[Template:About](/wiki/Template:About" \o "Template:About) [Template:Use British English](/wiki/Template:Use_British_English) [Template:Use dmy dates](/wiki/Template:Use_dmy_dates) [Template:Italic title](/wiki/Template:Italic_title) [225px|thumb|A poster for a](/wiki/File:Thomas_Keene_in_Macbeth_1884_Wikipedia_crop.png) [c.](/wiki/Circa) 1884 American production of *Macbeth*, starring Thomas W. Keene. Depicted, anticlockwise from top-left, are: Macbeth and Banquo meet the [witches](/wiki/Witch); just after the murder of [Duncan](/wiki/King_Duncan); Banquo's ghost; Macbeth duels Macduff; and Macbeth.

***Macbeth*** [Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en) (full title ***The Tragedy of Macbeth***) is a [tragedy](/wiki/Shakespearean_tragedy) written by [William Shakespeare](/wiki/William_Shakespeare). Set mainly in Scotland, the play dramatises the damaging physical and psychological effects of political ambition on those who seek power for its own sake. The play is believed to have been written between 1599 and 1606. The earliest account of a performance of what was probably Shakespeare's play is April 1611, when [Simon Forman](/wiki/Simon_Forman) recorded seeing such a play at the [Globe Theatre](/wiki/Globe_Theatre). It was first published in the [Folio of 1623](/wiki/First_Folio), possibly from a [prompt book](/wiki/Prompt_book). It was most likely written during the reign of [James I](/wiki/James_I) (of England), who had already been crowned James VI of Scotland before he succeeded to the English throne as well in 1603. James VI/I was a patron of Shakespeare's acting company, and of all the plays Shakespeare wrote during James's reign, *Macbeth* most clearly reflects the playwright's relationship with the sovereign.

*Macbeth* is Shakespeare's shortest tragedy, and tells the story of a brave Scottish general named [Macbeth](/wiki/Macbeth_(character)) who receives a prophecy from a trio of witches that one day he will become [King of Scotland](/wiki/King_of_Scotland). Consumed by ambition and spurred to action by his wife, Macbeth murders King Duncan and takes the Scottish throne for himself. He is then wracked with guilt and paranoia, and he soon becomes a tyrannical ruler as he is forced to commit more and more murders to protect himself from enmity and suspicion. The bloodbath and consequent civil war swiftly take Macbeth and Lady Macbeth into the realms of madness, and death.

Shakespeare's source for the tragedy is the account of [Macbeth, King of Scotland](/wiki/Macbeth,_King_of_Scotland), [Macduff](/wiki/Macduff_(Macbeth)), and [Duncan](/wiki/Duncan_I_of_Scotland) in [*Holinshed's Chronicles*](/wiki/Holinshed's_Chronicles) (1587), a history of England, Scotland, and Ireland familiar to Shakespeare and his contemporaries, although the events in the play differ extensively from the history of the real Macbeth. In recent scholarship, the events of the tragedy are usually associated more closely with the execution of [Henry Garnet](/wiki/Henry_Garnet) for complicity in the [Gunpowder Plot](/wiki/Gunpowder_Plot) of 1605.[[1]](#cite_note-1) In the backstage world of theatre, some believe that the play is cursed, and will not mention its title aloud, referring to it instead as "[the Scottish play](/wiki/The_Scottish_Play)". Over the course of many centuries, the play has attracted some of the most renowned actors to the roles of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. It has been adapted to film, television, [opera](/wiki/Macbeth_(opera)), novels, comics, and other media.

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## Characters[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

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* [Duncan](/wiki/King_Duncan) – King of [Scotland](/wiki/Scotland)
  + [Malcolm](/wiki/Malcolm_(Macbeth)) – Duncan's elder son
  + [Donalbain](/wiki/Donalbain_(Macbeth)) – Duncan's younger son
* [Macbeth](/wiki/Macbeth_(character)) – a general in the army of King Duncan; originally [Thane](/wiki/Thane_(Scotland)) of [Glamis](/wiki/Glamis), then Thane of [Cawdor](/wiki/Cawdor), and later King of Scotland
* [Lady Macbeth](/wiki/Lady_Macbeth) – Macbeth's wife, and later Queen of Scotland
* [Banquo](/wiki/Banquo) – Macbeth's friend and a general in the army of King Duncan
  + [Fleance](/wiki/Fleance) – Banquo's son
* [Macduff](/wiki/Macduff_(Macbeth)) – Thane of [Fife](/wiki/Fife)
  + [Lady Macduff](/wiki/Lady_Macduff) – Macduff's wife
  + [Macduff's son](/wiki/Macduff's_son)
* Ross, Lennox, Angus, Menteith, Caithness – Scottish Thanes
* [Siward](/wiki/Siward,_Earl_of_Northumbria) – general of the English forces
  + [Young Siward](/wiki/Young_Siward) – Siward's son
* Seyton – Macbeth's armourer
* [Hecate](/wiki/Hecate) – Queen of the witches
* [Three Witches](/wiki/Three_Witches)
* Captain – in the Scottish army
* Three Murderers – employed by Macbeth
* Two Murderers – attack Lady Macduff
* Porter – gatekeeper at Macbeth's home
* Doctor – Lady Macbeth's doctor
* Doctor – at the English court
* Gentlewoman – Lady Macbeth's caretaker
* Lord – opposed to Macbeth
* First Apparition – armed head
* Second Apparition – bloody child
* Third Apparition – crowned child
* Attendants, Messengers, Servants, Soldiers

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## Plot[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

[thumb|Macbeth and Banquo encounter the witches for the first time](/wiki/File:MacbethAndBanquo-Witches.jpg)

### Act I[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

The play opens amidst thunder and lightning, and the Three Witches decide that their next meeting shall be with Macbeth. In the following scene, a wounded sergeant reports to King Duncan of Scotland that his generals[Template:MdashMacbeth](/wiki/Template:Mdash), who is the Thane of Glamis, and Banquo[Template:Mdashhave](/wiki/Template:Mdash) just defeated the allied forces of Norway and Ireland, who were led by the traitorous Macdonald and the Thane of Cawdor. Macbeth, the King's kinsman, is praised for his bravery and fighting prowess.

In the following scene, Macbeth and Banquo discuss the weather and their victory. As they wander onto a heath, the Three Witches enter and greet them with prophecies. Though Banquo challenges them first, they address Macbeth, hailing him as "Thane of Glamis," "Thane of Cawdor," and that he shall "be King hereafter." Macbeth appears to be stunned to silence. When Banquo asks of his own fortunes, the witches respond paradoxically, saying that he will be less than Macbeth, yet happier, less successful, yet more. He will 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](/wiki/Ross_(area)), arrives and informs Macbeth of his newly bestowed title: Thane of Cawdor, as the previous Thane of Cawdor shall be put to death for treason. The first prophecy is thus fulfilled, and Macbeth, previously skeptical, immediately begins to harbour ambitions of becoming king.

King Duncan welcomes and praises Macbeth and Banquo, and declares that he will spend the night at Macbeth's castle at [Inverness](/wiki/Inverness); he also names his son Malcolm as his heir. Macbeth sends a message ahead to his wife, Lady Macbeth, telling her about the witches' prophecies. Lady Macbeth suffers none of her husband's uncertainty and wishes him to murder Duncan in order to obtain kingship. When Macbeth arrives at Inverness, she overrides all of her husband's objections by challenging his manhood and successfully persuades him to kill the king that very night. He and Lady Macbeth plan to get Duncan's two chamberlains drunk so that they will black out; the next morning they will blame the chamberlains for the murder. They will be defenseless as they will remember nothing.

### Act II[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

While Duncan is asleep, Macbeth stabs him, despite his doubts and a number of supernatural portents, including a hallucination of a bloody dagger. He is so shaken that Lady Macbeth has to take charge. In accordance with her plan, she frames Duncan's sleeping servants for the murder by placing bloody daggers on them. Early the next morning, Lennox, a Scottish nobleman, and Macduff, the loyal Thane of [Fife](/wiki/Fife), arrive. A porter opens the gate and Macbeth leads them to the king's chamber, where Macduff discovers Duncan's body. Macbeth murders the guards to prevent them from professing their innocence, but claims he did so in a fit of anger over their misdeeds. Duncan's sons Malcolm and Donalbain flee to England and Ireland, respectively, fearing that whoever killed Duncan desires their demise as well. The rightful heirs' flight makes them suspects and Macbeth assumes the throne as the new [King of Scotland](/wiki/King_of_Scotland) as a kinsman of the dead king. Banquo reveals this to the audience, and while sceptical of the new King Macbeth, he remembers the witches' prophecy about how his own descendants would inherit the throne; this makes him suspicious of Macbeth.

[thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Banquo.jpg)[Théodore Chassériau](/wiki/Théodore_Chassériau) (1819–1856), *Macbeth seeing the Ghost of Banquo,* 1854

### Act III[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

Despite his success, Macbeth, also aware of this part of the prophecy, remains uneasy. Macbeth invites Banquo to a royal [banquet](/wiki/Banquet), where he discovers that Banquo and his young son, Fleance, will be riding out that night. Fearing Banquo's suspicions, Macbeth arranges to have him murdered, so he hires three men to kill them. The assassins succeed in killing Banquo, but Fleance escapes. Macbeth becomes furious: he fears that his power remains insecure as long as an heir of Banquo remains alive. At the banquet, Macbeth invites his lords and Lady Macbeth to a night of drinking and merriment. Banquo's [ghost](/wiki/Ghosts_in_European_culture) enters and sits in Macbeth's place. Macbeth raves fearfully, startling his guests, as the ghost is only visible to himself. The others panic at the sight of Macbeth raging at an empty chair, until a desperate Lady Macbeth tells them that her husband is merely afflicted with a familiar and harmless malady. The ghost departs and returns once more, causing the same riotous anger and fear in Macbeth. This time, Lady Macbeth tells the lords to leave, and they do so.

[thumb|upright|*Macbeth consulting the Vision of the Armed Head* by](/wiki/File:Macbeth_consulting_the_Vision_of_the_Armed_Head.jpg) [Johann Heinrich Füssli](/wiki/Henry_Fuseli)

### Act IV[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

Macbeth, disturbed, visits the three witches once more and asks them to reveal the truth of their prophecies to him. To answer his questions, they summon horrible apparitions, each of which offers predictions and further prophecies to allay Macbeth's fears. First, they conjure an armoured head, which tells him to beware of Macduff (IV.i.72). Second, a bloody child tells him that no one born of a woman shall be able to harm him. Thirdly, a crowned child holding a tree states that Macbeth will be safe until [Great Birnam Wood](/wiki/Birnam,_Perth_and_Kinross) comes to [Dunsinane Hill](/wiki/Dunsinane_Hill). Macbeth is relieved and feels secure because he knows that all men are born of women and forests cannot move. Macbeth also asks if Banquo's sons will ever reign in Scotland: the witches conjure a procession of eight crowned kings, all similar in appearance to Banquo, and the last carrying a mirror that reflects even more kings. Macbeth realises that these are all Banquo's descendants having acquired kingship in numerous countries. After the witches perform a mad dance and leave, Lennox enters and tells Macbeth that Macduff has fled to England. Macbeth orders Macduff's castle be seized, and, most cruelly, sends murderers to slaughter Macduff, as well as Macduff's wife and children. Although Macduff is no longer in the castle, everyone in Macduff's castle is put to death, including [Lady Macduff](/wiki/Lady_Macduff) and [their young son](/wiki/Macduff's_son).

[thumb|left|upright|*Lady Macbeth sleepwalking* by](/wiki/File:Johann_Heinrich_Füssli_030.jpg) [Johann Heinrich Füssli](/wiki/Henry_Fuseli)

### Act V[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

Meanwhile, Lady Macbeth becomes wracked with guilt from the crimes she and her husband have committed. At night, in the king's palace at Dunsinane, a doctor and a gentlewoman discuss Lady Macbeth's strange habit of sleepwalking. Suddenly, Lady Macbeth enters in a trance with a candle in her hand. Bemoaning the murders of Duncan, Lady Macduff, and Banquo, she tries to wash off imaginary bloodstains from her hands, all the while speaking of the terrible things she knows she pressed her husband to do. She leaves, and the doctor and gentlewoman marvel at her descent into madness. Her belief that nothing can wash away the blood on her hands is an ironic reversal of her earlier claim to Macbeth that "[a] little water clears us of this deed" (II.ii.66).

In England, Macduff is informed by Ross that his "castle is surprised; [his] wife and babes / Savagely slaughter'd" (IV.iii.204–5). When this news of his family's execution reaches him, Macduff is stricken with grief and vows revenge. Prince Malcolm, Duncan's son, has succeeded in raising an army in England, and Macduff joins him as he rides to Scotland to challenge Macbeth's forces. The invasion has the support of the Scottish nobles, who are appalled and frightened by Macbeth's tyrannical and murderous behaviour. Malcolm leads an army, along with Macduff and Englishmen [Siward](/wiki/Sigurd_the_Dane) (the Elder), the [Earl of Northumberland](/wiki/Northumberland), against Dunsinane Castle. While encamped in Birnam Wood, the soldiers are ordered to cut down and carry tree limbs to camouflage their numbers.

Before Macbeth's opponents arrive, he receives news that Lady Macbeth has killed herself, causing him to sink into a deep and pessimistic despair and deliver his "[Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow](/wiki/Tomorrow,_and_tomorrow,_and_tomorrow)" [soliloquy](/wiki/Soliloquy) (V.v.17–28). Though he reflects on the brevity and meaninglessness of life, he nevertheless awaits the English and fortifies Dunsinane. He is certain that the witches' prophecies guarantee his invincibility, but is struck with fear when he learns that the English army is advancing on Dunsinane shielded with boughs cut from Birnam Wood, in apparent fulfillment of one of the prophecies.

A battle culminates in Macduff's confrontation with Macbeth, who kills Young Siward in combat. The English forces overwhelm his army and castle. 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" (V.8.15–16), (*i.e.,* born by [Caesarean section](/wiki/Caesarean_section)) and is not "of woman born" (an example of a [literary quibble](/wiki/Quibble_(plot_device))), fulfilling the second prophecy. Macbeth realises too late that he has misinterpreted the witches' words. Though he realises that he is doomed, he continues to fight. Macduff kills and beheads him, thus fulfilling the remaining prophecy.

Macduff carries Macbeth's head onstage and Malcolm discusses how order has been restored. His last reference to Lady Macbeth, however, reveals "'tis thought, by self and violent hands / Took off her life" (V.ix.71–72), but the method of her suicide is undisclosed. Malcolm, now the King of Scotland, declares his benevolent intentions for the country and invites all to see him crowned at [Scone](/wiki/Scone,_Scotland).

Although Fleance, and not Malcolm, is placed on the throne, the witches' prophecy concerning Banquo ("Thou shalt get kings") was known to the audience of Shakespeare's time to be true: James VI of Scotland (later also [James I of England](/wiki/James_VI_and_I)) was supposedly a descendant of Banquo.[[2]](#cite_note-2)

## Sources[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]

[thumb|left|The first edition of](/wiki/File:1577_printing_of_Holinshed's_Chronicles.jpg) [Raphael Holinshed's](/wiki/Raphael_Holinshed) *Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande*, printed in 1577. [thumb|right|"Macbeth and Banquo encountering the witches" from](/wiki/File:Macbeth_and_Banquo_encountering_the_witches_-_Holinshed_Chronicles.gif) [Holinshed's Chronicles](/wiki/Holinshed's_Chronicles) (1577)[[3]](#cite_note-3)

*Macbeth* has been compared to Shakespeare's [*Antony and Cleopatra*](/wiki/Antony_and_Cleopatra)*.* Both Antony and Macbeth as characters seek a new world, even at the cost of the old one. Both are fighting for a throne and have a 'nemesis' to face to achieve that throne. For Antony, the nemesis is Octavius; for Macbeth, it is Banquo. At one point Macbeth even compares himself to Antony, saying "under Banquo / My Genius is rebuk'd, as it is said / Mark Antony's was by Caesar." Lastly, both plays contain powerful and manipulative female figures: Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth.[[4]](#cite_note-4) Shakespeare borrowed the story from several tales in [*Holinshed's Chronicles*](/wiki/Holinshed's_Chronicles), a popular history of the British Isles well known to Shakespeare and his contemporaries. In *Chronicles*, a man named Donwald finds several of his family put to death by his king, King Duff, for dealing with witches. After being pressured by his wife, he and four of his servants kill the King in his own house. In *Chronicles*, Macbeth is portrayed as struggling to support the kingdom in the face of King Duncan's ineptitude. He and Banquo meet the three witches, who make exactly the same prophecies as in Shakespeare's version. Macbeth and Banquo then together plot the murder of Duncan, at Lady Macbeth's urging. Macbeth has a long, ten-year reign before eventually being overthrown by Macduff and Malcolm. The parallels between the two versions are clear. However, some scholars think that [George Buchanan's](/wiki/George_Buchanan) *Rerum Scoticarum Historia* matches Shakespeare's version more closely. Buchanan's work was available in Latin in Shakespeare's day.[[5]](#cite_note-5) No other version of the story has Macbeth kill the king in Macbeth's own castle. Scholars have seen this change of Shakespeare's as adding to the darkness of Macbeth's crime as the worst violation of hospitality. Versions of the story that were common at the time had Duncan being killed in an ambush at [Inverness](/wiki/Inverness), not in a castle. Shakespeare conflated the story of Donwald and King Duff in what was a significant change to the story.[[6]](#cite_note-6) Shakespeare made another important change. In *Chronicles*, Banquo is an accomplice in Macbeth's murder of King Duncan, and plays an important part in ensuring that Macbeth, not Malcolm, takes the throne in the coup that follows.<ref name = note/> In Shakespeare's day, Banquo was thought to be an ancestor of the [Stuart](/wiki/House_of_Stuart) King James I.[[7]](#cite_note-7) (In the 19th century it was established that Banquo is an unhistorical character, the Stuarts are actually descended from a Breton family which migrated to Scotland slightly later than Macbeth's time.) The Banquo portrayed in earlier sources is significantly different from the Banquo created by Shakespeare. Critics have proposed several reasons for this change. First, to portray the king's ancestor as a murderer would have been risky. Other authors of the time who wrote about Banquo, such as [Jean de Schelandre](/wiki/Jean_de_Schelandre) in his *Stuartide*, also changed history by portraying Banquo as a noble man, not a murderer, probably for the same reasons.[[8]](#cite_note-8) Second, Shakespeare may have altered Banquo's character simply because there was no dramatic need for another accomplice to the murder; there was, however, a need to give a dramatic contrast to Macbeth—a role which many scholars argue is filled by Banquo.<ref name = note>[Template:Cite journal](/wiki/Template:Cite_journal)</ref>

Other scholars maintain that a strong argument can be made for associating the tragedy with the [Gunpowder Plot](/wiki/Gunpowder_Plot) of 1605.[[1]](#cite_note-1) As presented by Harold Bloom in 2008: "[S]cholars cite the existence of several topical references in *Macbeth* to the events of that year, namely the execution of the Rev. Henry Garnett for his alleged complicity in the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, as referenced in the porter's scene."[[1]](#cite_note-1)

## Date and text[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]

*Macbeth* cannot be dated precisely but it is usually dated as contemporaneous to the other canonical tragedies (*King Lear*, *Hamlet*, and *Othello*).[[9]](#cite_note-9) Some scholars have placed the original writing of the play as early as 1599.[[1]](#cite_note-1) As the play may celebrate King James' ancestors and the [Stuart](/wiki/House_of_Stuart) accession to the throne in 1603 (James believed himself to be descended from [Banquo](/wiki/Banquo)),[[10]](#cite_note-10) some scholars believe 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. Some critics think the play was written in 1606 in the aftermath of the [Gunpowder Plot](/wiki/Gunpowder_Plot) because of possible internal allusions to the 1605 plot and its ensuing trials.[[11]](#cite_note-11) In fact, there are a great deal of allusions and possible pieces of evidence alluding to the Plot, and, for this reason, a great number of critics agree that "Macbeth" was written in the year 1606.[[12]](#cite_note-12)[[13]](#cite_note-13)[[14]](#cite_note-14)[[15]](#cite_note-15) Lady Macbeth's instructions to her husband, "Look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under't" (1.5.74–5), may be an allusion to a medal that was struck in 1605 to commemorate King James' escape that depicted a serpent hiding among lilies and roses .[[16]](#cite_note-16) Particularly, the Porter's speech (2.3.1–21) in which he welcomes an "equivocator", a farmer, and a tailor to hell (2.3.8–13), has been argued to be an allusion to the 28 March 1606 trial and execution on 3 May 1606 of the Jesuit [Henry Garnet](/wiki/Henry_Garnet), who used the alias "Farmer", with "equivocator" referring to Garnet's defence of ["equivocation"](/wiki/Doctrine_of_mental_reservation).[[17]](#cite_note-17)[[18]](#cite_note-18) The porter says that the equivocator "committed treason enough for God's sake" (2.3.9–10), which specifically connects equivocation and treason and ties it to the Jesuit belief that equivocation was only lawful when used "for God's sake", strengthening the allusion to Garnet. The porter goes on to say that the equivocator "yet could not equivocate to heaven" (2.3.10–11), echoing grim jokes that were current on the eve of Garnet's execution: i.e. that Garnet would be "hanged without equivocation" and at his execution he was asked "not to equivocate with his last breath."[[19]](#cite_note-19) The "English tailor" the porter admits to hell (2.3.13), has been seen as an allusion to Hugh Griffin, a tailor who was questioned by the [Archbishop of Canterbury](/wiki/Archbishop_of_Canterbury) on 27 November and 3 December 1607 for the part he played in Garnet's "miraculous straw", an infamous head of straw that was stained with Garnet's blood that had congealed into a form resembling Garnet's portrait, which was hailed by Catholics as a miracle. The tailor Griffin became notorious and the subject of verses published with his portrait on the title page.[[20]](#cite_note-20) When James became king of England, a feeling of uncertainty settled over the nation. James was a Scottish king and the son of Mary Queen of Scots, a staunch Catholic and English traitor. In the words of critic Jonathan Gil Harris, "Macbeth was a play for a post-Elizabethan England facing up to what it might mean to have a Scottish king. England seems comparatively benign while its northern neighbour is mired in a bloody, monarch-killing past...Macbeth may have been set in medieval Scotland, but it was filled with material of interest to England and England's ruler."[[21]](#cite_note-21) Critics argue that the content of the play is clearly a message to James, the new Scottish King of England. Garry Wills provides further evidence that "Macbeth" is a Gunpowder Play (a type of play that emerged immediately following the events of the Gunpowder Plot). He points out that every Gunpowder Play contains "a necromancy scene, regicide attempted or completed, references to equivocation, scenes that test loyalty by use of deceptive language, and a character who sees through plots—along with a vocabulary similar to the Plot in its immediate aftermath (words like *train, blow, vault*) and an ironic recoil of the Plot upon the Plotters (who fall into the pit they dug)."[[12]](#cite_note-12) The play utilizes a few key words that the audience at the time would recognize as allusions to the Plot. In one sermon in 1605, Lancelot Andrewes stated, regarding the failure of the Plotters on God's day, "Be they fair or foul, glad or sad (as the poet calleth Him) the great Diespiter, 'the Father of days' hath made them both." Shakespeare begins the play by using the words "fair" and "foul" in the first speeches of the witches and Macbeth. In the words of Jonathan Gil Harris, the play expresses the "horror unleashed by a supposedly loyal subject who seeks to kill a king and the treasonous role of equivocation. The play even echoes certain keywords from the scandal-the 'vault' beneath the House of Parliament in which Guy Fawkes stored thirty kegs of gunpowder and the 'blow' about which one of the conspirators had secretly warned a relative who planned to attend the House of Parliament on 5 November...Even though the Plot is never alluded to directly, its presence is everywhere in the play, like a pervasive odor."[[22]](#cite_note-22) Further, the play could not have been written after this time, due to references to it seen in other works, notably Francis Beaumont's *Knight of the Burning Pestle*, which was written in 1607-1608. Lines 21-30 are a clear allusion to the scene in which Banquo's ghost visits and haunts Macbeth at the dinner table:

<poem>In any place, but I will visit thee With ghastly looks, and put into thy mind The great offences which thou didst to me: When thou art at thy table with thy friends, Merry in heart, and filled with swelling wine, I'll come in midst of all thy pride and mirth, Invisible to all men but thyself, And whisper such a sad tale in thine ear Shall make thee let the cup fall from thy hand, And stand as mute and pale as death itself.[[23]](#cite_note-23)</poem>

[thumb|left|The first page of *Macbeth*, printed in the Second Folio of 1632Scholars](/wiki/File:Second_Folio_Title_Page_of_Macbeth.jpg) also cite an entertainment seen by King James at [Oxford](/wiki/Oxford) in the summer of 1605 that featured three "[sibyls](/wiki/Sibyl)" like the weird sisters; Kermode surmises that Shakespeare could have heard about this and alluded to it with the weird sisters.[[24]](#cite_note-24) However, A. R. Braunmuller in the New Cambridge edition finds the 1605–6 arguments inconclusive, and argues only for an earliest date of 1603.[[25]](#cite_note-25) 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."[[24]](#cite_note-24) In addition, one suggested allusion supporting a date in late 1606 is the first witch's dialogue about a sailor's wife: "'Aroint thee, witch!' the rump-fed ronyon cries./Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master o' the *Tiger*" (1.6–7). This has been thought to allude to the *Tiger*, a ship that returned to England 27 June 1606 after a disastrous voyage in which many of the crew were killed by pirates. A few lines later the witch speaks of the sailor, "He shall live a man forbid:/Weary se'nnights nine times nine" (1.21–2). The real ship was at sea 567 days, the product of 7x9x9, which has been taken as a confirmation of the allusion, which if correct, confirms that the witch scenes were either written or amended later than July 1606.[[26]](#cite_note-26) *Macbeth* was first printed in the [First Folio](/wiki/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](/wiki/Thomas_Middleton) play [*The Witch*](/wiki/The_Witch_(play)) (1615); Middleton is conjectured to have inserted an extra scene involving [the witches](/wiki/Weird_Sisters) and [Hecate](/wiki/Hecate#Hecate_in_literature), 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.[[27]](#cite_note-27) On this basis, many scholars reject all three of the interludes with the goddess [Hecate](/wiki/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.

## Pronunciations[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=10)]

The 'reconstructive movement' was concerned with the recreation of Elizabethan acting conditions, and would eventually lead to the creation of [Shakespeare's Globe](/wiki/Shakespeare's_Globe) and similar replicas. One of the movement's offshoots was in the reconstruction of Elizabethan pronunciation: for example [Bernard Miles'](/wiki/Bernard_Miles) 1951 *Macbeth*, for which linguists from [University College London](/wiki/University_College_London) were employed to create a transcript of the play in Elizabethan English, then an audio recording of that transcription, from which the actors, in turn, learned their lines.[[28]](#cite_note-28) The pronunciation of many words evolves over time. In Shakespeare's day, for example, "heath" was pronounced as "heth" ("or a slightly elongated 'e' as in the modern 'get'"[[29]](#cite_note-29)), so it rhymed with "Macbeth" in the sentences by the Witches at the beginning of the play:[[30]](#cite_note-30)

**Second Witch**: Upon the heath.  
**Third Witch**: There to meet with Macbeth.

A scholar of antique pronunciation writes, "*Heath* would have made a close (if not exact) rhyme with the "-eth" of *Macbeth*, which was pronounced with a short 'i' as in 'it'."[[29]](#cite_note-29) In the theatre programme notes, "much was made of how OP [Original Pronunciation] performance reintroduces lost rhymes such as the final couplet: 'So thanks to all at once, and each to one, / Whom we invite to see us crowned at Scone'" (5.11.40-1) where 'one' sounds like 'own'. The Witches, the play's great purveyors of rhyme, benefited most in this regard. So, 'babe' (4.1.30) sounded like 'bab' and rhymed with 'drab' (4.1.31)..."[[30]](#cite_note-30) Eoin Price wrote, "I found the OP rendition of Banquo's brilliant question 'Or have we eaten on the insane root / That takes the *raison* prisoner?' unduly amusing"; and he adds,

:... 'fear' had two pronunciations: the standard modern pronunciation being one, and 'fair' being the other. Mostly, the actors seemed to pronounce it in a way which accords with the modern standard, but during one speech, Macbeth said 'fair'. This seems especially significant in a play determined to complicate the relationship between 'fair' and 'foul'. I wonder, then, if the punning could be extended throughout the production. Would Banquo's lines, 'Good sir, why do you start and seem to fear / Things that do sound so fair?' (1.3.49-50) be fascinatingly illuminated, or merely muddled, by this punning? Perhaps this is a possibility the cast already experimented with and chose to discard, but, for sure, an awareness of the possibility of a 'fair/fear' pun can have interesting ramifications for the play.

## Themes and motifs[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=11)]

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*Macbeth* is an anomaly among Shakespeare's tragedies in certain critical ways. It is short: more than a thousand lines shorter than [*Othello*](/wiki/Othello) and [*King Lear*](/wiki/King_Lear), and only slightly more than half as long as [*Hamlet*](/wiki/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; and the oddness of Macbeth himself compared with other Shakespearean tragic heroes.[Template:Clarify](/wiki/Template:Clarify)

### As a tragedy of character[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=12)]

At least since the days of [Alexander Pope](/wiki/Alexander_Pope) and [Samuel Johnson](/wiki/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, and, according to Caroline Spurgeon, is supported by Shakespeare himself, who apparently intended to degrade his hero by vesting him with clothes unsuited to him and to make Macbeth look ridiculous by several [nimisms](/wiki/Nimism) he applies: His garments seem either too big or too small for him – as his ambition is too big and his character too small for his new and unrightful role as king. When he feels as if "dressed in borrowed robes", after his new title as Thane of Cawdor, prophesied by the witches, has been confirmed by Ross (I, 3, ll. 108–109), Banquo comments: "New honours come upon him, / Like our strange garments, cleave not to their mould, / But with the aid of use" (I, 3, ll. 145–146). And, at the end, when the tyrant is at bay at Dunsinane, Caithness sees him as a man trying in vain to fasten a large garment on him with too small a belt: "He cannot buckle his distemper'd cause / Within the belt of rule" (V, 2, ll. 14–15), while Angus, in a similar nimism, sums up what everybody thinks ever since Macbeth's accession to power: "now does he feel his title / Hang loose about him, like a giant's robe / upon a dwarfish thief" (V, 2, ll. 18–20).[[31]](#cite_note-31) Like [Richard III](/wiki/Richard_III_of_England), 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](/wiki/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](/wiki/John_Dover_Wilson) hypothesised that Shakespeare's original text had an extra scene or scenes where 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 in so far that, should I wade no more,/Returning were as tedious as go o'er."

While working on Russian translations of Shakespeare's works, [Boris Pasternak](/wiki/Boris_Pasternak) compared Macbeth to [Raskolnikov](/wiki/Raskolnikov), the protagonist of [*Crime and Punishment*](/wiki/Crime_and_Punishment) by [Fyodor Dostoevsky](/wiki/Fyodor_Dostoevsky). Pasternak argues that "neither Macbeth or Raskolnikov is a born criminal or a villain by nature. They are turned into criminals by faulty rationalizations, by deductions from false premises." He goes on to argue that Lady Macbeth is "feminine ... one of those active, insistent wives" who becomes her husband's "executive, more resolute and consistent than he is himself." According to Pasternak, she is only helping Macbeth carry out his own wishes, to her own detriment.[[32]](#cite_note-32)

### As a tragedy of moral order[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=13)]

The disastrous consequences of Macbeth's ambition are not limited to him. 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](/wiki/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](/wiki/Divine_right_of_kings), although this hypothesis, outlined at greatest length by Henry N. Paul, is not universally accepted. As in [*Julius Caesar*](/wiki/Julius_Caesar_(play)), though, perturbations in the political sphere are echoed and even amplified by events in the material world. Among the most often 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 significant in the play's treatment of moral order. Glynne Wickham connects the play, through the Porter, to a [mystery play](/wiki/Mystery_play) on the [harrowing of hell](/wiki/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](/wiki/Herod_the_Great) 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 thorough return to normative gender values. Some [feminist](/wiki/Feminist_literary_criticism) [psychoanalytic](/wiki/Psychoanalytic_literary_criticism) 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 cycles 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.

### As a poetic tragedy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]

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](/wiki/Andrew_Cecil_Bradley), is clear as early as the time of [Mary Cowden Clarke](/wiki/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.

### Witchcraft and evil[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=15)]

[thumb|*Macbeth and Banquo with the Witches* by](/wiki/File:Macbeth_and_Banquo_with_the_witches_JHF.jpg) [Henry Fuseli](/wiki/Henry_Fuseli)

In the play, the Three Witches represent darkness, chaos, and conflict, while their role is as agents and witnesses.[[33]](#cite_note-33) Their presence communicates treason and impending doom. During Shakespeare's day, witches were seen as worse than rebels, "the most notorious traytor and rebell that can be."[[34]](#cite_note-34) They were not only political traitors, but spiritual traitors as well. Much of the confusion that springs from them comes from their ability to straddle the play's borders between reality and the supernatural. They are so deeply entrenched in both worlds that it is unclear whether they control fate, or whether they are merely its agents. They defy logic, not being subject to the rules of the real world.[[35]](#cite_note-35) The witches' lines in the first act: "Fair is foul, and foul is fair: Hover through the fog and filthy air" are often said to set the tone for the rest of the play by establishing a sense of confusion. Indeed, the play is filled with situations where evil is depicted as good, while good is rendered evil. The line "Double, double toil and trouble," communicates the witches' intent clearly: they seek only trouble for the mortals around them.<ref name = tempt/> The witches' spells are remarkably similar to the spells of the witch Medusa in Anthony Munday's play [*Fidele and Fortunio*](/wiki/Fidele_and_Fortunio) published in 1584, and Shakespeare may have been influenced by these.

While the witches do not tell Macbeth directly to kill King Duncan, they use a subtle form of temptation when they tell Macbeth that he is destined to be king. By placing this thought in his mind, they effectively guide him on the path to his own destruction. This follows the pattern of temptation used at the time of Shakespeare. First, they argued, a thought is put in a man's mind, then the person may either indulge in the thought or reject it. Macbeth indulges in it, while Banquo rejects.<ref name = tempt>[Template:Cite journal](/wiki/Template:Cite_journal)</ref>

According to J. A. Bryant Jr., Macbeth also makes use of Biblical parallels, notably between King Duncan's murder and the murder of [Christ](/wiki/Christ):

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## Superstition and "The Scottish Play"[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=16)]

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While many today would say that any misfortune surrounding a production is mere coincidence, actors and other theatre people often consider it bad luck to mention *Macbeth* by name while inside a theatre, and sometimes refer to it indirectly, for example as "[the Scottish play](/wiki/The_Scottish_Play)",[[36]](#cite_note-36) or "MacBee", or when referring to the character and not the play, "Mr. and Mrs. M", or "The Scottish King".

This is because Shakespeare (or the play's revisers) are said to have used the spells of real witches in his text, purportedly angering the witches and causing them to curse the play.[[37]](#cite_note-37) 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. There are stories of accidents, misfortunes and even deaths taking place during runs of *Macbeth*.[[36]](#cite_note-36) According to the actor Sir [Donald Sinden](/wiki/Donald_Sinden), in his [Sky Arts](/wiki/Sky_Arts) TV series [*Great West End Theatres*](/wiki/Great_West_End_Theatres),

contrary to popular myth, Shakespeare's tragedy Macbeth is not the unluckiest play as superstition likes to portray it. Exactly the opposite! The origin of the unfortunate moniker dates back to repertory theatre days when each town and village had at least one theatre to entertain the public. If a play was not doing well, it would invariably get 'pulled' and replaced with a sure-fire audience pleaser – Macbeth guaranteed full-houses. So when the weekly theatre newspaper, [*The Stage*](/wiki/The_Stage) was published, listing what was on in each theatre in the country, it was instantly noticed what shows had NOT worked the previous week, as they had been replaced by a definite crowd-pleaser. More actors have died during performances of Hamlet than in the "Scottish play" as the profession still calls it. It is forbidden to quote from it backstage as this could cause the current play to collapse and have to be replaced, causing possible unemployment.[[38]](#cite_note-38)

One particular incident that lent itself to the superstition was the [Astor Place Riot](/wiki/Astor_Place_Riot). The cause of the riots was based on a conflict over two performances of *Macbeth,* and is usually ascribed to the curse.[[39]](#cite_note-39) Several methods exist to dispel the curse, depending on the actor. One, attributed to [Michael York](/wiki/Michael_York_(actor)), 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.[[40]](#cite_note-40) A related practice is to spin around three times as fast as possible on the spot, sometimes accompanied by spitting over their shoulder, and uttering an obscenity. Another popular "ritual" is to leave the room, knock three times, be invited in, and then quote a line from [*Hamlet*](/wiki/Hamlet). Yet another is to recite lines from [*The Merchant of Venice*](/wiki/The_Merchant_of_Venice), thought to be a lucky play.[[41]](#cite_note-41) Other sources cite [*A Midsummer Night's Dream*](/wiki/A_Midsummer_Night's_Dream) as being a similarly lucky play.

## Legacy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=17)]

### Performance history[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=18)]

#### Shakespeare's day to the Interregnum[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=19)]

The first actor to play Macbeth may have been [Richard Burbage](/wiki/Richard_Burbage), chief tragedian of Shakespeare's company, The [King's Men](/wiki/King's_Men_(playing_company)). The play required an effigy of his head, for its closing scene.[[42]](#cite_note-42) The only eyewitness account of *Macbeth* in Shakespeare's lifetime was recorded by [Simon Forman](/wiki/Simon_Forman), who saw a performance at [the Globe](/wiki/Globe_Theatre) in 1610 or 1611.[[43]](#cite_note-43) Scholars have struggled to explain the differences between his account and the play as it appears in the Folio; for example, the following does not accord with anything in the Folio text:

And when MackBeth had murdred the kinge, the blod on his hands could not be washed of by Any means, nor from his wiues handes, which handled the bloddi daggers in hiding them, By which means they became moch amazed and Affronted.[[44]](#cite_note-44)

Conversely, he makes no mention of the apparition scene, or of Hecate, of the man not of woman born, or of Birnam Wood.[[45]](#cite_note-45) As mentioned above, the Folio text is thought to be a revision of the original play, probably adapted by [Thomas Middleton](/wiki/Thomas_Middleton) (and unquestionably using Middleton's material), and is very short by Shakespeare's standards, suggesting abridgement. This has led to the theory that the play as we know it from the Folio was an adaptation for indoor performance at the [Blackfriars Theatre](/wiki/Blackfriars_Theatre) (which was operated by the King's Men from 1608) – and even speculation that it represents a specific performance before King James.[[46]](#cite_note-46) The play contains more musical [cues](/wiki/Cue_(theatrical)) than any other play in the canon as well as a significant use of [sound effects](/wiki/Sound_effect).[[47]](#cite_note-47)

#### Restoration and eighteenth century[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=20)]

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All theatres were closed down by the [Puritan](/wiki/Puritan) government on 6 September 1642. Upon the [restoration](/wiki/English_Restoration) of the monarchy in 1660, two [patent companies](/wiki/Patent_theatre) (the [King's Company](/wiki/King's_Company) and the [Duke's Company](/wiki/Duke's_Company)) were established, and the existing theatrical repertoire divided between them.[[48]](#cite_note-48) [Sir William Davenant](/wiki/William_Davenant), founder of the Duke's Company, adapted Shakespeare's play to the tastes of the new era, and his version would dominate on stage for around eighty years. Among the changes he made were the expansion of the role of the witches, introducing new songs, dances and 'flying', and the expansion of the role of Lady Macduff as a foil to Lady Macbeth.[[49]](#cite_note-49) There were, however, performances outside the patent companies: among the evasions of the Duke's Company's monopoly was a puppet version of *Macbeth*.[[50]](#cite_note-50) *Macbeth* was a favourite of the seventeenth-century diarist [Samuel Pepys](/wiki/Samuel_Pepys), who saw the play on 5 November 1664 ("admirably acted"), 28 December 1666 ("most excellently acted"), ten days later on 7 January 1667 ("though I saw it lately, yet [it] appears a most excellent play in all respects"), on 19 April 1667 ("one of the best plays for a stage ... that ever I saw"), again on 16 October 1667 ("was vexed to see Young, who is but a bad actor at best, act Macbeth in the room of [Betterton](/wiki/Thomas_Betterton), who, poor man! is sick"), and again three weeks later on 6 November 1667 ("[at] *Macbeth*, which we still like mightily"), yet again on 12 August 1668 ("saw *Macbeth*, to our great content"), and finally on 21 December 1668, on which date the [king](/wiki/Charles_II_of_England) and court were also present in the audience.[[51]](#cite_note-51) The first professional performances of *Macbeth* in North America were probably those of [The Hallam Company](/wiki/Old_American_Company).[[52]](#cite_note-52) In 1744, [David Garrick](/wiki/David_Garrick) revived the play, abandoning Davenant's version and instead advertising it "as written by Shakespeare". In fact this claim was largely false: he retained much of Davenant's more popular business for the witches, and himself wrote a lengthy death speech for Macbeth. And he cut more than 10% of Shakespeare's play, including the drunken porter, the murder of Lady Macduff's son, and Malcolm's testing of Macduff.[[53]](#cite_note-53) [Hannah Pritchard](/wiki/Hannah_Pritchard) was his greatest stage partner, having her premiere as his Lady Macbeth in 1747. He would later drop the play from his repertoire upon her retirement from the stage.[[54]](#cite_note-54) Mrs. Pritchard was the first actress to achieve acclaim in the role of Lady Macbeth – at least partly due to the removal of Davenant's material, which made irrelevant moral contrasts with Lady Macduff.[[55]](#cite_note-55) Garrick's portrayal focused on the inner life of the character, endowing him with an innocence vacillating between good and evil, and betrayed by outside influences. He portrayed a man capable of observing himself, as if a part of him remained untouched by what he had done, the play moulding him into a man of sensibility, rather than him descending into a tyrant.[[56]](#cite_note-56) [John Philip Kemble](/wiki/John_Philip_Kemble) first played Macbeth in 1778.[[57]](#cite_note-57) Although usually regarded as the antithesis of Garrick, Kemble nevertheless refined aspects of Garrick's portrayal into his own.[[58]](#cite_note-58) However it was the "towering and majestic" [Sarah Siddons](/wiki/Sarah_Siddons) (Kemble's sister) who became a legend in the role of Lady Macbeth.[[59]](#cite_note-59) In contrast to Hannah Pritchard's savage, demonic portrayal, Siddons' Lady Macbeth, while terrifying, was nevertheless – in the scenes in which she expresses her regret and remorse – tenderly human.[[60]](#cite_note-60) And in portraying her actions as done out of love for her husband, Siddons deflected from him some of the moral responsibility for the play's carnage.[[57]](#cite_note-57) Audiences seem to have found the sleepwalking scene particularly mesmerising: [Hazlitt](/wiki/William_Hazlitt) said of it that "all her gestures were involuntary and mechanical ... She glided on and off the stage almost like an apparition."[[61]](#cite_note-61) In 1794, Kemble dispensed with the ghost of Banquo altogether, allowing the audience to see Macbeth's reaction as his wife and guests see it, and relying upon the fact that the play was so well known that his audience would already be aware that a ghost enters at that point.[[62]](#cite_note-62) [Ferdinand Fleck](/wiki/Ferdinand_Fleck), notable as the first German actor to present Shakespeare's tragic roles in their fullness, played Macbeth at the Berlin National Theatre from 1787. Unlike his English counterparts, he portrayed the character as achieving his stature after the murder of Duncan, growing in presence and confidence: thereby enabling stark contrasts, such as in the banquet scene, which he ended babbling like a child.[[63]](#cite_note-63)

#### Nineteenth century[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=21)]

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Performances outside the patent theatres were instrumental in bringing the monopoly to an end. [Robert Elliston](/wiki/Robert_William_Elliston), for example, produced a popular adaptation of *Macbeth* in 1809 at the [Royal Circus](/wiki/Surrey_Theatre) described in its publicity as "this matchless piece of pantomimic and choral performance", which circumvented the illegality of speaking Shakespeare's words through mimed action, singing, and doggerel verse written by J. C. Cross.[[64]](#cite_note-64) [thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Charles_Kean_as_Macbeth_1858.jpg)[Ellen Kean](/wiki/Ellen_Kean) and [Charles Kean](/wiki/Charles_Kean) as the Macbeths, in historically accurate costumes

In 1809, in an unsuccessful attempt to take [Covent Garden](/wiki/Royal_Opera_House) upmarket, [Kemble](/wiki/John_Philip_Kemble) installed private boxes, increasing admission prices to pay for the improvements. The inaugural run at the newly renovated theatre was *Macbeth*, which was disrupted for over two months with cries of "Old prices!" and "No private boxes!" until Kemble capitulated to the protestors' demands.[[65]](#cite_note-65) [Edmund Kean](/wiki/Edmund_Kean) at [Drury Lane](/wiki/Theatre_Royal,_Drury_Lane) gave a psychological portrayal of the central character, with a common touch, but was ultimately unsuccessful in the role. However he did pave the way for the most acclaimed performance of the nineteenth century, that of [William Charles Macready](/wiki/William_Macready).[[66]](#cite_note-66) Macready played the role over a 30-year period, firstly at Covent Garden in 1820 and finally in his retirement performance. Although his playing evolved over the years, it was noted throughout for the tension between the idealistic aspects and the weaker, venal aspects of Macbeth's character.[[67]](#cite_note-67) His staging was full of spectacle, including several elaborate royal processions.[[67]](#cite_note-67) [thumb|A print of](/wiki/File:Charles_Macready_as_Macbeth.jpg) [William Charles Macready](/wiki/William_Charles_Macready) playing Macbeth, from a mid-19th century performance In 1843 the [Theatres Regulation Act](/wiki/Theatres_Act_1843) finally brought the patent companies' monopoly to an end.[[68]](#cite_note-68) From that time until the end of the [Victorian era](/wiki/Victorian_era), London theatre was dominated by the [actor-managers](/wiki/Actor-manager), and the style of presentation was "pictorial" – [proscenium](/wiki/Proscenium) stages filled with spectacular stage-pictures, often featuring complex scenery, large casts in elaborate costumes, and frequent use of [tableaux vivant](/wiki/Tableau_vivant).[[69]](#cite_note-69) [Charles Kean](/wiki/Charles_Kean) (son of Edmund), at London's [Princess's Theatre](/wiki/Princess's_Theatre,_London) from 1850 to 1859, took an antiquarian view of Shakespeare performance, setting his *Macbeth* in a historically accurate eleventh-century Scotland.[[70]](#cite_note-70) His leading lady, [Ellen Tree](/wiki/Ellen_Kean), created a sense of the character's inner life: [*The Times*](/wiki/The_Times)[Template:'](/wiki/Template:') critic saying "The countenance which she assumed ... when luring on Macbeth in his course of crime, was actually appalling in intensity, as if it denoted a hunger after guilt."[[71]](#cite_note-71) At the same time, special effects were becoming popular: for example in [Samuel Phelps'](/wiki/Samuel_Phelps) *Macbeth* the witches performed behind green [gauze](/wiki/Gauze), enabling them to appear and disappear using stage lighting.[[72]](#cite_note-72) In 1849, rival performances of the play sparked the [Astor Place Riot](/wiki/Astor_Place_Riot) in [Manhattan](/wiki/Manhattan). The popular American actor [Edwin Forrest](/wiki/Edwin_Forrest), whose Macbeth was said to be like "the ferocious chief of a barbarous tribe"[[73]](#cite_note-73) played the central role at the Broadway Theatre to popular acclaim, while the "cerebral and patrician"[[65]](#cite_note-65) English actor [Macready](/wiki/William_Macready), playing the same role at the [Astor Place Opera House](/wiki/Astor_Opera_House), suffered constant heckling. The existing enmity between the two men (Forrest had openly hissed Macready at a recent performance of [*Hamlet*](/wiki/Hamlet) in Britain) was taken up by Forrest's supporters – formed from the working class and lower middle class and anti-British agitators, keen to attack the upper-class pro-British patrons of the Opera House and the colonially-minded Macready. Nevertheless, Macready performed the role again three days later to a packed house while an angry mob gathered outside. The militia tasked with controlling the situation fired into the mob. In total, 31 rioters were killed and over 100 injured.[[74]](#cite_note-74) [thumb|left|Photograph of](/wiki/File:Ellen_Terry_plays_Lady_Macbeth.jpg) [Ellen Terry](/wiki/Ellen_Terry) as Lady Macbeth, an 1888 production [Charlotte Cushman](/wiki/Charlotte_Cushman) is unique among nineteenth century interpreters of Shakespeare in achieving stardom in roles of both genders. Her New York debut was as Lady Macbeth in 1836, and she would later be admired in London in the same role in the mid-1840s.[[75]](#cite_note-75) [Helen Faucit](/wiki/Helena_Faucit) was considered the embodiment of early-Victorian notions of femininity. But for this reason she largely failed when she eventually played Lady Macbeth in 1864: her serious attempt to embody the coarser aspects of Lady Macbeth's character jarred harshly with her public image.[[76]](#cite_note-76) [Adelaide Ristori](/wiki/Adelaide_Ristori), the great Italian actress, brought her Lady Macbeth to London in 1863 in Italian, and again in 1873 in an English translation cut in such a way as to be, in effect, Lady Macbeth's tragedy.[[77]](#cite_note-77) [Henry Irving](/wiki/Henry_Irving) was the most successful of the late-Victorian actor-managers, but his *Macbeth* failed to curry favour with audiences. His desire for psychological credibility reduced certain aspects of the role: He described Macbeth as a brave soldier but a moral coward, and played him untroubled by conscience – clearly already contemplating the murder of Duncan before his encounter with the witches.[[78]](#cite_note-78) (Similar criticisms were made of [Friedrich Mitterwurzer](/wiki/Friedrich_Mitterwurzer) in Germany, whose performances of *Macbeth* had many unintentional parallels with Irving's.[[79]](#cite_note-79)) Irving's leading lady was [Ellen Terry](/wiki/Ellen_Terry), but her Lady Macbeth was unsuccessful with the public, for whom a century of performances influenced by Sarah Siddons had created expectations at odds with Terry's conception of the role.[[80]](#cite_note-80) Late nineteenth-century European Macbeths aimed for heroic stature, but at the expense of subtlety: [Tommaso Salvini](/wiki/Tommaso_Salvini) in Italy and [Adalbert Matkowsky](/wiki/Adalbert_Matkowsky) in Germany were said to inspire awe, but elicited little pity.[[81]](#cite_note-81)

#### Twentieth century to present[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=22)]

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Two developments changed the nature of *Macbeth* performance in the twentieth century: firstly developments in the craft of acting itself, especially the ideas of [Stanislavski](/wiki/Constantin_Stanislavski) and [Brecht](/wiki/Bertolt_Brecht), and secondly the rise of the dictator as a political icon. The latter has not always assisted the performance: it is difficult to sympathise with a Macbeth based on Hitler, Stalin, or Idi Amin.[[82]](#cite_note-82) [Barry Jackson](/wiki/Barry_Jackson_(director)), at the [Birmingham Repertory Theatre](/wiki/Birmingham_Repertory_Theatre) in 1923, was the first of the twentieth-century directors to costume *Macbeth* in [modern dress](/wiki/Modern_dress).[[83]](#cite_note-83) [thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Macbeth-26A-Carter-Thomas.jpg)[Jack Carter](/wiki/Jack_Carter_(actor)) and Edna Thomas in the [Federal Theatre Project](/wiki/Federal_Theatre_Project) production that came to be known as the [*Voodoo Macbeth*](/wiki/Voodoo_Macbeth) (1936)

In 1936, a decade before his film adaptation of the play, [Orson Welles](/wiki/Orson_Welles) directed *Macbeth* for the [Negro Theatre Unit](/wiki/Federal_Theatre_Project#African-American_theatre) of the [Federal Theatre Project](/wiki/Federal_Theatre_Project) at the [Lafayette Theatre](/wiki/Lafayette_Theatre_(Harlem)) in Harlem, using black actors and setting the action in Haiti: with drums and [Voodoo](/wiki/Haitian_Vodou) rituals to establish the Witches scenes. The production, dubbed *The* [*Voodoo Macbeth*](/wiki/Voodoo_Macbeth), proved inflammatory in the aftermath of the [Harlem riots](/wiki/Harlem_Riot_of_1935), accused of making fun of black culture and as "a campaign to burlesque negroes" until Welles persuaded crowds that his use of black actors and voodoo made important cultural statements.[[84]](#cite_note-84) [thumb|Fort St. Catherine's, Bermuda, the site of a 1953 outdoor production](/wiki/File:Fort_St._Catherine's,_St._George's_Island,_Bermuda.jpg) A performance which is frequently referenced as an example of the play's curse was the outdoor production directed by [Burgess Meredith](/wiki/Burgess_Meredith) in 1953 in the [British colony](/wiki/British_Overseas_Territory) of Bermuda, and starring [Charlton Heston](/wiki/Charlton_Heston). Using the imposing spectacle of [Fort St. Catherine's](/wiki/Fort_St._Catherine) as a key element of the set, the production was plagued by a host of mishaps, including Charlton Heston being burned when his tights caught fire.[[85]](#cite_note-85)[[86]](#cite_note-86) The critical consensus is that there have been three great Macbeths on the English-speaking stage in the twentieth century, all of them commencing at [Stratford-upon-Avon](/wiki/Stratford-upon-Avon): [Laurence Olivier](/wiki/Laurence_Olivier) in 1955, [Ian McKellen](/wiki/Ian_McKellen) in 1976 and [Antony Sher](/wiki/Antony_Sher) in 1999.[[87]](#cite_note-87) Olivier's portrayal (directed by [Glen Byam Shaw](/wiki/Glen_Byam_Shaw), with [Vivien Leigh](/wiki/Vivien_Leigh) as Lady Macbeth) was immediately hailed as a masterpiece. [Kenneth Tynan](/wiki/Kenneth_Tynan) expressed the view that it succeeded because Olivier built the role to a climax at the end of the play, whereas most actors spend all they have in the first two acts.[[88]](#cite_note-88) The play caused grave difficulties for the [Royal Shakespeare Company](/wiki/Royal_Shakespeare_Company), especially at the (then) [Shakespeare Memorial Theatre](/wiki/Royal_Shakespeare_Theatre). [Peter Hall's](/wiki/Peter_Hall_(director)) 1967 production was (in Michael Billington's words) "an acknowledged disaster" with the use of real leaves from Birnham Wood getting unsolicited first-night laughs, and [Trevor Nunn's](/wiki/Trevor_Nunn) 1974 production was (Billington again) "an over-elaborate religious spectacle".[[89]](#cite_note-89) But Nunn achieved success for the RSC in his 1976 production at the intimate [Other Place](/wiki/The_Other_Place_(theatre)), with [Ian McKellen](/wiki/Ian_McKellen) and [Judi Dench](/wiki/Judi_Dench) in the central roles.[[90]](#cite_note-90) A small cast worked within a simple circle, and McKellen's Macbeth had nothing noble or likeable about him, being a manipulator in a world of manipulative characters. They were a young couple, physically passionate, "not monsters but recognisable human beings,"[[91]](#cite_note-91) but their relationship atrophied as the action progressed.[[92]](#cite_note-92) In Soviet-controlled Prague in 1977, faced with the illegality of working in theatres, [Pavel Kohout](/wiki/Pavel_Kohout) adapted *Macbeth* into a 75-minute abridgement for five actors, suitable for "bringing a show in a suitcase to people's homes."[[93]](#cite_note-93) Spectacle became unfashionable in Western theatre throughout the twentieth century. In East Asia, however, spectacular productions have achieved great success, including [Yukio Ninagawa's](/wiki/Yukio_Ninagawa) 1980 production with [Masane Tsukayama](/wiki/Masane_Tsukayama) as Macbeth, set in the sixteenth century [Japanese Civil War](/wiki/Sengoku_period).[[94]](#cite_note-94) The same director's tour of London in 1987 was widely praised by critics, even though (like most of their audience) they were unable to understand the significance of Macbeth's gestures, the huge Buddhist altar dominating the set, or the petals falling from the cherry trees.[[95]](#cite_note-95) [Xu Xiaozhong's](/wiki/Xu_Xiaozhong) 1980 [Central Academy of Drama](/wiki/Central_Academy_of_Drama) production in Beijing made every effort to be unpolitical (necessary in the aftermath of the [Cultural Revolution](/wiki/Cultural_Revolution)): yet audiences still perceived correspondences between the central character (who the director had actually modelled on [Louis Napoleon](/wiki/Napoleon_III)) and [Mao Zedong](/wiki/Mao_Zedong).[[96]](#cite_note-96) Shakespeare has often been adapted to indigenous theatre traditions, for example the [*Kunju*](/wiki/Kunqu) *Macbeth* of [Huang Zuolin](/wiki/Huang_Zuolin) performed at the inaugural Chinese Shakespeare Festival of 1986.[[97]](#cite_note-97) Similarly, [B. V. Karanth's](/wiki/B._V._Karanth) *Barnam Vana* of 1979 had adapted *Macbeth* to the [Yakshagana](/wiki/Yakshagana) tradition of [Karnataka](/wiki/Karnataka), India.[[98]](#cite_note-98) In 1997, [Lokendra Arambam](/wiki/Lokendra_Arambam) created *Stage of Blood* merging a range of martial arts, dance and gymnastic styles from [Manipur](/wiki/Manipur), performed in Imphal and in England. The stage was literally a raft on a lake.[[99]](#cite_note-99) The [RSC](/wiki/Royal_Shakespeare_Company) again achieved critical success in [Gregory Doran's](/wiki/Gregory_Doran) 1999 production at [The Swan](/wiki/Swan_Theatre_(Stratford)), with [Antony Sher](/wiki/Antony_Sher) and [Harriet Walter](/wiki/Harriet_Walter) in the central roles, once again demonstrating the suitability of the play to smaller venues.[[100]](#cite_note-100) Doran's witches spoke their lines to a theatre in absolute darkness and the opening visual image was the entrance of Macbeth and Banquo in the berets and fatigues of modern warfare, carried on the shoulders of triumphant troops.[[101]](#cite_note-101) In contrast to Nunn, Doran presented a world in which king Duncan and his soldiers were ultimately benign and honest, heightening the deviance of Macbeth (who seems genuinely surprised by the witches' prophesies) and Lady Macbeth, in plotting to kill the king. The play said little about politics, instead powerfully presenting its central characters' psychological collapse.[[102]](#cite_note-102) While the play has been translated and performed in various languages in different parts of the world, *Media Artists* was the first to stage its [Punjabi](/wiki/Punjabi_language) adaptation in [India](/wiki/India). The adaptation by Balram and the play directed by [Samuel John](/wiki/Samuel_John) have been universally acknowledged as a milestone in Punjabi theatre.[[103]](#cite_note-103) The unique attempt involved trained theatre experts and the actors taken from rural background in [Punjab, India](/wiki/Punjab,_India). Punjabi folk music imbued the play with the native ethos as the English setting of the Shakespeare's play was transposed into Punjabi milieu.[[104]](#cite_note-104)

### Screen[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=23)]

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#### Twentieth century[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=24)]

The earliest known film *Macbeth* was 1905's American short *Death Scene From Macbeth*, and short versions were produced in Italy in 1909 and France in 1910. Two notable early versions are lost: Ludwig Landmann produced a 47-minute version in Germany in 1913, and [D. W. Griffith](/wiki/D._W._Griffith) produced a 1916 version in America featuring the noted stage actor [Herbert Beerbohm Tree](/wiki/Herbert_Beerbohm_Tree).[[105]](#cite_note-105) Tree is said to have had great difficulties adapting to the new medium, and especially in confining himself to the small number of lines in the (silent) screenplay, until an ingenious cameraman allowed him to play his entire part to an empty camera, after which a real camera shot the film.[[106]](#cite_note-106) In 1947, [David Bradley](/wiki/David_Bradley_(director)) produced an independent film of *Macbeth*, intended for distribution to schools, most notable for the designer of its eighty-three costumes: the soon-to-be-famous [Charlton Heston](/wiki/Charlton_Heston).[[107]](#cite_note-107) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Orson_Welles_as_Macbeth.jpg)[Orson Welles](/wiki/Orson_Welles) and [Jeanette Nolan](/wiki/Jeanette_Nolan) as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in Welles' 1948 film adaptation of the play. [Orson Welles'](/wiki/Orson_Welles) 1948 [*Macbeth*](/wiki/Macbeth_(1948_film)), in the director's words a "violently sketched charcoal drawing of a great play,"[[108]](#cite_note-108) was filmed in only 23 days and on a budget of just $700,000. These filming conditions allowed only a single abstract set, and eclectic costumes. Dialogue was pre-recorded, enabling the actors to perform very long individual takes, including one of over ten minutes surrounding the death of Duncan.[[109]](#cite_note-109) Welles himself played the central character, who dominates the film, measured both by his time on screen, and by physical presence: high-angle and low-angle shots and deep-focus close-ups are used to distort his size in comparison to other characters.[[110]](#cite_note-110) Welles retained from his own 1936 stage production the image of a [Voodoo doll](/wiki/Haitian_Vodou) controlling the fate of the central character: and at the end it is the doll we see beheaded.[[111]](#cite_note-111) The film's allegorical aspect is heightened by Welles' introduction of a non-Shakespearean character, the Holy Father (played by [Alan Napier](/wiki/Alan_Napier)),[[112]](#cite_note-112) in opposition to the witches, speaking lines taken from Shakespeare's Ross, Angus and the Old Man.[[113]](#cite_note-113) Contemporary reviews were largely negative, particularly criticising Welles' unsympathetic portrayal of the central character. *Newsweek* commented: "His Macbeth is a static, two-dimensional creature as capable of evil in the first scene as in the final hours of his bloody reign."[[114]](#cite_note-114) [*Joe MacBeth*](/wiki/Joe_MacBeth) ([Ken Hughes](/wiki/Ken_Hughes), 1955) established the tradition of resetting the *Macbeth* story among 20th-century gangsters.[[115]](#cite_note-115) Others to do so include [*Men of Respect*](/wiki/Men_of_Respect) (William Reilly, 1991),[[116]](#cite_note-116) [*Maqbool*](/wiki/Maqbool) ([Vishal Bhardwaj](/wiki/Vishal_Bhardwaj), 2003)[[117]](#cite_note-117) and [Geoffrey Wright's](/wiki/Geoffrey_Wright) Australian 2006 [*Macbeth*](/wiki/Macbeth_(2006_film)).[[118]](#cite_note-118) In 1957, [Akira Kurosawa](/wiki/Akira_Kurosawa) used the *Macbeth* story as the basis for the "universally acclaimed"[[119]](#cite_note-119) [*Kumunosu-jo*](/wiki/Throne_of_Blood) (in English known as *Throne of Blood* or (the literal translation of its title) *Spiderweb Castle*).[[120]](#cite_note-120) The film is a Japanese period-piece ([jidai-geki](/wiki/Jidaigeki)), drawing upon elements of [Noh theatre](/wiki/Noh), especially in its depiction of the evil spirit who takes the part of Shakespeare's witches, and of Asaji, the Lady Macbeth character, played by [Isuzu Yamada](/wiki/Isuzu_Yamada),[[121]](#cite_note-121) and upon [Kabuki Theatre](/wiki/Kabuki) in its depiction of Washizu, the Macbeth character, played by [Toshiro Mifune](/wiki/Toshiro_Mifune).[[122]](#cite_note-122) In a twist on Shakespeare's ending, the tyrant (having witnessed Spiderweb Forest come to Spiderweb Castle) is killed by volleys of arrows from his own archers.[[123]](#cite_note-123) [George Schaefer](/wiki/George_Schaefer_(director)) directed [Maurice Evans](/wiki/Maurice_Evans_(actor)) and [Judith Anderson](/wiki/Judith_Anderson) in a [1960 made-for-TV film](/wiki/Macbeth_(1960_TV_film)) which later had a limited European theatrical release. (The three had also worked together on the earlier [*Hallmark Hall of Fame*](/wiki/Hallmark_Hall_of_Fame) [1954 TV version of the play](/wiki/Macbeth_(1954_TV_drama)).)[[124]](#cite_note-124) Neither of the central couple was able to adapt their stage acting style to the screen successfully, leading to their roles being described by critics as "recited" rather than "acted".[[125]](#cite_note-125) [Roman Polanski's](/wiki/Roman_Polanski) 1971 [*Macbeth*](/wiki/Macbeth_(1971_film)) was the director's first film after the brutal murder of his wife, [Sharon Tate](/wiki/Sharon_Tate), and reflected his determination to "show [*Macbeth's*] violence the way it is ... [because] if you don't show it realistically then that's immoral and harmful."[[126]](#cite_note-126) His film showed deaths only reported in the play, including the execution of Cawdor, and Macbeth stabbing Duncan,[[127]](#cite_note-127) and its violence was "intense and incessant."[[128]](#cite_note-128) Made in the aftermath of [Zeffirelli's](/wiki/Franco_Zeffirelli) youthful [*Romeo and Juliet*](/wiki/Romeo_and_Juliet_(1968_film)), and financed by [*Playboy*](/wiki/Playboy) mogul [Hugh Hefner](/wiki/Hugh_Hefner), Polanski's film featured a young sexy lead couple, played by [Jon Finch](/wiki/Jon_Finch) (28) and by [Francesca Annis](/wiki/Francesca_Annis) (25), who controversially performed the sleepwalking scene nude.[[129]](#cite_note-129) The unsettling film score, provided by the [Third Ear Band](/wiki/Third_Ear_Band), invoked "discord and dissonance."[[130]](#cite_note-130) While using Shakespeare's words, Polanski alters aspects of Shakespeare's story, turning the minor character Ross into a ruthless Machiavellian,[[131]](#cite_note-131) and adding an epilogue to the play in which Donalbain (younger son of Duncan) arrives at the witches' lair, indicating that the cycle of violence will begin again.[[132]](#cite_note-132) In 1973, the Virginia Museum Theater (VMT, now the [Leslie Cheek Theater](/wiki/Leslie_Cheek_Theater)), presented *Macbeth,* starring [E.G. Marshall](/wiki/E.G._Marshall). Dubbed by the *New York Times* as the "'Fowler' Macbeth" after director [Keith Fowler](/wiki/Keith_Fowler), it was described by Clive Barnes as "splendidly vigorous, forcefully immediate... probably the goriest Shakespearean production I have seen since Peter Brook's 'Titus Andronicus'."[[133]](#cite_note-133) The Nunn/McKellen/Dench [RSC](/wiki/Royal_Shakespeare_Company) [Other Place](/wiki/The_Other_Place_(theatre)) stage performance discussed above was adapted for TV and broadcast by [Thames Television](/wiki/Thames_Television) (see [*Macbeth (1978 film)*](/wiki/Macbeth_(1978_film))).[[134]](#cite_note-134) William Reilly's 1991 [*Men of Respect*](/wiki/Men_of_Respect), another film to set the *Macbeth* story among gangsters, has been praised for its accuracy in depicting [Mafia](/wiki/American_Mafia) rituals, said to be more authentic than those in [*The Godfather*](/wiki/The_Godfather) or [*GoodFellas*](/wiki/Goodfellas). However the film failed to please audiences or critics: Leonard Maltin found it "pretentious" and "unintentionally comic" and Daniel Rosenthal describes it as "providing the most risible chunks of modernised Shakespeare in screen history."[[135]](#cite_note-135) In 1992 [S4C](/wiki/S4C) produced a cel-animated *Macbeth* for the series [*Shakespeare: The Animated Tales*](/wiki/Shakespeare:_The_Animated_Tales),[[136]](#cite_note-136) and in 1997 Jeremy Freeston directed [Jason Connery](/wiki/Jason_Connery) and [Helen Baxendale](/wiki/Helen_Baxendale) in a low budget, fairly full-text, version.[[137]](#cite_note-137) In Shakespeare's script, the actor playing Banquo must enter the stage as a ghost. The major film versions have usually taken the opportunity to provide a double perspective: Banquo visible to the audience from Macbeth's perspective, but invisible from the perspective of other characters. Television versions, however, have often taken the third approach of leaving Banquo invisible to viewers, thereby portraying Banquo's ghost as merely Macbeth's delusion. This approach is taken in the 1978 [Thames TV](/wiki/Thames_Television) production, [Jack Gold's](/wiki/Jack_Gold) 1983 version for [BBC Television Shakespeare](/wiki/BBC_Television_Shakespeare), and in [Penny Woolcock's](/wiki/Penny_Woolcock) 1997 *Macbeth on the Estate*.[[138]](#cite_note-138) *Macbeth on the Estate* largely dispensed with the supernatural in favour of the drug-crime driven realism of characters living on a [Birmingham](/wiki/Birmingham) housing estate: except for the three "weird" (in the modern sense of the word) children who prophesy Macbeth's fate.[[138]](#cite_note-138) This production used Shakespeare's language, but encouraged the actors – many of whom were locals, not professionals – to speak it naturalistically.[[139]](#cite_note-139)

#### Twenty-first century[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=25)]

Twenty-first-century cinema has re-interpreted *Macbeth*, relocating "Scotland" elsewhere: [*Maqbool*](/wiki/Maqbool) to Mumbai, [*Scotland, PA*](/wiki/Scotland,_PA) to Pennsylvania, [Geoffrey Wright's](/wiki/Geoffrey_Wright) [*Macbeth*](/wiki/Macbeth_(2006_film)) to Melbourne, and Allison L. LiCalsi's 2001 *Macbeth: The Comedy* to a location only differentiated from the reality of New Jersey, where it was filmed, through signifiers such as tartan, Scottish flags and bagpipes.[[140]](#cite_note-140) [Alexander Abela's](/wiki/Alexander_Abela) 2000 [*Makibefo*](/wiki/Makibefo) was set among, and starred, residents of [Faux Cap](/wiki/Faux_Cap), a remote fishing community in Madagascar.[[141]](#cite_note-141) [Leonardo Henriquez'](/wiki/Leonardo_Henriquez) 2000 [*Sangrador*](/wiki/Sangrador) (in English: *Bleeder*) set the story among Venezuelan bandits and presented a shockingly visualised horror version.[[142]](#cite_note-142) [Billy Morrissette's](/wiki/Billy_Morrissette) [*Scotland, PA*](/wiki/Scotland,_PA) reframes the *Macbeth* story as a comedy-thriller set in a 1975 fast-food restaurant, and features [James LeGros](/wiki/James_LeGros) in the Macbeth role and [Maura Tierney](/wiki/Maura_Tierney) as Pat, the Lady Macbeth character: "We're not bad people, Mac. We're just under-achievers who have to make up for lost time." [Christopher Walken](/wiki/Christopher_Walken) plays vegetarian detective Ernie McDuff who (in the words of Daniel Rosenthal) "[applies] his uniquely offbeat menacing delivery to innocuous lines."[[143]](#cite_note-143) *Scotland, PA****s conceit of resetting the Macbeth story at a restaurant was followed in*** [***BBC Television's***](/wiki/BBC_Television) ***2005*** [***ShakespeaRe-Told***](/wiki/ShakespeaRe-Told) ***adaptation.***[***[144]***](#cite_note-144) [Vishal Bhardwaj's](/wiki/Vishal_Bhardwaj) 2003 [*Maqbool*](/wiki/Maqbool), filmed in [Hindi](/wiki/Hindi) and [Urdu](/wiki/Urdu) and set in the [Mumbai underworld](/wiki/Organised_crime_in_India#Mumbai_underworld), was produced in the [Bollywood](/wiki/Bollywood) tradition, but heavily influenced by *Macbeth*, by [Francis Ford Coppola's](/wiki/Francis_Ford_Coppola) 1972 [*The Godfather*](/wiki/The_Godfather) and by [Luc Besson's](/wiki/Luc_Besson) 1994 [*Léon*](/wiki/Léon:_The_Professional).[[145]](#cite_note-145) It deviates from the *Macbeth* story in making the Macbeth character (Miyan Maqbool, played by [Irfan Khan](/wiki/Irrfan_Khan)) a single man, lusting after the mistress (Nimmi, played by [Tabbu](/wiki/Tabu_(actress))) of the Duncan character (Jahangir Khan, known as Abbaji, played by [Pankaj Kapoor](/wiki/Pankaj_Kapur)).[[117]](#cite_note-117) Another deviation is the comparative delay in the murder: Shakespeare's protagonists murder Duncan early in the play, but more than half of the film has passed by the time Nimmi and Miyan kill Abbaji.[[146]](#cite_note-146) In 2004 an "eccentric" Swedish/Norwegian film, based on [Alex Scherpf's](/wiki/Alex_Scherpf) Ice Globe Theatre production of *Macbeth*, was said by critic Daniel Rosenthal to owe "more to co-director [Bo Landin's](/wiki/Bo_Landin) background in natural history documentaries than to Shakespeare."[[147]](#cite_note-147) More conventional adaptations of 21st-century stage productions to television include [Greg Doran's](/wiki/Gregory_Doran) [RSC](/wiki/Royal_Shakespeare_Company) production filmed in 2001 with [Antony Sher](/wiki/Antony_Sher) and [Harriet Walter](/wiki/Harriet_Walter) in the central roles,[[148]](#cite_note-148) and [Rupert Goold's](/wiki/Rupert_Goold) [Chichester Festival Theatre](/wiki/Chichester_Festival_Theatre) [*Macbeth*](/wiki/Macbeth_(2010_film)) televised in 2010 with [Patrick Stewart](/wiki/Patrick_Stewart) and [Kate Fleetwood](/wiki/Kate_Fleetwood) as the tragic couple. The cast of the latter felt that the history of their stage performance (moving from a [small space](/wiki/Chichester_Festival_Theatre) at Chichester to a [large proscenium arch stage](/wiki/Gielgud_Theatre) in London to a [huge auditorium](/wiki/Brooklyn_Academy_of_Music) in Brooklyn) made it easier for them to "re-scale", yet again, their performances for the cameras.[[149]](#cite_note-149) In 2006, [Geoffrey Wright](/wiki/Geoffrey_Wright) directed a Shakespearean-language, extremely violent [*Macbeth*](/wiki/Macbeth_(2006_film)) set in the Melbourne underworld. [Sam Worthington](/wiki/Sam_Worthington) played Macbeth. [Victoria Hill](/wiki/Victoria_Hill) played Lady Macbeth and shared the screenplay credits with Wright.[[118]](#cite_note-118) The director considered her portrayal of Lady Macbeth to be the most sympathetic he had ever seen.[[150]](#cite_note-150) In spite of the high level of violence and nudity (Macbeth has sex with the three naked schoolgirl witches as they prophesy his fate), intended to appeal to the young audiences that had flocked to [*Romeo + Juliet*](/wiki/Romeo_+_Juliet), the film flopped at the box office.[[151]](#cite_note-151) In 2014, [*Classic Alice*](/wiki/Classic_Alice) wove a 10 episode arc placing its characters in the world of Macbeth. The adaptation uses students and a modern-day setting to loosely parallel Shakespeare's play. It starred [Kate Hackett](/wiki/Kate_Hackett), [Chris O'Brien](/wiki/Chris_O'Brien_(actor)), [Elise Cantu](/wiki/Elise_Cantu) and [Tony Noto](/wiki/Tony_Noto) and embarked on a [LGBTQ](/wiki/LGBTQ) plotline.

[Justin Kurzel's](/wiki/Justin_Kurzel) feature-length adaptation [*Macbeth*](/wiki/Macbeth_(2015_film)), starring [Michael Fassbender](/wiki/Michael_Fassbender) and [Marion Cotillard](/wiki/Marion_Cotillard), was released in October 2015.

Also in 2015, Brazilian film *A Floresta que se Move* (*The Moving Forest*) premiered at the [Montreal World Film Festival](/wiki/Montreal_World_Film_Festival).[[152]](#cite_note-152) Directed by Vinícius Coimbra and starred by [Gabriel Braga Nunes](/wiki/Gabriel_Braga_Nunes) and [Ana Paula Arósio](/wiki/Ana_Paula_Arósio), the film uses a modern-day setting, replacing the throne of Scotland with the presidency of a high-ranked bank.[[153]](#cite_note-153)[[154]](#cite_note-154)[[155]](#cite_note-155)

### Other media[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=26)]

#### Literature[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=27)]

There have been numerous literary adaptations and spin-offs from *Macbeth*. Russian Novelist [Nikolay Leskov](/wiki/Nikolai_Leskov) told a variation of the story from Lady Macbeth's point of view in [*Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*](/wiki/Lady_Macbeth_of_the_Mtsensk_District_(novel)), which itself became a number of films[[156]](#cite_note-156) and [an opera](/wiki/Lady_Macbeth_of_the_Mtsensk_District_(opera)) by [Shostakovich](/wiki/Dmitri_Shostakovich).[[157]](#cite_note-157) [Maurice Baring's](/wiki/Maurice_Baring) 1911 *The Rehearsal* fictionalises [Shakespeare's company's](/wiki/King's_Men_(playing_company)) inept rehearsals for *Macbeth's* premiere.[[158]](#cite_note-158) Gu Wuwei's 1916 play *The Usurper of State Power* adapted both *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* as a parody of contemporary events in China.[[159]](#cite_note-159) The play has been used as a background for detective fiction (as in [Marvin Kaye's](/wiki/Marvin_Kaye) 1976 *Bullets for Macbeth*)[[160]](#cite_note-160) and, in the case of [Ngaio Marsh's](/wiki/Ngaio_Marsh) last detective novel [Light Thickens](/wiki/Light_Thickens), the play takes centre stage as the rehearsal, production and run of a 'flawless' production is described in absorbing detail (so much so that her biographer describes the novel as effectively Marsh's third production of the play).[[161]](#cite_note-161) But the play was also used as the basis of [James Thurber's](/wiki/James_Thurber) parody of the whodunit genre *The Macbeth Murder Mystery*, in which the protagonist reads *Macbeth* applying the conventions of detective stories, and concludes that it must have been Macduff who murdered Duncan.[[162]](#cite_note-162) Comics and graphic novels have utilised the play, or have dramatised the circumstances of its inception: [Superman](/wiki/Superman) himself wrote the play for Shakespeare in the course of one night, in the 1947 *Shakespeare's Ghost Writer*.[[163]](#cite_note-163) A cyberpunk version of MacBeth titled *Mac* appears in the collection *Sound & Fury: Shakespeare Goes Punk.*[*[164]*](#cite_note-164) Macbeth has been adapted into plays dealing with the political and cultural concerns of many nations. [Eugène Ionesco's](/wiki/Eugène_Ionesco) [*Macbett*](/wiki/Macbett) satirised *Macbeth* as a meaningless succession of treachery and slaughter.[[165]](#cite_note-165) [Wale Ogunyemi's](/wiki/Wale_Ogunyemi) *A'are Akogun*, first performed in Nigeria in 1968, mixed the English and [Yoruba](/wiki/Yoruba_language) languages.[[166]](#cite_note-166) [Welcome Msomi's](/wiki/Welcome_Msomi) 1970 play [*Umabatha*](/wiki/UMabatha) adapts *Macbeth* to Zulu culture, and was said by [*The Independent*](/wiki/The_Independent) to be "more authentic than any modern *Macbeth*" in presenting a world in which a man's fighting ability is central to his identity.[[167]](#cite_note-167) [Joe de Graft](/wiki/Joe_de_Graft) adapted *Macbeth* as a battle to take over a powerful corporation in Ghana in his 1972 *Mambo* or *Let's Play Games, My Husband*.[[168]](#cite_note-168) [Dev Virahsawmy's](/wiki/Dev_Virahsawmy) *Zeneral Macbeff*, first performed in 1982, adapted the story to the local [Creole](/wiki/Mauritian_creole) and to the [Mauritian](/wiki/Mauritius) political situation.[[169]](#cite_note-169) (The same author later translated *Macbeth* itself into Mauritian creole, as *Trazedji Makbess*.)[[170]](#cite_note-170) And in 2000, Chuck Mike and the Nigerian Performance Studio Workshop produced *Mukbutu* as a direct commentary on the fragile nature of Nigerian democracy at the time.[[171]](#cite_note-171)

#### Music and audio[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=28)]

*Macbeth* is, with [*The Tempest*](/wiki/The_Tempest), one of the two most-performed Shakespeare plays on [BBC Radio](/wiki/BBC_Radio), with 20 productions between 1923 and 2005.[[172]](#cite_note-172) The extant version of *Macbeth*, in the [First Folio](/wiki/First_Folio), contains dancing and music, including the song "Come Away Hecate" which exists in two collections of lute music (both c.1630, one of them being [Drexel 4175](/wiki/Drexel_4175)) arranged by [Robert Johnson](/wiki/Robert_Johnson_(English_composer)).[[173]](#cite_note-173) And, from the Restoration onwards, incidental music has frequently been composed for the play: including works by [William Boyce](/wiki/William_Boyce_(composer)) in the eighteenth century.[[174]](#cite_note-174) [Davenant's](/wiki/William_Davenant) use of dance in the witches' scenes was inherited by [Garrick](/wiki/David_Garrick), which in turn influenced [Giuseppe Verdi](/wiki/Giuseppe_Verdi) to incorporate a ballet around the witches' cauldron into his opera [*Macbeth*](/wiki/Macbeth_(opera)).[[175]](#cite_note-175) Verdi's first Shakespeare-influenced opera, with libretto by [Francesco Maria Piave](/wiki/Francesco_Maria_Piave), incorporated a number of striking arias for Lady Macbeth, giving her a prominence in the early part of the play which contrasts with the character's increasing isolation as the action continues: she ceases to sing duets and her sleepwalking confession is starkly contrasted with the "supported grief" of Macduff in the preceding scene.[[176]](#cite_note-176) Other music influenced by the play includes [Richard Strauss's](/wiki/Richard_Strauss) 1890 symphonic poem [*Macbeth*](/wiki/Macbeth_(Strauss)).[[177]](#cite_note-177) [Duke Ellington](/wiki/Duke_Ellington) and [Billy Strayhorn](/wiki/Billy_Strayhorn) incorporated themes depicting the female characters from *Macbeth* in the 1957 Shakespearean jazz suite [*Such Sweet Thunder*](/wiki/Such_Sweet_Thunder): the weird sisters juxtaposed with Iago (from [*Othello*](/wiki/Othello)), and *Lady Mac* represented by ragtime piano because, as Ellington put it, "we suspect there was a little ragtime in her soul".[[178]](#cite_note-178) Another Jazz collaboration to create hybrids of Shakespeare plays was that of [Cleo Laine](/wiki/Cleo_Laine) with [Johnny Dankworth](/wiki/John_Dankworth), who in Laine's 1964 *Shakespeare and All That Jazz* juxtaposed Titania's instructions to her fairies from [*A Midsummer Night's Dream*](/wiki/A_Midsummer_Night's_Dream) with the witches' chant from *Macbeth*.[[179]](#cite_note-179) In 2000, [Jag Panzer](/wiki/Jag_Panzer) produced their heavy metal concept-album retelling [*Thane to the Throne*](/wiki/Thane_to_the_Throne).[[180]](#cite_note-180)

#### Visual arts[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=29)]

The play has inspired numerous works of art. The scene in which Lady Macbeth seizes the daggers, as performed by [Garrick](/wiki/David_Garrick) and [Mrs. Pritchard](/wiki/Hannah_Pritchard), was a touchstone throughout [Henry Fuseli's](/wiki/Henry_Fuseli) career, including works in 1766, 1774 and 1812.[[181]](#cite_note-181) The same performance was the subject of [Johann Zoffany's](/wiki/Johann_Zoffany) painting of the Macbeths in 1768.[[182]](#cite_note-182) In 1786, [John Boydell](/wiki/John_Boydell) announced his intention to found his [Shakespeare Gallery](/wiki/Boydell_Shakespeare_Gallery). His chief innovation was to see the works of Shakespeare as history, rather than contemporary, so instead of including the (then fashionable) works depicting the great actors of the day on stage in modern dress, he commissioned works depicting the *action* of the plays.[[183]](#cite_note-183) However the most notable works in the collection disregard this historicising principle: such as [Fuseli's](/wiki/Henry_Fuseli) depiction of the naked and heroic Macbeth encountering the witches.[[184]](#cite_note-184) [William Blake's](/wiki/William_Blake) paintings were also influenced by Shakespeare, including his *Pity*, inspired by Macbeth's "Pity, like a naked new-born babe, striding the blast."[[185]](#cite_note-185) [Sarah Siddons'](/wiki/Sarah_Siddons) triumph in the role of Lady Macbeth led [Joshua Reynolds](/wiki/Joshua_Reynolds) to depict her as *The Muse of Tragedy*.[[61]](#cite_note-61) <gallery> File:Zoffany-Garrick and Pritchard in Macbeth.jpg|[Johann Zoffany's](/wiki/Johann_Zoffany) depiction of [Hannah Pritchard](/wiki/Hannah_Pritchard) and [David Garrick](/wiki/David_Garrick) in *Macbeth*.[[186]](#cite_note-186)File:Fuseli Macbeth 1766.jpg|[Henry Fuseli's](/wiki/Henry_Fuseli) 1766 depiction of [Garrick](/wiki/David_Garrick) and [Mrs. Pritchard](/wiki/Hannah_Pritchard), with the daggers.[[187]](#cite_note-187)Image:Johann Heinrich Füssli - Lady Macbeth with the Daggers - WGA8338.jpg|[Henry Fuseli's](/wiki/Henry_Fuseli) later (1812) reworking of [Garrick](/wiki/David_Garrick) and [Mrs. Pritchard](/wiki/Hannah_Pritchard), with the daggers.[[181]](#cite_note-181)Image:FuseliMacbethBoydell.jpg|James Caldwell's engraving, after [Henry Fuseli](/wiki/Henry_Fuseli), of Macbeth's encounter with the witches.[[184]](#cite_note-184)File:Pity by William Blake 1795.jpg|[*Pity*](/wiki/Pity_(William_Blake)) by [William Blake](/wiki/William_Blake), based on Macbeth's "Pity, like a naked new-born babe, striding the blast."[[185]](#cite_note-185)File:Mrs Siddons by Joshua Reynolds.jpg|[Joshua Reynolds](/wiki/Joshua_Reynolds) depicted [Sarah Siddons](/wiki/Sarah_Siddons) as *The Muse of Tragedy*, largely due to her triumph in the role of Lady Macbeth.[[61]](#cite_note-61)File:Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth.jpg|[John Singer Sargent's](/wiki/John_Singer_Sargent) painting of [Ellen Terry](/wiki/Ellen_Terry) as Lady Macbeth, in a gown decorated with green beetle wings.[[188]](#cite_note-188)</gallery>

## Notes[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=30)]

### Citations[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=31)]

Unless otherwise specified, all citations of *Macbeth* refer to Muir (1984), and of other works of Shakespeare refer to Wells and Taylor (2005).

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