PROJECT MUSE®

The Auteur Affect: *'Forces of Encounter' between Shakespeare and Kurosawa in*
 The Bad Sleep Well

Felicity Gee

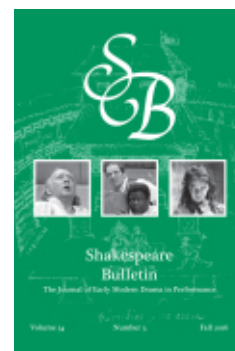➡ *For additional information about this article*
   https://muse.jhu.edu/article/629790

The Auteur Affect: 'Forces of Encounter' between Shakespeare and Kurosawa in The Bad Sleep Well

FELICITY GEE
University of Exeter

*I*n "Revenge of the Author" (1999), Colin MacCabe attempts to "bring into alignment two major and contradictory areas" that he finds difficult to resolve within the field of 1970s film studies. The first of these is the seismic shift brought about by reading Roland Barthes's "The Death of the Author" (1967), and the second his own participation in the making of feature films. The former dispatches with the "origin" (author) of the text in favor of the destination (reader/audience), while the experience of being an active crewmember on a film set reveals the steer of an author (MacCabe 30). As MacCabe notes, in the 1970s the discipline of film studies was largely defined by the seeming impasse posited via theories of authorship in *Cahiers du cinéma* and dissected in concurrent works of poststructuralism: "For Barthes, the author is the figure used to obscure the specificity of the textual. For *Cahiers*, the author, while sharing the Romantic features of creativity, inferiority, etc., was the figure used to emphasize the specificity of the codes that went to make up the cinema" (34). At the center of MacCabe's essay is the question of whether it is possible to read films as polysemic and continuously determined works of art in a poststructuralist sense, but a reading that also allows for the nonfixity of authorial and spectator positions:

> If there was great importance in emphasizing the potential polysemy of any text, its potential for infinitization … it is still the case that texts are continuously determined in their meanings. The question is how we are to understand those determinations without producing, on the one hand, an author autonomously creating meanings in a sphere anterior to their specific articulation and, on the other, an audience imposing whatever meaning it chooses on a text (36).

The conundrum concerning the exchange of meanings circulating between an auteur, a film, and its audience forms the basis for this article's discussion of Akira Kurosawa and his film *The Bad Sleep Well* (*Warui Yatsu Hodo Yoku Nemuru*, 1960). I propose a potential pathway out of MacCabe's impasse through the application of theories of affect and adaptation to questions of authorship. In turn, this reading posits a multivalent, nondetermined experience of film that upholds the entity of authorial presence, without losing the, at least, "partial agency" and potential for "alternative practice" that the autonomy of an auteur makes possible (Staiger 27). The auteur, I suggest, is not dead, nor simply exalted or fetishized, but rather haunts the film, conveying a myriad of "transindividual codes" to be felt or sensed by the spectator. This approach also marks a departure from scholarship that focuses on Kurosawa as a national auteur, an angle that has been particularly prevalent in considerations of his contribution to the realm of Shakespearean adaptation. Despite the very specific "Japaneseness" of Kurosawa's films (Richie 242), ideas and emotions are ventriloquized through striking objects and *mise-en-scène*—a helmet and a spinning wheel in *Throne of Blood* (*Kumonosu-jō*, 1957), the exterior view of an office window and a smoldering volcano in *The Bad Sleep Well*, for example—that speak for themselves, beyond the imagined constraints of fixed authorial or national boundaries. In contemplating the affect of the auteur generated through and by such images, this article asks a new set of questions regarding Kurosawa's creative practice and the sensational, "transindividual" appeal of his Shakespearean adaptations.

In his consideration (via Barthes and Derrida) of the infinite possibilities of textual creation and reception, MacCabe opens up the collaborative instance of cinema that is always constituted in the present moment. He argues that any notion of an auteur, or auteurism, has always been linked to that of an audience. Whether this refers to a twentieth-century "moment" at which audiences flocked to cinemas en masse, or the process of a filmmaker creating for a specific viewer, questions of intent, expectation, exhibition, and reception are paramount. From the outset, moving pictures demanded exhibition and were brought alive simultaneously through technical projection, the accompanying monologue of a "lecturer" (or *benshi*, in Japan), and the often animated response of the audience. In the present day, more than ever, films travel—across platforms, globally—moving at an accelerated rate, but the relationship between the work of art, its creator, and the spectator remains. MacCabe's question, above, points to the "continuously determined" aspects of a film text and ponders the ways in which films specifically, (and literature more gener-

ally), invite a continuous reevaluation of the past through repeat viewings and engagement in the present that, in turn, resists totalizing meaning. MacCabe's question is helpful in reminding us that auteurs, like the works of art they create, are part of a constantly shifting *process* in which totalities such as "national," "social," "individual," "collective," or "historical" are unfixed and yet prone to having fixity assigned to them. It is true that a film acts as an archive—a moving document of objects, locations, people, and thoughts—and that we as spectators interpret it through our own experiences of the present. In so doing, the unknown and invisible forces of the film as archive, the *social unconscious* may be lost in our interpretation of the past based on current knowledge. The film becomes, for example, like the cataloguing of a disappearing nineteenth-century Paris in Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project* "a realm in which the distinction between the nonsensically individual and the significantly collective disappears" (MacCabe 40).

The concerns of a cultural-materialist critic are of relevance to a critical evaluation of authorship and spectatorship because people can only be defined according to conscious knowledge. For example, Akira Kurosawa materializes before our eyes in the form of interviews, reviews, or in Chris Marker's "essay portrait," *A.K.: The Making of Ran* (1985), which details "Kurosawa's meticulous directorial role" (Alter 41). We hear the director's words spoken to camera in Marker's film: "I always say to my crew, to create is to remember. Memory is the basis of everything," but may wonder what is lost or overlooked in this process of creating. To cling to an auteur's autobiographical sharing of thoughts will not, however, give us the full picture. Kurosawa was fiercely autonomous yet nevertheless a part of the wider crew, affectionately named "Team Kurosawa"; a traditionalist, yet considered too Western by many Japanese film critics; known to "seize a flash of inspiration" in order to "jettison everything" while remaining "straitlaced and meticulous" (Hashimoto 86); political but not radical. He, as much as his films, is open to interpretation, and the preserved aspects of his personality are as subjective as the meaning generated by Toshirō Mifune's screen violence. Kurosawa's quasi-mythological status in the annals of global art cinema, and the commercial and cinephiliac appeal of the auteur as star (Corrigan) may alter the meaning of the films, raising expectation or imposing commercial value. Spectators also register patterns and hallmarks within Kurosawa's films that, even when adapted from another source text, can nevertheless seemingly be traced back to him. Laura Mulvey in her study of Max Ophuls insists on the term "auteurist adaptation" to account for the fact that Ophuls's films' "divergence

from their original texts has a consistency" (76). But to what extent could the proclamation "An Akira Kurosawa Film" (*Ran*, 1985) open up the film to multiplicity rather than sealing it with a sense of finality? Focusing in detail on Kurosawa's *Hamlet*-inflected *The Bad Sleep Well* (the first Toho-Kurosawa Production), the next section explores the film's combination of authorial "aura" (Andrew 27), the repetitions and differences that occur in transcultural[1] translations of Shakespeare, and the resulting "montage effect" (Lehmann ix)[2] drawn from creative collaboration.

The never-waning pleasure gained from watching new versions of Shakespeare plays in their various mediated forms is often heightened by a given performance's departure from, or defamiliarization of, the source text.[3] This is especially discernible in versions that negotiate, and sometimes transcend, national, cultural, historical, gendered, or medium-specific borders in their ambitious translations.[4] Whether this involves a stark relocation to a modern setting; an innovative use of film and digital technologies in stage productions; or a complete cultural reinvention in which religious, moral and aesthetic motifs reflect deep regional values,[5] the resulting experience for the viewer with knowledge of the source play is one that necessarily engages with difference and similarity. In Japan, the difference was pronounced, not so much at the level of the plot or the philosophical meaning, but in that Shakespeare belonged to the West, and required a different linguistic and visual language to bring his works to the stage. Arriving towards the end of the nineteenth century, concurrent with much later European literary figures, Shakespeare did not signal the Renaissance but, rather, like Ibsen, Chekhov, or Gorky, stood in for success and civilization. As Yoshihara Yukari suggests:

> The reception of Shakespeare's works contributed, in its small way, to the construction of the modern Japanese nation-state for it offered opportunities to invent an imaginary Japaneseness through partial and often mutually contradictory identification with and differentiation from the west. (21)

The oft-discussed story of Shakespearean adaptation and translation in Japan is one that involves a cast of translators, playwrights, screenwriters and directors. Each one brings personality to their work while also serving to reflect socio-cultural, political, and technological change. Since early expatriate endeavors to stage Shakespeare plays at The Gaiety Theatre (1870–1923) in Yokohama, performing Shakespeare in Japan has necessarily intersected and entered into conversation with modernity, both artistic and commercial. This has also always meant an epistemological

engagement with the West and its technologies, while simultaneously adapting Japanese art forms and the Japanese spirit—a complex concept summed up in the term *wakon yōsai* [和魂洋才], simply translated as "Japanese spirit and Western technique." It is important, therefore, to consider the ways in which indigenous art forms and modern literary and theatrical practices negotiate significant socio-cultural shifts through the words and ideas of Shakespeare, and of his adaptors in Europe. Thus, in visual and performance arts adapted from Western source texts, the text/performance/film is a syncretic product brought alive by the creative process in which a variety of traditional art forms are set in dialogue. It listens and interprets, but it also speaks back through the participatory act of performance: "now capable not merely of appropriating the foreign but of reflecting on its 'pedagogical' cargo, problematizing the local effects of that cargo, historicizing them and groping towards a new synthesis" (Gillies 239). We must, therefore, not view "tradition" or "national character" as monolithic, logocentric terms, but take into account the many twists and turns in the history of performance, and of cinema, in Japan, and, above all, consider how these shifts correspond to auteurial "presence" in the works themselves.

In the introduction to *Performing Shakespeare in Japan*, the editors note that "Translating Shakespeare has always been culturally complicated in Japan," illustrating their point with the example of Tsubouchi Shōyō's (1859–1935) 1884 translation of *Julius Caesar*, which they argue "should be seen primarily as an extension of Kabuki, rather than as a linguistic and cultural importation of Shakespeare" (Ryuta et al. 2). However, for novelist Natsume Sōseki writing of Tsubouchi's stage version of *Hamlet* in the *Asahi Shimbun* in 1911, this contemporary adaptation simply did not work. Shakespearean poetry, he argued, was better suited to the "unique poetic style of Noh" (Ueda 67). To further complicate matters, Tsubouchi, (the first translator of the complete works of Shakespeare in Japan, and the founder of the Bungei Kyōkai [Literary Society], which favored Shakespearean adaptations), likened his own work to Edō playwright Chikamatsu Monzaemon, adding to the layers of stylistic influences on his work. As well as Kabuki and Noh—of which the latter has been much discussed in relation to Kurosawa's metaphysics (Richie, 1970; Kurosawa, 1982; Goodwin, 1994; Prince, 1999; Guneratne, 2008; among others)—by the time we reach the period in which Kurosawa was making films (from his first work as assistant director with Kajirō Yamamoto on *Uma* [*Horse*, 1941] to his last film in 1993, *Madadayo* [*Not Yet*]), a wealth of influence drawn across theater, literature, painting, and film

is apparent. Indeed, the relative simultaneity of influence on the plastic arts due to rapid modernization during and after the Meiji era ensured that traditional, populist, and more avant-garde forms of entertainment all have purchase in discussions of Kurosawa films. Kurosawa is a collector, his films archival repositories for objects, styles, repackaged dialogue, and, most importantly, his original thoughts. It is through Kurosawa that these disparate elements are collated and enlivened.

In his appraisal of early cinema audiences in Japan, Tadao Satō describes how people were drawn to the paradoxical allure of new and old that film presented to them. Filmgoers were enamored of chivalric heroes in the *bushidō* vein, but were also desirous of the freedom that Western popular culture seemed to imply. After the crushing defeat in World War 2, Satō insists that Kurosawa "sustained" the Japanese public through the heroic depictions of suffering in his films, favoring the flawed honor and "spiritual quality" of the suffering outcast, whose "wretched straits" Japanese audiences found "far more appealing" than classic chivalry (Tadao 49–50). The emphasis on (anti)heroic figures and the liminal appeal of the outcast immediately alerts the reader to profound synergies between Kurosawa's narrative preoccupations, his recycling of earlier literary tropes, and those of Shakespeare. They have both similarly been upheld as visionaries working for the nation, individuals standing in for the whole: "Shakespeare was merely a part of a much larger system of patronage, market exigencies, performance technology, and the socio-political ideologies of early modern England" (Lehmann 12). A salient question, then, is how the singular creativity of an author might be measured against influence, against the collaborative nature of his method, and against the desires of the local and global audience.[6]

"*Coming into being*"—Film Moods and Affects

Besides repeated thematic preoccupations and resolute stylistic traits (lens flare, screen wipes, self-reflexive editing, multiple-camera perspective, excessive violence, metaphysical perspectives, battle choreography), Kurosawa's Shakespearean adaptations present formal and psychological elements from which an accumulation of affects arises. Of particular significance are: the perpetually present Shakespearean palimpsest at the level of the film; the auteur and his crew; and the repetition of formal motifs (with emphasis on meteorological phenomena, totemic objects, metaphysical perspectives, texture). Thus between the spectator and the screen, an active negotiation of the constituent elements occurs, throughout which intellectual, unconscious, and sensory information

flows unceasingly. Kurosawa's *virtual* presence is always implied; from the credit sequence that announces his directorial role, to the expectation held within each spectator conscious of his aesthetic and authorial power. This presence, however, rather than being monolithic in dimension, is an iridescent force (to run with a *virtual* [holographic] analogy)[7] that corresponds to lived experience *as it happens, and as it is felt.*

> Shakespeare, knowing that man is living his everyday life and at the same time is living intensely in the invisible world of his thoughts and feelings, developed a method through which we can see at one and the same time the look on the man's face and the vibrations of his brain. (Brook 84)

For Peter Brook, Shakespeare's plays reflect a deep and unwavering commitment to what it is to exist in the world, a commitment that tracks down human thought and makes it visible. Shakespearean worlds conjure the materiality of place—Verona, Venice, or the Forest of Arden, for example—and imbue it with the "forces of encounter" (Seigworth 2), of human sensations and emotions; literal magic and superstition meld with paranoia, shock, love sickness, and jealousy. Brook's use of the word "vibrations" to describe Shakespeare's "method" for bringing inner and exterior worlds together is of key significance to Kurosawa's Shakespearean adaptations. *Throne of Blood*, *The Bad Sleep Well*, and *Ran* (1985), based, to varying degrees, on *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, and *King Lear*, respectively, each vibrate with the tragic intensity of their principal characters. However, this is not as simple an equation as place + character + emotion = intensity; the affect accumulates across minute shifts and barely perceptible changes in the diegesis: "Physically and biologically, something is present that was not there before, but it did not originate sui generis: it was not generated solely or sometimes even in part by the individual organism or its genes" (Brennan 1). Teresa Brennan's theory of the transmission of affect registers the *coming into being* of a certain atmosphere, or mood, and recognizes that there is no fixed point of emergence.

The cumulative emergence of affect is also heeded by Donald Richie, who describes Kurosawa's "heroes" as subjects who live "in the eternal present," "*becoming*" rather than being "defined" by history (184). Such characters charge the screen with an energy that opens up meaning to the flow and cyclical return of (nondetermined) history, something that Kurosawa recognizes in "how man repeats himself over and over again" (qtd. in Richie 115). Whether located within scenes of medieval feudalism, or populating the nihilistic spaces of postwar urban commodification, the characters occupy nodal points in cyclical tales that reflect upon

what it means to exist. Lastly, the emergent mood that this flux of energy precipitates is also charged by what Carl Plantinga names "art moods," or the "affective character" of lines, letters, numbers, images, sounds: "of the elegant movement of a dancer through space, of the sly wink of the eye, the sound of a soaring aria sung by a soprano in an empty warehouse, or the grating of heavy metal being dragged along cement" (Plantinga 462). Kurosawa's film worlds self-consciously foreground moods and affects, with the director's own "affective character" setting the elements into play (or battle).

Shakespearean worlds can also be said to *become* within the limitless bounds of an eternal present in which source, iteration, repetition, and transformation continually circulate meanings. On the voice-over narration accompanying his documentary *A.K.: The Making of Ran* (1985), Marker marvels at how Kurosawa's film generates Shakespearean affect: "It is King Lear, yet it is not King Lear. More like Lear's echo reverberating across those castle walls built by Kurosawa on Mount Fuji." In Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Cornwall calls out the coming storm (2.2.460) to which Kurosawa's screenplay responds:

> Exterior. Wilderness. Storm. Day
> The very wilderness of insanity. A small shadow wandering in the mad gales, in the downpour, among the thunderclaps and the lightning bolts. (Kurosawa, *Ran* 120)

The image of the storm (which in the translation morphs into the Japanese typhoon that typically marks the coming of autumn) bridges the two texts, suggesting contrasting scales of mood, grand natural gesture, diminished human strength, and transitive madness. This correspondence magically ties the source and its treatment together, expanding the breadth and intensity of the wind and rain in our imagination. Similarly, Marker's comment underlines the powerful reverberation of the trace elements, which rise like the repressed to haunt the (fake) castle. His suggestive observation implies that *Lear*'s indexical trace negotiates the simultaneity of present and past temporalities, and multiple repetitions of the textual themes: "The past does not follow the present that it is no longer, it coexists with the present it was. The present is the actual image, and *its* contemporaneous past is the *virtual image*, the image in a mirror" (Deleuze, *Cinema 2* 77; author's emphasis). Fredric Jameson, following Gilles Deleuze's formulation of temporal simultaneity, suggests that the realm of affect allows for a "different kind of presence than the one marked out by the tripartite temporal system of past-present-future, or

even by that of the before and after" (Jameson, *Antinomies* 10). In Kurosawa and his team's hands, *Lear*'s echo transforms into a frantic, accelerated, visual and affective transference of madness. The original verse is superseded, yet its remains can be *felt*. *Ran* also ruminates on a "different kind of presence" in its foregrounding of supernatural and metaphysical thought. For example, the Kurosawan tropes of ruined battlements, hierarchy, rivalry, and bloodshed are interwoven with facets of spirituality that further expand the diegetic realm. Lady Sué's scroll of the Amitabha or Kyoami's anguished cries to Buddha, for example, imply a deific perspective, a point of view conjoining earth and cosmos that bends and expands time. *Ran's* screenplay ends on the word "Wretchedness" as the picture of Buddha falls from Tsurumaru's hands, and the spectator is reminded that with death and ruin comes the possibility of return in which mortals can choose to accept or reject metaphysical wisdom, signaling that "Future mysteries will arise from the ruins of today's" (Aragon 15).

An auteur—part celebrity, part artist, and part laborer—can also be analyzed according to his or her function as a conduit, a nodal point in a web of diversity and affect. Certainly Kurosawa still generates an excess of affect as Japan's most well-known auteur and national treasure (alongside Mizoguchi and Ozu). Screenwriter Shinobu Hashimoto believes that "there never was, nor will there ever be, another Kurosawa" (201). In an NHK broadcast after Kurosawa's death in September 1998, Steven Spielberg called him "the pictorial Shakespeare of our time" and in the same year, in *Time* magazine, Martin Scorsese insisted: "His influence is so profound as to be almost incomparable. There is no one else like him" (qtd. in Galbraith 3). Kurosawa spoke of his own role on a film set as if he were a director-god, or a medium channeling ghostly energy: "It's like I hear a voice from the heavens. I guess all of us are possessed by something" (qtd. in Galbraith 189). However, *The Bad Sleep Well* had five script cowriters: Kurosawa, Hashimoto, Hideo Ōguni, Ryūzo Kikushima, and Eijiro Hisaita: "Team Kurosawa's coscripting was about multiple people writing the same scene through various perspectives (compound eyes), editing them and creating a screenplay with the feel of a mixed chorus—that was the chief characteristic of a Kurosawa work" (Hashimoto 146). This "mixed chorus" was an integral part of Kurosawa's creative process, as he always needed to test and challenge a range of ideas for a particular scene. As a result, his films become a collection, a collage, of mirror images (in Deleuze's terms) drawn from multiple imaginations. To refer back to MacCabe's question, the potential permutations of images and their virtual impressions are dazzling. Subsequently, I find it significant

that the multicamera perspective famously employed to create amplified dimensionality in Kurosawa's films is further diversified by the collaborative practice behind the camera. Akin to the collaborative expertise of a professional orchestra, each vibration reverberates in communication with that produced by another to produce the overall sound, but arguably, the conductor is needed to forge the direction, rhythm, and tone of the piece. Fame, marketing, and commerce play a hand in this, too, but what is significant to our argument is the fact that the combination of incremental contributions forges the whole, regardless of creative hierarchy.

Affect, then, allows us to work from a position of nonfixity from which meanings spring forth, untethered, from the fountain of multiple origins. In her extraordinary book, *Forms of the Affects*, Eugenie Brinkema warns against a theory of affect that is solipsistic, in which "Affect is taken as always being, in the end, *for us*" (30). She argues convincingly that affect be considered "outside the expressivity hypothesis" and calls for affects to be *read for form*, and *as having forms* (36). This welcome move, which considers the ways in which aspects of film form such as light, color, rhythm, or line could be said to have affect, avoids a theoretical analysis that focuses solely on the human aspects of expression and reception. Brinkema asks two key questions that are also pertinent to an exploration of *The Bad Sleep Well*'s compositional emphasis on graphic and abstract forms, and to the ways in which these are mobilized to represent a *sense* of space; firstly, how might interrogating the relationship between cinematic form and a negative affect, such as disgust, reveal something beneath the form; and secondly, "How might the straits of anxiety be a matter of a broken horizontal line?" (xvi). A clear example would be the repetitive deployment of a patterned or grainy backdrop to disrupt symmetry and to amplify the mood within the diegesis—the decorative paper screen at the wedding banquet; the ominous volcano; or the walls of the police station that threaten to crush Miura following his release. These surfaces either contribute to a burgeoning *mood* or serve as counterpoint to expectation. They impress upon the characters, simultaneously absorbing sounds and acts occurring around them. In one sense they are uncanny, but not always necessarily linked to interior struggle and emotional turmoil: sometimes *they are* that struggle and turmoil in and of themselves, in their ontological reality.

According to film historian Lotte Eisner, mood, or *Stimmung*, arises in visual effects, such as penumbra, oblique and exaggerated angles, and filters deployed to simulate fogs and mists. In German Expressionist film, the visual representation of something akin to sorrowful nostalgia—a

"mystical and singular harmony amid the chaos of things"—often signals points in the diegesis when boundaries between animate and inanimate; present and past; grief and reconciliation are dissolved or transgressed (Eisner 199). From the driving rain and the lens-flare sunbursts in *Rashōmon* (1950), the gold-painted ears of wheat in *Ran*, the water-riven mud in *Seven Samurai* (1954), to the dust fogs and rain-drenched vistas of *The Bad Sleep Well*, *Stimmung*, as Eisner defines it, is abundant. As Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto points out, the relationship between nature and humankind in Kurosawa's films is not peaceful or symbiotic, but rather defined by alienation and despair (276). Moreover, the weather that characters must endure exacerbates their moods, and the shadows and textures it creates highlight the divisions and separation between *things*. The characters are murderous, melancholy, despairing, grief-stricken, and mad; Kurosawa's "natural world" echoes and reciprocates. The syncretism of mood and form allows in the instance of *The Bad Sleep Well* for *things* to stand in for *unnamed* social forces. The *grattage* of unforgiving concrete, piercing car headlights, office blocks, or crowds distorted into infinity by a wide-angle shot, exist in and of themselves as formal elements, but also metonymically link to social unrest. Thus, as Yoshimoto points out, Kurosawa was able to address specific acts of corporate corruption, but also the political affect of the 1960 US-Japan Security Treaty (*Anpo*) (the physical and emotional shock that resulted in intense public revolutionary opposition to the treaty) with oblique imagery: "From the beginning, it is clear that the operative mode of narration … is not realism" with the "diegetic space … divided into two clearly demarcated areas of performance and observation" (Yoshimoto 277). The performative space invites the spectator to decode the moods within the diegesis through the combination of artifice and nature, things and environment. Certainly, it would seem that Kurosawa was highly aware of affect functioning in his work, and the ways in which "the vibrations of the brain" could be realized formally and dialectically.

Socio-political Affects: Becoming Hamlet

Although it is an *a priori* "fact" that *The Bad Sleep Well* is rooted in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, a reference that spectators cannot help but now read into the film, Kurosawa did not directly refer to the play as his inspiration, but rather emphasized the socio-political need he felt to "expose" corporate corruption (and by extension a corrupt government) in order to reflect upon postwar capitalism (*Kurosawa on Kurosawa Part Two*, 202).

Key criticism on the film (Richie, 1970; Hapgood, 1994; Prince, 1999; Ashizu, 1995; Burnett, 2013) has, however, focused on the ways in which Shakespeare's text remains tangibly present—tragedy, the revenge plot, the play-within-the-play, the literal and figural meaning of sleep, the poison, ghosts, madness, and correspondences between characters. Indeed, there are many parallels between Kurosawa's tragedy and Shakespeare's, and I choose here to emphasize the similarity in the ways in which both imagine main protagonists that are "unfixed" subjects in the process of "becoming." This is not a question of Kurosawa's fidelity to *Hamlet*, however, but rather underlines both authors' passion to explore the complex and affective environment of the outsider. What Tanya Pollard finds to be "brooding" and "liminal" in Shakespeare's Hamlet, a man posed between introspection and violence (96, 100), is reanimated in Toshirō Mifune's performance as Kōichi Nishi, a modern-day Hamlet who has infiltrated the corrupt Dairyu Construction Corporation in order to expose the evil behind his father's death. The film is a morality tale conceived in dynamic counterpoint, as artificial and abstract, object-led sequences alternate with melodramatic set pieces that throb with sensory intensity. Described by his father-in-law Iwabuchi (Claudius) as "very reserved," Nishi spends the majority of the first half of the film silently observing the absurd actions of his colleagues, a clenched jaw the only outward sign of his inner turmoil. However, as the pace accelerates to accommodate the "big scandal unfolding" within the Dairyu Corporation, Nishi's cruelty and violence escalates. Alongside nameable emotions such as anger and sadness, are less easily measured sentiments of guilt, love, and disgust. The circumstantial details for Nishi's state of being and his impassioned drive for retribution are not revealed to the spectator until "the film is more than half over" (Ashizu 75). Through a series of cruel twists of fate and intolerable postwar corruption, Nishi enacts a performance of truth and deceit, which embodies the malevolent forces at play.

I would like to pause here to consider T. S. Eliot's famous reading of *Hamlet*, in which he argues that Shakespeare "attempted to express the inexpressibly horrible" in his play without fully understanding its implications for the main protagonist (94). To his mind *Hamlet* lacks the "skilled sensory impressions" of *Macbeth,* and leaves Hamlet baffled "at the absence of objective equivalent to his feelings" (92). Eliot posits that the only means of expressing emotion in the form of art is "by finding an 'objective correlative' … a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events, which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion" (93). Here Eliot points to a *formal* solution to the expression of the inexpressible (Hamlet's

disgust) that chimes clearly with Brinkema's writing on the forms of affect. For Eliot, Shakespeare fails at the linguistic level fully to express the depth of Hamlet's "feelings." It is a self-evident observation that film is better equipped to *realize* the inexplicable and inexpressible. The spectator experiences Nishi's suffering indirectly, not through his dialogue, but through visual, temporal and sonic elements that allow for the sensory apprehension of emotions that Eliot finds lacking in *Hamlet*. Kurosawa's manipulation of the object world allows *things* to speak and be expressed.

For example, *The Bad Sleep Well* presents a modern landscape in which city, suburbia, and raw nature intersect at close range. Every space functions as a site of death, lies, or corruption, and is shot to allow events to appear properly sinister. Although the Iwabuchi/Nishi home features prominently throughout the film (a version of the familial cohabitation at the Royal Court of Elsinore), there are five key locations that express the depths of despair: the hotel room used for the wedding banquet; the *jigokudani* volcano; the Dairyu office building; the Buddhist temple where Wada's mock-funeral takes place; and the underground "cave" within the war-ravaged ruins of the ammunition factory. Each space is also home to various objects that create interdiegetic tensions: the "alternative" wedding cake; steaming rocks; a window; the tape recorder; and the bombed factory, respectively. As the plot develops and the audience understands more of Nishi's history, the spaces become increasingly ominous and "*Things* speak" (Jorgens 27).

Act One, the wedding banquet, opens *in medias res*, a tightly choreographed farce of thirty minutes, which Francis Ford Coppola acclaimed seemed "as perfect as any film I have ever seen" (qtd. in Berra 31). I believe that the perfection of which Coppola speaks comes from the exquisite meeting of geometrical form and cruel absurdity. It becomes immediately clear that "something rotten" is afoot when an incongruous group of journalists start to gossip about a recent high profile arrest. The newlyweds Mr. and Mrs. Nishi enter, passing through the media throng, Yoshiko (Kyōko Kagawa) limping severely—accentuated through a close-up of her specially adapted platform *zori* sandal—as she painstakingly moves through the assembled relatives. A reverse-shot reveals the curiosity and shock on the journalists' faces, as one remarks: "An heiress is desirable even before she can walk." Juxtaposing the close-up of Yoshiko's sandal with the cruel comment, the Nishis' marriage ceremony becomes a site of thrilling mystery and conflicting affects.

The most significant object in this scene, and perhaps the most memorable image of the entire film, is that of the surprise wedding cake, a

frosted edifice shaped to look like a seven-story office block. The black rose marking a window on the seventh floor, we later find out, memorializes Nishi's dead father, Furuya, whose fall from the Dairyu Corporation building was made to look like suicide. The cake is simultaneously a memorial, a provocation, and a sinister omen. It is also inherently polyvalent as it carries both Western and Japanese cultural significance. The close-up shot where it dominates the entire frame is intensely disquieting, an *unheimlich* intrusion that voices what the simulated ceremony does not. The spectator begins to understand the motive for revenge, albeit before Nishi has revealed his inner thoughts directly. The blurring of the line between thought and reality is here activated in the correspondence between the image and the human mind, a visual and perceptual sorcery that is derived from and concludes in the film image. Freud called the subject's investment of libido (of mental or emotional energy directed towards an object, person, or idea) *Besetzung*, which can be translated into English as *cathexis*. The libidinal intensity brought forth in the form of the wedding cake (which we later understand as the desire for revenge, and for closeness with the father) connects subjective desire with objective existence: the libidinal apparatus "endows a private fantasy-structure with a quasi-material inertness, with all the resistance of an object which can lead a life of its own and has its own inner logic and specific dynamics" (Jameson, *Fables* 10). The cake, therefore, becomes a dynamic link between Nishi, his past, and the future desire to bring his father's murderers to justice. In Brinkema's terms, the graphic shock of the cake-edifice unexpectedly drives the narrative.

Likewise at Wada's simulated funeral ceremony, Kurosawa's masterful conflation of temporal and spatial realms turns the event into something very profound indeed. Wada is forced to sit and watch his own funeral through the windscreen of Nishi's car. Kurosawa's notorious screen wipe is transferred to the self-reflexive swipe of the windscreen wipers, which disrupt the view, drawing attention to the doubled construction of artifice and establishing a critical vantage point from which to consider Nishi playing with Wada's death. Wada's face is horrible, and through tears he blurts: "I'd rather die than go through this," recalling Hamlet's pain at Gertrude's betrayal. As if being forced to witness his own funeral were not enough, Nishi then plays Wada a tape recording of colleagues Shirai and Moriyama plotting his murder. An eavesdropping once removed (which connects to the instance of Polonius hiding behind the arras, and reminds the spectator of the recurrent theme of mistaken identities that connect Kurosawa and Shakespeare), the playback of the conversation is layered

over funereal drums and Buddhist chanting; as Wada understands the depth of these words from the past, Nishi urges him to join in his revenge.

Kurosawa famously eschewed close-ups to convey emotion: "I confused my staff thoroughly with my instructions. They were so used to moving up for moments of emotion and I kept telling them to move back" (qtd. in Richie 121). However, in *The Bad Sleep Well* faces are clearly drawn in tighter close-ups than is characteristic, but as a series of lines that, again, are more significant in their form than as shortcut to signal *emotion*. In his discussion of the film close-up, Deleuze considers the way in which a face can gather and express affect securing the "virtual conjunctions" between singular objects, actions, or events. He posits that through characters' faces on the screen, affect is able to accumulate and find expression:

> Affects are not individuated like people and things, but nevertheless they do not blend into the indifference of the world. They have singularities which enter into virtual conjunction and each time constitute a complex entity. It is like points of melting, of boiling, of condensation, of coagulation, etc. (*Cinema 1* 106).

Throughout the funeral scene, the medium close-ups of Nishi and Wada and the close-ups registering Wada's despair are animated with affect, albeit presented in contradistinction. Nishi's face next to Wada's seems smooth, unlined, and palpitates with the calculations of intent reflecting in his Brylcreemed hair. Wada's, in contrast, puckers, stretches, and crumples, registering the force of the nonchronological events unfolding around him. Thus the suffering caused by these events is not a single suffering; the affect is complex, but Kurosawa allows for it to boil and condense in the faces, and reflect outwards.

While Nishi remains to an extent a closed circuit, internalizing his grief (except in the telling photograph taken at his father's funeral, and later in the confessional scene with Yoshiko), the other characters are one by one affected by the horrors of the situation, as madness flows like a plague through them. In Shakespeare's play, both Hamlet and Ophelia are driven to the point of madness by their grief. In *The Bad Sleep Well*, Shirai, the chief of the contracts department, is the first casualty of the madness incited by the corporation's diseased plot. Thinking Wada dead after his dive from the volcano, Shirai returns home to be confronted with his "ghost" in the street. The sequences in which Wada's ghost appears are shot expressionistically with exaggerated *chiaroscuro* and spotlights provided by car headlights and street lamps. In a crescendo of expressionistic intensity, Shirai stands alone in the night street, emits a Munchian

Scream in horror, and the deep, accentuated hollows of his eyes resemble somnambulist Cesare in Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) as the schizophrenia that finally sees him committed to an asylum takes hold. Madness is viral, a prismatic force splintering characters and environment, visible as graphic lines and shapes: "Like Shakespeare, Kurosawa renders insanity visually as endless repetition" (Jorgens 156).

Lastly, although the crime narrative requires a visual emphasis on corporate space, Kurosawa's emphasis, is, as always, on the natural landscape's relation to the film's "state of mind" and the ways in which shifts in exterior reality correspond to wider socio-political changes and traumatic events: "To be traumatised is to be possessed by an image or an event" (Caruth 4–5). In the final act of the film, we find Nishi, his Horatio (Itakura), and their captive Moriyama, hiding in an abandoned ammunition factory. The location, it turns out, has significance for Nishi and Itakura as the site of the World War 2 battlefield on which they fought as schoolboy soldiers fifteen years earlier. After heavy bombing, the area is now a mass of concrete, steel wires, and rubble, but provides shelter for the men in the form of a surviving underground cavern. The factory, then, has deep national, as well as personal, significance; in the early years after the war:

> [the] Japanese confronted utter physical destruction of their cities … the "scene of the crime," as portrayed by novelist David Peace in his novel Tokyo Year Zero. … The recurring horror of the "darkness of the lived moment" in the complete collapse of a conception of personal and national identity—a scene now filled with multiple attempts to find new subjective identities capable of anchoring people amid the material ruin and ceaseless chaos of everyday life. (Harootian 18)

The contrast between the razed factory and the rapid rise of Dairyu Construction Company is clearly articulated by Kurosawa, and signals his political engagement with the themes of postwar disillusionment and the rise of capitalism. Nishi's eventual death at the wheel of a Studebaker, the crushed vehicle echoing the deaths of famous American film stars, seems tragic and almost pat. When asked by Joan Mellen whether *The Bad Sleep Well* was an anticapitalist film, Kurosawa answered, "[Laughing] Well I did not want to say so formally, I always have many issues about which I am angry, including capitalism. Although I don't intend explicitly to put my feelings and principles into the films, these angers slowly seep through. They naturally penetrate my filmmaking" (qtd. in Mellen 44). Without doubt, his anticapitalist sentiments are all the more powerful because they circulate in encounters of affect. Unable directly to criticize

the Japanese government via Iwabuchi's servile telephone call, Kurosawa instead addresses political issues through objects and the themes of memory, madness, corruption, fear, and guilt, encouraging their affects to reverberate formally, unfixed, through the *mise-en-scène*. *The Bad Sleep Well* unfolds with both sudden, and slow, incremental movements and shifts that are suggestive of the skittish/obsessive elements of human thought and action. What is particular about Kurosawa's Shakespearean collaborative adaptations is that the magically dark and sinister *mood* emerges in a flow of affects brought into visible and audible being as they pass through writer, director, cinematographer, actor, character, object, and spectator.

Coda: The Ghost of the Auteur

We have established that MacCabe's question regarding the possibility of producing undetermined meaning is answerable, if we consider the *affect* of the auteur. If, as discussed above, objects, buildings, and faces can be considered as loci where the fleeting capture (and release) of affect is registered within the diegetic moment, there is no reason why our understanding of an auteur or audience must conversely be fixed or monolithic. The "potential for infinitisation" arising from the "transindividual codes" created by a text has been illustrated through this analysis. Affect is not stable, but in constant motion, and therefore is an ideal theoretical and philosophical concept for understanding the ways in which film, authorship, and spectatorship generate meanings that are constantly edited, reviewed, copied, and recycled. This polysemic approach works particularly well when considering two such well-defined and debated figures as Shakespeare and Kurosawa, whose works are regularly discussed in relation to authorship and reception. Their ghosts, reified images that circulate in the world continuously, rise up with each new reading/viewing of their works, reflected back from the figures and objects on stage/screen, to meet the eyes, imaginations and sensing skin of the audience.

Notes

[1]After Cuban essayist and music critic Fernando Ortiz (1881–1969), who used the term "transculturation" to define a mutual interaction across different cultures.

[2]Lehmann's discussion of film auteurship post poststructuralism in *Shakespeare Remains* is useful here, particularly the way in which she writes about the Shakespearean film adaptation as dialectical montage, in which layers of often deeply antithetical ideas intersect.

[3]Judith Buchanan discusses how Peter Brook asked Ted Hughes to render *King Lear* in poetic form as part of the preparation for his 1971 film, likening this "defamiliarization" of the original text to the effect of cross-cultural textual adaptation (71).

[4]For detailed discourse on the implications of global adaptation, see Kennedy.

[5]Buchanan uses the term "reracinate" to describe this process; however, rather than a "Japanizing" of Shakespeare in Kurosawa's filmic translations, I suggest that the dialectical reworking of material generates the "global" and the polyvalent.

[6]For example, Kurosawa was derided for his 1951 adaptation of Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Idiot* (*Hakuchi*), due to the film sacrificing national or auteurist personality for textual fidelity. Heavily cut by Shochiku, the Japanese audience found much was lost in translation; Donald Richie complained that it was neither Kurosawan nor Dostoyevskian enough (81).

[7]Significantly, Stevan Riley's 2015 biopic documentary *Listen to Me Marlon*, "re-constructs" actor Marlon Brando virtually by weaving an autobiographical narrative from Brando's own taped footage, which along with home video footage, is accompanied by a three-dimensional hologram of the actor's head.

Works Cited

Alter, Nora M. *Chris Marker*. Urbana: Illinois UP, 2006. Print.

Andrew, Dudley. "The Economies of Adaptation." *True to the Spirit: Film Adaptation and the Question of Fidelity*. Ed. Colin MacCabe et al. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011. 27–39. Print.

Aragon, Louis. *Le Paysan de Paris*. Boston: Exact Change, 1994. Print.

Ashizu, Kaori. "Kurosawa's Hamlet?" *Shakespeare Studies in Japan* 33 (1999): 71–99. Print.

Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." *Image, Music, Text*. Ed. S. Heath. London: Fontana Press, 1977. 142–48. Print.

Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project*. Trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1999. Print.

Berra, John. *Directory of World Cinema: Japan*. Vol. 1. Chicago: Chicago UP, 2010. Print.

Brennan, Teresa. *The Transmission of Affect*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2004. Print.

Brinkema, Eugenie. *The Forms of the Affects*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2014. Print.

Brook, Peter. *The Shifting Point: 40 Years of Theatrical Exploration 1946–1987*. London: Methuen, 1987. Print.

Buchanan, Judith. *Shakespeare on Film*. Essex: Pearson Education Ltd., 2005. Print.

Burnett, Mark Thornton. "Re-reading Akira Kurosawa's *The Bad Sleep Well*, a Japanese Film Adaptation of *Hamlet*: Content, Genre and Context." *Shakespeare* 9.4 (2013): 404–17. *Taylor and Francis Online*. Web. 9 Nov. 2014.

Caruth, Cathy. *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995. Print.

Corrigan, Timothy. "The Commerce of Auteurism." *Film and Authorship.* Ed. V. W. Wrexman. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2003. 96–111. Print.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 1: The Movement Image.* Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. London: Continuum, 2008. Print.

———. *Cinema 2: The Time Image.* Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta. London: Continuum, 2008. Print.

Eisner, Lotte. *The Haunted Screen: Expressionism in the German Cinema.* London: Thames and Hudson, 1965. Print.

Eliot, Thomas. S. "Hamlet and His Problems." *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1921. 87–94. Print.

Galbraith, Stuart IV. *The Emperor and the Wolf: The Lives and Films of Akira Kurosawa and Toshio Mifune.* London: Faber and Faber, 2001. Print.

Gillies, John. "Afterword: Shakespeare Removed: Some Reflections on the Localization of Shakespeare in Japan." *Performing Shakespeare in Japan.* Ed. Ryuta Minami et al. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001. 236–48. Print.

Goodwin, James. *Akira Kurosawa and Intertextual Cinema.* Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1994. Print.

Guneratne, Anthony. R. *Shakespeare, Film Studies and the Visual Cultures of Modernity.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. Print.

Hapgood, Robert. "Kurosawa's Shakespeare Films: *Throne of Blood*, *The Bad Sleep Well*, and *Ran*." *Shakespeare and the Moving Image: The Plays on Film and Television.* Ed. Anthony Davies and Stanley Wells. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994. 234–50. Print.

Harootian, Harry. "Japan's Postwar and After, 1945–1989: An Overview." *From Postwar to Postmodern: Art in Japan 1945–1989*. Ed. D. Chong et al. New York: MoMA, 2012. 17–21. Print.

Hashimoto, Shinobu. *Compound Cinematics: Akira Kurosawa and I.* New York: Vertical, 2006. Print.

Jameson, Fredric. *Antinomies of Realism.* New York: Verso, 2013. Print.

———. *Fables of Agression: Wyndham Lewis the Modernist as Fascist.* Berkley: California UP, 1981. Print.

———. "On Magic Realism in Film." *Critical Inquiry* 12.2 (1986): 301–25. Print.

Jorgens, Jack. J. *Shakespeare on Film.* Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1979. Print.

Kennedy, Douglas, ed. *Foreign Shakespeare: Contemporary Performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993. Print.

Kurosawa, Akira. *Ran.* Trans. T. Shishido. Boston, MA: Shambhala, 1986. Print.

———. *Something Like an Autobiography.* Trans. A. E. Bock. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982. Print.

Lehmann, Courtney. *Shakespeare Remains: Theatre to Film, Early Modern to Postmodern.* Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2001. Print.

Listen to Me Marlon. Dir. Stevan Riley. Perf. Marlon Brando. Michael Borne. Universal. 2015. Film.

MacCabe, Colin. "The Revenge of the Author." *Film and Authorship*. Ed. V. W. Wexman. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2003. 30–41. Print.

Mellen, Joan. "Interview with Akira Kurosawa." *Voices from the Japanese Cinema.* New York: Liveright, 1975. 43–58. Print.

Mulvey, Laura. "Max Ophuls's Auteurist Adaptations." *True to the Spirit: Film Adaptation and the Question of Fidelity*. Ed. Colin MacCabe et al. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011. 74–89. Print.

Plantinga, Carl. "Art Moods and Human Moods in Narrative Cinema." *New Literary History 43*.3 (2012): 455–75. Print.

Pollard, Tanya. "Conceiving Tragedy." *Shakespearean Sensations: Experiencing Literature in Early Modern England*. Ed. K. A. Craik and T. Pollard. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013. 85–100. Print.

Prince, Stephen. *The Warrior's Cinema: The Cinema of Akira Kurosawa.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999. Print.

Ran. Dir. Akira Kurosawa. Perf. Tatsuya Nakadai, Akira Terao, Mieko Harada. (1985) Criterion Collection. 2005. DVD.

Rashōmon. Dir. Akira Kurosawa. Perf. Toshirō Mifune, Machiko Kyō. (1950) BFI. 2001. DVD.

Richie, Donald. *The Films of Akira Kurosawa.* Berkeley: California UP, 1970. Print.

——— "Kurosawa on Kurosawa Part Two". *Sight and Sound*. 33:4 (Fall 1964): 200–203. Print.

Seigworth, Gregory. J. "An Inventory of Shimmers." *The Affect Theory Reader*. Ed. G. Seigworth and M. Gregg. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2010. 1–28. Print.

Shakespeare, William. "*The Tragedy of Hamlet Prince of Denmark*." *The Complete Oxford Shakespeare*. Ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor. London: Guild Publishing, 1989. 1121–1164. Print.

———. "*The Tragedy of King Lear*: The Folio Text." *The Complete Oxford Shakespeare* Ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor. London: Guild Publishing, 1989. 1271–1306. Print.

Staiger, Janet. "Authorship Approaches." *Authorship and Film*. Ed. D. A. Staiger. New York: Routledge, 2003. 27–60. Print.

Tadao, Satao. *Currents in Japanese Cinema.* Trans. G. Barrett. Tokyo: Kodansha, 1982. Print.

The Bad Sleep Well. Dir. Akira Kurosawa. Perf. Toshiō Mifune, Kyōko Kagawa, Masayuki Mori. 1960. BFI, 2005. DVD.

Throne of Blood. Dir. Akira Kurosawa. Perf.Toshirō Mifune, Minoru Chiaki, Isuzu Yamada. (1957) BFI. 2001. DVD.

Ueda, Kuniyoshi M. "Some Noh Adaptations of Shakespeare in English and Japanese." *Performing Shakespeare in Japan*. Ed. Ryuta Minami et al. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001. 67–75. Print.

Yoshihari, Yukari. "Japan as 'Half-Civilized': an Early Japanese Adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and Japan's Construction of its National Images in the Late Nineteenth Century." *Performing Shakespeare in Japan.* Ed. Ryuta Minami et al. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001. 21–33. Print.

Yoshimoto, Mitsuhiro. *Kurosawa: Film Studies and Japanese Cinema.* Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2000. Print.