

many modern readers disappears behind the Celtic **Kelli Wig** and **Caer Llion ar Wysg** (Caerleon on Usk). Arthur is not only the most famous and powerful ruler (sometimes called “emperor”) in the tales, he also presides over the ideal royal court as a paragon of generosity and gentility. Nonetheless, it is at his court that some characters are offended (Peredur) or even assaulted (Gwenhwyvar), in clear violations of what would elsewhere be called courtesy. Arthur’s courts also provide convenient starting points for several of the tales, including “Culhwch,” “Owein,” and “Gereint and Enid.”

***Countryside.** Most of *The Mabinogion*’s stories entail travel for one purpose or another. While concrete routes can rarely be traced, the authors clearly associate certain types of terrain with certain moods. As might be expected, forests provide the greatest mystery and danger, as in “Gereint and Enid,” while lovely valleys, flowing rivers, and views of fine cities either contrast with characters’ black moods or accentuate the lightheartedness of the moment. The authors present these settings and details in a spare but effective way.

Cities. Neither Celtic culture nor these Welsh authors are comfortable with urban areas. London, for example, is depicted as a court rather than a town, and the towns in which the refugees of “Manawydan” seek a livelihood are hotbeds of conspiracy against the young “craftsmen.” This suggests a hint of fourteenth century mutual animosity between the bourgeois and nobles, as well as between the Welsh and English.

—Joseph P. Byrne

Mac Flecknoe

Author: John Dryden (1631–1700)

First published: 1682; revised in *Miscellany Poems*, 1684

Type of work: Poetry

Type of plot: Mock-heroic

Time of plot: Late 1670’s

Although this poem describes how the imaginary writer Thomas Shadwell comes to rule over the realms of Nonsense, its setting abounds with allusions to John Dryden’s own London, especially its districts of brothels, theaters, and publishing houses. These references help build metaphorical connections between the literary and political domains.

***River Thames** (tehmz). River running through London where the fictional poet, Mac Flecknoe, first catches sight of Shadwell, his true heir in literary ineptitude. Flecknoe beholds the ample form of Shadwell rowing a small boat in the

river that reflects his relative unimportance in the currents of literary history.

Augusta. Alternative name for London that stresses its connection to the cultural flowering of ancient Augustan Rome. A part of the inflated description of Shadwell’s surroundings that contrasts sharply with their vulgar reality.

***Barbican.** Ancient watchtower, near the Roman wall surrounding the old City of London, that has deteriorated into nonexistence by the seventeenth century. Only the name remains to describe a neighborhood full of brothels and frequented by fledgling actors and prostitutes. Ironically, the vigilance and security symbolized by the tall fortification has lapsed into a world of lowlife. Flecknoe chooses this site for the coronation of his successor, Shadwell.

***Ireland.** Island in the British Isles that fell under English rule several decades before Dryden wrote *Mac Flecknoe*. Dryden cites it as one of two places over which Shadwell might reign. Both Ireland and Barbados had reputations for savagery, which make them appropriate for Shadwell’s lack of civilized talent.

***Barbados.** Island in the West Indies whose seventeenth century sugar industry was based on slave labor. The poet adds that Irish lawbreakers might be “barbadoe’d”—transported to the New World to serve as slave labor. Shadwell, the poem implies, has transgressed against the rules of writing and churns out his hack work like one condemned to a fate of drudgery.

—Jennifer Preston Wilson

Macbeth

Author: William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

First published: 1623

First produced: 1606

Type of work: Drama

Type of plot: Tragedy

Time of plot: Eleventh century

Scotland’s history and terrain are organic to this early Jacobean tragedy, not only influencing William Shakespeare’s choice of topical contemporary subject matter, in tribute to the new Stuart British king, James I, but also enabling him to construct an exotic but recognizable atmosphere of violence and superstition. Adapting freely from a popular history of Britain, Shakespeare creates a nonrepresentational world in which history, reality, and fantasy freely alternate, commingle, and collide.

**Asterisk denotes entries on real places.*

***Scotland.** British country north of England that historically had its own language, monarchy, parliament, and culture. In the period in which *Macbeth* is set, 1040 to 1057, Scotland was beginning to form as a nation, building on its Viking and Saxon tribal nucleus, while constantly wracked by bloody internal disputes and wars with England. Shakespeare's choice of this period in Scottish history is far from accidental, as it pertains to the origin of the two Scottish royal lineages—those of Malcolm and Banquo—through which James I constructed his successful claims to the thrones of both England and Scotland. Shakespeare even stages the constitutional shift from feudal elective monarchy to patrilineal inheritance and the construction of “divine right” (to which James constantly referred), when Duncan names Malcolm as heir and Prince of Cumberland.

By the seventeenth century, Scotland was usually described in the English cultural imagination as wild and ungovernable because of its difficult topography, harsh weather, and uncivilized people. Images of Scotland, like those of Ireland and Wales, suffered from English Tudor nation-building—that is, “England” was constructed negatively, by defining what it was *not*. Hence, Shakespeare's Scotland becomes England's antithetical Other, a nightmarish land of barren heaths and misty crags, populated not only by aggressive clansmen and regicides but also by supernatural forces and demoniac spirits. The play's “England,” on the other hand, is depicted as graciously ruled by a “good king,” the saintly Edward the Confessor, who heals with a royal touch and possesses a “heavenly gift of prophecy.”

This imaginary rugged Scottish landscape, with its crags, hollows, and storms, is symbolically central to Shakespeare's depiction of a turbulent political structure. Consequently, in the play's denouement, as the nation is returned to “natural” order, the wild countryside itself seems to rise up against the murderous Macbeth, as Birnam Wood comes toward Dunsinane, in the shape of Malcolm's camouflaged troops and in accordance with the weird (or wyrd) sisters' prophecy. Simultaneously, the disruptions of the natural world, the “hours dreadful and things strange” with cannibalistic horses and “strange screams of death,” which accompany Macbeth's regicide and rule, are apparently purged as health is restored to the “sickly weal.” However, the replacement of one regicide by another reveals the similarities between the regimes, staging the play's equivocal wordplay and eliding the differences, as each term becomes “what is not,” both “fair” and “foul,” like the landscape itself.

Heath. Fictional Scottish wasteland of uncontrollable natural and supernatural forces. As inhabited by the three weird

sisters, the “blasted heath” is a symbolically liminal site of transformation and equivocal multivocality, in which weather is both “foul and fair,” where the sisters are both “women” and bearded males, who can appear and disappear, and where prophecy is both “ill” and “good” as language subverts sight and meaning. In addition, the sisters' presence gives Scotland gender as (super-)naturally “female” in its uncontrollable wildness throughout the play, in contrast to Scotland's strongly masculine warrior culture.

***Scone.** Ancient castle and holy site, immediately north of Perth and thirty miles north of Edinburgh. The Pictish capital of the early Scots, Scone became the traditional site for the “investment” or crowning of new monarchs, who sat on the Stone of Scone, a legendary symbol of nationalism that traces back to the eighth century. The stone was seized by England's Edward I in 1296 and removed to London, where it remained for many centuries.

***Inverness.** Scottish town on the Moray Firth, at Loch Ness, about thirty miles west of Forres and about ninety miles north of Fife. Inverness is the site of the Macbeths' feudal castle, located on the northern edge of Duncan's territory and strategically placed to guard against incursions from northern Europe. However, this distant frontier also makes it an ideal place for rebellion against a centralized government, as evidenced by Cawdor's insurrection. The town of Cawdor is only ten miles east of Inverness.

***Dunsinane Hill.** Thousand-foot-high crag, part of the Sidlaw hills and less than ten miles north of Scone. The site of Macbeth's military fortress and last stand, the daunting hill faces a forested area which stretches twelve miles northwest to the town of Birnam. It is through this “wood” that Malcolm and Siward make their final, disguised attack.

—Nicolas Pullin

Madame Bovary

Author: Gustave Flaubert (1821–1880)

First published: 1857 (English translation, 1886)

Type of work: Novel

Type of plot: Psychological realism

Time of plot: Mid-nineteenth century

This story is founded upon a woman's quest for happiness through three different French cities, Rouen, Tostes, and Yonville-l'Abbaye. The novel's original subtitle, “Provincial Customs,” implicitly contrasts these provincial cities with the central place in the French imagination: Paris. The exclusion of France's capital city for the heroine thus pre-

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