



**Anno scolastico:**  
2017-2018

On December 20th, an amazing seminar on the Shakespearean tragic hero was held at ISIS Malignani by the CEC Visionario. The relationship between cinema, theater and literature was analysed mainly focusing on the role of the tragic hero in Hamlet and Macbeth.

Shakespeare is the most prolific “scriptwriter” of all time: so far 1337 films have been adapted from his plays. In fact, Harold Bloom stated “whoever you are, Shakespeare is always facing you”. Besides, Lawrence Olivier wrote in 1944: “If the cinema had existed in 1599, Shakespeare would have been the greatest director of his time”.

Firstly, three Hamlet’s cinema versions were compared and contrasted: Lawrence Olivier’s Hamlet adaptation of 1949, Franco Zeffirelli’s Hamlet of 1990 and Kenneth Branagh’s Hamlet of 1996. If Olivier stresses Hamlet’s psychology, emphasising in particular the Oedipus complex, Zeffirelli achieves a very human interpretation of Hamlet thanks to the supreme soliloquy of Mel Gibson in the closed burial place. Finally, Branagh’s Hamlet is not rhetorically effective but musically catching.

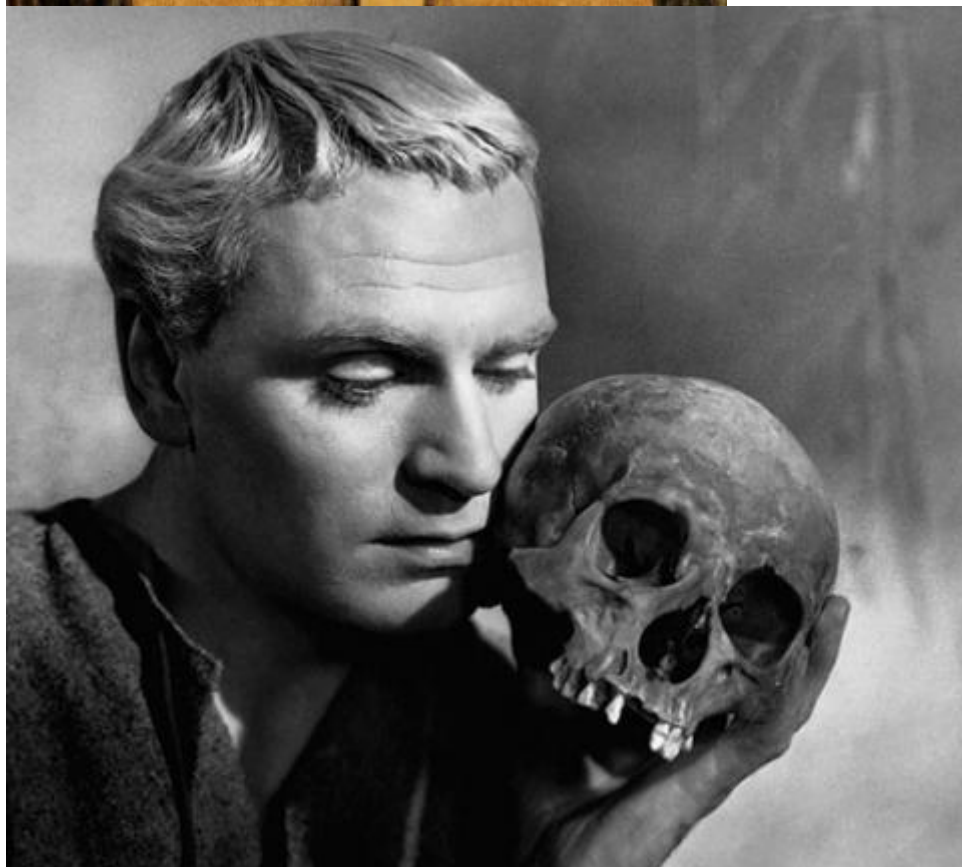
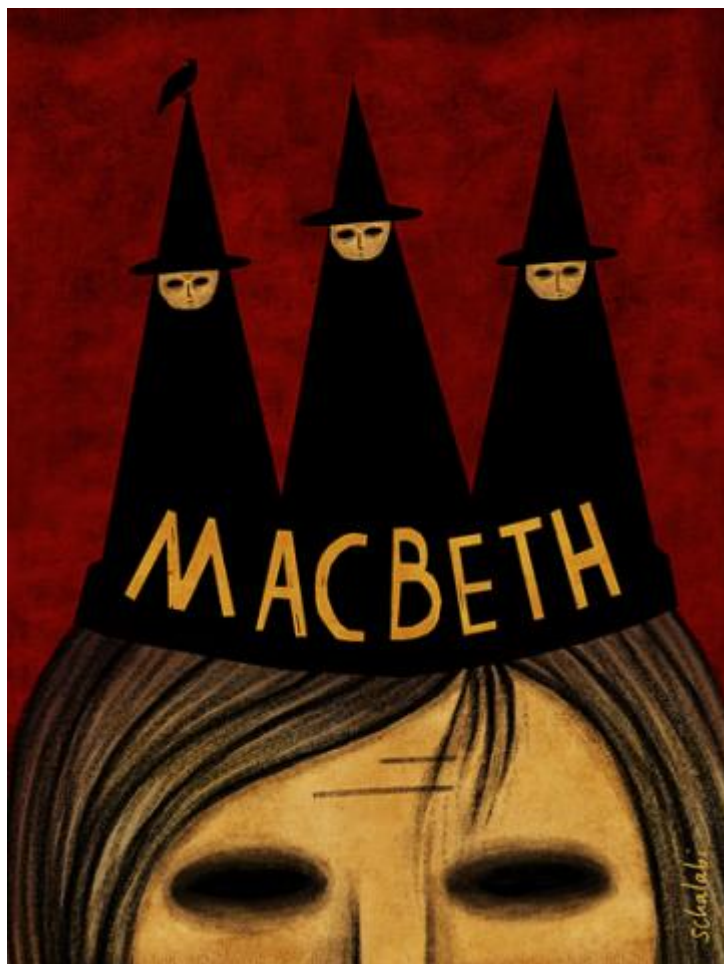
Secondly, the three cinema versions of Macbeth were presented. The Orson Welles’ Macbeth of 1948 was shot quickly and cheaply. Its strength is the spartan, eerie wasteland of fog and bare rock. The “Throne of blood” of Kurosawa (1957) was a brilliant synthesis of different cultural, aesthetic and historical sources. Its minimalist set, original music and the masks worn by the actors cannot be forgotten. There are no words in the scene of Duncan’s murder: the actors communicate with their bodies.

Lastly, the tragedy of Macbeth by Roman Polansky (1976) was analysed. Macbeth, performed by Jan Finch, seems to be reluctant to kill Duncan, and finally he commits the crime, only because he is urged by his wife. The scene ends with a gruesome close-up, with Macbeth planting his dagger into the king’s throat.

To sum up, the seminar achieved its goal and satisfied the audience of the Malignani’s students. We appreciated the compared analysis of the different Shakespearean works: the King’s struggle to hold the royal office, the importance of the supernatural, the greatness of female roles, the blood shed, the devouring ambition of Hamlet and Macbeth. We also understood that the cinema is a powerful tool to disseminate the humanity embodied in Shakespearean characters.

I must however stress the cons of this significant moment of learning: first of all, the fact that the seminar was held in Italian (and not in English); secondly, the lack of insights on some more technical aspects, such as the constraints of rendering the theater plot in the context of the big screen. Will the future students take advantage of my positive comments and enjoy an even more enriching experience?

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