4-4-2016

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Recommended Citation
EXPLORING FEMME FATALE THROUGH LADY MACBETH

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04 April 2016

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with Honors
Exploring *Femme Fatale* Through Lady Macbeth

Abstract:

I performed the role of Lady Macbeth at a common hour presented to Otterbein University’s Department of Theatre and Dance students. The concept involved presenting a cut of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* that highlighted the development of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth’s relationship. In scripting and performing this adaptation, I sought to fully incorporate my body into my acting style and to expand and apply my knowledge of the *femme fatale* archetype to a well known literary character: Lady Macbeth. Another goal of this project was to determine how and if the *femme fatale* fits into feminist ideologies.

Project Description:

Throughout the development and execution of this project I worked with Christina Kirk, Jeff Gise, and Jordan Donica. Mrs. Kirk served as my acting coach throughout the process, beginning with an independent study. Mr. Gise served as my acting partner, playing the role of Macbeth. And Mr. Donica served as my director, blocking and conceptualizing the performance. I created the script and played the role of Lady Macbeth. Lady Macbeth and Macbeth were the only characters in the production. The text followed their relationship’s rise and fall on their quest for power.

Professional Development Outcomes:

Throughout my four years of actor training at Otterbein, I’ve received consistent feedback: I need to quiet my mind in order to be fully embodied. After many acting and movement classes with only sporadic success, I decided to immerse myself in a seven-week independent study with Mrs. Kirk focused on bodywork specifically relating to the *femme fatale* archetype. During this independent study I realized that I had quite a few mental barriers regarding feminine nature. To be successful in this endeavor, I knew I needed to confront those issues.

Highlights included the following:

1) I discovered the importance of pace. A *femme fatale* is nothing if not intentional - intentional in movement and intentional in action. A *femme* waits for no one, but everyone will wait on a *femme*. My natural pace, both in speaking and in movement, is rapid and jerky. It took a concentrated effort and multiple attempts to slowly meander across the space without feeling silly or self-conscious. Eventually, I learned to luxuriate in taking my time.

2) I embraced my own sexuality. A large part of my reluctance to portray a *femme fatale* was my inherent sense of privacy. The idea of actively seducing someone on stage, in front of an audience, gave me profound stage fright and insecurity.
Eventually, through Chris Kirk’s coaching, I was able to stop judging myself for how silly or ineffectual I thought I looked and to start focusing on the action.

3) Looking like I was *trying* to be sexy instead of just *being* was a concern of mine. However, I learned that if movement is driven by a genuine need or desire, it wouldn’t look contrived.

4) Using my body to get what I want does not make me a “bad” feminist. This was a barrier I didn’t know I had until the work began. I had a desire to only play strong, smart, independent women. Women who didn’t need a man to be successful. Whereas a *femme fatale* knowingly puts herself under a man’s thumb to gain success. She dumbs herself down, reduces herself to breasts and lips in order to get what she wants – power, money, fame. Through Chris’s guidance I was able to realign my thoughts and see that that’s the beauty of the *femme fatale*. She exploits men’s weakness (their sexuality) in order to get what she wants. In doing this, the *femme* takes power from the man without relinquishing any of her own power or vulnerability. It takes a large amount of intelligence and cunning to execute plans like this. She does this in service of feminist values, not in spite of them.

5) I opened up my heart chakra. The heart chakra is located in the center of the chest at heart level. “It is the center of your deep bonds with other beings, your sense of caring and compassion, your feelings of self-love, altruism, generosity, kindness, and respect” (Sebastian). My instinct is to collapse in at my chest in order to protect my heart. Opening up my chest was a major success in my professional development. It gave me an air of confidence and steadfastness and was a major building block on creating the body of a *femme fatale*.

6) I analyzed a major Shakespearean character on a personal level. Lady Macbeth was my Moby Dick: A seemingly unconquerable role for an actor of my relatively novice level. Throughout this process I was reminded that I *am* the character. Lady Macbeth’s motives are universal and I need only to find and recognize them in myself.

7) I had permission to fail. I’m a bit of a perfectionist and I don’t like getting things “wrong.” This independent study was a safe place to let down my guard and give myself permission to be imperfect, awkward, and foolish.

While this independent study was largely focused on bodywork, it revealed individual shortcomings that prevented me from embracing the *femme fatale* archetype. After our seven-week independent study I continued on my journey to embodying Lady Macbeth by heavily journaling about my mental barriers on sexuality and by doing an extensive script study of *Macbeth* over the summer.

An important discovery in this process has been the ability to let Lady Macbeth do the heavy lifting. I don’t have to feel embarrassed about being seductive onstage because it’s all in service of Lady Macbeth’s objective to be queen. Whenever I started to doubt or question myself, I leaned on Lady Macbeth’s steadfast, unmoving resolve.

**Scholarship Outcomes:**
Lady Macbeth as a *femme fatale*

The *femme fatale* is an archetype that has been prevalent since the Biblical Age, but with each generation, its meaning and social significance changes. It’s this notion of ever-malleable womanhood that attracted me to the *femme*. From Eve being cast as the sinner responsible for the downfall of man, to Angelina Jolie who has become an idol of sexuality and empowerment in the 21st century, the *femme fatale* is an important genre in the history of women. Upon researching *femme fatales* through the ages, I wondered why Lady Macbeth was not a more prominent literary example from the 17th century when, from my acting perspective, she so clearly exalted trademark characteristics of the *femme fatale*.

In *Patriarchy in Eclipse*, Patrick Quinn concisely defines the *femme fatale*:

> “These women...consciously use their sexual wiles to seduce the male into performing some action that he has no desire to perform; or better yet, to perform an action that will wreak havoc on him or his world” (3).

It is only with Lady Macbeth’s constant seduction and scheming that Macbeth ultimately agrees to kill Duncan. His thirst for power, fueled by Lady Macbeth’s urgings, also leads him to kill Banquo, Lady Macduff, and Lady Macduff’s son. These actions are ultimately responsible for Macbeth’s murder. In addition, Lady Macbeth’s words and actions disrupt the entire monarchy and family lines of the kingdom. In playing Lady Macbeth as a seductress, it seems evident to me that she is iconic of predominant characteristics associated with the *femme fatale*.

However, unlike most other *femme fatales*, Lady Macbeth is driven mad by her responsibility for the murders. In act 5, scene 1 of *Macbeth*, Lady M becomes desperate for purity of her hands and soul. Crying, “What, will these hands ne’er be clean?” and “Wash your hands, put on your nightgown, look not so pale.” This outburst, made in her sleep, is clearly her manifestation of guilt and regret. It is this one flaw that I think separates Lady Macbeth from the classic image of the *femme fatale* with the iron will and heart of stone.

A Shakespearean character exalted for her trademark *femme fatale* behavior is Cleopatra,

> “Perhaps among the first important literary incarnations of the *femme fatale* is Shakespeare’s Cleopatra...witnessing how this seductive Egyptian queen corrupted such a nobleman and led him into a life of decadence and vice is undeniably shocking. There are scenes in the play when one is convinced that surely this time Antony will come to his sense and put his sword through her – but each time she manages to escape his righteous anger” (Quinn, 3).

In the chronology of Shakespeare’s plays, *Antony and Cleopatra* was written shortly after *Macbeth*. While Cleopatra gets the scholastic nod as Shakespeare’s most significant *femme fatale*, I believe that Lady Macbeth was his early model of a powerful seductress.

**The *Femme Fatale* and Feminist History**
A significant breakthrough for me while on the journey of embodying a *femme fatale* was viewing my work through a feminist lens; adjusting my thoughts to see that a *femme*’s actions were in service of feminism, not against it. From biblical Eve to Double Indemnity’s Phyllis Dietrichson, female sexuality evolved from shameful to empowering.

Elizabeth Menon provides the following account of Eve’s transgressions,

“The common understanding of Eve [is] as a *femme fatale* who caused man kind’s downfall through her voice and sexuality...women’s desire was specifically identified as foreshadowing death, for it was Eve’s desire for the apple that ultimately caused the death of the Son of God...Eve’s deception condemned successive generations to obey man’s rule” (18).

Perhaps it’s from the biblical wrongdoings of Eve that women are painted as inherently submissive to men. From this account, women could be seen as having a dangerous amount of curiosity and lack moral strength. Eve’s actions have also been depicted as selfish, a way for Eve to gain knowledge (and therefore power) over Adam (Menon, 23). This early example sets the stage for untrustworthy women being placed under the supervision of men.

Fast forward to the early 20th century where social climates are starting to shift with whispers of equality for women. This is revolutionary to the men of the time who had comfortably settled into their dominant gender roles. Patrick Quinn suggests that the *femme fatale* was a “fantasy” created by men in response to “the unsettling prospect of social and political equality demanded by many women at this time...these calls challenged...the inherent superiority of the male species” (81). The fantasy of the *femme fatale*: a woman that acts without regard for her place in society.

An iconic example of this dreaded woman is the 1920s flapper. A woman who smokes, drinks, drives a car, and has casual sex is a far cry from 19th century women who required a male escort when leaving the house. The Roaring Twenties was a decade when women’s sexuality became a more mainstream idea.

However, once women began embracing their own sexuality, men began hyper sexualizing the female gender. Now in the 21st century, you can’t sell a burger without an attractive, half naked woman advertising it for you. The *femme* uses the sexualization of her body as a tactic to get what she wants: fame, money, and/or power. It’s the intelligent use of a man-made construct in her favor that is in service of feminist values. The *femme* is in control of how the men around her perceive her, which levels the playing field in a patriarchal society.

**The Creation of a Lady Macbeth Centric Macbeth Interpretation**

I created the script for my project by using every scene in *Macbeth* where Lady Macbeth and Macbeth interact directly. In studying the *femme fatale* archetype it became clear that a *femme*’s motives are all relationship based. Without a man to manipulate the *femme* becomes nothing more than a crazed woman. I wanted the performance to be an analysis of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth’s relationship – the manipulation, the presence of love and
desire, the exchange of power, and, ultimately, their tragic fate. I eliminated every other character and included soliloquies that I felt were essential to charting the emotional state of Macbeth and Lady M. (See Appendix A).

**A Dream-Like Direction of Macbeth**

Due to my approach in cutting the script, the text spanned several months’ time in the play in a matter of minutes. The interpretation had an episodic, non-linear feeling that needed a strong direction to make these shifts in time and place tangible to the audience.

Mr. Jordan Donica had the idea of playing the script as if Lady Macbeth and her husband were re-living the events of Duncan’s murder. To establish this “dream like” direction, Mr. Donica had Mr. Gise and I begin and end the show in the same position to denote the never-ending cycle of love and murder these two characters have created.

Throughout the piece, Mr. Donica directed my partner and I to show our “chinks in the armor,” small twitches throughout the piece that showed our vulnerable state of re-living these events. This directing style also afforded Mr. Gise and I to be onstage the entire time. This allowed Macbeth and Lady M to hear soliloquies they’re not traditionally onstage for which I think fueled the *femme fatale* in Lady Macbeth even more.

Based on audience feedback after the performance, many people mentioned a feeling of “things coming full circle” and the “ebb and flow of power” which I think are telling of the effectiveness of this direction style for this piece.

**Macbeth in the Style of 1940s Film Noir**

Throughout my research of the *femme fatale*, the era that had the most impact on me was the 1940s film noir style. This period of film was when the *femme fatale* gained popularity and renown. The 1944 film, *Double Indemnity*, is a classic example of this style. So much so that it was deemed “culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant” by the U.S. Library of Congress in 1992 and was selected for preservation in the National Film Registry.

*Film noir* is characterized by certain “thematic elements, including: a plot about a crime told from the point of view of the criminal, psychosexual themes, and a visually dark and claustrophobic framing casting strong shadows that both conceal and project characters’ feelings” (Sklar).

Additionally, “The primary moods of classic *film noir* were melancholy, alienation, bleakness, disillusionment, disenchantment, pessimism, ambiguity, moral corruption, evil, guilt, desperation and paranoia... Storylines were often elliptical, non-linear and twisting. Narratives were frequently complex, maze-like and convoluted, and typically told with foreboding background music, flashbacks (or a series of
flashbacks), witty, razor-sharp and acerbic dialogue, and/or reflective and confessional, first-person voice-over narration” (Dirks).

After reading about and watching film noir, I wanted to mimic that style of film onstage. The only limitation I had was access to lighting but the themes of film noir aligned beautifully with the themes of Macbeth. Soliloquies addressed to the audience acted as first-person confessionals, guilt ran rampant through both Lady M and Macbeth after the murder, and Macbeth struggles with the moral corruption of killing his king and friend. Lady Macbeth’s cornerstone is her desperation for power and royalty. Lastly, the couples’ downfall is their paranoia. This manifests in Macbeth’s hallucination of Banquo, and the perpetual presence of blood on Lady Macbeth’s hands.

To enhance this stylistic aspect, I acquired costumes reminiscent of 1940s style. There is something subtly alluring about a high-necked dress with a subtle slit at the leg that’s in direct contrast with the modern style of dress that’s often highly exposed and leaves little to the imagination. A large part of the appeal of a 1940s style is that everything is more subtle and nuanced, which I wanted to emphasize during the performance.

**An Engaging Talkback Regarding Sexuality and the Femme Fatale**

After the performance, Chris Kirk facilitated a talkback and asked the audience of approximately 100 students questions I prepared to gauge the effectiveness of the performance. Below are selected responses recorded at the performance.

*What is a femme fatale to you?*

“A woman who uses feminine stereotypes to defy feminine stereotypes. Powerful because she’s a woman.” Tara Smith, Junior BA

“A woman whose goal is often destructive. It’s a mystery, what is she up to? All the cards are not shown. A *Femme fatale* is going against the flow, fighting the world around them. They’re trapped just as much as everyone else is.” Ben Folts, Sophomore Acting Major

“Strong female role in life, in anything of power. But not necessarily associated with villainy.” Madelyn Loehr, Junior Acting Major

*Is Lady Macbeth a femme fatale?*

“I never would have thought of Lady M as a *femme* before this. She was the first *femme fatale* maybe. But it’s her ambition, her goal, that ultimately destroys her.” Maggie Veach, Senior BA

“Kind of. Showing her vulnerability negates her power and her love of Macbeth cracks her armor.” Alex Armesto, Junior Musical Theater Major
“She was less of a femme fatale as the play went on. As she got more desperate, she had to use more strategies, which increased her stakes. As her stakes went up she lost some of her femme fatale tactics.” Tara Smith, Junior BA

“Her ego-centric goal of being queen with or without Macbeth was telling of a femme.” Mark Mineart, Acting Professor

“Yes. She does what she does for herself.” Lottie Prenevost, Sophomore Musical Theater Major

“I think Lady Macbeth wasn’t quite a femme fatale but inspired femme fatales that came after.” Miranda Cotman, Sophomore BA

“I think it’s also important to remember that women did not play women when this play was written. Lady Macbeth’s strength was contingent on men playing women.” Emily Bubek, Junior BA

“She’s a flawed hero. Who she is is a tactic in response to outrageous circumstances. Everyone does that. Does that make me a femme or just a woman?” Mason Smajstrla, Senior Acting Major

“Womanhood is implying a motive to be met. Femme’s resort to a stereotype due to oppression, to escape oppression.” Lizzie Catso, Senior BA

*This script uses every scene from the play that Macbeth and Lady M interact directly in. How did seeing these scenes back to back influence your perspective on their relationship?*

“It was interesting to try and judge what was and wasn’t true in this version.” Lauren Kent, Junior Musical Theater Major

“Macbeth was more easily swayed in this iteration.” Melanie Sierra, Senior Musical Theater Major

“The female power over the man was very apparent.” Madelyn Loehr, Junior Acting Major

“In this version it seemed clear that Lady M was a victim of her own femme fatale agenda.” Afton Welch, Senior Acting Major.

This talkback lasted for the better part of an hour and almost everyone provided thoughtful feedback on the subject of Lady Macbeth as a femme fatale. Through this feedback I feel that the medium of the femme fatale is a valid and thought-provoking interpretation of the classic character of Lady Macbeth.

**Conclusion:**
Through my exploration of the *femme fatale* in an adaptation of *Macbeth*, I grew in my ability to be fully embodied as an actor, found the feminist value of manipulative sexuality, and discovered Lady Macbeth as an early model for Shakespeare’s fatal women to come.

Through the talkback, I discovered that *femme fatale*, feminism, and sexuality are inseparable subjects; in discussion, one inevitably leads to the other two. I was pleasantly surprised by the feedback and insight the audience took away from the performance.

To conclude, I believe that the vessel of the *femme fatale* is a viable and important lens to view the character of Lady Macbeth through.
Works Cited


Works Referenced


APPENDIX A – Performance Script

Act I, Scene V

Macbeth:
‘They met me in the day of success; and I have learn’d by the perfect’st report, they have more in them than mortal knowledge. When I burn’d in desire to question them further, they made themselves air, into which they vanish’d. Whiles I stood rapt in the wonder of it, came missives from the King, who all-hail’d me, “Thane of Cawdor”; by which title, before, these Weird Sisters saluted me, and referr’d me to the coming on of time, with “Hail, King that shalt be!” This have I thought good to deliver thee (my dearest partner of greatness) that thou might’st not lose the dues of rejoicing, by being ignorant of what greatness is promis’d thee. Lay it to thy heart, and farewell.’

Lady Macbeth: Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and shalt be
What thou art promis’d. – Yet do I fear thy nature:
It is too full o’th’milk of human kindness,
To catch the nearest way. Thou wouldst be great;
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it: what thou wouldst highly,
That wouldst though holily; wouldst not play false.
And yet wouldst wrongly win; thou’dst have, great Glamis,
That which cries, ‘Thus though must do,’ if thou have it;
And that which rather thou dost fear to do,
Than wishest should be undone. Hie thee hither,
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,
And chastise with the valour of my tongue
All that impedes thee from the golden round,
Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem
To have thee crown’d withal.
The raven himself is hoarse,
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements! Come, thick Night;
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of Hell,
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
Nor Heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
To cry, ‘Hold, hold!’
[Enter Macbeth]  
  Great Glamis! worthy Cawdor!
Greater than both, by the all-hail hereafter!
Thy letters have transported me beyond
This ignorant present, and I feel now
The future in the instant.
Macbeth: My dearest love, Duncan comes here to-night.

Lady M: And when goes hence?

Macbeth: To-morrow, as he purposes

Lady M: O! never Shall sun that morrow see!
Your face, my Thane, is as a book, where men May read strange matters. To beguile the time, Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye, Your hand, your tongue: look like th’innocent flower, But be the serpent under’t. He that’s coming Must be provided for; and you shall put This night’s great business into my dispatch; Which shall to all our nights and days to come Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.

Macbeth: We will speak further.

Lady M: Only look up clear;
To alter favour ever is to fear.
Leave all the rest to me.

*Act I, Scene VII*

Macbeth: If it were done, when ‘tis done, then ‘twere well
It were done quickly: if th’assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
With his surcease success; that but this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all – here,
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
We’d jump the life to come. – But in these cases,
We still have judgment here; that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague th’inventor: this even-handed Justice
Commends th’ingredience of our poison’d chalice
To our own lips. 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 murtherer shut the door,
Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
So clear in his great office, that his virtues
Will plead like angels, trumpet-toung’d, against
The deep damnation of his taking-off;
And Pity, like a naked new-born babe,
Striding the blast, or heaven’s Cherubins, hors’d
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
That tears shall drown the wind. – I have no spur
To prick the sides of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o’erleaps itself
And falls on th’other –

[Enter Lady Macbeth] How now! what news?

Lady M: He has almost supp’d. Why have you left the chamber?

Macbeth: Hath he ask’d for me?

Lady M: Know you not, he has?

Macbeth: We will proceed no further in this business:
He hath honour’d me of late; and I have bought
Golden opinions from all sorts of people,
Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,
Not cast aside so soon.

Lady M: Was the hope drunk,
Wherein you dress’d yourself? Hath is slept since?
And wakes it now, to look so green and pale
At what it did so freely? From this time
Such I account thy love. Art thou afeard
To be the same in thine own act and valour,
As thou art in desire? Would’st thou have that
Which thou esteem’st the ornament of life,
And live a coward in thine own esteem,
Letting ‘I dare not’ wait upon ‘I would,’
Like the poor cat i’th’adage?

Macbeth: Pr’ythee, peace.
I dare do all that may become a man;
Who dares do more, is none.

Lady M: What beast was’t then,
That made you break this enterprise to me?
When you durst do it, then you were a man;
And to be more than what you were, you would
Be so much more the man. Nor time, nor place,
Did then adhere, and yet you would make both:
They have made themselves, and that their fitness now
Does unmake you. I have given suck, and know
How tender ‘tis to love the babe that milks me:
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have pluck’d my nipple from his boneless gums,
And dash’d the brains out, had I so sworn
As you have done to this.

Macbeth: If we should fail?

Lady M: We fail?

But screw your courage to the sticking-place,
And we’ll not fail. When Duncan is asleep
(Whereeto the rather shall his day’s hard journey
Soundly invite him), his two chamberlains
Will I with wine and wassail so convince,
That memory, the warder of the brain,
Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason
A limebeck only: when in swinish sleep
Their drenched natures lie, as in a death,
What cannot you and I perform upon
Th’unguarded Duncan? what not put upon
His spongy officers, who shall bear the guilt
Of our great quell?

Macbeth: Bring forth men-children only!

For thy undaunted mettle should compose
Nothing but males. Will it not be receiv’d,
When we have mark’d with blood those sleepy two
Of his own chamber, and us’d their very daggers,
That they have done’t?

Lady M: Who dares receive it other,

As we shall make our griefs and clamour roar
Upon his death?

Macbeth: I am settled, and bend up

Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.
Away, and mock the time with fairest show:
False face must hide what the false heart doth know.

_Act II, Scene I_

Macbeth:

Is this a dagger, which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee: -
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
To feeling, as to sight? or art thou but
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?
I see thee yet, in form as palpable
As this which now I draw.
Thou marshall’st me the way that I was going;
And such an instrument I was to use. –
Mine eye are made the fools o’th’other senses,
Or else worth all the rest: I see thee still;
And on thy blade, and dudgeon, gouts of blood,
Which was not so before. – There’s no such thing.
It is the bloody business which informs
Thus to mine eyes. – Now o’er the one half-world
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
The curtain’d sleep: Witchcraft celebrates
Pale Hecate’s off’rings; and wither’d Murther,
Alarum’d by his sentinel, the wolf,
Whose howl’s his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,
With Tarquin’s ravishing strides, towards his design
Moves like a ghost. – Thou sure and firm-set earth,
Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear
Thy very stones prate of my where-about,
And take the present horror from the time,
Which now suits with it. – While I threat, he lives:
Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives.
I go, and it is done: the bell invites me.
Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell
That summons thee to Heaven, or to Hell.

Act II, Scene II

Lady M: That which hath made them drunk hath made me bold:
   What hath quench’d them hath given me fire. – Hark! – Peace!
It was the owl that shriek’d, the fatal bellman,
Which gives the stern’st good-night. He is about it.
The doors are open; and the surfeited grooms
Do mock their charge with snores: I have drugg’d their possets,
That Death and Nature do contend about them,
Whether they live, or die.


Lady M: Alack! I am afraid they have awak’d,
And ’tis not done: - th’attempt and not the deed
Confounds us. – Hark! – I laid their daggers ready;
He could not miss ’em. – Had he not resembled
My father as he slept, I had done’t. – My husband!

Macbeth: I have done the deed. – Didst thou not hear a noise?

Lady M: I heard the owl scream, and the crickets cry.
  Did not you speak?

Macbeth: When?

Lady M: Now.

Macbeth: As I descended?

Lady M: Ay.

Macbeth: Hark!
  Who lies i’th’second chamber?

Lady M: Donalbain.

Macbeth: This is a sorry sight.

Lady M: A foolish thought to say a sorry sight.

Macbeth: There’s one did laugh in’s sleep, and one cried, ‘Murther!’
  That they did wake each other: I stood and heard them;
  But they did say their prayers, and address’d them
  Again to sleep.

Lady M: There are two lodg’d together.

Macbeth: One cried, ‘God bless us!’ and, ‘Amen!’ the other,
  As they had seen me with these hangman’s hands.
  List’ning their fear, I could not say, ‘Amen,’
  When they did say, ‘God bless us.’

Lady M: Consider it not so deeply.

Macbeth: But wherefore could I not pronounce ‘Amen’?
  I had most need of blessing, and ‘Amen’
  Stuck in my throat.

Lady M: These deeds must not be thought
After these ways: so, it will make us mad.

Macbeth: Methought, I heard a voice cry, ‘Sleep no more! Macbeth does murther Sleep,’ – The innocent Sleep; Sleep, that knits up the ravell’d sleave of care, The death of each day’s life, sore labour’s bath, Balm of hurt minds, great Nature’s second course, Chief nourisher in life’s feast; -

Lady M: What do you mean?

Macbeth: Still it cried, ‘Sleep no more!’ to all the house ‘Glamis hath murther’d Sleep, and therefore Cawdor Shall sleep no more, Macbeth shall sleep no more!’

Lady M: Who was it that thus cried? Why, worthy Thane, You do unbend your noble strength, to think So brainsickly of things. Go, get some water, And wash this filthy witness from your hand. – Why did you bring these daggers from the place? They must lie there: go, carry them, and smear The sleepy grooms with blood.

Macbeth: I’ll go no more: I am afraid to think what I have done; Look on’t again I dare not.

Lady M: Infirm of purpose! Give me the daggers. The sleeping, and the dead, Are but as pictures; ‘tis the eye of childhood That fears a painted devil. If he do bleed, I’ll gild the faces of the grooms withal, For it must seem their guilt.

Macbeth: Whence is that knocking? – How is’t with me, when every noise appals me? What hands are here? Ha! they pluck out mine eyes. Will all great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather The multitudinous seas incarnadine, Making the green one red.

Lady M: My hands are of your colour; but I shame To wear a heart so white. I hear a knocking At the south entry: - retire we to our chamber. A little water clears us of this deed:
How easy it is then! Your constancy
Hath left you unattended. – Hark! more knocking.
Get on your night-gown, lest occasion call us,
And show us to be watchers. – Be not lost
So poorly in your thoughts.

Macbeth: To know my deed, ‘twere best not know myself.
   Wake Duncan with thy knocking: I would thou couldst!

Act III, Scene II

Lady M: Nought’s had, all’s spent,
   Where our desire is got without content:
   ‘Tis safer to be that which we destroy,
   Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy.

[Enter Macbeth]
   How now, my Lord? why do you keep alone,
   Of sorriest fancies your companions making,
   Using those thoughts, which should indeed have died
   With them they think on? Things without all remedy
   Should be without regard: what’s done is done.

Macbeth: We have scorch’d the snake, not kill’d it.
   She’ll close,
   whilst our poor malice
   Remains in danger of her former tooth.
   But let the frame of things disjoint, both the worlds suffer,
   Ere we will eat our meal in fear, and sleep
   In the affliction of these terrible dreams,
   That shake us nightly. Better be with the dead,
   Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,
   Than on the torture of the mind to lie
   In restless ecstasy. Duncan is in his grave;
   After life’s fitful fever he sleeps well;
   Treason has done his worst: nor steel, nor poison,
   Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing
   Can touch him further!

Lady M: Come on:
   Gentle my lord, sleek o’er your rugged looks;
   Be bright and jovial among your guest to-night.

Macbeth: So shall I, Love; and so, I pray, be you.
   Let your remembrance apply to Banquo:
   Present him eminence, both with eye and tongue:
   Unsafe the while, that we
   Must lave our honours in these flattering streams,
And make our faces vizards to our hearts,
Disguising what they are.

Lady M: You must leave this.

Macbeth: O! full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!
Thou know’st that Banquo, and his Fleance, lives.

Lady M: But in them Nature’s copy’s not eterne.

Macbeth: There’s comfort yet; they are assailable:
Then be thou jocund. Ere the bat hath flown
His cloister’d flight; ere to black Hecate’s summons
The shard-born beetle, with his drowsy hums,
Hath rung Night’s yawning peal, there shall be done
A deed of dreadful note.

Lady M: What’s to be done?

Macbeth: Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,
Till thou applaud the deed. Come, seeing Night,
Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful Day,
And, with thy bloody and invisible hand,
Cancel, and tear to pieces,
That great bond
Which keeps me pale! — Light thickens; and the crow
Makes wing to th'rooky wood;
Good things of Day begin to droop and drowse,
While Night’s black agents to their preys do rouse.
Thou marvell’st at my words: but hold thee still;
Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill.
So, pr’ythee, go with me.

Act III, Scene IV

Macbeth: Blood hath been shed ere now, i’th’olden time,
Ere humane statute purg’d the gentle weal;
Ay, and since too, murthers have been perform’d
Too terrible for the ear: the time has been,
That, when the brains were out, the man would die,
And there an end; but now, they rise again,
With twenty mortal murthers on their crowns,
And push us from our stools. This is more strange
Than such a murther is.

Lady M: My worthy Lord,
Your noble friends do lack you.
Macbeth: Avaunt! and quit my sight! let the earth hide thee!
Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;
Thou hast no speculation in those eyes,
Which thou dost glare with.

Lady M: Think of this, good Peers,
But as a thing of custom: ’tis no other;
Only it spoils the pleasure of the time.

*Act III, Scene IV intercut with Act V, Scene I*

Macbeth: What man dare, I dare:

Lady M: Yet here’s a spot.

Macbeth: Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,

Lady M: Out, damned spot! out, I say!

Macbeth: The arm’d rhinoceros, or th’Hyrican tiger;

Lady M: One; two; why, then ‘tis time to do’t. – Hell is murky.

Macbeth: Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves

Lady M: Fie, my Lord, fie! a soldier, and afeard?

Macbeth: Shall never tremble: or, be alive again,

Lady M: What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our power to accompt?

Macbeth: And dare me do the desert with thy sword;

Lady M: Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?

Macbeth: If trembling I inhabit then, protest me

Lady M: The Thane of Fife had a wife: where is she now?

Macbeth: The baby of a girl. Hence, horrible shadow!

Lady M: What, will these hands ne’er be clean?

Macbeth: Unreal mock’ry, hence!
Lady M: No more o’that my Lord, no more o’that: you mar all this with starting. Here’s the smell of blood still: all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh! oh! oh! Wash your hand, put on your night-gown; look not so pale. – I tell you yet again, Banquo’s buried: he cannot come out on’s grave.

Macbeth: Why so;

Lady M: To bed, to bed; there’s knocking at the gate.

Macbeth: Being gone, I am a man again. – Pray you, sit still.

Lady M: Come, come, come, come, give me your hand. What’s done cannot be undone. To bed, to bed, to bed.