

ABSTRACT

This case study centers on the adaptation of metaphorical language in Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950) and examines visual metaphor in the film. In it, I identify key metaphors from two short stories by Ryunosuke Akutagawa on which the film is based, "Rashomon" (1915) and "In a Grove" ("*Yabu no Naka*") (1922), and observe how these metaphors subsequently appear within the works' script and film adaptations.

I begin by establishing a framework to classify and analyze the works' metaphors, based in part upon the principles of Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Further, I reflect on what visual factors govern viewers' literal and metaphorical interpretations of images in film. Following the work of Charles Forceville and other researchers in visual metaphor, I differentiate between *explicitly* signaled metaphors (e.g., visuals that must be interpreted metaphorically) and *implicitly* signaled metaphors (e.g., visuals that allow for literal interpretation but conceal metaphorical meaning).

The study is composed of three main sections: short story analysis, script analysis, and film analysis. In my short story analysis, I seek out metaphorical expressions integral to Akutagawa's short stories. Criteria for "integral" here are based on arguments from Akutagawa scholars as well as my own observations about the expressions in relation to Akutagawa's greater body of works. More specifically, I select metaphors which carry thematic weight and are used to express character interiority within the texts. I propose that figurative language often accompanies expressions of character interiority, since the concepts of dilemma, struggle, and suffering, all key components of character interiority, are abstract in nature and therefore may be effectively expressed through a process that essentially filters the abstract through the concrete (i.e., metaphor).

In my script analysis, I observe that adapted metaphors appearing as dialogue in the script utilize plainer language than the original expressions, likely as the result of the screenwriter's efforts to make the sometimes-marked language of the original text more easily comprehensible to film viewers. Analyzing the context in which they appear, I go on to argue that some of these metaphors are primed for interpretation through visual cues before the spoken line containing the metaphor is uttered, such as when a character faces a gust of wind before delivering a line in which he describes words as "storm-like." Additionally, I demonstrate how certain metaphorical expressions are present in the script's scene descriptions, despite not being present in dialogue (conversely, I later find examples metaphors that are present in the final film but absent from the script). I conclude from this that script analysis is a valuable but incomplete tool for tracking the progression of metaphor from literature to film—valuable because it offers insight into how a scriptwriter might handle the adaptation of challenging metaphorical expressions,

and incomplete because the final film may not adhere to its contents.

I make three main arguments in my film analysis. First, that actors' choreographed movements in the film, some of which are also detailed in the script, echo the metaphorical language of the original short stories (as when, for instance, a character "freezes" in fear upon seeing her husband's eyes "filled with cold light"). Seen with the context of the script, which stresses that a character is, for instance, specifically "frozen," it is evident that metaphorical expressions from Akutagawa's original short stories may motivate these motions. Second, I assert that the film primes viewer interpretation of certain metaphorical expressions by visually linking the subject of a metaphor to images associated with that which it will be likened to, such as when a character is visually linked to clouds, white, and bright light before being compared to a female bodhisattva. Third, I argue that the conceptualization of wind, clouds, and other weather phenomena is essential to how interiority is expressed in the film. Informed by research from scholars who focus on weather metaphors in Japanese, I argue that the film shows several visual manifestations of Japanese weather metaphors.

This case study concludes by classifying the methods by which selected metaphorical expressions are manifested in the film. I note that, of the metaphors adapted onscreen, all are either explicitly signaled through dialogue or cued through a combination of dialogue and visual/multimodal images. The study found no instances of the metaphorical expressions being signaled explicitly through visuals alone. Finally, of the metaphors examined, implicit visual metaphors tended to occur before their explicit manifestations were elicited in dialogue, further suggesting that visuals serve to prime viewer interpretation of verbal metaphors in the film.