

Title: The Past of *Macbeth*
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Publication Details: *Shakespeare Matters: History, Teaching, Performance*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003.
Source: *Shakespearean Criticism*. Ed. Michelle Lee. Vol. 100. Detroit: Gale, 2006. p46-61. From *Literature Resource Center*.
Document Type: Critical essay

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[(essay date 2003) *In the following essay, Cohen underscores Shakespeare's limited reference to his characters' pasts in Macbeth, arguing that this selectivity in characterization contributes to a powerful sense of immediacy and alienation in the drama.*]

What is true of endings is also true of beginnings. Lady Macbeth's mysteriously missing children present an ominous, unknown, but undeniable time before the beginning. Doubtful beginnings are also incidentally inherent in such details of the play as Macduff's non-birth. Indeed the beginnings, sources, causes of almost everything in the play are at best nebulous.--Steven Booth, "*King Lear*," "*Macbeth*," *Indefinition, and Tragedy*

Lady Macbeth's children, present either in her mind as a figment, or in her memory as a piece of her history, allude to something singular and usually unnoticed about the play. The characters of Macbeth are almost entirely without evident personal history. There is only the most sparse and scattered mention of the events and the time that precede the beginning of the drama. For a play that centers vividly and painfully on the effects of remorse--a feeling that by definition is possible only by the exercise of memory--this is an astonishing fact. Indeed, Lady Macbeth's memory of having suckled her infant is one of remarkably few specific memories of a time earlier than the events of the play. Memories such as these lend sensory focus to the present; they fill it suddenly and disquietingly with remembered feelings. More usually in *Macbeth* those feelings are of fear and danger and produce the sensation and threat of panic in the actors in the tragedy.

Tragedy is, I think, a response to the human urge to panic in the face of dread. The fear of disintegration is constructed as a means of warding off, controlling, or mastering the panic impulse. Tragedy is panic with circumference and form. The deconstructionist notion of immanent displacement, where the wholeness of the work is illusionary, is well exemplified in the constructions of tragedy. The genre's success is contingent on disaster and the danger of the narrative emotionally overwhelming the boundaries of completeness, which are only ostensible. What lingers beyond these boundaries is the power of the tragic--and the panic--experience of calamity endured. Macbeth, carrying two bloodstained daggers, confronting his wife minutes after the great murder of the play, asks, "Didst thou not hear a noise?" (2.2.14). He has heard the stamping of the hoof of Pan; the abyss yawns and he must act to avoid it. Evident here is a clear link between tragedy and memory: the memory that produces the impulse to panic is amongst the most powerful stimuli of the dread by which tragedy is animated and that, at the same time, it seeks to contain.

The characters of the play make only about a dozen direct references in the whole of *Macbeth* to personal experiences before the action of the drama begins.¹ These references themselves fall into two categories: specific memories of particular events or people, and vague allusions to possible and probable memories of feelings and sensations that seem to have preceded the action. The categories themselves are capable of resolution into subcategories and types--such as, in the first instances, the difference between persons actually known and remembered and those known by report. In short, the world that existed before the first line of the play is presented as nebulous and curiously disconnected from the present action. The play exists solidly in the present; its protagonists lean hopefully and desperately toward the future. This tendency away from the present and toward a better time is appropriate for a play so specific in its complimentary references to James, the reigning monarch, and one that, John Turner argues, explores "the language, metaphor and myth of a society which we are encouraged to identify as the prehistory of the present."²

The implications of such selective and limited temporal focuses offer subtle insights into the workings of the drama as drama, and drama as history. On the dramatic level, the excitement of the play is made more intense by this absence of the personal. On the historical level, the past cannot be measured or invoked as a molding force in the lives of the characters with anything like the depth or power with which it operates in other dramas. In *Othello*, for example, every crucial action is almost literally informed by specified preplay experiences and remembered actual events, and registered, if not distorted, by history. This presence of the past richly informs and determines the play's character and direction. *Othello's* past is replete with remembered detail and is a source of energy in the present, while *Macbeth's* is poor and random. The difference in each case is a strong determinant of action.

Now, this is not to say that the twelve references to the past are the only evidence of past life. Clearly, other ways of presenting history and the merely personal past in *Macbeth* do exist. Certain historical realities are vivid. A multiplicity of facts, allusions, practices, habits of address, modes of discourse and of speech, and customs of verbal and physical behavior indicate the reality of the past and the

groundedness of the play in a vital history. And indeed the drama insistently implies continuity with the history it enacts and with which it continuously becomes a part. For example, his title alone tells a great deal about Macbeth the individual subject and Macbeth the social and political personage. The title, thane of Glamis, indicates a locus in a social order that is itself imbricated in an established political and historical tradition. Of Macbeth's history within this context, we learn much within minutes of hearing his name: he is a valued and loyal soldier of his monarch; he has wealth and friends; he is married; he is, more simply, a man of a certain age--young enough to be a vigorous warrior and old enough to command men; he inhabits an old country; his nation possesses evidence of a stable and long-established political system.

In other words, Macbeth, like every other character in the play, is making and participating in the making of history. These are material facts about Macbeth that the audience absorbs spontaneously because they are based upon justly unquestioned assumptions about drama, culture, and social living. They help preserve the illusion that this play, like all other plays, is a complete slice out of the past. The illusion is the more ambiguous in the case of *Macbeth* since the play is so specifically concerned with the monarch for whom it was to be performed and with the issue of treason, which remained so close to his own experience. As Steven Mullaney has written:

at the heart of *Macbeth's* dramaturgical concerns lies the developing absolutism of the Jacobean state. If sixteenth-century political cosmology precluded the possibility of a fully intentional treason ... that same cosmology radically restricted the power of authority to control or contain treason's amphibology. ... James was endeavoring to extend the threshold, to redefine the boundaries of rule, and his claims for absolutism were ... grounded in the figure of a king who could, from his quasi-divine perspective, spy into the mystery of things, including the indecipherable countenance and amphibolic tongue of treason.³

The actual treason of the earl of Gowrie and the strange correlatives of the story of that treason--such as the refusal of the traitor's corpse to bleed until the written evidence of its treachery was discovered on the body in the form of allegedly magical writings--made of *Macbeth* an uncanny, bordered mirror into which the king must have gazed with mixed but mainly satisfied feelings.⁴

But the facts are, nevertheless, the mere givens of the drama. Its discursive constructions of the history or story it tells and enacts are generally silent on, or only allusive to, those features of the past that imply its own history. Indeed, my point largely is that one of the singular aspects of the various discourses of *Macbeth* is the force of that very silence and the heavy emphasis on present and future that displaces it. The impetus of *Macbeth*, its energies and motives of violently gaining and keeping power, is *felt* and carried by a relentless tension between the present tense and the unremittingly hopeful anticipation of security supplied by the future. Part of the mystery of the witches of *Macbeth*, and of preternatural characters generally, is precisely that they are not subject to time or the constructions of history, or, for that matter, to the changes that history and the past enforce. Paradoxically, however, just because they are old it follows that they must be subject, in some usually undefined fashion, to the temporal workings of nature, even if not in a normal or recognizable human sense. The witches crucially define the drama: their presence in the first scene establishes the commanding authority of the uncanny as the new and essential realm of habitation and action. From the moment he sees them, Macbeth is made aware that he has ceased to live in a world of rational matters. This being the case, the irrational becomes valorized, and the unthinkable and unmanageable suddenly acquire realizable possibility. This has become a world where the abnormal and the absurd have the power to speak and to predict--all earlier bets are off. The witches are terrible evidence of the contamination that adheres to "the warrior returning to his homeland, still tainted with the slaughter of war," according to René Girard, who goes on to explain that the "returning warrior risks carrying the seed of violence into the very heart of the city" or among his people.⁵ Macbeth moves forward from his encounter with the witches without having cleansed himself of the blood that clings to him after the battle. His plunge into murder is an almost logical progression by which he seals his connection to the present and his distance from the past.

The first direct reference to any life experience prior to the beginning of the play comes in the fourth scene. Malcolm is reporting a version of the thane of Cawdor's death by "one that saw him die" (1.4.4). The speech alludes to the trust, faith, and friendship that existed before Cawdor's earlier treachery:

That very frankly he confessed his treasons,
Implored your highness' pardon, and set forth
A deep repentance. Nothing in his life
Became him like the leaving it. He died
As one that had been studied in his death
To throw away the dearest thing he owed
As 'twere a careless trifle.
(1.4.5-11)

It is not clear that Cawdor is already dead at the start of the play--but it is possible. This secondhand report, however, strikes a peculiar note. The strangeness and violence of language and action of the first three scenes are given a kind of respite here: it is a still moment of reflection that interrupts and thus momentarily transforms the process of history-in-the-making that the play so egregiously is. Duncan's response to the speech, filled with yearning and disappointment, is deeply ironic:

There's no art

The moment radically reverses the movement of the drama. The past lives of these characters, only nervously present up to now, are shown to have a violently transformative power and, in being thus shown, reveal a powerful reason for the absence of the past or, more sinisterly, a reason why these characters may be avoiding it. Through the spontaneous exercise of memory, the past leaps unbidden and unwelcomed into Lady Macbeth's conscious mind from that place in the subconscious where it is kept, only to be prompted to life by familiar images and likenesses. The drama is made fearfully intense here by the momentary possibility that Duncan's life, whose loss is signified by the bloody hands and daggers of Macbeth, might have been saved by the single coincidence of his resemblance to Lady Macbeth's father. Terrible nostalgia is contained in these words; it enforces upon Lady Macbeth a crippling coalescence of memory and feeling that forbids her to act out her desire. Our eyes, filled with the sight of Macbeth covered in blood, tell us that Duncan is already dead; our ears tell us that he might have been spared. The moment is suffused with tragic helplessness; the verge of going back has been traversed. From now on the idea of what might have been springs into awful life, only to be crushed by what is.

The scruple--Lady Macbeth would not have killed her father--adds something to the moment as it interrupts the rapid pace of the plunge to achievement and destruction. The moment is also pregnant with a sign of the weakness of the whole enterprise: that weakness, as the play intermittently and vaguely shows (and conceals), is the continuous presence of the buried and subterranean past. The moment is punctuated by the recognition, made visible, of Macbeth's bloody appearance. Images and signs coalesce with the dominant words of the short speech giving way to the short parade of significant male figures: the king--the "he"--becomes "my father," and "my father" becomes "my husband!" Male identities merge in the powerful image of Macbeth, who stands bloodily before his wife, as the two other male figures, father and king, are reconsigned to memory.

And yet, the past as constructed here, is not separate from the present. It is shown to be a crucial part of it. The fifth example of the use of the preplay past is more purely and conventionally historical. In act 2, scene 4, the Old Man looks back to a less confused and turbulent time. He recalls:

Threescore and ten I can remember well,
 Within the volume of which time I have seen
 Hours dreadful and things strange, but this sore night
 Hath trifled former knowings.
 (2.4.1-4)

The human habit of trying to make sense of the present by comparing it with the past is a way of supplying a comforting perspective to present events. It is a familiar cry, perhaps more justifiable here than usual. The old days were innocent compared to these. The past gives authority to this grim evaluation of the present horrors. The Old Man and Ross proceed to catalog the recent eruptions and deformations of nature as prognostications.

In Macbeth's second reference to the past--and only the sixth in the play--he uses the idea of history, the authority that the past is supposed to carry, to manipulate the present. Macbeth tells the two murderers hired to kill Banquo that

it was he in the times past which held you
 So under fortune, which you thought had been
 Our innocent self.
 (3.1.78-80)

And he asks them,

Are you so gosselled,
 To pray for this good man and for his issue,
 Whose heavy hand hath bowed you to the grave
 And beggared yours for ever?
 (3.1.89-92)

With the murderers, we become ensnared by a possibly falsified version of the past. There is, of course, no way of confirming this version of the events before the play. What signifies, however, is Macbeth's perceived need to use or invent history to advance his purpose. Thus while he strains to determine the future by the intense and violent perversion of the present, inevitably the past becomes corrupted and compromised, a thing of use and a means of stabilizing Macbeth's uncertain rule. The murderers represent themselves as qualified for their task by virtue of their personal histories, their preplay lives. The Second Murderer has been made "reckless" by "vile blows and buffets" (3.1.110) while the First is "weary with disasters" (3.1.113) and ill luck. Both are ready for labor, however criminal or violent. Private history has molded present disposition--an allusion to the social roots of crime.

The banquet scene supplies yet another occasion for the fusion of lies and truth; the past is pressed into the service of the present. Macbeth's access of conscience is explained by his lady as a manifestation of an old condition. When the ghost of Banquo prompts the plea (or threat), "never shake / Thy gory locks at me" (3.4.49-50), Lady Macbeth attempts an explanation whose feebleness adverts to the schism between truth and falsehood that the Macbeth enterprise has caused: "Sit, worthy friends. My lord is often thus, / And hath been from his youth" (3.4.52-53). The excuse is palpable and unconvincing; the hallucination is clearly fired by the recently suborned murder.

The history that Lady Macbeth here invents becomes an inadequate buttress of the present. It is invoked in order to give Macbeth's present behavior a link to an innocent, preroyal, preplay self. Furthermore, it argues the existence of a youthful, innocent Macbeth, possessed, even as a child, by private demons. The haunted, raving monarch is thus connected to a haunted, raving boy, untrammelled by the responsibilities of power and official authority. It is, of course, doubtful that such a youth ever existed. However, the effect of Lady Macbeth's invention is the creation of a parallel past, one that never existed in reality but one that has acquired discursive existence in the present drama. The deformed and poisoned present of the play thus stands on the shifting sands of real and of invented history. The effect of such simultaneous histories--one true, one false--is to drive the infinitely unstable present further into the wild, strange, and violent realms that Macbeth has carved out for himself.

Macbeth himself, partly raving, partly lucid, harks back over the ages to a long and terrible history of murder in which he has become an infamous actor:

Blood hath been shed ere now, i' th' olden time
 Ere human statute purged the gentle weal;
 Ay, and since too, murders have been performed
 Too terrible for the ear. The times has been
 That, when the brains were out, the man would die,
 And there an end. But now they rise again
 With twenty mortal murders on their crowns,
 And push us from our stools. This is more strange
 Than such murder is.
 (3.4.74-82)

This is the clearest attempt so far in the play to locate the present in a sequential historical pattern. The "olden time" is prehistorical, a period before the existence of law; it was, by Macbeth's desperate reckoning, a time of terrible violence. But even then the laws of nature were in effect: human life is linked through time by murder and violent death and a string of victims who, unlike the present victim, remained dead. The past, in other words, was a stable place, one in which cause and effect--violent killing and sequent death--supplied the safety of predictability: a man whose brains were bashed out was a dead man. In this moment in which Macbeth recognizes Banquo, the play realizes its own temporal indeterminacy. Only a ragged and uncertain future can emerge from a present that is impervious to the laws of certainty, themselves another construction of the laws of nature. Macbeth's terror derives from the unforeseen reign of the unnatural, where nothing is but what is not. In *Macbeth* the laws of nature are in a constant state of transgression.

Macbeth's sense of history is shadowy and sweeping. He is troubled by a past that threatens to engulf his entire being. His response is largely to avoid that past and to immerse himself in the tides of the present time that are sweeping him to the future. The present in the play seems driven by a historic force, famously encapsulated in the repeated word "tomorrow." He constructs history as a terrible and overwhelming force as he faces tomorrow: "all our yesterdays have lighted fools / The way to dusty death" (5.5.21-22).

By contrast, Macduff invokes, in his English scene with Malcolm, a different sense and kind of history. He recalls stable and sure values embodied in the deceased persons of Duncan and his queen:

Thy royal father
 Was a most sainted king. The queen that bore thee,
 Oft'ner on her knees than on her feet,
 Died every day she lived.
 (4.3.109-12)

The past, as remembered here, acquires the sharp edges of persons, behaviors, actions, and precise Christian values. Macduff is both telling and showing it: he remembers king and queen in order to shape and comprehend the present. Macduff harks back to an apparently better time, to a sure and firm-set history that includes national myths and moral touchstones by which the nation has been directed, from which it takes its heroes and villains. From these myths and stories of Scotland's past he draws a moral perspective on the present; he remembers and reminds Malcolm of what Scotland was and may be again.

By contrast, Macbeth's last memory of the world he once occupied and has now lost is contained in the dreadful and dread-filled speech in which he recollects his capacity for ordinary human fear:

I have almost forgot the taste of fears.
 The time has been my senses would have cooled
 To hear a night shriek, and my fell of hair
 Would at a dismal treatise rouse and stir
 As life were in't. I have supped full with horrors.
 Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts,
 Cannot once start me.
 (5.5.9-15)

The past merges with the present in a virtually undiscernible shift. For four-and-a-half lines Macbeth recalls a time gone by in his recollection of the person he once was; the time when he, like others, was susceptible to the feelings of fear; when he, like others, responded to a night shriek in normal terror; when his physical being--his reflexive instincts--responded involuntarily and naturally to the world of sensation. Gary Wills comments that this evident desire of Macbeth to overcome his own fears and, thus, to triumph over his own memories is part of a process set in motion after the murder of the king: "Macbeth engages in a self-refashioning that amounts to sabotage committed upon himself. He systematically disconnects the systems of reflection."⁹ Systems of reflection are, of course, entirely dependent upon memory. Macbeth refashions a self almost without memory; his vain mission is to distance himself from the source of his pain. But his memory is, in the end, inescapable. It manifests itself in a myriad of ways and no evasions can put it outside the pulsating interior self that gradually consumes everything it touches.

The final direct and specific reference in *Macbeth* to the world that existed before the play is Macduff's, as he brings into life the nightmare curse: "And let the angel whom thou still hast serv'd / Tell thee, Macduff was from his mother's womb / Untimely ripped" (5.10.14-16). The violent language here produces a curious and mixed effect. Nemesis in this play is necessarily a figure of violence; every dramatic detail has conspired to deny Macbeth a peaceful or a solitary death. The violence of Macduff's birth seems here to be evidence that the ordained mission of his life is to kill Macbeth. Mother and motherhood in this play are themselves ambiguous states in which suckling and giving birth are surrounded by images and details of violence and death. Macduff's invocation of his birth is a discursive and active means of realizing the hideous dream. Of course, the whole is predicated upon a sleight of hand: certainly Macduff was born of woman, unless the word "born" is given an entirely original, etymologically unprecedented meaning. But there has been a rent in nature's design in a world of long ago; it is this detail that convinces Macbeth that Macduff's is the hand that will slay him. The past, that world of which Macbeth is an inevitable part but which he has sought assiduously to deny, is what defeats him in the end. A small tatter in nature's plan from a world he has almost successfully avoided is the blow that crushes the tyrant.

The paucity of references to the preplay past lends immediacy to the dramaturgical discourses of *Macbeth*. From a devastated present, the outlook for most of the play is more devastation, violence, and loneliness. The presentness of the action leaves, as the play's most powerful impression, a sense of dislocation--a dislocation heightened by the nearly ubiquitous imagery of disturbance. The great rush that the Macbeths are making toward the future gives a sense of panic to the enterprise, a sense that is intensified by the apparent absence of a world of past certainties upon which the present can safely rest or depend. Panic is the dominant mood of the early scenes of the play. It is a feeling that hardens into recklessness as the play progresses; but recklessness built on panic is itself fragile. The early scenes of the play are in a constant state of anticipation of disaster. Action is the antidote to panic in this play, but it is not always efficacious. For here the panic born of the possibility of success leads to action, which only produces more panic.

The play in large measure is about what it feels like to have killed the king, in the same way that *Hamlet* is about what it feels like to have to or to want to kill the king. The two plays depend for their terror very largely on nostalgia. As Hamlet hankers for the days of innocence before his father was dead, so Macbeth, more intensely, hankers for the moment, the second, the instant before he took the fatal step. Thus, while the speech "Had I but died an hour before this chance / I had lived a blessed time, for from this instant / There's nothing serious in mortality" (2.3.87-89) can look like cynical pragmatism, many will see in it nothing but the purest and most fraught expression of remorse in the language. Macbeth is trying with these words to surround and contain the invasion of panic terror. This moment bites back at Macbeth for the rest of his life as though it were the moment he came into being; what alters as he ages in the course of the play is his manner of recollecting it.

The history of Macbeth's life loses meaning in the presence of the great murder. What matters is the present: to deal with, to cope, to do. These needs, after the crisis of murdering the king, are matters of great urgency that belong to the here and the now. The history of Macbeth is absorbed into shadows that the present and future throw over the world he strives to hold onto. Macbeth's life as an outlaw starts after the play has started. His criminality is a feature of that present reality, one that appears to resist historicization; a resistance that is self-consciously centered in the hero himself, who possesses a defiantly individualistic, somewhat ahistorical and apolitical viewpoint upon his own plight. Although his own present life strews evidence of a past everywhere, in his conscious mind, in the words he speaks, Macbeth cannot linger in that old place. And yet, of course, Macbeth, like Lady Macbeth, had both father and mother. His father, Sinell, is remembered only because his death authorizes Macbeth's thane hood; but his mother has no existence in the play. No word in the drama adverts or alludes to a place or time in which the parents of Macbeth possessed relevance or existence, except, of course, in the probably fabricated history that his wife provides to explain his hallucination at the banquet. Where are they, Macbeth's mother, children, brothers, sisters, nurses, teachers? It is not that they are forgotten but that Shakespeare has contrived a means of representing formidable and alarming dramatic pace through the agency of panic and a discourse that maintains its pace by notionally jettisoning the past.

By not providing Macbeth with a fleshed out, substantial past, Shakespeare creates an impression of alienation. Macbeth seems not to belong to anyone; he is alienated even from the roots that personal history provides. He is a prime exemplar of Girard's "surrogate victim," the victim or scapegoat who comes from inside the community.¹⁰ Macbeth is the scapegoat who is guilty of the crimes with which he is charged and for which he is sacrificed. The violence of Scotland and its raging, bloody mayhem achieve apparent resolution in his death by the massive exercise of communal violence that, typically, seeks to extirpate the seeds of its own self-destruction by locating them in the person of the nation's most visible villain. His dependency upon his wife is broken at the moment when he kills Duncan. Lady Macbeth, who remembers her father at an utterly crucial time, is weakened by the memory, but she is also, in a small way, redeemed by it. Her appalling intentional cruelty is momentarily interrupted by a sudden access of human feeling brought on by a potent

and literally transforming memory. Her role as a murderess is changed to that of a woman with a conscience. Her inability to kill the king connects with the terrible expressions of remorse and regret of her mad scene where her subconscious mind reveals the existence of a latent humanity and moral instinct. Macbeth's tribulation is that the agon between moral instinct and evil ambition is played out on the stage of his *conscious* mind: he knows, sees, and confronts the horror and evil within himself. The range and extent of his crime are manifested in the intensely present mood of his struggle. Macbeth's reflection is moral and emotional rather than historical. He doesn't yearn for an easier or more innocent time; rather, he longs to recover an easier and more innocent feeling.

Feeling is no less contingent upon memory than upon moral and historical knowledge. The play is filled with evidence of ancient historical memory. Notwithstanding the characters' almost pathological inadvertence to their own past lives, there are intricate layers of historical memory and detail everywhere evident in the discourses of the drama. All of the characters, obviously, exist in a historical context that each persistently and consciously recognizes. Those contexts include the linear history to which each sees himself connected: Macbeth locates himself in a line of Scottish kings; Lady Macbeth in a line of Scottish queens. Fleance is destined to continue an established line, while Malcolm's position is to succeed to it. In short, the past is systematized through the forms of living that the present takes. King James himself is one of the more vivid, if unacknowledged, presences of the play. And Gary Wills offers a multiplicity of details describing the play's homages to the monarch. He includes references to the ways, for example, James--a Scottish Monarch, after all--was *not* to be confused with Duncan; for James possessed a much-touted ability to find, almost magically, the mind's construction in the face: "He was like an angel looking through appearances, according to Coke."¹¹ Moral certainty itself is measured by its deviation from or its adherence to established norms. In addition to the laws of the land there are the uncoded but ironbound laws of custom--notoriously that of hospitality--that reify the presence of that past.

There are, as well, the mythological pasts that bring into being the ancient Scottish, pagan, and Christian "history" in simplified moral form to add weight and authority to the discourses of disaster with which the present is informed. Golgotha, Bellona, Saint Colm, Hecate, and Tarquin are among those references whose shadowy presence in the drama help support a metaphorical structure by which history and metaphor are intertwined. The past becomes, in references such as these, a nonmaterial but substantial locus of precedent for the present. The past, in other words, looms ubiquitously in the play: it is large and it determines events, behaviors, and attitudes to a considerable extent. It possesses chiefly a kind of abstract precision. It is a touchstone and a referent; but it seems, almost contradictorily, to have little materiality. Such materiality or literalness as the past does possess in *Macbeth* is limited and discrete, confined to remarkably few moments.

Notes

1. As will become evident, it is hard to be specific as to number, some of the "experiences" being rather vague and allusive while others are quite precisely remembered events.
2. Graham Holderness, Nick Potter, and John Turner, *Shakespeare: The Play of History* (London: Macmillan, 1988), 144.
3. Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1988), 133.
4. Mullaney comments on this episode that it sets the traitor at an uncertain threshold of Renaissance society, athwart a line that sets off the human from the demonic, the natural from the natural (116).
5. René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1977), 41. John Turner addresses the issue of Macbeth's contamination via Girard in *Shakespeare: The Play of History* (137).
6. Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage*, 31.
7. Graham Holderness, "From Radical Potentiality and Institutional Closure: Shakespeare in Film and Television," in *Shakespeare, "Macbeth": A Casebook*, ed. John Wain (London: Macmillan, 1994), 259-60.
8. Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1978), 217.
9. Gary Wills, *Witches and Jesuits: Shakespeare's "Macbeth"* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press and the New York Public Library, 1995), 128.
10. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 102.
11. Wills, *Witches and Jesuits*, 30.

Source Citation: Cohen, Derek. "The Past of *Macbeth*." *Shakespeare Matters: History, Teaching, Performance*. Ed. Lloyd Davis Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003. 46-61. **Rpt. in** *Shakespearean Criticism*. Ed. Michelle Lee. Vol. 100. Detroit: Gale, 2006. 46-61. *Literature Resource Center*. Gale. McKinney Public Library. 9 Dec. 2009 <<http://go.galegroup.com/ps/start.do?p=LitRC&u=txshrp100250>>.

Gale Document Number: GALE|H1420073549