

# SHAKESPEARE'S "MACBETH" IN THE CINEMA: KUROSAWA AND POLANSKI

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**UNIVERSITY OF SPLIT**  
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**SHAKESPEARE'S *MACBETH* IN THE  
CINEMA: KUROSAWA AND POLANSKI**

**BA THESIS**

**Split, 2021.**

**SVEUČILIŠTE U SPLITU  
FILOZOFSKI FAKULTET  
SPLIT**

**Karla Bogoje**

**SHEAKESPEAREOV „MACBETH“ U  
KINEMATOGRAFIJI: KUROSAWA I  
POLANSKI**

**ZAVRŠNI RAD**

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**Thesis:** The main goal of my BA thesis is to compare Roman Polanski's *Macbeth* and Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* through analysis of five major scenes along with personal comments on both scenes and other authors' references. I will try to analyse every part of the scene with occasional reminders about earlier scenes to clarify the events in the scene. Besides that, I will compare characters and their costumes taking into account that films come from two different cultures. In the end, I will conclude my paper with my comment on both films. The point I will try to make in my paper is that it does not matter how similar some film is to the source but how well some story can be transferred into different a timeline and culture. I intend to do so by showing different ways in which Polanski in *Macbeth* and Kurosawa in *Throne of Blood* managed to do that and what are the similarities and differences between these two films.

## **1. Introduction**

In my paper, I will analyse and compare two movie adaptations of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The first movie is Roman Polanski's *Macbeth*, and the other one, with a different name but the same plot, Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*.

Polanski's film is following the original play with both its plot and dialogue. However, there are quite a few differences from the original. Polanski shows nudity, murder, violence, and dead bodies on the screen, but those kinds of scenes are not a part of the original play. On the other hand, elementary components like names of the characters as well as places and titles of the characters follow the original script. That is the reason why it might be more difficult to spot the differences between Polanski's film and Shakespeare's play.

On the other hand, in *Throne of Blood*, the names of the characters are changed, Macbeth and his Lady are called Taketoki and Asaji Washizu, King Duncan is Lord Tsuzuki Kuniharu, Banquo is Miki Yoshiteru, Macduff is Odakura Noriyasu, and other characters also have different, Japanese names. Kurosawa's decision to give characters Japanese names is much better than giving them original names, as the adaptation is Japanese and thus makes it more plausible and interesting, and what makes it even better is that it is easy to understand which character is which without much thought as their roles in the film are almost the same.

Titles are also different, for example, Tsuzuki is a lord rather than a king like Duncan and Washizu is pronounced Commander of the First Fortress rather than thane. Also, the names of the places are altered as well. Dunsinane castle is named Spider's Web Castle. Similarly, the characters of the Three Witches are combined in one character, the Spirit/Witch of Spider's Web.

An interesting difference between *Throne of Blood* and Shakespeare's *Macbeth* was brought forward by Greg Currie and Tzachi Zamir in their article "*Macbeth, Throne of Blood and the Idea of a Reflective Adaptation*". They put *Throne of Blood* in a special category of film adaptations, a reflective adaptation. That means that its focus is on the situations rather than on the characters, like in the source text. (See Currie and Zamir, 2017:8)

After this brief introduction, in the following chapters of my paper, I will present films in more detail with occasional reference to the source, but before I continue on that note, it will be useful to introduce my readers to the adaptation theory.

## 2. Introduction to adaptation theory

To discuss adaptations, it is important to explain and summarize the theory of adaptation. Adaptation theory deals with questions like. What is adaptation? What are the criteria to call something adaptation? Therefore, there are many theories by different adaptation theorists on how to define adaptation, and author Thomas Leitch managed to summarize, compare and analyse them in one chapter of the book *A to Companion Literature, film, and Adaptation*. In the chapter “Adaptation and Intertextuality, or, What isn’t an Adaptation, and What Does it Matter?” he presented nine adaptation theories concerning intertextuality, and I am going to present five that I found most interesting. First, he wrote about a theory that was the main idea in adaptation studies for forty years:

“1. Adaptations are exclusively cinematic, involving only films that are based on novels or plays more stories” (See Leitch, 2012:89)

The author went on to explain this theory by calling it dualistic, and the reason why this approach persists is that it offers both conceptual simplicity and disciplinary neatness. (See Leitch, 2012:90) But Leitch mentioned in this book, Kamilla Elliot, illuminates flaws in this theory in her book *Rethinking the novel/Film debate*: “designation of novels as ‘words’ and of film as ‘images’ which is neither empirically nor logically sustainable” (See Elliot, 2003:14) and Leitch adds it is because many novels depend on images, and film on both written and spoken words. She finishes this paragraph by saying that even this theory can be useful in the hand of Elliot. (See Leitch, 2012:91)

“2. Adaptations are exclusively intermedial, involving the transfer of narrative elements from one medium to another” (See Leitch, 2012:91)

The author explains how this theory is more generous than the previous one because it does not specify the two media as literature and film. Next, Leitch starts to explain the term of intermediality by quoting another author, Eckart Voigts-Virchow. (See Leitch, 2012:91) Voight-Virchow in the book *Introduction to Media Studies* explains:

“between intermedia (which fuses aesthetic practices) and multimedia or mixed media (which combine discrete media)” (See Voigts-Virchow, 2005:83) which means we can see both the benefits and problems with that theory.

Leitch lists two problems in intermedial theory: difficulty to differentiate between adaptation and other intermedial practices and adaptations that are rather intramedial than intermedial. (See Leitch, 2012:92)

The paragraph about this theory is concluded with a quote by Linda Hutcheon who does not agree with this theory: “not every adaptation is necessarily a remediation” (See Hutcheon, 2006:170). This marks the beginning of the new theory of adaptation.

“4. Adaptations are texts whose status depends on the audience’s acceptance of a deliberate invitation to read them as adaptations” (See Leitch, 2012:94)

Even though opposed to intermedial models, the advantages of this theory created by Hutcheon are actually similar to them. This theory makes fidelity irrelevant which frees adaptations of certain baggage.

Hutcheon defines adaptation based on two conditions: its creators must intend it to be perceived as an adaptation and the audience must perceive it as such.



The problem arises if the audience fails to perceive it as such, then the question of whether something is an adaptation or not is unclear because we do not know if it should be determined by the audience or creators.

Leitch says that this theory does not seek scientific neutrality but instead accepts the metaphorical baggage of the term “adaptation” as something to be addressed directly. (See Leitch, 2012:95-96)

This theory is a bit abstract but when observed closely a lot can be learned from it, even though it still has certain points that are unclear, for example, whether the audience or the creators determine if something is an adaptation.

Leitch introduces us to another two adaptation theories:

“6. Adaptations are translations”

“7. Adaptations are performances” (See Leitch, 2012:97-99)

Leitch presented a theory that adaptations are translations, and it was formed by Linda Constanzo Cahir: “to contrast” in contrast “to adapt” is to move text from one language to another. A fully new text is made through the process of translation, and it is at the same time independent from the original and has a strong connection with it. We can appreciate the translation without reading its source (See Cahir, 2006:14)

Leitch explains some issues with Cahir’s theory, but he emphasized one as most important and that is that recent theories of translation are the opposite of the one Cahir is trying to support. (See Leitch, 2012:99)

Considering all adaptations are interpretations it may be possible to form a theory opposite of Cahir’s and say all adaptations are performances. Leitch then mentioned quoted James Griffiths:

“An imitation [that] tries to capture some qualities of the object without perversely trying to capture them all” (See Griffiths, 1997: 41).

But he also reminds us that none of the leading adaptation theorists defined adaptations as performances.

He goes on to explain it would be less improbable to call adaptations performances if plays were a source of cinematic adaptations. He adds it would be more accurate to define adaptations as works of their forebears as performance texts.

He then explains that even adaptations within the same medium, like translating from one language to another, serve to bring originals back to life and for new creations. (See Leitch, 2012:99).

Leitch presented Jack Boozer’s idea that screenplay “has been deemed merely a skeletal blueprint for the adapted film and thus unworthy of serious consideration in its own right” (See Boozer, 2008:2). He commented by saying that would draw attention to screenplays as performance texts and complicate notions of authorship and text. He also mentioned a problem with that reorientation. Considering all movies, and not just adaptations, are performances of their screenplays, would bring to question a large number of works that have never been considered adaptations.

He offered a solution that adaptations can be distinguished from other performances by defining them as recordings or transcriptions of adaptations, but also explained problems with it as it would separate different kinds of adaptations and performances in different categories when they should not be separated. He finishes by saying that even though defining adaptations as kinds of performances may be impossible, it is valuable because throws new light on old problems. (See Leitch, 2012:100)

### **3. About the two adaptations**

In the following two chapters of my paper, I will write about background stories behind Polanski's *Macbeth* and Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* and that includes authors' inspiration for these films as well as the time period they were filmed in, they are important to understand their motivation and the techniques they used.

#### **3.1. About *Throne of Blood***

Minae Yamamoto Savas in her exquisite article "Familiar Story, *Macbeth*—New Context, Noh and Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*" explains Kurosawa's inspiration for the film and presents certain aspects of Japanese culture that affected the film in a very educational way.

She points out how individual endeavours of the characters in *Throne of Blood* represented the situation in post-war Japan that struggled to preserve its culture while facing modernization. She continues with the fact that Kurosawa was born during the Meiji period, the period of modernization and embracing of the Western culture which probably encouraged him to adapt classic works of the Western culture.

She goes on to mention the influence of Noh theatre, which I will explain later, on Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*. She noticed how the facial expressions of the characters, especially Asaji's greatly resemble traditional Noh masks.

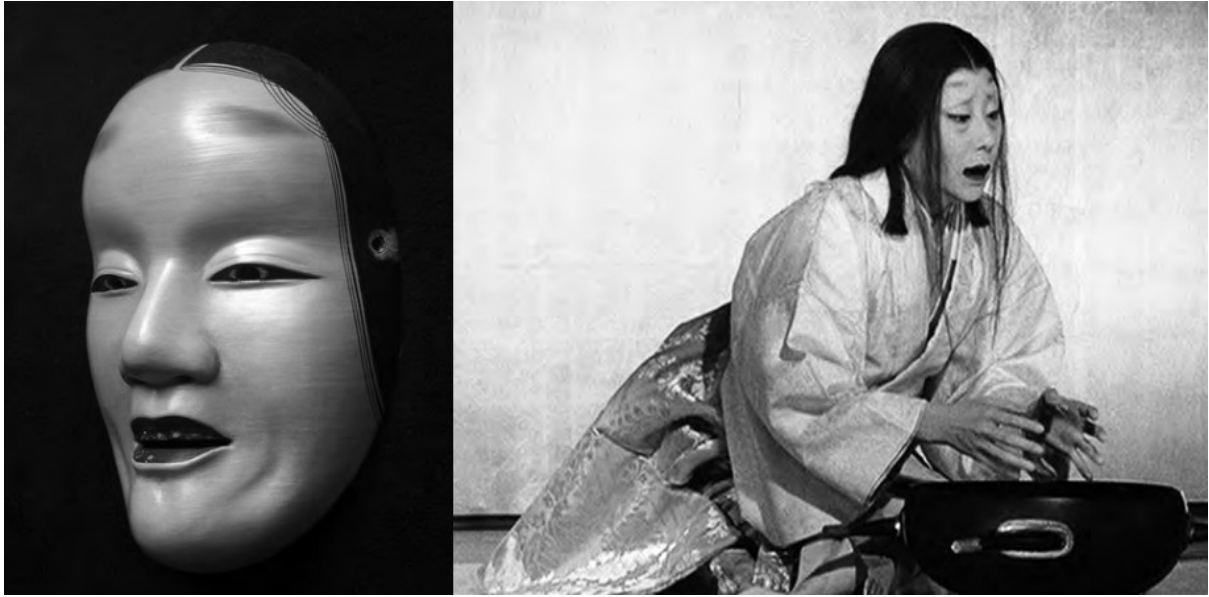


Figure 1: Fukaji mask (Source: Savas, Minae Yamamoto. “Familiar Story, *Macbeth*—New Context, Noh and Kurosawa’s *Throne of Blood*”,2012)

Fujaki mask shown in the picture is used to show the sorrow of a woman who lost her child.



Figure 2: Hannya mask (Source: Savas, Minae Yamamoto. “Familiar Story, *Macbeth*—New Context, Noh and Kurosawa’s *Throne of Blood*”,2012)

Hannya masks are used in Noh plays are used to depict the madness, agony, and despair of the protagonist often caused by death or separation from her child which makes her forget who she is and drives her into a mental breakdown. (See Savas, 2012:21-23)

This article is very informative and probably contains the best description of *Throne of Blood* in relation to Japanese culture and Noh theatre. The comparison of Asaji's facial expression with Noh masks is impressive and the pictures perfectly show that uncanny resemblance.

### **3.2. About *Macbeth* (1971)**

Roman Polanski's *Macbeth* was released in 1971. It was influenced by the death of his wife Sharon Tate who was murdered by the infamous Manson Family, a dangerous cult led by Charles Manson. The violent death Tate suffered inspired Polanski to film *Macbeth*, a gruesome yet artistically pleasing adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. (See Britannica, 2021)

Another interesting fact about *Macbeth* is that it was partially financed by Hugh Hefner, so Playboy productions is one of the producers of this film. Even though the film does not show scenes of intercourse, as Hefner announced, there is a brief shot of a nude actress as well as shots of dismembered and bloody bodies. Polanski took an opportunity with a producer like Hefner, to show parts of Shakespeare's play that he left to the imaginations of the viewers. (See *Hugh Hefner and Macbeth*, 2010.)

It is needless to say Polanski's story is tragic, but it is impressive how he managed to draw inspiration from it and turn it into one of his great works. The inspiration that was not mentioned in the paragraph above is that Polanski's wife was eight and a half months

pregnant when she was killed which possibly inspired him to create *Macbeth* whose main characters are unable to have children. This connection is vague, and it is not highly possible that it is true, but it is an interesting coincidence if not an intentional connection.

After learning the backgrounds of these two films, which is useful to understand them better, we can continue with their analysis and comparison.

## 4. Characters

There are many similarities but also some differences in characters in the two movie adaptations. In Polanski's movie the Macbeth couple plots to murder King Duncan. Lady Macbeth is enthusiastic and determined to do it and considers herself braver than her husband who sees a friend in Duncan and hesitates to kill him as he showed his gratitude towards him after the battle. She persuades him by telling him he would be a great king and presenting him with the benefits it would bring. In Kurosawa's version, Washizu's wife also persuades him to kill Lord Tsuzuki, but she is very calm, sitting on the floor and it seems she is praying rather than being energetic like Lady Macbeth and talks her husband into doing it by making him fear the Lord. At first, he feels like he can trust Tsuzuki, but his wife's warnings start to concern him and he also starts to fear him and decides to murder him.

The calmness of Asaji is somewhat frightening. She seems rather unbothered by the fact her husband is about to kill a person and the grim smile on her face as she talks to her husband about murder might make one shiver. Somehow, Lady Macbeth's murderous passion and excitement are less scary, even though it might seem more dangerous. Two characters oppose each other in their reactions to the situation despite having the same role in the film which is fundamentally the same. They prompt their husbands to commit murder and take the throne, which is the main part of both films and makes them one of the main characters.

Author Ana Laura Zambrano in "*Throne of Blood*: Kurosawa's "Macbeth" suggests an interesting observation about the character of Asaji. She suggests that there is a connection between her and the witch. Zambrano describes how after Tsuzuki's murder Asaji washes her

hands and disappears into the darkness of the room and later again emerges from the darkness and compares her with the demon who went to hell and came back once again. She later concludes how the white, luminous style of both Asaji and the witch indicates that they in fact function as a single character. (See Zambrano, 1974:269, 273)

Her observation is very inspective and something like that can only be noticed by close and detailed analysis of each move and expression of the character. She concentrated on exactly the same thing Kurosawa did as if she was already familiar with his style.

Author Dolores P. Martinez in her article “From ‘Scottish’ Play to Japanese Film: Kurosawa’s *Throne of Blood*” notices that out of all characters in *Throne of Blood* and source text, Asaji and her Shakespearean counterpart Lady Macbeth resemble each other the most. She did, however, notice a significant difference between them as well. She noted how Asaji wanted power and success not just for her own sake but for the sake of the child she was pregnant with while barren Lady Macbeth had no such motivation. She also brings that into connection with Asaji’s madness that can be understood more easily because she lost her child than Lady Macbeth’s madness since she showed no conscience. (See Martinez, 2018:8-9) These similarities and differences brought by Martinez can also be applied to Polanski’s *Lady Macbeth* as she is similar to the original Lady Macbeth.

The characters of Macbeth and Washizu are almost the same. They are both loyal to their leader and respect him, but the authority of their wives prevails which might be due to their love for them or their increasing hunger for power. This might indicate that for them the constitution of marriage overpowers the king, or in the other case, the lord. They differ when it comes to the reason why they killed their leader. Macbeth is led by ambition and Washizu



is led by fear. That portrays Macbeth as a more negative character than Washizu even though their role is the same.

Costume design is an interesting aspect of character building. Actors are wearing apparel that is period and geographically specific. In this case, it is medieval Scottish and Japanese clothing and armour respectively. In the following chapters, I will talk about the characters' costumes and their importance for the scene and the film. To make it clearer and more interesting I will attach frames from the scenes in which those costumes can be seen.

## 5. Costume design

### 5.1. Macbeth

Macbeth is first seen wearing a white scarf covered in blood from the recent battle and decorated with a golden cape clasp. He is also wearing a light chainmail coif paired with a bell helmet.

Later he's wearing a rough blue shirt decorated with ornamental details and paired with a heavy golden chain around his neck. After Macbeth killed King Duncan, we can see him wearing the same blue shirt, but this time covered in Duncan's blood.

Upon becoming a king Macbeth is wearing a white garment held together by golden clasps. White clothes are a symbol of wealth especially compared to the plain blue shirt he wore a lot up to this point. He's wearing a king's crown and sceptre as symbols of his newly acquired power and royal status. Later Macbeth grows into the lavish lifestyle as represented by his new golden-green outfit decorated with oversized jewels.

As Macbeth's psyche grows dimmer and he starts to lose grip on reality and gets madder, his outfit reflects his state of mind as he starts to wear dark fur overcoats instead of the luxurious garments seen before. Before the final duel with Macduff Macbeth is wearing full heavy plate armour with a lion emblem representing the Scottish kingdom. He died with a Scottish lion on his chest.



Figure 3: Macbeth's duel (Source: Polanski, Macbeth, 1971)

## 5.2. Washizu

Washizu is first seen in full armour characteristic for the time period of medieval Japan. He is wearing a kabuto helmet with a crest in the front called *maedate*. He is wearing a banner with a centipede on it.

Later his samurai-style ponytail can be seen. Long hair was a prominent status symbol in feudal Japan. He is wearing white trousers and a coat decorated with the same pattern as seen on his outfit from the beginning of the movie. He also carries a holstered katana sword.

Afterwards, Washizu is wearing a different helmet now with a bigger *maedate* and with the same centipede emblem now on his back.

Upon becoming a lord Washizu is wearing a coat with a floral pattern and a dark pointy hat. By the end of the movie, we can see him wearing the armour previously worn by the late Lord.

Washizu's acting style is full of sudden movements and exaggerated facial expressions are in contrast with expectations from a samurai. His temper plays a big role in his character development and is used as one of the main plot devices.



Figure 4: Washizu (Source: Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*, 1957)

### **5.3. Lady Macbeth**

Lady Macbeth is first seen wearing a simple light green-blue dress that's used to make her stand out from the rest of the gloomy scene. Her dress is modest and not very revealing which is even more emphasised by the long and loose sleeves. Golden decorations on her dress give away her aspiration for a higher social status she does not have yet.

At a royal banquet, she's wearing a white satin dress with a decorative headdress and a veil. She fashions a hairstyle common with European medieval nobility.

Her dresses are often used for compositions by Polanski to make the shot more vibrant and interesting. Once she lost her mind, she is seen naked which is a stark contrast compared to the posh dresses and fur coats we have seen her wearing up until that point.



Figure 5: Lady Macbeth (Source: Polanski, Macbeth, 1971)

#### **5.4. Asaji**

Asaji is one of the most interesting characters in Kurosawa's adaptation of *Macbeth*. Her looks, behaviour, and movement are greatly inspired by the Noh theatre rules. Just like her counterpart Lady Macbeth, she strives for a higher social status which is reflected by her looks. She wears white makeup as was common with Japanese aristocracy. Her teeth are blackened as to not appear yellow when compared to the white face makeup. Her movement on the scene is dictated by the aforementioned Noh theatre rules.



Figure 6: Asaji (Source: Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*, 1957)

## 5.5 Banquo

Banquo is introduced to us wearing a simple cowhide and a hooded cloak. In true Polanski fashion, his outfit is also used for the purpose of making the composition of a shot more dynamic as seen in a scene halfway through the movie where he is the only one wearing a brightly coloured shirt providing beautiful contrast to the shot. When Macbeth becomes a king, we can see Banquo wearing an expensive fur coat with ornamental decorations.

During Macbeth's hallucination of Banquo Polanski used a cold light to emphasize Banquo's ghostly appearance really adds to the scene and makes it memorable.



Figure 7: Banquo's ghost (Source: Polanski's *Macbeth*, 1971)

## 5.6. Miki

In *Throne of Blood*, Miki is shown as a proper samurai warrior, in full armour along with a rabbit emblem on his banner, his hair styled similarly to Washizu's. In Washizu's hallucination, Miki is shown pale, dressed in white with a lifeless expression on his face, his hair falling down to his shoulders in contrast to a well-made hairstyle he wore while alive.



Figure 8: Miki's ghost (Source: Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*, 1957)

## 5.7. King Duncan

The King is shown as wealthy and lavishly dressed right from the beginning of the movie, his burgundy red cape, beautiful armour, and golden crown all give off a vibe of a rich and stylish aristocrat. His horse is wearing a caparison with an emblem of a Scottish lion on it. Unlike most of the costume designs in Polanski's *Macbeth*, the king's crown looks like a cheaply made prop that stands out from the rest of his costume that is very well made. Throughout the film, Duncan retains his look wearing different capes with golden details and clasps and by decorating his horse with different caparisons.



During the banquet, his wealthy style is further emphasised by other characters in the scene being dressed in darker and more modest outfits while the king wears a bright red cape decorated with clean white fur and bronze details.

We last see the King Duncan bare-chested in his bed which shows his weakness and vulnerability as Macbeth ends his life.



Figure 9: King at the banquet (Source: Polanski's *Macbeth*, 1971)

## 5.8. Lord Tsuzuki

The Lord in Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* is first seen in full samurai armour along with a beautiful decorative back shield on his helmet called *ushirodate* which makes his appearance truly striking.

Later he's usually seen either in his armour or in a decorated robe with a floral pattern.



Figure 10: The lord (Source: Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*, 1957)

## 5.9. Three Witches

The witches in Polanski's adaptation are represented as three old women dressed in filthy rags. Their faces are disfigured, and their skin is wrinkled. Their appearance is meant to disgust the audience.



Figure 11: The Witches (Source: Polanski, Macbeth, 1971)

### **5.10. The Spirit/Witch**

The first time we see the Spirit it carries a wheel in its arms. As previously mentioned, the wheel represents the circle of life. The Spirit's facial expressions and movements along with the makeup and costumes are also a nod to the Noh theatre. It also shapeshifts into other characters and outfits for dramatic effect while conversing with Washizu for the second time.



Figure 12: The spirit with the wheel (Source: Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*, 1957)

Characters' costumes are a crucial part of film analysis. They not only add to the quality of the film but create a crucial part of the character and their spatial and temporal setting. After introducing characters and describing their costumes and their importance I will present and analyse five major scenes from both films and compare them. I will also point out certain scenography details important for the storyline. I will also compare the scenes from the two films and use other authors' observations that helped me compensate for the parts I missed while watching these films. To make my report full, I will occasionally add images of shots from the film to make my statements and comments more sensible.

## 6. Scenes

### 6.1 Prophecy

To continue with the topic of prophetic character, I will compare one of the most important scenes in *Macbeth*, the scene which initiates the main plot of the play and films. In the original play and Polanski's film, three witches appear in front of Macbeth and Banquo and begin to tell them about the event that will happen in their future, that they will be assigned very honourable titles. This part of the scene is the same in Polanski's movie. However, when witches exit the scene in the play they vanish into the air:

Into the air, and what seemed corporal melted,  
As breath into the wind. (Shakespeare, 1606:19)

On the other hand, in the movie, they enter their house made of stone. This was a more realistic solution that Polanski opted for and followed the same premise throughout the film. Although, Macbeth says the same quote as in the original play after three witches leave. This shows how Polanski still uses the original text even though he changed the way the witches exit the scene. Polanski is using a realistic approach just like he did through the movie. This scene is particularly interesting in this aspect because his realistic style clashes with the texts spoken by Macbeth. He follows the source text despite it not being coordinated with events happening on the screen. This introduces us to Polanski's special style of transforming text to screen.

This scene is fairly different in *Throne of Blood*, especially because there are no witches but only the aforementioned Spirit/Witch of Spider's Web. He tells Washizu and Miki his prophecy about their near future. After that, the spirit vanishes which is similar to

the exit of the three witches from the scene in the original play. Both the three witches and the thread of spider web the spirit is threading are referring to mythology. In Greek mythology three fates, as three witches in *Macbeth* make sure people are living their destinies by spinning a thread from a spindle, and so does the Spirit in *Throne of Blood*. It is questionable, though, whether Kurosawa was inspired by Greek or East Asian mythology in which there is a legend about the Red Thread of Fate that connects people that are destined to meet one another. It is interesting to notice the similarity between Greek and East Asian mythology considering these areas were far away from one another, especially in ancient times when it was harder to make a contact between them.

Keiko I. McDonald in “*Noh in film: Kurosawa’s Throne of Blood*” states how Kurosawa’s film is a brilliant cross-culture experience because it is perfectly positioned between two world traditions, Western and Eastern, more specifically Japanese. He notices how Kurosawa uses phantasmal Noh drama style in his film, which means reality and phantasy are intermeddled and characters have a hard time telling them apart. Washizu and Miki are unsure whether they are dreaming or not when they meet the witch. Another example of Noh drama is also the character of the Spirit of Spider’s Web that is as he says clearly inspired by *yamauba*, the mountain witch who has a spinning wheel with supernatural powers such as insight into human affairs and the deepest, darkest secrets of their hearts. (See McDonald, 1987:36)

This observation proves that the use of famous works of European literature as an inspiration and Asian legends and traditional stories is a great example of how well a film can turn out even when it is adjusted to a different culture.

This scene is equally important in the play and both movies because it is an introduction to the rest of the plot and is crucial to understand what happens later in the play.

Both Polanski and Kurosawa presented that scene very well, but Kurosawa's version is more memorable, probably because it is more surreal and intense with a special focus on facial expressions. Noh masks were used as an inspiration for the spirit's expressions.



Figure 13: An old woman in Throne of Blood.

## 6.2 Murder

The second scene from *Macbeth* I am going to describe and analyse is scene two from the second act. This is one of the most important scenes in both the book and films.

The most important part of the scene, the murder is preceded by a conversation between Macbeth and his wife, or in the other case, Washizu and his wife Asaji.

Lady Macbeth, thrilled about the possibility that her husband might become a king, starts to plot the current king's murder. The royal banquet that took place at her house was a perfect opportunity. After some persuasion and Macbeth's moral turmoil, he decides to do as his wife instructed.

In *Throne of Blood*, the situation is similar. Washizu's wife is also fond of the idea that her husband might take lord Tsuzuki's place.

Both Lady Macbeth and Asaji question their husband's bravery and manhood. Asaji does so less directly while Lady Macbeth is more straightforward. She perceives her husband as less of a man because of his hesitation to murder king Duncan. Author Sara M. Deats in "Polanski's *Macbeth*: A contemporary tragedy" suggests how Macbeth was easy to persuade by his wife for two possible reasons. The first reason being that he already wanted to do what she was suggesting, and her persuasion was just an affirmation of his ambition. The second reason is that he was afraid of the impotence that Lady Macbeth associated with his hesitation to kill Duncan. As a result, even though he did go through with the murder, he did not keep his humanity, but it turned into inhumanity rather than impotence he feared. (See Deats, 1986:90)

Lady Macbeth even compares her husband's manhood to her womanhood, wishing she could kill Duncan herself but the fact she is a woman stops her:

„Come, you spirits  
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,  
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full  
Of direst cruelty” (Shakespeare, 1606:33)

She wants to be “unsexed”; she wants to be rid of her womanhood in a sense of losing her nurturing, motherly nature and embrace cruelty and thirst for blood. She connects womanhood with tenderness and manhood with brutality and cold-bloodedness.

Lady Macbeth's fragile womanhood, as well as Macbeth's manhood, could partially be due to the fact they do not have children, which Deats emphasized in her article. (See Deats, 1986:90). The reason why they both missed compassion that, for example, Macduff



had because he was a father, could be because they did not have children and could not feel that parental, gentle instinct.

Kurosawa uses a similar premise in *Throne of Blood*. Washizu and Asaji did however conceive a child, a possible heir but their child was stillborn. They found out that Asaji is bearing a child after the murder of Lord Washizu. There are few reasons why that happens in the film.

The first reason is that it is following the prophecy. The spirit said Miki's sons will be heirs, and Washizu does not mind at first but when the possibility that his son inherits the throne opens up, he starts to change his mind. However, his child was stillborn, and he lost his possible heir.

The reason why this happened might be that some sort of justice or karma took revenge on Washizu and his wife. They took a life so a life they created was taken from them. But that is not the only life that was taken. Asaji, maddened by the murder and loss of her child took her own life. Finally, Washizu's life was taken by his people, just like Tsuzuki's life was taken by one of the people he trusted most, Washizu himself. All three deaths can be understood as a part of that karma, but Washizu's death is the most obvious one.

Washizu's death can also be understood through the circle of life. Tsuzuki's predecessor was killed by him, and he was killed by Washizu, who then was killed by his people, and someone among them will probably be the new heir. The circle of life is here shown through the line of rulers on the throne. This might be the reason why the movie is called *Throne of Blood*, a throne that can only be taken by spilling someone's blood.

Now we should compare the most important part of the scene when King Duncan, or in the other case, Lord Tsuzuki is murdered.

In this scene, Macbeth kills King Duncan in order to take his throne. In the original play, the murder itself is not shown on stage, but only scenes preceding and following the murder. Macbeth's bloody hands indicate that he indeed killed King Duncan. On the other hand, in Polanski's adaptation, Macbeth stabs Duncan and we can see it onscreen, Macbeth entering the room, climbing on top of Duncan, and stabbing him until he is certain the king is no longer alive.

In Kurosawa's adaptation, however, the scene of the murder is not shown onscreen. Macbeth, in Kurosawa's movie named *Washizu Taketoki*, enters the room in which Lord Tsuzuki Kuniharu is sleeping and Asaji is hearing the noises coming from the room and after that Washizu comes out with his hands covered in blood.

It is interesting how in Kurosawa's movie this scene is more similar to the one from the original *Macbeth* play than in Polanski's *Macbeth*, which for the most part seems like a reliable interpretation of Shakespeare's play. This indicates that Kurosawa paid more attention to interpret some scenes than to match character's names and other terminology.

It is a good distinction between Polanski and Kurosawa. They have different priorities in their interpretation which is interesting to notice when observing the interpretation style between two authors. This scene is also proof that Kurosawa's film has a theatrical style inspired by the aforementioned Noh drama. The facial expressions and acting techniques, for example, intense showing of emotions, are more similar to theatrical acting than film acting. Polanski's film is not very different in that aspect, but the actors are much less intense. However, they are poetical which can remind us of theatrical acting which is surely used in *Macbeth* plays. Therefore, this scene is a perfect example of how Polanski and Kurosawa are both similar and different.

## 6.3 Banquet

One of the most intense scenes is the one in which Macbeth hallucinates Banquo, or in the other film, Washizu hallucinates Miki. These scenes are important because they represent a moment when Macbeth and Washizu start to descend into madness. Their subconsciousness is haunting them with images of dear friends that died because of them and their hunger for power.

In Polanski's film, Macbeth is hosting a dinner after his people killed Banquo. He commemorates Banquo and right after that, he hallucinates Banquo. It is like he invokes Banquo by saying his name, his death becomes a reality. By seeing Banquo with his throat cut, Macbeth becomes aware that his friend is no longer alive. He imagines him in few different ways besides with a cutthroat, with blood dripping all over his head and only one eye opened. Finally, Macbeth sees Banquo shirtless, with both his eyes injured and bleeding, like someone gauged them out. Banquo is holding a bird on his arm, and it appears that it is digging its claws into Banquo's skin as he is bleeding from his wrists.

These violent images of Banquo that change a few times in Macbeth's mind during the scene probably happened because he did not see Banquo get killed and is imagining how that happened.

What is interesting about this scene is that the atmosphere changes very suddenly. At first, the atmosphere in the room is solemn and all characters are showing their respect and admiration for their new king. Suddenly, after his hallucination, they become worried about King Macbeth and the atmosphere is now more intense and uncertain. Lady Macbeth tries to intervene once again, she is initiating the action in the movie but this time she is not in control of the plot. This might be because she cannot prevent her husband from going as a

result of his wrong actions. Also, it might be the foreshadowing of her own madness that comes shortly after, she is not only losing control over the situation but over herself as well.

In *Throne of Blood*, the hallucination scene is similar but with some differences. The scene begins with a performer dancing and reciting for people at the dinner. After nervous Washizu dismisses him, dinner guests begin to wonder why Miki is late, and Washizu grows even more nervous and glares at the seat reserved for Miki and his son every few seconds, even though he knows they will not appear. Suddenly. When he looks towards that place again, he sees Miki.

Unlike in Polanski's film, he does not see Miki covered in blood or disfigured, it is actually the opposite. Miki is sitting peacefully covered in white light making his appearance ghastly. He reacts in the said manner as Macbeth, he is distraught, and he is trying to escape.

The difference from Polanski's version is that he draws his katana and tries to fight dead Miki while Macbeth did nothing when he saw dead Banquo. Asaji, just like Lady Macbeth tries to control the situation and comforts the guests but when she failed to do so, just like Lady Macbeth, she has no other option but to send them home. This part of the plot is probably foreshadowing her loss of control over herself as well.

There is a difference in the atmosphere of the scene between these two films. As mentioned before, the atmosphere fluctuates in *Macbeth* while in *Throne of Blood*, the atmosphere only grows more and more intense as time passes and the plot develops.

There is a significant difference in the events taking place after the banquet. In Polanski's film, Lady Macbeth worryingly comforts her husband as his hallucinations fade away. Later she listens about his sorrows in their room lit with a red light that is possibly announcing further woes that will happen in the film.



Figure 14: Red light scene (Source: Polanski, Macbeth, 1971)

In *Throne of Blood*, the plot gets even more intense after the guests leave the banquet. Washizu's henchman arrives and brings Miki's head to Washizu and his wife. Washizu is furious when he finds out that Miki's son lives and goes into a murderous rage, killing his henchman. During this time, Asaji stays peaceful, just like Lady Macbeth did. She then descends into darkness. Kurosawa is also using light, and in this case shadow as a tool for the plot of the movie, but in a different way than Polanski did.

This is a great example of how light is used differently in black and white film on one end and film in colour on the other. Black and white movies do not have the palette of colours like coloured movies, but Kurosawa still manages to use them skilfully. Polanski, however, chose a very prominent and aggressive red light that is much different from warm and cold lights in the rest of the movie. He used the red light to represent the plot turn.

That plot turn is exactly what I am going to describe in the following chapter.

## 6.5. The stain that won't wash

This scene is very significant in Both *Macbeth* and *Throne of Blood*. This is a moment when Lady Macbeth and Asaji lose control over themselves. The characters that up to this point had the plot wrapped around their finger are now becoming delusional and are no longer participating in the main plot. Their interaction is limited to their caregivers and spouses.

The scene opens with Lady Macbeth's caregiver and physician she invited to check on Lady. They are talking about her condition when she appears out of the shadow. Here Polanski used a similar technique Kurosawa uses throughout his film, Asaji walks in and out of the shadow when she enters and exits the scene.

Lady stands nude before them with a bewitched look on her face. It appears as if she does not control her movements. She sits at the table and moves her hands in a manner that she is washing them, even though there is no hand wash basin in front of her.

She is doing an involuntary action caused by the trauma of participating in a murder. She appears to be reliving that terrible event and her subconsciousness is only bothering her now. She is experiencing senses that are not real, like bloodstain and smell of blood on her hands:

Here's the smell of the blood still.

All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.

O, O, O! (See Polanski, 1971.)

I found this quote most interesting in this scene. Lady Macbeth, visibly distressed, says this in a shaky voice and as she smells her hand she begins to sob. It is maybe the best example of Lady Macbeth's rapid descent into madness.

Francesca Annis, an actress that plays Lady Macbeth, did excellent work in this scene. In fact. This scene was a peak of her performance in the film overall. Her raw and uncensored emotions created a realistic sense of madness the character was experiencing. The fantastic script accompanied by her gasping as she talks is certain to make one's skin crawl.

Another interesting and genius part of the scene is its ending when Lady Macbeth goes back to bed. The front side of her naked body is conveniently covered up by the physician who is helping her walk to bed. This is a very intelligent way to show the character's vulnerability without showing too much of the actress's skin.



Figure 15: Lady Macbeth with the physician (Source: Polanski, Macbeth, 1971)

A similar scene happens in *Throne of Blood*, but Asaji's husband is part of this scene while Macbeth was not present in the scene with Lady Macbeth that I previously described.

Before describing this scene, it is important to mention two other scenes from the film that are related to the scene I will analyse.

Earlier in the film, Asaji's caregiver notifies Washizu that his wife's mental health is decreasing. This is, without further explanation, the beginning of her madness.

The scene that precedes the one I will deal with in the following paragraph is also important. However, the scene ends with Washizu looking at crows flying around him with a disgusted expression on his face. These crows might foreshadow the terrible events ahead, just like the red light in Polanski's *Macbeth*. They can be understood as a symbol of Washizu's premonition that darker days are in front of him.

That premonition proves to be true in the next scene. It opens with Washizu hearing flustered noises. When he goes to see what is going on he sees his servants very agitated coming from the direction of his wife's room and grows more agitated himself. His amplifying fear is portrayed very well. The audience can almost feel what the character is feeling. His expressions, body language, and atmosphere keep the viewer on his toes.

Another bad omen is the lavish robe hanging at the entrance of Asaji's room. The fact that she took of something that was a symbol of her newly earned status is also a reason to question her well-being.

Washizu then finally sees delusional Asaji violently rubbing her hand over the empty basin like she is trying to wash them. She has a very similar speech as Lady Macbeth. She is also haunted by images and the smell of blood. She even says a quote very similar to the one Lady Macbeth said:

No matter how many times I wash and wash again,



Still these hands reek of blood. (See Kurosawa, 1957.)

Even though it is less poetic this quote successfully created a strong impact on the spectator. Lady Washizu's monologue has the same raw style as Lady Macbeth's.

As mentioned before, the big difference between this scene in Polanski's *Macbeth* and *Throne of Blood* is that Asaji's husband is a part of the scene. He is unsuccessfully trying to call his wife to her senses, but she is already so deep in her delusion that even he is unable to help her. This suggests, just like in Polanski's film, that Asaji will no longer participate in the main plot and this scene alludes to her impending doom.

Both these scenes are of great importance because they open a new chapter of the film, the one where the power and glory of Macbeth and his lady, and Washizu and Asaji begin to decrease and their lives, just like the plot are about to collapse.

## **6.6. Death of the main character**

The next scene I am going to analyse is also one of the most important ones, the scene in which Macbeth, or in the other case Washizu dies. Scenes in both films are closing the main plot, but there is space to continue the plot in both films. Whether that is because of the possibility of a new sequel or for the sake of dramatic effect, it is very interesting, especially because the end was not entirely uncertain, but it does leave the spectator the possibility to add their idea to the ending.

To continue, I will present and explain the scene from Polanski's film when Macbeth dies. The scene starts when the English and Scottish army approach Macbeth's castle. They are carrying branches from Birnam Forest which looks like the entire forest is coming towards the castle. At this moment Macbeth realizes that he is not safe as he thought he is since Birnam wood cannot come to Dunsinane castle. His initial self-assurance and boldness

begin to recede which we can see in the quote Macbeth says, that is the same as one in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*:

“Fear not till Birnam Wood

Do come to Dunsinane,” and now a wood

Comes toward Dunsinane. (Shakespeare, 1606:179)

This quote marks a new stage in Macbeth's character. Macbeth who was, up to this point, invincible and formidable begins to show fear and goes into a murderous rage. Fearful Macbeth does not hesitate to kill anyone on his way. He realizes is he is vulnerable, so he begins to defend himself in any way possible.

When a group of soldiers comes to fight him, Macbeth alone manages to kill them and gain the courage to fight and kill anyone that threatens his power and authority. Fear-driven Macbeth is the most frightening than Macbeth in any other stage of the movie. He has less and less humanity left in him.

The audience might think there is no stopping Macbeth until one important character turns the tables and shows himself as a serious threat to King Macbeth.

The combat between Macbeth and Macduff is perhaps the tensest in the whole movie. The most interesting segment about this combat is the ever-changing power dynamic between duellists.

Another interesting part of the combat is the weapons they use. First, they are having a classic sword fight and Macbeth overpowers Macduff, certain he will give up, but he stands up despite being surrounded by Macbeth's henchmen.

This moment is very important for the film. It is a moment Macduff reveals that he was born via caesarean section, and Macbeth realizes that it means Macduff is the one that was not born of a woman, the one that can kill him. When Macduff solemnly announces that, we can see drops of sweat forming on Macbeth's forehead, it is becoming obvious that he is petrified with fear.



Figure 16: Macbeth in fear (Source: Polanski, Macbeth, 1971)

In the next part of the scene Macduff attacks Macbeth again, but this time Macbeth uses his sword while Macduff uses his bare hands, which is a very brave move. This was possibly caused by his vengeance and in order to preserve his manhood that was brought to question after his wife and children got killed.

Macbeth then becomes aware that Macduff is an opponent who must not be underrated. They both fight with burning passion and do not let the other party catch a breath. For example, when Macbeth pushes Macduff onto a pile of logs, which could make him an easy target, he conveniently grabs a log and begins to fight Macbeth.

A detail that happens next is easy to miss but is actually very gripping once you notice it. Macbeth stops fighting for a few seconds only to put a fallen crown back on his head. This moment shows that Macbeth, even when faced with grave danger still cares a lot about his title of a king. Maybe even more than he cares about his own life. This is another proof that Macbeth is at this point completely consumed by power.

After that, they continue to fight all around the courtyard until Macduff finally reaches for his sword and stabs Macbeth. In a fragment of a second, we can see Macbeth lightly smiling as the sword slashes through his flesh. This detail is somewhat disturbing, it gives away Macbeth's absolute loss of sense. He is smiling even though he received a fatal wound.



Figure 17: Macbeth smiles (Source: Polanski, Macbeth, 1971)

Despite being stabbed Macbeth persists and is still standing on his feet. He does not want to show that he is weak, but he is overpowered, and he finally falls on his knees. Macduff took that opportunity and killed Macbeth by beheading him.

In the next shot, we see Macbeth's head on the ground and surprisingly the crown still remains on it. This was probably used as a tool for the dramatic effect of taking the crown off the dead king's head. This deviates from Polanski's realistic style but it added perfectly to the aforementioned dramatic effect and the following events as well.

Malcolm is then crowned the next king of Scotland, and Macbeth's head is then put on a stake, and we can see people pointing fingers and laughing at him. This shows how little respect they had for terrible Macbeth. They are celebrating his death and are happy that his horrible reign is finally over.

This last scene was also one of the most brutal scenes in the film. It was certainly brave of Polanski to show Macbeth's head on the floor. The head was portrayed brilliantly, and it seemed very realistic.

In Kurosawa's version this scene has the same intensity but in a much different way. It starts with the same event, an army coming towards the castle hiding behind branches from the nearby wood, a Spider's Web Forest Washizu reacted in a much more intense way than Macbeth. While Macbeth meaningfully gazed and contemplated in his mind, Washizu was visibly mortified and was unsure if what he is seeing is even true. We can see him screaming with his eyes wide opened. His performance, just like throughout the movie was very theatrical and overly exaggerated, again with fantastic facial expressions.

The most significant difference is that Washizu was not killed by one person only but with a rain of arrows his people threw at him. He did, however, have a similar reaction as Macbeth. Instead of fearing for his life, he held a speech about how their actions are treacherous:

“You traitors.

Murdering Great Lord is high treason” (Kurosawa, 1957.)

This also shows that he cares about title and power more than for his life.

Another similarity is that he also, just as Macbeth, still walks even though arrows are sticking out of his body and is climbing the stairs just like Macbeth.

An interesting comparison was made by Douglas Brode in his book *Shakespeare in the Movies: From the Silent Era to Shakespeare in Love*. He compared Washizu to a porcupine because of a hail of arrows in his body. (See Brode, 2000:194)



Figure 18: Death of Washizu (Source: Kurosawa’s *Throne of Blood*, 1957)

I am not certain whether Kurosawa intended this, but it is a very unconventional observation and shows this author’s different outlook on *Throne of Blood*, which probably means he watched and analysed it in great detail. It emphasises the brutal death of Washizu,

his whole body is pierced with arrows that are now part of him, he can never take them out, which might remind someone of a porcupine.

The final arrow, however, went through his neck. This is fairly different than what ended *Macbeth*, but they did, in the end, receive the fatal wound on their neck. That similarity might be vague, but it is very fascinating when looked upon.

The ending of *Throne of Blood* also suggests that what happens next is uncertain. Washizu is dead and he does not have a successor. Its ending is even more mysterious than *Macbeth's*.

These two scenes are fairly similar, but there are quite a few differences. The first difference is the part when the “forest” approaches the castle. In *Macbeth*, it looks just like it was meant to, an entire forest coming toward the castle. In Kurosawa’s version, this is much less impressive. It looks like a regular forest with rustling leaves, but the fog that Kurosawa used a great number of times in the movie, makes it look much more threatening and therefore better.

The duel scene is composed in a very impressive way. The actors move like they are dancing rather than fighting. The way they move from one place to another and the way their moves are coordinated make their combat very theatrical and more interesting than pure fighting full of blood and unnecessary violence besides, of course, *Macbeth's* head that was cut off.

On the other hand, the scene where Washizu dies is much more violent. He dies much more slowly and painfully, with arrows piercing through his body. This scene showed no mercy to Washizu and was not as advantageous as in *Macbeth* but rather cruel. It was rapid but it created the same effect just in a fairly different way.

Both scenes were done successfully, and they managed to portray the fall of King Macbeth and Lord Washizu well. They have the same idea and end result, but different performances. All in all, they are both very compelling and serve as an interesting closure.

Analysing these scenes and commenting on them, as well as comparing them is the biggest part of my work. The scenes I described are equally important in both movies. They have a great number of differences, but they also have some similarities. However, since scenes like prophecy and the final scene where the main character dies are the ones bearing the most difference, I would say that there are more differences than there are similarities. When it comes to their connection with the source text, despite Polanski's use of the original script, scenes in both films showed far more violence than in the original but they both resembled Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in some way. Polanski followed the time and setting, as well as previously mentioned elements. However, Kurosawa's theatrical style, and his avoidance to show, for example, Tsuzuki's

After fulfilling the goals of my paper that I mentioned in my thesis and introduction, I will conclude by commenting about these two films in general. The main goal of my conclusion will be to prove my thesis. I will prove my statement that *Macbeth* and *Throne of Blood* should not be judged by their resemblance to source text but rather their ability to transform stories into their own time.



## 7. Conclusion

After watching these two adaptations I believe I can give an overview of my experience. After reading classic work of literature, Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, I watched these films already knowing the plot, but I can say I was more than surprised by differences not just in *Throne of Blood* but also in Polanski's *Macbeth* as well. Even though both films more or less followed the original plot, they both had quite a few differences.

Even though I loved the fictional side of Shakespeare's play I also admired the way Polanski managed to make everything more realistic while following the original text. His use of cinema effects like lighting contributed a lot to the dramatic effect. He in a way amplified Shakespeare's dramatic moment by using those kinds of effects. He did not, however, use any special effects in order to keep the plot realistic.

The main difference between his and Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is that he showed murder, nudity, and other raw scenes in his film. At the first sight, this film might seem identical to the original play, but by taking a deeper look into it and thinking about every bit and every scene, I noticed that it is fairly different. It is exactly this difference that makes it an interesting film to watch and analyse.

Polanski's use of previously mentioned effects, like red light to announce something ominous, or cold white light to highlight dead Banquo in the banquet scene, is how classic work of literature is transformed into the era of film, and therefore it needs to have many differences.

There is no need to discuss whether this film was successful as an adaptation, but as a film itself, I would say it is successful. This is proved by various factors. To start with, amazing actors that managed to interpret very complex characters like Lady Macbeth, or King Macbeth who changes his personality throughout the film, with their convincing interpretation of various emotions and madness. Three witches were also interpreted very well with raspy voices and mumbling of the prophecies. Another impressive part is the wonderful, and more importantly historically accurate costumes that made the whole experience even better. The scenography is impressive as well, both the exterior with cloudy, grey weather that matches the frightening events and the interior of, for example, lavish Dunsinane castle.

These were a few details about *Macbeth* that I found impressive, and I can safely say it is by the criteria that I listed above, a quality film that I would recommend to anyone who likes Shakespeare, medieval thematic, or drama in general.

*Throne of Blood*, however, was a completely different experience. I watched a few Japanese movies before, even in black and white, but not enough to say I am familiar with Japanese cinematography, so it was also a new experience.

Since I always liked cross-cultural thematic, I was curious about Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*. The film uses a plot similar to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, but with different text, character names, and many other primary differences that I already mentioned in my paper. I used the same criteria to determine the quality of the film. Actors in *Throne of Blood* had fantastic facial expressions that presented a range of emotions to the audience. Washizu's extreme expressions were very memorable, but Asaji's minimal expressions, resembling masks from Noh theatre, also left a deep impact. The costume design was certainly one of the best parts of the film. They are very memorable because of various patterns, materials, and

shapes. It was even more interesting to observe them after finding the information about what each part of a certain outfit represents. The lack of colour did not reduce my amazement.

Scenography in *Throne of Blood* is fairly different than in Polanski's *Macbeth*. Kurosawa used a simple and humble design for the interior, but his exterior was far more interesting. The omnipresent fog gives off a very ominous ambient, together with skeletons laying around the Spider's Web Forest. What I found especially interesting is the use of fog to separate scenes. This simple effect serves very well to its purpose.

The scene I found most interesting is the one when Washizu visits the spirit for the second time. The eerie laughter and voice made this scene the most gripping one in the whole film, even though some other scenes were more important for the plot. Spirit's warnings to Washizu together with shapeshifting make the whole scene even more memorable.

*Throne of Blood*, aside from obvious differences, does bear resemblance to the original play. It was inspired by Noh theatre it used theatrical style, for example, effects like light and shadow which, despite its simplicity, also fulfilled its purpose. It is obvious that this film is a lot different from both the original play and Polanski's film, but its worth should be established by other factors, like the ones I previously mentioned and also Kurosawa's ability to transfer Shakespeare's story to his time and culture. He managed to transfer a classic work of European literature in a whole different culture. He did this by borrowing techniques from Noh theatre, and I can say it turned out successful. The audience can easily recognize the story he used, but the way he adapted it makes it a whole new story. It surely got me more interested in Kurosawa's work and Japanese cinematography in general.

I would recommend this film to anyone who is interested in or wants to learn more about Japanese films, or even anyone who likes dire thematic. It was a special experience to watch this European story through the prism of Asian, more accurately Japanese culture

paired with theatrical elements and elements of terror. The fact that the film was not in colour did not diminish the quality of the film and made it even more astonishing.

When comparing these two films I found it hard to decide which one I prefer. Even though they have the same storyline and some characters their styles and lots of other elements are quite different. I appreciated Polanski's realistic approach, but Kurosawa's mysterious and somewhat magical atmosphere is more memorable for me. I think that the actors in both films were great, especially at the portrayal of emotions. However, it was a unique and rewarding experience to watch both movies one after another and observe the same elements in both films. The most interesting part was comparing how the same story adapted to two different cultures. I cannot say that I prefer one of the films because I liked the components of both.

I can say that both movies are quality pieces of visual art no matter their resemblance to the source text. Both Polanski and Kurosawa managed to transfer the same story to the context they chose, and they did that very well with costumes, scenography, film effects, and so on. This proves my thesis that it is not the resemblance to the original that determines the quality of some film but all kinds of components, and of course how it appealed to a certain spectator, and both Polanski's *Macbeth* and Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* managed to do so for me.

In the end, I would say writing this paper, watching the films, and researching for it was a very memorable and positive experience.

## 8. Abstract

This paper analyses and compares two film adaptations of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. One is Roman Polanski's *Macbeth* (1971) and Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* (1957). The paper observes similarities and differences between these two films from European and Japanese cinematography, through the analysis of both and their relation to the original text. This paper analyses the two films through their characters, costume design, scenography, and five major scenes. My main thesis and opinion is that the fidelity to the original does not define the quality of the film but other parameters like acting, scenography, costume design, and much more. I will support this by observing and commenting on Polanski's *Macbeth* and Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*.

Keywords: *Macbeth*, *Throne of Blood*, Polanski, Kurosawa, adaptation.

## 9. Sažetak

Ovaj rad analizira i uspoređuje dvije filmske adaptacije Shakespeareovog *Macbetha*. Prvi je film *Macbeth* Romana Polanskog (1971.), a drugi *Krvavo prijestolje (Throne of Blood)* Akire Kurosawe (1957.). U radu se promatraju sličnosti i razlike između ova dva filma iz europske i japanske kinematografije, kroz analizu oba filma i njihov odnos prema izvornom tekstu. Ovaj rad analizira dva filma kroz njihove likove, kostimografiju, scenografiju i pet glavnih scena. Moja je glavna teza i mišljenje da vjernost izvorniku ne definira kvalitetu filma već drugi parametri poput glume, scenografije, kostimografije i još

mnogo toga. Svoju ću tezu dokazati promatranjem i komentiranjem *Macbetha* autora Romana Polanskog i Kurosawinog *Krvavog prijestolja*.

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