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Yoshiko Kawachi

Macbeth in Japanese Culture

Akira Kurosawa's *Kumonosu-jo* (*The Throne of Blood*) is a film adaptation of *Macbeth* released in 1957. He set the scene in the period of the Japanese civil war, and tried to express the beauty of *Noh* drama which he liked better than *Kabuki*. He presented the eerie woodland where the two warriors, Washizu (Macbeth) and Miki (Banquo), encountered an old witch seated at a spinning wheel in a thatched hut. He got this idea from a *Noh* drama, *Kurozuka* (*The Blade Mounds*) written by Zeami. In this film, he wished to use the way that *Noh* actors had of moving their bodies and walking. For Asaji (Lady Macbeth) walked like a *Noh* performer, and her face looked like a *Noh* mask. The stylized performance of main characters created the dramatic reality about the vicissitudes of one man's life. This film was the fruit of Kurosawa's imagination, and it was the most stylized of his all works. Tadao Sato, a film critic, conducted an interview with Kurosawa, and confirmed that Kurosawa wanted to describe a man living in a Darwinian jungle.[1] *The Throne of Blood* was favorably received, and Kurosawa got two prizes: one in London (1957) and another in Los Angels (1974). His film adaptation of *Macbeth* shows how Shakespeare's text is re-created

[1] R. Manvell, *Shakespeare and Film*, trans. Yoshio Arai, [in:] *Sheikusupia Kenkyu Shiryo Shusei* (*The Collected Research Materials on Shakespeare*), ed. Yasunari Takahashi and Takashi Sasaki, Nippon Tosho Center, Tokyo 1998, pp. 30, 387–389. (Hereafter cited as *Shiryo Shusei*).

in Japanese culture. In Japan, there have been several Japanese translations of *Macbeth*, and many productions of this tragedy on the stage. In this paper, I would like to consider how the Japanese people have accepted *Macbeth* and what they have wanted to express through the performances of *Macbeth*.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, Japan shook off its long seclusion when Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry came to Japan in 1853 and 1854 to press Japan to open itself to foreign trade and diplomatic relations. The Meiji Restoration of 1868 was an epoch-making event which promoted Japan's rapid modernization. Since then, Japan has adopted the vital parts of Westernization. Shakespeare was introduced into Japan at this period.

We find mention of Shakespeare's name as early as 1841 in a translation of Lindley Murray's *English Grammar*. In 1874 Charles Wirgman, an English correspondent, translated the "To be, or not to be" soliloquy into broken Japanese for *The Japan Punch*. This is regarded as the first translation of Shakespeare in Japan. In 1884 Shoyo Tsubouchi translated *Julius Caesar* into Japanese and gave it a Japanese title, *Shizaru Kidan: Jiyu no Tachi Nagori no Kireaji* (*A Strange Story about Caesar: The Remnant Sharpness of the Sword of Liberty*). This was a free and loose translation in *Joruri* (ballad drama) style, in which he used seven-and-five syllable verse. In 1897 an American itinerant troupe called the Miln, came to Japan and performed Shakespearean plays such as *Hamlet, Othello*, and *Macbeth* for a week at the public hall, the forerunner of the Gaiety Theater, in Yokohama. *Macbeth* was staged one night only, but Tsubouchi saw the first performance of this tragedy.

Tsubouchi knew great deal about *Kabuki* and *Joruri*, and was strongly conscious of the difference in dramaturgy between the East and the West. He compared Monzaemon Chikamatsu, a representative playwright of *Kabuki* and *Joruri* with Shakespeare. He enumerated eighteen similarities between them.[2] He called Chikamatsu the Japanese Shakespeare. Tsubouchi was the first to give serious consideration to what the Japanese people should learn from Shakespeare and how the Japanese drama should be improved by a study of Shakespeare's dramaturgy. He wrote two historical plays, *Kirihitoha* (*A Fall Leaf from a Paulownia*) and *Maki no Kata* (*Lady Maki*), each of which was suggested by *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. He published *Maki no Kata* in the *Waseda Bungaku* (*Waseda Journal of Literature*) in 1896, while studying and translating *Macbeth*. In the first performance of *Maki no Kata* in 1905, a *Kabuki* actor, the Fifth Utaemon, played the role

[2] S. Tsubouchi, "Chikamatsu vs. Shakespeare vs. Ibsen," [in:] *Shoyo Senshu*, ed. Shoyo Kyokai, Daiichi-shobo, Tokyo 1977, X, pp. 769–796.

of Lady Maki. Since then the play was produced six times until 1938. In this play, Tsubouchi described the internal trouble of the Kamakura Shogunate after the death of Yoritomo Minamoto. Lady Maki, the second wife of Tokimasa Hojo, a regent, loved her own child so madly that she instigated her husband to form a plot to murder Sanetomo Minamoto, Yoritomo's son, but she failed in it and killed herself. The characterization of Lady Maki reminds us of that of Lady Macbeth, but Lady Maki is not so strong-willed as Lady Macbeth. Rather, Tsubouchi described Lady Maki as an emotional woman.[3]

In 1905 Rokuro Kitamura, an actor of the Shinpa (New School of *Kabuki*), produced an adaptation of *Macbeth* in Osaka. In this adaptation, Kitamura in a Korean dress played the part of Lady Macbeth. It was a hit because Korean customs and manners were popular in those days in Japan after the Russo-Japanese War. In 1913 the Kindaigeki Kyokai (The Association of Modern Drama) whose leader was Sojin Kamiyama performed *Macbeth* under the guidance of an English director.[4] They used Ogai Mori's translation, but a critic wrote that his translation of witches' speech was too colloquial.[5] In this production Seiichi Kato played the role of Macbeth, while Uraji Kamiyama played the part of Lady Macbeth. Kato was short and lacked nobility, but Kamiyama was tall and beautiful.[6]

In 1916, however, the Mumeikai troupe performed *Macbeth*, using Tsubouchi's translation. Shiko Tsubouchi, Shoyo Tsubouchi's adopted son, directed the play, imitating the stage of Beerbohm Tree. In this production, Tetteki Togi played the leading role, Seiichi Kato played the part of Duncan and Macduff well, and Tamae Kagawa played the role of Lady Macbeth. Her voice was good but too weak to express her ambitious portrayal.[7] This production in memory of the three-hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare's death was seen in Tokyo, Osaka, and Kobe.

It is noteworthy that Mori's translation and Tsubouchi's translation of *Macbeth* were used simultaneously by different dramatic troupes. To tell the truth, Kamiyama, who retired from the Bungei Kyokai (The Association of Literature and Art) established by Tsubouchi, wanted to ask Mori to translate *Macbeth* into Japanese. In 1891 Tsubouchi put *Macbeth* into classical Japanese language used in *Kabuki* and *Joruri*, but about twenty years later, he revised this translation, using modern Japanese language.

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[3] S. Nishimura, "Maki no Kata and Lady Macbeth," *Sao Fukko* (*Shakespeare Renaissance*) 1934, No. 12, pp. 21–22. Reprinted by Chuo Koron-sha, Tokyo 1990.

[4] S. Kamiyama, "On Staging *Macbeth*," [in:] *Shiryo Shusei*..., pp. 28, 396–397.

[5] Ch. Ikuta, "Macbeth and Electra," [in:] *Shiryo Shusei*, pp. 28, 405.

[6] Seiseien, "*Macbeth* Produced by the Association of Modern Drama," [in:] *Shiryo Shusei*, pp. 28, 391.

[7] Seiseien, "*Macbeth* at the Yuraku-za Theater," [in:] *Shiryo Shusei*, pp. 28, 430.

Kamiyama, however, did not like Tsubouchi's translation. He wanted a fresh and colloquial translation by Mori.

In 1922 the Gekijutsukai troupe produced *Macbeth* in Tokyo. This play was well-received, and was also performed at the summer resort of Karuizawa in 1923. In 1927 Kaoru Osanai, the leader of the Jiyu Gekijyo (Free Theater), directed *Macbeth* for the Tsukiji Small Playhouse, using Mori's translation. Sadao Maruyama played the role of Macbeth, while Chieko Higashiyama played the part of Lady Macbeth. This performance held by the Shingeki (New Drama) group created a great sensation. In 1932 Choji Kato directed *Macbeth* for the Chikyu-za troupe, using Tsubouchi's translation. They performed it at the auditorium of Waseda University. Kenji Takasu played the part of Macbeth, while Miyuki Takekawa played the role of Lady Macbeth.

Tsubouchi and Mori were the two great men of letters in Japan, and they argued on "botsu-riso" in the 1890s. The literal translation of this term may be *lack of ideals* because "botsu" has the meaning of *lack* or *nothing*. In 1891 Tsubouchi published "*Macbeth* Hyoshaku no Shogen," the preface to his commentary on *Macbeth*. This essay was highly important because it opened a long argument on "botsu-riso" between them. Tsubouchi compared "our-myriad-minded Shakespeare" to Nature. According to his view, Shakespeare was susceptible to various interpretations in the same way that Nature is, and every reader could put each interpretation on his dramatic world in which he did not express his personal opinion. Therefore, a translator should not comment dogmatically on his work. In short, he wished to talk about the generic quality of Shakespeare's mind by choosing *Macbeth* which he thought was the best play. This was his first method of explaining Shakespeare to the Japanese people.

Mori, however, refuted Tsubouchi because he could not admit that Shakespeare lacked ideals. Their argument continued for more than a year. In the process of the heated dispute, Tsubouchi offered an excuse that the term "botsu-riso" he used for Shakespeare did not mean *lack of ideals* but *disinterestedness* or *self-effacement*.[8] Mori, however, said that self-effacement was an essential quality of drama. Their argument, in the last analysis, could be traced to their different views on literature. In a word, Tsubouchi was a realist while Mori was an idealist. Consequently their long polemics, which ended in smoke, played an important role in the history of literary criticism in Japan. In addition, it is significant that these two great men of letters discussed Shakespeare so earnestly while translating *Macbeth* from their original viewpoints.

[8] Tsubouchi, "The Origin of Botsu-riso," [in:] *Shoyo Sensyu*, Separate Vol. III, pp. 283–304.

When Mori was requested by Kamiyama to put *Macbeth* into Japanese, he felt at first some hesitation in accepting the proposal because Tsubouchi had started to translate the complete works of Shakespeare. He was the first to bring out the entire Shakespearean canon in Japanese during a twenty-year period, 1907–1928. However, Mori made up his mind to put *Macbeth* into Japanese, and he asked Kamiyama to show his manuscript to Tsubouchi in order to correct his errors. Tsubouchi accepted his request and made comments with a vermilion-brush on Mori's manuscript. This is now preserved in the Theater Museum of Waseda University. In spite of several faults, Mori's translation was faithful in sense and spirit to Shakespeare's original. He translated the play in metaphrastic style, as a whole, while Tsubouchi rendered it more broadly. Mori was primarily an army doctor and novelist who had studied in Germany: he never put any other Shakespearean plays into Japanese.

There was another great man of letters in those days. Soseki Natsume was a novelist majoring in English literature. He studied in London at government expense from 1900 to 1903. He read Shakespeare carefully, studied the subplots of drama, and intended to glean many a hint for his own creative writing. He acquired a real interest in Shakespeare's skill in the art of expression of his poetic world rather than in translation of his drama. Looking at the performance of Tsubouchi's translation of *Hamlet*, he wrote an essay, "Dr. Tsubouchi and *Hamlet*," and said as follows:

> I deeply regret that his words used for translation are not necessarily appealing to the audience psychologically.
>
> Essentially it is impossible to translate Shakespeare into Japanese. [...] I think that there is a great discrepancy between him and the Japanese. [...] This unnatural and wild idea, however, is his poetic world, and only its inhabitants can enjoy and understand it. He is truly a poet, whose active imagination conjured up such a world.[9]

In the margin of his book, he wrote down a note in English about the line of *Macbeth*, "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" (1.1.11), as follows:

> This is one of the most subtle [sic] passages, worthy of the name of Shakespeare. No commentators has [sic] ever pointed out the significance of his most powerful line. They have given themselves much trouble in explaining away "foul" and "fair" and trying to find a logical link between these words, all the while losing sight of the *logic of emotion*.[10]

He also suggested how to break the prediction of the witches.

[9] S. Natsume, "Dr. Tsubouchi and *Hamlet*," [in:] *Soseki Zenshu* 1966, XI, pp. 286–291.

[10] S. Natsume, "A Brief Comment and Miscellaneous Thoughts Written on the Margin of My Books," [in:] *Soseki Zenshu* 1967, XVI, p. 23.

(the original) FIRST WITCH. Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.
SECOND WITCH. Not so happy, yet much happier.
THIRD WITCH. Thou shalt not get kings, though thou be none:
(1.3.65–67)

(Soseki's) First Witch. Lesser than Macbeth
2nd W. and greater
3rd W. Not so happy
1st W. yet much happier
2nd W. Thou shalt get kings,
3rd W. though thou be none.[11]

In his opinion, a certain pause was necessary between these sets of antithetical utterances, in order to intensify the sense of wonder on the part of the hearer. These notes show us that Soseki as a novelist paid keen attention to the psychology of the audience in the theater.

In 1904 Soseki wrote a critical essay, "On the Ghost in *Macbeth*," in which he analyzed briefly Macbeth's character, and wrote, "Macbeth is a matter-of-fact fellow, but he is full of poetical interest and imagination. He is not a man of untiring energy but a sturdy man." Then he asked these three questions: (1) Is this apparition that enters on the stage at the banquet scene (3.4) one or actually two ghosts? (2) If it is one, is it Duncan's or Banquo's? (3) Is the ghost that Macbeth saw a hallucination or an apparition? From the psychological context he formed his own conclusion that (1) there was one ghost; (2) it was quite decidedly Banquo's; (3) it was an apparition. These answers may be a matter of common knowledge now, but his powerful and subtle analysis should be noticed. He wrote, "The central figure of this play is Macbeth. The audience's attitude toward Macbeth is not the same as that of his attendants. The writer gave the audience the right to enter more deeply into Macbeth's feelings. The audience can see the ghost that is unseen to the attendants."[12]

In 1913 Tsubouchi disbanded the Bungei Kyokai and retired from the theater. Since then Shakespeare's plays became chiefly the object of study by scholars until the end of World War II. Instead, modern European dramas written by Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekhov, etc. were performed more frequently than those by Shakespeare. In 1953, Choji Kato directed *Macbeth* again for the Kindai Gekijo (Modern Theater) troupe, using Tsubouchi's translation. In 1958, however, Tsuneari Fukuda directed his own translation of *Macbeth* for the Bungaku-za troupe. Hiroshi Akutagawa, who acted Hamlet successfully in 1956, played the role of Macbeth, and Mitsuko

[11] *Ibidem*, p. 24.

[12] S. Natsume, "On the Ghost in *Macbeth*," [in:] *Soseki Zenshu* 1967, vol. XII, pp. 237–251.

Kusayanagi played the part of Lady Macbeth. Tsubouchi thought that Shakespeare would be helpful for the improvement of Japanese drama, but Fukuda considered that Shakespeare would be the touchstone of modern drama in Japan. In short, Tsubouchi directed his attention to the similarities of Shakespeare to *Kabuki*, but Fukuda attached more importance to the heterogeneity of Shakespeare's drama in relation to Japan's traditional drama.[13] Both were not only translators but also directors, but their attitudes toward drama were rather different.

About Shakespearean translation, Fukuda declared, "Ninety percent of the beauty of Shakespeare's poetry would be lost if it were translated into Japanese." But he tried to preserve it as much as possible, avoiding rough-hewn everyday language and using frequently archaic or obsolete words to heighten the poetic effect. His language was speedy and springy, and his translation was rhythmical, lucid, and graceful. As the director of a dramatic troupe, the Subaru, he never rendered Shakespeare's plays without considering the potential performance of them. He thought that a sentence must be uttered by actors without stopping however long it might be. Therefore, he chose short and tight sentences, neglecting the punctuation and lines of the original text. Fukuda confessed frankly that he stood in isolation as if he had been an exile when he translated Shakespeare. In this way, the translator frequently faced the dilemma of interpretation and expression. But Ken-ichi Yoshida, a literary critic, spoke highly of Fukuda's stage translation.[14]

In 1969, Fukuda wrote an essay, "On *Macbeth*," in which he said that Macbeth was the only tragic hero that had no noble spirit. Fukuda also said that Macbeth never repented his evil deeds, and that he could not control his fate. In this essay Fukuda regarded Macbeth as a modern intellectual, and Shakespeare as a Renaissance man who had felt anxiety because he had rebelled against the Renaissance.[15]

Junji Kinoshita, a Shakespearean translator, wrote an essay, "Shakespeare Today," in 1973, in which he also said that Macbeth was a kind of modern man. According to Kinoshita, Macbeth had a nightmarish experience after bloody deeds, and gradually he began to feel that he was a person with a dual personality.[16] Kinoshita was a dramatist, and he always laid stress on elocution while translating Shakespeare. He made every effort to choose the words or phrases whose power was equivalent to the original because he considered that the dramatic power of Shakespeare arose from his language. Kinoshita's translation of *Macbeth*, however, has never been staged.

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[13] T. Anzai, *Shakespeare*, Taishukan-shoten, Tokyo 1978, pp. 156–167.

[14] K. Yoshida, "Shakespeare in Modern Japan," [in:] *Shiryo Shusei*, pp. 18, 421–422.

[15] T. Fukuda, "On *Macbeth*," [in:] *The Literary Reader*, Kawade-shobo-shinsha, Tokyo 1977, pp. 51–56.

[16] J. Kinoshita, "Shakespeare Today," [in:] *The Literary...*, pp. 38–46.

Considering translation, we must direct our notice to the fact that language is not static. The Japanese language has changed since World War II. Many people admire Tsubouchi for what he did, but they admit that his translation has become dated. People of the younger generation, in particular, cannot understand some of the literal words. Here is a gap in language and culture in Japanese translation. To answer their needs, Yushi Odashima started to translate the complete works of Shakespeare in a colloquial style and accomplished the task in the 1970s. In 1971 his translation of *Macbeth* was performed for the first time by Teatro Q troupe in Osaka. His translation was full of topical allusions and wordplays, because he thought that the aim of translation was to entertain the audience. The Shakespeare Theater troupe, whose director was Norio Deguchi, performed all of Odashima's translations at a small underground playhouse, Jan Jan. Here he directed *Macbeth* in 1978. The younger generation of theatergoers was eager to see these productions because of the added elements of rock music and present-day costumes such as T-shirts and jeans.

In 1966 the Kumo, a dramatic troupe, produced *Macbeth*, using Fukuda's translation. The director was Tetsuo Arakawa. Shigeru Kamiyama played the part of Macbeth, while Kyoko Kishida played the role of Lady Macbeth. In 1976 Toshikiyo Masumi directed *Macbeth*, using Odashima's translation. In this production, Mikijiro Hira played the part of Macbeth, and Tamasaburo Bando, a *Kabuki* actor, played the role of Lady Macbeth. He was an *onnagata*, a female impersonator in *Kabuki*. The Japanese term "onnagata" means *a woman's form* or *the woman side*. He speaks and acts as womanly as possible on the stage. Bando acted a beautiful and strong woman in this production. In 1979 Masumi directed Odashima's translation of *Macbeth* for the Haiyu-za troupe, in which Go Kato played the leading part and Momoko Kochi played the role of Lady Macbeth.

Tadashi Suzuki was a director who radically changed the original texts and presented the combined drama made from fragments of various other plays. For example, his first Shakespearean production was *Night and Clock* in 1975. He used mainly Tsubouchi's translation, but the action took place at a mental hospital where a wall clock remained stopped with its hands pointing to two o'clock. Speaking Macbeth's part, an old man invited the people to join him in nocturnal rites. This was a *collage* drawing freely on material from *Macbeth*. Suzuki wanted to describe the modern uncertainty.[17]

In 1980 Yukio Ninagawa directed *NINAGAWA Macbeth* for the Toho dramatic company, using Odashima's translation. Mikijiro Hira played the part of Macbeth, and Komaki Kurihara played the role of Lady Macbeth. Ninagawa set the scene in the sixteenth-century Japan, and changed Macbeth

[17] T. Suzuki, "My Macbeth," *Eureka* 1975, Vol. 7, pp. 134–139.

into a *samurai*, a Japanese feudal lord. He was strongly conscious of the dramatic technique of *Kabuki* plays. In the beginning of the play, the bell of a Buddhist temple tolled, and the two old women opened the double doors of a large household shrine. They watched the drama from the outside of the altar. All the tragic events happened within the shrine until the two women shut the doors. Therefore, the dramatic world of *Macbeth* was presented as a play-within-a-play. Ninagawa wrote in his book, *Thousand Knives, Thousand Eyes*, "When I opened the doors of the household shrine at home and offered sticks of incense, I remembered my dead father and brother, and could communicate with them. Then I thought that Macbeth was one of my ancestors."[18]

On the stage, the cherry blossoms were in full bloom. According to the Japanese legend, there were many corpses under a cherry tree. Therefore, the Japanese audience must have thought of the evanescence of life, when they saw falling cherry blossom petals. Three murderers killed Banquo under the cherry blossoms. Kurihara gave a wonderful performance of a merciless wife, wearing a *kimono* with a cherry blossom pattern. She was very beautiful but cruel. The witches were performed by three male actors because Ninagawa wished to use the acting style of female impersonators in *Kabuki*.

The first performance of *NINAGAWA Macbeth* was not well received in Japan. But it was welcomed by the British people when it was produced in Edinburgh in 1985. After this play, Ninagawa directed Shakespeare's other plays: *The Tempest* in 1987, *Hamlet* in 1988, *King Lear* in 1991, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Othello* in 1994, and *Richard III* in 1999, and *Pericles* in 2003. The production of *The Tempest* represented his attempt to fuse a Shakespearean drama with *Noh* drama. J. R. Mulryne who saw it at the Edinburgh Festival in 1988 was struck with the exotic glamour of the Eastern references.[19] In short, the audience was shocked by Ninagawa's addition of exotic theatricality to Shakespeare.

After Ninagawa proved that Shakespeare could fit in with Japanese culture, *Macbeth* began to be variously performed by many dramatic companies. In 1982 a puppet play of *Macbeth* was produced by the Yuki-za troupe. Makoto Sato directed it, and Magosaburo manipulated the puppet of Macbeth. This successful fusion of Shakespeare with the Japanese puppet show won the prize at the international drama festival at Belgrade in 1986. In 1982 Tomoe Taka directed *Macbeth* in which her husband, Tatsuya

[18] Y. Ninagawa, *Thousand Knives, Thousand Eyes*, Kinokuniya-shoten, Tokyo 1993, pp. 104–107.

[19] J. R. Mulryne, "Introduction" to *Shakespeare and the Japanese Stage*, ed. T. Sasayama, J. R. Mulryne and M. Shewring, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, p. 1.

Nakadai, played the role of Macbeth while Ai Kanzaki played the part of Lady Macbeth. In 1986 Hayaru Fukuda directed *Macbeth*, using his father's translation. In this production, Hiroyuki Nishimoto played the leading role and Yachiyo Otori acted his wife. In the same year, the Super Company presented *Macbeth* by all-male cast in a style of a musical play. Rui Takemura was a director and choreographer who created dancing scenes. A male player acted the part of Lady Macbeth. He seemed to be an incarnation of a witch. In 1987 Giles Brock directed *Macbeth* for the Shochiku dramatic company, using Odashima's translation. In this production, Toru Emori, who played the part of Macbeth, looked like Richard III.

In 1988, a very radical production called *Ryuzanji Macbeth* was performed. Sho Ryuzanji, a director, reconstructed a script based on Odashima's translation. Ryuzanji belonged to the postwar generation that was caught up in the campus disturbance of the late 60s and early 70s. He put the plot of *Macbeth* into a story of guerrillas in the jungles of Southeast Asia. The story was set in the killing field, and it reminded us of *Apocalypse Now*. The background music was *Paint It Black* by the Rolling Stones. In this play, the characters were portrayed as hooligans, and the witches held shopping bags. Ryuzanji made male actors play the parts of two witches, but he never used the acting style of female impersonators in *Kabuki*. Macbeth in a leather jacket stepped off a rope ladder of helicopter with a machine gun, and killed off all guerrillas. Macduff killed Macbeth, and Seyton killed Malcolm. In this play, the social order was never restored. There was only violence during the performance.

In the beginning of the play, men were fighting with knives, and crying, and in the last scene, there were many dead bodies. Therefore, this was an action drama from beginning to end. Ryuzanji wanted to present *Macbeth* as a nightmare, because he was influenced by Jan Kott who wrote as follows:

> The plot of *Macbeth* does not differ from those of the Histories. But plot summaries are deceptive. Unlike in Shakespeare's historical plays, history in *Macbeth* is not shown as the Grand Mechanism. It is shown as a nightmare. [...] History, shown as a mechanism, fascinates by its very terror and inevitability. Whereas nightmare paralyses and terrifies.[20]

While writing his script of *Macbeth*, Ryuzanji thought of Asia where many people died as mere worms in the Vietnam War. In his essay, "*Macbeth* as a B-Class Action Drama," he wrote, "A play must reflect the present age grotesquely and must shoot it."[21] In short, he wished to reflect the

[20] J. Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, trans. B. Taborski, Methuen, London 1965, p. 68.

[21] S. Ryuzanji, "*Macbeth* as a B-Class Action Drama," *Teatro* 1989, No. 559, p. 67.

modern society in this bloody, sweaty, and muddy action drama. He built up an image of Macbeth when he read Kojin Karatani's "On *Macbeth*," in which he said, "Macbeth seems to have fought against fate, but to say the truth, he feels frustrated. He looks like a hero, but he is a miserable and petty man who cannot understand himself. He is just like a modern man."[22] In 1991, this play was performed in Korea, too. After *Macbeth*, Ryuzanji directed *Hamlet, Othello*, and *Richard III* at the underground theater, and he called these productions "The Shakespeare in Asian Series."

In 1989 Tsutomu Yamazaki wrote a script of *Macbeth* and Yuzo Morita directed it. Yamazaki reconstructed the script, using three different translations. Yamazaki played the part of Macbeth, while Kazuyo Mita played the role of Lady Macbeth. In this production, Macbeth and Banquo gave money to witches at a poor town in order to listen to their prophecy. Describing Macbeth as a henpecked coward, Yamazaki composed a parody of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Ryuzanji wrote, "Recently I saw "new" *Macbeth* by Yamazaki and Morita, but I could not find any modernity at all. There were no expressions of nonsense, grotesqueness, and surrealism. I thought this play must be eaten by a pig."[23]

In 1992 Suzuki wrote a script of *Macbeth* and directed it for the Playbox Theater. In the same year *Broken Macbeth* was directed by Shozo Uesugi for the Globe-za company. He wrote a script of this adaptation based on early Japanese history. When Robert Lepage directed *Macbeth* for the Globe-za company in 1993, he used Mori's translation. In this production, Mikijiro Hira played the leading role and Tomoko Maria acted Lady Macbeth. In 1993 Hideo Kanze, a *Noh* actor, made a script of *Macbeth* and directed it. In the same year *Beijing Opera Macbeth* was performed by the Chinese actors in Tokyo. In 2000 Tatsuo Kaneshita directed *Macbeth*, using Fukuda's translation. In this production, only one witch appeared, and Macbeth spoke his soliloquy in a conversational style. Macbeth was a self-destructive man. Lady Macbeth had lost her child, and she held her dead baby in her arms when murderers attacked Macduff's family.

In this way, in the 1980s and the 1990s, some of the Japanese directors tried to create "new" *Macbeth* in Japan. Translators thought that adapting Shakespeare's dramas for the Japanese stage was the directors' task. The directors, who wanted to do something new, thought out all possible devices to produce Shakespeare's plays with fresh inventiveness. For instance, *NINAGAWA Macbeth* was a hazardous experiment. It represented the bold experience of the director to combine a Shakespearean plot with the elements

[22] *Ibidem*, p. 64.
[23] *Ibidem*, pp. 66–67.

of Japan's traditional drama. *Ryuzanji Macbeth*, however, was quite different from *NINAGAWA Macbeth*. Ryuzanji used some parts of Shakespearean world to express his own radical idea. Ninagawa's production was visually bold, but Ryuzanji's production exposed violence that was immanent in Shakespeare's original.

Macbeth is performed as frequently as *Richard III* in Japan today. The main reason is that the audience wants to see both plays which mirror the modern society full of bloody violence, crime, murder, ambition, desire, and stress. We should notice that there are bloody scenes in *Kabuki*, too. Tsubouchi once said that *Kabuki* was similar in bloody tragedy to English Renaissance drama. He also said that *Kabuki* and Elizabethan drama lacked the dramatic unities, and that they included both tragic and comic scenes in one play.[24]

Some of the modern Japanese directors inherited Tsubouchi's idea, and experimented the fusion of Shakespeare's drama and Japan's traditional drama. Ninagawa wrote in his book, "When I made up my mind to become a director, I thought that it was the best way for me to study Japan's traditional drama, such as *Kabuki, Joruri*, and *Bunraku* puppet show, etc. Because I believed that it would give me many helpful hints."[25] In this way, he changed Shakespeare's drama into Japanese drama with Japanese sense of beauty. He is one of the admirers of Kurosawa who directed *The Throne of Blood*, a film adaptation of *Macbeth*. Promoting their native culture overseas, both directors succeeded in "renewing" Shakespeare in Japan.

Japanese culture manifests a continuing interest in Shakespeare's plays. *Macbeth*, in particular, has struck a chord with generations of Japanese writers, directors, and actors, as I have shown. We should recognize that Shakespeare is great enough to transcend linguistic and cultural barriers and that he is truly worldwide.

[24] T. Kawatake, *On Beauty of Kabuki*, Tokyo University Press, Tokyo 1998, p. 11.
[25] Y. Ninagawa, *Thousand Knives...*, p. 250.