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Cowboys and Shoguns:

The American Western, Japanese Jidaigeki, and Cross-Cultural Exchange

By Kyle Keough

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Cowboys and Shoguns

The Western has always been considered by many to be a home-grown genre; alongside the musical and jazz, it is considered one of America's few original forms of art. Yet the American Western and the memories we have of it are not solely rooted in the United States. While the earliest forms of the Western can be traced back to American film, the evolution of the genre was a shared task, carried out not just by the United States, but by the impact Japanese cinema had upon Western directors.

Following the sudden emergence of the nickelodeon, Japan's first motion picture theater was built in 1903, forever obviating nickelodeon-type film by marrying the motion picture with the theater. This modernization of the film-viewing experience came before both England and America; Japan had had the nickelodeon introduced to it as early as 1896, and the presentation of film that mirrored the old Japanese Noh theater allowed the advancement of Japanese film presentation to predate its Western counterparts. For Japan, the mimicry of the Noh through the motion picture entailed that film-viewing became a communal event and a shared experience (Richie, 2-4). For the Japanese, the earliest film theaters housed exoticized cultural imports, normally nowhere to be found within Japanese culture. The foreign--or "Western"--film became a unique shared experience for Japan because it offered Japanese men and women sights previously unseen\. Donald Richie writes in Japanese Cinema: Film Style and National Character, "When this early audience saw the wave at Deauville rolling toward them, or the locomotive arriving at the Gare du Nord, they were enjoying their first glimpse of the outside world, a thrilling experience to a people for centuries isolated from this world" (4). It is here that one can make the

discernment that it was this early exposure to foreign film that refaced Japanese preconceptions of the outside world.

While still remaining within the boundaries of traditionalism, Japan nevertheless had allowed an outlet to ulterior modes of thought to exist; a modicum of foreign influence was therefore unkenneled, and any Japanese citizen willing to indulge in the films playing at the local theater was now able to do so. Richie theorizes--and rightfully so--that Japanese film was undeniably self-aware as the child of foreign influence. He makes the assertion that traditional theatrical influences played an increasingly diminutive role as early as 1910: "By the late 1910s, Japanese film, no longer totally constrained by Noh and kabuki influence, began to emphasize--via depiction--with the lower class" (10).

It is important first to consider the Japanese traditionalist influences that Richie mentions. In many ways, the Noh and kabuki theaters correlate directly with English theater of the 1600's, and are especially Shakespearean in the method of delivery and structure. Structurally, the plays of the Noh theater are divided in a similar manner to English theater, and the Noh theater presents its acts with periodic interruptions from a singing narrator--the Japanese *benshi*--which was a variation of the interlude as a storytelling device that Shakespeare used prominently (8). The two correlate so neatly, in fact, that Japanese filmmakers have, throughout history, been able to take Shakespearean premises and recreate them as originating from both Shakespeare and the Noh: Akira Kurosawa's Throne of Blood (1957) is a rather direct translation of Macbeth, but it transposes the Shakespearean singing narrator as an invention of the Noh. Throne of Blood is one of several such works that was born out of both Noh and Shakespeare, as the two are

remarkably similar and, therefore, conducive.

Likewise, the kabuki has Western aspects as well: for instance, Japan's kabuki once demanded that male actors played both male and female roles. In Archetypes in Japanese Film, Gregory Barrett bookends the timeline of the kabuki with the dates 1603 and 1867, a period of roughly two-and-a-half centuries. Barrett also says that the source of traditional Japanese archetypes emanate from the kabuki, though true "traditional" Japanese archetypes are exhibited in a proportionately small percentage of Japanese film, especially when contrasted with early Hollywood of the same period. What is important to note here is that Japanese film has never been rooted in traditionalist thought or methodology. The "newness" of Japanese film renders it as an art-form influenced not so much by traditional Japanese concerns, but by external Western influence.

Traditionalism, as a brand of rhetoric, eventually found a home in some Japanese film. One of its most renowned champions is Yasujiro Ozu, who supplemented traditionalism with a cinematographic style enriched with patience and, to an extent, uneventful passivity. Ozu, whose prominence began in the 1930's and extended into post-War Japanese film, and Japanese filmmakers like him, represent the final refuge of Japanese traditionalism, and if Ozu were on one end of the spectrum, progressively "Western" filmmakers counterbalanced him. For the purposes of this essay, the works of Akira Kurosawa--oftentimes branded as Japan's most "Western" auteur--must be considered because of Kurosawa's label as "Western." Yet while Kurosawa is ideologically dissimilar from Ozu--his films do not stress traditional family values and the acridity of Japan's insolent younger generation--his films are often antithetical to those of

the West. Even though Kurosawa's films are situated within subjective "Western" genres (like the aptly named Western), they are very strong ideological departures from their Western templates. Richie writes, "Over and over the films of Ozu…[and] even of Kurosawa have disconcerted the rigid West by successfully combining what we assumed to be antithetical" (39).

This disconcertion is only made possible through a re-structuring of the traditional Western genre. For example, one of the Western genre's most prominent constituents, John Ford, has been noted as one of Kurosawa's most ardent influences, yet the ideological divide between Ford's early Westerns and a film like The Seven Samurai (1954) are staggering. Kurosawa affectively re-coded Ford's early Westerns by dispelling many of the myths of the West that Ford allowed to proliferate: in Seven Samurai, the mercenaries fight not out of a personal code of conduct, but to feed themselves; the co-existence of samurai and farmer is less than harmonious; there is no invincible gunslinger, and an innate and naturalistic depiction of goodness is, through the fallacies of all the principle characters, rendered false.

Conversion from the American Western to Japanese *jidaigeki* films--feudal-era films that dealt with the wandering samurai--was oftentimes riddled with issues because of the different methods with which the two nations approached the mythic cowboy or samurai. Richie writes that "[i]n the West the tradition has been man against nature…it is difficult, therefore, for us to comprehend a culture that does not see man as powerful and immortal, at the center of the universe. The Japanese see him, rather, as part of the world he inhabits" (14). Richie's conjecture of cross-cultural incompatibility is a bit outdated, but

the thematic present here--man's place within the world and American culture conflicting with Japanese traditionalism--still evinces the problems of ideological transference.

American influence dissolved somewhat in the decade leading into the Second World War. Starting in 1933, the Japanese government developed a proclivity for arguing for a traditional ideology within Japanese film. In the book Mr. Smith Goes to Tokyo: Japanese Cinema Under the American Occupation, 1945-1952, author Kyoko Hirano writes that "[a]fter 1933, the government had suggested general goals and practices for the film industry, until it assumed total control of the industry under the 1939 Film Law" (15); Japanese film thereafter became dramatically more partisan, oftentimes at the behest of the ruling body (15). Japanese filmmakers were coerced into making propagandist films - just as other Axis nations manipulated through the rhetoric of film, Japan too saw film as a valuable tool. In this period of Japanese film just before World War II, censorship was wielded as a device with which to promote a nationalistic ideology. Hirano adds that the 1939 Film Law further constricted Japanese directors, forcing them to sublimate within their films an "acceptable" Japanese rhetoric: "Under the 1939 law, broader interpretations of their legal prerogatives enabled the wartime authorities to consolidate further their ideological control over the film industry" (17).

What is particularly intriguing about pre-War censorship in Japan is that the American film was not eliminated. While coercion led filmmakers in Japan to preach the values of traditional Japan and the reigning government's prowess, the Japanese government curiously continued to import the cultural product of American film. These films were also subject to manipulation, but their existence within Japanese society at this

time points to a need within Japanese society to appropriate American culture and confine it to Japanese traditionalism.

Hirano says that the often butchered Japanese films released during this period were met with malaise and discontent. He writes that "[i]t seems that neither the filmmakers nor the audience were satisfied with these emotionally distorted films. The film companies were merely carrying out the government's orders and filmmakers were following their companies' requests" (21). Hirano also notes that scene condemned as "Anglo-American" were omitted from Japanese pictures, even while American films were still frequently shown in theaters. Hirano says that "[o]f course, American films, which had always been the most popular and lucrative foreign films in Japan, had been controlled since 1935, when the government decided to impose important restrictions and censorship on American films," underlining the fact that Japanese authorities did their best in the ten years leading up to American occupation to de-Americanize imported cultural products (23). The fact remains that American films, even during World War II, were being shown in Japan, and their popularity never waned.

Japan's sojourn into censorship was the first of two periods of rhetoric sublimated within film within Japan at this time; the latter, which began with the American occupation in 1945, was a seven-year period during which American authorities radically shifted the ideological direction of Japanese film. Suddenly, instead of promoting traditionalism and the ideology of the Japanese right, leftist tendencies were the object of American censorship. Hirano writes that "[a]lthough Japanese cinema has always been influenced by foreign ideas and styles (especially those of Hollywood), the immediate postwar period

was unique in that Japanese filmmakers were force-fed American ideas" (9).

The Japanese were thereafter inundated with ideologically slanted rhetoric in a manner that, apropos pre-War censorship, was quite similar. What had been effected by the American occupation was the stance proffered by the ruling body, as it was the American occupation's desire to rid Japanese cinema of traditionalism. Hirano writes that "[t]he occupation authorities planned to use the Japanese media to remold the Japanese and film was one of the important vehicles for the occupation government's propaganda," (5) which essentially posits that the American occupation took a diametrically oppositional stance to pre-War censorship. Whereas pre-War censorship stressed traditionalism and the Japanese ruling body, post-War censorship condemned the promotion of a national identity.

The loss of a national identity in Japan was due in part because of the polarizing manner in which the Americans saw themselves as conquering reformers. As will be further described later, this theory of post-War Japanese film doing violence to traditionalism extends out of the "Us/Not Us" mentality that proliferated within the United States after the War. Much as pre-War censorship had stressed a sort of shared national character, post-War censorship dictated that the Japanese population be properly "Americanized." As Hirano evidences in his book, the Civil Information and Education Section of the United States occupational government "demanded pre production censorship of film projects and scripts, which had to be translated into English by the film companies for this purpose" (6). An Americanized Japan, therefore, was evident down to the way in which scripts were translated into English for "inspection"; not even in the blueprint for artistic expression could something inherently Japanese be allowed to

flourish.

The point of showcasing dual periods of censorship within Japan is to consider how, between culturally immured Japan and its oppositional foe, the United States, the cross-cultural exchange of film was ever possible. As has already been outlined, American film was one of the few cultural imports to Japan, and was viewed with an unexpected brand of fascination and awe that made the works of Western directors very popular in Japanese theaters. Not even a long period of Japanese censorship--followed by a long period of American censorship--coupled with the Second World War, could sway audiences from devouring American film.

The emphasis of this thesis is on the Western genre and how, even while bearing the stress of these cumulative factors, it emerged in the 1960's as a byproduct of the exchange between American and Japanese filmmakers and their films. It is my belief that it was the Japanese jidaigeki, and not any one period of the American Western, that advanced the overall Western genre into the era of the "adult" Western, or the point along the Western timeline with which the generic outline of the traditional Western gave way to a more violent vision of the Western. To offer some level of proof for this, I have looked at two of Japan's most "Western" directors, Akira Kurosawa and Kenji Mizoguchi, and the films of theirs that most closely embody the spirit of the Western; I have also cross-related these films with American Westerns that span a timeline of some thirty years. I have also made the assertion that it was the post-War wave of Japanese Westerns that in part brought about the decline in popularity in the American Western genre in the 1960's; by propagating impossible standards that contradicted the foundation that directors like John

Ford had constructed, American audiences couldn't cope with this new model of the West.

National Character and the "Us/Not Us" Rhetoric of Cross-Cultural Remakes

In the early 1950s, as Japanese film studies began to gain prominence in Western circles, critics posited themselves at a theoretical impasse: by postulating that Japanese film was born out of an uncertain—and considerably *dangerous*—national character, Japanese film was deemed positively alien and, therefore, unknowable. The theory of a national character affectively Othered Japanese culture. By creating an insurmountable void between Eastern and Western culture, and otherwise situating Japanese film within a theoretical vacuum, critics determined Japanese film to be unreadable by Western audiences, instead viewing themselves as mediators who could use the films as explanatory of their subjects, the Japanese artists. Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto makes the assertion in Kurosawa: Film Studies and Japanese Cinema that the level of exoticism attributed to reading Japanese film with an eye intent on deconstructing its "national character" ideology made a proper discursive understanding of Japanese cultural products all but impossible:

> The axiomatic characteristics of the humanist scholarship on Japanese cinema basically prelude possibilities of political intervention. The fixated notions of national character, the Japanese mind, and the Japanese way of life make an attempt to intervene in the status quo of society simply superfluous. Even when some attempt is made to introduce politics and

> ideology into criticism, the haunting effect of the essentialized Japaneseness often reinforces the national stereotypes. When, on rare occasion, humanist critics call for a political change, they still end up reaffirming national stereotypes, thus creating adverse political effects. (18)

Yoshimoto's theory of prevailing "national stereotypes" extends all the way into the films themselves, so that the theory of film studies with regard to Japanese film is situated only around the perversion of the idea of "national character." Yoshimoto argues that the formation of a "national character" theory constricted any awareness of different thematics at work in post-War Japanese film, thereby orchestrating an "Us/Not Us" dynamic (19).

This Othering of Japanese film and, in a broader sense, Japanese culture, came at an inopportune time. As Yoshimoto himself adamantly professes, the "Us/Not Us" Japan/United States dichotic relationship is hedged upon post-War tensions and anxiety; after years of effectively brandishing the "enemy" tag upon Japan, a sort of nationalist rhetoric was instilled within the U.S. The "Us/Not Us" dichotomy that Yoshimoto describes was appropriated by an inattentive American audience; by viewing the Japanese as "unknowable"–except to other Japanese—American interpretation of the slew of Japanese films that followed in the wake of Rashomon's (1951) international success was determined by the supposition that the films themselves were unknowable to a Western audience. It is as if critics, hung up on the supposed perpendicularity of the two cultures being considered here, determined that it was the birthplace—the culture of origin, I dare say—that makes a film either knowable or unknowable.

I say this comes at an inopportune time because, curiously enough, the new wave of

influential Japanese filmmakers—like Kurosawa, for instance—were only working under the guise of feudalism to create personal works that endeared themselves to a form of humanism that many American critics, in the midst of the "Us/Not Us" propaganda frenzy, forced themselves to overlook. Filmmakers like Kurosawa instituted a hodgepodge of various social influences—ranging from Japan's tumultuous past to the silent vexation of a nation forced to rebuild following World War II—and coupled them with, of all things, their personal influences of the Western films that had become a staple of Japanese theater houses over the years to create an entirely new Japanese filmic aesthetic.

Kurosawa "fooled" contemporary critics by hiding a modernist vision in a feudalist parcel: his manipulation of *jidaigeki* is the fundamental explanation for the reason why American critics were engaged in an "Us/Not Us" dialogue with his films (this is a dialogue that led to, for example, a viewing of The Seven Samurai to represent Kurosawa's infatuation with the bushido and not the inherent self-deprecating mockery of the bushido that, American critics might feel, would run counterpoint to the idea of "national character" that *must* be sublimated within all Japanese film). The components that make Kurosawa the most Western of Japanese filmmakers—even as many of his most "Western" films are jidaigeki—stem from personal experience, and he became Japan's most famous director to apply this Western mode of filmmaking to his own films. Yoshimoto defines the jidaigeki as the Japanese correspondent with the American period film, and he outlines some of the congruous forces at work in each:

> *Jidaigeki* has often been compared to the American Western. Both genres, set in important periods of Japanese and American national histories,

> feature armed heroes—samurai and gamblers, cowboys and gunmen—whose violence plays the essential role in the narrative development and resolution. The Western and *jidaigeki* heroes are often social outsiders who restore order and help people fighting against the villains while fully being aware that their virtuous action does not allow them to reintegrate themselves in a renewed social order. (231)

His films, therefore, are his vision, and are antithetical to a national character – they are of a personal vision, not a national one, and Kurosawa himself puts it best in his Something Like an Autobiography: "'Although human beings are incapable of talking about themselves with total honesty, it is much harder to avoid the truth while pretending to be other people. They often reveal much about themselves in a very straightforward way. I am certain that I did. There is nothing that says more about its creator than the work itself" (188-189).

Filmmakers like Kurosawa manipulate a Western perception of a Japanese social consciousness—or a "national character," as it was deemed—by rejecting feudalism. Kurosawa's motivations as a filmmaker were, unlike some of his predecessors, not to uphold the stagnating myth of national character, but rather to recode Japanese social consciousness by infusing his *jidaigeki* films with a series of theoretical constructs. One must therefore consider all of these constructs when considering subsequent interpretations of Kurosawa's works: his *jidaigeki* films are a commixture of what author James Goodwin determine are humanism, "socially responsible" individualism, and the running contradiction of Kurosawa's reverence for the bushido—defined as the "way of the

samurai"—and the consequent lengths he afterwards undertakes to parody it.

While situated within a feudal world, Kurosawa's *jidaigeki* films, such as The Seven Samurai and Yojimbo, do not concern themselves with a national character, and are instead hinged on Kurosawa's personal constructs. I feel that the American filmmakers who sought to re-envision Kurosawa's works in the form of the remake viewed these texts incorrectly. The United States-induced pedagogy was a calculated post-war "Us/Not Us" mentality, a lashing out against the feudal *jidaigeki* films that the United States saw as a subverted national character: Kyoko Hirano writes that "[f]eudal loyalty to lords was considered a most dangerous concept [by the United States], since it represented the opposite of the spirit of individualism, a cherished concept to American society that was strongly promoted by the occupation" (67). Therefore, Japan's adherence to a "national character" was the context within which a director like John Sturges, who helmed the 1960 remake of The Seven Samurai, The Magnificent Seven, viewed Kurosawa's works.

The Seven Samurai, it seems, came to represent for Sturges the same sort of national character that had been instilled within the American subconscious. This is why The Magnificent Seven popularizes the "united front" ethos; I argue that in the midst of this misinterpretation is an unwanted cultural menagerie, from which Sturges invariably participates in a role-reversal. Sturges looked at The Seven Samurai under the propagated guise of the "Us/Not Us" rhetoric; intent to recode Kurosawa's work as an American product, Sturges was compelled to make a film that was less Akira Kurosawa and more John Sturges.

However, at this point, the façade of "national character" had fallen, and Kurosawa,

the most Western of Japanese filmmakers, in turn became more of a Western filmmaker than Sturges. Sturges unwittingly made a film in The Magnificent Seven that appeals far more to "a national character" than Kurosawa's efforts; by consciously deriding the theoretical "national character" embedded within Kurosawa's film, Sturges took an ahead-of-its-time "Western" film and came up with a spinoff that revealed much about America's hidden national consciousness and the subverted fascination with squelched individualism. In essence, with The Magnificent Seven, it was Sturges who became the prototypical Japanese filmmaker.

Sturges' flirtation with the notion of a "national character" comes in the portions of The Seven Samurai removed from his recoded vision. An integral component of the Magnificent-Seven-as-a-traditional-Japanese-film equation is the idiosyncrasy of Sturges' many omissions and manipulations. In order to infuse within The Seven Samurai a more "Western" ethos, Sturges maligns much of what was Western, modern, and atypical about the original: Sturges frequently makes concessions on the tensions between rivaling representatives of different racial or caste segments, offering a romanticized vision of Kurosawa's Seven Samurai.

First, I must address how the word "caste" has been manipulated to fill the aims of the subsequent body of this thesis. Caste here does not evoke racial connotations; while race is a non-factor in The Seven Samurai and is more pertinent to The Magnificent Seven, racial boundaries are inconsequential to this definition of caste. The "caste" that is being explicitly used here is one of impenetrable social distinctions - the word takes on feudal connotations when examining Samurai because of the theme of the entitlement of a born

samurai versus the squalor of a born peasant. In Kurosawa's film, caste is applicable because these boundaries are seen as impenetrable, yet in Sturges' film, caste, in one of Sturges' many concessions, becomes class, as Sturges implies that the Americanized Seven Samurai is one of unhindered freedom. Sturges' message--which will be detailed further in an explication of the instances in which he intermingles Kurosawa's formerly stringent caste system--is not one of optimism but of faux naivety.

First, Sturges unconventionally consolidates caste systems that, Kurosawa argues, are at war with one another. In an attempt to make room for Sturges' disenchanted cowboy archetype (Robert Vaughn's Lee), Sturges consolidates the half-samurai, half-peasant Kikuchiyo (Toshiro Mifune) and boyish Katsushiro (Isao Kimura) into one voice, Chico (Horst Buchholz). Chico is Sturges' mishmash of Kikuchiyo's internalized struggle and Katsushiro's samurai infatuation – in Chico, Sturges attests to the comingling of peasant and cowboy, allotting his crowded character the ability, in varying degrees, the ability to expel one or the other from his present self. It is as if Sturges sees Chico as the vehicle with which he can present to a Western audience a happy-ending revision to Kurosawa's film; in The Magnificent Seven, Chico does not lose his life to avenge his friends—as Kikuchiyo does—nor does he lose his love—as Kutsushiro does—and, at the film's close, is allowed by Sturges the autonomy to choose his ancestry.

That autonomy is evoked from The Seven Samurai, in which Kikuchiyo is mocked and tormented over a stolen ancestral scroll. In this scene, Kikuchiyo is mocked for having stolen the ancestral scroll of a young boy; the dominant hegemony of the samurai reprimand "Kikuchiyo" (his given name, in part to serve as a reminder of his failed attempt

to inter-mix caste) for trespassing upon their caste. The mise-en-scene fully indicts Kikuchiyo as an unwanted trespasser, convicted of caste thievery: the set for the scene is constructed so that wooden stable fences keep the drunken Kikuchiyo from capturing his taunting superiors. If Kurosawa's sour note is one in the vein of, "we cannot choose our lot in life," Sturges' film reeks of harmony, so much so that a hegemony, Sturges argues, need not exist. The advent of Chico, who marries together warring caste systems, is one such example; another example, which is the empathy shown for the plight of the villain, resonates as an unrealistic comingling and will be expounded upon later. The expulsion of the hegemony, in whatever form it may take (in Kurosawa's, it is the dominant caste system; in Sturges', it deals more in one's race) is essential to Sturges' fairy-tale of a film.

Shawn St. Jean contemplates Sturges' decision to cater to a Western audience's ideological appetite in his essay, "'Three Meals a Day and the Fun of It': Existential Hunger and the Magnificent/Seven/Samurai":

> Sturges was to solve the class problem by making Chico…a farmer's son, thus satisfying both the cultural requirement that would enable him to marry the peasant girl and the American audience's perceived need for a happy romantic resolution. Kurosawa, however, realistically dooms the romance in a helpless ending where Katsushiro cannot join his beloved due to an invisible caste barrier, exactly antithetical to Sturges's ending. (80)

The invisible caste barrier is a conundrum and a difficulty when dissecting <u>The Seven Samurai</u>. On one hand, Kurosawa's film is part commentary on the caste system, denouncing it for the naivety with which it tries to regiment an otherwise fluid and

ever-changing social hierarchy. In The Magnificent Seven, caste, it seems, has been abolished. There are no ancestral scrolls in the mythic West – characters like Chico comingle with farmer and cowboy alike, and has optioned the profound and near-godlike ability to choose his role in life. Chico becomes governor of his own destiny; such a theory is, naturally, antithetical to The Seven Samurai's fate-bound ronin.

The theory that Sturges purports of a caste-less America is, naturally, a façade. Of the two films, The Seven Samurai is of a more Western mode of thought because of the progressive reasoning with which it claims the existence of a caste system: there is no allusion of harmony as in Sturges' film. St. Jean comments on the class-less America depicted in The Magnificent Seven, exhibiting several of the instances in which a seemingly more cultivated American West is, in actuality, perpetuating a lie within itself:

> Sturges's The Magnificent Seven sets forth even more explicitly the terms of the existential dilemma of its characters and offers a similar possibility for a solution, but this film also more definitely undermines that solution. In 'class-less' American society, however, some kind of barrier between human beings must serve, since the bandits and the gunmen are 'in the same business,' if 'only as competitors,' and the farmers cannot forbid their daughters from marrying on basis of rank or station. (82)

The lie that The Magnificent Seven seems to perpetuate is the elimination of the caste system as a whole. In his diligent efforts to eliminate from The Seven Samurai all that is Japanese—and therefore "foreign" and "alien"—he unwittingly extinguishes the flames of the hidden flaws within a self-entitled, progressive-minded society. It is as if Sturges

himself was the rain that doused and turned to ash the fire in the midst of Katsushiro's volatile dispute with his lover and her father, forcing the dispute to dissipate and thereby "uniting" together the fragments of a shattered social structure.

Instances in which such caste systems—whether recognizably visible, as in The Seven Samurai, or foolheartedly dismissed, as in The Magnificent Seven—intermingle are the episodes that St. Jean feels relate directly towards a sort of existential crisis looming over these works as modernist texts. It is true that in each film, an existential crisis does indeed emerge: each film is overwrought with the need for the designation of roles, for the placement of some measure of importance upon one's life, and for the cohesion of "parts" (i.e. farmers, samurai, bandits) into a grander whole. However, the problem here lies in the lengths to which Sturges goes to appease the existential; existentialism seems to be the thematic with which Sturges has recoded The Magnificent Seven as "American." By eliminating caste and implementing a flexible class system, the existential problem, Sturges argues, is soothed. St. Jean goes on to necessitate the role of the existential as the overseeing moral compass in The Magnificent Seven:

> As far as they reflected their own time, westerns like The Magnificent Seven could no more avoid existential overtones than other genres. With the Second World War fading quickly into history and Cold War, with its attendant nuclear threat, becoming part of everyday life, fine art and culture sought to portray, in original ways, the struggle to find human worth in a world that seemed slated for disintegration, if not destruction. (77)

Granted, the existential question, which in layman's terms can be defined as

whether or not the value of living lies only in attaining self-determining existence, is paramount to both films. The Seven Samurai's *ronin*—free-roaming, masterless samurai—who assume the contradictory forms of town patriarchs and martyrs-to-be are essential because the "existential hunger" that St. Jean alludes to drives them towards their self-annointed sainthood. Guided by the existential as a moral compass, Kurosawa turns these seven ronin into philanthropists, yet also makes the allusion to the many existing contradictions. When Kikuchiyo exclaims, "This was me!" while holding a farmer's baby, or when he reprimands the samurai as the instigators from which the farmers, in duress, have killed samurai in the past and taken their weapons and armor, he does so under the pretext that his words carry weight because of the moments of the film that precede it. Before Kikuchiyo lambasts his samurai compatriots, the shocking brutality of a town full of murderous, treacherous farmers is revealed. In no similar manner is the same brevity lavished upon The Magnificent Seven; the words that Chico utters may be the same, but situated within a less disintegrated context, they bear less weight.

Similarly, when Kikuchiyo's existential collapse re-emerges just before the old man's crumbling house is overtaken by flames, his admission of the painful memories as an orphaned farmer's son are particularly emotional. Again, Kurosawa is outlining the caste system rendered invisible in Sturges' Magnificent Seven; at this moment, Kikuchiyo's existential role seems positively uncontrollable, just as it had when he was a child. In his remake, Sturges opts to remove all mention of the burnt-down house, instead shielding the old man with the tremendous weight of his age. The old man—who, Sturges accounts, is *at least* 83 years old—has, in his frailty, become too small a nuisance for the

bandits to expunge.

Perhaps the one instance in which Kurosawa most recognizes the permanent, intransitive castes that inevitably prevail in his film is at the film's end. Kurosawa's The Seven Samurai leads us, under false pretenses, to side with the apparently harmonious attitude that has settled amongst the farmers, who sign and move in unison as they work in the rice fields. Kurosawa suggests here that the town has been restored to order, yet in an unsightly turn, then refocuses on the samurai, the diasporics who have nothing to show for their efforts. Unlike the surviving members of the seven cowboys, the samurai, once more nomadic, have left no imprint.

In The Seven Samurai's final scene, we open upon what is presented as a joyous time of harvest. Rice fields, plentifully stocked, are aligned in neat angles, suggesting the restoration of order. So too do the united movements and actions of the women tending the rice paddies convey the thematic of a return to order: the women plant rice as if choreographed, and they sing in harmony. Yet this sense of harmony is meant to dissuade the viewer into believing that all is well; the masquerade of the women is unseemly in how its artificiality is suddenly contrasted with the genuine discomfort and anguish of the three remaining samurai who stand before the graves of their fallen compatriots. The same persistent facade of order is rendered false here because of the similarities in scene composition. Like the rice paddies, there is a sense of uniformity, yet "harmony" fails to describe the way in which the graves of the four fallen samurai are aligned evenly across the screen, with the three remaining samurai positioned at the center. It is as if Kurosawa has intentionally perverted the audience's interpretation of how order is rendered to

disprove the notion that the restoration that has taken place is a happy one.

Kurosawa dictates that life, at least for the farmers, has been restored to "normal," but his depiction of an un-thanked and now-unwanted samurai trio questions whether this restoration does any good. What has returned are the long-hardened sentiments of hatred and mistrust that were so pervasive upon the samurais' entrance into the town. Unlike The Magnificent Seven, no social progress has been made in Kurosawa's film; farmers will still kill samurai, and samurai will still kill farmers. Such pessimism with regard to these irreconcilable populations is more embedded in reality than Sturges' film, which suggests an entirely different outcome.

By comparison, the conclusion of The Magnificent Seven, at first glance, is seemingly of a more sobering tone: the villagers, tight-lipped and dejected, offer their sorrows to the remaining three; the old man gives his sorrowful admonishments to the remaining cowboys, thanking them for their help but, at the same time, admitting that they have no use for them anymore; Chris and Vin (Steve McQueen) offer to us the same ominous narrative—that only the farmers have won—as in Kurosawa's version. Here, Sturges ostensibly reasons that, as Chris says, the farmers have won, though it is the cowboys who share in their victory. In this scene, Sturges finalizes the creation of a "national character" – while the farmers have no role for the cowboys, they do no cast them out and reject them, as do the farmers in The Seven Samurai. Sturges as a filmmaker does not create a void of distance between the two as Kurosawa did, instead allowing for dialogue to remain open and affectionate. And Chico's return to his lover signifies in Sturges' film that caste barriers are indeed fleeting, that no social hegemony is irrevocable,

that the illusion of a class-less America, at least in his vision, still prevails.

As a departure to Sturges' interpretation of Kurosawa's films, Sergio Leone, in his remake of Kurosawa's jidaigeki film Yojimbo, offers a film that is likeminded with Kurosawa's in tone and theory in A Fistful of Dollars (1964). Leone's brand of cinema, which Christopher Frayling refers to in One Upon a Time in Italy: The Westerns of Sergio Leone as "cinema cinema," imparts upon not only Leone's past experiences—which Kurosawa himself mended into his films constantly—but of his cinematic influences, which, Frayling asserts, was dominated not by Mussolini's propagandist ventures, but of American cinema. This appetite for cinema in America led Leone to his initial infatuation with the American Western:

> [T]he special fascination held by Italians—especially in artistic and intellectual circles—for American pop culture in the 1950s and 1960s had a great deal to do with their experience of films, comics, and popular music during the fascist era…these cultural products represented forbidden fruit, the "other world"; and this made the ideology they represented seem doubly attractive. (20)

Leone's start in film began as a longtime Assistant Director. A product of the tutelage of the neorealist movement, Leone graduated to American cinema, at which point he worked with some of the directors whom he had long held in high esteem. His idolatry of the iconoclasm that was the Western director was shared by Kurosawa as well, who had long revered John Ford as a monument of the Western genre. Yet Leone, Frayling argues, was disenchanted by his heroes once given the chance to work with them. Leone, intent on

uncovering some hidden truths about the genre, repeatedly coaxed the American directors he worked with to divulge their secrets. On the set of The Nun's Story, he only wanted to talk to director Fred Zinnemann about High Noon; while filming Ben Hur, his mind was consumed less with the now-popular sword-and-sandal epic, but with William Wyler's previous efforts; on the set of Sadom and Gomorrah, Leone's mind was still entrenched within the Western genre, so much so that it led director Robert Aldrich to fire Leone after he became too pesky an Assistant Director (Frayling 23-28). So, Leone returned to Italy with a sour taste of the directors who had created the films that he once worshipped.

Leone's A Firstful of Dollars reflects this change in demeanor. Leone drew upon likeminded Kurosawa for his man-with-no-name project, taking Kurosawa's quarrelsome evocations of the bushido and translating them faithfully into the genre that he had found similarly disingenuous, the Western. "National character" has been so far removed from either film that each smacks heavily of Kurosawa's theme of socially responsible individualism: archetypes are imagined as so vastly different that even extreme visual distances among characters become important. In Yojimbo, Kurosawa's casting decisions are clearly concerned with the visual, from devilishly boyish Unosuke (Tatsuya Nakadai) to the hideous uni-brow of Ino (Daisuke Kato) to Kannuki, the gargantuan bodyguard (Namigoro Rashomon); his assortment of characters supersede any possible notion of a "national character." There are, therefore, so many divergent and insidious categories at work that a consensual hegemony, Kurosawa argues, cannot be reached. Such a message is similarly proffered in The Seven Samurai, though it has now been subjugated within a rather different context.

Frayling writes that Leone's departure from the structured Hollywood system allowed him the theoretical freedom to expand upon the genre in an undertaking that, in many ways, resembled Kurosawa's: "Instead of telling his stories in classic Hollywood fashion (as his apprenticeship had trained him to do), he embellished them, turned the grammar of film into a kind of rhetoric, and generally behaved toward the Western like a mannerist artist confronted by a biblical subject" (22). It is not enough to say that Leone wished to re-invent the Western, nor that he desired to resuscitate a long-forgotten genre. What Leone did in A Fistful of Dollars was, as Frayling says, to approach the genre with a sense of mannerism in mind, yet it is not from these older Westerns that Leone draws his inspiration, but from Kurosawa's Yojimbo. Leone's visual flair, his heightened "spaghetti" aesthetic, and his use of outlandish caricatures and mythic figures all seem derived from Kurosawa's film, as are the complexities of character and the allusion to the faults of a defunct caste system found within his effort.

Both Kurosawa and Leone take ample time in succinctly reprimanding the caste system that exists. While these instances appear at differing junctures within the comparative narrative structures of the film, they nevertheless deal with the same theme: a human being's worth resulting in how hierarchy is established. In Yojimbo, Kurosawa is more up-front about the affronts made to Sanjuro (Toshiro Mifune) by the purchasing of geisha. When the geisha first appear on-screen, Sanjuro offers only a dissenting glance, yet his silence speaks volumes. His displeasure is evident – he looks down upon the geisha from aloft, and, for the first time, the impiety of the town has forced upon him a visual reaction. Later in the film, the Seibei family's wicked matriarch offers Sanjuro his pick

from the lot of geisha as a bribe in exchange for his services, and this is disparaging to him: with a sense of urgency, Sanjuro rises, and the first word out of his mouth is "careful." This remark, posited towards the two captives and the family's carelessness in guarding them, is also aimed like an arrow towards the sublimating of human beings as servants. Lascivious, Sanjuro is not.

In A Fistful of Dollars, the exposure of this hidden caste system is done in a different manner, but to the same effect. Ramon Rojo's (Gian Maria Volonte) mistress, Marisol (Marianne Koch), is, as she is in Kurosawa's film, the wife and mother to a separate family, handed over to Ramon as the prize in a card-playing theft. Again, Leone, like Kurosawa, is dealing with the artificial construction of castes, of sublimating one people in favor of the creation of a hegemony. Yet it is Clint Eastwood's man with no name who restores order, reuniting Marisol with her family. As in Yojimbo, Leone calls into question the process by which the elimination of this caste system is undertaken: "Joe" buys Marisol and her family's freedom with the money he has been given as an advance for his killing, and so the impotence of the family is magnified. In both films, Leone and Kurosawa are making the admission that commerce governs caste, and that the idea of the caste system, while no longer structured within the defunct feudal era within which Kurosawa's jidaigeki films operate, has re-emerged under the pretenses of one's assigned worth.

A commerce-led caste system seems, at first thought, to be a dynamic one, within which castes can be rearranged and individualism leads to inter-class movement. Yojimbo makes it known that a system of capital is still not a fluid system in how it enmeshes

violence and commerce together. Those who willingly participate in the commerce that Kurosawa supports are structured within a veritable enclave that allows for free trade to be dictated by the violence that surrounds it. At the film's start, a man who sells silk gripes about Sanjuro, saying that his violence will only "bloody the silk." Here, it is being inferred that there are always extraneous factors—in this instance, ongoing violence—that can act as a controlling force with regard to commerce. Once again, control is taken out of the hands of the individual. The silk seller cannot make enough money to move out of the town if the ruling bodies do not quell the violence.

In both films, the "Us/Not Us" dynamic with which Japanese films were once approached by critics has been suffocated. Kurosawa's use of individualism has, almost to its own downfall, become the controlling factor of films like Yojimbo. Within the allegorical feudal system, there is no national character, only ronin who cannot find a home—whether it be the wandering Sanjuro or the half-samurai, half-farmer Kikuchiyo—and farmers whose unwillingness to concede their harbored tensions make unity impossible. Sturges' view of Japanese film as the "Other"—so much so that it is "unknowable" and, therefore, both foreign and alien—prompted him to recode The Seven Samurai into The Magnificent Seven, though his interpretation of The Seven Samurai as a film centered around national character forced him into making the film he had originally sought to avoid. And the more "Western" of the two filmmakers, Kurosawa, has the gall to advise us that situated within his allegorical feudal system, hidden caste systems still permeate. Only now, they have taken on new forms, as Yojimbo's commerce-centered town indicates.

Cinematographic Technique, the Devolution into the "Adult" Western, and the Appropriation of Style

The Japanese samurai film of the post-World War II era—which oftentimes employed the then-aberrant filmmaking and post-production editing techniques that translated cogently into the adult Western of the mid-1950's and 1960's—was born out of myriad circumstances. The term "adult" Western is used here to convey the shift within the genre in which directors increased emphasis upon the cruelty of violence, created less defined distinctions between customary good and evil pairings, invoked the industrialization of the western landscape, and orchestrated a shift in the motivation behind the cowboy, from philanthropy to a capitalistic--and sometimes even misanthropic--approach to his world. In part, directors, encumbered by the call to propagandize the Japanese film, cultivated the Japanese period film, which allowed filmmakers to ensconce disapproval towards the present in what Donald Richie refers to as the "safely dead past" (47). Ten years removed from the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, filmmakers turned to the samurai film as a haven. Following in the vein of Japanese traditionalism, many, like Kurosawa, once again safeguarded their views as Japanese citizens in the past; in an agitated, post-nuclear climate, it would be the Japanese samurai who reclaimed the theater for Japan's war-weary public: Richie writes that "there was, in Japan, an early public acceptance of the realistic historical film, an agreement from the man on the balcony that his problems were much like those of the samurai on the screen" (48).

As a longstanding beacon for film depicting the middle-class, the resurrection of the Japanese shomin-geki, or "films about lower middle class as it is," ran parallel to that of similar film movements (Richie 50). Japan's shomin-geki genre originated in the 1930's and infiltrated into post-War Japan, even after filmgoers had moved on to the jidaigeki genre. Even nine years after the end of World War II, in the United States a similarly war-weary populous was divided over possible Communist Elia Kazan's On the Waterfront (1954). In wartime Italy, filmmakers Roberto Rossellini and Vittorio De Sica purchased their film—sometimes on the black market—and affectively remapped Italian socio-political consciousness with the neo-realism movement, which would be founded in the late stages of Nazi occupation in Italy but would resonate well into the 1950s. And in Japan, an ode to Japanese traditionalism and historicism—one born out of an intrusive political hegemony—created such filmic freedom that it disimprisoned those who wished to stray from the restrained style of Yasujiro Ozu.

In international circles--and especially as a byproduct of the French New Wave, from which much of auteur theory was born--the selling-point of a film became, with increasing frequency, less Ingrid Bergman and more Ingmar Bergman. David Weddle writes that "[t]here were filmmakers who had their own strikingly idiosyncratic styles—Akira Kurosawa, Federico Fellini, Ingmar Bergman—whom younger French critics were beginning to call 'auteurs': film authors…American movie moguls at first found the theory laughable, then maddening when it began to gain currency in their own country over the coming decade" (195); the cinematic auteur found himself rooted in, of all places, those most badly damaged by the War. And so, as the idea of the cinematic auteur

germinated from directors who coupled a shomin-geki thematic with incomparable cinematic stylization, the auteur was a bittersweet, lonely flower in the charcoal gardens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

In the wake of traditional Japanese filmmaking, newfound auteurs like Kurosawa experimented with the conventions of style, thereby transposing a new directorial arsenal upon a genre which, until this point, had stagnated in cinematic growth and maturity. Kurosawa and cinematographer Kazuo Miyagawa—whose chameleonic style found a home in the films of both Mizoguchi and Ozu as well—began intense experimentation with Rashomon (1950): the filmmaker and his cinematographer implemented complicated tracking shots, corralled natural light with the use of mirrors, and even defied the perception that over-exposure by the sun would damage one's camera by shooting directly into it. Those raised on a steady diet of an establishing shot of the overhead sun in the American Western might therefore find it strange that such an image comes from a Japanese period film, with a Japanese director and cinematographer, about an unclear event and the extreme ends undergone to shed light upon it.

Yet Kurosawa's greatest cinematic gifts to the Western genre emerged out of one of his most Western films: 1954's The Seven Samurai, in which Kurosawa's cinematographic experimentation led to the creation of the paragon of the adult Western. The Seven Samurai is a cinematographic paradigm, a touchstone of Kurosawa's prowess parlayed into a more Western genre; it provided a framework for a more modern Western in cinematic effects that hadn't up until that point been pursued. As he had done in Rashomon, Kurosawa left in the wake of production a long and varied list of innovative trials. A mélange of

slow-motion photography sequences, shooting with multiple cameras (sometimes as many as four or five in one scene), and the institution of the telephoto lens would soon become staples of the American Western genre.

In The Seven Samurai, Kurosawa uses slow-motion photography as a laconic reply to the periodic instances of violence in the film's first half. Kurosawa, pioneering in how violence in The Seven Samurai was photographed, uses undulating shots of slow-motion and normal-motion photography in the film's first violent episode. Kurosawa lays the framework for the use of slow-motion in action scenes in this introduction to Kambei Shimada (Takashi Shimura), the aging samurai as war-weary as the audience watching him.

Following a prolonged, muted exchange of glances between Shimada and a sprightly, innominate samurai under the forged name "Kikuchiro" (Toshiro Mifune), Shimada, adorned in the disguise as a priest, enters the hide-out of a thief and the child he holds hostage. Rushing forth, Shimada disappears inside; from this point on, Kurosawa consciously juxtaposes shots of normal motion and of slow motion, transitioning from a one-second reaction shot of the onlookers to a slow-motion shot of the thief stumbling gawkishly outside. Kurosawa inter-cuts several times between the thief—filmed in a long shot—and the onlookers, who flank an entranced Kikuchiro rising to his feet. Movement is made ubiquitous by Kurosawa here, with the aim meant to contrast movement at normal speed with movement in slow motion. Kurosawa makes effective this sequence of shots because of the movement displayed by the crowd; had Kurosawa just filmed a simple reaction shot to be inter-cut with that of the thief, the difference would be far less jarring,

drawing less attention to the stumbling thief and, therefore, failing to highlight Kurosawa's manipulation of the temporal. As Kurosawa moves his camera inward (i.e. as the scope of his shots decrease and he departs from the long shot of the thief in favor of a medium shot), the manipulation of the temporal becomes a more dominant element of the scene: the thief, filmed from the waist-up, falls forward in a shot that surpasses the prior sequence in length, and Kikuchiro, now framed in a medium shot, remains entranced by the goings-on laid out before him.

Suddenly, Kurosawa makes even more explicit the divide between normal motion and slow motion. A woman scurries past Kikuchiro, temporarily diverting his attention. Kurosawa follows the woman as she runs to Shimada, her captive child in-hand, and the thief—who now is filmed from the front—is re-framed in the foreground. At this moment, Kurosawa marries the subjects of both halves of the temporal divide: we, as the audience, for the first time see the thief in normal motion, and, as the terseness of Kurosawa's editing returns to a more frenetic pace, this commixture of shooting speeds becomes even more of a dialectic of sorts for the disparity between slow motion and normal motion.

After Shimada tosses his sword to the ground, the thief, now filmed from behind, falls to the ground in the final slow-motion shot of the scene. Kikuchiro, reacting to the now-dead thief with an intense gaze, is now filmed in a close-up; Kurosawa then moves the camera back to an extreme long-shot, framing the deceased thief, the entranced Kikuchiro and his flank of a legion of onlookers, the heroic Shimada, and the weeping mother and her child in a single shot. Doing so establishes slow-motion photography as a means with which to depict violence – with the scene's violent catalyst—the thief—now inanimate. An

extreme long-shot transposes a similar suspension of animation onto the crowd by making their movements diminutive. Without the thief, the scene no longer necessitates slow-motion photography.

Stephen Prince illustrates the significance of Kurosawa's slow-motion photography inter-cut with normal motion and the impact such innovations had on adult Western filmmaker Sam Peckinpah: "The essential influences on [Peckinpah's] montage aesthetic are easily identified. The most important influence is the work of Akira Kurosawa because it was Kurosawa who first showed filmmakers how to intercut slow-motion and normal-speed footage in scenes of violence" (178). Peckinpah, on the heels of Arthur Penn's Bonnie and Clyde, was transfixed not by Penn's 1967 endeavor, but by Kurosawa's original vision. Peckinpah became one of the first of a long lineage of Western filmmakers intent on translating the slow-motion photography aesthetic into the adult Western: Peckinpah, recently freed from the shackles of the television Western with Ride the High Country and Major Dundee, marked his first venture into the use of slow-motion photography in ultra-violent sequences with 1969's The Wild Bunch, fourteen-years the junior of Kurosawa's The Seven Samurai.

Even in pre-production, Kurosawa's influence on both Peckinpah and screenwriter Walon Green can be seen. As Green himself said, "'The violence in slow motion is very expressly in the script. I put the slow motion in because when I wrote it, I had just seen The Seven Samurai, which had the first use of slow motion in an action scene that I'd ever seen'" (180). Green, in conjunction with Peckinpah, participated in one of the first true adoptions of Kurosawa's slow-motion cinematographic techniques, comingling

Kurosawa's framework for this sequence with the adult Western.

If Kurosawa pioneered splicing slow-motion and normal-motion cuts to create an undulating rhythm, Peckinpah consummated this technique with the prolonged, ultra-violent adult Western. Peckinpah's dystopic vision of the adult Western stemmed from his complaints of the flat, unrealistic portrayal of violence in the traditional American Western. Peckinpah's take on sterilized violence was less than enthusiastic: he found the bloodless, clean aesthetic of death in the Western of old to be an anesthetic for the masses, making violence in the cinema decidedly unrealistic.

In The Wild Bunch, Peckinpah aimed to create an anti-violent film vis-a-vis an ultra-violent narrative: Prince said, "By using graphic imagery of bloodletting and the montage aesthetic, Peckinpah aimed to bring the era's violence inside the movie theater, which would no longer function as a place of refuge by shielding viewers from horrific images" (177). The vehicle with which Peckinpah could accomplish this was Kurosawa's framework for the violent sequence; both filmmakers are similarly humanistic in the portrayal of violence not as viscerally pleasing, but as ugly, and they therefore had a similar thematic buried amongst the bodies strewn across a more traditional, otherwise-picturesque Western landscape.

Peckinpah delivered a sobering portrait of violence in America to a public infatuated with the romanticized gunfights of the traditional Western, and he did so with Kurosawa's The Seven Samurai as a compass. Much of Kurosawa's framework appears at one juncture or another in The Wild Bunch: Peckinpah contrasts slow-motion photography with normal motion as early on as the film's first shoot-out, and he exhibits the same basic

principle aims in shooting such a sequence as Kurosawa had. First, as author Bernard Dukore professes, Peckinpah "does not overindulge slow-motion violence" (75), showing similar restraint to Kurosawa, always undermining the grandeur of slow motion by never lingering too long. The pageantry of this sequence exists only after-the-fact; moments of slow-motion photography—from a gunshot wound felling a would-be assassin atop an overlooking perch, to an outlaw careening through a glass window—are few and far between, accounting for less screen time than even Kurosawa's photography of Shimada, Kikuchiro, and the thief. Yet, for this sequence, Peckinpah layers his many variations on the temporal, using myriad speeds to draw particular attention to the manipulation of time. Dukore writes that in The Wild Bunch, Peckinpah actually patterns his many variations of speed:

> Peckinpah films the gunfight scenes from a variety of angles and camera speeds—24 frames per second (normal speed) and 30, 60, 90, and 120 frames per second, making the speed slow, slower, and still more slow—and he optically prints frames three times to make the result more breathtakingly slow; he then edits them together in a whirlwind-like, almost dizzying pattern. (77)

To obtain the sense of eclecticism reverberating from the vastly varied speeds of shooting present here, Peckinpah again participates in a sort of homage-cum-mimicry of Kurosawa's The Seven Samurai. Peckinpah's action sequences are largely more complicated than Kurosawa's; while Kurosawa's final battle between samurai, peasant, and outlaw uses a concentrated number of actors on-screen at once, Kurosawa removes

much of the difficulty from shooting this sequence by shooting from a greater distance. Peckinpah, unwilling to make such a concession, was driven to film with multiple cameras at once in order to obtain inter-cutting shots at differing speeds. The Wild Bunch parlays its multiple cameras into instances of individualized slow-motion violence; with multiple cameras, Peckinpah can remain anti-violent by focusing on each individual death, thereby limiting the scope and forcing his audience to view the degeneracy of a more realistic shoot-out. Kurosawa, who adopted a similar technique in filming The Seven Samurai, etched the use of multiple cameras into the lore of the Western action scene by expositing how slow-motion photography, when contrasted with normal motion, could be effective.

Peckinpah used yet another Kurosawa technique—the telephoto lens—in several of The Wild Bunch's most renowned scenes. Prince adduces Peckinpah's attraction towards multi-camera filming that led to the inevitable adoption of Kurosawa's telephoto lens: "Kurosawa's cinema also taught Peckinpah about the perspective-distorting effects of telephoto lenses, a signature Kurosawa element that became a signature Peckinpah element, because the telephoto lens works extremely well in conjunction with multi-camera filming" (179-180). Yet even Peckinpah refuses to subjugate the telephoto lens to a secondary role, circumscribed to only The Wild Bunch's action sequences: in perhaps one of the film's most recognizable moments, Peckinpah uses the telephoto lens to film an unequivocally calm moment in which Pike Bishop (William Holden), Dutch Engstrom, and brothers Lyle (Warren Oates) and Tector Gorch (Ben Johnson) saunter impetuously to their deaths.

Dukore approaches Peckinpah's use of the telephoto lens in this scene from a

similar perspective, writing that "[Peckinpah's] films their march through a long lens that, leveling or flattening the perspective, all but eradicates it, thereby appearing to eliminate the space between foreground and background" (85). In this shot, Peckinpah shoots the four men facing the camera using the telephoto lens to magnify the men and flatten the Western landscape serving as a background. Kurosawa's telephoto lens becomes the perfect instrument to demonstrate what Peckinpah hints at is true: that shades of the modern world have made defunct the old Western, and that the West is, through Perkinpah's telephoto lens, being mummified and encapsulated in hindsight before our very eyes.

Yet, at times, Peckinpah advances Kurosawa's style by astutely redressing the imperfections of Kurosawa's method. Perhaps the most notable blemish in Kurosawa's technique is the crudity with which he neglects sound during these precious moments; The Seven Samurai leaves a listless mark on sound manipulation, as the variations of the temporal are made incomplete by how sound remains at a normal pace. The woman whose child was abducted screams in the midst of the thief's freefall, yet the scream is unaligned with the movement being displayed. Therefore, Kurosawa's inattentiveness here means he had, as a filmmaker, yet to achieve complete control over time within the narrative structure of The Seven Samurai.

While Kurosawa's rendering of slow motion is therefore incomplete, Peckinpah rectifies Kurosawa's vision with a sound track that is in sync with the motion being displayed. Prince writes that "[i]n Peckinpah's work, the slow-motion image is carefully contrasted with amplified sound effects to create an intermodal, cross-sensory

montage…the expressive power of these combinations had been explicitly demonstrated by Kurosawa" (182); undoubtedly, Prince is referring to the amplification of sound in the slow-motion sequences of Kurosawa's film, but he is remiss to mention the divide in the temporality of sight and sound in The Seven Samurai. Such a canyon does not exist in The Wild Bunch; it has instead been smoothed over by Peckinpah's ability to edit the sound track to match the speed at which the action is taking place.

The Mythic Cowboy Archetype and His Role in the West

In his first starring role—Raoul Walsh's 1930 film The Big Trail—former stagehand Marion Morrison was coerced by the veteran director to adorn a more "American" pseudonym. Walsh cited General Anthony Wayne's family name as an option, and the actor and his director settled on "John" as an appropriately American forename. Thus, the persona of John Wayne was—linguistically, at least—born (McDonald 111).

Teamed with director John Ford, the John Wayne persona became synonymous with the Western cowboy in the duo's first great collaboration, 1939's Stagecoach. In Stagecoach, Ford introduced us to the very origins of the Wayne persona: playing The Ringo Kid, Wayne adopts the slanted saunter, the booming, methodical quips, and the always-lit cigarette that became essential to a John Wayne film. As an archetype, the Wayne persona is very much representative of the American cowboy, to the extent that his name—a marriage of gung-ho wartime spirit and one of the era's most recognizable and most "American" forenames—is symbolic of the union between man and open territory

that Ford was remiss to romanticize. Much like the free-roaming cowboy was a new identity for the Americans who lived vicariously through it, Wayne's stage name was itself the face of the American Western movement.

However, the idyllic Western cowboy was just as similarly adopted as Morrison's pseudonym. In Stagecoach, Wayne emerges as one of American film's first instances of total individualism: Kid becomes the film's aggrandized spectacle because of the uninhibited life he leads. In the same tradition as other Wayne-Ford offerings, the Ringo Kid is a man unconstrained by borders, both in the literal sense--inferred by the vast, untouched Western landscape, throughout which the cowboy freely traverses--and in a figurative one; Ringo is a fantasy for so many because he is not similarly shackled to the normative "restraints" of a husband and father, a homeowner and working man. He is the embodiment of idyllic American life. As Rita Parks enunciates in The Western Hero in Film and Television: Mass Media Mythology: "[T]he Western depicts certain symbolic elements of American life--the self-made man, the Edenic dream, the clever Yankee, the ultimate success of the work ethic, the triumph of physical prowess and personal energy, independence and freedom of movement" (29). Ringo is a rough framework for the outline Parks presents; he is emblazoned with the scrupulous intricacies of a lawless man who abides by a more personal code of conduct, and he defines the aesthetic hidden within humanity born out of the untouched West.

The Ringo Kid is introduced to us in a quick zoom into the collected countenance of Wayne - the passengers, caught off-guard by a stray rifle shot, turn and see Ringo up ahead, his gun held snug along his side. Ford's quick zoom at once posits Wayne's cutting stare as

the face of the Western cowboy, while, at the same time, visually signifying the cowboy archetype being created in how a once-distorted image--the blurred face of Wayne--is refocused through the cinematic lens. In this instance, the cowboy archetype has become a visceral fantasy for the filmgoer: Ford's quick zoom seems to herald the arrival of the cowboy as utterly unconstrained. In this instance, Ringo, as a bandit on the run, has no obligatory moral higher ground to which he must answer. While Ford will later paint him as a good and honest man, one who lives by a more personal code of conduct, the tin badge that Will Kane (Gary Cooper) casts into the sand in High Noon is not a similar burden upon Ringo, because he chooses not to answer to it. It is at this instance that Ford offers the cowboy unlimited freedom, thereby promoting Ringo's sense of justice as natural - there is, Ford theorizes, no force at work that instructs Ringo to do the right thing outside of a personal code of conduct.

Yet Ford's vision of the Western cowboy proves both naïve and antiquated. For the majority of his film, Ford romanticizes the cowboy as a sort of untamable gadabout, one whose disparity from the film's real scoundrels and villains--the corruptive nature of capitalism and politicking--makes light of his errors. Then, suddenly, Ford effusively dictates that the cowboy is a man capable of being tamed. At the end of Stagecoach, Ringo is presented with two diametrically opposed choices: either he can indulge his wanton need to murder the Plummer brothers, or he can forget the cowboy within him that demands Western justice and domesticate himself by leaving with Dallas. Clearly, each path represents what Ford constructs as two incongruous lifestyles. A choice must be made between the existential cowboy or the domesticated husband; Ringo seemingly makes his

choice, as gunshots fire out and Dallas, in the distance, understands that Ringo has chosen the "existential cowboy" as his archetypal future. Yet Ringo returns to her, almost as if from the grave (Ford is careful not to reveal that Ringo is the gunfight's survivor until he surprises Dallas, as if to minimalize the dangers of the life of the existential cowboy). Ringo rides off with Dallas, making Ford's previous theories of the Western cowboy positively untenable. It is as if the director has contradicted the archetype he spent most of the film creating: suddenly, the cowboy is no longer borderless, but a homebody, homogenized into civility by way of a woman's love. It's an approach to giving the film finality that can only be described as "Hollywood," and it comes about only after Ford has created non-conducive masculine and feminine archetypes.

To look at the cowboy in Ford's film as an idealized exasperation of the fantasy of an unrestricted existence--an act in existentialism that positions the viewer as capable of being in total control of their lives, with no hindrances or pitfalls to avoid--one must look at how the borderless cowboy is supplemented by the film's underlying matriarchal underbelly. The politicking of the film's women is hypothesized as suffocating by Ford, so much so that the cowboy becomes an ideal existence because the freedom it offers entails a more natural existence. The trappings of anti-naturalism--government, capitalism, politics--all reticulate within the film's hidden matriarchy, and so a more natural, unrestrained existence seems to be, as Ford suggests, one where this matriarchy is no longer a factor. It is this subliminal matriarchy that Ford posits as the driving force for the exodus of the men of the film. When Gatewood's wife, with uncaring countenance and cold demeanor, instructs him that they'll be having dinner with guests that night, he catches

the stagecoach before its exit, as if it is not so much the money he's stolen that has prompted his exodus, but his miserable wife. Hatfield, the southern gentleman with a less-than-amiable past, is met with poisonous stares from this matriarchy, which stands in a close cluster affronting the dirt road, so as to give the black of their dresses an increased unseemly undertone. Therefore, to allow Ringo to wed the cowboy aesthetic with a wife is, within the context of this film, an abomination; it is this romanticized approach that makes the cowboy seem idyllic and "highfalutin," an exasperation of the audience's subconscious fantasies coupled with the cryptic notion that an borderless existence is possible even when the outlined borders--married life, a settled household--have been put into place.

Stagecoach illustrates several Western archetypes that prove anomalous when collated with the overwhelming majority of the American Western genre. Ford's film is unusual as a Western due to the director's stance as an architect and creator, recasting the Western cowboy as an actualized representation of individualism while simultaneously espousing the hidden cliques within a supposed borderless West. One particular liberty that Ford takes is his creation of a town that is succinctly matriarchal; so much so, in fact, that Ford bemoans the corruptive ends of power by indicting the women who wield it as abusive in nature. When Dallas casts insults at the matriarchy--who simply stare back--Ford is explicitly forming a contrast between the two to create a divide between powerful and powerless. Her exodus, followed with that of Doc Boone's (Thomas Mitchell) indefinite "leave of absence," is depicted through inter-cut scenes of the observing matriarchy as one prompted by the town's women. Boone himself comments upon this underlying matriarchy, which is, as he says, "scouring out the dregs of the town."

Yet within Ford's Western narratology, the sympathetic perspective is that of the dregs; within this dramatic shift in perspective is where the innovation of Stagecoach's archetype-defining narrative is laid bare, as it is through the politicking of the town's housewives that Ford creates comparisons that, in a typical Western, would be paradoxical.

This is why, at this very juncture, Ford refuses to consecrate the American Indian as ultimate threat, the unseemly evil to the cowboy's natural good. In one swift scene, an ousted Dallas (Claire Trevor) turns back to the housewives and says, "there are worse things than Apaches." As if in concurrence, Ford then cuts immediately to the women, clad in black, standing there silently, their wishes to rid the town of its "dregs" now within reach. Suddenly, Ford has removed from Western mythology the Indian as ultimate foe, usurped by, of all things, the demanding housewife who proves insufferable. Whether it is the notoriously single Hatfield (John Carradine), the husband-less Lucy Mallory (Louise Platt), or the corrupt banker Henry Gatewood (Berton Churchill), the stagecoach that rides out of town is one of nomads, left out of the familial loop. Their venture into the desert hills of open territory assimilates them more within the Western cowboy archetype--typified by Ringo--than by the neatly-constructed underbelly of politicking that they left behind.

Many of these secondary archetypes or hierarchical characteristics, while aberrations within the Western genre, have been assimilated into other subsequent Westerns. The adoption of Ford's cryptic matriarchy extends into Kenji Mizoguchi's 1953 film Ugetsu Monogatari, where existential aspirations to attain the life of the ronin cause poor peasant Tobei to flee his demanding wife. Both films showcase dueling existences, situated in two integrally different environments: in the poor towns founded upon the

fringes of civilization, crestfallen husbands seek sanctuary in the promises of the West. The allure set forth by Ringo and the ronin invites these "dregs," and both filmmakers assert that it is not in the doldrums of familial life that aspiring cowboys--or shoguns--are driven away, but rather in the enthrallment of the mythic Western hero, who stands, as Parks noted, a "self-made man" and a representative of "independence and freedom of movement" (33).

Like Stagecoach, Ugetsu contains the underlying matriarchal rhetoric to which other more traditional Westerns are conspicuously indifferent to. Stagecoach approaches a woman's role in the borderless West on two differing planes, focusing on both perception and actuality. This film is neither an attempt to champion matriarchal rhetoric nor an outcry for the inherent strength found in the image of the male Westerner – the film's bulk, in which male suitors scrupulously attend to the every need of its "ladies" in a manner that can only be identified as Western gallantry, is, in actuality, the denouement of the strength and political power of women in the open territory. Suddenly, the politicking of the town's matriarchy is tossed asunder, and the film becomes succinct commentary upon the façade of Western gallantry. Ford does this to outline the traits that prevail in the borderless West: bravado, chivalry, and a hint of chauvinism take precedence once the stagecoach leaves the town. The power that was once held by the town's matriarchy—the politicking that made diasporic the town's dregs—has been, in the absence of stability, law, and government, been transferred over to the men.

In dire contrast to the film's early moments, the West seems to exemplify a release for the men from the purported suffocation of domesticated life, as it is Hatfield, and not

necessarily Dallas, who attends to Mrs. Mallory's every pressing need. The once-ostracized gambler is now ostensibly placed in a more covetous position, within which he makes dormant the former political strength of Mrs. Mallory. Suddenly, chivalric behavior becomes a priority for men who, perhaps for the first time in a long while, feel powerful. At one point, Hatfield asks Mrs. Mallory if she is thirsty. Rather than to have her drink from his canteen, he unveils a cup and pours her a glass of water. Chivalric behavior is then trumped by more chivalric behavior when Ringo, the champion of what Ford posits as the films outlaw class (he is similarly positioned with Dallas as outcasts, even amongst the other outcasts of the stagecoach), calls into question the validity of Hatfield's newfound chivalry by asking him if he would oblige Dallas with a drink as well. Within this context, Ford is reinforcing the Western hero archetype as dominant: he has the power to suppress—and to dominate—political influence within the open range, and he holds this position because of what he represents: the "self-made man" who is a representative of "independence and freedom of movement."

For Mizoguchi, the obvious teetering Ford exhibits towards the Western cowboy—or, in this instance, samurai—as dominant over a political underbelly is lessened in Ugetsu. Donald Richie writes in Japanese Cinema: Film Style and National Character that Mizoguchi teeters between the familial and the individual. Richie writes that "[i]n Mizoguchi, particularly in postwar films, we find a balance, rare in Japanese cinema, between the classic poles of the traditional—the acceptance of feudal values, the affirmation of the home, the joy of submitting to restraint; and the individual—the impatience with restraint, the criticism of all traditional values, the joy of overcoming

obstacles, of enlarging horizons" (114). In contrast, Ford's idealized Western cowboy need not exhibit similar balance. He is exemplified as an overtly prolific example of having one's cake and eating it too – Stagecoach's Western cowboy is, essentially, an inchoate vision of total individualism, within which there are no consequences. Richie correctly makes the justification that Ugetsu is, among other things, an examination of women's place in the world; yet it is also an antithesis to Ford's Western cowboy in how it rebukes the idea of total individualism without consequences.

Ford's ultimate concession, which can, with some level of cynicism, be labeled as a Hollywood-ized concession, comes at the film's end: the unequivocal Western cowboy archetype, Ringo, seeks the marriage of Dallas, yet also must avenge his family by murdering the Plummer brothers. Ford, it seems, has been building towards a choice that must be made by Ringo alone. It seems evident that Ringo will either opt for revenge—the existential free-roaming cowboy—or a family—the domesticated settler—and that the two choices are so contradictory that cohesion is impossible. Yet Ringo does indeed "have his cake and eat it too," murdering the three Plummers and then being let free to build a life with Dallas.

In this instance, Ford becomes an advocate for the do-anything cowboy, who can coexist on two planes that, by very definition, are at opposing poles. This is the film's most important union, and it is also the one instance in which Ford allows for such a blasphemous conclusion. For instance, Ford reinforces the continual separation of Mrs. Mallory and her military husband, as well as the overwhelmingly tragic relationship between Mrs. Mallory and Hatfield. Under both circumstances, Ford forces a choice to be

made: this is why Hatfield, under the duress of impending death, offers his final bullet to an unbeknownst Mrs. Mallory. By making this situation inherently paradoxical, Ford is advocating the inception of only one choice or another: Hatfield can lean upon the defunct logic of Western gallantry and, in the manner befitting a borderless cowboy, spare Mrs. Mallory a more painful death, but in doing so, he effectively puts an end to his prospects as a potential husband and family man.

It is as if Ford enacts his concession to make Wayne's Ringo Kid an impossible ideal, one who represents the foundation for the Western hero that Parks outlined. In dire contrast to this, Ugetsu gives multiple examples of a forced choice, in which the Western hero archetype is forever altered. Mizoguchi refutes the notion that the existential samurai is out of reach, even for poor farmers: Tobei, who parades around as a parodic samurai in the film's opening moments and is then reprimanded by his wife, is Mizoguchi's response to the impossible Western hero. Here is a character who offers none of the positive attributes of the Ringo Kid: Tobei is not particularly skilled with a sword; the other ronin laugh at and scold him demeaningly when he pleads for them to allow him to serve them; he has neither the monetary means to dress like a samurai, nor the mental fortitude to do the killing necessary to attain high esteem. Tobei is the quintessential "dreg" of society, much as Ringo is othered by a town that has no place for him, yet he is a dreg who does not jibe with Ford's archetypal standards because he cannot traverse archetypal boundaries as seamlessly as Ringo. While Ford's cowboy finds both the existential cowboy and the domesticated settler equally appealing, Tobei comes to find both similarly unattractive, thereby serving as antithetical to the archetype of the Ringo Kid.

Richie argues for the more realistic hero archetypes (like the fatally flawed and witless Tobei) as an entirely Japanese conception, insinuating that Tobei's ascension to prominence is an entirely Japanese cultural byproduct:

> Rather, in Japan as elsewhere, a recognition of the complication of human character is a prerequisite for any sort of meaningful experience, be it in life or in film. The bias of Japan, however, insists that unattractive traits be accepted along with those perhaps more pleasing. There are many less reformed characters in Japanese cinema, and somehow becoming better is, indeed, not a major theme. (77)

It is in how Mizoguchi draws out the many contradictions between rivaling archetypes of Western hero and settler that provides the evidence for Ford's Stagecoach as a misrepresentation of the modern Western hero. In Ugetsu, Mizoguchi juxtaposes the simultaneous rise of Tobei with the fall of his wife intentionally, so that, by correlating the two and inter-cutting scenes of husband, then of wife, Mizoguchi lays blame upon Tobei. At the apex of his influence as a samurai, Tobei comes across Ohama (Mitsuko Mito) , who has fallen to an opposing end of the power spectrum as a saloon prostitute and rape victim. It is as if Mizoguchi advocates here for a necessary harmony between the two, that the power-plays within a familial life work as a veritable scale. As Tobei gains prominence, Ohama must suffer the consequences of his power-mongering, Mizoguchi explains. Suddenly, the ability to attain the life of the existential cowboy and conjoin it with the life of the domesticated settler is rendered impossible.

Later films by Ford, I feel, infer from the archetypal impossibilities that a film such as

Ugetsu highlighted that the Western hero cannot forever be a covetous figure of idyllic existentialism and borderless existence. The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance (1962) is Ford's revision of the Western cowboy archetype, a death knell addressing the fallacies of complete freedom run amok. Ugetsu provided the genre with the template for a pessimistic approach to the cowboy, one that fixated not upon total and complete freedom, but on the cowboy as introvert and outsider; Ugetsu theorizes the cowboy as embedded within an either-or conundrum, within which a choice is necessitated and, once it has been made, is rendered absolute. Tobei's wanton dreams of a samurai are complicated by the duality of the lifestyle; it is explicitly stated in Ugetsu that a samurai-like existence does not mend strained family ties, nor does it even allow for the sort of stability--and dormancy--necessary within Tobei's ulterior existence as a farmer.

This melancholy cowboy is a rather drastic evolution over his Stagecoach counterpart. Within the bulk of the film, Ford ostensibly argues for the incompatibility of a cowboy's nomadic existence - as Ringo and Dallas grow closer, his likely imprisonment acts as a less-than-auspicious wedge between the two and their prospects of a life together. It is as if Ford acknowledges the complications involved in affixing the "family man" tag to the Western cowboy archetype, yet he presides over this film with a far more favorable outlook for Ringo than is allotted to his later Western heroes.

To examine how Ford reconstructs the Western cowboy archetype in the wake of a film such as Ugetsu, one must consider the ideological shift inherent in Wayne's later Western cowboys; no longer a young man, Wayne is portrayed as oftentimes aimlessly drifting within a changing frontier. As the landscape devolves, simultaneously losing its

original sense of a natural aesthetic, Wayne's character remains a static ode to the traditional Western heroes. However, his story is made bittersweet by the devolving landscape around him - in a film such as Stagecoach, Wayne's Ringo Kid is a man born out of a naturalistic existence, a product only made possible by a borderless--and therefore, unrestrictive--Western landscape. Wayne's cowboys remain as a swan song to a natural existence, even as the landscape from which the cowboy archetype was born devolves into a more contemporary (or, as Ford suggests, "artificial" and "structured") society.

Perhaps the best evidence of the stagnancy of the Western cowboy archetype is in Ford's The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance. Here, all the quizzical little contradictions of Stagecoach are addressed, and with some urgency: Ford very blatantly assigns three well-defined Western archetypes to cowboy Tom Doniphan (Wayne), intellectual Ransom Stoddard (James Stewart), and abominable cowboy Liberty Valance (Lee Marvin), with each very specifically showcasing the effects that Japanese samurai cinema like Ugetsu has had on the Western cowboy. Also, Ford blatantly addresses the contradictory themes of unrestricted existentialism (the free-roaming cowboy) and the stabilized family man, effectively affixing to these contradictory paths an impenetrable wall built with the faults of traditional Western semiotics, which suggests that a cowboy could do both.

Ford positions his archetypes in this film in very deliberate corners of the Western's spectrum of characters: Tom Doniphan exasperates the once-amicable Western cowboy's ideological base, to the extent that he becomes less a showcase of natural good and more an artifact of an extinct ethos; Liberty Valance, an obvious foil to Doniphan, is Ford's unseemly representation of an unrestricted cowboy without an instilled sense of good and

decency (in other words, the archetypal cowboy run amok); Ransom Stoddard is Ford's progressive cowboy, elevated in stature by the ideological shift spurned by traditional Westerns, but accepted in the post-war Japanese jidaigeki film. Ransom, especially, is an invention of a new type of cowboy. He thrives only because the social climate surrounding him has been domesticated.

At the end of The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance, Ransom admirably fights for statehood to allot Western frontiersmen and women the same rights afforded to citizens of a cultivated state. What Ransom is subtly fighting for, Ford argues, is the domestication of borderless space. Ransom is fighting for an end to naturalism, something that under the guise of the traditional Western would have been frowned upon. By allowing Ransom to be the bearer of progress and social growth, Ford suggests that the naturalistic existentialism once found in the gunslinger is a dead commodity, and that the structured existence of a homebody is a more rewarding lifestyle.

In this instance, Ford addresses the quandary of gender relations and the ability of the cowboy to couple contradictory lifestyles found in Stagecoach. He reasons that a choice must be made, that there is a very clear vote that must be made between statehood--the implementation of borders onto a previously borderless space--or territoriality, which Ford sees as a continuation of a naturalistic existence. In Stagecoach, Ringo is allowed both paths, and he simultaneously settles while, at the same time, maintaining an unrestricted existence, while here, this binary coupling is positively impossible. After all, both sides cannot win the election, and so Ford, through the lens of Japanese films like Ugetsu that addressed this problem long before he made Valance,

acknowledges his previous mistakes and admits that a choice must indeed be made.

In comparing Stagecoach and Liberty Valance further, we see in microcosm the dissolution of the Western cowboy mythic; the cowboy is a strained, impossible-to-achieve hodgepodge of archetypal elements, impotent with regards to married life because of the rivaling set of values that marriage entails. Doniphan takes after Mizoguchi's Genjuro (Masayuki Mori) in the sense that both find the existence of a family man suffocating to their existence as the idealized Western hero. Ford, in what can be seen as a reactionary piece to Stagecoach, punishes Doniphan for his idolatry of the Western cowboy in a manner similar to the tutelage of Mizoguchi upon Genjuro in Ugetsu; while not a dolt like Genjuro, Doniphan's resistance to evolving his Western cowboy archetype makes him an extinct byproduct of Ford's idealized early Westerns, and it leaves him wife-less and alone. Unlike the Ringo Kid, Doniphan cannot join together competing archetypes to create an entirely new existence for himself; Ford, perhaps wiser under the pedagogy of Japanese film, does not allow his protagonist such an impossible conclusion. Doniphan steps aside for the film's more evolved intellectual, Ransom Stoddard, effectively retiring the Western cowboy archetype that Ford once created by giving up the love of his life, Hallie (Vera Miles) and rendering himself obsolete.

The reason why Ford made The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance as a funeral for the Western hero can be seen in Doniphan's foil, Liberty Valance (Lee Marvin). In Valance, we are met with Ford's vision of the Western cowboy led astray by limitless possibilities. Ford is no longer advocating for the inherent good in a man born in the natural West as he did in Stagecoach; Valance exhibits none of the personal code of conduct that fellow

outlaw Ringo Kid does, and this amoralist behavior makes Valance less than endearing to his audience. Ford has become diffident to the natural good of the cowboy, which is why The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance is a veritable re-writing of the Western cowboy archetype. In Ugetsu, a more fatalistic Japanese take on the Western cowboy archetype outlines all the temerity, the insolence, and the self-obsession that Ford kept from his original design. Ugetsu is a film that is concerned with the consequences of the Western hero archetype – its destructive qualities and the role its allure has assumed as a proverbial siren's song. Liberty Valance is the character in whom Ford admits his naivety, and Doniphan's funeral is thereafter the sunset of the traditional Western hero, and the commencement of the death of the Western as a genre.

Conclusion: The Borderless Western

The study of the maturation of the Western genre from the classic Westerns of John Ford to the "adult" Westerns of Sam Peckinpah is one that seemingly defies customary constraints of time and politics, meaning that the evolution of the Western has overcome both. For instance, history dictates that a cross-cultural exchange would have, in practical terms, been all but impossible. Japan was itself a closed state with few cultural imports to its name, and the United States was, in the years before and during World War II, a diametrically oppositional state, complete with a polarizing ethos and a far different approach to film.

However, the Western's advancement has never been bound by history. A

historical approach to the effect that Japanese film had upon the genre suggests that little could be attributed to Japanese filmmakers in the way of advancing the Western genre because the two nations were at odds with one another. Yet the cinema, both for the United States and for Japan, proved transhistorical; filmmakers appropriated ideas from one another, and American and Japanese film was, to each other, a unique and quite popular experience to behold. Japan's public ideology ran counterpoint to that of the United States at this time, yet the taste for the American Western in Japan in the 1930s defies this perception.

The Western's advancement has also never been bound by culture. While pre-War Japan was enveloped within a traditionalist state, there exists nary a modicum of Japanese traditionalist film when compared with the jidaigeki works of more leftist filmmakers. Japanese traditionalism in the theater had a minimal impact when contrasted with the American Western - evinced by the works of post-War Japanese filmmakers, traditionalism was dominated by the works of humanist filmmakers like Kurosawa and Mizoguchi after World War II.

Nationalism has also never constricted the Western; while an oft-considered American creation, the Western is actually one of the first major transnational achievements in film. In this essay, I only touched upon American, Japanese, and Italian Westerns from a very specific period of time, yet there are many more instances of the Western genre as a transnational entity. While now considered inherently "American," it is clear that the Western was a movement of appropriation. This leads to the fact that the Western is explicitly apolitical; while early Westerns in America seem to promote a sort of

limitless existence, the alignment of politically dissimilar nations incontrovertibly suggests that the growth of the genre extended beyond the politicking of the nations within which it resided, that its allure was embedded within more than just being a tool of underhanded politicians.

Therefore, it seems that despite the limitations proffered by possible historical, national, or cultural contexts, there was indeed a direct correlation between the early Westerns of the United States, the post-War Japanese feudal film, and the adult Westerns of the United States. To show how Japanese film essentially bridged a rhetorical gap between the ethos of early American Westerns and latter American Westerns, I have brought to light some of the main contributors during this period: the works of famous filmmakers like Ford, Kurosawa, Mizoguchi, Leone, and Peckinpah are all a part of the Western lineage, and the films I have worked with here all fall within the canon of the Western genre.

Throughout this thesis, I've tried to evince the lineage of American and Japanese filmmakers; it is evident that Ford had a profound impact upon Kurosawa's career as a filmmaker, but the appropriation of Kurosawa's films by Western filmmakers is, for the intentions of this thesis, the far more important exchange. Stylistically, Kurosawa was perhaps the forefather of the adult Western - his influence upon directors such as Arthur Penn and Peckinpah is immeasurable, especially considering the cinematographic advances made--namely slow-motion photography and the telephoto lens--which were integral in the birth of the ultra-violent Westerns that directors such ass Peckinpah propagated.

Beyond a simple cinematographic context, many of the adult Westerns of the United States delineate from Japanese jidaigeki film in content and narrative, but I have also theorized within this essay that the American Western suffered from its inculcation of a Japanese thematic. For Western filmmakers, the Japanese Western was a cinematic binomial: it was either termed a rite of passage for the genre, or a dangerous alteration. For Peckinpah, it was the former, which is why he borrowed from the qualities that made Kurosawa a cinematic auteur to represent violence in a manner that he felt underlined the horrific qualities of it. For other filmmakers, Japanese films were viewed as "unknowable" - a "Us/ Not Us" approach was used when considering the narrative of a Japanese film, and these films were seen as artifacts of a sort of national character that the United States was intent on forever extinguishing. These filmmakers handled the works of a filmmaker like Kurosawa with exceptional care, so that they could keep their reworkings of Japanese films pure of the trappings of traditionalism and Japanese-ness.

John Sturges was one such filmmaker, and I contrasted his remake of The Seven Samurai, The Magnificent Seven, with the intention of outlining the inherent ideological differences between the two. The Magnificent Seven is The Seven Samurai, but only in narrative, and that which Sturges felt would be dangerous to the American viewing public was othered from his film. Western filmmakers like Sturges feared advancing the once-home-grown genre through foreign imports, whereas Italian director Sergio Leone birthed the modern anti-hero (and a blossoming star) in Clint Eastwood's Man With No Name and A Fistful of Dollars. It is with this logic that the spaghetti Western is rooted just as much in Japanese film as it is in the American West.

As only one example of the growth of the mythic cowboy of the Western genre, Eastwood's Man With No Name is an assimilation of the archetypal gunslinger who derives out of the samurai. Just as American Western filmmakers like Sturges tried to romanticize the humanist depiction of Japanese jidaigeki films, so too did earlier Western filmmakers promote an idyllic Western hero in the classic Westerns. The growth of the cowboy--and his role within a borderless society--was the topic of post-War Western film, and even a filmmaker like Ford, who had once helped shape the Western hero, admitted his shortcomings in The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance. Yet the fallacies of such a hero were discovered long before Ford's realization; they stem from the works of Japanese filmmakers like Mizoguchi, who explicated the inability for a cowboy to domesticate himself while remaining unconstrained. When contrasted with Stagecoach, it appears Ford's hypothesis on the cowboy had changed by the time he made Liberty Valance, and this transition from idyllic hero to pragmatic hero was first inferred in Japanese films like Ugetsu monogatari.

Immediately after World War II, the Japanese Western did as much to advance the Western genre, if not more, than the American Western. It furthered the genre beyond its idyllic origins, and it gave way to the "adult" Western. While the Westerns following the 1960s were much fewer and farther between, the reverberations of the Japanese Western continually resonate in the genre take-offs that are typically attributed to the American Western: the cop film, the action film, and the suspense film all are permanently indebted to the Japanese Western. This speaks volumes in dispelling the popular notion that the Western is American. While born in the United States, its outgrowth and emergence in the

unlikeliest of political spheres has done what the United States alone couldn't accomplish; it has matured the Western, and its arrival signaled a new cinematic landscape, one which has become as mythic as the cowboy himself: it is positively borderless, unconstrained by the derisive influences of politics, national identity, history, or culture.

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