

“I DARE DO ALL THAT MAY BECOME A MAN”: ESTABLISHING A TEXTUAL CASE
FOR AN ALL-FEMALE *MACBETH*

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Abstract

This project paper seeks to establish a textual basis for staging a genderbent all-female version of William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. It is the second step in a two-part process, which I began by editing the text of *Macbeth* to present all the characters as women. Creating this prototype script – which is attached at the end of this document as an appendix titled “An All-female *Macbeth*” – served as an experiment to see how well an all-female version of the play would work and how much would need to be changed in order for it to do so. I discovered that it worked very well with only minimal changes to male pronouns and other gender identifiers, so this paper now examines the implications of that choice on the story's gender dynamics, power dynamics, and character relationships. The thesis that arises out of this research is that presenting a genderbent all-female version of *Macbeth* does not disrupt the essential function or integrity of the play, which means that genderbending should be considered a textually legitimate form of performance; moreover, this paper argues that exploring the play in this manner brings new meaning and value out of the text by conceptualizing how a genderbent all-female production of *Macbeth* could serve as a powerful contemporary feminist statement.

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In recent years, the way that Shakespeare is performed has been evolving to better reflect the needs of contemporary audiences and theatre-makers. One of the most significant – and controversial – issues at the heart of this revolution is gender, as directors attempt to address the lack of gender-diversity and overwhelming imbalance between men and women in the Shakespearean canon. In the hope of providing scholarly support to this effort, the goal of this project is to establish a textual precedent for what happens to Shakespeare when it is performed by all-female casts, who are all playing their characters as women, by taking *Macbeth* as a case-study. I was drawn to *Macbeth* when selecting a test-text because gender is such a complex and integral part of its make-up, prompting me to develop research questions such as: “Would an all-female *Macbeth* even work from a textual perspective?”; “If so, what would it look like? What can stay the same and what has to be different?”; and, finally, “What new value could we bring out of the play by exploring it in this way?” My approach to answering these questions has been twofold: to answer my first two questions, I began by editing the text of *Macbeth*¹ to see how much of the original needed to be changed so that the story and its characters could function in an all-female environment. Once had I discovered that this was possible with only minimal changes to male pronouns and other gender identifiers, I was able to use that script as the basis for this paper,² wherein I will argue that an all-female *Macbeth* is not only textually sound but also brings new value out of the play through its potential to act as a powerful feminist statement in performance.

Shakespearean scholars and performers alike can attest that Shakespeare is well known for the richness and complexity of the female roles in his plays. That said, both parties are also in agreement that the problem with Shakespeare’s female characters is that there are not enough of them: the structure of Elizabethan acting companies limited the number of female roles that could be included in each work, as these characters would all have been played by the one or two boys employed by the troupe. While this cap on female representation in the Shakespearean canon is frustrating enough for feminist scholars, it is doubly detrimental to female-identifying

¹ My edited script – which I have titled “An All-female *Macbeth*” – is attached as an appendix at the end of this paper.

² That said, please note that due to irregular lineation in my copy-text, all quotes from *Macbeth* in this paper have been cited from the 1990 Oxford World’s Classics edition.

performers, who now represent the majority of actors entering the Canadian theatre industry (Burton 24) and therefore find themselves competing for incredibly scarce resources when auditioning for Shakespearean productions. To address this problem, many modern producers of Shakespeare's work have started casting women to play men's parts. This practice is typically approached in one of two ways: when women play male roles using the character's original pronouns and gender identity, this phenomenon is typically known as "cross-gender casting"; however, if a woman is cast in a traditionally male role, but the pronouns in the script are changed so that the character is also presented as a woman, then this would fall under the umbrella of "genderbending." The term "genderbending"³ encompasses a variety of theatrical and dramaturgical practices that are used to explore characters through gender identities other than the one originally assigned to them by the playwright. These practices are usually (but not always) employed to align the character's gender identity with that of the actor playing the part. Rebecca Burton's report on the status of gender equity in theatre affirms that cross-gender casting is the more commonly used method of incorporating more women into productions of classically canonical works (25); indeed, cross-gender casting is fairly mainstream in modern Shakespeare, as Elizabeth Klett explains that the practice "flourished" between 1995 and 2004 (21). The rise of cross-gender casting has evolved into productions of Shakespeare's plays with all-female casts gaining traction in recent years, with the all-female Shakespeare series that ran at the Donmar Warehouse in 2012 serving as a prominent example (Higgins).

Despite this progress, however, Klett points out that critics and theatregoers have not always been accepting of women playing traditionally male characters: she reports that they have tended to react to this practice with "animosity," arguing either that it "adulterates Shakespeare" (2) or that it "has nothing to contribute to audience's understanding of the plays" (19). These feelings seem to be particularly strong when women openly perform these roles as women, even if pronouns are not changed; for example, Andrew Temple's 1995 review of Fiona Shaw's "effeminate" (32), although not genderbent (179), portrayal of Richard in *Richard II* calls for audiences to "laugh and throw fruit" to drive her "and those like her from the stage permanently" (27). Similarly scornful and dismissive reactions to the Donmar Warehouse's all-female *Julius Caesar*—which portrayed the cast as inmates in a women's prison but did not change the

³ This phenomenon can also be referred to as "regendering" (Klett 28).

pronouns in Shakespeare's text (PBS 00:00-01:50)—demonstrate that the same critical bias against gender bending has continued to surface within the last ten years: Artistic Director Josie Rourke comments that “People just scoffed at it. And scoffing did two things: it trivialised it, and it made it look experimental” (Higgins).

However, Klett does not agree with those who claim that women playing male roles has nothing to contribute to our understanding of Shakespeare's work; in fact, she argues that “women's ... [cross-gender casting and genderbending] has the potential to open up Shakespeare's plays to new and transformational meanings” (x). Robert Kimbrough goes a step further to argue that this meaning has been lying dormant in the plays all along: he writes that “Shakespeare sensed that so long as one remains exclusively female or exclusively male, that person will be restricted and confined, denied human growth” (175), and he identifies *Macbeth* as the play that embodies and explores this need for mutability most fully (175-6). This observation is supported by a few productions of *Macbeth* that have been mounted in the last five years, as they seem to be picking up a similar sense of the play's fluidity and moving progressively towards all-female genderbending⁴ as the mechanism for practically unlocking and highlighting the innate gender multiplicity that Kimbrough points out. Furthermore, these productions have all approached this exploration through a contemporary feminist lens, thus manifesting the types of “new and transformational meanings” that Klett predicts (x). However, the ways in which these productions were constructed and received suggest that an all-female *Macbeth* is still seen as something that falls outside the realm of “legitimate” Shakespearean practice, even though there is no textual reason why it should not work. The fabric of the original *Macbeth* can be broken down into three interweaving components: the story's exploration of patriarchy and gender roles; the questions it raises about the ethics of fate, ambition, and power; and the actions of its main characters—Macbeth and Lady Macbeth—who destroy themselves through their interactions with these forces and with each other. These three foundational aspects of the play can retain their original functions even when all the characters are presented as women, thus establishing that genderbending poses no “adulterating” disruption to the essential integrity of Shakespeare's text. Making this change can also add to audiences'

⁴ That is, a production in which all the performers are women and all the characters are presented as women, regardless of their original gender identities.

understanding of the play by deepening and expanding Shakespeare's discussion of these issues to uncover new layers of contemporary feminist value⁵ in a genderbent all-female *Macbeth*.

Three prominent productions of *Macbeth* from the last five years draw attention to the issue of genderbending and legitimate practice. All of them had entirely female casts, and together they illustrate a chronological progression wherein the degree of genderbending for feminist purposes increases over time; crucially, however, in each case the ways in which the genderbending was approached or received implied that it was seen as a marginal practice in the theatrical hierarchy. The first of these productions is the 2018 Scottish National Tour of *The Macbeths*, adapted by Frances Poet and directed by Dominic Hill of Citizen's Theatre (Smith). Poet's two-person adaptation of *Macbeth* only features the dialogue between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, with the onstage action taking place between these two characters in their bedroom (Boyd and MacEvoy 00:10-40). This tour was an all-female twist on a 2017 production of the same adaptation, which had been traditionally cast – it had featured Charlene Boyd as Lady Macbeth, who reprised her role in 2018 and was joined by Lucianne MacEvoy as a genderbent Macbeth (Smith). In describing what he was hoping to achieve through this choice, Hill says: "Our original production of *The Macbeths* was an exploration of the play in terms of the impact Macbeth's actions have on the relationship between the two characters. ... Our revival of the play will explore the same relationships but this time in terms of the couple being both women,"

⁵ It should be noted that feminism is by no means monolithic, nor does it have an entirely unified set of beliefs and goals. I am primarily basing my use of the term "feminist" and my discussion of the feminist movement in this paper on my own observations and experiences as a contemporary feminist. My personal philosophy is influenced by feminist/queer theorists such as Judith Butler who identify gender as constructed and performative. For more information on this school of thought, please see Butler's book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. However, my approach in this paper is more focused on feminist practice than feminist theory. I practice feminism because I want to understand women's experiences in a way that works to deconstruct male-female binaries and gender expectations, and because I want to help others do the same; therefore, I consider anything in a genderbent, all-female production of *Macbeth* that furthers this goal – i.e., that would especially highlight gender performativity for an audience, expose the ways in which male-female binaries can be internalized and remain ingrained in our everyday lives, or demonstrate alternative ways of thinking and living – to have practical feminist value.

also noting that “this time there will be an additional focus on how these women operate in a male world, where violence is seen to be the domain of the male sex” (Smith). This statement displays an instinct to explore what arises out of the play when the relationships become between women, but Hill does not extend that exploration beyond the title couple to investigate how they relate to the rest of the characters when the entire story is placed in an all-female environment. For this reason, *The Macbeths* is perhaps properly described as a “selectively” genderbent (Klett 29) production of *Macbeth*, since the implication is that the male characters who exist offstage have not been reimagined as women; indeed, Hill specifically describes the world of the play as “male” (Smith). Furthermore, although MacEvoy and Boyd both earned praise for their performances (“What’s On”), this tour seems to have received less prominent critical attention than the original adaptation, as most of the reviews that can be readily found online focus on the 2017 production. The critical consensus about the traditionally cast show seems to be quite favorable, with Boyd receiving special commendation for her portrayal of Lady Macbeth (Smith); this version of the show is so popular, in fact, that it was remounted and made into a film for patrons to stream remotely during the Covid-19 pandemic, even though the all-female version came after the traditionally cast production (“About”). Thus, although the all-female production of *The Macbeths* was attempting to engage in feminist practice by selectively genderbending, the fact that it was eclipsed by its traditionally cast counterpart reinforces the marginal status of all-female productions.

Next in this progression is the off-Broadway production of *Mac Beth*, adapted and directed by Erica Schmidt, that ran at the Lucille Lortel Theatre in New York City between May and June of 2019 (Red Bull Theatre). *Mac Beth* is unique because the all-female cast of this production were not portraying the characters of *Macbeth* directly; instead, Schmidt takes a somewhat similar approach to the Donmar Warehouse’s *Julius Caesar* by having the performers play teenage schoolgirls who gather in a vacant lot to act out the play (Collins-Hughes) using “Shakespeare’s original text” (Red Bull Theatre). This *Macbeth* within *Mac Beth* featured Isabelle Fuhrman as Macbeth and Ismenia Mendes as Lady Macbeth (Red Bull Theatre). The extra framework that Schmidt employs here makes it difficult to precisely define the degree of genderbending going on in *Mac Beth*, since the original masculine pronouns in Shakespeare’s text do not appear to have been changed, and yet none of the actresses in the show is technically

playing a man,⁶ even while performing said text. Despite this ambiguity, it is clear that Schmidt intends the world of the play to be an all-female environment in which the youth and the femaleness of the characters can be used to highlight and destabilize *Macbeth*'s "repeated links between violence and masculinity," a jarring parallel that Schmidt states was inspired by the Slender Man stabbings⁷ (Red Bull Theatre). In exploring the relationship between the seemingly polarized worlds of "adolescent girls" and "bloody-minded Shakespeare" (Collins-Hughes), Schmidt arguably places *Mac Beth* closer to the spirit of a feminist, genderbent all-female version of the play than Hill represents with *The Macbeths*. Indeed, in her glowing review for the New York Times, Laura Collins-Hughes describes her experience of the play as "watching a group of girls meet Shakespeare on their own electric terms," and observes that this lens made all of the characters in *Macbeth* "legible in new ways." In this light, it seems that Schmidt's schoolgirl framework serves the overall purpose of genderbending—which, in this case, is to introduce a new female perspective into the play—but the distance it creates between the actresses and their *Macbeth* characters also reinforces the idea that the play will not work if the characters are simply and straightforwardly presented as women.

The third and final production in this series is the *All Female Macbeth* produced by John Partridge and Catherine Pugh of Tread the Boards Theatre Company at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in July and August of 2019 (Pugh). This production, which featured Pugh as Macbeth and Phoebe Cresswell as Lady Macbeth ("Here's our chief guests!"), is the only one out of these three that does not apply any additional adaptive framework to Shakespeare's original play (Pugh) – and, even more significantly, it is the only recent production that changes the male pronouns in the script to present all of the characters in *Macbeth* as women ("Throwback to a little textwork session"). Indeed, exploring how the characters and the story function in an all-

⁶ Rather, within the framework of *Mac Beth* they are all playing girls, some of whom are girls playing men.

⁷ The "Slender Man Stabbings" took place in 2014, when two twelve-year-old girls from Wisconsin colluded to stab their friend nineteen times in an attempt to initiate themselves as followers of "Slender Man," an imaginary, homicidal, ghoul-like figure from an online urban legend that was popular at the time. One of the girls was eventually diagnosed with a mental disorder called "shared delusional belief" (Red Bull Theatre).

female environment seems to have been the explicit purpose of this production, as Pugh writes in her Kickstarter campaign for the project:

As an ensemble we are excited to present how the conventions of this well-known dramatic epic change in the mouths and actions of women. Our production reveals what happens when world order is truly disrupted and the supernatural intervenes. Our women are on the front line and we look to question how gender empowers and restricts them.

Pugh also makes the contemporary feminist implications of this exploration clear by adding that “our approach to this story will delve deeper into the expectation and struggle for equality within our modern society.” Thus, it is arguable that Pugh and her colleagues have come the closest to realizing the feminist potential that can legitimately be brought out of *Macbeth* through all-female genderbending. The show’s overwhelmingly positive reception certainly indicates that their approach has struck a chord with critics: Caroline Worswick writes in a review for North West End that she “can’t praise this production enough for its brave, no-holds barred version of this classic Shakespeare play” (“[Four stars] from North West End!”), and the British Theatre Guide describes it as “far and away one of the best productions of Shakespeare ... [they] have seen in recent decades” (All Female Macbeth [[@MacbethEdFringe](#)]). However, although *All Female Macbeth* was ultimately highly acclaimed, the status of Pugh’s Kickstarter campaign betrays an initial lack of confidence from the theatre community: only fifty-seven people ended up contributing, and they collectively raised a mere 2,472 GBP. Furthermore, it is important to remember when considering the status of genderbending that Tread the Boards is a semi-professional theatre collective (Pugh), and that the success of their genderbent all-female *Macbeth* never made it past the experimental environment of the Fringe Festival.

Ultimately, although none of these recent productions has managed to bring all-female genderbending into the arena of universally accepted, mainstream Shakespeare, each of them anticipates and affirms that there is a legitimate textual basis for presenting *Macbeth* from a female perspective. This paper will now turn towards an examination of the text itself to demonstrate that the original story can retain its original integrity even when the degree of all-female genderbending is pushed to its furthest limits in a production such as Pugh’s which openly presents all the characters as women with no additional framing.

First, in editing the text of *Macbeth*, I observed the following editorial principles: nothing has been cut from the story, and I have endeavored to change as little as possible in the text. The only thing that is different about this all-female *Macbeth* is that all the characters who are present

onstage at any point in the play must be presented as women.⁸ Essentially, this means that all masculine pronouns and titles that are used to refer to onstage characters have been changed to equivalent feminine versions, and I have noted these changes in red. If a change is possible but not absolutely necessary, it is noted in red brackets beside the original term. However, it was also my goal to preserve the metre and the rhyme scheme wherever possible, which means that I have opted to insert gender-neutral terms in place of the original masculine ones wherever they fit better than a strictly feminine equivalent, and these changes are noted in green. For example, “gentleman” is consistently replaced with “gentle one” instead of “gentlewoman.” Where a gender-neutral, meter-preserving term is available, but not an exact substitute for the original word, it is noted in brackets beside the original word or the red female equivalent. Where it is not possible to preserve the meter or rhyme, the line is marked with a green asterisk, which occurs nine times throughout the edited text.

The original character names have been largely retained: the only name changes that occur are that the Old Man becomes an Old Woman, any Lords become Ladies, and MacDuff’s Son becomes a Daughter. I have not changed any normative masculine references that appear in the text – i.e., characters talking about “mankind” or something that a man might say/think/do when they are speaking of people in general, automatically referring to animals as male, or anthropomorphizing aspects of the world using masculine pronouns. I have also retained masculine titles that a modern audience would likely consider normatively gender-neutral, such as “host” and “kinsmen.” All these normative masculine terms have been noted in blue. Furthermore, there are a few non-normative masculine descriptors that I have left alone: even though all the characters in this version of the play are women, some are still described as “men” or “manly,” and Macbeth can still be referred to as “king” and/or “lord.” These are purposefully left in, both in service to the overarching goal of changing as little as possible to make the play

⁸ It would be possible for some characters who are only spoken of, such as King Sweno and his army, the sailor, and the pilot, to remain male, although it would also be fine to genderbend these characters. The original Thane of Cawdor could also be presented as a man, although in this case it makes more sense to present this character as a woman, even though she never appears onstage, because she is described as a traitorous defector from the all-female Scotland that is established in this version of the play.

work, and because they take on a new feminist significance in an all-female environment. In this application, they are meant to be taken as figurative descriptors rather than literal ones, to denote that the character in question is following a traditionally “masculine” gender script and is therefore comparing herself or being compared to a man. Since these instances are especially significant to the potential for feminist practice in an all-female *Macbeth*, I have highlighted them in bold.

Gender and gender roles are undoubtedly the most central and important themes in the original *Macbeth*. Indeed, scholars have been discussing this topic for over a hundred years. There seems to be a consensus in the scholarship that the world of *Macbeth* is one in which strength, courage and violence are expected of men, while vulnerability and passivity are expected of women. However, there is debate among *Macbeth* scholars about what Shakespeare is trying to do in setting up these structures, and subsequently, how the audience is meant to react to the characters’ performance of gender within these systems. Of these scholars, very few have argued that gender roles are a positive force in the play. One such argument comes from William Liston, who writes in 1989 that “[p]robably none of Shakespeare’s plays is so explicit in demarcating man and woman as is *Macbeth*” (232) and claims the play shows how “[w]hen men and women step outside ... [patriarchal gender] roles, they lose their humanity. Their liberation from definition destroys them; paradoxically, in fact, it confines them” (232-3). Liston notes that “Oddly, although Macbeth is ostensibly concerned with regicide and kingship, the fate of the kingdom, the play proceeds on the values of a domestic tragedy ... [that is] dependent upon the relationship of husband and wife, of man and woman” (233). He then goes on to argue that because patriarchal domestic relationships are so central in the play, and because the Macbeths’ “violat[ion]” of them does not work out well, Shakespeare is attempting to demonstrate their necessity in *Macbeth* (233-7)—or, at least that “limitation within [these] defined role[s]” is “essential to humanity” (239).

In contrast to Liston’s argument, there seems to be a far greater consensus that the attempt to uphold limiting gender roles has a destructive effect on the tragic heroes of *Macbeth*; however, scholars disagree about which characters are victimized and which are to blame for this destruction. As early as 1973, Jarold Ramsey writes that “in *Macbeth* Shakespeare exposes the ambiguities and the perils in a career premised upon ‘manliness’” (285). He argues that, at the beginning of the play, “Macbeth’s ‘manly’ actions in war are not contradictory to a general code

of humaneness or 'kind-ness' irrespective of gender: but as the play develops, his moral degeneration is dramatized as a perversion of a code of manly virtue" (285). Ramsey then suggests that in "recoiling from Macbeth's outrageous kind of manliness, we are prompted to reconsider what we really mean when we use the word in praising someone" (287) – in other words, to reconsider the legitimacy and utility of patriarchally defined gender roles. Significantly, however, Ramsey accuses Lady Macbeth of "initiat[ing] this disjunction of 'manly' from 'humane' by calling Macbeth's manhood (in a narrowly sexual sense) into question" (285), describing her actions in the play as "a strategic reversal of sex – the humiliating implication being that she would be more truly masculine in her symbolic act [of murdering her nursing child] than he can ever be" (298) and concluding that because of this "Macbeth is forced to accept a concept of manliness that consists wholly in rampant self-seeking aggression" (289). That said, on the other side of the spectrum, feminist scholars such as Cristina León Alfar assert that Lady Macbeth has been unfairly "scapegoated in Shakespearean criticism as the source of violence in the play" (184) and argue that it is actually she who is forced to adopt a brutally "masculine" persona for her partner. In contrast to Ramsey, Alfar argues in 1998 that the play begins not with a code of "humaneness... irrespective of gender" (285), but with a masculinist "structure of authority and domination" (182) in which Macbeth is complicit, first in his service to Duncan and then in his ambition to become the king himself (186-8). Subsequently, she points out that because Elizabethan women were expected to conform to and fulfill their husbands' wishes, if Lady Macbeth "does indeed transgress her gender to become manly ... it is because she must do so to reflect ... the bloody desire of her husband" (180), which he communicates to her through his letter (189). Moreover, Alfar argues that because Macbeth's ambition is in keeping with the play's larger code of "authority and domination" (182), Lady Macbeth spurring him on when he falters should not, as Ramsey suggests, be seen as emasculating, but as a way of "remasculinizing" him according to the conventions the story (190-3). Thus, although Ramsey and Alfar are both concerned with "the gender trouble behind the prescriptions that constitute femininity as compliance, masculinity as violence, and violence as power" (Alfar 180), their insistence that this trouble must stem from one party or the other puts them at odds with each other.

Kimbrough is able to reconcile these schools of thought and expand upon them convincingly. Like Liston, Kimbrough asserts that "the drama of *Macbeth* contains a fierce war

between gender concepts of manhood and womanhood played out on the field of humanity” (176); crucially, however, Kimbrough also stipulates that in this “war” the audience watches the “personal and social destructiveness of polarized femininity and masculinity” play itself out (177), as Ramsey and Alfar argue. Where Kimbrough breaks away from the scholars discussed above is in his refusal to blame either Macbeth or Lady Macbeth for their culturally determined actions, instead considering them together as “prisoners” of gender (175-6). Moreover, he argues that the battle of the genders he identifies is taking place not only between characters, but within them as well, and that their inability to embrace “a full range of human character traits” (176) is the ultimate cause of the Macbeths’ joint downfall (175-7). It would be understandable to assume that presenting all the characters in *Macbeth* as women would disrupt or remove this conflict around gender roles, but in actuality it remains very much intact. The destructive, hierarchical, ideological polarizing of “masculine” and “feminine” traits still exists in the genderbent version of the play, which means that the all-female Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are brought down because they are experiencing mirrored varieties of internalized misogyny.

There is an element of internalized misogyny in Lady Macbeth even as she exists in the original. In Shakespeare’s text, she is clearly operating within a system of patriarchal gender roles: she is not always on equal footing with her husband. For example, Macbeth asserts an implied authority over her when he unilaterally proclaims that they “will proceed no further in this business” (1.7.31); furthermore, she is also not taken as seriously by the other characters, as is the case when MacDuff refuses to tell her about Duncan’s murder, claiming,

O gentle lady,
‘Tis not for you to hear what I can speak.
The repetition, in a woman’s ear,
Would murder as it fell.” (2.3.85-8)

These instances reinforce the scholarly consensus that women are supposed to be passive and vulnerable in the world of *Macbeth*. Particularly significant, however, is the fact that although Lady Macbeth manipulates these conventions to further her own agenda in the play, she does not overtly challenge them, and even appears to believe the idea that femininity must be inactive despite her own inclination towards ambition and action. This belief is especially evident in her request to be “unsex[ed]” in Act One, Scene Five (1.5.40): Kimbrough describes this speech as a rejection of “that which she has been made to think is weak and womanly within her” (181). Kimbrough then identifies Lady Macbeth’s arc in the play from this point on as an “attempt to

masculate herself” (187); while this description does not fully take into account the “masculine” traits that Lady Macbeth exhibits on her own before calling on the spirits to make her cruel—her initial reaction to Macbeth’s letter (1.5.14-5) being a prime example—it is accurate to say that “Lady Macbeth’s culture did not allow her to develop her full self. She operates from the restrictive base assumptions of a culturally defined, feminine self” (Kimbrough 187). Indeed, the internal misogynistic restrictions that Lady Macbeth places on herself become tangible in her actions over the course of the play: even though she is initially more eager to commit regicide than Macbeth, she never fully realizes any independent agency for violence against others, and her comment that she could not kill Duncan herself because he “resembled/ ... [her] father as he slept” (2.2.13-4) has obvious patriarchal connotations. In fact, the only act of violence that she commits in the play is violence against herself; Alfar points out that, by this time, “her role as [Macbeth’s] ‘dearest partner of greatness’ has altered,” which means that Lady Macbeth’s “descent into madness and subsequent suicide ... are responses to the subjectivity to which she is consigned by her culture and by her husband’s rejection of her in favor of the witches” (193). Therefore, although her decision to take her own life could be viewed as a (very problematic) way to assert agency over her patriarchal subjugation, the fact that Macbeth has relegated her to the sidelines before this happens means that her death still upholds the expectations placed on her to be passive and vulnerable, despite her early identification with (and apparent aptitude for) strength, courage, and violence.

If Lady Macbeth struggles to find independent agency for violence, Shakespeare’s Macbeth is the corresponding opposite: while Lady Macbeth cannot quite shake her “culturally defined, feminine self” (Kimbrough 187) to fully explore her inclination towards “masculine” traits, Macbeth is convinced to go through with killing Duncan for the crown through suggestions that he is not “masculine” enough. It is abundantly clear throughout the play that Macbeth’s sense of self-worth is contingent on his status as a man: this is evident in his repeated assertions that he “dare[s]” to do anything that a man should do in this world of the play (1.7.46, 3.4.100), even though, as Lady Macbeth says, he is “too full o’ the milk of human kindness” (1.5.16) to be normally inclined towards the self-serving “machismo violence” (Kimbrough 183) that is expected of him and forbidden to her. That said, it is crucial to note, as James Calderwood does, that although Lady Macbeth assumes Macbeth is too kind to commit regicide without her encouragement, “that is not the Macbeth that we see on the heath enraptured by thoughts of

murder” (72).⁹ Just as Lady Macbeth tries to free her “masculine” traits in her “unsex me” speech, Macbeth also makes an effort to allow his compassion to cut through his “manliness,” culminating in his “If it were done when ‘tis done” speech (1.7.1-28); however, the dissonance between his personality and the role prescribed for him by his society makes him highly susceptible to external pressure, as demonstrated in the rest of Act One, Scene Seven, for instance, and so this attempt to go against gender roles is also ultimately unsuccessful. Furthermore, like Lady Macbeth, he also sees his hesitation to inflict harm as a “feminine” quality and attempts to reject it more and more adamantly as the play progresses, until he raves at Banquo’s ghost during the banquet scene:

What man dare, I dare:
Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,
The arm’d rhinoceros, or the Hycran tiger;
Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves
Shall never tremble; or be alive again,
And dare me to the dessert with thy sword;
If trembling I inhabit then, protest me
The baby of a girl. (3.4.100-7)

This scene marks the beginning of Macbeth’s ultimate descent into “masculine” violence and, as Ramsey suggests, even into bestial dehumanization (292), very much mirroring Lady Macbeth’s descent into “feminine” passivity and dehumanizing madness. This culturally required contempt and aversion for the “feminine” that drives Macbeth’s actions throughout the play is just plain old misogyny in the original, but it becomes internalized misogyny when the character is genderbent.

Gender’s role in *Macbeth* is not fundamentally any different in the genderbent version: strength, courage and violence can still be considered “masculine” traits (even in the absence of men), and it can still be considered more desirable to behave “masculinely,” which means that gender roles continue to affect Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in essentially the same ways: they simply become more abstract when they appear in an all-female environment. That said, while placing *Macbeth*’s gender roles into an all-female environment does not alter their essence per se, it does make their effects more complex because in this scenario they must be enforced on women by women. This additional layer of depth should be particularly jarring because the idea

⁹ I was directed to Calderwood by Alfar’s article. Alfar draws on the same quotation to support her argument that Lady Macbeth is not the source of Macbeth’s violent ambition in the play (188).

of an all-female society is loaded with presupposed feminist connotations – in other words, audiences are likely to assume that the all-female Scotland established in a genderbent version of *Macbeth* would have been founded by feminist women seeking to remove themselves from patriarchal gender roles.¹⁰ Highlighting this dissonance is one of the ways in which a genderbent production can offer new feminist value in addition to staying true to Shakespeare: presenting the characters as a group of women living in the same feminist society would inevitably raise the question of why the originally female characters would behave differently and be treated differently than the previously male characters, which in turn creates an opportunity to highlight and examine some of the current limitations that exist in some forms of feminist discourse and allyship. This opportunity is possible because, when Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are both presented as women, the couple represents two of the most common forms of internalized misogyny that many contemporary feminists experience and are still struggling to overcome.

In a genderbent all-female *Macbeth*, Lady Macbeth's experience with internalized misogyny takes on an additional layer of commentary about women who are performing and/or struggling to reconfigure more "traditionally feminine roles" and who are therefore seen as less empowered than women who do perform "masculine" behaviors. Indeed, whether they want to present themselves "femininely" or not, women who follow a passive/supportive gender script can often be looked down on and treated as lesser agents by other women, as Lady Macbeth would be in an all-female environment. Ramisa Rob points to a "viewer distaste" (even verging on an outright "hatred") for Sansa Stark in the *Game of Thrones* series on HBO as an example of this form of internalized misogyny that is so prevalent in current feminist discourse. She argues that this negative response stems from "a common Hollywood fallacy that a 'feminist' story must focus on iconoclastic women who can physically fight like men," and asserts that "[o]ur tendency to revere characters who aren't like other girls and scorn Sansa Stark demonstrates normalized sexism" (Rob). Thus, women like Sansa and Lady Macbeth can become trapped in a reciprocal cycle of self- and-externally inflicted patriarchal oppression, entirely propelled by women. At the same time, Macbeth's experience is still the corresponding opposite in the all-

¹⁰ Indeed, the contemporary impact of a genderbent all-female *Macbeth* would likely be maximized by choosing to go along with this assumption and identifying the characters as feminists through the costumes, set, props, etc.

female version of the play. She still faces pressure to be “masculine” from herself and others, but it becomes a more abstract pressure to prove that she can “measure up” to men. For example, Lady Macbeth’s line, “when you durst do it, then you were a man” (1.7.49) becomes a figurative assertion that Macbeth was “as good as” a man when she was willing to murder Duncan. In moments such as these, Macbeth feels she must reject traditionally feminine traits and prove that she can be just as “strong” (here synonymous with violent) as men to be feminist. This is the flip side of the internalized misogyny that drives feminist *Game of Thrones* viewers to despise Sansa Stark, essentially making Macbeth the Arya to Lady Macbeth’s Sansa (Rob).

To be clear, neither of these approaches should be, or are, the ultimate goals of feminism. A need such as Macbeth’s to prove that she “dare[’s] do all that may become a man” (1.7.46) is sometimes accepted as feminism. While that kind of attitude is still necessary in situations wherein women’s strengths and abilities continue to be underestimated, it is ultimately still a form of internalized misogyny because it is the product of larger culture that labels certain traits and activities as “masculine” and values them more than traits considered “traditionally feminine.” Rob points out that it is with this larger culture that feminists should take issue; in fact, she calls upon them to work to dismantle the patriarchal, ideological binary between “masculine” and “feminine” traits, declaring that “If we are truly feminist, we should be able to credit all kinds of women as equally strong.” A genderbent all-female *Macbeth* would also draw attention to this larger culture of internalized misogyny, which is certainly not restricted to Macbeth and Lady Macbeth: indeed, Ramsey observes that “as he so often does in the histories and tragedies, Shakespeare widens our attention beyond the fortunes of the principals; we are shown the cruel effects of such villainous causes, and much of the action on this wider stage parallels and ironically comments on the central scenes (293) With this in mind, leaving the normative masculine references in is quite useful because they highlight that an ingrained androcentrism is still the default even when there are no men around, showing Duncan, Malcom, Banquo and Macduff to be complicit in the residual misogynist ideology of the play as well. Moreover, having the stronger, more courageous, and more violent characters still refer to themselves as “men” or “manly” shows that the constructed binary between “male” and “female” traits still exists – and is just as harmful as it is in the original.

The exception to this rule – both in the original and in the genderbent version – is MacDuff. Kimbrough points out that MacDuff is the only character who gains the ability to see

that “bravery and compassion are not incompatible” (178), and that neither should be labelled as strictly “masculine” or “feminine.” This becomes clear in Act Four, Scene Three through the way MacDuff reacts to the news of his family’s deaths. First, when rebuked by Malcom to “[d]ispute [his grief] like a man” (4.3.219), MacDuff replies “I shall do so; / But I must also feel it as a man” (4.3.220-1); in this exchange, MacDuff acknowledges that there is room for compassion in masculinity, and that it can co-exist with strength, courage, and violence. Then, although he does appear to re-enforce the presumed binary when he remarks that he “could play the woman with [his] eyes” (4.3.270), it is crucial to recognize that he is simultaneously acknowledging a degree of fluidity between his role as a man and the role he associates with women. Indeed, Kimbrough also picks up on an element of gender-script androgyny in MacDuff, arguing that “[w]hen MacDuff says, ‘I must also feel it as a *man*,’ had he said *woman*, the speech would have been just as powerful because MacDuff’s response is a fully-realized human response” (178).

MacDuff’s non-binary gender script does very interesting things to the prophecy about her unique ability to kill Macbeth in the genderbent all-female version of the play. In the original, Macbeth is told not to fear the “power of man/ For none of woman born shall harm Macbeth” (4.1.94-5), and seems to interpret this literally to mean that he cannot be killed by any other man, as evidenced by his later misquotation of the prophecy as “Fear not Macbeth; no man that’s born of woman/ Shall e’er have power over thee” (5.3.6-7). The significant difference between the two versions of this prophecy is that the witches’ promise that “none of woman born” will be able to harm him suggests they are using the word “man” normatively to refer to people in general, while there is no generalizing qualification in Macbeth’s version to indicate that it applies to anyone who is not specifically a “man that’s born of woman” (5.3.6-7); therefore, based on his understanding of the prophecy, he must disregard the possibility that he could be killed by a woman born of woman in order to think he is safe – an assumption that never becomes overtly significant in the original, thereby again reinforcing the idea that aggression is not a “feminine” trait in the world of the play. In an all-female version, Macbeth can still interpret this prophecy literally, but in a figurative sense, she believes she cannot be killed by any of the other “manly” characters and remains unconcerned about being killed by a non-“manly” character. Crucially, however, although MacDuff is following a “masculine” gender script to some extent, she does not consider herself “merely manly” (Kimbrough 178) in

the way that the rest of the “manly” characters do. Thus, even though the revelation of her birth by caesarean section is still included in the genderbent version, the fact that the only person who can kill Macbeth is also one of the only women in this world who does not completely compartmentalize her strength as either “masculine” or “feminine” highlights Macbeth’s oversight and makes it significant. In this way, a genderbent all-female *Macbeth* would be suggesting that the way to overcome patriarchal oppression is to eschew the binary and hierarchy between “masculine” and “feminine,” which is much closer to the actual goals of some feminist theories. By doing this, MacDuff represents “Shakespeare’s fullest definition of humanity” (Kimbrough 178), and the Macbeths’ inability to do the same is still – and perhaps more than ever – the cause of their downfall (176).

Finally, it is important to note that while Macduff’s non-binary gender script is portrayed as a positive transcendence of gender roles in both the original and the genderbent versions of the play, *Macbeth* also contains a more sinisterly coded depiction of androgyny: the “weird sisters” (1.3.32). From the beginning of their interaction with Macbeth, the witches exist outside the play’s accepted gender scripts, as evidenced by Banquo’s reaction to them: “you should be women/ And yet your beards forbid me to interpret / That you are so” (1.3.45-6). In reality, “the witch was almost exclusively female: 80-90 percent of the approximately one thousand people executed in England for witchcraft were women” (Uszkalo 202). Kirsten Uszkalo explains that witchcraft was widely seen as a “tainted [form] of the female gender” (193); that is, it was a mode of femininity that threatened patriarchal gender roles. Uszkalo describes these practices as a way that women, oftentimes particularly vulnerable or marginalized women, could exert power or vengeance over other people (192-6), thus claiming an authority for self-protection and retribution that would have been considered part of the male domain. Although Britain was engulfed by an extreme fear and hatred of witches under James I, who was the patron of Shakespeare’s company at the time *Macbeth* was written, contemporary scholars such as Lorraine Helms have suggested that the witches’ liminal gender position “liberates” and empowers them in such a way that they could now be presented as feminist figures (167-77). While this is certainly possible, there is a noteworthy tension between the witches’ potentially feminist “subversion” of gender roles (Rooks 159) and their obviously malicious influence in the play. This tension becomes particularly significant in a genderbent version of *Macbeth* because a female Macbeth’s psychological gender presentation resembles the witches’ physical

“masculinity” and their penchant for inflicting harm on others, which means that, in a genderbent production, the witches can be read as embodied manifestations of the internalized misogyny that so detrimentally affects Macbeth and the other characters. This reading works particularly well if their prediction that Macbeth “shalt be King hereafter” (1.3.50) is left as it is in the original, since this would literally show the forces of internalized misogyny working on Macbeth to create her felt need to achieve “manly” successes.

Indeed, in a genderbent all-female version of *Macbeth*, Macbeth’s rejection of “traditional femininity” comes with a belief that achieving gender equality is synonymous with acquiring patriarchal power.¹¹ This is not a complete departure from the original, since the themes of fate, ambition and power are already so closely intertwined with gender anxiety that the patriarchal tinge to Macbeth’s ambition is abundantly apparent. Ramsey (295) and Kimbrough (183) have both noted the “machismo” quality in Macbeth’s escalating violence as king, which is evident, for example, in the rhetorical tactics he uses to convince the murders to kill Banquo (3.1.73-140); furthermore, Alfar points out that as Macbeth becomes increasingly tyrannical, he also becomes more of a patriarch in his relationship with Lady Macbeth, consigning his once “dearest partner of greatness” (1.5.10) to a passive role on the sidelines of his reign (193). Moreover, it is important to note that Macbeth’s “masculine” tyranny is escalated by a feeling of insecurity in his position, as expressed in his first soliloquy after being crowned, in which he says, “To be thus is nothing;/ But to be safely thus” (3.1.47-8). It is telling when considering the relationship between gender anxiety and power that this unease comes from Macbeth’s lack of an heir, and the fact that he identifies having Banquo and Fleance murdered as the solution to this problem highlights the connection between patriarchy and violence which, again, ties power back to gender. All of this functions the same way in the genderbent version, but the female Macbeth’s need to be a patriarch takes on an additional layer of gender-specific self-doubt regarding her right to claim authority. Zara Mohammed identifies a particularly

¹¹ Here again, leaving “king” as her royal title makes sense. It would also be possible to have the other characters continue to address her as “my lord” for the same reason, although too many masculine descriptors may become confusing for the audience. If I was directing, I would be inclined to change most of Macbeth’s “my lord”s into “my liege” for clarity – which would make sense because that is how the other characters would address Duncan during her reign – but “my lord” would work if the goal is to change as little of the original text as possible.

“crippling” form of anxiety that she claims “all women ... suffer” that discourages them from occupying positions of authority; upon being named the Head of the Muslim Council of Britain, she noted that she had “come up with 100 reasons not to put [herself] forward, that maybe someone else – a man – is better”¹² (Sherwood). In this light, it stands to reason that Macbeth being a woman would not change her “machismo” ruling style, but amplify it, as her personal need to prove that she can measure up to men becomes political.

That said, it is essential to note that just as Macbeth’s gender anxiety takes place within a larger culture of internalized misogyny, her need to possess oppressive “masculine” power stems from a society that, despite being all-female, is still structured according to institutions that have their roots in patriarchal ideology, such as monarchy. Indeed, a genderbent all-female *Macbeth* would provide an excellent opportunity to highlight one of the most significant problems facing contemporary feminists: that although women have made tremendous advances in terms of the societal roles they can occupy, not much has changed about the underlying patriarchal structures that created and continue to support those roles. Lynne Layton¹³ observes that since “few workplace or family conditions were changed” when women entered public sphere, to “fit into a man’s world, women had to be able to inhabit the male version of autonomy” (34) – which she identifies as a model of self-hood created by patriarchal capitalism that is “defensive” (35), “domineering” and dependent upon societal measures of success for self-worth (36). If it is true that women have now inherited this kind of psyche and equated it with empowerment (36),¹⁴ it is because many of the feminist theories that offer alternatives to patriarchal power dynamics¹⁵ are

¹² I was directed to this interview by Sue Einhorn’s article. Einhorn uses this quotation as an example to support her claim that women experience an inner “critical chorus” of internalized opinions from their female friends and family members (485); however, in the interview, Mohammed speaks of this anxiety as something that she experiences despite having a strong mother as a role model and a family who supports her career (Sherwood).

¹³ Again, I was directed to Layton’s article through Einhorn’s (497).

¹⁴ In her article, Layton discusses a few instances where she has personally observed this trend in her work as a professor and in her practice as a clinician (34-41).

¹⁵ It is important to note that many of these theories have been developed by BIPOC feminists and reflect marginalized or non-Western lived experiences. For examples and more information, see *Feminist*

considered “radical” (hooks 83) and are therefore not as well known or widely accepted as they should be, even within the feminist movement; moreover, they are certainly not reflected in the structure of contemporary Western society, and consequently, many women who manage to overcome patriarchal oppression in these spaces have no other choice than to take on patriarchal power themselves.

Particularly relevant to the play’s ability to act as an analogy for feminists who are often compelled to navigate residual patriarchal power dynamics are its overarching questions about fate and free will. Scholars have long asked whether Macbeth is free to behave differently than he does; one such scholar, Jean Gooder, argues that the answer is both yes and no, just like the defensively autonomous women that Layton identifies. Gooder points out that the witches predict Macbeth’s fate and curse him to it before his first entrance (221), telling the audience, “Peace! The charm’s wound up” (1.3.37). She then goes on to identify his soliloquy after receiving the first round of prophecies as the moment where he “admit[s] evil to his mind” (Gooder 221), concluding that “the charm is indeed wound up,” but asking the critical question: “by what agency?” (Gooder 222). Gooder maintains that Macbeth’s idea to kill Duncan for the throne “can have no origin outside” of himself (221), but considering the witches’ influence, she argues that he “is at once surrounded by a defining world of forces *and* radically isolated in his (or her) fate” (220). In this way, a character may “choose [their] fate” but still be “helpless to avoid it” (218) – which is essentially what is happening regarding women who feel pressured to accept patriarchal power in the absence of any societal alternative, and then struggle to resist corruption. Gooder suggests that the value of tragedy in this sense is that “[w]ith questions of guilt and responsibility left open, or enigmatic ... [the play] becomes a matter of *understanding what has happened* – and of seeing what has happened as willed by the gods” (220). Of course, in *Macbeth*, the witches are the primary representatives of the supernatural, so the object of the tragedy in a genderbent version would be seeing what has happened as “willed” by the internalized misogyny and patriarchy that the witches represent. Gooder goes on to conclude that, in this light, tragedy “lies in the hero’s consciousness of [their] place in a larger scheme, of which [they were] not aware before” (220). Indeed, Macbeth does realize that he has been led

Theory: From Margin to Center by bell hooks and *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism* edited by Joyce Green.

astray by forces beyond his control in his “tomorrow” speech from Act Five: first comes the realization that all of their “yesterdays [i.e., their cumulative cultural experiences]/ Have lighted fools [i.e., themselves] the way to dusty death” (5.5.22-3), and then Macbeth explicitly identifies the fact that they have been playing externally determined roles by describing life as a “walking shadow,” a “poor player/ That struts and frets his hour upon the stage” and a “tale told by an idiot/ Signifying nothing” (5.5.24-8), thus articulating both the constructed-ness and the disastrous performativity of their actions. In the genderbent version, this realization would create a powerful statement about the need for feminists to address remaining patriarchal structures and conceptions of power in their quest for gender equality. In fact, such a need is materialized at the end of the play when Malcolm tells all the Thanes to “henceforth be earls, the first that ever Scotland/ In such an honour named” (5.7.93-4); in making the other characters into peers, Malcolm is initiating a shift away from a select few women fighting to place themselves in limited positions of patriarchal power towards a dissemination of power that benefits everyone.

Having established that the two central issues in *Macbeth* – gender and ambition – can function in an all-female environment, it is important to step back and determine how such a change affects the main conduit for these themes: the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. As discussed above, the issues of gender roles and uneven power in their relationship are still present when the couple is all-female; patriarchal roles and hierarchies can be upheld even in a relationship between two women. That said, while genderbending does not necessarily undermine the foundations of this relationship, it does mean that a change must be made to the Macbeths’ sexual orientations so that they become LGBTQ+ characters.¹⁶ In dramaturgical terms, there are two ways that this can be done. The first option is to follow the general editorial principles applied to the rest of the script to change all male identifiers into their female equivalents: in this scenario, “husband” would become “wife,” and “lord” would become “lady.” In this case, the Macbeths would be indisputably presented as a married same-sex couple, which means that, while it may not be the specific focus or intention of the production, the show would

¹⁶ It is very important to note that, even if this change to the Macbeths’ relationship is an inherent result of genderbending, it should not be presented as something that they, as characters, have done or “settled for” just because they live in an all-female society; as Butler asserts, “Lesbianism is not the erotic consummation of a set of political beliefs” (x-xi).

be making an inherent statement about LGBTQ+ marriage; in choosing this option, it would be crucial for the director to be aware that this statement could be perceived as either positive or negative depending on factors such as audience demographics, the chemistry between the actors playing these roles, other directorial and dramaturgical decisions, and the overall tone of the show. Since the general public often tends to perceive the Macbeths' relationship as being quite toxic, some directors may prefer the second option, which is to make all of the identifiers related to relationships between significant others gender neutral. In this scenario, "husband" would become "partner," and "wife," "lord,"¹⁷ and "lady" would all be changed to "love." This would be more of an extension than a complete change since the Macbeths already call each other "partner" (1.5.10) and "love" (1.5.57) in the original. Moreover, it would still be entirely possible to show that these characters are monogamous, romantic and sexual partners using these terms, since it would also be unproductive to "gloss over" this aspect of their relationship, as some all-female productions are wont to do (Klett 138). Opting for gender neutrality would only make the characters' marital status ambiguous, thus lessening the risk that showcasing a turbulent same-sex relationship would inadvertently provoke or aid homophobia by taking marriage equality out of the direct line of fire.

A bonus of the second, gender-neutral option is that having Macbeth and Lady Macbeth call each other "love" and "partner" throughout the play highlights the strength and intimacy of their devotion to one another which would help to dispel any preconceived notions about their relationship being toxic. Indeed, despite their entanglement in the play's harmful structures of gender and power, and the horrible acts that they commit as a result, it is always clear that Macbeth and Lady Macbeth love each other, which Kimbrough notes is the "final humanizing touch throughout the play" (187). Certainly, if the viewer can look beyond the two-dimensional vilification that so often shrouds the way the Macbeths are presented, especially Lady Macbeth, there is a deep, tragic sense that each of these characters is acting out of love and care for their partner's desires. In the genderbent version of the play this devotion can also be read as a microcosm of the double-edged solidarity that can exist within the feminist movement, since a female Macbeth is not only Lady Macbeth's significant other, but she is also her feminist ally. On one hand, feminist solidarity provides a system of reassurance and support needed to reach a

¹⁷ When this term is used between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.

common goal; however, as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth would demonstrate in a genderbent version of the play, in some cases this can also morph into a feeling of responsibility to achieve successes historically unavailable to women by any means necessary for the “greatness” of the group. Looking at their relationship through this additional perspective makes the Macbeths’ collective ambition seem more justified and Lady Macbeth’s desire to push Macbeth more understandable. For example, when considering the original *Macbeth*, Ramsey characterizes Lady Macbeth’s declaration that she would murder her nursing child if she had “so sworn / As [Macbeth] [Has] done” to Duncan’s murder (1.7.59-60) as a humiliating assertion of how much more “masculine” she is than “he can ever be” (289). Even putting aside any counterarguments that could be made about the original, in the genderbent version, this moment would come across differently: this line is always Lady Macbeth invoking that she must play a more “traditionally feminine” role than Macbeth, but when this exchange occurs between two women, Lady Macbeth’s statement also becomes a plea to her feminist ally to break down these barriers in her stead, as the partner who has been presented with the opportunity to do so. Thus, a genderbent all-female *Macbeth* would more accurately reflect Alfar’s reading of the Macbeths’ relationship, where Macbeth’s “renewed conviction is not spurred entirely by [her] wife, then, making [Lady Macbeth] the evil instigator of murder, regicide. Rather, Macbeth recognizes [Lady Macbeth’s] injunctions to be [her] own understanding of bloody valor as not only valuable, admirable, and honorable but masculine” (191). In this scenario, the Macbeths truly are “partner[s] of greatness” (1.5.10), who only begin to fall in earnest when they lose sight of this and become unable to act as a team (Ramsey 292).

Lastly, it is important to consider how genderbending may change the way the Macbeths’ downfall can be read or, in other words, whether it has any significant effect on their standing as tragic hero[ine]s. Ramsey argues that in the original *Macbeth*, Macbeth is revealed to the audience as a “monster of degenerate ‘manliness,’” but maintains that he should be seen as a tragic hero because it is through his “career of regicide and slaughter” that the “circle of human sympathy and kindness ... is re-formed” as the audience is left with “a heavy sense of man’s undefinable limits and capabilities” (299). Hélène Cixous takes this logic one step further to identify tragic heroism as that which not only “bear[s] witness to the worst of evil,” but asks, “[i]njustice, hate, treason, massacre, how have we let them into the house? ... How, by what gesture, by what leap out of the bloody circle can we escape the programming of History?”

(15).¹⁸ Significantly, these are precisely the questions that live at the core of a genderbent all-female *Macbeth*. As Ramsey observes of the original, Macbeth is still revealed as a “monster” of toxic masculinity, but the unfamiliarity of having this descent into “perverted” manliness occur in an all-female environment should nudge the audience beyond a “heavy sense” (299) of what women are capable of to wonder, as Cixous prescribes, how these things have infiltrated that house. As discussed above, if everything plays out onstage according to plan, the viewer should conclude that internalized misogyny and residual patriarchy are to blame for Macbeth’s fatal errors, not Lady Macbeth. Moreover, in the genderbent version of the play, there is room for Lady Macbeth to be considered a tragic hero alongside her partner. Helms asserts that “a feminist *Macbeth* should transform a tragedy of machismo and maternity into a celebration of liminality” (174); I agree with this statement, but I also argue that a feminist, all-female, genderbent *Macbeth* would be most powerful by doing tragedy and celebration at the same time. In one sense, an all-female *Macbeth* issues a dual-sided tragic warning to feminist thinkers: Lady Macbeth’s example should always urge feminists not to reject their courage and strengths just because those traits may not be considered “traditionally feminine,”¹⁹ but in this case, Macbeth’s example can serve as a corresponding caution that pressuring themselves to behave like toxic men is not a productive way to achieve equality either. Ultimately, they both go wrong by failing to recognize that femininity and feminism should not be limited to prescribed sets of traits: as Helms suggests, if they had both been free to “dare do all that may become a man” without feeling that they must, and without considering those traits to be “unfeminine,” they might have also been empowered enough to remember that “who dares do more is none” (1.7.46-7). Thus, an all-female *Macbeth* not only highlights how injustice and hatred have been let into the house, but also how we can “escape the programming of History” (Cixous 15).

¹⁸ These quotes come from Cixous’ contributions to a 1995 symposium on the state of theatre published by the *Times Literary Supplement*. The contributors were asked to respond to the question “Who or what does the theatre most urgently require?” (14). Cixous’ answer was that “Great tragic characters” were needed to “question,” “wrestle with” and “explore the present figures of Evil” (15). I should also note that I was directed to this article through Gooder’s (214).

¹⁹ This is not to say that a genderbent production of *Macbeth* would be encouraging feminists to commit regicide. Alfar argues that Shakespeare uses the Macbeths’ plot to kill Duncan to critique or undermine patriarchal gender roles without condoning their violent actions (185).

I want to clarify that I do not intend this paper or any genderbent productions of *Macbeth* like the one I envision here to be a critique of feminism or the contemporary feminist movement: rather, I hope they can be used to take stock of the progress that has already been made, and to demonstrate how urgently necessary it is that we continue our work towards complete gender equality. In many ways, this all-female *Macbeth* is what I fear could happen in a hundred years or so if feminist discourse were to freeze now in its current state. In some of the recent rhetoric surrounding feminism,²⁰ there have been insinuations that ongoing feminist activism is somehow redundant or superfluous, as if women have now achieved gender equality and that therefore there is no further need to advance feminist discourse. The continued discrimination and violence that women face globally demonstrate that this statement is false (Einhorn 482), but this play further refutes that argument by imagining a world in which women have secured complete material and societal control of a nation and yet still have no frame of thinking that they can use to escape the remaining patriarchal power structures and misogynistic self-concepts that ultimately destroy their feminist utopia. This all-female *Macbeth* not only leaves the integrity of Shakespeare's original play intact, but it illustrates that further feminist discourse is needed to de-patriarchalize our conceptions of gender roles, power dynamics, and interpersonal relationships. Without such sustained critical discourse, women – even feminist women – could be doomed to inflict sexist oppression on themselves even if they manage to achieve societal gender equality.

Finally, now that I have examined the essential components of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and considered how they would function in an all-female environment, it is important to return to the issue of all-female genderbending and "legitimate" Shakespearean practice. Klett identifies two accusations that have been leveled against all-female Shakespearean productions in recent years: first, that this practice "adulterates Shakespeare" (2), and, failing that, it has "nothing to contribute" to audiences' understandings of the plays (19). Neither of these claims is true, but more than that, this project demonstrates the value of what can be brought out of Shakespeare's

²⁰ I am thinking, for example, about the University of Saskatchewan USSU Women's Centre's yearly "Who Needs Feminism?" campaign, which asks participants to submit their answers to the prompt "I need feminism because..." (USSU Women's Centre). While this initiative and the answers received reflect an ongoing need for feminist discourse, the fact that this question needs to be publicly addressed on an annual basis to justify the centre's work indicates that opposing views are also prevalent.

work by exploring the plays in this way. Genderbending is about more than just gender equity in the theatre industry, and those who oppose these practices must ask themselves why they think that Shakespeare is still important and what it means to stay true to his work. As much as I value and appreciate what Shakespeare can teach us about early modern life, I keep coming back to his work because of what it can show us about ourselves today. As a scholar, I firmly believe that these insights are most valuable when they are mined from within the framework of the text, but as an artist, I am also acutely aware that these plays were written to be performed and therefore come with the freedom and necessity of being re-envisioned with every telling. I argue that we stay truest to Shakespeare not by trying to keep the plays exactly as they were four hundred years ago, but by actively inheriting them. This inheritance requires us not only to respect the texts, but to ensure they will have as much relevance and vitality as they can for centuries to come; for this to be possible, contemporary theatre-makers need to show that there is room for everyone in these stories, and therefore it is time to re-evaluate our definitions of what is legitimate in Shakespearean theatre.

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Appendix: An All-female *Macbeth*

Editor's Note

The copy-text for this genderbent version of *Macbeth* was obtained through the public domain from the online *Complete Works of William Shakespeare* created in 1993 by Jeremy Hylton and maintained by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. It was chosen purely for ease of editing. I have retained the original formatting, but I added the line numbers listed on this document by counting them as the lineation appears in the copy-text; since the original does not indent shared lines, I have counted them as two instead of one. All quotations from the play in my project paper were taken from the 1990 Oxford World's Classics edition.

ACT I

SCENE I. A desert place.

Thunder and lightning. Enter three Witches

First Witch

When shall we three meet again
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

Second Witch

When the hurlyburly's done,
When the battle's lost and won.

Third Witch

That will be ere the set of sun.

5

First Witch

Where the place?

Second Witch

Upon the heath.

Third Witch

There to meet with Macbeth.

First Witch

I come, Graymalkin!

Second Witch

Paddock calls.

10

Third Witch

Anon.

ALL

Fair is foul, and foul is fair:
Hover through the fog and filthy air.

Exeunt

SCENE II. A camp near Forres.

Alarum within. Enter DUNCAN, MALCOLM, DONALBAIN, LENNOX, with Attendants, meeting a bleeding Sergeant

DUNCAN

What bloody **one** is that? **She** can report,
As seemeth by **her** plight, of the revolt
The newest state.

MALCOLM

This is the sergeant
Who like a good and hardy soldier fought
'Gainst my captivity. Hail, brave friend!
Say to the **queen** the knowledge of the broil
As thou didst leave it.

5

Sergeant

Doubtful it stood;
As two spent swimmers, that do cling together 10
And choke their art. The merciless Macdonwald--
Worthy to be a rebel, for to that
The multiplying villanies of nature
Do swarm upon him [her]--from the western isles
Of kerns and gallowglasses is supplied; 15
And fortune, on his [her] damned quarrel smiling,
Show'd like a rebel's whore: but all's too weak:
For brave Macbeth--well she deserves that name--
Disdaining fortune, with her brandish'd steel,
Which smoked with bloody execution, 20
Like valour's minion carved out her passage
Till she faced the slave;
Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him [her],
Till she unseam'd him [her] from the nave to the chaps,
And fix'd his [her] head upon our battlements. 25

DUNCAN

O valiant cousin! worthy gentle one!

Sergeant

As whence the sun 'gins his reflection
Shipwrecking storms and direful thunders break,
So from that spring whence comfort seem'd to come
Discomfort swells. Mark, queen of Scotland, mark: 30
No sooner justice had with valour arm'd
Compell'd these skipping kerns to trust their heels,
But the Norwegian lord surveying vantage,
With furbish'd arms and new supplies of men
Began a fresh assault. 35

DUNCAN

Dismay'd not this
Our captains, Macbeth and Banquo?

Sergeant

Yes;
As sparrows eagles, or the hare the lion.
If I say sooth, I must report they were 40
As cannons overcharged with double cracks, so they
Doubly redoubled strokes upon the foe:
Except they meant to bathe in reeking wounds,
Or memorise another Golgotha,
I cannot tell. 45
But I am faint, my gashes cry for help.

DUNCAN

So well thy words become thee as thy wounds;
They smack of honour both. Go get her surgeons.

Exit Sergeant, attended

Who comes here?

Enter ROSS

MALCOLM

The worthy **thane** of Ross. 50

LENNOX

What a haste looks through **her** eyes! So should **she** look
That seems to speak things strange.

ROSS

God save the **queen**!

DUNCAN

Whence camest thou, worthy **thane**?

ROSS

From Fife, great **queen**; 55

Where the Norwegian banners flout the sky
And fan our people cold. Norway himself,
With terrible numbers,

Assisted by that most disloyal traitor

The **thane** of Cawdor, began a dismal conflict; 60

Till that Bellona's **bridegroom**, lapp'd in proof,
Confronted him [her] with self-comparisons,
Point against point rebellious, arm 'gainst arm.

Curbing his [her] lavish spirit: and, to conclude,
The victory fell on us. 65

DUNCAN

Great happiness!

ROSS

That now

Sweno, the Norways' king, craves composition:

Nor would we deign him burial of his men

Till he disbursed at Saint Colme's inch 70

Ten thousand dollars to our general use.

DUNCAN

No more that **thane** of Cawdor shall deceive

Our bosom interest: go pronounce his [her] present death,

And with his [her] former title greet Macbeth.

ROSS

I'll see it done. 75

DUNCAN

What he [she] hath lost noble Macbeth hath won.

Exeunt

SCENE III. A heath near Forres.

Thunder. Enter the three Witches

First Witch

Where hast thou been, sister?

Second Witch

Killing swine.

Third Witch

Sister, where thou?

First Witch

A sailor's wife had chestnuts in her lap,
And munch'd, and munch'd, and munch'd:-- 5
'Give me,' quoth I:

'Aroint thee, witch!' the rump-fed ronyon cries.

Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master o' the Tiger:

But in a sieve I'll thither sail,
And, like a rat without a tail, 10
I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do.

Second Witch

I'll give thee a wind.

First Witch

Thou'rt kind.

Third Witch

And I another.

First Witch

I myself have all the other, 15
And the very ports they blow,
All the quarters that they know
I' the shipman's card.

I will drain him dry as hay:

Sleep shall neither night nor day 20

Hang upon his pent-house lid;

He shall live a man forbid:

Weary se'nnights nine times nine

Shall he dwindle, peak and pine:

Though his bark cannot be lost, 25

Yet it shall be tempest-tost.

Look what I have.

Second Witch

Show me, show me.

First Witch

Here I have a pilot's thumb,
Wreck'd as homeward he did come. 30

Drum within

Third Witch

A drum, a drum!
Macbeth doth come.

ALL

The weird sisters, hand in hand,
Posters of the sea and land,
Thus do go about, about: 35
Thrice to thine and thrice to mine
And thrice again, to make up nine.
Peace! the charm's wound up.

Enter MACBETH and BANQUO

MACBETH

So foul and fair a day I have not seen.

BANQUO

How far is't call'd to Forres? What are these 40
So wither'd and so wild in their attire,
That look not like the inhabitants o' the earth,
And yet are on't? Live you? or are you aught
That man may question? You seem to understand me,
By each at once her chappy finger laying 45
Upon her skinny lips: you should be women,
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret
That you are so.

MACBETH

Speak, if you can: what are you?

First Witch

All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, **thane** of Glamis! 50

Second Witch

All hail, Macbeth, hail to thee, **thane** of Cawdor!

Third Witch

All hail, Macbeth, thou shalt be **king** **[queen]** hereafter!

BANQUO

Good **ma'am**, why do you start; and seem to fear
Things that do sound so fair? I' the name of truth,
Are ye fantastical, or that indeed 55
Which outwardly ye show? My noble partner
You greet with present grace and great prediction
Of noble having and of royal hope,
That **she** seems rapt withal: to me you speak not.
If you can look into the seeds of time, 60
And say which grain will grow and which will not,
Speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear
Your favours nor your hate.

First Witch

Hail!

Second Witch

Hail!

65

Third Witch

Hail!

First Witch

Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.

Second Witch

Not so happy, yet much happier.

Third Witch

Thou shalt get **queens**, though thou be none:

So all hail, Macbeth and Banquo!

70

First Witch

Banquo and Macbeth, all hail!

MACBETH

Stay, you imperfect speakers, tell me more:

By Sinel's death I know I am **thane** of Glamis;

But how of Cawdor? the **thane** of Cawdor lives,

A prosperous gentleman [**gentle one**]; and to be **king** [**queen**] 75

Stands not within the prospect of belief,

No more than to be Cawdor. Say from whence

You owe this strange intelligence? or why

Upon this blasted heath you stop our way

With such prophetic greeting? Speak, I charge you.

80

Witches vanish

BANQUO

The earth hath bubbles, as the water has,

And these are of them. Whither are they vanish'd?

MACBETH

Into the air; and what seem'd corporal melted

As breath into the wind. Would they had stay'd!

BANQUO

Were such things here as we do speak about?

85

Or have we eaten on the insane root

That takes the reason prisoner?

MACBETH

Your children shall be **queens**.

BANQUO

You shall be **king** [**queen**].

MACBETH

And **thane** of Cawdor too: went it not so?

90

BANQUO

To the selfsame tune and words. Who's here?

Enter ROSS and ANGUS

ROSS

The **queen** hath happily received, Macbeth,
The news of thy success; and when **she** reads
Thy personal venture in the rebels' fight,
Her wonders and **her** praises do contend 95
Which should be thine or **hers**: silenced with that,
In viewing o'er the rest o' the selfsame day,
She finds thee in the stout Norwegian ranks,
Nothing afraid of what thyself didst make,
Strange images of death. As thick as hail 100
Came post with post; and every one did bear
Thy praises in **her** kingdom's great defence,
And pour'd them down before **her**.

ANGUS

We are sent
To give thee from our royal **mistress** thanks; 105
Only to herald thee into **her** sight,
Not pay thee.

ROSS

And, for an earnest of a greater honour,
She bade me, from **her**, call thee **thane** of Cawdor:
In which addition, hail, most worthy **thane**! 110
For it is thine.

BANQUO

What, can the devil speak true?

MACBETH

The **thane** of Cawdor lives: why do you dress me
In borrow'd robes?

ANGUS

Who was the **thane** lives yet; 115
But under heavy judgment bears that life
Which he [**she**] deserves to lose. Whether he [**she**] was combined
With those of Norway, or did line the rebel
With hidden help and vantage, or that with both
He[**She**] labour'd in his [**her**] country's wreck, I know not; 120
But treasons capital, confess'd and proved,
Have overthrown him [**her**].

MACBETH

[Aside] Glamis, and **thane** of Cawdor!
The greatest is behind.

To ROSS and ANGUS

Thanks for your pains. 125

To BANQUO

Do you not hope your children shall be **queens**
When those that gave the **thane** of Cawdor to me
Promised no less to them?

BANQUO

That trusted home
Might yet enkindle you unto the crown, 130
Besides the **thane** of Cawdor. But 'tis strange:
And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,
The instruments of darkness tell us truths,
Win us with honest trifles, to betray's
In deepest consequence. 135
Cousins, a word, I pray you.

MACBETH

[Aside] Two truths are told,
As happy prologues to the swelling act
Of the imperial theme.--I thank you, **gentle ones**

Aside

Cannot be ill, cannot be good: if ill, 140
Why hath it given me earnest of success,
Commencing in a truth? I am **thane** of Cawdor:
If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs, 145
Against the use of nature? Present fears
Are less than horrible imaginings:
My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
Shakes so my single state of **man** that function
Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is 150
But what is not.

BANQUO

Look, how our partner's rapt.

MACBETH

[Aside] If chance will have me **king** [**queen**], why, chance may crown me,
Without my stir.

BANQUO

New horrors come upon **her**, 155
Like our strange garments, cleave not to their mould
But with the aid of use.

MACBETH

[Aside] Come what come may,
Time and the hour runs through the roughest day.

BANQUO

Worthy Macbeth, we stay upon your leisure. 160

MACBETH

Give me your favour: my dull brain was wrought
With things forgotten. Kind gentle ones, your pains
Are register'd where every day I turn
The leaf to read them. Let us toward the queen.
Think upon what hath chanced, and, at more time, 165
The interim having weigh'd it, let us speak
Our free hearts each to other.

BANQUO

Very gladly.

MACBETH

Till then, enough. Come, friends.

Exeunt

SCENE IV. Forres. The palace.

Flourish. Enter DUNCAN, MALCOLM, DONALBAIN, LENNOX, and Attendants

DUNCAN

Is execution done on Cawdor? Are not
Those in commission yet return'd?

MALCOLM

My liege,
They are not yet come back. But I have spoke
With one that saw him [her] die: who did report 5
That very frankly he [she] confess'd his [her] treasons,
Implor'd your highness' pardon and set forth
A deep repentance: nothing in his [her] life
Became him [her] like the leaving it; he [she] died
As one that had been studied in his [her] death 10
To throw away the dearest thing he [she] owed,
As 'twere a careless trifle.

DUNCAN

There's no art
To find the mind's construction in the face:
He [She] was a gentleman [gentle one] on whom I built 15
An absolute trust.

Enter MACBETH, BANQUO, ROSS, and ANGUS

O worthiest cousin!
The sin of my ingratitude even now
Was heavy on me: thou art so far before
That swiftest wing of recompense is slow 20

To overtake thee. Would thou hadst less deserved,
That the proportion both of thanks and payment
Might have been mine! only I have left to say,
More is thy due than more than all can pay.

MACBETH

The service and the loyalty I owe, 25
In doing it, pays itself. Your highness' part
Is to receive our duties; and our duties
Are to your throne and state children and servants,
Which do but what they should, by doing every thing
Safe toward your love and honour. 30

DUNCAN

Welcome hither:
I have begun to plant thee, and will labour
To make thee full of growing. Noble Banquo,
That hast no less deserved, nor must be known
No less to have done so, let me enfold thee 35
And hold thee to my heart.

BANQUO

There if I grow,
The harvest is your own.

DUNCAN

My plenteous joys,
Wanton in fulness, seek to hide themselves 40
In drops of sorrow. Daughters [Friends], kinsmen, thanes,
And you whose places are the nearest, know
We will establish our estate upon
Our eldest, Malcolm, whom we name hereafter
The Princess of Cumberland; which honour must* 45
Not unaccompanied invest her only,
But signs of nobleness, like stars, shall shine
On all deservers. From hence to Inverness,
And bind us further to you.

MACBETH

The rest is labour, which is not used for you: 50
I'll be myself the harbinger and make joyful
The hearing of my wife [love] with your approach;
So humbly take my leave.

DUNCAN

My worthy Cawdor!

MACBETH

[Aside] The Princess of Cumberland! that is a step* 55
On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap,
For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires;
Let not light see my black and deep desires:

The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be,
Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see. 60

Exit

DUNCAN

True, worthy Banquo; **she** is full so valiant,
And in **her** commendations I am fed;
It is a banquet to me. Let's after **her**,
Whose care is gone before to bid us welcome:
It is a peerless **kinsman**. 65

Flourish. Exeunt

SCENE V. Inverness. Macbeth's castle.

Enter LADY MACBETH, reading a letter

LADY MACBETH

'They met me in the day of success: and I have
learned by the perfectest report, they have more in
them than mortal knowledge. When I burned in desire
to question them further, they made themselves air,
into which they vanished. Whiles I stood rapt in 5
the wonder of it, came missives from the **queen**, who
all-hailed me '**Thane** of Cawdor;' by which title,
before, these weird sisters saluted me, and referred
me to the coming on of time, with 'Hail, **king [queen]** that
shalt be!' This have I thought good to deliver 10
thee, my dearest partner of greatness, that thou
mightst not lose the dues of rejoicing, by being
ignorant of what greatness is promised thee. Lay it
to thy heart, and farewell.'
Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and shalt be 15
What thou art promised: yet do I fear thy nature;
It is too full o' the 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, 20
That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false,
And yet wouldst wrongly win: thou'ldst have, great Glamis,
That which cries 'Thus thou must do, if thou have it;
And that which rather thou dost fear to do
Than wishest should be undone.' Hie thee hither, 25
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. 30

Enter a Messenger

What is your tidings?

Messenger

The **queen** comes here to-night.

LADY MACBETH

Thou'rt mad to say it:

Is not thy **mistress** with **her**? who, were't so,
Would have inform'd for preparation. 35

Messenger

So please you, it is true: our **thane** is coming:
One of my fellows had the speed of **her**,
Who, almost dead for breath, had scarcely more
Than would make up **her** message.

LADY MACBETH

Give **her** tending; 40
She brings great news.

Exit Messenger

The raven **himself** is hoarse
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements. Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here, 45
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood;
Stop up the access and passage to remorse,
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between 50
The effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,
Wherever in your sightless substances
You wait on nature's mischief! Come, thick night,
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell, 55
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! 60

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. 65

LADY MACBETH

And when goes hence?

MACBETH

To-morrow, as **she** purposes.

LADY MACBETH

O, never
Shall sun that morrow see!
Your face, my **thane**, is as a book where **men** 70

May read strange matters. To beguile the time,
Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye,
Your hand, your tongue: look like the innocent flower,
But be the serpent under't. **She** that's coming
Must be provided for: and you shall put 75
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 MACBETH

Only look up clear; 80
To alter favour ever is to fear:
Leave all the rest to me.

Exeunt

SCENE VI. Before Macbeth's castle.

Hautboys and torches. Enter DUNCAN, MALCOLM, DONALBAIN, BANQUO, LENNOX, MACDUFF, ROSS, ANGUS, and Attendants

DUNCAN

This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
Unto our gentle senses.

BANQUO

This guest of summer,
The temple-haunting martlet, does approve, 5
By **his** loved mansionry, that the heaven's breath
Smells wooingly here: no jutty, frieze,
Buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird

Hath made **his** pendent bed and procreant cradle:
Where they most breed and haunt, I have observed, 10
The air is delicate.

Enter LADY MACBETH

DUNCAN

See, see, our honour'd hostess!
The love that follows us sometime is our trouble,
Which still we thank as love. Herein I teach you
How you shall bid God 'ild us for your pains, 15
And thank us for your trouble.

LADY MACBETH

All our service
In every point twice done and then done double
Were poor and single business to contend
Against those honours deep and broad wherewith 20
Your majesty loads our house: for those of old,
And the late dignities heap'd up to them,
We rest your hermits.

DUNCAN

Where's the **thane** of Cawdor?
We coursed **her** at the heels, and had a purpose 25
To be **her** purveyor: but **she** rides well;
And **her** great love, sharp as **her** spur, hath help **her**
To **her** home before us. Fair and noble hostess,
We are your guest to-night.

LADY MACBETH

Your servants ever 30
Have theirs, themselves and what is theirs, in compt,
To make their audit at your highness' pleasure,
Still to return your own.

DUNCAN

Give me your hand;
Conduct me to mine **host**: we love **her** highly, 35
And shall continue our graces towards **her**.
By your leave, hostess.

Exeunt

SCENE VII. Macbeth's castle.

Hautboys and torches. Enter a Sewer, and divers Servants with dishes and service, and pass over the stage. Then enter MACBETH

MACBETH

If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
 It were done quickly: if the 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, 5
 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 the inventor: this even-handed justice 10
 Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice
 To our own lips. **She's** here in double trust;
 First, as I am **her kinsman** and **her** subject,
 Strong both against the deed; then, as **her host**, 15
 Who should against **her** murderer shut the door,
 Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan
 Hath borne **her** faculties so meek, hath been
 So clear in **her** great office, that **her** virtues
 Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against
 The deep damnation of **her** taking-off; 20
 And pity, like a naked new-born babe,
 Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubim, horsed
 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 25
 To prick the sides of my intent, but only
 Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
 And falls on the other.

Enter LADY MACBETH

How now! what news?

LADY MACBETH

She has almost supp'd: why have you left the chamber? 30

MACBETH

Hath **she** ask'd for me?

LADY MACBETH

Know you not **she** has?

MACBETH

We will proceed no further in this business:

She hath honour'd me of late; and I have bought
 Golden opinions from all sorts of people, 35
 Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,
 Not cast aside so soon.

LADY MACBETH

Was the hope drunk
 Wherein you dress'd yourself? hath it slept since?
 And wakes it now, to look so green and pale 40
 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? Wouldst thou have that
 Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life, 45
 And live a coward in thine own esteem,
 Letting 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would,'
 Like the poor cat i' the adage?
MACBETH
 Prithee, peace:
 I dare do all that may become a **man**; 50
 Who dares do more is none.
LADY MACBETH
 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 55
 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: 60
 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? 65
LADY MACBETH
 We fail!
 But screw your courage to the sticking-place,
 And we'll not fail. When Duncan is asleep--
 Whereto the rather shall **her** day's hard journey
 Soundly invite **her--her** two chamberlains 70
 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 limbeck only: when in swinish sleep
 Their drenched natures lie as in a death, 75
 What cannot you and I perform upon
 The unguarded Duncan? what not put upon
Her spongy officers, who shall bear the guilt
 Of our great quell?

MACBETH
 Bring forth **men-children** only; 80
For thy undaunted mettle should compose
Nothing but males. Will it not be received,
 When we have mark'd with blood those sleepy two
 Of **her** own chamber and used their very daggers,
 That they have done't? 85

LADY MACBETH
 Who dares receive it other,
 As we shall make our griefs and clamour roar
 Upon **her** death?

MACBETH
 I am settled, and bend up
 Each corporal agent to this terrible feat. 90
 Away, and mock the time with fairest show:
 False face must hide what the false heart doth know.

Exeunt

ACT II

SCENE I. Court of Macbeth's castle.

Enter BANQUO, and FLEANCE bearing a torch before her

BANQUO
 How goes the night, **girl**?

FLEANCE
 The moon is down; I have not heard the clock.

BANQUO
 And she goes down at twelve.

FLEANCE
 I take't, 'tis later, **ma'am**.

BANQUO
 Hold, take my sword. There's husbandry in heaven; 5
 Their candles are all out. Take thee that too.
 A heavy summons lies like lead upon me,
 And yet I would not sleep: merciful powers,
 Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that nature
 Gives way to in repose! 10

Enter MACBETH, and a Servant with a torch

Give me my sword.
 Who's there?

MACBETH

A friend.

BANQUO

What, **ma'am**, not yet at rest? The **queen's** a-bed:
She hath been in unusual pleasure, and 15
Sent forth great largess to your offices.
This diamond **she** greets your wife [**love**] withal,
By the name of most kind hostess; and shut up
In measureless content.

MACBETH

Being unprepared, 20
Our will became the servant to defect;
Which else should free have wrought.

BANQUO

All's well.
I dreamt last night of the three weird sisters:
To you they have show'd some truth. 25

MACBETH

I think not of them:
Yet, when we can entreat an hour to serve,
We would spend it in some words upon that business,
If you would grant the time.

BANQUO

At your kind'st leisure. 30

MACBETH

If you shall cleave to my consent, when 'tis,
It shall make honour for you.

BANQUO

So I lose none
In seeking to augment it, but still keep
My bosom franchised and allegiance clear, 35
I shall be counsell'd.

MACBETH

Good repose the while!

BANQUO

Thanks, **ma'am**: the like to you!

Exeunt BANQUO and FLEANCE

MACBETH

Go bid thy mistress, when my drink is ready,
She strike upon the bell. Get thee to bed. 40

Exit Servant

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 45
 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; 50
 And such an instrument I was to use.
 Mine eyes are made the fools o' the 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: 55
 It is the bloody business which informs
 Thus to mine eyes. Now o'er the one halfworld
 Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
 The curtain'd sleep; witchcraft celebrates
 Pale Hecate's offerings, and wither'd murder, 60
 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 65
 Thy very stones prate of my whereabouts,
 And take the present horror from the time,
 Which now suits with it. Whiles I threat, she lives:
 Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives.

A bell rings

I go, and it is done; the bell invites me. 70
 Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell
 That summons thee to heaven or to hell.

Exit

SCENE II. The same.

Enter LADY MACBETH

LADY MACBETH

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. She is about it: 5

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. 10

MACBETH

[Within] Who's there? what, ho!

LADY MACBETH

Alack, I am afraid they have awaked,
And 'tis not done. The attempt and not the deed
Confounds us. Hark! I laid their daggers ready;
She could not miss 'em. Had **she** not resembled 15
My father [**mother**] as **she** slept, I had done't.

Enter MACBETH

My **wife** [**partner**]

MACBETH

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

LADY MACBETH

I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry.
Did not you speak? 20

MACBETH

When?

LADY MACBETH

Now.

MACBETH

As I descended?

LADY MACBETH

Ay.

MACBETH

Hark! 25
Who lies i' the second chamber?

LADY MACBETH

Donalbain.

MACBETH

This is a sorry sight.

*Looking on **her** hands*

LADY MACBETH

A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight.

MACBETH

There's one did laugh in **her** sleep, and one cried 30
'Murder!'

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 MACBETH

There are two lodged together. 35

MACBETH

One cried 'God bless us!' and 'Amen' the other;
As they had seen me with these [hangman's](#) hands.
Listening their fear, I could not say 'Amen,'
When they did say 'God bless us!'

LADY MACBETH

Consider it not so deeply. 40

MACBETH

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

LADY MACBETH

These deeds must not be thought
After these ways; so, it will make us mad. 45

MACBETH

Methought I heard a voice cry 'Sleep no more!
Macbeth does murder sleep', the innocent sleep,
Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course, 50
Chief nourisher in life's feast,--

LADY MACBETH

What do you mean?

MACBETH

Still it cried 'Sleep no more!' to all the house:
'Glamis hath murder'd sleep, and therefore Cawdor
Shall sleep no more; Macbeth shall sleep no more.' 55

LADY MACBETH

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? 60
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. 65

LADY MACBETH

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 **she** do bleed,
I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal; 70
For it must seem their guilt.

Exit. Knocking within

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 75
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas in incarnadine,
Making the green one red.

Re-enter LADY MACBETH

LADY MACBETH

My hands are of your colour; but I shame
To wear a heart so white. 80

Knocking within

I hear a knocking
At the south entry: retire we to our chamber;
A little water clears us of this deed:
How easy is it, then! Your constancy
Hath left you unattended. 85

Knocking within

Hark! more knocking.
Get on your nightgown, 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. 90

Knocking within

Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst!

Exeunt

SCENE III. The same.

Knocking within. Enter a Porter

Porter

Here's a knocking indeed! If a man were porter of hell-gate, he should have old turning the key.

Knocking within

Knock,
knock, knock! Who's there, i' the name of Beelzebub? Here's a farmer, that hanged himself on the expectation of plenty: come in time; have napkins enow about you; here you'll sweat for't. 5

Knocking within

Knock, 10
knock! Who's there, in the other devil's name? Faith, here's an equivocator, that could swear in both the scales against either scale; who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven: O, come in, equivocator. 15

Knocking within

Knock,
knock, knock! Who's there? Faith, here's an English tailor come hither, for stealing out of a French hose: come in, tailor; here you may roast your goose. 20

Knocking within

Knock,
knock; never at quiet! What are you? But this place is too cold for hell. I'll devil-porter it no further: I had thought to have let in some of all professions that go the primrose way to the everlasting bonfire. 25

Knocking within

Anon, anon! I pray you, remember the porter.

Opens the gate

Enter MACDUFF and LENNOX

MACDUFF

Was it so late, friend, ere you went to bed,
That you do lie so late? 30

Porter

'Faith **ma'am**, we were carousing till the
second cock: and drink, **ma'am**, is a great
provoker of three things.

MACDUFF

What three things does drink especially provoke?

Porter

Marry, **ma'am**, nose-painting, sleep, and
urine. Lechery, **ma'am**, it provokes, and unprovokes;
it provokes the desire, but it takes 35

away the performance: therefore, much drink
may be said to be an equivocator with lechery:
it makes him, and it mars him; it sets 40

him on, and it takes him off; it persuades him,
and disheartens him; makes him stand to, and
not stand to; in conclusion, equivocates him
in a sleep, and, giving him the lie, leaves him.

MACDUFF

I believe drink gave thee the lie last night. 45

Porter

That it did, **ma'am**, i' the very throat on
me: but I requited **him** for **his** lie; and, I
think, being too strong for **him**, though **he** took
up my legs sometime, yet I made a shift to cast
him. 50

MACDUFF

Is thy **mistress** stirring?

Enter MACBETH

Our knocking has awaked **her**; here **she** comes.

LENNOX

Good morrow, noble **ma'am**.

MACBETH

Good morrow, both.

MACDUFF

Is the **queen** stirring, worthy **thane**? 55

MACBETH

Not yet.

MACDUFF

She did command me to call timely on **her**:

I have almost slipp'd the hour.

MACBETH

I'll bring you to **her**.

MACDUFF

I know this is a joyful trouble to you; 60

But yet 'tis one.

MACBETH

The labour we delight in physics pain.

This is the door.

MACDUFF

I'll make so bold to call,

For 'tis my limited service. 65

Exit

LENNOX

Goes the **queen** hence to-day?

MACBETH

She does: **she** did appoint so.

LENNOX

The night has been unruly: where we lay,

Our chimneys were blown down; and, as they say, 70

Lamentings heard i' the air; strange screams of death,

And prophesying with accents terrible

Of dire combustion and confused events

New hatch'd to the woeful time: the obscure bird

Clamour'd the livelong night: some say, the earth

Was feverous and did shake. 75

MACBETH

'Twas a rough night.

LENNOX

My young remembrance cannot parallel

A fellow to it.

Re-enter MACDUFF

MACDUFF

O horror, horror, horror! Tongue nor heart

Cannot conceive nor name thee! 80

MACBETH LENNOX

What's the matter.

MACDUFF

Confusion now hath made his masterpiece!
Most sacrilegious murder hath broke ope
The Lord's anointed temple, and stole thence
The life o' the building! 85

MACBETH

What is 't you say? the life?

LENNOX

Mean you her majesty?

MACDUFF

Approach the chamber, and destroy your sight
With a new Gorgon: do not bid me speak;
See, and then speak yourselves. 90

Exeunt MACBETH and LENNOX

Awake, awake!
Ring the alarum-bell. Murder and treason!
Banquo and Donalbain! Malcolm! awake!
Shake off this downy sleep, death's counterfeit,
And look on death itself! up, up, and see 95
The great doom's image! Malcolm! Banquo!
As from your graves rise up, and walk like sprites,
To countenance this horror! Ring the bell.

Bell rings

Enter LADY MACBETH

LADY MACBETH

What's the business,
That such a hideous trumpet calls to parley 100
The sleepers of the house? speak, speak!

MACDUFF

O gentle lady,
'Tis not for you to hear what I can speak:
The repetition, in a woman's [lady's] ear,
Would murder as it fell. 105

Enter BANQUO

O Banquo, Banquo,
Our royal mistress's murder'd!*

LADY MACBETH

Woe, alas!
What, in our house?

BANQUO

Too cruel any where. 110
Dear Duff, I prithee, contradict thyself,
And say it is not so.

Re-enter MACBETH and LENNOX, with ROSS

MACBETH

Had I but died an hour before this chance,
I had lived a blessed time; for, from this instant, 115
There 's nothing serious in mortality:
All is but toys: renown and grace is dead;
The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees
Is left this vault to brag of.

Enter MALCOLM and DONALBAIN

DONALBAIN

What is amiss?

MACBETH

You are, and do not know't: 120
The spring, the head, the fountain of your blood
Is stopp'd; the very source of it is stopp'd.

MACDUFF

Your royal **mother's** murder'd.

MALCOLM

O, by whom?

LENNOX

Those of **her** chamber, as it seem'd, had done 't: 125
Their hands and faces were an badged with blood;
So were their daggers, which unwiped we found
Upon their pillows:

They stared, and were distracted; no **man's** life 130
Was to be trusted with them.

MACBETH

O, yet I do repent me of my fury,
That I did kill them.

MACDUFF

Wherefore did you so?

MACBETH

Who can be wise, amazed, temperate and furious,
Loyal and neutral, in a moment? No **man**: 135
The expedition my violent love
Outrun the pauser, reason. Here lay Duncan,
Her silver skin laced with **her** golden blood;
And **her** gash'd stabs look'd like a breach in nature

For ruin's wasteful entrance: there, the murderers, 140
Steep'd in the colours of their trade, their daggers
Unmannerly breech'd with gore: who could refrain,
That had a heart to love, and in that heart
Courage to make love known?

LADY MACBETH

Help me hence, ho! 145

MACDUFF

Look to the lady.

MALCOLM

[Aside to DONALBAIN] Why do we hold our tongues,
That most may claim this argument for ours?

DONALBAIN

[Aside to MALCOLM] What should be spoken here,
where our fate, 150

Hid in an auger-hole, may rush, and seize us?

Let 's away;

Our tears are not yet brew'd.

MALCOLM

[Aside to DONALBAIN] Nor our strong sorrow
Upon the foot of motion. 155

BANQUO

Look to the lady:

LADY MACBETH is carried out

And when we have our naked frailties hid,
That suffer in exposure, let us meet,
And question this most bloody piece of work,
To know it further. Fears and scruples shake us: 160
In the great hand of God I stand; and thence
Against the undivulged pretence I fight
Of treasonous malice.

MACDUFF

And so do I.

ALL

So all. 165

MACBETH

Let's briefly put on **manly** readiness,
And meet i' the hall together.

ALL

Well contented.

Exeunt all but Malcolm and Donalbain.

MALCOLM

What will you do? Let's not consort with them:
To show an unfelt sorrow is an office 170
Which the false man does easy. I'll to England.

DONALBAIN

To Ireland, I; our separated fortune
Shall keep us both the safer: where we are,
There's daggers in their smiles: the near in blood,
The nearer bloody. 175

MALCOLM

This murderous shaft that's shot
Hath not yet lighted, and our safest way
Is to avoid the aim. Therefore, to horse;
And let us not be dainty of leave-taking,
But shift away: there's warrant in that theft 180
Which steals itself, when there's no mercy left.

Exeunt

SCENE IV. Outside Macbeth's castle.

Enter ROSS and an old Woman

Old WOMAN

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.

ROSS

Ah, good mother, 5
Thou seest, the heavens, as troubled with man's act,
Threaten his bloody stage: by the clock, 'tis day,
And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp:
Is't night's predominance, or the day's shame,
That darkness does the face of earth entomb, 10
When living light should kiss it?

Old WOMAN

'Tis unnatural,
Even like the deed that's done. On Tuesday last,
A falcon, towering in her pride of place,
Was by a mousing owl hawk'd at and kill'd. 15

ROSS

And Duncan's horses--a thing most strange and certain--
Beauteous and swift, the minions of their race,
Turn'd wild in nature, broke their stalls, flung out,
Contending 'gainst obedience, as they would make
War with mankind. 20

Old WOMAN

'Tis said they eat each other.

ROSS

They did so, to the amazement of mine eyes
That look'd upon't. Here comes the good Macduff.

Enter MACDUFF

How goes the world, **ma'am**, now?

MACDUFF

Why, see you not? 25

ROSS

Is't known who did this more than bloody deed?

MACDUFF

Those that Macbeth hath slain.

ROSS

Alas, the day!

What good could they pretend?

MACDUFF

They were suborn'd: 30

Malcolm and Donalbain, the **queen's** two **daughters** [heirs],

Are stol'n away and fled; which puts upon them

Suspicion of the deed.

ROSS

'Gainst nature still!

Thriftless ambition, that wilt ravin up 35

Thine own life's means! Then 'tis most like

The sovereignty will fall upon Macbeth.

MACDUFF

She is already named, and gone to Scone

To be invested.

ROSS

Where is Duncan's body? 40

MACDUFF

Carried to Colmekill,

The sacred storehouse of **her** predecessors,

And guardian of their bones.

ROSS

Will you to Scone?

MACDUFF

No, cousin, I'll to Fife. 45

ROSS

Well, I will thither.

MACDUFF

Well, may you see things well done there: adieu!

Lest our old robes sit easier than our new!

ROSS

Farewell, **mother**.

Old WOMAN

God's benison go with you; and with those 50
That would make good of bad, and friends of foes!

Exeunt

ACT III

SCENE I. Forres. The palace.

Enter BANQUO

BANQUO

Thou hast it now: **king [queen]**, Cawdor, Glamis, all,
As the weird women promised, and, I fear,
Thou play'dst most foully for't: yet it was said
It should not stand in thy posterity,
But that myself should be the root and **mother** 5
Of many **queens**. If there come truth from them--
As upon thee, Macbeth, their speeches shine--
Why, by the verities on thee made good,
May they not be my oracles as well,
And set me up in hope? But hush! no more. 10

Sennet sounded. Enter MACBETH, as king [queen], LADY MACBETH, as queen, LENNOX, ROSS, Ladies, and Attendants

MACBETH

Here's our chief guest.

LADY MACBETH

If **she** had been forgotten,
It had been as a gap in our great feast,
And all-thing unbecoming.

MACBETH

To-night we hold a solemn supper **ma'am**, 15
And I'll request your presence.

BANQUO

Let your highness
Command upon me; to the which my duties
Are with a most indissoluble tie
For ever knit. 20

MACBETH

Ride you this afternoon?

BANQUO

Ay, my good **lord** [liege/lady].

MACBETH

We should have else desired your good advice,
Which still hath been both grave and prosperous,
In this day's council; but we'll take to-morrow. 25
Is't far you ride?

BANQUO

As far, my **lord** [liege/lady], as will fill up the time
'Twixt this and supper: go not my horse the better,
I must become a borrower of the night
For a dark hour or twain. 30

MACBETH

Fail not our feast.

BANQUO

My **lord** [liege/ lady], I will not.

MACBETH

We hear, our bloody cousins are bestow'd
In England and in Ireland, not confessing
Their cruel **matricide**, filling their hearers 35
With strange invention: but of that to-morrow,
When therewithal we shall have cause of state
Craving us jointly. Hie you to horse: adieu,
Till you return at night. Goes Fleance with you?

BANQUO

Ay, my good **lord** [liege/ lady]: our time does call upon 's. 40

MACBETH

I wish your horses swift and sure of foot;
And so I do commend you to their backs. Farewell.

Exit BANQUO

Let every **one** be **mistress** of **her** time
Till seven at night: to make society
The sweeter welcome, we will keep ourself 45
Till supper-time alone: while then, God be with you!

Exeunt all but MACBETH, and an attendant

Sirrah, a word with you: attend those **two**

Our pleasure?

ATTENDANT

They are, my **lord** [liege/ lady], without the palace gate.

MACBETH

Bring them before us. 50

Exit Attendant

To be thus is nothing;
 But to be safely thus.--Our fears in Banquo
 Stick deep; and in **her** royalty of nature
 Reigns that which would be fear'd: 'tis much **she** dares;
 And, to that dauntless temper of **her** mind, 55
She hath a wisdom that doth guide **her** valour
 To act in safety. There is none but **she**
 Whose being I do fear: and, under **her**,
 My Genius is rebuked; as, it is said,
 Mark Antony's was by Caesar. **She** chid the sisters 60
 When first they put the name of **king [queen]** upon me,
 And bade them speak to **her**: then prophet-like
 They hail'd **her mother** to a line of **queens**:
 Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown,
 And put a barren sceptre in my gripe, 65
 Thence to be wrench'd with an unlineal hand,
 No **child** of mine succeeding. If 't be so,
 For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind;
 For them the gracious Duncan have I murder'd;
 Put rancours in the vessel of my peace 70
 Only for them; and mine eternal jewel
 Given to the common enemy of **man**,
 To make them **queens**, the seed of Banquo **queens**!
 Rather than so, come fate into the list.
 And champion me to the utterance! Who's there! 75

Re-enter Attendant, with two Murderers

Now go to the door, and stay there till we call.

Exit Attendant

Was it not yesterday we spoke together?

First Murderer

It was, so please your highness.

MACBETH

Well then, now

Have you consider'd of my speeches? Know 80

That it was **she** in the times past which held you

So under fortune, which you thought had been

Our innocent self: this I made good to you

In our last conference, pass'd in probation with you,

How you were borne in hand, how cross'd, 85

the instruments,

Who wrought with them, and all things else that might

To half a soul and to a notion crazed
 Say 'Thus did Banquo.'

First Murderer 90
 You made it known to us.

MACBETH
 I did so, and went further, which is now
 Our point of second meeting. Do you find
 Your patience so predominant in your nature
 That you can let this go? Are you so gospell'd
 To pray for this good **one** and for **her** issue, 95
 Whose heavy hand hath bow'd you to the grave
 And beggar'd yours for ever?

First Murderer
 We are **men**, my liege.

MACBETH
 Ay, in the catalogue ye go for **men**;
 As hounds and greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels, curs, 100
 Shoughs, water-rugs and demi-wolves, are clept
 All by the name of dogs: the valued file
 Distinguishes the swift, the slow, the subtle,
 The housekeeper, the hunter, every one
 According to the gift which bounteous nature 105
 Hath in **him** closed; whereby **he** does receive
 Particular addition. from the bill
 That writes them all alike: and so of **men**.
 Now, if you have a station in the file,
 Not i' the worst rank of **manhood**, say 't; 110
 And I will put that business in your bosoms,
 Whose execution takes your enemy off,
 Grapples you to the heart and love of us,
 Who wear our health but sickly in **her** life,
 Which in **her** death were perfect. 115

Second Murderer
 I am one, my liege,
 Whom the vile blows and buffets of the world
 Have so incensed that I am reckless what
 I do to spite the world.

First Murderer
 And I another 120
 So weary with disasters, tugg'd with fortune,
 That I would set my lie on any chance,
 To mend it, or be rid on't.

MACBETH
 Both of you
 Know Banquo was your enemy. 125

Both Murderers

True, my lord [liege/ lady].

MACBETH

So is she mine; and in such bloody distance,
That every minute of her being thrusts
Against my near'st of life: and though I could
With barefaced power sweep her from my sight 130
And bid my will avouch it, yet I must not,
For certain friends that are both hers and mine,
Whose loves I may not drop, but wail her fall
Who I myself struck down; and thence it is,
That I to your assistance do make love, 135
Masking the business from the common eye
For sundry weighty reasons.

Second Murderer

We shall, my lord [liege / lady],
Perform what you command us.

First Murderer

Though our lives-- 140

MACBETH

Your spirits shine through you. Within this hour at most
I will advise you where to plant yourselves;
Acquaint you with the perfect spy o' the time,
The moment on't; for't must be done to-night,
And something from the palace; always thought 145
That I require a clearness: and with her--
To leave no rubs nor botches in the work--
Fleance her child, that keeps her company,
Whose absence is no less material to me
Than is her mother's, must embrace the fate 150
Of that dark hour. Resolve yourselves apart:
I'll come to you anon.

Both Murderers

We are resolved, my lord [liege/ lady].

MACBETH

I'll call upon you straight: abide within.

Exeunt Murderers

It is concluded. Banquo, thy soul's flight,
If it find heaven, must find it out to-night. 155

Exit

SCENE II. The palace.

Enter LADY MACBETH and a Servant

LADY MACBETH

Is Banquo gone from court?

Servant

Ay, madam, but returns again to-night.

LADY MACBETH

Say to the **king** [queen], I would attend **her** leisure
For a few words.

Servant

Madam, I will.

5

Exit

LADY MACBETH

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** [liege/love/lady]! why do you keep alone, 10
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 scotch'd the snake, not kill'd it: 15
She'll close and be herself, 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 20
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 **her** grave; 25
After life's fitful fever **she** sleeps well;
Treason has done **his** worst: nor steel, nor poison,
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing,
Can touch **her** further.

LADY MACBETH

Come on; 30
Gentle my **lord** [liege/love/lady], sleek o'er your rugged looks;
Be bright and jovial among your guests to-night.

MACBETH

So shall I, love; and so, I pray, be you:
Let your remembrance apply to Banquo;
Present **her** eminence, both with eye and tongue: 35
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 MACBETH

You must leave this. 40

MACBETH

O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife [**love**]!
Thou know'st that Banquo, and **her** Fleance, lives.

LADY MACBETH

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 45
His cloister'd flight, ere to black Hecate's summons
The shard-borne beetle with **his** drowsy hums
Hath rung night's yawning peal, there shall be done
A deed of dreadful note.

LADY MACBETH

What's to be done? 50

MACBETH

Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,
Till thou applaud the deed. Come, seeling night,
Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day;
And with thy bloody and invisible hand
Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond 55
Which keeps me pale! Light thickens; and the crow
Makes wing to the 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; 60
Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill.
So, prithee, go with me.

Exeunt

SCENE III. A park near the palace.

Enter three Murderers

First Murderer

But who did bid thee join with us?

Third Murderer

Macbeth.

Second Murderer

She needs not our mistrust, since **she** delivers
Our offices and what we have to do
To the direction just.

5

First Murderer

Then stand with us.
The west yet glimmers with some streaks of day:
Now spurs the lated traveller apace
To gain the timely inn; and near approaches
The subject of our watch.

10

Third Murderer

Hark! I hear horses.

BANQUO

[Within] Give us a light there, ho!

Second Murderer

Then 'tis **she**: the rest
That are within the note of expectation
Already are i' the court.

15

First Murderer

Her horses go about.

Third Murderer

Almost a mile: but **she** does usually,
So all **men** do, from hence to the palace gate
Make it their walk.

Second Murderer

A light, a light!

20

Enter BANQUO, and FLEANCE with a torch

Third Murderer

'Tis **she**.

First Murderer

Stand to't.

BANQUO

It will be rain to-night.

First Murderer

Let it come down.

They set upon BANQUO

BANQUO

O, treachery! Fly, good Fleance, fly, fly, fly!
Thou mayst revenge. O slave!

25

Dies. FLEANCE escapes

Third Murderer

Who did strike out the light?

First Murderer

Wast not the way?

Third Murderer

There's but one down; the child is fled.

Second Murderer

We have lost

30

Best half of our affair.

First Murderer

Well, let's away, and say how much is done.

Exeunt

SCENE IV. The same. Hall in the palace.

A banquet prepared. Enter MACBETH, LADY MACBETH, ROSS, LENNOX, Ladies, and Attendants

MACBETH

You know your own degrees; sit down: at first
And last the hearty welcome.

Ladies

Thanks to your majesty.

MACBETH

Ourselves will mingle with society,
And play the humble host.

5

Our hostess keeps her state, but in best time
We will require her welcome.

LADY MACBETH

Pronounce it for me, ma'am, to all our friends;
For my heart speaks they are welcome.

First Murderer appears at the door

MACBETH

See, they encounter thee with their hearts' thanks.
Both sides are even: here I'll sit i' the midst:
Be large in mirth; anon we'll drink a measure
The table round.

10

Approaching the door

There's blood on thy face.

First Murderer
'Tis Banquo's then. 15

MACBETH
'Tis better thee without than **she** within.
Is **she** dispatch'd?

First Murderer
My lord [**liege/ lady**], **her** throat is cut; that I did for **her**.*

MACBETH
Thou art the best o' the cut-throats: yet **she's** good
That did the like for Fleance: if thou didst it, 20
Thou art the nonpareil.

First Murderer
Most royal **ma'am**,
Fleance is 'scaped.

MACBETH
Then comes my fit again: I had else been perfect,
Whole as the marble, founded as the rock, 25
As broad and general as the casing air:
But now I am cabin'd, cribb'd, confined, bound in
To saucy doubts and fears. But Banquo's safe?

First Murderer
Ay, my good lord [**liege/ lady**]: safe in a ditch **she** bides,
With twenty trenched gashes on **her** head; 30
The least a death to nature.

MACBETH
Thanks for that:
There the grown serpent lies; the worm that's fled
Hath nature that in time will venom breed,
No teeth for the present. Get thee gone: to-morrow 35
We'll hear, ourselves, again.

Exit Murderer

LADY MACBETH
My royal lord [**liege/love/lady**],
You do not give the cheer: the feast is sold
That is not often vouch'd, while 'tis a-making,
'Tis given with welcome: to feed were best at home; 40
From thence the sauce to meat is ceremony;
Meeting were bare without it.

MACBETH
Sweet remembrancer!
Now, good digestion wait on appetite,
And health on both! 45

LENNOX
May't please your highness sit.

The GHOST OF BANQUO enters, and sits in MACBETH's place

MACBETH

Here had we now our country's honour roof'd,
Were the graced person of our Banquo present;
Who may I rather challenge for unkindness
Than pity for mischance! 50

ROSS

Her absence, ma'am,
Lays blame upon her promise. Please't your highness
To grace us with your royal company.

MACBETH

The table's full.

LENNOX

Here is a place reserved, ma'am. 55

MACBETH

Where?

LENNOX

Here, my good lord [liege/lady]. What is't that moves your highness?

MACBETH

Which of you have done this?

Ladies

What, my good lord [liege/lady]?

MACBETH

Thou canst not say I did it: never shake
Thy gory locks at me. 60

ROSS

Gentle ones, rise: her highness is not well.

LADY MACBETH

Sit, worthy friends: my lord [liege/love/ lady] is often thus,
And hath been from her youth: pray you, keep seat;
The fit is momentary; upon a thought 65

She will again be well: if much you note her,
You shall offend her and extend her passion:
Feed, and regard her not. Are you a man?

MACBETH

Ay, and a bold one, that dare look on that
Which might appal the devil. 70

LADY MACBETH

O proper stuff!

This is the very painting of your fear:
This is the air-drawn dagger which, you said,
Led you to Duncan. O, these flaws and starts,
Impostors to true fear, would well become 75
A woman's story at a winter's fire,
Authorized by her grandam. Shame itself!

Why do you make such faces? When all's done,
You look but on a stool.

MACBETH

Prithee, see there! behold! look! lo!
how say you? 80

Why, what care I? If thou canst nod, speak too.
If charnel-houses and our graves must send
Those that we bury back, our monuments
Shall be the maws of kites. 85

GHOST OF BANQUO vanishes

LADY MACBETH

What, quite **unmann'd** in folly?

MACBETH

If I stand here, I saw **her**.

LADY MACBETH

Fie, for shame!

MACBETH

Blood hath been shed ere now, i' the olden time,
Ere human statute purged the gentle weal; 90

Ay, and since too, murders have been perform'd
Too terrible for the ear: the times have 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, 95
And push us from our stools: this is more strange
Than such a murder is.

LADY MACBETH

My worthy **lord** [**liege/love/ lady**],
Your noble friends do lack you.

MACBETH

I do forget. 100

Do not muse at me, my most worthy friends,
I have a strange infirmity, which is nothing
To those that know me. Come, love and health to all;
Then I'll sit down. Give me some wine; fill full.

I drink to the general joy o' the whole table, 105
And to our dear friend Banquo, whom we miss;
Would **she** were here! to all, and **her**, we thirst,
And all to all.

Ladies

Our duties, and the pledge.

Re-enter GHOST OF BANQUO

MACBETH

Avaunt! and quit my sight! let the earth hide thee! 110
Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;
Thou hast no speculation in those eyes
Which thou dost glare with!

LADY MACBETH

Think of this, good peers,
But as a thing of custom: 'tis no other; 115
Only it spoils the pleasure of the time.

MACBETH**What man dare, I dare:**

Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,
The arm'd rhinoceros, or the Hyrcan tiger;
Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves 120
Shall never tremble: or be alive again,
And dare me to the desert with thy sword;
If trembling I inhabit then, protest me
The baby of a girl. Hence, horrible shadow!
Unreal mockery, hence! 125

GHOST OF BANQUO vanishes

Why, so: being gone,

I am a man again. Pray you, sit still.

LADY MACBETH

You have displaced the mirth, broke the good meeting,
With most admired disorder.

MACBETH

Can such things be, 130
And overcome us like a summer's cloud,
Without our special wonder? You make me strange
Even to the disposition that I owe,
When now I think you can behold such sights,
And keep the natural ruby of your cheeks, 135
When mine is blanched with fear.

ROSS

What sights, my lord [*liege /lady*]?

LADY MACBETH

I pray you, speak not; *she* grows worse and worse;
Question enrages *her*. At once, good night:
Stand not upon the order of your going, 140
But go at once.

LENNOX

Good night; and better health
Attend *her* majesty!

LADY MACBETH

A kind good night to all!

Exeunt all but MACBETH and LADY MACBETH

MACBETH

It will have blood; they say, blood will have blood: 145
Stones have been known to move and trees to speak;
Augurs and understood relations have
By magot-pies and choughs and rooks brought forth
The secret'st **man** of blood. What is the night?

LADY MACBETH

Almost at odds with morning, which is which. 150

MACBETH

How say'st thou, that Macduff denies **her** person
At our great bidding?

LADY MACBETH

Did you send to **her, ma'am**?

MACBETH

I hear it by the way; but I will send:
There's not a one of them but in **her** house 155

I keep a servant fee'd. I will to-morrow,
And betimes I will, to the weird sisters:
More shall they speak; for now I am bent to know,
By the worst means, the worst. For mine own good,

All causes shall give way: I am in blood 160

Stepp'd in so far that, should I wade no more,
Returning were as tedious as go o'er:
Strange things I have in head, that will to hand;
Which must be acted ere they may be scann'd.

LADY MACBETH

You lack the season of all natures, sleep. 165

MACBETH

Come, we'll to sleep. My strange and self-abuse
Is the initiate fear that wants hard use:
We are yet but young in deed.

Exeunt

SCENE V. A Heath.

Thunder. Enter the three Witches meeting HECATE

First Witch

Why, how now, Hecate! you look angerly.

HECATE

Have I not reason, beldams as you are,
 Saucy and overbold? How did you dare
 To trade and traffic with Macbeth
 In riddles and affairs of death; 5
 And I, the mistress of your charms,
 The close contriver of all harms,
 Was never call'd to bear my part,
 Or show the glory of our art?
 And, which is worse, all you have done 10
 Hath been but for a **wayward son** [a wayward one],
 Spiteful and wrathful, who, as others do,
 Loves for **her** own ends, not for you.
 But make amends now: get you gone,
 And at the pit of Acheron 15
 Meet me i' the morning: thither **she**
 Will come to know **her** destiny:
 Your vessels and your spells provide,
 Your charms and every thing beside.
 I am for the air; this night I'll spend 20
 Unto a dismal and a fatal end:
 Great business must be wrought ere noon:
 Upon the corner of the moon
 There hangs a vaporous drop profound;
 I'll catch it ere it come to ground: 25
 And that distill'd by magic sleights
 Shall raise such artificial sprites
 As by the strength of their illusion
 Shall draw **her** on to **her** confusion:
She shall spurn fate, scorn death, and bear 30
Her hopes 'bove wisdom, grace and fear:
 And you all know, security
 Is mortals' chiefest enemy.

Music and a song within: 'Come away, come away,' & c

Hark! I am call'd; my little spirit, see,
 Sits in a foggy cloud, and stays for me. 35

Exit

First Witch

Come, let's make haste; she'll soon be back again.

Exeunt

SCENE VI. Forres. The palace.

Enter LENNOX and another Lady

LENNOX

My former speeches have but hit your thoughts,
Which can interpret further: only, I say,
Things have been strangely borne. The
gracious Duncan
Was pitied of Macbeth: marry, **she** was dead: 5
And the right-valiant Banquo walk'd too late;
Whom, you may say, if't please you, Fleance kill'd,
For Fleance fled: **men** must not walk too late.
Who cannot want the thought how monstrous
It was for Malcolm and for Donalbain 10
To kill their gracious **mother**? damned fact!
How it did grieve Macbeth! did **she** not straight
In pious rage the two delinquents tear,
That were the slaves of drink and thralls of sleep?
Was not that nobly done? Ay, and wisely too; 15
For 'twould have anger'd any heart alive
To hear the **two** deny't. So that, I say,
She has borne all things well: and I do think
That had **she** Duncan's **daughters** [**heirs**] under **her** key--
As, an't please heaven, **she** shall not--they 20
should find
What 'twere to kill a **mother**; so should Fleance.
But, peace! for from broad words and 'cause **she** fail'd
Her presence at the tyrant's feast, I hear
Macduff lives in disgrace: **ma'am**, can you tell 25
Where **she** bestows **herself**?

LADY

The **child** of Duncan,
From whom this tyrant holds the due of birth
Lives in the English court, and is received
Of the most pious Edward with such grace 30
That the malevolence of fortune nothing
Takes from **her** high respect: thither Macduff
Is gone to pray the holy king, upon his aid
To wake Northumberland and warlike Siward:
That, by the help of these--with Him above 35
To ratify the work--we may again
Give to our tables meat, sleep to our nights,
Free from our feasts and banquets bloody knives,
Do faithful homage and receive free honours:
All which we pine for now: and this report 40

Hath so exasperate the **king** [queen] that **she**
Prepares for some attempt of war.

LENNOX

Sent **she** to Macduff?

LADY

She did: and with an absolute '**Ma'am**, not I,'
The cloudy messenger turns me **her** back, 45
And hums, as who should say 'You'll rue the time
That clogs me with this answer.'

LENNOX

And that well might
Advise **her** to a caution, to hold what distance
Her wisdom can provide. Some holy angel 50
Fly to the court of England and unfold
Her message ere **she** come, that a swift blessing
May soon return to this our suffering country
Under a hand accursed!

LADY

I'll send my prayers with **her**. 55

Exeunt

ACT IV

SCENE I. A cavern. In the middle, a boiling cauldron.

Thunder. Enter the three Witches

First Witch

Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd.

Second Witch

Thrice and once the hedge-pig whined.

Third Witch

Harpier cries 'Tis time, 'tis time.

First Witch

Round about the cauldron go;
In the poison'd entrails throw. 5
Toad, that under cold stone
Days and nights has thirty-one
Swelter'd venom sleeping got,
Boil thou first i' the charmed pot.

ALL

Double, double toil and trouble; 10
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

Second Witch

Fillet of a fenny snake,
In the cauldron boil and bake;
Eye of newt and toe of frog,
Wool of bat and tongue of dog, 15
Adder's fork and blind-worm's sting,
Lizard's leg and owlet's wing,
For a charm of powerful trouble,
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

ALL

Double, double toil and trouble; 20
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.

Third Witch

Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,
Witches' mummy, maw and gulf
Of the ravin'd salt-sea shark,
Root of hemlock digg'd i' the dark, 25
Liver of blaspheming Jew,
Gall of goat, and slips of yew
Silver'd in the moon's eclipse,
Nose of Turk and Tartar's lips,

Finger of birth-strangled babe 30
Ditch-deliver'd by a drab,
Make the gruel thick and slab:
Add thereto a tiger's chaudron,
For the ingredients of our cauldron.

ALL

Double, double toil and trouble; 35
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.

Second Witch

Cool it with a baboon's blood,
Then the charm is firm and good.

Enter HECATE to the other three Witches

HECATE

O well done! I commend your pains;
And every one shall share i' the gains; 40
And now about the cauldron sing,
Live elves and fairies in a ring,
Enchanting all that you put in.

Music and a song: 'Black spirits,' & c

HECATE retires

Second Witch

By the pricking of my thumbs,
Something wicked this way comes. 45
Open, locks,
Whoever knocks!

Enter MACBETH

MACBETH

How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags!
What is't you do?

ALL

A deed without a name. 50

MACBETH

I conjure you, by that which you profess,
Howe'er you come to know it, answer me:
Though you untie the winds and let them fight
Against the churches; though the yesty waves
Confound and swallow navigation up; 55

Though bladed corn be lodged and trees blown down;
Though castles topple on their warders' heads;
Though palaces and pyramids do slope
Their heads to their foundations; though the treasure
Of nature's germens tumble all together, 60
Even till destruction sicken; answer me
To what I ask you.

First Witch

Speak.

Second Witch

Demand.

Third Witch

We'll answer. 65

First Witch

Say, if thou'dst rather hear it from our mouths,
Or from our **masters** [mistresses]?

MACBETH

Call 'em; let me see 'em.

First Witch

Pour in sow's blood, that hath eaten
Her nine farrow; grease that's sweaten 70
From the murderer's gibbet throw
Into the flame.

ALL

Come, high or low;
Thyself and office deftly show!

Thunder. First Apparition: an armed Head

MACBETH
Tell me, thou unknown power,-- 75

First Witch

She knows thy thought:
Hear **her** speech, but say thou nought.

First Apparition

Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! beware Macduff;
Beware the **thane** of Fife. Dismiss me. Enough.

Descends

MACBETH
Whate'er thou art, for thy good caution, thanks; 80

Thou hast harp'd my fear aright: but one
word more,--

First Witch

She will not be commanded: here's another,
More potent than the first.

Thunder. Second Apparition: A bloody Child

Second Apparition
Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! 85

MACBETH

Had I three ears, I'd hear thee.

Second Apparition

Be bloody, bold, and resolute; laugh to scorn
The power of **man**, for none of woman born
Shall harm Macbeth.

Descends

MACBETH
Then live, Macduff: what need I fear of thee? 90

But yet I'll make assurance double sure,
And take a bond of fate: thou shalt not live;
That I may tell pale-hearted fear it lies,
And sleep in spite of thunder.

*Thunder. Third Apparition: a Child crowned, with a tree in **her** hand*

What is this 95

That rises like the issue of a **king [queen]**,
And wears upon **her** baby-brow the round
And top of sovereignty?

ALL

Listen, but speak not to't.

Third Apparition

Be lion-mettled, proud; and take no care 100
Who chafes, who frets, or where conspirers are:
Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be until
Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill
Shall come against **her**.

Descends

MACBETH

That will never be 105
Who can impress the forest, bid the tree
Unfix **his** earth-bound root? Sweet bodements! good!
Rebellion's head, rise never till the wood
Of Birnam rise, and our high-placed Macbeth
Shall live the lease of nature, pay **her** breath 110
To time and mortal custom. Yet my heart
Throbs to know one thing: tell me, if your art
Can tell so much: shall Banquo's issue ever
Reign in this kingdom?

ALL

Seek to know no more. 115

MACBETH

I will be satisfied: deny me this,
And an eternal curse fall on you! Let me know.
Why sinks that cauldron? and what noise is this?

Hautboys

First Witch

Show!

Second Witch

Show! 120

Third Witch

Show!

ALL

Show **her** eyes, and grieve **her** heart;
Come like shadows, so depart!

*A show of Eight **Queens**, the last with a glass in **her** hand; GHOST OF BANQUO following*

MACBETH

Thou art too like the spirit of Banquo: down!
Thy crown does sear mine eye-balls. And thy hair, 125
Thou other gold-bound brow, is like the first.

A third is like the former. Filthy hags!
Why do you show me this? A fourth! Start, eyes!
What, will the line stretch out to the crack of doom?
Another yet! A seventh! I'll see no more: 130
And yet the eighth appears, who bears a glass
Which shows me many more; and some I see
That two-fold balls and treble scepters carry:
Horrible sight! Now, I see, 'tis true;
For the blood-bolter'd Banquo smiles upon me, 135
And points at them for **hers**.

Apparitions vanish

What, is this so?
First Witch
Ay, **ma'am**, all this is so: but why
Stands Macbeth thus amazedly?
Come, sisters, cheer we up **her** sprites, 140
And show the best of our delights:
I'll charm the air to give a sound,
While you perform your antic round:
That this great **king** [**queen**] may kindly say,
Our duties did **her** welcome pay. 145

Music. The witches dance and then vanish, with HECATE

MACBETH
Where are they? Gone? Let this pernicious hour
Stand aye accursed in the calendar!
Come in, without there!

Enter LENNOX

LENNOX
What's your grace's will?
MACBETH
Saw you the weird sisters? 150
LENNOX
No, my **lord** [**liege / lady**].
MACBETH
Came they not by you?
LENNOX
No, indeed, my **lord** [**liege / lady**].
MACBETH

Infected be the air whereon they ride;
And damn'd all those that trust them! I did hear 155
The galloping of horse: who was't came by?

LENNOX

'Tis two or three, my lord [liege /lady], that bring you word
Macduff is fled to England.

MACBETH

Fled to England!

LENNOX

Ay, my good lord [liege / lady]. 160

MACBETH

Time, thou anticipatest my dread exploits:
The flighty purpose never is o'ertook
Unless the deed go with it; from this moment
The very firstlings of my heart shall be
The firstlings of my hand. And even now, 165

To crown my thoughts with acts, be it thought and done:
The castle of Macduff I will surprise;

Seize upon Fife; give to the edge o' the sword
Her wife [love], her babes, and all unfortunate souls
That trace her in her line. No boasting like a fool; 170

This deed I'll do before this purpose cool.
But no more sights!--Where are these gentle ones?
Come, bring me where they are.

Exeunt

SCENE II. Fife. Macduff's castle.

Enter LADY MACDUFF, her Daughter, and ROSS

LADY MACDUFF

What had she done, to make her fly the land?

ROSS

You must have patience, madam.

LADY MACDUFF

She had none:

Her flight was madness: when our actions do not,
Our fears do make us traitors. 5

ROSS

You know not

Whether it was her wisdom or her fear.

LADY MACDUFF

Wisdom! to leave her wife [love], to leave her babes,
Her mansion and her titles in a place
From whence herself does fly? She loves us not; 10

She wants the natural touch: for the poor wren,
The most diminutive of birds, will fight,
Her young ones in her nest, against the owl.
All is the fear and nothing is the love;
As little is the wisdom, where the flight 15
So runs against all reason.

ROSS

My dearest coz,
I pray you, school yourself: but for your **wife** [partner]
She is noble, wise, judicious, and best knows
The fits o' the season. I dare not speak 20
much further;

But cruel are the times, when we are traitors
And do not know ourselves, when we hold rumour
From what we fear, yet know not what we fear,
But float upon a wild and violent sea 25

Each way and move. I take my leave of you:
Shall not be long but I'll be here again:
Things at the worst will cease, or else climb upward
To what they were before. My pretty cousin,
Blessing upon you! 30

LADY MACDUFF

Mother'd she is, and yet **she's motherless**.

ROSS

I am so much a fool, should I stay longer,
It would be my disgrace and your discomfort:
I take my leave at once.

Exit

LADY MACDUFF

Sirrah, your **mother's** dead; 35
And what will you do now? How will you live?

DAUGHTER

As birds do, mother.

LADY MACDUFF

What, with worms and flies?

DAUGHTER

With what I get, I mean; and so do they.

LADY MACDUFF

Poor bird! thou'ldst never fear the net nor lime, 40
The pitfall nor the gin.

DAUGHTER

Why should I, mother? Poor birds they are not set for.

My **mother** is not dead, for all your saying.

LADY MACDUFF

Yes, **she** is dead; how wilt thou do for a **mother**?

DAUGHTER

Nay, how will you do for a husband [**partner**]? 45

LADY MACDUFF

Why, I can buy me twenty at any market.

DAUGHTER

Then you'll buy 'em to sell again.

LADY MACDUFF

Thou speak'st with all thy wit: and yet, i' faith,
With wit enough for thee.

DAUGHTER

Was my **mother** a traitor, mother? 50

LADY MACDUFF

Ay, that **she** was.

DAUGHTER

What is a traitor?

LADY MACDUFF

Why, one that swears and lies.

DAUGHTER

And be all traitors that do so?

LADY MACDUFF

Every one that does so is a traitor, and must be hanged. 55

DAUGHTER

And must they all be hanged that swear and lie?

LADY MACDUFF

Every one.

DAUGHTER

Who must hang them?

LADY MACDUFF

Why, the honest **men** [**ones**].

DAUGHTER

Then the liars and swearers are fools, 60
for there are liars and swearers enow to beat
the honest **men** [**ones**] and hang up them.

LADY MACDUFF

Now, God help thee, poor monkey!
But how wilt thou do for a **mother**?

DAUGHTER

If **she** were dead, you'd weep for 65
her: if you would not, it were a good sign
that I should quickly have a new **mother**.

LADY MACDUFF

Poor prattler, how thou talk'st!

Enter a Messenger

Messenger

Bless you, fair dame! I am not to you known,
Though in your state of honour I am perfect. 70
I doubt some danger does approach you nearly:
If you will take a homely **one's** advice,
Be not found here; hence, with your little ones.
To fright you thus, methinks, I am too savage;
To do worse to you were fell cruelty, 75
Which is too nigh your person. Heaven preserve you!
I dare abide no longer.

Exit

LADY MACDUFF

Whither should I fly?
I have done no harm. But I remember now
I am in this earthly world; where to do harm 80
Is often laudable, to do good sometime
Accounted dangerous folly: why then, alas,
Do I put up that womanly defence,
To say I have done no harm?

Enter Murderers

What are these faces? 85

First Murderer

Where is your **wife** [**partner**]?

LADY MACDUFF

I hope, in no place so unsanctified
Where such as thou mayst find **her**.

First Murderer

She's a traitor.

DAUGHTER

Thou liest, thou shag-hair'd villain! 90

First Murderer

What, you egg!

*Stabbing **her***

Young fry of treachery!

DAUGHTER

She has kill'd me, mother:

Run away, I pray you!

Dies

Exit LADY MACDUFF, crying 'Murder!' Exeunt Murderers, following her

SCENE III. England. Before the King's palace.

Enter MALCOLM and MACDUFF

MALCOLM

Let us seek out some desolate shade, and there
Weep our sad bosoms empty.

MACDUFF

Let us rather

Hold fast the mortal sword, and **like good men**

Bestride our down-fall'n birthdom: each new morn 5

New widows howl, new orphans cry, new sorrows

Strike heaven on the face, that it resounds

As if it felt with Scotland and yell'd out

Like syllable of dolour.

MALCOLM

What I believe I'll wail, 10

What know believe, and what I can redress,

As I shall find the time to friend, I will.

What you have spoke, it may be so perchance.

This tyrant, whose sole name blisters our tongues,

Was once thought honest: you have loved **her** well. 15

She hath not touch'd you yet. I am young;

but something

You may deserve of **her** through me, and wisdom

To offer up a weak poor innocent lamb

To appease an angry **god**. 20

MACDUFF

I am not treacherous.

MALCOLM

But Macbeth is.

A good and virtuous nature may recoil

In an imperial charge. But I shall crave

your pardon; 25

That which you are my thoughts cannot transpose:

Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell;

Though all things foul would wear the brows of grace,

Yet grace must still look so.

MACDUFF

I have lost my hopes. 30

MALCOLM

Perchance even there where I did find my doubts.

Why in that rawness left you wife [**love**] and child,

Those precious motives, those strong knots of love,

Without leave-taking? I pray you,
Let not my jealousies be your dishonours, 35
But mine own safeties. You may be rightly just,
Whatever I shall think.

MACDUFF

Bleed, bleed, poor country!
Great tyranny! lay thou thy basis sure,
For goodness dare not cheque thee: wear thou 40
thy wrongs;

The title is affeer'd! Fare thee well, lady*:
I would not be the villain that thou think'st
For the whole space that's in the tyrant's grasp,
And the rich East to boot. 45

MALCOLM

Be not offended:
I speak not as in absolute fear of you.
I think our country sinks beneath the yoke;
It weeps, it bleeds; and each new day a gash
Is added to her wounds: I think withal 50

There would be hands uplifted in my right;
And here from gracious England have I offer
Of goodly thousands: but, for all this,
When I shall tread upon the tyrant's head,
Or wear it on my sword, yet my poor country 55
Shall have more vices than it had before,
More suffer and more sundry ways than ever,
By her that shall succeed.

MACDUFF

What should she be?

MALCOLM

It is myself I mean: in whom I know 60
All the particulars of vice so grafted
That, when they shall be open'd, black Macbeth
Will seem as pure as snow, and the poor state
Esteem her as a lamb, being compared
With my confineless harms. 65

MACDUFF

Not in the legions
Of horrid hell can come a devil more damn'd
In evils to top Macbeth.

MALCOLM

I grant her bloody,
Luxurious, avaricious, false, deceitful, 70
Sudden, malicious, smacking of every sin
That has a name: but there's no bottom, none,
In my voluptuousness: your wives [loves], your daughters,

Your matrons and your maids, could not fill up
The cistern of my lust, and my desire 75
All continent impediments would o'erbear
That did oppose my will: better Macbeth
Than such an one to reign.

MACDUFF
Boundless intemperance
In nature is a tyranny; it hath been 80
The untimely emptying of the happy throne
And fall of many kings [queens]. But fear not yet
To take upon you what is yours: you may
Convey your pleasures in a spacious plenty,
And yet seem cold, the time you may so hoodwink. 85
We have willing dames enough: there cannot be
That vulture in you, to devour so many
As will to greatness dedicate themselves,
Finding it so inclined.

MALCOLM
With this there grows 90
In my most ill-composed affection such
A stanchless avarice that, were I queen,
I should cut off the nobles for their lands,
Desire her jewels and this other's house:
And my more-having would be as a sauce 95
To make me hunger more; that I should forge
Quarrels unjust against the good and loyal,
Destroying them for wealth.

MACDUFF
This avarice
Sticks deeper, grows with more pernicious root 100
Than summer-seeming lust, and it hath been
The sword of our slain kings [queens]: yet do not fear;
Scotland hath foisons to fill up your will.
Of your mere own: all these are portable,
With other graces weigh'd. 105

MALCOLM
But I have none: the king-becoming [queen-becoming] graces,
As justice, verity, temperance, stableness,
Bounty, perseverance, mercy, lowliness,
Devotion, patience, courage, fortitude,
I have no relish of them, but abound 110
In the division of each several crime,
Acting it many ways. Nay, had I power, I should
Pour the sweet milk of concord into hell,
Uproar the universal peace, confound
All unity on earth. 115

MACDUFF

O Scotland, Scotland!

MALCOLM

If such a one be fit to govern, speak:

I am as I have spoken.

MACDUFF

Fit to govern!

No, not to live. O nation miserable, 120

With an untitled tyrant bloody-scepter'd,

When shalt thou see thy wholesome days again,

Since that the truest issue of thy throne

By **her** own interdiction stands accursed,

And does blaspheme **her** breed? Thy royal **mother** 125

Was a most sainted **queen**: the queen that bore thee,

Oftener upon her knees than on her feet,

Died every day she lived. Fare thee well!

These evils thou repeat'st upon thyself

Have banish'd me from Scotland. O my breast, 130

Thy hope ends here!

MALCOLM

Macduff, this noble passion,

Child of integrity, hath from my soul

Wiped the black scruples, reconciled my thoughts

To thy good truth and honour. Devilish Macbeth 135

By many of these trains hath sought to win me

Into **her** power, and modest wisdom plucks me

From over-credulous haste: but God above

Deal between thee and me! for even now

I put myself to thy direction, and 140

Unspeak mine own detraction, here abjure

The taints and blames I laid upon myself,

For strangers to my nature. I am yet

Unknown to woman, never was forsworn,

Scarcely have coveted what was mine own, 145

At no time broke my faith, would not betray

The devil to his fellow and delight

No less in truth than life: my first false speaking

Was this upon myself: what I am truly,

Is thine and my poor country's to command: 150

Whither indeed, before thy here-approach,

Old Siward, with ten thousand warlike **souls** [**soldiers**]

Already at a point, was setting forth.

Now we'll together; and the chance of goodness

Be like our warranted quarrel! Why are you silent? 155

MACDUFF

Such welcome and unwelcome things at once
'Tis hard to reconcile.

Enter a Doctor

MALCOLM

Well; more anon.--Comes the king forth, I pray you?

Doctor

Ay, **ma'am**; there are a crew of wretched souls
That stay his cure: their malady convinces 160
The great assay of art; but at his touch--
Such sanctity hath heaven given his hand--
They presently amend.

MALCOLM

I thank you, doctor.

Exit Doctor

MACDUFF

What's the disease **she** means? 165

MALCOLM

'Tis call'd the evil:
A most miraculous work in this good king;
Which often, since my here-remain in England,
I have seen him do. How he solicits heaven,
Himself best knows: but strangely-visited people, 170
All swoln and ulcerous, pitiful to the eye,
The mere despair of surgery, he cures,
Hanging a golden stamp about their necks,
Put on with holy prayers: and 'tis spoken,
To the succeeding royalty he leaves 175
The healing benediction. With this strange virtue,
He hath a heavenly gift of prophecy,
And sundry blessings hang about his throne,
That speak him full of grace.

Enter ROSS

MACDUFF

See, who comes here? 180

MALCOLM

My **countryman**; but yet I know **her** not.

MACDUFF

My ever-gentle cousin, welcome hither.

MALCOLM

I know **her** now. Good God, betimes remove
The means that makes us strangers!

ROSS

Ma'am, amen.

185

MACDUFF

Stands Scotland where it did?

ROSS

Alas, poor country!

Almost afraid to know itself. It cannot

Be call'd our mother, but our grave; where nothing,

But who knows nothing, is once seen to smile;

190

Where sighs and groans and shrieks that rend the air

Are made, not mark'd; where violent sorrow seems

A modern ecstasy; the dead man's knell

Is there scarce ask'd for who; and good **one's** lives

Expire before the flowers in their caps,

195

Dying or ere they sicken.

MACDUFF

O, relation

Too nice, and yet too true!

MALCOLM

What's the newest grief?

ROSS

That of an hour's age doth hiss the speaker:

200

Each minute teems a new one.

MACDUFF

How does my wife [**love**]?

ROSS

Why, well.

MACDUFF

And all my children?

ROSS

Well too.

205

MACDUFF

The tyrant has not batter'd at their peace?

ROSS

No; they were well at peace when I did leave 'em.

MACDUFF

But not a niggard of your speech: how goes't?

ROSS

When I came hither to transport the tidings,

Which I have heavily borne, there ran a rumour

210

Of many worthy fellows that were out;

Which was to my belief witness'd the rather,

For that I saw the tyrant's power a-foot:

Now is the time of help; your eye in Scotland

Would create soldiers, make our women fight, 215
 To doff their dire distresses.
MALCOLM
 Be't their comfort
 We are coming thither: gracious England hath
 Lent us good Siward and ten thousand souls [soldiers];
 An older and a better soldier none 220
 That Christendom gives out.
ROSS
 Would I could answer
 This comfort with the like! But I have words
 That would be howl'd out in the desert air,
 Where hearing should not latch them. 225
MACDUFF
 What concern they?
 The general cause? or is it a fee-grief
 Due to some single breast?
ROSS
 No mind that's honest
 But in it shares some woe; though the main part 230
 Pertains to you alone.
MACDUFF
 If it be mine,
 Keep it not from me, quickly let me have it.
ROSS
 Let not your ears despise my tongue for ever,
 Which shall possess them with the heaviest sound 235
 That ever yet they heard.
MACDUFF
 Hum! I guess at it.
ROSS
 Your castle is surprised; your wife [love] and babes
 Savagely slaughter'd: to relate the manner,
 Were, on the quarry of these murder'd deer, 240
 To add the death of you.
MALCOLM
 Merciful heaven!
 What, woman [friend]! ne'er pull your hat upon your brows;
 Give sorrow words: the grief that does not speak
 Whispers the o'er-fraught heart and bids it break. 245
MACDUFF
 My children too?
ROSS
 Wife [Love], children, servants, all
 That could be found.
MACDUFF

And I must be from thence!
My wife [love] kill'd too? 250

ROSS

I have said.

MALCOLM

Be comforted:

Let's make us medicines of our great revenge,
To cure this deadly grief.

MACDUFF

She has no children. All my pretty ones? 255

Did you say all? O hell-kite! All?

What, all my pretty chickens and their dam

At one fell swoop?

MALCOLM

Dispute it **like a man**.

MACDUFF

I shall do so; 260

But I must also feel it as a man:

I cannot but remember such things were,

That were most precious to me. Did heaven look on,

And would not take their part? Sinful Macduff,

They were all struck for thee! naught that I am, 265

Not for their own demerits, but for mine,

Fell slaughter on their souls. Heaven rest them now!

MALCOLM

Be this the whetstone of your sword: let grief

Convert to anger; blunt not the heart, enrage it.

MACDUFF

O, I could play the woman with mine eyes 270

And braggart with my tongue! But, gentle heavens,

Cut short all intermission; front to front

Bring thou this fiend of Scotland and myself;

Within my sword's length set **her**; if **she** 'scape,

Heaven forgive **her** too! 275

MALCOLM

This tune goes **manly**.

Come, go we to the king; our power is ready;

Our lack is nothing but our leave; Macbeth

Is ripe for shaking, and the powers above

Put on their instruments. Receive what cheer you may: 280

The night is long that never finds the day.

Exeunt

ACT V

SCENE I. Dunsinane. Ante-room in the castle.

Enter a Doctor of Physic and a Waiting-Gentlewoman

Doctor

I have two nights watched with you, but can perceive no truth in your report. When was it she last walked?

Gentlewoman

Since **her** majesty went into the field, I have seen her rise from her bed, throw her night-gown upon her, unlock her closet, take forth paper, fold it, 5
write upon't, read it, afterwards seal it, and again return to bed; yet all this while in a most fast sleep.

Doctor

A great perturbation in nature, to receive at once the benefit of sleep, and do the effects of watching! In this slumbry agitation, besides her 10
walking and other actual performances, what, at any time, have you heard her say?

Gentlewoman

That, **ma'am**, which I will not report after her.

Doctor

You may to me: and 'tis most meet you should.

Gentlewoman

Neither to you nor any one; having no witness to 15
confirm my speech.

Enter LADY MACBETH, with a taper

Lo you, here she comes! This is her very guise; and, upon my life, fast asleep. Observe her; stand close.

Doctor

How came she by that light?

Gentlewoman

Why, it stood by her: she has light by her 20
continually; 'tis her command.

Doctor

You see, her eyes are open.

Gentlewoman

Ay, but their sense is shut.

Doctor

What is it she does now? Look, how she rubs her hands.

Gentlewoman

It is an accustomed action with her, to seem thus 25
washing her hands: I have known her continue in this a quarter of an hour.

LADY MACBETH

Yet here's a spot.

Doctor

Hark! she speaks: I will set down what comes from
her, to satisfy my remembrance the more strongly. 30

LADY MACBETH

Out, damned spot! out, I say!--One: two: why,
then, 'tis time to do't.--Hell is murky!--Fie, my
lord [love], fie! a soldier, and afeard? What need we
fear who knows it, when none can call our power to
account?--Yet who would have thought the old **woman** 35
to have had so much blood in **her**.

Doctor

Do you mark that?

LADY MACBETH

The **thane** of Fife had a wife [love]: where is she now?--
What, will these hands ne'er be clean?--No more o'
that, my **lord** [love], no more o' that: you mar all with 40
this starting.

Doctor

Go to, go to; you have known what you should not.

Gentlewoman

She has spoke what she should not, I am sure of
that: heaven knows what she has known.

LADY MACBETH

Here's the smell of the blood still: all the 45
perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little
hand. Oh, oh, oh!

Doctor

What a sigh is there! The heart is sorely charged.

Gentlewoman

I would not have such a heart in my bosom for the
dignity of the whole body. 50

Doctor

Well, well, well,--

Gentlewoman

Pray God it be, **ma'am**.

Doctor

This disease is beyond my practise: yet I have known
those which have walked in their sleep who have died
holily in their beds. 55

LADY MACBETH

Wash your hands, put on your nightgown; look not so
pale.--I tell you yet again, Banquo's buried; **she**
cannot come out on **her** grave.

Doctor

Even so?

LADY MACBETH

To bed, to bed! there's knocking at the gate: 60
come, come, come, come, give me your hand. What's
done cannot be undone.--To bed, to bed, to bed!

Exit

Doctor

Will she go now to bed?

Gentlewoman

Directly.

Doctor

Foul whisperings are abroad: unnatural deeds 65

Do breed unnatural troubles: infected minds

To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets:

More needs she the divine than the physician.

God, God forgive us all! Look after her;

Remove from her the means of all annoyance, 70

And still keep eyes upon her. So, good night:

My mind she has mated, and amazed my sight.

I think, but dare not speak.

Gentlewoman

Good night, good doctor.

Exeunt

SCENE II. The country near Dunsinane.

Drum and colours. Enter MENTEITH, CAITHNESS, ANGUS, LENNOX, and Soldiers

MENTEITH

The English power is near, led on by Malcolm,

Her aunt Siward and the good Macduff:*

Revenge burn in them; for their dear causes

Would to the bleeding and the grim alarm

Excite the mortified man. 5

ANGUS

Near Birnam wood

Shall we well meet them; that way are they coming.

CAITHNESS

Who knows if Donalbain be with her sister?

LENNOX

For certain, ma'am, she is not: I have a file

Of all the gentry: there is Siward's child, 10

And many unrough youths that even now
Protest their first of **manhood**.

MENTEITH

What does the tyrant?

CAITHNESS

Great Dunsinane **she** strongly fortifies:
Some say **she's** mad; others that lesser hate **her** 15
Do call it valiant fury: but, for certain,
She cannot buckle **her** distemper'd cause
Within the belt of rule.

ANGUS

Now does **she** feel
Her secret murders sticking on **her** hands; 20
Now minutely revolts upbraid **her** faith-breach;
Those **she** commands move only in command,
Nothing in love: now does **she** feel **her** title
Hang loose about **her**, like a giant's robe
Upon a dwarfish thief. 25

MENTEITH

Who then shall blame
Her pester'd senses to recoil and start,
When all that is within **her** does condemn
Itself for being there?

CAITHNESS

Well, march we on, 30
To give obedience where 'tis truly owed:
Meet we the medicine of the sickly weal,
And with **her** pour we in our country's purge
Each drop of us.

LENNOX

Or so much as it needs, 35
To dew the sovereign flower and drown the weeds.
Make we our march towards Birnam.

Exeunt, marching

SCENE III. Dunsinane. A room in the castle.

Enter MACBETH, Doctor, and Attendants

MACBETH

Bring me no more reports; let them fly all:
Till Birnam wood remove to Dunsinane,
I cannot taint with fear. What's the **girl** Malcolm?
Was **she** not born of woman? The spirits that know 5
All mortal consequences have pronounced me thus:

'Fear not, Macbeth; no **man** that's born of woman
Shall e'er have power upon thee.' Then fly,
false **thanes**,
And mingle with the English epicures:
The mind I sway by and the heart I bear 10
Shall never sag with doubt nor shake with fear.

Enter a Servant

The devil damn thee black, thou cream-faced loon!
Where got'st thou that goose look?

Servant

There is ten thousand--

MACBETH

Geese, villain! 15

Servant

Soldiers, **ma'am**.

MACBETH

Go prick thy face, and over-red thy fear,
Thou lily-liver'd **girl**. What soldiers, patch?
Death of thy soul! those linen cheeks of thine
Are counsellors to fear. What soldiers, whey-face? 20

Servant

The English force, so please you.

MACBETH

Take thy face hence.

Exit Servant

Seyton!--I am sick at heart,
When I behold--Seyton, I say!--This push
Will cheer me ever, or disseat me now. 25
I have lived long enough: my way of life
Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf;
And that which should accompany old age,
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have; but, in their stead, 30
Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honour, breath,
Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not. Seyton!

Enter SEYTON

SEYTON

What is your gracious pleasure?

MACBETH

What news more?

SEYTON

All is confirm'd, my **lord** [**liege/lady**], which was reported. 35

MACBETH

I'll fight till from my bones my flesh be hack'd.

Give me my armour.

SEYTON

'Tis not needed yet.

MACBETH

I'll put it on.

Send out more horses; skirr the country round; 40

Hang those that talk of fear. Give me mine armour.

How does your patient, doctor?

Doctor

Not so sick, my **lord** [**liege/lady**],

As she is troubled with thick coming fancies,

That keep her from her rest. 45

MACBETH

Cure her of that.

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased,

Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,

Raze out the written troubles of the brain

And with some sweet oblivious antidote 50

Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff

Which weighs upon the heart?

Doctor

Therein the patient

Must minister to **herself**.

MACBETH

Throw physic to the dogs; I'll none of it. 55

Come, put mine armour on; give me my staff.

Seyton, send out. Doctor, the **thanes** fly from me.

Come, **ma'am**, dispatch. If thou couldst, doctor, cast

The water of my land, find her disease,

And purge it to a sound and pristine health, 60

I would applaud thee to the very echo,

That should applaud again.--Pull't off, I say.--

What rhubarb, cyme, or what purgative drug,

Would scour these English hence? Hear'st thou of them?

Doctor

Ay, my good **lord** [**liege/lady**]; your royal preparation 65

Makes us hear something.

MACBETH

Bring it after me.

I will not be afraid of death and bane,

Till Birnam forest come to Dunsinane.

Doctor

[Aside] Were I from Dunsinane away and clear, 70
Profit again should hardly draw me here.

Exeunt

SCENE IV. Country near Birnam wood.

Drum and colours. Enter MALCOLM, SIWARD and YOUNG SIWARD, MACDUFF, MENTEITH, CAITHNESS, ANGUS, LENNOX, ROSS, and Soldiers, marching

MALCOLM

Cousins, I hope the days are near at hand
That chambers will be safe.

MENTEITH

We doubt it nothing.

SIWARD

What wood is this before us?

MENTEITH

The wood of Birnam. 5

MALCOLM

Let every soldier hew **them** down a bough
And bear't before **them**: thereby shall we shadow
The numbers of our host and make discovery
Err in report of us.

Soldiers

It shall be done. 10

SIWARD

We learn no other but the confident tyrant
Keeps still in Dunsinane, and will endure
Our setting down before 't.

MALCOLM

'Tis **her** main hope:
For where there is advantage to be given, 15
Both more and less have given **her** the revolt,
And none serve with **her** but constrained things
Whose hearts are absent too.

MACDUFF

Let our just censures
Attend the true event, and put we on 20
Industrious soldiership.

SIWARD

The time approaches
That will with due decision make us know
What we shall say we have and what we owe.
Thoughts speculative their unsure hopes relate, 25

But certain issue strokes must arbitrate:
Towards which advance the war.

Exeunt, marching

SCENE V. Dunsinane. Within the castle.

Enter MACBETH, SEYTON, and Soldiers, with drum and colours

MACBETH

Hang out our banners on the outward walls;
The cry is still 'They come:' our castle's strength
Will laugh a siege to scorn: here let them lie
Till famine and the ague eat them up:
Were they not forced with those that should be ours, 5
We might have met them dareful, **beard to beard**,
And beat them backward home.

A cry of women within

What is that noise?

SEYTON

It is the cry of women, my good **lord** [*liege/lady*].

Exit

MACBETH

I have almost forgot the taste of fears; 10
The time has been, my senses would have cool'd
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 supp'd full with horrors;
Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts 15
Cannot once start me.

Re-enter SEYTON

Wherefore was that cry?

SEYTON

The [*Your*] queen, my **lord** [*liege/lady*], is dead.

MACBETH

She should have died hereafter;
There would have been a time for such a word. 20
To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time,

And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle! 25
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing. 30

Enter a Messenger

Thou comest to use thy tongue; thy story quickly.

Messenger

Gracious my lord [liege/lady],
I should report that which I say I saw,
But know not how to do it.

MACBETH

Well, say, ma'am. 35

Messenger

As I did stand my watch upon the hill,
I look'd toward Birnam, and anon, methought,
The wood began to move.

MACBETH

Liar and slave!

Messenger

Let me endure your wrath, if't be not so: 40
Within this three mile may you see it coming;
I say, a moving grove.

MACBETH

If thou speak'st false,
Upon the next tree shalt thou hang alive,
Till famine cling thee: if thy speech be sooth, 45
I care not if thou dost for me as much.

I pull in resolution, and begin

To doubt the equivocation of the fiend
That lies like truth: 'Fear not, till Birnam wood
Do come to Dunsinane:' and now a wood 50
Comes toward Dunsinane. Arm, arm, and out!

If this which she avouches does appear,
There is nor flying hence nor tarrying here.

I gin to be aweary of the sun,
And wish the estate o' the world were now undone. 55
Ring the alarum-bell! Blow, wind! come, wrack!
At least we'll die with harness on our back.

Exeunt

SCENE VI. Dunsinane. Before the castle.

Drum and colours. Enter MALCOLM, SIWARD, MACDUFF, and their Army, with boughs

MALCOLM

Now near enough: your leafy screens throw down.
And show like those you are. You, worthy **aunt**,*
Shall, with my cousin, your right-noble **child**,
Lead our first battle: worthy Macduff and we
Shall take upon 's what else remains to do,
According to our order.

5

SIWARD

Fare you well.
Do we but find the tyrant's power to-night,
Let us be beaten, if we cannot fight.

MACDUFF

Make all our trumpets speak; give them all breath,
Those clamorous harbingers of blood and death.

10

Exeunt

SCENE VII. Another part of the field.

Alarums. Enter MACBETH

MACBETH

They have tied me to a stake; I cannot fly,
But, bear-like, I must fight the course. What's **she**
That was not born of woman? Such a one
Am I to fear, or none.

Enter YOUNG SIWARD

YOUNG SIWARD

What is thy name?

5

MACBETH

Thou'lt be afraid to hear it.

YOUNG SIWARD

No; though thou call'st thyself a hotter name
Than any is in hell.

MACBETH

My name's Macbeth.

YOUNG SIWARD

The devil himself could not pronounce a title
More hateful to mine ear.

10

MACBETH

No, nor more fearful.

YOUNG SIWARD

Thou liest, abhorred tyrant; with my sword
I'll prove the lie thou speak'st.

They fight and YOUNG SIWARD is slain

MACBETH

Thou wast born of woman 15
But swords I smile at, weapons laugh to scorn,
Brandish'd by **man** that's of a woman born.

Exit

Alarums. Enter MACDUFF

MACDUFF

That way the noise is. Tyrant, show thy face!
If thou be'st slain and with no stroke of mine,
My wife [**love**] and children's ghosts will haunt me still. 20
I cannot strike at wretched kerns, whose arms
Are hired to bear their staves: either thou, Macbeth,
Or else my sword with an unbatter'd edge
I sheathe again undeeded. There thou shouldst be;
By this great clatter, one of greatest note 25
Seems bruided. Let me find **her**, fortune!
And more I beg not.

Exit. Alarums

Enter MALCOLM and SIWARD

SIWARD

This way, my **lady**; the castle's gently render'd:*
The tyrant's people on both sides do fight;
The noble **thanes** do bravely in the war; 30
The day almost itself professes yours,
And little is to do.

MALCOLM

We have met with foes
That strike beside us.

SIWARD

Enter, **ma'am**, the castle. 35

Exeunt. Alarums

SCENE VIII. Another part of the field.

Enter MACBETH

MACBETH

Why should I play the Roman fool, and die
On mine own sword? whiles I see lives, the gashes
Do better upon them.

Enter MACDUFF

MACDUFF

Turn, hell-hound, turn!

MACBETH

Of all **men** else I have avoided thee: 5
But get thee back; my soul is too much charged
With blood of thine already.

MACDUFF

I have no words:
My voice is in my sword: thou bloodier villain 10
Than terms can give thee out!

They fight

MACBETH

Thou locest labour:
As easy mayst thou the intrenchant air
With thy keen sword impress as make me bleed:
Let fall thy blade on vulnerable crests;
I bear a charmed life, which must not yield, 15
To one of woman born.

MACDUFF

Despair thy charm;
And let the angel whom thou still hast served
Tell thee, Macduff was from **her** mother's womb
Untimely ripp'd. 20

MACBETH

Accursed be that tongue that tells me so,
For it hath cow'd **my better part of man!**
And be these juggling fiends no more believed,
That palter with us in a double sense;
That keep the word of promise to our ear, 25
And break it to our hope. I'll not fight with thee.

MACDUFF

Then yield thee, coward,
And live to be the show and gaze o' the time:

We'll have thee, as our rarer monsters are,
Painted on a pole, and underwrit, 30
'Here may you see the tyrant.'

MACBETH

I will not yield,
To kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet,
And to be baited with the rabble's curse.
Though Birnam wood be come to Dunsinane, 35
And thou opposed, being of no woman born,
Yet I will try the last. Before my body
I throw my warlike shield. Lay on, Macduff,
And damn'd be **her** that first cries, 'Hold, enough!'

Exeunt, fighting. Alarums

*Retreat. Flourish. Enter, with drum and colours, MALCOLM, SIWARD, ROSS, the other Thanes,
and Soldiers*

MALCOLM

I would the friends we miss were safe arrived. 40

SIWARD

Some must go off: and yet, by these I see,
So great a day as this is cheaply bought.

MALCOLM

Macduff is missing, and your noble **child**.

ROSS

Your **child**, my **lady**, has paid a soldier's debt: *
She only lived but till **she** was **a man [a woman] [full grown]**; 45
The which no sooner had **her** prowess confirm'd
In the unshrinking station where **she** fought,
But like a man she died.

SIWARD

Then **she** is dead?

ROSS

Ay, and brought off the field: your cause of sorrow 50
Must not be measured by **her** worth, for then
It hath no end.

SIWARD

Had **she her** hurts before?

ROSS

Ay, on the front.

SIWARD

Why then, God's soldier be **she**! 55
Had I as many **sons** as I have hairs,
I would not wish them to a fairer death:
And so, **her** knell is knoll'd.

MALCOLM

She's worth more sorrow,
And that I'll spend for her. 60

SIWARD

She's worth no more
They say she parted well, and paid her score:
And so, God be with her! Here comes newer comfort.

Re-enter MACDUFF, with MACBETH's head

MACDUFF

Hail, queen! for so thou art: behold, where stands
The usurper's cursed head: the time is free: 65
I see thee compass'd with thy kingdom's pearl,
That speak my salutation in their minds;
Whose voices I desire aloud with mine:
Hail, Queen of Scotland!

ALL

Hail, Queen of Scotland! 70

Flourish

MALCOLM

We shall not spend a large expense of time
Before we reckon with your several loves,
And make us even with you. My thanes and kinsmen,
Henceforth be earls [countesses /peers], the first that ever Scotland
In such an honour named. What's more to do, 75
Which would be planted newly with the time,
As calling home our exiled friends abroad
That fled the snares of watchful tyranny;
Producing forth the cruel ministers
Of this dead butcher and her fiend-like queen, 80
Who, as 'tis thought, by self and violent hands
Took off her life; this, and what needful else
That calls upon us, by the grace of Grace,
We will perform in measure, time and place:
So, thanks to all at once and to each one, 85
Whom we invite to see us crown'd at Scone.

Flourish. Exeunt

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