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The East-West Dichotomy in the 'Western' Reception of *Throne of Blood*

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Preface

I would like to thank my supervisors, Ton Hoenselaars and Paul Franssen for their great help

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Introduction

All the World's Bard

Shakespeare: the work, the man, the myth. Few others need so little introduction. Living and writing at the turn of the 16th and 17th century, Shakespeare produced poems and plays commonly hailed as the greatest works of the English language. Almost from the moment they were written, Shakespeare's works began travelling outward from the time and place of their origin. At first they followed English merchants and travellers, but soon they appeared in translation as other peoples sought to know and enjoy what was so highly praised in their home country. As globalisation increased, so did Shakespeare's spread around the world. Prompting Dennis Kennedy to write in 1993 that "Shakespeare doesn't belong to any nation or anybody: Shakespeare is foreign to all of us" (16). As Shakespeare becomes not just an English but an intercultural author, so the study of Shakespeare starts to intersect with the study of culture. This means that issues important to the study of culture become important to the study of Shakespeare as well. This thesis seeks to take one such issue, the East-West dichotomy, and apply it to the study of Shakespeare. Specifically, it will apply it to the study of Shakespeare as produced in Japan, choosing the 'Western' reception of Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* as the primary focus.

This thesis seeks to establish not only how the East-West dichotomy can be detected and analysed, but also the importance of including ideas from related fields in the discussion of Shakespeare. The first chapter will explain the East-West dichotomy itself, why it is problematic and how it manifests in regards to Japan. The second will introduce *Throne of Blood*. The third, fourth and fifth chapters will be case studies. Each of these chapters will highlight a specific treatment of *Throne of Blood*, analysing both it and the critics it is in discussion with. These chapters will seek to establish both the presence of the East-West

dichotomy and its harmful influence, or in the case of the fifth chapter: how the absence of the East-West dichotomy results in a stronger and more internally consistent analysis. The end result will be a thesis that stands as both an example and a warning; an example of how a concept like the East-West dichotomy can exist outside of just anthropology, and a warning against allowing its return.

On the Use of the Word 'Western'

The word 'Western', when used in the title and in the first paragraph, is placed in quotations to indicate both that the term itself is innately problematic, and that it is not wholly accurate here. This thesis will include discussion of critics whose heritage stems from regions not usually considered 'Western', and a more accurate term for those discussed might be 'English-speaking'. However that term would invite its own ambiguities and uncertainties, and more importantly is not standard in Shakespeare studies or in anthropology. Therefore the term 'Western' will be used for clarity and conformity to the general standard, but with the caveat that it does not perfectly capture the wide-range of backgrounds of the many critics who are using the English language to engage in discussing Shakespeare or Japan. The same will be true for similar words if and when they are used.

Limitations of this Thesis

There are some clear limitations that will be placed upon this thesis. These limitations stem from the fact that though discussing a Japanese topic, I, the author, possess rudimentary Japanese language skills at best. I have of course studied Japanese language and culture, and even spend six months on exchange to Kyoto University, however I will not pretend that this in any way qualifies me to speak expertly or authoritatively on issues regarding Japanese

language or culture. At the same time, I believe this thesis will still be able to argue solidly and convincingly in spite of this. I offer two points in support of this:

The first point is that being intimately familiar with a language and culture does not automatically mean a person is able to properly analyse it. This is exemplified by Hueng Wah Wong in his article "Eastern and Western Anthropologists Unite in Culture: A Personal Note". In this article Wong takes to task his own research done in his native city of Hong Kong. In this research he analysed the relationship between Japanese expatriates working in the Hong Kong branch of a Japanese company. Wong argues that in spite of being a native Hong Kong-born Chinese researching Japanese workers (a by all accounts closely related culture), he still failed to properly analyse his subjects. In analysing their relationships he subscribed utilitarian motives to their actions, which Wong argues was wrong and failed to see the cultural specificity of his subjects' actions. Wong's point with his self-criticism is that: "there is no a priori reason to assume that simply being a native anthropologist can guarantee an epistemological privilege in understanding non-Western cultures, including his own" (114). Wong can fail in analysing his own culture, while a non-native researcher might succeed. The most important tool for a researcher is not so much their cultural background, but rather the conceptual framework from which a researcher is approaching their subject. That is also the relevance of Wong's article to this thesis. Knowledge and expertise does not prevent someone from failing to understand their subject as a result of a flawed conceptual framework. This leads into the second point:

This thesis seeks to review the conceptual framework of those discussed, and how its effects show in their analyses. Aware of its limitations, this thesis will not in any way seek to analyse or write authoritative regarding issues of Japanese language or culture. This thesis is a discussion of the conceptual framework through which critics have analysed Japanese Shakespeare, specifically *Throne of Blood*. It seeks to analyse this framework, and

specifically the presence of the East-West dichotomy inside of it. It does not seek to challenge the cultural expertise of the critics discussed, and should this become inevitable it will do so solely through the quotation of other critics and experts. Criticism of its subjects will only concern the internal consistency of and conceptual assumptions behind their analysis, not their expertise on matters of Japanese language or culture.

<u>Main Sources for this Thesis</u>

The present discussion of the East-West dichotomy will be based primarily on the anthropological work *Dismantling the East-West Dichotomy* edited by Taylor & Francis. Other important works will be *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Japanese Culture* edited by Yoshio Sugimoto and *Recentering Globalization* by Koichi Iwabuchi. The discussion of *Throne of Blood* will be based on *The Films of Akira Kurosawa* by Donald Richie, as well as the assorted Shakespeare critics discussed throughout this thesis. The discussion of *Macbeth* will be based on the Penguin Classics edition edited by G.K. Hunter.

Chapter I: Introduction to the East-West Dichotomy

What is the East-West Dichotomy?

The East-West dichotomy, as defined by this thesis, is the concept that humanity can be divided into two distinct and opposing cultural blocs, 'East' and 'West', and that humanity can be understood through understanding the differences between these two. The concept originated in the 19th century. Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney posits that "[the East-West dichotomy] is a paradigm rising out of the nineteenth-century Eurocentric view of the world, on the one hand, and of the 'structure and event' paradigm in history and anthropology, on the other" (16). In a similar vein, Victor Lieberman discusses "the overwhelming intellectual – nay, emotional – need to explain ever widening power inequalities between Euro-America and the rest of the world during the eighteenth to mid-twentieth centuries" (466). The latter in particular explains why the dichotomy only distinguishes between two cultural blocs: because its original raison d'être was not to accurately describe the global cultural landscape, but merely to compare and contrast the (often implicitly superior) West against the rest of the world. The details of the origin and development of the dichotomy throughout the centuries would be a thesis in its own right, and so cannot be done here. What is important to this thesis is that it exists, to this day, and is quite widespread. This is not always obvious, as the East-West dichotomy usually does not exist as a formal theory or ideology. It is not a movement with official advocates and a monthly magazine. In that case it would be easy to identify its presence and influence. Instead it often manifests itself not directly, but indirectly as an underlying assumption upon which people build their theories and ideologies. For example Samuel Huntington in his 1993 article "Clash of Civilizations?" does not subscribe himself to a theory or movement of East-West dichotomy. Nevertheless, the East-West dichotomy is the very fundament of his argument, which in essence is little more than an expansion of the

dichotomy to include more than two cultural blocks coupled with a deep pessimism regarding humanity's ability to get along peacefully. Huntington is of course not a lone case. Lynne Y. Nakano notes in response to Huntington that "The idea that Japan and the West exist on opposite sides of an East-West spectrum of cultural difference has appeared regularly in popular and academic literature in Japan, Europe and North America for over a century" (189). It is in this manner that the East-West dichotomy continues to influence people and events to this day. It is, at its core, a perspective through which people structure humanity. Rather than subscribing to it in the way one subscribes to liberalism or socialism, it is an assumed part of peoples' worldview which manifests itself in the way they structure and analyse humanity.

<u>Problems with the East-West Dichotomy</u>

Considering that one of the books listed as a main source for this thesis is *Dismantling the East-West Dichotomy*, it should come as little surprise that this thesis holds that the East-West dichotomy is a deeply flawed concept. For one, as might have already been surmised from the preceding paragraph, there are grave political concerns with respect to its historical application. In the 19th and early 20th century, the East-West dichotomy was used to both explain and justify Western imperialism. More recently Huntington's variant "shaped US government anti-Islamic rhetoric and policy in the months following the September 11 terrorist attacks, thus inflaming passions and encouraging the conflict of which it foretold" (Nakano, 189). Even today much of the rhetoric behind Islamophobia in both Europe and America follows Huntington's variant of East-West dichotomous thinking. Even more egregious in the context of this thesis is that the East-West dichotomy is a concept without a factual basis. Specifically it is factually wrong in that it presumes it possible to demarcate humanity into clearly definable cultural groupings.

Nakano writes that "The East-West dichotomy is based on the assumption that cultures and civilisations are self-contained, internally consistent entities" (191). This is reflected in Huntington when he argues that "The culture of a village in southern Italy may be different from that of a village in northern Italy, but both will share in a common Italian culture that distinguishes them from German villages" (24). Huntington sees humanity as made up of sets of clearly demarcated cultural entities, increasing in scale from the village, regional to national cultures and the cultural 'civilization' at the top. Each village has their own distinct culture, groups of villages together form distinct regional cultures, which together form distinct national cultures, which in blocs form distinct 'civilizations'.

The first problem with this is that it enforces homogeneity onto heterogenic groupings. This is aptly illustrated by Harumi Befu, writing in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Japanese Culture*:

For example, cultural narratives of 'Japan' evoke a country of four seasons: spring with cherry blossoms, a summer of sweltering heat, autumn with beautiful foliage colours and a bitterly cold winter. But these evocations are biased in favour of central Japan – a region from Kansai (Kyoto-Osaka) to Kantō (Tokyo) – where the power to create such cultural narratives has historically resided. These images are a creation of the intellectuals based at the centre of Japan, and it is only from this vantage point that these evocations ring true.

From the peripheries of Japan, these seasonal changes are only partially true at best. As celebrated in the literature for eons, the famed cherry blossoms are supposed to be viewed from late March to mid-April. But school children in Naha, Okinawa, where the cherry trees blossom in January, simply have to memorise what they do not experience as prescribed in textbooks: namely that cherry blossoms are viewed in

March-April. So do children in Hokkaidō, where they blossom well into May. The

sweltering, hot and humid summer is unknown in Hokkaidō, as is the phenomenon of

tsuyu, or 'plum rain' (the drizzly rainy season from June to July), so central to Japan's

culturally defined seasonality, which covers Kanto and the south but is decreasingly

real and meaningful in Tohoku – the northern-most part of Honshū – and not at all real

or meaningful in Hokkaidō, where *tsuyu* is non-existent. Similarly, autumn colours,

celebrated in haiku and *waka* poetry, are unknown or diminished in Okinawa. The

bitter cold of central Japan is foreign to Okinawans. Hokkaidō and Okinawa –

territories that were added to Japan in the 19th century – simply do not feature in

Japanese central narratives of seasonality. They are forever condemned to the

peripheries, not only literally at the southern and northern ends of the island chain, but

also figuratively in the culturally constructed seasonality of Japan. (22-23)

The East-West dichotomy, in order to establish distinct cultural entities, by necessity "hides

the complexity" (Creighton, 103) and the internal diversity of the cultures grouped together.

But, as Befu shows, the dichotomy does not provide an equal share generalisation where all

parties have equal loss and gain. It is an imposition of the majority onto the minority. It

institutionalizes the dominant culture, the centre, as the norm and the remainder as deviant

and peripheral. One might counter that the problem in Befu's example is the inclusion of

Okinawa and Hokkaidō into 'Japanese' culture, and that if the latter was reserved to labelling

only the Kansai/Kantō areas it would be more correct. This would be a flawed approach,

because it fails to take into account statistics and probability. Even if the selection were

narrowed, there would still be areas and peoples that are statistical outliers. The nature of

probability prescribes that in any heterogenic grouping that is not completely random there

will always be outliers. The problem with the East-West dichotomy is that it seeks to enforce

homogeneity on heterogenic humanity. As Margaret Lock writes: "We are all biologically and culturally diverse; such diversity is not amenable to dichotomisation" (46). The attempt to do so will always lead to generalisation and the subsequent imposition of the dominant or the majority onto the rest.

The second problem is the demarcation of cultural groupings itself. The East-West dichotomy supposes that it is possible to draw lines where one culture ends and another begins. Huntington, for example, allows for some fluidity but nevertheless considers German culture and Italian culture to be fixed and separate entities. They are allowed similarities due to both being part of the even greater cultural grouping of Western civilization, but Germans are Germans and Italians are Italians. In reality cultures are fluid entities, continuously both influencing and being influenced by each other. In the words of Ohnuki-Tierney: "Every culture is a product of a *series* of, and *continuous* interpenetration between the external/global and the local. Each conjuncture requires a reinterpretation of the foreign elements, which in turn transforms the local, which had already undergone similar processes before" (16). She notes how "the Romans […] took over the tutelary gods of cities which they conquered and claimed that they were local manifestations of their own gods" (15), and "the Japanese adopted Buddhism and claimed it to be the manifestation of the native shintoism" (15). In both cases the result was a new 'Roman' or 'Japanese' culture which was a combination of the original and the new influences. The term combination is used because as Ohnuki-Tierney continues, the word hybrid is inappropriate: "Such terms as 'hybrids' and 'creoles' are predicated upon the notion of a 'pure' culture" while in reality "Culture is a product of interaction between cultures, each of which is 'hybrid'" (16). That is to say, all cultures are shaped and born from the interaction or merging of various cultural influences, and as such all are already hybrids. The East-West dichotomy supposes that there are boundaries at which similarities end and differences begin. In reality, similarities and differences neither end nor

begin, but are always present. It is an intrinsic part of culture that it will include influences from the outside. Regardless of whether the boundary is set at the village, region, nation or civilization levels, as long as there has been communication (and in today's globalised economy, that will always be true), there will always be influences from outside of whatever boundary has been set. Cultures that have existed in close proximity to each other will be more similar, as there will have been more mutual influencing; however the same will be true for individuals. An Italian living close to the Austrian border will share similarities with their German neighbours that they do not share with other Italians. Linguistic and national barriers can tie people together culturally, but they do not stop people from passing those barriers and both influencing and being influenced by those beyond. The East-West dichotomy is too rigid; it disregards the differences inside cultures, while disregarding the similarities between different cultures. It enforces similarities on people even when they might not exist, as shown in Befu's example, and it enforces differences when there might be similarities. An example of the latter is illustrated by Millie Creighton in her article "Two Wests Meet Japan: How a Three-Way Comparison of Japan with Canada and the United States Shifts Culture Paradigms". Creighton was born American and spent several years working and studying in Japan before taking an academic post and settling down in Canada. She recounts how before settling in Canada she had studied gift-giving in Japanese culture. Specifically, she had studied and discussed the act of gift-giving as a social obligation rather than a means to communicate affection. She recounts how, at the time, she and the other students found the practice of socially mandated gift-giving, especially to ones teachers and superiors, odd and had even discussed whether they could be seen as constituting bribes. While in Canada years later, she experienced it herself as her son came home from school annoyed that he was the only child whose mother had not given him a gift for the teacher for Christmas (and later again at the end of the school year). A custom that had seemed so odd from an American

perspective turned out to have a very close equivalent in Canadian culture. In a second anecdote she recounts how a Japanese exchange student had run into difficulties with her Canadian host family. The student had learned in Japan that 'Westerners' expected direct answers, and when she did so by giving a clear no to a request from her Canadian host, she had ended up offending her host. The argument here is of course not to use anecdotes to claim that Canada and Japan are somehow very similar cultures. The point here, as it is with Creighton, is to show how the East-West dichotomy's focus on distinct cultural boundaries and differences can hinder understanding. The view of set boundaries and clear distinctions between Germans and Italians or between 'Western' and 'Eastern' culture is complicated by the reality of continual cultural exchange shaping all cultures. Creighton suggests in her article, for example, that rather than a dichotomous opposition of individualist Western cultures against collectivist Eastern cultures, the correct perspective is to see a continuum of approaches to how a culture considers the individual vis-à-vis society. One in which America, Japan and Canada would all have their own position. Rather than placed within the confines of 'Western' or 'Eastern' civilizations, cultures should be considered as the fluid entities they are, and treated on their own terms.

In the end the core of the problem with the East-West dichotomy might be summed up as that it both simplifies and over-emphasises culture at the expense of understanding the individual. As shown above, the concept of demarcated, definable cultural groupings in which people fit is flawed. This can also be turned around: people do not fit into demarcated definable cultural groupings. Though a person's cultural background is a major part of their personality, it is not the totality of their person. This is one of the conclusions of Peter Ackermann in his article "But what happens with Religion?" which discusses a research project into the differences between religious attitudes of Japanese and Swiss people. The project included extensive discussion with and amongst the group of Japanese and Swiss

participants. Though he notes many cultural differences between both sides regarding their views and beliefs on religion, he equally notes that "On the other hand, it was also becoming clear that no individual could be fully equated with his or her cultural context, but merely that he or she was relating to, and in a sense also struggling with, a cultural frame" (162). The mistake of the East-West dichotomy and its proponents is the desire to explain people as nothing more than subsets of culture. In order to do so it ignores the complexity that results from the fact that each individual human is a unique entity. It forgets that culture, for as much as it does exist, is never the full definition of an individual. It is a framework in relation to which the individual will analyse and structure their lives, but every individual will still relate to their culture in their own way.

The East-West Dichotomy in Japan

As explained earlier, the East-West dichotomy is more a concept than an organised theory or movement. As a result it manifests with different subtleties and nuances according to the time and place. Huntington provided a clear and obvious example of the East-West dichotomy in action, but his theories should not be equated with the East-West dichotomy itself. Huntington's example is but a specific manifestation of the East-West dichotomy at one time and place. Huntington wrote at the end of the cold war, and following the first signs of economic resurgence of the formerly colonised, especially in Asia. His theory reflects the feelings of a West at once triumphant and trepid about what would come next. As this thesis deals with the East-West dichotomy in the specific case of Japan, it is important to establish how it has manifested in that specific context. To do so, this thesis will identify three myths as recurring features of the East-West dichotomy's manifestation in relation to discussions of Japan and Japanese culture. These are the myths of Japan as the exotic Other, Japan as exceptionally unique, and Japan as the great assimilator.

Before addressing these myths themselves, it must also be noted that across all three it is often not exactly the *East*-West dichotomy. Instead, as Peter Knecht argues: "in Japan it is, I believe, more often 'Japan' that functions as the opposite term to 'West'" (91). That is, it would be more accurate to speak of a Japan-West dichotomy. In conjunction with this stands Koichi Iwabuchi, who argues that Asia, if acknowledged at all, is considered only as a third category in an Asia-Japan-West triad (6-7). In both their arguments they are primarily concerned with Japan's perspective towards the West. In the West the perspective is, of course, different. As noted before, the West has often lumped together many nations, Japan included, into what were often arbitrary blocs. However the focus of this thesis is on Western perceptions which deal specifically with Japan, rather than general perceptions of Asia or the 'East' as a whole. Because of this the same sense of a Japan-West dichotomy also applies to the Western perspectives discussed here. This leads into the first myth.

The first is the myth of Japan as the exotic Other. Admittedly, of the three myths the first is the least specific to Japan. It is the practice of seeing and depicting a foreign culture not on its own terms, but as an Other in comparison to the Self. It happens not just in the case of Japan, but in all cultures, and has been widely documented and criticised. As such it should require little additional explanation here. Suffice to say its main problem is that it does not analyse or engage with the foreign culture. Instead the foreign culture simply becomes the canvas on which are painted the originator's culture's concerns and self-image. Such works or research reveals more about their creators than their supposed topics. Befu gives examples of this in tracing American views through the 20th century. Before the Second World War, Befu posits, the image of Japan was as a "quaint, exotic country" or as a "frail, feminine country of which the masculine West was able to take unfair advantage with impunity" (24). During the Second World War "Japan was portrayed as being 'treacherous' and 'sneaky'. A monkey was the favourite animalistic representation of the Japanese" (25). In the post-war period this

became an image of Japan as "a backward country badly needing reform in all aspects of life" (25). In all cases these perceptions had more to do with America and its relationship to Japan, than with any accurate depiction of Japan or its people. Less historically based and more relevant to this thesis' concern is the other example Befu gives:

> Another biased US view of Japan positions Japan as an opposite of itself. Thus Americans are supposed to be individualistic, while the Japanese are said to be groupist – where Japanese groupism is definitely given a lower value status than US individualism. (25)

The case of Creighton discussed earlier illustrates the problem with this type of perspective.

This leads into the second myth: Japan as exceptionally unique. It may seem natural to some readers that the Japanese would have resisted the exotifying of their people and culture. What actually happened, though, was that the Japanese accepted the Western perspective into their self-image through a "conscious self-Orientalizing discourse" (Iwabuchi, 7). The Western narrative of Japan as a wholly different and opposite culture to the West was turned into a nationalistic narrative of Japan as a wholly different and unique nation unlike any other. Iwabuchi describes this process as "a narrative that at once testifies to a firm incorporation into, and a subtle exploitation of, Western Orientalist discourse" (7). The epitome of this view is what has been termed *Nihonjinron* discourses, the word itself literally translating to 'theories on the Japanese people'. These discourses have "attracted a large audience captivated by portrayals of Japan and the Japanese as being exceptionally unique and fundamentally different from Western societies and Westerners" (Sugimoto 4). The reasons why such an essentialised interpretation of in this case Japanese culture is incorrect should be

established by now. The extensive quote from Befu used in the previous section was written in the context of disproving *Nihonjinron* theories. Sugimoto adds even more examples to this:

> First, a majority of Japanese work in small companies with fewer than 300 employees and do not possess four-year university degrees, yet the world of large-company employees with high education is often used as the empirical base to characterise Japanese culture. Second, while the cultural differences between the residents of eastern Japan (whose centres are Tokyo and Yokohama) and those of western Japan (Osaka, Kyoto and Kobe) are widely acknowledged, this does not appear to have had significant impact on *Nihonjinron*. (4)

Again, the problem with such views is that on a fundamental level, they are flawed as they seek to enforce homogeneity on heterogenic populations. On a practical level the problem is that the decision as to what constitutes the norm is usually made by the intellectual elite and politically powerful, who use it to enforce their views and preferences at the expense of the weak and the minorities. Befu adds a third problem to the above:

> Yet another important flaw, which these critics have failed to argue, is that features of the essentialised Japan propounded in *Nihonjinron* do not account for some of the most important events in Japanese history. Japan's first major transformation took place when Chinese culture was introduced from Korea. This transformation involved the introduction of elaborate political structures in government, a Buddhism rivalling the native Shintō, a writing system which allowed recording of history and literary accomplishments for the first time, and continental art and architecture in the form of

magnificent edifices and refined Buddhist sculpture. None of these achievements are

registered as part of the essentialised Japanese culture. (26)

Befu adds a second example of the deep Western influence following the opening and

modernisation of Japan in the late 19th century. What Befu and others often overlook is that

there is a response to this specific complaint. One which allows for these foreign influences

while maintain the essentialised dichotomous view of Japanese culture. It is one of the main

themes of Koichi Iwabuchi, already quoted before, in his book *Recentering globalization*,

which researches the exportation of Japanese popular culture to East- and South-East Asia.

This response constitutes the third and final myth.

The myth of Japan as the great assimilator is the last of the three myths identified by

this thesis as the primary manifestations of the East-West dichotomy in the context of Japan.

If the second myth constituted the Japanese responding to Western dichotomisation by

appropriating it into their national identity, the third myth constitutes an attempt to reconcile

this belief in an essential Japanese culture with the obvious presence of foreign (Western)

influences in Japanese society. Iwabuchi explains it as follows:

In the course of Japan's modern history, in which West-centric transnational and

cross-cultural encounters, conflicts and connections have been accelerated at various

levels, a particular self-image of the Japanese national essence has been developed so

as to construct a modern national identity in the face of Western domination. Japan is

said to be a vociferously assimilating cultural entity: The Japanese modern experience

is described in terms of appropriation, domestication, and indigenization of the foreign

(predominantly associated with the West) in a way that reinforces an exclusivist

notion of Japanese national/cultural identity. It is in this sense that I argue that the

Japanese capacity for cultural borrowing and appropriation does not simply articulate a process of hybridization in practice, but it is strategically represented as a key feature of Japanese national identity itself. This mode of self-representation, which I am calling 'strategic hybridism', is a principal form of Japan's trans/nationalism discourses. Friedman (1994, 209) argues that, 'The establishment and maintenance of creole identity are a social act rather than a cultural fact'. Japanese hybridism aims to discursively construct an image of an organic cultural entity, 'Japan', that absorbs foreign cultures without changing its national/cultural core. As Yoshimoto (1994, 196) suggests, the problematic [sic] of hybridism arises from the nationalistic reconciliation of the two 'contradictory principles of cultural production–obsession with native uniqueness and the indifference of origins'. Foreign origin is supposed to be purged by the Japanese tradition of cultural indigenization. Japan's hybridism strategically attempts to suppress ambivalence generated by the act of cross-fertilization, relentlessly linking the issue of cultural contamination with an exclusivist national identity, so that impurity sustains purity. (53-54)

The problem with this is not the notion of cross-cultural influence itself, which as established earlier is a fundamental feature of all cultures, but the way in which it is used to maintain an essentialised dichotic view of culture. Ohnuki-Tierney also argued against this type of view specifically:

[T]he local was never a solid structure/culture selectively absorbing foreign elements through reinterpretation, only to reproduce itself. Rather, the global/local interaction is a mutually constituent process in which the local, through the actions of historical

agents, acts upon the outside forces, which become transformed, while the local, in

turn, undergoes changes because of the global. (15)

The myth of Japan as the great assimilator posits that following arrival in Japan, foreign

influences are 'made Japanese'. This myth is based upon the assumptions that there is an

essential 'Japanese' culture, and that foreign influences are somehow 'purified' of their

foreignness. As established, neither of these assumptions are in line with the realities of

culture and cultural exchange.

Though all three myths are identified separately, they also form a mutually reinforcing

entity. Western exoticising of Japanese culture as utterly different and opposite enables

Japanese positions of Japan as different and unique. Likewise, an adoption by Westerners of

Japanese rhetoric regarding their own uniqueness reinforces Western conceptions of Japan as

utterly different from the West. The myth of Japan as the great assimilator helps both sides

maintain their positions. It allows Western perspectives to maintain Japan as different in spite

of the wealth of Western and modern influences in Japanese society. Because these influences

have either been 'made Japanese', or are simply not a part of the essential Japanese culture

that has been maintained and has 'purified' the foreign influences of any cultural value.

Likewise, it allows for Japanese perspectives to maintain concepts of a 'pure' and

essentialised Japanese culture by denying or undoing the foreignness of foreign influences.

Culture and Identity

Having established the East-West dichotomy, its problems and manifestations, this

thesis considers it necessary to make one final point: that there is a difference between culture

and identity. This is not to add to the above discussion of the East-West dichotomy, but to

avoid possible misunderstanding as to its interpretation. The difference between culture and

identity is always acknowledged by this thesis and by the many scholars discussed, but not always explicitly so. As a result there may appear some confusion between the terms, which this thesis wishes to avoid by making the distinction explicit. Though there is no such thing as an essential American, Japanese or even Indian *culture*, there is such a thing as an American, Japanese or Indian *identity*. The two are usually related in that national (or ethnic) identities use a belief in national cultures as part of their make-up. But a thing itself and the belief in said thing are not the same. As established, a Japanese or American or any demarcated and essentialised culture does not exist. The identity of being Japanese, or American, or anything else does exist, and is a great driving force in people both as individuals and as nations. If it is argued that the idea that all Japanese or Americans share an essentialised Japanese or American culture is wrong, this should not be taken to imply that they do not still share a Japanese or American identity. But this should be taken as an identity is: a part of people's self-image, how they view themselves and others, rather than how they and others actually are. The study of people's identity and self-image are not a part of this thesis. It is concerned with supposedly factual analyses, and as such the thing itself is what is important, and belief regarding said thing is only relevant in so far as it has influenced people's analyses. This should not be misunderstood as this thesis or its sources failing to recognise the presence and importance of cultural identity to people's lives.

Chapter II: Introduction to *Throne of Blood*

Introduction

Having established the East-West dichotomy, its problems, and its manifestations in Japan, this thesis can now move on to the meat of its discussion: the dichotomy's presence in the study of Japanese Shakespeare productions. Steve Tillis already establishes the East-West dichotomy's presence in global theatre studies as a whole in his article "East, West and World Theatre". He traces the beginning to Leonard C. Pronko's book *Theatre East and West* from 1967. He argues that Pronko's book had a great positive influence. Before this book, Western scholars were only interested in Western theatre traditions. Pronko strongly advocated the validity and importance of non-Western theatre traditions. Yet at the same time, Tillis argues, Pronko's books established a tradition of thinking about non-Western theatre through the lens of the East-West dichotomy. The rest of Tillis' argument is concerned with arguing against the dichotomy. If the East-West dichotomy is and has been present in global theatre studies as a whole, it should come as no surprise if it is present in Shakespeare studies as well.

To establish its presence, this thesis will examine the Western reception of Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*. This film was released in 1957, and is based on the Shakespeare play *Macbeth*. *Throne of Blood* was chosen because it is a work that is both old and well-known, meaning there is a wealth of critical material available. This chapter will introduce *Throne of Blood* in general. Subsequently the third through fifth chapters of this thesis will deal with specific examples of the East-West dichotomy's presence in *Throne of Blood*'s reception. Each chapter will review three critics and analyse their arguments to establish the presence or absence of dichotomous thinking. To provide an image of *Throne of Blood*'s reception as a whole, the critics discussed will not be viewed in isolation, but their treatments will include analyses of the critics they themselves refer back to. Though a true

comprehensive look at *Throne of Blood*'s reception would require that all critics are given equal time and attention, that is beyond the scope of this thesis. As such, multiple critics will be looked at, but only the three primary case studies will be analysed in full detail. Still, there should be enough critics discussed to establish that this thesis is not dealing with mere isolated incidents, but that those discussed represent wider trends throughout the field. The three case studies will be: Chapter six of *Shakespeare in Japan*: "Shakespeare and Japanese Film: Kurosawa Akira" by Tetsuo Kishi and Graham Bradshaw; "Weaving the spider's web: interpretation of character in Kurosawa Akira's Throne of Blood (Kumonosu-jô)" by Paula von Loewenfeldt; and finally "Silence and Sound in Kurosawa's Throne of Blood" by Lei Jin. Kishi and Bradshaw were chosen because they exemplify critics analysing through the lens of the East-West dichotomy. Von Loewenfeldt was chosen because she exemplifies critics who reject the East-West dichotomy, but have yet to find a successful method for analysing without it. Lei Jin was chosen because she exemplifies critics who have successfully moved beyond the East-West dichotomy, and are analysing works on their own terms.

<u>*Throne of Blood*</u>

This discussion of *Throne of Blood* will be based on its corresponding chapter in the book *The Films of Akira Kurosawa* by Donald Richie. Richie's work is chosen as it is "the first and still the most influential full-length study of Kurosawa's films in English" (Kishi & Bradshaw, 131). It has also only been minimally used by the other critics examined by this thesis, allowing it to serve as a neutral third party reference for the reader.

Richie's *Throne of Blood* chapter opens with a short introduction to the film. He notes how Kurosawa had long wished to make a *Macbeth* film. *Macbeth* was Kurosawa's favourite Shakespeare play, and in addition Kurosawa wanted to make a film set in feudal Japan. The vast majority of Japanese historical films presented an unrealistic, romantic image of Japan's

past. Kurosawa objected to this trend, and wished to counter it in *Throne of Blood*, as he had also done before in *Seven Samurai*. On a thematic level, Kurosawa saw in *Macbeth* a "parallel between medieval Scotland and medieval Japan which illuminated contemporary society" (Richie, 115). Richie quotes Kurosawa describing this as the theme of "how man repeats himself over and over again" (115). Richie argues that Kurosawa saw this cycle as innately destructive, and that throughout his films Kurosawa's heroes attempt to destroy it. In addition *Macbeth* was attractive to Kurosawa because Macbeth is a hero who "tries to realize himself" (115), and his tragic flaw is the inability to do so fully leading him to chase mere power. Another attractive point was that *Macbeth* is, Richie argues, a cautionary tale. He argues that in *Throne of Blood* Kurosawa is "exclusively concerned with limitation, negation, death" (115). As a result, Richie continues, *Throne of Blood* "is a finished film with no loose ends. The characters have no future. Cause and effect is the only law. Freedom does not exist […] Here Kurosawa makes his point by allowing no hope and no escape" (115). From here Richie proceeds to summarise the film's plot. He is rather brief in this, making it more useful to quote him wholesale:

> The single source is Shakespeare and the film follows the play very closely, though there are a number of minor differences from the original. General Washizu and his friend, General Miki, are lost in the forest and meet a witch who prophesies that Washizu will reign but that Miki's heirs will prevail. They are rewarded for valor but Washizu kills, first, his lord, and then, Miki. A second visit to the witch tells him that he is safe until the forest moves. Miki's son attacks the castle using as protection and camouflage the trees of the forest. Washizu's son is still-born, his wife goes mad, and he is immolated by the arrows of his own men.

Other than the differences above, Kurosawa has included a number of new scenes (in particular that magical scene where the birds flee the ruined forest and invade the castle) and has further simplified the characters. His Macbeth is not grand. Rather, he is possessed from the beginnings, he is compulsive, he is so profoundly afraid that he kills to insure that he himself is not killed. He is a little man, lacking in grandeur precisely because he is not torn between desires. Rather, he is ruled by ambition and we watch his rise and fall unmoved. At the same time, Kurosawa has so prodigiously illustrated this fall, so subtly indicated the parallels, the hidden meanings, so artfully prepared the traps and pitfalls and–in so doing–so fully explained the patter, that this cautionary tale is truly cautious. (116)

As seen, the story generally follows the plot of *Macbeth*, but without many of its subplots. Richie does not spell out the direct equivalents between the characters, though. To avoid any future confusion this thesis will do so in his stead: Washizu is Macbeth, Miki is Banquo, Asaji is Lady Macbeth, Lord Tsuzuki is King Duncan and the forest witch replaces the weird sisters. There are some rough equivalents for the other *Macbeth* characters, but their subplots have been removed and as a result they do not function as true counterparts to the Shakespearean versions. Following his summary, Richie continues with his own treatment of *Throne of Blood*. This treatment is largely in line with Richie's opening argument, though he also establishes the presence and importance of influences from Noh theatre in the film and of course covers the various cinematic techniques Kurosawa employs. In discussing the film's meaning Richie adds another quote from Kurosawa, where he says that with *Throne of Blood* he intends to show why humans "can't […] live with each other with more good will" (119). Richie's final conclusion is that in *Throne of Blood*, the reason for this is ambition. In Richie's argument, Kurosawa seeks to establish that to be human is to have ambition, and that

this ambition leads to destruction. As a result humanity is trapped in a continuous cycle of ambition and destruction. The reason the characters in *Throne of Blood* cannot live in peace is "because they are human" (122).

Richie's treatment is thorough, but it looks at *Throne of Blood* from a film studies perspective. There is little consideration to *Throne of Blood* as a Shakespeare adaptation. The following chapters of this thesis will discuss critics who do consider the Shakespearean angle.

Chapter III: *Shakespeare in Japan* **Chapter Six: "Shakespeare and Japanese**

Film: Kurosawa Akira" by Tetsuo Kishi and Graham Bradshaw

Introduction

Shakespeare in Japan began, as its authors explain in its preface, with a short article

by Tetsuo Kishi on Shakespeare in Japan. A chairman of Athlone Press (Brian Southam) saw

the article and suggested a full-length book on the subject. Kishi agreed, and invited Graham

Bradshaw to help as the co-author (Kishi & Bradshaw, xii). At the time of the book's

publishing, Kishi was professor emeritus of English at Kyoto University, and former president

of the Shakespeare Society of Japan. Bradshaw was teaching at Chuo University and editor of

The Shakespeare International Yearbook (Kishi & Bradshaw, back cover). Between them, the

authors combine a wealth of expertise on Shakespeare both in and outside Japan, and the

book's contents reflect this. At the same time *Shakespeare in Japan* is not a comprehensive

survey of Japanese Shakespeare productions, historical or contemporary. Rather, it seeks to be

a study of the phenomenon of Japanese Shakespeare productions. Kishi and Bradshaw put it

as: "what happened when Shakespeare's works which belong to a long and sophisticated

tradition met another tradition which was no less long and sophisticated but almost totally

different, both culturally and linguistically?" (vii). To this end they divide the book into two

parts. The first discusses the attempts at translating Shakespeare into Japanese, and the second

deals with actual productions and adaptations on stage and in literature and film. They write

that they expect that the first part will be most controversial in Japan, as they positively

appraise oft-criticized translators. They also expect that the second part will be most

controversial in the West as they criticize oft-praised producers and argue that most Western

appraisals of Japanese Shakespeare productions have been Anglo-centric in nature. They also

give an account of their theoretical underpinnings. They write that they:

[S]ubscribe to Hans-Georg Gadamer's view that our response to works of art are always, and inevitably, culturally and historically bounded. [...] it is a condition of our responding at all. According to this view, it might even be argued that any and every Shakespearean production, reading or interpretation inevitably begins as one or another kind of mental staging, and then, no less inevitably, issues as a kind of translation. (ix)

This is a view this thesis largely agrees with. Overall, *Shakespeare in Japan* is a highly informative and well-structured book. Kishi and Bradshaw make many points that other (English) critics discussing Japanese Shakespeare productions either neglect or are simply not informed enough to make. However, their discussion of *Throne of Blood* is flawed. Kishi and Bradshaw force their observations into the East-West dichotomy and in doing so weaken their analysis of the film.

<u>Kishi and Bradshaw on Past Critics</u>

Kishi and Bradshaw begin their treatment of *Throne of Blood* with a rough overview of the history of the film's critical reception in the West as they see it. They begin with the *New York Times* review of *Throne of Blood* from 1961. This review has become infamous for not only lambasting what is now considered a great film, but doing so in a rather culturally insensitive way. Bosley Crowther, whom Kishi and Bradshaw note had praised Kurosawa in the past, wrote that "lightly is the only way to take this substantially serio-comic rendering", that "probably Mr. Kurosawa, who directed the classic 'Rashomon,' did not intend it to be amusing for his formalistic countrymen", and that "To our western eyes, it looks fantastic and funny" (Crowther). Yet, as Kishi and Bradshaw continue, only a few years later Peter Brook

and Peter Hall would begin to heap praise on Kurosawa's *Macbeth* film. This is not difficult to explain, they argue, if one looks at the contemporary Western debate. At the time the Western debate was shifting from a "Christian providentialist view" (126) to a more complicated view proposed by Jan Kott or Wilbur Sanders. The former view reads *Macbeth* as a story of evil receiving its just desserts, with a strong focus on the resumption of just kingship. The latter, more complicated view, stresses "the uncertainties that complicate the seemingly strong or triumphal sense of closure" (Kishi & Bradshaw, 127). This is exemplified in a quote from Pauline Kael's discussion of Polanski's *Macbeth*: "[at the film's end] the cycle of bloodletting is about to begin again" (Kishi & Bradshaw, 127). To the earlier interpretations, *Throne of Blood* would have seemed nonsensical. To the latter, it was ahead of its time and starkly accurate. In this light Kishi and Bradshaw argue that the earlier negative views of *Throne of Blood* "seemed to reflect the perennial tendency of Anglocentric critics to regard their view of Shakespeare (whatever that happens to be at the time) as the *real* Shakespeare, and foreign views as more or less exotic 'versions' of Shakespeare" (127). They also suggest that this did not stop once the appraisals turned positive. Rather, the critics "continued to assimilate their sense of what Kurosawa was doing to their changed but still Western sense of what Shakespeare was doing" (128). Western critics were interpreting *Throne of Blood* according to Western debates on nihilism and its relation to *Macbeth.* In Kishi and Bradshaw's view any perception of such notions in *Throne of Blood* is the result of misinterpreting what are actually Buddhist and Noh influences. Even worse, some critics outright refused to see *Throne of Blood* as 'Shakespeare'. Kishi and Bradshaw chose Frank Kermode as their example of this attitude. They break down Kermode's objection (from his 1972 article in *The New York Review of Books*) as simply being that: "There is no attempt in *Throne of Blood* to translate Shakespeare's words into Japanese *words*" (Kishi & Bradshaw, 128). Kishi and Bradshaw raise three objections to this: firstly that there is still a very strong

connection between Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*, secondly that (as they discuss in detail elsewhere in their book) translating Shakespeare into Japanese is neither simple nor straightforward, and thirdly, as they put it: "In our view, the most thoughtful response would consider how Kurosawa's Shakespeare is always and profoundly Japanese" (129).

Already, Kishi and Bradshaw's treatment is starting to become problematic. Their argument that Kurosawa's Shakespeare is "always and profoundly Japanese" is highly suggestive of the myth of Japan as the great assimilator. They seem to want to argue that Kurosawa has taken Shakespeare and 'made it Japanese', bringing upon themselves all the problems associated with such a view. A second manifestation of the pervasive East-West dichotomy is the complete absence of any mention of the Japanese critical reception of *Throne of Blood*. Although Kishi and Bradshaw's treatment places *Throne of Blood* in its Japanese context, it does so solely through comparison with other productions and adaptations of Shakespeare. It does not mention Japanese critics or scholars. There is a mention later in the chapter of the "Japanese critics [who] so often castigated Kurosawa", so it is clear they exist. Yet this is the only mention of any kind of Japanese critical reaction to *Throne of Blood*. Kishi and Bradshaw simply dismiss them as wrong. It is hard to argue that a treatment of Japanese critics would have fallen outside of the breadth of Kishi and Bradshaw's goals. They themselves stated they wished to investigate "what happened when Shakespeare's works which belong to a long and sophisticated tradition met another tradition which was no less long and sophisticated but almost totally different, both culturally and linguistically?" (vii). The reception of these works should be an important part of this process. There no point in speculating why Kishi and Bradshaw chose to make this omission. The result is that the omission seriously weakens their argument. Kishi and Bradshaw take Western critics to task for being Anglo-centric, yet by not taking Japanese critics seriously, they are perpetuating this

Anglocentricity. The impression left is that according to their judgement, Japanese critics were either unwilling or unable to make any worthwhile analysis of *Throne of Blood*: that the only people whose opinion is noteworthy are Western critics who are being chastised for doing just that.

<div align="center">Japanese Context of Throne of Blood</div>

Subsequently, Kishi and Bradshaw seek to put *Throne of Blood* in its Japanese (theatrical) context. They argue that *Throne of Blood* is an attempt at correcting the anachronistic reading of Shakespeare prevalent in Japan at the time. This anachronistic reading of Shakespeare is an issue which Kishi and Bradshaw deal with in detail throughout their book, specifically in the earlier chapters. To summarise: though contact between Japan and Europe had already been established before Shakespeare's birth, Shakespeare's works did not begin to enter Japan until the second half of the 19th century. During this century, the newly industrialized Western powers began to assert their imperial hegemony across the world. This had a great impact in Asia, where before the highly advanced Japanese and Chinese civilisations had been able to deal with the Europeans on relatively equal footing. In the case of China, the Opium Wars with the British Empire established the new power relations. In the case of Japan, it was the infamous 'Black Ships' incident in 1853. United States Commodore Matthew Perry arrived in Japan with three American warships to forcefully end Japan's self-imposed isolation. The resulting shocks to Japanese society culminated in the Meiji Revolution of 1868, when the ruling feudal shogunate was toppled in favour of a new bureaucratic government. This new government made the modernisation and industrialization of Japan one of its main priorities. The reason why these events are important for the history of Shakespeare in Japan is because the end result was that, as Kishi and Bradshaw put it: "Shakespeare first arrived in Japan with Ibsen, Chekhov, Gorky, George

Bernard Shaw and trams" (2). To the Japanese of the time, Shakespeare was modern, in the way all things Western were considered modern. Of course, Shakespeare was not at all modern (at least not like Ibsen or Shaw). However, as Kishi and Bradshaw put it: "This basic confusion and the fatal lack of any proper historical perspective were characteristic of the whole process of so-called modernization of Japan, and of modern Japanese culture and civilization in general" (3). To return to *Throne of Blood:* the prevailing attitude towards Shakespeare in Japan had long been to both read and produce the bard as if he was a modern author, as if Shakespeare's plays were not different in style or theme than any other play written during the 19th or early 20th century. *Throne of Blood* was one of the first two major Japanese Shakespeare productions which sought to correct this (the other was Fukuda Tsuneari's play *Akechi Mitsuhide*, which appeared in the same year but according to Kishi and Bradshaw could not have influenced or been influenced by *Throne of Blood*). *Throne of Blood* presents Shakespeare not as a modern, but as a thoroughly non-modern author. It does this primarily through the setting. Whereas in the West, placing Shakespeare in a medieval setting would be considered natural if not boringly orthodox, doing so in Japan was, at the time of *Throne of Blood*, a bold and revolutionary choice. Kishi and Bradshaw elaborate on this point by also referring to Kurosawa's next film, produced almost directly following *Throne of Blood*. This was a modern adaptation of Gorky's 1902 play *The Lower Depths*, called *Donzoko*. They note how *Donzoko* follows its original more closely than *Throne of Blood* follows *Macbeth*, but that it also moves the setting to Edo-period Tokyo. It is questionable how easily Kishi and Bradshaw gloss over that latter part: that *Donzoko* is still set in a historical, pre-industrialized version of Japan. Especially considering that the film Kishi and Bradshaw discuss after *Throne of Blood*, Kurosawa's *The Bad Sleep Well,* transposes *Hamlet* into an industrialized Japanese corporate setting. Still, they have a point in-so-far as *Donzoko*'s setting is more modern than *Throne of Blood*'s. Either way, Kishi and

Bradshaw's argument is that Kurosawa was trying to make a point with these two films: that Shakespeare and Gorky are different authors from different backgrounds, and should be treated as such. As they put it:

> In *The Lower Depths* it is as if Kurosawa were saying: 'Look! This is what naturalistic Shingeki acting at its finest can achieve, with no need for false noses and eye shadow. Gorky's play can live and breathe in our own Tokyo, or in any hell-hole where hopeless poverty breeds pitifully hopeless illusions.' But in *Throne of Blood* it is as if Kurosawa were saying: 'Look! Shakespeare's play is "Western" but not "modern", not naturalistic, and not at all like Gorky or Ibsen. It can best find us through our own earlier history, our own performance traditions, and our own folk beliefs.' (131-132)

The main problem here is Kishi and Bradshaw's excessive attempts to designate *Throne of Blood* as 'Japanese'. The picture painted of its theatrical context is informative. It is this level of insight in the native context of Japanese Shakespeare productions that makes *Shakespeare in Japan* a highly valuable and useful book for any Japanese Shakespeare scholar. But the insistence on thinking in the East-West dichotomy, and on establishing the 'Japaneseness' of *Throne of Blood* weakens Kishi and Bradshaw's arguments. Of course, it is natural that in a discussion of the Japanese context of a work, the authors point out the ways in which it is a Japanese work. But Kishi and Bradshaw go beyond this. They do not just try to show the Japanese context, they argue that the entire work is itself "profoundly Japanese" (129). They repeat this exact phrasing again just a page later, writing that: "Kurosawa's Shakespeare is always profoundly Japanese" (130). After this second mention they do soften this phrase. Writing that they simply mean that rather than engaging in the Western critical debate, Kurosawa "was profoundly engaged with what the Japanese were doing to, or making

of, Shakespeare" (130). Of course, their argument regarding what Kurosawa was or was not engaged with is not problematic. What is problematic is that they are suggesting that this 'makes it Japanese'. They make the mistake, discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, of seeing the work as equivalent to its cultural influence rather than seeing it as an individual in its own right that is seeking to respond to its cultural influences in its own way. The next chapter of this thesis will see Paula von Loewenfeldt word this argument as "*Throne of Blood* [being] categorized – and thus marginalized [...] as an essentially 'Japanized' version of *Macbeth*, rather than one (albeit Japanese) filmmaker's engagement with *Macbeth*" (87). This is a good description of what Kishi and Bradshaw do. Especially problematic is that the rest of Kishi and Bradshaw's arguments explain exactly what Kurosawa's personal engagement was: to correct the anachronistic readings of Shakespeare prevalent in Japan. Yet by insisting that this 'makes it Japanese', Kishi and Bradshaw do what they themselves objected to just a few pages earlier: seeing *Throne of Blood* as a "more or less exotic 'version' of Shakespeare" (127). The argument should have been focussed on how *Throne of Blood* is Kurosawa's personal response to the Japanese Shakespeare tradition. By bringing in vague concepts such as 'Japaneseness' Kishi and Bradshaw weaken their own analysis.

Kishi and Bradshaw on *Throne of Blood*

The first half of Kishi and Bradshaw's treatment of *Throne of Blood* is primarily informative. They seek to inform the audience regarding the Western and Japanese traditions in whose context *Throne of Blood* was made and analysed. As a result, the flaws in their treatment could still theoretically have been caused by events outside of their control. Kishi and Bradshaw might have been forced to cut, for reasons of space or time, parts of their analysis that they would have otherwise included. Though the presence of the East-West dichotomy is apparent, it so far has only led them to omit information they perhaps should not

have. It is when Kishi and Bradshaw move on to their own analysis that the presence of the

East-West dichotomy becomes truly problematic. Their analysis, identifying Noh influences

in the film, is divided into three parts: an analysis of the film's music, its handling of violence,

and the 'witch' character. They are all problematic, especially the final part. Firstly, their

treatment of music, though it is solid in its observations, fails to support their assertion that

the music adds significant depth and meaning. Their treatment of violence is more tenuous in

its observations, and again fails to support its assertions of added depth and meaning. Lastly,

their treatment of the witches is flawed as it includes assumptions about *Macbeth* and *Throne*

of Blood which Kishi and Bradshaw fail to support.

Throne of Blood's Music

Kishi and Bradshaw argue that as a result of Noh influence, Kurosawa uses music to

off-set or counter the emotions and events it accompanies. They start this discussion with a

note of contempt for the Hollywood film industry. Music, they argue, is used by Hollywood

as a cheap trick to tell the audience how to feel. Sad music accompanies sad scenes; triumphal

music accompanies scenes of triumph. If the acting is weak, proper music is used to stir the

audience's emotions where the actor's skill would not. Kurosawa, however, counters this

tendency. As they put it: "Often, he would boldly set the music *against* whatever is happening

on screen" (132). They offer examples of Kurosawa setting frivolous music to tense scenes, or

bright music to dark scenes. In *Throne of Blood*, they continue, music is used sparingly, but

when it is used it is at key moments. Specifically: "the Noh flute and drum announcing,

punctuating and, in that sense, reinforcing key moments" (133). Their argument is that

Kurosawa's punctuating and reinforcing contrasts with the events taking place; specifically

that it "recalls the desolate opening chorus and either checks or complicates any involvement

with the characters" (133). Kishi and Bradshaw's argument is that, as a consequence, the

music takes on aspects of the chorus present in Noh, which would also at times serve to detach the audience from the characters and events portrayed.

There is nothing wrong with the factual observations Kishi and Bradshaw make on the use of music in Hollywood or by Kurosawa. This thesis does not question Kishi and Bradshaw's expertise on how music or the chorus functions in Noh theatre. It is, however, simply not enough for Kishi and Bradshaw to state that Kurosawa sets music in contrast to what is shown on screen, that the chorus in Noh theatre by at times taking a "detached [or choric] perspective" (133) has the same effect, and that therefore there is a "profoundly Japanese" (132) Noh theatre influence in the music of *Throne of Blood*. Of course the actual music itself is also Noh music, using the "Noh flute and drum" (133). But Kishi and Bradshaw's own arguments state that this by itself does not mean anything. Just three pages later they write that "Kurosawa is not flirting with Japanese material in the manner of a Ninagawa, and then presenting a kind of Japanese-Shakespearean cocktail that fails to take either tradition seriously" (136). Yet even though they make this distinction, Kishi and Bradshaw do not provide the reader with any evidence as to why Kurosawa's Noh music is taking the tradition seriously, but Ninagawa's usage of similar elements is not. Kishi and Bradshaw should have supported these assertions and that they do not is frustrating. What makes this especially frustrating is that, as shall be established in detail in the next chapter of this thesis, there are readings of *Throne of Blood* that connect to Kishi and Bradshaw's observations. Kishi and Bradshaw write that "[the use of music] has a detaching, even chilling effect that immediately recalls the desolate opening chorus and either checks or complicates any involvement with the characters" (133) , which is very close to von Loewenfeldt's arguments that *Throne of Blood* seeks to emphasize the complicity of its characters. Rather than sweep the audience along, leading them to empathise with the characters, the music forces the audience into a detached perspective. From this detached perspective, the audience

is then able to see the characters not as victims, but as architects of their own demise. Kishi and Bradshaw need not have read von Loewenfeldt to argue this. As will be noted in the next chapter of this thesis, the emphasis on complicity or guilt is a continual theme throughout Kurosawa's work. In fact, in the very next section of their chapter, Kishi and Bradshaw discuss Kurosawa's *The Bad Sleep Well*, based on *Hamlet*. Here they note how Kurosawa is attacking "the 'cosy' alliances between politicians bureaucrats, businessmen and (with a little help from the CIA) gangsters or *yakuza* in Prime Minister Kishi's post-war Japan" (136). Simply noting how Kurosawa might be problematising the 'cosy' relationship between Banquo and Macbeth, or Miki and Washizu, would have been enough to offer some kind of justification to the argument Kishi and Bradshaw made. The music indeed adds to the depth and richness of *Throne of Blood*. But there is not enough support for Kishi and Bradshaw's conclusion that the music adds a deep and meaningful connection between *Throne of Blood* and Noh theatre. Again, the problem boils down to the desire to establish *Throne of Blood* as an essentially 'Japanese' film. Kishi and Bradshaw are more concerned with establishing Noh, and therefore Japanese, influences than with treating *Throne of Blood* as a work with depth and meaning in its own right.

Throne of Blood's Violence

On violence, Kishi and Bradshaw argue that the depiction of violence in *Throne of Blood*, inspired by Noh practices, is more in line with Shakespeare's use than other Shakespeare films. Kishi and Bradshaw begin by noting how Kurosawa showed his principal actors Noh masks representative of their characters. They then use this point to lead into discussing the great difference in acting style between Asaji (Lady Macbeth) and Washizu (Macbeth). Asaji spends the majority of the film making only very small but controlled movements, while her expression rarely changes, and even then only subtly so. Washizu on

the other hand is very much the opposite, having what they describe as "extraordinary and hyperactive mobility [...] producing eruptive explosions of energy which are sometimes like those in Kabuki" (133). They also note how in the final scene Washizu's last pose is similar to Kabuki. Kishi and Bradshaw do not follow up on these Kabuki influences. Instead they continue by discussing movement as it exists in Noh. They note how Kurosawa argued that though Noh has a reputation for being static, this was not correct. Noh "can also be remarkably athletic and even 'terribly violent'" (133). But it is a controlled violence; one part of the actor's body is violent while the rest remain completely still. Kishi and Bradshaw argue that the same kind of controlled violence exists in *Throne of Blood*. Using as examples Miki's horse's frenzy, or the birds that invade the castle. This type of violence, they argue, brings the film closer to its Shakespearean original. They argue that Shakespeare, too, controlled his use of violence carefully, but that this is often ignored in Western films. For example, they note how Shakespeare does not show Macbeth's killing of Macdonwald (though it is described in violent detail), nor the killing of Duncan. Yet Shakespeare does portray Macduff's son's murder on the stage, which Kishi and Bradshaw consider to have been a deliberate choice. They argue that films like Polanski's *Macbeth* or Olivier's or Branagh's respective *Henry V* films undo what were carefully considered effects, by showing violence on screen that Shakespeare kept off-stage. But, they argue, *Throne of Blood* is "in a paradoxical sense, far more faithful to Shakespeare's careful scaling of the violent and visceral" (134).

Kishi and Bradshaw's treatment of violence in *Throne of Blood* has the same problems as described above, but in addition their observations are not as convincing as those on the music. The link Kishi and Bradshaw tried to make between Noh practices and the use of violence in *Throne of Blood* is very tenuous. They imply that Kurosawa is influenced by Noh practices in his controlled use of violence, and this creates an effect that is more faithful to Shakespeare. They do not offer a proper argument for this, though, and fail to offer a

connection between the first part, discussing masks and Asaji and Washizu's contrasting acting styles, and the second part, discussing violence in Noh according to Kurosawa and Zeami. They seem to suggest that Asaji's static acting represents Noh, and Washizu's energetic acting represents Kabuki. Yet they do not make this explicit. As a result, their mentioning of Kabuki comes across as entirely superfluous, because their continuation, and the rest of their analysis, is focused solely on Noh influences. The resulting problem is that though there is nothing wrong with Kishi and Bradshaw's opinion on Noh being more than just static acting, they fail to make a case that this is present in *Throne of Blood*. It leaves the impression that they want to say that Washizu's acting is also Noh, or that Asaji's acting is also violent, but they never actually argue this point. Instead they simply move on by suggesting that this concept of Noh violence is represented in the overall use of violence in *Throne of Blood*. Yet again, the problem is that without an actual example of how this representation is related to Noh practices, that argument does not hold. Simply stating that a concept is present in Noh, and that something similar is also present in *Throne of Blood*, does not establish a connection. All Kishi and Bradshaw are saying is that Kurosawa is very careful and deliberate in his use of violence. Yet Richie's, and every similarly comprehensive study, make clear that Kurosawa was careful and deliberate with everything he did in his films. One has only to read, for example, Anthony Davies' detailed deconstruction of horizontal and vertical imagery in *Throne of Blood* to be convinced of this. The same problem exists in Kishi and Bradshaw's discussion of other Shakespeare films. They are right to remark that directors like Polanski or Olivier or Branagh use violence in a meaningless and sensationalist manner. Nor is there anything wrong with their argument that Shakespeare was careful and deliberate in his use of violence. Yet this by itself does not offer anything new. Therefore, what Kishi and Bradshaw's argument boils down to is merely establishing that both Kurosawa and Shakespeare are careful and deliberate writers/directors. This is of course not a statement any

critic would have disagreed with in the first place. Again, Kishi and Bradshaw focus on establishing the 'Japaneseness' of *Throne of Blood* through supposed Noh influence, at the expense of analysing the film on its own terms.

Throne of Blood's Witch

Kishi and Bradshaw's final argument is that the Noh demon from *Throne of Blood* is more faithful to Shakespeare's witches than most modern Western productions. To make this argument, they first establish how Western productions have not been faithful to Shakespeare's original. They argue: "For any Western director Shakespeare's witches present a grave difficulty, since modern Western audiences do not believe in witches" (134). Kishi and Bradshaw's argument is that modern Western productions are unable to capture the original effect the witches had on their audiences in Shakespeare's time. As their first example they reject Polanski and Trevor Nunn's decision to make the witches physically revolting as "not enough" (134). While as a second example they argue that the usage of Christian motives in Welles or Nunn conflicts with the themes present in *Macbeth's* text. They pin-point the dual nature of the witches, being both comic and serious, as "especially difficult" (135) for directors to get right. In this they mention Verdi as the only producer to do get this right. Kishi and Bradshaw quote him as saying that "the witches should be 'brutal and coarse' in 'both their singing and acting' when they are with each other, but 'sublime and prophetic' when they confront Macbeth and Banquo" (135). Although they do not say so explicitly, what Kishi and Bradshaw argue here is that there are two sides to Shakespeare's witches. One side is comic and vulgar; the other is dark and serious. However, when audiences stopped believing in real-life witches, the on-stage witches lost their ability to scare or terrify. Audiences no longer took the witches seriously, so all that was left was the vulgar or comedic aspect. Following this line of reasoning, Kishi and Bradshaw argue that simply

restoring the witches to what may or may not have been their representation in Shakespeare's time would not work. In this, they argue, Kurosawa starts with a natural advantage. As he is already transporting Shakespeare into a Japanese setting, he is not held back by any need to stay true to an 'original' English tradition. They argue Kurosawa's witch is clearly referencing the demon from the Noh play *Kurozuka*. They also note how her face is made up to represent different Noh masks: at first the *yaseonna* (a thin woman) mask, and in her later appearances a *yamauba* (a mountain witch) mask. Though they admit the context for these is Buddhist rather than Christian, they write it is "deeply felt and richly, coherently presented" (136). They end by writing that "The result is that Washizu's first encounter with the witch has a real power to disturb, which any Western director might envy. Of course this is not like whatever Shakespeare's first audiences saw; but if we could see that we would not feel whatever they felt" (136).

Thus far Kishi and Bradshaw have made many good observations in addition to their more problematic ones, but their final argument is flawed on all levels. At the very start when they write that Western Shakespeare producers have a problem because "modern Western audiences do not believe in witches" (134), the immediate counter should be obvious: are Kishi and Bradshaw arguing that modern Japanese audiences *do* believe in witches? Of course, if this was indeed their argument there would be no problem. Instead Kishi and Bradshaw completely ignore what should be the first thing addressed after making that statement. This is not a case of Kishi and Bradshaw making one poorly phrased statement. Kishi and Bradshaw's entire argument rests on the assumption that Noh demons resonate with Japanese audiences in a way that witches do not with Western audiences, an assumption they neither discuss nor prove. Their discussion of Western representations of the witches equally fails to support their argument. It is not factually wrong (again, their expertise is beyond doubt), but rather entirely superficial. Kishi and Bradshaw go into detail how they think the

witches should or should not be staged, but completely fail to take into account that there is a deep *Christian* meaning behind them. G. K. Hunter discusses this in detail in his introduction to *Macbeth*. For example, after quoting Macbeth using the word 'suggestion' when describing the witches' words to him, Hunter notes how this word is "a technical term of theology, meaning 'a prompting or incitement to evil'" (792). Most convincing is Hunter's noting of the contemporary Morality play *The Cradle of Security* (800-801). Hunter recounts that this play depicts personifications of various sins. These 'sins' seduce a king or prince into spending all his time on worldly delights, ignoring his spiritual and moral duties. At the end of the play two personifications of God's judgement come on stage, and the king or prince is judged and sentenced to hell. The witches in *Macbeth*, though not identical, have very strong echoes of this type of Morality play. They 'suggest' to Macbeth in that theological sense. They seduce him into evil, and like the 'sins' in *The Cradle of Security* lure him into a false sense of security afterwards. Security, as Hunter points out, is again a term with theological implications (800). The virtuous person is never secure, as there can never be certainty about the one thing that matters above all else: their salvation by God. Macbeth's compulsive need for security can be read as reflecting a fear that he no longer has a chance of being saved by God. Kishi and Bradshaw argue that "Shakespeare's bearded witches seem more primeval or even pagan than that, while the play's few Christian references are not at all reassuring, and increase its terrors without bringing any relief" (135). Yet Kishi and Bradshaw ignore that in spite of this, as pointed out by Hunter, the worldview of *Macbeth* is still very much marked by a Christian, specifically an Elizabethan Christian, perspective. Moreover, after establishing the details of Kurosawa's framing of the witches as a Noh demon, Kishi and Bradshaw write that "[o]f course the religious context for [Kurosawa's Noh demon] is Buddhist, not Christian, but it is also deeply felt and richly, coherently presented" (136). Christianity and Buddhism are two very different religions, with fundamentally different conceptions of sin and evil. To

exchange a Christian for a Buddhist context is to fundamentally alter the meaning of what is portrayed. Yet Kishi and Bradshaw gloss over this fact. Not only do they fail to provide any basis for their assertion that the Noh demon in *Throne of Blood* resonates with Japanese audiences in the same way the weird sisters did originally with Shakespeare's audiences. They actually acknowledge that this resonance, if it existed, would come from a Buddhist context, yet fail to notice this would radically alter its meaning. An example of how it does so can be found in chapter V of this thesis, which discusses Stephen Prince's treatment of *Throne of Blood*. Prince offers some insight into how the Buddhist context alters *Macbeth*'s meaning. For the present discussion the manner in which the Buddhist context alters *Macbeth* is secondary to the fact that it obviously must and does. Kishi and Bradshaw's failure to notice that a Christian context cannot be considered equal to a Buddhist context is a grave flaw. Most frustrating is that this is entirely unnecessary. Kishi and Bradshaw identify the Noh demon from *Throne of Blood* with a similar figure from the Noh play *Kurozuka* (136). They do not offer any elaboration beyond this, but the website http://www.the-noh.com offers a detailed description of this play. It notes how in this play: "While [using the spinning wheel], the [Noh demon] laments her misfortune that she cannot free herself from her bitter karma in this uncertain world and feelingly describes the evanescence of this world" (the-noh.com). Is Kurosawa's spinning Noh demon meant to imply that in *Throne of Blood* the characters too are trapped and unable to free themselves from their karma? This would be in line with Kishi and Bradshaw's interpretation of *Throne of Blood*. This thesis, as made clear in the introduction, cannot prove such an argument as doing so would require interpreting Japanese culture. Kishi and Bradshaw, however, could have done so. Yet rather than investigate how their own observation could give deeper insight into *Throne of Blood*, they gloss over massive cultural differences and make assumptions they do not prove. They fail to

prove their arguments regarding *Throne of Blood*'s impact on audiences, and they fail in their analysis of the witches' role in *Macbeth*.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

Kishi and Bradshaw's expertise is great, and as such they are both informative and interesting. Sadly, their analyses are often contradictory or flawed. Kishi and Bradshaw provide a decent overview of Western reactions to *Throne of Blood*, only to undermine their own arguments by giving no overview of Japanese reactions to *Throne of Blood*. They are highly informative in providing the Japanese theatrical context for *Throne of Blood*, but are so insistent on establishing the 'Japaneseness' of the film that they end up offering little true insight. Their analysis seeks to establish how the Noh influences in *Throne of Blood* makes it closer to Shakespeare, yet in the end fail to both prove those Noh influences and fail to properly analyse Shakespeare.

In the end, the core of the problem is that Kishi and Bradshaw are attempting to analyse using the East-West dichotomy, specifically the myth of Japan as the great assimilator. Throughout their treatment, Kishi and Bradshaw attempt establish that *Throne of Blood* is Japanese; that this 'Japaneseness' paradoxically makes it more faithful to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*; and that Western critics fail to properly understand either. Essentially, they seek to prove that Kurosawa has taken Shakespeare and assimilated it, that he has 'made it Japanese'. Yet, as this chapter has hopefully been able to demonstrate, the result is that it undermines those good observations Kishi and Bradshaw have or could have made. Had they not been confined to East-West dichotomy, their treatment, as their many insightful observations demonstrate, could have been not only an important and useful description of the context of *Throne of Blood*, but an insightful analysis of its themes and meanings as well.

Chapter IV: "Weaving the spider's web: interpretation of character in Kurosawa Akira's *Throne of Blood (Kumonosu-jô)*" by Paula von Loewenfeldt

Introduction

Paula von Loewenfeldt was at the time of her article completing her doctorate in medieval and early modern literature and drama at Purdue University in the United States (Ryuta & Carruthers & Gillies, ix). The article of her discussed here appeared in *Performing Shakespeare in Japan* by Minami Ryuta, Ian Carruthers and John Gillies. In the previous chapter Kishi and Bradshaw served as an example of critics who were deeply in bed with the East-West dichotomy. Von Loewenfeldt is an example of a critic who, to continue the metaphor, is in the middle of a messy divorce. Von Loewenfeldt is aware of the East-West dichotomy, though she does not label it as such. She uses different terminology, but her argument is largely identical to that of this thesis: past critics have looked at *Throne of Blood* through the flawed lens of the East-West dichotomy, and as a result their analyses have been equally flawed. At the same time von Loewenfeldt's explicit opposition to past dichotomous analyses at times limits her ability to look past the dichotomy all together. She begins her treatment with an indictment of past critics. Subsequently, she frames her own analysis as being a prototype of the kind of analysis that can see past the East-West dichotomy. In the first case von Loewenfeldt is correct, however in the second case she is not wholly convincing.

Von Loewenfeldt on Past Critics

In the opening pages of her article, von Loewenfeldt criticises past critics for failing to see past the East-West dichotomy when analyzing *Throne of Blood*. Von Loewenfeldt notes the high praise critics like Anthony Davies and Robert Hapgood have given *Throne of Blood*,

but she strongly criticises the analyses that have accompanied such praise. Von Loewenfeldt argues that to too many critics 'Shakespeare' and 'Japan' seem to be incompatible opposites: that when the two are combined, as in *Throne of Blood*, only one can survive. That is: either the work is 'Shakespeare' at the expense of being 'Japanese', or it is 'Japanese' at the expense of being 'Shakespeare'. She singles out two critics as examples of treatments that she finds particularly offensive. These are David Desser and his treatment of *Throne of Blood* in *The Samurai Films of Akira Kurosawa*, and E. Pearlman's article "*Macbeth* on Film: Politics" in *Shakespeare and the Moving Image: The Plays on Film and Television*.

Regarding Desser's treatment, von Loewenfeldt takes care to emphasize her agreement with his factual observations. She agrees with his description of Noh and the importance of the theme of nature to *Throne of Blood*. What she disagrees with is his conclusion: the film lacks a 'human' element. Von Loewenfeldt argues that there are many scenes that stress the emotions and agency of the human characters. She lists: "Washizu's and Miki's crazed ride through the rain-swept, lightning-split, demon-haunted forest to Washizu's slow, hypnotic, horrific fall to his death – pierced through with arrows" (88). Von Loewenfeldt also singles out E. Pearlman. She takes issue with Pearlman's description of *Throne of Blood*'s characters as dehumanized. Desser and Pearlman are, she argues, examples of the belief amongst Western critics that Shakespeare's characters cannot "maintain their warmth when played in a traditional Japanese – rather than Western renaissance – guise" (88). Von Loewenfeldt considers this belief to have no basis other than cultural bias on the critics' part. She suggests that that the inability to see past the East-West dichotomy is the root of these problems. She writes that "[p]erhaps Western critics have tried too hard to see *Throne of Blood* through what they think of as Japanese eyes, so that attempts at cultural understanding may result in cultural misunderstanding" (88). In other words: that as a result of their dichotomous world view, Western critics have tried to analyse *Throne of Blood* as coming

from a wholly foreign and different 'Japanese' culture, rather than approaching the work on its own terms. As von Loewenfeldt's puts it: "*Throne of Blood* has been too often categorized – and thus marginalized – by Western critics as an essentially 'Japanized' version of *Macbeth*, rather than one (albeit Japanese) filmmaker's engagement with *Macbeth*" (87). Critics have looked at *Throne of Blood* and seen a Japanese film, with all that implied to them, rather than a Kurosawa film, with all its individual specificity. Von Loewenfeldt ends this discussion by suggesting how critics should approach a work like *Throne of Blood*. Von Loewenfeldt quotes Leah Marcus who argues that by mixing Shakespeare with other cultural influences one can defamiliarise Shakespeare. This defamiliarisation allows audiences to overcome their preconceived notions regarding the original work, opening their minds to new insights and new interpretations they would otherwise not have seen.

Desser and Pearlman deserve a deeper look than what von Loewenfeldt gives them. For example, von Loewenfeldt does not mention that Desser and Pearlman have opposite conclusion regarding *Throne of Blood*. Desser is very disapproving of the film. He writes that *Throne of Blood* is "disproportionally studied compared to other films in Kurosawa's *oeuvre*" (71). He argues that Japanese Noh theatre is inherently incompatible with the medium of film: "If [Noh] is an abstract art form [...] the cinema is concrete" (72). As a consequence, Desser concludes that in combining these two Kurosawa has created a film devoid of a human element and which "borrowed the bones of tragedy without the heart" (76). Yet, at the same time, he argues that *Throne of Blood* "is not at its core a Japanese film" (75). Desser does not touch upon the relationship between *Throne of Blood* and *Macbeth*, but he is not supportive of Kurosawa's attempt at melding the latter with Japanese culture. Unlike Desser, Pearlman is supportive of *Throne of Blood*. Pearlman compares it favourably to both Orson Welles and Roman Polanksi's respective *Macbeth* films. This attitude stems from Pearlman's analysis of the political message of *Throne of Blood*. Pearlman sees the film's ending, where Washizu is

killed by his own men, as a call to political revolution. To Pearlman *Throne of Blood* depicts "the common people, the nameless soldiers of Washizu's army, mobilize themselves to commit [...] an act of specific political rebellion" (258). At the same time, Pearlman does make points similar to those made by Desser. For example: Pearlman argues that "The peasants are not seen as individuals, and the camera treats them rather as objects than as people" (257). Similarly Desser argues that "The humans become equal to any other 'object'" (73).

Desser is the one most clearly applying the East-West dichotomy. There are contradictions in Desser's analysis. He argues that *Throne of Blood* combines Noh elements and Shakespeare elements, and then declares it a failure for being neither. If Desser argument was merely that Noh does not adapt well to cinema, he could be wrong or right but it would not be problematic. The problem is that Desser proceeds to judge *Throne of Blood* based on its failure to adapt Noh. In Desser's view, the core flaw of *Throne of Blood* is that it is neither true Noh nor true Shakespeare. Such a view is an epitome of the East-West dichotomy. Pearlman in comparison is less problematic. The crux of von Loewenfeldt's objections is just Pearlman's accepting of the reading of *Throne of Blood*'s characters as dehumanised. There are possible objections against Pearlman's interpretation, but it is not inherently flawed or contradictory. At the same time, Pearlman does not give much consideration for the cultural specificity of *Throne of Blood*. Pearlman does not define the film through its cultural background, but does not investigate how it relates to it either. Pearlman reads in *Throne of Blood* a message of class struggle that seems open to Kishi and Bradshaw's allegations from the preceding chapter of this thesis: that Pearlman assimilates *Throne of Blood* into the Western debates regarding Shakespeare without seeking to understand it on its own terms.

<u>Von Loewenfeldt on *Throne of Blood*</u>

After criticising past critics, von Loewenfeldt seeks to avoid the East-West dichotomy in her own analysis. She even argues that her own analysis is a prototype for the kind of analysis that should be done for intercultural works such as *Throne of Blood*. Her analysis itself argues for the presence of a grand narrative structure in *Throne of Blood*, through which the film's key concepts can be identified. She the highlights the increased importance of Miki/Banquo's character in *Throne of Blood* compared to *Macbeth*. She argues that her use of such a structure-based analysis is a means of avoiding cultural misunderstandings and of offering a "less culturally grounded point of view" (97). However, this grand narrative structure is the weakest part of von Loewenfeldt's analysis. Her observations are better explained through their thematic links.

Structural Narrative

Von Loewenfeldt attempts to use the film's narrative structure as a guide to understanding its deeper meaning. Her main argument centre's around dividing *Throne of Blood* into three acts and assigning a core scene for each. She begins by noting the structure of Shakespeare's original.

Von Loewenfeldt suggests that there is a symmetrical structure to *Macbeth*. A structure centred around the banquet scene, with the prophecy and the murder of Duncan on one side and the Macduffs' subplot and Macbeth's downfall at the other end. She suggests that the murder of Banquo at the centre serves as a kind of moral event horizon, the act past which "all likelihood of redemption ends" (90). *Throne of Blood*, she continuous, is different. The Macduffs' subplot is virtually eliminated, and Miki/Banquo is made the third main character after Washizu/Macbeth and Asaji/Lady Macbeth. Instead of Shakespare's five act structure, *Throne of Blood* has three acts. Von Loewenfeldt suggests that the latter borrows from Noh, which has a three-part structure called *jo/ha/kyû*. Von Loewenfeldt, following

Robert Hapgood, describes this structure as "introduction/destruction/haste" (von Loewenfeldt, 90-91; Hapgood, 239). Von Loewenfeldt sees this introduction/destruction/haste triad as the framework for the entirety of *Throne of Blood*[1]. Accordingly, she divides the movie into three segments of equal length. She also identifies the three scenes that fall in the middle of these segments as the core scenes of each. The first segment (*jo*/introduction) is the scene of Washizu and Miki listening to the witch's prophecy in Cobweb Forest. The second segment (*ha*/destruction) is the scene of Washizu and Asaji before, during, and after they murder lord Tsuzuki. At this point von Loewenfeldt fudges things a bit, taking both the scene where Washizu rides out of the castle to meet the witch for the second time, and his actual meeting as one to together form the core of the third segment (*kyû*/haste).

About the first core scene von Loewenfeldt is brief, mentioning that the witch at first seems to be good until at the end she disappears leaving a mountain of skulls, thus revealing that rather than benevolence she represents "malevolent, capricious fate" (93).

In her discussion of the second core scene, von Loewenfeldt identifies the bloodstain on the wall of the room from which Wasjishu and Asaji plot and kill lord Tsuzuki as resembling the painted pine tree that traditionally features on the backdrop of a Noh stage. She links this to the mountain of skulls in the forest of the previous core scene, as both being images of nature turned evil. She interprets the dancing of lady Asaji as the "stomping Noh step called *ashibyôshi*" (94). She explains the meaning of this dance by quoting Suzuki Tadashi, saying that it is "not necessarily to tread down or suppress evil enemies, but to arouse their energy" (von Loewenfeldt, 94). The enemy aroused here, she argues, is the witch. This makes Asaji's dancing a symbolic act representing her attempts to harness the power of the prophecy to further her own ambition.

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[1] In her footnotes von Loewenfeldt notes that James Goodwin in *Akira Kurosawa and Intertextual Cinema* offers and alternate attempt at using the *jo/ha/kyû* structure to analyse *Throne of Blood*.

Equally interesting is von Loewenfeldt's analysis of the third core scene. She focuses on the end of the scene. After the witch has made her new prophecy to Washizu, she disappears and is replaced by three apparitions of armoured warriors. Each apparition in turn speaks a line to Washizu before disappearing. Significantly, von Loewenfeldt identifies the apparitions as referencing the twelfth century Japanese saga *The Tale of Heike*. This saga chronicles the conflict between the rival clans of Taira and Minamoto. She reads them as referring to one specific part from *The Tale of Heike*:

> In the *Heike*, the most heinous crime is perpetrated at the end of the long civil war by the victorious Yorimoto, the head of the Minamoto clan. Pathologically insecure – even about his own relations, whom he eventually hunts down and kills at the insistence of his wife Masako – Yorimoto orders the round-up and slaughter of all the Taira children. It is his retainer, Tokimasu, who is charged with carrying out the massacre; the *Heike* says of him, 'Many times a father and a grandfather himself, Tokimasu did not like what he was doing, but there seemed no alternative; men must accommodate themselves to the times.' (95)

Von Loewenfeldt identifies Yorimoto with Washizu, and Tokimasu with Miki.

Finishing her analysis, von Loewenfeldt reiterates how central the character of Miki is to *Throne of Blood*. She goes through the various segments: she notes Miki's considerable on-screen presence during the first segment, and how in the other two segments Miki still retains considerable off-screen presence even when he is not actually in the scene itself. According to von Loewenfeldt, Kurosawa's main interest in *Macbeth* was Banquo's complicity in Macbeth's murderous rise to power. This would be in character for Kurosawa, as Hapgood also states that "Kurosawa consistently changes Shakespeare to emphasize the guilt of his

authority figures" (240). In the case of the *Throne of Blood*'s, though, it is not only the authority figures, but also those who support them like Miki/Banquo whose guilt Kurosawa investigates and emphasizes. As von Loewenfeldt recognizes, Banquo's relatively small role in *Macbeth* deemphasizes his exact role and complicity in Macbeth's rise. Kurosawa, by focussing almost exclusively on the Banquo subplot at the expense of the others brings Banquo's, and by extension others', complicity to the forefront. Von Loewenfeldt ends on a final interpretation regarding the characters of *Throne of Blood*:

> Each of the three main characters in *Throne of Blood* is destroyed by an illusion: Washizu that he is protected by Yamamba's prediction; Lady Asaji that she can harness the spirit world and create her own fate; Miki that he can survive by bowing to the inevitable and, like Tokimasu, accommodating the times. Miki's illusion is the most chilling, precisely because, compared to Washizu and Asaji, he seems so ordinary, so practical, so sane. (97)

<u>Themes and Meaning</u>

Von Loewenfeldt's analysis is solid and overall very convincing. However, her attempt to connect her thematic interpretation to her structural analysis is not convincing. Her observations are better served by a thematic perspective. This thesis will offer two examples on this account, the first regarding von Loewenfeldts observations on the theme of complicity and the second regarding her observations on the themes and symbolism surrounding *Throne of Blood*'s witch.

Von Loewenfeldt's the link between her narrative structure and her thematic observations is not convincing. Her main thematic argument, that Miki/Banquo's complicity to Washizu/Macbeth's reign is one of the main themes of *Throne of Blood*, is convincing. But

it is so in its own right, not because it follows from the structural analysis. Of the three core scenes von Loewenfeldt identifies, Miki features in only one. That is the scene in which Washizu and Miki meet the witch. Moreover, even though Miki is present in this one core scene, it is a bit of a stretch to argue its focus is Miki's complicity. If the structure of the film emphasizes this theme, one would expect the core scenes to reflect this. There are several scenes which do clearly focus on Miki and his complicity. For example, the scene in which Miki chooses Washizu over the son of his murdered lord. Likewise there is the scene where Miki chooses to go to the banquet in spite of his son's protests as he believes in the prophecy and Washizu's promise of leaving the castle to said son. Yet none of these scenes are core scenes in von Loewenfeldt's narrative structure. The core scenes that she identifies do not point at Miki's vital role to the film. As a result von Loewenfeldt's structural analysis, though by itself very interesting, does not convincingly lead into her thematic analysis, again by itself very interesting.

The observations made by von Loewenfeldt are better explained through an analysis of the films themes. In the case of Miki's complicity, her observations can be read to reveal the dialogue between *Throne of Blood* and *Macbeth*. Writing the introduction to the Penguin Classics edition of *Macbeth*, G. K. Hunter begins by writing that "reduced to its plot-line, *Macbeth* sounds like a crime-does-not-pay melodrama" (787). Expounding on this, he argues that unlike in other Shakespearean works dealing with evil and villainous main characters, in *Macbeth* the evil very much upstages the good. That the world presented in *Macbeth* is one where "good struggles forward [...] but evil is all-pervasive" (788). Yet this good is still very much a presence, both physically and thematically, within *Macbeth*. Though von Loewenfeldt criticized Pearlman earlier when it came to other points, Pearlman does make a good analysis of the shape this 'good' takes: that of the righteous king. Pearlman writes: "*Macbeth* unabashedly celebrates a semi-divine monarch in terms specific to the first years of Stuart

absolutism" (250). King Duncan, Pearlman elaborates, is presented as an almost saintly figure, as is his son. Macbeth's tyrannical rule is not presented, at least not openly, as a criticism on absolute monarchy. Rather Macbeth is presented as an unnatural disturbance of the harmonious and divinely-sanctioned order that exists under the rule of 'just' kings like Duncan and Malcolm. Going back to Hunter this comes as little surprise, as he notes that "*Macbeth* was first performed before James I and his royal guest, King Christian IV of Denmark" (807). Whatever opinion on kingship Shakespeare may or may not have had, it should not be controversial to state that he was smart enough not to openly criticise the absolute monarchy when not one but two absolute kings are in attendance. (As an aside, this does add some irony to this discussion of complicity in *Macbeth*, as one could argue Shakespeare was himself being complicit, like Miki, by glorifying the monarchy with this play.) This adulatory attitude to the monarchy is something that, as Pearlman examines in detail, modern adapters of *Macbeth* have to find a way to deal with. What sets Kurosawa apart from the other directors Pearlman discusses is that his solution is to simply not deal with it. Not only is Lord Tsuzuki made to be a warlord and usurper like any other, the entire plot regarding Malcolm's rightful succession is cut and the film ends before the castle has well and truly fallen. However this last part was in no way necessary if the point was simply to subvert *Macbeth*'s adulatory. For example, the BBC production of *Macbeth* ends with Fleance looking at the fallen tyrant, and the screen turning red, implying further bloodshed for the throne. Similarly, though from a different play, Ninagawa's second *Hamlet*[2] subverts the (sometimes) positively portrayed take-over by Fortinbras after both Hamlet and Claudius have died. Ninagawa ends there with a thoroughly sinister note, as Fortinbras laughs maniacally while the surviving characters throw themselves at his feet in hopes of salvation. Kurosawa forgoes either method and instead marginalises Lord Tsuzuki/Duncan and has

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[2] I was able to see a video recording of a television broadcast of Ninagawa's second *Hamlet* during my stay at

Washizu/Macbeth killed by his own men before almost immediately ending the movie. As discussed earlier, Pearlman chooses to read this as an optimistic note: the tyrant is defeated by the people, opening up the path for a social revolution to overthrow the corrupt feudal system. This is too optimistic though. As Davies quotes A.L. Zambrano writing in the *Literature/Film Quarterly* as far back as 1974: "the soldiers who kill Washizu are as guilty as he. They rose to power by accepting his leadership, and they kill in order to save themselves" (Davies, 164). All of the above connects naturally to von Loewenfeldt's observations. The increased role of Miki/Banquo, the removal of the 'virtuous' kings Duncan and Malcolm, and Washizu's death at the hands of his own soldiers all work together to make complicity the defining theme of *Throne of Blood*. Von Loewenfeldt establishes the importance of complicity for the Washizu/Miki relationship, but in her attempt to connect this to her narrative structure she misses the chance to connect it to the film as a whole.

The same applies to von Loewenfeldt's observations regarding the nature and presence of the witch in *Throne of Blood*. Von Loewenfeldt writes that the witch "embodies a malevolent, capricious fate, a force that has the power to consume" (93). This is different from Shakespeare's weird sisters. Hunter establishes two roles for the witches in *Macbeth*, noting that "Act IV, scene I, differs from the earlier Witch-scenes in a number of ways" (799). At the beginning of *Macbeth* the witches are seductresses, tempters who lure Macbeth into giving in to his ambition and commit sins. In the later scene they are deceivers, tricking Macbeth into believing himself safe when in truth he is far from so. In both cases though, they "must be supposed to be evil" (Hunter, 791). Hunter argues that the witches in *Macbeth* are evil for evil's sake, without representing any particular force or concept. Von Loewenfeldt analysis of the witch in *Throne of Blood* paints a different picture. As von Loewenfeldt describes in the quote above, the witch is evil, but she represents more than just evil for evil's

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sake. Going by von Loewenfeldt's own analysis, the witch becomes the central theme of *Throne of Blood*. It is surprising that while von Loewenfeldt tries (and as argued above, fails) to connect her structural analysis to Miki, she does not try to do so for the witch. When discussing it, this thesis noted that one of von Loewenfeldt's most interesting observations was the connection of Asaji's dance with a Noh dance meant to arouse the energy of what would in this case be the witch. The reason for this was that with this observation, the witch becomes the connecting link between all three core scenes identified by von Loewenfeldt's analysis. In the first core scene, the witch meets with Washizu and Miki. In the second, Asaji tries to channel the powers of the witch for her own ambitions. In the third, Washizu returns to the witch for a new prophecy. This would make the witch the central character of *Throne of Blood*. This would not contradict the theme of complicity, as shown by von Loewenfeldt's second observation: her identification of the three apparitions as referring to *The Tale of Heike*. Von Loewenfeldt considered it a reference to the event in *The Tale of Heike* involving Tokimasu and the slaughter of the Taira children. Tokimasu says men must "accommodate themselves to the times" (von Loewenfeldt, 95). If this is explicitly connected to the witch, as von Loewenfeldt argues, then the films argument becomes that it is not an external, divinely ordained fate that dooms man, it is man itself. It is man's complicity, by either committing atrocities or refusing to intervene when they are committed, that leads to man's destruction. This harkens back to Richie's arguments in the second chapter. Richie, based on quotes from and conversations with Kurosawa, argued that *Throne of Blood* showed how ambition was both the nature and the doom of humanity.

What the above is meant to establish is that in attempts to reject the East-West dichotomy, von Loewenfeldt ends up over-correcting. Von Loewenfeldt tries to base her analysis in something she considers to be objective or impartial, yet the result is that her objective basis does not support her subjective interpretations. As has been pointed out

repeatedly, the key to overcoming the East-West dichotomy is to understand the complexity

of culture, and to analyse people or works as individuals rather than cultures personified. Von

Loewenfeldt understands the flaws of enforcing a culturally specific framework on *Throne of*

Blood, but overreaches in trying to enforce a culturally neutral framework instead.

Conclusion

　　Von Loewenfeldt's criticism of earlier critics is in line with the positions taken by this

thesis, and though her own analysis is not convincing on all points it does succeed in what it

sets out to do. Von Loewenfeldt does not name the East-West dichotomy explicitly, but it

nevertheless lies at the core of her arguments. When Desser declares *Throne of Blood* to be

"not [...] a Japanese film" (75) or when Davies argues that the characters are "not [...]

dramatic equivalents [to Shakespeare's]" (155) it is the dichotomy at work, causing otherwise

intelligent critics to reject *Throne of Blood* on no other grounds than not being 'Japanese'

enough or not being 'Shakespeare' enough. Von Loewenfeldt's own analysis is shaped by the

desire not to make the same mistake she criticizes in others. Instead of trying to create some

vague framework of 'Japanese' or 'Shakespeare' and trying to analyse *Throne of Blood*'s

relation to it, she combines structural analysis with information from Kurosawa's own life and

words to provide a culturally neutral basis to work from. This last part though is what is less

convincing about her article. The connection between von Loewenfeldt's thematic analysis

and her structural framework is not convincing or well-established. This thesis argues that the

success of von Loewenfeldt's analysis is not because she uses more culturally neutral tools,

but because she approaches *Throne of Blood* without dichotomisation. Von Loewenfeldt tries

to read *Throne of Blood* not as a 'Japanese' or 'Western' work, but as an "(albeit Japanese)

filmmaker's [personal] engagement with *Macbeth*" (87). Her only flaw is not having the

confidence to do so without a 'culturally neutral' framework. It is her ability to approach

Throne of Blood on its own terms, to see past nations of 'Shakespeare' or 'Japanese', and to see a work that is its own entity, that gives her analysis its strength and insight. *Throne of Blood* will have Japanese influences, 'Western' influences, Shakespearean influences, influences from Kurosawa's own personal life, and even influences from any of the countless cultures with which people come into contact on a daily basis. As established in the first chapter, all cultures are the result of such amalgamations. What von Loewenfeldt does well is not seeking to establish 'Japanese' influences, but to simply establish influences, whether they happen to be Japanese or not. The result is that she makes many great observations that both enrich and reinforce the themes of *Throne of Blood*.

Chapter V: "Silence and Sound in Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*" by Lei Jin

<p style="text-align:center">Introduction</p>

In the preceding chapters this thesis discussed critics whose analyses were, to greater or lesser extent, marred by the presence of the East-West dichotomy. This final chapter will discuss a critic who successfully avoids this pitfall, namely Lei Jin, the author of "Silence and Sound in Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood*", published in *Shakespeare in Hollywood, Asia, and Cyberspace*. At the time of publication Jin had recently completed her Ph. D in comparative literature at Purdue University, and was teaching Chinese at the University of Charleston. In her article Jin successfully avoids any influence of the East-West dichotomy. Instead, Jin approaches *Throne of Blood* on its own terms, seamlessly mixing the various cultural influences into a coherent and comprehensive argument.

<p style="text-align:center">Jin on Past Critics</p>

Unlike von Loewenfeldt, Kishi, and Bradshaw, Jin does not take to task the critics who came before her. Rather, for Jin in her comparatively brief treatment they serve to establish the starting point for her own analysis. She begins by mentioning the complaint levelled at *Throne of Blood* that it cannot be Shakespeare as it does not include a translation of Shakespeare's text. Jin mentions this criticism only to develop its counter-argument: that rather than translate Shakespeare's words into Japanese words, Kurosawa translated them into cinematic sound and imagery. This latter argument is the basis for Jin's own analysis, which goes into detail on how the interplay of silence and sound 'translate' Shakespeare in a manner which reinforces the themes and meaning of *Throne of Blood*. Jin selects two critics as the main defenders of her approach, Anthony Davies and Stephen Prince. Davies writing in his

book *Filming Shakespeare's Plays*, and Prince writing in his book: *The Warrior's Camera –*
The Cinema of Akira Kurosawa.

<div style="text-align: center;">Anthony Davies</div>

Anthony Davies' discussion of *Throne of Blood* has been mentioned in both preceding
chapters. But Jin is the first to discuss Davies' analysis of *Throne of Blood*, rather than just his
judgement. What Jin takes from Davies is that his analysis "shows Kurosawa's craft and
originality" (88). Specifically, it serves as an example to Jin of how Kurosawa's cinematic
techniques and be read as reinforcing the films meaning.

Davies' argument is that "[t]he major conflict in *Throne of Blood* is presented through
the spatial polarity between the castle and the forest; the world of man and the world of nature
[…] the vertical and the horizontal" (156). This is not a case of simple opposition, Davies
argues, but rather one of complex interaction. He divides the interaction into three main
forms: military, material and reflective. The first, military interaction, refers to the importance
of the forest for the castle's defence. Davies notes how at the start of the film the forest is
identified as a maze, in which invading armies will get lost. Rather than merely being its
natural surroundings, the forest is an intrinsic part of the Castle's defence. The second,
material interaction, refers to how both the castle itself as well as the armour and weaponry of
the soldiers are made of wood. Davies argues that there is a sense that the wood, even after
having been used in human constructions, is still ultimately allied to the forest. He suggests
that the flight of birds into the castle, and the heavy presence of wood in the final scene (in the
castle, the arrows and Washizu's armour itself), are also examples of this. The third, reflective
interaction, refers to how in Davies' analysis both the Castle and the Forest accommodate
"contradictions within themselves" (158). While the castle is primarily horizontal, and the
forest primarily vertical, both also hold elements of the opposite (vertical and horizontal

respectively). One example of Davies is how the vertical forest includes horizontal paths. Through these three forms of interaction, which manifest themselves in many ways throughout the film, the castle and forest are connected on an intrinsic level. The ultimate conclusion of this interaction is, in Davies' analysis, that not only are the forest and the castle connected; they also share the same fate. In the end the horizontal conquers both the castle and the forest: both are destroyed, levelled to the ground.

Davies also discusses other oppositions in *Throne of Blood* like the interplay between movement and stasis, or the presence of diagonal imagery as a destructive counterpart to the horizontal and vertical imagery. It leads Davies to conclude that *Throne of Blood* is a deeply pessimistic film. The conflict, as Davies puts it, is not between good and evil, but between "the world where achievement and success are won through opportunism and the cunning abrogation of trust, set against […] a world of vain ambition, of futility of action, of reductive mutability and ultimate insignificance" (159). In Davies' view, *Throne of Blood* depicts a world where mankind is irredeemably corrupt, and all its endeavours doomed to fail.

What Lin takes from this is the way Davies' analysis links imagery to overall theme. Davies looks at the recurring patterns of the horizontal and vertical, and instils them with a deeper meaning. The usage of the horizontal and the vertical shows the connection, conflict, and interdependency of mankind and nature, as well as their shared doom. In this Jin demonstrates her ability to see past the East-West dichotomy. Davies is not above the dichotomy, and both Kishi and Bradshaw and von Loewenfeldt include Davies amongst the critics they criticise. However none of those critics dealt with the specifics of Davies' analysis. Jin sidesteps the criticism by simply ignoring Davies' dichotomous statements on the Shakespearean or Japaneseness of *Throne of Blood*, and focussing only on what she considers relevant: his analysis of *Throne of Blood* the film itself.

Stephen Prince

Whereas Davies is used by Jin as an example of the meaning in detail in *Throne of Blood*, Prince is used to argue that this detailed and meaningful sound and imagery serves to translate Shakespeare's text onto the screen. As mentioned previously, Jin is rather brief in her discussion of both critics, giving it only a small paragraph in total. She uses Davies to validate the amount of meaning she will subscribe to even small details, and she uses Prince to argue that Kurosawa used these details to 'translate' Shakespeare's text. Though very economical, it also means she offers only the barest summary of what, in Prince's book, is a 7-page deconstruction.

Prince does indeed write that Kurosawa translated Shakespeare's text into cinematic sounds and imagery, and his analysis supports this in detail. Prince argues that *Throne of Blood* is more than just an adaptation of *Macbeth* into film, that it is actually a cultural transposition. It is a transposition from Shakespeare's Elizabethan England into the frame of reference of (Japanese) Buddhism. *Macbeth*, Prince argues, resonates with Buddhist themes regarding "the transience and illusory nature of material existence" (144). As an example he compares a speech from *Macbeth* with one from a Noh play:

[*Macbeth*'s] 'Out, out brief candle! / Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player, / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage / And then is heard no more' echoes the melancholy of the Noh play *Sekidera Komachi*: 'The temple bell of Sekidera / Tolls the vanity of all creation– / To ancient ears a needless lesson. / A mountain wind blows down Osaka's slope / To moan the certainty of death.' (144)

Prince argues that Kurosawa took this speech from *Macbeth*, and through Buddhist influences turned it into the centre of *Throne of Blood*. This is how Prince explains the removal of

Macduff and Malcolm, and the lack of virtue of *Throne of Blood*'s Duncan. This is also in line with the Noh influences in the film. In origin, Noh was strongly Buddhist in its themes and meanings. However in this case Prince argues that the strongest result of the Noh influence is that, "[i]n *Throne of Blood*, feelings are not strictly the province and expression of human beings but are objictified within the environment, are disclosed within and through the world of things" (147). Later, Prince adds that this is also reflective of Confucian beliefs that nature will respond to and reflect the moral behaviour of the ruler. In essence, *Throne of Blood* is a setting where the internal conflicts of *Macbeth*'s characters, as seen from a Buddhist perspective, have become part of the very world and nature itself.

However unlike Davies, Prince does not conclude that *Throne of Blood* is a pessimistic work. Reading it in the context of Kurosawa's entire oeuvre, he argues that *Throne of Blood* shows hints of the type of pessimism that would become stronger in Kurosawa's later work, but is not there yet. What Davies views as representative of destruction, the emphasis on the futility of human ambition, Prince interprets as a call to (Buddhist) enlightenment. Prince agrees that the world depicted in *Throne of Blood* is totally evil and corrupt. However he reads the Witch and the Chorus and similar themes as representing a wisdom that stands above the corrupt world, calling out its evil, and suggesting to the audience that enlightenment may be achieved by letting go of (Washizu's) futile human ambition.

Prince is another example of a critic who avoids analysing in dichotic terms. He argues that Kurosawa incorporated *Macbeth* into a Buddhist context, but this is not the myth of Japan as the great assimilator. In this Prince offers a great contrast to Kishi and Bradshaw from chapter III. Kishi and Bradshaw simply gloss over the exchange of Christian for Buddhist context, and insist on establishing that *Macbeth* has been 'made Japanese'. Prince spends no time attempting to establish that *Macbeth* was 'made Japanese', and instead

explains how the new Buddhist context alters or reinforces parts of *Macbeth*'s meaning. Jin takes from Prince primarily the concept that Kurosawa's sound and imagery serve to 'translate' Shakespeare, but her own approach is equally skilful in avoiding the East-West dichotomy.

Jin on *Throne of Blood*

Jin's analysis of *Throne of Blood* is based on combining what she identifies in Davies and Prince. This is an attention to the interplay between specific cinematic elements, with the concept of *Throne of Blood* transforming Shakespeare's text into such cinematic elements. Specifically, Jin looks at the interplay between silence and sound, and argues that it both serves as a representative of Shakespeare's speeches and reinforces the themes of the film. Jin identifies three types of silence present in *Throne of Blood*: "The mysterious silence of the beginning of the movie and the violent silence of the murder scene [and] the ambiguous and suspenseful silence of the funeral scene" (93). She analyses each in turn.

Mysterious Silence

Regarding the first type of silence, Jin analyses the interplay between silence and the sound of hoof beats during the opening half of the film. Jin begins by noting Kurosawa's love for silent film, by which she tries to establish the validity of looking at the way silence is used in *Throne of Blood*. She notes how in *Throne of Blood* "Kurosawa invites his audiences repeatedly to ponder brief or minutes-long moments of silence" (89). Arguing that the interplay between sound and silence in *Throne of Blood* is rich with symbolism and meaning, Jin gives a detailed description of the film's opening. She notes that "[t]he sound of harsh wind counterpoints the silence, and the silence deepens the mysterious and ambiguous feeling evoked by the heavy fog" (89). She notes how as the film transitions out from the opening,

the silence is broken by hoof beats. The sound of hoof beats is, in Jin's analyses, a recurring symbol of the major themes of the movie "ambition, perfidy, treachery, and war" (89). A second and related symbol, noted by Prince as well, is that of horses running in circles. Jin establishes that the first occurrence of this symbol is at the start of the film. Washizu and Miki get lost in the forest, and end up riding in circles continuously. The second occurrence is only a bit later. Jin argues that with the sound of hoof beats representing human ambition, the horse running in circle symbolises the futility of such ambition. During the scene where Asaji first convinces Washizu to murder their lord, a horse is seen being walked in circles in the yard outside. As Washizu tries to protest Asaji's suggestions, he is mocked, in Jin's words, by the whining of the horse. The interplay between silence, speech and the sounds of the horse both reinforces and symbolises the major themes of the film.

At this point, Jin is already demonstrating her ability to avoid succumbing to the pitfalls of the East-West dichotomy. Rather than attempt to establish artificial barriers between different types of influences, she is focusing on how these influences are contributing to the depth and meaning of the film. When she notes Kurosawa's admiration for silent movies, she is not attempting to categorise *Throne of Blood* as defined by this influence. Rather it comes across as simply one of a myriad of influences, although in this case it is the influence most relevant to Jin's argument. Equally she is not insistent on making the silence the defining feature of her analysis, but rather notes how it enhances and interacts with other elements such as the visuals of the opening sequence or the horse sounds and symbolism of the later scenes.

<u>Violent Silence</u>

Regarding the second type of silence, Jin argues that it originated from Noh practices. Whereas her first example dealt with silence and natural sounds, here Jin expands this by

adding the film's Noh-music. Jin notes that "[s]ilence, natural sound, and *noh*-music […] are
the main aural components in the movie" (90). Although the influence of Noh itself has been
present in virtually all analyses of *Throne of Blood*, Jin notes that the vast majority of these
readings have focused on the acting, not on the music. Yet the music, she argues, owes just as
much to Noh practices as any other influence. Specifically, Jin argues that there's a very
important role of silence in Noh theatre as well. She references Zeami in saying that during
moments in a Noh play when the music or chanting stops "the actor must never abandon his
concentration but must keep his consciousness of inner tension" (91). This sense of inner
tension is something Jin considers pivotal to the depiction of the murder scene in *Throne of
Blood*. She describes the scene in vivid detail, emphasising the interplay between silence and
the sound of Asaji's robes. The silence, she argues, is not to be seen as calm or peaceful, but,
as in Noh, it is filled with tension. Kurosawa dispensed with the elaborate speeches and
poetry exchanged between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in Shakespeare. Instead the sound of
Asaji's robes as she moves about and the tension-filled silence are what Kurosawa uses to
present Asaji's dominance over her husband. The climax of the scene is entirely silent, as
Asaji and Washizu both hold the spear with which he is to kill the lord, wordlessly fighting a
battle of wills. When Washizu finally relents, an owl screeches breaking the silence. In Jin's
interpretation "[t]he screech simultaneously conveys an ominous cry of murder, the mocking
of the Forest Spirit, and a lamentation on the fate of a doomed human" (92). After this, Noh
music accompanies Asaji's nerve-wracking wait as Washizu is off to do the bloody deed.
While the Noh music here serves to punctuate Asaji's state, it also provides a strong contrast
to the deep silence that follows when Washizu finally returns, bloody spear in hand. However
the silence has lost its tension. Instead it symbolises the internal destruction of Washizu
following his act. At this point Jin quotes John Gerlach arguing that Kurosawa removed the
introspection from Shakespeare's characters. However she counters that in her reading,

Kurosawa actually intensified them to the extreme. Rather than discuss their mental state, Washizu and Asaji act out what is going on inside their minds, and the interplay between sounds and silence play a key role in this process.

As Jin includes *Throne of Blood*'s Noh influences, the strengths of her analysis continue to shine through. Jin is not interested in discussing how 'Japanese' Noh is, nor how it contrasts with the Western traditions found in Shakespeare. Jin simply argues how the influence of Noh tradition can be used to explain elements of *Throne of Blood* in ways that reinforce its themes and meaning. Like Prince earlier, Jin's approach contrasts strongly with Kishi and Bradshaw's treatment of *Throne of Blood*. Jin and Kishi and Bradshaw make similar points regarding the influence of Noh music to *Throne of Blood*. However for Kishi and Bradshaw this influence is enough in its own right, as their true goal is to establish the 'Japaneseness' of the music. Jin on the other hand is focused on how the music interacts and explains the film itself. The Noh influences are but a part of her argument as to the music's deeper meaning.

<center>Ambiguous Silence</center>

The third type of silence is used to express Miki's emotional state and moral ambiguity. After the murder is done, Washizu takes the lord's casket to the castle currently under Miki's control. In a long scene, the audience is forced to wait alongside Washizu to see if the castle gates will open for him. When they finally do, Miki appears and rides with Washizu, however he remains silent until the very end of the scene. Again Jin describes the scene in vivid detail. Here silence is again pivotal to the scene. In theory, as the audience has already seen Miki chase away the murdered lord's son, it should be clear that he has chosen Washizu's side. However the use of silence still forces the audience into Washizu's position, anxiously waiting to discover Miki's position. In this sense the silence has two effects. Most

directly, it reflects Miki's ambiguity and uncertainty, suggesting an internal moral struggle as he decides what to do. However at the same time, it emphasises the power Miki has at this moment. Washizu, and the audience with him, is waiting for Miki's word as to what he will do. They are, essentially, powerless until Miki has made his decision. Meanwhile Miki has the power to give the saving or damning word whenever he wishes. By staying silent, Miki maintains his power, his control, over Washizu and the audience as long as possible. The end result is an emphasis on the power, and therefore the complicity of Miki.

Again Jin demonstrates her ability to approach *Throne of Blood* in its own right. There are a myriad of elements present in this scene. However Jin resists the temptation to categorise them. She does not seek to label the silence present here as reflective of silent films, nor of Noh traditions. Jin's approach here offers a contrast to von Loewenfeldt's in chapter III. Von Loewenfeldt's observations are of similar quality, but she complicates them by attempting to provide a culturally neutral framework. Jin does not feel the need for such a framework. She freely notes different cultural influence, Noh and silent movies, but remains focussed on how they reflect upon the theme of *Throne of Blood*. Jin approaches *Throne of Blood* on its own, culturally complicated, terms and analyses how its elements function within its own context.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

Jin manages to avoid succumbing to the East-West dichotomy by approaching the various elements in *Throne of Blood* on their own terms, and refusing to excessively categorise them as East or West, one way or the other. In her treatment of past critics, she avoids the more problematic aspects of their discussions and instead focuses on what is relevant to her own analysis. She discusses the influences of silent films and Noh traditions on silence in *Throne of Blood*, but does not seek to define *Throne of Blood* by those influences.

She focuses on the interplay between various elements, whether she can establish their origin or not, and seeks to establish only how they support and add depth to the themes and meanings present in *Throne of Blood*.

Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to examine the presence of the East-West dichotomy in Japanese Shakespeare studies by examining the Western reception of *Throne of Blood*. Hopefully it has succeeded in proving that it has not only been present, but that is has been a problematic presence at that. The first chapter established the East-West dichotomy, its nature, its problems and its manifestations in Japan specifically. The second chapter introduced *Throne of Blood* and the critics that would be analysed in the chapters following. The last three chapters were case studies of various critics and the ways in which they interacted with the East-West dichotomy. The third chapter on Tetsuo Kishi and Graham Bradshaw displayed how otherwise expert critics can produce a pervasively flawed analysis when working from the flawed framework of the East-West dichotomy. The fourth chapter on Paula von Loewenfeldt displayed how even critics who are aware of the East-West dichotomy and its problems can still struggle to find an adequate replacement through which to analyse instead. The fifth chapter on Lei Jin displayed how critics can move past the East-West dichotomy, by analysing a work as a combination of varied cultural influences, the unique combination of which creates the whole.

Lei Jin's article was the most recent of the case studies, published in 2009. Its strong analysis offers hope that present and future critics can avoid making the mistake of seeing through the lens of the East-West dichotomy. This is indeed the general direction of other fields. As chapter I shows, in anthropology the East-West dichotomy has already come under severe fire and has been largely discredited. Still, it is important that the field of Shakespeare studies is aware of its history, problematic as it at times may have been. A study such as Jin's which avoids discussing the East-West dichotomy altogether does much for the analysis and understanding of specific works. But it is also important to have studies such as this thesis,

which seek to analyse and catalogue the mistakes of the past. Though the East-West dichotomy has been largely discredited in academic circles, it survives in popular culture at large. The appeal of 'us' versus 'them', of narratives of Self and Other, remains. It is important to be aware of their presence in the past, and be vigilant to avoid allowing their return in the future. Hopefully this thesis has been able to contribute to this process.

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