

2017

Macbeth in Film: Directorial Choices and Their Impact on the Audience

Kellie Suzanne McClelland

University of Mississippi. Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College

Follow this and additional works at: https://egrove.olemiss.edu/hon_thesis



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

McClelland, Kellie Suzanne, "Macbeth in Film: Directorial Choices and Their Impact on the Audience" (2017). *Honors Theses*. 534.
https://egrove.olemiss.edu/hon_thesis/534

This Undergraduate Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Honors College (Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College) at eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of eGrove. For more information, please contact egrove@olemiss.edu.

MACBETH IN FILM:
DIRECTORIAL CHOICES AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE AUDIENCE

by
Kellie Suzanne McClelland

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford
May 2017

Approved by

Adviser: Professor Ivo Kamps

Reader: Senior Lecturer Peter Wirth

Reader: Professor Karen Raber

© 2017
Kellie Suzanne McClelland
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

*To Dr. Ben McClelland for believing in me
and encouraging me
and supporting me
on this, his Retirement Year,
as well as every other time of my life.
Thanks for it all. I love you, Daddy.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I owe my family, friends, and Him from whom all blessings flow my deepest gratitude for providing comfort and encouragement throughout this arduous journey that has become my thesis. You never doubted me, even when I did.

I would also like to thank Dr. Kamps for working with me over the past sixteen months—especially those times during which I might not have been working with him. I could not have created this work without your guidance. Dr. Wirth, thank you for taking the time to send me thoughtful responses even during your time away from work.

Finally, thank you, Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College for providing me this opportunity for growth. This was the most challenging experience, scholastically and emotionally. I learned the true meaning of prioritizing. I learned how to hear and accept and apply criticism to my work. I learned the true meaning of dedication. I learned that 10:00 in the morning is not too early to cry. I learned paying \$3.65 for coffee at 10:00 at night is worth it. I learned that having a support system, for which I also have you to thank, is essential for success.

ABSTRACT

KELLIE SUZANNE MCCLELLAND: *Macbeth* in Film: Directorial Choices and Their Impact on the Audience
(Under the direction of Ivo Kamps)

In this thesis, I closely examine William Shakespeare's 17th century tragedy, *Macbeth*, in comparison to five film adaptations for a 21st century audience: Roman Polanski (1971), Philip Casson (1979), Geoffrey Wright (2006), Rupert Goold (2010), and Justin Kurzel (2015). I chose to survey the women in *Macbeth* specifically because of historical blame placed on either Lady Macbeth or the witches for Macbeth's actions. General critical perceptions are that these women robbed Macbeth of his agency or free will and urged him, coerced him, to commit unspeakable crimes to advance his career. What I found in these productions are a variety of character features that present the women in novel ways, mitigating against, or supporting, a traditional view of women in the drama.

In order to draw conclusions from the overall roles of these characters, I placed the play text directly beside the film scripts. If a director omitted a line or made another modification, what purpose was he serving? By addressing these changes, I was able to determine Macbeth's agency over his own fate. Details in the script alterations ultimately become determinative factors in the meaning of the play; with these omissions or modifications, Macbeth is able to control his own fate.

In this analytical project, I served as an active audience member, watching the film to construe the directors' efforts as well as account for any concepts of the play, lost or diminished in their adaptations. Instead of passively adopting the directors' presentations, I sought to understand why the directors made specific changes to the play

text in their scripts and certain choices of setting, lighting, costume design, and characterization. By actively engaging in these five films, I uncovered the implicit changes through the directors' use of cinematography and the impact of their explicit changes in their scripts from the play text on their 21st century audience. Ultimately, I aimed to reveal the importance served in the manifold retellings of this drama.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE: LADY MACBETH	8
Introduction.....	8
Roman Polanski	9
Philip Casson	12
Geoffrey Wright.....	19
Rupert Goold.....	24
Justin Kurzel	29
Conclusion	36
Chapter Two: The Witches	38
Introduction.....	38
Roman Polanski	40
Geoffrey Wright.....	50
Rupert Goold.....	60
Justin Kurzel	66
Conclusion	74
CONCLUSION.....	77
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	82

INTRODUCTION

My first formal interaction with Shakespeare's text occurred in my ninth-grade, gifted-English class, where my classmates and I read *Romeo and Juliet*. Divided into groups, we reenacted certain scenes for a film project. I remember this project fondly; however, I do not remember being taught how to critically read Shakespeare's text. In Dr. Kamps's honors Shakespeare course during the fall semester of my junior year, I learned how to engage closely with the text and although I struggled in his course, which was not normal for me, I realized that I was really challenged—not only by my professor's expectations, but by this playwright's enchanting work. In the spring of my junior year, I decided on a thesis topic. I had just finished Dr. Kamps's Shakespeare course, in which I earned a B+ (my first B in an English class), and I was, at the time, enrolled in Dr. Duck's Intro to Film class, where I learned to analyze film as I'd always been taught to analyze literature. Dr. Duck showed me how to interpret a new genre. After establishing an understanding of film terminology, I was eager to apply this new knowledge. With my critical appetite whetted in Dr. Kamps's class, I also wanted to pursue my study of Shakespeare. So, I used the opportunity of my thesis to extend my knowledge of Shakespeare's work through the vehicle of film.

After Dr. Kamps kindly agreed to work with me as my advisor, I spent the spring semester of my junior year watching and analyzing Michael Radford's film, *The Merchant of Venice*. This served as a test-run to see if I was interested in pursuing the analysis of Shakespeare's text through film interpretations. And here we are! Ultimately, I chose to continue my thesis work on *Macbeth* because of its literary merit as well as the rich diversity of film productions of this play.

First performed on stage in 1606 by The King's Men, this timeless tragedy was most recently made into a film adaptation in 2015 (Thomas). Many people question Shakespeare's prevalence in our world today, wondering why his plays have been translated to almost every language, why Hollywood, Bollywood, and other studios around the globe have adapted his works to the screen, and why high school English classes teach this as a standard. Because Shakespeare's plays present such universal themes still today, they are able to speak to all nations in their native language. Because plays have been made into films, more people may have access to his work. And because his work has so much to teach us about the modern human condition, the English classroom provides a safe space for students to explore those timeless ideas. I chose to write my thesis on a man's work from the 17th century, presented to a 21st century audience through a new medium of film, not because this is a radical movement, but because, as this study illustrates, film presents another means for learning about Shakespeare's work, employing directorial interpretations asserted by cinematic techniques that live stage productions or open text does not offer the audience.

During the summer after taking Dr. Kamps's course on Shakespeare, I studied at King's College in London, where I took another course on Shakespeare; this one stressed the importance of experiencing Shakespeare in several media: stage, film, and in the classroom. One day, our class wandered the streets of Shakespeare's London before we attended a performance of *Macbeth* at the Globe Theater. Our class of thirteen stood in the yard throughout the play, where we could see the actors' spit spray out from their mouths during intense line delivery, and watch beads of sweat form at their hairline and drip down their faces. A woman behind me passed out two hours into the play because

she locked her legs. And, it started raining during Act III when Banquo's ghost appeared. What an incredible time! While the yard used to be the section for the poorest spectators, with the seats in the gallery reserved for the upper class, I quite loved the yard, because I got to be a part of the play. This particular production made a point to interact with the audience. Characters would appear next to you, out of nowhere, and jump up on to the stage from out of the crowd. Actors made a point to look directly at you and motion for you when speaking lines; it was magnificent. That's an experience you cannot get out of watching a film; however, stage-to-screen productions offer a multiplicity of audience experiences, as I explore in depth within this study.

Originally, I had planned to explore the stage-to-screen movement as a whole, and how it has impacted audiences; I wanted to analyze the reasons behind turning Shakespeare's work, intended for the stage, into films. However, I soon discovered that my intention on encapsulating the stage-to-screen movement was naïve, for that is too broad of an approach to cover within an academic year. So, I narrowed my focus to this: how, why, and to what effect five directors departed from the original play text, and used various techniques to convey their interpretations. I believe the directors are offering their work, asking us to assess their ideas, and to consider whether they are credible and suggestive interpretations of Shakespeare's text for today's audience.

As a Liberal Arts student, I value the opportunity to engage in critical thinking about literary texts. This thesis has given me liberty to exercise this passion in a constructive way. By placing Shakespeare's play text directly beside five films, I examined the technical differences in scripts and analyzed the impact that those changes had on the audience. By omitting certain words or lines, by modifying characters, by

redirecting the chronological order of scenes, and by employing cinematic technologies, directors Roman Polanski (1971), Philip Casson (1979), Geoffrey Wright (2006), Rupert Goold (2010), and Justin Kurzel (2015) created varied and unique interpretations of the Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Analyzing their different uses of cinematic techniques and characterizations, I inferred the various artistic and social projects portrayed in their filmic adaptations of Shakespeare's work.

I conducted my study over the past academic year, viewing each film several times, taking note of various divergences from the play text, actors' line delivery, changes in costume design, lighting, and setting, as well as cinematic techniques. My goal of this careful analysis was to gauge the impact of those components on audience reception. By comparing the various films to the text, and to each other, I came to understand the reasons for and significance of creating different versions of this play. While the directors were able to use this medium as an outlet for their artistic interpretations of Shakespeare's text, these films also served another purpose: reaching audiences that might not otherwise ever read or watch a stage performance of *Macbeth*. For example, I asked myself, "If I had never read this play or seen it performed in the Globe Theater in London, and I were to watch Justin Kurzel's film, what would my understanding of Lady Macbeth be? How would I view the witches' agency in Macbeth's fate? What are overarching themes I take away from Kurzel's film of Shakespeare's play?"

Thus, this thesis joins the ongoing critical conversation about the impact on audiences that film productions of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* have. There is abiding interest in Shakespeare's play as an academic topic, as the themes in this complex drama about

primary human nature still resonate today, ranging from ambition and finding a sense of purpose, to love, guilt, and grief. However, not every millennial will pick up a Shakespearean anthology and read *Macbeth*, nor will all take the time to watch the play performed on stage; nevertheless, many are likely to watch Sam Worthington perform the role of Macbeth as a young, urban gangster. So, too, might Polanski's 1971 audience appreciate his diversion from Shakespeare's supernatural witches to a more symbolic representation of marginalized women, those who were misunderstood because of their traditionally-unwomanly features, and therefore used this position to trick Macbeth. Using bare staging, and harsh lighting techniques, Casson shows his contemporary audience the essential complexity of a woman's guilt and grief intertwined with her dependency on, and blinding love and ambition for her husband. Rather than a straightforwardly evil, power-hungry Lady Macbeth, Casson creates an intensely cerebral plotter who, by pushing Macbeth to the throne, eventually loses him and her reason for being. Goold relocates his *Macbeth* in time and place, setting the drama in a militarily aggressive society during World War II. Modern audiences, acquainted with war games and drawn to shocking, spellbinding cinematic effects, can engage with Goold's witches, powerful, ethereal war nurses that plunge their fists into a man's chest to take his heart and march right through Macbeth as they lure him into their snare. Kurzel chooses to depict his Lady Macbeth as a grieving mother, seeking to further her husband's legacy through this kingship; in this way, Kurzel invites modern audiences to empathize with her, witnessing her ultimate failure, as she creates a tyrant in pushing her husband to the throne.

In this analytical project, I served as an active audience member, watching the film to construe the directors' efforts as well as account for any concepts of the play, lost or diminished in their adaptations. Watching a movie passively, one can become lost in it and be unaware of how and why the film was put together as it was. To develop the film analysis for this study I employed active viewing practices, observing cinematic techniques and other directorial choices, to engage with and interpret the constructed nature of the films. Instead of passively adopting the directors' presentations, I sought to understand why the directors made specific changes to the play text in their scripts and certain choices of setting, lighting, costume design, and characterization. In my analysis, I discussed resulting artistic elements as they impact the audience's understanding of the characters, the action, and, ultimately a proposed meaning of *Macbeth*.

As I indicate in the body chapters, the directors explore a range of character components for Lady Macbeth, as they do in establishing the source and nature of the witches. Re-characterizations and modifications to those characters influence their relative agency and, in turn, Macbeth's role in the murder plot. I chose to survey the women in *Macbeth* specifically because of historical blame placed on either Lady Macbeth or the witches for Macbeth's actions. General critical perceptions are that these women robbed Macbeth of his agency or free will and urged him, coerced him, to commit unspeakable crimes to advance his career. What I found in these productions are a variety of character features that present the women in novel ways, mitigating against, or supporting, a traditional view of women in the drama.

Interpretation of any literary work depends on the individual, the life that he or she lived, and the time and location of that life. Because these five film directors range in

age and in intellectual orientation, as well as range in when they produced their films, they create disparate versions of the play based on their unique interests, perspectives, and where and when they lived. Thus, we see Phillip Casson (1979) and Rupert Goold (2010) show differences owing to their lives and times, as well as their orientations to the world. For all of these directors, the elements of time and place of their lives, artistic production, and critical interpretation culminate in five different filmic adaptations of the same play; because of these varying elements, audiences are able to challenge their preconceived, or never-before-conceived, ideas of Lady Macbeth and the witches. Of course, these five directors all chose to produce *Macbeth* in film because Shakespeare's play still holds great significance in our society today. Moreover, the achievement of their interpretations ensures that modern audiences are able to engage with Shakespeare's text, whether or not they go to the library.

CHAPTER ONE: LADY MACBETH

Introduction

Examining five different film versions of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* proved just how varied interpretations of his play can be. Though their actors portray the same character, directors Roman Polanski (1971), Philip Casson (1979), Geoffrey Wright (2006), Rupert Goold (2010), and Justin Kurzel (2015) depict very different versions of Lady Macbeth. These directors enact their interpretations of Shakespeare's text in their films by using various cinematic techniques, by setting the play in different historical periods or modernizing the characters, and by modifying the play text. The resulting five films yield significantly different understandings of Lady Macbeth's character and her relationship with Macbeth, and have a distinct impact on how we understand the overall play and the causes of the tragedy. Lady Macbeth is often viewed as one of the contributing factors – along with fate, the witches, ambition, the violent nature of feudal society, and others – in Macbeth's decision to kill Duncan. Each of these five films defines and explains her contribution differently, shifting our understanding of the cause(s) of the tragedy and the meaning of the play.

In Shakespeare's play text, Lady Macbeth first appears on stage as she opens and reads a letter from Macbeth, who is travelling home from battle. Although some of these films introduce Lady Macbeth in other ways, they all feature this essential scene. Because Lady Macbeth appears on stage alone, we may assume that her initial response to Macbeth's letter, which describes his encounter with the Weird Sisters, is a reflection of her true feelings. This reaction is a pivotal moment in the overall plot of *Macbeth* because it establishes Lady Macbeth's position and reveals her true character to the audience. As I

show in this study, each director interprets his Lady Macbeth's reaction differently, which is noteworthy as the beginning of his adaptation of Shakespeare's character.

Roman Polanski

Roman Polanski's 1971 film, set in the Middle Ages of Scotland, features Francesca Annis as Lady Macbeth and Jon Finch as the title character. Starring in their roles for *Macbeth* at ages 26 and 29, respectively, the two are noted for their youth in portraying these characters. Annis's fair skin, soft facial features, and her waist-length, auburn hair, lend to her portrayal of a less-harsh Lady Macbeth. These features help Annis convince her audience of her character's more-subtle attributes and gentle disposition. Roman Polanski's Lady Macbeth contrasts with Casson's Lady Macbeth in that Annis's version of Lady Macbeth employs a more reserved approach in the manipulation of her husband. Neither version makes Lady Macbeth seem lustful for the crown or power for herself; rather, her character in both renditions deeply wants the best and the most for her husband.

Polanski first presents Lady Macbeth to us as a young, fair woman. Her radiant, blue dress, and long, red hair glow vibrantly against the dull brown of the dirt, walls, and people of Glamis around her. Reading Macbeth's letter, she is clearly happy with the news, as she sits down on a step with the sole purpose of marveling at the thought of her husband as king. When she does so, dogs come up to her, and she shares her joy by lovingly petting them. Many critics think of Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth as aggressive, but from the beginning of his film, Polanski portrays her as gentle, and perhaps naïve.

When Macbeth returns home, Lady Macbeth brings up the letter and suggests that the two should murder Duncan. Macbeth's shock at hearing this leads the audience to believe that the two have never before mentioned this topic, whereas the original play text suggests that the two have previously spoken about this fantasy. Weighing in on this much-debated question, Polanski makes the thought of taking the crown appear as a fresh idea to the couple, showing the influence that Lady Macbeth's happiness has over Macbeth. He seems content in being named Thane of Cawdor, but his wife's urgency in the matter presses him forward. Instead of viewing this Lady Macbeth as a power-hungry woman, who had already discussed taking the crown with her husband, the film asks the audience to view her as a woman who wants her husband to jump at an opportunity to succeed.

When Duncan arrives at Glamis, Polanski's Lady Macbeth acts as the most gracious hostess and his most admiring subject. Throughout the evening, anytime Duncan speaks, Lady Macbeth is quick to react with a smile or a laugh, building Duncan's trust and gaining his favored attention. As the banquet begins, the shot shows a smiling Lady Macbeth seated beside a pleased Duncan enjoying a boy's song. Meanwhile, Macbeth is alone, outside on the balcony during a rainstorm. Macbeth delivers lines 1-28 of Act 1, Scene 7, wherein he resolves to end the plan to murder his king. Lady Macbeth comes to his side, summoning him to join the party. As her husband calmly tells her that they will not continue in their plan, Lady Macbeth does not react. Macbeth turns to rejoin his guests, and Lady Macbeth follows him. The two step into the doorway between the rainstorm and the celebration, and just as the light from the banquet reaches their faces,

Lady Macbeth grips his robes and gently turns his face toward her own: “Was the hope drunk / Wherein you dressed yourself? Hath it slept since?” (1.7.36-37).

Macbeth turns away, breaking from her hold, but she persists even as they enter the room. Amidst the commotion of the banquet, Polanski places a conversation that—in the play text takes place away from the banquet. During this exchange, Lady Macbeth is moved to tears and, between sobs, she challenges his courage and manhood between moved to tears; thus, redefining our understanding of her manipulation of Macbeth. Rather than berating him or placing herself in an authoritative position over him, Polanski’s Lady Macbeth uses her tears to make him feel guilty for going back on his word. Macbeth tries to ignore his wife’s upset as they watch a Scottish sword dance; however, Lady Macbeth continues her plea. Macbeth walks away from her to get a glass of wine, and when he returns, his demeanor has changed from refusal to consideration as he asks her, “If we should fail?” (1.7.60). Immediately, Lady Macbeth’s smile returns to her tear-stained face. Wiping the streaks away from her cheeks, she explains, with wide eyes and a cheery tone, the plan to drug Duncan’s guards. As Lady Macbeth asks, “What cannot you and I perform upon the unguarded Duncan?” a crown-shaped shadow falls on her face (1.7.70-71). The party moves into a period of dancing, and Duncan asks Lady Macbeth to dance with him; of course, she grants her king this pleasure. Completely transformed from her earlier state of hysteria, Lady Macbeth’s dimples decorate her cheeks, and a smile beams across her face. Macbeth watches his wife’s performance, and the audience hears a voiceover of his lines: “Bring forth men-children only! / For thy undaunted mettle should compose / Nothing but males” (1.7.73-75). Polanski creates a duplicitous character as Lady Macbeth’s innocent façade covers her murderous

intentions, proposing to his audience that Lady Macbeth uses her womanhood in an implicitly deceitful way.

Polanski's Lady Macbeth can best be contrasted with Justin Kurzel's characterization. Kurzel and Polanski use their Lady Macbeths to embody two different types of womanhood. In Kurzel's film Lady Macbeth uses her female sexual manipulation to gain an upper hand over her husband's desires, and through this influence, she challenges him to gain power as king. Portrayed in the beginning of Kurzel's film as a woman with little remorse for aiding in the murder of her king, she later sees her position as an ambitious agent in Macbeth's rise to power fade, as she struggles in her relationship with her husband. Polanski's Lady Macbeth, on the other hand, has the same ambitions for her husband, but she employs this role differently in that she does not use her sexual appeal to urge Macbeth to kill Duncan. When her husband tells her that the plans will go no further, she cries and uses her womanhood in a more traditionally understood way. Her tears work as a weapon of guilt, as Lady Macbeth reproaches her husband, eventually pushing him back into the plot against the king by holding him to the promise he made her. Polanski's Lady Macbeth symbolizes—what his 1971 audience would consider—the outdated ideals of womanhood. She uses her emotional distress and dismay to corner Macbeth into guilt, further aiding in his pursuit for the crown.

Philip Casson

In 1979, Philip Casson produced a film recording of Trevor Nunn's Royal Shakespeare Company stage production of the play, which stars Ian McKellen and Judi

Dench. The play was originally performed in the round before small audiences; when Casson filmed the play, the round stage, bare set, and plain costumes remained as they were during the play's live performances. Dench's nominal makeup and black garb stayed true to the play's minimalistic approach. Her whispery-delivery of the lines and her short stature work well as contrasting features in Dench's Lady Macbeth's domineering presence.

Casson appropriates the character of Lady Macbeth from the play while discarding all other social and environmental indicators of time and place. Set on a round stage, with a completely empty set and a solid-black background, Casson's play focuses on the pure emotive power of the language and characters in action. Through her delivery of lines and her physical appearance in the opening scene Dench's Lady Macbeth manifests Macbeth's wife in an intensely cerebral way as she convincingly makes the murder plot up as she goes from line to line. Dench speaks in a whisper, not a soft, under-the-breath utterance, but a fervently forceful vocal expression. Moreover, she places more emphasis on certain lines through emphatic enunciation, giving those words stronger meaning. She employs this exaggeration of speech specifically when she scorns Macbeth, making Casson's Lady Macbeth pointedly critical of him.

Philip Casson presents his Lady Macbeth as the ultimate driving force behind Macbeth's rise to power. Casson makes it apparent that his Macbeths have never previously discussed the plot to kill Duncan and when Lady Macbeth suggests this, Ian McKellen, as Macbeth, is reluctant to agree, becoming dismissive and even reproachful at the idea. Dench portrays Lady Macbeth as a wife intent on furthering her husband's career and, even if he cannot see greatness inside of him, she will conjure that greatness

out of him, suppressing her own welfare to advance his rule. Because she is the sole reason for his kingship and eventual tyranny, Dench's Lady Macbeth intensifies her demise as it begins with the loss of trust for and emotional connection with her husband, ending in her death.

The audience initially sees Lady Macbeth illuminated by an overhead beam of harsh white light while she stands on an empty set with low-key background lighting. This beam of light creates a stark contrast with the dark atmosphere, her black skullcap, and the black dress that covers her entire chest, arms, and legs. This garb implies that she is in mourning, Casson's way of possibly insinuating, as the play text does, that the Macbeths have lost a child. Casson uses low-key background lighting to signify that this taut scene carries great weight and he repeatedly employs these elements throughout the rest of the play as signifiers of critical moments in the play.

In this opening scene, Lady Macbeth slowly reads the letter from Macbeth in a whisper while she paces back and forth on the round stage. She reads in fits and starts, pausing frequently to ponder the meaning of this message. When she stops reading and delivers the "Come, you spirits" lines, Casson's Lady Macbeth drops down into a deep crouch and extends her hands out in front of her, reaching for the spirits, in a position that seems forced and uncomfortable to her. While other directors present this scene as Lady Macbeth merely expressing her desires, Casson sets it up as a medium for Lady Macbeth to actively seek out higher beings to transform her for this deed. Upon saying, "direst cruelty," she shrieks and jumps up from the ground, clasps her hands together on her forehead, and, turning her back, runs into the shadowed area of the stage, as if she is frightened by her own words and actions. She hides herself. After a moment of respite,

she screws up her courage, returns to center stage, and crouches once more extending a quivering outstretched hand that further indicates her discomfort. She puts herself back into this physically and emotionally fraught position, continuing her pursuit resolutely, even though she seems terrified by the immensity of this undertaking. More determined than before, she continues to entreat the spirits, emphasizing just how much her husband's happiness and success means to her: she is willing to suppress her own well-being in order to further his office.

Proving her dedication to her husband, Casson's Lady Macbeth makes it clear that stepping out of the bounds of traditional womanly roles in this society—seeking to be the stronghold for her husband as she recognizes that Macbeth needs her bolstering—is a scary, self-sacrificing, and out-of-the-ordinary act; yet, because she needs to be the source of his strength, she makes this prayer for transformation, ultimately proving that even as this Lady Macbeth perceives the horrors of her actions beforehand, she continues with the plan.

Later on, when Duncan and his entourage arrive, Lady Macbeth greets the naïve, trusting king, convincing him that she is the subservient lady he would expect her to be. Casson dresses Duncan in all white robes, setting him distinctly apart from the rest of the cast, all of whom wear black. Through his benign demeanor and ever-present smile, Casson's Duncan embodies the essence of gracious goodness. Recognizing that Duncan is truly kind soul, Lady Macbeth briefly drops her pleasant smile, her expression flashing to one of guilt-stricken dread at the thought of killing this loving man. However, just as she screwed up her courage in the former scene, she does so again now, quickly pushing

past her guilt and smiling once again, as she leads the king into her home—and to his doom.

In a later scene, Lady Macbeth asks her husband if his hope of killing Duncan, which at one time excited him, is waning now “to look so green and pale” (1.7.38). In the film, after his wife delivers these lines, Macbeth averts his eyes from hers, reacting to her rebuke. In an attempt to reassert his manhood, he tries to kiss her. Lady Macbeth ducks under his arms and moves quickly aside to escape his grasp, which really appears to concern him. Immediately she tries to revive his commitment, but he continues to express his disapproval of the plot by shaking his head, shushing her, and mouthing “no”; nevertheless, she continues, approaching him and entangling their bodies again in a loving embrace. By staging his characters in such an engrossing physical relationship, Casson suggests that Macbeth’s dependency is why he cannot resist his assertive wife or her wishes.

This introduction of Lady Macbeth implies that she is a perseverant character who overcomes her fears because of her duty-bound love for Macbeth. Her only explicit comfort throughout these scenes comes from her husband’s presence. Casson’s interpretation of Lady Macbeth is not synonymous with the traditional view of her as Shakespeare’s most frightening female character, who is driven by raw, selfish ambition. Throughout the film, Casson continues presenting her as assertive but dependent on Macbeth’s affection. She chooses to strip herself of her womanly attributes to become what she feels is necessary to help Macbeth achieve this goal.

Casson’s choice to present his Lady Macbeth this way defines her as the forceful agent in Duncan’s murder. Although she urges Macbeth to carry out the plan, her obvious

guilt and reproachful nature make her seem more “normal” as opposed to Shakespeare’s ruthlessly ambitious character. And while this version of the couple is sexually charged, each seems to seek the other as a source of comfort, whereas other film versions of the play employ their sexual interaction as a means of taking away Macbeth’s masculinity or adding a factor of his sexual dependency. Because Casson normalizes the couple’s relationship in the beginning, Lady Macbeth’s downfall, evokes sympathetic feelings from the audience for the wife who wanted to make her husband happy. Casson marks the transformation in the couple’s relationship as the plot moves forward.

Over the course of the film, Casson makes it clear to his audience that the physical relationship, which mirrors the emotional state between the two, deteriorates. In the initial scene with the Macbeths, the two can’t be more than an inch away from each other. Their speech is even indecipherable at some points of Act 1, Scene 5 because, as they speak, they press kisses on the other’s face. Even as the early parts of the film progress, moments of excitement or need for comfort yield to loving embraces, and the two are always seen holding hands; however, after the murder, Lady Macbeth’s feelings of guilt wedge a space between the two. We see this emotional disconnection first shown at Macbeth’s coronation, when, after being crowned, he walks toward the camera, looking straight ahead. Momentarily, he shifts his gaze toward Lady Macbeth, flashing a smug smirk of contentment before looking forward again. Lady Macbeth never faces the camera; however, even from the limited scope, the audience can see that she does not smile back at her husband.

Later in Act 3, Scene 2, the physical disconnect becomes obvious to the audience: Lady Macbeth tries to encourage her husband to forget his anxieties because they have

guests for a banquet. Upon greeting her husband, Lady Macbeth extends her arms and places them on Macbeth for an embrace, but he denies her his affection. Macbeth continues to explain his grief, but Lady Macbeth tells her husband, “You must leave this” (38). She delivers this line in great despair, pleading with Macbeth to move on from these thoughts as she throws her hands over her face and cries. Now that he has upset her, Macbeth allows her to lean on him for support and comfort. Yet, just moments later, Macbeth causes her to start when he says,

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
Which keeps me pale! Light thickens,
And the crow makes wings to th’ rocky wood;
Good things of day begin to droop and drowse,
Whiles night’s black agents to their preys do rouse.
Thou marvel’st at my words, but hold thee still.
Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill.
So prithee, go with me (49-59).

Lady Macbeth jumps away from him, a horrified expression spread across her face. She turns her back to him and begins to walk off-stage; when he calls to her, “prithee, go with me,” she turns toward him. With much caution in her step and horror in

her eyes, she walks out of the frame with him; however, Casson shines a white spotlight on them to expose that the two do not hold hands as they leave together.

By pushing her husband toward a goal that she wanted *for* him, Lady Macbeth ultimately suffered from the series of killings that occurred at the hand of her murderous husband, whom she put into power through her own hand. Casson makes this discrepancy obvious to his audience to enhance the idea that she pays a terrific human cost in losing her sanity and the love of her life, by pushing an ambitious agenda. Casson symbolizes her plight in the film's last scene when she goes mad. Her dress is more revealing, exposing more of her neck and arms; she strips off these robes, outwardly exposing herself, and revealing symbolically what she has become inwardly, as she pays the price for supporting her husband against her nature and dispelling any reservation.

Geoffrey Wright

Geoffrey Wright's 2006 Australian adaptation of the Scottish tragedy features Sam Worthington as Macbeth and Victoria Hill as Lady Macbeth. Set in the Melbourne, Wright's Macbeths are part of the urban drug-culture. Portraying a gangster-Macbeth and drug-addicted Lady Macbeth, Worthington and Hill contemporize the classic drama with modern-day grit and grime, blood and gore. Hill's long, feathered black hair, ruby lips, and 70's go-go girl dresses add flare to her Lady Macbeth character.

Geoffrey Wright's Lady Macbeth is also grieving the loss of her child, as becomes evident in the opening scene where an extreme close-up shows her sobbing over a small grave. Wright's Lady Macbeth is introduced as completely cut off from any

emotional connection with her husband. She, the wife of a drug-lord, is found taking drugs throughout the film, and it seems to be Wright's way of allowing her to cope with the loss of her child by numbing her to those grievous feelings; however, it also numbs her to the love of her husband. When the idea to kill Duncan occurs to her, she regains a sense of purpose. While this revives her to an extent, she still does not satisfy her husband's desire for sexual intimacy. Wright uses many techniques and interventions in the original text to portray this seemingly abstract character, due to the mafia aspect of her life, as someone to whom an audience can relate.

Wright strays from the text more than any other director, especially in the letter-reading scene. Instead of finding out via letter of her husband's new title, Lady Macbeth learns from him directly. He returns home to find her unconscious in her bathtub and rushes to revive her, fearing that she's dead. When her eyes flutter and he realizes that she is barely conscious, he relaxes, his shoulders dropping in a sign of relief. Leaving her in the tub, he sighs and strokes her face, indicating to the audience that this behavior has occurred before. Directly after this, we see the couple spooning on the bed. As Macbeth strokes his wife's arms and legs, he tells her the news of his interaction with the weird sisters. He is clearly trying to arouse her, either physically or emotionally with his news, yet she makes no response, acknowledging only the cigarette lingering between her fingers. Casually having a smoke while her husband is passionately trying to engage her in conversation shows that Wright's Lady Macbeth is not concerned with her husband's ambitions at this point. She makes no effort to acknowledge him until she slightly opens her mouth to deliver the line "I fear thy nature," whereupon she barely turns her head over her shoulder. She does not even look *at* him; rather she tilts her head in his general

direction. Her disgusted tone causes him to pull away from her before they resume their former positions. Here the audience sees that even though the couple is very close in proximity, their connection goes no deeper than that. Their emotional distance is even further pointed out when Macbeth attempts to prove his masculinity to his wife by abruptly placing his lips on hers in a passionate kiss. She does not so much as twitch. Even as he leaves the room, she remains motionless, continuing to stare at the ceiling with no expression.

With Wright placing Lady Macbeth in a red silk nightgown and in bed with her husband we expect a passionate love scene, but we are given far less than that. Macbeth refers to her as his “partner of greatness,” to which she responds impassively. Whether this lack of reaction stems from Lady Macbeth’s grief for the loss of their child, or from a constant disaffected state, in which she finds herself, Wright makes his Lady Macbeth stand out from all the rest I examine in that she cares nothing about this news.

My initial reaction to Wright’s Lady Macbeth was that she and her husband must be coping differently with the loss of their child. Whereas he wants to be near her, excite her, or comfort her, she would rather him just leave her alone. Her complete lack of enthusiasm for Macbeth’s plan goes against the text, as does her lack of interest in life. But as the film progresses, the plan becomes a bonding experience for the two, wherein she experiences a newfound appreciation for life, or rather an aspiration and a reason to keep living, even without her son.

The next time we see Wright’s Lady Macbeth, she is snorting cocaine off of a mirror. The off-screen noise of a door opening and closing lets the audience know that someone has entered the room, yet Lady Macbeth does not stir, indicating that she is not

concerned with hiding the fact that she has just hit a line. Standing in front of a mirror, Macbeth says, without turning toward her, “My dearest love, Duncan comes here tonight (1.5.59-60). The camera is angled at his body from behind, so that the audience only sees his front through the mirror, but because the lighting casts a shadow on his face, we are really only shown his silhouette. These hard shadows define that this scene is using the technique most commonly seen in Film Noir to possibly suggest doom.

Lady Macbeth, red wine in hand, slowly turns her head toward Macbeth. In anticipation and with a wary expression, she asks when Duncan plans to leave. Finally, directly looking at Macbeth for the first time in the film, Lady Macbeth arises from her chair and speaks lines that are taken from an earlier part of this scene in the play and placed here in the film. She speaks to Macbeth, “Hie thee hither, / That I may pour my spirits in thine ear / And chastise with the valor of my tongue / All that impedes thee from the golden round,” but in the play’s text, she says this to herself after reading the letter (1.5.28). It seems fitting to her purpose in the remaining lines from Act 1, Scene 5, lines 72-82:

Your face, my thane, is as a book where men
May read strange matters. To beguile the time,
Look like the time. Bear welcome in your eye,
Your hand, your tongue. Look like th’ innocent flower,
But be the serpent under ’t. He that’s coming
Must be provided for; and you shall put
This night’s great business into my dispatch,

Which shall to all our nights and days to come
Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.

But it does not seem fitting to place this here because she has never once asked him to come closer to her, nor has she concerned herself with his matters so eagerly. With eyes wide and seemingly fearful, Macbeth's expression plainly shows that he is surprised by her sudden change of heart. He does not react openly or excitedly; rather, just as she exits on "leave all the rest to me," his shoulders go slack and he exhales deeply. This body language shows that he was trying to maintain his composure during their conversation. He lets out a heavy sigh, with eyes still bulging, implying that he could not respond to his wife honestly, and that his true feelings are fearful or simply bewildered; he might just not know what to do with his wife's sudden and drastic transformation from being listless to becoming exuberant with a plan for the murder.

In this scene, when the camera is positioned to look at Macbeth, it is shot from a low angle, looking up toward his face. When the camera is facing Lady Macbeth, it is shot from a high angle, looking down on her. The light is so dim, and the cameras are zoomed in so much, that the only things lit up are their faces. Usually a low angle implies that the character in the frame is dominant or aggressive, but here this is not the case, for Macbeth does not act the part of the aggressor. He cannot even bring himself to speak to his true feelings. The downward-looking camera angle placed on Lady Macbeth usually signifies that a character is weak and submissive, or frightened, but it is clear that she does not embody any of these characteristics. Director Geoffrey Wright might have used these subtle details to suggest irony. Lady Macbeth is acting completely different from the first time we met her and Wright employs this cinematic technique to underscore the

retrospective tone of this scene. Directly following this scene, the frame jumps to Macbeth in the shower. This could be seen as Macbeth's baptism, or renewal of spirit as he washes away the uneasiness he felt during the conversation that just took place. When he has finished his shower, he emerges from the steam, and he has accepted his wife's declaration.

While Wright certainly makes choices that diminish the text in his film, his modern-mafia take on Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth has a powerful effect. She becomes tangible and relatable as a person in his film through her vices. Seeing her as a woman drawn to drug-abuse as a result of grief over her dead son, Wright's modern audience can better understand his Lady Macbeth's neurotic behavior, and—given the gang culture in which she lives—her vulnerability to employ a murder to feed her ambitions for her husband. While this take on Lady Macbeth does not necessarily make her a more sympathetic character, it is credible.

Rupert Goold

Rupert Goold cast Kate Fleetwood as his Lady Macbeth and Patrick Stewart as his Macbeth in his 2010 film. In setting this film in a locale reminiscent of the Stalin-era Soviet Union, Goold gives his Macbeth a Stalin-stache and other features that link the two tyrants. Kate Fleetwood's Lady Macbeth has the most severe appearance of all the actresses in this study. Fleetwood's Lady Macbeth wears low-cut dresses, and as she often becomes exasperated throughout the film, this neckline exposes the force with which she delivers her lines as the muscles in her chest and neck tense and bulge. Her

sharp, high bone structure, large, ice-blue eyes, and crow-black hair aid her in delivering a chilling performance.

Rupert Goold introduces his Lady Macbeth behind bars in an elevator descending into an area underground. The camera goes out of focus on the image of the woman in a white dress as she reads the letter from Macbeth. This setup implies that she is trapped or confined in some larger way. The significance of her costume, a white dress, suggests innocence or purity, but as the scene continues, the audience realizes that this character is not innocent or pure of spirit. Suddenly, Lady Macbeth pushes open the iron rods and frees herself, implying that she takes control of her own circumstances. A pale, white light produces a contrast on her face, which is laced with thick, black eyeliner and framed with black hair, as she pierces the air with an articulate delivery of her lines. When she delivers the “Do I fear thy nature” lines, the camera points directly at her hands holding the letter.

We do not see Lady Macbeth’s face until she offers to pour her own spirits into Macbeth’s ear. Never looking directly into the camera, she speaks with a sinister smile. She hears a raven’s crow, foreshadowing the ill omen that the raven represents when Lady Macbeth states in the play text, “The raven himself is hoarse / That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan / Under my battlements” (1.5.28-30). The frame breaks from a close up to an extreme long shot. This situates Lady Macbeth, who is looking up into the ray of light shining in from the ceiling, in a position that makes her seem small. In this frame, she doesn’t seem so scary and mighty in comparison to nature as a force, yet as she calls on the spirits, she is instantly affected by them. Her body quivers and her face contorts. Immediately she is transformed. Lady Macbeth has become a force to be reckoned with.

The camera slowly pans around her, further emphasizing the gravity of her speech. This version, just like Casson's, positions Lady Macbeth in a crouch with her hand held out before her. However, unlike Casson's Lady, Goold's holds a firm fist before her that seems to energize her demeanor. Instead of becoming shaky or troubled in this position, Goold's Lady Macbeth makes this her element. She approaches these lines as if she were commanding the spirits to do as she wishes, whereas in Casson's film, the act is a desperate plea. The two adaptations of Lady Macbeth both emphasize her separate agency. Though both Lady Macbeths align with the text in that they aid Macbeth in the murder of Duncan, they evoke completely different emotions, even from this opening scene. In the next scene, Lady Macbeth's white dress is dirty because she has been cleaning the kitchen walls. After her transformation, the audience should now be able to acknowledge that her dress no longer symbolizes her purity and innocence. As she turns around to greet her husband, her dress is unwrapped, revealing her entire chest and part of her lower torso. Goold's fierce Lady Macbeth continually twists seemingly good qualities into vehicles for her harsh treatment of Macbeth.

Rupert Goold's version of Act 1, Scene 7 follows the text exactly as it's written. The couple is placed in a kitchen as the dinner party is going on without them just outside the open doors. Lady Macbeth walks into the kitchen with empty plates to find a lonely Macbeth. Apparently in a good mood, she delivers her first few lines with a mocking, playful tone. When Macbeth says, "We will proceed no further with this business," she puts the dirty dishes away and begins drying off her hands with a towel (1.7.32). Even though she has not yet committed any crime, the act of washing her hands from the dirty dishes is foreshadowing. With her back facing the camera, we do not see her facial

reaction; yet, she immediately stops drying her hands, looks up at the wall, her shoulders stiffening, an indication that she is not happy with Macbeth. Slowly, she turns her head around to face her husband. As Macbeth finishes dismissing the murder plot and begins to leave the room, Lady Macbeth turns completely toward him and leans on the sink with her arms folded across her chest. Though she does not yell or wave her arms about frantically, in her delivery of lines 36-45, she makes obvious through her spitting articulation and disgusted facial expressions that she is charged with a great deal of anger. Interestingly enough, her body language is relaxed. She cares very little if Macbeth leaves the room or not. Macbeth charges toward her and demands her silence. Her gaze drops briefly, but she gains momentum just as quickly as he did. This time, her volume swells; Macbeth sighs and looks away from her as she accuses him of losing his manhood.

She makes herself busy in the kitchen by going to the fridge and getting the cake for the dinner party. Macbeth keeps his distance from her as she delivers the “I have given suck” lines. The depth of field goes from deep to shallow as Macbeth’s silhouette is blurred out of focus in the background. This cinematic effect shows just how essential these lines are for Lady Macbeth. Although she is speaking to Macbeth, her back is toward him, and she stares into the distance. Through an outburst, with her lips quivering, she presents this as a very personal pledge. Although she begins to whimper in her final lines, her persona shifts from sad to bitter as soon as Macbeth rushes to envelop her in his arms, in an effort to comfort her. So moved is he by her words, that he changes his position on the matter, but Lady Macbeth is still not satisfied. He asks, “If we should fail?” and she barks back, “We fail?” which is a different delivery than the other film

versions. Finally, she makes an intentional turn toward him, grabs his arms, and stares directly into his eyes to convince him that they will not fail. As the lighting turns from the low-key with high contrast to high-key, putting them both in a more natural light that yields visual clarity. It also provides a basis on which both characters find clarity in the pressing matter: killing Duncan. The frame jumps to an extreme-close-up of Lady Macbeth's face. This cut shows that her nose is snarled up and that her eyes are about to pop out of their sockets, evoking a sense of uneasiness. Within this scene alone, her outward emotional reactions have ranged from playfulness to upset to anger and then to ultimate excitement.

Macbeth immediately shifts his demeanor. He forces her closer to his body by squeezing her while he delivers "Bring forth men children only." Then the camera jumps to an extreme close-up of Macbeth's face as he delivers "Will it not be received, / When we have marked with blood those sleepy two / Of his own chamber..." (1.7.74-76). His face has the same high-key light shining on it, while Lady Macbeth's face is completely left in the shadows. As he finishes his lines, Lady Macbeth's reaction is only noted through her panting, not her facial expressions. Macbeth kisses her hands after she assures him that they will succeed in fooling everyone—thus signifying his submission to her plan. Lady Macbeth picks at Macbeth's coat button as he says that he will do everything he can to fulfill this prophecy. He states that they must return to the party. Before grabbing the cake, Lady Macbeth places her hands on her cheeks, realizing that she is blushing and trying to get rid of the heat from her cheeks. In Shakespeare's time, a woman blushed either to show her modesty and innocence or to expose her guilt or shame. We can infer that Gould uses this minute detail to "convey her emotional state

and, by extension, her moral character. Shakespeare's invitation...is to experience the power of the face to initiate reflection, judgment, and action" (Knapp 14-15). Because this last instance is sexually charged, and because Macbeth instructs her to act normally, having flushed cheeks would be a sure sign to their dinner guests that something out of order is going on. Her warm, rosy cheeks further indicate Lady Macbeth's corrupt, immoral character.

Justin Kurzel

In his 2015 film, Justin Kurzel stars Michael Fassbender and Marion Cotillard as his Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Shot in the scenic plains of Scotland, Kurzel's film uses the beauty and immensity of nature to help aid in his grandiose interpretation of this bloody drama. Cotillard's brown hair produces a beautiful contrast against her milky skin, and her large, animated eyes, usually decorated with blue liner to simulate war paint. These striking features enable her to convey emotions of fear, sadness, or rage. In her controlled, fluid delivery of Shakespeare's lines, Cotillard makes this diction seem natural to her, helping Kurzel's audience to understand the words' meaning.

Taking a different approach from Polanski, Justin Kurzel initially presents his Lady Macbeth (2015) as the ultimate femme fatale. However, when she gets what she asks for, she succumbs to her ambitions, and they become the cause of her deteriorating relationship with Macbeth and her death. Kurzel works to humanize his Lady Macbeth: if she cannot have power or a sense of purpose as other females do—by bearing healthy children, as the film implies she has recently lost a baby and a teenage son—then she must find another way to gain power and prove her devotion to her husband: urging

Macbeth to take the crown for himself. But as she realizes that she has created a monster, a tyrant instead of a king, she eventually begins to reject Macbeth's decrees, fearing his next move and mourning the loss of her husband.

In his version of Act 1, Scene 2, Kurzel presents his Lady Macbeth's silhouette kneeling between the frames of a chapel door. She takes off her cloak and sits in the candlelit room to read the letter from her husband. The entire aesthetic makes the reading out to be a religious experience for her. She even looks up to the altar at the close of the letter and calls upon the crucifix and pictures of angels to unsex her. The setting of Lady Macbeth's introduction is crucial, and it is the most extreme placement of all the films in this study. The expression of Lady Macbeth in that instance is already so passionate, but placing her in a church to deliver this plea intensifies the spiritual significance to the audience. Kurzel plays on the common trope that "God has called her to this destiny"; however, she asks Him to unsex her, which goes against nature and what a divine figure intended her to be. Even though Lady Macbeth supplicates help from God in the opening scene, she actually *becomes* the force that rejuvenates her motivation to commit this act. This version of Lady Macbeth does not display characteristics of your typical Christian Lady seeking refuge in a chapel. Rather, here as throughout the play she takes control of situations at hand and forces her own will upon them, as well as upon the people around her. She *becomes* the divine through this act, taking control of her own destiny. Not until the mad scene, when Lady Macbeth returns to the church, does she make a traditional use of the Church. Placing her in this façade—a woman seeking Divine approval for murder—further indicates how determined she is to fulfill this prophecy.

Kurzel depicts Lady Macbeth this way in an attempt to humanize her. The immediate indication that she had a child who died as an infant and a teenage son, who died in battle, draws sympathy from the audience from the beginning of the film. Instead of looking at Lady Macbeth as a power-hungry woman, who had already discussed taking the crown with her husband, the film asks the audience to view her as a mother, grieving her lost children and desperate to make her husband happy. In this state, she uses her femininity in other ways to gain power. Eager to please her husband, Kurzel's Lady Macbeth focuses her attention on gaining the crown for Macbeth by seducing him into the plan. Guilt and failure are two key components that Kurzel seems to play off of in order to support why Lady Macbeth feels the need to push her husband to the throne. Because she has failed at rearing children, from infancy to manhood, for Macbeth, she attempts success in seducing her husband into murdering the king to gain power of the throne, in an effort to continue his legacy otherwise. Moreover, because Macbeth has failed at keeping his teenage son safe during battle, the couple finds another child to rear: the plot to take Duncan's crown. As the audience watches the once-invigorating relationship between Lady Macbeth and her husband dwindle into a life of fear and loneliness, our sympathetic feelings toward her character grow.

In the scene when Macbeth first returns from battle, Lady Macbeth does not stir or show excitement as he enters. Macbeth removes his sword before his wife begins to gently remove his armor, careful not to cause further pain to his injuries. Because this scene is shot with a hand-held camera that moves around the characters, the audience becomes a part of the scene. Unlike the frame captured by a set camera, this frame does not seem as edited, established, or manipulated, and therefore evokes a raw sense of

“being” in the audience. In extremely dim lighting Macbeth turns to face his wife, both in close proximity, and they share lingering looks. Macbeth strokes Lady Macbeth’s cheek, suggesting that they are close emotionally, too. Kurzel’s Lady Macbeth’s slight reaction to learning that Duncan would be there tonight is different from that of any of the other film versions. Her eyebrows lift, and the corners of her lips turn up. Though she does not jump for joy, this mere muscle movement in her face expresses her excitement in a seemingly appropriate manner. As she says, “O, never / Shall sun that morrow see!” Macbeth drops his hand from her face, turns, walks away from her, and sits down. Here, Kurzel introduces lines originally intended for earlier in scene 5 from Lady Macbeth’s soliloquy:

Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and shalt be
What thou art promised. Yet do I fear thy nature;
It is too full o' th' milk of human kindness
To catch the nearest way: thou wouldst be great,
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it.

In the original text these lines were intended for her alone, but Kurzel purposely places them here. With this modification, Lady Macbeth is saying this *to* Macbeth instead of *about* him. Having Lady Macbeth bluntly state her fears of Macbeth’s meek and mild caliber to his face, Kurzel surely intends for this to have an impact on Macbeth, influencing his decision to eventually murder Duncan.

Then, Lady Macbeth continues her speech, however, leaving out one line: “Your face, my thane, is as a book where men / May read strange matters.” This omission

reflects the fact that Macbeth's face does not show much expression at all, because he is exhausted and worn down from his travels. Macbeth's facial expression doesn't change from excited-to-see-his-wife to distressed-by-his-wife's-words as this line from the original text might suggest. Lady Macbeth continues:

To beguile the time,
Look like the time. Bear welcome in your eye,
Your hand, your tongue. Look like th' innocent flower,
But be the serpent under 't. He that's coming
Must be provided for; and you shall put
This night's great business into my dispatch,
Which shall to all our nights and days to come
Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.

When Macbeth responds with "We will speak further," instead of urging him further as she does in the play text, Lady Macbeth in Kurzel's film is not given that time on screen.

The scene concludes and directly shifts to the Macbeths welcoming Duncan to their home in a very un-welcoming manner. Dressed in huge black blankets, the members of the Glamis community are depicted like members of a cult, or as very disturbing bystanders at a funeral. Kurzel no doubt does this intentionally to cast a foreshadowing layer over Duncan's arrival.

Duncan and his entourage are facing Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, and their community, staged to look like a stalemate in a war. In the previous scene, the only noise other than the words spoken by Macbeth and Lady Macbeth is ambient sound, such as the wind

blowing, wind chimes outside, crackling of the fire. There was no music. But immediately with the scene change to Duncan's arrival, the background noise becomes a drum that hits directly as the screen changes images. The camera first captures Duncan and his men from a long shot, and then it flashes the same view of Macbeth's side of the yard, echoing the same drumming as the camera jumps to a close-up of Lady Macbeth's unenthused face. The fog and diluted saturation of the scene further indicate that this invitation is most uninviting.

Kurzel takes out the entirety of the written scene and only includes a one-line exchange between Lady Macbeth and Duncan before they exit the screen, showing that Kurzel wants to portray Lady Macbeth as dismissive of Duncan's presence. This attitude toward her king sways the audience to believe that she still wants him dead so that Macbeth may have his title. Though she has not expressed this in any way to Macbeth or to the audience, what she doesn't say plays an important role in her agency regarding the plan she briefly mentioned earlier.

In Kurzel's version of Act 1, Scene 7, Lady Macbeth searches for her husband to request his presence at the dinner party; he is found hiding out in the same, former chapel to get away from the commotion of their company. Because the Macbeths are hosting King Duncan as their guest, the chapel is now decorated very differently than in the "unsex me" scene, having been adorned with tapestries and lined with candles. The light from the candles—the only light shining on the couple—illuminates the scene with oranges, deep yellows, and light reds, suggesting a type of warmth from the literal warmth radiating from the flames. Using solely candlelight in this scene is significant. Not only does that use remain true to the form of lighting from the time to produce a

more authentic rendition, but also, I believe Kurzel uses this instrument to evoke fear. Although the overlapped scenes of the dinner party and the chapel feel safe, with Lady Macbeth singing sweet melodies in the children's choir for Duncan, boys sitting in their fathers' laps as stories are being told, and laughter filling the night air, this lighting also foreshadows what is about to happen, setting a contrast to this happy dinner-scene. Lady Macbeth leaves the children's choir to find her absent husband in the chapel.

In this scene, when Macbeth tells his wife that he cannot go through with their murderous plot, Lady Macbeth's reaction transforms the candlelit scene from nurturing warmth to a heated rage. Using sex persuasively, Lady Macbeth "screw[s her husband's] courage to the sticking place" (Shakespeare 1.7.61). Macbeth does not refute her as she lays out the murderous scheme; Kurzel omits most of Macbeth's lines except for "I am settled," which he exclaims at the climax of their lovemaking, therefore granting her access to this ambitious plan. Kurzel's Lady Macbeth continues to assert her influence over Macbeth in his rise to power, until, when he has viciously and publically murdered their friends, she realizes that she has created a tyrant instead of a king. With this devastating realization, Kurzel's Lady Macbeth, unlike Shakespeare's, eventually rejects Macbeth's decrees, growing afraid of this man, and mourning the loss of her husband. Kurzel's audience sees what has been the ultimate femme fatale brought low by her late realization of the error of her ways, which brought about dire costs to her life and love. Because Kurzel's Lady Macbeth is moved to this murderous plot by the guilt of her inability to successfully mother children for her husband, his audience can sympathize with a woman who is tries, but fails, to extend her husband's legacy.

Conclusion

Each of these directors pours out fresh takes on this widely familiar play. Some, such as Roman Polanski, Phillip Casson, and Justin Kurzel, remain loyal to the more traditionally understood period, setting, and costumes, while Geoffrey Wright and Rupert Goold place the characters in a different world entirely. Kurzel uses candlelight to convey certain messages, while Casson uses harsh white spotlights to expose his characters' desires or fears. Goold interprets the couple to be physically and emotionally in sync, while Wright presents them in a state of suspended distance from each other. Though these five directors used various elements to convey their individual interpretations of the play text, ultimately their combined intentions were to offer the public their own takes, to demarcate their ideas and views from another in an effort to allow individual viewers a visual aid in determining his or her own idea of the play.

Through my efforts in scoping and analyzing the impact of cinematography, camera angles, lighting, costume design, set choices, line changes, character manipulations, etc., I aimed to expose the true nature of each film. While it is easy, and commonly done, to get caught up in the plot and action of the story of a movie, this research challenged me to actively participate in the film. By taking note of the efforts made by the directors, I was able to express the implicit interpretation in explicit terms. In doing this, I sought out to understand and explain the reason behind the directors' choices. Why did Kurzel present Lady Macbeth as this power-hungry figure? Why did he and Wright give the Macbeths children? Why did they choose to have the children die? What impact did this have on the couple? How is that implied through the cinematic elements? What impact did this change have on the audience? Why did the directors want

to have this impact over their audience? What culpability does Lady Macbeth hold in causing Duncan's death and the tragedies that follow? How do these portrayals of Lady Macbeth impact our overall understanding of the play?

These were the questions I ultimately attempted to answer, and some I will continue to strive to unpack. Although I may never rightly expose the directors' reasons or intentions for these changes, I believe, that because their changes are apparently separate from Shakespeare's original text, these directors are urging their audiences to strive for a unique perspective of *Macbeth*. Knowing that these directors didn't all simply take Shakespeare's work as is, whether that is due to their displacing a scene or lines, giving the Macbeths children, or putting Lady Macbeth on drugs, shows that they are asking for their audience to realize there is more to take away from their works as interpretations of Shakespeare's work. I believe the directors are asking for us to assess their ideas and, instead of adopting those ideas as our own, decide whether or not that is how we interpret Shakespeare's text.

CHAPTER TWO: THE WITCHES

Introduction

In this chapter I examine four recent filmic approaches to the portrayal of the witches. Over the long reception history of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, critics and audiences have attempted to determine the precise cause of the tragedy. The blame for Duncan's death, and the other tragic events that occur as a repercussion, are arguably due to several factors: Lady Macbeth's manipulation, the witches' influence, Fate, some metaphysical force of evil, the feudal social system that breeds a cycle of perpetual violence, Macbeth's ambition, or a complex combination of some of these. This chapter demonstrates how various film directors, through their use of different cinematic techniques and interventions in Shakespeare's text, address their stance on the debate, by revealing their interpretation of the play text, and ultimately arriving at a plausible answer.

Even as the concept of witches as supernatural powers was palpable during Shakespeare's time, today's directors of *Macbeth* on film—Roman Polanski (1971), Geoffrey Wright (2006), Rupert Goold (2010), and Justin Kurzel (2015)—depict their witches in order to give modern audiences novel perspectives on the nature and role of the witches. The portrayals of *Macbeth's* witches in these films vary, straying from the traditionally understood idea of hags; however, in them “Shakespeare's original theme of a disharmony in nature remains clearly visible” (Bevington 1257). Because the witches' actions and prophecies are determinative factors in the play—affecting Macbeth's agency and culpability in the murder of Duncan—we must understand them and their effect on

Macbeth. Moreover, each director's perspective on these sisterly characters issues from his overall conception of the drama and the particular meaning he wants it to convey to his audience.

If, for example, a director portrays his witches as supernatural beings, able to control fate, holding destiny in their hands, it diminishes Macbeth's agency, and he becomes their mere tool. However, if the witches represent an earthly being with less otherworldly power, their prophecies become mere suggestions that push Macbeth in the direction of his already ambitious nature to murder Duncan and seize the crown. By closely examining Shakespeare's text, and by placing it directly beside the film directors' varying choices, we can infer the different natures and significance of these witches' genders, origins, and extent of power, thus determining how they deviate from or conform to Shakespeare's original conception.

In his introduction to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, David Bevington explains the traditional portrayal of the written witches: "They are portrayed as witches according to popular contemporary understanding, rather than as goddesses of destiny; nonetheless, witches were thought to be servants of the devil" (Bevington 1257). The play-text states that his Weird Sisters are women, though because they are bearded, their sexuality is ambiguous. During the skepticism of the Jacobean Era, "women comprised ninety percent of those accused of witchcraft in England," yet because they were thought to have been involved with the devil, their gender is put into question (Levin 23). Bevington also claims "without our active consent in evil...we cannot fall" (1256). However, Shakespeare includes the character Hecate, the half witch and half Goddess who is seen as an archetype of evil as she "appears at midnight, an emanation of darkness, in the form

of a curse, a poison, a dagger, to demand her offering” (Aronson 229). Moreover, “the Weird Sisters ... [by] performing various functions in the play such as ‘mothering,’ guiding Macbeth at literal and psychological crossroads, and performing spells ... constellate characteristics of Hecate” (Shamas 3). This indicates that because Shakespeare’s witches collaborate with a goddess of fate, Macbeth does not have full agency over his destiny.

In Act 3 Scene 5 of the written text, Hecate admits that their “prophecies are illusions designed to draw Macbeth towards evil actions citing that prophecies give ‘security’ or confidence” (Dobbyn 14), which would suggest that the weird sisters, however, do not have the power to control destiny solely on their own, but rather by prophesying to Macbeth, they encourage certain behavior from him, expecting him to follow suit to ensure that these visions become his reality. However, the term “weird sisters” that the witches refer to themselves as in 1.3.32 derives from the Old English word “wyrd,” which “originally meant ‘having the power to control destiny,’ like the Fates in ancient classical mythology” (Shakespeare; Dobbyn 14). Examining the wide range of the directors’ characterizations reveals their sisterly creations and, moreover, the import they hold for the directors’ larger creative purposes.

Roman Polanski

In his 1971 film Roman Polanski portrays the three witches of *Macbeth* in the traditional guise of hags. Upon first glance, Polanski’s weird sisters match the traditional descriptions of a witch; social outcasts, they form alliances with others like them and perform cultish ceremonies. Every time the witches appear their behavior encourages the

audience to believe that they are connected to some sort of power. For example, whether they are alone and forming a casting circle in which they place a man's cut-off hand, or whether they are found in cavern, along with thirty other women, preparing a potion in a cauldron, Polanski's weird sisters present themselves as witches. However, although Roman Polanski's witches take the form of a traditional hag, old women with boil-covered noses and a hobgoblin appearance, through his various cinematic choices, his manipulation of the original script, and his use of setting, Polanski establishes that his witches are veritably of a different force than Shakespeare's. Instead of linking his witches to divinity, Polanski creates characters of human nature, more bound to the earth than to the supernatural. The audience can construe that these witches do not actively seek out Macbeth's attention, but because he approaches them twice, urging them to prophesy his future, the women take this opportunity to play the role that has been offered them by figures of authority. Targeting Macbeth as an authority figure, the witches, who have been pushed out of society, act out against this superior personage. They use their "power" of being othered, marginalized, to create an ambition in Macbeth's mind, granting him full agency of his own destiny, while simultaneously convincing him that it lies in their hands. So although Macbeth has full control over his actions, he believes that he is their tool, fulfilling their vision of his fate.

Though Roman Polanski's witches appear in the form of a traditional hag, he uses setting to establish that his witches are from a different force than Shakespeare's. Polanski's initial shot is set around sunset on a beach that has just experienced some rain. Sand dunes are shadowed in the background, just on the horizon, blending in with the

pink and purple clouds. However, time progresses as the camera remains in position, gradually morphing the setting into a completely different type of sandy location.

The light and scenery change much faster in the frame than they would in reality. Through this use of deadline structure, Polanski adds tension and suspense, suggesting to the audience the importance of this scene and what is about to transpire. The pleasing pink and purple overtones change to orange, then to red and brown, and finally just as the off-screen diegetic sound of seagulls occurs, a single bird flies over the now entirely-blue/gray gulf. The audience sees that the opening scene is set on a beach, whereas the scene in which the witches are introduced in the original text is set on a heath. Polanski's choice to place the witches on a damp, soggy beach near a body of water instead of an open area of vegetation and uncultivated land holds implications of the source of his witches' force. This setting suggests that the witches are connected to the immense power of the sea, yet live in the liminal space where boundaries become permeable. The audience can link this murky setting to the ambiguity of the witches' nature and identity, for although the sea is part of our world, it hosts many creatures that are foreign and unknown. Thus, the metaphorical significance of Polanski's scenic location directly relates to the witches' identity as more connected to the natural world than Shakespeare's, and also suggests that they are linked to a more indeterminate force than that in the traditional version.

More off-screen diegetic sound occurs: coughs are heard right before a large staff draws a circle in the wet, gray sand, immediately alluding to traditional witchcraft of the casting circle. The extreme close-up shot steadily zooms out, and the audience is able to see the three weird sisters as they begin digging the wet sand up from the outlined circle.

Polanski's version most directly aligns with the play text in that the women are "portrayed as witches according to popular contemporary understanding," with boils on their faces, warts on their disfigured noses, and grotesque fingernails (Bevington 1257). They wear baggy, black and gray garb—mismatched, raggedy items of clothing—and appear to be nomads, carrying around a wheelbarrow full of items. Their ragamuffin appearances suggest that they are outcasts constantly on the move, having no sense of belonging.

Shakespeare's stage directions instruct that thunder and lightning occur as the witches enter the scene throughout the play; however, Polanski presents his scene without these elements. Still, the gray seascape environment evokes an eerie feeling in the film, but these directorial changes ultimately modify the origin of the witches' power. Though Polanski's version eliminates the interjection of a supernatural relation to the witches' powers by removing the thunder and lightning, which would have presented an element of supernatural foreboding, he makes his witches more connected to powers of the earth, as they bury a noose and a human hand clutching a dagger, with sprinkled herbs on top, in the wet sand and use their own spit to settle the burial.

The language in the film reflects the paradoxically written text exactly; however, Polanski takes out a few lines of the first scene, using the last two lines of 1.1 as the first spoken words in his film: "Fair is foul, and foul is fair. / Hover through the fog and filthy air" (Shakespeare 1.1.11-12). After the three witches bury a man's hand in the sand, and pour blood from a small bottle over it, they state lines 1-7. Polanski chooses to leave out "I come, Grimalkin! / Paddock calls. / Anon" (1.1.8-10). The footnotes in the original text explain that Grimalkin and Paddock are of the witches' familiars; the play text

suggests that this cat and toad are calling to the witches, and by stating “anon,” the witches hurry off the stage to answer the animals. But Polanski’s witches do not mention the evil cat or frog, and instead they drift apart as their silhouettes gradually disappear from the horizon into the fog. Thus, the opening scene establishes the witches as mischievous evildoers, as they work with dark magic; however, Polanski chooses to portray them as beings that march to their own beat, not relying on the beckoning call of another creature. Just as he doesn’t have the external lightning and thunder, Polanski also removes the connection to the cat and toad, focusing the audience’s attention on the witches as the sole agency of exceptional earthly powers, serving no higher being.

Polanski sets the next witches’ scene during a downpour, as it is in the play text; however, the organization of the film’s scene is much different from the play’s in that Polanski cuts lines 1-37. During this scene, Shakespeare establishes the witches as beings who would seduce men whose wives have shooed them away. They use their powers selfishly to punish and mock humans. Shakespeare also used these lines to suggest “the witches’ deformity and sexual instability” (Bevington 1262). The term “Weird Sisters,” first used in line 32, links the witches to “women connected with fate or destiny; also, women having a mysterious or unearthly, uncanny appearance” (Bevington 1262). Because Polanski does not include the lines about the sailor or the term “weird sister,” the audience sees his witches as independent agents with a specific goal instead of as selfish meddlers in people’s lives. Later in the play text, in Act 3 scene 5, Hecate meets with the witches to scold them. Hecate, the goddess of witchcraft, is angry with the witches for excluding her in their meeting with Macbeth. She states that she is “the mistress of [their] charms,” suggesting that they are her agents. Because Polanski does not include this

scene in his film, he presents no such relationship with a higher force or supernatural power, further signifying that his witches are their own malignant force unattached to a higher being.

When Macbeth first meets the witches in Polanski's film, the scene begins with him and Banquo on horseback amidst a storm, as Banquo states, just as the character in the play text also does, "So foul and fair a day I have not seen" (Shakespeare 1.3.38). Just after his delivering this line, Macbeth and Banquo's horses become startled, making an explicit connection to Macbeth's use of the same paradox that the witches used earlier. The two warriors hear mumbled voices chanting near them, so they travel around a rock to find the origin. When they reach the oldest and youngest witches, Banquo asks, "What are these, / So withered and wild in their attire, / That look not like inhabitants of the Earth / And yet are on't?" (1.3.39-40). Thus, even though Banquo does not identify them as "Weird Sisters," he directly distinguishes them as such without using that term. In the film Banquo is not given the lines that ask the witches whether or not they are women, specifically eliminating the witches' sexual ambiguity, just as Banquo also does not state that they have beards.

As the witches speak the "All hail, Macbeth!" lines, the storm ceases, indicating their capability to dispel external powers Banquo and Macbeth stare, mystified, at the witches. Macbeth breaks his gaze from them to look into the space around him, recognizing that the air has cleared, further acknowledging the significance of the connection between the natural world and the witches' power. The three begin to walk away as Banquo addresses them, seeking their prediction for his future. Presenting Banquo with a riddle of his fate, they continue to walk away, never looking back at the

men. Macbeth follows them and urges the “imperfect speakers” to stay, but their bodies continue to trail off into the grassy mountains. From the angle of the camera, the weird sisters seem to disappear into a mound of rocks; however, as the camera pans around the corner, the audience sees that they have built a walkway into the body of rocks leading to a door, which they enter.

When Macbeth follows them, the youngest witch pulls up her skirt, warning Macbeth off with a laugh, and closes the door in his face. Seeing her curt manner and frivolous attitude, the audience does not view this as a sexual pass, but rather as a disagreeable act that further separates Polanski’s witches from the sexual temptresses that traditional witches were. When Banquo asks, “Whither are they vanished?” Macbeth answers, “Into the air,” and the audience is presented with the previous frame that disguises their door again, making it seem possible that the witches could have evaporated. In the original play, Macbeth’s dialogue here with Banquo indicates that the witches disappeared into the air. However, in Polanski’s film Banquo laughs at Macbeth’s statement, making light of the situation, which shows that Polanski wanted these lines presented as jokes. His Macbeth and Banquo mock the idea that these women could have evaporated because it is not realistic. Because the witches hid in their man-made underground shelter instead of disappearing into the fog or air, it does seem that Polanski makes them tactile instead of supernatural. The inflection and tone put on the script is another manipulation Polanski interjects that ties his witches to the natural world. As Macbeth and Banquo speak lines 1.2.83-88, recapping their encounter with the witches, the two men cackle, mocking the prophecies they were just given, and gallop off.

Though Polanski's witches appear in some measure like the hags in Shakespeare's play, Polanski's choices to exclude several details of Shakespeare's witches from his adaptation indicate that his witches do not originate from a divine source. His witches' powers are not summoned from the heavens nor do they answer to another being, Hecate, Grimalkin, or Paddock; instead, Polanski steadily presents his witches as creatures of this world altogether, though they are received as creatures of the supernatural by Macbeth.

Later in the film, following the dinner scene in which the Banquo apparition takes place, Macbeth returns to the rocky shelter under which he and Banquo first encountered the weird sisters, seeking their counsel. The same sound that originally tempted him appears again, and he follows the sound of the witches' chants. As Macbeth rounds the same rock that the witches disappeared into previously, the youngest witch, now entirely naked, grabs Macbeth's arm through the fog. She leads him down into the lair, where fog, the "visual equivalent of ambiguity and mystery," writhes all over the ground and reaches up toward the other naked bodies in the lair (Forker 202). About thirty other naked hags, old and saggy with unruly hair, are gathered around a cauldron. Though Shakespeare's text calls for a cauldron in his stage directions, he does not indicate that there are any more than the three witches present during their sorcery, nor does he suggest that they are nude. Wearing no clothing, Polanski's witches ensure Macbeth that they are not hiding anything up their sleeves, but rather, they show him that they have put everything on display for him. This theme of overt transparency is also shown in the way the witches deliver their lines. When Macbeth first met the witches, they delivered the prophecy of his fate in a whisper, as if it were precious information, secretive even, but now, their

voices are louder and elevated in tone, suggesting they have nothing to hide from him. This sets up the invitation for Macbeth to drink from their concoction and witness the apparitions. This further indicates that Polanski wants his witches to be received, by Macbeth, as honest agents in this scene. However, it comes to light that this deemed “honesty” was a trick altogether, for the prophecies shown Macbeth are deceitful.

As the camera presents individual witches donating items into the cauldron, they begin speaking lines, pulled from 4.1.8-38, with Macbeth present, whereas in the play text, he is not a witness to their witchcraft. Lines 4.1.61-62 are kept in the film: “Say if thou’dst rather hear it from our mouths / or from our masters?” In the play text, Hecate had just come and gone from the scene, but Polanski does not include her character in his film whatsoever, so the fact that Polanski keeps these lines, suggests that his witches *do* answer to another being. Directly following this, Macbeth tells them to “Call ‘em” and to “Let [him] see” (*Macbeth* 4.1.63). He then drinks from the cauldron and sees visions of the apparitions. This suggests that these “masters” in the film merely allude to the magic that the witches fabricate through their cultish crafting. Although this scene presents a new aspect of Polanski’s witches, revealing to Macbeth more of their power as unnatural, these women are simply acting, conforming to the presumed idea that they are traditional witches.

Serving as Macbeth’s temptresses of fate, they throw into the cauldron ingredients that range from the toe of frog, wool of bat to an owlet’s wing and eye of newt, convincing Macbeth of their supposed power, though in reality, a concoction may be hallucinogenic based on its chemical composition rather than witchcraft. Polanski’s weird sisters want Macbeth to believe in their reputation as witches, so they adopt the

ceremonial practice of witchcraft, and carry out those acts in front of him. This intentional twist in plot is crucial for the witches' agency determines the entire play's unfolding events. Polanski has introduced women, ostracized and othered, who have decided to use the persona of witches to manipulate Macbeth. By pretending to be witches, these women convince Macbeth of their powers. Placing his trust in their apparently prophetic hands, Macbeth falls into their trap, under the impression that his actions are not his own, but that he is being used to fulfill his destiny through their aid. Actually, Polanski's Macbeth has full control over his own fate, altering the entire outcome of Macbeth's agency in murdering Duncan, claiming the throne, and meeting his tragic end.

Thus, though Polanski's witches seem to represent the kind of hags Shakespeare would have used in his play, Polanski's choices to omit several details of Shakespeare's witches from his adaptation indicate that his witches originate from another source. His witches are not beings with powers summoned from the heavens or another being, but rather project the image of such traditional witches. The audience can perceive a social project in Polanski's construct of his witches: they represent women who were marginalized because of their low estate, their unkempt, haggard physical appearance or their lack of husband. Pushed out of society, these othered beings become opportunistic, unleashing harbored resentment and acting against Macbeth, who represents the social class that has displaced them outside society's bounds. Given the chance, they manipulate Macbeth, convincing him into doing whatever they say. Even though they have no real power over him, they have duped him into believing that they do. Because they are marginalized, othered, beings, Polanski's witches are motivated to exercise extreme

earthly power, like making a potion, to play this game on Macbeth. The potion makes Macbeth hallucinate, but does not portray his actual destiny, even if he is fooled into thinking so. In sum, Polanski's witches play mind games with the royal warrior as a kind of retributive justice for society's mistreatment of them.

Geoffrey Wright

In a radical departure from Shakespeare's play, Australian director, Geoffrey Wright, sets his 2006 film in a cultish Melbourne underground. Contemporizing the classic tragedy, thus, in an urban scene, Wright presents a Lady Macbeth that, overcome with the grief of her dead child, is drug-addicted and sexually unresponsive to her husband. Because of this rift in their marriage, Macbeth allows himself to be influenced by seductive witches, presented in Wright's film as hooligan-schoolgirl temptresses, in whom Macbeth invests his feelings of sexual desire. Because of his drug-aided dependency, Macbeth ultimately grants these young, fantasized girls a type of agency over him that deviates from Shakespeare's hags' power of fate over Macbeth. As I will show, Wright makes a compelling case to today's audience about contemporary man's drug dependency diminishing not only his will, but also his very humanity, making his Macbeth a much weaker figure than Shakespeare's character.

Beginning our analysis with the opening moments of Wright's film, we hear, before any image appears on the screen, whispers in the background that grow louder than the music, immediately implying that some secretive, concealed meaning is about to reveal itself. These whispers turn to the type of grunts one makes from exerting physical energy. An extreme low angle, handheld shot portrays the silhouette of an angel statue contrasted

against the grey sky. A girl's shrill scream occurs off-screen just before the camera jumps to a redheaded teenager wearing a schoolgirl outfit: a beret, a burgundy sweater over a white collared shirt, and a plaid skirt. She seems more than an angsty-teen, as she bludgeons, with a sinister hiss, a cross that was marking a grave, forcing its fall. The camera reveals another area of this graveyard, in which another schoolgirl runs amuck with an aerosol can of paint, spraying the eyes of angel statues in such close proximity that the red paint drips down the stone faces, making the angels appear to be crying tears of blood. The third, more collected girl gouges out the eyes of a life-size angel statue. While these schoolgirls are hissing and screaming, they are also laughing and chasing each other, this defacing act being a gruesome game to them. So, looking at Wright's initial presentation of his witches—in this scene prior to the credits rolling—the audience sees these school-age hooligans making mischief and readying themselves to wreak havoc on Macbeth's mind.

Just as the play text directs, Wright's film includes the sound of thunder whenever the witches enter the scene. However, the thunder does not appear to be from some metaphysical power, but rather a sound effect to underscore the entrance of these teenage girls into a gangster-urban world. Instead of having the third witch say Macbeth's name at the end of her line, "There to meet with Macbeth," Wright displays the protagonist's name in blood red letters across the screen as thunder strikes and spine-tingling sound effects play. Setting a tone of playful havoc, this scene implies that, just as they laughed at vandalizing and destroying the cemetery, these girls will also enjoy the game of interfering with Macbeth's life.

Because Wright extracts all mention of Hecate from his script, and because Macbeth does not witness the three apparitions of Act 4 Scene 1 in the way that Shakespeare's text presented them, these school-girl witches do not seem to be linked to an all-knowing, high power or a supernatural force, holding no real, external power over Macbeth's fate. Instead, Wright deviates from the text by presenting his witches as sexualized girls who appear to Macbeth as hallucinations, feeding off of his own paranoias and, as the audience will soon see explicitly, fill the sexual void he faces in his marriage. In line with the urban drug culture Wright's version of 4.1 includes Macbeth consuming a concoction prepared for him by the witches, a scene he added to advance the hallucinogenic and sexualized behavior among the three witches and Macbeth. Wright's witches are hooligans with whom Macbeth eagerly interacts after he has done drugs. Thus, although they do not hold a divine power over Macbeth, Wright's witches become destructive figures onto whom Macbeth projects his feelings, giving them agency over him.

Serving as sexual temptresses, the witches relish in playing mind games on Macbeth. Portrayed as young, druggie schoolgirls, very much unlike Shakespeare's hags who appear sexually ambiguous, Wright's witches seem to have no motive for their meddling with Macbeth other than the sadistic pleasure it brings them. Wright may be toying with his audience, too, as the witches seem only to exist in Macbeth's mind, for nobody else ever sees them, nor do they have any external agency in advancing the prophesy. Because Wright's contemporary, urban Macbeth is acquainted with drugs from the beginning of the film, and because the first time Macbeth meets the witches he has just been seen taking drugs, Wright suggests to the audience that throughout the film the

witches are summoned from his mind as a hallucinogenic effect. While the witches do prophesy to Macbeth things that eventually take place, the specific details in the prophesy seem likely to take place simply because of the lifestyle Wright's gangster-Macbeth leads, not necessarily because the witches foresaw the events occurring.

Directly after the credits roll, Wright sets the context of his Macbeths' current emotional state. The screen's image of a dark, cloudy sky fades into a medium-close-up shot of Macbeth in the same cemetery that the girls were vandalizing. The camera pans around to the back of Macbeth's head, revealing to the audience what he sees: the three schoolgirls leaving the scene, looking at him with smirks on their faces. The camera returns to the medium shot of Macbeth's face, showing that his glance shifts down to the ground as he lets out a sigh at the sight of his wife's reflection in the dark marble headstone. Like Kurzel, Wright dramatizes the inferred text that the Macbeths have had and lost a child. Church bells chime as the hand-held camera reveals the words "Loving Mother...Father" engraved on the stone. The shot shifts to a sobbing Lady Macbeth, placing white flowers on the grave. Then, camera pans to the gravestone to reveal the inscription "Beloved Son." Showing a close-up of the grieving Lady Macbeth, the camera shakes, adding to the effect of intensity and realism for the audience. This scene provides context for the remainder of the film: Wright's Macbeths are suffering from the recent loss of their young son. This injection of grief provides the base of this couple's problems, therefore offering Wright's witches the opportunity to manipulate Macbeth's mind.

The witches next appear on screen just after leather-jacketed Macbeth has killed all other parties involved in a double-cross-drug-deal. Wright makes it very clear that Macbeth is on drugs during this encounter with the witches: he stumbles several times

and exhibits symptoms such as hypersensitivity to sound and light as he becomes enamored with the disco ball and the fog machine. Macbeth has moved from the grimy, backroom poker tables to the empty, colorfully lit dance floor. He turns the fog machine on himself and, just before he clicks the music on, the familiar sound of whispers resounds, signaling to the audience that the witches are coming. Macbeth stares up, in a trance-like state, at a disco ball rotating in a violet spotlight. His trance is broken by a voice speaking “Fair is foul, and foul is fair”; as soon as the words leave her lips, two other redheaded girls continue: “Hover through the fog,” and “filthy air” (1.1.11-12). The screen jumps to a flashback: the three schoolgirls in the cemetery, curtsying in front of Macbeth. However, in the nightclub, they do not wear their school uniforms. Instead, they are dressed in frilly skirts, fishnet hose, and skimpy tops, accessorized with chokers and long, beaded necklaces that rest on their exposed chests. In this scene, the witches present Macbeth with the prophecy. While they share the lines about Banquo’s fate, he is not present on screen. Macbeth is on the floor with the girls, who taunt and tease him, scratching him, pulling his hair, and leaning in close to him for a brief moment, before he realizes that they are suddenly leaving. Crawling like animals on the floor, the witches scurry away from Macbeth. He grabs one of the witch’s legs, but she wriggles her way out of his grip, giggling and running away into the fog. Obviously, Wright’s witches are very sexualized characters and this whole scene has dramatized the idea of sexual foreplay; in their demeanor, body movements, and attire, the tantalizing witches exude temptation for Macbeth.

Off-screen the sound of devilish laughter is still heard as Macbeth, standing on the dance floor, backs into Banquo. Their conversation mocks Macbeth’s encounter with the

Weird Sisters because Banquo assumes that the drugs that he took earlier have just tricked Macbeth and they both laugh it off. Wright's decision to deviate so drastically from Shakespeare's hags in the play ultimately makes his Macbeth a smaller person. Reflecting the human cost of the drug culture in contemporary urban life, Wright portrays his Macbeth as less grand and powerful than other directors' Macbeths. Driven by motives such as his sexual appetite and the effects of taking drugs, Wright's Macbeth becomes reliant on these vices; so, although these schoolgirls have no link to divinity, they still hold power over Macbeth with their intoxicating touches and whispers because he has been blinded to the line between reality and the drug-induced realm he inhabits during his hallucinations.

As the audience sees in the scenes with Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, the couple seems to be drifting apart rather than binding together through the grief of losing their son. Thus, the witches play a pivotal role in the Macbeths' marriage as they insert themselves between Lady Macbeth and her husband.

The lines from 4.1 "Double, double, toil and trouble; / Fire burn, and cauldron bubble" are played as a voiceover as Macbeth enters his home directly after Duncan has granted Macbeth the title of Thane of Cawdor. This slight interjection suggests that the witches are conjuring something up even though they are not present in the scene. The witches return to screen directly after Macbeth sees Banquo's apparition during his dinner party. Now, Lady Macbeth sleeps next to her husband as he stares up at the ceiling. A bare butt, illuminated by moonlight, enters the right side of the screen. Macbeth turns to see the body as she laughs and drums her fingers on her thigh, flirting with him. Then

the camera, using an extreme low angle, shows the girl from Macbeth's point of view. The witch smirks and laughs once more before skipping off.

A startled Macbeth leaves his wife in the bed, and follows the witch, with the camera following Macbeth as he makes his way to the three naked witches. The audience hears the witches' off-screen dialogue, listing items for their concoction. As lines 4.1.4-48 are spoken, the camera steadily pans over the table, displaying the items being cast into the cauldron: writhing worms, limp intestines, gouged eyeballs, and a slippery eel. In a harsh white light, the witches grab these phallic symbols with their long red fingernails, underscoring Wright's linking of the witches to sex. Upon the second witch's line "By the pricking of my thumbs, / Something wicked this way comes," Macbeth appears on screen from behind her, wearing a mischievous smile (4.1.44-45). When Macbeth says, "I conjure you, by that which you profess, / Howe'er you come to know it, answer me," the second witch fills a small pot with the potion from the cauldron, and after she takes a sip, she passes it around to everyone (4.1.50-51). When it comes to Macbeth, they all have their red nails caressing his body and eyes watching eagerly at his reaction as he drinks. At first, he gives a small chuckle, but then it hits him; he becomes overwhelmed. Two of the witches place kisses upon his lips, and the third claws him, hisses, and then runs off. The potion seems to have invigorated his spirits, and he chases after them, panting. Macbeth drags his hands across the walls as he skips along, looking for them. He jumps around corners ready to say, "Gotcha!" but they are not there. As they play their game, toying with him, one witch suddenly runs from behind him and jumps on his back, screaming.

Fast-paced techno music begins to play, and they enter a dark room, lit with candles. At this point the camera waxes and wanes towards and away from their bodies as they come to the other two witches, but are separated by a thin veil. Macbeth urges, "Tell me thy unknown power," and a second witch leaps through the transparent curtain, grabs his face, and in a voice unlike her own she says, "We know thy thought. / Hear our speech, but say thou naught" (4.1.69-70). The pronouns of Wright's script change from Shakespeare's text because the witches are acting out the parts of the apparitions. The implication of this change in the text is that the witches are simply telling Macbeth things he wants to hear, instead of this information being pulled out from the cosmos.

They then pull Macbeth through the veil and all have sex with him. The screen shows various overlaying of images as the camera moves about constantly. This works to show that the time is sped up on screen, increasing the sexual intensity of the scene. In place of the first apparition of an armed head yelling "Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! Beware Macduff, / ... Dismiss me. Enough," Wright's witch makes this outburst, an exclamation from their intense copulation. This orgy scene continues, until finally Macbeth needs rest, and asks for more information. The witches warn him: "seek to know no more," but Macbeth responds: "I will be satisfied. Deny me this, / And an eternal curse fall on you!" to which they all laugh, but they show him anyway (4.1.103-105). Macbeth then sees before him Fleance, who points a gun at Macbeth, and then shoots him. Though this vision, a major change from the play script, is brought to him while Macbeth is with the witches, I do not believe this is the vision of his fate. Because of the world in which Wright has planted his characters, living with a gangster/mob-mentality, Macbeth is understandably tortured by the thought of Fleance's eventual revenge, considering that

Macbeth had Fleance's father murdered. When Macbeth opens his eyes, he sees only the three naked witches. They laugh and hiss at him before running away again. Angered by this, Macbeth chases after them, however, not playfully as before. This entire encounter shows that Macbeth seeks sexual fulfillment from these girls that he is not getting from his wife. Showing that he is not fully satisfied, he runs after them; however, he never finds them, and no other characters ever see these girls, emphasizing Wright's decision to make his witches internal projections instead of external characters in the film.

In summary, Wright's manipulation of the play text, by rearranging the power structure between the Weird Sisters and Macbeth, denoting them hallucinatory hooligans rather than marginal beings of supernatural forces, causes the audience to reflect on man's frailty, rather than seeing a powerful individual exerting dangerous and tragic forces against others. Because these witches are not tied to divinity, Wright's Macbeth is granted full agency of his own fate. However, he is unable to act on his own free will, because he is debilitated by his drug addiction and the sexual dysfunction of his marriage. Wright illustrates his Macbeth's diminished manhood by having him bootlessly chase after these girls in such a desperate manner.

In the final scene of the film, after Macbeth has been mortally wounded in a shoot-out, the audience hears a voiceover of the witches' lines, even though they never appear on screen again. Fleance, with his pistol ready, follows the wounded Macbeth, who staggers to his bedroom as the witches' lines echo: "Banquo shall be lesser than Macbeth, and greater. He shall get kings. His children shall be kings." Macbeth reaches his bed to find his wife, dead from suicide. Lying down beside her, he dies. Fleance hears movement behind him and shoots, but before he can see whom he shoots, he has killed

Lady Macbeth's gentlewoman. Wright uses this, the boy's first murder, to show the extent to which Fleance is overwrought. Moreover, it shows that the vision Macbeth had of Fleance shooting him was not a picture of his fate, as he believed it to be at the time, further proving that Wright's witches did not have access to the future or fate, though they did hold power over Macbeth's drugged mind, vulnerable to them as he was, because of his sexual thirst.

Not only are Shakespeare's traditional hags downgraded to school-girl temptresses in Wright's film, but also the warrior-hero Macbeth is reduced to a drug-dependent, sex-starved gangster. Wright changes the direction of the play from depicting a heroic figure, acting ambitiously and impulsively then succumbing to guilt, to illustrating for today's audience the debilitating consequences of an individual caught in the urban drug culture. In order to convey his interpretive understanding of Shakespeare's play to a modern audience, Wright employs this unique characterization of *Macbeth* as a Hollywood gangster movie, trading in royalty for a more common, tangible character. Thus, Wright co-opts the centuries-long fame of this story, and reinterprets it in contemporary society's terms. Instead of searching the skies for supernatural power, Wright dives deep into a vulnerable mind, where drug-induced hallucinations substitute for metaphysical power. Wright's witches are a key component of relaying a modern message by rearranging a classical text.

Rupert Goold

Rupert Goold's film (2010) takes an entirely different approach to Shakespeare's witches than Polanski did. While Polanski's witches were more synonymous to Shakespeare's text in their appearance, Goold's witches are more similar to the original text in their ghostly nature. Goold relocates *Macbeth* in time and place, setting the drama in an ambiguous, modern, and militarily aggressive society. He prefaces the drama with fast-paced, grainy shorts battle scenes: heavy artillery fire, strafing airplanes, and wounded soldiers. Two officers make their way through the rubble of war, walking toward the camera. In Goold's film adaptation, the three witches are disguised as 1940s' wartime nurses in an underground hospital. They wear dark gray uniforms with white overlaid aprons and white deaconesses atop their heads, including shoulder-length veils, and medical masks over their faces. Set in a stark, bunker-like hospital hallway, the opening scene reveals them diligently working to keep a badly wounded captain alive as he breathlessly reports on the recent battle to Duncan and his men, all of whom wear dress hats and ankle-length overcoats. Viewed from a handheld camera, light fixtures shake and walls rumble constantly from loudly exploding bombs on the battlefield above. Interspersed jump cuts show action from the battlefield: large artillery guns firing as well as explosions from incoming fire. The captain's last words recount Macbeth's valor, bringing cheers from the officers.

As soon as Duncan and his men leave, the nurses reveal their true, evil identities, as they shift from saving the captain to killing him. The camera technique changes to a dolly-mounted camera for steady composure as the nurses prepare to inject the man with an unknown substance. This effect changes the mood of the scene from urgency and

chaos to one of calm precision, portraying the witches as having ultimate control. After they stab the captain's neck with the syringe, the camera shot becomes jerky again, and the fast-paced tempo returns as his heartbeat speeds up to an unnatural rhythm. The handheld camera shows a cut-in shot of one nurse's torso, which goes out of focus and then refocuses on the captain's torso again. The camera jumps again to show the heart monitor behind the patient, drawing attention to the fact that his heartbeats are now slowing down. This shifting camera focus, jumping from witch to man to monitor, makes it unequivocally clear that the nurses are active murderesses. Overcome with spasms, the man's body jerks, matched by the camera's movement. Finally, the heart monitor shows one horizontal line and emits a solid tone. The captain's chest falls with his last exhalation of breath, as the nurses simply stand next to his stretcher, watching him die. At this point the audience is well aware that these women are not ordinary nurses, but Goold shocks us by inserting a gruesome act that adds a nontraditional supernatural twist: one nurse shoves her hand into the captain's chest and seizes his heart in a raw and revolting act.

As the camera backs away from the seized heart, the shot portrays an empty hallway where all traces of war and other wounded soldiers have disappeared. The heart monitor still beeps as the camera jumps to a close up of one of the witches. As the camera moves backward, using a dolly shot, the witch slowly tilts her head up to look straight into the lens. This effect produces an anxious feeling in the audience, hinting that we are about to witness something else disturbing. The mood becomes even more chilling as the lights in the hallway turn off one by one, until only an unseen overhead white light illuminates the scene with a blue-tinted tone that extracts any warmth. In this cold place,

we see that the nurses' bloody aprons no longer represent them as life-saving women, but rather they identify them as death-dealing witches.

The next scene opens in an underground hallway with Duncan discussing the Thane of Cawdor's title to his councilmen. As he says, "What he hath lost, noble Macbeth hath won," the silhouette of a nurse carrying an old bone saw takes the frame, as she travels toward the camera. By placing this witch in earshot of that conversation, Goold introduces the idea that his witches do not mold fate, but rather that they simply use this overheard information to influence Macbeth. Directly after Duncan mentions Macbeth, while the witch's body engulfs the camera's view, the shot jumps to an extreme close-up of a nurse busily wiping a bloody butcher knife clean, instantly foreshadowing Macbeth's killing of Duncan.

In the following scene, the two officers pictured earlier on the battlefield enter a darkened tunnel by flashlight. Meanwhile, as the scene shifts to a large dark room that is lighted with a single bright overhead light, the nurses push an IV drip stand, from which a blood bag is hanging. With their actions shot in accelerated motion, the nurses assemble the form of a man, placing glasses on the blood bag, a coat on the arms of the stand, and then ultimately placing their own hands inside the coat, manipulating its movement. Thus, they both create and become a body. Intercutting shows that as the nurses build the body, simultaneously two officers walk about somewhere in the same underground compound, eventually getting on an elevator and descending to the hospital. When the intercut frame switches to the nurses, the audience hears an incessant whispering, accompanied by a loud noise of electricity, producing an effect of spell-casting that is emphasized as the witches place the heart—the one that they earlier ripped from the

captain's man's chest—in the cavity of the coat hanging on the IV stand. The frame cuts from the three witches hovering over a concealed object together to the heart pumping inside of the coat, suggesting that they have made it come to life.

From above a harsh white light splays down on the three witches as they stare up into the ceiling, declaring that the drum has been sounded. All three witches exclaim, “A drum, a drum! Macbeth doth come.” As soon as they speak, “Macbeth doth come,” they jerk their heads down and peer directly into the camera's lens. The two officers, who continue their descent on the elevator, are now revealed as Macbeth and Banquo. As the witches move the dressed IV drip stand toward the camera, they sing, “The weird sisters, hand in hand, posters of the sea and land, thus do go about thrice to thing, and thrice to mine and thrice again, to make up nine,” disappearing into thin air. Witch #1 speaks, “Peace! the charm's wound up,” and just as they are gone, the frame presents the elevator again. Gould places these shots side by side to convey that, although the witches cannot see Macbeth, there is a connection between them for the witches are aware of his presence.

Armed with rifles, Macbeth and Banquo walk warily into the large room where the three witches stand facing them, along with their creation, the IV drip stand which is dressed in a man's garb. Banquo asks, “What are these that look not like the inhabitants o' the earth,” and in response to Banquo's questions, they each place a pointer finger on their lips, the universal sign for “be quiet.” The middle witch holds another human's hand up to her face instead of her own. Banquo continues despite their telling him to cease speaking: “You seem to understand me...her chappy finger laying upon her skinny lips...you should be women, and yet your beards forbid me to interpret that you are so.”

Although Goold's witches do not have natural beards of hair on their faces, the nurses wear surgical masks to cover their mouths. Macbeth pushes them to speak: "Speak! If you can. What are you?"

The camera pans to a close-up of Witch #1's profile as she declares, "All hail Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis." The camera then removes the focus from Witch #1, focusing on the background and illuminating Witch #2, who follows suit by loudly declaiming, "All hail, Macbeth. Hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor." Then, the camera swings to Witch #3 as she removes her mask in an extreme close-up of her chapped and frosty-lipped mouth, stating coldly, "All hail, Macbeth. Thou shalt be king, hereafter!" just as the camera tilts up to her eyes. Macbeth tilts his head down instantly at this, cowering, peering at the witches just below his hat's bill. Banquo turns to Macbeth smiling, and he asks why Macbeth starts at this news. Banquo walks toward the nurses, probing them further to tell him of his destiny, looking directly at their faces. His voice grows louder as he demands they answer him. Although he gains on them and his volume elevates, which would lead the audience to believe he is comfortable, he still clutches his rifle in ready position, revealing that he is actually uneasy.

The same cinematic decisions are repeated, moving in close from one witch to another, as the witches loudly exclaim, one-by-one, "Hail!" The dramatic effect in their delivery of these lines shows that this information is monumental. All together then, the witches declare: "Banquo and Macbeth, all hail!" They all start toward the two men, marching in military style—incapable of being stopped, and disregarding Macbeth's plea for them to stay. Macbeth challenges them to halt as he steps in front of one nurse; however, she walks right through him. This is the second element of Goold's witches that

makes apparent their other worldly origin. Macbeth tries to stop another witch, but again this nurse is not corporeal. The witches continue to march briskly away, and Macbeth runs through the halls after them. Though they seem to be simply walking as he runs, he cannot catch up to them. When he reaches them, Witch #3 turns toward him, and she places her pointer finger over his mouth, pushing his face slightly upward. Her touch has a strong effect on Macbeth as he gasps for air afterward, showing that simply her fingers on him is more powerful than a human's physical touch. While Macbeth was incapable of stopping these marching nurse figures, one has no trouble stopping him with a mere finger pressed to his lips.

Goold further presents his witches as impalpable beings when the nurses get on the elevator. Instead of it transporting them to another floor, the women are transported into the air themselves, completely vanishing even before the elevator doors close. Macbeth and Banquo walk back into the room, wondering if they made up the encounter with the nurses in their heads, but there, in the middle of the room, stands the IV drip stand dressed in a soldier's coat. While Goold's witches take an abstract and intangible form, the men still perceive them as real and not merely a figment of their imaginations. Like Polanski, Goold chooses to omit the relation among his witches and Grimalkin and Paddock, suggesting that these witches have no master, answering only to themselves. His use of synchronization in his witches' dialogue, formation and motions is placed directly beside his choice of setting: the middle of a war. While his witches are dressed as nurses and not soldiers, their forceful nature and determined position of authority suggests that they are evil agents of war, imbued with supernatural powers, and have a determined effect on Macbeth's actions.

Justin Kurzel

Presenting Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in his 2015 cinematic rendition, Justin Kurzel offers a fresh form that deviates from the original text. For example, Kurzel explicitly dramatizes on screen long battle scenes that were originally off-stage, only hinted at in the play text. Moreover, Kurzel emphasizes the emotion and spectacle of battle, employing cinematic techniques to create a marvel of sights and sounds. Using color saturation, Kurzel intensifies the heat of battle and, employing slow motion, he shows the ferocity, the agony, and the gore of the fighting warriors.

For another example, Kurzel gives two sons to the Macbeths, both of whom die. Kurzel dramatizes the infant's funeral, accentuating the darkly somber rite by placing the scene on a wintry mountainside where the only color is the yellow-orange-red flame of the funeral pyre. The Macbeth's teenage son is killed in his first battle. Both of these deaths send the Macbeths into deep, sorrowful mourning. Also, Kurzel's witches constitute a unique component of his film that deviates from Shakespeare's original text. Kurzel connects these three directorial innovations, as he seizes on the idea that emotional trauma makes people vulnerable and particularly susceptible to psychological dysfunction: enter Kurzel's witches.

In the play text there are three witches, whereas Kurzel adds a fourth witch and a static infant to the group of Weird Sisters. Though he has more witches in his film, Kurzel circumscribes the witches' nature and roles. Kurzel's witches loom ominously in the several scenes—more scenes than in the play—yet they act primarily as bystanders, mostly present without much substance. Throughout this tragic play, many traumatic

incidents occur, and Kurzel fleshes out those scenes vividly, as I stated about the battle scenes. Following these incidents whenever someone has just undergone emotional trauma, the witches appear on screen and the affected character or characters see them—and those affected characters are the only ones who see them. The witches are not visible to any other characters. For instance, the witches come into the shot directly after several traumatic events: the Macbeths' infant's funeral, the battle scene in which Macbeth's son dies, Lady Macbeth seeing the apparition of her late baby, and Fleance witnessing men murder his father.

Unlike Shakespeare's witches, Kurzel's witches are not linked to any supernatural or magical source, for his script does not include the character Hecate, nor do his Weird Sisters perform chants or cast spells on anyone. Similar to Polanski, Kurzel does not include lines 1-37 of 1.3, which explain that one witch was killing swine, while another was punishing a sailor's wife by keeping her husband out at sea. By removing this information, Kurzel gives even less detail about or context for these women, suggesting that they exist merely in the characters' minds. Kurzel's witches appear to be imagined, their entire existence triggered by injured or suffering minds. After Kurzel's witches appear in a scene, they seem to act as omens of escape for the character or characters before whom they have appeared.

To examine Kurzel's witches in more detail I will analyze several key scenes from the film. Kurzel introduces the audience to the witches as the shot shifts from the opening scene of the infant's funeral, following the billows of smoke from the pyre swarming the air, to an aerial view of the landscape, where the four witches stand. Suddenly, shifting the point of view, the camera focuses directly on the weird sisters. The audience still

hears, as off-screen sound, the fire crackling at the child's funeral, suggesting that the witches have been watching the funeral. Somehow the weird sisters know that Macbeth will seek them out because of the pain he suffers from his child's untimely death. Immediately the witches discuss when and where they will next meet, and as one sister delivers, "Fair is foul, and foul is fair. Hover through the fog and filthy air," a tear falls from her unwavering stare, leading the audience to believe that the tragic scene has emotionally impacted her, too. Because their appearance is so brief, even though the witches seem very connected with the ceremony, Kurzel implies that the witches only witnessed the funeral scene from a distance. As they stare straight ahead to the site of the funeral, their quiet speech and blank gazes suggest fear and sympathy. They are sorry for Macbeth's loss, yet they fear what lies ahead, for they know Macbeth will seek them out for answers. When the witches speak the lines of the opening scene, Kurzel's script reads, "Upon the *battlefield*," instead of following the original text that reads, "Upon the *heath*," when deciding where they will meet with Macbeth. This slight change sets the tone immediately. They already know Macbeth will play a crucial role in the battle, and that he will survive for their meeting with them. Thus, they specify "battlefield," knowing that he will be fraught from the toll of the battle.

The next time we see the witches, they are present on the brink of the battle. The intensified presentation of the battle, through the use of color saturation and slow motion panning, allows the audience to see that Macbeth ceases fighting entirely as his eyes meet the weird sisters'. While the action continues to rage around him, Macbeth stands stock still staring at the witches. With the use of intercutting, Kurzel presents shots of the witches, and then he cuts directly to Macbeth or to his young soldier-son, who wears a

horrified expression mirroring the chaos around him. These cross cuts reveal to the audience that these three characters share a significant relationship. None of the other soldiers notice these four Weird Sisters, who are standing just feet from their swords, further suggesting that the witches are apparitions, formed in select troubled minds. The last few seconds of the battle involve Banquo's solemn expression, passing along the news of the young boy's murder. A wave of emotion washes over Macbeth's face as his heart calcifies toward Macdonwald, and he decapitates the rebel. This circles back to the beginning of the battle scene in which the slow-motion effect played as Macbeth's son stood horrified by the battle in front of the witches. Although the boy did not acknowledge the witches, Kurzel hints that the witches will come soon after the battle, as Macbeth has just lost another child to death.

Kurzel shows his audience the trauma of fighting in a battle, and his cinematic techniques, noted earlier, such as slow motion and extreme saturation of red tones, convey why those catastrophic events impact Macbeth emotionally. Before the first battle scene, Kurzel's Macbeth is already facing grief, for he has just suffered the loss of his infant child. And now his only other child dies young fighting in his first battle. Following Kurzel's method, Macbeth first encounters the witches directly after he and Banquo have dragged the son's body to the pile of bloodied corpses. Both battle-weary men, torn and tired, see the witches. When two older witches approach Macbeth, the oldest places her hand on his cheek, in a comforting gesture. This sympathetic, gentle touch, her whisper-like tones suggest that the witches want to comfort Macbeth, although they become deliverers of his doomed fate. As the witches deliver their all-hail lines through the use of a voice-over, the screen portrays images that Macbeth sees as a result

of the witch's touch: his future coronation. When her hand leaves his cheek, he returns to his immediate reality. The witches walk away, ignoring Macbeth's plea for more information. As the witches disappear into the fog, the two men seem to laugh it off, suggesting that maybe they're both hallucinating from a root they ate, or deceived by the vast, writhing fog. Making the witches an apparition in the film gives Macbeth sole power for his fate. If Kurzel's witches are only visible to those to whom they appear, without any power over destiny or connection to the supernatural world, then they have only the power of clairvoyance. While the witches have prompted him, Macbeth acts on his own account with the help of Lady Macbeth's urgency, and this allows him to personally fulfill his own destiny.

On the night of the murder, Macbeth has flashbacks to the battle scene. However, this PTSD-like symptom features more the witches' stares than it does traumatic murders. The last face to leave Macbeth's mind is that of his murdered soldier-son, who then appears before Macbeth's eyes holding a dagger in his bloodied outstretched hand. As Macbeth delivers, "Is this a dagger which I see before me" lines, 2.1.34-40, 43-46, 48-52, 53 and 57, he is speaking to and about his son, whereas the text suggests these words were spoken about the dagger itself. Kurzel extracts "I see thee yet, in form as palpable / As this which I now draw. [*He draws a dagger*]" from their original placement (2.1.40-41). By taking these lines out of context, Kurzel emphasizes the idea that this grief-driven hallucination is more correlated to the death of his children than to his greed for power. Macbeth's son is *leading* him to Duncan's tent. He is acting as a helper in this deed. By placing the dagger in the hands of this young boy, Kurzel suggests that Macbeth's son gives him permission to regain his assertion of power since he no longer has an heir to

continue his line. Kurzel creates this character and places him in this pivotal scene to associate Macbeth's desire to be king with the loss of his children, suggesting that taking the crown might fill that void.

Macbeth follows the young boy, aimlessly it seems, until his dark figure morphs into the shadows of the night, and he disappears altogether, whereupon Macbeth finds himself at the entrance of Duncan's tent. Without hesitation, he enters, and takes a dagger from one of his sleeping-guard's uniform.

Kurzel again places his witches in two scenes that Shakespeare had not. In the first instance, Fleance has just witnessed the murder of his father, Banquo, and is running for his own life when Kurzel's youngest, the fourth witch, presents herself in the woods and helps him escape from the murderers. Because Fleance is announced escaped, the audience infers that this little witch served as a guardian angel that led him to safety. Admittedly, in this incident the witches move the nature of their engagement closer to agency than mere sympathetic witness. The audience can only speculate whether Kurzel intentionally or unwittingly modified his earlier set formula for the witches' interaction in this instance.

Kurzel deviates from the text again by adding the witches to the scene directly after Lady Macbeth's apparition of the child. She walks out of the chapel and into the rain. Wandering about in her nightgown, she stares off into the distance, and the camera pans the scenery to show the Weird Sisters across the way. Lady Macbeth whispers, "To bed, to bed, / to bed!" (5.1.67-68). The next time Lady Macbeth is featured, she sleeps, lifeless in her bed. In this case, the witches have provided escape for Lady Macbeth, offering her respite from a tormented mind. Even though there is nothing new or

extraordinary about this encounter, it further substantiates Kurzel's characterization of them in his film.

The second encounter that Macbeth has with the Weird Sisters takes place on the night of his Banquo apparition. He and Lady Macbeth are getting ready for a night's rest, and he has just told her of his mistrust for Macduff. Although Lady Macbeth advised him to ignore these feelings and sleep, a time-lapse shot shows the audience that he stood staring out the windows all night, anticipating his meeting with the witches. Wearing a nightgown which might suggest that he is dreaming, Macbeth rides toward the weird sisters in an open, foggy field, and he speaks, "I conjure you, by that which you profess, / Howe'er you come to know it, answer me" (4.1.51-52). Kurzel takes out the entire previous fifty lines that make up the scene in which the witches list the ingredients in their cauldron, "Double, double, toil and trouble," as well as the conversation with Hecate.

The establishing shot of this scene shows Macbeth and his horse alone in this foggy field; however, as he walks away from his horse, an image of three figures and a fire comes into focus. Macbeth's presence does not seem to stir or excite the witches in the slightest. Taking the form of the text's third apparition, a crowned child holding a tree, the first witch, who is holding an infant, speaks: "Be lion-mettled, proud, and take no care / who chafes, who frets, or where conspirers are" (4.1.90-91). The second witch continues the third apparition narrative by saying, "Macbeth shall never vanquished be," and the third witch finishes the line: "Until Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill / Shall come against him" (4.1.92-94). Macbeth reaches in front of the third witch to take a bowl of an unknown substance she has concocted. No language is exchanged about this

substance; the witches do not tell him to drink from the bowl, nor does Macbeth ask for it. He simply drinks it, on his own volition, without any prodding. When the bowl leaves Macbeth's lips, a thick, blood-like substance drips from his beard. Once again with this scene Kurzel poses, but does not conclusively answer, the question of illusory appearances or the relative powers of perception of a psychologically dysfunctional individual.

The setting shifts from yellow dawn to grey dusk. Solemn shadowed figures reveal themselves to be the fallen soldiers of the battle as they troop lifelessly toward the camera, understood as Macbeth's viewpoint. A profile view of Macbeth's silhouette is contrasted against the morning sky, suggesting we are back to reality. However, these soldiers begin to enter the shot, allowing the audience to experience Macbeth's apparition as if it were real. Instead of executing the text's first apparition, an armed Head, these fallen soldiers adopt those lines: "Beware Macduff, / Beware the Thane of Fife. Dismiss me. Enough" (4.1.71-72). Once again, the camera takes Macbeth's viewpoint, and the setting returns to gray, murky dusk. The young soldier walks toward Macbeth, who smiles, and places his hands atop the boy's shoulders. The boy gazes vacantly upon Macbeth and says, "Be bloody, bold, and resolute; laugh to scorn / The power of man, for none of woman born / Shall harm Macbeth" (4.1.79-81). With this news, Macbeth embraces the boy, who, upon being released, makes no reciprocation of this affection and walks away to join the other fallen soldiers in the march. With the scene still set during the deadly dusk, the camera zooms in on Macbeth's face as he states that he will make assurance double sure in killing Macduff. A medium shot shows Macbeth back in the liveliness of yellow dawn, now completely alone in this field. Because it is unlikely that

the witches have packed up their belongings and gotten rid of all traces of the fire within this time frame, it appears evident that Kurznel continues to emphasize the witches' watchful presence following a traumatic event.

Finally, the witches appear in the midst of the final battle scene. Deep red and orange overtones fill the smoky air, and through it appear the three witches, the young girl, and an infant with them. They stand there, throughout the entire fight, speaking no words. They act as idle spectators. Macbeth never takes notice of them, but when he is finally struck to the ground, they turn and leave, just as his allies abandon him. While this could be seen as a form of abandonment, I believe that it reinforces the idea that the witches were connected to Macbeth's life, and now that his life is leaving his body, so, too, must the witches leave, for they can no longer offer him solace or escape.

Conclusion

In this chapter I demonstrated how four film directors, through their use of different cinematic techniques, and interventions in Shakespeare's text, portrayed the witches, thereby revealing their interpretations of the drama and influencing audiences' reception of the text. Among the central concepts relating to the witches in the film versions of *Macbeth* are 1) whether they are supernatural beings, as they are in the original text, 2) whether and how much they influence or control Macbeth's will, and 3) whether and to what extent the directors created aspects of their characterization that hold special significance for contemporary audiences.

Even though Polanski's witches appear much in the same form as Shakespeare's, they are not supernatural beings, but rather they are earth-bound creatures. Moreover, we may

infer a social project in Polanski's construct of his witches, as they represent unkempt, nomadic women, who were marginalized, othered beings that become opportunistic, unleashing harbored resentment and acting against royal Macbeth. Even though they have no real power over him, they make him believe that they do; Macbeth is easily fooled by their tricks because people of his class believed that such downtrodden, unruly women as these were witches. Polanski's witches play mind games with the royal warrior as a kind of retributive justice for society's mistreatment of them.

Geoffrey Wright introduces us to his witches as school-age hooligans that make mischief and become sexual temptresses entangling Macbeth in a drug-laden orgy and wreaking havoc on his mind. Because of his drug-aided dependency, Macbeth ultimately grants these young, fantasized girls a type of agency over him that deviates from Shakespeare's hags' power of fate over Macbeth. Wright dives into Macbeth's vulnerable mind, where drug-induced hallucinations substitute for metaphysical power. Wright's witches are a key component of relaying a modern message about man's frailty, wherein, debilitated by his drug addiction, Macbeth sees phantasms of his fate that he believes the witches have foretold him, although the scenarios he envisions are part of the mob-culture and were more than likely to occur otherwise. Wright allows his witches to represent the projection of paranoia festering in Macbeth's mind.

Goold's three witches, disguised as 1940s' wartime nurses in an underground hospital, wear dark gray uniforms with white overlaid aprons and white deaconesses atop their heads, including shoulder-length veils, and medical masks over their faces. Even though they work to save a soldier's life while he delivers a battle report to Duncan, they quickly reveal their evil identities and set about killing the man, including one witch

ripping his heart from his chest. Goold's witches are otherworldly, though, unlike Shakespeare's traditional hags, they do not have a connection to Hecate or other witches' familiar. Goold places his witches in different positions of helpers throughout his film, such as nurses and waitresses. Macbeth's misunderstanding of trust yields to his fall. Through this theme of irony in his film, Goold asks his audience to sympathize with Macbeth for being fooled by these seemingly helpful servants.

Using scenic Scotland, extreme desaturation, and fog to highlight the murky, eerie evocation of the witches' characters, Kurzel plays off the idea that his witches act as ethereal beings that lurk in the margins of the scenes. One can see that Kurzel's Macbeth and other characters that undergo emotional trauma throughout the play, suffer hallucinations of the witches that are presented as omens of relief or change. Even though they are benevolent to many individuals, and even though they appear only to select, suffering characters, they are not supernatural, nor do they control Macbeth's will. While they may have prompted Macbeth with their words, exercising their limited powers of influence, he acts on his own account, urged on by Lady Macbeth, personally fulfilling his destiny. The audience can infer that, through Kurzel's strongest digression from the text, when these witches merely appear in these scenes as bystanders, they do not hold any agency, but through their presence, they allow each character an escape from his or her current horror, ultimately advancing the prophecy.

CONCLUSION

Readers of this study have discovered descriptions and analyses of definitive features of these five directors' film productions of *Macbeth*, plus inferences drawn from them. Brief highlights include: Polanski gives his perspective on the witches as women marginalized by mainstream society and fighting back in the persona of witches to influence Macbeth; Casson portrays Lady Macbeth as entreating the spirits to embolden her to devise the murder plot for her husband; Wright devises seductive, hooligan-schoolgirl witches, in whom Macbeth invests his feelings of sexual desire and to whom he turns over his agency; Goold introduces a Lady Macbeth, who is energized from her treaty with the spirits, and who forcefully presents her plan with Macbeth, and, who, often exasperated, treats him the most harshly of all other Lady Macbeth characters in these films; finally Kurzel, a virtuoso of technical creativity, deviates most from the text in his use of the witches, as his five Weird Sisters reveal themselves to emotionally traumatized characters in the play—posing, but not answering, the question of illusory appearances or the relative powers of perception of a psychologically dysfunctional individual, challenging the audience to consider Macbeth as more susceptible to the witches' influence due to his grief. These examples represent the rich plentitude of directorial creations, analyzed in this study, that challenge modern audiences with implicated human drama in ways not presented in Elizabethan times.

Exploring *Macbeth*, one of Shakespeare's masterpieces, as these film directors have modified it for their artistic productions, reveals how contemporary artists want to re-imagine the dramatic text, to become co-creators with the great bard in his tragic drama that has intrigued audiences for years. This artistic motivation to rework a classic

production stems from the directors' desires to contextualize the play in their own way, to modify the dramatic components, and to re-shape the characters as they conceive them. Why? It's simply part of our human desire for discovery, for making meaning in our own terms. By our very nature, we love to find the next big thing, to move on to a newer technology, or to imagine varieties of a Lady Macbeth unsexed, desiring to be considered as powerful as a man. The power disparity between men and women, presented in Shakespeare's 17th century play, is still prevalent and affects women of the 21st century, which is just one reason why this text still holds a place in our society.

All of these artists—from Shakespeare to Wright—had the same aim: to play to an audience they envisioned. Just as Shakespeare produced plays for Elizabethan audiences, our group of directors produced films for twentieth and twenty-first century audiences. However, Roman Polanski focused on an audience that expected a more traditional version of the play, an audience for whom he could use his talents to develop his conception of a softer, gentler Lady Macbeth, while also devising a progressive social project for the witches' characters. Geoffrey Wright created his edgy film as radical departure from the original play because he envisioned reaching a different sort of audience, one that would appreciate this classic drama reconceived in an urban drug culture, where a neurotic Lady Macbeth, grief stricken and addicted to drugs, was vulnerable to a murder plot that could serve her husband's ambition.

Each director also employed different cinematic techniques to create desired effects on his audience. Kurzel, as the study showed, used multiple techniques to engage the audience in the settings and action of the plays. Using extreme desaturation, and fog, he sets the audience in the midst of scenic Scotland that is an eerie, murky world, in the

margins of which the ethereal witches lurk. Later, using color saturation and slow motion panning through the crowded battlefield, Kurzel allows the audience to focus on Macbeth as his eyes meet the weird sisters'. Further, Kurzel flashes intercut frames between Macbeth and the witches, as the chaos of war rages around them, enabling the audience to feel the connection between them. As the audience sees, Kurzel's Macbeth and other characters undergo emotional trauma throughout the play and suffer hallucinations of the witches, presented as omens of relief or change. Thus, in the end, the audience empathizes with the witches, who appear to bring surcease of pain.

Placing his production on an empty-set round stage with a solid-black background, Philip Casson bathes Judi Dench's Lady Macbeth in white light as she speaks her opening lines in an emotionally forceful whisper manifesting an intensely cerebral character as she convincingly makes the murder plot up as she goes from line to line. Through the use of nominal makeup and black garb, Casson's minimalistic approach to the play focuses on the pure emotive power of the language and characters in action. While other directors present Lady Macbeth's opening scene merely as a way to express her desires, Casson sets it up as a medium for Lady Macbeth to actively seek out higher beings to transform her for this deed. Judi Dench's performance of the "Come, you spirits" scene convinces the audience that this is a terrifying undertaking as she shrieks and scurries about the stage; however, her character screws up her courage, continuing her pursuit resolutely. More determined than before, she continues to entreat the spirits, emphasizing the importance of her husband's happiness and success means to her, while suppressing her own well-being in order to further his office.

What purposes do the manifold retellings of this drama in film serve? Certainly, *Macbeth* is a profound literary text, worthy of study for its language, characterization, human intrigue, political history, and more. However, as this study has shown, Shakespeare's play holds varied meanings for the five directors. Audiences cannot expect to see definitive performances of Lady Macbeth and the witches, or learn the true meaning of the play from the films of Polanski, Casson, Wright, Goold, or Kurzel, for there is no universally true or right meaning. Rather, audiences may experience the film re-imaginings of the story and, if they employ active viewing practices, they can interpret the constructed nature of the films, gaining partial but valuable insight into *Macbeth's* place in the world as these directors see it. Artistic productions, such as literature and film, can serve many purposes in our society, one of which is to challenge the reader or audience to participate in the creation of meaning for themselves in their time and place, not necessarily immutable and eternal meaning.

Over the course of writing this thesis, I developed a keen ability to observe and describe the cinematic means that directors used to convey intended meaning to their audiences. I discovered many more concepts of character and direction of the play than I ever anticipated. During the thesis trial-run in the spring semester of my junior year, I recall being offended by the ending of Michael Radford's *Merchant of Venice* film, for his ending completely deviates from Shakespeare's play: Radford's Jessica looks sadly off into the distance, toying with her late mother's ring that is resting safely on her finger, whereas in the play text, she steals the ring from Shylock, and trades it in for a monkey. This ending romanticized a false hope not present in the play text. As I expressed this confusion, I realized that this was Radford's purpose; he wanted to evoke in his audience

a sense of remaining reassurance about Jessica and Shylock's relationship, because he knew audiences would want to leave a film with a sense of hope, although this is not how Shakespeare's play leaves the reader feeling. This revealed to me that there is no true, universal interpretation of an artifact, but based on the individual's perspective, every interpretation can hold meaning. This experience prompted me to continue my research in the filmic adaptations of Shakespeare's plays. These five film versions of *Macbeth* offer the modern audience an array of insights into Shakespeare's text; in addition, the directors use film as a vehicle to deliver their personal agendas through interpreted themes in the play. I have been pushed intellectually through this project, questioning the place that re-imagining a play has in the realm of literature in society, and it has ultimately sharpened my critical capabilities, as I gained a better understanding of human enterprise's place in literature and life, I became a more productive collaborator in interpreting meaning from *Macbeth*. This capability stands me in good stead in my future engagements with literature.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aronson, Alex. *Psyche & Symbol in Shakespeare*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1972. Print.

Bevington, David. *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*. 7th ed. N.p.: Pearson Education, 2014. Print.

Dobbyn, Elaine. "Shakespeare's Weird Sisters." *Irish Independent* 3 (2014): 14. Web.

Knapp, James A. *Shakespeare and the Power of the Face*. N.p.: Ashgate, 2015. Print.

Levin, Joanna. "Lady MacBeth and the Daemonologie of Hysteria." *Project Muse* 69.1 (2002): 21-55. Web.

Shakespeare, William. "Macbeth." Bevington (n.d.): 1260-292. Print.

Shamas, Laura. "WE *Three*" *The Mythology of Shakespeare's Weird Sisters*. New York: Peter Lang, 2007. Print.