

Thornton 1752 [Bonnell Thornton], 'Some reflections on the theatres', Have at you all: Or, the Drury-Lane journal, No 10 (19 Mar 1752), 226-31.

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Mrs. CIBBER has so often mov'd our pity in the tender plaintive parts of a drama, that we have almost been taught to overlook her energy in any other parts: but in the Character of Lady MACBETH last Tuesday night she convinc'd us, that she is no less powerful in exciting terror: I allow Mrs. PRITCHARD in this character to have all the merit imaginable: but the muscles of Mrs. CIBBER'S face are so finely form'd by nature to answer the emotions of every passion which agitates the heart, that the effect is most strongly enforc'd upon the audience. Nothing could be equal to that amaze-

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ment which dwelt upon her brow just before and immediately after MACBETH had *done the deed*; and the contrition she shew'd, when in her sleep she seem'd to smell to her fingers, was painted on her countenance beyond the faint colouring of the most masterly artist.

There is a circumstance in this play of Macbeth, which I always thought might be manag'd to more advantage. I would willingly confine all dumb ghosts beneath the trap-doors: the ghost in HAMLET is a particular exception, as he is an interesting character, and not only speaks, but is a principal engine in carrying on the fable: -- otherwise, their mealy faces, white shirts, and red rags stuck on in imitation of blood, are rather the objects of ridicule than terror. I cannot help imagining that if the audience were not coldly let into the cause by the rising of the mangled MACDUFF, our surprise would be much greater, and our terror more alarming, while the imagination of MACBETH conjur'd up an airy form before him, though he were really looking only on a chair. There is no reason why a bloody dagger might not with as much propriety be let down by a wire over MACBETH'S head, when in that fine scene he creates the air-

drawn dagger of the mind. -- At present, I am sure by far the greatest part of the audience is chiefly taken up in contemplating the odd figure of MAC-DUFF and marking the opening or closing of the trap-doors; -- as I once overhead an honest citizen in the first gallery observing to her neighbour, *he looks deadly like a ghost.*

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This tragedy, by a very odd accident the other night, had somewhat like a comical catastrophe. Those heroic full-bottom'd perukes, whose bushy expanse is spread over the whole back of the wearer, have lately been exploded the stage, and a more natural, I mean, a less enormous covering for the head substituted in its stead. -- Unfortunately Mr. BARRY this night chose to appear in one most curiously frizzled out and of the fullest tragical flow I ever saw: When in the last act it was our hero's turn to be kill'd, honest RYAN, being eager to dispatch him, just as he was to plump down upon the carpet, entangled his hand in the vast profusion of Macbeth's hair; and by jerking back his sword after the concluding stab, away came poor perriwig along with it, while our hero was left expos'd, in the last agonies of death, -- bare-headed. RYAN in the mean while with some confusion contemplated Full-bottom, which he held dangling in his hand, but sadly tumbled and out of curl: at length he good-naturedly adjusted it on the bald pate of the tyrant, who was then enabled to make his dying speech with proper regularity and decorum.

The character, in which Mrs. CIBBER appear'd in her own little piece subsequent to the play, was a mighty pretty contrast to that of Lady MACBETH. The native, unaffected, artless simplicity of innocence was set off with a most charming *je ne scai quoy* action.

<Mar> 17. Mrs. Cibber's bt. Macbeth = Barry : Lady Macbeth = Mrs. Cibber, 1st time : with, never acted, Oracle. Oberon = Dyer : Cinthia (a princess) = Mrs. Cibber: Fairy (Oberon's mother) = Mrs. Elmy : -- the Fairy at the birth of her son had consulted the Oracle -- she was told, that he was threatened with great misfortunes, but would avoid them, and even be very happy, if he could make himself beloved by a young princess, who believed him to be deaf, dumb, and insensible -- Cinthia sees Oberon -- the Fairy tells

her that he is only a more perfect sort of machine --
Cinthia falls in love with him, and the Oracle is fulfilled -- this little piece is a pleasing trifle -- Mrs. Cibber saw it at Paris, and translated it for her bt. --
Mrs. Cibber did not play Lady Macbeth a second time this season. -- Genest 1832 4:353-4