**By focusing closely on the literary and linguistic techniques used, discuss Shakespeare’s presentation of the relationship between Goneril and Albany in this extract from Act 4 Scene 2.**

Act 4 Scene 2 highlights the shift in the relationship between Goneril and her husband as Albany finally embraces societal expectation of masculinity. Within this extract the audience sees Albany metamorphose into a man of moral integrity and inner strength. Goneril, however, refuses to conform to conventional expectations of women by challenging her husband and attacking his manhood.

Throughout the extract Albany is the dominant speaker and this represents a potential power shift in his relationship with Goneril. Shakespeare immediately draws the audience’s attention to the way Albany expresses his disgust and disbelief at Goneril’s behaviour through the exclamative utterance ‘O Goneril!’ Through the use of the interjection ‘O’ and the vocative ‘Goneril’, Shakespeare emphasises to the audience Albany’s incredulity as he confronts Goneril about her actions. Albany’s emphatic denunciation of Goneril is evident through the forceful declarative utterance ‘You are not worth the dust which the rude wind/Blows in your face.’ The stress on the personal pronoun ‘you’ creates an insulting address and the use of the adverb ‘not’ immediately emphasises the negativity of the current situation in the relationship between Goneril and Albany. The use of the predicative adjective ‘rude’ and the abstract noun ‘wind’ accentuates the fact that Albany feels much distaste and unhappiness at Goneril’s actions as he expresses his feelings of her unworthiness with vehemence and anger. Through the use dynamic plosive verb ‘blows’, Shakespeare also highlights the forceful nature of Albany’s rebuke as he reduces his wife to less than ‘dust’ – a noun which emphasizes how inconsequential she has now become to him.

Shakespeare creates the impression that the relationship between Goneril and Albany is irreparable as Albany implies that Goneril is now unworthy of his trust and that he fears her ‘disposition’. Albany’s use of the metaphorical noun phrase ‘material sap’ to represent the family unity that should unconditionally exist draws the audience’s attention to the fact that nobody can be worthy of trust when they are willing to abuse their own flesh and blood, to betray someone they should respect and look up to. Through the modal verb phrase ‘will silver and disbranch’ Albany implies that Goneril, like a branch breaking away from that tree, has metaphorically broken away from her relations. However, the use of the reflexive pronoun ‘herself’ emphasizes the fact that Goneril has personally and deliberately made this morally unsound decision and that her actions will lead to her own destruction. .

Goneril tries to re-assert power within the relationship and seize control of the conversation by dismissing Albany’s claims with the imperative utterance ‘No more’ and labelling his words with the modifier ‘foolish’. Albany, however, refuses to be silenced. Through his extended turn, he launches into a fierce and sustained attack presenting Goneril in an increasingly disparaging light. The rhetorical interrogative utterances ‘What have you done? And ‘what have you perform’d?’ emphasise Albany’s disbelief at his wife’s part in Lear’s downfall. Albany displays an ability to empathise with Lear who he refers to with the noun phrase ‘a gracious aged man.’ In contrast, he denounces Goneril who he perceives as ‘most barbarous, most degenerate.’ The repetition of the superlative ‘most’ and the harshness of the plosive sounds on ‘degenerate’ and ‘barbarous’ serve to emphasize the appalling depths to which he feels Goneril has sunk both as a wife and daughter. Here, he stresses the primitive and uncivilised manner in which she has behaved and the fact she has no moral code. He also de-humanises Goneril through the noun ‘Tigers’ and the simile ‘Like monsters of the deep’, suggesting her animalistic behaviour stands outside the norms of society. The collective noun ‘daughters’ in the parenthetical clause further accentuates the fact that Albany believes that Goneril and her sister are barbaric and not worth the status of human as they have behaved with such low morality it would be a disgrace to humanity to say so.

Goneril, however, refuses to be intimidated by Albany and attempts to assume authority, dismissing Albany as a coward and weakling through the exclamatory utterance ‘Milk-liver’d man!’ Here, Goneril’s behaviour immediately subverts stereotypical gender roles as she belittles Albany and attacks his masculinity. This unstereotypical female behaviour is further reiterated in the way Goneril condemns Albany’s spinelessness. Through the use of the rhetorical interrogative ‘Where’s thy drum?’ she implies Albany lacks the patriotic attitude needed to defend his country and is a man incapable of action. Goneril further attempts to emasculate Albany with her second interrogative ‘Whiles thou, a moral fool, sit’st still, and criest ‘Alack, why does he do so?’’ Through the use of the predicative adjective ‘moral’ and the common noun ‘fool’ Goneril essentially creates a weak and pathetic image of Albany. The sibilant sounds on the verbs ‘sit’st’ and ‘criest’ present Albany as a whimpering fool who complains when things are not done but lacks the ability to do it himself. Shakespeare clearly highlights how Goneril attacks Albany’s masculinity as she attempts to diminish any shred of self-belief and security Albany has in himself as a man. Shakespeare also draws the audience’s attention to how Goneril subverts stereotypical ideologies of women in a patriarchal society as she uses derogatory language in order for Albany to be a subject of her abuse. In Goneril’s eyes, true marriage is a foreign concept as from her perspective there is no respect or love enveloping her relationship with Albany and she refuses to conform to conventional expectations.

Albany retaliates with increasingly violent language as he represents Goneril as the embodiment of all evil. This is highlighted through the use of the lexical set of imagery of hell. Albany uses the vocative ‘devil’, the repetition of the noun ‘fiend’ and the compound adjective ‘Be-monster’ to describe Goneril’s unfeminine and unnatural behaviour. The repetition of the abstract noun ‘fiend’ implies that, to him, Goneril is nothing more than an incessant, evil woman who cannot comprehend the intensity of her actions. Also, the use of the vocative ‘devil’ indicates that she is of a demonic nature and is the complete antithesis of anything that can be considered good and pure – expected traits of the Elizabethan woman. The violence of Albany’s language becomes more apparent as he warns Goneril of the physical harm he is tempted to inflict upon her as a result of her lack of self-recrimination and deliberately provocative attack upon him. The violence implied in the infinitive verb phrase ‘to dislocate and tear’ clearly highlights both the emotional and physical effect that Goneril’s remorseless and challenging behaviour has had upon Albany personally. Goneril, however, once again outfaces him with the imperative utterance ‘Marry, your manhood – mew!’ attacking his masculinity and implying his effeminate nature.

In conclusion, this extract clearly highlights the now dysfunctional nature of the relationship between Albany and Goneril. The verbally aggressive and heated nature of this exchange emphatically suggests to the audience that this situation has gone too far for them to ever come back from.