THE CROSS-CULTURAL CAMERA OF AKIRA KUROSAWA

By

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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I would like to thank the following people for their assistance and support in the production of my minor dissertation and short feature film, entitled Visual Therapy: Associate Professor Lesley Marx, my supervisor, for her constant insightful feedback and input, and Professor Vivian Bickford-Smith for his contributions. Interestingly enough, although my lecturers might not be aware of it, some of the comments and ideas that they dispelled to me during my lectures with them were to inspire some of the chapters of this dissertation. I would also like to thank the U.C.T library staff for assisting me in compiling my audio-visual material, and Alan Francis and Sidney Johannes at U.C.T’s H.U.M TV for their tireless efforts in assisting me with the production of my short film. Last but not least, I’d also like to thank the Molapo and Edkins families for their continual assistance in the completion of my studies.
ABSTRACT

Cinema is arguably the defining artistic medium of our milieu, and has been used with astonishing success to entertain, engage and to represent humanity in all its different shapes and forms. The history of mankind has been replete with ideological conflicts; a factor due partly to humankind’s misunderstanding of each other’s cultures. Cinema can be used as a tool of intervention; to change opinions and to stimulate debate and understanding in the interests of developing a culturally tolerant, globalized society. A continual examination of cross-cultural cinema can be used to reveal the manner in which people have fed off each other’s ideas, and to illustrate the essentially universal traits that bind us together as human beings.

This minor dissertation is undertaken to examine the cross-cultural similarities that are revealed by motion pictures through analyzing the work of Akira Kurosawa and contrasting it with selective mainstream cinema texts. Kurosawa is a critical case in point due to his welding of Occidental and Japanese ideas into his films, and his origin from a hybridized Japan, a society which historically has freely absorbed and embellished itself from numerous cultures, including America, Korea, China and Europe.

This dissertation has embarked upon a detailed stylistic analysis of a selection of Kurosawa’s films, accentuating for example, his use of lighting, characterization, mise-en-scène, editing and dialogue, whilst extensively researching the written material surrounding his works. This dissertation analyzes Kurosawa’s influence and manifestation in mainstream cinema and identifies the manner in which his films reveal
the incidence of a cultural transference of ideas. As stated earlier, I have also argued that
the reason that film is such an accessible medium is due to the fact that the issues that it
portrays are universal, and can be understood and interpreted by human beings of all
societies. Regardless of Kurosawa's cultural origin of Japan, his film are essentially
stories, visual forms of artistic expression that can be understood and interpreted cross-
culturally through one's societal referential point; regardless of the African origin of the
dissertation writer, or the Western audiences who have been continually enthralled by his
works.

This dissertation is composed of five chapters that tackle varying aspects of a selection of
Kurosawa's films; specifically Rashomon (1950), Seven Samurai (1954), Throne of
Kurosawa's other films that were examined and influenced this dissertation include The
Bad Sleep Well (1960), Derzu-Uzala (1975) and Dreams (1990), regardless of the fact
that they are not mentioned within the text.

The subject matter of the five chapters ranges from Kurosawa's depiction of women and
war, to an analysis of his samurai films, to critiquing his adaptation of Shakespeare's
Macbeth. Although extensively researched, this dissertation is also a subjective
interpretation on the part of the writer, that acts as an introduction to the films of
Kurosawa and Japanese cinema as a whole, to allow for, and to stimulate cross-cultural
cinematic understanding and tolerance, and to promote artistic hybridism and humanism
through analyzing the influences of Kurosawa on the development of international cinema.
NOTE TO READER

Throughout this dissertation, numerous references are made to Japanese terminology such as 'chambara' (page 1), and 'daimyo' (page 3). Please refer to the Glossary of Terminology on page 106 for a brief explanation of these terms.
**SKIET, SKOP AND SWORDFIGHTS**

While living  
Be a dead man  
Be thoroughly dead  
And behave as you like  
And all's well¹

For the mainstream cinema viewer, Oriental cinema is stereotypically depicted as the producer of an endless glut of mindless martial arts films, instantly bringing to mind images of death-defying stunt maneuvers and complicated hand combat in films where the characterization and plot are generally believed to be superseded by their action-packed sequences.

Regardless of the manner in which Oriental cinema is derogatively depicted, its influence on mainstream society is as thorough as to ensure that Eastern terms and methodologies such as 'samurai,' 'kung-fu' and 'ninjia' are instantly recognizable by the mainstream viewer. This results from the successful crossover of many of its stars and ideologies into the mainstream through films such as Bruce Lee's *Enter the Dragon* (1973) and Jackie Chan’s *Rush Hour* (1998).

In the case of Japanese cinema, the works of film-making grand-masters such as Kon Ichikawa, Akira Kurosawa and Yasujiro Ozu are largely relegated to the screens of foreign art film festivals and esoteric satellite TV channels, promulgating the notion of Japanese cinema as consisting of cheap 'chambara.'

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This highlights one of the hypocrisies of mainstream cinema in relation to its ‘othering’ of non-European artistry. Mainstream cinema is quick to marginalize and repudiate what it does not know and understand in foreign cultures, but upon subsequent examination, has no qualms about swiftly incorporating foreign ideologies within its mainframe upon the possibility of any commercial viability. This is a factor highlighted by the re-making of Kurosawa’s work into *The Magnificent Seven* (1960) and *The Outrage* (1964), and the manner in which oriental thought and filmmaking techniques repeatedly proliferate in films as diverse as Tarantino’s *Reservoir Dogs* (1992) and the Wachowski brothers’ *The Matrix* (1999).

This chapter will attempt to dispel this disparaging notion of the Japanese ‘martial arts’ film, by analyzing two classic ‘samurai’ period pieces of Kurosawa, *Seven Samurai* (1954) and *Yojimbo* (1961). As this dissertation focuses on Japanese cinema, Chinese and Hong Kong martial art films will not be emphasized, but will be mentioned in passing through films such as Tao’s *Shaolin Drunk Fighter* (1969) and Wong’s *Strike of the Thunder-kick Tiger* (1978).

I will examine the manner in which Hollywood cinema has absorbed Japanese and Oriental cinematic culture within its structure using the Wachowski brothers’ *The Matrix* as a case study. This section will also illustrate the central tenets of ‘the samurai film’ by cross-referencing *The Matrix* with Kurosawa’s works to identify the metaphysical and religious underpinnings that resonate within the concept of the *samurai*, and the samurai genre as a whole. The significance of the genre’s action sequences and the manner in
which they have influenced mainstream cinema will be addressed. This chapter will also entail an examination of how Kurosawa’s work has been transferred, whilst providing an analysis of the influences of the samurai film. Logically, for one to begin this inquiry, a brief explanation of the genre and the concept of the *samurai* must be provided.

The samurai film is a *'jedai-geki,'* a period piece ‘set in the past, of armed heroes who protect the weak or who seek bloody revenge...’ that subscribe to a ‘codified set of beliefs’ known as ‘the code of *Bushido*’ (Desser 1983, p.13). This in itself is a gross simplification of the genre, which actually serves as a vehicle that dramatizes the myth of the ‘*samurai*’, a Japanese warrior who, in a filmic sense, generally manifests himself within the Japanese *Tokugawa* historical period.

The samurai cinema is thus used in a similar manner to the American Western. Both genres contribute to a cultural ‘reshaping’ of the past, alternately romanticizing or critiquing history through the use of iconographical figures, such as the cowboy and the *samurai*. David Desser notes ‘The icons of the samurai film, even more so than the heavily iconic Western genre, define and delimit the form. From head to toe, the *samurai* is a walking sign system. From his well-groomed hair tied in a top knot, to his silken *kimono* which bears the family crest, to the two swords worn in the carved scabbards, the *samurai* defines himself’ (1983, p.29).

The *samurai* and cowboy in themselves represent and symbolize aspects of their respective country’s national and social ethos in their mythical configuration. This
construction is achieved by ‘presenting an imaginary world that is aligned with the interests and attitudes’ of its culture of origin, to ‘resolve tensions and ambiguities resulting from the conflicting interest of different groups within a culture’ (Desser 1983, p.13). The disjunction between the filmic and historical depiction of the samurai substantiates the main argument of this dissertation, of the universalism that is inherent in the usage of film.

The Samurai (and Western) films thus have the ability according to Desser, ‘to assist in the process of assimilating changes in values to imaginative constructs,’ resulting in the repeated reconstruction of the samurai (and Japanese history) in a manner conducive to and sympathetic towards the audience and the film’s cultural context (1983, p.13). The samurai for example, is a symbol of Japanese masculinity (and of Japan as a whole) and his repeated reproduction suggests a nostalgic ‘harkening back’ on the part of the Japanese people, to an era in which their society and traditional life style flourished, and was free of foreign influences.

To continue with the analysis, David Desser provides an exposition of the samurai genre, noting its three sub-categories. These include what he refers to as: ‘the nostalgic samurai drama’ (of which he argues Seven Samurai is an example), ‘the anti-Feudal samurai drama’ and lastly, the ‘Zen Fighter’ samurai sub-genre. Desser further notes that the first type of samurai film, the ‘nostalgic samurai drama’ is the more contemplative and reflexive genre. It ‘usually focuses on a ronin, a masterless samurai. The term ‘ronin’ itself means ‘wave man’; an index of the status he now possesses. A ronin is not likely to
find employment as a true samurai, for these films are situated during the Tokugawa era, and in times of peace, a lord ('daimyo') is not likely to need his services' (p.33).

Historically, the samurai was a figure that evolved from within the Japanese aristocracy, with the term itself meaning a 'servant' or 'retainer' of the feudal lord whom the samurai was traditionally allied to and was sworn to protect. This relationship subsisted throughout Japan's centuries of civil insurgencies, reaching its conclusion in the peaceful Tokugawa era of 1603-1867. The samurai was subsequently discarded, with his situation being further hampered by his obsolescence as a swordsman in the face of a more technologically advanced warfare dominated by firearms and cannons (Silver 1977, p.14). In The warrior's camera: the cinema of Akira Kurosawa, Stephen Prince notes: 'born at the very end of the Meiji period, Kurosawa would in his art, grapple with the fundamental challenge posed by this period; the relation between Japan and the West, specifically the tensions between Japanese cultural identity and economic and political modernization' (1991, p.22).

This explains the state of desolation in which we find Sanjuro and the seven samurai in their respective films. They reside in a Japanese society that no longer requires their services after a historical period mired by protracted civil wars. They are unemployed, highly skilled soldiers of noble origins who traditionally performed acts of extreme militaristic and religious servitude to their lords in return for stipends of rice or favors. They have subsequently been severely humiliated by their loss of status in a society that
has relegated them to performing administrative work, acting as ruthless mercenaries, or in extreme cases becoming abject beggars or 'stray dogs.'

Another crucial tenet of the samurai that merits explanation and has a critical effect on the samurai behavioral pattern is the doctrine of 'Bushido.' Bushido is defined as 'the way of the warrior,' a scheme of training and code of conduct that emphasized self-control and duty to the master from the samurai, and was a doctrine that was rigorously adhered to (Earhart 1969, p.73). Bushido also espoused the notion of continual physical and mental self-cultivation of the samurai, and had strong religion underpinnings; with its filial attachments to the daimyo resting in Confucian ethos, and its cosmological attitude couched in 'Zen Buddhism,' 'Taoism' and 'Shintoism.'

This essentially meant that the ideal samurai was bound to his daimyo, emperor and society as a whole through what is referred to as his 'giri', 'the notion of duty or fealty which each warrior owes to his master and society' (Desser 1983, p.22). As an individual, the samurai was also obligated to his 'ninjo,' 'a word that variously represents instinct, inclination, or natural conscience' (Desser 1983, p.22). Desser further notes that the majority of samurai films are about the clash between the samurai's strong social obligations and his personal beliefs, which (in a communitarian Japanese society) he was supposed to repress.

A case in point in relation to this principle is Kambei, who epitomizes the correct usage of Bushido, continually striking the correct balance between his 'ninjo' and 'giri.'
Although ruthless when required, Kambei saves a young child from a bandit at the onset of *Seven Samurai* out of sympathy and without requesting any financial reward. Later in the film, he agrees to risk his life for the villagers after realizing the desperation of their situation and the sacrifice they have made in paying him in rice as opposed to millet.

The *bushido* code was extremely harsh to the adherent, with the honor, loyalty and fighting prowess of the *samurai* paramount above all else. The *samurai* thus exhibits parallels with the Arthurian knight of English legend in terms of his code of morality and sense of noblesse oblige. Unlike his English counterpart, the *samurai* was skilled in hand-to-hand combat and was more resilient in the face of adversity due to his pursuit of a frugal, monastic lifestyle. Nevertheless, like the Arthurian knight, the *samurai* was compelled to protect his honor and dignity, (and that of his lord), with any affront to his personage resulting in armed combat or acts of vengeance.

The severity of the code of conduct to which the *samurai* was supposed to subscribe is most famously evidenced in *Rashomon*, where Takehiro the samurai commits 'seppuku' in accordance with the *bushido* doctrine, subsequent to his humiliation at powerlessly witnessing his wife's violation. Such an act was traditionally encouraged and understood in Japanese society, and is one of the more famous aspects of *samurai* culture recognizable to mainstream film audiences. In *The Hagakure: a code to the way of the Samurai*, Tsunemoto states: 'Bushido, I have found out, lies in dying. When confronted with two alternatives, life and death, one is to choose death without hesitation' (1980, p.35).
Desser further notes the persistence of the anti-feudal samurai drama. This sub-division includes examples such as Kobayashi’s Hara-Kiri (1962) and Rebellion (1967) where the *samurai* suffers a loss of status throughout the genre, which critiques aspects of the conformist feudal society (1983, p.30). The *samurai* protagonist is repeatedly within these films, placed in a situation in which he is ‘torn between the impulses of *giri* and *ninjo*’ (Desser 1983, p.22).

The third category is what Desser refers to as ‘the Zen Fighter,’ a genre populated by *samurai* who follow the teachings of *Zen Buddhism*. *Zen Buddhism* is a vigorous, practically based religion, that lays emphasis on meditation, concentration and spiritual transcendence as being critical to achieving the ideal state of ‘*satori*’ or enlightenment from a materialist world (Austin, 1988, p.12). The follower is thus supposed to be self-reliant, to attain a spiritual state of ‘*mushin*’ or mental clarity, a ‘non-mindedness so that his actions may flow freely, unencumbered by conscious thought and intervention’ (Desser 1983, p.41).

This religion, with its belief in attaining ‘a state of mind which is no more troubled with the questions of death or immortality’ was essentially non-violent, but was seized upon by the Japanese *samurai* class, who admired its simplicity and single-minded indifference to death, writes Suzuki (1970, p.74). *Zen* was also applicable to *samurai* practices such as sword fighting, hand-to-hand combat and archery that involved intense introspection and concentration on the part of the participant.
Kyuzo in *Seven Samurai* is the living embodiment of the Zen-fighter. He is calm and impassive; 'the perfect swordsman avoids quarreling or fighting,' and initially refuses a sword fight when first seen by Kambei (Suzuki 1970, p.132). He later refuses to join the group, stating that he is interested in pursuing his craft rather than abjectly killing, but later returns. Kyuso is also lightning-quick on the draw, reflective of Zen ideologies where the 'man and sword' are so symbiotic 'that their actions turn into instruments...of the unconscious' (1970, p.146). His speed at dispatching a trio of bandits again suggests his conceptualization of this Zen principle.

In *Zen and Japanese Culture* Suzuki notes: ‘When the sword is held by the swordsman whose spiritual attainment is such that he holds it as though not holding it, it identifies with the man himself, it acquires a soul, it moves with all the subtleties which have been imbedded in him as a swordsman’ (1970, p.146). Fittingly, a bullet in the film fells Kyuzo rather than the audience being subjected to the improbability of his dying at the hands of an opponent’s sword.

The final sub-genre that Desser mentions is that of the ‘sword-film.’ In this genre, the hero is a ‘swordman and a survivor’ like Sanjuro, with his ‘fast draw and deadly aim becoming negotiable skills available to the highest bidder’ (1983, p.44). The villains in this category are ‘viable powerful enemies’ and are not reflective of the feudal society critiqued by the other categories of samurai film (1983, p.45). To an extent, Desser’s notion of *Yojimbo* embodying elements of a genre where ‘the sight...of fountains of blood emerging from headless victims...is a common, and expected sight’ is acceptable
Sanjuro is as complex as he is adept at swordplay, and although a *samurai* (a class that traditionally eschewed financial gain) he accepts the financial rewards of Ushi-Tora and Seibe, lending to his characterization as a Japanese mercenary of sorts. He does however, have complicated reasons for his actions, setting him apart from the familiar American Western Man-With-No-Name. As is noticeable from his appearance (in crested *kimono*, carrying the traditional pair of *katana* and *tanto* blades) he is a *samurai*, albeit one who has fallen on hard times due to the harshness of a society where ‘the young ones have gone mad,’ and where the cornerstone of the Japanese society, the small town is in the grip of *yakuza* - merchants, bandits and gamblers.

The film thus uses the past to critique the present. ‘In *Yojimbo* the merchants embody the future, and the town is offered as a microcosm of the contemporary corporate state, which had been castigated in *The Bad Sleep Well*’ (Prince 1991, p.22). The village thus represents the destructive properties of capitalism and reveals its effects on Japanese society and its *samurai* class. Desser substantiates this argument, stating that ‘A tension exists because the *samurai* warrior is born into a rigid society that extends back over a thousand years, but is doomed to extinction. The frontier (of *Yojimbo*) becomes a psychological one, of a nation trying to hold back the inevitable... to preserve a way of life that will disappear and give rise to a new civilization...which in many instances repudiates its forbears’ (Desser 1983, p.24).
This reflects the degree of disillusionment and complexity of the *samurai*’s situation in the *Togukawa* era. As a class of people who eschewed materialism, *samurais* were dismayed at their loss of social status, and due to their lack of financial skills were eventually heavily in debt to the powerful emerging merchant class. In the *Conversations at Suraga-dai* Kyuso Muro (cited in Prince 1991, p.222) voices concern over the destruction of traditional values by the growth of a mercantile class and condemns the spread of the ‘money-grubbers’ and their ‘evil ways.’ Sanjuro is thus forced to become a mercenary and beg for food because he is compelled to, and contrary to Desser’s analysis, his *ninjo* and *samurai* ethic is still a force.

Sanjuro does not join the melee for his own selfish or nihilistic reasons. He states to Gisake that ‘I’m staying’ in the town as ‘it would be better if all these men were dead...Seibe, Ushi-Tora, gamblers...it would be nice to get rid of them.’ This highlights the fact that regardless of the corruption that abounds in his surroundings, his extreme moralistic sensibilities still prevail. Sanjuro is utterly ruthless towards the bandits, but compassionately saves Yohei’s family from bondage, giving them the entire sum he has amassed from his work without a moment’s hesitation. At the end of the film, Sanjuro marches off into the sunset, stating that ‘now this town will be quiet,’ lending to the belief that if the situation were to arise again, Sanjuro would be compelled by his code of conduct to emancipate a subsequent town (and Japan as a whole if necessary) from the vices of murder, corruption and prostitution that are suggested as being prevalent in modern capitalist Japan.
Sanjuro is thus still evidenced to be the proverbial *samurai*: ‘One does not simply give up one’s samurai status for more money’ (Desser 1983, p.33). He thus becomes a lonely existential figure, a ‘ronin…a doer of good deeds in exchange for food and gratitude’ whose ‘enemies become the enemies of those on whom he would bestow his beneficence. And when the ronin has dispatched these doers of evil, he sets off again to wander’ aimlessly, lending to his characterization as a tragic figure (Desser 1983, p.33).

At this point, after providing an explanation of the various *samurai* sub-genres, and examining the manner in which Kurosawa’s films fit into the genre’s schemata, I will analyze the approach by which Oriental cinema and its discourses have materialized in mainstream cinema by analyzing the *The Matrix*.

The central character in *The Matrix*, Thomas Anderson (Keanu Reeves) immediately suggests parallels with the Buddha, Siddharta Gautama who, like Neo, was shocked out of a life of complacency upon realization of the harsh world existing outside his sheltered lifestyle. Neo himself remarks to one of his customers in a comment laced with Buddhist introspection when he asks ‘ever have the feeling that you’re not sure if you’re awake or still dreaming?’

Thomas is a computer hacker, a position representative of his powerful status in a technologized world controlled by computers. His moment of sudden Zen-like *satori* or *mushin* is prompted by a mysterious electronic message, beginning a voyage of self-discovery that culminates in his establishment as a post-modern deity, ‘the one.’
Like the Buddha, Thomas is ‘re-christened’ and given the name ‘Neo,’ and throughout the film, his actions (and the film as a whole) subscribe to the four noble truths of the Buddha. The first notion is: ‘life is full of suffering and dissatisfaction’ (Park 1983, p.8). Although not realized by the residents of the matrix, humankind exists in a semi-comatose state of servitude in an apocalyptic future ruled by machines. The second Buddhist principle is ‘...our passions and other worldly illusions cause these sorrows’ (Park 1983, p.8). This is epitomized by Cypher’s treachery, and the manner in which the film suggests that the machines were of humankind’s making.

The third directive states that ‘the way out of suffering is to extinguish self-centered desires and aversions’ (Park 1983, p.8). Throughout the film, Neo learns to overcome his fear of being ‘the one.’ At the film’s closure, he is finally accepting of his status of being ‘the one’ who will save humanity from slavery. The final component of the Buddha’s teaching that resonates within the film is that there is ‘a sensible...path for doing this’ (achieving enlightenment) (Park 1983, p.8). Through Morpheus’ prompting, Neo learns to harness his physical and mental capabilities in a series of rigorous tests, reminiscent of the drilling exercises undertaken by the villagers in Seven Samurai.

Neo thus becomes the Occidental equivalent of the samurai. Like Sanjuro and the majority of the Seven Samurai, his abilities vastly outweigh those of the average person. His reflexes are quick enough to dodge bullets, while his prowess in hand-to-hand combat bests even that of the Agents. Neo uses oriental martial arts throughout the film to
aid his cause, incorporating the thought processes of the self-defense modes along with their ideologies.

Like the Zen practices of the samurai that encourage introspection, Neo is given the choice to attempt to attain enlightenment by Morpheus; it is never forced upon him. Morpheus says that 'no one can be told what the Matrix is, and you have to see it for yourself.' Neo's actions are also guided by a sense of societal obligation, akin to the samurai concept of girl that Sanjuro and the Seven Samurai also have to contend with. Throughout the film, he struggles to subvert his personal ninja to begin his monumental task that has implications for humanity as a whole.

Zen Buddhist phraseology is replete throughout the film. Characters repeatedly intone cryptic Zen-like messages, as when Trinity says to Neo that 'The answer is out there, it is looking for you and it will find you.' A similar example is provided by the young shaven haired 'monk' at the oracle's domain, who advises Neo on the art of spoon-bending, telling him to 'not try and bend the spoon; try and realize the truth. There is only truth. Then you'll see that its not the spoon that bends, it's only yourself.'

Perhaps the most significant manner in which Oriental thought has influenced The Matrix is through its action sequences. Through the steady stream of Zen altruisms spouted throughout the film, and as in the highest form of samurai film, the action is given metaphysical implications.
Like Sanjuro, Neo has to learn to utilize samurai Zen philosophies to effortlessly allow his mind and body to act in synchrony, not to 'localize the mind anywhere but to let it fill up the whole body' (Suzuki 1970, p.107). Neo struggles to attain the Zen state of no-mindedness ('mushin-no-shin') which is explained in the following Zen story of a dancer, who, if (like the aspirant swordsman) he becomes conscious of his actions and 'has any idea at all of displaying his art well...ceases to be a good dancer, for his mind stops with every movement he goes through' (Suzuki 1970, p.114).

Neo’s self-doubt reveals itself in the manner in which he initially fails to leap between the skyscrapers in the simulation exercise with Morpheus. Neo is again defeated in his combat practice with Morpheus who forces him to understand that he also can execute the impossible by walking along walls and averting gunfire, stating to Neo: 'Don’t think you are, know you are.' In his book The Samurai Film Alain Silver notes that for the samurai swordfighter (who was traditionally a Zen adherent) ‘the chief impediment to perfection in swordplay or any endeavor is the 'ushin-no-shin,' or the mind conscious of itself' (1977, p.31). This 'space' between thought and action manifested itself as the 'suki' a brief moment of hesitation that could have life-threatening consequences for the combatant, a factor realized by Morpheus as being the main deterrent to Neo’s enlightenment.

It should be noted that in the case of the samurai, the sword that he wields in itself has varying psychological and metaphysical underpinnings. In Kurosawa: a documentary on the acclaimed director, Kurosawa is noted to have said that for him, the samurai sword 'is
a tool to cut out impure thoughts' (Low 2000). Traditionally, a series of Shinto rituals were performed whilst making the sword, to protect it from evil spirits, and to ensure its strength and durability (Suzuki 1970, p.91). More importantly, these rites were undertaken in the hope of imbuing the holder with a sense of the responsibility that would be placed in his hands by bearing this weapon (Suzuki 1970, p.91). For the Japanese samurai to attain true swordsmanship and knowledge of any art form, Suzuki notes that 'he ought to have delved deeply into the inner spirit of it' to understand the cosmological implications of any actions he might partake of (1970, p.94).

This highlights the deep sense of concentration that is required in sword-fighting and hand-to-hand combat, evidenced by the years of training undertaken by the samurai. This was to ensure that the 'bushi' was capable in the use of his weapon, and more importantly, was psychologically and spiritually prepared for the rigors of warfare, as an instance of misalignment could result in his death. The swords of the Seven Samurai and Sanjuro are thus not just simple weapons of defense. 'The sword stands as a symbol of the invisible spirit keeping the mind, body and limbs in full activity' (Suzuki 1970, p.155). Its wielding against an opponent is thus not a mere act of violence, but 'concerned with the working of Tao and the harmonious co-operation of 'yin' and 'yang' in their cosmological movements' (Suzuki 1970, p.150).

Killing an opponent unnecessarily thus creates a cosmic imbalance in a Zen Oriental world 'that presupposes a living universe composed of opposing or complementary forces. Ideally, these forces can be harmonized, as in the harmonious result of a properly
conducted orchestra; if the forces get out of balance, the result is disharmony and
catastrophe’ (Earhart 1969, p.30). The poignancy of this principle is related in Kambei’s
despondence at the end of *Seven Samurai*, when he realizes that the farmers are actually
the winners, as they are able to return the village to its state of cosmic harmony. The
*samurais* on the other hand, are doomed to perennially disrupt the universe’s sense of
order, as they are the constant harbingers of death and destruction.

Critical influences from Japanese and Oriental cinema are evidenced in *The Matrix’s*
action sequences, which merit some explanation. In *The Matrix*, Neo is forced to
overcome his fear of self-preservation by leaping over walls and defying gravity. This is
a feat that he accomplishes by channeling his energies into tapping into his unconscious
mind, allowing him to transcend his conscious reality. ‘When the unconscious is tapped,
it rises above the individual limitations. Death now loses its sting altogether, and this is
where the *samurai* training joins hands with *Zen*’ (Suzuki 1970, p.70). Sanjuro the
bodyguard also embodies this principle of ‘mind over matter,’ albeit in a less exaggerated
fashion than is projected in *The Matrix*. The blinding speed with which Sanjuro wields
his *katana* suggests a holism of mind and body.

This phenomenon is revealed in Oriental cinema’s action heroes, such as Jet Lee and
Jackie Chan, who partake in a series of seemingly improbable action sequences, leaping
and soaring through the air, in martial art films such as *Shaolin Drunk Master* (1978) and
*The Scripture with no Name* (1996). This holism has for decades been perpetuated in
Oriental film, but has only recently been acknowledged and understood by mainstream
cinema through films such as Ang Lee’s *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000).
It is also interesting to note that the balletic action sequences in *The Matrix* were modeled on, and choreographed by Yuen Woo Ping, a legendary Hong Kong cinema film-maker and stunt co-coordinator who has had a marked influence in the development of film luminaries such as Jackie Chan, and whose stunt sequences have reappeared in mainstream films such as *Charlie's Angels* (2000) and *Ballistic: Ecks vs. Sever* (2002). Sanjuro’s feats of dispatching an endless succession of enemies are thus directly related to his *satori* or *mushin*. Like Neo at the end of *The Matrix*, Sanjuro exists in a mental plane in which his physical actions are not regulated by the rationalistically bound world that he has spiritually and physically transcended.

This notion is further substantiated by the analysis of Roger Ebert, a famous American critic for the Chicago Sun Times. Ebert notes in his review of Ang Lee’s *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* that ‘the best martial arts movies have nothing to do with fighting and everything to do with personal excellence. Their heroes transcend space, gravity, and the limitations of the body and the fears of the mind. In a fight scene in a Western movie, it is assumed the fighters hate each other. In a martial arts movie, it’s more as if the fighters are joining in a celebration of their powers’ (Ebert 2000).

Sanjuro’s sword, at times, literally moves faster than the eye can see. *Zen* philosophy might propose that the reason that Sanjuro and Neo’s actions are seemingly impossible and inexplicable is because ‘it is a great mistake to make logic the supreme test in the evaluation of human behavior’ (Suzuki 1970, p.140). ‘It is only when we are out of the intellectual grip of any kind that we can transcend birth and death and can work freely in
the mysterious realm of the unborn, where the artist can display 'myo' in all its varieties' (Suzuki 1970, p.141). *Myo* is described as a state of spiritual development 'beyond an analytical understanding that...comes out when the rationality of things ceases to be valued' (Suzuki 1970, p.140).

The Matrix is an American film and is thus couched in Western thought. This is a factor that ensures that its mainstream audience would require a scientific, rational explanation to understand the propensity of Neo's abilities. The film hypothesizes that Neo is able to manipulate the earth's gravitational pull because his world is actually a computer programme. Once Neo understands the manner in which the programme is constructed, he can begin to use his mental capabilities to 'bend the rules' through the use of his body, a factor essentially entailing a rejection of the Western Cartesian duality of the separation between the mind and body. In the Oriental film, the 'computer program' is the Shinto universe, in which every living thing and object within the 'program' is interlinked and interconnected, thus negating any sense of separation between human beings and the world they reside in.

The Matrix also has parallels with Desser's (1983) sub-genre of the anti-feudal samurai drama, where the hero is torn between his personal impulses and social obligations; and the film is used as a vehicle of societal critique. The Matrix is essentially a critique of modern mechanized society, in which the individual is isolated and controlled by technology. Neo, like the *samurai* of this genre, represents a triumph of the individual over the collective, the 'supreme being' who will emancipate society from its materialist
trappings and allow us to return to a more altruistic society fostered on individual relationships.

*Seven Samurai* is also a critique of society, with Kikuchiyo in his outburst stating that ‘farmers are miserly, craven, mean stupid, murderous beasts...they hunt the wounded and the defeated...But then who made animals out of them? You. You did, you samurai. All of you damned samurai!’ *Seven Samurai* shows a society in a state of upheaval. The farmers are unable to cultivate their crops as bandits assail them, thus suggesting that life itself is unable to regenerate. The farmers themselves are also not free of faults, hunting samurais with ‘bamboo sticks,’ in a lawless, apocalyptic mise-en-scène, reminiscent of the futuristic nightmare of *The Matrix*. Both films suggest the need for a collectivized, unified action between people of differing social classes and ethnic groups, to instigate change in a society that has alienated humanity from itself. Although the changes involve communal actions, both films suggest that these actions can only be realized through acknowledgement and introspection on the part of the individual, to recognize that even as a single entity, they are potentially a critical component of the cooperative.

Through an examination of the samurai genre, and cross-referencing the work of Kurosawa with *The Matrix*, this chapter has highlighted the manner in which Oriental cinema has manifested itself within the mainstream filmic world. This is shown by the way in which its ideologies and artistic techniques have been incorporated into mainstream films such as *The Matrix*, and has revealed the spiritual implications
prevalent in the manner in which the Oriental world depicts and constructs reality through film.

As evidenced throughout the chapter, the parallels between the films are innumerable. An investigation into the religious and philosophical underpinnings that are manifested within Japanese samurai films, and of Kurosawa’s work repudiates the manner in which the average mainstream viewer has traditionally interpreted samurai films and Oriental cinema as a whole as simple *chambara*.

Although in many cases the samurai film has fallen into the annals of ‘donder’ when executed by the unskilled filmmaker, the samurai film in itself is reflective of a Japanese society that allows for elements of the fantastical and illogical within its conceptualization of reality. Oriental thought has traditionally resided in a cosmological society where the irrational can occur, and where the individual’s conscious and subconscious are collective elements that are included within the life force of the universe itself (Earhart 1969).
GEISHAS, MAMA SANS AND PROSTITUTES

Her disposition is devout, her countenance angelic...
A rapture of submission lifts
Her life into celestial rest

In this chapter, I will analyze the representation of women in the work of Kurosawa, examining in particular Yojimbo (1961), Rhapsody in August (1992), Kagemusha (1980) and Rashomon (1950). This chapter will highlight my belief that Kurosawa has represented women in the simple, dualistic fashion that is perennially de rigueur to criticize. His ‘women’ parallel the gender-biased depictions that are prevalent in classical Hollywood, where the female characters vacillate between the representations of ‘Madonna’ and ‘Whore.’ Molly Haskell (cited in Welsch 1977, p.99) observes that the mainstream film’s depiction of women traditionally encompassed the ‘age-old dualism between body and soul, virgin and whore before offering various female types such as flappers, super females, sex goddesses and sex objects, earth goddesses, bitches, mothers.’

This chapter will examine the correlation between Kurosawa’s films and selective Western, feminist critical discourses emanating from mainstream cinema. This will hopefully highlight the feature films’ use as a ‘mirror’ on our commonality of thought as human beings, revealing universally applicable issues in our societies, and their cross-cultural filmic transferability. This analysis is also undertaken to prevent this dissertation from degenerating into a simplistic, continuous ‘one on one’ reading of Eastern versus

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Western cinema, so as to emphasize the unconscious commonalities existing between the two cinemas and most importantly, between societies.

The dichotomy of 'Madonna' and 'whore' appears as a Japanese equivalency in Kurosawa's film. Japanese women are represented as 'geishas' or 'prostitutes,' or their converse, the conservative 'mama-san,' the matriarchal, Japanese 'mother' figure (Liddle and Nakajima 2000). My interpretation is, however, read in the light of Kurosawa's background as a leftist, humanist director, who would not have willingly wished to represent women in such a manner. This chapter is more a reading of the impressions that subconsciously arose from analyzing his work and the parallels that abound within it with mainstream cinema and its feminist filmic critiques and female character representations.

Kurosawa has arguably garnered most of his success from his period pieces, such as Seven Samurai (1954) and Ran (1985). Perhaps the most perplexing aspects of his films are the general absence of female characters, or more importantly the over-abundance of strong male leads. Kurosawa has, though, tried his hand at creating important female leads, with Kane of Rhapsody in August (1991) and Isuzu Yamada in Throne of Blood (1957) being notable examples, but his films are generally 'boys' films.' The topics are indelibly tied up within masculine themes, such as epic war, violence, crime and bloodshed, resulting in his films marginalizing women and his female characters' issues and representational status.
The reasons for this are as numerous as they are endlessly debatable, and will be expanded upon at length within this chapter. Adequate representation of the opposite sex has long been an artistic minefield that other illustrious male directors have struggled to navigate within. In her article entitled The Female audience and the Feminist critic Judith Mayne notes: 'The male presence behind the camera (and in the editing room and the production office and so on) creates the world in its own image, and the very word 'male' is presumed to denote its identity wholly of a piece of patriarchy itself' (1988, p.24).

Kurosawa’s presence as the director, the main creative force behind his productions makes him an unseen, yet omnipresent masculine influence over his films. Kurosawa’s lack of female characters in his period pieces in particular is perhaps reflective of a feudal, patriarchal Japan in which women were rarely allowed equal participation or representation in the country's affairs. Liddle and Nakajima note that in feudal Japan, men were constructed as soldiers willing to die for the state, whilst women were constructed as wives and mothers in the family sphere, requiring a chaste and secluded lifestyle and the surrender of rights in property or progeny in the husband’s family (2000, p.42).

Regardless of these factors in favor of Kurosawa, I will attempt to argue throughout the course of this chapter that there is a decided under-representation of women in Kurosawa’s films, and that there are distinct parallels between his female characters and the stereotypical representation of women that has tainted classical Hollywood.
As I have stated earlier, this gender-biased representation may be due to numerous factors, including Kurosawa's societal context of a conservative Japan, his personal beliefs, stylistic choices, and his background from a patriarchal samurai social class and an authoritarian father (Low 2000). These representations are also perhaps reflective of the manner by which Kurosawa characteristically managed to be influenced by Western perceptions and literature. These influences include Dostoyevsky (The Idiot, 1951), Shakespeare (Throne of Blood, 1957), Western directors (John Ford) and Occidental thought, and perhaps suggests the possibility of his appropriating some of these patriarchal modes of representation through his exposure and influence to a Western [film] culture that was traditionally as sexist as his Japan.

Kurosawa's female characters arguably slip into a framework suggested by Janice Welsch in her article entitled Actress Archetypes in the 1950s: Doris Day, Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor, Audrey Hepburn (1977). This schema is based on Welsch's belief in the prevalence of four archetypical representations of women in classical Hollywood cinema. Although her findings were based on analyzing classical cinema of the nineteen-fifties, the archetypical representations that she suggests arguably still persist in mainstream cinema today. These four female archetypes are: the 'sister,' the 'mother', the 'daughter' and the 'mistress' (or 'whore or 'vamp) (Welsch 1977, p.100). In her article entitled Women in Film Noir Place notes; 'the dark lady, the spider woman, the evil seductress who tempts man and brings about his destruction is among the oldest themes of art, literature, mythology and religion in Western Culture...she and her sister
(or alter ego) the virgin, the mother, the innocent, the redeemer, form the two poles of female archetypes' (1980, p.35).

Jung’s theory (1969) of the ‘universal consciousness,’ substantiates this notion of the prevalence of ‘archetypes’ in humankind; ‘universal images that have existed since the remotest times,’ a phenomenon which he argues suggests for ‘the existence of definite forms in the psyche which seem to be present always and everywhere’ (p. 44). Interestingly enough, one of Jung’s four main archetypes is that of the ‘mother,’ who ‘appears under an almost infinite variety of aspects...first in importance are the personal mother and grandmother, stepmother and mother-in-law, then any woman with whom a relationship exists, for example perhaps a nurse or governess or perhaps a remote ancestress’ (p.81). Jung continues, stating that this ‘archetype is often associated with things and places standing for fertility and fruitfulness...the cornucopia, a ploughed field, a garden’ (p.81). The ‘qualities associated with it are maternal solicitude and sympathy, the magic authority of the female...all that cherishes and sustains, that grows and fosters’ (p.82).

As its converse, the mother archetype can also ‘connotet anything secret, hidden, dark, the abyss, the world of the dead, anything that seduces, poisons that is terrifying and inescapable of fate’ (Jung 1969, p.82). The ‘Madonna’ and ‘Whore’ dichotomy and Janice Welsch’s framework is thus substantiated by Jung, who states that ‘there are three essential aspects of the mother; her cherishing and nourishing goodness, her orgiastic emotionality, and her Stygian depths’ (p. 82). Jung concludes by stating that ‘an
archetype is in no sense just an annoying prejudice; it becomes so only when it is in the wrong place' (Jung, 1969, p.85).

Welsch (1977) goes on to note that the archetype of the 'sister' manifests itself in classical Hollywood cinema; providing an example in the characterizations of Doris Day, in films such as Calamity Jane (1953) and Move over Darling (1963) (1977, p.103). The 'sister' archetype is tied to relations of camaraderie towards her fellow sisters; she is the conventional 'girl next door' (1977, p.100). She is generally well mannered, middle class and polite, and is occasionally tomboyish, but always manages to fulfill her role of taking care of her male relatives; namely her brother and father' (1977, p.100). In a modern context, I would argue that this 'type' is still prevalent through its numerous portrayals by mainstream actresses such as Sandra Bullock and Julia Roberts, in films such as Notting Hill (1999) and Practical Magic (1998).

The other archetypes that are mentioned are the 'mistress,' (or 'whore') the 'mother,' and the 'daughter' (Welsch 1977, p.100). The mistress is traditionally identified in classical Hollywood through the characters of 'sex kittens' such as Marilyn Monroe, in films such as How to Marry a Millionaire (1953) and Gentleman Prefer Blondes (1953); with a contemporary example being that of Sharon Stone in Basic Instinct (1992). They are generally represented as being attractive, sexually promiscuous, goddesses and temptresses, who 'give sex freely outside of marriage,' but are also at times presented as being sexually coy. Their sense of sexual mystique and allure is accentuated by the fact that in certain cases, they also lack a specific back-story (Welsch 1977, p.100). Hollis
Alpert (cited in Dyer 1988, p.80) notes: ‘Hollywood has given (audiences) the Hollywood siren, the woman who simply by existing, or at most sprawling on a rug or sauntering up a street is supposed to imply all the vigorous, kaleidoscopic possibilities of human sexuality.’ In certain cases, the ‘sex kitten’ is seen as a dangerous ‘vamp’ or ‘black widow’ of sorts. For example, ‘in film noir, women are...defined by their sexuality, which is presented as desirable but dangerous to men, the women function as the obstacle to the male quest’ (Kaplan 1980, p.2).

The geishas and concubines in Yojimbo and Kagemusha are thus the archetypical ‘whores,’ the ‘sexualized objects’ that reassert the male character’s masculinity (See Chapter 3). They are peripheral characters, of loose morals and from a low social class, and are directly contrasted with the physically restrained, chaste male ‘hero’ such as Sanjuro, who symbolically refuses to be sexually corrupted by these ‘Jezebels.’ In his Male Fantasies, Theweliet relates how the sadistic fantasies of the German Freikorp soldiers of World War One influenced the modern polemical representation of the woman as ‘whore’ in society. The author notes the Freikorp’s obsessive fear of being overwhelmed in combat by ‘the sexuality of the proletarian woman/ gun slinging whore/ communist [who] is out to castrate and shred men to pieces’ (1987, p76). Freud further substantiated this misogynistic representation of women, as ‘whores’ who are out literally and metaphorically to castrate males, stating in his On the Sexual Theories of Children (1908) that for the young male, ‘the women’s genitalia...are regarded as a mutilated organ and recall this threat... [Of castration]’ (1953, p.195).
In *Yojimbo*, Orin's *geishas* are merely present within the text to add color and to reveal Sanjuro's chivalrous attitude, a factor shown in his disapproval of their ill treatment and refusal of their services. The female characters are thus conveyed as male objects of desire, viewed and interpreted directly in relation to their importance in revealing aspects of the male lead.

The women in *Yojimbo* also serve the function of being 'objects of motivation' for the male leads, 'prizes' and 'goals' that the male hero strives for. This factor is most primarily exemplified in Sanjuro's rescue of Nui, who plays the part of the prototypical damsel (or 'Madonna') in distress. Richard Dyer interestingly notes that in Western society Christian gender ideals are manifested in Mary and Jesus; 'Mary is a vessel for the spirit; she does nothing and indeed has no carnal knowledge, but is filled with God; her purity (of which her virginity is only one aspect) is a given of her nature, not something achieved' (Dyer 1997, p.17). Both Mary and Christ provide models of behavior and being to which humans may aspire. 'In women these are passivity, expectancy, repetitiveness, a kind of sacred readiness to motherhood as the supreme fulfillment of one's nature; all of these constituting a given priority and a state of grace' (Dyer 1997, p. 17). As stated earlier, Nui is the epitome of the 'Madonna.' She is deeply loved by her family and martyred by her long-term abuse at the hands of Ushi-Tora's clique. Her 'celestial' characterization thus substantiates Sanjuro's exertions on her behalf.
In the case of *Kagemusha*, the female characters are also marked by their overwhelming absence. Shingen’s colorful, sensually draped concubines merely provide the occasional visual diversion. Ironically, despite their marginalization, they are the only people that manage to spot the Kagemusha for what he is. This again highlights how the relative importance of Kurosawa’s female characters is constructed directly in relation to the degree to which they reflect on the male protagonist’s characterizations, as discussed in the earlier example of the *geishas* in *Yojimbo*.

The success of Kurosawa’s films and the manner in which his work has been heralded in the West has perhaps ensured that his conceptualization of women has inadvertently fuelled the skewed representation of Oriental women in cinema. The Orient and its women were traditionally depicted as an exotic, coquettish ‘other’ in American films such as *The Green Berets* (1968) and *Lady from Shanghai* (1948), ‘which conflated various Eastern cultures with corrupt sexuality, a degraded or treacherous feminity and male homoeroticism’ (White 1988, p. 216). The proliferation of this misconception in film noir in particular has resulted in its subsequent parody in films such as Polanski’s *Chinatown* (1974). A more familiar, vulgarized interpretation is provided in American Vietnam war movies, with the Oriental woman reinvented as the sleazy, sexualized prostitute that American G.I soldiers solicit endlessly for ‘boom-boom’ in films such as Kubrick’s *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) and Irvine’s *Hamburger Hill* (1987).

Other archetypical portrayals that I believe are prevalent in Kurosawa’s cinema (and that can be conceptualized on the theories of Welsch 1977) are the appearance of the ‘sister’
and ‘daughter’ stereotype in *Rhapsody in August*, in the guise of Kane’s grandchildren. The grandchildren are overly chatty and enthusiastic, and are indistinguishable save for their differing American university t-shirts. The young woman, Minako, and her cousin in particular, exemplify traits of the traditional Japanese woman, who is still today arguably seen ‘as a bride, expected to be a virgin...and for the vast majority of Japanese women, marriage and childbearing remain life’s supreme objectives,’ for reasons that I will explain in the following paragraph (Christopher 1984, p.56).

Throughout the film, Kane’s granddaughters are depicted happily, singing, cooking and cleaning for their male siblings, and genially existing obliquely in a rural Japanese setting. The female characters thus maintain peripheral roles, having a minimal amount of dialogue and a marginal relevance to the plot, thus not allowing for their development into complex characters (Howe 1992). They argue repeatedly with Kane in an annoying, disruptive manner, and although this is a factor that is relevant to all of Kane’s grandchildren, the female grandchildren in particular blend as seamlessly into the background as a preceding scene after one of Kurosawa’s legendary ‘wipes.’ The filial archetype of the ‘daughter,’ is thus enforced, with Minako and her cousin embodying ‘the young woman of respectability, learning and sophistication...capable and efficient...’ [who] ‘...manages the role of the female head of the household with ease, even finesse...at times she is willful, spoiled and aloof’ (Welsch 1977, p.100).

As I have briefly mentioned earlier, the opposite of this pole, (the ‘whore’) is represented in Kurosawa’s films by the *geishas* in *Kagemusha* and *Yojimbo*. It must be noted in
Kurosawa’s favor though, that his depiction of geishas and the brutal treatment of women in Feudal Japan is a realistic interpretation of the patriarchal society that the films are set in.

In Yojimbo, Seibei’s wife Orin beats and abuses her geishas, reflective of a Tokugawan society in which peasant women were regularly sold into prostitution and used as concubines to entertain male visitors. Liddle and Nakajima note that in traditional Japanese society, ‘As heads of households, fathers had the right to sell their daughters...although daughters were supposed to give their consent’ (2000, p. 67). Orin reiterates this factor through her angry intonations throughout the film, when she orders her garishly dressed geishas not to abscond as she has paid dearly for them. This representation of women as geishas and prostitutes reinforces Engels and Marx’s (cited in Harvey 1980, p.23) critique of women being domesticated and controlled so as to be used and incorporated into a male-dominated capitalist society as units of materialist production. ‘She [woman] is the proletarian, he [man] is the bourgeois.’

The characters of Orin in Yojimbo and Kane in Rhapsody in August typify aspects of the ‘mother’ archetype. The ‘mother’ is commonly represented as ‘the dominant image of adult women in our society. She nurtures, protects, cares for and encourages...She can be as emasculating as well as nurturing, a bitch and a nag as well as an empathetic and encouraging protectress of the household’ (Welsch 1997, p.100). The authors further note the proliferation of this characterization of the ‘mother’ in classical mainstream cinema,
citing Elizabeth Taylor, in films such as *Who’s Afraid of Virgina Woolf* (1966) as evidence of this phenomenon.

Continuing with the analysis of Orin, she is overly assertive and aggressive in *Yojimbo*, plotting the assassination of Sanjuro in an opening scene, and comically dominates her husband Seibei, regardless of his status as a vicious gangster. As stated earlier, Orin also ruthlessly controls her *geishas*, effectively establishing herself as the domineering ‘mother’ of her harem, and later, offers one of ‘children’ to Sanjuro as a reward for his services.

In a continuation of her stilted characterization, Orin later slaps her son at his stupidity at being kidnapped by Ushi-Tora’s men, and is repeatedly reproached by the film’s male characters for being arrogant, ruthless and greedy, characteristics that are all traditionally masculine, rendering her a ‘phallic female’ or ‘masculinized woman’ (Freud 1953). Sylvia Bovenschen (cited in Mayne 1988, p.29) states: ‘The woman could either betray her sex and identity with the masculine point of view, or in a state of accepted passivity, she could be masochistic or narcissistic and identify with the object of the masculine representation.’

Kane the grandmother is also representative of this stereotypical portrayal of the ‘mother,’ but from a more affectionately maternal perspective. She loves her children unconditionally, and in a heart-wrenching portrayal by Sachiko Murase, Kane shows us the debilitating effects of World War Two on Japanese society, and the generational gap
that has sprung up within its people in the aftermath of the atomic attack. Unfortunately after all these significances related to her character, Grandmother Kane is too easily rendered into a doddering, old, compassionate grandmother, who reproaches her children for their greed at her brother's inheritance, and lavishes affection on her grandchildren.

As the film develops, Kane deteriorates into an infantile, child-like state in a sentimentalized representation of grandmotherhood. As stated earlier, Kane also only manages to identify with her syrupy grandchildren as opposed to the other adults in the film, bringing to mind the old adage of senility bringing a regression to a state of childlikeness. As the Nagasaki bomb Remembrance Day draws closer, she disintegrates into a deeply religious, remorseful figure, continually framed in sentimental, glowing one shots. She is shown peacefully reflecting, praying, or warmly accepting Clark's apology for America's atomic attack in a nostalgic, overly romanticized evening sequence. This scene in itself should have been deeply emotional for the audience due to its symbolism, but unfortunately in my opinion, only manages to convey a sense of visual beauty above all else.

This brings us to another case in point in relation to Kurosawa's treatment of women, the manner in which they are framed and lit. The women are usually framed in one-shots and close-ups, to heighten our compassion towards them, and are usually centered on whilst confused (as in the geishas listening in on Orin during Seibei's plot to assassinate Sanjuro in Yojimbo), distressed and open mouthed (Masako after her violation in Rashomon), or rendered as part of Kurosawa's picturesque, all-encompassing landscape. (In the case of
the colorful *getshas* in *Kagemusha* and *Yojimbo* and the sweet *mama-san*, Kane of *Rhapsody in August*.)

This ties into Dyer’s (1997) notion of women in cinema being overly lit and ‘whitened’ in their cinematic appearance, thus aiding in their compositional fixedness as objects of erotic visual desire within the masculine gaze. Kurosawa’s ‘women’ are thus compositionally constructed in a manner analogous to Western mainstream cinema; over-lit and romanticized to create stereotypically feminized representations that have resulted in images of ‘the glowingly pure...woman...[remaining] powerful, particularly at those radiant moments of adoration; the man’s first sight of his first or great love, demure, looking down, luminously sweet; the bride, glowing in the light of her first white gown; the young mother still at heart illuminated with the pure desire of love for children’ (1997, p.131). Classical Hollywood and the mainstream cinema of today have thrived on generating celluloid images of the Rita Hayworths and Cameron Dizas of this world, transforming them into neatly packaged sexual commodities that invariably boost film sales.

The plurality of representations of Masako in *Rashomon* at first glance, seems a point of departure from my argument, but if thoroughly examined, reinforces the discourses that I have mentioned, resulting in a continuation of what Laura Mulvey (cited in Mayne 1988, p.29) refers to as the ‘male [film-maker] as being the bearer of the look, and the female as the object of the look in a hierarchical system of spectacle.’
The unfortunate character of Masako portrays the entire gamut of stereotypical female representations within Rashomon, hurtling from ‘Madonna,’ to ‘sister’ to ‘whore’ effortlessly in the space of one film. Masako is first seen in a low-angle shot, symbolically elevated above the other characters, astride a horse led by her nobleman husband. She first arrives on the screen dressed in virginal white, in a luminous, angelic pose to a lilting, ethereal score. Significantly, within the film, Masako has her actions represented by others, and is over-determined by a plethora of men, including Kurosawa the director, the chief manipulating force. Although none of the accounts of the other characters is conclusive in formulating an opinion of Masako, the sheer weight of masculine viewpoints thoroughly outweighs her solitary female one.

Masako’s impotence within Rashomon in some of the other characters’ interpretations of her, and the manner in which the other characters over-determine her rather than allow for her own self-construction, lends to the classic male-driven conceptualization of the woman. A woman is ‘in a sense everywhere; - one could hardly discuss anything without falling over her - but always in the margins,’ the woman is ‘generally spoken of, not speaking...usually discussed as part of a discourse...a figure in the design, out of focus, or if in focus, the brunt of an attack, a criticism, a complaint, usually in the discourse of a child...or adult concerned to attribute ill to it’ (Kaplan 1992, p.3). As was the case in traditional Japan and America, women like Masako, were seen and not heard.

Masako is also voyeuristically depicted as ‘an object of desire,’ a representation of her that is riddled throughout the film. The woodcutter discovers symbols of Masako’s
'celestial' presence. The hat and veil that originally hid her face from prying eyes is found, symbolically cast aside on the side of the road, hinting towards her violation. Tajomaru the bandit is also blinded by her beauty upon his first sighting of her, stating that 'I had no more than a glimpse of her, that's why I thought she was beautiful.' (He is subsequently (depending on which interpretation you believe) so transfixed by her beauty as to wrestle her from the arms of her husband and to violate her with the intentions of making her his wife.

Masako is thus the primary 'object of desire' in Rashomon. Her 'repeated' rape and public scrutiny provides a sordid, sadistic basis for this 'examination' into the subjective nature of the 'truth.' Joan Mellen notes that throughout the film, 'women are rendered powerless and subordinate, and hence reduced like Masako to manipulation or deceit for influence and survival' (1976, p.102).

The numerous contradictory interpretations of Masako's character thus fit her into the classical Hollywood archetype structure of Welsch (1977). Originally in the film, she is perceived as an honorable 'Madonna' by the woodcutter, Tajomaru, and the Buddhist priest, and as the archetypal emotional female struggling to regain her honor after the incident in her own account. It must also be noted that Masako's characterization is bound to the contextual setting of the Heian feudal society in which Rashomon is set, with her actions congruent with the feudal government's paternalistic practices. Traditional Japan's sexist practices are crystallized in the sixteenth century 'Onna daigaku' code of behavior, which was enforced on women, emphasizing 'obedience,
chastity, mercy and quietness as the ideal qualities in a woman' (Liddle and Nakajima 2000, p.102). The principle also identified 'women’s five failings: disobedience, anger, slander, jealousy and stupidity' (Liddle and Nakajima 2000, p.102).

In the second rendition by the Woodcutter, Masako amazingly switches to the other extremity: that of the more calculating 'whore', stating to Tajomaru that 'I wanted you to take me.' She induces Tajomaru and her husband to fight over her as 'women only love men who forget all else in love' and are 'won by the sword.' Joan Mellen notes that 'In Rashomon woman is perceived as a castrating female, taunting competing males for not being real men' (1976, p.102).

The male characters in Kurosawa's masterpiece also change characterization repeatedly within the course of the film, but as stated earlier, it is Masako who is the primary 'object' of contention and 'desire.' Masako is the reason behind Tajomaru's actions, her husband's death, the Woodcutter's interjection, and the court case as a whole. Masako is thus representative of the female's status as a cinematic object of desire; the main 'prize' that stimulates the confrontations between the male characters, placing her character within the confines of classical cinema's gender-biased representations.

The medium in Rashomon is also strikingly serpentine in her appearance and pale death-like pallor. Although speaking for Masako’s deceased husband, the medium speaks in a symbolically thick drawl, enhancing her masculinity. Women in cinema are thus also physically sexualized to male needs; - evidenced in mainstream films by the wide
shoulders of Greta Garbo and Joan Crawford, the deep voice of Marlene Dietrich, and the thin slender bodies that are taut and masculine in super-models (Dyer 1988, p. 90). The character of the medium is obviously supposed to induce fear and unease in the viewer, but her eel-like dance, stringy, enveloping hair and the ominous clouds of bleak, dusty smoke that accompany her provide her with a strikingly unpleasant, archetypal Medusa-like quality. Her characterization thus fits into feminist critiques of women being represented as ashen-faced, ghoulish ‘vamps’ or ‘black widows’ who prey on men in film noir in particular. It is also interesting to note that the medium appears in direct contrast to the only other woman in Rashomon, Masako, whose depiction as the heavenly ‘woman in white,’ ensures the affirmation of the ‘Madonna-whore’ dichotomy.

In Rashomon’s closure, Kurosawa restores our faith in humanity by providing us with images of torrential rain and sunshine, and the discovery of an abandoned child, heralding the promise of renewed life through images that suggest the regeneration of life and that are again, sexist and stereotypically feminine in concept.

A gender-based analysis of Kurosawa’s films thus suggests a continual transference and commonality of thought and ideas across cultures. This chapter has shown the similarities in the depiction of women in Kurosawa’s cinema with mainstream film and its alignment within Western critical discourses. This chapter has also revealed the correlations between the paternalistic treatment of women in our societies, and the manner in which films may invariably reflect and reveal this.
Cinema thus divulges the commonalities that inherently bind us together as human beings, regardless of their negative components or uses. Carl Jung notes: 'In themselves, archetypal images are among the highest values of the human psyche; they have peopled the heavens of all races from time immemorial' (1969, p.85). Jeanine Basinger concludes this chapter, noting the importance of identifying the gender-biased manifestations of archetypes, a factor of critical consequence due to the significance that film has on the construction of gender identity: 'The average red-blooded American girl grew up at the movies, the place where she found her ideas about love, marriage, and her role as a woman' (1977, p.61).
Supermen and Super-samurai

I will begin this chapter with a somewhat wayward question to the reader:

What do Superman, Rambo, Flash Gordon, John McClane, John Wayne, Indiana Jones, James Bond, Spartacus, Sanjuro, Dirty Harry Callahan, The-Man-With-No-Name, Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan, Charlton Heston, Charles Bronson, Spiderman, Sylvester Stallone, Chuck Norris, Popeye and Shaft have in common?

All of the above-mentioned individuals are, or play, imaginary characters drawn from popular culture. Regardless of their cultural backgrounds and differing textual sites of origin, they are all representative of the ‘hero’ archetype in society, or what I will refer to as the ‘superman.’

Joseph Campbell’s The hero with a thousand faces (1972) provides a cross-cultural mythological analysis of the ‘hero,’ and his universal traits and characteristics, and relates the prevalence of this phenomenon to a collective societal consciousness. ‘And looking back at what had promised to be our own, unique, unpredictable, and dangerous adventure, all we find in the end is a series of standard metamorphoses as men and women have undergone in every quarter of the world, in all recorded centuries, and under every odd disguise of civilization’ (Campbell 1972, p.12).

All of the afore-mentioned characters represent strong-willed, even-tempered, level-headed, broad-shouldered macho men who succeed, again and again without fail within
their respective texts against seemingly insurmountable odds. This inevitability is achieved via the use of their superior wits, brawn and intellect and traditionally, also partly due to their impeccable morals and clear-cut ethical standpoints.

The notion of the 'superman,' a man who is more mentally and physically accomplished than the average male is a popular theme in mainstream popular culture. American action films have capitalized on a deluge of violent films featuring stars such as Jean Claude Van Damme and Sylvester Stallone who tirelessly play the tough, chisel-faced, square-jawed, 'one-man-army' hero ' who goes it alone,' successfully. Examples of this genre in recent cinematic history are too innumerable to mention, but include films such as *Kickboxer* (1989), *Rambo: First Blood* (1982) and *Tango and Cash* (1989).

In *Nam: the Vietnam War in the words of the men and women who fought there*, Baker notes how film's depiction of the 'superman' has influenced the construction of the male identity and the perceptions of American soldiers during the Vietnam war stating: 'what does a man do? A man stands alone against impossible odds, meets the Apache chief in single combat to protect the manifest destiny of the wagon train, plays guitar and gets the girls, leaps tall buildings in a single bound, plants the flag on Iwo Jima, falls on a grenade to save his foxhole buddies and then takes a bow to thundering applause' (1981, p.4).

As stated earlier, the concept of the 'superman' is infused from a diversity of creative standpoints, including literature, mythology, folk stories and comic books, with each specific source lending a degree of difference to the colorful appropriation of the concept.
The 'superman' materializes in a kaleidoscopic symposium of cross-cultural characters such as Batman, James Bond, The Saint and Hercules, and reappears in Italian peplums, American action and adventure films and British spy films in an inexhaustible list of reference points that all attest to his universality. Joseph Campbell (1972) provides an additional basis for understanding the psycho-social underpinnings of the continual manifestation of the 'superman' in society, stating: 'The mighty hero of extraordinary powers - able to lift Mount Govardhan on a finger, and fill himself with the terrible glory of the universe - is each of us: not the physical self visible in the mirror, but the king within' (p.365).

In this chapter, I examine Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* (1961) and Sergio Leone's *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964) to establish the prevalence of the 'superman' in film, and more importantly, to highlight the manner in which the archetype is constructed cross-culturally. This chapter will also reveal the prevalence of transference of thought, ideology as well as filmic technique by looking at the Japanese *Yojimbo* and the Italian *A Fistful of Dollars*, using the texts as an example of the manner in which societies have fed off each other's ideas.

Leone's *A Fistful of Dollars* is essentially an Occidental re-make of *Yojimbo*, with the action switching to the Mexican town of San Miguel. An American actor, Clint Eastwood, shoulders the mantle of valorous, tight-lipped stoicism that Toshiro Mifune has left behind for him. Eastwood, himself, of course, was no slouch at assimilating this role, and was highly successful at blasting his way taciturnly through a myriad of villains.
in films like Don Siegel's *Dirty Harry* (1971) and Sergio Leone's follow ups to *A Fistful of Dollars*.

From the opening sequence of Kurosawa's *Yojimbo*, shots of Mifune's fragmented body hinder our complete view of a man who immediately dominates the film's proceedings, a factor suggesting the magnitude of a character symbolically shot against an epic, mountainous landscape. This conflagration of shots constructs and heralds the presence of a demi-god, whose arrival in the village is met by a series of voyeuristic, awe-stricken stares behind shuttered windows.

The epic score at the film's inception heightens the effect of Sanjuro's arrival, signaling the arrival of a 'super-man' who will single-handedly change the fate of an entire town. Sanjuro's role thus 'resembles that of the God in Greek plays. He descends, makes an impact, and ascends again. The drama, the pathos, the morality, none of these touch him though he may be responsible for all three' (Richie 1984, p.149).

Within the film, Sanjuro exhibits a series of manipulative twists and turns on the two gang leaders who terrorize the noisirish Japanese town, highlighting his superior wits and physical abilities. In a sweeping finale, Sanjuro single-handedly slaughters Ushi-Tora's entire gang in a scene reminiscent of John Ford's Westerns, in a Japanese version of John Sturges' shoot out at the O.K Corral. The inter-textuality between the two directors and Kurosawas's Occidental influences are further highlighted by *Yojimbo's* continual mix of stylish, sweeping long shots and abrupt, intense close-ups during the epic duels. Suffice
to say, Ford was an American director highly regarded by Kurosawa, who himself, was both admired and criticized by film theoreticians for the occidental influences in his work.

The storyline of *Yojimbo* is itself riddled with Western ideology, and can be read in a Freudian context. This suggests the prevalence of a mutual transference of cultural ideologies as well as techniques within the feature film. The super-samurai (Sanjuro) arrives in a small Japanese village that is reminiscent of the 'God-forsaken places in the middle of nowhere remembered from the films of Ford, of Sturges, from *Bad Day at Black Rock* or *High Noon*’ (Richie 1984, p.147). The town is symbolically in the midst of a tug of war between its two (male) merchants and their two (male) bandit henchmen, resulting in the unfolding of a Japanese Oedipal saga of sorts.

One of the bandits, Seibei, struggles to gain the respect and affection of his greedy, domineering wife Orin, who in a Freudian sense, can be interpreted as representing the overbearing maternal figure that forms the crux of the Oedipal complex. Krutnik (cited in Gabbard 2001, p.9) notes: 'For Freud, the child must renounce the mother...in order to escape the threat of castration and ultimately to adhere to masculine authority.'

It is also ironic to note that it is Seibei (the gangster who is unable to reprimand his overbearing wife) who is ultimately destroyed in the gang rivalry, an event foreshadowed by his apparent 'impotence,' his failure to avoid 'castration' at the hands of Orin repeatedly (Freud 1953). The film's Oedipal underpinnings are further suggested by the
that Seibei's key rival in controlling the village is Ushi-Tora, who can be interpreted as Seibei's Freudian estranged 'son,' due to the fact that he is a former member of Seibei's gang who has rebelled against Seibei his 'father.'

Sanjuro enters the fray, wielding his superior swordsmanship and intellect, and successfully asserts his authority over the two male gang leaders by slashing them to pieces, or in a Freudian sense, destroying their masculinities and asserting his ego over theirs by castrating them metaphorically.

Sanjuro's own verbalized reasons for his actions are discordant, as he cites his intense dislike of gamblers as being the main motivation for his actions, but yet, at times, seems to sadistically enjoy the violence he creates. In a Freudian reading, his actions are perfectly legitimate, as he struggles to overthrow the two gangsters, or 'father-figures' of the town. Sanjuro can thus be interpreted as a Freudian 'prodigal son,' a wandering, masterless ronin seeking to impose his will and ego on the village and its two 'fathers' through the use of a phallic-looking katana blade.

Returning to the conceptualization of 'the superman,' it is interesting to note that Sanjuro's construction as the film's deux-ex-machina is further suggested by the manner in which he is derisively referred to as a 'dog...attracted by the smell of blood' (as is Joe) and is shunned by the villagers in a manner akin to that of Christ whilst on earth, suggesting that Sanjuro has a supernatural status. Sanjuro also interestingly draws parallels with Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (1818). Frankenstein's monster was also
literally composed of a series of ‘fragmented parts’ as Sanjuro is similarly ‘fragmented’ in the opening sequence of *Yojimbo*. Although Sanjuro is not a monster like that of Frankenstein, he is also doomed to represent the ‘other’ or perennial outsider of a feudal *Tokugawan* society that has helped to make him into a ruthless killer, but which now, sadly refuses to integrate him back into itself.

The two characters (Joe and Sanjuro) further substantiate their super-human characterization through their respective abilities. Sanjuro is a master swordsman whilst Eastwood’s character is a lightning-fast gunslinger, wielding his forty-five faster than the human eye can see. Both men comply with the notion of being ‘heroes…born at the top of their particular social group or risen to the top through sheer ability and or special circumstances’ (Kirkham and Thumim, 1993, p.19). Both men are scintillatingly adept at the use of their large, phallic looking weapons, a Japanese sword, and the most ‘potent’ of handguns in Eastwood’s case, a forty-five magnum.

Their choice of weapons emphasizes their status as the archetypical ‘superman’, who aside from his superior strength and intellectual abilities, also metaphorically wields his superior ‘phallus’ more effectively than the average man. This justifies the manner in which the two ‘supermen’ manage to easily savage their way through their metaphorically ‘lesser-endowed’ opposition. Toby Miller notes how ‘the pistol…has significance for the owner as a symbol of virility – an extension of the male organ – and that excessive interest in guns…is a form of fetishism’ (2001, p.253).
The two characters also comply with the traditional Shakespearian concept of the ‘hero’. Although Sanjuro the ‘Yojimbo’ and Eastwood’s character are not of noble breeding, within any cultural context, they exemplify the necessary characteristics that would merit adulation: superior skill, strength and mental prowess. The characters are thus representative of their society’s ideals. In his article entitled The Politics of Ambivalence: Apocalypse Now as a Pro-war and Anti-war film, Tomasculo notes: ‘Through their myths, people try to hide or to justify the discrepancies between their society and the ideal of it which they harbor’ (1990, p.146).

We are as unaware of the background of Eastwood’s character as we are of Sanjuro’s, and assume that their indifference to violence is indicative of the harsh Mexican and feudal Japanese landscape they respectively reside in. At the end of their films, they both walk off disconsolately into the sunset after instilling a new blood-soaked reordering of affairs single-handedly. They are thus shown to be men of immeasurable stature, monumental characters in a traditional sense, who can change the affairs of an entire town at the drop of a hat, and who are as indifferent to death as they are to their astounding abilities.

Sanjuro and The-Man-With-No-Name present another central characteristic of the traditional hero: they are visually pleasing to the eye. They are both good looking, broad-shouldered men, a factor reflected by their superior abilities as opposed to their fellow man. As declared by Gabbard in ‘Someone is going to pay’: Resurgent White
Masculinity in Ransom, ‘almost anyone can identify with an attractive...man struggling to prevent his masculinity from floating away’ (2001, p.21).

As stated earlier, a key aspect of the ‘super-man’ is his valorous unwritten code of conduct. Sanjuro is a Japanese samurai, albeit one that has fallen on hard times, but still adheres to the Bushido code of ‘the principles of duty, loyalty, integrity, honor, justice and courage’ (Hane 1991, p.71). His Western counterpart, Eastwood, also engenders these virtues, and is first seen compassionately watching a child, Jesus, being brutalized by a group of bandits in the opening scene of Leone’s film. This ties both men to the superman precept that was stated at the beginning of this chapter, a ‘superman’ possessing clear-cut morals and ethical standpoints, evidenced in his chivalrous treatment of women and children, and in his general character which is in opposition at times, to his amoral environment.

Their construction as ‘men of virtue’ is sustained by the fact that though Sanjuro and The Man With No Name are both cold-blooded mercenaries who provide their services strictly for cash, they exhibit genuine acts of affection in aiding their respective ‘buddies’ or confidants (Silvanito in A Fistful of Dollars and Gonji in Yojimbo), who aided them in their time of need.

This brings us to another aspect of the superman. Every male ‘superman’ worth his salt usually has a male sidekick or confidant that he can turn to when circumstances momentarily overwhelm him. The confidant or ‘buddy’ is usually a foil for the main
character, a male of lesser abilities or who has a different ethnic background or social class from the main character. The ‘buddy’ is generally the only character to whom the macho superman ever reveals any of his innermost thoughts and feelings, and with the proliferation of male camaraderie in action, adventure and war films, this ‘elaborates and builds on filmic male camaraderie as a kind of last bastion against otherness’ (Fuchs 1993, p.197) ‘and reproduces freeze frames in the order of the last images in George Roy Hill’s Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid’ (Fuchs 1993, p.195).

Numerous examples of this key characteristic of the ‘superman’ character can be cited in mainstream cinema, including the multi-racial partnership between the characters of Danny Glover and Mel Gibson in the Lethal Weapon series, Eastwood and his Mexican friend Silvernito, the loyal Native American Tonto and the Lone Ranger, and Eddie Murphy and Nick Nolte in 48 Hours (1982) and Another 48 Hours (1990).

The choice of ‘sidekicks’ who are either non-white or of a different social class than the main protagonist has numerous implications for the construction and reinforcement of the male identity in society. This representation could subtly suggest to the audience that interracial (or inter-social) friendships can exist in America (and Japan) after centuries of racial (America specifically) and class (Japan) intolerance and attempt to prompt a social and ethnic reconciliation through film. This characterization could also lend to a popular cultural construction of the male identity, by suggesting cinematically that men are able to develop caring same-sex relationships amongst themselves without a hint of homosexuality.
In *Yojimbo*, Ganji the bar owner acts as Sanjuro's confidante, allowing the viewer to follow the story as Sanjuro avidly relates the details of his manipulations as they unfold. Ganji (and Silvernito in the case of *The-Man-With-No-Name*) are also the only villagers that sympathize with the outsiders, and are marked as admirable characters, who espouse loyalty and compassion in a corrupt society. This suggests a commonality of virtuousness between the confidantes and the heroes as being the basis of their friendship, with Ganji commenting to Sanjuro gleefully after his rescue of Nui, that 'You're not bad, you just pretend to be.'

The apparent sub text in this recurring relationship is that one or two virtuous men, regardless of their differing social class and ethnic backgrounds can band together against an unjust society and defeat it, primarily through the use of force. This is a theme that has proliferated in mainstream cinema in films such as McTiernan's *Die Hard* (1998) and Eddy Murphy's *Beverly Hills Cop* series. Moreover, the idea of a main character imbued with virtuous characteristics is in itself another 'superman' pre-requisite. This notion of 'virtue' as a key conceptualization of the hero in his Occidental interpretation in particular is a factor partly derived from ancient Grecian society (Foucault 1985).

Michael Foucault's *History of Sexuality* traces the historical construction of the virtuous hero and its prevalence in Judeo-Christian and classical Greek society. He is a man 'who is able to turn aside from pleasure, as if from the temptation into which he knows not to fall...and was a visible mark of the mastery they brought to bear on themselves and hence of the power they are worthy of exercising over others' (1985 p.20). This attitude
reflects the similarities between the patriarchal, chauvinistic Japanese feudal and traditional American societies, where women were traditionally oppressed and seen as 'Jezebels,' who could physically and morally corrupt or hinder the hero from completing his rite of passage, as did Eve to Adam in the Garden of Eden.

Another key aspect of the 'superman's' construction therefore, is his heterosexuality. This is at once a product and a reflection of the societal morals of the context and epoch of the superman's textual site of origin. In Yojimbo, regardless of Sanjuro's indifference to being offered a *geisha*, and The-Man-With-No-Name's lack of female companionship, we are continually reminded throughout the film that these gentlemen are attracted to women, although seemingly celibate.

This traditional attitude of the 'superman' to his female protagonists is epitomized by The-Man-With-No-Name's relationship with Marisol. Marisol's beauty immediately captivates Eastwood's character, and she is firmly cemented as his sexualized 'object of desire.' The deep impression she has on Eastwood's character is stylistically heralded by the use of gentle, soft lighting and a lilting score of accompaniment. The-Man-With-No Name subsequently saves Marisol and her family from the Roja's, saying that 'he knew someone like her once, and he wasn't there for her.' This act of compassion and Marisol's entrenchment as a sexualized 'object' evoking sympathy and desire, placed on a pedestal by Joe thus dispels the audience's suspicion of any hint of homosexuality within the film and in Joe's characterization. It is necessary to negate the possibility of homosexuality, particularly after the barrage of hairy chests, steely gazes and phallic...
pistols that the audience has been subjected to without any sign of a female or heterosexual romantic relationship in the text.

The ‘superman’ is thus portrayed as a chauvinistic, valiant, and most importantly, heterosexual hero who generally goes out of his way to save (and sometimes bed) the damsel in distress. In Yojimbo Sanjuro saves Nui in a supreme act of chivalry, killing six men in the process, and then subsequently offers Kohei’s family his entire stipend in an act that furthers his construction as the quintessential ‘super-man,’ and reinforces the film’s sexist gender constructions.

The reproduction of sexist gender roles is a phenomenon that is commonly depicted in filmic and television texts, with T.V sitcoms in particular allowing for the domestication of the female, and her conceptualization within the male ‘gaze.’ Michel Foucault suggests the prevalence of a reinforcement of the normative nature of heterosexual relationships and the nuclear family in Western society to support heterosexuality as being the mainstay of a continual, healthily reproductive society that entrenches men as its head (Foucault 1985).

The ‘superman’ is thus a product of his societal context, subscribing to the morals and ethics of his particular time of origin. Gabbard outlines the idea of ‘the angry [white] male,’ a product of modern society, who feels threatened by his loss of status and is sexually intimidated by the encroachment of woman onto his ‘territory’ (2001, p.8). The character of the ‘superman’ in all its plurality of manifestations is thus an attempt by
(white) men in particular, to subconsciously reassert their masculinity through violence in a fictional text, but with societal underpinnings. Lehman notes: 'At a time when women have made such major inroads upon areas of male privilege such as the workplace and the military; asserting the importance of the penis seems to affirm the significance of the one thing women can't have' (2001, p.38).

There is also a disturbing appearance of racialist elements in A Fistful of Dollars. The setting is of a lawless, arid landscape populated by barbaric Mexican 'others.' The hapless townsfolk sit and wait to be saved by a stereotypically 'superior' gringo, who is 'up against foreignness, its treacherous terrain and its inhabitants, animal and human' (Dyer 1997, p.156). The Rojas and the indigenous Mexicans in A Fistful of Dollars, represent the foreign 'others,' who are 'quite often his [the superman's] adversaries but by no means always. They are good and bad, instinctual and wily, stupid and wise, primitive and orientalist natives in any combination. The colonial structure of the hero's reaction to the native is aid as much as antagonism; he sorts out the problems of a people who cannot sort things out for themselves' (Dyer 1997, p.156).

Although Yojimbo does not have any racial implications due to its characters being of the same ethnicity, one is led to believe that Kurosawa’s superman, Sanjuro, is a nostalgic, yet cynical throwback to the all-conquering Japanese soldiers or samurais of pre-World War Two Japan, whose feats of bravery in committing extreme acts such as 'seppuku' and 'kamikaze' were legendary. Japan's crushing defeat in World War Two is still an issue of great resentment for its people, particularly as it was the only country that has
been subjected to atomic warfare (Christopher 1984). For a nation that traditionally prided itself on its inherent superiority over other countries during its expansionist periods, Kurosawa’s film, made directly after Japan’s defeat and during the stifling American occupation of Japan, is perhaps in itself a subconscious lament and a call to arms to the emasculated, frustrated Japanese man to reassert himself.

Leone, as an Italian director, lends a reflexive attitude towards his treatment of the Western, but if his film is read within its temporal context of the nineteen sixties, it may also be indicative of a time in Western society where the traditional societal role and status of [White] men in particular was being seriously compromised and threatened in the midst of a turbulent Civil Rights movement.

Sanjuro and The-Man-With-No-Name evidence this cross-societal reassertion of the male identity, but their construction is also a double-edged sword sub-textually. In the face of changing gender barriers, there is a trend in feature films to highlight aggressive masculine characters that reassert their masculinity through violence, but also to use their ‘reckless’ individuality to point out the fallibilities of a society that has made them into what they are, through the hero outwitting the system and winning as an individual (Gabbard 2001, p.9).

Yojimbo reveals the violence and misogyny that was inherent in feudal Japan and A Fistful of Dollars highlights the brutality of Mexico and ‘The Wild West.’ Paradoxically, this suggests that the main character’s violence is a response to his environment, and
cleverly absolves him of any sadistic tendencies. Sanjuro and Joe are thus constructed as being essentially 'good' characters that are forced to indulge in amoral behavior to survive in morally corrupt landscapes that reduce men to such depths of inhumanity.

Sanjuro and The-Man-With-No-Name are distrustful of a society that allows the perpetration of female bondage, gambling, corruption and bigotry. They highlight these problems in their society and are thus tragic heroes, who are forced to react violently to circumstances that are not of their own creation, whilst secretly yearning for a more peaceful, simplistic society in which they are not forced to continually exercise their nihilistic actions in retaliation against it.

The final primary aspect of the 'superman' that I wish to highlight is the importance of the taut, lean muscular body that allows him to perform these superhuman feats of fancy. Richard Dyer notes the construction in popular culture of the muscled; Nietzsche inspired omnipotent hero, and the fascistic connotations of heroes whose bodies 'carry the signs of planned labor, the spirit reigning over the flesh' (Dyer 1997, p.155).

Although we are not as excessively exposed to the taut, muscled bodies of Mifune and Eastwood as we are regularly deluged in mainstream cinema by the half naked figures of Sylvester Stallone and others of his ilk, we are covertly aware of the fact that only a man of superior powers and consummate strengths could manage to wield a weapon as expertly as Sanjuro and The-Man-With-No-Name. The body of the superman is of particular significance as James Dickey (cited in Robinson 2001, p.137) notes: 'the route
towards remasculinization flows through the body as the hero attempts to recover a biological sense of maleness blocked by civil society...the wounds... [the hero]...suffers along the way are the key to his remasculinization, as his earlier blockage gives way to an orgy of release that conflates the violent with the sexual, and frames his killing...as a sexual and remasculinizing experience.'

This analysis further substantiates the depiction of Sanjuro as fitting within the 'superman' filmic archetype, as he is captured, tortured and beaten in Yojimbo by Ushi Tora’s men. Interestingly, in a Freudian interpretation, this suggests that without his 'phallus' (or weapon) the superman is easily defeated due to his metaphorical ‘castration’ by his enemies. The torture scene and the images of scarred, bloody bodies that we see subsequent to Sanjuro’s capture highlights the recurring trend of masochistic and fetishistic violence in cinema, and the disturbing, voyeuristic undertones it presents to the viewer. This combines what Leon Hunt (cited in Dyer 1997, p.150) refers to as ‘a passivity offset by control, humiliation offset by nobility of sacrifice’ and a lewd form of ‘eroticism offset by religious connotations of transcendence.’

The superman’s violation and miraculous escape is thus also connoted with Christ’s ‘Resurrection,’ and the capture, escape and triumphant revival of Sanjuro and The-Man With-No-Name cements their construction as ‘demigods’ who are larger than life itself (Dyer 1997, p.150).
The costume of the characters also hints at their inherent superiority as opposed to the other protagonists. Regardless of Sanjuro’s ruffled appearance at the onset of the film, he is first seen wearing a crested ‘kimono’, carrying two blades. This suggests that he is a samurai, a character from a social rank that was traditionally above that of the ‘yakuza’ merchants and townspeople and this provides justification for his superior abilities and ethical standpoint. Eastwood’s Man-With-No-Name strides into town, wearing tough cowboy boots, reflecting the fact that he (a superior White man) will trample all over the Mexican village, in a throwback to the American ‘Manifest Destiny’ theory of the time. Symbolically, Eastwood’s character wears a ‘foreign’ clothing item, a Mexican poncho even though he is a ‘gringo’ to suggest his innate intelligence at blending swiftly into his locale.

Throughout the film, Eastwood’s character incorporates many of the qualities of the locals and the treacherous Rojas in his adaptability. His ‘spirit’ (and that of the archetypical ‘supermen’) is evident ‘in both his resourcefulness, that is the intelligent, improvisatory use of his environment, and his endurance and his capacity to withstand pain and torture’ (Dyer 1997, p.160).

Due to living in this environment of the Mexican ‘Other,’ Eastwood becomes cunning, using a mixture of brawn and Western scientific thinking to repeatedly outwit his Mexican enemies, demonstrated by his cleverly devising a metal armor plate in the grand finale. He thus survives by assimilating the super keen, animalistic senses and abilities that white mainstream culture popularly ascribed to non-Europeans, an assimilatory
characteristic evidenced for example, in Edgar Rice Burrough’s character of Tarzan and Sylvester Stallone’s Vietnam veteran in Rambo: First Blood Part Two (1985).

As Sanjuro the samurai and The-Man-With-No-Name saunter off at the end of their films after defeating their respective foes, they instill a sense of familiar closure to the narrative, with their tight-lipped exits aiding in the reconstruction and parody of an embattled, stoic, monosyllabic masculinity. The respective communities that the heroes have affected enter a new period in their lives, which have been everlastingly affected by heroes reflective of a macho ethos that is also, slowly but surely, wandering off into the sunset.
Kurosawa was a Japanese director often noted for his affection for Western fiction. This factor is illustrated by his transposition of numerous Occidental literatures into film, adapting the work of his favourite Russian author Dostoevsky into The Idiot (1951), Edward McBain's King's Ransom (1959) into High and Low (1963), Gorky into The Lower Depths (1957), and most importantly in relation to this chapter, Shakespeare's Macbeth into Throne of Blood (1957) (Richie 1984).

Kurosawa's work, although the product of an auteur is 'embedded in a process of inscription, play, reiteration, filiation and dissemination with other texts' (Goodwin 1994a). This process has thus helped Kurosawa to contribute to a truly international cinema, that freely absorbs and embellishes itself from cross-cultural ideas.

This chapter will examine the manner in which Kurosawa has adapted Shakespeare's Macbeth to further demonstrate the presence of a continual cultural transference of ideas within his films. This will exhibit the means by which creative texts (and the ideas within them) can be effectively adapted and appropriated across different cultures. This chapter will therefore focus on the parallels between Kurosawa's Throne of Blood and Macbeth the literary text exclusively. I will not attempt to engage in a detailed, historical analysis of Shakespeare's cinematic adaptations, or a comparison of Throne of Blood with other filmic renditions of Macbeth, due to my primary focus being on Japanese cinema and that of Akira Kurosawa in particular.
An examination of Kurosawa's work and the approach which he has used to adapt Macbeth to his cultural context will substantiate another central argument of this dissertation, that of the universality of our common experiences as human beings, and the prevalence of a 'universal consciousness' similar to that espoused by the theories of Carl Jung (1969), and the argument of Joseph Campell in his The Hero with a Thousand Faces (1972), (introduced in Chapter 3 above). This notion of a commonality of human experiences is intrinsically related to and reflected by the universality of the issues and themes that are depicted in cross-cultural cinema.

In The archetypes: Mother, Rebirth, Spirit, Trickster, Carl Jung notes 'a more or less superficial layer of the unconscious is undoubtedly personal...but this personal unconscious rests upon a deeper layer, which does not derive from personal experience and is not just a personal acquisition but is inborn. This deeper layer I call the collective unconsciousness. I have chosen the term 'collective' because this part of the unconscious is not individual but universal; in contrast to the personal psyche, it has contents and modes of behaviour that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. It is, in other words, identical in all men and thus constitutes a common psychic substrate of a supra-personal nature that is present in every one of us' (1972, p.3).

This argument is further evidenced by the manner by which we are able to understand and adapt each other's cultural representations of (supposedly) culturally specific 'myths' in creative texts such as cinema and literature. In this analysis, the influences derived from Kurosawa's national context and his personal stylistic choices in his adaptation of
Macbeth will be highlighted, to show the cross-cultural propensities and transferability of the creative text, using Macbeth and Throne of Blood as a case study.

‘In Macbeth, Kurosawa saw a contemporary issue - a parallel between medieval Scotland and medieval Japan which illuminated contemporary society; and, further, a pattern which is valid in both historical and contemporary contexts’ (Richie 1984, p.115). The tragedy of Macbeth thus becomes that of Tatekoki Washizu, a samurai from a Japanese Muromachi era that was riddled with civil insurgenicies (Earhart 1969, p.6). Lady Macbeth becomes Lady Asaji, Banquo and Fleance manifest themselves as Yoshiaki Miki and Yoshiteru respectively, with King Duncan, Malcolm, Macduff and the three Witches being transposed into the characters of Kuniharu Tsuzuki, Kunimaru, Noriyasu and a single mysterious ‘spinner prophet.’ Noel Burch notes that Kurosawa dispenses with a number of important Shakespearian characters and scene to provide a story that generally follows Shakespeare’s plot faithfully ‘to the point of respecting the play’s division into acts’ but is more compact in its rendition (1979, p.144).

Kurosawa’s economy of expression manifests itself in numerous ways throughout the film. One example that I will briefly touch upon is his use of mise-en-scène. In Akira Kurosawa and Inter-textual cinema, Goodwin notes: Throne of Blood condenses the dramatic settings of events into three locales: Forest Castle (Dunsinane in Macbeth) and the surrounding terrain, the dense and confusing Cobweb Forest (Birnam Wood) that stands before the castle, and North Castle’ (Cawdor) (Goodwin 1994a, p. 173).
Goodwin further notes that ‘the script has pared down action and speech to focus events on the Macbeth couple, Washizu and Lady Asaji’ (1994a, p.172). The film eliminates scenes devoted to the Lords and leaders allied in the liberation of Scotland from Macbeth’s tyranny…’ and ‘Discussion by other nobles and by the doctor of the murderous events under Macbeth’s reign’ (such as in Act 3, Scene 1 and Act 5, Scene 1) [are replaced] ‘with brief dialogue among samurai and soldiers about the course of their fortune’ (1994a, p.172). This thus ensures that the adaptation is lively and engaging, and avoids the plodding pace of numerous other Shakespearian adaptations.

In an interview with Tadao Sato, Kurosawa explained the parallels that he perceived to exist between Medieval Japan and Scotland, and that fuelled his interest in this transposition stating: ‘In the age of civil wars in Japan, there are plenty of incidents like those portrayed in Macbeth aren’t there? They are called ‘Gekokujo’ (1994, p.51). Tadao Sato notes that ‘gekokujo’ occurred when a ‘retainer murders his lord and deprives him of his power. The age of civil wars for about 100 years starting from 1460 is named such, and during that age, the trend of ‘gekokujo’ prevailed here and there in Japan’ (1994, p.51). This again, evidences the prevalence of a cross-cultural commonality of experiences across humankind. This is a factor shown by the ease with which Kurosawa was able to transpose Shakespeare’s work by using similar events from his own cultural context.

From the opening credits of Throne of Blood, the viewer is met by a melancholy score that is marked by the occasional, shrill piping of a disconcerting flute that prefaces the
‘unnatural deeds’ that will unfold before us (Act 5, Scene 2, 1967, p.126). This sense of unease is continued as we fade to an eerie, windswept landscape, covered by a mist that prevails throughout the film. The camera then pans to a mountain covered in the ‘fog and filthy air’ that will symbolically envelop and cloud the minds of Washizu and Macbeth, and still, as depicted in the opening sequence of the film shrouds the former site of the aptly named Cobweb Castle (Act 1, Scene 1, 1967 p.53).

The Japanese title of the film, The Castle of the Spider’s Web, is reflective of the sinister forces that will ensnare Washizu. Cobweb Forest is a natural labyrinth that is populated by evil spirits, and protects a foreboding Cobweb Castle that has parallels with the Overlook Hotel of Stanley Kubrick’s The Shining (1980). Like the hotel in The Shining, the Castle is under the influence of evil forces; it is a ‘spider’s web’ that threatens to corrupt and ensnare the ignorant into committing murder.

The title of the film also symbolically ties into the notion that the Castle is an extension of nature, and of its ‘Spider’, which can perhaps be read as the evil spirit within the Forest, or the evil repressed desires that reside within each and every one of us. Blumenthal (cited in Davies, 1989, p.18) states that ‘the reality of the forest is overwhelming…it breathes, and sweats and twitches and speaks in the unknown tongue. It is easily as powerful a presence as Washizu himself; and this is exactly as it must be, since for Washizu the first encounter with the forest is nothing less than a headlong plunge into the self.’
Cobweb Castle, (like the Overlook Hotel) is an inanimate object, but can exert an autonomous effect on its occupants. The tenant will also unwittingly become engaged (like Jack Nicholson in The Shining and Washizu, Noriyasu and Tsuzuki in Throne of Blood) in an endless cycle of violence. They will inevitably be drawn into futile efforts to gain control of a castle that demands that the occupant 'build a mountain of corpses...to the sky' and 'if you shed blood, let it run like a river.'

Thus Macduff's assertion of Macbeth, that

A good and virtuous nature may recoil
In an imperial charge (Act 4, Scene 3, 1967, p.56).

has less bearing in justifying Washizu and Tsuzuki's violent usurpations. Their deeds in Throne of Blood are reflective of their succumbing to the supernatural forces that reside within Cobweb Castle and its forest, rather than to the avaricious follies to which the individual in a seat of power is prone.

Kurosawa dispenses with the psychological character focalisations that other Western filmic adaptations of Macbeth have provided by creating a stylised, expressionistic version of Washizu's decline in a chaotic Japanese medieval society. 'None of the play's great passages of self-examination was retained. Instead Washizu (Macbeth) and Asaji (Lady Macbeth) embody the ambition, lust and cruelty of the play in more pure and absolute terms' (Prince 1991, p. 143). I will argue that the expressionism that appears
throughout the film is as much a reflection of Washizu’s mind as it is an interpretation of the film’s societal context.

Events occur illogically and repeatedly in a disjointed manner akin to that of a nightmare, with Washizu symbolically stating to his wife after his initial encounter with the witch that ‘It has all been nightmare, I have been haunted by an evil spirit.’ Noel Burch provides an example of the film’s surreal qualities, stating that in ‘a sequence early in the film, which shows Washizu and Miki’s blind wanderings through the mist-shrouded forest after their encounter with the witch; twelve times the horsemen advance towards the camera, turn and ride away, in twelve shots that are materially separate but identical, apparently in the space they frame-grey, misty, almost abstract. Not until the last shot do we realise that this was supposed to be a forest’ (1979, p.144). Noel Burch also notes of the film having ‘an opposition between extreme violence or pathos and moments of static, restrained tension’ (1979, p.144). This renders the film as a whole into a disturbing, fantastic reflection of Washizu’s deteriorating mind-state, triggered by his lust for power and manipulation at the hands of evil supernatural forces.

Kurosawa injects this surrealism into the film by using ‘Noh’ theatre stylisation, an artistic form representative of a ‘Japanese aesthetic system, which…does not begin from a ‘representational’ or mimetic impulse’ (Desser 1983, p.72). In the film, a chorus of unseen Noh voices add to the inexorableness of the proceedings, singing of a ‘proud castle’ that stood ‘in this desolate place, its destiny wedded to a mortal’s lust for power…a warrior strong, yet weakened by a woman…driven to add his tribute to the
throne of blood...' In Akira Kurosawa and Inter-textual cinema. Goodwin also notes that the opening chorus or 'chant reiterates the Buddhist teaching of 'mujokan,' the impermanence and brevity of worldly aims' (1994a, p.177).

The events and the manner in which they will unfold are thus instantly revealed in a style that is in direct opposition to the 'cause-and-effect' linear plot structure of Macbeth. It should be noted though, that Macbeth also, to an extent, resonates with a sense of the inevitable, as from the play's onset, the Three Witches are already eagerly awaiting their fateful meeting with Macbeth before the audience has witnessed his appearance (Act 1, Scene 1, 1967, p.53). Stephen Prince suggests that 'the fated quality to the action in Macbeth, all of it foretold by the witches, was transposed by Kurosawa with a sharpened emphasis upon predetermined action and the crushing of human freedom beneath the law of karma' (1991, p.145).

David Desser notes: 'The narration of Throne of Blood is similar to the narrative of the Noh. The Noh theatre presents the relation of events, not their reproduction. The Noh theatre offers us a fait accompli in the sense that there is no mystery to the unfolding of the plot' (1983, p.72). This fatalistic twist to Kurosawa's adaptation heightens the pathos of Washizu's tragedy, with the futility of his situation reiterated and heightened by the cyclical narration and similar closing visual imagery as at the beginning of Throne of Blood. 'The film begins and ends with the same image, post stones, the ruins of a castle, fog drifting, over which the camera moves. It suggests...the transience of all earthly things, the end of all ambition, the grave which is our lot' (Richie 1984, p.117).
Due to its pervasiveness, a further exploration of the influence of Noh theatre in creating Throne of Blood's expressionistic form is useful. As I have earlier stated, Noh is a theatrical form that is non-mimetic. Arnott notes in his The theatres of Japan that in many cases, 'The Westerner will be disappointed to find a lack of [linear] plot in Noh' (Arnott 1969, p.69). Arnott further notes another critical aspect of Noh stylisation that is prevalent within Throne of Blood, that Noh plays emphasise dream-like flashbacks and reminiscences, and that in Noh, 'plays ...which present a story in terms of direct action are outnumbered by those in which the action is merely reported or seen indirectly through a vision or a dream' (Arnott 1969, p.69).

Although there are no flashbacks in Throne of Blood, its nightmarish, dream-like quality is fashioned through its stylised, elliptical cuts and cyclical plot structure, resulting in a film that is structurally as seamless as it is mystifying in its progression. In a style similar to that of Noh, two of Throne of Blood's major battles occur off-screen, and are rapidly compressed into the alternate mirroring 'messenger' scenes. The seeming sense of the 'illogical' that pervades the film is also partly influenced by a Noh stage that creates a world that Arnott describes as being 'beyond the laws of space and time in which past may merge with present, dead history turns into a living reality, visions become actual and actuality turns to dreams' (1969, p.84).

As stated, Kurosawa's brilliant editing techniques are critical in the construction of the surreal nature of the film. A key example of this is in the afore-mentioned opening 'messenger' sequence in Cobweb Castle, which ironically, directly mirrors the desperate
scenes of Washizu's besiegement near the film's end. In a series of swift elliptical wipes that dramatically compress cinematic time, Tzuzuki is informed of the rebellion of Fujimaki, who has attacked Fort Four and Five, and for a period, the Lord and his counsel are at a loss as to the course of action to be taken.

Within a few seconds of cinematic time though, a series of messengers arrive, one after the other, hailing the rapidly unfolding efforts of 'valiant Washizu' and Miki (Banquo) who have managed to turn the tide of Inui and Fujimaki's insurrection. This scene is thus surreal as it visually relates the swiftness with which the messengers were eagerly met within Cobweb Castle, and reflects the state of tenseness of Lord Tsuzuki and his counsel upon their arrival. Similarly in Washizu's case, the speed with which his messengers arrive and are consecutively, quickly 'wiped away' from memory, replicates his startled, desperate reactions at the news of his rapidly crumbling regime in what would subjectively be perceived by Washizu as occurring 'within seconds' as the film visually depicts.

We are then immediately transported to one of the most important scenes of Macbeth, Washizu's encounter with the supernatural. The three witches are transposed into the figure of a single hag in Throne of Blood. Before this occurrence, Washizu and Banquo are seen riding through a rain-drenched Cobweb Castle, in a day 'So fair and foul' (Act 1, Scene 3, 1967, p.58) that 'all elements [are] combined,' and 'whilst it's raining heavily, the thick branches filter out most of the light and moisture' (Silver 1977, p.43).
Kurosawa introduces another interesting Japanese contextual twist in the scene prefacing ‘Banquo’ and ‘Macbeth’s’ meeting of the supernatural forces, ‘That not look like the inhabitants o’er the earth’ (Act 1, Scene 3, 1967, p.58). As the pair ride through Cobweb Forest, the unnatural storm continues and the hag’s malicious laugh resonates throughout the forest and ‘Washizu and Miki fear they are being held captive by a spirit. In trying to break the spell, Washizu rides on with bow drawn, an action suggestive of a Buddhist ceremony in which priest-archers shoot arrows to ward off evil spirits’ (Goodwin 1994a, p.178). This highlights the manner in which Kurosawa utilised his context to achieve the gist of Macbeth’s themes.

A key idea of Macbeth is that Duncan’s death has resulted in an inversion of nature itself. The Old Man in Act 2, Scene 4 notes that:

I have seen

Hours dreadful and things strange; but this sore night

Hath trifled former knowings.

Similarly in Throne of Blood, nature is brought to discord by Washizu’s murders in a similar fashion as is related by the Doctor in Macbeth who states that

Unnatural deeds

Do breed unnatural troubles (Act 5, Scene 1, 1967, p.126).
The recurring hellish fog unleashed by the supernatural:

Though you untie the winds and let them fight
Against the churches (Act 4, Scene 1, 1967, p. 106)

and 'bird' imagery that punctuates Throne of Blood, and Miki’s skittish horse are all scenes reflective of this sense of 'natural unease' that is one of Macbeth's main themes.

The similarity in the significance of Tsuzuki and Duncan’s deaths is a clever adaptation on the part of Kurosawa, but also hinges on a societal parallel between Japan and Scotland. Historically in both countries, their Lords’ deaths would be perceived as having an immutable affect on the ‘natural order’ of things, due to the respective countries’ feudal beliefs in the divinity of their rulers, who were perceived to be closer to God. Traditionally in Japan, the Emperor was worshipped as a deity, whilst in feudal Scotland the king was believed be part of a hierarchy that placed him slightly below God.

To murder a King was therefore tantamount to disrupting the ‘natural order’ as the feudal monarch was believed to have been placed in his eminent position by God, and thus had a divine right to rule. In the case of Throne of Blood though, Lord Tsuzuki is a shogun and not of noble lineage, and regardless of the fact that he usurped the throne, we are led to believe that he is the legitimate ruler of his state, and is thus accorded the same cosmological status as King Duncan.
The apparent autonomy of 'nature' and the 'elements' in *Throne of Blood* is thus a manifestation of Japan's *Shinto* and Buddhist religions, where all natural objects are perceived as having a 'spirit' or divinity that can react independently to the events surrounding them, and where man, nature and the elements are fundamentally interlinked. ‘In such a worldview, people did not consider themselves in any way separated from cosmic experience and the rhythm of nature. They felt a deep kinship with the rhythm of nature, so that no tree could be marked for fuel, no bush tapped for lacquer juice, no oven built for smelting as for pottery, and no forge lit without appeal to the ‘*kami*’ residing in each’ (Kitagawa 1990, p.12).

Returning to the plot of *Throne of Blood*, the *Noh* influences that are prevalent within the character of the witch require elucidation. As I have stated earlier, the Three Witches of *Macbeth* are compressed into the character of the solitary hag prophet, who is initially seen bathed in a glowing supernatural light, symbolically weaving the thread of Miki and Washizu’s impending destruction, in a scene reminiscent of the three Fates of Greek mythology.

For his transmutation of the Three Witches, Kurosawa moulded his character of the spinner hag on the ‘*Kurozuka*’ character, which is prevalent in the ‘*mugen*’ *Noh* play structure. The entire scene of Washizu’s initial encounter with the ‘hag’ is drawn from the *Kurozuka* character and the *mugen* (Goodwin 1994a, p.187). In *mugen* a ‘common occurrence at the thatch hut setting is for both the hut and its inhabitant to vanish thus confirming its ghostly identity’ (Goodwin 1994a, p.187). Goodwin further notes an
overriding influence of the *mugen* play structure on the film as a whole, stating that: 'The film adapts from *Noh* the unique structure *mugen* (phantasm, dream, vision), which provides the theatre great flexibility in time and space. Representation through the technique of *mugen* entails a reversal of the flow in time, from future to past' (1994a, p.187). The Three Witches are thus transplanted into a classic Japanese dramaturgical character successfully, without their characterisation losing any of its sense of purpose or importance.

The similarities between Kurosawa's dialogue and Shakespeare's text should at this point be analysed. In *The Samurai Film*, Alain Silver notes that *Throne of Blood*’s strength lies in the fact that 'the social background and the main story elements - from the hag giving prophecies and 'Duncan's' murder, to the Lady's blood-stained prophecies and 'Birnam' wood coming to Kumonosu-Jo - are identical in many respects, they are transposed and reconstituted to appear as classically Japanese as they were Elizabethan' (1977, p.43).

Similarly, Kurosawa's dialogue is successful as he manages to avoid a significant stumbling-block of many modern Shakespearian adaptations by transposing *Macbeth'*s dialogue to 'present day Japanese,' and *Noh* verse, and doing what Peter Brook refers to as something 'every filmmaker has always done...to construct a film out of an idea and get the appropriate dialogue to go with it' (1965, p.31). Kurosawa thus cleverly does not literally transpose the dialogue of *Macbeth* scene by scene, but has 'set out to capture the general image of the play, its story and its mood, with a deliberate simplification of the text' (1965, p.32). Peter Hall notes that 'perhaps the most successful Shakespeare film
ever made was the Japanese Macbeth, *Throne of Blood*... This had hardly any words and none of them by Shakespeare’ (1965, p.33).

An example of Kurosawa’s successful adaptation of Shakespeare’s text without loss of meaning include his version of Macbeth’s soliloquy:

Stars, hide your fires,

Let not light see my black and deep desires (Act 1, Scene 4, 1967, p.64)

This is rendered into Lady Asaji questioning Washizu if Tsuzuki ‘knows what really lies in the depths of your heart?’ A second example that can be cited of the successful translation of Shakespeare’s text is the speech of the Third Apparition:

Macbeth shall never vanquished be, until

Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill

Shall come against him (Act 4, Scene 1, 1967, p.108).

In *Throne of Blood*, this becomes the Witch’s statement that ‘you will not lose a single battle unless Cobweb Forest begins to move...and comes to Cobweb Castle.’ These examples reinforce the argument that I have presented throughout this chapter that although the dialogue of this adaptation is more economical and not meticulously translated from Shakespeare’s text, the key thematic principles of *Macbeth* are still faithfully addressed throughout the film.
As I have mentioned in passing at the onset of this chapter, Kurosawa does not provide us with a psychological elucidation of Washizu in the film, and we are unable to enter the mental recesses of his mind in a manner akin to that of other filmic adaptations such as Roman Polanski's *Macbeth* (1971), with the mise-en-scène providing the main means of understanding Washizu's psychological state throughout the film. Stephen Prince observed that: 'In *Throne of Blood*, feelings are not strictly the province and expression of human beings but are objectified within the environment, are disclosed within and throughout the world of things. Emotions are not expressed but revealed. The art of the ceremony, *haiku* poetry, *Noh* theatre-arts influenced by Zen Buddhism all made a virtue of the perception of emotional forms within the world of nature' (1991, p.147).

Donald Richie continues with the differences in the characterization of Macbeth, stating that Kurosawa's Washizu 'is not grand. Rather, he is possessed from the beginning, he is compulsive, he is so profoundly afraid that he kills to insure that he himself is not killed. He is a little man, lacking in grandeur precisely because he is not torn between his desires. Rather, he is ruled by his ambition and we watch his rise and fall unmoved' (1984, p.117). Macbeth's numerous soliloquies are thus dispensed with in *Throne of Blood*, with the film relying on *Noh* stylisation to reveal the innermost thought processes of its main characters.

Kurosawa stated that 'the drama of the West makes up its characters out of the psychology of man and circumstances; the *Noh* are different. The *Noh* first of all, has the mask, and while staring at it, the starer grows to become the man whom the mask
represents. The performance also has a style, and whilst devoting himself to it faithfully, he is possessed by something' (Sato 1994, p.51). Kurosawa also noted that throughout his adaptation, he continually asked his crew members to shoot Washizu and Asaji in long shots, to ensure that the audience did not identify with them personally through the continual usage of close-ups, but rather gained an overriding sense of the futility of their actions in relation to the greater scheme of things. The framing of Throne of Blood's mise-en-scène is itself sparsely composed, in a windswept and desolate environment that heightens the depiction of Washizu’s sense of alienation. Donald Richie in his The Films of Akira Kurosawa notes ‘There is a visual sameness which enforces the visual style. It always rains. There is always fog and wind. The only two scenes where the sun is allowed to shine, are, first, at his mansion where Washizu still has a chance, and second-when he is leading his men, and may still turn back’ (1984, p.120).

Continuing with Kurosawa’s usage of Noh to construct his character’s psyches, he states that ‘to Toshiro Mifune who played the part of Tatekoki Washizu (Macbeth) I showed him the mask named Heida...the mask of the warrior. In the scene in which Mifune is persuaded by his wife to kill his lord, he revealed to me the same life-like expression as the mask did’ (Sato 1994, p.52). Other Noh mask personifications that were used to construct the characters include ‘Isuzu Yamada [Asaji] whom...I showed the mask named Shakumi. This was a mask of a beauty already not young and represented an image of a woman immediately before she got into a state of craziness. The actress, who wears this mask, when she gets angry, changes her mask for the one whose eyes are
golden coloured. This mask represents the state possessed by an unearthly feeling of tenacity, and Lady Macbeth gets into the same state’ (Sato 1994, p.52).

Throughout the film Asaji and Washizu’s facial expressions are frozen in a seeming state of permanence. This paradoxically lends an interesting degree of complexity to their characterization. Numerous examples abound of this phenomenon, with one being that we are unsure as to whether Washizu’s consistently stern, lined ‘mask’ is actually reflective of his contempt for the hag after receiving his initial prophecy, or whether his fixed expression actually hides the secret delight that the hag rebukes, stating; ‘You mortals! Your behaviour is very mystifying. You want something but act as if you do not want it!’

As stated earlier, Macbeth’s soliloquies and the scenes in which he wrestles with his inner conscience and repressed desires (Act 2, Scene 1, 1967, p. 72 for example) are neatly compacted into Mifune’s fixed, but limitlessly interpretable countenance, and a series of exchanges between Washizu and his wife. In this adaptation, his wife Asaji is depicted as a more wicked, calculating character than Lady Macbeth and exerts a greater influence in forcing her husband to pursue his ‘destiny,’ taunting him with statements such as ‘You want to rule a nation, but you let a ghost frighten you’ after Washizu’s horror at witnessing Miki’s ghost. Stephen Prince additionally notes that ‘by eliminating Lady Macbeth’s speech in which she calls on the spirits to unsex her and to fill her with the direct cruelty, Kurosawa transforms Asaji into a figure of unmitigated evil, lacking
the human dimensions of Shakespeare's character because she is endowed with a purely physical power' (1991, p.143).

Asaji's Noh-like performance and usage of the Noh 'facial' mask technique also adds to her complex characterisation. Aside from her facial expressions, her constricted movements and unnatural sense of detachment are also drawn from Noh theatre, and lend to her manipulative and evil characterisation (Goodwin 1994a, p.188). Throughout the film, her character's facial expressions also stay the same. Initially in the film due to the influences of Western psychologically based drama, the viewer assumes that her fixed expression is reflective of her cold-heartedness and indifference at murdering Tsuzuki (Duncan) and Miki (Banquo).

Towards the end of Throne of Blood, the viewer interprets the same pale, fixed facial expression tragically, as Asaji begins to lose her sanity after the loss of her child, with Kurosawa's earlier insight, that 'the starer [we the audience] grow to become the man whom the [Noh] mask represents' being applicable (Sato 1994, p.52). This 'Noh mask' technique thus ensures that the viewer is able to interpret the main characters from varying subjective viewpoints throughout the film, rather than an actor or actress struggling to portray the complex characterisations of Macbeth and his Lady exclusively.

In Kurosawa: a documentary on the acclaimed director, Yukio Ninagwa, one of Kurosawa's stage directors stated 'Noh elements are most evident in Kurosawa's Lady Macbeth (Throne of Blood) she glides through the corridors, expressionless, the audience
is left to interpret her emotions, because the Noh mask is used as an abstract object so the audience can personalize what she feels’ (Low 2000).

Mifune and Yamada’s frozen façades therefore lend to the sense of unease of Throne of Blood, heightening its nightmarish ambience. The contrast between Washizu’s fixed face and his sudden theatrical body movements in critical scenes such as his witnessing of Miki’s ghost and his death in a hail of arrows contributes to our sense of discomfort and neurosis. In a film where nature itself is unnervingly uncontrollable and its main characters remain unnaturally impassive at the sight of death, the sense of cold, clinical detachment of Washizu and his wife is chillingly projected to the audience. As stated earlier, continual abrupt changes between stasis and sudden movement induce a sense of fear and discomfort in the viewer.

Other aspects of the film that highlight its expressionistic characteristics are revealed in the set design of Cobweb Castle itself. In The Films of Akira Kurosawa Richie notes how the film’s crew decided to emulate the hellish atmosphere of Macbeth: ‘We decided that the locations should be high on Mount Fuji, because of the fog and the black volcanic soil’ (1984, p.123). The interior of Cobweb Castle was similarly constructed: ‘to emphasise the psychology of the hero; driven by compulsion, we made the interiors wide with low ceilings and squat pillars to create the effect of oppression’ (Richie 1984, p.123). The claustrophobic atmosphere of the diegesis is thus continually asserted throughout the film.
The main area of criticism that emerges after analysing this film is that regardless of the uniqueness of this adaptation, the supporting cast of *Throne of Blood* do not lend much to this expressionistic stylisation, and are generally auxiliary to the main couple. Tsuzuki (Duncan) does not merit similar praises from Macduff (Noriyasu) of being a ‘sainted king’ (Act 4, Scene 3) as he himself was also a usurper, whilst Noriyasu is not afforded the same personal motivations and significances that Macduff has in destroying Macbeth (Act 4, Scene 3). We can only assume that Noriyasu’s doggedness at deposing Washizu is tied towards his sense of *bushi* loyalty towards the family of his former lord, Tsuzuki and his son Kunimaru.

Other aspects of *Throne of Blood* that attest to its faithful but complex rendition of the spirit of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* include its interpretation of Lady Macbeth’s hand-washing scene (Act 1, Scene 1), the appearance of Miki’s (Banquo’s) ghost at the banquet, and Macbeth’s (Washizu’s) second meeting with the spinster ‘hag.’ As I have stated earlier, the significance of Macduff (Noriyasu) in the film is greatly reduced, but the Birnam wood prophecy is depicted and executed by Noriyasu, attesting to his status as the character that will have the strongest hand in deposing Macbeth.

In conclusion, it can be stated that Kurosawa’s adaptation of *Macbeth* attests to the durability of Shakespeare’s work. More importantly, as his adaptation is within a Japanese feudal context, it provides substantiation for one of my central arguments, of the prevalence of a cross-transference of ideas in the global cinema. The mastery with which Kurosawa successfully transplanted *Macbeth* to samurai Japan is also reflective of his
substantial creative abilities. The parallels between Kurosawa's Japan and Macbeth's Scotland that are revealed in his adaptation contribute to the notion of the universality of the essential themes that resonate within motion pictures. This once more, suggests the prevalence of a 'collective consciousness' that links us all intrinsically as human beings.

Jean Paul Sartre concludes this chapter stating: ‘Furthermore, although it is impossible to find in each and every man a universal essence that can be called human nature, there is nevertheless a human universality of condition’ (1946, p.303). This is reflected in our filmic representations of our analogous life experiences and perspectives, regardless of our differing cultural contexts.
THE KUROSAWAN GUIDE TO WAR CINEMA

It is not possible to make an anti-war movie because all war movies, with their energies and sense of adventure, end up making combat look like fun.1

It is with this quote from Truffaut that I delve into the workings of Kurosawa's approach to war through his Seven Samurai (1954). Although Kurosawa's epic pieces, such as Ran (1985) and Kagemusha (1980) entail a more traditional analysis of the rendition of armed combat, Seven Samurai is of critical importance within this dissertation due to its influence on mainstream cinema. I shall show how Kurosawa's cinema has resulted in a cultural transference of ideas, a phenomenon that again indelibly highlights the parallels between humankind's mythologizing of its mutual experiences through cinema. Upon receipt of Rashomon's (1950) award at the 1951 Venice film festival, Kurosawa symbolically stated: 'human beings share the same problems; a film can only exist if it depicts this' (Low 2000).

As stated throughout this dissertation, Kurosawa's work has had a strong influence on mainstream cinema, with films such as Seven Samurai being re-worked into The Magnificent Seven (1960) and The Dirty Dozen (1967), and Rashomon (1950) into The Outrage (1964). Kurosawa's handiwork, his use of sweeping cinematography, his economic dialogue and stirring treatment of period and contemporary dramas have crept into (and have been reciprocated by) mainstream cinema in such a manifold manner so as to ensure the impossibility of adequately examining his influence in its totality within this dissertation. Kurosawa is held in high regard by the brightest of luminaries of mainstream cinema.

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American cinema, with George Lucas in *Kurosawa: a documentary on the acclaimed director* for example, stating as to how his *Star Wars* series was inspired by Kurosawa's *The Hidden Fortress* (1958) (Low 2000).

In relation to these observations, I will devote this chapter to an examination of the manner in which Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* has impacted upon, and resulted in a transference of ideas in the treatment of the mainstream 'war film.' It should be noted though, that this analysis is not a systematic and exhaustive attempt at nit picking every aspect of *Seven Samurai* to ensure a thorough examination of the exactness of its influence on the mainstream 'war films' that I cross-reference it with. This analysis may also be interpreted at times as entailing a series of sweeping generalizations on the part of the writer in his assumptions, as the chapter is not a detailed, historical analysis of Occidental or Kurosawan 'war cinema.' The chapter is rather a subjective interpretation on my part in relation to the material and the influences that I believe have been exerted and transferred by Kurosawa onto the war films that I have examined.

This chapter is therefore, a light hearted analysis of what I will refer to in this dissertation as the 'war film,' a cinema dramatizing the American experience in World War Two and Vietnam and the manner in which Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai* has seemingly operated as a thematic 'template,' exerting significant influences on this genre. Most importantly, these assumptions are made specifically in relation to the eleven mainstream films that I have examined. This chapter is also, to an extent, an ode to the 'emperor,' Kurosawa, in an acknowledgement of his masterful influence on modern cinema. I have thus devised
this ‘guide’ in the form of ten humorous ‘precepts’ that form the basis of what I refer to as ‘The Kurosawan guide to war cinema’

The basis of this examination will rest primarily on the shoulders of a direct cross-examination between Oliver Stone’s Platoon (1985) and Seven Samurai specifically, with ancillary references to Kubrick’s Full Metal Jacket (1987), Huston’s The Red Badge of Courage (1951), Malick’s The Thin Red Line (1998), Coppola’s Apocalypse Now (1979), Cimino’s The Deer Hunter (1978), Levinson’s Good Morning Vietnam (1987), Irvin’s Hamburger Hill (1987), and Kellogg and Wayne’s The Green Berets (1968).

On that note, I will begin with my first precept. War (or armed combat) is a masculine enterprise. Precept #1: ‘All war films are about masculinity’ (Newsinger 1993, p.126). Kurosawa’s Seven Samurai is a film centered on seven (male) samurai, who are involved in protecting a village from marauding bandits. The focus of Oliver Stone’s Platoon is intrinsic in its title. Like Seven Samurai the film is about the men themselves, and posits itself as a naturalistic, personalized examination of the characters and day-to-day lives of its male protagonists, with its female characters being reduced to peripheral significance.

This in essence, ties into my second ‘Kurosawan precept of war cinema,’ the relegation of women to a secondary status, and their representation through the ‘gaze’ of the male characters and directors. The peripheral representation of women in these texts is historically correct as Japanese samurai were men, and male soldiers fought the World and Vietnam Wars. This does not, however, justify the interpretations of women in the
texts that I have examined and the manner in which women are used to support the masculine construction of this genre.

Women appear occasionally within these films, with their characterization exemplifying the duality that I have expressed in my ‘Geishas, Mama-sans and Prostitutes’ chapter - primarily, but not exclusively. In the war film, women either appear as sexualized ‘objects of desire’ like Shino in Seven Samurai, and have to a certain extent been transferred in an exaggerated manner in the portrayal of the infamous Oriental prostitute in Vietnam War films such as Hamburger Hill, Full Metal Jacket, and The Deer Hunter. The women in the war film also materialize as the direct opposite of this characterization-as a virtuous ‘Madonna’ archetypal figure, exemplified in the peasant women of Seven Samurai. In the mainstream films that I have examined, this archetype is manifested in the female relations and love interests of the male protagonists, or the cherubic indigenous women painted with sweeping brushstrokes into sentimental, pastoral imageries in The Thin Red Line and Good Morning Vietnam. Rick Berg comments on the skewed depiction of women in the war films of John Wayne in particular, providing a statement generalisable to most of the ‘war films’ that I have examined. ‘Wayne gives women a strict role in war. Either the allies protect them or the enemy rapes them’ (1986, p.54).

As stated in my earlier chapters, the importance of women in the war film is related to their significance in the construction of the male characters, and the manner in which
they are used objectively to tie into the conceptual themes of the predominantly male war film director’s tableau.

The woman in ‘war films’ is omnipresent, regardless of her apparent absence or lack of appearance on screen. They are constantly referred to by the men, and significantly shape the actions and thoughts of the men throughout the film. Women are complained of bitterly by Kikuchiyo throughout Seven Samurai due to their lack of appearance in the village, thus highlighting the notion of the female presence as being constructed, and interpreted for us by the male protagonist. Shino in Seven Samurai is a case in point, as regardless of her recurring appearances, she is generally depicted as part of a sentimental, flowery mise-en-scène in her love sequences with Katushiro. Shino’s character is more complex than that of the other village women, but as a character, she is primarily Katushiro’s love interest, and is sexualized repeatedly in her shot composition as a feminine sex ‘object,’ whose deflowering contributes to Seven Samurai’s sub-plot of Katushiro’s maturational development and ‘coming of age.’

In Platoon the omnipresent, over-determined female also markedly affects Chris’s experience. Chris significantly writes his letters and addresses his narration to a female family member, his loving grandmother. His grandmother thus fits into the ‘Madonna’ archetype, holding an ‘elevated,’ sentimentalized position in the eyes of Chris. Ella Shohat (cited in Dyer 1997, p.29) notes how in films, women are granted ephemeral ‘positional status.’ This prevalence of the ‘Madonna’ archetype and its manifestation
through the women-folk whom the American soldiers long for who are ‘back-home’ ensures that ‘the woman becomes the civilizing center of the film’ (Dyer 1997, p. 29).

Women are thus seen and not heard: their sporadic appearances are marked by their visual construction by the male characters that polarize them, seeing them as horny prostitutes (Hamburger Hill and Full Metal Jacket) or indigenous Madonnas (The Thin Red Line and Good Morning Vietnam). Women in war films are thus depicted as erotic ‘objects,’ longingly pined for by the men due to their relevance in providing a means of emotional and sexual gratification.

Women are also represented as commodities to be protected or exploited by the male characters. This is a factor tying directly into the treatment of Shino in Seven Samurai. Her father cuts her hair, thus masculinizing her so the samurais won’t molest her, beginning her cycle of abuse. Kikuchiyo also continually notes disappointedly throughout the film that the villages have successfully hidden their most prized asset, their women. Rikichi’s wife is also abducted by the bandits, and although possibly an attempt by Kurosawa to highlight the misogynistic practices of feudal Japan, the woman in Seven Samurai are repeatedly depicted as being mere commodities of the men, to be protected, abused or controlled at will.

The actions of the villagers and Manzo in Seven Samurai towards their ‘prized possessions’ thus parallels the treatment of women in the ‘war films’ that I have examined as the characters ‘think about the women as Orientals do... as a possession, as
property that can be locked,' and most importantly, must be protected against violent insurgency and conquest by other men (Roszak and Roszak 1969, p.7).

This notion of women as 'commodities' of a patriarchal society is further evidenced in their degradation to cheap five-dollar prostitutes in Full Metal Jacket and Hamburger Hill, objects that are haggled over before 'consumption' by the male G.I's.

Sub-textually, all of the films that I have examined also further entrench the war film as a masculine phenomenon by suggesting that women (in general) are unable to protect themselves, and thus require men to save them from any type of onslaught. This thematic correlation is again suggested in Seven Samurai. The women are symbolically 'hidden away' with the children in the battle sequences (suggesting their debasement to the level of children) and in the film's opening sequences, one of the sporadically seen female characters is depicted tearfully lamenting the impending loss of the harvest, and imploring the predominantly male village council to take action on her behalf. Richard Dyer notes: 'Women simultaneously stand for... [male] power and yet are shown to be unable to exercise it effectively or to change what they perceive to be its abuses' (1997, p.30).

While Platoon is posited as a film that focuses on the male characters within the war, the only women that we see in the film are symbolically brutalized by the G.I's. Although this lends to the verisimilitude of Stone's portrayal, it again suggests that women appear in war movies solely for the purposes of being abused and sodomized by the male protagonists.
Filmmakers thus either sexualize or sentimentalize the female characters, a factor resulting in their voyeuristic representation in the war films that I have examined. We continually see suggestive images of female characters of women in the soldier’s pictures (Gardner’s girlfriend in Platoon, Languilly’s pornographic pictures in Hamburger Hill) with the women being continually framed and shot in a manner (like Shino throughout Seven Samurai) that either sentimentalizes or sexualizes them into ‘objects’ of the director’s masculine gaze. The camera focuses on images of the women’s pretty faces, shapely legs, thighs and breasts, fixing them within a male ‘gaze.’ This gender-biased representation recurs throughout the films, with specific examples including the hot tub scene of Hamburger Hill, Joker’s initial encounter with a forceful Vietnamese prostitute upon arrival in Vietnam in Full Metal Jacket, and Bell’s recurring flash-backs to his sexy, domesticated wife in The Thin Red Line.

Thus there is a male fixatedness within Seven Samurai and the Western war films that I have examined. This is highlighted through these films’ focus on a gender-biased treatment of women. The masculine ‘gaze’ is prevalent from the genre’s predominantly male film directors.

This brings us to my third ‘Kurosawan precept of war cinema,’ which relates to the initial condition. To fight a war or battle successfully, one has to ensure that one selects the right team of men. This ‘team’ will inevitably result in a proliferation of differing characters of varying areas of expertise but who will, in the long run, complement each other and the team as a whole. In Seven Samurai, Katushiro is the young, naive samurai...
who seeks to prove himself in battle, as did Kanbei before him. He is also significantly
the only samurai who is romantically involved in the film, providing him with the
characterization of the 'casanova' of the group.

Through a series of subjective shots and introductions, we are introduced to the differing
characters within the samurai group. Kambei is the stoic, fatherly leader whom the men
profess their allegiance to, and he marshals the men into an efficient fighting unit.
Toshiro Mifune immortalized the role of Kikuchiyo, the crazy samurai, who provides the
comic relief within the group. Gorobei is the strong man, the stouthearted 'Little John'
character of the group. Heihachi is the comedian, whilst Shichiroj is Kambei's
dependable right hand man. Kyuzo is the cool taciturn samurai, a model of concentration
who can easily polish off three opponents at a go single-handedly.

This notion of a group of 'soldiers' being molded together to form a complementary team
with differing areas of expertise has occurred so prolifically in mainstream cinema that it
is clichéd. This concept has also crossed over into television, into the adventures of a
group of ex-Vietnam veterans in the popular nineteen eighties action series The A-Team
and into different genres, with examples including The Wild Bunch (1969) and The
Magnificent Seven (1960). In Japanese film image Tucker notes 'In the work of...Sam
Peckinpah there are so many visible influences of Kurosawa that one questions
Peckinpah's claim that he has never seen a Kurosawa film. The slaughter in the opening
sequence of The Wild Bunch bears great similarity to the battles of Seven Samurai - a
feeling strengthened by the shot immediately after the battle as L.Q Jones and Strother
Martin run towards the camera amongst the bodies in the street just as if they had sprung from the period world of Kurosawa' (1973, p.80).

All of the American war films that I have examined follow this individuated, subjective perspective from the eyes of the ordinary soldiers. Platoon’s Bravo company, and Charlie Company in The Thin Red Line have both been arguably touched by Kurosawa’s film to varying degrees, a factor that has aided in indelibly changing the face of war cinema, detaching it from its original propagandistic usages, and adapting it as a tool to dramatically sketch and identify the contrasting characters of the ordinary people who were involved in wars, drawing them out of anonymity. His efforts have helped in deflecting attention away from the political leaders and major historical figures that historically used to dominate representations of warfare in films such as Riefenstahl’s Triumph of the Will (1934) and Schaffner’s Patton (1970). This has resulted in a focus on the ordinary foot soldiers that suffered more comprehensively during war. This venture has thus injected an egalitarian humanism in the depiction of the everyman in modern cinema.

Throughout Seven Samurai great pains are taken to ensure that the audience is aware of the nuances of each character, and the motivations behind their actions, adding to their complexity. Katushiro is remembered for his vibrant love scenes with Shino, Mifune for his initial drunken entrance and maniacal outbursts, and Kyuzo for the cool manner in which he dispatches an opponent in a duel at the beginning of the film. This notion of imbuing the characterization of the soldier in war films with complexity is a precept that
has been culturally transferred so often, resulting in memorable characters such as Kubrick's Private Joker and Cimino's Nick in *The Deer Hunter*. It would be a gross generalization though, to assume that *Seven Samurai* is solely responsible for this characterization, but again, it must be noted that this film has arguably had a profound influence, and again suggests a cross-cultural transference of representation within cinema.

Each *samurai*’s death is of immense significance, and this factor is accentuated by the identification that the audience is afforded with them through a series of close shots and intimate dialogue sequences. Kikuchiyo’s emotional outburst reveals his inner turmoil relating to his upbringing and class status, and further ingrains him within the minds of the audience. This continual characterization of the *samurais* ensures that at the end of the film Kambei’s (and Kurosawa’s) humanistic message resonates within the audience, in a film that ‘is concerned with the present though its story is in the past’ and ‘criticizes contemporary values but insists that they are human values’ (Richie 1972, p.232).

We identify with the *samurai*, and empathize with the loss of life within the film rather than seeing death as a glorification. Kambei symbolically remarks whilst reflecting over the village gravesite that the real ‘winners’ are the farmers, and not the *samurais*, as the farmers are the harbingers of life. Again, it must be noted that this humanistic anti-war approach was amalgamated and transferred into mainstream American cinema through films such as Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now* and Stone’s *Platoon*. This was to occur decades after Kurosawa’s examination of the debilitating effects of war on humanity.
Kambei, the head of the seven *samurai* thus ties into the fourth precept of my 'Kurosawan guide to war cinema,' of the group requiring a 'fearless leader,' who embodies many of the characteristics that I outlined in my 'Superman and Super-Samurai' chapter. Kambei is resourceful, intelligent and adept at organizing his men proficiently, and exhibits superior mental and physical capabilities. His leadership qualities are shown throughout the film and particularly at the onset of the film in his handling of the bandit in the kidnapping sequence.

Kambei is the quintessential group leader, molding his *samurai* and the village into a cohesive fighting unit, a critical function of this character that is aptly intoned by Barnes in *Platoon* who refers to his 'group' as an efficient machine, 'and when that machine breaks down, we break down, and I ain't going to allow that.' As stated earlier, Kambei is also self-less and charismatic, 'posing as a Buddhist monk, he rescues a child held captive by a crazed thief in an episode...modeled on a *Zen* anecdote' and it is his personality alone that successfully convinces Gorobei to join the venture (Prince 1991, p.206).

In *Seven Samurai* (and throughout most of the war films that I have examined) we are led to believe that the group is otherwise unable to function without the presence of the 'fearless leader.' The dysfunction of the 'unit' without the 'leader' is thus highlighted by the ease with which Chris's 'Platoon' deteriorates in the final battle sequence after the assassination of Elias. In *Platoon*, Elias and Barnes are the conflicting group leaders who inspire and direct the members of the platoon, with Rhah stating his fear of the seemingly
invulnerable Barnes who’s ‘been shot seven times and he ain’t dead, Barnes ain’t meant
to die.’ Captain Staros of The Thin Red Line fulfills a similar role in this film, tearfully
telling the men of Charlie Company on his departure that ‘you are my sons...you live
inside me now.’ This concept of the ‘fearless leader,’ who is a father figure of sorts,
respected and admired by his men, and the primary source from which the group’s bonds
of masculinity emanate is yet another aspect of Kurosawa’s cinema that has helped to
develop an irrefutable legacy on mainstream cinema and that attests to a cross-societal
transference of ideas. This notion has manifested itself in a diversity of paternal
characters in mainstream war films who have the appropriate leadership skills, and who
exhibit extreme loyalties towards their ‘brother in arms.’ Examples include the brave,
selfless ‘one-shot’ Michael of The Deer Hunter and the quintessential ‘superman,’ John
Wayne in The Green Berets.

This brings us to the fifth directive of the Kurosawan guide to war-cinema. Although war
is hell, it is still an adventure in itself, and the soldiers do find time to cavort and frolic
boyishly amongst themselves in between the action. This notion of war being depicted as
a ‘fun-filled adventure’ also emerges in the majority of the films that I have examined.
Although it can be argued that a continual emphasis on the combat itself and its
debilitating effects on the men would result in a product that would be too excruciating to
watch, many of the films, at times, give the impression that war is an experience marked
with frivolity, excitement and boyish bantering. Molly Haskell (cited in Lang and Moussa
2001, p.84) notes that films such as Seven Samurai express the notion of a homo-social
love between ‘buddies’ in ‘war’ and ‘team’ movies. Haskell (cited in Lang and Moussa
2001, p.84) notes that it is a non-sexual 'love in which men understand and support each other, speak the same language, and risk their lives to gain each other's respect.'

In Seven Samurai we continually see Kikuchiyo and his 'brother' samurais laughing and joking with the villagers whilst drilling them. In Platoon, although lending to the verisimilitude of Stone's depiction, we are at times led to assume that the Vietnam War was an exercise in beer drinking and pot smoking. Malick's The Thin Red Line, for all its somber moments also shows the men of Charlie Company frolicking in the ocean, whilst Coppola's Apocalypse Now parodies the absurdities of war, with Martin Sheen's character stating that Vietnam was placed in the hands of 'rock'n rollers with one foot in the grave,' who are treated to strip shows and surf whilst on patrol, emphasizing the innate sense of 'fun' in this orgy of death and destruction.

At this point I will provide my sixth principle of the 'Kurosawan guide to war cinema.' War is a precise science requiring detailed plans and skilled expertise. If you want to win a war (or anything in particular) you have to have a plan. This notion of 'brains' over 'brawn' is depicted in Seven Samurai by the manner in which seven skilled 'supermen' manage to dispatch a horde of forty armed bandits successfully, whilst molding a village of peasant farmers into a well-oiled fighting machine.

We continually see elaborate maps and plans of the war strategy, and are consciously aware that the bandits (the brawn) are being defeated by the superior intellects of the samurai. The converse of this is reflected in Platoon when Sergeant Barnes angrily
remarks that the reason that the Americans (and his Platoon) are losing the war is because 'them politicians in Washington' are 'trying to fight this war with one hand tied around their balls.' This was a common American reaction to their bemusement at defeat in Vietnam, where 'superior' Western technology and science failed against 'primitive' Oriental 'barbarism,' and again suggests that if one wants to win a war in a war-film, you need a clever, rational battle-plan that is avidly supported by all of the participating members of your war-machine.

Again it should be stated that this principle of a group of soldiers or individuals coming together to defeat a foe with a detailed plan appears so frequently in mainstream cinema that it is almost impossible to document. It is also a phenomenon so widespread that it would be difficult to assume that Seven Samurai is the sole influence. As I have stated earlier, a plethora of American action-adventure series appeared in the nineteen-eighties that were closely based on this precept, such as The A-Team and Macgyver, with films such as The Dirty Dozen and The Green Berets all popularizing the concept of the collectivized battle master plan as a filmic grand finale. This notion of the group working together has been immortalized by the words of Hannibal, the cigar smoking 'leader' of the above-mentioned A-Team TV series at the end of yet another flawlessly executed military master plan in the popular series, when he inevitably proclaims, 'I love it when a plan comes together.'

The seventh precept of 'The Kurosawan guide to war cinema' ties directly into the sixth notion, of the 'men' having to develop into a well-oiled, but more importantly, internally
cohesive fighting machine. Uniformity and allegiance to the common cause are crucial to the success of the group, or as Kambei puts it, 'individual defense destroys the individual.' Kikuchiyo’s impulsiveness at attempting to imitate Kyuzo’s act of bravado tragically results in the death of Gorobei in *Seven Samurai*, whilst Rikichi's brash action at the siege of the bandit stronghold results in the death of Heihachi.

Other examples that can be cited of this concept is the manner in which Kambei forces Mosuke and his men to return to the ranks of the villagers rather than defend their own homes, and when Kambei demands to know whom Kyuzo and Katsushiro are giving their rice away to as 'information must be the property of the group, and private knowledge is a threat to its security...there is simply no space in this film where a hero can stand as an individual. That space is constantly being transformed into social terms where isolation and individualism are regarded as pathologies' (Prince 1991, p.210).

As stated earlier, the success of Chris's platoon depends on its cohesiveness and adherence to the plans devised by its leaders, and the manner in which it self-implodes in the final sequence is directly tied to Elias's absence, resulting in the scattered, uncoordinated actions of Platoon members such as Junior and O'Neil, who desert their team mates at a critical point in the battle, consequently causing the platoon as a whole to suffer for their cowardice.

Joker's platoon in *Full Metal Jacket* is also effectively destroyed by the impulsiveness of its individual members such as Animal Mother in the sniper assault, a factor again
suggesting the need for a constant uniformity and homogeneity of action in war. Although most of the texts overtly seem to highlight the atrocities of war and appeal to a return to individualism, the strong emotional bonds between the men of *The Thin Red Line* and *Hamburger Hill* suggest that allegiance to the group and suppressing one’s personal interests is critical to collective success, particularly in a situation as desperate as war, where Sergeant Frantz of *Hamburger Hill* states that ‘I’m going to save your life, and you’re going to save mine.’

This suggests that regardless of the individuation of the main characters in *Seven Samurai*, the traditional groupthink ethos that is still prevalent in Japanese society today unwittingly surfaces within the film. The samurai’s collectivized actions are thus reflective of a society in which individual needs are traditionally frowned upon. In Japan, collective interests are regarded as being critical to the overall success of the family unit and the Japanese nation as a whole. This concept is epitomized in a famous Japanese proverb that states that ‘the nail that sticks up gets pounded down’ (Christopher 1984, p. 48). Although there is a marked collaboration across social classes within the film, at the end of *Seven Samurai*, Shino symbolically refuses Katushiro’s advances and returns to her ‘place’ as a villager. The rest of the characters also return to their societal roles of samurai and farmer respectively, with solidarity across class thus being evidenced as an occurrence that is doomed to occur only temporarily, and only in extreme circumstances.

This brings us to the eighth precept of ‘Kurosawan war cinema’, involving the actual developmental process that results in the creation of the ‘well-oiled war machine.’ To win
a war (as was stated earlier), you have to mold your ‘men’ into a cohesive fighting unit. This invariably involves a process of extreme physical and mental tribulation for the uninitiated that will transform the ‘men’ into well-disciplined, ruthless soldiers.

Although most of Kurosawa’s samurais are already super-men in themselves and do not require further training, the drilling of the villagers is a key aspect of the war film. The development of the villagers into ruthless soldiers epitomizes one of the major precepts of war cinema, the manner in which combat manages to homogenize people into violent ‘lean, green fighting machines’ who are indifferent to the slaying of their fellow man. Platoon elaborately focuses on the indoctrinative training of Chris and his change from a nervous young debutante into a violent, assertive soldier who is ready to leap into battle at will.

Kubrick’s Full Metal Jacket is perhaps the film that is most vociferous in its condemnation of the manner in which war brainwashes and subverts the individual. From its onset, the recruits’ heads are symbolically shaven clean, hinting at their pending anonymity in the face of the war ‘machine’ that seeks to destroy their individuality. Sergeant Hartman repeatedly states the degree of extreme physical and mental allegiance that is demanded from the men to the army, stating that ‘you can give your ass to Jesus, but your heart belongs to the Corps.’ Significantly in the middle of the training, Hartman says that the men will be so effectively indoctrinated that they will change from feminine ‘steers and queers’ to violent killing machines, that ruthlessly execute orders without question, ‘minister(s) of death, praying for war.’
Seven Samurai is essentially an anti-war movie, emphasizing the loss of life as being the most critical aspect of the village’s defense. Unfortunately, its drilling sequence and the subsequent change that it evokes in the desperate villagers, coupled with its unconscious glorification of the nobility of death, has to a certain extent been seized upon and transferred to mainstream culture in more grossly exaggerated forms than is exhibited in Kurosawa’s film.

This brings us to the ninth precept of my ‘Kurosawan guide to war-cinema’ that is tied to the eighth principle. In many cases war (and the battlefield) is depicted as having an initiatory quality, akin to losing one’s virginity or acquiring a car on one’s twenty-first birthday. Often, ‘war films...are stories of boys becoming men. Violence and the ability both to inflict and to take it is portrayed as an essential aspect of what being a man involves’ (Newsinger 1993, p.126). This notion of war being an environment that prompts the development of young boys into men is revealed in Platoon’s tag-line, that states that ‘the first real casualty of war is innocence.’

Katushiro, the young samurai is dazzled by Kambei’s slaying of the bandit in the opening scenes of Seven Samurai, with Kambei initially refusing to accept Katushiro’s apprenticeship and adulation, in an apparent attempt to ward him off the perils of the violent samurai lifestyle. Later within the film, Kambei changes his attitude to the young samurai, noting sentimentally (as would a father to a son) that Katushiro reminds him of himself, as he was also keen to distinguish himself in combat as a youth. Throughout Seven Samurai, Kambei and the other men occasionally remark contentedly on
Katushiro's development into manhood, an issue preempted by Heihachi's insistence that the others should accept him into the group, as the process will result in his maturation. *Seven Samurai* thus 'studies the young man's traumatic encounters with battle, violence, death and sexuality' (Prince 1991, p.207).

As stated earlier, Shino serves as Katushiro's love interest, further catalyzing his development from 'boy to man,' and establishing the notion of 'the battle field as initiation school.' Although Katushiro is not as competent as the other *samurai*, he (along with Schichiroj and Kambei) symbolically manages to survive the onslaught that would otherwise have resulted in his death had it occurred earlier in the film. (And thus in his development.)

The character of Katushiro can also be contrasted with two other young mainstream filmic young men, 'who also come into their own' through warfare, Chris of *Platoon* and Henry of Huston's *The Red Badge of Courage*. Chris arrives as a young, fresh-faced suburbanite, and is first seen descending from a military helicopter, symbolically after a title with a quote from Ecclesiastes, 'Rejoice o young man in thy youth.' On Chris' first 'hump' he is overburdened and ill equipped, and faints from heat exhaustion, but is indoctrinated into the group mores by his platoon 'brothers', who are initially worried that his inexperience and naiveté will get them killed. Kinney notes: 'Platoon relies on the traditional structure of the bildungsroman, the tale of the education of a young man, within the context of a modern morality tale' (1991, p.161).
Henry of The Red badge of Courage is also overwhelmed at his initial skirmish, and throughout the film is haunted by his desertion in Huston’s story of ‘a boy, who frightened, went into battle, and came out of it a man with courage.’ Towards the end of their respective films, both Chris and Henry have matured into ‘men’ due to the trials and tribulations that they have endured. The conclusive voice over from The Red Badge of Courage states that Henry’s development has resulted in a profound change in his character, ‘for the first time in his life, he was possessed by a great passion.’ Henry overcomes his fears within the film, and accepts a masculine identity that is suggested as being inherently intertwined with war. The film thus suggests that war (and war films) aid in cultivating a masculine identity that is impassive to pain and violence, with Mark Simpson (cited in Eberwein 2001, p.150) noting that ‘the war film...offers a text on masculinity and on how to take one’s place in patriarchy...’ This is evidenced at the end of The Red Badge of Courage by Henry’s final acceptance of the fact that as a man ‘the world is a war for him.’

Chris on the other hand, also transforms into an assertive, aggressive team member respected by his fellow comrades such as Rhah and King. In the final battle sequence Chris becomes one of the bravest members of his Platoon, single-handedly attacking scores of N.V.A troops. His metamorphosis into ‘manhood’ is exemplified in the manner in which he ruthlessly avenges Elias’ death, and the way in which he accepts the inevitability of his vengeful actions in a cross-cultural appropriation of the Japanese concept of ‘mono-no-aware’ that prevails in many of Kurosawa’s films, where the desolate poignancy of life and its impermanence is accepted upon maturation.
The final condition in my Kurosawan guide to war-films is related to my third precept, concerning the fluidity and cohesiveness of the ‘group’ of combatants itself. Regardless of their differing ethical standpoints, religions and ethnicities, the ‘men’ always manage to understand each other and work together effectively. War effectively becomes an exercise in male bonding. Seven Samurai’s ‘men’ are effectively from the same social class and backgrounds and do not have any points of extreme differentiation, save for Kikuchiyo who is torn between his samurai status and his background from a farmer’s caste. This does not in any manner, though, hamper his assimilation into the group or his acceptance by the other samurais, and the group leader Kambei views him sympathetically. This idea of the war squadron being an affable ‘melting-pot’ has been transferred to the American war film in numerous guises.

In Platoon, though the ‘Bloods’ (African-American soldiers) complain about the racism that they experience, they are also still effectively integrated into the group and equitably treated by their commanding officers. Although there is a clear separation between the ‘Heads’ and Barnes’ group, the conflict within the platoon is between the two sergeants, and any inter-ethnic differences manifest themselves in the form of verbal arguments and bantering amongst the men rather than in physical violence.

Centuries of ethnic and social hostilities are swiftly thrown out the window and ignored in an idealized portrayal of the army’s homogenization of the human being. The deep masculine bonds that are developed by war amongst men thus essentially override any racial or social class differences.
Examples that can be cited of this idea appear in The Thin Red Line, where Captain Staros, a Greek-American, effectively leads a company of differing areas of origin and social class who co-exist amicably, in a similar manner as do the squadron leaders in Hamburger Hill, Full Metal Jacket and The Green Berets. This suggests that war can be used to mold society towards a common pursuit, regardless of its underlying complexities, as during the blood, sweat and tears of warfare, it is the superseding goal of victory that persists above all.

In conclusion, this chapter has sought to reveal the manner in which Kurosawa's Seven Samurai has materialized in mainstream cinema, highlighting the transference of cultural ideas as a phenomenon that is as continual as it is as widespread, through identifying the cross-cultural commonalities in filmic depictions of war. This analysis does not assume that Kurosawa's film was the sole repository of the manifestation of these ten precepts in the examined war films, but is rather a light-hearted comparison between Seven Samurai and the war films that I have examined. This chapter attests to the cross-cultural similarities in the representation of a phenomenon that ironically substantiates the universalism of the human experience by exposing one of our truly unique traits as human beings - our repeated propensity to enact war and senseless violence against each other.
CONCLUSION

This dissertation has thus underlined the need for a continual cross-examination of non-Western and mainstream cinema, in the interests of understanding the influences prevalent within their renditions of filmic reality. This will hopefully result in a plethora of artistic ideologies in a manner conducive to, and reflective of humanity’s diversity.

Cinema can thus be used as a tool of intervention, to promote debate and cross-cultural understanding, and to reveal the essential similarities that bind us together as human beings. Ataturk (cited in Matabane 2003, p.34) stated ‘a day will come when the invention of cinema will seem to have changed the face of the world...cinema will remove differences of thought and outlook, and will be of great assistance in realizing the ideas of humanity.’
GLOSSARY OF TERMINOLOGY

Derived from:

Silver, A. 1977, The Samurai Film, A.S Barnes, South Brunswick [NJ].


1. **Bafuku**- A military government; used to refer to various eras of rule by a *shogun*.

2. **Bakumatsu**- The fall of a military regime, used to designate the restoration to power of the *Meiji* dynasty in 1867.

3. **Bunraku**- A style of Japanese puppet theatre.

4. **Bushi**- A warrior (bu = martial; shi = knight).

5. **Bushido**- The way of the warrior. A code of honor practiced by the *samurai*, emphasizing loyalty, honor and self-sacrifice.

6. **Chambara**- Sword theatre-plays with ritualistic swordplay, relying on a skilled swordsman, generous and helpful but merciless to his enemies.

7. **Chugi-bara**- A suicide out of loyalty; performed by a vassal in order to admonish or to follow his master in death.

8. **Daimyo**- Japanese feudal lords who dominated Japan's history from the 12th to the 19th century. Daimyo's were masters of the *samurai* class. In Japanese the word means 'great holders of private lands.'

9. **Daisho**- A mismatched pair of long and medium length swords, which could legally be worn only by the *samurai* class.

10. **Daito**- A long sword, about two-and-a-half feet in length, traditionally associated with the *samurai*, who was the only person privileged to carry it.

11. **Dojo**- A gymnasium or place of religious meditation.

12. **Funshi**- Suicide out of righteous reasons.


15. Giri- Right reason; the dutiful service which bushido directs the warrior to give to his family, clan and lord.


19. Heian Era- Commonly known as the ‘Golden era’ of Japanese history, due to the literature, culture and arts that flourished in this period. The historical period lasted from 794-1192 and was named after the Japanese capital at the time, Kyoto, which was then called Heian-kyo.

20. Heimin- A commoner, a non-samurai.


22. Junshi- Suicide performed to follow one’s master in death.

23. Kabuki- Popular Japanese theatrical art, a stylized mix of dance, music and art.

24. Kami- ‘Divinity,’ a key facet of the Shinto religion’s animistic belief in the prevalence of an ‘energy’ or ‘life force’ residing within all living beings, resulting in a spiritual and cosmological inter-connectedness between human beings, nature and the universe.

25. Kamikaze- Literally means ‘divine wind’ in Japanese. In a Western context the word is associated with the suicidal airplane bomb attacks made by the Japanese air force in World War Two. This suicide bombing attack was arguably influenced by samurai ethics and seppuku in particular.

26. Karoku- The stipend (room, board and/ or a monetary allowance) paid to a clan retainer.

27. Katana- Long curved sword, the primary weapon of the samurai. Traditionally wielded along with a smaller dagger called a tanto.

28. Kendo- ‘The way of the sword;’ the art and technique of swordplay.

30. **Kirisutogomen**- The rights to kill a man of lower caste; a privilege reserved for the *samurai* clan.

31. **Kufu**- Discipline; de-localizing the mind to guard against over concentration.

32. **Meiji Restoration**- A Japanese era beginning in 1868 that prompted the end of Japan’s shogunate rule, resulting in the restoration of the emperor Meiji. This era was marked by a radical democratization, westernization and modernization of Japan, and resulted in the decline of the *samurai* class and the *daimyo*.

33. **Mono-no-aware**- A Japanese aesthetic and spiritual concept relating to a desolate poignancy and an acceptance of impermanence.

34. **Muromachi Era**- From 1392-1573. A Japanese era filled with civil wars and insurgencies.

35. **Mushin-no-shin**- 'No-mindedness;' the mind capable of movement from unconscious thought to action; decentration.

36. **Ninjo**- 'Mans’ will;' the personal or conscientious inclination which is often opposed or constrained by *giri* or duty.

37. **Noh**- Lyrical drama played on a bare stage with male actors only.

38. **Onna Daigaku**- A Japanese behavioral handbook for women, written in the 1600s. It means ‘Great Learning for women.’ The book taught women rules on obedience and etiquette and encouraged women to revere their parents and their husbands.

39. **Osho**- An instructor of *budo*, a monk.

40. **Ronin**- Masterless *samurai*, literally means ‘a man on the wave.’ In Japanese feudal society a *ronin* was a *samurai* who had renounced his clan or who had been discharged or ostracized and had become a wanderer without a *daimyo*; an outcast, an outlaw.

41. **Samurai**- Warrior class of the feudal system. Believed in fidelity and stoicism. Was literally a servant of his master.

42. **Satori**- ‘Enlightenment;' in Buddhist thought, coming to understand the true nature of reality.

43. **Shin-geki**- New drama, realist approach to theatre.

44. **Shinto**- ‘The way of the Gods;' Japan’s indigenous animistic religion. In some historical periods, it also professed worshipping the Japanese Emperor as a deity.
45. **Shogun**- Commander in chief, literally refers to ‘barbarian-subduing great general.’

46. **Shushigaku**- Sino-Japanese belief that a person’s life is governed by the circumstances of his or her birth.

47. **Suki**- The space between which something can enter; a fatal inattention engendered by self-consciousness.

48. **Sunyata**- Emptiness; voiding the body of conscious thought, which in swordsmanship guards against over-concentration.

49. **Taoism**- Chinese religion that emphasizes the worship of nature and divination. The Tao (or Dao) is defined as ‘the way’ or ‘the path;’ an unseen omnipresent force that is the origin of all creation and that lies behind the workings of the universe.

50. **Tanto**- A dagger or knife with a blade less than 12 inches long, traditionally wielded along with his katana by a samurai. The tanto was used to effect seppuku.

51. **Tokugawa Era**- An era of militaristic Japanese shogunate rule, stretching from 1603-1868. The era is named after Ieyasu Tokugawa, a warrior and statesmen and the founder of the Tokugawa dynasty.

52. **Tozama**- The outside daimyo’s; traditionally a reference to the eight-six clan lords who rank below the go-sanke (three exalted families) and the eighteen kokushu or lords of provinces.

53. **Ushin-no-shin**- The mind conscious of itself; the opposite of mushin-no-shin; over-concentration.

54. **Yakuza**- A gangster; member of a roving group of gamblers or pimps.

55. **Yang**- An aspect of a Chinese cosmological belief, that presupposes the universe as being divided into 2 opposing principles, yin and yang. Yang encompasses the principles of maleness, the sun, domination, Heaven, etc to create a complimentary effect on the universe with its opposing principle, yin.

56. **Yin**- An aspect of a Chinese cosmological belief, that presupposes the universe as being divided into 2 opposing principles, yin and yang. Yin encompasses the principles of femaleness, including the moon, darkness, material form, submission, etc.

57. **Yojimbo**- A bodyguard.

58. **Zen**- Buddhist sect. Preaches spiritual enlightenment, self-discipline and solving of personal problems to grasp the meaning of the universe.
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37. The Scripture With No Name, 1996, motion picture, China Film Production, directed by T. Ching.

38. Seven Samurai, 1954, motion picture, Toho Pictures, directed by A. Kurosawa.


42. Throne of Blood, 1957, motion picture, Toho Picture, Japan, directed by A. Kurosawa.


44. Triumph of the Will, 1934, motion picture, Leni-Riefenstahl-Produktion [de], directed by L. Riefenstahl.


46. Xala, 1995, motion picture, Connoisseur Videos, directed by S. Ousmane.

47. Yojimbo, 1961, motion picture, Toho Pictures, directed by A. Kurosawa.
VISUAL THERAPY

CUT TO:
A STATIC TV SCREEN

CUT TO:
'FELICIA' TALK SHOW

CUT TO:
A STATIC T.V SCREEN

CUT TO:
A WRESTLING MATCH

CUT TO:
A STATIC T.V SCREEN

CUT TO:
INT. PATIENT'S APARTMENT—DAY

THE PATIENT
(Despondently)

Should I begin? ...Oh? (Sighs) When I think of my wife... I used to think of sunshine... We were so happy together...

CUT TO:
THE PATIENT
(Agitated)

I wake up at nights in a cold sweat... I keep seeing those two sweaty bodies fucking each other senseless...

CUT TO:
INT. PATIENT'S APARTMENT—DAY

THE PATIENT
(Reflecting)

Do I think she's a whore? No. No. Not really. You spend five years with a woman. Then she does this to you. (To camera) Aren't all women whores anyway?

CUT TO:

INT. PATIENT'S APARTMENT—DAY

THE PATIENT

Then I started drinking, gin, brandy, beer you name it I drunk it. I used to stick my hand down my throat to make space for more.

CUT TO:

INT. PATIENT'S APARTMENT—DAY

THE PATIENT
(Feverishly)

I locked myself in my apartment. I quit work. I used to wash my hands and brush my teeth obsessively to get his smell off me, to get the stink of, of him off my lips after kissing her! (To camera) Do you think that's insane?

CUT TO:

INT. PATIENT'S APARTMENT—DAY

THE PATIENT
(Agitatedly to camera)

Why don't I have any pictures of her? I burned them. Every last one... I like fire...

CUT TO:
INT.PATIENT'S APARTMENT-DAY

THE PATIENT
(Crying)

I just want things to go back to the way they were. Can't I do that? With a simple touch... Bend reality-just like this. (He touches the camera and laughs.)

CUT TO:

INT.PATIENT'S APARTMENT-DAY

THE PATIENT
(Despondently)

Some days, some days I'd wake up and not be sure as to whether I'm alive or dead. (To camera) Maybe I'm already dead?

CUT TO:

INT.TV SCREEN-DAY

THE PATIENT
(Cheerfully)

But it's fine; I'm happy now. I'm quite safe here, free from emotions and worries. It gets really cold at times in here though. (He shivers)

CUT TO:

INT.PATIENT ON T.V SCREEN-DAY

THE PATIENT
(Excitedly)

I meet lots of famous people in here, Sam Spade, Luke Skywalker! Such nice guys! They don't want to leave either. They like it here too! (He pauses and looks to the camera) My wife doesn't really matter does she? My problems don't have any meaning do they?

CUT TO:
INT. PATIENT ON T.V SCREEN—DAY

THE PATIENT
(Laughing hysterically)

Anyway what would I know? I'm just a character in a film, I don't really exist! (He bursts out laughing) I had you going there for a while didn't I? I don't really exist! I don't exist!!! See? See? (He laughs hysterically)

CUT TO:

A STATIC TV SCREEN

CUT TO:

IMAGES OF WIFE HAVING SEX

CUT TO:

A SPORTS MATCH

CUT TO:

A STATIC TV SCREEN

THE END