

The Representation of the Twenty-first Century Children in Justin Kurzel's *Macbeth* 2015

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Abstract

Children in Justin Kurzel's *Macbeth* 2015, represent many symbolic concepts, such as the dominant ideology of the Elizabethan era. This research study explains why the source text has undergone many changes regarding the representation of child characters. Kurzel has added new child characters to the original story to signify his concern for the young generation of our contemporary time. Contextualization and the socio-historical events will explain the reason behind the abundance of children in the film adaptation. Robert Stam's model of intertextual dialogism helps to understand how *Macbeth* 2015 relates to real physical and psychological damage to contemporary children by war. The adaptation is in constant dialogue with the reality of violence and war in the turn of the century. Child soldiers, grieving and revengeful parents and children, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder are serious contemporary dilemmas. These traumatic events are a consequence of the pursuit of power by people who encourage war and violence.

Keywords

Intertextual Dialogism; Contextualization; Children; PTSD; War.

1. Introduction

In the modern movie adaptations of the Shakespearean *Macbeth*, this play is brought into the contemporary time, culture and identity. Concepts are shaped by the dominant discourses of a particular time and place. The Shakespearean concept of the vicious cycle of power has been transported from one century to the next and its representation has undergone changes by this circulation. In a modern adaptation, the original message is taken and put into a new form and

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context, which is understandable to a modern audience. The trope of adaptation as a reading of source text is “partial, personal and conjectural” (Stam 63). It suggests that just as any text can generate an infinity of readings, so can any literary text generate any number of adaptations. A single literary work can generate any number of critical readings and creative misreadings. Many literary texts have been adapted repeatedly many times and in diverse countries. Each adaptation sheds a new cultural light on the original text. An adaptation is a representation of the original work which interprets the flexible meanings depending on the cultural field within which the work is re-created.

As adaptation theorists such as Linda Hutcheon recognise, we experience an adaptation as a complex palimpsest that resonates not only with the hypotext, but also potentially with a range of other hypertexts (Hutcheon 8). This is particularly the case with *Macbeth* screen adaptations, which are in “dialogue with a range of earlier film adaptations”, as well as with Shakespearean pretexts (Hatchuel 129). Justin Kurzel’s *Macbeth* 2015 presents a compelling new production, adding to the play’s rich screen history and drawing elements from several filmic predecessors. At the same time, this adaptation brings a new dimension to the field by emphasising the motif of the child in a very physical and embodied way.

Justin Kurzel’s film of *Macbeth* 2015 takes the multi-faceted trope of children in the Shakespearean play and turns it into a visual image that permeates the landscape. From the pre-credit sequence, in which the grieving Macbeths are seen burning the body of their dead baby on a funeral pyre, to the closing coda, in which young Fleance returns like an avenging fury to challenge the crown, they provide crucial interpretative framework for reading this latest cinematic adaptation. In Kurzel’s adaptation, the most fundamental ideological concept of the films is clearly defined: the representation of the child in Kurzel’s *Macbeth* reflects recent public attitudes towards childhood.

The significance of this research paper is relating Kurzel’s film adaptation to real equivalents within the twenty-first century context. In both the film and in reality, victims of war - children and adults - have been affected. The adaptation is in constant dialogue with the reality of violence and war in the turn of the century. The children of the twenty-first century are exposed to violence and war by the media and in reality. Consequently, they show a dual personality of innocence and aggressiveness.

This research has two main objectives. First objective is to explain why the source text has undergone many changes regarding the representation of child characters. It is aimed to contextualize *Macbeth* 2015 and find the socio-historical forces, which have shaped the film adaptation. The second objective is to use

Robert Stam's model of intertextual dialogism in order to relate and connect the adaptation to other film adaptations and historical events.

2. Literature Review

In his analysis of Orson's Welles's 1952 *Macbeth*, Jeff W. Marker asserts: "this movie was influenced by the political events of 1930's and 40's such as the Cold War. The dialogues within the film resemble an anti-communism rhetoric" (116). Maurice Hindle (2015) reads Welles's *Macbeth* as "a post-war commentary on the political dictatorship which had been deranging the world during the mid-1950". He states: "this movie was produced at a time when Hitler's fanatical ambitions were focused on absolute German political supremacy" (33-7).

In his analysis of Akira Kurosawa's 1957 *Throne of Blood*, Maurice Hindle asserts: "Kurosawa photographs with metaphoric rather than realistic value and that he transforms the poetic texture into visual poetry" (100). Erin Suzuki states: "Kurosawa appropriates the Shakespearean drama by the exotic visual imageries of Noh theatre" (104). Dower talks about "the inevitable cultural clashes". He states: "the post-war introduced political democracy did little change to the hierarchical social structure". Erin Suzuki observes: "the situation of the Japanese who fell back to the old traditional social system resembles to that of *Macbeth's*" (Suzuki 93).

In his reading of Roman Polanski's 1971 *Macbeth*, Maurice Hindle observes: "the assassinations of politically progressive leaders such as John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, America's anti-communist war in Vietnam and the invasion of a liberalizing Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Union are important examples of global incidents, which influenced the make of this film" (50). In analysing *Macbeth* 1971, Randal Robinson contends: "the story is mainly about subversion of authority and there are film shots and sequences which correspond the theme. The film contains the hunter and the hunted, the eaters and the pray, the persecutors and the victims" (105-8).

In his reading of Trevor Nunn's 1979 *Macbeth*, Maurice Hindle states: "the audience understands *Macbeth's* thinking, when they can see a closer look at his eyes" (100). He continues: "Trevor Nunn differentiates between film and TV Shakespeare production as the difference between shooting the action and shooting the text" (259). In his analysis of Jack Gold's 1993 *Macbeth*, Maurice Hindle asserts: "the director uses techniques to create theatre-like playing conditions in the TV studio. Gold deploys minimal props and abstract set designs to attract attention to the words uttered by the characters" (255-56).

John Wyver, filmmaker and producer of *Illuminations*, states: "Gregory Doran's *Macbeth* 2001 was produced by working with a single documentary camera and using London's Roundhouse as a single location" (Miola 131). In her reading of Billy Morrissette's 2001 *Scotland, PA* Elizabeth Deitchman views: "this movie elaborates the dark side of the American Dream. The movie shows that despite the promise, the American society suffers an inequality in class, race and gender" (21-9).

Maurice Hindle talks about the difference between big screen, cinema, and small screen, TV. He states: "contrary to television, cinema elaborates a variety of pictorially realistic setting where what is said by the characters is of secondary importance to the way their world is visually conveyed and received" (245-6). In her reading of Mark Brozel's 2005 TV production, *Macbeth*, Ann Thompson claims: "the imageries of floors and surfaces soaked in blood, and the chef's blood stained white uniforms reimagines Duncan's utterance of the bloody man". Also, Jonathan Bate asserts: "this superlative *Macbeth* has shown glorious allusions to the original language" (Thompson 261-9).

Amanda Kane Rooks reads Geoffrey Wright's 2006 *Macbeth*, as "re-imagined in an underworld of contemporary Australia". She contends: "according to post-feminist epoch, contemporary western society has diminished the authority of feminist discourse. There is a resemblance between such contemporary cultural practices and beliefs and the patriarchal ethos of many European countries during Renaissance era" (50-70). She concludes: "this production is an anti-feminist appropriation of the Shakespearean work" (71).

In his analysis of Rupert Goold's 2010 *Macbeth*, Victor Huertas Martin asserts: "this movie displays an iconography of Stalin's dictatorship. This film contains Japanese horror by featuring psychological and supernatural tension. The different floors that are connected by an infernal lift reminds us of Dante's different levels of hell" (10). Maurice Hindle states: "*Macbeth* contains horror body imagery which makes the movie more frightening and puts an emphasis to the fearful path of bloody terror the Macbeths have set foot upon" (271-73).

In his analysis of Vincent Regan's 2014 *Enemy of Man*, Maurice Hindle asserts: "this dark and new take on the play strips back the dialogue and cranks up the action to produce a blood-soaked thriller". He suggests that by removing Shakespeare's text it will no longer be Shakespeare (81). Theodor Adorno contends: "Kurzweil has taken a deterministic and ideological approach in creating an authentic Scottish Shakespearean experience". In fact, the cinematic and filmic

medium is used to present an already established art which limits its audience (Clement 4).

In her reading and analysis of Justin Kurzel's cinematic adaptation, *Macbeth* 2015, Philippa Sheppard claims: "Kurzel pictures an ideal manhood in the film's opening scene which first shows a grieving father over the body of his dead baby. The adding of an older son who is slain in the war and the multiple conjuring of the boy, highlights Macbeth's heirless state" (5). She adds: "the otherness of the Macbeths is boosted by the acting of French actress, Marion Cotillard as Lady Macbeth and the Irish actor, Michael Fassbender as Macbeth, both speaking with accents" (10).

Barbara Everett traces the context of names of Iago, Roderigo and by extension the Moor in *Othello*. She claims: "Shakespeare's contemporary audience were aware that the anglicized version of Iago, James, referred to the patron saint of Spain. He was an enemy to the invading Moor, who was figurehead of the Muslim Kingdom" (Alexander 5). J. W. Lever contends: "Shakespeare's mind and art was directly engaged in Elizabethan ideas of nature and super nature, politics and society, psychology and ethics. In the political and historical field, the line of Tudor histories has influenced the Shakespearean work" (1).

3. Theory

This research is based on the adaptation theories by theorists such as Linda Hutcheon and Robert Stam, regarding medium specificity, adaptation prejudices, auctorial intentions, audience expectations and experiences, and the historical and cultural contexts and limitations. Linda Hutcheon's questions of why, when and where are the framework to examine the modern representation of the Shakespearean concept of power in *Macbeth*. Contextualization and finding the socio-historical forces will explain why an adaptation is shaped into its new form. Robert Stam's model of intertextual dialogism explains the changes made on an original text in order to be better understood by a particular audience. An adaptation can insert its source text into a broader intertextual dialogism. In this sense an adaptation is less an attempt to resuscitate the original work than it is to form an intersection of textual surfaces (Stam 64).

All texts are tissues of conscious or unconscious quotations, confluences and inversions of other texts. Intertextual dialogism refers to infinite and open-ended possibilities generated by all the discursive practices of culture and the entire matrix of communicative utterances within which an artistic text is situated. These possibilities reach a text through recognizable influences and through the

subtle process of dissemination. Adapters can have an activist approach towards a source text, by inserting it into a space of intertextual dialogism. Consequently, an adaptation an attempt for a continuous dialogue rather than a revival of the source text. Intertextual dialogism means that every text forms an intersection of many textual surfaces (Stam 69).

Stam's model of intertextual dialogism helps to destabilize authority of the source text. It enables multiple and sometimes conflicting production of meanings. The intertextuality of literature encourages the evolving production of meaning and an expanding network of textual relations (Sanders 3). In the analysis of adaptations, it is possible to move beyond moralistic approaches. The superficial analysis of morality cannot be considered as a methodological principle and that the possibility of a strict fidelity is questionable. When reading a text, a director has to fill in the gaps created by the virtual and symbolic meaning of the words called "paradigmatic indeterminacies" by the power of imagination. In a film, an imaginative reconstruction is conducted through images and sound, and there are "inevitable supplements" not necessarily found in the original text (Stam 56).

4. Contextualization

Justin Kurzel's *Macbeth* takes the eleventh-century Scotland as its historical setting. In addition, there are ideological gestures, which represent the socio-cultural context of the 1970s and the 2010s (McKernan 11). The brutal realities of war form a constant visual backdrop, and locate Macbeth's blood thirsty reign within a wider context of unremitting violence and self-serving political duplicities. The dramatic treatment of children through Kurzel's 2015 release, is located in focus within a larger socio-historical context of changing attitudes towards the role and identity of children more generally. The film is both influenced by the dominant discourses of the original text, as well as the contemporary context and its socio-historical events.

4.1. The Context in the Shakespearean *Macbeth*

In the film adaptation, the first glimpse of the witches precedes the intertitle that locates Kurzel's film in early medieval Scotland and emphasises the civil war context. Macbeth's subsequent regicide is placed in a larger context of pre-existing disloyalty to the crown: "Civil war rages in Scotland. The traitor MacDonwald leads mercenaries against King Duncan. Few remain loyal to the crown. Macbeth, Thane of Glamis, leads a weary army. The King has sent him his last reserves. The war will be dedicated at the Battle of Ellon" (Intertitle Sequence 2:56).

The Macbeths' childlessness has a political dimension. This becomes particularly relevant after the regicide and upon Macbeth becoming king. In the early modern period, royal fertility was inseparable from political power. The very idea of the king, of his legitimacy and succession, is bound up with paternity, with the idea of the child. Across Shakespeare's play, virility is often a sign and measure of kingship. The absence of children reflects a monarch's lack of fitness for rule and it is the mark of a usurper (Hatchuel 135). The film's emphasis on the child foregrounds this link between children and politics in the play, and its historical context. *Macbeth* is a play famously preoccupied with succession and with the interpretation or disturbance of primogeniture.

4.2. The Contemporary Context of Kurzel's *Macbeth* 2015

There has been a movement from representing the child in *Macbeth* as a one-dimensional object of pathos. It features a shift in the conceptualisation of childhood. The figure of the child in all its various and multifarious manifestations has taken on an ever greater significance in the productions of *Macbeth* towards the end of the twentieth century. The shift is in focus within a larger socio-historical context of changing attitudes towards the role identity of children. There is a change from the sentimentalised depiction of childhood towards one which is at best ambivalent, and at worst depressingly nihilistic.

Influenced by the trend that has been gathering pace for several decades, Kurzel has made the child his central organizing principle. He raises questions about childhood and political agency, and foregrounds the role of children as ambiguous bearers of futurity, both in this film and in the twenty-first-century environment of its release. The children in Kurzel's *Macbeth* are polysemous and multivalent. The result is a complex and contradictory representation of childhood that reflects an increasingly conflicted attitude towards children in society. Kurzel has a nihilistic vision that heralds the end of the so-called century of the child (Wells 10). This film feature suggests a continuation of the cycle of violence extending beyond the ending of the play's narrative, and beyond the death of the protagonist.

4.2.1. The End of the Century of the Child

The recent adaptations of *Macbeth* has demonstrated that the children of *Macbeth* have been turned from textual ambiguities into a visual paradox that is both pitiful and terrifying. Children themselves have become alien creatures, a threat to civilisation rather than its hope and potential salvation. The role of children as bearers of a bright and optimistic future has become gradually less sharply defined. In his book, "The Disappearance of Childhood", Neil Postman argues: "the gradual erasure of childhood is a phenomenon that began with the

emergence of television” (Sheppard 15). From the perspective of the twenty-first century, the form of mass communication has resulted in a deconstruction of boundaries. Consequently, the world has experienced an adultification of children and a childification of adults. The new media environment has provided everyone with the same information. Electronic media has made it impossible to withhold any secrets. As a result, childhood space has been intruded. By making information available to all, the new media environment has erased childhood all together. The digital revolution and the internet has been a major contributing factor in giving children almost unlimited access to the secrets that were previously denied to them.

In today’s *Macbeth*, *Macbeth* performed at the turn of the century that has “supped full with horrors” (act 5.5.13), the child who survives – Fleance – may be even more disturbing than the children who die. Fleance reappears in the final frame sequence with the hardened look of a soldier. He is no longer the charming and vulnerable young child, but an embittered avenger. Rutter argues: “the return of Fleance is very much a recent innovation in productions of *Macbeth*, featuring Gregory Doran’s 1999 RSC production, Dominic Cooke’s 2004 RSC revival, and John Caird’s 2005 production for the Almeida Theatre” (Crowl 60). Considering the recent adaptations of *Macbeth*, children of *Macbeth* have been doubled as both innocent victims and demonic witches. They have metamorphosed from the symbol of pity to avenging revenants.

4.2.2. The Socio-historical Events of Late Twentieth Century

There is a link between the shifts in public opinion and the hysterical mass media coverage of the murder of James Bulger in 1993. What made the emotive force of this case so particularly potent was not merely the fact that the victim of this horrific crime was a two-year-old child, but that the perpetrators were themselves also children. Security camera images of James Bulger being led out of the shopping centre by the older boys were relayed across the world, raising questions about the innate capacity for evil in children everywhere. Carol Chillington Rutter, Professor of Shakespeare and performance studies claims: “from this instant, childhood was tainted, children, evil” (Miller 54-5). Those nameless boys had killed not just a child but the idea of childhood. A dualistic tradition of crime reportage gave way to this paradoxical conflation of evil and innocence. Sentimentalised images of childhood purity were both reinforced and challenged, as public sympathy for the young victim ran parallel to public hostility towards the young killers.

This case signified a landmark in terms of public perceptions of children, particularly in the United Kingdom. Because the young killers were above the age of criminal responsibility, which in England and Wales remains fixed at 10,

they were trialled in an open adult court. As a result, they became subject to the scrutiny of the world's media. This event was an influential catalyst for a change in attitudes towards the inherent nature of children more generally. No longer merely vulnerable or alien, a figure of hope or one of despair, children began to be seen as a potentially terrifying combination of both extremes at the same time. Journalists and social commentators came up with a new definition of childhood. Innocent angels coexisted with little demons, and the difference between the two increasingly difficult to discern. In the latter decades of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, directors have increasingly embraced this ambiguity, as Kurzel's multifaceted cast of child characters has demonstrated. This new manifestation of childhood, which is absent in Shakespeare's text, is consistent with the film's overall investment in deglamorising violence, and with its persistent mobilisation of the child-figure as a symbol for the larger themes of the play. Today's *Macbeth*, *Macbeth* performed at the turn of the century is full of horrors (Sheppard 51).

5. War and Children in *Macbeth* 2015

The film links war with sterility, the death of the next generation (Hatchuel 130). Macbeth addresses his questions to the dead adolescent soldier, as if he is somehow a link to Macbeth's dead child (scene 15:50). Macbeth lights a fire to burn the dead body of his young boy soldier and other dead bodies. This death of a second child emphasises Macbeth's childlessness, and his link with the death of children. The passing figures in the cauldron scene are consistent with Kurzel's concept of Macbeth as a product of war. One of the figures is the ghost of the boy soldier, who becomes the Second Apparition of the play-text, the "bloody child". He advises Macbeth to "Be bloody, bold, and resolute" (Scene 1:10:27) and to "Laugh to scorn/the power of man, for none of women born/Shall harm Macbeth" (act 4.1.78-80). Macbeth embraces him in gratitude.

The battle scene begins with a shot of Macbeth tying a sword to the wrist of a young boy, played by a fourteen-year-old Scot Greenan, who looks like he is barely strong enough to lift it off the ground, let alone raise it in the battle (Miller 63). He then daubs the boy's face in black war paint and sends him off to face the enemy in a scene with limbs severed and throats slit in slow motion. One of the slit throats belongs to this young soldier, and the full horrors are captured in agonising slow motion as the camera lingers on his face contorted in a silent scream (scene 6:45). At the end of the "hurly-burly" (act 1.1.3) of the battle, we see Macbeth lift the body of the boy and carry him over his shoulder (scene 9:49). There is no soaring musical accompaniment to Kurzel's citation of this scene, just the squelch of Macbeth's boots in the mud and the dull thump of the boy's body as it is dropped into a mound of corpses (scenes 10:01, 10:07). Later, as the "two

truths are told" (act 1.3.126-41) in voiceover, Macbeth is shown placing stones over the eyes of the boy soldier in an iteration of the opening scene (scenes 15:46, 16:40).

6. Contemporary Children in War

"I see the world gradually being turned into a wilderness, I hear the ever-approaching thunder, which destroys us too. I can feel the suffering of millions, and yet, if I look up into the heavens, I think that it will all come right, that this cruelty, too, will end" (Bellany 2). These are the words of a fifteen-year-old girl called Anne Frank, who died shortly afterwards during World War Two. The establishment of the United Nations after World War Two raised hopes of a new era of peace; however, this was over optimistic. Between 1945 and 1992, there were 149 major wars, killing more than 23 million people. On an average yearly basis, the number of war deaths in this period was more than double the deaths in the nineteenth century, and seven times greater than the eighteenth century. War and political upheaval have been tearing whole countries apart – from Bosnia and Herzegovina to Cambodia to Rwanda - perishing a large number of children's lives. Entire generations have grown up in the midst of brutal armed conflicts. At the end of 1995, conflicts had been running in Angola for over thirty years, in Afghanistan for seventeen years, in Sri Lanka for eleven years and in Somalia for seven years (Ressler 100).

Children have always been caught up in warfare. They usually have little choice but to experience, at minimum the same horrors as their parents, as casualties or even combatants. Children have particularly been exposed, when food supplies have run short. As a result, children whose growing bodies need steady supplies of essential nutrients, have been the hardest hit. When water supplies have been contaminated, it is children who have had the least resistance to the dangers of disease. The trauma of exposure to violence and brutal death has emotionally affected generations of young people for the rest of their lives. During the last decade of the 20th century, it is estimated that child victims have included: two million killed, four to five million left homeless, more than one million orphaned or separated from their parents, and some ten million psychologically traumatized. The increasing number of child victims is primarily explained by the higher proportion of civilian deaths, with the bombings of Coventry and Dresden, for example, and the atomic bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This pattern was repeated in the Vietnam War, which estimated to have cost two and a half million lives (Ressler 150).

6.1 Children as Soldiers

Most child casualties are civilians, but one of the most deplorable developments in recent years has been the increasing use of young children as soldiers. For centuries children have been involved in military campaigns – as child ratings on warships, or as drummer boys on the battlefields of Europe. In fact the word “infantry”, for foot-soldiers, can also mean a group of young people. Nowadays the escalation in the use of children as fighters is high. Recently, in twenty five countries, thousands of children under the age of sixteen have fought in wars. In 1988 alone, they numbered as many as 200,000. Recent developments in warfare have significantly highlighted the dangers for children (Ressler 110).

In the past, children were not effective as front-line fighters since most of the lethal hardware were too heavy for them to manipulate. As a result, the proliferation of light weapons was mediated. A child with an assault rifle, a Soviet-made AK-47 or an American M-16, is a fearsome match for anyone. These weapons are very simple to use. The AK-47 can be stripped and reassembled by a child of ten (Ressler 117). The rifles have also become much cheaper and more widely available – having few moving parts they are extremely durable and have steadily accumulated in war zones. Besides being able to use lethal weapons, children have other advantages as soldiers. They are easier to intimidate and they do as they are told. They are less likely than adults to run away and they do not demand salaries.

Children may also have active reasons to want to fight. Like adults, they too may see themselves fighting for social justice – as was the case in Central America or South Africa – or they may want to fight for their religious beliefs or cultural identity. In more personal terms, they may also be seeking revenge for the deaths of their parents, brothers and sisters. Children who have grown up surrounded by violence, see it as a permanent way of life. Alone, orphaned, frightened, bored and frustrated, they will finally choose to fight. Accordingly, “[p]hysical symptoms of the PTSD appear in the life of the subject as insomnia, amnesia, and weaknesses” (Hosseini and Baghaei 139). In these circumstances, a military unit can be a refuge – serving as a kind of surrogate family. In 1986 in Uganda, the National Resistance Army had an estimated 3000 children, many under sixteen, including 500 girls, most of whom had been orphaned and who looked on the army as a replacement for their parents (Dodge 54). Joining an army may also be the only way to survive. Gone is the carefree years of adolescence and the sense of purpose, even amid the horror of the warrior’s life. But most of all, gone is any sense of hope about the future. While children might be thought to be the people deserving the greatest protection, as soldiers they are often considered the most expendable. Children’s actual duties in warfare cover the whole range of military

services. In addition to cooking and carrying water, they have particular value as messengers or spies (Macpherson 41-2).

7. Intertextual Dialogism

Just as many other adaptations, Kurzel's film adaptation has inserted its source text into a broader intertextual dialogism. In his film, the imaginative reconstruction is conducted through images and sound, not necessarily found in the original text. These possibilities reach the text through "recognizable influences and through subtle process of dissemination" (Stam, 55-64). Emerging from the blood-red smoke of the battlefield, young Fleance walks past Macbeth's motionless body and draws a sword from its position where it has been embedded, Excalibur-like, in the rocks. This intertextual dialogism refers to the legendary sword of King Arthur, also attributed with magical powers or associated with the rightful sovereignty of Britain. Also, the omnipresent red colour of the background reminds us of Dante's Hell, pain and torture.

7.1 The Dialogic Representation of Children in *Macbeth*

There has been a new trend of representing children as showing both vulnerable and evil characteristics in recent films. The representation of the darker side of children has been the subject of many successful horror films since the 1960s. For instance, *The Innocents*, *Rosemary's Baby*, *The Omen*, *Carrie*, *Child's Play*, *The Sixth Sense* to name a few. In the 1980s, the focus on the child character as emblem of vulnerability and innocence began to change. Kurzel's film, have also followed the suit. Where Polanski used the children of the Shakespearean play as vehicles for embodying the horrors of the past, directors of the following decades began to use them to contemplate issues related to futurity. Michael Boyd staged a more questionable representation of childhood and futurity. Taking Macduff's children as a focal point, he complicated their characterisation as innocent victims of tyranny by doubling the child actors with the weird sisters to create weird children (Babliak 101). The result was a dichotomous portrayal of childhood.

7.2 Kurzel's Intertextual Dialogism with Boyd's Adaptation

Michael Boyd presented the ambiguous children of *Macbeth*, in his three productions of 1985, 1993 and 2011. In each instance, he doubled the children with the witches. In his productions, the witches doubled as the Macduff children, making the witches the murdered Macduff children ripped not only out of life but of time, and returning to retell their fate and Macbeth's. This adaptation was a Janus-faced image that evoked both "foul" and "fair" (act 1.1.10), child and not-quite-child. It represented a moment of ontological uncertainty that encapsulated not only the epistemological ambiguities of

Macbeth, but also the contradictions of a modern world both fearful of and fearful for its children. In the modern world, there is a contradictory attitude to crime and childhood that sees media stories of child abuse sitting alongside reports of “troublesome children and lawless youth” (Miller 60-1). Having played the roles of both victim and agent, the “innocent flower” and “the serpent” (act 1.5.64-65), the children of *Macbeth* were the symbolic embodiment of Scotland’s future – a future that, was an endlessly repeating cycle of violence, vengeance and murder.

The analysis of the shape-shifting child characters of Boyd’s *Macbeth* reflected the schizophrenic media rhetoric exemplified in the James Bulger case (Miller 61-2). In other words, the child, who “should” be an image of victimhood is simultaneously a symbol of evil. The embodiment of both the past and the future, the victim and the perpetrator, the living and the dead, Boyd’s children encapsulated the dichotomous attitude to childhood that permeated late-twentieth and early-twenty-first media and popular discourse. In Justin Kurzel’s *Macbeth* 2015, we are presented with the death of innocence. In his adaptation, Kurzel created four new child characters, including the ghost of the Macbeth child. Kurzel’s three weird sisters are not alone: a baby lies sleeping in the arms of one of them and a pre-teen girl stands by their side, as though mocking the Macbeth’s childlessness. Kurzel adapts the ambivalent evil/innocent child of Boyd’s three revivals, and adds a further dimension to his study of childhood in the figure of the damaged child soldier.

8. Conclusion

Many recent screen adaptations of *Macbeth* suggest that the seeds of future violence, embodied in a child figure, will implicitly haunt the new king. Kurzel’s nihilistic glimpse into the future sends out a clear message: the century of the child has come to an end. We are now facing a future where the boundaries between childhood and adulthood are being irreversibly erased. Therefore, the children we are raising now may be the repositories of a future that one does not bear thinking about. Filmed on location in the bleak highlands of rural Scotland, the costumes, the battle scenes and the set design capture the eleventh-century setting of the play. Yet without compromising the overall feel of period authenticity, it is ideologically and psychologically a *Macbeth* for the twenty-first century, particularly in the multiple and contradictory ways in which it mobilises the symbol of the child. From the opening frame sequence to the closing montage, Kurzel’s film is saturated with children – dead or alive, human or supernatural. The children in Kurzel’s *Macbeth* are both pitiful and terrifying.

The dialogical space within the movie adaptation can be extended to other traumatic events of our era. Some of the Middle Eastern children experience war

and violence on a daily basis. They have to witness the death and injury of their family members. All of these violent events are a consequence of the pursuit of power by people who encourage war and fighting. As a result, children, who are the most vulnerable people of all, become both traumatized and warlike. Just as Kurzel's Fleance, who has lost a father due to brutality, the innocent children of Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, etc. feel the need to act as avenging adults and forget their simple childhood engagements.

Considering *Macbeth* 2015, it is concluded that violence and war damages both grown-ups and children. It injures both sides of the war physically and psychologically. It can bring fears and psychological anxiety to the soldiers attending the war, as well as the civilians, who suffer the event. This interpretation relates to many contemporary incidents, such as the hallucinations of the American soldiers, during the war on terror in Iraq. In response to trauma and horror, many American soldier were found wandering on the regional mountains, out of confusion and PTSD. The filmic equivalent is when Macbeth wanders around the heath wearing his night gown, as if it is a continuation of his sleep, or else being confused.

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