

Film critiques on the bad sleep well (kurosawa, 1960)

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The Bad Sleep Well Taking place during the post World War 2 reconstruction of Japan, Akira Kurosawas film The Bad Sleep Well focuses on the corruption that was present in the corporate world during this time period. Everyone is aware of what these corporate entities are doing, but no one has the power to stop them. The film draws upon the idea of Hamlet when portraying this corruption and showing the negative impact that an infallible corporation can have on society.

The beginning of the film sets its dark tone, as we see a wedding party.

While a wedding should be a happy time, the music played in the background gives the impression that there is anger within the people who have attended. This opening goes a long way in setting the groundwork for the plot of the story, since the audience is shown a few facts about those involved with the wedding. We see that Tatsuo has threatened to kill Nishi and that Nishi has only married Keiko for the wealth and power of her family. All of this is revealed during a seemingly happy time, which sets the rest of the film up very well.

The audience is also privy to Nishi seeking revenge for the death of his father. He blames corporate entities for this death, which is why he wants to show the world how corrupt the corporate world is in Japan. The main issue is that the corporation that he focuses on is owned by his father-in-law. At the same time, however, we see Nishi legitimately fall for his new wife, which makes it more difficult for him to reach his objectives. This part of the plot features similarities to Shakespeares Hamlet, as the protagonist, Hamlet, focuses on getting revenge on a family member for the death of his father. The ending of this film is a tragedy, similarly to Hamlet, since the protagonist

dies while attempting to reach his goals. The main difference is that the villain in *The Bad Sleep Well*, Iwabuchi, does not die, while Hamlet's villain, Claudius, does perish.

Perhaps the main goal of this film is to create a social commentary on the state of Japan at that time. Those who were involved in the corporate world could get away with nearly anything, unless there was enough evidence to back it up. We see at the end of the film that even though Nishi and Wada were both murdered, everyone involved in the situations knows that no one will ever be convicted of the crime because there was not any firsthand evidence present. On the other end of the spectrum, we see lower level employees of this corporation feeling bound to the company. Wada, for example, would rather die than expose the corporation for what has truly been doing. In the end, the vice-president of the corporation actually murders him because he has turned on the company.

This film does a good job of showing what Japanese society was like after the Second World War. We can still see parallels to the power of this corporation in society today. These parallels can be found all over the developed world, as corporate entities have even more power in politics and over the lives of everyday people. Kurosawa was ahead of his time because he saw the corruption of the corporate world over 50 years ago and attempted to expose it at that time. If we had only listened to his social commentary, we might have been able to halt some of the issues that current plague society. Overall, Kurosawa perfectly sets the film up to be a tragedy by creating the perfect villain, which nearly everyone in society can relate to, and then allowing that villain to get away with murder.