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words

## **Macbeth, by William Shakespeare (c.1606)**

Trevor Turner

The 1605 Gunpowder Plot, much-quoted sayings, betrayals and killings infest Shakespeare's shortest tragedy, best played without an interval. Macbeth and his Lady who are throneward-bound murder King Duncan, Banquo (whose ghost returns), Macduff's wife and children. Witches and prophecies enthral Macbeth, Lady M goes mad with hand washing: 'canst thou not minister to a mind diseased?', he asks a physician. There are hallucinations – 'is this a dagger?', stones that 'prate' – delusions of invincibility and haunting lines on life's meaninglessness that reflect contemporary witchcraft angst and doubts. A demonic blood fest about regime change, in post-Fawkesian Britain, *Macbeth* is theatrical fireworks.

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