Genji to Godzilla

USING ART AND FILM TO TEACH JAPAN

By Penny M. Rode

Articles in past issues of *EAA* have suggested effective strategies for using Japanese film in the classroom to introduce Japanese culture.[1] These include the works of internationally recognized masters of the format, as well as popular *anime,* Japanese animation, which has only recently attracted similar scholarly attention. In this essay, I propose that expanding the scope of the visual culture we discuss, and applying art historical pedagogy, can further students' understanding of Japan, past and present. As educators, one of our primary goals is to address the perception of Asia as strangely exotic and unfathomable, to take students beyond their comfortable Eurocentrism, and spark an interest and curiosity in the unfamiliar that will continue throughout their lives. Combining art with film effectively advances these efforts.

The examples suggested here serve to introduce aspects of Japanese culture to students. Altering the selections and modifying the topics would make the methodology appropriate to the high school level as well.

THE USE OF ART HISTORICAL PEDAGOGY

In the classroom, art historians generally have two primary objectives: first, to teach students to *see* art objectively, to recognize *how* artists manipulate form, composition, and media to create their works; and, second, to educate our students in the *why* of art-making. To do this, we consider the impact of religious beliefs, historical developments, politics, economics, audience, and literary traditions to contextualize art-making in a given time and place.

Understanding filmed narratives entails similar multidisciplined approaches. Nevertheless, the study of film is usually a discipline separate from the study of art.[2] It is the purpose of this article to demonstrate that learning is enhanced by combining both formats, pictures and *moving* pictures, to introduce Asian topics to non-specialists. As David Bordwell explains in a recent edition of *Film Art*, "Artworks . . . provide organized occasions in which we exercise and develop our ability to pay attention . . . to draw conclusions, and to construct a whole out of parts . . . the artwork and the person experiencing it depend on one another." (New York: McGraw Hill, 2004), 48.

Bordwell directs his remarks toward film, but they are equally applicable to earlier forms of image-making. The primary tools of the art historian, visual analysis and image comparisons, can be effectively applied to the analysis of film as well, to teach Japan more effectively. Space constraints limit the factors I consider here, but my examples should be sufficient to demonstrate the efficacy of this methodology. The works range from one of the most significant monuments in Japanese art to popular films generally dismissed by serious scholars; all can be used to prompt discussion and address questions students often raise about Japan, including the operation of multiple religious affiliations, seemingly demeaning gender hierarchies, and the sometimes incomprehensible disregard for naturalism in most of Japanese art. Can't these people draw? Or act, for that matter? All these issues can be investigated in the context of visual culture.

SHINTŌ, BUDDHISM, CONFUCIANISM

Raised in a society with exclusive and sometimes antagonistic religious traditions, students find the flexibility of Japanese syncretism confusing and difficult to understand. A brief, and necessarily simplistic, description of the basic tenets of Shintō, and the teachings of Confucius and the Buddha, serves to acquaint students with these unfamiliar ideas. Myths recorded in the primary texts, the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki,*[3] demonstrate the uniqueness of Shintō in many respects. Shintō is irreducibly coterminous with Japan and the Japanese, (contrasting with the universality and the imprecise locale of Adam and Eve's misdeeds). *Kami* number in the "millions,"[4] are neither all good nor all evil, and are identified with particular locales, natural phenomena (such as thunder, earthquakes, and drought), and less often, people. Since we are studying visual material, it is worth noting that *kami* are rarely depicted figuratively, as either anthropomorphic or fantastic theriomorphs, but are suggested by *things*—a mirror, a jewel, a string tied around a tree or rock. Students can be encouraged to theorize the ways in which these fundamental concepts may inform Japanese culture, such as the interconnectedness of the Japanese people with nature and its cycles, the perception of existence as "gray," rather than the clear "black and white" that dominates Western thought, the emphasis on cleanliness and ritual as opposed to good thoughts and deeds, and the preference for arcane symbolism that requires the collusion of the audience. That Shintō is not particularly efficacious dealing with the pollution of death helps explain the role of Buddhism in Japanese society. Initially, most students have heard of Zen (probably in connection with motorcycle mechanics), and they visualize the Buddha as the grinning figure of the rotund Hotei (C. Putai). The teacher can broaden this (mis)understanding of Buddhism by introducing a few fundamental concepts. For this discussion, these would include the sobering recognition of the ubiquity of suffering and the impermanence of happiness, the illusionary nature of this existence, and the common plight of all sentient beings.

Students also need to be acquainted with Confucius, the sixth-century BCE Chinese philosopher whose pronouncements on individual and social conduct are incorporated, in varying degrees, in all East Asian cultures. Confucius thought that social harmony could be procured by the acceptance of a hierarchical set of loyalties and recognition of individual and communal duties. Confucianism is fundamental to relationships between the sexes, between family members, between Emperor and citizen, and employer and employee. Its operation is often apparent in the interaction of protagonists in the narratives considered here, past or present.

ILLUSTRATED HANDSCROLLS (emaki)

Emakimono, pictorial narrative scrolls, began to appear in Japan in the eighth-century AD.[5] The twelfth-century *Tale of Genji* is invaluable in exploring Heian Japan, (794–1185). The source text is a Japanese literary classic which, in its English translation, runs more than 1,000 pages. It weaves stories of romance and intrigue set in the Imperial court in Kyoto, revolving around the life and loves of a fictional "Shining Prince,"[6] Genji, and his family. Written by an

FIGURE 1: Drawing by the author, the *Illustrated Tale of Genji*, scene from the "Oak Tree" chapter.

aristocratic woman, Murasaki Shikibu, it is rich in the erotic undertones, refined tastes, and elegant pastimes of the idle rich. Only twenty illustrations from the original set of scrolls survive, but it is thought that each of the novel's fifty-four chapters was originally interpreted with one to three scenes. The "Oak Tree" chapter is one for which multiple illustrations survive. Students should read the chapter; it is full of nuanced poetry, emotional probing, and obliquely-suggested relationships. In the first illustration, Genji's wife has just given birth to a son, but the boy is not his. Genji knows the real father is his wife's brother-in-law, Kashiwagi, but feigns ignorance. After all, Genji is not a pillar of moral righteousness either, as we know he is the biological father of the future emperor, a consequence of his own affair with the emperor's wife.

The illustrations are fraught with emotional turmoil that captures the undercurrents of the novel. The Third Princess is sick with guilt; she wants to take the vows of a Buddhist nun to atone for her actions. Her father, the retired emperor, (now a Buddhist monk, himself) visits, concerned over her health. Although angry and indignant, Genji sits stoically nearby. In the second scene, Genji holds the infant as he stages the prescribed ceremonies acknowledging the child as his. The final illustration for the chapter shows Yugiri, Genji's son by another wife, visiting the dying Kashiwagi, while remaining unaware of the cause of his friend's melancholy.

The scroll (fig. 1) employed conventions that would continue for centuries. Not constrained by the requirements of visual verity, the unknown artists rip the roofs from the palaces, allowing us to enter the world of the imperial court. Floors are crazily tilted to serve as backdrops for figures shown from the side. Colors symbolize moods, and the degree of angles in the compositions reflect the emotional agitation of the participants. Faces are stylized in a practice called "slit-eye/hook-nose," which portrays each character with virtually identical features. The departures from naturalism are so extreme that students require help to initially decipher the images: a black triangle is a woman's hair, while a rounded black oblong marks the hat of a courtier. Those abstract, patterned rectangles are the edges of the tatami; the flowing curves are ribbons held aloft by room-dividers, which serve to segment the scene. Parallel bands in rainbow colors are the hems or cuffs of multiple kimono, which reflect the status of the women wearing them. Sometimes the presence of a woman is indicated only by these multiple layers, peeking out from between curtains.

Once the narrative techniques are explained, the illustration is seen to clearly capture not only the events described in the chapter, but the emotional entanglements, as well. As in the novel, little

activity actually takes place. The scenes are frozen, both practically and physically. While Confucian dictates of status are clearly defined in both novel and illustrations, it is the overriding impression of the transient nature of happiness that permeates them both. The sensibility is one of sadness, of *mono no aware*, "pathos of things," a kind of poignant acquiescence to events. The birth of a son should be a happy event, but circumstances converge to make it otherwise for the principals. To live is to suffer, even in the Heian court.

This type of imagery is referred to in Japan as *onna-e*, or "women's art," and students readily perceive the similarities to contemporary "chick-flicks." Both concentrate on the relationships of the principals and use subtle cues to suggest them.

Any number of *otoko-e*, or "men's art," can be contrasted with the *Genji* scroll. These are remarkably analogous to the "action films" of today. A set of thirteenth-century *emakimono* depicting the Heiji rebellion can serve as an example here. The subject is a violent, ongoing feud between two Imperial lineage groups. Most of the scrolls' action takes place outdoors, in a continuous montage of raging inferno, rampaging soldiers, frightened civilians, and explicit carnage, with gory details depicted in voyeuristic excess. The panic includes the image of a bare-breasted woman, cowed by the violent assault.[7]

Our viewpoint is consistently high, although we still view the participants from the side. The artist uses abbreviated contour lines, flat color, exaggerated gestures, and faces distorted by emotion. Where *Genji* is nuanced and under-stated, here the action is blunt and non-stop. Yet each approach effectively captures the character of its respective narratives, while simultaneously eschewing visual verity.

The two sets of scrolls invite exploration of changing social structures, one based in court protocol, the other in samurai society. Confucian duties are not always clear and easily distinguished, whether it's Genji's possible compromise of the imperial succession, or the kidnapping of an emperor. The portrayals of women in the novel and the scrolls also serve to spark questions and discussion.

EDO AND *UKIYO-E* PRINTS

Examples drawn from the Edo period (1615–1868) demonstrate continuity with earlier traditions, even in the context of a new narrative form. It is useful to outline the economic and social upheavals occasioned by the move of the center of power to Edo to explain how the themes of Ukiyo-e prints developed. The popularity of portraits of actors and wrestlers, as well as erotica, can be attributed to the tastes of the new merchant class. It is worth noting, as well, that such prints were considered devoid of aesthetic merit at the time. Images with popular appeal are often dismissed by contemporary critics.

Although art described by the term *Ukiyo-e* ("pictures of the floating world") refers to a bourgeois clientele, it originally had a Buddhist connotation, alluding to the sadness of an existence floating between the tangible and ephemeral. The merchants, indeed, seemed to inhabit an unanchored and direction-less world, characterized by wealth and excess, but no social status or legitimate authority.

Edo-period Japan blended the antithetical forces of affluence and authority, tradition and novelty; of Confucian honor and independent morality. Many of these themes were expressed in *kabuki*, a

unique theatrical form, and the printed images it inspired. As performance employing action, music, and speech, it serves as a transitional art form from "stills" to film. Taped episodes from modern kabuki plays can be used to introduce the genre, and invite comparison with Western drama. Since the plays usually allude to actual events, past or contemporary, they reflect the ebb and flow of influences discussed here. For our purposes, then, kabuki, and the contemporary images that illustrate it, can serve to elucidate change in Japanese society.

FIGURE 2. Drawing by the author, Toshusai Sharaku, The Actor Otani Oniji III as the servant Edohei.

Once again, the story-telling requires the audience to be complicit in the narrative form: the extravagant costumes and symbolic make-up, the codified movements and exaggerated posturing, the stylized vocal delivery and music, all contribute to a performance that is anything but lifelike. In particular, the *onnagata,* men playing female roles, requires the approbation of the audience. Kabuki substitutes stylized narrative for mimesis. The contrast with Western theater is extreme, even when kabuki is compared to Italian opera or English musicals. The degree of "suspension of disbelief" required of the viewers is exponentially higher.

Kabuki employs all available means to best tell the story, not to mimic nature or approach naturalism. One of the most notable of these patently anomalous practices is the frozen *mie* pose, as effective a narrative tool as the "blown-off-roof" of the Genji scrolls, and equally unrealistic.

The Tokugawa government attempted repeatedly to restrict the activities of the merchant class, in the guise of Confucian ethics. Expensive display was curbed by sumptuary laws; theaters and brothels were confined to certain parts of the cities, and the prints that illustrated these activities were similarly subjected to regulation. Nevertheless, the actor prints of the Torii family (late seventeenth to mid-eighteenth century) and Sharaku (active 1794–1795) manage to capture the sensory overload of kabuki, depicting their stars with contorted faces, extraordinary histrionics, and heavy-handed burlesque. In contrast to the exaggerated posturing of the kabuki actors, courtesans, and the men and women depicted in (selectively chosen) *shunga* prints[8] of Harunobu (1725–1770) and Utamaru (1753–1806), reflect the reserve and subtlety of the *Genji* illustrations. Nuance is preferred to action, and (here) clothing to nudity. These prints can be used to stimulate discussion of the status of women in pre-modern Japan. Both types of imagery, bombastic kabuki actors or subdued sexual liaisons, abide by the appropriate conventions, selected to best tell the story.

THE *GODZILLAS*

Comparing two works of ostensibly similar subject matter is common in art historical analysis; applied to film, it yields equally insightful results. For this essay, we'll consider two films ostensibly depicting the same 400-foot monster, Godzilla, in similar plots. Teachers can contrast the 1954 Japanese *Godzilla* and the 1998 American remake to explore many issues, including gender, family, and the basic characteristics of the different cultures that produced them. The comparison serves to bring this discussion into the modern era.

In order to avoid box-office deadening subtitles, or a continuous barrage of awkward dubbing, twenty minutes of the 1954 original was excised and replaced, in the American release, with an equal amount of Raymond Burr as a serendipitous American reporter. Ignoring these clumsy distractions, the original can be interpreted as a pointed, tightly-edited struggle between "nature-requiring-containment" (Godzilla) and the need for Japan to develop Western-style technology. After all, technology had created the monster; only more of the same can defeat it. This "gray" denouement reflects the inconsistencies in post-war Japan's perception of itself, of the roles of Shintō vis-à-vis "foreign."

The work abounds with Shintō references: The "natives" attempt to assuage the monster with a ritual performance of appeasement, which might just work if Godzilla were a manifestation of a disgruntled *kami*. During the night, Godzilla's appearance is presaged by typhoon-like winds and rains, phenomena traditionally associated with a malevolent spirit. None of these references would be meaningful to a Western audience, and so do not appear in the later version.[9]

The 1954 film delineates the traditional relationships between government and citizens, parents and children. Godzilla is eventually defeated by a combination of communal effort and individual genius. The Japanese army and government throw all their might unconditionally into the defense of Tokyo—to no avail. It is the inventiveness of a single scientist that ultimately brings down the monster and saves Japan.

Although women do little but scream and attend to the comfort of men, the film hints at pending social change, especially the possible erosion of Confucian obedience, at least within the traditional Japanese family. Emiko Yamane is the daughter of the prominent paleontologist who connects the monster with atomic bombs. She was betrothed by her father to the intellectual genius who will ultimately save Tokyo (and the world), but prefers to marry another. This ultimate betrayal of filial piety is avoided, however, by the suicide of her fiancé. The question remains, does the scientist sacrifice himself for the greater good, to keep his awesome weapon from falling into less responsible hands (a Confucian ideal behavior), or is it a selfish act designed to shame his fiancée and simultaneously assure his place in history? Both interpretations have precedents in Japanese customs which can be explored and debated.

The most readily apparent difference between the two films is the credibility of their special effects. We might conclude that it took nearly fifty years to bring Godzilla to America because only recently could filmmakers convincingly portray his state-side melee: American audiences expect realism, and now we can give it to them. Yet that verity often distracts viewers from the plot development. When the illusionism slips, students feel cheated, even insulted. On the other hand, the original monster is sufficiently monstrous to convey the meaning and advance the narrative. It isn't necessary that the train looks less like a child's toy, and the

audience accepts that the man in the dinosaur suit represents a nuclear menace. When viewers concede to the abstractions employed by the film, the narrative dominates, not the special effects.

Much of the extended running time of the 1998 film is filled with the development of characters and their interaction. Unlike in the original, the New York principals have no families, or none worth mentioning. Rather, independence and individual achievements are stressed. The mayor is not motivated by a Confucian concern for the safety of his people, but by anxiety over how events will affect his chances for reelection. Matthew Broderick's Dr. Nick Tatopoulos warns of the dangers posed by nature's fecundity, but the military powers-that-be arrogantly ignore this civilian input, despite the disastrous loss of life and catastrophic consequences if his observations prove accurate. The public good is not as overriding a concern as demonstrating superior insight.

Another eloquent divergence of the two narratives is the identification of the ultimate source of the monster. The Japanese film left no doubt that the atomic experiments of the United States resurrected this paleolithic nightmare, but in the 1998 film, it wasn't "us;" it was the French! This observation can be used to stimulate discussion of many topics, including the re- (or de-)construction of history, the dichotomy of "us" and "them," and how this view of the "other" affects our perception of contemporary world polities.

CONCLUSIONS

This essay demonstrates that Japanese art and Japanese film can be combined to make Japan and its history more accessible to students. Comparing similar works points out differences, which in turn, prompt questions and stimulate discussion. Teachers can select examples to illustrate a broad spectrum of issues. In this way, art can be instrumental in teaching students to accept plurality and difference, and see how perception and expression build on past traditions. Nothing, not film, gender relations, or business ethics, develops in a vacuum, not in Japan, or anywhere else. Contemporary Japanese society is a heterogeneous mix of indigenous and imported beliefs and practices, of the millennia-old seen through last week's lenses, and visual culture, past and present, reflects this. n

Acknowledgements

RESOURCES

Many classic and recent Japanese films are currently available, or will be soon, in DVD format. These are invaluable resources, as they offer the film in both dubbed or subtitled versions. Many also include useful supplemental information on the making of the films, bios and oeuvres of the director, stars, etc.

TRADITIONAL JAPANESE ART

Stephen Addiss, *How to Look at Japanese Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996).

Christine Guth, *Art of Edo Japan* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996).

Penelope Mason's *History of Japanese Art* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1993).

Timothy Screech, *Sex and the Floating World* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 1999).

USEFUL WORKS ON FILMS IN THEIR CULTURAL CONTEXT

Joan Mellen, *The Waves at Genji's Door* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976).

Chon A. Noriega, "Godzilla and the Japanese Nightmare: When *Them*! is U.S." In *Hibakusha Cinema: Hiroshima, Nagasaki and the Nuclear Image in Japanese Film.* Mick Broderick, ed. (New York: Kegan Paul International) 1996: 54–74.

WEB SOURCES

Of course, search engines such as Google reveal new sites almost daily. Some good Web-based links of particular note:

Drawing by the author, Godzilla, King of the Monsters.

http://ku.edu/~jahf/visitors/links.html—Provides extensive links to museums and image sites.

http://pears.lib.ohio-state.edu/Markus—Excellent source for Japanese films, along with threads to forum discussions on individual works.

NOTES

1. See for example, James R. Keating, "*King Lear* and *Ran*," *EAA* (Fall 2002), 39–44; Paul Otis, "Japanese Folklore and Kurosawa's *Dreams*," *EAA* (Spring 1997), 42–43; Kyu Hyun Kim, "Girl (and Boy) Troubles in Animeland," *EAA* (Spring 2002), 38–45; Alan Chalk, "Rashōmon Revisited," *EAA* (Winter 1999), 45–47; and Antonia Levi, "The Animated Shrine," *EAA* (Spring 1997), 26–29.

2. "Pictures" are studied in the Department of Art History, while the study of films (moving pictures) usually is conducted by a department dealing with communications media.

3. These two works comprise the earliest compilations of indigenous beliefs and events. The *Kojiki* (*Records of Ancient Matters*) and the *Nihongi* (or *Nihonshoki: The Chronicles of Japan*) both date to the early eighth century CE. Expurgated or original texts may be used, depending upon the maturity of the student audience. The version quoted in Marianna McJimsey's essay in this journal (*EAA* 6.1 Spring 2001, 42–45) would be more appropriate for younger students than the language used in the primary sources.

4. Students generally view religious traditions as evolutionary; that simple societies believed in multiple gods, and through time, through intellectual exploration and increasing social sophistication and complexity, this "superstition" came to be replaced by belief in a single deity. That many in Japan, a model of modern technological society, still accept the existence of "eight-million gods" may be surprising and somewhat disconcerting, as it challenges the accepted norm.

5. In some sense, these scrolls are already a form of moving pictures, since the reader must unroll the images, from right to left, viewing the scenes in sequence or, in some examples, a single narrative that unfolds chronologically.

6. The widely recognized appellation is somewhat inaccurate, as Genji, the son of an Emperor, is not within the primary kinship line. The sobriquet comes from the title of Ivan Morris's work *The World of the Shining Prince: Court Life in Ancient Japan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964).

7. A less well-known but equally effective example of the genre is the Mongol Invasion Scroll. A soldier commissioned the scroll to publicize his role in the campaign, and he is repeatedly included in the action.

8. Literally, "Spring Pictures" erotic and often graphically pornographic images of sexual activities.

9. In fact, the only component of the original film retained in the American version is the monster himself, and the name Godzilla, although this designation is never explained.

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The Example of *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*

By Sam Joshi

India is the most prolific film-producing country in the world. Of all its film production centers, Mumbai produces more films that are seen nationwide in India. The Mumbai film industry, also known as Bollywood, produces films in the Hindi language. This essay is intended to serve as an aid to teachers who wish to add Hindi cinema to their curriculum. It assumes readers have no prior knowledge of Hindi cinema, and aims to ease their first encounter with a Bollywood product. As a case study, this essay focuses on the 1998 film *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (KKHH),[1] the title of which translates into "A Certain Feeling." Since this film is one of the biggest commercial successes in recent years, it is readily available in the US as a subtitled DVD. More importantly, this film serves as an excellent illustration of Hindi film's aesthetic principles.

KKHH begins with the death, in childbirth, of Tina, wife of Rahul. Tina leaves behind eight letters for her new baby, one for each of her first eight birthdays. The scene shifts to Mumbai, eight years later. Rahul is a widower who lives with his daughter, Anjali Junior. It is her eighth birthday, and she gets to read her late mother's final letter. In it, Tina tells her daughter about her father's college days, which are shown in flashback. In college, the Casanova Rahul and the tomboy Anjali Senior are best friends. Rahul falls in love with a new student, Tina, whom he will eventually marry. Neither knows that Anjali Sr. has fallen in love with Rahul too. Heartbroken, Anjali Sr. leaves college. This is the end of the flashback, and at the end of her letter, Tina reveals that she had come to realize that Anjali Sr. loved Rahul. She entreats her daughter to bring Anjali Sr. back into a lonely Rahul's life.

The scene now shifts to Anjali Sr., who has turned into a beautiful young woman. She is shown getting engaged to the handsome Aman. Anjali Jr. finds out that Anjali Sr. is a teacher at a summer camp for children. Anjali Jr. enrolls in this summer camp, and feigns sickness so her father will visit the camp and meet Anjali Sr. This is exactly what happens, and Rahul and Anjali Sr. are romantically drawn to each other. Torn between love for Rahul and her duty towards Aman, Anjali Sr. chooses the latter and promptly leaves summer camp to marry him. Rahul shows up at the wedding, and silently lets Anjali Sr. know that he loves her. Just as the wedding is to be solemnized, Aman realizes the truth of the situation, and graciously asks Anjali Sr. to be true to her feelings by marrying Rahul instead. Anjali Sr. and Rahul get married.

The first song of KKHH brings out Hindi cinema's "affective realism." Making up after a quarrel, college students Rahul and Anjali Sr. spontaneously break into the song *This Boy Is Crazy*. Viewers may find it strange that their friends join them in perfectly

choreographed movements on the college campus. Other students go about their daily business, unaffected as the singing and dancing start up. This "unreal" aesthetic differs from that of contemporary Hollywood film, which is characterized by what I call a "cognitive realism" that contrasts with Bollywood's "affective (emotional) realism." Cognitive realism seeks to make the film viewer's perception mimic her perception as it operates in real life; the film uses all its techniques to make the viewer believe that what's seen is really happening, or could quite possibly happen. Events flow in a cause-effect relationship, and the film's mise-en-scène (stage setting) strives for maximum fidelity to "real life."[2] This can take on extremes, as in the shootout scene in *The Matrix*, where the filmmakers used the sounds of hundreds of bullet shells hitting the floor to portray the shootout as accurately as possible. In contrast, Hindi cinema stresses not the accurate depiction of events but the emotional import of those events. The techniques of filmmaking serve to bring the film to life not in a cognitive, but in an affective sense. If Rahul and Anjali Sr. experience their friendship as exhilarating, the song-and-dance sequence *This Boy Is Crazy* is performed to express this feeling. The principle of *sadharanikarana*, as I will show later, posits that our perception of artwork is different from our perception of real life, being *alaukika*—not of the quotidian world. This aesthetic tradition enables Hindi film to depart from cognitive realism and to embrace affect.

Under cognitive realism, the activity of the viewer is geared towards understanding situations, predicting likely outcomes based on available information, and proposing solutions to certain enigmas. These predictions may be then fulfilled or subverted by the narrative. The viewer is constantly asking questions like "What will happen next?" In contrast, the viewer of affective realism is not interested in what will happen next, but in how a particular on-screen event *feels*. To experience a depicted emotion in as much depth as possible is the reward for a viewer of Hindi cinema. This is the raison d'être of song and dance sequences in Hindi films—which serve to bring out the emotional potential of a given situation. Songs give body to intensely emotional points in the film's narrative.[3] A song's lyrics, music, and choreography are custom-made to convey a particular shade of emotion. The function of the songs is not to convey cognitive information about characters or plot; this goal can be achieved more economically through such means as dialogue. The goal of the song and dance sequence is a different one—that of immersing the viewer in an emotional experience.[4]

But not all Bollywood songs are constructed in keeping with affective realism, as they are shown to be either dream sequences or explicit depictions of staged performances. Explicit depictions of staged performances, termed "item songs" by Ganti, are situated firmly within cognitive realism, as their existence is cognitively justified by the presence of the trappings of staged performances and diegetic audiences (on-screen audiences shown to be part of the film's story).[5] Dream sequence songs and item songs, frequently featured in Bollywood films, do not displace the quintessentially Bollywood song. Even in these songs, which seemingly depart from affective realism, elements of affective realism can be seen (In fact, insofar as dreams are seen to be wish fulfillments, emotions like desire

are essential to dream sequences.). For example, the song "*Some-things" Happen To Me* is a dream song, depicting the fantasies of the three main characters Rahul, Tina, and Anjali Sr. However, instead of showing us three different dreams, the filmmaker has chosen to film all three dreams simultaneously, using the same song and even the same location. The three dreamers even appear in the same

frame, even though the song tries to depict the private reverie of each, making it hard to determine just whose daydream we are watching. KKHH also has two "item songs." The first is a staged performance where Rahul, Anjali Sr., and Tina sing the song *I Found Someone* at a college revue. Here also, there are elements of instrumental music that seem to have no source on the on-screen stage, signaling a departure from cognitive realism. The same is true for the song *The Bridegroom Has Arrived*, which Anjali Sr. and Aman sing at their engagement party to entertain the guests.

To understand how Hindi cinema enables an affective experience, we must first understand the principles of Sanskrit drama. Many scholars of Hindi film hold that Sanskrit drama is the aesthetic forebear of Hindi cinema.[6] In Sanskrit drama, the affective reaction of the viewer of an artwork is termed *Rasa* (pronounced "Russ"). Rasa translates roughly as "sentiment" and occurs in the viewer's mind. Rasa is evoked when the viewer interacts with *Bhaavas*, the on-screen actions performed to induce emotional fervor. There are nine rasas, which are evoked by nine corresponding *sthaayibhaavas* (static emotions). These are:

Sthaayibhaava	Rasa
Rati (Love)	**Srngara** (Erotic Love)
Haas (Merriment)	**Haasya** (Humorous)
Soka (Sorrow)	**Karuna** (Pathetic)
Krodha (Anger)	**Raudra** (Furious)
Utsaha (Enthusiasm)	**Viira** (Valorous)
Bhaya (Terror)	**Bhayaanaka** (Horrific)
Jugupsa (Disgust)	**Biibhatsa** (Repugnant)
Vismaya (Astonishment)	**Adbhuta** (Wondrous)
Sama (Placidity)	**Santa** (Blissful)

Each rasa has infinite shades; the rasa of love, *Srngara* (erotic love), for example, has two *adisthanas* or bases—*Sambhooga Srngara* (erotic love in union) and *Vipralambha Srngara* (erotic love in separation). Each base has infinite varieties. Vipralambha, for example, may be pleasant when the lover is shown eagerly anticipating a meeting with her beloved; it may be full of pain when the lover is shown seeing her paramour depart for a long duration. The viewer of affective realism experiences rasa when she sympathetically resonates with the exact shade of the sentiment being expressed by the film. Also, each film, according to the rules of *aucitya* (propriety) must have one principal rasa only.

KKHH, a love story, has Srngara as its principal sentiment. To be specific, the principal rasa is Vipralambha Srngara, since erotic love-in-separation is the most prominent theme. Let us chart the progression of this rasa by looking at songs, the emotional high points of the film. The first song *This Boy Is Crazy* is a pleasant variant of

Vipralambha. At this point in the story Anjali Sr. loves Rahul, but considers him only her best friend since her love hasn't reached her conscious awareness. The second song *I Found Someone* is in the same vein, because while Rahul and Tina are falling for each other, they have not fully realized this fact; who has "found someone" and to what end is not clear. The third song *"Somethings" Happen To Me*, develops this shade of the rasa further, because it depicts the three leading characters falling in love, while still being charmingly befuddled by a new, unfamiliar feeling that they are unable to fully articulate; what is this new feeling, this "something" that is happening to the characters? The Vipralambha, however, takes a turn for the painful in the song *You Did Not Think Of Me*, in which Anjali Sr. realizes that her love for Rahul has remained unfulfilled. The last song *There Goes A Strange Girl* references the first song of the film, being friendly rather than overtly romantic. Only after this extended spectacle of love in separation does the film allow the lovers to unite at the very end of the story. In this way, the film mainly displays the vicissitudes of a single rasa—Vipralambha Srngara.

However, the supremacy of the principal rasa does not exclude the film's focus on other rasas. Other rasas are welcome as long as they do not challenge the principal rasa. For example, a rasa considered germane to the principal rasa may be safely presented in a way that makes clear its subordinate, supporting status. Since *Haasya* (Humorous) is considered germane to Srngara, it is presented in KKHH in the form of humorous antics of minor characters like the English professor Ms. Briganza, the college principal Malhotra, the matron Rifat Bi, and the summer camp manager Colonel Almeida. Rasas antithetical to the principal rasa present a bigger problem. An example would be the use of *Raudra* (Furious) in a film dealing with Srngara, displayed in, say, a romantic hero's fistfight with the villain. However, if this film has made it amply and skillfully clear that the hero's anger toward the villain is motivated by deep love for the heroine, whom the villain has trapped in his lair, then the use of Raudra may be justified as being in the service of Srngara. The primacy of Srngara would then be reinforced rather than challenged by the presentation of the subordinate Raudra.

A film evokes rasa by the action of the bhaavas. The sthaayibhaavas such as *Rati* presented in the foregoing table are not directly presented; the existence of a sthaayibhaava is inferred after the fact by examining its components. Each sthaayibhaava consists of three components: *Vibhaava* or determinant, *vyabhichaaribhaava* or transitory state, and *anubhaava* or consequent. The vibhaava presents the cause of an emotion, while the anubhaava displays a character's reaction consequent to the experienced emotion. The vyabhichaaribhaavas are subsidiary on-screen events that support and add color to the emotion being displayed. The Vibhaava further consists of *Uddipana* (background or circumstances—lighting, décor, setting) and *alambana* or character. The alambana can be further divided into *asraya* (locus of emotion) and *visaya* (object of emotion). For example, if in the film *Jurassic Park*, the character of Sam Neill is shown running in terror from a dinosaur, then the Sam Neill character is the locus of fear, while the dinosaur is the object of fear. This entire mechanism can be illustrated using the song *You Did Not Think Of Me*, played when Anjali Sr. realizes that Rahul loves Tina, not her. The sequence of events is as follows: Anjali Sr. goes running to tell Rahul that she loves him, but before she can speak, Rahul tells her that he is in love with Tina. It starts raining, and Anjali returns to her residence hall. She cries, and at the end of the song, is shown taking leave of her matron, as she is leaving college.

In this song, the visaya of Anjali Sr.'s love is Rahul, while she herself is the asraya. The sthaayibhaava being performed here is Rati (Love). The fact of Rahul being in love with Tina instead of Anjali Sr. is the determinant, the vibhaava. As soon as this is revealed, the uddipana changes: it starts raining and Anjali Sr. is shown running home in cold, gray weather. Her actions of grief, crying, looking at an old photo of herself and Rahul, sitting listlessly in a ruined castle, and walking alone through a dark tunnel are *abhinayas*, actions aimed at displaying the anubhaava or the emotional consequences of the determinant. A sad song of separation, *You Did Not Think Of Me*, is sung by some passing folk singers and it constitutes the vyabhichaaribhaava. The vyabhichaaribhaava serves the purpose of burnishing the rasa, which is primarily evoked by the vibhaavas and anubhaavas. As time passes during this song, the song is played again, this time in Anjali Sr.'s "own" voice, which absorbs it into the anubhaava. Vyabhichaaribhaavas here also include contrasting shots of Tina enjoying the company of Rahul. These serve to throw into relief Anjali Sr.'s

misery. The combined effect of these actions on the screen produces in the refined and emotionally sympathetic viewer the rasa of Vipralambha Srngara inflected by pathos and grief. A similar analysis can enhance our understanding of all the songs in KKHH.

The question that now arises is, how do the bhaavas produce in the viewer the experience known as rasa? The mechanism by which this occurs is known as *dhvani*, which translates as "suggestion." The concept of dhvani was first articulated by Anandavardhana[7] as he investigated the question of how poetry achieves the effect of emotionally moving the reader. Dhvani, which makes such an emotional experience possible, is of a different order than the standard effects of language—denotation, indication, metaphor, and so on. These are basically cognitive processes; dhvani, on the other hand, is a purely affective process. Abhinavagupta,[8] in describing this process, compares it to a process of "tasting." When we taste, say, a sweet and spicy drink, we immediately delight in the taste. This process bypasses intellectual and complicated cognitive processes. We do not speculate on the ingredients of the drink, their relative proportion, the recipe, and then arrive at an estimation of the drink's taste before we render the judgment that the drink tastes good. Our enjoyment of the drink is instead spontaneous and instant; it does not require a time period of reflection because it occurs simultaneously with the act of tasting. Aesthetic enjoyment is of a similar nature; we do not meditate on the number of a painting's pigments before we find that we are enthralled by the painting. Similarly, in viewing a film, our emotional response is instantaneously evoked by the combination of vibhaavas, vyabhichaaribhaavas, and anubhaavas. The mind contains the 'seeds' of rasa, known as *vasanas*. These seeds are present in the mind due to past emotional experience, in current or previous lifetimes. Upon receiving the stimulus of bhaava, the vasanas are immediately activated as are seeds when they feel the touch of water. These vasanas mature into rasa. In seeing the song

You Did Not Think Of Me, the seeds of heartbreak latent in our mind get activated and we experience Vipralambha Srngara. But in order for this to occur, we must be open to emotional suggestion, taking on the role of a *sahrdaya*—the refined and sensitive viewer, whose mind ignites with rasa upon receiving a stimulus just like a piece of wood that catches fire as soon as it is set alight. Being open to affective experience means having to put ordinary cognition on the backburner. In the song, a dejected Anjali Sr. is shown walking through a dark tunnel in a ruined castle. This visual aims at delineating her emotional state. A viewer who asks questions like "Well, Anjali was on the college campus a minute ago, why is she in a castle? Is there a castle near the campus? This castle was seen in the dream-song earlier, so is Anjali awake or dreaming? The castle looks Scottish—but isn't the film set in India?" will miss the point. Such a viewer is not a sahrdaya and will deprive herself of rasa.

An important aspect of this experience is Sadharanikarana—universalization or departicularization. This concept further illuminates the ways in which an aesthetic object achieves its effects. For example, a viewer watching a play about Joan of Arc feels sad when Joan of Arc is awaiting execution. What is the source of this emotion? The experience does not purely arise in the viewer, as the viewer has not been through the same experience as Joan of Arc. The actress may not be the source, as she is merely going through the motions. The writer may not be the source either, because she might well be describing something dispassionately. As for the character Joan of Arc—nobody can tell with certainty what emotion she was experiencing. And yet, the viewer is pervaded with the experience of grief. How has this come to be? The answer is that this experience occurs in a way independent of purely the character, writer, actor, or viewer in a general, de-particularized, de-individualized way. This process is sadharanikarana. In this way, aesthetic experience allows the viewer to feel intense emotion, but in a detached way that allows him to transcend his specific self, to be free of individuality. This experience of transcendence approximates spiritual experience "and is only comparable to Eternal or Supreme Bliss."[9] Being thus lifted above the stream of everyday life is an experience free of ordinary cognition.[10] Indeed, ordinary cognition is seen as an obstacle that blocks the process of sadharanikarana.[11] In this way, aesthetic experience is of a different order than ordinary cognition. This detachment allows the viewer to experience an aesthetic "pleasure" even while watching films that espouse rasas like *Bhayaanaka* (Horrific) or *Biibhatsa* (Repugnant) which would never evoke enjoyment in real life.

Hindi film songs enable sadharanikarana by divorcing themselves from ordinary cognition within the diegetic world. The songs almost never mention specific names, places, or narrative events. This allows the emotion expressed by the song to transcend the emotions of on-screen characters and to envelop the viewer in the affective experience. Moreover, this aspect of the song lyrics ensures that the songs may be detached from their immediate narrative mooring, so that they can be sung or played at various points throughout the film, in whole or in parts, with the same or different lyrics, all in the interest of delineating the film's principal rasa. The song *You Did Not Think Of Me*, for example, is played once again in KKHH when Anjali Sr. has made the difficult decision of leaving the summer camp to marry Aman. The viewer's memory of the painful moment when this song was first played heightens the grief of Anjali Sr.'s departure.

Besides rasa, the second main preoccupation of Sanskrit drama is *dharma*. Mishra points out that "The term dharma covers a wide

semantic field including morality, religion, duty, justice, virtue, and so on."[12] Sanskrit drama took on a didactic function in this respect: The *Natya Sastra* of Bharatamuni, an early treatise on drama, mentions that Brahma, the Creator, in instituting dramatic art, decided that such an art would be "conducive to righteousness" with "a succinct collection of didactic material," to "serve as a guide in all (human) activities of future generations."[13] Rao translates dharma as "righteousness," which must be shown to prevail at the end of a Sanskrit play, in the interest of the play's mandatory didacticism.[14] In Hindi film, a state of dharma portrays a feeling of respect for family duties and kinship obligations. According to Thomas, "Order, or equilibrium, is presented as a state in which humans live in harmony with fate, respecting social obligations and ties of friendship or family."[15] Kasbekar agrees in saying that "Family relationships are crucial to popular Hindi film regardless of its genre. Often, it is an individual character's response to family duties and responsibilities that defines his or her virtue or villainy."[16]

The characters in KKHH act according to dharma. They always place the happiness of someone else ahead of their own, putting decorum in familial dealings above their personal happiness. For example, Rahul does not tell Anjali Sr. to leave Aman, respecting family obligations which require that Anjali Sr. marry Aman since she is engaged to him. Anjali Sr., similarly, does not break off her engagement with Aman out of concern for him and out of a sense of duty. At the end of the film, it is Aman who emerges as the most righteous character—a *dharmaviira*, who steps out of the picture so that Rahul and Anjali Sr. can marry. Whereas Hollywood films feature a goal-seeking protagonist who achieves his goal due to his individual struggle, Bollywood films like KKHH stress sacrifice and fidelity to social and familial dharma over individual desire, inculcating the moral that those who respect dharma are always victorious.

Of course, a Hindi film's stress on dharma does not mean that the values it propagates are universal; a film merely purveys only that notion of dharma which matches its ideology. In KKHH, this ideology is one of patriarchy and sexism. The motivating crisis in the film is Anjali Sr.'s refusal to conform to traditional femininity. The film punishes her for this, as she is shown losing Rahul. Dharmic resolution is made possible only when Anjali Sr. has learned to exchange basketball for childcare, and sportswear for chiffon sarees, thereby molding herself into acceptable "wife material" from a traditional patriarchal point of view.

In this essay, I have used the example of KKHH to illustrate rasa and dharma, the aesthetic principles of Hindi cinema. Readers may use this introductory essay as a starting point on their way to broadening their Hindi film viewing experience, given that Hindi films are increasingly available in the US from various stores and Web sites. Further, the scholarly literature on Hindi cinema has seen an explosion in recent years, and I hope that this essay will spur the reader to take advantage of this literature as a pedagogical resource.

Acknowledgments

NOTES

1. *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai*, prod. Yash Johar and dir. Karan Johar, 185 min., Dharma Productions, 1998, DVD.
2. In my discussion of Hollywood cinema, I draw upon David Bordwell's and Kristin Thompson's, *Film Art: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003). This is a widely used undergraduate textbook in film studies.
3. Tejaswini Ganti, "Casting Culture: The Social Life of Hindi Film Production in Contemporary India" (PhD dissertation, New York University, 2000), 270–271.
4. This is not to say that Hollywood films never utilize affective realism or that Hindi films completely take leave of cognitive realism; the point is that the two cinemas place different types of realism in the foreground. The background music and unrealistic soundtracks used by Hollywood film, exemplified by the suspenseful musical effects in horror films, can be seen as an undercurrent of affective realism.
5. Ganti, 281.
6. M. C. Byrski, "Hindi Phillum—The Kaliyugi Avatara of Sanskrit Drama," *Pushpanjali* 4, 4 (November 1981): 111–8. M. C. Byrski, "Traditional Aesthetic Criteria and Contemporary Indian Culture" in *Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on the Theoretical problems of Asian and African Literatures*, edited by M. Galik (Bratislava: Literary Institute of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, 1983), 192. Asha Kasbekar, "An Introduction to Indian Cinema," in *An Introduction to Film Studies*, edited by Jill Nelmes (London: Routledge, 1996), 368. Paul Willemen, "Notes/Arguments/Hypotheses" in *BFI Dossier Number 5: Indian Cinema*, edited by Paul Willemen and Behroze Gandhy (London: British Film Institute, 1982), 37.
7. Anandavardhana, *Dhvanyaloka* (Dharwar: Karnatak University Press, 1974).
8. Abhinavagupta, *The Aesthetic Experience According to Abhinavagupta* (Rome: Instituto Italiano per Il Medio Ed Estremo Oriente, 1956).
9. P. S. R. Appa Rao, *A Monograph on Bharata's Naatya Saastra: Indian Dramatology* (Hyderabad: Naatya Maalaa, 1967), 30.
10. Abhinavagupta, 99.
11. Ibid., 77.
12. Vijay Mishra, "Towards a Theoretical Critique of Bombay Cinema," *Screen* 26, 3, 4 (May–August 1985): 142.
13. Bharatamuni, *The Natya Sastra* (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1987), 2.
14. Rao, 33.
15. Rosie Thomas, "Indian Cinema: Pleasures and Popularity," *Screen* 26, 3, 4 (May–August 1985): 126.
16. Kasbekar, 367.

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