**5 Reasons Why Breaking Bad is Macbeth**

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*Breaking Bad* is now in its final death throes, and we will soon all see what happens to Walter White and the rest of his crew, not to mention his tortured family.  Most well written stories reference great literature, but Vince Gilligan has indeed made some obvious references from Shakespeare that are evident throughout the series.  I would like to make 5 observations about *Breaking Bad*that I feel are ironclad proof that the writers know their Shakespeare…at least *Macbeth.*

1. **Skyler White and Lady Macbeth** – Many things have been written about Walter White’s wife, but one thing that is true is that she is definitely a shrew.  She belittles Walter with her actions more than her words and then with everything that she can muster.  She eventually joins Walter in his meth operation, laundering money for him through the car wash.  Lady Macbeth belittles Macbeth many times in the play, questioning his manhood and even going as far as insulting him when he carries the daggers out of Duncan’s bedroom.  She then, however, helps him with his bloody bid for power even to the point of giving him suggestions as to how to go about it.
2. **Perceived Invincibility -**Walter White and Macbeth both develop an invincibility complex.  Macbeth is told by the witches that “no man of woman born” can harm him, so he does deeds that he would otherwise not do because he feels as if he cannot be killed.  Walter White makes meth that is over 99% pure, something average meth cooks are not capable of doing because they do not possess his chemistry background.  He begins to believe he is untouchable because in his mind all of the other drug lords and cartels know he has the best product.  Therefore, to kill him would be to lose that high quality product.  This is tested when Jessie learns to make the meth exactly like Walter.  Macbeth eliminates every rival, real or imagined, and Walter does the same, spreading out a map of Albuquerque on Jessie’s kitchen bar and exclaiming that “all of this territory is just ripe for the taking.” When Jessie mentions that the other drug lords won’t take kindly to encroaching on their territory, Walter simply states that Jessie now has a “rep” because of crushing the head of a rival with an ATM machine, and that they will “deal with” anyone who stands in their way.
3. **Driven by Prophesy** – Both Walter White and Macbeth receive prophesies about their eventual fates but even when the prophesies do not work in their favor they continue on their downward spiral.  Macbeth is told he will become king while Walter is told he will die from lung cancer.  Both of these prophesies drive them to courses of action that send them on a path toward evil and depravity.  At the start, Macbeth questions the prophesy that he will be king, but then Lady Macbeth spurs him on with insults.  Walter’s decision to remedy his family’s financial situation can be seen as somewhat noble, but the means by which he does this are depraved and immoral.  Another similarity here is that once Macbeth discovers that Macduff is “no man of woman born” in Act V, he does not back down or stop his fight for control.  Walter, when he finds out in Season 2 that his tumor has shrunk by 80%, pounds a paper dispenser in the bathroom with his fist until his knuckles bleed, continuing on his path to control the meth trade anyway.
4. **Pros and Cons of Murder -**Macbeth’s soliloquy in act 2 and Walter’s first deliberate murder are extremely similar.   Macbeth weighs the pros and cons of committing murder in his soliloquy in Act I, vii, making a list of reasons why one should and should not murder another.   Walter, in the episode “And the Bag’s In the River”, makes a very similar list of pros and cons before going down into the basement to kill Krazy Eight.  In Act II, i, Macbeth sees a dagger floating before him, a vision of what he is about to do.  Walter re-assembles the broken plate (in the same episode mentioned above) and discovers that Krazy Eight has a broken shard that he plans to use as a dagger, which in essence is a “vision” of a dagger.
5. **Jessie Pinkman and Lady Macbeth** – Another character who has amazing similarities with Lady Macbeth is Jessie Pinkman.  In “And the Bag’s In the River”, Jessie teases Walter about killing someone or doing what is necessary, telling Walter “You have to do your part!”, which means he has to go down into the basement and kill Eight Ball.  Lady Macbeth belittles Macbeth when he commits his first murder (Act II, ii) taking the daggers from him saying: “Infirm of purpose!/Give me the daggers: the sleeping and the dead/Are but as pictures: ’tis the eye of childhood that fears a painted devil.”  As Macbeth grows in power and evil, Lady Macbeth shrinks in importance and eventually goes mad, seeing the vision of blood on her hands that will not be washed away, a picture of her guilt.  Jessie shrinks in importance as Walter becomes the meth lord of Albuquerque, eventually falling completely into drug addiction so that he becomes useless.  Jessie’s “Out, Out, Damn spot!” moment has to be when he begins to fear for his life and hallucinates that two Mormon missionaries are two murderers with machetes on motorcycles in Season 2, the mental damage from his evil deeds and his guilt.  Another similarity is that Walter loses all compassion for Jessie when he goes over the edge with drug addiction, going out on his own in pursuit of power and money.  Macbeth, when he learns of Lady Macbeth’s death in Act V says “She should have died hereafter; there would have been time for such a word”, refusing to feel anything at all about her demise.

There are many more, so many in fact that the show should probably be called *Macmeth*.  What do you think, Shakespeare fans?  Do you see any other similarities between the Bard and the Bad?  Post comments below.

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