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Film Analysis SAMPLE Essay

Depicting Macbeth's Loss of Control

In William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the title character transitions from a decorated military hero to a man who loses control of his ability to make rational and moral choices. The depiction of this loss of sanity is shown in Roman Polanski and Patrick Stewart's film adaptations of Act 1.7 and Act 2.1 of the play. Polanski uses loud drums, hushed tones, and a dagger visible to the audience to show Macbeth's loss of sanity. In the Stewart version, moreover, the director uses silence, a "thumping" beat, angry voices, and a contrast between light and dark, to show the same loss of reason. Regardless of their tactics, both directors effectively show how Macbeth loses control of himself.

The Polanski version largely uses contrasts to depict Macbeth's imminent insanity. For example, while a party takes place in the background, Macbeth and his wife scheme off to the side. As the music rises—banging drums and people dancing—Macbeth gets more and more quiet. The contrast effectively shows that Macbeth is isolated, he has no one to turn to, and the music helps isolate him in his own mind. Similarly, this version uses hushed tones to push Macbeth towards madness. Lady Macbeth whispers her lines, but seems to fake tears and pain at the same time, in an effort to make Macbeth feel as if he has disappointed her. The fact that she is pretending is revealed because as soon as he agrees to act, she smiles, and then begins dancing with the other party goers. All of this again isolates Macbeth, leading him to think he is going insane. Both

the music and the hushed tone ultimately lead Macbeth to physically be by himself. Once alone on the stage, he completely slips from reality. Polanski depicts this effectively by letting the audience see the same imaginary dagger that Macbeth sees. Polanski even points the dagger toward the king's bedroom. It is a visual reminder that Macbeth is no longer in control of his actions. He has completely lost control.

Patrick Stewart also uses director tactics to add to Macbeth's loss of reason. For example, this version begins with a very intense conservation that has almost no sound in the background. The director intends to isolate Macbeth and his wife, giving her ample opportunity to manipulate him into doing her bidding. Later on, though, the director uses a sound that sounds almost like a beating heart. As Macbeth hallucinates about the dagger, the sounds in the background "thump" and echo. The director seems to be trying to mimic the inner turmoil inside Macbeth's mind, showing that he is again loses control. Finally, Stewart effectively uses a contrast between light and dark to show Macbeth's insanity. As he walks down a tunnel, he is isolated from not just other people, but from the lights themselves. A light bulb goes out with each step he takes. As he reaches the end of the tunnel, he is the only visible image left. But, of course, he is completely in "the dark," a place where he can no longer make good choices.

Clearly, the directors of these scenes reveal Macbeth's loss of reason. However, rather than use only the script Shakespeare provided, they add to the suspense and thematic development of the scene by incorporating sound effects, physical positioning, and lighting details.