

SHAKESPEARE IN SCOTLAND

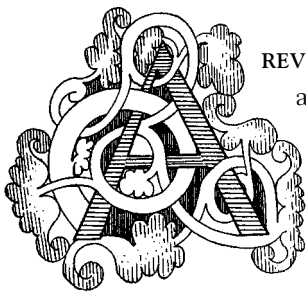
What did the author of Macbeth know and when did he know it?

Richard F. Whalen



*Awake! Awake! Ring the alarum-bell:—murder and treason!
Banquo and Donalbain! Malcolm! Awake!
Shake off this downy sleep, death's counterfeit,
And look on death itself!*

Macduff: Macbeth: Act II Scene 1



REVIEW of historical documents and topical allusions in *Macbeth* shows that the author knew a great deal about Scotland and that he knew it long before 1606, which orthodox scholars argue was the year it was written by William Shakespeare of Stratford-on-Avon. Six of these scholars, however, unwittingly provide much of the evidence supporting Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl of Oxford, as the true author of *Macbeth*.

Generally, Shakespeare scholars today simply pay no attention to the first-hand knowledge of Scotland that is demonstrated in *Macbeth*. Instead, with a few notable exceptions, they have argued that there are many topical allusions to events in England that date the play to 1606, three years after James VI of Scotland became King of England. Under examination, however, their arguments fail to convince.

The principal topical allusions in *Macbeth* for most Stratfordians—but not all—are to the 1605 Powder Treason or Gunpowder Plot to blow up Parliament and to the subsequent trial of a Jesuit priest, not only for treason but for *equivocation*, i.e. dissembling under oath to avoid the sin of lying. They note that the play depicts the treason of Macbeth against his king and famously features the porter's ramblings about "equivocators" (2.3).

Other topicalities are also supposed to tie the play to King James. His keen interest in witchcraft (he wrote a treatise on it) is thought to have inspired the play's three Weird Sisters. Macbeth's hallucinatory vision of eight kings is supposedly intended to flatter James by showing him as the legitimate descendent of monarchs from Banquo and Fleance (4.1.111-124). And they add a few scraps of evidence: the porter's throwaway line about "the farmer who hanged himself on the expectation of plenty" (2.3.3) because wheat prices were low in 1605-7 (Muir xxii) and "touching for evil" by King James (Carroll 222-26), because a doctor in the play tells how King Edward the Confessor practiced touching for evil to effect miraculous cures for tubercular ulcers (4.3.142).

Dating the play to 1606, shortly after the Gunpowder Plot, serves orthodox scholars well in that it links the playwright to a reigning king of England and one of the most sensational events in British history, commemorated ever since as Guy Fawkes Day. It also helps spread the plays rather evenly throughout the working life of the Stratford man and puts its composition after the death of Oxford in 1604. (There is no certain contemporary reference to the play until its publication in the First Folio in 1623.)

Not gunpowder but a nocturnal knifing

None of the alleged topicalities, however, hold up under examination. The Gunpowder Plot of 1605 is particularly unsuitable and unconvincing as an event that might inspire a playwright to write *Macbeth*. It was allegedly a plot by a gang of Roman Catholic radicals—none of whom was in any position to take power—to massacre the whole government of Great Britain, including King James, in a gigantic explosion of gunpowder under Parliament during a ceremonial meeting in broad daylight. Thousands might have been killed. In contrast, *Macbeth*, ambitious to gain the throne, stabs his guest, King Duncan, in the night while he sleeps alone in his bed. The two regicides could hardly have been more different.

Equally unconvincing is the suggestion that *Macbeth* was written to flatter James and celebrate his escape from violent death in the Gunpowder Plot. Henry Paul in *The Royal Play of Macbeth* (1971) was the principal advocate of this view. Rejecting the suggestion of his orthodox colleagues, William C. Carroll, editor of the *Bedford Macbeth* (1999), notes that James would then be a “royal spectator of a royal bloodbath, whose own right of succession to the English throne was . . . questioned (2, 5). Carroll, a professor at Boston University, makes several observations that have the unintended effect of throwing doubt on the topicalities embraced by most Stratfordian commentators. Moreover, James was famous for his fear of bodily harm at the hands of enemies or as a result of witchcraft. Stratfordian Professor Dennis Kay says in his book on Shakespeare: “Everybody knew that King James was terrified of violent death” (311). No surprise, since his father was assassinated and his captive mother was beheaded.

Thus, it strains belief to suggest that an English actor/playwright would celebrate the new Scottish king of England by writing a gloomy, violent, bloody tragedy depicting the assassination of a Scottish king that is instigated by witches. That’s not the way playwrights, especially commoners, celebrate their monarchs. Nor is it credible that the king’s own acting company would dare to perform it. There is no documentary evidence that James ever saw the play, read it or even heard about it, much less felt celebrated.

Also improbable is the Stratfordian notion that King James would have been pleased to see himself as the most recent in a line of kings begun by Banquo, the kings that the witches show to *Macbeth* in Act IV Scene 1. Neither Banquo nor his son and heir Fleance were historical persons. They were recent, fictional embellishments to the “history” of Scotland. It was not until 1527, during the reign of James’s father, that Hector Boece added the Banquo portion to the twelfth-century story of *Macbeth*. Carroll dismisses it as a “myth of lineage” (117). A keen

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student of Scots history, James, born just forty years later, would certainly have known that Banquo was a recent addition, one the Stewarts could use to bolster their claim to the Scottish throne. It's doubtful that he would have appreciated a play that reminded him that his right to the throne was based on a fiction. Besides, Banquo too supposedly came to a violent end.

Professor Carroll is also skeptical that James would have appreciated the play. He notes that some scholars "find the play to be far more ambivalent about—and even subversive of—James's ideological interests," rather than a play intended to please him (2). He adds that in his own view, "rather than clarifying and reinforcing the theories of kingship and sovereign power that James proposed in his writings and speeches, the play seems to go out of its way to mystify and undermine those theories" (6). A bloody Scottish tragedy subversive of James's interests and undermining his succession theories could hardly have been more unpleasant for the recently crowned Scottish king of England. The Stratfordian attempts to link *Macbeth* to King James and the Gunpowder Plot, while possibly exciting, do not withstand scrutiny.

The Royal Succession Issue

Carroll offers several more observations that Oxfordians would say support their view that the play was written, not for King James I, but years or decades earlier, and that someone like Oxford would be the more likely author. The dramatist, Carroll says, knew a great deal about the four contending theories of royal succession: the appeals to religious authority, to natural law, to secular history and to blood relation. "Shakespeare's *Macbeth*," he writes, "embodies virtually every issue of the succession controversy in the four paradigms of kingship within the play" (185-91). Carroll also raises questions about the puzzling "show of kings" passage, which has led editors of modern editions to change a stage direction (sd) in the First Folio text in a way that allows them to link the passage to King James. Carroll writes:

While the play does represent the line of Banquo stretching out to the crack of doom, it also leaves us with two significant gaps in the "show of eight Kings and Banquo last" (4.1.111sd)—there should be nine kings, but James's mother, Mary Queen of Scots, is missing from the sequence, and at the end of the play Fleance is missing, unseen and unmentioned, as if he had never existed. (191)

Carroll is not alone in puzzling over the "show of kings" passage. It is unaccountably confusing, at least for modern-day critics. John Dover Wilson and Kenneth Muir wrestled with it, reaching no conclusion. The stage direction in the First Folio calls for "a show of eight kings and Banquo last with a glass in his hand." *Macbeth*, however, says the eighth king

. . . bears a glass
which shows me many more, and some I see
That two-fold balls and treble scepters carry. (4.1.119-21)

Something is wrong here. It's unlikely that the dramatist would have both Banquo and the eighth king holding mirrors.

Taking bold action, textual scholars changed the stage direction so that Banquo, not the eighth king, holds the mirror. This change enables them to propose that James is the eighth king, which almost fits the number of monarchs between the time of the historical Macbeth and James. But that would depict a reigning monarch on stage, which was prohibited. Wilson asks, "Did they dare to show his image on stage? If not, that perhaps explains why F [the First Folio] gives to Banquo the 'glass' " (152). Muir gives up: "Perhaps we should retain the F reading" (115). Whatever the interpretation, altering the stage direction allowed textual scholars to insert a representation of King James into the scene, a change that fits their idea of when and why it was written.

The scene, however, probably has nothing to do with James. Since neither Mary Queen of Scots nor her son James is included in the show of monarchs it's unlikely that the dramatist had them in mind when he wrote the passage. The scene could have been written much earlier, serving simply to dramatize Macbeth's horror at Banquo's descendants somehow reigning over Scotland and later on some of them reigning over England as well.

Orthodox scholars also suggest that the "two-fold balls and treble scepters" in the show of kings symbolize James's kingdom. But scholars differ on what realms they represent, and the phrase seems at best a weak allusion to James in a passage that has defied explication.

Topicalities and dating the play

Although equivocation and witchcraft certainly influenced the playwright, neither was specific to the early 1600s. Equivocation had been notorious for years. A decade earlier, it was a principal accusation in the trial of Robert Southwell, a Jesuit poet accused of treason (Brownlow 19-20). Thus equivocation was in no way unique to the Gunpowder Plot and the treason trial in 1606 of Father Henry Garnet, another Jesuit accused of equivocation. Similarly, witchcraft and witch hunts were notorious long before James became King of England. Nor were "touching for evil" or "the farmer who hanged himself in the expectation of plenty" unique to the reign of James in England. Touching for evil was practiced by many of the monarchs who came after Edward the Confessor—including Queen Elizabeth herself (Levin 16, 31-3). King James, in fact, was a reluctant and skeptical toucher for evil (Carroll, 222-6). And slumping prices for grain caused problems a number of times for farmers in the decades preceding 1606.

Not all Stratfordian scholars date the play to 1606; at least three date the play before 1604, most notably J. Dover Wilson, co-editor of *The New Cambridge Shakespeare*, who dated it to 1601-2 (xli). An independent scholar, Arthur Melville Clark, also suggested 1601. In his book, *Murder Under Trust*, he cites parallels with the Gowrie conspiracy in Scotland against James's life the previous year. Professor Daniel Amneus of California State University at Los Angeles argues for 1599 in *The Mystery of Macbeth* mainly because of succession issues and because no English dramatist would have depicted regicide after James became King of England (40-1, 46). In his Arden edition of *Macbeth*, Muir tentatively allows that "the play as a whole might have been written earlier [than

1606]” if, as he considers, some of the passages were interpolations (xvii). But these are exceptions. Most commentaries describe *Macbeth* as a 1606 play written for King James I of England.

Six Stratfordians aid the case for Oxford

Oxfordian scholars—aided by the work of six Stratfordians—contend that it was Oxford who wrote and rewrote *Macbeth* many years before James became King of England. They point to a number of topicalities: the Darnley assassination, a sequence of slayings of persons of rank who were guests of their assassins, the playwright’s knowledge of Scotland, and narrative details in a manuscript chronicle of Scotland pre-dating Holinshed.

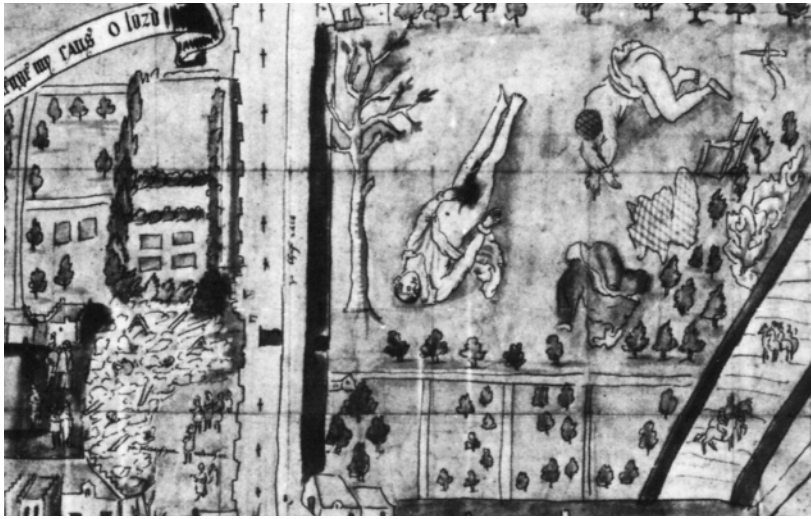
The principal Oxfordian commentators on *Macbeth* are Charles Wisner Barrell, author of numerous articles on the Shakespeare authorship issue in the 1940s, and Ruth Loyd Miller, a lawyer and leading Oxfordian scholar, who added her own extensive notes to her 1974 reprint of Eva Turner Clark’s book. This article is indebted in large part to their work.

The first two of the six Stratfordian scholars were Charlotte Carmichael Stopes (1841-1929) and Lilian Winstanley (b. 1875). Stopes, who was born and educated in Scotland, wrote articles and a dozen books on Shakespeare. *Shakespeare’s Industry* (1916) won an award from the British Academy. Professor S. Schoenbaum calls her an indefatigable, eccentric amateur but usually tough-minded and critical (459-64). Winstanley, also a Scotswoman, was a lecturer at the University College of Wales when she published in 1922, *Macbeth, King Lear & Contemporary History*, being a study of the relations of the play of *Macbeth* to the personal history of James I, the Darnley murder and the St. Bartholomew Day massacre. She apparently wrote without knowing that J. Thomas Looney had identified Oxford as Shakespeare two years earlier.

Probably due to her native perspective on Scottish history, Winstanley was the first to find significance in the treatment of plots, assassinations and executions in *Macbeth*. She builds a strong case that among the sources of *Macbeth* were the assassinations of Lord Darnley in 1567 in Scotland and of Admiral Coligny in the Saint Bartholomew’s Day Massacre in France in 1572. Without questioning the 1606 date for its composition, she suggests that the Gunpowder Plot in 1605 reminded the dramatist of the two assassinations, and that he counted on his audience, including the King, to remember them. She fails to appreciate, however, that since the two assassinations had occurred thirty-eight and thirty-three years earlier, both on foreign soil, details of them would have dimmed in popular memory, and that the Gunpowder Plot hardly fit the pattern of murders in *Macbeth*.

Darnley’s assassination

Lord Darnley was the youthful consort to Mary Queen of Scots and thus King of Scotland to his supporters, although she denied him the title and often banished him from her castle. His sensational murder in 1567, when he was twenty-years-old, was engineered by rivals that included the ambitious Earl of Bothwell, Mary’s chief adviser (Weir 331-3). Mary had arranged for the ailing Darnley to recuperate at one of her houses near Edinburgh. Bothwell and some of his cohorts took



A section of the sketch sent to Burghley showing the assassination of Lord Darnley.

advantage of the King's isolation to blow up the house. Darnley awakened just before the blast and managed to escape in his nightclothes, but the conspirators suffocated him in the orchard. Three months later, Bothwell virtually forced the twenty-three-year-old Queen to marry him. The grisly murder of Darnley, when Oxford was sixteen, provides the most striking influences

on *Macbeth*, including the role of Lady Macbeth in the murder of King Duncan. Reports quickly spread throughout Scotland and London that the Queen was behind the assassination and that she had lured Darnley to Edinburgh on the pretext that the air was wholesome. In the play, Duncan, the guest of the Lord and Lady Macbeth, remarks that "the air . . . recommends itself unto our gentle senses;" and Banquo agrees that "the air is delicate" (1.6.1-9).

As in the play, an ambitious rival assassinated Scotland's king, who had gone to bed thinking he was a welcome guest. Just as the play includes a knocking at the porter's gate, investigative reports of Darnley's murder twice mention a "knocking at the gate"—while Bothwell was said to have cried "Treason"! when informed of Darnley's murder. Bothwell, moreover, was widely believed to consort with witches. These details and many other reports of Darnley's assassination point to the ultra-ambitious Bothwell as the primary model for the character Macbeth (Winstanley 65- 93; Miller/E.T. Clark 840-3). A contemporary sketch of the murder scene (above) shows a gate, the assassinated Darnley, and a dagger that seems to be floating in the air (in the upper right-hand corner). In the play, Macbeth asks, "Is this a dagger I see before me"? Lady Macbeth later calls it an "air-drawn dagger." William Cecil's agent in Scotland sent the sketch and a variety of investigative records to Cecil in London.

Traumatized by fear and horror, accused by some of complicity in her husband's murder, Mary collapsed into a trance-like depression similar to that of Lady Macbeth. In his 1935 biography of the Queen of Scots, Stefan Zweig speculated at length on the "remarkable similarities" between her condition and Lady Macbeth's. Drawing on his studies of psychology, he suggests that both suffer pangs of conscience, become depressed and physically ill (209-12). Zweig probably developed his insights independently; he does not indicate that he had read Winstanley.

The first Macbeth play?

Darnley's assassination and Bothwell's involvement inspired an interlude or play that was written within months of his death, the only play of the time known to depict a contemporary event and one that might be considered an early version of *Macbeth*. Sir William Drury mentioned it in his letter of May 14, 1567 to William Cecil: "There has been an interlude of boys at Stirling of the manner of the King's death and the arraignment of the earl . . . This was before the Lords, who the earl thinks were devisers of the same" (Winstanley 87). Drury was deputy governor of Berwick on the Scottish border, and the previous month Bothwell had challenged him for "uttering foul reproaches" (DNB). Presumably, Drury's reproaches had something to do with Darnley's murder.

The following year, in March, *The Tragedie of the Kinge of Scottes* was performed by the Children of the Chapel for Queen Elizabeth in London. Stopes, the first to bring it to light, suggested in 1916 that this lost, anonymous tragedy "might even have represented the death of Darnley, which had happened on the 9th of February in the year before" (95-6). E.K. Chambers backhandedly recognized the possibility that the tragedy was the first Macbeth play. "We do not know," he wrote, "whether Macbeth was the theme of a tragedy of *The Kinge of Scottes* given at court in 1567-68" (*Shakespeare* 1:476). Both Stopes and Chambers implicitly raise the possibility of the *King of Scottes* tragedy being a first version of *Macbeth*, but they stop short of recognizing the implications. It would have been far too early for Will Shakspeare to have written it.

Darnley's assassination caused a sensation in London. As a ward in the household of William Cecil, councilor to Queen Elizabeth, Oxford was perfectly placed to hear about the assassination, see the sketch with the air-drawn dagger and peruse the extensive Scottish records of the investigation, which included many dramatic details that turn up in *Macbeth*. Fifteen years later, he would be identified as patron of the Children of the Chapel, the same acting troupe that performed *The Tragedie of the Kinge of Scottes* for Elizabeth as recorded in the Revels Accounts for 1567-8 (4.144).

The only other credible candidates for authorship of the tragedy are George Gascoigne and Thomas Norton. Gascoigne's two plays at that time were translations from the Greek and Italian, whereas *The Tragedie of the Kinge of Scottes* must have been original. Norton is famous for having written *Gorboduc* with Thomas Sackville, but it was produced nearly a decade earlier, and it is his only known play (3.320-1, 456-7). Neither playwright is known to have had any special interest in Scottish politics. Also not credible as the anonymous dramatist are the few other obscure or anonymous playwrights in Edmund Chambers's lists for that period, most of whom translated classics or wrote on classical themes (4.1-54).

Whether Oxford wrote the tragedy in 1567/8 must remain speculation. He entered Gray's Inn, the law school, in February, 1567, three months before the performance of the interlude in Scotland. No records indicate that he was in Scotland at that time. On the other hand, he did not have to be there to write the tragedy, and it's hard to imagine what other writer so early in the history of Elizabethan theater might have written such a play for performance for Queen Elizabeth by the acting company that would later be identified as Oxford's own. Pending new evidence, however, its authorship must remain an intriguing conjecture.

Violations of hospitality

Macbeth, of course, is a play about a usurper whose overweening ambition leads him to assassinate his king—but there’s more to it than that. Macbeth and his equally ambitious wife compound the evil by killing King Duncan when he was a guest in their home. They sin against the law of hospitality—that a host owes his guest food, shelter and safety from harm. Toward the end of Act I, Shakespeare explicitly invokes the law of hospitality. Duncan has arrived and Macbeth, alone, wavers in a soliloquy: “He’s here in double trust,” says Macbeth, “first, as I am his kinsman and his subject, strong both against the deed; then as his host, who should against his murderer shut the door, not bear the knife myself” (1.7.12-16). Violation of hospitality, a major theme of the play, is drawn not from the Macbeth legend, but from the earlier murder of a king who was a guest in his assailant’s castle. Not generally recognized is that Banquo is also a guest who is slain by his host. “Here’s our chief guest,” says Macbeth, welcoming him (3.1.11). Macbeth then hires killers to assassinate Banquo, whom he considers a potential rival.

The reason the dramatist went out of his way to incorporate the violation of hospitality in the play may well be because it was the common characteristic of an extraordinary sequence of slayings during the reign of Elizabeth. As Miller points out, no less than five monarchs or would-be rulers were killed or attacked by their hosts in struggles for political power. And in every case, the victims’ hosts violated the law of hospitality, essential for civilized life. It was not a good time for a king to accept invitations.

Five years after Darnley was betrayed by his hosts came another sensational assassination. In France, Admiral Coligny, the highly respected leader of the Protestant Huguenots, was killed in an assassination that was also a violation of hospitality, triggering the sensational St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre. Coligny and his Protestant followers had been invited by Catherine de Medici, the

The St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre. The central figures show the murder and beheading of Admiral Coligny (from a contemporary painting).



Queen Mother, to the wedding of her daughter. According to English history, she plotted with Roman Catholic noblemen to massacre her wedding guests. Oxford, now twenty-three, heard about the assassinations and the rampage by Catholics that followed. He wrote to his father-in-law, William Cecil Lord Burghley, about his concern that a moderate like Admiral Coligny

could be assassinated and that Burghley and Queen Elizabeth might be vulnerable to similar plots (Ward 71-2). Again, Oxford was in a position to learn about details of an assassination, details that turn up in *Macbeth*.

Like Lady Macbeth, Catherine de Medici was often depicted as the fiendish power behind the throne. It was said that her son, the King of France, hesitated before agreeing to Coligny's assassination, but her prodding convinced him to go along with the plan, just as Lady Macbeth hectored Macbeth into killing Duncan. At the end of the play, Malcolm describes Lady Macbeth as a "fiend-like queen" (5.8.70). Catherine de Medici supposedly gave the signal to ring a church bell—the signal to kill Coligny and his entourage. In the play, Macbeth orders a servant to have Lady Macbeth ring a bell when his drink is ready. When the bell rings, Macbeth, having screwed his courage to the sticking place, takes it to be a signal to kill King Duncan. "The bell invites me," he says. "Hear it not, Duncan, for it is a knell/that summons thee to heaven or to hell" (2.1.32, 63-5).

Two years later, Walter Devereux, the first earl of Essex and commander of the English forces in Ireland, invited an Irish chieftain and relatives to a dinner meeting in Belfast, seized them and their followers at the banquet and had them killed—another brazen sin against hospitality (DNB).

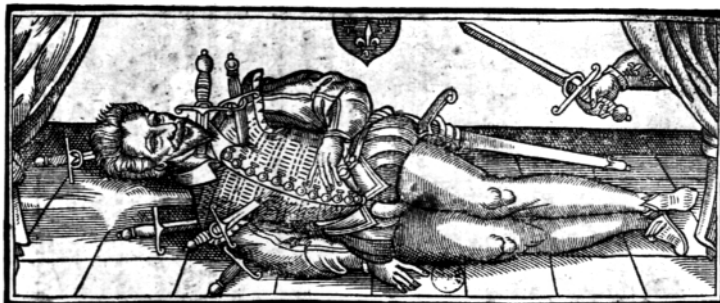
After Darnley's assassination, his widow was forced to abdicate. Mary escaped from her enemies in Scotland, put her trust in Elizabeth and accepted her hospitality and safety in England. However, her presence came to be seen as a threat to the English Queen, at least in the eyes of Elizabeth's advisers, and Mary became a political prisoner. Elizabeth alternated between her fear that Catholic plotters might use Mary to unseat her and her duty to treat a cousin and an anointed fellow-queen as a protected guest. Reluctantly, she finally gave in to her fears and allowed her long-time prisoner-guest to be tried for treason in 1587. Mary's quest for hospitality and safety in the England of Elizabeth ended with her trial and execution. Oxford, now thirty-seven, was one of two dozen commissioners at her treason trial.

Gifts of diamonds figure both in the play and in Mary's search for safety. Banquo tells Macbeth that the king, who has gone to bed, "sent forth great largess to your offices. This diamond he greets your wife withal, by the name of most kind hostess . . ." (2.1.14). When Mary took refuge in England, she sent Elizabeth a large diamond (Miller/E.T. Clark 842).

The following year, in France, Henry III invited his rival, the Duke of Guise, known as the King of the Parisians, to Blois for a private audience. Henry's royal guard assassinated his guest. A friend of Eva Turner Clark, Esther Singleton, called to Clarks's attention that the apparition of the eight kings in *Macbeth* is very similar to a report that Catherine de Medici, mother-in-law of Mary Queen of Scots, had once seen an apparition of the future kings of France in a mirror (809-23).

Thus, from 1567, when he

The assassination of the Duke of Guise. From a contemporary engraving.



was seventeen, to 1589, when he was thirty-nine, Oxford was aware of a series of slayings that involved, not just the murder or execution of a political leader, usually a ruler, but in every case a violation of the law of hospitality. Moreover, he was in a position in Burghley's household and at Court to learn of obscure details that turn up in *Macbeth*.

Additional Scottish topicalities

Another proposed source for *Macbeth* is the Gowrie conspiracy of 1600. Arthur Melville Clark, an independent Stratfordian scholar from Scotland, proposed it as the primary influence. He found other obscure topicalities in the play as well. The Gowrie Conspiracy was an alleged attempt to assassinate King James VI of Scotland three years before he also became James I of England. James maintained that he had been lured to Gowrie castle, where he and his fellow-guests thwarted what he described as an attempted assassination by his hosts and political rivals, following a banquet. It's a fascinating incident, one which has provoked much speculation that James himself engineered it to get rid of his rivals (he had them killed) and make himself a hero. It's still an open question for historians of Scotland. Although several parallels between the Gowrie Conspiracy and *Macbeth* are striking—far more so than between *Macbeth* and the Gunpowder Plot—there is no reason that, given the example of the Darnley assassination and other murderous violations of hospitality, the dramatist had to wait until 1600 to write the play. It is, of course, possible that after the Gowrie Conspiracy he was inspired to revise parts of his play.

Whether or not the Gowrie Conspiracy influenced the writing or rewriting of *Macbeth* in 1602 or 1603, Arthur Clark is one of three Stratfordians who identified significant topical allusions in the play that could have been written only by someone who knew Scotland first-hand. These led him to conclude that Shakespeare—his man from Stratford—must have visited Scotland.

Two of these allusions are to fine points of Scots law: “double trust” and “interdiction.” Clark entitled his 1981 book, *Murder Under Trust: The Topical Macbeth*, because, as noted above, Macbeth says of Duncan: “He's here in double trust: First, as I am his kinsman and his subject, strong both against the deed; then as his host, who should against his murderer shut the door, not bear the knife myself” (1.7.12). The “double trust” concept was enacted into law in 1587 when the Scottish Parliament raised from mere homicide to treason the slaying of someone of rank who was also a guest of his slayer, with the trial to be held in the highest court. The act was passed after the Macdonald clan killed eighty-six men of the McLean clan who had been invited to a banquet and entertainment. This “double trust” concept was only in Scots law (46).

The legal term “interdiction” occurs in the strange colloquy between Macduff and Malcolm. Macduff laments that Malcolm, the heir to the throne, “by his own interdiction stands accused and does blaspheme his breed” (4.3.107). This refers in Scots law to someone conscious of his failings who gives up or is forced to give up the management of his own affairs, which is what Malcolm seemed to be doing, much to Macduff's dismay (46).

Scotland's geography and weather

The dramatist also was knowledgeable about Scotland's geography and used at least one local idiom correctly. Arthur Clark says Shakespeare correctly situates Dunsinane, Great Birnam Wood, Forres, Inverness, the Western Isles, Colmekill, Saint Colme, and the lands that gave their names to the thanes: Fife, Glamis, Cawdor, Ross, Lennox, Mentieth, Angus and Caithness (31). Maps of Scotland were rare, and only someone who had been there could have situated the places so accurately. Even the Scots were vague about their geography. Stopes calls attention to Banquo's question: "How far is it called to Forres"? (1.3.39) "Called," she says, was a typical Scots locution of the time, since rarely did anyone in Scotland know accurate distances (98).

The weather in *Macbeth* is typically Scottish. In Act I, Macbeth says to Banquo, "So fair and foul a day I have not seen," a gratuitous comment on Scotland's rapidly changing weather compared to England's (1.3.38). When King Duncan arrives at Macbeth's castle at Inverness to spend the night (his last) he comments on the mild weather: "This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air nimbly and sweetly recommends itself unto our gentle senses." Banquo agrees: "Heaven's breath smells wooingly here. The air is delicate" (1.6.1-9). According to Stopes, an Englishman could not have written these passages unless he had visited Inverness and experienced the unexpected mildness of its climate. She says Shakespeare (and she assumes the man from Stratford) probably visited Inverness (98). Arthur Clark also notes that Inverness has an unusually mild "microclimate" distinct from the rest of Scotland, and he too wonders how Shakespeare could have known about it without having visited Inverness (33, 187).

Other topical allusions in the play are subtle, but telling. For example, Ross says Scotland suffers greatly under Macbeth and "good men's lives expire before the flowers in their caps" (4.3.170). That is an allusion to the sprig of flower or plant that a Scotsman wore in his cap to identify his clan (A.M. Clark 32). In Act V, Macbeth gets ready for battle and calls out impatiently for his armor-bearer, named Seton. The legends of Macbeth do not mention any Setons, but adding him to the play was perfectly appropriate. Professor Wilson of the University of Edinburgh marveled that "somehow or other" Shakespeare learned that the Setons were the hereditary armor-bearers to the kings of Scotland (xlii). He goes on to suggest reluctantly that Shakespeare (of Stratford) must have visited Scotland—reluctantly, because there is no evidence for such a visit, nor is one likely.

Oxford in Scotland

Oxford, on the other hand, was in Scotland for several months in 1570 when he was nineteen-turning-twenty. In his biography of William Cecil Lord Burghley, Conyers Read says Burghley sent his son Thomas Cecil and his ward the young Earl of Rutland to join the Queen's forces in putting down the Catholic "Northern Rebellion." He probably would also have sent Oxford, his other noble ward, had he not been ill at the time (2.126). Oxford wrote Cecil on November 24, 1569 that his health was restored, reminding him of his promise "to have me see the wars and services in strange and foreign places." He asked to "be called to the service of my prince and country."

Oxford's request was granted around March 30 when Burghley authorized payment of forty pounds to Oxford "as the Queen's Majesty sendeth at this present the Earl of Oxford into the north parts to remain with my Lord of Sussex, and to be employed there in Her Majesty's service" (Ward 40).

The author of *Macbeth* showed a special interest in the fourth Earl of Lennox and his Countess, who both appear in the play, although neither is mentioned in the historical legend of Macbeth. The Earl has a fairly prominent role. While Oxford was with Sussex, the English invaded Scotland twice and Sir William Drury (quoted above regarding the 1567 interlude) led troops escorting Lennox to Edinburgh, where he was to rule over Scotland as regent on behalf of Queen Elizabeth (DNB). Four years later, Lennox's widow and Oxford would be among the guests at a country house party given by Burghley.

The best estimate is that Oxford would have been on the Scottish border and in Scotland—including perhaps with Drury on his mission to Edinburgh—for up to seven months, from April to October. Ward says he probably returned to London in late summer or early autumn. Sussex returned to Newcastle in September and to London in November (49). Oxford may well have returned with him at that time.

Sussex, the military commander, with whom Oxford was associated later, also had an interest in the theater. He had an acting company that became the Lord Chamberlain's Men when he took that position two years later. Oxford was in his twenties and spending most of his time at Court when the Lord Chamberlain's Men were performing for Queen Elizabeth. A few years later, after Oxford returned from his travels on the Continent, the Lord Chamberlain's Men performed half a dozen plays whose titles sound like early versions of Shakespeare plays. Unfortunately, the records name no author of these early Court plays, and the scripts have not been found (E.T. Clark 4-6).

William of Stratford in Scotland?

Several Stratfordian scholars, recognizing the intensely Scottish atmosphere of the play, have suggested that Will Shakspeare of Stratford traveled to Scotland, although there is no documentary evidence for it. They say he might have been in Scotland around 1601-2 with Lawrence Fletcher's acting company. Wilson cautiously suggested:

We do know, however, that "English comedians" were in Scotland from 1599 onwards, to the scandal of the Edinburgh Kirk Sessions, and that they were led by one Laurence Fletcher, whose name later appears with Shakespeare's as one of the principal members of the King's company constituted by royal patent on 19 May 1603. We know, too, that players can do nothing without plays; and, although no title or tittle of what they acted has survived, it is at least conceivable that Shakespeare's longer *Macbeth* was first produced by Fletcher's company in the capital city of Scotland. Indeed, if I may continue to live dangerously, it is even possible that Shakespeare visited Scotland himself. (xlii)

Stopes was bolder, stating that the Stratford man "very probably joined" the English actors in Scotland, apparently in her view simply because "there is no record of 'Shakespeare's Company'

playing in London between March 1601 and December 1602" (99).

This scenario, however, is weak on several counts. Fletcher's theatrical career up to that point was totally in Scotland, where he was a favorite of King James. He had no known connection with acting companies in London until he went there with James in 1603. The identities of the "English comedians" in Scotland is unknown. That Will Shakspeare was among them seems unlikely. In his survey of "English Players in Scotland," Chambers rejects the idea that Shakspeare and the Chamberlain's men were in Scotland (*Shakespeare* 2.269)

A chronicle and a house party

Besides the topicalities noted by Oxfordian and Stratfordian scholars that point to Oxford as the author of *Macbeth*, an unusual source document adds to the evidence. It is William Stewart's chronicle of Scotland, one of ten such chronicles, including Holinshed's. Stewart translated Hector Boece's chronicle from Latin into the Scottish vernacular in 1531-35, embellishing it with details that turn up in *Macbeth*. The original existed only in manuscript for centuries.

Stopes, who first called attention to Stewart's manuscript, points to three passages (102-3). One passage of sixty-five lines describes thoughts and motives of Macbeth and his wife that correspond closely to passages in the play. A passage of eight lines is reflected in Act I when Macbeth tells his wife that Duncan and others have honored him and that he will not proceed in their plot to kill him (1.7.34). Wilson notes that "Boece and Holinshed have nothing corresponding to this, and yet how well it sums up the pity of Macbeth's fall as Shakespeare represents it" (xix).

Finally, when Lady Macbeth taunts Macbeth with being a coward and unmanly and breaking his vow to seek the crown (1.7.36-61), her long tirade draws directly on twenty-six lines in Stewart's chronicle, according to Stopes. Nothing like these correspondences appears in any of the other chronicles of Scotland. As Stopes sums up: "In every case in which Stewart differs from Holinshed, Shakespeare follows Stewart" (102). She provides the texts of the passages in Stewart's Scottish vernacular in end notes, but does not translate them into English (336-40).

Others have rejected the influence of Stewart's manuscript. Wilson, after first agreeing with Stopes, changed his mind, according to Muir, who does not, however, say why or where Wilson retracted his view (xvii). Neither Muir nor Chambers agreed with the parallels found by Stopes. Muir is cautious: "It seems to me that resemblances between Stewart and Shakespeare are accidental No one, moreover, has provided any plausible explanation of how Shakespeare obtained access to the manuscript of Stewart's poem" (xviii, xxxix-xl). Chambers is somewhat more definite in his rejection: "There is not much substance in the suggestions that some of Shakespeare's departures from Holinshed are due to this [Stewart's manuscript]" (*Shakespeare* 1.476).

Geoffrey Bullough allows in his comprehensive work on Shakespeare sources that "there are parallels between Stewart's chronicle and the play," but he adds immediately "they are indecisive and appear elsewhere" (7:438). "Elsewhere" is chiefly in George Buchanan's 1582 history of Scotland, which drew on all the earlier sources, according to Paul (222)—but with one significant exception, Stewart's embellished translation of Boece.

Orthodox scholars realized that Stewart's chronicle was a problem for them because only someone with access to the original manuscript—in royal hands—could have seen it. No manuscript copies are known to have been made, not surprising since it is 43,000 lines long and in the Scottish vernacular. It was not printed until the mid-nineteenth century (A.M. Clark 187). No other writers of Shakespeare's time referred to it (Barrell/Clark 857). Stopes and Arthur Clark are thus forced to surmise that the actor from Stratford must have been in Scotland to see it, although, of course, there is no evidence he traveled there, much less got into the royal library, or, once there, managed to decipher the Scottish vernacular.

Charles Wisner Barrell suggests that Oxford, who might have seen the manuscript chronicle when he was in Scotland, probably saw it as a result of his connection, through Burghley, to the Countess of Lennox, who was closely related to Scottish and English royalty (E.T. Clark 857-8). No one in England at that time was more likely to have Stewart's manuscript in their possession. Lady Lennox's grandmother, the Queen of Scotland, had commissioned it for her brother, James V, now dead more than thirty years. Much later scholars found it in the library of her grandson, James I of England. Given Oxford's position in aristocratic circles, he had unique opportunities to see Stewart's manuscript chronicle, whether in Scotland or England.

Barrell notes too that the author of *Macbeth* had a particular interest in the Countess of Lennox (E.T. Clark 861-2). Besides an anachronistic Earl of Lennox, the dramatist also added a Lady Lennox, whom modern text editors have removed from the play. In the First Folio, the first printing of the play, she is included in the stage direction near the beginning of Act III Scene 1: "Enter Macbeth as King, Lady Lennox, Rosse, Lords and Attendants." After Macbeth welcomes Banquo as his guest, Lady Lennox—designated "La"—says her only three lines in the play:

If he had been forgotten,
It had been as a gap in our great Feast,
And all-thing unbecoming. (3.1.11-13)

Since Lady Lennox has such a small role, text editors changed the stage direction to replace her with Lady Macbeth, who enters with Macbeth and the others, adding Lennox himself to those entering on stage, although he says nothing in the scene. They give the three lines by "La" to Lady Macbeth, even though she has no other lines in the scene and was not in the original stage direction. The triple switch—removing Lady Lennox and adding Lady Macbeth and the Earl of Lennox—is perhaps understandable, since whoever the speaker, she calls it "our" great feast, implying the feast of Lord and Lady Macbeth. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the dramatist anachronistically added a Lord and Lady Lennox to his play, an addition that makes little sense unless the author knew the Lennoxes and wished to please them.

When Oxford was twenty-four years old, he and Lady Lennox were guests at a country house party where everyone had a personal interest in Scottish politics. They were guests of Lord Burghley, Oxford's father-in-law, on September 19 and 20, 1574, at Theobolds, Burghley's house north of London, which was noted for its dinner parties (Barrell/E.T. Clark 858). Oxford had just returned

from his brief foray to Holland, where, it was rumored, he was consorting with Scotsmen.

Among the guests was Henry Percy, eighth Earl of Northumberland, and his wife. Percy had been imprisoned for treason for offering to help Mary Queen of Scots escape England. Five years earlier, as a more loyal subject of Elizabeth, he had fought beside the Earl of Sussex against the northern rebels in the campaign that took Oxford into Scotland (DNB). Another was Lady Hunsdon, about fifty, whose husband was governor of Berwick on the Scottish border and, like Northumberland, had commanded an English force under Sussex during the Northern Rebellion (DNB). He had recently been named Vice-Chamberlain of the Royal Household under Sussex, a post that gave him authority over Court theatricals. Earlier, in 1564, he had been the patron of an acting company. That was three years before the Darnley assassination and the appearance of *The Tragedie of the Kinge of Scottes*. His company would also be active in the 1580s, when he became Lord Chamberlain (Chambers *Shakespeare* 2.192-3).

The Countess of Lennox herself was a pivotal figure in Scottish and English politics. Her late husband had been with Sussex, Drury and Oxford in the campaigns at the Scottish border. She was the mother of the assassinated Lord Darnley, and she and Lord Lennox campaigned vigorously to have Bothwell tried for the murder of their son. Both had strong claims to the English throne. A granddaughter of Henry VII of England, she grew up as a favorite of Henry VIII and lived most of her life in England, where she acted as agent and strategist for her husband. At the time of the dinner party, Lady Lennox was living in the same house in Hackney where Oxford would live the last years of his life (Miller 2.157). In her late fifties, the Countess, with all her Scottish and English connections, must have been a fascinating guest at the famous dinners. In her recent biography, Kimberly Schutte describes her as a prickly, strong-willed, outspoken woman with an overweening ambition for her family, adept at marital scheming (1-2).

Summary

On balance, the evidence points to Oxford as the author. The cumulative effect is powerful. The dramatist who wrote *Macbeth* knew Scotland so well he must have spent time there. He knew about its weather, its customs and its unique law of “double trust.” He had access to details of several assassinations that turn up in *Macbeth*, especially those concerning the assassination of Lord Darnley. He was in a position to see William Stewart’s manuscript with its unique details that appear in the play. And, although speculative, there is the intriguing possibility that his first version of *Macbeth* was *The Tragedie of the Kinge of Scottes*, written when he was eighteen. All scholars agree that the text of *Macbeth* in the First Folio shows clear signs of rewriting and was probably longer in earlier versions.

As a result of the work of six Stratfordian scholars—Stopes, Winstanley, Wilson, Arthur Clark, Amneus and Carroll—as well as Oxfordians Miller and Barrell, the preponderance of evidence supports the Oxfordian view that the dramatist wrote the first version of *Macbeth* long before 1606 and that he was not Will Shakspere of Stratford-on-Avon but Edward de Vere, seventeenth earl of Oxford, writing under the pseudonym *William Shakespeare*. _____ ❧

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