

# Drama macbeth: shakespeare's play and wells' film essay (book review)

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



Shakespeare's play, Macbeth, has been adapted into different films after its original publication in 1623. In 1948, Orson Wells adapted the tragedy Macbeth into a film by making numerous changes perhaps to fit in the cinematic themes of the time. However, the play communicates the meaning of the text in a better way as compared to the film by Orson Wells. This paper explores this assertion.

In the film, Orson dwells on Act 2, Scene II where Macbeth kills the king. However, Orson fails to bring out the real traits of the involved characters and especially Lady Macbeth and her husband, Macbeth. In the play, Macbeth is panic-stricken when he emerges holding daggers after killing the king. This aspect underscores the seriousness of the crime he has just committed.

However, in the film, Macbeth comes out not as terror-stricken as the audience would expect. In addition, in the film, he does not even speak to his wife and he simply cleans his hands without showing any remorse or panic (Macbeth). This scenario is not expected of a person who has just murdered a king in cold blood. In the film adaptation, perhaps Orson tries to embolden Macbeth because he is a man and men are supposed to show courage and boldness.

However, this perception defeats the essence of the play. The play, Macbeth, is supposed to be a tragedy where the characters involved, especially Macbeth and his wife, are abnormal. In this case, women are supposed to be strong and courageous while men are supposed to be frightened to underscore the tragedy that has befallen society.

In the play, Lady Macbeth comes out as a more logical and stronger person as compared to her husband. As Macbeth wonders on what to do after killing the king coupled with swearing not to go back to the room, Lady Macbeth shows some logic by holding that the daggers should be returned to the room. After Macbeth refuses to return the daggers, she takes responsibility by accomplishing the task by herself. Macbeth cannot even take the initiative of cleaning up in a bid to conceal his heinous murder (Shakespeare 23).

Again, Lady Macbeth shows logic by leading her husband to another room in a bid to clean up and avoid any suspicion. However, in the movie, roles are inverted and Lady Macbeth seems more frightened as compared to Macbeth. As aforementioned, the motive of the film is perhaps to highlight the 20th century perceptions concerning the role of women and men in the society concerning masculinity and chauvinism. However, Shakespeare lived at a time when chauvinism was prevalent and thus he wanted to question such beliefs through the tragedy of Macbeth. Therefore, the film misses the point of the original context of the play in the quest to fit into the cinematic themes of the time.

In conclusion, Orson's film adaptation of the tragedy Macbeth robs it of its uniqueness. Shakespeare's main theme was to question societal issues like chauvinism and the place of women in society. During his time, women were disrespected and their role was to remain in the kitchen and Shakespeare sought to question these ideals. Unfortunately, Orson reversed the ideas to fit into societal expectations of the mid-20th century when men sought to

counter the rising wave of feminism, and thus he lost the meaning of the original context of the play.

Macbeth. Dir. Orson Welles. Tampa, FL: Mercury Productions Inc., 1948. Film.

Shakespeare, William. Macbeth, London: Macmillan and Co., 1892. Print.