



# LADY MACBETH

UK 85 MIN

WILLIAM OLDROYD

WINCHESTER  
FILM SOCIETY

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SCIENCE CENTRE  
AND PLANETARIUM

It takes a while to figure out who the title character in *Lady Macbeth* really is. You may think you know her, that she's the one who sleeps with death, the one pouring evil into her husband's ear. Certainly the invocation of Shakespeare tips that there's something dangerous about the lady of its house, an opaque beauty called Katherine (a very fine Florence Pugh). Yet part of this movie's ticklish nastiness is that at first it isn't at all clear whether she will be the master of doom or its helpmate. At just 17, Katherine looks like the innocent flower, but something wicked this way comes seductively, then savagely.

Set in 1865 rural England, *Lady Macbeth* opens with Katherine at the marriage altar, her head draped in a white veil that suggests virtue and slyly hints at the blood that will spill. She's soon in the bedroom with her husband, Alexander (Paul Hilton), a scowler with angry, accusatory eyes who isn't interested in her sexually or any other way. Their first night together, he brusquely orders her to undress, only to crawl into bed, leaving her naked, untouched and puzzled. This remains the template for a somewhat mysteriously cheerless, loveless marriage that finds Katherine more of a prisoner than a wife.

Not much happens at first, beautifully. Katherine is soon bored, but the director, William Oldroyd, ensures that you aren't, with his use of sepulchral quiet,

mesmerizingly steady framing and unnerving order, in which nothing is ever out of place, especially nothing human.

It's unclear if Katherine can read; at times she barely speaks. For the most part, she watches, and we watch her watching, as the quiet grows louder, and the stillness grows eerier. Bidden to stay indoors — somehow the fresh air would be bad for her, or so the men of the house insist — she spends much of her time staring out a window, a familiar pastime for repressed, yearning women in fiction.

Something happens, of course, rocking Katherine, the story and the visual order...

The movie is based on *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, an 1865 novella by Nikolai Leskov that Dmitri Shostakovich turned into an opera and Andrzej Wajda adapted into a film. Like the novella, the movie opens up some interpretive leeway as it invites your sympathy for Katherine. She's an unambiguous captive, trapped by sex and class, yet the viciousness that her liberation awakens — as carnal lust slips into bloodlust — precludes a facile redemptive reading...

**Manohla Dargis, The New York Times**

**WRITERS:** Nikolai Leskov, Alice Birch **CINEMATOGRAPHY:** Ari Wegner **MUSIC:** Dan Jones

**CAST:** *Katherine* Florence Pugh | *Sebastian* Cosmo Jarvis | *Alexander* Paul Hilton | *Anna* Naomi Ackie

VOTING FOR *I, Daniel Blake* A82 | B12 | C0 | D0 | E0 | Rating 96.8% | Attendance 94

Next screening | **Toni Erdmann** | Tuesday 17 October 2017 8.00pm

'...fascinating film about a fraught father-daughter relationship.'

