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**A Wicked Countenance:
The Vengeance Seeking Woman in Japanese Cinema**

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of Humanities in
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Abstract

A Wicked Countenance: The Vengeance Seeking Woman in Japanese Cinema argues the female *onryō*, or vengeance seeking spirit, belies Japan's often conflicted relationships to the various socio/political contexts of the last 100 years. The *onryō* is an archetype, appearing throughout Japanese film, theatre and folkloric cultures, and yet the specificities of that archetype change greatly through time. Japanese modern history has been conditioned by its various interactions in geo-politics and this thesis argues that the various permutations of the *onryō* have been correspondingly impacted by the nation's political actions. Viewing history, not as a teleological series of cause/effect relations but rather as a product of a system of competing discourses, the thesis argues that those discourses shape the *onryō* in differing manners dependent on the competing ideological positions of the era.

Film cannot escape its context and is imbued with the ideologies of the society from which it is produced. Ideology is itself a product of the interaction between a society and its media, both being shaped and reinforced through that interaction. While capitalism, as proposed by Eric Cazdyn in his *The Flash of Capital*, has been the dominant contributing discourse in the shaping of ideology, my own work, stemming from Cazdyn's project, considers discourses as varied as feminism, cultural nationalism and nationhood. These are discourses which, though *marked* by capitalism, comprise inherent particularities which direct ideology in ways independent of capitalism.

In this work, Japanese film history is divided into three different temporal/ideological contexts. The first half of the 20th century in Japan was mar(r/k)ed by the introduction of the west to Japan. The earliest films struggle to create a Japanese cinematic language and while ideology struggled to better articulate what constituted appropriate womanly behavior, women often became representations of 'womanliness'. The postwar period, conversely was a time of questioning. With the end of the occupation, Japan re-discovered political and cultural autonomy. Japanese film culture began to actively explore its relations to the past, and to question what it is to be a Japanese individual with autonomy and how to participate in the democratic environment of free will and personal subjectivity. The films then become an exploration of the attempts to negotiate the self as Japanese within the context of political autonomy and the *onryō* becomes indicative of that quest to articulate 'japaneseness.' Finally, the contemporary period is an era marked by globalization. *Empire*, as defined by Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt in their book of the same name, is different from Imperialism. *Empire* posits that the new world order of interdependency and corporate economic expansion has resulted in the exploitation of offshore labour forces for personal economic gain and that all people who participate in contemporary capitalism are culpable in *Empire's* exploitations. The films, cognizant of the culpability of the individual within *Empire's* exploitations, manifest those fears in the *onryō*. The *onryō*, devastating in its usage of the media's vehicles of transmission (television, cell phones, the internet), becomes metaphorical of capitalism's destructiveness. While the thesis examines Japanese film culture of the last 100 years, the *onryō* films themselves are not restricted to those past historical contexts. As long as film continues to be produced by Japan, they will continue to reflect the ideological idiosyncrasies germane to the Japanese identity.

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Introduction

An Eye on Terror

In the summer of 1997, a film was released upon an unsuspecting world public which shocked and terrified a global audience. So terrible was the film's climactic scene that it inspired Britain's *Channel 4* film presenter to declaim: the end will make you (the viewer) 'shit your pants' in terror.¹ The Nakata Hideo Japanese horror *Ringu (Ring)* (1997) transformed the Japanese film industry and consequently reignited international interest in the cinematic images of East Asia. Indeed, my own interest in contemporary Japanese horror began with *Ringu* and so it seems fitting that my work begin and end with that seminal piece.

The terrifying moment in *Ringu* which caused the television presenter such excremental discomfiture begins with a middle aged professor, Takayama Ryuji, at home. Convinced his actions of the previous night had ended the ghostly hauntings of a young telekinetic woman's reign of paranormal terror, the academic returns to his quotidian life of preparing his mathematics lectures. His ex-wife, by this moment in the film, has survived her delimited time of death (exactly seven days after having watched a haunted video cassette), suggesting that the curse of the video has been resolved. The audience too by this point is convinced the haunting is over and that the film has run into an epilogue. A subtle dissolve to black punctuates the sequence as an epilogue moment. While the professor is lost in his algebraic thoughts, his television suddenly switches itself on to a now familiar image of an abandoned drinking well – the very well down which the young Yamamura Sadako had been thrown to her untimely watery death several years previous. While the television focuses on this image, we see a grotesque vision of a decaying re-animated body

¹ The Channel 4 premier of the film during a series of late night horror films, aired 2002.

crawl out of the watery mausoleum and drag her broken corporeal figure clumsily toward the television screen. As she reaches the television screen her arm traverses the appliance's glass partition between fantasy world and reality and extends into the professor's living room. The ghost of Sadako pulls herself through the set and into the room and then violently lurches her head back revealing a single eye in extreme close up, gazing directly at the *film* camera's lens and subsequently directly at the audience. It is this moment that is universally seen as the ultimate shock moment in the film. While Sadako's clumsy movements and irresistible appearance in the professor's living space are all indeed quite scary, it is the single shot of the eye of Sadako that induces the loudest screams.

Ringu, based on the Suzuki Koji novel of the same name situates the *onryo* or vengeful ghost, who is most commonly found in tales set in the *Tokugawa* Period (1603 - 1867), in a contemporary setting. This contemporary setting is perfect for the novel's high concept, which has the ghost use her telekinetic powers to haunt her victims through current media technologies. It is the utilization of that technology's ability to disseminate mass media imagery that enables Sadako to so effectively spread her curse, virus like, upon an unsuspecting world of moving image consumers. In an overly surveilled age of picture phones, cheap portable cameras and the mass spread of the digitized image, the threat of the corruptibility of such media technology proves an effective dramatic device with which to hook a contemporary audience similarly inured to such a mediated world.

Nakata deploys several filmic strategies to create atmosphere. The film is marked by a cinematic coldness through the use of muted colours, long takes, long shots and wide angle lenses which elongate the filmic planes and continually places the characters deep within the filmic spaces. High contrast lighting makes dark areas

murky and Nakata creates a shadow world from which the monstrous is continually threatening to emerge. These strategies are contradictorily defied in the final moments, by the evenly lit close up of Sadako's crimson streaked bloodshot eye. This shot is a break in Nakata's filmic style and so becomes shocking through its contrapuntal impact upon the viewer's sense of the movie's own conventions. The minimal use of extra-diegetic music throughout the film contrasted with the continual use of a series of non-diegetic onomatopoeic whirs and groans creates tension throughout the piece, reaching its apotheosis with a high pitched shriek, punctuating the close-up of Sadako's terrible visage. Nakata works hard to establish a filmic precedent of quiet minimalism which he violates with this abrupt shot of Sadako's violent and violating gaze.

Nakata deploys what to a contemporary Japanese audience is a familiar archetypal image, albeit one placed into a contemporary context. The *onryo* is a figure that has appeared throughout Japanese cinema history and indeed is a figure from literature, graphic art, folklore and theatre. Much of the figuration of the *onryo* comes from Japan's ancient theatre traditions, *No* and *Kabuki*. Sadako's terrifying appearance in a long white gown with long, lank hair obscuring her face is a well known icon of horror, an image historically used in the Japanese theatre during the hot summer months in order to give viewers a cooling chill. But Nakata's usage of this familiar figure emphasizes the brutality of Sadako's death, correspondingly emphasizing the frailty of her former corporeality. As the lumbering creature drags her body clumsily toward the screen, her movements emphasize the brokenness of that body, shattered during her long fall down the well. As the demonic, reanimated Sadako extends her arm through the television screen and places it upon the floor of the professor's living room, one notices her hand has shed a few of its nails,

excreting blood and the calcified remains of what was once human tissue. The image reinforces Sadako's former corporeality and presents her current incarnation as a grotesque parody of what it is to be animate, to be human and a mockery of what it is to be feminine. It is this very absence of humanity within the lumbering shambolic figure which is so contrasted with the terrible vibrancy of her eye which acts as testimony to her very real presence in the professor's room.

Sadako's figuration is a mockery of femininity, as indeed Sadako is herself a mockery of femininity. While the film *Ringu* does not make explicit reference to Sadako's sexual ambiguity, Nakata is aware of the source text, author Suzuki's novel, which explains that in life Sadako had been a hermaphrodite, born with both male and female sets of reproductive organs. Nakata subtly plays with this knowledge in his construction of the final scene, by casting a man to play the wretched creature. The figure of Sadako who crawls out of the well is an ambiguous creature, with large, manly hands and a strong jaw but with hair and costuming which code her as the female vengeful spirit. It is Nakata's blurring of gender boundaries with his choice of casting, which further emphasizes the ghostly Sadako's perverse inhumanity.

All of these elements of the grotesque come together in this final terrifying sequence, but it is the image of her eye that captures the full terror of Sadako's grotesque presence. While within the film's narrative context, it is the professor whom Sadako fixes with her gaze, that vibrant eye looks both into the film apparatus (the camera's lens) as well as directly at the audience, thereby implying Sadako's placement of her curse upon her viewers. The film's story begins with an explanation of her curse in which she has decreed that whoever sees her video will die in seven days time. Her announcement is that no-one shall look into her video/mind and those who do violate her proscription and attempt to gaze at the

mediated image of Sadako shall be cursed to death. And so her final gaze is a direct response to that declared wish to not be looked upon. Her gaze then becomes the confrontational gaze, actively challenging the audience to continue to place her as spectacle. Once again the usage of ambiguous sexuality comes into play in this confrontational gaze because again as exemplary of the grotesque (animated dead, female as scopophilic spectacle, female as male), she confounds the viewer to continue to objectify her with a gaze of her own, far more terrible than that of the audience's – a gaze that threatens to kill. Ultimately, Sadako changes her medium of confrontation. Within the story world, she haunts through possessing a video cassette but in this final moment she has transgressed the boundaries of the film's fourth wall and has now laid ownership to the materiality of the film itself. Using the movie's celluloid as her new means of confrontation she directly 'haunts' the cinema audience. Thus the moment becomes terrifying. The film's success crossed cultural boundaries and spawned a new wave of Japanese horror films, re-establishing the archetypal female *onryo* as a contemporary cultural icon and putting her into the mediated media present, monstrous in her awesome ability to exploit the media technologies. The past literally resurfaces to haunt the ever progressing, media saturated globalized present.

The *Ringu* film was a huge financial success and because film is a business invested in repeating and exploiting such success, *Ringu* spawned a series of sequels and remakes and reinvigorated the Japanese horror film industry. The films that *Ringu* spawned are similarly derived from a particular socio/temporal context, which provides clues to the ideological manufacture and comprehensibility of those films. This thesis is an examination of the vengeance seeking woman in Japanese film and

is an attempt to create understanding of that figure as a product of specific Japanese ideological contexts.

Film as Discourse:

Japanese film is discursive, iterating subtextual metadiscourse on Japanese cultural identity. Japanese film is in many ways indebted to and informed by western sensibilities. But Japanese film is also indelibly inscribed by the specificities of its own cultural context and must also be read as deriving from such a culturally specific origin. Film is a medium with an international history. Film was, with its inception coinciding with international travel and colonial expansion, quickly spread throughout the world. Japanese film history began very shortly after the inception of the cinemas of America and France and thus is informed by such international cinematic codes. But Japanese cinema is also very much inflected and impacted by its own history and culture. Japanese film has a more than one hundred year history and while there are many allusions within contemporary Japanese films to western cinematic and cultural modes, there are equally many references to purely Japanese cinematic, cultural and ideological cues. Japanese film is both a product of western invention and cinematic forms, as well as being imbued with a long history independent of such western cinematic forms. Resultantly, the Japanese cinematic image double articulates. Consequently, my work reads Japanese film as ambivalent, as both deriving from and being divorced from western cinematic and cultural precedents. This work situates a history of Japanese vengeance driven women or *onryō* films, within several contexts of Japanese attitudes toward internationalisation and nationalism.

The incorporation into film's lexia of iconic cultural artefacts causes cinema to inherently reference past histories, both indigenous and international. Film, like

Mikhail Bakhtin's definition of language, is by nature inescapably reflective of prior discourse. According to Bakhtin, language, through its associations to past usages, makes reference to past events.² Japanese film similarly expresses both cinema and cultural history through allusion, repetition or through incorporating image icons which, like language, also carry cultural weight. The cinematic image, through the use of editing, costuming, and language, both spoken and written, makes quotation of past discourses. Iwasaki Akira argues:

Every Japanese film shows signs of the director's struggle with his Japaneseness – his identity, his tradition. (Iwasaki as cited in Richie 2001: 62)

Japanese film, through using profilmic material that has a connection to prior histories, expresses such 'Japaneseness'.

Critic Xiomei Chen, in his *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-Discourse in Post-Mao China* (1995), argues that mainland China has a reciprocal version of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, in which Chinese visual culture presents a mythic depiction of the western 'other', in order to create a better understanding of the Eastern self. Chen states:

Orientalism has been accompanied by instances of what might be termed *Occidentalism*, a discursive practice that, by constructing its Western Other, has allowed the Orient to participate actively and with indigenous creativity in the process of self appropriation, even after being appropriated and constructed by Western Others (1995: 5)

This binarism results in a reciprocal mythologization of the self, an idealized portrait of the east made by the east; a self induced myth of the orient that is perpetuated and consumed by that 'orient'. This myth, however, relies upon the exaggerated stereotype of what the east is in relation to the west. According to Chen, the stereotype manifests itself in iconographies of Confucianism, Taoism and icons with

² Bakhtin's dialogism is examined further in this chapter.

inherently eastern precedents. I propose Chen's *Occidentalism* can be quite readily transposed from China to Japan, with Japanese film constructing a hyperbolized, mythic image of the west which causes the films to actualize an equally hyperbolized, mythic image of the self. Significantly the mythologized eastern self can be present in film simply by repeating and reinforcing the iconographies found in the east/west binary, even when the west is removed from that particular dichotomy. The films frequently construct Japan as a set of desirable mythic traits and perpetuate an exoticization and 'orientalization' of the self.

The *onryo* can be a figure which I call the *Japanesque*. The word is derived from French art criticism and is taken from a term applied to late 19th Century, early 20th Century pottery, describing the pottery as "Japanese in style or manner" ("Japanesque" Oxford English Dictionary). The term is suitable for describing images in contemporary Japanese culture because while the term's denotation is for a particular French art movement, its connotation is for anything that evokes a stylized 'Japaneseness.' The word comes to represent a mythic oriental charm that is found in much Japanese film, images of the mythic Japanese self. The *Japanesque* differs from Roland Barthes' *Italianicity* and its reciprocal *Japanicity* in that Barthes' *Italianicity* is a part of an *otherizing* discourse, a discourse that actively constitutes the other as different from the self. In Barthes' chapter "Rhetoric of the Image" in his book *Image-Music-Text*, Barthes, in writing of an advertisement for Panzani Italian pasta and sauces, writes "The sign *Panzani* gives not simply the name of the firm but also, by its assonance, an additional signified, that of 'Italianicity'" (Barthes 1977: 33). But, Barthes continues stating:

This sign stands in a relation of redundancy with the connoted sign of the linguistic message (the Italian assonance of the name *Panzani*) and the knowledge it draws upon is already more particular; it is a specifically 'French' knowledge (an Italian

would barely perceive the connotation of the name, no more probably than he would the Italianicity of tomato and pepper), based on a familiarity with certain tourist stereotypes. (Barthes 1977: 34)

While *Italianicity* is part of an *otherizing* discourse where, in this case, the French apply the conception of 'Italianness' upon the Italian product. The *Japanesque*, conversely, is a component of a self mythologizing discourse in which the self constructs images of the self as an exotic other with or without the presence of the occidental binary. The *Japanesque*, then, is a component of *Occidentalism*, whereas *Italianicity* is a component of *Orientalism*. The *onryo*, then, becomes *Japanesque*, an image icon that hyperbolizes its relationship to Japanese literary, theatre and folkloric cultures and thereby expresses its own constituted 'Japaneseness.'

Literary Review:

This work takes as its central premise the concept that all films comprise a series of complex discourses which iterate multiple ideas through multiple semiotic means. Those iterations are made manifest primarily through the use of narrative and character dialogue, but also in much more subtle and intricate ways, through the incorporation of costuming, performance, editing and lighting. This thesis is an investigation into Japanese identity politics, using film, specifically the female *onryo* films and vengeance driven women narratives, as didactic texts which articulate the nation's struggle with its identity as Japanese.

There has been much writing in English on Japanese film, beginning with Donald Richie and Joseph Anderson's *The Japanese Film, Art and Industry*. Most academic work on Japanese cinema has been organized into historiographies, beginning with early cinema and cataloguing the growth of a national cinema. These books, while containing a wealth of information and contextual material about the growth of a nation's film industry, tend to focus more on film aesthetics without

providing deep theoretical analysis of the themes inherent in the films involved. In short, they provide exceptional accounts of the films but provide little concern to questions of meaning. One work of particular merit is Peter B. High's exceptional *Imperial Screen, Japanese Film Culture in the Fifteen Years War, 1931-1945*. Situating his analysis of film history specifically in the contexts of nationalism and Japan's 15 year military campaign both leading to and during the Second World War, High's work is extraordinarily comprehensive providing detailed analysis of the films as a product of conflicting and ambivalent desires inherent in war.

Recent scholarship in Japanese cinema history has produced alternative methods of organizing film history as a series of contexts from within which the films are produced. Such organizational structures are promoted by Isolde Standish in her *A New History of Japanese Cinema, a Century of Narrative Film*, Eric Cazdyn in his *The Flash of Capital, Film and Geopolitics in Japan* and Scott Nygren's *Time Frames, Japanese Cinema and the Unfolding of History*. These works represent an exciting movement in English language Japanese film scholarship, which proposes that meaning inherent in film (and through its corollary, understanding in reception of those films) is indelibly inflected by the disparate contexts from which film is produced. This new method of organizing Japanese film history proposes a multiperspectival approach to understanding the films as embodying multiple, often ambivalent ideologies. Of her own work, Standish states "this study takes the view that there is no 'grand narrative' of history that neatly collates all the facts and puts them into place. There are, however, identifiable discourses of history that link political, social and cultural trends to specific time frames" (2006: 14). Standish's work identifies a number of moments – modernism, transgression, gender issues – and organizes her analysis of the films around such cultural/temporal contexts.

Few books, with the exception of the extraordinary writings of Keiko McDonald, Nygren, Standish and Cazdyn, provide comprehensive analysis of films by disparate filmmakers, and fewer still attempt to create connections between the films and the contexts from which they were produced. The most common type of book on Japanese cinema is the edited anthology where a collection of disparate writers provide analysis of individual films. While these books are often extremely informative there is little sustained thought on a single topic and often there is little continuity between the disparate writers' theoretical positionings.

The *onryo* in Japanese film is a complex figure that has been little analyzed in Japanese film scholarship. Gregory Barrett devotes a chapter of his book *Archetypes in Japanese Film*, to the female vengeful spirit. Cultural critic Ian Buruma gives passing reference to her in his chapter "Demon Women" in his work *A Japanese Mirror*. To date, the most comprehensive analysis of the figure exists on the internet, with several websites devoted to the film *Ring*. With the success of the *Ring* franchise, there has been an explosion of populist analyses of this film, the best of which is *The Ringu Companion* by Denis Meikle, which devotes most of Meikle's energies to details of the *Ringu* novels and film adaptations. Meikle does provide some history of the *onryo*, but is cursory at best with little concern for the ideological ramifications of such figurations of women. There are also countless websites devoted to Japanese horror, but these amount to fanzines with much opinion but virtually no critical analysis. There is very little theoretical work written on Japanese horror, with the exception of the newly released anthology edited by J. McRoy, *The Japanese Horror Film*. This work, while comprehensive, compiles articles from various contributors, who again analyze single films and so there is little continuity or cohesion to its survey of the Japanese horror film. There is detailed analysis of the

films *Ring* and *Rasen* (1998) in two essays compiled in the anthology, although while analyzing the films, they do not particularly concern themselves with the history of the *onryō*. There is as of yet, no comprehensive work on the *onryō* itself. Yet the *onryō* is a recurrent figure in Japanese popular culture and the popular imagination.

My work is not an attempt to catalogue a history of the Japanese horror movie. Rather, this work is an attempt to create understanding about how a certain type of Japanese horror, namely the films that deploy the vengeance seeking female, create meaning with that particular icon and how that meaning is contingent upon the ideological contexts from within which the films were produced. This work is an attempt to analyze attitudes toward female sexuality and power and in some respects continues along some of the work established by Carol Clover in her work on the American horror film of the 1970s, *Men Women and Chainsaws*. Using a combination of feminism and psychoanalysis, Clover argues that the films provide ego identification for young men, with the female protagonists. She argues for a protofeminist reading of these films because the young female ‘final girl’, far from being a victim of sadistic masculist impulses, frequently confronts the male aggressor despite her status as a pre-adult woman (a census figure that provides little status in a socio-economic environment) and often defeats or at least confounds the monstrous male. Clover’s work deals explicitly with horror films from America spanning the Vietnam to Reagan eras and deals primarily with audience identification, assuming a young male audience. My work differs from Clovers’ because my concern is for the ideological society which produced such films, rather than the demographic which consumed them. I see film as a product of various external and internal competing forces; studio demands, budgetary restrictions,

ensorship and directorial intention at times colluding with and at times reacting to those external forces. Thus, rather than assuming the films speak for an audience and its desires, I treat the films as a series of complicated conflicting statements shaped by those several factors.

Two scholars whose work is deeply influential to my methodology are Keiko I. McDonald and Eric Cazdyn, who has created a whole new means of looking at Japanese film history. McDonald, because she seamlessly interweaves two seemingly contradictory positions into her analysis; analysing a film as an autonomous work while simultaneously identifying its cultural specificities. Writing in her introduction to the anthology *Reading a Japanese Film, Cinema in Context*, states:

If pressed to account for my critical method in this book, I would describe it as eclectic, a carefully considered combination of New Criticism, neo-formalism, and a cultural/historical approach. Here let me briefly outline a uniform approach to film. I begin by treating each film as a finished product rather than as a work in progress. I consider each work as a self contained entity with its own structure (McDonald 2006: 14 – 15).

McDonald's methodology carries ambivalence, seeing film as a self contained semic text, but despite that containment is inextricably a product of the society from which it was produced and demands to be read as such.

The second scholar whose work is of significance to my own methodology, is Eric Cazdyn. In his work *The Flash of Capital, Film and Geopolitics in Japan*, Cazdyn argues for a direct address to the interrelatedness between Japanese capitalism and geopolitics, with film criticism. Cazdyn's project is to remodel the traditional method of analyzing Japanese cinema. Cazdyn begins his project by stating:

Like every medium, film exceeds itself. It bleeds into the meanings of education and public policy, into the landscapes we see when looking out a train window and

on the urban streets we walk when killing time. Likewise, Japan – the nation – exceeds itself. It bleeds into all that which is not Japan; into the workings and meanings of the world system; into our imaginations, whether we live there or not, whether we know it or not, whether we like it or not. The task of this work is to theorize a cultural history based on these excesses. (Cazdyn 2002: 1)

Similarly, the task of my own work is to theorize a cultural history that begins with the notion that Japanese film is constituted by these ‘excesses,’ both real and imagined. Indeed film does exceed itself and so part of the work of analyzing Japanese film is to organize these excesses, the interplay between the text and its ideological contexts in order to provide a more comprehensive analysis of the filmic text.

Cazdyn, in his *Flash of Capital* examines prior historiographies of Japanese film and isolates several methods of analyzing Japanese film. These methodologies have traditionally been organized by various structures: organized by director; chronologically organized; organized around the collective (studio systems); organized through genre or type; or organized through the notion of the author/‘genius’. Cazdyn’s project is to conceive of a new, more comprehensive organizational structure which isolates the moments within Japanese modern history in which the forms of both cinematic and capitalist categories mutate – the moments in which capitalism and film history converge and the contextual subtext begins to interrelate with the film form and the narrative content becomes indicative of a larger social context. Cazdyn posits:

To make sense of these formal relations and their transformations, I produce the concept of ‘problem cinema.’ Problem cinema refers to the historically dominant problem with which all cinematic production must (in however unconscious or indirect a way) come to terms. The three problems I identify are coterminous – they don’t begin and end on a linear timeline but exist simultaneously – and, at the same time, correspond to three moments of Japanese modernity: (1) between being colonized and being a colonizer nation of the pre-World War II moment; (2) between the individual and collective of the postwar moment; and (3) between the national and the transnational of the contemporary moment. (Cazdyn 2002: 5)

Cazdyn dissects Japanese film history into three trends, each trend shaped by a large scale historical moment – the pre war, post-war, and contemporary periods. Yet because capitalist ideology is slow to change, the ideologies inherent within the periods are not solely found within each of these three movements and are therefore coterminous.

Cazdyn, in his work, provides a Marxist analysis of ideology, presuming capitalism to be the sole ideology, subordinating all other hegemonic and ideological structures as secondary to economic systems. My own work presumes all moments of struggle as indicative of where ideology lies. While Cazdyn presents capitalism as the sole ideological context, mutating at these three historical junctures, I consider Capitalism the *prime* ideological context, but one which encompasses all power struggles be they monetary, gender based, nationally motivated, or politically motivated. My conception of ideology is to conceive of multiple, competing *ideologies* which causes film to reflect various gender/nationalist/nostalgic discourses.

Parameters of scope:

Analysis of Japanese film history is complicated with a post-Foucauldian conception of history as discursive. Scott Nygren, in his *Time Frames, Japanese Cinema and the Unfolding of History*, discusses the difficulties in reading history as a series of *cause/effect* relationships, challenging teleological constructions of history.

Nygren states:

Historical writing usually proceeds by a kind of integrative accumulation, so that all research and findings are assembled into the appearance of a seamless narrative that nowhere questions its own foundations. The effect is to construct a conception of history as if the past were always already there, simply waiting to be discovered, despite the simultaneous assertion that only the most recent research allows us to see history as it really was. (Nygren 2007: vii)

Nygren contrasts the previous construction of history with his conception of history as dynamic. “Different discourses compete to account for the events and forces that drive history as a dynamic process, and both the narrative and objects of history change depending on the discursive context through which accounts are produced” (2007: viii). My own work is a type of historiography, but the process of cataloguing history is complicated by several factors. The very nature of history has been radically altered, and no longer can history be seen as a series of chronologically ordered cause/effect relationships. Rather, history must be seen as a plurality of competing narratives, each told from differing perspectives.

This book is a history of the female *onryo*, or vengeance seeking female ghost, in film. In other words, this book is an attempt to trace some of those competing discourses as they relate to the female *onryo* in Japanese cinema. It is a book about power and power relations, relations which manifest themselves as ideology. Taking the *onryo* as a symbolic figure that is both emblematic of as well as deployed through power relations, this book is an examination into the *onryo* archetype as an ideological figure. Ideology both iterates and is itself (re)iterated and so ‘meaning’ or rather the various ‘meanings’ of the *onryo* are mutable, that mutability being contingent on the ideological context within which the *onryo* is deployed. My work then reconfigures history, not as a series of chronological orderings but rather as the articulation of discourse as produced in various differing ideological contexts as they relate to vengeance driven female narratives. To clarify, the work is an examination into a number of historical moments each with ideology germane to that temporal site, and how the *onryo*’s manifestations are contingent upon that historical specificity. The ideological contexts are divided along similar lines to the methodology proposed by Eric Cazdyn in his *The Flash of Capital*,

although with a slight variation. While recognizing capitalism to be the prime organizing structure, this thesis argues for greater plurality of ideologies in three temporal/sociological contexts: colonialism; post-war autonomy; and globalization. By greater plurality of ideologies, I mean that rather than focussing on capitalism as the only ideology present in these contexts, I also analyze ideologies of gender, nationalism and religion within these three overarching contexts.

Each context presents its own peculiar problems, and Japanese film manifests the society's interrelating to these contexts. These 'problems' are manifest in the films' usage of the *onryō* and women's vengeance. As Cazdyn effectively argues, it is not the actual operations of capitalism and the economy within Japan during these moments that are of interest, but rather 'how a particular individual ideologically invests in capitalism as an adequate system to provide for the welfare of human beings' (Cazdyn 2002: 3). My own work is similarly less concerned with the economics of capitalism than the participation of individuals in the Japanese form of capitalism. My work finally is not about capitalism, colonialism, nationalism/nationhood, gender, et al, but rather the imagined relationships between the Japanese people through cinema, with these various structures and contexts and how that imaginary relationship is manifest within the *onryō* film.

There is much in this thesis that deals with films in which the *onryō* is absent. While this book is organized as a history of the *onryō*, it is also a history of the ideological belief systems from which the *onryō* was produced, perpetuated, reinforced and also *repressed*. Throughout Japan's rising nationalism, in countless efforts to promote particular Japanese value systems, the *onryō* iconography was deemed explicitly contrary to the wartime ideologies and consequently prohibited. The figure then was repressed and driven out of popular culture. This work is as

interested in the significance of the *onryo*'s absences as her appearances, and closely examines films in which the figure is itself absent but in which elements of the *onryo* myth surface. The film also examines in detail films in which the proscribed female behaviours were presented, particularly during the war era, in which women were conditioned to behave in particular manners and feel proscribed (improbable) emotions.

This thesis focuses on texts which are available on video or DVD release either in Japan or internationally. All the films screened are available (with searching) to screen on video or DVD in some form. As my work deals with Japanese film as a site of *popular* attitudes and imagination, then my work is limited to those films which have involved the investment of money for the purposes of restoration and preservation. The films selected for this thesis then, invariably reflect popular, market driven attitudes and tastes but both from the time of creation and at the point of redistribution. There is a question of cost involved in recovering, restoring and releasing archived films for commercial purposes. A distributor must first purchase the rights for a film and then invest money in the restoration and digitization processes as well as fund the distribution and marketing of the film. The distributor will select films that will best create a financial return. Consequently distribution companies tend to release films which have a market appeal – this in itself then creates further bias in Japanese cinema's presentation of *Japaneseness*. This raises further questions about the nature of ideology inherent in a national cinema, as the films which are available for commercial viewing are now doubly selected, chosen and financed at the point of production and then again chosen and financed at the point of re-release. Happily, the selection of films chosen for distribution is generally predicated by the film's popularity upon its initial release

and so distributors tend to select films which are deemed to have historical significance or interest. Sadly this means that my work too is of its time and reflects an attitude toward Japanese cinema as derived from its restored and released films as per an early 21st century audience's demands. As the cost of digitization and digital storage continues to fall, and archives begin to put their entire catalogue online thereby restoring to the international public domain films which are of no interest to commercial distributors, the nature and study of Japanese cinema history will no doubt change again.

Throughout my work, I introduce films with the original Japanese title followed by the western title in parentheses. However, when referring to a film in detail, for sake of ease and as this work is addressed to a western readership, I use the western name. Japanese names are given in the Japanese style with family name first and given name second.

Chapter Breakdown:

This thesis is broken down into three chapters, plus an introduction and conclusion. The chapter formation loosely follows Cazdyn's conception of an organizational structure, dividing the films into three different contexts: The introduction of imperialism to Japan; the post-war period of autonomous governance; the contemporary period of globalization. Of course, as Cazdyn argues, these categories are at times co-terminus and some films studied as indicative of post-war ideology are also produced in an era of globalization and can indeed reflect disparate ideologies.

Chapter 1, 'The Lyrical Past, Sounds Like Modernity: The *Onryo* Film in the Context of Imperialism', examines the vengeance seeking woman in the films produced in the era of Japan's first encounters with western styled imperialism. The

chapter subdivides imperialism into four differing sub-contexts: The first encounters in the *Meiji* Era; the democratization debates of the *Taisho* (1912-1926) and early *Showa* (1926-1989) periods; the rising nationalism which led to Japan's own attempts at imperialism which culminated in the Second World War; the U.S. Occupation. The chapter begins with the introduction of the west to the closed borders of *Meiji* (1868-1912) Japan, charting the introduction of film into Japan and examining the first attempts to construct a Japanese cinematic language. The use of *onnagata*, male actors trained to play female roles, as representative of womanliness, is examined. The second sub-context situates film in a period of democratisation and universal suffrage. Japanese cinema began to depict women as a site of scopophilic pleasure for men, pleasure derived from the female body. As film strived for greater verisimilitude, the narratives began to structure women as a commodity in an increasingly commodity driven society. The films of the Second World War became overtly propagandistic and censorship dicta prevented the *onryō* from being deployed in film. The vengeance seeking woman was replaced with the spiritist woman, a puppet whose function was to promote self sacrifice for the good of the nation. The chapter finishes with the American occupation, and the occupation government's censorship of the films. Japanese film was officially mandated to promote the spirit of democracy and vengeance and retribution were decreed inextricably associated with feudalism and were therefore censored by the occupation government.

Chapter 2, "Nostalgia and Self Governance and the Quest for Japaneseness" examines the *onryō* films of the post-war period. After the occupation ended, filmmakers were free to film subject matter of their choosing. The films of this period begin a reinvestment into a Japanese formal aesthetic, attempting to recapture a 'pure' Japanese look and style. The films took on the *Japanesque*, using symbols

of 'Japaneseness' to express a national identity. Cazdyn argues the *shutaisei* or subjectivity debates penetrated all elements of thought and aesthetic culture. This chapter looks at film as discursive of new subjectivity. The films depict the past with stylized mastery, constructing images of Japan's feudal past with elaborate sets, lavish budgets and painting the past as a glorious fantastic realm of grace, beauty and exquisite discipline. The films of this period also create a direct relationship between Japanese high culture and the *onryo*.

Chapter 3, 'Technologies of Fear: The *Onryo* in the Age of Globalization' examines contemporary Japanese cinema and the relationship between the *onryo* and the nation's immense economic growth and instability of the 1990s. Japanese society became dependent upon a global economy as Japanese began to export labour and manufactured goods around the world. Both economic surplus and recession affected the film industry immensely and the films' narrative content was equally affected by global business. As Japan began to engage in contemporary economic *Empire*, the films began to reflect the competing ideologies of economic exploitation and the rising anti-globalisation movement which capitalizes on *Empire's* global destruction. In the contemporary films the *onryo* is deployed as a metaphor for the social milieu. While the contemporary films have lost many of the high culture associations of the post occupation films, generally falling into the category of populist film, the vengeance driven woman continues to borrow iconography from a Japanese cultural specificity. These films, rather than alluding to a theatre or folkloric tradition, allude to a past filmic tradition. In the contemporary films, the icon of the scary woman has become a simulacrum, so deeply ingrained into the collective unconscious that the image bears no direct relationship to the theatre and cultural traditions. The *onryo* in contemporary film is a manifestation of

fears of globalization and its corporations' rapacious appetites. She therefore is equally rapacious in her desires for vengeance, thereby moving from *Japanesque* to grotesque.

Defining Terms:

This thesis is predicated on two notions, that the *onryō* is an archetype, and the image of the *onryō* is ideological. The *onryō*, as an archetype, exists in the collective unconscious. Isolde Standish, beginning with Raymond Williams' study of language, argues "images, like language, form part of a continuous social process that both shapes individual consciousness and to which spectators and viewing audiences, to a limited extent, actively contribute through their acceptance or non acceptance of dramatic, stylistic and technical innovations" (2006: 14). My own work presumes that images and their resultant ideological meanings are shaped through the interaction of individuals with society through 'acceptance or non-acceptance'. In order to examine the *onryō* in film history, *Archetype, Ideology and Collective Unconscious* must first be defined.

Archetype:

Gregory Barrett begins his work on archetypes in Japanese film with Carl G. Jung's definition of the archetype as "The God-image in man" (Barrett 1989: 19). Jung states "Archetypes, so far as we can observe and explain them at all, manifest themselves only through their ability to *organize* images and ideas, and this is always an unconscious process which cannot be detected until afterwards" (Jung quoted in Storr, 1973: 25). Jung argues that the archetype is an *a posteriori* classification or organizational structure that groups together like images and concepts. An archetype, as Jung envisions it, is a figure which when reduced to its constituent parts, spans time and cultures and can be found through countless, unconnected narratives. When

reduced to her constituent parts, the female *onryo* is such a figure, essentialized to a woman who seeks vengeance for perceived wrongs. But with such a reduction of the archetype, the implication is that the meaning inherent in that archetype is similarly reductive. If one were to conceive of the archetype as being similar to a word in a lexicon, one can argue that meaning is inextricably tied to that word (cat = four legged feline). If the archetype can be reduced to its most basic constituent and repeatable parts, the argument follows that the meaning of the archetype is similarly inherent and immutable.

Paradoxically, the obverse is the case, with meaning not existing within the figure itself, but rather deriving from the *deployment* of that figure. The meaning in the archetype is akin to the connotative meanings of language. If one were to examine language closely, one is made aware that meaning in words is arbitrary and ascribed to the word through collective agreement. The meaning of words can and does change through colloquial usage. I conceive the archetype to be analogous to the colloquial word, as a meaning bearing vessel but one in which meaning is contingent upon that vessel's deployment.

In his introduction to *Jung, Selected Writings*, Anthony Storr provides an accounting of Jung's belief in the cultural evolution of the archetype. Storr paraphrases Jung:

It was only in 1950 that the Pope proclaimed the Assumption of the Virgin Mary as part of divine revelation. Jung considered this as a significant step toward incorporating femininity into the image of the divine, and pointed out that the impulse to do this did not come from the ecclesiastical authorities but from the Catholic masses 'who have insisted more and more vehemently on this development. Their insistence is, at bottom, the urge of the archetype to realize itself' (Storr 1973: 27).

In this example, the archetype of the virgin mother is re-visioned as a part of divinity and meaning is actively changed in order to encompass the values of contemporary

belief systems. While this change in the archetype was actively conducted by the Pope, it is not a manifestation of his individual desires because the Pope and the Catholic Church are acting in concert with ‘the Catholic masses.’ The evolution of the archetype is a dialectical process where literature, media culture, film and religion construct the archetype in accordance with the ideology of the masses.

While Gregory Barrett uses Jung’s notion of the archetype as ‘the God image in Man’ as an origination point, he deviates from a Jungian model of the archetype’s evolution and transformation, preferring to emphasize the work of Robert N. Bellah. While Jung argues that the archetype is shaped by the active desires of a collective unconscious, Bellah posits that “archetypes are constructed in a personal unconscious as a result of a child’s interaction with its sociophysical environment, for example, the relation with the mother produces a mother archetype” (Bellah as represented in Barrett 1989: 20). Barrett’s work, however, makes a fatal logical flaw in his use of Bellah. Bellah’s theory of the archetypes’ evolution is expressly author centred, where the individual artist shapes the archetype in accordance with his or her own experiences of society and its icons/tropes. Barrett, contradictorily, in explaining the relationship between the archetype and popular culture, states:

Characters are the constituents of realistic drama and literary art. Archetypes are the stuff fantastic entertainments and commercial films are made of. Archetypes are probably the best way to study popular culture, since they are not only the focus of popular sentiments but also the simple embodiments of endearing values. (Barrett 1989: 14)

While Barrett’s work presumes to examine the evolution of the archetype as derived from the individual artist’s unconscious, it is precisely the archetype as a ‘focus of popular sentiment’ and as an ‘embodiment of endearing values’ that the archetype cannot simply be a manifestation of a single author’s subconscious preoccupations.

This thesis proposes to return the evolution of the archetype to a Jungian model, in which individual artists propose variants of the archetype which are both predicated, and then either accepted or rejected, by the masses. While individual artists do indeed create variants of the archetype, those variants are then given to the general public to compete with other such variants. The viewing public, then, is inundated with myriad various competing versions of an archetype. The population consumes and reinforces certain desirable images of the archetype while relegating others to obscurity, thus returning the archetype to the popular unconscious.

A contemporary example of this is with the Japanese *Ringu* cycle of films. In 1998, two films were released simultaneously, *Ringu* (*Ring*) and *Rasen* (*The Spiral*), both films involving the same vengeful woman, Sadako, and released on the same date in order to capitalize on a strong marketing campaign. In *Ring*, the spectral antagonist is ugly, brooding and given little motivation for her terrifying and insatiable appetite for destruction. *The Spiral*, a film that continues the tale of Sadako and derived from the same source material, reconfigures the villainess as mysteriously beautiful and tragic. *Ring* was immensely popular at the box office but *The Spiral* was such a massive failure that a second sequel *Ringu 2* (*Ring 2*) was commissioned and *The Spiral* has all but disappeared. Clearly two competing and contradictory permutations of the vengeful spirit archetype as manufactured by two different directors, but ultimately the popular reception of the motiveless Sadako of *Ring* reinforces this version of the *onryo* archetype. The *Ring* film was remade several times and spawned numerous horror films which present similar ghostly figures, while the popular disdain of *The Spiral's* Sadako resulted in her version of

the vengeful spirit trope being relatively forgotten and relegated to obscurity.³ While the author may indeed influence the shaping of the archetype through parody or pastiche, ultimately it is the popular response to the author's work that reinforces the archetype, thereby returning the archetype to the society's collective unconscious.

Ideology:

Language carries weight and with every single semic utterance, be it as a word, an image, or an icon, the semes exceed their intended meaning. Christian Metz, writing in the 1970s, in his book *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema* attempts to create a structural approach to understanding the ways film organizes meaning. Presuming film is organized like a language, Metz argues that the image is akin to a fully formed statement, that the image functions as a complex form of articulation in which meaning is denoted. Metz organizes film language into two axes, the syntagmatic, the order of organization; and the paradigmatic, the selection of what images are shown to the viewer. According to Metz's analogy of denotation, if we imagine denotation on a Cartesian graph we have the x axes which is the syntagm and the y axes which is the paradigm. Along the paradigmatic axes are a series of nodal points which the syntagm organizes into denotative language. However, Metz fails to consider the complex connotative meanings of the image. Each Cartesian point flashes off multiple connotative meanings, each triggering its own pathway. To provide an example from *Ringu* the final scene denotes a television which switches on, revealing a well out of which a woman climbs. When you read the significations at the connotative level, the sequence becomes metadiscursive: A television switches on – it is a modern television situated within a clean, modern apartment. It is prepossessed with automatic ability linking it to

³ A more detailed analysis of these films occurs in chapter four.

Sadako's telekinesis and the supernatural world of *Shinto* mysticism. The television shows a well, an old abandoned well in a rural area, indicating that Sadako is from a forgotten past divorced from the technologized present as symbolized by the modern television that is showing this scene. Sadako draws herself from the well. She has long hair which configures her as the *onryo* of *No* drama, an ancient theatre tradition, but she is being shown within the context of modern society, shown on a modern television, which indicates a conflict of tradition/modernity.

It is because of this intricate web of meanings that film exceeds itself. But it is also within this web that ideology comes into existence, being both expressed and reiterated by the associative meanings inherent in the image. Ideology, much like the archetype, is proposed and shaped by individuals, and then is either consumed and reinforced by popular reception, or declined. Ideology then is a construct of the participation of the individual within society. Consequently, film becomes ambivalent, both critiquing and reinforcing ideology. *Ringu* can be read as critical of Japanese nationalism and isolationist policy (the rural past penetrates the present, haunting it to devastating effect) and paradoxically be read as critical of contemporary globalization and its resultant cultural hybridity (modernity and its technology are used to destroy society). The film becomes ambivalent because of its relationship to ideology and can be interpreted in competing manners because of the complexity in connotations of the iconographies used.

The notion of ideology as a political tool was first established in the writings of Karl Marx in *Das Kapital* and *The German Ideology*. Critic Terry Eagleton summarizes Marx's conception of ideology. Eagleton states:

Ideologies are sets of discursive strategies for displacing, recasting or spuriously accounting for realities which prove embarrassing to a ruling power; and in doing so, they contribute to that power's self legitimation. (Eagleton 1994: 8)

For Marx, ideology is a system of masks which work to mystify the proletariat in order to maintain power for the ruling class, leading Marx to state that the ideas of the ruling class are the ruling ideas. David McLellan, in his book *Ideology* (1995), argues that through the repetition and simplification of Marxist theory, the concept of ideology came to the forefront but while Marx posited that ideology was always negative, in the post Marx writings ideology came to be associated with Socialism as a form of counter ideological discourse.

Drawing on Marx, Antonio Gramsci examines and defines the concept of hegemony in his *Prison Notebooks*. For Gramsci, hegemony was the ways in which the ruling class gained the consent of the exploited. McLellan explains Gramsci's notion of hegemony:

The Bourgeoisie obtained the consent of virtually the whole of society to its governance through so organizing the relations of production that its own dominance seemed natural. (McLellan 1995: 26).

The naturalization of the bourgeoisie's power implicates the proletariat in the perpetuation of their own subjugation. Gramsci, in his *Prison Notebooks* writes, "The supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as 'domination' and as 'intellectual and moral leadership'" (Gramsci 1971: 57). Consequently, "one should not count only on the material force which power gives in order to exercise an effective leadership" (1971: 59). Leadership is exercised through various ways.

Gramsci continues:

The intellectuals of the historically (and concretely) progressive class, in the given conditions, exercise such a power of attraction that, in the last analysis, they end up by subjugating the intellectuals of the other social groups; they thereby create a system of solidarity between all the intellectuals, with bonds of a psychological nature (vanity, etc.) and often of a caste character (technicojuridical, corporate, etc.). (Gramsci 1971: 60-61)

The significance of this is that the ruling class does not need to revert to force in order to subjugate the proletariat to its power; ideology is weapon enough and hegemony causes people to actively participate in their own subjugation through vanity or guilt feelings. Yet for Gramsci, ideology remains a tool of the ruling classes with the subordinate class culpable in their subordination.

Wilhelm Reich contributes greatly to the understanding of hegemony in his writings about the rise of fascism. It is in Reich, a student of Freud, in which ideology becomes first connected to the unconscious as a manifestation of repressed desires. Hegemony, then, works by appealing to the subconscious of those whom ideology indoctrinates. Reich argues “the Fascist ideology arose from sadistic impulses that were given a political rationalization in times of crises” (Reich as quoted in McLellan 1995: 26). Ideology then becomes interconnected with the deep rooted functions of the human unconscious, making manifest the ‘sadistic impulses’ of the subjugated proletariat who provide consent to the dominant class and reproduce and perpetuate the ideologies of that ruling class.

The writer who most contributed to our contemporary understanding of ideology was Louis Althusser. In his essay “On Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” Althusser is critical of Marx’s view that ideology is mere dream or mystification as manufactured by a small ruling elite and then imposed upon society. For Althusser, ideology is “the representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (Althusser 1971: 152). Ideology is indeed a type of mystification but one which lies in the mind of the subject, rather than one which is simply imposed upon the subjugated by the ruling class. Working from Gramsci’s notion of hegemony, Althusser begins the discussion that ideology is an *effect* rather than a tool of the ruling class. Althusser posits that we commonly

call various ideologies (religious, ethical, legal, political, etc.) *world outlooks*, but these world outlooks are largely imaginary and do not ‘correspond to reality’ (1971: 154), consequently these world outlooks are simply illusion. These outlooks do, however, make allusion to reality and are therefore interpretable as illusion/allusion. Ideology is not the real conditions of existence but rather society’s representation to itself of that real existence, leading Althusser to state: “it is the *imaginary nature of this relation* which underlies all the imaginary distortion that we can observe (if we do not live in its truth) in all ideology” (1971: 155) Yet it is the ruling class who own the means of disseminating ideology, who provides to the subjugated classes the ideas and images with which the subjugated reference in constructing that imaginary relation.

Ideology does not work through coercion, as previous scholars maintain but rather through *collusion*. In his essay “On Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” Althusser argues that ideology is spread through the use of *ideological state apparatuses* which he calls ISAs. The ISAs work through mass dissemination of ideas in order to indoctrinate the public into the ruling ideology. Althusser argues there are two types of state apparatuses; the repressive state apparatuses and the ideological state apparatuses. The repressive state apparatuses (RSAs) spread ideology through violence and the threat of violence. Examples of the RSAs are the police, the army, the courts – the agents of the state that demand people conform to the ‘laws’ of a society – who enforce these laws through censorship and punishment. The second, and vastly more subtle form of state apparatuses, are those which disseminate the ideas of the state and who perpetuate ideology through various institutions. Examples of the ISAs are the religious system; the educational system; the familial system; the legal; political, trade union; communications and cultural

institutions. However, the fundamental difference between the RSAs and the ISAs, is that while the RSAs function under the express directives of the state the ISAs are virtually all privately owned, yet still promote the values of the state. But regardless of ownership, Althusser notes that the ISAs continue to promote the ideology of the ruling elites. "It is unimportant whether the institutions in which they are realized are 'public' or 'private'. What matters is how they function. Private institutions can perfectly well 'function' as Ideological State Apparatuses." (Althusser in Eagleton 1994: 91). Ideology, then, is within the subject (the individual's imaginary relation to the real), but repeated and reinforced through the ISAs.

The ISAs indoctrinate the subject into the state ideology through interpellation. Interpellation is the self positioning the self as a subject and responding to that subjectification. Althusser describes interpellation as akin to a police officer hailing a citizen (Hey, you!). We respond to the hail because of innate guilt feelings. We too respond to ideology in an unconscious manner, accepting the hail of the ISAs because of the inequities between the individual and the state, and the attendant guilt feelings inherent to that relationship.

We are born into ideology and raised into ideology first by the familial structure (family ISA), then placed into schools and bombarded with media and cultural artefacts. But ideology indoctrinates us by 'hailing' us and we reciprocally respond and accept ideology through its naturalization. Interpellation is an effect of Gramsci's hegemony and works at the level of the unconscious, interpellating through appealing to the subjugated's unconscious. Althusser was Marxist and his theorizations were predominantly concerned with methods of material production.

Slavoj Zizek, writing about the Marxist theorists argues:

(For the Marxists) (1) there exists a certain fundamental antagonism possessing an ontological priority to 'mediate' all other antagonisms, determining their place and their specific weight (class antagonism, economic exploitation); (2) historical development brings about, if not a necessity, at least an 'objective possibility' of solving this fundamental antagonism and, in this way, mediating all other antagonisms. (Zizek 1989: 3)

Marxism reduces all antagonisms as subsidiaries of the principle antagonism – the conflicts resulting from material production – positing that all other conflicts (gender inequities, racism, etc) will be solved with the socialist revolution. As long as there are inequities in the distribution of capital, there will continue to be sexism, racism, ecologism (?) et al. But the Marxists only come to this conclusion because they too are subject to ideology, albeit a Marxist ideology.

Karl Mannheim, writing in the 1930s states:

As long as someone does not call his own position into question but regards it as absolute, while interpreting his opponents' ideas as a mere function of the social positions they occupy, the decisive step forward has not yet been taken. (Mannheim 1936: 68)

Althusser becomes clouded by his own ideological bias, insisting that all ideology has a capitalist function. Althusser delimits his definition of ideology to the perpetuation of the *bourgeois* status quo, when in fact ideology operates to preserve power in any and all given structures.

The position that all ideology becomes subordinate to the ideology of material production is countered by the post Marxist tradition. Zizek posits that post Marxism argues "almost any of the antagonisms which, in the light of Marxism, appear to be secondary can take over this essential role of mediator for all the others" (Zizek 1989: 4). Any one of the other antagonisms can be recognized as the dominant ideology, depending on the particular context. Ideology, then, makes itself transparent in any power conflict. Feminism makes patriarchal ideology transparent through its criticism of the patriarchal status quo. Similarly polluting was not seen as

ideological until ecologists began to question pollution and the ideologies of polluting became transparent.

In this refined model of ideology, it continues to be the imaginary relation of an individual to its real conditions, but through applying Zizek's notional concept of various competing antagonisms, this imaginary relationship is in constant flux and is malleable depending on the context of that particular antagonism. We do not function under a single ideology, rather, we function under several constantly evolving ideologies which make themselves transparent in times of confrontation.

Collective Unconscious:

Both *ideology* and the *archetype* exist in the personal and collective unconscious. There are two systems of unconscious thought. Carl G. Jung in his *Collected Works Vol. 9* defines the unconscious as developed by Freud:

The concept of the unconscious was limited to denoting the state of repressed or forgotten contents. Even with Freud, who makes the unconscious – at least metaphorically – take the stage as the acting subject, it is really nothing but the gathering place of forgotten and repressed contents, and has a functional significance thanks only to these. (Jung 1969; vol 9. para 3)

Jung labels the Freudian unconscious, the repository of forgotten and repressed contents, the *personal* unconscious. He calls it the personal because all contents within the unconscious were at some point filtered through the individual's conscious and is therefore unique to that individual.

The personal unconscious contains lost memories, painful ideas that are repressed, subliminal perceptions, by which are meant sense-perceptions that were not strong enough to reach consciousness, and finally, contents that are not yet ripe for consciousness. (Jung 1969: vol. 7 para 103)

This personal unconscious is accompanied by what Jung terms the *collective unconscious*, which is 'not a personal acquisition but is inborn' (1969: vol 9 para 3).

The collective unconscious exists outside of the personal unconscious. Jung explains:

The personal layer ends at the earliest memories of infancy, but the collective layer comprises the pre-infantile period, that is, the residues of ancestral life. Whereas the memory-images of the personal unconscious are, as it were, filled out, because they are images personally experienced by the individual, the archetypes of the collective unconscious are not filled out because they are forms not personally experienced. (Jung 1969: vol 7 para 118)

Archetypes are abstract ideas that are shared by society but not personally experienced. The collective unconscious is where these abstract 'not filled out' ideas exist, independently of the individual. Jung's conception of the collective unconscious is flawed because Jung, motivated by the specificities of the various manifestations of the collective unconscious rather than examining the mode of transmission, fails to explore the ways in which the collective unconscious perpetuates those archetypes. While Jung posits the collective unconscious is the shared thought of society through its various tangible permutations, he fails to probe the question of how the collective unconscious operates within the spaces in which this abstract theoretical concept exists, frequently changing and contradicting his conception of it through his life's work. For Jung, the collective unconscious appears to be a quasi-mystical nebulous free form thought space that all individuals can psychically tap into. This conception of the collective unconscious has frequently been charged with a form of pseudo-scientific mysticism. Jung responds to that charge in his collected works:

Although this reproach of mysticism has frequently been levelled at my concept, I must emphasize yet again that the concept of the collective unconscious is neither a speculative nor a philosophical but an empirical matter. The question is simply this: are there or are there not unconscious universal forms of this kind (*archetypes*)? If they exist, then there is a region of the psyche which one can call the collective unconscious. (Jung 1969: vol 9 para 92)

Jung defines the collective unconscious through examples, arguing that because the archetypes do exist in all cultures, that is proof enough that a collective unconscious must exist. Jung is contestable precisely because he fails to systematically question

the ways in which archetypes are transmitted and refuses to delineate what the collective unconscious is before exploring its manifestations.

I propose that the collective unconscious exists in the connotations of signifiers, in the ‘excess baggage’ of language. Jung’s conception of the collective unconscious as the shared repository of ideas within society continues to bear credence if one examines more closely the ways in which ideology and the archetypes of the collective unconscious are transmitted. Beginning with the premise that the collective unconscious is the *abstract*, theoretical space in which a society’s shared ideas exist, but that they do exist as proven by Jung’s empirical evidence, one must ask how these archetypal ideas are transmitted outside of the personal unconscious.

Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin, in examining the structure of the novel, develops a theory of the transmission of language. In his essay “Discourse in the Novel,” Bakhtin, in examining a stylistics of prose develops a conception of language as *heteroglossic*. Arguing against the fallacy of the traditional approach to stylistics of prose which sees the novel as monologic, Bakhtin writes:

Stylistics defines itself as a stylistics of ‘private craftsmanship’ and ignores the social life of discourse outside the artist’s study, discourse in the open spaces of public squares, streets, cities and villages, of social groups, generations and epochs. Stylistics is concerned not with living discourse but with a histological specimen made from it, with abstract linguistic discourse in the service of an artist’s individual creative powers. But these individual and tendentious overtones of style, cut off from the fundamentally social modes in which discourse lives, inevitably come across as flat and abstract in such a formulation and cannot therefore be studied in organic unity with a work’s semantic components. (Bakhtin 1981: 259)

For Bakhtin, stylistics erroneously examines literary prose as hermetically sealed and divorced from language’s predominantly social mode of transmission. While stylistics views the author’s language as isolated from the world, Bakhtin views language as inextricably linked to its living, social contexts.

Bakhtin continues, arguing that the novel is composed of multiform voices.

He asserts:

The novel can be defined as a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized. The internal stratification of any single national language into social dialects, characteristic group behaviour, professional jargons, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of authorities...this internal stratification present in every language at any given moment of its historical existence is the indispensable prerequisite for the novel as a genre. (1981: 262-263)

The novel is a unique form of prose, for the novel exploits the heteroglossic nature of language. Language is composed of various competing voices, which the novel utilizes in its mode of expression. Bakhtin argues that while language is stratified, heteroglossic and multiform, it paradoxically aspires toward unity. The very task of discourse is to control language, to iterate a cogent, unified argument, a position that is opposed to language's heteroglossic nature. Bakhtin argues that this unitary aspiration of language is a centripetal force aspiring to hold language together, which is directly opposed to the nature of heteroglossic language, a centrifugal force, which works to stratify language into its various discourses.

Heteroglossia exists in dialogue. Because we come into language through language, every utterance is a discourse with language. In Bakhtin's contempt for traditional stylistics, he states:

Stylistics has been likewise completely deaf to dialogue. A literary work has been conceived by stylistics as if it were a hermetic and self-sufficient whole, one whose elements constitute a closed system presuming nothing beyond themselves, no other utterances. . . Should we imagine the work as a rejoinder in a given dialogue, whose style is determined by its interrelationship with other rejoinders in the same dialogue (in the totality of the conversation) – then traditional stylistics does not offer an adequate means for approaching such a dialogized style. (1981: 273)

Language, through its utterances, carries with it the meanings and associations of other usages – language has baggage, which reveals itself through dialogism.

Bakhtin concludes his argument for a new practice of stylistics, arguing that the old

system denies the complexity of language. Conversely, Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia asserts that language's meaning changes depending on context, exchanges messages with other utterances, is able to realize its stylistic implications within those utterances and carries multiple meanings. In essence, language has baggage independent of the author's intentions or meanings.

In my conception of the collective unconscious, it becomes the theoretical repository of the shared connotations inherent in discourse. That discourse can take the form of verbal language but can also be articulated through imagery. The collective unconscious, then, exists within language's baggage, in languages excesses. Discourse carries with it multiple thoughts which exist outside of the speaker's intention. Those thoughts are society's beliefs which have not been filtered through the *personal* unconscious, and so exist at the collective level. These thoughts express themselves through archetypes. So rather than existing in a nebulous free-form psychic thought space as Jung contends, the archetypes of the collective unconscious exist within language and language's dialogic nature.

To summarize, there are three key terms, the *archetype*, *ideology* and the *collective unconscious*. The archetype is a classificatory term for figures or ideas that when reduced to their constituent components appear through disparate cultures and histories. The specificities of the archetype are dependent on the culture which deploys it, those specificities being determined by the culture's ideology. Ideology is a system of ideas and values, what Althusser calls 'world outlooks' which are mutable but reinforced through the interaction of individuals with society, being shaped and reinforced with each subsequent deployment. Ideology and the archetype both exist in the personal unconscious of individuals as well as the collective unconscious. The collective unconscious is a term to describe the shared

metaphysical thoughtspace of society, but in actuality refers to the excess weight, or connotative values of language as articulated through discourse.

To use Nakata's *Ring* as an example, the film is highly conflicted in its usage of the mother figure. The film's protagonist is a strong, wilful career woman, who as a reporter working independently of her newspaper (ironically her job is with an Industrial State Apparatus and presumably one which must disseminate non-controversial ideology), begins investigating the death of her niece. Reiko, a single mother with an established career is every bit the progressive woman and Nakata's film appears resistant to the conservative ideology that presents women as little more than wives and mothers. And yet through the course of the film, Reiko's son becomes exposed to the haunted video cassette and Sadako's curse. It is precisely because Reiko is a working mother rather than a stay at home housewife, that her son is placed in peril. The reinforcement of a paternalistic ideology symbolically punishes Reiko for having a challenging career and she ultimately becomes an unfit mother because of it. The suggestion is that the very prospect of having a career is directly incompatible with her role as a mother.

The film progresses with Reiko and her former husband, Ryuji, hunting for the body of Sadako in order to lay her body to rest and hopefully alleviate her curse thereby saving their lives as well as that of their son. They discover the abandoned well in which Sadako was left to die and Reiko enters the well in order to find the body. Ryuji, at the top of the well drawing out bucketfuls of water is left outside of the symbolic discovery of Sadako. Reiko, in the darkness of the well, finds the body of Sadako and the body comes to life, desperately grasping at Reiko's arm. Reiko, exhausted and relieved cradles the body of Sadako finally giving her spirit rest.

Reiko discovers that the time has passed her foretold moment of death and relieved, Reiko re-exerts her status as a mother as she tenderly cradles the decaying body.

Of course while Reiko has beaten the curse and has survived her allocated moment of death, Sadako's reign of terror has not been stopped and Ryuji in fact is killed even after Sadako's body had been laid to rest. Desperately thinking of everything she had done which could lift the curse that Ryuji hadn't, Reiko realizes that the one thing she had done was to copy the tape and show it to someone else (in fact, show it to Ryuji). Reiko realizes that by spreading the curse, she had in fact passed on Sadako's antipathy from herself to the second viewer. The film ends with Reiko grabbing her son and two video recorders and driving off into the distance. A voice over provides Reiko speaking to her father, asking him to do her an important favour. The film ends then with the prospect of Reiko forever spreading Sadako's curse infinitely infecting everyone with Sadako's terror. The film then ends with Reiko once again as a type of mother, giving birth to Sadako's terror in a large scale manner. But she is now a monstrous mother, not spreading love but fear and acting as an incubator for Sadako's virus like curse. The film, through its deployment of mother imagery, is paradoxically both critical of, as well as reaffirming, the dominant patriarchal ideologies. It is in the sequel to *Ring*, *Ring 2*, that we discover how the curse was ended. Reiko has shown the cursed video to her father, thus deflecting Sadako's wrath from her son, and her father then hanged himself before Sadako could kill him, thus denying Sadako the fulfilment of her proscription. This again further undermines the film's potential feminist positioning because now Reiko is ultimately responsible for her own father's death (in order to save her son's life) and the true heroism comes from the patriarchal figure's selfless actions.

Originations of the *Onryo*:

The vengeful spirit, or *onryo*, is a creature of fantasy which appears in film in two ways; as both the spiritual projection of the desires of a living figure, or more commonly as a ghost returned from the dead in order to complete the unfulfilled desires of a life cut short. The *onryo* is the physical manifestation of the active desires of a wronged individual.

Gregory Barrett defines the *onryo*:

A human being who dies bearing a grudge and appears as a ghost to settle the score. For example, if Lord Asano had not had Oishi and other loyal retainers to avenge him, in the popular imagination he could have appeared as a ghost tormenting Lord Kira. A vengeful spirit is like *muenbotoke*, or those who die without living relatives, in that both are restless. Still, whereas *muenbotoke* could be somewhat pacified if someone at least remembers them by erecting a grave marker and/or by making food offerings, vengeful spirits cannot be satisfied until they avenge themselves. (Barrett 1989: 97)

The *onryo* dies restless thereby eschewing the finality of death. It is important to note that the *onryo* only comes into existence in order to exact revenge when there is no living relative to perform retributive justice on the victim's behalf. The *onryo* exists because there is no other means of resolving the deceased victim's obligations to itself or to society. The *onryo* is a product of a Confucian cultural context of filial piety, wherein the immediate relatives are expected to exact vengeance upon those who have wronged the family. The *onryo* functions under a particular ideological value system in which retribution is tied to filial obligation, and a value system in which vengeance is paramount to the restoration of order. The *onryo* is often incited into action by the rejection of those Confucian values: the desecration of family, the offending of ancestors or the defilement of land often incites a person's rage sufficiently for them to return from the dead and exact supernatural vengeance. *Onryo* often appear after a murder, a rape, a bloody battle or seditious actions.

Gravesites and battle sites are frequently the setting for the *onryo*, but the destruction or desecration of homesteads and temples equally inspires ghostly retribution.

‘Justice’ becomes the fulfilment of revenge, rather than the preservation of a higher moral order as ordained by a super-personal god. Indeed, with no one God to mete Last Judgement, it is up to the individual to redress evil actions. While the *onryo*’s actions seem at times immoral and often grotesque to a western sensibility – often calling for a blood debt and the eradication of an entire family line including those who are entirely innocent – their actions are always just, in that they target and persecute those who have, or are representative of those who have, broken such Confucian precepts. The *onryo* restores order through ridding the world of those who, through jealousy or ambition, have transgressed their various roles within society. Those who do transgress their allotted position in society are tainted by their inappropriate desires, and so their progenitors too must carry that tainting within their own blood, hence the necessity of ending a family line.

The first recorded instances of the vengeful female archetype appear in the *Kojiki*, the Japanese creation myth. The *Kojiki*, written in the 8th Century, tells of the creation of Japan and is the first recorded text in *Shinto* belief. *Shinto* is a pagan belief with a pantheon of gods. *Shinto* posits that everything in this world has a *Kami* or spirit. Cultural critic Ian Buruma, in his work *A Japanese Mirror, Heroes and Villains of Japanese Culture*, describes *Shinto*:

Shinto has many rituals, but no dogma. A person is Shinto in the same way that he is born Japanese. It is a collection of myths and ceremonies that give form to a way of life. It is a celebration, not a belief. There is no such thing as a Shintoist, for there is no Shintoism. (Buruma 1988: 4)

Shinto is a collection of folk myths and stories which when compiled give insight into the belief systems of the Japanese, without delineating a system of taught doctrine.

At first there was only a floating, milky substance which eventually separated. The lighter, airier elements rose, while the heavier, baser elements sank. This was the creation of heaven and earth. Eventually, two deities, Izanagi or He-who-invites and Izanami, She-who-invites, descended to the earth. There they erected a large pillar and walked around it, he to one side and she to the other, whereupon meeting she said “Oh, what a fair and lovely youth.” Izanagi, however, chastised her for speaking first. Regardless, a child was born, Hiruko, the leech child, who at the age of three could not stand erect and so was cast away. Izanagi claimed that the deformed child was born because the woman had spoken first. The two walked around the pillar once again, but this time He-who-invites spoke first, this time saying “Oh what a fair and lovely maiden.” With this, the two gods began to beget children.

The story is significant because the celestial lovers are equal in temperament and form. Gender is not of consequence in the process of child birth, they have asexual reproduction by walking around a pillar, but gender is important to the tale because it creates social mores – the woman is punished for speaking first and consequently their first attempt at life was to produce a deformed child. The beginning of the creation myth creates gender roles and social conventions with a patriarchal hierarchy and with the creation myth woman becomes subordinate to man. A female archetype is created in which women are impulsive (speak first) and that impulsiveness leads to a type of baseness actualized in the child’s deformity

The two parent deities produced numerous children, the islands of Japan and various spirits, all of whom are gods who have dominion over various places. In giving birth to a fire god, Izanami, was horribly disfigured and decided to retire from her role in creating deities. She headed to the underworld, a metaphoric death. What is significant is that the language of the *Kojiki* implies death is a choice, an active decision precipitated by the woman's traumatic and physically scarring experience in giving birth to the fire god. Ultimately Izanami commits suicide because she has lost her beauty, but this is coded as a noble choice. Once again, the *Kojiki's* gender characterization posits that the woman's value comes from her beauty and once that is lost, she ceases to have value in her role as wife and mother.

Izanagi, despairing at his sister/wife's death, beheaded the fire god for having killed his mother. From the beheading, multiple other deities were born from the drops of blood that hit the blade of the sword, from the blood that hit the ground and from the blood that dripped from Izanagi's fingers. This too is significant, because the process of giving birth continues without the female's involvement, ironically with the father killing the son.

Izanagi, missing his wife, decided to visit her in Hades whereupon he asked her to return to earth, saying "The lands that I and thou made are not yet finished making; so come back!" So while the female is not required in the process of creating life, her company is desired. Izanagi however, was too late for Izanami had already eaten the fruits of hell and had become so horribly disfigured in the birth of the fire god that maggots swarm in her once beautiful but now rotting skin. So repelled by his wife's appearance Izanagi fled the underworld, incurring Izanami's shame and wrath. She sent after him the Ugly-Female-Of-Hades, accompanied with eight thunder deities and 1,500 warriors, who Izanagi quickly dispatched. Finally

Izanami herself began to lay chase and was only stopped with Izanagi blocking the gates of hell with a giant boulder. Feeling polluted from his journey, Izanagi came upon a spring and bathed himself. During his ritual ablutions a further twenty-six deities were born.

This encounter between husband and disfigured wife is of utmost importance because the woman's involvement in the process of creating life is once again removed. Her biological function is essentially made redundant. Her gender's importance lies solely as a justification or explanation for her unstoppable wrath. It is because she is woman that she is spurred by jealousy and shame and becomes so threatening a figure. The woman in the *Kojiki* is represented as being close to death and therefore closer to supernatural power than the man, and indeed both the supernatural Izanami and the Ugly-female-of Hades pose a supreme threat to the male. The female becomes the grotesque in her vanity and unreasonable anger and the male becomes a victim to the female's temperament and awesome power. While Izanagi, the male, is able to create life, Izanami, in her death becomes monstrous and an archetype is formed.

Japanese cultural critic Ian Buruma analyzes the *Kojiki* and specifically Izanami's role in contrast to Christian mythology, comparing Izanami and Izanagi to Adam and Eve. He argues "The latter were thrown out of the Garden of Eden because Eve took a bite from the apple. They were made conscious of good and evil and only thus was it possible to sin" (Buruma 1988: 5). In Christian mythology, sex and knowledge are interconnected and knowledge and sexuality both become sinful acts in the eyes of Christian lore. Buruma continues:

Izanagi and Izanami were not directly punished for anything they did. . . Their crisis came when Izanami was seen by her husband in a state of pollution. The disaster concerned her shame rather than anything she consciously did. Although the gods

enjoyed sex with impunity, they were terrified of pollution, especially the pollution of death. Izanagi, seeing the putrid body of his sister, barely escaped death himself. One could perhaps say that pollution is the Japanese version of original sin. (Buruma 1988: 5)

While Buruma is astute in his analysis of pollution being equated with sin, what is of particular interest is Izanami's relationship to her own pollution. Recognizing she is ugly, she implores Izanagi to not look at her polluted state but her reaction to his violating her request is not to retreat in shame but to react with rage. The implication is that with her pollution Izanami finds great strength and power and an unnatural anger which she is more than willing to direct toward her one time lover.

The *Kojiki* continues after Izanagi returned from Hades. While purifying himself of the pollution of his wife through bathing, Izanagi produces several other deities, twenty-six in total, the final three being the most powerful. From his left eye springs Amaterasu the sun goddess; from his right eye springs His-August-Night-Moon-Possessor, the moon god; and from his nose comes Susanoo, the wind god. To Amaterasu, Izanagi gives dominion over the sky; to the moon god, the night; and to Susanoo the sea plain. His daughter and son, Amaterasu and Night-Moon-Possessor immediately take their places, but his youngest son, Susanoo refuses to take his position, instead tearing about the earth hollering and wailing, drying rivers, destroying crops and turning mountains to dust.

Izanagi, upon hearing of his son's destructive actions, demanded to know why he would cause such damage and why he refused to take his post. Susanoo told his father that he was crying because he wished to meet with his departed mother in the underworld. This so outraged Izanagi, he decided to banish his son. Susanoo then flew to the heavens to bid farewell to his sister, Amaterasu the sun goddess, where in his agitation and excitement he destroyed Amaterasu's crops, defecated

throughout her palace, and flaying a horse dropped it in her weaving room, consequently so terrifying Amaterasu's weavers that they all died.

Amaterasu, in her anger withdraw into a cave, pulling a rock across the doorway and thus plunging the world into darkness. At this, the other deities grouped together and devised a plan to pull Amaterasu out of her hiding place. Together they fashioned a mirror and the deity Heavenly-Alarming-Female stood on a tub and began to stamp her feet. She continued stamping her feet, working herself up into a frenzy, culminating in her pulling on her nipples and lifting her skirts to expose her genitals, causing all the other deities to burst into a fit of uproarious laughter. This noise roused Amaterasu's interest, causing her to inquire into what the other gods were celebrating. They told her that they were celebrating the birth of a new deity, more beautiful than the sun. At this, Amaterasu pulled back the rock sealing her cave and peered out. The other deities lifted up the mirror and while Amaterasu was stunned by her own beauty the Heavenly-Hand-Strength-Male-Deity pulled her out of the cave, returning sunlight to the world.

Buruma posits "One could argue perhaps that Susanoo, the Sun Goddess's brother, is 'bad', but certainly not in any metaphysical or absolute sense. He is the Wind God: his badness just blows" (Buruma 1988: 6) Susanoo causes bother, but not out of any particularly evil inclination, his badness is simply a manifestation of his uncontrolled temperament and his impetuous nature. Buruma continues: "His worst crime, serious enough in Japanese society, is his erratic, selfish and rudely destructive behaviour" (1988: 6), and so ultimately Susanoo is punished for his lack of self control, rather than for what he actually has done. The Sun goddess, on the other hand, makes a wilful choice in her retirement. Buruma states:

Amaterasu's reaction to her fierce brother's abominations is quite compliant at first. She indulges his whims like a doting mother blind to her boy's faults: after all, he cannot help the way he is. When things finally go too far, it is she who retreats into the cave, not he. (Buruma 1988: 7)

Yet while Susanoo is somehow not responsible for his behaviour, Amaterasu certainly is responsible for her own. Buruma attempts to explain this:

One could conclude, as many casual observers of the Japanese scene do, that men rule their women like spoiled despots. This is a superficial view, however, for at a very basic level (and Shinto is fairly basic) women have an awesome power over their men. (1988: 7)

And indeed both Izanami and Amaterasu possess great power, powers over life and death. *Shinto* is a matriarchal culture with an ambivalent relationship toward women, and while women are polluted (blood is treated with disgust and so menstruation is a sign of pollution), they are also the givers of life. Because of her great power, Amaterasu's retreating into a cave is a punishment meted out on the entire world, and so she must not be indulged in her anger, while Susanoo is certainly indulged in his. It is because of women's potential powers over life and death that they are treated with far less indulgence than men.

While Amaterasu is not ostensibly an *onryo*, she operates as a powerful woman in Japanese mythology. As a female figure she provides certain characterizations which become inherent in what begins to shape the *onryo* archetype in Japanese culture. As an archetype, she is powerful but also petty and vain. Her temperament causes her to plunge the world into darkness, but it is her vanity that allows her to be tricked into restoring light to the world. The implications are that women are potentially vastly more powerful than men but are also governed by irrationality and emotion rather than by reason and intellect. The construction of women as powerful, particularly powerful in their anger, begins establishing the cultural specificities of the vengeance seeking female archetype in Japan.

The *onryo* appears in much folklore. Lafcadio Hearn recounts a tale of an *onryo* in his *Kwaidan, Tales of the Strange*. Hearn, writing at the close of the 19th Century, compiled a series of Japanese folktales of the supernatural. In one such story, *Diplomacy* (Hearn 1971: 45-49), a bandit has been arrested by a samurai and condemned to death. The bandit, showing no remorse for his crimes whatsoever, announces that his death sentence is unfair and he will devote all his energies to returning from the grave in order to exact revenge. The samurai, knowing full well the power of the *onryo*, devises a plan to prevent the bandit from fulfilling his revenge legacy. The samurai tells the bandit that he simply does not believe the bandit to have the conviction to devote his thoughts entirely to revenge and will never return from the dead. The samurai then points to a flagstone that is slightly raised and poses a challenge to the bandit. He states, if, when the samurai beheads the bandit, the head can grip the flagstone between its teeth, that will act as proof of the bandit's conviction and the bandit will surely return as an *onryo* to exact revenge. The bandit agrees to the test and the samurai swiftly beheads the rogue. Sure enough, the bandit's head rolls forward and suddenly his eyes open, his mouth opens and the teeth grip onto the raised flagstone, halting the head in mid roll. The samurai's companions panic, but the samurai himself remains calm. He knows that the bandit devoted all of his final thoughts to completing the challenge rather than on returning to exact revenge and indeed the samurai was never bothered by any *onryo*.

The Hearn story is significant because it characterizes the *onryo* in several specific ways. In *Diplomacy*, the *onryo* is not a victim of circumstance and the bandit's potential transformation is not precipitated by an action that is intrinsically unjust. Rather, the transformation is precipitated solely by the bandit's perception of the samurai's actions as being unfair and unreasonable. The bandit will become a

restless spirit because he desires to, rather than his transformation being precipitated by a superhuman system of morality. The transformation into *onryo* is predicated by the deceased's desire to become a ghost to enact revenge. The *onryo* comes into being through a force of will, although supernatural it has human agency. Indeed, morality or the concept of an intrinsic rightness within the samurai/bandit relationship becomes irrelevant. What is relevant is the fulfilment of feudal hierarchy (the samurai has every right to pass judgement on the bandit) and the bandit's attempt to set limitations on the samurai's powers of execution. But the bandit fails to become an *onryo* and the samurai remains unmolested. The samurai proves himself to be the bandit's intellectual superior and is consequently free of the bandit's vengeful desire.

In the Hearn tale, the *onryo* is male. Throughout folkloric culture, the *onryo* appeared as both genders. Barrett reports "The most numerous occurrences of vengeful spirits are the ghosts of dead soldiers, which are reported in the aftermath of any war in Japanese history" (Barrett 1989: 97) Barrett posits the most famous *onryo* is the ghost of Sugawara Michizane, who, after being sent into exile took revenge on the family of Fujiwara Tokihira (871-909AD) through the form of earthquakes and fire. Barrett states "In contrast, most vengeful spirits in Japanese film are wronged women, who have traditional precedents in literature and theatre" (1989: 97), but Barrett fails to corroborate this statement. Barrett, while acknowledging the gender transformation's existence, fails to give an account for this sudden rise in popularity of the female *onryo* in film. While the female *onryo* has many literary antecedents, Barrett fails to consider why it is that film becomes such an important forum for the presentation of the female vengeful spirit, who prior to the inception of film had been,

as Barrett states, mostly men. He does, however, attempt to explain the psychological significance of the female vengeful spirit in literature. Barrett posits:

Japanese males of old were reluctant to recognize guilt feelings toward their wife or paramour, and even went to the extreme of attributing a woman's jealousy to supernatural causes. As a consequence, however, her jealousy became all the more terrifying in their imagination, leading them to hallucinate female vengeful spirits and/or create them in literature and drama. (Barrett 1989: 98)

Barrett argues that a woman's jealousy was a manifestation of men's wilful self deception. Barrett argues that rather than recognize women's jealousy as a result of her husband's actions, the Japanese men would instead attribute jealousy to spirit possession. Indeed, this is the case within a number of *onryo* narrative tales, such as the *Tokaido Yotsuya Kaidan* films, in which the ghost is even at times presented as a hallucination derived from the husband's guilty conscience. Barrett's analysis, while providing a plausible explanation for the psychological function of the female *onryo* for Japanese males of old, fails to address the gender transformation of the *onryo* or why so much film presents the *onryo* as predominantly female.

One principle function of the *onryo* is to enact revenge but a secondary ideological purpose becomes to promote egalitarianism in an iniquitous feudal society. Gregory Barrett in analyzing revenge and justice as it relates to the *onryo* archetype states:

Filial piety is the cornerstone of Confucianism and one of its injunctions is that one cannot live under the same sky as the man who killed one's father or brother. (Barrett 1989: 103)

Feudal Japan granted awesome power to nobility and great inequities to those of lower ranks. In a society that demanded filial piety, one could always expect revenge for any unmotivated or unjust killing. In a society that demands the death of one's kin's killer, the killings would never stop until entire families were exterminated. However, in Japanese feudal society, not only did one have the

security of being able to rely on living relatives to exact revenge, even if there were no living relatives, with the prospect of becoming a vengeful spirit one is practically guaranteed the chance to fulfil revenge for any perceived unjust action. Death was not seen as the final end to vengeance and the vengeance cycle continues beyond the death of a family line.⁴ Paradoxically, the threat of the unending revenge cycle did not have the effect of limiting the promotion of the ideology of enacting vengeance.

Barrett continues:

Despite the warnings of great teachers that revenge could ultimately lead to the annihilation of the human race, just vengeance still remains a viable ideal realized in countless [Japanese] stories, dramas and films. (Barrett 1989: 103)

Barrett provides Sato Tadao's argument that the vengeful spirit acts as a deterrent to immoral actions. Sato posits 'there are more vengeful spirits in Japan than in the West because the concept of the Last Judgement has not been so persuasive in Japanese thinking' (Sato in Barrett, 1989: 103). Barrett modifies Sato's position:

Even the long suffering Japanese, who are said to be capable of bearing the unbearable, could not wait for the next life, let alone a too distant Last Judgement. They changed the primitive, troublesome spirit into a vengeful one with a just purpose, which afforded at least psychological relief. (1989: 103)

Both Barrett and Sato's arguments position the *onryo* as analogous to the Last Judgement. In Christian mythology, it is a higher power which metes out final retribution and punishes those who are in the wrong, right and wrong being determined by God. With no belief in a higher moral power and the threat of last judgement to limit ones actions, society would become in the words of Hobbes, 'nasty, poor, brutish and short.' The threat of *onryo* transformation, in place of the myth of last judgement, limits capricious violence in the fear that an unjust killing

⁴ See the story of the death of the Heike clan, with the entire clan destroyed, there are still numerous tales and dramatizations of the ghosts of the Heike being restless.

creates a blood debt. However, this argument still leaves open the question of the rise in popularity of the female vengeful spirit.

In Japanese mythology, the transformation to *onryo* is not restricted to any one particular social group. With the introduction of the *onryo* as a potential consequence of an iniquitous action, as opposed to an immoral action, those with access to immense power become limited in their actions. In feudal Japan, where the samurai, by virtue of his elevated position in society is granted the freedom to make life altering decisions on a whim, the prospect of his decisions having reciprocal negative consequences, either real or imagined, becomes a means of limiting and controlling the samurai's actions. Consequently the myth of the *onryo* restores power to the oppressed classes. In feudal society, where the poor, and particularly poor women were the lowest of society, victim to the whims of their superiors; the *onryo* myth provides power to those at the bottom of the feudal hierarchy. Women in Japanese folklore frequently operate under the double oppression of economy and of being subordinate to men in a patriarchal world. Woman in Japan, then, was the most oppressed of all Japanese, she is the intensification of all of the inequities within feudal Japan. The female *onryo* operates to restore equity to the most oppressed and becomes a symbol of egalitarianism, providing vengeance to those who have the least access to it in the quotidian realities of a highly iniquitous society. The *onryo* must be seen as a *symbolic* figure, one who is representative of the restoration of order. As a symbol, the female *onryo* best exemplifies the transformation of the oppressed into those with power to redress society's ills, punishing those within society who forget or reject their obligations to honour and respect their positions of rank or power. It is because the female *onryo* is a symbolic figure, and film is a medium that relies on evocative

symbolism in order to spread ideology, that film presents the female *onryo* more often than the male.

A contemporary example of the *onryo* providing social egalitarianism is evident in the Kaneto Shindo film *Kuroneko (The Black Cat)* (1968), in which a poor mother and daughter living in the woods are raped and murdered by a group of soldiers. The rape encapsulates the inequities of feudal society and although the soldiers' actions are coded as grotesquely immoral and unjust there is no institution in place to enact retribution. In the tale, both mother and daughter return from the dead, killing each and every soldier and samurai whom they encounter. The women, peasants in life and powerless to stop the soldiers through force or through class and social standing, are granted immense power in death and are able to wield power over, and kill even the most noble of samurai. Social equality is granted in death and those without power in life are given access to power in death.

In the film *Kwaidan*, in the story "Black Haired Ghost," a poor samurai divorces his wife in order to marry a woman of higher social standing. After several years of high government office, the husband realizes that he had been a fool to divorce his poor peasant wife and so one day returns to his home village. There he discovers his wife looking very much the same as she always had done, and after a night of passion, discovers his wife to be, in actuality, a ghost. Upon this discovery the samurai becomes insane. The tale, then, metes out karmic justice on behalf of the dead woman. Both films, however, while depicting feudal times were made in the 1960s. This was a period in Japan of intense upheaval. The post-war world of Japan was ideologically turbulent with the withdrawal of American occupation troops. This ideological transformation of Japan was occurring after an intense schism rejecting the plans for a socialist Japan. There were numerous union riots in the

1950s in which unions were decrying the exploitation of the workers. The films, then, in the context of modernity reflect the attitudes of the exploited classes and the female as avatar of vengeance exemplifies the ideological concerns of 1960s Japan.⁵

In attempting to trace the origin of the vengeful spirit, Barrett consults Shoko Watanabe who posits that as far back as the fifth century A.D. “the Japanese believed dead spirits could harm the living and that those who died tragically would take it out on not only those responsible but also innocent bystanders” (Watanabe in Barrett 1989: 97). The *onryo* was originally grotesque, excessive in her desire for retribution and destined to attack and harass any and all who came within his grasp. Through the transmission of folklore and oral history the *onryo* has made a slight transformation. Barrett introduces Sato’s argument that although there are some instances of the *onryo* continuing to target all people, the idea eventually developed that the *onryo* would only direct her wrath at the guilty (Barrett 1989: 97). Much has changed, however, since Barrett wrote his book in the late 1980s. The contemporary *onryo* has made another ideological shift and is once again targeting innocent victims.

While having changed throughout the years, the *onryo* remains a popular figure in Japanese film, terrifying old and young alike through countless generations, appearing in such early work as Tanizaki’s *Lasciviousness of the Viper* (1922), later to be remade as Mizoguchi’s masterpiece *Ugetsu Monogatari* (1952). In contemporary Japanese horror, the *onryo* is once again attacking whoever she may come into contact. Contemporary films such as *Ringu*, *Ju-on*, and *One Missed Call* present a monstrous figure who terrorizes everyone unfortunate enough to cross the *onryo*. Detached from its original function, to restore justice to an iniquitous world, the new *onryo* is not a retributive figure but rather is nihilistic, punishing society and

⁵ These films will be examined in greater detail in chapter 3.

pointlessly destroying life for some forgotten past transgressions. This is an ideological change and the following chapters seek to examine how such a change has occurred.

Chapter 1

The Lyrical Past, Sounds Like Modernity: The Cinematic construction of Women in the Contexts of Imperialism

“What governs my mind at this moment, what will influence all my future work, is not, alas, the tradition of my ancestors, but, rather, thoughts brought over from across the sea, and by an alien race.” Soseki Natsume, 1910.¹

The *Meiji* Era (1868 – 1912) was a time of incredible change for Japan.

Japan had been operating under a self imposed policy of isolation from the rest of the world for more than 200 years. That isolation was broken by Commodore Matthew Perry, who guided his armed black steam ships into Edo port on July 8, 1853 and discovered a world entirely divorced from the industrial modernity of his American homeland. Perry, accompanied by a letter from his President, Millard Fillmore, had a list of demands which if not met would incur his return with a stronger fleet of ships. Ian Buruma in *Inventing Japan*, describes the meeting. “When, after long deliberations, during which the Japanese countered Perry’s imperious behaviour with polite vagueness and other stalling tactics, Perry was finally allowed to go ashore, the two sides set out to impress each other with as much pomp as they could muster” (Buruma 2005: 2-3). The Japanese brought out sumo wrestlers and lacquerware and the Americans brought a telegraph and a miniature mechanized train. Buruma quotes the Reverend Samuel Wells Williams, Perry’s official interpreter, who considered the meeting ‘a curious melange’ of East and West. Williams describes the encounter:

Railroads and telegraph, boxers and educated athlete . . . shaven pates and nightgowns, soldiers with muskets and drilling in close array, soldiers with petticoats, sandals, two swords, and all in disorder, like a crowd – all these things and many other things, exhibiting the difference between our civilization and usages and those of this secluded, pagan people. (Williams in Buruma 2005: 3).

¹ Quoted in Morris, Ivan, “Introduction” *Modern Japanese Stories, An Anthology*, Ivan Morris, Ed. Tokyo: Charles Tuttle Ltd, 1977.

The Japanese lords, confronted with Perry's technological might, determined that they must indeed open to trade in order to better gain from the west's technological advancements. Buruma writes "News of the disastrous Opium Wars in the 1840s came as a shock, for it not only proved how backward China had become, it showed Japan's own vulnerability (Buruma 2005: 11). Within two years of Perry's landing, Japan had begun to produce steam ships of its own. By 1867, with the restoration of sovereignty from the feudal shogun to the 15 year old Emperor, Japan officially re-entered international trade. Who at that meeting in 1853 could have imagined that in only forty-three years Edison's kinoscope would be imported to Japan and prove a popular amusement, and within the boy Emperor's lifetime, cinema itself would be produced by these 'secluded pagan people?'

The industrialization of Japan was extraordinarily rapid. Long starved of the novelty of the foreign, Japan was quick to embrace things western. Richard Storry describes this move toward modernization:

A central, modernized system of taxation was established, together with a new system of coinage. Banks, railways, harbours, lighthouses, dockyards, telegraph offices, printing presses and newspapers, post offices, cigars and cigarettes – the entire apparatus of Western material civilization seemed to find some reproduction, some kind of echo, in Japan. Indeed the first two decades of the Emperor Meiji's reign saw a Japan to all appearances intoxicated with the strong wine of Western thought, techniques and customs. (Storry 1973: 107)

The importation of foreign culture did not end with material culture. The desire to promote modernization included a change in diet. Storry continues:

Some prominent Japanese, such as Inouye Kaoru, even went so far as to advocate the universal and permanent adoption of European dress by both sexes, the substitution of bread for rice, and the large-scale importation of sheep to graze on those rice fields, transformed into meadows, that had not been turned over to the production of wheat, oats, and barley. (1973: 107)

Political institutions and ideology were also imported from the west. Beasley states "The court had adopted western ceremonial dress at the end of 1872. As early as

1873, we are told, a group of Satsuma samurai, coming to the capital in the clothes and hairstyle that had always been proper for their class, were ‘stared at as foreigners had formerly been’” (Beasley 200: 225). Nearly a century later, Japanese novelist and cultural critic Mishima Yukio likened the environment to “An anxious housewife preparing to receive guests, hiding away in closets common articles of daily use and laying aside comfortable everyday clothes, hoping to impress the guests with the immaculate, idealized life of her household, without so much as a speck of dust in view” (Mishima in Buruma 2005: 32).

So complete was the Japanese desire to entertain western innovation as superior to its own indigenous cultural productions, Ivan Morris reports “In the effort to become ‘modern,’ countless old customs, habits, and heritages were scrapped in a wave of cultural iconoclasm which at one stage went so far that there were serious proposals to replace the Japanese language by English and the native religions by Christianity” (Morris 1977: 10).

The rapid adoption of western ideologies and cultural practices did not go unopposed. Indeed, such swift abandoning of traditional custom brought about an intense ambivalence among Japanese intellectuals and cultural critics. When the foreign minister Inoue Kaoru hosted a ball at the *Rokumeikan*, or ‘Deer Cry Pavilion’ in honour of the Emperor’s birthday, Japanese and foreign dignitaries met over waltzes, pâté and truffles. Such ostentatious westernized posturing caused critics of the foreign minister to label Ito Hirobumi’s cabinet, ‘the dancing cabinet.’

One importation of western ideological taste, as has been noted prior, was the practice of eating large quantities of meat, a practice in contrast from Buddhist taboo. Buruma argues “The fashion for meat began when Fukuzawa Yukichi, one of the greatest *Meiji* intellectuals, suggested that eating meat would improve Japanese

physiques. Soon meat eating was promoted as a way to achieve enlightenment (Buruma 2005: 32). Novelist Kanagaki Robun, penned a savagely ironic passage in 1871 about one such Japanese man enamoured with western iconographies, in his account of a 'beef eater' in his *Aguranabe*.

A man about thirty-five, rather swarthy it is true, but of clear complexion, thanks apparently to the daily use of soap, which purges all impurities. His hair, not having been cut for some hundred days, is long and flowing, and looks as if it is in the process of being let out altogether in the foreign style. Naturally enough, he uses that scent called Eau de Cologne, to give a sheen to his hair. He wears a padded silken kimono beneath which a calico undergarment is visible. By his side is his Western-style umbrella, covered in gingham. From time to time he removes from his sleeve with a painfully contrived gesture a cheap watch, and consults the time. As a matter of fact this is merely so much display to impress others, and the chain is only gold-plate. (Kanagaki 1977: 31-32)

Kanagaki's detailing of western fetish items such as the watch and the umbrella belie the superficiality of such cultural accoutrements as the man's time keeping emerges as an empty gesture and the watch chain's gold plate threatens to flake away revealing the common metal beneath.

Many Japanese intellectuals began to question Japan's valuation of western culture over indigenous practices. Such criticism was evident among the novelists of the day, many of whom had in fact, travelled to the west and whose writings were informed by western literature. Donald Keene argues that in the early *Meiji*, Japanese literature was stale and Japanese novelists "specialized in books of formless, almost meaningless gossip" (Keene 1996: 13).

And yet, within the same forty years that elapsed between the Meiji Restoration and the Russo-Japanese War, Japanese literature moved from idle quips directed at the oddities of the West to symbolist poetry, from the thousandth-told tale of the gay young blade and the harlots to the complexities of the psychological novel. (Keene 1996: 13).

The adoption of western literary practices produced novels with much greater psychological depth. The downside of this cultural importation was that Japanese literature began to turn aggressively away from its own cultural traditions. This

brought about a great sense of ambivalence, prompting Soseki Natsume to utter the despairing quote cited at the beginning of this chapter. Soseki himself had endured miserable conditions while studying in London, England. Consequently, integral to *Meiji* culture is an underlying sense of loss of culture and an ambivalent attitude to modernity. Mori Ogai describes a typical scene in *Meiji* Japan, in his *Under*

Reconstruction:

By the door was a pile of little cloths for wiping one's shoes and next to these a large Western doormat. Watanabé's shoes were muddy after the rain and he carefully cleaned them with both implements. Apparently in this restaurant one was supposed to observe the Western custom and wear one's shoes indoors. (Mori 1977: 37-38)

What is striking about the above passage is both *Meiji*'s blending of Japanese and western customs, with the little cloths for wiping shoes accompanied with the distinctly western doormat, and Watanabe's discomfiture in using the foreign implements. Within Watanabe's characterization is the desire to blend east and west comfortably, to demonstrate a worldly wise awareness of supposedly enlightened western attitudes, while displaying surprise and mild bemusement that the restaurant expects the patrons to practice the western custom of wearing ones shoes indoors. Indeed, this ironic bemusement toward the *Meiji* Japanese desire to adopt western practices is frequent in both Tanizaki and Soseki's work, most notably in Soseki's novella *Botchan* and his series *Wagahai Wa Neko de Aru (I am a Cat)*, in which a modern teacher's life is seen as a ludicrous series of follies, as observed by his cat. One such example is the teacher's misguided insistence upon growing a western styled moustache, despite an inability to sprout an even patch of facial hair.²

It was not only western innovation that the Japanese consumed in the *Meiji* Period. The west brought with it the ideologies of capitalism and colonialism, two

² The English translation of the title does not convey the cat's imperious use of a ludicrously formal language. A better translation would be to put great emphasis on the "I" as in, *I am a Cat*.

concepts which the Japanese politicians and cultural commentators alike recognized as changing the world order. The following chapter examines the development of the vengeance driven woman in film, as inflected by the ideologies inherent in western and Japanese imperialisms through their various incarnations. Early Japanese imperialism can be further subdivided into four discrete contexts and so the chapter is similarly subdivided into four discrete units. The first is the introduction of western culture and ideology in the late *Meiji* (1868 – 1912) and *Taisho* (1912-1926) periods which coincided with the introduction of cinema. Cinema and modernity were concomitant, and just as the nation needed to discover its own relation to modernity, it experimented in the construction of an indigenous cinematic language. The second section is a period of democratization and the films reflect Japan's discourses on universal suffrage, freedom and western modelled capitalism. These films are also marked by a rising nationalism and an increased sense of national and ideological coherence. The third period examines the films as marked by ardent nationalism as the nation headed to war, while the final section examines the films in the post-war occupation and occupation cinema's often conflicted relationships with Japanese vengeance and women.

The first two contexts involve the films and filmmakers negotiating rapidly changing ideologies from traditionalism to modernity and from a feudal system to western styled mercantile capitalism. The first two periods are marked by the attempts of the filmmaking community to establish a cinematic code. Ideology is formed through the interaction between the film producers and society, as the filmmakers worked to establish various generic conventions. The second two periods are marked by ideology as a product of the filmmakers' negotiating the RSAs or *Repressive State Apparati*, as the films were subject to strict censorship. Once

again, because ideology is transitory and shifts, there is overlap between the ideologies and its various manifestations through the differing temporal periods.

I) Cinema of the *Meiji* and *Taisho*: Establishing a Cinematic Code.

A comprehensive examination of silent Japanese cinema is at times confounded by the relative paucity of extant films from the silent era. Joan Bernardi explains in her introduction to *Writing in Light, The Silent Scenario and the Japanese Pure Film Movement*.

A large part of the challenge in understanding the nature of the silent Japanese film industry lies in learning how to work within the boundaries of what is feasible. Film is fragile and the potential benefits of its preservation (let alone archival preservation) were not self-evident from the start anywhere in the world, but the survival rate is particularly bad in Japan. Although the Japanese film industry was extremely active in its early years, for various reasons (for example, copyright procedures that in the United States ensured a legacy for certain material were not standard practice in Japan) only 4 percent or less of its products before 1945 is known to have survived. (Bernardi 2001: 17).

Compounding the lack of quality prints of early Japanese films was the mass destruction of studios and film related warehouses in the 1923 *Kanto* earthquake, as well as the mass recycling of used film stock during the Second World War. This is not to say the early Japanese silent cinema should therefore not be studied, but the nature of study must by necessity become forensic, using fragments – pieces of extant clips, photographs and contemporary reports – in order to compose a picture of the early cinema movements of *Shinpa* (new school), *kyu ha* (*Kabuki* derived films) and *jun eigageki undo* (The pure cinema movement).

Cinema in Japan began with the importation of the Edison Kinetoscope in the late 19th Century. In 1897, the Lumière's Cinématograph made its Osaka debut, and shortly after photographer Asano Shiro imported the first moving picture camera and began shooting scenes of Tokyo. Similar to most nations's cinema history, the first film subjects were quotidian things – street scenes and filmed actualities but both the

Lumières and the Japanese cameramen also looked for images that were expressly Japanese. As well as the trains, gardens and passing traffic that were common to all nations's first cinemas, Japan's cinema also from its inception expressed a unique Japaneseness, and hence *geisha*, tea houses and *Kabuki* actors often featured. Donald Richie argues "*Geisha* were chosen as subjects not because they were quintessentially Japanese but because their appeal was so strong. Asano and Komada had both noticed that among the various popular photographic postcards their stores sold, those of *geisha* outsold any other. *Geisha* were therefore a commodity popular enough to warrant the necessary cinematic outlay" (Richie 2001: 17). Richie argues that the *geisha* were chosen as subjects because they would bring a good fiscal return, presumably because in Japan, as in the rest of the world, sex sells. Yet despite Richie's assertions to the contrary, the appeal of the *geisha* certainly is inextricably tied with her being expressly Japanese. The *geisha*'s popularity represents a cultural blurring, mingling sex, history and Japanese culture in a desirable iconographic commodity package. In the context of Japan's rapid transformation and newly revitalized understanding of itself as an identity separate and distinct from the west, the images of *geisha* became a means of affirming Japan as a nation. While the initial choice to use the *geisha* as photographic subjects may have been driven by a desire to profit on a particular commodity, the result was to capitalise on a cinematic image unique to Japan that was in direct competition with the cinematic images provided by the west. It is significant that it is the female body that came to represent the cinema of Japan, equating that 'Japaneseness' with the feminine, that particular image of 'oriental' femininity becoming *Japanesque*. Images of the *geisha* began the process of building cinematic iconography of a mythic nation, inextricably tied to a historic past that conflates cultural identity with

sexual desire. The *geisha* transform into a commodity fetish, standing in for an imagined ‘lack’ of cultural specificity. This image, consumed by the public, justifies the filmmakers repeating the image for profit.

Photographer Komada Koyo had accrued enough capital from his images of *geisha* that he was able to form the Association of Japanese Motion Pictures, an organization that, as Richie reports “sponsored an entire program of such *geisha* dances, all newly filmed, all in focus, at the Tokyo *Kabuki-za*, and the event was well attended even at the inflated admission prices common to that venue” (Richie 2001: 17).

The *geisha* were filmed at the Tokyo *Kabuki* theatre, and the connection between *Kabuki* and early Japanese film was to have long effect. In 1899, the cinematographer Shibata Tsunekichi filmed excerpts from two *Kabuki* plays, *Ninin Dojoji* (*Two people at Dojoji Temple*) and *Momijigari* (*Maple Viewing*) starring the actor Ichikawa Danjuro IX. Danjuro had originally been reluctant to perform for the camera as he considered film to be low art but eventually acquiesced when told that the camera would preserve his performance for posterity (and indeed, the film being one of only several dozen extant Japanese silent films, has done as promised). Eric Cazdyn writing of this film reports that when Danjuro first saw a screening of *Momijigari*, remarked “It is terribly strange (*fushigi*) to be able to see my own dance” (Ichikawa Danjuro IX as quoted in Cazdyn 2002: 15). Cazdyn is troubled by the phrasing of the statement. He argues “It is not strange, in other words, to watch *Momijigari*, and it may not even be strange to watch film for the first time. What is terribly strange is seeing oneself in this new technological medium” (2002: 16). Cazdyn considers Danjuro’s quote as related to the discovery of subjectivity, in which ‘the strangeness or shock of seeing oneself in film for the first time produces

an *awareness* of being – at the same time – spectator and spectacle, subject and object, seer and seen” (2002: 16). For Cazdyn, the strangeness relates in Danjuro’s sudden ability to recognize himself as others see him – the famous *Kabuki* actor Danjuro IX. To this I would like to add, there must be recognition not only of himself as performer, but also as a commodity. One must not forget Danjuro’s initial motivation for creating the film was to preserve *his* dance – not to preserve *Kabuki* itself, but *Kabuki* as interpreted by his own movement. Perhaps Danjuro’s shock came in the recognition of himself as a cultural commodity, as object, rather than as subject. He states “It is strange to be able to see my own *dance*” not ‘to see myself’ or even ‘to see me dancing’ because for Danjuro, it is not his image that is the commodity but rather his performance and movement that is the essence of his art. In *Kabuki*, the actor’s skill lies in the ability to express oneself through movement, gesture and posture. *Kabuki* is an art form that exists in time. While Danjuro would have been familiar with his reproduced image through photographs and publicity media, this is the first time he would have been able to see the movement of his body – the essence of his art – projected back to him. So the awareness, then, is not to see his subjective *self*, but rather to see himself as performance, to see himself as *representation* and that representation becomes reproducible and marketable. What becomes symbolic of Japanese cinema’s relationship to the filmed subject, right from its very genesis, is the positioning of the subject matter as a cultural commodity, a symbol of a unique Japaneseness and indigenous Japanese culture. Just as Danjuro’s dance and the image of the *geisha* become *Japanesque*, much of the iconography of early Japanese silent cinema similarly incorporates the *Japanesque*.

The cinematic image of the *onryo* derives from a theatre tradition, but was best iterated in literature by Lafcadio Hearn. Hearn was a European living in Japan

during the late nineteenth century, who became fascinated with tales of Japanese mysticism. His work, while initially being intended to introduce Japanese culture to the west, was very early translated into Japanese and very quickly penetrated the Japanese popular imagination. Hearn's most significant contribution to the establishment of the *onryo* myth was to take his icon of the *onryo* from various competing elements of Japanese culture, from folklore, *Ukiyo-e* paintings and from *No* and *Kabuki* theatre and synthesize these different elements into a single coherent icon. *Kabuki* began in the 17th century, and was a means of updating the more ancient *No*. Much of *Kabuki*'s architecture has its foundations in *No*. *Ukiyo-e* highly stylized woodblock prints, uses the imagery of the *Kabuki* quarter for much of its subject matter. The imagery of the *onryo* can be found in each of these styles and her iconography evolved with each art form's further abstraction from its originations. While Hearn did not invent the *onryo*, he pulled together many competing elements of the *onryo* and gave her a cohesion which had prior to been fragmented. Furthermore he presents the *onryo* to the reader as a distinctly Japanese figure with a wholly indigenous pedigree. Writing of the tale, "A Passional Karma," a condensed version of a *No* play *Botan-Doro* from which Hearn derives much of his iconography. Hearn describes the play as "purely Japanese in local color" (1971: 74). Hearn claims that a Japanese friend who "guides me betimes through the mazes of Eastern philosophy," (1971: 74) convinced him to give English readers the ghostly part of the story, as it "would serve to explain some popular ideas of the supernatural which Western people know very little about" (Hearn 1971: 74). Hearn prefaces his *onryo* as a uniquely Japanese figure, a position which the Japanese themselves were quick to reinforce.

As well as providing the iconography of the *onryo*, influencing Hearn, and providing the first filmed Japanese subjects, Japanese theatre was further instrumental in establishing Japanese cinema's foundations. As cinema became increasingly popular in Japan, cinema groups began to form around independent financiers who eventually established studios following the Hollywood model. The studios required actors to fill the roles and the most logical place to find experienced actors was from the theatre. Most of the silent film actors had their start in the *Shinpa* theatre school. *Shinpa*, or new school theatre, was a means of contemporizing *Kabuki*. While *Kabuki* is highly stylized with gestures and postures detailing stories of feudal Japan, *Shinpa* tells modern stories using colloquial language and a supposedly less rigid formal acting style. The *Shinpa* theatre school adapted such modernist playwrights as Ibsen to the Japanese stage. Despite this progressive nature of the *Shinpa*, it continued many of the contrived conventions of *No* and *Kabuki*, including the use of *onnagata* or male actors for female roles and its own (albeit lesser) stylized acting technique where certain postures again contain specific meanings. Japanese silent cinema, incorporating the actors and female impersonators of the *Shinpa*, by extension incorporated much of the ideology inherent in that theatre style. Therefore, early Japanese cinema, adapted from the *Shinpa* school continued to reinforce images and ideologies that were in some ways descended from the 9th Century *No* theatre tradition.

The dance and movement of *No* was in its inception, considered far too physically demanding for women actors. Female characters were portrayed by men wearing the mask of a woman's face. In the late sixteenth, early seventeenth century a woman by the name of Okuni began entertaining men through a series of dances derived in part from *No* and in part from *Shinto* folk belief. She continued dancing

and refining her new dance drama as a woman's drama in order to entertain the common men, which was diametrically opposed to *No* which was entertainment for the ruling classes. The rising popularity of the female performers posed a threat to the conservatively hierarchized ruling class system, and so citing the frequency of prostitution in the *Kabuki* quarters as evidence of moral decline, women were prevented from performing *Kabuki*. The demand for the new art form for the common people was so great that young men began to perform the dances. Consequently, the pressure upon the young men to continue the sexual services associated with the *Kabuki* quarter caused the Tokugawa shogun to ban young men from performing the art, the authorities once again citing the moral decline of the military classes as reasoning for the proscription. *Kabuki* then became the domain of older male actors. The performance of female roles by men had long been a part of Japanese theatre from its earliest incarnations but with the edict preventing women performers, a new class of actor, the *onnagata*, (men trained exclusively to perform women roles) began refining their art in order to best depict the quintessence of 'womanliness.' For the subsequent hundred years the *onnagata* perfected the art of portraying what it is to be woman. In the *Meiji* Era of modernity and cultural transformation, there was pressure upon *Kabuki* to allow women to return to the stage. The actors countered this pressure by arguing that it is only the male who has studied the female form (*kata*) who can best render the *performance* of womanliness. The woman, because she is naturally a woman, does not act, she simply *is* woman but by virtue of her status as woman her performance is less of a symbolized representation – it is naturalism and therefore not art. This was contrasted with the position that the trained male *Kabuki* actor, who after a lifetime of studying the nature of woman, can best express the representation of woman through movement

and gesture. The woman on the *Kabuki* stage is not woman per se, but rather the essentialized nature of womankind as expressed through performance. The *Shinpa* too is a theatre of performance and symbolization and consequently the earliest Japanese films which incorporated the *Shinpa* aesthetic similarly involved the *depiction* of women rather than women performers. Earliest *Shinpa* derived Japanese cinema too employed female impersonation. Subsequently this ideology of woman as performance permeated early Japanese cinema so much that even when women began acting in the *Shinpa* and *Shingeki* dramas, they continued to follow the heavily stylized performance of womanliness as created and perpetuated by their *onnagata* predecessors. Just as Danjuro IX's dance in *Momijigari* was a commodity of Japaneseness, so too was the performance of the *onnagata* and the *Shinpa* women actors.

One of the most famous *Shinpa* dramas to use *onnagata* was *Kachusha* (1912), a *Shinpa* film adaptation of Leo Tolstoy's novel *Resurrection*. According to the research database *Masters of the Japanese Silent Cinema*, the film, while popular was criticized because the *oyama* (another term for female impersonators) Tachibana Teijiro's performance seemed unnatural. The actor's performance was deemed too performative and not woman like enough. This was one of the first instances of the film audience's movement toward a desire for naturalism and realism. Film ideology in its earliest incarnations, was shaped by the interaction between director and audience. Ideology and the female archetypes were a product of both filmmaker authorship, and audience acceptance or rejection of those archetypes.

Futari Shizuka or *Two Quiet People* (1922), starred the actress Nakayama Utako in a story in which a young woman chooses to give up her child for the sake of providing for him a better life. A young gentleman, Shibue Teruo is engaged to

Mieko, a woman of distinction but is in love with the popular *geisha* Namiji with whom he's had a child. The Shibue household, concerned with the impropriety of Teruo continuing his relationship with Namiji, persuades the *geisha* to terminate contact with him. Namiji struggles to support her self and son and works herself to exhaustion. In the meantime Shibue Teruo has married Mieko, who seeing Namiji's struggle to raise young Masakazu, takes the *geisha*'s son into her home to raise as her own as an heir to the family's fortune. Distraught, Namiji confronts Mieko but so impressed by the woman's desire to care for the boy and the prospects of his future wealth, decides to leave Masakazu in Mieko's care.

The sequence begins with the father, Teruo, facing screen right and standing by a door listening to a conversation in the next room. He then shakes his head, turns to face screen left and walks off screen where the film then cuts to the interior of the room. The father is physically absent from the room, shut out by the door, and symbolically removed from the women's exchange by exiting the screen and walking into the black space that is outside of the film's frame. It is on the father's movement that the film cuts, thereby entirely removing him from the child's fate and enabling the two women to make the decision of the boy's future, divorced from the father's interfering presence. The film empowers the women by removing all forms of patriarchy from their decision making, by graphically cutting away from him and effectively editing him out of the sequence.

The room is a western styled room with European settees and tables bedecked with white linen cloths. There are vases of flowers arranged in the *Ikebana* style which belie the Japanese owners of this otherwise western salon. Contrasting the Western styled room, the two women are dressed in traditional *Kimono*, reinforcing

the idea of women as continuing a link to a traditional past that perseveres despite their environment of western modernity.

For the duration of the two minute sequence there are 15 edits, with several quick cuts between the two women which build into the sequence a sense of urgency as the camera flits between close ups of Namiji's face and long shots of the room. What is remarkable about the sequence is the frequent use of close up shots of the two women's faces – particularly a single intercut of a close up of Namiji's reaction to the events – suggesting the woman's face is a key to understanding her thoughts. The earlier films which used the *onnagata* avoided close-ups, as they would reveal the artifice of the female impersonation.

The sequence ends with Namiji agreeing that it is best for the child to stay in the Shibue household. At that moment, the film cuts to a boy being brought into the sitting room by a third woman and Namiji stands to see him. The child, who has been in the care of the Shibue household, fails to recognize his mother and so Namiji makes her leave. The film focuses on the boy with his new guardian while Namiji makes her exit off screen. The camera remains on the new mother with her child in a long shot with the third woman in the background. The two remaining women make overt gestures, such as dabbing the eyes with a cloth, indicating their sorrow at the plight of the poor biological mother. The film then cuts to the exterior hall and a medium close up of the distraught Namiji, alone in the world but knowing the future for her son is secure.

In the preceding scene, the two women are dressed in traditional *kimono* rather than contemporary dress. Their faces are heavily caked in white powder and the two stand as they speak to each other. The two women are the picture of compliance, even in arguing, with heads bowed low, eyes averted from each other

and continual nodding of the head, as if to elicit agreement and confirmation. Each statement is concluded with a low bow to show deference to the other's opinion. When Namiji realizes that her son will be the heir to the Shibue household, she reaches out to touch Mieko's arm, again, a gesture of compliance and familiarity. When the discussions about the child's fate are concluded, the two women bow low to each other. Nakayama Utako her grief with low stooped shoulders and the frequent dabbing of her face with her kerchief. The entire sequence is performed with heavily stylized, contrived gestures of what it is to be woman, physically articulating gender as performance.

Japanese silent cinema, like all silent cinemas, involved large gestures to compensate for the lack of sound, but Japanese silent films were not shown in silence. Alongside the piano, trumpet and violin, as found in western silent cinema halls, there would also be various Japanese instruments, such as a *shamisen* and *taiko* drum. The music would be selected by the conductor in consultation with the *Eiga Banso Kyokushu* (*The Collection of Music to Accompany Silent Film*) which advised which music should be played during various types of scenes. Accompanying the music was dialogue and narration provided by the *benshi*. A further carryover from the Japanese theatre tradition which continued into the sound era of cinema, was the use of a live narrator. Donald Richie explains: "Initially, the *benshi* merely told the story before the performance – the *setsume* (summing up), or an explanation provided before the fact. Soon, however, he was telling the story during the screening itself" (Richie 2001: 21).

In Japan, the *benshi* became an integral element to a film's comprehensibility. Often using a scenario that was provided by the director, the *benshi* would have foreknowledge of the film's plot and story and so would bring the narrative to life

even giving voice to the characters themselves. Certain *benshi* enjoyed greater popularity than the screen stars and would take top billing in the film's exploitation campaign. In the age of *Shinpa*, screen women were doubly represented, the essence of woman often being performed for the camera by the *onnagata* and her voice provided by the *benshi* speaking in falsetto. Women in the first age of Japanese silent cinema were entirely a construction – woman as interpreted by male performance, both at the time of filming by the *onnagata* and at the point of projection by the *benshi*.

By the mid 1920s, the *Shinpa* movement faced heavy criticism from scenario writers, directors and actors who were heavily influenced by modernism in European theatre and social realism in certain Hollywood and European film, and who were looking to similarly create realism within Japanese cinema. The *Shinpa* theatre movement, while intended to update *Kabuki*, had itself become enslaved by a system of restrictive conventions which were quickly becoming dated. By the 1920s there was increased pressure for films to be more naturalistic, and called for film reform. The reform agenda campaigned to abandon the *benshi* for more intertitles, the use of intertitles allowing the film's 'meaning' to be the sole domain of the filmmakers rather than the *benshi* who retroactively constructed intelligibility at the time of screening. There was also pressure to abandon the use of *onnagata* which further compromised realism. The filmmakers instead focussed on natural settings and naturalistic acting. These reforms did not result in the presentation of women being any less ideological but it did change cinematic woman's ideological nature.

The Pure Film movement was founded by a group of young intellectuals who were active in most elements of filmmaking. Joan Bernardi (2001: 25) credits the director Kaeriyama Norimasa as being one of the defining figures of the movement.

In Kaeriyama's own films, he promoted natural acting, natural lighting and refused the use of *onnagata*. He also wrote a technical manual on film which encouraged a particular realist aesthetic. Kaeriyama, an avid film scholar was familiar with the expressionist movement of Europe, but was also aware of the realist films being produced in Hollywood. Kaeriyama was looking for film to detail moments of life. A second major figure in the modern cinema movement was Osanai Kaoru, who graduated with a degree in English Literature from Tokyo Imperial University in 1906. A few years later he travelled through Europe watching plays and studying European culture. Eric Cazdyn reports that in Russia "Osanai was immediately attracted to Vsevolod Meyerhold's biomechanics, as well as to Konstantin Stanislavsky's Moscow Art Theater" (Cazdyn 2002: 134). As Donald Keene notes, Japanese modern fiction was indebted to Henrik Ibsen and Maxim Gorki and much early 20th Century Japanese fiction is concerned with psychological drama. The filmmakers too were influenced by the European writers and one of the first *pure cinema* films to emerge was *Rojo no Reikon (Souls on the Road)* (1922), a film adaptation of Gorky's *The Lower Depths*.

It wasn't only European writers whose concern for social problems in literature was influential to the Japanese *pure cinema* directors. There were Japanese authors too who were also exploring the depths of human psychology. One such writer was the immensely popular Tokyoite Tanizaki Jun'ichiro. Born in 1886, Tanizaki's childhood was set directly in the age of *Meiji* modernity and as a young man he was fascinated by the west, regularly attending foreign film screenings and enrolling in ballroom dance lessons. By his late twenties Tanizaki developed an intense distaste for Japanese daily life. Of particular distaste was the Japanese film industry as epitomized by the action star Onoe Matsunosuke which, for Tanizaki,

when contrasted with the filmed art of Europe, seemed trivial and lacking in psychological depth. Tanizaki, whose own fiction writing was influenced by European modernism was deeply interested in psychological realism and felt that Japanese culture of the *Taisho* era was a crude copy of things occidental. He writes:

Today Japanese goods have conquered the world market, but at that time our national industry was in a trial period when it was only a crude imitation of an industrially advanced country. In general it seemed as if no product with a domestic label was worth anything. I was often infuriated by matches. Most of them would light up with a swoosh as soon as you struck them, and then immediately burn out at the tip. You needed to strike four or five matches in order to light one cigarette. It was the same with flashlights. The contact between the battery and the light was poorly made and the switch would break while you were still on your way home from the store. As for the Japanese moving pictures at the time, Onoe Matsunosuke was all the rage. You could say that he symbolized the level of culture in the country. Old Japan had been cast off, but the new Japan had yet to come. (Tanizaki in Bernardi 2001: 148).

For Tanizaki, Japan's transition to modernity was a period of cultural crisis in which the attempt to appropriate western culture resulted in the manufacture of poor copies of western material culture. And yet ironically Tanizaki himself created Japanese art with a distinct western influence. It is telling that Tanizaki's condemnation of Japan is through its material culture. It is Japan's inability to reproduce the western material objects, particularly disposable objects – matches and flashlights – the detritus of capitalism, that so piques Tanizaki's ire. He had become so completely indoctrinated into a consumerist ideology that in his early days he equated the integrity and value of a culture upon its ability to manufacture cheap disposable goods. Tanizaki's work is similarly inflected by this interest in commodification and the relative values of consumable items, be it the traditional *Kabuki* or a woman's body. In his writings, Tanizaki engages in a discourse of ownership; ownership of bodies, sexuality, and most significantly in his scenario for the film *Amachua Kurabu (Amateur Club)* (1922), the commodification of performance.

Tanizaki was hired by the Taikatsu studios as a scenario writer, and although he only worked in film for a few years, being credited as the script writer for just three films, his impact on the *new cinema movement* and Japanese film is historically significant. Working with Kurihara Kusaburo as the director, the two set out to create a film that eschewed the staid contrivances of the staged *shimpa* dramas. *Amateur Club* is a light comedy about a troop of untrained actors who set about performing a mock *Kabuki* play on a beach in Kamakura. Cazdyn states “Tanizaki hired real amateurs to play the characters because he believed that traditional actors would not be able to unlearn their training, to unlearn the disciplining of their bodies” (2002: 139). The sequences where the characters perform would appear too disciplined if performed by classically trained actors. It was necessary for Tanizaki to have the metadrama appear amateurish, an amateur aesthetic he feared professionals would not be able to perform. The film is metadiscursive of the nature of performance. And while the non professional actors’ inability to fully realize a *Kabuki* performance is central to the film’s believability, the aesthetic of naturalism within that performance is also significant to Tanizaki’s work. The use of non professional actors causes the film to be devoid of the contrived gestures that so affected the *Shimpa*.

The most significant impact Tanizaki’s film had on the pure cinema movement was his refusal to use female impersonators. Tanizaki’s insistence that the female impersonator, who could only really be shown in long shot as close ups would betray the impersonator’s artifice, argued that such contrived convention would again interfere with the film’s naturalism. *Amateur Club* employed women in order to examine their sensuality. Joan Bernardi states “It is true that a great deal of attention was given to the vivacious and modern Hayama: in her unusual costumes

she romped about in an astonishing, uninhibited manner that would have been out of the question for a female impersonator” (2001: 228). The film depicts women playing in the water and details the female body as a site of visual pleasure, something which the *Shinpa* dramas were entirely unable to do. The film again engages with a discourse of commodification, articulating femaleness as a site of male pleasure. Joan Bernardi quotes a reviewer of the film. “The appearance in a bathing suit of his (Tanizaki’s) sister-in-law, Hayama Michiko, was unprecedented in a Japanese film, and I enjoyed her lively animation. I could feel a youthfulness that had been absent in Japanese films until then.” (Hazumi Tsuneo in Bernardi 2001: 227). While the *pure cinema movement* films constructed woman in ever increasingly natural/naturalistic ways, her position as symbol never changed. The films continue to articulate ‘femaleness,’ albeit in more naturalistic ways. Her role in film continued to be ideological and predominantly defined by her status as temptress, wife, or mother and by her suitability to fit those roles.

While the films of the *pure cinema movement* aspire to greater realism appearance, women remain a construct of male fantasy. Tanizaki Jun’ichiro, who came to fame with a short story called *Irezumi (The Tattooer)*, is a novelist with a peculiar set of complexes regarding women. His early short story *Irezumi* involves a bizarre twist of misogyny and empowerment. The tale involves a tattoo artist who finds a woman with flawless skin of unmatched beauty. Using her as a blank canvas, he pours his emotion into a tattoo that covers her back, a tattoo of a large spider. Admiring his work he informs the woman that ‘henceforth all men will be her victims’ and indeed, he becomes her first. What is striking is the commodification of the young woman’s beauty. Tanizaki seems to question who owns the girl’s beauty? Is beauty inherent in the woman or is it the Tattooer’s skill that draws her beauty out,

in which case ‘beauty’ is the Tattooer’s? The tattooer imprints an amalgam of their two spirits – his skill and her natural grace – and is in turn devoured by her. But the tale takes pains to present the tattooer as not *projecting* his fears upon her body, but rather drawing the spirit of the girl out through his art. His art, then, becomes her commodity which she deploys to devour men. Ironically the potent young girl becomes Tanizaki’s commodity, with which to hook his readership.

While in the novel Tanizaki takes pains to assert the tattooer is not projecting his fears upon his subject, the author Tanizaki most certainly is. Of *The Tattoo*, Mishima Yukio writes “Her beautiful body houses a dark, cruel and evil element. If we examine this more closely, it is clear that this is not a particular evil inherent in women. Rather it is an evil desired by men; a reflection of masculine lust” (Mishima in Buruma 1988: 49). And so once again the woman is objectified, this time not by the tattooer, but rather by Tanizaki and patriarchal society. She is the ‘reflection of masculine lust,’ a mirror showing the monstrosity of society’s desires, desires which in Japan’s newfound ideologies of ownership and conspicuous consumption, become all the more grotesque. Equally, the young women in *Amateur Club* become the filmmakers’ commodity with which to distinguish their film. They are a fantasy construct, a projection onto the screen of masculine society’s desires for vitality, youth and beauty. Much of Tanizaki’s work in both literature and film projects fear of female sexuality upon its subjects, prompting Buruma to write “Tanizaki was an unusual individual, yet at the same time representative of his culture and the times” (Buruma 1988: 50). Tanizaki’s popularity is indicative of his engaging in society’s shared attitudes toward women. While he provides to the collective unconscious particular permutations of archetypal images of women, it is society’s celebration of his work that reinforces those ideologies of ‘womanliness’.

A second tale of vampiric animal-women that fascinated Tanizaki was the folkloric tale 'the Lasciviousness of the Viper,' *Jasei No In*, which Tanizaki later adapted into a film of the same name (1922). The story is taken from mainland China, but through oral transmission has become uniquely Japanese. The tale involves a young man who meets and falls in love with a mysterious noblewoman. As the young man begins to court the woman, despite their immense affection for each other, he becomes increasingly sick. The woman turns out to be a snake, a creature associated with death and their tainted love is symbolically toxic. He becomes polluted by her unnatural desires. The story is tragic because she cannot deny her nature but the two are equally incapable of fighting their mutual affection. They genuinely love each other. But while the woman is a snake and it is in the snake's nature to poison, the snake is also a woman and women are proven vampiric regardless of their better intentions.

II) Cinema of the *Showa*: Modern Women and the Cinema of Modernity

The appropriation and indigenization of folklore from Mainland China and Korea signified a nationalist trend in which the nation began to imagine for itself cultural unity through oral lore. The first significant writings on Japanese folklore to appear in Japan were composed in the late 1920s and early 1930s by Yanagita Kunio. Yanagita felt that to truly understand the Japanese in order to unite the country, one must first examine its religious beliefs and customs. Yanagita felt that all Japanese share particular beliefs which root them in a cultural and ideological specificity.

Yanagita argues:

The people of every country have a certain faith which is characteristic of their own society and culture. . . there are characteristics of each religion which are distinctly different from other religions. A study of these religious characteristics, I believe, will reveal various aspects of that society and culture which will provide us with a further insight into the history of that country. (Kawada 1993: 43-44)

Yanagita believed that in order to better understand what constitutes country and culture, one must first understand its history, religion and customs. Yanagita concludes that the one thing which all Japanese have in common is *ujigami* worship. In this system, ones ancestors become *kami* (deities) who provide protection to the surviving members of the family. Above these *kami* is the *ujigami* whose purpose is to protect all the members of a particular village or clan. Each *ujigami* is a direct descendent of the sun goddess *Amaterasu*. Yanagita discovered that the *ujigami* model of divinity had a certain flaw. Each *ujigami* was seen as a distinct figure and so the individual clans were hostile to each other, viewing each clan as being from different *ujigami* origins.

Kawada Minoru argues Yanagita's compilation of Japanese folk tales and beliefs was a project designed to establish an ideological and historical connection between all Japanese through increased awareness of shared religious beliefs in order to promote a form of nationalism. Kawada attests:

His intention was to dissolve the fundamentally exclusive communal ideology of *ujigami* worship, hoping to replace it with a new kind of consciousness that the people of Japan were united by common religious roots. Yanagita was convinced that this consciousness would contribute to nurturing a certain kind of nationalistic awareness among the people, so helping to form the backbone for the spiritual unification of the state. (Kawada 1993: 46).

That unification was not derived from *ujigami* worship itself, but the recognition that all *ujigami* worshippers engage in *Shinto*. Yanagita, in his analysis of Japanese folklore, surmises that *Shinto* provides a form of moral guidance. Yanagita posits that in *Shinto* there are two worlds, the *kakuriyo* spirit world; and *utsushiyo* the existing world of the humans. Those who live in the spirit world can see and hear everything that occurs in the human world. Yanagita posits:

Because of the fear of kakuriyo, one has to refrain from performing evil deeds. [Those who believe in *ujigami*] have a strong sense of morality because they believe in the existence of *kakuriyo* and fear it. (Yanagita in Kawada 1993: 53)

In reading Japanese folklore one must understand that within *Shinto* supernatural tales are never viewed with scepticism. Richard M. Dorson writes about the difference between the Japanese folktale (*mukashi-banashi*) and the European wondertale.

While the vestiges of supernatural and magical beliefs can plainly be seen in the *kinder-und Hausmarchen*, their hearers do not accept the malice of witches and ogres or the jealousies of talking animals as real. In the Japanese tales, however, the sense of fiction and fantasy is much less pronounced . . . The stories of supernatural husbands and wives and of ogres like the *oni* belong not to a children's realm of fairyland but to a danger-laden adult world where *kami* descend from the heavens and emerge from the mountains and swamps and whose essence, indeed, they embody. (Dorson 1963: xiii-xiv)

The folktale in contemporary Japan derives from a system that believes in the spirit world's continued interaction with that of the human realm, and while the tales have elements of fantasy and lore, the individual's relationship to that fantastical world is not filled with scepticism but rather with the notion that, although rare and improbable, interaction is in fact possible.

Yanagita's folklore studies became an obsession, and through the years he collected thousands of tales to comprise his *Nihon Musashi-Banashi Meii (Folktales of Japan)*. Part of the task of compiling folktales was to order them in a coherent way, but in a manner that emphasized similarity between tales. Yanagita began grouping his tales by theme, but it was one of Yanagita's students, Seki Keigo, who compiled the most complete classification of Japanese folktales. Seki, a lecturer in Sociology, translated into Japanese the work of Finnish folklorist Karl Krohn, which Dorson argues "demonstrates his grasp of the Finnish method of comparing variant texts to establish regional subforms of a folktale and chart their travels through time and space" (1963: ix). While Seki maintained Yanagita's grouping of the folktales

by theme, he considerably expanded and rearranged the national catalogue of oral narratives. Seki's catalogue conforms to the European model of folktale classification, promoted by Aarne-Thompson and criticized by Vladimir Propp in his *Morphology of the Folktale*.

Propp, a folklorist, was sceptical of Aarne Thompson's system of classifying folktales through like themes. He begins his *Morphology of the Folktale* with the chapter "On the History of the Problem," the problem being how to coherently classify folktales using a logical system. Propp considered the study of folklore to be a science, and therefore needed a coherent means of dissection. On the state of the science of folklore, Propp argues that classification is the first and most important stage of study. Propp states "The most common division is a division into tales with fantastic content, tales of everyday life, and animal tales. . . But involuntarily the question arises, 'Don't tales about animals sometimes contain elements of the fantastic to a very high degree?'" (Propp 1979: 5). The Afanás'ev system contains contradictions and provides difficulties in determining to what extent a tale is fantastic, and to what extent the tale is an animal tale, supernatural tale or a tale about good fortune. Propp notes certain patterns in the narrative ordering of the tales. He posits "a tale often attributes identical actions to various personages. This makes possible the study of the tale *according to the functions of its dramatis personae*" (Propp 1979: 20). Propp's system differs from previous attempts at studying folklore, because rather than studying the tales through the characters, he analyzes the tales through the *functions* of the characters. Writing of three separate tales with similar narrative events, but different characters performing the narrative actions, Propp concludes that the tales are variations of the same story.

But surely it is the same tale! Morózko, the lešij, and the bear test the stepdaughter and reward her each in his own way, but the plot does not change. Was it possible that no one should ever have noticed this before? Why did Afanás'ev and others think that they were dealing with different tales? (Propp in Liberman 1984: xxvi)

Essentially, in various tales, the same action is performed by a different character, but that variation of character does not mean that the tale is in fact a different tale, each different character performs the same function for the narrative. Propp argues that character substitutions, be it as an animal or a supernatural being, are superficial. Propp proposes that when closely examined, all folktales appear to be the same tale because they adhere to the same structure. Anatole Liberman describes Propp's theory:

The tremendous diversity of details in Russian wondertales is reducible to one single plot, that the elements of this plot (thirty-one in number) are always the same and always follow one another in the same order and, finally, that only seven different characters should be taken into consideration (Liberman 1984: xii).

Propp does have his detractors, and since the publication of his *Morphology of the Folktale* was published there have been some significant criticisms of his work.

Anatole Liberman criticizes Propp's work, stating "The idea that the sequence of functions in the wondertale is always the same is unwarranted, and Propp dismissed many exceptions too lightly" (Liberman 1984: xxxi).

Propp's biggest oversight, however, is in the inability to recognize the role that context plays in the construction of meaning in a folkloric text. Indeed, this is a weakness inherent within syntagmatic structural analysis itself. Alan Dundes argues:

One of the most important differences in emphasis between the syntagmatic and paradigmatic brands of structural analysis has been the concern or lack of concern with context. Propp's syntagmatic approach has unfortunately dealt with the structure of the text alone, just as literary folklorists generally have considered the text in isolation from its social and cultural context (Dundes 1965: xii)

While the structure of a text informs the text's meaning, the elements of the text do contain material that is dependent on the social and cultural contexts. Anatole

Liberman provides an example:

Propp says that only actions (the stable elements of the tale) matter for his morphological purposes, whereas the *dramatis personae* (the variables) do not affect the tale's structure, so all primary definitions should be made solely in terms of actions. But to know that the actions are the same, we have to know who performs them! There is certainly no difference between one villain or another carrying off the bride, *as long as we know that the attacker is the villain* (Liberman 1984: xxxii).

Propp fails to recognize that meaning changes depending on the associational values of the characters and that a father carrying a bride off has a different *meaning* than the villain carrying the bride off. It is the additional elements beyond the structure which carry the connotative associations and complex signified meanings of the tales.

It must not be forgotten that Yanagita's purpose in organizing Japanese folktales was to foreground a unified system of belief in order to promote the notion of cultural homogeneity. It was necessary for Yanagita to emphasize consistency throughout the folktales, promoting a sense of cultural unity in disparate stories. Yanagita's project in itself had an agenda, to unify the Japanese people under a collective belief system in order to better construct a sense of national cohesion. His selection, categorization and interpretation of the tales is compromised by that desire to promote certain (imagined) Japanese characteristics and promote an (imagined) cultural unity and so it behoves Yanagita's purpose to diminish the differences among the regional variations of the tales, and promote the narrative consistencies. But it is in the specificities of the tales that ideology is expressed, and to focus the tales through their narrative similarities is to shape the tales ideologies into a coherent form.

In many of Yanagita's folktales, women are a site of mystery and there is an ambivalent attitude toward female sexuality. This is most evident in the tale "The Oni's Laughter." The Oni is a type of goblin driven by passions and generally motivated by emotion or impetuous desire rather than rationality or logic. In this tale, a young woman is kidnapped by an Oni, and forced by him to be his wife. The mother sets out to find her daughter and when discovering her on the Oni's island, attempts to flee. The two set off in the Oni's boat, but as they are sailing away all the Oni begin to drink the water from the lake and the boat begins to drift back toward the shore. Despairing for their lives the women, fearing the worst, hike up their skirts and bare their genitalia. This causes the Oni to burst out laughing, laughing so much that they vomit out all the water they had drunk and the boat quickly sails away. This tale is reminiscent of the passage in the *Kojiki* in which the Heavenly-Alarming-Female jumps upon a drum, begins to stamp her feet, dance wildly and then exposes her genitalia to the delight and amusement of the other gods. Just like the Oni, the Heavenly-Alarming-Female's actions are seen as so transgressive that the gods lose themselves in laughter. Female sexuality then, becomes equated with power, and the instances of women wielding power over men become associated with sexuality and the female body. However, the sexual imagery is ambivalent because while sexuality provides women with power, sexuality is also seen as a site of female desperation and male pleasure – the Heavenly-Alarming-Female's actions are placed in the context of a *Matsuri* or festival, and the fellow gods, as do the Oni, don't fear the female body so much as derive pleasure from the shock of it all. But, it is that very pleasure that enables the women in "the Oni's Laughter" to escape, and it is that pleasure in the *Kojiki* that arouses the sun goddess Amaterasu's curiosity and causes her to withdraw from her self imposed exile. Female sexuality becomes

associated with woman's power over man, but that power is associable with a type of death, man's death, or at the very least woman's ability to overcome the edicts of man. Buruma, writing of Izanami in the *Kojiki*, states:

The connection between sex and death is certainly not typically Japanese. Georges Bataille, among others, has written eloquently about this concept. But although sex as such is not a sin in Japanese thought, there does seem to be a strong fear of the destructive forces sexual passion can unleash, especially in women. (Buruma, 1988: 5)

With sexuality and power becoming conflated, the first instances of the vengeful spirit archetype become evident.

In the preface to the tale "The Oni and the 3 Children," Seki Keigo writes "In the version of the tale given here it is the real mother, not the stepmother, who abandons the children, most Japanese versions have the stepmother as the villain. Cruel stepmother tales are as popular in Japan as they are in Europe" (Seki 1963: 51). Japanese tales are filled with instances of cruelty performed by wicked step and natural mothers. In the preceding tale, the mother abandons her children, thinking:

Here I am, just one lone woman. Though I work as hard as I can, I hardly earn enough to keep myself alive; I just cannot provide enough to raise my children properly. It is a terrible thing to have to see them suffer; it would be much better to take them to the mountains and abandon them. If an animal came along and ate them up, at least they would not have to suffer. (Seki 1963: 51)

And so the mother takes her children up into the mountains and abandons them. Wicked mother actions aren't just delimited to neglect; evil mothers in Japanese folklore have been known to do much worse actions.

The tale "Fire boy," while not ostensibly about a child who is the victim of an evil mother, requires an evil mother's actions to set the fire boy off on his journey. The tale is about a boy, Mamichigane, who was raised by a stepmother. When he was nine years old, his father had to leave on a trip to Edo. His stepmother had no further requirements than to take care of Mamichigane's hair, cleaning, brushing and

combing it. As soon as the father leaves, the stepmother begins to treat Mamichigane very cruelly. On the day of his father's return, the stepmother sends Mamichigane off to meet the father at the ship, promising to come along shortly. Alone, the stepmother takes a razor and repeatedly slashes her own face before taking to bed. The father and son, after waiting on the stepmother, eventually return home to find the mother sleeping in bed. Upon their return she wakes, crying "Look at what your child has done to me. As soon as your ship was gone, he would come every day with a razor, and crying, 'you old stepmother, you,' he would cut gashes in my face. I was ashamed to be seen looking like this; so I could not come to meet your ship" (Seki 1963: 71). The father, upon hearing this, banishes the child, setting the hero's journey in motion. Buruma, in analyzing the Kojiki, again discusses the role of jealousy and social status in the creation myth. Writing of Izanami, Buruma states:

She had no reason to be jealous of another woman, however, for, as far as we know, there was not one in Izanagi's life. But she hated losing her marital status. And social status, however hard it may be to be bullied by possessive mothers-in-law or neglected by unfaithful husbands, is something most Japanese women cannot do without. Any threat to take it away from them can unleash jealousy of the most violent kind and there is sufficient evidence that men live in morbid fear of it. (Buruma 1988: 5)

In the 'Fire Boy' story, it is the woman's status as 'step' mother that incites the woman to evil. It is her jealousy in competing with Mamichigane for his father's attention that impels her to commit her crimes. The folktales consistently present women as a series of functions, regularly portrayed as the villain who motivates the hero's journey. But meaning is not inherent in the function itself, but rather ideology is expressed through the insistence on the villain's defying her role of wife and mother. Ideology lies in the gendering of the villain and it is the very fact that it is *women* who embody villainy that perpetuates and reinforces conservative ideology,

ideology which eventually penetrated film culture. While in the folktales, compiled in the 1920s, women were frequently representations of an imagined 'womanliness' the films of the early *Showa* era were equally reductive.

The film *Banba no Chūtarō Mabuta no Hana* (1931) (*Chutarō's Long Lost Mother*) is a period piece filmed by Inagaki Hiroshi, yet while it is set in the feudal past, it cannot eschew the ideological contexts of western modelled modernity, colonialism and capitalism. The film is a melodrama rather than a straight sword fight film and it began a series of wandering hero films set in the feudal past. A rather rough looking man named Chutarō, who had been born in the Banba Inn, had been abandoned by his mother when an infant. While his appearance is that of a gangster, he is in fact a gentle and honest man who spends his life searching for his long lost mother. One day he comes across what appears to be an ageing prostitute who is being accosted outside of a famous teashop. Chutarō comes to her aid and discovers through her that Ohama, the woman who runs the teashop, is also from Banba. Chutarō blurts out that it is he, her son, who has finally found her. The woman is Chutarō's mother but fearing that her son has become a reprobate gangster who will bring shame to her successful business, dismisses the man, telling him that while he may have been born at the same inn as her own child, her child had died at the age of five.

The sequence in which Ohama denies Chutarō is shot in a conventional manner, shot-reverse-shot manner, cutting between medium close ups of the two speakers. Chutarō, prostrate on his knees, looking up to and pleading with his mother and Ohama facing downward and being given a position of dominance over her suffering son. With her face tilted toward him, but her body angled away from him her body encapsulates a posture of indifference. The sequence is interrupted

with intertitles which provide the dialogue as spoken by the *benshi*. She tells him that her son died at the age of five, and he states that can not be the case, for he is indeed Chutaro. Upon this assertion, she turns away and looks at the wall, denying his statement. She demands he leave, accusing him of being after her money. In the context of modernity, her conclusion is derived from an economic perspective, presuming that a son's love for his mother simply cannot compare with the desires for money and insinuating that Chutaro is a manipulator. When Chutaro responds with shock, the mother is genuinely surprised because she simply cannot conceive any other reason for her 'son' to wish to establish contact with her. At this point, Chutaro pulls out a small bag of coins which amount to little in comparison to the lavishly appointed tea house. In a pathetic exchange, Chutaro informs his mother that he had toiled hard to save this money to provide for his mother when he finds her. His hardened mother, unable to see beyond Chutaro's poor vestments, drives him away. It is only upon Ohama's daughter admonishing her mother, that Ohama finally seeks out her long lost son and invites him into her home. The film is unusual because it is in the placement of the new system of economic class movement and social climbing (Ohama comes from poverty, but represents the new merchant class) that the drama derives. Ohama, while having been free to climb socially, resents what she perceives as her own son's aspirations to her wealth and social status. She also values material wealth over her own obligations as a mother, indeed becoming a monstrous figure by virtue of her loss of traditional maternal values. Greed is nothing new, but in the earlier feudal era of strict class divisions, social climbing was a near impossibility. It is only in the context of mercantile capitalism that the mother's greed begins to affect her ability to care for her children.

In the earlier *Shinpa* film *Two Quiet People* (1922), the drama derives from the two women both aspiring to be good mothers. It is in the aspiration toward motherhood from which the narrative derives conflict. In this film, social class was presented as fixed and stable. The film's ideology never questions Namiji's inability to transcend her poverty. It is taken for granted that if Namiji were to raise the child he would be similarly forever trapped in poverty. In the later film, (1931) steeped in capitalist ideology, the conflict comes from the mother being opposed to what she perceives as Chutaro's attempt at social climbing. The suggestion is that Ohama cannot be both mother and successful entrepreneur, because to lose guard over her personal finances, even to embrace her estranged family, could potentially be economically damaging. In the earlier *Shinpa* film, Mieko chooses to raise Namiji's child even at her own financial risk because it is the correct thing to do, the figure of Ohama refuses to raise her own children because it would involve parting with some of her hard earned money. It is significant that it is Chutaro's mother (his father is absent from the film) that embodies such ideology, because the paradox comes in her failing to perform her 'natural' role as care giver in favour of the unnatural role of successful merchant. The film seems to imply that a woman cannot be both mother and merchant, for she must excise that part of her which is nurturing in order to be a successful business woman in the modern world. This theme similarly appears in the Ozu silent film, *Tokyo no Yado* (1931) (*An Inn in Tokyo*).

Ozu Yasujiro was a fixture in the Japanese silent film industry. While much of his later work has been preserved, many of the forty-two known silent films he directed no longer exist. Of his extant films, one of his later silent masterpieces, *Tokyo no Yado*, similarly portrays the business orientated woman as monstrous in her inability to act her role as a mother. The film is one of Ozu's Kihachi trilogy, along

with *Dekigokoro* (1933) and *Ukikusa Monogatari* (1934), all of which feature the luck starved anti-hero Kihachi, although many of the themes in this film are current throughout Ozu's oeuvre.

The story details an unemployed father with his two sons who wander the streets of Tokyo looking to scratch a living. They catch stray dogs for their cash reward and they save their pennies to buy food and find shelter when it rains. One day, while the unemployed Kihachi pounds the streets looking to find money, he meets a young woman, Otaka, who is similarly poverty stricken and who is equally unable to afford to raise her young daughter Kimiko. Kihachi and Otaka, kindred spirits, establish an immediate friendship and so when Kihachi meets a long time family friend Otsune, who provides for him a job in her inn, Kihachi petitions Otsune to similarly find Otaka gainful employment. One day Otaka's daughter Kimiko develops a high fever and the mother and child disappear. Weeks later, Kihachi finds Otsune working in a teahouse and denounces her as an ingrate, to which she replies that she had no choice as she had been unable to afford to take the young girl to the hospital on the allowance provided by the innkeeper, Otsune. Kihachi then petitions Otsune for money to provide for the sick child but Otsune, her generosity having been stretched, denies him the money. Kihachi desperate to provide for the sick child, feels no choice but to steal the money from Otsune and in the dead of night breaks into her inn. He then pays for the sick girl's hospital fees, visits Otsune to confess his crime and denounce the old woman whose firm resolve crumbles. He then asks her to look after his children before turning himself in to the police.

The film, while following the aesthetic tenets of the modern drama adheres to a realist look. The film is shot mostly on location, using natural lighting and natural settings. Much of the film is shot in fields, emphasizing the vast expanses of

Tokyo's ruined wasteland. While the film announces itself to be about Tokyo, the film does not show a teeming metropolis, recently rebuilt after the destruction of the 1923 earthquake but rather shows rural fields and abandoned construction projects, dusty roads and a lack of gainful employment. At a time when millions in federal money was being sent into overseas territorial expansion, the film shows a Tokyo that is not receiving the benefits of Japan's newfound imperialism. Kihachi strolls through construction sites where half finished work remains unmanned and there is no work for an able body. Concrete drain piping, waiting to be laid, becomes a seat rather than a drain and Ozu's usage of deep space shows miles of iron railing, rusting from disuse. This Tokyo is not a bustling world capital but rather a desolate land where the only few denizens are forever starved for work.

Kihachi's salvation, then, comes neither from his own industry, nor from a prosperous society where those who have ambition shall always find work. Rather, this new Tokyo, which is distinctly not a meritocracy, only provides one form of salvation and that is through a form of nepotism. It is through Kihachi's chance meeting of a long time family friend who has found wealth that Kihachi is finally able to provide for his children and indeed extend his benefactor's favour to his lady friend, Otaka. In this new economy in which wealth is tied to filial piety, status becomes increasingly precarious because one's position in society is entirely determined on your benefactor's generosity, as indeed Kihachi pushes Otsune's generosity to the limit by asking for aid for Otaka's child. The film's moral centre is Kihachi, who is tested to the breaking point in his desire to help Otaka. Recognizing that Otaka's only help can come from Otsune's wealth, Kihachi robs Otsune's inn. He then gives the money to Otaka and apologizes to Otsune before turning himself in to the police. And yet Ozu provides Kihachi with a crucial moment in his apology.

He states to Otsune that if she had been a parent, she would understand that there are more important things in life than both money and one's own liberty. Ozu suggests that Kihachi is forced into committing a crime and committing himself to a life in prison in order to save a child, and yet he is put into this position by Otsune's failure as a woman in both her inability to bear children of her own and in her inability to recognize how a parent must sacrifice for those children. Kihachi's moral character is never questioned but rather Otsune's value system is questioned, by virtue of her over valuation of capital, even at the sake of a child's wellbeing. Otsune is given a form of redemption by the film's resolution. Kihachi, destined for jail, can no longer provide for his own children as a parent and role model. He asks Otsune to provide for his children while he is in jail. Otsune agrees and she too becomes redeemed and her 'femaleness' and humanity are restored as she finally learns what it is to be a mother. Her hard demeanour crumbles as she realizes the error in her misguided ways.

Ozu's ideologies relating to capital and women weren't unique. Much film during the thirties had a tendency to present a patriarchal, moralizing attitude toward women. The 1930s, politically, saw the rise of Japanese nationalism and the *Kokutai no hyongi* or the 'national polity.' As Japan saw the rise of western power deriving from its imperialist project of colonisation for economic gain, Japan too decided to enter into a project of territorial expansion. While the country began to promote ideologies of nationalism, film began to reinforce conservative doctrine of codified gendered behaviour.

Two female tropes who appeared in the films of the *Showa* were the tragic heroines of the *Shinpa* melodramas and the flapper like *modan gāru* or modern girl. Of particular note is that during the 1930s, while women were frequently featured in

film narrative, the *onryō* made a virtual disappearance. With the exception of two versions of the Yotsuya ghost story being made (1932 and 1936 respectively of which there are no extant copies) and sundry other ghostly tales, mostly involving ghost cats, of which few remain, the vengeance seeking woman became a rarity.³ Conversely, the realist dramas of the *Shinpa* and *mo-ga* women enjoyed immense popularity. The *Shinpa* heroines and *mo-ga* often exhibited similar character traits to the *onryō*, but while the *onryō* was granted the power to redress iniquitous treatment, the *Shinpa* was often a tragic heroine, punished by society for her transgressions of the patriarchal mode.

Isolde Standish creates a link between morality and the emancipation of women from the traditional role of wife and mother.

The advent of modernism in Japan of the 1920s and 1930s precipitated a change in ‘public morals’ particularly evident in the cities. This change came to be associated in popular consciousness with a new image of womanhood. Women were increasingly breaking out of their traditional space as *okusan* (wives within the home) and entering society for the first time in significant numbers. (Standish 2006: 52-53)

Cinema had an ambivalent attitude toward the rise in women as workers and consumers. Standish argues ‘in the early 1900s, women from middle-class backgrounds increasingly found employment outside the home, precipitating a masculine backlash that manifested itself in a media-generated image of what came to be known as the *modan gāru* (2006: 53). The popular imagination constructed an image of aggressive, individualized young women, who with the discovery of independent means to capital became less dependent upon their male benefactors. This created within the media an intense fear of the strength of these independent women who both represented a loss of traditional conservative values as well as an

³ It is difficult to ascertain a true portrait of the *onryō* figure’s popularity in this period – extant films of the period in general are rare and costly expenditure of recovery and restoration tends to favor films of supposed artistic merit.

embodiment of a new ‘foreign’ valuation of conspicuous consumption. Standish continues: “Within this context she became the corporeal expression of the destabilization of traditional ideologies of gender” (Standish 2006: 53). Despite the *modan gāru* or *mo-ga* embodying a foreign system of ideologies, she remained intensely popular in modern Japanese culture – indeed representing modernism itself, starring in novels, films and stage plays, embodying the rapidly changing times. Standish quotes Kataoka Teppei, who writing in 1927 described the Modern Girl as an abstract concept derived from the 1920s feminist movement. He states “somehow, from the midst of the lives of all sorts of women of our era, we can feel the air of a new era, different from that of yesterday . . . the Modern Girl is but a term that abstractly alludes to one new flavour sensed from the air of the life of all women in society” (Kataoka quoted in Standish 2006: 52). The reception of the *mo-ga* was ambivalent, for she inspired conservative fears of the unknown which accompany change. One facet of the *mo-ga*’s appeal was the films’ characterization of the modern woman incorporating liberated sexuality.⁴ The films’ conflated the modern woman’s economic freedoms with sexual freedoms and frequently tied the *mo-ga*’s financial independence with a newfound sexual liberation. Clothing, or rather ‘costuming,’ of the *mo-ga* tied her conspicuous spending to a sexually revealing and specifically western modality which becomes concomitantly indicative of an imagined sexual availability. She becomes a sexual figure because of her new found freedoms and yet ironically because of cinema’s spectacularizing gaze becomes a site of sexual pleasure for a male audience. The *mo-ga* is restrained even within her newfound liberation by becoming a commodity for a curious male audience.

⁴ Note once again the popularity of the use of the liberated women in Tanizaki’s *Amateur Club*.

The *mo-ga* wasn't only popular with men. She became a figure of identification for many women, both those in the workforce and those who continued to remain in the domestic sphere. The popular appeal of the *mo-ga* was noticed by the head of the Shochiku Studios, Kido Shiro, who being "aware of women's growing spending power and the need to foster new audiences, he saw the commercial potential in attracting women into cinemas" (Standish 2006: 53). Women's dramas, particularly the *Shinpa* melodramas, had long been directed toward women as consumers but the rise in popularity of the *mo-ga* or modern girl within the contemporary popular consciousness created an entirely new iconology of liberated feminine power.

Contrasting the *mo-ga* was the relatively conservative heroine of the *Shinpa* derived melodrama. Exemplary of the early *Showa* era's ambivalence to the modern woman is the early Mizoguchi silent *Shinpa* feature *Tokyo Koshinkyoku (Tokyo March)* (1929) which has a passage in which a dying woman gives a haunting command to her daughter. The story involves a young factory worker, a *mo-ga* named Michiyo, who had never known her father and whose mother had died in Michiyo's childhood. Michiyo has been raised by an uncle and works in a factory in order to raise money to help support her adoptive family. She represents the modern girls, working in the city but the film's context of a brutal capitalist society creates a crisis which the young woman must negotiate. The factory where they work has recently laid her uncle off and he faces economic peril. His wife reminds him that a *geisha* house has offered a substantial amount of money for the younger woman. Michiyo's mother had been a famous *geisha* in the past and Michiyo is consequently a legacy. The film's conflict comes from a clash between Michiyo's role as potential comfort woman indentured to her uncle to raise, and her newfound role as

independent woman who is in charge of her own future and no longer bound by such outmoded familial contracts. Her uncle too, recognizes that Michiyo is not responsible for his financial situation, nor in the modern world is she his commodity to sell as he pleases. As Michiyo overhears her uncle speaking about her future, she begins to reminisce about her mother's final words. The film cuts to a flashback of her mother lying in a sick bed, while an intertitle flashes her spoken words. The mother states to Michiyo:

Michiyo, you never knew your father, but he was a cold hearted man. Know this! The moment a woman gives her body and soul to a man, he begins to tire of her. When you grow up, never fall in love. Make them fall in love with you (*Tokyo March* 1929).

It is significant that the girl equates her uncle's discourse on capital and obligation, with love relations. Mizoguchi constructs heterosexual love as a system of economic compacts which Michiyo must equally negotiate. In Mizoguchi's film, and indeed in much of the contemporary iconography of the modern girl, she understands well her role as a sexual commodity and understands also the connection between her sexuality and its economic use value within a capitalist society. Her sexuality then becomes a means of negotiating a commodity driven society and thereby gives her power. But her power is delimited by a patriarchal society because her uncle (whether ethically or not) retains the means of selling her to the *Geisha* house and Michiyo continues to be bound by those outmoded social rules of honour which demand she display loyalty to her adoptive patriarch.

Michiyo ultimately does become a *Geisha*, fated to be entwined in a love triangle with a young man whom she eventually discovers to be her half brother, thereby reinforcing her mother's dire warnings to be distant with men and to never fall in love. Her character then makes a transformation from modern girl to *Shinpa*

tragic heroine. It is of note that when she becomes a *Geisha*, clad in the traditional *kimono* she also significantly changes her name to Oriie and resultantly the iconographic and ideological shifts from *mo-ga* to traditional woman is complete. The mother's earlier exhortations to the daughter to use her sexuality in order to create her own destiny, are contained by both fate and a patriarchal society which conspire to oppress and punish the woman who dares take such control. The young woman's potential power to claim dominion over her own future is curtailed by the film's utilization of fate with the incorporation of the tragic incestuous relationship story arc.

Film of the 1930s often used twists of fate to punish its independent female characters. Standish, writing of Shimizu Hiroshi's *The Usurer* argues:

Within these *Shinpa* – derived films female characters have little constitution of their own as individuals; they exist merely within a masculine consciousness, and when they transgress traditionally defined roles of the feminine they are punished. (Standish 2006: 55)

And yet the women are not only punished by the controlling men of the films, but also by the scenario writers who often use ill fate as a dramatic device. The women often suffer karmic retribution for their aspirations toward independence, as is the case with Michiyo in *Tokyo March*. Ironically it is her very attempts to negotiate the dicta of patriarchy, which demand she not be a financial burden upon her newly unemployed uncle, which instigates her entering into the capital economy and precipitates her love torn fate.

Mizoguchi's early films frequently depict young women who developed power through their sexuality and yet whose power is delimited by a society that commodifies a woman's body. His 1933 film *Taki No Shiraito (The Water Magician)* similarly revolves around a woman who claims ownership of and commodifies her

own body in order to help her lover, consequently also being punished by an iniquitous society that devalues the sexualized woman.

The story again revolves around an ill fated young woman. Taki works as a travelling performer, the titular ‘water magician’, whose act involves controlling a fine jet of water and ‘juggling’ the spray. The young woman meets on a bridge a young man who had at one time in the story’s past, been her lover. Her lost love being re-ignited, the woman pledges to finance his studies to be a lawyer and takes out a loan from a notorious loan shark. The money to repay the loan goes missing, and discovering that it had been stolen by an agent of the loan shark, she eventually kills the crook. Arrested, the woman finally is able to meet her lost lover who has indeed studied hard and has by a tragic twist of fate become the judge who must try her. He sentences her to death but before the courts can mete out her punishment, she commits suicide by biting off her tongue. The judge, devastated by fate’s tragic turn also takes his own life.

The Water Magician, like Mizoguchi’s earlier film, revolves around a young woman who uses all of the means at her disposal to control her life. The film begins with her being a successful entertainer. Tragedy strikes the woman at the point in which she enters into the world of economics and aspires to take dominion over the young man’s financial problems. The water magician is herself able to sustain a life independently of men, but it is at the point in which she attempts to provide for the lawyer that her story begins to unfold as a tragedy. It is through her attempts to negotiate a specifically masculine economy of lawyers and loan sharks that she makes her initial mistake, borrowing money from a crook who then counteracts her indebtedness to him with a sexual economy. She becomes doubly exploited by him, through his physicality as well as through his economic power. The film’s moral

message seems to be that when women enter into a masculine world of capital power, they must inevitably expose themselves to be ill equipped to suffer its consequences (in this case, pay back the loan and suffer the abuses of the gangster). Through the film's construction of narrative, the woman is entirely justified in her killing of the loan shark – the film takes pains to demonstrate that he is the film's figuration of evil – but by this point her fate is sealed and she must suffer the consequences of her actions and aspirations. The film's positioning the exploited woman within a world of retributive justice serves to favour a patriarchal ideological system that restores power to the dominant (ergo masculine) order by punishing the woman through both its legal systems and through its interjection of fate. The film world cannot allow for the woman to be unpunished for her murder of the gangster, and symbolically the film cannot provide for an alternative (thereby radical) ending which permits the woman happiness by being unpunished for her transgressions and finding economic and emotional stability with her lawyer lover/life partner. The further irony of the young lawyer being forced to prosecute her is a restoration of the dominant order – not only has civil law conspired to contain the woman's ambitions, but so too has fate conspired to doubly punish her by forcing her own lover to act as judge and jury. The woman's only solace is in knowing that her efforts were not in vain and that her lover did indeed succeed as a venerable lawyer. And yet that solace too is tempered by the fact that the judge also extinguishes his own life. The final irony then, is that she ultimately becomes responsible for his death because so overwhelmed is he by his debt to, and love for her, that he cannot continue to live. The young man then becomes the martyr rather than the woman because it is he who fulfils his traditional obligation to his benefactor by killing himself after condemning his patron to death. The woman has been suitably punished and the man has stoically paid his debt to his

benefactor. In the context of a society psychologically overwhelmed by a flux of women into the economic workforce, the film becomes an example of the conservative ideologies surrounding the debate of emancipated women.⁵ The message is clear – no good can ever come of women entering into the masculine economic sphere.

The iconography of the tragic heroine of the later *Shinpa* often served to reinforce conservative ideology by punishing the woman who attempts to control her own fate, but the *modan gāru* conversely often went unpunished. Standish identifies the often conflicted attitude toward the *mo-ga*. She states “Their image within popular films of the period is at times ambiguous, reflecting masculine insecurity and the destabilising effect these trends had on the traditional family” (Standish 2006: 56). Indeed, the *mo-ga* in the films were often contrasted with a figure who represented the traditional role of women. The *mo-ga* frequently acted as a counterfoil to such conservative tropes. In such films as Gosho’s *Madamu to Nyobo* (*The Neighbour’s Wife and Mine*) (1931) and Naruse’s *Tsuma Yo Bara No Yoni* (*Wife, Be Like a Rose!*) (1935) the *mo-ga* is contrasted as an alternative figure to the conservative wife and mother.

Gosho’s *The Neighbour’s Wife and Mine* was Japan’s first film to incorporate sound technology. The film features a poor husband whose traditional wife (the titular *nyobo*) is contrasted by the neighbour’s modern, jazz loving wife referred to with the westernized appellation ‘*madamu*’ or ‘*madam*’ to denote her western (read modern) persona. Standish states ‘through the title, we are invited to view these

⁵ I say ‘psychologically overwhelmed’ because the actual numbers of women entering into the workforce were substantially lower than was represented in film. The films depicted a fantasy world in which the workforce was inundated by an influx of women working, when in actuality there were demographically very few women who took jobs at this time.



characters not as individuals but as social types representing competing social values” (2006: 61), and indeed the films of this era regularly cast women as a symbol of womanhood, relegated to one of few roles; traditional wife and mother, or modern girl. Women of these early films become little more than a narrative device and a signifier for the changing times – either as a symbol of the new modern individualist/capitalist systems, or a symbol for the traditional communalist kinship based ideology. Exemplary of the deployment of women for ideological purposes is the Naruse film *Wife! Be Like a Rose!* (1935).

Naruse’s film involves a young woman, Kimiko, who wishes to get married. Kimiko is a modern woman who dresses in modern clothing and who wears a modern hairstyle and yet despite that modernity seeks her father’s permission to marry. Her parents are separated, her father living with a former *Geisha*. Kimiko hatches a plan to reunite her parents by asking for her father’s approval for marriage, thereby forcing her father to act as a go-between for the two families. Kimiko has all of the iconographies of the modern girl and yet she represents a moderate modernism because her modernity is contained by a conservative belief system that demands she receives her father’s approval before marrying her beau.

The film through its outset provides Kimiko with a traditional moral code that diminishes her potential threat as a wholly modern, ergo self interested and self serving, woman. The film in its early stages presents the mother as a victim of the father’s wanderlust and her role in the film is as a pious victim of the father’s selfishness. The mother is initially constructed as the good wife and her figuration as a conservative art lover confirms this positioning as an idealized image of a bourgeois matriarch. Kimiko hears of her father’s lover, and that presentation of the woman of ill repute configures the lover as anathema to the mother’s traditional

value system. The lover has stolen a husband and is therefore responsible for Kimiko's mother's shame and unhappiness. And yet Naruse cleverly turns these competing figurations of the mother archetype around and exposes them to be merely tropes. When Kimiko finally finds her father she discovers his mistress to be a warm and generous woman who not only supports her father, but also sends money to his former wife in order to better raise Kimiko. In fact, the former *geisha*'s warmth is contrasted with the mother's brusque coldness. Donald Richie describes the film "Two wives – the one supposedly good is in reality bad, the other supposedly bad is actually good" (Richie 2001: 61). Both women represent conservative values but the film's utilization of women as tropes becomes a didactic means of questioning society's blind valuation of all things traditional, and society's quick condemnation of the unorthodox. One is left to wonder what it is to be a rose. Is a rose something that is cold and aesthetically pleasing with a superficial beauty? The film's desire for the restoration of the family seems to promote the mother's cold austerity over the *geisha*'s tainted generosity while the film's resolution presents the *geisha* as providing the more desirable life. The film's salvation comes from neither mother figure, but rather in the presence of the daughter's potential future. The daughter has been given her father's blessing and is by the film's conclusion destined to become a wife and mother herself. And yet she remains a modern girl, albeit one who has learned both from her mother and the *geisha*, the two contrasting female tropes. The film's resolution comes from the daughter discovering balance between the two tropes but it is only because of her status as a modern girl that she can learn from the two women and become a third, balanced alternative for the future generation. The film, through its deployment of women, expressly through its deployment of competing mother figures, questions the nature of 'goodness' and how to behave in

one's various roles. The film's usage of women as tropes enables it to promote its message of balance and negotiation. The film remains conservative in its conclusion, presuming that the *geisha* as a mistress will always be tainted and the mother, through her bourgeois manner can never become a more moderate figure. It becomes didactic in its conviction that traditional roles are fixed and immutable, and thereby must present a new, third figure. It is essential that the daughter be constructed as a modern girl because the modern girl lacks the strictures of tradition which prevent growth and change. Despite the film's questioning of traditional ideologies of women's roles, the film continues to present women as a limited number of tropes; the conservative mother, the good hearted *geisha* and the modern girl. There is little room for nuance or variation within these fixed figurations and the film continues to deploy women as types rather than as rich, textured characters.

Throughout the Japanese silent film era, strong women were featured regularly in film. They were presented as the *Shinpa* tragic heroines and the aggressive and sexualized *mo-gas* or modern girls of the late 1920s and early '30s. Yet despite this prevalence of strong women, the *onryo* was virtually absent. The *onryo* is an image icon that is perverse, frequently confronting and confounding the scopophilic pleasure of the cinema. With her destroyed beauty and rotting skin, she is an image of potent female power that is not derived from her sexuality or beauty. Hers is both a supernatural power (in the narrative) and an eviscerating power at the level of the image. Frequently beautiful in her past life, it is the loss of beauty which often fuels the *onryo*'s rage. Hers is the power to repulse and to shock and to combat the objectifying gazes of cinema. She has both powers within the narrative arc of the revenge story, able to exert dominion over life and death; and also power over the audience, able to shock and terrorize and to subvert the frequently masculine gaze

which places the young woman under male scrutiny. Film, because of patriarchy's fears of women, aspired to delimit the cinematic woman's power, but the *onryo* refuses to be contained by the cinematic gaze. The *onryo* both narratively and ideologically confronts and subverts the dicta of patriarchy.

In the nineteen twenties, when the first debates regarding the emancipation of women appeared within the film making and watching communities, women began consuming the 'women's films' in much greater quantities. While working women began to accrue disposable income, they began to make choices as to how they would spend their money. This represented a power shift which precipitated debate. While in actuality, the numbers of women working were vastly fewer than the films would indicate, ideology reinforced the idea that women were taking to industry en masse. While the novelty of the economically and sexually liberated women proved popular in cinema, the women in the films were often delimited in their freedoms through the deployment of fate, containing and curtailing women's power and returning them to a site of voyeuristic pleasure. The films, despite the pretence of presenting a liberated and liberating attitude to the emancipation of women, ultimately aspired to reassert and reinforce patriarchal ideology.

Women of War: Nationalism/Spiritism/Japanism?

Film in the 1930s became overtly didactic, constructing tropes designed to promote national polity. Films that were critical of the government's nationalist agenda frequently faced criticism and public flak for being contrary to the promotion of an approved Japanese identity. Donald Richie describes the criticism and growing censorship which faced the *tendency* films:

The *keiko-eiga*, or 'tendency' films – films which tended toward leftist sympathies but avoided overt political commitment – eventually became numerous enough to form a genre. Usually these films took a stance against some repressive

government-backed political action. As the authorities looked more and more closely at the liberties taken during the decade of the 1920s, increasing efforts were made to curb this license, resulting frequently in ever more overt expressions of criticism. (Richie 2001: 90-91)

Richie gives the example of the public denunciations of the Suzuki Shigekichi tendency film *Nani ga Kanojo wo so Sasetaka* (*What made her do it?*) (1930), in which a poverty stricken young woman becomes an arsonist. Richie asserts the film makes a clear connection between the gross disparities between the rich and the poor with the disaffection of the proletariat. The press demanded people not watch it, reporting that the film's persuasiveness sparked riots. Richie argues "the 1920s had been a period not only of 'license' and relative freedom but also of economic setbacks and widespread poverty. Many Japanese were dissatisfied and made this known. The authorities were quite prepared to act against such dissidence" (Richie 2001: 92). It wasn't long before governmental criticism was sanctioned by law and such 'expressions of criticism' morphed into overt censorship.

As Japan began to make its presence known on the world stage, Japanese culture, expressly film culture, began to struggle to ascertain and promote an identity of 'Japaneseness.' John Dower, in his *Embracing Defeat* argues "no one makes more of a fetish of the supposed singularity of the national character and the national experience than the country's own cultural essentialists and neonationalists" (Dower 1999: 29). Throughout Japanese history, nationalists have focussed on the uniqueness of the Japanese character in opposition to the west, which reached its apotheosis in the lead up to the war. Dower continues: "Although all peoples and cultures set themselves apart (and are set apart by others) by stressing differences, this tends to be carried to an extreme where Japan is concerned (1999: 29).

Oppositional theory posits that identity is constructed through a series of binaries --

us versus them – but those binaries are based on constructed criteria and often proves to be a fantasized identity. With Japan’s increasing awareness of the western world the nation began to scrutinize its differences from the west in order to better construct a national identity.

As Japan began to engage in its own project of Imperialism, beginning with the Manchurian ‘Incident’ of 1931 (a polite way of referring to Japanese hostile territorial expansion), Japanese film eventually began to fall more and more heavily under the scrutiny of the military and government censors. Initially, in the early 1930s, censorship was not so strict, relying on public and government flak to pressure filmmakers into conforming to government ideology. However, as the *tendency* films became increasingly overt in their politics, censorship became increasingly legislated. As the Japanese cinema industry gained strength and international acclaim, Japanese politicians became increasingly concerned with how the world perceived Japan. Peter B. High writes:

On 14 February 1933, the League of Nations voted forty-two to one condemning Japan’s invasion of Manchuria. Matsuoka Yosuke, the Japanese plenipotentiary, rose from his seat and with a peremptory ‘Sayonara,’ led his delegation out of the world body. The domestic press roared its approval of ‘this plucky show of Japanese manhood,’ but the aftermath was tense. Having staked out an isolated position in the eyes of the world, the Japanese government and military became more sensitive than ever to the manner in which the world perceived them. (High 2003: 51)

High continues with an account of the director Ushihara Kiyohiko’s experience in Europe, where he encountered the ‘perverse’ depictions of his country in western film. Ushihara demanded that Japanese film shed the “protective cocoon of entertainment value” (Ushihara quoted in High, 2003: 51) in order to better counteract the western vision of Japan. High reports that by 1935, the Home

Ministry enacted the 'Export-Import Regulation' which required all Japanese film sent abroad to be approved by the Ministry.

Isolde Standish reports:

One further issue that was raised in support of a national film policy was concern with Japan's international image. This was manifested in two ways: (a) the desire to promote Japanese films abroad as an intercultural exercise in mutual understanding, and (b) to ensure that Japan's censorship standards met those of other 'advanced nations.' (Standish 2006: 140)

The film law's intention was to create a system of refining Japanese cinema in order to promote an accurate image of the 'true' state of contemporary Japan. Asaoka Nobuo, author of the essay "A Proposal for a National Film Policy" describes the need for a film law:

In the case of films made by foreign companies to introduce Japan, there are many which brought about unforeseen misunderstandings that have harmed the dignity of our country by portraying strange fabricated customs as if they were the truth. Our principal aim, is to induce commercial film companies to make films to introduce Japan abroad that are genuine (*junsei*) and refined (*kogana*), in order to prevent the loss of our international standing in this way. (Asaoka quoted in Standish 2006: 141).

Noble concern for the international view of Japanese geo-politics and culture impelled the creation of the film law but in practice created an equally biased (though government sanctioned) constructed Japanese character. The practice of censorship was to eradicate any and all depictions of dissidence and the nation's pluralism, replacing plurality with a homogenized vision of harmonious industriousness with a population united in working toward the nation's future.

The 1939 Japanese film law demanded in legislature that film present a particular image of the Japanese national character. Hirano Kyoko, in her *Mr. Smith Goes to Tokyo* cites eight scenarios which warranted deletion from the films:

1. Those that might profane the dignity of the royal family or undermine that of the empire.
2. Those that might inspire questioning of the Imperial Constitution.

3. Those that might damage the political, military, diplomatic, economic, or other interests of the empire.
4. Those that might hamper the enlightenment and propaganda basic to the exercise of national policies.
5. Those that might disturb good decorum and/or otherwise threaten the national morality.
6. Those that might undermine the proper use of the Japanese language.
7. Those that were notably inferior in production technique.
8. Others that might obstruct the development of the national culture. (Hirano 1992: 15)

The language of the film law is intentionally vague, particularly points three, four, five, six and eight, which the censors themselves could feel free to interpret in myriad ways. Point six, the undermining of Japanese language was used to discriminate against films that incorporated 'loan' words (English words that had been introduced into the vernacular) which then became 'evidence' of the filmmakers' British/American influence. Kurosawa in his autobiography notes that his film *Sugata Sanshiro* was criticized for the incorporation of a love scene, an offence to public morality which supposedly betrayed him as a British/American sympathiser (Kurosawa 1982: 131).

The *Naimu-sho* (Ministry of Internal Affairs) issued even more strict regulations in a 1940 revision of the film law, even limiting the use of comedy.

Hirano cites the *Naimu-sho* dicta:

1. National Movies of healthy entertainment value with themes showing persons ready to serve are hoped for;
2. Comedians and vaudeville satirists will be restricted if they overdo their comedy;
3. Slice-of-life films, films describing individual happiness, films treating the lives of the rich, scenes of women smoking, drinking in cafes, etc, the use of foreign words, and films dealing with sexual frivolity are all prohibited;
4. films showing industrial and food production, particularly the life of farming villages, should be presented; and
5. Scripts will be censored before production and will be rewritten until they fully satisfy the Censorship Office of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. (Hirano 1992: 16)

Of particular note is point three, which denies even the showing of individual happiness, conflating private happiness with the detriment of the collective goals.

The film law demanded pre-production censorship – all film scenarios had to be approved by a government agent – but the film law also recognized that film could be disruptive through subversive editing practices and visual iconography, and so the films were also subject to post production censorship. The revised film law demanded that all those seeking employment in the film industry be tested for ‘aptitude’ and be registered as professionals. The purpose of this was to limit those who may prove to be subversives from access to filmmaking. Of this dicta, High quotes Fuwa Suketoshi, who states “it is not at all uncommon for individuals to be so filled with their own popularity and importance as to act in a manner detrimental to public morality” (Fuwa in High 2003: 75). Fuwa was one of the original co-authors of the Japanese film law, who became a key figure in Japanese film censorship. Of the Japanese film law, he argues:

Firm leadership in all our national arts will restore our identity as a people; it will move us beyond the present impasse of liberalism, commercialism, and aesthetic solipsism, all of which are the unwholesome legacy of the era of Western influence. (Fuwa Suketoshi, quoted in High 2003: 89)

Fuwa’s attitude toward film culture was one of education and citizen reform. It is of some significance that Fuwa conflates liberalism with westernization, presuming both Japanese national character and genetic makeup are inherently conservative. Fuwa continues, speaking of the role of Japanese cinema as “one that encourages the populace to use film not only as a medium of entertainment, but as a means of education and of training in the proper role of the citizen” (2003: 90). That proper role being diametrically opposed to commercialism.

Japanese film eventually became overtly propagandistic, culminating in a dictum where film had no further function than to promote the war effort. Richie quotes ‘One high-ranking government official’ as stating “Films are our bullets and

there is not a foot of film to give to the private sector” (Richie 2001: 96).

Government legislation affected all aspects of filmmaking during the war period and film from 1939 to 1945, in Japan became greatly impoverished of criticism and dissidence. Kurosawa describes the censors in his autobiography.

The censors echoed the official wartime xenophobia, and if they were able to find something that was ‘British-American-looking,’ they excitedly condemned it to destruction. My next two scripts, *Mori no sen'ichya* (*A Thousand and One Nights in the Forest*) and *San Paguita no hana* (*The San Paguita Flower*), were buried forever by the interior Ministry censorship bureau. (Kurosawa 1982: 118)

Hirano makes reference to Kikuchi Hiroshi, a writer and playwright, who argues the censors became overly critical of the films because they themselves ‘were too nervous about having to take responsibility for decisions that might later be condemned by their superiors” (Hirano 1992: 23). Kurosawa provides an alternative explanation; “They all behaved as if they suffered from persecution complexes, sadistic tendencies and various sexual manias” (Kurosawa 1982: 118)⁶.

The films were not only narratively and ideologically refigured but the films’ aesthetic design was also refined to reflect a quintessential Japaneseness. Richie quotes Darrel William Davis writing in his *Picturing Japaneseness: Monumental Style, National Identity, Japanese Film*. “the films enact a canonization of history, an emphasis on indigenous art forms and design, and a corresponding technical repertoire of long takes and long shots, very slow camera movements, and a highly ceremonial manner of blocking, acting and set design” (Davis in Richie 2001: 101).

Akira Kurosawa was highly disillusioned by the censorship demands. He writes in his autobiography of his loss of interest in filmmaking during the early war years.

⁶ Kurosawa’s biography, of course, was written many years after the Second World War, and reflect his post-war memories of the period, rather than reflecting a first hand account of his experiences *at the time*. While a number of Kurosawa’s films were indeed banned, he also managed to make several films that were deemed by the censors as suitably reflective of the wartime ideology.

After my *Three Hundred Miles* project was shelved, I gave up fighting to become a director. All I did was go on writing scripts in order to earn the money to drink, and I drank as if it were going out of style. The scripts I wrote were things like *Seishun no kiryū* (*Currents of Youth*, directed by Fushimizu Shū in 1942) and *Tsubasa no gaika* (*A Triumph of Wings*, directed by Yamamoto Satsuo in 1942). They were stories that the times required, about the aircraft industry and boy aviators. Their aim was to fan the flame of the national war spirit, and I did not undertake them out of any personal inclination. I just dashed them off in the suitable formulas. (Kurosawa 1982: 121).

While there was the occasional film that had moments of subversive content, the majority of the film product in the war years was simply propaganda and women too became mouthpieces for the national polity. According to Peter B. High, women had not always been singular in their motivation in film, arguing that in the early 1930s, there was a great deal of variation in the figuration of women. High notes that while none of the women in early Japanese cinema ‘displayed the extreme idiosyncratic individualism of a Scarlett O’Hara, this was probably due to the repression of feminine individuality in real life rather than an oversight on the part of the filmmakers’ (High 2003: 252-253). As Japanese nationalism hardened into the film as bullets ethos, the plurality of women disappeared. Women had long been a variety of didactic tropes in Japanese film, as argued previously, but under the new film law women were reduced to being a propaganda tool designed to educate the ‘proper role of the citizen.’ High describes such women as contrasted with Greer Garson’s portrayal of a western war bride in *Mrs Miniver* (1942). “In comparison, Mrs Miniver’s counterparts in Japanese film tend to be stereotypical mannequins who mouth the appropriate phrases and apparently actually feel the officially prescribed emotions” (High 2003: 252). High describes the implausible ‘spiritist women’ of the films of the war years.

The ‘spiritist’ women were saddled with the function of portraying (or ‘modelling,’ to be more precise) emotions and motivations that were unlikely to arise naturally under normal circumstances. Their psychological improbability – such as the ‘deep satisfaction’ of a mother at the death of her son in battle – necessitated the

expunging of all hint of independent thought or individual psychology. Instead, women were depicted according to models largely developed in the pages of the elementary school *shūshin* and *kokugo* (national language) textbooks. (High 2003: 253)

Standish too discusses the implausible reconfiguration of young feminine love morphing into nationalist desire. In her analysis of *The Patriotic Flower* and *On the Eve of War*, Standish describes love in the spiritist film as being “transformed into patriotic sacrifice: the doing of things for people who are unaware of what is done for them” (Standish 2006: 148).

Hirano cites an example from the film *Hanako-san (Miss Hanako)* (1943), “in which a newly married wife is supposed to be happy about her husband’s departure” (Hirano 1992: 19). The film was released after a number of censorial edits, but the film portrays a young lover who displays the governmentally approved emotions and attitudes toward her husband’s presence on the warfront. Hirano quotes actress Yamada Isuzu, who played the titular wife.

I felt that it was a lie to express happiness at sending the lover off to war, suppressing the heroine’s sadness, as was then demanded by the government. I could not make films that were really human and moving. I was, so to speak, forced to play a soulless human being, like a hollow grain. However, my audience seemed to be most moved by my underlying sadness while trying to portray the heroine happily sending her lover off. (Yamada in Hirano 1992: 20)

Perhaps the audience too was suffering under pressure to present the correct prescribed emotions while feeling differently. Hirano concludes this passage with a rationale for the audience’s acceptance of such ideological tropes.

Many Japanese spectators may have felt the ludicrousness of new brides cheerfully sending their husbands off to war. At the same time, they had been prepared by nationalistic education and media propaganda to work hard and to sacrifice for the sake of their nation in a time of crisis. Furthermore, the repressive social climate of that time made it unwise to criticize such implausible situations in public. As Gordon Daniels points out, the collaboration of Japan’s best directors and actors with the propaganda effort gave it credibility and effectiveness. (Hirano 1992: 27)

Kurosawa Akira's *Ichiban Utsukushiku (The Most Beautiful)* (1944) is a film which exemplifies the spiritist ethos, while placing the war in the deep background of the film's context. *The Most Beautiful* was Kurosawa's second film after the hugely popular *Sugata Sanshiro* (1943). It is significant that the film was sandwiched between *Sugata* and its sequel *Zoku Sugata Sanshiro*, two films that are worlds apart in their attitude toward Japanese nationalism, but both of which promote specifically 'Japanese' ideologies. *Sugata Sanshiro* was based on a short novel by the nationalist story writer Tomita Tsuneo, about the displacement of ju-jitsu with judo in Japan. The story involves a young judo practitioner who, using both spiritual and physical strength and skill defeats a series of ju-jitsu masters, thus establishing judo and its attendant (Japanese) ethos as the superior martial art. Judo is a sport that requires strict mental discipline, a theme that the film emphasizes by detailing both the physical and spiritual growth of the protagonist. The tale had a strong nationalist agenda, with the wholly Japanese martial art supplanting the older Chinese form of ju-jitsu, and the story passed the censors approval. The film is a straightforward biopic following a conventional narrative arc in which the hero grows into manhood by learning discipline.

Women are not particularly foregrounded in this film, although there are two notable exceptions. The first is the wife of Momma, *Sanshiro*'s first major opponent. The man is a violent thug and a practitioner of a particularly aggressive form of ju-jitsu. In a climactic scene, *Sanshiro* throws the man over his shoulder and into a wall, inadvertently killing him. The film cuts to a close up of a woman's face. The man's daughter, a witness to this event, lets out a chilling scream. It is a moment which haunts Sugata and becomes imprinted into his memory and Kurosawa's clever usage of variable filming speeds gives the sequence impact and evokes memory. In a

later passage, the daughter is seen looking for Sugata. She is stopped by two of Sugata's acquaintances and it is discovered that she has a knife and seeks revenge on Sugata. An intertitle informs the audience that the woman's animosity toward him chills the young hero. The ideological demands of filial piety force the young woman to exact revenge for her father's unjust death. The daughter becomes the living avatar of vengeance – a living *onryo*. The evocation of the living avatar has further significance later in the film. As the story progresses, *Sanshiro* must face increasingly difficult opposition, culminating in a duel with an older Jujitsu master, Murai. Murai is a reluctant opponent but it was his disciple that Sugata had killed and so Murai is also duty bound to fight Sugata. Sugata's fight with Murai is problematized because Murai has a young daughter with whom *Sanshiro* has met and fallen in love. The hero then suffers a crisis, fight the young woman's father and possibly kill him, thereby once again bringing on the very real threat of her vengeance, or refuse to fight and let down his school of martial art. What is significant in this film is that while the *onryo* is not actually present, the threat of the woman's possible retribution upon the hero gives the hero cause to question the rightness of his actions and to contemplate the possible consequences. It is the threat of woman's potential animosity which causes Sugata to question the moral rightness of his actions. Like in the *onryo* myths of folklore, morality becomes once again linked to a cause effect relationship rather than on a divine moral code.

Kurosawa's sequel film *Zoku Sugata Sanshiro* (1945) is a film that Kurosawa never wanted to make. He was consigned to make the film as a piece of propaganda and he equated the making of the film as similar to being forced to make a meal out of leftovers. He states: "A director filming a re-make does so with great deference toward the original work, so it's like cooking up something strange out of leftovers,

and the audience who have to eat this concoction are in an unenviable position, too” (Kurosawa 1982: 135). The film features two main storylines. The first involves a duel with an American boxer who fights for money, thereby proving Americans to be base, capitalist and a corrupting influence; the second storyline involves a duel with the villain from the first film’s family, who seek revenge for their brother’s prior disgrace. By this point the film is reduced to cliché and innuendo and the film’s portrayal of foreign figures is a gross parody, used solely to exemplify the nobility of the pure Japanese race. Women are completely absent from the sequel, and the film’s villains are either foreign, or in the case of the two brothers of the formerly disgraced Higaki, deranged. Kurosawa even goes so far as to costume the younger brother Genzaburo in the dress of the *No mad* figure. Kurosawa describes the costuming in his autobiography:

He is meant to be half crazy, so I spent a great deal of effort on his costume and makeup. We put him in a tousled long black wig like those used in the Noh drama. He wore white makeup all over his face, and bright red lipstick. We put him in a white costume and had him carry the ‘bamboo grass of madness’ that crazed characters in Noh plays hold. (Kurosawa 1982: 136)

The film is little more than propaganda, equating any figure that disagrees with the noble young Japanese hero as either foreign or completely insane. The film’s message of total agreement with the local community for harmonious living, could not be made more explicit.

Sandwiched between these two films is Kurosawa’s wartime drama, *Ichiban Utsukushiku* (*The Most Beautiful*) (1944). The film focuses on the domestic front and Japan’s increasing dependence on homeland resources, but is no less a piece of propaganda than his two judo saga action films. Kurosawa, by eschewing active depictions of the war, and instead focussing on the women workers of the domestic front, creates a far more subtle piece of propaganda. The film continues to promote

national polity and its characters are often sublimated into nationalist discourse. The film does not evoke the *onryo* figure, indeed the *onryo* was by the war excised from film. All films considered to be of a frivolous nature were prohibited and the *onryo* was considered a figure contrary to the nationalist agenda. Instead, Kurosawa, as was typical of the filmmakers of the day, peopled his film with the spiritist women, a constructed trope who embodied the government propaganda and voiced the national agenda.

The film is set in a lens making factory where the lenses will eventually be used for sights on aircraft guns. To make the film, Kurosawa hired a group of young studio actresses but then immediately set about stripping them of their pretensions.

I began with the task of ridding the young actresses of everything they had physically and emotionally acquired that smacked of theatricality. The odor of makeup, the snobbery, the affectations of the stage, that special self-consciousness that only actors have – all of this had to go. I wanted to return them to their original status of ordinary young girls. (Kurosawa 1982: 132)

Kurosawa set the young women on a regiment of running, drilling and volleyball, and trained the young girls on the operation of the heavy machinery used in the film itself. Kurosawa, reflecting on his strict regimentation makes some startling conclusions.

I was a terribly rough director to work for. It is really quite amazing how they all did without question what I told them to do. But then, in the mood that prevailed during wartime, everyone took orders as a matter of course. I was not consciously asking these girls to behave in a selfless, patriotic fashion. The fact is that the theme of the film is self-sacrificing service to one's country. (Kurosawa 1982: 133)

Ideology then, even though imposed upon the filmmaker and his actresses by the repressive state apparatus, has been incorporated into their own worldview and so they become active participants in the reinforcement of the government sanctioned ideologies.

The film opens with the head of the factory making a morning announcement to his staff. The increased demands of war have necessitated the factory stepping up production quotas. The factory must produce 50% more lenses over a four month period. The women workers only need increase their quota by 10%. The film then details the effect of the workload on the women lensmakers.

The women's shopfloor is run by a 'teacher,' followed by a shop leader, Watanabe, and the factory is worked by several teenaged girls who all live in the same dormitory. The film begins with the head of the factory making his announcement, and then there is a minute and a half montage comprising 6 shots repeating the same theme. In each shot a group of girls is standing chatting while their machines run unattended. Two shop stewards walk into the room and the girls run back to attend to their machines. The repetition of this action, with different girls at different machines, universalizes the character of the girls and reinforces their homogenized makeup. The male shop stewards believe that it is simply in the women's nature to be less efficient than the men and so the women are only gently reprimanded for their chatting. This impels their team leader Watanabe to demand the factory head raise their quota to match that of their male counterparts.

The introduction of Watanabe constructs her as an individual separated from the group. While the other women work together making the lenses, it is Watanabe's job alone to measure and calibrate the lenses. The scene which introduces Watanabe begins by cutting away from the busy shop floor to an empty hallway, then cuts to a door at the end of the hallway and finally to Watanabe seated in the interior of a room. The editing effectively isolates Watanabe from the other women. She is seated at the end of a long row of men and is remarkable as the only woman. Furthermore she wears a uniform that is darker than that of the men. She is not

constructed in such a singular way to promote her individuality, but rather to construct her as a paradigm of the spirit of self sacrifice for the nation.

Watanabe confronts the factory heads, contesting their overly gentle treatment of the women. The factory heads acquiesce to her demand that the women's quota be increased to two thirds of that of the men. The film then cuts to Watanabe announcing this new increase in their workload to the other girls, who cheer uproariously (exemplary of High's assertion that the 'spiritist women' often function under wholly manufactured motivations). The shot is a single take of all the girls sitting in the factory canteen, the mass of girls making each one indistinguishable from the next through their uniform clothing and behaviour. Seated in the centre of this mass of cheering women sits Watanabe, dressed identically, but illuminated with a high key light which distinguishes her from the other girls. She waves her arm in the air and silences the cheering women. Watanabe then chastises the girls for their unfounded exuberance, telling them that they should celebrate only if and when they meet the new production target, and reminds them it will not be an easy feat to accomplish. She informs them that with such a positive attitude they would never meet the production requirements. Rather, instead of joyful exuberance the women should always feel unsatisfied and annoyed with their work. It is only through that very dissatisfaction with their own performance that they will ever reach the increased factory target. The message is clear and the 'unlikely emotions' of the spiritist women are indoctrinated through Watanabe's admonition that one must continually be dissatisfied with one's own work ethic, in order to impel oneself to work that much harder. Happiness is proved not only frivolous but even detrimental to optimally functioning as a productive citizen in the nationalist era!

The film then cuts to the girls marching solemnly home after their first day's working with the new production targets. As the girls march they are drilled by their leader Watanabe but this time removed of any joy that they had previously experienced. Rather, they find solace through hard work and through singing nationalist songs of young soldiers dying on the battlefield. Instead, the young girls' happiness comes through their teacher, who greets them at their campus dormitory with a huge smile. It is for the benefit of the homeland, represented by the mother figure, that the girls must sacrifice their own happiness. It is only when the young workers have returned home and are safely behind the closed doors of their residence that they can revert to being young girls and express their true selves.

Pleasure, or at least the simulacrum of pleasure, comes from officially prescribed activities, music lessons, cleaning and organized play. All elements of their daily life involve working as a group and the film takes pains to present the girls en masse, with only Watanabe being singled out as individualistic. The film then cuts through a second montage of the girls again working in the factory, with Kurosawa matching the shots of the first montage in the same order, again culminating with Watanabe alone in her lab. In this montage there is no chatting and no frivolity, only silent concentration as the girls work to their new quota. They are now working for the glory of the country and have seemingly accepted Watanabe's admonition that happiness would affect their productivity.

As the film progresses, it begins the work of identifying individual characters by name and personality traits. But Kurosawa's repetition of motifs through the different stories is not to express individuality in the girls but to reinforce the universality of the girls' shared hardships. Each one of the vignettes entails the effects of sickness on the girls and how the loss of a single member affects the

productivity of the group as a whole. There are two girls who become feverish from exhaustion and a young girl, Yamada, who sprains her ankle. Each time a girl becomes ill and unable to work the factory's productivity plummets as the morale of the shop floor is lowered. Through motif repetition, Kurosawa builds a sense of oneness and focussing on individuals ironically aids in his presenting the homogeneity of the women's world.

As four months churn grindingly by, the girls become increasingly hostile toward one another and their productivity lessens. This reaches its climax when Watanabe misplaces a lens while trying to resolve yet another of the girls' seemingly unending conflicts. Two of the young women get into a terrific row causing a third to fetch Watanabe. Distracted, she leaves what she is doing in order to resolve the conflict. When she returns she files away the lens she had been examining before correctly calibrating the optic. She recognizes her mistake hours later, after all the lenses have been packaged for shipment. Recognizing the potential fatality of several Japanese airmen, she must find the lens. She then spends an entire night laboriously recalibrating all of the packed lenses until she finds the mislabelled piece.

The world of the factory is an isolated, nationalistically idealized environ where the question of money is never raised. The girls do not work for such selfish reasons, but for the selfless benefit of the military and their country's international standing. While the women are continually reminded of the presence of men in the film – men as soldiers, pilots and of course the men factory workers whose quota the women attempt to match – sexual desire for those men is totally absent. The film constructs a fantasy vision of industriousness where all such 'frivolities' as sexual relating are rendered void. This is drawn into stark relief on two occasions where the film's women 'fantasize' about the young male aviators. The first sequence occurs

after the girls' factory has experienced a slump in production. The young women have been working flat out for some time and are unable to muster the energy to continue at their furious pace. The sequence begins with an animated productivity chart with the productivity rate suddenly plummeting. The film dissolves to an exterior shot of the factory grounds and an off screen voice states that it's unfair that the quotas are not being met as they've been working their hardest. The camera tracks back to reveal a cluster of the young women speaking together. One woman states that they should really pay more attention as it would be disgraceful to fail to meet their target, to which another girl responds 'It's not a matter of losing face, it's a problem of responsibility.'" At that moment Kurosawa bleeds into the soundtrack the humm of jet fighters and the girls all look to the sky. The film cuts to a shot of the sky in which six Japanese fighter jets are flying in formation. The camera lingers on this shot for a few seconds, allowing the planes to leave the frame before cutting back to the women where the speaker resumes her speech, stating that the planes are carrying their products. The girls are reminded of the importance of their work by equating their lenses with the active aerial warfare that the young pilots must face. Reinforcing the notion of absent men from the girl's words, the camera pans in the direction of the off screen planes and an older male factory worker steps into the frame. Consequently, the older man graphically replaces the prior image of the absent young pilots. The film cuts to a close up of his face as he stands smiling benignly at the laughing ladies, but then his smile drops as he notices Watanabe's stern look. The film cuts to an interior shot where he has taken Watanabe aside to gently chastise her over the falling production numbers. The frame is filled with the two in medium close up as he reprimands her. The sequence, placing the two in frame together, could not be less romantic. The two stand stark still, avoiding

physical contact as he paternalistically tells his young charge not to worry too much, that she should learn to relax a little more, and that things need not constantly be stressful. Indeed, the girls would be more productive if they could find some time to relax. The film then cuts to the girls playing an organised game of volleyball which Watanabe has incorporated into their routine in order to build teamwork and restore a casual working relationship between the girls.

The sequence is significant because the young ladies, as well as the audience, are once again reminded of their vibrancy and vitality. These are young women at the prime of their youth and yet organized sports must act as compensation for the complete lack of sexuality afforded them. The absent young men are referred to by the presence of the planes, and the girls are reminded that the pilots lives depend on their craftsmanship, but the fact that the young men are being sent away is thrown into stark relief by the presence of the older (and therefore unsuitable love match) male factory workers.

The volleyball game has restored to the young women some of their earlier vitality, and the game is shot with a light musical soundtrack in bright natural sunshine. The sequence finishes with a short montage of eleven quick head shots of the girls smiling. The film then cuts back to the production graph and clearly productivity is rising. The sequence restores to the film a sense of energy and play, but the game is a mere substitution for the type of life the young women should be leading. The sequence is quickly followed by tragedy, as production once again falters with the coming of the harsh winter months and the volleyball game is proven to be merely a short term salvo to their long term unhappiness.

The second fantasy sequence involves Watanabe. While she searches for the misplaced lens she begins to imagine the pilot who may fly the plane carrying her

faulty lens. This is a significant moment, as it is the only moment of imagination in the entire film and is the film's only moment of subjectivity where the viewer sees firsthand one of the character's imagined thoughts.

Watanabe has spent most of the night working at her microscope, calibrating lenses and searching for the misplaced piece. Several hours have passed and she is nearing the point of exhaustion. The passage begins with a close up of an opened box of lenses. The camera holds on the box while off screen the soundtrack plays Watanabe singing in order to keep herself awake and focussed on the task at hand. The camera tilts up to reveal the deep space of the empty factory lab with Watanabe sitting at the back of the room bathed in the pale light of a single incandescent bulb. The camera cuts to a clock showing that it is five minutes past twelve at night. The camera cuts back to the long shot of Watanabe but her singing is more halting, indicating the passage of time. She is clearly more weary at this point. The camera cuts again to the clock, revealing half an hour has lapsed, before cutting back to Watanabe. This occurs four more times, with each cut back to Watanabe in slightly tighter shot, until she is shown in profile, medium close up. The camera cuts again to the clock, this time showing it is now three in the morning and the camera then cuts ninety degrees to a frontal head shot in which Watanabe peers wearily into her microscope. The following shot is a single long take of Watanabe's face in close up, lasting for a full minute and thirty four seconds. Her singing has become barely a whisper and she repeatedly raises her head from the telescope, blinking pronouncedly before returning to peering down the lens. She rubs her eyes several times before her head slumps to her shoulder in sheer exhaustion. On the movement, Kurosawa cuts to a shot of a flying fighter plane seen through the sites of a lens (presumably of the type that Watanabe has been staring through throughout the

night). The soundtrack plays a bugle and the roar of fighter planes can be heard while the jet belches out plumes of smoke and takes a nosedive. The film cuts back to a startled Watanabe who wakes with a jump. This is clearly her dream and with it her insistence to persevere through the night is given explanation. She has taken on the responsibility for the potential deaths of Japanese pilots because of her prior lapse in concentration. She fears her errant lens will result in Japanese dead, echoing the girls' earlier argument about their job as a matter of responsibility to the young pilots. What is striking is that fantasy involves the responsibility of the girls to the young warriors. Obligation has replaced love. The men are not seen as potential love matches but rather are representative of the fulfilment of one's duty to the country. This is galvanized by the women's repeated fears about failing in their duty and made visually manifest in Watanabe's anxiety dream. Women's sexuality becomes replaced with obligation, and just as their female bodies are clothed in the shapeless *monpe*, their sexual desires are equally swaddled in a system of obligations and duties.⁷

The film ends fifteen days prior to the end of the four month production quota. Watanabe is informed that her mother has died during Watanabe's long absence from home. She is given the opportunity for an indefinite leave to attend the funeral but she informs the factory heads that she will never go back. Instead, she asks for permission for the feverish Yamaguchi to take some time off from the assembly line and then wordlessly returns to her work in the factory lab. The factory heads are left alone to express their admiration for this extraordinary young woman. The film cuts back to Watanabe working in the lab, periodically raising her head from her microscope in order to wipe the tears from her eyes. On the soundtrack a song

⁷ Monpe were functional pant suits worn by women during the war.

describing the beauty of the Japanese countryside plays as the film comes to a close. The ideological message to the wartime audience is clear. One must continue to suffer hardship and perform one's duty to the utmost, sacrificing all for the greater good of the nation.

With the rising militarism of the early thirties, films became subject to increasing scrutiny and became ever more didactic. During the fifteen years of Japan's overseas military campaign (1931-1945), film became subject to increasing censorship. By the Pacific war (1941-1945), with the government censors limiting film stock, film had become a tool of propaganda. Cinema became mandated to indoctrinate the population into 'correct' modes of behaviour. As war progressed and men left the domestic workforce to fight overseas, women were increasingly placed into positions of authority in both workplace and volunteer institutions. Peter B. High reports "by 1938, participation in one or another of the various patriotic or national defence women's associations came to be seen as the equivalent of good citizenship" (2003: 256).

Eventually women became a great part of the domestic workforce, finding work in factories and light industry. Film became conflicted, both promoting the emancipation of women and their active involvement in working life while simultaneously aspiring to limit and contain women's emancipation. Women had to be mobilized as a workforce, but also contained in their access to power beyond that as a labour resource. Hence the absence of women in prominent power positions as well as the absence of female sexuality and of fantasized female power, such as the *onryō* archetype. As the war progressed, the films began to espouse gender specific roles and behaviour in ever more urgent ways, ergo the *onryō* made a complete disappearance. The *onryō*, would not only fail to promote positive wartime

behaviours, she could potentially promote subversive behaviour. The figuration of the *onryo* is first and foremost one of a wholly self serving being. The notion of personal vengeance was entirely contrary to the wartime ideology of self sacrificing for the betterment of the nation. Crucial to the *onryo* myth is the status of the *onryo* as victim of society and of patriarchy's selfishness. The *onryo* seeks personal vengeance, even to the point of sacrificing the functional ordering of society for that personal gain. This was an ideological worldview which was completely contrary to the mandates of the Japanese nationalists who were promoting the '100 million working as one' ethos. The *onryo* does not adhere to the *giri/ninjo* ideology of self sacrifice (*giri*) for duty (*ninjo*). Hence it became necessary to expunge the *onryo* mythology from the popular consciousness.

The great irony of the absence of the *onryo* in the war era, is that during the American occupation of Japan, *onryo* films were seen as promoting ardent nationalism. Such themes as retribution and vengeance were considered, by the occupation, to be intrinsically associable with feudalism which was seen as the direct progenitor of Japanese militarism. And yet in the war period the very same *onryo* driven vengeance narratives were discouraged for being associable with western ideologies of individualism. The films of the war era had a use function, to indoctrinate into the population the role of citizens, to reinforce the particular government sanctioned identity of Japaneseness, and to silence dissidence and dissent. These were functions the *onryo* simply could not perform. In the occupation period (1945-1952), Japanese film was once again placed under censorial scrutiny and once again mandated to promote government sanctioned ideology, albeit this time with an agenda to promote democratization and egalitarianism. And yet ironically, the *onryo*, whose motivation is for personal retribution rather than self

sacrifice for the nation, a figure who to the wartime militarists represented a western modelled individualism, to the occupiers represented the feudal values of the martial spirit.

IV) Cinema of the Occupation: Freedom! Democracy! Censorship!

Six days after the second nuclear warhead deployed in the American campaign devastated Nagasaki, the Emperor addressed the nation and announced in an elliptical and euphemistic way that the war was not transpiring in Japan's favour. That day the remaining cinemas that had been in operation and showing the wartime propaganda films closed and all the films that could have been interpreted as propaganda by the allied forces, were withdrawn. Hirano argues:

It is noteworthy that the Film Corporation voluntarily prohibited the showing of films on the same war themes that it had itself imposed on Japanese filmmakers until several weeks earlier. The inevitable changes that filmmakers had predicted would follow the surrender were thus being implemented a mere week after the end of the war. (Hirano 1992: 37)

By the end of that week, the cinemas were reopened and showing films that were deemed suitable for the occupying forces but despite the film industry's self censorship, the American military command under the leadership of General Douglas MacArthur inevitably seized strict control over the Japanese film industry. The occupier's officially landed in Japan on August 27, 1945 and Japan's surrender was officially declared on board the U.S.S. Missouri on the second of September.

No one was entirely sure how the Japanese would react to the end of the war. The Emperor, in the event of Japan's defeat had been threatening to order the 'honourable death of the hundred million,' where the people of the nation were all to die like 'shattered Jewels.' John Dower writes:

The Americans arrived anticipating, many of them, a traumatic confrontation with fanatical emperor worshippers. They were accosted instead by women who called

'yoo hoo' to the first troops landing on the beaches in full battle gear, and men who bowed and asked what it was the conquerors wished. (Dower 1999: 23-24)

The Japanese response to the end of the war was conflicted, ranging from despair to relief at the war's end. Dower continues:

Most of all, they encountered a populace sick of war, contemptuous of the militarists who had led them to disaster, and all but overwhelmed by the difficulties of their present circumstances in a ruined land. More than anything else, it turned out, the losers wished both to forget the past and to transcend it. (1999: 24)

Kurosawa describes the reaction to the Emperor declaring the war's end:

The people on the shopping street were bustling about with cheerful faces as if preparing for a festival the next day. I don't know if this represents Japanese adaptability or Japanese imbecility. In either case, I have to recognize that both these facets exist in the Japanese personality. Both facets exist within my own personality as well. If the Emperor had not delivered his address urging the Japanese people to lay down their swords – if that speech had been a call instead for the Honourable Death of the Hundred Million – those people on that street in Soshigaya probably would have done as they were told and died. And probably I would have done likewise. The Japanese see self-assertion as immoral and self-sacrifice as the sensible course to take in life. We were accustomed to this teaching and had never thought to question it. (Kurosawa 1982: 145-146)

Hirano similarly reports that the citizens' reaction to the end of war was a conflicted array of responses, ranging from relief over the end of privation, to fear of the invaders, to bewilderment at the sudden importation of the idea of democratized freedom. Hirano describes the reactions of a number of filmmakers:

Suddenly, they felt released from these oppressive institutions, not to mention the stifling mood that had confined their filmmaking to meeting the needs of the Japanese war effort. (Hirano 1992: 31)

The consensus is that Japan, rather than showing hostility to the occupation forces, embraced the opportunity to rebuild the country under the dual prospects of egalitarianism and democracy if it meant life without the privations of the war period.

The occupation, recognizing film's political uses were quick to claim control over the film industry and the first official statement on censorship was made on September 12, only ten days after Japan's surrender. Hirano reports that on the 22nd

of September all of the heads of the various film production companies were summoned for a briefing in which the mandates of the occupation censorship policy were meted out. By October of that year both the Civil Censorship Detachment (CCD) and the Civil Information and Education (CIE) division were censoring content of all film in Japan.⁸

America had been preparing for the occupation of Japan long before the war came to an end. Hirano records that American military officials had been studying Japanese film (1992: 25). They studied twenty Japanese films of the pre-war and war eras and drew several conclusions recorded in a report entitled “Japanese Films: A Psychological Warfare.”

This report pointed out that the most important theme of wartime Japanese feature films was ‘self-sacrifice.’ When the heroes and heroines are confronted by the choice between the pursuit of their private happiness based on family ties or romance and their obligation to the national cause, they invariably find the latter more important than the former. The process by which they reach this decision is emotionally highlighted and dramatized. (Hirano 1992: 26)

The analysts noted the films featured characters driven by a desire for self sacrifice for the good of the nation. The central conflict driving most Japanese drama is that of *giri/ninjo*, the conflict that arises when personal desires (*giri*) are contradictory to one’s duty (*ninjo*) which is often what is best for the society. When America came to occupy Japan, the occupiers already had familiarity with the narrative structuring methods Japanese film deployed to indoctrinate into the war effort and thus had already devised plans on how to effect film and ideological reform. These reforms affected characterization in the films, particularly the characterization of women, who frequently came to embody the spirit of democracy but who also, ironically, often became emblematic of the corruption that self interested capitalism can bring.

⁸ The CIE was responsible for the spread of propaganda and the indoctrination into American values, whereas the CCD was responsible for the enforcement of the CIE mandates through the active censoring of the films produced.

The Japanese film industry had several productions underway when the war came to an end. Most production had to be abandoned but some enterprising filmmakers managed to convert scripts and productions to fulfil the occupation strictures. One such filmmaker was Akira Kurosawa whose *Waga Seishun Ni Kuinashi*, (*No Regrets for Our Youth*) released in October of 1946, was one of the first major films released during the seven year American Occupation to have been made entirely within the occupation period and following the occupation mandates to promote the ‘American’ values, of democracy and egalitarianism. Kurosawa provides a valuable case study as he continued to make films throughout the war and post-war periods, producing quality films that were widely watched throughout the changing ideologies.

No Regrets for Our Youth is a film that begins in the late 1930s and presents a small group of leftwing intellectuals who are persecuted through the course of the war for their contrary ideals. The film centres around a young woman, Yukie played by Hara Setsuko. Isolde Standish describes the film as “the quintessential ‘democratization film.’ It takes up many of the themes associated with occupation social policy, the casting of a strong, independent woman at the centre of the narrative, the links with post-war agrarian reforms and the questions of war responsibility” (Standish 2006: 165). Indeed the film perfectly addresses all of the mandates of the occupation dicta while maintaining integrity with character motivations germane to the plot and thereby eschewing a propagandistic ethos. One must question how Kurosawa so seamlessly managed to survive the transition from nationalist propagandist to occupation spokesperson for democratic values.

No Regrets For Our Youth begins with a university lecturer being fired for his subversive teachings. He has two young protégés, one who continues the teacher’s

work and another who becomes a lawyer, culminating in his compromising his values for the advancement of his career. The professor's daughter marries the young activist but he is eventually arrested for treason. The daughter leaves the comforts of her bourgeois home and moves to a rural farm run by the activist's parents, where because of her husband's actions, she is ostracized by the farming community. The young woman perseveres under hardship, working for a better future. At the end of the war the young woman stays in the farming community that had shunned her, in order to continue to help rebuild for a better tomorrow.

The film, through its promoting of a strong female character, its valuation of democracy and condemnation of the militarists was heralded as a triumph of Kurosawa and Japanese filmmakers' adapting to the occupation ideology, but the question remains as to how the films were able to make this huge ideological transition so quickly?

John Dower, in his *Embracing Defeat* argues that Japan was a nation ready to embrace change, indeed ideological change and a quest to improve Japan was by the end of the war, tradition itself. Dower writes:

“Change,” in a word, was itself a continuity. The Japanese had not been socialized to preserve the status quo. On the contrary, ever since the *Meiji* Restoration in the 1860s they had been involved in a whirlwind of change. The war years represented an acceleration of this process in innumerable ways. The sense of crisis intensified; so also did the depth of dissatisfaction with the status quo. When the war ended in disaster and utter defeat, it was obvious that the ‘New Order’ and the ‘New Structure’ had been miserably conceived. It seemed no less self-evident that the quest for a new domestic structure and a new place in the global political economy had to go on. (Dower 1999: 178-179)

The nation was quick to embrace change, not only because the war had ended in such terrible defeat resulting in poverty and privation, but in the quest to continually improve the state of Japan, the country had become indoctrinated in a culture of

continually striving for the nation's betterment regardless of the costs to personal comfort and values.

The American occupation maintained a mandate for the Japanese film industry to promote certain values of democracy. Hirano reports the censors made several suggestions as to what would make suitable film subjects, such as films detailing "Japanese in all walks of life cooperating to build a peaceful nation" (Hirano 1992: 38). While Kurosawa's film does indeed portray such a character, his narrative device is to create a conflict between Yukie's belief in what constitutes building said peaceful nation, contrasted with the belief of those in power. The film's tension comes through the resolution of that conflict between personal belief and duty.

The film is not, in fact, ideologically or structurally very different from the wartime spiritist films. While the film's political allegiances are with the left leaning university lecturer rather than the wartime militarists, its narrative structuring and ideological positioning remains deeply rooted in the spiritist ethos. If Kurosawa's earlier film, *The Most Beautiful* is a tale of self sacrifice for the good of one's nation, his occupation era film *No Regrets* continues along these thematic and ideological lines. The character Yukie risks her life and sacrifices her material comforts for the betterment of Japan, and although her politics match those of the occupation forces rather than the militarists, the film's dramatic tension continues to be derived from the *giri/ninjo* dichotomy. Yukie sacrifices her own happiness in her struggle for what she believes to be the benefit of the country, which is to struggle against the militarists. Kurosawa creates a character who is against the society's core beliefs in the war context, but her struggle continues to be for what is ultimately proved to be the good of the nation. Her character's politics may differ from the militarists, but

her ethos (self sacrifice for the betterment of the nation) is exactly in line with that of her peers. Kurosawa simply changes the teleos of his character's spiritism. Yukie's duty is to her nation, despite the militarist's dicta. Although the character's root goal is the peaceful development of Japan rather than the colonial program of international conquest, the film's formula and dramaturgy are proven to be the same as the earlier war era films.

The characterization of Yukie is of particular note because she never desires revenge against the rural community which shunned her. While the film provides Yukie with plenty of justification for a desire for revenge, she instead elects to continue her work in rebuilding the rural landscape. This occurs because the desire for vengeance was expressly prohibited by the occupation censors. In the spirit of democratization and rebuilding of the nation, cooperation and forgiveness were promoted as the correct behaviours. The occupation governors established an edict that forbade films to display revenge as a legitimate justification for the performance of evil actions (Hirano 1992: 44). Revenge was considered by the occupation era and its censors, to be derived from a feudal valuation of personal justice.

Kurosawa's character becomes benevolent and charitable to her neighbours because she was forbidden by law to seek out retribution against those who had shunned her. The filmmaker had to modify his characters traits to accord with the *repressive state apparati*.

Occupation censorship limited the films depicting many elements of daily Japanese life. Donald Richie reports "Not only was American damage to Japan to be minimized, there was also a standing order that members of the Occupation were not to be shown on film" (2001: 110). Other things that were not permitted were depictions of prostitution and the black market, yet these were the fabric of daily life

in occupied Japan. The black market fuelled an underground economy which often spilled into both the legitimate economy and the functioning of the city. There was then, a conflict between the mandate to show Japanese of all walks of life, and the edict preventing the black market world of the working class.

The world of the early stages of the occupation was indeed a dirty one, full of prostitution, petty crime and disaffection as well as a population that was suffering lack of faith in its leadership which had been proven so flawed. While many were relieved at the war's end, it was proven spurious to pretend that there was no economic fallout from Japan's loss of war. Eventually such censorial restrictions were relaxed and the films began to show the negative effects of the war. Kurosawa Akira's *Nora-inu (Stray Dog)* (1949) set its tale in the polluted world of post-war Japan. Kurosawa continues to prove a useful case study, as he was most prolific during the post-war years, completing nine films during the occupation period. Furthermore, his films used the post-war context explicitly in their narratives, which he often wrote in partnership with his various scriptwriters. All of Kurosawa's films of the 1940s deal with the war as the social background, and many of his films explicitly acknowledge the effects of the war on the characters' personalities and actions.

John Dower describes post-war Japan as a country of displaced peoples, reporting there were 9 million homeless. He quotes an American observer of defeated Japan describing the scene. 'Families were crowded into dugouts and flimsy shacks or, in some cases, were trying to sleep in hallways, on subway platforms, or on sidewalks. Employees slept in their offices; teachers, in their schoolrooms' (Quoted in Dower 1999: 48). While homes had been destroyed and people had been forced to take shelter where they could, there was also a massive

return of soldiers who often found themselves receiving a hostile homecoming. Dower continues “The streets of every major city quickly became peopled with demoralized ex-soldiers, war widows, orphans, the homeless and unemployed – most of them preoccupied with simply staving off hunger” (Dower 1999: 48). The returned soldiers often discovered a life of hardship, finding employment scarce and being stigmatized by the population, for being tainted by the atrocities of war. Kurosawa populates his film with such people. *Stray Dog* features two returned soldiers who elect to lead very different lives.

The post-war population was suffering a condition labelled *kyodatsu*, a condition of exhaustion and despair brought on from defeat, privation and the economic fallout of the loss of the war. Many people were displaced, with entire neighbourhoods in all of the major cities having been flattened. Petty crime was rife. But coupling the *kyodatsu* condition was a sense of hope for the rebuilding of the nation and by the late 1940s, certain elements of the *kyodatsu* culture had begun to be celebrated in the popular media.

“The marginal groups that electrified popular consciousness came from three overlapping subcultures; the world of the *panpan* prostitute, whose embrace of the conqueror was disturbingly literal; the black market, with its formidable energy and seductively maverick code of behaviour; and the well-lubricated ‘*kasutori* culture’ demimonde, which celebrated self-indulgence and introduced such enduring attractions as pulp literature and commercialized sex. All three marginal worlds came to exemplify not merely the confusion and despair of the *kyodatsu* condition, but also the vital, visceral, even carnal transcending of it. (Dower 1999: 122-123)

While the occupation had initially demanded the filmmakers elide such marginalized groups, their omnipresence in the nation made it inevitable that such life would ultimately become featured in film.

Akira Kurosawa’s *Stray Dog* uses the world of the black market and the prostitutes in its background, to tell the story of an officer desperate to find his stolen

gun. What is striking in the film is Kurosawa's usage of two particular women, the pickpocket Ogin, and Namiki Harumi, the girlfriend of the robber. The film, ostensibly a detective story in which an officer searches for the robber who has possession of his gun, creates sophisticated discourse on democratization and Americanization through its deployment of these two female tropes.

The film revolves around a young detective, Murakami, a returned soldier who entered the police force in order to aid in the rebuilding of post-war Japan. While on a crowded streetcar, his pocket is picked and his gun is stolen. His gun is eventually used in a series of robberies which culminate in a murder. The detective begins to feel responsibility for the crimes committed and increases his determination to arrest the robber. While discussing the case with a fellow officer, Murakami describes a woman who had been standing beside him at the moment he realized his gun was stolen. He had been riding a commuter train, and recalls a middle aged woman had been standing at his side. He describes her as wearing a modern dress and strong perfume. The detective flicks through a catalogue of file cards of known women pickpockets and pulls out a card declaring 'that's her' and hands his colleague the card. The colleague inspects the card and states "but wearing a dress? Strange, Ogin's famous for her *kimono*" to which Murakami replies "That's her, but with a permanent and perfume." The colleague concludes with "Times do change!" The exchange is early in the film and aids in establishing the context of the changing times, where even a woman who is famous for her kimono will sacrifice that character trait for modern iconology. Indeed, Ogin has become a symbol for the contemporary times. When Murakami finally meets her and begins to question her about his stolen gun, she immediately evokes her 'human rights' and threatens to 'sue.' The officer in charge marvels at her newfound language but she responds by

telling him it's not the only language she's learnt before saying 'bye bye' in English and walking out of the room. Ogin evokes the spirit of democratization and change – she makes reference to her individual rights, an action unheard of in the feudal/militarist eras of self sacrifice and unquestioned obedience and even uses such language in defence against the relatively powerless police. The use of English associates her with the prostitution trade, an illicit trade that came to be associated with the occupation forces, thereby setting her at odds with the Japanese police officers. She evokes the occupation government's desires for presenting new, democratized characters but she becomes, through her criminality, a parody of the autonomous individual. Her clothing identifies her as a modern girl, although she makes reference to her advanced age at several points, saying that the cop Murakami is too young for her. And while she affects modern sophistication, her perfume is revealed as cheap and pungent rather than making her desirable. Ogin becomes a parody of modernity.

Murakami follows the woman for the entire day, badgering her with questions about his missing gun. Eventually, close to midnight, the woman's resolve breaks and feeling pity on the detective offers him a cold beer and some food and suggests he disguise himself as a man down on his luck and hang around the amusement arcade. There, if he is lucky, the gun men will approach him and offer him a weapon. It is only at this moment that Ogin's characterization changes and her hard edge is softened. She lays back and looks at the sky and announces with astonishment "I had forgotten how pretty the stars are for about twenty years!" The woman is revealed to be more complex than a rote stereotype and while Kurosawa is reluctant to not condemn her for the lifestyle choices she makes, she is also proven to be humane and possibly a victim of the era. The film at several points questions the

choices one makes to do evil acts and is conflicted by the question of socialization and acculturation to criminality. The film questions individual responsibility and accountability for their actions in a world that had been socialized to participate in what it had discovered, post factum, to be a war of aggression.

Much of the film focuses on the black market economy. The black market was Japan's second economy, which created huge disparities between those who were tied to the legitimate working world, and those who profited from the illegal economy. The black market was integral to post-war daily life, prompting Dower to exclaim "no one could fail to be aware of the enormous economic role of the black market. For many Japanese, this was virtually *the* economy" (Dower 1999: 139).

Dower writes extensively on the black market economy.

Men carried weapons. Order was enforced. No one gave anything away because the customer was good looking – or pathetic, or desperate, or starving to death. There was little room for sentimentality. These outlaw activities often were camouflaged by gentle euphemisms – not only the 'free market' but also the lovely "open –sky" or "blue-sky" market – but when all was said and done, the black market remained a place of hardened hearts and harsh dealings. (Dower 1999: 139)

The black market economy was so fundamental to the rebuilding of Japan that most farmers would sell to the black marketers before the legitimate market. While some of the buying and selling in the black market was legal, most of the activity was gang related and caused the market prices to rise out of accord with the nation's economy, causing huge discrepancies between the working poor and the black market profiteers. Because the black market vendors would purchase directly from the food supply, virtually everyone was forced to buy off the black market or face possible starvation. Dower provides the story of the death by starvation of a thirty three year old judge named Yamaguchi Yoshitada. He had presided over a small section of the Tokyo municipal court devoted to petty crime and the majority of his cases involved

petty transactions on the black market. Dower states “From the young judge’s personal perspective, he had no alternative but to find those brought before him guilty. Yet his own family also relied on the black market for basic commodities” (1999: 100). The judge’s response was to live to the letter of the law and only consume his rationed allotment. Dower concludes “Yamaguchi’s widow later recalled days when she and her husband consumed nothing more than salted water. Judge Yamaguchi died on October 11, 1947” (1999: 100). The period following defeat was marked with ambivalence toward the notion of goodness. If the entire nation had been wrong in actively pursuing war, was it a nation devoid of goodness? If the entire nation was deeply connected to the illegal economy, to the point where to live within the boundaries of the law was to court starvation and death, was it morally bankrupt? Kurosawa’s film, through the utilization of the black market and through detailing the lives of those both within and without the black market economy, is hesitant to condemn his characters while being critical of their actions. This is why the pick-pocket Ogin can be presented ambiguously, being both a calculating criminal and generous to the desperate officer.

Kurosawa’s ambivalence toward the notion of ‘goodness’ continues with the characterization of Sato. The director pairs the young police officer with an older, wiser detective. Sato has been a police officer for twenty-five years, and being older and more experienced acts as a mentor to the young Murakami and attempts to instill within his protégé understanding of the criminal. Sato is a good officer, and Murakami, upon visiting Sato’s house, comments on the number of commendations that Sato has received. Yet to be a good officer in the 1930s would have been very different to being a good officer in the post-war period, and while the post-war Sato

treats criminals in custody to ice creams the wartime Sato must surely have been a harder man to earn those commendations.

The two men sit down to eat, and they begin to discuss the man who was using Murakami's stolen gun and who has been committing increasingly violent crimes with the weapon. Through the course of the film, the detectives discover that a returned soldier named Yusa was committing these crimes. The detectives manage to find Yusa's home, a tiny shack on the edge of his sister's property. Sato states "my house isn't much but Yusa's place is terrible." The two detectives had visited the criminal's house earlier that day, discovering it to be a terrible little shed in which there was barely enough room to lie down. And yet despite his poverty, Yusa had already spent within a week the money he had stolen. This was an amount which the officers calculate to be 6 000 yen per day, a daily figure Sato claims would provide for his family for a month. The disparity between the working economy and the black market economy is brought into stark relief. The petty criminal generates a staggering amount of money, only to burn it away within days. The spendthrift attitude reflects the genuine response to money in the period. Dower provides the account of a black marketer who "recalled the exhilaration of raking in, in a single day, what would take the average salaried worker a full month to earn" (1999: 145). Because of run away inflation, money lost both its economic and social values. Dower provides the man's attitude toward his earnings. "After putting aside that part of the day's earnings necessary for the next day's business, he and his companions would squander the rest on prostitutes and liquor" (1999: 145).

Murakami and Sato eventually find a lead to Yusa through his girlfriend, a showgirl named Namiki Harumi. While Namiki describes Yusa's motivation for criminality, she too expresses her own desires for material wealth at any cost. The

sequence begins with the officers entering her flat. An elderly woman, who turns out to be Namiki's mother, answers the door and Namiki is shown seated on the *tatami* floor of a very sparse apartment. The mother proffers tea which the two officers decline. Sato asks where Yusa is, and she declares she doesn't know, to which the mother replies "you do know, he was just here." After a few minutes of deadlock, the officer Sato decides to follow up a different lead, announcing "I have no time for wilful girls." He excuses himself, leaving Murakami to deal with the young woman. After Sato leaves, Namiki's mother asks the girl why she protects Yusa, when she dislikes his company? Indeed, Namiki distrusts Yusa but refuses to turn him in to the police. She tolerates Yusa's company because he provides her with gifts, the material goods that her modest life with a showgirl revue company cannot afford. Feeling frustration with Murakami's questioning, she pulls out a dress box and spills its contents to the floor. She picks up a party dress that Yusa had bought for her. The film cuts to a close up of her face as she informs the officer "We saw it in a show window together, so pretty, I said I'd like to wear it once. He looked at me so sadly. Then a week later he brought it." The film cuts to a long shot registering the mother and Murakami's reactions and then cuts back to a long shot of Namiki who continues "Yes, he committed a crime for me. If I'd the courage, maybe I'd have done the same thing." And indeed, Yusa has committed a crime. But Namiki does not consider Yusa's actions to be as heinous as those demanded by a world that promotes such materialism. She looks directly at Murakami, which is where the camera has now been placed, and so in a direct address to the camera and audience she states "A crime to display it! We'd have to do worse things to buy it." She suddenly evokes the black market economy that has propelled prices beyond society's ability to pay for such goods. Indeed, Yusa spent half of his gains from the

robbery on this dress, an amount that in Sato's calculations would have supplied his family for four months. And yet the dress wasn't bought on the black market but rather was displayed in a show window by a legitimate department store. The legitimate market had been setting its prices in accordance with the black market economics. The world had created such discrepancies between those who had money and the working poor, that frivolities such as a party dress were astronomically out of line with the wage scale. Her statement "we'd have to do worse things to buy it," is again Kurosawa's evocation of the prostitution trade, where the prostitutes would exclusively service American occupation soldiers for money and gifts.

Murakami responds to Namiki, stating "times are bad, but that's no excuse to commit crimes" but Namiki cuts him off with the undeniable fact that in this society, "bad people eat good food, dress well, they're the winners." Murakami, undaunted, demands the girl join those criminals, and put on the dress. To his surprise, the girl grabs the dress and whisks it to her room. He confronts the girl's desire to be part of the well dressed, well fed set, regardless of the criminality associated with the procurement of the luxury items but the girl is undaunted by Murakami's value system. Indeed, the world's values have been compromised and so she cannot see the harm in gaining personal benefit from sharing those poisoned values.

The film cuts to Sato who is following a lead on Yusa, and in that scene a terrific storm starts. The film cuts back to Namiki's room and it is raining outside her window with thunder and lightning crashing. The film cuts to a medium close up of Murakami standing in the doorway, while a cast shadow flicks over his face. It cuts to his point of view shot of Namiki, lightning flashing in the background as she pirouettes in the party dress laughing hysterically and declaring "I'm so happy, it's

like a dream.” The mother storms in the room and tears the dress off her daughter, slapping her, and throws the dress out the window into the torrential rain. The girl has become the embodiment of Yusa’s criminal actions, and she both provides rationalization, as well as his motivation. But she also vocalizes his desires for material wealth through her own desire for material goods. While she did not participate in the robberies, she physically embodies the absent Yusa’s criminality. Furthermore she makes visually manifest his increasing madness through her brief moment of hysteria.

It is significant that in two separate instances of Kurosawa’s film it is women who become the site of Japan’s turbulent social change, reflecting both the progressive as well as the negative elements of the American modelled democratization. It is of significance as well, that both Namiki and Ogin evoke the prostitute, in their speech, costuming and makeup. The prostitute or *panpan* was a popular figure in the post-war period, reflecting the material desires of the population but also embodying the democratic spirit. She indeed made personal choices (and sacrifices) for economic stability and was both reviled and celebrated for such strength of character. John Dower writes extensively on the *panpan*. He describes her image in the popular imagination:

This was the milieu epitomized by the *panpan* –tough, vulnerable figures remembered for their bright lipstick, nail polish, sharp clothes, and sometimes enviable material possessions. They became inseparable from the urban nightscapes and memory landscapes of post-war Japan. (Dower 1999: 132)

The prostitute was shocking in her appearance for her complete adoption of western material iconography, from the designer sunglasses to the headscarves, cigarette holders and brightly rouged lips. The pickpocket, Ogin too had sacrificed her kimono for a parasol and perfume. While it is not made clear whether Ogin is a

prostitute as well (she states she has no interest in young men), she has adopted the *panpan*'s taste for western accessories. But importantly, the *panpan* were consumers of material culture, which greatly aided in the indoctrination of the nation toward the uniquely American value of conspicuous consumption. Dower argues:

In their embarrassing way, the *panpan* were the exemplary pioneer materialists and consumers of the post-war era. In those years of acute hunger and scarcity, the material comfort of the Americans was simply staggering to behold. What made America 'great' was that it was so rich; and for many, what made 'democracy' appealing was that it apparently was the way to become prosperous. Among ordinary people, no group tapped the material treasures of the conquerors as blatantly as the *panpan*. (Dower 1999: 136)

The films of the period, through utilizing the image of the *panpan*, or even through the evocation of the *panpan*'s materialism as embodied by Namiki, were a means of subtly promoting the western valuation of conspicuous consumption. Kurosawa's film, however, registers the gross discrepancies between the working poor and the conspicuous consumption of those in the second economy and questions the valuation of such materialism. But women become a vital means of entering the discourse of consumption, embodying those values through their discourse and through their very bodies.

Namiki is proven to be merely a child. Her brief moment of hysteria is resolved by her mother reclaiming the role of parent, and stripping the child of the tainted dress. Namiki bursts into tears and the mother comforts her. Murakami, shamed by his harsh treatment toward her, apologizes to the young girl. He recognizes that she is not herself a criminal, but victim to the desires of material goods, a desire that has been created by the foreign occupation, a desire which cannot be actualized by the real circumstances of the economy. He recognizes that Namiki has been acculturated into desiring things which are prohibitively expensive, but compounded with her having grown up through the privations of the war, her

desire for these objects is so much more understandable. Dower, writing of the *panpan* argues:

To women who had been denied make-up, permanents, and colourful clothing ('extravagance is an enemy' was a wartime slogan), the application of a bit of cosmetics could be a touching and understandable way to try to transcend despair and exhaustion, even if just for a moment. A journalist recalled how nylons, never seen before, arrived along with the Americans just as women were shedding their ugly *monpe* pantaloons. Their hearts were tempted, she observed acidly, and some were known to have exchanged their chastity for a pair of stockings. (Dower 1999: 137)

After knowing nothing but a lifetime of privation, Murakami and Kurosawa are both quick to forgive Namiki and indeed, shortly after this exchange she informs Murakami of where Yusa will be, leading to Yusa's arrest.

The film takes pains not to condemn its villains. Kurosawa has a great deal of sympathy for a society that is struggling to regain a sense of identity as well as a newfound moral code. After the entire nation was discovered to be wrong in supporting the war, many were unsure of how to lead a moral life. The *shutaisei* debate, or new subjectivity debate, was the questioning of what subjectivity meant to the Japanese, prompting some to argue that traditionally the Japanese had no sense of self as an individual, but rather saw the self as a member of a vast network of obligations and hierarchies. In short, one had been conditioned to give up a notion of 'selfness' in order to better operate as part of a collective. This was condemned as resulting in a nation that was lead into a war campaign of aggression. This is simplistic reasoning because there was dissent leading up to the militarist campaign and the Japanese had a relatively quick transition to democracy. Throughout that transition, however, the debates of personal choice and subjectivity influenced much popular culture. Kurosawa's film participates in the *shutaisei* debate through his deployment of women and while he is reluctant to exonerate his characters' various

criminal activities, he provides a complex world where criminality is motivated by a number of factors, social, economic and cultural.

Throughout the occupation era, during this period of promoting democracy, the *onryo* made a complete disappearance. The first instance of an *onryo* film did not occur until late 1949 with a re-make of the Yotsuya ghost story, *Tokaido Yotsuya Kaidan*. Hirano argues that there were so few period films because of the occupation censorship guidelines which equated the period films with feudalism. While much of the censorial mandate, such as the prohibition of showing the effects of occupation, or the prohibition of showing prostitution and the black market were eventually relaxed, there were certain dicta that were proven inflexible. The military occupation provided a comprehensive argument against the promotion of feudal values within period settings in its statement on *Kabuki* theatre. Hirano again provides the occupation account of *Kabuki* theatre.

Kabuki theatre is based on feudalistic loyalty, and sets faith in revenge. The present world does not accept this morality any more. The Japanese will never be able to understand the principles of international society insofar as things such as fraud, murders, and betrayals are justified by the principle of revenge, regardless of law.

Of course, serious crimes also occur in Western countries; however, Western morality is based on concepts of good and evil, not on feudal loyalty.

For Japan to participate in international society, the Japanese people must be made to understand the basic political ideals of law and democratic representative government, respect for the individual, respect for national sovereignty, and the spirit of self government. The entertainment media and the press should all be used to teach these ideals. (Hirano 1992: 39)

The message was that feudal values were intricately tied to the evolution of Japanese militarism and the feudal valuation of obedience to one's superiors was seen as inherently anti democratic. So too was the valuation of revenge. Because the *Kabuki* plays invariably must depict such feudal values inherent in the drama, it would therefore (in the censors' logic) continue to promote militarism and martial law. Censorship in films equally prevented the depiction of feudal attitudes. Hirano

reports that in the occupation mandate, banned films were those that could be seen as being:

1. Infused with militarism
2. Showing revenge as a legitimate motive;
3. Nationalistic;
4. Chauvinistic and anti-foreign;
5. Distorting historical facts;
6. Favouring racial or religious discrimination;
7. Portraying feudal loyalty or contempt of life as desirable and honourable;
8. Approving suicide either directly or indirectly;
9. Dealing with or approving the subjugation or degradation of women;
10. Depicting brutality, violence or evil as triumphant;
11. Anti-democratic;
12. Condoning the exploitation of children; or
13. At variance with the spirit or letter of the Potsdam Declaration or any SCAP directive. (Hirano 1999: 44-45)

Occupation film was mandated to promote certain democratic values, and the above scenarios were considered counter productive to the spirit of democratization. Most applicable to the *onryo* myth is the prohibition from showing revenge as a legitimate motive. In one particular telling of the *Yotsuya* ghost story, the samurai father, who evokes the militarism that feudal hierarchies obeyed, poisons his wife for being of a low clan. The poison disfigures the wife, but does not kill her. The wife, before committing suicide, kills her baby son to prevent her husband's line from continuing. She returns as a ghost to haunt him and exacts personal vengeance. This particular telling of the tale manages to break every one of the censors' prohibitions.

By the turn of the decade, the occupation censors had greatly lessened their restrictions against feudal iconography and so the occasional period film was eventually made. The 1949 Kinoshita Keisuke adaptation of *Yotsuya Kaidan* was notable for its period setting. Only four period films had been made in the occupation up until this point, among them Mizoguchi Kenji's *Utamaro O Meguro Gonin No Onna* (*Utamaro and his Five Women*) being the most notable exception. Kinoshita's adaptation of the *Yotsuya* legend, and his skilful redeployment of the

feudal material, conformed to the occupation censors dicta, enabling the film to be produced. In the original tale, Oiwa returns as a ghost to take revenge on her husband Iemon who had poisoned her in order to be free to marry another. This remake managed to fulfil the occupation mandates because rather than focussing on the ghost story as a revenge tale, promoting what the occupiers considered to be the feudal valuation of revenge as a legitimate justification for performing evil – the film instead became a psychological allegory, wherein the returned murdered wife of the samurai Iemon is a projection of Iemon's guilty conscience. By removing the ghost from the story, the film ceased to promote what the censors considered feudal and militarist values and by shifting the moments of villainy from the ghost to Iemon's guilt addled conscience, the film becomes a social critique. The film rather than favouring the revenge of Oiwa and thereby 'depicting brutality, violence or evil as triumphant,' condemns Iemon's actions as deriving from greed. The same tale is told with the same narrative elements, but the ideology surrounding the tale has been suitably reconfigured to accord with the spirit of democracy.

As the occupation wound to an end, it was determined that Japanese popular culture had developed the ability to sufficiently question and criticise society and its idiosyncrasies. In short, popular culture had become suitably democratic to once again begin using period settings. By the 1950s, filmmakers had relative freedom to begin telling feudal tales, and a number of period films began to appear, including Kurosawa's *Rashomon*, which while being a tale of revenge creates ambiguity and uncertainty in its narrative structure. It was this questioning of the prior feudalism inherent in the period films that enabled filmmakers to return to feudal subject matter.

Chapter 2

Nostalgia and Autonomy in the Post Occupation Period: The Quest for Japaneseness.

Kurosawa Akira's *Rashomon* (1950), has an ambivalent relationship to history and the Japanese cultural past. While the protagonists create fanciful tales of their superior character out of false pride, the filmic construction of their tales equally belies a fanciful nostalgia for a cultural past. Kurosawa's film is complicated by his relationship to the past, and while the stories told by his characters are compromised by the teller's inability to be truthful in his depiction of self, Kurosawa's camera is equally compromised in its veracity by virtue of his visually depicting stories that the narrative reveals to be false. The film can be read as metadiscursive, depicting Kurosawa's own inability to articulate truth in the (re)telling of history.

The film involves a rape and murder, as recounted by first a bandit, then a noblewoman and finally her husband. All three, in telling their version of events, confess to the killing. What is puzzling is that while the samurai and bandits 'confessions' embolden their identities, both men justifying their actions as being in accord with their character tropes, the woman's confession paradoxically diminishes her nobility. While the two men 'confess' to having superior qualities, the woman's confession constructs her as lacking control over her actions. She characterizes herself as irrational and motivated by self serving desire for retribution. As the prior occupation censors had feared, the archetypal characters' actions are predicated by genre conventions and their actions are proven to be functions of their archetypal role within the narrative and consequently must perpetuate feudal attitudes. Yet the woman's actions continue to be ambivalent. While the bandit and samurai's actions

are functions of their nature as bandit and samurai, the woman too must reconstruct her story in accordance with genre traditions. In Kurosawa's *Rashomon*, her actions are predicated not by her nobility, but by the functions of the archetypal vengeance seeking woman or *onryo*.

The film, roughly hewn from two Akutagawa tales, *In a Grove* and the titular *Rashomon*, recounts the murder as told to a peasant by a woodcutter and a priest. On a rainy afternoon in the Kansai region in the forests near Nara, a priest and a woodcutter take shelter from a violent storm in the dilapidated ruins of the *Rasho* gate. A third man joins the two in mid conversation, where they express their wonderment at the mysterious circumstances surrounding the death of a nobleman. The woodcutter begins the telling of the tale by describing his stumbling upon a noblewoman's hat in a forest, then the hat of a samurai and finally the corpse of the stabbed nobleman lying in a thicket. The woodcutter then ran straightaway to the police to report his grizzly find. The priest, at this point, joins the telling to report he had in fact seen the nobleman and his wife the very morning of the murder. While the woodcutter and the priest were at the police station, a police agent entered with a bandit, Tajomaru, whom the officer had found thrown from his horse. The policeman then told of how he had caught the bandit, a story which Tajomaru interrupts to reject as false and then corrects with his own version of events.

Tajomaru tells a tale, witnessed by both the priest and the woodcutter, in which he constructs himself as a romantic, emotive figure, controlled by a capricious nature which causes him to act upon all of his immediate desires. James Goodwin argues:

In contrast to the posture of a social rebel taken in 'In a Grove,' the film's bandit credits himself with a heroism that makes him the romantic equal of the samurai. This role is unlikely. From the perspective of others, he is a pest-ridden, half-naked

roughneck. In his own account, the bandit is first seen as a natural creature, slumbering at the foot of a giant tree, brushing off insects that gather on his flesh. The bandit explains his motives as free of any base instincts of lust. Rather, the wife's angelic beauty and childlike vulnerability inspire his crimes. (Goodwin 1994: 129)

In Tajomaru's version of events, a chance breeze lifts the noblewoman's veil, unmasking her face and exposing him to her natural graces. The bandit declaims had it not been for that breeze, the samurai would still be alive. The bandit lures the samurai from his wife with promises of buried treasure, where he then overpowers the man and binds him with a cord. On a whim, the bandit leads the noblewoman to her bound husband in order to lord his potency over the tied man. Tajomaru explains how he 'seduces' the wife, possessing her with a kiss. Dismayed by the careless ease with which the woman betrayed her husband, the bandit moves to leave but is halted by the scorned woman's imploring Tajomaru to fight for her honour. The bandit explains that the wife, unable to live with the thought of two men having known her shame, demands that he kill her husband. The bandit's duel with the husband becomes an affirmation of the bandit's integrity; his winning the duel becomes a testament to his masculine prowess over the nobleman's classically trained swordsmanship. With the bandit's self characterisation in his story contrasting so starkly with the wild figure spinning the yarn in the police station, the bandit's tale is proved nothing more than a fancifully self aggrandising fabrication. But what is significant is the way in which he constructs himself. His self characterization is indeed a glorified embellishment of his admittedly animal like nature. In his recounting, he does not have any seeming moral code, rather events unfold and it is fate and nature that determine his actions rather than reasoning or rationale. His temper is also mercurial, changing from phlegmatic to bilious in seconds, much like the wind and the weather too are changeable. His embellishments are derived from

his essential characteristics and reflect his personal desires. But the bandit is also quick to embellish the others in equally heroic terms. The woman's temper too, in the bandit's version, is mercurial, moving from being possessed by his kiss, to hate filled in equally quick measure while the husband is championed as a great fighter who crossed swords with the bandit more than twenty times. But, his recounting is compromised through double iteration. The story is told, not as the bandit tells it, but as recounted by the priest and the woodcutter in their conveying the mysterious tale to the peasant. The story becomes an oral tale and the process of double iteration both creates unreliability in narration but also begins the work of mythologizing the events as the priest and woodcutter begin the process of constructing the narrative as folk legend.

The bandit's tale is followed by the wife's version of events, as told to the court and the priest and woodcutter who had been witness to the telling, by the wife herself. The tale is retold by the priest, who claims that rather than the hateful harridan Tajomaru constructs her to be, the priest saw nothing more than a pitiable creature, beautiful in her angst. The priest argues that what he saw was 'so different her face didn't even show the fierceness he spoke of.' The wife's tale is also complicated through the fact of double iteration – as told by the wife and then retold by the priest.

The wife's version of events begins after the 'seduction' which she clearly construes to be a rape. In her tale, the bandit flees shortly after the attack, taking her husband's sword as well as her horse and leaving her alone to face her husband's cold fury. She explains through voice over narration accompanied by flashback images, that after the bandit's departure she threw herself upon her husband, looking to both console him and seeking comfort herself. Her husband, conversely, remained

motionless and the coldness in his eyes conveyed neither anger nor sorrow at the circumstances but rather a newfound hatred for her. What is striking is that the wife's realization of her husband's hatred is shot from an over the shoulder shot from the *husband's* subjective positioning which subsequently places *her* reactions under scrutiny. The camera cuts to a close up of the wife's reaction which is a clear subjective shot from the husband's point of view, so while she tells of his actions/reactions, the film shows us her actions/reactions. While her post factum oral narration provides the film with her own subjective positioning, the filming does the opposite – failing to provide her subjective vision, but providing the subject positioning of her husband – he whom she is telling about. Rather than objectifying him through her discourse, we subsequently objectify *her* through the camera's observing gaze. The irony is that the relative 'truth' which she is telling becomes undermined because the entire duration of the wife's coming realization of her husband's antipathy, symbolically places her reactions (and correspondingly her 'telling') under her husband's as well as the camera's and the audience's, scrutiny.

The woman describes her husband's gaze as filled with fury, but the husband's hatred becomes representative of the uncanny – something too abject to show and so it is left to the audience's imagination to construct the image of the husband's antipathy – because for the wife, who had supposedly experienced this cold gaze, it remains un-imag(e)inable. What we do see is the wife's reactions, her initial surprise at her husband's anger, her dawning realization, her anger, her grief, and finally her hysteria. The visualization of her narration fixates on her expressions rather than her subjective gaze, becoming a filmic means of punctuating her mood, a visual display of "*I was surprised, I slowly came to realize, then got angry and possibly hysterical,*" which is correspondingly depicted in the film's imagery.

Significantly, the film depicts the woman's face in medium close-up, suggesting the key to understanding the woman's motivations comes from her emotive physiognomy rather than the words she utters.

Eric Cazdyn argues that the film uses different cinematic techniques for each of the confession sequences – arguing that for the wife's tale, “Kurosawa chooses a (cinematic) language more closely related to melodrama. Close-ups and medium close-ups dominate” (Cazdyn 2002: 241). In Cazdyn's analysis, the cinematic language corresponds to the characterization of the narrator/narratee and provides veracity to the narrator's story through the agreement between narrated material and the narrator's association to and familiarity of that material. In Cazdyn's analysis the characters must act in a particular fashion that is in keeping with an ideological fiction in which character actions are always determined and particularistic. “A woodcutter must always act like a woodcutter; a bandit like a bandit; a woman like a woman; and so forth” (Cazdyn 2002: 238). Cazdyn argues that Kurosawa negotiates this determinism through the use of varying cinematic languages, as exemplified by the bandit and the woodcutter's respectively describing the sword fight scene.

Cazdyn describes the two moments:

In his representation, Tajomaru, who possesses a language with which to articulate the details of sword fighting, lasts two minutes and comprises twenty-five cuts (each shot therefore lasting less than five seconds). These quick cuts, punctuated by stylistic music, are fluid and practiced. The camera navigates the landscape, cutting angles and parrying strikes as expertly as Tajomaru battles. Yet when the woodcutter represents the same fight scene, it is entirely different – not in the events but in the language chosen to describe what has happened. For this representation, Kurosawa chooses a cinematic language that is clumsy and gritty, shaky and unsure of itself. (Cazdyn 239)

Cazdyn asserts that the woodcutter, paradoxically, when describing his first walk through the forest, is able to articulate his narration through stylized and fluid camera movement. Cazdyn posits this to be the case because the woodcutter, familiar with

the language of the forest is able to articulate through the forest in a stylistic manner, whereas he is unable to similarly articulate a sword fight as he is unfamiliar with its conventions (although he is familiar with the conventions of telling tales). Cazdyn's analysis is problematic because it could be equally argued that the woodcutter's earlier confession was elaborated through his fabrication, whereas his second confession is 'clumsy and gritty, shaky and unsure of itself' because it is a reluctant forced confession of true events, rather than an elaborate lie. However, Cazdyn's recognition of different filmic strategies for the various tellings proves useful as it postulates that the cinematic language is inextricably tied to the person telling the tale and is therefore representative of the character's subjectivity. The wife then is shown to be somewhat of a narcissist as the corresponding cinematic language for her telling is one of self imaging as she (re)constructs her tale. And yet the wife's tale presents her murderous actions as automatous and beyond her control, stating she 'must have blacked out'. She confesses to the murder as an act of unconscious rage which she neither had control over nor remembers performing.

The wife's flashback continues, showing how she then retrieved her dagger from the ground and cut her husband's bonds and then demanded he kill her with her dagger. Her voiceover tells the viewer that although freed from his strictures, her husband remained motionless, his face a frozen mask of antipathy. She recounts that she implored him to kill her in order to restore both of their dignities but he remained unmoved and unmoving. Driven to madness by her husband's icy glare, the film uses a hand held camera that slowly tracks into a close up of her face as she reaches a heightened apotheosis of madness. This slow steadycam tracking shot is intercut with three one-second medium close-ups of the husband's stare. While the close-ups are from her subjective positioning, the duration of the three minute sequence is of

her in close-up, continuing her self-objectification (it is after all she who narrates) putting her rising madness on display for the police panel (and the priest and woodcutter and in turn, the audience) to adjudge its credibility.

The film then cuts back to the wife sitting in the police court where she completes her tale through oral narration without a corresponding image track flashback. She states “I must have fainted after that” and orally recounts that when she woke from her faint she saw her husband dead with her dagger in his chest. She concludes she must have stabbed her husband while in a trance. What is interesting about the wife’s story is that it is not entirely a confession – she does not admit to killing the husband but concludes that she must have committed the crime. The film correspondingly provides ambiguity as to the wife’s involvement in her husband’s death by refraining from actively showing her commit the murder. She continues her tale, stating she couldn’t remember how she found her way out of the woods, but discovering herself to be by a pond, she threw herself into the icy water. Unable to kill herself, she decided to confess to the police.

The husband’s version of events, as told to the police court through a spirit medium, creates further confusion, claiming his death to be a suicide. Upon completion of the bandit’s carnal actions, the wife pledges her undying love for the bandit, who would be able to rescue her from her boring life. She demands the bandit kill her husband, thus freeing her from her ‘true’ tormentor, the wronged nobleman. The bandit, appalled by the woman’s lack of fidelity to her husband, refuses her request. She flees and the bandit gives chase. Some hours later the bandit returns to cut the samurai free from his bonds and then departs. Alone and tormented by thoughts of his betrayed love, the samurai plunges the dagger into his own chest. The samurai, then, constructs his death as an act of heroic passion. The

husband's tale though is further compromised through its being triple iterated – as told by him, through a spirit medium's translation, and then once again through the priest's re-telling.

At this point in the retelling, the woodcutter interjects, claiming that this story too is a lie. This is not how the man could have died, considering that he was not killed by a dagger but rather by a sword. The commoner, catching the woodcutter in *his* lie, argues that the woodcutter could not have possibly known with what the samurai was killed, unless he had witnessed the murder. The woodcutter confesses that he had indeed witnessed the murder, and that the events in fact transpired in the following way: The bandit, after engaging with the wife, was left pleading with the wife to stay with him. The wife, angered by her husband's inability to protect her, demands the two men duel for her honour. The men reluctantly agree and in a battle that is neither heroic nor chivalrous, the bandit kills the samurai with his sword. But even the woodcutter's supposedly objective re-telling of the tale is undermined by his elision of the dagger from the story. The commoner questions the presence of the dagger, implicating the woodcutter as a thief, who at the very least took the dagger from the ground, possibly removed the dagger from the dead man's chest, or at the very worst murdered the bound samurai for the sake of a knife.

Kurosawa's belief that people cannot speak about themselves honestly similarly appears in the film *Seven Samurai* (1954). That film opens with a small group of bandits riding to the border of a farming village where they discuss the best time to rob the farmers of their crops. Yohei, a farmer out gathering wood, hears the bandits in their discussions and reports to the villagers. The villagers gather in a meeting and in a gross display of self-pity and self-deception the villagers lament the pitiable state of being a farmer. They decide they must eat rice gruel and millet, that

they are destined to starve and that they are continually being punished for their low status as labourers. As the film progresses it is discovered that the farmers have hidden stores of white rice, sake, arms and money and possibly even tend hidden rice fields deep in the valleys. The farmers have plenty despite the continued threat from the bandits. The farmers may well be guilty of deceiving the samurai but they are equally guilty of deceiving themselves. They have fully convinced themselves that they are being punished by fate and that they must starve or eat broken millet and indeed do eat such peasant fare, saving the quality product for festivals. They have truly convinced themselves of their misfortunes despite the very reality of their hidden wealth, because for Kurosawa, some people are entirely incapable of introspection and perform their duties as a trope. Identity is often determined and particularistic and so peasant farmers must act as such regardless of their hidden wealth.

Kurosawa himself provides an answer for his characters' lying in his *Something Like an Autobiography*. He provides an account of his assistant directors' inability to understand the *Rashomon* script. Kurosawa suggests we humans construct ourselves in an idealized fashion in order to preserve our sense of self. He states:

Human beings are unable to be honest with themselves about themselves. They cannot talk about themselves without embellishing. This script portrays such human beings – the kind who cannot survive without lies to make them feel they are better people than they really are. It even shows this sinful need for flattering falsehood going beyond the grave – even the character who dies cannot give up his lies when he speaks to the living through a medium. Egoism is a sin the human being carries with him from birth; it is the most difficult to redeem. (Kurosawa 1982: 183)

We are ultimately delimited by our being human, a limitation which prevents us from having clear introspection. In *Rashomon* it is the characters' pride which causes them to lie. This explanation extends to the woodcutter too, who considers himself a

good person, despite his implicated theft of the dagger. He too re-visions the story in order to exclude any implicated negative behaviour of his own part.

Eric Cazdyn reads *Rashomon* as engaging in the *shutaisei* debates. The *shutaisei* were the subjectivity debates of the late occupation period, wherein the notion of what it was to be an individual operating within society was mooted. For Cazdyn, the film is about the individual's relationship to truth and to a set of events. Cazdyn argues "We are always mediated to this truth by such things as language, gender, ego, and social position. No one is lying; everyone is telling the truth. The bandit tells the truth from his position, the woodcutter from his, the husband from his, and so on" (2002: 237). While Cazdyn is a little too generous to the character's nobility of spirit – the characters do in fact contradict statements with their competing accounts, and so the characters are indeed fallacious in their retellings – Cazdyn's argument that the characters are delimited by language, gender, ego and social position, remains credible. The characters' relationships to the events are so conditioned by their social positions, ego, et al, that they become incapable of being objective in their reconstruction of events. They are delimited by their subjectivities, so while they may misrepresent the truth, their telling is conditioned by their various relationships to the truth.

The characters in *Rashomon* are incapable of faithfully reconstructing their past because they are incapable of being truthful to themselves because they too have become conditioned to construct the self as a trope. Donald Richie analyzes the nature of lying in *The Films of Akira Kurosawa*. Richie states:

They are proud of these actions and we know because they insist upon them. One confesses only what one is openly or secretly proud of, which is the reason that contrition is rarely sincere. (Richie 1998: 75)

Richie similarly postulates that pride is the cause of the lies – the thief, the nobleman and the wife are all proud and subsequently become boastful of the actions they may or may not have committed. Richie continues, alluding to Parker Tyler’s analysis of the film.

Each is proud of what he did because, as he might tell you: ‘It is just the sort of thing that I would do.’ Each thinks of his character as being fully formed, of being a *thing*, like the rape or the dagger is a thing, and is therefore (during an emergency such as this) being capable of only a certain number of (consistent) reactions. They are *in character* because they have defined their own character for themselves and will admit none of the surprising opportunities which must occur when one does not. (Richie 1998: 75-76)

Richie’s conclusion is that the characters, constructing themselves as a character, are conditioned in their lies to present their actions as belonging to a set of prescribed behaviours in accordance with their character(s) traits. Resultantly they (tell themselves) they ‘had no choice in the matter’ that they were simply behaving appropriately to their (constructed) character. They are in essence narrative-ising their lives and the narratives they tell must be in agreement with the characters they’ve constructed themselves to be.

While Richie’s analysis of the characters’ motivations for lying is appropriate for both the husband and the bandit - they self victimize, thus exonerating their actions and then present their actions as the noblest of all possible actions – this is not the case for the wife’s tale. While the bandit fights an honourable duel with the samurai, and the samurai takes his own life in a romanticized ending to a defiled marriage, the wife’s murdering the husband is by no means an honourable action but rather is an emoted manifestation of shame and guilt feelings. James Goodwin argues that Kurosawa’s text fails to iterate the wife’s true duty in such circumstances. Goodwin states:

The account does not acknowledge that the duty of a samurai wife is to commit suicide in such circumstances. By custom she is armed with a dagger to defend against rape or, when that fails, to preserve the honor of her marriage through suicide. (Goodwin 1994: 132)

The wife has a knife, precisely to preserve her husband's and her own honour in the event that such an attack occurs. Rather than turn the knife on the bandit, the most honourable course of action would have been to take her own life before the bandit could defile her body. And yet the wife fails in this instance, preferring to use the knife against the bandit rather than against her own flesh. Resultantly, her actions cannot be, even in her embellished telling of the tale, the most honourable of options because she remains alive to tell the tale. Her very living is testament to the fact that she did not choose the most honourable of courses.

Goodwin argues that in the original Akutagawa text, the wife does indeed attempt suicide with the knife, but fails. Goodwin states:

In the Akutagawa story 'in a grove' the death of the Samurai at the hands of his wife is a calculated act. She explains that in reaction to his silent stare she determines that they shall both die now that she is shamed. She interprets his paralyzed expression to signal consent and stabs him while he is still bound. (Goodwin 1994: 132)

She understands her husband's gaze to be a silent command, and understanding the conventions of her age, stabs him with the intention of immediately ending her own life. Goodwin continues, stating of Akutagawa's novel, "she unties his corpse and attempts *jigaki*, the piercing of her own throat with a dagger thrust, a ritual method of suicide for samurai women" (Goodwin 1994: 132-133).¹ She fails in this attempt, only nicking her neck, and so then attempts suicide by drowning which she also fails, resulting in her believing that her inability to die is humiliating punishment for her betrayal of her wifely duties. In the Akutagawa text, the wife is conscious

¹ Goodwin uses the term *jigaki*, to describe suicide through the piercing of the throat. This term doesn't exist in any dictionary, although Goodwin may have mistranslated the term *jigai* (白害) which is a general term for suicide.

throughout her murdering her husband. She follows the prescribed course of actions and it is fate which intervenes and prevents her from killing herself. While in the novel, her actions are portrayed as the most noble of courses but denied through misfortune, they are not the same set of actions in the film. Yet Goodwin bases his conclusions for the woman's motivation in the Kurosawa film, upon his findings of the novel.

In Kurosawa's text, with the elision of her attempted *jigai* and the stabbing instead occurring during a moment of unconscious automatic action, the woman's stabbing of her husband ceases to be a self aggrandizing act. Kurosawa, by removing this detail, changes the ideological meanings of the wife's actions. The Kurosawa version reconfigures the wife's act as a subconscious manifestation of her anger toward him in his cold rejection of her own anguish. In the film, her suicide attempt only comes later, only after feeling remorse over the stabbing. As both Goodwin and Parker Tyler argue, the other characters present themselves as determined and particularistic, but this determinism does not correspond to the real world, but rather to literary convention and ideological fantasy. The husband, a samurai, constructs his tale through a knowledge of archetypal tropes – he aligns himself with romantic heroes of the past. Similarly the bandit too has a finite selection of archetypal characters with which to align himself, either base criminals or wronged heroes. The woman only has two archetypes with which to align herself; as tragic victim or vengeance seeking antagonist. She has already failed in her role as victim because as stated, her remaining alive is proof of her failing to qualify for victim status. So in constructing her narrative she has no choice but to align herself with the alternative trope; the vengeance seeking female or *onryō*. The woman, in her tale, becomes valorised through her connection to a historical role of womanhood,

justifying her behaviour not as *her* actions, but rather the actions of *woman in her position in literary convention*.

The wife's actions are not coded as 'just like me' but rather are presented as just like what multiple women throughout Japanese literary history, have done when in such a position. The rape becomes symbolic of a death – the woman has been defiled and subsequently has a moment of passing out wherein she seeks vengeance upon the only man who remains on the scene – her husband. It is significant that she loses consciousness because in her telling of the tale, to create a sense of verisimilitude, it is paramount that the vengeance seeking female's actions be automatous. The wife's actions parallel those of Lady Rokujo in Princess Murakami's *Tales of the Genji*, in which Genji's wife, so consumed by her hatred of Genji's lover, was while sleeping, unconsciously projecting spiritual illness upon the girl. The woman had been so consumed by jealousy that it began to prey on her subconscious, manifesting in the psychic poisoning of her rival. In *Rashomon*, the wife's lie creates believability through its shared characteristics with other *onryo* tales. This story then exonerates her failure to commit suicide because she was not consciously aware of her actions and while she should not have killed her husband, as an *onryo* she had no choice in the matter. The woman becomes exonerated in her actions because in the *onryo* folklore it is within women's nature to seek vengeance upon all of patriarchy. The woman, therefore, lies, not to validate herself or glorify herself, but the lie becomes the only way to explain why she failed to commit suicide. The *onryo* as a restless being and motivated only by the desire for vengeance, would not be capable of such a selfless act and it is only after the trance moment, long after custom would have her commit ritual suicide that the woman, realizing her actions, attempts to throw herself in the lake.

Kurosawa has a dual purpose in evoking the *onryo* myth. Kurosawa's post-war film texts are frequently a conscious evocation of the past because they are part of a lifetime project of reclaiming a forgotten cultural tradition. Before making *Seven Samurai* Kurosawa had initially planned on creating a film about the day in the life of a single samurai, a project that eventually proved impossible. In his book, *The Emperor and the Wolf*, Stuart Galbraith quotes the scriptwriter for *Seven Samurai*,

Hashimoto Shinobu:

We did a lot of research," recalled Hashimoto, "the producer [Sojiro Motoki], the assistant producer [Hiroshi Nezu], and myself, but it was all so vague. We could never really determine specifics of their day-to-day life. For example, when a samurai shaved his beard or combed his hair, did someone do it for him? Did he do it himself? What kind of razor did he use? What kind of food did he eat for breakfast? Did he bring his lunch to the castle? Books only detailed the historical events – the day, the year, and so forth, but there was nothing about the samurai's daily life. So I told Mr. Kurosawa that I wouldn't be able to write the script, and he got really angry because he had already been waiting for three months." (Galbraith 2002: 171)

The scriptwriters felt that because there was not enough research material with which to reconstruct the minutiae of a samurai's life and thereby present that day in intricate detail, they were unable to continue with that project. Kurosawa's intention was to create a piece of verisimilitude, but that proved impossible for there was no way to faithfully articulate all elements of the past. The past was forever lost to the present. The film he did make, *Seven Samurai* is a film that contains much factual detail, as much as the writers could recover, but because the story is an adventure there is much about the samurai's daily living that is glossed over. The films then reflect compromise. They are an attempt to reclaim or rediscover the past, but are also a discourse on the inability to properly articulate that lost past and lost identity.

Kurosawa himself discovered that the past was a difficult thing to reclaim. In his autobiography he discusses how his childhood in the *Taisho* Period involved a study of painting, but despite a childhood steeped in culture, by war's end he felt he

lacked anything more than a superficial knowledge of Japanese art. During the war and the early years of the U.S. occupation, images of feudal iconography were banned and Kurosawa began to feel a keen lack of culture. This was drawn into stark relief when he read some carefully crafted Haiku. He had been writing his own poetry, but feeling cut off from a literary tradition, felt his own work reflected a lack of awareness of Japanese artistry, describing his writing as twisted and deformed. On his poorly formed Haiku, he states: "I recognized my lack of education and talent, and I felt deeply ashamed. There must be many such things I thought I understood and yet really knew nothing about." (Kurosawa 1982: 147) Kurosawa felt that this lack of knowledge extended beyond Haiku. He felt impelled to further refine his knowledge of Japanese art and culture, stating:

My reaction was to resume a study of traditional Japanese culture. Up until that time I had known nothing at all about pottery and porcelain, and my familiarity with the other industrial arts of Japan was superficial at best. In fact, as far as my aesthetic judgment goes, the only art I knew how to appraise at all was painting. And in the performing arts I had never even seen that peculiarly Japanese dramatic form, the Noh" (Kurosawa 1982: 147).

His enthusiasm for rediscovering Japanese culture had been tempered by the war's long period of devaluing aesthetic goods. He states:

During the war I had been starved for beauty, so I rushed headlong into the world of traditional Japanese arts as to a feast. I may have been motivated by a desire to escape from the reality around me, but what I managed to learn despite the motive was nevertheless of great value to me. I went to see the Noh for the first time. I read the art theories the great fourteenth-century Noh playwright Zeami left behind him. I read all there was to read about Zeami himself, and I devoured books on the Noh." (1982: 147)

But Kurosawa didn't only feel that he was not alone in lacking a knowledge of Japanese culture, but rather Japanese society itself has no particular appreciation of Japanese culture. He finishes his autobiography with a lament on the Japanese people:

Why is it that Japanese people have no confidence in the worth of Japan? Why do they elevate everything foreign and denigrate everything Japanese? Even the woodblock prints of Utamaro, Hokusai and Sharaku were not appreciated by Japanese until they were first discovered by the West. I don't know how to explain this lack of discernment. I can only despair of the character of my own people. (1982: 187)

While his film *Rashomon* is about the inability to faithfully reconstruct the self, it is also a film about the inability to faithfully reconstruct *the past*. It is significant that the film is set in the past because that too is double articulated – by the filmmaker and the narrators, further complicating their ability to articulate faithful narration. The story is set in the ruins of the Rashedo gate, which becomes an index of a further ruined past. Time and history become metaphors within the film. The story is told within the presence of a symbolic marker of the past (the Rashedo gate), but one that is already ruined and lost.² Similarly the tale the speakers tell is fragmented and lost to the hearers. Both sets of audience, those within the film who are listening to the tale and those in the auditorium who are watching the film, are fed short bursts of information with which to reconstruct the past. The film is about how truth is impossible to determine, but through competing stories, you discover ‘truths.’ These truths are not necessarily what was sought but do create an alternative type of understanding. Writing in his biography Kurosawa writes about his own work, in which he has most likely eliminated certain bad traits while emphasizing particular good ones. He advises the reader to read his friend and collaborator Uekusa's autobiography to determine the true state of events, stating “he has his version of events and I have mine. I suppose somewhere between those two you'll find the truth” (Kurosawa 1982: 187). *Rashomon* is a text about the inability to faithfully

² This argument is further compounded by the Rashedo gate no longer being in existence. Kurosawa could not even find any paintings of such a gate and was forced to construct a film set entirely out of his imagination and knowledge of what the gate should look like in comparison to other similar gates.

reconstruct the past, but in that attempt a type of truth is discovered in the in-between spaces, in the place between competing stories.

Kurosawa's *Rashomon*, while never providing the truth of the murder, carefully articulates truths about human nature and the inability to perfectly reconstruct the past. But Kurosawa does not argue that it is a futile endeavour to reconstruct the past, rather he argues that one must continually struggle to reclaim those fragments and establish multiple strands because it is through those competing discourses, and through competing accounts and histories, that a semblance of the past can be discovered. While not necessarily accurate, that constructed understanding of history and identity will contain many truths. His films in the post occupation period frequently use images and icons of the past. His film *Seven Samurai*, while failing to provide the minutiae of daily samurai life, does contain multiple elements of Japanese culture. His period films are highly intertextual with multiple references to Japanese classical arts and culture, making use of such disparate icons from *No* and *Kabuki* theatre, Buddhism and poetry. He creates a semblance of the past through the deployment of the existing, multiple fragments that he can access, and out of that deployment of those fragments come 'truths.' *Rashomon*'s deployment of the *onryo* archetype becomes an index of 'pastness', a single element of his larger project to restore to the Japanese people discourse on Japanese culture in the post occupation era.

Japanese film of the post occupation period frequently attempts to reconstruct and articulate the past. It is in the repeated *attempts* to establish a concept of an authentic Japanese past, particularly of authentic culture and identity, that multiple fragmented truths appear. While Kurosawa cleverly articulates a need to present multiple and competing discourses of culture in his films in order to reconstruct an

imagined Japanese identity, he was not alone in deploying historic intertexts for this purpose. Post occupation society was imbued with filmmakers who set their films in the feudal past and were anxious to create verisimilitude. The vengeful spirit appears throughout this period because she is a figure of an imaginary past authentic Japanese culture and thereby is a figure of nationhood. It is in the post occupation period that the vengeful spirit begins to double articulate, simultaneously acting as an extrapersonal system of morality but also expressing (imagined) lost 'Japaneseness.'

Democracy, Individuality and Autonomy: Post-war Film Culture and the *Shutaisei* Debates.

Kurosawa's work is a product of its ideological context, and his construction of women is predicated by two distinct ideological factors: the perceived loss of a connection to a cultural past, and the *shutaisei* debates of individualism and subjectivity. Cazdyn describes the debate of the post-war period:

The debate turned on the individual, for many concluded that one way to explain what had gone wrong over the past fifteen years was the lack of a proper philosophical conceptualization of the individual and of a proper, politically felt experience of the individual. To prevent such a historical repetition from occurring, the individual, the subject, would need to be fleshed out. (Cazdyn 2002: 236).

Film culture in Japan of the 1950s, if not directly informed by the *shutaisei* debates, was indelibly affected by the notion of individual freedoms and choice, as exemplified by the increased awareness of individual rights which resulted in the great Toho film company strike. The films of the post occupation period are informed by the political context, and frequently reflect the democratization movements from the prior occupation era. The occupation period was characterized by the American led movement to promote the individual's role in the functioning of democratic society and promoting the right to political dissent. In the earliest days of the occupation, socialism, much to the chagrin of the occupation leaders, was

actively promoted as a political alternative to the American styled capitalist discourse. The country was quickly unionized, particularly the film studios, and the contribution of all the workers was recognized as being of equal importance in all aspects of filmmaking.

In 1946, shortly after the film industry was unionized, Toho released *Those who Make Tomorrow*. The film had been directed by three directors, Sekigawa Hideo, Kurosawa Akira and Yamamoto Kajiro. While the film had been co-directed, the entire project had been made with a collaborationist spirit and much of the film's content had been shaped by union committees. Hirano Kyoko writes:

This film was planned by the union to promote the idea of unionization, beginning with the organization of a film studio, and spreading through the entertainment field and then to other industries. Its main theme is the conflict between the feudalistic sense of obligation the worker was supposed to feel toward his benevolent employer, and the awakening sense of workers' unity in the fight to improve their working and living conditions. (Hirano 1992: 215)

Following the period of militarism in which the political leaders' various decrees were unquestioningly followed, the notion of individual rights and control was widely popular.

The unions became so strong within the film community of the late 1940s, that union representation became crucial in all decisions made by the studios, from making decisions in hiring and casting, to the enforcement of an eight hour shooting day regardless of the demands of the director. Kurosawa recounts his increasing frustration at union representation. He describes the Toho studio's attempts to replenish its stock of existing actors. A jury was selected to adjudicate the merits of a young crop of auditioners. Kurosawa recalls:

The jury was made up of two groups: movie-industry specialists (directors, cinematographers, producers and actors) and representatives of the labour union. The groups were equally represented. At that time the union was gaining in strength daily, and union representatives appeared wherever something was happening. Because of them, all decisions had to be made by voting, but I felt that for them to

voice their opinions on the selection of actors was really going too far. Even the expression 'going too far' doesn't do justice to the suppressed anger boiling in me. (Kurosawa 1982: 160)

The labour union's power grew until there was inevitably a series of strikes, the third and longest of which paralyzed the Toho film studio for 134 days. Because the film studio strike involved so many famous people, it had struck a chord with the nation. The occupation rulers felt that the strike had to be disbanded before it fuelled similar strikes throughout the country. The strike was ended when the military had been called in to confront the striking workers. Hirano reports

At 9:20 on the morning of August 19, the district police chief arrived at the front gate of Toho Studio and read the decision of the court. The company's lawyers and the court officials arrived at 9:30. They had been preceded by a platoon from the First Cavalry Division augmented by three aircraft (possibly reconnaissance planes) and several tanks sent by the U.S. Eighth Army. (Hirano 1992: 228)

The strikes had a profound effect upon the entire film industry, precipitating the cleaving off from Toho several major actors and directors who formed Shin-Toho (New Toho), an independent film production company. Most significantly, the mass unionization of the film industry promoted the widespread notion of individual rights and the 'self' as an identity in a manner that in the prior age had been suppressed.

This chapter argues that the films of the 1950s were affected by the ideologies inherent in post occupation political autonomy. The films are marked by a desire to express 'Japaneseness' and engage in various discourses invested in the socio/political climate. These encompass nostalgia for the past and the ideologies of individualism and subjectivity; concern for individual rights and freedoms; and a questioning of the Japanese identity. The *onryo* made a startling comeback in this period and I argue the *onryo* is a figure that is malleable and representative of these various debates.

In the 1950s, filmmakers found increasing freedom to explore subject matter of their choosing without the strictures of government mandated censorship. As the restrictions preventing the showing of feudal subjects were lifted, the films began to once again depict ancient Japanese culture and customs. The filmmakers, unsure of how to begin fashioning films of a culture that had been long suppressed during both the war era militarism and the American led occupation, crafted discursive films which were enunciatory of that insecurity and which frequently questioned character fidelity and the ability to articulate the past. While Kurosawa's *Rashomon*, heralded as international art cinema, was vociferously conscious of its status as divorced from continuity with history, many of Kurosawa's contemporaries similarly questioned the nature of Japanese culture and their own inability to rediscover a wholly indigenous cultural tradition. While telling tales of ancient Japan, the films of the post occupation period contained imbedded discourse, questioning the very nature of 'Japan,' the 'Japanese identity' and the rediscovery of that suppressed past.

The films from this section were selected by virtue of their continued popular appeal. It should be noted that all of the films of this section are available on DVD re-release, and have each been issued in various collections for distribution in both Japan and overseas. This thesis is a work on the evolution of the vengeance seeking woman archetype and it must not be forgotten that an archetype is shaped through the dialectic between the individual artists and the consuming public. Each film deploys the vengeance seeking woman in different ways, but with the popularity of the films, the viewing audience in turn continues to consume that archetype and attendant ideologies. Ideology then is reinforced through society's acceptance and continued celebration of these manifestations of the archetype. Films that have

disappeared from the collective imagination and are only housed in archives, have not sufficiently contributed to the shaping of the archetype and so are not examined.

Three versions of the *Tokaido Yotsuya Kaidan* legend are examined. While there were dozens of filmed versions of the Yotsuya ghost through this time period, I reduce my study to only three versions. Each film studied is considered for its particular treatment of the *onryo* and also because of its continued popularity and presence in the collective imagination. Their popularity and continued appeal reinforces the inherent ideologies and returns those ideologies to the viewing public. The Mori Masaki version has become notable for starring Wakayama Tomisaburo, who through the *Lone Wolf and Cub* series of films has had a lasting impact on period films, and the third version, directed by Toyoda Shiro and starring Nakadai Tatsuya, has been celebrated as a film which stars one of Kurosawa Akira's family of actors in a departure from that director's work. The film won several awards internationally. Finally, the Nakagawa Nobuo version is studied because it is considered by many as a classic. It is even cited by Nakata Hideo as an influence in his construction of the *onryo* archetype for his film *Ringu*. His figure has vestigial elements of the ghost Oiwa. While Nakata's film is quite radical in its criticism of dominant ideology, through using an icon that has a filmic antecedent, Nakata's film cannot escape reinforcing certain attendant patriarchal ideologies of gender, beauty and the abhorring of the disfigured female. All three films, finally, while stemming from the same story, each deploy the archetype in different ways, each to different ideological effect. Those effects are examined in detail.

The Tokaido Yotsuya Kaidan: Competing discourses on subjectivity

Three film adaptations of the play *Tokaido Yotsuya Kaidan* made in 1956, 1959 and 1966 respectively, are straight adaptations of a well known 19th century *Kabuki* drama about a vengeful ghost. The three films present the same narrative elements but the different directors' treatment of the subject matter diverges from each other presentation, resultantly affecting the inherent ideology. The use of cultural intertexts, the depiction of character motivation and the deployment of the story's Edo context varies greatly in the three adaptations. That variegation reflects the contemporary society's environment of questioning identity and history.

The decision to make a period film in the 1950s, following the lifting of the occupation prohibition of feudal subject matter in film, was in itself a political one. Also political was the decision to craft a tale detailing the *onryo*, a decision that was in direct violation of the prior occupation government's mandate to not depict revenge as a legitimate motivation for the performance of evil actions. Furthermore, the decision to film an adaptation of a *Kabuki* play was also a direct violation of the occupation prohibitions, defying the ban of that particular form of drama from stage and screen. And yet several filmmakers of the era did exercise their right to depict the *onryo* with filmed adaptations of the Yotsuya ghost story.

The films are all adaptations of Namboku Tsuruya IV's *Kabuki* drama *Tokaido Yotsuya Kaidan*. The play, first performed in 1825, was a telling of an *onryo* tale in which a *ronin* (a *samurai* who has lost a lord) named Tamiya Iemon kills a higher status *samurai* who had refused his daughter's hand in marriage. Iemon, marrying the now parentless child, makes a vow to her that he will find her father's killer. Iemon enlists the aid of a gambler named Naosuke who similarly wishes to marry Oiwa's sister Osode. Iemon discovers married life one of poverty, but one day

meets Oume, the daughter of a rich Lord. Together they contrive to poison Oiwa so Iemon can leave his wife for Oume and benefit from Oume's wealth. Iemon devises a scenario in which his house servant Kohei, can be charged with adultery; justifying Iemon's abandoning his wife and thereby leaving him free to marry Oume. Oiwa dies a painful death, but first vows revenge upon both the Ito household and her husband. On Iemon's betrothal night, Oiwa haunts the infidel and the terrified man swings at his former wife with his sword. The ghost vanishes and Iemon discovers that he has killed his new bride. Iemon then flees to a temple at Snake Mountain where he finds solace in prayer but while fishing one day he is once again haunted by the sight of Oiwa. Increasingly crazed, he eventually dies variously in the different adaptations, by society, by Yomoshiche and Osode, and by fate.

The films, while evoking a feudal past are very much a product of their contemporary ideology and the films through their ambivalent relationships to a long since suppressed Japanese identity can be read as metaphoric of the concerns of contemporary Japan. The films *Tokaido Yotsuya Kaidan* (1956), *Tokaido Yotsuya Kaidan II (Ghost Story of Yotsuya)* (1959) and *Yotsuya Kaidan (Illusion of Blood)* (1966) can all be read as allegorical of the dual debates of *shutaisei* and of nationhood.

What is striking about the films is that while having very different treatments of characterization of the story figures, all three films have certain shared themes and iconographies. Central to each story is the *onryo* myth, which all three film versions present as real rather than as an imaginary figment of the characters' guilty psyches. But more than simply using the *onryo* as a narrative device, all three films present the *onryo* using similar iconography. In each of the three films, the ghost's look is predicated by the *onryo* archetype as derived from *Kabuki* theatre. Having consumed

poison, Oiwa's face is disfigured, a conceit that is central to the *Kabuki* imaging.³ She also has long lank hair which has fallen loose, a deathly pallor emphasized by heavy pancake makeup, and flowing white robes. The makeup becomes a direct reference to the *Kabuki* theatre. *Kabuki*, as stated, was a movement that had shifted away from the even more ancient *No* theatre style. The *No* was dependent on wooden masks. Young women were played by male actors wearing a stylized white mask designed to evoke the white makeup of the geisha. The *Kabuki* eschewed the masks in favour of heavy stylized makeup, which continues to further abstract the geisha imagery. The decision in the films to present the *onryo* with the heavily powdered white face is to make a conscious evocation of the film's *Kabuki* antecedent. The makeup of the *onryo* is contrasted with the actresses' use of naturalistic makeup during the scenes of Oiwa prior to her death.

The *Kabuki* theatre was filled with special stage effects and tricks. One scene in particular, from the stage productions of *Yotsuya Kaidan*, is the 'hair combing scene.' The production employs the use of a trapdoor under the stage which allows hair to be fed upward onto the stage floor, creating the illusion of impossible amounts of the poisoned Oiwa's hair falling out as she combs it. Oiwa's death, in all three films, is constructed in a manner that is iconographically derived directly from the *Kabuki* versions of the film, including a scene where the poisoned Oiwa combs her hair. Distraught and attempting to reclaim her lost beauty, Oiwa takes a comb and begins a pathetic attempt at grooming. This action results in her shedding her hair as she tears into the flesh of her poisoned scalp, further marring her former beauty.

³ See appendix, fig. 1 and 2.

A second trick of the *Kabuki* stage was to use a wooden door with a fake headless body placed on both sides of it. This allowed for a single actor to play two roles in sequence, turning the board over to switch between the two characters. In the story, Iemon nails the bodies of Oiwa and Takuetsu (or Kohei, depending on the version) to the two sides of a wooden door, thereby warning others of the consequences of infidelity. In the *Kabuki* play, a single actor would use this prop in order to play the two characters; the ghost of Oiwa and the ghost of Takuetsu. The board would be flipped over and the head of the actor placed through a hole, providing the illusion that two different ghosts were appearing. All three film adaptations, while foregoing the stage technology in favour of film editing, continue to use this scene as a key moment of Iemon's haunting. The films continue to use the *Kabuki* iconography and in a sequence that is virtually identical in all three film adaptations, the door floats up into a lake in which Iemon is fishing. The prostrated ghosts of first Oiwa and then Takuetsu haunt Iemon from their watery grave. The films, through their intertextuality both at the narrative and iconographic levels establish a connection to the play's early 19th century antecedent, symbolically connecting the films to an imagined culturally pure period before Japan's interaction with the west. The moments of intertextuality lend to the films imagined cultural authenticity, borrowed from a time period prior to Japan's westernization. Such cultural imagining reinforces to the post occupation society the notion of shared cultural roots and national identity.

The first of the three film adaptations is the black and white 1956 Mori Masaki directed piece, starring Wakayama Tomisaburo as the reluctant villain Iemon. The film presents the *onryo* as a devastating force, destructive in her awesome desires for vengeance. Oiwa, crazed by her husband's infidelities pledges hate filled

vengeance. In her final moments of life, Oiwa, having heard of Iemon's duplicity through a confession from the terrified masseur Takuetsu, lunges at the masseur with a razor, only to stumble and slit her own throat. She vows revenge on Iemon and the Ito family and terminates the Tamiya bloodline by strangling her own infant son, stating that she could not bear the thought of her child being raised in the Ito household. Before her grisly demise she states "I hate you Iemon. Now you will see how much I can hate."

The ghost of Oiwa haunts Iemon, inducing him to kill Oume, Ito, and their maidservant. She also kills Naosuke as well as her own sister Osode. Iemon flees to Hebiyama temple, where he is again haunted by Oiwa and driven to stab his own mother whom he blames for all of his problems. Indeed, it had been his mother who had arranged his initial meetings with Oume, who had provided him with the poison, and who had convinced him to despatch his wife. Iemon is finally killed by a local army in its attempts to pacify the crazed man.

The presentation of the *onryo* is one who directly haunts all of those responsible for her death. While the occupation era version of this story, made in 1949, presents the ghostly Oiwa as entirely a manifestation of Iemon's guilty conscience, this version makes it explicitly clear that Oiwa is a returned ghost actively exacting her own revenge. No longer subject to the occupation censors' dicta denying the depiction of revenge as a legitimate motivator for evil, Mori is entitled to emphasize the ghost's active desires for personal vengeance. The film returns woman's supernatural desires for vengeance to the *onryo* myth, rejecting the psychological realism of the occupation era's whitewash of the same tale. The reclamation of the *onryo* myth also returns to the film, and by extension Japanese film culture, its *Shinto* origins. The film once again provides an extra-personal

morality system in which the *kakuriyo* or spirit world metes out justice to the *utsushiyo* human world. The film reclaims a uniquely Japanese fantasized solution to the preservation of order.

The second film adaptation of the *Kabuki* play, made in 1959 by Nakagawa Nobuo, is a lavish colour film which uses a combination of location and studio shooting. This version aligns itself with high art from the outset, using the widescreen and colour formats to their fullest effect, presenting beautiful panoramic landscapes of a fantasized forgotten Japan. The film devotes a great deal of screen time to presenting landscape as an indicator of nationhood, with long takes and wide angle shots of cherry blossoms in spring, tranquil lakes, mountain ranges and blazing sunsets in the heat of August.

Tokaido Yotsuya Kaidan II was Nakagawa's third attempt at the *onryo* ghost tale. In 1958, Nakagawa filmed *Ghost Cat Mansion* which blends the *onryo* myth with that of the *Kuroneko* or ghost cat. Nakagawa had also, two years earlier, made *Kaidan Kasane Ga Fuchi (The Ghost of Kasane Swamp)* (1957), a story that incorporates most of the elements of the *Yotsuya* ghost story, even constructing the vengeance driven ghost with a broken, disfigured face. Based on the novel by Encho San'yūtei, the *Ghost of Kasane Swamp* begins with a blind masseur being killed by a samurai. The ghost of the masseur then kills the samurai and the two men leave orphaned children, Rui and Sankichi. Twenty years later, the grown children meet and fall in love. Unbeknownst to them, they are in fact cursed by their parents' mutual hatred. Rui is hit in the head and she develops a growing, pustulent tumour which is explained by her maid to be a manifestation of her father's anger at her love for Sankichi, the son of his sworn enemy. Rui eventually dies and returns to haunt Sankichi. What is of particular interest in this film is how the second generation falls

victim to the actions of the prior generation. Made twelve years after the end of the war, the film becomes a striking condemnation of the destructive actions of the prior generation. The disfigured face of Rui becomes evocative of the survivors of the atomic bombings and the film's theme of the second generation being literally haunted by the actions of the past is a bold statement. The passage of twenty years becomes a significant date, because the film, when read as a post-war allegory, situates the start of that allegory at 1937, a date which coincides with the beginning of Japan's aggressions in mainland China. The subsequent war led to the next generation living in an era of privation, and as the film depicts the suffering of the new generation as being derived from the actions of the previous, so too were the current generation's sufferings a product of the actions of the prior generation.

The film's production design incorporates much imagery of the *Kabuki* stage, experimenting with staging and iconography which Nakagawa was to further in his adaptation of the *Yotsuya* ghost tale. His depiction of Rui, with the cracked and swollen face, was to be used again with more refined elegance in his *Yotsuya* ghost tale. While Rui's features were often shown in close up under harsh lighting, fetishizing her cracked and broken skin, Nakagawa used a much more textured lighting with more refined usage of shadows in his depicting of Oiwa's brutalized features. While the earlier Nakagawa film was allegorical of war guilt and the sins of the past being revisited on the present, the later film is concerned with individual choice and how one is responsible for the consequences of one's own actions.

Nakagawa's adaptation of the *Yotsuya* ghost story differs from the Mori Masaki version in several ways. While the 1956 version presented Oiwa as a victim of her husband Iemon's aspirations to wealth, this film presents Oiwa as a haughty member of the fallen Enya Samurai clan. Oiwa is desperate to take revenge on her

murdered father, spurring Iemon and Naosuke to trek for six months searching for the non-existent murderers. Naosuke and Iemon, tiring of their travels, kill Osode's lover Yomoshichi and throw him down a ravine. They blame this murder on a gang whom they claim had also killed Oiwa's father. Osode at this point becomes desperate to revenge both her father and her lover. Revenge and personal desire become central motifs in the film from the outset. Naosuke is motivated by his lust for Osode, Oiwa and her sister desire revenge for their father, Takuetsu is presented as greedy and splenetic, and Iemon continually rages against a society which he blames for his fallen status.

Despite Oiwa's desire for revenge, she is also presented as a victim of a class system wherein status is a precarious thing. She is seen as a member of a fallen class, who regularly laments her newfound poverty and speaks at length on her poor position. Her status is entirely dependent upon those with whom she is associated. Her status has been removed by the death of her Lord, the head of the Enya clan, which causes both her father and her husband to become *ronin* (masterless samurai). Her status is further compromised by the death of her father and her newfound poverty forces her to work in a teahouse. Her sister Osode too is constructed as acutely class-conscious. Though a *geisha*, she invokes her samurai caste, albeit fallen, to rebuff Naosuke's advances. This action is repeated later as Oiwa similarly refuses the masseur Takuetsu's sexual advances. Oiwa in this version is filled with animosity toward Takuetsu, her husband and a society in which social position is a precarious thing.

The presentation of the *onryo* in this film becomes secondary to the construction of a particular social world of shifting status. The story is mostly concerned with the aspirations of Iemon to find a better position for himself, with the

murders of his father-in-law and of his young wife as necessary in his quest for social climbing. The *onryo* myth becomes a form of morality lesson to curb undeserving aspiration, where Iemon becomes culpable in his actions for his unwarranted aspirations and is consequently punished for them. What is significant is that while Oiwa does indeed haunt the film's villains, she does not actively provide for her own retribution. Rather, she facilitates others in the performance of their own desires for retributive justice. In the earlier film, it is Oiwa who actively punishes and kills those who had conspired against her. In the 1959 version it is only Oume and Ito who die at Oiwa's hand through the blade of Iemon. While Oiwa does haunt Naosuke, he is killed by an angry Iemon who blames Naosuke for his own sufferings. Oiwa leads her sister Osode and Yomoshichi (who had survived being thrown off a cliff) to Iemon and while Oiwa facilitates the two reunited lovers in finding Iemon, he dies at their hands thereby providing to them justice for prior wrongs visited upon the lovers. Osode avenges the death of her father and Yomoshichi avenges Iemon having thrown him off a cliff. While Oiwa pulls the strings guiding the characters' fates, she allows for the characters own arrogance and selfish desires to lead to their own grisly conclusions. The ghost becomes an arbiter of justice, a karmic agent facilitating those who had been wronged by Iemon, to exact their own justice. Iemon is not punished by any one individual, but rather the film posits that it is only through Oiwa, Osode and Yomoshichi coming together to perform a common goal, that a just resolution is found. The suggestion is that while each individual does have a subjective experience, society only finds justice through collaboration and working toward shared goals. Naosuke and Iemon's villainy is derived from their self interest over the benefit of the collective, and harmony is restored to the film by ridding

society of those figures who are incapable of working toward communal goals at the expense of their own desires.

The third of the *Tokaido Yotsuya Kaidan* remakes is the Toyoda Shiro version produced in 1964. This adaptation is similarly shot in full Eastman colour with a widescreen presentation, again glorifying the landscape and spanning four seasons, beginning with spring and ending in winter. The film's iconography presents feudal Japan as a series of glorious vistas, spectacularising the land and its past. The film is imbued with images of the *Japanesque* and the *onryo* too becomes *Japanesque*.

While the *onryo* legend remains the centrepiece of the film, the film elaborates greatly on the other characters' story arcs. The film provides a wealth of exposition for character motivation and subjectivity, and also details Naosuke's storyline. While Iemon aspires to wealth, Naosuke is in love with Osode and engineers a relationship with the woman. The two stories become contrapuntal, as the one man conspires for power, the other conspires for love. The two selfish characters however both are punished, each in his own specific ways.

The deployment of the *onryo* is diminished considerably in this version. While *Oiwa* does haunt the characters in several instances, she is not actively provided with revenge on all those who wronged her. Prior to her death, upon her discovery of Iemon's treachery *Oiwa* states her anger at Iemon, saying "Did you think I would leave this unpunished," but qualifies that statement by saying, "But I hate the Ito family more." She then sets about haunting the film's villains. She haunts Naosuke, appearing as an apparition in a bucket of water. But although she haunts Naosuke, he dies at the hand of Yomoshichi who is Naosuke's rival for Osode's love. She haunts Iemon too, although he dies accidentally, falling on his

own sword. Ultimately, her revenge manages to only manifest itself against one person. Oiwa kills Oume by taunting Iemon until he, in a state of delirium, cuts the girl down with his sword. Even Oume's father, Ito who traditionally dies in this same scene, is killed later, by Iemon, after he questions Iemon about the disappearance of his daughter. Indeed, most of the characters die by Iemon's hand, killing Samon, Oiwa, Kohei, Ito and Maki in various moments of anger or distress. Of these victims, with the exception of Oiwa and Kohei, each proves guilty of ambition in their own right. Ito is an unscrupulous merchant, Samon is a haughty family head and even the maidservant Maki proves a classic manipulator. Iemon's death is presented as an accident as the delusional man rages at the world for depriving him of financial security and success. In his raving anger, he trips and falls upon his own sword. Oiwa's involvement in the tale becomes secondary to the incorporation of fate and of personal accountability in one's own downfall.

While the films make explicit their connection to the 19th century dramatic form, the films are heavily intertextual in other ways, frequently using differing, often anachronistic elements of Japanese art and culture incorporated into the telling of this traditional tale. The 1956 Mori Masaki filmed adaptation of the *Yotsuya* ghost legend has a peculiar metadrama inserted into the midpoint. Iemon has killed his wife and the masseur Takuetsu, and has finally married Oume. Dressed in full *No* theatre regalia, Iemon performs a dance. The sequence is shot in three long takes, each shot lasting close to a minute allowing Iemon to perform the dance until the film fades to black midway through. The piece is given no rationale within the context of the film. Dressed in an elaborate costume and wig, Iemon's face is immobile and his movements are slow and precise. He is positioned in the middle of a bare room with some musicians on the left hand side and the wedding guests seated

around the open floor space. The camera begins in medium close-up, slowly tracking backward to allow Iemon's entire body to fill the frame. As he dances, the camera makes a slow pan of the room before cutting to a reverse shot of the lone dancer. The camera holds this shot for about forty seconds before cutting to its obverse, again showing Iemon in a full body pose. The shot holds for a further forty seconds before fading to black. The inclusion of the *No* intertext is a peculiar moment. While within the film's world, Iemon's dance can be interpreted as an attempt for him to demonstrate to his new benefactor that he is a sophisticated figure; the film's inclusion of this moment becomes puzzling until seen in the context of the subsequent sequence. The next act begins with Iemon on his betrothal night softly speaking to his new bride. He turns her to face him in order to kiss her and as she turns her body she transforms into the ghost of Oiwa, pivoting her disfigured face to receive his kiss.

In *No* drama there are often two dancers who tell a three or five act play. In the first act, a wandering figure (almost always a young to middle aged man, often a priest or warrior) encounters a mysterious figure who shall be from this point referred to as the *shite*. The *shite* is possibly a young woman, an old man, or a warrior. In the first act, the *shite* tells a story, the second act the *waki* explains his status as a wanderer, and in the third act the *shite* returns in his or her true form, as a ghost, a goblin, a demon or a king. In *No* theatre, the *shite* usually performs wearing a mask or if not wearing one he keeps his face immobile, his expression becoming mask enough. The *waki* however, is never masked. While Iemon's dance in the previous scene, costumed in the elaborate kimono and wig had been presented as the dance of the *shite* (the central protagonist in *No* drama), it is revealed that he was actually performing the function of the *waki* (the second). Daiji Maruoka and Tasuo

Yoshikoshi describe the functions of these two figures in their book, simply titled *No*. “The role of the *waki* is merely for the purpose of calling the *shite* to the stage, to question him, and to provide the incentive for him to dance (108). Iemon’s dance then, is to perform both roles in simultaneity. While his face is unmasked, he wears an elaborate robe and wig and performs a fan dance and his face is held immobile. Such costuming and performance suggests it is the dance of the *shite*. However, if the film were to be read as conforming to the conventions of *No*, his function is paradoxically that of the *waki* which is to preface and call on the presence of the ghost, who indeed appears in the very next sequence which is significantly the next act. Mori’s incorporation of the *No* intertext is a clever means of calling the ghost Oiwa, the *shite* or supernatural figure, to the film. The use of the 15th century *No* dramatic form and the 19th century *Kabuki* figuration of the ghost, is part of a greater project of cultural reclamation and demands of its post-war audience, understanding of the conventions of these long forbidden dramatic forms.

The 1959 Nakagawa Nobuo version continues with this project of cultural re-appropriation. The film opens with a brief date stamp and production house insignia but the audio track plays the sound of sticks being hit together. The sound is derived from *Kabuki* theatre, a sound which traditionally is used to call the audience to the auditorium, signalling the imminent commencement of the play (similar to a trumpet fanfare signalling the start of a Shakespearean play). The film then cuts to a *Kabuki* stage’s curtain, which is drawn back by a man dressed in black. The extra-diegetic opening titles are played over shots of a *Kabuki* stage on which a lone man dressed in black dances with a candle mounted on a long pole. The candle on the pole signifies in *Kabuki*, the presence of a ghost. As the credits finish playing, the film then fades out from this *Kabuki* stage and fades to a lake shot at night. The camera pans over

the lake, to reveal a short road being travelled by three men. The film then enters into the diegetic world of the story. The opening shots of the *Kabuki* stage are proven to be entirely outside of the filmic diegesis, and are solely a framing device. The *Kabuki* intertext becomes a means of explicitly announcing the film's theatrical antecedent, but also graphically aligns this contemporary film with a traditional, high art cultural artefact. The film becomes enunciatory of its allegiance to a historical and cultural past, and in a manner that is similar to the 1956 film's incorporation of *No* theatre, the film borrows the high art associations of this theatre form in order to present itself as similarly imbued with traditional Japanese culture.

The 1966 Toyoda Shiro film plays its opening credits over a series of highly stylized *ukiyo-e* paintings. The *ukiyo-e*, or literally 'pictures of the floating world' were brightly coloured, painted 19th century woodcut prints that usually depicted the bohemian quarters of the *Kabuki* actors. The prints would frequently depict an actor in full costume performing known roles such as a ghost, demon or warrior. The *ukiyo-e* then frequently depicted two things in simultaneity – the performance of known actors in famous roles but were also a further stylized abstraction of images of the supernatural realm. The woodcuts used to underscore the opening credits of the Toyoda version of the *Yotsuya Kaidan* tale depict images of the *onryo*, probably Oiwa herself, as she haunts a samurai with her ghostly spectre. Once again, this fetishistic usage of cultural icons acts as a signifier for a reclamation of a lost cultural past, of lost identity and a borrowing of cultural authenticity. In all three filmed adaptations, these elements of peripheral Japanese culture become *Japanesque*.

The three films' most significant departure from one another is in the presentation of the villain Tamiya Iemon. The films are each deeply concerned with Iemon's subjectivity, providing his state of mind throughout the tale. The 1956 film

version introduces a character named Maki, who in the original play is the maid to Oume but in this version is Iemon's mother. It is Maki who initially introduces Iemon to Oume and acts as matchmaker, goading Iemon into dating the woman in order to earn Ito's favour. Iemon regularly questions the rightness of dating Oume, in the light of his marriage to Oiwa. Maki informs Iemon that to succeed in this world one must be a rascal. In a flashback it is revealed that Samon had forbade Iemon from marrying his daughter Oiwa. Samon insists that because Iemon is the son of an itinerant farmer and a village headman's daughter, he shall not marry the daughter of a samurai. Maki had lied to Iemon about his paternity, telling him he was the son of a samurai when he was in fact a farmer's child. It is Maki as well who provides Iemon with the poison to kill Oiwa, and demands that Iemon do so. While the film does not exonerate Iemon, for he does indeed kill several people including his wife, it is Maki who ultimately espouses the selfish language which prompts Iemon to action. Iemon continually questions the rightness of his mother's aspirations. Emphasis then is placed on the older generation (Maki and Samon) who both create and reinforce the feudal system's strictures of caste which Iemon poorly negotiates. While Iemon engineers his own downfall, he is still presented as a victim of a flawed stratified society which he is incapable of navigating.

Nakagawa's 1959 adaptation provides the least introspective version of Iemon. The film presents a changing world, in which the samurai are no longer of particular use. The film is set in the late *Tokugawa* Period, after a long period of stability. Tokugawa Ieyasu had unified Japan at the turn of the seventeenth century, and so by the late *Tokugawa* Period samurai were not needed as warriors and military generals. Samurai had become dependent on their lords and benefactors and their status was dependent upon borrowing that of their superiors. With the death of

the head of Iemon's Enya clan leader, Iemon becomes a pauper. He is forced to become an umbrella maker in order to eke out a living. The film devotes much attention to Iemon and Oiwa's dissatisfaction with their fallen status and Iemon's social climbing is presented as a necessity in a rapidly changing society. Iemon is paired with Naosuke who performs a similar function to Maki from the prior film, goading Iemon into performing his evil deeds and aiding Iemon in the disposal of the bodies. Unlike the 1956 version of Iemon, the later Iemon rarely questions the rightness of his actions. Rather, he is a cold and calculating opportunist who justifies his villainy through the necessities of surviving in a changing world. Iemon becomes a social climber who creates allegiances that best allow for him wealth and privilege.

It is the 1966 film version that creates the most interest in Iemon's social standing and most focuses on the changing world of the *Tokugawa* Period. The film examines the context of a society transforming from one in which privilege had been provided by caste, to a society in which money and power come through self interest and atomized individualism. The film opens with a fine sword being appraised by a dealer who offers Iemon money for the weapon. A third person explains that a sword is the spirit of a samurai and Iemon decides against selling the cultural artefact. The context is immediately established in this opening scene; Iemon is shown to be destitute and desperate, on the verge of sacrificing his very identity as samurai in order to provide for himself in a capital based economy.

Iemon, as a samurai, demands that society respect him for the status that his bloodline and membership of that class accord. Because his benefactor, the head of the Enya clan had fallen into madness and then committed suicide, Iemon is no longer provided with funds. The Edo setting, a time of peace and political stability prevents Iemon from working as a military figure and so he is forced into a

mercantile economy where he makes umbrellas. Unskilled in a capitalist economy, Iemon finds himself unable to survive in this changing social world. Furthermore his father in law Samon has called home his daughter, Iemon's wife Oiwa. Iemon questions why Samon has prevented Iemon from continuing life with his wife, considering they are both of the same clan and Samon explains that he is aware that Iemon had stolen money from their dead lord. Iemon explains to Samon that he had known that with the rising madness of their lord, they would have all been left to their own devices. Iemon excuses the theft of the money (money which was quickly spent) as a means of attempting to secure his future welfare in the absence of a benefactor. Samon insists that disloyalty is a worse fate than poverty and it is because of Iemon's lack of filial piety that Samon had called Oiwa home. Samon has also been left destitute with the death of their lord but rather than allow his daughter to remain with the disgraced Iemon, Samon pressures Oiwa to enter into prostitution with her sister Osode. Iemon then kills Samon in order to rescue his wife from a life of prostitution, return her to his homestead and prevent Samon from informing others of Iemon's past infidelities.

In these opening scenes, Iemon is very quickly shown to be ill equipped to survive in this capital based economy. Iemon is contrasted with his lower caste clan member Naosuke. Naosuke, in this adaptation, is a vendor of medicines and is proven to be financially successful. Despite being of a lower caste than Iemon, Iemon is reliant on borrowing money from Naosuke. It is his money that allows and justifies Naosuke's desire to wed Osode. Naosuke, a natural born narcissist and social climber, has the resourcefulness to negotiate a mercantile society. Unhindered by Iemon's pride in social standing which prevents the samurai from fully entering an entrepreneurial world, Naosuke has managed to create a comfortable living

outside of Iemon's economy of benefactorial dependency. What Naosuke lacks is social standing in a stratified class based society. Being of a lower caste, he must rely on guile and manipulation in order to entrap Osode into a marriage with him. While these personality traits allow for Naosuke to be successful in business, they prove his undoing in the world of social relating.

Iemon, using his martial skill, rescues the Lord Ito from a group of thugs and Ito finds himself indebted to the samurai. Ito's daughter Oume takes a fancy to Iemon, and although he is married, she conspires to win his heart. It is Oume who decides on using poison to disfigure Oiwa and the poison is revealed to be an ancient Ito family recipe. Ito explains to Iemon that Oume is a wilful and ruthless girl who will always endeavour to have the object of her desire. Ito too becomes culpable in this plot for, ever indulgent of his daughters desires, he provides money for Iemon. But Ito is proven to be materialistic too, demanding a large dowry from Iemon before being willing to write Iemon a recommendation to his own lord and provide for the samurai a new benefactor.

Even Oume's maidservant Maki is proven to be a social climber. She approaches Iemon after the death of her own lord and benefactor, with Ito's written recommendation for Iemon's promotion. She provides this recommendation to Iemon with the proviso that he marry her, thereby securing her own future status. In Toyoda's crafted world, everyone becomes a social climber in a precarious world where caste no longer becomes a guarantee of fiscal security. Iemon's sole quest in life is to find a lord where he can continue to live as a samurai but this is a changing time and samurai are not valued for that status alone. He has a dream sequence which becomes revelatory. His wives Oiwa and Oume are both by this point dead by his hand, and in his increasing madness he dreams of a lost tranquil life. In his

dream, his young wife Oiwa is at their homestead. The home is modest but clean but Iemon must leave it for he still has not found his position in society. The sequence is touched by sadness, for it is revealed that he had genuinely loved Oiwa but in the context of the contemporary society, love was not enough to provide for him a happy life. Iemon simply could not tolerate life as a poor merchant, making and selling umbrellas. The film, released in 1966, on the cusp of Japan's major movement into global geopolitics spans two contexts, the post-war *shutaisei* period and the dawning globalization movement. The film story's context of a changing world in which disposable capital was intrinsically tied to happiness and success reflects the film production's context of a society's trepidatious entry into a network of global economic interdependencies. Iemon's struggle reflects those inherent in a feudal economy of benefactor favour in exchange for filial piety, but he is anachronistic and doomed to fail in a world headed toward economic competition and atomized individualism.

The filmed adaptations of *Tokaido Yotsuya Kaidan* were all based on the same narrative elements, going so far as to reproduce entire scenes derived from the *Kabuki* stage. The films' deployment of *Kabuki*, *No*, and *Ukiyo-e* intertexts reveals nostalgia for a cultural past. But the films' various treatments of narrative elements, particularly the treatment of the characters Oiwa and Iemon, reveal the indelible impact of the *shutaisei* or subjectivity debates. The films' various presentations of Iemon's demise reflect criticism of the narcissistic atomized individualism entailed by society's emphasis on the individual. Such individualism could potentially result when community is forgotten. Iemon struggles with his Japaneseness, aspiring to maintain what is proven to be anachronistic values in a capital driven world. And yet it is his sense of self and self importance that proves his final undoing. The films

leave the viewer questioning what it is to be moral in a climate of changing ideologies.

Ghosts, Demons, Snake Women and Cat People: Intertextuality and Pastiche in the Post Occupation era

The post occupation period was filled with ghostly tales, and the *onryo* made a major resurgence. As the society worked to uncover elements of its cultural past, the *onryo* appeared in countless tales, often becoming *Japanesque* and expressing film's Japaneseness by virtue of her connection to that cultural past. Not only a figure of high art with literary aspirations, the *onryo* appeared in popular film, low budget horror and B movies alike. In the post occupation era, the *onryo*, after many long years of suppression, exploded into the popular imagination.

Mizoguchi Kenji's *Ugetsu Monogatari (Tales of Moonlight and Rain)* (1954) is set in a turbulent period of civil war at the end of the 16th century. The film details the life of Genjiro, his brother Tobei, and their wives Miyagi and Ohama. Genjiro is a peasant farmer who also makes pottery. One day he sells several pieces for a large sum, and subsequently decides to devote his energies to producing such work. He enlists the aid of his wife Miyagi and his brother Tobei who desperately wishes to become a samurai warrior. The country is in the midst of a civil war and when the war reaches Genjiro's door he and his family are forced to flee their village. The two men and their wives pack up Genjiro's latest batch of pottery with the intention of selling it in a neighbouring town. They decide to travel by river, where they are informed that bandits are lurking and robbing passing merchants. Genjiro sends his wife back to the relative safety of their village and promises to return after he has made some money selling his wares. The three remaining entrepreneurs reach their destination and immediately begin to successfully sell their product. Tobei uses his

money to buy himself armour and a spear and deserts his wife in order to join the army. Genjiro is approached by a noblewoman looking to buy some of his pottery, who asks him if he is able to deliver the goods. While the two husbands are preoccupied with their private pursuits, Miyagi, Genjiro's wife is stabbed by a group of desperate soldiers searching for food, and Tobei's wife Ohama is raped by a similar group of savage soldiers.

Genjiro is invited into Lady Wakasa's mansion, where she woos him with lavish gifts and her opulent lifestyle. Tobei steals a dead general's severed head and earns himself a high samurai rank, including a stipend, a horse and vassals. Tobei's wife in the meantime has become a prostitute. The two are reunited when Tobei brings his men to Ohama's brothel and he is shocked to discover his wife's fate. Genjiro eventually discovers his mistress' ghostly nature and discovers himself to have been living in a castle's ruins. The film ends with the three surviving figures returning to their humble villages where Genjiro discovers his wife and child waiting for him with a hot meal on the stove. Genjiro wakes the following morning to realize that he is alone and he learns his wife had been dead for a month and that the village headman had been providing shelter for Genjiro's son.

Mizoguchi's film has a conflicted attitude to the past, presenting both 'real' and 'fantasized' elements of Japanese past. The passages that are ostensibly real depict a brutal and punishing society where soldiers are violent, animalistic and uncontrollable in their destructive desires. The farmers are poor and regularly abused by the nihilistic soldiers who steal from them. Miyagi and Ohama find themselves victim to extremely violent attacks and in one scene all the single men of the village are rounded up to work as forced labourers for the soldiers. The film is unambiguous in its depiction of war as a violent time that at best results in poverty

and hardship, and at its worst strips people of their very humanity, presenting the soldiers as savage and animalistic. Even the film's protagonists are not immune to the corrupting influences of war and the two men show callous disregard for their wives' wellbeing when otherwise preoccupied in their various pursuits of money and war. But the film also depicts a fantasized Japan, filled with culture and hope and it is in fantasy that the film finds solace for its characters. Initially Genjiro and Tobei (and to a lesser extent their wives) fantasize about money, which impels them to work at a fever pitch to create a large batch of pottery. Money, for the two peasant farmers, provides opportunity to transcend their humble lives. As soon as Tobei has a little money, he abandons his brother and wife in order to pursue his dreams of becoming a soldier.

Genjiro, conversely, has his fantasies stoked by the Lady Wakasa, a noblewoman who comes to purchase his wares. He states to her that he is honoured that such a lady would deign to purchase his goods. On his way to deliver his products, he stops at a kimono shop to gaze at some lovely silk robes. He had earlier purchased his wife a modest kimono with his first earnings, and he stares wistfully at the lavish cloth. He asks how much the kimono are and the merchant states that they are for a lady of much higher standing than his wife could possibly be, to which Genjiro states 'I have money.' His revelries are interrupted by the Lady Wakasa's maidservant who suggests that perhaps he needs direction to the Wakasa house. It is in the context of his fantasizing of his future wealth, prosperity and acculturation into genteel society and its attendant artefacts, that he meets the Lady Wakasa. The noblewoman shall be marked as directly relating to Genjiro's fantastic vision of cultural Japan from this moment onward.

Genjiro is led by Lady Wakasa and her attendant to what at first sight appears to be a modest house in slight disrepair. Grasses have become overgrown and the house appears quite dark. As he is led deeper into the domicile, the camera reveals increasingly opulent splendour and as candles are lit it is discovered that the Wakasa house is very grand. Critic Tadao Sato describes this sequence. “The Kutsuki mansion where she appears has a room at the end of a long corridor, and the view from the garden looks just like a *No* stage. That corridor in the *No* often becomes a mysterious passageway between this world and the other world, and it does in this movie too” (Sato in McDonald, 1984: 163). As Wakasa and Genjiro walk deeper into the house the two leave the world of reality and wander further into a fantasy world, a fantasized tranquil past divorced from the violence and chaos found in the farmer’s home village.

The lady of the house offers Genjiro refreshment, which he accepts. He is astonished to discover her serving food and sake in his own earthenware receptacles. She praises him for his artistry and indeed his pottery looks very fine, much more delicate in fact than it had appeared when he had been making it. She strokes his ego and he responds suitably by stating that he treats ‘each piece as one of my children.’ This seems a far cry from his producing the work, which was at a breakneck speed in order to sell the work as quickly as possible. Lady Wakasa comes to represent Genjiro’s fantasies, even calling him a master craftsman. In truth he is a farmer who makes pottery as a means of making more money. He produces the work quickly in order to sell it quickly. This does not strike as the actions of a master craftsman but rather a man who treats his work as a commodity. As Genjiro begins to see his own work as rich in culture, he begins to discover Wakasa’s world as being similarly rich in culture. This is significant because it solidifies Mizoguchi’s break in the film. He

constructs two worlds – a historic Japan which is brutal and violent, and a fantasized Japan which is rich in cultural heritage. The two are related but cannot exist in simultaneity. In the film's world, the two become mutually exclusive.

The film dissolves to the next scene, and Lady Wakasa is shown in long shot in a sparse room. To her right, her maidservant sits on the floor with a *shamisen* on her lap. Genjiro is also seated, facing the woman. The soundtrack plays the soft tones of the *shamisen*, and Lady Wakasa begins a slow dance with a fan. The sequence is shot predominantly in long shots and long takes, allowing for Lady Wakasa's full body to be shown onscreen with deep space and the background in deep focus. Lady Wakasa is dressed in expensive silk kimono, evocative of the type which Genjiro was earlier unable to buy. She dances slowly, in a typical Geisha style but her make up is particularly striking. Her face is whitened, but rather than the orthodox Geisha make up, her face is painted white with brightly rouged lips, her long hair tied loosely at the back and her eyebrows shaved. High on her forehead are highly stylized painted eyebrows. Her face becomes evocative of the *wakaonna* or young woman mask of the *No* theatre.⁴ While she dances, bleeding into the soundtrack is the sound of a bamboo flute and a drum beating steady rhythm. Finally a low male voice begins singing. The music has by this time been overlaid with music of the *No* theatre, supplanting the *shamisen* music being played by Lady Wakasa's maid. In the diegesis Lady Wakasa asks Genjiro if he can hear that music. She informs him that it is the ghostly sound of her late father who always begins to sing whenever the Lady dances.

What is significant of this sequence is that Mizoguchi transforms Wakasa's conventional courtesan dance to a self reflexive moment of *No*. The film, like

⁴ See appendix, fig 5 and 6

Masaki Mori's *Tokaido Yotsuya Kaidan*, becomes an intertext for that particular theatre style. Lady Wakasa's dance becomes the dance of the *waki*, calling out the ghostly *shite* (in this case her father), but she also functions as the *shite*, dancing in her disguised form and signalling to an audience conversant with *No* that she who is dancing in the first act, will by the third act reveal herself to be a ghost.

Mizoguchi presents Lady Wakasa's mansion as a fantasy realm and his cinematic techniques diminish both space and time, enforcing the idea that her lived space is a nebulous realm divorced from conventional understandings of the operations of space and time. In one particular scene Genjiro is bathing in an *onsen* or hot spring and playing love games with Lady Wakasa. Mizoguchi's camera, in a single flowing crane shot, tracks screen left leaving the two lovers in their play. The camera pans over a *Zen* garden made of raked sand and then a slow dissolve over the image of sand lapses into a shot of dry grassland. The match on colour and texture of the sand and grass blur the two shots into a single continuous moving image. The camera's dissolve onto the grassland, tracking at a consistent rate and movement from the prior shot further disorients the viewer. The camera continues moving until ending on a shot of Genjiro and Lady Wakasa having a picnic and sitting on a mat of a similar size to the square hot spring of the prior scene. The framing of the picnic matches the framing of the prior *onsen* scene and the repetition of composition further aids in conflating the two scenes into a single gestalt of Genjiro's relaxed pleasure. The effect of this transition is to compress time and space into a single nebulous freeform 'thoughtspace.' Mizoguchi's editing and composition construct Genjiro's time with Lady Wakasa in a manner reflective of the nebulous natures of thought, memory and fantasy, which is separate and distinct from the brutal violence, poverty and warfare experienced by Miyagi, Tobei and Ohama.

Genjiro has now been living with Lady Wakasa for perhaps a month and he presently has become accustomed to leading a life of luxury.⁵ He even states “I never imagined such pleasure existed.” Ironically this life has been proven to be imagined fantasy and such fantasy must ultimately come to an end. Genjiro eventually leaves the Wakasa mansion on an errand to purchase sundry goods for his new love. There he buys some jewellery and two kimono. He discovers that he is a little short of money and tells the vendor to come to the Wakasa mansion where he will pay him the rest of the money. The vendor, in fear, informs Genjiro that he will not take his money and to just take the goods and leave. As the puzzled Genjiro walks home he passes a Buddhist monk who informs the potter that he has a deathly pallor. He reveals to Genjiro that the Lady Wakasa is a ghost and in order to protect him, paints Buddhist sutras on Genjiro’s body. Genjiro returns to the mansion to present Lady Wakasa with her gifts, one of them being the same silk kimono that he had longed to purchase for his wife Miyagi. Lady Wakasa moves to embrace her lover but is burned by the holy words painted on his body. Genjiro tells his new love that he is in actuality married and the father of a young child, and that he wishes to return home. Wakasa becomes outraged and informs Genjiro that because she had died never knowing true love, she died a restless spirit unable to find repose until she finally discovers that love. She informs Genjiro that he had been that love. Genjiro flees from the house in terror and wakes hours later in an empty field where he learns that Lady Wakasa had perished with her clan years before.

⁵ With Mizoguchi’s play in editing, time has become meaningless. Time can only be measured through Genjiro’s storyline’s relativity to the other stories in the film. The time Genjiro spends with Lady Wakasa can only be measured after the fact, when the township magistrate informs Genjiro that the sword he carries had been stolen a month before. The space of a month is corroborated when the village headman tells Genjiro that he had been looking after Genjiro’s son Genichi for a month.

Genjiro, finally returns to his house and walks into the empty hovel. It is abandoned and in slight ruins, damaged by the war. He walks through the house calling to his wife and walks around to the back. Re-entering the main room he discovers his wife sitting by a now lit fireplace cooking a stew. She tells him his son is sleeping and that he should rest now that he is finally home. Genjiro wakes the following morning to learn that his wife had died a month earlier, on her way back to the house and that the village headman had been caring for the child. Once again the woman represents Genjiro's fantasy, this time a fantasy of an imagined tranquil homelife. That fantasy too is proven to be false.

Mizoguchi is reluctant to leave the film without hope. It is only in the film's resolution that the characters can find peace but are also able to tangibly build a positive future. The war is over and the farmers can now go about rediscovering a new life. The two families live in harmony as one extended family, with what appears to be an equal division of labour. While Tobei is ploughing a furrow in a field, Ohama feeds the child and Genjiro works on a new set of pots. These pots are crafted in a very different manner from his prior work. Rather than a mad rush to produce his wares to turn a quick profit, he has truly become a craftsman, taking pride in his work and taking genuine care in his product. This is only possible with Tobei's help with the farm work, thereby freeing Genjiro to devote his time to his craft. He has indeed become the master craftsman that he had imagined himself to be. On the audio track the off-screen voice of Miyagi states "Your delusion has come to an end. You are again your true self, in the place where you belong." The war is over and the society can, in this period of peace time, begin to rebuild. But it is only in the peaceful post-war society that Genjiro, Tobei and Miyagi can be 'their true selves.' Further, it is only in the post-war peace time that Genjiro can truly

discover his artistry and fully articulate the culture that he had so long desired. The film's resolution then finally provides a place for rediscovery of Japanese culture, but that only comes when the distractions of personal gain, material wealth and warfare have been settled. The film, in its post-war context becomes a message of hope for the rediscovery of Japanese cultural past. In the film's conclusion, Mizoguchi suggests it is indeed possible to reclaim a knowledge of and access to a Japanese cultural past in the post-war era.

Mizoguchi fills his film with moments of intertextuality, incorporating cultural artefacts in multiple ways. The film opens with a shot of carved wooden panels, depicting tranquil scenes of a fantasized Japanese idyll. The film's usage of pottery lovingly depicts every stage of the crafting of the Japonica. The film is filled with images of Japanese cultural heritage, fetishizing fans, kimono and silks. It depicts landscapes and even incorporates samurai culture through the use of armouries displaying warfare artefacts. The film is a veritable library of Japanese history and culture but with ambivalence to the past, that past being torn between violence and fantasy. Mizoguchi's resolution comes in the film's explicit acknowledgement that culture in the post-war period can be revitalized, but only within peacetime. In the post-war/post occupation period, the nation had finally the time and the disposable income to engage in such cultural pursuits. Mizoguchi's film ends with a sense of hope for the nation's rebuilding and its incorporation of multiple intertexts is a means of providing for the nation elements of its culture waiting to be rediscovered. Mizoguchi seems to say to his audience, 'you are again your true self, in the place where you belong.'

Mizoguchi's *Ugetsu* was a loose adaptation of two short stories taken from Akinari Ueda's compilation of tales *Ugetsu Monogatari*. The Lady Wakasa portion

of the story is derived from the tale “The Lust of the White Serpent” which had earlier been adapted by script writer Tanizaki Jun’ichiro into the 1921 film *Jasei No In (Lair of the White Serpent)*. Akinari based his tale on an ancient Chinese legend about a viper that wishes to be a god and can take the form of a woman. The Chinese legend was adapted into a film as a Japan/Hong Kong co-production, directed by Toyoda Shiro and starring Shirley Yamaguchi and Ikebe Ryo and financed by the Shaw Brothers and Toho studios. The story is set in China, and details a love affair between the serpent Lady White and a young scholar named Kyosen (or Xu Xian, depending on the version released). Mizoguchi’s film removes the snake element from the tale, and transforms Lady White into Lady Wakasa. The Toyoda Shiro *Madam Whitesnake* (1958) version is more faithful to the Chinese legend, but continues to present the snake in a filmic manner analogous to the *onryo*, venting her desires for vengeance when Kyosen finally refuses her love and seeks shelter in a Buddhist temple. Madame White, in her anger, causes the ocean to flood the temple, killing hundreds with her insatiable rage. This is one of the few versions of the *onryo* tale produced in the immediate post occupation era, in which the ghost’s vengeance is directed at all of patriarchy. Madame White is proven to be monstrous in her desires to exact vengeance.

The post occupation era was filled with lavish productions of ghostly spirits evoking an imagined opulent past. Kobayashi Masaki’s *Kwaidan* (1964), a spectacular production which recounts four tales from Lafcadio Hearn’s massively popular collections of ghostly stories, involves two manifestations of the vengeful woman. The brilliant colour production presents itself as a high art film and indeed was the most expensive Japanese production to date. The film mixes high art values with folk culture, elevating the folk art to a symbol of the nation’s rich cultural

heritage. The film, by marrying *Kabuki*, *No* and folktales into a gestalt of Japanese high art, canonizes folk culture into the pantheon of Japanese artistry. The film is predominantly concerned with its visual construction and the film relies heavily on painterly and theatrical techniques.

The first story is entitled 'Black Haired Ghost' and tells the story of a samurai who leaves his wife in order to find wealth and prosperity. He marries into wealth, but discovering that money does not compare to the love he once had, eventually returns to his humble first wife. They meet again and consummate their rediscovered love for each other. Upon waking, the samurai discovers the mummified remains of his former love, but with still vibrant, lustrous black hair. The samurai becomes mad at the prospect of nocturnal ghostly conurbations and flees the bed chamber in terror. The visualization of the man's increasing madness is to utilize the imagery from both *Kabuki* and *ukiyo-e*. The film subverts the prior convention of depicting the ghost with these stylized contrivances, and instead uses the *Kabuki* images to depict the corporeal manifestation of the man's poisoned psyche. With each subsequent cut, the husband is constructed in increasingly stylized makeup and lighting, presenting his face as increasingly demonic. The sequence ends with his blustering through the decrepit mansion, only to find a drinking well where he catches sight of his transformed physiognomy. The final image is of an *oni* or demon, with a pale white face and the face contorted (with the aid of prosthetic makeup) into an expression of monstrous madness.

The second tale is entitled 'Yuki-onna' or 'Snow woman.' The passage is shot entirely within studio soundstages and using cyclorama lighting to create surreal manufactured environments. This is particularly ironic, as the setting is the natural wilderness of Japan's snow country, abstracted by the non-naturalist sets. The look

of the tale is predicated by its mythological origins and as the mythic story emphasizes the supernatural, the imaging is similarly hypernatural. A woodcutter and his young apprentice are trapped in a severe snow storm. They find shelter in a small abandoned hut. In the middle of the night, the younger man wakes to discover a strange snow demon over the body of his older mentor. The demon, seeing the young man, spares him his life on the condition that he tell no-one of what he had seen. The young man agrees to these terms and is free to leave. A year has passed and he has resumed his life. He meets a young woman and they start a family. Several years later, he catches a glance of his wife in a peculiar light. He tells her that she reminds him of an experience he once had. He tells his wife of the snow demon and the wife's expression suddenly turns cold. The lighting turns blue and she informs him that she in fact is that very snow demon. He had broken his promise to her and she would kill him but for their three sleeping children who need their father. She then returns to the snow filled countryside. The imagery is particularly striking, with the stylized painted sets with expressive lighting. What is also striking is the construction of the snow demon. This is a figure from *Shinto* folkloric belief, but the costuming and make up of this figure is to present her as the *No* stage's *wakka-onna*, with the theatre figure's white painted mask visually connecting the snow demon with her pristine natural environment. What is peculiar is the conflating the high art stage imagery with the populist folkloric figure. But the evocation of the highly stylized *No* theatre form parallels the consistency of the high stylization of the story's presentation of the natural environment. The *wakka-onna* becomes a further means of de-naturalizing the mythic snow demon, but also becomes a means of elevating folk and populist arts to shared high status with *No* theatre by their shared

‘Japaneseness’. The film argues that folk and popular Japanese culture can be elevated to high art status and should be celebrated accordingly.

The films of the post occupation era were filled with ghostly spirits seeking revenge but inevitably with repetition the imagery and iconography of these demons eventually became convention in themselves and the image of the *onryo* became detached from its theatrical antecedents. While in the early post occupation era, the feudal setting often became an excuse to showcase elements of Japanese culture and history, fusing folklore and folk art with high art and culture, the later films became divorced from such referentiality. While Mizoguchi Kenji’s *Ugetsu Monogatari* and Kobayashi Masaki’s *Kwaidan* were considered internationally as filmed art, populist film too displayed such demonic figures. These figures became simulacra, and through repetition the metadiscourse of cultural rediscovery was buried. The ghosts had made a transformation, no longer reflecting lost culture but becoming embedded into the contemporary popular culture lexicon. The *onryo* was finally transformed from representing lost culture in need of being rediscovered, to a figure of living contemporary Japanese film culture.

As well as ghosts, spirits and snake women, the vengeance seeking woman archetype also managed to filter into demon tales. Shindo Kaneto’s *Onibaba* was a film that became an international success. The story involves two women, a mother and stepdaughter who must toil during the civil war of the 16th century. The younger woman’s husband had been drafted to fight in the war, leaving the two women to fend for themselves. The two women murder passing soldiers in order to sell their weapons and eke out a living. Their closed autonomy becomes disturbed by the return of a neighbour, an animalistic man who arouses in the young woman a sexual curiosity that had, with the absence of her husband, been long since forgotten. The

neighbour presents a threat to the older woman who relies on her stepdaughter for her own security. The woman steals from a passing warlord his faceplate, a carved mask that represents a devil. Late at night, donning the mask, the old woman terrifies the girl, preventing the young woman from her nocturnal visits to the barbarian neighbour. Shindo's film is savvy in his usage of the mask. While in the film, the mask is a faceplate piece of armour, the mask is in fact a *hannya* devil mask from the *No* theatre. The mother dons the mask, playing the character of an *oni* (goblin), thereby terrifying the young girl. While in the film, the mother evokes the *No*, in the story, the mother is only able to control the young girl through the young girl's ignorance and lack of awareness of Japanese culture. It is because the girl cannot differentiate theatre and art from her daily life, that she is incapable of seeing the mother's actions as performance. The film contains metadiscourse about the dangers of losing touch with Japanese traditional culture. The film is a success precisely because of the director's knowledge of the demon iconography's relationship to a cultural past, and the film in fact becomes critical of Shindo's contemporaries who become unconcerned about their film ghosts and demons' connection to their cultural antecedents.

The film contains a final bitter irony. The mask of the *hannya* becomes fused onto the face of the old woman. The daughter returns to the hut to discover the demon crouched in the corner, but the mother demands the daughter stop and listen. She explains that it was she who had been wearing the mask to scare the daughter, but in the rain the wood has attached itself to her face. She enlists the daughter's aid in tearing the mask off, but the fusion is tight. The daughter grabs a mallet and begins to try to crack the mask off. The mask falls away to reveal the mother's face is blistered and scarred. The mother has become monstrous in her actions and her

own monstrosity has become etched onto her face. But also the artefact of culture, when used inappropriately, has turned toxic leaving a painful scar on those who misuse it. Shindo's message becomes one of responsibility, history and culture are powerful tools when used correctly, but when treated without due respect, become corrupted and disfiguring.

While some filmmakers, such as Shindo Kaneto, made clever use of these film conventions with his usage of the *hannya* demon *No* mask in his *Onibaba* (1964) parodying the peasant women's lack of cultural familiarity with such artefacts, most filmmakers made little use of these iconographies' relationships to their cultural origins. The films of the late 1950s and early 1960s were filled with ghosts and monsters taken directly from folklore and theatre culture, but the stories told had scant concern for the cultural origins of the monstrous iconographies deployed.

One such figure that became by the late 1950s and early 1960s a corrupted simulacrum of its origins was the *Bakaneko* or ghost/vampire cat. This figure has a long history in Japanese folk tales. A. B. Mitford in 1871, recounts an early story of the ghost cat in his *Tales of Old Japan*. In this tale set many years ago, the Prince of Hizen had been cursed by a giant cat. Cats in *Shinto* belief were, like foxes and badgers, trickster animals who were able to take on different forms in order to tease humans. It seems that this cat demon had killed the prince's beloved wife O Toyo and had taken her form. Each night the false O Toyo would visit the sleeping prince and drain him of his power. As the days went by, the prince was visibly weakened and his courtiers decided that something must be wrong. They set a guard in his room for the night, but as the night grew dark, all of the guards without exception found themselves struck by an irresistible sleepiness. The following night the courtiers provided a larger contingent of guards, but they too, every man found

themselves unable to stay awake throughout the night. This kept occurring nightly, until the prince's guard had reached a hundred men. But a hundred men unable to stay awake overnight alarmed the court. Eventually a young soldier named Ito Soda offered his services and he was included as one of the guards. He laid out an oilcloth and a knife and set himself down for the night. As the drowsiness hit him, he stabbed himself in the leg, turning the knife until the pain abated his sleepiness. Again he found himself irresistibly falling to slumber and again he ground the blade into his wound. Presently the prince's wife O Toyo entered the room and questioned the soldier's presence. The soldier informed her that he had kept himself awake through pain. Prevented from her nocturnal games O Toyo left the room. The following morning, the prince's health had greatly improved. This occurred on the following three nights and the prince was soon restored to perfect health. It was decided by all that O Toyo must be the cause of the prince's sickness. O Toyo, being nightly disturbed in her mischief began to stay away from the prince. With her staying away, the guards were no longer afflicted with the drowsiness and the prince grew healthy. Ito decided that O Toyo must indeed be a form of demon. He went to her chambers to kill her, where he discovered she to be a cat. Attacking her with his knife, she leapt out of the window and ran into the mountains.

The cat demon became a popular figure throughout Japanese film culture, appearing even in the silent era, in such films as *Yajikita Okazaki Neko Taiji*, (*Yaji and Kita, Cat Fuss*) (1937), a comedy horror film where a comic duo encounter the demon cat, along the lines of *Abbot and Costello meet Dracula*. The story comes from an early novel *Tokaido Hizakurige* that had been serialized between 1802-1809 by Jippensha Ikku. The novel is a picaresque that involves two travellers, Yajirobei and Kitahachi who have a series of adventures. In one of their many adventures, the

two men are haunted by a cat monster that seeks revenge for a wrongful death. The cat demon can change shape and disappear and reappear at will. This particular passage of the story had been retold as both *Kabuki* drama and film countless times but is more known as a comic piece than as a horror.

By the films of the 1950s, the cat demon had become a further manifestation of the vengeance seeking woman, conflating two different folkloric archetypes and melding them into one. This is seen in the films *Borei Kaibyoyashiki (Ghostcat Mansion)* (1958) by Nakagawa Nobuo and *Kaiby Otama Ga Ike (Ghost Cat of Otama)* (1960) by Ishikawa Yoshihiro, in which the ghost cats literally become the means of manifesting a wronged woman's desires for vengeance. The latter film becomes totally unconcerned with following its own narrative logic, so immersed into what had by this time become the conventions of the vengeance driven ghost tale. The two films are very similar in construction, both beginning in the present. *Ghost Cat of Otama* begins with a young couple lost in the woods, who end up in a derelict house. There the young woman falls ill after seeing the spectre of an old woman. *Ghostcat Mansion* similarly begins with a young man who has bought an old mansion for his sister to recuperate from an unnamed illness. There she sees the spectre of an old woman who also places the young woman under a curse. In both tales, the couple visit a Buddhist temple in which an old monk tells them a story from a century earlier. The two tales both involve a haughty magistrate who for little reason causes the death of a family. In both stories the families own a cat named O Tama which licks the blood of the deceased and then becomes possessed by the family's desire for vengeance. The stories, however, seem to create two different types of demon. While the ghost cat takes the form of the grandmother, and presides over the following retribution, the spirits of the wronged victims also return to haunt

the films' villains. *Ghostcat Mansion* is particularly problematic because the story seems driven, not by internal logic, but rather by what has now become the conventions of the vengeance driven ghost narrative. A young man who is a *Go* master is invited by the town magistrate Lord Shogen, to play and possibly instruct in the skills of the game.⁶ Shogen is proven to be a short tempered man who is angered by losing the game. The young gamesman is proven to be equally haughty and swords are drawn, resulting in the gamesman being killed. The magistrate then spreads word that the *Go* master had in fact lost the game, and so shamed by the loss had fled to Kyoto in order to pursue further studies. The young master's blind mother Lady Miyaji, who had been visited by the spirit of her son (how she saw the spirit is beyond me and also evidently beyond Nakagawa too) visits the magistrate to contest his story. Shogen rapes the mother, and so angered by his actions, she commits suicide while commanding her cat to lick her blood thus freeing her to return as a vengeful spirit. The ghost of Lady Miyaji visits Shogen's mother and kills her. The cat demon transforms into Shogen's mother, and begins haunting Shogen and his family with various spectres of those that Shogen had killed. Irony is built (intentionally or not) because it is Shogen's own mother who actively pursues vengeance on behalf of the Miyaji family. The film is filled with images of ghostly spirits who haunt the villainous magistrate and while the images reflect the ghosts of the *Kabuki* stage the film does not make use of the *Kabuki* referent as had Mizoguchi, Kurosawa and the various other prior filmmakers, including Nakagawa himself who better refined the ghost in his adaptation of the *Yotsuya* ghost tale. While the initially wronged figure is the *Go* teacher Kokingo who does appear as a ghost in a few scenes, the majority of the films hauntings involve the cat demon in the body of Lord

⁶ *Go* is a game of skill, much like chess.

Shogen's mother, or ghosts of young women who had been killed by the cat demon herself thereby providing plenty of images of the *onryo*.

The *Ghost cat of Otama* similarly has a family killed by an evil magistrate. He kills a village headman for questioning the raising of taxes, and then burns the headman's house, kills his remaining family and attempts to rape the headman's daughter-in-law, an action that is only prevented by her committing suicide before he can perform his attack. This is presided over by Tama, the family's cat, who then takes the guise of various members of the headman's family in order to haunt the magistrate. The ghost cat takes the form of the headman's mother who engineers the hauntings, but the magistrate is also harassed by a series of ghostly young women. Of them are the woman he attempted to rape, a further young woman from a neighbouring village who his son loves, and young women from his own family that the ghost cat recruits in her terrible revenge.

The films' imagery relies on the conventional iconology of the vengeance seeking ghost myth, despite that iconology often being counter to the demands of the narrative. Resultantly the wronged parties rarely appear as vengeful apparitions, favouring the deployment of the young women ghosts whose imagery correspond better to the traditional iconography of the vengeance seeking narrative. These ghosts often appear with long flowing hair and pale kimono, aligning them with the ghosts of the *Kabuki* stage. Yet failing to resolve this usage of the theatre tradition, the ghost becomes an empty referent, signifying *Kabuki* but for no recognizable purpose. The imagery that had been derived from *Kabuki* theatre has by this point become incorporated into the contemporary film lexicon and becomes predominantly a referent to ghostliness rather than its initial position of being a referent to traditional theatre cultural forms. As the films began to quote other films' usage of

the *onryo*, the symbol became divorced from its original referent. Meaning inherent in the *onryo* imagery became displaced, and as the genre grew, meaning changed and the *onryo* itself became a simulacrum of its initial theatre form, connoting film culture over theatre culture. The early filmmakers' desire to incorporate traditional Japanese culture into the contemporary post-war world had (to an extent) worked, and the *onryo* along with the *No* and *Kabuki* imagery, became components of living culture, divorced from those traditional antecedents.

Shindo Kaneto, in his 1968 *Kuroneko* further refines the ghost cat demon, blending the two figures of the *onryo* and the cat demon into a single figure. The story has two women, a mother and her daughter-in-law, who were left to fend for themselves when the son was drafted into the civil war. The mother and daughter are violently raped and murdered by a group of former soldiers, who then burn down the hut. The charred bodies are licked by a pair of black cats and the two women return as cat demons. Shindo has blended the iconographies of the vengeance-seeking woman with the cat demons, and the women maintain vestiges of the *Kabuki* and *No* iconographies. The cat demons, while belonging to folk tradition, are dressed in flowing white robes and the faces of the demons are painted white with the stylized features of the *wakka-onna* mask of the *No*. Shindo, however, plays with these features and adds a definite catlike quality with sharpened fangs and slightly pointed ears.⁷ In one scene the young woman/demon performs an elegant *No* dance for one of her victims before collapsing upon him in a grotesque frenzy of violence. Shindo's message is clear, through pastiche; the use of culture has literally devoured itself. As the mask had become, in his earlier film *Onibaba*, a toxic, destructive thing the *No* dance has similarly been turned into a spectacle of violence. Shindo in

⁷ See Appendix fig. 7

his films argues that traditional culture in contemporary films has become a gross spectacle, and through repetition and reinforcement has been increasingly divorced from its cultural origins and is resultantly devastating in its current incarnation. The culture has become cannibalistic; consuming reproduced and copied images of Japaneseness. Those images have become simulacral abstractions, divorced from and distorting their cultural heritage. Japan consumes reproduced images of Japaneseness, but ultimately leading to its own destruction.

Ideological and cultural contexts are not rigidly defined, beginning and ending with clear boundaries. Rather, ideology shifts in slow swings and while the economy was headed toward the corporate bubble economy of globalized international relations, some elements of film culture continued to reflect the nostalgia for the ancient past that was inherent in the films of the post occupation era. The *shutaisei* debates continued beyond the immediate post occupation era. Even contemporary films can reflect the ideologies of the post occupation society and contemporary films, while emphasizing concerns for globalization and internationalization can also be indicative of the post occupation ideologies of cultural rediscovery. Such filmmakers as Oshima and Kurosawa, making films well into the 1990s continue to engage in ideological discourse of the *shutaisei* debates while also engaging in discourse on contemporary ideology. Kitano 'Beat' Takeshi, a contemporary filmmaker engaged in contemporary ideological discourse also address questions of nostalgia and nationalism within his work. These filmmakers span two different ideological contexts; the contemporary era of globalization and its attendant discourses, as well as continuing in the work of iterating Japanese nationhood in the post occupation period. While the majority of Japanese film began to be concerned with issues of economic shifts and ideological changes, as evidenced

in the 1966 Toyoda version of *Tokaido Yotsuya Kaidan* which reflects Japan's headlong rush into geo-politics, certain films continued to deploy iconographies of a cultural past. Films, such as Oshima Nagisa's *Ai No Koriida (In the Realm of the Senses)* (1976) fetishized certain qualities of Japanese ancient culture. The film is set in a very traditional country manor and Oshima's filmic gaze is cast longingly at sumptuous interiors and tranquil walled courtyards. The film constructs a pristine fantasized 'Japanese' space, untouched by foreign influence.

Oshima questions Japan's fantasized loss of culture and periods of nationalism while painting a devastating image of narcissism and destructive internalisation. Based on the true story of Abe Sada, the film's characters withdraw from the world in their infatuation with each other. The two engage in a love affair that detaches itself from the problems of the external world and they increasingly withdraw from their lives outside of the bedroom. The film's protagonists, particularly the figure of Abe, represent a grotesque extremity in cloistered detachment and withdrawal from the external changing world. The film, lavish in its depiction of distinctly Japanese interiors, creates a link between Ichida and Abe's increasing detachment from the external world and self seclusion, with their ultimate destruction, but that detachment becomes analogous with Japanese fantasy about withdrawing from international trade and cultural exchange. The extreme internalization of Abe Sada becomes cannibalistic (in both metaphoric and literal senses) and the traditional Japanese tatami becomes smeared and indelibly stained with the blood of the protagonists as Abe attempts narcissistic self gratification at the expense of Ichida's life. The film as a metaphor for Japanese nationalism pairs the house, a microcosm of Japan, as a closed border and as Japan refuses to indulge in 'foreign' ideas such as Oshima's films, Oshima argues that the country will

eventually destroy its own culture. More recently, in his *Gohatto (Taboo)* (1999), Oshima reclaims homosexuality and incorporates alternative sexualities into the iconographies of the feudal past and samurai culture. By creating a gay samurai, Oshima attempts to recast the samurai ideologies and create greater plurality in that cultural figure. While questing for understanding of a cultural past, Oshima enters into contemporary discourses of alternative sexualities in order to construct a more authentic, pluralistic depiction of Japanese archetypes.

The concerns for cultural rediscovery and preservation of the post occupation period run continuously into the present. Kurosawa, throughout his work, continues to evoke expressly Japanese culture through his use of intertexts, particularly *No* and *Kabuki* theatres. He casts such referential figures in his films *Kumonosu-jo (Throne of Blood)* (1957), with his Lady Asaji; in his construction of the Lady Kaide in *Ran* (1985); and culminating in his *Dreams* (1990). *Dreams* is a collection of eight short tales derived from the director's own actual dreams. The tales mix folklore, fantasy, high art, theatre, drama and nostalgia in a series of short vignettes that range in subject matter from *Shinto* spirits to the returned war dead. The film uses high stylization and visual imagery becomes paramount in his fantastic realization. One of the tales deploys the snow ghost, much in the manner of the earlier film *Kwaidan*, with high stylization and costuming similarly derived from the *Kabuki* stage. The contemporary period, while marked by concerns for and ideologies inherent in a contemporary period of globalization, often continues to iterate the ideologies of the past, post occupation agenda of cultural rediscovery and rebuilding.

'Beat' Takeshi Kitano cleverly plays with issues of globalization and cultural exchange in his film *Zatoichi* (2003). The film's predominant concern is for living Japanese culture. Kitano constructs a cultural world that blends modernity with

ancient Japanese culture, creating a Japanese modern culture that recognizes a possibility for living culture that does not sacrifice its 'Japaneseness.' The film argues that culture is a living thing and his playful pastiche of cultural artefacts demonstrates profound knowledge of Japanese traditional arts, while deploying such arts in a present context. Kitano is able to transcend the restrictions of Japanese nationalists while presenting a wholly indigenous but contemporary cultural alternative. The film is itself a remake of countless Zatoichi tales. Zatoichi, the blind swordsman is a sort of Japanese Robin Hood, a figure of folk legend who has been told about in literature and film for generations. The very choice to film a story about this figure is to engage in a discourse on a Japanese icon. Kitano, for his portrayal of Zatoichi, died his hair blonde, signifying that this would be a very different form of that cultural icon.

Kitano includes a story within the film's narrative about a pair of Geisha who actively seek out a gang that had in the past killed their entire family. The death of their parents resultantly forced the two into a life of prostitution at a very young age. One of the geisha dances in full kimono while the other plays the *shamisen*. Kitano shoots these dances with clear focus on detail, his camera gaze fetishizing the lavish kimono and the graceful movements. Kitano, however, both twists this convention on its head, while also being surprisingly authentic. It is revealed within the film's story that the dancing Geisha is in actuality a man playing a cross gendered role. His film is both totally radical while paradoxically situating the film within its Japanese cultural heritage. While the character is a man, the actor too is a man, defying the conventions of the film genre by spectacularizing and sexualizing the transgendered body. Within the film, the characters various reactions move from shock, to surprise, to anger and curiosity. The characters become genuinely surprised that they would

be so aroused by a transgendered male. But the film is making reference to *Kabuki* theatre's tradition of presenting women as dramatised presentation of 'womanliness' by using male actors to play female roles. Kitano employs for the role of Osei a young *Kabuki onnagata* (actor who specializes in women's roles), Tachibana Daigoro in his film debut. Furthermore, it must not be forgotten that in Japanese film history itself, evolving from the *shinpa* drama, women in early Japanese film were also played by male actors. In the Japanese silent era, one must recall, women were played by *oyama*. So Kitano's film, by deploying a male actor to play the vengeance seeking woman's role, through the radical use of the transgendered male, situates the film in authentic traditional film and theatre cultures. It is only because the male screen actor is playing a gay man within the film story, that the film becomes radical. It is because the film explicitly exposes the artifice of the geisha within the film story that it so well articulates this daring exposition of Japanese culture.

The film is unorthodox in several ways, regularly playing with traditional culture in a contemporary world by including field workers who break up their day with 'stomp' or 'blue man group' inspired dancing. The workers respectively plough fields, sow rice seeds and rebuild a house while making rhythmic music with their actions. In an extraordinary final scene, Kitano extends this rhythmic musicality with an ending which sees the entire cast clad in traditional attire, tap-dancing in a breathtaking show stopping finale. Kitano decided that the traditional period films all have a pointedly happy ending in which the entire village comes together for a *matsuri* (an annual festival celebration inspired by *Shinto* culture). The film extends this *matsuri* to absurd properties, beginning with a traditional *Shinto* dance, which leads the festival dancers into their tap routine. The film spans two cultural contexts, the post-war desire for cultural rediscovery and preservation, with the contemporary

period of globalization and its attendant negation of the Japanese identity in the drive for a global economic position. The modern tap dance supplants the traditional *Shinto* dance, but Kitano manages to have it both ways by creating a new cultural hybridity that can only be Japanese.

Chapter 3

Technologies of Fear: The *Onryo* in the Age of Globalization

The current age of globalization, internationalization and economic trade inescapably impacts the cultural artefacts of this era. The contemporary films of Japan reflect the ideologies inherent in Japan's headlong rush into global economics. The narratives are indelibly marked by conflicting ideologies inherent in contemporary global capitalism. In recent history, Japan as a nation, while competing on the world's financial markets, poured millions of yen into factory produced commodities and invested time and effort into globally competitive light, heavy and technological industry. Similarly, the film industry of the period has been streamlined into a cost efficient corporate driven entity and the films reflect concern for the negation of a specifically Japanese identity at the expense of corporate economic gain. Japan, in the period of the bubble economy, rather than focussing on production designed for local consumption, pushed for greater internationalisation. This increased emphasis on internationalisation results in media culture engaging in discourse on international economics. The new global economy of transnational corporations diminishes the concept of a wholly unique Japanese national character in favour of the global, and the film industry accordingly responded with films that negate the specificities of the supposed Japanese national character. The first films of the globalization age began supplanting the Japanese national character with a newly imagined corporate figure, the everyman or *sarariman* (salary-man), whose progenitors could be seen even in the early films of Ozu. Ozu's *Umarete wa mita keredo...* (*I Was Born, But...*), made in 1932 tells the story of a group of young boys who brag about whose father is the best. The two who win the argument later discover their father to be a corporate lackey who must kowtow to his employer. Ian

Buruma describes the salaryman as first appearing in the 1960s television series *Musekinin Shirees*. Buruma establishes the connection between the salaryman and the economic environment:

A mixture of tradition and modern fashion puts the salaryman papa in an awkward position torn between two families: the company, being the common roof under which he works, and his *kazoku*, the wife and children. The nuclear family is being pushed as an ideal by advertisers trying to boost consumerism with such modish slogans as 'mai homu' (my home) 'mai kaa' (my car) and 'mai famiree' (my family). The English word for 'my' is favoured by advertisers and consumers alike, because somehow the Japanese equivalent would sound too possessive, too egotistical, stressing as it does, the private over the collective. (Buruma 1988: 202-203)

Ironically, in time this figuration of the salaried employee became the quintessence of the Japanese identity, but the initial appearance of the *sarariman* was to create an anonymous/eponymous everyman who represented the suppression of personal identity for the benefit of the corporation.¹

With the embedding of the *sarariman* into the collective unconscious came a tangential change in the film industry. Other narratives and archetypal figures similarly became imbued with the ideologies of globalization. Fugita Toshiya's cult classic *Shurayuki Hime (Lady Snowblood)* (1973) can be read as a meditation on identity within the global economy. The character battles an identity crisis, sublimating her own identity into that of her dead mother's desires for revenge, all the while assassinating those who sacrificed their cultural heritage in the name of economic gain. The film, extremely sentient of Japanese film and historical cultures, redeploys the *onryo* archetype in a new form of violent filmmaking. The film, highly ambivalent in its presentation of the Japanese figure, becomes conflicted in its presentation of its heroine's ruthless self interest. The protagonist must first negate the self in order to fulfil her mother's desires for retribution, but ironically comes to

¹ For a more comprehensive analysis of the salaryman in Japanese film, please see Ian Buruma's *A Japanese Mirror*.

represent an imagined ‘authentic’ Japan. The film, conflicted in its presentation of the Japanese identity ultimately becomes nihilistic, as Yuki destroys her enemies, her love and her own body.

Donald Richie, in his *A Hundred Years of Japanese Film*, argues that the greatest threat to the Japanese film industry in the 1960s was the encroachment of television. The studios had produced hundreds of films in the 1950s and 1960s, with Richie citing the peak being in 1960, with 537 films being released to 900 cinemas in that year alone (Richie 2001: 177). But it was the Tokyo Olympics which precipitated the change in Japanese ideologies from the local to the global. The broadcast of the Olympics also, significantly for the film industry, irrevocably changed people’s viewing habits. Ian Buruma writes in his *Inventing Japan*:

The autumn of 1964, when the Olympics came to Tokyo, was to be the great ceremonial celebration of Japan’s peaceful, post-war democratic revival. No longer a defeated nation in disgrace, Japan was respectable now. After years of feverish construction of highways and stadiums, hotels, sewers, overhead railways, and subway lines, Tokyo was ready to receive the world with a grand display of love, peace, and sports. (Buruma 1988: vii)

The Olympics was widely seen as Japan’s re-entry into the international sphere, symbolizing Japan’s successful transition from war state, to occupied state, to self government. The same year, the *shinkansen* or bullet train was launched, signifying Japan’s ability to compete internationally with its technology and innovation. As the society became quick to embrace the prospect of a newly technologized state, Donald Richie argues “everyone acquired a television set in order to view the Games” (Richie 2001: 177). Indeed, the broadcasting of the games changed the nation’s viewing habits, with visual entertainment occurring in private spaces rather than in traditional public arenas. With the wide spread reception of television, the film industry lost a huge amount of money. In order to differentiate itself from television,

Japanese film began to incorporate graphic violence and sexuality. A glut of cheaply made exploitation films were produced in order to attract a young, jaded clientele. While the film studios began producing such cheaply made exploitative fare, the nation as a whole became more accustomed to a new ideology of international cosmopolitanism.

The Olympics became a grand symbol of Japan's participation in a new globalized world order in which ninety four nations assembled in a single stadium to compete for international recognition. A symbol of intercultural mixing occurring within the borders of the very same nation that less than a hundred years earlier was closed to all international trade, and twenty years earlier was a member of the Axis powers in its attempt to carve the world into separate and discrete isolated political protectorates.

While hopes for Japanese political expansion ended with the bombing of Hiroshima, Japanese economic expansion was only just beginning in the 1960s. The country long had economic power held by large family run business conglomerations which acted as investors in disparate companies. Many of these companies had owned the heavy industry connected to the war effort, but through the clever shifting of production from war industry to those of peacetime. John Dower describes the rise of such companies:

The successful post-war camera manufacturers Canon and Nikon had been producers of optics for the war effort. In 1946, Honda Soichiro, who had been a small wartime subcontractor supplying piston rings to Toyota, began motorizing bicycles with tiny engines the military had used in communications devices. Hugely popular among small-shop owners and petty black-market operatives, these motorbikes led to the marketing of a motorcycle named 'Dream' in 1949 and marked the beginning of the Honda Motor Company empire. (533-534)

Even the film industry was part owned by such corporate conglomerations. The Toho studios had originally been founded by a company that had made its money by

investing in the railway system. With the dawning of the globalization era, the Japanese corporations began establishing offices overseas and selling Japanese product to a global market. Eric Cazdyn writes about this new form of capital economy, a globalized capitalism which has shifted from a Fordian capitalist ethos to post-Fordian. Cazdyn begins his argument by supplying the concept of *Empire* as defined by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in their book *Empire*. For Hardt and Negri, *Empire* is not synonymous with Imperialism but rather is a means of defining the conjoining of corporations beyond national boundaries. Cazdyn writes:

The planet is organized differently under *Empire*. Unlike under European and Japanese imperialism, nation-states do not extend sovereignty beyond their borders; rather, *Empire* is itinerant, not bound to older configurations of linear time and space. It is 'a decentered and deterritorializing apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open expanding frontiers.' (Hardt and Negri, as quoted in Cazdyn 2002: 246)

In the climate of *Empire*, the Japanese national identity becomes sublimated into that of the corporation. Cazdyn argues that in the contemporary period of globalization, a notion of capitalism that is based on the nation state proves no longer applicable. As corporations shift the labour force from the domestic to international labour pools, there is no such thing as the domestic proletariat. The Fordian view of capitalism provided the myth that through the industrialization of the manufacture of goods, the proletariat could earn a wage that provided to the worker the ability to consume its own product. The Fordian model of capitalism works through desire – the desire of the proletariat to increase the quality of its standard of living. The productivity of the labour force is contingent on the desires of the working class to transcend its poverty, but as that standard rises, too do labour costs and productivity declines. In the post-Fordian era of *Empire*, the corporations scour the globe for the cheapest available labour source, thereby proletarianizing new labour forces and creating an

international working class. According to Cazdyn, this creates a power shift, reducing the power of the nation state and providing greater power to the corporations which do not serve the interests of any particular nation but rather those of its own internal ruling class (Cazdyn 2002: 248). This consequently results in the de-emphasizing of nationhood and national identity in favour of that of the corporation. Cazdyn argues that two Japanese science fiction cyberpunk films, *Ghost in the Shell* and *Tetsuo*, through their emphasis of the break-up of the human body, manifest the concerns and ideologies of a post-Fordian capitalist world. Cazdyn reads these films' usage of the cyborg as a metaphor for the breakdown of the Japanese national identity. Cazdyn states "I read *Tetsuo's* and *Ghost in the Shell's* focus on the breakup of the individual as a desire to express the breakup of the nation" (2002: 249-250). Similarly, *Lady Snowblood's* sublimation of the self into the desires of her mother is symptomatic of society living within the ideology of *Empire* and its demands for the negation of personal and national identities.

Within *Empire* comes increased awareness of the individual's participation of international exploitations. The individual in contemporary society is cognizant of *Empire* geo-capitalism's exploitations of labour resources and its environmental impact. No longer is ideology subject to domestic issues but now, such disparate concerns as third worldism, Aids, famine, sweatshop labour and child labour have permeated the global subconscious. I believe that it is not only Cazdyn's cyberpunk science fiction films that can be interpreted as participating in discourses of globalization. In this chapter I argue the ideologies inherent in the context of globalization and *Empire* penetrate contemporary Japanese film culture. Contemporary cinema is produced within an environment in which an awareness of and more importantly the fears of the globalization movement, permeate all

discourse. In the post-Fordian world, all discourse, ranging from environmental concerns, to the spread of Aids, to issues of nationalism, are coloured and inflected by an awareness of the machinations of contemporary geopolitics. Consequently all Japanese film can be interpreted as, overtly or covertly, engaging in ideologies of globalization.

The 1973 film *Shurayuki Hime (Lady Snowblood)* was produced in a period of exploitation films. The Japanese film industry in the 1970s suffered a lull in box office sales. The straight to video market of the 1980s would provide some economic relief, but the film industry of the 1970s was stagnating. The studios turned to cheaply made films that were high in violent and sexual content in order to attract a youth driven market. These films were often made by filmmakers who were much older than their target audience and represent a cynical attitude toward the tastes of the younger generation. Gone were the high art aspirations of the B movie filmmakers of the 1950s and such graphic allusions to *Kabuki* and *No*. The *onryo* as a ghost similarly disappeared. Instead the films presented a bleak nihilism as the protagonists wandered a corrupted and corrupting world. The films were produced within an industry where production houses provided the only funds available to filmmakers and the filmmakers were subject to the demands of the producers.

The film *Lady Snowblood* depicts a young woman named Yuki who is born in a woman's prison. The story begins in 1873 (precisely a hundred years prior to the date of the film's production) in the *Meiji* Era, an era long deployed as a metaphor for transition. The *Meiji* (1868-1912) was the period of rapid industrialization and incorporation of western technological innovation. The themes inherent in the film production's context of globalization and corporate expansion can readily be transposed onto the *Meiji* Era. The *Meiji* as a period of social,

political and ideological upheaval can be understood to act as a metaphor for the film's contemporary society.

The film begins in the early years of the *Meiji*, which was a turbulent and violent time. A young family moves to a new village, where the husband is to take the position of the village's resident teacher. The husband and young son are killed in a violent attack and the wife is brutally raped. She is kidnapped, destined to be treated as a sex slave to one of the gang members. This proves torture which only ends with her killing the reprobate. She is sentenced to life in prison for murder and in prison devises a plan. She begins seducing every man with whom she contacts in a desperate bid to become pregnant. Knowing she will die in prison, her only hope for vengeance is to conceive a child who will live outside of the prison and eventually avenge the mother.

The film sheds the supernatural elements of the *onryo* myth but participates in the culture of *onryo* tales. While in prison, the woman gives birth to a baby girl whom she pledges into a life of violence. The mother dies at childbirth and a mentor indoctrinates the young girl into the arts of martial combat. So palpable is the young woman's lust to avenge her mother that she claims to remember her mother's final words, words spoken to the baby at the moment of the child's birth. Yuki becomes the living embodiment of her mother's desires for vengeance, shedding her own identity in favour of her commanded role. But this *onryo* is different from prior incarnations, because while earlier *onryo* films deploy the supernatural post mortem return of the victim's spirit, *Shurayuki Hime* deploys the living avatar of vengeance. The earlier films presented the *onryo* as a psychic projection of the protagonist's antipathy, a gestalt of anger and bloodlust and thus an empty vessel designated to perform a function of the dying person's emotions. Yuki, in *Lady Snowblood*, is a

living being, who must first shed her own desires, feelings and even humanity in order to become such an empty vessel. While the previous *onryo* was a projection of desire, the new construction of the *onryo* must first give up the self in order to make manifest the desires of the previous generation. If the film is to be read as allegorical of the contemporary society, it demands that the Japanese too must rid themselves of personal desire and personal feeling, in order to best act as figures in the re-ordering of society. In the era of corporate driven society, the film becomes metaphorical of the salaryman workers who were expected to give themselves up in favour of their role as company employee.

The film's presentation of the *onryo* figure defies the prior conventional iconographic configurations. Gone are the stylistic references to the *No* and *Kabuki* forms. Rather, the film works hard to create a sense of verisimilitude in its visual style. The story is derived from *manga*, the Japanese stylized graphic novels, and so the filmmakers' choice to create a verisimilar environment is a conscious decision which nullifies its highly stylized origins. The use of realistic violence, the providing of dates and the use of location shooting and natural lighting, strip the film of its visual allegiance to the traditional *onryo* narrative. Despite this verisimilitude, the film demands the viewer accept as natural, Yuki's supernatural lust for revenge. The film has also blended genre conventions, providing Yuki with martial arts training. Rather than using supernatural powers to defeat her enemies, she uses superior martial skill. However, her skill is so refined that it becomes supernatural in its awesome effectiveness. The film, while demanding that Yuki deny her own identity, provides her with powers that are specifically linked to her uniquely Japanese cultural specificity. She possesses such terrifying efficacy with her *katana* blade that she becomes a terrible icon of Japaneseness. The film, then, in the global age can be

read as promoting the Japanese corporate fantasy: if one divests the self of personal desire and focuses one's entire energies upon a given task, she too will become awesome in her ability to destroy competition.

It is significant that the film's story occurs in the historical past and that the film makes explicit reference to historical events and places. While the *Meiji* setting was regarded as the period that best exemplifies Japan's period of transition from local to global through its iconic cultural hybridity, the film exists in a mythic version of the *Meiji* in which people continue to lead a culturally traditional lifestyle. But for Yuki's schoolteacher father, who is killed because of his white linen suit, the film presents the *Meiji* as a culturally 'pure' period of *kimono* and *hakama*. The film begins with Yuki's birth in 1873, and the story takes place in her twentieth year, 1893. Virtually everyone in the film's setting is dressed in traditional clothing. However, it is recalled that Beaseley reports an account as early as 1873, of a group of samurai dressed in traditional clothing being 'stared at as foreigners had formally been' (225). Costuming and the culturally 'pure' filmic depiction of the *Meiji* environment, are proven fantasy. It is only the final sequences that the *Meiji*'s cultural blending is shown. The film's finale occurs in the *Rokumeikan* or *Deer Cry Pavilion*, the *Meiji* Era's prime symbol of cultural hybridity. The *Deer Cry Pavilion* was established as a meeting point between Japanese and foreign dignitaries, where 19th century foreign policy would be discussed over canapés and waltzes. The film, however, depicts the *Rokumeikan* as a site of indifference, where the bourgeois continue to dance, oblivious to the (cultural and physical) violence which is occurring within their vicinity. Yuki battles with the final villain Gishiro in the balconies while the foreign dignitaries dance below them. It is only after the violence has occurred, when Gishiro's dead body falls from the balcony to the

cement floor that the bourgeois elite realize what has been occurring in their presence. The film makes explicit the link between westernization and the Japanese elite. Those who benefit fiscally from the sacrificing of Japanese ideology are proven indifferent to the violence of that cultural blending and dilution. The film's final villain wears a three piece suit and sports a heavy moustache. His weapon of choice is a pistol, as opposed to Yuki's *katana* blade, and his motivation for villainy is his greed derived from desire for personal economic gain. He represents the foreign bourgeois elite who desire the breakup of Japanese cultural autonomy at the price of personal financial gain. It is the bourgeois elite who become responsible for the destruction of the country and indirectly responsible for the violence visited upon Yuki's mother.

The film becomes ambivalent in its relationship to contemporary globalization, both undermining the westerners' ideologies of capital in its narrative actions, while concomitantly reinforcing corporate fantasy in its depiction of Yuki's sacrificing of herself in order to embody her mother's desires. The deployment of the *onryo* becomes metaphorical of the globalization period's conflicted and ambivalent ideologies of nationhood and globalization. These ambivalences are inherent within the natures of the Japanese corporate identity and ideology. The corporations, in order to compete in a global economy, must divest themselves of their national identity. Sony, Hitachi, Mitsubishi have become global brands and must be presented as such and thereby deny their Japaneseness. Paradoxically, because the global economy is a competitive economy, the companies must also present their particular specificities. The Japanese global identity is one of quality in electronics. So the companies, while denying their cultural specificity must paradoxically promote their national identity as a signifier of their superior quality in

the electronics market. The film, if read as allegorical of global economic practice, becomes similarly ambiguous. Yuki both is presented as identity-less, subsuming her mother's rage as her own, while also becoming an icon of the Japanese identity. Her traditionalism is presented symbolically through her *kimono* and *katana* blade. Because ideology is the interaction between individuals and society it must account for the plurality of society. If ideology is understood as the interactions between society and the media, then the media reflect the ambivalences inherent within society. The film emphasizes the specifically Japanese cultural artefacts which she uses to achieve her mandate, while simultaneously presenting that Japanese identity as self-destructive. The film becomes nihilistic because it is a new form of Japaneseness that must be able to compete within the global economy and thereby must deny that presentation of nationhood as ideal, while simultaneously presenting itself as able to ruthlessly destroy its competition by virtue of its singular qualities. But it is also through her desire to assert her mother's vengeance that she ultimately destroys her lover and even her own body, its shattered pieces left broken in the film's final scenes.

The film becomes both a repetition of and response to the dominant ideology because it too is a corporate entity, struggling to appeal to as wide a market share as possible and attempting to reflect multiple, often contradictory and competing ideologies. The character Yuki's ambivalence to nationhood then reflects both the desires of the corporate world and its promoting the break-up of the national for the benefits of the global, while simultaneously aspiring to reflect the desires of nationalists who demand the promoting of a uniquely Japanese cultural identity.

The Lost Decade: Film Culture in 1990s Japan

The film industry in the 1970s suffered a massive recession which lasted well into the 1990s. Richie writes:

The majority audience, debauched by television, vanished forever. Despite occasional visits to movie houses for pictures about dogs left behind in the Antarctic and the like, a regular audience would never return. The later story of the Japanese film industry (as distinguished from the later story of the Japanese cinema) is one of decline and bankruptcy. (Richie 2001: 208)

The studios only produced conservative fare, attempting to capitalize on prior successes. With the advent of video recording systems, much Japanese film was released straight to video, which lowered production costs and significantly lowered the quality of the product. Films were shot in uniform manner, with formulaic scripts that demanded a duel per scene. Productions were referred to as product, and the language of business supplanted the language of filmed art.

The 1990s in Japan have been dubbed the Lost Decade. This is a period when the economy imploded, the asset bubble collapsed, banks teetered on the edge of insolvency, unemployment skyrocketed, suicides increased and the leaders of Japan, Inc. were tarnished by exposes of pervasive corruption. The nation of the 'economic miracle' found itself looking into the abyss, lunging from the swaggering late 1980s, when commentators gushed about a Pax Nipponica, to the sobering realities of the turn of the century when analysts predicted systemic collapse. The nation's credit rating slumped to the level of junk bonds and zombie companies staggered towards bankruptcy. Everything seemed to go wrong at the same time, an inauspicious beginning to the Heisei era, a period that has virtually become synonymous with Japan's prolonged recession. (Kingston, 2004: 1)

Japan in the 1990s was suffering a period of extreme recession, which, coupled with countless reports of widespread corruption both in the private and public sectors, resulted in a climate of scepticism and cynicism toward the corporate 'family.' Property values tumbled, mortgage rates increased and the notion of job security became a nostalgic memory. Kingston questions "what was lost in the Lost Decade? Mountains of money, a sense of security, stable families, and the credibility of the nation's leadership" (2004: 1).

The film industry, like all other industries during the collapse of Japan's bubble economy, suffered extensively. Mark Schilling reports in his *Contemporary Japanese Film* that film production levels had fallen from a high of 547 domestic films in 1960, to a mere 249 in 1998 (1999: 14). Furthermore, Schilling asserts "throughout the 1990s, the percentage of distribution revenues accounted for by Japanese films has hovered at about the one-third mark" (1999: 14), as compared to in the 1980s in which domestic films accounted for half of the total box office revenue.

The decline in attendance for Japanese films is directly tied to bubble economics and the increasing corporatization of the Japanese film industry from the 1960s until the late 1980s. During the bubble era of the 1980s, big budget films were highly subsidized by Japanese corporations who desired the films express corporate interests. As films became intrinsically coupled to corporate sanctioned ideology, filmgoers found stagnation in the variety of film plots and consequently attendance of domestic films dropped. However, with the rise in the bubble economy, corporate financiers began to fill in the financial gaps where cinema attendance dwindled. Schilling argues that to combat dwindling audience interest, the major studios 'financed and promoted more of their big budget films using the advance-ticket strategy employed by Haruki Kadokawa in *Ten to Chi to* [1990] (Schilling 1999: 17). Schilling reports that *Ten to Chi to* earned ¥5.05 billion in film rentals in 1990 (1999: 16). Ironically, the film itself cost 5 billion yen to produce. And yet the film was still economically viable.

Schilling reports that the Japanese studio system continues to suffer vertical integration, in which the Big Three studios (*Toho*, *Shochiku*, and *Toei*) own both distribution and exhibition companies. The production companies often finance a

film and guarantee a film's success by selling large blocks of advance tickets and block booking the theatre chains. "The aim is to eliminate competition by controlling every aspect of the pipeline from development to release, while guaranteeing a certain level of income by putting a floor under ticket sales. The only ones left out of this cosy arrangement are the filmmakers, who are basically subcontractors working for a fee" (Schilling 1999: 17). The producers of the bubble economy were effectively buying a film's success through minimizing competition. The strategy of block booking theatre chains allowed a production company to reduce financial risk and ensure a film's profitability to the point where until 1997 advanced ticket sales accounted for the top five all time domestic grossing films. Because a film's profitability was all but guaranteed prior to the film's production, the quality of the films became secondary to promoting corporate backers' private interests. Schilling asserts:

For companies flush with cash in the booming 1980s, these movies were not simply money-spinning machines, but tools for boosting the corporate image and – a reason that should not be underestimated – trimming the corporate tax bill. Film investments could be depreciated within two years after the film's release and, if a movie went into the red, used as a tax write-off. (Schilling 1999: 18)

Through the strategy of block booking, cinematic quality became invariably compromised and the film going public inevitably became inured to mediocre domestic product. To finance *Ten to Chi to*, Schilling reports, the producer recruited a staggering thirty-eight corporate backers, most of whom had no clearly defined product interest in the sixteenth century period film (1999: 16). But using film as a tax shelter the corporate backers had enough incentive to invest millions. To ensure the film's success, the producer Kadokawa printed nearly five million advance tickets (1999: 16). Despite audience attendance dwindling, studio executives would program films which would better attract corporate sponsorship over films that could

potentially please a core audience because the film's economic viability was already assured.

As the heady days of the bubble economy came to an end, the production companies dependence on corporate sponsorship inevitably resulted in the collapse of the Japanese studio system. The producers and distributors continued to pre-sell movies, arguing the necessity of maintaining stability in the block booking system. This resulted in what Schilling describes as the distributors "effectively cutting their own throats" (1999: 19). As cinema attendance dropped, the pre sold tickets inevitably had to be sold below cost. With the block booking system no longer a guarantee of a film's profitability, corporate investors soon lost interest. Shochiku sold off its production arm and Nikkatsu ceased production of feature films entirely, in order to concentrate solely on made for television populist entertainment.

Japanese cinema in the late 1980s and early 1990s was stagnating and as the studios promoted conservative films with little directorial input, critics and filmmakers alike began to treat domestic product with genuine disdain. Producers responded by monitoring audience attendance figures, only reproducing commercially successful films. Donald Richie argues "With the large audience and the enormous profits disappeared, it seemed only natural to exert audience control over what was left, though in a considerably simplified manner. As always, the controlling power was the producing company" (Richie 2001: 213). This resulted in a series of copycat films attempting to capitalize on prior successes. Filmmaker Kurosawa Akira, speaking at the end of his career, stated:

One reason why we [in the past] had so many good directors is that Japanese studios gave talented people the freedom to make the movies they wanted. Now, however, the people in the marketing department are in charge – and all they think about is the box office. [So] they keep remaking the same kinds of pictures. If a movie about a cat does well, they make one about a dog. (Kurosawa quoted in Richie 2001: 214)

This sentiment is echoed by filmmaker Nakata Hideo. In the forward to Sharp and Mes' *Midnight Eye's Guide to New Japanese Film*, Nakata describes his frustration with the Japanese studio system in the early 1990s:

In 1991, I decided to go to England for a year. I thought it was important for me to get away from Japan for a while and think over my situation within the Japanese film industry. I was an assistant director working for the Nikkatsu film studio, which had at that time ceased producing feature films and was just making TV dramas or straight-to-video films. I couldn't think of any way to get out of the situation other than by taking a break in a distant foreign country. (Nakata in Sharp and Mes 2004: ix)

When Nakata returned to Japan, he discovered that the film industry had made a complete transformation, but not necessarily for the better. Nikkatsu had gone bankrupt in 1993 and Shochiku had sold off its production facilities. The three remaining studios were running increasingly conservative fare. And yet, Nakata observes "Despite this, there were many filmmakers who made their first theatrical features during the decade" (Mes and Sharp 2004: ix). As the film production houses wallowed in their conservative and cynical views of audience desires, continuing to funnel money into mediocre fare, the Japanese film industry of the 1990s experienced a quiet revolution with the rise of independent director/producers who created small and personal works. Schilling posits "As the decade wound to a close, however, this industry power structure, which was once set in stone, was being challenged from all directions" (Schilling 1999: 31). Nakata recalls:

In the meantime, Japanese film studios seemed to be afraid of taking risks in film production. This kind of mentality gradually killed the enthusiasm of the people who worked at the studios. Then, independent filmmakers were spotlighted. They know how to make good films on low budgets and their enthusiasm never faded. (Nakata in Mes and Sharp 2004: ix)

The rise of the independents is corroborated by both Donald Richie and Mark Schilling. Richie argues:

A picture could be made for comparatively little since a recently formed company would not be burdened with the cost of a full-time studio and staff. And, as not much was spent, a major audience was not needed to realize a profit. Financial gain, though limited, could still be considered sufficient if it managed to finance another film. (Richie 2001: 215)

Schilling provides an account of Studio Ghibli, an animation studio which found success in its 1997 release, *Mononoke Hime (Princess Mononoke)*. The studio was able to finance the film through earlier, smaller productions and parlay the success of its earlier releases into its latest work. The company president, Suzuki Toshio once commented “Every time we make a film, we are betting the company” (Suzuki in Schilling 1999: 31).

With small independent companies making lower budget films, independent directors, freed from the burdens of presenting a corporate image were able to develop an individual style. This style was often reflective of a television/music video sensibility were most of these younger filmmakers had developed their talents, rather than the restrictive environment of the rigidly hierarchized studio system. In this climate of the film industry and the independent sector’s being so diametrically opposed in their attitudes toward the treatment of film as a profit driven corporation, it is little wonder that the films made had such diverse discourse on global capitalism.

The Japanese studio system responded to the rise of independents by block booking their cinema chains, effectively squeezing out their independent competition. The independent producers had to look elsewhere to distribute their films. Nakata explains:

It was foreign film festival directors who responded to their works very quickly. One of the strongest bridges between the festivals and the independent filmmakers was Takenori Sento, who produced two of my films. Vigorously and strategically, he sent his films to a large number of foreign film festivals. It was a good opportunity for him to sell the films as well as to receive awards. This may sound quite normal, but surprisingly, most Japanese film companies were rather reluctant to enter their own films unless invited. They did not think Japanese films were competitive enough in the market. (Nakata in Sharp and Mes 2004: ix)

International circuits allowed the independent filmmakers to circumvent the Big Three studios' monopolization of the Japanese film distribution system. Suo Masayuki's *Shall We Dance* was the highest grossing Japanese film in America, grossing more than \$10 million, which allowed him to self finance his next production.² With international markets open to Japanese production, independent filmmakers were increasingly able to finance their own films through international funding agencies and co-productions. The most successful example of the independent filmmaker/producer being Kitano 'Beat' Takeshi, who has managed to parlay a successful career as a television comedian and sometime film actor into a one man film production house. Through the success of his early films and using his own money earned from television and film acting, Kitano established his own film production house, 'Office Kitano.' Ironically, his films are only modestly consumed in Japan, generally being seen as too violent for the public taste, but his works have developed an international reputation which has enabled him to produce more than a dozen films in as many years.

A third independent filmmaker who, through his re-visioning of the *onryo* archetype and whose dark imagining of Suzuki Koji's novel *Ringu* spurred a renaissance in Japanese horror cinema, is Nakata Hideo. A film produced outside of the closed studio system and its climate of corporate profiteering, *Ringu (Ring)* (1997), made with international festival monies, is inescapably a product of Japan's participation in a global economy and is heavily imbued with ideologies of globalization.

² A film which sadly took ten years to produce.

The *Ringu* Phenomenon:

Ringu first appeared in Japan as the brainchild of novelist Suzuki Koji. Written in 1991, the book was an immediate success and subsequently warranted a sequel, *Rasen*, penned in 1995. The book's first incarnation as a filmed adaptation was in a made for television film *Ringu: Kanzenban (Ring, the Complete Edition)*, a faithful adaptation of the original source material produced on the quick with a low budget and few special effects.

The book would later find international infamy through the filmed adaptation by Nakata Hideo. The *Ringu* film project was conceived in 1996 as an experiment in filmmaking and promotion. In a bold publicity stunt, independent producer Sento Takenori decided that both *Ringu* and its sequel *Rasen (Spiral)* (1997) would be released as a double bill, thereby capitalizing on marketing and advertising for the two films in a single exploitation campaign. Nakata, through his collaboration with producer Sento on the film *Ghost Actress*, was hired to direct *Ringu*, while Iida Joji was hired to direct the sequel *Rasen*. *Ringu* ends with an open ending which involves the male protagonist mysteriously dead from a curse and the female protagonist driving into the future unsure of what will become of her and her similarly cursed son. *Rasen* picks up the following day, the story being initiated by the autopsy of the dead protagonist from the earlier film. The production staff was completely different for the two films and so the two films have vastly different looks and sensibilities, moreover, while the two films employ many of the same actors in key roles, the plots arc in very different directions. Significantly, the two films belong to wildly different genres and while *Ringu* is a brooding horror *Rasen* belongs to the science fiction/melodrama genres. Most damaging to the success of *Rasen*, was the director's wildly divergent ideological basis, resulting in Iida's

treatment of the antagonist Sadako being at extreme odds to Nakata's. Nakata's Sadako was a malevolent demon, bent on the destruction of those representative of them that harmed her while Iida's Sadako is a tragic, misunderstood figure who is punished for her physiological differences. While *Ringu* enjoyed massively lucrative box office successes internationally, spawning both South Korean and American remakes as well as three sequels, *Rasen* was quickly and quietly removed from the cinemas only to resurface years later, thanks to the demands of *Ringu* aficionados, to be admired as a curious addendum to the *Ringu* franchise.

Nakata's *Ringu* deviates from the Suzuki novel, transforming the novel's male protagonist to a female and diminishing the background story of the vengeance seeking figure. Asakawa Reiko, a reporter for a local newspaper begins investigating the mysterious death of her teenaged niece Tomoko. Reiko discovers that her niece had seen a video with four other teenagers, who similarly died in mysterious circumstances on the same Saturday night at exactly the same time. Reiko's investigations lead her to a cabin in the Izu peninsula where she discovers and watches a mysterious video cassette. The contents of the tape are a series of surreal, broken images, including a volcano erupting, people drowning in open water and an eye with the word 'sada' superimposed upon it. Realizing that she too is now cursed, and discovering that she has only seven days to reveal the nature of the curse, Reiko recruits her ex husband, the mildly psychic Takayama Ryuji to help her solve the curse mystery. Tension rises when Reiko catches her seven year old son watching the video and her determination to beat the curse is doubled.

Reiko and Ryuji discover the curse to be a product of a teenaged psychic named Yamamura Sadako who had been murdered by her deranged father, thirty years previous. Sadako had, as a child, the ability to kill through *nensha* (mental

projection similar to telekinesis) and her father, fearing the monstrosity of his daughter's power, pitched her down a well. Thirty years later, the ghost of Sadako has managed to project upon a video cassette a curse that would exact her revenge upon anyone who watches the tape. Reiko and Ryuji find the well in which they discover the remains of the long dead Sadako and Reiko puts the body to rest on the seventh night of her own curse. Surviving the curse, Reiko believes that Sadako's threat to the world is over, only to discover the following day that Ryuji's life had not been spared. Realizing that it wasn't her putting Sadako's body to rest that had spared her from the curse, but rather, her copying the tape and showing it to Ryuji that saved her life, Reiko rushes to have her son make a copy of the tape. The film ends with Reiko driving into the future with a copy of the tape and a spare video recorder in her car, presumably to spread Sadako's curse ad infinitum.

Iida Joji's *Rasen* begins the following day, with forensic scientist Ando Mitsuo being called into his office to perform an autopsy on his former graduate school classmate, a man named Takayama Ryuji. Ryuji had died of an apparent heart attack despite being in excellent health. The case was being treated as a mystery and could Ando possibly shed some light into the case? Through his autopsy, Ando discovers a coded cipher that Ryuji had swallowed – obviously a message meant for him, as the two used to send each other ciphers in their college days. Ryuji too had psychic powers (something mentioned in the *Ringu* film but not treated as a significant plot motivator) and must have known that Ando would be performing the autopsy. As Ando begins to further investigate the circumstances revolving around his friend's mysterious death, he uncovers the curse of Sadako and potentially has once again unleashed Sadako's rage upon the world.

While both films, in plot summary, detail the curse of Yamamura Sadako being unleashed upon the world and both films end with the uncertainty of death looming upon society as the curse gets continually transmitted in order to be lifted, the two films could not be more different in style. A brief analysis of the two films openings will clarify the two films' allegiances to differing genres.

The film *Ringu* opens with a series of indistinguishable sounds, low rumblings and synthesized haunting chimes culminating with a gong sound as the first image appears on the screen. A low lit shot of waves crashing at night time adds an eerie tone as the film's extra diegetic title fades onto the screen and dripping blood red letters spell out 'ringu' in Japanese *katakana* lettering. With this tantalizing beginning, *Ringu* clearly codes itself as belonging to the horror genre. The credits roll over the crashing waves while the soundtrack continues to play eerie scraping noises and chimes. The image fades into static and the camera pulls back to reveal the pixelated image of a television screen shown in extreme close up. As the camera pulls back, the image literally draws the viewer into a high school girl's bedroom while laid over the soundtrack is the voice of a girl telling an urban legend of a boy in Izu peninsula who died shortly after viewing a haunted video cassette.

Ringu's terror effect begins with a phone call. Two teenaged girls, Tomoko and Masami are home alone on a Saturday night, chatting and discussing various things typically of interest to teenaged girls in traditional horror films – boyfriends, the weekend, and their social life in general. Tomoko confesses that she had spent a weekend in a cabin in the Izu peninsula with her boyfriend and another couple, where they watched a mysterious video tape. When the tape ended, the phone in the cabin rang and a voice on the line said “you will die in seven days.” These strange occurrences happened precisely at this time the Saturday previous. The phone rings,

scaring the two girls silly, and convinced the call has something to do with her viewing the strange video cassette, Masami answers the phone only to discover Tomoko's mother on the line. Masami returns to Tomoko's bedroom, while Tomoko goes to the fridge to pour herself a drink. The television mysteriously switches itself on, much to Tomoko's annoyance, who turns the television off. She returns to the counter where she left her drink and the camera cuts to a medium close up of Tomoko in profile. On the audio track is played a scratching sound and the camera cuts to a close up of Tomoko from behind. She turns her head to discover the cause of the noise and the image freezes on an extreme close up of Tomoko's shocked expression. Nakata bleeds the image of its colour, using a negative photographic effect, emphasizing Tomoko's horrified grimace and the freeze frame locks her expression into a death mask.

The prologue is shot without extra diegetic music, with the audio track emphasizing every diegetic sound. The phone rings with a phonetic burst punctuating the still silence in the girls' conversation. The television clicks on with an auditory explosion and the pacing of the editing emphasizes the unnaturalness of these unexpected auditory interruptions. The first extra diegetic sound, a low rumble culminating with a single drumbeat (evocative of the sounds from the credit sequence), signifies the girl's death. Nakata's camera style is unobtrusive with his editing kept to a minimum allowing the diegetic sounds to punctuate the scenes rather than his cutting.

Rasen opens with a much more lyrical cinematic style, more reminiscent of a conventional melodrama than a horror. The second film also opens with a short prologue before the title and credits. In a darkened room, daylight spills through cracks in a Venetian blind while a constantly moving hand held camera pans over a

series of reference books. The effect of the hand held camera is one of immediacy, placing the viewer as a spectator in the room. Long drawn out violin tones are played on a synthesizer in extra diegetic music and a melodramatic piano leitmotif begins as a man walks into the frame and pulls from a shelf a photograph of a young boy. The lighting is diffused, Iida's camera style preferring long takes and generally with little movement. What movement he does use is slow and graceful sweeps of the camera in time to the graceful music. The man in the scene continues to examine the photograph of the young boy and then opens a paper packet that contains a lock of hair. Iida intercuts the sequence with intimate close ups of the man's face, emphasizing the man's anguished expressions. With tears in his eyes, the man stares at the hair. An intercut of an image of the same man standing at the seashore staring at a clump of wet hair in his hand, reveals a memory of an unnamed tragedy. The film cuts back to the gently weeping man in his room, where he picks up a medical scalpel and holds it to his wrist. The camera cuts to a close-up of the man's set expression, cuts again to a close up of the scalpel and once again to the man's set features. Unable to make the fatal cut, he drops the scalpel.

While *Ringu*, through its dark tones and onomatopoeic clicks, groans and whirrs codes itself as ascribing to horror, *Rasen* clearly codes itself as belonging to the genre of melodrama. *Rasen* opens with personal tragedy of the main protagonist, a tragedy which will mark his subsequent actions, whereas *Ringu* opens with a mysterious death, one which propels the protagonists to search for answers. *Ringu* was predominantly concerned with the characters dealing with the presence and actions of the villainess Sadako, *Rasen* is more concerned with the characterization of its protagonist. *Ringu* deals with the physical effects of Sadako's curse upon its victims, while *Rasen* explicates the emotional implications of the curse's effect upon

its victims. While both films optimize a chiaroscuro effect, Nakata uses shadow to obscure while Iida uses soft light to create brilliant, blinding patches. In these two competing opening sequences, the different directors' pre-occupations become clear and while Nakata's pre-occupation is with unravelling mystery and elucidating the potency of Sadako's rage upon a family using the dark lighting and ambience of a gothic horror, Iida's concern is with displaying Ando's inner torment as explicitly as possible in a melodrama infused cinematic style complete with soft focus and diffused lighting. Finally, while both films open with the mysterious death of a child, *Ringu's* death is a product of Sadako's vengeful wrath and its function is to establish the potency of the villainess' power. *Rasen's* death is revealed to be an anxiety dream spurred by the guilt feelings in Ando's inability to save his own child from drowning years before. Its function is to provide characterization and psychological motivation for that character's actions and response to the Sadako curse.

After *Rasen's* short prologue, the film abruptly cuts to a shot of Ando shaving. His morning ablutions are interrupted by a phone call. However, in *Rasen*, unlike *Ringu* which similarly begins with a phone call, the voice on the line isn't informing Ando of his own impending death but rather is informing Ando of the death of his old classmate Takayama Ryuji. Ando himself is scheduled to perform the autopsy. After this short prologue the screen fades to black. Green lettering, evocative of the science fiction genre, spells out "*Rasen*." Iida in a video interview, talks openly of how he visualized *Rasen* as belonging to the realm of science fiction/paranormal films.³ He conceived *Rasen* as not so much a sequel, but as a different aspect to the *Ringu* series of books and the Sadako curse. In an interview with Jasper Sharp he states:

³ Included in the DVD extra features of the *Eastern Cult Cinema* release of *The Spiral (Rasen)*.

Nakata has drawn Sadako as an unknown and unrecognisable as a human being. I detested depicting Sadako that way in *the Spiral*. I think Sadako is a sorrowful, tragic existence that someone with an oppressive and painful life is transformed into, so I didn't want to make Sadako a monster. That's how Nakata's work is different. For those who wanted to see Sadako as a monster, they might be unsatisfied with *the Spiral* because of its reduced horror impact. (Iida Joji interview with Jasper Sharp, *The Spiral* DVD extras).

The second major point of departure in the two directors' treatment of the Suzuki source material is with the two films' explanations of Sadako's curse. Nakata's film barely concerns itself with how the curse is transmitted, taking for granted the power of a ghost to haunt the living. The Nakata film takes as its central premise the fact that the long dead Sadako had a very potent form of *nensha* (psychic power) which enabled her as a child to kill through the power of her own thoughts. This power was amplified by the rage inspired by the circumstances surrounding her death, to the point where the curse is a very real, though highly improbable threat. The mystery involved in the Nakata film is tied to solving the problem of how to pacify the vengeance driven ghost. Nakata is not concerned with how the curse is spread (Indeed the film is rather simplistic in its explication of the 'hows' of the film. For Nakata, simply iterating that the curse is spread through watching the video seems to be sufficient), but rather with *why* it is spread and how to stop it. Iida, conversely, details in excruciating detail what the Sadako curse exactly is, providing pseudo scientific, medical, geographic and psychokinetic explanations. While Nakata's construction of the Sadako curse is simplistic at best, Iida's attempt to rationalize the curse in explicable terms is pointlessly convoluted. Clearly, as demonstrated by the relative success of the Nakata film and the abysmal failure of the Iida film, with matters of the supernatural no explanation is necessary.

Ringu's explanation of the Sadako curse's origination is cursory at best and Sadako's powers are not really revealed or explicated until the sequels *Ringu 2* and

Ringu 0, Basudei (Ring 0, Birthday). In *Ringu*, cursed reporter Asakawa Reiko, in trying to rid herself of the curse, journeys to Oshima Island in order to discover some answers. There, she discovers the house where Sadako was born. Asking the locals if they know anything about Sadako, she discovers the girl's uncle to be still alive. The uncle, however, is tight lipped about what he knows of Sadako, but in a confrontation on the beach Reiko has a vision of the uncle's involvement in the Sadako affair (the explanation is that infected by Sadako, Reiko has begun to take on some of Sadako's psychic ability). The vision reveals a presentation of psychic powers involving Sadako's mother, Shizuko. Shizuko too had the powers of *nensha* and had been married to a renowned professor of parapsychology, Ikuma Heihachiro, who created a public display of Shizuko's psychic abilities. At the event, the crowd became an unruly mob denouncing Shizuko as a fraud. However, the child Sadako, also in attendance, angered by the mob, kills one of the most vocal attackers with her psychic abilities. Little in the film is explained, particularly how Sadako arrived with such strong psychic powers, or how she became so violent in her usage of her powers. When questioned about Sadako, her uncle simply states "She's a monster." The film provides little in the way of explanation, preferring ambiguity and the film's allegiance with the *onryo* tradition, presuming the viewers would take for granted a ghost's desires for vengeance. Nakata himself provides an equally ambiguous answer when asked about who Sadako's father actually is. Nakata responds:

Sadako's mother was going to the seashore almost every day, and she kept looking at the sea every day. And at a certain point, she found out that she was pregnant. So, in the original versions of *Ringu* and *Ringu 2*, there is the suggestion that Sadako's father is not human, but is a mysterious, evil, let's say *monster* from the sea. (Nakata as interviewed by J. Lopez. *The Ring World*
<http://www.theringworld.com/nakata.php>)

And yet the film itself only provides that ‘suggestion’ through associating images of the sea with these flashback images of the child Sadako’s power. What is revealed, however, is that Sadako, as a teenager was hit over the head and pushed into a well by her step father, the Professor Ikuma. The film’s only clear iteration of how the curse originated is a young woman (father unknown) with strong psychic powers was murdered and pushed down a well. Nakata doesn’t explain why Sadako was killed (that is not answered until the fourth film of the franchise, *Ringu 0, Basudei*), for his story telling, he simply requires the knowledge that she was killed in a gruesome manner for the curse to have suitable justification. For Nakata, the combination of a gruesome death and psychic ability is explanation enough. Iida’s *Rasen* conversely, explains far too much, not only delineating how Sadako’s curse is transmitted but also why Sadako is compelled to spread her curse and the full extent of her methods. Sadako, who died a tragic death, desires the world to feel her suffering and so the virus was created to expose people to her pain. The virus is part smallpox, part spermatozoa (Sadako is a hermaphrodite) and the virus is ‘reborn’ in each new host. This enables Sadako herself to become reborn on occasion, but at the expense of the host’s life. Ironically, the film does not explain the circumstances of Sadako’s death presuming the viewers are aware that Sadako was pushed down a well, but again never explaining why she had been murdered in the first place.

Rasen’s explanation begins with Ando’s criminal pathology lab. The film begins with Ando performing an autopsy on his old colleague Takayama Ryuji (who dies at the hands of Sadako in the end of *Ringu*). In his autopsy, Ando discovers two unusual things, the first is a coded cipher, the second is a small tumour in Ryuji’s throat. At first the findings of the medical examination indicate Ryuji died of a heart attack, but the tumour causes Ando to delve further into the causes of Ryuji’s death.

The tumour, in structure, resembles the small pox virus and it seems increasingly likely that Ryuji's death was caused by this tumour. Ando attempts to crack the coded cipher, and spells out both 'DNA' in one attempt, as well as 'present' in another. While puzzling over Ryuji's death, a colleague of Asakawa Reiko (Ryuji's ex-wife from the first *Ringu* film), tells Ando about a cursed video which the now missing Reiko had been investigating. Ando finds a copy of the curse tape and watches it, which causes him too to be infected by the curse/virus. The virus is spread through exposure to Sadako's psychic projections, through the form of her story. In her own words "I just wanted them to know the fear I've felt" (*Rasen*). The virus is predominantly transmitted through the viewing of the video but can be spread through the reading of her diaries, or even through repeated exposure to her story. Death is averted by showing the video to someone else (or having someone else read the book, etc) and thereby spreading Sadako's terrible ordeal. The nature of Sadako's telekinetic projection, however, is mutable. Indeed it is not so much exposure to the tape as exposure to Sadako's plight which spreads the virus.

There are two parts to the virus. The first is a replication of the small pox virus, the second, though less potent part is a type of spermatozoa. On rare occasions the infected host is infected by the spermatozoa, which similarly causes the host to die and Sadako to be re-born in the host's body. Takano Mae, Ryuji's girlfriend and student, is infected by the virus in this manner. She dies, and out of her dead body grows a new Sadako, although with Mae's physical appearance and even retaining Mae's memories. Mae/Sadako proposes a deal to Ando. The virus can replicate the host's DNA and through synthesizing Sadako's DNA with that of the host DNA, bring the host back to life. Ando learns he can utilize Sadako's regenerative abilities to bring his son back to life, as he has some of his son's DNA through the hair

strands that he grabbed when his son died. Sadako proposes that she bring Ando's son back to life (although he too would be part Sadako) but only in exchange for the mass perpetuation of the Sadako curse through spreading the virus globally. She demands Ando publish the video tape and Reiko's journals, thereby exposing millions to her virus/curse. Sadako's spirit will not rest until the entire world has felt her pain. This causes an ideological problem for Ando. Ando can have his son back but at the expense of unleashing Sadako's curse upon the world. The film ends with Ando walking along a deserted beach, hand in hand with a small boy. In this reconfiguration of the *onryo* myth, the *onryo* continues to seek out personal vengeance but in this manner to teach the world about her suffering. Her targets of her vengeance aren't those directly responsible for her death, but rather the society which rejected her living self by virtue of her physiological and psychic difference. Her target is the entire world, but her intention is not to kill but rather to teach tolerance and plurality.

Iida conceived his film adaptation of the Suzuki novel as concerning the character's responses to the Sadako curse and considered the subject matter to be far more indicative of science fiction values more so than horror. He recognized that audiences may not appreciate his film if they were expecting a re-make or sequel of *Ringu*. Iida's film is principally concerned with Ando's loss of his child and justifies his subsequent actions as deriving from that loss. It is difficult to identify precisely why the film adaptation of *Rasen* was such a commercial failure, when both *Ringu* and the literary version of *Rasen* were both extremely successful. It is most likely a combination of its slow moving plot, its melodramatic film style, and its diminishing of the ideologies of the globalization debate. Within the story of *Rasen*, the hero Ando becomes far more culpable in the spread of the Sadako curse, using print media

to spread Sadako's terror, but the film diminishes this element, favouring instead, the embellishment of the reunion between father and son. Iida's film prefers to remain optimistic, providing the viewer with a redemptive Sadako, who restores the family compact, rather than a vengeance fuelled anima who chooses to spread her rage. In the context of the jaded globalized viewer, perhaps this redemptive future simply fails to ring true.

Ringu's presentation of the *onryo* is radical in its reconfiguration of the Japanese ghost. While the appearance of Sadako retains some vestigial elements of the *Kabuki* ghost, the pale skin, the long black hair, the white shroud and the deformity and physical brokenness signifying the violence in corporeal death, the ghost is an abstraction of *Kabuki*. No longer analogous to the traditional arts, the figure has become a ghost for the contemporary media age. The Nakata *Ringu* film is placed firmly in the tradition of the *onryo* archetype. Sadako, with her lank hair, broken body with its lumbering movements, flowing water stained robes and disfigured visage calls to mind a ghostly forbearer similarly thrown into water – the Lady Oiwa from the *Yotsuya Kaidan* legend. In an interview with Donato Totaro at the Montreal Fantasia 1999 Film Festival, Nakata makes reference to the *Kabuki* play *Yotsuya Kaidan*. Nakata states:

The *Yotsuya Kaidan* story is a classic story that has been told for 40 years, a classic Japanese story in the sense that because summer in Japan is so hot and humid, you tell those stories or show these films, because they give you a cold feeling, a chill. It's a classic that has been shown already for forty years. The best film version, I think, is *Tokaido Yotsuya Kaidan* (1959) by director Nakagawa Nobuo, who mastered this. There are about five or six versions of the story, but this I think is the best. (Nakata quoted in Totaro 2001)

Nakata, admittedly a fan of the 1959 version of *Tokaido Yotsuya Kaidan* incorporates multiple elements of the traditional *onryo* archetype into his figuration of the vengeance seeking Sadako, elements which are missing from the Iida sequel. Eric

White, in his analysis of the film and its sequel, in his essay “Case Study: Nakata Hideo’s *Ringu* and *Ringu 2*,” discusses the use of the simulacra within the narrative itself. The first film ends with Reiko surviving the curse, while her ex husband Ryuji falls victim. Reiko realizes that the only thing that she did differently to him, was to copy the film and show it to him thereby passing the curse. White writes:

This introduction of the motif of the simulacrum – understood as the copy of a copy – is of considerable interpretive consequence. It turns out that Sadako’s revenge upon a cruel world entails the inauguration of a new cultural logic, a logic or the simulacrum according to which copies of copies vary continually from an always already lost original” (White 2005: 41).

White reads the simulacra entirely within the narrative context, arguing that the characters, when they encounter the cursed tape, cross over into simulacra themselves. Even those who survive the curse (such as Reiko and her son) ‘cross over to the other side of everyday life as simulacral images that copy, but do not identically reproduce, their former selves’ (White 2005: 41).

The film, through introducing the idea of the simulacrum in the narrative drive, demands to be read as simulacra itself, and the presentation of the *onryo* is itself a simulacral abstraction from its *Kabuki* and *No* theatre antecedents. The image encompasses the icons of the *Kabuki* with the usage of the long hair, the flowing robe and the broken features. While these elements are originally derived from the *Kabuki* iconography, the ghost has become an abstraction from that high art origination, losing much of the classic theatre features, such as the expressionless *waka-onna No* mask, or the similarly expressionless painted face of *Kabuki* female ghosts. Rather, the new ghost’s face is often contorted with rage. Culture has destroyed itself through constant repetition, and the figure itself is now a simulacrum, divorced from the culture and history of the traditional arts. The new image of the *onryo* becomes an empty referent, highly evocative but signifying nothing. Detached

from its cultural antecedents, the ghostly figure is made all the more terrifying because it has become a grotesque copy of its progenitors, emphasizing the horrific look while diminishing the cultural line.

The success of *Ringu*, and failure of *Rasen* relate not only to the filmic strategies, but also to their relationship to contemporary ideologies of globalization. While both films pander to viewer anxiety about the destructive possibilities of mass media technology, *Rasen* discusses the effect of mass mediated terror, while *Ringu* performs it. The film, in the context of globalization, depicts a mass mediated image of Sadako. Yet this figure who is traditionally exploited by the mass mediated image of victimhood, has the ability to control the very tools of the media which traditionally fetishize such images. The film explicitly depicts the object of spectacle, the (formerly) beautiful teenaged girl, who then manipulates the medium to her own destructive ends. It is significant that her very means of attack (video, television and cameras) are the very same technologies and innovations with which corporate Japan accrued its wealth. While Japan through the global corporations Sony, Hitachi, Mitsubishi and Canon amassed global wealth with their image disseminating technologies, Sadako seizes the products of these very companies, and turns those items monstrous. Sadako's curse becomes analogous to corporate expansion, as she 'takes over' the medium of broadcasting and spreads her curse – virus like – over the globe. The film manifests the contemporary society's fears of globalization's rapid expansions and destructive powers. The virus' method of transmission through telephones and televisions, wholly integrated with technologies of transmission, becomes a parable for ideology itself. The viewers of the tape, and indeed the

viewers of the film, are ‘infected’ by the very ideology transmitting mediums that the film itself utilized to create its international infamy.⁴

While *Rasen* disappeared, *Ringu* spawned a revival of the ghost/horror film genre. The ghost films of the 1990s created a figure for the new generation. While certain atavistic elements from the *Kabuki* stage remained, such as the long black hair, the ghostly pallor and the disfigured face, the ghost figure of the new generation had developed entirely new generic conventions. While the violent death of the protagonist frequently left its mark on the body of the returned figure, such as *Yotsuya Kaidan*’s Oiwa; in the contemporary films the ghost’s brokenness is emphasized to the point where that very disfigurement constitutes the *onryo*’s makeup. The films reduce the ghost to a series of constituent parts and so the shuffling gait of *Ringu*’s Sadako, the character Kayako from *Ju-on (The Grudge)* (2003) dragging her broken body down a flight of stairs, or the ethereal dripping of the drowned child in *Honogurai Mizu No Soko Kara (Dark Water)* (2002), constitutes the ghost’s appearance. The contemporary *onryo* becomes the grotesque, emphasizing its brokenness until it no longer resembles its former humanity, its figuration being derived predominantly from the violence of its genesis. The *Tomie* series of films involve the continual decapitation of the ghostly figure; her severed head regenerates a body from the head down. *Chakushin Ari (One Missed Call)* (2003) uses the dead asthmatic child’s laboured breathing; the sound of her synthetic breathing apparatus becomes an abstracted deathly clarion call. *Chakushin Ari 2 (One Missed Call 2)* (2005) has a ghostly spectre whose mouth had been sewn shut,

⁴ Despite a splashy television campaign, *Ringu*’s domestic popularity was through word of mouth, with limited opening takes but a long and successful box office run as it generated popularity among a teenaged audience. The film’s popularity in England and North America, however, was initially through illegal pirated DVDs. It was not commercially released in America until after the American re-make reached video stores and had exhausted its run.

and the recently released *Kuchisake-onna (Carved/Slit-mouth Woman)* (2007) features a protagonist whose mouth has been slit on both sides leaving a grimace that literally spans from ear to ear.

While the *onryo* tales of the 1950s narrative structure emphasized the transformation of the *onryo* from living being to ghostly spirit, the new films introduce the *onryo* into the narrative already in the ghostly form. The films of the 1950s dramatize the transformation of the *onryo* from victim to spirit – from human to monstrous – and the narrative is a means of restoring to the *onryo* peace in death and restoring humanity to that monster. The contemporary films contrastingly demonstrate little concern for the genesis of the *onryo*, often disclosing the genesis in back-story, if at all. The narrative structure of the contemporary films shifts emphasis from that of the *onryo* as victim of society, to contemporary society as victim of the *onryo*. While *Yotsuya Kaidan*'s Oiwa was a victim of a brutal and brutalizing context in which women were often denied powers to redress wrongs visited upon them, the contemporary films present the *onryo* as belonging to a past generation, whose evils continue to haunt the present society. The films create a fantastic present context in which such societal inequities no longer exist, but the horrors of the past continue to effect the present. While in the earlier films, the *onryo*'s terrible vengeance was meted on those directly responsible for, or representative of those that had wronged the living victim, the new *onryo* is indiscriminate in her bloodlust, attacking anyone she encounters. The *onryo* in the new films is no longer a victim of society's ills, but rather is a malevolent force who haunts the contemporary world, enacting contemporary vengeance for long forgotten ills. The films become investigatory, with the haunted protagonists questing to discover, not the source of the haunting but the means to end the haunting. In the

process the characters occasionally uncover past persecutions, and while tragic, those persecutions are constructed as belonging to a society divorced from the present age, which must suffer the motiveless malignity of supernatural woman.

The *onryō* in the contemporary films is a grotesque abstraction from the *kaidan* stories and becomes metaphorical for the horrors of the contemporary world. That the terrors of capitalism are similarly abstract and indiscriminate in whom they effect is paralleled by the contemporary *onryō*'s irresistible attacks. Vengeance is no longer an addressing of inequality. While the early *onryō* myths were a matter of realigning power to folk tellers, to those most oppressed by society by providing the idea of supernatural vengeance to restore equity to the otherwise powerless, the new films are no longer about providing power to the powerless because the *onryō* no longer represents society. The *onryō* doesn't represent violence done to women in a contemporary violent society, but rather becomes anomalous in her violence to a peaceful society.

That the films regularly present the *onryō* as unable to find rest, only deferment, is paralleled by capitalism's unstoppable advancement. The films *Ring*, *Dark Water*, *One Missed Call* and *The Grudge* all present the *onryō* as continuing in its violence. By the culmination of the film story, the ghost is unable to find peaceful resolution. The violence is deferred, as in the case of *Ring* or *Dark Water*, or is transformed into another figure, as is the case with both *One Missed Call* and *The Grudge* where the supernatural violence of the spirit reproduces itself in those who encounter the ghost. *One Missed Call* ends with the suggestion that the victim has become possessed by the ghost and has become a living avatar for the ghost's vengeance. *The Grudge 2* ends with the victim giving birth to a demon spirit, who becomes a living avatar of the ghost's vengeance. None of the films provide an end

to the *onryo*'s terror, for the contemporary *onryo* can never find peace. The suggestion is that within our contemporary dependence on capitalism and its attendant technologies, we must continue to perpetuate society's evils. As the ghosts of the past cannot find rest, we too cannot divest ourselves of our participation in *Empire*. Resultantly we are doomed because of that dependence and with that awareness comes incurable social malaise and discontent.

Projected Violence and the *Anima*: Woman's inherent nature?

The generation of the 1990s, frequently dubbed 'the lost generation,' is regularly characterized as one suffering social malaise, a malaise which the media is frequently quick to comment upon. The lost generation is depicted as lacking motivation, self centred, suffering from an atomized individualism and rejecting the traditional Japanese ways of life. M. Miyamoto argues:

There is widespread concern that traditional values such as deference to authority, willingness to accept discipline and *messhi hoko* (self sacrifice) – values that many Japanese believe have been crucial to Japan's economic success and social cohesion – are on the decline. (Miyamoto in Kingston 2004: 26)

The Japanese tabloid media, quick to capitalize on the moral decline of its teenagers, endlessly reports on the rise of *Enjo Kosai*, and the rise of young men rejecting the safety of corporate Japan for a lifetime of *arubaito*.⁵ The media presents a lurid picture of the teenaged girls of the lost generation as materialistic and driven by a desire for money into *Enjo Kosai*, Kingston asserts that social commentators are quick to point out that most girls who participate in *Enjo Kosai* are usually not in dire economic circumstances, but rather come from middle-class backgrounds. The magazine *Shukan Jitsuwa*, in March of 1999 argues:

They (Japan's teenaged girls) are the products of an environment, an upbringing and an education hardly conducive to the full ripening of the human personality. As

⁵ *Enjo Kosai* is literally 'compensated dating' involving junior high, or high school girls entertaining older married men. *Arubaito* is part time work; the western equivalent would be a 'McJob.'

children they were indulged to excess by parents bloated with 'bubble' wealth. Their junior high school years coincided with the bubble's collapse. Their parents, unable to descend gracefully from the high life, borrowed recklessly. Wives and mothers who had been at home went out to work. Family intimacy withered. Children grew up believing only in money and its most visible symbols. (Schreiber 1999: 24)

And yet the 'lost decade' also found new hopes. While the Japanese economy was collapsing, it found improved lifestyles and a greater acceptance of diversity.

Furthermore, the Japanese themselves began to question the economic systems which proved to be so fallible, questioning ideologies of filial piety and corrupt corporate values. Jeff Kingston argues "the popular phrase 'not being #1, but being only 1' articulates a new humility and a new-found freedom of self expression. Such affirmation of individuality and uniqueness is a new phenomenon for Japan" (Kingston 2004: 2). Despite the prolonged recession of the 1990s, contemporary Japan is rebuilding and creating a more relaxed society than that of the economic bubble. Kingston asserts "Japan is a better place to live in 2003 than it was in 1990 and, aside from those who lost power, prestige, privileges, and stock investments, few Japanese wish to return to an era associated with avarice, excess, and slavish devotion to corporate life" (2004: 32).

The contemporary attitude toward the 'lost generation' is one of ambivalence, seeing it as turning away from traditional values and entering into a spirit of moral decline and self centeredness, while paradoxically viewing the current generation as democratic, socially aware and pluralistic. This ambivalence toward contemporary Japanese teens makes itself manifest in the contemporary horror films and their re-configuration of the *onryo* figure. Three recent Japanese horror films have presented the *onryo* as a living being who acts upon her own repressed desires, actualizing the sociopathology lying dormant within the film's supposedly vulnerable female victim.

While these films begin as conventional *onryo* ghost stories, the ghost tale invariably turns out to be a distractive device constructed by the victim/antagonist to mask latent desires. In these films, the ‘ghost’ repeatedly turns out to be a member of the younger generation, exemplifying the inherent attitudes and sociopathy imagined within them, by the older generation who project those fears upon the young. This is evident in the story of “One Snowy Night,” in *Yo Nimo Kimyo Na Monogatari* (*Tales of the Unusual*) (2000), the *Tomie* film series, and the film *Otogiriso* (*Saint John’s Wort*) (2001).

A characteristic of the *onryo* archetype is the power of transference. It has been recounted previously that in the story of Lady Rokujo in *Tales of the Genji*, the lady who, so angered by her husband Genji’s infidelities directs her antagonistic thoughts toward Genji’s young mistress. The young mistress falls ill from a mysterious ailment for which no-one can find a cure. It turns out that the Lady *Rokujo* had been spiritually projecting her animosity, targeting the young girl, and was the root cause of the young girl’s mysterious sickness. However, what is most significant of this tale is that the Lady Rokujo was also an innocent. She was neither consciously projecting her thoughts, nor was she even aware that she had been responsible for the young woman’s discomfort and yet her animosity toward the girl was so strong that she had indeed been responsible for the girls’ complaint.

The conceit that a woman’s subconscious desires can manifest malignity continues in contemporary Japanese horror. The tale “One Snowy Night” in the series of short films *Tales Of the Unusual*, begins with several people trapped in a train station during a severe downpour. A young man, in order to pass time, begins to tell the tale of a group of climbers who had been hit by an avalanche in the Swiss Alps. In this tale, there were only two survivors. One of the two men had a broken

leg and for days the two of them waited helplessly for rescue. After four days they ran out of food. However, the healthy man had hidden food outside of their shelter, in order to ensure his own survival. Every day he'd leave the tent in order to check the weather and each time he went out, he'd sneak a bit more food. Eventually, the injured man starved to death and the sole survivor buried him in the snow. But then, the next morning, the survivor woke to discover the frozen body of his companion lying beside him. Each day he'd bury the dead body but every morning, upon waking, he'd discover the body to be lying there beside him.

At this point, the young commuter's story ends. His listener asks him what happened next, but the storyteller claims he doesn't know. The tale is simply a mystery. An older man, also waiting for the rain to subside interrupts, stating, "I too know that story, but you left out the most important part." It seems the most disturbing part to this story, lies elsewhere. The film, on the older man's re-telling of the tale, cuts to a dramatization of his story. However, his version of events takes on a much different character, most notably, with the additions of both a woman victim and the vengeful spirit archetype. The re-configured version of events relies entirely on a presumed knowledge of the characteristics of the *onryo* figure, and so resultantly demands a female victim.

The second version of the tale begins with a plane crash and instead of only two survivors, there are now five: a doctor; the head of Kawasaki Corporation; a reporter; and two women, Misa and Mari, neither of whom are identified with a profession. The women are the only two characters whose names are given. Of the survivors, it is now one of the two women who has the broken leg. The mountain, where the plane crashed, is hit by a blizzard and the survivors decide to trek to a climber's cabin which is marked on the plane's navigation charts. Because Mari has

a broken leg, she must be carried and as the blizzard intensifies the group decide they have no choice but to leave Mari behind. They carve a bivouac into the snow to provide her with shelter with the intention of returning for her when the blizzard subsides. They bury Mari in a deep pit in the snow, leaving her with food and blankets and continue on their way. The group eventually find the cabin and wait for the snow to stop falling.

In the warmth of the cabin, Misa returns to thoughts of her abandoned friend Mari, and runs into the snow in order to retrieve her. She finds Mari, who in the meantime had started to dig her way out of the bivouac and is now near frozen to death. In their haste to dig Mari out, the reporter accidentally stabs her in the neck with the shovel and Mari dies. The two return to the cabin to wait out the rest of the storm. Fearing the consequences of nocturnal hypothermia, the group of four decides on a sleep schedule with one person constantly awake. The schedule is to take five minute shifts; the watchman taking the bed of the next person as each shift ends, thereby forcing the sleeper to rouse themselves with the movement. After the sleep cycle is over, Misa recognizes that there must have been a fifth person in the cabin, as they've all ended up in the wrong bed.

They return to their sleeping cycle, this time keeping to their own beds. On waking, they discover the president of Kawasaki to be dead in his bed. Furthermore, his body is frozen stiff and so they realize he must have been dead two hours at least. The three remaining survivors conclude that it must be the ghost of Mari seeking revenge for her untimely demise and indeed, in the dead of night, the film shows a ghostly figure glide through the room. The two others fall asleep while the doctor remains awake to keep watch watch. The film shows a medium close up of the doctor's terrified face while a woman's hand reaches into frame from offscreen left.

The hand does not touch the doctor but in the next shot he is lying lifeless with a loaf of bread clutched in his hand.

The two sole survivors, Misa and the reporter, decide to set up a video camera to record their final hours as a testament to the fact that they had indeed survived the plane crash. Misa wakes to discover the reporter dead with an axe in his back. Terrified, she leaves a video message to the dead Mari, asking if she will die next. She winds the tape back to review the message only to see the figure of Mari in profile plunge the axe into the reporter's back.

After reviewing the tape in which she witnesses Mari kill the reporter, Misa drops the blanket in which she was huddling, only to discover that it is she who is wearing Mari's clothing. She had put them on earlier in order to provide more layers to protect her from the encroaching cold. As realization dawns upon her, a masked figure, which turns out to be a rescue worker, asks her what happened here? The camera cuts from a close up of Misa's terrified face to a long shot of her sitting in the snow with two rescue workers and her three dead companions lying on the frozen ground. There is no cabin in sight and they are a mere dozen feet from Mari's dead body. The story ends with a series of cuts to the various frozen corpses and the narrator's voice returns to the original tale of the two mountain climbers, stating "Let me tell you the rest of the story. The survivor became scared and set up his video camera. The next morning the corpse was back by his side. When he looked at the tape, he saw himself dig up the body and bring it into the tent." Both the thieving mountain climber and the terrified woman plane crash survivor were actualizing their guilt feelings in their sleep, although the actions of the two villain/victim figures varies greatly between the two stories. The characters' functions are the same but the ideologies behind the actions are vastly dissimilar.

In the mountain climber tale, the initial act of villainy is conscious on the part of the man. He actively hides food from his injured companion, knowing full well this may result in his death. And indeed his companion does die. His guilty conscience infects his unconscious thoughts to such a degree that he becomes a somnambulist, nightly digging out his companion's frozen body in order to punish himself. Conversely, in the "One Snowy Night" tale, the woman is not directly culpable for her friend's death. Indeed, it is she who most actively tries to save Mari, both through her insistence not to leave Mari behind at the original crash sight, and in her repeated protestations to the group that decides to leave Mari in the bivouac. Furthermore, it is Misa who once in the safety of the mountain lodge returns to the snow to retrieve her friend. Finally, it is the reporter, not Misa, who provides the *accidental* killing blow with the shovel as Misa attempts to dig her friend from the snow. Despite the death of Mari being purely a consequence of the trials of the plane crash, Misa continually blames herself for not having done enough to help her friend. And so while the mountain climber tale has a direct act of villainy upon the victim, the 'One Snowy Night' tale has the victim die in unfortunate circumstances. The significance of this lies within the two types of *onryo* myth. While the tale of the mountain climbers has a male spirit which is supposedly returned from the dead, seeking retribution for a criminal action, the power of the female *onryo* is so great that death, even accidental death, is villainy enough to warrant the wrath of the returned spirit.

The resolution of the differing tales is to reveal that the ghost does not exist. There is no *onryo*, male or female, only guilty feelings materializing in somnambulist actions. In the mountain climber's tale, it is discovered that the man, out of guilt feelings torments himself with the body of his deceased companion.

However, in the tale of “One Snowy Night” Misa is not punishing herself (although she does succeed in scaring herself) rather she becomes the agency of Mari’s vengeance. She metes out punishment against those who elected to abandon Mari in the bivouac. Misa then literally becomes Mari’s *onryo*, not a ghost, per se, but the living avatar of Mari’s vengeance driven desires. The film even creates some ambiguity in Misa’s motivation, is she acting out her latent desires, or is she indeed possessed by the ghost of Mari? She appropriates Mari’s attire and when asked ‘what is your name’ by the rescue workers, she is unable to answer, left stating “my name is. . . My name. . . My name is. . .” By this point she is unsure whether she is Misa, a woman possessed by the spirit of Mari, or operating under what she has convinced herself to be Mari’s desires for vengeance – the answer is irrelevant. What is of importance though, is the characterization of a wronged woman’s post mortem animosity versus that of a wronged man. While the mountain climber haunts himself with a restless corpse, the plane crash survivors are without exception bludgeoned to death by a homicidal amnesiac acting out the wishes (real or imagined) of a vengeful spirit. And yet what is peculiar is that the film, while clearly laying blame upon the greedy mountain climber, is reluctant to lay blame upon the young crash survivor. She is coded as being powerless to prevent her being possessed. She is framed as a victim, unable emotionally or psychologically to survive the tests of the brutal wilderness. The rescue agents come to her aide, rescuing this poor, deranged woman. And indeed, her actions were automatous, beyond her powers of rationality and reason, to control. She is entrapped by events that are beyond her limited faculties to survive.

Misa becomes the *anima*, a psychological projection of the (imagined) violence inherent within women. Gregory Barrett, in defining the anima in relation

to the female *onryo* in his *Archetypes of Japanese Film* states “the anima is the personification of all feminine psychological tendencies in a man’s psyche” (Barrett 1989: 104). Barrett posits the anima is an expression of the male unconscious. Jung argues that in the patriarchal imagination, the female psyche is diametrically opposed to the male psyche, a psyche supposedly governed by reason and intellect. The anima is governed by emotion.

Behaviour is conditioned by social conventions, precedent and expectations. Jung gives several examples in his essay “The Relations between the Ego and the Unconscious.” Jung writes:

Society expects, and indeed must expect, every individual to play the part assigned to him as perfectly as possible, so that a man who is a parson must not only carry out his official functions objectively, but must at all times and in all circumstances play the role of parson in a flawless manner. Society demands this as a kind of surety; each must stand at his post, here a cobbler, there a poet. No man is expected to be both. (Jung 1969: 94)

While the individual presents an outer face or persona to the world, that individual also has an inner face which is turned inward toward the unconscious. The outer face, or persona, the mask that individuals present to society depending on the context, has a dual function; to allow the individual, regardless of the true nature of his or her inner self to conform to society’s expectations; and secondly to hide the inner self from the rest of society. The inner self, the hidden, repressed nature inherent in men; Jung calls the *anima*, while the hidden inner nature inherent within women Jung labels the *animus*.

Just as the persona is a construct, created by the desires of the unconscious, so too is the anima. Jung defines the anima:

Everything that is true of the persona and of all autonomous complexes in general also holds true of the anima. She likewise is a personality, and this is why she is so easily projected upon a woman. So long as the anima is unconscious she is always projected, for everything unconscious is projected. (Jung 1969: 108)

Essentially, Jung argues that the anima is the inner woman within masculine society, but that depiction of the inner woman is contingent on masculine fear. It is important to remember that the anima is a male construction, devised in a patriarchal world complete with its unconscious projections of what it is to be woman. Jung argues “An inherited collective image of woman exists in a man’s unconscious, with the help of which he apprehends the nature of woman” (Jung 1969: 108). Of course, this is no true ‘nature of woman’ but how woman *appears to man*. It is important to see women in Japanese film, not as woman *qua* woman, but woman *qua* unconscious construct. This is particularly true of the anima for she represents man’s fear of woman or the potential power inherent within women which must be contained and restrained through the reinforcement of hegemony.

Misa becomes violent because the projection upon her of man’s inner *anima* is a violent figure. Because the persona of women is seen to be calm and delicate although emotional, the *anima* is seen as pathological, violent and destructive. Misa, in her unconscious state, becomes extremely violent, killing everyone around her. Paradoxically, she is exonerated because she is simply acting out her ‘true’ nature. It must be recalled that the tale is itself told by two male commuters and represents their attitudes to women. The film too is created by an industry that continues to be predominantly controlled by men, and therefore reflects the perpetuation of patriarchal fantasy.

The connection between women and the *anima*, while unconscious, is ideological. The perpetuation of the belief that women and men operate differently at the subconscious level, is related to patriarchal ideology and is a means of furthering the sexual division of labour. It must not be forgotten that the film never depicts Misa acting out this violence. Rather, the viewer concludes that it is Misa

who performs the action because she is discovered as the sole survivor in this inhospitable wilderness. However, it is patriarchal society which discovers Misa in the snow, and it is through the male rescue workers' view, as recounted by the male commuters, that we audience see and ascribe blame to Misa. We conclude that it must indeed have been she that committed the crimes because we viewers too function under similar ideological/psychological complexes and conceive of women as comprising dormant sociopathy. We unanimously come to the conclusion that Misa is psychotic because we too engage in such patriarchal ideological discourse.

The film *Tomie* similarly has a female victim/protagonist who is terrorized by a vengeance seeking figure and who also remains the sole survivor to tell the tale. *Tomie* (1998) is based on the Manga series by Itou Junji, as are its sequels *Tomie Replay*, *Tomie Re-birth*, and *Tomie, Forbidden Fruit*. All four films, as well as the graphic novel use the same premise. A high school girl named Kawakami Tomie is in actuality an alien being who can never be killed. She is destined to spend eternity being killed and resurrected, only to be killed again. Oikawa's treatment of the original source material differs from the sequels, for while the *manga* as well as the further films in the franchise, present the figure of Tomie as an alien being destroying the lives of her compatriots in a grotesque form of Darwinian competitiveness, Oikawa's film in its resolution, undermines the supposed 'real' existence of the alien Tomie, suggesting instead that she is a product of the female victim's imagination.

The Oikawa film begins with the original Tomie source material. High school girl Isumisawa Tsukiko is haunted by bloody dreams of murder. Tsukiko suffers from amnesia, and is haunted nightly by these images of blood and death. She begins treatment with a psychiatrist in order to cure herself of these terrible

dreams. One day a detective visits the psychiatrist in order to interview her about a recent murder mystery. A teenaged woman named Kawakami Tomie had been murdered by her boyfriend. Several of Tomie's classmates have also been murdered and six of the witnesses are now in a mental institution. What is most puzzling about this case is that it has striking similarities to a case that involved Tsukiko three years prior. In that case, another girl, also named Kawakami Tomie had been killed. It turns out that Tomie had been having an affair with her best friend Tsukiko's boyfriend, Tanabe. The two had been continuing relations until one day Tanabe killed and dismembered Tomie. Tsukiko who had been a witness to the crime, subsequently developed amnesia from the shock of the trauma. Her mother had told her she lost her memory in a car crash to protect her from her past. The murderous Tanabe meanwhile had been placed in a mental institution. The most puzzling thing about the Tomie murders is that a Kawakami Tomie has been murdered in similar circumstances countless times, spanning back to the 18th Century. In every single reported case Tomie's body was never found.

Tsukiko is now a college student studying photography. She has developed another long term love relationship with another young man and blissfully unable to recall her traumatic past, is slowly rebuilding her life since her 'accident'. In the meantime, Tanabe has escaped the mental asylum in which he was imprisoned. He is shown walking through the town with a large carrier bag in which there is a living dismembered head. He feeds the head and it very quickly grows into a young woman, also named Tomie. The reborn Tomie, soon bored of tormenting Tanabe, decides to find a job. Her employment is coincidentally at the same restaurant in which Tsukiko's current boyfriend works. It appears Tomie harbours certain resentments toward Tsukiko for having been able to so easily forget Tomie's past

existence and erase the memory of her from her life. A number of men are killed in Tomie's search for Tsukiko, and her animosity toward the young woman culminates in a showdown in a hospital. With the majority of Tsukiko's friends and acquaintances killed, Tomie finally encounters Tsukiko. Just as Tomie is explaining why she is tormenting Tsukiko, Tsukiko's boyfriend stabs Tomie with a large knife, once again killing the resurrected girl.

It is at this point the Oikawa film diverges from the source material. Tsukiko drives the dismembered corpse of Tomie to a forested area in order to bury the body. The body begins to move, and the terrified Tsukiko flees the scene. She runs to a lake, where she is pursued by the reanimated Tomie. There is a final confrontation upon the dock, where Tsukiko asks Tomie why she is tormenting her. Tomie responds with "I can't believe you have forgotten. Well, I suppose I should tell you. . . I am you."

The two girls laugh riotously, Tsukiko hands Tomie an ignited stick of dynamite and then pushes her into the water where she explodes into a million pieces. The film then cuts to an epilogue in which Tsukiko has once again rebuilt her life. She continues with her career in photography and develops a self portrait. Upon looking at the picture in the developing tray she notices a mark on her face. She runs to a mirror to inspect her own features and discovers a small birthmark under her eye – the same birthmark that had been identified with Tomie. At that moment Tomie runs into the mirror's frame and the two girls embrace and the film ends.

The Oikawa film, then, completely changes the ideological and thematic meanings of the *Tomie* franchise. Tomie, the villainess, is no longer a demonic figure haunting a peerless victim. Rather, Tomie is the villainy lying dormant within Tsukiko. Tomie represents the latent desires in Tsukiko and indeed it is those whom

Tsukiko has reason to hate who become her victims – her school rival, her supposed friend who has an affair with her boyfriend, her condescending psychiatrist and her cheating boyfriend. Tomie actualizes Tsukiko's animosity. Tomie then becomes a distractive device, a complex fabrication that permits Tsukiko's unconscious to take over and actualize her darkest desires. And yet, like Lady Rokujo before her, Tsukiko continues to be a peerless victim, so consumed by her repressed unconscious desires that it is not until the final confrontation that she even becomes aware of her own status as *anima*.

Presumably, her blowing up of Tomie comes to represent her self awareness and her growing psychological healing, and yet just as the Tomie legend maintains that Tomie can never be killed and that she will continually return to propagate her mission of aggression, so too does the repressed desire resurface and thus the final scene is so chilling. Tsukiko has not found psychological healing, her unconscious *anima* returns in the final image, implying her continued violence to society and to patriarchy.

The final film in the projected anima series of films is *Otogiriso (Saint John's Wort)* (2001). A beautiful young woman whose mother died in childbirth, had been raised by an aunt, who also died when the girl was 16. The orphan Nami, now 20, has just discovered her father too has passed away and being his sole heir has inherited his entire estate. One night she inspects the estate with Kohei, her video game designer boyfriend who is looking for inspiration for a new game. The two discover Nami's father Kaizawa Soichi, a famous expressionist painter, harboured many dark secrets. Hidden within the mansion's dark corridors are the mummified corpses of several missing young boys. It seems that Kaizawa had been torturing these children in order to find inspiration for his macabre paintings. And yet,

through his collection of work, one of his subjects seems to grow older. A collection of paintings involves a beautiful dark haired girl who closely resembles Nami.

In her investigations, Nami discovers an old photograph of two babies. On the back of the picture are two names, Nami and Naomi. Nami, it seems, had a twin sister. As Nami and Kohei unravel more of Kaizawa's secrets, Kohei is attacked and killed by a mysterious woman who must be Naomi. Naomi then leads Nami through the mansion to Kaizawa Soichi's hidden study, where Nami asks "are you Naomi, my twin sister?" Naomi reveals to Nami that she is indeed Naomi's long lost twin, but is in fact her twin *brother*. Kaizawa took his inspiration from the abuse of young boys – he had no need for a girl – hence the separation of the twins. And yet his *subject* matter was girls. While Nami had been raised in the safety of her aunt's house, Naomi had been Kaizawa's favourite torture device and inspiration. Naomi, perversely, took pride in the participation of his father's art and was desperate to see the final work finished. Trapped in the house and cut off from the world, the paintings acted as testament to Naomi's existence. Kaizawa Soichi's final unfinished piece was titled "The Girl with Eyes of Flame" and involved his favourite subject's demise. Naomi demands that Nami, Kaizawa's sole remaining relative, must complete the final work in order to provide meaning in Naomi's life. Naomi douses himself in gasoline and drops a lit gas lamp. He then stabs out his eyes with a knife. Nami picks up a paintbrush and begins frantically painting while Naomi immolates and immortalizes himself. The story ends with the house engulfed in flames and Nami fulfilling her father's legacy.

This ending, while providing closure to the story, isn't the end of the film. The film cuts to a subjective shot of Kohei and his fellow game designers looking at a computer screen congratulating themselves on designing a very scary video game.

Kohei states, “I don’t know, it’s kind of mean to Nami, don’t you think?” The shot cuts to Nami, who states “It’s fine as an ending.” “But, let’s see mine.” She taps a few keys on the keyboard, and the film returns to the final few minutes of the Kaizawa Soichi story. Kohei, who had been attacked by Naomi, does not die, rather he is merely badly injured. Naomi takes Nami up to the secret study to paint, but Kohei discovers the hidden room. While Naomi sets himself on fire, Kohei bursts into the study and drags the protesting Nami out of the burning room and away from her painting. Nami is prevented from realizing what she considers to be her destiny. She desires self immolation. The revised ending leaves the two survivors watching the Kaizawa mansion burn to the ground. The other game designers praise Nami for her exciting ending and the film draws to a close.

The significance of this film is that both endings are clearly coded within the film’s framing story as products of Nami’s imagination. It is revealed that it is she, not Kohei, who is the chief designer. The psychotic behaviour of her deceased father (which then becomes a contamination within her own bloodline), the dementia of her tortured brother and her own active desire to complete Kaizawa’s macabre work all become actively constructed within Nami’s own imagination. She constructs herself as the *anima/animus* split, as actualized by the trans-gendered relationship between her and her non existent twin sister/brother. The twin becomes the doppelganger embodying the repressed desires from within, but is revealed to be wholly a product of Nami’s imagination. The contemporary films often construct the female vengeful spirit as a psychological projection. The imagined violence of women is no more palpable than in Miike Takashi’s film *Odishon*, (*Audition*) (1999).

Fear and Consequence: Woman as Victim of Male Psychosis:

As filmmaker Miike Takashi has proven in his 1999 film *Odishon*, (*Audition*), of all the ‘scary women’ in Japanese film, it is the living embodiment of the *onryo* – the living avatar of vengeance – that is the most terrifying. She is so terrible because encoded within the living avatar is her potentiality to be anyone, anywhere and with the supernatural removed from her permutation she is directly aligned to the real prospect of women’s vengeful desires over patriarchy’s inequities being meted against an unguarded society. With the fantasy element of the *onryo* removed, Miike’s presentation of the vengeful female takes on a chilling twist and his optimization of realist film techniques aids in his portrait of the living *onryo* as an ostensibly ‘real’ figure. Miike carefully constructs his film using film techniques that create verisimilitude. Miike, however, at certain points in the film, undermines that verisimilarity of his depiction of the avatar through his utilizing elements of dream narrative in order to question the potentiality of the living vengeful female which his realist formal technique insists upon. Through the course of the film, as the dream elements increasingly rupture the film’s narrative realism, Miike begins to utilize expressive formal devices to further disrupt the film’s aesthetic realism, suggesting that the living avatar is in actuality the *anima*, the projection by patriarchy upon woman of her supposed inherent villainous tendencies.

The film’s director, Miike, is problematic in film studies as he overtly refuses to be seen as the film’s maker. According to Tom Mes, in his book *Agitator, the Film’s of Takashi Miike*, Miike prefers to be seen as a film *arranger*, a ‘hired gun’ who enters a film set in order to shoot the film, rarely writing the script or finalizing the editing (Mes, 2004: 10). Yet, while Miike defies categorization as a film’s author, he can be seen as an *auteur* in that there are thematic, graphic and ideological

consistencies throughout his body of work. While the films Miike directs are not ostensibly written by him, Mes reports Miike “doesn’t refuse any offers to direct a film, provided he feels he can do something interesting with the material handed to him” (2004: 10). It is through Miike’s treatment and arrangement of pre-existent material that certain motifs appear and a type of authorship can be credited to him.

Tom Mes is a well published critic in Japanese film who has analyzed the film *Audition* in numerous publications both online and in print, most recently providing an article for the edited anthology *The Cinema of Japan and Korea*.⁶ Within his articles, Mes continually analyzes *Audition* positing the film’s resolution as ‘real’ rather than as allegorical. This is a fundamental misreading of the film which compromises his analysis of the film’s various metaphorical meanings.

The film culminates with the villainess Asami attacking the protagonist Aoyama’s son with a spray can of what is presumably a drug that causes paralysis. She chases the boy up a flight of stairs but at the top of the stairs the boy kicks out and sends his assailant down the flight where upon impact with the landing, she breaks her neck. Paralyzed and with her head turned in the direction of the similarly paralyzed Aoyama, the two former lovers are left staring at each other. Mes describes this moment in his book *Agitator*: “As Aoyama and Asami lie there staring at each other, their eyes convey that they are finally beyond lies” (Mes 2004: 191). Mes argues that the two, who had so many lies between them, are left stripped of all infidelities and have come to a mutual understanding – their shared pain is beyond lies. Further, in his essay “Odishon (Audition)” found in the anthology *The Cinema of Japan and Korea*, Mes argues the film had been widely misinterpreted as a

⁶ Some of Mes’ publications on *Audition* can be found in the book *Agitator, the Cinema of Takashi Miike, The Midnight Eye Guide to New Japanese Film*, and on the online journal of Japanese cinema *Midnight Eye*.

feminist statement. Mes suggests that feminists interpret the film as such because the film provides a woman who has been deceived by a man for his sexual pleasure, meting out vengeance. Mes asserts the film cannot be feminist. Mes writes:

Asami is not an immaculate, victimised foil. She too has lied to and deceived Aoyama. During her torture, she calls Aoyama a liar and blames him for deceiving her and the women at the audition. She is right, but self-righteously so. From the moment they met, everything she told Aoyama about herself during their dates was a lie; her feelings for him were true, without doubt, but even they came dressed in lies (Mes 2004: 202).

Yet Mes' analysis of the film throughout his critical work, is dependent on a reading that assumes Asami's violence to be literal rather than allegorical and the film at key points defies such a literal reading. Rather than implying that Asami's violence is an attempt to rectify a patriarchal wrongdoing, the film conversely suggests that Asami's 'lies' and violence are in fact created by the protagonist Aoyama's imagination as a manifestation of his guilty feelings over both deceiving Asami and for letting go of his past love for his long deceased wife. From this perspective, the ending can be read as positing that Aoyama's supposed physical pain is in fact allegorical of the metaphysical pain of his tormented psychology and his emotional paralysis is caused by his inability to confess the truth of his infidelities to the innocent Asami. The film suggests that he projects his anxieties upon Asami, constructing her as a monstrous 'other' in order to assuage the monstrousness inherent in his own deceitful behaviour.

The film implies the tale to be allegorical in two crucial ways. The first is through the repeated motif of the protagonist Aoyama's feeling guilt over his searching for love seven years after the death of his wife. The second way Miike suggests the film is allegorical is through the combined use of realist and expressive formal strategies. The purpose of this essay is twofold: firstly to argue that the film

is not intended to be read as literal but rather provides Asami's violence as a manifestation of Aoyama's guilt riddled imaginings; and secondly to re-inscribe a type of feminist analysis onto the film. This is not to say that Miike himself is feminist, indeed, his films frequently depict graphic mutilations of the female body and are often aggressively misogynistic. Regardless of the film's outcome, it continues to depict (whether as a manifestation of masculine psychological damage or a literalization of the vengeance driven female psychopath) woman as monstrous. And yet the film is structured around a critique of patriarchal society's attraction/aversion to the monstrous feminine and can be interpreted as a sophisticated analysis of patriarchy's projection upon the female body, the *anima*. Miike's film proposes that the monstrous feminine is in fact entirely a construct of patriarchal society's fears of the female other, compounded and confounded by male anxiety.

The film implies the tale to be allegorical in several ways. The first is through the repeated motif of the protagonist Aoyama's feeling guilt over his searching for love seven years after the death of his wife. The film opens with a memory sequence, shot with all the conventional trappings of a nostalgic gaze; the usage of soft focus, of diffused lighting, of a slightly slowed frame rate and a faint echo to all the sounds. The first shot of the film is of an extreme close-up of a bouquet of flowers and a card amidst the offering states 'get well soon mother'. The camera cuts to a long shot revealing that the flowers are being carried by a young boy. The camera then cuts to a woman in a hospital bed being comforted by her husband, Aoyama, in her final minutes of life. The camera returns to the young boy and in a long shot with the boy in the centre of the frame, the camera tracks with his movement. What is striking about this scene is that contrasted with the conventions

of the nostalgic gaze is the unexpected but overt presence of the colour blue, a colour which through the course of the film will come to be frequently associated with Aoyama's recollections of his dead wife and will come to signify his guilt feelings for abandoning her memory in choosing to find a new lover.

The film then cuts to an exterior long shot depicting the father and son walking away from the camera while the film's title appears in red lettering. Again, this outdoor shot, rather than using natural daylight has a cold steel blue tone with which the bold red of the title is contrasted. The film then cuts to an impossibly blue sea and a title informing the viewer that seven years have passed. Father and son are fishing and while the son has caught a number of small fish, the father who has caught nothing states "I'd rather catch pretty women," informing the viewer that Aoyama is still single but is desirous to find a 'pretty woman.' As the sea is too rough they decide to go home but at this point the father does in fact catch a fish, the largest of the day, foreshadowing his pulling from the deep blue a woman that he will come to fear as replacing his memory of his dead wife.

The film then cuts to father and son at home where they have cooked the fish. The son, in preparing the fish, tells his father that black bass are born asexual and that they change their sex after they have grown. Aoyama asks his son if the fish is male or female and the son reminds him that they already removed the ovaries, to which Aoyama replies "I don't know much about ovaries." In an economical use of dialogue, Miike summarizes Aoyama's experience with women: he simply does not understand them, for to Aoyama, women are as mysterious as both the sea and a fish which can change its gender. After these two short scenes which concisely introduce the character of Aoyama, the film begins its work of establishing the audition and creating the pretext for Aoyama's meeting the mysterious Asami.

Contrasting with the prologue which was marked by short takes, frequent camera movement, diffused lighting and the expressive use of the colour blue, the film has by this point switched to natural and naturalistic lighting, little camera movement and relies predominantly on long takes in order to reveal the action. Miike works hard to remove all expressive devices in the unfolding of his narrative in order to create a sense of realism which will be later contrasted by the film's excessive use of graphic violence.

The film's narrative is propelled by the protagonist, Aoyama, deciding that he needs to find a new wife. The film relies predominantly on long takes and long shots, rarely focussing on Aoyama's face and frequently shooting Aoyama from the side in order to maintain a respectful distance to what turns out to be a very private man. This is exemplified by a scene in Aoyama's office in which he is approached by his secretary who informs him that she is getting married. The camera cuts to a close up of the secretary's face and then to a long shot of Aoyama in profile. He wordlessly acknowledges her and then enters an elevator. It is only in the elevator, where Aoyama is alone, that the camera dares cut to a close up of Aoyama's reaction to the secretary's announcement. By this point it becomes clear that the film centres on Aoyama and he becomes a form of narrator and his presence shall be central in every single scene.

Aoyama meets his colleague Yoshikawa in a bar, where Aoyama tells his friend that he feels it is time he found a new wife. Yoshikawa devises the titular audition which is a clever ploy for Aoyama to select a potential wife. The men, who both work as producers for a successful television production company, devise a reality show in which 'tomorrow's star' will be discovered today. In their plan, women will audition for the lead role in a television movie and of all the applicants,

Aoyama will select one whom he considers an ideal woman to date. She will then be cast as the first runner up in the show, leaving her free to date him while the winner will be engaged in her duties as ‘tomorrow’s star’. The show’s call for application submissions turns out to be a success and Aoyama selects thirty candidates whom he will audition.

While scanning through the applications Aoyama is interrupted by his son. The scene begins with a long shot of Aoyama in his room seated at his desk and looking through the various application profiles. On his desk and prominent within the background is a photograph of his dead wife Ryoko. The camera cuts 180° to a low angle reverse shot with the photograph now in the foreground, although with its back facing the camera. Aoyama, feeling guilty about emotionally deserting his late wife’s memory, turns the photo away from himself and directly into the camera’s line of vision. And so, while Aoyama may feel guilty for his actions, he symbolically cannot escape his wife’s gaze for as he turns it away from himself, it becomes mirrored in the camera’s lens. Aoyama’s phone rings and it turns out to be his colleague telling Aoyama to be scrupulous in his reading the applications and not to make a judgement based on the accompanying photograph alone. Aoyama hangs up the phone and is immediately interrupted by his son. Once again emphasizing his guilt feelings, Aoyama scrambles to hide from his son what he is doing, wherein his son informs Aoyama that he too has found a girlfriend. His son leaves and it is at that moment that Aoyama spills his coffee and spies a particular application which he then reads. This is an application from a young woman named Asami, who from this point will capture the imagination of the would be Lotahrio. While he reads the application’s accompanying cover letter with his wife’s image prominent in the foreground, upon the writer’s words “Live or die, its just a thin line between them,”

the camera cuts to a shot of his late wife sitting up in her deathbed, once again bathed in blue tones. This is clearly a subjective shot manifesting Aoyama's guilt feelings toward his coming acceptance of his wife's death and his desires to find another love. The camera then cuts to a close up of the application form, giving weight to Asami's head shot photograph stapled to the application. This is symbolic of Aoyama replacing the image of his wife with the image of Asami. Aoyama, then, is first introduced to the mysterious Asami in the context of his guilt feelings toward his ex-wife exemplified by both his subjective memory image of her and by his guilty scramble to hide his actions from his son upon his son's unexpected intrusion. Aoyama's guilt will mark his relationship with Asami from the outset.

Aoyama feels minor compunctions about the nature of the audition as a ruse to meet women (he states "I feel like a criminal") but dauntless carries through with the procedure. The audition room is filled with an intense white light, magnifying the intensity of the white floor and walls. Situated in the centre of the room (and the centre of the frame for most of this sequence) is a single black chair in which the aspiring actresses sit and present themselves to the two judges. The various auditions are shown in a breezy montage that is accompanied with light music which comes to an abrupt halt with the entrance of the twenty eighth candidate, Asami. Until this point, throughout the audition process, Aoyama had remained silent while his colleague had asked pointed questions about the girls' sexuality, lifestyle choices and goals. However, with the 28th candidate's audition, Aoyama is compelled to speak. Of the thirty women who are called into the audition, Aoyama becomes entranced by a willowy beauty; a beguiling twenty four year old dressed entirely in white whose pale complexion is offset by her straight, exquisitely black hair. Throughout the film Asami will be shown in white, forever graphically connecting

her to the audition process and reinforcing the idea that she is and will remain Aoyama's *fantasy* woman, continually associated with the fantasy selection process of the audition. Aoyama, who had previously been struck by Asami's application and covering letter in which she laments the end of her ballet dance career owing to a waist injury, speaks to Asami for the first time during the audition process and questions her melancholic attitude to the end of her ballet career. He informs her "You are bound to have to give up something precious in your life, and there's nothing you can do but accept that fact," words that have particular resonance for Aoyama in the context of his difficulty in accepting his own wife's untimely death. He feels a particular kinship to Asami as they have both experienced loss which they both equate with death.

After the auditions Aoyama telephones Asami and he begins to arrange dates with her. The sequence starts with a long shot of Aoyama seated at his desk with the photograph of Ryoko looking on. The camera, in a continuous take for the duration of the call, stays on Aoyama, foregrounding the wife's image. This is contrasted with the call from his colleague Yoshikawa. Immediately after Aoyama ends the call to Asami, his phone rings. It is his colleague, but as he speaks to Yoshikawa the film cuts to a shot of Yoshikawa speaking on the phone. At this point, Aoyama does not know Asami and so he cannot possibly imagine what she is doing at home. He can however imagine Yoshikawa's behaviour on the phone, and so the film, directed by Aoyama's subjectivity, provides the image of Yoshikawa. In the conversation Yoshikawa reveals that he is made nervous by Asami and had decided to investigate her by phoning her referees. Apparently, the man whom Asami had listed as her agent has been missing for the past 18 months. Furthermore, Asami had never been

registered at his agency. Aoyama dismisses his friend's concerns telling him it is probably a simple misunderstanding.

Yoshikawa's concerns about women are matched by Aoyama's son, who when asked about his own girlfriend, answers "She's not exactly what she seems, she's so complex. I'm scared of women," thematically echoing Yoshikawa's sentiments about Asami's mysterious resume. Not heeding the prophecies of his friend and of his son, Aoyama again phones Asami and they meet for a date. At the date, Aoyama asks the girl about Shimada, the man she had identified as her referee and she confesses that she had never met the man but a friend had told her that she should always claim to have an agent as it is customary in auditions to be represented by an agency. Indeed the producers had asked her for a referee and her lie then did in fact propel her through the audition process.

Tom Mes identifies this date as using a subjective shot of Aoyama through Asami's point of view, while not providing a similar subjective shot of Asami from Aoyama's point of view, choosing instead to use a more conventional over-the-shoulder shot. Mes argues that this is a disorientating technique that is used to hint that something is not quite right in the scene (Mes 2004: 182), and while indeed it is disquieting, Mes concludes that it is with Asami that we should be worried. This moment is of note because we are, for the first time, asked to identify with someone other than the film's protagonist. Yet in this scene it is Asami who makes a confession (whether it is an honest confession or not is irrelevant, because for Aoyama and the audience at this point it must be assumed to be the truth) whereas Aoyama, who the subjective gaze puts under scrutiny, is not confessing that the audition was a ruse in order to meet ladies. It is Aoyama who is objectified by the camera's gaze at this point and it is Aoyama who is continuing a lie while Asami is

making a confession. The use of the subjective gaze is not to create identification with Asami but is a filmic strategy to emphasize Aoyama's nervousness at continuing to hide his deceitfulness toward Asami. By shooting him in close up Miike forces Aoyama to address the camera. He is literally objectified by the three gazes of cinema, the camera's; Asami's; and the viewer's and resultantly his nervousness is literally placed under scrutiny, a scrutiny that is usually reserved for the depiction of women. It is Miike's disrupting filmic convention that is so disquieting.

Yoshikawa tells Aoyama that he really should slow down in his dating Asami, and Aoyama tries to heed Yoshikawa's advice. This attempt is exemplified by images of Aoyama seated at his desk with his phone prominent in the foreground. Periodically throughout this scene, the film cuts to images of Asami sitting in her apartment beside her phone waiting for Aoyama to call. Situated beside Asami is a large burlap bag, the contents of which remain hidden for the duration of these shots. Despite Yoshikawa's pleas for Aoyama to take things slowly and wait a little longer before seeing Asami again, Aoyama decides to call her. The film cuts to Asami in her room and her phone rings. She slowly cracks a smile and suddenly the bag beside her begins to thrash violently. This is the viewer's first explicit depiction that things are very much wrong with Asami, and the viewer at this point now has knowledge which Aoyama lacks. Miike creates terror by providing for the viewer this moment of dramatic irony.

Eventually the two begin dating in earnest and Aoyama takes Asami on a much more serious second date. The scene begins with Asami walking down the street while her voice is heard on the audio track, stating in a sound bridge "This may seem brusque, but I was very happy that you called." The camera cuts mid sentence

to a long shot of the two seated at a small café table in a coffee shop cum bar and Asami is finishing the sentence which was started in the previous shot. In a long shot, Aoyama, who is seated frame right, has half a beer in front of him and Asami is seated frame left. Presumably Aoyama had been waiting at the designated meeting point and Asami has just arrived. In a single long take, Aoyama starts the conversation and they exchange pleasantries while a waiter enters the frame to deposit a second beer in front of Asami. At this point the camera begins to cut on the conversation, using a conventional shot reverse shot structure. Aoyama asks Asami about her family and she informs him that her family are doing well, telling him briefly about her father's passion for golf. She ends this portion of dialogue with the statement "my family is very harmonious, an ordinary family." While she talks the camera is focused on a tight medium shot of her speaking and there are two very subtle, barely perceptible, jump cuts which give the scene a sense of distraction, presumably Aoyama's, thereby questioning the veracity of Asami's prosaic statements of her parents relatively mundane life. It is at this point that the film begins to undermine its formal realism and begins to move to the realm of allegory. But this undermining of Asami's statements is then further called into question because while Aoyama begins to speak, asking Asami where she works, the camera again has a jump cut on *his* statement. The jump cuts then don't become a means of probing the truth about the statements made but rather act as a sort of punctuation. The jump cuts emphasize the statements, not so much undermining them but highlighting them as significant and indeed later when Aoyama is searching for the missing Asami, Aoyama recalls this conversation on two separate occasions.

Aoyama asks Asami if he can visit her work place and Asami tells him that he can feel free to but her boss is quite nosy and frequently interferes in her personal

life and that it could potentially make her uncomfortable. Aoyama responds that he simply wants to know her better to which Asami then states “I would never lie to you, I swear.” The camera then cuts to a close up of Aoyama looking pained and then a reverse shot of Asami and then a long shot of the two seated at the table in which Aoyama begins to make his ‘confession’ about the ‘Tomorrow’s Star’ auditions. Ironically, in this scene in which Aoyama could conceivably tell Asami the truth about the audition being a system for him to meet women, he chooses instead to tell her that the show’s sponsors have decided there are problems with the script and so the show will not be produced. Significantly, this is the first moment in which Aoyama directly lies to Asami, previously preferring to avoid the topic of the television show rather than to misrepresent it. Miike highlights Aoyama’s lying to Asami in a very subtle way. The lie begins with a close up shot of Aoyama, who states “about that movie. . .” This shot is followed by a close up shot of Asami looking up to him and then a long shot of the two seated at the table. However, in the long shot, the background has changed slightly and it is revealed that the two are now seated in an empty room. In a single long take Aoyama tells his entire lie. The image composition is shot from behind a black framed glass wall which effectively bisects the screen image, placing Aoyama in a box and metaphorically separating him from Asami to whom he is lying. The soundtrack, throughout the scene, had been marked by the sound of traffic outside the restaurant. While the soundtrack does not change, the traffic that had previously been visible in the window in the background of the frame has similarly disappeared and the window depicts an empty street, contradicting the traffic sounds. The scene continues in an alien space, disrupting the film’s continuity and causing the viewer to question what is occurring. As Aoyama’s fidelity as a narrator has become undermined, so too has the film’s

veracity been undermined. This highlighting of Aoyama's first lie to Asami is an expressive device that contradicts the film's earlier realism and the film at this point must be seen as allegorical and expressive of Aoyama's thoughts and concerns, rather than as a realist depiction of action.

Writing of *Fudoh, the New Generation*, another Miike film, Tom Mes discusses that film's usage of excessive violence and the grotesque. Mes writes "The exaggeration in both form and content allows for the creation of a surrealist (in the literal sense of the word) world, which although comparable to the effect achieved in *Shinjuku Triad Society* goes a step further by creating an alternative reality rather than a society that exists side-by-side with our own (Mes 2004: 96). Mes' point is that the film, rather than be read as realist and dismissed as being unbelievable, demands that the viewer read it as allegorical in order to accept the excesses in violence. The form (exaggerated stylization) compliments the narrative (exaggerated violence). The same argument, then, is applicable to *Audition*, in which the realist form compliments the realist subject matter but is only sustainable provided the subject matter maintains its veracity. When Aoyama begins his lie, the film's form must equally change. The film then moves into the realm of allegory.

The scene continues with Asami passively accepting Aoyama's lie and she begins to reassure him, telling him that she had never really been convinced that she would get the part but that it's alright because she's happy to have met him. While she's talking, the camera cuts to a close up of her but now the background has changed, again disorientating the viewer. The camera cuts to a long shot, establishing that the two are continuing on their date and have moved on to a second restaurant in which they are eating. The film's compressing of time through these sound bridges, jump cuts and carried over conversations which span locations, is a

means of changing the pacing of the film that the prior realist strategies had worked hard to slow down. At this point the film begins to utilize a highly economical usage of editing to further the narrative. The film's formal strategies have switched from realist to expressive and the film must now be read as indicative of Aoyama's increasing fears of change and of leaving his first wife's memory in the grave as well as his fears of the consequences of misleading the trusting Asami.

The sequence ends with Aoyama and Asami leaving the restaurant and riding in a taxi in which they arrange to see each other again. The film cuts abruptly to a shot of Aoyama's son seated at his computer. Aoyama enters the room and confesses that he's met a woman. The son asks his father if he's proposed yet and Aoyama says that they are taking a trip this weekend. The film then cuts to a lone highway with a single car driving on it and then cuts to a shot from inside a room with the camera focussed on the exterior and depicting Asami standing on a balcony. Aoyama, in the room, enters the frame and walks to the doorway. The camera cuts to an objective shot of Aoyama in the doorway looking at Asami and then a point of view shot of Asami, who turns and looks directly at the camera (Aoyama). In a few quick shots, Miike has propelled the story several days, informed the viewer that Aoyama wishes to propose to Asami on a weekend getaway, and has placed the viewer into the hotel room where Aoyama will shortly propose marriage.

Asami enters the room and closes the curtains behind her, bathing herself in blue lighting, a colour which until this point has been associated with Aoyama's memories of his dead wife Ryoko. He is seated in a chair underneath a lamp which provides him with yellow incandescent lighting and graphically separates the two lovers. She walks over to him and switches off his light, casting him in the same blue tones. She undresses herself and slips into bed, again evoking the images from

the prologue of Ryoko in her deathbed. He walks over to the bed and begins to undress, but she stops him, telling him she wants to show him something. She slowly raises the sheets exposing her legs and informs him she was burnt as a child. He tells her she is beautiful. She tells him that she wishes him to love her and only her, implicitly asking him to negate the memory of his wife – an image icon that she has come to embody by lying in a bed bathed in blue. Graphically she has replaced Ryoko's image with one of her own. She again asks him to love her and her only. Unable to do so, Aoyama wordlessly gives a slight nod, implying his consent but not actually giving it and climbs on top of her, pressing his lips against hers. She rolls him over and the film again has an abrupt jump cut to Aoyama rolling over in the bed, this time alone. The phone is ringing. Confused and disorientated, Aoyama answers the phone to discover the desk clerk informing him that his companion has left and does he want to continue his stay at the hotel? At this point, the film's transition from formal realism to expressionism is complete and the film's expressive formal qualities are highly at odds with the earlier realist sequences.

Aoyama, desperate to find Asami, returns to his office. The film cuts to Aoyama's office, with the cut occurring in mid camera movement. In a continuous long take, the camera, tracking down a long corridor in a hand held shot with dizzying movement, follows Aoyama into his office. The lighting in his office, formerly naturalistic is now washed with slight tones of blue, a carryover from the prior scene in the hotel room and expressive of his mindset. Aoyama, in a conversation with his colleague Yoshikawa, explains that Asami has gone missing and he asks Yoshikawa for assistance in finding her. The camera, hand held for the duration of the scene and moving continuously, cuts rapidly on the conversation,

giving the sequence a frenetic energy that is completely at odds with the slow realist conventions of the prior scenes.

Aoyama's search for Asami takes him to the ballet school that is mentioned in her resume. There he discovers a mad old man with false legs, playing the piano. Aoyama sees a charcoal brazier with a bundle of rods in the fire, rods which match the burn marks on Asami's legs. The camera then cuts to a subjective shot of Aoyama's imagining the child Asami being burnt by the ballet instructor. He then remembers the restaurant that Asami had told him she worked and discovers the restaurant to be closed. He is informed by a passer by that the owner of the restaurant had been killed in a brutal murder. When the pieces of the body were put together, the police discovered there were three fingers, a tongue and an ear too many. The film then cuts to another subjective shot of Aoyama's imagination in which he sees the severed body pieces in a pool of blood. Presumably Asami had murdered her former employer.

The film then cuts to a single long take in which the camera, representing what must be Asami's subjective point of view, enters Aoyama's house, attacks his dog and then picks up a bottle of whiskey. The camera then returns to the doorway of the house and the lighting changes, signifying the passage of time. Aoyama enters his home, walks into his room and picks up the drugged bottle of whiskey. He pours himself a glass and sits down. The drug begins to take effect and Aoyama rises to his feet. Struggling to right himself, he begins to fall. The camera cuts on Aoyama's fall and the film returns Aoyama to his second date in the café bar with Asami. The lighting has changed to a green tone, and significantly Asami's story about her family has also changed. In this re-living of Asami's telling her family past, she informs Aoyama that she was severely abused as a child, first by her aunt with whom

she had been sent to live, and secondly by her stepfather when she was returned to her parents. The scene then cuts to the second restaurant, where their conversation continues. Aoyama expresses his admiration for Asami's ability to transcend her childhood abuse. He tells her that she is his perfect partner, at which point he is interrupted by his dead wife Ryoko, who is seated at the next table. Aoyama is called over by Ryoko who uses the familiar term *annata*, a term that is reserved for wives to call their husbands, reinforcing the idea that he belongs primarily to her rather than to Asami who uses the more formal and distancing third person to address Aoyama. Seated at Ryoko's table are his son, although as a young child, as well as a high school girl. At this point it becomes clear that Aoyama is not remembering his dates with Asami, but rather he is having a drug induced anxiety dream about Asami in an attempt to rationalize from where her violence derives. In his dream, Aoyama walks over to his wife Ryoko in order to introduce Asami. Ryoko then insists that Aoyama not marry Asami. It is significant that Ryoko enters into Aoyama's subconscious imaginings because not only does he fear his replacing his dead wife's memory, his anxiety is galvanized by the thought of replacing Ryoko with such an unsuitable match as he fears Asami to be.

The dream then cuts to Asami's apartment, where she tells him that she will do anything for him. She runs to him and begins to undo his trousers, at which point the camera cuts and Asami has been replaced by Aoyama's secretary. She asks him why he only slept with her the one time, was there something wrong with her? To which Aoyama apologizes profusely. The camera cuts and it is once again Asami. The camera cuts again and now he is being fellated by his son's high school girlfriend who states "I love to do that." Appalled, Aoyama pushes her away. Clearly, Aoyama projects upon Asami all of the guilt feelings he has for all of his

indiscretions with women; his affair with his secretary, having sexual desires for his son's girlfriend, his infidelity to his wife's memory and his lying to Asami about the auditions. Fleeing the high school girl, Aoyama trips over the mysterious bag that has been in Asami's room in prior shots. From inside the bag crawls a man who has had three of his fingers removed, his ear cut off, his tongue cut out and both feet removed. This is presumably the missing talent agent that Asami had earlier lied about, and it is obviously his appendages that had been found at the restaurant crime scene where Asami's boss had been murdered.

The dream sequence then cuts to a montage of images of Asami as a young dancer being abused by her instructor, of the adult Asami killing her ballet instructor by beheading him with a wire from his piano, of Aoyama's partner Yoshikawa suggesting the auditions, of his wife Ryoko on her deathbed, of a severed finger dropping into formaldehyde, and of the head of the ballet instructor falling onto the keyboard. The film then cuts back to the hallucinating Aoyama in his office completing his fall with the drug taking effect and a brief cut back to the severed head falling reinforces the notion that this was indeed Aoyama's dream before cutting back to the drugged Aoyama crashing to the ground. The dream summarizes all of Aoyama's guilt feelings, for betraying his wife's memory, for holding the audition, and for not being truthful to Asami. But the dream also reinforces Asami's monstrosity by providing imagery of (although through Aoyama's imagination), and psychological rationalization for, all of the murderous actions that Asami has materialized.

After Aoyama has hit the ground, and contrasting starkly from the overwhelming use of expressive lighting, colour, music and grotesque violent imagery of the dream sequence, the film at this point reverts to a realist formal style.

The film once again returns to naturalistic incandescent lighting, clear focus, long shots and long takes, only using close-up intercuts to reinforce certain images, forcibly implying Asami's 'real' actions as opposed to the expressionistic depiction of violence of the previous dream sequence. Asami enters the room and injects a second paralysing drug into Aoyama's tongue. The film then resorts to a veritable orgy of violence as Asami takes revenge on Aoyama for having lied to her about the auditions and being insincere to her.⁷ She has by this point seen his wife's photograph, she has heard his son leave a message on his answering machine and she now knows that he cannot possibly love only her.

Aoyama's son Shigehiko interrupts Asami's violence by unexpectedly coming home and Asami grabs a spray can of mace with which to attack the teenager. She begins to make chase but the film at this crisis moment abruptly cuts, once again returning Aoyama to the hotel room that he had taken Asami in order to propose. On the cut, the film returns Aoyama to the subdued, expressive blue lighting that has come to graphically signify Aoyama's psychological subjectivity through its evocation of his dead wife Ryoko. On the cut Aoyama wakes and panicking, checks to discover that he is unharmed. The film posits that Asami's violence is a dream and the real Asami, sleeping peacefully beside him, also wakes and asks him if everything is okay. He nods to her that he is okay. Presumably he had just been having a bad dream, and she tells him that she accepts his proposal for marriage and returns to sleep.

Aoyama gets up, washes his face and returns to the bed he is sharing with the now peacefully sleeping Asami. He lies down and the camera focuses on Aoyama's

⁷ It is significant to note that it was this point that inspired mass walkouts at both the Cannes and the Toronto International film festivals.

face as he blinks and then closes his eyes. Upon this action, the film then cuts back to Aoyama lying paralyzed in his house with Asami chasing his son. The film returns to the natural incandescent lighting and deep space which, through its association with the use of realist formal strategies, suggests that unlike the prior dream sequences the violence is indeed real and many critics, including Tom Mes, do interpret the violence as literal.

Miike has a canny usage of film's heteroglossic nature and confronts and contradicts the audience's expectations. Bakhtin argues that language is heteroglossic and that it is composed of a polyglot of competing voices. Film too is similarly heteroglossic, making allusions to prior conventions of film making. Miike, through the course of the film, creates an association between long takes, long shots, use of location sound and minimal use of extra diegetic sound – formal strategies that throughout film history have come to connote the 'real' – to present the lived experiences of his protagonist. Miike similarly uses formal strategies that have conventionally been associated with dreaming, to express his protagonist's subconscious subjectivity. But by the final reel of the film, Miike has reversed those conventions, using the expressive colouring and editing to depict the character's waking from the dream, and then returning the dreamer into a verisimilar environment with his return to sleep. By constructing the final dream images with realist formal devices, Miike causes the viewer to subconsciously question the narrative actions – is this a lived experience or is it metaphor? The film's subversion of its own formal lexicon posits that the violence is indeed real despite the fact that the viewer explicitly sees Aoyama fall asleep and return to his dream. The visual iconography exploits the viewer's belief in the conventional depictions of dream and reality in film, in order to undermine the narrative content. But the division of dream

and reality is further confounded with the inclusion of the highly expressive meta-dream. The expressive dream within a dream normalizes the subsequent imagined/projected violence.

Returned to his dream, Aoyama watches as Asami chases his son up the stairs but the teenaged Shigehiko kicks out and sends her falling. She breaks her neck and the film ends with both she and Aoyama paralyzed and facing each other. The two are metaphorically paralyzed by his lies.

The film's principle concern is not with the construction of violence inherent within women; rather, the film's utilization of both realist and expressive formal styles is in fact Miike's desire to construct Asami's violence as nothing more than a projection upon women derived from Aoyama's (and patriarchy's) guilt feelings. Every violent action that Asami performs in the film is perceived through Aoyama and the film in fact constructs Asami as the projected anima in very literal ways. The crux of this reading of the film as allegorical of patriarchy's projection of vengeful desires within women upon women is found in the film's drug induced meta-dream.

In the meta-dream, Aoyama places himself within Asami's apartment, a setting that the viewer up until this point has identified with Asami independently of Aoyama's field of perception. The viewer is fooled into thinking that the images of Asami in her room are an example of dramatic irony where the viewer knows more than the film's protagonist, yet Aoyama is able to reconstruct this setting within his dream with complete fidelity. His dream even conjures the mysterious bag and it is within the dream that its gruesome contents are finally revealed. Closer scrutiny of the film's usage of the sequences of Asami at home belie that Asami's apartment is entirely a construct of Aoyama's imaginings and Asami's grotesque nature in fact exists solely in Aoyama's fantasy.

The first depiction of Asami in her room is shown in the context of Aoyama's guilt feelings toward betraying his wife's memory. The sequence occurs after the two have their first date. Yoshikawa has told Aoyama that Asami had lied about her referees, instilling within Aoyama his first doubts about her. Aoyama sits at his desk and looks over Asami's profile and covering letter with his wife's photograph again prominent in the frame. The film cuts to an image of Asami at home with the burlap sack and then cuts to an image of Aoyama at home asleep, bathed in blue tones. The film then cuts to a close up of Asami shot with a wide angle lens and showing the sack in the background and then cuts to Aoyama still sleeping but restless in his sleep. The film then cuts to an outdoor location with slight blue tones, depicting a tree in the snow. A woman is standing beside the tree. The film cuts to a close up of the woman and it is Ryoko, who steps behind the tree. The sequence ends with a shot of Aoyama at home sitting in a chair. The shot construction posits an ambiguity. The image of Ryoko is clearly a memory/dream image from the sleeping Aoyama's subjectivity and sandwiched between those shots are the images of Asami, which must too be seen as subjective shots of Aoyama's imaginings. The baggage, beside Asami, while constructed to represent Asami's mysteriousness, in fact represents Aoyama's insecurities. It is not her baggage, but his! The sequence in which the bag first moves, revealing to the viewer that there is something strange about Asami, is similarly constructed in such a way that it can be read as indicative of Aoyama's imagination. After Yoshikawa's dire warnings that there is something disquieting about Asami, Aoyama is shown seated at his office desk contemplating phoning Asami. The sequence is punctuated with shots of Asami seated in her room with the bag. While these shots posit an ambivalence, either being manifest by Aoyama's imagination or being dramatic irony and showing Asami for what she is, on a re-

viewing of the film it becomes clear that the shots of Asami at home are a product of Aoyama's imagination.

The very first shot of Asami's apartment occurs prior to the introduction of that character. After Aoyama and Yoshikawa decide to host the auditions, Aoyama hears the radio broadcast calling for candidates for the 'Tomorrow's Star' auditions. Aoyama is sitting in his car in the rain. He turns on the radio and some soft music begins to play. A voice comes on announcing that Audrey Hepburn, Julia Roberts and the like were all at one time in life ordinary people. The voice then continues to describe the auditions for a new reality show called "Tomorrow's Heroine," in which the star of tomorrow will be discovered today. While Aoyama is listening to this advert, there is a brief cut to a very young girl sitting in an apartment similarly hearing the ad. The apartment is the space that the film later comes to define as Asami's. Yet it is not Asami hearing the ad, it is a young girl. This space, then, must be read, not as Asami's physical space, but as Aoyama's fantasy space. Because he has at this point not met Asami yet, Aoyama imagines in the space a young child, one who would potentially dream of becoming 'Tomorrow's Star'. Indeed, that child later becomes the grown Asami, both the film's heroine and Aoyama's. Every scene that occurs in this space is therefore a construct of Aoyama's imaginings. This reading undermines all of Asami's violence, for the images of Asami seated beside the mysterious bag; the images of her murder of the ballet instructor; the murder of the record producer; and her attack on him, all occur in Aoyama's various states of imagination. The allegorical reading of the film restores to the film the idea of the dream narrative and of Asami's villainy as Aoyama's projection of the anima upon her.

The dream begins in the hotel where Aoyama is about to propose. Asami had shown him her scars and asked him to love only her, something he is not emotionally prepared to do. The dream then begins when he 'wakes' the next morning and the fractured formal style begins. When the film is viewed with this point as the dream's start, it becomes clear that elements from the earlier portion of the film have penetrated Aoyama's subconscious. The music that the ballet instructor plays is the same music that is played over the 'Tomorrow's Star' audition. The bed in which Aoyama and Asami lie together is composed of thin wires, evocative of both the piano wire which Asami uses to kill the ballet instructor and the short needles with which Asami tortures the paralyzed Aoyama. But it is not just Aoyama who projects monstrosity upon Asami. Because Miike inverts the filmic conventions in depicting dream/reality, we viewers frequently misread the film to be a literalization of the monstrosity in women. The film demands to be misread in this way, for we too as an audience come to further oppress Asami and women in film, by imposing our ideological position of monstrosity inherent in women, upon the filmic female body. We interpret Asami's actions as monstrous because we desire women to be monstrous. Miike implicates contemporary film viewing society in the continued oppression of women.

In psychoanalysis, the anima's purpose is to provide psychological relief to multiple complexes. Jung states:

The immediate goal of the analysis of the unconscious, therefore, is to reach a state where the unconscious contents no longer remain unconscious and no longer express themselves indirectly as animus and anima phenomena; that is to say, a state in which animus and anima become functions of relationship to the unconscious. (Jung 1969: 122).

For Jung, the patient who suffers a complex (a hysteric, a person who is possessed by the anima, or someone who is burdened by the mask of a persona), can only rid

himself of such a complex by recognizing the operations of the unconscious in his conscious life. Through analysis, the patient learns to recognize the anima as a psychological construction and the complex is dispelled. Resolution for Aoyama, then, lies in his recognizing his conception of Asami to be a projection upon her as manifest by his guilt feelings in lying to her. He can only find psychological relief in confessing his role in the audition.

If the film is indeed a dream, what is one to make of the ending? While Mes analyzes the violence as literal, the film insists that Asami's violence is metaphorical. But of what? The closing minutes of the film involve Aoyama waking. He realizes that Asami's violence is a projection of his imagination, caused by his guilt feelings toward his dead wife and of lying to Asami. By this point, Asami has asked him to love her only and he has implied his consent. What is more, he has by this point proposed marriage to her, which she has accepted. Aoyama feels trapped because he has missed his opportunity to confess to Asami his role in the audition process. He can never tell her the truth for fear of the consequences. He returns to his bed, and closing his eyes he is returned to the culmination of his fears of Asami discovering his truth and so he is returned to the image of his inner *anima* exacting revenge. The film's ending is a metaphorical paralysis for there can, by this point, never be truth between them. He becomes incapable of articulating the full extent of his love for fear of breaking her trust. The final image of the film is of ambivalence. The film's final shot is of the child Asami dancing, an image that is both liberating and terrifying for its evocation of torture. The image of the child is both a pure, pre-torture Asami, evoking both her pristine nature and the torture in Aoyama's lies that is yet to come.

J-Horror Today

The *onryo* in film, it seems, is changing again. Recent Japanese horror films continue to deploy the *onryo*, but in such films as Hoshino Yoshihiro's *Cho Kowai Hanashi A (Cursed)* (2004), Shiraishi Koji's *Ju-Rei* (2004), and the made for t.v. *Nihon No Kowai Yoru (Dark Tales of Japan)* (2004), conventional ideas of narrative have been excised. *Dark Tales* is presented as a series of self contained short films, each condensing narrative and back story to a minimum in order to present the various spectacles of haunting. *Cursed* and *Ju-Rei* are feature length films that have dispensed with narrative entirely and are a series of interconnected ghostly spectacles.

In *Cursed*, the minimal plot entails a convenience store where a series of people, whose only connection is having visited the store, die in particularly gruesome circumstances. These various narrative strands are fragmented and interlaced and so the film becomes a series of spectacular deaths. In one vignette, it is briefly mentioned that the convenience store had been built on a burial ground and in the final shot the convenience store is seen to be filled with floating spirits, however in terms of story, there is none. The concept of a restless spirit desiring murderous vengeance becomes narrative explanation enough and the filmmakers feel no compunction to express back story or narrative exposition.

The elision of the vengeance narrative changes the meaning of the *onryo*. The ghost in this film kills indiscriminately, punishing anyone, whether or not the victim is representative of the ghost's pain. In the context of *Empire*, vengeance is meted out against those who participate in contemporary capitalism and rather than targeting the store's corporate owners who built the shop upon the burial ground, the ghost targets the employees and consumers who blithely participate in the corporation's desecration of Japanese history. The film becomes a condemnation of

contemporary society's culpability in the exploitation of land and the nation's scarce resources.

The film *Ju-Rei* is similarly fragmented in its unfolding of narrative. The film consists of eleven short interconnected sequences. In each vignette a person dies a gruesome supernatural death. Syuzhet is further confounded by being ordered in reverse chronology. By the third vignette, it is explained that when one is touched by a cursed person who is destined to die at the hands of 'the dark person,' the touched one shall inherit the curse and shall consequently pass on the curse and die. Narrative is reduced to simply depicting each death and then flashing back to the previous death in which it is revealed at what point the curse was passed from one to another. By the seventh segment, it becomes clear that each person is in fact killed by the ghost of the person killed in the preceding sequence. This film also removes the 'vengeance' element of the *onryo* tale, implying that the very fact of being cursed creates desire to punish others. The killing ghost (or ghosts rather) discover desire for retribution in death. Powerless to stop the curse, they must participate in the curse's gruesome continuance. Yet the film provides no origination tale for the curse and while the film ends with an epilogue (which is actually the prologue), that too proves a continuation of a curse that has already been in existence for many years. The curse simply exists, being passed virus-like from one victim to the next, each cursed person fated to die and kill the next infected victim.

The film *Ju-Rei* creates a paradox. The film explains that whoever is cursed will inadvertently pass the curse to whomever they touch. Furthermore, it is the ghost of the recently dead, who must kill their cursed victims. This results in several people accidentally cursing their own family members. In the film's logic, however, this results in family members both figuratively killing their own by cursing them,

but also actively killing their own as the restless *onryo*. This is a direct contradiction of the *onryo* myth's original function. The *onryo* was established in a feudal world of retributive justice. Feudal morality argued that one could not live under the same sky as one's father's killer. Filial piety obligated family to exact justice for wrongs visited upon their kin. In the original mythology, if there were no living family members to exact that justice, the person could find justice after death as the returned *onryo*. As Gregory Barrett argued in his *Archetypes of Japanese Film*, "If Lord Asano had not had Oishi and other loyal retainers to avenge him, in the popular imagination he could have appeared as a ghost tormenting Lord Kira" (97). This is evident in such films as the *Tokaido Yotsuya Kaidan* where *Oiwa* seeks vengeance for her father's murder in life, and then achieves vengeance in death. *Ju-Rei* is in complete defiance of the ideology of filial piety and a total subversion of the *onryo* myth. The 1960s *Kuroneko* also figures this paradox, but the paradox itself is actively explored in the 1960s film. In *Kuroneko* the returned ghost of a woman is forced to attack her son by her nature as ghost, but is conflicted by her status as mother. The son, conversely, is obliged to end the terror of his ghostly mother but is unable to turn his blade against his own family. The conflict results in his madness. *Ju-rei* has no such compunctions and a grandmother happily kills her daughter-in-law, a mother brutally destroys her son, and a teenager eviscerates her father. The film has become detached from the parameters established by the archetype, and following the parameters of its own internal logic must therefore defy the logic of the *onryo* archetype.

In the most recent *onryo* films, there is no supernatural system of morality at play and the ideology of vengeance has been replaced with a nihilistic worldview in which the unstoppable curse will forever exist, thinning out the population of

innocents. Contemporary Japanese society has reconfigured the ideology inherent within the *onryo* archetype from arbiter of justice to monstrous evil. Contemporary nihilist society cannot conceive of supernatural justice and so the *onryo*'s function has been morphed to a figure symptomatic of society's perceived diseases. The film suggests that the world, because of our own insidious selfishness, has become inhospitable.

It has been noted that J-Horror has run its course, variously in newspaper articles, web zines, and academic books, and yet the *onryo* films keep on being produced with no real sign of abatement. This is because the *onryo* is not a genre to itself; it is an archetype which appears through various different genres. While the J-Horror tradition as we understand it will indeed one day come to an end, the image of the *onryo* shall not disappear from film culture. For as long as we continue the sexual division of labour, as long as we continue to differentiate along gender lines, as long as there will be patriarchy which produces films, and as long as we insist on identifying the inhabitants of a series of islands in the south Pacific as 'Japanese', the female *onryo* will continue to appear in film and will continue to engage in ideological discourse. But whether she is constructed as a malevolent force terrorizing innocents or a pathetic force depicting society's injustices, will be determined by a given society's attitude toward its women, nationhood, and patriarchy. The *onryo* will not disappear until the very notion of 'Japanese' is itself disbanded as an identity. Until then, the *onryo* will continue to reappear in Japanese film culture terrifying countless more generations with her ideological significations.

Conclusion

Countenancing the Wicked.

I was recently discussing with a friend what it is I do, and I started to explain to him that I examine the ways in which the various permutations of the vengeful woman ghost manifest ideology in Japanese cinema. Registering his blank incomprehension, I started to explain how such a figure can be read as belonging to various ideological contexts and how she makes manifest certain assumptions about the nature of women, about the relationships between nationalism and culture, and anxieties about the preservation of culture in contemporary Japanese society. My friend's response was "and here I thought they were just ghost stories." To a certain extent, the narratives are 'just ghost stories'. In some circumstances the ideological issues are foregrounded, as in the work of Kurosawa in *Rashomon* or Miike in *Audition*. But in many of the *onryo* films, the directors were just making films about ghosts. It is because ideology is the *unconscious* attitudes inherent in society that it is so pernicious. Film is made within specific socio/cultural/temporal contexts and inescapably reflects the attitudes, the 'world outlooks,' of those contexts. Even when opposing certain beliefs, film continues to be ideological. Film is a constructed system of expression – it presents its story in a highly constructed way and can be seen as analogous to a linguistic system. Ideology exists in the excess weight, the dialogic nature of language. It is because it is taken for granted that ideology interpellates the subject and becomes hegemonic. Ideology is reinforced, complicated and shaped through society's interaction with media artefacts. The only way to defy ideology's indoctrination is to recognize how ideology indoctrinates. It is through the understanding of how media is ideological, that ideology can begin to be analyzed, critiqued and challenged. This thesis presents itself as a study of the

onryo, but it is really a study of the culture that has produced the cinematic images of the *onryo*. More than the *onryo*, it is a study of the nature of ideology.

A Wicked Countenance explodes the notion of the archetype as being fixed and immutable. While Jung contends that the archetype is a fixed figure that spans all history and culture, the very meaning inherent in the archetype is not stable. Folklorist Vladimir Propp argues that all folktale narratives are simply different permutations of the same story. When a story is divided into its constituent components it is revealed that all tales are in fact divisible into various functions of the narrative, those functions being common to all folkloric texts. While it is true that there are countless stories involving the *onryo* archetype, and her function within the narrative (to exact revenge for previous wrongs) may indeed appear in countless tales throughout Japanese history and culture, the *ideological* function of the archetype is continually changing. The various permutations of the *onryo* are contingent upon the socio-temporal contexts that produce and consume those various tales. Whether she is a redemptive, a punishing, a tragic figure of social inequity, or a wicked harridan terrorizing innocents; the *onryo*'s narrative function remains the same (returned ghost to enact some form of retribution) but the ideology surrounding that narrative function can be wildly different. It is not so much what happens in the tales that creates significance, but rather *how* the tale is told that reveals the ideologies inherent in the tale. This is made explicit in Kurosawa's *Rashomon* in which the same story elements are variously retold by different characters. While the story elements (rape and death) remain the same, the different meanings inherent in the different tellings are shaped by differing ideological positions. Mikhail Bakhtin, in his analysis of dialogism and discourse in the novel argues that language carries with it excess weight, that each and every utterance bears more signification than the

speaker intends (Bakhtin, 1981: 273). The attempts to articulate the *onryo* are complex, often competing and always ideological and malleable, depending on the cultural context of that articulation. This argument indeed hold true of the *onryo* figure, as explored through the many examples in *A Wicked Countenance*.

Cinema in Japan is a little over a hundred years old. Western-modelled capitalism in Japan is similarly only a little over a hundred years old. Eric Cazdyn, in his work *The Flash of Capital*, argues that capitalism has been the prime ideology throughout Japanese cinema and makes manifest the imagined relationship between the individual and Japanese capitalism. Accepting Cazdyn's argument that the text reflects a society's ideology, but contrasting Cazdyn's limiting view of capitalism as the prime ideology with the more pluralistic post Marxist position, *A Wicked Countenance* argues that while capitalist ideology does express itself in Japanese film there are also competing ideologies of gender, nationhood and culture at play within the filmic texts. Japanese cinema expresses several often times conflicting ideologies as the filmmakers attempt to tell stories in an often ideologically changing world. Japanese film should not be analyzed as deriving from a cause/effect telos, but rather Japanese cinema studies should aspire to situate the films within their appropriate contexts in order to fully analyze the ideologies inherent in the narratives' telling. Reading Japanese film in context does not have to adhere to a strict classificatory system, indeed with increased research in minority studies different contexts continually emerge. My own work situates Japanese cinema in three socio/temporal periods. Those periods are in relation to Japan's interaction with global culture. However, there is no such thing as the final word on cinema studies. Indeed as different contexts are explored and shaped, understanding of Japanese cinema within those contexts will develop further diverse and rich analysis

of the filmic texts. The three contexts that *A Wicked Countenance* situates Japanese film within are the context of Imperialism, the context of post-war self governance and political autonomy, and the context of globalization. Each context produces differing analyses of the *onryo* archetype as the films articulate various ideologies of nationhood and gender.

In the context of Imperialism, the films frequently punish women for aspirations toward modernity and the scriptwriters regularly used fate as a means of delimiting women in their aspirations to enter the newly reformed capitalist economy. As the country headed to war, the films' deployment of spiritist women acted as a means of promoting 'one million hearts beating in unison' propaganda and women were divorced of self interest and personal motivation. In the context of self governance in the post-war period, the women in films became once again victim to patriarchy and the *onryo* returned as a figure of superpersonal morality. Women, who are presented in film as closer to the spirit/natural worlds were often exploited by a violent and violating society. The usage of the spirit world enables women to redress patriarchy's inherent inequities. The women in the post-war films are also frequently depicted as being closer to the Japanese cultural past and through the films' construction of the *onryo* in classical theatre iconographies, present an imagined continuity between the supernatural mother and ancient historical culture. Women in the films become the point of identification for contemporary Japanese to a historical, culturally pure (imaginary) past. In the contemporary age of globalization, the *onryo* films have made a further change. The transformation from human to *onryo* only occurs in the films' back-story, if it is explored at all. The contemporary films, rather than exploring the inequities of a society which continues to visit evil upon women, present the ghost operating in the present but redressing

wrongs from the past. The past literally haunts the present. The films construct contemporary Japan as a fantasy space cured of inequities. Vengeance is reconfigured to animosity as the films' haunted characters pathetically attempt to redress the wrongs of the previous generation. In the context of *Empire*, the films become metaphorical of a society that is inextricably tied to economic exploitation. As everyone who participates in contemporary geo-capitalism is culpable, the *onryō* becomes indiscriminate in her attacks using the tools of corporate Japan (televisions, computers, cell phones) to spread her terror.

Through the course of my work, I've discovered myself examining at length films in which the *onryō* is absent. This is because the ideologies which construct the iconographies of the *onryō* are often inherent within the films and the social contexts which *denied* the explicit presentation of the female *onryō*. During the war period, the *onryō* disappeared and was replaced with the spiritist woman. But this itself is an ideological action. The very insistence that women can only be presented in a limited number of tropes is a position that denies the plurality of women. Within the historical period of war, with the necessity of galvanizing women as an unexploited workforce, the manufacture of the spiritist ethos became paramount to the point of removing and denying such radical alternative female tropes. There are many such instances within *A Wicked Countenance* in which I explore the absences of the *onryō*. It is because of my interest in ideology and the significance of the substitutions for the *onryō* and such transgressive female figures, that I feel compelled to explore such absences.

When pressed to account for my methodology, I begin with the position that a film is a complicated system of discourses in which multiple, often competing arguments are being made. The film text has a narrative arc, a story that begins and

(sometimes) ends, but that narrative arc is only one of many systems of discourse. The narrative itself is ideological (is there a hero, is there a villain, what makes the hero heroic, what makes the villain villainous) and that ideological position is iterated through actions. But film is a unique medium, which utilizes multiple other signifying systems to express the story and the attendant ideologies and it is through the deployment of those multiple and often competing signifiers that ideology becomes complicated. For example the choices within casting and costuming affect ideology (is the hero a man, or a woman, is the hero handsome or ugly). Setting affects the ideology – does the narrative occur in urban or rural environments? Does the story occur in contemporary or historical periods? Camera angle and editing also affect the attendant ideologies in a filmic text, the use of lighting and shadow can be emotive; the conjunction of shadow with a character creates certain evocations. These multiple strands all carry with them utterances, all participate in discourse, quoting past usages (is the lighting conventional or unconventional) and become subject to interpretation and consequently analysis, regardless of the intentions of the film makers. A certain cinematographer may emphasize certain colours for aesthetic effect but those colours may make reference to certain gender attitudes or cultural allusions. Thus the film becomes ideological despite the film makers' desires. To provide an example, Nakata's *Ringu* uses in the titling of the film, the colour red to indicate allegiance to a horror film tradition while Iida's *Rasen* opens with green titles, aligning the film to a tradition of science fiction. The red lettering has great impact as red is a forceful colour, but Iida's soft green robs his film of momentum from the outset, which ultimately denies his screen character her potential power. Despite Iida's version of the character Sadako wielding immense power and an insatiable desire to control the world's emotions, Iida's film implicitly restricts her

potency from the outset through his aesthetic colour choices. The film is softened from its opening credit sequence by substituting the bold reds of Nakata's title, with the pale green of his science fiction lettering and consequently his use of science fiction and melodramatic iconographies softens the superhuman ambitions of his film's villainess. This is the nature of language (and I firmly believe that film is a discursive though complicated linguistic system) and language carries with it greater weight than the speaker ever could possibly intend. As Bakhtin argues, language is learned through participation in language, and every utterance we make is indelibly impacted by prior statements with or without our consent.

In analyzing a history of the *onryo* film, I make some startling connections. Is it fair to make a connection between a low budget horror film of the 1950s, with the 19th century *Kabuki* theatre debates regarding the inclusion of women on the *Kabuki* stage? Is it reasonable to align a contemporary film about homosexual samurai with the post-war subjectivity or *shutaisei* debates? But this is absolutely the nature of ideology. These historical debates enter into the collective unconscious through the quotation and repetition of certain iconographies and tropes. Contemporary Japanese (and indeed international) audiences are aware of the iconographies and tropes of *Kabuki* theatre *even though most have never attended a Kabuki play!* The iconographies are quoted and reinforced in myriad disparate ways and enter into the collective unconscious through that repetition. Through textual examples of films that make allusion to *Kabuki* theatre, contemporary film audiences become informed of those allusions without any knowledge of the original theatre artform. It is through such quotation of past iconographies that the attendant past discourses penetrate into the contemporary imagination. The ideologies of the past continue to interpellate contemporary society because the iconographies of the past

have penetrated the present. Such iconographies from pre-war and post-war society are no less potent when viewed by a contemporary audience, although the direct connection to the cultural context may be buried into the film's meta-discourse. Film, through its use of image, music and linguistic semiotic systems is far more potent a discursive text than written language alone. Consequently, when a contemporary filmmaker views a film (perhaps Kurosawa's *Ran*) and then makes allusion to such film, the new film text then inescapably carries with it prior discourse inherent in the original text. Any quotation of the earlier artefact's iconographies then perpetuates past discourses even without that filmmaker's awareness; the film text, though unintended, becomes implicit in the perpetuation of past ideology.

Contemporary film scholarship must incorporate understanding of film as an unconsciously discursive text, in all analysis of the cinematic image. Contemporary film analysis must take into account how past film discourse, through quotation and allusion, causes ideology of the past to continue its effect on contemporary society. *A Wicked Countenance* demonstrates, through examining the *onryo* archetype, how historical film texts continue to impact contemporary cinema, thereby causing contemporary cinema to engage in unintended meta-discourse. That meta-discourse in turn, affects contemporary ideological belief systems and perpetuates the historic status quo despite the filmmakers' often professed liberalism. Contemporary cinema through its use of past cinematic language participates in the perpetuation of conservative ideological beliefs even when attempting to address and challenge those very assumptions.

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Appendix



Fig 1 Oiwa from a contemporary Kabuki performance of *Tokaido Yotsuya Kaidan*



Fig 2. Oiwa in the 1959 Nakagawa Nobuo film version of *Tokaido Yotsuya Kaidan*.



Fig 3 and 4, Ukiyo-e paintings of the ghost of Oiwa.



Fig 5 The Wakka-Onna Mask



Fig 6, Lady Wakasa in Ugetsu Monogatari



Fig 7, *Kuroneko* , Shindo Kaneto, 1966.