Macbeth

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Charles Kean and his wife as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, in costumes aiming to be historically accurate (1858).

Macbeth is among the best-known of William Shakespeare's plays, and is his shortest tragedy, believed to have been written between 1603 and 1606. It is frequently performed at both amateur and professional levels, and has been adapted for opera, film, books, stage and screen. Often regarded as archetypal, the play tells of the dangers of the lust for power and the betrayal of friends. For the plot Shakespeare drew loosely on the historical account of King Macbeth of Scotland by Raphael Holinshed and that by the Scottish philosopher Hector Boece.[1] There are many superstitions centred on the belief the play is somehow "cursed", and many actors will not mention the name of the play aloud, referring to it instead as "The Scottish play".

Contents

[hide]

- 1 Date and text
- 2 Characters
- 3 Synopsis
- 4 Themes and motifs
  - 4.1 Macbeth as a tragedy of character
  - 4.2 Macbeth as a tragedy of moral order
  - 4.3 Macbeth as a poetic tragedy
5 Superstition and "the Scottish play"

6 Performance history
   o 6.1 Shakespeare’s day
   o 6.2 Restoration and 18th century
   o 6.3 Nineteenth century
   o 6.4 Twentieth century to present

7 Film versions

8 Adaptations and cultural references
   o 8.1 Literary versions
   o 8.2 Television versions (a selection)
   o 8.3 Musical adaptations

9 References

10 External links
   o 10.1 Performances
   o 10.2 Audio Recording
   o 10.3 Text of Play
   o 10.4 Commentary

Date and text

Facsimile of the first page of Macbeth from the First Folio, published in 1623

Macbeth cannot be dated precisely owing to significant evidence of later revisions. Many scholars conjecture the likely date of composition to be between 1603 and 1606. As the play seems to be aimed at celebrating King James’s ancestors and the Stuart accession
to the throne in 1603 (James believed himself to be descended from Banquo), they argue that the play is unlikely to have been composed earlier than 1603; and suggest that the parade of eight kings—which the witches show Macbeth in a vision in Act IV—is a compliment to King James VI of Scotland. Other editors conjecture a more specific date of 1605–6, the principal reasons being possible allusions to the Gunpowder Plot and its ensuing trials. The Porter's speech (Act II, scene III, lines 1-21), in particular, may contain allusions to the trial of the Jesuit Henry Garnet in spring, 1606; "equivocator" (line 8) may refer to Garnet's defence of "equivocation" [see: Doctrine of mental reservation], and "farmer" (4) to one of Garnet's aliases. However, "farmer" is a common word, and the concept of "equivocation" was also the subject of a 1583 tract by Queen Elizabeth's chief councillor Lord Burghley, and of the 1584 Doctrine of Equivocation by the Spanish prelate Martin Azpilcueta, which was disseminated across Europe and into England in the 1590s.

Scholars also cite an entertainment seen by King James at Oxford in the summer of 1605 that featured three "sibyls" like the weird sisters; Kermode surmises that Shakespeare could have heard about this and alluded to it with the weird sisters. However, A. R. Braunmuller in the New Cambridge edition finds the 1605-6 arguments inconclusive, and argues only for an earliest date of 1603. The play is not considered to have been written any later than 1607, since, as Kermode notes, there are "fairly clear allusions to the play in 1607." The earliest account of a performance of the play is April 1611, when Simon Forman recorded seeing it at the Globe Theatre.

Macbeth was first printed in the First Folio of 1623 and the Folio is the only source for the text. The text that survives had been plainly altered by later hands. Most notable is the inclusion of two songs from Thomas Middleton's play The Witch (1615); Middleton is conjectured to have inserted an extra scene involving the witches and Hecate, for these scenes had proven highly popular with audiences. These revisions, which since the Clarendon edition of 1869 have been assumed to include all of Act III, scene v, and a portion of Act IV, scene I, are often indicated in modern texts. On this basis, many scholars reject all three of the interludes with the goddess Hecate as inauthentic. Even with the Hecate material, the play is conspicuously short, and so the Folio text may derive from a prompt book that had been substantially cut for performance, or an adapter cut the text himself.

Characters

- **Duncan** – King of Scotland
  - **Malcolm** – Duncan's elder son
  - **Donalbain** – Duncan's younger son
- **Macbeth** – A general in the army of King Duncan. Thane of Cawdor, Thane of Glamis, King of Scots
  - **Lady Macbeth** – Macbeth's wife
- **Banquo** – Macbeth's friend and a general in the army of King Duncan
  - **Fleance** – The son of Banquo
- **Macduff** – The Thane of Fife
The play opens among thunder and lightning, with the Three Witches deciding that their next meeting shall be with Macbeth. In the following scene, a wounded sergeant reports to King Duncan of Scotland that his generals, Macbeth (who is the Thane of Glamis) and Banquo, have just defeated the allied forces of Norway and Ireland, led by the rebel
Macdonwald. Macbeth, the King's kinsman, is praised for his bravery and fighting prowess.

The scene changes. Macbeth and Banquo enter into conversation, remarking on the weather and their victory ("So foul and fair a day I have not seen"). While they wander into a heath, the three Witches, who have been waiting, greet them with prophecies. Even though it is Banquo who first challenges them, they address Macbeth. The first hails Macbeth as "Thane of Glamis", the second as "Thane of Cawdor", and the third proclaims that he shall "be King hereafter". Macbeth appears stunned into silence; so again Banquo challenges them. The Witches inform Banquo he shall father a line of kings, though he himself will not be one. While the two men wonder at these pronouncements, the Witches vanish, and another Thane, Ross, a messenger from the King, soon arrives and informs Macbeth of his newly bestowed title—Thane of Cawdor. The first prophecy is thus fulfilled. Immediately, Macbeth begins to harbour ambitions of becoming king.

Macbeth writes to his wife about the Witches' prophecies. When Duncan decides to stay at the Macbeths' castle at Inverness, Lady Macbeth hatches a plan to murder him and secure the throne for her husband. Although Macbeth raises concerns about the regicide, Lady Macbeth eventually persuades him, by challenging his manhood, to follow her plan.

On the night of the visit Macbeth kills Duncan. The deed is not seen by the audience, but it leaves Macbeth so shaken that Lady Macbeth has to take charge. In accordance with her plan, she frames Duncan's sleeping servants for the murder by planting bloody daggers on them. Early the next morning, Lennox, a Scottish nobleman, and Macduff, the loyal Thane of Fife, arrive. The drunken porter opens the gate and Macbeth leads them to the king's chamber, where Macduff discovers Duncan's corpse. In a feigned fit of anger, Macbeth murders the guards before they can protest their innocence. Macduff is immediately suspicious of Macbeth but does not reveal his suspicions publicly. Fearing for their lives, Duncan's sons flee, Malcolm to England and his brother Donalbain to Ireland. The rightful heirs' flight makes them suspects and Macbeth assumes the throne as the new King of Scotland as a kinsman to the dead king.

Macbeth seeing the Ghost of Banquo by Théodore Chassériau.
Despite his success, Macbeth remains uneasy about the prophecy that Banquo would be the progenitor of kings. So Macbeth invites Banquo to a royal banquet and discovers that Banquo and his young son, Fleance, will be riding out that night. He hires two men to kill Banquo and Fleance. (A third murderer appears mysteriously in the park before the murder). While the assassins murder Banquo, Fleance escapes. At the banquet Banquo's ghost enters and sits in Macbeth's place. Only Macbeth can see the ghost; the rest panic at the sight of Macbeth raging at an empty chair, until a desperate Lady Macbeth orders them to leave.

Macbeth, disturbed, goes to the Witches once more. They conjure up three spirits with three further warnings and prophecies, which tell him to "beware Macduff", but also that "none of woman born shall harm Macbeth" and he will "never vanquish'd be until Great Birnam Wood to High Dunsinane Hill shall come against him". Since Macduff is in exile in England (he meets with Malcolm and together they begin to raise an army) Macbeth assumes that he is safe; so he puts to death everyone in Macduff's castle, including Macduff's wife and their young children.

Lady Macbeth becomes racked with guilt from the crimes she and her husband have committed. In a famous scene she sleepwalks and tries to wash imaginary bloodstains from her hands, all the while speaking of the terrible things she knows.

In England Malcolm and Macduff plan the invasion of Scotland. Macbeth, now identified as a tyrant, sees many of his thanes defecting. Malcolm leads an army, along with Macduff and Englishmen Siward (the Elder), the Earl of Northumberland, against Dunsinane Castle. While encamped in Birnam Wood, the soldiers are ordered to cut down and carry tree limbs to camouflage their numbers, thus fulfilling the Witches' third prophecy. Meanwhile Macbeth delivers the famous soliloquy ("Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow") upon his learning of Lady Macbeth's death (the cause is undisclosed, and it is assumed by some that she committed suicide, as Malcolm's final reference to her reveals "'tis thought, by self and violent hands / took off her life").

A battle ensues, culminating in the slaying of the young Siward and Macduff's confrontation with Macbeth. Macbeth boasts that he has no reason to fear Macduff, for he cannot be killed by any man born of woman. Macduff declares that he was "from his mother's womb untimely ripp'd" (i.e., born by Caesarean section)—and was therefore not "of woman born". Macbeth realizes, too late, the Witches have misled him. They fight, and Macduff beheads Macbeth off stage, and thereby fulfils the last of the prophecies.

Although Malcolm is placed on the throne and not Fleance, the witches' prophecy concerning Banquo, "Thou shalt [be]get kings", was known to the audience of Shakespeare's time to be true, for James I of England was supposedly a descendant of Banquo.

Themes and motifs
Macbeth is an anomaly among Shakespeare's tragedies in certain critical ways. It is short: more than a thousand lines shorter than Othello and King Lear, and only slightly more than half as long as Hamlet. This brevity has suggested to many critics that the received version is based on a heavily cut source, perhaps a prompt-book for a particular performance. That brevity has also been connected to other unusual features: the fast pace of the first act, which has seemed to be "stripped for action"; the comparative flatness of the characters other than Macbeth; the oddness of Macbeth himself compared to other Shakespearean tragic heroes.

Macbeth as a tragedy of character

At least since the days of Alexander Pope and Samuel Johnson, analysis of the play has centred on the question of Macbeth's ambition, commonly seen as so dominant a trait that it defines the character. Johnson asserted that Macbeth, though esteemed for his military bravery, is wholly reviled. This opinion recurs in critical literature. Like Richard III, but without that character's perversely appealing exuberance, Macbeth wades through blood until his inevitable fall. As Kenneth Muir writes, "Macbeth has not a predisposition to murder; he has merely an inordinate ambition that makes murder itself seem to be a lesser evil than failure to achieve the crown." Some critics, such as E. E. Stoll, explain this characterisation as a holdover from Senecan or medieval tradition. Shakespeare's audience, in this view, expected villains to be wholly bad, and Senecan style, far from prohibiting a villainous protagonist, all but demanded it.

Yet for other critics, it has not been so easy to resolve the question of Macbeth's motivation. Robert Bridges, for instance, perceived a paradox: a character able to express such convincing horror before Duncan's murder would likely be incapable of committing the crime. For many critics, Macbeth's motivations in the first act appear vague and insufficient. John Dover Wilson hypothesised that Shakespeare's original text had an extra scene or scenes in which husband and wife discussed their plans. This interpretation is not fully provable; however, the motivating role of ambition for Macbeth is universally recognised. The evil actions motivated by his ambition seem to trap him in a cycle of increasing evil, as Macbeth himself recognises: "I am in blood; stepp'd insofar that, should I wade no more, returning were as tedious as to go o'er."

Macbeth as a tragedy of moral order

The disastrous consequences of Macbeth's ambition are not limited to him, of course. Almost from the moment of the murder, the play depicts Scotland as a land shaken by inversions of the natural order. Shakespeare may have intended a reference to the great chain of being, although the play's images of disorder are mostly not specific enough to support detailed intellectual readings. He may also have intended an elaborate compliment to James's belief in the divine right of kings, although this hypothesis, outlined at greatest length by Henry N. Paul, is not universally accepted. As in Julius Caesar, though, perturbations in the political sphere are echoed and even amplified by events in the material world. Among the most frequently depicted of the inversions of the
natural order is sleep. Macbeth's announcement that he has "murdered sleep" is figuratively mirrored in Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking.

Macbeth's generally accepted indebtedness to medieval tragedy is often seen as particularly significant in the play's treatment of moral order. Glynne Wickham connects the play, through the Porter, to a mystery play on the harrowing of hell. Howard Felperin argues that the play has a more complex attitude toward "orthodox Christian tragedy" than is often admitted; he sees a kinship between the play and the tyrant plays within the medieval liturgical drama.

The theme of androgyny is often seen as a special aspect of the theme of disorder. Inversion of normative gender roles is most famously associated with the witches and with Lady Macbeth as she appears in the first act. Whatever Shakespeare's degree of sympathy with such inversions, the play ends with a fairly thorough return to normative gender values. Some feminist psychoanalytic critics, such as Janet Adelman, have connected the play's treatment of gender roles to its larger theme of inverted natural order. In this light, Macbeth is punished for his violation of the moral order by being removed from the bicycles of nature (which are figured as female); nature itself (as embodied in the movement of Birnam Wood) is part of the restoration of moral order.

Macbeth as a poetic tragedy

Critics in the early twentieth century reacted against what they saw as an excessive dependence on the study of character in criticism of the play. This dependence, though most closely associated with Andrew Cecil Bradley, is evident as early as the time of Mary Cowden Clarke, who offered precise, if fanciful, accounts of the predramatic lives of Shakespeare's female leads. She suggested, for instance, that the child Lady Macbeth refers to in the first act died during a foolish military action.

Superstition and "the Scottish play"

Main article: The Scottish play

While many today would simply chalk up any misfortune surrounding a production to coincidence, actors and other theatre people often consider it bad luck to mention Macbeth by name while inside a theatre, and usually refer to it superstitiously as The Scottish Play, "MacBee," "Macker's," or when referencing the character rather than the play, "Mr. and Mrs. M," "The Scottish King", or sometimes "MacWhat's-his-face".

This is because Shakespeare is said to have used the spells of real witches in his text, purportedly angering the witches and causing them to curse the play. Thus, to say the name of the play inside a theatre is believed to doom the production to failure, and perhaps cause physical injury or death to cast members. A large mythology has built up surrounding this superstition, with countless stories of accidents, misfortunes and even
deaths, all mysteriously taking place during runs of Macbeth (or by actors who had uttered the name). [12]

An alternative explanation for the superstition is that struggling theatres or companies would often put on this popular 'blockbuster' in an effort to save their flagging fortunes. However, it is a tall order for any single production to reverse a long-running trend of poor business. Therefore, the last play performed before a theatre shut down was often Macbeth, and thus the growth of the idea that it was an 'unlucky' play. [citation needed]

Another explanation for this superstition is that theatre companies may have used Macbeth as a back-up play if they were to lose an actor and were not able to perform the production originally planned for the performance. This is because this play requires fewer actors (when doubling of characters for actors occurs) and has the least amount of text for the actors to memorize. "Macbeth" may have been the play that kept in theatre companies' back pockets, just in case some bad luck were to occur prior to any planning of a performance.

Several methods exist to dispel the curse, depending on the actor. One, attributed to Michael York, is to immediately leave the building the stage is in with the person who uttered the name, walk around it three times, spit over their left shoulders, say an obscenity then wait to be invited back into the building. [13] Another popular "ritual" is to leave the room, knock three times, be invited in, and then quote a line from Hamlet. Yet another is to recite one of Shylock's monologues from The Merchant of Venice. [citation needed]

Performance history

Shakespeare's day

Apart from the one mentioned in the Forman document, there are no performances known with certainty in Shakespeare's era. Because of its Scottish theme, the play is sometimes said to have been written for, and perhaps debuted for, King James; however, no external evidence supports this hypothesis. The play's brevity and certain aspects of its staging (for instance, the large proportion of night-time scenes and the unusually large number of off-stage sounds) have been taken as suggesting that the text now extant was revised for production indoors, perhaps at the Blackfriars Theatre, which the King's Men acquired in 1608. [14]

Restoration and 18th century

In the Restoration, Sir William Davenant produced a spectacular "operatic" adaptation of Macbeth, "with all the singing and dancing in it" and special effects like "flyings for the witches" (John Downes, Roscius Anglicanus, 1708). Davenant's revision also enhanced the role of Lady Macduff, making her a thematic foil to Lady Macbeth. In an April 19, 1667 entry in his Diary, Samuel Pepys called Davenant's Macbeth "one of the best plays for a stage, and variety of dancing and music, that ever I saw." The Davenant version
held the stage until the middle of the next century. It was this version that the famous Macbeths of the early eighteenth century, such as James Quin, employed.

Charles Macklin, not otherwise recalled as a great Macbeth, is remembered for performances at the Covent Garden in 1773 at which riots broke out, related to Macklin's rivalries with Garrick and William Smith. Macklin performed in Scottish dress, reversing an earlier tendency to dress Macbeth as an English brigadier; he also removed Garrick's death speech and further trimmed Lady Macduff's role. The performance received generally respectful reviews, although George Steevens remarked on the inappropriateness of Macklin (then in his eighties) for the role.

After Garrick, the most celebrated Macbeth of the eighteenth century was John Philip Kemble; he performed the role most famously with his sister, Sarah Siddons, whose Lady Macbeth was widely regarded as unsurpassable. Kemble continued the trends toward realistic costume and to Shakespeare's language that had marked Macklin's production; Walter Scott reports that he experimented continually with the Scottish dress of the play. Response to Kemble's interpretation was divided; however, Siddons was unanimously praised. Her performance of the "sleepwalking" scene in the fifth act was especially noted; Leigh Hunt called it "sublime." The Kemble-Siddons performances were the first widely influential productions in which Lady Macbeth's villainy was presented as deeper and more powerful than Macbeth's. It was also the first in which Banquo's ghost did not appear on stage.

Kemble's Macbeth struck some critics as too mannered and polite for Shakespeare's text. His successor as the leading actor of London, Edmund Kean, was more often criticised for emotional excess, particularly in the fifth act. Kean's Macbeth was not universally admired; William Hazlitt, for instance, complained that Kean's Macbeth was too like his Richard III. As he did in other roles, Kean exploited his athleticism as a key component of Macbeth's mental collapse. He reversed Kemble's emphasis on Macbeth as noble, instead presenting him as a ruthless politician who collapses under the weight of guilt and fear. Kean, however, did nothing to halt the trend toward extravagance in scene and costume.

**Nineteenth century**

The Macbeth of the next predominant London actor, William Charles Macready, provoked responses at least as mixed as those given Kean. Macready debuted in the role in 1820 at Covent Garden. As Hazlitt noted, Macready's reading of the character was purely psychological; the witches lost all supernatural power, and Macbeth's downfall arose purely from the conflicts in Macbeth's character. Macready's most famous Lady Macbeth was Helena Faucit, who debuted dismally in the role while still in her mid-20s, but who later achieved acclaim in the role for an interpretation that, unlike Siddons', accorded with contemporary notions of female decorum. After Macready "retired" to America, he continued to perform in the role; in 1849, he was involved in a rivalry with American actor Edwin Forrest, whose partisans hissed Macready at Astor Place, leading to what is commonly called the Astor Place Riot.
The two most prominent Macbeths of mid-century, Samuel Phelps and Charles Kean, were both received with critical ambivalence and popular success. Both are famous less for their interpretation of character than for certain aspects of staging. At Sadler's Wells Theatre, Phelps brought back nearly all of Shakespeare's original text. He brought back the first half of the Porter scene, which had been ignored by directors since D'Avenant; the second remained cut because of its ribaldry. He abandoned Irving's music\(^\text{[clarify]}\) and reduced the witches to their role in the folio. Just as significantly, he returned to the folio treatment of Macbeth's death. Not all of these decisions succeeded in the Victorian context, and Phelps experimented with various combinations of Shakespeare and D'Avenant in his more than a dozen productions between 1844 and 1861. His most successful Lady Macbeth was Isabella Glyn, whose commanding presence reminded some critics of Siddons.

The outstanding feature of Kean's productions at the Princess's Theatre after 1850 was their accuracy of costume. Kean achieved his greatest success in modern melodrama, and he was widely viewed as not prepossessing enough for the greatest Elizabethan roles. Audiences did not mind, however; one 1853 production ran for twenty weeks. Presumably part of the draw was Kean's famous attention to historical accuracy; in his productions, as Allardyce Nicoll notes, "even the botany was historically correct."

Henry Irving's first attempt at the role, at the Lyceum Theatre, London in 1875, was a failure. Under the production of Sidney Frances Bateman, and starring alongside Kate Josephine Bateman, Irving may have been affected by the recent death of his manager Hezekiah Linthicum Bateman. Although the production lasted eighty performances, his Macbeth was judged inferior to his Hamlet. His next essay, opposite Ellen Terry at the Lyceum in 1888, fared better, playing for 150 performances.\(^{[15]}\) It had incidental music by Arthur Sullivan.\(^{[16]}\) Friends such as Bram Stoker defended his "psychological" reading, based on the supposition that Macbeth had dreamed of killing Duncan before the start of the play. His detractors, among them Henry James, deplored his somewhat arbitrary word changes ("would have" for "should have" in the speech at Lady Macbeth's death) and his "neurasthenic" approach to the character.\(^{[citation needed]}\)

**Twentieth century to present**

Barry Vincent Jackson staged an influential modern-dress production with the Birmingham Repertory in 1928; the production reached London, playing at the Royal Court Theatre. It received mixed reviews; Eric Maturin was judged an inadequate Macbeth, though Mary Merrall's vampish Lady was reviewed favourably. Though The Times judged it a "miserable failure," the production did much to overturn the tendency to scenic and antiquarian excess that had peaked with Charles Kean.

Among the most publicised productions of the twentieth century was mounted by the Federal Theater Project at the Lafayette Theatre in Harlem from 14 April to 20 June 1936. Orson Welles, in his first stage production, directed Jack Carter and Edna Thomas, with Canada Lee playing Banquo, in an all African American production. Welles set the
play in post-colonial Haiti, and his direction emphasised spectacle and suspense: his dozens of "African" drums recalled Davenant's chorus of witches.

Laurence Olivier played Malcolm in the 1929 production and Macbeth in 1937 at the Old Vic Theatre in a production that saw the Vic's artistic director Lilian Baylis pass away the night before it opened. Olivier's makeup was so thick and stylised for that production that Vivien Leigh was quoted as saying "You hear Macbeth's first line, then Larry's makeup comes on, then Banquo comes on, then Larry comes on".[12] Olivier later starred in what is among the most famous twentieth-century productions, by Glen Byam Shaw at Stratford-upon-Avon in 1955. Vivien Leigh played Lady Macbeth. The supporting cast, which Harold Hobson denigrated, included many actors who went on to successful Shakespearean careers: Ian Holm played Donalbain, Keith Michell was Macduff, and Patrick Wymark the Porter. Olivier was the key to success. The intensity of his performance, particularly in the conversation with the murderers and in confronting Banquo's ghost, seemed to many reviewers to recall Edmund Kean. Plans for a film version faltered after the box-office failure of Olivier's Richard III. It was of this performance that Kenneth Tynan asserted flatly that "no one has ever succeeded as Macbeth"—until Olivier.

Olivier's co-star in his 1937 Old Vic Theatre production, Judith Anderson, had an equally triumphant association with the play. She played Lady Macbeth on Broadway opposite Maurice Evans in a production directed by Margaret Webster that ran for 131 performances in 1941, the longest run of the play in Broadway history. Anderson and Evans performed the play on television twice, in 1954 and 1962, with Maurice Evans winning an Emmy Award the 1962 production and Anderson winning the award for both presentations.

One of the most notable twentieth-century productions is that of Trevor Nunn for the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1976. Nunn had directed Nicol Williamson and Helen Mirren in the play two years earlier, but that production had largely failed to impress. In 1976, Nunn produced the play with a minimalist set at The Other Place; this small, nearly round stage focused attention on the psychological dynamics of the characters. Both Ian McKellen in the title role and Judi Dench as Lady Macbeth received exceptionally favourable reviews. Dench won the 1997 SWET Best Actress award for her performance and in 2004, members of the RSC voted her performance the greatest by an actress in the history of the company.

Nunn's production transferred to London in 1977 and was later filmed for television. It was to overshadow Peter Hall's 1978 production with Albert Finney as Macbeth and Dorothy Tutin as Lady Macbeth. But the most infamous recent Macbeth was staged at the Old Vic in 1980. Peter O'Toole and Frances Tomelty took the leads in a production (by Bryan Forbes) that was publicly disowned by Timothy West, artistic director of the theatre, before opening night, despite being a sellout because of its notoriety. As critic Jack Tinker noted in the Daily Mail: "The performance is not so much downright bad as heroically ludicrous."[13]
On the stage, **Lady Macbeth** is considered one of the more "commanding and challenging" roles in Shakespeare's work. Other actresses who have succeeded in the role include Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies, Glenda Jackson, and Jane Lapotaire.

A performance was staged in the real Macbeth's home of Moray, produced by the National Theatre of Scotland to take place at Elgin Cathedral. Professional actors, dancers, musicians, school children, and a community cast from the Moray area all took part in what was an important event in the Highland Year of Culture, 2007.

In the same year there was general consent among critics that Rupert Goold's production for the Chichester Festival 2007, starring Patrick Stewart and Kate Fleetwood, rivalled Trevor Nunn's acclaimed 1976 RSC production. And when it transferred to the Gielgud Theatre in London, Charles Spencer reviewing for the Daily Telegraph pronounced it the best Macbeth he had ever seen. At the Evening Standard Theatre Awards 2007 the production won both the Best Actor award for Stewart, and the Best Director award for Goold. The same production opened in the US at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 2008, moving to Broadway (Lyceum Theatre) after a sold-out run.

**Film versions**

William Shakespeare's **Macbeth** has been screened numerous times featuring many of the biggest names from stage, film and television.

**Adaptations and cultural references**

**Literary versions**

- *MacBird*, a 1966 counterculture drama by Barbara Garson featuring US President Lyndon B. Johnson as Macbeth
- *Macbett* — 1972 play by Eugène Ionesco which satirises the original.
- *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, short story by Nikolai Leskov only loosely related to Shakespeare's play
- *Macbeth* — 1988 Greek novel by Apostolos Doxiadis
- *The Third Witch* — 2001 novel by Rebecca Reisert, told from the point of view of one of the witches in the play.
- *La señora Macbeth* 2004, by Griselda Gambaro. An Argentinian play, told from the point of view of Lady Macbeth and her arguing with the three witches that harass her during the victories and later death of her husband.
Television versions (a selection)

- *Macbeth* — 1954 *Hallmark Hall of Fame* live adaptation of the famous stage production starring *Maurice Evans* and *Judith Anderson*, with a mostly American supporting cast of stage and television actors, among them *Richard Waring*.
- *Macbeth* — 1960 television remake of the 1954 production, again produced for the *Hallmark Hall of Fame*, and again starring Evans and Anderson, but this time featuring an all-British supporting cast, and filmed on location in *England* and *Scotland*. *Ian Bannen* and *Jeremy Brett* are also featured.
- *Macbeth* — 1983 production produced for the *BBC Shakespeare* series shown on *PBS*, this version starring *Nicol Williamson* and *Jane Lapotaire*.
- *Macbeth* — 1992 animation by *Nikolai Serebryakov* as a part of *Shakespeare: The Animated Tales*
- *Macbeth* — 1998 TV movie on UK *Channel 4*, starring *Sean Pertwee* and set in an alternate present-day *Scotland*, but with the original dialogue
- The *BBC's Shakespeare-Re-Told* series in 2005 included a present-day modern-language *Macbeth* set in a Glasgow restaurant starring *James McAvoy*.
- "*Maqbool*" - a 2004 Bollywood film directed by Vishal Bharadwaj

Musical adaptations

- The opera *Macbeth* (1847) by *Giuseppe Verdi*
- The opera *Macbeth* (1910) by *Ernest Bloch*
- *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, an opera by *Dmitri Shostakovich* based on the short story by Nikolai Leskov
- *Macbeth*, one of *Richard Strauss*’s earliest *tone poems* (1890)
- The album *Thane to the Throne* (2000), a concept album by *Jag Panzer*
- The album *A Tragedy in Steel* (2002), a concept album by *Rebellion*.
- *Macbeth: the Contemporary Rock Opera* (revised 2006) by Judy Stevens and Clarry Evans, first performed at the *Queensland Performing Arts Centre*.
- *Umbatha*, merging the story with the history of *Shaka Zulu*, incorporating *Zulu* tribal songs and dances. Written by *Welcome Msomi* and first performed in 1969. See *UCLA news article*.
- *David Hobson*’s rock opera - 1985
- From a Jack to a King by Bob Carlton 2007

References


10. ^ If, that is, the Forman document is genuine; see the entry on Simon Forman for the question of the authenticity of the *Book of Plays*.


15. ^ "Henry Irving as Macbeth", PeoplePlay UK website


**External links**

[Wikisource](https://wikisource.org) has original text related to this article:

*The Tragedy of Macbeth*

[Wikiquote](https://wikiquote.org) has a collection of quotations related to:

*Macbeth*

[Wikimedia Commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org) has media related to:
Macbeth

Performances

- Performances and Photographs from London and Stratford performances of Macbeth 1960 - 2000 - From the Designing Shakespeare resource
- The Shakespeare Video Society edition (Google Video - 2 hours 12 mins)
- Macbeth on Film

Audio Recording

Text of Play

- Macbeth Navigator - searchable, annotated HTML version of Macbeth.
- Classic Literature Library - HTML version of Macbeth.
- Project Gutenberg : Macbeth - ASCII plain-text from Project Gutenberg
- shakespeareNet - Act by Act summary of Macbeth
- No Fear Shakespeare - By Sparknotes - Original Text and a Modern Translation side-by-side
- Macbeth - Searchable and scene-indexed version of Macbeth.

Commentary

- Sparknotes
- CliffsNotes
- Lesson plans for Macbeth at Web English Teacher
- Shakespeare and the Uses of Power by Steven Greenblatt
- Macbeth Text-Based Game - Full text of Macbeth with a Text-Based Game.
- The Complete Works of William Shakespeare - Entire play in basic HTML.
- TheFinalClub.org - Entire play with Commentary that anyone can add to