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The elements of anamorphic composition: Two case studies

Contreras, Cynthia A., Ph.D.

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300 N. Zeeb Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

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THE ELEMENTS OF ANAMORPHIC COMPOSITION: TWO CASE STUDIES

by

CYNTHIA CONTRERAS

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Date

Professor Albert Bermel
Chair of Examining Committee

3-31-89

Date

Professor Marvin Carlson
Executive Officer

Professor Lindley P. Hanlon

Professor Stanley Kauffmann

Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

To my parents

John and Elizabeth Kiley

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INTRODUCTION

Overview

The history and technology of CinemaScope have been carefully documented by both industry professionals and film scholars. This study will examine the development and application of the aesthetic principles of anamorphic composition, an area that has so far been neglected despite the current historical interest in CinemaScope. As François Truffaut has pointed out, "If CinemaScope is a commercial REVOLUTION it is also an aesthetic EVOLUTION."[1]

The seemingly sudden emergence of anamorphic cinematography in 1953 was the culmination of a lengthy technological process, which, in turn, spawned a plethora of widescreen offspring and provided filmmakers with several aspect ratio options. However, unlike sound and color, innovations which have become basically standard in the commercial cinema, the anamorphic format remains but one possibility. Its introduction served to replace the standard 1.33:1 and to prepare the industry for the multiple formats of 1.66 and 1.85, as well as 2.35.

Nonetheless, changing the shape of the frame was a major innovation, resisted by some, embraced by others. From the 1920s on, the possibility and desirability of altering screen shape were argued by film practitioners as well as theorists. The debate culminated in the 1950s, when the Hollywood studios actually committed themselves to CinemaScope, and it continued into the 1960s as directors and cinematographers adapted to the different proportions and evolved suitable compositional conventions appropriate to the wider canvas.

What are the restrictions imposed and possibilities created by shooting in 2.35 instead of 1.33? Godard regretted not having shot Breathless in 'Scope;[2] Truffaut's widescreen Shoot the Piano Player can be seen only in 16mm flat prints in America. What difference does it make? These questions acquire special significance now as the 1.33 video format increasingly dictates cinema ratios to producers with long-range ambitions for their film products in the video market. Just as television prefers even colorization of films to black and white, so too does it resist and transform any aspect ratio but its own. Yet widescreen contains a unique set of aesthetic values which need to be respected.

As both Charles Barr[3] and Gavin Millar[4] have pointed out, the fundamental difference between 'Scope and the

Academy Aperture (1.33) is the sense of inclusiveness or context offered by widescreen, which the narrower screen more appropriately suggests through editing. Accommodating the increased sense of contextuality afforded by 'Scope is the key adjustment for the filmmaker when working in the widescreen format, and it constitutes the primary aesthetic difference when reducing 'Scope to smaller formats.

In order to more clearly define the qualities of widescreen composition, one must, of course, look to the films themselves and closely observe the compositional problem-solving, decision-making process at work. This study will confine itself to just two films, in order that each may be considered in detail. The narrative and thematic integrity of each work can thereby be maintained while the significance of compositional factors is explored.

Most of the discussion of CinemaScope to date has focused on American films, particularly those of Otto Preminger, who, with his straightforward style, was said to "stage an event for the unobtrusive camera to record."[5] The two films chosen for this study, though both primarily commercial endeavors, are more in the mode of the European art film than those made by their stylistically restrained

American counterparts. They are Seppuku (Harakiri, 1962) by Masaki Kobayashi, and Once Upon a Time in the West (1968), by Sergio Leone.

Seppuku uses a closed form of controlled, geometric patterns. Self-contained and favoring interiors, it places its characters within hierarchical social constructs and creates a sense of confinement despite the expansive screen size. Seppuku, with its emphasis upon lateral composition, resembles a bas relief, whereas Once Upon a Time in the West stretches for depth and breadth, as if even the enlarged screen could not contain the vastness of the American West. Open in form, it is a location film which inserts its characters into natural surroundings.

These films encompass the two principal contextual possibilities of architecture and landscape, of person in society and person in nature. Through close analysis of these films, the application of traditional cinematic schemata will be examined to determine how these paradigms are influenced by the demands of a widescreen format. As case studies, these two films can serve as models for weighing questions related to aspect ratio and for suggesting general principles of widescreen composition.

Early History

The capability for wide film and huge screens existed from the very beginning. In 1896, there was a public screening in New York at the Daly Theatre of film shot with the Latham Eidoloscope projector. This used two-inch wide film to project frames 3/4 inches high and 1 1/2 inches long. In 1897, the Corbett-Fitzsimmons fight at Carson City was filmed with a Veriscope camera, which allowed the static cameras to take in the whole ring within one shot. Reputedly, over two miles of film were exposed by three alternating cameras set side by side and filming for six minutes each before reloading.[6] The impulse for this film was the representation of the event through the only means then available, the long take.

Cineorama, a 360° system, was patented by Raoul Brimoin-Sanson in France in 1897, and Lumière devised a screen seventy feet wide and fifty-three feet high for the 1900 Paris World's Fair. By 1912, however, the Edison format of 1.33:1, derived originally from the size of the Edison/Dixon Kinetoscope,[7] became the professional theatrical standard. The chief way to circumvent this shape was through the use of masking devices, particularly the iris. Nevertheless, in 1914, Adolph Zukor and Edwin

S. Porter began experimenting with stereoscopic effects, hoping to develop a wide film with greater depth of focus than that which was then in use. Their experiments were ended by a fire which destroyed their studio in 1915.

In 1921, George W. Bingham put together a two-projector system called Widescope, and in 1925, Lorenzo del Riccio developed a system for Paramount called Magnascope, which could produce images to fill a thirty-by forty-foot screen. It was large rather than wide and was used mostly for climactic scenes in films like Old Ironsides (1926) and The Big Parade (1927).

Zukor recruited Del Riccio to begin working on a widescreen format. Their efforts coincided with the advent of sound, which Del Riccio incorporated into his process, the Paramount Magnafilm. An article in The New York Times noted that Del Riccio achieved an anamorphic effect "by means of throwing stigmatization into the camera lens in the same way that some persons' eyes are stigmatic and need correction."[8]

Premiered at the Rivoli Theatre in 1929, Magnafilm cast an image twenty feet high and forty feet wide. Del Riccio pointed out that now the director would be able to "complete action within the angle of the lens, which, heretofore, he has had to show on the screen by resorting to different cuts in his action and in unusual photographic angles."[9] He noted the stereoscopic values resulting from new methods of lighting and thought that Magnafilm would be especially valuable for picturing the ensemble numbers of the musical.[10]

Meanwhile, Abel Gance had released Napoleon in 1927. His scenes projected in three-projector Polyvision anticipated Cinerama. Of this film, Godard would later remark that "polyvision differs from the ordinary cinema only through being able to show simultaneously what the ordinary cinema shows in succession."[11]

On May 30, 1927, Henri Chrétien was introduced by Louis Lumière at a meeting of the French Academy of Sciences and presented a paper outlining the possibility of creating anamorphic widescreen films. This system would be first realized in Claude Autant-Lara's 1928 short, Construire un feu, shot with Chrétien's hypergonar process, but destroyed in 1932. Apparently, three screens were used, upon which the shape and the size of the image could be varied from vertical to horizontal as seemed appropriate to the content. Over fifty years later, cinematographer Nestor Almendros would give voice to the same yearning which had inspired Aurant-Lara's experiments. "It is sad that the cinema does not have the other shapes that painting does--ovals, verticals, triangles, squares."[12]

In 1929, Kodak published an article by Lloyd Jones concerning frame proportions from the aspect of shot composition.[13] Jones pointed out that aspect ratios had vacillated from 1.25:1 to 2:1 during the early years of cinema, and were for a while standardized at 1.33:1, although the exigencies of the sound track temporarily reduced the frame to 1.15:1. Jones explored comparable frame ratio variations in the pictorial arts, such as the "static symmetry" of the rectangle which can be divided into six equal squares, i.e., 3:2, and the rectangle of "dynamic symmetry," such as 5:3 or 8:5. He concluded that no standard size could satisfy all compositional situations, but would merely constitute a compromise. He did recommend 1.55:1 to 1.60:1 for landscape and mass compositions, which is about equivalent to the Euclidean "golden section." For portrait compositions, he recommended 0.88:1 to 1.48:1 as more fitting.

In 1930, the cinematographer Vladimir Nilsen, commenting upon Jones's research, concluded that

> The proportions of the "wide frame" are obviously not perfect, since they render the construction of portrait and group compositions very difficult. Such a shape will not allow of a single compositional center, and in such conditions the planning of a close-up presents considerable difficulties.[14]

In 1929, George K. Spoor and John Berggren introduced Natural Vision, which used a 63.5mm film width. Among the other formats which appeared around this time was the 70mm Grandeur system introduced by Fox. Immediately, the Fox studio turned to the spectacles of Niagara Falls and speeding locomotives as suitable subjects for introducing their system. The premiere screening also featured Fox Movietone Follies of 1929. It was followed in 1930 by the musical Happy Days and Raoul Walsh's epic western, The Big Trail.

One of the determining factors in the sideways spread of the screen seems to have been the structure of the theatres themselves and consideration for audience members seated under the balcony, whose vertical vision would be impaired by any extra height. Earl I. Sponable, who, as technical director of Fox, had a key role in the development of 'Scope, took this structural factor into consideration:

> Where there is a balcony, the picture must (unless structural changes in the upper level were resorted to) of course be of dimensions that prevent the overhang from obstructing vision from the rear rows of the main floor. This consideration would have bearing on the width by limiting the height...however, when the screen can be placed well forward on a stage, it can rest on the floor.[15]

M.G.M. called its 70mm process Realife and used it for King Vidor's Billy the Kid (1930) and Charles

Brabin's The Great Meadow (1931). This wide-gauge film was transferred to 35mm and projected with a wide-angle lens. Paramount's Magnafilm used a two to one ratio with a 56mm format, later increased to 65mm. Warner Brothers, First National, and United Artists also chose a 65mm size for films like Kismet, Bat Whispers, and The Lash (all 1930). The Motion Picture News of May 10, 1930, even announced that representatives of major studios and the SMPE planned to standardize film size at 70mm. Widescreen was viewed as a natural adjunct to sound film which would increase realism:

> the development of sound pictures, and particularly the talkie brought with it the necessity of photography of wider scope, since for the highly dramatic scene the talking picture, unlike the silent, is not dramatically enhanced by the use of the close-up. Long shots, on the other hand, reduce the figures to such small proportions that much of the actor's facial expression and the definition of lips are lost. Consequently there was set in operation much experiment with methods to use a larger film.[16]

The enthusiasm for wide screen formats was not shared by Sergei Eisenstein, who was in Hollywood while the studios were discussing the new screen dimensions. Eisenstein even attended a meeting about widescreen prospects organized by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in September, 1930. Afterwards, in order to clarify his position on the matter, he sent an article to

Kenneth MacPherson for publication in Close-Up. In it, he welcomed the opportunity of reassessing the frame proportions of the screen, but opposed the standardization of the rectangular form in any of the possible formats: 3:4; 4:3; 3:6. Instead, he advocated a "Dynamic Square" as the perfect composition for both horizontal and vertical subjects, "the one and only form equally fit by alternate suppression of right and left, or of up and down, to embrace all of the multitude of expressive rectangles of the world."[17]

Eisenstein's concerns were those of the film practitioner trying to arrange life's myriad geometrical forms into the 1.33:1 rectangle, and horrified at the prospect of even wider organizing structures. He faults Jones for lauding the 1.5:1 format, saying that this size was favored during "the worst period of painting," the pre-impressionistic nineteenth century. Eisenstein traces "this 'narrative' group of paintings" to the theatre, asserting that they are concerned with representing scenes for a proscenium stage rather than solving problems of pictorial space. He suggests that if relationships must be drawn, then the postcard or amateur photograph might better serve by comparison to the motion picture than painting.

As for the theories of perception, Eisenstein questions the significance given to the horizontal framing characteristics assigned to the human eye. Instead,he suggests that

> the idea of a framed picture derives not from the limits of the view field of our eyes but from the fact of the usual framedness of the glimpse of nature we catch through the frame of the window or the door--or stage aperture.[18]

Eisenstein also emphasizes that vertical composition serves as a "harmonic counter-balance" to the horizontal and that the audience participates in these directional movements through what he calls "the phenomenon of dynamism in perception," i.e., the "horizontal dimensions of the eyes and the vertical of the head."[19] The cinema, he states, is a new art form with the unique attributes of both dynamism and everlastingness. Why, therefore, he asks, "should a holy veneration for this mistaken 'golden cut' persist if all the basic elements of this newcomer in art--the cinema--are entirely different, its premises being entirely different from those of all that has gone before?"[20]

Eisenstein worried that certain pragmatic attitudes towards "talkies" might extend into the use of widescreen and "smother the principles of montage,"[21] which were so essential to his vision of the cinema. Yet, in typical dialectic fashion, Eisenstein could not resist seeing creative possibilities in the new format against which he had been arguing. He concludes his essay by noting that the laws of montage will have to undergo a critical review in light of altered screen dimensions, and he welcomes the montage possibilities of Grandeur film, citing the potential for

> the rhythmic assemblage of varied screen shapes, (and) the attack upon our perceptive field of the affective impulses associated with the geometric and dimensional variation of the successive various possible dimensions, proportions and designs.[22]

But the exhibitors, unconcerned with questions of aesthetics, reacted negatively to the new technology. Amidst a depression economy, not only were they expected to retool for sound, but now they had the added expense of wide format projectors and screens. The exhibitors resisted the change on economic terms, since there was no groundswell of support for widescreen from the audiences, as there had been for sound. Finally, Adolph Zukor relented and, speaking for the Producers Association of America, declared

> It would be folly to bring out the wide film and place additional burdens on the exhibitors. I can assure you that the producers of America have decided to delay the advent of wide film until such a time as it is necessary again to provide an additional attraction to the public.[23]

These experimental formats were once again relegated to the forum of the World's Fair and special exhibitions for the rest of the depression and war years. Meanwhile, the movie industry began examining the prospects for another newly-emerging technology--television--and discussing how to deal with the potential threat it posed. The television picture tube was invented in the 1920s, and, by 1953, an estimated 46.2% of American families owned television sets.[24]

In 1938, a committee was established to study television and to devise contingency plans. It was headed by William Koenig of Universal and Nathan Levinson of Warners, and represented the major corporations through the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Their advice to the studios was to offset the inroads of this new medium through their ownership of first-run theatres and through the creation of theatre television.[25] The studios also moved to get television licenses but lost out to the radio networks. Their attempts to develop theatre television in the late 1940s proved equally unsuccessful.

Weekly movie attendance began to fall precipitously from 90 million in 1948 to 51 million in 1952. Net income dropped from $325 million in 1941 to $46 million in 1953.[26] In the midst of this economic chaos, Hollywood reexamined its assets and decided to emphasize that which

set it most apart from television, namely its size and capacity for spectacle. It is interesting to note that the producers, not the filmmakers, were behind the move to widescreen both in the twenties and in the fifties, and that they promoted it "as a technology of increased theatricality rather than of enhanced realism."[27]
The independently produced 3-D feature, Bwana Devil, opened on Broadway in 1952. Its commercial success prompted some Hollywood studios to reshoot current productions using the new process. But "by rushing into production of 3-D films using antiquated, rapidly adopted and often unsuitable equipment, they soon alienated the public."[28] It was a short-lived experiment, but one which underscored the attractiveness of expanded screen dimensions.

Fred Waller's Cinerama, accompanied by stereophonic sound, also opened on Broadway in 1952. A resuscitation of the simulated railway car theatre created fifty years earlier as Hale's Tours, soon it was setting box-office records in major cities throughout the country and the world. Film Daily noted that "the motion picture for the first time achieves a startling, even over-powering realism with its amazing screen illusions of both image and sound."[29] Actually, Robert Flaherty had been commissioned to shoot the first film using this process, but he died before the project commenced.[30]

This is Cinerama was followed by _Cinerama Holiday_, _The Seven Wonders of the World_, _Search for Paradise_, and _Cinerama South Sea Adventure_. Although too enormous and unwieldy to become a story-telling medium,[31] Cinerama, according to James Limbacher, "started the widescreen revolution and re-interested the public in going to the movies again. It made stereophonic sound something which captured the public's fancy."[32]

CinemaScope

In 1952, Twentieth Century-Fox bought the option on the Chrétien anamorphic lens, and Spyros Skouras, president of Fox, launched an all-out effort to sell CinemaScope to the industry. Since it was the exhibitors who had halted the move to widescreen in the late 1920s, Skouras, who had started in the motion picture business as an exhibitor, knew it was crucial to convince them of its significance this time around. As John Belton has summarized the situation,

> CinemaScope technology was a product of conflicting economic pressures: it had to be both different from earlier technology in order to satisfy spectatorial demand, yet it also had to be the same as earlier technology to placate cost-conscious exhibitors who

> had little capital to invest in theatre conversion and who wanted a system compatible with other formats.[33]

Yet, as James Spellerberg has pointed out, the net effect of the introduction of CinemaScope was a change in patterns of exhibition.[34] 'Scope reinforced the first run and the dominance of the large chains which could accommodate the size of the new technology. The site of viewing became paramount--"the theatre versus the home as the place for viewing"[35]--and studio promotion made analogies between film and legitimate theatre.

Fox committed itself to widescreen production, and, within ten months from the studio's decision to convert to 'Scope, it released its first CinemaScope feature, The Robe, on September 16, 1953.[36] Soon all the other companies, except RKO, Paramount, and Republic, were making CinemaScope films. A variety of technical processes--Vistarama, Franscope, Tohoscope--emerged both in America and abroad, most of which were derivations of CinemaScope. Viewers were treated to a number of processes throughout the 1950s and 1960s, including VistaVision, Technirama, and Todd-AO, prompting Elia Kazan to comment, "They tried just about everything except the real novelty: three-dimensional material, new and better stories."[37] The multifaceted Panavision finally emerged as the preferred technology, and, in America, the 1.85:1 ratio became the most common format. Panavision, which received an Academy Technical Award in 1960 and was used in Ben-Hur, could yield a print in several formats, and thus helped make systems more compatible.

Initially, the 'Scope ratio was 2.66:1, but was reduced to 2.55:1 to accommodate the four-track, magnetic stereophonic sound, and finally to 2.35:1, which was the maximum width most conventional theatres could project.[38] By the end of 1956, there were 41,000 theatres around the world in which CinemaScope films could be shown, but only 10,000 of them had magnetic capability to accommodate multiple-track stereo magnetic sound.[39]

The anamorphic format provoked discussion about the nature of cinematic art and it received mixed reviews. André Bazin stated that "the traditional narrow screen is an accident to which most of the great filmmakers have more or less objected."[40]

Henry Koster, director of The Robe, saw CinemaScope as a blend of stage and screen techniques. As on the stage, 'Scope format allowed more freedom for lateral movement without sacrificing the close-up. For Koster, the director was now able "to concentrate on the chief task of drawing superb performances from his players" and "to move actors logically and dramatically."[41] Movements could be staged so that an actor walked into a close-up, and, in shots of more than one character, the viewer could simultaneously see both the speaker and the one reacting to what was being said. This concept of 'Scope as a blend of stage and screen became something of a studio refrain. Al Lichtman, Fox's director of distribution, claimed that the combination of skills needed to effect that blending frightened many directors, and, in a jibe no doubt aimed at recalcitrant directors, even declared that greater artistry was required to work in widescreen.[42]

Thomas M. Pryor noted in The New York Times that "due to the immensity of the screen, few entire scenes can be taken in at a glance, enabling the spectator to view them as in life, or as one would watch a play when actors are working from opposite ends of the stage."[43] But, as the following sampling of opinions reveals, many directors and cinematographers did not at first share this optimistic attitude about 'Scope.

As Lee Garmes expressed it, "We'd look through the camera and be startled at what it was taking in."[44] Rouben Mamoulian said "I hated making it (Silk Stockings) in CinemaScope--the worst shape ever devised."[45] Jean Negulesco in discussing the 1953 film How to Marry a Millionaire expressed his dismay: "How, for example, were you going to do intimate scenes on that great wide oblong? And this was supposed to be a comedy!"[46] The new shape did not appeal to Vincente Minnelli either. "I never did like CinemaScope very much: it's not so much that it's wider as that there's less on the top and bottom. I don't think it's the right composition for pictures."[47] And Fritz Lang quipped that CinemaScope "is a format for a funeral, or for snakes, but not for human beings: you have a closeup and on either side there's just superfluous space."[48]

The cinematographer Bill Butler thought of it as "almost a different medium, since it forced one to plan composition and the staging of action differently.[49] James Wong Howe found widescreen more difficult to light, since it was harder to hide shadows.[50] Sidney Lumet thought that the CinemaScope/stereophonic sound phenomenon was ridiculous, pointless, and typical of the Hollywood mentality:

> The essence of any dramatic piece is people, and it is symptomatic that Hollywood finds a way of photographing people directly opposite to the way people are built. CinemaScope makes no sense until people are fatter than they are taller.[51]

As with the advent of sound, there were initial technical weaknesses to be overcome. In fact, in the opinion of Charles Higham, there ensued "a collapse of visual quality more disastrous than that which accompanied the dawn of sound."[52] Leon Shamroy agreed. Although widescreen did save the movie business, he said, "It wrecked the art of film for a decade."[53] At first, a cinematographer either used a long lens, which resulted in a shallow depth of field, or a shorter lens, which tended to increase distortion noticeably. Horizon lines often curved, angling tended to distort, and panning was a problem, since the movement was tremendously magnified. Lee Garmes grumbled that "close ups used to give fat faces."[54] The results were limited camera movement, long runs of the camera, avoidance of the close-up, since it was hard to keep it sharp, as well as stilted and cluttered compositions.[55]

Traditional methods of blocking had to be revised as did standard editing procedures. Along with improved lenses, innovative lighting techniques eventually became a key factor in making the CinemaScope format more palatable. For instance,

> "if the narrative required intimacy, the side edges of the scene could be left in darkness, thus reducing the lit image to a more standard size. Intense key lighting, focused on principal characters, and localized sound placement were other ways of directing attention in a panoramic shot."[56]

Although the studios were wholeheartedly behind 'Scope, directors continued to resist using this blanket format. Lumet relates that George Stevens fought for six months against using widescreen for Anne Frank (1959), but then had to do so. He "spent all his time with the art director trying to figure out beams and girders to cut down the sides of the screen, and how to isolate what he wanted."[57]

In 1955, the editors of Sight and Sound noted that they had received "more unsolicited manuscripts on CinemaScope and the wide screen movement than on any other subject, and all have expressed in varying degrees, distrust and dislike."[58] They printed Richard Kohler's and Walter Lassally's assessments as representative of general "aesthetic objections" and "practical misgivings."[59]

The cinematographer Walter Lassally complained that "the new screen proportions were adopted entirely without reference to the production side of the industry."[60] Lassally expressed the frustration of a cinematographer shooting without the assurance of a standardized format for projection. To shoot for both old and new formats together, "you just draw two horizontal lines across your viewfinder and make sure that 'essential action,' as they term it, is kept within this area. Only, you should never again use the word 'compose.'"[61] He called upon his readers to express indignation against the mutilating procedures used by theatre managers in altering the original formats.

He found the wider shape more suitable for long shots and landscapes, but awkward when framing medium shots or close-ups, especially since height differences between actors or between actors and objects were accentuated. "There must be more reclining done in CinemaScope films than in the whole previous history of the cinema, and no wonder--for who can stand up while anyone else is sitting down, except in long shot?"[62]

He complained that the audience-screen relationship was disturbed, since distance from the screen markedly altered the viewing experience. By sitting close to the screen, one experienced the much touted engulfing of one's field of vision. On the other hand, to have a sharp, grain-free image, it was necessary to be seated farther away.

Lassally defends the old 1.33 format on the following grounds: it is the universally accepted format for which cameras and projectors worldwide are equipped; it can be easily adapted to television and 16mm; it is the best format for composition, "being an acceptable compromise frame midway between the horizontal and the vertical;"[63] subtitles present a problem on the wide screen.

In his article on "The Big Screens," Richard Kohler states that both Cinerama and CinemaScope "place the spectator in an environment and create a feeling of participation" approximating "actual" reality.[64] He finds this sense of being physically present to the scene, without any awareness of the frame for reference, to be in conflict with the necessary ingredient of imaginative involvement, i.e., suspension of disbelief. "By assaulting the spectator on the 'actual' plane of consciousness, the enveloping screen in fact makes him physically too much a part of the screen."[65]

Kohler bemoans the loss of "aesthetic distance" and the implied tendency away from representational conventions: "concise images," juxtapositions of meaningful combinations. Arguing from formalist assumptions, Kohler finds the widescreens unfilmic. "As the scope of the screen is reduced and the frame becomes more apparent, the opportunity for imaginative interpretation increases."[66]

He pointed out that CinemaScope motivated stage-like compositions of figures at a distance and in groups, arrangements which were too large to be perceived as a whole but could only be apprehended one part at a time. Since it took longer to absorb all the information in a shot, pace was retarded by longer takes and fewer cuts. Although scenic display could be emphasized, the spaces around characters often seemed irrelevant. He could see no potential within the 'Scope format for "suggesting ideas or the course of human relationships."[67]

Although he echoes Eisenstein in favoring an "uncommitted" frame--since the primary subject of film is the vertical human figure--Kohler accepts a multiplicity of formats (from 1.33:1 up to 2:1), depending upon the subject matter. Yet he asserts that "beyond this (2:1 ratio), the wider the screen the narrower the interpretative path the artist must follow."[68]

In Film As Art, Rudolf Arnheim thought widescreen regressive and voiced reservations similar to Kohler's:

> The increased size of the screen will render any two-dimensional or three-dimensional composition less compelling; and formative devices such as montage and changing camera angles will become unusable if the illusion of reality is so enormously strengthened.[69]

But Basil Wright in his 1953 review of The Robe saw interesting possibilities in 'Scope. He thought that the most successful scenes were those in which the entire screen was filled with action or when a complex series of actions balance within the long and narrow area."[70] He saw no problem with the close-up so long as the editing sustained it in context.

If Wright was optimistic, André Bazin greeted the movement towards widescreen with genuine enthusiasm. He did not share the crisis mentality of Hollywood's producers who thought that the very existence of cinema was threatened; he thought the death of cinema improbable. As already noted, Hollywood promoted 'Scope for its theatrical and spectacular qualities rather than its ability to enhance realism.[71] Yet Bazin rejoiced that "the efforts made to resolve the cinema's economic crisis by a spectacular process seem to me to go in the direction of substantial and desirable progress."[72]

As the main theorist who had challenged the traditional, formalist approach to film aesthetics, Bazin saw much promise for increased realism in the prospect of wider screens. Whereas Arnheim was committed to the position that "getting nearer to nature" made it "increasingly difficult for film to be art,"[73] Bazin welcomed widescreen as one more element which would hasten "the shedding of all artifice extrinsic to the image's content itself, of all expressionism of time and space."[74]

Even before he had seen a CinemaScope feature, Bazin wrote an article for Esprit entitled "Le Cinemascope sauvera-t-il le cinema?"[75] In it, he reaffirmed his position that the basis of cinema is "a quest for realism of the image. A realism, one could say, implied by the automatic generation of the image, and which aims to confer upon this image as many common properties of natural perception as possible."[76]

The peculiar property of CinemaScope was "the elongated format of the new screen" rather than "the impression of depth."[77] It was a format particularly suitable for a genre like the western which favored landscapes, but Bazin saw its effective use with more psychological genres as well. He even imagined Le Journal d'un curé de campagne in widescreen and could see "almost no effects whose filming could not be translated into CinemaScope."[78]

Bazin was gladdened by the challenge to the close-up and to montage which 'Scope presented, and entitled an article in the January 1954 issue of Cahiers du cinéma "Fin du montage." Contending that montage condemned a director to the "fragmentation of reality" and that Abel Gance's Napoleon tended "to multiply the effects of montage in space"[79] rather than extend the visual field, Bazin hoped that CinemaScope would serve "to destroy montage as the major element of cinematic discourse."[80]

His spirits were dampened, however, upon seeing The Robe, which seemed cinematically regressive to him. In a subsequent article entitled "Un peu tard,"[81] Bazin concluded that improvements would have to involve "covering large surfaces in a technically satisfying manner."[82] It was spatial relationships, particularly of man to nature, which concerned him and which widescreen could enhance. He also asserted that "anything which contributes to the 'participation' of the spectator is progress,"[83] and he truly believed that widescreen did this.

Charles Barr picked up the torch on behalf of widescreen in a 1962 essay entitled "Cinemascope: Before and After."[84] He admitted that "most of the early 'Scope films were indeed crude. Fox was enlightened neither in choice of subjects nor of directors."[85] Therefore, critics had reason to be disconcerted and see it only as a gimmick, a medium for "the spectacular and the trivial." According to Barr, 'Scope shows up a bad film by magnifying its weaknesses and making it seem worse; but it also makes the good film better. However, as with the at first regressive introduction of sound, the quality of films began to improve as more creative imaginations were applied to the format.

Barr also attributed the initial resistance toward 'Scope to formalist assumptions about composition and montage, which were compatible with the 1.33:1 ratio but not with 2.35:1, a format which he, too, thought was "unsuitable for 'framing' things."[86] So for Barr, 'Scope was a challenge to an outmoded aesthetic: "Art does indeed involve organization, but this is just as possible within the open and complex image of 'Scope as in a montage sequence: it can in many ways be more subtle."[87]

Jacques Rivette saw a certain inevitability in the development of mise-en-scène style:

> From Birth of a Nation to Le Carrosse d'or, from the Murnau of Tabu to the Lang of Rancho Notorious, this extreme use of the breadth of the screen, the physical separation of the character, empty spaces distended by fear or desire, like lateral movements, all seem to me to be--much more than depth--the language of true film makers, and the sign of maturity and mastery.[88]

Barr posited a teleological point of view, implying an inherent evolution of film processes as "a nicely arranged series of advances, each one coming when directors, and audiences, were ready for it."[89] This Bazinian perception of film's movement towards greater realism led him, like Rivette, to assert that 'Scope was inevitable and to add that "there is really no alternative."[90]

This is in some ways a peculiar reading of film history, since the processes of widescreen, color, and sound were all to a degree in place from the beginning, and, apparently, audiences were able to grasp them as a totality. "We know from experience that the public quickly absorbs technical progress,"[91] noted Universal production head William Goetz as 'Scope was being introduced. Perhaps directors did need time to develop each element, but there is no strong evidence to suggest that color, sound, and widescreen could not have simultaneously evolved aesthetically had the studios decided it was feasible. Abel Gance once reflected that "If people had followed my lead thirty years ago, the cinema would have evolved much more rapidly towards its new style."[92] But Barr points out the connection between technology and economic forces which determined the timing for introducing each element.

Barr then proceeds to make observations about the actual uses of 'Scope composition. He faults the transposition of formalist principles to the widescreen in such films as <u>The Hidden Fortress</u> and <u>Vera Cruz</u>, going so far as to say that "if you notice it, it's bad, but you don't have to notice it for it to be good."[33]

Refuting the literary model of film analysis, which sees shots as words and favors editing images together into montage sequences or sentences, he declares that "there is no literary equivalent for 'getting things in the same shot.'"[34] He also disputes the notion that there is too much to look at on a widescreen and that details will be lost, especially in the full or long shot. He also qualifies the degree of democracy available to the viewer in choosing where on the widescreen to focus. The director organizes space, decor, and relationships in order to guide the attention of the alert spectator within the frame. The advantage of widescreen for Barr is that it allows "a greater range for gradation of emphasis."[35]

Barr qualifies an observation by Claude Chabrol and Eric Rohmer that "the extreme edges of the screen are virtually unusable"[36] by citing examples in which characters are placed at opposite ends of the screen for dramatic tension or as a reinforcement of horizontal space suggesting freedom. In reference to Spartacus, he notes the possibility for expressing the contrast between constraint and openness through arrangement of characters within the wider frame.

Generally, he agrees with Chabrol and Rohmer that the chief advantage of 'Scope is the greater sense of continuous space it gives. In the landscape film, it is possible "to portray people dominated by, almost defined by, their natural environment."[97] He also extended this possibility to include interior locations and intimate dramas.

The key idea in Barr's essay, and one consistent with Bazin's position, is that "the natural subject for film is man-in-situation."[98] With a narrow frame, this becomes translated into man plus situation through editing and the close-up.

In 'Scope, contextuality becomes preeminent and transforms even the close-up, which need no longer be isolating and disorienting, since the environment occupied by the character is still evident and situates the viewer throughout. Now the character can be brought closer to the frame without eliminating the ambience or cutting the subject off from another character who might also be presented close to the camera. Barr suggests that "the interaction of people with each other and with their surroundings is much more subtly expressed by showing them simultaneously,"[99] and speculates that the widescreen format also provides room for greater freedom and spontaneity on the part of the actor.

However, Richard Koszarski points out that the heightened realism of color and widescreen during the 1950s

> made suspension of disbelief in the face of studio settings extremely difficult to achieve. Once exposed to New York, Paris or Marseilles backgrounds, audiences were spoiled for the Hollywood reconstructions of Richard Day and the other great studio art directors. As usual, surface realism seemed all that could ever matter, but some films were definitely hurt by the use of natural surroundings, and even genres like fantasy and the musical became weighted down with a misguided documentary 'realism.'[100]

Gavin Millar's 1968 addition to Karel Reisz's The Technique of Film Editing (1953) lists and illustrates the ways in which widescreen can be effectively used, and finds its chief characteristic to be inclusiveness, which diminishes the need for isolating detail through the close-up.

> Its width and clarity make it possible to unfold a scene of great complexity and length without losing sight of detail or overall shape, meanwhile preserving the intensity which is dissipated by cuts which are only mechanically necessary.[101]

Millar finds the widescreen especially suited to diagonal and horizontal compositions and useful in accentuating certain elements of the image which would hardly be noticed in a narrower format. Widescreen increases possibilities for effectively blocking characters within the frame, both in depth and laterally, and adds complexity and density in a variety of ways, especially when combined with camera movement. Different yet related activities can be shown in the same shot, and the frame can be altered through lighting, architectural elements, and the like. The close-up can be effectively incorporated into the widescreen format if properly matched in editing and with the added gain of being able to maintain the space between characters, yet showing them in a close-up. Millar also makes the odd assertion that

> The wide screen lends itself particularly to expressions of equality or brotherhood or companionship, where the traditional squarer screen tends more readily to express rank, hierarchy, domination and subjugation.[102]

He supports this with but one example from A Star is Born in which the camera pulls back from a close-up of Vicki Lester to include the whole band with which she feels a certain solidarity.

The divergent positions articulated by Arnheim/Kohler and Bazin/Barr were mediated by Jean Mitry in his Esthétique et psychologie du cinéma. Whereas Arnheim, Eisenstein, and the Formalists had depicted the spectator as seated in front of a framed image, like a painting, Bazin and the Realists conceived of the screen as a window. Rather than argue an either/or position, Mitry evisioned a dynamic interplay between frame and window, which encompassed both systems. Another metaphor, that of the mirror, would be applied later by those explicating the psychoanalytic approach.[103]

The evolutionary process of CinemaScope and its accompanying discourse encompasses the two mutually dependent areas of production and exhibition. The recurring theoretical question throughout is the nature of film realism.

The realism of the CinemaScope system stemmed from its approximation of the bilateral nature of the human head, i.e., two horizontally arranged eyes and ears. "The cinema is a visual art," wrote Truffaut, "and our natural vision is panoramic: our eyes are one beside the other, not one on top of the other--they complement one another along the horizontal axis and are no use at all to each other along the vertical."[104] Three-D had taken the imitation of human sight as far as possible by imitating the right eye, left eye viewing apparatus and fusing them to suggest depth, much as the interpreting brain would do. Cinerama sought to eliminate awareness of the defining frame by filling the peripheral field of the viewer, thereby reducing the audience's ability to distance itself from the screen events.

CinemaScope through its enormous screen, which curved slightly as it stretched across the front of the theatre, also sought to encompass peripheral vision. Leon Shamroy said you felt "as if you were actually witnessing an event, rather than watching a picture of it,"[105] and Skouras boasted that "It is equally enjoyable to onlookers sitting anywhere in any part of any theatre."[106] This wasn't actually true, however, unless one was ideally seated in a version of the "Royal Seat" looking straight ahead. In addition, stereophonic sound approximated the dual manner of hearing and combining aural information of human ears, and was considered practically a necessity for widescreen.[107] However, exhibitors resisted the conversion to stereophonic sound, which was supposed to be part of the CinemaScope package. This total realism intended for 'Scope, therefore, remained "one of the unrealized dreams of the engineers of the motion picture industry."[108]

For the theorist André Bazin, the concept of realism was tied to the photographic properties of the cinema <u>per se</u>, which could objectively record the phenomenal world. He thought film uniquely suited to revealing that world in all its ambiguity. What CinemaScope contributed to the advancement of realism was "an enlarged surface whose angle with respect to the spectator's eye approaches that of normal vision."[109] His concern, though, was not just with the viewer's increased angle of vision to the screen but with the angle of vision to reality.

On the other hand, as James Spellerberg has pointed out, in promoting CinemaScope, the theatrical metaphor was often invoked as the viewing experience was compared to that of attending a play or the wide frame to a proscenium.[111] CinemaScope also served to offer "a vision of film as dramatic fiction, as illusion" and the reference to theatre seemed a fitting one to express this "dialectic of the real and artificial."[112]

By far, most of the discussion of widescreen has centered upon its history, technology, and, more recently, its ideological underpinnings.[113] Since the heyday of CinemaScope, little has been written to augment the initial analyses of the purely aesthetic implications of aspect ratio.

The concept of frame itself, however, has been examined, especially in its capacity for separating on-screen and off-screen space. Once again, a dichotomy of opinions becomes evident. For Claude Chabrol, the important thing can be precisely that which is not shown, the larger context.[114] "Everything in the frame," according to Benoit Jacquot, "gives rise to the imagination of the spectator for that which is outside....The entire film is determined by the 'off' frame, what goes on outside."[115]

Noël Burch has enumerated the six possible off-screen spaces: the left and right, top and bottom of the frame, and the areas behind the camera and behind the set.[116] He notes that "any camera movement obviously converts off-screen space into screen space or vice versa."[117] A sound can suggest the surrounding space to the viewer's imagination and sometimes even indicate an approximate distance, suggesting an off-frame spatial parameter.[118]

Dusan Makavejev, on the other hand, believes that "whatever is in the frame is all there is....Everything else is just fantasy."[119] Director Jean-Marie Straub takes a middle position: "no matter how you view it, the frame illuminates and safeguards the off-frame space."[120] Stephen Heath explores space in its narrative context, concluding that "events take place, a place for some one, and the need is to pose the question of that 'one' and its narrative terms of film space."[121]

How widescreen functions within the structuring demands of narrative, particularly the classical Hollywood model, is the subject of David Bordwell's examination of the topic. Bordwell analyzes the impact of widescreen filming on Hollywood film style. He finds that, despite predictions to the contrary, it did not radically challenge established norms, but rather "offered only trended changes in the classical style."[122] 'Scope was readily absorbed into the preexisting system, thereby implying that "within the Hollywood film industry, technology is created and developed with an eye already on its absorption into the existing aesthetic system."[123]

At first, CinemaScope served to augment the discussion between "mise-en-scène" and traditional critics. "The revisionist Bazinians of Cahiers du cinema and Movie quickly seized upon the widescreen processes as proof of the mystique of mise-en-scène."[124] Yet the Hollywood moguls were not thinking of realism but of spectacle when they introduced 'Scope. The American films on the huge screens were often highly stylized and generically based in the travelogue, the historical pageant, the adventure film, the musical, and the western.[125]

Early 'Scope films did tend to favor longer takes, but by 1959 were being edited as rapidly as any 1.33:1 format film. David Bordwell notes that although early (1953-5) 'Scope films tended to use longer takes,

> after 1955, a CinemaScope film might contain between 200 and 600 shots per hour, with the 300-400 shot range being most common. This range falls within the common Academy-ratio norm (200-500 shots per hour). thus a later widescreen film's ASL (actual shot length) might be anywhere between six and eighteen seconds. By 1959 it was possible to cut a CinemaScope film as rapidly as a 1930s Warners' film.[126]

The problems associated with focusing audience attention on significant elements were resolved by using the typical classical schemata of centering, lighting, grouping, reframing, sound clues, and the directing gaze of a character. No greater potential for depth of field evolved. It was lateral composition which became more notable, sometimes creating multiple centers of interest.

Those directors who favored the mise-en-scène aesthetic in the 1.33:1 format continued to do so in widescreen, and those who did not modified and adapted 'Scope to their styles, using the single-take scene as "a secondary paradigmatic alternative to the classically edited scene."[127]

Thus were the technical resources available to filmmakers once again increased, this time by offering aspect ratio choices. Bordwell finds some of the 1950s writings on CinemaScope skewered in favor of "the thematic protocols of the art cinema" rather than the traditional range of classicism's "permissible strategies."[128] He suggests that a widescreen aesthetic take account "not only of meanings but of perceptual effects,"[129] noting that, along with thematic significance and narrative function, style can also include the purely decorative.

Distortions

Despite the concern of some filmmakers, theorists, and critics with the aesthetics of composition, there has been a long-standing disregard in the film industry for the significance of aspect ratio beyond the concept of 'Scope as a special effects novelty. Mervyn Le Roy summed up this attitude by saying "A good picture will prove its quality on a small screen in your home or on a wide screen in your favorite theater. It's as simple as that."[130]

This emphasis on the primacy of the story was even noted by cinematographer James Wong Howe, who conceded that "nobody is going to be aware of the screen if the story is good."[131] As the studios made their peace with television and saw it as a recycling outlet for movies, filmmakers were faced with creating films with an eye to a variety of format reincarnations. The vagaries of exhibition situations, the conversion of 35mm prints to 16mm, and the transfer from film to video each had the potential for altering the original aspect ratio.

It was not an uncommon practice, after the industry-wide change to widescreen in the 1950s, for exhibitors without anamorphic facilities to mask off the top and bottom portions of a normal print during projection, thereby instantaneously transforming it into a "widescreen" film. Sometimes the head or feet of an actor might be amputated in the process, which created noticeable distortions in musical dance scenes. It was the epitome of disregard for vertical composition.

Filmmakers worried also about the projection of their 1.85:1 films. The cinematographer Conrad Hall, for one, expressed the frustration of shooting with multiple formats in mind, and making the compromises involved, when he admitted that he preferred "to have them cut off the sides than to have them cut off the top and the bottom."[132] He liked Panavision because the top and bottom could not be altered without showing the frame line, so at least the film was protected from the whims of the projectionist.

Nestor Almendros, too, found the prospect of projecting with multiple ratios something of a nightmare since "we never know if the compositions we designed so carefully during shooting will be respected."[133] André Bazin was distressed by the attitude of the Commission technique du cinéma français, which urged producers shooting in 1.33:1 to consider the possible future panoramic projection of their films "by concentrating on the 'useful' part of the image in the central band of the frame."[134]

Although 'Scope and the 1.85:1 and 1.66:1 formats augmented the creative technical options of the filmmaker, the implications of choosing to shoot in widescreen became especially significant in the light of the long term and lucrative video and 16mm markets.

In converting a 35mm or 70mm print into a 16mm flat print or television tape, the guiding assumption is that primacy must be given to essential story information.[135] The print is recomposed, reframing movement is added, pacing is altered, and there may be some reduction in image quality. Many significant 'Scope prints do not exist in the 16mm anamorphic format. Therefore, films such as Rebel Without a Cause and La Dolce Vita can be seen only in truncated and distorting 16mm flat print versions.

It was Twentieth Century-Fox which, in 1961, developed the first completely automatic step-printer to simultaneously produce a 35mm and a 16mm internegative. Ironically, the same studio which had been given an Oscar for introducing CinemaScope--the aim of which was to overwhelm and "dwarf those really tiny people on television"[136]--was now given another Oscar for adapting that same super image to a form designed for television consumption. It was, however, a step up from reproducing only the central portion of the screen or showing CinemaScope without a correcting anamorphic projector lens.

The printer devised by Fox ran at a slow thirty feet per minute. It horizontally repositioned the frame for 16mm according to cues preprogrammed onto punched tape by a film editor. The result was a television print which was more expensive than the one destined for theatrical release.[137]

Then, in 1969, Warner Communications developed a system using inexpensive helical-scan cassette videotape equipment. This Goldmark Communications Corporation (GCC) system effected the real-time transfer to magnetic tape of the film.[138] Cues for horizontal repositioning of the frame could be stored in digital form on a magnetic tape cassette with the timing noted in feet plus frames. In setting cues for CinemaScope, nine equally-spaced positions are available to the programmer. Only five of these are used when transferring the 1.85:1 aspect ratio to tape. Film scanning processes continued to be refined and then computerized, often moving control of the final image farther away from the judgments of the studio editor and closer to the sensibilities of the scanning system operator.

There are several approaches possible in the transfer process. For the 2.35 ratio, the film can be reproduced fully, leaving empty space constituting 32% of the screen above and below the image in the so-called letter-box format. Eleven percent of the image is cut off in the 1.85 format, leaving 21% of the television screen unused on top and bottom, although a 1.33 inner frame is generally used when shooting in 1.85. The most common form of adapting widescreen to television, however, is the Pan Scan method in which full picture height is displayed but the image area on the sides is eliminated. For 2.35, 22% of the frame is cut off on each side and 14% in 1.85. In adjusting for 1.66, 2.5% of the top and bottom are usually lost.[139]

Directors are not called in to supervise the scanning of their films as disruptive cuts and pans--sometimes within camera movements--are added, altering radically the rhythm of the film.[140] Again, the dictum "Follow the action" is the sole criterion in determining what portion of the frame will be kept and what will be cut out. The aesthetic refinements developed by filmmakers working in 'Scope are in effect nullified by the Pan Scan reconstruction of films. The quality of contextuality, with its carefully constructed spacial relationships, is voided.

Summary of Observations

The widescreen discourse over the years has yielded a variety of observations and assumptions about the techniques appropriate to CinemaScope, among which, the following are outstanding.

It has been noted that the screen actually allows for a variety of shapes and formats within its wide angle of vision, which can be achieved by using lighting and architecture to reframe the screen.

Characters and their surroundings can be shown simultaneously, and cause and effect can be encompassed within the same shot.

Multiple centers of interest are possible, and the viewer's attention can be guided within the wide expanse.

Elements, which might be lost on a small screen, can be accentuated, and space between characters can be used to suggest relationships, particularly through blocking and camera movement.

Diagonal and horizontal lines are particularly suited to the wide composition, whereas vertical forms can be problematic.

The close-up presents special difficulties, and accentuates the potentially superfluous space at the sides.

The long-take master shot allows the viewer to absorb more readily all the widescreen visual information and is especially effective when showing a complex series of actions.

CinemaScope gives an epic, larger-than-life quality to any drama, and is a most appropriate choice when the environment is significant to the story.

These observations about compositional structure will be applied in analyzing the two films chosen for this study and will be elaborated upon within these specific filmic structures.

SEPPUKU

Background

The discussion of widescreen composition in Seppuku will necessarily involve an understanding of the narrative underpinnings of the film. In narrative cinema, as David Bordwell has argued, "syuzhet-centered schemata usually control stylistic ones. Once grasped as three-dimensional and furnished with recognizable objects, cinematic space is typically subordinated to narrational ends."[1] Therefore, I will preface the analysis of anamorphic composition in Seppuku with some general observations about the narrative and dramatic characteristics peculiar to this film.

However, instead of drawing solely upon Western paradigms for diegetic construction--which do not quite fit Japanese films--I will briefly examine certain forms which are rooted within the culture. As has often been pointed out, there is a tendency in Japanese society to retain elements from the past intact and "to cultivate these traditional forms alongside newer innovations"[2] or, as Shuichi Kato has put it, "the history of Japanese art is not one of succession but one of superposition."[3]

This preface can only be suggestive, since narrative and dramatic structures in Japanese films are in themselves formidable subject areas. Yet, if we note the coexistence of Western modes of representation together with distinctly Japanese models, the imagistic strategies chosen by Kobayashi can be more clearly understood.

Noël Burch describes a narrative tradition in Japan whose "modes are radically different from ours."[4] In the novel, theatre, and cinema, narrative is "designated as one function among others,"[5] rather than the key organizing element. He traces this attitude from the heikyoku singer (like Hoichi in Kwaidan), whose songs involved three modes of discourse, only one of which had a strictly narrative function, to the gidayu bushi of Bunraku, and to the benshi of the silent cinema. Along with the hand scrolls, which recounted already known tales both in script and in image, Burch concludes that these practices determined "the rapid rejection of the linear narrative codes of the West by the Japanese film-going public."[6]

Within the context of the Japanese narrative tradition, the organizing concepts in Masaki Kobayashi's[7] Seppuku resemble those generally associated with traditional Japanese theatre, particularly Noh plays, and he applies these concepts within the conventions of the Samurai film genre (jidai geki). The Noh theatre was developed at the shogun court of Yoshimitsu Ashikaga in the fourteenth century. Since then, the Noh and the Samurai traditions have been historically and aesthetically connected.

One of the outstanding characteristics of the Noh theatre is its choreography. The movements are understated, stylized "dance patterns of rigorous simplicity"[8] in which gestures are precise and significant. Props, the most common of which is the fan, are few and purposefully--often multi-purposefully--utilized. The movements are generally slow and suggestive indications of character type and emotion. When these movements are quickened, the change can be startling by contrast.

Both the solitary Noh play and the series of plays which constitute a performance event are constructed according to the gradually intensifying and accelerating rhythms of Jo (introduction, prelude), Ha (body, central part, development), Kyu (finale), which in turn govern the five usual categories of God piece (Kami mono), Man or Warrior piece (Shura mono), Woman piece

(Katsura mono), Madness piece (Kurui mono or Monogurui Noh), and Demon or Final piece (Kiri noh mono). Events are revealed primarily through the dialogue between the waki (supporting actor), who according to Komparu Kunio's interpretation, represents the passive, negative, dark yin, and the shite (protagonist), who is his active, positive, bright yang counterpart. Although the shite, of course, has the bigger role, "they complement one another to harmonize in performance."[9] There is usually a reliving of a past event. Often the shite has been disguised and later reveals his true identity. All of these elements associated with the structure of the Noh play are prominent in Seppuku, even though the film did not intend to adapt or directly imitate any particular play.

The film opens with a montage of images pertaining to the display of sacred armor of the clan ancestor--a sort of enshrined god--and his legacy, the edifices his progeny now inhabit (Kami mono). The young samurai, Motome Chijiwa, arrives seeking alms, but is made to commit ritual suicide. Hanshiro Tsugumo, a second warrior, arrives. It is he who will be the shite and carry on an extended dialogue with the clan's chamberlain--a rather perverse waki--in which past events are reenacted (Shura mono). There is but one woman in the entire film, and she, along with her scholar husband and infant son, becomes the victim of circumstances and decisions (Katsura mono).

Gradually, the true identity of Tsugumo is revealed. In a metaphorical sense, he is the ghost of Chijiwa, and he revenges himself upon the evildoers like a furious whirlwind (Kurui mono). According to Archer Winsten, the progression is "from mystery to suspense, and at last to crowning irony, the boomerang that undercuts the whole tradition and shows the rotten inside of a ruling family."[10] The final segment is ironic, an elucidation in which the god of the beginning is exposed as the demonic final image (Kiri noh mono).

When viewed in the context of theatrical influences, the film acquires an added richness, since the ironic use of the form underscores the irony of the content. The distinction between an idealized past (Noh and the Ashikaga court) is contrasted with the decaying state of affairs at the beginning of the Tokugawa period, and, by implication, contemporary Japan.

Drawing upon the same condemnatory principle often employed in the plays, the film creates tension through a complex combination of cinematic and narrative elements which restrain the action--while outrage builds to an almost unbearable degree--and then release it. This tension-release pattern, similar to the dramatic principles of Jo, Ha, Kyu, creates the pace of the film. The precise, dancelike movements associated with formal court life and with the Noh, are evident in the scenes in the Iye manor. These are in marked contrast to the more naturalistic style of Hanshiro Tsugumo's flashback story. The fighting scenes, when at last they come, are again carefully choreographed. When the film was shown at Cannes, a critic noted that it reminded him of a Greek drama. This pleased Kobayashi: "The stylized beauty of the film was understood."[11]

Again like the Noh, the film is ritualistic in style, which, as Blake Lucas has remarked, "is very appropriate to the drama because Harakiri is a film about ritual--the nobility of the ritual and the potential emptiness of the ritual."[12] The word seppuku is much more suggestive of a ceremonial act than harakiri (literally, belly-cutting)), the title under which the film was distributed in the West.

The film explores a familiar theme in Japanese literature, theatre, and film, that is, the relationship between the individual and society, often referred to as the struggle between giri (duty, social demands) and ninjo (personal feelings). One of the basic functions of the samurai film, according to David Desser, was "the mythic presentation of the giri/ninjo conflict."[13] The genre mythicizes history by rewriting it as "the struggle between man's society and man's humanity."[14] In Desser's opinion, Confucian philosophy devalues the individual at the expense of society.[15]

The hero of Seppuku is a believer in the ideals of the Bushido code, which governs samurai life and which provides the forms of self-definition within the social structure. However, these codes are administered by self-interested samurai lords, who mask their power struggles by invoking these established ideals. The film offers both a modern and a traditional perspective.

> Its ordering of the narrative into a circuitous chronology and its reflections on hypocrisy and lack of compassion in an ostensibly honorable way of life are very modern, but its protagonist emerges as a genuine hero who integrates his samurai values with a more profound humanity.[16]

Seppuku reflects a preoccupation of Kobayashi. As with many other Japanese artists who participated in World War II, the experience remained with Kobayashi as a ghost to be confronted and exorcised. Conscripted in 1942, he was sent to Manchuria. The only way he could find to express his opposition was by refusing to be promoted beyond the rank of private. In 1944, he was transferred to the Ryuku Islands, and he then spent a year in a detention camp in Okinawa.

From The Thick-Walled Room (Kabe Atsuki Heya) to Tokyo Saibon, he has primarily probed the causes and results of militarism. What emerges from these films is an indictment of an austere and inflexible social structure which inevitably destroys those who oppose it. He presents a totalitarian world in which everyone is expected to cooperate in upholding the status quo and in which self-assertion is tantamount to suicide. His films, particularly The Human Condition, Samurai Rebellion (Joiuchi), Seppuku, and several episodes of Kwaidan (Kaidan), emphasize the nobility of an individual committed to affirming the truth in a constrained, even suffocating environment of corruption and deceit. Kobayashi never forgot the experiences of the war, which for him was indeed the big lie, the ultimate expression of a rigid society's inherent dishonesty.

In exploring these themes in Seppuku, Kobayashi uses the widescreen anamorphic format, as he has done in all nine of his films since the 1959 Part I of The Human Condition (Ningen no Joken), with the exception of the made-for-TV Kaseki (1975) and the 1984 documentary

Tokyo Saiban. Like Kobayashi, other Japanese directors have also favored 'Scope. Since The Hidden Fortress (Kakushi Toride no San Akunin) in 1958, Kurosawa has worked primarily in 'Scope, as have Imamura and Oshima. Kinoshita used it exclusively from the 1958 Ballad of Narayama (Narayamabushi-ko), as did Ichikawa from 1958 through 1965. 'Scope has had a favored place among Japanese directors despite the difficulties it has presented.

> Widescreen, a problem and something of a challenge in all film industries, was particularly troublesome to Japanese filmmakers because the proportions did not lend themselves well to Japanese sets. The rooms of Japanese houses are small and hence difficult to photograph, the wide angle always wanting to take in more than is actually there. Also, since so many scenes occur with the actors sitting on the floor and the camera in a low position, there is considerable distortion in widescreen.[17]

On the other hand, in situations where characters traditionally do sit on the floor, the vertical dimension is diminished and a horizontal format can be an asset.

In Japan there is a long tradition of transverse composition developed particularly in hand scrolls (emakimono) and screen painting. Emakimono are especially tantalizing when one is looking for cinematic correlations, since they offer a pictorial narrative which "welds the representation of passing events in space and time into a perfect unity."[18]

The scroll is viewed by unrolling it with the left hand and rewinding it with the right as it rests on the table or floor. The pace and framing of this right to left "reading" are determined by the spectator, since the divisions between pictures are not predetermined by the artist. "The all-uniting 'framelessness,'" as Dietrich Seckel has pointed out, "does not allow the picture to stop short at the edges of the scroll but, by playing on the viewer's imagination, extends it far beyond. Here, as in all Far-Eastern painting, the 'suggested' pictorial area is considerably larger than the actual."[19] The viewpoint is steeply angled; illusionistic perspective is avoided; and the stories are generally accompanied by calligraphy. "There is everywhere a merging of lively observation and formal rigidity...a union of decorative elegance and rhythmical dynamism."[20] This summation of the characteristics of Emakimono could also fittingly describe Kobayashi's style.

Before becoming a filmmaker, Kobayashi was a student of Oriental art for many years, and, like other of his peers, his ease in composing within the widescreen format has no doubt been influenced by the study of his artistic precursors. "When I was a student, I studied Asian art, particularly Buddhist sculpture. I spent many hours looking at numerous statues and images in our ancient cities. While I was making Seppuku, I was very much aware of traditional Japanese aesthetics."[21]

Although he does use Western, linear perspective, Kobayashi also explores the steeply angled perspective of the bird's eye shot and the oblique angle generally associated with Japanese painting. His framing of shots, though formal and carefully composed, nonetheless is not self-contained but continually refers to the space beyond the frame in which more of the story awaits the viewer. To extend the comparison with emaki further, one might say that Hanshiro's narrating voice supplants the calligraphic texts, which usually guide the pictorial flow, as the camera frames and reframes discrete compositions of the unfolding scroll. Like the heikyoku singer retelling the heroic exploits of the Minomoto and Tara clans, Tsugumo recounts and comments upon the fate of an unknown young ronin and his less than heroic demise.

The cinematography in Seppuku is characterized by a propensity for reframing the 2.35 aspect ratio into 1.85, 1.33, or vertically arranged rectangles, and triangles. Often the screen is divided into three distinct vertical or horizontal segments; but a single center of interest is consistently maintained through lighting, line, and the attention of characters to a particular focal area. Angled viewpoint and parallel perspective are occasionally used, but the subjective point-of-view is not. This film is less about an inner struggle, than about coming to terms with social structures.

> If my films have any meaning, I feel it lies in my depiction of human problems created by the powerful historical framework. Historical interpretation always plays a very fundamental, important part in my films. The relationship of an individual's consciousness to his setting is my main theme.[22]

The locations are interiors and the few outdoor settings in the final flashback vengeance scenes serve as a release from the stifling social constraints which are emphasized throughout most of the rest of the film.

Lighting is used to focus attention, reshape the screen, delineate character, and suggest the passage of time. Formal distances are generally observed between characters and are accentuated by the widescreen space. Offscreen space is implied especially by framing only parts of the body, usually in the foreground. Framing subjects in this manner is a characteristic of Japanese painting which particularly influenced the French Impressionist painters like Dégas, as did the Japanese propensity for asymmetrical composition. The straight cut is used throughout between shots, with cutting on action as the favored mechanism. There are few dissolves and the cut is used to move to and from flashbacks, often in conjunction with camera movement towards or away from the narrator.

One of the outstanding characteristics of this film is the interplay between long static shots and movement. Kobayashi has said that he is indeed aware of the contrast between the static and the dynamic in his films.

> But I never plan on these shots beforehand. They are brought out by the particular demand of a shot which I execute in order to express a specific emotion or a particular scene of the drama. It is all an integral part of filmmaking.[23]

The key to the camera movement is the connection between the group and the individual, between ancient, fossilized forms and immediate, vital reality. It is the camera movement which comments upon the linkage as well as the tensions between these two. Also, the camera movement often serves to create a sense of depth as characters move towards or away from the camera. Ths use of oblique angles, diagonal lines, and movement is dynamic and often suggests spatial depth. These techniques are used principally when the actions of an individual threaten to upset the fixed social order, which is depicted throughout by static, lateral compositions.

In order to develop the preceding briefly sketched ideas more fully, the film will be examined sequentially. This way, the patterns of cinematic development can be observed within the defining narrative and dramatic structures. The emphasis throughout will be upon the individual within the social situation and the unique characteristics of this context created by the anamorphic format.

Space and Historical Context

Seppuku begins with a close-up of a helmet with a light, hairy substance draped over the sides, resembling the mane of a lion. Its visor suggests mask-like facial features. This helmet fills most of the screen as the hair flares out on either side. It is the same image that will conclude the film. It will, by that time, be rich with meaning.

With a percussive sound, there is a cut to a low angle, side view, this time including some of the body armor. The warrior effigy is shrouded in lighted smoke, which fills most of the screen behind it. It is placed in the center of the screen, while a sword rests vertically in the empty space on the right side of the frame. The next shot is from behind the figure with the mane of hair, which covers all but two horns on top of the helmet. The space on either side is filled by diffused spots of light, one on the left and the other just behind the figure to the right. As the camera slowly tilts down, the seated effigy armor spreads out into a circle of metal plates around the hips and reveals the sword now on the left side of the screen. There is a cut back to the frontal view, only this time from a medium shot. The camera slowly zooms out to a full shot of this figure seated on a pedestal with back lighting, which creates a halo effect around it. Quickly, the lighting is altered, making the entire room suddenly visible. This theatrical type of lighting change will be used three times in the film.

The mythic, ghost-like warrior is now an enshrined relic. The figure appears to be seated in front of the center of a triptych with the two smaller side panels empty. The one to the left is lighted, the one to the right is dark. The narrator's voice is heard reporting the date and weather as recorded in the daily log book. "It is the thirteenth day of May, 1630. The weather is fair. The heat of the day rises hourly." As Kobayashi has stated, "Many times I have discovered that my interest is not aroused unless I start locating a particular drama in its historical context. It is really essential to my filmmaking."[24]

A quick dissolve replaces the effigy with the book, which occupies the center of the screen, touching the top and bottom. It is lighted against an unlighted background. Another dissolve shows this log book open and laid at a diagonal so that part of the top and bottom are obscured by the frame. The narrator's voice continues, noting the arrival of a ronin who was formerly in service to the Lord of Geishu of the Fukushima clan.

Now begins a series of shots which establishes the spaces the characters will inhabit and initiates the compositional strategies which will govern the film. The sequence begins with an exterior shot of the building compound with the ronin, Hanshiro Tsugumo (Tatsuya Nakadai), entering from the right. His back is to the camera, and just the portion of his body from his upper arms to his buttocks is seen, implying that the rest of him extends beyond the screen above and below.

He walks away from the camera into the center of the frame. Only his footsteps on the stones are heard. He stops in the center of the screen, a defiant figure before three massive edifices. As in the shot of the family ancestor effigy, the background of buildings is in three distinct parts extending across the screen. Next comes a shot of the side of a building and the screen is divided horizontally: the bottom half is dark, the roof juts out in a bright, ribbed gable, topped by a dark beam, and there is a light area above. Music begins as the camera tilts down to a symmetrical wall decoration over which the film's title is displayed.

The camera looks down upon a map of the compound, the shape of which once again divides the screen into thirds and then abstract forms as the camera scans more of it. Then there is a shot of a courtyard as viewed from inside an adjoining room. The shoji have been pulled back to frame the view, dividing the screen into three parts, with the center portion being the brightest and the largest area.

Next, a wall mural of a coiled tiger is seen, a smaller rectangle with the same proportions as the larger screen rectangle, a frame within a frame. There are touches of light at the extremes of each side, and three ornaments are arranged above the mural.

This is followed by a pine tree wall painting, which occupies the entire screen and is suggestive of the Noh stage background. It consists of four panels, the middle two of which form the center of a triptych balanced by the strong vertical form in the center of each side panel.

The film credits appear as the camera begins to track from right to left, the favored direction throughout the film.

Suddenly there is a sense of depth as two layers of pillars pass in front of the gliding camera, then a partition as the camera moves to another room via the "fourth wall," and comes to rest on the image of another asymmetrical, four-panel wall mural, continuing the architectural division of the screen. In the next shot, there are two pillars which serve to redefine the screen size. In the center of them is the cross-hatched clan insignia, or Kamon, imposed on a lotus blossom. This is followed by the same shot from a greater distance, which now situates the insignia within a square within a rectangle in the upper half of the center of the screen.

The next shot evokes scenes from a screen or emaki rendering of The Tale of Genji or Heiki Monogatari. The camera looks down upon an open courtyard. It is positioned at a corner of the roof of the surrounding buildings and the rooftops create a sense of flattened, parallel perspective. The camera then switches to the other side of the roof with similar effect. Also, the widescreen now contains a small, light triangle, formed by the roof on the top left and a second larger one with its base on the bottom right as the roof cuts across the screen to the upper right corner.

> The illustrated Tale of Genji scrolls...clearly tell a story that moves through time, but they also illustrate it spatially with a graphic representation of a type of architecture called fuki-nuki yatai in which portions of roofs are missing so that we can have a bird's eye view into rooms.[25]

Once again inside the building, the camera dollies backwards down a hallway as the architectural shapes of the variously lighted walls and fusuma reveal themselves at the edges of the frame, slide by, and establish a sense of deep space and perspective, which is continued in the next, static shot of the inside of a room, the ante-chamber to the ancestor effigy shrine. Rows of pillars on either side lead the eye to the adorned window on the center back wall. Then there is a cut to a long shot of the armored effigy in the center of the frame, in a triptych setting. This is followed by a shot of the outside of a building, which a title identifies as the official residence of Lord Iye.

Kobayashi has carefully established the spaces in which all but the scenes of Tsugumo's flashbacks will occur and has summarized the entire progression of events in those spaces. These are huge, impressive exteriors and interiors of a well-established, prosperous, and powerful daimyo. The historical context has been delineated.

The ronin has imposed himself and will penetrate that household to its innermost depths. As Tadeo Sato has pointed out,

> Japanese audiences do not find the ideal samurai as appealing as the outcast, who is outside the confines of the ruling class. A real samurai is one who struggles to maintain his pride and honor.[26]

Tsugumo will challenge those elegant but empty, ancient forms--the ancestor idol, the book, the lifeless rooms--all presented in an Eisensteinian montage. These dead forms are Tsugumo's enemy. Just as there will be stories within stories, there are frames within frames.

Stasis and movement have begun to be counterposed: that which is frozen in time and that which is fluid and alive. In suggesting this contrast, Kobayashi makes good use of the natural characteristics of Japanese architecture. "Movement of characters and camera," as Noël Burch has noted, "introduce an effect of spatial flow, in contradiction, we might say, to the primary character of Japanese dwelling-space, and which is an important source of formal and dramatic tension."[27]

Architecture and Social Context

Kobayashi carefully begins to explore the possibilities of placing characters within the square, rectangular, and rhomboidal spaces of traditional Japanese architecture and within what Kunio Komparu has described as

> the clean, straight-line compositions; the raised-floor post-and-beam construction; the multipurpose space; the Mondrianlike patterns of light and dark produced by the dark wood of the columns and crossbeams and the white of the walls and door panels; the dynamic zigzag of the layout of the whole.[28]

When filmed, these traditional interiors, according to Noël Burch, offer

> Mondrian-like patterns, many large or small sections of which may at any time slide back to reveal a new, framed element: a person, a fragment of a garden, a painted <u>fusuma</u>, etc. And although a shadow projected on a <u>shoji</u> may occasionally designate the segment which is about to open, no purely architectural trait marks it out as 'door' or 'window.'[29]

There are myriad possibilities here for geometrically dividing the widescreen horizontally, vertically, and in depth.

Following the exterior shot of the Iye residence, there is an eye-level shot of an interior room, the first room past the entryway. On the back wall is the tiger painting, in front and to the left of which sits a clan functionary, or <u>tsukiban</u>, facing forward. The recently arrived <u>ronin</u> is in the foreground, off center to the right with his back to the camera. He is seen from the neck to the waist as in the previous exterior shot of his arrival. In a reverse angle medium shot, against a dynamic background of courtyard roof and structural shapes, he faces the camera for the first time and introduces himself as Hanshiro Tsugumo. This use of the medium shot in front of a rich background of complex architectural forms will be associated with him again in the courtyard scenes and will underscore his clarity of purpose and strength of charcter.

A medium shot of the receiving official places him in the center of the screen, but he seems to be part of the tiger painting behind him, which fills the right side of the screen. To the left of him is a partially lit blank wall. Amidst this elegance, Tsugumo is about to embark upon a dangerous venture.

The two men are then included in the same shot, but at a significant distance from one another. The receptionist is seated in the right foreground in a full shot and angled away from the camera towards the background center, where Tsugumo stands. Tsugumo is slightly off center and precisely framed by a door of the entryway across the courtyard. There are distinct areas evident in this shot: the room in which the official is seated, the room in which Tsugumo stands, the courtyard behind him, and an open space past the entryway beyond the courtyard. The fusuma and shoji, which would normally separate these spaces, are pulled to the sides, rather like the wings of a perspective stage setting. Within the widescreen format, formal distances between characters can be maintained while still suggesting enclosure through architectural forms.

Once again, the screen is divided into thirds, unequal ones this time, of which Tsugumo in dark, impoverished attire, occupies the brightest portion. Because of the background framing, lighting, and frontward position of Tsugumo, he is the immediate center of interest in the composition. This shot will be precisely repeated in the first flashback recounting the arrival of Chijiwa, who will occupy Tsugumo's place in the composition.

There is a cut, and Tsugumo's request to commit ritual suicide within the compound is communicated to the Chief Retainer, Kageyu Saito (Rentaro Mikuni). He is seen in full shot and seated in the left third of the frame, facing away from the camera towards the back right. The receptionist sits at the entrance to the room some distance away, framed by the fusuma on either side of him.

As in the preceding three shots, the camera and the characters remain static as they speak. Their conversation is punctuated by the snapping sound of Saito's fan as he opens and closes it, the only indication of agitation on his part. Saito is then framed by the alcove behind him at the back of which is an open window through which a tree trunk is seen. The small empty spaces created by the _fusuma_ fill out the sides of the screen. A close-up of the receptionist in the center of the screen against a dark background is followed by a medium shot of Saito in the center of the screen, his head perfectly framed by the opened _shoji_ on the wall behind him. The tree trunk is like an abstract wooden sculpture to his left in the background, and a reading table is to the right, creating a textural background of balancing forms.

Kobayashi's careful approach to 'Scope composition is a far cry from Jacques Rivette's 1954 admonition to 'Scope directors:

> quickly tiring of chandeliers and vases introduced at the sides of the image to balance medium-shots, he will discover the beauty of empty spots, of open and free spaces through which the wind glides; he will unburden the image, no longer fearing holes or imbalances, and will multiply compositional violations the better to obey the truths of cinema.[30]

The painstaking compositions in _Seppuku_, however, are aimed at creating an atmosphere of the absolute and suffocating control of a strictly ordered world. The wind will not glide but sweep through it later. Precisely by working against the expansive tendencies of the widescreen, a heightened sense of constraint is achieved.

Saito agrees to meet with Tsugumo, and a single percussive string sound is heard. Tsugumo is seen in the distance, following the official to the meeting. The camera is placed in a room across the courtyard in front of which a small table juts out on the portico in the right foreground and a plant is seen in the courtyard to the left. Tsugumo and the receiving official move ceremoniously in the distance from right to left along the engawa bordering the opposite side of the courtyard. As they pass along the porch, they are hidden at times by the three sets of opened shoji and could be a reverse image of Noh performers entering on the hashigakari to the stage. The effect is of boxes within boxes, frames within frames, creating a sense of depth, enclosure, order, and control. A note from the samisen is heard.

Tsugumo follows the official away from the camera and down a long corridor. The ceiling, floor, and wall screens create a deep sense of linear perspective as the camera dollies behind them at a distance, reinforcing Tsugumo's penetration of the house. The sound of their feet creaking on the floorboards is heard.

Saito, standing near the window and framed by the parted fusuma in front of him, awaits them. There is then a medium shot of him as he turns toward, then away from the camera. Behind him, filling the left side of the screen, is the open window, and on the right, the grating on the window shoji. This cross-hatch and bar imagery, so natural to the setting, will become a motif of confinement. As Keiko McDonald has noted in her discussion of Shinoda's Double Suicide,

> The lattice window...and checked walls indicate giri. An audience steeped in the Japanese cultural tradition will immediately associate the checked design with the door of a feudal prison...an externalization of feudal restriction upon individual characters.[31]

Here, the grating is counterposed to natural forms beyond the window. A percussive instrument sounds.

The camera is placed at floor level for the next shot. As Tsugumo enters and walks from back left to front right, the official accompanying him kneels and closes the screen behind them. The camera pans as Tsugumo passes in front of it and walks away. All that has been seen of him in this shot is from his waist down to his ankles. The horizontal widescreen composition works especially well when characters are seated on the floor in the traditional Japanese manner. When a character rises and accentuates the vertical, he escapes from the frame. Kobayashi uses this peculiarity of the anamorphic format to good effect in this shot. The frame seems unable to contain Tsugumo. He overwhelms the space, although his demeanor is composed and respectful. As he moves away from the camera, his whole body comes into view.

He sits down in the left third of the screen so that the walls behind him frame him perfectly. Part of the choreography of this film is the precise placement of characters in relation to architectural forms as they move from one position to another. Saito stands behind the opening to the raised room he occupies, which fills the center third of the frame, while the fusuma to the right completes the third side. Saito walks forward and sits down, touching the floor with his fan. Tsugumo bows as he makes his petition. This shot of the first meeting of these two men lasts for one minute and twenty seconds and exemplifies the leisurely pace of the shots throughout much of the film. The movements of all three characters are slow, graceful, precise--no more or no less than is needed. Saito remarks that another samurai had recently made the same request and asks Tsugumo if he knew Chijiwa.

This motivates a cut to a reverse angle shot of Tsugumo repeating the name, Chijiwa. As David Bordwell has noted, "The shot/reverse shot schema is easily adapted to widescreen filming; the shoulder of an interlocutor can block off an unbalanced area."[32] In this shot, Saito sits in the center with his back to the camera. The official who brought Tsugumo is seated facing Saito in the back and to the right, barely visible in the shadows. Tsugumo occupies the left third of the screen. Because of the lighting on him and his frontal posture, he is the center of interest. This spatial relationship between Tsugumo and Saito will be maintained but augmented in the courtyard scenes. Whether they are seen frontally or in reverse angle shots, the tension created by the formal distance between them is enhanced by the widescreen format, and that space is never bridged. These are sociological structures made visible.

There is a close-up of Saito, then a close-up of Tsugumo, then the original shot composition of this dialogue from behind Tsugumo, only in closer. This time the shot lasts thirty-eight seconds with the only movement consisting of the gestures Saito makes with his fan. As he points and says that Chijiwa came just as Tsugumo did, there is a cut to the close-up of Tsugumo as before, then a cut to a medium shot of Saito from a slightly above eye-level position. The sound of a string being plucked is followed by the click of his fan as he closes it. "Are you interested in how he fared?" he asks. There is a cut to a tight close-up of Tsugumo's impassive face as he responds, "I'm listening." When Tsugumo and Saito are seen together in the same shot, they are separated by space. Here they are separated into discrete shots through editing.

Within these static shots of their dialogue, the intensity results from the dramatic nature of the weighty subject which is so calmly discussed. It is the beginning of the interchange between the waki and the shite, so to speak. Kunio Komparu sees the waki as the coordinator of the play.

> Thus his own acting should be kept to a minimum. Once he has drawn out the shite he seats himself at the waki-za, behind the waki pillar, out of sight of the audience, and stays there unmoving except when necessary for the development of the play.[33]

Komparu also points out that "in a few rather unusual Noh plays there is a dramatic confrontation between waki and shite."[34] With these two key characters in place, the story is going to slowly unfold, allowing time to savor the pictures and the mood.

The flashback depicting Saito's account of Chijiwa's fate begins. Motome Chijiwa (Akira Ishihama) is seen placed almost precisely where Tsugumo was when he first arrived. He stands to the right of center with his back to the camera, while the same receiving official sits facing him before the tiger mural. The next shot is of a rather emaciated Chijiwa in close-up, but from a slight high angle with the floor mats as background, creating three lateral bands of light and shadow across the screen. Then the shot of Tsugumo is again duplicated with Chijiwa in his place, framed by the door of the entryway beyond the courtyard with the official seated with his back to the camera and to the right. This shot is held for twenty-five seconds.

There is an obsessive quality to the repetition in this film. A moment in history is examined from various perspectives as, both verbally and visually, the events are reenacted. Actions, compositions, and artifacts are repeated. Past events, seen through flashbacks, are then discussed by Tsugumo and Saito. The moment of Chijiwa's demise becomes the all-consuming memory that motivates Tsugumo's meticulously calculated revenge.

The decision-making process, leading inexorably to Chijiwa's death, begins with a shot of the official who has already communicated Chijiwa's request to commit <u>seppuku</u> within the Iye compound. This official is seated to the left of center, and the wall behind him is divided into panels of dark and light. In front of the rear center panel is a statue on a pedestal, balancing the composition. As this official resumes an upright position from a slightly inclined bow in a right to left movement, the camera complements this by moving away from him left to right just as it had done when Tsugumo entered for his meeting with Saito.

This time, however, the room is revealed to be full of men assembled to discuss the situation. Saito sits in the alcove by the window and Hikokuro Omodaka (Tetsuro Tamba) is seated with his back to the camera where Tsugumo had been. To the left of him is Inosuke Kawabe, to his right Hayato Yazaki. Between Yazaki and Saito is Inaba Tango. This shot is one minute and fifteen seconds long. Aside from the initial camera movement, the only other movement comes from Saito, who unfolds a cloth, cleans a piece of sculpture, and refolds the cloth. The arrangement of other characters on either side of and facing Saito, his position in a raised area framed on either side by drawn screens, the fact that he occupies the most brightly illuminated area, his movements as he speaks--all of these highlight his importance within the frame as well as within the clan hierarchy. The screen is able to encompass all of this information while retaining formal distances and the visual awareness of the group or social collective.

As the scene progresses, there are close-up, medium, long, and reverse angle shots. The camera is stationary and eye level throughout each of these shots, favoring asymmetrical combinations of people in the frame--3,5,7,9. Kunio Komparu has called this propensity for odd numbers in Japanese art "an intentional rejection of the harmonious in favor of the discordant."[35]

The assembled characters are arranged so that they are framed by wall beams and screens behind them. They discuss the implications of Chijiwa's request. If, instead of letting him perform <u>seppuku</u> they admit him into the household or pay him to go away, this will encourage others to come with the same request. Only Tango favors giving him some money. Omodaka, Kawabe, and Yazaki advocate making an example of Chijiwa. Each of them argues on behalf of calling his bluff and forcing him to commit ritual suicide.

At the end of this discussion, there is a cut to a low angle, medium shot of Saito, who is now standing with his back to the camera as if to leave. As Omodaka's voice is heard, Saito turns toward the camera, just as he had done in the shot which preceded the arrival of Tsugumo into the room and as he will do many times later on. His instincts seem to pull him away from this affair. There follows a shot with Omodaka in the center of the frame, flanked by two figures in the foreground, one on either side, angled toward him, and a background figure facing forward on either side of him for a total of five figures symmetrically arranged. As Omodaka rises and moves towards, then past, the camera so that only his legs are seen, the two rear attendants gesture slightly forward out of respect and the two front figures follow Omodaka with their eyes to underscore the movement as well as the decision. The composition of Omodaka rising to exit from the shot recalls Tsugumo's legs as he entered this room. In many ways, Omodaka will be Tsugumo's double, as well as his principal adversary.

Throughout these scenes, the sides of the screen are never left open-ended. The edges of the screen are cut off by the architectural forms within the room, by the change of lighting near the edges, or by seated figures framing central characters. Once again, enclosed, tightly controlled, feudal society is represented by carefully structured compositions. Protocol dictates a restrained elegance of setting and behavior. Yet what these assembled men have decided, though it seems in the best interests of the clan, is inhuman and unfeeling.

The cruelty masked by polite society, long a theme of social and political critics, is Kobayashi's concern here: "The tragedy was triggered by authoritarian pressure which smothered individuals."[36] As portrayed in this film, when faced with such oppression, "the conscience of the individual and his worth as a human being supercede in value the mentality of the clan.[37]

Kobayashi then proceeds to detail the malicious way Chijiwa is treated. There is Tori Takemitsu's music on the sound track and a shot of an empty room in the middle of which a stark tree branch, devoid of leaves, is displayed. A two-step platform is on the left, a screen on the right. The camera pans left to reveal Chijiwa awaiting his fate in another room. There is a dark screen door angled in at the right of the frame. The room beyond is enclosed by two light-colored, opened fusuma. The room beyond that is empty.

Chijiwa is seated on the raised floor of the next room, away from which the screens have been pulled. Beyond him is an abstract wall mural of a pine tree with its branch extended over his head. He is framed by this and one of the mural panels. The shot consists of a series of rectangles one within the other. The effect is a curious blend of flat, geometrically-arranged squares and rectangles of varying shades of grey and white, as well as the depth of a Renaissance painting or a perspective stage with its wings, shutters, and raked perspective. The eye is immediately directed to the background to the left of center. David Bordwell has observed that in classical widescreen filmmaking, "compositional centering becomes a function of camera distance: the longer the shot, the more centered the composition."[38] Here the symmetry of the setting is undercut by placing Chijiwa asymmetrically off center. The scenery serves to reduce and engulf him. As David Desser has suggested, when the space around him is emphasized, the individual tends to be deemphasized.[39]

The music ends with a sharp clapping sound and a cut to a shot of Kawabe's legs and feet as he walks down the corridor towards the camera. Once again making an asset of vertical cut off, Kobayashi records in close-up the impersonal feet of this deceptive messenger. The shot is accompanied by the appropriate squeaking sounds of his garments and his feet on the boards.

Kawabe makes two sharp, ninety-degree turns before reaching the room in which Chijiwa is seated. As he walks, the camera, at floor level, tracks right to left with his feet. As the shot ends, his lower torso is on the right side of the screen, the tree trunk panel is in the middle, and Chijiwa, framed by two panels of the wall mural is on the left, with a branch of the painting creating a canopy over his head. Chijiwa straightens his posture and looks toward Kawabe, who, in the scene that follows, informs him that permission to see the Lord has been granted.

Chijiwa is tricked into believing his fortunes have changed. When Kawabe leaves him alone, he is surrounded in the room by the curved forms of tree paintings, and a bird song is heard. There is a sense of peace expressed by being at one with nature, albeit artificial nature--that "fusion of nature and man that characterizes all phases of Japanese art."[40]

We are privy to his inner thoughts, his smile, his happiness, to moments which transcend the logic of the flashback. It is unlikely that Saito, the narrator, could have known his feelings, or that he would have revealed to Tsugumo the manner in which Kawabe and Omodaka so cruelly toyed with Chijiwa's feelings. The flashback takes on a life of its own:

> Extended flashback sequences usually include material that the remembering character could not have witnessed or known. Character memory is simply a convenient immediate motivation for a shift in chronology; once the shift is accomplished, there are no constant cues to remind us that we are supposedly in someone's mind.[41]

In this flashback, Chijiwa's serenity and sense of relief are communicated by his place within the widescreen setting, which is orderly and tranquil. His sudden panic at learning the truth from Omodaka in the next scene is heightened by disorienting angles, quick camera movements, and compositions in which the floor or wall patterns create diagonal lines behind the characters. Through the oblique angles, Kobayashi "makes the visual suggestion that the balance and harmony implied by the codes that underlie a samurai's life are extremely precarious."[42]

In creating a widescreen context for his characters, Kobayashi not only uses the narrative possibilities of the space--formal postures of characters and distances between them--but also explores the implications of compositional forms such as horizontal, vertical, and diagonal lines, triangles, and circular forms. The geometry of the spaces provides a psychological as well as a physical context.

> Seppuku is characterized by sharp contrasts in black and white with stark and ascetic geometrical shot compositions, at once formalistic and cold. They express the hypocrisy of the clan order, a class structure with neither morality nor justice at its center. The geometrically composed shots convey, in their austerity, the absence of any softening humanity within the samurai code invoked by the House if Ii against a weak and helpless Chijiwa.[43]

Chijiwa pleads for more time but is reminded by Omodaka of the sacredness of the samurai's word. This is quite hypocritical, since Omodaka himself has just instigated a deception. There is a close-up of Omodaka with two sharp diagonal lines to the right of his head in an otherwise open and empty frame, and then a high angle close-up of Chijiwa with one strong diagonal line cutting across the entire screen behind him. The strumming of percussive strings is heard. As Chijiwa looks up, the camera quickly pans down to the ritual garments, placed there previously by an attendant. The frame is filled with the whiteness of the cloth.

This is the end of the flashback. In the next shot, the camera dollies back from Saito, whose fan is touching the floor, to include Tsugumo, whose back fills the left third of the frame. Saito is framed in the center by the edges of the fusuma. Tsugumo calmly notes that it is "a most interesting story, a tale befitting the valiant traditions of the House of Iye." As Tsugumo speaks, Saito readjusts his position, discomfited by the response, which is subject to various interpretations.

There is then a medium shot of Tsugumo from a slight high angle. He, too, is framed by open fusuma, which fill the left and right sides of the screen. Behind him are the horizontal lines of the tatami in the next room. He is tranquil and undeterred as he moves his hand across his belly in a gesture of cutting. There is a tight close-up of Saito, whose head is framed by a complex of background patterns.

The camera returns to a two-shot from behind Saito. Since the camera is placed at floor level, only his back is included, angled to the left towards Tsugumo, who sits off center in a full shot and, smiling, completes the gesture of cutting. He is evenly framed by the borders of the background wall. Saito's fan enters the frame from the right, in the space between them, and Saito snaps it. There is a cut to a close-up of him as he asks if Tsugumo wants him to continue with the story. The time before, when he asked this, Saito was in a medium shot.

Then there is a tight close-up of Tsugumo, like the one which began the previous narration. The shot frames the continuation of the narration. Throughout these parallel stories, both Tsugumo and Chigiwa, except for one shot, have occupied the left side of the screen during their conversations with the others. Kobayashi very carefully replicates positioning to emphasize the retributive purpose of Tsugumo's presence, a vengeful ghost come back to haunt.

The second flashback is quite different from the slow, static quality of all that has gone before. It is a foreshadowing of Tsugumo's two fight scenes with the Iye clan, the first of which will also be interrupted before physical violence occurs. The director uses choreographed patterns of movement and stasis as the action flows in and out of the screen. The use of offscreen space allows him to keep fairly close to the characters and thereby intensify the emotion.

The flashback begins with a shot of Omodaka in medium shot. The branches and broad leaves of the wall mural fill the screen behind him, mostly to the right of center, and he is angled slightly to the left of center. The left side of the screen is open. There is a reverse angle shot of Chijiwa from floor level in which Omodaka's lower body fills the right third of the screen, and Chijiwa bows forward as he pleads for time. There is a cut to the reverse angle with Chijiwa on the left with his back to the camera and Omodaka to the right of center, angled slightly away from Chijiwa but looking at him. Chijiwa wears dark clothes, Omodaka light garments. There are no framing devices except for the mural behind Omodaka.

Music comes in after Chijiwa's request is denied. As Omodaka looks away from him to the right, Chijiwa seizes the opportunity to rise and run to the right. The camera pans right as he runs and opens the screen. There is a cut to a reverse angle, medium shot of him as he hastens out, framed on either side by the white screens he has just parted. He stops abruptly and looks offscreen right. Omodaka is seen behind him standing up, framed by the screen behind him as well as by the one in front. Omodaka is still angled away from Chijiwa but is looking towards him. This arrangement (of Omodaka in the left of center background, Chijiwa on the right side, and the implied others offscreen) creates a sense of depth and space.

The next shot shows the object of Chijiwa's gaze. There are four men laterally arranged across the frame and reaching for their swords. The camera pulls back to reveal a fifth and to include the back of Chijiwa in the shot. He quickly moves away to the right. Then there is a shot of a wide empty corridor into which he enters backwards in the distance from another corridor. He is framed multiple times by the screen divisions along the sides of the wall and ceiling. From either side of the foreground, the torsos of other men are seen entering the frame, cutting off that exit.

As he sees them and turns, there is a cut to a medium shot of Chijiwa in the center of the frame looking offscreen to the right with complex architectural forms creating rectangles behind him. A figure enters in the distance behind him on the far left of the screen. Chijiwa turns to see him. Then another figure enters, effectively blocking off that corridor. He is trapped by both men and architecture. Chijiwa slowly turns around again. There is a cut to him viewed from behind in the center of the screen with two men to the left and Omodaka on the right. The edges of the fusuma create frames on either side of the screen.

As Omodaka advances towards him, Chijiwa backs away towards the camera. This shot is followed by a close-up of the lighted face of Chijiwa just off center to the right, against a plain, dark background. The camera moves in closer to his horrified face, which then fills the left side of the screen as he backs up against the wall. Only the sounds of his garments are heard as he moves.

As Donald Richie has commented, "the wide screen adapts itself particularly well to feelings of isolation, of enmity. Even a simple close-up, if seen on one side of the wide screen, suggests solitude because it is balanced by an almost equal extent of blank screen."[44]

Omodaka occupies the center of the next shot with one of the other men on each side behind him. The architectural forms behind them all divide the screen into thirds. The man on the right steps forward and his footstep is heard. Then there is a snapping sound used to end the scene.

Isolation and entrapment by social forces, against which the individual is powerless, are clearly portrayed in this scene. Polite decorum can easily turn into violent oppression. Beneath the orderly behavior dictated by the feudal hierarchy is an unspoken threat. Anyone who deviates from the status quo will be destroyed. Thus, the cruel underpinnings of the elegant Japanese social customs are exposed.

The next scene begins with a high angle shot of the courtyard, framed by two adjacent roofs, which slope down towards it. In the lower portion of the center is a rectangular, lighted area with the white square of the suicide pallet and a bucket to the side of it. A closer shot of this follows from ground level standing position. The lighting, which mimics the contours of the platform, serves to reframe the screen, creating a jagged border on the right. Once again, the space is shown before the characters are inserted into it.

The Close-Up and the Individual

In the next scene, Saito approaches the enshrined clan ancestor to apologize for his decision. Even he feels caught up by the system. At the end of this scene, there is a high angle shot from behind the effigy, which places the effigy on the right side of the screen and Saito on the left. This composition will be repeated at the end of the film when Tsugumo approaches and unseats this symbolic figure. Saito speaks with emotion and then bows. There is a tight close-up of the visor of the effigy against a white background. The close-up links this weighty artifact of tradition with a living victim of its intransigent protocol.

Music serves as a transition to the high angle shot of Chijiwa, now dressed in white ritual attire, bowed and seated in the center of the screen. There is a spotlight on him, and the wide floor tatami create diagonal lines across the screen. A spotlight and diagonal floor lines will be used again when his body is returned home.

A tight close-up profile of Chijiwa then ironically connects him with the warrior ancestor. Meanwhile, Kawabe and Yazaki in another room examine Chijiwa's two swords: the tachi, used in combat, and the wakizashi reserved for seppuku. A sword is held diagonally across the screen, then bent to show Omodaka and the other men gathered in the room, as well as the movie audience, that it is made of bamboo, not forged steel. This same disdainful gesture of bending the bamboo sword will be repeated when the body of Chijiwa is returned to Miho and Tsugumo. The sword is the primary icon throughout the film, since, according to the _bushido_ code, it signifies the soul of the samurai.

> When he exchanges steel blades for those of bamboo, he reduces himself analogously--for them (the clan retainers), the true samurai is only as resilient and unbreakable as his blade, he _is_ his sword. In selling it, he forfeits not merely his honour but, in their eyes at least, his very being.[45]

An attendant enters and announces that "All is ready," yet it is apparent that what is most important is not ready, unless for an act of sadism.

This scene is followed by a long shot of the courtyard from the shadows of the surrounding walkway with two support pillars on either side, an attendant seated with his back to the camera about one third of the way in on either side, and the seat prepared for Saito just off center at the bottom of the frame. Saito enters with an attendant from offscreen right and sits with his back to the camera. Chijiwa, dressed in white, is seated in the center of the courtyard on the white-covered _tatami_. Men are arranged in rows on either side facing him. He is completely enclosed by the walls and pillars of the courtyard as well as by the gaze of the people all around him. "The retainers remain seated in their positions around the courtyard, barely moving, the symmetry of the scene expressing Kobayashi's horror of codes devoid of compassion."[46]

As Saito sits, there is a cut to a reverse angle from well behind Chijiwa, who is off center to the left and balanced compositionally by a bucket placed off center to the right. The platform on which Saito sits is framed by a pillar on either side, creating three distinct background areas, of which he occupies the central one with the family crest on the wall behind him. There are also three horizontal bands across the screen: the light sand of the courtyard area, the dark base of the porch, and the platform area itself, which is evenly divided vertically between dark and light areas.

After Saito speaks, Chijiwa once again pleads for a delay. This static shot lasts for one minute and three seconds. Then as Chijiwa bows, there is a cut to a high angle shot of him on the white pallet, which is framed to emphasize its diamond-shaped design, with the bucket at the point in the upper left. No one asks why he wishes to postpone the event and his request is denied.

In the shots which follow, Omodaka is designated as _kaishaku_, the second who will behead him once he has made the incision. He proves to be merciless, demanding the entire ritual before he will end the agony. This scene includes an excruciating depiction of the actual ritual of _seppuku_.

Orderliness and restraint are replaced by disorientation and horror. The images themselves are gruesome and the filmmaking style changes to favor close-ups, low, high, and oblique angles, zooms, a predominance of diagonal lines, and grating sound effects. In so doing, Kobayashi graphically strips the ceremony of its legendary romantic heroism and shows it to be a barbaric rite. He also moves away from the demands of the group to the sufferings of the individual.

The ritual itself begins with a close-up of Chijiwa drawing the sword from its holder in a diagonal movement. There is a quick tilt up to his chest as he raises his arm and thrusts the bamboo sword into his belly, which, being offscreen, is not seen. There are appropriate effects--a kind of creaking sound--and he repeats the thrust. As he bends with the movement, his grimacing face and shoulders fill the center of the frame. Then the camera is placed behind him and to the side. His lower chest and abdomen fill the right side of the screen; the left side is empty, then filled by the third thrust of the sword.

This is followed by a select focus close-up of his face, framed on either side by out of focus pillars in the background. He slowly raises his eyes to look offscreen right towards Saito. There is a cut to a tight close-up of Saito's face looking back towards him.

Then there is the shot from behind Chijiwa again as he brings the sword in from the left, followed by a select focus tight close-up from his eyebrows to lower lip. His face fills two-thirds of the screen and is off center to the left as he gazes to the right of center. He looks down, then raises his body and lunges to the left. There is a cut to an oblique angle, medium shot. As he moves, only his lower torso is visible against the sword. When he leans on it, there is a cut to a side view in which his thighs fill the left side of the frame, his upper body and head are aligned with the top of the frame, his shadow on the ground is parallel to the bottom of the screen, and the sword in the center of the frame, in a diagonal position, penetrates his flesh as blood pours out. The magnification of the image across the screen, focused at the point of the diagonal sword, underscores the horror of the action.

There is a cut to an empty frame into which Chijiwa's face is lowered diagonally from above. Music comes in to accompany his groans. The same close-up shot is seen of Saito watching intently. It is followed by a low angle close-up of Omodaka with his sword held behind his head at a diagonal, poised to strike. The gabled roofs of the portico behind him frame his head.

Then there is a high angle shot of Chijiwa as Omodaka might see him. His head is on the left, his neck is in the center of the frame, and his bared and lowered shoulders fill the right side. He turns toward the camera and the direction of Omodaka as he entreats him to kill him. A low angle, medium shot of Omodaka is seen with the same composition as before as he continues to call out the directions of the proceedings. There is then an oblique angle of Chijiwa, whose body makes a diagonal across the screen, with his abdomen and sword in the lower center of the frame. As he forces the sword in again, the camera zooms in from the side to a select focus shot with his face in the center and upper torso filling the entire right of the screen.

A high angle, medium shot of Kawabe is followed by an eye-level medium shot of Yazuki framed by two men on one side and one on the other, then the same close-up of

Omodaka ordering Chijiwa to pull to the right. The camera implicates these men by singling them out. There is a gory close-up of the sword in Chijiwa's belly surrounded by his bloodied garments and his trembling hands as he tries to pull the blunt bamboo through his intestines.

Once again, the close-up of Saito is seen, then a close-up of Chijiwa in select focus with chiaroscuro lighting as he lifts his head, sticks out his tongue and bites it off in a desperate attempt to die. There is a high angle shot of him in the lower center of the frame and the lower part of Omodaka's body is visible on the upper right side. Omodaka's shadow with the raised sword is cast across the white pallet and the shot is from a slightly oblique angle. Then there is an oblique angle of Chijiwa on the left and Omodaka on the right with the background architecture and two seated figures in view. The camera moves in for a medium shot of Omodaka as he swings his sword down and offscreen below the frame in a gesture of severing Chijiwa's head.

Immediately, there is a medium shot of the impassive face of Tsugumo, framed by the dark background of the room behind him and the opened <u>fusuma</u> on either side. The camera zooms in for a close-up of his face. During the interchange which follows between Tsugumo and Saito, Tsugumo assures him that he is undeterred by this story. He refuses the white, ritual clothing of death, saying his humble garments are fitting for a destitute ronin headed for the next world. This sequence of shots encompassing their verbal exchange begins and ends with a close-up of Tsugumo.

Thus, throughout the film, the widescreen format allows Kobayashi to emphasize visually the highly structured codes of behavior of the feudal society. The formal placement of characters within the same shot in relation to one another, determined by rank and propriety, and the confinement of characters within the squares and rectangles of surrounding architectural forms creates an oppressive atmosphere despite the wide aspect ratio.

There are different degrees of close-up used to separate a character from the social context. Here the close-ups record the personal responses of individuals to events. Saito is unsettled, Omodaka sadistic, Tsugumo impassive, Chijiwa relieved, then frightened, then anguished. There is rarely any headroom in these shots. Subjects are brought close to the screen and seen from the top of the head or forehead down.

The background forms continue to reframe and suggest enclosure, but as close-ups get tighter, the background naturally blurs. As in the shots of Chijiwa performing seppuku, the background all but disappears so that there can be full concentration upon the sufferings of the individual, which have resulted from the societal ordinances.

The isolation of the character in tight shots and the suggestion of interior states are particularly effective, since background forms usually insinuate themselves even in the medium close-ups. The close-ups are the primary indicators of emotion and personality, which are hidden in the formally constructed full and long shots. The tighter the close-up, the more intense is the emotion. Once again, the conflict between the needs of the individual and the well-being of the group comes into play. It is interesting to note that in the close-ups of the ancestor effigy, there is neither background nor feeling expressed through facial features. It is an empty symbol which mocks human emotion.

Narrative Time

The film continues its repetition of images by returning to the courtyard, this time with Tsugumo filling Chijiwa's place. The courtyard is an interesting location, aside from being a logical place for performing _seppuku_. It is composed of raked sand and surrounded on three sides by a covered porch. On the two facing sides, there are _shoji_ screens which can be opened and closed for easy exits and entrances. On the third side, there is a raised area beyond the walkway and the clan insignia is on the wall behind this space.

Characters are seated strictly according to rank. Saito, as the chief retainer, sits on a stool in front of the insignia with his senior advisors seated on the floor at either side of him. Behind them is a servant who, like a Noh stagehand, is always present in the background to perform functional tasks, such as to adjust a stool. Also seated on stools placed along the sides of the courtyard itself are ranking members of the clan hierarchy, while lesser figures and attendants sit on the floor on both sides of the portico. These many figures, so static and formally arranged, reinforce the sense of enclosure of the space itself.

The eaves of the portico roofing frame the sun into a rhomboid, the size of which becomes an indicator of time passing. At first it creates a wide frame which encloses the oblique rectangle of the ceremonial pallet. As the story progresses, the lighted area is gradually reduced until it is only a small piece of sunshine between Tsugumo and Saito.

Tsugumo is seated in the center framed by the sides of the courtyard, the seated men, the rhomboid created by the sun, and the white pallet. Saito sits in the elevated area in front of the clan insignia, framed as if on a stage. Although respected as a samurai who once had status, Tsugumo is visually in an inferior position in relation to Saito. Yet, as the dialogue ensues, it becomes apparent that, unlike Chijiwa, Tsugumo is the controlling force behind events. There are visual and verbal overtones of a law court proceeding as Tsugumo portrays the plight of the individual caught in the system, and Saito defends the code and his role as administrator of it.

The reverse angle shots which dominate most of the courtyard scenes are quite sweeping long shots, since they encompass not only the back of one character and the facing character in the distance, but also many of the other seated figures and framing architectural forms. Saito is generally seen from the low angle perspective of the courtyard, while Tsugumo is usually seen from a high angle, emphasizing the fact that Saito has hierarchical power, although Tsugumo retains moral authority.

Figures placed in the background of a shot often provide narrative information. For instance, Ichiro Shinmen, Tsugumo's appointed kaishaku, is often included in the background in full or medium shots of Tsugumo as a reminder that this issue of the second will be Tsugumo's device for making his indictment. In front of Tsugumo are his swords, and beside him the pragmatic bucket which will be used for cleaning up afterwards.

Tsugumo politely requests Omodaka as his second instead of Shinmen. When told he is absent, he then requests Kawabe, and finally Yazaki, both of whom are reportedly indisposed. During Tsugumo's interchange with Saito over this issue, the shots change from full to medium to close-up as it becomes clearer that this is a suspicious coincidence and Tsugumo is up to something. Also, Saito's face begins to be seen in shadows.

While awaiting news of the whereabouts of Kawabe and Yazuki, Tsugumo offers to tell his life story, saying to those assembled that his fate may turn out to be theirs. The camera begins a pattern of dollying in behind or zooming in from in front and above Tsugumo to start or end a flashback. This camera gesture isolates him from the social context and shifts attention to his personal affairs. It also serves to connect the memory of past events with the present predicament.

The first flashback narrated by Tsugumo is of Motome Chijiwa, whom he introduces as "a lad of some slight acquaintance." It begins with a dissolve to a sheet of paper with a pen writing on it. The camera cranes up and out to reveal a youthful Chijiwa practicing calligraphy. The white parchment in front of him bears an eerie resemblance to the white _seppuku_ pallet, but this narrative is a remembrance of happier days. The windows are open and springtime blossoms float in through them. The beauty of nature and the ample, well-appointed rooms of a samurai household are quickly communicated as the widescreen casually encompasses them while focusing first on Chijiwa and Tsugumo's daughter, Miho[47] (Shima Iwashita), then on Tsugumo and Jinnai Chijiwa (Yoshio Inaba), Motomo's father, practicing archery. While the fathers hone their martial arts skills, the children refine their artistic and literary ones, more suitable to peace time.

Subtle connections between past and present continue to be made as the sound of the bow being stretched resembles the sound of the bamboo sword against Chijiwa's flesh before he died. As the two widowers, Hanshiro and Jinnai, discuss their children and practice archery, their movements are relaxed and casual, although still carefully blocked to accommodate Kobayashi's compositional formalism.

Hanshiro Tsugumo, the narrator, is seen describing how these halcyon days ended with the fall from favor of his lord, Gozaemo Masukatsu, in 1619, as the Tokugawa family was consolidating its power. This next part of his narration tells of the death of Jinnai by ritual suicide and contains an extraordinary series of shots of Tsugumo running to Jinnai's home.

The scene begins with a low angle of the eaves of a building as Tsugumo enters from the rear and seems to rise into and across the screen as he hastens past. There is a cut to his feet moving right to left down outdoor steps as the camera tracks quickly alongside of him, with the part once again suggesting the whole. Next is a full shot of him in the middle of the screen descending a flight of stairs, which entirely fills the screen with parallel horizontal lines. As he moves vertically down them, the camera tilts down until it is directly over him. It is a very strong vertical movement of both camera and character along wide, horizontal planes, creating the effect of a two-dimensional screen.

In the next shot, he enters a corridor from the rear and rushes towards the camera. As he stops, the camera dollies back to reveal a woman seated on the left facing offscreen left. The object of her gaze is the shot's point of interest. The obstacle of spaces to be overcome by movement conveys Tsugumo's anxiety and a sense of urgency as he hastens to his friend. He finds Jinnai's body behind a screen, and there is a letter left for him. We hear the voice of Jinnai as Tsugumo reads it: Jinnai's story within Tsugumo's story. Jinnai entrusts Motome to Tsugumo's care.

Tsugumo's disgraced lord is then shown preparing for his own _seppuku_. He forbids Tsugumo to do the same, saying that it is his duty to remain behind and fulfill Jinnai's request. Now poverty and the Iye clan have prevented him from fulfilling this sacred trust. Like the 47 _ronin_ of the _Chushingura_, Tsugumo is, after all, a true samurai whose deepest motivation is fealty to his lord. He will avenge the wrongdoers, but he will also atone for his failure in his duty.

After hearing this story and the news that all three requested retainers are unable to come, Saito rises, gestures with his fan, and exits, followed by his two advisors and the servant. This rush of movement by these formerly placid men signals the rising tension. There is a cut to a medium shot of Tsugumo alone in the frame. He comments that all three men seem to be indisposed. He chuckles, and there is a cut to a long shot from behind Saito's now empty platform seat with Tsugumo sitting in the distance laughing loudly and mockingly.

Saito and his two associates are seen in a large empty room, which has numerous support pillars. These serve to frame the screen into three portions around each of the men in an eye level full shot. The camera pans with Saito as he moves into the shadows on the left and then turns to face the other two. The shot lasts one minute and twelve seconds, but, unlike the previous, static long takes, this shot is marked by agitation because of the restless movement of the characters, formerly so imperturbable. Also, a visual comparison is made between the devious attitute of Kageyo Saito and the decency of Gozaemo Masukatsu, who was brightly illuminated, poised even as he faced death, and concerned with Tsugumo's welfare. The upshot of this scene is that Tango is sent to find out what is going on. He is seen in the center of the screen, hurrying away from the camera down a long, perspectival corridor, which creates a vertical path in the center of the screen. He will reenter later the same way. This movement away from and later towards the camera is made to seem quite rapid by the wide angle lens.

Editing Patterns

As an example of the aesthetic rhythm of the tension and release which creates the structural rhythm throughout the film, the next sequence of shots follows the pattern referred to in music and traditional theatre as _Jo_, _Ha_, _Kyu_. It begins with a quiet passage, gradually builds in degree and intensity to an outburst of energy, and then achieves a concentration of it in a single point of expression.[48] This rhythm affects the editing and illustrates that rapid cutting is quite feasible in widescreen.

_Jo_. There is a long shot from behind Tsugumo, who is seated to the left of center and directly facing the empty platform. The emblem on the back wall is the center of attention in the upper middle portion of the screen. Three men are seen seated on either side. Saito, once again composed, enters and sits, assisted by the servant. The other man sits on the floor to his right. Saito signals to the left with his fan. There is a cut to a medium shot of Shinmen on the sidelines rising to respond.

Then there is a cut to a high angle shot from behind Saito. In this shot, he is in shadows, as are all the men seen seated on the right side. Tsugumo, the center of attention on the left, is fully lighted. The screen seems to be in two parts because of dark and light areas. Shinmen also stands out in the right center rear in his light colored shirt as he rises. He steps towards Tsugumo, who raises his arm in front of him to interrupt Saito's command to begin the ceremony.

Ha. Then there is a cut to a low angle, medium shot of Saito framed by the emblem and wall post. There is a medium shot of Tsugumo with the feet of Shinmen in the background in shadows. It is a high angle shot but open on the sides. Saito accuses Tsugumo of never intending to go through with the ritual.

A medium shot of Saito follows, then a tighter medium shot of Tsugumo, a select focus close-up of Saito, a close-up of Tsugumo, and then a reverse angle from behind Tsugumo, seated on the left. Saito and his man are seated on the upper right and framed within a 2:1 rectangle. This is a tighter version of the earlier shots.

There is a low angle, medium shot of Tsugumo with complex architectural patterns behind him, one framing his head. The screen is layered horizontally in thirds. This is a very dynamic shot which emphasizes his position of power. He knows the rules and is using them to his advantage. "I do not die a criminal. I am free to choose a second." A percussive sound follows his challenge. Then an aerial shot from the corner of the courtyard roof places Tsugumo on the bottom center in light and Saito in shadows with attendants on either side. The shadows cast diagonal lines as does the right roof, which makes a triangle on the frame. It is silent. The only movement is that of Saito standing up.

In the next shot, Saito is seen in the center of the frame, angled to the left, and the shadowed background forms three muted quadrants. As Saito speaks, the camera zooms back to show the whole platform from the perspective of the courtyard, then dollies behind two seated attendants, whose heads turn towards Tsugumo. The camera pans past them to place Tsugumo in the center of the frame, with seated men in the background. The camera then zooms in quickly to a medium shot of Tsugumo with Shinmen behind him to the left. A percussive sound is heard. Once again, tension is created by emphasizing the space between characters as they vie for power.

The camera is positioned in the courtyard, looking up at Saito, who is standing in the center with the background crest to the right and the head and shoulders of a seated man on the far right. There is a vertical wall pattern to his left. The camera zooms out to include Tsugumo facing the screen as two men on the left rise from their seats.

There is a cut to a low angle of two other men standing up and then an eye level, medium shot of Tsugumo as the camera zooms in to a close-up of him. This shot is followed by a cut to the side torso of a man, whose sword creates a strong diagonal across the screen as he puts his hand on it and makes a movement to draw it from its scabbard. The appropriate sound effect is heard. A tight close-up then shows Tsugumo with the dynamic, well lit background behind him. He looks warily to the right, then back to center.

The next shot shows sliding doors being opened with appropriate sound as six men are revealed in shadows from a slight low angle. This is followed by a cut to another side of the courtyard with one man in the left foreground, three on the raised walkway behind him, and four entering as the screens behind the three are opened. As they move forward, the camera quickly pans down behind Tsugumo and, cutting on action, switches to a low angle shot of him reaching for the sword in front of him. The dynamic background is evident behind him. Along with zoom shots, there is movement from all sides of the screen pressing in on Tsugumo. This slow contraction culminates in a freezing of movement and is then released through an expansion of space as all move back to their original positions.

Here the contraction continues. There is an eye-level long shot from behind Tsugumo as he rises towards Saito's platform with Saito taking a step in his direction and attendants on either side stepping towards the center. Three men on Saito's platform all rise at the same time as Saito steps forward. The men in the courtyard move to draw their swords.

Music begins and there is a fast zoom in to a full shot of Saito in the center of the screen with plenty of headroom and background forms as before. He points forward with his fan. There is a cut to all the men on Tsugumo's right drawing their swords and moving menacingly in his direction. The camera pans with their movement to include Tsugumo with his back to the camera in the center and men moving in from the left and rear. He swivels around counterclockwise towards the camera as two spears diagonally raised enter the screen from the left behind him and to the left of the camera.

There is a cut to a reverse angle of the holders of these swords: five men at eye level as their spears make diagonal patterns across the screen. They stand in a row and the camera zooms back to include Tsugumo and the others on either side. Throughout all this, along with the music there is the sound of their feet and the clanging of their swords being drawn. Tsugumo, holding his dagger, changes it quickly to his right hand and swivels to the right.

Kyu. There is an aerial shot and the camera quickly zooms in from this position on Tsugumo in the center of the frame with his arms upraised. As in the scene of Chijiwa's entrapment earlier, the action is halted. Like the close-up of Chijiwa in that scene, this shot of Tsugumo is a kind of mie, a freezing of emotion.

There is a cut to a low angle, medium shot of Saito as before as the camera moves in closer to him. This is followed by a cut to a slight low angle of Tsugumo in the center of the frame facing the camera, gazing off center to the right. His left arm is extended along the bottom of the frame to the right and his right arm raised, holding the sword at a diagonal on the left. The dynamic background is seen clearly behind him and the heads of three men are seen near the bottom of the frame in the rear. He slowly lowers his arms and looks around. Two clanging sounds end the music.

There is a cut to a high angle from the rear of Saito's platform. Saito is standing with his back to the camera, right of center, and all other surrounding men face Tsugumo. They step back as Tsugumo moves forward in the left center, the best-lighted area, and resumes his seated position, replacing the sword on its stand with the appropriate sound. His is the only movement in the shot. Then Saito turns counterclockwise towards the camera as if to walk away. Tsugumo stops him with his words. Saito turns clockwise, half way around, and then the rest of the way to have his back to the camera. Saito moves to sit again.

Cutting on action, there is the usual medium shot of Saito with the crest to his right and lines of the wall to the left, then a slight low angle, medium shot of Tsugumo in the center of the frame with two men in the background on either side poised to draw their swords. There is a tighter medium shot of Saito followed by quite a high angle of Tsugumo in full shot in the center of the frame on the white pallet with the shadows of the men behind and to the left of him also evident. He leans forward, lifts the ensheathed sword with his left hand, withdraws the sword with his right, and snaps it back into the scabbard with accompanying sound. He swears to fulfill his promise and then replaces the sword onto the stand.

There is a cut to a reverse angle from behind Tsugumo with a circle of men with swords in hand to the left of center and to the right, with Saito seated in the background. Saito signals with his fan, and the men resume their place and return their swords to their holders. Order and stillness are restored. Tsugumo's swords rest on the platform in the right bottom foreground at a slight diagonal, and Shinmen and others are seen seated behind Tsugumo.

As in the earlier scene of Chijiwa's attempted escape, there is a building of tension and the movement towards violence is interrupted. Both scenes foreshadow the explosion of violence in the climax. In the first scene, Chijiwa is helpless; in this scene Tsugumo remains in command. In the third scene, Tsugumo accomplishes his purpose, then succumbs to the forces of the Iye clan. It is not possible here to trace this <u>Jo</u>, <u>Ha</u>, <u>Kyu</u> structural model in detail throughout, but it is a complex design which gives a distinctive dynamism to the film and significantly affects the editing pattern.

The shots in this scene are filled with narrative information as Tsugumo forestalls disaster. Not only are the shots themselves dense, but Kobayashi expands the screen even further by continually referring to offscreen space. As David Bordwell has pointed out, "frame mobility, whether achieved through camera movement or zoom, inevitably sets up a play between offscreen and onscreen space."[49] The offscreen gaze of Tsugumo in several instances also implies life beyond the frame.

Objects and Mise-en-scène

Tsugumo has asserted his authority through the very power of his presence and the threat of killing many before he dies. He has won the verbal parry with Saito and has been permitted to continue his story. But from now on during the shots of him narrating, the viewer is made more and more aware of the presence of swords carried by the men seated behind him. The sword artifact also becomes increasingly prominent within the flashback scenes. Like other objects found within the mise-en-scene, this primary icon of the sword is not singled out by a close-up, camera movement, or unusual lighting. It must be noticed by the viewer, read, as it were, as part of the environmental context. The widescreen, notes Gavin Millar, "helps to avoid the overweighting of the importance of an event that isolating it in a separate shot often produces."[50]

The tone changes as the flashbacks proceed. For the first time circular forms dominate. This is the intimate story of Tsugumo's daughter, son-in-law, and grandson. It begins with Miho by the entryway to their house. The mise- en-scene immediately communicates the fact that Tsugumo and his daughter have become artisans who make parasols and fans for a living. The implements of their craft are casually scattered about creating a light, bustling tone. Objects found casually within the setting gain significance as the story progresses, and these objects relate a story of their own as they are gradually eliminated.

As Miho enters the house, there is a full shot with Tsugumo seated in the foreground facing left and at a forty-five degree angle from the camera. There is a circle made by an umbrella on the right, and to the left is the side of a suspended umbrella on which he is working. The posts on either side of him divide the screen into three segments. He and Miho, as she enters in the rear center, occupy the middle portion, while the umbrellas dominate the other two areas. The background consists of opened and closed shoji screens. Tsugumo turns the umbrella as he works on it, while Miho moves around in the background getting ready to go to the wholesaler. Their movements are natural and relaxed.

As Miho leaves, the landlord enters with a proposition for Tsugumo. He is acting as middleman for a wealthy lord who would like to "adopt" Miho. There is a cut to a medium full shot of Tsugumo in the foreground, filling the right third of the frame. He faces left and is at a forty-five degree angle from the camera. The partially assembled umbrella before him fills the rest of the screen and extends beyond it. The landlord enters from the left in the background and is seen through the umbrella spokes. He sits down. Another umbrella is seen in the background at the far right.

Tsugumo is then seen in a medium close-up in the right center of the frame, behind the spokes of the unfinished umbrella, which fills the whole left foreground. A window is on the upper right and two folded, completed umbrellas lean against the wall to the right. There follows a low angle, medium shot of the landlord as he smokes his long pipe. Then there is a cut back to Tsugumo behind the umbrella spokes.

He is being offered a way out of his present situation, but at the expense of his daughter, who would become a concubine. He refuses, and the landlord admonishes him for being too proud. As they speak, there is a full shot with a bright, completed umbrella in the left foreground. The landlord has his back to the camera on the right, and Tsugumo is in the background center. They look in the direction of the umbrella whenever they refer to Miho. Then the camera slowly zooms in on Tsugumo, isolating him and emphasizing his firmness of purpose, which is revealed in the following scene. Being something of a non-conformist, he has his own plans for his young charges.

The next scene begins with a high angle long shot of Motome seated in the background at the point where the walls meet. A group of about eight merchant-class boys face him reciting their lessons, a Confucian commentary on the qualities needed for leadership. They are all framed by foreground pillars, jars, and a vase on either side. In a reverse angle shot, Motome is then seen in the left foreground facing the right rear. The boys are on the right side facing him. In the center background, another room is visible. It is empty and partially lighted as Tsugumo is seen entering it in the distance.

The next shot is from this room as Tsugumo comes into it. The offscreen sound of the boys' voices is heard. Tsugumo waits here for Motome. Then, with obvious discomfort and a sense of urgency, he asks this gentle young teacher to marry his eighteen-year-old daughter. As he does so, there is a slight high angle, two-shot from behind Hanshiro on the left with Motome in the right center. Between them is a tea tray, to the right are Motome's books, and behind him on the left is his sword, mounted on the wall. This well-intentioned proposal of Hanshiro will end tragically.

Tsugumo the narrator is seen again, then the marriage of Miho and Motome, without guests, and then Tsugumo as narrator. This time he is shown in a select focus close-up with the swords of those seated behind him pointed towards his head, three on each side. He says that a son, Kingo, was born two years later.

In the scenes which follow, objects in the mise-en-scene continue to tell a story of their own. Like the umbrella spokes, the curved forms of the fans, which are carefully hung on bamboo poles, suggest the physical frailty of this family and its delicate economic situation. Bit by bit, the few household objects begin to disappear as they are sold, and the rooms become barren.

Seasons are suggested by the sounds of summer cicadas or heavy autumn rains outside of the windows. The surrounding outside spaces of a larger world are alluded to but, without their former clan affiliation, there are no social supports. This family becomes a self-contained but unsustainable unit within the ever more empty environment of their dwelling. In Kobayashi's films, the individual who extricates himself from the social web is doomed. Yet what fascinated the director was "the tenacious human resilience which continued to defy this extreme pressure."[51]

In these flashback scenes, the director visually depicts the disintegration of this family unit precisely by the way he arranges the four of them within the widescreen spaces. The narration tells of this dissolution in a matter of fact way, but the dramatic enactment of events is full of nuance and emotional overtone.

This sequence begins at a time of happiness after the birth of Kingo. Tsugumo is seated off center to the left in the foreground and turned away from the camera. As he talks, he is fanning Kingo, who is crying offscreen below the bottom of the frame. Motome is seated on a raised area behind Tsugumo and to the right facing him.

There is cutting on action as Tsugumo gets up and moves to the rear to sit next to Motome. A book is behind Motome on the right and the sword is horizontally behind them in the midground center of the frame. There are some small arched windows in the background. Once again, there are three distinct areas of dark and light which frame them, and the edges of fans, hung upon bamboo poles, protrude into the screen at the left. They are discussing samurai who threaten seppuku in order to get money. They disapprove, but Motome says he understands how poverty could drive one to do this.

Then there is a cut to a medium close-up of Motome in the center of the screen. A window is behind him on the left and vertical bamboo poles on the right behind the book set on a pedestal. There is a medium shot of Tsugumo, left of center and facing offscreen right toward Motome. The screen is reframed into about a 1.33:1 ratio around him by the room architecture, while the ominous horizontal sword is visible in the background. Tsugumo is relaxed and fanning himself. The offscreen sound of Kingo's crying is heard, so Tsugumo looks to the left. As he rises to respond, there is cutting on action to a long shot of him in the background left getting up. The thin, horizontal slats of a foreground partition obscure Motome on the right.

The camera pans left with Tsugumo as he steps down to where the baby is lying on the floor. Miho, in the background to the left, now rises, comes forward, and kneels down beside Tsugumo, who lifts the baby. A doting grandfather, he bounces Kingo and tries to amuse him. There is a cut to a high angle shot of them as Tsugumo stands up with the baby and holds the small toy mask he had earlier given him. The camera pans left as he moves to the left and up a step. Pillars, fans, and the sides of screens pass as they move. Miho rises and repositions herself. The screen is reframed into thirds with a slated screen on the right, a dark pillar on the left, and the four figures in the center: Tsugumo with the baby in the foreground, Motome on the left, and Miho on the right behind them. It is a family portrait.

Tsugumo is dancing and singing a mirthful lullaby to the baby. As he continues moving to the left, the camera dollies with him until, in an eye level medium shot, he and Kingo are alone on the screen against the white backdrop seen earlier during the wedding ceremony. This warm, charming scene is in marked contrast to the next shot of Tsugumo, the solemn narrator in the Iye pavilion. The sound of cicadas is heard and a breeze lightly moves his garments. From now on, that breeze will be evident in the courtyard until it culminates on the windy plains during his fight with Omodaka.

Tsugumo next tells how Miho became ill and Motome, unable to find work because of the restrictions imposed by his samurai status, started selling their belongings. Miho's weakened condition and sadness are poignantly evident in a four-shot sequence. It begins with a shot of a half-opened, latticed window shutter moving and creaking with the wind and rain against it from the outside. Then there is a slightly high angle shot of Miho in the center of the screen seated on her _futon_. Kingo is in the far right-hand corner of the screen turned toward the wall. Miho, who is facing the camera, looks fleetingly in his direction, then back to the front as she starts to lie down. The camera dollies in towards her, leaving Kingo offscreen, although his voice is still heard. Then there is a low angle shot of two grated windows, followed by a close-up of Miho. Wordlessly, the mother's inability to attend to her child is shown as they are separated. The chill and bleakness of nature are palpable.

Motome is then seen at the labor pool trying to get emloyment. A high angle shot of men surging diagonally across the screen while snow falls suggests the fierce and desperate competition for work. Motome is discovered and turned away because he is a samurai. He is next seen from a high angle leaving a pawn shop, presumably exchanging his steel swords for money to feed his family. Then there is a long shot of an empty road with two small, barren trees on the left and two road markers off center right in the background. Motome enters the frame from the right and moves diagonally from close right towards left rear. It seems to be twilight, and he becomes a silhouette against a deeply clouded sky.

Alain Silver maintains that the stage line in Japanese CinemaScope films will most often recede from right front to left rear or from top front to bottom rear, particularly if persons or objects are arranged from foreground to background. This he attributes to the fact that words in Japanese are read from right to left and top to bottom.[52] The right to left movement, whether lateral or diagonal, does seem to dominate in this film.

From this point on, Motome is often seen against smoky, morning mist or light streaming in from a door or window behind him, giving him an ethereal appearance. He slowly becomes a ghost. In such a shot, he awakens Tsugumo to tell him that now Kingo, too, is ill. The sounds of birds are heard, suggesting the arrival of spring.

The intimations of nature have backgrounded their plight. The family, which was united in the summer, has gradually broken apart. Miho became ill in the fall, Motome's efforts to find work during the winter were in vain, and early spring brought the illness of Kingo.

Tsugumo goes with Motome to his home. Light is flooding in through the doors and windows in the background. Motome, at the far left edge of the raised platform, turns away from the camera and sits down. Miho is in the right of center foreground, her face in shadows and diagonally away from Motome. She faces the camera, looks at Kingo, who is offscreen on the floor, and leans down towards him. The pillars between them cut the frame into four discrete areas, placing them in separate frames as the characters face in opposite directions. Background open and closed _shoji_ further divide the screen. The space is shattered into dark and light squares and rectangles as the family unit itself is disintegrating. As Bosley Crowther has described it, Kobayashi "achieves a sort of visual mesmerization that is suitable to the curious nightmare mood. And he uses his actors like weird puppets in this tensely drawn mise-en-scène."[53]

Tsugumo is seen looking offscreen. Then the camera reveals the subject of his gaze and pans across the few remaining objects in the room, ending on an urn, which is shaded by the shadows of bamboo poles. It is one of the few times in the film that an object is singled out by a close-up. Robert Edmonds has observed that the widescreen "makes it almost impossible to remove the detail from its environment, simply because of the space to left and to right of center in the frame."[54] This object, an urn which presumably contains the ashes of Jinnai, is a reminder to Tsugumo that he is unable to provide for those entrusted to him by both his lord and his friend. The mother is unable to care for her son. Motome cannot support Miho and Kingo, and Tsugumo is helpless to fulfill his obligations to care for all of them. The Confucian duties related to the five key relationships, i.e., lord-subject, parent-child, husband-wife, old-young, friends, are delineated and frustrated.

Spatial Separation and Social Disintegration

Throughout the film, characters are formally arranged using the spaces between them and the architectural structures around them to emphasize the highly codified social mores which define their lives. In the sequence of shots recounting Chijiwa's departure and the return of his remains to his family, empty spaces and camera movement are used to suggest the finality of the separation, since all of them will die.

The sequence begins with a full shot of the screen divided into four portions, with a _fusuma_ on the far right and one on the left. A pillar divides the screen in the middle, Motome sits to the left of it in the background facing the left rear and reframed several times by the architecture around him. Tsugumo sits in the foreground to the right of the pillar facing the right rear. He also is reframed several times.

Shortly thereafter, Motome announces he will go to a money lender. Tsugumo agrees. The slightly high angle shot of his departure places Motome in the center of the frame as he walks away from the camera towards the light streaming in from the background. Tsugumo enters from the right foreground and crosses to the center midground as the camera also moves forward. As Motome disappears into the sunlight, Tsugumo calls after him "We depend on you, Motome." This shot is followed by a dissolve, one of the few in the film.

Later, when Miho and Tsugumo hear footsteps outside, Tsugumo moves towards the doorway. The composition repeats the earlier shot, this time with Miho in the foreground and Tsugumo in the middle, with the space Motome had occupied now filled only with light. There is another dissolve to suggest time passing, for time becomes most significant now. Again, Tsugumo sits on the edge of the raised platform where Motome had been and moves towards the doorway waiting for him to return. These repetitions depict the anxious emotions of those left behind.

The lighting and architecture have served to separate characters, suggesting complexity and confusion rather than the social, if rigid, stability of the Iye household. Finally, Tsugumo the narrator tells his audience, "Later that night, at the hour of the dog, Motome did come home, but not by himself. He was accompanied by a gallant escort of retainers."

Omodaka, Yazuki, and Kawabe, along with their servants, return the body. Omodaka, in a narration within Tsugumo's narration, retells the story of Motome's <u>seppuku</u> and berates him for conduct unbecoming a samurai. During this retelling of the events, the audience can witness the effects of Motome's death on those who were dependent upon him.

The scene begins with a high angle long shot of Tsugumo and Miho seated facing away from the camera at the bottom of the frame. Omodaka, Kawabe, Yazuki, and two servants form an arch facing the camera on the upper part of the screen. The covered body of Motome is lying on the floor between them. A true chiaroscuro lighting is used. leaving the edges of the frame in shadow. The cloth over Motome's head is the most brightly lighted area and the center of the characters' and the audience's attention. Omodaka in the middle of the three retainers recounts the events once again from the perspective of the Iye household, emphasizing the disgraceful behavior of this discredited samurai. An eye-level three-shot follows of Omodaka, Kawabe, and Yazuki.

Then the camera tilts down to a high angle shot of Motome's body, dollies right to a full two-shot of Tsugumo and Miho listening to Omodaka, and quickly pans right away from all of them to a shot of Kingo in the distance. He is in a lighted area in the background, which is framed into a square by the fusuma and shadows, which encompass this space. This shot is followed by a close-up of him sleeping with a cloth on his feverish brow. Omodaka's denunciations of Motome continue to be heard offscreen.

The movement of the camera from the accusatory social group to the father and daughter and then to Kingo continues the film's counterposing of the dictates of society and the needs of the individuals. The judgment against the man is undercut by the visualized motivation for his desperate act. Also, the camera assigns responsibility for the fate of Kingo, Miho, and Tsugumo to these particular individuals who took such an active role in killing Motome.

To have cut from the three men to the two-shot to Kingo would have been an intellectual statement. The moving camera is an emotional gesture as if the director were pointing in front of the audience: look here, now here, now there. What will become of these people? The movement also separates the body of Motome, Tsugumo and Miho, and Kingo within one large space to suggest once again the shattering of the family unit, which had previously been shown through compositional arrangement of characters within a shot.

Because of the lighting in this scene, background information becomes limited. Objects which communicate narrative and figurative information are now obscured and framing pillars and screens are less evident. The widescreen context is that of emptiness and loss.

After a series of shots emphasizing the callowness of the three retainers and Tsugumo's dawning realization of the horror which has taken place, there is once again a high angle shot of the group. Yazuki disdainfully drops the swords on Motome's body. Then Omodaka, Kawabe, Yazuki, and their attendants leave with a vertical movement in the upper, central portion of the screen.

As soon as they have gone, in a highly theatrical gesture, all but one light is extinguished, and Tsugumo, Miho, and the body of Motome remain only in key lighting surrounded by darkness. The light that had flooded in through the windows during Motome's departure has been put out, and with it hope. The breadth of the screen emphasizes the sense of void and the isolation of these characters.

Miho weeps over the body, then retreats to lie beside Kingo. Tsugumo seizes Motome's sword, withdraws it from its holder, and slams it shut again, a gesture he made with his own sword in reaffirming his commitment before Saito of going through with the <u>seppuku</u> ritual. He turns away from Motome's bamboo sword to his own steel one and weeps, saying "And still I never realized. Yet I never parted with mine. I would never have dared. In my ignorance I clung to these worthless symbols, useless tokens."

Tsugumo is then seen calmly recounting to the Iye assemblage that Kingo died and then "three days later, Miho also passed on following her child to the next world. Thus was Hanshiro Tsugumo left alone in this world, a lone and solitary figure." Behind him in this low angle, medium shot are strong, dynamic architectural lines, once again emphasizing his strength of purpose.

Throughout his story, Tsugumo interrupts the narrative to comment upon it, and Kobayashi, in a somewhat Brechtian manner, cuts back and forth between the emotionally involving flashbacks and the coolly rational courtyard setting in which the moral implications of the event are discussed.

Now the camera is placed again at a slightly high angle from behind Saito's chair. Saito is in the foreground, and Tsugumo faces him in the midground area. As before, this composition suggests the discomfort of Saito, who slowly paces back and forth. He would like to leave and have done with this man but is trapped by Tsugumo's cunning logic as he seeks to unsettle Saito's conscience. The shot lasts a full minute and forty-seven seconds, and the only movement in it is Saito's controlled pacing.

Tsugumo does not defend Motome's unseemly behavior. He does, however, condemn the Iye household for its overbearing and cynical response. "Even samurai cannot live on air," he tells them. "Put yourself in his place." In subsequent shots, the camera begins with Tsugumo, pans across the men seated stoically along the sides, and ends with Saito. The debate is between these two men who bear conflicting responsibilities, but the camera implicates all of them in the disregard for the individual on which their feudal structure is based.

Then Tsugumo plays his trump card. His carefully orchestrated scenario is close to its finale and he is ready to illustrate the point he has been so painstakingly developing. He cannot resist laughing with vengeful glee. Within the simple garments he insisted upon wearing, he has concealed the topknots of his adversaries.

Into the small lighted space which remains between Saito and him he tosses first the topknot of Kawabe then that of Yazuki. As he tells his audience, it is harder to cut off this samurai symbol than to slit someone's throat. His aim was to disgrace these men, not to murder them.

There is a high angle medium shot of Tsugumo with six background swords seeming to surround his head. His hair and garments start to move with a breeze as he begins to narrate his encounter with Yazuki. This wind links the past events with the present and suggests the whirlwind he is about to unleash.

Movement and Offscreen Space

Tsugumo's encounter with Yazuki takes place outside, although still within the Iye estate compound. The streets are dusty and, in the conventional manner of the samurai film, the wind swirls the sand around the characters as they walk. Tsugumo, his face hidden behind the brim of a wide-rimmed straw hat, stalks Yazuki from afar. Even though these are exterior locations, the sense of enclosure which dominates the rest of the film is maintained, since the widescreen encompasses the surrounding walls and buildings. Tsugumo and Yasuki are isolated figures in a maze-like setting.

The streets they traverse are seen either as alleys, diagonally stretching across the screen from left rear to right front, or as perspectival corridors with the characters moving always towards the camera, which usually dollies along with them. The streets are reduced to a series of empty, uncluttered, and mostly diagonal lines through which these characters pass. Distance is implied by placing them at extreme corners of the frame.

These long shots are counterposed with medium and close shots, particularly of Yazuki. When first he realizes he is being followed, he displays his signature grin. Although he postures and struts, a close-up reveals him sweating and with a nervous eye twitch. The pursuing Tsugumo is seen as a shadow moving relentlessly along the ground, identifiable by the outline of his straw hat and the tip of his sword cast diagonally across the screen. The camera dollies along with this phantom image.

Kobayashi has moved clearly into the samurai genre for this scene and is creating variations on conventions. Part of the enjoyment stems from his use of offscreen space. Once it is established that Tsugumo is following Yazuki, the camera stops with Yazuki, who makes an incorrect assumption about where Tsugumo is located in that offscreen space. His only clues are footsteps and shadows. When he does rather wildly lunge to attack, it is in the wrong direction. His ineptness and lack of fighting experience are immediately evident vis-a-vis Tsugumo's disciplined presence. The editing gradually accelerates to very fast cutting as the scene ends.

However, deviating sharply from the genre expectations, Kobayashi cuts from a shot of Yazuki rushing forward towards Tsugumo to a low angle medium shot of Tsugumo the narrator dryly commenting that "Honorable

Yazuki was disposed of." It was such an easy matter, it is hardly worth recounting and, therefore, is not shown.

The story of Kawabe's undoing begins with a low angle shot of a gate guardian statue and a sharp percussive sound. Another warrior statue is seen, and then we watch the fight in progress between Tsugumo and Kawabe. The action takes up where it abruptly ended in the previous story. Kawabe is hyperventilating and obviously not representative of the ideal personified by the fierce statues. Diagonal movements and background forms are prominent, dust blows around them, and their clashing swords can be heard.

They move diagonally in and out of the frame and among the large columns of the edifice. Even the widescreen seems unable to contain the energy of the struggle. This asymmetrical movement in and out of the frame, along with a more quickly paced editing than is generally used in this film, creates a dynamism which culminates in the close-up of Tsugumo pinning Kawabe on the ground and cutting off his topknot. The difficulty of this maneuver becomes clear as Tsugumo subdues the terrified Kawabe by sitting on him, turning his head with one hand, and cutting with the <u>wakisashi</u> in his other hand. The topknot, the focus of attention, is contained within a triangle created by the corner of the left frame and the diagonal knife. Again the suggestion is that it was hypocritical of this pathetic man to sit in judgment on Motome.

There is an eye-level full shot of Tsugumo in the center of the frame facing offscreen right with men seated behind him. The wind begins to blow his garments and the camera slowly dollies back and away from him to include two other men seated in the left foreground. The flashback story of Omodaka begins. The encounter with Omodaka and the battle with the Iye clan retainers are the events which have been awaited throughout. These climactic scenes have determined the pace and tone of what has gone before. According to Kobayashi, "It is the climax which guides me in developing a film. Then I think of atmosphere, ambiance, decor, scenery."[55] The sense of place flows from the psychological experiences of the characters--especially Tsugumo--which are directed toward the inevitable moment of conflict.

Omodaka is Tsugumo's primary adversary. He is what Tsugumo might have been without adversity, i.e., a righteous upholder of the <u>bushido</u> code. They already have been linked by the dynamic architectural background used in shot compositions in the Iye courtyard when

Omodaka served as second to Chijiwa and in medium shots of Tsugumo as narrator. Now, Omodaka will be seen as a shadow wearing a straw hat and initiating combat, as Tsugumo had been seen when stalking Yazuki.

At first they are placed in formally structured compositions in which framing, atmosphere, and objects add dimension to the encounter. The scene begins with a shot of _shoji_ screens framed by wide, dark areas. The center screen is the widest; the one on the right makes a small band by the frame and has the silhouette of tree bows from outside cast upon it. The one on the left is dark against the left frame, and the wider center area shows the framed silhouette of Omodaka with a straw hat and some tree leaves to the right of him. The sound of the wind is heard and the silhouetted leaves quiver.

The camera pans to the left across the walls of the room to disclose Tsugumo in medium shot, seemingly asleep in the lower center of the frame, his body angled to the left. Some lighted, folded umbrellas are resting vertically against the wall on the left. A window makes a rectangle of light in the upper center to right portion of the frame, and the spokes of an umbrella form a round pattern in the right of center with the umbrella handle extending diagonally from upper center to lower right.

Tsugumo is alone with the suggestive remnants of his reduced status. The round umbrella evokes Miho and the rejected promise of security from the landlord-emissary.

There is a cut back to a view of Omodaka's silhouette, but the camera is at an angle to the right side, so more of the wall at the left is seen. As the door slides to the left, erasing the shadow, the dark figure of Omodaka appears to the right and closer than the shadow was. For an instant, both man and shadow are visible. This is the spector of Tsugumo's former self which, like all shades, must be vanquished.

This shot is followed by a medium, low angle shot of Tsugumo in the left of center side of the frame with the umbrella spokes filling the entire foreground and partially blocking out the rectangular window in the upper center to right side. Tsugumo slowly looks up and off to the right. He has been found in a vulnerable situation. There is a cut to a full shot, and the screen is divided into thirds. Tsugumo is closest to the camera against the left frame and facing towards the right rear. Omodaka is against the right frame, angled toward Tsugumo, with his face shaded by his hat. The center of the frame is filled with the spokes of the parasol.

As Omodaka calmly gives voice to their thoughts about the unfeasibility of combat in this enclosed space, there are medium and close shots. In one of these, Omodaka is seen underneath the lighted brim of his hat, which cuts across the entire top border of the frame, predating Sergio Leone's hallmark sombrero close-ups. Finally, there is a full two-shot of them with Tsugumo on the left, Omodaka in the right of center in shadows, and the umbrella out of focus and hardly visible in front of and to the right side of Tsugumo. The light makes moving shadows in the upper left of center portion as they speak.

The architectural framing of the characters has emphasized their self-control and attention before combat. The moving shadows and silhouette have set an ominous tone. Within this context, their positioning in separate quadrants of the screen suggests the still formal nature of this visitation of Tsugumo by the phantasmal apparition of Omodaka.

Nature as Context

With each of these three confrontations, Tsugumo moves farther away from the social structure and settings towards the one-on-one moment of truth. Omodaka is the top swordsman of the Iye clan and, through this encounter, Tsugumo will illustrate his argument: they require of others what they cannot do themselves.

As Omodaka and Tsugumo journey to the plain of Goyu-In, Kobayashi for the first time removes the characters from enclosing buildings, courtyards, and streets to a purely natural location. Yet, as is typical in all his films, nature for Kobayashi becomes a finely-honed abstraction of line and movement. The frame is more open, but the images remain austere. Precedents for these film images can be found in traditional Japanese landscape paintings. As Alain Silver has described it,

> The pen-and-ink simplicity of terrain, a fondness for mists, and line drawings which emphasize the interfacing of earth, sky, and sea are other qualities of traditional Japanese landscapes which often find equivalents in film images.[56]

In a high angle shot, Omodaka and Tsugumo are seen walking along a graveyard path, which cuts diagonally across the screen. Amidst a maze of monuments, crowded together on both sides of the pathway, Tsugumo is in the upper left of center and Omodaka is in the lower right of center. The camera dollies to the right as they walk. A barren tree trunk passes right to left in the foreground, the branches of which create a set of triangles as the camera moves by. There is a sense of background depth with many graves in the distance.

In the next shot, the camera tracks ahead of them from a high angle as they walk almost parallel to one another, stirring up the dust around them. Because of the lighting, they are like shadows against a brightly-lit background. Then they are seen walking away from the camera on a curved path through a bamboo grove. The camera dollies in behind them through the trees, which are swaying in the wind. As they walk towards an archway formed by the trees at the far end of the path, the lighting recalls the doorway through which Motome passed upon leaving his home for the last time.

Then there is a tracking shot from in front of them with Omodaka in the foreground, walking briskly towards left of center in light colored clothing, and Tsugumo, a dark figure in the lower right background, following him. It is sunrise and the diffused lighting is soft and impressionistic. The mythic quality of these iconic characters is evoked as they journey to the ritual sword fight. They represent all warriors preparing to test their skills as they seem to glide through a netherworld of graves and morning mist. The widescreen, mobile camera, and sense of depth allow the spaces through which they pass to comment upon the nature of this journey and provide epic proportions befitting the timeless reenactment of the duel ahead. It is a visual _michiyuki_, in which the places through which they pass on their way to death are pointed out, if not specifically named.[57]

The music which has accompanied their perambulation subsides and is replaced by the sound of a wind which can only be described as howling. Kobayashi had gone to considerable trouble in moving his crew to a mountaintop plateau famous for its year-round, continuous high winds. As fate would have it, the winds subsided on the day they set up and, while they waited with nothing else to do, the weather remained calm for a week.[58]

Real swords, carried by the actors throughout the film, were also used in the fighting scenes, resulting in several of the actors being injured. By carrying the two heavy samurai swords and their accoutrements, the actors were required to use hip as well as arm movement in order to maneuver them and they naturally fell into the more deliberate steps of the samurai warrior.[59]

The stylized duel between Tsugumo and Omodaka takes place among wind-blown grasses against a stark, open landscape. On the hillside behind the two characters are the silhouettes of grave markers.

The sequence begins with a high angle shot of tall grasses cutting diagonally across the screen on the bottom border of a path, which the legs and feet of Omodaka traverse from lower right to upper center and then offscreen. Once again, the part is used to suggest the unseen whole. Omodaka is followed by Tsugumo, and, as he passes, the camera tilts up to show Omodaka and Tsugumo ascending a hill. They are right of center. The hill cuts diagonally across the center horizon from lower left of center to upper right of center. There are seven vertical monuments silhouetted on the upper part of the hill and three on the lower part. Tsugumo and Omodaka, like monuments, are also profiled against the empty sky in the center. The camera tilts down slightly, then cranes up as they step into an open field, and the horizontal line of a plateau in the distance cuts across the left side of the frame.

There is a low angle shot with the tall, swaying grasses in the foreground filling the lower half of the frame laterally and monuments in three groups cast against a now cloud-streaked sky. The stark, open space for the encounter is established.

A high angle shot of the grass fills the screen. The camera pans right to left above it as the grass blows vigorously left to right. As Tsugumo will later narrate, sensitivity to nature and the ability to use this wind direction to advantage will help determine the winner. Fifteen shots later, while the fight is in progress, the camera will once again pan across the grass, but this time from left to right, indicating the necessity of being attuned to the natural flow of the wind. This segment between shots of the grass lasts one minute and fifty-eight seconds. In comparison with much of the rest of the film, the editing seems rapid, although only fifteen shots are used. A bird's-eye shot follows. Omodaka is placed in the lower left and Tsugumo in the upper right as Omodaka walks diagonally towards Tsugumo.

> The way in which the combatants face off against each other, hardly moving for long moments, is a near-perfect expression of the concept that a fight is won before the sword has left the scabbard--physical action is superseded by mental conflict."[60]

The dynamism of diagonal lines is emphasized throughout in the line of the sloping land behind them, a sword slanted across the frame, the placement of characters in opposite corners of the screen, and in the frequent use of oblique angles. A particularly dramatic instance of the diagonal line comes during a series of shots in which Omodaka is advancing on Tsugumo and is suddenly taken aback by the sight of his fierce demeanor as Tsugumo approaches.

An oblique angle is used, and Tsugumo is seen in a medium full shot in the center of the screen with the horizon cutting a diagonal from the lower left to the upper right corner. The camera moves slightly closer as Tsugumo extends his arm so that the sword reaches horizontally across and beyond the screen frame on the left. He then raises the sword into a diagonal line with the tip touching the upper left corner. This diagonal is completed by the downward line of his other arm towards the lower right corner. The background diagonal, the line of his arms and sword, and the oblique angle combine to suggest an invincible warrior. This shot would be possible nowhere else but on a widescreen.

Shortly thereafter, these lines are modified into another powerful shot of Tsugumo advancing. He is seen in an oblique, low angle shot against the bright background clouds. His arms and sword are extended horizontally across the screen. Then he draws his arms together in front of him and crosses them in a martial arts position of courage as if to condense within himself the energy of the larger intersecting diagonals. Any gross gestures of the <u>chambara</u> genre are avoided here. As Richard Tucker has remarked, "by creating the exact style of the fighting masters he elevates the action of the film to an artistic ritual."[61]

In the midst of the action, the camera returns to the Iye courtyard. This time the camera dollies in toward Tsugumo, rather than away from him as the last time. The wind is blowing everyone's garments and Tsugumo looks especially fierce. Then there are four concluding oblique angle shots of the duel, which ends with Tsugumo's strong movement forward towards the camera--and, by implication, towards Omodaka--as the camera zooms towards him.

The next shot is a very quick zoom from a medium to a close-up shot of Saito's face. There is a cut to a slight high angle full shot of Tsugumo seated in the courtyard, angled toward the right, with some of the seated figures in the background aligned diagonally across the screen. The camera dollies back and away from him as he points out that this was his first fight in eighteen years. The warriors of the house of Iye placed a high value on ritual and codes of honor, yet had never before been tested in battle. Tsugumo, before the fall of the Geshu clan, had proved himself as a samurai "in deed as well as in name."[62]

The wind continues to blow his garments as he pulls the third topknot from within his clothing and throws it into the small lighted area in front of him with the other two topknots. This lighted area is all that is left of the light which at first surrounded him. Time has passed and the tale is almost over. The camera pans away from him across those seated at the side. These men one by one place their hands on their sword hilts. Tsugumo laughs mockingly. There is a close-up of Tsugumo, then one of Saito, followed by a high angle shot from behind Saito on the platform. Tsugumo on his white pallet is off center left in the midground and others are seated around the edges. "You boast of tradition and honor, but even the house of Iye has a false front," he tells them. He laughs loudly and Saito rises.

There is cutting-on-action to a reverse angle shot of Saito in a low angle, medium shot, with the ceiling beams behind his head. He walks forward, angrily gives orders to do away with Tsugumo, then turns and leaves. The real threat Tsugumo poses to the Iye clan is summarized by Blake Lucas:

> The ultimate irony of the film is that Tsugumo wins the viewer's admiration partly because of his embodiment of the values that the film shows to be bankrupt. Unlike any other character in the film, he is a true samurai--courageous, serene, and true to his inner self. By contrast, the Iye retainers are only loyal to a tradition whose significance is for them an abstraction.[63]

The Static and the Dynamic

The balancing interplay between movement and stasis, so integral to martial arts training, is aesthetically employed throughout the film, but most especially in the final sequence. Here,the static shots serve as a brake, a restraining force against the total outburst of vengeful emotion and action towards which the film has been building.

There is a bird's-eye shot from the corner of the courtyard roof, as in the opening montage when the space was empty. Tsugumo is placed in the lower center portion of the frame. The gabled roof creates a triangle on the right from the inner edge of the right third to the top right corner. All the men seated in the courtyard rise and move to draw their swords. Those seated on the portico also rise at the same time and exit by various doors behind them.

There is a cut to an eye-level, medium shot of Tsugumo still seated and angled to face right of center. The screen is divided into thirds in that a group of men are on the left, another off center right, and Tsugumo is in the center with the upper parts of the wall architecture framing them all. The men shift positions behind him so that there are three on either side.

Now begins a rhythm of restraint and release, of suspenseful, poised stillness followed by rapid action, which is used throughout the sequence. It begins with a rooftop shot, only this time from the diagonally opposite corner, so that Tsugumo is in the center of the frame on his white square, and the screen is reframed by the rooftops to the right and lower left, giving the effect of an oblique angle. The shot is held for fifteen seconds and then the camera zooms in as the men draw their swords. One of them attacks from the upper right behind Tsugumo. There is a fast zoom in to Tsugumo reacting in time to evade the thrust. The assailant yells as he moves forward.

There is a shot of the lower part of this man's body on the left, while the white pallet fills most of the screen and cuts diagonally from lower left of center to upper right of center. The escaping knees of Tsugumo are seen in the upper right and the spear makes a diagonal line across the center from upper left to lower far right at an angle with the side of the pallet.

This very quick shot is followed by a long shot of the corridor adjacent to the room into which Saito had exited. The camera dollies into the room where Saito stands in the distance in shadows and an attendant sits facing him in the background to the far left. Music is heard in this shot as well as the yells and sword clashes offscreen. There are a series of pillars giving a sense of depth. Saito walks toward the left, from which direction the sound comes, then forward. There is a cut to a low angle, close-up, oblique angle shot of Saito as he walks.

The sequence from Saito's command to kill Tsugumo to the actual shot of muskets being fired consists of fifty-two shots and lasts seven minutes and twenty-five seconds. It is once again structured on the juxtaposition of the static and the dynamic. The fighting scenes, filmed with fluid camera movements and fast-paced editing, are counterposed with shots of Saito quietly awaiting the results of the conflict going on outside of his room. Like the _waki_ in the theatre, his function is to balance the activity by remaining perfectly still. Saito is shown seated in a large, empty room as fighting is heard offscreen. The frame is open and unencumbered. The camera may slowly move around him, but he remains motionless. Yet sound imposes itself on this serene order. As Noël Burch has noted,

> when sound alone is involved, either as background noise, music, or an off-screen voice coming from an undetermined direction, it brings the surrounding space as a whole into play....Even when there is no indication of the direction a sound is coming

> from...we are able to tell approximately how far away it is, and this distance factor provides yet another parameter.[64]

The scenes of fighting were carefully diagrammed and planned in every detail, requiring many days to shoot.[65] The movement of the characters flows across the screen, often accompanied by camera movement. Though choreographic in its grace and fluidity, the scenes are entirely believable. There are also moments of rapid editing and close-ups as Tsugumo evades his adversaries. He even resorts to throwing sand in their faces when he is briefly without a weapon, and he is seen ducking spears thrown at him.

For the most part, however, the full or long shot is employed, and the screen is filled with men rushing into view, at various times, from all six offscreen directions in order to block Tsugumo's escape. The widescreen is crowded with men, emphasizing the impossibility of victory by one man over so many aligned against him. When he manages to break through on several occasions, the others sweep across the screen after him, usually in a horizontal movement. As he evades one group, another laterally-arranged group appears in front of or behind him. The bodies of these men, along with the architectural forms, serve to enclose him many times within the frame.

Metaphorically speaking, one could say that the frame itself seems to be a source of oppression. Tsugumo is trapped within it by the enclosing compositional forms. Yet when he breaks through to escape from the confines of the space, he finds himself once again enclosed within similar constraining forms in the subsequent shot.

He penetrates the house, dispensing with collapsible wall partitions as he charges ahead. Finally, wounded and exhausted, he finds himself before the clan effigy. Music is heard under a medium shot of the lower part of the effigy armor. The camera quickly tilts up the armor and zooms in on the helmet in a select focus close-up.

There is a cut to a tight close-up of Tsugumo framed simply by two wall pillars. He moves forward towards the right of the screen. There is a cut to a high angle full shot from behind and to screen left of the effigy, which occupies the right side of the frame. This shot is reminiscent of the one in which Saito came before the effigy when Chijiwa was about to die. Tsugumo fights with one man in particular while four others stand around them in the background extending their swords.

There is a cut to a medium shot of Tsugumo and this man in the center. The man has his back to the camera and we see Tsugumo's sword pierce him. The effigy fills the right third of the screen in the background and is well-lighted. A screened window is on the left. Tsugumo pushes the sword and the man offscreen and lunges forward, panting with the effort, towards the effigy as the camera dollies forward slightly and tilts down a bit.

There is a cut to a medium shot of Tsugumo at the lap of the effigy with his arm stretched up and to the right, grasping the armor. The camera tilts up as he lifts himself up to the armor, then falls down to grasp the weapon on the floor next to it. There is a quick insert shot of his hand doing this.

Then there is a cut to a long shot from behind of some of the men advancing towards him. There are men lined up on either side of the frame with their backs to the camera. The camera dollies forward slightly as Tsugumo carries the effigy off the platform and to the right, leaning on his sword. He is wheezing and music comes in. Two men dash from right to left across the screen as he moves farther back in the opposite direction and stops alone with the effigy in front of the ornate window. An offscreen voice gives an order, and there is a cut to the men lined up in horizontal rows facing him. They back away from the camera and move to the sides as the camera backs away from them to show Tsugumo on the left of the center and the long perspectival space before him, into which four men hasten. A two-shot follows with Tsugumo in the center, the effigy filling the right side, and vertical screen slats on the left behind Tsugumo.

Then, three men with rifles are seen in full shot as they simultaneously squat, each one occupying a third of the screen and pointing a musket offscreen left of center. There is a cut back to the close-up of Tsugumo and the effigy. As Tsugumo raises it, there is a reverse angle long shot from behind the three men with guns as Tsugumo in the background smashes the effigy to the ground. Men are seen in shadows on either side and the three men in the foreground are also in shadows. Tsugumo is the center of all lines and is framed as if on a stage with the window as a backdrop and the seemingly raked floor between him and the gunmen lighted. As he throws the effigy to the ground, the men on the side, who are all facing in his direction, react.

Then there is a cut to a medium full shot of Tsugumo in front of the window performing <u>seppuku</u> as he had promised to do and using the sword previously mounted behind the effigy. The camera zooms in closer to him as he falls to his knees. The lighting changes so that the key is from the left and the area behind the screen window is lighted. There is a very quick shot from a high angle of the barrels of two guns being fired and the bodies of two men from neck to hips in the center to right part of the screen. The left side shows the smoke which is emitted. When asked why, after all he had gone through to expose the falseness of the samurai tradition, which cloaked self-interest and cruelty, Tsugumo still commits the seppuku ritual himself, Kobayashi replied "He was, after all, a samurai."[66] The Bushido code provided the formative structures for Tsugumo's character and, as a samurai, his word was sacred. Also, he had nothing left for which to live.

Two messengers rush to Saito to announce the death of Tsugumo. The other casualties are four dead, eight injured. As they hasten away, Tango returns to report that Omodaka has committed seppuku. Saito sends him back to Kawabe and Yazuki with an order that they should do the same. Then Saito proceeds to dictate the historical account of the day's events as they will appear in the official log book. Illness and seppuku account for the deaths of his men. As his voice-over recounts that Hanshiro Tsugumo was granted permission to commit seppuku and that the House of Iye was commended for its wise handling of the affair, shots of the courtyard and household being cleaned and reordered are shown.

The courtyard platform is seen with the family crest in the center of the screen framed twice, once by the framing construction of the space itself and then by the foreground walls, since the symbol is set back. Significantly, it is night, for the truth will be suppressed, and there are burning baskets in the foreground on either side. The only other night scenes were for the return of Chijiwa's body and during the pre-dawn encounter between Omodaka and Tsugumo. Music is heard. There is a cut to the family crest with blood stains on it and with the light of the offscreen fires throwing many patterns of shadows across it. The crackling of the fire can be heard.

This is followed by a shot to the slatted wall with the spears still stuck in it. In a spatial summary of the preceding events, which singles out significant artifacts, the camera dollies back and tilts down as it moves across topknots, a sword, and other articles until it comes to the ritual pallet with bloodstains on it and a spear stuck in the middle. Light flickers over all of this as the camera moves from right to left. The pallet assumes a diamond shape in relation to the screen, and the foot of a servant enters from the upper left as he pulls out the spear. When he steps offscreen, he also pulls the white sheet with him.

There is a cut to a high angle of Saito in the center of the screen with his back to the camera facing an altar at the opposite end. It is a perfectly symmetrical shot again; order has been restored. However, Saito is still seen in shadows and from a high angle. The screen has three horizontal planes and three vertical ones.

The fallen armor is then seen in chiaroscuro lighting from a high angle. In close-up, the camera dollies across these disassembled parts as they lie on the bloodstained tatami. The shot ends on the white helmet hair. There is a cut to another shot of this hair. Two hands reach in and lift it. Then the camera rises up and the hair fills the screen. The servant pulls it out of view to the left, revealing the background shoji windows in front of which Tsugumo died. They are splattered with blood, and the camera tilts up to the top of the window frame. The glow of fire outside makes patterns across them.

There is a tight close-up of Saito's face lit only along the sides of his head and the bottom third of the frame. It recalls the way the effigy was lighted and immortalizes Saito in a similar fashion. The shot is from his eyebrows to his lower lip and lasts thirteen seconds. Then there is a shot of him again before the altar. The camera is in a bit closer at eye level behind him and there are candles in the background on either side of his head. The camera dollies in behind him to a perfectly symmetrical medium shot. The dolly is like those used for Tsugumo, but now the inner truth is perverted as Saito's voice-over recites the offical account of the events. In the end, the clan will control its own version of recorded history.

There is a cut to a high angle long shot of two servants in the courtyard cleaning up. They are in the center of the frame, and each one lifts up one of the <u>tatami</u> and moves away from the camera to the upper left of center. The camera moves back to reveal a burning basket on the right. Two other servants enter and begin to rake the ground. All of the servants are in shadows throughout.

This image is followed by a floor-level shot of the servants as they rake. One is close to the camera in the foreground moving from left to right, and the other is in the background moving from right to left. The one is the foreground exits. The one in the left background hesitates, then bends down to pick up a topknot. He walks laterally across the screen to the right holding the topknot in front of him. The family symbol is in the background to the right.

There is a cut to two cleaning buckets. The legs of the servant are seen entering from the left and his hand drops the ignoble topknot, now refuse, into the bucket. Other cleaning paraphernalia are behind the bucket to the left of center. The servant goes out the left.

There is a dissolve to the empty courtyard again indicating that time has passed. The family wall crest is lighted and off center to the right in the background. The baskets of fire, hung against the now dark walls on either side of the symbol, are dimmer and the flames evoke the image of departed spirits. The idea of a flame as a soul is a familiar one in Japanese painting. Kobayashi uses this image to depict the ghosts of the Minomoto family in the "Hoichi the Earless" episode of Kwaidan.

In a reversal of the opening sequence of shots, a dissolve reveals the open log book in the center of the frame, filling all but a quarter on either side. The film is returned to its larger historical context, and we are told that the house of Iye will prosper throughout the ages. A hand closes the book from right to left and the camera adjusts slightly to keep the book in the center. In Audie Bock's words, the daily record book of the clan "represents the lies of recorded history."[67]

There is a cut to a medium shot of the restored effigy framed by the background wall design. The camera dollies back to a full shot. Then there is a close-up of the "face" with lighted smoke rising up in front of it on the left. This shot is followed by a fade out. "The initial awe inspired by the camera treatment, mist effects, and music in the beginning is totally overturned in the end."[68]

Set in the samurai era of the _chambara_ genre, _Seppuku_ is about the ritual expression of that highly-codified world. The cruelty masked by elegant forms is revealed as the narrative slowly unwinds, and the tension between _giri_ and _ninjo_ guides the dramatic action to its climax.

Favoring lean, austere compositions, Kobayashi divides the screen into discrete areas and uses the geometric forms of the architecture to enclose and separate his characters from one another. Just as there are stories within stories, there are frames within frames. Within the widescreen format, formal distances between characters can be maintained while, at the same time, the architectural enclosure of individuals can suggest how tightly-controlled the society is and how few options are available to the individual.

The relationship between the individual and his setting is central to this film. The historical context is clearly delineated and the spaces the characters will occupy are shown first as empty rooms. Time will pass, individuals will interact and die, but the spaces will endure. Ultimately, this film is about the interaction of time and space. Just as the images of the _emakimono_ are fixed yet are given life by the viewer's act of unrolling the scroll, so too in the film, space becomes the stable context for people and objects, the static mode. It is given three-dimensional depth through architectural arrangements and through the movement of characters and camera. Dynamism is provided by the temporal forces of movement and montage, which penetrate and alter the serene spaces. Like a Noh play, the film is structured according to patterns of tension and release, contraction and expansion.

Through the counterposing of the static and the dynamic, movement and stillness, _Seppuku_ embodies key concepts of Buddhism which, in turn, characterize both the Noh aesthetic and the _Bushido_ code of the samurai. At the intersection of time and space, the perfect balance between the active and the passive, the _yin_ and the yang creates the possibility for realizing the Buddhist ideal of spiritual equilibrium and enlightenment. These philosophic and aesthetic ideals manifest themselves within the dramatic structure of Seppuku and, in the narrative, are invoked by Kobayashi, who argues for balance between the needs of the individual and those of the social group. Seppuku is a uniquely Japanese film whose themes transcend culture to comment upon the universal human condition.

ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST

Background

Once Upon a Time in the West (C'era una Volta il West, 1968) is a Western in the Italian style, an American genre film with a European sensibility. Its director, Sergio Leone, was born in 1929 in Naples and was raised by a mother who was an actress and a father who directed over a hundred films, the first in 1905. Leone came under the polar influences of the post-War Neo-Realists--he worked with Vittorio de Sica, among others, and even had a bit part in Bicycle Thieves (1948)--and those American filmmakers who used Cinecittá studios for their epics during the 1950s. It was quipped at the time that "a Dino de Laurentiis Production is a Hollywood team on location in Rome."[1]

Leone worked as an assistant on fifty-eight films, including the Sign of the Gladiator (Nel segno di Roma, 1958) and The Last Days of Pompeii (Gli ultimi giorni di Pompei, 1959), and with Hollywood directors such as Aldrich, Walsh, Wise, Wyler, and Zinnemann. In 1960, he directed The Colossus of Rhodes followed by

Sodom and Gomorrah in 1962. Then he embarked upon the trilogy of Westerns starring Clint Eastwood that would make him internationally famous. In 1964, under the pseudonym Bob Robertson--his father worked as Roberto Roberti--he directed A Fistful of Dollars (Per un pugno di dollari), an adaptation of Kurosawa's Yojimbo (1961). It was followed the next year by For a Few Dollars More (Per qualche dollaro in piú) and then The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly (Il Buono, il brutto, il cattivo, 1966).

Since all three films were internationally successful and lucrative ventures, the American studios began courting him. He chose Paramount over United Artists for his next project because, among other reasons, Paramount afforded him access to Henry Fonda. Once Upon a Time in the West has been referred to as "the climactic expression of romanticism in the Italian Western vision,"[2] and it is generally thought to be Leone's best film. Nonetheless, it did poorly at the box office and diminished his opportunities for further United States co-productions. Duck, You Sucker or A Fistful of Dynamite (Giu la testa, 1971), his next endeavor, was produced by his own newly-founded company, Rafran Cinematografica. On his following three films--My Name is Nobody (Il mio nome è nessuno, 1973), A Genius (Un Genio, due compari è un pollo, 1975), and The Cat (Il Gatto, 1978)--he functioned as production supervisor on behalf of Rafran. In 1979, he began work on his forty-million-dollar gangster film, Once Upon a Time in America. It was released in 1984 by the Ladd Company, which cut it from nearly four hours to under two and a half and significantly reedited it.

Leone's best-received works have been his Westerns. As part of a phenomenon which lasted for about ten years, hundreds of so-called spaghetti westerns were produced at Cinecittá. The intention of the Italian film industry was "to make epic films of commercial mass appeal full of humour and healthy irreverence for the actual genre itself."[3] In the year before Leone began A Fistful of Dollars, twenty-five were shot, prompting Stuart Kaminsky to suggest that "the 'stylistics' attributed to him are not unique; they are generic."[4] His work, therefore, was part of an already thriving genre with its own tone and set of conventions, in which, in Richard Jameson's words, the familiar was to be made "fresh, new, and neurotically contemporary."[5] These films used the landscapes and icons of the American westerns but were more mannered and violent than their models. As Christopher Frayling has expressed it, they are characterized by an "obsession with style, ritual or external gesture--with Latin machismo, rather than American toughness."[6] Taking the comparison a bit further, Pauline Kael commented that spaghetti westerns

> eliminated the morality play dimension and turned the Western into pure violent reverie. Apart from their aesthetic qualities (and they did have some) what made these Italian-produced Westerns popular was that they stripped the Western form of its cultural burden of morality. They discarded its civility along with its hypocrisy. In a sense they liberated the form; what the Western hero stood for was left out and what he embodied (strength and gun power) was retained."[7]

In some ways, these films are also an extension of the popular "Sword and Sandal" epics which preceded them at Cinecittá and generally featured mythic super-heroes, like Hercules, Maciste, Ursus, or Samson, engaged in awesome deeds.

The fascination with grandeur and spectacle was a significant characteristic of Italian cinema even during the silent era.

> No country was more responsible for the rapid rise of the feature film than Italy, whose lavishly produced costume spectacles brought its cinema to international prominence in the years immediately preceding World War I.[8]

With huge three-dimensional sets, casts of thousands, and lavish realistic effects, films like Quo vadis? (1912) and Cabiria (1914) rewrote history and inspired Cecil B.

De Mille and D. W. Griffith in their monumental endeavors.

This inclination towards epics on the grand scale is reflected also in the history of Italian theatre from the ampitheatres of Imperial Rome to the opera productions of the nineteenth century. One of the outstanding contributions of the Italian theatre has been its attention to the visual aspects of production. During the Renaissance and the Baroque eras, Italy provided Europe with its best set designers and the machinery for elaborate effects within the illusionistic proscenium stage frame. According to George Kernodle, "every single designer for the early perspective stage was trained in painting and was primarily a painter or architect who looked on stage designing merely as a special application of his skills."[9]

The Italian Renaissance stage was inspired by, but not at all like, the Greek or Roman theatre. It was instead a huge painting whose human characters had become animate. Its playwrights looked to Classical myths and legends for inspiration. The literary drama, under the influences from the visual arts, gave way to the theatre of spectacle. In England, where the proscenium stage was slow in taking hold, the robust literary forms prevailed. The Italianate stage directed attention away from the text and the actor and toward the splendid scenery, of which the costumed performer was but a part. This preoccupation with visual extravagance was eventually absorbed into opera, which came to dominate Italian theatrical life.

For a variety of reasons, Leone's films have been compared to operas. "From the bel canto era onward, Italian opera emphasized the moment rather than the flow, the scene rather than the story."[10] Certainly Once Upon a Time in the West is comprised of a series of loosely linked encounters between its characters, who are never pressured by time or space. Leone's stories have a larger than life quality, accentuated by the 'Scope screen. "Verdi and Boito recognized that with the sheer width and depth of stage spectacle must come a simplification of story and character."[11]

Robert Cumbow summarizes the connections between Leone's films and opera by pointing out that

> Leone's stories are the classically-based tales of destiny, revenge, betrayal, obsession, and madness that sprang from the Attic stage to form the basis first of Italian Renaissance poetry and eventually of Italian opera. Beneath the surface, Leone's stories are all twice-told tales; hence the sense of fate, of a predestined outcome.[12]

Ennio Morricone, Leone's long-time collaborator, created leitmotifs for key characters. So integral was Morricone's music to Once Upon a Time in the West that the director had the music prepared beforehand in order that he could have it played on the set while shooting.[13] Also, Leone's actors are given to posturing and posing in a way that led Jameson to remark that in Leone's films, "arias are not sung but stared."[14] In Vivian Sobchack's words, Once Upon a Time in the West

> contains so many elements of the Western, heaped one upon the other--the mail-order bride, the fight over water rights, the coming of the railroad, sinister bankers and corporate officials, and obsessive revenge--that the effect is close to opera. Playing against his usual stereotype of the earnest lawman in this film, Henry Fonda portrays the wickedest, most ruthless hired killer ever imagined.[15]

Leone's "operas" are visually uncluttered yet nonetheless splendid. His is a spectacle of spaces. In a burst of enthusiasm, Jameson compared the film with Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey. "Once Upon a Time in the West is one of the two great visionary/mystical films of the Sixties: one looking to the future, the other to the past."[16] Like Kubrick, Leone favors deep focus, wide-angle shots, and, in the Italian tradition, he seems quite comfortable working with massive proportions. The Techniscope process which he used allowed for an image that was clearer and sharper than anamorphic processes of the time tended to be, and it substantially increased the depth of field.[17]

Instead of turning to antiquity, as in the "Sword and

Sandal" films, Leone looked to the American frontier for his Western series. What he resurrected was a mythic rather than an historic place. This is not to imply that his films were not historically researched. On the contrary, he diligently studied the history of the Old West.[18] But what he extracted from a particular historical era was "a mythical American West much like Homer's mythical Greece but for the cowboy garb, guns, holsters, nooses and lingo."[19] As described by Danny Perry,

> During this violent, timeless period, which might well have extended from biblical times to the 1850s, several warriors were blessed with divine powers to help them in their never-ending combat....These warriors were like Hercules, the protagonist of several popular Italian-made epics: supermen who lived among mortals. However most of these men were probably killed off by one another or while performing dangerous tasks for their godly benefactors.[20]

Once Upon a Time in the West is as much about Westerns as it is about the West. The original screenplay was written by Bernardo Bertolucci and is replete with references to specific films from the American genre. Yet Once Upon a Time is romantic and overstated rather than naturalistic and action-oriented. Whereas John Ford admired the Remington style of painting and studied the frontier paintings and illustrations of Charles M. Russell for his compositions, Leone invoked their distant predecessors, Rembrandt and Goya.[21] "I showed the cameraman, Tonino Delli Colli, a series of Rembrandt prints. I was after that monochrome colour."[22]

Leone developed some definite stylistic characteristics in creating his Techniscope Westerns. The most unusual component is his alternation of tight close-ups and extreme long-shots in a kind of expansion and contraction of vision. In his close-ups, he brings an image as near to the screen as it can be before becoming an abstraction, while his exterior long shots offer extraordinary depth as well as width.

For the area in between these long and close shots, Leone has devised a unique arrangement for efficiently organizing visual information. In a variety of ways, he will place a character close to the camera and then have other equally significant information in the full shot range. In this way, he can often communicate narrative and descriptive information simultaneously. The ways in which he organizes simultaneous narrative and descriptive information will be a prime consideration during the analysis of Once Upon a Time.

Slow Disclosure

The opening scene poses a series of questions and contains within it clues to the answers of later questions. We see in the first shot a dark room, the structure of which is so decrepit that chinks of light are visible between the wall boards. A door in the center background opens with a creak to frame the light outside. By way of some expository information, a hand dragging chalk across a blackboard is seen noting the amount of time under the headings DELAYS To Flagstaff/From Flagstaff. The camera zooms out to reveal a wizened old station master responding to the offscreen sound of the door. About the general earthiness of his characters, Leone has remarked

> I have consulted historical documents and can assure you that they were a lot dirtier in reality. As to their faces, they were incredible and had a lot more character than those of my actors.[23]

The next character (Woody Strode) is disclosed through a close-up crane shot, which begins on his boots and glides up along his duster past the sawed-off Winchester strapped to his thigh, to rest on his face, which is framed by a wide-brimmed, felt hat. As will be true of many of the close-up faces throughout the film, the hat fills in the widescreen spaces around the face with a gracefully curving line.

The station master is seen in close-up looking screen left, and a long shot of the space reveals a figure in the open door in the center and another figure framed in the distance on the left. The camera pans left to place the Strode character within the composition. There is a medium shot of the station master next to the blackboard and then a long shot, which includes all four characters, each one framed by some sort of background aperture as they are positioned laterally across the screen's expanse.

The first questions, therefore, are: Where are we? Who is there? What do they want? These men seem sinister and the audience is apprehensive. As the scene progresses, we learn about these three hombres by observing their behavior, gestures, facial expressions, for they do not speak while they wait. We learn a lot. They are given to posturing, studied sobriety. They are figures of repose, just as Robert Warshow said a Westerner should be.[24] They wait patiently for the moment of action and remain alert.

The station master hands one of them (Jack Elam) three tickets and asks for $7.50. Elam responds by releasing them to a gust of wind. In a long shot, one piece of paper floats toward the camera, creating a sense of spatial depth. As we see the station master in close-up on the right side of the screen, Elam's hand reaches through the empty space on the left to clasp his shoulder and a rooster crows. The old man is relegated to a closet, the door of which is labeled PRIVATE STAY OUT. Just before this door is closed, Elam puts his finger to his lips and hisses "Ssshh," then points forward in a warning gesture to the station master and to the audience beyond the camera. Cheyenne will later warn Wobbles in a similar fashion. An Indian woman runs away into the distance muttering in Spanish as she goes. The depot has been effectively cleared by the presence of these men. One does not chatter in their commanding presence. One simply obeys. They are men of purpose, hired gunmen, mythic icons.

Leone then proceeds to penetrate the quirky humanity of these icons as they are observed waiting. In doing so, he also introduces the audience to his unique method of handling time and space. As Robert Cumbow has noted, Leone is

> more interested in saving the moment, stretching it, protracting real time by long takes and "slow" montages during which the suspense that precedes explosive action is drawn out by photographing all the details of a single event and reassembling them lineally. This is what Leone does in the buildups to his climactic gun battles. He makes the simultaneous become sequential, and thereby comes as close as anyone can to making time stand still.[25]

First the director carefully places the three gunmen within the environment and in distant proximity to one another. Viewed from within the depot in long shot, the men are seen to leave from the left, center, and right openings. Elam on the right settles into a porch rocker and becomes a silhouette framed by an arched hole in the wall that serves as a window. It is an efficient shot as they simultaneously disperse and establish their own outdoor territoriality, an example of multiple points of interest within a widescreen format.

In a medium shot, Strode is seen with his back to the camera, affixing the duster, which he has just removed, to the horn of his horse's saddle. He seems to mind the heat and is often seen fanning himself with his hat. The camera dollies left with him to reveal the huge wooden platform and water tower set within a desolate landscape. This is the film's establishing shot of the southwest American desert. In actuality, most of the location shooting was done in the canyons and deserts of southern Spain, while the interiors were shot at Cinecitta. As Ian Johnstone has described the settings generally in Leone's Westerns, "the burnt-out landscape and cruel, glaring Mediterranean sun gave the film an original and desolate look, unlike any previous Western."[26] Rundown as it is, this is an oasis in an arid country, a precursor of Brett McBain's planned train stop. Soon the camera, placed high up between a windmill on the left and the water tower to the right, encompasses the station platform and railroad tracks, which disappear at the foot of the distant mountains that touch the top of the screen.

Throughout this scene, there is a cacophony of sounds: the creaking of the windmill and rocker, both in need of oil, the wind, bird calls, boots on wooden surfaces, dripping water, the telegraph message being tapped out, a buzzing fly. The sounds become contrapuntal, unsettling, humorous. They shrilly break through the silence which seems as vast as the enveloping landscape. Often they asynchronously remind the viewer of offscreen spaces. There is the animal and the mineral here but no evidence of the vegetable kingdom at this cattle station.

Strode establishes himself against some beams. He is placed in medium shot on the right of the frame, while the left contains the train tracks cutting diagonally across the screen. It is a medium and a long shot in one. Al Mulock, the third gunman, is seen in a similar way staking out a spot at the far end of the depot. We then see the rails from his perspective like a pastel watercolor landscape. In the next shot, he reaches into the water trough and the motif of water in a dry land is introduced.

Meanwhile, Elam is seen in the left foreground on the rocker while the right side of the screen completes the orientation in space by showing Mulock in the distance at the far end of the platform. The characters are carefully placed and separated within the environment. A tapping sound from the telegraph is heard, as annoying to Elam as to the audience. Now begins a series of non-events which illustrates the inventive thought processes of these impassive gunmen and has nothing whatever to do with the storyline of the film. It is Camus with humor.

Elam is seen from the point-of-view of the closeted station master. Framed by the arched window opening, he reclines in his rocker on the left. In the foreground is the telegraph mechanism just inside the window. Later in the film, it is the telegraph which will provide Frank with information about Jill's origins.

Elam is shown in close-up, touching the brim of his hat. There is a medium shot of the telegraph tape being spewed across the table, then another close-up of Elam. Every movement of his eyes and subtle shift of expression is magnified across the screen. Next, he is seen in profile, facing left as his hand reaches over the windowsill and grabs the wires of the machine, abruptly stopping it. This is followed by a close-up of him with his eyes closed, again a figure of repose. He opens his eyes, glances around, then lowers his hat to cover his face and eliminate the light. These men need not speak. Their expressions and gestures clearly reveal their boredom and their direct approach to life's mundane annoyances.

The next routine involves Strode, who is fanning himself with his hat as a drop of water splashes off his forehead. He looks up and offscreen above. A point-of-view shot reveals the source of this nuisance, water forming on a roof fissure. A low angle close-up, which places his face in the center of the screen, captures another drop landing like a waterfall on that unflappable shaved skull. He raises his hat in front of him, momentarily blocking out his face, and then lowers it upon his head. Anyone else would have moved aside. He has stood his ground and outmaneuvered nature. There is a hint of a smile on his face as the water is heard upon the hat, and he looks almost directly into the camera. As if aware of being observed, he has maintained his dignity.

Mulock, seated by the water trough, watches a dog go by and begins to crack his knuckles, adding to the percussive counterpoint. The grizzled Elam in close-up dozes as a fly lands and begins to explore his facial stubble. In an interview with Elam, Stuart Kaminsky learned that "the fly appeared by chance while the scene was being shot and Leone liked it so much that he insisted on shooting all of Elam's reactions to it."[27]

There is a shot of Mulock still reshaping his fingers, a close-up of Elam trying to blow the fly away, a close-up of another water droplet forming, a close-up of Strode pretending not to notice the water pelting his hat, another close-up of the ceiling, a close-up of his boot also being splashed upon, and a close-up of Elam still blowing and finally swatting at the fly.

Then Elam is seen in profile close-up as the fly lands on the side of the rocker in the center of the screen. There is a close-up of Elam's face, a close-up of the rocker arm upon which his adversary, the fly, is moving, and a close-up of Elam's face again as his gun comes into view on the left of the screen. Somehow, it seems logical that he should shoot the fly. He moves quickly; there is a cut, and the gun is seen imprisoning the fly within its barrel against the rocker. His other finger enters the frame and presses against the bore of the gun. The camera pans left to a tight close-up on his face, hand, and gun. Then he reclines again, holding the gun next to his ear. We hear, as he must, the loud buzzing sound of the trapped fly, and it is music to his ears. The whistle of the approaching train is then heard. It is the first time a direct connection will be drawn between a gun and a train. Also, "the traditional Western theme of ambivalent attitudes towards technological advance, as represented by the railroads,"[28] will become a recurring motif of this movie.

From track perspective, the train approaches and rides over the camera. There is a close-up of Strode. The background to his left is dark and to his right is light. He slowly removes and lowers his hat so that, having defeated nature, he can triumphantly drink the accumulated water from the rim of his hat. Elam freeing the fly is seen in close-up. Then a close-up of Mulock fills the left side of the screen while the train arrives across the right side, once again presenting two shots in one. With the arrival of the train, the titles, which have accompanied all the preceding shots, are concluded.

The men position themselves strategically along the platform--one in the middle, one at each end--and react to the sounds of a freight car door opening and packages being thrown out. To indicate their intention, we see in close to the camera a hand reaching for a holster while the background train fills the rest of the screen. No passenger emerges, however, and, as the train starts to move again, Elam signals with his head that they should leave. Strode and Mulock join Elam in the center of the platform and prepare to depart when the sound of a harmonica stops them.

The three men are close to the camera, one in the center, one on either side. As in a wipe, the train moves horizontally across the screen in the background and, when the last car passes, the unnamed man with the harmonica (Charles Bronson) is revealed in the center of the screen. "His harmonica is his signature and his reason for being there, the reason for the film,"[29] as will become evident later on. As Frayling has pointed out, "he has no identity apart from this quest,"[30] that is, the revenge he has come to exact from Frank.

Despite their elaborate spatial preparations, the three are now clustered together and, therefore, more vulnerable. After a close-up of Harmonica, as he comes to be called, there is a shot from behind him which situates him on the right side of the frame. The three gunmen are seen facing him in the distance on the left side of the frame with their horses tied to a railing behind them. The presence of the horses provides a subject for pointed discussion.

There is a close-up of Elam, then a medium shot of Bronson, who lowers his harmonica and asks for Frank. Scored music begins. In a two-shot of Strode and Elam, Elam responds "Frank sent us." Harmonica is seen from their perspective in a full shot. He is placed in the middle of the screen. There are posts and railings forming abstract patterns against the horizon behind him and the wooden slats of the platform create vertical and diagonal lines across the width of the screen. "Did you bring a horse for me?" he asks.

A tight close-up of Strode shows him smiling wickedly and turning to Elam who, in a medium shot which includes the horses behind him, responds "Looks like we're shy one horse." In a close-up, Harmonica shakes his head and notes "You brought two too many." That is the full extent of the dialogue. "Leone's world is set up for an interplay of male style in the face of world horror,"[31] according to Kaminsky. It is a world of visual rather than verbal communication. The shoot-out ensues and Harmonica dispatches all three, although Strode's character manages to discharge a shot at Harmonica before collapsing, and Harmonica, too, appears to have been killed.

Then there is a shot of the rickety, squeaking windmill, looking like a giant pinwheel, and there is the sound of the wind. The camera zooms out and pans right to include the water tower. Along with suggesting the passage of time, cutting away from the action like this becomes an existential comment on the great indifference of the natural forces to the plight of the mortals below.

Harmonica's face in close-up extends horizontally across the screen, filling it completely. In the center of the frame, his eye opens and the camera zooms back as he starts to get up. The resurrected hero surveys the scene of horses and dead men, calmly makes a splint with his coat for his wounded arm, puts on his hat, and replaces his Colt Peacemaker into the top fold of his valise to conclude the scene. We will come to learn that, as with other Leone protagonists, "what makes him a hero is not that he is a wonderful person, but the fact that he kills so many wicked people."[32]

About half of the shots in this scene are close-ups of faces. When the character is placed in the center of the frame, usually the wide-brim of his hat fills in the space at either side of the screen. Such huge close-ups could not be achieved in a narrower frame and they become human landscapes. The slightest modulation in expression is immediately evident, revealing the unspoken thought or emotion behind it. As Mary Corliss has pointed out, "America has turned its plains into the landscape of legend. Leone has turned legend into myth. The West for Leone was so big and empty, only giants could fill it."[33] These gunmen whose faces fill the screen do indeed appear to be giants.

The interplay between the widescreen's tight close-up and the long shot creates the overstatement of myth throughout the film. Leone claims that Homer was the greatest writer of Westerns and that the archetypes of today's cowboys were Achilles, Agamemnon, and Ajax:[34] the off-spring of gods in a dangerous landscape long, long ago.

When not employing the close-up on his giants, Leone places them within the golden vastness of the desert. Often the character is seen in close-up on one side of the screen while the long shot landscape fills the other side, effectively creating two shots out of one. These characters are not dwarfed by the environment, they are equal to it. When they seek to face down one another, however, their power is visually weighted.

Before the three gunmen realize that Harmonica actually has arrived, they are seen in long shot as they stand in the center and at each end of the platform. As they prepare to depart, they move together. Then we see them as large figures in the foreground with Harmonica as a small revelation in the distance. However, a reverse angle shot shortly thereafter establishes Harmonica as the dominant figure in the right foreground with the others diminished into a vulnerable, triadic configuration on the left side of the screen. The characters are made insignificant not by their relationship to nature within the long shot but by their proximity to another person within the same shot.

Although the sound track adds its own level of meaning to this scene, the sequence works well as a silent film. The shots are saturated with information about place, character, and mood. The editing responds to the audience members' anticipation as they read the visuals, as when there is a cut to the gun imprisoning the fly right after the audience assumed it would be shot.

The method of narrative disclosure, as in the rest of the film, is an inductive one. The expository questions which immediately occurred to the viewer have been answered. At a cattle station somewhere outside of

Flagstaff, Arizona, during the transitional period when the railroad was making its way across the continent, three unnamed gunmen were hired by a man called Frank to wait for and kill an unnamed character later referred to as Harmonica.

Character Preparation and Entrances

The primary function of the three gunmen is to prepare for the entrance of Harmonica and, since he proves himself capable of outgunning even such seasoned professionals as these three, to underscore his heroic stature. In a like manner, the arrival of each of the other three main characters is also carefully prepared.

The next set of questions pertains to Harmonica. Who is this reserved man and why does someone named Frank want him killed? The connection between Harmonica and Frank will not be clarified until the last scene of the movie, which also is constructed around a shoot-out and occurs at a new railroad oasis.

In the last shot of the opening scene, the camera is placed at ground level. Harmonica's valise fills the right side of the screen. His boots are seen in close-up occupying the left side of the screen, and his hand rests his gun within the top folds of his luggage. In a visual synechdoche, the parts are substituting for the whole body. In the distant background, the water tower is visible and will serve to link this scene thematically with the following one.

In the next shot, a gun barrel in select focus protrudes from the sagebrush and pierces the screen from left to right as a bullet is released. Weeds on the left side create diagonal lines across the screen. Although the direct cut to this shot suggests that someone else is after Harmonica, it quickly becomes apparent that the scene has changed to another location. In this section, we are introduced to Brett McBain (Frank Wolff), a widower of six years, and his three children, Timmy, Patrick, and Maureen. Unlike the characters in the previous segment, these people have names, yet their film life span is a mere nine minutes. Just as the function of the gunmen was to prepare an atmosphere for the entrance of Bronson, these more sympathetic figures set the tone for the malevolent appearance of Frank. Once again, as the scene progresses, questions are posed: Who are these people? Why are they so apprehensive? Why would anyone want to kill them?

After the shotgun fires, we see partridges fly up and out of the frame and then, after an almost imperceptible cut, we watch as one, accompanied by another gunshot, falls from the sky and lands on the ground. The shotgun barrel is seen again, this time creating a diagonal along with the weeds. It is withdrawn from view and replaced by a close-up of Brett McBain's face. He is looking offscreen to the right. The close-up is from his chin to his forehead in the right of center. He smiles at the sound of offscreen running feet.

The entrance of Timmy (Enzio Santianello) is in full shot through out-of-focus foreground sagebrush. Although hidden by the weeds, he runs down the hill right to left then back to the right, as the camera pans with him, until he emerges on the right from behind the vegetation to retrieve and hold up the game bird in front of him. In the next shot, McBain is in medium shot on the left of the frame with Timmy in the distance on the right. As the scene progresses, McBain tells Timmy "C'mon home," but instead the boy ferrets out some more birds, startles them into flight, then pretends to shoot them many times. Soon, these hunters will become the hunted. These shots of McBain and Timmy seem to suggest the predatory nature and inherent violence in human beings as they do what is necessary to survive.

The boy is seen in full shot running up the hill and towards the camera. The camera zooms out as he zigzags up between the bushes, pans with him to the left, and cranes up over the ridge to disclose a large house in the background toward which he hastens after his father. "Many of the Leone buildings in Once Upon a Time (and especially the McBain place) have the look of Northern Italian Alpine chalets."[35] In a full shot from the side of the porch, Maureen emerges from the house through the door carrying food. The camera dollies with her as picnic tables, covered with red-checkered table cloths and a variety of eatables, are revealed. As Kaminsky points out, the "food in his films is always colourful and appetizing."[36] In both shots, camera movement serves to disclose offscreen information.

The three characters are seen amidst the bountiful tables; McBain unobtrusively leans his gun against a chair. This significant detail is not isolated by a close shot but left for the viewer to notice along with other long shot information. They hear a dog barking offscreen. The background sound of cicadas stops as, in separate shots, they look around and listen apprehensively. The sound track results from the aural focus of the characters. When the sound of cicadas is again heard, we know they have relaxed once more.

After Timmy has gone into the house to get washed, McBain tells Maureen, who is ominously slicing bread towards her heart, that "soon you can cut the bread in slices as big as a door if you want to. You'll have beautiful new clothes and you won't have to work no more." She asks "We going to get rich, Pop?" "Who knows," he responds.

Patrick enters from the background through the door of the house. He is late and McBain reprimands him: "The train'll come in and there won't be no one to meet yer mother." Patrick, cleaning his boot says by way of exposition "our mother died six years ago," then spits on the cloth. McBain slaps him. It is apparent in this scene that he is having trouble raising the children alone. There is an air of violence among them along with familial affection.

Patrick asks "How we gonna recognize her?" McBain describes her for Patrick and the audience. "She's young and she's pretty. She's a lady." He opens her letter and reads "I'll be wearing a black dress and the same straw hat I was wearin' when we first met." As he reads the camera zooms in to a close-up of his face, removing him from the environment and his children and suggesting the shyness he feels at the remembrance of the woman he is describing. The scene up to this point has been handled according to the traditional classical formula of master shot, shot-reverse angle shot, two shot, etc. But now the characters will become separated in space and isolated from one another as the family unit is destroyed.

In a full shot, McBain is on the left in the middle, Maureen is closer to the camera on the right, and Patrick is in the background center preparing the buckboard. McBain moves toward the camera saying "I'm gonna get some fresh water." In this film, a remark like this is generally followed by death. In this desert, people kill for water. The camera dollies ahead of him as he moves forward and offscreen to the left. He is then seen in long shot in the center of the frame behind the well and surrounded by its arch. At the end of the film, we will see Harmonica and his brother under an arch. The two families thus become linked. There is the sound of the wind and Maureen's voice humming "Danny Boy," along with the creaking of the bucket as it is raised from the well.

Once again the characters sense offscreen danger and stop what they are doing. There is a close-up from behind McBain in which the camera pans 180° left to right as if scanning the horizon with him. The widescreen allows the camera to combine a close-up with a long shot from an indirect subjective point-of-view. Startled birds fly up. Maureen smiles and walks to the left so that the camera can include McBain's gun, resting against the chair near her. A gunshot is heard and then McBain sees that his daughter, not a partridge, has been shot. The sand blows around her as, in long shot, she falls to the ground by the festive tables. The camera evokes the emotive power inherent in the extreme close up as it zooms in to a tight close up of McBain's mouth as he calls her name. As he runs toward Maureen, McBain is shot, then Patrick.

There is a point-of-view dolly shot from the inside to the outside of the house, accompanied by breathing and footsteps, and followed by a close-up of Timmy running out and into the light as music comes in. Point-of-view shots of the massacre are interchanged with close-ups of the boy. Then there is a long shot of the desert with wind blowing the sand in gusts around the sagebrush. The figures of men in long designer dusters begin to materialize out of the landscape. Like the gunmen appearing at doors in the opening scene, three men come forward first, one at each end and one in the center. They wait for Frank to come in through the center. A fifth man appears in the background and, spread out across the frame, they all move forward. Next, they are seen from a high angle with their backs to the camera, and the boy is placed in the background, looking vulnerable indeed. Once again, the placement of characters close to and away from the camera within the same shot emphasizes the dominance of one over the other.

Frank is seen on the right with his back to the camera and the boy is in the midground on the left clutching a bottle he was carrying. The camera then dollies around Frank to a close-up of him, which includes two of the men behind him. This camera movement, which first includes Frank and the boy and then Frank and his men, ends by revealing the villainous face of Henry Fonda, an outstanding example of casting against type if ever there was one. Once more, the film unwinds through slow disclosure and revelation.

There are close-ups of Fonda which highlight a sinister smile along with his famous blue eyes. The close-ups of the copper-headed boy seem to replicate a Botticelli angel. After one of his men has addressed Frank by his name, thereby identifying him for the audience and providing Timmy with too much information, Frank's hand is seen in close up drawing back his coat and reaching for his Silver Colt .38. With a gesture reminiscent of The Great Train Robbery, he points the barrels directly at the camera. There is a tight close-up of the cherubic boy looking almost at the camera as if making eye contact with Frank. A low- angle close-up of Frank follows. The sound of a bell is heard, linking this scene with Harmonica's final flashback, and there is a close-up of the gun pointed toward the camera as it goes off. Mercifully, Leone spares the audience the sight of this death. The scene has come full circle since it begins and concludes with the image of a gun. In the opening sequence, following the usual Western convention, there was a dual among equals and an homage to High Noon. Here we have witnessed am ambush in which even children are killed.

Rather than using angular forms and diagonals to create apprehension, Leone's compositions stress the horizontal and curved lines of the environment into which the vertical figures of the characters are inserted. It is the characters' presence that creates tension and drama against the placid landscape. Yet even the malicious features of the outlaws are softened by the arching brims of their hats. Accompanied by music, the most violent scenes take place outside in full sunlight against a sepia terrain of sloping hills. As Peckinpah and Coppola would later do, Leone depicts violence as a sensual experience.

The excess of space allotted to each character, when there are several in the frame, is useful in conveying a sense of individualism. These outlaws do not interact very much, but rather maintain their separation even when functioning for a group purpose. Dominance through spatial arrangement within a long shot is employed as when the men in the center of the frame step aside for Frank's entrance or when they stand facing the helpless young boy.

The long shot and the tight close-up often alternate. Both types of shots need to be read by the viewer for telling details: in the close-up, one watches for the shift of the eyes as they scan a horizon or make offscreen eye contact; in the long shot, one notices Brett McBain offhandedly leaving his shotgun against a chair where he will later be unable to reach it during the ambush.

As Frank's smoking gun aims at the camera, there is a cut to the engine of a train emerging from the steam it is pouring out. This transition continues the gun/train motif and leads to the next scene, the arrival of Jill McBain.

> This single sequence, with its juxtaposition of the murdered family and the arrival of the railroad, enables Leone to introduce the plot of the film--the clash of an older way of life on the lawless western frontier with the arrival of civilization, symbolized by the railroad.[37]

Four shots are used to record the approach of the train to the station, making it a grand event. Cheerful banjo music adds to the celebratory mood. Passengers, then cattle, begin to disembark right to left from the train to the platform.

As Peary has noted, no one is better than Leone at handling extras.[38] The entire scene of the train being unloaded flows in a natural manner and captures the energy and optimism of frontier expansion as well as its social structure. Recently-freed slaves have now graduated to the status of train porters; Indians are segregated to separate cars and herded out with the animals; a returning cattle baron discusses the good stock he found in the South; and a community of white men, women, and children bustle purposefully by. As Frayling has put it, the new West was "less a melting pot than a vegetable soup with all the ingredients remaining separate."[39]

The woman (Claudia Cardinale) with the black dress and straw hat demurely and expectantly emerges from the passenger car. No doubt she had been mentally rehearsing this entrance into a new life during her journey. It is a touching moment as the audience recognizes her as Brett McBain's bride and anticipates the disappointment which awaits her. The camera zooms from a medium shot to a close-up of Jill in the middle of the frame and cranes down with her as she descends to the platform. Inscribed on the train car behind her is A. & P.H. MORTON RAILROAD. Already she is under the shadow of Morton and his men. She looks offscreen, walks away from the camera, then turns around.

There is a reverse angle shot from behind her as passengers around her greet one another. She walks away from the camera, then back again. Piles of boxes, luggage, and supplies are seen along with the people who are milling about. The camera dollies along with her to the station house. The shot of Jill looking for the McBain family lasts one minute and eleven seconds. Jill remains the center of interest throughout, yet a sense of place is created around her. The shot ends as Jill walks into a close-up, singled-out and separated from the surrounding community. She, too, will be one of Leone's outsiders. "The role of the outsider in the community is," according to Frayling, "a key feature of most Italian Westerns."[40]

There is a cut to a close-up of Jill, which registers her concern. A close-up of the clock over the ticket office door signals that it is 7:55. The banjo music fades and with it Jill's sense of elation. Another close-up of her face records her disappointment, and the sound of the wind is replaced by scored music. She looks down. There is a cut to an ornate pocket watch in her lace-gloved hand, which tells us it is 10:10. There is music now, which will become Jill's leitmotif, but there are no sound effects, so the scene takes on a detached, dreamlike quality.

Jill is seen on the right side of the screen in close-up. Her gaze fills the left as she looks offscreen. This close-up is followed by one of the most stunning shots in the film, which lasts for one minute and twenty seconds. A long shot places the train on the left of the screen, and its cargo is scattered about the ground on the right. The extended shadows indicate that more time has passed. Jill stands in the center midground of the frame. Only the two porters, leaning against the train, remain. As she walks forward, the camera dollies ahead of her, but when she enters the ticket office, the camera stays outside and dollies to a window on the right. She is framed by the window--it is a frame within a frame--as she speaks to the train master and leaves through a door at the rear. Her movement motivates the camera to crane up and over the adobe roof to disclose a town being born. Gently curving mountains adorn the horizon in this watercolor sketch of a new settlement. It is a revelation, a surprise. As Leone expressed it, "I undertook the production of a fresco on the birth of a nation."[41]

As Jill pases through this town, the widescreen will again create a counterpoint between Jill and the world around her, to which she does not belong. An omnibus drawn by four white horses passes back to front and left to right across the screen, and the camera pans with it. As it passes in front of the screen like a wipe, Jill and Sam (Paolo Stoppa) are revealed on a buckboard in the background center. Some sound effects are lightly heard along with the music. The camera pans right with them as they pass and move away from the camera. The focus shifts in this shot from the public conveyance to the buckboard as Sam and Jill ride through the booming town. Frayling notes that Flagstone's main street, built at Guadix, Spain, cost $250,000, more than the entire budget of <u>For a Fistful of Dollars</u>.[42]

Along with lighting and placement of character, the narrative itself determines the dominant contrast or primary focus of audience attention within a shot. Leone identifies us with the main characters through the close-ups, after which we seek them out in the long shot.

Sometimes, however, as with the entrance of Frank, he presents us with the group, then isolates the character of main narrative interest.

There is a close-up of Jill riding through town and looking offscreen, then a point-of-view shot of the storefronts as they pass, including a clothing store, an attorney's office, the Chinese laundry, and the partially built theatre. Another close-up of Jill is followed by a point-of-view shot of the other side of the street. The camera is in motion throughout these shots since it mimics the view from a moving wagon. This movement, combined with the music, creates a wonderfully lyrical mood, an elegy to human initiative and the emergence of a new community.

Although fragments of conversation were heard upon Jill's arrival at Flagstone, nothing germane to the story has been said, yet the visuals have clearly communicated the sequence of narrative events as well as the tone. Now, as the music subsides, sound effects are heard and Jill and Sam begin a conversation. They are seen facing forward in medium shot as they ride through town. There are very few such two-shots in the film. Sam asks "What's the name of the place you want to go?"

There follows a series of ten alternating close-ups of Jill and Sam during which the only word she utters, in answer to his initial questions, is "Sweetwater." The close-ups of her allow us to observe her reaction to his disdainful description of the McBain farm, "that stinkin' piece of desert." Then there is again a medium shot of the two of them as their wagon passes by the camera and they ride away to the right in long shot. In the background there is a stagecoach parked in front of a building at the edge of town. A fence separates this parameter of the settlement from the surrounding desert. In keeping with this visual homage to John Ford's Stagecoach, Leone evokes the symbolic function of fence imagery in that film: the fine line between civilization and wilderness and the gradual displacement of the latter by the former.

The next shot then takes us into real John Ford territory. It is a high angle, extreme long shot of the buckboard in the middle of the desert. As they draw near to and pass by the camera, we watch them ride away into Monument Valley. Leone steps back from his characters for a moment to admire the Western terrain and the genre it inspired. As Hal Rossen once remarked, "If you have a Western, you automatically think in terms of the Grand Tetons, the great American desert--well CinemaScope was half again as big as what we had been using."[43]

They come upon a railroad work crew, and Sam almost runs over the surveyors. Then they are once again immersed in the distant buttes. Perhaps as another homage to Ford, Leone rather arbitrarily crosses the axis. First Sam and Jill are seen in long shot, traveling left to right as the camera pans with them, then right to left, also in a pan shot. As the frame is altered by the camera movement, a halfway house/trading post is discovered, literally in the middle of nowhere.

There is a full two-shot as Sam stops and alights from the wagon. The elegiac music, which is Jill's theme, concludes in a variation of "Amen." "Why are we stopping?" asks Jill, on our behalf as well. "I told you I was in a hurry." Sam responds "Don't the train stop?" Leone crosses the axis to the other side of the wagon as Sam starts walking toward the building.

This scene, encompassing Jill's arrival, has lasted for eight minutes and thirty-three seconds and contains fifty-one shots. She is the main point of interest throughout this scene, yet, because of the added vista the widescreen allows, the excitement of the bustling town and the grandeur of the surrounding wilderness have been conveyed. These environments, in turn, resonate with the enshrined imagery of hundreds of films which sought to record and mythologize the westward expansion of the nation.

Like all the interiors in this film, the trading post, which features a bar and a stable, is enormous. These characters are never placed in crowded or tight areas. The sole exception is in the scene between Jill and Frank during their sexual encounter in his cave hideaway. At the trading post, as in the opening scene, light filters in through unmatched boards in the roof and walls, the lack of rain having led to some shoddy but aesthetically interesting construction. Leone sought to imitate Rembrandt, and the chiaroscuro lighting of this scene is one result.[44] Although the space appears to be large, the shadows are used to conceal information, such as the presence of Harmonica in the back of the room.

This stop-over is an interlude in the sequence of Jill's journey to Sweetwater. It lasts thirteen minutes and thirty-five seconds and contains 145 shots. It is needed as a way of introducing the fourth main character, Cheyenne (Jason Robards). Kaminsky points out that Italian Westerns generally feature three main character types: the good, the bad, and the ugly, designations which inspired the title of one of Leone's earlier films.[45] Cheyenne is, of course, the ugly, just as Frank is the bad, and Harmonica is the good. According to Kaminksy,

> The "ugly" one is always physically coarse, bearded, a bit dirty, but vibrant, alive and, in contrast to the morality of the "good" and the immorality of the "bad," he is amoral.... He has no cunning, is open, direct and shows an earthy simplicity and sense of humour.[46]

While Jill is chatting with the bartender and waiting for Sam's liquor break to end, horses, gun shots, and groans are heard outside. There are reaction shots of various people in the establishment wondering what is going on. Then the obligatory saloon doors swing open and Cheyenne backs into the room. The door is in the center of the screen in the background and becomes a small frame within the large frame. Although there are slats of light forming patterns around it, the main light comes in through the door. It is a spotlight entrance as all attention, both on and offscreen, is focused on that lighted square. After Cheyenne has backed into the room, there is a cut to a medium shot of him turning toward the camera, which zooms in to a close-up of his face. He is mostly in shadows, except for his eyes, which scan the room. His musical theme begins.

Killing has heralded the appearance of the three main male characters, and the mode of killing serves to define each of them. Harmonica killed to defend himself; Frank murdered from ambush; Cheyenne shoots it out with his unseen escort in order to escape. This gunfight is aurally rather than visually communicated, with a nod to the radio Western, and creates a humorous context for Cheyenne's entrance.

He goes to the bar which, as Jameson observed is "very gamy and italianate--down to and especially including the chianti bottles hanging around in straw baskets."[47] He says "Jug." There is a medium two-shot of the bartender (Lionel Stander) and Cheyenne. As he drinks, Cheyenne lifts the bottle with both hands to reveal a chain and the handcuffs it connects. The sound of a harmonica is heard.

This scene contains an unusual number of medium two-shots. Generally, the characters are placed close to each side of the frame, usually in an over-the-shoulder composition so that a comfortable space exists between them, in keeping with the elbow room afforded characters throughout. When this space is violated, as when Cheyenne intimidates a by-stander into shooting off the handcuff chain, tension is created by the very proximity of the characters to one another, given the space available to them because of the large screen. This type of close proximity will be associated with Frank later as he menaces Morton and then Jill.

Cheyenne and Harmonica meet for the first time; then Cheyenne leaves with his men. The bartender resumes his conversation with Jill as if the gunplay were an everyday occurrence. Afterwards, Jill completes her journey. It is unusual for Leone to give such prominence to a female role in one of his films, although Jill's life is basically defined by the men in it. "Throughout the film, Jill McBain is a reactor, a character who only makes sense, is only defined, with reference to the male protagonists."[48]

Layers of Information

Jill's arrival at the McBain farm consists of twenty-three shots and lasts for five minutes. The scene illustrates the potential for multiple layers of meaning which widescreen, with its capacity for containing so much visual information, can add. It begins with a select focus close-up of Jill as she rides in the buckboard to the farm. There is back lighting on her hair, and her musical theme is heard. A point-of-view long shot follows as she nears the McBain house and sees the assembled local people dressed in black and white. The music ends and the sound of cicadas is prominent.

There is another close-up of Jill accompanied by the sound of horse hoofs and then a point-of-view dolly shot of the people as she passes by. They are layered in rows laterally across the screen and are seen in medium shot. Some of the men remove their hats. Then, as the camera passes the last group of people, the bodies of Brett McBain and his three children are seen laid out on the red-checkered cloths on the picnic tables and garlanded with flowers. Jill and Sam are seen in a select focus, medium close-up as she gasps. The sound of the wind is heard.

In the next shot, the four bodies are layered horizontally across the screen and the camera travels above them to end with just Brett and Maureen. Horizontal and curved lines continue to be the dominant compositional forms, suggesting a fatalistic tranquility despite the horrible significance of the content. After another close-up, Jill is seen in full shot getting off the wagon. The mountains are piled up in the background, and the spoked wheels of the buckboard are prominent in the midground. She walks past the bodies, which are revealed in the foreground as the camera dollies towards them.

The poignancy of the scene stems in part from the audience's remembrance of the previous scene at this location. The festive tables have become funeral pallets. The wind and sound of cicadas, which signaled danger previously, are heard again. The house, the land, the mountains remain as they were, despite the dashed hopes of the inhabitants. The screen encompasses the bodies, the mourners, Jill and Sam, the desert, and the mountains in varying degrees of proximity to the camera.

Jill reveals that she and McBain were married in New Orleans a month ago. Then the mourners proceed to bury the dead on the hillside overlooking the farm. There is a long shot which places Jill in the midground center of the frame. The others extend across the frame in groups on either side of her and closer to the foreground. The house is in the distant background with the hills behind it.

A man rides up with evidence implicating Cheyenne. Wobbles is singled out from the crowd in a medium three-shot with Jill and the Sheriff. Jill asks why Cheyenne would do such a thing and the sheriff vows, "We'll make him tell us before we hang him." This is a peculiar narrative discrepancy because even Jill can testify to the fact that Cheyenne was in custody up until the time he arrived at the trading post and escaped from his escort. Theoretically, his men could have shot the McBains, however, since they arrived late to rescue Cheyenne. Also, when Cheyenne will be turned in by Harmonica, the Sheriff will blithely send him off on a train to prison with little animosity and no questioning. The narrative in this film resembles a series of vignettes of events which are generally associated with the genre. Character, not plot, is of primary concern. Also, the film was reedited several times and, as a result, contains some narrative gaps.[48]

All the mourners are seen in long shot on the hillside as they disperse to pursue Cheyenne. Jill and Sam remain. Like John Ford, Leone explores within the shot the tenuous affiliation of the solitary individual and the social group. This larger community remains rather anonymous and ineffectual throughout the film. Its well-meaning people but are not of the same mettle as the main characters. The scene ends with a close-up of Jill in profile on the left side of the frame looking offscreen to the left. Sam is behind her on the right. She tells him that this is her home now and she will stay.

The previous scenes account for fifty-one minutes of the movie and contain 431 shots, or about eight and a half shots per minute, with an average shot length of seven seconds. These figures support David Bordwell's conclusion that widescreen editing approximates the average shot duration of the Academy-ratio norm.[50] The variety of shots, camera techniques, and pacing of Once Upon a Time in the West shows that widescreen can accommodate the entire spectrum of filmmaking possibilities. It does not diminish, as some early theorists had feared, but rather augments the director's palette.

One of the outstanding contribution of CinemaScope to the filmmaker's resources is the enhanced possibility of portraying narrative and descriptive material simultaneously rather than sequentially through editing. We are given a detailed sense of place while the narrative elements accumulate.

Leone uses vertical movement of the camera within the widescreen format as a device for slow disclosure. He does this when the camera cranes up and over the Flagstone ticket office to reveal the town on the other side and when the camera follows Timmy McBain up the hillside to the clearing where the farmhouse is situated. As such camera movement continually makes evident, there is always a sense of a larger space just outside the frame. This film, to use Bazin's phrase, truly presents the viewer with a "window on the world."[51]

In the opening sequence, the camera dramatically introduces the first gunman, Woody Strode, by scanning him from boots to hat. In like manner, the camera discloses the motivation for Harmonica's life-long vendetta. In the final flashback scene, we see a close-up of the young man with a Harmonica thrust into his mouth by Frank. Then the camera follows the boots, which rest on the boy's shoulders, to reveal the legs and finally the head of his brother, encircled by a noose. In this way, Leone can present vertical information in a medium or close-up shot which would otherwise have to be photographed in a more detached full or long shot.

Another variation on movement and verticality occurs in the scene during which Jill is held captive at Frank's hideout. We see Jill and Frank placed close together in the middle of the screen facing each other. Then the camera swivels 90° to the left so that the true horizontal position of the characters becomes apparent. The structure which supports the hanging bed on which they recline creates bars between the camera and the subject. By first presenting the image as a vertical one, Leone emphasizes the unusual proximity of the characters and the overbearing presence of Frank. Jill is not in this situation by choice.

Leone sometimes substitutes the part for the whole when he wishes to have a close-up of an object or person and still suggest the presence of someone else. This is done when Frank's boots are seen in the shot of Morton lying on the ground and when Harmonica's boots are included in the shot with his valise. Since Leone emphasizes the close-up and the long shot, vertical cut-off--as when a character in medium shot stands up--does not generally seem to present a problem for him.

Leone occasionally uses the architectural forms of a room to reframe the screen and enhance the sense of spatial depth. Jill, alone in the house after the funeral, searches for the secret of why Brett was killed. The camera focuses on her hands and pans with them as she rummages through the drawers, shelves, and closets, disclosing the bridal bouquet and other artifacts of what would have been her life with McBain. Harmonica is seen doing some research of his own by questioning Wobbles. Then Jill is observed continuing her search, but less frantically.

Leone frames her from a slight high angle with a pillar on either side so that the screen is divided into thirds. One by one, she lifts the toy replicas of buildings from a trunk. This is one of the few times Leone uses this sort of composition to direct audience attention. There is a cut to a tight close-up of Jill on the right side of the screen and a portion of one of the buildings on the left. Then there is an insert shot of the sign which designates this edifice as the STATION. It is obviously a significant object since this carved word fills the screen. She then removes a model of a train engine and sets it on the table, not knowing that she has uncovered the motive for the McBain murders.

Jill in medium shot stands in the center of the frame looking down. In front of her, close to the camera, are various framed family portraits including the picture of Brett, on which she is focused. Behind her the support pillars make frames and create a sense of depth. The lighting is low key and the ceiling is evident above her head. It is something Gregg Toland could have arranged for Citizen Kane, yet it is more open, less oppressive. The layers of architectural form, as in the Welles film, do create a feeling of depth in this interior setting.

As she hears the sound of a harmonica, Jill goes to a window. She is viewed from outside so that the window panes serve to reframe her. There is a reverse angle shot in which the back of her head fills the right side of the screen and the left side is in darkness. The darkness is filled, so to speak, by the sound of the harmonica. The next morning, the empty landscape around the house is panned through the porch pillars; then Jill is seen again enclosed by the window panes. This sort of architectural reframing is used sparingly in the film. In this instance, Jill is confined within the house by the circumstances that have befallen her and by the implied danger outside.

Windows will be used to provide an added level of information from here on. The interactions of the people within the house or on Morton's personal train car maintain their reference to the surrounding land about which the plot conflict develops: Who will own the land? The widescreen allows this background and foreground information to coexist.

As Jill opens the door to leave, she is seen in profile on the right of the screen facing left. The door opens and three vertical door slats fill the left side, blocking out what is behind. This composition will be repeated when Cheyenne leaves this scene and also when Harmonica departs at the end of the film. Jill gasps at what she sees, but the audience does not. As she steps back the sound of wind is heard and Cheyenne's theme begins. The camera dollies around the door and discloses Cheyenne in close-up with his men on horses behind hm.

After entering, he asks her for coffee, then squats on the floor to prepare the fire. He is seen in low angle close-up on the left of the screen while Jill, who has opened a drawer with a knife in it, is standing in the midground looking down at the drawer to her right. The smoke and flames of the fire rise up in the center of the screen between them as he intuitively warns her that "If somebody had a mind to kill me....Fires me up. And a fired up Cheyenne ain't a nice thing to see, especially for a lady." In a reverse angle, high angle shot, the drawer in the center of the screen is shown being closed, signifying her decision not to challenge Cheyenne.

Being a somewhat comic character, Cheyenne tends to be more chatty than the other main characters. As they continue their conversation about the McBain riches, Cheyenne sits by a table eating some food he has found, and the model train engine is evident in the foreground. Jill angrily deposits a pot of boiling water on the table in front of him. The camera zooms in so that Cheyenne is in medium shot on the right, the steaming pot is in front of him, and the train engine is on the left. He asks "Do you make good coffee, at least?" Then there is a straight cut transition to a rather elegant real train labled A. & P.M. Morgan extending across the screen against the desert and mountain backdrop. A toy figure of a man is placed in the foreground on the windowsill which opens onto this tranquil view. "Not bad," answers the voice of Morton as his hand reaches horizontally into the frame, grasps the figurine, and draws it into the train car, suggesting the manner in which he usually deals with real people who stand between him and his railroad. The scene between Morton and Frank begins.

This is the most ornate transition in the film, encapsulating as it does the main conflict of the story. In the next scene, McBain's dream, signified by the wooden toy buildings and engine, will be the subject of Morton and Frank's conversation about obstacles in the path of Morton's dream of crossing the continent from one ocean towards another with his railroad, although no single rail line ever actually achieved such a nonstop trajectory. "The encounters between Frank and Morton also stress the Brechtian (or perhaps Chaplinesque) analogy between businessmen and gunmen, capitalists and bandits."[52]

The Individual in Relationship and Alone

The first third of the film, up until the funeral of the McBain family, serves to introduce the four main characters. The scene between Frank and Morton outlines the point of conflict on which the events will turn. Each entrance has been carefully prepared and executed. The compositional strategies for the film have also been established so that what follows may be considered variations on some fundamental arrangements. For instance, it has been pointed out that the long shot and close-up can be combined by placing a character in the foreground, usually to one side of the frame, and having the landscape fill out the rest. Sometimes the landscape contains an object, such as a moving train or a person, who is placed in the full or long shot range away from the camera.

Leone explores some of the interesting possibilities for this sort of arrangement. When the crippled Morton follows Frank to his Navaho Cliffs hideout, for example, Frank kicks away one of Morton's crutches, leaving him sprawled face down on the ground. His body stretches across the screen while his crutch lies in the left foreground and, on the right, the ominous black boots of Frank fill the screen. As he reminds Morton, "You can't even stand on your own feet by yourself." Yet in the next shot, we see Morton's head and shoulders close to the screen on the left as he faces the camera, while Frank, in a medium full shot, occupies the right side. Since the camera is placed at ground level in front of Morton, Frank is viewed from a low, slightly oblique angle. There is a power struggle going on. Even though Frank is seen from a low angle, he is farther from the camera. Despite Morton's physical impairment, Frank must still rely upon him.

Later, when Frank returns to Morton's private train, he finds all his men dead. Frank is seen in the right foreground facing away from the camera with the train on the far left. In between are riderless horses and dead men lying on the ground against the desert landscape. Frank finds Morton still alive at the other end of the train. There is a rivulet of water cutting across the screen horizontally in the foreground. Morton's face is close to the camera in the center and his torso extends across the screen to the right as he crawls towards the water. Frank is seen in the left background on the rear platform of the train as he turns and leaves. The angle of the shot is slightly oblique. Morton dies in a puddle, still far from the Pacific, and Frank's fortunes end here as well. As Morton expires, the sound of the ocean is heard, as well as clanging of tracks being laid, a transition to the shot of the rail crew nearing Sweetwater.

Another instance of this sort of composition occurs after the auction. Jill and Harmonica are in the hotel lobby, which had been the auction site. Jill is on the left side of the frame, Harmonica on the right. Both are in the foreground, linked by their mutual admiration and their disdain for Frank. In the background, upper center portion of the frame, Frank enters through the swinging saloon doors creating a triangular formation among the characters. His figure is framed by the door and the wooden architecture on either side of it. He intrudes upon people's lives. The use of graduated architectural forms also provides a sense of depth.

> Leone shows towns isolated in a vast wilderness with great space between them and when people in conflict appear together in a room they, too, are often separated by great distances. The rooms and interiors themselves are generally grotesquely large.[53]

Jill goes upstairs and then there is a series of shots which place Frank and Harmonica at diagonally opposite ends of the frame. First Harmonica is in the right foreground as Frank sits at a table in the left background. Then Harmonica moves to the swinging doors, leans on them, and looks out. Frank offers to buy Mrs.

McBain's property from him for his purchase price of $5,000 plus one dollar. Frank is seen in close-up at the left of the frame, Harmonica in long shot on the right. In between is the one dollar coin Frank holds up in the center of the frame. Harmonica once again takes control of the situation and assumes the foreground position. Always, there is a seemingly enormous space separating them.

The swinging doors against which Harmonica rests allow the viewer to see beyond to the street activities outside. point-of-view shots isolate three separate locations on the street where Harmonica observes Frank's men waiting to double cross him on Morton's behalf. As Frank leaves the hotel, he, too, apprehensively singles out these three places, although the men can no longer be seen there.

After Frank leaves, Harmonica literally watches over him from a balcony. Again, Harmonica is seen close to the screen on the right as, in shared perspective, we observe Frank below in the distance in front of the watch maker's shop. Then we share Frank's perspective on his benefactor as Frank is placed in the left foreground and Harmonica in the upper background on the right. The angle of the shot establishes Frank's vulnerability in this situation.

Also, Leone uses the architectural shapes of the porch and buildings around Frank to suggest the unusual nature of the situation in which he finds himself. On this occasion it is Frank who is trapped and being hunted. The scene is given a surreal touch in that the clocks painted on the building are unfinished and lack hands. The manipulation of time and space in this scene also provides an example of Leone's "genius for achieving emotional saturation through studied acceptance, almost stoical endurance of time and space as the key events of any scene."[54]

At both the McBain house and in Morton's private train car, Leone includes on the background walls windows that reveal scenes of the town, the desert, or the station being built at Sweetwater. The interplay between the personal relations of the characters and the larger issue of the land and developing communities is simultaneously presented as both background and foreground information within the shot.

This connection is particularly important in the scene in which Cheyenne returns to the McBain farm to see Jill, and together they anticipate the fate of Harmonica, who patiently waits on a fence by the arched entry to the farm and then has his shoot-out with Frank. Unknown to Jill and the audience, Cheyenne has been mortally wounded.

As a representative of the old ways, he, like Frank and Harmonica, is becoming obsolete.

Outside, the railroad line has reached Sweetwater. Both Morton's and McBain's dreams are realized as the station and town are built and the tracks are laid. Cheyenne, with his back to the camera, looks out of the multi-paned window at Harmonica and Frank in the distance outside. Then he and Jill move to an open window to observe the work crew. The ritual dual between Frank and Harmonica is significant only to these four characters. It is the railroad and the town which will inevitably replace their way of life.

The contrast between the old and the new is suggested several times by juxtaposing horses and the train, or "iron horse." On one occasion, Frank and his men leave Morton's private car, which has stopped in the middle of the desert. In a long shot, we see these men ride away from the camera on the left as the train starts up and moves across the screen on the right. At this juncture of history, they are mutually dependent, although the gunmen will be supplanted by the businessmen once the railroad is completed and the settlements are in place.

Leone's long shot landscapes present us with awesome, golden vistas of enormous, empty spaces. Nonetheless, he relies heavily upon the close-up to portray his mythic characters, who are extracted from the vastness around them. It is the widescreen close-up which filmmakers fear most of all. Yet Leone's close-ups have become his hallmark. "The extreme close-up is a major device of Leone's for getting to his primary concern: character. Plot is of minimal interest to Leone."[55]

Happily, the intense sun of the Southwest provides him with an excuse for encircling faces with hats. These hats seem to be carefully chosen for the faces, and they generally fill the sides of the screen with arches, curves, or straight horizontal lines. The subject is often framed from forehead to chin, rather than in a bust shot, so that less of the face fills more of the screen. The parts of the face which are included are the most expressive features, namely, the eyes and mouth.

In two instances, he uses an extreme close-up to signal the deepest obsession of a character. The first example is a shot of Morton on the train looking at a painting of ocean white caps. Just his eyes fill the widescreen against the backdrop of his surrounding flesh. He longs to reach the Pacific with his railroad before he dies. A similar shot is used of Harmonica's eyes before the flashback to the death of his brother, which he finally reveals to Frank. Leone removes all else and lets the eyes speak as they are juxtaposed with the motivating image within the character. This is about as closely as a filmmaker can penetrate the surfaces of filmic reality in order to reveal the inner landscape of the spirit. It also is a statement that there is no shot that CinemaScope cannot accommodate and turn to its own purposes.

As already noted, there is little dialogue in this film. Instead, much is communicated by following a character's gaze. For instance, when Cheyenne in a medium close-up encounters Harmonica at the desert stop-over, we cannot but notice his eyes focusing upon something offscreen. Then a medium close-up shows us the gunpowder on Harmonica's jacket where he was shot. Leone often lets us watch his taciturn characters think in this manner.

Quite a bit of narrative information can be contained in a widescreen close-up. When Harmonica is trying unobtrusively to leave Morton's train, which has stopped in the desert, we see him on the bottom rung of a ladder on the rear platform. His face in profile fills the right side of the screen, the ladder cuts diagonally through the center, and Frank's gun suddenly intersects the frame horizontally on the left. In the center background, Frank's men on horseback approach as small, distant figures.

Occasionally, a character is placed off center and the frame is balanced by a large oval object. This happens in the opening scene when Mulock's character stands just behind and to the left of a bird cage in the depot and rather grotesquely tries to imitate the bird's chirping. In separate shots, Cheyenne and Harmonica both share the frame with a lantern Cheyenne has brought to the end of the bar in the trading post. In a similar fashion, Wobbles is framed with a lantern when Harmonica finds him in the Chinese laundry. All of these shots employ low-key lighting as well and use the objects to balance the screen symmetrically.

There is an unusual and complex close-up of Jill in front of a mirror when she is alone at the farm after the funeral. She walks from the window to the mirror, and the camera zooms in on her reflection. The frame of the mirror is seen on the left with the wooden wall filling in the left side of the screen beyond it. Jill, slightly out of focus, stands to the right with her back to the camera. The center of the screen is filled with her reflection in the somewhat imperfect glass. Her face is seen from forehead to chin, but her gaze is inward rather than at herself. Then she emerges from her introspection and recognizes herself. She touches her face and hair as her facial expression changes several times. She turns away from the mirror and into focus as her reflected image shifts out of focus.

This shot, which lasts a minute and six seconds, is another attempt by Leone to express the thoughts as well as the emotions of his characters. As we learn later, Jill is not what she seems to be. There is a self-recognition in this shot as, through a change of focus, she steps into and out of her private thoughts. Chiaroscuro lighting is used and music accompanies her reverie. This close-up "two-shot" works especially well within the open spaces of the widescreen frame.

More often, however, the individual occupies the screen alone with little architectural restructuring of the frame. Instead, Leone completes the spaces around the face are with color, lighting, and texture, much as a painter would do. Leone's approach to widescreen composition, therefore, emphasizes the close-up, the simultaneous long shot and close-up, the framing possibilities of architectural forms, the open frame, and the implications of distances between characters within the frame. The concluding scenes of the film--the shoot-out and the farewell--can serve as a summary and culmination of these techniques.

Stylistic Summary

The final encounter between Harmonica and Frank takes place in a secluded area behind the McBain farmhouse. Staig maintains that "the gunfight in all of Leone's Westerns takes place in a circle"[56] and that "the circle is a physical symbol of cosmological action."[57] Others have compared this circle to an arroyo or corrida.[58] This time the place is not a delineated circle but it is open and flat. Frank inscribes a circle, however, by walking around the area in preparation for the shoot-out.

The scene begins with a long shot of Frank in the distance walking from the right toward the center of the frame. The farmhouse is behind him on the right while the left side of the frame is empty. One expects Harmonica to enter from the left but instead he appears in close-up on the right. He moves to the left foreground to fill the empty space and to create the simultaneous long shot/close-up composition, as in profile they both face the same offscreen direction and both remain in focus.

Then there is a reverse angle shot of Frank with his back to the camera in the left foreground. He faces to the right center where Harmonica stands in the distance on the right. These shots suggest that they are evenly matched. Once again there is a reverse angle shot which positions Harmonica in the foreground. This time, however, the camera dollies back and cranes up as both men walk forward towards the grassy area in front of them. There is a cut to a long shot which places both of them in the background at an equal distance from the camera and at either side of the screen. Frank will warily explore the parameter of this distance before situating himself for combat. "It's an Italian Western," notes Cumbow. "You know: Ten minutes of people looking at each other. Americans believe in blood and gore. Leone is interested in what comes before."[59]

Frank drops his jacket on the ground and circles the area, checking the direction of the sun's glare until he positions himself in an advantageous spot. Close-ups and longshots are alternated during this process. Then there is a long shot in which Harmonica is at the extreme left of the frame and Frank is on the extreme right. Frank's jacket lying in the foreground serves to provide a point for perspective.

This empty, open space they have chosen is set against a backdrop of rocks and mountains. The widescreen frame is stretched to its limits in all directions. Then the distances start to contract. Harmonica, who has been still throughout, walks horizontally toward the center. The camera pans slightly to the right so that the two of them are equidistantly placed a third of the way in from either side of the frame. The sound of the wind is heard, and the music, which has accompanied the scene thus far, subsides. The proscribed distances for the ritual are illustrated here, dictated by the effective range of a pistol.

There is a tight close-up of Frank followed by a medium close-up of Harmonica. The camera slowly zooms in to an extreme close-up of Bronson's face as the sound of a harmonica comes in. In flashback, the young Frank is seen moving through the sagebrush towards the camera in slow motion and taking a harmonica out of his pocket. "The function of the flashback is Freudian," according to Leone. "You have to let it wander like the imagination or like a dream."[60] Bronson, the man who is remembering, is then seen in extreme close-up as the camera fills the frame with his eyes. From the widest possible view of the two men encompassed by the desert landscape, Leone has reduced the screen's content to a pair of eyes.

Instead of having Harmonica verbally reveal to Frank who he is and why he wishes this showdown, Leone presents us with a flashback of the event. As if by telepathy, Harmonica and Frank share this recollection. Leone was "aware of the ambiguities of shared flashbacks, so he filmed the flashback (which this time tells us something about both protagonists simultaneously) from two points of view."[61] There is a close-up of the anguished face of a Mexican-American boy. Then the camera zooms out and cranes up to a high angle long shot, which reveals the man who stands on his shoulders with a noose around his neck. The rope is attached to a bell at the apex of an arch surrealistically constructed in the middle of the desert, "like a crumbling, golden Roman arch."[62]

The death of Harmonica's brother is associated with the sound of a bell, an arched structure, and Frank's sadistic gesture as he shoves a harmonica into the boy's mouth. His brother kicks the boy forward and, in a slow motion medium shot, the lad falls to the ground into the dust and sand stirred up around him. The harmonica drops from his mouth onto the ground in front of him as the sound of a bell signals the hanging death of his brother. Staig points out that Harmonica "really died when his brother did, as Leone depicts the young Bronson in the flashback wearing the same clothes as the adult."[63]

After the flashback, there are two very fast shots.

First, Frank is placed in the foreground and Harmonica in the distance. Then there is a reverse angle shot of Harmonica in the foreground and Frank in the distance. However, instead of using a foreground over-the-shoulder shot, a hand extracting a gun from a holster is seen in close-up. They reach for their weapons simultaneously. Harmonica's response is faster, and he mortally wounds Frank. The gun, the main signifier in this situation, is brought close to the camera, yet both characters are seen as well. Once again, two shots are included in one very dynamic image.

There is a close-up of Frank's bewildered face, then a tight close-up of Jill, who gasps at the sound of gunfire. One side of her face is more brightly lit than the other as she awaits the results of the gunfight. In a medium shot, Cheyenne is enclosed by the window frame behind him. Having just nicked himself, he pauses in the process of shaving. This is an interesting use of reaction shots since those responding are not witnessing the actual event.

There is a medium shot of Frank's gun pointed forward and angled up slightly, recalling the moment when he killed Timmy McBain. He tries to replace it into its holster, but it falls from his hand. The camera tilts up to a low angle bust shot of him against the sky. He steps forward haltingly, but the camera backs away to a low-angle medium shot. Then he falls forward to his knees and the camera is lowered to keep him within the frame. Because of the camera angle, Harmonica seems to rise up from the bottom of the frame in the left midground area.

Frank falls forward to the left and out of frame, except for his hat. Harmonica replaces him on the right side of the frame. There is a reverse angle shot of Harmonica in close-up with his back to the camera on the right and Frank on the ground, looking at him from the left. These shots are variations on Leone's full shot/close-up-in-one model, in which the camera angle as well as the character's distance from the camera determines who holds power in the relationship.

Frank asks "Who are you?" There is a low angle close-up of Bronson, then a tight close-up of Fonda, followed by a low angle medium shot of Bronson on the right removing the harmonica from the cord around his neck. It is once again "the symbol of a past event which determines a character's role throughout his life leading to his eventual confrontation with his opponent in the arena of life and death."[64] The camera pans left with him, then tilts down as he kneels to the right of Frank, whose hat fills the left foreground. Bronson holds up the harmonica in the center of the screen just as Fonda had held up the dollar bill. Fonda is shown in close-up and Bronson's hand close to the camera fills the frame on the right. The harmonica theme comes in as he lowers it into Frank's mouth. Frank nods his head. This film favors gesture over words whenever possible.

There is a repeat of the flashback close-up shot of the boy falling into the sand, then a shot of Frank falling forward in the same way to the left. Bronson is positioned on the right watching him. The camera pans left so that Frank's face lies horizontally across the entire left side of the screen. The harmonica falls from his mouth to the ground on the right bottom portion close to the camera. Cause and effect are underscored through the juxtaposition of these parallel images. This was the kind of retribution Harmonica had hoped for. He wanted the criminal to be conscious of why he was being executed. Offscreen, the sounds of the railroad work crews can be heard. The path of the train, so violently prepared by him for Morton, will continue to expand without them.

Cheyenne tells Jill that if Harmonica does survive, he will pick up his gear and say "Adios....People like that have something inside, something to do with death."

After this prediction, there is a sequence of thirty-five shots, at the end of which Cheyenne and Harmonica ride away. Twenty-five of these shots are close-ups.

The sequence begins with a shot of Cheyenne in the extreme left foreground with his back to the camera and his gaze directed diagonally to the right, where Jill in midground range is spreading a red checkered cloth on the table, a reference to the aborted wedding feast. This arrangement of characters within the room will be repeated several times.

Cheyenne is seen in a frontal close-up leaning against a wooden pillar, which fills much of the right side of the screen. The background is in soft focus as it will be for all of these interior close-ups. "It would be nice to see this town grow," he remarks. There is a medium close-up of Jill in the center of the screen. Her face is in a three-quarter profile, and she is framed on either side by background pillars. When Leone uses medium rather than tight close-ups, he, like Kobayashi, sometimes employs devices to reframe the image. An offscreen sound is heard.

The close-up of Cheyenne is repeated as he reacts to the sound. The opening two-shot of them is also repeated. There is a close-up of Cheyenne's gun belt as he unhooks the holster, just in case Frank won. Again, he is seen in close-up. A shot of the back of the room discloses light suddenly pouring in from an offscreen door being opened. Then there is a tight close-up profile of Jill as the light floods across the frame. She gasps, which she does frequently in this film, looks towards the center, and smiles. As the offscreen door is shut, the light on her face also diminishes. There is back lighting on her hair. The close-up of Cheyenne is repeated.

Harmonica, in a profile close-up, slides into the frame from the right. His hat creates an arched line across the screen. Music comes in. The close-up of Cheyenne is seen again and then the shot of Jill smiling. There is a tight close-up of Harmonica, off center on the right. The right side of his face is in shadow making him look indeed like a divided man. Perhaps there is a part of him which would like to stay here.

The same shot of Jill follows and then the tight close-up of Harmonica. The opening shot from behind Cheyenne is seen, only this time he is more in silhouette with back lighting framing his head. Harmonica walks right to left across the screen, and the camera dollies around to hold him at the extreme right of the frame as he goes to retrieve his belongings. Jill is between them in the middle with her back to Harmonica. The earlier close-up of Cheyenne is repeated. Then Harmonica is seen in medium shot, off center on the right. The mirror is next to him on the wall, and there is a door on the left. He turns around and says "I gotta go."

Jill is then placed off center on the left in a medium shot with Cheyenne in soft focus in the left background. A thick pillar fills in part of the right side of the screen. She turns around toward the camera and draws her breath again. Harmonica is seen in a medium close-up; then we see Cheyenne in the same close-up as before. There is a medium close-up of Jill, right of center, with Cheyenne in soft focus in the background. The medium close-up of Harmonica is repeated. He turns to the left and moves towards the door, which he opens. The door fills the entire left foreground as it did in the scene during which Jill first found Cheyenne outside her door.

There is a long shot of the building crew outside as Harmonica might see them through the porch. A wagon and a horse pass by. Harmonica is again seen by the door against a dark background. He steps back as he speaks. "Gonna be a beautiful town, Sweetwater." The same medium close-up of Jill is seen as she responds "I hope you'll come back someday." In close-up profile against a dark background and facing left, Harmonica's face is lighted by the sunshine outside, which seems to lure him.

There is a tight close-up of Jill, then the profile shot of Harmonica. "Someday," he says, then moves to the left and disappears behind the open door, which fills the screen as he departs. From his entrance in the opening scene to this departure from the McBain farm, Harmonica tends to slip quietly on and off the screen. "Harmonica always enters the scene as if he had been standing just out of frame all along, only making an appearance when he is needed."[65]

The tight close-up of Jill is repeated, then the same close-up of Cheyenne, which has been used like a pivot throughout. Cheyenne says "Yeah, I gotta go too." The camera returns to its original position from behind Cheyenne, only this time Jill has her back to the camera as she faces the right rear space, which Harmonica had occupied and which now is empty. The vacant space suggests the sense of loss as this trio separates.

The music ends here. Cheyenne moves offscreen to the right. As he reenters the frame, the camera pans left. He stands beside Jill, whose ample derriere, offset by the tie of her apron strings, becomes the screen's main source of interest as Cheyenne pats it. In the medium close-up frontal shot of them which follows, he offers, "Make believe it's nothing." There is a background pillar behind them and he departs to the left.

In a medium shot, Jill walks forward and the camera dollies ahead of her. She stretches her arms out to either side of the frame as she looks outside after them; then there is a long shot of Harmonica and Cheyenne as they ride away in the distance in the center of the screen, while the town and depot is being built around and without them.

Once again, the viewer is expected to read the close-ups for thought and emotion, since the characters say very little. The variations in lighting and the use of select focus fill the empty spaces of the frame not with narrative information but with an appropriate atmosphere. The close-ups become portraits of these icons as they fade into history or myth.

The camera follows Cheyenne and Harmonica on horseback as they ride down the ridge where previously Timmy and Brett McBain had hunted for partridge. Harmonica is in the right foreground facing the camera so that the audience sees what he does not see in the left background. Cheyenne dismounts and sits on the ground.

Then Harmonica turns around and stands near Cheyenne. Once again Leone uses his favorite composition. Harmonica is placed in the right foreground with his back to the camera. The camera is at a slight high angle and Cheyenne is seated in the midground on the left looking up at him.

He explains that "Mr. Choo Choo" shot him, and he asks Harmonica to go away and not watch him die. Then we see Harmonica on the left in the midground area and Cheyenne on the right in the foreground. This time, however, the characters turn their backs towards one another. It is Harmonica's position of respect for Cheyenne as he maintains his distance. In Leone's world, "the measure of a man is his ability to survive, to laugh at death....A man's death is less important than how he faces it."[66] There is a close-up of Harmonica as he hears a thud. As he slowly turns around to the right, the camera dollies with him to include Cheyenne in the background, a horse on the right of the frame and one in the background between Harmonica and Cheyenne. Cheyenne has expired and is curled up on the ground in a fetal position. No lasting relationships are permitted in this film.

There is a close-up of Harmonica and the sound of the train whistle catches his attention. He looks up and to the left. The camera leaves him and cranes up the ridge to show the arriving train. The final shot of the film lasts two minutes. In a high angle long shot, it follows Jill from the house as she carries water to the work crew, the complete embodiment of "an earth-mother role considerably more Italian than American."[67] The camera continues to the right, offering a vista of the construction sites and general activity. Far in the distance, Harmonica is seen riding away, leading the horse on which Cheyenne's body is draped.

> For the first time Leone proposed that something could grow in the wasteland: a civilization and on the shoulders of a woman (Claudia Cardinale)! Once Upon a Time in the West is a fairy tale of redemption, whether through killing (Charles Bronson), or being killed (Jason Robards), or staying put and carrying in water to men parched by despair."[68]

CONCLUSIONS

The narratives of Seppuku and Once Upon a Time in the West have several aspects in common. Each features a skilled and patient protagonist who, motivated by the wrongful treatment of family members, premeditates and rather theatrically executes his revenge. Tsugumo tosses the top knots before the assembled Iye household and Harmonica thrusts the musical instrument, after which he is named, into Frank's mouth. They use these symbolic gestures to make clear the point of their actions.

Both men are obsessed with a past event carried out by a sadistic antagonist. Frank is Harmonica's adversary, but for Tsugumo a whole system must be indicted. A ritualized duel is the format for settling accounts. In both films, there is only one conspicuous female character and her identity is determined by the men around her.

Both films use flashbacks to tell their stories and they take advantage of the widescreen to maintain formal distances between people. Seppuku tends to place its characters at opposite sides of the screen, but Once Upon a Time in the West often places someone close to the camera at one side and someone else farther away on the other side. They each tend to use odd numbers of figures in group compositions (3,5,7) and to rely upon the straight cut for transitions, although Kobayashi does use several dissolves and freeze frames.

Seppuku is characterized throughout by restraint, control, and a sense of public decorum, whereas Once Upon a Time in the West is brash, overstated, and emphasizes the personal style of each character. The individual is separated from the group and exalted by Leone, but Kobayashi struggles with the tension between the social unit and the individual, proving in the process the Japanese adage that "the nail that stands out gets hammered down."

As noted earlier, Seppuku reflects aspects of traditional Japanese theatre and Once Upon a Time in the West is a respectful parody of the American Western with overtones of Italian opera. The plots of both are structured according to a slow revelation of information which reaches a climax in a startling disclosure. Tsugumo has already dispatched his enemies, thereby humiliating the Iye clan, and Harmonica's brother was murdered by Frank.

The two directors approach the CinemaScope format in quite disparate ways, however. Though both are painterly, they are from dissimilar schools. Seppuku favors closed, self-contained compositions.[1] Most of the scenes are interiors in which confinement by social structures and tradition can be suggested by using architectural forms to break up the frame. Straight lines, diagonals, and oblique angles are employed throughout, and the director judiciously places objects where they can most effectively balance a composition. He favors medium and full shots, reserving the close-up for emotional revelation.

Leone's frame is open and much of the film is shot in spacious outdoor settings. Rather than break up the frame, he emphasizes its width through horizontal lines and curved forms. His color film is sensuous, while Kobayashi's black and white work is austere. Cumbow thinks that "the essence of the Leone style is geometry."[2] In comparison with Kobayashi, however, his patterning seems unobtrusive indeed. Leone likes both the long shot and the close-up, often using his close-ups to portray the thoughts of his characters for the audience to read.

Seppuku directs viewer attention and creates a sense of depth through lighting and architectural arrangement. Once Upon a Time, shot in great part in bright natural light, can more easily achieve deep focus without artificial contrivance. For the interior shots, Leone uses architecture and low "Rembrandt lighting" to give the illusion of depth. In Once Upon a Time, proximity to the frame usually determines who will be the main focus of interest, unless that character by his or her gaze directs our attention elsewhere.

Both films rely in great measure upon metaphorical objects either emphasized by a close-up or found within the frame. In Once Upon a Time there are the train station toys, clocks, archways, harmonica, guns, money, plus the horse/train contrast and the motif of water. Seppuku incorporates the family crest, effigy, daily log book, top knots, swords, urn, tiger and pine tree murals, parasols and fans, pens and books, and baskets of fire.

The Samurai and Western genres have many conventions in common and, on occasion, have interchanged stories. The Magnificent Seven is a remake of The Seven Samurai and Leone recreated Yojimbo as For a Few Dollars More. In using the chambara genre, Kobayashi's concerns are thematic as he challenges some fundamental aspects of Japanese society. Leone's film is more elegiac, an homage to the Western, albeit existential in tone. Both explore different aspects of the widescreen format, and together they illustrate the divergent possibilities for adapting to its dimensions.

The debate between the realists and the formalists, which culminated in the discussion of CinemaScope, was ultimately made obsolete by the widescreen films themselves. Formalists, like Arnheim, disdained the widescreen format, whereas realists like Bazin welcomed it. Yet, as David Bordwell has pointed out, "rather than enhancing realism, the monumental screen size and shape tended toward stylization and the enhancement of spectacle."[3]

The very functions of mise-en-scène and editing had to be rethought for the CinemaScope screen, which demands a great deal of the practitioners who work within its borders. The environment can hardly be blocked out, even in medium and close shots, and, consequently, the implications of setting must be carefully considered. The directors cited here--Kobayashi and Leone--effectively used the mise-en-scène to create opposite ideas. Through geometrical arrangement of characters within architectural structures, Kobayashi created an enclosed, imprisoning world of social constraints, while Leone evoked a sense of freedom and spaciousness through deep focus, uncluttered frames, and wide distances between characters.

Since both narrative and descriptive elements can more readily be encompassed within a single shot, the information-gathering functions of editing are reduced and its emotive and rhythmic potential enhanced, as Eisenstein had anticipated would happen. The long shot vistas offered by widescreen, of course, proved particularly appropriate for epic films and action sequences using large numbers of people.

The close-up, too, underwent a transformation on the CinemaScope screen. The human face could fill more of the screen with less distortion, and several characters could be seen in close-up simultaneously. When an empty space existed at the side, it could, among other possibilities, become a receptacle for an actor's gaze.

The selection of aspect ratio influences the manner in which all the other cinematic elements are used and, therefore, has crucial aesthetic implications for the film as a whole. Many of the problems encountered by 'Scope directors in the 1950s were transformed into assets. For contemporary filmmakers, the choice of shooting in an anamorphic format involves taste as well as practical consideration. Although the widescreen is still often associated with spectacles and epics, like Bernardo Bertolucci's <u>The Last Emperor</u> (1987), more intimate subjects, such as Francois Truffaut's <u>Shoot the Piano Player</u> (<u>Tirez sur le pianiste</u> 1960) and Nagisa Oshima's <u>Boy</u> (<u>Shonen</u> 1961), have been successfully explored using the 'Scope frame.

The main deterrent for filmmakers now is the shrinking size of the theatres where their films are exhibited and the restrictions presented by the television and video markets, which generally reduce films to the 1.33:1 size. Perhaps the rerelease of David Lean's Lawrence of Arabia (1962) will serve both to recall the sophistication of CinemaScope during its peak period and to suggest the exhibition possibilities which still remain for those who choose to work in the anamorphic format.[4]

NOTES

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40. André Bazin, "Will CinemaScope Save the Cinema?" _The Velvet Light Trap_ No. 21 (Summer 1985): 14, trans. Catherine Jones and Richard Neupert. Originally published as "Le Cinemascope sauvera-t-il le cinéma?" _Esprit_ (Oct.-Nov. 1953): 672-83.

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68. Ibid., 123.

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73. Arnheim, Film as Art, 75.

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86. Ibid., 6.

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93. Barr, "CinemaScope: Before and After," 9.

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95. Ibid., 18.

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123. Bordwell, "Widescreen Aesthetics," 25.

124. Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson, Classical Hollywood Cinema, 360.

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131. Rainsberger, James Wong Howe, 215.

132. Leonard Maltin, The Art of the Cinematographer: A Survey and Interviews with Five Masters (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1978), 122.

133. Almendros, Man with a Camera, 96-7.

134. Bazin, "CinemaScope," 11.

135. K. Blair Benson, "Wide-Screen Scanning System for Film-to-Tape Transfer," Journal of the SMPTE 82,9 (September 1973): 739-42.

136. Michael Kerbel, "Edited for Television I: Scanning," Film Comment (May-June, 1977): 28.

137. Benson, "Wide Screen Scanning System," 740.

138. Ibid.

139. Dieter Poetsch, "FDL 60--An Advanced Film Scanning System," SMPTE Journal 93,3 (March 1984): 221.

140. For a comparison of the 16mm anamorphic and 16mm scanned prints of Mike Nichols's The Graduate, see Kerbel, "Edited for Television," 29-30.

Chapter 2. Seppuku

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2. Robert Cohen, "Toward a Theory of Japanese Narrative," Quarterly Review of Film Studies (Spring 1981): 187.

3. Shuichi Kato, Form, Style, Tradition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 4.

4. Noël Burch, To the Distant Observer (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 98.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid., 99.

7. All Japanese names will be ordered in the English format of given name first, then family name.

8. Benito Ortolani, "The Nō Drama," International Encyclopedia of Dance. Forthcoming.

9. Kunio Komparu, The Noh Theater (New York: John Weatherhill, Inc., 1983), 159.

10. Archer Winsten, The New York Post, 5 August 1964.

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11. Joan Mellen, Voices from the Japanese Cinema (New York: Liveright, 1975), 148.

12. Blake Lucas, "Harakiri," Magill's Survey of Cinema, ed. Frank N. Magill (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Salem Press, 1985), 3:1342.

13. David Desser, The Samurai Films of Akira Kurosawa (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1983), 54.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Lucas, "Harakiri," 1344.

17. Joseph L. Anderson, and Donald Richie, The Japanese Film (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), 253-54

18. Dietrich Sekel, Emakimono (London: Jonathan Cape, 1959), 15.

19. Ibid., 60.

20. Ibid., 52.

21. Mellen, Voices, 147.

22. Ibid., 139.

23. Ibid., 151.

24. Ibid., 139.

25. Komparu, Noh Theater, xvii.

26. Tadeo Sato, Currents in Japanese Cinema, trans. Gregory Barrett (New York: Kodansha International/USA, Ltd. through Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1982), 49.

27. Burch, Distant Observer, 200.

28. Komparu, Noh Theater, xviii.

29. Burch, Distant Observer, 199-200.

30. Jacques Rivette, "L'age des metteurs en scène," Cahiers du cinema 31 (January 1954): 48.

31. Keiko McDonald, Cinema East (East Brunswick, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983), 52.

32. Bordwell, Narration, 199.

33. Komparu, Noh Theater, 158.

34. Ibid., 159.

35. Ibid., 21.

36. Mellen, Voices, 147.

37. Joan Mellen, The Waves at Genji's Door (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976), 86.

38. Bordwell, Narration, 199.

39. Desser, Samurai Films, 39.

40. Saburo Ienaga, Japanese Art: A Cultural Appreciation, trans. Richard L. Gage (New York: John Weatherhill, Inc. 1979), 71.

41. David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 43.

42. Lucas, "Harakiri," 1342.

43. Mellen, Waves, 88.

44. Donald Richie, The Films of Akira Kurosawa (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 138.

45. Alain Silver, The Samurai Film (Woodstock, New York: The Overlook Press, 1983), 30.

46. Mellen, Waves, 88.

47. The name Miho has mythological overtones. Nakanishi Susumu points out that, according to the Kojiki, the retired ruler Okuninushi no Mikoto sent a messenger to one of his children in a place called Miho asking whether he should consent or refuse to obey Takemikazuchi. Takemikazuchi also asked submission from the god of words and the deity of strength. According to ancient Japanese thinking, in Susumu's interpretation, "in life, when one's existence is challenged by outside forces, one faces a crisis demanding commitment, either an acceptance or refusal of these forces. It is natural to react in a crisis by resorting to words and power. Yet there is a discrepancy between the two: one may accommodate the forces by words, but one can only resist them with power. As a result, one's body may be subjugated and destroyed, but the spirit continues to struggle." Nakanishi Susumu, "The Spatial Structure of Japanese Myth: The Contact Point Between Life and Death," Principles of Classical Japanese Literature, ed. Earl Miner (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985), 112-17.

48. For a more thorough discussion of the principles of Jo, Ha, Kyu, see Komparu, Noh Theater, 26-7.

49. Bordwell, Narration, 137.

50. Karel Reisz, Gavin Millar, The Technique of Film Editing (London: Butterworth & Co., Ltd, 1981), 282.

51. Mellen, Voices, 147.

52. Silver, Samurai, 41.

53. Bosley Crowther, The New York Times, 5 August 1964.

54. Robert Edmonds, the Sights and Sounds of Cinema and Television (New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1982), 23.

55. "Entretien avec Masaki Kobayashi," Séquences no. 54 (April 1968), 64. "D'abord je me demande où est le point culminant du film. C'est ce point culminant qui me guide dans le développement du film. Ensuite, je pense à l'atmosphère, à l'ambiance, aux décors, aux paysages. Je ne commence jamais par la forme. Non. Avant tout, c'est l'homme qui me préoccupe. Après vient tout ce qui concourt à le mettre en évidence."

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56. Silver, <u>Samurai</u>, 39.

57. Susumu, "Spatial Structure," 117. Nakanishi Susumu defines the <u>michiyuki</u> as "a technique used to depict characters' movements, typically their approach toward imminent death, by stringing together a series of place names."

58. <u>Toronto Film Society Newsletter</u> (Spring 1974), 13-4.

59. Ibid., 13

60. Richard Tucker, <u>Japan: Film Image</u> (London: Studio Vista, 1973), 100.

61. Ibid., 99.

62. Lucas, "<u>Harakiri</u>," 1341.

63. Ibid., 1343.

64. Noël Burch, <u>Theory of Film Practice</u> (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 27.

65. <u>Toronto Film Society Newsletter</u>, 13.

66. Ibid., 14.

67. Audie Bock, <u>Japanese Film Directors</u> (New York: Kodansha International Ltd., 1978), 257.

68. Bock, <u>Japanese Film Directors</u>, 256.

Chapter 3. <u>Once Upon a Time in the West</u>

1. Christopher Frayling, <u>Spaghetti Westerns</u> (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 66.

2. Lawrence Staig and Tony Williams, <u>Italian Western: The Opera of Violence</u> (London: Futura Publications, Ltd., 1975), 75.

3. Ibid., 24.

4. Stuart Kaminsky, "Once upon a Time in Italy: The Italian Western Beyond Leone," Velvet Light Trap 12 (Spring 1974): 31.

5. Richard T. Jameson, "Something to Do with Death: A Fistful of Sergio Leone," Film Comment 9 (March/April 1973): 8.

6. Frayling, Spaghetti Westerns, 61.

7. Iain Johnstone, The Man with No Name: The Biography of Clint Eastwood (New York: Morrow, 1981), 50.

8. David A. Cook, A History of Narrative Film (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1981), 54.

9. George R. Kernodle, From Art to Theatre: Form and Convention in the Renaissance (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944), 5.

10. Robert C. Cumbow. Once Upon a Time: The Films of Sergio Leone (Metuchen, New Jersey, and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1987), 215.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid., 214.

13. Elaine Lomanzo, "A Fable for Adults," Film Comment (August 1984), 23.

14. Jameson, "Something to Do with Death," 11.

15. Thomas Sobchack and Vivian Sobchack, An Introduction To Film 2nd ed. (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown, and Company, 1987), 224.

16. Jameson, "Something to Do with Death," 12.

17. Robert E. Carr and R. M. Hayes, Wide Screen Movies: A History and Filmography of Wide Gauge Filmmaking (Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland and Company, Inc., 1988), 72.

18. Staig and Williams, Italian Western, 20.

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19. Danny Peary, Cult Movies: The Classics, the Sleepers, the Weird, and the Wonderful (New York: Dell Publishing Co. Inc., 1981), 235.

20. Peary, Cult Movies, 235.

21. Frayling, Spaghetti Westerns, 137.

22. Noel Simsolo, "Sergio Leone Talks," Take One 3 (Jan./Feb. 1972): 31.

23. Cumbow, Once Upon a Time, 175.

24. Robert Warshaw, The Immediate Experience: Movies, Comics, Theatre and Other Aspects of Popular Culture (New York: Atheneum, 1970), 137.

25. Cumbow, Once Upon a Time, 132.

26. Johnstone, The Man with No Name, 38.

27. Stuart Kaminsky, "The Grotesque West of Sergio Leone," Take One 3:9 (Jan./Feb. 1972): 29.

28. Frayling, Spaghetti Westerns, 181.

29. Staig and Williams, Italian Western, 128.

30. Frayling, Spaghetti Westerns, 200.

31. Kaminsky, "The Grotesque West," 27.

32. Danny Peary, "New Western Hero," in Close-Ups: Intimate Profiles of Movie Stars by their Co-Stars, Directors, Screenwriters and Friends, edited by Danny Peary, (New York: Workman Publishing, 1978), 414.

33. Mary Corliss, "Once upon a Time...." Film Comment (August 1984): 19.

34. Johnstone, The Man with No Name, 39.

35. Frayling, Spaghetti Westerns, 171.

36. Kaminsky, "The Grotesque West," 29.

37. Peter Bondanella, Italian Cinema: From Neorealism to the Present (New York: Ungar, 1983), 263.

38. Perry, Cult Movies, 239.

39. Frayling, Spaghetti Westerns, 128.

40. Ibid.

41. Simsolo, "Sergio Leone Talks," 26.

42. Frayling, Spaghetti Westerns, 171.

43. Maltin, The Art of the Cinematographer, 102.

44. "Chiaroscuro" lighting is usually associated with German Expressionism, but, in 1915, it was Cecil B. DeMille's cameraman, Alvin Wyckoff, who first dubbed D. W. Griffith's atmospheric or tonal illumination "Rembrandt lighting." See Cook, 68.

45. Kaminsky, "Once upon a Time in Italy," 32.

46. Ibid.

47. Jameson, "Something to Do with Death," 32.

48. Frayling, Spaghetti Westerns, 202.

49. Jameson, "Something to Do with Death," 32. For a shot description of the shots and sequences cut from the film, see Frayling, Spaghetti Westerns, 269-79.

50. Bordwell, Staiger, Thompson, The Classical Hollywood Cinema, 361-62.

51. Bazin, "A Little Late, 16.

52. Frayling, Spaghetti Westerns, 215.

53. Kaminsky, "Once upon a Time in Italy," 29.

54. Jameson, "Something to Do with Death," 11.

55. Kaminsky, "Once upon a Time in Italy," 29.

56. Staig and Williams, Italian Westerns, 160.

57. Ibid., 165.

58. Jameson, "Something to Do with Death," 9; Frayling, Spaghetti Westerns, 121.

59. Cumbow, Once Upon a Time, 131.

60. Simsolo, "Sergio Leone Talks," 30.

61. Frayling, Spaghetti Westerns, 181.

62. Jameson, "Something to Do with Death," 15.

63. Staig and Williams, Italian Western, 80.

64. Ibid., 81.

65. Frayling, Spaghetti Westerns, 203.

66. Kaminsky, "The Grotesque West," 27.

67. Jameson, "Something to Do with Death," 14.

68. Corliss, "Once upon a Time," 19.

Chapter 4. Conclusions

1. For a discussion of open and closed forms, see Leo Braudy, The World in a Frame: What We See in Films (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press, Doubleday, 1977), 44-51.

2. Cumbow, Once Upon a Time, 132. Also see Frayling, Spaghetti Westerns, 180.

3. Bordwell, Staiger, Thompson, Classical Hollywood Cinema, 361.

4. High Definition Television is using a 1.66:1 instead of 1.33:1 aspect ratio, and some CinemaScope films, such as Lola Montès are now available in their original 2:35:1 format on video discs.

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