Macbeth Critical Bibliography

Bernad, Miguel A. “The Five Tragedies in Macbeth.” Shakespeare Quarterly 13, no. 1 (winter 1962): 49-61. [Bernad offers a thematic survey of Macbeth, emphasizing five distinct aspects of tragedy--physical, psychological, moral, social, and theological--within the play.]

Biggins, Dennis. “Sexuality, Witchcraft, and Violence in Macbeth.” Shakespeare Studies 8 (1976): 255-77. [Biggins studies the links between sex and violence in Macbeth, as well as the association of both with the Weird Sisters.]

De Quincey, Thomas De. “On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth,” in his The Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey, edited by David Masson, A. & C. Block, 1897, pp. 389-94. Reprinted in Shakespearean Criticism, Vol. 3. [De Quincey explains the profound effect of the knocking heard in Macbeth following Duncan’s murder.]


Twayne Publishers, 1989. [Long evaluates Macbeth as an archetypal man of action and analyzes his crimes in relation to other literary depictions of primal destruction and Christian redemption.]

Mack, Maynard. “The Many Faces of Macbeth.” In Everybody’s Shakespeare: Reflections Chiefly on the Tragedies, pp. 183-96. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993. [Mack examines many of the central thematic concerns of Macbeth, including usurpation, witchcraft, pride, crime, the blurring of the real and unreal, the collapse of community, and final judgment.]

Markels, Julian. “The Spectacle of Deterioration: Macbeth and the ‘Manner’ of Tragic Imitation.” Shakespeare Quarterly 12, no. 3 (summer 1961): 293-303. [Markels reads Macbeth as a tragedy of personal degeneration, concentrating on Macbeth as a tragic figure according to the classical, Aristotelian definition and examining his potential to elicit sympathy and find redemption.]

Zitner, Sheldon P. “Macbeth and the Moral Scale of Tragedy.” Journal of General Education 16, no. 1 (April 1964): 20-8. [Zitner comments on Shakespeare’s ability to present the numerous evil acts perpetrated by Macbeth without letting his tragedy degrade to the level of melodrama.]