Sacrificing their conscience and morals, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth’s evident hamartia is ambition. Shakespeare cleverly takes the audience on a journey with the two characters development to reinforce the **Jacobean beliefs** concerning distinctions of male and female within society.

Thrilled by the thought of power and authority, Lady Macbeth’s personality is immediately established as dominant. She is cunning and manipulative in her actions by encouraging Macbeth to believe that the murder of Duncan was indeed his own plan. The use of the **rhetorical question ‘What beast wasn’t then that made you break the enterprise to me?’** strengthens her courage and fearlessness to challenge her husband. Due to the rhetorical nature of the question, it silences Macbeth, and pushes him into a lower status to his wife, as he believes she is correct. It could even be interpreted as a subtle way for Lady Macbeth to mock him, Shakespeare does this to contrast the **Jacobean culture,** as the confrontation would have been seen as improper, and against the feminine etiquette- which would have been believed that even noblewomen like Lady Macbeth would have been thought to have upheld at all times.

Oblivious to emotion of guilt, Lady Macbeth doesn’t show any signs of remorse towards the death of Duncan. This is apparent in **Act Two Scene Two** when she acts as the barrier between macbeth and his conscience, as she explains **‘infirm of purpose give me the daggers’** the **adjective** ‘infirm’ connotes ideas of weakness, which reveals Lady Macbeth’s opinion of Macbeth. She is clearly insulting and belittling her husband’s inability to return the daggers to the chambers. Coupled with the **imperative verb** ‘give’, this exchange heightens her superiority within the relationship, as it portrays her as forceful and decisive- attributes typically associated with men in the **Jacobean era.** It could perhaps be argued that Shakespeare has depicted Lady Macbeth as increasingly masculine and authoritative following her appeal to the spirits in Act One Scene Five where she demands for them to **‘unsex me here’.** Her decision to meddle with the spirits directly links to the only character at this point in the play who are linked to the supernatural: the witches. Shakespeare places Lady Macbeth in the same group as the witches, conveying the idea that she is too evil and malicious- a belief attributed to witches and the supernatural in **Jacobean times.** Her refusal to conform to gender norms would have disturbed the audience, possibly leading them to fear her as everyone, including King James, was scared of witches- a figure Shakespeare wished to flatter and impress.

Always looking forward to total power and domination, Macbeth pushes anything deemed useless away from him in order to focus on the future he desires to have, even if this includes separating himself from his wife. **Act Three Scene Two** emphasises Lady Macbeth’s unawareness of Macbeth’s plan to kill Banquo, rejected any information she is told to **‘be innocent of the knowledge dearest chuck’.** This establishes the pivotal for the couple, and the reestablishing of gender roles. The **superlative** ‘dearer’ followed by the pronoun ‘chuck’ could represent Macbeth’s patronising affection towards Lady Macbeth, and his newly acquired coherence to express this. Alternatively, it could be seen as a way to infantilise as terms such as these were often used for children. The fact she is denied details exemplifies this attitude Macbeth has adopted- that Lady Macbeth is too ‘weak’ to handle the plan, or that he deems it pointless to share with her. Interestingly, Macbeth’s added confidence ties in just in time for the second murder. In the first, it was Lady Macbeth who proved to be more devious of the two, yet in the second it is Macbeth who displays his masculinity and status. Shakespeare presents this reversal of gender roles within the couple to symbolise how much Macbeth has been corrupted by the taste of power following Duncan’s murder. The patriarchal society deemed women to be unable to discuss major issues with, due to the fear that they would be unable to grasp the depth of importance. To the **contemporary Jacobean audience,** this is how women should be treated, and how men should act.

Haunted, and in apparent agony, Lady Macbeth is seen to be mentally suffering. Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth as exhibiting strange behaviour in her speech in Act Five Scene One, by uttering **‘out damned spot! Out I say!’** The use of the **adjective** ‘damned’ to describe the spot refers to the blood only she can see. This blood is **symbolic** of the guilt Lady Macbeth is unable to ‘wash away’ following the murder of Duncan. However, the ‘damned’ **alludes** to religious beliefs regarding the mortality of men, and their inevitable judgement by God. Shakespeare choice to have Lady Macbeth sleep walking during this scene, as opposed to depicting her as conscious, along with the idea of being ‘damned’ implies that her fate will be hell, and eternal damnation. In the state of hell you cannot sleep due to the suffering, and her inability to sleep (as a mortal) suggests that she is already on the path to hell. Shakespeare dwells on the consequences of regicide to **flatter the governance of James I,** and it also reflects the attempted murder of King James I in the gun powder plot, as it reassures the King, and warns the audience of what could happen in the case of another rebellion.

On the other hand, the repetition of the **imperative verb** ‘out’ coupled with the constant use of exclamation marks, portrays the need for dominance in Lady Macbeth’s personality. Even during the time when she is unconscious, Shakespeare depicts her as demanding. Moreover her mental degradation would have reduced the audience’s sympathy for her- she is inhumane. The audiences are reminded of her behaviour during the first act of the play, when she was manipulating Macbeth into killing Duncan. This echoing of her demanding manner reminds the audience that she is at her lowest, due to her own behaviour and desire for power- nobody else. This highlights her **hamartia** as a person who is overly ambitious, and in this scene, Shakespeare diminishes, or perhaps, returns to the correct status, by degrading her mental health, and displays women as weak, as incomparable to the strength of her husband, Macbeth.

To conclude, Shakespeare presents gender roles through Macbeth and Lady Macbeth by reflecting the developments seen side by side. Lady Macbeth is depicted as the initial dominant figure, a relationship that would have been questioned in Jacobean times. Lady Macbeth guides Macbeth towards a path of regicide and tyrannical murder, in the hopes of obtaining the status she longed for. Despite her initial dominance, it doesn’t last, as presented in Act Three, as Shakespeare’s pivotal moment reveals a reassignment of the gender roles, and they are re-branded to remain that way until the end of the play. Lady Macbeth’s mental health spirals out of control to the point of insanity, and indicates that she died in madness. This emphasises her weakness in contrast to Macbeth- who has asserted his masculinity for once and for all. Shakespeare’s decision to depict Lady Macbeth and Macbeth in the final acts in more traditional roles signifies his own beliefs on what gender roles should be.