From Scrolls to Prints to Moving Pictures: Iconographic Ghost Imagery from Pre-Modern Japan to The Contemporary Horror Film

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When it was first released in Japan in 1998, the supernatural horror thriller *Ringu* sparked a cult phenomenon. Growing in popularity by word of mouth, the film went on to become an international franchise, with remakes of the terrifying film appearing in Korea and the United States. The film, which tells the story of a cursed videotape (psychically created by the angry spirit of a woman named Yamamura Sadako[1]) that causes the viewer's death in one week, was notable both for its reliance on mood and tension rather than gore or cheap scare tactics and for its use of iconographic horror imagery, a long-standing device used in the Japanese horror traditions of literature and stage.

In the United States, the new horror genre evident in director Nakata Hideo's *Ringu*, and other films in a similar vein, represents an innovative direction in the creation of a horror film—a triumph of atmosphere over violence. In its homeland of Japan, however, such films are not new paths of terror but tales built on the strong foundation of historical visual culture and folklore. The images found in such films can be traced back through Japan's fascinating history, revealing the numerous sources that produced an iconography of ghost imagery. From the earliest stages of Japan's development of a Japanese writing system in the ninth century to the refinement, daring, and imagination of Edo period (1600-1868) literature and art, a collection of codified elements that define the Japanese concept of ghosts has evolved, illuminating a frank love of an enduring ghost story tradition. The continued dominance of both traditional ghost stories and their contemporary variants can be attributed to a myriad of social, cultural, political, and economic factors that arose during the early modern period.

Economy and Stability in the Edo Period

The ghost story has been an ever popular theme in Japanese literature, but it was not until the unique economic and social situations that developed at the beginning of the Edo period in the seventeenth century that ghost story motifs and imagery began to gain in popularity, eventually becoming a viable subject in the thriving world of *ukiyo-e art* and growing into codified imagery through contributions

from social conventions, religious beliefs, and Kabuki staging techniques. It was only after an era of stability was attained that the ghost story genre, along with other literary arts, finally had the fertile atmosphere in which to grow. Earlier centuries, dominated by military conflict and civil warfare, did not possess the necessary cultural climate for the widespread production and dissemination of artistic works. The social environment required for this cultural growth was supported by a rising merchant class capable of patronizing folk culture in its various forms of literature, art, and theater.

Prior to the Edo period, Japan had been engulfed in a centuries-long civil war. At the end of the twelfth century, the Imperial court collapsed under the weight of its own indolence as aristocrats became more insular at the capital of Heian-kyo (present-day Kyoto). Open warfare between two rival families—the Minamoto and the Taira clans—began in 1156 and lasted until the Minamoto family claimed victory in 1185 after a series of battles that racked the provinces as well as the capital city.[2] In the five centuries that followed, civil war was a continuing facet of Japanese life. The Kamakura and Muromachi periods (c. 1185-1573) saw the rise and fall of multiple military families. The worst of the warfare ensued after the rise of the Ashikaga clan in 1336. In the succeeding period, nearly unending strife and battle lasted for two centuries. Indeed, the last century of the Ashikaga rule is commonly known as the Warring States Period due to its degree of instability. Paul Varley describes the Muromachi period as "the most tumultuous age in Japanese history,"[3] and consequently it was not until the latter half of the sixteenth century, when the military lords Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and Tokugawa Ieyasu initiated unification, that Japan entered an era of stability and the nation again saw a flourishing of the arts.[4]

In 1600, after the deaths of first Nobunaga and then Hideyoshi, it was Ieyasu who took control of the nation with his decisive victory at the battle of Sekigahara. Ieyasu established an unchallenged regime in the early modern city of Edo (present-day Tokyo). It was this regime that brought an initial economic stability conducive to the proliferation of ghost stories, as well as a rice economy that turned the newly moneyed, lower class echelons into the arbiters of popular society and brought folkloric culture, and with it the ever-popular ghost story, into the Japanese canon.

The Edo period economy was based on rice, and because of the fluctuations associated with an agricultural economy, currency was often unstable.[5] Additionally, members of the military class who generally derived their income from agriculture were at a disadvantage financially. The military lords (*daimyo*) received income from farmer vassals while lower ranked samurai received income from annual stipends that were paid in rice. Merchants who dealt in currency and luxury commodities bypassed the military class in economic status, though they remained at the bottom of the social class scale. The Tokugawa government's inability to accept and accommodate the transition of Japan from an agrarian to a capitalist economy wreaked havoc among the various warrior clans,[6] and a set of laws governing the conduct of military families, passed in 1615, also greatly diminished the great families' wealth and power. These laws covered marriage, castle construction, and the treatment of criminals within the clans. However, despite the fact that the laws had been instituted by the early Tokugawa government to promote order among the various warrior clans,[7] the combination of forced relocation—lords and their entourages were required to live in Edo every other year—and restrictive sumptuary laws—samurai were expected to live up to their status by purchasing costly clothes and accessories—led to the bankruptcy of numerous wealthy warrior lords and the impoverishment of many lower-rank samurai. By the nineteenth century it was not uncommon for men of the warrior caste to live poverty stricken lives of squalid misery.[8]

By contrast, merchants, always considered the lowest class of society, beneath warriors, farmers, and artisans, but now aided by a growing literacy rate,[9] began to accumulate vast sums of wealth that they were not allowed to display. The same sumptuary laws that so crippled the warrior class forced the merchant class (*chōnin*) to hide their wealth in the accumulation of various artworks and trinkets.

For the *chōnin*, status could be achieved through the spending of money in places like the licensed prostitution quarters or the Kabuki theaters. Depictions of the lifestyles of townsmen were captured in many plays and novels of the period, most notably in the ribald works of Saikaku Ihara, whose novels generally concerned the amorous adventures of men and women of the merchant class.[10] Collections of *ukiyo-e* that advertised those pastimes were equally popular among *chōnin* patrons.[11]

At the same time, the regional stability that contributed to the conversion of Japan's economy also aided the widespread popularization of ghost stories.[12] It is not unreasonable to suppose that, though ghost stories had always been a part of Japanese culture, their popularity in the preceding centuries of repeated and often constant civil warfare would have declined along with many other literary arts.[13] In fact, outside of the Nō Theater there was almost no literary development during the Muromachi period, and while the main characters of Nō plays were often ghosts, the audience for such works was so limited as to prevent them from reaching the popular culture as anything more than prototypes for later stories and characters.[14] When a country is plagued by civil war, how can there be time for the development and support of a literary genre? When numerous people die in uprisings and raids on a regular basis—and subsequently become potentially dangerous spirits [15]—how can horror really be viewed as an entertaining pastime?

The effects of political stability on the development of the ghost story genre can be seen in the sudden appearance in the seventeenth century of numerous collections of supernatural stories. In the 1660s, a time when more and more of the generation that remembered life during wartime was passing away, three separate collections of supernatural tales were published.[16] Additionally, the tone of ghost stories became more secularized than that of their precursors,[17] a trait that again reveals the effects of a secure life. The moralizing qualities of ghost stories as told in Nō dramas of the medieval period demonstrate the human tendency to rely on religion in times of crisis. In the Edo period, as the fear of living through social unrest rapidly became a thing of the past, it seems reasonable that the authors of ghost stories and other supernatural tales were more at liberty to emphasize the entertaining aspects of their narratives and subsequently this genre became a lastingly popular facet of Japanese culture in word and image.

Religious Beliefs and the Japanese Ghost Story

Supernatural elements have long been part of Japanese tales, less often as the defining characteristic of a literary work than as one piece of a larger whole. Both the concept of the *yūrei*, which literally means "dim/hazy/faint spirit" and which refers specifically to spirits of the dead,[18] and the origins of the Japanese ghost story as an independent genre are based on religious constructs. However, they are informed by a variety of different sources, including Buddhist moralistic and miracle tales and Shinto concepts of purification and defilement. The ghost story's rise to popularity in the Edo period was due largely to the development of a game based on Buddhist constructs, while the construct of the *yūrei* owes its power to frighten to Shinto beliefs regarding death and defilement.

An emphasis on Buddhist religious practices is found in collections of supernatural tales, known as *Kaidan-shū* (*kaidan* meaning "strange talk/narrative" and *shū* meaning "collection") in the Edo period, which had their origins in Buddhist moral tales from earlier periods.[19] The *Nihon ryōiki* (*Miraculous Stories from the Japanese Buddhist Tradition*), written around 823, is thought to have been the first collection of supernatural tales published in Japan. The themes of the tales were intended to convey Buddhist moral values and the punishments and rewards inherent in various deeds.[20] These moralistic qualities were shared by many ghost stories and folktales, particularly those involving avenging spirits, whose act of punishing the people who had harmed them could be said to be an implementation of the Buddhist belief that those who commit crimes will

suffer for their misdeeds.[21] This theme of suffering for misdeeds is integral to the narratives surrounding vengeful spirits and can be seen in some of Japan's earliest literature.

One of Japan's most celebrated written works, *The Tale of Genji*, written in the eleventh century, features several chapters that have a fantastical and often frightening tinge to them. The supernatural elements of *The Tale of Genji* center on the character called the Rokujō lady. The Rokujō lady, one of Genji's numerous lovers, is portrayed as an overly sensitive and neurotic woman, and her jealous rages prove fatal to her rivals for Genji's affections. In the chapters "Evening Faces" and "Heartvine," the Rokujō lady—through the malignancy of her angry spirit—psychically attacks and kills two separate women.[22]

As one of the earliest examples of an angry ghost,[23] the Rokujō lady has captivated Japanese audiences since her eleventh century creation, even inspiring an early fifteenth century Nō play, *Nonomiya (The Shrine in the Fields)*, by the actor/playwright Zeami.[24] In the play, the Rokujō lady, far from being freed from her destructive passion for Genji, is still trapped by her earthly desires in the realm of the undead and requires the assistance of a Buddhist monk to achieve salvation. This play, like the earlier Buddhist moralistic tales contained in the *Nihon ryōiki*, demonstrates the religiosity that persisted throughout the medieval era.

Literature that featured a Buddhist slant, whether in the form of tale, novel, or play, was not Buddhism's only contribution to the development of the Japanese ghost story. The popularity of *Kaidan-shū* is thought to be connected to the popularity of a game known as *hyaku monogatari (One hundred [supernatural] tales)*, whose possible precursor was the Buddhist ritual of *Hyakuza hōdan (One hundred Buddhist stories)*. A common pastime among Buddhists in the medieval period preceding the Edo, the game involved similar mechanics as *Hyaku monogatari*, except that in the case of *Hyakuza hōdan* it was believed that miracles would occur after the telling of one hundred Buddhist tales over the period of one hundred days [25]—a larger time commitment than the single evening of fun involved in the Edo period game that developed later.

The game *hyaku monogatari* was often played by the Japanese of the Edo period at social gatherings, and the rules were simple: one hundred candles were lit at the start of the game and, as each tale was told, they were extinguished one by one until all lights were gone. It was a commonly held belief that something frightening would occur after all the light sources were extinguished.[26] Following the popularity of this game in the seventeenth century, many *ukiyo-e* artists produced collections entitled *Hyaku monogatari* in the following centuries of the Edo period, with Katsushika Hokusai's (1760-1849) superlative five-print series perhaps being the best known.[27]

Hyaku monogatari did not spring into existence by itself, but rather represented an evolution of supernatural ritualistic practices that can also be seen from another common subject matter displayed in woodblock prints of the Edo period, *Hyakki yakō (Night Parade of One Hundred Demons)*. *Hyakki yakō* refers to a Heian period (794-1185) belief in a night-parade consisting of scores of terrifying demons; "one hundred" was a common Japanese expression for "a great many." These demons were thought to walk the streets of the capital by night.[28] The continuation of such themes in Edo period artworks, from an even earlier precursor than the Buddhist game *Hyakuza hōdan*, demonstrates the role of tradition in formulating a standard ghost story genre.

The Japanese belief in the malignancy and danger of the *yūrei* is largely indigenous and developed independently from the ghost story genre, which owes much of its form to foreign influences such as Buddhism and Chinese tales of the strange.[29] In the Shinto religion many things cause spiritual pollution—among them menstruation, childbirth, death, and misdeeds—and death is the most profound pollution undergone by a human being. As is evident in the "Evening Faces" chapter from *The Tale of Genji*, just coming into contact with a dead body could cause defilement.[30] The pollution of death could

only be expunged after the ritual passage of seven days from the date of contact or death. It took another forty-two days before mourners were free from the ritual abstinences imposed upon them by the funeral rites,[31] and purification of the deceased occurred only once the spirit had taken its place in the great collective of immortal ancestors.[32]

The elaborate funeral proceedings observable in Japan, mainly originating in the Edo period, were the result of Buddhist traditions augmented by the traditional beliefs of Shinto, which—unlike the Buddhist beliefs of nirvana and reincarnation—reveal an ongoing relationship between the living and the dead.[33] Originally, separate graves were maintained to protect the living from the defilement of death. One space housed the remains of the dead, while another space was kept for the living family members to meet and celebrate the deceased.[34]

In addition to the fear of pollution, the Japanese had, and continue to have, a fear of angry spirits–for example, the spirits of people who had died young, painfully, far from home, or otherwise in distress of some kind.[35] These spirits were thought to have the power to harm living human beings through the force of their anger, and it was generally accepted that anyone who died in a state of heightened emotional stress would be doomed to return to the world to plague the living.[36] Additionally, as Brenda Jordan notes, "powerfully gripping emotions such as spite, love, loyalty, jealousy, hatred, or sorrow can *bring a spirit back* into the world of humanity. Once manifested, the ghost remains until released of its obsession."[37]

In the Japanese tradition the term *yūrei* refers to male and female spirits. However, there is a tendency for defilement to fall more often upon women, through menstruation and childbirth. The large numbers of women who died in childbirth meant that a majority of premature and painful deaths belonged to women. The ghosts of recently deceased mothers, known as *ubume*, appear in many Japanese folktales, sometimes causing trouble and sometimes merely trying to aid their newly born children.[38] The tendency to perceive women as impure and defiled, and above all to focus on deaths that occurred under unfortunate circumstances, greatly accounts for the proliferation of female spirits in Japanese ghost stories. Although male spirits walk the earth in search of revenge and worse, they are far, far less common than the female variant. As a result, male spirits lack the specific iconography—for example the white kimono and long hair—that most typically characterizes the female *yūrei*, who is the subject of this study.

The most striking feature of both the male and female *yūrei* is their tendency to appear not as the diaphanous spirits associated with Western concepts of restless souls, but in the form they held while living. *Yūrei* often seem more like roaming corpses than intangible beings—another illustration of how the iconography of ghosts has been influenced by Shinto fears of death. Tim Screech describes the *yūrei* thus: "[R]ising up from the darkness, *yurei* [sic] reanimate themselves with the flame of their passion. This makes them partially human again, reinvested with their original mind and something of their former bodies too—scars, blood, and all."[39]

A notable example of this characteristic can be found in a tale from the *Konjaku monogatari*, translated as *Tales of Times Now Past*, a twelfth century collection of folklore and supernatural stories. The tale relates the story of a man whose wife dies after he deserts her. Rather than decomposing like a normal dead person, her corpse continues to retain its long hair and bone structure. Aware that his wife's spirit despises him and undoubtedly wishes him ill, the man seeks help from a local diviner (rather than the more common Buddhist priest), who instructs him to take hold of the corpse's hair and, no matter what occurs, to sit astride the corpse's back until dawn.[40] Here, the malignant spirit does not take a diaphanous or indistinct form but continues to inhabit the body, using flesh to accomplish its aims and goals. This aspect of the Japanese ghost more than plays itself out on the contemporary movie screen, as will be shown.

The Codification of Ghost Imagery in the Edo Period

By the Edo period tales of the supernatural had an established history. Despite this longevity, the representational elements of the Japanese female ghost were not codified until this time. The Japanese of earlier periods tended to perceive ghosts as being nondescript—indistinguishable from living men and women—rather than startlingly recognizable. Nevertheless, a crucial aspect of the developing icon had been visible in the art of the preceding centuries, particularly in art from the late Heian period.

Living women in illustrated scrolls (*emaki*) of the Heian period could not be distinguished from ghosts through their clothing or their hairstyle—for at this time Japanese ghosts were thought to look like ordinary, everyday people.[41] While the clothing fashion of court women did not go on to form part of the ghost iconography, the hairstyle of court women did. One of the distinctive features of the female *yūrei*, the long black hair, was also a common feature of Heian period court women, and the hairstyle—far from conveying the frightening revenant it would eventually come to represent—can be seen in the extant examples of artwork from the period, most notably in the celebrated *Genji* scrolls.

The scrolls illustrating *The Tale of Genji*, by Murasaki Shikibu,[42] do not survive in their entirety. The extant examples reveal the style of the traditional Heian court women, which include flamboyantly colorful clothing, and long, unbound black hair. In one of the surviving scroll images (Figure 1), court women are shown in one of their partitioned rooms. Some of the women sit together, combing each other's long hair—which hangs straight down their backs to the floor—whereas others are seated separately. Some face forward, so that the line for an eye, hook for a nose (*hikime kagibana*) technique that defined Heian period figure painting can be seen, while others show only their perfect, black hair and the colorful, wide sleeves of their elaborate outfits.

Figure 1

In *The Tale of Genji*, Shikibu devotes considerable attention to the description of both court costumes and the length and quality of various ladies' hair.[43] Such hair was a symbol of beauty and feminine sexuality,[44] but by the Edo period a new standard of sexual desirability had come into play. This new hair style, in which the hair is worn in an elaborate updo, is shown in the numerous pictures of beauties (*bijinga*) produced in the Edo period, and in part explains the divergence in appearance between the *yūrei* and living women since the Heian period. In the Heian period, when ghosts looked much like living women, both women and ghosts possessed long hair worn down. In the Edo period, by contrast, only ghosts retained this stylistic representation.

The segregation between visual representations of living and dead women can plainly be seen from even a random perusal of the most popular *ukiyo-e* prints. One of the most common themes of Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints was love, and many prints were devoted to representations, both allusive and explicit, of courting and coupling. One of the most notable features of such prints is the elaborate hairstyle worn by the women depicted. Like the styles from classic images of courtesans and famous beauties, erotic pictures (*shunga*) portray amorous women as wearing their hair in styles of daunting complexity, even though the scenes are often of romantic entanglements that even the most stalwart hairdo would fail to withstand.

Kitagawa Utamaro (1754-1806), one of the most famous female portraitists, made numerous *shunga*. An example can be seen in *Illustration from Utamakura (Pillow Poems)* (Figure 2). In the print, the

woman is seen from behind, her white neck and the tops of her shoulders exposed and an intricate mass of hair piled on her head, held in place by a wickedly sharp hair stick. Neither the man's nor the woman's face can be seen in this print, but they are clearly engaged in, or leading up to, a sexual act. The woman's right leg is thrown over the man's hips, indicating that they are in the midst of a tryst, but still her hair is perfectly coifed. In a realistic depiction, it would not be surprising at this stage of the proceedings to find the woman's hair already undone.

This use of hairstyle as icon is once again tied to concepts of sexuality. In this case, the bound hair carries a quality of desirability because it hints at the more intimate access to a woman's unbound hair, which a man would inevitably see once he entered into physical relations with a woman.[45] In this print, arousal is wrapped up in the promise of the glimpse rather than the actual glimpse itself. In the Edo period, long, unkempt hair was reserved for depictions of ghosts—women whose sexual promise could never again be fulfilled—and also for women whose lives had been touched by the uncanny,[46] and whose existence had been thrown into spiritual turmoil as a result.

Figure 2

An example of the use of hair to denote psychological turmoil appears in another print by Utamaro (Figure 3). The print is a depiction of Yamauba, a mountain woman who was either some kind of supernatural being or an ordinary woman who had been abandoned after the humiliation and banishment of her husband. Yamauba fled into the mountains where she gave birth to a son possessed of extraordinary strength.[47] Utamaro portrays her, not as the dainty vision of perfection his other beauties were, but as a sturdy, though ragged, mother. Her clothing, though not white, has very little brilliance or ornamentation, and her hair is shown as a long, scraggly mess that hangs lank against her neck and shoulders. Unlike Utamaro's regular portrayals, Yamauba is shown to have suffered some kind of trauma, and that trauma is revealed through the treatment of her hair and her negligently kept attire.

Figure 3

The sexual symbolism of hair becomes inverted in the depiction of a ghost. In the case of a *yūrei*, long dark hair symbolizes a cessation of the woman's natural life cycle, not her sexuality. Had she lived to be an old woman and died naturally, her hair would inevitably have turned white.[48] The vengeful ghost has not lived through a natural life cycle, and the despair at having her life cut short is often what leads to the ghost's discontent and subsequent reappearance in the world of the living to seek her vengeance.

This symbol of nature interrupted is very much apparent in the construction of the spectral figure of Sadako—the villainous avenging spirit from the famed film, *Ringu*. Her hair could be said to be her defining feature (Figure 4). Even in the scenes where she is shown still living, her hair is long and unbound and covers her face, functioning almost as a mask behind which she hides and an emblem of her eventual afterlife. This use of long hair, while immediately and symbolically distinguishing her as a character with whom something is wrong, also further separates her from humanity; it emphasizes her "Otherness" in a starkly visual way.

While a striking symbol for the otherworldliness of the undead, long hair alone is not enough to signify a female figure as a ghost, particularly in contemporary culture where modern women wear their hair in nearly any style they choose. To this most prominent of features is added a number of other key factors that set the *yūrei* apart from the denizens of the living world.

Figure 4

Iconic Ghost Imagery in Art and Film

As with Western apparitions who are often described as having set features that distinguish them as spirits of the dead, the Japanese ghost is instantaneously recognizable due to its possession of several iconographic elements (the iconography of which evolved in the Edo period) that distinguish it from everyday, living human beings. These are the aforementioned long disheveled hair, long white dress or kimono, limp hands, and lack of evident feet.

In ghost portraits from the Edo (1600-1868) and Meiji (1868-1912) periods, these iconic features function to inform the viewer of what he or she is seeing. There can be no confusion regarding the status of a woman in a woodblock print. If she is a living woman she is depicted with an elegant coiffure and colorful and fashionable clothing; she is often holding flowers, a letter, or some other refinement, and has dainty feet—another symbol of allure and sexual promise[49]—suggestively revealed beneath the hem of her elaborate kimono.

Ghost portraits reveal the opposite characteristics. Unlike the *shunga* and *bijinga* prints, in which elegantly coiffed paragons of fashion, typically courtesans,[50] appeared in the richly patterned and dyed costumes of the day, portraits of *yūrei* typically depict the phantoms wearing white. During the Edo period, the dead were buried in white clothing—a plain, unlined kimono, sometimes inscribed with Buddhist sutras.[51] It was also customary for women intending to commit suicide, or being taken for execution, to be attired in white or sometimes very light blue. Thus, women who came to death through bad ends often wore white even before their death, and as a result this color symbolized misfortune and suffering.[52] Consequently, Edo period depictions of ghosts show them in white clothing, in marked contrast to the flamboyant kimono fashions showcased by famous courtesans in *ukiyo-e*.

Whereas such *shunga* and *bijinga* prints of courtesans were designed to attract the attention of wealthy merchants' wives in the hopes of inducing them to purchase costly fabrics,[53] it is highly unlikely that any clothing merchant would wish his wares to be showcased by such an inauspicious figure as a ghostly specter. With the art of the Edo period, particularly woodblock prints, becoming more and more obviously commercial in nature, the need for a separation between the various marketable commodities would have been vital to the advertising industry of Edo, Japan. Dead and hideous *yūrei* were saleable in illustrations of popular novels and plays, but they would never have done as purveyors of modern fashion. As early modern equivalents of fashion models, healthy and beautiful courtesans, whom merchants' wives and daughters could safely emulate, were far better suited to such a task.

The separation created by depicting ghosts as wearing the clothing in which they were buried, rather than in the most stylish fashions of the day, made them recognizable to the viewer instantaneously[54] and has remained a key iconographic symbol in the contemporary filmic depiction of the *yūrei*. In *Ringu*, Sadako never once appears in any clothing other than a white dress, not even in the scenes in which she is shown living. Again, the director uses this imagery to separate her character from ordinary society in a fashion that foreshadows her ultimate separation from humanity as a ghost.

This desire to separate the image of a healthy, desirable, and marketable woman from that of the dead, dangerous, and sartorially unmarketable *yūrei* is also the reason behind the limply hanging hands that many ghosts are shown to have. Except in the case of images where the ghosts are shown at prayer, their hands generally hang to the sides. A good example of this is Shunkōsai Hokushū's (active 1810-1832) *The Ghost of Oiwa* (Figure 5) from 1826. The longhaired, bedraggled Oiwa stands in an unspecified location, wearing a flowing white kimono. Both of her hands lie to her sides, seeming to have no purpose other than to distinguish the pitiable figure from other living women—who would most likely be depicted holding a letter, a fold of their fine clothing, or a parasol.

Figure 5

Here, too, the twentieth century cinematic example, Sadako, reflects the appropriately iconographic imagery of her *ukiyo-e* lineage. Even in the final sequence during the pursuit of her ghostly revenge, she holds her hands to her sides except when crawling towards her victim. Yet even in that series of movements her hands are strangely bent and ineffectual, giving the impression that there is no physical strength in them (Figure 6). More telling is the fact that she achieves her revenge without the use of her hands at all, and never touches her victim, never reaches out for him, and therefore never deviates at all from the iconic representation of a *yūrei*.

Figure 6

The last obvious characteristic of a *yūrei* is the lack of feet. The appearance of ghosts without feet was mainly a contribution from the Kabuki stage, and this trend in Kabuki spread to visual depictions of ghosts. The footless *yūrei* first appeared in the artwork of Maruyama Okyō (1733-1795), whose most famous ghost portrait is a depiction of a deceased lover (Figure 7). Unlike most other figures in Edo period ghost portraits, which capture the anger, misery, and gore of ghost stories, the figure in Okyō's portrait has a peaceful air to her—a soft smile plays about the ghost's lips, and her face is composed in a soft, restful gaze—yet all the standard iconic elements can be found in his painting. The *yūrei's* long hair is unbound and hangs down her back and shoulders. She wears a white kimono and her one visible hand, though lying pliant against her chest rather than, as is more common, at her side, is loose and lacking in muscular tension. Her other hand is washed out, lost in the fog that surrounds her. Most significantly, her feet are gone, faded into the misty atmosphere that surrounds the apparition, along with most of her legs, an additional blurring in this particular painting.

Figure 7

The lack of feet is more difficult than other iconographic features to recreate in a film—particularly if the effects budget for the film is not high. In *Ringu*, the director and cast devised an ingenious and innovative way to recreate the sense of footlessness in the character of Sadako without the expense of costly special effects that would have been needed to remove the actress's feet on film. In the final sequence of the movie where Sadako finally emerges from the cursed videotape, her approach toward the front of the television set is awkward and therefore disconcerting, and conveys a sense of someone totally unaccustomed to using her feet for transportation.[55] Sadako's walk is a gangling, almost nauseating gait. Her feet and legs bend awkwardly as she moves forward and her upper body, following suit, ripples and

contorts revoltingly (Figure 9). The visual implication here is the same as that found in the great ghost portraits of the Edo and Meiji periods: that this is a creature who is not normal in any way and is therefore to be feared and avoided if possible.

Figure 8

Figure 9

The effect of Sadako's walk was achieved through the use of reverse playback. The director filmed actress Inou Rie walking backward, and then the footage was played in reverse to create a sense of disorientation in the walking.[56] Inou Rie, who studied Kabuki theater before being cast in the role of Sadako—a role she reprised in the sequel, *Ringu 2*—brought a technique that had long been used in the Kabuki theater: communication of emotion by means of movement. This addition to the construction of the Sadako character continues the long tradition of Kabuki contributions to the representation of the Japanese ghost.

Kabuki and the Ghost Image

Many factors influenced the visual appearance of the *yūrei*, including the popularity of folk culture and the growing business of advertising, but perhaps the most influential factor in the creation of codified ghost imagery was the Kabuki Theater and the tremendously popular plays performed there. Over the years, innovations in Kabuki staging techniques led to an ever-larger divide between the portrayal of ordinary, living characters and that of ghosts, demons, gods, and monsters, while a series of stirring horror tales would so whet the public's appetite for tales of the supernatural that to this day the trend continues.

Kabuki is a highly stylized form of dramatic performance that emerged in the seventeenth century. Originally centered on the erotic performances of women, Kabuki was restricted to male actors by order of the Tokugawa government in 1629,[57] although women continued to attend performances. The plays performed on the Kabuki stage often involve action, violence, and brutality, and as a result Kabuki evolved a series of elaborate effects, collectively known as *keren*, to enhance the audience's perception of the strange. The effects included the practice of rapid costume changes, the presence of water on stage, and the use of the *mie*—which involves an actor striking a pose that he then holds.[58]

One of the most clear-cut contributions of Kabuki to the image of the *yūrei* is the development of the lack of feet. As horror plays gained in popularity, the ability of the audience to distinguish between living and dead characters became increasingly important.[59] The use of ropes to hoist actors portraying ghosts became extremely common, and in the performances the "ghosts" often seemed to float through the air due to this contrivance.[60] Additionally, actors portraying ghosts wore extremely long kimono to disguise their legs in order to distinguish them from actors portraying living humans. It's unclear why an extra-long kimono was not used for *Ringu*. Perhaps the extra material, without the benefit of a Kabuki rope-hoist, may have looked less intimidating than a shorter kimono.

Along with visual contributions, Kabuki made contributions to the subject matter of ghost prints. Much of the subject matter for *ukiyo-e* prints was dependent on popular plays of the Kabuki and puppet

play (*bunraku*) tradition,[61] including the two famous plays—*Bancho sarayashiki* (*The Plate Mansion*) and *Tokaido yotsuya kaidan* (*Along the Tokaido, The Chilling Tale of Yotsuya*)—which most inform the visual elements of *Ringu*.

Bancho sarayashiki tells the tale of a young maidservant. Desired by her unscrupulous employer, the girl consistently refuses his advances, eventually driving him to hide a valuable Chinese porcelain plate and accuse her of theft. When the girl, named Okiku, again refuses his advances, he has her thrown down a well. Afterward her angry spirit rises from the well to torment her former employer (Figure 10).[62]

Figure 10

This classic image of the longhaired woman rising up from the depths of a well is used in *Ringu* for its most shocking scene. In the film, the so-called "cursed" videotape, when first viewed, ends with the scene of a well. When seen by the victim for the last time, Sadako emerges from this well and proceeds to stalk towards her victim, menacing and inescapable. It is from this well that she always comes to take her revenge upon the living. The image of the well is one of the few aspects of *Ringu* that comes from the original novel by Kōji Suzuki. In both the film and the novel, Sadako—like Okiku—meets her death by being thrown into a well. The subtle sexual aspect of the Okiku tale is present in Suzuki's story, though it was omitted in the film version. In the novel, Sadako's death follows directly after a sexual violation; the murder is committed to cover this prior crime. In the film, Sadako is murdered by her father for reasons unrelated to sexual issues.

The other play to have a large influence on the filmed version of *Ringu* is *Tokaido yotsuya kaidan*, which debuted in 1825.[63] It is the story of a lonely and betrayed wife named Oiwa. When her husband, an unscrupulous *rōnin*, tires of her and decides to marry another woman, he feeds her poisoned medicine. The poison causes a horrifying disfigurement before finally ending her life. Afterwards the restless spirit of Oiwa—her hideous visage characterized by her drooping and deformed eye—returns to drive her husband mad. On the Kabuki stage this deformity is achieved through the use of elaborate makeup.

Sadako shares Oiwa's deformity, and the film concentrates upon this visual aspect by making her eye the focus of her power to kill. In the climactic scene, Sadako's deformed eye is shown directly before the death of her victim, implying that it is the act of fixing him with her gaze that effects the murder (Figure 11). This sense of being seen by a ghost, and subsequently cursed, is a theme that often occurs in Japanese ghost stories. In one popular folktale, a man's nighttime encounter with a strange-looking woman—she wears all white clothing and her hair is long and disheveled—results in his being struck unconscious when he meets her gaze after she turns to look at him.[64] This tale underscores the power of a *yūrei*'s gaze—a power that is demonstrated in both the Oiwa legend and *Ringu*.

Figure 11

Figure 12

Several nineteenth century depictions of Oiwa, including the earlier described painting by Shunkōsai Hokushū and a magnificent woodblock print by Katsushika Hokusai (Figure 12), were produced in the aftermath of the play's success. Hokusai's print, from 1830, emphasizes the poisonous deformity suffered by Oiwa, showing her in the form of a lantern—one of the numerous shapes she assumed to torment her husband. Her hair grows out of the

lantern, hanging long and limp against the white paper, and her eyes and mouth have formed from holes burnt in the paper by the growing flames. Her eyes droop to the sides and her mouth gapes, fixed in a terrible expression of rage and misery.

Kabuki techniques were put to especially realistic use in the first production of the *Tokaido yotsuya kaidan*, which took place around 1825. The actor portraying the vengeful Oiwa, as well as five other characters in the performance, had his performance abetted by the use of theatrical devices which by turns made the actor seem to float, to be completely waterlogged, and to turn into a skeleton at the end of the performance. The depiction of this horror fest was so terrifying to the people of Edo that rumors quickly spread about Oiwa's vengeful spirit having attacked the production—ironically claiming that her malice had damaged the operation of the stage mechanisms that made the character seem so otherworldly and believable. In fact, rumors were so widespread that it became customary for actors taking part in the play to visit Oiwa's grave to placate her restless spirit.[65]

The practice of appeasing the soul of a fictional character continues to this day. In August 2002, during *O-Bon*—the Festival of the Dead—the producers of the successful *Ringu* franchise, having determined that the series had run its course, held a mock funeral for the repose of Sadako's soul.[66] This practice, admittedly strange from a Western perspective, indicates that, while Sadako herself may indeed have been placated by such a display, the Japanese fear of death and the dead is itself far from laid to rest.

Ringu, Sadako, and the *Yūrei* in Contemporary Japan

Figure 13

Figure 14

With tremendous commercial and cult success, *Ringu* has established itself as one of the most popular horror films of the past decade. As the top grossing horror film in Japanese cinematic history and the basis for a host of cookie-cutter remakes in both Korea and the United States,[67] not to mention numerous horror hits that draw scandalously from its signature imagery,[68] its public appeal is undeniable. But what about this film is so appealing, and how was it able to seize so firmly onto the Japanese consciousness?

It is, undoubtedly, a combination of the instantaneously recognizable and classifiable imagery that characterizes *Ringu* and was one of its most striking qualities, and of the persistent interest of the Japanese in vengeful spirits that keeps supernatural subject matter perennially popular. To this day a compulsory reverence for the souls of the dead—particularly those dead who have met untimely ends—pervades the Japanese public psyche. *Ringu*, with its motif of revenge and its main villain who so perfectly conforms to the codified imagery reserved for avenging ghosts since the Edo period, was more than ready to take advantage of that continued affinity for the uncanny.

Fear of the dead continues to extend to everyday life, as can be seen in the ongoing reverence for and consideration paid to family ancestors—always prime candidates for restless spirits—as well as to the fictional accounts of ghost stories in cinema. It can also be seen in the current behavior of Japan's Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro. Despite the displeasure of neighboring countries, including the United States and China, the Prime Minister has visited the Yasukuni Shrine—a Shinto shrine dedicated to the memory of Japan's war dead—since 2001. Prime Minister Koizumi honors Japan's war heroes, in keeping with the Japanese people's inherent solicitude on the part

of dead spirits, though much of the world considers the visits a willful exultation of Japan's war past.[69]

Though present-day international political opinion is that Japanese political leaders ought to cease their visits to the shrine, to do so could be dangerous—and not just politically. The Japanese belief in vengeful spirits holds that to abandon these spirits, to end the rites and prayers that subdue their souls, would be to put the country at risk for retaliation from angry ghosts.[70] This is because *yūrei* often do not distinguish between the person against whom they want revenge and the average person on the street. For the Japanese, since all living people are responsible for the appeasing of dead souls, any living person can be held responsible for the spirit's woes.[71]

With such a potential danger inherent in the neglect of any deceased soul, it becomes the responsibility of the entire nation to see to it that the souls of the war dead are kept happy. On the subject of debate over the Yasukuni shrine, which has been raging for decades, Klaus Antoni notes, "If one single family has to fear the souls of members who died from unnatural causes, so, of course, the nation as a whole (as the 'family of families') has to fear the totality of members who die such bad deaths."[72] For the safety of the country, the souls of the dead must be pacified through continued reverence and care. Though world opinion is against the actions of the prime minister; Japanese public opinion supports his actions,[73] a fact that may stem as much from the deep-seated fear of dangerous spirits as it does from a single family's personal sense of loyalty to its long-deceased relative.

The Japanese attention to, and preoccupation with, potentially dangerous spirits makes it no surprise that tales involving *yūrei* remain vital and current within the Japanese artistic tradition. Of all the most recent offerings of Japanese horror phantoms, no figure in the filmic tradition is more canonical—or identifiable—than that of *Ringu's* Sadako. Emerging from the depths of a supernaturally possessed television screen, she seems more likely to have stepped down from one of *ukiyo-e*'s more terrifying visual offerings. Unlike many of her contemporary counterparts, Sadako seems to embody all the characteristics of the traditional *yūrei*, and, for that reason, is easily the most dependent on Japan's visual culture for her dreadful power to frighten.

Yamamura Sadako was first introduced to Japanese audiences in the early 1990s in a novel by the respected horror novelist Suzuki Kōji. In that intricate thriller Sadako functioned only as a memory, never once appearing as a ghost within that tale's nearly 300 pages. Moreover, though she is described by those who knew her as "eerie" and "creepy,"[74] descriptions of her do not conform to the standard appearance reserved for *yūrei*. She is described as being particularly beautiful and as wearing unremarkable clothing. It is therefore clear that the creators of the film version, director Nakata Hideo and screenwriter Takahashi Hiroshi, did not rely solely on the author's descriptions for their brand of horror, but had other inspirations for the menacing apparition they created.

The filmed version of *Ringu* is astonishingly different from Suzuki Kōji's novel. The novel version, rather than being a horror story, is a mystery novel that straddles the border with the science fiction genre. While both versions focus on the attempts by the main character to unravel the mystery, in the novel the disturbance turns out to have been caused by the creation of a kind of viral infection. In the film, the disturbance is completely supernatural in origin. The main character is Asakawa Reiko,[75] a reporter for a Tokyo newspaper who begins to investigate the mystery of the so-called "cursed" videotape after four teenagers, including Asakawa's niece, die at exactly the same time, supposedly from watching the tape. Her investigation eventually leads her to the tape itself, which she watches, and from there the story involves a race against Asakawa's newly urgent weeklong deadline to unravel and escape the mysterious curse.

Sadako's first appearance in the film is itself iconic. Asakawa has just watched the infamous videotape. As she turns the VCR off she spies in the reflection of the television a figure standing behind her (Figure 15). This figure has long black hair which obscures the face, is clad all in white, holds her

hands limply to her sides, and—because of being positioned behind a couch—does not appear to have any feet. As Asakawa catches a glimpse of this figure her face, which already registers shock at the experience of watching the strange images on the videotape, contracts in absolute terror—presumably because she herself recognizes the codified imagistic qualities and knows that she is in the presence of a *yūrei*. For a person who understands, the visual cues presented by this image—existing as they do in the periphery of daily life—would instantly create what Iwasaka Michiko and Barre Toelken refer to as an "emotional meaning" for the person who saw them.[76]

Figure 15

For the audience familiar with this tradition of visual imagery, the effect of seeing the avenging ghost for the first time is staggering. Her very presence creates an atmosphere of horror far beyond what the video itself could have conveyed, and her appearance there foreshadows her climactic emergence from the television screen at the end of the film. This aspect of the film, Sadako's appearing in and emerging from a two-dimensional screen, is one that appears in Japanese folklore and in woodblock prints. Lafcadio Hearn, in his Japanese folktale collection *Shadowings*, relates the tale of a man who—much like Pygmalion—fell in love with a woman in a painting and wooed her everyday until she finally stepped down from the frame to live with him as his wife.[77] This particular tale may well have been influenced by the Chinese play *The Peony Pavilion (Mudan ting)*, written by Tang Xianzu in 1598,[78] which tells the tale of a young woman who, after meeting a lover in a dream, dies from longing after first painting her self-portrait. Several years later the young man from her dream comes to her family home, sees the portrait and falls in love with it, causing the girl to come to life again by stepping out of the painting.

In a more frightening interpretation of the motif by Tsukioka Yoshitoshi from circa 1890, a *yūrei* rises up from the canvas of a painted scroll. Her face is obscured by her hair, as Sadako's always is, and she wears the white kimono of the dead and buried. The painter of the scroll, seated before her, falls backward away from the apparition in a frenzy of terror (Figure 16), and this tense and futile attempt at escape is repeated in *Ringu*, where Sadako's victim—Asakawa's ex-husband Takayama Ryuji—is forced to squirm away from her to no avail. In having watched the videotape but, unlike Asakawa, failed to solve its riddle and thus to mollify the vengeful spirit, he is irrevocably doomed with no chance of escape.

Figure 16

These themes, present in Japanese art and literature from the Heian period on and stylized in the Edo period, continue to resonate through contemporary Japan. Director Nakata Hideo, who has been summarily praised for his deft touch with *Ringu* and other similar horror films, professes to have a familiarity with the tales from which *Ringu* draws most, *Tokaido yotsuya kaidan* and *Bancho sarayashiki*, as well as Kabuki traditions and ancient Japanese folklore.[79] But at the same time he is generally described as being "a typical contemporary Japanese"—one who does not own a Buddhist altar, who hasn't studied classical Japanese literature since college, and whose first horror films were American classics like *The Exorcist* and *The Omen*.[80]

Nakata's knowledge of the ghost story is no more proficient than that of the average Japanese, and this lack of expert familiarity only underscores the continued power of horror iconography in Japan. Without an explicit model to follow from the original text and with only a peripheral awareness of the imagery that has informed Japanese perception of the *yūrei*, Nakata and his screenwriter, Takahashi Hiroshi, crafted a tale rich in the imagistic heritage of Japan.

Conclusion

The motif of the vengeful female spirit is not exclusive to Japan. Angry women looking to settle their scores after death are common in many if not all cultures around the world. Still, understanding Japan's unique method of representing these ghosts and their activities is essential to understanding the nuances of Japanese culture. By studying the fears of a nation it is possible to extrapolate a deeper cultural psychology at work.

An example of this can be found in comparing traditional Chinese vengeful spirits with those of Japan. *The Jade Record*, a Chinese religious text dating from the late tenth/early eleventh century, describes the ten courts of hell that sinners fall into after their deaths. At the end of the section on the tenth and final court, the *Record* notes that occasionally women go to the demons who control the underworld and request to remain incorporeal for a while, as *gui*, in order to exact revenge on the men who have wronged them. These are often women who committed suicide over the outrage of being lied to or mistreated by a husband. Grudges against these men commonly arose from the men having abandoned the wife's parents or children from a previous marriage or from being taken as a concubine by a man who falsely claimed to have no wife.[81]

After obtaining permission to remain as ghosts, these women typically went to examination halls and waited for their prey so that when the men presented themselves for their civil service examinations the angry spirits might beguile them entirely, causing them to fail the examinations and thus lose the chance to attain prestigious and lucrative livelihoods.

This loss was a fate entirely different from the one suffered by victims of the Japanese *yūrei*, who come for their victims' lives. This difference demonstrates a vital contrast between the core qualities of each civilization. China is a nation with a predominantly academic tradition, valuing scholarly merit and achievement above practically all other qualities. Japan, by contrast, is a nation with a militaristic tradition, valuing honorable behavior and deeds above all else. This is not to say that Japan did not have great scholars, or that it did not value those scholars; neither is it to say that China did not possess any military prowess, nor, even worse, that it did not have any sense of honor. Such a contrast does, however, point out that while Japan has motifs in common with the rest of the world, some of which are heavily borrowed from Chinese structures and archetypes, it filters those motifs through its unique cultural perspective.

An understanding of popular horror films provides a mechanism for recognizing a nation's distinctive viewpoint. What people within a given culture fear and how they relate to and deal with such fears in daily life are key indicators of a society's consciousness. Indeed, an understanding of a culture's consciousness is difficult, if not impossible, without first understanding its deepest fears. This is where the horror film comes into play. It is a fear barometer, registering the levels of a national awareness. The successful horror film succeeds because it draws from the ingrained terror traditions of its respective civilization, and in doing so it reveals the continued need for an understanding of what makes people afraid and how those people face the fears that shape their everyday existence.

Ringu, the numerous films that have followed it and the works of art that inspired it, all have a greater role than their entertaining capacity. In its tremendous success, *Ringu* shines a light on some of the traits that still govern the Japanese national psyche, and the film provides an opportunity to observe and dissect the culture that produced it.

Notes

1. Except where otherwise noted all Japanese names appearing in this text take the traditional Japanese format of family name first.
2. Paul Varley, *Japanese Culture*, 4th ed. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 79-80.
3. Varley, 111.
4. A thorough account of the Momoyama period, the lives of Nobunaga and Hideyoshi, and the stages of unification can be found in Conrad Totman, *Early Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 37-79.
5. Totman, 70-71.
6. Penelope Mason, *History of Japanese Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1993), 244.
7. Wm. Theodore de Bary, ed., *Sources of Japanese Tradition: Volume 1* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 326-329.
8. A representative account of such a lifestyle is contained in the nineteenth century autobiography of Katsu Kokichi, a member of the warrior class who spent most of his life destitute and in constant pursuit of money—via a series of odd, and often unethical, jobs. See Katsu Kokichi, *Musui's Story*, trans. Teruko Craig (Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 1988).
9. Varley, 180-181.
10. Saikaku, Ihara, *The Life of an Amorous Woman and Other Writings*, trans. Ivan Morris (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1969).
11. Mason, 243-244.
12. Noriko T. Reider, *Tales of the Supernatural in Early Modern Japan*, Japanese Studies, vol. 16 (Lewiston: The Edward Mellen Press, 2002), 16.
13. Varley, 140.
14. Examples of ghost characters in Nō dramas include such plays as *Atsumori*, *The Fulling Block*, and *Matsukaze*, among many others. Excellent translations of these plays can be found in Royall Tyler, *Japanese Nō Dramas* (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1992).
15. Norman A. Rubin, "Ghosts, Demons, and Spirits in Japanese Lore," *Asianart.com,* http://asianart.com/articles/rubin.
16. Reider, 18-19.
17. Reider, 10-15.
18. Tim Screech, "Japanese Ghosts," in *Mangajin,* www.mangajin.com/mangajin/samplemj/ghosts/ ghosts.htm.
19. Reider, 7.
20. Reider, 10.
21. Brenda Jordan, "*Yūrei*: Tales of Female Ghosts," in *Japanese Ghosts and Demons*, ed. Stephen Addiss (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1985), 27.
22. Murasaki Shikibu, *The Tale of Genji*, trans. Edward Seidensticker (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 57-83; 158-184.
23. While the *Rokujō* lady's first attacks are committed during out of body experiences, she later attacks Murasaki, Genji's first wife, after her own death has occurred.
24. Varley, 116. For an analysis and translation of *Nonomiya* see Tyler, 203-214.
25. Reider, 15.
26. Midori Deguchi, "One Hundred Demons and One Hundred Supernatural Tales," in *Japanese Ghosts & Demons*, ed. Stephen Addiss (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1985), 18-19.
27. Figs. 10 and 12 are examples from Hokusai's five print series.
28. Deguchi, 15.
29. Although Chinese tales of the strange are not discussed in this paper, an important text on the topic is Judith T. Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese Classical Tale* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).
30. Shikibu, 75.
31. Iwasaka Michiko and Barre Toelken, *Ghosts and the Japanese* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1994), 40.
32. Fosco Maraini, *Japan: Patterns of Continuity* (Tokyo: Kodansha International Ltd., 1971), 20.
33. Iwasaka and Toelken, 21-22.
34. Iwasaka and Toelken, 21.
35. Klaus Antoni, "Yasukuni-Jinga and Folk Religion: The Problem of Vengeful Spirits," in *Asian Folklore Studies 47*, no. 1 (1988), 128, www.jstor.org.
36. Gary L. Ebersole, "'Long Black Hair Like a Seat Cushion': Hair Symbolism in Japanese Popular Religion," in *Hair: Its Power and Meaning in Asian Cultures*, ed. by Alf Hiltebeitel et al. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 81.
37. Jordan, 25. Emphasis added.
38. Iwasaka and Toelken, 60-79.
39. Tim Screech, www.mangajin.com/mangajin/samplemj/ghosts/ghosts.htm.
40. *Ages Ago: Thirty-Seven Tales from the Konjaku Monogatari Collection*, trans. S.W. Jones (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 72-73.

41. Screech, www.mangajin.com/mangajin/samplemj/ghosts/ghosts.htm.
42. In the case of Murasaki Shikibu, her given name is presented first, followed by her surname.
43. One of the most notable examples of this attention to hair comes in the "Lavender" chapter, where Genji first catches a glimpse of his future wife, Murasaki. His appreciating glances return more than once to the contemplation of her long and lustrous hair. See Shikibu, 87-88.
44. Ebersole, 77.
45. Ebersole, 94.
46. Ebersole, 95.
47. Mason, 281.
48. Ebersole, 83.
49. Gary Hickey, *Beauty & Desire in Edo Period Japan* (London: Thames & Hudson, Ltd., 1998), 29.
50. Hickey, 30.
51. Screech, www.mangajin.com/mangajin/samplemj/ghosts/ghosts.htm.
52. Ivan Morris points this fact out in his translation of Saikaku's *The Life of an Amorous Woman and Other Writings*, 296n27 and 317n188.
53. Hickey, 30-31.
54. Iwasaka and Toelken, 70.
55. A film that makes explicit use of the iconographic depiction of ghosts without feet is the film *Kōrei (Séance)*, directed by Kurosawa Kiyoshi and released in 2000 (Fig.8), two years after the release of *Ringu*.
56. The Internet Movie Database, "Trivia for Ringu (1998)," http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0178868/trivia.
57. Totman, 97.
58. Richard J. Hand, "Aesthetics of Cruelty: Traditional Japanese Theatre and the Horror Film," in *Japanese Horror Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 21.
59. Jordan, 28.
60. Screech, www.mangajin.com/mangajin/samplemj/ghosts/ghosts.htm.
61. Mason, 304.
62. Laurence C. Bush, *Asian Horror Encyclopedia* (San Jose: Writers Club Press, 2001), 140-141.
63. Sumie Jones, "The Other Side of the Hakone: Ghosts, Demons, and Desire for Narrative in Edo Literature," *in Desire for Monogatari: Proceedings of the Second Midwest Research/Pedagogy Seminar on Japanese Literature, November 13-14, 1993,* Purdue University (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1994), 61.
64. Iwasaka and Toelken, 72.
65. Jones, 62.
66. Tom Mes and Jasper Sharp, *The Midnight Eye Guide to New Japanese Film* (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2005), 262.
67. Mes and Sharp, 261.
68. Such films include 2001's *Juon: The Grudge* (Fig. 13) and 2002's *Ghost System* (Fig. 14).
69. Elaine Lies, "US Frustrated Over Japan's Strained Ties," *Yahoo! News* (2005), http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20051119/wl_nm/japan_asia_dc_1 (accessed November 19, 2005).
70. Antoni, 132.
71. Iwasaka and Toelken, 18.
72. Antoni, 132.
73. "Postwar 60: Many Kin of Dead Soldiers Support Yasukuni Visits," *Yahoo! Asia News* (2005), http://asia.news.yahoo.com/051114/kyodo/d8drtnf03.html (accessed November 19, 2005).
74. Suzuki Kōji, *Ring*, trans. Robert B. Rohmer and Glynne Walley (New York: Vertical Press Inc., 2004), 181.
75. In the film version, Asakawa is a single mother, however in the novel he is a married man. To reduce confusion, the paper refers to Asakawa as the female character from the film.
76. Iwasaka and Toelken, 46.
77. Lafcadio Hearn, *Shadowings* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1910), 23-29.
78. Tang Xianzu, *The Peony Pavilion: Mudan ting*, 2nd ed., trans. Cyril Birch (Birmingham: Indiana University Press, 2002). For a discussion on Japanese adaptation of Chinese tales in the Edo period see Reider, 9-13.
79. Donato Totaro, "The 'Ring' Master: Interview With Hideo Nakata," *Offscreen*, www.horschamp.qc.ca/new_offscreen/nakata.html (accessed September 21, 2005).
80. "Interview with Hideo Nakata, Specter Director," *Kateigaho International Edition: Japan's Arts & Culture Magazine,* http://int.kateigaho.com/win05/horror-nakata.html (accessed September 21, 2005).
81. Léon Wieger, *Moral Tenets and Customs in China, trans.* L. Davrout (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1981), 383-385.

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