Japanese cinema as mass art: an export of mass cinema

by

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Abstract

The aim of the thesis is to examine the distribution and consumption of contemporary Japanese cinema in the UK. Through the study of aesthetics it seeks to identify the ways in which content and current distribution methods suit different markets. Noël Carroll's definition of cinema and contemporary media as 'mass art' has informed the way in which the thesis notes variation in film content, and forms the core methodology. The selected texts range from the post-war period (1948) with films by directors such as Akira Kurosawa, to contemporary animation cinema such as the work of Mamoru Hosada (2009). The distribution methods of these films is of particular importance as the thesis links them to the export of Japanese identity.

The films are available to a UK audience via a range of distribution methods such as officially distributed DVDs, online distribution, and art house cinema exhibitions. There is an emphasis on digital distribution throughout the thesis and this is reflected through the use of texts downloaded from the internet as well as digital sources such as university encyclopaedias and e-books. Each chapter is organised around a distinctive and specified market for Japanese cinema and includes detailed textual analysis of film examples. In the final chapter, on the popularity of Japanese animation (anime), the analysis is enhanced with empirical research into online consumption groups and internet communication, given these groups' important role in the distribution of anime outside of Japan.

Contents

Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to analyse the distribution and consumption of Japanese cinema, predominately as export, since the Second World War. Through contemporary distribution, many different examples of Japanese media are being made increasingly available outside of their original territory. Furthermore, in the 'information age' we are able to access media that would not be as conveniently available in previous epochs; the thesis takes this into consideration and hence chooses to analyse the ways in which Japanese media is consumed outside of Japan rather than focusing on the internal Japanese market.

The thesis also applies the work of the philosopher Noël Carroll. He classified many of the more popular art forms such as cinema and television as mass art works. Carroll's observations will inform the thesis and its focus on Japanese cinema to explore the trans-national consumption of Japanese media. Carroll's classification of popular art forms enables the thesis to asses the consumption of Japanese media by determining the aesthetic factors that differentiate from a range of films. These factors will inform the structure of each chapter as well as the texts and their analyses throughout the thesis.

The globalisation of media flow and westernisation are important to an understanding of the markets in which Japanese cinema and animation is distributed. The thesis is structured in a way that addresses the markets that consume Japanese cinema. The thesis also aims to explore the possibility that Japanese cinema is stylistically divided by different distribution methods such as the consumption of DVDs, art house cinema festivals, and digital media such as file sharing or downloads.

The thesis furthermore recognises that the aesthetic diversity of Japanese cinema informs the different markets that consume them. For example, the most 'Japanese' of texts may be distributed and consumed differently to a number of more global or westernised texts. The connection between stylistic identity and its method of distribution is what the thesis seeks to highlight and analyse. Standard chronological organisation would allow for a greater volume of texts that could be classified together; however, this could lead to complications and obscure the aims of the thesis that are concerned with markets and distribution rather than chronicling Japanese cinematic history.

Japan's golden era of cinema is an aesthetic backdrop to the first film examples selected. The recognition of different markets and distribution networks are important issues at the heart of the thesis, and so textual examples will be diverse and come from different moments in Japanese cinema history. The films are connected through their means of distribution and the varying aesthetic factors that constitute the need for the different markets.

This complex means of organisation serves to inform the main aims of the thesis. Although many of these texts do not aesthetically correlate, they do all represent different types of distribution which is reflected by the visual style.

Much of Japanese media remains difficult to access outside of Japan. Independent and fan distribution via the internet is therefore significant as it operates outside of the mainstream as it is propagated through small groups of people, acting outside of distribution companies. Susan Napier studied anime fans and fandom and identified anime fans as a distinct group with roots reaching back to the late 1970s. However, the primary concern of the later chapters is to determine the attraction and popularity of Japanese animation cinema within the west. I wish to look at the role of the internet and how the online availability of anime has shaped tastes. The ways in which her research was conducted produced only a limited picture in the ways in which anime is consumed. For example, there was no mention of how many other fans communicate as a community outside of events such as anime or 'cosplay' (where anime fans dress as their favourite characters) conventions.

Select interviews with anime fans over the internet and in person while they discuss their attraction to anime, in comparison to other forms of entertainment, are invaluable to the empirical research. A questionnaire which sought to identify the trends in the viewing of anime and its procurement by anime fans in western territories will be used to reveal features of the online community as outlined in the third chapter.

I: Preoccupations with Japanese Cinema and Mass Art

The varied cultural output of Japanese cinema shows genres, themes and narratives that differ and their emergence points to a self-knowing, fragmented cultural identity. The coexistence of such varying subject matter and aesthetic modes implies that Japanese cinema, as an institution, is a highly sophisticated network that relays conflicting takes on Japanese identity. Such fragmentation of identity is thus reflected through the aesthetic practices of Japanese cinema and animation.

Japanese aesthetics have been discussed at great length in film studies and other disciplines[1]; developments in the study of aesthetics may prove useful when looking at the way in which Japanese aesthetics have evolved to render these differing identities and how this resonates within mass media distribution networks and the markets that consume this

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[1]   Donald Richie is a perfect example of an academic who has devoted his career to the study of Japanese cinema and history. This crossover has led him to look at aesthetics in great detail from a number of perspectives. In 1959 the book *Japanese Cinema: Art and Industry* was released and one of his later publications *A Hundred Years of Japanese Cinema* released in 2005.

media.

The ways in which these films are distributed globally also inform the way in which markets consume them. The aesthetic rendering of a film can determine the circles that a film may travel through. For example, the films of Kenji Mizoguchi, one of Japan's visionary directors, utilises a very slow paced aesthetic and drew upon Japanese folklore and art. Films such as Mizoguchi's *Uegetsu Monogatari* (1953) have these aesthetic features and consequently are consumed by a minority of informed consumers and so is distributed in a specialised line of DVDs that are the product of remastered prints. Yukihiko Tsutsumi's *20th Century Boys* (2008), on the other hand, is a blockbuster. Though the film's narrative is quite complex, the style of the film is similar to western cinema; quick editing, deep focus, close ups and a extended use of Computer Generated Imagery (CGI) shows that a Hollywood style has been adopted. Also unlike *Ugetsu Monogatari,* the release of *20th Century Boys* had been relatively accessible in comparison. The film was made widely available through upon its release through mainstream distribution channels. The distribution networks that these films traverse in order to get released are informed by the style of the film. Newer means of consumption, such as digital distribution and file sharing operate outside of these networks and consequently this implies that aesthetics are important to distribution.

With changing communication technologies and their ability to access different types of texts, we find that habits of consumption are allowed to vary. Through the application of digital distribution and download culture, consumers can diversify their consumption. They are no longer limited to systematic distribution networks. Digital distribution, especially file sharing and torrent downloads, allows the consumer to come into contact with Japanese media at a much greater frequency. A greater number of Japanese films are available for download than are officially released globally as they are available more or less upon the Japanese release. Japanese animation series' (*anime*) get extremely limited global releases and are now made available through these digital means.

The stylistic content and sophistication that is accessed because of digital distribution is having an effect on mainstream media globally. Mass artworks such as long running television shows that experiment with narrative and have similar stylistic features to art house productions are gradually becoming commonplace globally. Television shows including that of *Lost* (2004 – 2010) and *Twin Peaks* (1990 -1991) use experimental and sophisticated aesthetic practices which broaden the horizons of many viewers, and have introduced them to more intellectually rewarding and complex media. Japanese television, and even animation, uses similar narrative structures and the same ambiguities of these new works of

mass art in shows such as *Higurashi No Naku Koro Ni* (2006-2009), a show that takes place in multiple realities, reliving the same week repeatedly, and *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1997), another animated TV show in which the conclusion was a surreal culmination with a very loose narrative focusing on the mental breakdown of the main character.

Noël Carroll comments on the state of mainstream media by identifying one of the main parameters of mass art: 'Mass art [...] is easy to consume, and designedly so. It is made with the intention that it is assimilated with minimum effort, ideally, it requires little background information as is possible within the bounds of comprehension.' (Carroll: 1998 36). This will serve as the thesis' definition of mass art. It is aware of its purpose and is also aware of its audience's need for entertainment. In the case of this new breed of television from Japan in the west, it is clear that certain sectors of mass audiences are beginning to enjoy a different kind of mass media; one that requires more information but still entertains and is as easily consumable as earlier instances within mainstream entertainment.

Looking that the recent cinematic trends of Hollywood there has been elements inspired by eastern media for some time. In the late nineties action films such as *The Matrix* (The Wackowski Brothers, 1999) drew upon Japanese animation (specifically Shirow Masamune's and Mamoru Oshii's 1995 film *Ghost in the Shell)*. In the case of *The Matrix,* visual elements and specific scenes share a resemblance with its animated counterpart. The narrative structure as well as the philosophical implications of both these films seem quite complex in comparison with some mainstream science fiction. Apart from the thematic likenesses, there are also aesthetic trends shared between the two. For example, in the first scene of the main female protagonist bends the rules of physics. The floating that Trinity in *The Matrix* uses during jumping and kicking in the opening is similar to the falling of the main character Makoto in *Ghost in the Shell* as she floats away from her captors and escapes using optical camouflage. More recently, films such as *Astro Boy* (Bowers 2009) and *Speed Racer* (The Wackowski Brothers 2008) draw upon animation in a much more direct way by translating old animation classics into live action western cinema. This is one way in which the global is affecting the way in which media popular in Japan is translated for western audiences; homage is no longer adequate to represent influence, instead re-imagining is becoming more commonplace. The connection between how mass art is changing due to new means of consumption is a theme at the heart of the thesis.

II: Methodological Issues

In the *Philosophy of Mass Art* (1998) Carroll's definition of mass art originally applied to western media. This is a potentially problematic issue when discussing Japanese cinema. However, Carroll offers a well-developed and useful explanation of how cinema is categorised as regards its artistic nature, as he differentiates between art house features (high art), culturally specific media (folk art) and popular art forms (mass art). These definitions of art and classifications form a theoretical basis that is important to the thesis. The limitations of Carroll's work will therefore be filled in by other scholarship on mass art and the relationship between distribution and consumption specific to Japanese cinema.

For example, Cavanaugh and Washburn state that, 'the presence and availability of motion pictures transformed Tokyo into a city where modes of elitist art forms were redistributed as the new currency of modernity, a cultural movement that, unlike European modernisms, drew upon realism for its intellectual authority as well as for its appeal' (Cavanaugh and Washburn 2001: XX). Japanese cinema has always existed to appeal to mass audiences and its consumption has been intended to overcome boundaries of class and ideology since its conception. Japanese audiences have been aware of this aspect of cinema since its introduction to Japan in 1897. The introduction of cinema to Japan also saw a emphasis on the inclusive elements of realism. So the relationship between mass art and Japanese cinema is quite a strong one, making Carroll a useful source when discussing the intricacies of Japanese media, even though it is also recognised that there are limitations that need to be addressed.

Furthermore only a small part of Carroll's work is used. The thesis focuses on the consumption of Japanese media in western territories as well as older instances of Japanese cinema, which means that the intricacies of Carroll's *Philosophy of Mass Art* (1998) cannot be fully explored. Japanese media functions in a different way to western media and there are cultural differences regarding the perception of cinema as an art form that need to be negotiated. The thesis will analyse these differences while keeping the work of Noël Carroll as a central point of reference. The attention paid to Japanese cinema in the context of global media and the growing importance of communication media is well suited to Carroll's classification of art; Studies such as Carroll's take into account the mass production of newer art forms.

The significance of technology in the distribution of mass art is another main feature. '...*communication* technologies, rather than the ensemble of the forces of production,

represent the key to the historical process. Epochal historical transformations are brought about, that is, by changes in communication media' (Carroll 1998: 146 – 147). Carroll postulates that contemporary media is designed for mass consumption; it is therefore the means of consumption that is potentially the more important difference between high art and mass art. Within contemporary media many texts (if not all) are designed for dissemination to vast numbers of people; the introduction of the internet and digital distribution as well as the expansion of mainstream distribution has come to define the information age as globalised. Carroll's work supports the perspective that distribution networks can change the way mass art is consumed. The thesis also adopts this perspective.

Carroll identifies other artistic classifications that can be applied to the thesis. Japanese media, in comparison to global media is an example of folk art; Sugimoto offers an explanation: 'Having taken root over decades or centuries, the content of folk culture differs from place to place and relies upon the historical memories of people in a region.' (2003: 259). The thesis proposes that global media is made up of many national media contributors, distributing their folk art; Japanese cinema is but one of these. This perspective recognises that there are differences in style that are culturally engrained. For example, the films of Ozu and Kurosawa display pre-recognised ideas of Japanese style, a meditative and reflective tone that Japanese cinema was once renowned for. However, with current media flow and western interests in the oriental, how do these texts retain their Japaneseness by contemporary standards? Or, is this merely an archaic form of aesthetics that is now absent from Japanese mass artworks? The thesis will seek to answer these questions while recognising that there are a greater frequency of Japanese mass artworks coming into contact with audiences outside of their initially intended sphere of distribution. This shows that there is a Japanese response to globalisation through cinema and it is of particular importance to the thesis.

Susan Napier makes a comparison between Japan and the colonized western perception of the orient, discussing Japan and what it represents to the west as something that can be collected and colonized: 'Japan also shares one major element with its fellow Eastern Others, and that is its position as an object of fantasy to the west or, more accurately, as an embodiment of a variety of fantasies to the West' (Napier 2007: 3). Mass aesthetics have informed cinema since its arrival in Japan at the turn of the century, and Napier illuminates one way in which Japanese cinema is perceived by these consuming markets. The thesis is concerned with the consumption of this fantasy. This embodiment of fantasy as represented by Japanese media, has captured the imagination of many. Media systems such as Hollywood seek to capitalise on this, as seen by the number of remakes of Japanese texts.

Post modern scholars such as Roland Barthes discuss this embodiment of fantasy as an inevitable misinterpretation '… descend into the untranslatable, to experience its shock without ever muffling it, until everything Occidental in us totters and the rights of the "father tongue" vacillate - ' (Barthes 1970: 6). Here Barthes recognises that cross cultural exchange that meanings are often blurred or misinterpreted. There are cultural divisions that cannot be fully explained or understood, they are exclusive to that culture. There is a similarity between both Barthes and Napier as they both recognise that there are limitations in the understanding of Japanese media. The thesis seeks to link these two distinctions and show that the markets that consume Japanese media view Japan as aesthetic fantasy, allowing them to assimilate Japanese media without the linguistic crisis Barthes refers to. The aesthetic division of these films is only way in which distribution can be regulated. This creates an euphoric state of consumption and reinterpretation that has gone unchecked, a cherry picking of certain identities represented within Japanese mass art to reiterate them within a different context. As Barthes pointed out, it can be seen as an appropriation of self on the part of western audiences, using the fantasy of Japan as a perspective to explore their own understanding of themselves.

IV: Issues of Film Selection

As previously discussed, the structure of the thesis is informed by the markets that Japanese cinema and animation are released to. Within each section a number of films will be analysed in order to explore the stylistic traits that define each market. These range from the art house films of the 1950s to animation cinema of the 1990s and newer independent features. For example, the films of the post-war era utilise concepts of the auteur within their marketing. The thesis will look at the films of certain directors to analyse the consumption of these films and determine the relationship between stylistic elements present within the films and their distribution and consumption. This has become a large factor in selecting the texts for analysis throughout the thesis.

Due to the range of markets that the thesis covers, the texts used within the thesis not only range from the 1950s until the present day, but also have these varying styles. The films selected come from a range of distribution methods. In the first section the films cover a range of twenty years with a close focus on the work of Akira Kurosawa, Yasujiro Ozu and Seijun Suzuki. The titles that are covered within the thesis are selected as examples of the current distribution methods for these types of film. This ethos surrounds the selection of

texts throughout the thesis. This method of selection and range can be seen as a limiting factor in the organisation of thesis; however, it is necessary to work within these limitations to fully explore the preoccupations at the centre of the thesis.

The thesis aims to establish a link between markets that consume Japanese media and the aesthetic rendering of Japanese identity through these texts. Consequently, the selection of texts is a very important issue. For example, there is a difference between the products that are selected for export such as filmic adaptations of mass artworks, and independent productions that seek to explore issues more conducive to Japanese society. Films such as Toshiaki Toyoda's *Blue Spring* (*Aoi Haru* 2001) looks at juvenile delinquency, a major problem within Japanese society. Yet Toyoda's film has not enjoyed a global release similar to that of Kinji Fukasaku's *Battle Royale* (2000). Though both films deal with similar themes, there are many aesthetic differences that make *Battle Royale* the more marketable film, such as definable action sequences as well as a suitably 'extreme' story that pits children against one another in a fight to death. Many of these less known films are a product of independent film makers who seek to create outside the flow of mass media and Japanese cinema. Mark Schilling writes about these directors and their approach to cinema: '...many new directors were trying to reinvent cinema for the 1990s, not continue the tradition of the golden age directors. Iwai bluntly said that young Japanese audiences knew neither the films of Kurosawa or Ozu nor the society they depicted.' (Schilling 1999: 38). Schilling states that contemporary manifestations of identity through new media displays a separation between the older view of Japanese identity that was accepted by the global cinematic community, and a newer, different identity that is communicated through contemporary media. One of these differences is an awareness of export. Iwai in his comment makes a connection between the representation of Japan and Japanese society as seen in the golden era of cinema. The current situation of Japanese media (specifically cinema) is that it has a style highly coveted by western audiences and studios; for example, the appropriation of Studio Ghibli's non-Japanese distribution is handled by the Disney Corporation. In light of Iwai's comment we can see that there is a definite recognition of market and identity, and it is this connection that the thesis seeks to highlight by looking at chosen texts in terms of the market they appeal to.

The same means of communication that have allowed us to experience Japanese media at a greater volume, have also allowed us to experience more "niche" and native films and animation that do not get distributed overseas. Import DVD, torrent downloads and online message boards allow people to compare their collected media and expand their impression of Japanese identity through cinema and animation. The thesis will utilise these

technologies as well as traditional methods to acquire the texts such as cinema screenings.

The other texts that the thesis analyses represent these different aspects of Japanese identity and looks at the way in which they reach western markets. For example, the first chapter looks at two different notions of traditional Japanese identity in both Kurosawa's *Drunken Angel* (1948) and Ozu's *Tokyo Story* (*Tokyo Monogatari* 1953) and compares the similarities in distribution alongside Suzuki's *Tokyo Drifter* (*Tokyo Nagaremono* 1956). The thesis brings to light the generalisation of classical Japanese identity through close analyses of these films.

The more contemporary texts that the thesis looks at have a varying range of genres and identities. The classification of Japanese 'extreme' cinema is looked at by comparing a number of texts that have been distributed in ways that accentuate this label. Films such as *Visitor Q* (Miike 2001) and *Versus* (Kitamura 2000) seem to illustrate two different perspectives on 'extreme' Japanese cinema: a subversive and hard hitting extreme as represented by *Visitor Q* and a more anarchic mainstream aesthetic represented by *Versus*. Even though these films are stylistically and thematically different, the distribution of these films generalise these points. The thesis explores the possibility that the styles and themes present within these films inform the distribution of other elements of Japanese cinema to western markets. For example, the inclusion of films such as Tsutsumi's *20th Century Boys* (2008) (a mainstream Japanese film), and *All About Lily Chou Chou* (Iwai 2004) (a independent Japanese production) are selected to reinforce the point that distribution of Japanese cinema to western markets is both generalised and segregated due to the complexies of Japanese stylistic identities.

The selection of films that have been attained through newer, digital means of consumption were selected to reflect the most contemporary issues of identity that Japanese cinema represents. In this respect, the choice of *Summer Wars* (Hosada 2009), a film acquired through digital distribution, and *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence* (Oshii 2004), a film acquired through traditional means, represent two differing takes on technology and its role in Japanese society. It is both how these films differ in their treatment of a common theme, and the different methods of distribution, as informed by their aesthetics, make them important to the thesis.

Chapter 1: The Distribution and Consumption of Japanese Folk Cinema

I: Introduction: traditional Japanese aesthetics and post-war Japanese cinema.

In this chapter, the thesis is concerned with the distribution of Japanese cinema to markets with interest in classical Japanese cinema. This is further defined by markets with an interest in Japanese history. The films that this chapter analyses all share characteristics that make them desirable to these markets through their 'Japanese' style as the generic contents of these films are closely linked to periods within Japanese history or Japanese culture. For example, the jidai geki (historical drama) and Yakuza (Japanese gangster) genres both resonate with aspects of Japanese history or Japanese culture. These films are chronologically placed during and just after the Japan's post-war era, ranging from the the mid 1940s to the late 1960s, highlighting their cultural significance.

This chapter aims to highlight distinct divisions in the markets that consume Japanese cinema. The aesthetic aspects of the films following the post-war period relate to the specific ways these films are marketed and consumed in the UK. This chapter seeks to illuminate certain stylistic elements that the market uses to differentiate itself from other aspects of Japanese cinema. The relationship between the aesthetic elements of these films, and the way they are distributed and consumed are the issues central to the thesis. The work of Noël Carroll is of great importance when looking at this connection, and will inform the way that the identified markets are divided throughout the chapter. Through the application of Carroll's work the connections emerge between the aesthetic content of post-war Japanese cinema and the way in which these films are consumed today.

The way in which Japanese cinema has evolved over time to encompass the more traditional national aesthetic practices and new media forms has generated much interest in the country's cultural output. Post-war Japanese cinema accounts for a small fraction of Japanese cinema exported, but the library of directors and films that are still distributed to western markets is ever growing as they are transferred to newer media forms, such as high definition video in the form of Blu-Ray Discs.

Japan's aesthetic agenda as regards to cinema (for a short time) was one of an all-encompassing realism, designed to aesthetically render a recognisable reality. Classical Japanese cinema such as the films of Yasujiro Ozu are among the more obvious examples of this through his use of cinematic techniques such as long takes and detailed construction of mise en scene. Japanese cinema employs aesthetics in a way that evokes concepts close to

Japanese culture. For example, *sabi* (Parkes 2005) is a notion that refers to beauty earned through solitude. Techniques such as detailed yet minimal mise en scéne can be seen to evoke notions such as *sabi.*

The tone of these films embodies a very different aspect of Japanese culture to the widely distributed, extreme cinema. Violence is a rarity and events are more implied than revealed. These films are marketed as artworks with a rich cultural background. The distribution of these films by cinematic societies such as the British Film Institute imply that they are consumed by exclusive, educated audiences. This type of marketing and consumption ensures that these films are perceived as historical texts and works of high art rather than works of entertainment with a strong and conscious aesthetic. Consequently, the original point of the films has been missed. Roland Barthes argues that this kind of misinterpretation is inevitable on a cultural level. Cultural differences hinder true understanding and inform the way cultural artefacts, such as cinema, are encountered. Japanese cinema and mass culture is being experienced by western audiences in a way that colours their perceptions. Japanese cinema from past eras, which is closely connected to Japanese culture, is not widely marketable. This is evident from the limited distribution of post-war Japanese cinema. Barthes points out that:

> Thus in Japanese, the proliferation of functional suffixes and the complexity of enclitics suppose that the subject advances into utterance through certain precautions, repetitions, delays, and instances whose final volume (we can no longer speak in a simple line of words) turns the subject, precisely, into a great envelope empty of speech, and not that dense kernel which is supposed to direct our sentences […] so that which seems to us an excess of subjectivity (Japanese, it is said, articulates impressions, not affidavits) is more a way of diluting, of haemorrhaging, the subject in a fragmented, particles language diffracted to emptiness. (Barthes 1970: 7)

In this comment, Barthes is discussing the complexities of Japanese language. He says that the organisation of sentences is such that the subject is made diffuse. Aspects of speech in Japanese such as expression and silence that initially serve to accentuate and clarify subject, in fact, do the opposite. The connection between language and culture is strong. Language is intrinsic to complete understanding of other cultures. This type of speech is another example of a Japanese identity that is difficult to define. Barthes makes a comparison to other languages as he describes the subject as our 'dense kernal' which drives our sentences. When Napier suggested that Japan is seen by many as an object of fantasy, Barthes further exemplifies this point with his analysis of Japanese language. Japanese culture can

only be seen as a fantasy among markets, the distribution of post war Japanese cinema fulfils this fantasy for a market. The complexities of its aesthetic is appreciated as something indicative of Japanese culture and is a signifier of Japaneseness to a market, yet its intricacies means that it cannot be fully understood.

When the post-modern analysis of Barthes is applied to post-war Japanese cinema, we must first consider the conditions under which these films were made and consumed. They were intended to be viewed by native Japanese audiences united in the mourning of two cities and a shattered national character. The thematic content of these films was intended to impart values that are entirely contextual to purely Japanese situations and problems. When viewed now, they are far removed from these themes. They are seen around the world in cinemas and on DVD as time pieces, as something to be collected. The presence of the director within the film's style is a defining factor in the marketing of these films. Western audiences can only truly appreciate the aesthetic aspects of these films while the thematic content is dislocated. This dislocation is embodied by the victors of World War Two as extolled by their influence throughout the world, while the defeated nations had been humiliated. These two completely different cultural contexts that were relevant at the time of the production of these films, no longer inform the viewers of these films. Even tutored audiences that are aware of these themes cannot truly understand the implications that these films make. Scenes in *Tokyo Monogatari* (Ozu 1953) utilise a combination of aesthetics and thematic content that are implicit in the true appreciation of the film; an appreciation bleeds into the daily life of viewer, something that could be understood on a personal level. This is achieved through Ozu's use of thematic juxtaposition to illustrate the differences between the younger generation's approach to marriage and the older generation. This could mean a great deal more to audiences who understand the Japanese perception of marriage and attitude toward women, whereas those who are not familiar with these perspectives may focus on the act of visual juxtaposition, rather than its utilisation within the film.

The scene that illustrates this juxtaposition begins with a mid shot of a hotel hallway. The camera is placed low down with light entering from the left of the frame. The shot is framed by the hallway itself, levelling the mise en scène so perspective is still present while still utilising deep focus. Objects such as ice buckets and sake bottles litter the bottom of the hallways on both the left and right side, ordering the symmetry of this particular shot. Two women appear while singing from the right, emerging from two separate doorways; however, this still conforms to Ozu's symmetry as one of the women never moves over the centre of the hallway, leaving a space between the two in width and length. The sound at this moment

is diegetic as the two women sing as they dart in and out of the shot both exiting from the same doorways they emerged from. Although the sound in this scene is not particularly loud its presence is still noticeable as the women sing in their navigation of the hallway. Visually we then edit to a high shot overlooking the sea at a forty five degree angle, while the sound of the two women humming gradually fades out. The two figures sit in close proximity to one another; they are dressed in similar pattered robes. Another edit closes in on the couple, this time taken from a low angle looking upwards towards them, still on a forty five degree angle. The right figure, an old woman, turns her head to reveal her face as she talks to her husband; her soft voice is punctuated by concern as she asks if he slept well. We then cut to a straight shot at a one hundred and eighty degree angle of the husband, who is also elderly. He turns to look at the camera and despite his wife's concern, smiles and says he didn't but could hear her snoring. This shot is then reversed to show his wife playfully disagreeing which then returns to the original shot behind the two as the husband acknowledges that the hotel is for young people and not suited to their needs. There is no malice or anger in his voice, just a simple observation which is mirrored visually as the shot continues in silence for a short time after this interaction ends. We then edit back to a room in the hotel. The shot is again confined by doorways with a similar use of deep focus, however with very little light in comparison to the previous outdoor shot. The two women working in the hotel are adjacent to one another as one occupies the end of the two rooms and one the divide that separates the two. Moving in unison they dust from left to right along the top of their respective doorways. One turns to face the other as they carry on working. At this point they both share the centre of the shot framed by the doorways. Even before a conversation begins the sound within the scene differs greatly. The almost silence of the last scene is now punctuated by brushes and rustling of the two characters cleaning the room. The sound of their voices also differs greatly from the old people. The two cleaners use a stronger tone of voice as they describe the behaviour of two young newly-weds. The camera stays in one position, firmly outside of the conversion as Ozu's camera does not want to intrude on the situation at hand.

Using this scene as an example, we recognise the stylistic elements that imprint this visual identity of Japanese cinema from this period. The emphasis on symmetry, timing and framing shows a meditative approach to cinema. However, in terms of Japanese national character very little can be truly understood from these elements alone. The aesthetic features of this scene culminate in this juxtaposition between the busy, gossiping young maids and the polite, positive and static older couple making the true beauty of this scene the exploration of the boundaries between generations.

Although ideas such as the ones presented within the sequence are not specific to Japanese society, there are contextual factors within post-war Japanese cinema that inform the rendering of these themes. It is these contextual factors that cannot be identified or articulated by contemporary western audiences. The distribution of these films as time pieces and art works distorts this understanding. This does not just apply to Ozu but to other works from this era. We can only understand this exploration with relevant cultural references and knowledge of language; we may experience the intended message but there is a potential to misinterpret nuances. So ultimately in earlier examples of cinema, the Japanese identity can only be understood through the analysis of visual and aesthetic style in comparison to our own native cultures, very similar to Barthes postulations about the understanding of foreign languages. This could be called the spectacle of comparison; the infatuation with that which is different, because it is different.

II: Carroll, folk cinema and alternative folk cinema: The export of traditional identities

Art that is made to be distributed on a national level by Japanese studios, such as the big studios of the post-war era and the new wave films of the 1960s (Studios such as Tōhō and Toei), is too closely connected to their cultural origin to be distributed on the same scale as a Hollywood film. As Carroll points out, mass art requires little background knowledge and understanding to consume. To fully grasp the meaning of Ozu's social drama or the significance of Seijun Suzuki's approach to the Yakuza genre, a great deal of background information and an interest in Japanese cinema is required, not to mention an understanding of Japanese language and culture. The consumption of films of this nature make up the first market that the thesis is concerned with. The 'Japaneseness', the closeness of these texts to their cultural origin, is important to the consumers of this market. The films themselves represent an image of traditional Japanese culture, a fantasy that Susan Napier referred to in the introduction to the thesis.

At the time of directors such as Kurosawa and Ozu, immediately following the defeat of Japan in the Second World War, Japan was seen as a fallen enemy to be controlled. After the US occupation strict measures were placed on the cultural output of Japanese cinema (Richie 2001). The films that had been made with US supervision under SCAP (Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers) introduced heavy censorship into Japanese media, including cinema. Although these films enjoyed a great amount of success internationally, they were made for Japanese people coming to terms with the occupation of their country.

The aesthetic practices displaying a synergy between reality and art could be seen as an attempt to unite Japanese audiences culturally. Jay Leyda describes the reception of Akira Kurosawa's *Drunken Angel* (1948) at a film festival upon its release in the US in 1954: 'This film (little known outside of Japan) involuntarily played a very practical role in Kurosawa's career, for it is to *Drunken Angel* that we owe the Venice entry of *Rashomon* […] The raw fierceness of *Drunken Angel* made Burstyn hesitate to show it to American audiences [...]' (Leyda 1954). Leyda's analysis of the controversies surrounding *Drunken Angel* in the west upon its release signifies the cultural exclusivity central to the understanding of the film and the potential misinterpretation. However, the important aspect of Leyda's analysis is the appreciation of aesthetic style and the highlighting of the importance of *Drunken Angel* in terms of cementing a place for Japanese cinema in the west at festivals. There are elements to *Drunken Angel* that made it difficult for western audiences to understand it upon release. The social background from which this film had been made (SCAP censorship) and the stylistic features give this film a distinctly Japanese identity. It is this connection to post-war Japanese culture and the intricate style of the film that is consumed by the markets interested in post-war Japanese cinema. In contemporary media, these films form a very exclusive portion of Japanese cinema released in the UK and US. These films are consumed by a very specific market who are educated in Japanese culture. Carroll comments on distribution on this scale and exclusivity. He differentiates between mass art and media created by an indigenous group of people by drawing upon their shared cultural experience.

> 'folk art articulates an individual ethos or vision of a people from below. It expresses their distinctive mode of being. Mass art, on the other hand, expresses nothing distinctive. It blurs; it homogenizes. And it does this for a reason – namely, so that it will be consumable by the number largest of people possible.' (Carroll 1998: 17)

Carroll was originally writing to demonstrate a resistance to mass art by some critics; however, his definition of folk art is accurate when considering some of Japanese cinema. Folk art seeks to represent commonalities of those present within a culture. For example, films such as Kenji Mizoguchi's *Uegetsu Monogatari* (1953) seeks to represent this as a cohesive cultural identity to its audience through its adaptation of Japanese folklore as well as having stylistic elements that are recognisably Japanese. On an international level this allows audiences to experience a piece of that culture, which is how these films are marketed outside of Japan. All Japanese cinema can be considered mass art on a domestic level. Domestically Japanese cinema utilises a combination of artistry and industrial techniques as well as

requiring little background knowledge to consume it. On the other hand, when looking at the distribution of these films globally, the thematic content is lost in translation and stylistic techniques do not coincide with mainstream globally distributed cinema (for example Hollywood cinema). Japanese cinema from the post-war era draws upon its cultural roots for aesthetic identity. Within Japan, these techniques may be commonplace and even archaic now, but outside of Japan they represent a separate aesthetic to Hollywood. Sugimoto offers a definition of folk art from a Japanese perspective. Although Sugimoto does not refer to the consumption of folk art, he refers to its production:

> 'Having taken root over decades or centuries, the content of folk culture differs from place to place and relies upon the historical memories of people in the region. Folk culture requires neither mass products nor mass media to be consumed, it normally involves a large number of people in a locality or region, or even throughout Japan.' (Sugimoto 2003: 255)

Sugimoto's comment originally regarded cultural events specific to regions within Japan but looking at this while also considering Carroll's definition, we find that the term is more informed and clearly defined in terms of its relation to cinema and mass art.

The use of camera and acknowledgement of the audience's connection to the film is something that is specific to Japanese cinema. This is seen in many of the films from the post-war era. For example, Kurosawa's *Drunken Angel* uses still cameras and long takes to observe events. Within the opening scenes of the film the camera is positioned outside of a door frame; through the door Toshiro Mifune's character, Matsunaga, can be seen sat through the door, as the character of Takashi Shimura, Sanada, turns his back on the camera. The shot remains static as the door begins to close. The second before the door slams, Sanada catches it. This segment continues and is interrupted once by a close shot of Matsunaga observing his doctor. It is ten seconds until Sanada bends down to observe the door's movement, trying to work out a reason why the door moves. There he stops the door with a bin, allowing us to observe the rest of his medical examination through the doorway, all of which is done with the minimum of background noise. This entire sequence lasts for 40 seconds and seems fairly innocuous, however, the inclusion of small sequences such as this one illustrates the observational tone of early post-war Japanese cinema. Here the characters interact with their environment, becoming subjects within the mise en scene to serve an aesthetic purpose. While Sanada is looking at the door, two aesthetic purposes are being served: it allows for Kurosawa's shot to go unspoiled as the door would otherwise block the view of the examination room (the character has constructed the frame with which the audience watches

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the action transpiring on screen); secondly, Sanada is adding to the reality in which *Drunken Angel* is set. The imperfection in the door's function enhances the verisimilitude throughout the film, a recognisable reality without perfection that the audience can relate to and connect with.

The way in which Kurosawa used realism is individual to Japanese cinema. Within western cinema, specifically British cinema, the camera is used to display the grit of real life. Haphazard set construction, natural lighting help illustrate the tone of reality within western cinema, the most notable examples being British cinema of the 1960s. Films such as *The loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (Richardson 1962) are examples of the way western directors use realism. In Japanese cinema, aesthetic features, such as long takes and static camera allow the audience to observe the film and concentrate on the mise en scéne. This shortens the distance between the world of the film and the world that the audience inhabit.

As seen in Kurosawa's film, there is an impression of reality that, through the director's stylistic choices, the audience is able to observe, as if looking through a window. These aesthetic choices regarding camera and mise en scéne are not meant to represent reality in the way a documentary might. They are merely representations of a believable surrounding, framing the plot in a way that the viewer can identify with. The aesthetic choices made by directors like Kurosawa are intended to make the film a window through which the audience can experience the narrative presented in a reality similar to their own. This is a point Richie makes when he details the work of Yasujiro Ozu as principally displaying traditional Japanese artistic tendencies such as realism. He writes: 'The traditional view is seen in repose, commanding a limited field but commanding it entirely. It is the attitude for watching, for listening even for learning. Some have consequently compared this position with that of the haiku poet, the tea master, even the priest' (Richie 2001: 123). Richie refers to the connection between the post war directors and how they are revered among critics and Japanese cinephiles, the market in which these films are distributed now. These films were made originally for Japanese audiences and so there is a clear distinction between the intended effect upon the release of these films and the consumption of these films now. It is the connection between aesthetics and realism that make these particular films interesting to contemporary western markets. Moments such the example given from *Drunken Angel* are present within other moments of Japanese cinema. Whether the film aesthetically addresses the audience such as Sanada does in *Drunken Angel,* or the film utilises realism to suit the tone of the film, they represent a cultural identity that modern audiences wish to collect. The cultural identity that the stylistic features of post-war Japanese cinema use link reality and art.

This concept could be seen to be linked to Buddhist conception of *mujô,* meaning transience (Parkes 2005). The only reality is one that is felt by our senses which is in a constant state of change and so is transient. Elements of aesthetic devices used within the post war era draw upon concepts such as *mujô.*

The opening of Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950) begins with a shot of the dilapidated Rashomon Gate. This is placed within the centre of the mise en scéne first at long range, and then a edit moves the camera closer. These shots last for twenty seconds. The only movement seen within the shots throughout this short segment is the direction of the rain as it falls diagonally from right to left. The emphasis Kurosawa has given this shot allows the viewer to fully explore the mise en scéne and the building in its decaying state. Kurosawa's camera work is static, and the edit allows the audience to explore the building in more detail. The twenty seconds spent on the scene implies that the location is important but also allows the viewer to reflect upon the state of the building. In this way the style of *Rashomon* is exemplary of *mono no aware.* The film reflects upon the transient nature of its environments. In this way, Japanese cinema's ability to capture reality through the act of filming a scene, allowing the audience to experience *mono no aware.* The reflective nature of the films by directors such as Ozu and Kurosawa acknowledges that there is a point of reciprocity between Japanese culture and cinema. The markets that consume this kind of cinema are interested in the Japaneseness of the texts they consume. Now that DVD reissues are becoming readily available, the work of directors such as Kurosawa are available to these markets. The aesthetics of these films are what distinguishes them from the standard, more mainstream, Japanese cinema. However, the transition from this meditative style to chaotic style embodied by contemporary Japanese cinema is also received in a similar way to these examples of Japanese 'folk cinema'

In contrast to post-war cinema, the films of the Japanese new wave were pulp fiction aimed at domestic audiences irrespective of background. The style of these films can be considered more mass orientated as it draws upon an international repertoire for its aesthetic identity. For example, the still and understated imagery of Ozu's *Tokyo Story* (1953) is nowhere to be seen in Suzuki's *Tokyo Drifter* (1966); instead there are a number of techniques that seem to suggest an influence of 1960s pop culture. Colour is used to great effect within Suzuki's film, creating images that are visually striking such as the use of solid colour in works by artists like Andy Warhol. Entire rooms painted one colour clash with the protagonist, Tetsu's (Tetsuya 'Tetsu Phoenix' Hondo) turquoise suit, cutting a stand out figure while alluding to the film drawing away from a recognised reality and more into the realms of

a separate film reality, one which is prescribed by the director.

One of *Tokyo Drifter*'s most iconic scenes as regards its style occurs at the beginning of the film. The scene begins with a mid shot focusing on the character of Tetsu behind a door. Another character, Otsuka (played by Hideaki Esumi), is stood directly in line with the door, obscuring our vision of Tetsu. As he moves to the left of the frame the camera follows him, only revealing Otskua's back, a stylistic quirk that accompanies Otsuka's character throughout much of the film. There is a cut to Tetsu emerging from a curtain in the background, again this shot is obscured by another character. As Tetsu moves from the background to the foreground the camera begins to shift perspective to the left, placing Tetsu in the centre of the shot as he grabs a gun from a nearby desk. Tetsu then moves back to back with the character and begins to turn to the right of the frame. The camera then moves to right of the two figures as Tetsu forcibly breaks away from the other character putting Tetsu in the centre of the shot. There is then an edit to a close up of another character in the background of this particular shot. Suzuki's use of colour is particularly evident as the colour above the eye level of the character is white that horizontally fades into a deep red. This leads to a low shot pointing upwards as Tetsu's boss as he leaves the room depicting striking and inventive camera angles. As his boss is moving, he stops mid-pace and looks toward the camera which in turn lowers its angle to show his entire body going through a doorway. The next shot depicts Tetsu walking backwards from the right side of the mise en scene. The scene is organised with a chain fence over the same white and deep red background as seen in the previous close up. A woman is lying on the floor after being shot with her lover stood over her. Two pillars that unequally divide the mise en scene enclose the dead woman and her lover while a chair is closer to the foreground, further throwing off the symmetry of the shot. The lover then runs over to the body and picks up a gun, pointing it toward the camera, presumably at the back of Tetsu's boss. As he slowly lines up the shot, Tetsu spins round and shoots the gun from his hand. The background then changes colour from deep red to white, and in the same instant Tetsu turns back around facing the right of the frame. A a close shot of Tetsu on the white background is also unsymmetrical due to the framing of the character with a black pillar vertically breaking the continuity of the background, to the left of the frame. The final shot of the sequence is a vertical shot taken from a high perspective. The camera is slightly off centre as it looks downwards through a square hatch. Below the bodies of the woman and another man both face up are accompanied by the text in Japanese '*Lovers' suicide or murder?'* further distancing the audience from the world that the film presents by utilising techniques such as subtitles to explain the purpose of a certain shot.

This short sequence seems to have a more explosive and obvious style than films previously discussed. There is an emphasis on the spectacle of the scene, highlighted by the colour which is the most noticeable feature of this sequence. The concentration that would previously go into the construction of the mise en scene as seen in the post-war films is absent. *Tokyo Drifter*'s aesthetic properties signifies a definite break from older forms in Japanese cinema. By using a traditional genre such as the *Yakuza* (Japanese Gangster), Seijun Suzuki delivers a film that aesthetically differs from and comments on its previous generic incarnations. For example, Kurosawa's depiction of gangsters within *Drunken Angel* as self-destructive and frightened young men is abandoned and this new 'cool' persona, embodied by Tetsu, quickly became a staple to the Yakuza genre that has survived to this day. Contemporary actors such as Kenji Matsuda adopt similar personae to Tetsyua Hondo while video games such as the Yakuza (*Ryü ga Gotoku.* Sega 2005-2010) draw upon this these representations of yakuza for characters. However, as a reaction against the stoic cinema that immediately followed the war, Suzuki and his peers became a part of the legacy of mass art through the distribution of their films. The actions of the character of Tetsu show something that had been previously neglected by the realism of Japanese cinema, a cool persona, something that US directors like Sam Fuller and later on Quentin Tarentino placed in very high regard and is quintessential to the aesthetic of pulp fiction cinema. The final shots of the scene display a nonchalant coolness that accompanies Tetsu throughout all of his endeavours in *Tokyo Drifter.*

In this respect, Japanese cinema is exemplary of what Carroll terms mass art. Aesthetic trends appear out of a shared cultural imagination. The use of cinematic trends and techniques comment on and support a shared cultural base. Although this can be said of many cultures with a cinematic legacy, Japan has become increasingly aware of how these aesthetic trends transcend artistic classification, homogenising culture into a form that encompasses high and low art. The cinematic system within Japan focuses on the creative drive of the director to craft the film. This is in contrast to the Hollywood model in which a greater emphasis is placed on the role of the producer and the financial earnings of a film and its cost to the studio. Figures such as Jerry Bruckheimer are given particular attention because of their ability to market films. In Japanese cinema, there is a different focus and the idea of a shared experience that all can partake in is integral to the idea of mass cinema, and one that has been streamlined and reforged over time by placing creative control with the hands of the director. Directly after the post-war era, other directors began to comment on the aesthetic style of directors like Ozu and Kurosawa. These directors utilised a wider cinematic

knowledge[1] such as that of the Nouvelle Vague that was emerging in France at the time. Directors such as Nagisa Oshima and Seijun Suzuki decided to remove themselves as film makers from the classical Japanese aesthetics:

> As with the new cinema that emerged from France and the United States, the films were made by young, largely inexperienced, but mostly cine-literate directors, yet these Japanese directors were working with studio resources, effectively being sponsored to subvert the system from within, rather than burrowing their way into the popular conscience from the industrial margins. However, what began as a fascinating case of studio experimentation did rapidly evolve into a genuine sector of independent production, and independent thought[...] (Berra 2009: 227)

Berra is commenting on the differences between the new wave movements such as France and Britain and Japan. Similar to the films of the Nouvelle Vague, the Japanese new wave focussed on distancing itself from the previous epoch's cinema. However, unlike in France, where the Nouvelle Vague body of work operated independently of mainstream mass culture, these Japanese directors were encouraged by the studios to experiment with cinema, to stylistically differ to that of the post-war directors. Films such as *Tokyo Drifter (Tôkyô Nagaremono.* Suzuki 1966) and *Violence at High Noon* (*Hakuchu no Torima.* Oshima 1966) actively try to disassociate themselves from the work of Kenji Mizoguchi and other directors from the 1940s and 50s. It must also be recognised that these films served a different purpose. The post-war films sought to unite Japanese audiences after the trauma of defeat in World War Two yet they were not always popular in Japan. For example, the films of Kurosawa although highly relevant to the thesis were much more successful in the west as were seen in numerous festival nominations for his films as well as the adaptation of his more famous works by western directors (for example *Rashomon* gained him international recognition at Cannes and his later 1954 film *Seven Samurai* was remade into *The Magnificent Seven* by John Sturges in 1960). Although watched by Japanese audiences, the fame and recognition these films achieved were usually outside of Japan.

Due to *Tokyo Drifters'* thematic and stylistic roots as a Yakuzu film it is safe to say that the film's motive is to entertain. The intrinsically Japanese style that markets are interested in when they consume post-war Japanese cinema is not present. These films are

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[1] The director Nagisa Oshima grew to be great friends and working partners and with Jean Luc Goddard. This type of cinematic knowledge is what influenced the Japanese directors of the 1960's to stylistically rebel against their predecessors. This is detailed in Grindon Legars article *Realm of the Censors: Cultural Boundaries and the Poetics of the Forbidden,* page 293 – 317, (in)Washburn, Dennis and Cavanaugh, Carole (eds) 2001. *Word and Image in Japanese Cinema.*

still marketed in a similar way to the films immediately following the Second World War. They are consumed as pieces of Japanese culture, crafted by a director, yet Berra's comment before made it clear that these films were produced with the intention of escaping the style of post-war cinema. The strategy in creating these films was created by Japanese studios, making these films a greater collaborative process, an anti-post-war cinema. This increased stylistic effort may not reflect the same idea of mass culture as that of Kurosawa, but it is consumed in a similar way. DVD reissues of these films share a similar treatment as the post-war directors.

The films of Suzuki tried to break away from the traditional notions of Japanese style and identity as seen in the work of the Ozu and Kurosawa. The directors of the 1960s utilised a more contemporary, and more importantly, 'cool' aesthetic. Cinema of the Japanese new wave looked beyond its national borders and addressed entertainment on a global scale. Chris D writes about the aesthetic objectives of these new wave directors, emphasising a new, more incidental and instinctive method of aesthetic construction: 'They did not have any art house pretensions. However radical their style of frame composition or editing, however daring or perverse their subject matter, these traits were always usually born out of intuition, an innate sense of aesthetics rather than calculation. ' (D. 2005: 1) Here Chris D. comments on the aesthetic approaches of directors like Suzuki and his peers and implies that they were not tied down by an overbearing sense of aesthetics, they worked off instinct. This differs greatly from my earlier quote of Richie describing Ozu and his style. This lack of boundaries is present within films such as *Tokyo Drifter* and speak to an audience versed in aesthetics outside of their original cultural frame of reference. In Suzuki's films both the subject and style illustrate D's point.

The intuitive and popular cinema of the 1960s that is described by D. can also be considered with Carroll's description of Mass Art. The tendencies of Mass Art as also lacking the art house sensibilities of high art fare yet retaining a level of awareness of style:

> Indeed throughout the history of mass art, one finds a marked tendency in pulp fictions to aim above the lowest common denominator of aesthetic taste and morality just because an appeal to higher values is itself an attractive calling card for the largest portion of the audience. (Carroll 1998: 26)

Although this comment from Carroll refers to appraisal of pulp fiction and its style, there is a commonality with that of Suzuki's cinema. There is a strong aesthetic that runs throughout the film as regards it visual style. As Carroll points out, this kind of anarchic style,

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synonymous with pulp fiction, is similar to that of Suzuki's films and aims itself at the mass market. This is something that Japanese studios who employed these directors were possibly banking on. So even though these film makers sought to escape the confines of their predecessors and played to mass audiences, their contemporary appeal is similar to the post-war film makers. The films of the new wave, like the post war films are still distributed to appeal to a market of Japanese cinephiles. Though their original aesthetic content aimed to disassociate themselves from the films of the post war era they are still distributed and consumed in a similar way.

III: The contemporary DVD market and the art house cinema

This appreciation and entrenched relationship with Japanese culture requires prior knowledge and maybe some education in order to consume these films. Within western territories, there are more suitable instances of media can be likened to mass art; for example, the films that dominate western media as well as texts that are exported globally such as Hollywood blockbusters and popular music that is distributed by global media conglomerates such as Sony and Universal. Cinema that is intended for smaller more specialised audiences and that is distributed on a much smaller scale, has more in common with 'folk art' when considered in comparison to that of Hollywood. The circles the distribute these films focus on their national specificity. Distributors such as the BFI (British Film Institute) and Artificial Eye market films on a relatively small scale and utilise these films status' as Japanese cultural artefacts. Films such as the works of Kurosawa are released in collections: the BFI have a large selection of Kurosawa films and market them together, using similar packaging. They are also available under specific sections in high street stores (usually placed with art house and European cinema) and are usually priced higher than chart DVDs, making these films part of an exclusive distribution circle. The exclusivity of these films distribution and marketing, as well as the specific interest of the market that consumes these films places them outside of the thesis' definition of mass art.

Conclusively the important factor in identifying the market in which these films are distributed is the stylistic content of these films. They may differ from one another yet the stylistic factors and methods represent a previous epoch that is commodified through distribution. These films are consumed for their place in Japanese cultural heritage, they are cultural artefacts rather than pieces of mass art. The current distribution methods of these films means that there is a lack of understanding of the film's original intentions, and so they

are a perfect example of Roland Barthes and Susan Napier's postulation that Japanese culture is reduced to fantasy in order to be consumed. They highlight the 'folkness' of these works, rather than the 'massness'.

The new wave films set out to separate themselves from the folk style and identity of the post-war films. However, the markets that consume Japanese cinema today do not necessarily differentiate between the subtleties of style after a film's initial release, but are aware of the emphasis on aesthetics that these directors communicated through their films. These films are marketed to be collected and not merely consumed. It also has to be taken into consideration that these films were not produced at a time when DVD or international distribution was commonplace, so there is a connection between the age of these films and their labelling for distribution. As 'folk cinema', they are now marketed as romanticised texts and so it seems that common consumption does not apply.

Chapter 2: Generalised Distribution and Contemporary Japanese Mass Art
I. Introduction: Carroll on consumption

Within Japan there is an elitist approach to art similar to western societies in as much as there is a hierarchical system that ranks art in terms of its aesthetic value. In British society arts such as painting, opera and ballet are placed within the echelons of high art, while mass cinema (Hollywood blockbusters), television soaps and popular music are aimed at mass consumption. This means that Japanese and western perceptions of art are similar, as they both involve a hierarchy of art forms. This makes Carroll's theory on mass art relevant to Japanese mass art; however, this does not mean that both western and Japanese approaches to mass art are the same. A definition of Japanese mass art is offered by Yoshio Sugimoto as he illuminates these differences:

> Mass art, whose roots include television shows, popular songs, posters and detective stories, is often regarded as pseudo-art or vulgar art, inasmuch as its production is based upon collaboration between professional artists and media organisations and its recipients are non-specific masses. (Sugimoto 2003: 259)

Here Sugimoto highlights the Japanese perspective on mass art's place in a hierarchy of art forms. Mass art's defining feature is its marketability by media organisations, and its design as consumable media. Sugimoto also claims that they are seen as 'vulgar' or 'pseudo' and are opposite to more 'pure' forms of art within the hierarchy. However, the inclusion of artists within this collaborative process that Sugimoto points out is illustrated by the directors within the 1960's. This is one instance where western and eastern perceptions of mass art differ.

It is accepted widely that the production of mass art is an industrialised process (Benjamin 1935). Hollywood, for example, utilises many of the popular attributes from different cinematic backgrounds within their production methods to blend a film that is relevant to current popular culture; the success of comic book films has spawned a myriad of different titles that are incorporated into the summer blockbuster cycle. There is a clear difference in the marketing of Japanese mass art and its consumption in the west. The production of media in Japan is recognised as process that involves artistic expertise but is sullied by media conglomerates. Carroll's reflection upon mass art differ greatly from Sugimoto's aim to impart knowledge regarding Japanese society although he reaches a similar conclusion to Carroll. *The Philosophy of Mass Art* is written to underpin and assess

arguments regarding the cultural perception of mass art.

Unlike earlier instances of Japanese cinema, contemporary Japanese cinema is more defined by its stylistic, thematic and generic content. The focus of mass art, as Carroll describes it, is on large numbers of people consuming art from a shared background as discussed earlier within the thesis. To further define mass art, Carroll looks at the effects of this consumption on audiences and markets and attributes engagement with these texts to their status as mass art:

> Thus far the audience activities I have been drawing attention to have been what might be called cognitive. But, of course, the consumers of mass fiction are not merely involved actively in a continuous process of cognition; they are also actively involved in response to mass fictions emotionally and morally. (Carroll 1998: 43)

Here Carroll asserts that mass art does not only utilise the cognitive faculties of the audience through its consumption but is also in support of moral and emotional engagement with the text. With this in mind, contemporary Japanese cinema is not something that is merely designed for consumption, as Sugimoto presents. This kind of interaction with cinema informs the thesis to look at the moral and emotional responses that the aesthetic content of Japanese cinema demands and how this effects its distribution. Emotional investment in Japanese cinema can be seen to guide the tastes of markets and further define them; however, this is not taken into account through contemporary official distribution. This particular section of the thesis will look at how western distribution homogenises the aesthetic content of Japanese cinema.

II. Japanese cinema as 'Extreme' other

Unlike Japanese cinema that is distributed as folk art, contemporary Japanese cinema is divided into many diverse groups. However, like the distribution of folk art, many of these smaller groups are ignored or grouped within mainstream distribution. For example, many Japanese genre films such as Japanese horror or action films are marketed as extreme cinema, when they simply offer a different approach these genres. Films such as Hideo Nakata's *Dark Water* (*Honogurai Mizu no Soko Kara* 2002), are distributed as extreme cinema when they are neither extreme in style nor in theme. They are placed along side films such as *Tetsuo: The Iron Man* (Tsukamoto 1989), a film that utilises unconventional camera, sound and narrative to create a subversive comment on technology, typifying the extreme thematically

and stylistically. Japanese genre cinema is something that the vast majority of western audiences could never really have experienced within their own culture. This is one possibility for their marketing as 'Extreme Cinema'. This kind of cultural contact signifies an abbreviation of cultural differences that had been previously identified by Barthes. The emotional response to these films can define audiences; however, the generalised way in which these films are distributed fails to recognise this important aspect of mass cinema.

To fully explore the relationship between the kinds of extreme cinema available from Japan, a comparison between two films will be made: *Versus* (2002) is a film that mixes both the horror spoof and the action genres and is directed Ryuhei Kitamura, a director famous for his work within the action genre; and *Vistor Q* (*Bijitâ Q* 2001)*, an experimental film from cult director Takeshi Miike which utilises a mixture of hand held and static camera and is thematically concerned with the breakdown of the Japanese family and institutionalisation of violence. Both films are distributed in the UK by Tartan Video, marketed under the Asia Extreme label. The consumption of these films is centred around the content of these films; however, the style of these films is completely ignored by the distributors. *Visitor Q* is a far more subversive film that differs stylistically to mainstream cinema. And while *Versus* utilises blood and gore to an extreme level, the use of camera, mise en scéne and sound create a tame and light hearted style. The similar marketing of these films implies that there is no distinction between the two. Both of these can fall into different, more classical terms of art house and mainstream. The distribution of these films by Tartan blurs these distinctions, and homogenises the market that consume these films.

III: Case Study: Kitamura's *Versus* (2004) and Miike's *Visitor Q* (2001)

The first film that will be analysed is Kitamura's *Versus*. Kitamura is an action director with a global cult following due to this film. *Versus* is a violent action spoof with many fight scenes that focus on the gratuitous blood and gore. The visual style of *Versus* is closely related to Hollywood action cinema as Kitamura utilises a number of techniques that western audiences are used to such as an emphasis on close ups and fast paced editing. In this scene the camera follows the characters and pays particular attention to Tak Sakaguchi as he dispatches a number of assassins. The pumping soundtrack is well suited to the film's fast pace and emphasises the film's action orientated style. This film's inclusion in Tartan's 'Asia Extreme' range could not be due to elements of film language because they do not qualify as extreme, but due to the film's violent content which is often seen in western action films.

The penultimate fight scene in the film begins with the camera looking up at the main character played by Tak Sakaguchi. His back is facing with a sword slung over his shoulder. The camera moves from right to left. He then turns round as high tempo electronic music plays in the background; the right side of his face is covered in blood. This cuts to a static shot of zombie assassin, he pulls out two guns before it edits back to Tak. The camera moves in a similar way, from right to left as Tak turns round to face the antagonist, he also begins to move up to focus on Tak's face. This then edits to another assassin as she walks into frame, the camera pulls up to reveal her face. There is then another quick edit back to Tak's face as he gestures to the right. There is then another edit to yet another zombie assassin as he crawls down a tree vertically; making a crunching sound effect as he moves. He stops at the base of the tree and looks at the camera, his face is distorted and then he makes an animalistic sound. There is then a close up of Tak's face as all of his enemies have been introduced. As he speaks, there is a cut to a close up of a female character he has been protecting throughout the film, and an edit back to Tak's face as he says 'I never lose' and pulls his sword from over his shoulder. There is an edit to a mid shot of the main villain, as he pulls a briefcase from below the mise en scéne and gestures towards the camera. There is another edit back to the same close up of Tak for a second. The music then picks up in volume and the camera is pointed upwards and revolves quickly counter clockwise as Tak jumps. His landing is signified by a shot to his feet and then the camera edits to a shot of the first zombie assassin running to the edge of a cliff. The camera then turns from on its left side to its regular position. There is then a different close up to the left of Tak's face, his sword is over his shoulder again. There are then three quickly successive edits; the first shows the assassin running to the very edge of the cliff, the next is to Tak as he looks up at the antagonist, and the final is to a slow motion shot of the assassin jumping. The image is out of focus and accompanied by a sound effect that signifies rapid movement and is followed by a high shot of Tak as he moves to engage his opponent, the camera moves from right to left following Tak as he spins. This then edits to a high angle shot of the assassin jumping with a flip from the cliff down to Tak. The assassin lands on his knees, the camera is looking at the assassin from the bottom right as he lifts a gun and points it to the left of the frame. The edit then moves backwards just behind the right leg of Tak as we see the assassin knelt point his gun, the camera is at a forty five degree lean. Tak then jumps. We first see a shot from a right angle, pointed up at Tak as he launches himself and then a shot from behind the antagonist as Tak jumps over his head. The camera follows Tak down as he lands behind the assassin. The film then edits to a closer view of the assassin, the camera pans down following Tak's movements to close of the right side of

the antagonist. There is then another edit of Tak's sword cutting through the assassin which is followed by a straight shot from the left of the assassin as he falls. There is then an edit to a low angle shot of the antagonist split down the middle: it begins to fall before another edit of a close up of the assassin's face. His is head is parallel with the bottom frame of the shot, his face is covered in blood and he wears a pained expression. There is then an edit to a long shot, the animal like assassin reacting to this. The camera is pointed straight on as he makes another inhuman sound. The camera then cuts to a straight shot of Tak. The camera moves from left to right as he moves his sword in slashing motions with his right hand. He now has a gun slung over his left shoulder and is smiling, the sound effects at this moment give the impression of the cutting and slicing sounds of the sword. Close ups of body parts being removed from the assassin follow this shot. Blood sprays and prosthetic organs spill as a multitude of shots focus on the character's dismembering. The final shot of this sequence is a close up from the right of the animal-like assassin as he reacts to the violence with a distressed expression and another animalistic sound effect.

Versus is a violent film, as can be determined from the extracted scene. However, the stylistic features of the film present the violence in a comedic way. The focusing on Tak Sakaguchi's while he eviscerates the assassin is intended to add comedic effect. The ridiculous amounts of blood and prosthetic limbs within the film again bear a resemblance to western B-Movies such as Sam Raimi's *Evil Dead* (1981). The constant cutting back to the reaction of the animalistic assassin also adds comedic effect. The film's less violent fight scenes illustrate a technical proficiency in action choreography but they do not make the kind of violence that this film displays constant. The style that Kitamura incorporates within *Versus* is accessible and can be seen to be quite familiar to western audiences. The way in which *Versus* couples violence and visual style shows that it is not intended to be serious. Though *Versus* displays few 'extreme' elements, the film could be linked to many films within Hollywood. The generic, stylistic and thematic elements of *Versus* do not illustrate any challenging or shocking elements that would be expected from a film under 'Asia Extreme' release. However, this is not to say that all films within Tartan's 'Asia Extreme' distribution do not qualify for the title of extreme cinema.

Takeshi Miike's *Visitor Q* (2001), is a film that embodies Japanese extreme cinema. As a director, Takeshi Miike is renowned for his controversial and subversive films. Films such as *Audition* (1999) and *Ichi the Killer* (*Ai Wa, Kanari Itai* 2001) have a cult following in the west and *Audition* was also distributed by Tartan Asia Extreme. Miike, unlike Kitamura, has a cult following as an extreme director rather than being associated with a specific genre. A

small synopsis of *Visitor Q* shows that the film follows a dysfunctional family; the daughter is a prostitute, the father is a disgraced TV presenter, the mother is a heroine addict and the son is victim of bullying and humiliation. Q, a stranger, attempts to bring this family closer through the enjoyment of sex and violence. The themes present within *Visitor Q* are taboo. They represent a side to Japan that is rarely seen in mainstream Japanese cinema. This alone makes *Visitor Q* a far more 'extreme' film than *Versus*. The stylistic elements of the film accentuate these taboo elements by utilising a unusual and more realistic aesthetic. The scene from *Visitor Q* that the thesis is concerned with, comes from when Q first visits the house.

The scene opens with two men (Q and the father of the family, Kiyoshi) sat at table. The camera is at mid range and directly in front of the two. The mise en scéne is divided. Q is framed by a broken paper wall, while Kiyoshi is not. The only light within the scene is the overhead light above the table making the exposed paper wall dark. This contrasts with the image of the two men eating. Q extends his arm to the left beyond his frame, as he hold out a rice bowl and asks for more. There is then an edit, the camera has been placed at a greater distance to the two characters and is slightly higher. The mise en scéne now shows the extent of the damage to the wall. The mother of the family, Keiko, enters from the right of the frame. Her back is turned towards the camera, and moves across the hole in the wall. As she moves out of the shot sound effects denote her working off screen until her hands appear through the frame in the wall. Sound affects abruptly get louder as Keiko hobbles across the hole in the wall and her son, Takuya, shouts and enters the shot from the left. He moves across the hole in the wall and stands in the doorway, towards the far right of the frame so the three characters remain visible in the same shot. He turns to face the table staring at Q, this position is held as Q is introduced to Takuya. He then leaves the mise en scéne to the right of the frame following Keiko. Sounds of whipping and screaming can then be heard outside of the frame. The camera position is held and continues to watch the men eat. Dialogue between Keiko and Takuya at this point indicates violence. Kiyoshi then leaves the scene to the left, ignoring the violence off camera. There is then an edit to a close up of a television. Two presenters are sat behind a desk smiling. There is then an edit back to a shot of Q. The camera is static and above the television, the shot is looking diagonally at Q as he lights a cigarette. The sound effects still denote that Takuya is beating Keiko. There is another edit. The camera is placed behind and above Q's head. The mise en scéne depicts the paper wall with a hole through it and a doorway. Beyond the doorway there is an unlit room. From the back of the shot to the left of the frame, Keiko enters as she is thrown through a paper wall within the room. The wall collapses and Takuya is stood behind it. Keiko crawls towards the camera

taking a bowl from the table and limps to the left of the frame. There is a final edit to a straight shot of the two anchor people as they say 'Isn't she cute.'

Although the violence within this scene may not be a graphic as the violence within *Versus, Visitor Q* is a far more shocking film. The construction of mise en scéne within the scene is reminiscent to the symmetry of Ozu (see chapter 1). There is a similar use of framing within the mise en scéne as well as straight, mid shot camera angles. This deliberate construction of mise en scéne as well as a lack of music enforces this ominous atmosphere. The tension of the scene is continued throughout even when the implied violence is going on. The inclusion of static shots as well as being shot in digital video, gives *Visitor Q* a much more gritty and realistic feel than *Versus.* The final shot of the scene also illustrates the dark and cruel humour that is present within *Visitor Q.*

In comparison these two films display two very different styles and yet are intended to be consumed by the same market. The way in which these films are distributed does not acknowledge the very different intentions of the films or different emotional connections attached to them. The aesthetic construction of these films is used to evoke these emotional responses. The distribution of contemporary Japanese cinema as 'Extreme' cinema however, fails to recognise these variations and implies that a great deal of Japanese cinema is used to shock audiences when this is not the case. For example, even though *Visitor Q* contains taboo subjects and disturbing imagery, the film itself is a comment upon the dysfunctional nature of the Japanese family, while *Versus* uses violence to entertain and does not utilise its aesthetic to communicate any definable themes. Distribution that fails to recognise these stylistic factors tends not to recognise the cultural origin of these films. Dudley Andrew determines that aesthetic choices that inform emotional responses are culturally specific: 'Balasz's vision of film technique was completely based on the belief that films are not pictures of reality but rather the humanization of nature, since the very landscapes we choose as backgrounds for our dramas are the products of cultural patterns within us.' (Andrew 1976: 89). Andrew identifies elements within cinema that draw upon cultural backgrounds to stylistically frame the thematic content.

Contemporary Japanese cinema draws upon a vast cultural background for its stylistic content as proved by the differing aesthetics seen within *Visitor Q* and *Versus.* Through the distribution of these films as 'extreme' cinema, western distributors can homogenise a number of different markets interested in not only the different generic aspects of Japanese cinema, but the vast cultural background that these films draw upon.

IV. Consumption and identity within contemporary Japanese cinema

Due to the homogenised distribution of contemporary Japanese cinema, Japanese blockbuster films seem to be pushed towards the public through retailers but there is very little to suggest any other kind of marketing. Contemporary Japanese cinema is distributed as a standardised product, unlike the films of the post-war era which are marketed in a very specific way, to very specific audiences. For example, the Tartan Asia Extreme and many distributors of alternative Japanese cinema do not differentiate between Korean, Japanese or Chinese cinema, they are marketed as Asian. Also the contemporary blockbusters rely upon other cultural texts for their knowledge (such as manga and anime) and so are distributed as a part of a franchise. For a system such as Japanese cinema to be understood outside of its home must require special effort on the part of the consumer. Yet the Japanese identity of these films is obscured and misunderstood by contemporary distribution. The conscious effort of distributors to occupy cultural space (i.e. shelves or movie screens) in form of marketing is contradicted by the limited release of Japanese products that seem to haphazardly appear in art house cinemas or specific shelving areas. The real question is what exactly attracts western audiences to Japanese media even though these films are limited in terms of their marketing. The contradictory aesthetics that have been explored in detail in this chapter may hold the key.

Arguments such as Americanised distribution methods push Japanese mass artworks out of the public eye are easy to make, yet may not be entirely accurate. Arguments regarding globalization and Americanisation[2] do not apply to the thesis as even though Japanese media is not marketed clearly and specifically as Japanese, it may be consumed as Japanese within some markets. The referential aspects of even the most western styled of Japanese texts (the mainstream blockbuster films) still have a link to their cultural origin even though this is not recognised by distributors. The dissemination of Japanese media texts may go beyond nationality and indicate how media flows are directed in the information age. Iwabuchi's scholarship concerning the flow of media, identifies that Japanese media may not be imparting specific Japanese values, but attributes that exist outside of national identity from what is a recognisably Japanese source.'[…]most Japanese cultural exports to Western markets are culturally neutral, in that the positive image and association with Japanese culture

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2   '...international distribution of "global brands" consumer products, advertising images, music, sameness, repetition and standardization and a global culture lacking uniqueness and potential for originality. This is an argument that can be found in popular journalism and in academic writings, and often appears when politicians evoke terms such as "McDonaldization" and "Cocacolonization" and more generally the spectres of Americanization or Westernization. (Negus and Román-Velázquez 2003: 338) This is an example of arguments of westernization that the thesis is opposed to.

or way of life is not generally related to the consumption of the products (see Iwabuchi 2002).' (Iwabuchi 2007). This allusion refers to the mainstream media that is readily exported to western countries. He asserts that they operate within a cultural middle ground, recognisably Japanese but designed in a way that non-Japanese audiences can relate to them. The exclusivity that is staple to the consumption of earlier instances of Japanese film is not present within contemporary Japanese cinema.

One of the most recent is a live action iteration: the manga/anime series *Deathnote* (*Desu Notô* Kaneko 2006) contains very few signifiers indicating the film's cultural origin. The film enjoyed reasonable international success due to its existence and immense popularity within other media format; the manga and anime enjoyed similar cult success internationally but is very much mainstream within Japan. *Deathnote* only hints at its own cultural background but still draws upon itself in its previous more successful forms, the manga and anime series, for its success and aesthetic. It is plain to see from the actors and language used within the film that it is of Japanese origin, but there is very little in the way of aesthetic specifics; there is an image of Japan, without the connotations of 'Japaneseness'. Like *Deathnote, All About Lily Chou Chou (Riri Shushu no Subete.* Iwai: 2004*) where this is not the case.* existed previously in another format (in this case as a hypertext on the internet). Its story draws upon the experiences of classmates going through troubled times and expressing themselves on internet message boards. There are numerous ways in which web and multimedia can be linked to cinema (for example fan sites and official pages about specific films and directors), but it is relatively unheard of that a film should be based on such an experimental and meta-fictional medium like a hypertext. And it is this experimentation that is central to *All About Lily Chou Chou*'s aesthetic.

Iwai utilises long takes and unobtrusive camera that capture the most minute gestures as well as large events. This is set against a narrative that is told on two plains, utilising the non-linear approach that has been part of Japanese cinema since *Rashomon*. Two characters each post their thoughts and feelings on a message board while they interact in the real world, each unaware of the other's online existence. The film opens with a black screen with Japanese type and keyboard sounds alluding to the impression of typing. After a short time there is then a high shot of a rice paddy, the green of the plants is contrasted with the white of a boy's school uniform in the field. As ambient music plays the camera begins to move. There are then short edits of Japanese characters reading like a conversation on an internet message board. The camera moves around the boy; however, no shot is completely perpendicular to its subject and the camera avoids this contact and keeps at a distance as it

moves. Interspersed with more of these conversations, it becomes apparent that the boy is listening to the music playing. His solitude in the rice paddy is juxtaposed to the numerous usernames appearing on the message board conversation. It is not made clear at this point in the film the character's connection to the message board but the connection between the music and the numerous references to pop music made through the messages signify the importance of music within the film. Again, this aesthetically displays a similar contradictory style used in the previously analysed Ozu scene, by juxtaposing two themes visually. In the case of *All About Lily Chou Chou* the loneliness of the boy in the field is contrasted against the conversation between the message board participants and their unity in the appreciation of music.

If *All About Lily Chou Chou* is looked at with Iwabuchi's comments in mind we can see that there is certainly a difference between mass artworks that are readily exportable, in this case the *Deathnote* film, and films that are made more independently. There seems to be two different styles in place; one that facilitates the image of Japanese cool that dislocate themselves stylistically from their national origin, as seen in Japanese blockbusters and action films like *Versus*; and one that readily displays a stylistic lineage but incorporates contemporary elements as well. Iwabuchi's comment seems to ring true for a great deal of readily exportable mass artworks from Japan; even the extreme cinema titles from directors that subvert use violence and style to subvert cinematic conventions and like Miike, dislocate themselves from a specific nationality through the extreme violence that is present throughout. However, surely then we must look outside of mainstream media that is readily distributed to get a true picture of Japanese mass art and its aesthetic identity.

V. Case Studies: Defining mainstream and alternative aesthetics in Tsutsumi's *20th-Century Boys* (2008) and Iwai's *All About Lily Chou Chou* (2004).

The two case studies of Tsutsumi's *20th Century Boys* (2008) and Iwai's *All About Lily Chou Chou* (2004) will define the stylistic features found in mainstream Japanese cinema and alternative Japanese cinema. The aesthetic construction of Japanese mainstream cinema is closely related to western mainstream cinema. Films such as Kitamura's *Versus* utilise similar techniques in editing, camera and narrative to make cinema easy to consume. While western markets audiences may be used to stylistic elements of these films, there are aspects of these films that may remain unfamiliar. Mainstream Japanese cinema is closely related to other forms of Japanese media, such as graphic novels (*manga*) or animation (*anime*). Many

instances of contemporary Japanese cinema released into the west are connected to another form of Japanese media, something that may be neglected by distribution companies. Scholars such as Julian Stringer acknowledge this connection:

> […] Japanese cinema studies may be usefully revisited through the prism of films relationship to other media, including but not exclusively restricted to the novel. In the contemporary period, for example, such an approach may be extended in several intriguing directions, taking into account not just the importance of television, radio, and popular fiction, but also the ever growing cinematic adaptation of *manga*. (Stringer 2007: 305)

Here Stringer identifies that a large portion of contemporary Japanese cinema that is distributed among western markets is referential to other parts of Japanese culture, such as television and radio; however, a growing area of importance is the recognition of uniquely Japanese media such as manga and anime and their effect on cinema. Films such as the *Deathnote* films (Kaneko 2006) and the *20th Century Boys* trilogy are adaptations of manga into cinema that have been distributed within western territories. Unlike the Tartan Asia Extreme films, both of these films have been marketed towards a larger audience[3]. Although the vast majority of manga released in Japan is not distributed in western territories, the two texts that these films adapt were released and gained certain cult followings, specifically *Deathnote*. Texts existing in another visual medium is something that western audiences are used to seeing, for example, the recent explosion of comic book adaptations by numerous Hollywood studios, such as the recent *Iron Man* films (Favreau 2008/2010 and Batman films (*Batman Begins* and *The Dark Knight* (Nolan 2005/2008). Both western and Japanese adaptations are structured in a similar way. They both utilise sequels and similar episodic formats to communicate the large story arcs of the original texts. The stylistic features of these films also feel familiar to western audiences, in a similar way to *Versus*. Techniques such as close ups, computer generated imagery, fast paced editing as well as traditional linear narratives are aesthetic staples of mainstream contemporary Japanese cinema. The final scenes of the first *20th Century Boys* (Tsutsumi 2008) film incorporate all of these techniques.

The scene opens on a close up of the main character (Kenji). He is wearing a gas mask and hazard suit. The camera is directly in front of him as he stares into the camera. The music is soft guitar and continues through an edit to a right mid shot of Kenji. The mise en scéne

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[3] This is mainly anecdotal. The release of *Deathnote* and *20th Century Boys* both saw the films being placed within the charts of major high street chains such as HMV. Although these charts do not follow sales, they do indicate that the chains need to sell specific films. Both *Deathnote* and *20th Century Boys* have been part of the these charts which shows that the high street chains wish to sell these films in a similar fashion to blockbusters and new releases that usually dominate the DVD charts.

shows that he his in a booth, high off the ground. Kenji moves closer to one of the windows. There is another edit to a close shot from a higher angle of Kenji looking out of a window. This then edits to another close up of his face. There is then another edit behind the main character and then the camera then slides left revealing what Kenji is staring at. Outside of the window stands a giant computer generated robot. As the camera moves left, the window frame crosses the image, until another edit to a closer shot of the round head of the robot. This is then edits to a close up of a symbol on the robot, signifying that it belongs to the villain. The next edit moves the camera backwards focusing on the giant computer generated face of the robot, grinning as it moves towards the camera. This then edits to the same high close up of Kenji as seen previously. The camera quickly pulls backwards in an upwards direction, revealing Kenji within his own computer generated robot behind the villain, Friend, stood on the shoulder of the first robot. The shot continues as the camera pulls down behind Friend's robot and moves quickly around the left side of Kenji's robot. Pulling further down to a low, side profile of the two robots facing one another. The mise en scéne is at street level and the partial lighting of the two robots disguises their size. This illustrates the large scale of this final sequence. The music then begins to change into a driving rock song with distorted guitars. There is another edit to a close up of Kenji's right eye through the gas mask; it is wide and over the top of the glass there is a reflection of Friends symbol. As the camera zooms into Kenji's eye, the symbol gradually comes more into focus. There is then another edit to the figure of Friend on the should of his robot. The direction of the rain moves from left to right and the camera begins to zoom closer. Another edit brings the camera in closer focusing on the figure of friend, and another edit shows a mid-close shot of friends face obscured by a child's mask. There is then an edit back to Kenji from the same perspective and another edit back to the close shot of Friend. This then edits back to the close up of Kenji and the camera begins to move left. There is then an edit to the symbol on Friends robot. This edits to a shot from behind Friend's shoulder. The camera is pointed down towards Kenji in his robot, while the right side of Friend's head is out of focus. The edits to a close up of Friends masked face and then a mid shot of Kenji from behind the cockpit glass. This then edits back to a close up of Friend. This edits back to the shot of Kenji behind glass and then a close shot of Friend's masked face. Friend's right hand enters from the bottom of the frame and comes up to the left side of the mask, gesturing as if to pull it off. This then edits to a close shot of Friend from the right as his mask begins to come off. The camera follows the direction of the mask upwards as it moves over Friend's head. This then cuts to a scene looking at Friend's back, the mask in his right and as he lowers his arm and then edits to his right hand holding the mask.

The distorted guitar is now accompanied by strings and adds dramatic effect to the music.

20ᵗʰ Century Boys is a good example of the style that these mainstream Japanese blockbusters use. Throughout the scene there is extensive use of dynamic camera. The camera movements, though not as rapid as *Versus,* do explore the scene especially the CGI (computer generated images). The scale of the scene is similar to any large scale production from Hollywood. The editing is fast paced and focuses on details within the wide scope of the scene. The style of *20ᵗʰ Century Boys* accommodates for the fantastic elements within the film. These aesthetics are familiar to western consumers hence the importance placed on these films by distributors and retailers in comparison to other foreign films. These films can be considered to transcend their cultural background as they are stylistically similar to other forms of western cinema and are marketed in such a way. However, this is not the only type of contemporary Japanese film that gets released onto western markets, but it is the more popular.

The other side of contemporary Japanese cinema that is exported to western markets is more alternative in style. These instances differ from mainstream Japanese cinema both in their aesthetic and distribution. Compared to the films examined in the previous section these alternative films have very little marketing connected to their distribution outside of Japan. Films such as *Takeshi's* (Kitano 2005) or *All About Lily Chou Chou* have a small distribution and are marketed for specific markets. This is similar to the post war film's contemporary distribution as they are distributed to markets that are immersed in film culture or more specifically Japanese film culture. These films often get brought to attention by magazines such as *Village Voice* or *Sight and Sound*. The marketing of these films have a more national focused distribution, as distributors such as Optimum Release distribute these films under their Optimum Asia sub division, while other distributors ignore the national origin of the films and release them alongside European and American independent productions like Artificial Eye.

These films have more in common with Miike's *Visitor Q* in this sense. The content of these films differ greatly as they can be excessively violent, such as contemporary samurai film such as Takeshi Kitano's *Zatoichi* (2003), while on the other hand, they can also be tame and reflective such as Hirokazu Koreeda's *Nobody Knows* (2004). Shunji Iwai's *All About Lily Chou Chou*, is a perfect example of alternative Japanese cinema. The film was shot in high definition video and utilises a number of visual styles as well as containing a non-linear narrative. *All About Lily Chou Chou* was released under Optimum Asia with very little marketing despite its critical acclaim (Michael Atkinson of the magazine Village Voice online

review at) and numerous awards as festivals (the film won notable prizes at the Berlin Film Festival, Yokohama Festival and Shanghai Festival).

One of the scenes that best illustrates the alternative style that *All About Lily Chou Chou* embodies is towards the end of the film. The scene begins with the camera pointing up at a large screen, the figure of a woman is silhouetted to the right of the frame. The image on the screen is from a music video, a woman is stood in front of a stone slab with wings draw onto it. Her back is facing the camera. There is diegetic music playing as if it very far away and the woman appears to be singing along she sways from side to side as she sings. The light from the giant screen clashes with the dark mise en scéne creating a very striking image. The main character, Yuichi, is framed from left and walks towards the screen, the woman turns to look at him and leaves the frame from the same place as Yuichi entered. Yuichi then moves to closer to the centre of the large screen. The music video on the screen finishes and stays dark for ten seconds. A symbol begins to appear in a bright light at the centre of the screen. The sound of a crowd cheering then comes into effect as the symbol changes into the words Lily Chou Chou. These words are written in white and clash against the darkness of the rest of the mise en scéne. At this point it is unclear whether the melancholy choral music is diegetic or not as the film edits to a unsteady shot of a crowd leaving an arena. The camera edits twice to different areas of the crowd all walking towards the camera. The camera then edits to the back of Yuichi stood looking at the crowd as it flows around him. The camera is never steady and moves from left to right. There is another edit to the left of Yuichi as he begins to walk forward into the crowd. Another edit is then made as Hoshino (the school bully and once friend of Yuichi) walking through the crowd, he is followed by the camera as he negotiates the crowd. The shot moves out gradually and loses focus as the camera gets closer to Hoshino and it edits to a low shot looking at Hoshino grabbing Yuichi. The camera is still unsteady as the two turn their back and walk away from the camera. There is another edit to the two talking from the right. The camera is still shaking and due to the use of natural light the mise en scéne is dark; however, a green apple in the hands of Hoshino stands out against the dark, out of focus and constantly moving background. The two stop walking and the camera stops with them. A sudden edit moves the camera behind the two and as Hoshino continues forward, the camera stays looking at the back of Yuichi. This then edits to front shot of Hoshino looking down at the apple in his hands as he walks towards the camera. There is another edit to the back of Hoshino as he moves into the crowd. The is another edit to the front on Yuichi still static. Then the camera cuts to a low shot starting behind Yuichi

and moving right coming round to face him, as he starts shouting and screaming, drowning out the noise of the crowd. This then edits to a high shot of the crowd walking from left to right. The crowd stops and turns around. There is then a close shot to the left of Hoshino as he turns to look behind him. This then edits back to the low shot of Yuichi as he turns around, still screaming. The music then picks up with lively piano as the high shot returns and the rest of the crowd turn to look to the left of the frame. The entire crowd start shouting the name Lily, as it edits to another close up of Yuichi shouting. There is another edit to a mid shot of Hoshino as he faces the same direction as the crowd. This then edits another low shot of Yuichi looking behind and the camera moves from right to left to face him. He stops screaming and there is another edit to another high shot of the crowd; however, this time it is close as the crowd begins to move at pace from left. The it edits back to the close shot of Hoshino as he is pushed with the crowd towards the camera. The film then edits back to the wider shot of the crowd as they run from right to left, the screams of Lily are getting increasingly louder and beginning to drown out the music. There is another low shot of Yuichi as he begins to move into the crowd away from the camera. This is followed by a high shot from behind the crowd as they surge forward. There is an edit back to the low shot of Yuichi as he walks through the crowd, his back is to the camera. The camera moves into his black jacket and edits to a close shot at the head of the crowd, focusing on Hoshinos head. There are two more edits looking at the crowd: the first, looking at the front row pushing each other, and the second a high shot, at a diagonal angle as the crowd still moves forward, Hoshino is stood at the centre of this shot. This cuts back to shot following Yuichi from behind, the camera is placed higher than the previous shots that focused on Yuichi. The film then cuts to a close up of Hoshino, in slow motion. The sound of the crowd is turned down and only the music remains. Yuichi appears over Hoshino's left shoulder. This then edits to a pair of girls in the crowd whose voices are calling for Lily. This edits back to the mid shot of Yuichi and Hoshino. Hoshino then begins to fall forward, and the camera cuts to wider angle showing Hoshino fall through the crowd. He turns to notice Yuichi leave. At this point the entire noise of the crowd is gone and only the music remains. There is another edit back to the wide shot of Hoshino as he falls to the floor. Camera looks down to focus on him on the floor as the feet of the crowd move away. The crowd then screams.

All About Lily Chou Chou places great importance on sound and camera to construct the film's style. The way in which the camera is constantly moving and exploring the environments gives the film a realistic feel. The dark mise en scéne is also connected to this as the natural lighting from street lamps and the giant screen at the start of the scene create

striking images that are beautifully rendered in the high definition digital video. This style is also utilised within the film's narrative as for a small section, the film becomes a collection of amateur films shot by the characters during their time on holiday together. This is a very sophisticated technique in which Iwai justifies his intrusive camera style and natural lighting through the narrative of the film. This film's multi-layered approach to style makes it a perfect example of how diverse contemporary Japanese cinema is. Factors such as this and the growing complexities of mass art in contemporary times suggests that a film like *All About Lily Chou Chou* could become quite popular. However, this is not the case.

VI. Fragmented identity and mass distribution

Contemporary Japanese cinema, due to its distribution overseas, is able to reconstruct its cultural identity. The attractive aspects that are found within contemporary Japanese cinema may be due to its diffuse and unspecific distribution as well as its varied and schizophrenic styles. Because of this Japanese cinema lends itself to many different identities and so fulfils many different fantasies of the East for consumers. Chikio Hayashi and Yasumasa Kuroda also identify this contradictory element within Japanese culture that is reflected through cinema. Their study looks at Japanese culture from an outside perspective in an attempt to articulate the differences between Japanese and western (specifically American) perceptions of cultural identity. 'The Japanese culture is nebulous, unsystematic, chaotic and contradictory without the centre of ones own world since the concept of the individual as the salient unit is absent.' (Hayashi and Kuroda 1997: 120). Films such as *All About Lily Chou Chou* represent this identity. They illustrate Japanese identity as fragmented and defuse. The characters of both Hoshino and Yûichi display this in their two separate personae in a similar way that Hayashi and Kuroda point out. They both seem to comfortably negotiate these fragmented identities but they are only truly happy when they utilise their alternative persona. Although these are more narrative themes rather than visual features, they appear throughout Japanese media often enough to suggest a cultural preoccupation with the separation of identities.

Hayashi and Kuroda comment on Japanese culture and elaborate on their previous point however, this time they are concerned with perceptions of Japanese culture rather than individual perceptions of self. 'The core of the Japanese culture consists of ambiguity (Rashomonesque) or, at least non-binary thinking in relation to the American way of thinking and define self.' (Hayashi and Kuroda 1997: 119) On a cultural level, Japan is dislocated and

indefinite in its sense of self, as pointed out by Hayashi and Kuroda. Japanese cinema is symptomatic of this, often presenting a schizophrenic and indistinct sense of identity. Within an era of globalisation and the supposed diminishing of indigenous culture, Japan's media output seems to embrace a loss of self, and an acceptance within fragmented identities. This is one possible reason for a global identification and consumption of Japanese folk art. The thematic content of Japanese media is denotative of the realities of globalisation. There is a distinct break in identity: the *Tatemae* (the public face) and the *honne* (the underlying reality) (Kelts 2006). As in the case of *All About Lily Chou Chou,* Hoshino and Yûichi have two separate lives, one within their prescribed social roles (school roles of bully and victim), and their true personalities that they live online. Western audiences consume Japanese media and create their own *honne*, rejecting the readily available media and constructing their own alternative form of consumption outside of the mainstream westernised media. The consumption of Japanese media is alien and causes a reassessment of our own cultural background, through comparison. There is a consciousness in looking at media outside of a culturally relevant sphere that enables identification with cultural artefacts and base understanding of their origin.

The consumption of contemporary Japanese cinema utilises this fragmented sense of identity that is mirrored within Japanese cinema, and the distribution methods and marketing to indulge in a specific form of entertainment. The division of Japanese cinema into such markets by distributors creates a malleable alternative to contemporary cinema, that is consumed because of its difference without having to understand specific cultural differences. Japanese animation and animation cinema utilise both mainstream and independent distribution.

Chapter 3: Japanese Animation and Animation Cinema

I. Introduction: Defining the Audience

Unlike Japanese folk cinema or contemporary Japanese cinema whose audiences are defined by the aesthetic content of films they consume, the audiences that consume Japanese animation (anime) and animation cinema are difficult to define. Compared to aspects of Japanese cinema studied in the thesis there is very limited release in western territories. The initial market which consumes these products is small; however, due to other means of consumption such as digital distribution this market expands beyond what is readily definable. Also unlike the markets for contemporary Japanese cinema and Japanese folk cinema, distribution is a fully independent effort. In her investigation of markets animation Susan Napier (2007) discusses the consumption of anime in western territories as an exclusive activity, something that is reserved for enthusiasts and not for mass audiences: 'Undoubtedly, however, part of the fun was in the incomplete understanding and enjoyment of the pure visual pleasure of anime. There was also according to older fans with whom I have talked, the particular pleasure of being part of a small and very specialised community of cognoscenti.' (Napier 2007: 134). The markets that consume Japanese animation are a very specialised group, according to Napier, that are concerned with the aesthetic properties of animation and image.

Katsuhiro Otomo's *Akira* (1988) is heralded as one of the most important animation films of all time and still appears within the top 50 in many lists, such as imdb's animation list that is listed by number of votes (http://www.imdb.com/chart/animation). With a large cult following there has been global interest in this film since its release in 1988[4].Within *Akira* there is an amalgam of styles that create a new kind of Japanese aesthetic representation. Within anime there is a blending of old styles that represent reality, emphasising a world that aesthetically matches our own; and newer character archetypes that exist to add colour to the world of the film. Even the way in which the characters and objects in the world are illustrated show that there is an investment in verisimilitude. The opening bar scene depicts a very rough and run down saloon. However, there are little touches: with each edit we find the camera focuses on another set of characters or an object that shapes the bar into a recognisable and believable location, ultimately familiarising the audience with the

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[4]   The book displaying the fan culture surrounding *Akira* is also written by Katsuhiro Otomo and is called *Akria Club*. The book contains pictures and news reports regarding the film since its release including a cataloguing of selected merchandise of the film that is still in production to this day 22 years after to the film's release.

world in which *Akira* is set. For example, we see a drunk passed out in a booth as a couple inappropriately kiss one another and, as an edit jumps to a jukebox playing CDs, the camera stays focussed on it while it picks a disc from a collection and begins to play it, showing the meticulous detail the animators illustrated in order to give the world of *Akira* a frame of reference within reality. Scenes such as this give an impression of detail to evoke a connection between the world and the audience in a similar way to post-war cinema. This draws together the two opposite aesthetic practices of Japanese cinema, one of the "cool" new wave look, involving inventive camera movement and unsymmetrical mise en scene; and the aesthetic aims of the post-war era, to create a bridge between reality and the world of the film that the audience can recognise. The markets that Napier discusses were the first western audience's privy to bootleg tapes without subtitles. This link with reality and 'enjoyment of the pure visual pleasure' (Napier 2006) can be seen in small details. However, over the past twenty years this has evolved into more sophisticated networks of fans with a more sophisticated and informed impression of anime aesthetics, some of which are fluent in Japanese. This network has been enhanced and strengthened by utilising current internet technology which further defines the markets that consume Japanese animation.

The consumption of Japanese animation can be compared to both the consumption of Japanese contemporary cinema and Japanese folk cinema. The way in which Japanese animation reaches these markets enables this kind of fluidity that oscillates between, unspecified consumption and specialised collection. Japanese animation is distributed to these markets in a number of ways and is not pinned down to one format. Official mainstream releasing and unofficial independent releasing inform the consumption of anime and create a sensitive market. As a market it is willing to consume where available, but also has the means to independently seek out and distribute media by using web technology as Roland Kelts points to when he writes about Japanese animators and their relationship to the US market.

> '...in the case of the United States in particular, the internet is playing a colossal role in generating the buzz for an around anime. For Japanese animators, this is new, unknown, and untamable territory, and their response to it has been poor and pathetic. Rather than embracing the fact that there is a new generation of animation geeks cropping up everywhere, and peddling to their every desire, Japan has on this occasion let America dictate its terms.' (Kelts 2006: 74)

Although Kelts is describing the Japanese inactivity in acknowledging an international market for anime and animation cinema, he also suggests that there is a large demand for the

Japanese media outside of Japan and sufficient desire from a market to warrant criticism. The role of the internet in forming these markets has been integral to anime's growth in popularity in the west, as Kelts suggests; however, the use of internet technologies in the creation of the anime markets has also produced a very knowledgeable and educated fan base, able to fill in the gaps in distribution that Japanese distributors have failed to notice. Anime series' such as *Toppen Tengen Gurren Lagann* (Iketomi 2007) and the animated series of *Deathnote* (2006) became hugely popular among anime fans. Several websites and fan artworks were dedicated to the two shows well in advance of the official DVD release in 2008 and 2010: for example, www.deviantart.com allows fans to post their art inspired by these two series as Oliver Pindard points out:

> There are thousands of images for single series in some occasions […] there is an abundance of *Full Metal Alchemist* images from western amateur artists. Despite the age of the series it still has a great popularity among fans [...] (Pindard 2010)

This shows that web technologies are important in defining the audience of anime. However, western fans still utilise the official releases for collections and completionist purposes. This is similar to the auteur orientated releasing of the folk cinema, as they are distributed to a market that is ready to collect, rather than consume. Anime DVDs are released in volumes containing approximately 4 episodes per disc. The market that anime is distributed to utilise both the physical DVD collections while still able to experience animation in a less tangible form online.

For both Kelts and Napier the western anime market is defined through its distribution means and its exclusive appreciation and knowledge of anime aesthetics. This market is separate from the other markets that consume Japanese cinema as their active online involvement in the distribution of anime sets it apart from other markets in which audiences exclusively consume Japanese cinema that is officially distributed. The western market for anime in some cases uses the knowledge and interest in folkness of Japanese animation and culture and uses this to make it more accessible (more of a mass art form) through self distribution and translation. Within the western market for anime there is a mixture between the collector and the consumer, a mixture of the mass and folk, making it a very difficult market to identify. However, one of the most important aspect to the market is its relationship with digital distribution.

There are a number of issues surrounding the research of online fan groups, especially that of niche interests such as anime fans. One of the major attractions to people

communicating over the internet is ability to remain anonymous. This makes the collection and validation of data a difficult task. The way in which anime is consumed over the internet may require some illegal activity (the downloading and uploading of files for unofficial distribution) and anime fans can be engaging in internet piracy. This is another reason why the collection of data in the form of email interviews is difficult to secure and why empirical research is not a key focus of this dissertation.

Internet forums are a place where these communities meet to discuss topics surrounding anime. Conducting interviews or posting threads can be a hit or miss exercise. Some forums can be strict as to what threads can be posted and information probing can attract unwanted attentions from not only the forum moderators but also members of the forum looking to disrupt or illicit reactions from other members (this is known as trolling). Finding suitable interviewees is yet another issue when investigating niche internet communities; the way in which these communities interact with one another (for example the internet forums) and the anonymity attached would allow for many to disrupt research in the form of false or unreliable results.

To remedy these issues the empirical evidence sought in aid of my research into Japanese animation took two distinct forms. The first was questionnaire based and the second was through interviews with fans of Japanese animation regarding interest in anime. The questions in the questionnaire focused on the attraction to Japanese animation in comparison to other film content. As for the interviews, I used a few personal contacts that were willing to talk in detail about their interest in anime and Japanese culture. These contacts have been acquired through my personal involvement in anime fan groups.

A similar approach was taken in Julian Stringer's article in *The Film Festival Yearbook 3* which examined the way in which Japanese cinema was received by the British film journal *Sight and Sound* in the post war period. In the article Stringer covers the rise in popularity of the post war Japanese cinema in the UK as well as Japanese cinema's role as cultural currency and its presentation of fantasy to western viewers.

The twenty years period covered by Stringer includes not only the work of quintessentially Japanese directors such as Kurosawa and Mizoguchi but also the work of the new wave directors coming from the 1960s and 70s. This study is further defined by the look at the role of the film festival in disseminating post-war Japanese cinema over the period and presenting Japanese cinema as fantasy.

The thesis adopts a similar scope when conducting empirical research inasmuch as looking at a specific part of western consumption. Instead of looking at the way in which

anime is disseminated within mainstream media flow, the thesis looks at the way in which western fans access anime through the use of the internet; as Stringer states, that the depth and clarity of research is much more desirable than wide and diffuse research goals: '[…] exhaustiveness does not in itself have to be the goal. The refusal of a more totalising perspective means that insights have to be gleaned from the local and specific.' (Stringer 2011: 75)

Due to the way online communities operate there are inherent problems with disseminating a survey online. Surveys profile audiences, which contradicts the nature of internet fan groups and the anonymity that is intrinsic to their existence. As Kane and Brun (1985) state, the specific function of surveys is to determine specific actions and feelings of a group, with their cooperation. In my own experience the questionnaire had been ignored by these online communities but also ridiculed by others, most notable of which is the image board, 4chan.org. The uncooperative nature of the fan groups online, as manifested in disagreements and aggressive responses from such a fluid community such as 4chan, throws into question the function of formal research into consumption habits and the identity of any researcher accessing the image board.

II. Digital and Official Distribution

Animation is another area of Japanese cinema that is distributed among western audiences through home entertainment media such as DVD or Blu Ray, however unlike the previous forms of Japanese cinema that have been distributed officially, a great deal of Japanese animation is consumed digitally on a large scale. Unofficial digital distribution makes up for the lack of official distribution and media flow as a great deal of Japanese animation and animation cinema. Torrent sites and import DVD sales from independent websites ensure that mass artworks of almost any national background are readily available. Thousands of gigabytes of Japanese animation, cinema, music and video games are downloaded daily from such websites as www.thepiratebay.org. This method of distribution is barely recognised academically in discussions concerning media flow. Websites such as thepiratebay.org are becomingly an increasingly bigger part of how people consume media. Due to its unregulated nature and freedom from distribution company policies, this allows a great amount of freedom on the part of the consumer to choose from a vast amount of sources that would previously have been unavailable. Torrent downloads and file sharing, due to the vast numbers of people utilising this technology and its illegality, define this market who are

difficult to identify.

In order to fully research the importance of digital distribution, two interviews were conducted with local anime fans. One still lives in the UK and the other has moved to Japan recently. From both interviewees it is clear that the internet is a very important aspect of the distribution of Japanese animation and related media (for example *Detroito Metaru Shiti* (Lee 2008) a film based on an anime series of the same name). Unlike Japanese cinema that has been distributed officially, there is an emphasis on a community identity – a marked difference from both consumer and cinephile. For example:

> There is also the factor of the legal grey area that is downloading and streaming anime online. This practice is very widespread with fans of anime translating episodes free of charge, often referred to as "fan-sub" [...]I would say the internet is essential for western audiences to keep up-to-date with the fast paced media. (Simms: 2011)

As Richard Simms points out, this is a legally grey area – something that these fans are very much aware. The internet is an essential connection between these fans and their preferred media. Entire fan groups such as the anime image board on 4chan[5] (boards.4chan.org/a), use the internet not only to access anime and manga but to converse and discuss anime as a community. These image boards are not the only use of the internet that anime fans. Richard Simms also identified the idea of 'fan-sub' groups that use the internet to disseminate anime; he also points out the legal problems of posting these translated features online. Due to this, there is some difficulty in obtaining information on individuals producing fan subs as a degree of anonymity is desired.

It is right to compare the official distribution of animation to western releases of alternative contemporary Japanese cinema. Although these films are released within the west they are released on a much smaller scale than mainstream releases for the most part. Films like the Studio Ghibli collection enjoy a wide and varied release, however, these instances of Japanese animation differ stylistically from other more underground series such as *Bleach* (2004 – 2010) or *Haibane Renmei* (2004). The Studio Ghibli films such as *Howls Moving Castle* (Miyazaki 2005) although incredibly popular within Japan are still widely released in the west. The earlier quotation from Iwabuchi concerning the cultural neutrality of many Japanese works' popular outside of Japan (see Chapter 2) can be applied here. The official releases of specifically the Ghibli films include celebrity voice acting on the dub track as well

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[5]   4chan is a notorious image board with links to the group anonymous which is responsible for the hacking of credit card companies. However, it is initially an image board where people can post pictures and comment.

as notable changes to the film itself. The films themselves are distributed through the Disney corporation outside of Japan and are aimed at the family market but are still consumed by the anime market that has previously been defined. The marketing of these films is geared more twowrds the family audience as Rayna Denison has analysed the marketing of the Ghibli film *Spirited Away/Sen to Chihiro* (Miyazaki 2001). Rayna looked at the changes made to the film in light of its global release and concludes that these films are edited for the global release in such as way that detracts from its Japanese origin. She writes that, 'The film was not sold through an essentialist or pure image of national identity or rather, but rather evinced a broad spectrum of hybridised identities: with mixed Japanese and western styles of architecture, décor and costuming; in its characterisation and even marketing.' (Rayna 2007: 310). Through the film's official, global distribution, much of its Japanese aesthetic is lost according to Rayna. This is also the case with *Howls Moving Castle.* The film is originally based on a Welsh folk story, immediately losing much of its Japanese appeal, and includes high profile voice acting from Hollywood actors and actresses such as Christian Bale. This has also been recognised by members of the anime community. For example, Oliver Pindard also identifies the cross cultural attraction of anime.

> 'The films are accessible to all and are all reproduced in different media (for example *My Neighbour Totorro* is an iconic children's figure in Japan). The films from Ghibli are a mix and match of cultures, this can be seen to relate to a wide audience. *Howls Moving Castle* is based on Welsh and Slavic folklore.' (Pindard 2010)

The westernisation of these originally Japanese texts makes these films readily accessible and this is not limited to children's animation such as Ghibli. Series such as *Afro Samurai* (Okazaki 2007) uses western popular music genres such as rap music as well as Hollywood talent such as Samuel L. Jackson within official distribution. However, unlike the Ghibli films, this hybrid of both western and Japanese style was intended to be a central theme to the series. Iwabuchi's look at globalised western media is corroborated in this instance by Rayna as it is clear that the official distribution of anime and animation cinema markets a neutral version of the original Japanese release. As Kelts pointed out, Japanese distributors neglected the global markets for animation and so American distributors have used that inactivity to their advantage, much to the dismay of anime fans in the west. Anime that is not released officially to western markets retains a cultural specificity that is lost in editing and dubbing. As Richard Simms suggested the dubbing and subtitles in official releases can be confusing, gleaning his own interest in learning Japanese.

Yes, it was actually anime that sparked my interest in learning the Japanese language. It began with watching Negima! on DVD, which is coincidentally also written by Ken Akamatsu, the author of Love Hina. In the first episode there is a scene where two girls are discussing the arrival of a new male teacher. In the Japanese version one girl says "He's a little hentai [perverted], right?" to which the other girl replies "No, he's not like that". However in the English dubbed version the conversation is changed to "He's quite cute, right?" and the girl responds with "Yes, he is sort of". It was coincidental I was watching the English dubbed version along with the subtitles which were more accurate translations of the Japanese version rather than ad-verbatim of the English. It was this contradicting scene that made me decide it would be easier to learn to understand the Japanese myself rather than rely on vague translations or even completely edited script. (Simms: 2011)

As Simms suggests, due to western industrial standards anime loses some clarity in translation. The editing of scripts is a common practice in the translation of anime. Fan sub groups take the initiative and learn Japanese. These amateur translators have spearheaded the distribution of a great deal of anime to western audiences through digital means.[6]

DVDs available for import to western markets through particular websites or independent selling such as ebay.com make a much larger proportion of unofficial physical media consumed by the anime markets. DVDs for long running series such as the *Gundam* series or *One Piece,* until recently they have had a very small release in Britain specifically; these are another way in which Japanese animation is distributed among the market. This is another way in which the internet is used to distribute and 'generating the buzz' of anime, as Kelts said previously. The use of the internet in the distribution, marketing and consumption of Japanese animation goes even further than selling import DVDs. There are a great deal of websites devoted to the consumption of Japanese animation that provide links to torrent files and download mirrors to entire anime series or animation films. Many of these series or films are not available outside of Japan for official release; however, fans translate and provide their own subtitles. These types of digital distribution allow not only for programming and cinema that has not been initially designed to suit the tastes of non-Japanese audiences but also are a way of experiencing these mass art works as and when they are released: turnover from the Japanese release to western releases can be up to and over a year[7]. The digital

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6   Websites such as Mubi.com allow for western fans to watch Japanese cinema on demand for a small fee every month. This is one way in which western cinephiles are able to access more niche directors and their films.

7   . This is part of my personal experiences. A year ago (2009) I visited Japan and bought a new DVD of a popular anime series called *Neon Genesis Evangelion: You are (not) Alone*. A year after I bought the DVD, the film was officially released in Britain in April 2010, making an almost two year wait for fans of the original series.

release of animation is comparatively frequent and is updated week by week, similar to the television release of a series in Japan. This self distributing market can be cyclical as the market uses its own in-depth knowledge of web technology and Japanese language and culture to make a great deal of Japanese animation available.

The anime that is released by these fan distributors covers a very wide generic and aesthetic cross section. The stylistic content of anime that is distributed by the online fanbase consists of many styles, the film *Mind Game* (Yuasa 2004) is a good example. The style of anime can be typified by character designs with large eyes heads and bright coloured hair. The designs within *Mind Game,* however do not have this style of design; instead the film is dark and sketchy and is very much the opposite of typical anime style. Furthermore unlike the official distribution of anime, these series can be quite culturally specific: the surreal comedy series' *Pani Poni Dash* (Shinbo 2005) and *Saynara Zetsubo Sensei* (*Goodbye Mr. Despair.* Kumeta 2007) rely on a great deal of onomatopoeia and play on words as sources for its comedy as well as satire of social problems specific to Japan, for example, the problem of *Hikkikomori* which refers to a people within Japanese society who suffer from a form of agoraphobia and refuse to leave their homes. Social phenomena such as this are parodied within *Sayonara Zetsubo Sensei.* The unofficial online distributors write their own subtitles and add them to the video. This is the only way these products are localised for western markets. Digital distribution offers media that is closer to its cultural origin and fills the gaps in the market that official physical distribution misses.

III: Case Studies: Cultural Specificity in *Ghost in the Shell:2 Innocence* (Oshii 2004) and *Summer Wars* (Hosoda 2009)

The two films that will be looked at in this section come from two separate forms of distribution yet are consumed by the same market. Analysis of these films will focus on the cultural specificity that is represented within each film. The stylistic differences between the two film's inform the differences in the film's distribution methods. The first film, *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence* (Oshii 2004), is an example of an officially distributed anime feature film. The film's generic content is a science fiction film and so portrays a very specific aspect of Japanese culture, while *Summer Wars* (Hosada 2009) is also a science fiction film that utilises a cross section of Japanese cultural imagery and customs. While the film has not been officially released in the west, it is note worthy that the distribution of this film has bypassed

the standard localisation (English dub track and marketing) and has been distributed via file sharing.

A synopsis of *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*'s plot follows two police officers (Batou and Togusa) as they investigate the deaths of businessmen at the hands of robots. The section that the thesis analyses comes as the two characters interrogate the programmer of the robots in her lab. The scene begins with a tracking shot moving upwards and left across a mechanical device. It is underneath a yellow perspex sheet. The attention to detail on the device and light reflecting off the sheet is ultra realistic adding to the impression of the machines complexity. This then edits to a close shots of mechanised eye balls bubbling in a jar. There is another edit to a robotic head, the camera moves from right to left. The head itself is illustrated in a realistic style. As the camera turns, the face of the robot is revealed. Its smooth white surface appears human, contrasting with the rest of the head's mechanics. The background surrounding the head is sterile white further compounding the impression of the futuristic Tokyo. The camera then edits to another machine. A mechanical appendage extends from a casing. The other components of this machine are embossed with Kanji characters. There is then a close up of a robot on a table. The camera is placed next to the machine's head looking down: the mechanical appendage moves over the body it is clear that the robot is meant to be female as denoted by its long hair and thin form. There is then an edit to a first person perspective of the mechanical appendage as it examines the robot's insides. The mise en scéne is tinted orange as neon numbers and shapes focus on different parts. The camera moves up and orange neon surrounds and focuses on a number of bullet holes. The mise en scéne is then bombarded with neon letters and numbers. There is then an edit to a mid shot observing this examination from the outside. Within the mise en scéne we see another perspective of the female robot. Her black hair contrasts with the white skin and surroundings. Each of her joints are clearly marked and she is missing a large portion of her chest and a leg. The camera then pans right to reveal a grey haired figure sat at a orange computer screen. The design of this character is realistically proportioned and the lighting and shadow follows the folds in her coat and hair. The character then turns to face the camera. She is an elderly woman. This emphasises the realistic style that *Ghost in the Shell 2* adopts. As the camera moves over her, the English dub track begins. The voice acting is well executed and conveys the dismal and clinical style that the aesthetic features of this scene have constructed.

The most clear aspects of this scene from *Ghost in the Shell 2* is its realistic style. The way in which light and shadow interact with objects and characters creates a very believable

world. This impression is further defined by the realistic character designs of both the robot and the scientist. The design of the mechanical objects (the robot, the mechanical appendage and the computers) show that there is a stylistic focus on detail, this compounds the impression of realism. *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence* may have a distinct visual style, yet this is not due to its origin as a work of Japanese animation. They represent a certain element of Japanese culture. Films such as *Ghost in the Shell 2* denote this technological fantasy world in their depictions of Japan. These images of a technological nation are typified by Iwabuchi as culturally neutral:

> Animation, computer games and character (and some cinema) may be recognized as originating in Japan and their consumption may well be associated with high technology and miniaturization; however, the appeal of such products is relatively autonomous from cultural images of the country of production. (Iwabuchi 2007: 63)

Iwabuchi is referring to the image of Japan that is propagated through films such as *Ghost in the Shell 2*. Here Iwabuchi argues that these images of Japan as a technological nation are not connected to Japanese culture and operate in a state of cultural neutrality.

It can thus be argued that the official distribution and popularity of features such as *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence* construct a fantasy of Japanese culture. The consumption of officially distributed anime may confirm some of Iwabuchi's argument. It can be seen as a cynical attempt to capitalise on a section of Japanese media and culturally standardise its content ready for consumption within western markets. This is similar to Rayna's analysis on the distribution of Ghibli films to western audiences and the disavowing of its Japanese identity. It is not the image of Japan that is being represented within anime such as *Ghost in the Shell 2* that is consumed, but the themes and content within these features.

English dub tracks and realistic style in films such as *Ghost in the Shell 2* may undermine certain aspects of anime that make it originally Japanese (such as outlandish character designs and cultural iconography such as school uniforms and samurai swords), but it is a vision that pertains to a specific area of Japanese culture. The image of the robot with its clearly defined mechanical parts illustrates an alternative cultural iconography. The image of the doll (in this case represented by the humanoid robot) has become a recognisable part of Japanese culture. The popularity of Japanese dolls (known as dolphies) and the real robot Azumo, have become renowned among Japanophiles. So have anime features that represent niche aspects of Japanese culture. Iwabuchi has not accounted for this kind of *otaku*

(Japanese term of obsessive fan or geek) that is growing more popular. Anime represents a small section of Japanese culture, yet it is marketed officially in a similar way to contemporary Japanese cinema; as a culturally generalised product. These features contradict Iwabuchi as they are not autonomous from Japanese culture, but only highlight a specific part. Iwabuchi's comments are undermined further when digital distribution is investigated in a similar way.

Summer Wars is an example of an anime feature that has been digitally distributed among the western market. The plot of *Summer Wars* follows a young boy as he stays with the family of his high school crush while a computer virus destroys the online world of OZ which has become integral to military, medical and social interaction. The film is a generic mix of science fiction and romantic drama; however, it has more overt cultural origin than the officially released *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*. The section that has been chosen for analysis takes place before the final showdown between the characters and the computer virus within the world of OZ. The scene begins with a mid shot. The mise en scéne shows a green garden that frames two characters. They talk as they move gracefully in unison as they practice a type of martial art. The music at this point is a slow electronic rhythm with traditional Japanese shamisen (a traditional Japanese musical instrument played with a fan like plectrum). There is another edit to a close up of a old clock, its finish is chipped and worn. The mise en scéne is dark in comparison to the last scene and the only movement is the clock's pendulum. This edits to another close up of a character, he is wearing a head set and microphone. He stand to the right of the mise en scéne and turns to face the camera. To the left of the mise en scéne is a computer screen with a detailed display, however the top of the frame shows clear blue skies and green fields. There is then another edit to a close up with the camera pointing down to a different character. In the mise en scéne a mural is visible on the wall behind the character, however, cables protrude from a small crack in the wall which connect to the character's laptop computer. This computer also has a similar high tech display to the computer screen in the previous scene. There is an edit to another close shot positioning the camera behind another character, his head is turned left to face the camera. This time there are more screens with the complex display. This then edits to a similar shot however, this character is turning right to face the camera. There is another edit to a mid shot looking down at a group of characters, they are all facing away from the camera. In the centre of the frame a small boy is stood up while the others kneel. In front of the boy is a large television set with a similar display as the computer monitors throughout the scene. On either side of this television are smaller computer monitors showing the exact same display. The

floor is covered in traditional tatami mats, however, there are a number of cables. There is an edit to a profile shot of the boy as he sits. The shot is taken from the left and covers the profiles of the characters the camera has previously focused on in this section. Behind their close profiles to the left of the mise en scéne there are rolling green hills and blue skies. There is then an edit to a shot of television. The camera is close up to the television and captures the team as they huddle and break off to take up their positions on the field, mirroring the positioning of the main characters as they prepare to get into OZ.

Through comparison, it is clear that both *Summer Wars* and *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence* display very different aspects of Japanese culture. The inclusion and focus of many different characters, as well as the visual metaphor as seen within the final focus on the base ball team shows that there strong sense of community and family in *Summer Wars*. All characters that are included in this sequence are part of the same family. This is juxtaposed to the clinical, high-tech image of Japan that is represented in *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*. The contrast in thematic content is mirrored by the different styles that each film adopts. *Ghost in the Shell* utilises a very detailed style as seen in the focus on the working of machinery. The clinical atmosphere of the analysed sequence within the film is reinforced by the over use of white within the room. This is contrasted with the aesthetic of *Summer Wars* that has a very vibrant tone in colour. There is an aesthetic focus on the traditional and natural within *Summer Wars* that is not seen within *Ghost in the Shell 2*. The presence of technology within the traditional tatami floors as well as the mural walls shows a coexistence of old and new within the film. These small visual touches seems of very little importance but it these small cultural references that anime fans enjoy. In my interview with Richard Simms, he talk about how these small cultural touches (which features prominently throughout *Summer Wars* and are very important to the films aesthetic) made him more interested in Japanese culture;

> Anime is made by Japanese people for Japanese people, so it doesn't take time out to explain why you say お邪魔します ("o-jamashimasu" or "I'm going to disturb you") before entering someone's home or what たこ焼き ("takoyaki", fried ball of batter with octopus inside) is. If you're watching anime you are sometimes forced to understand these parts of the culture in order to understand the storyline. (Simms 2011)

This comparison between anime features that are distributed officially and unofficially support the view that the market for anime differentiate between the features through their connection to Japanese culture. Although officially distributed anime such as *Ghost in the*

Shell 2 are popular among fans, they only present a specific aspect of Japanese culture in a great depth. The unofficial distribution of films such as *Summer Wars* shows that the anime market is interested in films that illustrate a close connection of Japanese culture as a whole. The distribution of official anime could do well to emulate the rapid and independent nature of the unofficial distribution circles. The selection of anime that is distributed officially in the UK is narrow in its cultural specificity, yet the growing popularity and thriving internet community that surrounds anime shows that the cultural specificity that is embodied by anime is more of an attraction to the market than a hurdle for audience consumption. As is indicated by both Oliver Pindard and Richard Simms throughout their interviews, it is the Japaneseness, the difference in visual and narrative styles within anime, that attract them to it. There is also an emphasis on the authenticity of fan subbed anime that attracts them.

Conclusion: Multiple markets and the export of identity

It has become clear throughout the thesis that the distribution of Japanese cinema to western markets is divided not only aesthetically but also in accordance with the films' cultural relevance. In the final chapter one of the defining factors between the official and unofficial distribution of anime was the cultural specificity, the 'Japaneseness', of the work at hand. This could be applied to the rest of the thesis. The differences in Japanese cinema, or the specialised marketing of Japanese post war cinema indicates that cultural identity is an issue when distributing Japanese cinema among western markets. For example, the films of Kurosawa and Ozu make clear references to Japanese customs and culture within the style as well as the thematic content. The classification of these films as 'folk art' alludes to the overt relationship to Japanese cultural identity within post war Japanese cinema.

The presentation of this cultural identity has been thoroughly examined within the thesis. Each chapter has focused on the different stylistic aspects of Japanese cinema. The aesthetic content of Japanese media, whether it be film or an animated series is a form of folk art as the stylistic features of Japanese media, as well as its thematic content, originate from Japan and are generated, originally, for Japanese consumption. Peter Dale has illuminated that within Japanese media there is a concern with national identity and what it 'means' to be Japanese. He identifies the complications facing western understanding of 'Japaneseness', and locates these complications with the translation of Japanese issues of identity, into western frameworks.

'The post-war period has witnessed the emergence of a vigorous, indeed booming, industry of national self appraisal in Japan. The temptation to sidestep the ethnocentrism of eurocentric approaches by treating this burgeoning field of interpretation as an authentic, autochthonous expression of Japanese realities is strong, and often results in a marriage, western scholarship with native forms of ethnocentrism masqueraded under the formal garb of "oriental thought". In consequence, what we often read is translations, and western books which draw upon this tradition is not Japan as experienced by Japanese individuals. Rather we encounter a "Japan" as that society and its people tend to be interpreted by conscious nationalists working in an intellectual framework out of touch with both reality and the most elementary principles of logic and method.' (Dale 1986: 7)

Here he criticises the way in which both western and Japanese media treat the subject of national identity. Dale claims that the appraisal of 'Japaneseness' in the post war era is discoloured by translations that further mystify the idea of 'Japaneseness' through its detachment from Japanese culture and life. Cinema and animation that have minimal official release such as alternative contemporary Japanese cinema like *All About Lily Chou Chou* (Iwai 2004), can be seen to thematically as well as aesthetically deal with complex identities. For example, the character's development through the film's non-linear narrative illustrate characters whose development is constantly shifting backwards and forwards. Films such as *Jisatsu sâkuru* (*Suicide Cricle*. Sono 2001) can also be classified as alternative contemporary cinema and presents a film brimming with symbolic meaning as well as a unconventionally flawed main character (a over working police   detective who commits suicide half way through the film). Due to their background that is firmly rooted in Japanese culture, they draw upon aesthetic notions that are intrinsic and indigenous to Japan. This means that wide distribution is only officially enjoyed within its country of origin. In comparison to the type of Japanese cinema that is officially released, these films present a much more fragmented sense of identity. This fragmentation is also seen in anime and is also attributed to its success in the west. Characters within animation show this kind of fragmentation and are easily related to. Both Kelts and Napier focus on audience response research and comment on the ability of the audience to relate to the characters portrayed in anime:

Judging by the large number of respondents who identified with adolescent characters, it appears that anime is particularly effective at portraying the conflicts and confusions of life. The majority of characters cited were from fantasy and science fiction anime. These included fairly recent series as... however, the respondents mentioned how "real" the characters and situations seemed to them. (Napier 182: 2007)

Here Napier illuminates the concept that anime presents "real" characters. This reality does not refer to their design, but their identity. This identity is also picked up on by Roland Kelts as he offers a further insight to the attraction of anime to western markets:

> "I think that aspects of anime do appeal to young Americans, specifically at a time when the institutions of government don't seem to represent them,"Solomon continues. "They feel powerless, a pervasive theme in a lot of anime is industrial corruption, or military industrial corruption, that is pervading society and using people against their wills. The vision of shadowy power structures and dark experiments going on does resonate with people today." (Kelts 2006: 30).

As well as the characters of anime being believable through their imperfections, the worlds themselves present similar qualities. Aesthetic factors such as these make Japanese media attractive to western markets according to Kelts and Napier.

The imperfect representations of characters as well as complex and shadowy worlds resonate with western audiences. These factors seem to be a staple of Japanese cinema and animation as all the texts selected for the thesis have these character types or have these themes at heart. The division of these markets is based on the stylistic factors that are not related to the cultural specificity of the films. The orientalism that Dale alluded to previously is subverted by the consumption of Japanese media in the west. The factors that are aesthetically rendered and illuminated by Napier and Kelts suggest that the markets that consume Japanese culture do not idealise Japanese cultural identity, but embrace the underlying themes that are communicated through Japanese cinema and anime.

In the introduction to the thesis, the claim is made that there are inherent cultural differences between Japanese and western (European or American) cultures that cannot be negotiated. Writers such as Roland Barthes acknowledges a desire for cultures to understand each other's identities; However, Barthes also recognises that there are factors that limit this understanding, the most important of which is the inability to adopt perspectives outside of ones own. Culturally speaking, issues such as language and etiquette inhibit the understanding of underlying characteristics that are specific to that culture. Barthes focussed on the desires to understand language and culture without being a part of it, and concluded that the only limitations to understanding foreign cultures and languages, is the limitations in the understanding of native language and culture:

> The dream: to know a foreign (alien) language and yet not to understand it: to perceive the difference in it without that difference ever being recuperated by the superficial sociality of discourse, communication or vulgarity; to know, positively

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refracted in a new language, the impossibilities of our own… (Barthes 1970: 6)

Here Barthes illuminates a factor that informs the consumption of Japanese culture. There is a inherent desire to over-come linguistic barriers, without fully understanding them. Barthes then says that there is a need to adopt perspectives in foreign languages to fully understand the native language. Upon contact with other languages limitations within your own language become apparent. To escape these limitations is the dream that Barthes refers to. This is not limited to the study of language. Etiquette, tradition and art are other facets of foreign cultures whose understanding are limited by our own cultural 'impossibilities'.

The export of cultural artefacts such as cinema does not expel a text's cultural specificity. The ways in which Japanese films are exported to western markets do not neutralise their 'Japaneseness' but divide the markets in a way that discourages a wide dissemination of Japanese cinema. In fact, the export of Japanese cinema, and even more so with animation, relies on the cultural specificity of these texts as a major selling point. The stylistic and thematic aspects of anime and Japanese cinema deeply resonate with the markets to which they are distributed to (Napier 2007). So much so that the rigid official distribution circles are accompanied by the unofficial circles. Barthes comments may have been true at the time of its publication; However, within the information age, the expansion of markets and sophistication of tastes mean that the cultural identity of media is no longer limited by our own cultural impossibilities, but is something that can be understood. The aesthetics of Japanese mass art are consumed because of the inherent 'Japaneseness' and the elements of that culture that are understood.

The original interpretation of Noël Carroll's theories on contemporary media have been examined in light of the thesis' conclusions. The original interpretation of Carroll was that of cinema as mass art; that, upon export is divided into sub categories such as 'folk' art and art house. In light of the thesis, this interpretation has changed. The distribution of these films may be divided in this way, but the consumption of these films are centred around cultural commonalities; the Japanese identity of these films. When looking at the consumption of this identity, Carroll's interpretation of mass art can be seen as inclusive. Carroll highlights the notable differences between mass art and his other artistic classes when he writes, 'As such it [mass art] lacks both the individualised personal expressiveness that is putatively the hallmark of high art, on the one hand, and it lacks the distinctive ethic (community based) expressiveness of folk art, on the other hand.' (Carroll 1998: 18). The distinct style and themes that run through Japanese cinema and animation may suggest that

they are too rooted within their cultural specificity or the artistic vision of the creative team behind production but, the burgeoning popularity of anime and Japanese cinema among global audiences belie any notions of exclusivity. Carroll's comment supports this idea in terms of the consumption of Japanese media, as mass art is without the exclusive elements of both high and folk art. The cultural specificity that is seen in the production of Japanese features resonates with western markets as is suggested through the growing consumption of Japanese media.

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<u>**Appendix**</u>

<u>**Summarised transcript of Interview 1**</u>

<u>*Interview with Oliver Pindard (Graduate of University of Central Lancashire and fan of anime). The interview was conducted on an informal basis at his home on the 15/1/2011.*</u>

What was your introduction to anime?

First anime he properly watched was Moomins, which was a children's television show. He began watching this from a young age. He also didn't realise it was an anime (a Japanese animated feature), he felt it was a regular cartoon. *Moomins* set itself apart from other shows through its aesthetic. It is a very strange program that was not similar to anything else on British TV. This oddness that made *Moomins* so memorable would become nostalgic within other anime.

Another important show for Oliver when growing up was *Pokemon.* The art style was reminiscent of shows such as the *Moomins.* Obviously, *Pokemon* is distinct due to its existence within other media. For example card game and video games which are other important exponents of Japanese popular culture. Oliver still watches *Pokemon* now. What shows such as *Moomins* and *Pokemon* displayed was a difference to American cartoons. This is something very difficult to articulate.

The visual style of anime (from the illustration to the animation itself) seem to be very traditional . Conventions in narrative, plot twists and long running series. Visual conventions, large eyes realistic body sizes and the accentuation of the female form is still in use today and sets itself a part from the child orientated western animation. Anime is treated differently in Japan than cartoons are treated here, in the west. Animation is a more established medium in Japan. Anime experiments with stories and characters that are often more interesting than than television in the west aimed at adults.

Did anime's Japaneseness change the way you looked at it?

When Oliver was young he did not realise that shows such as *Pokemon* and *Moomins* were Japanese. The aspects of the shows he enjoyed were the more Japanese aspects of the shows. These aspects are what makes these shows stand out against American animation. In college when Oliver began to play more video games that it became more obvious that these older shows were Japanese. The video game industry is contributed to greatly by Japanese developers and many of the conventions of Japanese video games borrow greatly from anime (narratives and styles) as well as the *Pokemon* series of games. This realisation reintroduced Oliver to Japanese culture through friends at college. Realised that the anime he watched as a child was Japanese which spurred on his knowledge. Oliver began actively looking for anime instead of just watching what was on TV.

Was there a realisation through your more formal introduction to anime what your tastes were, or did you already have an idea of what you liked?

The more Oliver dug into Japanese culture and anime it became more clear that he had been looking at anime for a great number of years and not realised it. Oliver had already seen such

anime classics as *Ghost in the Shell* through he fathers love of animation and cinema. When investigating anime on his own Oliver watched as much as he could. He began indiscriminate in his tastes and watched a broad range of anime. He watched all genres including Harem, Mecha and Shonan anime in order to fully define his tastes.

How did you acquire anime?

Only after getting a proper computer and internet connection, did anime become more prevalent. Oliver utilised a number of different methods to acquire anime mainly streaming and torrents however he has not really contributed to the community. Oliver 'Lurks' – he looks and uses these resources rather than contributing to them. Sites such as animesuki.com, sanaku complex and the /a/ board on 4chan are of direct relevance to his interest in anime.

Do you watch more anime than western television? Be that American or British.

Likes anime more than British and American TV. Tends to search for anime more, than British and almost never watches US TV. American TV, to Oliver is really tedious – he feels that American television and cinema is over saturated and too widely distributed. He also feels that it is too conventional. American TV is more generic than used to be. With anime and Japanese cinema there is a much broader range of conventions. He feels that anime is more that caters towards his taste than US films. The character types and narrative style within anime speak to Oliver more than in Us shows. Oliver also takes issue with the Production values of US film and television. He brings to my attentions that anime does a lot more with smaller budget than in American TV and cinema.

What parts of anime speak to you generally? Is any of it influenced by western culture.

Oliver has always been interested in military and military hardware and *Full Metal Panic* (military anaime) has these themes running throughout. Oliver feels that the worlds within *Full Metal Panic* are realistic worlds and treated as if they could exist. Nothing super about them like in *Gundam* and FMP. Oliver differentiates between sub genres here. This shows that anime fans are really informed as to the subtleties in anime.

Would you say fan groups are important to western fans of anime?

Oliver feels that fan translation is extremely important to the digital distribution of anime. The time it takes for the show to air in Japan, to its unofficial subtitling in the west is very quick. For example Tokusatsu shows (special effects shows) such as *Kamen Rider* or *Sentai* are subbed within a day. These are very dedicated groups of fans. Oliver also brings to my attention the similar state of manga translated that is read online goes through the same quick turn around time. It is also important to mention that these shows are not just subtitled in English, some subtitle groups translate to other European language.

One positive of these unofficial groups is the how close they are to original Japanese releases. For example, according to the official release in the UK the Shonan manga and anime *Bleach* is 30 volumes ahead in Japan. To import the American versions of the show or even buy them on release in the UK it would cost hundreds of pounds. Licensing and translation takes too long within the official channels. There are strings of publication houses that own individual volumes of a manga which can stall regular publications. From a collectors point of view this

is annoying as volumes can look different or be different sizes depending on the publisher. Oliver has very little faith in British publishers due to the slow releases and small amount released in comparison to America. He would still buy anime if it were locally available but the vast majority of it isn't, to get some of the more niche or less known anime and manga the nearest place in which to buy them is Manchester which costs a lot to get to. He also talks about the legal problems with publishers and translators when as they get exported to different countries. Oliver even stated that he would pay extra if it meant quick turnarounds. He would pay to support the artists.

'It [illegal downloading] is the only way we can consume these types of things... without being left out the loop.' (Pindard 2011)

Oliver states that the shows that he downloads are shows that were mainly released upto 6 years ago, that still haven't had a licence in the UK. We then discuss the recent *Battlehip Yamato* film that and how we both feel that there will be a very limited release in the UK for a blockbusting film over in Japan. Oliver feels that there is a double standard in terms of advertising and releases as new US TV gets a great deal of hype in terms of advertising and even distribution. Animation in the west Is meant for children, occasionally anime inspired shows in western and Japanese concepts of animation. Aeon Flux is an American anime that has anime influences – very Japanese (Story focuses on a female protagonist who dies at the end of every episode but she is cloned).

Internet very important in the way Oliver accesses anime. It not only informs him of releases and popular trends in anime but offers a space in which he can consume anime.

What role would you say fan-art plays within anime fan groups?

Oliver points out that fan art is a very important aspect of the fan community. There are thousands of images for single series in some occasions, for example Oliver points out that there is an abundance of *Full Metal Alchemist* images from western amateur artists. Despite the age of the series it still has a great popularity among fans (this can be due to the fact that last year there was a re imagining of the original manga series). Oliver also points out that some people specifically learn Japanese (written and oral) to do this and get a job with companies who licence anime. Oliver would also pay for the privilege of having anime sooner than we receive it in reality. Oliver follows anime industry very closely through websites like Dannychoo, 4chan and sanaku complex.

Talking about Danny Choo and his affiliation with Japanese anime industry:

Oliver points out that Danny Choo has his own TV show called culture Japan it is a Japanese show with articles in English. The show itself is a Japanese TV show and eastern Asia but meant primarily for foreigners wanting to get and insight into Japanese culture. He would like to see more of this kind of programme in the UK. He recalls an anecdote in which Danny Choo was interviewed by the BBC but the interview was not shown even though he sat through the entire TV show. Oliver believes there is a big market from looking at the amount of people online talking about and consuming anime.

Anime Transcending barriers.

Oliver believes that because it anime is from a completely different culture it is a meeting

point of people from different cultures. This is a very good thing according to Oliver as it transcends barriers. Also anime conventions and cosplay embody this – the shows are completely about anime and transcend these barriers of perception that inhibit regular social interaction. Over the internet it doesn't matter about the colour of your skin, religion or tastes in music or dress people discuss anime and not these aspects. Anime, like any other fan group brings people together. For example the amount of AMVs (anime music videos) made with very different kinds of music attest to this. Oliver would go to cosplay conventions as a photographer – would probably dress as a character – but not go over the top.

Oliver also believes video games act as a base or introduction for anime and Japanese culture. The media cycle of *Pokemon* (Card and video games linked to a TV show and then to a film) give people an opportunity to look at different aspects of Japanese culture from a comfortable starting point. Studio Ghibli is another example of this. The films are accessible to all and are all reproduced in different media (for example *My Neighbour Totorro* is an iconic children's figure in Japan). The films from Ghibli are a mix and match of cultures, this can be seen to relate to a wide audience. *Howls Moving Castle* is based on Welsh and Slavic folklore.

Oliver believes that anime spectacle orientated this comes in the form of the art style as well as the events that happen within the story *Furi Kuri* for example. Oliver like a balance between style and story however, he likes both. Anime offers many different story types that all appeal to him. Different kinds of anime deal with this dichotomy differently Oliver believes that this is all gesture based – panel manga. Spectacle – shonen manga.

Richard Simms is a English teacher currently working Japan whose interest in Japanese culture began with anime and manga. The Interview was conducted via email from the 17/2/2011 until the 24/2/2011.

To begin with, how did you start watching anime? Were you aware of it as being a piece of Japanese media or did this realisation come afterwards? If so, what aspects of it stood out as being Japanese?

Thanks,

Alex

On my 17th birthday my father bought me two manga books; Love Hina volume 1 & 2. I recognised the art-style immediately, but at that time I didn't know where it originated from or what the art-style's name was. I had grown up with a few mainstream animes such as Pokémon and Cardcaptor Sakura, so the art-style was familiar and a little nostalgic to me. I immediately fell in love with the story, humour and characters in Love Hina and proceeded to read the entire series which spanned 14 books.

I can't say that I was aware that I was aware it was a Japanese media per se. I knew the story originated from Japan, but I wasn't aware that anime and manga were a product of Japan. Within the Love Hina series, both manga and anime, there were a lot of references to Japanese culture. In the first episode of the manga it makes references to Tokyo University (often referenced as Toudai which is an abbreviation of Toukyou Daigaku), cram schools (known as "学習塾" or "gakushuu juku"), ronin (people who have failed university entrance exams), onsens, and print club stickers (プリクラ or "purikura"). From these references I would research more about them and then my interest in Japanese culture snowballed.

I later learnt through the internet that there was an anime series made during the production of the manga for Love Hina. I found an English DVD of volume 1 in a local video shop but it was unfortunately a disappointment. The anime had tried too hard to compress one or two manga volumes into a 20 minute episode, making the final product feel rushed and confusing. The story takes place over several years but had I not read the manga before seeing the anime, I wouldn't know how much time had passed between plot points, or why.

As I mentioned; even though I was aware Love Hina was set in Japan, I wasn't immediately aware that the media itself originates from Japan. The plentiful references to everyday Japanese life within the story made me realise that anime and manga, although influenced by western cartoons themselves, were a piece of Japanese media.

Even after a false start in my interest in anime, I researched more about the media and was recommended more anime to watch. I discovered that Japanese culture is included in most anime but the references, while a novelty to western readers, feel very natural in the stories involved, even those about fantasy or science-fiction. For example in the second episode of the on-going anime One Piece, they introduce a pirate named Roronoa Zoro. Despite the

story being set in a fantasy-Caribbean a small girl makes Zoro onigiri (Japanese rice balls) and Zoro himself often talks of drinking sake (Japanese rice wine). These often small aspects of Japanese anime are what makes them stand out amongst other forms of media.

When you first discovered anime and manga was it coincidental (i.e. it was by chance you received the first two volumes of Love Hina)or did you hear about it from other places? If so where?

To you, it seems anime and manga was a very important in the sense it seemed to be the first real interface with Japanese culture, would you agree? You display a very good working knowledge of Japanese language, is it safe to assume you have acquired this since your first experience with anime? Did this budding interest kindle or nurture your interest in Japanese culture?

Would you also say that the inadequacies of the Love Hina anime were due to practices within the anime industry to compress a great deal of information in a short number of episodes? In your experience of anime would you say that this is a common practice?

If we could also talk about how you began to access anime and research these different aspects of Japanese culture that came from watching anime and reading manga? Did you use the internet to either learn more about Japanese culture and anime? How important would you say the internet is to anime fans in the west?

Thanks
Alex

It was certainly the case for manga that it was coincidental. My father remembered I enjoyed the old Pokemon cartoons on television which is why he bought the manga books for my birthday. Up until that point I assumed the anime art-style was only televised. It's difficult to say if my interest in anime was coincidental or a progression from manga. As I have said, my first anime with the knowledge of it being anime was Love Hina which I discovered (the manga) purely by coincidence. However, after reading reviews from veteran anime fans on the internet, I discovered I wasn't alone in preferring the manga over the anime. Another anime recommended was Lucky Star which truly opened my eyes to the vast world of anime. All of the information I initially found about anime and manga was researched and recommended on the internet; through forums, blogs and top ten recommendation lists.

I think I would agree with that statement - my knowledge of Japanese culture was almost non-existant at that time and anime helped introduce me to the deep intricate way of life in Japan. It was very much jumping into the deep end, however. Anime is made by Japanese people for Japanese people, so it doesn't take time out to explain why you say お邪魔します ("o-jamashimasu" or "I'm going to disturb you") before entering someone's home or what たこ焼き ("takoyaki", fried ball of batter with octopus inside) is. If you're watching anime you are sometimes forced to understand these parts of the culture in order to understand the storyline.

Yes, it was actually anime that sparked my interest in learning the Japanese language. It began with watching Negima! on DVD, which is coincidentally also written by Ken Akamatsu, the author of Love Hina. In the first episode there is a scene where two girls are discussing the arrival of a new male teacher. In the Japanese version one girl says "He's a little hentai [perverted], right?" to which the other girl replies "No, he's not like that".

However in the English dubbed version the conversation is changed to "He's quite cute, right?" and the girl responds with "Yes, he is sort of". It was coincidental I was watching the English dubbed version along with the subtitles which were more accurate translations of the Japanese version rather than ad-verbatim of the English. It was this contradicting scene that made me decide it would be easier to learn to understand the Japanese myself rather than rely on vague translations or even completely edited script.

Learning Japanese was a very effective catalyst in my interest in Japanese culture. While I watch anime with subtitles or with English voice overs, it's interesting noticing how certain words or phrases get translated. A word I mentioned before - "お邪魔します" ("o-jamashimasu") - is translated as saying "I'm going to disturb you". In English it doesn't make much sense, especially in the context that you had been invited to someone's house. However Japanese culture and language is overtly polite and humble, the belief that disrupting others from what they are doing is incredibly rude. Take "すみません" ("sumimasen") as an example. In most Japanese dictionaries it is translated as "sorry" or "excuse me" in English, however a more accurate translation is "I'm sorry for making you pay attention to me". It is said if you bump into someone, if someone bumps into you, if you ask a question, if you answer a question, if someone does a favour for you or even if you make a phone call to someone. Words that either can't or are difficult to translate into other languages are present in all languages, and it was this that made learning Japanese and watching anime so interesting. It helped with understanding situations, contexts and conversations between characters within anime. Watching anime and learning Japanese to me both influence one another.

Indeed; anime is such a huge and broad media that it is difficult for companies to know which animes to invest in. This leads to anime companies putting a tight budget on less well-known animes, almost forcing the team behind series making cost-cutting measures to try to stay true to fans without over-spending. Such budget saving techniques include using the same footage throughout the series (such as Team Rocket's "Prepare for Trouble" scenes present in Pokémon), using internal dialogue as a means of not needing to animate characters speaking, and having long openings and credits in order to fill in the 25 minute average length of an episode. The more popular an anime is the more budget it gets, for example Naruto and One Piece are still producing episodes despite both being over 10 years old, and therefore the more freedom the directors and animators have. A common practice with long anime series is to have "filler" episodes - episodes which do not further the story or hold any significance in the long run of the series. Love Hina quite obviously did not have such freedoms and therefore attempted to compress as much storyline as it could into 25 episodes. While 14 books into 25 episodes sounds feasible in theory, in practice it is very difficult.

If I was to be so bold, I would suggest that the internet is a key-stone in western viewers access to anime. It was on the internet that I discovered Love Hina had an anime series and it was on the internet that I found other animes and mangas to enjoy. It also assists in the efforts of importing anime and manga; western companies that localise and distribute anime need to know what it is western audiences want. What is popular in Japan wouldn't necessarily be popular in the west. There is a technique in anime known as "fanservice" which is observing which character(s) audiences like the most and simply putting more and more emphasis on them. However, it is always difficult for companies to know what will be the next popular thing, so observing internet discussions on anime from a western audience is essential for companies to know which would be the best to import.

There is also the factor of the legal grey area that is downloading and streaming anime online. This practice is very widespread with fans of anime translating episodes free of charge, often referred to as "fan-sub". This is both beneficial and damaging for Japanese anime companies; it is beneficial in that the companies can see which anime series is popular and therefore would be more profitable for them. It is very damaging at the same time in that by the time the anime has been licensed, marketed, translated, dubbed and distributed, the audience it is targeted at have already watched the entire series free online. I would say that anime companies are missing out a very lucrative untapped market in that regard. I would say the internet is essential for western audiences to keep up-to-date with the fast paced media.

<u>**Questionaire**</u>

What genre of anime do you prefer?

I.Harem comedy (eg. Love Hina, Negima)
II.Panel comedy (eg. *Yotsuba, Azumanga Daioh*)
III.Shōnen anime (eg. *Bleach, Naruto, Dragon Ball*)
IV.Mecha (eg. *Gundam, Yukikaze*)
V.Super Mech (eg. *Toppen Tengan Gurran Lagann, Gaogaigar*)
VI.Other – (Please specifiy with name of genre and one or two examples)

Internet Communities

Do you visit any forums connected to anime?
I.Yes
II.No
III.None in particular

How active in forums are you?

I.Lurk
II.Occasionally comment
III.Avidly comment
IV.Participate in discussion
V.Moderate forums
VI.Other

What attracts you to these forums?

I.Discussions
II.News
III.Education
IV.Links to downloads
V.Other

Do you feel the discussions on these forums are worthwhile?

I.Yes
II.Somewhat
III.No

Do you aid these communities in some other way?

I.Translating
II.Torrent downloading and uploading
III.Posting links
IV.Recommending more anime
V.Making wallpapers or fan art

The attraction of anime

How do you watch this content?

I.DVD
II.Digital format
III.Both

Where do you acquire it?

I.High street store
II.Internet shopping
III.Torrent download
IV.Youtube or other streaming site