

An Actress Explores her Role: A Monologue

by [Evelyn Hooven](#) (October 2018)



Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth, John Singer Sargent, 1889

*(As she works, she sometimes contemplates the character
while sometimes she and the role converge.)*

Cast now as Lady Macbeth I feel
Stopped in the sleepwalking scene by stage fright.
Recourse to theatre precedent tends to fail.
Rending cries, Out Damned Spot!, as I summon
Futile Arabian perfumes seem over
The top and must be subdued. Moving inside
Toward guilt, shame, remorse, sin, leaves spectators
Altogether dutiful and cold.
I haven't been dethroned, cast out or widowed—
Sorrow inside drives a hard bargain here.
Branches have been wrenched from a perturbed earth
For use as shields—a war for health and order.
I am known as the fiend-like queen; nothing's
On my behalf. Forfeit the grandiose,
Trade the Scottish queen's nocturnal robes

For an ungainly shift and a strange
Headband, maladroït and frayed, that refuses
The form of any crown, apparel now
For my companionless vanishing.
King Macbeth has gone far into the dark.
My own light will not last me. This fate is just—
Except, between author and spectator,
Here is this famous insert—a sleep-enclosed,
Diminished soul lost to all forms of rescue
While harsh glimpses of torment and dwindling
Claim their instance as some human due.

Evelyn Hooven graduated from Mount Holyoke College and received her M.A. from Yale University, where she also studied at The Yale School of Drama. A member of the Dramatists' Guild, she has had presentations of her verse dramas at several theatrical venues, including *The Maxwell Anderson Playwrights Series* in Greenwich, CT (after a state-wide competition) and *The Poet's Theatre* in Cambridge, MA (result of a national competition). Her poems and translations from the French have appeared in *ART TIMES*, *Chelsea*, *The Literary Review*, *THE SHOP: A Magazine of Poetry* (in Ireland), *The Tribeca Poetry Review*, *Vallum* (in Montreal), and other journals, and her literary criticism in Oxford University's *Essays in Criticism*.

Follow NER on Twitter [@NERIconoclast](https://twitter.com/NERIconoclast)