ATSUMORI
by SEAMI

CHARACTERS
THE PRIEST RENSEI (formerly the warrior Kumagai).
A YOUNG REAPER, who turns out to be the ghost of Atsumori.
HIS COMPANION.
CHORUS.

PRIEST.
Life is a lying dream, he only wakes
Who casts the World aside.
I am Kumagai no Naozane, a man of the country of Musashi. I have left my home and call
myself the priest Rensei; this I have done because of my grief at the death of Atsumori, who
fell in battle by my hand. Hence it comes that I am dressed in priestly guise.
And now I am going down to Ichi-no-Tani to pray for the salvation of Atsumori’s soul.

(He walks slowly across the stage, singing a song descriptive of his journey.)

I have come so fast that here I am already at Ichi-no-Tani, in the country of Tsu.
Truly the past returns to my mind as though it were a thing of today.
But listen! I hear the sound of a flute coming from a knoll of rising ground. I will wait here
till the flute player passes, and ask him to tell me the story of this place.

REAPERS. (together)
To the music of the reaper’s flute
No song is sung
But the sighing of wind in the fields.

YOUNG REAPER.
They that were reaping,
Reaping on that hill,
Walk now through the fields
Homeward, for it is dusk.

REAPERS. (together)
Short is the way that leads
From the sea of Suma back to my home.
This little journey, up to the hill
And down to the shore again, and up to the hill,—
This is my life, and the sum of hateful tasks.
If one should ask me
I too would answer
That on the shores of Suma
I live in sadness.
Yet if any guessed my name,
Then might I too have friends.
But now from my deep misery
35 Even those that were dearest
Are grown estranged. Here must I dwell abandoned
To one thought’s anguish:
That I must dwell here.

PRIEST.
40 Hey, you reapers! I have a question to ask you.

YOUNG REAPER.
Is it to us you are speaking? What do you wish to know?

PRIEST.
Was it one of you who was playing on the flute just now?

YOUNG REAPER.
Yes, it was we who were playing.

PRIEST.
It was a pleasant sound, and all the pleasanter because one does not look for such music from men of your condition.

YOUNG REAPER.
Unlooked for from men of our condition, you say! Have you not read:—
“Do not envy what is above you
Nor despise what is below you”?
Moreover, the songs of woodmen and the flute-playing of herdsmen,
55 Flute-playing even of reapers and songs of wood-fellers
Through poets’ verses are known to all the world.
Wonder not to hear among us
The sound of a bamboo-flute.

PRIEST.
60 You are right. Indeed it is as you have told me.
Songs of woodmen and flute-playing of herdsmen…

REAPER.
Flute-playing of reapers…

PRIEST.
65 Songs of wood-fellers…

REAPERS.
Guide us on our passage through this sad world.
PRIEST.
Song…

70 REAPER.
And dance…

PRIEST.
And the flute…

REAPER.
75 And music of many instruments…

CHORUS.
These are the pastimes that each chooses to his taste.
Of floating bamboo-wood
Many are the famous flutes that have been made;
80 Little-Branch and Cicada-Cage,
And as for the reaper’s flute,
Its name is Green-leaf;
On the shore of Sumiyoshi
The Korean flute they play.
85 And here on the shore of Ōsama
On Stick of the Salt-kilns
The fishers blow their tune.

PRIEST.
How strange it is! The other reapers have all gone home, but you alone stay loitering here.
90 How is that?

REAPER.
How is it, you ask? I am seeking for a prayer in the voice of the evening waves. Perhaps you will pray the Ten Prayers for me?

PRIEST.
95 I can easily pray the Ten Prayers for you, if you will tell me who you are.

REAPER.
To tell you the truth—I am one of the family of Lord Atsumori.

PRIEST.
One of Atsumori’s family? How glad I am!
100 Then the priest joined his hands (he kneels down) and prayed:—
Praise to Amida Buddha!
“If I attain to Buddhahood,
In the whole world and its ten spheres
Of all that dwell here none shall call on my name
And be rejected or cast aside.”

**CHORUS.**
“Oh, reject me not!
One cry suffices for salvation,
Yet day and night
Your prayers will rise for me.
Happy am I, for though you know not my name,
Yet for my soul’s deliverance
At dawn and dusk henceforward I know that you will pray.”

So he spoke. Then vanished and was seen no more.

(Here follows the Interlude between the two Acts, in which a recitation concerning Atsumori’s death takes place. These interludes are subject to variation and are not considered part of the literary text of the play.)

**PRIEST.**
Since this is so, I will perform all night the rites of prayer for the dead, and calling upon Amida’s name will pray again for the salvation of Atsumori.

(The ghost of ATSUMORI appears, dressed as a young warrior.)

**ATSUMORI.**
Would you know who I am
That like the watchmen at Suma Pass
Have wakened at the cry of sea-birds roaming
Upon Awaji shore?
Listen, Rensei. I am Atsumori.

**PRIEST.**
How strange! All this while I have never stopped beating my gong and performing the rites of the Law. I cannot for a moment have dozed, yet I thought that Atsumori was standing before me. Surely it was a dream.

**ATSUMORI.**
Why need it be a dream? It is to clear the karma of my waking life that I am come here in visible form before you.

**PRIEST.**
Is it not written that one prayer will wipe away ten thousand sins? Ceaselessly I have performed the ritual of the Holy Name that clears all sin away. After such prayers, what evil can be left? Though you should be sunk in sin as deep…
ATSUMORI.
As the sea by a rocky shore,
Yet should I be salved by prayer.

PRIEST.
And that my prayers should save you…

ATSUMORI.
This too must spring
From kindness of a former life.

PRIEST.
Once enemies…

ATSUMORI.
But now…

PRIEST.
In truth may we be named…

ATSUMORI.
Friends in Buddha’s Law.

CHORUS.
There is a saying, “Put away from you a wicked friend; summon to your side a virtuous enemy.” For you it was said, and you have proven it true. And now come tell with us the tale of your confession, while the night is still dark.

CHORUS.
He bids the flowers of Spring
Mount the tree-top that men may raise their eyes
And walk on upward paths;
He bids the moon in autumn waves be drowned

ATSUMORI.
Now the clan of Taira, building wall to wall,
Spread over the earth like the leafy branches of a great tree:

CHORUS.
Yet their prosperity lasted but for a day;
It was like the flower of the convolvulus.
There was none to tell them
That glory flashes like sparks from flint-stone,
And after,—darkness.¹
Oh wretched, the life of men!

ATSUMORI.
When they were on high they afflicted the humble;
When they were rich they were reckless in pride.
And so for twenty years and more
They ruled this land.
But truly a generation passes like the space of a dream.
The leaves of the autumn of Juyei
Were tossed by the four winds;
Scattered, scattered (like leaves too) floated their ships.
And they, asleep on the heaving sea, not even in dream
Went back to home.
Caged birds longing for the clouds,—
Wild geese were they rather, whose ranks are broken
As they fly to southward on their doubtful journey.
So days and months went by; Spring came again
And for a little while
Here dwelt they on the shore of Suma
At the first valley.
From the mountain behind us the winds blew down
Till the fields grew wintry again.
Our ships lay by the shore, where night and day
The sea-gulls cried and salt waves washed on our sleeves.
We slept with fishers in their buts
On pillows of sand.
We knew none but the people of Suma.
And when among the pine-trees
The evening smoke was rising,
Brushwood, as they call it,
Brushwood we gathered
And spread for carpet.
Sorrowful we lived
On the wild shore of Suma,
Till the clan Taira and all its princes
Were but villagers of Suma.

ATSUMORI.
But on the night of the sixth day of the second month
My father Tsunemori gathered us together.
“Tomorrow,” he said, “we shall fight our last fight.
Tonight is all that is left us.”
We sang songs together, and danced.

¹“Now the clan of Taira...darkness” The Taira evacuated the Capital in the second year of Juyei, 1188.
PRIEST.
Yes, I remember; we in our siege-camp
Heard the sound of music
Echoing from your tents that night;
There was the music of a flute…

ATSUMORI.
The bamboo-flute! I wore it when I died.

PRIEST.
We heard the singing…

ATSUMORI.
Songs and ballads…

PRIEST.
Many voices

ATSUMORI.
Singing to one measure.
(ATSUMORI dances.)
First comes the Royal Boat.

CHORUS.
The whole clan has put its boats to sea.
He will not be left behind;
He runs to the shore.
But the Royal Boat and the soldiers’ boats
Have sailed far away.

ATSUMORI.
What can he do?
He spurs his horse into the waves.
He is full of perplexity. And then

CHORUS.
He looks behind him and sees
That Kumagai pursues him;
He cannot escape.
Then Atsumori turns his horse
Knee-deep in the lashing waves,
And draws his sword.
Twice, three times he strikes; then, still saddled,
In close fight they twine; roll headlong together
Among the surf of the shore.
So Atsumori fell and was slain, but now the Wheel of Fate has turned and brought him back.

(ATSUMORI rises from the ground and advances toward the PRIEST with uplifted sword.)

“There is my enemy,” he cries, and would strike,
But the other is grown gentle
And calling on Buddha’s name

Has obtained salvation for his foe;
So that they shall be re-born together
On one lotus-seat.
“No, Rensei is not my enemy.
Pray for me again, oh pray for me again.”
A. The Five Types of Noh Plays:
1. The god play (Kami)—congratulatory piece praising the gods in a quiet, dignified tone.
2. The warrior play (Shura)—a slain warrior comes back as a ghost and relives his suffering.
3. The woman play (Katsura)—an elegant, stylish woman is the protagonist.
4. The mad woman (or madness) play/realistic play.
5. The supernatural (or demon) play (Kiri)—a battle between a demon or other supernatural figure and a hero in which the demon is usually subdued.

B. The Order of Performance
1. Okina-Sanbaso—a ritual piece
2. The god play (Noh)
3. A Kyogen play
4. The warrior play (Noh)
5. A Kyogen play
6. The woman play (Noh)
7. A Kyogen play
8. The mad play (Noh)
9. A Kyogen play
10. The demon play (Noh)

C. The Characters of a Noh Play
1. Shite (pronounced sh’tay)—the main character, the “doer” of the play
   - Maejite (pronounced may-j’tay) the shite appears in the first part of the play as an ordinary person
   - Nochijite (pronounced no-chee-j’tay) the shite disappears and then returns in the second part of the play in his true form as the ghost of a famous person of long ago
2. Tsure (pronounced tsoo-ray) the companion of the shite
3. Waki: a secondary or “sideline” character, often a traveling priest, whose questioning of the main character is important in developing the storyline
4. Waki-tsure: the companion of the waki
5. Ai or Ai-kyogen: an interlude actor, often a local person, who gives further background to the waki, and thus to the audience, in order to understand the situation of the shite

Other Performers
6. Jiutai: a chorus, usually consisting of eight people, that sits at the side of the stage and functions to narrate the background and the story itself. It also sometimes describes the character’s thoughts and emotions or even sings lines for the characters.
7. Hayashi: instrumentalists who sit at the back of the stage. They consist of a flute (nohkan), an hourglass-shaped drum placed on the lap (okawa or otsuzumi), and a barrel-shaped drum placed on a small floor stand and played with two sticks (taiko). The rhythms and melody of these instruments follow highly prescribed systems.
D. The structure of a Noh Play
1. Jo—the introduction. The chorus enters and seats itself on stage. The formal action begins with the entrance of the waki.
2. Ha—the development. The shite enters and introduces himself with a monologue. The waki begins a series of questions through which the shite begins to reveal some mysterious facet of his past or identity. At the end of this section, the shite usually exits the stage.
3. Kyu—the climax. The shite reappears and has been transformed into some truer manifestation of his nature. Through dance, the shite reenacts some truth about his past or reveals his transformed understanding.

E. Style of a Noh Play
1. Not a performance of realistic theater; its movement is highly stylized and prescribed.
2. Relies heavily on exaggerated gestures, some of which have specific meaning, while others serve as an abstract aesthetic expression to convey the emotions of the main character.
3. In general, deliberateness, brevity, suppression, and abstraction are important features of Noh movement.
4. All characters portraying women and old men wear masks as well as supernatural beings such as ghosts, deities, demons, and divine beasts. Only middle-aged male characters do not appear masked. In general, masks either have a neutral expression or portray a very strong emotion. Even in roles in which an actor does not wear a mask, the sense of a masked face is evident; the actor does not use his face for realistic expression but rather for mask-like expression.
5. Costumes in Noh are elaborately made and follow prescribed conventions as to their use. All characters, whether rich or poor, young or old, male or female, are all beautifully costumed, and the costume helps reveal the type of character being portrayed. The costuming process is complex. Rather than the actor putting on his own costume, two or three costumers are needed to sculpt the costume on the actor.
Shinto & Buddhism:
Wellsprings of Japanese Spirituality

The Japanese religious tradition is rich and complex, encompassing within it both complementary and contradictory trends in religious thought and practice with an ease that may occasionally puzzle the Western observer. At the very heart of the tradition stand Shinto, the indigenous religion of Japan, and Buddhism, the Indian religion that reached Japan in the sixth through eighth centuries C.E. from Korea and China. Throughout the long course of Japanese history, it has been these two religions that have contributed most to the Japanese understanding of themselves and their world.

Shinto

Shinto was the earliest Japanese religion, its obscure beginnings dating back at least to the middle of the first millennium B.C.E. Until approximately the sixth century C.E., when the Japanese began a period of rapid adoption of continental civilization, it existed as an amorphous mix of nature worship, fertility cults, divination techniques, hero worship, and shamanism. Unlike Buddhism, Christianity, or Islam, it had no founder and it did not develop sacred scriptures, an explicit religious philosophy, or a specific moral code. Indeed, so unself-conscious were the early Japanese about their religious life that they had no single term by which they could refer to it. The word Shinto, or “the Way of the kami (gods or spirits),” came into use only after the sixth century, when the Japanese sought to distinguish their own tradition from the foreign religions of Buddhism and Confucianism that they were then encountering. Thus, in its origins, Shinto was the religion of a pristine people who, above all, were sensitive to the spiritual forces that pervaded the world of nature in which they lived. As one ancient chronicle reports: in their world myriad spirits shone like fireflies and every tree and bush could speak.

Remarkably, neither Shinto’s relatively primitive original character nor the introduction of more sophisticated religions, such as Buddhism and Confucianism, caused the religion to wane in importance. In part its continued existence can be explained by pointing to changes that took place within Shinto, for after the sixth century, it was gradually transformed into a religion of shrines, both grand and small, with set festivals and rituals that were overseen by a distinct priestly class. However, such developments have had little effect on basic Shinto attitudes and values. More crucial to Shinto’s survival, therefore, have been its deep roots in the daily and national life of the Japanese people and a strong conservative strain in Japanese culture.

The Shinto world view is fundamentally bright and optimistic, as befits a religion in which the main deity is a sun goddess. While it is not unaware of the darker aspects of human existence, Shinto’s chief raison d’etre is the celebration and enrichment of life.

Much can be learned about Shinto’s world view from Japanese mythology. Two eighth-century works, the Kojiki (Record of Ancient Matters) and the Nihon shoki (Chronicles of Japan), include the story of the creation of the Japanese islands by the divine couple, Izanagi and his mate, Izanami; the subsequent birth of numerous gods and goddessesses—the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu, chief among them; and the descent of representatives of the Sun Goddess’ line to rule the islands. Two aspects of the mythology are particularly noteworthy. The first is its this-worldly orientation. Other worlds are mentioned in the mythology—the High Plain of Heaven, for example, and the Dark Land, an unclean land of the dead—yet we receive only the
haziest impressions of them. Blessed with a mild climate, fertile seas, and impressive mountain landscapes, the early Japanese seem to have felt little compulsion to look far beyond their present existence.

A second important feature of the mythology is the close link among the gods, the world they created, and human beings. The tensions present in Western religion between the Creator and the created, and the human and natural realms, are conspicuously absent. In the Shinto view, the natural state of the cosmos is one of harmony in which divine, natural, and human elements are all intimately related. Moreover, human nature is seen as inherently good, and evil is thought to stem from the individual’s contact with external forces or agents that pollute our pure nature and cause us to act in ways disruptive of the primordial harmony.

Shinto deities are referred to as kami. The term is frequently translated “god” or “gods,” but it expresses a concept of divinity significantly different from that found in Western religion. In particular, Shinto deities do not share the characteristics of utter transcendence and omnipotence often associated with the concept of god in the West. In the broadest sense, a kami may be anything that is extraordinary and that inspires awe or reverence. Consequently, a wide variety of kami exist in Shinto: there are kami related to natural objects and creatures—the spirits of mountains, seas, rivers, rocks, trees, animals, and the like; there are guardian kami of particular locales and clans; also considered kami are exceptional human beings, including all but the last in Japan’s long line of emperors. Finally, the abstract, creative forces are recognized as kami. Evil spirits are also known in Shinto, but few seem irredeemably so. While a god may first call attention to its presence through a display of rowdy or even destructive behavior, generally speaking, the kami are benign. Their role is to sustain and protect.

Worship in Shinto is undertaken to express gratitude to the gods and to secure their continued favor. Worship may take the form of one of the many large communal festivals that occur at fixed times during the year, celebrating such events as spring planting, the fall harvest, or some special occasion in the history of a shrine. However, it may also be carried out privately in a much abbreviated fashion in the home or at the neighborhood shrine. Although a festival may continue for several days, shifting at times in mood from the solemn to the lighthearted or even raucous, individual worship may require only a few moments to complete. In spite of such contrasts, both types of Shinto worship have three essential elements in common. Both begin with the all-important act of purification, which ordinarily involves the use of water; in both an offering is presented to the kami, today usually money but often food; and in both a prayer or petition is made. We may further note that in general Shinto worship is performed at a shrine. These structures, which are made only of natural materials and located on sites selected for their abodes for the kami rather than as shelters for the worshipers.

Since Shinto is without scriptures, dogmas, and creeds, worship has always had a central place in the religion. Rather than through sermons or study, it has been through its festivals and rituals, as well as the physical features of the shrine itself, that Shinto has transmitted its characteristic attitudes and values. Most prominent among these are a sense of gratitude and respect for life, a deep appreciation of the beauty and power of nature, a love of purity and—by extension—cleanliness, and a preference for the simple and unadorned in the area of aesthetics.

**Buddhism**

By the time Buddhism entered Japan in the sixth century C.E., it had already become a world religion with a history of a thousand years. The form of Buddhism that from the start was
dominant in Japan is known as Mahayana, the Buddhism of the Greater Vehicle, and it brought with it an enormous canon of religious literature, an elaborate body of doctrine, a well-organized priesthood, and a dazzling tradition of religious art and architecture—all of which Shinto lacked in the sixth century. Although its view of the world and mankind differed markedly from that of Shinto, it is important to understand that within the teachings of Mahayana Buddhism both differences from and similarities to the native tradition could be found. On the one hand, for example, Buddhism regarded the world as transient and saw it as a source of suffering for those who remained attached to it, a view that contrasts sharply with Shinto’s ready acceptance of the world. On the other hand, however, there was an optimism in Mahayana Buddhism that meshed well with Shinto—an optimism about human nature, for it was committed to the belief that all human beings had the potential to attain the wisdom that brings an end to suffering, and an ultimate optimism about the world itself, since it taught that once human attachments are discarded, the world takes on a new and positive significance.

It is no wonder that at first the Japanese were unable to appreciate Buddhism on its own terms. They regarded the Buddha as simply another kami and were drawn to the religion by the beauty of its art and the hope of such concrete benefits as wealth and longevity that, on the popular level, Buddhism did not disdain to promise. By the seventh century, however, individuals capable of grasping Buddhism’s message began to emerge. In general, we may understand the subsequent development of Buddhism in Japan as the result of constant interaction between the foreign religion and the native religious tradition. For its part, Buddhism consciously sought to develop a positive connection with Shinto. This was eventually accomplished by identifying the Shinto kami as manifestations of various Buddhas and bodhisattvas that had grown up within Mahayana Buddhism. By this conception, the Buddhists were able to introduce many of their own ideas into Shinto, and, in the end, argue that Shinto and Buddhism were complementary versions of the same fundamental truth—a view that gained wide acceptance in Japan.

The effect of the native religious tradition on Buddhism was to bring to the fore within it those aspects that best suited Japanese tastes. This can be illustrated by brief references to three Buddhist sects that represent uniquely Japanese developments: Kukai’s (774-835) Shingon sect; Shinran’s (1173-1262) True Pure Land sect; and the sect founded by Nichiren (1222-1282) and known by his name. All of these sects are still active today. The Shingon sect stands in the mainstream of Buddhism in terms of doctrine—emphasizing the transient nature of existence and calling upon its followers to transcend the ordinary world of suffering—and in the broad outline of its practices, which stress the importance of ethical conduct, meditation, and study. However, Shingon Buddhism advocates a distinctive type of meditation. More intricate than traditional meditation, it involves the use of symbolic hand gestures and speech, that is, mudras and mantras, as well as a form of Buddhist art known as a mandala. The mandala represents the universe as it is seen by the enlightened and serves as the object of meditation. The sheer complexity of Shingon meditation, coupled with the rich symbolism and beauty of the mandala, give this sect an air of mystery that has proven particularly attractive to millions of Japanese from Kukai’s age to the present.

In the True Pure Land sect, we encounter a very different kind of Buddhism, one that advocates salvation by faith rather than the attainment of enlightenment through the practice of morality and meditation. Based upon the belief that as time passes human beings find it increasingly difficult to follow the example of the historical Buddha—an idea that can be traced all the way back to India—it teaches that in the present era salvation can be gained only by
relying on the saving grace of the celestial Buddha Amida, who resides in a Pure Land to the West. This belief had been embraced by other Buddhists, not only in Japan, but in China and India as well; but Shinran was the first in the history of Buddhism to draw the radical conclusion that acceptance of it must lead to the complete abandonment of monastic discipline. Consequently, from Shinran’s day on, it has been common for True Pure Land priests to marry and live as lay persons, and the sect has been one of the most popular to develop in Japan.

Finally, in the Nichiren sect, we see surfacing in Buddhism, in a dramatic fashion, the strong sense of national pride that has frequently been related to religious sentiment in Japan. Nichiren was an impassioned reformer who envisioned both himself and Japan at the center of a worldwide movement to revive what he considered to be true Buddhism.

These figures and sects do not, of course, reflect all of the many ways in which Buddhism was transformed in Japan; nevertheless, in them we can glimpse some of the salient characteristics of Japanese Buddhism. In Shingon, we see a strong attraction to the mystical and mysterious, as well as to aesthetic modes of apprehension and expression; in the True Pure Land sect, we observe a preference for a kind of Buddhism that can be followed within the context of everyday life; and in the Nichiren sect, we detect an ever-present consciousness of national identity. Given Shinto’s emphasis on ritual and the aesthetic features of the shrine, its this-worldly orientation, and its close connection to the myth of Japan’s origins and the Imperial line, it is not difficult to discern the influence of the native religion and the background of these developments.

Citation Information

A Comparison of Scenes from Macbeth and Throne of Blood

Throne of Blood is an adaption, not an interpretation, of Shakespeare’s Macbeth: Kurosawa takes Shakespeare’s play as his point of departure, but creates a new autonomous work with a new text.

Though Shakespeare’s Macbeth is based on events reported to have occurred in 11th-century Scotland, his play reflects thematic concerns of early 17th-century England. Like Shakespeare, Kurosawa creates a story that is set in the historical past, but is completely symptomatic of the contemporary context. Kurosawa mythologizes the past to make points about the present.

Use the following comparison table to help you determine how Kurosawa’s Throne of Blood draws on and transforms source material from Shakespeare’s Macbeth. How are the narratives similar? How does Kurosawa’s script depart from Shakespeare’s play? Note that this comparison does not include framing shots in Throne of Blood that contain no dialogue (e.g., exterior shots of the castle, courtyard, etc.). These shots may also be important to our understanding of the action of the film, and may function to replace equivalent descriptions in Macbeth.

<table>
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<th>Character Correlations</th>
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<td>Taketoki Washizu = Macbeth</td>
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<td>Asaji = Lady Macbeth</td>
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<td>Yoshiaki Miki = Banquo</td>
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<td>Yoshiteru = Fleance</td>
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<td>Kunimaru Tsuzuki = Duncan</td>
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<td>Kunimaru = Malcolm</td>
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<td>Noriyasu Ogagura = Macduff</td>
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<td>Forest Spirit = Three Witches</td>
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<th>Macbeth</th>
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<td>[1] Ruins of Cobweb Castle; Chorus</td>
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<td>[1.2] Battle at Forres reported to Duncan</td>
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<td>[1.3] Macbeth and Banquo meet the three witches; the prophecies; Two lords inform Macbeth and Banquo about their promotion</td>
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<td>[10] Washizu and Miki get lost in the Cobweb Forest</td>
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<td>[1.4] Duncan, Macbeth, etc., are talking</td>
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<td>[1.5] 1st scene of the Macbeths—“Look like the’ innocent flower, / But be the serpent under’t”; message of Duncan’s arrival</td>
<td>[12-18] 1st scene of Washizu and Asaji; arrival of Kuniharu</td>
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<td>[1.7] 2nd scene of the Macbeths—“But screw your courage to the sticking-place, / And we’ll not fail”; Plan of Duncan’s murder</td>
<td>[23-24] 2nd scene of Washizu and Asaji; Plan of Kuniharu’s murder</td>
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<td>[2.2] Lady Macbeth waits; The Macbeths after the murder—“Macbeth shall sleep no more!”</td>
<td>[25-33] Kuniharu’s murder; Washizu and Asaji wake up everybody</td>
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<td>[2.3] The Porter’s scene; Macduff appears and finds out about the murder</td>
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<td>[2.4] Macbeth becomes king; Macduff and Duncan’s two son’s escape</td>
<td>[34-61] Noriyasu and Hunimaru escape, Washizu chases them; Washizu enters the Cobweb Castle with Kuniharu’s coffin</td>
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<td>[3.1] Macbeth commissions the murderers to kill Banquo and his son</td>
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<tr>
<td>[3.2] 3rd scene of the Macbeths—“Oh, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!”</td>
<td>[63] 3rd scene of Washizu and Asaji; they decide on the murder of Miki and his son</td>
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<tr>
<td>[3.3] Banquo’s murder; his son escapes</td>
<td>[64-66] Miki and his son talk</td>
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<tr>
<td>[3.4] Banquet; Murderer reports Banquo’s death and his son’s escape; Banquo’s ghost appears</td>
<td>[67] Return of Miki’s horse alone</td>
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<td>[68] Banquet; Miki’s ghost appears; Later a soldier brings Miki’s head; Washizu kills the soldier because Miki’s son was not killed</td>
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<td>Section</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>[3.5]</td>
<td>Three witches, Hecate</td>
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<tr>
<td>[4.1]</td>
<td>Macbeth meets the three witches; the three prophecies</td>
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<tr>
<td>[4.2]</td>
<td>Murder of Macduff’s family</td>
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<tr>
<td>[5.1]</td>
<td>Lady Macbeth sleepwalks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[5.2]</td>
<td>England’s army appears</td>
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<tr>
<td>[5.3]</td>
<td>Macbeth prepares for the battle—“I will not be afraid of death and bane, / Till Birnam Forest come to Dunsinane.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>[5.4]</td>
<td>England’s army; Malcolm orders the army to cut branches</td>
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<td>[5.5]</td>
<td>Macbeth waits for the battle; Death of Lady Macbeth—“Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow”; Birnam Forest begins to move</td>
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<td>[5.6]</td>
<td>England’s army with branches; battle</td>
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<tr>
<td>[5.7] Macduff kills Macbeth; Malcolm is the new king</td>
<td>[105] Noriyasu’s army approaches Cobweb Castle</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>[106] Ruins of Cobweb Castle; Choir</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Lyrics to Songs from *Throne of Blood*

**Opening Chorus**
*(sung over images of the ruins of Cobweb Castle)*

- Look upon the ruins
- Of the castle of delusion
- Haunted only now
- By the spirits
- Of those who perished
- A scene of carnage
- Born of consuming desire
- Never changing
- Now and throughout eternity

**The Demon Hag’s Song**

- Strange is the world
- Why should men
- Receive life in this world?
- Men’s lives are as meaningless
- As the lives of insects
- The terrible folly
- Of such suffering
- A man lives but
- As briefly as a flower
- Destined all too soon
- To decay into the stink of flesh
- Humanity strives
- All its days
- To sear its own flesh
- In the flames of base desire
- Exposing itself
- To Fate’s Five Calamities
- Heaping karma upon karma
- All that awaits Man
- At the end
- Of his travails
- Is the stench of rotting flesh
- That will yet blossom into flower
- Its foul odor rendered
- Into sweet perfume
- Oh, fascinating
- The life of Man
- Oh, fascinating

---

2 Kurosawa’s hag certainly draws on the three witches of *Macbeth*, but her character also draws on Japanese and East Asian mythological and folk traditions. Some critics interpret her as a forest spirit or a *kami*.

3 It is unclear what Fate’s Five Calamities are. It has been suggested that they are related to Buddhism’s Five Precepts.

4 Karma in Buddhism (as well as Hinduism) is the sum of a person’s actions in this and previous states of existence, viewed as deciding their fate in future existences.
Discussion Prompts for *Throne of Blood* and *Macbeth*

**DIRECTIONS:** A Socratic Seminar will be held after viewing *Throne of Blood* to allow students a forum for discussing Kurosawa’s film and its source material, Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. Use the following prompts to generate ideas for the Socratic Seminar as well as the interpretive compare-and-contrast essay you will be writing for this unit.

1. As you are watching *Throne of Blood*, make a list of the characters and whom they parallel in *Macbeth*. Note any character differences that you see. In class, we will consider how the characters are different in the two works, and how this changes our understanding of the story (e.g., Duncan vs. Tsuzuki Kuniharu, Lady Macbeth vs. Lady Asaji).

2. As you are watching *Throne of Blood*, use the Scene Comparison Table to make a list of the scenes and characters Kurosawa eliminates. You should also make a list of what Kurosawa adds (note particularly where he extends scenes or adds framing and other kinds of shots). How do these omissions and additions affect our understanding of Washizu and Asaji’s actions?

3. As you are watching *Throne of Blood*, take notes about things you do not understand. What do you feel you need to know more about in order to understand what is happening in this film?

4. Research the Noh play *Kurozuka* (“Black Mound”). What allusions does the opening scene of *Throne of Blood* make to this Japanese folktale? How does this source material serve Kurosawa’s purposes in the film?

5. Research the historical context of late 16th Japan (the “Warring States Period”). Why do you think Kurosawa picked this period to set his film? How is it comparable to Scotland in the 11th century? Is it comparable to mid-20th century Japan?

6. Stephen Price argues in an essay that Kurosawa “strips the psychology from *Macbeth*.” How does he achieve this? Do you agree?

7. How does Kurosawa transpose elements of Noh theater over features of Elizabethan stagecraft in *Throne of Blood*? To which tradition, the Western stage or Japanese Noh drama, is Kurosawa’s film more indebted?
The Stepped in Blood Essay
An Interpretive Study of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* and Kurosawa’s *Throne of Blood*

**Writing Task (CCSSs RL.9, W.2)**
Analyze how Akira Kurosawa’s film *Throne of Blood* draws on and transforms source material from Shakespeare’s tragedy play *Macbeth*. Use textual evidence from the literary and cinematic texts to develop and support an original thesis. Write a five-paragraph interpretive essay that uses three points of comparison to support your general thesis statement (e.g., characterizations of Lady Macbeth vs. Asaji, the play’s reliance on dialogue to create mood vs. the film’s dependence on setting and facial expressions to establish mood). Be sure to write a concluding paragraph that ties to and supports the information/explanation of the body paragraphs.

Though it is not a requirement, you may use informational texts provided on the class website (see lists C and D below) or found in your research. Just be sure to cite all sources from which you gather information.

**Special Note**
Your thesis must not simply show similarities between the two works (e.g., showing how Macbeth and Washizu both fall prey to ambition), but more importantly show how Kurosawa both draws on and transforms Shakespeare’s narrative to fit his own (emphasis on the transforms task). For example, the play and the film have remarkably different conclusions that consequently convey substantially different themes. Your introductory paragraph, then, should develop an argument aimed at explaining how and why Kurosawa at once uses the story of *Macbeth* yet also significantly changes the Shakespearean script and its plot elements to serve the needs of his own story, one informed by a patently different worldview and intent on communicating a distinctly different message about human ambition.

**A. Literary Texts**

**B. Cinematic Text**

**C. Informational Texts on *Throne of Blood* and *Macbeth* (available on class website)**

**D. Informational Texts on Samurai Culture and Noh Theater (available on class website)**
- “Seami and Japanese Noh Drama”

**FINAL DRAFT DUE:** Monday, March 21 (150 points)

**NOTE:** Final Draft must be submitted digitally to TurnItIn.com **
SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

STEP #1: Enroll in my class (if you haven’t done so already)

• Go to www.turnitin.com
• If you are a new user, click on “new user” in the upper right hand corner and go through all of the steps to create an account. Creating an account requires an email address.
• If you are already a user, sign in to your account and then enroll in my class (see below).
• Keep in mind that passwords are case sensitive and there are no spaces whatsoever.

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<thead>
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<th>ENG 9 CP Classes</th>
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<th>ENG 10 CP Classes</th>
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STEP #2: Upload your final draft:

1. Select class name.
2. Select the “submit” icon on the right.
3. Select a paper submission method (choose either “single file” or “cut and paste”).
4. Type in your first name, last name, and the submission title (title of report).
5. If uploading a file, select “browse” to locate your file. Select the folder where you saved your final draft. Then select “open” and when your file name appears, select “upload.” If cutting and pasting, cut and paste your entire final draft.

IMPORTANT: Your entire paper will appear on the screen as a preview. Click “Submit” at the bottom, and you’re good to go. You will receive an electronic receipt confirming the upload was successful. If you do not receive a confirmation, try it again.

The submission portal opens on __________________________ at ____________________

Without exception, your report must be uploaded by: ____________________________ at ____________