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Sunset Warriors

Cowboys, Samurai, and the Crisis of Masculinity

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Abstract

In the writing on men and masculinities there is a pervasive sense that the essence of masculinity has somehow been lost. While often attributed to the angst-ridden exaggerations of privileged white men, the notion that masculinity has become synonymous with loss is a global theme and this perceived loss has contributed to the ubiquitous sense that masculinity is, or has always been, in crisis. For American and Japanese men the loss of an ideal masculinity is invariably connected to the loss of the cowboy and samurai as replicable and dependable archetypes of masculinity.

I have responded to the crisis of masculinity as a social and cultural phenomenon. It is experienced and responded to by men and women, and it is reflected in and developed through the narratives of cultural artefacts such as film. Through close analysis of film texts informed by interdisciplinary research I argue that the crisis of masculinity experienced by American and Japanese men is informed by the complex and precarious bilateral relationship between the United States and Japan that finds an acute expression in the interactions between cowboys and samurai on screen after World War II. I focus on cinematic cowboys and samurai in particular because of the unique position both archetypes hold in the history of the bilateral exchange between the U.S. and Japan, and also because of their centrality to the national cinemas that participated in this exchange.

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Note on Japanese Names and Translations

The conventional order for writing Japanese names is family name followed by given name. However, because this thesis is written in English and consists of both Western and Japanese names, both Western and Japanese names are in Western order with given names first followed by family names in order to remain consistent throughout the text. In the bibliography the order is reversed so that family names are followed by given names.

All translated films and texts are recorded in the bibliography and filmography.

Glossary of Japanese Terms¹

Ainu: Indigenous population of Hokkaido incorporated into the Japanese mainland during the Meiji Restoration.

Anime: Japanese animation.

Article 9: A clause in Japan's 1947 constitution that renounced war, demilitarized the nation and committed Japan to global pacifism.

Bubble Economy: Associated with consumption and indulgence in the 1980s and the bursting of Japan's economic bubble in 1991 due to speculative markets and hyperinflation, which brought about an economic recession that continued into the 21st century.

Bushi: Samurai.

Bushido: Way of the Warrior, popularised in the Meiji Period with the writing of Ozaki Yujio and Inazo Nitobe.

Chanbara (also, chambara): The sound of swords clashing. A sub-genre of *jidaigeki* where the emphasis of the film is on sword-fighting and action.

Chūshingura: also known as The 47 Ronin, a classic tale set during the Tokugawa Period in which loyal *ronin* seek revenge for their disgraced master, Lord Asano.

Geisha: An entertainer, now exclusively female and often associated with prostitution.

Giri/ninjō: The conflict between duty (*giri*) and emotion (*ninjo*) often associated with samurai narratives.

Gyokusai: Honorable suicide, literally translates to shattering like a jewel.

Heian Period: Named after Heian-kyō, present day Kyoto, the capital at the time, this period lasted from 794-1185.

Hitokiri: Swordsman associated with assassination tasks.

Jidaigeki: Period films set before 1868. Commonly associated with films featuring *samurai*.

Jieitai: Japan's Ground Self-Defence Force or SDF.

¹ See *Routledge Handbook of Japanese Culture and Society*, edited by Lyon Bestor Victoria, Theodore C. Bestor and Akiko Yamagata (New York: Routledge, 2011).

Kabuki: Drama form of the Tokugawa Period.

Kamikaze: translates to divine wind after the storm that prevented a Mongol invasion in the 14th century, commonly associated with the Special Attack pilots of World War II.

Meiji Period: Named after the Meiji Emperor Mutsuhito, and also known for the Meiji Restoration, this period re-instated the Emperor as the spiritual leader of Japan and witnessed the industrialization of Japan. Lasted from 1868-1912.

Nihonjinron: The study of the Japanese or Japaneseness. Often focused on the essence of being Japanese and became popularized in the 1970s.

Rōnin: Masterless *samurai*.

Samurai: Retainer, now commonly associated with the figure of the sword-fighter or warrior.

Sarariman: Salaryman, a term popularized in the postwar period and associated with lifetime employment in large corporations, the term became less prolific after the collapse of Japan's markets in 1991.

Sengoku Period (Warring States): Associated with civil war and warlords vying for power, came to an end with major victories won by Oda Nobunaga. Lasted from 1467-1603.

Seppuku (also, hara-kiri): the act of committing ritual suicide by slicing open the belly and being decapitated by a loyal retainer, considered an honourable death reserved for *samurai*.

Shōgun: Military ruler associated with feudal Japan.

Shōwa Period: Named after the Showa Emperor, Hirohito. Lasted from 1926-1989.

Taishō Period: Named after the Taisho Emperor Yoshihito, associated with Japanese modernism and democratic liberalism, which came to an end with the turn to militarism that preceded the Pacific War. Lasted from 1912-1926.

Tokugawa Period: Named after Tokugawa Ieyasu who was responsible for the reunification of Japan after a long period of civil war, see Sengoku Period. Also known as the Edo Period after the capital city was moved from Kyoto to Edo, modern day Tokyo. This period lasted from 1603 to 1868.

Yakuza-eiga: Japanese gangster (*yakuza*) films.

Yamato: Ancient name of Japan and the ethnic Japanese people commonly associated with the Battleship Yamato, which was sunk in 1945 during a Special Attack on Okinawa.

Zainichi Koreans: Koreans living in Japan, most commonly descendants of Koreans forced to live in Japan after the annexation of Korea in 1910 and during the Pacific War.

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Introduction

Where have all the good guys gone?

In the history of cinema no other masculine archetypes are as vital, visible and versatile as the cowboy and samurai. Their masculinity forms the basis of national mythologies, they have inspired the personas of world leaders, and they are templates for men in need of manly virtue. They have their origins in national histories, but they have become transnational phenomena appearing in various guises the world over. Their guns and their swords are emblematic of masculine dominance, the conquest of history, and the taming of countless adversaries both real and rhetorical. And yet, in the post-World War II period these paragons of masculinity were each beset by a crisis of masculinity that threatened to erase them from cinema screens and masculine daydreams. The loss of one of these masculine archetypes might have been admissible, but that both the cowboy and samurai should come to represent masculine anxiety and loss suggests a broader crisis in masculine identities and global affairs. In the postwar period the crisis can be traced to the bilateral relationship between the U.S. and Japan, articulated at the crossroads of cinema's cowboy and samurai and their crisis of masculinity.

While the real cowboys and samurai belong to vastly different historical circumstances, both archetypes experienced comparable re-imaginings as men of myth in the late 19th century. Jacqueline Moore's *Cow Boys and Cattle Men: Class and Masculinities on the Texas Frontier, 1865-1900* is quick to unpack the masculinized myths of the west in contrast to the stark realities of ranch work in the 19th century, where 'cowboys were essentially working-class men' who became propped up by fantastical narratives of masculine exceptionalism in dime novels and Wild West shows.¹ The history of the samurai in Japan can be dated back to Japan's Kofun Period (250-800 AD),² although David Desser remarks that the samurai film is primarily set in Japan's feudal years between 1185 and 1868.³ Much like the cowboy, however, the samurai was incorporated into narratives of national exceptionalism in 19th-century Japanese novels and kabuki plays at the same time as the figure of the samurai became attached to the ideology of *bushido*, which came to represent Japanese tradition, masculine

¹ Jacqueline Moore, *Cow Boys and Cattle Men: Class and Masculinities on the Texas Frontier, 1865-1900* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 3.

² Catharina Blomberg, *The Heart of the Warrior: Origins and Religious Background of the Samurai System in Feudal Japan* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 1.

³ David Desser, "Toward a Structural Analysis of the Postwar Samurai Film," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 8, vol. 1 (1983): 26.

exceptionalism, and supreme militarism in the early 20th century.⁴ The cowboy and samurai of myth may be fairly recent phenomena, but they both come to represent national ideologies at an historical juncture of considerable change and masculine crisis.

The meeting point of the cowboy and samurai on screen collapses into the mytho-historic narratives of both the U.S. and Japan as the two nations collided in the modern age. The arrival of Commodore Matthew Perry to Edo Bay in 1852, an event associated with opening Japan to the West and Westernization in the modern era, becomes the meeting point of John Wayne and Japanese feudal lords in *The Barbarian and the Geisha* (dir. John Huston, 1958). In 1860, the first envoy of Japanese delegates to San Francisco aboard the Kanrin Maru becomes a journey of samurai swordsmen fated to collide with the American cowboy in *East Meets West* (dir. Kihachi Okamoto, 1995). But it was not always this way. Prior to World War II the cowboys and samurai saw very little of each other because geopolitical barriers prevented the bilateral exchange between the two national archetypes. This changed in 1945 under the most horrific circumstances. The atomic bombs that fused shadows to sidewalks in Hiroshima and Nagasaki also instigated the fusion of cowboy and samurai narratives as the masculine archetypes were employed to make sense of a postwar relationship that would prove to be just as tumultuous as the conditions that produced it.

I address the relationship between the masculinities of the U.S. and Japan through the interactions of cinematic cowboys and samurai because of the unique position both archetypes hold in the history of the bilateral exchange between the U.S. and Japan, and also because of their centrality to the national cinemas that participated in this exchange. The cowboy and samurai are not merely a convenient synecdoche for the nation and its masculine ideals. Both archetypes belong to genres that are integral to the dominant narratives of nationhood and national masculinity: the cowboy to the western, and the samurai to *jidaigeki* and *chanbara*, period films and swordfighting films respectively. As Inger Brodey explains, ‘each of these countries [U.S. and Japan] has developed a successful genre of film that is both independent of state government and dedicated to its own mythical founding or self-definition.’⁵ For the cowboy and samurai to meet is to imbue the mythical self-definition of the nation with the qualities of an equally mythical other, and to acknowledge that the trajectory of the nation’s mythical narrative and its mythologized masculinities cannot exist without recourse to the trajectory of the other.

⁴ Oleg Benesch, *Inventing the Way of the Samurai: Nationalism, Internationalism, and Bushido in Modern Japan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 7.

⁵ Inger S.B. Brodey, “The Power of Memory and the Memory of Power: Wars and Graves in Westerns and *Jidaigeki*,” in *The Philosophy of the Western*, ed. David LaRocca (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 290.

Bilateral History of Cowboys and Samurai

In the postwar period the relationship between the U.S. and Japan was ‘overwhelmingly characterized by bilateralism,’ argues T.J. Pempel.⁶ While spaghetti westerns do have a role to play in the exchange between cowboy and samurai masculinities, my thesis will primarily focus on the bilateral interaction between the cowboy and samurai of the U.S. and Japan. Interactions between the cowboy and samurai reflect the cultural dimension of this bilateral exchange, and they also reveal the masculine anxieties that resulted from this exchange, because the relationship has never been equal. The friction between the two superpowers as they redefined national characteristics and narratives to facilitate bilateralism can be traced to the collision of their national mythologies of exceptionalism.

The legacy of America’s mythic west and Japan’s legacy of feudal warriors has had a lasting impact on the relationship between the two nations. While usually absent from cinematic representations of the American West, the Japanese nevertheless participated in the history of America’s frontier expansion. In her revision of America’s frontier history, Patricia Nelson Limerick explains that in the early 1900s, the Japanese were feared and hated by white Americans for allegedly ‘colonizing the Pacific Coast’ with ‘the same process that Americans used in their own expansion [of the west].’⁷ As Limerick explains, the Japanese were often hated not because of their outright difference, but because they were ‘acculturating too successfully, in the judgement of their white competitors.’⁸ Even at the height of Japanese exclusion during the period of the internment camps in the 1940s, the desire to be considered American was strong among the Japanese in the U.S., and this desire was often framed around the figure of the cowboy. David L. Eng discusses the desire to appropriate the paragons of American whiteness and masculinity, namely John Wayne’s cowboy, as expressed in the short story “The Shoyu Kid,” by Lonny Kaneko. Interred Japanese children play cowboys and Indians but refuse to play the role of the Indian Other, because to pass as the Indian was to risk

⁶ T.J. Pempel. “Challenges to Bilateralism: Changing Foes, Capital Flows, and Complex Forums,” in *Beyond Bilateralism: U.S.-Japan Relations in the New Asia-Pacific*, ed. Ellis S. Krauss and T.J. Pempel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 1.

⁷ Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2006), 271.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 272.

becoming invisible like the natives and so lose the tenuous connection to a recognized American identity.⁹

Japan's own foundational narratives of feudal warriors and conflicting Shogunates also proved instrumental to the postwar relationship between the U.S. and Japan during the U.S. occupation, which lasted from 1945 to 1952. Carol Gluck argues that the 'occupation's attention to Japanese history was [...] an invasion of one country's national history by another' and much of the attention was directed to the histories of samurai, bushido, and feudalism.¹⁰ Although the samurai of Japanese cinema confronted comparable ruptures of modernity as those experienced by the American cowboy, Japan's dalliance with modernism was reframed as a failure by the U.S. occupiers. Japan's history of samurai values making way for the promise of modernity was redrafted as Japan's experiment with modernity 'that had gone badly awry but could now be set right.'¹¹ While American censors targeted jidaigeki and banned any films that promoted the values of bushido, the Japanese audiences were also aware that bushido values had been hijacked by Japan's wartime imperial government.¹² Once the occupation had ended Japanese filmmakers had the opportunity to reinterpret bushido values and reintegrate the samurai into the mytho-historic narratives of the nation, just as American filmmakers would use the cowboy to reconsider America's position in the postwar world.

Both the western and jidaigeki fixate on comparable, but not necessarily contemporaneous, moments of considerable change, and so it is that contemporary moments of change stir an interest in the narratives of the past. While the scope of cinematic westerns is fairly broad, ranging from the early settlement of the frontier to the early 1900s (arguably to the present day, if films such as *Die Hard* can be considered westerns of a sort), some of the most famous examples of the classic western draw attention to the collision between the old west and modernity, most commonly through the symbolic intrusions of the railroad. In his study of Cold War westerns Stanley Corkin explains that the western mediated the dramatic shifts in America's postwar position as a world power by 'grafting the historical onto the mythic to help audiences adjust to new concepts of national definition.'¹³ In response to the westerns of the 1980s, Alexandra Keller makes a similar claim to Corkin that 'the Western is a genre whose cultural meanings, both held and contested, coalesce as something oscillating

⁹ David L. Eng, *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 118.

¹⁰ Carol Gluck, "The Past in the Present," in *Modern Japanese Culture and Society*, ed. D.P. Martinez (New York: Routledge, 2007), 31.

¹¹ Carol Gluck, "The Past in the Present," 34.

¹² Oleg Benesch, *Inventing the Way of the Samurai*, 216.

¹³ Stanley Corkin, *Cowboys as Cold Warriors: The Western and U.S. History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), 3.

between myth and history.’¹⁴ Because American westerns and Japanese jidaigeki are so invested in myth and history I have found it useful to read the films analysed in this thesis as evidence of an historical moment where the cowboy or samurai were employed to help audiences adjust to the shifts in the relationship between the U.S. and Japan, and more specifically, to the sense of masculine crisis that emerged from the changes of the postwar period.

Just as the western provided mytho-historic narratives to explicate America’s global position in the postwar period (including its relationship with Japan) the jidaigeki of Japan’s cinema participated in the redrafting of Japan’s foundational narratives to suit its postwar identity vis-à-vis the U.S. Isolde Standish argues that the ‘tragic hero’ of samurai tales was ‘instrumental in providing a figurative structure around which the Japanese people could interpret the events of the war.’¹⁵ Her book *Myth and Masculinity in the Japanese Cinema*, ‘explores through a political analysis how masculine subjectivity interacts with the past in the light of the present, in relation to the ‘tragic hero’ narrative structure dominant in Japanese films.’¹⁶ In my application of history to the masculine crisis of Japanese and American men, I have similarly discussed how masculine subjectivities of the postwar period interacted with the mythic masculinities of cowboy and samurai in the light of contemporary crises. Where Isolde Standish focuses on defining the narrative tropes of the tragic hero in Japanese cinema, I see the crisis of masculinity as adaptive, amorphous and transnational. History, myth, cinema and masculinities intersect as a response to, and as evidence of, historical moments of masculine crisis, which I situate at the nexus of the bilateral exchange between the U.S. and Japan.

Midnight for the Cowboy, Twilight of the Samurai

Asking if there exists a quintessential American masculinity, Michael Kimmel writes that ‘nowhere is the dynamic of American masculinity more manifest than in our singular contribution to the world’s storehouse of cultural heroes: the cowboy.’¹⁷ And the significance of the cowboy to the American sense of self is further epitomized by the importance of the

¹⁴ Alexandra Keller, “Historical Discourse and American Identity in Westerns since the Regan Era,” in *Hollywood’s West: The American Frontier in Film, Television, and History*, eds., Peter C. Rollins and John E. O’Conner (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 240.

¹⁵ Isolde Standish, *Myth and Masculinity in the Japanese Cinema: Towards a Political Reading of the “Tragic Hero”* (Richmond, Surrey England: Curzon Press, 2000), 2.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁷ Michael Kimmel, *The History of Men: Essays on the History of American and British Masculinities* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2005), 94.

western, which Jim Kitses refers to as ‘one of America’s greatest inventions.’¹⁸ The samurai is equally important to the cinema of Japan. Tessa Morris-Suzuki writes that in the 20th century, *bushido*, the way of the warrior, or samurai, had constituted “the soul of Japan.”¹⁹ In the postwar period *bushido* values were reconfigured to meld samurai values with the tireless labour of salarymen,²⁰ but the sense that the samurai constituted the soul of Japan remained and it became a dominant fixture in Japanese cinema.²¹ The loss of the cowboy and samurai as hegemonic masculine archetypes would therefore amount to the loss of an entire lexicon of maleness.

Because the cowboy and samurai have been, and to a lesser extent remain, pivotal to the representation and experience of being a man in the U.S. and Japan, the crises afflicting these masculine archetypes on screen are indicative of broader crises of American and Japanese masculinities at the meeting point of the two nations. While Jim Kitses is careful to critique the idea that the American western is the supreme spectacle of masculinity, something he identifies in the work of Jane Tompkins and Lee Clark Mitchell,²² he does argue that the genre’s basic function is its ‘inquiry into the roots and circumstances of American character.’²³ For Lee Clark Mitchell, part of the inquiry of the western involved the ‘mythic resolution of crisis,’²⁴ which he sees as a crisis of modernity that began in the 19th century, and which modern viewers of the western wished to see beyond.²⁵ Sabine Fröhstück demonstrates that the figure of the samurai, and the jidaigeki through which he was known, had a similar appeal as the world of the samurai was ‘decidedly premodern,’ existing in a time before the catastrophes of Japan’s early 20th century.²⁶ Both genres were well suited to investigating contemporary male anxieties, which is why the loss of these genres, or at least the radical rewriting of these genres, marks a considerable moment in the history of masculinities in crisis.

Drawing on feminist film criticism Dennis Bingham refers to the representations of masculinity on cinema screens as ‘responses to “male hysteria.”’²⁷ Bingham argues that the

¹⁸ Jim Kitses, *Horizons West: Directing the Western from John Ford to Clint Eastwood* (London: BFI, 2004), 1.

¹⁹ Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation* (Armonk, New York: Sharpe, 1998), 111.

²⁰ Sabine Fröhstück, *Uneasy Warriors: Gender, Memory, and Popular Culture in the Japanese Army* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 56.

²¹ John Berra, *Directory of World Cinema: Japan 2* (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), 145.

²² Jim Kitses, *Horizons West*, p. 18.

²³ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁴ Lee Clark Mitchell, *Westerns: Making the Man in Fiction and Film* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 24.

²⁵ Lee Clark Mitchell, *Witnesses to a Vanishing America: The Nineteenth-Century Response* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), xiii.

²⁶ Sabine Fröhstück, *Uneasy Warriors*, 56.

²⁷ Dennis Bingham, *Acting Male: Masculinities in the Films of James Stewart, Jack Nicholson, and Clint Eastwood* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 3.

cinema has served to amalgamate the various forms of the masculinity crisis into concentrated expressions of male anxiety, so that the ‘popular versions of what it is to be a “real man” have become so outlandish as to prompt the idea that all is not as it should be for the male sex.’²⁸ Joan Mellen was an early film critic to pick up on the shifting nature of male characterizations as she traced the anxieties of men through cinematic representations of masculinity from the 1900s through to the 1970s. Each decade presents challenges to masculinity articulated in the representations of men across all genres of film, but it is the western that serves as the pinnacle of constructing self-destructive males, or what Mellen refers to as ‘The Big Bad Wolves’ of cinema.²⁹ Joan Mellen identifies a similar role for the samurai in Japanese cinema when she argues that ‘without samurai little is left of what it means to be Japanese.’³⁰ Just as the cowboy is integral to formations of American masculinity in film, so too is the cinematic samurai central to the warrior mindset of Japanese men, for it is the samurai that ‘constituted the epitome of iconic masculinity.’³¹ So it is that the meeting point of the cowboy and samurai on screen represents the meeting point of masculinity crises that existed in both the U.S. and Japan. East meets West meets the anxieties of manhood.

I situate the crisis of masculinity within the particular bilateral relationship between the U.S. and Japan. This is not to suggest that the cowboy and samurai have only interacted in these two countries’ films – the South Korean feature film *The Warrior’s Way* (dir. Lee Sngmoo, 2010) is but one example of samurai and cowboy encounters occurring outside of the bilateral exchange between the U.S. and Japan. However, it is the relationship between the U.S. and Japan that complicates the coterminous development of masculine identities in crisis as they react in relation to, and independently of, the masculinities of the other. What I aim to demonstrate is the extent to which the crisis of masculinity, as exemplified by the representations of cowboy and samurai, suggests a common ground of masculine insecurity despite the cultural differences and cultural boundaries that had been erected between the two nations.

The Good, The Bad, The Crisis

²⁸ Dennis Bingham, *Acting Male*, 3.

²⁹ Joan Mellen, *Big Bad Wolves: American Masculinity in Film* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 4.

³⁰ Joan Mellen, *Seven Samurai* (London: BFI, 2002), 20.

³¹ Sabine Frühstück and Annie Walthall, “Introduction: Interrogating Men and Masculinities,” in *Recreating Japanese Men*, eds., Sabine Frühstück and Anne Walthall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 10.

Judith Newton commented in 2002 that the number of articles and books published in the field of masculinity studies had grown rapidly since the late 1980s, and there is little evidence to indicate that this growth has abated:³² Michael Kimmel still finds reason to write about angry white men;³³ Japanese salarymen in crisis, the corporate samurai, continue to frame discussions of Japanese masculinity.³⁴ Newton suggests that the rise in masculinity studies could be attributed to the sense that the field offers men a safe space for reflection.³⁵ I am doubtful that male readers will find comfort in this thesis, because it does not aim to reassert a sense of stability to constructions of masculinity, or to frame men as unwitting victims of broader power shifts in society. Instead, masculinity is discussed as unstable, impermanent and detached from maleness to the extent that being a man does not require being masculine and performing masculinity does not require being a man. Rather than witness the decline of the cowboy and samurai as evidence of a lost manhood that ought to be mourned or retrieved, I respond to the conflicted masculinities of the cowboy and samurai as evidence of an ongoing struggle to accommodate masculinities as multiplicities of being, a theme which is rearticulated in the final chapter.

My discussion of masculinity is influenced by Judith Butler's response to Simone de Beauvoir, who famously stated that "one is not born, but, rather, *becomes* a woman."³⁶ Butler explains that gender in this sense is 'in no way a stable identity or locus of agency [...] rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time.'³⁷ Masculinity is something to be performed, or acquired through particular acts, the nature of which will change over time. It does not come naturally to men, nor is it limited to the sexed male. Butler continues that the body 'is not merely matter but a continual and incessant *materializing* of possibilities.'³⁸ To agree that the gendered body is performed draws attention to the mechanisms through which the body is regulated in order to fulfil expected or conditioned notions of sexual difference and the being of one's gendered self. I locate the cowboy and samurai as archetypes of masculinity once perceived to be ideal, so that the doing of one's gender, and the doing of manliness, was measured against the masculinity epitomized by the cowboy and samurai. I also argue that by extension, the meeting point of the cowboy and samurai on screen as masculine

³² Judith Newton, "Masculinity Studies: The Longed for Profeminist Movement for Academic Men?" in *Masculinity Studies and Feminist Theory*, ed. Judith Kegan Gardiner (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 178.

³³ Michael Kimmel, *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era*. New York: Nation Books, 2013.

³⁴ Romit Dasgupta, *Re-reading the Salaryman in Japan: Crafting Masculinities*. London: Routledge, 2012.

³⁵ Judith Newton, "Masculinity Studies," 178.

³⁶ Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Construction: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 519.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 521.

representatives of the U.S. and Japan became the accepted means of *doing* the bilateral relationship between the two nations.

As one might expect, the clash of two masculine archetypes commonly involves recourse to crude measurements of masculine worth. Judith Butler writes of the phallus as an organizing principle of sexual difference and gender. For Butler, the phallus is ‘an idealization of morphology,’³⁹ and because it is an idealization it is not necessarily connected to men, something that she explores through the ‘lesbian phallus.’⁴⁰ I will refer to the possession of the phallus, and the fear of its loss, in relation to the masculinities of the cowboy and samurai most commonly in regards to the possession of, or loss of, the pistol or the sword. Kwai-Cheung Lo’s explanation of the relationship between masculinities and the phallus is indicative of my application of the term in this thesis: ‘in a way, masculinity may function more or less like the phallus. It refers to an imaginary object that men desire because it represents power, and also serves as a signifier of the symbolic difference between sexes.’⁴¹ For the cowboy and samurai, the pistol and the sword can represent the phallus as penis because they are extensions of masculine empowerment, but they can also come to represent manliness itself, so that their loss is the loss of masculinity. Lo continues that the meaning of masculinity as a signifier is contested, but in order to maintain the illusion of sexual differences it must be maintained in some recognizable form to prop up existing mechanisms of control and stability.⁴² The patriarchal regime of the phallus takes the shape of hegemonic masculinities, a concept coined by R.W. Connell.

According to R.W. Connell, hegemonic masculinity was the ‘most honoured way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men.’⁴³ Much like Judith Butler’s historically contingent gendered performances, hegemonic masculinities are likewise subject to change. Connell explains that ‘there could be a struggle for hegemony, and older forms of masculinity might be displaced by new ones.’⁴⁴ While Connell sees this struggle as having the potential to result in an egalitarian model of hegemonic masculinity, I instead trace the struggle for, and loss of, hegemonic masculinities as the site of crisis for those men who may have once enjoyed, or benefited from, the privilege of the patriarchal dividend.⁴⁵ Because

³⁹ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 86.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁴¹ Kwai-Cheung Lo, *Excess and Masculinity in Asian Cultural Productions* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 109.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 109.

⁴³ R.W. Connell and Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept,” *Gender and Society* 19, no. 6 (2005): 832.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 833.

⁴⁵ Raewyn Connell, *Gender* (Oxford: Polity, 2002), 142.

to be the cowboy or the samurai had once been the most honoured way of being a man, and because both of these archetypes had been embodied patriarchal systems of domination and control (over women and non-hegemonic men), it is the loss of the cowboy and samurai that contributes to the sense of masculinities in crisis.

The crisis of masculinity thesis has been addressed by scholars as a crisis of legitimacy,⁴⁶ as a reaction to feminism and queer studies,⁴⁷ and as a form of ‘male hysteria.’⁴⁸ These various approaches can be applied to the crisis as it exists in the U.S. and Japan, but the masculinity crisis can also be indicative of the tensions that existed between the two superpowers. Because the cowboy and samurai are so firmly connected to national mythologies and ideologies which are reliant on notions of stability and impenetrability, when the narrative of nationhood is disrupted or disturbed, the ripples are made evident in the characterizations of the cowboy and samurai. I therefore read the cowboy and samurai in crisis as a gauge of real experiences of masculinity in particular historical contexts, but also as indicative of broader crises experienced on a national scale as the two dominant world powers recalibrated their position in global affairs vis-à-vis the other in the postwar period.

I am cautious not to discuss the crisis of masculinity as a uniquely white, heterosexual phenomenon, because between the decline of the cowboy and samurai and the sense of crisis that surrounds both male archetypes is a much more complex web of bilateral exchanges and internal ruptures in accepted norms and power structures. However, the loss of masculine legitimacy in the U.S. is often framed as the loss of white privilege and it can be discussed as such. While variations of crisis are evident in numerous masculine formations, the particular hegemonic privilege enjoyed by white, heterosexual men in the U.S., as embodied by his white heterosexual cowboy, brought with it a particular response to experiences of loss and disempowerment. For example, Nicola Rehling’s study of white heterosexual men in Hollywood films draws attention to the backlash against the perceived gains of women through feminist movements, which were seen to challenge ‘straight white men’s assumptions of privilege at a time when [...] few in fact experienced any individual sense of empowerment.’⁴⁹ Likewise, Michael Kimmel devotes much of his writing to the experiences of white heterosexual men in the U.S. and their experience of crisis despite, or because of, their privileged position in society.

⁴⁶ Arthur Brittan, *Masculinity and Power* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 184.

⁴⁷ Nicole Rehling, *Extra-ordinary Men: White Heterosexual Masculinity in Contemporary Popular Cinema* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009), 25.

⁴⁸ Dennis Bingham, *Acting Male*, 3.

⁴⁹ Nicola Rehling, *Extra-ordinary Men*, 25.

There is a sense that masculinity as crisis has become ‘ubiquitous in the psychology of the masculine subject.’⁵⁰ Without a grounding in feminist studies, gender theory and queer theory, however, there is the risk that masculinity studies becomes ‘exculpatory,’ redeeming white men for past transgressions of wielding disproportionate power by constructing men as victims of a masculine ideal that is forever out of reach.⁵¹ Not only does the crisis become a normalized aspect of masculinity, but it also serves to justify hegemonic, heterosexual masculinity ‘as being natural and normal.’⁵² I agree with Jean Bobby Noble that ‘sometimes, masculinity has absolutely nothing to do with men whatsoever,’⁵³ an idea pithily embraced in the phrase ‘female masculinity’ employed in the writing of Judith Halberstam and an idea that I will explore in greater depth in Chapter 4.

Queer theory has been instrumental in the deconstruction of masculinity as heterosexual, stable and belonging to men. An early cinematic precedent to queer readings of the heterosexual cowboy archetype occurs in the film *Midnight Cowboy* (dir. John Schlesinger, 1969), in which John Wayne is described as a “fag.” Such readings can be applied to numerous heterosexual cowboy characters. John M. Clum argues that had the child in George Stevens’ *Shane* (1953) been older his relationship with the titular cowboy Shane ‘would be a gay love story.’⁵⁴ It is a relationship between the mature cowboy and a young male common to the postwar western. Such readings also coincide with queer communities adopting and performing hypermasculinity in the late 1970s, such as gay men dressing as cowboys and bikers.⁵⁵ Not only is masculinity destabilized in relation to gender differences and power structures, but the fluidity of sexualities broadens the extent of masculine multiplicities by drawing heterosexual masculinity further from the potential to be normalized.

Satoko Akiyama in her study of androgyny in Japan insists that the ‘sexual choices available to women and men are as varied as the combinations of feminine and masculine tendencies they embody,’ even suggesting that all humans are ‘inherently androgynous.’⁵⁶ Queer studies also draws attention to the male gaze, not as inherently existing between the heterosexual male and the sexualized, idealized woman, but also as a gaze that exists between

⁵⁰ Judith Kegan Gardiner, “Introduction,” 10.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Arthur Brittan, *Masculinity and Power*, 187.

⁵³ Jean Bobby Noble, *Masculinities Without Men?: Female Masculinity in Twentieth-Century Fictions* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004), ix.

⁵⁴ John M. Clum, “*He’s All Man*”: *Learning Masculinity, Gayness, and Love From American Movies* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 61.

⁵⁵ Corey W. Johnson, ““Don’t Call Him A Cowboy”: Masculinity, Cowboy Drag, and a Costume Change,” *Journal of Leisure Research* 40, no. 3 (2008): 387.

⁵⁶ In Jennifer Robertson, “The Politics of Androgyny in Japan: Sexuality and Subversion in the Theatre and Beyond,” *American Ethnologist* 19, no. 3 (1992): 420.

men.⁵⁷ Such a gaze permeates the western and jidaigeki as genres predominately focused on groups of men who measure their worth with the phallic power of the pistol or sword. The jidaigeki film *Gohatto* (dir. Nagisa Ôshima, 2000) makes this reading explicit when numerous samurai fight for the attention of a particularly beautiful male trainee. The postmodern road trip samurai film *Yaji and Kita: The Midnight Pilgrims* (dir. Kankurô Kudô, 2005) queers time and space in its narrative of two gay lovers traversing through Tokugawa bureaucracies, drug-induced hallucinations, a modern highway, and the afterlife to be together.

I mention these queer cowboy and samurai films to acknowledge that the study of cowboys and samurai is not synonymous with the study of heterosexual masculinities, and both the cowboy and samurai as hegemonic masculinities have incorporated queer identities in fascinating (and well documented⁵⁸) ways. There is room for future research into the bilateral cultural exchange between the queer cowboy and samurai in relation to the queer ‘contact moments’ between the U.S. and Japan,⁵⁹ although the scale of such a study falls outside of the scope that I am constrained to in this thesis.

The crisis of masculinity is addressed as a consequence of specific historical circumstances inscribed onto the characters of the cowboy and samurai. Yumiko Mikanagi’s approach to masculinity and foreign relations asserts that ‘gender, dominant masculinity in particular, is formed within a particular historical context and that the rise and decline of dominant masculinities have been intertwined with Japan’s international relations as both cause and effect.’⁶⁰ Writing on masculinities and the American western, Peter Verstraten makes a similar claim, ‘that history does matter in understanding changing constructions of masculinity.’⁶¹ In the immediate postwar context the relationship had been framed as that of the oppressor, or occupier, dominating a defeated nation, and yet I will argue that comparative and concurrent crises of masculinities occurred despite (or because of) the relative sense of global empowerment experienced by the two nations. It is not simply a case of Japanese men confronting a crisis caused by the oppression of a dominant U.S., although that reality is

⁵⁷ Lee Clark Mitchell, *Westerns: Making the Man in Fiction and Film*, 161.

⁵⁸ See Crystal Parikh, “‘The Most Outrageous Masquerade’: Queering Asian-American Masculinity”. Mark J. McLelland, *Male Homosexuality in Modern Japan: Cultural Myths and Social Realities*. Jonathan D. Mackintosh, *Homosexuality and Manliness in Postwar Japan*. Gary P. Leupp, *Male Colours: The Construction of Homosexuality in Tokugawa Japan*. Peter Boag, *Re-dressing America’s Frontier Past*. Chris Packard, *Queer Cowboys and Other Erotic Male Friendships in Nineteenth-Century American Literature*.

⁵⁹ Katsuhiko Suganuma, *Contact Moments*.

⁶⁰ Yumiko Mikanagi, *Masculinity and Japan’s Foreign Relations* (Boulder Colorado: First Forum Press, 2011), 21.

⁶¹ Peter Verstraten, “Screening Cowboys: Reading Masculinities in Westerns” (Doctoral Thesis, Universiteit van Amsterdam, 1999), 35.

discussed in this thesis and it has also been the subject of numerous articles and books.⁶² If the crisis were directly associated with being oppressed, then American men in the postwar period, the oppressors, ought to have experienced a sustainable sense of masculine excess and security, and yet the cowboys on screen tell a different story.

The U.S. and Japan in the Postwar

On the 6th of August, 1945, Hiroshima became the first city to experience the apocalyptic potential of the atomic bomb dropped by a U.S. Boeing B-29 with the innocuous moniker, the Enola Gay. Just three days later, on August 9, Nagasaki would become the second and final city to witness this horror. These two acts established the nature of the relationship the U.S. would have with Japan as the conqueror in the immediate postwar period, the destroyer of worlds. For Marilyn Ivy, Japan's 'last war, the war of total atomic defeat, stands as the origin and telos of Japanese nationality' and it would leave an indelible mark on Japan's national cinema.⁶³ As I discuss in Chapter 1, Kurosawa's *Rashomon*, while set in the Heian Period, reflects upon the immediate postwar setting with imagery of destruction that resonates with atomic destruction. While the terms of Japan's surrender written up in the Potsdam Declaration (announced July 26 and accepted by the Japanese cabinet on August 14) may have lacked elements of 'revenge or hostility,'⁶⁴ there was no doubt that the goals of demilitarizing, democratizing, and economically rebuilding Japan would occur on U.S. terms and that the occupation of Japan was intended to serve U.S. strategic interests in the Pacific.⁶⁵ What remained of Japan was personified as an emasculated child, the U.S. playing the role of the father. Even in the latter half of the 20th century when Japan's economy became one of the most powerful economies in the world, the spectre of the atomic bombs would remain with the lingering condescension of the hegemonic power that dropped them.

Tensions over atomic weapons did not subside over time. For many Japanese in the post-war period blame for Hiroshima and Nagasaki was directed at the wartime leadership of

⁶² see Mark McLelland, *Queer Japan from the Pacific War to the Internet Age*, Katsuhiko Suganuma, *Contact Moments: The Politics of Intercultural Desire in Japanese Male-Queer Cultures*, David H. Budd, *Culture Meets Culture in the Movies: An Analysis of East, West, North and South, with Filmographies*.

⁶³ Marilyn Ivy, "Trauma's Two Times: Japanese Wars and Postwars," *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 16, no. 1 (2008): 171. See also, David Deamer, *Deleuze, Japanese Cinema, and the Atom Bomb: The Spectre of Impossibility*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2014.

⁶⁴ Makoto Iokibe, "Diplomacy in Occupied Japan: Japanese Diplomacy in the 1940s," in *The Diplomatic History of Postwar Japan*, ed. Makoto Iokibe, translated by Robert D. Eldridge (New York: Routledge, 2009), 22.

⁶⁵ Sakamoto Kazuya, "Conditions of an Independent State: Japanese Diplomacy in the 1950s," in *The Diplomatic History of Postwar Japan*, ed. Makoto Iokibe, translated by Robert D. Eldridge (New York: Routledge, 2009) 51.

Japan, rather than the U.S. However, developments during the Cold War began to change these perceptions of the U.S. as an unwilling nuclear power. Development of the hydrogen bomb in the 1950s made the prospect of a 'super atomic war' a very real one, and an incident involving nuclear fallout from a test on Bikini Atoll, in which crew on board a Japanese fishing boat *The Lucky Dragon* were exposed to radiation, began to contribute to growing anti-American sentiment and outrage.⁶⁶ With the outbreak of the Korean War the U.S. injected \$2.3 billion into Japanese industries which were indirectly aiding the U.S. war effort. During this time Japanese leaders were critical of being indirectly involved in U.S. conflicts.⁶⁷ Anti-American fervor intensified with the signing of the 1960 Security Treaty between the U.S. and Japan, which effectively placed Japan under a nuclear umbrella; the price for this protection being economic and logistical support for U.S. military operations.⁶⁸ Intensification of the Vietnam War in the 1960s and the use of airbases on Okinawa to launch bombing raids proved to be hugely contentious issues in Japan (Okinawa was not returned to Japan until 1972 but U.S. military bases remain on the island). Controversy over U.S. involvement in Vietnam, worsened by publicity over atrocities such as the Mai Lai massacre in 1968, reignited beliefs that the atomic bombings were racially motivated (or at the least, racially justified).⁶⁹ The inability of U.S. Presidents or officials to denounce the use of the bomb effectively upheld the "good war" narrative of U.S. exceptionalism in which atomic bombs reflected U.S. superiority thus assuaging the need for reflections of potential war guilt.

When nuclear fears took the backstage, other issues emanating from the immediate postwar period continued to plague the troubled alliance between the U.S. and Japan. Article 9 of Japan's postwar constitution denounced war and demilitarized the nation. As Japan became a dominant power in world affairs in the 1970s the absence of a military became more pronounced and an inability to build an army prevented Japan from becoming a "normal" state.⁷⁰ In effect, Japan was forced to use "soft power" to influence the world around it, taking advantage of its rapidly growing economy and strong imports to the U.S.⁷¹ Ironically, while it was the U.S. that imposed Article 9 on Japan, increasing demands on the U.S. military and a need for powerful allies encouraged the U.S. to have Japan loosen the interpretation of Article 9 to allow its Self-Defence Forces to partake in war games in the 1970s and 1980s as well as

⁶⁶ Sadao Asada, *Culture Shock and Japanese-American Relations: Historical Essays* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 210.

⁶⁷ Chizuru Saeki, *U.S. Cultural Propaganda in Cold War Japan: Promoting Democracy 1948-1960* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007), 42.

⁶⁸ Christine Hong, "Flashforward Democracy: American Exceptionalism and the Atomic Bomb in *Barefoot Gen*," *Comparative Literature Studies* 46, no. 1 (2009): 136

⁶⁹ Sadao Asada, *Culture Shock*, 211.

⁷⁰ Glenn Hook and Takeda Hiroko, "'Self-Responsibility' and the Nature of the Postwar Japanese State: Risk Through the Looking Glass," *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 33, no. 1 (2007): 103.

⁷¹ Edward J. Lincoln, "Japan: Using Power Narrowly," *The Washington Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (2003): 115.

contributing to the first invasion of Iraq and America's war on terror.⁷² When it suited U.S. interests, Japan was granted nominal freedom to exert military strength (often under the guise of "peacekeeping missions"), even if this ran counter to public opinion.

By the 1980s Japan had become an economic threat to the U.S., its economy approaching its zenith while the U.S. economy neared collapse after the Wall Street crash of 1987. Without 'puppet regimes to prop up, and no proxy wars to mind' Japan was able to focus on becoming a non-militarised superpower.⁷³ Unsurprisingly, Japan's growing economic strength and influence in the U.S. bred hostility and the return of racial stereotypes that had remained under the surface of U.S.-Japan relations since World War II. It was a return of the "yellow peril," the insidious enemy that sought to undermine the U.S. through aggressive trade, which author Michael Crichton referred to as 'adversarial trade, trade like war, trade intended to wipe out the competition.'⁷⁴ The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 removed an adversary that had largely defined U.S. foreign relations in the Cold War. Within the vacuum left by the Soviet Union many commentators in the U.S. were priming Japan to be America's next threat. The bursting of Japan's economic bubble in 1991 suggested that such fears were premature, but mistrust of Japan's economy remained. Rather than being perceived as a powerful threat, Japan's economy became viewed as backwards and corrupt, a warning to other powerful economies in the world as it found itself caught in a decade's long recession.⁷⁵ The nature of the hostility may have changed, but the prejudices remained.

Through economic booms and busts and debates over Japan's demilitarized role in global affairs, the relationship between the U.S. and Japan had been rocky at best, but it would be the fiftieth anniversary of the atomic bombings that would see the return of old tensions. In 1995 the Smithsonian Museum played host to the controversial Enola Gay exhibit. The ensuing debacle made it quite clear that a resolution on how to commemorate the war had not been reached. Veterans backed by a newly elected Republican congress wanted a festive, celebratory exhibit in keeping with the "good war" narrative, while the historians behind the exhibit planned for a more critical, historical examination of the events leading to the dropping of the bomb and an insight into the effects on the Japanese victims.⁷⁶ Ultimately the exhibit was cancelled, although it did draw enough attention to revive the issue of war memory, an issue that was still able to generate hostility.

⁷² Edward J. Lincoln, "Japan: Using Power Narrowly," 123.

⁷³ Douglas McGray, "Japan's Gross National Cool," *Foreign Policy* 130 (2002): 47.

⁷⁴ Mark Berger, *The Battle for Asia: From Decolonization to Globalization* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 176.

⁷⁵ Edward Lincoln, "Japan: Using Power Narrowly," 118.

⁷⁶ Otto Mayr, "The Enola Gay Fiasco: History, Politics, and the Museum," *Technology and Culture* 39, no. 3 (1998): 470.

That same year another controversy brought to light the tenuous relationship of the U.S. and Japan. The rape of a schoolgirl in Okinawa by three U.S. servicemen caused an outcry by the residents of Okinawa and Japan, who demanded an end to the military bases on the island.⁷⁷ A renewed Security Treaty in 1996 sought to address the Okinawa problem by reducing the number of U.S. bases on the island, but once again Japan found itself at odds with a seemingly hypocritical relationship as a nation still effectively occupied by a military superpower while having no active military of its own. Japan's status as a demilitarized nation was further put to the test in 1996 during a standoff with China on the Taiwanese straight. Japanese Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro made the decision to fuel U.S. vessels at sea during the Taiwan crisis while agreeing with the U.S. that in cases involving China a policy of non-violent 'engagement' rather than 'containment' would apply.⁷⁸ A litmus test of sorts had been set; when it came to unrest in East-Asia Japan would back the U.S., a gamble considering the unpredictability of Kim Jong Il's North Korea and a rapidly industrializing China.

A new century has not quelled the tumultuous waters that continue to rock the relationship of the U.S. and Japan. George Bush's comments after September 11, 2001 compared the attacks to the bombing of Pearl Harbor, retroactively aligning the Japanese with terrorists. His war on terror stretched the limits of Japan's capacity to remain a demilitarized nation when so closely aligned with a superpower intent on military action and invasion. Japan's economy failed to recover, while rising suicide rates attributed to large-scale unemployment suggested a generational decay in which Japan's future was largely unknown, or at worst, presumed non-existent.⁷⁹

Bi/Trans-national Crisis

The cowboy and samurai may have their origins as products of national myths, but their role in the bilateral exchange between the U.S. and Japan also brought the two masculine archetypes into the scope of transnational cinemas. Leon Hunt and Leung Wing-Fai write that transnationality involves 'the cultural and economic flows of globalisation, the erosion of the nation-state, a "borderless world", de-territorialisation, debates about whether we live in a

⁷⁷ Makoto Iokibe, "Japanese Diplomacy After the Cold War," in *The Diplomatic History of Postwar Japan*, ed. Iokibe Makoto, translated by Robert D. Eldridge (New York: Routledge, 2009), 185.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 187.

⁷⁹ Anne Allison, "Ordinary Refugees: Social Precarity and Soul in 21st Century Japan," *Anthropological Quarterly* 85, no. 2 (2012): 346.

“global village” or are witness to ever more sophisticated forms of “global pillage.”⁸⁰ Scott Nygren asks, ‘why does film history continue to be written in terms of national cinemas, despite a poststructuralist methodology that now rejects essentialist assumptions as illusory?’⁸¹ Nygren’s call to the post-structuralist dissolution of essentialized national identities is apposite to my reading of the cowboy and samurai as participants in a bilateral exchange in which the unity and solidity of the self is often questioned and accepted as hybrid. Although I have framed my thesis around the postwar interactions between the cowboy and samurai, it is important to recognize that transnational cinemas existed well before the outbreak of World War II, and well before concepts such as globalization and transnationalism were in wide circulation. For example, Michael Baskett traces the globalizing spread of Japanese film to 1905.⁸²

Because the global spread of film cultures is often attached to Hollywood, or to European film cultures, Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden recognize the significance of hegemonic centres of cultural production, but they are quick to identify the hybridity of cinema cultures to the extent that transnational cinema ‘transcends the national as [an] autonomous cultural particularity while respecting it as a powerful symbolic force.’⁸³ To this end, I will situate the cowboy and samurai within their respective national cultures before focusing on their global interactions and transnational intersections. That the cowboy and samurai can interact at all is not to deny their rootedness in culturally specific contexts. Instead, the interactions between the cowboy and samurai on screen demonstrates the translatability of national cultures, which is a theme that runs through D.P Martinez’ work on the remakes of Akira Kurosawa’s films.

Martinez approaches the translations and remakes of Kurosawa’s films from an anthropological position to explain the global cultural flows of cinematic narratives and the translatability of film cultures. Martinez begins her book by questioning the assumption that ‘translating stories, customs, ideas, attitudes, religions – anything – is problematic,’ as if the very process implies some form of domination.⁸⁴ Instead, Martinez suggests that ‘some texts are translatable because they speak to the human condition, both in a diachronic and

⁸⁰ Leon Hunt and Leung Wing-Fai, “Introduction,” in *East Asian Cinemas: Exploring Transnational Connections on Film*, eds., Leon Hunt and Leung Wing-Fai (London: Taurus, 2008), 3.

⁸¹ Scott Nygren, “Boundary Crossings: Japanese and Western Representations of the Other,” *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 14, no. 3 (1993): 87.

⁸² Michael Baskett, *The Attractive Empire: Transnational Film Culture in Imperial Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2008), 3.

⁸³ Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden. “General Introduction: What is Transnational Cinema?” in *Transnational Cinema: The Film Reader*, eds., Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden (Abingdon, England: Routledge, 2006), 1.

⁸⁴ D.P. Martinez, *Remaking Kurosawa: Translations and Permutations in Global Cinema* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 2.

synchronic way.’⁸⁵ As Martinez explains, Kurosawa has long been a figure of interest in the West precisely because of the translatability of his films. Rather than admit that film can transcend national cinemas, or that the logic of national cinemas should be questioned altogether, Kurosawa’s work was questioned for not being ‘Japanese enough.’⁸⁶ In my discussion of the cowboy and samurai, I have found that the archetypes speak to the human condition of gender insecurity and masculine crisis, but this is not to suggest that the interactions between the two warrior types are consistently dour. Takashi Miike’s *Sukiyaki Western Django*, for instance, builds upon the legacy of Kurosawa’s transnational cinema to playfully deconstruct the hybrid formations that occur when cowboy and samurai intersect.

Framing the Crisis of Cowboys and Samurai

The thesis consists of six chapters separated into two parts. In Part 1 I have attempted to establish a sense of historical continuity in the films discussed, from the 1950s to the 1970s, although this continuity is elongated in Chapter 3 by my discussion of *East Meets West* released in 1995, and *Yurusarezaru Mono* released in 2014. These chapters focus on developments in the bilateral cultural exchange between the U.S. and Japan and the growing proximity between the cowboy and samurai. What begins as a series of remakes in Chapter 1 advances into radical reassessments of generic conventions in Chapter 2, before the cowboy and samurai finally meet face-to-face in the films chosen for Chapter 3.

In Chapter 1, cowboy and samurai masculinities are discussed as extensions of national identities, in part because both masculine formations had been so integral to the war efforts of their respective nations, but also because this sense of national identity became all the more important in the postwar period of recovery. While Kurosawa has been regarded as a ‘westernized’ filmmaker, I locate both *Rashomon* and *Shichinen no Samurai* as expressions of an immediate response to the devastation incurred by the Japanese after World War II. The crisis of masculinity that results is due to the loss of the samurai who cannot be, or perhaps should not be, retrieved from Japan’s past in the service of those men in the postwar period in need of a revised model of masculinity. The American remakes *The Magnificent Seven* and *The Outrage*, while somewhat less bleak, nevertheless echo the sense that the cowboy had been lost to the war, and that his presence on screen in the postwar period is merely to visualize his departure.

⁸⁵ D.P. Martinez, *Remaking Kurosawa*, 16.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

In Chapter 2 I argue that the dissolution of the nation as singular and unproblematic precipitated the dissolution of the cowboy and samurai as national icons of hegemonic masculinities. This process started earlier for Japan, with the tumult of the 1960s erupting at the start of the decade in response to the renewed security treaty with the U.S. and the factionalization of Japan's left and right. Akira Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* has a humorous bite, but the comedy merely accentuates the cynicism evident in the fictional town that has become overrun by violent thugs and a disinterested *rōnin*. *Yojimbo* inspired Sergio Leone's *A Fistful of Dollars*, one of two films in this thesis that exists outside of the bilateral exchange between the U.S. and Japan. However, the film is instrumental to the revision of the cowboy in America's westerns, and it also introduced American audiences to Clint Eastwood's particular brand of narcissistic masculinity. Finally, I argue that *A Fistful of Dollars* paved the way for Sam Peckinpah's vicious film, *The Wild Bunch*, which effectively ended any hope that the cowboy might once again exist as a dominant model of virtuous masculinity.

To intertwine the crises of cowboy and samurai masculinities is not to ignore the cultural specificity of American and Japanese experiences of manhood or to erase the experiences of minority groups within each nation. While by no means exhaustive or complete, in Chapter 3 I discuss the relationship between the Ainu and samurai in *Yurusarezaru Mono*, as well as the relationship between Ainu, samurai and Native Americans in *East Meets West*, in an effort to avoid framing Japan or America as homogenous societies with homogenous sets of masculine values. I also address the extent to which an American masculinity had been constructed as white in *Red Sun* and offer the example of Native American and Japanese interactions as an often overlooked element of the bilateral exchange between the U.S. and Japan. In Chapter 3 I argue that the dissolution of assumed norms and the transversal of concrete demarcations of self/other entailed the reactive crises of the cowboy and samurai as they were forced to adapt to shifting definitions of the masculine self. If there is a hint of a teleological trajectory of unification between the cowboy and samurai developing between these three chapters, it is undone in *Yurusarezaru Mono*, which problematizes national identities, nationalized masculinities, and narratives of self and other that routinely dismiss indigenous populations that exist outside of convenient binaries. It is a film that establishes a shift towards the thematically oriented chapters of Part 2.

The chapters in Part 2 are underpinned less by their historical contexts than by conceptual frameworks. The purpose here is not to attempt historical parallels between the treatment of cowboy and samurai on screen, but instead to establish a sense of thematic and symbolic similarities as both masculine archetypes encounter comparable metaphysical undoings and reconstructions. I open Part 2 with an examination of cowboys and samurai

becoming the Other in *The Last Samurai*, *The Wanderer of the Great Plains* and *Kill Bill*. I discuss these becomings-Other in relation to the rhizomatic becomings of Deleuze and Guattari, and with specific reference to the work of Rosi Braidotti. At this juncture in the thesis the cowboys and samurai as articulations of nationalized masculinities are opened up to the multiplicities of becoming as a transnational process. The fluidity of masculine becomings are also attached to the figure of The Bride in *Kill Bill* as an example of a nomadic female masculinity. What some might see as crisis can instead be read as an opportunity to become.

My application of Deleuzian becomings dissolves the boundaries between men, women and animals, and in Chapter 5 I discuss the uncanny consequences of disjointed identities that stray too far from the human and the familiar. Freud's notion of the uncanny is applied to the cowboys and samurai of science-fiction as the masculine archetypes traverse the boundaries of time and space, and transgress the boundary between the human and the machine. I open the chapter with Michael Crichton's *Westworld*, which sees Yul Brynner reprise his role from *The Magnificent Seven* only to emerge as the uncanny return of a masculinity that ought to have been dead and buried by a previous generation of filmgoers. The uncanny cowboy returns again in Paul Verhoeven's *Robocop*, a film which resurrects the cowboy of television westerns into Regan's cowboy America of the late 1980s. The uncanny future inhabited by the sci-fi cowboy is compared to the space-time of time-travelling Self-Defence personnel in the Japanese film *Sengoku Jieitai*, a film which witnesses the uncanny return of Japan's militant past and its impossible place in Japan's present.

In Chapter 6 I discuss the bilateral exchange between the U.S. and Japan in response to the transnational flows of rap and hip-hop, which has had a significant impact on the representations of cowboy and samurai masculinities. I borrow from the techniques used in the construction of hip-hop and rap's signature sound to discuss the bilateral cultural sampling that generates the titular heroes of *Afro Samurai* and *Ghost Dog*. The interaction between hip-hop and samurai cultures allows me to expand the bilateral cultural exchange between the U.S. and Japan to include the often overlooked relationship between African Americans and the Japanese. I also discuss the significance of the African-American gunslingers in *Wild Wild West* and *Django Unchained*, which incorporate the masculine performances of hip-hop and rap into a renegotiation of the cowboy as a hegemonic figure for a marginalized audience.

Although largely informed by feminist and queer studies of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the crisis of masculinity I address here can be traced back to the immediate postwar period, to the dropping of an atomic bomb that largely defined the relationship between Japan

and the U.S as well as the masculine identities that emerged as postwar cowboys and samurai. Because the cowboy and samurai had been so pivotal to the realization of hegemonic masculinities, they bore the burden of masculinities in crisis. Through their relationship I will demonstrate how the crisis of masculinity existed in both Japan and the U.S., and how the anxieties of postwar men became evident when the samurai and cowboy interacted, when the two icons of hegemonic masculinity confronted each other and realized that they were both projections of masculinities in crisis.

Chapter 1

Remaking Men in *Rashomon*, *Shichinin no Samurai*, *The Magnificent Seven* and *The Outrage*

Both the U.S. and Japan were at crisis point at the end of World War II. The Japanese homeland had been devastated by routine bombing raids, two atomic bombs, and the loss of 1.74 million Japanese men who had died during the war, and 6.5 million men who had yet to be repatriated from every corner of Japan's collapsed empire.¹ The U.S. may have stormed into Tokyo Bay as victors on September 2, 1945,² but Americans had unleashed a nuclear spectre that would haunt the country and its war memory. Before the U.S. and Japan lay a path towards peaceful cooperation and a partnership that would see both nations emerging as economic superpowers in the modern world. But this partnership would be continuously threatened by contested war memories and a history of mutual antagonism that could potentially undermine any progress made towards postwar reconciliations. Film became an avenue for articulating concerns of postwar identities and the role that memory should play in the service of the future, because film promised to preserve a golden age of masculinity that seemed to have been lost in the war. For American and Japanese men, history and memory played out on film not only to fashion a sense of continuity between the past and the present, it was also vital to formulating a collective sense of the masculine self.³ The samurai and cowboy emerged from these attempts to consolidate national memories of masculinity as figures that fashioned memories of what masculinity had been and what it could be again.

In Japan, the rupture between past and present, samurai myth and postwar reality occurred when the male ruling elite faced the responsibility for Japan's capitulation and the failure of the imperial militarization of bushido, culminating in the live broadcast of Emperor Hirohito surrendering on August 15, 1945. For the first time, Japanese civilians heard the quiet, awkward voice of a man who had been worshipped not only as an Emperor but as a divine entity representing 'the sense of self for Japanese men.'⁴ He had also been the

¹ Franziska Seraphim, *War Memory and Social Politics in Japan, 1945-2005* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006.), 60.

² John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 43.

³ Sabine Frühstück, *Uneasy Warriors: Gender, Memory, and Popular Culture in the Japanese Army* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 153.

⁴ Morris Low, "The Emperor's Sons Go to War: Competing Masculinities in Modern Japan." in *Asian Masculinities: The Meaning and Practice of Manhood in China and Japan*, ed. Kam Louie and Morris Low (New York: Routledge, 2003), 95.

figurehead of the imperial government's revision of bushido, the way of the warrior. Japanese men faced a further first-hand crisis of masculinity when their defeat in the Pacific War resulted in the U.S. occupation of Japan and the positioning of Japan as a child, an inferior nation unable to obtain the symbolic masculine ideal of the adult male.⁵ Although the occupying American forces led by General MacArthur censored all cinematic representations of bushido for fear of rekindling militant sentiments, one notable representation of the samurai was released during the occupation. Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950) condemns the samurai to an extent that appeased occupational censors, but the film also made sense for Japanese audiences that had been betrayed by an image of masculinity lauded by the imperial government during wartime.

For American men, experiences of war were a far cry from the gunplay in westerns, which became unsurprisingly scarce from 1941 to 1945. Audiences could not relate to gunfighters saving the prairie from savage redskins when German and Japanese soldiers were threatening soldiers abroad.⁶ One of the few notable westerns released during wartime was *The Ox Bow Incident*, a commercial failure that directly addressed the meaning of manhood, ultimately concluding that 'adherence to the rules' is called for, validating a 'softer conception of manhood.'⁷ Gone was man-the-warrior as the ideal expression of masculinity. In its place was incalculable loss and destruction that sociologists and psychologists struggled to attribute to the nature of man.⁸ And while news of Hiroshima's destruction may have made twenty one year old lieutenant Paul Fussell and those around him lay down the fake manliness of their warrior facades and 'cry with relief and joy,' many men would return home with their masculinity in tatters only for it to be further endangered by the looming presence of nuclear war.⁹ Such challenges to warrior masculinity would persist in postwar westerns which, more often than not, retold stories of the cowboy's demise rather than the cowboy's triumph. Somewhere in the horror of World War II the essence of an unproblematic masculinity was lost and westerns in the postwar period would become preoccupied with trying to rediscover it.

This chapter addresses the postwar crisis of cowboy and samurai masculinities as a response to hegemonic masculinities in transition. Hegemonic masculinity is understood as the most honoured way of being a man, as defined by R.W. Connell.¹⁰ Unlike the cowboys and samurai to be discussed in Chapter 2, the cowboys and samurai in this chapter have not

⁵ Sabine Frühstück and Anne Walthall, "Introduction: Interrogating Men and Masculinities." in *Recreating Japanese Men*, eds. Sabine Frühstück and Anne Walthall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 8.

⁶ Michael Coyne, *The Crowded Prairie: American National Identity in the Hollywood Western* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1998), 30.

⁷ Joan Mellen, *Big Bad Wolves: American Masculinity in Film* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 174.

⁸ Arthur Brittan, *Masculinity and Power*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 82.

⁹ David McCullough, *Truman* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 551.

¹⁰ R.W. Connell, *The Men and the Boys* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000), 11.

become jaded and destructive anti-heroes lashing out at societies that have left them for dead. Instead, the cowboys and samurai of this chapter are forced to adapt to, or else disappear from, societies that are rapidly transforming because the most honoured ways of being men were no longer conducive to the warrior ideals that had been espoused by the cowboys and samurai prior to the war. Tarja Vayrynen argues that war reveals the instability of gender hierarchies produced by the military and wartime societies, and from this postwar instability ‘an urgent need for closure emerges.’¹¹ The cowboy and samurai became entwined in this process of closure, as they were not only employed to make sense of postwar masculinities on the homefront, they were also employed to make sense of the masculinities that emerged from the bilateral exchange between the U.S. and Japan.

The masculinities in transition are also transitioning from the cinematic contexts of Japan to the U.S. through the American remakes of Akira Kurosawa’s jidaigeki. The bilateral transition brings to attention the comparable conditions of crisis afflicting postwar American and Japanese men. The bilateral exchange between the cowboy and samurai established a bilateral dialogue between men and their masculinities. This is a dialogue that may have had its antecedent in the early cinemas of the U.S. and Japan, but it becomes much more pronounced in the postwar interactions between the cowboy and the samurai. D.P. Martinez suggests that the interactions between cinema cultures ‘make “bridges” that become conceptual “places” – locations from which something new can be generated.’¹²

Men in Japan and the U.S. emerged from World War II with vastly different postwar experiences, one of defeat, one of victory, but both nations sought heroic templates of masculinity that had existed in a mythic past. In the postwar films of the samurai and the cowboy, Japan and the United States attempted to reconfigure national ideals of hegemonic masculinity based on the models of prewar masculine archetypes. But the war had created a chasm between the masculinities of the past and present, leaving the old models of masculinity wanting in the postwar period. *Rashomon* (1950), *Shichinin no Samurai* (1954), *The Magnificent Seven* (1960) and *The Outrage* (1964) will be read as a response to the historical context of the postwar period through which the nature of America and Japan’s crisis of masculinity, and the emerging U.S.-Japan alliance, can be addressed.

¹¹ Tarja Vayrynen, “Keeping the Trauma of War Open in the Male Body: Resisting the Hegemonic Forms of Masculinity and National Identity in Visual Arts,” *Journal of Gender Studies* 22, no. 2 (2013): 140.

¹² D.P. Martinez, *Remaking Kurosawa: Translations and Permutations in Global Cinema* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 3.

Masculinity at War's End

The threat faced by men in the postwar period was that their masculinity had been undone during the war at a time when combat had promised the making of the man. While wartime propaganda bolstered the image of a dominant white American manhood, white American masculinity at war's end was at a crisis point. Soldiers not only had to confront the horrors of war, but they also had to confront the knowledge that in the grand scheme of the global conflict they were expendable, nicknamed GI's (government issue) because they no longer had an individual identity.¹³ Their masculine façade became an act forced upon them by a society at war; they were 'browbeaten' into becoming killers and heroes.¹⁴ And if their wartime masculinity was performative, a 'masquerade in which men are required to adopt different roles,' it became evident that civilian masculinity could itself constitute a performance.¹⁵ But social constructions of the powerful man at war could only disguise so many truths. The realities of modern warfare shattered many illusions of a dominant warrior masculinity. The male body, once phallicized as 'impermeable and sealed up,' became penetrable and "leaky," traits that had traditionally been associated with women. The penetrated, leaking male body was unavoidable when men were riddled with holes and left bleeding and defecating in foxholes despite their best efforts to "keep a tight asshole."¹⁶

Like their American counterparts, Japanese soldiers encountered a bitter reality of battle that dismantled many of the myths of the heroic, masculine warrior. For many Japanese servicemen the American soldier was an enigma, an unknown quantity that had been left out of wartime propaganda preoccupied with the question of "why we fight" rather than the question "who are we fighting."¹⁷ So it was with some fascination and awe that Japanese soldiers encountered the masculinity of their enemy. Some soldiers, such as Ooka Shohei, were taken aback by the beauty of captured American soldiers. Shohei writes of 'a beauty whose sudden appearance before me held a particular freshness because the world it represented had been banished from my sight since Pearl Harbor.'¹⁸ Shohei's description is

¹³ Thomas A. Bruscino, *A Nation Forged in War: How World War II Taught Americans to Get Along* (Baltimore: Project MUSE, 2012): 128.

¹⁴ Roger Horrocks, *Masculinity in Crisis: Myths, Fantasies, and Realities* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 61.

¹⁵ Mike Chopra-Gant, *Hollywood Genres and Post-war America: Masculinity, Family and Nation in Popular Movies and Film Noir* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 99.

¹⁶ Christina S. Jarvis, *The Male Body at War: American Masculinity During World War II* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2004), 89.

¹⁷ Ueno Toshiya, "The Other and the Machine." in *The Japanese American Film Wars: World War II Propaganda and Its Cultural Contexts*, eds., Abe Mark Nornes and Fukushima Yukio (Switzerland: Harwood Academic, 1994), 82.

¹⁸ Morris Low, "The Emperor's Sons Go To War." 90.

indicative of how the body of the other was not only demonized, but often eroticised. Unsurprisingly for many Japanese soldiers this beauty was perceived as a direct threat to the rhetoric of Japanese racial superiority, particularly when Japanese soldiers encountered ethnically diverse American units.¹⁹ These threats to Japanese masculinity contributed to the disfigurement of white American genitals by Japanese soldiers, either as a manner of enacting symbolic masculine superiority over white manhood or merely as an affront to the masculinity of the enemy.²⁰ Similar body mutilations committed by American soldiers reveal how the male body itself became a sight of vicious contestation of competing hegemonic masculinities.²¹

If many American men faced unparalleled crises at the conclusion of the Pacific War, they could at least return home as heroes with a narrative of the “good war” awaiting them. Such was not the case for many Japanese men, whose masculine identities had undergone seismic shifts since the late 19th century only to be utterly renegotiated during the long postwar. For Japanese men no single figure has embodied the epitome of the male warrior quite like that of the samurai and his ethical code of *bushido*. However, the samurai class had lost their elite status in 1871 after having already become nigh on obsolete during the reunification of Japan in the Tokugawa period. While remembered as honourable warriors, the samurai were of the ruling aristocracy and had very little in common with the mass conscripts of the Emperor’s new army. Thus, the Meiji government had no interest in creating “new men” in the mould of the old samurai; their goal ‘was to mould loyal subjects and obedient soldiers.’²² The new militant government of the Shōwa Period, which was at least one generation removed from former samurai, also had little interest in maintaining the integrity of the *bushido* code of honour, trained as the Shōwa policy makers were by modern European military tacticians. They demanded blind allegiance to the Emperor while retaining only a ‘mere husk’ of what *bushido* had once meant to the samurai warrior.²³ Armed with the lie of death with honour and a corrupted code of ethics, hundreds of thousands of Japanese men participated in war crimes and sacrificed their lives for an Emperor who had come to embody the essence of a new Japan. While the war dead continued to be remembered in war shrines, those who returned from the war represented remnants of a warrior masculinity that had gone horribly awry. The militant masculinity that had so perverted the ethics of *bushido* became an

¹⁹ Morris Low, “The Emperor’s Sons Go To War.” 91.

²⁰ Christina S. Jarvis, *The Male Body at War*. 130.

²¹ Greg Dvorak, “The Martial Islands: Making Marshallese Masculinities between American and Japanese Militarism.” *The Contemporary Pacific* 20, no. 1 (2008): p. 61.

²² Theodore F. Cook, Jr., “Making “Soldiers”: The Imperial Army and the Japanese Man in Meiji Society and State.” in *Gendering Modern Japanese History*, eds., Barbara Molony and Kathleen Uno (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005), 285.

²³ Yuki Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II* (Boulder Colorado: Westview Press, 1996), 206.

aberration, a cancer to be removed. Many returning soldiers found that Japanese society had little room for maimed and infirm veterans, who became an ugly reminder of an ugly past. While some resorted to begging, many more committed suicide, not out of fealty but despair.²⁴

Judith Keagan Gardiner argues that ‘masculinity is a nostalgic formation, always missing, lost, or about to be lost, its ideal form located in a past that advances with each generation in order to recede just beyond its grasp.’²⁵ Congruent with this conception of masculinity as something lost are the cowboy and samurai of cinema, who both represent masculine ideals located in an irretrievable past that exists only in myth. That the cowboy and samurai enjoyed unparalleled popularity in the postwar period can be attributed to the transition from wartime to peacetime societies and the sentiment that somewhere amidst this transition the essence of masculinity that had been lost could be rediscovered or reignited by these golden age heroes. In the wake of tremendous social changes brought about by the calamitous events of World War II the dislocation of postwar men from their prewar masculinities became a pressing concern. Masculinity in this period was indeed nostalgic, defined in relation to a golden age when masculinity was unproblematic, but locating that golden age in order to serve the present proved troublesome – a task that contributed to the troubled characters of the samurai and cowboy after World War II.

Prior to the outbreak of war in the Pacific the worlds of the samurai and cowboy were separated by a vast ocean, in which Japan remained an exotic location of the Orient, in the eyes of those in the West, and the United States was a distant land of opportunity with closed borders to those of the East. But the war that would bring Japan and the United States together under the most atrocious circumstances was also a war that would result in a postwar partnership in which the samurai and cowboy masculinities would converge, in part because of the huge success of Akira Kurosawa and his ability to marry western cinematic influences with narratives steeped in Japanese traditions. The international success of Akira Kurosawa’s *Rashomon* did not immediately translate into popular appreciation of the samurai, or Japanese cinema at large, in the United States. In *Rashomon* the samurai figure was condemned rather than celebrated, and the film avoided epic set-pieces, offering instead an allegorical critique of Japan’s postwar society that favoured art-house consumption rather than mass appeal. Only after the success of Akira Kurosawa’s *Shichinin no Samurai* in 1954 would the samurai epic enjoy widespread fanfare in the United States, after the film was edited and released as *The*

²⁴ John Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 59.

²⁵ Judith Kegan Gardiner, “Introduction.” in *Masculinity Studies and Feminist Theory: New Directions*, ed. Judith Kegan Gardiner, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 10.

Seven Samurai in 1956 (cut from 207 to 160 minutes).²⁶ Satisfying western appetites for stalwart heroes and gallant warriors, the film offered comparable action to sword-and-sandal epics, while resonating with the masculine values of the cowboy western. In 1960 the film was remade into a western called *The Magnificent Seven*. It was a turning point in the relationship between the samurai and cowboy, an implicit acknowledgment that the heroes of the East and the West shared common ground. *The Magnificent Seven* was not as critically acclaimed as Kurosawa's original, but the translation from feudal Japan to western shanty towns was successful enough to merit a similar translation of *Rashomon*, which was remade as *The Outrage* in 1964. Released fourteen years after *Rashomon*, many of the themes present in the original film fail to resonate with 1960s America, but one theme does: the necessity to remake the masculine constructions of a previous generation.

Masculinity, War Memory, Rape and *Rashomon*

Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon* may be set in the tumult of the Heian period (794-1185) but the film would have resonated with fresh memories of the destruction incurred during wartime Japan. The Rashomon gate, the main gate into the capital city of Kyoto, lies in disrepair, a bleak silhouette buffeted by torrential rain. Post-atomic parallels can be deciphered from the rain in the opening scene. In his autobiography, Kurosawa describes the process of creating rainfall with black ink in it so that it would appear on the film.²⁷ Kurosawa had created black rain, or kuroi ame, the colloquial phrase used to describe the radioactive fallout from Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And the Rashomon gate in disrepair strikes a similar image to that of torii gates depicted in films documenting the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The suggestion that the ancient capital lies in ruins offers a comparable reality to the firebombed capital of modern Tokyo.²⁸ While Kurosawa may not have been aware of the parallels between his Heian era dystopia and the memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, many artists, such as Toshi Maruki, explicitly linked the two periods. Drawing on the descriptions of hell written by the 10th-century monk Genshin, visual metaphors connected his hell 'as a fiery

²⁶ "Seven Samurai: Shichinin no Samurai." *IMDB*. Accessed November 2, 2015.

http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0047478/?ref_=nv_sr_

²⁷ Akira Kurosawa, *Something like an Autobiography* (New York: Knopf, 1982), 185.

²⁸ Released in 1947 for the U.S. Department of the Air Force, the short film *General Effects of the Atomic Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki* focuses on the impact the bombs had on buildings and other structures, and its final image is that of a single torii gate standing against a backdrop of destruction.

inferno peopled with monsters and naked, tormented bodies' with the witness accounts of the two atomic blasts.²⁹

Rashomon is a film framed by the subjective nature of memory, the fabrication of reality and the possibility that multiple versions of an event can coexist; what is lost is any hope of reaching an empirical truth. All that the audience knows for sure is that three people are dead: a samurai, his wife, and a bandit. Out of these multiple narratives Kurosawa offers the final image of an abandoned baby being discovered and saved by a woodcutter, a priest and a commoner, signalling the possible rebirth of the country. The audience are offered the woodcutter's account of discovering first, a noble lady's hat and subsequently the body of her slain samurai husband. Leading us through the forest in his narration, and thus leading us to his version of the truth, a tracking shot follows the woodcutter. The camera is repeatedly blocked by overhanging leaves and branches so that the clarity of the woodcutter's journey to the discovery of the body is hindered. Obstructions to the camera are amplified by disorientating shots of the sun's light strobing through breaks in the forest's canopy. In Kurosawa's words, this scene 'leads the viewer through the light and shadow of the forest into a world where the human heart loses its way.'³⁰ Upon the discovery of the body the woodcutter makes a hasty retreat, the forest a blur as the camera tracks his frantic movement. An identical shot is used to show the bandit running through the forest after ensnaring the samurai (his victim) and so the two characters converge, if only for a moment, to become equal parts witness to, and participant of, the atrocity that frames the film. A similar scenario would face Japan in the postwar period as it convulsed between its position as both victim and aggressor during the war. Like the commoner's interrogation of the woodcutter in the film, many felt that responsible parties in Japan were shirking from acknowledging their complicity in the war effort and thus, like the survivors of *Rashomon*, an uncertain future awaited the people of Japan if it could not reconcile its paradoxical identity.³¹

Like the confusion caused by the multiple contradictory narratives, masculine identities are contested and confused throughout *Rashomon*, a situation that resembles the uncertainties facing Japanese men at war's end. With its multiple perspectives of the rape of the samurai's wife, the film nevertheless represents samurai masculinity as weak, corrupted and emasculated irrespective of the point of view given. It becomes evident that in the postwar context Kurosawa uses the figure of the samurai to criticise the numerous perversions of Japan's wartime masculinity, including Japan's militant ruling class. Just as historical records give

²⁹ John Dower, *Japan in War and Peace: Selected Essays* (New York: New Press, 1993), 244.

³⁰ Akira Kurosawa, *Something like an Autobiography*, 185.

³¹ James Joseph Orr, *The Victim as Hero: Ideologies of Peace and National Identity in Postwar Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 2.

voice to the dead, a spiritual medium presents the deceased samurai's account. He claims that his death was self-inflicted after having his wife disgraced before his eyes. Death before dishonour, a mantra perverted by the militarism of the fifteen-year war, justifies his sacrifice, but even this is exposed as a fraudulent attempt to preserve the dignity of his warrior spirit after death. The priest cannot believe that the dead can lie. But the samurai's posthumous attempt to salvage dignity from his death becomes an echo of narratives in postwar Japan in which the integrity of fallen soldiers could be maintained through the myth of a meaningful death, *gyokusai*.³² Though truth may be lost in the shadows of the forest, the death of the samurai is absolute, and Kurosawa makes it clear that Japan's samurai virtues are dead.

Contested as the masculine body may be, there remains the irrefutable crime as a commentary on Japanese masculinity and sexuality in postwar Japan. A woman was raped, her husband killed, and the killer was captured. For Japanese men in postwar Japan the rape of a beautiful Japanese woman by a bandit (potentially a foreigner) would have struck close to the bone as reports of sexual assaults committed by occupation forces surfaced. But the rape of Japanese women by GIs only represented the unsanctioned, and unlawful, means through which American occupiers could possess the female body. Japanese women who resorted to prostitution were regarded by U.S. occupiers, and Japanese welfare institutions, as 'fallen women,' whose existence reflected a spiritual and moral collapse.³³ That many women became prostitutes after the humiliation of being raped by American GIs did not figure into a discourse of social wellbeing in which women were passive.³⁴ Fears that 'fallen women' were a corruptive force in a weakened society aligned with the fears of the SCAP (Supreme Command of the Allied Forces) that they were also spreading venereal diseases to occupation forces, and so they effectively became possessions of the state in order to protect national integrity.³⁵ Linked to a discourse of national bodies in which divergent beliefs became pathogenic, the spread of venereal disease in postwar Japan was equated with the spread of communism, and so the routine and often forced examination of Japanese women coalesced with the broader rhetoric of democratization.³⁶ While Japanese men protested the forced female examinations as an affront to their masculine power, Japanese women condemned Japanese men for their inability to protect them.³⁷ In the events of *Rashomon* the samurai is criticised by his wife, who scorns his inability to protect her. She tells him that he is not a real

³² Benedict Giomo, "The Myth of the Vanquished: The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum." *American Quarterly* 55, no. 4 (2003): 704.

³³ Mire Koikari, *Pedagogy of Democracy: Feminism and the Cold War in the U.S. Occupation of Japan* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), 162.

³⁴ Mire Koikari, *Pedagogy of Democracy*, p. 181.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 180.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 160.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 161.

man, asking, 'if you are my husband, why don't you kill this man [the bandit]? Then you can tell me to kill myself. That's a real man.' Her criticism is a heated response to her husband's apparent disdain for her violated body and her apparent moral collapse, representing as it does his loss of possession and the dominance of the impure bandit. But if he is to have any right to her body and what she ought to do with it, he must reassert his power by killing the bandit Tajomaru, and so the rape becomes ensconced in a broader discourse of power, race and competing masculinities.

Wartime propaganda had established the battle between the U.S. and Japan as a power struggle of hegemonic masculinities, competing for sexual and ethnic primacy often evoked through the emasculation of the enemy or the domination of the enemy's women. The mutilation of the enemies' genitals, mentioned earlier, was a physical means of emasculating the enemy and asserting the supremacy of the masculine self. To rape the women of the enemy, in the context of the propaganda war, was another means of 're-enacting the drama of conquest [...] the intent of this act was to continually remind the dominated men of their loss of power; rape was a gesture of symbolic castration.'³⁸ The failure of Japanese men to protect Japanese women from the U.S. occupiers, the ethnic Other, represented the failure of Japanese manhood and, by extension, the demise of Japan's ethnic superiority. Paul Hoch argues that in conceptions of hegemonic masculinity, framed around ideas of ethnic superiority, 'defence of manhood demanded, above all, the defence of the white goddesses of civilisation against the dark, sex-crazed barbarians at the gates.'³⁹ In *Rashomon*, the bandit Tajomaru represents the sex-crazed barbarian, and the samurai's wife, who would have painted her face white, as was the custom in the Heian period, becomes the virtuous white goddess.

If the rape of the samurai's wife suggests the failure of Japanese men to protect their women from outside forces, the accusation that she reluctantly consented to the act hints at larger social changes occurring in postwar Japan. No longer tied to the sexual restraint of her former husband, the samurai's wife recognizes the liberating potential of Tajomaru's unfettered sexuality. A similar situation arose for Japanese women during the U.S. occupation. Liberation from the war and Japanese militarism also resulted in the liberation of the body.⁴⁰ John Dower explains how married women in Imperial Japan were expected to become *ryosai kenbo*, good wives and wise mothers, serving the patriarchy of the household and the state.⁴¹ With the democratization of society followed the democratization of sexuality, the reciprocity of sexual pleasure and a woman's power over her own body aided by the legalization of

³⁸ Christina S. Jarvis, *The Male Body at War*, 128.

³⁹ in Athur Brittan and Mary Maynard, *Sexism, Racism and Oppression* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), 191.

⁴⁰ A point also made in Nagisa Ôshima's sexually explicit, *In the Realm of the Senses*, 1972.

⁴¹ John Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 163.

abortions and the dissemination of birth control methods.⁴² However, like the ambiguous response of the samurai's wife, postwar Japanese bodies 'represented the optimism of liberation as well as Japan's subjugation to the power of the victor.'⁴³ Like the U.S. occupiers, Tajomaru offers liberation through force.

Although the Heian period would see the emergence of the samurai as a wealthy and powerful elite contributing to the division of Japan into conflicting Shogunates, Kurosawa's *Rashomon* constructs the samurai class as impotent and powerless by the film's end. Unconvinced by the belligerent celebration of the samurai's martial spirit that allowed it to be perverted during wartime Japan, Kurosawa's samurai figure becomes archaic and irrelevant, for the future resides in the common man represented by the survivors of the film and the abandoned child that they discover. A similar theme would emerge four years after the release of *Rashomon* and just two years after the end of the U.S. occupation in Akira Kurosawa's *Shichinin no Samurai*.

“Just when everything seems tranquil...” – Kanbei, *Shichinin no Samurai*

The end of the U.S. occupation of Japan in 1952 did not result in the denouement of contentious relations between the two countries, nor did Japan's freedom allay national anxieties regarding the future role of the nation in global affairs. Rather than usher in a period of peace and stability after seven years of occupation, the 1950s would embroil Japan in Cold War disputes and elevate tensions with Korea, China, as well as the Soviet Union, with which Japan was still technically at war.⁴⁴ The relationship between the U.S. and Japan also demanded renegotiation, as the prevailing Cold War hegemon fashioned Japan into its Pacific bastion against communist forces, a stance which would drive many pacifists and leftists to denounce America and its imperial intentions. On the domestic front the democratization of Japan often resulted in policies which conflicted with left-wing aspirations and communist parties that had been oppressed during Japan's militarism. With the continuation of oppressive policies towards the rights of workers and women, Japan's communist parties equated American democracy with Japanese militancy and the proliferation of a red scare mentality did

⁴² Andrew Gordon, "Managing the Japanese Household: The New Life Movement in Postwar Japan." in *Gendering Modern Japanese History*, eds., Barbara Molony and Kathleen Uno (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005), 429.

⁴³ Yoshikuni Igarashi, *Bodies of Memory: Narratives of War in Postwar Japanese Culture, 1945-1970* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 71.

⁴⁴ Because of a dispute over the Kuril Islands the Soviet Union did not sign a peace treaty with Japan at the end of World War II.

little to quell their resentment of the U.S.⁴⁵ These disputes marked the blurry distinction between pre- and postwar Japan as the radical shift in a national mentality failed to materialize. The dismay over the squandered opportunities to redefine Japan was justified when the outbreak of civil war in Korea led the U.S. to encourage the rearmament of Japan and promotion of rightist nationalism.⁴⁶ Problematic links to Japan's militant past were further entrenched when pardoned war criminal Nobusuke Kishi became Prime Minister in 1957. *Shichinin no Samurai* is a film structured by the passage of time and the change of the seasons, but for many in Japan, and for Kurosawa himself, such a transition did not occur for Japan in the 1950s.

A shift in political and social attitudes towards socialism may not have occurred with the occupation's end, but cultural liberation followed the end of the SCAP and its enforcement of film censorship. After seven years of silence the jidaigeki genre was no longer banned and a deluge of period films followed, including previously unreleased films such as Akira Kurosawa's debut feature *Tora no o wo Fumu Otokotachi* (The Men who Tread on the Tiger's Tail). Prohibited because of fears that they would promulgate anti-democratic sentiments, the jidaigeki released during this time were no less critical of Japan's feudal past. Kenji Mizoguchi's *Ugetsu Monogatari* (1953), set in the late 16th century, is particularly damning of the samurai and the aspirations of men who wish to become warriors, while *Sansho Dayu* (1954) criticises the cruel and ineffectual bureaucratic rulers of the Heian period. Winner of the 1953 Academy Award for Best Foreign Film, Teinosuke Kinugasa's *Jigukumon* (released in the U.S. as *Gate of Hell*) was celebrated as the first jidaigeki to be produced in colour, and while its vibrant palette beautifies the Heian period in which it is set, 'a shorthand stylization of things Japanese for Western consumption,' it remains no less damning of a samurai warrior obsessed with a married woman and his sense of entitlement derived from victory in battle.⁴⁷ It is within this artistic ferment of masterful, yet subversive, jidaigeki that Akira Kurosawa sought to revolutionize the genre.

While the end of the occupation offered an opportunity for Japanese men to reassert and redefine their masculinity, the persistent neo-colonial attitude of the U.S. towards Japan and the looming presence of America's atomic superiority complicated such efforts. Though the erotically charged figure of the American GI had largely retreated from view as servicemen returned home, the presence of the West remained. Jonathan D. Mackintosh argues that American power was 'projected in embodied ways to emphasize the hyper-physical, and

⁴⁵ Andrew Gordon, "Managing the Japanese Household," 441.

⁴⁶ William Stueck, *The Korean War in World History* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 147.

⁴⁷ Darrell William Davis, *Picturing Japaneseness: Monumental Style, National Identity, Japanese Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 220.

by extension, the powerfully virile.’⁴⁸ It was a position reflected in the security treaties signed between the two countries. On September 8, 1951 Japan and forty-eight other nations signed the Mutual Security treaty in San Francisco, which brought an end to the U.S. occupation. The treaty included a number of security provisions allowing U.S. forces to carry out military operations in Japan as well as the right to intervene in Japanese disputes. It also allowed the U.S. to store nuclear weapons on Japanese soil.⁴⁹ One month prior to the release of *Shichinin no Samurai* in April 1954, fallout from a thermonuclear test conducted by U.S. forces on Bikini Atoll contaminated the crew of the Daigo Fukuryu Maru, a Japanese fishing boat. The incident occurred only days before the signing of the Mutual Defence Assistance Agreement in March and it became emblematic of fallout seeping through America’s nuclear umbrella.

As was the case in *Rashomon*, despite the historical setting of *Shichinin no Samurai*, Akira Kurosawa criticises the destructive nature of modern weapons technology and the loss it inflicted on honourable warrior values. Jidaigeki had predominately been set during the Heian or Tokugawa periods; however, *Shichinin no Samurai* is set during the civil wars of the Sengoku (Warring) period, which coincides with the arrival of the gun, brought to Japan by the Portuguese in 1543.⁵⁰ The use of guns is reserved for the bandits, a distinguishing feature that defines them as ignoble and cowardly. All four of the seven samurai who die in the film are killed by the gun, a death that renders their elite skills redundant. Even Kyuzo, a master swordsman of incomparable skill, is killed by an unseen gunman, his sudden and unglamorous collapse marking the end of an age in which virtuous training merited martial superiority. The gun, in this sense, also symbolises the end of the samurai. The demise of the samurai as a class was still far from certain in the 16th century, but with the arrival of the gun their way of life was no longer assured. Joan Mellen argues that for Kurosawa, ‘without samurai little is left of what it means to be Japanese.’⁵¹ While he does not necessarily condone the remilitarisation of Japan through his celebration of the samurai warrior, Akira Kurosawa certainly suggests that their demise coincided with a spiritual loss brought about by western military technologies. Kurosawa’s visual protest ‘against the coming world ruled by technology’ occurs in the climactic moments of the film’s final battle, in which the bandit chief is killed by a sword, gun still in hand, the weapon finally outmatched by the noble samurai spirit, but at great cost.⁵²

As ambiguous as Japan’s relationship with the U.S. might have been at the end of the occupation, there is little doubt that the arrival of western democracy signified a welcome

⁴⁸ Jonathan D. Mackintosh, *Homosexuality and Manliness in Postwar Japan* (London: Routledge, 2010), 105.

⁴⁹ William Stueck, *The Korean War in World History*, 166.

⁵⁰ Eisuke Sakakibara, *Structural Reform in Japan: Breaking the Iron Triangle* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), 88.

⁵¹ Joan Mellen, *Seven Samurai* (London: BFI, 2002), 20.

⁵² Joan Mellen, *Seven Samurai*, 57.

release from years of sexual oppression forced on the Japanese body, male and female, by an authoritarian regime. Even physical acts such as kissing were reintroduced and normalised after having been muted in wartime.⁵³ Literature exploring sexuality and the Japanese body flourished during this period, including pulp magazines that extended their reach ‘to a variety of non-conventional or perverse sexualities, such as homosexuality and sadomasochism.’⁵⁴ The discussion of homosexuality that emerged in the postwar period brought attention to the idea that the male gaze was not necessarily fixed on women. Although homosexuality was not condoned at this time, the male gaze of homosexuals was not critiqued because of the gender, but rather the nationality of the body being gazed at. Within the discussion of sexualized bodies emerged a patriotic fixation on the physicality of the Japanese body, so that homosexuals who favoured American men were regarded as being beset by an inferiority complex.⁵⁵ Kurosawa, for his part, focuses the gaze of the camera on the bodies of Japanese men.

If the democratized body unleashed previously suppressed sexual desires, then Toshiro Mifune’s commoner-cum-samurai serves as a fitting symbol of the unleashed physical potential available to Japanese men. Toshiro Mifune plays a character without a past or a name, although he steals the identity of Kikuchiyo, a thirteen-year-old samurai. He is thus a clean slate embodying the fluid identity construction made possible during a period of social upheaval (both in the setting of the film and contemporary Japan). It is fitting, therefore, that Mifune’s character is the centre of the male gaze in Kurosawa’s film, a stance made explicit in an early scene involving male exhibitionism. Perched atop a waterfall, six samurai look down on Kikuchiyo. He knows that they are watching as he undresses to his undergarments. The intention of the gaze in this instance is not to suggest erotic attraction, but rather to normalise and celebrate the beauty of the Japanese male body, to make it worthy of inspection and idolization – he is being watched by master swordsmen, after all. But Kikuchiyo’s body is that of a farmer’s son, not a warrior, and it is this body that will define the strength of postwar Japan’s social mobility.

Kikuchiyo also represents the potential of the sexed Japanese male body. When the seven samurai enter the village that they have been entrusted to protect, Kikuchiyo is the only character to lasciviously gaze upon the female workers. The elder samurai remain focused on the defence of the peasants. At a time when the body of Japanese males became a sight of

⁵³ Mark McLelland, “Kissing is a Symbol of Democracy! Dating, Democracy, and Romance in Occupied Japan, 1945-1952.” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 19, no. 3 (2010): 525.

⁵⁴ Katsuhiko Suganuma, *Contact Moments: The Politics of Intercultural Desire in Japanese Male-queer Cultures* (Hong Kong, China: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), 42.

⁵⁵ Katsuhiko Suganuma, 62.

anxiety and envy, particularly when contrasted with the physicality of the West and the supposed magnitude of the American penis, Toshiro Mifune stands as a powerful embodiment of postwar Japanese masculinity.⁵⁶ Perhaps it is no mistake that his sword is considerably longer than those of the six other samurai. This makes Kikichuyo's death by a gunshot all the more tragic, for even at its prime the Japanese body is at the mercy of superior, foreign military technologies.

If Toshiro Mifune's Kikuchiyo exists as the object of the samurai's (and the audience's) gaze and the embodiment of sexual potential, it is the young Katsushiro who takes on the role of the naïve voyeur. Introduced as the youngest and most inexperienced of the samurai, Katsushiro is consistently referred to as the child, an ungendered member of the group desexed by his youth. His role amongst the six samurai is as much about defining the nature of his desires as it is proving the worthiness of his warrior spirit. Fluctuating between feminine and masculine impulses, Katsushiro is depicted picking flowers, coming across a peasant doing the same. While the peasant, Shino, is disguised as a boy, Katsushiro has no disguise. Caught picking flowers, his masculinity is temporarily questioned, just as Shino's is soon to be. With her hair cut short to disguise her femininity it is not until Katsushiro accidentally touches her breast that he discovers her true sex, but his desire for her body arguably originated before this moment, when she was gendered male. He may become a man before the film's final battle, consummating his desire for Shino the night before, but his possession of her body is short-lived. As she returns to the planting of crops, her body is denied to him when it becomes normalised as feminine. Katsushiro's sexuality is secured at the film's end, but it is not welcome in the peasant village.

One particular scene draws attention to Katsushiro's conflicted desires as he gushes over the exploits of Kyuzo, a stoic, master swordsman. Preparing for an ambush, Katsushiro keeps his distance, watching with intensity as Kyuzo calmly observes the petals of a flower. For a fleeting moment Katsushiro sees in Kyuzo the delicate temperament that he had himself displayed when picking flowers earlier. It is short-lived in Kyuzo, however, as the arrival of three bandits reveals his true identity as a lethal warrior. The gaze of Katsushiro is repeated later, after Kyuzo returns from a solo foray into enemy territory. Kurosawa's camera positions the young samurai standing over Kyuzo, his look filled with admiration, which becomes erotically charged by an intense close-up of Katsushiro's face. His gaze remains unbroken; he does not blink once during the encounter. It is an example of the young child admiring the strength of the masculine body, a relationship that echoes a similar occurrence in the westerns

⁵⁶ Katsuhiko Suganuma, p. 57.

of the U.S. in which a child admires the fully formed masculinity of the gunslinger. John M. Clum's reading of the western *Shane* suggests how a potentially erotic, same-sex relationship is disarmed by the age difference.⁵⁷ Confused gender identities and the pressure to pass from childhood to manhood in *Shichinin no Samurai* echo Japan's postwar and post-occupation position as a nation feminized by the presence of the U.S., while it simultaneously adopted a masculine stance through rearmament and economic growth.

Unlike *Rashomon*, which focused on the conflict of competing masculinities, *Shichinin no Samurai* creates a sense of harmony between the seven samurai and the peasants. The samurai represent various forms of masculinity working in conjunction, strengthened by a sense of companionship, however transitory, with the peasants they are protecting. Through the unity of the democratized Japanese body the samurai are able to overcome adversity even when they are outnumbered and outgunned, and while the surviving samurai may acknowledge that their time is passing, the democratized body prevails, represented by the peasants harvesting their crops at the film's end. Competing with the hegemonic masculinity of the U.S. becomes a moot point. Emerging after the occupation as a nation able to once again recall a history of strong masculine archetypes, Japan could hope to reassert a national identity forged from a past of heroes who had been perverted in wartime and silenced during the occupation – not the samurai, but the working-class civilian. *Shichinin no Samurai* proved to be a huge success for both Akira Kurosawa and the Japanese film industry and although he had been criticised for being too westernised, from this point on the cowboy would find himself defining his worth in response to the samurai. Like his samurai counterparts, the cowboy would also acknowledge that his time was passing and it would be the working-class breadwinners of peacetime that would take his place.

The Magnificent Seven and America's Cold Frontiers

The American remake of *Shichinin no Samurai* was released in 1960 as *The Magnificent Seven*, six years after Kurosawa's original film. By this time the western genre had shifted from the confidence evident in films such as John Ford's *Stagecoach* (1939) and Howard Hawks' *Red River* (1948) towards elegiac tales in which the sun no longer stood at high noon for the cowboy, but foreshadowed his demise as it set on horizons west. If the westerns of the late 1940s and 1950s had prophesised the triumph of free markets and the

⁵⁷ John M. Clum "He's All Man": *Learning Masculinity, Gayness, and Love From American Movies* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 61.

legitimacy of America's manifest destiny, by 1960 such triumphalism was troubled by domestic unrest and fears that an unmanageable American empire was set on an atomic collision course with the Soviet Union and China.⁵⁸ Even Japan, America's strongest ally in the Pacific, became an economic liability as trade concessions harnessed the potential to undermine U.S. industries.⁵⁹ But if trade disputes represented the continuation of postwar tensions with Japan, then the enthusiasm following the release of *Shichinin no Samurai* in the U.S. in 1956 suggested a closing cultural gap, even if the samurai remained a feature of an exotic orient. Solidifying this cultural exchange was the realisation that in Kurosawa's tale of feudal warriors aiding a village of helpless peasants existed the underpinnings of a great western, a thought that occurred to producer Lou Morheim when he bought the rights to *Shichinin no Samurai* for \$250. Remaking samurai into cowboys was not a seamless process, but to create a western – a genre considered to be 'a sacred part of America's post-Civil War national mythology' – based on a Japanese film signifies the germination of a cross-cultural, myth-making apparatus that would see the cowboy and samurai become an integral part of the bilateral exchange between the U.S. and Japan.⁶⁰

The translation from feudal Japan to the American south in *The Magnificent Seven* illuminates the different histories of the two nations, but it is the shared contemporary realities that make the translation possible. Joan Mellen sees in *The Magnificent Seven* an embarrassment, a film which highlights the incompatibility of the cowboy and samurai archetypes.⁶¹ The rōnin in *Shichinin no Samurai* are members of an elite class which they were born into; their poverty in the film was not of their own making but the result of ill fortunes and a nation in turmoil. The gunslingers in *The Magnificent Seven* by comparison are 'a rabble,' a mixed consortium of drifters who have found their penchant for gunplay obsolete in a civilised age.⁶² However, Joan Mellen's criticism is too literal, focusing as it does on the inevitable differences between two idiosyncratic warrior cultures that existed centuries apart. In *The Magnificent Seven's* translation of Kurosawa's film is an acknowledgment that, like the masculine heroes of Japan's past, the self-determining masculinity of the west had somehow been lost in the modern age. Akira Kurosawa employs the image of the passing storm, as he did in *Rashomon*, to mark the transition from one society into another, one which will not have

⁵⁸ Stanley Corkin, "Cowboys and Free Markets: Post-World War II Westerns and U.S. Hegemony." *Cinema Journal* 39, no. 3 (2000): 71.

⁵⁹ Michael A. Barnhart, "From Hershey Bars to Motor Cars: America's Economic Policy Towards Japan, 1945-76." in *Partnership: The United States and Japan, 1951-2001*, eds., Akira Iriye and Robert A Wampler (New York: Kodansha International, 2001), 205.

⁶⁰ J. Hoberman, "How the Western was Lost." In *The Western Reader*, eds., Jim Kitses and Gregg Rickman (New York: Limelight Editions, 1999), 86.

⁶¹ Joan Mellen, *Seven Samurai*, p. 69.

⁶² *Ibid.*

room for his samurai. *The Magnificent Seven* is not quite so subtle. Vin (Steve McQueen) and Chris (Yul Brynner) mount a hearse in the film's opening sequence instead of a stagecoach, which had once symbolised the conquest of the west epitomised by John Ford's *Stagecoach* (dir. John Ford, 1939). The stagecoach in *The Magnificent Seven* is reserved for two salesmen, for it is they who will inherit the future of the civilised nation. It is a sequence that calls to mind Frederick Jackson Turner's thesis, 'The Significance of the Frontier in American History,' a frontier which will need to be reimagined in the 1960s.⁶³ Common to both films is a desire to rekindle the meaning of warrior masculinity so that it might apply to civilian populations. It was a call to courage that would be voiced by a youthful Senator named John F. Kennedy in his 1957 memoir, *Profiles of Courage*.⁶⁴

That the gunslingers in *The Magnificent Seven* cross the border to help Mexican farmers suggests an alignment of the film with a proactive Cold War foreign policy of intervention, but such interpretations often neglect to account for the logistical considerations behind this choice, many of which are outlined in a documentary celebrating the MGM re-release of the film.⁶⁵ Having already had a complicated pre-production period in which numerous producers, writers, and directors were involved with the film (Martin Ritt, who would later direct *The Outrage*, was the first choice) a looming Writers Guild Strike in 1960 further threatened production, which hastened the casting process so as to avoid being stalled in Hollywood. Filming in Mexico not only avoided the strike, but it also provided cheap extras and accessible set locations. However, one of the conditions of filming in Mexico was the presence of a Mexican censor to remove any lines of dialogue that degraded the Mexican people or Mexico's history. For this reason, rather than have the farmers seek the assistance of men to fight for them (as was the case in *Shichinin no Samurai*), they first attempt to buy weapons so that they may fight for themselves. While the film potentially 'provides a liberal interventionist model based on the view that U.S. hegemony can actively work to lift up people in underdeveloped nations,' as Stanley Corkin argues, it does so within the context of Hollywood economics working in cooperation with Mexican censors.⁶⁶

The real worth of a man in *The Magnificent Seven* is equated with the control he has over his gun, the phallic symbol of power that grants male virility and agency. In an early scene in which Chris helps the farmers find worthy men, he tells them that 'every man wears a gun the same as they wear pants.' He is effectively telling them that every man has a penis, but

⁶³ Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*. Marlborough England: Adam Matthew Digital, 2007.

⁶⁴ John Michael, "Profiles in Courage, JFK's Book for Boys." *American Literary History* 24, no. 3 (2012): 425.

⁶⁵ Brynner, Yul. *The Magnificent Seven*. DVD. Directed by Sturges, John. New York: MGM Home Video, 2001.

⁶⁶ Stanley Corkin, *Cowboys as Cold Warriors*, 179.

this does not necessarily make them a man, a differentiation between the sexed male and gendered male. In the context of the film Chris is drawing attention to the idea that it is the actions that make the man, just as JFK called for the hardiness of war-tested manly virtue in his 1957 memoir.⁶⁷ Joan Mellen argues that in the gunfighter's defence of the farming village nothing is won and had they never arrived the world of the farmers would have been no different.⁶⁸ For men needing to prove their worth the end result is hardly the point. A similar small battle was waged in Delmer Daves' 1957 western *3:10 to Yuma* as much to pass the masculine values of civic duty from father to son as for any grander sense of accomplishment. In 1959 Norman Mailer wrote that 'masculinity is not something one is born with, but something one gains. And one gains it by winning small battles with honor.'⁶⁹ Defending the small Mexican village is just that, a small battle won with honour.

This distinction between the sexed and gendered male is further addressed in the character of Chico, a youthful gunslinger who conflates the characters of Katsushiro and Kikuchiyo from *Shichinen no Samurai*. His masculinity is not assured and an early test proves that he is not yet worthy to be counted among the six other men. Engaged in a clapping game to display the speed of his draw, Chico is exposed to Chris' agility with his pistol, clasping it in his hands as though witnessing for the first time the true potential of the male extension. Chico's draw proves too slow and, like a discarded lover, he drunkenly admonishes Chris in a bar, firing wild but unthreatening shots as though shooting blanks, suggestively losing hold of his gun after he does so. In the midst of real men Chico's phallic masculinity slips from his grasp. That Katsushiro and Kikuchiyo might prove to be impotent, symbolically or otherwise, is never suggested in *Shichinin no Samurai*. In the West every man has a gun but he has to prove that he can use it. In the East, only the samurai can carry a sword; they must prove that they are worthy to do so.

If Chico represents an unsexed male, it is possible that this abjection also makes him the figure of homosocial desire loaded with the potential to upset the heterosexual normativity of the six other gunslingers. Released after the paranoiac years of McCarthyism, the idea remained that homosexuality undermined American masculine strength and "deviant" sexualities were positioned alongside communism as a threat to the nation's integrity.⁷⁰ Like communism, deviant sexualities were also feared for being contagious. Following the six men as they ride to the Mexican village, Harry comments that the distant presence of Chico is 'like

⁶⁷ John Michael, "Profiles in Courage: JFK's Book for Boys," 425.

⁶⁸ Joan Mellen, *Seven Samurai*, 70.

⁶⁹ In Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: a Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 256.

⁷⁰ John Bodnar, *The "Good War" in American Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 133.

an itch I can't scratch,' an early sign of the disruptive effect Chico has on his physical body, aligning homoerotic desire with a pathogen. When they enter the village the six men discover a disconcerting lack of women and Vin comments to Harry, 'if we're not careful we could have quite a little social life here.' Inactive and without the presence of women to disarm their homosocial bond of its sexual charge, the men need to assert their hetero-masculinity through acts of violence. Homosexuality was perceived as a "soft" masculinity, and even Kennedy was accusing Americans of going "soft" on China when it fell to communism in 1949.⁷¹ Chico's "soft" masculinity must therefore be remedied so as to prove his heteronormativity among the group. A single act of macho bravado reasserts his masculinity when he disguises himself as a bandit and sneaks into their camp. Katsushiro had sex with a woman to become a man; Chico becomes a man through bravery alone. In *Shichinin no Samurai* the comparable act of bravado by Kikuchiyo is scorned as being selfish and reckless; in *The Magnificent Seven* it is the kind of bravery that real men are made of. To ensure that heteronormativity prevails at the film's end Chico stays behind with the farmers to settle down with Petra, another way in which the film differs from Kurosawa's original. His presence with Chris and Vin has the potential to undermine the heterosexual masculinity they have worked so hard to vindicate and, had he left with them, the threat of homosexual desire spreading would have remained. Because Chris and Vin have proven their masculine bravado throughout the film, their heterosexuality is not in question despite the lack of women in their lives. They have proven their hegemonic masculinity through mastery of the gun.

Harnessing the sexual power of the gun extends to the Mexican farmers, who must also prove their potency. The motivations behind setting the film in Mexico may render the meaning ambiguous, but in the relationship between the seasoned gunslingers and the farmers there is no doubt that the hegemonic masculinity rests with the cowboys. Elaborating on the sexual innuendo afforded to guns in the film, the inexperience of the farmers at shooting is equated with sexual impotence. While training the farmers how to shoot, Bernardo O'Reilly (Charles Bronson) tells a farmer to squeeze the trigger, but the farmer pulls the trigger and the shot is fired prematurely. So that there is no mistake that this equates to premature ejaculation, the farmer explains, 'it's that I get excited,' to which O'Reilly responds, 'well, don't get excited.' Unlike the farmers, O'Reilly is in full command of his manhood. While it is possible to equate the training of Mexican peasants to the CIA's early involvement in Vietnam, the sexualisation of the relationship between master and pupil is reminiscent of the occupation and rearmament of Japan. The virile U.S. had to masculinise Japan by rebuilding its economy and

⁷¹ Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States: 1492-Present* (Kondon: Peason, 2003), 432.

allowing it to rearm; the premature shots echo Japan's pubescent growth through the immediate postwar period.

Because the gun reflects the power of the masculine ideal, the holstered gun represents the ultimate failure of masculine potential. Towards the end of the film the bandit chief Calvera ambushes the seven gunmen and gives them the option to ride away with their lives. All that he asks in return is that they drop their guns. For the gunmen such a loss is not only an affront to their masculine superiority (disarmament emasculated Japan), but giving up their guns is tantamount to castration. Calvera promises to return their guns once they have left the village, but they must reassert their claim to their weapons and their phallic empowerment. The final assault to rid the village of bandits becomes less of an altruistic endeavour than a dramatic reattachment of the phallus that must shoot to prove it still functions. Even Harry, obsessed with finding gold and initially reluctant to return to the fight, arrives in a suicidal blaze of glory to display the return of his phallus before he dies. Chris, looking over Harry's body, acknowledges that the sacrifice has redeemed him from damnation, that is, emasculation.

The most dramatic case of holstered, damaged masculinity can be found in Lee, played by Robert Vaughn, one of the more complex gunfighters in the film. Lee suffers from a 19th-century variant of post-traumatic stress disorder and his role is incomparable to any character of Kurosawa's film. Overcome by fear after having fought in the Civil War, Lee is no longer able to draw his pistol and he is plagued by night terrors. Chico may have been shooting blanks and the farmers may have been firing prematurely, but Lee is not firing at all. Lee's character elevates *The Magnificent Seven* from its unwavering celebration of manly virtues; through his character, the film acknowledges that the stresses of battle can be psychologically taxing, a sentiment in keeping with the realities of veterans returning from World War II and the Korean War. Michael Kimmel notes that after World War II many soldiers admitted that they could not fire their weapons in battle and it became accepted that 'in combat, most men have anxiety.'⁷² But, like Americans at war's end who took up the fight against communism, Lee is empowered when he takes up his guns once more. After all, the epitome of masculine fortitude is to get back up on the saddle after being brought down.⁷³ It would take the crippling humiliation of Vietnam to deflate this rhetoric.

⁷² Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 225.

⁷³ Lee Clark Mitchell, *Westerns: Making the Man in Fiction and Film* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 167.

While Lee redeems his cowboy masculinity and assures the heroic fortitude of America's male archetype, *The Magnificent Seven* ends, as does *Shichinin no Samurai*, with the final message that this particular mode of warrior manhood has passed (although three sequels to *The Magnificent Seven* and a TV series in the 1990s might suggest otherwise). The future belongs to the farmers. Partially due to the presence of the Mexican censor the morality of the farmers is never questioned, unlike *Shichinin no Samurai*, which places an uncertain future in the hands of peasants who could be deceitful, murderous and cowardly. But if the future is to belong to farmers and workers, as was the reality for most men in the U.S. in the 1950s and 1960s, then the masculine virtue of such an existence also required articulation. While helping the farmers build a ditch to defend their village, both Harry and O'Reilly work with their shirts off, exposing the muscular torso of the ideal masculine form. Their sweating bodies represent the payoff of physical labour. O'Reilly defends the masculinity of the farming community in an address to a group of children admirers. 'You think I'm brave because I carry a gun,' he says, before letting them know that the true heroes are the men who have the courage to take responsibility for a wife and kids. It is exactly the rhetoric found in the peacetime society of the U.S., in which fulfilling the duties of a father became an embodiment of patriarchal masculinity.⁷⁴ This sentiment transfers to Chico's decision to stay behind in the village. In order to rearticulate his masculinity as a husband he must first hang up his guns while Chris and Vin, who have decided on a different path, are able to keep their guns in hand. Men in the U.S. could lament the demise of the cowboy, but they were also able to articulate their dominant masculinity in their own way as fathers and productive workers, hopeful that America as a nation could embody hegemonic masculine ideals of the cowboy as a strong, patriarchal global power.

Similar themes of a postwar masculinity in transition emerge from both *Shichinin no Samurai* and the U.S. remake, *The Magnificent Seven*. Both Japan and the U.S. faced the daunting task of rearticulating wartime manly virtues to suit the demands of peacetime reconstruction and a shift towards market economies that removed men from many of the physically rewarding tasks that had once fulfilled a sense of masculine integrity. Cold War containment further complicated both national identities and constructions of masculinity that suited interventionist policies. A sense of ambiguity prevails in the denouement of Akira Kurosawa's film. The optimism that had been present in the humorous interactions between the seven samurai and the peasants are dampened by the death of four able warriors and the return to a life of transient poverty for those who survive. The age of the samurai had ended, but for the time being the spirit of bushido prevailed and the samurai remained as champions

⁷⁴ Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 227.

of masculine ideals in Japan's postwar period. With the 1961 release of *Yojimbo* Akira Kurosawa would suggest that the samurai was no longer a viable archetype of masculine virtue, but rather a figure who represented anarchic violence directed at a corrupted society. In the U.S. it would take three more years before the cowboy began to lose his way.

The Outrage at the Cowboy's Demise

Blacklisted director Martin Ritt had been the first choice to direct *The Magnificent Seven*, but when Yul Brynner became involved John Sturges took the reins. In 1964 Martin Ritt was once again offered the opportunity to remake an Akira Kurosawa jidaigeki, following the success of *Hud* (1963), a modern-day western starring Paul Newman as a sexually aggressive cowboy. *The Outrage* is a loose translation of *Rashomon*, transferring the Heian setting to a post-Civil War border town, and replacing Toshiro Mifune's bandit with Paul Newman's Mexican bandito. The samurai and his wife are replaced by a Civil War veteran and his southern belle, and the woodcutter, priest and commoner become a prospector, a preacher and a conman, respectively. In her study of western translations of Kurosawa's films, D.P. Martinez asks, 'what in 1960s U.S. society required this theatrical and filmic remake?'⁷⁵ Unable to find hints of western revisionism, McCarthyism, issues of feminism, or critiques of U.S. Cold War diplomacy, Martinez concludes that the film is a remake lacking the social commentary evident in Akira Kurosawa's film. That the film exists within a contextual vacuum may explain why it has been ignored by scholars such as Jim Kitses and Richard Slotkin, whose studies have otherwise been near exhaustive in their approach to the western genre. Writing on Akira Kurosawa and his relationship with western film theory, Mitsushiro Yoshimoto also ignores the film, despite commenting on the western remakes of both *Shichinin no Samurai* and *Yojimbo*. While it may be largely ignored by critics, audiences, and academics alike, *The Outrage* nevertheless exists as a commentary on the waning popularity of the cowboy figure in the 1960s and of a dominant masculinity that no longer reflected contemporary society.

Fourteen years separate Kurosawa's *Rashomon* and Martin Ritt's American remake, during which time the crisis of masculinity had become recognized as a social issue as much as an academic one. Justin Shaw argues that the crisis of masculinity, as discussed in the 1960s, was attributed to the loss of masculine confidence due to the 'decline of traditionally

⁷⁵ D.P. Martinez, *Remaking Kurosawa: Translations and Permutations in Global Cinema* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 53.

masculine occupations involving brawn and industry.’⁷⁶ As Shaw identifies, the crisis of masculinity also coincided with shifts in attitudes towards sex and gender, which articulated gender as an active process rather than a natural birth right.⁷⁷ The *doing* of gender might have resonated with the active *doing* of citizenship championed by John F. Kennedy in his call for a new generation of men to tackle America’s new frontiers. However, the death of John F. Kennedy at the end of 1963 effectively closed his “New Frontier.” The mantle of American diplomacy based on the warrior-myth would be picked up by his successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, but the virtue of his cowboy presidency would be perverted by the Vietnam War and a space race that had as much to do with anxieties over Soviet space dominance as the projection of American values spaceward. Westerns that had once espoused the prophetic virtue of westward expansion began to view progress as a troublesome prospect. John Ford’s *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962) harkened the end of great cowboys like John Wayne with the arrival of the railroads that would hasten the domestication of Western men.⁷⁸ Technology that had once defined American superiority could no longer be relied on as a symbol of American exceptionalism, a point dramatically demonstrated by Yuri Gagarin’s spaceflight in 1961 and the detonation of a Chinese nuclear bomb in 1964.

The Outrage opens, not with a dilapidated torii gate as in *Rashomon*, but an abandoned train station that heralds the spiritual demise of the western frontier. James Stewart may have represented the promise of democratic institutions when he boards his train in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, but in *The Outrage* it is a conman who boards the train and a conman who will define the corrupted nature of America’s capitalist future, just as two salesmen board the stagecoach in *The Magnificent Seven*. On this stormy night the three men who discover the messianic baby are not wise or virtuous, but cowards, thieves and liars. However, while *Rashomon* never disclosed the truth of the events at the heart of the film, *The Outrage* redeems the prospector, and American society at large, by revealing that his version of events is the true version. Exposing the innards of a corrupted society affords the preacher and the prospector the hope of saving America as they take it upon themselves to nurture America’s new generation. Unfortunately, the prospector and the preacher represent conservative ideals at odds with the progressive movements of society in 1964, a point addressed by D.P. Martinez in her dismissal of the film. In *The Outrage*, a new generation of Americans will learn the truth of a cowboy masculinity undone by impotence, infidelity and miscegenation, not war or nuclear arms races or corrupted patriarchies.

⁷⁶ Justin Shaw, “Destabilizing Sexistentialism and Hegemonic Masculinity in Norman Mailer’s *An American Dream*.” *Canadian Review of American Studies* 44, no. 1 (2014): 45.

⁷⁷ Justin Shaw, 48.

⁷⁸ Jim Kitses, *Horizons West: Directing the Western from John Ford to Clint Eastwood* (London: BFI, 2004), 31.

If the masculine dignity of the samurai in Kurosawa's *Rashomon* remains salvageable amidst the contradictory narratives that retell his failings, *The Outrage* offers no such respite for the cowboy and his martial spirit. Like the character of Lee in *The Magnificent Seven*, the cowboy in *The Outrage* is a veteran of the Civil-war, and like Lee it becomes apparent that he did not emerge from the conflict any more of a man than when he entered it. When urged to fight for his honour, the cowboy in *The Outrage* is reluctant to draw his gun, and when he does so all six shots are fired at the sky. Lee is redeemed through action; his masculinity was merely repressed by fear, but the masculinity of the cowboy in *The Outrage* is non-existent and cannot be reasserted. In *Rashomon* the relative status of the samurai is never disclosed, nor is his history of martial exploits, leaving the possibility open that, while being born into the position of a samurai, he may not have had any experience of war. We are told that the cowboy in *The Outrage* was a colonel and his weakness as a man is thus extended to his weakness as a soldier. As a southern man with a war record a comparison can be made between the cowboy in the film and President Lyndon B. Johnson. Johnson was a Texan who served as an officer in World War II, a man known for his affinity for cowboy boots and political affairs conducted 'as much with the genitals as with political genius.'⁷⁹ Johnson's masculine stance was undone by the escalation of the Vietnam War in 1968, but within the action of *The Outrage* is the sentiment that the cocksure southern man is merely an impotent coward in disguise.

The fraught relationship between the cowboy and his wife in the film could be interpreted as an early example of male responses to the emerging feminist movements of 1964. The cowboy in this instance represents the old patriarchy, which includes ownership and control of the woman's body. When he is challenged by the presence of another dominant model of masculinity (Paul Newman's bandit, Carrasco), he asserts his strength by enacting power over his wife, achieved with a single look of disdain that renders her weak. Her worth had been an extension of his own power and without his approval she is stripped of an identity that he had granted her. Carrasco, as a Mexican and a bandit, offers to free her from the constraints of a repressive white, upper-class patriarchy, thus subordinating her husband's white hegemonic masculinity. When the cowboy's dominance is threatened by his wife's liberation, his immediate reaction is to pervert her attempts at freedom by attacking both her morality and her class, calling her 'white-trash' and a 'slut.' It is a response indicative of juvenile reactions to women's liberation in the late sixties, where displays of masculine power were enacted by denigrating images of women who had been "liberated."⁸⁰ For the first time

⁷⁹ Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, p. 269.

⁸⁰ Susan Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man* (New York: W. Morrow and Co, 1999), 312.

the cowboy is confronted with the necessity to redefine his relationship with his wife and the need to 'break established sexual patterns of objectification, fixation, and [the] conquest' of women.⁸¹ That he fails to reform his arcane masculinity proves to be his downfall. After a botched duel with Carrasco that exposes his masculinity to be a superficial façade, he falls and lands on his own knife, pathetically stating, 'I tripped.' He has tripped and fallen on his own self-inflated phallus. Having penetrated himself like the ouroboros snake, his warring masculinity becomes a destructive cycle of self-gratification serving no particular end but his own.

While typically associated with the rape of white women by African American men, the racial element of Carrasco raping the cowboy's wife evokes racial penis envy and the white man's fear of the unrestrained sexuality of the non-white Other. When defending her honour after being raped, the wife pleads to her husband that she struggled but Carrasco was too strong, to which he replies, 'I was gagged but not blindfolded.' She confirms his fear that his penis may be inferior to that of other men; it may have started as rape but it becomes consensual. *Rashomon* conveyed a similar fear in the samurai. Dominion over the white woman's body by the white male is an extension of the hegemonic dominance of white masculinity. The connection between rape and possession is made explicit during Carrasco's trial, in which he is described as a 'bloodthirsty vandal driven by a craving for our possessions and our women.' The rape of the cowboy's wife becomes an inversion of his own domination while simultaneously representing the penetration of an extension of his own body. The cowboy becomes inadequate, impotent and penetrated through the possession of his wife by a racial other.⁸² However, as Roger Horrocks argues, 'rape is an expression of impotence, not potency,' and so it follows that Carrasco is also emasculated in the film following his fight with the husband, after which it becomes evident that Carrasco's masculine bravado is also a thin veneer hiding a coward underneath.⁸³

If the patriarchy of the cowboy is challenged and his masculine dominance disarmed, the sexual liberation of his wife does not materialise and the triumph of feminism is quashed. According to the prospector's narration of the events, which we learn to be the final truth, the wife not only embraced Carrasco after being sexually violated, but we also learn that she enjoyed the rape. It is revealed that she had been unfaithful on numerous occasions, a fact which her husband sees as typical of her class. That her previous sexual improprieties are

⁸¹ Jeff Hearn "The Personal, The Political, The Theoretical: The Case of Men's Sexualities and Sexual Violences." in *Between Men and Feminism*, ed. David Porter (New York: Routledge, 1992), 164.

⁸² Roger Horrocks, *Masculinity in Crisis: Myths, Fantasies, and Realities* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 138.

⁸³ Roger Horrocks, *Masculinity in Crisis*, p. 139.

mentioned at all suggests that she was in some way asking to be raped, a point picked up by Carrasco, who says, 'you cooked the pot of tamales, I just pick up the lid.' Having already strayed from the Christian morality of fidelity, her rape becomes an inevitable consequence of the sexually liberated female body. Partly because of her infidelity and her immoral sexuality, her husband is killed. Although he was far from representing masculine ideals, the image of an unrepressed female sexuality undermining upper-class white morality remains. *Rashomon* had implicated guilt across a broad spectrum of society, from the samurai to the commoners; in *The Outrage*, D.P. Martinez argues, 'the focus has shifted . . . from all human guilt to that of modern women,' who are somehow to blame for the moral decay of America.⁸⁴ Released during the progressive ferment of the civil rights and feminist movements, *The Outrage* is hardly a reflection of either.

Men at Postwar's End

Akira Kurosawa indicts a generation of warmongers in *Rashomon*, condemning a corrupted samurai ideology and a perverse, militant masculinity that had resulted in war crimes as well as a legacy of brutality that would continue to haunt Japan's historical memory. It is for this reason that the samurai in *Rashomon* must die, not only because of the presence of the U.S. occupiers, who represent a dominating masculine presence, but also because Japan deserved more worthwhile heroes. In 1964 when *The Outrage* was released, America had not yet abandoned the cowboy as an exemplary hero. The cowboy in *The Outrage* must die because he has failed to live up to the standards of worthy men, not because he represents a model of masculinity that had betrayed a young generation, as in *Rashomon*. The historical context that had made *Rashomon* such a powerful expression of Japan's contemporary crises was absent in *The Outrage*, which instead reflected a broader sense of masculinities in crisis. However, the celebration of national masculine archetypes is shared in Kurosawa's *Shichinin no Samurai* and John Sturges' *The Magnificent Seven*. In 1954 samurai were ubiquitous in Japanese cinema. While their depictions were not universally flattering, they had become relatable figures that would inspire a new generation of men. Likewise, in *The Magnificent Seven*, the gunmen had stepped down from the pantheon of mythical heroes to become flawed men redeemable by acts of bravery and self-sacrifice, men who answered the call of John F. Kennedy's New Frontier. Both the cowboy and samurai represented male ideals at a time

⁸⁴ D.P. Martinez, *Remaking Kurosawa*, p. 53.

when a dominant form of masculinity could still be conceived as a positive force in society, but they existed primarily as sources of inspiration rather than archetypes to be emulated.

For Kurosawa in 1954, and Sturges in 1960, the samurai and cowboy figures represented nostalgic ideals of masculinity that could be called upon to inspire new generations of men. By the end of 1960 both the cowboy and samurai would become despondent articulations of disillusioned youth, or archaic hangovers of an older generation. If the morality of *The Outrage*'s critique of cowboy masculinity is muddied by a backwards perspective of women's liberation and civil rights, the demise of the cowboy is a theme that would resound in many of the revisionist westerns that followed. Released at the end of 1964, Sergio Leone's *A Fistful of Dollars*, an adaptation of Akira Kurosawa's *Yojimbo*, would mark the end of the western's golden age, as the genre replaced stagecoaches and virtuous gunmen with increasing body counts and remorseless killers, none of whom were more iconic than Clint Eastwood's man with no name. As for the samurai, Akira Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* would be a turning point for the rōnin, who became increasingly isolated from a society that was no longer worth saving.

Chapter 2

Deconstructing Genres, Revising Masculinities, 1961-1969

In Chapter 1 I discussed the transition from wartime to postwar societies in the U.S. and Japan and the impact this transition had on the masculinities of the cowboy and samurai archetypes. Kurosawa's *Rashomon* and Martin Ritt's remake *The Outrage* dismissed the samurai and cowboy as ineffective and impotent, whereas *Shichinin no Samurai* and John Sturges' remake *The Magnificent Seven* witnessed the elegiac withdrawal of the samurai and cowboy as once dominant models of masculinity. Consistent in all of these films is a sense of time passing, be it through the arrival of a train or the passing of a storm, and so it is that the masculinities of the cowboy and samurai are situated as historical constructions subject to change. In response to the seemingly obvious impermanence of masculine formations Todd W. Reeser states that 'thinking of masculinities in historical terms contributes to the larger goal of disbanding simplistic or essentialist notions of masculinity.'¹ In this chapter I will build on the historicity of cowboy and samurai masculinities in order to identify the shifts in hegemonic ideals of masculinity that arose out of the bilateral exchange between the U.S. and Japan in the 1960s.

The 1960s witnessed the fragmentation of heroic masculine traits that coincided with an increase in onscreen violence and chaos – violence that reflected a tumultuous decade witness to global student protests and vicious state responses, and the exposure of the bloody consequences of U.S. globalization and Cold War foreign policies. Kjetil Rødje explains that Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch*, which will close this chapter, 'can be seen as a film about violent men in violent times, striving to find a sense of meaning and direction in their chaotic existence.'² This sense of violent men attempting to find meaning and direction is well suited to the cowboys and samurai discussed in this chapter, who likewise struggle to make sense of their role in a decade of chaos. Shifts in hegemonic constructions of masculinity reflected the emergence of newly fashioned conservative majorities in the U.S. and Japan, which reacted to the sense of chaos by endorsing complacency, consumption and conservative morality. This conservative turn took the shape of Nixon's silent majority and Japan's slow return to militarism and exceptionalism under the guise of Cold War defence policies and economic

¹ Todd W. Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 218.

² Kjetil Rødje, *Images of Blood in American Cinema: The Tinsler to The Wild Bunch* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2015), 145.

stimulation. In Japan, the yakuza and salaryman would compete with the samurai as dominant models of masculinity deemed fit to embrace the competitive impetus of Japan's economic miracle. In the U.S., the cowboy was uncomfortably positioned alongside the soldiers in Vietnam and it became all the more apparent that the western had overstayed its welcome as the nation's defining myth.

The violence and chaos evident in the westerns and jidaigeki of the 1960s not only made apparent the failure of the cowboy and samurai to function as bastions of civilized, masculine stability in the postwar period, but it also became clear that men could be victims of patriarchal domination. R.W. Connell notes that 'men's dominant position in the gender order has a material payoff,' which she calls the 'patriarchal dividend.'³ These benefits made it unlikely for men to emphatically embrace feminism or a rejection of patriarchal norms that might diminish that payoff. However, Connell also clarifies that not all men benefit from the patriarchal dividend, and in response to the violence and chaos of the 1960s, patriarchies in the U.S. and Japan were targeted by feminists and men alike. That the patriarchy could work to victimize men contributed to the discourse of a crisis of masculinity and gave ascendancy to the image of 'the white male as victim.'⁴ Rather than accept the abuses of patriarchal domination, with which they had once been complicit, the cowboys and samurai discussed in this chapter dismantle patriarchal institutions and the national mythologies that had normalized masculine hegemonies, not to rescue women from the abuses of masculine domination, but to save men from their own destruction.

To build on Todd Reeser's insistence on the historicity of masculinities I will discuss the hybrid formations that became prominent in the 1960s. Demetrakis Demetriou suggests that hegemonic masculinity is not a formation that dismisses less desirable forms, but is rather a 'hybrid bloc that unites practices from diverse masculinities in order to ensure the reproduction of patriarchy.'⁵ Demetriou contends that 'it is its constant hybridization, its constant appropriation of diverse elements from various masculinities that makes the hegemonic bloc capable of reconfiguring itself and adapting to the specificities of new historical conjunctures.'⁶ In the 1960s it was clear that the cowboy and samurai no longer represented desired forms of masculinity and they could not be easily reconfigured or adapted to suit the chaotic conditions of the 1960s. Rather than hybridize the identity formations of the old archetypes, the films discussed in this chapter set the old masculine types in direct

³ R.W. Connell, *The Men and the Boys* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000), 202.

⁴ David Savran, *Taking it Like a Man: White Masculinity, Masochism, and Contemporary American Culture* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), 4.

⁵ Demetrakis Demetriou, "Connell's Concept of Hegemonic Masculinity: A Critique," *Theory and Society* 3, vol. 30 (2001): 348.

⁶ Ibid.

opposition to the emerging hegemonic blocs being established by a new generation of patriarchs. The 1960s witnessed the violent death throes of the cowboy and samurai as they presaged their departure as hegemonic archetypes of maleness. The stability of the cowboy and samurai, which may have once normalized and naturalized the domination of men over women and Othered, non-hegemonic men, gave way to gender multiplicities and hybrid formations at a historical juncture where the fragmentation of personal selves coincided with perceived ruptures in the homogeneity and hegemony of nation-states.

In the United States and Japan personal politics became entangled with discourses of national identity, even if many cultural forms refused to acknowledge the conflict. In the United States hegemonic masculinity could no longer be accepted as white, heterosexual and dominant when women's liberation movements, civil rights protests, gay pride parades and anti-war rallies were gaining traction throughout the decade. In Japan, masculinity could no longer necessitate the virtues of loyalty and honour as student protests brought light to Japan's increased militarism and the suppression of worker's unions after the nation aligned itself with the United States and its Cold War diplomacy. And although feminism and the visibility of homosexuality in Japan were stifled by a broad acceptance of conservative norms based on economic growth, as well as the reluctance of many men to forgo the existing patriarchal order,⁷ gender and sexual discrimination was no longer considered to be acceptable to those who embraced democratic values beyond granting women the vote (first exercised in the election of April, 1946).⁸ The hybridized masculinity that emerged from the conflicts of the 1960s undermined the established male protagonists of both westerns and jidaigeki, whose dominant masculine qualities seemed ill-fitted to a world where the patriarchal social structure could no longer be accepted as benevolent. The directors discussed in this chapter created male anti-heroes who no longer served the existing patriarchy; they either chose to rise against it, or opted out of society entirely. In doing so, these characters also altered the performances of masculinity that had once rendered them heroic. Beginning in 1961, with Akira Kurosawa's *Yojimbo*, these anti-heroes culminated in some of the most memorable characters of both westerns and jidaigeki, but their arrival also beckoned the demise of both genres.

In the 1960s hybrid masculine identities coincided with hybrid explorations in film genres that began to deconstruct the national mythologies of the western and jidaigeki. Critiques of these national mythologies rendered the genres that relied on them untenable in their traditional forms. For Akira Kurosawa, his critique of Japan's culpability and

⁷ Julia C. Bullock, *The Other Women's Lib: Gender and Body in Japanese Women's Fiction* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010), 6.

⁸ Eiko Siniawer, *Ruffians, Yakuza, Nationalists: The Violent Politics of Modern Japan, 1860-1960* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 141.

hypocritical stance in its Cold War relationship with the United States would contribute to the nameless drifter of *Yojimbo* who represented a violent departure from traditional samurai characteristics. It was a figure that would inspire Sergio Leone's anarchic gunslinger in *Per un Pugno di Dollari* (*A Fistful of Dollars*, 1964), a film that echoed a similar sentiment of dismay over Italy's own postwar political and social developments and its relationship with the United States. Both Kurosawa and Leone saw in the American western an opportunity to critique and debunk the narrative of America's manifest destiny during a period when the influence of the United States on both Italy and Japan (and the world) had become unpopular, particularly among those recovering from Japanese and Italian militarist institutions who witnessed similar fascist tendencies in America's global policies. Both *Yojimbo* and *A Fistful of Dollars* were immensely popular nationally and globally, and their animosity towards once sacred masculine archetypes resonated with a counter-cultural celebration of rebellion against narratives of conformity and national exceptionalism. In August 1969, just three months after the Mai Lai massacre in Vietnam, Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* shocked viewers with a festival of violence largely inspired by the spaghetti westerns of Sergio Leone and Sergio Corbucci, which effectively brought an end to the possibility of the traditional American western serving any purpose beyond naive nostalgia. The irrelevance of samurai virtues in Japan's postwar focus on economic growth undermined the narratives of jidaigeki, while international perspectives on the American western rendered the myth of America's manifest destiny culturally impotent. Through cultural and genre hybridity the worlds of the cowboy and samurai were brought closer together, at the same time as their respective mythologies were being torn apart.

Biting the Hand that Feeds You –*Yojimbo* (1961)

Akira Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* begins with an image of striking brutality that is as shocking as it is appropriate, for it signals the director's intention to subvert the very genre that had made him an international icon while framing the anarchic nature of his anti-hero. Upon entering a deserted village the titular yojimbo (bodyguard), played by Toshiro Mifune, watches as a wild dog runs past with a severed hand in its mouth. The association is that, like the dog, Mifune's character is a man without a master – a *rōnin*, or masterless samurai. The connection between the wild animal and Mifune's character has already been established in the opening credits of the film, which have the yojimbo scratch at his neck like a flea-ridden dog. It is a mannerism shared with Mifune's bandit in *Rashomon* and his character Kikuchiyo

in *Sichinin no Samurai*. Kurosawa's audience are being introduced to a man they think they know; a man untamed by civilization, flawed, but nevertheless governed by a code of honour even if it is a code that only he follows. But whereas the bestial nature of Mifune's previous characters had been associated with sexual vigour and an energetic unpredictability, in *Yojimbo* the link to wild animals connotes mere savagery and a disconnection from the laws of man. An upbeat, anachronistic score 'played by the wrong instruments' accompanies the yojimbo's indifference to the brutal sight.⁹ Within moments he will himself be severing the arm of one of the town's many gangsters as he plays two rival factions against each other. In the narrative of the film the yojimbo is figuratively biting the hand that feeds him by allowing the two factions to annihilate each other. Kurosawa's use of the anachronistic score and the graphic depiction of brutal violence bite at the traditional form of jidaigeki that he himself had revolutionized with *Rashomon* and *Shichinin no Samurai*.

Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto describes the emergence and popularity of Toei jidaigeki in the 1950s as predictable narratives of good triumphing against evil based on kabuki formulas and popular Japanese tales (such as *Chūshingura*, known in the West as the tale of the forty-seven rōnin). Evil is represented by the villain who 'thinks' and good is represented by a swordsman who has no need to question an inherent sense of justice.¹⁰ In the tale of *Chūshingura*, which has numerous film adaptations, the forty-seven rōnin who seek revenge for their dead lord are faulted precisely for taking too long to 'think' of a course of action.¹¹ Like the protagonists of the films, Toei jidaigeki affirmed the unquestioning acceptance of the status quo. Akira Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* shattered this formulaic approach to the genre, and the film's immense popularity delivered a 'fatal blow' to Toei jidaigeki.¹² Traditional narratives could no longer reflect the chaos of Japanese society, and traditional heroes could no longer be relied upon to serve as role models. In a deliberate inversion of Toei norms, Toshiro Mifune's wandering samurai is repeatedly depicted stroking his beard in thought as he considers the next stage of his plan. He becomes a director of the action. He writes and reacts to the script as events unfold, and he refuses to commit his loyalty to either warring faction, for they are both equally evil in his eyes.¹³ The yojimbo represents the film director, Kurosawa himself, the auteur at odds with either faction of Japan, be it the left, the right, or the impassive majority. Whether he is sitting atop a watchtower gleefully observing a battle unfold, or impassively watching as

⁹ Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto, *Kurosawa: Film Studies and Japanese Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 289.

¹⁰ Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto, *Kurosawa*, 229.

¹¹ J.L. Anderson, "Japanese Swordfighters and American Gunfighters," *Cinema Journal* 2, vol. 12 (1973): 6.

¹² Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto, *Kurosawa*, 289.

¹³ Alan P. Barr, "Exquisite Comedy and the Dimensions of Heroism: Akira Kurosawa's *Yojimbo*," *The Massachusetts Review* 1, vol. 16 (1975): 168.

a village inspector is bribed, the yojimbo participates in the action only insofar as doing so furthers his own interests.

Yojimbo is a hybrid construction that emerged from an original, intertextual screenplay which departed from the traditional narratives common to jidaigeki. James Goodwin explains that *Macbeth* is the primary intertext for Kurosawa's 1957 feature, *Throne of Blood*, rather than the basis for a Shakespearean adaptation.¹⁴ In the intertextual narrative of *Throne of Blood*, Toshiro Mifune's samurai lord becomes imbued with many of *Macbeth*'s crises of masculinity.¹⁵ In a similar fashion, Dashiell Hammett's novel *Red Harvest* (1929), featuring the character of the Continental Op, becomes the primary intertext of *Yojimbo*. Like the yojimbo of Kurosawa's film, the Continental Op cleans out a town corrupted by two rival factions by playing one group against the other. Both characters remain nameless, defined by their function in society. Cyrus Patell writes that upon its release *Red Harvest* 'reinvigorated heroic individualism within the domain of popular culture, even as the ideology was being discredited within the domain of political and economic theory.'¹⁶ Such a description is equally applicable to Kurosawa's *Yojimbo*, which likewise celebrated individualism at a time when Japan was embracing the profitability of conformity combined with an efficient wartime model of 'cartel' production.¹⁷ Hammett's hero was immediately poignant in a society forced to confront the failings of its economic system in the wake of the 1929 Wall Street Crash. Reliant on a corrupt bubble of prosperity, Japan's economy would suffer a similar crash when the bubble burst in 1991, but even in 1961 *Yojimbo* existed as a warning to those eagerly embracing Japan's peacetime consensus. Like the Continental Op, Mifune's yojimbo is an outsider hastening the demise of a town corrupted by greed. By default, both of these characters become moral agents, because 'alternatives to corruption are nowhere to be seen.'¹⁸

Dashiell Hammett's *Red Harvest* was an allegorical treatise on the corruptive consequences of greed in American society. Akira Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* complicates the allegory by expanding the scope of the corruption beyond national borders. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s the Cold War had created a divisive rift between those on the 'left' and those on the 'right,' and by 1960 it was clear that America's foreign policy with Japan had

¹⁴ James Goodwin, *Akira Kurosawa and Intertextual Cinema* (Baltimore: James Hopkins University Press, 1994), 167.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 169.

¹⁶ Cyrus R.K. Patell, "Screen Memory: Happy Birthday, Hammett," *Harvard Review* no. 6 (1994): 20.

¹⁷ William H. Overholt, "Japan's Economy, at War with Itself," *Foreign Affairs* 1, vol. 81, (2002): 136.

¹⁸ George Thompson, *Hammett's Moral Vision: The Most Influential Full-Length Investigation of Dashiell Hammett's Novels Red Harvest, The Dain Curse, The Maltese Falcon, The Glass Key and The Thin Man* (San Francisco: Vince Emery, 2007), 43.

intensified Japan's 'susceptibility to the polarization of the Cold War.'¹⁹ On the left, Japan's Communist Party (JCP) had immediately attempted to maintain communications with, and funding from, Stalin's Soviet Russia, which ostensibly established the formation of two Japans pulled in opposite directions by two disparate superpowers.²⁰ Having already participated in the split of Japan into two opposing sides, the JCP itself became fractured as radicals and student protestors felt the party had become ineffectual, while 'average' citizens feared the party had become a tool of the Soviet Union.²¹ The result of this factional rivalry was escalating violence that became 'the hallmark of student radicalism in the 1960s.'²² Meanwhile, the United States became actively involved in re-militarizing Japan's political right so as to undermine the perceived communist threat, which involved "purging" leftists and "de-purging" formerly disgraced militarists.²³ Support from the United States in purging communists coincided with the involvement of the yakuza, who repressed (often violently) the leftist opposition of trade unions and political parties.²⁴ Tensions between the two groups escalated with Japan's "passive" involvement in the Korean War when its decommissioned war-time industries were rekindled to serve America's war machine.

Marie Thorston Morimoto argues that the yojimbo represents Japan 'carrying on with its economic plan – even playing one superpower off against the other – often as if it were entirely independent from the situation, a *rōnin* in the world of nation-states.'²⁵ While this interpretation is certainly valid, it largely redeems Japan from its active complicity in the Cold War, as the corrupt village becomes a stand-in for global corruption, rather than a microcosm of Japan's own schismatic society. Morimoto's interpretation also overlooks the bitter and ineffectual rivalry between Japan's political left and right, which had become so entrenched and radicalized in their positions that they were unable to be brought 'into the same room, much less have a real discussion.'²⁶ Democracy existed in Japan, but the cartelization of politics and industries muted any dialogue between opposing sides, and in the meantime the career-minded, soon to be hegemonic, figure of the salaryman ignored political activism altogether.

¹⁹ Herbert Passin, "The Sources of Protest in Japan." *The American Political Science Review* 2, vol. 56 (1962): 391.

²⁰ Haruki Wada, "The Korean War, Stalin's Policy, and Japan," *Social Science Japan Journal* 1, vol. 1 (1998): 8.

²¹ James I. Matray, *Japan's Emergence as a Global Power* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001), 64.

²² Toyamasa Fuse, "Student Radicalism in Japan: A "Cultural Revolution"?" *Comparative Education Review* 3, vol. 13 (1969): 329.

²³ Takeshi Matsuda, *Soft Power and its Perils: U.S. Cultural Policy in Early Postwar Japan and Permanent Dependency* (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2007), 45.

²⁴ Renate Bridenthal, "The Hidden History of Crime, Corruption, and States: An Introduction," *Journal of Social History* 45, no. 3 (2012): 577.

²⁵ Marie Thorston Morimoto, "The "Peace Dividend" In Japanese Cinema: Metaphors of a Demilitarized Nation." In *Colonialism and Nationalism in Asian Cinema*, ed. Wimal Dissanayake (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 23.

²⁶ Herbert Passin, "Sources of Protest in Japan," 393.

Within the popular mythos of Japan's postwar gendered society the salaryman emerged as a dominant hybrid masculinity which fused samurai values of loyalty and self-sacrifice with the mercantile ambitions of the patriarchal head of the household.²⁷ Aligned with international narratives where 'business was war in bilateral economics,' the Japanese businessman as samurai warrior was adopted by Japan as a hegemonic role model to be feared by men in the United States.²⁸ However, Kurosawa does not accept the hybrid salaryman-samurai masculine figure. Toshiro Mifune's beard-scratching rōnin might lack the traditional characteristics of the loyal samurai (namely, devoted service to a master), but he does at least adhere to a code of honour. Conversely, the symbolic salaryman in *Yojimbo* becomes hybridized with the world of gamblers, thugs and yakuza, and his participation within society merely hastens its moral corruption. Kurosawa does not differentiate between the Machiavellian world of Japan's postwar economics and the yakuza underworld that thrived off of Japan's postwar growth, and he identifies the breakdown of the family unit as a consequence of this moral decay.²⁹

The film opens with a family dispute, in which a son tells his parents that he is moving into the village to become a gambler. The son is effectively leaving his home to become a salaryman so that he can earn a living and become the patriarch of the household. The son's physical act of entering the village at the centre of the action in *Yojimbo* evokes the phrase '*shakaijin no naru*' (becoming an adult), which 'denotes entering society.'³⁰ Although the phrase can apply to both men and women, its association with entering the workplace primarily links it to men; in effect, women are prevented from entering the 'adult' world just as the son's mother remains at home in the film.³¹ One of the basic tenets of the salaryman doxa was the reinstatement of gendered distinctions between private and public. Women were expected to remain in the private sphere to care for the home, while men dominated the public sphere.³² Kurosawa rebukes the gendered differentiation of the sexes by depicting the young gambler's mother working a loom. Throughout the action of the film she is the only character to produce anything; the men trade only in death. The mother's involvement in the film is minimal, and to suggest that Kurosawa is engaging with women's liberation might be an overstatement, but she certainly serves to emphasize the productive role of Japanese women

²⁷ Romit Dasgupta, "Creating Corporate Warriors: The "Salaryman" and Masculinity in Japan," in *Asian Masculinities: the Meaning and Practice of Manhood in China and Japan*, eds., Kam Louie and Morris Low (New York: Routledge, 2003), 123.

²⁸ Thomas W. Zeiler, "Business is War in U.S.-Japanese Economic Relations," in *Partnership: The United States and Japan, 1951-2001*, eds., Akira Iriye and Robert A. Wampler, 223-248 (New York: Kodansha International, 2001), 224.

²⁹ Eiko Siniawer, *Ruffians, Yakuza, Nationalists*, 158.

³⁰ Hidaka, *Salaryman Masculinity: Continuity and Change in Hegemonic Masculinity in Japan* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 104.

³¹ Hidaka, *Salaryman Masculinity*, 104.

³² Kristen Schultz Lee, "Separate Spheres or Increasing Equality? Changing Gender Beliefs in Postwar Japan," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 72, vol. 1 (2010): 188.

within the domestic sphere of the household.³³ *Yojimbo* begins with the family unit being dismantled by the son's desire to enter the mature world. But, as we discover, the mature world is rife with corruption, violence, and greed. After the final battle of the film, after all of the gamblers and yakuza are dead, the son returns home. Only with the eradication of the salaryman's village can the family prosper, held aloft by the productivity of a working mother.

Akira Kurosawa condemns the salaryman archetype for being composed of undesirable qualities of the yakuza, while contemporary popular representations of the yakuza attempted to imbue gangsters with samurai values. Toei's jidaigeki were rendered redundant by Kurosawa's *Yojimbo*, but the genre was already in decline as yakuza-eiga (literally, yakuza films) emerged with their hard-edged narratives and gritty, hyper-masculine protagonists. Acknowledging the shifting trend, Toei began mass-producing yakuza films in the late 1950s and 1960s, including the films of Kihachi Otomoto, Masahiro Shinoda, and Seijun Suzuki. To legitimize yakuza as desirable, masculine heroes, popular yakuza-eiga focused on the exploits of "good," that is to say, loyal, gangsters while the cinematic samurai became "bad" rōnin.

In Kurosawa's film the difference between the yojimbo and the yakuza is established through action. The yakuza pose and scheme, but they do not act; the yojimbo schemes, but he punctuates his plans with violent action. Keiko Iwai McDonald attributes the growing popularity of the postwar yakuza film to 'Japan's status as a newly independent nation,' which 'called for virtues such as charismatic leadership, group loyalty, and social harmony.'³⁴ Kurosawa consciously critiques the 'rising cult of the yakuza' by depicting his gangsters as cowards, drunkards, and inferior men who contribute to social disharmony.³⁵ The gang bosses are ineffectual and impotent, easily coerced by manipulative wives. Prostitutes are seen early in the film as the yojimbo enters the town, but their presence is not referred to again, as if to suggest the impotence of the gangsters who are too busy drinking and gambling to be sexually active. Alluding to the classic western *High Noon*, a confrontation between the two opposing factions is scheduled for midday, the local guard acting as an unofficial time keeper to signal the combatants. But the battle is a farce, with gangsters from each side unwilling to confront each other. Akira Kurosawa makes it clear that the yakuza do not constitute a suitable form of hegemonic masculinity, for they do not fulfill the patriarchal expectations of leadership and empowerment.

³³ Julia C. Bullock, *The Other Women's Lib*, 5.

³⁴ Keiko Iwai McDonald, "The Yakuza Film: An Introduction," in *Reframing Japanese Cinema: Authorship, Genre, History*, eds., Arthur Nolletti and David Desser (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 174.

³⁵ D.P. Martinez, *Remaking Kurosawa: Translations and Permutations in Global Cinema* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 146.

With his anachronistic score and deliberate departure from jidaigeki conventions through the allusions to *Red Harvest*, Kurosawa was able to further enrich the intertextuality of *Yojimbo* by embracing the ‘grammar’ of the American western, which he had been well versed in ever since watching the westerns of William S. Hart as a child.³⁶ D.P. Martinez argues that *Yojimbo* is clearly structured as a western, with a visual grammar that recalls *High Noon* and *Shane*.³⁷ However, Kurosawa subverts this visual grammar, and the conventions of the western, so as to debunk the myth of American exceptionalism and critique the manipulative relationship the U.S. was developing with Japan. In effect, Akira Kurosawa bites at the hand of the American western. Audiences well versed in the western were comfortable with the lone gunman riding off into the sunset at the close of the film after the triumph of good over evil (in its simplest form). Thus, Gary Cooper’s marshal is able to ride out of the town in *High Noon* without turning his back, because civilisation has been saved. And although the occupants of the town had cowered in fear, they nevertheless represented a ‘good,’ redeemable society dependant on righteous men to act on their behalf.³⁸ In a sardonic twist of this narrative convention the lone yojimbo leaves only three survivors in the town when he is finished; he has not so much preserved civilisation as participated in its destruction, because no one in the town is worth saving. Kurosawa subverts the moral justification of violence in American westerns by deliberately complicating the convenient dualism between good and evil, rendering the actions of the hero morally ambiguous.³⁹ The moral ambiguity of the “hero” and the immorality of the town he ironically “saves” can be read as a critique of America’s Cold War policy, ‘which took a simplistic, binary view of the world as being divided between the Soviet Union with its desire to conquer the world and the non-Communist bloc.’⁴⁰ While many American Cold War westerns justified foreign intervention as a necessary battle between good and evil (John Sturges’ *The Magnificent Seven* being one such example), in *Yojimbo* Kurosawa suggests that the Cold War was a battle of two equally pernicious powers, with the only conceivable result of their rivalry being mutually assured destruction.⁴¹

By borrowing, and undermining, the conventions of the western, Akira Kurosawa is able to simultaneously critique both the Japanese and American male archetypes that had articulated masculine virtue. If the yojimbo represents an embittered, amoral samurai, the rival gunfighter, played by Tatsuya Nakadai, exists as his cowboy doppelganger. The gunfighter

³⁶ James Goodwin, *Akira Kurosawa and Intertextual Cinema*, 167.

³⁷ D.P. Martinez, *Remaking Kurosawa*, 141.

³⁸ Gerald D. Nash, *Creating the West: Historical Interpretations, 1890-1990* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), 229.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 228.

⁴⁰ Hiroshi Sakurai, “A Survey: Studies on the Korean War in Japan,” *Social Science Japan Journal* 1, no. 1 (1998): 91

⁴¹ Marie Thorston Morimoto, “The Peace Dividend,” 21.

shares the yojimbo's indifference to killing, but despite his anarchic actions the yojimbo nevertheless adheres to a limited code of virtue. Rather than being associated with an animal (even a wild dog has some redeemable qualities), the gunfighter arrives on the wind. The yojimbo cleans up a town that had been corrupted beyond salvation; the gunfighter in this scenario represents nothing more than the tempestuous chaos of a violent storm. And while the yojimbo remains chaste throughout the film, almost to the point of becoming an asexual figure with his sword predominately sheathed, the gunfighter constantly has a hand on his revolver, poking it through his kimono as if to remind his enemies of his phallic empowerment – much like the absurd nuclear posturing of the United States and the Soviet Union during the arms race.⁴² The revolver defines the gunfighter, just as the gun defined the colonial imperatives of the United States as it forced open the borders of Japan through the gunboat diplomacy of 1853. It is fitting that when the yojimbo and the gunfighter finally clash, the yojimbo's first action is to disable the gunfighter's hand with a throwing-knife, symbolically castrating him and any colonial aspirations he may have had in the small village. Denied the semiotics of the gun as phallic power, the gunfighter is rendered an impotent coward. As the closest figure to a cowboy in the film, Nakadai's gunfighter is a biting indictment of American force that had become as devoid of purpose as a wind blowing through a desolate village. Samurai values had failed Japan in the past; Kurosawa suggests that the heroes will not be found in the west.

Violence in *Yojimbo* accentuates the inaction of impotent yakuza and vividly depicts the brutal consequences of aggression at a time when Japan was poised to become a pawn in Cold War hostilities. The graphic depiction of severed limbs and blood also distanced *Yojimbo* from traditional jidaigeki films and their close ties to the theatrics of kabuki, which presented swordfights as poetic rituals rather than deadly conflicts. Masculinity had become disconcertingly connected to violence in popular culture, particularly with the rising popularity of yakuza films. Kurosawa addresses the celebration of violence by representing sword fights as chaotic and devastating. His camera focuses on the horrific outcomes of confrontation, and by the end of the film Mifune's anti-hero resembles a demon, the Oni of Japanese folktales, rather than the battle-weary samurai of earlier films. Akira Kurosawa makes it clear that the yojimbo should not be a basis for hegemonic models of masculinity by deliberately distancing the anti-hero from any sense of normal society.⁴³

⁴² Daniela Gioseffi, *Women on War: An International Anthology of Women's Writings from Antiquity to the Present* (New York: Feminist Press at the City of New York, 2003), 58.

⁴³ D.P. Martinez, *Remaking Kurosawa*, 159.

As the 1960s wore on the Cold War became more violent, as did the social responses to Japan's involvement in America's wars, namely in Vietnam.⁴⁴ Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto argues that the popularity of *Yojimbo* influenced a new sub-genre of "cruel films" that elaborated on the violence and gore that Kurosawa had introduced, which Kurosawa himself deeply regretted.⁴⁵ However, the brutality of subsequent jidaigeki is more indicative of a broad sense of dismay over Japan's postwar national identity. Jidaigeki such as Masaki Kobayashi's bleak *Harakiri* (1962) and Hideo Gosha's anarchic *Hitokiri* (1969), starring Yukio Mishima in his final film appearance before his ritual suicide in 1970, convey the hopelessness of violence in societies dominated by cowards and corrupt officials. Akira Kurosawa may have introduced the technical means of portraying the brutal realism of violence in jidaigeki, but the sentiment that violence was ultimately futile is one that is shared by many of his contemporaries. It is a sentiment that would be translated into the Italian and American westerns of the 1960s.

Yojimbo reconstructs the fragmentation of Japanese society and the disillusionment that followed, as both left and right descended into violent confrontations with each other, while an apathetic majority embraced consumerism and the benefits of Japan's economic miracle. Akira Kurosawa fails to find a masculine hero under these circumstances. His violent anti-hero undermines the status-quo narratives of banal Toei jidaigeki, while simultaneously dismissing the possibility of samurai values being integrated into modern Japanese society. In 1970, acclaimed author, body-builder, and nationalist Yukio Mishima dramatically condemned the loss of masculine samurai ideals by publically committing seppuku after an attempted coup. The decade ended with a graphic denouncement of Japanese masculinity. For Akira Kurosawa, samurai masculinity was already a lost cause at the start of the decade, in 1961. Japan had set upon a course of economic growth under America's nuclear umbrella, leaving the samurai, and his masculine values, no choice but to bite at the very hand that had fed him.

Masculinity with No Name – Clint Eastwood's Cowboy in Sergio Leone's *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964)

Intertextuality and hybridity in Akira Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* opened the film to a broader, international audience while fusing Japanese traditions with contemporary concerns

⁴⁴ Guy Faure and Laurent Schwab, *Japan-Vietnam: A Relation Under Influences* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2008), 48.

⁴⁵ Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto, *Kurosawa*, 290.

over Japan's post-war identity. But the film also deconstructed and critiqued the various influences which comprised it, including the core framework of the Japanese jidaigeki film, exposing the redundancies of the genre in its traditional form. In 1963 Sergio Leone watched *Yojimbo* with his wife and immediately saw potential for the film to be remade as a western.⁴⁶ While the success of a Western treatment of a Kurosawa film had already been demonstrated with John Sturges' *The Magnificent Seven* (1960), Sergio Leone approached his Western remake in a deliberately foreign way, using *Yojimbo* as a template from which to critique the myth of the American west and the emblematic figure of the cowboy. Just as Kurosawa had included a reference to the gunfighter in *Yojimbo* only to castrate that very symbol, so too would Leone deconstruct the American cowboy in *A Fistful of Dollars*, thus revolutionizing both the spaghetti western and the American western with one fell stroke. America's manifest destiny in the 20th century had expanded the borders of the frontier well beyond 'civilizing' the west, spreading the American dream across the globe. It is appropriate, therefore, that global film cultures responded to the myths of the American western when the narratives of conquest and civilization were directly related to post-war encounters with America's de facto empire. *A Fistful of Dollars* is very much an international film, with a cast of Germans, Spaniards, Italians and an American, joining forces to reconfigure the myth of the American west in a post-war global context. Unsurprisingly, the ideals of the American west are quickly dismissed, because the formula of America's benevolent westward expansion 'was not suited to the exigencies of the post-World War II world and even less to the more "polarized social and political atmosphere of the 1960s."' ⁴⁷

Christopher Frayling is correct to note that the underlying sensibilities and cultural traditions evident in *A Fistful of Dollars* are half a world away from Kurosawa's Japanese *Yojimbo*; Leone includes numerous Catholic allusions, for example.⁴⁸ However, both filmmakers shared comparable experiences of life in post-fascist countries that were influenced by a postwar influx of American ideologies and aspirations. While Italy did not share Japan's experience of prolonged postwar occupation, it followed a similar route of economic growth modelled on, and encouraged by, the United States. Like Japan, Italy also found itself committed to following American foreign policy when it joined NATO in 1949.⁴⁹ Austin Fisher points out that Italy was sold the idea of its 'economic miracle' in the 1950s, although for many southerners 'consumption was less a reality than a spectacle' witnessed

⁴⁶ Christopher Frayling, "The Making of Sergio Leone's *A Fistful of Dollars*," *Cineaste* 25, no. 3 (2000): 14.

⁴⁷ Marcia Landy, "'Which Way Is America?': Americanism and the Italian Western," *Boundary 2* 23, no. 1 (1996): 48.

⁴⁸ Christopher Frayling, "The Making of Sergio Leone's *A Fistful of Dollars*," 15.

⁴⁹ Austin Fisher, *Radical Frontiers in the Spaghetti Western: Politics, Violence and Popular Italian Cinema* (London: Tauris, 2011), 15.

through life on American television shows.⁵⁰ With a limited capacity to participate in the indulgences of American capitalism as presented on screen, Italian consumers ‘negotiated with cultural imports, creating a hybrid modern identity.’⁵¹ Unsurprisingly, an emphasis on consumption and the inescapable presence of Americana in Italy brought the ire of Italy’s communist party (PCI), which nevertheless had to acknowledge that for many Italians, ‘Americanisation offered vitality, novelty, and escape,’ and no genre was more emblematic of this escapism than the American western.⁵² Marcia Landy suggests in her analysis of Americanism in Europe that American films and television were either interpreted as examples of American cultural imperialism or as the site of selective appropriation by the host culture for its own uses.⁵³ Both Sergio Leone and Akira Kurosawa temper their critical attitudes towards American imperialism through their shared appreciation and appropriation of one of America’s finest cultural products: the western. Critical attitudes towards American cultural imperialism were thus directed at the cowboy, the embodiment of American masculinity.⁵⁴

Akira Kurosawa regretted the violence on Japanese cinema screens that followed the release of *Yojimbo*; his influence on *A Fistful of Dollars* may also have unwittingly contributed to the brutality of westerns in both Italy and America. Sergio Leone deliberately ups the ante in his remake. In *Yojimbo*, Toshiro Mifune’s rōnin disarms the villainous gunfighter with a dagger in the film’s climax. In *A Fistful of Dollars* Clint Eastwood’s cowboy skewers a bandit with a machete. The rōnin is captured and beaten in *Yojimbo* after his scheming is discovered, but the violence is largely restrained to shots of the rōnin being thrown about by a comically giant thug. *A Fistful of Dollars* also has the hero beaten, but the sequence is considerably lengthier and more brutal. A sequence where Rojo’s men pour tequila on the fresh wounds of the nameless cowboy was censored in Britain, where the film was rated X. A shot of a burning cigar being pressed onto the captive’s hand was also cut. The escalation of violence between the two films represents more than playful one-upmanship, however. The urgency of Italy’s postwar cinema to denounce the depravity of Italy’s fascist regime through graphic visualizations of social injustice encouraged the ‘seeds of realism [...] to burst into full flower.’⁵⁵ Thus, the torture scene in *A Fistful of Dollars* is imbued with experiences of violence and confessions under duress as witnessed and remembered in fascist Italy.

⁵⁰ Austin Fisher, *Radical Frontiers*, 21.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Marcia Landy, “Which Way is America,” 40.

⁵⁴ Michael Kimmel, *The History of Men: Essays on the History of American and British Masculinities* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2005), 94.

⁵⁵ Austin Fisher, *Radical Frontiers*, 32.

Akira Kurosawa introduced the visual metaphor of a dog carrying a severed hand in its mouth, which summarized the director's intention to bite at the mythologies of traditional jidaigeki. Not to be outdone, Leone introduces the town of *A Fistful of Dollars* with a dead man propped up on his horse, wearing a poncho not dissimilar to that worn by Eastwood's character. The visual metaphor directly addresses the demise of the traditional western and its valiant cowboy - a dead archetype propped up on a dying horse that has no place in the contemporary context of clashing global powers (the township hosts a conflict between Texas gunrunners and Mexican bandits). Clint Eastwood's nameless cowboy does not comment as the deceased man passes him; he merely tilts his hat and rides on. His indifference to the morbid sight establishes the nature of his anti-hero. Prior to this encounter Eastwood's cowboy had witnessed a small boy being shot at by bandits, but he did not intervene. It would be unthinkable for a hero such as Alan Ladd's Shane to passively tolerate such behaviour (Shane's decision to defend the farming community in the 1953 film is largely due to his admiration for young Joey). Eastwood's lack of altruistic intervention directly contradicts the Cold War stance of the U.S. which had become the global watchdog protecting potential allies from the threat of communism.

In the opening sequence of *A Fistful of Dollars* it is unclear who the hero is. Clint Eastwood commented that 'you didn't know who was the hero till a quarter of the way through the film, and even then you weren't sure; you figured he was the protagonist, but only because everyone else was crappier than he was.'⁵⁶ Rather than actively construct a template of heroic masculinity, the Man with No Name becomes a hero by virtue of being less monstrous than those he kills. If Toshiro Mifune's rōnin in Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* is associated with the dog in the opening sequence, then Eastwood's cowboy is likewise linked to the dead man in the opening sequence. Like a dead man on horseback, Eastwood's drifter lacks the capacity to enforce any meaningful change on society. In the final act of the film *The Man with No Name* escapes from captivity in a coffin. When he confronts the villainous Rojo he is shot several times in the heart. Although the conceit is revealed (a plate of metal protecting his chest), the metaphor remains; the Man with No Name is like the undead, his humanity has left his corporeal body. Even though Eastwood's cowboy rides out of the town alive at the film's end, he has insured the death of the traditional cowboy archetype nonetheless. The traditional cowboy is dead, propped up by filmmakers such as Sergio Leone resolutely deconstructing a genre that had endorsed a corruptive myth of benevolent hegemonies.

⁵⁶ David L. McNaron. "From Dollars to Iron: The Currency of Clint Eastwood's Westerns," in *The Philosophy of the Western*, ed. Jennifer McMahon (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 152.

Clint Eastwood's 'Man with no Name' came to define the cowboy of the revisionist westerns at a time when John Wayne's lumbering gunslinger had become a quaint reminder of masculine values in the age of postwar consensus: 'a vision of American moral exceptionalism, sustained by unparalleled consumer power, uniting Americans against the extremist forces of communism and fascism.'⁵⁷ The characters played by Wayne had not always been upstanding gentlemen, Thomas Dunson in *Red River* (dir. Howard Hawks, 1948) is uncompromising and at times downright brutal, and Ethan Edwards in *The Searchers* (dir. John Ford, 1956) borders on savagery, but these characters had at least a moral compass to stray from as they forged the values of an exceptional nation out of savage frontier experiences. Clint Eastwood's gunman, by comparison, is morally adrift. David L. McNaron argues that the spaghetti western seemed to be an 'experiment in moral reduction, to see how much goodness could be drained from heroes and still have them retain that status.'⁵⁸ Untethered from morality, Eastwood's cowboy masculinity is able to transgress boundaries that had once been defended, if not necessarily occupied, by the cowboys of yesteryear. Maggie Günsberg argues that masculinity in *A Fistful of Dollars* is 'mobile rather than static, moving around and almost permeating a space with no boundaries,' including national borders and the threshold of the home.⁵⁹ The frontiers of American civilization, national and domestic, that had been established by moral cowboys have little meaning to the amoral cowboy. Just as easily as Eastwood's cowboy walks through these spaces, he leaves, offering little in the way of the redemptive or restorative qualities of violence that had once justified the actions of moral cowboys such as Alan Ladd's Shane.⁶⁰

Leone's rejection of America's consensus values is reflected in his indifference to the consensus genre conventions of the American western. Like Kurosawa before him, Sergio Leone immediately undermines the foundational genre tropes of *A Fistful of Dollars* with a title song consisting of the wrong instruments, in this case an electric guitar. Composed by Ennio Morricone, the title song was a rebellious response to the 'sentimental' orchestra pieces typical of American westerns.⁶¹ It is an early indication that Leone has dismissed the celebratory tone of American westerns.⁶² Informed by dedicated research into the realities of pioneer life in 19th-century America, Leone populates *A Fistful of Dollars* with ugly, unshaven and unclean characters to infuse the American myth with a touch of reality. When the film

⁵⁷ Matthew J. Costello, "Rewriting High Noon: Transformations in American Popular Political Culture During the Cold War, 1952-1968," in *Hollywood's West: The American Frontier in Film, Television, and History*, eds., Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 176.

⁵⁸ David L. McNaron, "From Dollars to Iron," 152.

⁵⁹ Maggie Günsberg, *Italian Cinema: Gender and Genre* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 185.

⁶⁰ David L. McNaron, "From Dollars to Iron," 152.

⁶¹ Christopher Frayling, "Making of *A Fistful of Dollars*," 20.

⁶² Austin Fisher, *Radical Frontiers*, 27.

received a wide U.S. release in 1967 the stark realities of America's mythic frontiers were starting to become more apparent.

Expanding upon the irreverence for the genre conventions of the western, *A Fistful of Dollars* was not only ugly; it was also extremely violent. Gunplay had featured in the earliest American westerns, Edwin S. Porter's *The Great Train Robbery* (1903) ends with a gunfight, and even John Ford had added a touch of sadism to Lee Marvin's vicious antagonist in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962), but audiences had never witnessed the spectacle of violence as depicted by Sergio Leone. In the 1960s the crisis of masculinity came to be associated with a sense that men had been emasculated by the loss of labour intensive jobs, because they 'retained a standard of masculinity better suited to the rough-and-tumble of the frontier.'⁶³ Sergio Leone suggests that the myth of the 'rough-and-tumble' frontier should have no place in setting the standards for masculinity. Before *A Fistful of Dollars*, American westerns isolated audiences from the consequences of pulling a trigger through subtle editing, which disconnected a trigger being pulled from its victim being struck.⁶⁴ Leone explicitly depicts the connection between the gun and the victim, often by placing the camera behind the pistol as it fires. Not satisfied with implicating the audience in the participation of violence, Sergio Leone also has Eastwood's pistol directed at the camera in the final shootout. *The Great Train Robbery* shocked audiences with the final reel of a bandit firing at the screen. Leone subverts this image by directing the gun of the hero at the audience to situate them as the victims of the hero's actions – the cowboy who was supposed to be a surrogate for their own desires. It is a stunning moment in the film indicative of Leone's ability to both empower and disempower the audience and their association with the violent masculinity of the cowboy.

To have Eastwood's cowboy turn his gun on the audience is to challenge the audience's identification with his character and his masculinity. The Man with no Name lacks those qualities that an audience may have once associated with the cowboy of the west, but what he does exude is a masculine presence that occupies the attention of the camera, and the gaze of the spectator, with little else to be distracted by. As Christopher Frayling observes, 'spaghetti westerns were, with one or two exceptions, a celebration of a masculine world where men were men and women – on the rare occasions they appeared – seemed to like it that way.'⁶⁵ *A Fistful of Dollars*, much like *Yojimbo*, is set in a town nearly devoid of women who may have once attracted the gaze of the cowboy, and the male audience members to

⁶³ Tim Hodgdon, *Manhood in the Age of Aquarius: Masculinity in Two Countercultural Communities, 1965-83* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), paragraph 19.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁶⁵ Christopher Frayling, *Spaghetti Westerns: Cowboys and Europeans from Karl May to Sergio Leone* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), XVI.

whom the cowboy could become a surrogate set of eyes. But, as Steven Neale explains, the *Man with no Name* offers a contradictory site of spectatorship.⁶⁶

With no one else to occupy the gaze of the viewer, Eastwood's cowboy is presented as both object and subject to the audience, but both positions become equally problematic. Steven Neale refers to the 'narcissism' of Eastwood's near silent cowboy, whose silence 'can be linked to the construction of an ideal ego.'⁶⁷ As Neale explains, this ideal ego is a response to the fear of castration, symbolized by the recognition of absence and lack that is inherent to language. However, through his silence the cowboy draws attention to the lack and to his own overwrought response to his castration-anxiety.⁶⁸ If the audience were to identify with him as a subject, they would inherit his anxiety. Furthermore, the silent cowboy and the ideal masculinity that he represents ('totally enclosed, self-sufficient, omnipotent'⁶⁹) is a model of masculinity 'to which the subject is never adequate.'⁷⁰ As if to demonstrate the failure of his own omnipotent masculinity the cowboy projects his anxiety onto the audience by pointing his gun at them, to prove the attachment of his phallic pistol which they themselves lack, and to reject being the object of the audience's gaze. However, this outward display of masculinity exposes 'his masculinity as an act, and his identification with the phallus as an allusion.'⁷¹ The moment that Eastwood's cowboy seems most powerful, and most omnipotent, he is the most vulnerable and incomplete. The film simultaneously encourages the audience to reject the cowboy as an unwilling object of desire, and to reject his entire masculine subjectivity as a charade.

In hindsight it is convenient to read *A Fistful of Dollars* as a timely deconstruction of the western genre and a rejection of its hegemonic model of masculinity just as American society had come to reject the corruptive myth of the frontier cowboy. However, the turning point for the cowboy was yet to come. Kevin Floyd convincingly identifies the 1969 Oscars ceremony as a defining moment in the legacy of the western. In this same ceremony, *Midnight Cowboy*, in which John Wayne is referred to as a "fag," won the award for best picture, while John Wayne won best actor for his role as cowboy Rooster Cogburn in *True Grit*.⁷²

⁶⁶ Dennis Bingham offers a similar reading of Eastwood's *Man with No Name* and the problematic gaze that he invites in "Men With No Names: Clint Eastwood's "The Stranger" Persona, Identification, and the Impenetrable Gaze." *Journal of Film and Video* 42, no. 4 (1990): 33-48.

⁶⁷ Steven Neale, "Prologue: Masculinity as Spectacle: Reflections on Men and Mainstream Cinema," in *Screening the Male: Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema*, eds., Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark (New York: Routledge, 1993), 12.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Arthur Brittan, *Masculinity and Power* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 9.

⁷² Kevin Floyd, "Closing the (Heterosexual) Frontier: *Midnight Cowboy* as National Allegory," *Science and Society* 65, no. 1 (2001): 100.

Coincidentally, this was the same year that Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* was released. While the explicit queering of the cowboy is significant to this transition, it is the recognition of the cowboy and his masculinity as a performative masquerade that Sergio Leone had pre-empted in 1964. Responding to Eastwood's cowboy in *A Fistful of Dollars*, Maggie Günsberg argues that 'in foregrounding masquerade and performance, parodic representation of masculinity in the end leads to an exposure, or 'making strange', of patriarchal masculinity, which manages simultaneously to glorify and ridicule it, while revealing its inherent contradictions (especially the precarious nature of masculine possession of the phallus).'⁷³ These contradictions are evident in the 1969 Oscar ceremony, but they were yet to be recognized by soldiers and protestors alike as the Vietnam War began to escalate.

On the release of *A Fistful of Dollars* in the United States in 1967, the cycle of cultural appropriation would come full circle. Many American audiences used the nihilism evident in Clint Eastwood's cowboy to articulate the growing tide of dissent following the escalation of the war in Vietnam and brutal state reactions to civil protests. Joan Mellen argues that Eastwood's 'impassive silence, while not on behalf of any political dissent – for he acts on behalf of the most violent and ruthless elements of the established order – duplicates nevertheless the spiritual mood of the sixties.'⁷⁴ It is interesting that Mellen arrives at this conclusion after having watched an edited version of Leone's film, which begins with a rare prologue specifically designed by American television networks to give Eastwood's character a moral justification for his actions – he will be freed from prison if he cleans out a corrupt village.⁷⁵ The extended version of the film was aired only once on ABC television in 1977 (the year that Mellen's book was published) and exists as a telling attempt at censorship intended to downplay the anarchic undercurrent evident in Leone's original film. However, it was the un-edited version that American audiences watched in cinemas in 1967, and its anarchic tones spoke to a generation that witnessed betrayals on either side of the picket lines.

In 1965 Paul Potter, then president of Students for a Democratic Society, concluded that the Vietnam War 'has provided the razor, the terrifying sharp cutting edge that has finally severed the last vestiges of illusions that morality and democracy are the guiding principles of American foreign policy.'⁷⁶ Something of this speech resonates in the lack of morality guiding Eastwood's cowboy as he destroys the corrupt township of San Miguel in order to save it (an approach that would become eerily prescient in Vietnam). However, the rejection of

⁷³ Maggie Günsberg, *Italian Cinema*, 186.

⁷⁴ Joan Mellen, *Big Bad Wolves: American Masculinity in Film* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 250.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 267.

⁷⁶ Trevor B. McCrisken, *American Exceptionalism and the Legacy of Vietnam: U.S. Foreign Policy Since 1974* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 26.

America's war in Vietnam did not equate to a rejection of America's cowboy. Many in the anti-war movement framed their protests in cowboy terms, as rebels in 'the badlands, looking for a place from which to hold off the forces,'⁷⁷ The connection between the anti-war movement and cowboys reflects the changing values of the 1950s western, 'which places society as the hero's enemy, to be saved despite itself.'⁷⁸ Say Burgin observes that men in the anti-war movement were no less patriarchal than their Hawkish counterparts, as 'many men found in the anti-Vietnam War arena methods for re-asserting a masculinity based on normative notions of male dominance and heterosexual relations.'⁷⁹ They took it upon themselves to enact the roles of frontier sheriffs instilling order on the borderlands between civilization and savagery. Rather than embody a cowboy fit for the left or the right, Eastwood's cowboy embodied 'manly nihilism' for young men unable to connect with any models of masculinity.

The shift in constructions of hegemonic masculinity is indicative of a shift from the Cold War concerns of the 1950s to the violent consequences that the Vietnam War would have on American society. It was a shift that often brought sons into conflict with the conservative mentalities of their fathers who refused to believe that America could be the antagonist in a war that had been framed around the Cold War conflict of good versus evil. Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* was a response to a post-war Japan torn asunder by the opposition of anti-American socialists and pro-American capitalists and the disconnection of a postwar youth culture. In America a similar rift occurred in response to the Vietnam War, in which Americans became entangled in a narrative where patriotic supporters of the war confronted unpatriotic/un-American dissenters. *A Fistful of Dollars* thus became appreciated as an anti-Vietnam film upon its release in the United States despite its apolitical narrative.⁸⁰ Sergio Leone deconstructed the American westerns that had appealed to Cold War fathers, reimagining the west as an anarchic battleground of meaningless violence that appealed to their sons.

Last Stop is Vietnam: *The Wild Bunch* (1969)

Violence in cinema is transformed by filmmakers' and audiences' experiences of violence. For American audiences in the late 1960s, escalating bodycounts in films reflected an emphasis on bodycounts in the escalating war in Vietnam. During the chaos of the Mai Lai

⁷⁷ David McNaron, "From Dollars to Iron," 151.

⁷⁸ Austin Fischer, *Radical Frontiers*, 57.

⁷⁹ Trevor McCrisken, *American Exceptionalism*, 26.

⁸⁰ D.P. Martinez, *Remaking Kurosawa*, 150.

massacre in 1969, a soldier was seen “firing his weapon from the hip, cowboy-movie style,” while another ‘jumped on a water buffalo and rode it “like a rodeo bronco rider.’”⁸¹ These men were not cowboys rescuing a wagon train from marauding savages, or gunfighters securing the safety of farmers from bandits, but their actions echoed those of a masculine ideal that society had promised they could attain in battle. In a conflict that counted success in terms of bodies, the contradictory definition of masculine virtue became apparent. These soldiers were killing women, children and the elderly, all of whom counted as enemy combatants, to inflate statistics of enemy losses. Soldiers played out their cowboy fantasies in a war that failed to deliver experiences of the frontier. Sam Peckinpah deftly visualizes the perversions of the frontier myth and the body-counts in Vietnam with the horrific opening to *The Wild Bunch*. In an attempt to capture the titular Bunch, a small township is transformed into a bloodbath as a temperance march collides with volleys of endless fire between bandits and bounty-hunters alike. The Bunch escape and the massacre, like the massacre that will close the film, proves to be futile. In *The Wild Bunch* no one benefits from violence but the buzzards.

Susan Faludi argues that ‘Vietnam would become a defining event of American masculinity, the bridge that collapsed just as the nation’s sons thought they were crossing to manhood.’⁸² The men drafted to fight in Vietnam were sold the good war narratives of masculinity that had served their fathers in World War II, the same narratives trumpeted by John Wayne in *The Green Berets*, but these narratives would be grotesquely contradicted on the television screens of Americans watching the news in their homes, and in the bitterness of returning veterans who felt betrayed by a government that had sent them to fight for a lie: the myth of the domino theory. Men who refused to fight in Vietnam abandoned the chance to become men through the experiences of combat, their own president remarked that they ‘had to squat to piss’; they would have to find another way to formulate their image of masculinity.⁸³ These men were often disowned by their fathers, who themselves had defined their masculine self-worth out of wartime experiences and an unfettered faith in America’s righteousness.⁸⁴

Sam Peckinpah’s outlaws represent the perverse extremes of the hegemonic model of cowboy masculinity at a time when men’s experiences in Vietnam and anti-war protests uncovered the inadequacies of the cowboy myth. Like Mifune’s yojimbo and Eastwood’s Man with No Name, the Bunch, led by Pike Bishop, adhere to a code of honour, but it is not a code

⁸¹ Susan Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man* (New York: W. Morrow and Co, 1999), 332.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 298.

⁸³ Say Burgin, “Understanding Antiwar Activism as a Gendering Activity: A Look at the U.S.’s Anti-Vietnam War Movement,” *Journal of International Women’s Studies* 13, no. 6 (2012): 25.

⁸⁴ Susan Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, 296.

that serves contemporary values. Jim Kitses refers to the Bunch as ‘fallen idealists’ who ‘look back to a visionary past of principles and loyalties now comprised and broken,’ just as young American men looked back to the masculinizing narratives of their fathers.⁸⁵ Without a clear moral justification for invading a country on the other side of the world, men began to sense that ‘patriarchy and male dominance doubled as code words for male disposability.’⁸⁶ Warren Farrell argues that the myth of the male hero disguises the reality that heroes are slaves.⁸⁷ With mandatory conscription into year-long tours of duty in Vietnam, service in the military became a form of slavery, and unlike the war stories of their fathers, where men sacrificed themselves willingly, these slaves were often reluctant to die for their country. Susan Jeffords argues that calendars handed out to servicemen ‘emphasized the extent to which the individual soldier’s perception of the war was focused on the immediate survival of a given number of days rather than on ‘winning.’⁸⁸ With an emphasis on surviving one’s tour of duty, group cohesion quickly gave way to individual desires for survival. An extreme consequence of this mentality was fragging, where soldiers killed their superior officers to prevent being sent into combat.⁸⁹

The lack of group cohesion amongst the soldiers fighting in Vietnam, and the subsequent loss of masculine solidarity, is expressed in the moral values attached to the Bunch. The leader of the Bunch, Pike Bishop, asserts that “when you side with a man you stay with him,” and this is a code that he will live and die by. Group cohesion is tested throughout the film, but it is the heist of an arms train that demonstrates the beauty of men cooperating in harmony. The heist requires trust in the group and the meticulous synchronization of movements captured by Peckinpah’s active camera, which unites the phases of the heist into a coherent set-piece. However, the train heist merely exemplifies the unity that is to be lost. As John M. Gourlie notes, ‘the film presents a series of abandonments in which, for one reason or another, members of the gang have been left behind.’⁹⁰ Gourlie attributes some of these abandonments to Peckinpah’s failed marriages,⁹¹ but the emphasis on cohesion and its loss resonates with the sense that America was coming apart in the 1960s and the once stable image of American masculinity, the cowboy, was not only failing to maintain a sense of cohesion but was himself coming to pieces.

⁸⁵ Jim Kitses, *Horizons West: Directing the Western from John Ford to Clint Eastwood* (London: BFI, 2004), 202.

⁸⁶ Warren Farrell, *The Myth of Male Power: Why Men are the Disposable Sex* (London: Fourth Estate, 1994), 5.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁸⁸ Quoted in Jon Robert Adams, *Male Armour: the Soldier-hero in Contemporary American Culture* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008), 73.

⁸⁹ Susan Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man*, 337.

⁹⁰ John M. Gourlie, “Peckinpah’s Epic Vision: *The Wild Bunch* and *The Ballad of Cable Hogue*,” in *Sam Peckinpah’s West: New Perspectives*, ed. Leonard Engel (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 2003), 118.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 121.

On the homefront civilians imagined the Vietnam War being fought by cohesive military units strengthened by group morale.⁹² Faith in the military as a cohesive military structure is evident in John Wayne's film, *The Green Berets* (1968), which transplants the myths of the west onto the war in Vietnam. The film's final battle sees waves of unidentifiable Vietnamese soldiers rush an isolated military outpost – not entirely dissimilar to the waves of Mexican soldiers that rush the Bunch in their last stand. Wayne rallies his troops to stave off the invaders and the scene plays out like a re-enactment of the battle of the Alamo, which itself echoed the western trope of pioneers circling their wagons to fight off 'savages'. The reality of combat in Vietnam was much different, and the film only serves to articulate the disconnection between the fantasies of the war and real experiences. But the film also emphasises the extent to which traditional cowboy mentalities had defined perceptions of the war in Vietnam as a frontier conflict between the pioneering champions of democracy and the savagery of communism.

Stephen Prince argues that the final sacrifice of the Bunch in the massacre that closes Peckinpah's film is a redemptive act with 'humanistic assertions about the importance of honor and loyalty and about the internal, psychological suffering that is the spiritual accompaniment, and consequence, of physical violence.'⁹³ Understood in the tradition of American westerns (Prince refers to Peckinpah as 'one of the last great directors of westerns'⁹⁴), the sacrifice of men in defence of their values is consistent with the heroic acts of traditional cowboys. However, the film was released in a context in which the optimistic valediction of male sacrifice was being contradicted by the escalating sense of hopelessness in Vietnam. And faith in the cohesion of male bodies had become equally problematic. In this sense, Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch* is both a celebration of manly virtues evident in the classic American western at the same time as it accepts that times have changed and those very same values no longer make sense in a world of chaos.

John Wayne's attempt to instil a sense of meaning from the sacrifices of soldiers in *The Green Berets* is contradicted in Sam Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch*, and the differences between the two films indicate the rift opening up between the cowboys of two generations of men. In her book, *Washed in Blood*, Claire Sisco King argues that male sacrifice in American films had functioned as a restaging of traumatic loss 'so that catastrophe may be reconfigured as

⁹² Jon Robert Adams, *Male Armour*, 77.

⁹³ Stephen Prince, "Savage Poet of American Cinema," in *Sam Peckinpah's The Wild Bunch*, ed. Stephen Prince (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 4.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

redemption, renewal and rebirth.’⁹⁵ John Wayne’s attempt to relocate the sacrifices at the Alamo to the battlefields of Vietnam is indicative of such a redemptive act of male sacrifice so that the traumatic loss of life could be rearticulated as the formation of a nation reborn in the Cold War. The restaging of trauma is vital because, as King explains, trauma discourse had been framed around masculinist assumptions of the subject’s whole and unified subjectivity. The loss of this unified subjectivity through acts of self-sacrifice served to valorise ‘the white male body in pain as the exemplar of the citizen-subject and the most honourable form of heroism.’⁹⁶ In contrast, Sam Peckinpah’s *The Wild Bunch* fails to articulate any sense of meaning out of the bloody sacrifice of the film’s protagonists in their final showdown with Mexican soldiers. Kjetil Rödje argues that ‘what starts as a call for moral redemption ends in a senseless bloodbath’ that does not result in the inscription of meaning but the ‘intensification of affect.’⁹⁷ Stephen Prince finds confirmation of moral values in the final sacrifice of the Bunch, but those morals are just as easily lost to the blood and chaos of penetrated bodies and dying men.

That the cowboy had come to represent the generation gap between fathers and their sons fighting in Vietnam (or fighting against the war at home), is made clear by the emphasis of age in *The Wild Bunch*. If Eastwood’s supposedly cool cowboy had reflected the nihilism of youth that young men struggled to identify with, the Bunch reflected the perverse realities of growing old as a cowboy. Judith Kegan Gardiner points out that in an oppositional construction of masculinity, the man is defined ‘not only in opposition to being a woman or a male homosexual but also in opposition to being a boy.’⁹⁸ Following the logic of a masculine hierarchy determined by age, ‘all men could presumably mature to the status of proper fathers or wise elders and so fulfil their deep need for a socially validated masculinity.’⁹⁹ For young American men in the 1960s the hallowed transition from boyhood to manhood was promised in the battlefields of Vietnam, and John Wayne’s aging patriarch seemed to validate the legitimacy of the elder cowboy even if he rejected domestication. But Peckinpah’s cowboys demonstrate the brutal consequences of the logic. More specifically, Peckinpah envisages a future for the kinds of cowboys represented by Eastwood’s indifferent Man with No Name, and the youthful recklessness celebrated by Paul Newman and Robert Redford’s *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (dir. George Roy Hill, 1969). The fate of the aged bandit is

⁹⁵ Claire Sisco King, *Washed in Blood: Male Sacrifice, Trauma, and the Cinema* (Piscataway: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 6.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁹⁷ Kjetil Rödje, *Images of Blood*, 146.

⁹⁸ Judith Kegan Gardiner, “Theorizing Age with Gender: Bly’s Boys, Feminism, and Maturity Masculinity,” in *Masculinity Studies and Feminist Theory: New Directions*, ed. Judith Kegan Gardiner (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 91.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 103.

reflected on by Eastwood himself in *Unforgiven* (1991), which in turn inspired the musings of an old samurai in the Japanese remake *Yurusarezaru Mono* (2014), both discussed in Chapter 3.

Pike Bishop (William Holden) and Dutch Engstrom (Ernest Borgnine) have lived long enough to realize that life as a gunslinger on the run has alienated them from a society that has little tolerance for non-productive men. Richard Gaughran draws attention to the setting of *The Wild Bunch* as a time of change in which Bishop and Dutch have become discarded relics. Rather than set the film in the 19th century, Peckinpah sets the film in 1913, an age of motorcars and aeroplanes, Darwinism and Freud, Marxism and Fordism.¹⁰⁰ While Dutch seems content with his lot in life, Pike is frequently reminded of missed opportunities for a domestic life, as experienced through rosy flashbacks. In the final shootout Pike is shot by a woman and then by a child as if to punish him for the domestic life he never lived. And the Bunch continuously lament that the foiled robbery that opens the film was supposed to be their last, although the possibility of hanging up their boots is firmly rejected. These cowboys have chosen a life of violence, and they are fated to exist in a world of violence. This is the consequence of being a man if being a man is to follow the masculine ethos of the frontier cowboy. Pike and his men stick to their guns to the bitter end, but the final massacre is as emasculating as it is redundant. Pike dies with his hand clutching the handle of a machine gun, as if to become a monument to the undying masculinity of the cowboy, but the wild general Mapache had already clownishly fired the weapon from his waist in a masculine masquerade that had robbed the weapon of any of its phallic resonance. Like the rest of his Bunch, Pike clutches desperately to a remnant of the cowboy masculinity, but Peckinpah denies them any chance of redemption, and any hope of validating their missed opportunities to be real men.

Where some have attempted to instil some sense of elegiac triumphalism in the climactic sacrifice of the Bunch, I see only the hapless death throes of the cowboy at the end of his rope. In *Yojimbo* the cooper is asked to prepare two coffins in preparation for a swordfight in the film's opening. Leone makes it three. Not to be outdone, Sam Peckinpah begins *The Wild Bunch* with the massacre of over a dozen innocent bystanders. Bodies, and even body parts, had become emblematic of victory in Vietnam; Sam Peckinpah extrapolates this mentality to a horrific extreme, concluding *The Wild Bunch* with an orgy of violence that is as brutal as it is senseless, for although the bodycount nears the hundreds, there is no

¹⁰⁰ Richard Gaughran, "'Back Off to What?'" The Search for Meaning in *The Wild Bunch*," in *Philosophy of the Western*, eds., Jennifer McMahon, Steve B. Csaki and Karen Hoffman (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 204.

indication that the ultimate sacrifice of the protagonists has resolved anything. To denounce the madness of the 1960s, Peckinpah opens *The Wild Bunch* with an image of children torturing scorpions as the scorpions are slowly dismembered by ants. Like the wild dog of *Yojimbo*, and the dead man on horseback in *A Fistful of Dollars*, it is an image that establishes the message of the movie: American cowboys are scorpions being fed to the ants by amoral masters, their deaths ultimately serving little purpose beyond the thrill of those orchestrating the conflict.

Closing the New Frontier

A Fistful of Dollars launched Clint Eastwood's career in the United States and influenced a wave of hybrid westerns that fused the American myth with the rebellious energy of the spaghetti western, such as Sam Peckinpah's ultra-violent *The Wild Bunch*. But this genre hybridity proved to be a death-knell for the American western, for it required the deconstruction of traditional western tropes which encouraged self-parody and farce, culminating in films such as Mel Brooks' 1974 comedy, *Blazing Saddles*, and numerous farcical spaghetti westerns. Clint Eastwood continued to star in and direct westerns, but he became better known for his leading role as a vigilante cop in *Dirty Harry* (1971), which coincided with former cowboy star Charles Bronson rebranding himself as a vigilante husband in *Death Wish* (1974). The traditional cowboy embodied by John Wayne had come to represent the archaic Cold War mentalities of fathers who had needlessly sent their sons to war in Vietnam. Critical approaches to the warring cowboy archetype undermined these mentalities by exaggerating the anarchic violence wrought by the gun through displays of hypermasculinity. Many young men realized that conforming to the cowboy model of hegemonic masculinity equated with complicity in the values of an old generation that were no longer relevant. Hybrid manifestations of masculinity which required the fusion of pacifism, femininity and aggression had no referent in the rigid, hegemonic model of the cowboy. Demetrakis Demetriou suggests that masculinity has always been a hybrid bloc, but the cowboys and samurai of the 1960s were just as likely to resist the patriarchy as be a part of its hybridized evolutions.

Jidaigeki and American westerns did not vanish after the 1960s, but their popularity certainly waned. Samurai and cowboys became more violent and withdrawn, and their antipathy towards women also became more pronounced as they viciously reacted to their own redundancy. They were figures that had once defined the mythical qualities of nationalized

masculine solidarity, leaving little room for self-reflexive critique. To critique these archetypes was to critique the fundamental ideologies of the nation and its role in the world. Experiences of men throughout the 1960s in both Japan and the United States undermined national narratives of homogeneity and supremacy at the same time as men were confronted with the realization that the meaning and performance of manhood were being transformed.

Chapter 3

Cowboys and Indians and Samurai: Negotiating Masculinities through Racial Difference

The three films discussed in this chapter re-enact 19th-century encounters between the East and West as encounters between cowboy and samurai masculinities in order to draw parallels to the bilateral relationship of the postwar period. Just as the U.S. and Japan developed (unbalanced) trade in the 19th century, the late-postwar period witnessed the growth of the U.S. and Japan as allied economic superpowers. If the tentative step towards postwar reconciliation was reflected in the American remakes of Japanese jidaigeki, as discussed in Chapter 2, then the meeting of cowboys and samurai on screen is the reification of the bilateral relationship. *Red Sun* (dir. Terence Young, 1971) and *East Meets West* (dir. Kihachi Okamoto, 1995) are loosely inspired by the 1860 and 1872 Japanese embassies to the U.S., while *Yurusarezaru Mono* (dir. Sang-II Lee, 2014) reinterprets Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven* (1991) to problematize the colonization of Hokkaido during the Meiji Restoration. The unification of the East and the West that is visualized by the meeting of the cowboy and samurai on screen is complicated by the visibility of Indigenous populations that had largely been erased from 19th-century narratives of the U.S. and Japan. While Japan's attempt to Westernize in the Meiji Period made apparent the imbrication of civilization with white supremacy, the displaced Indigenous populations of both the U.S. and Japan came to represent the ultimate Other against whom the cowboy and samurai could distinguish themselves. The visible Native Americans in *Red Sun* and *East meets West*, and Ainu in *Yurusarezaru Mono* problematize the rigid boundaries between the self and the other that the meetings of cowboys and samurai attempt to resolve. What ought to be the reconciliation of difference in the service of bilateral relations, becomes the destabilization of masculine identities that must recognize and live with the visible multiplicities of the self and the nation.

Othering and otherness frame this chapter. When the cowboy and samurai encounter each *other* on screen they represent the meeting point of nations that had been diametrically opposed as enemies in the Pacific War and as representatives of the polarities of East and West, masculine and feminine. The Asian Other exists to normalize the sexual prowess of American white masculinity just as the American man had initially been forged through his

encounters with the Indigenous ‘savage’ of the frontier.¹ Western masculinity, as constructed by what it is not (feminine, barbaric, heathen), encounters its antecedent in the Asian man and the Indigenous other. David L. Eng in the introduction to *Racial Castration* asks if being oriental is ‘the antithesis of manhood, of masculinity,’² and yet during the Meiji period the antithesis of Japanese masculinity had been Western material culture.³ Both the U.S. and Japan had reason to imagine the other as feminine, the self as masculine, while committing men to perform ideals of masculinity in the service of rapidly modernizing nations. The nature of the oppositional framework between the U.S. and Japan would shift over time, but a masculine hierarchy remains in contention when the cowboy and samurai encounter the other.

When the cowboy, samurai and the Indigenous other meet, the binary opposition of self/other is insufficient and the process of negotiation is more applicable. The appearance of the samurai in the American west challenges what Jim Kitses identifies as one of the unifying thematic and ideological staples of the western genre: ‘the frontier’s dialectical play of forces embodied in the master binary opposition of the wilderness and civilisation.’⁴ Within this binary the savage Indian and Mexican bandit belonged to the wilderness⁵, and for a time the Japanese had been regarded as similarly uncivilized. However, the journey west by a Japanese delegation in 1860 to promote modernization and to ratify unequal treaties with the American “barbarians”⁶ unsettled such simple distinctions. The distinction between self and other, white civilization and savagery, was further destabilized when the Japanese delegation identified with Native Americans despite aligning themselves with the civilized ‘whiteness’ of their Anglo American hosts. Krestlin Knopf argues that *othered* groups ‘continually reinterpret ethnic identity and negotiate new ethnic groups and identities in processes of assimilation, hybridization, modernization, and the reincorporation and maintenance of traditional traits.’⁷ When the cowboy and samurai meet, the West no longer represents a stable boundary between civilization and savagery, although its seminal importance to the foundational myths of Western expansion makes it an ideal location for such encounters.

¹ Karen Kuo, *East is West and West is East: Gender, Culture, and Interwar Encounters Between Asia and America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012), 5.

² David L. Eng, *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 1.

³ Jason G. Karlin, “The Gender of Nationalism: Competing Masculinities in Meiji Japan,” in *Gender and Japanese Society: Critical Concepts in Asian Studies, Volume II*, ed. D.P. Martinez (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 65.

⁴ Jim Kitses, *Horizons West: Directing the Western from John Ford to Clint Eastwood* (London: BFI, 2004), 13.

⁵ Michael Richardson, *Otherness in Hollywood Cinema* (New York: Continuum Publishing, 2010), 34.

⁶ Paul Varley, *Japanese Culture* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2000), 236.

⁷ Kerstin Knopf, *Decolonizing the Lens of Power: Indigenous Films in North America* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), 44.

Fluid boundaries and expansive frontiers demand mutable identities, which is problematic for the hegemonic unity that defines the ideal cowboy and samurai. America's west, that defining American experience, loses its cultural specificity and fixity, as does the "closed" frontier of isolationist Japan, when rigid boundaries of the self prove to be leaky and unstable. In their introduction to *Shock of the Other*, Esther Peeren and Silke Horstkotte argue that 'far from representing a safe haven where otherness can be evaded, place becomes the site of the confrontation and negotiation with the other, the stake of the identity/alterity intersection.'⁸ The frontiers of the cowboy as represented in *Red Sun* and *East Meets West*, and the frontier of Japanese expansion into Hokkaido in *Yurusarezareu Mono*, operate as places of intersection and negotiation with the other in an historical context of nation-building, which was prefaced on the construction and cementation of national boundaries. But as Peeren and Horstkotte contend, 'places change and so do the identities associated with them,' an axiom that is confronted by the cowboys, samurai and Indigenous populations in the films of this chapter.⁹

Intersections of place, gender and race necessitate not only malleable identity constructions, but also recognition of the displaced and overlooked ethnicities at the meeting point of frontiers – the marginalized voices of peoples forced to adapt to imperialistic encroachment, or else be erased from national narratives altogether. This chapter offers an account of the historical and cinematic encounters between cowboys, samurai and Indigenous populations as an opportunity to address the 'erasure of otherness,' a phrase used by Armando Jose Prats.¹⁰ The erasure of otherness established the primacy of the cowboy and samurai as hegemonic masculine archetypes. For the cowboy of America's west, 'defeated savagery would henceforth blazon the nation's greatness.'¹¹ In Japan, the overlooked history of the displaced Ainu contradicted the supposed homogeneity of the nation, which the pure lineage of samurai warriors had come to represent. Asian Americans and Zainichi Koreans do not feature in the three films of this chapter, although their marginalization in the dominant narratives of the U.S. and Japan, respectively, suggest that parallels can be made between the marginalization of Indigenous and other groups. The treatment of the samurai in the cowboy's west is indicative of the way Japanese immigrants have been othered in American society, while the lack of Chinese characters in *Red Sun* and *East Meets West* is telling considering their prevalence in the historical context of Western expansion. Director Sang-Il Lee's

⁸ Silke Horstkotte and Esther Peeren, *The Shock of the Other: Situating Alterities* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 11.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Armando Jose Prats, *Invisible Natives: Myth and Identity in the American Western* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 224.

¹¹ Ibid.

identification with Zainichi Koreans infuses *Yurusarezaru Mono* with a subtext of marginalization beyond the treatment of the Ainu during the Meiji Period. Sang-Il Lee establishes intersections between the Native American experience, the erasure of the Ainu and the subsequent (mis)treatment of other minorities in Japan.

I do not intend to further erase the distinct experiences of Indigenous groups by establishing cross-cultural parallels between Native Americans and Ainu. Instead, I will analyse how these cross-cultural parallels appear in film, and how the Indigenous Other has been made visible in order to mobilize the negotiation of cowboy and samurai masculinities with the identities of non-hegemonic others. To follow the seminal work of Stuart Hall, I want to work ‘with and through difference [...] without suppressing the real heterogeneity of interests and identities’ that complicate the East/West binary and encounters with ethnic others.¹² Jodi Byrd refers to the ‘horizontal struggles among peoples with competing claims to historical oppressions,’ and as the cowboy and samurai defined their hegemonic masculinities through the domination of others, they bore witness to the historical oppressions of Native Americans and the Ainu alike.¹³ The cowboy and samurai had represented masculine ideals of hegemonic dominance for American and Japanese audiences, but counter-narratives produced by marginalized groups challenged the cultural infrastructures and masculine imperatives that legitimized this dominance. The waning hegemony of cowboys and samurai, their disappearance from cinema screens, and the masculine crises associated with their loss intersect with the marginalized masculinities of Indigenous groups.

The first two films discussed in this chapter negotiate difference by employing Native Americans as templates of an uncontested otherness in which the Japanese and Americans can establish their relative racial and masculine identity. In these instances of negotiation the Native American is a passive observer to the dominant interaction between the cowboy and samurai masculinities. However, in *Yurusarezaru Mono* the Indigenous natives of Hokkaido, the Ainu, are able to speak for themselves. In this instance it becomes clear that negotiating racial and masculine difference is a colonial prerogative premised on policies of assimilation and submission. When the Indigenous population speaks, identities are no longer negotiated; they are defended and points of difference are staunchly articulated.

¹² Stuart Hall, “New Ethnicities,” in *“Race”, Culture, and Difference*, eds., James Donald and Ali Rattansi (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1992), 255.

¹³ in Cari M. Carpenter and K. Hyoejin Yoon, “Rethinking Alternative Contact in Native American and Chinese Encounters: Juxtaposition in Nineteenth-Century US Newspapers,” *College Literature* 41, no. 1 (2014): 9.

The Red Sun Rises in the West

Red Sun (1971) stars Charles Bronson, Toshiro Mifune, Alain Delon and Ursula Andress. It was marketed as the first East-meets-West western, although it was arguably the second, after *The Horseman and the Samurai* (dir. Luigi Vanzi, 1968). Hollywood westerns may have been in decline, but the popularity of Euroasian hybrid-westerns, inspired by the success of kung-fu cinema, resulted in a number of East-meets-West crossovers before and after *Red Sun*'s international release.¹⁴ The marketing for *Red Sun* draws attention to the East/West binary as a significant element of the film and frames the central confrontation between the cowboy and samurai as an encounter with the unfamiliar other. However, the international cast and the 'Spanish-Italian-French' production, helmed by a British filmmaker who was born in Shanghai, denies the simplicity of an East meets West binary in which America is largely absent.

Red Sun opens with captions stating that the film is set one decade after Japan first visited the U.S. in 1860, which roughly situates the film within the context of the 1871 Iwakura Mission. In *Red Sun* the delegation, which consists of an ambassador and two samurai, are travelling to Washington to deliver a ceremonial sword to the President. In reality, the Iwakura Mission, named after ambassador plenipotentiary Tomomi Iwakura, consisted of forty-six members of the Meiji Government. Their 'ostensible objective was to revise the unequal treaties ratified and exchanged in Washington by the first Tokugawa mission to America in 1860.'¹⁵ Revising the unequal treaties would establish equality between Japan and the West and fortify the legitimacy of the Meiji Government. In order to revise the unequal treaties Japan first needed to meet the standards of the civilized West. The primary intention of the Iwakura Mission 'was to discover conditions in the West and adapt these to Japan' in order to meet these standards of civilization.¹⁶ The embassy consisted of 'powerful members of the Meiji government,' men who were sincere in their desire to learn from Western powers to benefit an emerging imperial nation.¹⁷

The simplified East/West binary has often been presented as a 'personal encounter with the bizarre, the exotic, the other' in an attempt to stabilize the singularity of the East and

¹⁴ Kevin Grant, *Any Gun can Play: The Essential Guide to Euro-westerns* (Godalming: Fab Press, 2011), 318.

¹⁵ Sukehiro Hirakawa, *Japan's Love-Hate Relationship with the West* (Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2005), 79.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Akira Tanaka, "Introduction." In *The Iwakura Embassy, 1871-73: A True Account of the Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary's Journey of Observation Through the United States of America and Europe*, eds., Graham Healey and Chushichi Tsuzuki (Chiba, Japan: The Japan Documents, 2002), xvii.

the West.¹⁸ The Iwakura Mission to the U.S. destabilized the broad associations between Western civilization and Eastern savagery due to Japan's desire to disassociate itself from other occupied Asian nations such as India and China. Tomomi Iwakura was acutely aware that he was representing Japan's Meiji Government, and in order to revise Japan's global position vis-à-vis the west he needed to be taken seriously as a civilized, modern man. Iwakura had initially been impressed by the delegation's reception in the U.S. until he realized that he had been attracting attention as an 'object of curiosity' due to his 'peculiar hair style and exotic garb.' To avoid being identified as an exotic other Iwakura 'cut off his top-knot and took to wearing Western clothes.'¹⁹ Iwakura did not travel to the U.S. to placate a Western desire for spectacle and so he avoided any markers of self-orientalization.²⁰

Tomomi Iwakura consciously rejected signs of his otherness as a Japanese man in the U.S., but this does not translate to *Red Sun*, which frames the samurai as a symbol of the exotic, feminized orient. Bilateral relations between the U.S. and Japan had contradicted stable binaries of self-identification, but as Jeanette Roan argues, the cinematic medium is a 'uniquely powerful means of representing the Far East as distant, and distinct, from the United States in every way.'²¹ Toshiro Mifune's samurai is introduced as a foreign object to be observed when he first appears in the film, in sharp contradistinction to the opening shot of Charles Bronson's cowboy, which is integrated into the landscape of the west as he rides on horseback. Before we see Mifune's samurai a soldier remarks, "God almighty, just you look at that," which instructs the camera to pan and direct the gaze of the viewer towards the source of fascination. Once the viewer has witnessed the exotic samurai in his kimono, the camera cuts to the gaze of the cowboy, whose eyes follow the direction of the previous panning shot. Bronson's intense gaze is framed as if he were setting eyes on a beautiful woman; when Mifune notices that the cowboy is staring at him, Bronson sheepishly looks away. The viewer is encouraged to associate with the cowboy as the site of the familiar, civilized and masculine source of hegemonic entitlement. The samurai is positioned as alterior, a foreign object juxtaposed against the familiar western setting despite the convivial nature of the 1871 embassy and the 1971 release date of the film, by which time Japan had firmly established itself as a global economic and cultural power.

¹⁸ Kevin M. Doak, "Romancing the East, Rejecting the West: Japanese Intellectuals' Responses to Modernity in the Early Twentieth Century," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 26, no. 3 (2006): 402.

¹⁹ Kazuo Ogura, *Japan of the East, Japan of the West: Styles of International Negotiation and Japan's Response* (Christchurch, New Zealand: Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology, 2000), 114.

²⁰ See Yoshiharu Tezuka for a discussion of Japan's self-Orientalist strategies regarding its consumption in the West in *Japanese Cinema Goes Global: Filmworkers' Journeys* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011), 26

²¹ Jeanette Roan, *Envisioning Asia: On Location, Travel, and the Cinematic Geography of U.S. Orientalism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 8.

Visibility of the masculine body establishes a hierarchy of masculine entitlement in *Red Sun* in what Martti Lahti calls ‘the connection between masculinity and the regime of the visible.’²² Demonstrations of physical dominance and contestations over the gaze articulate ‘tensions between fantasies of power and powerlessness’ played out on the bodies of the cowboy and samurai.²³ The gaze is established in the first encounter with the samurai and it remains coveted throughout the film. Charles Bronson sheds his clothes midway through the film after fighting Mifune’s samurai in a watering hole. The two men tussle in a battle of domination and submission, which leaves the samurai nearly drowned and panting for breath. It is an erotic encounter. Both men are wet and dripping and Bronson removes his shirt to reveal his chiselled form, while the samurai sits beneath him in the frame. Mifune’s samurai does not look at Bronson’s body; it is being displayed for the pleasure of the audience. The next shot has Mifune unsheathe his blade to reassert his masculinity and his potential to penetrate, but it is a masculinized self-image that limits Japanese masculine display to the sword rather than the body. When Mifune’s samurai is killed in the climactic battle of the film, his body is buried and it is the samurai sword that remains as the closing image of the film.

Red Sun opens with the introduction of the samurai and ends with his disappearance from the western landscape, leaving only a samurai sword suspended from telegraph lines as proof that he ever existed. It is an inversion of the technique through which the Indian is introduced to the cinematic frontier but it amounts to a similar trajectory of exclusion. The Indian of American westerns threatens whiteness as an unseen presence, a residual trace of savagery inherent within the untamed landscape of the frontier itself. The arrival of the samurai and the gaze that he excites when he disembarks the locomotive distances the Japanese warrior from the otherness of the Indian by virtue of being seen. In *Red Sun* the first sign of Indians is an arrow lodged into a chair in the ruins of a village – the threat that savagery will unseat civilization. The arrow marks the presence of the Indian, although none are physically present. Armando Jose Prats refers to this technique as the ‘*defining synecdoche*’ since it presents the Indian in such a way as to already secure his defeat and guarantee his disappearance.²⁴ The Indian is rendered invisible because his absence is evidence of the successful conquest of the frontier. *Red Sun* similarly closes with a shot of a samurai sword which acts as a *defining synecdoche* of the Japanese presence in the west. The Japanese body of representation arrives in the west to announce its stake in the globalizing expansion of the frontier, but only synecdochal evidence of the samurai’s existence remains.

²² Martti Lahti, “Sylvester Stallone’s Body: “A Peculiar, Not to Say Pathological, Interest”,” in *Bending Bodies: Moulding Masculinities Vol. 2*, eds. Soren Ervo and Thomas Johansson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 140.

²³ *Ibid.*, 141.

²⁴ Armando Prats, *Invisible Natives*, 27.

The purpose of the samurai as other to the cowboy is to establish the primacy of white masculinity, which first requires colour coding the Japanese man as something other than white. In the cowboy's mythical battle over the contested frontier the struggle 'determined in many ways the definition of white manhood and the shape and content of American national and thus, masculine, identity.'²⁵ That the cowboy is white is rarely contested in the myth of the frontier despite the realities of ranch life.²⁶ Colour distinctions are imperative, and yet in *Red Sun* the binary systems of colour compartmentalization disintegrate even as the film attempts to enforce them. Charles Bronson plays the cowboy, the pinnacle of white masculinity, and yet Bronson was born of Lithuanian parents and his skin tone matches that of Toshiro Mifune. Western observers at the time of Japan's 19th century encounters with the U.S. and Europe commented on the light skin of the Japanese. When the Japanese first visited the U.S. in 1860 a writer described a member of the Japanese embassy as "almost Caucasian in his complexion."²⁷ In the diegesis of the film the colour comparison is not made between the American cowboy and the samurai, but by a Mexican prostitute who says to the samurai, "you are very beautiful; your skin is almost the same colour as mine." *Red Sun* distances the samurai from whiteness in an attempt to simplify a binary opposition that his presence has disturbed, even if the visual evidence of his similarity to Charles Bronson undermines the attempt at colour distinctions.

Attempts to situate the colour, sexuality and gender of the samurai throughout *Red Sun* ultimately require the samurai to be defined by what he is not: a savage Indian. Ambiguities of race, gender and sexuality introduced by the samurai are simplified for the Indians who represent an absence of civilization. John E. O'Connor explains that Native Americans were reduced to stereotypes of savagery so that audiences could easily decide 'which characters were good and which were evil (white hats or black?).'²⁸ In *Red Sun* these simplified signifiers of morality and civilization are employed to quell the problematic presence of the samurai. The conniving villain of the film, played by Alain Delon, wears black, and the Native Americans fulfil their role as antecedents to the righteousness of the white cowboy. The samurai participates in the masculinizing ritual of the frontier by killing Indians alongside the

²⁵ David Anthony, Tyeeme Clark and Joane Nagel, "White men, Red Masks: Appropriations of "Indian" Manhood in Imagined Wests," in *Across the Great Divide: Cultures of Manhood in the American West*, eds. Matthew Basso, Laura McCall and Dee Garceau (New York: Routledge, 2001), 111.

²⁶ Jacqueline Moore, *Cow Boys and Cattle Men: Class and Masculinities on the Texas Frontier, 1865-1900* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 9.

²⁷ Gary P. Leupp, *Interracial Intimacy in Japan: Western Men and Japanese Women, 1543-1900* (London: Continuum, 2003), 128.

²⁸ John E. Conner, "The White Man's Indian: An Institutional Approach," in *Hollywood's Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film*, ed. Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003), 33.

cowboy, an act that temporarily invites his 'entry into the "white club" of Western nations.'²⁹ The samurai does not kill the Indians to defend civilization, but by participating in their demise he proves that he is not a threat to it, nor is he a threat to the white women of the civilized world.

In the literature and films of East/West encounters Japanese women are frequently depicted as 'childlike, naïve, undemanding and sexually cooperative,' a threat to white men as a temptation and little else.³⁰ Japanese men posed a more substantial threat to 'white women and the production of white families,' and so the samurai's appearance in the west must be tempered in *Red Sun*.³¹ It is a Mexican prostitute, not a 'pure and virtuous American woman,' that the samurai beds.³² Toshiro Mifune brings an established masculine virtuosity to *Red Sun*; however, in his encounter with the cowboy he is transformed into a transsexual anomaly. The Mexican prostitute feminizes the samurai by commenting on the "beauty" of his skin. Bronson's cowboy refers to the samurai as 'men dressed up like women.' The condescending remark is obvious in its recognition of difference, but it also alludes to the othered, feminized masculinity of the Japanese: East meets West and men become women. Mifune's samurai is no longer a threat to white women because he does not have the requisite masculine properties to be considered hypermasculine or sexually voracious.

As in numerous westerns before *Red Sun* the untamed savagery of the Indian poses the most substantial threat to a white woman, played by Ursula Andress in the film. Andress was not only a white woman with platinum blonde hair, but the first Bond Girl and a symbol of sexual desire at the time. Andress plays Christina, a feisty prostitute and companion to Alain Delon's villain. Prior to encountering the Indians Christina pulls a gun on Bronson's cowboy, but the gun is not loaded. Her attempt at appropriating the phallus fails in the presence of a real man. In the following scene she is accosted by a group of Indians, one of whom attempts to rape her. In a moment of desperation Christina stabs her assailant with his own knife, reversing the violent act of penetration and granting her more phallic power than her assailant. Unlike Bronson's cowboy, the savage Indian is not a real man and so Christina usurps his masculine role. Christina is then accosted by a group of Indians who attempt to asphyxiate her, which mirrors the near-drowning of the samurai in the frustrated erotic encounter between the cowboy and samurai in the watering hole. The Native Americans are sexually threatening, but they are proven to be impotent and Christina is swiftly rescued by the cowboy and samurai.

²⁹ Alastair Bonnett, "A White World? Whiteness and the Meaning of Modernity in Latin America and Japan," in *Working Through Whiteness: International Perspectives*, ed. Cynthia Levine-Rasky (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 95.

³⁰ Gary P. Leupp, *Interracial Intimacy in Japan*, 178.

³¹ Karen Kuo, *East is West and West is East*, 6.

³² Armando Prats, *Invisible Natives*, 49.

It is during the ritualized slaughter of nameless, asexual Native Americans that the relative phallic capability of the samurai is negotiated with the cowboy. It is made clear in *Red Sun* that the samurai does not understand how to use firearms, which remain attached to the cowboy throughout the film. In the historical context the Japanese had been using Dutch-made rifles since 1543 and guns had been associated with masculinity and masculine tasks since their introduction.³³ By 1872, the year of the Iwakura Embassy to the U.S., Japan had established a conscription army consisting of riflemen. In *Red Sun* Charles Bronson's cowboy patronizingly remarks to the samurai: "wish you could use one of these [a rifle], maybe someday I'll teach you." The cowboy could just as easily be talking about the samurai's penis, for he makes a similar comment in the brothel, asking if the samurai can "handle" the prostitute. By limiting the samurai to the use of the sword, he is constrained within a particular image of masculinity that is locked in the exotic past of the orient, although Mifune's swordsmanship distinguishes him from the clumsy savagery of the tomahawk-wielding Indians. Mastery of the revolver becomes an extension of the cowboy and his masculine body, whereas the samurai sword becomes a synecdoche enclosing and limiting all of Japanese-ness.

Red Sun problematically negotiates the position of the Japanese samurai within binary systems that fail to account for his appearance in the Wild West. As a master swordsman the samurai offers a compelling vision of warrior masculinity, and yet as a Japanese man his masculinity must be undermined so as not to unsettle the primacy of the white cowboy. A transsexual samurai is implied, rendering the samurai's gender and sexuality ambiguous. Ambiguity also frames the relative modernity of the samurai, who arrives by train but does not understand rifles. The identity of the samurai could have remained ambiguous were it not for the threatening quality of ambiguity. Ambiguous identities transgress the rigid boundaries that stabilized the racial hierarchy of white supremacy and hegemonic masculinity, which the cinematic western, and the mythic frontier, had traditionally upheld. Therefore the samurai is contrasted to the tropes of the savage Indian, but this threatens to position the Indian as other to both the cowboy and the samurai, a binary pairing that dissolves the otherness of the samurai. Unable to resolve the ambiguities, the samurai is ultimately removed from the west, leaving only a trace of his manhood behind.

Red Sun failed to make a significant impact upon release in 1971, although the pairing of Charles Bronson and Toshiro Mifune was an important moment in the relationship between the cowboy and the samurai and to a lesser extent between the samurai and the Indigenous

³³ Anne Walthall, "Do Guns Have Gender? Technology and Status in Early Modern Japan," in *Gender and Japanese Society: Critical Concept in Asian Studies Vol. 2*, ed. Dolores P. Martinez (New York: Routledge, 2014), 99.

population of the U.S. Despite the moderate success of *Red Sun*, it was imitated by Sergio Corbucci in his spaghetti-western comedy *The White, The Yellow The Black* (1975), which starred Eli Wallach (who also appeared in *The Magnificent Seven*) and Tomas Milian. Kevin Grant dismisses this film due to its ‘gross insensitivity and cheap stereotyping,’ but he does concede that the film was a success at the box office and became Corbucci’s highest grossing western.³⁴ The primary source of insensitivity is the casting of Cuban-born actor Tomas Milian as the Japanese samurai. Crude make-up and offensive pseudo-Japanese dialogue undermine the politics of the East/West encounter in the film, which nevertheless offers a queer interaction between the samurai and the west worthy of future study. Racial passing and drag occur so frequently in the film that in one scene Tomas Milian’s Japanese samurai performs as a male geisha, or *onnagata*,³⁵ alongside Eli Wallach in drag, in an attempt to discover the location of white bandits who are passing as Native Americans. The scene is crude and performed as farce, but the conflation of gendered and racial passing at the intersection of the East and West makes it one of the more interesting scenes in an otherwise forgettable film. Despite its financial success, Grant is right to criticize the film for its abundance of regressive and racist elements and it is worth mentioning primarily for its proximity to *Red Sun* and as a curio of the encounters between cowboys and samurai in the 1970s.

All Signs Point East/West

East Meets West (dir. Kihachi Okamoto, 1995) stars Hiroyuki Sanada as a rōnin of the Mito domain travelling with the 1860 embassy to the United States. It was filmed in New Mexico with an American and Japanese crew but was never released in the U.S. It is director Kihachi Okamoto’s penultimate picture in a career that began in the 1950s. Its limited release and relative obscurity diminish its significance to the ongoing cultural exchange between Japan and the U.S., but it does revisit the encounter between the cowboy and samurai that started with *Red Sun*. Unlike *Red Sun* and *The White, The Yellow, The Black*, Okamoto’s film radically repositions Japan’s role in the East/West binary by offering a Japanese perspective of East/West interactions. The samurai is constructed as a dominant figure in the Wild West, which undermines the patronising role of the American cowboy as a father figure to the childlike Japanese. Repositioning the Japanese samurai in the West also aligns the Japanese

³⁴ Kevin Grant, *Any Gun can Play*, 329.

³⁵ Samuel L. Leiter, “From Gay to Gei: The Onnagata and the Creation of Kabuki’s Female Characters,” *Comparative Drama* 33, no. 4 (1999-2000): 495.

with Native Americans in an allegiance that critiques the perpetual foreignness of the non-white other in the U.S.

An extended voice-over introduces the historical context of *East Meets West* to ground the film in past reality while the fictional elements reflect the position of contemporary Japan. On February 13, 1860, members of the Japanese embassy left Yokohama on the USS Powhatan, an American frigate named after the father of Pocahontas. The Powhatan had accompanied Matthew Perry's voyage to Japan in 1854, and it had hosted the signing of the Harris Treaty in 1858, making it a vessel laden with symbolic resonances.³⁶ The embassy was followed by the Dutch-made Kanrin Maru, which served as an escort, bringing the total retinue to over 170 men. The Japanese spoke Dutch but not English, which limited the extent of the cross-cultural interactions between the American hosts and the Japanese guests, and strict curfews limited the freedom of delegates to explore the idiosyncrasies of Western life.³⁷

The film repurposes America's frontier for the experiences of the Japanese delegation, offering Japan an active role in the history of the U.S. It is one of the few films to dramatize the 1860 Japanese embassy to the U.S., which is often overshadowed by the significance of the Iwakura Mission that followed a decade later. Whereas the Iwakura Mission of 1872 promoted the modernization of Japan, the 1860 embassy marked the reluctant ratification of an unequal treaty with the U.S. in an expedition marred by assassination plots and anti-Western sentiment. The Tokugawa Shogunate's policy of isolation had been infiltrated by Dutch learning prior to 1860, but it was the voyage west that introduced Japan to global frontiers and the germination of an East Asian manifest destiny. For the Tokugawa Shogunate the embassy represented the power of Japan rather than the inevitability of Westernization.³⁸ The representation of power was the principle aim, because in reality the Japanese delegation knew very little about the Americans, their culture, or their language, and it was not until the Iwakura Mission that the Japanese were aware of the extent of their unequal trading relationship with the U.S.³⁹ What the embassy did achieve was the reciprocation of a transnational crossing that threatened to position Japan as an extension of America's East Asian ambitions.

Like *Red Sun* before it, *East Meets West* invents a heist plot that necessitates the action of a samurai warrior to restore the honour and integrity of Japan and its sacrosanct masculinity. The heist itself is a subtle critique of American exploitation, past and present.

³⁶ Masao Miyoshi, *As We Saw Them: The First Japanese Embassy to the United States, 1860* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 3.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 35.

³⁸ Masao Miyoshi, *As We Saw Them*, 28.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

Bandits dress as bankers and deceive the Japanese delegation into a duplicitous exchange, a situation that mirrors the unequal treaty the Japanese delegates were ratifying in 1860. The value of Japan's currency and the exchange rate with the U.S. is a running theme throughout the film despite its seeming insignificance to the plot. Japan's exchange rate with the U.S. did have disastrous consequences for Japan's economy in the 1860s. After Japan's borders were opened for trade, foreigners bought and sold Japanese gold for huge profits. Masao Miyoshi refers to these traders as 'rude and greedy,' and while their exploitative methods went largely unpunished in history, Okamoto rewrites the narrative to empower the violent interjection of the samurai.⁴⁰ The heist plot resonates with Japan's trade policies of the late 20th century. In 1995, fifty years after the end of the Pacific War, Japan defended its particular form of capitalism from American intervention.⁴¹ The capitalist cowboy was forced to accommodate reciprocal exchange with the samurai. Empowering the samurai's position in the west occurs within a larger realignment of the East/West binary.

Okamoto's retelling of the 1860 embassy opens with a signpost in New Mexico pointing to East and West. Strong winds rattle the sign to suggest its instability. A reverse-shot of the back of the sign reverses the direction of East and West, rendering the sign arbitrary and useless. Perspective determines direction and director Okamoto intends to displace the privileged position of the west as the centre of the world. Place becomes 'multiple, shifting, and invariably relational' in Okamoto's film as a riposte to Japan's relegation to foreignness within a global directionality that had been dominated by the hegemony of the U.S. and the west.⁴² The presence of the samurai upsets the balance of America's homogenous frontier and the binary oppositions that had maintained that balance.

In Okamoto's film the balance of power shifts in favour of the samurai to reflect Japan's status in 1995. The Japanese, not the 49ers, are depicted travelling west, and the samurai, not the cowboy, enacts a masculine, patriarchal command over the wild frontier. Young gunslingers in the film are depicted as naïve youths who are served milk at a saloon. It is the samurai who adopts the role of the iconic cowboy Shane as the patriarchal figure for a young orphaned child. Sam, the young child, dresses the samurai in the clothes of his father. He comments that the samurai "looks like pa from head to toe." And it will be the Japanese man, not the cowboy, who proves his sexual worth in the film, not with a feminine archetype of whiteness, but with a Native American woman called Nantai.

⁴⁰ Masao Miyoshi, *As We Saw Them*, 20.

⁴¹ Walter Lafeber, *The Clash: A History of U.S.-Japan Relations* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 400.

⁴² Silke Horstkotte and Esther Peeren, *The Shock of the Other*, 11.

Interracial sex in *East Meets West* erases the white reproductive body from the progenitive expansion of the American empire. In the historical context of the 1860 embassy the Japanese were yet to be disregarded as asexual or hypersexual, as was the case when fear of the ‘yellow peril’ became more prominent in the early 20th century. Tateishi Noriyukiw, nicknamed Tommy, was a translator with the 1860 embassy, and at only 17, he became a recognizable and celebrated symbol of Japanese virility in the U.S. Owing to his youth and good looks, Masao Miyoshi writes that ‘by the time the Embassy arrived in Washington, maidens and ladies of the capital were hysterical about Tommy.’⁴³ In *East Meets West* a ninja travelling with the embassy is also nicknamed Tommy, but he fails to win the affections of white women. Instead, a mishap involving shunga (pornographic woodprints), has Tommy thrown in jail in an adjacent cell to Nantai. While Tommy squeezes through steel bars to enter Nantai’s cell, the sheriff lustfully examines the confiscated shunga in his office. He comments on the grotesquely enlarged penises common to the genre: “impressive piece of work. But I don’t believe you guys are all so well endowed.” The film then cuts to Tommy having sex with Nantai. Her elation contradicts the sheriff’s observation. It is the only sexual encounter in the film and it is reserved for the Japanese man.

To use a phrase from Jolie A. Sheffer, the interracial encounter between Tommy and Nantai highlights ‘the possibilities of and limitations to inclusion in the nation.’⁴⁴ Sheffer explains that in the 19th century, miscegenation between white men and Native American women became politicized as an act of assimilating the vanishing natives into society. Native American men, however, remained a threat to white women in a racial hierarchy that privileged white masculinity.⁴⁵ Indigeneity was tolerated only if it could be worked into the preconditions for civilized society. Tommy’s interaction with Nantai incorporates their sexual bodies into the productive body of the nation in a tangential lineage to that of the Anglo-Americans. It is a radical representation of Asian American identity because it bypasses white masculine hegemony altogether. Nantai is not being assimilated into Japanese culture; on the contrary, it is Tommy who will undergo the transformation into a native of the west. In 1860 the embassy had no such interactions with Native Americans; however, during the 1872 Mission Kume Kunitake, a member of the embassy, writes of the different tribes the embassy

⁴³ Masao Miyoshi, *As We Saw Them*, 43.

⁴⁴ Jolie A. Sheffer, “The Optics of Interracial Sexuality in Adrian Tomine’s *Shortcomings* and Sherman Alexie’s *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*,” *College Literature* 41, no. 1 (2014): 127.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 128.

had encountered. Regarding the Indian people of New Mexico Territory Kunitake remarks, “They are probably descendants of the Japanese.”⁴⁶

Normalized interracial encounters in America’s west legitimize the alternative points of contact between immigrant populations as a counterpoint to narratives of Anglo-American dominance. In the diegetic unreality of *East Meets West* the members of the 1860 Embassy are not visiting the U.S. for the first time; rather, they are effectively returning to a land that their ancestors had settled for them. Kume Kunitake’s assertion that the Native Americans must be Japanese extends the reach of the Japanese bloodline well beyond the closed borders of the isolated island nation, but it simultaneously detracts from the unique experiences and hardships faced by the persecuted Indigenous populations of America. Likewise, Tommy’s relationship with Nantai in the film problematically positions the Japanese as an Indigenous population with parallel experiences of exclusion despite Japan’s own Indigenous population, the Ainu, going unacknowledged until the 21st century. However, *East Meets West* does achieve a representation of the west that challenges the idea of the frontier as an uninhabited wilderness destined to be conquered by white cowboys.

Resistance to the homogenizing, centrifugal expansion of the American frontier occurs through the representation and vocalization of ‘internal Others’ in *East Meets West*.⁴⁷ Jackie Hogan defines internal Others as marginalized groups constructed as ‘pleasurable spectacles for members of the majority’ that are removed from the dominant narratives of the nation.⁴⁸ However, Hogan insists that marginalized, internal Others are not ‘helpless dupes,’ because they can write themselves ‘into the national imaginary by constructing “counter-narratives of nation.”’⁴⁹ In 1860 the Japanese embassy provided a spectacle that captured the imagination of famed American poet Walt Whitman to be immortalized in his poem ‘The Broadway Pageant,’⁵⁰ while Native Americans were relegated to a mythic past in stage performances of the exotic savage, noble or otherwise.⁵¹ In the cinema of the 20th century, Japanese and Native Americans were rendered mute through their invisibility or else dismissed as exotic others on American screens. These spectacles reduced the internal Other to symbolic counterpoints of

⁴⁶ Kume Kunitake, *The Iwakura Embassy, 1871-73: A True Account of the Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary’s Journey of Observation Through the United States of America and Europe*, eds. Graham Healey and Chushichi Tsuzuki (Chiba, Japan: The Japan Documents, 2002), 128.

⁴⁷ Jackie Hogan, *Gender, Race, and National Identity: Nations of Flesh and Blood* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 9.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ David Scott, “Diplomats and Poets: “Power and Perceptions” in American Encounters with Japan, 1860,” *Journal of World History* 17, no. 3 (2006): 298.

⁵¹ Zoe Detsi-Diamanti, “Burlesquing “Otherness” in Nineteenth-Century American Theatre: The Image of the Indian in John Brougham’s *Met-a-mora*; or, *The Last of the Pollywogs* (1847) and *Po-Ca-Hon-Tas*; or, *The Gentle Savage* (1855),” *American Studies* 48, no. 3, (2007): 106.

civilization to be acknowledged insofar as they justified white supremacy and the rationality of America's homogeneity. In *East Meets West*, however, it is the white cowboy who is largely absent. The Japanese exist as spectacle for a brief time in the film during a welcoming parade, but they are quickly incorporated into the fabric of the western myth as visible and viable participants of the American frontier.

Despite interactions between non-whites during the settling of the west, spectral indigeneity continues to disempower both the Japanese and Native Americans in the discourse of the American nation. Okamoto's opening shot of an east/west sign rattling in the wind is set against the distant silhouette of an unknown man: the invisible indigene. David L. Eng discusses Lonny Kaneko's short story "The Shoyu Kid" as an example of the 'representational currency' that affects how Asian American groups will or will not be seen. In the text, three boys in a Japanese internment camp play cowboys and Indians, but they do not want to be cast as the Indian, the abject, due to the 'idealized images of American heterosexuality and whiteness.'⁵² To identify with the Indian is to render the self invisible. In 1860, the Japanese emissaries to the U.S. were distanced from non-whites, or else specifically referred to as white, "the British of the Sea."⁵³ However, Okamoto displaces the point of ethnic abjection by indicating early in the film that the Japanese delegation will be characterized as Indians. Admiral Kimura, the head of the delegation, inadvertently mimics the gesticulations of a tribal war cry as he yawns. Later in the film Tommy returns the bellowing call of an Indian Chief as he elopes with Nantai. He confirms a bond that transcends language barriers, a bond that does not exist in the film between the Japanese and the English-speaking Americans.

A latent cultural connection exists between Tommy and Native Americans that revivifies the sexual potency of both marginalized groups. In *East Meets West* Tommy's reproductive, sexual body is a riposte to the characterization of asexual Japanese and the inevitable demise of Native Americans. The myth of the frontier that was played out on stage and screen made Native Americans visible as a romanticized sacrifice in the name of progress; they existed on screen only so that they could be seen to disappear.⁵⁴ In *East Meets West* Okamoto reverses this trope by explicitly making visible the generations born from the union of Tommy and Nantai. The film concludes with a voice-over narration stating that Tommy and his wife had twelve children. Joanna Hearne argues that representing the Native family acts as 'a site of contestation over whose vision of the future should become reality.'⁵⁵ In *East Meets West* the vision of America's future is composed of empowered minorities. Tommy is revealed

⁵² David L. Eng, *Racial Castration*, 111.

⁵³ Masao Miyoshi, *As We Saw Them*, 67.

⁵⁴ Zoe Detsi-Diamanti, "Burlesquing Otherness," 106.

⁵⁵ Joanna Hearne, *Native Recognition: Indigenous Cinema and the Western* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2012), 19.

to be the spectral figure of the film's opening; rather than being a perpetual foreigner, or an invisible indigene, Tommy becomes a fixture of the West. Okamoto makes visible both the Japanese and the Native Americans as if to counter a fear articulated by Fukuzawa Yukichi in 1860. Fukuzawa Yukichi, who would play a prominent role in Japan's Meiji government, returned home from the 1860 embassy fearing that the Japanese might soon share the same fate as the American Indians.⁵⁶ He was half-right.

East Meets West normalizes the presence of the Japanese in the U.S. as legitimate participants in the future of the nation. The samurai exerts his masculine prominence in a Wild West largely devoid of the patriarchal cowboy, and the East/West binary that had rendered the Japanese as "other" is reduced to a redundant sign left swinging in the desert. In reality the 1860 Embassy did not cast such an impression on the American hosts, but in the context of the film's production in 1995, the balance of power in the U.S.-Japan alliance was shifting. The film also confirms a bond between the Japanese and Native Americans that visualizes the multiplicity of interactions between America's marginalized populations while establishing a tenuous ancestral continuity between the Japanese and the Indigenous population. The binary oppositions of America's frontier are destabilized when the perspective is reversed. Okamoto directs a film where the passage west is made by the Japanese, and where samurai masculinity is constructed as dominant over an infantilized cowboy.

No Country for Old Samurai

I bring this chapter to a close with a Japanese remake of an American western in order to draw attention to the reciprocal, often circular, cultural exchange between Japan and the U.S. and the parallels of masculine crisis at the intersections of East/West frontiers.

Yurusarezaru Mono (dir. Sang Il-Lee, 2013) replaces Clint Eastwood's aging gunslinger in *Unforgiven* with a former samurai, played by Ken Watanabe, and relocates the north-western setting of Wyoming to the snowy frontier of Hokkaido. The film remains faithful to the original script, which confirms the comparable experiences of cowboys and samurai. David Webb Peoples, writer of the screenplay for Eastwood's 1992 film, is credited in the remake alongside Sang Il-Lee. However, Il-Lee's film incorporates a narrative thread that is missing from Eastwood's original. In *Unforgiven* the presence of Native Americans is limited to the non-speaking role of Ned Logan's wife. Logan, played by Morgan Freeman, occupies the

⁵⁶ Walter LaFeber, *The Clash: A History of U.S.-Japan Relations*, 37.

central role of racial other in the film that culminates in his being lynched. *Yurusarezaru Mono*, however, incorporates the Indigenous population of Hokkaido into the central conflict of the narrative. The African American Logan is replaced by an old former samurai called Baba, and we are told that Jubee, played by Ken Watanabe, was married to an Ainu woman. Jubee speaks the Ainu language and he is partnered with a young half-Ainu man called Goro, who occupies the role of The Schofield Kid from the original film. *Yurusarezaru Mono* extends the role of the Ainu to visualize the long silenced other of Japanese history at a critical moment in the nation's history, when its national identity was born anew.

With the restoration of the Emperor in 1868, and the momentum of modernization that followed, came a sense of the Japanese nation as a unified whole, which was defined by clearly delineated boundaries between self and other, civilization and savagery, masculinity and femininity. However, the division between East and West that had isolated Japan during the Tokugawa period became blurred when the Meiji government promoted the adoption of numerous Western technologies and ideologies under the rubric 'wakon yosai' ('Japanese spirit, Western learning').⁵⁷ Constructing the borders of Japan's new nation, and the permeability of East/West divisions, became a preoccupation of the Meiji elite. Michael Wiener observes that in the 19th century 'to be Japanese was to be implicated in the idea of frontier.'⁵⁸ Nowhere was the frontier more visible than in the northern territory of Ezochi, which would be renamed Hokkaido as it was incorporated into the unified nation state. With Japanese spirit and Western learning the formerly 'savage' occupants of Ezochi, the Ainu, would be assimilated into the Japanese nation as 'former natives,' their erstwhile savagery rectified by the conquest of their hostile frontier land.⁵⁹

Incorporating the subjugation of racial others into the narrative of *Yurusarezaru Mono* is a significant departure from the revenge narrative of *Unforgiven*. The representation of the Ainu in Sang Il-Lee's film recognizes Japan's mistreatment of minorities in a subversive twist that undermines the centrality of the vanishing samurai narrative that has dominated jidaigeki. The Meiji Restoration was a decisive moment in the historical narrative of Japan, but it is a narrative that excluded Japan's Indigenous population. As was the case during the colonization of the American West, in Meiji-era literature Hokkaido was referred to as a 'virgin land.'⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Kenneth Henshall, *History of Japan: From Stone Age to Superpower* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 77.

⁵⁸ Michael Wiener, "General Introduction," in *Race, Ethnicity and Migration in Modern Japan*, ed. Michael Wiener (New York: Routledge, 2004), 4.

⁵⁹ Kojima Kyoko, "The Making of Ainu Citizenship from the Viewpoint of Gender and Ethnicity," Translated by Leonie Stickland, in *Gender, Nation and the State in Modern Japan*, eds. Andrea Germer, Vera Mackie and Ulrike Woehr (London: Routledge, 2014), 103.

⁶⁰ Michele M. Mason, *Dominant Narratives of Colonial Hokkaido and Imperial Japan: Envisioning the Periphery and the Modern State* (New York: Palgrave and Macmillan, 2012), 59.

The villainous police chief Ichizo Oishi repeats this phrase in *Yurusarezaru Mono*: “There’s a strange thing about virgin land,” he says, in his second piece of dialogue. It was not until 2008 that the Ainu were officially recognized as an Indigenous population of Japan despite years of appeals to the United Nations and to various Japanese governments.⁶¹ In response to their invisibility, Richard Siddle identifies an ongoing discourse in which ‘Indigenous peoples, including the Ainu, are challenging the official histories of the coloniser with counter-narratives,’ and such is the case in Sang Il-Lee’s *Yurusarezaru Mono*.⁶² As a Zainichi Korean, Sang Il-Lee identifies with another overlooked Japanese minority that had experienced a history of colonization and forced assimilation during the Meiji era not entirely unlike the experiences of the Ainu. To stay faithful to Clint Eastwood’s *Unforgiven* Sang Il-Lee sets his film in 1880, a period that coincides with the instigation of Western-inspired colonial policies of racial othering in Japan, which would have disastrous consequences for the inhabitants of East Asia into the 20th century.

Dehumanizing metaphors are prevalent in *Yurusarezaru Mono* to establish the othering thematic of the Meiji government and the language of colonization that was used to justify the institutionalized violence against racial others. One of the dominant metaphors of the Meiji era ‘postulated the state as a natural organism and people as individual cells.’⁶³ It was an extension of social Darwinism that was introduced from the west into Japan in the late 1870s and it was used to justify social inequality as an inevitable consequence of natural selection, and assimilation as a necessary countermeasure. So it was that the national body would subsume the languishing Ainu, who had ‘deteriorated’ as a race. However, Japanese intellectuals refused to acknowledge that the ‘dire health conditions of Ainu communities and the rapidly declining Ainu population’ were a direct consequence of colonial policies that displaced hunting communities and introduced foreign diseases such as small pox. the disregard for the plight of the Ainu also functioned as proof of their racial inferiority.⁶⁴

Yurusarezaru Mono employs the Meiji metaphor of the nation as a natural organism to provide a counter-narrative of Hokkaido as a colonized frontier diseased by the interloping colonisers. Jube, Goro, and Baba encounter an Ainu village beset by Japanese militia. The Ainu women are represented with lip tattoos and the men have large earrings to visualize the customs that the Meiji government would systemically eradicate through the process of

⁶¹ Norimitsu Onishi, “Recognition for a People who Faded as Japan Grew.” *The New York Times*. Accessed November 19, 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/03/world/asia/03iht-03ainu.14194117.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

⁶² Richard Siddle, *Race, Resistance, and the Ainu of Japan* (London: Routledge, 1996), 23.

⁶³ Yuki Terazawa, “Racializing Bodies through Science in Meiji Japan: The Rise of Race-Based Research in Gynecology,” in *Building a Modern Japan: Science, Technology, and Medicine in the Meiji Era and Beyond*, edited by Morris Low (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 84.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 89.

assimilation. As the militia harass the Ainu village, Baba says of the militia, “they’re a plague.” Baba’s choice of words is not a coincidence. If the Japanese nation was imagined as a unified, natural organism and the population as individual cells, then it is a scathing indictment to refer to the militia as diseased cells. In effect, the Meiji policy of colonial expansion is being likened to the spread of a disease. To expand upon the metaphor, Jubee’s samurai and Goro, the young Ainu, act as antibodies rejecting the foreign cells that threaten the Hokkaido organism. Sang Il-Lee deftly inverts the narrative of naturalized and normalized colonial expansion to position the Japanese as foreign, inhuman invaders. However, the samurai’s position within the metaphor is unstable. Unlike the Ainu, Jubee is also a foreign agent despite his antagonism towards the militia. As is the case with autoimmune disorders, Jubee’s unpredictable nature makes him a lingering threat. Dehumanizing metaphors are a recurrent theme throughout the film, but when the masculine bodies are humanized, they are exposed as bodies in crisis.

Like *Unforgiven* before it, *Yurusarezaru Mono* is framed by masculine insecurities at the vanishing point of hegemonic manhood: a prostitute is cut and disfigured because she laughs at the miniscule size of a patron’s penis. In this instance the patron is an ex-samurai, an identity which contributes to the masculine crisis that fomented into his act of violence against women. Samurai were no longer permitted to carry swords in public, and many became destitute and unemployable in a system no longer amenable to their particular set of skills. As ex-samurai they are ex-men. Disarmed of their swords their masculine status is diminished and their phallic power is imperilled. After the shamed samurai lashes out at the prostitute her co-workers scream for justice, telling the police chief that the men should be beheaded. Beheading implies castration, a point made clear when the police chief forces a prostitute’s hand to the offender’s crotch as she clutches a knife. When the offenders pay for their crime and apologize, a prostitute remarks, ‘cut your balls off. That will be an apology.’ But as ex-samurai they are afforded a degree of civility. They are ex-samurai who have been ostracized from the modernizing mainland and left to fend for themselves as subsistence farmers at the borderlands of savagery. It is their contribution to the civilizing mission of the frontier as remnants of a lost Japaneseness that affords them forgiveness for their crimes from the village chief. The masculine insecurity that instigates the violent act of masculine excess, directed at a prostitute, will allow another ex-samurai to redeem his lost masculinity in an act of defiance directed at the entire Meiji establishment.

Jubee, the anti-hero of the film, is also a farmer who has settled in Hokkaido, but his crops are failing, because the earth rejects his attempt at a domesticated masculinity. Jubee cannot settle the frontier, because, like the natural savagery of the frontier itself, he is the

antithesis of the Meiji model of civilization. A flashback has already established that Jubee had once been a vicious samurai warrior. He is shown fleeing from Government troops during the Boshin War of 1869, a brief period of civil war in which the remaining Tokugawa loyalists were hunted down as impediments to the modernizing impetus of the Restoration. The men that hunt Jubee are young, inexperienced and penetrable; Jubee brutally impales one of them with a broken branch. Jubee becomes an extension of the branch, of nature repelling the incursion of civilization. He is likened to a hunted bear, one of the many bestial metaphors used throughout the film to distinguish between civilized humans and the savage ecology of Hokkaido. A voiceover by Jubee states, ‘if you meet a bear in the woods, stare it right in the eye. I don’t want to die. That’s the cry of pure instinct.’ His statement is both personal and political, for it encapsulates the dying throes of an entire gendered identity that has been relegated to the outer limits of Japan’s frontier. He is hunted like a bear, and he kills without mercy. He is the embodiment of savagery that demarcates the limits of civilization, a characterization historically reserved for Indigenous populations.

Yurusarezaru Mono opens with a flashback of Jubee as a savage animal, which is unique to the Japanese remake, but much of his characterization is consistent with Clint Eastwood’s aging cowboy in *Unforgiven*. Watanabe’s samurai and Eastwood’s cowboy represent the indignity of surviving long after their relevance to society has passed – a status which relates to their place in the diegesis and to the contemporary (ir)relevance of westerns and jidaigeki. Writing about *Unforgiven*, Jean-Christophe Cloutier calls this the ‘precarious balancing act between keeping the “purity” of the gunslingers’ legacy intact and revealing how this legacy is now inadequately embodied in a vulnerable, diseased man haunted by the carnage he has caused.’⁶⁵ Both men are brought to the point of death after a rainstorm, both are savagely beaten, and both struggle to mount their horses. In Lee Clark Mitchell’s taxonomy of the man in westerns both the aged cowboy and samurai struggle to meet the standards of erect men ‘astride their horses’ exerting mastery over inhospitable terrain.⁶⁶ In the context of the films, their struggle extends to a legacy of masculinity that is threatened by the civilizing impulse of society. However, Mitchell argues that in the narratives of the western, the cowboy is beaten and pulled from his horse to offer the spectacle of his ‘convalescence and recovery.’⁶⁷ The man is deconstructed and restored to demonstrate the resilience of an image of masculinity that had almost been lost.

⁶⁵ Jean-Christophe Cloutier, “A Country for Old Men: *Unforgiven*, *The Shootist*, and the Post-Heyday Western,” *Cinema Journal* 51, no. 4 (2012): 120.

⁶⁶ Lee Clark Mitchell, *Westerns: Making the Man in Fiction and Film* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 168.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 170.

Masculine crisis in *Yurusarezaru Mono* is a condition of the schizophrenic shifts in identity that followed Japan's response to modernization. Japanese encounters with the west in the 19th century precipitated the need to reify the identity of a Japanese self in response to being othered as non-white, or like-white. Recalibrating modern masculinities was central to the new sense of nationhood. Jason G. Karlin identifies competing masculinities that emerged with Japan's modernization: 'one elicited anxieties about the decadent, artificial, and performative nature of modern life, while the other sought to erase the feminine by validating the authentic, primitive, and spiritual.'⁶⁸ Karlin argues that those in opposition to the Meiji ruling elite were young activists called *soshi*, some of whom were former samurai. They rejected the fashion of the European 'dandy' adopted by the Meiji elite, displaying instead the rugged markers of an authentic masculinity: torn kimonos, tucked sleeves and a brazen attitude.⁶⁹ To the *soshi*, the Meiji government's accommodation of the west's self-indulgent fashions 'suggested weakness and effeminacy, while militarism signified strength and masculinity.'⁷⁰ The masculine oppositions identified by Karlin punctuate the central point of conflict in *Yurusarezaru Mono*, where the Westernized dandy is a sadistic police chief, and the *soshi* is an aging former samurai called Jubee.

Masculine performances demonstrate the façade of modernization and the masculine loss that has come to define Japan's new frontier. Ichizo Oishi is the police chief of Washiro, a town on the outskirts of Hokkaido with little more than a brothel to sustain its populace. Despite the town's isolation, Oishi presents himself in the fashion of a civilized, European dandy. His moustache is trimmed and curled and he wears a European suit with a bow-tie and top-hat. But the trimmings of civility that define his Westernized masculine performance belie a savage interior that is exposed in moments of brutal violence. Ironically, it is the façade of another man that reveals Oishi's true nature. Lured by the bounty offered by the prostitutes, Squire Kitaoji visits Washiro with the air of an esteemed Choshu samurai (the Choshu clan constituted the Meiji elite). Kitaoji fills the role of English Bob in the original film, a man propped up by false myths that he feeds to his mouse-like biographer. Weapons are prohibited in Washiro, and after refusing to submit his sword the Choshu samurai is confronted by the moustachioed police chief. Kitaoji critiques the dandy before him, "so the kid grew a beard and now he's a big man?" Kitaoji is promptly beaten by the police chief in a display of violence that confirms the performativity of their masculinity: Kitaoji's samurai warrior is exposed as a fraud; Oishi's civilized dandy disguises a vicious savage. Kitaoji is the first man

⁶⁸ Jason G. Karlin, "The Gender of Nationalism: Competing Masculinities in Meiji Japan," in *Gender and Japanese Society: Critical Concepts in Asian Studies, Volume II*, ed. D.P. Martinez (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 65.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 76.

to be beaten by the police chief, but unlike Jubee, who will receive his beating later in the film, Kitaoji is not shown getting back on his horse or recovering from his wounds. The false samurai has no role to play in the ongoing narrative of the nation. Kitaoji leaves the village in a horse-drawn cart, yelling at those remaining in the village, “This is where all the scum ends up when there’s nowhere else, you ill-bred barbarians.”

Kitaoji, bruised and beaten, is expelled from the frontier town of Washiro, but his biographer remains as a witness and scribe to the masculine conflicts of Japan’s emerging national identity. The presence of a writer on the frontier of Meiji Japan’s expansion into Hokkaido alludes to the centrality of the written word in the construction of a national myth, of what will and will not be remembered and passed down into the historical record of the nation. In the film’s climax the writer, Yasaburo Himeji, is surrounded by the corpses of militiamen and the police chief, all variously stabbed and shot at the hand of the rampaging Jubee. Left covered in blood and shaking, the cowardly writer attempts to placate the samurai: “I’m just a writer. I didn’t see anything. I don’t know anything. I won’t write anything.” Jubee insists that the writer should record all of the events as he witnessed them, on one condition. He cannot write about the “whore or the Ainu.” Jubee knows that a written record of his violent slaughter will condemn him to a life on the run. By excising the “whore” and the “Ainu” from the events, Jubee thinks he will spare them a similar fate. Perhaps unwittingly, Jubee is condoning a narrative of Hokkaido in which the Indigenous Ainu (and women) are rendered invisible, replaced by the struggle of competing Japanese masculinities. This is a narrative arc that was indeed favoured by Japanese writers travelling to Hokkaido in the Meiji Period. Michael M. Mason argues that ‘many Meiji depictions of the Northern territory go beyond merely emptying out any trace of the Ainu or their resistance to Japanese colonization. In numerous instances, the ordeals of the Ainu are, in fact, repressed and replaced by the struggles of the Japanese against a personified hostile natural world in Hokkaido.’⁷¹ Jubee’s attempt to save the young Ainu will condemn the samurai to an ethereal existence as a myth of the written word. The final shot of the samurai in the film has Jubee surrounded by the endless frozen wilderness of Hokkaido; he will become imbibed by the hostile natural world of the frontier as an impediment to civilization, whereas the Ainu will survive long enough to foster future generations so long as they remain invisible.

The alienation of the samurai and the Ainu from Japan’s modern frontier temporarily unites the two men as fellow outcasts of society, but *Yurusarezaru Mono* resists romanticizing the samurai as an honorary indigene. Jubee’s Japaneseness, his masculinity, and his complicity

⁷¹ Michael M. Mason, *Dominant Narratives of Colonial Hokkaido*, 73.

in the colonization and assimilation of the Ainu are ambivalent when he is introduced on his farm. In *Unforgiven* Eastwood's cowboy forsakes his masculinity when he becomes domesticated by marriage and home-life, but the death of his wife offers the potential for his untamed masculinity to be exhumed. Jubee had also been married, but he had married an Ainu woman, which places his identity further into the ambiguous territory of frontier identities. Jubee speaks to his dead wife's father in Ainu, a language that is rarely, if ever, spoken in Japanese films, although it is revealed that Jubee's children cannot speak the native tongue. When he stumbles upon an Ainu village being ransacked by government militia, Jubee displays a knowledge of Ainu customs and religious rites that positions him as an intermediary figure. However, the absence of his Ainu wife and the temptation towards drink and violence, which he had rejected while married, reintroduce Jubee's true identity and cement his separation from the Ainu customs – customs through which he had tried to redeem himself. It is a transformation at the root of the film's title. Jubee's violent past, and his Japaneseness, will be unforgiven by the Ainu and by society. It is the reason the young half-Ainu, Goro, who had witnessed the extent of Jubee's violence, says to the samurai, "I will never be like you. And I don't want to." Goro, as a half-Ainu, had been tormented by his fractured identity. It is revealed that his Japanese father had raped his Ainu mother. In the end, Goro resists being assimilated into Japan's Meiji government, and he resists assimilating the samurai masculinity of Japan's past.

Sang Il-Lee incorporates many of the masculine dilemmas of Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven*, and the fluidity of the transition from western to jidaigeki reveals a comparable historical narrative, but subtle differences in the respective denouements of each film result in very different stories being told. *Unforgiven* ends with a written epilogue, which explains that Will Munny, played by Eastwood, moved to San Francisco with his two children where he prospered in dry goods. The cowboy that had nearly been domesticated by a wife and farm life is able to redeem his masculinity and prosper. Eastwood brings the cowboy off of his horse to examine the repercussions of masculine violence, only for the cowboy to remain as a viable model of masculinity for America. However, in *Yurusarezaru Mono*, Jubee does not return to the farm where he had left his two children. Instead, Jubee is left unsettled and untethered in the wilderness of Hokkaido, forever adrift as an othered, untenable model of masculinity. In his place, the "Ainu and the whore" ride to his farm to raise his children and it is here that the prostitute offers a closing narration: "This is the place where he once harboured hope. I believe that some day he will return." Hope for the settlement of Hokkaido, and for Japan, does not exist with the samurai. Instead, Sang Il-Lee has his frontier settled by the half-Ainu children of an ex-samurai, to be watched over by a half-Ainu and a prostitute. If the settling of

Japan's northern frontier had once occasioned a narrative of national unity and racial homogeneity, Sang Il-Lee dispels the myth as an unforgiven account of colonization.

Beyond Negotiation at the Forefront of Frontiers

There where the cowboy meets the samurai becomes a place of confrontation, a site of instability and mutability that promises the resolution of a sense of selfhood but threatens the impending collapse of any such certainty. The alterior is distinguished by racial otherness, but as this chapter has argued, the integrity of the masculine self is also at stake. Because the cowboy and samurai both represent hegemonic models of masculinity, the point of intersection demands that only one model can remain if parity cannot be established. Previous chapters have argued that the cowboy and samurai experienced parallel crises of masculinity, which made possible their eventual intersection, but recognizing this parallelism threatens the masculine certainty of the self when the one meets the other.

Red Sun fails to resolve the disorientating presence of the samurai in the cowboy's west. The film attempts to colour the samurai as other, akin to a Mexican prostitute, but the skin-tone similarity between the cowboy and the samurai counters the superficial differentiation and the comparison between the samurai and a woman creates a subversive gendered confusion. Gendering the samurai becomes a process of negotiation (a man in a dress, a feminized man who has sex with women) to an extent that ambiguities become latent transgressions. The harder it tries to situate the samurai as something other than an *other*, the more *Red Sun* destabilizes the normalizing function of the frontier. When the samurai implicitly recognizes the ultimate alterity of the savage Indian, the self/other distinction collapses entirely. The homosocial binding that threatens to conflate the cowboy and the samurai as variations of the self, and the ambiguities introduced by the samurai necessitate the expulsion of the samurai from the frontier altogether. In *Red Sun*, the frontier remains a fixed position, something that is made clear by the circular narrative of a train pulling into a station in the opening and closing scenes. Because it is immutable, the frontier cannot accommodate the mutability introduced by the samurai.

East Meets West reorients the encounter between the samurai and the cowboy so as to normalize the presence of the Japanese in the west. Unlike *Red Sun*, the film explicitly displaces East and West as fixed polarities. Instead, East and West are arbitrary signifiers liable to change when the wind shifts. However, the encounter between the cowboy and the

samurai is still framed as a negotiation between the self and the other. The samurai wears the clothes of a deceased white father and teaches a young white boy how to use a sword. Markers of Japaneseness remain, and rather than contest the essentializing properties of the samurai archetype, *East Meets West* suggests that the traits of the Other can be learned and accommodated within a shifting identity. The presence of Native Americans threatens to confuse the self/other binary between the East and the West. However, the film problematically implies that Native Americans and Japanese share an innate connection as non-whites, which threatens to erase certain ethnic particularities altogether.

Sang Il-Lee undermines the negotiation of identities at the colonial intersection of East and West in *Yurusarezaru Mono*. The sobering conclusion of the film does not provide closure, but instead leaves the audience with the reality of a displaced multiplicity. The samurai remains, but he exists alone in the wilderness as a model of masculinity that has no hope in Japan's future. A half-Ainu man will raise two children on a barren farm with a scarred prostitute, but the film leaves the audience in doubt as to whether the children will learn the Ainu language and customs. The encroachment of modernity that will spread like a plague through Hokkaido and ravish Ainu communities is not destroyed, only delayed. Sang Il-Lee makes permanent and visible the scars of colonization. Negotiating identities becomes a euphemism for assimilation when hierarchies of race and place are firmly established, so that Goro's rebuke, "I will never be like you," becomes a defining rejection of the homogenizing impulse of the modern nation. He will remain a samurai, but only on his own terms.

Chapter 4

Cowboys, Samurai and the Uncanny in *Westworld*, *RoboCop* and *Sengoku Jieitai*

Judith Kegan-Gardiner has stated that masculinity is a nostalgic formation, with its ideal form secured to the past where a natural, ideal masculinity is located.¹ In essence, masculinity is a gender construction seeking a singular, unproblematic and dominant origin point from which contemporary men can legitimize patriarchal control. For men in the U.S. the ideal form of masculinity could be found embodied in the cowboy and his mythic west. The cowboy represented hegemonic, heterosexual, white masculinity during a short period in which this masculine archetype was relatively unproblematic. For Japanese men in the postwar period, the samurai of Japan's feudal past served as a figure of masculine strength and virtue, which became particularly popular after the end of the U.S. occupation when the reassertion of a national identity independent of America became a cultural imperative. Both the cowboy and the samurai offered men in the postwar period an ideal image of masculinity located in mythic pasts that resonated with historical moments in which institutions of nationhood and patriarchy were established.

However, as I argued in Chapter 2, by the end of the 1960s these hegemonic masculine archetypes of monomythic narratives had become destabilized by genre and gender hybridity, and a global counter-cultural antagonism towards the narratives of patriarchal institutions that had come to be regarded as destructive, perverted and oppressive towards men and women alike. By the 1970s the dominance of the cowboy and samurai in film had waned; men could no longer depend on nostalgic ideals of masculinity, and the cowboy and samurai as they had existed in a mythic past could no longer be relied upon to articulate dominant models of masculinity in the present. The loss of the cowboy and samurai as dependable gender archetypes constituted a crisis for constructions of hegemonic masculinity, which required a substitute. It is no coincidence then that the decline of the western and jidaigeki genres coincided with the rising popularity of science-fiction cinema, which allowed for utopian ideals of the nation – and the man – to be realized on screen: ‘under attack in one genre – the western, the hardbody hero simply took refuge in another – sf [science-fiction].’² With the cowboy and samurai isolated from the past and scorned in the present, studios began to project

¹ Judith Kegan Gardiner, “Introduction,” in *Masculinity Studies and Feminist Theory: New Directions*, edited by Judith Kegan Gardiner (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 10.

² Donald K. Meisenheimer, “Machining the Man: From Neurasthenia to Psychasthenia in SF and the Genre Western.” *Science-Fiction Studies* 24, (1997): 446.

the cowboy and the samurai into the future where they could be rearticulated as positive embodiments of masculine virtue. But what happens to masculinity as a nostalgic formation in the future worlds of science fiction?

The American cowboy of the 1970s was in a state of crisis after failing to appear as a meaningful source of masculinity in the Vietnam War. Disillusioned soldiers returned from combat with a sense that they had been betrayed by the incompetence of an older generation and their myth of American exceptionalism, of which the cowboy was a part. When the cowboy surfaced in Michael Crichton's *Westworld* in 1973, he did not represent facets of heroism or manifestations of masculine empowerment; instead, he embodied the inhuman brutality of the Vietnam War, the numerous technological and logistical failings during combat, and the psychological trauma it had inflicted on individual soldiers and the nation as a whole. Audiences were confronted by something I call the uncanny cowboy, a once familiar archetype that re-emerged as something unfamiliar and horrific, revisiting the traditional archetype only to demonstrate how perverted it had become.

Westworld was released before the war in Vietnam officially ended for the Americans in 1975, so when the uncanny cowboy returned in Paul Verhoeven's *RoboCop* in 1987, he represented an attempt to redefine the once heroic figure in a post-Vietnam America. Significantly, while the uncanny cowboy of Crichton's *Westworld* is an automaton utterly devoid of humanity, *RoboCop* exists as a hybrid, cyborg figure, embodying a nation's psychological trauma as represented by the conflict between man (morality) and machine (corporate, political and technological). Despite being a satire, *RoboCop* nevertheless (and perhaps unintentionally) enables the cowboy to be reintegrated into the narrative of American exceptionalism as espoused by cowboy president Ronald Reagan during his two consecutive terms from 1981 to 1989. Within the science-fiction fantasy of its narrative, *RoboCop* allows America to symbolically win the war in Vietnam. The uncanny cowboy, whether friend or foe, represented an attempt to explore the impact that national trauma had on a national myth.

Whereas the uncanny cowboy addressed the return of a warrior masculinity that had been repressed after the failures of the Vietnam War, the uncanny samurai addresses Japan's very lack of military strength due to Article 9 of its constitution. Americans confronted the loss of a virtuous mythology of warfare and benign imperialism, while Japan engaged with the loss of an entire military apparatus that had, for a very short time, promised Japan an empire in Southeast Asia in the early 20th century. The uncanny Japanese warrior does not surface through the relocation of the archetype into the future, but rather through men in the present confronting masculine warriors from the past. I explore this as a consequence of Japan's

military space-time. This occurs in two films: the 1979 film *Sengoku Jieitai* and its 2003 remake, *Sengoku Jieitai 1549*, in which Japan's Self Defence Force (SDF) accidentally travels back in time to the Warring State Period, or Sengoku jidai (1467-1603)³. Uncanny cowboys and uncanny samurai reflexively unpack national mythologies that had come undone in the latter half of the 20th century, allowing for postwar narratives to be rewritten in favour of the aging archetypes.

While I attribute uncanny features to the reappearance of the cowboy and samurai, these figures function in many ways as emissaries to familiar lands that have become sites of the uncanny. In his essay on the uncanny Sigmund Freud describes the sensation of walking through side-streets in Italy only to unintentionally return to the same area of storefronts.⁴ The feeling of unease was not because he was in a strange location, but rather because the familiar stores now seemed somewhat sinister. It was as though *fate* had brought him to the same location rather than *chance* and this sense of entrapment contributed to the unsettling reoccurrence that could have otherwise seemed comical. This is the spatial dimension of Freud's uncanny, which I will discuss in relation to the return of Japan's militarized space and the return of America's western frontier. But there is also a temporal dimension to Freud's uncanny, evident in the return of something familiar and old that had been repressed. Freud explains that the uncanny is 'in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression [...] the uncanny as something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light.'⁵ The spatial and temporal dislocations explored in science fiction treatments of the cowboy and samurai are therefore fertile ground for an uncanny confrontation with the past as something that has become estranged from the present.

For America in the post-Vietnam War period, the Wild West took on the quality of an uncanny landscape. It was a familiar space known to cinema-goers, but the mythic frontier of glorious expansion no longer resonated with American audiences. Instead, those dusty trails and shanty towns took on a sinister undertone of pro-war rhetoric that belonged to a previous generation. Michael Crichton's *Westworld* and Paul Verhoeven's *RoboCop* establish their western settings as uncanny landscapes threatening the return of American values that had contributed to the nightmare in Vietnam. In a similar way, the castles and fortresses of feudal Japan become a source of the uncanny in *Sengoku Jieitai*, because they represent the return of

³ Catharina Blomberg, *The Heart of the Warrior: Origins and Religious Background of the Samurai System in Feudal Japan* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis), 20.

⁴ Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny." Translated by James Strachey, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, eds., James Strachey and Anna Freud (London: Hogarth Press, 1974), 237.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 241.

a history of militarism that had been repressed in Japan's post-World War II period. The very familiarity of modern Japanese audiences with the world of the samurai elicits a sensation of the uncanny because this familiarity is out of place, particularly after denouncing war and committing to pacifism. Just as Freud wrote of the unsettling feeling of being fated to return to the same street repeatedly, for Japan and America the sensation was that both nations were fated to repeat histories that postwar generations were trying to forget.

The Uncanny Antagonist in *Westworld* (1973)

Michael Crichton's directorial debut follows two men: Peter, a recently divorced lawyer who desperately wants to reassert himself as a man, and his boisterous friend John. The two men travel to Westworld, a futuristic theme park where guests can experience the thrills of the Wild West without any of the dangers. The frontier experience has clearly been denied to the patrons of the future, who must pay for a simulacrum, just as the frontier had been denied to American men in the late 1960s. Westworld operates like the Dude Ranches of the early 20th century, which allowed 'large numbers of weak and puny Eastern city men [...] to find a cure for their insufficient manhood.'⁶ The masculinity of the guests entering the hypermasculine space of Westworld is constantly emphasized, and there is little doubt of what is at stake. Peter plays the effete lawyer from Chicago (the East), who is travelling west. When he orders a drink in Westworld he asks for a vodka twist, a metropolitan drink that belies his attempt at masculinization. The barman reveals that he only serves whisky. In essence, there is one drink for real men, who must conform to the homogenous, heteronormative model of a rugged masculinity. This throwback to homogeneity offers a telling nod to the increasingly fragmented nature of modern society where, as Alvin Toffler stated, 'the old ways of integrating a society, methods based on uniformity, simplicity, and permanence, [were] no longer effective [for] a new, more finely fragmented social order [that was] emerging.'⁷ Westworld offers a space for men to reconstruct themselves according to the liberating ethos of the frontier myth, which is why one of the male guests removes his wedding ring, and Peter is able to forget his ex-wife by sleeping with a robotic prostitute. And yet, while the guests sleep, the film demonstrates to the viewer how the setting of the Wild West is manufactured

⁶ Michael Kimmel. "Consuming Manhood: The Feminization of American Culture and the Recreation of the Male Body, 1832-1920," in *Bending Bodies: Moulding Masculinities Vol.2*, eds., Soren Ervo and Thomas Johansson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 64.

⁷ in Linnie Blake, *The Wounds of Nations: Horror Cinema, Historical Trauma and National Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 106.

and maintained by engineers and electricians who work to maintain the illusion of the frontier space.

The science-fiction setting establishes the uncanny nature of the premise: the Wild West itself becomes an unhomely, uncanny representation of an imagined past as re-imagined in the future. An apparent mimetic connection to America's mythic frontier is recreated for wealthy guests in a futuristic theme park, but the entire setting is a ruse and the recreation merely accentuates the disconnection between the past-real and the future-real, for Westworld blurs the boundaries of truth and fiction, myth and reality, past and present.⁸ It is no surprise that Peter is initially beset by feelings of alienation as a meek lawyer thrust into the hypermasculinity of the Wild West, for it is a past that no longer holds any meaningful referents for him as a modern man. In the plot of *Westworld* it is suggested that Americans can only engage with the Wild West on an inherently artificial level, as guests to a theme park, thus denying the historical reality of an *actual* Wild West. In a poststructuralist twist, it is revealed that Peter should not feel alienated by the unreality of the Wild West, because 'there is nothing to be alienated *from*' – the reality of the Wild West never did exist.⁹ By the end of the film Peter, the lawyer from the future, conquers Westworld, but only after running beyond the boundaries of the theme park and exploring the inner recesses of the artifice – only once Peter accepts the Wild West as a harmless myth can he be freed from the expectations it had placed on him as a modern man. But conquering the unhomely space is not enough. To free himself from the expectations of cowboy masculinity Peter must confront the uncanny cowboy itself.

Yul Brynner's gunslinger dominates the western setting of Westworld, dressed as his character from John Sturges' *The Magnificent Seven*. The semantic link to Brynner's definitive cowboy character connects the cowboy to America in 1960 when *The Magnificent Seven* was released, before the decline of the western genre and before JFK's New Frontier was abruptly closed with his assassination in 1963.¹⁰ The connection between the two characters also establishes the extent of the generational disconnect between the Cold War gunslinger and the post-Vietnam cowboy. Brynner's gunslinger exists without his magnificent troop, echoing perhaps the isolation of fighting in Vietnam, a war that 'became a highly individualized

⁸ Anneleen Masschelein, *The Unconcept: The Freudian Uncanny in Late-Twentieth-Century Theory* (Albany: SUNY, 2011), 139.

⁹ Mikhail Epstein, "Between Humanity and Human Beings: Information Trauma and the Evolution of the Species," *Common Knowledge* 13, no. 1 (2007): 20.

¹⁰ Klaus P. Fischer, *America in White, Black, and Gray: The Stormy 1960s* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), 178.

experience' rather than encouraging camaraderie between fellow soldiers.¹¹ In the thirteen years since his initial appearance as Chris, the cowboy has been remade.

Donald K. Meisnheimer argues that the traditional western allowed (white) men to 'make themselves anew [...] machine themselves new bodies, link themselves to new assemblages,' and in *Westworld* this process of 'machining' the male body is realized within a revised interrogation of the frontier experience.¹² We find out Brynner's gunslinger has been rebuilt as a harmless robot after he is shot by Peter only to reappear the next day so that he can be shot again. Initially, Peter is robbed of his defining masculine moment when he realizes the artificiality of his act. He thought he had killed the gunslinger, only for it to return. Brynner's robotic gunslinger is initially rendered a product of myth, denuded and harmless, because it is recycled from old assemblages. But when a computer virus turns the robot into a killing machine, it becomes clear that the cowboy myth cannot be contained in the future, and the two protagonists are not at home in the cowboy's past. It begins with a robot snake biting John's arm, drawing blood. The fiction begins to collapse as reality bites back – the artificial reality associated with the first sin of Eden's serpent. It is at this stage that the traumatic scars of the Vietnam conflict appear. Peter and John wanted to bask in the empowerment of the cowboy myth, but Brynner's unnamed gunslinger grotesquely reveals the horror of that lie. John, who had seemed the most comfortable in *Westworld*, is gunned down by Brynner's robot, futilely exclaiming, "I'm... I'm shot." The cowboy is inhuman, and real bullets hurt.

In the context of the Vietnam War, which had not yet ended when *Westworld* was released, the uncanny cowboy can be read as a reaction to the experiences of American men who discovered, often too late, that the cowboy myth had no place in the brutal realities of combat, or the brutal experiences of standing up to the institutions that sold these men the myth in the first place. To quote Cathy Caruth, war 'is an event that, in its unexpectedness and horror, cannot be placed within the prior schemes of knowledge.'¹³ And in response to the Vietnam War it became apparent that the cowboy belonged to a prior scheme of knowledge about what it meant to be an American and what it meant to be a man. The trauma of Vietnam could not be articulated within existing narratives, particularly those narratives of the traditional western, so *Westworld* has the Wild West abandoned entirely.¹⁴ *Westworld* confronts the audience with the uncanny sense that this cowboy figure, who had once been so familiar and at home in America, has become something to despise, embodying the lie of a

¹¹ Arthur G. Neal, *National Trauma and Collective Memory: Extraordinary Events in the American Experience* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2005), 94.

¹² Donald Meisnheimer, "Machining the Man," 453.

¹³ Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 153.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 153.

corrupted national identity and a perverted ideal of manhood. The cowboy had become an inhuman object, not a tangible subject worthy of emulation.

In the narrative of the film the destructive nature of the cowboy is not the fault of the gunslinger itself, for it is an automaton programmed by scientists and owned by a corporation – the very same figures of authority that failed the troops in Vietnam and the civilians on the home front. Peter and John are sent into the danger zone of the frontier with the understanding that those in control of the operation will protect them. But, as was the case in Vietnam, these very same figures of authority prove fatally ineffectual, relying on faulty technology and a misplaced hubris regarding their control over a sprawling industrial process (a vast network of computers in the case of *Westworld*). Combat veterans of the Vietnam War referred to such figures of authority as REMFs (Rear Echelon Mother Fuckers), politicians and advisors who sent troops into battle with a seeming disregard for the wellbeing of the individual.¹⁵ As Jonathan Shay discovered from treating Vietnam veterans, ‘the most fundamental incompetence in the Vietnam War was the misapplication of the social and mental model of an industrial process to human warfare,’ an industrial model overseen by REMFs, the likes of which also appear in *Westworld*.¹⁶

By 1973 the Vietnam War was under the process of “Vietnamization,” in which Nixon withdrew American troops, encouraged the South Vietnamese troops to take the full brunt of the war, and escalated bombing runs with Operation Rolling Thunder. In essence the REMFs continued to wage their war but without the large-scale sacrifice of individual soldiers. Americans did not get the satisfaction of dismantling the incompetent mechanisms of an industrialized model of warfare. However, the cathartic demise of the REMFs does occur in *Westworld*. Rather poignantly, the scientists and overseers of the frontier artifice are suffocated in an airtight control room while trying to protect themselves from the outside threat. The frontier myth collapses and takes the creators down with it. *Westworld* was released as Nixon’s Watergate scandal was unravelling. Like the scientists gasping for breath in their hermetically sealed control room, Nixon would find his presidency suffocated by attempts to protect it from a stifling milieu of oppression and distrust he had himself initiated.

Westworld can be read as a fitting metaphor for the collapse of the entire frontier myth in the early 1970s and the demise of those who sought to control it, but the film also explores the impact on the individual: the cowboys of Vietnam. Yul Brynner’s gunslinger exists as an uncanny representation of the trauma of Vietnam, but he also enacts the trauma as experienced

¹⁵ Arthur G. Neal, *National Trauma and Collective Memory*, 95.

¹⁶ Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (New York: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1994), 17.

by the men fighting the war itself. As an automaton Brynner's gunslinger can be read as an embodiment of what psychologist Pierre Janet conceptualized as psychological automatism: a dissociative mental state where a traumatic experience causes a detached personal consciousness, sometimes resulting in a somnambulistic trance.¹⁷ In his interviews with Vietnam veterans, Jonathan Shay repeatedly heard stories of soldiers going 'beserk,' a dissociative state of mind in which many of the veterans confessed to becoming blinded by the uncontrollable impulse to kill, often after losing a comrade.¹⁸ This state of going beserk resembles Janet's notion of 'automatism' as a form of male hysteria.¹⁹ Like Brynner's character in *Westworld*, the soldiers could no longer 'see the distinction between civilian and combatant or even the distinction between comrade and enemy.'²⁰ Only the physical restraint of their fellow soldiers could prevent berserkers from slaughtering all those around them. This was the cowboy "hero" of Vietnam. One veteran told Shay, "I started fucking putting fucking heads on poles [...] I didn't give a fuck anymore. Y'know, I wanted -. They wanted a fucking hero, so I gave it to them."²¹ The men who went to Vietnam to become cowboys instead became blind killers in a war where killing had become 'its own *raison d'être*.'²²

In *Westworld* Yul Brynner's automated killing machine reflects the state of the cowboy in 1973. Peter had travelled to Westworld to indulge in the nostalgic golden age of masculinity, only to find that the myth had been perverted by the incompetence of scientists and a dispassionate corporation. In the climactic scene, Peter abandons Westworld and seeks refuge in Medieval World, a separate fantasy altogether. It is here that the uncanny nature of Brynner's gunslinger is further emphasized by his dislocation spatially and temporally as he passes through the historical fantasies of the western world. The cowboy no longer has his frontier, but no other mythic space can house him, so he must be destroyed. Peter defeats Brynner's murderous robot with his wits rather than outgunning him. Peter's friend John had embraced the cowboy myth, and had been killed for it. Peter abandons cowboy masculinity altogether, seeing it for the destructive lie that it had become, so Brynner's robotic gunslinger is doused in acid and set aflame. The gunslinger is defaced to expose the vacant space behind the robot cowboy's façade.

The automatons of *Westworld* reflect the loss of America's narrative of exceptionalism that had been founded upon the frontier experience. The Vietnam War had denied American

¹⁷ Pasi Valiaho, "Cinema's Memoropolitics: Hypnotic Images, Contingent Pasts, Forgetting," *Discourse* 33, no. 3 (2011): 324.

¹⁸ Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, 86.

¹⁹ Didier Fassin and Tichard Rechtman, *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 31.

²⁰ Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, 87.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 83.

²² Klaus Fischer, *America in White, Black, and Gray*, 210.

men the opportunity to become cowboys and had instead transformed them (and subsequently the fictional cowboy itself) into killers without a moral compass. Peter does not use a gun to defeat the cowboy in the end, because to do so would necessitate engaging with the cowboy mythos. However, an intriguing counter-interpretation was offered by Gerald Mead and Sam Applebaum two years after the film's release that posits the robotic killers of *Westworld* as racial others, constructed as dehumanized figures that can be exterminated in a similar fashion to the comparably dehumanized Vietnamese soldiers of the time.²³ This interpretation of the film as a racist justification for the mass killing of the Other ignores the possibility that, in this instance, the monstrous Other was America's own national hero, the cowboy. The film does construct a fairly simplistic binary between good human and bad machine, but it complicates this binary by suggesting that the entire construct of the cowboy had become dehumanized and malicious. This reading also implies that *Westworld* allows for the war in Vietnam to be won, at least symbolically, because the robots are killed in the film. Brynner's gunslinger is set aflame in the finale, which Mead and Applebaum interpret as a re-enactment of the Vietnamese being engulfed by napalm.²⁴ Perhaps if the robotic figure had been anything other than the cowboy, their interpretation would have been more convincing. However, Michael Crichton is not beyond racist polemics, evident in his torridly anti-Japanese novel *Rising Sun*, written in 1992, which was made into an equally problematic film that exaggerates American fears of a Japanese corporate takeover.²⁵ Interestingly, the racial boundaries explored (or not) by robotic or android characters in *Westworld* do become a factor when the uncanny cowboy returns in *RoboCop*, a franchise which will participate in the yellow peril rhetoric of anti-Japanese sentiments in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Do RoboCops Dream of Electric Frontiers?

Paul Verhoeven's *RoboCop* is an ultra-violent satire that broadly mocks the excesses and contradictions of Ronald Reagan's America. The film critiques the cowboy ethos of former B-grade cowboy actor Reagan, a president committed to instilling Americans with a renewed sense of American exceptionalism encapsulated in his "city upon a hill" speeches.²⁶ In order to re-establish the primacy of the US after the stagflation of the 1970s, Reagan vowed

²³ Gerald Mead and Sam Applebaum, "Westworld: Fantasy and Exploitation", *Jump Cut*, no. 7 (1975): 13.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Edward N. Luttwak, *The Endangered American Dream: How to Stop the United States from Becoming a Third World Country and How to Win the Geo-Economic Struggle for Industrial Supremacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 132.

²⁶ Trevor B. McCrisken, *American Exceptionalism and the Legacy of Vietnam: U.S. Foreign Policy Since 1974* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 89.

to reinvigorate America's economy, reassert America's dominance over the evil empire of the Soviet Union and win the war on drugs, all the while making a concerted effort to rewrite the memory of America's war in Vietnam, because 'at the level of grand strategy in Vietnam, the United States had been defeated, and yet American soldiers had won every battle. For the veterans, the unanchored dead continued to hover.'²⁷ President Reagan took it upon himself to anchor the dead of Vietnam by remembering the war as a victory for America, a victory denied to veterans and soldiers by Lyndon Johnson's administration.²⁸ *RoboCop* critiques Reagan's America by indulging in the rewritten national narrative, which allows the cowboy to win the war but only under absurd circumstances. The film focuses on the identity crisis of Alex Murphey, a police officer who is killed during a raid on a group of drug dealers that, it transpires, are being employed by a corrupt CEO. Alex Murphy is reborn as RoboCop, called in to fight Reagan's war on drugs while simultaneously reconfiguring the cowboy archetype so as to allow America's cowboy to retroactively win the war in Vietnam.

As in *Westworld*, the introduction of the uncanny cowboy in *RoboCop* requires the uncanny (and unhomey) displacement of the Wild West frontier to be relocated in the modern American landscape. The film offers the near-future battleground of Detroit, Michigan in which to reconstruct the frontier boundary between the wilderness of pioneers and the encroaching emasculation of civilization. To clarify the connection between the futuristic setting and the semantic features of traditional westerns, we are told that the Detroit City police headquarters is located in "West" Detroit. Within the modern urban sprawl the civilized (and feminizing) East is represented by the corporate offices of Omni Consumer Products (OCP), which is occupied by yuppie businessmen. The wilderness that needs to be reconquered is the industrial wasteland of an abandoned American dream affected by a decade of stagflation.²⁹ It is here that two Americas converge; the free reign of corporations under Reaganomics, represented by OCP in the film, and the once-booming industrial heartland of America that had been associated with the auto industries of Detroit. Like the cowboys before him, RoboCop is defined by his relationship to the frontier experience. Just as the cowboys of the 1950s and 1960s had been the 'product of the ideological divide that America had attempted to draw between the "savagery" of the perceived communist threat and the "civilisation" embodied in American capitalism's militaristic democracy,' RoboCop is a product of the ideological divide between the outmoded production methods of mechanized

²⁷ Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, 7.

²⁸ Eric T. Dean, *Shook Over Hell: Post-Traumatic Stress, Vietnam, and the Civil War* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 188.

²⁹ John Gallagher, *Reimagining Detroit: Opportunities for Redefining an American City* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010), 120.

industrialization and the promise of free-market corporations in the 1980s.³⁰ RoboCop must embrace his hybrid identity as a manufactured product from a factory (with a heart built by Yamaha) made possible by the funding of a corrupt corporation but with the socially constructed mentality and mythology of the cowboy to ensure the righteousness of the transition.

One of the functions of the unhomely frontier is to either redeem or abandon the ideological foundations of the uncanny environment. Whereas the West is abandoned in *Westworld*, RoboCop is able to redeem the 1980s American frontier between capitalism and industrialization by removing one of the core corrupting components: the military-industrial-corporation complex. Corporations such as the Dow Chemical Company (based in Michigan) became synonymous with the militarization of America's corporate capitalism. Products such as Agent Orange denuded Vietnamese jungles while Saran Wrap sealed lunches on the homefront. In *RoboCop*, OCP functions as a Dow substitute; one of OCP's head science advisors is named after ex-Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara and their Ed-209 security bot has the faceplate of a Bell-Huey attack helicopter used in the Vietnam War. Setting *RoboCop* in Detroit allows the cowboy to forge a new frontier beyond Vietnam, but by maintaining a link to the politics of the conflict in Vietnam, the new frontier enables the cowboy figure to expropriate the old myths so as to redeem America's past failures. OCP's military product Ed-209 is vanquished, and the vice-president is fired.

Paul Verhoeven refers to RoboCop as the American Jesus,³¹ but RoboCop is also depicted as the uncanny return of the Duke himself, a mechanized John Wayne. From the awkward gait to the way RoboCop fires his pistol, the film exhumes John Wayne and relocates him in 1980s America, where he ought to feel right at home under the leadership of cowboy President Ronald Reagan. The familiar waddle of John Wayne displaced onto a robotic body contributes to the unfamiliar, uncanny nature of the resurrected on-screen cowboy. But rather than threaten to replace the familiar with a monstrous robotic double, RoboCop allows a contemporary generation to reconnect with the old archetype.³² Alex Murphy had spent time with his son watching cowboy television shows, and as RoboCop he is able to revitalize the positive aspects of the cowboy archetype for both his son and America at large. One Vietnam veteran said, "When I went to Vietnam, I believed in Jesus Christ and John Wayne. After

³⁰ Linnie Blake, *The Wounds of Nations: Horror Cinema, Historical Trauma and National Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 107.

³¹ Weller, Peter. *Robocop*. DVD. Directed by Verhoeven, Paul. New York: Orion Home Video, 1988.

³² David Greven, "Cyborg Masochism, Homo-Fascism: Rereading *Terminator 2*." *Postmodern Culture* 19, no. 1 (2008). 10.1353/pmc.0.0033.

Vietnam, both went down the tubes. It don't mean nothin."³³ Americans who had lost faith in the infallibility of Jesus and John Wayne during the 1960s could have their faith restored by the unfaltering values of RoboCop, who amalgamated both into a hardbodied champion of 1980s America.

Paul Verhoeven emphasizes the dismemberment of Alex Murphy's cop to draw the comparison between the physical traumas of Vietnam and the necessary reconstruction of the cowboy's body. For the cowboy to exist in the 1980s he must first have suffered through the traumas of Vietnam so that he can be rebuilt. Jennifer Gonzalez argues that 'imaginary representations of cyborgs take over when traditional bodies fail.'³⁴ John Wayne's traditional cowboy body had failed in Vietnam, as had the bodies of many ordinary soldiers who returned from combat with metal plates in their skulls and artificial limbs – as rudimentary cyborgs, part flesh and part metal.³⁵ The 75,000 permanently disabled veterans who survived made visible the failure of the masculine body to remain intact.³⁶ And unlike previous conflicts, the dismembered bodies of American soldiers were made public through photographs and newsreels during the conflict. Verhoeven explicitly demonstrates the dismemberment of Alex Murphy's body, capturing the moment his hand is blown apart in slow-motion, so as to emphasize the importance of putting the cowboy back together as something new and improved.

Reconstructing the masculine body as unproblematic, unified, impenetrable and dominant in *RoboCop* means circumventing the posthuman multiplicities imagined by Donna Haraway's 'post-gender' cyborg.³⁷ Despite Donna Haraway's seminal *Cyborg Manifesto* being published in 1985, two years prior to the film's release, *RoboCop* ignores the dissolution of gender binaries that Haraway had seen as the liberating potential of the cyborg figure and instead recasts the cyborg, and the fusion of man and machine, as a distinctly masculinizing event.³⁸ Because the cowboy is an archetype ideally comprised of masculine integrity, RoboCop's cowboy-cyborg identity contributes to the reformation of a homogenous, heteronormative masculinity in a body previously fragmented by the trauma in Vietnam.

³³ Klaus Fischer, *America in White, Black, and Gray*, 211.

³⁴ Jennifer Gonzalez, "Envisioning Cyborg Bodies: Notes From Current Research," in *The Gendered Cyborg: A Reader*, eds., Gill Kirkup, Linda Janes, Kathryn Woodward and Fiona Hovenden (New York: Routledge, 1999), 61.

³⁵ Frank L. Grzyb, *A Story for all Americans: Vietnam, Victims, and Veterans* (West Lafayette: Purdue University, 2000), 245.

³⁶ Keith Beattie, *The Scar that Binds: American Culture and the Vietnam War* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 13.

³⁷ Donna Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s," in *The Gendered Cyborg: A Reader*, eds., Gill Kirkup, Linda Janes, Kathryn Woodward and Fiona Hovenden (New York: Routledge, 1999), 66.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

RoboCop might be the product of futuristic technologies, but he is very much the realization of old values so that the fusion of man and machine re-enables a previously dis-abled man, consistent with the ‘original vision’ of the cyborg leaving ‘man free to explore, to create, to think and to feel.’³⁹ Rather than realize the posthuman dream of being more human than human, RoboCop embodies the dream of becoming more masculine than machine.

RoboCop’s intact cowboy does combat some of the ‘old hierarchical dominations’ discussed by Haraway in her *Cyborg Manifesto*,⁴⁰ but only those hierarchies that disempower men – namely, the effete corporate elites who have denuded the real men of the Wild West and contributed to the domestication of the working-class man. Murphey’s wife is missing in the film, seen only in flashbacks, because her presence might threaten to bring the empowered cowboy into the domestic sphere. She might also serve as a painful reminder for Alex Murphey that he may have the mind of a man, but he is all machine from the waist down. For the man to be remade again in the world of *RoboCop* he must be singularly engaged with the masculine and masculinizing rituals of violence. Rather than constrain Murphey in a metallic sarcophagus, the cyborg fusion of man and machine enables RoboCop to articulate the ‘hardbodied’ masculinity of the 1980s without problematizing his manhood with the softening presence of domesticity.⁴¹

The emphasis on masculine emancipation and domination is reemphasized in the film’s consistent fascination with the phallus and anxieties over the loss of phallic empowerment at all levels of society. While President Reagan championed cowboy values and fostered the reconciliation of Vietnam War veterans with America’s history of exceptionalism, a battle between the sexes developed as an anti-feminist backlash emerged in the 1980s amongst men who perceived feminism and women’s increased presence in the workforce as a threat.⁴² Many men felt entitled to their power over women in a culture where men felt they had to constantly prove their sexual primacy.⁴³ Proving masculine worth is a recurrent theme in *RoboCop*, in which every confrontation becomes a demonstration of sexual virility. The vice-president of OCP (Dick) confronts an insolent underling (Bob) at a urinal. Their heated argument is framed as a pissing contest, with one bystander visibly urinating on his trousers as he leaves the bathroom. The only black member of the drug dealers (Joe Cox) stuns a female police officer

³⁹ Jeanine Thweatt-Bates, *Cyborg Selves: A Theological Anthropology of the Posthuman* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 18.

⁴⁰ Donna Haraway, “A Manifesto for Cyborgs,” 69.

⁴¹ J.P. Telotte, “The Terminator, Terminator 2, & The Exposed Body.” *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 20, no. 2 (1992): 27.

⁴² Michael Kimmel, *Misframing Men: The Politics of Contemporary Masculinities* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 18.

⁴³ Caryn E. Neumann, “Date Rape and Sexual Politics,” in *The 1980s: A Critical and Transitional Decade*, eds., Kimberly R. Moffitt and Duncan A. Campbell (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011), 282.

with the size of his penis before kicking her off a high ledge. Names such as Dick and Cox make explicit the extent to which these men are defined by and identified through their connection to the phallus.

RoboCop also participates in the rhetorical pissing contest, but as a hero of America's 1980s transitional frontier his phallic empowerment is righteous and just, a distinction that is clarified when he becomes the hero of helpless white women. The second crime that RoboCop prevents is the rape of a white woman who has been cornered in a dark alleyway. RoboCop does not arrest the perpetrator; he castrates him with a bullet to the crotch. The spectacle of this event demonstrates RoboCop's metaphorical phallic competence when his bullet penetrates the female victim's skirt, but it simultaneously reflects male anxieties of emasculation. RoboCop punishes the potential rapist for engaging in an act that RoboCop is himself incapable of.⁴⁴ His phallic supplement, the pistol, is fetishized to compensate for this lack – we see RoboCop's pistol emerge from the holster, though the rapist never gets the chance to reveal his. As the re-embodiment of cowboy virtue, RoboCop makes it clear that masculine empowerment is not entitled, it is earned, and if left to thrive in the moral body of the cowboy it can still come to 'the defence of the white goddesses of civilisation.'⁴⁵ The uncanny return of the cowboy and his hegemonic masculinity not only coincides with the return of masculine surety and hard-embodiment, but it also heralds the return of a righteous patriarchy that will protect men and women.

RoboCop embodies virtuous re-masculinization as a rebuilt cowboy archetype, and although he cannot demonstrate his empowerment sexually, he can still symbolically dominate the feminine domain. When the hardware of RoboCop's physical body integrates with the software of computer terminals, he does so through a protruding, phallic spear that shoots from his hand into a circular slot in the computer. Deborah Lupton argues that the computer has long been associated with regressive attitudes towards women, since as a site 'of intense desire and emotional security but also threatening engulfment, the inside of the computer body is dark and enigmatic, potentially leaky, harboring danger and contamination, vulnerable to invasion.'⁴⁶ As part machine, RoboCop's masculine hardware is potentially threatened by his feminine software, and throughout the franchise his primary weakness is his susceptibility to damaged software being involuntarily penetrated with harmful programming. Amanda Fernbeck argues that the hypermasculinity of the male cyborg is a reaction to the 'feminized position of the postmodern male subject,' which explains RoboCop's phallic

⁴⁴ Sue Short, *Cyborg Cinema and Contemporary Subjectivity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 7.

⁴⁵ in Arthur Brittan and Mary Maynard, *Sexism, Racism, and Oppression* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), 191.

⁴⁶ Deborah Lupton, "The Embodied Computer/User," in *Cyberspace/Cyberbodies/Cyberpunk: Cultures of Technological Embodiment*, eds., Mike Featherstone and Roger Burrows (London: Sage, 1995), 111.

‘technoprosthetics.’⁴⁷ Donna Haraway saw the posthuman integration of the physical (human and machine) and the non-physical (information) as a revolutionary step for humanity.⁴⁸ But RoboCop represents an archaic image of hegemonic masculinity and so he emphasizes his masculine dominion over the feminine cybersphere by penetrating it. He will later use the very same protruding device to stab the leader of the drug dealers in the neck, proof of his ability to penetrate both hardware and software.

The obsession with phallic empowerment carries over to the significance of guns, which have long existed as symbolic stand-ins for the male penis in movie westerns. To emphasize that RoboCop is not a genderless posthuman entity his gun (effectively his penis) is integrated into his leg, ready to eject itself into his hands when needed. The gun becomes a robotic extension of RoboCop’s body. The drug dealers in *RoboCop* also appreciate the phallic extension of the gun by arming themselves with comically oversized anti-tank rifles, which they fire from the pelvis. But it is RoboCop’s attachment to his gun that proves the most significant, because the loss of sexual primacy has long been a dominant fear for veterans.⁴⁹ The image of RoboCop confidently firing his enlarged pistol at the misfiring Ed-209 represents a retroactive visual catharsis for those soldiers in Vietnam who were beset with faulty equipment. Jonathan Shay recalls numerous stories of the standard-issue M-16 rifle failing soldiers, so much so that one soldier started feeling ‘like the government didn’t want us to get back.’⁵⁰ The rifle was prone to jamming when empty cartridges failed to eject, despite the army publicly announcing the weapon to be the best for the war in Vietnam after it was favoured by General Westmoreland.⁵¹ Soldiers in Vietnam were not given the frontier experience promised to them by the cowboy myth, partly because the frontier never materialized in the jungles of Vietnam, but also because their guns failed to fire when needed. The failure of America’s faith in its weaponized technologies rendered the cowboy’s in Vietnam impotent well before the symbolic “wounds” of Vietnam threatened to reveal the impotence of America as a nation.⁵² RoboCop needs to do more than re-embodiment the disembodied man; he needs to prove that his weapon can still fire, and he needs to do so with reinvigorated gusto. Whereas the violence of Kurosawa, Leone, and Peckinpah had reflected the anarchic disintegration of society and its masculine heroes in the 1960s, Paul Verhoeven

⁴⁷ Amanda Fernbeck, “The Fetishization of Masculinity in Science Fiction: The Cyborg and the Console Cowboy,” *Science Fiction Studies* 27, (2000): 242.

⁴⁸ Jeanine Thweatt-Bates, *Cyborg Selves*, 19.

⁴⁹ Fiona Reid, *Broken Men: Shell Shock, Treatment and Recovery in Britain, 1914-1930* (London: Continuum, 2010), 153.

⁵⁰ Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*, 17.

⁵¹ C.J. Chivers, “How Reliable is the M-16 Rifle?” *The New York Times*, Accessed December 5, 2013. http://atwar.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/11/02/how-reliable-is-the-m-16-rifle/?_r=0.

⁵² Keith Beattie, *The Scar that Binds*, 18.

indulges in violence to allow his hypermasculine hero the opportunity to prove his potency. The cowboy is reborn as the impenetrable masculine cyborg that must violently penetrate his adversaries to prove that he is whole.

While the cowboy can be put back together again, the same cannot be said for the corporate warrior, who has subtly been influenced by the business mentalities of Japan. The presence of Japan as Other is much more overt in the two sequels, *Robocop 2* (dir. Irvin Kershner, 1990) and particularly through the presence of robotic ninjas in *Robocop 3* (dir. Fred Dekker, 1993). Bob, the young upstart responsible for funding RoboCop, is brought to his knees because he relies on symbols of Japanese virtue without having any masculine substance of his own. Bob's appropriation of Japanese salaryman practices is not an isolated incident. When RoboCop enters CEO Dick's office, the iconic theme song to the film takes on an oriental twist reminiscent of classic Hollywood treatments of ancient Japan. And when Dick's thuggish henchman Clarence Boddicker is about to kill Murphey he says "sayonara, RoboCop," an indication that he has picked up the Japanese influences from his corporate superiors. RoboCop displaces the western frontier into a modern American setting, while Bob, the film's representative of corporate America, subtly displaces the Japanese salaryman's Orient into his living room with Japanese paintings and decor. Like Alex Murphey before him, Bob is shot and dismembered by the antagonists of the film, and for his transgressions his apartment is also destroyed. Despite being responsible for the creation of RoboCop, and despite his tenacious, masculine approach to corporate dealings, no one is willing to redeem the un-American masculinity of Bob, or Boddicker or Dick, because the cowboy has returned with a new face and he is finally right at home. RoboCop's cyborg identity has not encouraged an exploration of posthuman or transhuman possibilities. The fluidity of the cyborg framework has merely allowed the old cowboy archetype to re-enter the American landscape as a functional, masculine myth. The cowboy is rebuilt in the future, to enable men to reconnect to John Wayne's golden past.

The Uncanny Space-Time of Japan's SDF in *Sengoku Jieitai*

In the 1970s both the U.S. and Japan were confronted with variations of a disheartening paradox: America, the most powerful industrialized nation in the world, was unable to win a war against a developing nation in Southeast Asia. Japan, the second most powerful nation in the world in the 1970s with 1% of its GDP spent on its army, was unable to fire a single shot. The Vietnam War had temporarily dislocated a generation of American men

from the masculinizing myths that had served their fathers. The trauma experienced by individuals as well as the psyche of the American nation resulted in a crisis of masculinity that Ronald Reagan actively sought to address and films such as *RoboCop* satirically deconstructed. The golden age of masculinity epitomized by cinematic cowboys such as John Wayne no longer made sense as figures of hegemonic masculinity for men after the 1960s, which established the need to project utopian models of masculinity into the future possibilities of science fiction where uncanny cowboys re-familiarized American audiences with their old heroes. A similar crisis of masculine dislocation was affecting Japanese men who had been systematically denied the chance to be warriors after World War II due to Japan's forced demilitarization under Article 9. After their traumatic defeat in the Pacific War and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan was perpetually trapped in a postwar epoch of defeat because it was robbed of its ability to determine its own future.⁵³ Japan's contradictory stance as a global power denied the freedom to exist as a 'normal state' incited the ire of those who imagined a return to the majesty of imperial Japan, and aroused reasonable fears for the security of Japan when America reduced its presence in Asia after defeat in Vietnam.⁵⁴

Japanese science fiction in the 1970s reflected the emerging milieu of nationalism, Japanese exceptionalism and anxieties over disarmament that followed Japan's economic boom and global position as America's closest ally. Nationalistic sentiments celebrating Japan's return to power renewed interest in rewriting Japan's recent history to establish a sense of continuous exceptionalism. These efforts included a museum exhibition glorifying the 'noble sacrifices' of kamikaze pilots and numerous rewrites of high-school textbooks which justified Japan's aggression during the Pacific War.⁵⁵ Science-fiction anime also became preoccupied with rewriting Japan's postwar national narrative so as to offer scenarios in which Japan could emerge as a victor or where Japanese military aggression was acceptable. In 1974 the infamous battleship Yamato, the largest battleship in the world during the Pacific War, became reimagined as a spaceship on a voyage to defend the Earth from alien invaders, and even the pro-pacifist narrative of Gundam involved the return of samurai warriors as armoured soldiers.⁵⁶ In 1979 the live-action feature film *Sengoku Jieitai*, directed by Kosai Saito, offered a different method of returning Japan to its former military might by transporting a

⁵³ Marilyn Ivy, "Trauma's Two Times: Japanese Wars and Postwars," *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 16, no. 1 (2008): 171.

⁵⁴ Joseph M. Ha, and John Guinasso, "Japan's Rearmament Dilemma: The Paradox of Recovery," *Public Affairs* 53, no. 2 (1980): 249.

⁵⁵ William Ashbaugh, "Contesting Traumatic War Narratives: *Space Battleship Yamato* and *Mobile Suit Gundam*," in *Imag(in)ing the War in Japan: Representing and Responding to Trauma in Postwar Literature and Film*, eds., Mark Williams and David C. Stahl (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 336.

⁵⁶ William Ashbaugh, "Contesting Traumatic War Narratives," 329.

contemporary squad of Self Defence Force (SDF) personnel back in time to Japan's warring states period, to the year 1549.

Japan is the only nation in the world to have a commitment to pacifism and a denunciation of war written into its constitution, and the limited nature of Japan's *Jieitai*, Self Defence Force (SDF), restricts Japan's global military presence. However, on-going disputes over the Senkaku Islands, the continued presence of US military bases on Japanese soil (particularly in Okinawa) and controversies regarding the increased visibility of the SDF in global conflicts highlight the significance of military space in a demilitarized nation and the implications this demilitarization has had on Japanese masculinities. Pragmatic solutions to Japan's security issues address the naval power of China, the nuclear threat of North Korea and the implications of Japan's security treaty with the US, which has been left un-amended since the 1960s.⁵⁷ And yet, pragmatic discussions of Japan's evolving military spaces are insufficient when dealing with the intangible forces of time and memory that continue to shape domestic and international responses to Japan's military presence.

To use the language of Derrida, the discourse surrounding Japan's security policies and its contested military spaces is haunted by the memories of Japan's early 20th century.⁵⁸ By virtue of its post-war constitution, Japan, more than any other nation, has been tethered to the past. Written into the subtext of Article 9, which was imposed on Japan during the U.S.-led occupation, is the condemnation of Japan's wartime atrocities and an implicit caution that Japan can never again be trusted with a military, or warrior masculinity, capable of initiating conflict; defence spending is curtailed at 1% of the GDP and euphemisms embedded into the language of the SDF (personnel in the SDF are not referred to as soldiers but as "members of a group or unit") ensure that militarism cannot become sanctioned as it had been in the interpretation of bushido during the early Showa era.⁵⁹ To attempt to remilitarize Japan, or to question the interpretation of pacifism in Japan, is to challenge the assumptions present in the subtext of Article 9 and to re-establish the continuity of a history that includes wartime aggression.

Time is inseparable from the physicality of Japan's military presence because Japan's history of wartime aggression remains in a state of flux – unacknowledged, contested, rewritten. For this reason, I want to collapse the temporal dimension of Japan's military space

⁵⁷ Glenn D. Hook, "From Demilitarization to Remilitarization: External and Internal Pressures on Japanese Security Policy," in *Demilitarization in the Contemporary World*, ed. Peter Stearns (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 114.

⁵⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (New York: Routledge, 1994) 10.

⁵⁹ Sabine Frühstück and Eyal Ben-Ari, "'Now We Show It All!' Normalization and the Management of Violence in Japan's Armed Forces," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 28, no. 1 (2002): 15.

into physical space, something I call Japan's military space-time. The science fiction pretence of Japan's military space-time forms the central conceit of two Japanese science fiction films: *Sengoku Jieitai* (1979) and its 2005 remake, *Sengoku Jieitai 1549*, are relatively low-budget science fiction films in which members of an SDF ground squadron accidentally time-travel to the Sengoku period. It is a convenient plot device to enable the spectacle of contemporary military technology engaging with feudal soldiers, and yet both films must necessarily navigate the complexities of a pacifist nation at war with its own violent history. In both films, history is a teleological project of continuity that, when altered, radically impinges upon the stability of the present and the possibility of a future. Thus, both films must naturalize and stabilize the military space-time of contemporary Japan by re-establishing the continuity with its past. But Japan's past is problematic in the historical discourse of the nation following its cataclysmic defeat in 1945 and so the very possibility of continuity with a militant history is questioned.

In the narrative of Japan as postwar victim its legacy of imperialism has been erased from the national memory, leaving in its place a temporal discontinuity which dislocates contemporary SDF members from their forebears – the proud soldiers serving Emperor Hirohito. And yet the memory of place demands continuity because, as Dylan Trigg observes, the past 'stretches out into the present, resonating in such a way that personal identity and collective identity become reinforced.'⁶⁰ Trigg's phenomenological approach to memory has space, time and bodies inextricably linked so that a rupture in the continuity from past to present would threaten the collective identity. He suggests that 'our bodies not only orient us, but also serve as the basis for an entire history, at all times producing a self that strives towards continuity through retaining and returning to places.'⁶¹ By being transported back in time the bodies of the SDF members become entangled in the reorientation of Japan's space-time. Because military space is conventionally a masculine space, the process of reorienting the SDF body is explicitly conveyed in both films through the confrontation with the masculinity of the samurai.

The body, and in many ways the spirit, of the samurai offers a lineage of masculine virtues that have come to define Japanese masculinity. Male SDF members and salarymen alike have had their masculinity articulated in the language of samurai codes and traditions, and while this might be wishful thinking for salarymen, the connection between the SDF and the samurai is more tangible, and therefore more problematic. How can a pacifist defence force associate with the masculine ideals of Japan's warrior elite, particularly after these ideals

⁶⁰ Dylan Trigg, *The Memory of Place: A Phenomenology of the Uncanny* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011) 47.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

had been skewed to legitimize atrocities committed during the Pacific War? This is the root conflict that defines what can be described as the uncanny samurai. For the SDF members in *Sengoku Jieitai* the samurai is a familiar figure rendered uncanny because of their inability to share the common ground of a soldier: the common ability to kill.

In the postwar period Japan had become estranged from its history of colonialism to such an extent that Imperial Japan had become a foreign land. While Japanese civilians may have welcomed the change, it was a harrowing shift for returning soldiers. Kawamura Minato writes of Japanese war veterans returning to ‘a place in which they had never lived.’⁶² For veterans, peacetime Japan had become an unhomey space, uncanny in its rapid transformation from militarism to pacifism, from war-ravaged cities to a thriving industrial power. They had left their homeland with the intent to defend it with their lives. They had returned to discover that their homeland had disappeared somewhere in time. The temporal dislocations explored in science-fiction treatments of the samurai are therefore fertile ground for an uncanny confrontation with the past as something that has become estranged from the present. The castles and fortresses of feudal Japan become a source of the uncanny in *Sengoku Jieitai*, because they represent the return of a history of militarism that had been repressed in Japan’s post-World War II period.

We Were Samurai

Sengoku Jieitai stars Sonny Chiba as Lieutenant Yoshiaki Iba, the leader of a small SDF squadron accidentally transported through a “time-slip” into Japan’s Sengoku period during a routine training exercise, whereupon they become entangled in a battle between two fictional warlords. In the postwar period Japan was beset with ‘the sense of time without movement toward the future, a time without contingency’ as a nation constitutively prohibited from being able to rectify its defeat in the Pacific War with victory in future conflicts.⁶³ The time-travelling narrative of the film is thus symptomatic of Japan’s sense of being futureless. To be able to liberate Japan from the debilitating demilitarization of the 20th century the film allows Japanese men to remilitarize themselves alongside the soldiers of a golden age of manhood. Released from the emasculating restrictions of Article 9, Iba and his soldiers take

⁶² in Seiji M. Lippit, “Spaces of Occupation in the Postwar Fiction of Hotta Yoshie,” *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 36, no. 2 (2010): 289.

⁶³ Marilyn Ivy, “Trauma’s Two Times,” 171.

the opportunity to unite with their samurai predecessors so as to enact the warrior masculinity that had been denied to them in the Showa Era.⁶⁴

Japan's present goes to war with its Sengoku past in order to fulfil SDF masculine fantasies and prevent the mistakes of Japanese imperialism in the Showa Period. Not only does this internal conflict resonate with the civil turmoil of the Sengoku Period (often referred to as Japan's Warring States Period), but it also reflects the tensions that existed in 1970s Japan between the pacifist left, who feared a return to Japanese militarism, and those on the right, who desired a more active role for Japan's SDF in global affairs.⁶⁵ *Sengoku Jieitai* allows the SDF to engage in the 'futurity of war' in order to liberate Japan from its postwar stasis without disrupting Japan's tenuous peace in the present.⁶⁶ By declaring war on its own past, the film avoids the need to tread delicately around issues of postwar victimization and instead internalizes the need for Japanese men to find victory (and their innate warrior masculinity) in battle.

The confrontation with the uncanny samurai involves the unhomely sensation of being displaced in a familiar setting. L.P. Hartley famously wrote that 'the past is a foreign country: they do things differently there,' which becomes an axiomatic phrase within the narrative of *Sengoku Jieitai*.⁶⁷ The SDF realise that they are foreigners in their own land, partly because they have been temporally displaced, but also because they are tasked with an impossible mission: the SDF soldiers must embody the spectre of Japan's samurai history in order to liberate the pacifist present from its samurai past.⁶⁸ This paradox necessitates the death of the displaced SDF, who become victims of the 'ontological condition of the human being: man does not belong in the world, even if he may experience a familiarity with it.'⁶⁹ In the case of *Sengoku Jieitai* it is the Japanese soldier who does not belong in the world, because the SDF member's familiarity with the world is exactly what threatens his existence.

SDF soldiers might be haunted by the impossible expectation to be pacifist samurai warriors, but this sense of self-persecutory pacifism inadvertently nourished Japan's problematic role as a victimized nation in the postwar period. Despite Japan's history of atrocities in the early 20th century the most common postwar narrative shared by Japan's political left and right centred on a state of victimhood for a nation subjected to the atomic

⁶⁴ Sabine Fruhstuck, *Uneasy Warriors: Gender, Memory, and Popular Culture in the Japanese Army* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 54.

⁶⁵ George Friedman and Meredith Lebard, *The Coming War with Japan* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 330.

⁶⁶ Marilyn Ivy, "Trauma's Two Times," 171.

⁶⁷ L.P. Hartley, *The Go-Between* (New York: New York Review Books, 2002), 1.

⁶⁸ Anneleen Masschelein, *The Unconcept*, 137.

⁶⁹ *The Unconcept*, 140.

bomb and precursory disarmament at the hands of an occupying force.⁷⁰ Those who survived the war avoided complicity by identifying with a sense of victimization in which the “State” was to blame for coercing innocent civilians to join the war effort. However, the postwar “State” itself was quick to adopt this victim mentality and apply it to the nation as a whole.⁷¹ Manufacturing a victim mentality for Japan became a means to avoid the repercussions of war responsibility and legitimized dependence on the security umbrella of the United States. *Sengoku Jieitai* reiterates this victim mentality by establishing the SDF soldiers as victims in both the past and present. When his soldiers lament that they might not ever return to their homes, Lieutenant Iba berates them: “What are you guys going to do when you get back to the Showa era? What is there for you to do in a time of peace? At a time when we can’t even use our weapons? Don’t you think it’s better to fight in this era?” Men of the SDF become victims of Japan’s emasculating pacifism in the present, which prevents them from reconnecting to their golden age of manhood, made explicit in the film when the SDF troops are ultimately killed. Their inability to be men in the Showa period has rendered them incapable of being men in the Sengoku period, since a hegemonic model of masculinity cannot be founded upon a victim mentality.

The uncanny samurai in this scenario involves contemporary Japanese men witnessing the disjuncture between the reality of their emasculation and the unfamiliar hypermasculinity of the golden age of manhood. Sabine Frühstück argues that ‘military institutions all over the world invest a great deal of energy in creating the illusion that military tasks are inherently male and masculine ones,’ but this illusion is difficult to maintain in the pacifist era when many of the tasks performed by the SDF (support, protection and relief) have historically been regarded as feminine.⁷² Further complicating the masculinization of the SDF is the difficulty of constructing the soldier as a hegemonic masculine figure when this position had already been appropriated by the salaryman and his identification with the samurai as a corporate warrior.⁷³ In order to reassert their primacy as Japan’s hegemonic warriors, SDF soldiers must reclaim their direct connection to the warrior manhood of the samurai without invoking the problematic connection to the militarism of imperial Japan. It is no mistake then that *Sengoku Jieitai* explicitly creates connections between the SDF and the samurai soldiers they meet, one of whom comments, “we are from the same tribe.”

⁷⁰ James Joseph Orr, *The Victim as Hero: Ideologies of Peace and National Identity in Postwar Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2001), 3.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁷² Sabine Frühstück, *Uneasy Warriors*, 52.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 57.

Rather than project a utopian image of the Japanese soldier into the future, *Sengoku Jieitai* suggests that the ideal Japanese man already exists in the present; all he needs is the freedom to act as a warrior through an uninterrupted connection to his samurai past. The film offers the specific date of 1549, which was shortly after firearms were first introduced to Japan, reducing the extent of alienation between the Sengoku samurai and the weapons of the SDF.⁷⁴ The SDF's armoured tank is referred to as an iron horse, effectively becoming a mount upon which the samurai of the future will ride into battle, making it clear that the SDF soldier, not the salaryman, is the true descendant of Japan's samurai masculinity. Also emphasized is the importance of being able to kill and be killed as soldiers. Lieutenant Iba tells his crew that "if we're all going to die anyway, I want to fight," and it is the opportunity to die a warrior's death that ultimately separates the SDF soldier from the passivity of the salaryman. The film suggests that an SDF soldier's willingness to sacrifice himself for his country is 'superior to the salaryman's sacrifice for his company.'⁷⁵

Sengoku Jieitai addresses the anxieties of modern Japanese SDF soldiers and their inability to meaningfully connect to a proud lineage of samurai, which involves the necessary masculinization of both the SDF and the military itself. Significantly, the SDF was in the process of integrating women into its ranks after 1974 due to a shortage of male recruits. Partially due to the nature of being a pacifist organization, many of the roles within the SDF were deemed "suitable for women" and positions began to open up for women who wanted a more rewarding career in the military than could be found in the white-collar clerical jobs typically assigned to them in the domestic workforce.⁷⁶ However, women who joined the SDF discovered that normalized gender roles, in which soldiers were men and women were support staff, had become entrenched and discrimination existed despite the non-normative nature of the SDF as a pacifist army.⁷⁷ The growing presence of women had the potential to complicate the anxieties of male soldiers who were already prevented from establishing their maleness through acts of war, which makes the lack of women in the ranks of the SDF in *Sengoku Jieitai* a significant absence.

The time-travelling narrative allows men to empower themselves through the domination of women in order to normalize the hegemony of warrior masculinity. Within the context of the film, Lieutenant Iba allows his men to systematically rape a widowed woman, because "young men are supposed to sneak into a widow's place." Hearing that he has

⁷⁴ Anne Walthall, "Do Guns Have Gender? Technology and Status in Early Modern Japan," in *Gender and Japanese Society: Critical Concept in Asian Studies Vol. 2*, ed. Dolores P. Martinez (New York: Routledge, 2014), 99.

⁷⁵ Sabine Frühstück, *Uneasy Warriors*, 60.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 97.

permission, one of the men remarks, “I’m going to do something I couldn’t do in our Showa Era.” In this scene it becomes clear that Article 9 has not only restricted Japanese soldiers from enacting their masculinity through acts of war, but the demilitarization has directly emasculated them by preventing their sexual domination of women. Not only is the militant past unfamiliar territory for the SDF in *Sengoku Jieitai*; apparently a woman’s body is, too. Upon sneaking into the widow’s house the men of the SDF encounter Sengoku Era soldiers with the same plan. If the SDF are allowed to re-embodiment the masculinity of their dominant samurai forebears, then they can reinforce their power over women, the loss of which has long caused anxiety amongst those men who cling to masculinity as the dominant gender in society.

The samurai ethos was romanticized to inspire the conscripted soldiers of Japan’s Imperial Army. But if he had once been a figure of romantic masculine ideals, the Japanese lost their virtuous samurai during the Rape of Nanking, an event which is symbolically re-enacted in *Sengoku Jieitai* as an event that victimizes Japanese women and problematically empowers Japanese men. In the rewritten war narrative of the film, the victims of the Japanese SDF soldiers are not Chinese or Korean women, but Japanese peasants who are captured and raped by Yano, a rogue soldier of the SDF who steals a patrol boat loaded with alcohol. While Japanese women were forced to become comfort women during the war, the implication of establishing Japan as the primary victim of military atrocities reinforces the national narrative of Japan as the victim of a military establishment that betrayed the trust of individual citizens. It is also significant that Yano acts outside of his mandate as an SDF soldier, which echoes the arguments of revisionists who refused to acknowledge that comfort women were part of an official military strategy.⁷⁸ However, Yano’s actions are not immediately condemned in the film. An SDF soldier says of Yano and the two men who go AWOL with him, “they’ve got balls.” In a film that repeatedly emphasizes the inability of SDF soldiers to fulfil masculine functions, the implicit support for Yano’s actions is extremely troubling, particularly when Yano is punished for disobeying orders rather than for his crimes against the women, who are jettisoned into the ocean without being explicitly rescued. *Sengoku Jieitai* by no means represents consensus attitudes of the Japanese postwar public, but the film does reflect problematic narratives that emerged during the 1970s in which Japan existed as an exceptional nation, as a victimized nation and as an emerging global economic power, but very rarely as a victimizer and perpetrator of wartime atrocities, for which official apologies remained forthcoming.

⁷⁸ Margaret D. Stetz, “What the West Failed to Learn about War from the “Comfort Women,”” in *Gender Violence: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, eds., Jessican Schiffman and Margie Edwards (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 225.

By relocating the SDF into the past, *Sengoku Jieitai* engages with the discourse of war memory in order to establish the contemporary Japanese soldier as a victim. After its failed attempt at imperialism and global hegemony, which led to defeat in the Asia Pacific War, Japan as a proud and powerful nation survived, but as Sharalyn Orbaugh argues, ‘the very act of surviving on through the present into the future entails a *rewriting* of memory, newly necessary at each moment for the constitution of a *currently* viable identity in the *current* context.’⁷⁹ *Sengoku Jieitai* offers the opportunity for an SDF squad to rewrite history, and although they fail to alter the future of Japan, they are able to rewrite their own agency and masculinity by temporarily joining the ranks of samurai. Identifying with samurai is only temporary, however, and the attempt by the SDF members to become permanent fixtures of the military space-time of Japan is punished with death; SDF as samurai is viable in fantasy only.

The contested military space-time of *Sengoku Jieitai* is stabilized by the erasure of the SDF squad, who have transgressed the accepted role of Japanese soldiers as pacifists and victims. An aggressive Japanese military can exist only in the annals of history, and so it is in history that the SDF are buried. In the film the audience do not return to the military spaces of contemporary Japan, because in the logic of time travel those spaces no longer exist; they can be accessed only by travelling to the foreign lands of the past. However, the film simultaneously revels in the opportunity to construct a link between the SDF members and their samurai forebears, a link that has supposedly been missing in the real military spaces of contemporary Japan. The sight of Sonny Chiba’s modern soldier wielding a samurai sword celebrates the innate samurai spirit that resides in all Japanese men; all it takes is a desperate situation and the freedom to act as warriors to unleash it. Unfortunately the unleashed samurai spirit results in a mimetic re-enactment of past atrocities – the atrocities that had prohibited Japanese men from imagining themselves as samurai in the first place. It is the innate warrior spirit of the Japanese man that threatens to destabilize Japan as a demilitarized, pacifist nation divorced from the military space-time of its past. And it is this fear of the innate Japanese warrior consciousness that is evident in the subtext of Article 9. *Sengoku Jieitai* does not offer a solution to the paradox of Japan’s military space-time. The continuity between Japan’s militant past and its pacifist present must remain fragmented, lest the SDF attempt to imagine themselves as samurai. This requires distinguishing contemporary Japan’s physical space from its historical memory and removing the body of the samurai from the identity of Japanese men. While Freud’s uncanny space suggests a return of the repressed, the uncanny space-time

⁷⁹ in Christine E. Wiley, “Of Brutality and Betrayal: Youthful Fiction and the Legacy of the Asia Pacific War,” in *Imag(in)ing the War in Japan: Representing and Responding to Trauma in Postwar Literature and Film*, eds., Mark Williams and David C. Stahl (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 307.

of Japan goes beyond repression. The temporal nature of Japan's military space (which threatens continuity with past atrocities) and its embodiment into a modern Japanese soldier has not only been repressed, but it has become impossible, accessible only through the logic of time-travel in science-fiction fantasies.

Sengoku Jieitai is a relatively minor film despite starring Sonny Chiba, and it had only a limited international release, retitled *GI Samurai* in America and *Timeslip* in Germany. However, a remake was released in 2005 entitled *Sengoku Jieitai 1549*, directed by Masaaki Tezuka with a revised plot in which a crazed SDF General establishes a fortress in the Sengoku Period with the goal of initiating a nuclear blast to drastically reshape Japan's future. Once again a squad of SDF soldiers must redefine what it means to be a pacifist military, balancing strategic defence with acts of aggression, all the while negotiating a connection to the samurai masculinity of the past. Evidently, to many Japanese the past remains an unfamiliar country in which the samurai continues to exist as an uncanny other, a mirrored masculinity that offers an idealized, intact image of manhood unfamiliar to contemporary Japanese men, who are burdened with the colossal fragmentation of Japan's identity that followed defeat in 1945. War memory is still a contentious issue for Japan, particularly when tensions flare between China, Korea and Japan over contested territories and contested war memories, and the samurai will continue to exist as a contentious and unstable vanishing point of Japan's golden age of masculinity.

They'll Be Back

The uncanny cowboy and the uncanny samurai may have emerged as a disruptive sight on cinema screens, but they did allow the United States and Japan the opportunity to confront the haunting image of masculine archetypes that had been repressed after the postwar period. Science-fiction afforded imaginative scenarios in which an unfamiliar model of masculinity could be replaced or reconfigured to suit the needs of contemporary men; by rewriting the role of the cowboy and the samurai into contemporary narratives, the values associated with the once dominant archetypes could also be rewritten. In Michael Crichton's *Westworld* the corrupted cowboy of 1960s America that had haunted the imaginative playground of the fictional Wild West could finally be confronted and destroyed, along with the simulacrum of America's frontier history that no longer resonated with postwar audiences. Paul Verhoeven resurrected the cowboy in *RoboCop* with his satirical assault on the corporate excesses of Reagan's cowboy America, although the cowboy itself avoided being the butt of the joke.

RoboCop consolidated the multiplicities of Donna Haraway's socialist-feminist cyborg into a reorganization of the singular masculine self. His hypermasculinity may have been a response to masculine anxieties, but he had audiences cheering regardless. The uncanny samurai of *Sengoku Jieitai* responded to the chasm that had emerged between Japan's contemporary pacifism under Article 9 and its militant past, although the temporary jubilation of remilitarized SDF personnel resulted in an ambiguous conclusion to Japan's paradoxical military space-time. The SDF may not have been able to survive as samurai in the past, but they resented being unable to live as samurai in the present. Judith Kegan Gardiner may be correct that masculinity is a nostalgic formation with its ideal form located in the past,⁸⁰ But if this ideal past is repressed, and if men are separated from the nostalgic masculinity of cowboys and samurai, then cinema screens will experience a return of the uncanny cowboy and samurai.

⁸⁰ Judith Kegan Gardiner, "Introduction," 10.

Chapter 5

Becoming Cowboys, Samurai, Transnational in *The Last Samurai*, *Wanderer of the Great Plains* and *Kill Bill vol.1 and 2*

In Chapter 4 I addressed the uncanny return of cowboy and samurai as instances in which the cowboy and samurai became other. In this chapter I will investigate four films in which the American cowboy and Japanese samurai become *the Other* in the bilateral exchange between the U.S. and Japan. Becoming the archetype of the other uproots the cowboy and samurai from their cultural specificity as representatives of a national, masculinized self. Therefore, it is no longer appropriate to discuss the cowboy and samurai as products of national cinemas or national mythologies. Instead, the cowboy and samurai become transnational. In the early postwar encounters between cowboy and samurai it was the shared sense of loss and masculine crisis that drew the iconic figures of the cowboy and samurai together. As much as films like *Red Sun* (1971) and *East Meets West* (1995) attempted to emphasize the differences between the two archetypes, the affective condition of masculine crisis cut through their cultural idiosyncrasies. While I emphasized the self/other dichotomy as a framing device of such films, the logics of self and other dissipate in the multiple becomings of the transnational cowboy and samurai.

I use the phrase transnational, as opposed to global, because ‘*trans* denotes moving through space or across lines, as well as changing the nature of something’ to ‘transgress’ the national and the fixed.¹ The cowboys and samurai discussed in this chapter transgress spaces both real and imagined – a process which is mirrored in the production and reception of the films themselves as they unsettle the fixity of space and place. No longer is America’s frontier limited to the borders of the west, and gone is the necessary Japaneseness of the samurai warrior. The transnational cowboys and samurai not only transgress space and place; they are actively transformed in the process, so that their transnational deterritorialization is at once a key component of their multiple becomings captured on screen. Although the transnational is discussed in relation to the bilateral relationship between the U.S. and Japan, this is not to suggest that transnational becomings depend on the U.S. and Hollywood as the locus point of differentiation. Philippa Gates and Lisa Funnell identify that in the discourse of transnational

¹ Leon Hunt and Leung Wing-Fai. “Introduction,” In *East Asian Cinemas: Exploring Transnational Connections on Film*, eds., Leon Hunt and Leung Wing-Fai (London: Taurus, 2008), 3.

cinema there is a tendency to pit ‘Hollywood against the rest of the film-producing world.’² Gates and Funnell contend that ‘film production, talent, techniques, and conventions flow among pan-Pacific cinemas,’ rather than from a central point of origin.³ So it is that the films discussed in this chapter decentre Hollywood and Japan just as much as they decentre the self and subjectivity in the process of becoming.

Transnational becomings challenge the two dominant explanations for the absorption and integration of “foreign” cultural practices in the film industries of postwar Japan⁴ and Hollywood. Japan’s modern culture is characterized as imitative while American culture is framed as imperializing. Kōichi Iwabuchi argues that Japan’s capacity for cultural borrowing is ‘strategically represented as a key feature of Japanese identity itself,’ which Iwabuchi refers to as ‘strategic hybridism.’⁵ Prior to Japan adopting imitation as a cultural strategy, commentators in the West have been sceptical of Japan’s appropriation of Western cultural products such as jazz and hip-hop (discussed in Chapter 6) and Japan’s imitation of the West can be traced back to the so-called opening of Japan in 1853. This line of reasoning underlies the connection made between Kurosawa and the influence of John Ford, and it is an argument critiqued by E. Taylor Atkins in his chapter ‘Can Japanese Sing the Blues?’⁶ It is a framing device that positions Japan as passive, especially in its relationship to the U.S. The U.S. can then be critiqued as a hegemonic cultural power exerting its influence overseas as an extension of its empire through which it maintains control over the mechanisms of representation. To follow in this tradition would risk reading the Japanese cowboy as a shallow imitation borrowed from Hollywood and the American samurai as an extension of America’s global cultural reach. While these positions do have credence, this chapter will complicate the bilateral cultural exchange between the U.S. and Japan by decentering the national origins of cowboys and samurai and instead locating them within the transnational rhizome of becomings.

² Philippa Gates and Lisa Funnell, “Introduction,” in *Transnational Asian Identities in Pan-Pacific Cinemas: The Reel Asian Exchange*, eds., Philippa Gates and Lisa Funnell (New York: Routledge, 2012), xiii.

³ Ibid.

⁴ As Michael Baskett establishes, Japan’s film industry was actively engaged in the construction of Japan’s empire prior to the outbreak of the Pacific War, so the distinction I make between the film industries of Japan and the U.S. is in response to the postwar period. Michael Baskett, *The Attractive Empire: Transnational Film Culture in Imperial Japan*, 2008, 3.

⁵ Kochi Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 53.

⁶ E Taylor Atkins, “Can Japanese Sing the Blues?: “Japanese Jazz” and the Problem of Authenticity,” in *Modern Japanese Culture and Society*, ed. D.P Martinez (London: Routledge, 2007), 123.

Deborah Shaw draws attention to the popular use of transnationalism in film studies and observes that it is rarely defined when applied.⁷ Shaw responds to this shortcoming by refining the approaches to transnational film into fifteen sub-categories. The heading most applicable to this chapter is the notion of cross-cultural exchange, a term she borrows from Tom O'Regan that is consistent with my insistence on the particularities of the bilateral cultural exchange between the U.S. and Japan. Cultural exchange, as defined by O'Regan, involves the 'circulation – the giving, receiving, and redistribution – of cultural materials among differentiated socio-cultural formations.'⁸ The transnational cowboy and samurai are thus given, received and redistributed between the U.S. and Japan. However, O'Regan suggests that while cultural exchange is intrinsic to identity construction, it is simultaneously oppositional to 'cultural becoming,' because the process of exchange denies cultural integrity and autonomy.⁹ This is not an issue for the transnational becomings of cowboy and samurai, which forgo the integrity and concreteness of culture in the ongoing process of becoming, a condition of the transnational that will be explored in the films of this chapter.

Becoming other liberates men from hegemonic masculinities that failed to materialize in the postwar period. However, the very notion of *becoming* contradicts the foundations of being a man. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, which frames the discussions of this chapter, Deleuze and Guattari claim that there can be no 'becoming-man,' because man is considered to be the 'molar entity par excellence.'¹⁰ For men to participate in the act of becoming is to recognize the failure of *being* a man. Because masculinity is constructed as impenetrable, singular and complete, masculinity is in crisis if it is confronted with a sense of loss or pluralities of being. Masculinity ideally exists in stasis, it is an end point; it is not to be gained, only lost. But stasis is antithetical to the process of *becoming*. To *become* masculine is anathema to *being* a man. This is the ontological crisis of becoming masculine as opposed to being a man and it demands a radical reimagining of masculinity as a concept. The films discussed in this chapter thematise the crisis of becoming masculine, although they simultaneously invite comments regarding representations of the other and othering. The purpose of this chapter is to shift the focus away from the post-colonial *other* to deterritorialize the self/other dichotomy entirely, so that self/other are no longer oppositional but conditional.

⁷ Deborah Shaw, "Deconstructing and Reconstructing 'Transnational Cinema,'" in *Contemporary Hispanic Cinema: Interrogating the Transnational in Spanish and Latin American Film*, ed. Stephanie Dennison (Suffolk, UK: Tamesis, 2013), 49.

⁸ O'Regan, Tom. "Cultural Exchange," in *A Companion to Film Theory*, eds., Toby Miller and Robert Stam (Malden: Blackwell, 1999), 263.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 280.

¹⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translation by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 292.

Feminist readings of Deleuze discussed in this chapter actively work against the centrality of masculinity as an origin-point for identity construction and I will not contradict these arguments. Situating female masculinities within a Deleuzian reading of *Kill Bill* and *Sukiyaki Western Django* will rely on the work of feminist scholars such as Lucy Bolton, Rosi Braidotti and Dorothea Olkowski. Furthermore, this chapter is not an excuse to justify the appropriation of cultures by dominant forces. Instead, applying the notion of becoming allows for an alternative reading of films that are situated within the bilateral exchange between the cowboy and samurai of the U.S. and Japan. Becomings are the cause of, and solution to, the crisis of masculinity as it becomes a formation upended from its hegemonic roots to be dispersed and interspersed throughout the larger, rhizomatic potentials of uncategorized identities and endless becomings cowboy and samurai.

Edward Zwick's *The Last Samurai* (2003) opens my discussion of transnational becomings as a film that takes a literal approach to the transformative process of becoming a samurai. I argue that criticisms aimed at the American hero's appropriation of samurai culture and the film's representations of Japan as other, while valid, ignore the film's application of Deleuzian transformations. Zwick's storytelling and Tom Cruise's performance as the white hero are hardly subtle and do not need to be defended, but by focusing attention on the centrality of transnational becomings in the film I will demonstrate the affective, transformative qualities of becoming samurai. Critiques of Hollywood appropriations of samurai often neglect to mention the bilateral nature of America's cultural exchange with Japan and an early example of a Japanese cowboy exists in Takeichi Saito's *Daisogen no Wataridori*, hereafter referred to as *Wanderer of the Great Plains* (1960). Nikkatsu studios promoted the *Wanderer* series as "films without a nationality," which makes *Wanderer of the Great Plains* a sans-national film that features a transnational cowboy fighting to reclaim the dispossessed lands of the Ainu in Hokkaido.¹¹ What, exactly, the transnational cowboy becomes by the film's end remains ambiguous, which is consistent with the ongoing process of becoming. The film's exploration of identity construction intersecting with the plight of the Ainu makes the film an interesting companion to *Yususarezaru Mono*, discussed in Chapter 3. Both *The Last Samurai* and *Wanderer of the Great Plains* focus on male becomings, but becomings are not tied to the fixities of masculinity as a state of *being* male. Female masculinities are discussed in the final film of the chapter, Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill* (2004).

¹¹ Olivia Khoo, Belinda Smaill, and Audrey Yue, *Transnational Australian Cinema: Ethics in the Asian Diasporas* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2013), 64

My treatment of *becoming* transnational cowboy and samurai applies the ideas of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari and their discussion of becomings-animal in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Of particular relevance is the explanation of becoming as defined by what it is not: ‘a becoming is not a correspondence between relations. But neither is it a resemblance, an imitation, or, at the limit, an identification.’¹² Paul Patton clarifies the significance of Deleuze and Guattari’s becomings by identifying them ‘in terms of affects or intensities that correspond to a body’s relations with other bodies,’ although these bodies are not necessarily human or physical in nature.¹³ This is vital to *becoming* transnational cowboys and samurai as it bypasses the common criticism that becoming other involves an imitation of the *other* that is predicated on the perceived entitlement of a hegemonic position of cultural certainty, for example, the entitlement of whiteness. But the body of the other must be present so that ‘something or someone continues to become other (while continuing to be what it is).’¹⁴ These becomings are not end-points. Deleuze and Guattari stress the continuance of becoming as a ‘rhizome,’ not as an evolution or devolution, or a ‘being’ or ‘equalling’ on a ‘classificatory or genealogical tree.’¹⁵ The cowboy does not equal the samurai; becoming cowboy or samurai does not mean improvement, and it does not mean participating within a hierarchy of identity constructions. Instead, becoming a cowboy or samurai is an affective moment or movement between bodies (cowboy and samurai) outside of structural regulations of what someone is or ought to be. While this liberates the transnational archetypes from criticisms of cultural appropriation or cultural imperialism it plays havoc with the certainties necessary for masculine subjectivities.

Becoming, as discussed by Deleuze and Guattari, denies representation because it is neither stable nor necessarily physical or visual. This limits the applicability of their notion of becoming when discussing the visual transformations of transnational cowboys and samurai. To compensate for the literal transformations and becomings that occur in the films of this chapter I will apply an expanded sense of becoming that incorporates the performative body and gendered metamorphoses. Rosi Braidotti employs her ‘materialist theory of becoming’ to ground the ideas of Deleuze within a framework that can be applied to feminist philosophies of becoming woman and becoming nomadic¹⁶ in response to the phenomenon of ‘trans-culturality’ and the ‘scattered hegemonies’ of contemporary cultures.¹⁷ Braidotti also engages

¹² Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 237.

¹³ Paul Patton, *Deleuze and the Political* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 79.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹⁵ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 239.

¹⁶ Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 5.

¹⁷ Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 14.

with sexual difference more directly than Deleuze as a means to embody females ‘as corporeal and consequently sexed beings.’¹⁸ Embodied becomings are better suited to analysing gender representations on cinema screens, and Braidotti’s discussion of the feminist subject will also elucidate the significance of women becoming cowboys, samurai and masculine in the *Kill Bill* films (2003/4).

As a transformative, affective event, becoming implies action. Embodying the process of becoming cowboy and samurai, masculine and feminine, therefore requires an understanding of the affective body in performance and in movement. Elena del Rio applies the possibilities of Deleuzian becomings to the body in action. Del Rio argues that ‘performance is the actualization of the body’s potential [...] Thus the body’s expressivity coincides with its continually transformative activity in its relations with other bodily assemblages, human or otherwise.’¹⁹ Both the cowboy and samurai are masculine archetypes of bodily potential – the flexing fingers atop primed pistols, the coiled muscles of a swordsman waiting to strike. As archetypes of action the cowboy and samurai are well suited to the transformative potential of becomings. Their physicality had once been employed to demonstrate and insist upon their bodily integrity, so that the dismembered or beaten body marked the failure of the cowboy or samurai to remain intact – their failure to remain masculine. However, becomings as transformative events empower the fluid bodies of motion, where bodies in stasis represent only atrophy.

The films discussed in this chapter employ the transnational cowboy and samurai as a response to identity configurations that had become mired in the crises of the modern age. Where being American, Japanese, man, woman had come to represent the oppressive demands of cultural and social norms, *The Last Samurai*, *The Wanderer of the Great Plains* and *Kill Bill* each explore the potential *becomings* that arise through the transnational transgressions of spatial and temporal boundaries.

The Last Cowboy Becomes a Samurai

Edward Zwick’s *The Last Samurai* is loosely inspired by the Satsuma Rebellion of 1877 and the siege on Kumamoto Castle, which was led by Saigo Takamori and his army of disaffected samurai during the first years of the Meiji era. At the time of his rebellion

¹⁸ Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses*, 22.

¹⁹ Elena del Rio, *Deleuze and the Cinemas of Performance: Powers of Affection* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 11.

Takamori was labelled as a traitor by the Meiji government, although in the years following his death he came to be idolized as the epitome of samurai, ergo Japanese, masculine virtue. The film introduces a disaffected American cowboy, Nathan Algren, played by Tom Cruise, who encounters the Japanese rebellion and is taken prisoner by the rebel leader. During his season-long captivity, Algren learns Japanese, falls in love with the widow of a man he had himself killed, and joins the rebellion against an American-led conscript army of Imperial Japanese soldiers. The film takes great liberties with the historical time-period because it does not make claims at historical facticity. *The Last Samurai* instead represents the 19th century histories of the U.S. and Japan as constructs of myth – myths of cowboys and samurai.

In Zwick's film, Takamori is fictionalized as a man called Katsumoto, played by Ken Watanabe, and this refrain from the conceit of historical truth is an important factor in the way Zwick's film engages with historical fictions and masculine myths. The real Saigo Takamori was a hero of the Boshin War, which helped to establish the restoration of the Emperor and the subsequent Meiji Government. His motivations for inciting rebellion against the very government he helped establish were largely political, rather than romantic fancies of a loss of Japaneseness due to Westernization. And his rebellion, though significant, was relatively small.²⁰ However, following his death, Takamori became the fascination of Meiji and Shōwa-era Japanese with the help of biographies that celebrated his resistance to a weakened state and his ardent nationalist values.²¹ Zwick's fictionalized samurai rebel, Katsumoto, has more in common with the romanticized Takamori of Ivan Morris' book, *The Nobility of Failure: Tragic Heroes in the History of Japan*²² than the man of Charles L. Yates' restrained historical account, *Saigo Takamori: The Man Behind the Myth*.²³ However, it is important to recognize that the myth of Saigo Takamori, and the mythical Japan that he fought for, are not Western notions, but were instead promulgated by Japanese writers shortly after Takamori's death. Yates identifies Takamori as a man of 'affective truth,' remembered as a man of Japan's imaginary rather than a man of fact.²⁴ What Takamori represents more than anything is the affective truth of the samurai, and it is this idea that will drive the *becomings* of *The Last Samurai*.

²⁰ Junji Banno, *Japan's Modern History, 1857-1937: A New Political Narrative*, translated by James Arthur (Ainscow. London: Routledge, 2014), 76.

²¹ Jason G. Karlin, *Gender and Nation in Meiji Japan: Modernity, Loss, and the Doing of History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014), 110.

²² Ivan Morris, *The Nobility of Failure: Tragic Heroes in the History of Japan* (New York: Noonday Press, 1988), 418.

²³ Charles L. Yates, *Saigo Takamori: Man Behind the Myth*. New York: Routledge, 2010.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

The Last Samurai is frequently criticized as an example of cultural appropriation and the White Messiah complex evident in films such as *Dances with Wolves* and *Pocahontas*.²⁵ By emphasizing the whiteness of the male lead, played by Tom Cruise, the appropriation and subsequent salvation of the *other* becomes a condition of *being* a white male. Sean M. Tierney challenges the ease with which Nathan Algren can appropriate the culture of the Japanese, citing it as an example of the white man's 'flexible positional superiority,' a phrase he references from Edward Said.²⁶ In this view, the act of becoming Other assumes the superiority of Nathan Algren and a unilateral relationship that exists wherein the U.S. is the colonizer and Japan is the colonized. The superiority of Algren's appropriation culminates in his *becoming* samurai, which Tierney describes as a 'superlative performance of the Other's cultural practices.'²⁷ I argue that to focus instead on the instability and impermanence of Algren's *becoming* samurai opens the film to an interpretation of whiteness and maleness that is far less celebratory and more consistent with the way his character develops. Rather than read Algren's transformation into a samurai as a triumph, we can instead read it as the continuation of his crisis.

The Last Samurai actively establishes its world as one of fantasy and myth, concerned less with the realities of Japan's encounters with the West in the Meiji Era (or the 21st century) than with the ephemeral nature of masculinity as experienced through impermanent moments of becoming. Applying the logic of imperialism to *The Last Samurai*, which does admittedly structure its narrative around the consequences of colonialism, necessitates the application of a self/other binary that assumes the fixity of national identities. Ironically, by critiquing the privileged position of Algren as a white, Western male, the alignment of identity with geography becomes fixed, thus asserting the very hierarchy between the East and West that such a reading purports to address. I contend that the film is not about Empires at all, or Algren's whiteness, or Japan's positionality vis-à-vis the West. *The Last Samurai* alludes to the context of Japan's 19th century modernization, but in its fanciful retelling of events, the film rejects the concrete boundaries of national spaces. Instead, the film embraces the possibilities of permeable spaces of myth, which are able to conflate the context of the film's setting with the contemporary conditions of its production. Thus, the impermanence that belies the masculine crisis affecting Nathan Algren throughout the film is informed by the non-diagetic realities of the film's transnational production.

²⁵ Mina Shin, "Making a Samurai Western: Japan and the White Samurai Fantasy in *The Last Samurai*," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 43, no. 5 (2010): 1069.

²⁶ Sean M. Tierney, "Themes of Whiteness in *Bulletproof Monk*, *Kill Bill*, and *The Last Samurai*," *Journal of Communication* 56 (2006): 613.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Because large segments of the story were filmed in New Zealand, the spaces of colonization implied in the action of the film are subsequently decontextualized and upended, refusing the masculine certainty of ‘real space’ as fixed.²⁸ Rather than read this spatial instability as a consequence of Hollywood’s post-colonial indifference to the sanctity of national spaces, it can instead be incorporated into the broader deterritorializations occurring in the film. Outside of the diegesis, Japan is no longer a fixed geographical certainty, but rather a set of assemblages that can be reconfigured on the fields of Taranaki, enhanced by the visual effects of digital artists working in the United States, and seemingly legitimized by the presence of Japanese actors responding to New Zealand as home. In her efforts to ‘spatialize feminism,’ Linda McDowell argues that ‘what distinguishes the world at the end of the 20th century is the transnational attenuation of ‘local’ space, and this breaking of space into ‘discontinuous realities’ which alters our sense of ourselves as individuals, members of various groups and communities, as citizens of a nation state.’²⁹ In the case of *The Last Samurai* the ‘discontinuous realities’ are realized in the multiple shooting locations that create the illusion of a continuous Japanese space. Rather than attend to the discombobulation of postmodern spatiality as a problem, McDowell instead encourages a definition of both identity and place as a ‘network of relations, unbounded and unstable, rather than fixed.’³⁰ In other words, McDowell encourages an understanding of space as rhizomatic. The Japan that Nathan Algren visits is New Zealand *becoming* Japan, a suitable metatextual alignment with Algren’s own transnational becomings.

To recognize that the “Japan” of *The Last Samurai* is an unstable, rhizomatic space in the process of geographic *becomings* undermines the imperial certainties necessary for a critique of Nathan Algren’s whiteness and his privileged, colonial mastery over the Japanese other. The first sighting of Japan, viewed from the deck of a digital sail-ship, has a digital Mt Fuji towering over Yokohama Harbor – a composite image of matte paintings, green screen effects shots, and a set built in New Plymouth, New Zealand.³¹ Nathan Algren briefly walks through the New Plymouth set – standing in for the haphazard sprawl of a rapidly modernizing Yokohama city – which seamlessly transitions into a shot of Algren walking up the steps of a palace filmed on location in Kyoto, Japan. These same techniques and technologies are employed to visualize the brief opening sequences set in San Francisco, which were filmed in

²⁸ Gillian Rose, “As if the Mirrors Had Bled: Masculine Dwelling, Masculinity Theory and Feminist Masquerade,” in *Body Space: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality*, ed. Nancy Duncan (New York: Routledge, 1996), 59.

²⁹ Linda McDowell, “Spatializing Feminism: Geographic Perspectives,” in *Body Space: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality*, edited by Nancy Duncan (New York: Routledge, 1996), 30.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 36.

³¹ Edward Zwick commentary, *The Last Samurai*. DVD. Directed by Zwick, Edward. Burbank, California: Warner Home Video, 2004.

Burbank, California, with the use of matte paintings for the 19th century urban landscape. The geographic impossibilities of the film's spatial assemblages defy the fixity of nations as being rooted in time and space. This dislocation upsets the association between national space and subjectivity, which allows for the subject to create an identity disconnected from the hierarchies of place. For example, the filmmakers subvert the dominant Japanese narrative of the last samurai sacrificing their lives as defenders of Japaneseness by erasing the fixed boundaries of Japan. Instead, the last samurai, led by the fictional Katsumoto, are defending their right to *become* samurai. Likewise, Nathan Algren is liberated from the expectations of his American masculinity – the Western cowboy that he had failed to become.

The introduction of Nathan Algren as a failed cowboy and alcoholic establishes the literal realization of Deleuzian becomings that constitute Algren's masculine identity. The crisis afflicting Nathan Algren in the opening scenes of *The Last Samurai* is his realization that he has not *become* a cowboy hero befitting the masculine myths of his generation. Instead, he is a man tormented by the memories of a massacre of Native American women and children that he reluctantly participated in. Algren's failed becoming cowboy is further confounded by the commoditization of his exploits as a soldier in his use as a salesman for Winchester Rifles. To address his lack of becoming, Algren finds solace in alcohol. Leonard Lawler explains that in the becomings of Deleuze and Guattari, to enter into cycles of addiction – such as the alcoholic's addiction to drink – is to find solace in a recommencement of action disguised as a becoming. Without change there cannot be a becoming, and cycles and recommencements do not amount to change.³² To break the cycle the alcoholic must either commit suicide or enable the choice of more choices, which begins with the choice to stop drinking alcohol. In the early stages of the film Algren is tempted by both outcomes. The suicidal death-wish has Algren coerce a Japanese trainee to fire a loaded musket at his head, and his temptation towards death remains up to the final climactic battle sequence, which does witness the death of Katsumoto. Algren does not die. He does, however, break his cycle of alcoholism.

Nathan Algren breaks his cycle of alcoholism by rejecting the restrictive nationalism required of the cowboy myth, although his initial motivation for fighting in Japan maintains his complicity in the racist assumptions of colonialism: "You want me to kill jappos. I'll kill jappos." Leaving the U.S. is a choice for more choices, and it advances the potential becomings that had been stifled by the American frontier cowboy, which had become a tool of colonialism. What begins as an imperializing mission to quash the resistance of anti-imperial samurai becomes an opportunity for Nathan Algren to recognize the impermanence of his

³² Leonard Lawler, "Following the Rats: Becoming-Animal in Deleuze and Guattari," *Substance* 37, no. 3 (2008): 172.

being cowboy, and the impermanence of his being American. In response to the trope of the American man travelling to the unfamiliar orient, Brian Locke locates *The Last Samurai* within a tradition of Orientalist buddy films, in which the white man reconciles his differences with the Japanese man to collectively overcome a common obstacle. In the post-9/11 context, Locke interprets this formula as an attempt to reconcile shared histories of aggression so that Japan and the U.S. could overcome the common threat of 21st century terrorism.³³ This conclusion assumes that Algren remains white and American throughout the film. It also assumes that Katsumoto, Algren's oriental buddy, is, and remains Japanese. Locke's interpretation is well-suited to the film and its post-9/11 context, but it does insist on the fixity of nation-states and the fixity of racial identities. I argue that Nathan Algren sails to Japan and inadvertently commences his becomings in a manner that defies the permanence of his previous identity, but as he discovers early on, he is not immediately prepared to become samurai.

Critics of the whiteness of Tom Cruise's samurai in *The Last Samurai* neglect to mention that before *becoming* samurai, the failed cowboy *becomes* animal. More specifically, he *becomes* a tiger. In *A Thousand-Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari explain that *becoming* animal does not mean appearing, being or regressing into an animal.³⁴ Instead, *becoming-animal* involves an affective moment of action, an instant, which brings the human into contact with the flows and assemblages and affects that make up the animal. This moment of affective reconciliation is made possible if we accept Tamsin Lorraine's explanation that 'the same processes that produce human beings and social existence also produce rocks, mountains, forests, and animals.'³⁵ That is, to accept 'humanity in its imbrications with impersonal as well as nonhuman flows.'³⁶ Deleuze and Guattari offer the example of a man scratching his beard like a rodent, or like a dog, as in the case of Toshiro Mifune's animalistic behaviours as a Rōnin in the films of Akira Kurosawa.³⁷ They explain further that becoming animal, or to become rat, is not to identify with the rat, nor does the human become the same as the rat. It is instead a 'composition of speeds and affects,' to imbricate the human within the flow of being rat.³⁸ Leonard Lawlor expands upon Deleuze and Guattari's example of the human becoming rat to contemplate what it would mean to write as rat. He suggests that writing like a rat 'would produce a people contaminated with the feverish thought of the

³³ Brian Locke, *Racial Stigma on the Hollywood Screen from World War II to the Present: The Orientalist Buddy Film* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 155.

³⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 239.

³⁵ Tamsin Lorraine, *Deleuze and Guattari's Immanent Ethics* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2011), 35.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

³⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 239.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 258.

struggle against death.’³⁹ It would not require being a rat, or identifying with the rat, in the same way that Nathan Algren does not transform into a tiger, or, indeed, a samurai.

In *The Last Samurai* Nathan Algren’s becoming-tiger visualizes the essence of Deleuze and Guattari’s becoming-animal. It is an affective moment shared by Katsumoto and the audience, who witness Algren’s momentary becoming-tiger as a time-distorted blur of movement. The moment of Algren’s becoming-tiger comes at the end of an ill-fated battle against Katsumoto’s army. Algren is knocked from his horse and surrounded by foot-soldiers. Desperate, he brandishes the banner flag of Katsumoto’s army as a rudimentary weapon. The banner features the stylised design of a white tiger, which is a visual cue that Algren’s frantic, defensive movements, presented in slow-motion, constitute his becoming-animal. His hair sways wildly, matching the billowing banner, and his breathing becomes hoarse. It is through movement and the collapsing of time through slow-motion that Algren becomes banner, animal, tiger. If becoming-rat was ‘to be contaminated with the feverish thought of the struggle against death,’ then Algren’s becoming-tiger is the ferocious will to live. This moment of affect, of ferocity, is translated to the audience through the look on Katsumoto’s face as he recognizes Algren’s transformation. An unnecessary, non-diegetic tiger’s growl is heard over the action to make Algren’s momentary transformation more apparent, and while this does contradict Deleuze and Guattari’s insistence that becoming-animal is not an identification with the animal, the visual impact of Algren’s becoming-tiger remains. It is a sequence that lasts barely two minutes of screen time, but Algren’s brief becoming-tiger is the catalyst for his eventual, and brief, becoming-samurai.

The ethereal nature of Algren’s becoming is visualized in a brief silhouette sequence in which he rehearses the swordplay of the samurai against the setting sun. The sequence is barely five seconds in length, and yet it effaces the presence of Tom Cruise the actor and the whiteness of his character at a pivotal moment in his becoming samurai. He is reduced to pure movement, and it is through movement that his body incorporates the flow, the processes, and the tendencies of the samurai. Elena Del Rio makes the connection between the moving body and Deleuzian becomings clear: ‘In the gestures and movements of the performing body, incorporeal forces or affects become concrete expression-events that attest to the body’s powers of action and transformation.’⁴⁰ Del Rio explains that ‘the lived-body of phenomenology enables a reading of the female body (or indeed, any body) as engaged in possibilities of action and meaning in addition to, or in place of, those stipulated by culture.’⁴¹

³⁹ Leonard Lawlor, “Following the Rats,” 181.

⁴⁰ Elena Del Rio, *Deleuze and the Cinemas of Performance*, 4.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 114.

Algren's expression-event is a moment of action and transformation that exists in place of his stipulated identity as a white American man. They are a series of movements that will transform the black samurai of *Ghost Dog*, discussed in Chapter 6. When Nathan Algren wears the clothes of a samurai he is not a white man in the armour of a Japanese samurai, and he does not become Japanese when he speaks Japanese, and he does not become a samurai when he rides onto the battlefield in the company of Katsumoto's men – moments that foreground his otherness and make apparent the visibility of the white man *acting* the role of the Other. Algren's becoming-samurai is akin to his becoming-tiger, it is a moment of affective action and it is only momentary; a *becoming*, not a *being*.

Scholarly responses to *The Last Samurai* rightly address the Othering that occurs in the film and convincingly locate its narrative within a legacy of Orientalizing treatments of Japan by the West, but I contend that there is a complexity to Nathan Algren's *becoming-samurai* that can further the discussion of becoming Other beyond the binaries of East/West, self/other, masculine/feminine. Deleuze and Guattari provide a useful, although at times evasive, schema for malleable identity permutations that bypass cultural expectations, binary configurations and physical limitations. *The Last Samurai* actively invites the application of Deleuze and Guattari's *becomings* by following, often quite literally, the transformative process of *becomings* as explained in *A Thousand Plateaus*; from alcoholic, to animal, to samurai. The temptation is to read Algren's transformation as an extension of his white privilege, but I interpret the instability of his identity, and the impermanence of his *becomings*, as evidence of his crisis of masculinity. Algren's crisis is being condemned to live and to know that he can never *be* a man, at least not in any sustainable form, because his is a crisis precipitated by the rejection of the cowboy that had defined what *being* a man entailed for American soldiers. It is the collapse of the cowboy as a stable, masculine identity, lost in the massacres of Native Americans, that encourages Algren to make the choice for more choices rather than die as a failed, alcoholic cowboy.

The Last Samurai interrogates the nature of masculinity as a gender formation disassociated from the conditions of space, time and place. The Japan and America of the film are conceived through transnational spaces and artifice that allow Algren's masculine transformations to be anachronistic and exaggerated so that he might demonstrate the fluidity of identities associated to bodies without organs. In the film, masculinity is not an outcome but a process, and it does not necessarily lead to *being* a man. However, access to transnational *becomings* are limited to men. The love interest of the film, Taka, played by Koyuki Kato, remains a dutiful housewife and mother while the men around her transform into samurai and tigers. The potential of Deleuzian *becomings* are therefore limited by cultural expectations that

dictate masculinity to be gendered male. It is a shortcoming of the film that I will address in my discussion of *Kill Bill* and the female-masculinity of *The Bride*. But first, I will demonstrate that the masculine becomings-other are not manifestations of white privilege or products of cultural imperialism. Before Tom Cruise was becoming Nathan Algren becoming samurai, Akira Kobayashi was becoming Wanderer, becoming cowboy in the 1960 feature *Wanderer of the Great Plains*.

Becomings Cowboy, Ainu, Japanese

Wanderer of the Great Plains (dir. Takeichi Saito, 1960) realizes the connection I have been making between postwar American cowboys and Japanese samurai in the body of the Japanese cowboy, played by actor and singer Akira Kobayashi. Akira Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* introduced the gun-cocked gunslinger into the world of samurai in 1961, and Seijun Suzuki employed tropes of the wandering gunman in his art-house yakuza film *Tokyo Drifter* (1966), but the influences of cinema's Wild West were implied and indirect in both cases. In *Wanderer of the Great Plains* there is no mistaking the influence of Golden-Age American westerns, and the lineage of singing cowboys such as Gene Autry and Roy Rodgers. The Japanese cowboy, a man named Shinji (a masculine name comparable to the American Joe), is a guitar wielding wanderer destined to fight injustice without ever being able to settle down – a narrative device that suited the episodic nature of the long-running series. During his travels, Shinji chances upon an Ainu tribe facing eviction. This is the catalyst for the action of the episode. The film was popular upon release in the summer of 1960, but Hiroshi Kitamura rightly identifies the Nikkatsu produced *Wanderer* series as being 'largely neglected in existing filmic scholarship,' which makes it both fertile ground for original insights into Japan's overlooked mainstream cinema and an opportunity to discuss the radical potential for Japanese *becomings-cowboy* in the 1960s.⁴²

In the same way that Nathan Algren in *The Last Samurai* never permanently became a samurai, Shinji in *Wanderer of the Great Plains* is never *being* cowboy or Japanese, despite his appearance. As mentioned earlier, Japan's culture has been essentialized as imitative, and the presence of the cowboy in *Wanderer of the Great Plains* could be mistaken as an imitative performance of an American masculine trope – I have already identified the influence of the

⁴² Hiroshi Kitamura, "'Shoot-out in Hokkaido', The *Wanderer (Wata-dori)* Series and the Politics of Transnationality," in *Transnational Asian Identities in Pan-Pacific Cinemas: The Reel Asian Exchange*, eds., Philippa Gates and Lisa Funnell (New York: Routledge, 2012), 31.

singing cowboys. Shinji's *becomings* are not as literal as Algren's, but they are indicative of an identity in motion. What might appear to be the performance of a hegemonic masculine archetype borrowed from the West - an alternative to Japan's defeated wartime masculinities - is a rejection of hegemonic identity formations and the nation-states they serve. Shinji refuses the use of guns, the phallogocentric imperative of American cowboys, and his actions proactively work against the settling of frontiers in the defence of impermanence – he does not settle the Ainu in their rebellion against the incursion of Japanese settlers.⁴³ Shinji's *becomings* are a nomadic response to Japan's attempted renationalization following the war in which he chooses the choice of more choices rather than the cyclic dependence on national formations. This is the radical nature of a film that Hiroshi Kitamura recognizes as conservative.

1960 proved to be an eventful year for Japan, and the potential *becomings* witnessed in *Wanderer of the Great Plains* resonate with the destabilizing transformations Japan encountered in 1960. Michael H. Gibbs describes Japanese cinema in the build-up to 1960 and the ANPO Security Treaty as 'indicative of massive uncertainty and strong disagreement about the national course.'⁴⁴ Gibbs employs the metaphors of Japan's feudal past to visualize the possibility that in 1960 the U.S. would become the Tokugawa Shogunate of the Free World emerging from the Warring States Period – a dominant but isolated power.⁴⁵ In this metaphor Japan would function as an isolated, but dependent, Daimyo or State paying tithes to the imperialistic ruling power. Gibbs' metaphor and the uncertainty of Japan's position vis a vis the United States is apposite. In *Wanderer of the Great Plains* the film collapses past and present so that the cowboy, armed with a guitar, coexists with contemporary yakuza gangs armed with pistols and an Ainu tribe armed with spears in a loose re-enactment of Japan's unification during the Meiji Restoration. The instability that Gibbs witnessed in the films of 1960 can be seen in the precarious position of the Ainu within Japan's emerging national identity, and the displacement of the cowboy as a masculine alternative to samurai, embodied in a man who seems to be both out of place and out of time.

The sense of destabilization evident in the film's displaced hero and the anachronistic Ainu coincides with the unfixed nature of transnational cinema and the uncoupling of time and place that ensues. Hiroshi Kitamura explains how the opening scene of the film interlaces what might be seen as "Japanese" 'with tropes of the Hollywood western;' an example of Nikkatsu's "action without nationality."⁴⁶ The opening shot offers a panoramic view of Mashu Lake, Hokkaido, accompanied by a western-influenced theme song (played with the right

⁴³ Rosi Braidotti positions her nomad as the antithesis to phallogocentrism, *Nomadic Subjects*, 33.

⁴⁴ Michael H. Gibbs, *Film and Political Culture in Postwar Japan* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), 52.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Hiroshi Kitamura, "Shoot-out in Hokkaido," 37.

instruments). For those familiar with Hokkaido, the scene could be recognizably Japanese, but the presence of the cowboy renders the location unfamiliar and Other. Shinji, the cowboy Other, chances upon an Ainu village, home to the indigenous Other, which has been harassed by yakuza thugs. The village elder speaks Ainu, which necessitates the use of Japanese subtitles, as in *Yurusarezaru Mono*. Kitamura explains that this is a deliberate strategy of Othering Hokkaido and the indigenous Ainu to reinforce the rhetoric of mainland Japan as a homogenous, exceptional nation.⁴⁷ But in the context of 1960s Japan, and situated within the destabilization inherent to a film “without nationality,” the Japanese cowboy, a wanderer without a home, can instead be read as a rejection of nationhood as fixed. And rather than being victims of colonization in the narrative and production of the film, the Ainu of 1960 reject their incorporation into the Japanese Archipelago in a reversal of Japan’s internal-colonization that occurred nearly a century earlier with the Meiji Restoration. The Ainu do lack agency in the film’s narrative, and Kitamura is correct to identify the patronizing presence of a Japanese “Ainu specialist” in the film, but their representation as timeless and independent of mainland Japanese modernity is a radical rejection of Japan and the Japanese as they had been understood since the late 19th century.

The incorporation of Ainu at the centre of the film invites a comparison with the post-colonial discourses that dominated the reception of *The Last Samurai*. Nathan Algren, the white cowboy, rides to the rescue of Japan’s native samurai from a position of power as an American man and as a fiction of the Hollywood Studio system. Shinji, a Japanese cowboy, rides to the rescue of Japan’s native Ainu from a position of power as “Japanese” and as a construct of Japan’s “national cinema.” Hiroshi Kitamura argues that *Wanderer of the Great Plains* exemplifies the paradox of transnationalism; the film borrowed the American cowboy to defend the Ainu and redefine Japan’s national space from the encroachment of cultural “others,” namely Hollywood’s America and Japan’s pre-modern Ainu.⁴⁸ The film made the “transnational” cowboy, and the strategy of hybridism employed in *Wanderer of the Great Plains*, a component of Japan’s “national” cinema and national identity; the ‘strategic hybridism’ identified by Kochi Iwabuchi. However, what Hiroshi Kitamura sees as a paradox of transnational cinema can be reconciled as a consequence of a Nomadic Cinema of perpetual becomings; a cinema without borders, and a cinema “without a nation” that creates nomadic peoples and a nomadic cowboy.

Dudley Andrew traces Nomadic Cinema to the origins of film. He explains that at a time when the ‘sedentary studio empire protected itself by colonizing (territorializing) the

⁴⁷ Hiroshi Kitamura, “Shoot-out in Hokkaido,” 41.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 43.

uncontrolled spaces, times, and dramas beyond its walls,' Nomadic Cinema was led by, and led to the movements of nomadic people beyond national borders.⁴⁹ As a domestic studio that relied on local markets, Nikkatsu is more readily identified within the cultures of transnational cinema. However, with its insistence on borderless cinema and its readiness to move outside of Japan, even when filming *in* Japan, the transnational films can be understood as Nomadic. *Wanderer of the Great Plains* begins *in media res*, as a film already in motion, and it concludes with the wanderer riding into the unknown. Dudley Andrew explains that Nomads are “always coming into being,” they take (and change) shape in relation to an already colonized environment that would define and place them.⁵⁰ We can read *Wanderer of the Great Plains* as an episode of Shinji’s “coming into being,” or becoming that takes place within the colonized space of Hokkaido. Crucially, Shinji’s cowboy does not participate in the colonization. The wandering cowboy and the Ainu of the film come into being within a colonized space, and they resist identification. By the film’s end the Ainu village has been destroyed, which will no doubt prompt the need for nomadic relocations (the Ainu were historically nomadic before being colonized and settled by the mainland Japanese). And although they had been the primary victims within the narrative, their story is left unresolved as it is unceremoniously abandoned after a climactic shootout. When Shinji rides into the distance at the film’s end ala *Shane*, the ambiguities (or Kitamura’s paradoxes) of the unresolved narrative can be explained as Nomadic rejections of sedimentation. There is no settlement, there is no resolution and there is no *being*.

The destabilizations that frame *Wanderer of the Great Plains* naturalize the unfixed wanderings of the protagonist and the nomadic becomings that he fosters and enacts. The film resists placement and settlement even as it “locates” its setting within the fixed spaces of Hokkaido. In her response to Deleuze and Guattari, Rosi Braidotti defines the nomad as enacting ‘transitions without a teleological purpose’ and ‘crossing boundaries [...] regardless of the destination.’⁵¹ For the nomad to cross boundaries is not an act of resistance to nation-states and national identities inasmuch as a disregard for those infrastructures that demarcate boundary positions and binaries as fixed. The nomad is not homeless, or displaced, ‘the nomad is only passing through.’⁵² They are actively engaged in their becomings, which are rhizomatic and without end, and so they resist any hierarchical or hegemonic structures or institutions that will attempt to permanently settle those *becomings* into *beings*. Braidotti’s nomad is a feminist

⁴⁹ Dudley Andrew, “The Roots of the Nomadic: Gilles Deleuze and the Cinema of West Africa,” in *The Brain is the Screen: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Cinema*, ed. Gregory Flaxman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 220.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 224.

⁵¹ Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, 23.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 75.

response to the scattered hegemonies and micro-fascisms that regulate the wanderers, the exiles and the refugees so it is unlikely that she had the cowboy in mind as a nomadic formation. But Shinji's cowboy, the wanderer of the series, has many traits of the Deleuzian nomad. He wanders in and out of the film, and in and out of musical interludes, without any teleological purpose and without an end, and he crosses national boundaries (from the American West to Hokkaido) only as a means to expose that boundary as permeable. Unlike Nathan Algren, who apparently settles into domestic life at the end of *The Last Samurai*, Shinji resists assimilation into domestic normality, and he aids the Ainu in their resistance against assimilation. Not only is Shinji a man of movement, his actions dismantle the formation of micro-fascisms, be they the hegemonies of domestication or the settlement of a displaced people – the same cannot be said of Alan Ladd's Shane.

I have resisted the interpretation of Shinji's cowboy as imitative by reading him as nomadic rather than hegemonic, and by virtue of his proximity to the Ainu in the film, his nomadic *becomings* can be likened to becoming-minoritarian. Paul Patton explains that the minority is not quantitative but qualitative, a state of being (or becoming) that exists outside of the normality accepted and enforced by the hegemonic majority.⁵³ The threat of the minority, therefore, is not that the minority will seek to become the majority, but that everyone will become minoritarian. Deleuze and Guattari 'are advocates of the transformative potential of becoming-minor, or becomingrevolutionary, against the normalising power of the majority.'⁵⁴ This is the threat of the Ainu to mainland Japan, that their not *being* Japanese will call into question the normalizing nihonjinron discourse that attempted so vociferously to regulate Japan as a cohesive nation-state in the postwar period. And it is the threat of the nomad, who resists the stasis of *being* (man, woman, other) normalized by the majority, in favour of a nomadic, minoritarian alternative. For the Japanese in 1960, confronted by the radical polarities of Left and Right-Wing political parties in Japan and the uncertainty of Japan's postwar course vis-à-vis the West as identified by Michael H. Gibbs, the Wanderer is a radical hero paradoxically situated within a conservative genre.

To retroactively apply Braidotti's Deleuzian feminism and Patton's politicized Deleuzian *becomings* to *Wanderer of the Great Plains* is not inconsistent with the historical context of the film's production. The year 1960 marked a pivotal transition for Japan, as already alluded to in the comments of Michael H. Gibbs, and Japanese academics recognized the impact of Japan's shifting position in the world. The 1960 Hakone Conference of Japanese and American intellectuals was a defining moment in the critical reappraisal of Japan's

⁵³ Paul Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*, 48.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

postwar identity. The conference was organized by University of Michigan historian John W. Hall with representatives from the CIA and the Ford Foundation in attendance. It was an effort to make sense of Japan's strategy of high-growth economics within a globalized (Westernized) 'ideology of modernization as a model of capitalist development.'⁵⁵ Historian Tetsuo Najita responded to Japan's modernization theory and subsequent high-growth economics as a flawed project in which the social dialectic, which was supposed to be 'fuelled' by technological production, was instead neutralized and disarmed by the state, which became the 'preeminent apparatus that defines and promotes national interests [...] by managing culture.'⁵⁶ At stake was the subjectivity of the individual within a homogenized society that embraced consumption and middle-class consensus based on an American model of economic growth. What a time, then, for the cowboy to appear in Japan as a nomadic spokesman for the minoritarian, and defender of the Ainu, the indigenous population that had been so thoroughly displaced and dismissed during the modernization of the Meiji Period.

So what does this mean for the crisis of masculinity? Unlike Nathan Algren, within whom the crisis presents itself as the destructive cycle of the alcoholic, Shinji is not the victim of, nor reciprocator for, a crisis of masculinity. Instead, Shinji's nomadic, transnational, minoritarian cowboy represents both the promise and uncertainty of identity constructions in postwar Japan. The year 1960 would set Japan on a path of economic growth facilitated by the insistence on Japan as a homogenous nation celebrated for its expansive middle class. Shinji represents an alternative. His cowboy is the minoritarian alternative to American-led modernization and capitulation to the state's regulation of culture. Shinji is the precursor to Toshiro Mifune's anarchic rōnin. But where Mifune's rōnin reacted to a corruptive society by destroying it, Shinji reacts to an oppressive state by moving beyond it, by refusing to be a majority, by opting to have the choice of more choices. In the end, Shinji chooses to become-horse, the untamed, nomadic animal so that he can canter off screen towards future possibilities.

Becomings Bride, Woman, Masculine in *Kill Bill vol.1 and 2*

⁵⁵ David C. Engerman, *Staging Growth: Modernization, Development, and the Global Cold War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), 227.

⁵⁶ Tetsuo Najita, "On Culture and Technology in Postmodern Japan," in *Postmodernism and Japan*, eds., Masao Miyoshi and H.D. Harootunian (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989), 7.

In the introduction to this chapter I insisted that becoming masculine does not require *being* a man, which makes Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill* an appropriate film to discuss in relation to female becomings. The idea of becoming-woman plays a prominent role in *A Thousand Plateaus* as a necessary step for the becomings of minoritarians, men and women alike. The becomings that occur in *Kill Bill* are consistent with a minoritarian status, inasmuch as they exist outside the hegemony of the *being* man, but rather than witness the female warrior as a becoming-woman, I position her becomings as a tenet of female masculinities. The ease with which the female protagonist of *Kill Bill* embraces the multiplicities of becomings-female masculine as a rejection of patriarchal norms demonstrates that the crisis of masculinity is but the flourishing of masculinities.

Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill* (2003/4) is a transnational assemblage of film references and shooting locations centred on the revenge narrative of Beatrix Kiddo, a woman referred to as The Bride (Uma Thurman). The Bride is shot in the head during her wedding rehearsal, a scene that is repeated in the opening sequences of both films. When presumed dead, The Bride undergoes a series of episodic transformations to enact her vengeance, which culminates in a showdown with the titular Bill at the end of Volume 2. The film pays homage to the grindhouse favourites of Tarantino, with parallels to *Lady Snowblood* (dir, Toshiya Fujita, 1973) in Volume 1, the films of the Shaw Brothers in Volume 2, and with a consistent undertone of Sergio Leone's spaghetti westerns in both mise-en-scene and music in both volumes. This consortium of cinematic styles and influences encourages the multiple becomings of the film's protagonist as she bonds with genre tropes on her bloody path to revenge. Beyond being a vehicle for revenge The Bride has very little personality or character attached to her. Instead, she is defined by movement and change and it is her becomings that delineate the ten chapters of the film. It is unclear what The Bride *becomes*, if anything, at the end of Volume 2, but through her Deleuzian becomings The Bride demonstrates the transformative possibilities of masculine identities once they are liberated from the fixed location of the masculine as a *being* man.

The transnational movement of The Bride and Tarantino's camera disrupts the territorializing insistence on identities as fixed. These transnational, nomadic, movements are consistent with The Bride's becomings throughout *Kill Bill*. Tarantino is a nomadic director by virtue of his films as hybrid assemblages and mosaic texts that deny genre specificity or stylistic consistency as his camera transforms from the influence of the Shaw Brothers to jidaigeki to Brian De Palma within the space of one scene. And at times The Bride is dressed as a tourist only to contradict the assumption that a travelling American woman is merely window-gazing through fixed points in time and space. When The Bride visits Hattori Hanzo

(Sonny Chiba) in contemporary Okinawa and speaks to him in Japanese, she is visiting a man who existed in the 16th century at a time when Okinawa was not a part of Japan, all on a sound-stage in Beijing. Rosi Braidotti says that the nomad 'has no passport – or has too many of them,' which is certainly true of the globetrotting Bride.⁵⁷ But her nomadic resistance to a settled subjectivity is more than a convenience to enable Tarantino's composite film. The Bride's nomadism is retaliation against those who would attempt to settle her as she transforms through her multiple becomings on the road to kill Bill.

The invocation to kill the patriarch in the film's title draws attention to the crisis of masculinity that permeates Tarantino's cinematic amalgam. The crisis is expressed in the demise of the male characters in the film, although it is the primacy of the female-masculine that foregrounds the crisis of masculinity as a conceptual crisis beyond the experiences of male bodies and identities. Like Nathan Algren, the cowboys in *Kill Bill's* universe have become stagnant stereotypes of ritualistic violence. Algren directed his violence at the minoritarian Native American, in *Kill Bill* the violence is targeted at women. In their cyclic *being* male the cowboys begin to atrophy. Bud, once a fearsome killer, has become an alcoholic and a bouncer at a strip club. Buck, an oversexed nurse, rapes comatose women. And Bill (David Carradine), the alpha-patriarch, had been The Bride's father-figure, lover and subsequent father to her child. He was also her mentor and, when she left his patronage, he was the harbinger of her destruction. But when the audience is finally introduced to Bill in the closing moments of vol. 2, he is not the stoic image of masculinity one would attribute to a man of such legendary status. Nor is he a man of Kwai Chang Caine's stature, the character Carradine played in the TV series *Kung Fu*, and a character clearly being invoked by Tarantino. In the final scene of the film Bill is a quietly spoken, domesticated man, who devotes the final moments of his life to an explanation of Superman's alter-ego, Clark Kent. His death is equally anti-climactic. After The Bride delivers a five-point-palm exploding heart technique to his chest, Bill takes five steps on his recently cut lawn and unceremoniously collapses. The death of Bill constitutes the cathartic end to the patriarch, but it is The Bride's masculinity that brings gendered configurations into crisis.

Tarantino's transnational homage to genre films brings global cinematic masculinities into contact. The primary conflict-point is the female masculinity of The Bride as it comes into contact with the hypermasculinities of genre cinema. The term 'female masculinity' was first employed by Judith Halberstam as a response to the accepted notion that masculinity was a gendered construct untethered to biologically sexed bodies. Halberstam's female masculinity

⁵⁷ Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, 33.

is purposefully disassociated from the hegemonic subject position of manliness by ‘turning a blind eye to conventional masculinities and refusing to engage’ so as to construct a masculinity of and for minority identities.⁵⁸ The concept of female masculinities has had a significant impact on transgender studies, as developed by Halberstam and Susan Stryker, but to refer to The Bride’s female masculinity is not to imply that she is transgendered or transsexual, or to invite a queer reading of The Bride as a lesbian. In *Masculinities Without Men*, Jean Bobby Noble clarifies that ‘sometimes masculinity has nothing to do with men’ and the female masculine is ‘not exclusively lesbian.’⁵⁹ Although The Bride does *transform* into male roles throughout the film, most notably her embodiment of Bruce Lee, her female masculinity does not demand a movement from femininity to masculinity, or a rejection of her sexed body as a woman.

The Bride’s masculinity exists in relation to her becomings, which demonstrate the affective capacity of her body to transform outside of gender binaries. Elena Del Rio asserts that ‘no matter the gender of the bodies concerned, or the combination thereof, the body only exists in relation, which is to say in performance.’⁶⁰ Deleuzian ‘bodies’ are not limited to biological bodies, they can include rocks, trees, and transcendental states (bodies without organs), although Del Rio does employ the physical relation between two biological bodies in their capacity ‘to affect, and be affected by, the other body.’⁶¹ One example of The Bride’s female masculinity is her affective invocation of Bruce Lee as it is expressed during a fight scene in which she *becomes* samurai. In the climactic fight sequence of Volume 1, subtitled the Showdown at House of Blue Leaves, The Bride dispatches a room full of yakuza henchmen before confronting their leader, O-Ren Ishi (Lucy Liu). The Bride wears a yellow jumpsuit replica of Bruce Lee’s outfit from *Game of Death*. The Bride does not *become* Bruce Lee when her outfit resembles the costume from his ultimate film. *Becomings* are not resemblances or imitations. Dressed as Bruce Lee, The Bride *becomes* samurai as demonstrated by the posture of her body in relation to the ‘body’ of the samurai sword, which becomes much more than a phallic symbol in her hands. And in this fight scene The Bride’s body *becomes* samurai in relation to the opposing bodies of the Crazy 88’s, O-Ren Ishi’s henchmen, who are all dressed as Kato, the sidekick to The Green Hornet, played by Bruce Lee in the 1966 television series. The Bride *becomes* Bruce Lee when she delivers the five-point-palm exploding heart technique to Bill’s chest. Her samurai sword is not in the frame. It

⁵⁸ Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 9.

⁵⁹ Jean Bobby Noble, *Masculinities Without Men?: Female Masculinity in Twentieth-Century Fictions* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004), xii.

⁶⁰ Elena del Rio, *Deleuze and the Cinemas of Performance*, 116.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

is the position of her fingers, and their rhythmic drum against Bill's chest that is her immanent becoming Bruce Lee, the female masculine that overthrows the tyranny of Bill's patriarchy.

Bill's patriarchal, masculine presence is not the only bodily relation to contend with The Bride, for she must also contend with the patriarchal gaze of Tarantino's camera. Del Rio acknowledges the tension in the oppressive and expressive potentialities of the female performance, which she defines as 'the tension between, on the one hand, the appropriation of the female body by male-ordained systems of representation and desire [...] and, on the other hand, the body's potential acts of resistance against that appropriation.'⁶² For example, early in Volume 1, The Bride wakes from her coma only to find her body paralyzed by disuse. In the backseat of a pick-up truck, the "pussywagon," The Bride trains her attention on moving her big toe. The male fetishist gaze aimed at Uma Thurman's big toe, Tarantino's foot fetish, is also a performative event, the moment that The Bride wills her body into action. And during the Showdown at House of Blue Leaves, The Bride robs the camera of its gazing apparatus at the moment her body becomes its most expressive. Surrounded by a fresh wave of henchmen The Bride begins the second-stage of the showdown by plucking out the eye of an assailant, an action of such force that it simultaneously robs the camera of colour. The moment Tarantino's camera threatens to coerce the female body into a fixed state of representation the female body of The Bride resists by becoming animated. The deterritorializing effect of The Bride's body in motion coincides with the deterritorializing effect of her female masculinity and transmogrifications. Del Rio concludes that 'these deterritorializing effects may not liberate the female subject in any definitive way, but they can radically interfere with, and alter, the otherwise stagnant relation between her state of confinement and her capacities for movement.'⁶³

Del Rio's body in motion as a 'multidimensional flow of ever-changing singularities of expression' and as a resistance to the patriarchal gaze, is conducive to a concept of female masculinity as both transformative and transgressive. Nikki Sullivan in *Transmogrification* explains that 'trans' practices, which I will apply here as trans-becomings, are an example 'of the many ambiguous and complex ways in which bodies are continually changed and changing.'⁶⁴ It is the body of change that resists the will of the camera to confine and stabilize the body, which is the masculinizing impulse of hegemonic masculinity. The masculine as it had been associated with men is a body in crisis whenever it becomes unstable and in such a state its prime directive is to recompose – the fallen cowboy getting back on the saddle.

⁶² Elena del Rio, *Deleuze and the Cinemas of Performance*, 27.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁶⁴ Nikki Sullivan, "Transmogrification: (Un) Becoming Other(s)," in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, eds., Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 553.

Female masculinity as trans-becomings, as a body in motion, can enjoy masculine empowerment, demonstrated through The Bride's violent movements. The empowerment is derived from the ability to change and be changed. It is The Bride's transmogrifications and becomings that empower her body as it comes into contact with the bodies of those that would constrain her.⁶⁵ And trans-becomings as bodies in motion, as bodies being changed and changing crucially embodies the process of becoming at the intersection of Deleuze and feminism.

One of the central critiques of Deleuze and Guattari's becomings responds to the impermanence of the female body as a state of becoming that elevates the becomings of men and erases the sexed body of women. In her overview of feminist responses to Deleuze and Guattari, Dorothea Olkowski recognizes that the impermanence of becoming-woman threatens to erase sexual difference and the lived experience of the female body as a *being* woman, as a *being* that cannot and should not be appropriated by the becomings of men.⁶⁶ Rosi Braidotti is similarly cautious, asking: 'is the bypassing of gender in favour of a dispersed sexuality not a very masculine move?'⁶⁷ The female masculinity of The Bride, performed through the movement of her trans-becomings, does not negate her sexed body. The Bride is, and remains, a woman throughout the action of *Kill Bill*, which makes the sexed nature of her revenge all the more satisfying. The Bride's female masculinity encourages a broader understanding of the potential becomings of female bodies that does not necessitate the erasure of female experiences. The Bride reasserts control over her body throughout the film, a point made clear when she reclaims her daughter, the baby she feared to be lost after being shot in the head while pregnant. Female masculinity, trans-becomings, and *being* women are not mutually exclusive. But The Bride's rejection of the patriarchy and hegemonic configurations of masculinity remains consistent. In this way The Bride's trans-becomings align with the becoming minority of women as expressed by Rosi Braidotti.

In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari clarify that all becomings-woman are necessarily becomings-minoritarian because 'women, regardless of their numbers, are a minority.'⁶⁸ Rather than react to the minority status of women by reversing the balance of power, a tempting impulse in *Kill Bill*, Rosi Braidotti argues that the process of subversion advocated by Deleuze aims at 'overcoming the dialectic of identity/otherness that governs

⁶⁵ The body of The Bride rejects the fixity of physical bodies by repeatedly demonstrating the fragility of a body composed of limbs. In the Showdown at the House of Blue Leaves The Bride concludes her slaughter by ordering the survivors to leave with their lives, but to leave their limbs behind, stating "they belong to me now."

⁶⁶ Dorothea Olkowski, *Gilles Deleuze and the Ruin of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 35.

⁶⁷ Rosi Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women and Contemporary Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 120.

⁶⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 106.

philosophical thought.’⁶⁹ The Bride as minoritarian does not take up the mantle of Bill, despite his self-assured statement that she *is* a killer and will always *be* a killer. Like The Wanderer, The Bride refuses to become majority once the patriarch is dead. The Bride resists the linguistics of difference, initially by remaining unnamed throughout much of the film, her name is bleeped whenever it is spoken, and by resisting codification and stagnation through her constant transmogrifications into and through the masculinities of genre cinema. Her continuous trans-becomings deny the classificatory sedimentation of otherness by destabilizing the binaries that had instituted the dialectic. When The Bride becomes samurai on the path to becoming Bruce Lee as she enacts the female-masculine through the violent animation of her body, she becomes other to no one.

Female masculinities do not exist in opposition to traditional forms of masculinity, they turn a blind eye to them, and they do not participate in the codification of gendered selves, hence it is more appropriate to refer to female masculinities, not plural, but rhizomatic. For this reason, female masculinities are not denied to men, and the performances of masculine woman are not necessarily consistent with female masculinities. For example, in *Kill Bill* there are three notable female antagonists, all of whom aggressively assert masculine positions of dominance. O-Ren Ishi upsets ethnic codifications by assuming the role of a Tokyo yakuza boss as a half Japanese, half Chinese-American woman. It is a transgression that initiates an outburst from one of her subordinates, which results in his prompt beheading. O-Ren Ishi’s performance of hegemonic masculinity demands that she be punished as a man, so The Bride scalps her. O-Ren is dressed in the manner of a Geisha when she is killed, but her feminine appearance does not disguise her masculine intentions. Elle Driver (Darryl Hannah), the one-eyed assassin, is presumably killed when The Bride plucks out her remaining eye. The violence enacted on the female patriarchs is violence associated with the mutilation of the male body. Women who embody a model of masculinity predicated on the patriarchal domination of women are not examples of female masculinity. These masculine women are the enforcers of masculine codes of otherness that, in the vengeful logic of *Kill Bill*, need to be treated as such. Judith Halberstam turns a blind eye to masculine norms. The Bride is not as forgiving.

Deleuze and Guattari make it clear that there can be no *becoming* man if being man, with the implication of being masculine, is a state of domination.⁷⁰ Part of this domination is the insistence on identity politics altogether as a politics of segregation and control. Jerry Aline Fleiger argues that becoming-woman ‘is an active minoritarian ethics, opposed to the

⁶⁹ Rosi Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance*, 109.

⁷⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 291.

majoritarianism dominant in pragmatism and rationalism, but also opposed to ‘identity politics’ of any sort.’⁷¹ There is the threat, then, that female masculinity will oppose the regimentation of the majoritarian masculinity by constructing a counter politics of identity construction, but an identity politics nonetheless. The Bride’s female masculinities are multiplicities that remain unfixed even when her body comes to rest at the end of Volume 2 as a maternal woman. They are immanent becomings of a Deleuzian body in movement not only as a means to resist the masculine bodies of those who wish violence upon her, but as a means to resist identifications as fixed. To invoke Nikki Sullivan, The Bride’s is a body that is continually changed and changing, a deterritorialized body of trans-becomings, a body without organs.

It is the body of the female masculine in movement that resists classification and The Bride is always on the move as a nomad in *Kill Bill*’s transnational cinema. The nomadic body without organs ‘entails “deterritorialization” from the habitual patterns that make a process of individuation (such as a human subject) an entity of a specific kind.’⁷² This is the potential of Deleuze and Guattari’s becomings as a means to destabilize dominant modes of being man, woman, self, other, but it does not necessitate a schizophrenic instability. The final shot of *Kill Bill* has The Bride, now known to the audience as Beatrix Kiddo, embracing her daughter as they watch an old television set in a motel room. This is not capitulation to domestication or the final resting place of the female masculine in motion. In her auto-biographical response to Deleuze and Guattari’s immanent ethics in *Nomadic Subjects*, Rosi Braidotti insists that ‘being a nomad, living in transition, does not mean that one cannot or is unwilling to create those necessarily stable and reassuring bases for identity that allow one to function in a community. Rather, nomadic consciousness consists in not taking any kind of identity as permanent.’⁷³ Bill had tried to tell The Bride that she was, and always would be a killer. The final shot denounces his assertion. And before the credits roll a subtitle appears reading ‘the lioness has returned to her cub.’ This is not The Bride becoming killer, or mother. It is The Bride becoming-animal.

Can Cowboys and Samurai Just Be?

Transnational becomings cowboy and samurai open up the once staunchly nationalist archetypes to a world of endless configurations and permutations. Gone is the insistence that

⁷¹ Jerry Aline Flieger, “Becoming-Woman: Deleuze, Schreber and Molecular Identification,” in *Deleuze and Feminist Theory*, eds., Ian Buchanan and Claire Colebrook (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 47.

⁷² Tamsin Lorraine, *Deleuze and Guattari’s Immanent Ethics*, 84.

⁷³ Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, 33.

the cowboy is the impermeable man atop a horse guarding the frontier between civilization and savagery, masculine and feminine. And gone is the insistence that the samurai embody the timeless masculine traditions of pure Japanese bloodlines. The deterritorialized, transnational cowboy and samurai accommodate, rather than exclude, even if their borderless existence demands a violent response to the apparatus of patriarchal control. Transnational becomings encourage coalitions and interconnections between bodies as they move through permeable spaces. The bilateral relationship between the U.S. and Japan at the core of my thesis is therefore only one root of the possible rhizomatic interconnections and relations between cowboys and samurai. It is the transnational that accommodates the multiple becomings of Nathan Algren as he breaks free from the destructive cycle of *being* an American man and cowboy. The Wanderer can become the nomadic cowboy without *being* a surrogate for American hegemonic values, and he can refuse to become Japanese. And The Bride can refuse identification as she becomes Bruce Lee and samurai. And even when she physically settles in the final moments of the film her identity is not fixed. But in each instance the hegemonic masculinity of “the man” must be rejected. If there is an identity politics being enacted, it is this.

The crisis of masculinity does not need to mean a failure of masculinity, or a failure of the cowboy and samurai to reconcile lived experiences with social expectations of *being* man. The crisis exists only for those whose power relies on the enforcement of identity constructions. It is a crisis for the men and women of *Kill Bill* who refused to accommodate The Bride’s becomings. It is a crisis for the yakuza of *Wanderer of the Great Plains* as they attempt to amalgamate Hokkaido and the Ainu into a fixed space of Japaneseness. And it is a crisis for the cowboys of *The Last Samurai* who had become extensions of the state’s delineation between savagery and modernity. Crisis means transformation and through transformation comes the choice for more choices where remaining static means only cyclical self-destruction. The promise of the films discussed in this chapter is in the success of the becomings cowboy and samurai. The disavowal of fixed identity constructions rooted in time and place results in positive transformations for men and women. There is no reason why the cowboy and samurai cannot just *be*, but this does not require ‘taking any kind of identity as permanent’ or taking on ‘the limits of one national, fixed identity.’⁷⁴ The cowboy and samurai can *be*, but if by *being* they constitute a crisis it is high time to become.

⁷⁴ Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, 33.

Chapter 6

Sampling Masculinities in *Afro-Samurai*, *Ghost Dog: Way of the Warrior*, *Wild Wild West* and *Django Unchained*

Colouring the crisis of masculinity aligns the crisis of destabilized masculinities with a crisis of destabilized racial identifications. Judith A. Allen argues that masculinity is perpetually in a state of crisis to the extent that it is an inherently crisis-bound formation.¹ Likewise, E. Patrick Johnson argues that ‘the mutual constructing/deconstructing, avowing/disavowing, and expanding/delimiting dynamic that occurs in the production of blackness is the very thing that constitutes black culture.’² Constructing a black masculinity on-screen demands reconciling the instability of both blackness and masculinity, or else accepting the paradox of hegemonic black masculinities. Because of their cultural history as epitomic masculine figures, the cowboy and samurai are suitable archetypes for exploring crisis-bound gender constructions and the possibility of a hegemonic black masculinity embodied by the black cowboy and the black samurai.

The association between the masculinities of hip-hop and the masculine articulations of the cowboy and samurai unites the texts of this chapter. I argue that *Afro Samurai* (2007), *Ghost Dog: Way of the Warrior* (dir. Jim Jarmusch, 1999 hereafter *Ghost Dog*), *Wild Wild West* (dir. Barry Sonnenfeld, 1999) and *Django Unchained* (dir. Quentin Tarantino, 2012) employ hip-hop, ‘the loudspeaker for what constitutes black masculinity worldwide,’³ as a dominant African American cultural form in order to appropriate the cowboy and samurai for the construction of an African American masculinity independent of Anglo American society.⁴ Defining a dominant African American masculinity demands the rejection of the racial dichotomy that had positioned blackness as the antithesis to white masculinity, because the dichotomy itself is a product of white supremacy. But the danger of re-colouring the white cowboy and reintegrating the Japanese samurai into African American experiences of emasculation is that the black cowboy and samurai will simply re-enact the masculine abuses

¹ Judith A. Allen, “Men Interminably in Crisis? Historians on Masculinity, Sexual Boundaries, and Manhood,” *Radical History Review* 82 (2002): 193.

² E. Patrick Johnson, *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 2.

³ Jeffrey Q. McCune, Jr. “A Good Black Man is Hard to Find: Toward More Transgressive Reading Practices,” *Spectrum: The Journal of Black Men* 1, no. 1 (2012): 127.

⁴ For an introduction to the growing study of hip hop and rap see Derrick P. Alridge and James B. Stewart, “Introduction: Hip Hop in History: Past, Present, and Future.” *The Journal of African American History* 90, no. 3 (2005): 190-195.

of the white American cowboy and Japanese samurai, archetypes of hegemonic masculinity that came to be recognized for their role in the oppression of women and non-hegemonic men.⁵

Previous chapters of the thesis have argued that Japan's crises of masculinities in the postwar period derived from the perceived emasculation that followed in the wake of American imperialism. Symbolically castrated by defeat and emasculated by forced occupation and demilitarization, Japanese men were forced to perform masculinity within a very narrow, non-militaristic framework. Hip-hop in Japan provides a stage for performances of hypermasculinity otherwise closed off to Japanese men who cannot identify with samurai in the pacifist SDF or the corporate office. Japanese rappers such as 'Uzi' not only identify with the samurai, but imitate the violent exploits so prevalent in American gangster rap.⁶ While these boasts might lack the authenticity of street life in America, *Afro Samurai* engages with fantasies of re-masculinization legitimized by the collaboration with Samuel L. Jackson and RZA, and a black masculinity often associated with hypersexuality virile enough to offset the memory of Anglo-America's presence in Japan and strong enough to dismantle the oppressive presence of the American cowboy.

Two related issues arise when discussing race and hip-hop in this chapter: the performance of race, and the authenticity of this performance. White, heterosexual masculinity, with its dominant position on screen in the U.S., is often "naturalized" by an assumed acceptance that both whiteness and heterosexuality are stable and uncontested.⁷ Within hip-hop and rap culture, the performativity of black masculinity is often exaggerated at the same time that the authenticity of these performances is asserted; if claims of masculine excess are unsupported with convincing evidence, the performance is dismissed as a 'front.'⁸ The centrality of performance and authenticity in hip-hop applies to the texts discussed in this chapter because the appearance of African American samurai and cowboys highlights the performativity, and hybridity, of masculinity and race. Just as *Afro Samurai* and *Ghost Dog* interrogate the "Japaneseness" of the samurai, so the black cowboy destabilizes the assumed whiteness of the cowboy in both *Wild Wild West* and *Django Unchained*. Naomi Pabst claims

⁵ David Ikard, *Blinded by the Whites: Why Race Still Matters in 21st-century America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 204.

⁶ Ian Condry, *Hip-Hop Japan: Rap and the Paths of Cultural Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 28.

⁷ An assumption contested by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, p. ix.

⁸ Marcyliena Morgan and Dionne Bennett. "Hip-Hop and the Global Imprint of a Black Cultural Form," *Daedalus* 140, no. 2 (2011): 191.

that racial ‘hybridity just *is*. And always *was*.’⁹ This might prove true for the black cowboy and samurai, but they will have to fight the white establishment to prove it.

It is fitting that the films discussed in this chapter interrogate the genre conventions of both the western and jidaigeki. Black cowboys and black samurai must reject the strict genre conventions that had previously championed a heteronormative, homogenous masculinity lest their performances be reduced to imitations of whiteness, or cultural ‘passing.’¹⁰ Destabilizing the rigidity of genre norms enables the exploration of an unstable masculine and racial identification that can be forged anew to reject the previous codes that had prevented the black cowboy and samurai from emerging in the first place. Focused as they are on “re-colouring” these archetypal heteronormative, masculine figures, the texts discussed in this chapter are almost singularly concerned with maleness to the extent that female characters regularly become sexualized and fetishized objects through which male supremacy (regardless of race) can be asserted.

Afro Samurai rekindles a connection between African Americans and the Japanese in their fight against white American imperialism a century after the potential for such an alliance was established in Japan’s Meiji Period.¹¹ The series follows the vengeful path of Afro on his quest to murder the cowboy responsible for his father’s death, but the series also engages with potentially damaging racial stereotypes indicative of Japan’s often controversial relationship with African Americans and representations of race. The alliance between the samurai and African Americans, and the potential to uproot white supremacy is explored from an American perspective in Jim Jarmusch’s *Ghost Dog*. These two texts will be discussed in relation to the influence that hip-hop culture has on representations of the black samurai in both Japan and America through the music of RZA (Robert Fitzgerald Diggs). Founding member of the Wu-Tang Clan, RZA’s identification with the samurai is evident in both his lyrics and film appearances (*G.I. Joe: Retaliation*, 2012) and his contribution to both *Afro Samurai* and *Ghost Dog* offers an interesting example of the cross-cultural dialogue central to his gangsta persona. Hip-hop, and the racialized masculinity attributed to it, also features in the two examples of the black cowboy on screen discussed in this chapter. While the dynamic relationship between Japan and African Americans is absent from this discussion (as is RZA), the black cowboy, like the black samurai, challenges the history and legacy of white imperialism while navigating the issues of performing an African American masculinity. *Wild*

⁹ Naomi Pabst. “Blackness/Mixedness: Contestations over Crossing Signs,” *Cultural Critique* 54, (2003): 208.

¹⁰ Erika Renée Williams, “Subverted Passing: Racial and Transgender Identities in Linda Villarosa’s *Passing for Black*,” *Studies in American Fiction* 40, no. 2 (2013): 287.

¹¹ Yuchiro Onishi, *Transpacific Antiracism: Afro-Asian Solidarity in Twentieth-Century Black America, Japan, and Okinawa* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 21.

Wild West features Will Smith as a gun-slinger opposing a racist confederate general, and while hip-hop is absent from the film itself, the feature was released alongside the Will Smith song of the same name - a hip-hop single indicative of the genre's growing commercialization and mainstream appeal 'in the service of "sanitized" white narratives,' to borrow from Nina Cornyetz.¹² And finally, hip-hop punctuates the violent action of Quentin Tarantino's *Django Unchained*, in which a freed slave, played by Jamie Foxx (no stranger to hip-hop cameos), is liberated by the posthumous pairing of 2pac and James Brown.

***Afro Samurai* and Sampling Blackness in Techno-colour**

The animated mini-series *Afro Samurai* is a collaborative project between creator Takashi Okazaki, Samuel L. Jackson as the voice of Afro, and RZA of the Wu-Tang Clan, who created an original musical score based on a narrative of musical conflict waged by African American soul and hip-hop against the tyranny of white rock. The series is voiced in English and was released in the U.S. before a Japanese release which included Japanese subtitles. The collaboration mirrors the fusion of cultures and inspirations found in the text itself.

Takashi Okazaki's animated series (based on his manga of the same name) indicates the growing popularity and cultural significance of hip-hop in Japan. It can also be read as a continuation of a sometimes contradictory and complicated relationship between Japan, the Japanese, and African Americans that has its origins in the 19th century. Yukiko Koshiro traces the origins of the relationship between African Americans and Japan. A shared status as "non-whites" in a Western discourse espousing white supremacy established a tenuous, and fleeting, moment of identification between the two races inspired by the desire to end the domination of European and Anglo-American imperialism.¹³ However, Koshiro argues that the celebrated similitude between Japanese and African Americans was lost in the racial hierarchy established during the rise of Japan's Pan-Asian Empire. In the build-up to Japan's brutal war with China in the 1930s numerous scientific studies conflated culture and biology to form the basis of a culturally and racially superior Japanese people that directly contradicted Japan's

¹² Nina Cornyetz, "Fetishized Blackness: Hip Hop and Racial Desire in Contemporary Japan," *Social Text*, no. 41 (1994): 114.

¹³ Yukiko Koshiro, "Beyond an Alliance of Color: The African American Impact on Modern Japan," *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 11, no. 1 (2003): 184.

association with other oppressed peoples.¹⁴ Imperial Japan's identification with the plight of African Americans was a front, and their supposed alliance became a propaganda tool to undermine the integrity of the United States while simultaneously justifying Japanese imperialism as a liberating force.¹⁵ The black samurai has an historical precedent in the 'Tokyo-Negro' alliance of the 1930s, although many of the contradictions of that alliance remain in the 21st century.

An affront to white imperialism in the early 20th century instigated a potential alliance between African Americans and the Japanese. However, Imperial Japan was embarking on a similarly destructive course of empire-building founded on the myth of a racially and culturally superior Japanese people. Christine R. Yano refers to Japan's relationship with race, racism and African Americans as a "dualistic racial identity."¹⁶ Japan identified with the status of African Americans and other peoples of colour within a racial hierarchy dominated by Europeans while simultaneously positioning itself above blacks, who were situated at the bottom of the racial ladder in the company of simians. This dualistic racial identity persists. Joe Wood, in his exploration of blackface in the contemporary hip-hop scene of Japan, argues that 'America has been exporting its race problem around the globe for at least a century, and the Japanese *have* taken sides – both sides.'¹⁷ That is to say, Japan simultaneously rejects cultural exclusion and celebrates African American culture as an alternative to Anglo-Americanism, while simultaneously exerting power over the consumption of this culture so as to uphold the superiority of Japaneseness. *Afro Samurai* must therefore situate its African American samurai within a Japanese society that has historically been ambivalent at best in its attitudes towards the racial other. It does so by avoiding Japan's history altogether.

"Colouring" the samurai in *Afro Samurai*, referred to as Afro in the series, takes place within an alternate reality in which Japan's feudal past is suffused with advanced technologies necessary to manufacture hip-hop: headphones, turntables, and amplifiers. The styling of the series directly participates in the techniques of "sampling" central to hip-hop's distinct sound, and it offers a beneficial opening into discussions of race and hip-hop in Japan.¹⁸ The fusion of hip-hop and samurai in an alternate reality is not unique to *Afro Samurai*; the Cartoon Network

¹⁴ Michael Weiner, "The Invention of Identity: Race and Nation in Pre-war Japan," in *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan*, ed. Frank Dikötter (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), 99.

¹⁵ Gerald Horne, *Race War: White Supremacy and the Japanese Attack on the British Empire* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 59.

¹⁶ Christine R. Yano, "Categorical Confusion: President Obama as a Case Study of Racialized Practices in Contemporary Japan," in *Race and Racism in Modern East Asia: Western and Eastern Constructions*, eds., Rotem Kowner and Walter Demel (Boston: Brill, 2013), 510.

¹⁷ Joe Wood, "The Yellow Negro," *Transition*, no. 73 (1997): 50.

¹⁸ Joseph G. Schloss, *Making Beats: The Art of Sample-Based Hip-Hop* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2014), 26.

series *Samurai Jack* features a similar mix. However, *Samurai Jack* does not directly situate hip-hop within a racialized context, content to cast aliens and mutants as stand-ins for racial difference. In the feudal Japan of *Afro Samurai* a black samurai can exist only in tandem with the acculturation of blackness at all levels of society, so that his being African American in Japan does not disrupt the norm. Samurai masters and the leaders of a ninja clan are repeatedly depicted wearing headphones and listening to hip-hop music, indicative of the conflation of hip-hop and the performance of blackness adopted by fans and performers of hip-hop in Japan.¹⁹ This fusion allows for the appearance of hip-hop tropes alongside the samurai within the action of the series. The alternate reality also visualizes a history in which African American culture plays a significant role in the cultural history of Japan, which is an interesting visual statement considering the proliferation of discourses in Japan centred on the notion of Japan's cultural and ethnic homogeneity.²⁰ "Sampling," therefore, becomes a meaningful technique beyond the music, indicating the reciprocal borrowing and inspiration that occurs when nationalized, masculine tropes interact in global markets.

The presence of hip-hop in Japan demonstrates the global reach and popularity of a predominately black musical culture, but the influence cuts both ways. The popularity of African American hip-hop in Japan has been explained as a highly codified consumption of blackness in a capitalized transaction manipulated to appeal to the rebellious sensibilities of those (primarily youth) who listen. The performance of Japanese hip-hop is dismissed as imitation and pastiche that lacks context and understanding.²¹ Nina Cornyetz argues that consumers of hip-hop in Japan are sold a 'fetishized' image of blackness that is hyper-sexualized and centred on the primacy of the African-American phallus, which offers to empower both Japanese men who embody blackness by consuming hip-hop and Japanese women who forgo the inferior Japanese phallus in pursuit of consuming African American hyper-masculinity.²² The emphasis on phallusizing hip-hop implies that Japanese men lack the authentic, legitimate masculinity required to participate in hip-hop's global movement. These arguments assume a unidirectional transaction between an authenticated American producer of culture and a passive Japanese audience that fails to account for the bilateral relationship between America and Japan, which has witnessed numerous cultural exchanges since the 19th century and has certainly become more pronounced with the global influence of Japanese

¹⁹ Ian Condry, *Hip-Hop Japan*, 26.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

²¹ Nina Cornyetz, "Fetishized Blackness," 120.

²² *Ibid.*, 115.

popular culture in the late 20th century.²³ *Afro Samurai* does not engage in a process of imitation, but rather in bilateral cultural sampling.

The collaboration between RZA and Takashi Okazaki on *Afro Samurai* connects the cultural forms of hip-hop and anime in a unified attack on the dominance of white cultural imperialism, the resurrection of an alliance first promised in the Meiji period made possible by the celebration of sampling in the late 20th century.²⁴ RZA identified with the samurai in his work with the East Coast rap-possé the ‘Wu-Tang Clan,’ which idealized a connection between Japanese masculinity, hip-hop, the samurai and his sword (specifically the samurai masculinity constructed in Japanese film), lauded as an empowering, non-white, masculine force within the context of urban America’s ‘post-industrial city.’²⁵ Critics might lambast Japanese attempts to identify with African American hip-hop, but African American hip-hop artists and gangster rappers were identifying with the samurai as early as Wu-Tang Clan’s debut album in 1993. Ian Condry writes that East Coast rappers have been popular in Japan due to their claims of authenticity, because ‘New York is regarded as hip-hop’s historical place of origin.’²⁶ The ‘authenticity’ of hip-hop in America often presupposes a set of lifestyles and circumstances largely centred on the lives of African American men as a dispossessed and oppressed minority reflecting on their experiences of sex, drug use and police brutality. This narrative that has been exaggerated by many black rap artists to appeal to white audiences.²⁷ While the Wu-Tang Clan certainly addresses issues of street life in their lyrics, they also engage with diverse pop-cultural references that exist beyond the confines of Stanton Island and hip-hop gangsterism.²⁸ The samurai in African American hip-hop and the identification with hip-hop in Japan offer a mutually beneficial, collaborative effort to construct a meaningful model of masculinity strong enough to counter the dominance of a white cowboy masculinity often embodied by the figure of the policeman in rap lyrics and drawn into the narrative of *Afro Samurai* as the arch-nemesis to the black samurai - a cowboy called Justice.

²³ William M. Tsutsui, *Japanese Popular Culture and Globalization* (Ann Arbor: Association for Asian Studies, 2010), 1.

²⁴ Christine Yano, “Categorical Confusion: President Obama as a Case Study of Racialized Practices in Contemporary Japan,” 510.

²⁵ Tricia Rose, “A Style Nobody Can Deal With: Politics, Style and the Postindustrial City in Hip Hop,” in *Microphone Friends: Youth Music and Youth Culture*, eds. Andrew Ross and Tricia Rose (New York: Routledge, 1994), 73.

²⁶ Ian Condry, “A History of Japanese Hip-Hop: Street Dance, Club Scene, Pop Market,” in *Global Noise: Rap and Hip-Hop Outside the USA*, ed. Tony Mitchell (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 223.

²⁷ Antonia Randolph, ““Don’t Hate Me Because I’m Beautiful”: Black Masculinity and Alternative Embodiment in Rap Music,” *Race, Gender & Class* 13, no. ¾ (2006): 205.

²⁸ Steven R. Cureton, “Something Wicked This Way Comes: A Historical Account of Black Gangsterism Offers Wisdom and Warning for African American Leadership,” *Journal of Black Studies* 40, no. 2 (2009): 357.

Afro Samurai rejects the dominant masculinity of the white cowboy by rendering it demonic, and instead the samurai, and by proxy other Japanese males, are associated with the virility of the hypermasculine black warrior. The series begins with a young Afro witnessing the death of his father (representing soul music) at the hands of Justice, a cowboy who covets the number one headband. Justice is accompanied by the shrill distorted guitars of a hard rock soundtrack.²⁹ Justice speaks of absolute power bringing peace to the world, echoing the rhetoric of the United States as a global watchdog exerting hegemonic dominance for the purposes of global security. To emphasize the corruptions of the cowboy figure, Justice is drawn with a long demonic face consistent with Japanese wartime propaganda, which described American soldiers, and early European imperialists, as demonic figures with long, goblin-like noses.³⁰ The cultural battle between the dominant cowboy and the hip-hop samurai becomes imbued with the discourse of racial difference and conflict established during Japan's first encounter with the European 'other,' which reached its most fervent level during World War II.

Afro Samurai establishes a revenge narrative centered on a racial conflict in which race is identified through music and racially coded archetypes – conduits through which resistance to a dominant, white cultural imperialism can be made. The revenge narrative of *Afro Samurai* is consistent with revenge fantasies against white oppression (often police brutality) found in the aggressive lyrics of gangster rap, a genre represented by the figure of Afro.³¹ Afro may be a fantastical fusion of samurai warrior and gangster rapper made possible in the fantasy worlds of animation and film, but his assault on a representative of white cultural imperialism (the cowboy) has its precedent in early examples of hip-hop artists confronting American racism and the 'irrational white fear of the very class it suppresses.'³² Chuck D of Public Enemy retaliated against not only the police in his lyrics, but also icons of white culture in general, including Elvis and John Wayne: 'Simple and plain, motherfuck him [Elvis] and John Wayne.'³³ The fantastical setting of an alternate Japan in which hip-hop permeates the feudal society allows for a connection between Japan and African American hip-hop based on a fantasy in which shared ownership of an authentic cultural archetype translates to real power over an oppressive force, effectively affirming liberation through the vocalization of an

²⁹ RZA, *Afro Samurai: Resurrection*. DVD. Directed by Kizaki, Fuminori. USA: Funimation, 2009.

³⁰ John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 238.

³¹ Jerry Bryant, *Born in a Mighty Bad Land: The Violent Man in African American Folklore and Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 159.

³² *Ibid.*, 161.

³³ *Ibid.*

emancipatory culture present in hip-hop and the samurai of Japanese anime.³⁴ The charge against the Japanese that they do not, or cannot, ‘understand’ the roots of hip-hop is ill-fitting within an historical context of shared discrimination based on race under the domination of an Anglo-American culture that persists in the 21st century, but this does not exempt *Afro Samurai* from essentializing blackness in potentially damaging ways.

Engaged as it is with cultural caricatures and masculine archetypes produced within a “drawn” world, *Afro Samurai* employs exaggerations of black masculinity that are sometimes present in the hypersexual performances of hip-hop artists, but are by no means representative of African American masculinities in America. The physical appearance of Afro, in which his hair, colour and exaggerated facial features (lips and nose) are signifiers of race, is a visual reminder of his otherness as an African American in feudal Japan even if other characters in the series are colour-blind. Afro’s identification through his hairstyle could be a throwback to nameless ronin inventing expedient monikers (the ronin of Kurosawa’s *Yojimbo* names himself after a field of camellias, after all), but the Afro hairstyle in Japan has a legacy of essentializing blackness as something exotic to be consumed and temporarily adorned. Christine Yano suggests that the image of the African American in Japan is simultaneously celebrated as “cool” and as a stranger (*soto*) with a simian presence, ‘a blend that can be infantilized, sexualized, dehumanized, and/or commodified.’³⁵ The character of Afro represents this blend. While Afro’s samurai modernizes the archetype and makes it cool, repeated flashback sequences throughout the series infantilize his character by conflating Afro as a child with an adult who has never grown up. As the title of the anime suggests, *Afro Samurai* engages with a dualistic approach to race through a character defined by signifiers of blackness and Japaneseness, at once revelling in the cultural crossover while indulging in controversial simplifications of race and hypermasculinity. But where *Afro Samurai* is most problematic is in the adoption of a racial caricature with a damaging legacy for African Americans: the coon.

If Afro demonstrates traces of Japan’s fascination with the Sambo figure somewhat obscured by his empowerment as a hip-hop samurai warrior, his alter ego (referred to as Ninja Ninja in the credits and also voiced by Samuel L. Jackson) vocally embodies the ‘supercoon’ as exemplified by ex-Public Enemy rapper Flavor Flav.³⁶ Ninja Ninja is the projection of

³⁴ Shelly Eversley, *The Real Negro: The Question of Authenticity in Twentieth-Century African American Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2004), xv.

³⁵ Christine Yano, “Categorical Confusion: President Obama as a Case Study of Racialized Practices in Contemporary Japan.” 508.

³⁶ Shannon B S. Campbell and Steven S. Giannino, “FLAAAVOOOR-FLAAAV: Comic Relief or Super-Coon?” in *Masculinity in the Black Imagination: Politics of Communicating Race and Manhood*, eds. Ronald L. Jackson and Mark C. Hopson (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), 103.

Afro's sub-conscious mind and in a sense he represents the visualization of the 'double consciousness' of race as described by W. E. B. Du Bois.³⁷ But whereas Du Bois regarded the African American double consciousness as being both 'Negro' and 'American,' Ninja Ninja represents the double consciousness of being both black and a samurai; and if Afro represents the samurai, then Ninja Ninja offers a troubling depiction of black consciousness. Shannon Campbell and Steven Giannin define the 'coon' as a lazy and simple character aligned with young urban blacks at the end of the 19th century. Flavor Flav (real name William Drayton Jr.) performs the coon stereotype as an exaggeration of his earlier stage persona as a "hype man," or rap side-kick, in Public Enemy.³⁸ The 'co-optation' of the coon may have been an effort to reclaim the derogatory caricature from Anglo-Americans in order to empower it (in the way that 'nigger' became co-opted and re-coded in the language of hip-hop and rap³⁹), but Campbell and Giannin argue that 'through the commodification process, Flavor Flav became a product to be consumed rather than an exemplary representation of a rapper espousing a revolutionary ethos.'⁴⁰ Like Flavor Flav, Ninja Ninja is a loquacious side-kick acting as comic relief to the stalwart Afro, and he exhibits many behaviours characteristic of the coon: he is licentious, lazy and a coward. He also detracts from the "revolutionary" spirit of Afro through the implication that the supercoon remains in the consciousness of the African American as something to be resisted through the practice of an alternative masculinity, in this case that of the samurai. Ninja Ninja is less an irritating side-kick than the shadow of the coon threatening to undermine the samurai sensibilities of Afro and his mission to dismantle Anglo-American hegemony; once again Japan (represented by Afro the samurai) is placed above African Americans (Ninja Ninja, the coon) on the racial pedestal. While Afro mostly ignores Ninja Ninja, the exaggerated behaviour of a coon character in *Afro Samurai* nevertheless reflects a 'history of using exaggerated media images to demean marginal groups [...] in a systematic campaign to dehumanize and subjugate black men.'⁴¹ Afro may be an empowering figure of resistance to the white cowboy, but within the world of *Afro Samurai* his greatest enemy may well be the vocal coon at his side.

Because damaging caricatures threaten to undermine Afro's authenticity as an African American man *Afro Samurai* incorporates a series of "inauthentic" antagonists, including a robotic Afro doppelganger designed to imitate Afro in every way. In this battle, robo-Afro represents manufactured hybridity and industrialized racial imitation, as opposed to the legitimate hybridity of Afro as part-samurai, part-African American; an identity that had to be

³⁷ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 7.

³⁸ Shannon Campbell, "FLAAAAVOOOOR-FLAAAV," 105.

³⁹ Geoff Harkness, "Hip Hop Culture and America's Most Taboo Word," *Contexts* 7, no. 3 (2008): 40.

⁴⁰ Shannon Campbell, "FLAAAAVOOOOR-FLAAAV," 109.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 110.

earned and one which is congruent with the Africanist aesthetic found in underground hip-hop.⁴² Within the identity politics of hip-hop in Japan issues of authenticity are common, but they do not necessarily involve race or racial difference.⁴³ One of the core values in hip-hop is “keeping it real,” something that is lost once the music reaches ‘the global pop culture industry and its [...] imitation of the commodified and fetishized manipulated (black) image.’⁴⁴ Afro not only has to contend with the dominance of the white cowboy, but he must also keep it real while doing so. He must resist the temptations of his subconscious coon and fight against the superficial articulations of hip-hop masculinity produced by the ‘culture industry.’ And he must also keep it real as a man. After being defeated by the authentic Afro samurai the robotic Afro imitation attempts to unleash one final, destructive blow from a large phallic crotch-cannon, but the blast misses its target, an impotent *petite mort*. The demise of robo-Afro suggests that the fetishization of black masculinity is ineffectual when manufactured.

Hip-hop has enormous potential to emancipate disenfranchised and disempowered people from systems of oppression. Tricia Rose describes hip-hop as ‘an Afro-diasporic cultural form which attempts to negotiate the experiences of marginalization,’ and the global reach of the genre has involved marginalized groups beyond the United States, including Japan.⁴⁵ However, despite the revolutionary potential of the music and its associated culture, ‘the most commercially promoted and financially successful hip-hop [...] has increasingly become a playground for caricatures of black gangstas, pimps, and hoers,’ in which women are commonly presented as sexual objects.⁴⁶ Margaret Hunter and Kathleen Soto identify two predominant caricatures for women in ‘commercial’ hip-hop: ‘the “video-hoe,” who is essentially a prop for male sexual pleasure, and the “loyal girlfriend” willing to die for her man.’⁴⁷ These caricatures of female sexuality are present in Japanese hip-hop videos, such as the music video for Rip Slyme’s ‘Tropical Night,’ where half-naked Japanese porn actresses enact the “video hoe” by gyrating in front of the camera. *Afro Samurai* employs both caricatures. The Empty Seven Clan (responsible for the robotic Afro) is depicted with bikini-clad women writhing at their feet – props for male sexual pleasure (both the viewers’ and the characters’). Meanwhile, Utsuru, a childhood friend of Afro, plays the “loyal girlfriend,” healing Afro’s wounds after he is poisoned. She dies for him after an explicit sex scene had

⁴² Halifu Osumare, *The Africanist Aesthetic in Global Hip-Hop: Power Moves* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 100.

⁴³ Ian Condry, *Hip-Hop in Japan*, 34.

⁴⁴ Halifu Osumare, *The Africanist Aesthetic in Global Hip-Hop*, 100.

⁴⁵ Tricia Rose, “A Style Nobody Can Deal With,” 71.

⁴⁶ Margaret Hunter and Kathleen Soto, “Women of Color in Hip Hop: The Pornographic Gaze,” *Gender and Class* 16, no. 1/2 (2009): 184.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 173.

emphasized her voluptuous figure – her function in the narrative ends once she has been sexualized.

Like the dualistic racial identity present in *Afro Samurai*, there is also a dualistic sexual discourse in the text. Within the narrative of the series Japanese women are liberated from the hegemonic oppression of the white cowboy but they remain as objects for the white male gaze. The exploitative way in which women are depicted to emphasize their breasts and buttocks markets these eroticized images of the ‘exotic woman’ for consumption by a white audience, thus undermining the potentially subversive nature of an African American male coming out on top in a clash of hypermasculinities.⁴⁸ It is a dualistic sexual identity present in hip-hop itself in which ‘orientalizing’ images of the Asian Other appear in hip-hop lyrics and videos (including those of RZA). The tropes employed include the domination of the virginal Japanese geisha (as played by Utsuru in *Afro Samurai*) by the hypermasculine gangsta rapper.⁴⁹ Like the pornographic images of women in *Afro Samurai*, oversimplifications and exoticized representations of the “oriental woman” render them objects for the ‘masturbatory consumption of the dominant [white] culture.’⁵⁰ By demonstrating the hypersexuality of Afro and his sexual dominance over Utsuru, an attempt has been made to demonstrate the sexual virility of the African American-samurai alliance in the face of white domination. Afro might defeat the cowboy at the end of the anime series, but the presence of white imperialism persists if performances of masculinity demand the objectification of women for the benefit of the white, male gaze.

Afro Samurai engages with a complex discourse of race, racism, and sexism through its engagement with the hip-hop cultures of America and Japan and a legacy of cross-cultural resistance to Anglo-American imperialism. The series directly establishes a conflict between the hegemony of the white cowboy and the resistance of an African American samurai empowered by the warrior culture of Japan. But, while the hybrid character is imbued with many of the positive facets of Japan’s relationship with African American culture, it is also tarnished by the shortcomings that arise when race is represented through hypersexualized and essentialized caricatures. The series participates in an ongoing dialogue between African Americans and Japan, which is also present in Jim Jarmusch’s *Ghost Dog: Way of the Samurai*.

⁴⁸ Mireille Miller-Young, “Hip-Hop Honeys and Da Hustlaz: Black Sexualities in the New Hip-Hop Pornography,” *Meridians* 8, no.1 (2008): 273.

⁴⁹ Deborah Elizabeth Whaley, “Black Bodies/ Yellow Masks: The Orientalist Aesthetic in Hip-Hop and Black Visual Culture,” in *AfroAsian Encounters: Culture, History, Politics*, ed. Gary Okihiro (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 191.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 189

Sampling Chocolate and Vanilla Ice-cream in Jim Jarmusch's *Ghost Dog: Way of the Samurai*

Ghost Dog: Way of the Samurai complicates the performance of race by directly unpacking the racial stereotypes and viewer expectations of racial performance generated by the media, placing them in a decontextualizing, post-diasporic framework that playfully deconstructs the artifice of racial difference. Unlike *Afro Samurai*, which challenged white supremacy with hypersexualized warriors, Jim Jarmusch avoids racial hierarchies altogether, creating an imagined community where homogenous, fixed identities are impossible to maintain due to media saturation and a setting that reflects Cornel West's 'subterranean cultural current of interracial interactions.'⁵¹ As Juan Suarez puts it, 'the film is about composite identity.'⁵² And though Jarmusch deliberately exposes the performativity of race and masculinity, through the character of Ghost Dog, played by Forrest Whitaker, the film also creates a link to real referents and a legacy of black samurai that existed in America during the civil-rights clashes of the 1960s and 1970s.

Ghost Dog alludes to the Afro-Asian unification of the 1960s and the rise of a "bad ass" masculinity that followed the militarization of minority groups unified against racism and imperialism in the United States.⁵³ In a brief cameo appearance, RZA walks past Ghost Dog on the pavement, stopping only to say "peace and equality," to which Ghost Dog responds, "always see everything, my brother." RZA is dressed in military camouflage, mirroring the appearance of civil rights leaders such as Malcolm X, while Ghost Dog wears the black outfit associated with his adaptation of samurai masculinity. Although it is an understated moment in the film, this intersection of Black Power and samurai masculinities reflects the significant interactions between African American and Japanese American activists and the mixed identities of men such as Richard Aoki, who evoked both the samurai legacy of his Japanese ancestry and the call-to-arms ethos and imagery of Black Power members.⁵⁴ However, while Richard Aoki may be an empowering case for Japanese Americans and African Americans alike as a Black Power samurai, the samurai represented a contentious figure upon which to build an anti-imperialist, anti-racist identity due to Japan's own expansionist policies during

⁵¹ Cornel West, *Race Matters* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), 121.

⁵² Juan A. Suarez, *Jim Jarmusch* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 124.

⁵³ Diane C. Fujino, *Samurai Among Panthers: Richard Aoki on Race, Resistance, and a Paradoxical Life* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 182.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, xx.

the 1960s and 1970s and Japan's history of atrocities during World War II.⁵⁵ African Americans were identifying with the samurai as a non-white masculine archetype at the same time that heroic figures such as Bruce Lee were denouncing and defeating the samurai as an embodiment of imperialism. Ghost Dog's identification with the samurai is thus necessarily focused on a simplistic, essentialized notion of the samurai ethos as taught in a single book, the *Hagakure*, so as to sample only the desirable qualities of an archetype that potentially contradicts his struggle against white racism.

Within the hip-hop infused social milieu of the film the interaction between samurai and Black Power masculinities represents the continuation of an interracial resistance to white oppression through the integration of marginalized identities authenticated by shared legacies of oppression.⁵⁶ The figure of the black samurai that was potentially exoticised in *Afro Samurai* becomes politicized in *Ghost Dog*. However, both RZA and Ghost Dog adhere to stereotypes of the militarized minority employed as shorthand symbols of how racial 'others' have unified against an essentialized and normalized white presence.⁵⁷ In order to deconstruct the assumption that white masculinities represent an ideal, which racial 'others' must either assimilate to or oppose, Jim Jarmusch emphasizes the performativity of white masculinities through the exaggerated personalities of the white stereotypes in the film. The cultural hybridity and sampling present in *Ghost Dog* destabilizes the rigidity of a racial binary that had historically naturalized the universality of whiteness. The technique of sampling as practiced in hip-hop is shared with *Afro Samurai*; however, within a Japanese context the sampling of racial identities is often dismissed as imitation, as is the case with the hip-hop scene in Japan. In an American context the cultural diaspora of the late 20th century becomes another example of American exceptionalism that authenticates the roots of hip-hop in America. Ghost Dog's performance of a samurai identity within a cultural space in which the performativity of identities is normalized renders his cross-cultural passing a necessary process in a postmodern setting. The essentialized Japanese masculinity he adopts is forgiven because of the transparency of the performance and because it asserts his resistance to a schema of white racism.

Authenticating racial performances has often entailed locating a racial identity within a binary system in which non-white becomes the 'other', a process which adopts the fixity and homogeneity of whiteness. In her article on African American writers during the Harlem

⁵⁵ Kato, M.T., *From Kung Fu to Hip Hop: Globalization, Revolution, and Popular Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 16.

⁵⁶ Diane C. Fujino, *Samurai Among Panthers*, 149.

⁵⁷ Murali Balaji, "Beyond Jackie Chan," in *Global Masculinities and Manhood*, eds. Ronald Jackson, Murali Balaji and Molefi Asante (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 188.

Renaissance, Mollie Godfrey argues that African Americans who assimilated to white European cultural norms and behaviours were dismissed as imitators of a sacrosanct whiteness, but likewise dismissed as exotic savages if they performed accepted notions of blackness.⁵⁸ It was a catch-22 paradox for African Americans, who were prevented from joining a global community of humans because the global community was universalized as white.⁵⁹ The paradoxical impossibility for African Americans to be a part of the universality of a culture dominated by whites necessitated the construction of “the *real* Negro” that was not an imitation of whiteness or a product of white racism; rather, as Shelly Eversley argues, ‘the articulation of black authenticity functions to defend a whiteness that is either securely embodied by whites, or ineffectively and inappropriately imitated by blacks.’⁶⁰

Ghost Dog immediately challenges the black/white binary and the articulation of *real* blackness through the figure of the black samurai, but it goes further by disembodying whiteness to render it an empty signifier. The Italian-American whites of *Ghost Dog* assert their position of dominance by defining any non-white as a “nigger” and consistently confusing African Americans with American Indians: “Puerto Rican, Indian, Nigger, same thing.” They establish a conflated binary of white/other consistent with the idea of a universalized whiteness. But their claims to white authenticity are ridiculed throughout the film. Their safehouse, in which whiteness is normalized, is located in the back of a Chinese takeaway, and they owe rent to Sanchez, a Latin American landlord. One of the mafia bosses (Sonny) also elaborately and enthusiastically imitates the raps of Flavor Flav, his favourite gangsta rapper. And just as Ghost Dog performs his role of samurai learned from reading the *Hagakure*, the mafia perform their role as stereotypical gangsters. Todd Reeser argues that ‘in the American context, white Anglo-Saxon men might try to hide their race, ethnicity and gender all at once,’ but in *Ghost Dog* the performativity of race and gender is emphasized so as to oust whiteness from its position of normalized universality.⁶¹ Jarmusch employs stereotypes to draw attention to the manufactured nature of masculine identities, many of which are learned from, and shaped by, the media. Writing on the ‘postmodern racial passing’ of the film, Cathy Covell Waegner concludes that ‘the magic of *Ghost Dog*’s convincing passing as a samurai lies in the constant foregrounding of the artificiality of his undertaking, reinforced by the grotesque comedy of the inept and racist characters he is surrounded by.’⁶²

⁵⁸ Mollie Godfrey, “Rewriting White, Rewriting Black: Authentic Humanity and Authentic Blackness in Nella Larsen’s “Sanctuary,”” *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the U.S.* 38, no. 4 (2013): 135.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁶⁰ Shelly Eversley, *The Real Negro*, xvi.

⁶¹ Todd W. Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 146.

⁶² Cathy Covell Waegner, “Performing Postmodernist Passing: Nikki S. Lee, Tuff, and *Ghost Dog* in Yellowface/Blackface,” in *AfroAsian Encounters: Culture, History, Politics*, ed. Gary Okihiro (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 237.

Jarmusch ridicules and dismantles the white/other binary so as to imagine an American community that has moved beyond multiculturalism by acknowledging that all of culture is performance and imitation regardless of race, colour and gender, which is why his film is itself framed by imitation and adaptation.

Imitation and sampling in *Ghost Dog* reduces racial identities to learned signifiers that can be adopted or rejected at will, which reduces race to a set of symbols found in language, culture, and literature. The film embraces essentialism as a necessary by-product of a post-diasporic America, because the saturation of media forms makes it impossible for individuals to meaningfully identify with, or embody, any race or ethnicity beyond its cultural constructs, rendering any claim to authenticity impossible and pointless. Within the world of 'Ghost Dog,' Forrest Whittaker's character learns his identity by reading Japanese classics such as the *Hakagure*, which is a translation of a samurai code that was never intended to be written down or shared. Ghost Dog is ultimately reduced to a symbol in his final act. After being fatally wounded he curls himself into one of the branches of the kanji symbol for death, which is completed by the inclusion of his two friends, an African ice-cream vendor and Pearline. This also reduces his masculinity to a symbolic act interpreted through texts, and while this potentially liberates him from the pressure to conform to rigid masculine stereotypes or social expectations, the subjectification through symbols dissolves the possibility of his authentic African-American masculinity existing beyond literature. As in hip-hop, sampling necessitates an original source, but this in turn is often lost or obfuscated through repeated interpretations and samplings. In his death stance and fatal identification with a Japanese symbol for death, Ghost Dog's death might be the inevitable consequence of a man who has lost his connection to an authentic masculine referent.⁶³

Ghost Dog masculinizes the racial conflict between African Americans and Anglo-Americans by framing the conflict within familiar patriarchal parameters: as a conflict between the samurai (Ghost Dog) and the cowboy (Louie). The racial and cultural mixing that occurs throughout *Ghost Dog* challenges the construction of *real* blackness as racially homogenous, but it does not dismantle the heteronormativity of black leadership. The champions of racial empowerment in the film are embodied as men, as are the white, racist obstacles to this empowerment. Whereas the women of *Afro Samurai* were sexualized and objectified, women in the world of *Ghost Dog* are rendered silent due to their absence. Louise Vargas functions as an object of lust whose sexual presence initiates the conflict that ultimately kills Ghost Dog, while Pearline embodies the potential of a black female leadership

⁶³ Bryant Keith Alexander, *Performing Black Masculinity: Race, Culture, and Queer Identity* (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2006), 86.

that is nevertheless infantilized by her youthful naivety. Pearline continues the voice-over narrations from the *Hagakure* after Ghost Dog's death, suggesting that she will continue his legacy of resistance and empowerment, but her potential is undercut by her age and her marginalized status within the film. By militarizing the struggle of a black man and his identification with the hyper-masculine samurai, the film locates Ghost Dog within a discourse of racial conflict and resistance that echoes the militant (and often misogynist) attitudes present during the Civil Rights movement where African American women, homosexuals and lesbians were subordinated in a racial conflict framed and fought by heterosexual men.⁶⁴ By sampling the hypermasculine figures of the Civil Rights movement and the cinema that followed, the film is unable to progress beyond exaggerated gender constructions that often undermined women and those who did not fit within heteronormative characterisations.

Both *Ghost Dog* and *Afro Samurai* articulate a counter-hegemonic masculinity to the normalized white cowboy that continues a legacy of African American and Japanese co-resistance to Anglo-American domination. The black samurai samples the desirable qualities of the samurai and the African American man, and while this sampling challenges notions of racial homogeneity and white normativity, it emphasizes a hypermasculine heterosexuality that subordinates the agency and authority of women. These texts also engage in the process of essentializing racial and cultural identities so as to construct a hybrid figure (the black samurai) that is composed of reductive, recognizable tropes of Japaneseness and *real* blackness. The reductionism that occurs in the creation of a cross-cultural figure also occurs in the creation of the black cowboy, who performs the masculine archetype of the cowboy in an attempt to escape from the dehumanizing and emasculating legacy of slavery.⁶⁵

Wicky Wild Will Smith

Wild Wild West (1999) was an expensive attempt to remake the quirky television series of the same name into a mainstream commercial success, recasting one of the characters as an African American cowboy. The film reunites director Barry Sonnenfeld with leading man Will Smith after the success of *Men in Black* had demonstrated the commercial appeal of Smith as an actor and a hip-hop artist. *Wild Wild West* incorporates Smith's persona as both actor and hip-hop artist, offering an intriguing intersection of cowboy and hip-hop masculinities.

⁶⁴ E. Patrick Johnson, *Appropriating Blackness*, 38.

⁶⁵ Kimberley Lamm, "Visuality and Black Masculinity in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and Romare Bearden's Photomontages," *Callaloo* 26, no. 3 (2003): 814.

However, the transient nature of Smith's persona undermines the authenticity of his performances and negates his association with both the cowboy and the cowboy-rapper masculinities. African American cowboys did exist in the American frontier, providing an historical referent for the mythologizing output of Hollywood, but in the alternate reality of *Wild Wild West*, the absurd dressing, undressing and cross-dressing that persists throughout the film reduces the cowboy to a costume change that neither white Americans or African Americans can authentically claim.

The film opens with a symbolic birthing scene that establishes a narrative in which Will Smith's Jim West must forgo his primitive, boyish nature in order to become not only a man, but a cowboy. Lee Clark Mitchell identifies the 'ongoing problem in becoming, then remaining a man' as a thematic concern that 'thoroughly inflected the western genre,' and the interchangeable use of 'man' and 'boy' throughout *Wild Wild West* indicates that it is a similar problem for Jim West.⁶⁶ We are introduced to Jim making love to a buxom African American woman inside a womb-like water tank; it is the only sex scene in a film that consistently renders white men impotent and sexually perverse. Their love-making is interrupted, however, and the water tank is destroyed, depositing a naked Jim West at the feet of three antagonistic southern whites. Jim West's re-birth renders him temporarily naked and vulnerable, although as an African American man it is suggested (by the downward looks of awe shared by the white men) that he has been born with a certain phallic advantage. It is one of the few moments in the film in which his Otherness as an African American cowboy is acknowledged and it is primarily focused on drawing attention to his sexual prowess and physicality. After a brief fight scene his clothes are dropped at his feet and he is able to adopt the dress of the cowboy, remaking himself into a man.

Whereas black costumes had traditionally been worn by villains in classic westerns, a black outfit is worn by Jim West to assert that he is not only a man, but a black man. His costume change is one of many throughout the film, highlighting both the performativity and the transience of his identification as a masculine cowboy, whose signifiers can be lost, disrobed and interchanged at will in a similar way to Ghost Dog's association with the *Hagakure* and the samurai. If the water-tank had revealed the naked truth of Jim West's blackness, then the costume change signals the beginning of a performance in which his claim to *real* blackness is lost. While by no means as problematic, Will Smith's exaggerated performance of blackness does raise a similar issue to that of blackbody minstrelsy as

⁶⁶ Lee Clark Mitchell, *Westerns: Making the Man in Fiction and Film* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 152.

discussed by Amma Y. Gharty-Tagoe Kootin.⁶⁷ Kootin offers the example of the 1901 Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York, where emancipated and free-born African Americans re-enacted life in the old plantations in a performance that borrowed conventions from blackface minstrelsy shows. For Kootin, black men performing an identity constructed by white men implied ‘that whites in 1901 possessed knowledge of the “authentic black culture” and that real black people somehow had forgotten how to be themselves.’⁶⁸ Will Smith plays the black cowboy as an act, just as the act had been performed by numerous white men before him. The danger is that Will Smith’s performance of blackness is also an act informed by a legacy of white men who had constructed race in blackface.

Will Smith’s appropriation of a cowboy masculinity becomes a disingenuous performance within the film because the performance is derided as a drag masquerade. Within the postmodern context of Jarmusch’s *Ghost Dog*, the black samurai exists as a cross-cultural mosaic of identities informed by media saturation and proliferation. It is an identity that lacks an authenticated origin only because such an origin is impossible to find. But the black cowboy of *Wild Wild West* is not self-consciously informed by film texts or other media; it is informed by camp appropriation of hegemonic norms. Whereas some homosexual men identified with the cowboy performance of *real* manliness to reassert and reaffirm their gendering as male (in order to counter the image of homosexual men as sissies and Queens), Smith’s black cowboy masculinity becomes equated with the queered, non-normative masculinities of effeminate homosexuals and transvestites, which are mocked and ridiculed throughout the crass comedy of the film.⁶⁹ Jim West in cowboy drag is partnered with Kevin Kline’s eccentric (or queer) agent Artemis, who indulges in cross-dressing as a means of infiltration. Artemis asks Jim West to touch the fake breast of his drag costume, a conversation which is intentionally misinterpreted by a passer-by to frame the scene as a comical homosexual encounter. Artemis also proudly recalls the number of men he has managed to entice while dressed as a woman, seemingly unaware of the homoerotic implications of such a claim. Drag in *Wild Wild West* becomes infantilized and mocked, a spectacle that ‘marks the difference between the normal and the not normal, performance and performativity,’ and it

⁶⁷ Amma Y. Gharty-Tagoe Kootin, “Lessons in Blackbody Minstrelsy: Old Plantation and the Manufacture of Black Authenticity,” *The Drama Review* 57, no. 2 (2013): 104.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁶⁹ Corey W. Johnson, ““Don’t Call Him A Cowboy”: Masculinity, Cowboy Drag, and a Costume Change,” *Journal of Leisure Research* 40, no. 3 (2008): 393.

becomes clear that Jim West's African American cowboy is not normal.⁷⁰ Men are not supposed to dress as women, and black men are not supposed to dress as cowboys.⁷¹

Wild Wild West problematically constructs the black cowboy as a spectacle, likened to the heightened queer, drag performances of Artemis and his fetishistic penchant for cross-dressing. However, black masculinity itself is rendered potent and unified in contrast to impotent white racists, physically disfigured Civil War veterans, and the gender-confused Artemis. The primary antagonist of the film is Dr. Loveless (played by Kenneth Brannagh), a double-amputee rendered impotent in both body and name. Like Alex Murphey in *RoboCop*, the wounded white veterans of *Wild Wild West* must rely on technology to re-establish their masculine unity, lending the film a steam-punk aesthetic in which steam-powered limbs and brass extensions form cyborg bodies – which is to say queered bodies, not only because of the unfamiliar configuration of man and machine, but because the machined body is explicitly identified as something outside of normative gender constructions. After capturing the love interest (played by Selma Hayek) of both Artemis and Jim West, Loveless boasts that despite his missing limbs he will still find the technological means to ravage her, at which point the camera cuts to an oversized, over-phallicized contraption on wheels that enthusiastically thrusts forward. But the phallus is disembodied and Loveless' connection to it is illusory; the steaming phallus is a reminder of his castration.⁷² Jim West, in contrast, is deposited into the film naked and intact, his phallus is both attached and functional and his liberated sexuality has castrated the white men.

The film disembodies white men so as to defend the unified, black masculinity of Jim West, but in order to demonstrate the primacy of Jim West's black masculinity the film also disembodies women into sexualized objects. The nameless African American woman in the opening sex scene is depicted as breasts and a head, the unity of the rest of her body only implied by the suggested coitus taking place under the water. The disembodied woman is most visibly apparent in Salma Hayek's character. Throughout the film her cleavage is emphasized, as is the extent of her helplessness as a liability for the two heroes. In one particular scene she wears borrowed pyjamas, unaware that the flap on the backside is unbuttoned and exposing her bottom. In essence she is reduced to the "ass and titties," as referenced in the most degrading hip-hop lyrics.⁷³ However, the attempt to sexually disempower and disembody

⁷⁰ Bryant Keith Alexander, *Performing Black Masculinity*, 109.

⁷¹ For more on cross-dressing and the performance of race see Aoife Monks, "Genuine Negroes and Real Bloodhounds": Cross-Dressing, Eugene O'Neill, the Wooster Group, and the Emperor Jones," *Modern Drama* 48, no. 3 (2005): 540-564.

⁷² Jessica Elbert Maycock, "The Medusa Complex: Matricide and the Fantasy of Castration," *philoSOPHIA* 3, no. 2 (2013): 160.

⁷³ Margaret Hunter and Kathleen Soto, "Women of Color in Hip Hop," 176.

white men and women, respectively, so as to empower the figure of the black cowboy effectively justifies the racist fear of the black man as hypersexual and bestial, which becomes another identity for Will Smith to perform.

Amidst the transgender, transracial performances of *Wild Wild West*, Will Smith performs the cowboy in blackface, creating a character composed of various racist stereotypes that have their origin in the dehumanization and subjugation of African Americans. Early in the film Jim West and Artemus must infiltrate a masquerade hosted by Dr Loveless. The party is being held in a former slave plantation, but when asked to disguise himself as Artemus' manservant, Jim West replies, "Jim West does not wear costumes." His assertion of authenticity will be undermined by the various costume changes he makes throughout the film, but it is suggested that, during the masquerade at least, Jim West is attending as an authentic "Negro cowboy" and only white men wear masks. As an authentic, *real*, black man, Jim West molests a buxom female guest by drumming his hands on her cleavage. In the ensuing outrage a lynch mob is formed and Jim West is sentenced to hang. The film makes light of America's brutal history of lynching, but it also confirms 'the inaccurate notion that African American males have a very high propensity toward wanting to rape white women' – a stereotype used as a justification for sustaining the rule of Jim Crow.⁷⁴ The film makes a spectacle of Will Smith's cowboy masquerade as it does his performance of black masculinity, rendering the African American cowboy a composite identity of racist stereotypes that undermine rather than empower the potential of an African American embodiment of the hegemonic archetype.

Wild Wild West playfully abandons the fixity of gender and racial identities to mock the institution of the hegemonic white cowboy. While this renders Will Smith's black cowboy something of a queer dandy in cowboy drag, it also establishes an environment in which the sole possession of an empowering archetype becomes impossible due to the implied notion that everyone is in drag and all identities, no matter their claims to authenticity, are no less performative. It contravenes the stressed importance of authentic identities in gangster-rap at the same time as it challenges the existence of a *real* black male identity, even if this means sourcing degrading stereotypes that had once been employed to oppress African Americans in the antebellum period and beyond. The message is as contradictory as it is potentially liberating, but the negative critical and commercial response to the film suggests that it failed to resonate with audiences, black and white alike.

⁷⁴ Dennis Rome, *Black Demons: Media's Depiction of the African American Male Criminal Stereotype* (Wesport: Praeger, 2004), 51.

Unchained Melodies in Django Unchained

The films discussed in this chapter so far locate their African American protagonists within postmodern settings fused with cross-cultural borrowings. The films also engage with hybrid genre crossovers and the sampling ethos of hip-hop. The deliberate conflation of various cultural signifiers and racial markers breaks down the rigid identifiers of race, allowing for black cowboys and samurai to thrive while at the same time rendering a distinct, *real* black masculinity impossible due to the heightened performances of both race and gender. Quentin Tarantino's *Django Unchained* is a genre film specifically located within the visual tropes and conventions of the western and the spaghetti-western, as evident in the title of the film and the cameo appearance of Franco Nero, who played Django in the 1964 Corbucci film of the same name. Rooted in identifiable genre conventions, the film is nevertheless concerned with recreating an authentic account of experiences in America's antebellum south told within the folkloric tradition of slave narratives. The appearance of a black cowboy is not predicated on the dissolution of genre significations or the postmodern abandonment of racial identifications. Instead the black cowboy is deliberately juxtaposed with a virulently racist white backdrop to emphasize both his racial specificity and the transgressive nature of his adopted identity as a cowboy. *Django Unchained* is not colour-blind, and it does not flinch from explicitly visualizing the brutality of antebellum America.

In the lyrics to Will Smith's 'Wild Wild West' his identification with outlaw archetypes is confused between rough riders, desperados and buffalo soldiers, and the confusion exists in the constant costume changes in the film. In *Django Unchained* the character of Django is firmly rooted in the folklore traditions of the "bad nigger," a slave who 'refused to accept whippings' and 'ran away at the slightest provocation.'⁷⁵ Unlike the coon, who rejected white authority without retaliating against existing power structures, the "bad nigger" openly defied his white masters to secure the freedom and empowerment of an African American individuality.⁷⁶ Django is liberated by Dr Schultz in the opening moments of the film, but numerous flashbacks recall how he defied his masters by marrying Broomhilda and by running away from the plantation. John Roberts explains how "bad niggers" were not necessarily heroes in African American folktales, because their actions often incited the violence of white law makers.⁷⁷ Likewise, Django is established as an outcast and an anti-hero in the film, looked upon with distrust and loathing by other slaves who see him as a threat to

⁷⁵ John Roberts, *From Trickster to Badman*, 176.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 177.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 179.

the precarious stability of the system – most notably, the Uncle Tom archetype as played by Samuel L. Jackson, who has prospered by participating in the oppression of slaves in return for a degree of power and autonomy. The “bad nigger” is co-opted by hip-hop artists who wish to identify with his spirit of violent retaliation. Jerry Bryant argues that within the economy of hip-hop as a marketable commodity, the badman rapper ultimately submits to the materialist values of a dominant, white culture.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, the badman attitude of black liberation established rap and hip-hop of the late 1980s and early 1990s as a potentially violent and destructive force that threatened to undermine the white establishment, and threatened to bring the force of that establishment down upon those who rebelled in the form of police raids. *Django Unchained* allows for the fulfilment of the “bad nigger’s” emancipation with the violent destruction of white bodies and the subtle inclusion of the year in which the action takes place: 1858, two years before the Civil War that would produce the emancipation declaration. While the folkloric “bad nigger” connects Django to the slave narratives that articulated the traumatic experiences of African Americans in the antebellum period, the cowboy archetype affords Django a gun to enact his liberation.

Django’s first transgressive act towards becoming a black cowboy involves disrobing the shackles and rags that had identified him as a sub-human slave and mounting a horse befitting a real cowboy, and a real man. Lee Clark Mitchell argues that the western film celebrates ‘the phallic image of a man on horseback, sitting high above the ground, upright and superior, gazing down at a world whose gaze he in turn solicits.’⁷⁹ Django rides with Dr Schultz (played by Christoph Waltz) into Daugherty, Texas in the opening scenes of the film. Django’s proud stature atop the horse is unaffected by the horrified gaze shared by the white townsfolk, one of whom comments, “that’s a nigger on a horse.” The gaze of the captive white audience affords Django the sense of awe inspired by the traditional white cowboy on horseback. Will Smith’s gunslinger in *Wild Wild West* rides a horse as expected of a cowboy, but it is a trope that is mocked as antiquated and redundant by Kelvin Kline’s white sidekick, who prefers steam-powered cycles and flying machines. By the time the black cowboy arrives in the Wild Wild West he is already dismissed as a relic. In *Django Unchained* the horse remains a phallic symbol reserved for white men and scenes of white men being brought down, or shot down, from their horses becomes a motif throughout the film. The masculinization of Django as a black man demands the emasculation of the white men who had subordinated him, because up to this point only white men had represented a coherent model of masculinity. Mitchell describes the dismounted man as a non-man, and while some

⁷⁸ Jerry Bryant, *Born in a Mighty Bad Land*, 164.

⁷⁹ Lee Clark Mitchell, *Westerns: Making the Man in Fiction and Film*, 167.

who fall are able to redeem their masculinity by returning to their steed, in *Django Unchained* the white men shot off their horses stay down, brought to the level of their slaves.⁸⁰ The narrative of the film demands the assertion of the dichotomy between human and non-human, man and non-man, so that Django can demonstrate his masculinity as being intact and authentic by the standards of a society that had condemned him as something less. Visually, Django needs to be seen on his horse at the same time as a spectacle is made of the white men being brought down from theirs, and this is why Leonardo DiCaprio's John Candy (ostensibly the villain of the film) is only ever shown riding in a carriage – the slave-owner is inhuman and unworthy of his status as a man.

The soundtrack to *Django Unchained* associates African American rebellion and retaliation against white oppression with hip-hop. It is an association consistent with the lyrics and the tone of early gangster rap. One of the most damning visualizations of the white man lording phallic power over his slaves is that of the slave-owner on horseback looking down at black men in chains. It is an image that opens the music video to N.W.A's hip-hop single 'Express Yourself', released in 1988. The slave owner's oppression of African Americans is equated to the excesses of the Los Angeles police in the inner city suburbs. The connection between contemporary hip-hop masculinity's aggression towards police brutality and the legacy of slavery is mirrored in *Django Unchained*. Django is insulted by a white man referred to as Hoot while riding to Candyland, the plantation where Django's wife is held. The confrontation resembles the opening of N.W.A's music video, in which a slave prepares to throw a rock at a white man on horseback, but whereas the slaves in 'Express Yourself' stay their hands Django calmly walks to Hoot's horse and pulls at the reins, bringing the horse and Hoot to the ground. It is an act of insubordination and emasculation. Hoot is effectively castrated, and as though recoiling at the sight, the other white men at the scene immediately place their hands on their guns. At this point the hip-hop song '100 Black Coffins' by Rick Ross begins, affirming the connection between black retaliation and the confrontational attitudes present in hip-hop, and primarily in gangster rap.

Hip-hop exposes the traumatic fissure of American racism by connecting contemporary African American traumatic experiences with the trauma inflicted on African American slaves. Hip-hop as an African American cultural product (at least initially) established itself as an affront to 'the erasure of black experience[s] by white culture,' which Evelyn Jaffe Schreiber argued erased 'any witnesses to the horrors of slavery.'⁸¹ *Wild Wild*

⁸⁰ Lee Clark Mitchell, *Westerns*, 168.

⁸¹ Evelyn Jaffe Schreiber, *Race, Trauma, and Home in the Novels of Toni Morrison* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010), 11.

West erases the witnesses to the horrors of slavery by locating its narrative in an alternate, steam-punk setting in which slavery has become an abstraction that is mentioned in passing, or as the punchline to an offhand joke. Will Smith's gunslinger does not bear the scars of slavery. His naked body is intact and coherent like the hegemonic figure of the white man, although the cohesion of the white body is disrupted by images of limbless war veterans. *Django Unchained* explicitly confronts its audience with the horrors of slavery and offers hip-hop as a musical means to bring down the white house of oppression. When Django is unchained, the camera centres on the scars that cover his back. He is an embodiment of African American trauma, which remains through his transformation into a black cowboy. His clothes will change, but the audience has witnessed the scars and they remain beneath the clothes – his identity as an African American is not merely performed, but carved into his skin. Like the authenticated gangster rappers whose credibility is proven in the inner-city suburbs, the authentic black cowboy must bear witness to the traumatic scars of racism lest his identity as an African American man be subordinated by identifying with the naturalized coherence of the white body.

Maintaining the specificity of an African American identity while reconstructing the black body in the cowboy archetype demands the realization of an African American cultural space outside of the white spheres of racism of which the cowboy had been a part. Schreiber quotes Toni Morrison's phrase that in order to eliminate racism from American culture we need "to convert a racist house in a race-specific yet nonracist home."⁸² The home is imagined as a site of 'nostalgic memory' in which the subjective self can be safely articulated.⁸³ The conversion of a racist house into a nonracist home occurs in the music video to Will Smith's song 'Wild Wild West.' African Americans replace southern whites in the plantation house, occupying the positions of power previously reserved for Anglo-Americans without necessitating the forceful removal of the previous occupants – the cultural capital of hip-hop secures their place. However, the home is not race-specific, as demonstrated by Will Smith's costume change from black to white. The authenticity of Will Smith's non-racist house of hip-hop is undermined because of its disconnection from an African American history of trauma and his inability to identify with a *real* black masculinity. In *Django Unchained* the racist house is not converted; it is destroyed and with its destruction Django is able to emerge as an African American cowboy unfettered by the cowboy's previous association with white culture of oppression.

⁸² Evelyn Jaffe Schreiber, *Race, Trauma, and Home in the Novels of Toni Morrison*, 1.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 138.

It is no mistake that the destruction of Candyland in *Django Unchained*, along with the culture of racism housed within it, is accompanied by the hip-hop fusion of Tupac and James Brown. The penultimate shootout occurs towards the end of the film after Dr Schultz is killed. Django had been a free man up to this point, but he had been a subordinate to Dr Schultz; Schultz had been the teacher and Django had been the student, a child. Schultz's death heralds the moment where Django must become a man and truly embrace his identity as a cowboy. The ensuing gunfight is a spectacle of leaky white bodies being penetrated by gunfire and erupting into exaggerated splashes of blood and viscera. White male bodies are burst and reduced to deflated corpses in slow-motion as a reprisal for the whipped and fractured bodies of African American slaves. All the while, Django keeps his masculine body intact. The bloody spectacle is equated to a masculinizing ritual through the lyrics of Tupac, in which the mantra "am I wrong coz I wanna get it on 'till I die" is repeated over the backing track of James Brown's funk song 'Payback.' With the forceful demise of white oppression the African American body becomes coherent, embodied and sexually primed through the figure of the black cowboy, but this cohesion only occurs in the final moments of the film and only with the destruction and erasure of the hegemonic white house of racism and the white bodies within.

While Will Smith's black cowboy was reduced to a costumed masquerade, Django is authenticated through his connection to the "bad nigger" archetype of black folklore and the film's grounding in the tropes of the western and spaghetti western. Rather than assimilate with the white culture of the cowboy, Django violently rejects the cowboy's associations with the white body and embraces the black cowboy as an amalgamation of African American culture that confronts the trauma of the past as articulated in the blues, funk, soul, hip-hop and rap-infused soundtrack.

Keeping it Real

The crisis of masculinity in the United States often presupposes the prior normalization and naturalization of the white body as being intact, coherent and hegemonic, as represented by the figure of the cowboy atop his horse. In Japan, the crisis of masculinity often suggests a point of dislocation from the hegemonic figure of the samurai, who embodied the glory of a homogenous nation and the integrity of the masculine Japanese body. The race of the masculine archetype is often neglected or rendered invisible because it is already assumed. However, the African American cowboy and samurai challenge the assumptions of the racial

normativity of these archetypes at the same time that the racial specificity of an African American identity becomes problematized. What it means to be an African American cowboy or samurai thus involves questioning what it means to be both an African American and an African American man.

Keeping it real as an African American is a common theme in hip-hop and rap, which has long been a musical genre, and culture, dominated by African American males in a music industry otherwise dominated by Anglo Americans. The crisis of keeping it real in hip-hop and rap reflects the issues of constructing an empowered masculine identity within a white society while maintaining an authentic connection to a *real* African American experience and culture. The connection between the samurai, the cowboy and hip-hop establishes a discourse of self-identification through archetypes previously restricted to the dominant cultures that had created them. By challenging the hegemony and normativity of these archetypes, the African American cowboy and samurai simultaneously reject the monolithic myths and monochromatic masculinities that had alienated other marginalized masculinities from the dominant narratives of society.

Conclusion

Learning to Live with Multiplicity in *Sukiyaki Western Django*

It has become a truism that in gender studies academics no longer speak of masculinity, but of masculinities. In contrast to hegemonic masculinity, a concept which may have once implied masculine dominance as singular, R.W. Connell refers to ‘hegemonic masculinities.’¹ The crisis of masculinity might therefore be reconceived as the crises of masculinities. The crisis of masculinity is the recognition that no such thing as masculinity exists, at least not in its singular form. What is a triumph for those who have suffered under the oppression of hegemonic masculinity as a tool of patriarchal dominance has nevertheless resulted in gender insecurities for those (primarily heterosexual men) that had relied upon the institutionalized security of masculinity as a dominant, stable norm. It is a crisis for those who had invested faith in the perceived stability of the cowboy and the samurai as archetypes of that dominant, stable norm.

I do not intend to bemoan a lost golden-age of masculinity, or call for the reinstatement of hegemonic masculine norms as a solution to the perceived crisis of masculinity as it exists, and has existed, in the U.S. and Japan. Rather, I will conclude the thesis by addressing the crisis of masculinity as a response to the gendered multiplicities that have arisen from the hybrid identity formations of postwar globalization and transnationalism, of which the bilateral exchange between the U.S. and Japan is but a part. In isolation the cowboy and samurai have failed to reconcile their mythical foundations as rigid masculine archetypes with the fragmentation of gender identities into performed multiplicities. Roger Horrocks argues that men cannot simply reject the culture they were born into, or its fantasies, and the cowboy and samurai have been integral to fantasies of masculine empowerment and gender stability in the U.S. and Japan. Horrocks continues that the ‘challenge to the erstwhile sacrosanct rituals and roles attributed to men and women suggests that the gender system is going through ‘an immense crisis.’² It is through the ongoing bilateral exchange between the cowboy and samurai that these masculine archetypes can learn to live with multiplicity and to move beyond the self as unitary. The bilateral exchange between the cowboy and samurai is not a condition of masculinities in crisis; it is a strategy to work through the crisis. In Chapter 1 I

¹ R.W. Connell and James W. Messerchmidt. “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept,” *Gender and Society* 19, no. 6 (2005): 832.

² Roger Horrocks, *Masculinity in Crisis: Myths, Fantasies, and Realities* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), 63.

argued that for the Japanese, the fracturing of space and time at ground zero, the point of impact of the nuclear bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, signalled the crisis point of a fractured postwar identity. The imagery of Kurosawa's *Rashomon* is that of apocalyptic ruination, passing storms and vanishing samurai amidst the uncertain future of an orphaned child. Even narrative time and space are disrupted in Kurosawa's telling of the events. And in *Shichinin no Samurai* the passage of time marked by the seasonal cycles of harvested crops can only mean the erasure of the samurai from the land.

The American remakes of Kurosawa's jidaigeiki demonstrated the comparable dissolution of a unified self as (dis)embodied by the troubled cowboys of *The Magnificent Seven* and *The Outrage*. The apocalyptic imagery of Kurosawa's postwar Japan was replaced by the instability of American frontiers and borders. The finality and certainty of change instigated by atomic destruction became the contested boundaries and ideological frontiers of the Cold War. Implicit in the rhetoric of John F. Kennedy's New Frontiers was the sense that the old frontiers of the cowboys, the real men, had somehow been lost, but they could be found again in space, or in Vietnam, or in the promises of a new America waiting to be discovered. But JFK was assassinated and those new frontiers merely opened out to a decade of loss. The need for new frontiers presaged the departure of the John Waynes and Alan Ladds from the cultural landscape, but their departure did not revitalize or remasculinize those men who were to inherit the new frontier.

In Chapter 2 I witnessed the chaotic dissolution of the singular body at its zenith in Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* (1961), Sergio Leone's remake *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964) and Sam Peckinpah's nihilistic *The Wild Bunch* (1969). These films fixate on fragmented bodies, a dismembered hand in the mouth of a wild dog, and the tortured bodies of cowboys and samurai as they work to undermine the fabric of society. The bodies of the samurai and cowboy are unified in *Yojimbo* and *A Fistful of Dollars* only so that they can work against the body of the nation-state. Rather than operate as agents of stability and unification, or as guardians of the patriarchy, the lone warriors dismantle the power structures that had maintained the precarious peace of the villages they chance upon. In *The Wild Bunch* the body of the cowboy fails to remain intact and is instead torn asunder by the military, the mechanism of state-control; this marks the nihilism of Sam Peckinpah's film because at least the yojimbo and the man with no name enacted some kind of change. As I have argued, this failure of the unified masculine body does not hasten the demise of the cowboy and samurai; rather, it draws the archetypes closer together as masculine formations undergoing change so that *becoming*, as discussed in Chapter 5, liberates these identity formations from the oppressive fixity that had failed them in the immediate postwar period.

By gendered multiplicities I refer to Judith Butler's influential thesis that gender is a performative act to the extent that the 'appearance of substance' is 'a constructed identity.'³ This introduces the stark separation of the sexed body from the gendered body, in which gender is no longer understood as a natural corollary of biological, sexed functions but is instead contingent, malleable and unstable – what cowboys and samurai were not. The distinction between sex and gender contests the unity of the body and, as Butler argues in 'Gender Trouble', permits gender 'as a multiple interpretation of sex.'⁴ For Butler, the gendered body is less about *being* than *doing* one's gender as an embodiment of historical possibilities.⁵ Gender is thus contextual rather than inherent to the individual, but the possibilities of the performative acts are limited by the social and cultural constraints of the historical context. To this end, Butler's *doing* has much in common with Deleuzian *becomings*, a comparison made by Mikko Tuhkanin.⁶ As Tuhkanin explains, both Butler and Deleuze are concerned with futurity and the realization of potential identities that are pre-existing but not yet recognized.⁷ This is the challenge confronted by the cowboys and samurai as nostalgic formations hardly suited to futurity.

Because the *doing* of gender may imply the will of the individual, Judith Butler is careful to clarify that the doing of gender is a collective agreement that is situated within an historical context and performed under duress due to the repercussions of undoing or failing to do an accepted gendered identity. Judith Butler argues that 'the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of its own production,' thereby disguising the extent to which gender is imposed on the individual.⁸ That the sexed body directly informs the gendered body had been one such fiction. Hegemonic gender fictions had also been disguised due to their perceived normality, just as the cowboy and samurai had once been regarded as stable, masculine norms due in part to their uncontested role in the formation of national masculinities. To embrace the multiplicities of gender futurity is to undermine the micro-fascisms that are dependent on the gendered body as fixed and controlled.

Building on the work of Judith Butler, Judith Kegan Gardiner recognizes that 'hegemonic forms of masculinity work constantly to maintain an appearance of permanence,

³ Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Construction: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 520.

⁴ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 6.

⁵ Judith Butler, "Performative Acts," 521.

⁶ Mikko Tuhkanin, "Performativity and Becoming," *Cultural Critique* 72 (2009): 10.

⁷ Mikko Tuhkanin, "Performativity and Becoming," 23.

⁸ Judith Butler, "Performative Acts," 522.

stability, and naturalness.’⁹ This had been the role of the cowboy and samurai – to render unproblematic the origin point of masculinity and to dramatize the being-man as a concrete event located in history and maintained in myth so as to become part of the collective male imaginary. One aspect of the crisis of masculinity is the realization that the gendered cowboy and samurai, the masculine archetype, had always been a fiction ‘in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self.’¹⁰ The masculine body as natural and normative makes way for gender as an active process open to gendered multiplicities. Throughout my thesis I have argued that the loss of an abiding gendered self has often been expressed through the loss, or lack, of phallic agency for the cowboy and samurai. It is the gun that will not shoot, or the sword that cannot pierce, that threatens the masculine stability of the warrior. Mastery of the self as a contained whole equates to mastery of phallic empowerment, just as the cowboy and samurai must put themselves back together if beaten, so that multiplicity becomes anathema to the centrality and iconic singularity of the abiding phallus.

For Butler the potentialities of becoming do not promise the discovery of new identity formations or genders. As Butler makes clear, the multiplicities already exist, but they require recognition. I have located the cowboy and samurai in bilateral exchange as participants of these moments of recognition. As individual, isolated masculine archetypes both the cowboy and samurai had become mired in untenable conditions of being that failed to resonate with the postwar conditions of men and women in the U.S. and Japan. However, through their bilateral exchange both the cowboy and samurai could articulate unrecognized ways of being, and more importantly, unrecognized ways of becoming. The seeming inevitability of the cowboy and samurai as archetypes of masculine crisis could instead be framed as the growing pains of two rigid archetypes learning to live with multiplicity. These growing pains are articulated in the intertextual conflation that is Takashi Miike’s film *Sukiyaki Western Django*, a film that locates the cowboy and samurai within their isolated cultural contexts only to rapturously embrace the intertextual exchange of the two archetypes at its origin point – the moment that Kurosawa’s jidaigeki brought the cowboy and samurai into the open spaces of the bilateral cultural exchange between the U.S. and Japan.

⁹ Judith Kegan Gardiner, “Introduction,” in *Masculinity Studies and Feminist Theory: New Directions*, ed. Judith Kegan Gardiner (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 11.

¹⁰ Judith Butler, “Performative Acts,” 519.

Jane Stadler endearingly refers to Takashi Miike's *Sukiyaki Western Django* as a 'bad film.'¹¹ Stadler's criteria for a bad film – 'its derivative nature, its overstated affect, and its lack of psychological and thematic nuance' – are the very conditions that make Miike's film a suitable case study for the culmination of masculinities in crisis in a film that can barely hold its narrative together, let alone the textual bodies of the cowboys and samurai who come to amalgamate a half-century's worth of masculinities in crisis.¹² Miike makes direct references to spaghetti westerns, westerns, jidaigeki and, by virtue of Tarantino's presence in the film, hybrid-genre films such as *Kill Bill* that are themselves intertextual throwbacks. It is a film that celebrates the havoc of intertextuality while buckling under the weight of untethered multiplicities. At its core, the film is about men and women attempting to reconcile their masculine identities at a moment of change. It is through the cowboy and samurai that crisis-bound men attempt to establish a sense of fixity, and so their textual bodies reenact the performances of cowboy and samurai masculinities in an attempt to work through intertextuality and discover the mythical origin point of manhood. However, intertextuality merely reinforces the extent of the crisis, because the texts being referred to remain sites of masculinities in various states of collapse, be it the anarchic rōnin of *Yojimbo*, the effete prince of Shakespeare's *Henry VI* or Sergio Corbucci's tortured *Django*. The crisis is that no matter the configuration of masculine archetypes, or combination of masculine and feminine performances, or formation of queer identities, the liberation of gender from the body, the masculinity of the cowboy and samurai remains a crisis-bound formation. Only those who accept the multiplicities of becoming survive.

Multiplying Hegemonies

There is a well-known anecdote attributed to the American psychologist William James that, after explaining how the Earth orbits the Sun, an old woman conjectured that the Earth does not float in the void of space but rests atop a turtle. When asked what that turtle rested upon the woman famously responded, "It is turtles all the way down."¹³ In response to the growing literature on the history of masculinity, Judith Allen defines masculinity itself as a

¹¹ Jane Stadler, "Cultural Value and Viscerality in *Sukiyaki Western Django*: Towards a Phenomenology of Bad Film," in *After Taste: Cultural Value and the Moving Image*, eds., Julia Vassilieva and Constantine Verevis (New York: Routledge, 2012), 37.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Robert Anton Wilson, *Prometheus Rising* (Arizona: New Falcon Publications, 2000), 25.

crisis-bound formation.¹⁴ Sabine Frühstück and Anne Walthall reemphasize that the crisis of masculinity is not new and that for Japanese men it has been crisis-bound throughout history.¹⁵ To define what constitutes maleness it could be said that men rest atop a crisis of masculinity and it is crisis all the way down. The fear for men is that their masculinity, their source of legitimacy and entitlement, might not have a solid, stable foundation. R.W. Connell is cautious of the way in which the ‘crisis of masculinity’ is discussed because it may ‘provoke attempts to restore a dominant masculinity.’¹⁶ One of the common responses to masculinities in crisis is to regress to a point where an unproblematic, uncontested, and hegemonic masculine archetype might be found. This has often taken the shape of the cowboy in the U.S. and the samurai in Japan. However, as my thesis has argued, in the postwar period the cowboy and samurai could no longer be relied upon as stable foundations of a renewed hegemonic (that is, heterosexual and monoethnic) masculinity.

Hegemonic masculinity is a concept articulated by R.W. Connell in response to the limitations of ‘male sex role’ theory, which focused on social expectations for men rather than the active processes through which male domination over women was practiced.¹⁷ In *The Men and the Boys* Connell clarifies that ‘the hegemonic form need not be the most common form of masculinity,’ but is instead ‘the most honoured or desired’ articulation of masculine ideals.¹⁸ Hegemonic masculinity could thus be understood as a broad concept that included the active practices of the patriarchy in the domination of men over women and non-hegemonic men, as well as the mediated ideals of masculinity that could work to naturalize and normalize the existence of the patriarchy, as discussed by Judith Kegan Gardiner. Along with Michael Kimmel, Roger Horrocks, Nobue Suzuki and many others, I have regarded the cowboy and samurai as masculine archetypes that represented the most honoured and desired ways of being a man. And I have responded to the crisis of masculinity as a loss of patriarchal control (or a sense of loss) in the postwar period that coincided with the loss of the cowboy and samurai as the most honoured or desired masculine ideals. The crisis of masculinity can also been applied to men who failed to meet the nebulous social expectations of *being* a man at a point in time in which the desired articulation of masculinity was undergoing change.

The failure of men to find a singularity that justified the existence of patriarchal power and the dominance of men over other, lesser men, and over women, required a new strategy to

¹⁴ Judith Allen, “Men Interminably in Crisis? Historians on Masculinity, Sexual Boundaries, and Manhood,” *Radical History Review* 82 (2002): 193.

¹⁵ Sabine Frühstück and Annie Walthall, “Introduction: Interrogating Men and Masculinities,” in *Recreating Japanese Men*, eds., Sabine Frühstück and Anne Walthall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 5.

¹⁶ R.W. Connell, “The Social Organization of Masculinity,” in *The Masculinities Reader*, eds., Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett (Malden, Massachusetts: Polity Press, 2001), 45.

¹⁷ Connell and Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept,” 832.

¹⁸ R.W. Connell, *The Men and the Boys*. (Cambridge: Polity, 2000), 11.

legitimize masculinity in the late 20th century. The response was to circle the wagons, or gather the rōnin, and consolidate multiple masculinities into a renegotiation of hegemony. Demetrakis Demetriou builds on R.W. Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity to argue that in the late 20th century 'the patriarchy was in need of new legitimacy strategies and many men were asked to renegotiate their positions in patriarchal societies [...] in the formation of a hegemonic bloc.'¹⁹ Demetriou argues that hegemonic masculinity thus incorporated marginalized (minoritarian) masculinities, such as the masculinity of homosexuals, so as to provide a masquerade 'behind which women's subordination could be masked.'²⁰ For Demetriou, 'hybridization in the realm of representation and in concrete, everyday gender practices makes the hegemonic bloc appear less oppressive and more egalitarian.'²¹ Rather than ostracize the Other, the practices of the Other were subsumed into a new consolidation of dominance. Rather than witness hybridity as the dissolution of masculine integrity, Demetriou argues, hybridity becomes a "common sense" and accepted notion that renders invisible the continued domination of men over women.²²

For Demetriou argues, this hegemonic bloc complicates the dualism found by R.W. Connell, in which hegemonic masculinity was oppositional to non-hegemonic (minoritarian) masculinities. The crisis of masculinity could be averted if the conditions of hegemonic masculinity as a bloc were more flexible and more inclusive. In response to the decline of Japan's salaryman masculinity, Romit Dasgupta similarly identifies a shift towards 'funky' and 'feminized' masculinities that nevertheless remain engrained in patriarchal systems of control –namely capitalist hierarchies and commodified identities.²³ The look of hegemonic masculinity might change but the patriarchy remains. Contrary to Demetriou's criticism of Connell's hegemonic masculinity concept, however, both Connell and Messerschmidt are open to the idea that hegemonic masculinity was and still is subject to change as a 'normative' but not necessarily 'normal' set of expectations.²⁴

Where Connell and Messerschmidt differ from Demetriou is in their shift away from understanding hegemonic masculinity as inherently oppressive. They suggest that it is possible 'that a more humane, less oppressive, means of being a man might become hegemonic.'²⁵ By moving beyond hegemonic masculinity as a necessarily oppressive formation, as Demetriou seems to suggest, both Connell and Messerschmidt articulate a model of hegemonic

¹⁹ Demetrakis Demetriou, "Connell's Concept of Hegemonic Masculinity: A Critique," *Theory and Society* 3, vol. 30 (2001): 349.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 352.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 355.

²² Demetrakis Demetriou, "Connell's Concept of Hegemonic Masculinity," 346.

²³ Romit Dasgupta, *Re-reading the Salaryman in Japan: Crafting Masculinities*. (London: Routledge, 2012), 3.

²⁴ Connell and Messerschmidt, "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept," 838.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 833.

masculinity that expresses ‘the practical constitution of masculinities as ways of living in everyday local circumstances.’²⁶ This is particularly important for Connell’s definition of hegemonic masculinity, which has historically remained closed off from ‘specific groups of men who gain little from it.’²⁷ The definitions of hegemonic masculinity articulated by Connell and Messerschmidt, as well as by Demetrakis Demetriou, acknowledge that masculinity is multiple and malleable, an historically contingent social formation subject to change. Masculinity as a multiplicity is engineered into the fabric of hegemony, and yet multiplicity is one of the reoccurring conditions of gender anxiety and crisis.

The crisis of masculinity might not always be consistent with the crisis of the cowboy and samurai. Whereas men remain empowered by a malleable and adaptive hybrid hegemonic bloc and benefit from the ‘patriarchal dividend,’ the cowboy and samurai have been less inclined towards this inclusivity. And yet both the cowboy and samurai remain as embodiments of hegemonic masculine ideals. This is a slippage in the use of the term hegemonic masculinity picked up by Christine Beasley. The men who institute actual legitimacy and political control might not embody the masculine ideals associated with the image of hegemonic masculinity.²⁸ The cowboy and samurai operate as throwbacks to a mythical hegemonic ideal of masculinity and patriarchy as uncontested and uncomplicated. As Michael Kimmel states, ‘American men have been searching for their lost manhood since the middle of the nineteenth century,’ and there is still a sense that American and Japanese masculine ideals remain lost in the past.²⁹ Both the cowboy and samurai occupy a central part of this nostalgic golden-age of masculinity. Demetrakis Demetriou demonstrates the adaptive qualities of hegemonic masculinities as an institutional and political bloc, but this does not necessarily account for the ideal of maleness as a singular event. Masculinity as a multiplicity or hybrid formation might be made to suit the patriarchy, but it can still threaten to undermine the integrity of *being* a man.

In response to the work of Jennifer Coates, Robert Nye identifies the strategies that men employ to reassert gender differences when conversing with women.³⁰ In the day-to-day interactions between men and women, reaffirming gender difference has less to do with the maintenance of the patriarchy than with the promulgation of gendered selves constructed on the basis of self/other, male/female oppositions. Men can perform multiple masculinities

²⁶ Connell and Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept,” 838.

²⁷ R.W. Connell, *The Men and the Boys*, 203.

²⁸ Christine Beasley “Rethinking Hegemonic Masculinity in a Globalizing World,” *Men and Masculinities* 11, no. 1 (2008): 90.

²⁹ Michael Kimmel, “Consuming Manhood: The Feminization of American Culture and the Recreation of the Male Body, 1832-1920,” in *Bending Bodies: Moulding Masculinities Vol.2*, eds., Soren Ervo and Thomas Johansson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 47.

³⁰ Robert Nye, “Locating Masculinity: Some Recent Work on Men,” *Signs* 30, no. 3 (2005): 1953.

according to variable social contexts, but as Nye argues, there is a sense that a stable masculine ideal exists to which men can regress in times of need: ‘Even if men stake out and perform masculinities at odds with the hegemonic masculinity of their own society, they must know the code in order to oppose it, and so they know, in a pinch, how to enact it.’³¹ Nye concludes that ‘in crisis, whether real or invented, societies tend to revert reflexively to what appear to be stable gender norms.’³² A hybrid hegemonic masculinity might disguise the dominating practices of the patriarchy, but it will not disguise the crisis of masculinity and the reflexive desire for gender stability.

On a macro level the idea of hegemonic masculinity as a malleable social formation recognizes the extent to which a patriarchy will adapt to maintain its mechanism of control. However, on a personal level the hegemonic bloc is less accommodating to those individuals who are attempting to reconcile their gendered identity with an accepted norm or established set of practices. As Robert Nye explains, ‘for a brief historical moment [...] sexed bodies were considered to be stable platforms that expressed the *gender* and *sexuality* natural to them.’³³ Despite the large body of work on gender and sexuality that works to normalize gender identities as malleable and unfixed, the social expectation remains that sexed bodies ought to be stable signifiers of established norms. For cowboys, the male body ought to be upright and impenetrable. The body of the samurai ought to be dominant in combat, lithe but firm. It is the body of change and dissolution that threatens the cowboy and samurai, be they changes in time or space or changes imposed on the physical body itself. The cowboy passes through the village, but he can never settle and change with civilization. The samurai is passing through generational shifts from which he will soon be alienated. The settling of the West and the arrival of civilization displaces the cowboy and elevates the effete masculinity that had been the antithesis of the cowboy’s rugged individualism. In a similar vein, the samurai is replaced by a mercantile class and an industrialized society that no longer requires the masculine values of the warrior. In both cases it is the dissolution of the body that poses the largest threat to masculine integrity because it is the only constant of the *being*-man. Change and instability are the preconditions for crisis.

“Which Side Are You On?”

³¹ Robert Nye, “Locating Masculinity,” 1953.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 1938.

The opening sequence of *Sukiyaki Western Django* establishes the dislocations of time and space caused by the overt intertextual pairing of the cowboy and samurai that I have associated with the postwar bilateral exchange of the U.S. and Japan. A low-angle shot of a rusty weathervane evokes a comparison to the opening sequence of Sergio Leone's *Once Upon A Time in the West*. It was the tireless creaking of the weathervane of Leone's film that heralded the action to come as a restless group of gunfighters awaited the arrival of Charles Bronson's cowboy, but in *Sukiyaki Western Django* the camera cuts to a close-up of a dead man with a bullet between his eyes. His time was up and the audience has already missed the action. Quentin Tarantino is then introduced wearing a poncho on what is clearly a theatre stage as two Japanese men dressed as cowboys enter the scene. A medium shot reveals a Hokusai-inspired painting of Mt Fuji and a large yellow sun acting as the backdrop for the meeting point of Tarantino and his assailants. The stage is simultaneously Sergio Leone's spaghetti west, Japan's kabuki stage and the dusty shanty towns of America's frontier. It is, in other words, a visualization of the transnational encounters between cowboys and samurai that frame this thesis. Takashi Miike invites the audience to witness the artifice of his transnational stage so that the multiple threads that bind his text are revealed.³⁴

The intertextuality of Miike's hybrid space exposes the arbitrary nature of the signs of identification that he has sampled in his patchwork transnational setting. When the cowboy and samurai occupy the same space, let alone the same time, their co-presence undercuts the efficacy of difference that had grounded these archetypes as masculine embodiments of a gendered national unity, as was the case with the spiralling east/west sign in the opening scene of *East Meets West*. Miike's hybrid space thus becomes an unhomey, uncanny space because it reduces the signs of identification to hollow signifiers, much like the uncanny space of Michael Crichton's *Westworld*. Ewa Ziarek argues that 'the communal desire to "invalidate the arbitrariness of signs" and to reify them "as psychic contents" does not generate the feeling of belonging but its opposite, a threatening experience of strangeness.'³⁵ The hybrid space draws attention to the social and cultural construction of belonging and the effort required to reify the signs of identification. The labour of relying on language as a stable identifier of self is demonstrated throughout Miike's film by having the Japanese cast speak phonetic English. Without the use of English subtitles, however, the dialogue is nearly incomprehensible. And even when Tarantino speaks, his accent is inflected with the strained English of a Japanese foreigner speaking phonetically. In the uncanny space of Miike's intertextual space, a common

³⁴ David Duff, "Intertextuality versus Genre Theory: Bakhtin, Kristeva and the Question of Genre," *Paragraph* 25, no. 1 (2002): 57.

³⁵ Ewa Ziarek, "The Uncanny Style of Kristeva's Nationalism," in *The Kristeva Critical Reader*, eds., John Lechte and Mary Zournazi (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 149.

language does not generate a sense of unity. Instead, ‘it brings an unsettling recognition of the subject’s own strangeness.’³⁶

Takashi Miike is not a stranger to the uncanny and the abject, nor is he a stranger to the representation of incestuous couplings, which is how Jane Stadler explains the hybridity of *Sukiyaki Western Django*. Stadler argues that ‘the process of reciprocal cultural interplay of global cinema cultures results in what might be termed “inbreeding”.’³⁷ Hybridity implies a fusion of disparate sources, whereas inbreeding ‘involves combining two or more genres that share family resemblances or are from related film cultures,’ which Stadler argues is the case in *Sukiyaki Western Django*.³⁸ However, the metatextual incest being implied in Stadler’s reading limits Miike’s film to filial relations and implies that Miike wants his film to be like its parents. This reading works against the expansive, sometimes paradoxical textual allusions made throughout the film that are not filial, but rhizomatic. The multiplicity in the film is what makes it so problematic for the characters in the diagesis and for those who attempt to make sense of its textual incoherence, but it is this multiplicity that opens up Miike’s hybrid space to the complex identity configurations that undermine the hegemonic, patriarchal imposition of homogenous subjectivities. In Chapter 6 I borrowed from the sampling techniques of hip hop to apply the term bilateral cultural sampling. I argued that sampling was a generative event that challenged the homogeneity and fixity of identity formations. Jane Stadler experiences the inbreeding of Miike’s film as the constructive decentring of Hollywood, in which the films being referenced by Miike ‘are, and always have been, transnational genre hybrids.’³⁹ For the characters in *Sukiyaki Western Django* the incestuous ramifications of Miike’s family resemblances raise the spectre of the incest taboo, an indication that Stadler’s metaphor of inbreeding is well suited to the film.

The metaphor of inbreeding is invited by Miike through the presence of a young child, Heihachi, born of Heike and Genji parents. His mixed, hybrid blood – red and white – makes him a pariah in a town run by the Heike and Genji, who have restricted familial relations to the promulgation of the singular, unmixed bloodline. However, inbreeding is incommensurate with the multiplicities that become inevitable in the film. As if to deny the Heike and Genji exclusive access to the incestuous unity with the maternal, all of the women in *Sukiyaki Western Django* are killed. Meanwhile, the hybrid child, the unsung protagonist, must pass through the Oedipal stage. The hybrid child watches his father die and he is rendered mute. For a time, the unity with his mother is made possible. However, he witnesses the attempted

³⁶ Ewa Ziarek, “The Uncanny Style of Kristeva’s Nationalism,” 151.

³⁷ Jane Stadler, “Cultural Value and Viscerality in *Sukiyaki Western Django*,” 43.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

rape of his mother, which culminates in her being penetrated through the heart with an arrow. The moment that Heihachi witnesses the primal scene, through which his eyes are closed, the body of his mother is taken from him.⁴⁰ The incestual couplings that Stadler witnesses in Miike's film are refused. In the closing moments of the film Heihachi's eyes are opened and he regains the capacity to speak. After he is liberated from the impulse to unite with his mother, Heihachi can realize his own subjectivity. He begins by admiring a new paternal figure, the cowboy who had dismantled the binary oppositions of the Heike and the Genji.

To impose meaning on the semiotic void of his hybrid space Miike reduces the intertextual threads to a central binary conflict of red versus white. Miike's insistence on the red and white binary opposition throughout the film draws attention to the deliberate attempts of the Heike and Genji to restore hegemonic order upon the unstable world that has been constructed. The seeming irreducibility of identity formations is whittled down to a choice between the reds and the whites with the added assumption that one side will win and hegemonic order will be reinstated. However, as soon as the simplistic binary of red versus white is introduced, it is quickly dispersed into its intertextual multiplicities. It is the dramatization of a quandary identified by Christine Beasley, that in the case of globalizing masculinities 'it is unclear how one would assess whether any particular version of masculinity has an over-arching legitimating function.'⁴¹ The characters of Miike's film do not know the answer, but they are hell-bent on pursuing it. Tarantino's poncho-wearing cowboy introduces the binary opposition to his assailants as a conflict between the Heike clan dressed in red and the Genji dressed in white, an allusion to the Genpei War of 12th-century Japan. When this allusion fails to connect with his audience, Tarantino adds, "sort of like the War of the Roses." Like a rose, Miike's text begins to open up. The allusion to the Genpei War is paired with Shakespeare's War of the Roses in a film that uses Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* as a central narrative influence that was itself based on Dashiell Hammett's *Red Harvest*. In response to the threat that the red versus white conflict could spiral into intertextuality all the way down, one of the Japanese cowboys asks, "Who won?" The stakes of constructing a hegemonic identity are too high to allow for intertextual multiplicities and unstable identities; there has to be a winner, a legitimated model of masculinity. These are the stakes that Miike invites when his red and white colours of opposition fuse to create the Japanese flag in the opening credits of the film. Out of his incestuous intertextual couplings a nation is born.

⁴⁰ Sigmund Freud, "Family Romances." Translated by James Strachey, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume IX (1906-1908): Jensen's 'Gradiva' and Other Works* (London: Vintage, 2001), 238.

⁴¹ Christine Beasley, "Rethinking Hegemonic Masculinity in a Globalizing World," 93.

The arrival of a foreigner into the primal setting of Miike's film disrupts the binary opposition between red and white that had justified the formation of a dominating hegemonic masculinity. The foreigner, a cowboy wearing a black hat – black being the absence of colour – is immediately asked to join either the reds or the whites. His foreignness must be rectified through his assimilation into the schema of oppositions that has established the border between the red and the white. To exist outside of the binary borderland is to undermine the conditions of hegemonic dominance and the identities that are stabilized through their opposition to a distinct other.⁴² One of the Genji in white calls out to the foreigner, "Best not get any ideas about playing yojimbo." As I discussed in Chapter 2, Kurosawa's yojimbo refused to participate in the binary conflict between rival gangs, which I read as a critique of Japan's oscillation between the political left and right in the postwar period. The result was the violent dismantling of hegemonic order, which had been embodied by a young and cocksure samurai, and the anarchic annihilation of the entire population. In Chapter 3, I discussed the binary opposition between the Eastern and the Western frontiers as a framing device for the meeting point of the cowboy and samurai, who become gendered articulations of difference through which identities could be organized and normalized. In *Sukiyaki Western Django* the foreigner refuses to participate in the formation of a hegemonic bloc. He exists outside of the accepted masculine schema of difference and domination; he becomes the other of the Other, a disruptive multiplicity outside of the stable binary.

To be a foreigner in Miike's world of intertextuality is to unravel the threads that had bound the essence of identity formation. Beyond the red and white binary there are a multiplicity of beings and becomings that the opposing forces of the Heike and Genji had attempted to repress. Mika Ko identifies the disruptive presence of the foreigner as a dominant narrative concern in Takashi Miike's films. Ko argues that 'Miike's films seem to allegorise the break-up of the mythical national body of Japan as a racially homogenous organic unity.'⁴³ Ko reads the graphic violence imposed on the body in Miike's films as a response to racial hybridity and the loss of Japan's homogenous 'kokutai' or national body.⁴⁴ In Chapter 3 I demonstrated that *Yurusarezaru Mono* thematised a similar crisis to Japan's kokutai due to the intrusion of Western influences and the inability to fully assimilate the Ainu into a homogenous space. In *Sukiyaki Western Django*, which is set in a hybrid space as established in the opening sequence, the unity of the hegemonic masculine body is lost. Julia Kristeva

⁴² Thomas Faist, "Diaspora and Transnationalism: What Kind of Dance Partners?" in *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods*, eds., Rainer Baubock and Thomas Faist (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 13.

⁴³ Mika Ko, *Japanese Cinema and Otherness: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and the Problem of Japaneseness*. (London: Routledge, 2010), 58.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

explains that ‘he who is not a citizen is not fully a man. Between the man and a citizen there is a scar: the foreigner.’⁴⁵ The foreigner is a challenge to the hegemonic order imposed by binary oppositions of self and other. In *Sukiyaki Western Django* the foreigner that exists outside of gendered binaries, between the man and the non-man, is a challenge to hegemonic masculinities.

The black-hatted wanderer is a threat to the tenuous peace established between the Heike and the Genji because of his ambiguous identity and his foreign position outside of their established binary. His disruptive potential is fully realised when he is allied with a woman who enacts female masculinity, a foreign kind of foreignness altogether. The Bloody Benton, as she is called, is a legendary gunslinger trained by Tarantino’s cowboy from the opening sequence, an appropriate coupling because she is inspired by *The Bride of Kill Bill*. Much of her masculinity is suggested by her ownership of phallic empowerment, which is something the men of the Heike and Genji clans lack: she urinates while standing and shoots from the hip. However, it is while her empowerment is attached to the phallus, the signifier of a singular masculinity, that she is shot and killed. Her female masculinity is at its most disruptive when it is multiple: when she transforms into an eight-armed spider-woman during a brief animated sequence; when her identity is only a legend to shatter the illusion of supremacy held by the leaders of the Heike and the Genji; and when she pretends to be an alcoholic in mimicry of being trapped in a cycle of unbecomings, as experienced by Tom Cruise’s failed cowboy in *The Last Samurai*. Like the black-hatted wanderer, the female masculine undermines the shoddy foundation of hegemonic masculinities when it refuses to participate. It is a condition of being multiple that Rosi Braidotti recognizes as the potential of Deleuzian feminism. She argues that ‘the issue at stake in the redefinition of female subjectivity is how to make the feminine express a “different difference”, released from the hegemonic framework of oppositional, binary thinking within which Western philosophy had confined it.’⁴⁶ Female masculinity, as was the case with *The Bride* in *Kill Bill*, has the potential to be a different difference, but only if it avoids the temptation to cling to those phallic signifiers of dominance that had led men astray – the very same phallic signifiers favoured by the nostalgic cowboys and samurai.

The fear of castration and impotence is a reoccurring theme throughout my thesis, and it suggests that masculine insecurity and anxiety drive the desire for hegemonic empowerment and mastery over the phallus. In Chapter 1 I argued that a postwar crisis of masculinity was

⁴⁵ in Ewa Ziarek, “The Uncanny Style of Kristeva’s Nationalism,” 141.

⁴⁶ Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 76.

projected onto the cowboys and samurai. Their competence as men became equated to their competence with the pistol and the sword. In *The Magnificent Seven*, Lee enacts the debilitating and emasculating effects of post-traumatic stress disorder suffered in war time as he “fails to get it up” when called to draw his pistol from its holster. And in *Shichinin no Samurai* Toshiro Mifune’s oversized sword represents his unrestrained virility. Takashi Miike mocks the extent to which the masculine primacy of the cowboy and samurai had been associated with the ownership of phallic substitutes. In the climactic showdown between the nameless cowboy and the Genji boss, Yoshitsune, the blade of Yoshitsune’s katana is caught in the handguard of the cowboy’s revolver. The cowboy then extends a Derringer pistol from his sleeve, which he uses to shoot Yoshitsune dead. It is a moment of comical effect, with the humorous reveal of the miniscule pistol, but the use of the Derringer, a pistol extensively used by women, also undercuts the phallic unity of masculinity. The Bloody Benton had revealed that the phallic domain of the gun is not the reserve of men, but her death and the reveal of the Derringer encourage a different masculinity altogether.

Sukiyaki Western Django is an exercise in learning to live with crisis. The unnamed cowboy in the black hat is introduced as a silhouetted figure atop a horse riding against a dusk-blue backdrop. Like Tom Cruise’s silhouetted samurai discussed in Chapter 5, Miike pre-empted the becomings of the man who exists outside of the hegemonic logic of oppositional identities and patriarchal domination, as he will be the one to expose the lie of the *being-man*. The cowboy will be beaten, and he will need to kill, but not to reinstate the hegemonic institutions of power, and not so that he can put himself together as the singular man. He survives so that he can protect a small child who will learn to embrace his hybridity. Those men who insist that masculinity is oppositional and dominant will experience a crisis, and because identities can no longer be understood as organic, singular and fixed, they might mistake their masculine delusion as a crisis-bound identity. Dennis Bingham writes that for the gender revisionist, ‘unitary masculinity disperses into multiple masculinities and learns to live with ambivalence and contradictions rather than divide up the world into either-or-dualisms.’⁴⁷ Hegemonic masculinities are dependent on either-or dualisms and they have yet to live with ambivalence.

The singular masculine body had been an extension of the unitary national body, so that multiple masculinities precipitate the dissolution of national boundaries. Mika Ko argues that Takashi Miike once reacted against the dissolution of the homogenous body of Japan in films that witnessed the multicultural incorporation of the Other as an apocalyptic end to the

⁴⁷ Dennis Bingham, *Acting Male: Masculinities in the Films of James Stewart, Jack Nicholson, and Clint Eastwood* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 9.

self.⁴⁸ In *Sukiyaki Western Django* it would seem that Miike has learned to live with difference. He ends the film by locating the young hybrid child outside of the incestuous sign system implied by the film's title. In a subtitled prologue we learn that the hybrid child of mixed blood will move to Italy and change his name to Django, but not, as the title of the film might suggest, the titular Django of Sergio Corbucci's spaghetti western, because his likeness has already passed through the town. The child decides to become a different kind of man entirely. The child does not pick up a pistol to become a cowboy; he becomes a musician. He becomes Django Reinhardt.

Learning to Live with Multiplicity

I have responded to the crisis of masculinity as a lived experience of men that has been projected onto, and reflected by, the cowboys and samurai of the postwar silver screen. The cowboy and samurai were called upon to fill a lack, to quell an anxiety, to act as a social balm applied to those men in the audience who feared that their masculine integrity had been or was soon to be lost. That the crises of the cowboy and samurai could interact so seamlessly, and be so easily translated, established that the crisis of masculinity could resonate with a global sense of loss, or perhaps, a bilateral sense of loss that emerged from the postwar relationship between the U.S. and Japan. Although the popularity of the cowboy and samurai has waned, they are still being called upon to embody masculine ideals, often imagined as nationalized ideals, and the bilateral exchange between the cowboy and samurai on screen continues as evidence of the fluctuations and reciprocations that define the U.S.-Japan alliance in the 21st century. It would seem then, that the cowboy and samurai have become timeless. Their bodies continue to bear the scars of masculine insecurities because their bodies have been construed as impenetrable.

If the cowboy and samurai have failed men, it is only because they have failed to disguise the performativity of masculinity and the apparent stability of the patriarchy. In response to hybrid hegemonies and masculine multiplicities, the cowboy and samurai have not always been the ideal masculine archetypes to embody these shifts because they had been employed to defend the conservative values of a normalized, uncontested patriarchy, as they had done before the outbreak of the Second World War. However, in the postwar period the cowboy and samurai did respond to shifting attitudes towards masculinity. Demetrakis

⁴⁸ Mika Ko, *Japanese Cinema and Otherness*, 59.

Demetriou argued that the hegemonic bloc in the postwar period became more inclusive to those men that R.W. Connell had regarded as non-hegemonic. In the postwar period the cowboy and samurai also became more inclusive of those men who had been neglected or oppressed by masculine hegemonies. In *Westworld* the effete man from the east ultimately becomes the conqueror of the Wild West, and the demilitarized SDF members become the samurai of *Sengoku Jieitai*, if only momentarily. However, as Demetriou suggests, the inclusivity of the hegemonic bloc worked to disguise the oppressive qualities of the patriarchy, just as the victimized men of *Westworld* and *Sengoku Jieitai* reclaimed much of their masculine self-worth at the expense of women.

I do not believe that men are perpetually in crisis, or that to be a man is to rest upon a crisis of masculinity where it is crisis all the way down. Nor do I believe that the cowboy and samurai are inherently crisis-bound. The cowboy and samurai have merely carried the burden of a crisis-bound hegemonic masculinity for so long that no matter their contemporary configurations it might seem that the crisis remains. The fragmented, disembodied cowboy on screen will represent the loss of the golden-age cowboy who had once been impenetrable. And the samurai lost in time will represent the loss of a masculine warrior who was once at home in history. But through the bilateral exchange of the cowboy and samurai these archetypes have evolved, and while their evolution may have been in response to perceived moments of crisis, both the cowboy and samurai can be understood as archetypes engaging with change rather than resisting it. The first two chapters of this thesis discussed the cowboy and samurai as masculinities in transition and in Chapter 3 I discussed the challenges posed by permeable boundaries and globalizing bodies. The crisis of masculinity discourse arose as a response to these changes at the same time as transitioning masculinities enabled new and empowering ways of being and becoming masculine. Chapter 4 featured transhuman cowboys and time-travelling samurai as a lead into the multiple becomings of cowboys and samurai in Chapter 5. And in Chapter 6 the cowboys and samurai were opened up to the techniques of bilateral cultural sampling, which rejected the idea of authentic, legitimated models of masculinity and denied hegemonic masculinity as a white masculinity. This is not to suggest that the cowboy and samurai, or the masculinities they represented, were unproblematic. As the cowboy and samurai responded to shifts in masculine ideals and the perceived loss of patriarchal power, the evolution of the cowboy and samurai often came at the expense of women, who continued to occupy a marginal or dominated status in westerns and jidaigeki alike. The crisis of masculinity is not only about loss: the loss of legitimacy, or empowerment, or the loss of a nostalgic moment of untroubled masculine dominance. In many ways the crisis-of-masculinity discourse is framed around the resistance to change. The cowboy and samurai are no longer

fixed to a mythopoetic imaginary in which the man is impenetrable, heterosexual and dominant. Where there is change to the gendered performances of masculinity, there will be cowboys and samurai to make sense of those changes. I have argued that through their bilateral exchange, the cowboy and the samurai have been learning to live with multiplicity since the postwar period and it is high time that the audience joined them in the saddle.

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