Information, reception and film: A reader-response analysis of *Rashomon*

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Declaration

This thesis has been composed by myself and it has not been submitted in any previous

application for a degree. I executed the work reported upon within and all other works

used is acknowledged at the relevant places in the text.

Abstract

The dissertation is aligned to current changes in the academia, notably the transdisciplinary interpretation and understanding of human phenomena. Grounded in communication, the dissertation has drawn on concepts from information science, film studies, and cognitive science as well as philosophy and other disciplines. The objective of this research is to unravel the way film as an environment is observed, marked, and indicated by spectators and thus how meaning is assigned to a film.

This transdisciplinary approach draws on autopoiesis, laws of form, reader response and cybernetic communication. The research employs a constructivist approach to understand how viewers assign meaning to the films they watch. The research is based on two premises: information emerges from people's indications of an environment as they observe it, and film is an environment for observation that attains meaning, in other words become informative as spectators make indications of their observations of film.

Rashomon, the celebrated film of Akira Kurosawa, is the vehicle to understand the process of sense-making as constructing form. Viewers' comments at Amazon.com provide evidence of how these individuals observe the film and make sense of it by making distinctions. A reader-response analysis was used to interpret the comments; this researcher's analysis is yet a higher scale of indication of observation.

In the process of reader-response, the researcher as an observer is cued or perturbed to indicate that *Rashomon*, an impressionistic film noted for its cinematic style, has taken an expressionist form because of the discourse constructed, and being constructed, by various observers generating meaning over an open-ended palette.

This research stresses the functional necessity for transcending disciplinary borders in order to understand communication as multistage observation constructing meaning and thereby constantly generating forms for observation. Such forms are made intelligible by virtue of our having structural coupling, i.e. a shared set of tokens such as language. Humans as observers are constant producers of forms and diligent generators of tokens that expand our horizon.

Communication is thus an ever-emerging, meaning-construction process. We observe the world—tangible and intangible—that we interpret, make distinctions, and externalize through indication; these are in turn observed, distinguished, and indicated by other observers. This observational understanding of communication in fact facilitates the unending emergence of horizon and therefore communication is emergent, sense-making, and horizon-expanding.

Dedication:

My departed father who never ceased to believe in my dream.

Alamgir Kabir, whose cinema *Surjakonna* inflicted a metamorphosis in me.

Farid, with whom I have been discussing cinema since we watched *Surjakonna* in 1976.

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The clock ticked tacked, seasons rounded, and I roamed from place to place while I worked on this dissertation. Ideas evolved as I came across new thoughts constantly appearing in different books and journals. Finally, the dissertation has come to its end form and this would not have been possible without the support of my supervisors Professor Gitiara Nasreen and Professor Zakir Hossain Raju. My sincere gratitude to them.

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My younger brother Nasim prematurely breathed his last, and therefore I will not be able to share my relief of completing this dissertation with him in this dimension of life. But I will miss him as without him my celebration would be incomplete. I thank my sister Shelly and youngest brother Apu for being remarkably patient and not giving up on me.

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Completion of this dissertation was like a meditation to me. I was sometime defocused as the wind blew against my path. Listening to the music of Leonard Cohen and Bob Dylan has calmed me and I felt recharged.

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1 Introduction: Framing the research

1.1 Introduction

Death of a samurai remains a mystery—was it a suicide or murder, and who killed with what motivation—in Akira Kurosawa's 1950 film *Rashomon* as different testimonies narrate the death from contrasting perspectives. Film reviewers, scholars, and general spectators have been interpreting the mystery with various analyses of human nature since the premiere of the film. The riddle of contradictory interpretation of a single event has given birth to a phrase "the Rashomon effect" denoting the subjectivity of perception, by which observers of an event tend to produce significantly different but equally believable accounts of the same event. Differences in human observations assign different meanings to the same phenomenon. This dissertation has used a transdisciplinary approach to explore the way receptors assign meaning to films they watch.

The research is based on two premises: information emerges from people's indication of an environment as they observe it, and film is an environment that becomes informative as spectators make indication of their observation of a film. Using the constructivist theory of autopoiesis in combination with the theory of form, a reader-response analysis of audiences' reviews has been conducted to examine how spectators make indications of *Rashomon*, i.e. assign meaning to the film. I have proposed a constructivist understanding of information and communication while demonstrating a methodology—reader-response aided by discourse analysis technique—for the theory of

information as form. My approach aligns with current changes in the disciplines, which are transitioning from a positivistic to a constructivist understanding of human phenomena addressed from a transdisciplinary perspective.

1.2 Disciplines: Undergoing a transition

A Buddhist monk may joyously await death believing it is the passage to achieving nirvana. On the contrary, which is likely the case with most of us, the very thought of death evokes an austere feeling and we become distressed if not dreadfully sad. Death is a fact that no living being can overcome, in that sense death has an objective epistemic status that can be observed, measured, and recorded. However, how an individual approaches the concept of death, let alone his own death, i.e. our ontological association with death, is a matter of each individual's biographical context, emotional frame and cognitive scripture. Thus the unquestionable objective fact of life—death, which no one can deny—becomes a province for subjective interpretation because of the various way people phenomenize it. Phenomenizing a fact, idea or feeling is essentially constructing knowledge that is emergent and specific to an individual. Therefore, multiple knowledge exist, constructed by different individuals. As Raskin (2002, p. 4) puts it, "knowledge is a compilation of human-made constructions," not necessarily the unearthing of an objective truth. In academia we see progressive changes aligned to the constructivist approach to knowledge.

This change in academia—from positivistic to interpretive understanding of objects and phenomena—has made a significant difference in most disciplines, even neuroscience, as early as the 1960s, moved from an entirely mechanical examination of symptoms and tangible properties to include considerations of patients' interpretations (Sacks, 1970). Heuristic cognitive science made a pronounced shift to social or embedded cognition widely known as cognition in the wild (Hutchins, 1995). The change, broadly evident in the humanities and social sciences, is especially by an increasing focus on the actor's perspective—the way actors participate in constructing the world as they observe it (Pervez, 2006).

Once primarily located (discussed and debated) in the humanities and social sciences, the constructivist perspective is now being adopted in hard science as well, from particle physics, to biology to neuroscience. Most disciplines are undergoing what is almost a paradigmatic change, with increasing subscription to constructivism. This encourages a multi-disciplinary understanding of phenomena—from both theoretical perspectives and methodological applications. The discipline of communication is no exception. It draws on theories and methods from different disciplines and adopts a trans-disciplinary constructive perspective to unearth phenomena of human interest.

Disciplines are drawing on each other's concepts and perspectives for interpreting actors' interpretations, resulting in an obvious diminution of the boundaries that formerly separated the disciplines. Instead those that share core areas are progressively merging: communication and information science now recognize their areas of common interest in

dealing with the same phenomena using common perspectives (Saracevic, 1995; Pervez, 2008). These developments facilitate this doctoral research in communication to draw on multi-disciplinary concepts from communication, information science, film studies and other fields to understand film from the receptor's perspective. The research will draw on a cybernetic communication approach—that further draws on autopoiesis and the laws of form—to information and information system to argue that film is an environment, i.e. information system, capable of perturbing viewers' observations to assign meaning, i.e. information to film.

1.2.1 Academic disciplines: Structural formation

An academic discipline is a particular form of knowledge that represents a particular way of knowing about the world. An academic discipline can be understood as divided into two planes: a horizontal plane that speaks for its breadth and a vertical plane that denotes its depth (Bernstein, 1999). The horizontal plane is about the history of the intellectual and sociocultural foundations of a discipline, whereas vertical plane unveils the tools, techniques, and methods used for investigation and the knowledge developed and reproduced from them. The first plane explains the paradigmatic position of a discipline, the latter shows the scope and nature in practice by indicating the discipline's boundary. A significant change on the horizontal plane may evoke changes on the vertical plane, similar to Kuhn's (1962) *paradigm shifts*.

Some view a boundary as a difference (Abbott, 1988; Gieryn, 1999; Small, 1999) and others take it as an interfaces facilitating knowledge production (Bowker &

Star, 1999). As an interface, a boundary is not only a separation that makes exclusion, it also facilitates communication that bridges ideas across different organizations, institutions, and disciplines. Therefore, a boundary is a coin with two sides: exclusion and inclusion. Exclusion is often associated with hard sciences and hierarchical knowledge structure. Soft sciences and those with horizontal knowledge modalities are open for inclusion, while simultaneously maintaining their organizational and professional identity.

Although each discipline had its own vocabulary, dialogue among the social sciences is increasing. This is evident in hard science as well; for example, some Nobel laureates in medicine are actually physicists by disciplinary affiliation. Durkheim was a sociologist and classical founder of the discipline but his works, theories, concepts, and methods are used in anthropology and other social sciences with equal emphasis. Thus, the classical sense of boundary is unsettled at best. What we see is an increasing communication and bridging across academic disciplines. However, the academic professions continue to strengthen their identities through professional organizations, occupation, conferences, and field-specific journals.

Academic disciplines are also developmental and they should be understood in the context of interpretation. The Kuhnian understanding of paradigm[1] divides

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[1] "Paradigm is an entire constellation of beliefs, values and techniques, and so on, shared by the members of a given community" (Kuhn, 1970, p.175)

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academic disciplines into hard and soft science. The hard sciences are known to have a strong paradigm relying on experimental, quantifiable data. Accuracy and objectivity are the prime focus of hard science. Natural sciences fall into this category. Social sciences are more hermeneutical in nature. They usually do not have a universally accepted approach, method, or perspective. They emphasize the use of scientific method and use both quantitative and qualitative techniques, but do not always lean on objectivity as their focus. Social sciences fall into the soft sciences.

1.2.3 Revival of transdisciplinary epistemology

Philosophers from the distant past in different nations and countries—e.g., India, China, the Arabic speaking world—developed knowledge over an integrated horizon including material and non-material phenomena. Ancient philosophers like Aristotle and Plato emphasized equally poetics, socio political matters, physics, astronomy and biology to develop a metaphysical epistemology describing human ontology. That was a culture of integrated knowledge, which continued throughout the middle ages. Hegel used the term *Realphilosophie* in his 1805 lectures on the material philosophy of pure logic, emphasizing that without an understanding of social and cultural phenomena the pure logic of the material world will remain incomplete (Brockman, 1995). Such an integrated approach to knowledge according to, Gábor Paál, aligns with the idea of the *Third Culture* that was widespread in nineteenth century German universities (Steven, 2002), even as positivism was gaining ground. Some members of the Vienna Circle, Otto Neurath and others, argued for the unity of science while also popularizing new scientific

concepts. However, in the *Methodenstreit* German universities established a hard division between scientific and humanistic knowledge, battling out interpretivism in favor of positivism. Positivism soon achieved solid ground on the continent and dominated knowledge production over the next centuries. In *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*, published in 1959, Charles Percy Snow (Snow, 2001) described the disjunction that prevailed between humanities and science.

Over the last decades of the twentieth century, the scenario began to change as scholars felt the need to transcend their disciplinary boundaries by adopting approaches and theories from other disciplines. A good example is the theory of autopoiesis. Maturana and Varela developed it in the course of their biological investigations and the social sciences and humanities soon appropriated the approach and theory in their domains. Sociologist Niklas Luhmann (2000, 1995, 1990) expanded autopoiesis to sociological investigation while bringing together systems theory, communication theory and evolution theory. Likewise, Spencer-Brown's *Laws of Form*—a mathematical treatise written to serve technological purpose—is now used across all sciences. Cybernetics, an offshoot of mechanical information processing, is now used by anthropologists (Hutchins, 1995) in understanding the social aspect of cognition. Recently film theory has adopted neurological concepts, coining the term *neurofilmology* for such transdisciplinary study of film. *Cinéma&Cie* devoted its Spring/Fall 2014 issue to neurofilmology.

Sandu (2011) sees the return of transdisciplinary exchange and production of knowledge as an inevitable phenomenon of postmodernity, by stating (p.39):

> Postmodern humanism remains focused – on one hand – on the issue of freedom, taken from Sartre, but breaks it apart from any other form of transcendence, from any possibility of ontological focus. On the other hand, the postmodern humanism is centered on the distinction. Reality is multiple, there is not only one world, but a multitude of worlds, going to be so many worlds, as many thoughtful consciousness. ………Reality is a flash, a cut of a set of inter-looked to object-event system, which constitutes the way of appearing for the observer. …There is no single reality capable of measuring, but a multitude of realities which could be understood and contained in a communication process.

In a state of immeasurable ever emergent reality, no discipline alone can address any phenomenon, and positivism can present an objective picture either. Therefore, it is necessary to cross boundaries and promote dialogue among the disciplines. One cannot study an objective reality but rather the result of an interaction between observer and observed. Addressing such interaction is an act of communication that necessitates disciplines to draw on each other. Søren Brier (2013, p 222) responded to such transdisciplinary effort by developing *cybersemiotics—*which "proposes a transdisciplinary framework integrating Peirce's triadic semiotics with a cybernetic view of information on the basis of an ontology of emptiness." He is concerned that the discipline–based, positivistic search explains human communication from the outside without recognizing the phenomenological and hermeneutical aspects of human existence and therefore cannot explain the evolution of embodied consciousness and human language and communication (Brier, 2010, 2009, 2008).

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Transdisciplinary thinking overcomes the popular social science practice of reduction and disjunction, meaning inquiry goes progressively deeper into a smaller subsection of knowledge and separate into its own world; instead it "is an attitude towards inquiry, informed by certain epistemological propositions, and an effort to frame inquiry as a creative process that recognizes as central the subjectivity of an inquirer and challenges the underlying organization of knowledge." (Montuori, p.2, 2005) The two core premises of transdisciplinary thinking: that observer creates his reality and that the object of inquiry is the interaction between observer and observation, directs attention to the process of world/reality construction, i.e. constructivism, and its unending interpretation or hermeneutics. Interpretation is a ceaseless human act that already begins "when the child moves to the touch of its mother or opens its mouth to feed from the breast, it is already interpreting. It is not merely reacting to stimulus but responding to a call. In the natal contact of flesh on flesh, there are already the tiny seizures and exposures or joy and fear, desire and anxiety" (Kearney, p. 104, 2015).

1.2.4 Constructivism

In discussing information—its construction and use—Tuominen and Savolanien (2005) cite Gergen who defines constructivism as a view in which an individual mind constructs reality but within a systematic relationship to the external world. Thus the core premise of constructivism emphasizes the individual's creation of knowledge and mental models through experience and observation. This transdisciplinary approach subscribes to constructivism in its inquiry regarding humans and their making the world meaningful.

Two examples below will support the process by which we endorse meaning to our world.

Celebration of Bengali New Year is astoundingly popular in Bangladesh marked by colorful procession of people from all walks and genders. The celebration that was observed on 14 April 2015, created a loud outcry as some girls were assaulted by some who believed that women should not be allowed in public places. It came as a shock and people immediately protested the incident by voicing their opinion through different media, notably Facebook, where discussion was the most sustained one.

Arushaa Rayhan
3 hrs · ❀

No, this is no painting nor anything drawn or made deliberately. This is simply a tea stain which i found in one of the tiles in my kitchen. The figure seems to be that of a woman and this can have many meanings.. But out off all, the one i interpreted is the call of 'women' constantly reminding us of the heinous acts and tortures which they have been enduring all through.. Not recently but through ages...... This call should be answered.. The nature too is protesting.....

Figure 1 Construction of views on Facebook

In one of such Facebook protest Arusha Rayhan posted a tea stain laying from a kitchen floor, which she finds resembles a woman protesting the trials that women have endured through the ages. Humans see form and engage in interpretation aligned to their context, which is very much subjective, and thereby construct meaning.

Ascribing meaning to one's surroundings and observations in order to explain things that are apparently mystic and unknowable is an ancient phenomenon. For example, different civilizations—Aztec, Sumerian, Greek, Arab, Chinese and Indian—mapped the stars in the night sky. Observation was put into methodical understanding of the universe by recording changes in positions of the stars—actually the animals and objects comprising the constellations to which the stars are mapped—as their relative positions change throughout the year. The sun's appearance was considered especially significant.
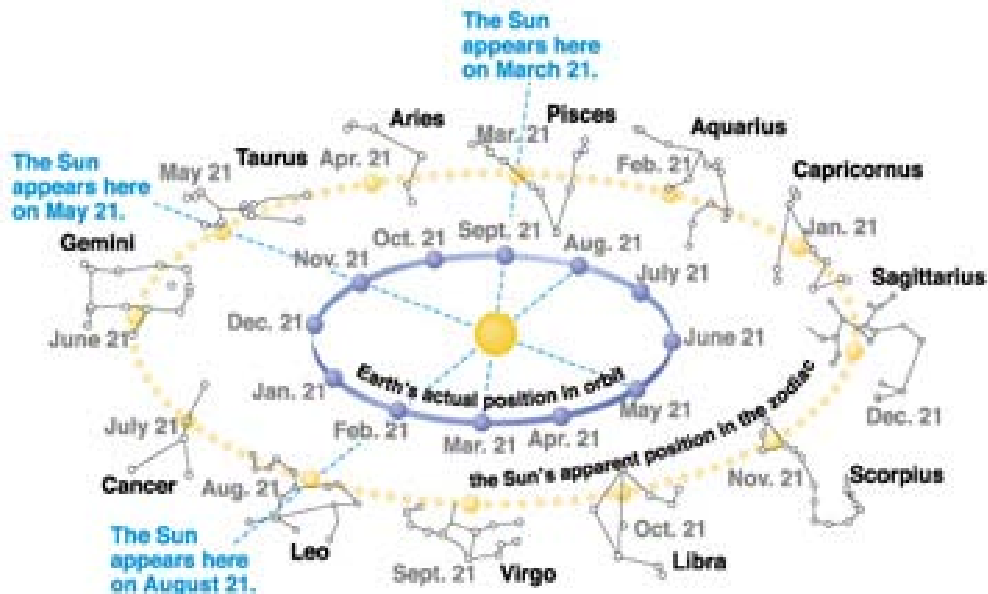
Figure 2 Construction of constellation in the universe

The meaning endorsement is self-referential and constructive (Maturana, 1970); without exception, each civilization constructed constellations referring to the shapes of animals and other objects that one sees while connecting or grouping the stars. Below is an example of Greek constellations constructing Leo the lion and Taurus the bull by grouping stars.

Figure 3 Constructing Leo and Taurus with stars

Lupus is one of the 88 modern constellations; it was also one of the 48 constellations listed by the second century astronomer Ptolemy . It is located in the deep southern sky and its name is Latin for wolf. White (2008, p. 145) explains the exterior connection Lupus as he says, "The Greek constellation is probably based on the Babylonian figure known as the Mad Dog (UR.IDIM). This was a strange hybrid creature that combined the head and torso of a man with the legs and tail of a lion (the cuneiform sign 'UR' simply refers to a large carnivore; lions, wolves and dogs are all included). It is often found in association with the sun god and another mythical being called the Bison-man, which is supposedly related to the Greek constellation of Centaurus."

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Figure 4 Lupus the Wolf

Articulating observations into representations of animals proceeded further as people framed them into narratives out of which stories, legends and myths formed. The Indian constellation is an excellent example, which gave birth to thousands of legends and myths, which in turn constructed rituals that Hindus still celebrate. The renowned Saptarshi (Seven sages), the seven central stars of Ursa Major, representing the character and spirit of pre-historic or mythic period is such a construction. .

Worshipping the supreme goddess (Devi) Durga (Sanskrit: "the inaccessible" or "the invincible") is the core religious festival of Bengali Hindus. Durga has definite meaning as Fuller (2004, p.108) explains, "The goddess Durga riding a lion and slaying the buffalo demon Mahishashura (Asura) the king of the demons (Asura) who represents the forces of ignorance and chaos. With his demonic army, Mahishashura has defeated the gods in battle, but because of a boon granted to him, the goods cannot destroy him. So the task falls to the goddess, who is created by the gods, and finally kills Mahishashura by cutting off his buffalo-head." The supreme goddess Durga is framed into a narrative. "According to the narrative from the Devi Mahatmya story of the Markandeya Purana,

the form of Durga was created as a warrior goddess to fight a demon. The demon's father

Rambha, king of the demons, once fell in love with a water buffalo, and Mahish Asur

(the demon Mahish) was born out of this union. He is therefore able to change between

human and buffalo form at will (mahish means "buffalo"). Through intense prayers to

Brahma, Mahishasur had the boon that he could not be defeated by any man or god. He

unleashed a reign of terror on earth, heaven and the nether worlds." McIntosh (2007, p.

284).

Figure 5 Killing of Mahishashur in painting and statue in temple

From the observational perspective of constructivism it is notable that the

characters of Durga narrative, and as the rituals and performance observed in the Durga

worships (Puja) in the form of idols has origin in the Indian constellation. Sengupta

(2009) illuminates the fact in explaining Durga puja from the Bengali month of Falgun to

Ashwin. The stars forming the image of Durga and Mahish Asur have a heliacal setting

effect[2], as the Mahish Asur   disappears just after being visible in the sky while the Durga is still visible. The human mind translates this as the Mahish Asur being killed by the goddess. Furthermore, the position of the stars is not static because the universe is always moving. Until 1000 BC the disappearance of Mahish Asur happened in the Bengali month Falgun, and therefore Durga puja was observed in Falgun. Due to celestial change, Mahish Asur disappears, or as a Hindu believes is killed, in the month of Ashwin. Accordingly, the Durga puja has shifted to Ashwin as well.

Construction is a self-referential process (Maturana; Pervez, 2006; Nöth & Bishara, 2007) as people—individually or in groups—cognize and phenomenize from their own perspectives aligned to their biographies, beliefs and stocks of knowledge (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Gestalt psychologists—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Ernst Mach, and particularly of Christian von Ehrenfels and the research work of Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Köhler, Kurt Koffka, and Kurt Lewin—in their explanation of how people construct perception echoed the notion that objects are perceived or phenomenized according to the background knowledge of perceiver or observer. Thus, individuals and groups often see things differently.

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[2] A heliacal setting occurs when a planet or star enters into conjunction with the Sun. The increasing proximity of the Sun towards the star each day eventually leads to a period of invisibility, during which it is masked by the Sun's light. Its setting is the moment when it is visible for the last time immediately after sunset. It then rises and sets with the Sun, remaining hidden from sight both day and night.
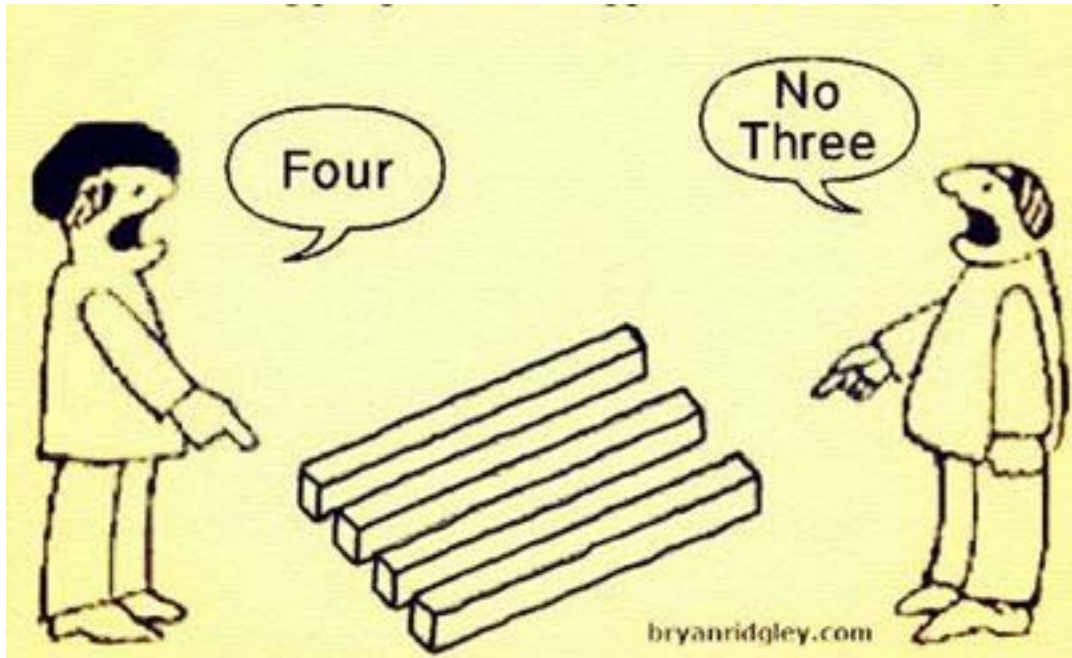
Figure 6 Difference in perception (source: bryanridgley.com)

Differences in observation, which is caused and derived by the observer's biography, beliefs and knowledge (in other words context or culture) is the core premise of constructivism, which subscribes to phenomenology emphasizing the embedded worldview of the perceiver.

Jean Piaget is referred to as the initiator of formalizing the theory of constructivism; he examined how learners internalize what they learn in a contextual way. Here context refers to the concept of *umwelt* developed by Jacob von Uexküll, who was interested in how living beings perceive their environments. Drawing on empirical evidence, Uexküll argued that organisms perceived the experience of living in terms of species-specific, spatio-temporal, 'self-in-world' subjective reference frames that he called *umwelt* (Uexküll, 1957). *Umvelt* has become a semiotic term to understand the

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world from a subjective perspective. While discussing *umwelt* to understand the process of constructionism, Surrop (2001) says that *umwelt* and the internal world of an organism belong together. Thus, it is also the closed world of the organism which can best be understood by self-reflexivity.

Maturana and Varela elaborately described a similar understanding of constructivism based on *umwelt* by in their theory of autopoiesis. "Maturana and Varela proposed an instructive metaphor that is worthwhile to recall here. In their viewpoint, living systems are self-producing machines. No other kind of machine is able to do this: their production always consists in something that is different from themselves" (Mariotti, 2009)[3]. Zolo (1991) claims that the epistemological implications of autopoietic self-reference have revolutionized the classical epistemology of subject-object and providing the way to synthesize the new 'circular' categories emerging in physics, biology and the social sciences. It is further claimed that autopoiesis presents itself as the new paradigm of postmodern knowledge, valid for both natural and social sciences.

1.2.5 Construction and reader response

One of the most important premises of autopoiesis, and constructivism as well, is seeing perception and construction as a self-reflexive phenomenological act, which, in other words, puts reader response in the middle ground especially in understanding the ways people makes indication of what they observe. Reader response is both an approach to

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[3] Autopoiesis will be described in detail in the next chapters

see construction from the actor's point of view and also a methodology to investigate, indicate and understand such observation.

Originating in literature, as developed by Norman Holland, Stanley Fish, Wolfgang Iser, Hans-Robert Jauss, Roland Barthes, and others, reader response belief that the meaning of a text is derived from the reader through the reading process (Cahil, 1996). It contrasts the idea of classical literary theory that text contains meaning and the reader is a passive consumer. Wendly Griswold (1993, p. 457) elaborates the act of readers as:

> The most significant new direction taken by work in the sociology of literature in the past decade has been the reconceptualization of readers as creative agents rather than passive recipients of what authors write. Sociologists embraced European "reception aesthetics as a way to understand the construction the construction of literary meaning. Proponents of reception aesthetics argued that the reader never comes to a text as a blank slate but instead places it against what Jauss termed a "horizontal expectations."

The principal theoretical premises of reader response as illustrated online at http://www2.cnr.edu/home/bmcmanus/readercrit.html by Barbara F. McManus in October 1998 are:

- Literature is a performative art and each reading is a performance, analogous to playing/singing a musical work, enacting a drama, etc. Literature exists only when

it is read; meaning is an event (versus the New Critical concept of the "affective

fallacy").

- The literary text possesses no fixed and final meaning or value; there is no one

    "correct" meaning. Literary meaning and value are "transactional," "dialogic,"

    created by the interaction of the reader and the text. According to Louise

    Rosenblatt, a poem is "what the reader lives through under the guidance of the

    text."

Introduced in the 1970s, reader response is progressively making its way in other

disciplinary studies beyond literary work, of which communication in general and film in

particular are no exception. Hubard (2008) used reader response in meaning making in

visual arts while Berger already in 1978 termed viewing as action as he examined the

audience's response to the films they watch by comparing Eigenstein's film sense with

Fish's (1967) [4] theory of reader response while drawing on the audience's response on

the films of Hitchcock and also Alain Resnais' *Last Year at Marienbad.* In his recent

doctoral research, "The audience and the film: A reader-response analysis of Italian

neorealism," Vincent Piturro (2008) used both the approach and method that further

confirmed and strengthened the use and utility of reader response theory in understanding

how people construct meaning as they distinguish their observations and assign meaning

to what they actively watch.

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[4] Fish is best known for his analysis of interpretive communities — a derivative of reader-response criticism. Fish in this area examines how the interpretation of a text is dependent upon each reader's own subjective experience in one or more communities.

Constructivism draws on phenomenology (as does autopoiesis) and thus conceptually connected to reader response since both take an actor-centric perspective on meaning making as a communicative process. Such communication processes involve observation, making distinctions and externalization of indications over some medium for sharing and reproducing meaning. The following section explores the discipline of communication, which is transcending its boundary to fit into an emerging transdisciplinary understanding of human acts.

1.3 Communication: Evolution towards undoing boundary

Communication is vital to human life as we try to make sense of our experience and to assign meaning to what is going on inside and around us; sometimes this meaning is shared but on other occasions it is not. It is no wonder that communication has been studied since antiquity (Stewart, 1995). Scholars have defined communication from different perspectives. Dance and Larson (1976) identified 126 definitions of communication. According to Dance (1970), some definitions were broad and inclusive but others were restrictive. Some focused on purpose when others were normative.

Miller (2002), examining a wider arena of different understandings of communication, identified two levels of conceptualization of communication, which he called the points of convergence and divergence. Points of convergence are conceptual features that have emerged as important points of discussion over the years; some of them are widely accepted. Examples of points of convergence are "communication is a process," "communication is transactional," and "communication is symbolic." On the

other hand, there are communication concepts that have generated enormous debate and differences of opinion persist; these are the points of divergence. Two primary examples of such concepts are "communication as social activity" and "communication and intention." The divergent points of communication concepts raise questions regarding people's active involvement in the act of communication; the convergent points focus on the need for a medium for communication to occur.

According to Littlejohn's (2002) analysis, nine things may be considered as communication: 1A Nonperceived symptomatic behavior, 1B Incidentally perceived symptoms, 1C Symptoms attended to,2A Nonperceived nonverbal messages, 2B Incidental nonverbal messages, 2C Nonverbal message attended to, 3A Nonperceived verbal messages, 3B Incidental verbal messages, and 3C Verbal messages attended to. This communication spectrum generates three models about what is to be called communication. The sender-receiver model restricts communication to the messages that are intentionally directed to other people and are received by them. The receiver model defines as communication anything that is meaningful to receivers irrespective of whether it is intended. In the communication behavior model everything is communication except nonperceived symptomatic behavior.
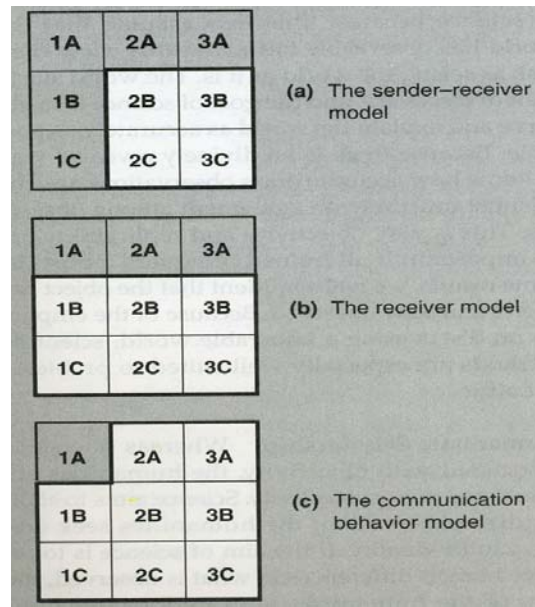
Figure 7 Different models of communication (Littlejohn, 2002, p. 9)

The communication behavior model emphasizes intention on both the sides—senders and receivers—but does not limit it to sharing of a common intention. Therefore, a message sent by a sender with a particular intention packed with a definite meaning may be received with a different meaning by a receiver but this will still be communication. Here lies the basis of interpretive understanding of communication, which is both convergent and divergent, denoting communication is a process and meaning is emergent.

1.3.1   Cybernetic communication: Autopoietic meaning construction

Unveiling the ever growing horizon of knowledge and inquiry in general and putting it into the context of communication specifically, Craig (p, 123, 1999) remarks:

No active field of inquiry has a fully unified theory. A perfectly coherent field would be a static field, a dead field, but the practice of communication itself is very much alive and endlessly evolving in a worldly sense of contingency and conflict. Communication theory, the theory of this practice, in all likelihood will never, therefore, achieve a final, unified form.

In elaborating such an active and open-ended field of inquiry, Littlejohn identified seven traditions of communication —rhetorical, semiotic, phenomenological, cybernetic, sociopsychological, sociocultural and critical tradition—to address communication practices.

	Rhetorical	Semiotic	Phenomenological	Cybernetic	Sociopsychological	Sociocultural	Critical
Communication theorized as:	The practical art of discourse	Intersubjective mediation by signs	Experience of otherness; dialogue	Information processing	Expression, inter-action, & influence	(Re)production of social order	Discursive reflection
Problems of communication theorized as:	Social exigency requiring collective deliberation and judgment	Misunderstanding or gap between subjective viewpoints	Absence of, or failure to sustain, authentic human relationship	Noise; overload; underload; a malfuction or "bug" in a system	Situation requiring manipulation of causes of behavior to achieve specified outcomes	Conflict; alienation; misalignment; failure of coordination	Hegemonic ideology; systematically distorted speech situation
Metadiscursive vocabulary such as:	Art, method, communicator, audience, strategy, commonplace, logic, emotion	Sign, symbol, icon, index, meaning, referent, code, language, medium, (mis)understanding	Experience, self & other, dialogue, genuineness, supportiveness, openness	Source, receiver, signal, information, noise, feedback, redundancy, network, function	Behavior, variable, effect, personality, emotion, perception, cognition, attitude, interaction	Society, structure, practice, ritual, rule, socialization, culture, identity, coconstruction	Ideology, dialectic, oppression, consciousness-raising, resistance, emancipation
Plausible when appeals to metadiscursive commonplaces such as:	Power of words; value of informed judgment; improvability of practice	Understanding requires common language; omni-present danger of miscommunication	All need human contact, should treat others as persons, respect differences, seek common ground	Identity of mind and brain; value of information and logic; complex systems can be unpredictable	Communication reflects personality; beliefs & feelings bias judgments; people in groups affect one another	The individual is a product of society; every society has a distinct culture; social actions have unintended effects	Self-perpetuation of power & wealth; values of freedom, equality & reason; discussion produces aware-ness, insight
Interesting when challenges metadiscursive commonplaces such as:	Mere words are not actions; appearance is not reality; style is not substance; opinion is not truth	Words have correct meanings & stand for thoughts; codes & media are neutral channels	Communication is skill; the word is not the thing; facts are objective and values subjective	Humans and machines differ; emotion is not logical; linear order of cause & effect	Humans are rational beings; we know our own minds; we know what we see	Individual agency & responsibility; absolute identity of self; naturalness of the social order	Naturalness & rationality of tradi-tional social order; objectivity of sci-ence & technology

Figure 8 Seven traditions of communication (Source: Creig, 1999)

The seven traditions of communication theories are inclusive as one does not necessarily negate another. They can be used in orchestration for holistic inquiry where one may support another. Cybernetic tradition, being one in the seven traditions

mentioned above, developed from systems theory that views communication primarily as information processing. For a long time cybernetic understanding of communication, drawing primarily from general systems theory, remained restricted in examining information as a machinelike message transfer between communicators, while also investigating the feedback mechanism having the potential of noise. It was a positivist approach. However, as the change occurred—both globally and within the discipline— the cybernetic communication approach moved from mechanical understanding of information and information transfer to a phenomenological understanding of information as an emergent property resulting from the observer's observation of a system. Following Heinz von Foerster (1981), this approach is called second-order cybernetics.

Second-order cybernetic communication defines information as meaning constructed and assigned to the system or environment as observers make distinction of the system or environment they observe (Pervez, 2009). Such understanding of construction of information is nested in autopoiesis, which argues that individuals self-referentially create meaning as response to being perturbed by something in the environment. The act of communication, as seen from the communication behavior model, is also a case of making distinctions of the observed world constructing form. The theory of autopoiesis developed by Matuana and Varela in combination with the laws of form (LoF) developed by Spencer Brown provides the theoretical basis for grounding of a cybernetic communication approach.

Autopoiesis is a theory for a phenomenological understanding of cognition proposed by Maturana (1970). Maturana and Varela (1980) developed this in a systemic explanation of cognition and descriptive phenomenology. Autopoietic theory describes how living systems address and engage the domain(s) in which they operate. Living systems approach and engage the world in terms of the perturbations in their nervous systems. Living systems constantly reproduce themselves by maintaining their boundaries. The boundary is a distinction that the system makes on its own and the boundary—a closure that is a product of an individual's physiological apparatus, biography, mental and cultural context— is what makes the system different from another system or the environment. The boundary gives us uniqueness that frames our observation and as well as distinction or interpretation of our observation.

According to autopoiesis, information, i.e. assigning meaning while observing a perturbing system, is a mental state or change in the individual system—the way the individual relates himself to a particular state of the world (Pervez, 2009). It is a phenomenological and constructivist approach highlighting the act of making distinction of observation.

An observer observes by drawing a distinction. To put it another way, what we perceive always follows from an act of making distinctions. In his revolutionary work *Laws of Form,* Spencer-Brown (1973) introduced the basic and fundamental human act of making distinctions. Making distinctions is fundamental, as this is how something is marked, indicated, and created. Marking an unmarked world is also the way something

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emerges from the unconscious into conscious. By making distinctions form arises and unfolds through different tokens. The emergence of form, by making a distinction that serves as indication, constructs a world by arranging a set of tokens that we make sense of by our observation. The tokens of indications, the markers, are actually signs according to our popular vocabulary.

The cybernetic approach to communication, in this case second-order cybernetics, can be visualized according the following diagram:
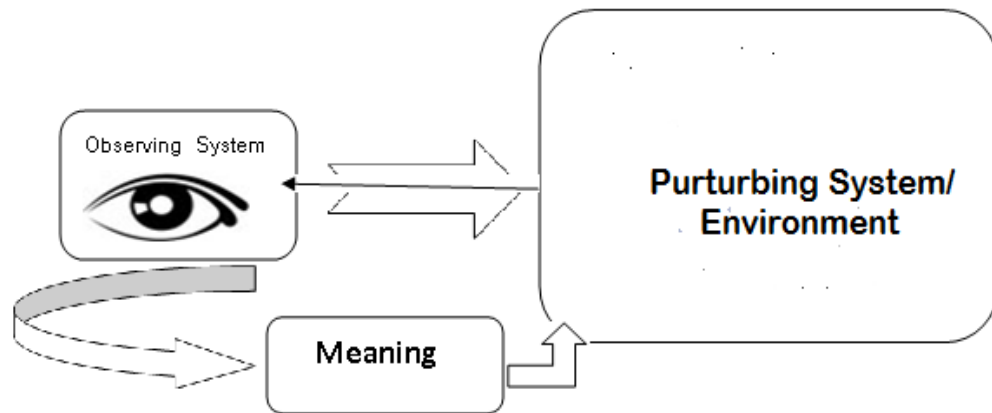
Figure 9 Observer assigning meaning to environment

Combining autopoiesis with the theory of form of Spencer-Brown, one may argue that information is a form (Pervez, 2009) resulting from observers' making distinctions of their environments. This further implies that information emerges through humans' assigning meaning to an object; and communication media, as a part of a wider meaning system, facilitate the act of assigning meaning to an object of observation.

Cybernetic communication holds that humans are in a continuous flow of constructing the world and reflecting their own construction. Causal explanation, the dominant one, tends to highlight objective reality (i.e., understanding the process of writing and reading the world as an external force) as coercive and constraining as the physical and biological environments with which we must cope. It is a macro perspective of information processing. On the other hand, a micro perspective seeks to understand the very way one comes to approach the world, the aspirations and longings that come to dominate one's thought. It further argues that change in the medium, perturbing the system in this case, may bring changes in how people process information and articulate meaning. In additions, this view contrasts the general system theoretic understanding of information system, which is based on positivism with no space for interpretation, and therefore necessitates developing a communication aspect of information system.

1.3.2 Media, communication and film

Some communication scholars, for example, Fiske (1982), have a restrictive definition of media, viewing a medium as a physical artifact or channel of communication. This is an artifact-centric projection of media. Focusing on how people make meaning out of a mediated process provides a receptor perspective on how communication generates meaning (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989). The receptor perspective on media is a phenomenological approach (Tomasulo, 1990) that understands media, not as texts or structures of production, but as practice (Couldry, 2004). In using media people become

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part of a constructive process and thus "new media blurs the distinction between author, text, and audience, forgrounding the author-audience struggle" (Threadgold, 2004, p. 113).

Hansen (2006) conceives of a medium as an environment for life. His understanding of medium is divided into two dimensions: the technical dimension deals with the materiality of media and the experiential dimension focuses on its phenomenality. The second, experiential, dimension sees the medium as an operation of mediation between a living being and the environment. Artifacts work as communication media only when coupled with the human. It is a common gossip among anthropologists that a group of Micronesians who had no concept of "photograph" could not figure out what they were seeing when shown a family picture of a European anthropologist. They stared at the picture for quite a long time and said, "Your family members are so small and flat." Through structural coupling an artifact becomes a part of our experiential domain and only then does that artifact qualify as a medium we can use to communicate. Media are context-dependent and are located at a crossroad of individual biography, institutional settings, and socio-cultural context. Littlejohn (2004) examined different theories and perspectives on media and graphically showed how artifacts, society, and individuals are all important in understanding media as an integrated process of communication.

Taking this view of communication, one may argue that media provide the mediation through which we make distinctions about our environment. From these

distinctions meaning emerges and the emergent meaning may also become form when expressed to communicate in a community. This is equally true for film, which is a communication medium, and therefore, a system potential for perturbation leading to receptors making distinctions.

In *The Art of the Moving Picture* published in 1915, Lindsay welcomed film as a new language of picture-words and hieroglyphs. The description of language as a form for making indications also applies to film. The historical development of film and its etymological meaning clearly indicate film as a medium for observation (Stam, 2000). Film appears as a flow of audio-visual form from which meaning is constructed by a cognitive mind. In film, forms are organized on a spatio-temporal level. It arranges spatial elements and manipulates temporal structures by editing the shots and sequences. A filmmaker produces tokens that are observed, marked and indicated by spectators. Tokens thus constructed and distinguished qualify film as an environment. It is an environment of reading and writing texts.
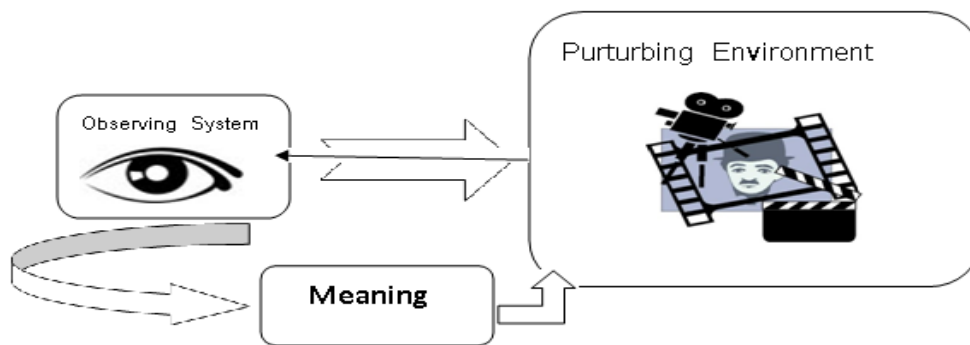
Figure 10 Receptors assigning meaning to film through observation

Bordwell (1989) developed a method most suitable to analyze the informativeness of a film from a cognitive perspective that may complement autopoiesis and the theory of form. Cognitive film theory approaches the understanding of film from a receptor-centered perspective. Borrdwell draws on Muntesberg (1916) who focused not on the physical means and technical devices but on the mental means—the psychological factors involved when we watch what happens on the screen. Bordwell departs from the classical cognitivism that tends to understand information processing as another mechanical function. Instead, he believes that perception, which involves both sensory mechanisms and concept formulation, is context dependent. This is particularly evident in the way cultural knowledge is organized by intersubjective schemata, scripts, or mental models and thus structures a community—or individual—centered mode of perception. A cognitive analysis examines the narrative and the use of cinematic apparatus in a film to see how the form of the film in question cues/perturbs spectators to attribute an explicit meaning to the film.

1.4 Conceptual mapping

Adopting a transdisciplinary approach, which draws on autopoiesis, laws of form, reader response and cybernetic communication, this dissertation is an attempt to draw on a constructivist approach to understand how receptors assign meaning to the films they watch. The research will base on two premises:

    i.   Information emerges from people's indication of an environment as they observe it, and

ii.   Film is an environment for observation that attains meaning, in other words become informative, as spectators make indication of their observation of film.

Drawing on the constructivist theory of autopoiesis in combination with the theory of form, a reader-response analysis of audience reviews will be conducted to examine how spectators make indications of the famous Japanese film *Rashomon*. Any film qualifies for such research because the object is to observe observers' indications. However, I chose this particular film for two reasons; first, it is a film that was not warmly received by the Japanese audience at its premiere in the country; rather it was criticized by the natives for not properly portraying samurai—an object of Japanese national pride (Es, 2002). Later, the film received astonishing appreciation abroad and was quickly termed one of the greatest films. Secondly, the film possesses persistent ambiguity, as is evident in the term *Rashomon Effect* (Roth & Mehta, 2002). Considering such debate and variation in views among scholars and professional reviewers, I feel motivated to see how audiences make indication of their observation of *Rashomon*. As a researcher, myself, who is an observer, I will observe receptors' observations and interoperate my observations with the support of academic instruments: tools, techniques and reasoning.

The research will have the following core premises aligned to the preceding theoretical discussion.

1. Communication is assigning meaning to the observed systems/environment potential of making perturbation.

2. Information is constructing meaning

3. Information is emergent

4. Film is a perturbing environment

5. Receptors assign meaning to films as they observe

Below is the conceptual mapping of the research:
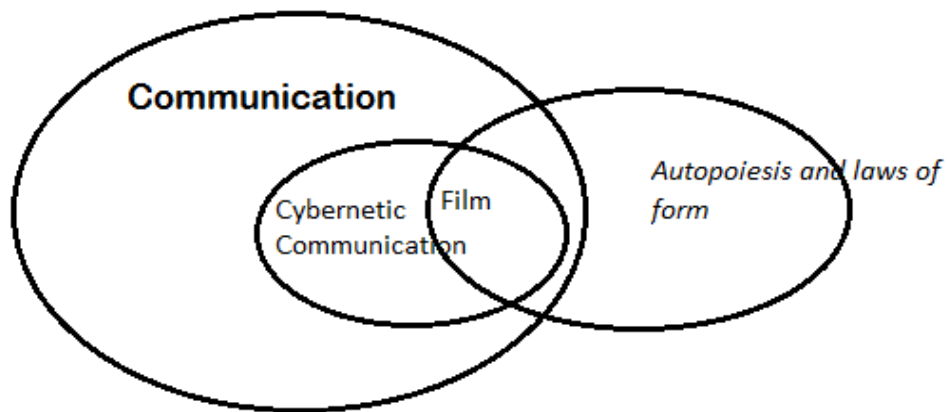
Figure 11 Conceptual mapping

1.5 Objective

The objective of this dissertation research is to develop an understanding of how spectators through their observation endorse meaning to film.

1.6 Significance

Significance of this research lies in contributing to the broader interface of communication science that addresses the concepts of information science and film studies.

1.7   Flow chart

Aligned to the conceptual mapping and study framed, the dissertation will proceed according to the flowchart below.
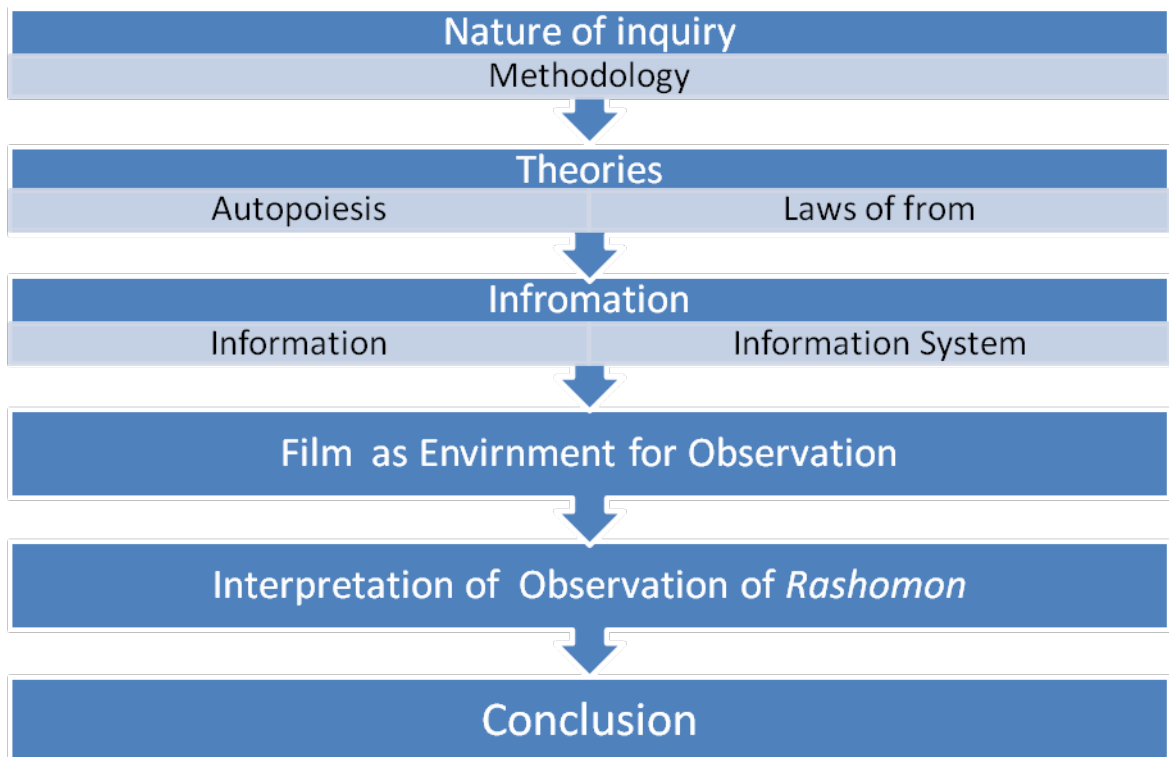
Figure 12 Flow chart

2 Nature of inquiry: Methodology

2.1 Nature of inquiry

The nature of inquiry in a field reflects the philosophical base and theoretical underpinnings to which researchers in the field subscribe. Information analysis is an integral part of understanding communication acts and its development reflects changes in the philosophical and theoretical bases of contemporary information research. Three developments in the nature of inquiry in communication and information studies are relevant here. First, information research has become increasingly user-centric, beginning with the publication of user needs study in *American Documentation* as early as in 1951 (Bates, 1999). In the 1960s Parker (1966) argued that the system should adapt to the user, rather than the reverse. Several information science scholars continued to develop this view (Chatman, 1996; Gaines, Chen, & Shaw, 1997; Harter, 1992; Kuthlthau, 1991; Rosenberg, 1974; Saracevic, 1975). Second, the view of human beings as easily predictable components of mechanistic systems was found wanting and a more holistic approach was needed (Rosenberg, 1974). The third change is the adoption of qualitative research methods (Ellis, 1996). Along the way, information science has subscribed to various interpretive philosophies: phenomenology (Budd, 2005), constructivism (Talja et al*.,* 2005), hermeneutics (Hansson, 2005), and critical realism (Hjørland, 2004). This reconfirms contemporary information science's commitment to methods of inquiry that focus on humans and their appropriation of their environments and artifacts.

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The second development in the area undertakes human-centered inquiry by addressing how people, using artifacts (media), assign value to the environment and thereby constructs information. The human-centric nature of information systems entails a qualitative understanding of people, information, and media. This is a communication approach supported by interpretive philosophies such as phenomenology, hermeneutics, and constructivism. It seeks to unravel how reality is subjectively constructed.

Theories and philosophies of science have offered various views to interpret reality. Positivism views reality as objective and knowledge as measurable and sensory-driven. It further holds that certainty of knowledge derives from the use of the scientific method. Durkheim (1982) declared that social phenomena or social facts could be treated as "things" and therefore could be measured in the same way as physical objects. Popper criticized the historicist view of positivism, which held that the course of social change could be predicted. He contended that scientific knowledge was more tentative than the positivists believed; and he suggested that our knowledge of the world is provisional rather than absolutely certain. Therefore, he rejected the scientific method, with its bold conjectures and attempts to refute them. Popper's famous technique of falsification asserts that we can be sure only of what is not truth. Kuhn (1962) also noted the context dependence of science and consequently the relativity of the notion of reality; Morison (1986, p. 22) summarized Kuhn's argument: "scientific work in any field, takes place in the context of the scientist's general viewpoint on the particular thing he or she is studying." Feyerabend (1975) viewed science as an ideology that is shaped by its historical and cultural contexts. Reality thus takes shape the way we observe it. This

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echoes the Heisenberg uncertainty principle from physics, which holds that the process of observation influences the object of observation and therefore the observer and the observed cannot be separated.

Holding that the observer constructs reality is an interpretive approach. It requires a relativist method of inquiry because it understands the world as differently perceived by various people and communities. Such inquiry does not concern itself with investigating how the world is, but rather how some people perceive it. Gibbs (2002, p. 6) describes an interpretive approach:

> it rejects the idea that there are facts and that the role of research is to discover them. Researchers might come up with statements that that look like facts, but these are inevitably "theory-driven." In other words, our descriptions of the world and theories about it reflect preconceptions and prejudices that arise out of the researcher's and respondent's construction of the world.

A progressive change of the nature of inquiry in the field, a change from a positivistic to an interpretive understanding, emphasizes on investigating communication—in other words, people's assigning meaning to the object they observe—by understanding receptor's interpretation of what is externalized in different media. In the context of this dissertation, which aims to understand the construction of information therefore poses the following research questions:

2.2 Research domain

Information construction understood from a constructivist and interpretive—autopoietic in this context—perspective brings humans as the locus of all investigation. Therefore, research in this area ought to be user-centric and the research questions and methods should emphasize the communication process by which users observe and assign meaning to an artifact, leading to self-referential construction of information. In this regard the research domain has three areas for investigation:

a) Observation of people

b) The medium or artifact perturbing observation

c) Interpretation of making distinction of what is observed

The primary objective of this research is to explore how people self-referentially make distinctions within the film they observe. Persistent ambiguity, moral dilemma, and non-linear narrative style made *Rashomon* an object for interpretation for over a half century (Es, 2002). Therefore, I chose *Rashomon* as the film for investigation of this research.

2.3 Research question:

2.3.1 Broader question

How can film be understood as an environment capable of facilitating meaning construction?

2. 3.2 Specific questions

1. What meaning do the spectators assign to *Rashomon*?

2. How does *Rashomon* perturb spectators' observation?

Specific questions will unravel the way film as an environment is observed, marked and indicated by spectators and thus meaning is assigned to a film. Construction of meaning seen in this way will justify film an environment from a broader and humanistic understanding of information construction.

2.4 Research method

Depending on the nature of inquiry, researchers generally choose between two types of research methods: quantitative and qualitative. Researchers using quantitative methods adopt a positivist approach and endeavor to discover an objective reality by scientific observation, the findings of which can be measured and falsified. Quantitative research uses scientific methods as it seeks to develop and employ mathematical models, theories, and/or hypotheses pertaining to natural phenomena. Researchers develop instruments and methods for measurement, employ experimental control and manipulation of variables, collect empirical data, model and analyze data, and evaluate results. Their work generally follows a deductive logical explanation.

On the other hand, researchers using qualitative methods attempt to understand people's construction of meaning and thereby the emergence of a reality by trying to

understand people's behavior, expressions, and actions. These researchers investigate how people approach the world and relate themselves to their environment. To accomplish this, researchers employ such techniques as participation in the action, direct observation, in depth interviews, and analysis of documents and materials of expression. Quantitative research is conclusive and theory driven; qualitative research is largely exploratory-- it contributes in theory building and generally follows an inductive logical processes. Examples of qualitative research include: ethnomethodology, ethnography, case study, discourse analysis, and reader-response.

Because the essential point of qualitative methods is to explore how people interpret the world and because interpretation is cognitive work, a challenging problem is how to read cognition. Qualitative methodology's solution is to understand cognition by analyzing the expressions of cognition displayed in people's behavior, action, and speech. An example of this is Austin's (1962) speech act theory, which considers speech as an illocutionary act: by saying something we do something. Discourse analysis and conversation analysis methods often examine the illocutionary act of speech to understand how speakers assign meaning to their environments.

The interpretive understanding of information—a communication approach that explores how people (using artifacts or media) self-referentially assign value to forms they observe—is a qualitative exploration of human mind and action. Therefore, qualitative methods would be appropriate means for research in this area. I will use the reader-response method, which is a phenomenological approach for analysis of

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token/form constructed by spectators (Iser, 1980), that will employ two levels of textual analysis of spectators' spontaneous comments of the Japanese film *Rashomon* collected from amazon.com. Comments are data to investigate what distinctions are made about the film, which will be first level analysis using discourse analysis technique to investigate the semantics while the second level analysis will adopt syntactic interpretation of the form—cinematic structure—of the film.

2.4.1 Reader-response analysis

Reader-response is primarily a method of literary criticism; it argues that literature should be viewed as a performing art in which each reader creates his or her own text-driven performance. This research method developed in response to the textual emphasis of New Criticism from the 1940s to the 1960s. Opposing the omnipotent power and authenticity of text, reader-response proposes that meaning and value are transactional and dialogic—created by the interaction of the reader and the text. According to Resseguie (1984, p. 304),

> Reader-response criticism focuses attention on the reader's actions involved in responding to a text. An examination of the text in-and-of itself is replaced by a discussion of reading process, the interaction of reader and text. Often the reader-response critic is concerned not with what the text *says* or *shows*, but with what the text does to the reader.

Reader-response is not merely a method of literary criticism, it has attained the status of empirical investigation for written or verbal data (Andringa, 1990), psychological and cognitive domains (Goodblatt, 2001), consumer research (Scot, 1994),

and film reception (Shull, 1987). Kuiken and Miall's (2001) work on numerically aided phenomenology is a technical support illustrating how to conduct a readers-response analysis systematically.

Reader-response is a phenomenological approach (Iser, 1980) where a reader actively participates in the production of textual meaning. Here lies the strength of reader-response to support a broad view information systems research. As discussed earlier, a broad view of information systems takes a user-centric communication approach that reveals people's self-referential indication of their world. The act of indication (creating form) is marked in people's expressions (forms) and these expressions or tokens are the empirical clues or data that becomes the basis for a reader-response analysis. Reader-response, as part of interpretation, draws on discourse analysis of indications of observations. In this way discourse analysis can be considered as a embedded technique of reader-response.

2.4.2 Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis explores meaning behind text or discourse. It came to the attention of scholars in the humanities and social sciences in the late 1960s and 1970s. Information research began adopting this research method in the first half of the 1990s. Forhmann (1994, p. 133) identified the relevance of discourse analysis for information science while commenting about user-centered understanding of information:

The shift of LIS's theoretical attention from information system to information user is especially suited to questions of the role of LIS theories in the discursive construction of specific identities for information, its users, and its uses. A benefit of the shift to users is that it problemetizes, rather than stabilizes, the related notions of information users and information needs. When users are forced into the center of theoretical vision, questions arise of how their identities, and especially their needs, are constructed in theoretical discourses. Precisely how are users of information positioned as subjects in user-centric information theories?

Communicative events such as writing and conversation, all of which have form, are known as discourse. Discourse analysis works on a huge range of variables, including: intonation, gesture, syntax, style, lexicon, rhetoric, meaning, speech act, moves, strategies, turn taking, and other aspects of interactions. It also analyses the relations between text and context, discourse and interaction, and cognition and memory. In other words, discourse analysis serves an encompassing arena of action, interaction, and construction of meaning. Herring's (1994) work on politeness in computer culture is an example of how to explore value, in this case politeness, in an online conversation. It shows the possibility of identifying forms in a discourse in order to understand the meaning people endorse through an information system that facilitates information construction.

At the first level, I have used the qualitative data analysis software *NVivo*, to identify indications made by viewers as found in the reader's comments archived at Amazon.com.
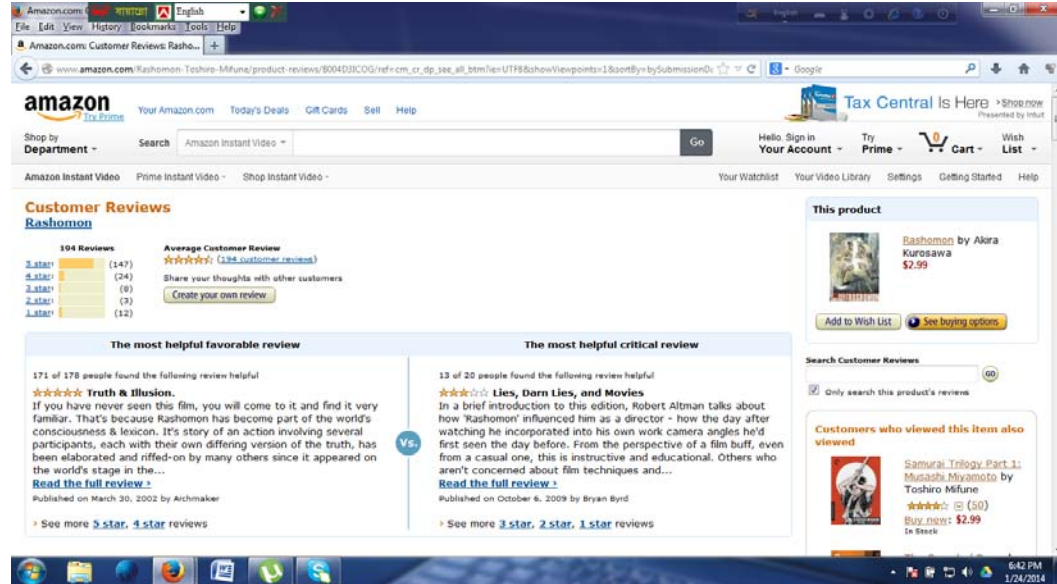
Figure 5: Observer indication through comments at Amazon

These indications are then synchronized with the film in the second level of analysis. At the second level, various aspects—like narrative, style etc.—of the film were examined to identify what could have perturbed viewers to make their distinction. In other words, the relationship between the film form and spectator's distinctions of these forms helped us understand film as an environment capable of perturbation, and viewers as assigning meaning to it.

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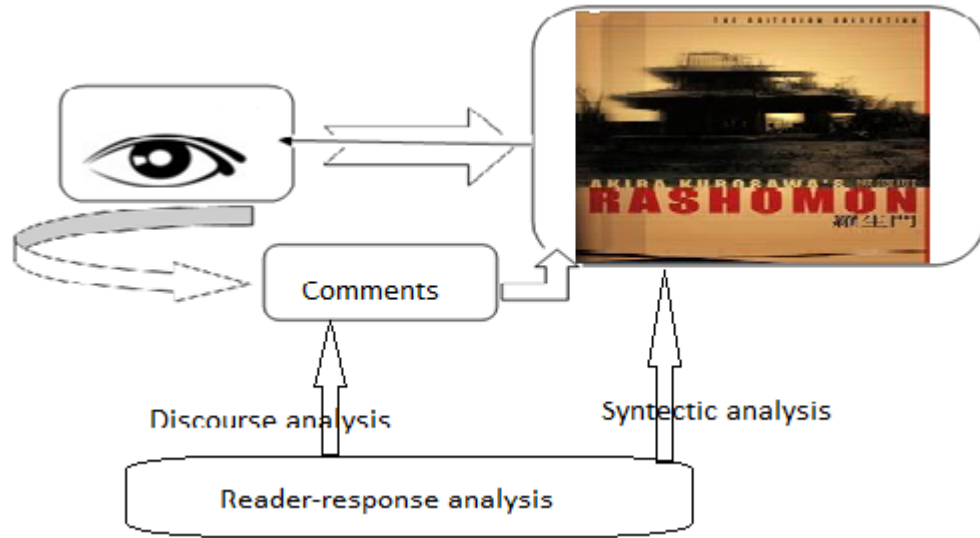
Figure 6: Process of analysis

3 Observation, indication and form: Autopoiesis and the Laws of form

3.1 Autopoiesis

"Autopoiesis", combining the Greek words auto (self) and poiesis (creation, production), is a concept for a phenomenological understanding of cognition proposed by Maturana (1970); Maturana and Varela (1980) developed this to a systemic explanation of cognition and descriptive phenomenology.

In the autopoietic view cognition is phenomenological with respect to the organism(s) whose conduct realizes cognition. In other words, autopoietic theory describes how living systems address and engage the domain(s) in which they operate. Living systems approach and engage the world in terms of the perturbations in their nervous systems, which are operationally closed, i.e. the transformation occurs within the system's boundary. Living systems constantly reproduce themselves by maintaining their boundaries. The boundary is a distinction that the system makes on its own and the boundary is what makes the system different from another system or the environment. A system is an observer of its own boundary. The boundary gives it uniqueness that can be used for manipulations or descriptions in interactions with other observers.

A system is comprised of organization and structure. The organization is a set of inter-component relationships, which outline its form at a given moment and serve as the core "identity" that is maintained by the system. Organization is necessary for a system to become a member of a specific class. The organization's unity is realized through the presence and interplay of components in a given space and time. These comprise the system's structure.

The principle of structural determination is used to understand the system's range of potential structural transformations and the potential perturbations impinging upon the system. Any perturbation may trigger a change of system state, but the particular change is a function of the system's own organization and structure. The basic point is that the behavior of a system is constrained by its constitution, not by the environment.

Structural coupling denotes the way a system interacts, coordinates, and co-evolves with another system or the environment. In structural coupling, the participant systems reciprocally serve as sources of compensable perturbation for each other. Here perturbation is understood in the sense of indirect effect or change without having penetrated the boundary of the affected system. This implies that (1) any change in a system is a self-referential change and therefore the system is closed and (2) an autopoietic system reproduces itself and is thus recursive.

Self-referential observation is the core principle of autopoiesis. In a nutshell, an observer, who is a system, observes an environment being governed by the observer's

unique structure. This is a second order cybernetic understanding of observation. Observation begins with the observer and ends with the observer. This is how an observer constantly reproduces her/his own structure.Varela (1979) and Foerster (1981) used the myth of *Uroborus*, the snake that swallows its own tail, to emphasize the self-referential nature of observation. Like the Uroborus, all observations recursively make the system reenter itself.
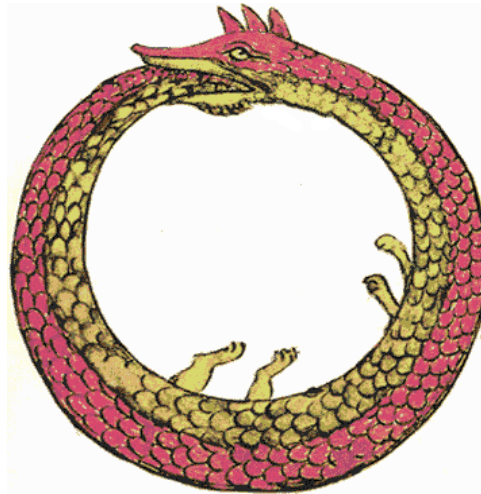
Figure 13 Self-referential observation (Source: Wikipedia)

A cybernetic approach to examining narratives leads to an individual perspective, where the individual is seen as the starting point for relationships. It further argues that any person should become the author of his or her own story. These stories bring us to perceive the importance of the self and inner experiences. Authoring one's own story or narrative is an inner dialogical experience where one talks to oneself (Bertrando, 2000). In authoring one's own story, one develops texts.

Luhmann (1986, 1995) extended Maturana and Varela's autopoietic theory for biological systems to an autopoietic theory for non-living systems like psychic and social systems. A social system allows space for such other systems as the economic, cultural, and religious. Social systems are characterized by their communicative character; they reproduce meaning through a self-referential order and the production of meaning is recursive.

3.2 Laws of form

A Platonic perspective understands form as archetypes or abstract representations of the many types and properties of things we see around us. Aristotle was the first to distinguish between from and matter. Spencer-Brown offered a theory, laws of form, denoting how form emerges as an outcome of our observation.

An observer observes by drawing a distinction. To put it another way, what we perceive always follows from an act of making distinctions. Spencer-Brown, in his revolutionary work *Laws of Form* (1973), introduced the basic and fundamental human act of a making distinction. Spencer-Brown uses ¬ for a marked and an empty space for an unmarked universe. Making distinction is fundamental, as this is how something is marked, indicated, and created. Marking an unmarked world is also the way something emerges from the unconscious into conscious, for "consciousness itself is the progressive emergence of a self-reflective, recursive cycle of ever more subtle distinctions" (Robertson, 1999, p. 51).

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By making distinction, which means marking an unknown whole into a known and an unknown, form arises that unfolds through different tokens. Engstrom (1999) develops the following sequence to express the process of unfoldment:

- Level 0: formless void (wholeness)

- Level 1: distinction

- Level 2: indication (token) regarding the distinction

- Level 3: arrangements of tokens

- Level 4: archetypes (patterns in these arrangements)

- Level 5: infinity, time, feedback, memory

- Level 6: concrete existence (matter, energy)

Emergence of form, by making distinction that serves as indication, constructs a world by arranging a set of tokens that we as a social system make sense of by our observation. The tokens of indications, the markers, are actually signs according to our popular vocabulary. Luhmann (1999) asserts that signs per se do not exist; rather they exist only as forms within the operations of a system that uses them. Signs, in this line of thought, are prerequisites to make second-order observation possible.

Language works as sign when it mediates our orienting behavior. Orienting behavior is a term developed by Maturana and Varela (1987) to denote a mode of communication or action through which an organism orients another organism to some

other interaction that both the organisms have in common. "Orienting behavior is thus symbolic; its significance lies not in itself, but in what it connotes" (Mingers, 1995, p. 74). Orienting behavior indicates the indication or marks the marking, which means that through orienting behavior humans describe and also describe their descriptions. This in turn forms the basis of language. Mingers further says, "As a result of this process and a concomitant development of the neocortex, organisms have arisen that can make complex and recursive descriptions of descriptions, and thus they become observer" (p.74). By repeatedly sharing the distinction and description of indication, humans become structurally coupled and that is how one can meaningfully observe another's observations.

Kenney (1983) recognizes how close is Spencer-Brown's idea of indication to the concept of punctuation developed by Watzlawick *et al.* (1967). Punctuation when ordered in a sequence actually creates distinctions among a number of situations, and thus a particular form is developed that indicates a particular mode of reality. Korzybski (1973), working within the domain of general linguistics, argued how language as a tool imposes distinction upon our reality. Use of language and the way people punctuate their experience give us an observable corpus to investigate the way people observe. This, when recorded, also becomes a resource of the observing people to observe themselves. Larson (1987) calls action or performance recorded on to an external device the externalization of knowledge. He attempts to develop an anthropology of information technology where the concept of externalization of knowledge plays the pivotal role as a historical process. Larson shows how knowledge (i.e., humans themselves) is

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externalized through a semiotic process. It is an ongoing process that develops tools and artifacts--language, numbers, printing technology, radio, TV, computer--for humans to externalize themselves over a socially shared platform.

Larsen argues that with the process of externalization we externalize the structure and process of knowledge. He elaborates the way language helps us externalize ourselves. For him, "It [language] is a way of living in the world. We try to make our world intelligible through making it readable. In fact, we transform our environment more and more according to our linguistic vision of the world, so most of our living becomes a reading of our own texts" (p. 130). Larson's concept of externalization of knowledge may well be read as analogous to the concept of orienting behavior. Both emphasize the role of signs, markers, in human interactions or observations of themselves.

Roberts (1992) uses Spencer-Brown's theory of laws of form to examine the question of self-reference in literary texts. Niklas Luhmann's systems theory and the observation of first-, second- and third-order have been elaborately discussed. "Re-entry of form" has also been discussed with examples. It argues that observation makes the world marked or visible while an observer remains invisible or unmarked to himself. But second-order observation, like an author reading her own writing, makes the observer visible to herself. So, first-order observation sees the world, second-order observation sees the observer in the world observing the world. This means that second order observation is self-reflection as it involves the difference between observation of

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observation from outside and self-observation from inside. In other words, self-reference and self-observation is defined by the difference between self-reference and external-reference. This is conceptualized as the re-entry of form. The second part his article tries to apply laws of form and observation of self in literature. It examines romantic irony and the self-reference in drama and novel. It shows how the play, which is contained and framed within the play, contains and frames at the same time the play which contains it.

Any observation is self-referential and that is how a system (an organism or an individual) by observing itself being observed may ultimately observe a world of its own. Thus, a self observes itself being distinguished and indicated. Varela (1979), by using the myth of *Uroborus*, the snake that swallows its own tail, emphasizes on self-reference's role in the creation of form that endlessly reaffirms identity. Like the Uroborus, all observations recursively make the system reenter itself. Therefore, at the end there exists only one distinction though it may have an unending number of distinctions nested in it. Spencer-Brown explains it with a pair principle called *The law of condensation* and *the law of cancellation*.

The law of condensation states that the multiple distinctions of the same type condense into a single distinction. This is shown as the following mark:
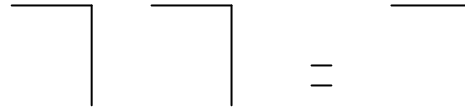
The law of cancellation states that nested distinctions are erased to form a single distinction, and it can be marked as:
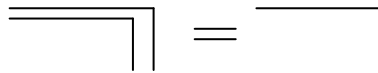
The emergence of form, by making a distinction that serves as indication, constructs a world by arranging a set of tokens that we make sense of by our observation. The tokens of indications, the markers, are actually signs according to our popular vocabulary. Luhmann (1999) asserts that signs per se do not exist; rather they exist only as forms within the operations of a system that uses them. Signs, in this line of thought, are prerequisites to make second-order observation possible.

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other interaction that both the organisms have in common. "Orienting behavior is thus symbolic; its significance lies not in itself, but in what it connotes" (Mingers, 1995a, p. 74). Orienting behavior indicates the indication or marks the marking, which means that through orienting behavior humans describe and also describe their descriptions. This in turn forms the basis of language. Mingers (p. 74) further says, "As a result of this process and a concomitant development of the neocortex, organisms have arisen that can make complex and recursive descriptions of descriptions, and thus they become observer." By repeatedly sharing the distinction and description of indication, humans become structurally coupled and that is how one can meaningfully observe another's observations.

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Language, punctuation, and externalization of knowledge are all indications of some distinctions of an environment observed by some observers. There exist two types of forms: a form in the environment that is observed by an observer and indication of distinctions as a form that displays the meaning an observer constructs or assigns to the observed form in the environment. Forms can be physical or cognitive (Kauffman, 1999); and forms in the environment are called objects. According to von Foerster (1981), an object does not exist as an independent entity; something becomes an object only when perceived by an observer. Perceiver and the perceived arise together in the condition of observation. This relationship is called eigenbehavior. The context that we regard as our external world is called eigenform in Foerster's language.

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Cybernetics is a radically different world view. Classical cybernetics, the first-order cybernetics, developed by Weiner (1954) sought to understand the way a system gauges its effect and makes necessary adjustments. Primary emphasis of classical cybernetics was focused on regulation and control in a system. A cybernetic device would be composed of a sensor, a comparator, and an activator. The sensor's task is to provide feedback, positive or negative, to the comparator to help determine whether the machine is deviating from its own norms. A system in its gradual evolution develops a complex network of subsystems and continues to interact with different environments. Developing this way, a system becomes circular and recursive in its regulation and self-maintenance. Thus, a cybernetic thinking is a circular way of thinking that challenges the conventional idea that one thing causes another in a linear way. "Cybernetics, most simply defined, is a part of a general science of pattern and organization. To adopt a cybernetic view is to enter a radically different world of description" (Keeney, 1983, p. 6). By recognizing the patterns and organizational structure, cybernetics unravels the way a system, in this case humans, come to construct and maintain their system. Von Foerster (1981) offers the concept of second-order cybernetics that tries to understand how observation itself is a cybernetic mechanism with feedback loops between the observer and observed[5]. His view differs from the first-order or the classical cybernetics

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[5] A third-order cybernetics has also been proposed. With the realization that a new order is necessary as the importance of diversity of human behavior is increasingly being felt by scholars working in the field. The existing cybernetics explains how the world works and how an individual constructs reality. But none seems to properly answer how people create meaning. Third-order cybernetics will seek to address the question of meaning especially by understanding the way people organize concepts while they are also framed in a social system. He calls it the cybernetics of conceptual systems.

that denies any objective observation and hence objective knowledge could be possible as an observed system that effects and is affected by the observer. This is analogous to the theory of autopoiesis developed by Maturana and Varela (1980) that is built up on a fundamental premise that what we see in another system or in an environment is actually determined by our own makeup and biography.

Autopoietic epistemology defines observation as self-observation. According to autopoiesis, the observer defines himself as an entity by specifying his own domain of interactions and is able to always remain an observer of these interactions. Thus, all living systems can observe their own observation and describe their own descriptions in a recursive loop. The epistemological implications of autopoietic self-reference have revolutionized the classical epistemology of subject-object and as the way to synthesize the new "circular" categories emerging in physics, biology and social sciences. It is further claimed that autopoiesis presents itself as the new paradigm of postmodern knowledge, valid for natural and social sciences (Zolo, 1991).

A cybernetics approach to examining narratives leads to an individual perspective, where the individual is seen as the starting point for relationships. It further argues that any person should become the author of her own story. The story, thus authored by individuals themselves, brings us to the self and to an inner experience. Authoring one's own story or narrative is an inner dialogical experience where one talks to oneself (Bertrando, 2000). In authoring one's own story, one develops texts. Text is a

powerful determinant of our identity. Therefore, text can be considered to have the potential to articulate the way one represents herself.

According to a second-order cybernetic, which is also the case for autopoiesis, the process of construction and knowing is understood at a double layer: first, recognizing an organism as an observing system that observes itself being observed by another system or an environment; second, a system's observation is always self-referential.

An observer observes by drawing distinction. To put it another way, what we perceive always follows from an act of making distinction. Spencer-Brown, in his revolutionary work *Laws of Form* (1972), improvises on George Bool's algebra and gives it an arithmetical notation to introduce the basic and fundamental human act of making distinction. Spencer-Brown uses ¬ for a marked and an empty space for an unmarked universe. Making distinction is fundamental, as this is how something is marked, indicated and created. Marking an unmarked world is also the way something emerges from the unconscious into conscious, for "consciousness itself is the progressive emergence of a self-reflective, recursive cycle of ever more subtle distinctions" (Robertson, 1999, p. 51).

4 Communication approach to information and information system[6]

4.1 Conceptions of information

The popularization of the term "information" complicated its theoretical definitions because it is often difficult to put into a rigid scientific boundary around a popular term. Information has been theorized from a number of perspectives across different disciplines; one can find several perspectives on information within information science. Some of the understandings are supplementary and complementary to each other. There are also understandings that are quite contradictory.

4.1.1 Diversity of the conceptions of information

Some researchers view information as data—mechanical, economic, or sensory— that can be understood as a commodity or physical resource (Artandi, 1973; Boulding, 1956; Budd and Ruben, 1979; Horton, 1979; Lancaster and Gillespie, 1970; Lipetz, 1970; Loftus and Loftus, 1976; Rogers and Kincaid, 1981; Ruben, 1972, 1984; Thayer, 1968; Williams, 1979). For some, it is a signal (Cherry, 1966; Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson, 1967), code (Cannon and Luecke, 1980; Maruyama; 1968, Masuda,1981),

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[6] This chapter is partly reproduced from the dissertation researcher's own article (Pervez, 2009) used with the permission of the journal editor. (See appendix)

symbol (Lin, 1973) or message (Fisher, 1979; MacKay, 1952a, 1952b; Rapaport, 1982; Shannon and Weaver, 1949). According to McLuhan (1964) information is a medium. A significant number of scholars understand information as formal or recovered knowledge (Boorstein, 1961; Davidson, Boylan, and Yu, 1976; Machlup, 1962; McCroskey, 1968) whereas Boulding (1956), Goffman (1974), Ruben (1984), and Whittmore and Yovitz (1973) think information is subjective or personal knowledge. Miller and Steinberg (1975) bring a socio-cultural and psychological dimension to understanding information as knowledge. There is a group of scholars who understand information as thinking, cognition, and memory (Burner, 1973; Hunt, 1982; Laszlo, 1969; Loftus and Loftus, 1976; Masuda, 1980, Pratt, 1977; Schifrin, Castellan, Lindman, and Pisoni, 1975; Schroder, Driver, and Streufert, 1967). So diverse is the conception of information that Dizard (1982), Salvaggio (1983), and Schiller (1983) consider information as a technology and Belkin and Robertson (1976) view information as text. Wiener (1961) sees information as uncertainty reduction and his view is supported by Jones (1969), Krippendorff (1977), Lin (1973), Pierce (1961), Rogers and Kincaid (1981), Rapoport (1966). For Buckley (1967), Masuda (1980), Miller (1965), Ruben (1972, 1984), and Thayer (1968, 1979) information is a linkage between living organisms and their environment. Information is also a product of social interaction (Deetz and Mumby, 1984; Ruben 1975) that has a structure (Laszlo, 1969; Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson, 1967, Weiner, 1961) capable of changing the image-structure of a recipient (Belkin and Robertson, 1976). As a stimulus (Bruner, 1973; Jones, 1975) information facilitates learning (Bruner, 1973; MacKay, 1952a, 1952b; Pratt, 1977; Thayer, 1979) and it acts as

means for regulation and control in society (Ashby, 1964; Laszlo, 1969; Milsum, 1968; Watzlawick, Bevin, and Jackson, 1967; Young, 1960).

Such diverse understandings have made the conception of information even more complex and often difficult to follow. Ruben (1985) identified several perspectives or conceptions of information that could be found across different disciplines and demonstrated these under a number of dimensions as shown in the following table.

Dimension	Perspective/Concept
Data (property, code, pattern)	commodity, code/pattern, documents, knowledge, messages, news, physical forms of property, processed sensory data, product, resource, service, signal, stimuli, structure or organization, symbols, text
Process (through which data are transmitted, transformed, or stored)	learning, linkage, process of being formed, thinking, cognition, memory
Channel or technology (means through which data are captured, transmitted, transformed, stored, retrieved)	medium, technology
Uses, Functions, or Outcomes (of data transmission, transformation, organization, management, or storage)	Consequence of action, culture formation, decision making/problem solving, entropy (decrease in), meaning, management, network development, personality development, personality development, product of social interaction, reality construction labeling and validation, regulation of control, relational development, rule and ritual formulation, structure or organization, therapy, thinking, cognition, memory

Table 1: Dimension and perspective/concept of information

4.1.2 Information in Information Science

Shannon's view on how information is transferred, although it never defined information, developed a ground for theorizing information across different disciplines. Theorizing information within information science also rested on Shannon's information transformation perspective for the many years that the field held a positivistic nature. Over the last few decades, information science has experienced a shift from a predominantly objectivist view of information theory and cybernetics to focus on the phenomena of relevance and interpretation (Capurro & Hjørland, 2003). This was a shift from the hard science and technical perspectives to social sciences and humanities (Brier, 1997). Various detailed reviews (Cornelius, 2002; Capurro & Hjørland, 2003; Machlup & Mansfield, 1984) identify three approaches to information: the mechanistic approach, the cognitive approach, and the constructivist approach. The mechanistic approach considers information as a substance residing "in the world." Information systems and the mechanism of information transfer are the focus of this approach. It assumes that information science is an empirical discipline, unconcerned with what information is in an ontological or metaphysical sense (Zund and Gehl, 1979).

The mechanistic approach does not actually give a clear explanation of how something becomes informative. During the first half of the 1990s information scientists began to understand the need to change their approach and focus. Buckland (1991) defined information as a *thing* that has some reified existence. His view differs from the purely mechanistic in the sense that he defined *thing* to include tangible and intangible

items, knowledge, and process. Agre (1995) advocated a practice-centered understanding of information. He viewed information as an object of certain professional ideologies that can be understood only through the practices by which professionals construct it in their work.

The cognitive approach considers human cognition as necessary for determining what can be called information. This moves the focus from the information system to the user's state of mind. Information science in this phase benefited from ideas from outside the discipline. In this regard Drestke's (1991) information-based knowledge theory and Barwise and Perry's (1983) theory of situational meaning are important to mention. In parallel to the development within cognitive science, which marks a move from symbol manipulation to embedded cognition, a refined, human-centered approach to information emerged: the constructivist approach to information. The constructivist approach focuses on the uniqueness of the individual experience of information; it seeks to understand and theorize how information becomes meaningful to individuals.

Saracevic (1999) viewed information as a continuum of complexity: as signal or message in a narrow sense, as cognitive processing and understanding in a broader sense, and as embedded within a social context. This continuum essentially is congruent with Hjørland's (2007) classification of the understanding of information into two basic categories: the objective understanding of information and the subjective understanding of information. The objective understanding is observer- and situation-independent. In this sense information has an intrinsic value that has a universal and definite meaning to

everyone who has access to it. The narrow sense of information is an example of this objective understanding; the cognitive processing and broad understanding is a subjective or situational understanding of information. According to Hjørland (2007, p. 1449), "What is information for one person in one situation needs not be information for another person in another situation. This view of information as a noun is related to becoming informed (informing as a verb). Something is information if it is informative—or, rather, something is information *when* it is informative". Understanding information as subject- and situation-dependent is an interpretive and constructivist approach that subscribes to interpretivism and phenomenology and aims to understand the individual's role in the process of making information.

4.1.3 Information and communication

Ruben (1992, p.15) thinks "In the rhetoric of the Information Age *communication*and *information* are well on their way to becoming synonymous terms." Ruben closely examined the relationship—similarities and dissimilarities—between communication and information studies as presented in the following figure:

Dimension	Communication Studies Paradigm	Information Studies Paradigm
Primary theoretical focus	Construction of meaning	Information transformation
Primary Research focus	Interaction and behavior	Documents and systems
Codes/channels Emphasized	Interpersonal verbal, interpersonal nonverbal, mediated verbal, mediated nonverbal	Mediated verbal, mediated visual
System/network	Formality varies,	Formal, managed,

perspective emphasized	purposefulness varies	purposeful
Some functions/ uses/outcomes examined	Personal growth, relationship development, news and entertainment, organizational processes, socialization, and cultural development	Information use, Problem-solving, Information organization retrieval appropriateness, and information systems and services effectiveness

Table 2: Communication and information studies: a comparison of paradigms (Ruben, 1992, p. 19)

The paradigmatic difference presented here highlights the contrast between viewing information as emergent (in communication studies) versus information as an instrumental property (in information studies). But a wider investigation, as I have discussed in the section devoted to information, reveals that the trend in information science to view information as an interpretive phenomenon serving users' needs. Information science's long-practiced emphasis on mechanical information transmission and retrieval has been challenged by Taylor's views on the value added process, among others. Dervin's (1992) theory and methodology of sense making, which sees information as a construction, is also a significant conceptual development in this regard. The very notions of value endorsement and sense making assume that information is a communicative phenomenon.

By employing concepts from General Systems Theory Ruben, (1987, 1992) showed how information is a communicative process. His point of departure was, "An inevitable consequence of the emergence and evolution of social systems is the negotiated creation, intersubjectification and mutual validation of meaning" (Ruben, 1992, p. 21). He further said, "Information arises out of communication; it is the product

of communication. Communication occurs with respect to information. Process and product are inseparable" (ibid, p. 22). Seen in this way, information and communication are an integrated whole of how humans—individuals, a community, or a nation— mark their environments.

Ruben's understanding of information as communication rests on integrating three types of information: Information$_E$ (message), Information$_I$ (meaning), and Information$_S$ (social concept and symbolic system, which is a negotiated creation, intersubjectification, and mutual validation that produce meaning). Individual systems communicate and thus make meaning of the environment by communicating with the society of which the individual system is a part.
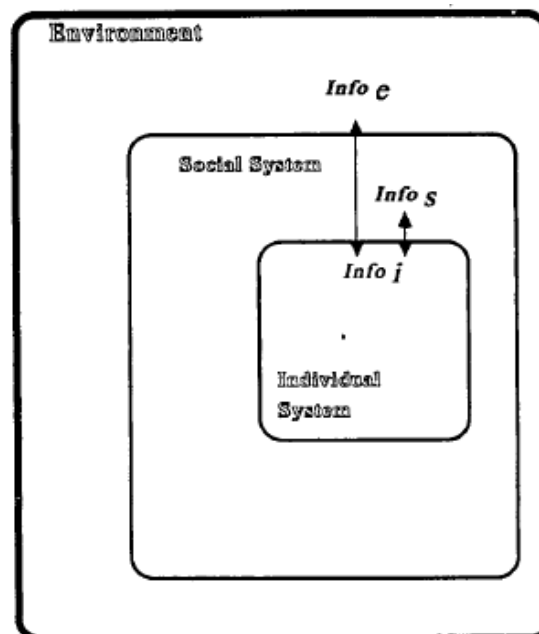
Figure 14 Communication and information studies: a comparison of paradigms (Ruben, 1992, p. 19)

Information$_S$ is the vehicle by which people communicatively express their

Information$_I$ to other individuals in the community. This is also a complementary force

that helps individuals to generate Information$_I$ by observing an Information$_E$: "the culture

of any social system has its own constructed, privileged meanings—its knowledge base—

which serves to link individual members to one another and gives the system its

identity….. At the level of societies, the knowledge base includes language, currency and

its value, societal symbols and their significance, along with culturally meaningful

institutions and their institutionalized roles" (Ruben, 1992, p. 22). As shown in Figure 8,

an individual [system] calls the object in the environment an *apple* by using the

vocabulary [form] from the social knowledge base he shares; and his opinion that the

apple is *tasty* can be understood by other members in his community who share the

knowledge base and thus can communicate.
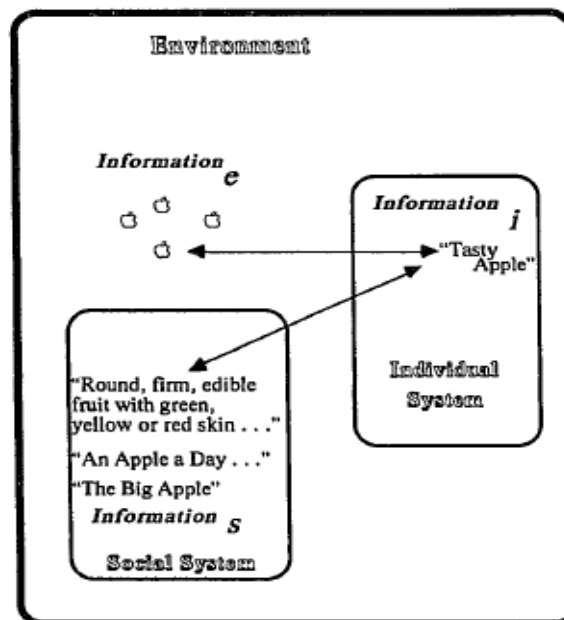
Figure 15 Example of communication and information relationship (Ruben, 1992, p. 24)

The systemic relationship between Information$_E$, Information$_I$, and Information$_S$ is progressive, which suggests viewing information as a communicative process. This kind of reasoning leads Ruben to view information systems from a communicative approach and he describes the limitations of information science's historical, systems focus:"Consider a situation where the primary focus is information systems design and transport (Information$_E$), which is not well *received* (Information$_I$), because established cultural traditions and hierarchies (Information$_S$) within an organization or society were not taken account of" (Ruben, 1992, p. 25).

Scholars have employed various perspectives within this approach. Cornelius (1996) used symbolic interactionism to unveil how meaning is negotiated in interaction with other meanings. Capurro (2000) preferred a hermeneutic perspective whereas Brier (2000) emphasized a semiotic perspective called cybersemiotics. The theory of autopoiesis represents a further step in this tradition.

Autopoiesis is a radical form of constructivism. Brier, Qvortrup (1993) and Mingers (1995) laid the ground for an autopoietic view of information, but did not offer any direction about how to operationalize such a constructive and interpretive comprehension. In the next two sections, I briefly discuss the properties of autopoiesis that are relevant for a subjective or interpretive understanding of information. This will be later connected with Spencer-Brown's (1973) theory of "laws of form" in order to

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operationalize such a conception of information that can be used for empirical investigation.

4.1.4 Autopoiesis and information

Perturbation is the point of departure for an autopoietic understanding of information. Qvortrup (1993) considers information as an operational change the external world introduces into an observing system. The individual is a closed system that experiences perturbation through a structural coupling with another system or the environment. Perturbation is a state of change or difference in the interacting system or the environment that triggers a change or difference in the first system. This "difference that makes difference is information" (Brier, 1992, p. 123). Defining information in this way places Bateson's famous notion of information into an autopoietic setting.

Autopoietic information theory denies the existence of any information in the environment and also does not recognize information as thing. Information is a mental state, or change in the individual system—the way the individual relates himself to a particular state of the world. It is a phenomenological and constructivist approach.

A difference or an internal change in a system actually means a change in a cognitive mind. The cognitive mind relates itself with an external state by producing a new state of relationship. This is done by producing meaning from within those that already exist. In the domain of communicative systems, meanings are the extension and reproduction of the stock of meaning one already has. Therefore, information is also the

extension and reproduction of meanings that already exist. The process of reproduction in this regard is understood as evolution. Nothing becomes informative out of the blue: everything that informs is an outcome of a construction. This is a construction process similar to the concept of *language games* posited by Witgenstein (1963). A language game views language as a set of tools that we use to construct and assign meaning defined within a particular knowledge system. Similarly, information is the usages of a set of meanings that a system has in possession. Because the tools, in this case meaning, have a boundaries for their operation, the process of assigning meaning is self-referential: one meaning reproduces another by reference to the knowledge system to which the meanings belong. Dretske's (1981) notion of belief as a background for generating knowledge and Gadamer's (1977) concept of pre-understanding have similarity with the way information is self-referential and recursive. An autopoietic system is also analogous to von Uexkull's (1957) concept of *Umvelt,* which emphasizes an organism's sovereignty and its self-reference.

The fact that self-referential meaning and therefore the reproduction of information are constrained and shaped by organizational closure implies that a system is intentional in its relating to its environment and to other systems. Intention in this context is similar to Brentano's formulation (Hamlyn, 1984) that intentionality was so obviously inexplicable in physical terms that it proved the existence of a non-material world. Intentionality is comprised of desire, aspiration as well as an individual's need for volition. Intention is not only a private mental phenomenon; it is also expressed in social conventions (Grice, 1989) via signs in speech and other forms. Non-natural meaning is

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the kind possessed by signs, where someone intends the meaning. Recognition of the intent of a system by another one via social conventions brings forth the importance of semiotics in understanding the complexity of structural coupling and its meaningful co-ordination and co-evolution. Semiotics may help unveil this complex structural coupling. Brier (1995, 2003), by developing the concept of *cybersemiotic*—a combination of second order cybernetics, autopoiesis, semiotics, and ethology—suggests that we use the triadic and dynamic concept of sign (or semiosis) from C.S. Peirce to give a deeper explanation of what it is exchanged, as well as how information is created and has effect on a biological level. Semiotics, both Sussarian and Peircean, discuss sign and symbol, Spencer-Brown's theory of the laws of form, however, analyses how an observer creates forms by making distinctions and indication. I will use the fundamental concepts and tools of the laws of form to show how an autopoietic understanding of information can be operationalized.

4.1.4 Information as form

Now that we have spelled out the fundamentals of autopoietic understanding of information and laws of form, let us see how information can be perceived. Our understanding may follow this sequence:

1. An environment becomes an object when an observer perceives it.

2. Observation is self-referential.

3. An observer makes distinctions of an object.

4. Distinction creates indication.

5. Indication is arranged in tokens.

6. Tokens are form.

7. Form indicates the operational change brought about in an observing system.

8. Operational change is information.

By analyzing tokens of indications it should be possible to perceive how one observes a potentially informative eigenform and assigns meaning to it. In other words, indication forms are the clue to understanding information as constructed by an observer. The following example shows how different observers observe an object differently. I call it the problem of perceiving September 11.
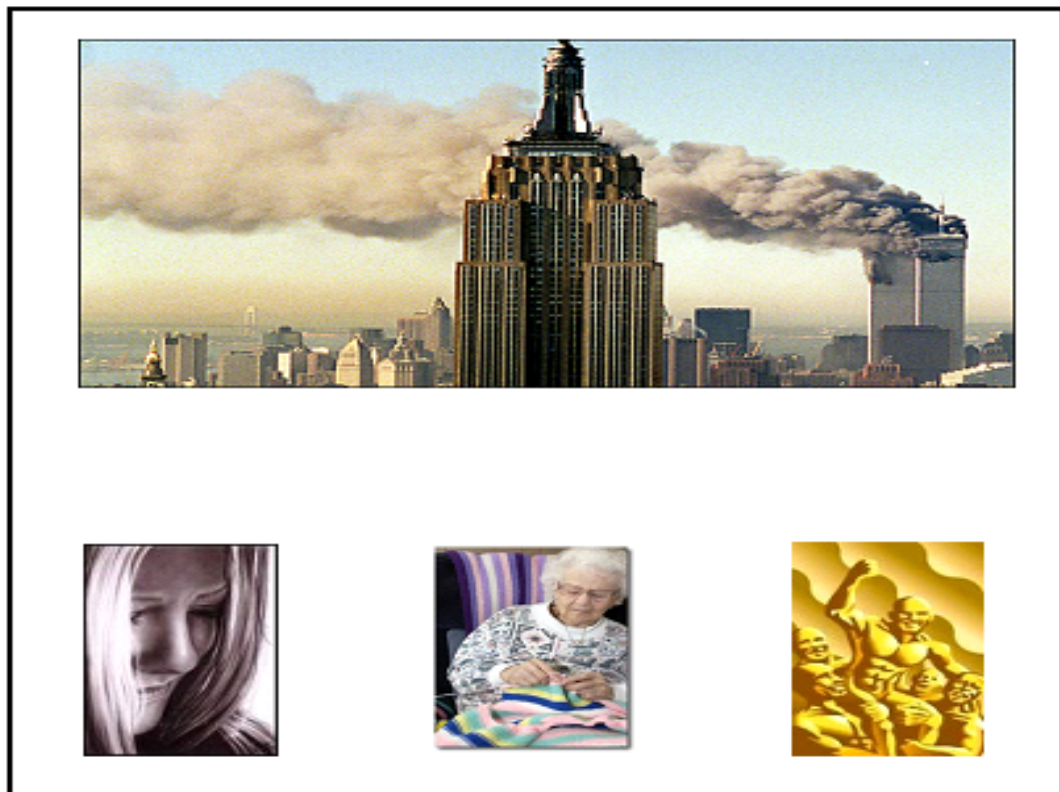
Figure 16: Problem of perceiving September 11 (Source: Pervez, 2009, p 8)

We have four images, of which the top image is an object or environment and the bottom images are indications of three observations and subsequent information. Let us name the object image *Observed* and bottom images from left to right as *Observer 1, Observer 2* and *Observer 3*. *Observed* is an image of destruction of September 11; it is observed by three different observers differently. *Observer 1* is mournful, *Observer 2* is busy in her leisurely sewing work, and *Observer 3* shows an expression of joy and victory. This example demonstrates how different observers may have different eigenbehavior with an object. *Observer 2* does not relate herself with the object and therefore she does not assign any meaning to it or construct any information. *Observer 1* and *Observer 3* make relationships with the *Observed* object but they make distinctions differently—negatively and positively—as is indicated by the token or form created in their expressions. This further reinforce the notion that *Observer 1* and *Observer 3* are perturbed differently by the same object and thus they assign meaning or constructs information differently.

4.2 Information System

The study of information systems was founded on the technological and conceptual support of computer science, management and operation theory, operations research, and accounting in the early 1960s (Davis and Olsen, 1985; Lee, 1991). Two significant developments occurred in this era that provided the ground necessary for the foundation of IS. Firstly, Western capitalism matured to an unprecedented level by restoring the economy from the devastation of the Second World War. This had a

positive impact on industrial production, including business organization and marketing. Herbert Simon's rationalistic theory of organization complemented this development and significantly influenced organization scientists in shaping their understanding of organization. Secondly, the computer's capacity for efficient data processing and retrieval increased dramatically.

Business management, propelled by its new rational and effective model for decision making, needed an efficient technology for data management. Computer science answered this need and IS developed at this intersection.

The development of IS (Hirschheim and Klein, 2006, p. 84) parallels development in information technology usage era (Dahlbom, 1996):

Stages	Information Technology
Data Processing (DP)	Automation of transaction processing
Management IS (MIS)	Using computers as instruments of control
Information Systems (IS)	Rationalizing administrative systems

Table 3: Stages of development in IS and information technology

Hirschheim and Klein's third era, characterized by the diffusion of the personal computer and the spread of the Internet, brought significant exploration in communication. This, one may argue, has provided the ground to view IS from a different perspective, namely, one that replaces information technology (IT) by its users as the driving force.

IT, more appropriately termed information and communication technology (ICT) with the advent and diffusion of the Internet has always been a fundamental consideration in Information Systems. IT's shift to ICT is remarkable in many ways; but in the context of this paper information technology's incorporation of communication actually marks expansion, if not change, in the scope of IS. This change divided the field into two aspects. The harder, or narrow aspect of IS places more weight on technological factors; the softer, or broader view emphasizes social and communication aspects (Avison and Fitgerald, 2003).

4.2.1 Conceptualization

The data processing stage of IS focused on designing efficient computer systems and programs. But with the development of management information systems (MIS) and the progressive development of communication technology, scholars soon began to conceptualize the evolving field from multiple angles. The various ways of conceptualizing IS can be divided into a conventional or narrow view and a broad view. These two ways of viewing IS differ primarily in how technology is understood and organizations are comprehended. Views are also marked by the theoretical support to which they subscribe. The narrow view of IS is technology-centered; it considers organizations as rational units and uses positivism as the dominant theoretical support. On the contrary, the broad view sees technology as a tool people use in complex organizations; this view takes theoretical supports from interpretivism. The following section elaborates these two views.

4.2.1.2 The conventional or narrow view

In 1969 Blumenthal defined IS as a scientific approach to an organization's information needs that will facilitate sound decision making. Seeing IS this way highlights decision making as the prime object in considering an organization's information needs.

In *Theoretical Analysis of Information Systems* Langefors (1973) attempted to conceptualize IS by drawing on systems theory. For Langefors, IS is a technologically implemented medium for recording, storing, and disseminating linguistic expressions as well as for drawing conclusions from such expressions. This formal theory of IS became the conventional view of the field and is still subscribed to by some scholars.

The conventional definition explains IS as a system that collects, stores, retrieves, processes, and displays information. This definition echoes Herbert Simon's assertion that an organization is a rational, goal-oriented system that works methodically, following well defined procedures. The same can be said of computing or information technology. In this sense, organizational theory and computer applications have syntactic similarities; they both work according to the same principles. As Orman stated, (1991, p. 1) "Most managerial activity can be characterized as information processing and the managers can be viewed as IS."

The conventional view of IS focuses solely on computer and information technology and organizational decision making, as discussed in the next two subsections.

Computer and information technology

The development and use of computers played a decisive role in the development of IS, particularly in the 1960s and '70s. The computer received primary attention, both as an area for application and as a focus for academic investigation. Moreover, many scholars considered the computer to be synonymous with information technology (Lee, 1991). The computer was essential in processing information for retrieval by potential users

The computer- or information technology-focused definition of IS is evident in Orman's (1991) description of an IS as a system that collects, stores, retrieves, processes, and displays information. He defines a system as a purposeful collection of interrelated components.

Information technology, according to Orman, processes information that has two formal components: data and procedure. Data is known by its three components: an entity about which information is being collected, an attribute that describes the nature of the information collected, and a value attached to that attribute. A procedure transforms data. The act of data processing is performed by database management, where a database is understood as a collection of interrelated data that are syntactically organized.

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IS seen from a conservative information technology viewpoint is an attribute-value system similar to set theory's basic knowledge representation framework: a table with columns designating attributes and rows designating objects. This is heuristic in nature and gives scant attention to semantics.

The datalogical and formalistic understanding of IS focuses solely on the syntactical aspect of information processing, although it does consider designing intellectual technologies such as indexing and abstracting. Semantics does not seem to play any significant role. Technology is viewed as artifacts empowered with the properties of influencing the application and its effects. Therefore, information behavior—that is, the pragmatic aspect of information—continued to be ignored.

Organization and decision making

The technologically driven view of IS fit well with the way organizational theory of the 1960s shaped the organization and its decision-making processes. This kind of organizational theory was supported by the idea of "the functional, decision-making-in-pursuit-of-goals" model derived from Simon (Checkland and Holwell, 1998, p. 38).

Simon's (1976) goal was to promote correct and efficient rational decision making, which he approached in a three step sequence: identification and listing of all alternatives, determination of the consequences likely to result from each of the alternatives, and comparison of the consequences. These steps were the elaborations of

his 1957 work, which recognized that *bounded rational agents* experience limits in formulating and solving complex problems and in receiving, storing, retrieving, and transmitting information. Simon's theory of bounded rationality suggested that economic agents employed heuristics to make decisions. He held that the best way to study human decision-making processes was through computer simulation; this was the gateway through which his theory influenced the syntax-governed, technology-centric understanding of IS.

A number of IS scholars who subscribe to Simon's perspective view the organization as a system (Schultheis and Summer, 1995) that uses IS to make rational decisions supported with data to attain goals (Lucas, 1994).According to this view, an organization is a rational system that binds people and resources in a defined structure to achieve its goals. IS facilitates the process of decision making by supplying data. There is no difference between data and information; and IS mechanically stores, processes, and transmits data to feed the organization's need to make decisions heuristically. Decision making is heuristic because humans are viewed as functioning according to a bounded rationality that can be modeled effectively by computer simulation.

Checkland and Holwell (1998, p. 71) criticized the narrow view: "IS are thought of as the data-based networks needed to create, establish, maintain, and control the organization's set of contracts." They hold that philosophically this is a positivistic model and sociologically a functionalistic one. Organizations are more problematic and must be

understood from more appropriate perspectives because positivism and functionalism cannot fully represent complex organizations that work organically.

Summary of the conventional or narrow view

The conventional or narrow conceptualization of IS—a technology-centric rational view—has eight principal characteristics:

1. IS is data processing that performs data storage and retrieval.

2. Data are processed to supplement rationalization of an organization's decision making.

3. IS is dependent predominantly on computer technology.

4. There is no difference between data and information.

5. Semantics has little or no value.

6. Organizations are rational in their structures and functions.

7. Positivism is the driving philosophy.

8. Functionalism is the sociological approach.

It is striking that the supporters of the conventional conceptualization of IS avoid clarifying their stand on information. Information does not present a problem according to these scholars because their rationalistic concept of the organization does not differentiate between data and information. Therefore, they concentrate on a syntactic understanding of information processed by information technology to meet the rational goals of an organization. The meaning of information or the semantic aspect of IS remain essentially untouched.

4.2.1.3 The broad view: The communication approach to IS

During the 1970s and '80s, IS concerns were addressed from different disciplines, which led to a broader scope and multiple perspectives. Culnan (1986) saw this development as the expansion of referents from which the field got its intellectual nutrition. He classified them into three broad categories: fundamental theory (systems science), related applied science (accounting, computer science, finance, management, and operations research), and underlying disciplines (anthropology, political science, psychology, and sociology). These disciplines contributed in two contrasting ways: hard disciplines focus on technology, soft disciplines focus on the interaction between people and organizations. IS takes properties from both hard and soft disciplines rather than affiliating itself with either. But it is evident that IS is currently positioning itself more toward the softer end. Avison and Elliot (2006, pp. 6-7) present the relationship in the following figure.
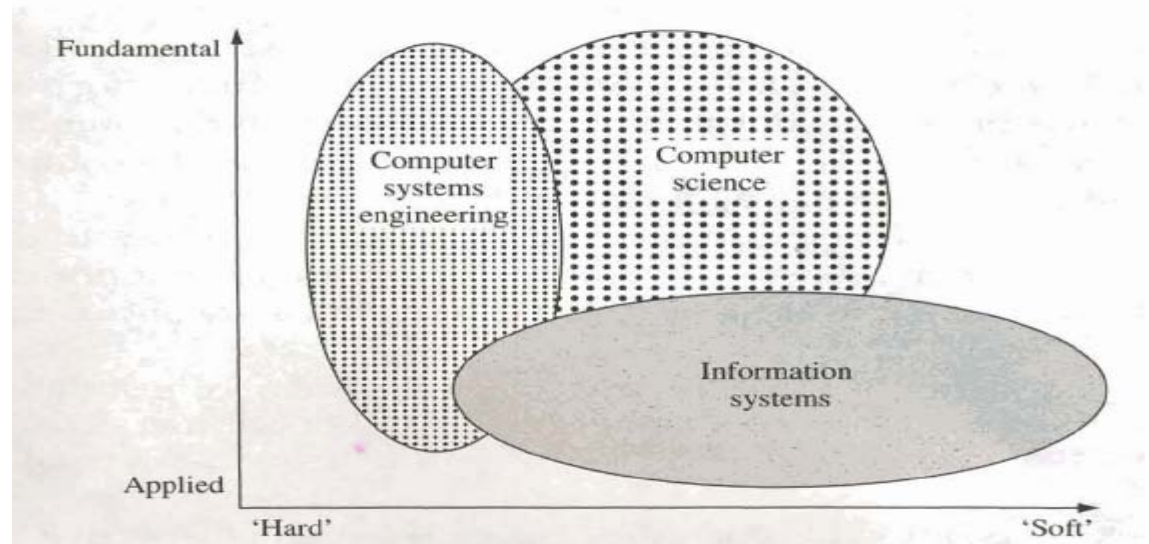
Figure 17: IS in relation to IT-related disciplines

It is important to note IS's progressive relationship to social sciences, which began during the 1970s. One can logically connect this development to a change in how technology and organization were comprehended, a change that advocated a human-centered perspective.

Human-centered technology

The driving force in the human-centered view of technology is the recognition of the need to reexamine the nature of technology and to appropriate technology for people's use. A technology-centered perspective is replaced by a user- or human-centered perspective. This happened concurrently with a change in our understanding of technology.

Etymologically, the term "technology" derived from the Greek term "*technologia*," τεχνολογία—"*techne*," τέχνη meaning craft and "*logia*," λογία denoting saying. A conservative definition of technology refers to material objects useful to humanity, such as machines, hardware, and utensils. But a broader understanding of technology goes far beyond material objects to include systems, methods of organization, and techniques. In general, technology is a type of relationship that a society has with its tools and crafts; it affects the extent to which a society can control its environment. More specifically, technology is a capability given by the practical application of knowledge.

Technology, historically speaking, is a progression of our knowledge and usage of human-created tools to ease and accomplish our tasks. Therefore, Van Wyk (1999, p. 16) defined technology as "created competence as manifested in devices, procedures, and acquired human skill." Van Wyk viewed technology fundamentally as an ability to accomplish a defined task with a definite purpose. As such, technology is a combination of purpose, tools, knowledge, and use. Humans, he concluded, consciously construct tools that develop their knowledge and technique to achieve a purpose. Tools alone do not reveal the meaning of technology; they are just an integral part of a sequence where human competence plays a major role. Competence is used here to encompass both human acts and human thinking. Therefore, according to Hamman (2004, pp. 115-116), "the computer explicitly provides a means for humans to design the very representational frames which condition how they think and act *vis á vis* a particular domain of activity."

Already in the 1980s, Kling and Iacono (1984) proposed an understanding of the ways in which users select and use computer-based information system (CBIS). They argued that the development of the computer as a technology was influenced by political, ideological, and structural dimensions. Kling (1993, 1994) elaborated his view on a society-based understanding of technology, especially computing, which took a disciplinary form called social informatics. Kling (1999) defined social informatics as the interdisciplinary study of the design, uses, and consequences of information technologies, taking into account their interaction with institutional and cultural contexts. Despite conceptual and methodological differences, social construction of technology (SCOT), primarily developed by Pinch and Bijker (1984), also focuses on the social dimensions of technology.

Feenberg (1991) classified mainstream theories about technology as *instrumental* or *substantive*. Instrumental theory views technology as socially and culturally neutral; in other words, technology is tools or devices that have nothing to do with their contexts and uses. According to substantive theory, technology dominates and shapes culture and lifestyle. Feenberg criticized both views for adopting a single premise: that technology is immutable. Therefore, he offered a new perspective on technology, a critical theory, which advocates redesigning technology to adapt its forces to the needs of a genuinely free society. This view denies the so-called immutable power of technology. According to Hamman (2004, p. 117), "critical theory of technology requires a rethinking of technology in order to bring about its transformation from an instrumental abstraction into a site for human thought and activity."

The conventional work on data analysis and structure analysis, which focuses on algorithmic and functional properties of machines, changed as human activity systems and sociotechnical systems gained scholarly attention. This strengthened the social science approach to technology and influenced how IS would be understood. Accordingly, there developed multiple views to answer the following questions (Wood-Harper, Antill, et al., 1985, p. 8):

1. How is the computer system supposed to further the aims of the organization installing it?

2. How can it be fitted into the working lives of the people in the organizations that are going to use it?

3. How can the individuals concerned best relate to the machine in terms of operating it and using the output from it?

4. What information processing function is the system to operate?

5. What is the technical nature of a system that will come close to meeting the answers to the other four questions?

Researchers thus sought to understand human competence in designing and evaluating IS by examining the contexts of its use and needs of its users (Land and Hirschheim, 1983).This is similar to Feenberg's critical perspective, transforming technology from an instrumental abstraction into a site for human thought and activity. At this crossroad, IS, as an intellectual field, came closer to social science and moved further

from computer science. This significant jump necessitated broadening the understanding and scope of IS to incorporate human competence as the primary element.

The soft and interpretive understanding of organization

The hard, goal-seeking-machine model of organization, which was influenced by Simon's formulation of organization theory, needed to respond to changes in other social sciences that focused more on society and human interactions. IS scholars developed a new view of organization, which was "to be seen at core as a social process, essentially a conversational process, in which the world is interpreted in a particular way which legitimates shared actions and establishes shared norms and standards." (Checkland and Holwel, 1998, p. 71)

The soft, or interpretive strand of organization pursued understanding of IS that would take into consideration how tasks are performed in coordination with people and information technology. This view focuses on people using information technology, hence information, to develop work practices that will accomplish an organization's goal. Work practices are the methods that people and technologies use to perform work. The relationship runs in both directions: people, technology, and information construct work practices even as work practices influence people, technology, and information. An information system is a combination of work practices, information, people, and information technologies organized to accomplish goals in an organization (Alter, 1992, p. 7).

Davis and Olsen (1992, p. 8) presents this relationship graphically:
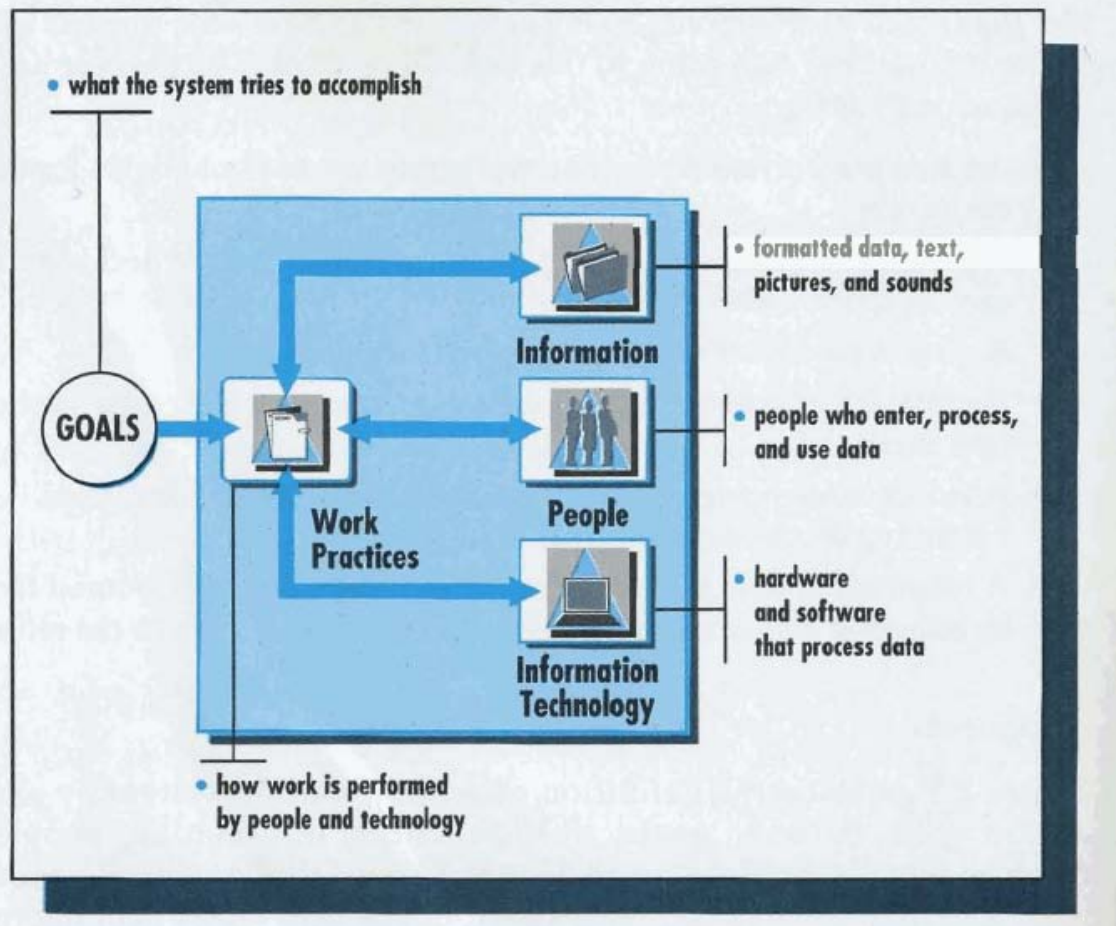
Figure 18: Organization as work practice

From this perspective, understanding information technology is not equivalent to understanding IS. Information technology is a part of IS; it is to be designed with reference to the people who will use it. The two-way relationship between work-practices and people indicates that the work-practices affect the people, and the characteristics of the people in the system determine what work-practices are feasible. Alter argued that it is often difficult to develop an IS in an organization where the technical staff focuses on technology and the users focus on work-practices, people, and information. This, as a consequence, hampers communication and leads to system failure.

Vickers's (1984) interpretive model of organization provides further support for the soft and interpretive understanding of organization. For Vickers organizations are social entities that seek to manage relationships; and organizations are thus conversation processes. Managers primarily set the norms for a meaningful conversation rather than fixing an organization's goal. In this view, social action, which is conversation, is based upon personal and collective sense making. An IS is a part of interpreting the world and sense making in connection with managing the relationships. Vickers's interpretive understanding of organization is hermeneutic in nature. His work has conceptual similarities with that of Winograd and Flores (1986), who see organization as a network of conversation in which communities are generated. For them computers are tools for conducting networks of conversation.

Thus, an interpretive, soft understanding of organization supplements the critical theory of technology by adding the phenomenon of conversation to the concept of human competence. For both, sense making works as the core driving force; without it, no conversation is meaningful and no competence is actualized. Moreover, adopting an interpretive comprehension of technology and organization makes it possible to define IS at a broader level, which actually validates a communication approach. This I will elaborate in a later section.

One can find a number of conceptualizations under the umbrella of a broad view of IS. I will discuss three that are relevant to this study: IS's development as a social action, value-added processes in IS, and the mutually transformational, emergent IS.

IS's development as social action

Discussing IS's development as social action reconfirms the shift in our understanding of IS from a narrow view of technocentrism to a broad view of IS as socially grounded.

Hirschheim et al. (1987) challenged the conservative or narrow view by presenting IS and its development as a form of social action. They contended that an IS embodies seven basic elements of social action: knowledge, power, subjective meanings, human interests, consensus, conflict, and resistance. In this view the interplay of these seven elements is the basis of IS development.

The social action view posits three stages of IS development. In the beginning, it was conceived largely as a technical system. In the second stage, IS was recognized as a technical process that had behavioral consequences; in this stage, issues such as user friendliness and ergonomically sound design became important. In the third stage, the social interplay of multiple actors dominated IS development. Here multiple actors make sense of their and others' actions through the medium of language. Scholars in this stage applied several interesting labels to IS that were inconceivable earlier: symbolic interactionism, structuration theory, and theory of communicative rationality are a few examples of ways IS began to be comprehended.

Hirschheim et al. (1987) further argue that in the course of IS development, multiple actors with different group interests and personal biographies interact. Interacting actors constantly negotiate for a common ground that may lead to an optimal consensus. In case of failure to achieve a common ground, it is likely that the system will fail. Subjective knowledge, power nexus, and conflict may be obstacles to achieving a common ground. Therefore, it is necessary that human performance be valued and that social action receive primary attention in both developing and using IS. IS is primarily a social process that increasingly relies on information technology for its effective operation.

The value-added process in IS

According to McMullin and Taylor (1984, p. 92), "Historically our information systems have been technology-driven and content-driven. The former systems first found their base in the book and its technology and today find it in the computer and associated technologies. These technologies have essentially prescribed size, shape, dynamics, and even the content of information systems. What is stored in a book or similar artifact, or what is stored in a computer is perceived as knowledge or information. And the constraints of the book or computer are the determinants of the technology driven models." They add that a content-driven approach to information systems is fallacious because it stems from the traditional division of knowledge derived by a concern with classification of information. Both views ignore the fact that an understanding of information and information systems is logically related to how people or users perceive a need for information and their information use environment (IUE).

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By criticizing such a technology- and content-driven conception of information systems, Taylor (1986, p. 3) advocated a user-driven understanding of information systems: "Major input to the design of information systems must come from an analysis of the information use environment."

Taylor viewed technology as a device or artifact that helps us externalize our potentials in a more systematic way for better and faster output. Technology has a wider range that also includes intellectual technologies such as indexing, classification, systems analysis, and alphabetization. Information systems, which process information, are to be viewed as a user-driven technology that is guided by the information use environment to convert data into information. Data are basically symbols that designate the conditions that characterize an entity at some time. Data becomes information through establishing relationship among data; and information at the end of a sequence causes actions. This sequence, known as the value-added spectrum, can be shown as follows:
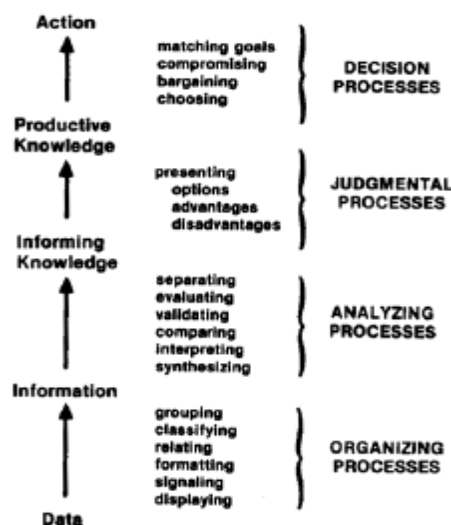
Figure 19: Value-added spectrum (source: Taylor, 1986, p.6)

For Taylor, information systems are a series of formal process by which data are organized into information that, through analysis and judgmental process, produces knowledge to facilitate decision-making leading to action. The term value-added has an especial strength in this way of viewing information systems. Through the above mentioned sequence something becomes information by virtue of obtaining value. Value is not intrinsic to an information message; the value of information is user-based. An information message is given value by someone who uses it. In other words, the value of information is determined by the praxis and use of information. Information transfer is primarily a human process that takes the form of information systems when the process is formalized. Therefore, technology is simply a means, not the determining factor for understanding information systems. A system that facilitates the task of data's conversion to information leading to action caters to the information needs of the users in a given information environment. The process involves a negotiating space between system and users; this means that the system and user should be able to communicate with each other to provide optimal response to users' information needs.

A system's merit depends on how appropriately and effectively it reflects and responds to the needs of the environment. Taylor said (ibid, p. 5):

> By estimating the possible utility of certain kinds of information, the preferred mode of access, and the kinds of enhancements of signals the system can provide so that use can be facilitated in the particular context and transforming them into a formal series of activities, we have in essence designed an information system, responsive to a particular information use environment.

The information use environment (IUE) is a conceptual construct consisting of different elements that affect the flow and use of information in a definable entity such as organization; these elements determine how individuals in that entity judge the value of the information received (Deltor, 2003). An IUE consists of people, their problems, typical settings, and problem resolutions. In other words, an IUE equals context for information seekers.

Social sciences, especially sociology and anthropology, have long recognized the importance of context. Linguistically, context is a metaphor from weaving (Burke, 2002). In classical Latin 'to weave' is *contexere* and the noun form *contextus* was used for connection. According to ancient Greek rules of rhetoric, one's speech and behavior were supposed to be connected to the principles of appropriateness: one would weave one's speech and behavior in connection to the references that were set by the community. Context was used as the guide for behavior and also to regulate the production and reproduction of people's speech. In the middle ages, context came to represent the intention of a writer, particularly in understanding the meaning of a Biblical passage. Later hermeneutics placed scholarly emphasis on the inclusion of context in the process of interpretation. German hermeneutics actually paved the way to understand context as culture. Karl Marx's historical materialism took cultural and material context in prime consideration in its interpretation of history. Weber's understanding of the development of capitalism also relied heavily on an extensive investigation of the context that produced the Protestant work ethic and shaped human behavior and action. Karl

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Mannheim, the pioneer of the sociology of knowledge, held that ideas are socially

situated, which is actually another way of saying that context produces ideas and

thinking.

Rosenbaum (1999) outlined the importance of context in reference to information

and communication technology (ICT) He defined context as an organizational

information environment (OIE). His main premises are:

- OIE is context.
- OIE organizes information behavior by
  - influencing the flow of information, and
  - providing criteria for determining the value of information.
- OIE is a product of situated information behaviors as it allows for the reproduction of information behavior across time and space.
- OIE reproduces information behavior.
- OIE helps in structuring the organization.
- OIE, as the context, affects and is affected by ICT design, implementation, and use.

These premises highlight three fundamental aspects of any kind of information in

any social setting:(1) it takes a particular shape in a given context, (2) it is produced and

reproduced in a particular time and space while simultaneously structuring the

institutions that help the production and reproduction, and (3) a particular community's

information behavior follows a definite pattern. Viewed this way, information can be

understood as a property that is meaningful in a context where it is produced and it

becomes a flow as the community uses it to take a particular kind of action. This further implies that information, communication technology, and information systems are conditioned by the context in which they are nested. This echoes Taylor's claims that the IUE has the ability to assign value to an information message. Rosenbaum's view is also similar to Choo's (1998) general model, which explains how people seek information on the basis of their context or environment. This further confirms Sonnenwald's (1999) statement that information science is a discipline concerned with the discovery and implementation of models and theories that focus on human information behavior in a social, institutional, or individual context.

Detlor (2003) held that a negotiating space (interface) exists between an IUE and information systems where the system displays its value-added output to assist users in making choices to help resolve their problems. And therefore, the major input to the design of information systems comes from an analysis of the IUE. The IUE is so crucial that it even determines our information seeking behavior. Therefore, Deltor (p.117) said,

> During information seeking, characteristics of the social settings can induce or constrain certain patterns of information-seeking behavior. For instance, the culture and structure of the setting can affect individual attitudes towards information and information gathering, determine the time available to conduct an information search and dictate the technologies available to facilitate a search.

The value-added process approach to information systems is a user-centered view. It focuses on users and their environment and it considers tools and technology as means

for users to satisfy their information needs. According to this view (Taylor, 1986, p.5),

"An information system then, is a series of *value-adding processes*, the result of which

help the users or clients to make choices or assist them in clarifying problems."

The mutually transformational, emergent IS

Considering the increasing emphasis on organization, and yet maintaining a

formal conceptualization of IS, Lee (2004, pp. 10-11) commented:

> A conventional (and incomplete) view of information systems focuses on
> information requirement--which describes the information that an
> organization requires from an information technology so that it can
> function and achieve its goals--as well as how to design, implement,
> install or otherwise procure information technology so that it can deliver
> the information required. This view dominates the assorted waterfall
> models of systems design and, one can argue, still permeates some of the
> recent and sophisticated notions of information systems development. This
> view is incomplete because it is blind to systems other than the technical
> system as well as to mutually transformational interactions that unfold
> between technical systems and other systems.

Lee had no problem with the importance technological aspect of IS, but he held

that technology had organizational components as well. Organization in its broadest

understanding is a social entity. From where IS emerges, Lee saw an ongoing, mutually

transforming interaction between technology and organization. Therefore, in Lee's

formulation (p. 11) "…an information system is that which results from the intervention

of an information technology into an intervention of a social system, as much as an

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intervention of a social system into an already existing information technology." Lee held

an open definition for technology that stretches from hardware to division of labor and

social norm and practice. In his view a mutually transformational, emergent IS has the

following properties:

1. IS is a process.

2. This process involves technical and organizational systems' mutually

   interactive transformation.

3. The process is progressive.

4. IS is emergent.

The mutually transformational, emergent IS holds the clue to comprehend IS as a

communicative process, which I will elaborate later.

Theoretical underpinnings

A broad view of information systems, which I call a communication approach to

IS, results from an increasing emphasis on interpretive research in information systems

(Washlam, 1995). A broader range of different interpretive social theories—

phenomenology, hermeneutic, semiotic, structuration, postmodern, etc.—have come to

influence the field (Minger and Willcocks, 2004). The following table presents the main

interpretive theories used in contemporary research in information systems

Theory	Works
Phenomenology	Ciborra (2000), Introna (1997), Dreyfus (1993), Rathswohl(1991)
Hermeneutics	Myers (1994), Lee (1994), Boland and Day (1989, Boland (1979, 1985, 1987), Butler

	and Fitzgerald (1997), Trauth and Jessup (2000)
Semiotics	Anderson (1991), Stamper (1987, 1991, 1995), Liu (2002)
Communication action theory of Habermas	Heng and de Moor (2003), Forester (1992),Mingers (1981, 1984),
Critical realism	Mingers (2002, 2004), Mutch (2002)
Critical Theory	Probert (2004), Lyytinen (1992)
Postmodernism	Greenhill (2001), Ciborra (1998)
Structuration theory	Jones, Orlikowski, and Munir (1994), Jones (1998)
Power Knowledge theory of Foucault	Brook (2002a, 2002b), Harvey (1998), Doolin (1998), Cleggs (1989)

Table 4: Different interpretive theories used in IS

Interpretivism is a type of philosophy concerned with providing an interpretation of events and phenomena in terms of how the people involved perceive and understand their own experience instead of simply quantifying what actually happens in social phenomena. Interpretivism is also a method for carrying out empirical studies in the light of interpretive philosophy and theory. Lee (1991), in his discussion of theinterpretive approach to organizational research, referred to the procedures associated with ethnography, hermeneutics, phenomenology, and case studies. Interpretivism is often contrasted with positivism. According to Lee (1991, p. 343), "the positivist approach involves the manipulation of theoretical propositions using *the rules of formal logic* and *the rules of hypothetico-deductivelogic*, so that the theoretical propositions satisfy the four requirements of falsifiability, logical consistency, relative explanatory power, and survival." Such a rigid method of investigation explains how things operate in the physical world, but does not cater to the views and opinions of the people who have a cognitive and emotional attachment to the world in which they live. Max Weber, by introducing the concept of *Verstehen* (understanding), paved the way for understanding

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how people interpret their worlds and their own acts. According to Natanson (1960), by introducing the sociology of interpretation Weber argued that the primary task of the sociologists is to understand the meaning an act has for the actor himself. Since then many different theories, approaches, and methods for interpretive investigation have been developed.

A broad view on information systems, which is primarily a user- or actor-centric perspective, has convincingly used various interpretive approaches and methods. Lee's (2001) hermeneutic study of how managers in an organization interpreted email to facilitate the construction of information exemplifies this approach. Anderson's (1991) semiotic interpretation of Danish post receipt documents demonstrates the validity and effectiveness of semiotic investigation.

Avison et al. (2001) reported how information systems journals have encouraged interpretive, scholarly work in the field. This is a significant change for information systems, which grew out of technology- and content-driven perspectives and subscribed to positivistic research and understanding of information technology. It is probably true that even in the earlier days of information systems development there was a seed of interpretive investigation. In the language of Avison et al. (2001, p.3), information systems "was essentially the field of applied computing, still known by some as DP (data processing). The perspective was different to that of computer science at the time, and we took the view that we, in IS, stood with our backs to the machine and looked outwards towards the world at large, whereas computer science stood in much the same place but

looked in." The seed has now grown to a tree that is open to all kinds of interpretive theories in order to validate the claim for a broad view of information systems.

2.3.6 Summary of the broad view

A broad view on information systems is a shift of focus from the machine to the human and his context. It developed in response to the changes that occurred in the realms of technology, organization, and communication.

1. Technology is a tool that requires human competence to function.

2. Organization is a social and conversational process to interpret the world through shared actions establishing shared norms.

3. Information systems are more than computers.

4. Understanding of the information use environment is a prerequisite to designing effective information systems.

5. Data are not the same as information.

6. Interpretive theory, approach, and methods are essential to develop a user-centric understanding of information systems.

A broad understanding of information systems remains incomplete without mapping out an appropriate comprehension of information. In fact, "Information systems could not presumably exist without information" (Minger, 1995, p. 285). Therefore, in the next section I will discuss the concept of information and identify a view that may have a logical coherence with the broad understanding of information systems that I have

discussed so far. I will also endeavor to operationalize such a conception of information that can be used for empirical investigations.

4.3 Information systems and communication

The broad view of information systems discussed in the preceding section sees information systems relying on communication to support people as they self-referentially assign value or meaning in their environment out of which information is constructed. Any physical or symbolic artifact that is used in this process of constructing information is a medium. Media facilitate our acts of information creation. Lee's (1994) empirical work on how information was constructed from a conversation facilitated by email messages among managers of an organization is an example. It distinctly shows that an information system operationally depends on communication where the medium is necessary to accomplish the act of information construction.

A communication approach to information systems shifts the focus from artifact to users and from a positivistic to an interpretive understanding of information. It emphasizes the way people communicate with their environment by using media. The communication approach to information systems broadens the horizon to include as information system everything that facilitates the communication acts of marking one's environment and constructing information. In this line of thought, any medium facilitating the emergence of information is an information system. A database is an information system that facilitates the act of information creation. So is the invisible

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college (the "ancillary communication conduit" [Cronin, 1982, p. 216]); and so are email and blogs. Film—documentary, feature, experimental, etc.—is definitely an information system that as a medium presents an audio-visual world for the receptor to make self-referential distinctions. I will discuss this more in detail in the next section.

Understanding information systems from a communication approach is in fact arguing that an information system is a communication system; to proceed in this line of reasoning we will need to map out our understanding of communication. In the first chapter and preceding sections I have present methodically what communication is, how the concept of media is important for communication, and the system theoretic relationship of communication and information as developed by Ruben (1992). I chose Ruben's approach because, as a system theoretic approach, it comes closest to an autopoietic and cybernetic understanding of information that I have argued so far. Consequently, I argue how a broad understanding of information systems—a user driven interpretive approach—can be viewed as a communication approach.

4.4 Autopeoitic information and Information Systems

An autopoietic approach to information, which considers information as self-referential meaning construction by observing an object, complements the broad view of information systems. For both, the point of departure is the user and both understand meaning as being constructed by people on the basis of their needs, situations, and contexts. Taylor's value-added information systems made this clear by showing how data become information by users' assigning value. Minger (1995) saw information systems

as a part of a wider human meaning system, and information as quite meaningless until it connects to that meaning system within which a human being operates. This further implies that information emerges through humans' assigning meaning to an object; and an information system, as a part of a wider meaning system (shown in the following figure), facilitates the act of assigning meaning to an object of observation.
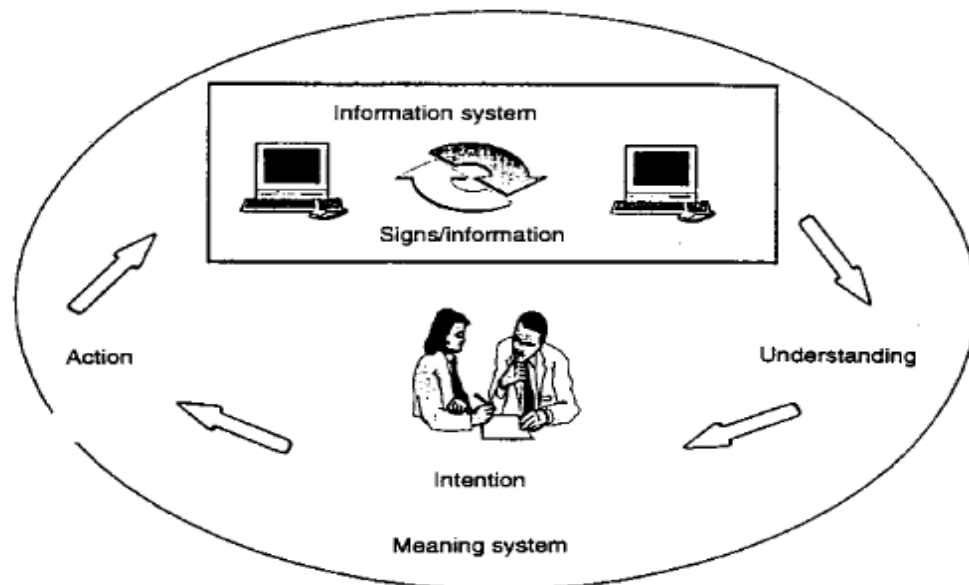
Figure 20 Information system as a part of meaning system (Minger, 1995, p. 303)

A broad understanding of information systems complemented by an autopoietic conception of information is in fact a process of communication. It is communication between system and environment, people and artifacts, and among people. In other words, a broad view of information systems is a communication approach to information systems. Briefly, information system is an environment that observers distinguish through observation and autopoietically makes indication, i.e. assign meaning to what they

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observe. In that sense any medium of communication is an information system. In the same line of argument, film as communication medium is an environment for observation and indication, and therefore it is an information system.

5 The Film: Environment for observation and indication

5. 1 Film: An environment

Examination of film as a medium for communication is the clue to understanding film as an environment. As a continuation of the concepts and perspectives discussed earlier in this paper, that film needs to be understood from the perspective of the receptor (receiver/viewer/spectator/audience member) perspective while also discussing film as a device for generating form that is self-referentially observed and distinguished by receptors.

5. 1.1 Film as medium

Film is a medium (Jacobs, 1970) for indicating ideas, thoughts, and messages cognized by a filmmaker into an audio-visual form organized into a chain of shots, sequences, and sounds. Every unit, shot, or sequence contributes to structuring the feel, message, or theme that the filmmaker intends to represents. It elicits pleasure, feeling, and sometimes intellectual thought in a receptor's mind when the receptor, as a cognitive agent, reflects on the film. Film presents an intriguing dialectic between narrative mediation and visual immediacy in one's cognitive domain (Stoehr, 2002). We reflect thoroughly upon perceived images while perceiving present images; at the same time we prepare ourselves to perceive images in the immediate future. Our perceptions of past, present, and future images are assembled into a whole by the aid of a mediated judgment

shaped by biography, context, mood, reason, and imagination. Both immediate perception and mediated judgment are cognitive acts made possible as one recognizes patterns with the help of schemata.

5. 1.2 Film as form

In *The Art of the Moving Picture* published in 1915, Lindsay welcomed film as a new language of picture-words and hieroglyphs. That description of language as a form for making indications also applies to film. The historical development of film and its etymological meaning clearly indicate film as a medium for observation. Over a century ago, European Christian priests used magic lanterns to present the story of the life of Jesus Christ. Etymologically speaking (Stam, 2000, p. 22), early names for this new medium in various languages defined film as an artifact for watching or observation. "Vitascope" and "Bioscope" both mean "looking at life;" "Kinetoscope" means visual observation of movement; and "Cinema" means transcription of movement. In Arabic, film was called "Swa Mutaharika," meaning "moving image" and "Reina" was film in Hebrew, also meaning "watching movement."

In film we observe forms created by manipulating space and time using the techniques and art of cinematography and editing. Over the past century, many ways and styles of creating cinematic forms have been developed. Receptors' perceptions developed concurrently to make meaning of these forms. Filmmakers can now communicate with a sequence changed by a jump cut without forcing viewers to struggle

with its meaning. A classic example of this is the famous jump cut of the film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, in which Kubrick (1968), in a single cut, turned a bone thrown into the air by the ape men turns into a 21st century space ship.
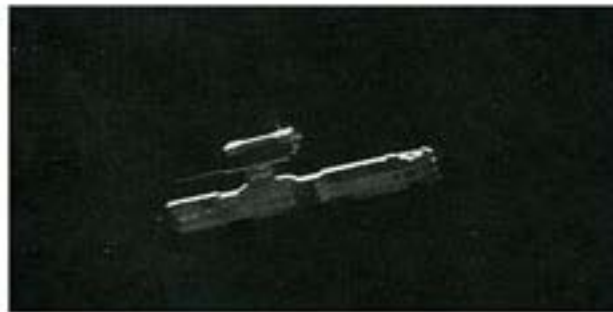
Figure 21: Visual Match-Cut from bone to spaceship, indicating the evolution of mankind (*2001: A Space Odyssey* by Stanley Kubrick)

Film is a powerful medium to create audio-visual forms to stimulate humans emotionally, intellectually, and cognitively. The same content of a film may perturb our cognition differently when the content is formed into a different order. Leni Riefenstahl's film *Triumph of the Will* (1935) was a German propaganda film made to validate the upcoming war. Later the Englishman Charles Ridley reedited the footage into a film called *The Panzer Ballet* (1941) that actually mocked Hitler and his war.

One form may appeal differently to different people as audience members self-referentially observe forms. Japanese audiences did not appreciate Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950) on its premiere but it was hailed as extraordinarily by Dutch audience (Es, 2002). The two nations' disparate conceptions of morality, reality, and life may account for the difference in reception.

The film form must be understood as a system—a unified set of interrelated, independent elements—that relies on social conventions to stimulate the receptor's/viewer's mind (Bordwell & Thompson, 1997). The spectator, as a cognitive agent, attributes meaning to the film he or she perceives and thereby constructs the form of a film. Therefore, the form of a film is not merely how it is shot and edited; the form is also how spectators make it meaningful to them. Making such distinctions is assigning value or meaning to an object of observation. Actually, film form is inseparable from the value attributed by the receptors and endorsing value makes a film meaningful.

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There are a number of theories—for example, the expressionism of Arnheim (1967) and Kracauer (1952); formalism of Pudovkin (2006), Eisenstein (1942), and Baláz (1952); and structuralist theory of Metz (1974)—about the ways film becomes meaningful. In this connection I will discuss cognitive film theory because it is the closest to cybernetic or autopoietic theory, which I have discussed and used in relation to a broad understanding of information systems.

5. 2 Cognitive film theory

Cognition is a collective term for the psychological processes involved in the acquisition organization, and use of knowledge. In contemporary terminology, cognition includes such processes and phenomena as perception, memory, attention, problem-solving, language, thinking, and imagery. Cognition, as it has been used in various disciplines, has slowly drifted away from the idea of mind as an input-output device that processes information toward the idea of mind as an emergent and autonomous network. Thus, cognition is not to be studied as inner versus outer worlds but rather as embodied action. Therefore, it is believed that cognition depends upon the kinds of experience that come from having a body with various sensorimotor capacities; and also that these individual sensorimotor capacities are themselves embedded in a more encompassing biological, psychological, and cultural context. Seeing cognition in this way is known as *cognition in the wild* or *distributed cognition* (Hutchins, 1999). When one applies cognitive principles to the observation of human activity "in the wild," at least three interesting kinds of distribution of cognitive processes become apparent: the cognitive

processes may be distributed across the members of a social group, the processes may be distributed in the sense that the operation of the cognitive system involves coordination between internal and external structure, and the processes may be distributed through time in such a way that the products of earlier events can transform the nature of later events.

Mainstream cognitive science looks for cognitive events in the manipulation of symbols (Newell et al., 1989) or patterns of activation across arrays of processing units (Rumelhart et al., 1986) inside the human individual actors but distributed cognition looks for a broader class of cognition events and does not expect all such events to be encompassed by the skin or skull of an individual. The roots of distributed cognition are deep but the field came into being under its current name in the mid-1980s. Now, over a period of twenty years of development, distributed cognition has gained ground and paved the way for other disciplines, including film study, in their endeavors to understand human communication.

It is not entirely new to use psychology in an effort to understand film viewing. Almost a century ago, Hugo Muntesberg (1916) set as his objective for film studies an understanding of how moving pictures impress us and appeal to us. He focused not on the physical means and technical devices but on the mental means—the psychological factors involved when we watch what happens on the screen. In 1933, Arnheim used Gestalt theory in understanding film and later film theoreticians drew upon cognitivism to unravel the mystery of film. After Kracauer, major changes occurred in the theoretical

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study of how film communicates and how it comes to have meaning. It went from a linguistic model, to a political model built upon a linguistic model, to cognitvism's promise of a model based upon perception and cognition. Cognitivism is now gaining acceptance in film theory. Cognitivists reject the dominant views in film studies: Saussurean linguistics, Metz's semiotics, and psychoanalytic accounts of neurotic viewer responses to, or ideological victimization of films. As an alternative to psychoanalysis, cognitivists posit that humans have evolved (nearly) universal psychological structures that are relevant to viewing films. This analysis is supported by recent empirical approaches to describing the relevant psychological structures.

Noel Carroll's (1988) point of departure to develop a cognitive approach to film theory lies in his understanding of psychoanalysis as the study of irrational, which he does not find in the world represented in films. Rather, in understanding the viewing experience of cinematic mimetic signification, cognitivists prefer to speak of *recognizability* as an inherent human rational capacity. A mimetic film image is a representation of x and the spectator recognizes the representation, the image, as a representation of x. The recognition of a film image as a representation is a presupposition of spectatorial perception and comprehension. A cognitivist film theoretician does not complicate the field by trying to understand human comprehension of film as a theory-governed process of interpretation.

Bordwell (1989) departs from the classical cognitivism that tends to understand information processing as another mechanical function. He consciously avoids the term

"cognitive science," preferring "cognitive approach." In this regard his position is closer to what is known as cognition in the wild or distributed cognition. Bordwell (1989a), in "A Case for Cognitivism," systematically spells out his position; he begins by defining cognition as it has been presented by the cognitivists of social science and humanities. In subsections on the cognitive core, good naturalization, constructivism, mental representations, and social action he develops a cognitive perspective of film.

The core of cognitive theory rests in its concern with normal and successful action, unlike Freudian psychoanalysis, with its emphasis on deviation. Cognitive theory, which aims at understanding the ordinary comprehension of human actions, consists of recognition, comprehension, inference-making, judgment, memory, and imagination. Cognition explains both intelligible (involuntary) and intentional (voluntary) actions in order to understand the mentation process of the two; cognitive theory also rejects a strong behavioristic account of human actions. Bordwell further describes the intentional act (purposive and rational acts) as the action that is done deliberately; he views intentional acts as directed at objects. A mental state that has intentionality possesses semantic content. Mental process, for Bordwell, produces meaning through a causal, functional, or teleological explanation of the objects on which the mind is focused. Cognition is a linear process involving description, problem solving, and inference, for which perception is the key. Thus, the act of representation and the way it attains intentionality and makes meaning is actually a process of construction. Furthermore, perception, which involves both sensory mechanisms and concept formulation, is context dependent. This is particularly evident in the way cultural knowledge is organized by

intersubjective schemata, scripts, or mental models and thus structures a community—or individual—centered mode of perception.

Cognitivism, as understood by Bordwell, thus focuses on a process of construction that acknowledges the necessity of *a priori* components—conceptual or physical. This construction is a natural process and, at the same time, a cultural one. In other words, cognition is built upon innate capacities and as well as acquired skills. This is also the case for filmmaking and film viewing. Film works on us as a combination of three processes:

- Neurophysiological process (apparent motion)
- Universal cognitive process (the identification of human agents, the processing of musical meter and rhythm).
- Culturally variable cognitive process (historically variable strategies of constructing a narrative).

These three processes together make film viewing meaningful. We see through our eyes and identify objects as the result of top-down inference with the help of cultural concepts. Both filmmakers and film viewers operate with common schemata and heuristics that are partly neurophysiological (innate) and partly convention-governed (learned and therefore *a priori*).

Bordwell's cognitive approach to film is unusually encompassing. It examines the physiological organs that are used for perception while also referring to the concepts and

conventions one learns from history and culture. His approach truly exemplifies

distributed cognition, which sets him apart from other cognitivist scholars of film study.

He opposes Carroll, who asserts that recognition takes place without inferential

maneuvers and that recognition is more analogous to a reflex process than to reading.

Instead, according to Bordwell (1985), sensory stimuli alone cannot determine a

perception because they are incomplete and ambiguous. Seeing is not absorption of

stimuli, rather, it is a constructive activity that involves various purposes, expectations,

and hypotheses. Everything from recognizing objects and understanding dialogue to

comprehending a film's overall story utilizes previous knowledge.

Film appears as a flow of audio-visual form from which meaning is constructed

by a cognitive mind. In film, forms are organized on a spatio-temporal level. It arranges

spatial elements (i.e., photographed objects) and manipulates temporal structures by

editing the shots and sequences. A filmmaker's contribution depends on how

convincingly and meaningfully he or she works on spatio-temporal arrangement. A

different arrangement invokes a different meaning. The famous *Kuleshov effect* is an

example of how juxtaposing the same shot of the actor Mosjoukine with different visual

images produced different meanings. In accordance with conventional human schemata,

the shot of the actor juxtaposed with a bowl of soup meant hunger but when juxtaposed

with a boy in coffin invoked grief. The pan, close up, flash forward, flash back, dissolve,

negative, and freeze shot techniques are used to articulate the spatio-temporal

organization of content in film. Static elements are arranged by editing; camera

movement articulates temporal structure. A particular arrangement and manipulation of

spatio-temporal structure usually evokes a particular kind of reflection. Several studies show how motion, a temporal structure, perturbs attention or cortical arousal to film perception (Gibson, 1979; Huston, 1993; Zetti, 1973). For example, the slow motion of the last shot of *Zabriskie Point* showing the explosion makes the world appear with more intensity; the repeated shot of flying plastic bags in *American Beauty* unveils the beauty of emptiness. Humans, as cognitive agents with the help of pattern recognition and lumping ability, do not usually struggle to follow the narration that the sequence discloses and to construct meaning by indicating the forms.

Bordwell and Thompson (1997) develop a method most suitable to analyze the informativeness of a film from a cognitive perspective. They contend (p. 85):

> Our experience of an artwork is also a concrete one. Picking up cues in the work, we can create specific expectations which are aroused, guided, delayed, cheated, satisfied, or disturbed. We undergo curiosity, suspense, and surprise. We compare the particular aspects of the artwork with general conventions which we know from life and from art. The concrete context of the artwork expresses the simultaneous emotions and enables us to construct many types of meanings.

The overall interrelation among different systems of elements composes the form of a film that has five concerns: (a) what are the functions of an element of a film? (b) Do elements repeat throughout the film? (c) How are the various elements differentiated from one another? (d) How do the beginning and ending of the film compare? (e) What is the degree of unity in the films overall form? All these concerns are simultaneously

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manifested in both the narrative and the style of a film. Narrative is the flow of the story in which the parts relate to each other through a series of causally related events taking place in a specific time and space; and style denotes the repeated and salient uses of film techniques characteristic of a single film or a group of films. Narrative deals with the story and style deals with how the story is articulated with the particular use of cinematic apparatus including the photography, editing, and sound of a film.

In a nutshell, a cognitive analysis will examine the narrative and the use of cinematic apparatus in a film to see how the form of the film in question cues/perturbs spectators to attribute an explicit meaning to the film. In order to attribute an explicit meaning one approaches a film with the stock of concepts in one's possession.

Cognitive film theory approaches the understanding of film from a receptor-centered perspective. Film is a medium for audio-visual form that becomes meaningful only when receptors assign value to it. To put it in other words, film is an information system—like any other information system in its broader sense—that has the potential to perturb the viewer to make distinctions and thus construct information.

6 *Rashomon*: Observers' distinctions

An abundance of viewer's observations of *Rashomon* is available online, and the largest internet forum,   Internet Movie Database (IMDb)[7], records thousands of receptors' or observers' indications of the film. For example, *billheron53* describes the film in 235 words:

> Sheltering from a rainstorm in the derelict *Rashomon* gatehouse, a commoner wants to hear the strange story that has horrified a priest and confounded a woodcutter. They tell him about a murder inquiry at which they have just appeared as witnesses. Tajomaru (a bandit with a reputation for murder and lust) had managed to tie up a samurai and rape his wife. The woodcutter had discovered the dead body of the samurai in the forest, and the bandit was arrested the following day. But how the samurai was killed was unclear. Strangely, the three people involved all claim to be responsible. The bandit describes winning a dramatic sword fight. The distraught woman all but admits she was driven to stab her husband in desperation. Through a medium, the dead samurai claims his wife was treacherous, and that this drove him to suicide. Something has motivated at least two of them to lie, grotesquely subverting truth, justice, and decency. Even the woodcutter has not been forthright, and ironically, he feels that he too must lie. He changes his story, claims to have witnessed

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[7] "IMDb started in 1990 as a hobby project by an international group of movie and TV fans IMDb is now the world's most popular and authoritative source for movie, TV and celebrity content. We offer a searchable database of more than 100 million data items including more than 2 million movies, TV and entertainment programs and more than 4 million cast and crew members." (As described on the site)

the crime, and gives yet another (the fourth) wild version of the samurai's death. The commoner is not fooled, and it only reinforces his cynical view of life. Then the men make a discovery, and their reactions reveal that, though there is terrible evil and mistrust in the world, there is also goodness.

(http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0042876/plotsummary?ref_=ttmi_stry_pl [Accessed on 15 June 15, 2015])

This dissertation chose comments posted at Amazon.com, which represents observers or spectators who may not be such dedicated film enthusiasts as those who post in IMDB. In other words, the Amazon contributors can be considered the commoners who make indication of their observation with greater spontaneity. One hundred observations, posted from 2002 to 2012, were recorded on 12 November 2012; they are composed of 27,275 words and range from as brief as 12 to as many as 556 words. All the comments are indications of observations that the observer find distinctive. The distinctions address diverse topics such as narrative and plot, acting, Kurosawa as filmmaker and his cinema sense, technical aspect like lighting and editing, and above all the meaning of the film. The distinctions are constructed and assigned by the observers being perturbed by their observations of the film, which eventually highlights and questions the nature of reality and human conduct.

6.1 **Structuring the data**

With the help of NVIVO qualitative data analysis software, observers' observations are categorized—node in the language of NVIVO—in order to ascertain the meanings that the observers assign to *Rashomon*. Below is an example of nodes highlighting the text for identification, searching, and analysis. The screenshot shows the palette displaying menu, documents, nodes in color at the right side, and content in the middle marked by the nodes.
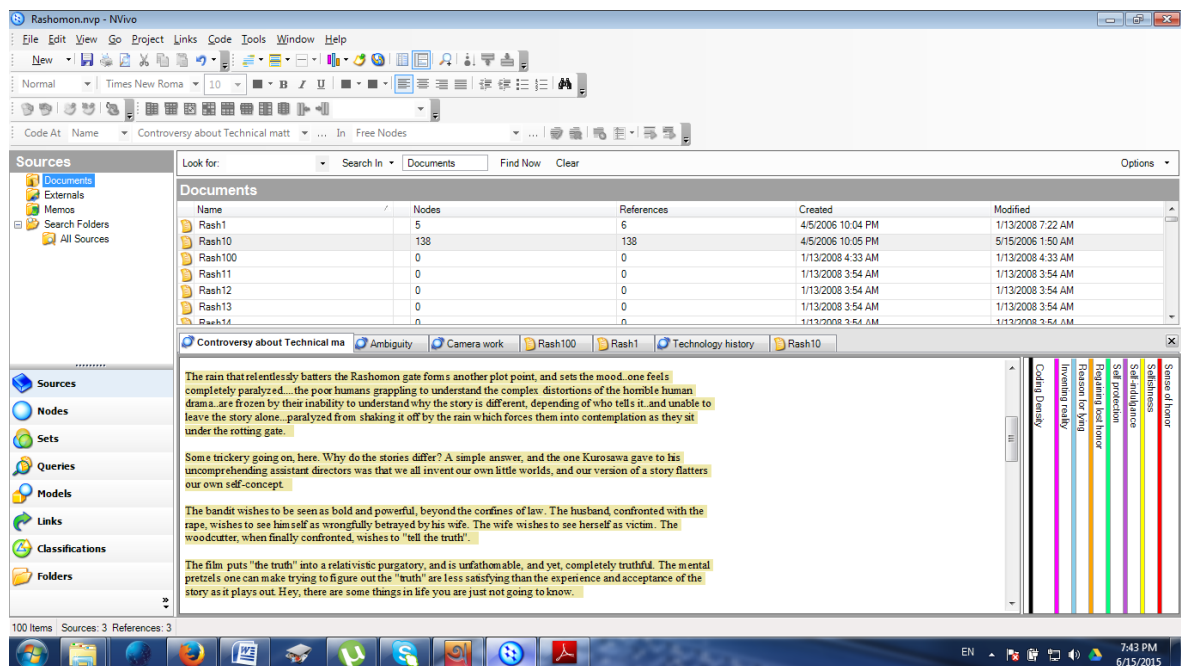
Figure 22 Screenshot of Nvivo displaying data highlighted in groups

All the hundred comments were grouped into 138 categories; some of the categories were also subcategorized, in a relationship like parent and offspring. For example, *Philosophy\Reality\Ambiguity\Different interpretation.* The 138 categories and subcategories are:

1   Acting
2   Ambiguity

3	Anger
4	Camera work
5	Cinematic Making
6	Cinematic Making\Acting
7	Cinematic Making\Camera work
8	Cinematic Making\Camera work\Camera composition
9	Cinematic Making\Camera work\Camera-angle
10	Cinematic Making\Camera work\Camera-lighting
11	Cinematic Making\Direction
12	Cinematic Making\Editing
13	Cinematic Making\Screenplay
14	Cinematic Making\Storytelling
15	Classic
16	Controversy about Technical matter
17	Description of a character
18	Description of a sequence
19	Description of a shot
20	Description of an event
21	Description of story
22	Different interpretation
23	Different versions
24	Direction
25	Distortion of truth
26	Driving cause- anger
27	Driving cause- betrayal
28	Driving cause- honor
29	Driving cause- power
30	Driving cause- self protection
31	Driving cause- victim
32	DVD quality~ Negative
33	DVD quality~ Positive
34	Editing
35	Effects of weather
36	Failure of honor
37	Film format
38	Human character
39	Human character- darkness
40	Human character- selfishness
41	Human character~ deeper meaning
42	Human character~ multi-layered
43	Human character-deeper meaning
44	Human drama

45	Influence- on other filmmakers
46	Influence- on world cinema
47	Inventing indi world-self Concept
48	Inventing individual world
49	Inventing individual world-story
50	Inventing reality
51	Kurosawa
52	Kurosawa\Kurosawa's past
53	Kurosawa\Kurosawa's Power as Filmmaker
54	Kurosawa\Kurosawa's Power as Filmmaker\Narrative method
55	Kurosawa's past
56	Kurosawa's Power as Filmmaker
57	Life- unknown zone
58	Message beyond what is Shown
59	Message of mistrust
60	Metaphysics of what happened
61	Minds coping with understanding
62	Murder
63	Mystery
64	Noteworthy victory
65	Philosophical puzzle
66	Philosophy
67	Philosophy\Philosophical puzzle
68	Philosophy\Reality
69	Philosophy\Reality\Ambiguity
70	Philosophy\Reality\Ambiguity\Different interpretation
71	Philosophy\Reality\Competing realities
72	Philosophy\Reality\Different interpretation
73	Philosophy\Reality\Inventing reality
74	Philosophy\Reality\Metaphysics of what happened
75	Philosophy\Reason for lying
76	Philosophy\Unknown reality
77	Philosophy
78	Powerful film
79	Psycho exploration of Human mind
80	*Rashomon*esque scene
81	Reason for lying
82	Regaining lost honor
83	Screenplay
84	Self protection
85	Self-indulgence
86	Selfishness

87	Sense of honor
88	Simplicity
89	Status of the Film
90	Status of the Film\Contribution to Film language
91	Status of the Film\Contribution to Film language*Rashomon*esque scene
92	Status of the Film\International Success
93	Status of the Film\Powerful film
94	Status of the Film\Simplicity
95	Status of the Film\Thought provoking
96	Status of the Film\Work of art
97	Storytelling
98	Technology history
99	Theme
100	Theme\Human character
101	Theme\Human character\Human character- darkness
102	Theme\Human character\Human character- selfishness
103	Theme\Human character\Human character~ multi-layered
104	Theme\Human character\Human character-deeper meaning
105	Theme\Reality
106	Theme\Reality\Ambiguity
107	Theme\Reality\Ambiguity\Different interpretation
108	Theme\Reality\Competing realities
109	Theme\Reality\Different interpretation
110	Theme\Reality\Inventing reality
111	Theme\Reality\Metaphysics of waht happened
112	Theme\Truth and Lies
113	Theme\Truth and Lies\Reason for lying
114	Theme\Truth and Lies\Reason for lying\Anger
115	Theme\Truth and Lies\Reason for lying\Regaining lost honor
116	Theme\Truth and Lies\Reason for lying\Self protection
117	Theme\Truth and Lies\Reason for lying\Sense of honor
118	Theme\Truth and Lies\Truth
119	Theme\Truth and Lies\Truth and Lies- experience
120	Theme\Truth and Lies\Truth and Lies- narration
121	Theme\Truth and Lies\Truth and Lies- performance
122	Theme\Truth and Lies\Truth\Ambiguity
123	Theme\Truth and Lies\Truth\Ambiguity\Truth and Lies- relativity
124	Theme\Truth and Lies\Truth\Ambiguity\Truth and Lies-relativity\Truth and Lies- experience
125	Theme\Truth and Lies\Truth\Ambiguity\Truth and Lies-relativity\Truth and Lies- narration
126	Theme\Truth and Lies\Truth\Ambiguity\Truth and Lies-

relativity\Truth and Lies- performance
127   Theme\Truth and Lies\Truth\Definition of truth
128   Theme\Truth and Lies\Truth\Distortion of truth
129   Thought provoking
130   Trickery
131   Truth and Lies
132   Truth and Lies- experience
133   Truth and Lies- narration
134   Truth and Lies- performance
135   Truth and Lies- relativity
136   Unknown reality
137   Vantage point
138   Work of art

Analyzing complete analysis of all the categories and sub-categories is beyond the focus of this dissertation; here the aim is to unearth the core meaning assigned by the observers as they make indication of their observations of *Rashomon*. In order to identify the fundamental or core meaning endorsed by the observers or receptors, the long list of categories was transformed into a set of concise but core categories, a *trajectory*, which binds related categories into broader themes. Death is an example of a trajectory, which appears as inexplicable as the observers indicate several rather contradictory reasons that the death occurred. The nature of death is questioned—was it suicide or murder? The central focus of the film—investigating the reason for the death—perturbs observers indicating at least four reasons:

Figure 23 Varying causes for death

Understanding the mystery of the death—nature and reason—as explained by the observers generates multiple accounts. Based on these, I developed six trajectories. The trajectories, as they unsettle to reach a consensus, mark *Rashomon* as a film of complexity.
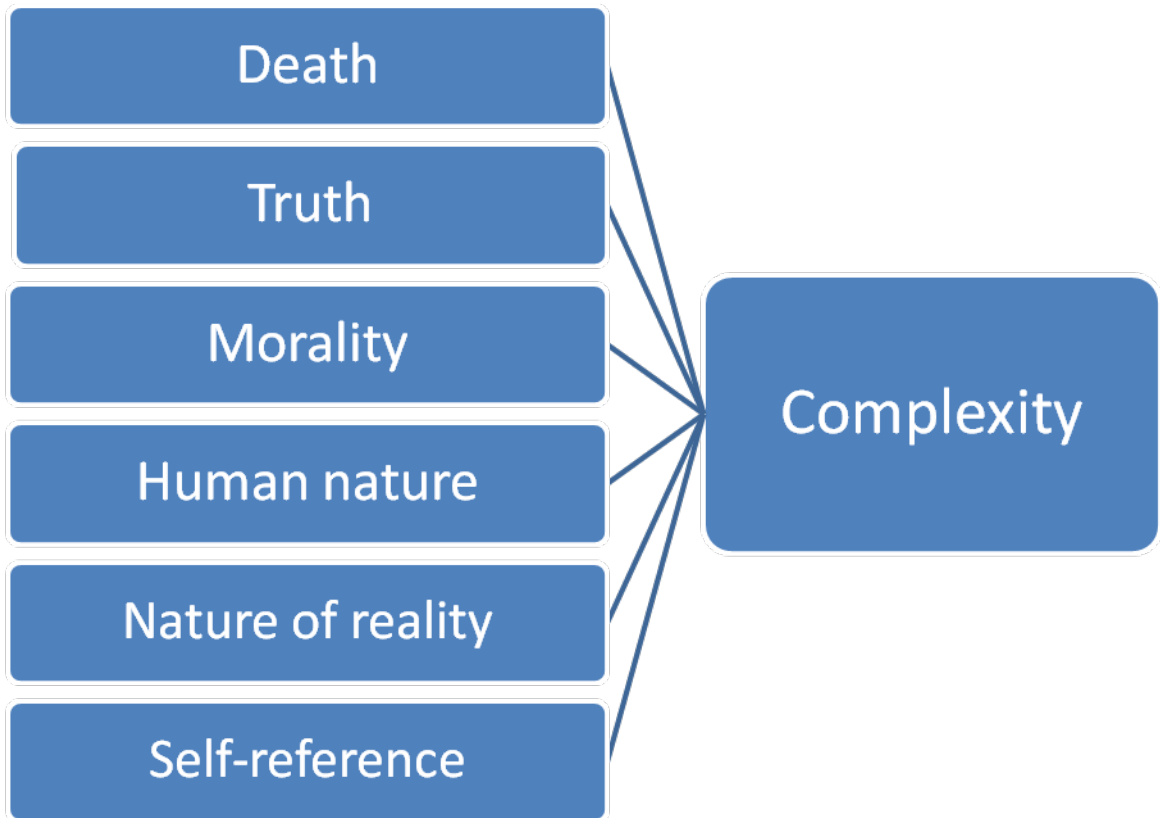
Figure 24 Trajectories

6.2 Indications

Rashomon is an enigma, the meaning of the film is still debated among film buffs of all kinds—professional reviewers, scholars, and the general public. From the observers' comments in this analysis, we can develop the story of the film with the following words compiled from comments 23, 35 and 40.

> It begins in a torrential downpour. Two men, a priest and a woodcutter, have taken refuge in the ruins of an abandoned gatehouse and are joined by a third, a boorish ruffian. He notices the others are under a horrible mental strain, and badgers them until they tell of the trial they had recently

witnessed, and of four eyewitness accounts of a murder and a rape. Each participant's account is un-reconcilable with the other, until it is unclear if anyone is telling the truth. The woodcutter is depressed and the priest is horrified, over a recent crime: the vicious bandit Tajômaru (Toshirô Mifune) was arrested for murdering a man named Takehiro (Masayuki Mori) and raping his wife Masako (Machiko Kyô). But when taken before the police, Tajômaru claims that he had his fun with the woman and killed her husband honorably in a fight. But Masako begs to differ; she claims to be the victim first of the sadistic bandit, then of her cold-hearted husband, whom she says she stabbed. And when a medium calls up the spirit of Takehiro, he claims that Masako was unfaithful, asking the bandit to murder him, then spurned by Tajômaru. Her actions drove Takehiro to suicide. But the woodcutter himself claims to have seen the altercation -- and his version is wildly different from them all. Each narrator relates the same incidents but in each telling the narrator becomes the protagonist & the nuances are different. How can one know the truth of anything? And with each telling the puzzle deepens & becomes more & more fascinating

6.2.1 Diversity:

The categories and sub-categories mentioned earlier display a palette of diversity, which is felt as the observation indicated in comment 80:

> And that's what the movie shows us; a terrible murder; five persons state about the fact; and before you five different versions are given. So, the question is; who of these persons is lying and who is true? All of us have a sight blind; and because of this you may agree with some of these people; and your close friend or even your couple may be perfectly disagree with you.

Comment 75 is an example at hand indicating several aspects of *Rashomon*—mood of the film aligned with the puzzle of the death and ending with highlighting the relativistic nature of truth.

> The rain that relentlessly batters the *Rashomon* gate forms another plot point, and sets the mood...one feels completely paralyzed....the poor humans grappling to understand the complex distortions of the horrible human drama..are frozen by their inability to understand why the story is different, depending of who tells it..and unable to leave the story alone...paralyzed from shaking it off by the rain which forces them into contemplation as they sit under the rotting gate.
>
> Some trickery going on, here. Why do the stories differ? A simple answer, and the one Kurosawa gave to his uncomprehending assistant directors was that we all invent our own little worlds, and our version of a story flatters our own self-concept.
>
> The bandit wishes to be seen as bold and powerful, beyond the confines of law. The husband, confronted with the rape, wishes to see himself as wrongfully betrayed by his wife. The wife wishes to see herself as victim. The woodcutter, when finally confronted, wishes to "tell the truth".
>
> The film puts "the truth" into a relativistic purgatory, and is unfathomable, and yet, completely truthful. The mental pretzels one can make trying to figure out the "truth" are less satisfying than the experience and acceptance of the story as it plays out. Hey, there are some things in life you are just not going to know.

6.2.3 Trajectories:

As stated earlier, trajectories have been developed by combining the diverse but core observations into an organic whole, which, as aligned with the focus of the dissertation, displays the indications of observation of *Rashomon*. The following section illustrate the trajectories with supporting indications made by the observers.

Death:

The puzzle of death is syntactically developed in the film as the bandit, the wife and the samurai describe the death in their own ways with underlying reasons to justify their acts. Tajomaru, the bandit, takes responsibility for killing the samurai because, according to him, the samurai's wife after first being panic-stricken and then willingly, as seen in shot 174[8], gives herself to the bandit as she was forcefully kissed and then they made love. She wanted to get rid of being doubly disgraced. Therefore, she wanted one of them to be killed.

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[8] Reference is found in the continuity script in Appendix 1

The audience sees on the screen, from shot 165 to 180, Tajomaru testifying, and perhaps
justifying, his killing of the samurai:

165[9]   MS of Tajomaru's back, the woman in his arms. The camera slowly dollies toward them during the kiss. Her hand encircles his back, her fingers move caressingly; she tightens her grip on him. Shot ends with ECU of the back of Tajomaru's head and an area of the woman's face as the kiss continues.

166   MS: in the prison courtyard, Tajomaru is laughing and kicking his feet exultantly.

TAJOMARU (CONT'D) And so I had her-just as I'd planned, and without killing the husband. And that was how I did it. Besides, I hadn't intended to kill him. But then...

177   Shot of Tajomaru's back, beginning in close range, as he walks away from the camera to go off into the woods; the woman rushes after him (LS).

MS from reverse angle. She throws herself at his feet.

WOMAN
Wait. Stop. One of you must die. Either you or my husband.

178   MCU of her husband. Bound up, he stares without expression.

179   MCU of Tajomaru staring at the samurai; then he looks down at the woman.

---

[9] Left side number indicates shot number, while CU stands for close up, MCU mid close shot, MS mid shot, ECU extreme close shot and LS for long shot.

180   MCU of the woman kneeling, seen from over Tajomaru's shoulder.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Either you or he must die. To be doubly disgraced, disgraced before two men, is more

than I can bear.

Tajomaru indulges in a sword fight and eventually kills the samurai.

Contrary to this, the woman asserts that she has killed her husband because she saw hatred and rejection in his eyes. She finds such a look unbearable and agonizing, as she says in shot 235, "Don't look at me like that. Don't! But kill me if you must, but do not look at me like that. Please don't!" Nothing brings change in her husband's reaction, which is followed by the following shots:

249   MS, The woman continues to move, the camera seeming to weave with her painful approach and retreat before her husband. She holds the dagger almost absent-mindedly; her desperation grows.

250   CU, as in 244, of the husband, staring implacably.

251   MCU of the woman as she moves steadily forward now; her world forever destroyed, she holds the dagger high, without seeming to be aware of it. The camera tracks with her in the direction of her husband until she suddenly lunges off screen.

252   MS, as in 234, of the woman in the prison courtyard, continuing her testimony.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

And then I fainted. When I opened my eyes and looked around, I saw there, in my

husband's chest, the dagger.

As the dead husband presents his testimony through a medium, he claims to have killed himself because he was shocked to see his wife asking the bandit to kill him as she seems being happy with the bandit. He finds his wife's eyes dreamy (in CU, shot 275) when the bandit says that he had attacked her only because of his great love for her. This enveloped him into a deep silence. As he returns to senses the film displays:

300   MCU of the husband crying. The camera dollies back and he rises to his feet. He

moves painfully (pan), rests his head against a tree. There is the soft sound of grief, but it

comes from the husband himself.

301   MCU as he rests his head against the tree, sobbing. Finally he raises his head and

begins to wander off, but stops when he notices something on the ground.

302   MS from behind the husband, the dagger sticking up before him. Slowly he goes

to it, picks it up, and turns to walk back toward the camera, staring at the dagger.

303   MS as he moves forward into the clearing; he stops, raises the dagger high above

his head and brutally thrusts it into his chest. He begins to fall.

.

All three characters take the blame for the killing, or rather take responsibility in a persuasive way, which certainly perturbs observers' understandings of whether it was a murder or suicide, and who has actually executed it. Moreover, what is the motive—psychological, existential, or philosophical—of the claim. Comments, meaning reader responses, centre around such a quandary whether it is a murder caused by smugness, trauma, outrage or feeling of rejection, or it is a betrayal, shame and honor driven suicide.

The puzzle of death, which in a discursive way sheds light on a wide aspect of human nature, is displayed below in a top-down tree structure, a popular way to visualize sentence and phrase structure in linguistics (Fromkin and Rodman, 1993).
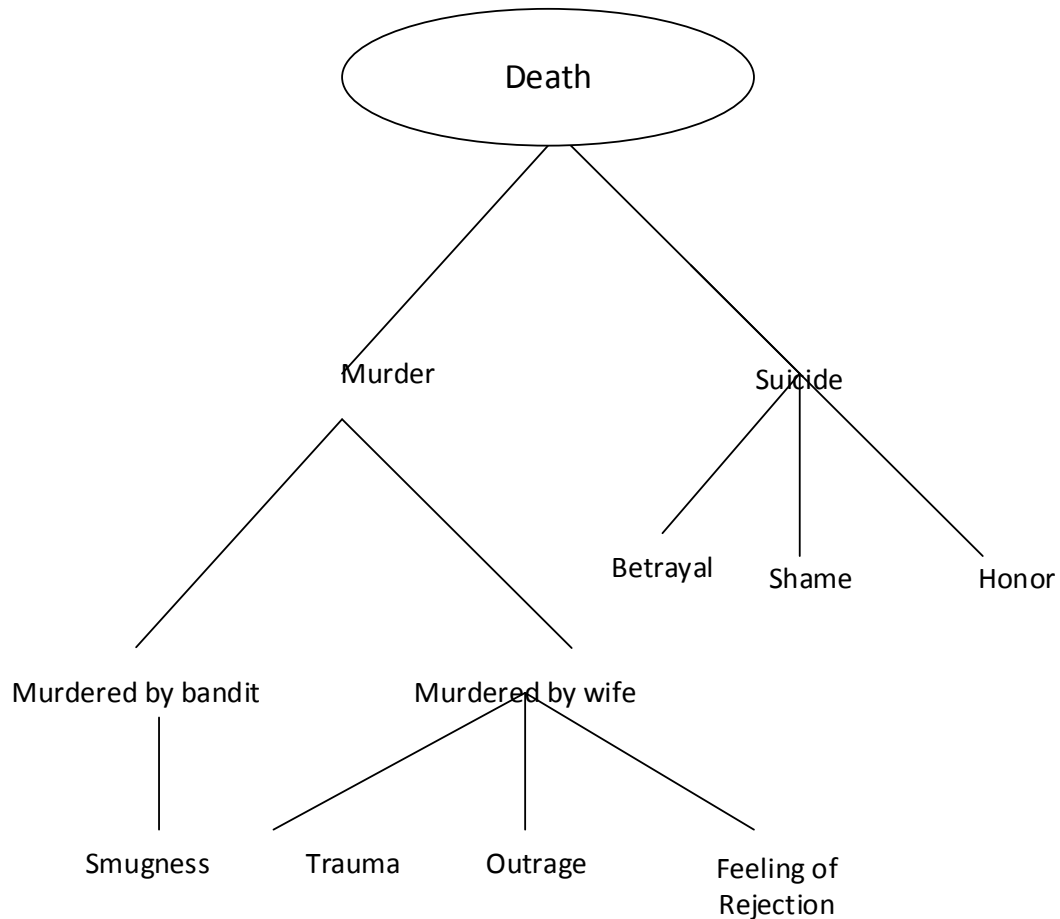
Figure 25 Discussion of death in tree-structure

Thus, as comment 8 indicates:

It's the story of the murder of a man told from several different angles; the robber; the wife; the murdered man; and the woodcutter. Each view varies differently and every story is changed a little (or a lot). It makes the viewer constantly question which story is true or which parts of each story are true, even after watching the movie dozens of times. It also makes the

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viewer consider "point of view" in everyday life, how the same incident is seen in several different lights and how can it be that 3 people can witness the same thing and come to different conclusions.

Truth:

The persistent ambiguity around the death eventually drags the observer into a deeper level of questioning about what is truth. Comment 10 indicates:

> The 4 different versions of the story not only create a deep layering effect on the question of what really happened but also create a sort of 3-D effect in terms of gaining some understanding of human nature. While Kurosawa's actors wanted to know which was the "real" story, the big K told them that no single one was correct. Even though, personally, this irks me just a little, the truth is that the movie reveals a lot about human nature.

It is evident that not all the testimonies could be true at the same time, or probably they are only partly true; therefore, the observers transfer from the death puzzle over to humans' inherent tendency to manipulate truth. Comment 18 reads, "The film is about the human tendency to DENY the truth, which is both real and essential to the growth of the individual. Kurosawa himself said of the film's message: 'Human beings are unable to be honest with themselves about themselves.' They cannot talk about themselves without embellishing." The comment continues:

> The film makes no statement about the reality of truth, or even its attainability, but instead about our unwillingness to take an objective look at ourselves. The films characters embody the variety of responses and choices we take in life: selfish cynicism to moral despair, to true responsibility in the face of an unpleasant view of our true natures. The characters are similar in that they lie to themselves, to "save face", and to

see themselves as better than they actually are. And yet they differ in their willingness to suffer the pain of a view of themselves.

One of the comments (25) even asserts that, "In a world of relativist perceptions and competing ways of interpreting the world, can there ever be any such thing as absolute truth? Like Socrates arguing the sophists on the nature of virtue, truth slips away as we try to pinpoint it, and eventually we realize absolute truth is unknowable." And the truth is so ambiguous that one observer (comment 50) is in doubt about whether the ending of the film was redemptive, wondering "if the woodcutter would go off and sell the child if it was a girl."

Morality:

With the obscure nature of truth and people's inability to be honest to themselves, the question of morality arises in some observations. For example, the film is a "masterpiece of human emotion with great depth which questions morality in man." (Comment 24) Nevertheless, in the crisis of broken morality, one also sees that Rashomon leaves the viewer with a strong sense of the evil of humanity but also with the possibility of redemption (Comment 4). Comment 24 expresses hope:

> This film's ending is one of the great arcs I have seen in that it delivers such a punch of emotion and hope into you. I center my attention on the priest at the end of the film as the thief questions the morality of man and rocks the priest's belief in the good of man, but I exclude the real whammy, as all hope is not lost.

Human nature:

Considering human nature, which for many is the consuming drive of the film, comment 43 divides humans into three categories according to their nature—natural or animalistic, moral and civilized man. These categories have reference to the characters in the film. The commoner, who says that it is human to lie and men believe in the made-up good stuff, represents the natural or animalistic nature, the priest possesses a moral nature while the woodcutter, who adopts the abandoned child despite having trouble with his six children, represents the civilized nature. Thus, human nature looks like a wider palette with different vices and virtues.

Nature of reality:

The observers describe *Rashomon* as a film about competing realities; how different people can view the same events differently. A number of observers' echo this; for example comment 75 mentions we all invent our own little worlds, and our version of a story flatters our own self-concept. While discussing the relativistic idea of reality, comment 80 draws on Goethe's four levels of reality—lineal, literal, metaphorical and cosmic. It goes further: "the human being always will keep his dignity, pride and a set of values above all the odds; and through this process, the truth is always put in a second place, by obvious reasons." Therefore, reality is not necessarily true or actual, rather it is constructed. Reality is how we perceive a phenomenon, therefore, according to comment 86, "'*Rashomon*' reminds us that all is not necessarily as it seems." Likewise, comment 97 says that Kurosawa is trying to show us how our reality is altered by our perception.

This is supported by comment 46, that Kurosawa was examining life and our perceptions of it— the idea that nothing we know is true in any empirical sense, that all of it is filtered through our perceptions. Comment 37 expands the discussion of reality as displayed in this film by drawing on postmodern perspective:

> "*Rashomon*" is one of the great movies for the ages. It challenges us to think about what "reality" might be, and leads us to wonder if we can truly comprehend "reality." Let me begin this review with a fragment about postmodern perspectives. One key point here is that subject and object cannot be separated. We cannot "get outside" ourselves in order to objectively observe the world around us--including the world of human affairs. This is oversimplified, of course, but it provides one lens through which to consider Akira Kurosawa's great work, "*Rashomon*." …… postmodernists argue that it is difficult for people to step outside themselves and their unique perspectives and biases to observe "objective reality." And contemporary psychologists tell us the same: humans are remarkably able to distort reality to protect self-image and make their motives appear to be good (and competitors' to be not so good). In that sense, there is a great deal of human nature, psychology, and philosophy at stake in this movie.

Self –reference:

Constructing reality based on one's own perception is the notion of self-reference, i.e. we comprehend objects and ideas from our own perspective, or, in other words, we are self-reflexive. Comment 22 elaborates this by noting that the truth is never found; eventually the truth is all dependent on the individuals, all of whom are convicts in some way or another. Further:

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The guilt in each individual as well as the attempt to save themselves determines the stories. The movie actually throws up a very important question that if the essential data is kept intact the interpretation is completely dependent on the stakeholders.

Observers further say that belief is subject to our own interpretation. We are fundamentally biased with regard to ourselves and phenomena are interpreted and assigned self-reflexively.

6. 3 Syntactic structure of *Rashomon*: Clues for perturbation

The film begins with a question of cognitive obscurity, compounded by perturbation—not knowing what has happened. As the *Rashomon* gate washes with heavy rain, two men, an woodcutter and a priest, wearing a bleak look confirm their confusion uttering "*I don't understand.*" Understanding remains unresolved as observers indicate observations differently or in other words assign different meaning to the token they observe.

I don't understand.

Form and narrative of *Rashomon* are "pervaded by a dialectic of symbols of light and darkness" (McDonald, p. 183, 1994). The film has a narrative of three contrasting testimonies (bandit, wife and samurai) and another ambiguous version of description of a witness (woodcutter). Testimonies are persuading in themselves if taken as independent stories. However, they conflict with one another when seen as constituent of an organic whole and thus generate complexity and perturb observers' minds because one cannot know which one is true. Impressionistically crafted, *Rashomon* is weaved with light and darkness perturbing towards demystifying what is narrated.

McDonald (*Ibid*, p.183) elaborates the form by commenting:

The murder takes place in a dense, dark forest. The main actions of the priest, the woodcutter, and the commoner are set against the pouring rain. The half-ruined gate standing in the torrent gives the film a gloomy setting. In sharp contrast to these dark images are impressionistically

filmed images of sunlight. The blazing sun piercing the clouds dominates the police station. Sunlight comes through the trees and flickers on the woodcutter's ax. When the wife yields to the bandit, she looks up at the sun glittering through the branches. At the conclusion of the film the woodcutter walks into the sunlight after the rainstorm is over. The juxtaposition of these symbols serves as an important constituent, which contributes to a unified version of the film.

Light and darkness are observed in the landscape, sky, objects and as well as when human faces are shown in close up shots, which gradually constitutes in observers' minds a semiosis wrestling about the meaning not just not of the film, but also of human nature. The repeated juxtaposition of light and darkness, especially capturing the sun directly—which violated cinema conventions—provides impressionistic cues for human

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nature: "light represents reason whereas darkness represents impulse" (*Ibid*., p.186). Human cognition follows schemata[10]—drawing on representations internalized through our socialization. This impressionistic milieu for interpretation and constructing meaning is likely to perturb observers, indicating phenomena that may seem complex.

Rashomon is made of 407 shots crafted with many close ups and mid-close ups and characters are often set into triangular composition. Close ups perturb observers' intensive attention while triangulation depicts conflicts and pervasiveness of perspectives.

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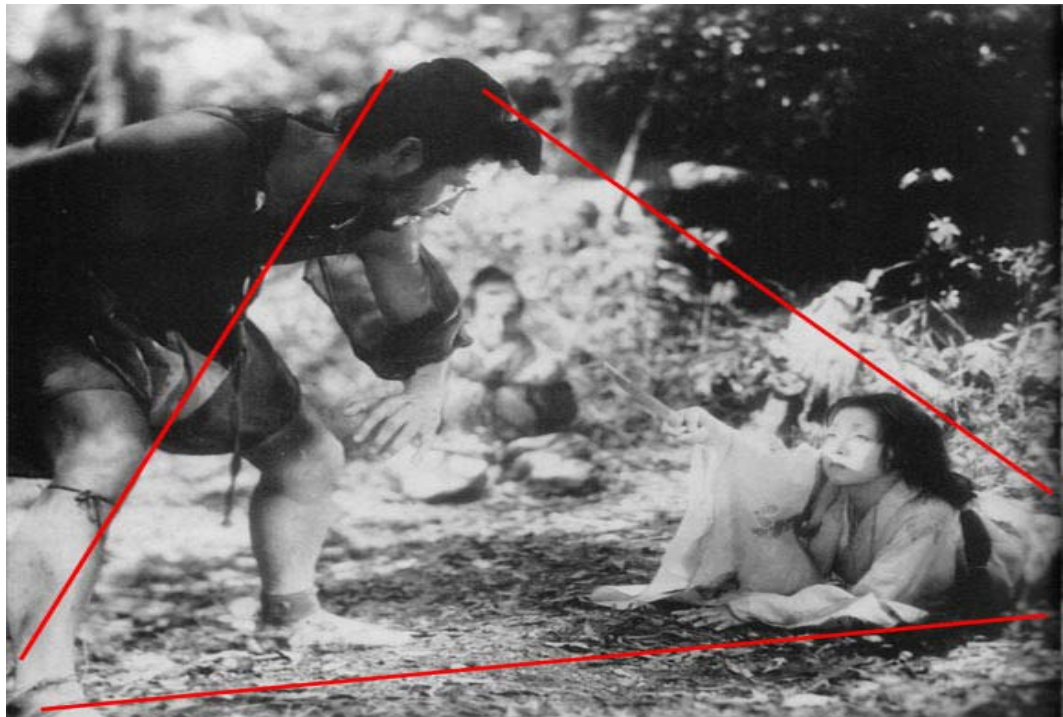
[10] Schemata—an organized pattern of thought or behavior organizing categories of concepts and the relationships among them—influence attention and the construction of new knowledge and meaning. The term "schema" (singular of schemata) was introduced by Piaget in 1926. People observe that fit into their schema. (DiMaggio, 1997; *Rumelhart, 1980)*

It's human to lie.
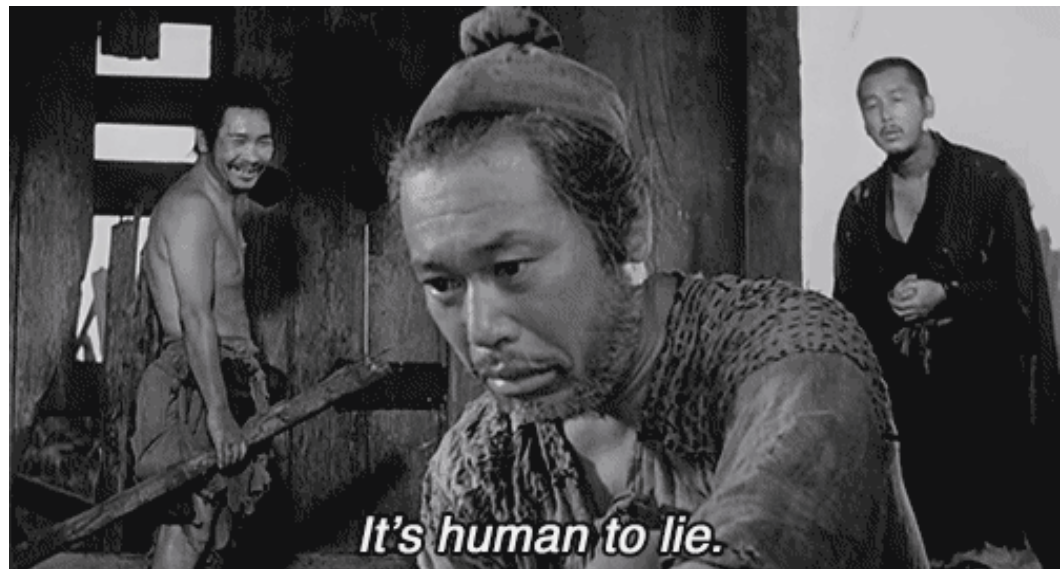
In triangulation, especially evident at the Rashomon gate, Kurosawa makes a confrontation between the rational and impulsive, between the realist and idealist. We observe a transformation in the woodcutter, perhaps a redemptive feeling affects him as

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he takes the responsibility of the abandoned child despite his poverty. Nevertheless, some observers are not yet sure about the woodcutter's seemingly good conduct. They suggest that he would sell the child if were a girl. The complex narrative of *Rashomon* and its making—cinematography, character composition, shots etc.—do not always lead one to a straightforward conclusion. Instead, "In *Rashomon* there is no strategic effort to conceal any more than a modern painter's purpose is to conceal instead of reveal" (Barbarow, p. 151, 1994). Thus, *Rashomon* remain an enigma, which observers reveal and interpret according to their own horizons of understanding and reasoning. The light and darkness, and contrasting testimonies present a mystic environment perturbing observers to demystify in their own ways.
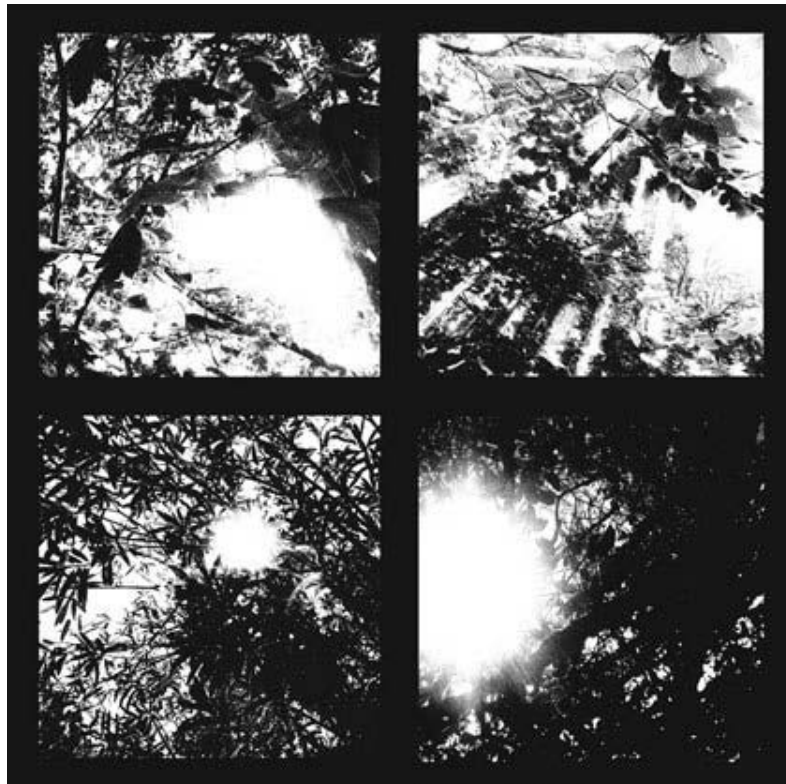
Figure 26 Light and darkness: the enigma

Besides complex narrative of showing a single event in varying ways, *Rashomon* also keeps some ambiguity. It does not explicitly show that the wife stabs the dagger, which is just a hint but not confirming her killing of the samurai. The shot 246 in mid-close-up follows the women holding the dagger. The camera tracks with her in the direction of her husband until she suddenly lungs off screen. Killing is not distinctive in the shot, and in the following shot shows the woman saying, "And then I fainted. When opened my eyes and looked around, I saw there, in my husband's chest, the dagger." Such ambiguities only heightens the perturbation leading to varying indications. husband's chest, the dagger.

6.4 Semantics: Observation of observation

War-defeated Japan in the 1950s needed to draw on its historic pride to reconstruct its morality in every aspect of life including the various domains of arts. Kurosawa's *Rashomon* did not quite fulfill this need (Davidson, 1994). Therefore, it is not surprising that the film was not welcomed in Japan. "In fact the film is the complete opposite of the ordinary Japanese historical film in that it questions while they reaffirm; it is realistic, while they are romantic" (Richie, p. 18, 1994). *Rashomon* might have portrayed the samurai—an important symbol for Japanese pride—as a relatively weak personality who seemed to have surrendered to sadness. However, the scenario changed as observers from other cultures explored the philosophical twists in the film. Thus, a new positive discourse has developed, which eventually changed Japanese indication of the film.

Kurosawa had a personal motivation to take an unconventional path because he was bothered by the loss of the aesthetics that the silent films had. In his autobiographical writing he states, "Since the advent of the talkies in the 1930s, I felt, we had missed and forgotten what was so wonderful about the old silent movies. I was aware of the aesthetic loss as a constant irritation. I sensed a need to go back to the origins of the motion picture to find this peculiar beauty again" (Kurosawa, p. 115, 1994). With this motivation and spirit *Rashomon* was his testing ground, which he based on two short stories by Ryūnosuke Akutagwa—*Rashomon* and *In a Grove*.

Rashomon the short story is based on tales from the *Konjaku Monogatarishū*. (*Anthology of Tales from the Past*), a Japanese collection of over one thousand tales written during the late Heian period (794-1185). Akira Kurosawa's film *Rashomon* takes only its name and some of the material for the frame scenes, such as the theft of a kimono and the discussion of the moral ambiguity of stealing to survive, from this story. Kurosawa bases more on Akutagawa's *In a Grove*, presenting three varying accounts of the murder of a samurai, whose dead body has been found in a bamboo forest near Kyoto. Kurosawa blends both stories to construct his own interpretation of truth, reality and human nature. In other words, Akutagawa's stories provide an environment for Kurosawa, which he self-reflexively observed, made distinction, i.e. constructed certain meaning, which he indicated and assigned to his film *Rashomon* . About the principal element of the film *Rashomon*, Kurosawa states (*Ibid*., p. 116):

> Human beings are unable to be honest with themselves about themselves.
> They cannot talk about themselves without embellishing. This script

portrays such human beings—the kind who cannot survive without lies to make them feel they are better people than they really are. It even shows this sinful need flattering falsehood going beyond the grove…………Egoism is a sin the human being carries with him from birth; it is the most difficult to redeem. This film is like a strange picture scroll that is unrolled and displayed by the ego.

Kurosawa's *Rashomon* thus externalizes his worldview (umvelt), which differs significantly from Akutagawa's "Rashomon". Kurosawa confirms this:

To provide the symbolic atmosphere, I decided to use Aktutagwa's "In a Grove" story, which goes into the depths of the human heart as if with a surgeon's scalpel, laying bare its dark complexities and bizarre twists. These strange impulses of the human heart would be expressed through the use of an elaborately play of light and shadow. In the film, people going astray in the thicket of their hearts would wander in to a wider wilderness, so I moved the setting to a large forest.

Kurosawa's *Rashomon* is now observed by spectators who make their own interpretations of the film—its meaning—from their own perspectives being perturbed by the explicit token of the film and its implicit tone. In the earlier section of this chapter we observe observers' indications of *Rashomon*, which interpret and construct the sense of reality in various ways and thus phenomenize human nature. In other words, by indicating their observations, observers construct meanings that they assign to *Rashomon*.
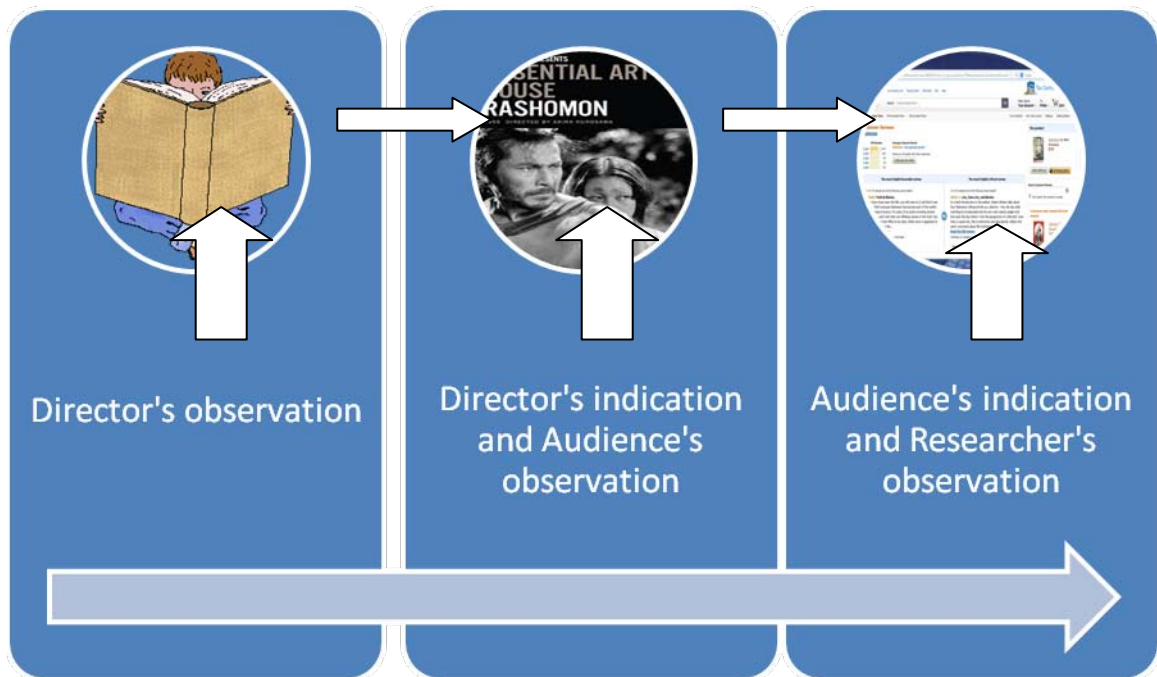
Figure 27 Three levels of observation and indication

It is a second order cybernetic communication the way observation of one construction or form, which is an environment, assigns meaning to that construction, i.e. creates information. Such meaning creation is progressive, as Kurosawa assigned meaning to Akutagawa's stories indicated in his film, which spectators distinguish and assign meaning to Rashomon as they comment on the film and interpret.

Self is found in the indication one creates as we observe autopoietically, i.e. self-referentially. Therefore, Kurosawa states (Ibid., p. 122):

I am a maker of film; films are my true medium. I think that to learn what became of me after *Rashomon* the most reasonable procedure would be to look for me in the characters in the films I made after *Rashomon*.

Although human beings are incapable of talking about themselves with total honesty, it is much harder to avoid the truth while pretending to be other people. They often reveal much about themselves in a very straightforward way. I am certain that I did. There is nothing that says more about a creator than the work itself.

Myself, as the observer of observation, my selection of comments and their interpretation is another scale of observation of observation. My observation cues me to indicate that *Rashomon*, an impressionistic film seen from its cinematic style, has taken an expressionist form because of the discourse constructed, and being constructed, by various observers generating meaning over an open-ended palette.

6.5 Grounding into research question

This research in chapter 1 has mapped out the recent changes in epistemology paving the way for a transdisciplinary understanding of human phenomena, and thus identified communication as a discipline to have undone its disciplinary boundary marked by a necessity of a cybernetic perspective. Cybernetic perspective of communication emphasizes observation and its indication, i.e. interpretation, which commendably argues that observer creates his/her reality and that the object of inquiry is the interaction between observer and observation. Therefore, methodologically it is important to approach phenomenon from an observers' or readers' perspective.

Aligned to the current changes in the academia the research has drawn on concepts from information science, film studies, and cognitive science as well as philosophy and other disciplines. The objective of this research, as stated in the first chapter,   is to unravel the way film as an environment is observed, marked, and indicated by spectators and thus how meaning, i.e. information, is assigned to a film.   This transdisciplinary approach drew on autopoiesis, laws of form, reader response and cybernetic communication. Based on two premises: information emerges from people's indications of an environment as they observe it, and film is an environment for observation that attains meaning, in other words become informative as spectators make indications of their observations of film, the research employed a constructivist approach to understand how viewers assign meaning to the films they watch. The research has worked on answering two set of questions—broader and specific. Broader question investigated how film can be understood as an environment capable of facilitating meaning construction, while specific questions sought to understand what meaning do the spectators assign to *Rashomon*, and how does *Rashomon* perturb spectators' observation.

Specific questions have been answered by making a reader-response interpretation of viewers' comments at Amazon.com providing evidence of how these individuals observe the film and make sense of it by making distinctions. Previous section in this chapter framed viewers' indication of their observations into eight trajectories. In other words, these trajectories are the eight categories, among many others, that the observers of *Rashomon* have assigned meaning to the film. An analysis of

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from and style of *Rashomon* in the successive section displayed the cinematic clues perturbing observer for making their indication.

Answering the specific questions by drawing on empirical data made the ground for leaping to answer the broader question, i.e. how film can be understood as an environment capable of facilitating meaning construction. As it has been the case for *Rashomon*, possessing properties—narrative, shot, lighting, etc.— to perturb spectators to assign meaning distinctive in their indication of *Rashomon*, film is a communication medium, and as such an environment, that has the potential to perturb human as they observe film.

As theoretically argued in chapter 4 and 5, film is an information system—like any other information system in its broader sense—that has the potential to perturb the viewer to make distinctions and thus construct information. A broad understanding of information systems complemented by an autopoietic conception of information is in fact a process of cybernetic communication. As stated in chapter 4, information system is an environment that observers distinguish through observation and autopoietically make indication, i.e. assign meaning to what they observe. In that sense any medium of communication is an information system. In the same line of argument, film as communication medium is an environment for observation and indication, and therefore it is an information system. Film appears as a flow of audio-visual form from which meaning is constructed by a cognitive mind. Observers' indication of *Rashomon* aligned to the film's cinematic structure—properties that make film an environment for

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observation—perturbing human cognition to assign meaning to *Rashomon*, i.e.

constructing certain information, is an empirical confirmation that film is an environment

capable of facilitating meaning construction.

7 Conclusion: Emerging horizon

In The Country of the Blind, published in 1904, H. W. Wells tells the story of Nuñez who by accident falls into a valley where everyone is blind and he discovers that they perceive things differently. The folk in the valley had changed over 15 generations after having been cut off from outside civilization. They suffered diseases and lost their sight, which led them to develop a worldview at odds with the way Nuñez sees the world. It makes no sense when he tells the folk that he comes from Bogota in a country where people can see. "Seeing" does not have any meaning to those who have not seen for many generations. Because of communication failures and contrasting worldviews, Nuñez's existence becomes endangered. He climbs high into the surrounding mountains where, in spite of injuries and bruises, he is happy that he has escaped the valley and arrived in the world of all five senses. Wells' fiction is analogous to the core premise of autopoiesis, developed long after this short story, that we (and all living creatures) observe and interpret according to our umvelt, i.e. worldview. Our self-referential perceptions guide our interpretations out of which we assign meaning to what we observe.

This dissertation subscribes to autopoiesis along with the laws of form, to explain the process of sense-making as constructing form. Rashomon, the celebrated film of Akira Kurosawa, is the vehicle to understand how viewers observe the film and make sense of it by making distinctions as indicated in their comments. A reader-response

analysis was used to interpret spectators' comments; the analysis is again a higher scale of indication of observation by the researcher of this dissertation.

The dissertation is aligned to the change taking place in the academia where we see a progressive development of transdisciplinary interpretation and understanding of human phenomena. Therefore, although grounded in communication, the dissertation has drawn on concepts from information science, film studies, and cognitive science while also drawing on philosophy and other disciplines. To explain human communication from a cybernetic perspective, which I argued serves the need for an autopoietic approach, it was methodically necessary first to develop a perspective of information as form and meaning construction. Thereafter, communication systems are viewed from a communication perspective showing media to be environments in which people observe and make distinctions in the process of constructing meaning. Thus film becomes an information system, the meaning of which resides largely in observers' indications. This contrasts with the screen theory that emphasizes text rather than reception or observation. Film is just one of many media or environments comprising indications for observers to make distinctions as part of the communication act.

Communication, in this way is an ever-emerging meaning-construction process. We observe the world—tangible and intangible—that we interpret, make distinctions, and externalize through indication; which is again observed, distinguished, and indicated by other observers. Such an observational understanding of communication in fact facilitates

the unending emergence of horizon and therefore communication is emergent, sense making, and horizon expanding.
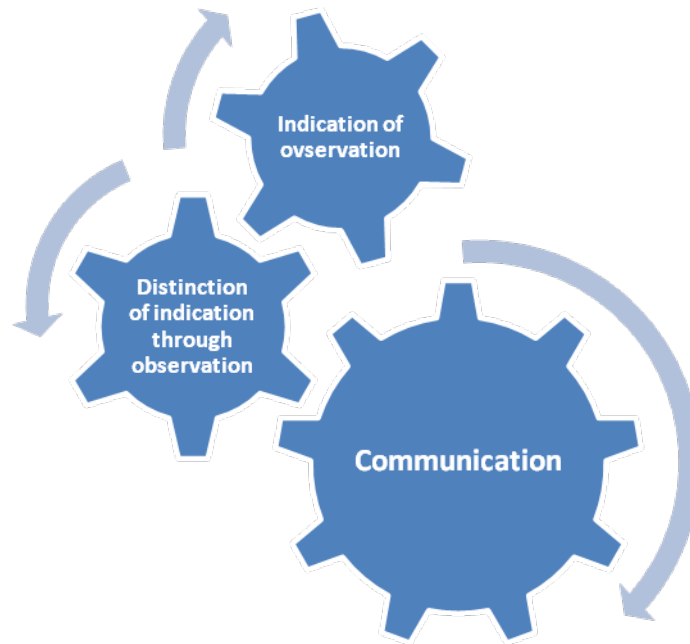
Figure 28 Observational understanding of communication

Observation is self-referential indication of tokens on a medium, i.e. information system, which continues progressively; therefore an observer does not exist without having its indications distinguished by another observer. Drawing on the work presented here, I further suppose that perhaps the human mind is not a complete tabula rasa or a clean slate, rather we are born in a flow of culture or context holding already developed worldviews, part of which is embedded in our neurological apparatus—nervous system and motor function. This cultural basis is perpetuated genetically, while it develops a worldview in the process of enactive cognition — the interaction between autonomous

agents and their environments to produce the worldview (Varela, 1997; Weber & Varela, 2002; Thompson, 2007) —guiding our ways of making distinctions and indications of our observations. This supposition is still anecdotal; some scholars have been working to establish this view of which film is no exception. Neurological film theory subscribes to this perspective (D'Aloia, 2012), arguing that the engaging nature of audiovisual experience, which is primarily a "visiomotor neural" act, is also a function of a connection between the spectator and the world of the films based on the perception of observed intentional actions.

This dissertation highlights the functional necessity for transcending disciplinary borders in order to understand communication as multistage observation constructing meaning and thereby constantly generating forms for observation. Such forms are made intelligible by virtue of our having structural coupling, i.e. a shared set of tokens such as language. Humans are constant producers of forms and diligent generators of tokens that expand our horizon. Communication is observation and its interpretation by which meaning takes birth.

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Appendix 1: *RASHOMON* The Continuity Script

From the film with screenplay by Akira Kurosawa & Shinobu Hashimoto

The title sequence consists of some ten shots of the half-ruined gate, Rashomon, in the rain. Superimposed over these are the title and credits, including, in some prints distributed in the United States, vignettes (oval-shaped insets) showing the major characters in action. Various details of the gate are seen: its steps, the base of a column, the eaves of the roof, puddles on the ground. Everywhere there is evidence of the downpour. Gagaku, traditional court music, is heard during the credits, then the sound of the torrential rain.

The final title reads: "Kyoto, in the twelfth century, when famines and civil wars had devastated the ancient capital.

1   LS: two men, a priest and a woodcutter, are sitting motionless, taking shelter under the gate.

2   MS from the side of the two, the woodcutter in the foreground, as they stare out at the rain with heads bowed. The woodcutter raises his head.

WOODCUTTER

I can't understand it. I just can't understand it at all.

3   MCU of the priest; he looks at the woodcutter and back again at the rain.

4   LS from directly in front. The two men continue to stare vacantly at the rain.

5   A general LS view of the gate; a man enters from behind the camera and runs toward the gate, splashing through puddles. Thunder is heard.

6   LS from reverse angle. The man runs past a fallen column, and disappears from the frame.

7   MS of the steps of the gate; he enters from behind the camera and runs up the steps to shelter.

8   MS: out of the rain, he turns and looks back outside, then removes a rag covering his head and wrings it out. The woodcutter's voice is heard.

WOODCUTTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I just can't understand it.

9   LS: the newcomer, in the background, turns toward the priest and woodcutter, who are sitting in the foreground.

10   MS of the newcomer. He goes toward the others-the camera panning with him-and sits behind the woodcutter.

COMMONER
What's the matter?

11   MS of the woodcutter and commoner.

COMMONER (CONT'D)
What can't you understand?

WOODCUTTER

I've never heard of anything so strange.

COMMONER
Why don't you tell me about it?

12   MS of all three men, the priest in the foreground. The commoner looks toward the priest.

COMMONER (CONT'D)

Good thing we have a priest here-he looks smart too.

PRIEST

Oh, even Abbot Konin of the Kiyomizu Temple, though he's known for his learning, wouldn't be able to understand this.

COMMONER

Then you know something about this story?

PRIEST

I heard it with my own ears, seen it with my own eyes. And only today.

COMMONER
Where?

PRIEST
In the prison courtyard.

COMMONER
The prison?

PRIEST
A man has been murdered.

COMMONER
What of it? One or two more...

He stands up.

13   MS of the commoner standing over the others; he looks down.

COMMONER (CONT'D)

Only one? Why, if you go up to the top of this gate you'll always find five or six bodies. Nobody bothers about them.

He begins to take off his shirt.

14   MS of the priest; he turns and looks up at the commoner.

PRIEST

Oh, you're right. Wars, earthquakes, great winds, fires, famines, plague-each new year is full of disaster.

He wipes his hand across his face.

15   MS, as in 13: the commoner wrings out his wet shirt.

PRIEST (O.S.) (CONT'D) And now every night the bandits descend upon us.

16   MS of the priest, as in 14.

PRIEST (CONT'D)

I, for one, have seen hundreds of men dying, killed like animals.
(Pause)

Yet... even I have never head anything as horrible as this before.

17   MS of the woodcutter, who has been listening; he turns to the priest.

18   MS, as in 14: the priest turns toward the woodcutter.

19   MS of the woodcutter and priest.

WOODCUTTER
Horrible-it's horrible.

The woodcutter looks away; dolly in to CU of the priest.

PRIEST

There was never anything as terrible as this. Never. It is more horrible than fires or wars or epidemics-or bandits.

Camera stays on him.

COMMONER (O.S.)

Look here now, priest-let's not have any sermons.

The priest looks up.

20   MS of the commoner, as in 13.

COMMONER (CONT'D)

I only wanted to know about this strange story of yours because it might amuse me while I wait out the rain. But I'd just as soon sit quietly and listen to the rain than hear any sermons from you.

His wet shirt over his shoulder, he moves toward the camera.

21   LS: the commoner moves away, leaving the priest and woodcutter sitting as before.

22   MS of the commoner at the other side of the gate; he peers at some loose boards, then rips two of them free.

23   LS: he crosses back to squat in front of the woodcutter and priest, and begins to pull the boards to pieces. The woodcutter rises and runs over to him.

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WOODCUTTER

Maybe you can tell me what it all means. I don't understand it.

He squats down.

WOODCUTTER (CONT'D)
All three of them...

COMMONER
All three of whom?

WOODCUTTER

It's those three I wanted to tell you about.

COMMONER

All right, tell me then, but don't get excited. This rain won't let up for some time.

Both men look up.

24   CU of the great signboard of the gate, seen in the opening shot of the titles: the sign reads "Rashomon" in large Japanese characters. The camera tilts down from the signboard to the men far below. The woodcutter moves closer to the commoner.

25   CU of the woodcutter.

WOODCUTTER

It was three days ago. I'd gone into the mountains for wood...

26   The dazzling light of the sun breaks through the branches of trees overhead as the camera travels through a dense woods. Music begins, a steady rhythm supporting a melody initially associated with the woodcutter but later becoming the underlying musical theme of the entire film.

27   CU of the woodcutter's ax, seen in a traveling shot, glinting in the sunlight as the woodcutter walks through the woods.

28   MCU of the woodcutter's face as he walks, ax over his shoulder, the camera tracking backward.

29   LS: panning from high above, the camera follows him.

30   A tree; the camera tilts from top to bottom to discover the woodcutter in the distance.

31   The camera pans with the woodcutter as he approaches a narrow bridge, crosses it, and goes off.

32   A forward-traveling shot of the sky seen through the branches of the trees passing overhead.

33   MCU of the woodcutter's back as he walks, the camera tracking after him.

34   A traveling shot as he moves rightward from LS closer to camera.

35   The sky and the tree branches, as in 32.

36   The camera travels toward the woodcutter, crosses in front of him, and pans around to follow his back receding into the woods.

37   The sun through the tree branches, as in 26.

38   The woodcutter from above. The camera travels as the woodcutter approaches, pans, and travels with him again, closer now, occasionally losing sight of him in the underbrush.

39   Extreme close-up of the back of the woodcutter's head, the camera tracking after him; again, the leaves sometimes block the view.

40   ECU: a traveling shot alongside the woodcutter; the view is frequently blocked.

41   ECU of the woodcutter's face as he walks toward the camera, camera tracking backward. Suddenly he and camera halt. Music ends.

42   CU of a woman's reed hat with veil, dangling on a branch near the ground. The woodcutter, in the background, looks at it and comes forward to touch the veil. Audible is a soft tinkle like the sound of wind chimes; it develops into bell-like music which is later associated withe the woman. The woodcutter slowly walks on, the camera panning to watch as he recedes farther into the woods. The main thematic music begisn again.

43   MS: traveling shot alongside the woodcutter; he looks about on either side as he walks cautiously on.

44   He approaches the camera and (MCU) looks down. He halts.

45   A close shot of a man's hat lying at his feet; he bends over to pick it up. The camera tilts up with him as he stands up straight again. He comes forward and goes off.

46   LS: he approaches, stops again (MS), and looks down; this time he picks up a piece of tope, and stares in front of him.

47   LS of something lying in the leaves.

48   A closer shot of the object: it is an amulet case.

49   CU of the woodcutter, who then moves to the right into MS range (pan) but stumbles; he jumps back with a look of horror on his face.

50   MS: the stiffly raised hands of a corpse are in front of him. A gong is sounded.

51   CU of the woodcutter's face; he leaps back, turns around and, his back to the camera, runs into the woods, dropping his ax as he goes.

52   MS: the camera moves rapidly alongside the woodcutter as he runs panic-stricken through the woods. His speech runs over this and the next two shots.

WOODCUTTER (O.S.) (CONT'D) I ran as fast as I could to tell the police. (MORE)

WOODCUTTER (O.S.) (CONT'D) That was three days ago. Then the police called me to testify.

53   MS: the camera continues to move with the woodcutter.

54   MS: the camera continues with him.

WIPE.

55   MS of the woodcutter kneeling on the sand of the prison courtyard.

WOODCUTTER (CONT'D) Yes, sir. It was I who found the body first
(Pause)

He is obviously being questioned though we hear only his answers.

WOODCUTTER (CONT'D)

Was there a sword or anything? No, sir. Nothing at all. Only a woman's hat, caught on a branch... and a man's hat that had been trampled on. And a piece of rope... and further off an amulet case of red brocade.
(Pause)

Yes, sir. Yes, that was all I saw. I swear it.

He bows.

WIPE.

56   MS of the priest kneeling in the prison courtyard. Behind him is the woodcutter. The priest is testifying.

PRIEST

Yes, sir. I saw the murdered man when he was still alive. Well, it was about three days ago. It was in the afternoon. Yes, it was on the road between Sekiyama and Yamashina.

57   The priest is walking along a road which winds through a bamboo grove. Music in. Pan as he approaches the camera and passes it. He stops, back to camera. From the opposite direction a samurai approaches, leading a horse by the bridle. On the horse is a woman, sitting sidesaddle. The priest steps back and looks after them (pan); they recede into the distance.

PRIEST (O.S.) (CONT'D) Her hat had a veil. I couldn't see her face. The man was armed. He had a sword, bow and arrows.

A gong sounds.

58   MS of the priest in the prison courtyard, as in 56.

PRIEST (CONT'D)

I never though I would see him again; then, to see him dead like that. Oh, it is true-life is ephemeral, as fleeting as the morning dew. But the pity of it. What a pity that he should have died like that.

He bows.

WIPE.

59   MS: the police agent is proudly testifying. Beside him, tied up, sits the bandit, Tajomaru. Behind them sit the woodcutter and the priest.

195

POLICE AGENT

Yes, it was I who caught Tajomaru. Yes, indeed. That very same notorious bandit who has been so much talked about, even in the outskirts of the city.

60   CU of the bandit gazing vacantly up at the sky, the voice of the agent continuing.

61   The sky, filled with huge summer clouds.

POLICE AGENT (O.S.) (CONT'D) Yes, this is the very same bandit, Tajomaru, your honor. When I
finally caught him...

62   MS of the agent testifying, as in 59.

POLICE AGENT (CONT'D)

...he was dressed like he is now, and carried that Korean sword. It was toward evening, day before yesterday, by the riverbank at Katsura.

Dolly to CU of agent. Music in, continuing into next shot.

63   The riverbank. Camera pans to follow as agent walks along the bank. He hears a horse neigh, and runs along the bank (away from camera) toward a man seen in LS range lying as though in agony. He leans over to lift the man and loses his grip, stumbling back into the river.

64   MS: Tajomaru, in the foreground, groaning, apparently in agony, writhing in the sand. In the background, the agent in the river. The camera travels left from them to reveal, farther down along the bank, a bow, arrows, and finally a horse.

POLICE AGENT (O.S.) (CONT'D) There was a black-lacquered quiver holding seventeen arrows in all-

they all had hawk feathers. The bow was bound in leather... and there was a gray horse.

65   MS of the agent in the prison courtyard; the camera backs away from CU of him to same position as shot 59.

POLICE AGENT (CONT'D) And they all belonged to the murdered man. But just imagine a fierce bandit like Tajomaru here being thrown by the very animal that he himself had stolen. It was retribution.

196

The bandit wheels toward him threateningly, hisses through his teeth, then bursts into laughter.

TAJOMARU

Retribution? Don't be stupid. On that day...

66   LS: a hill, low clouds. Triumphant music. Tajomaru, shouting, gallops across and off the screen in low foreground.

TAJOMARU (O.S.) (CONT'D)

...while I was riding that gray horse I suddenly got very thirsty.

67   MS of Tajomaru, continuing in the prison courtyard.

TAJOMARU (CONT'D)

So when I got near Osaka Pass I had a drink at a stream.

68   LS from above. Tajomaru, stretched on the ground, drinks from a small stream. His heavy panting is heard.

69   MS of Tajomaru in the prison courtyard, as in 67.

TAJOMARU (CONT'D) There must have been a snake or something in the upper stream, because after a few hours I began

to have this terrible colic. Toward evening it got so I couldn't bear it any longer and so I got off the horse and lay down.

Dolly back to the two-shot [59] of Tajomaru and the police agent.

TAJOMARU (CONT'D)
And you thought I'd fallen off-hah!

He hisses and kicks the quiver lying in front of the agent.

TAJOMARU (CONT'D)

It takes a pretty stupid person to have an idea that stupid.

70   MCU of Tajomaru.

TAJOMARU (CONT'D)

No, I'm telling the truth. I know you're going to cut off my head sooner or later-I'm not hiding anything. It was me, Tajomaru, who killed that man. Yes, I did it. It was a hot afternoon, about three days ago, that I first saw them. And then all of a sudden there was this cool breeze. If it hadn't been for that breeze, maybe I wouldn't have killed him.

The bell-like music, like distant wind chimes, is heard as he concludes; the music continues into the next shot.

71   In the woods; the camera tilts from the great crown of an enormous tree down to its roots to reveal the bandit sprawled out sleeping at the base of another huge tree nearby. Music denoting the traveling couple fades in over the tinkling bells.

72   MS of Tajomaru asleep; the camera dollies in to closer range and pans around to reveal the samurai leading the horse on which the woman is riding.

73   Camera travels backward as it shows the pair coming down the road.

74   MCU of the bandit; he looks sleepily in their direction.

75   MS of the woman on horseback, her face barely visible through the veil of her hat.

76   MCU, as in 74: Tajomaru closes his eyes, scratches, appears to be falling asleep again, but then glances again in the direction of the couple.

77   LS: the pair approach the "sleeping" figure.

78   MS: profile of the samurai as he sees Tajomaru and hesitates.

79   MCU, as in 74: Tajomaru, his eyes half-open, staring back at the samurai.

80   MS: the samurai, now seen from in front, continues to assess Tajomaru.

81   MCU, as in 74: Tajomaru staring back; he scratches his leg lazily, closing his eyes again.

82   MCU: the samurai decides to move on, leading the horse toward the camera.

83   MCU of Tajomaru, as in 74, his eyes shut. Then, to the sound of the bell-like music, a fresh breeze stirs his hair; he opens his eyes, looks in the couple's direction, and gives a start.

84   CU of the feet of the woman, gently swinging with the movements of the horse; the camera tilts up to show her face as the veil is blown aside.

85   ECU of Tajomaru, now wide-awake, looking.

86   CU of the woman on horseback (pan), her veil parting to reveal her face fully.

87   ECU, as in 85: Tajomaru begins to raise himself up.

88   MS from behind Tajomaru, now in a sitting position. Pan as the horse and couple move past him in the background. Tajomaru turns and looks after them, then sinks back under the tree as they continue to move further down the road.

89   MS of Tajomaru, from in front. His sword rests between his legs, and now he slowly pulls it closer to him.

90   In the prison courtyard, Tajomaru continues his testimony, as in 70.

TAJOMARU (CONT'D)

It was just a glimpse. First I saw her, then she was gone-I thought I

had seen an angel. (MORE)

TAJOMARU (CONT'D)

And right then I decided I would take her, that I'd have her even if I had to kill the man...

He laughs.

TAJOMARU (CONT'D) But if I could do it without

killing him, then that would be all the better. So I decided not to kill him but to somehow get the woman alone. The road to Yamashina was hardly the place to do it though.

91   LS: Tajomaru runs through the woods toward the camera. Chase music in.

92   LS from the side; the camera travels with him as he races along.

93   MS: he runs down a slope (pan).

94   MS: pan to follow him as he leaps over a small brook and approaches the couple in the background. Music out.

199

95   MS of Tajomaru's back, the couple visible over his shoulder. The Samurai stops and turns.

SAMURAI
What do you want?

96   MCU of Tajomaru. He stares back at the samurai, absently slaps at a mosquito that has landed on his neck, then walks (pan) behind the horse (MS), glancing up at the woman.

97   MCU as Tajomaru eyes the pair, then walks to the front of the horse (MS) and crouches down.

SAMURAI (O.S.) (CONT'D)
What is it?

98   MS from behind the samurai as he approaches Tajomaru.

SAMURAI (CONT'D) (threateningly)
What do you want?

Tajomaru rises and crosses back behind the horse (pan), into a clearing. As the samurai crosses in front of the horse into the clearing, Tajomaru suddenly draws him sword and swings it smartly-the samurai at once reaches for his own sword, but the bandit laughs loudly, for he is merely displaying his.

TAJOMARU
Isn't that splendid? Just look!

99   MS: reverse angle from behind Tajomaru as, in profile, he proudly raises his sword.

100   MS of Tajomaru as he steps up to the samurai and presents the sword, hilt first.

TAJOMARU (CONT'D)
Here, take it. Look at it.

The samurai makes no move to accept it.

TAJOMARU (CONT'D) Near here I found this old tomb
(points past camera)

with lots of things like this in it. I broke it open and inside found swords, daggers, mirrors... I buried them all here in the woods and no one but me knows where. But if you're interested I might sell some of them to you cheap.

Tajomaru presents the sword again.

101   MCU from reverse angle as Tajomaru holds out the sword. The samurai abruptly takes it and examines it. Tajomaru glances in the woman's direction and scratches his cheek.

WIPE.

102   The forest, enormous trees. Idyllic music. The camera tilts down to reveal the woman sitting on the ground alone, the horse grazing behind her.

103   CU of the bow and arrows, which have been left lying on the ground near the woman.

104   LS: moving generally to the left, the bandit and the samurai are climbing a slope in the woods; a traveling shot from above and behind them. Music with drums accompanies the trek through the woods.

105   MS from above and in front of them as they continue up the slope (pan), now to the right, then turning.

106   LS: they push on to the left through the woods (pan).

107   MS: pan as they go on. Suddenly Tajomaru stops and draws his sword. The man recoils, thinking the bandit is about to fight.

Tajomaru laughs and with a shout pokes his sword toward the samurai. Then he begins slashing at the obstructing underbrush with the sword (pan).

108   CU: pan as the bandit hacks his way forward. He pauses.

TAJOMARU (CONT'D)
It's over there in that grove.

109   CU of the samurai, eyeing the bandit.

SAMURAI
You walk ahead of me.

110   MS: samurai in the foreground; Tajomaru, in the background, waits, then turns from the camera and starts out, leading the way for the samurai.

111   MS: Tajomaru, hacking through the underbrush, leads the way as the two come toward the camera, which tracks backward.

112   MS: now the camera tracks forward and follows their backs.

113   MS: they approach the camera; it pans as they go off to the left. They proceed into the brush, away from camera.

114   MS: they approach from LS. Tajomaru stops and gestures.

TAJOMARU
It's over there.

He replaces his sword in its scabbard.

The samurai moves past and in front of him (pan), and stands looking with his back to Tajomaru, who now is out of frame.

115   MS of Tajomaru-pan as he moves toward, then past the camera and attacks the other man, knocking him to the ground. Fight music punctuates the action. They roll over each other, but Tajomaru kicks the samurai away, then leaps through the air after him. The remainder of the fight is never seen, for as Tajomaru lands atop the samurai, a wipe leads into shot 116.

116   MS: a traveling shot of Tajomaru running to the right through the woods. He pauses for a moment to point back in the direction of the samurai, laughing and shouting.

117   CU: the camera continues to travel with him.

118   LS: still running and laughing loudly, he starts down a hill.

119   LS from the bottom of the hill. Tajomaru descends, stops, and peers through the bushes MCU.

120   Seen from over his shoulder, far below, stands the woman, waiting by a small brook. She crouches to dangle her hand in the water.

121   MS: a closer view of the waiting woman.

122   MCU, as in 119: Tajomaru looks down at her, his eyes wide.

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123   MCU of the woman, serenely passing the time.

124   MCU, as in 119: Tajomaru peering down.

125   CU of the woman's hand, playing with the water as it flows gently past. Suddenly her hand stops.

126   MCU of the woman from the side as she turns abruptly to the camera, puzzled, and lifts her veil.

127   MCU, as in 119: Tajomaru sees she has noticed something and leaps forward from his hiding place.

128   MS from reverse angle. Tajomaru's back is to the camera as he bounds down toward her away form the camera.

129   Reverse angle from over the woman's shoulder in the foreground. Tajomaru runs swiftly up to her and stops, panting, in front of her.

TAJOMARU (CONT'D) Something terrible has happened. Your husband has been bitten by a snake.

130   MS: reverse angle of the woman from behind Tajomaru. Shocked, she stands up, removing her hat.

131   MCU of the bareheaded woman; she stares incredulously at the bandit.

132   MCU of Tajomaru in the prison courtyard, continuing his testimony.

TAJOMARU (CONT'D)

She became very pale and stared at me as though her eyes were frozen. She looked like a child when it turns suddenly serious. The sight of her made me jealous of that man; I started to hate him. I wanted to show her what he looked like, all tied up like that. I hadn't even thought of a thing like that before, but now I did.

133   MS: a traveling shot of Tajomaru running to the left through the woods, pulling the woman after him. Travel music begins.

134   MS of the woman; a traveling shot as she is pulled along by the wrist.

135   CU: a traveling shot of her hat dragging behind her; it snags on a branch (camera stops) and is left behind.

136   They run from LS up to the camera, which pans to reveal the samurai, tightly bound up, sitting in the clearing where Tajomaru attacked him. The woman stops abruptly.

137   MS of the samurai, helpless.

138   MCU of the woman who stands transfixed by the sight of her husband, Tajomaru behind her. The bandit steps forward past her.

139   LS from behind the husband, the woman and Tajomaru in the background: Tajomaru steps back to look at both of them.

140   MS from behind the husband, the woman in the background.

141   MS from behind the bandit, the husband in the background.

142   MS from the side of the woman, the bandit in the background.

143   MS from the side of the bandit, the woman in the background.

144   MS from behind the husband, the bandit in the background. The samurai looks toward his wife.

145   MS from the side of the woman, her husband in the background. The camera moves swiftly toward her and pans around then away from her (MS). CU: she suddenly turns to attack the bandit with her dagger. She races toward him, her weapon outstretched, but he dodges the thrust and springs around to look at her with admiring disbelief.

146   CU of her frenzied face as she regains her balance and whirls to charge again.

147   MS from behind her as she runs at him again (pan); he dodges, she turns and charges at him with the dagger held straight before her. Hysterical now, she misses and stumbles out of sight. The camera remains on Tajomaru's laughing face.

148   MS: Tajomaru in the foreground, the woman in the background; she dives forward and grabs his leg, but he pulls free.

149   MCU of Tajomaru; he stares down at her, excited by her desperate spirit.

150   MCU, stretched on the ground; she menaces him with the dagger held straight up at him, every muscle tense and ready.

TAJOMARU (O.S.) (CONT'D)

She was fierce...

151   MCU of Tajomaru, as in 149; his admiration is unbounded.

TAJOMARU (O.S.) (CONT'D)
...determined.

152   MCU of the woman, as in 150; she won't relent.

153   MS of the two of them; he continues to stand over her, silent, watchful.

TAJOMARU (O.S.) (CONT'D)
She fought like a cat.

She starts to crawl away, then rises, slashes at him.

154   MS from reverse angle as he grabs her.

155   MCU: Tajomaru behind the woman. He shouts in pain as she sinks her teeth into his forearm; he flings her away and (pan) she trips to the ground.

156   MCU of Tajomaru; he licks his wound and moves forward.

157   MCU of the woman as she rises to attack again.

158   LS: she chases him to the right, wildly slicing the air with her dagger (pan). He circles a tree and continues in the opposite direction (pan).

159   MS: he reaches another tree, swings around it, and waits for her next move. She thrusts at him, sobbing, and they chase each other around the tree.

160   MS from right. He runs off (traveling shot); she follows, but collapses, exhausted; he stands jubilant over her.

161   LS: the woman in the foreground, in close range, helplessly sobbing; Tajomaru in the background. He stalks up to her, she lunges yet again, but now he grabs and holds her.

162   MCU of the husband watching them; he bows his head.

163   CU: the woman claws Tajomaru's face; he wrests his head free and pushes her to the ground (camera tilts down). She struggles but he kisses her.

164   The sky seen through the branches of the trees (pan).

165   CU of the bandit kissing her; she stares straight up.

166   The sky seen through the overhead branches (pan), as in 164.

167   CU from reverse angle; Tajomaru holding her, kissing her.

168   The sky and trees, as in 164. The camera has stopped panning; now the sun is seen shining brilliantly through the branches. Bell-like music begins.

169   ECU from reverse angle; Tajomaru kissing the woman, as she stares blankly up at the sun.

170   The sun through the branches,as in 168; slowly the scene goes out of focus.

171   ECU, as in 169. The woman closes her eyes.

172   CU of the dagger in her hand, Tajomaru tightly gripping her wrist. Her fingers loosen, the dagger drops to the ground.

173   CU of the dagger sticking point first in the ground.

174   MS of Tajomaru's back, the woman in his arms. The camera slowly dollies toward them during the kiss. Her hand encircles his back, her fingers move caressingly; she tightens her grip on him. Shot ends with ECU of the back of Tajomaru's head and an area of the woman's face as the kiss continues.

175   MS: in the prison courtyard, Tajomaru is laughing and kicking his feet exultantly.

TAJOMARU (CONT'D) And so I had her-just as I'd

planned, and without killing the husband. And that was how I did it. Besides, I hadn't intended to kill him. But then...

177   Shot of Tajomaru's back, beginning in close range, as he walks away from the camera to go off into the woods; the woman rushes after him (LS).

MS from reverse angle. She throws herself at his feet.

WOMAN
Wait. Stop. One of you must die.
Either you or my husband.

178   MCU of her husband. Bound up, he stares without expression.

179   MCU of Tajomaru staring at the samurai; then he looks down at the woman.

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180   MCU of the woman kneeling, seen from over Tajomaru's shoulder.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Either you or he must die. To be doubly disgraced, disgraced before two men, is more than I can bear.

181   MCU of Tajomaru looking down at her.

182   MCU, as in 180: the woman continues to speak intensely.

WOODCUTTER

I want... I will belong to whoever kills the other.

183   CU of the woman; her honor at stake, she looks up expectantly at the bandit.

184   ECU of Tajomaru. a fierce resolution comes over his face.

185   MCU of the woman on the ground. Tajomaru walks away to the samurai in the background (LS). The woman remains in the foreground with lowered eyes. Tajomaru takes out his sword.

186   MS: Tajomaru cuts the ropes binding the samurai, and holds out the unsheathed sword he has robbed from him. The samurai whips the sword from its scabbard and slashes at Tajomaru. The samurai then springs to his feet and they begin to fight (pan). They move away from the camera into the background.

187   MS: the two duel, slashing and parrying. Martial music.

188   MCU: Tajomaru turns, thrusts at the samurai.

189   MCU of Tajomaru's sword as the samurai dodges; Tajomaru pulls back and they cross swords again.

190   MS: the two of them fighting, Tajomaru in the foreground; the bandit heads away from the camera and scrambles up a slight incline.

191   MS: he slips and falls, but remains there in a sitting position, glaring defiantly at his opponent.

192   MS from reverse angle. The bandit's back in the foreground, the samurai visible below. Tajomaru scratches idly, then charges down the incline past the other man. Now in the background, the bandit turns and starts to walk insouciantly away, then whirls on his opponent.

207

193   Tajomaru lunges forward, the samurai backs out of the frame, Tajomaru follows.

The samurai charges back into the frame, followed again by the bandit. They fight toward the background; the samurai stumbles.

194   CU: the samurai, stumbling, falls to a sitting position.

195   MS: Tajomaru, in the background, circles menacingly around the samurai in the foreground.

196   MCU, as in 194, of the samurai on guard, ready to ward of Tajomaru's attack.

197   MCU of the bandit jabbing at the fallen samurai.

198   MCU, as in 194, of the samurai warding off the thrust.

199   MS, as in 197, of the bandit circling (pan), brandishing his sword, sometimes feinting a lunge.

200   The samurai, as in 194, still in a sitting position, turns with Tajomaru.

201   MCU, as in 197, of the bandit circling (pan) in the other direction.

202   MCU, as in 194, of the samurai, still sitting, sword in a defensive position.

203   MC, as in 197, of the bandit (pan) taunting, feinting-finally he lunges.

204   ECU: the samurai, who has kept in his free hand the rope that had bound him, now whips the rope at Tajomaru.

205   CU, as in 197: the bandit wards off the rope.

206   MS: the samurai is on his feet again, and the two cross swords, circling around so that the samurai's back is to the camera.

207   MS from reverse angle. The two men fight, running, struggling; they begin to duel around a tree, Tajomaru pursuing.

208   Camera dollies in to a closer shot of the two men fighting around the tree.

209   LS through the bushes of a thicket. The samurai is forced back into the thicket, his back to the camera; then he stumbles and falls on his back. Tajomaru moves in on him. The samurai's sword has become entangled in the undergrowth. Dolly in to MS of

Tajomaru, who laughs, raises his sword to throw it, and spears the samurai with a mighty heave. Tajomaru stands looking down.

210   MS: in the prison courtyard, Tajomaru continues.

TAJOMARU

I wanted to kill him honestly, since I had to kill him. And he fought really well. We crossed swords over twenty-three times. Think of that! No one had ever crossed over twenty with me before. Then I killed him.

He laughs.

The camera has dollied back to reveal the police agent, as well as the priest and the woodcutter in the background.

TAJOMARU (CONT'D) (answering the unheard voice of the official questioner)

What's that? The woman? Oh, she wasn't around anywhere. Probably got frightened and ran away. She must have been really upset.

Anyway, when I came down the path again I found the horse grazing there. About that woman-it was her temper that interested me, but she turned out to be just like any other woman. I didn't even look for her.
(Pause)

What? His sword? Oh, I sold that in town on the same day, then drank the money up.
(Pause)

Her dagger? I remember, it looked valuable, had some kind of inlay in it. You know what I did? I forgot all about it. What a fool thing to do. Walked off and forgot it. That was the biggest mistake I ever made.

He laughs uproariously, kicking his feet on the ground.

211   MS of the rain pouring off the eaves of the Rashomon gate; the sound of the great downpour. Tilt down to reveal the three men below.

212   MS of the woodcutter, in the foreground, and the commoner, sitting by a fire; the commoner stretches and yawns.

COMMONER
Oh, that Tajomaru, he's famous for that sort of thing. He's worse than all the other bandits in Kyoto.

Why, last fall a young girl went off with her maid to worship at the Toribe Temple and they found them murdered there afterwards. He must have done it.

He rises to fetch some wood.

213   LS: the priest in the foreground; the commoner, in the background, continues talking as he crosses behind the priest.

COMMONER (CONT'D) They say the woman ran away and

left her horse behind. I just bet he killed her.

He pulls some loose planks from the side of the gate. The priest rises to walk back to the commoner.

PRIEST

But the woman turned up in prison too, you know.

The commoner turns to listen.

214   MS from reverse angle, commoner in the foreground. The priest approaches the commoner.

PRIEST (CONT'D)

It seems she went to seek refuge at some temple and the police found her there.

The voice of the woodcutter cuts across this.

WOODCUTTER (O.S.)
It's a lie!

215   MCU of the woodcutter, the priest and commoner visible in the background.

WOODCUTTER (CONT'D) It's a lie. They're all lies! Tajomaru's confession, the woman's story-they're lies!

COMMONER

Well, men are only men. That's why they lie.

He pulls a board loose and turns to speak again.

COMMONER (CONT'D)

They can't tell the truth, not even to themselves.

PRIEST

That may be true. But it's because men are so weak. That's why they lie. That's why they must deceive themselves.

COMMONER
Not another sermon!

He starts to move forward.

216   MS of the commoner, leaning forward as he puts the wood on the fire.

COMMONER (CONT'D)

I don't mind a lie. Not if it's interesting. What kind of story did she tell?

He looks up.

217   MS of the priest.

PRIEST

Hers was a completely different story from the bandit's.

He comes and kneels between the others, the camera panning with him.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
Everything was different.

218   CU of the priest.

PRIEST (CONT'D) Tajomaru talked about her temper, her strength. I saw nothing like that at all. I found her very pitiful. I felt great compassion for her.

219   LS of the prison courtyard, the woman prostrate in the foreground, the woodcutter and the priest kneeling in the background. The main thematic music begins softly and continues, almost uninterrupted, throughout the woman's version of the story.

At times gentle, at other times frenzied, it is the only musical theme through shot 254. The woman is bent over weeping; she raises her head.

220   MS of the woman, who slowly raises the upper half of her body.

WOMAN

And then, after having taken advantage of me, he told me-oh, so proudly-that he was the famous bandit Tajomaru. And then he sneered at my husband.

221   MCU as she continues, now more possessed.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Oh, how terrible it must have been for him. But the more he struggled, the tighter the ropes became. I couldn't stand it. Not even realizing what I was doing, I ran toward him, or tried to.

222   LS: the woods. With her back to the camera, the woman runs toward her husband; the bandit pushes her, knocking her down, and goes up to the husband bound by the tree. He takes the husband's sword and starts to leave.

223   MS of Tajomaru as he turns to sneer at the husband. The woman's sobs are heard and Tajomaru begins to laugh and point at the husband, then turns away.

224   LS as Tajomaru stops to laugh again, jumping up and down; then he runs away from the camera, disappearing into the woods.

225   LS: the woman lies weeping on the ground by her husband.

226   LS: the same, from nearer.

227   MS: the same, nearer still.

228   MCU of the woman, sobbing; finally she raises her head to look brokenheartedly at her husband.

229   MCU of her husband, in profile. He stares at the ground.

230   MCU, as in 228: she looks at him, then begisn to rise.

231   LS from behind the woman as she rises and rushes toward her husband in the background and throws herself on him.

232   CU from over his shoulder. She sobs on his breast, looks up, and is shocked by what she sees.

233   CU of the husband from over her shoulder. He looks at her coldly, cynically.

234   MCU of the woman in the prison courtyard as she continues: the woodcutter and priest visible in the background.

WOODCUTTER
Even now I remember his eyes...

What I saw in them was not sorrow, not even anger. It was... a cold hatred of me.

235   MS in the woods, the woman seen over her husband's shoulder. She pulls herself away from him, staring at him. As she speaks, she moves from side to side before him, the camera moving with her.

WOMAN

Don't look at me like that. Don't! Beat me, kill me if you must, but don't look at me like that. Please don't!

236   CU: she covers her face with her hands and starts to sink back to the ground.

237   ECU of the top of her head as she lies shaking and sobbing.

238   CU: suddenly she looks up, glances around, starts to rise.

239   LS: the pair in the background; in the foreground is the dagger, still sticking point first in the ground. She rises to her feet, comes forward and retrieves it, and rushes back to her husband, starting to cut his bonds.

240   CU: the dagger cutting through the rope.

241   MS over the husband's shoulder; she extends the dagger to him.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Then kill me if you will. Kill me with one stroke-quickly!

The camera dollies toward her face, then pans around to show the husband still staring at her as before.

242   MCU: she looks up imploringly, rises, and starts to back away.

243   MS: the camera dollies with her as she backs away.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
Oh, don't! Please don't!

She raises her hands to her face, still clutching the dagger.

244   CU of the husband's hard, unmoved face.

WOMAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Don't-don't look at me like that!

245   MCU: she comes forward again, dagger extended.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
Don't.

246   CU, as in 244, of the husband staring; her sobs are heard.

247   MS, as in 245, of the woman, backing off again, crying.

248   CU, as in 244, of the husband.

249   MS, as in 245. The woman continues to move, the camera seeming to weave with her painful approach and retreat before her husband. She holds the dagger almost absent-mindedly; her desperation grows.

250   CU, as in 244, of the husband, staring implacably.

251   MCU of the woman as she moves steadily forward now; her world forever destroyed, she holds the dagger high, without seeming to be aware of it. The camera tracks with her in the direction of her husband until she suddenly lunges off screen.

252   MS, as in 234, of the woman in the prison courtyard, continuing her testimony.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

And then I fainted. When I opened my eyes and looked around, I saw there, in my husband's chest, the dagger.

She begins to weep again.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

I didn't know what to do. I ran through the forest-I must have, although I don't remember. Then I found myself standing by a pond...

253   Shot of a lake, illuminated by a low sun, a strong breeze moving over the surface.

WOMAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
...at the foot of a hill.

254   MS, as in 234, of the woman in the prison courtyard.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

I threw myself in it. I tried to kill myself. But, I failed.

She sobs.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

What could a poor helpless woman like me do?

She sinks to the ground.

255   The steps of the Rashomon gate with the rain pouring down. The dreary, loud sound of the rain. Visible above the steps are the three men, seated. The camera tilts up as the commoner stands; he comes forward, looks out at the sky, spits disgustedly, and turns back to the group.

256   MS: he rejoins the other two around the fire (pan).

COMMONER

I see. But the more I listen the more mixed up I get.

He sits down.

COMMONER (CONT'D)

Women lead you on with their tears; they even fool themselves. Now if I believed what she said I'd really be mixed up.

PRIEST

But according to the husband's story...

COMMONER

But he's dead. How could a dead man talk?

PRIEST
He spoke through a medium.

WOODCUTTER
Lies.

He rises and comes toward the camera.

WOODCUTTER (CONT'D)
His story was all lies.

PRIEST
Dead men tell no lies.

257   MCU of the commoner, in the foreground, and the priest.

COMMONER
All right, priest-why is that?

PRIEST

They must not. I must not believe that men are so sinful.

258   MCU of the two from reverse angle.

COMMONER

Oh, I don't object to that. After all, who's honest nowadays? Look, everyone wants to forget unpleasant things, so they make up stories. It's easier that way.

Grinning, he bites into a piece of fruit. The priest looks distraught.

COMMONER (CONT'D) But never mind. Let's hear this dead man's story.

259   The ceiling and beams of the great gate illuminated by a tremendous flash of lighting.

260   LS from above the three men as they look up. A roll of thunder is heard.

261   MS of a fallen statue outside the gate. The rain falls even harder, flooding in rapid cascades past the statue.

262   CU of the statue.

263   CU of a hand bell being violently shaken in the air. The scene has abruptly shifted back to the prison courtyard.

216

264   MS of the medium, a woman, her hair and robes blowing in the wind. She is rattling the bell, dancing madly. The bell clatters, the wind howls, and a weird, unearthly voice drones on like a record player slowing down. A drum beats slowly. The wind, voice, and drum continue through shot 273.

265   LS from above the medium. Behind her kneel the woodcutter and the priest. She circles the altar which has been placed in the courtyard, shaking the bell.

266   CU, as in 263, of the bell being shaken.

267   MLS of the medium writhing about on her feet. She begisn to turn dizzily in circles. Suddenly she stops completely still.

268   MCU of the medium, now possessed by the other world.

269   CU of the bell dropping from her hand.

270   MCU, as in 268: she turns abruptly in the direction of the camera.

271   LS: she rushes toward the foreground and stands, mouth open, her eyes wild, as the camera dollies in. Her mouth begins to move and suddenly the voice of the dead man is heard.

SAMURAI-MEDIUM (as though at a great distance)

I am in darkness now. I am suffering in the darkness. Cursed be those who cast me into this hell of darkness.

The medium starts to fall.

272   MS of the medium falling behind the altar to the ground. She moves convulsively on the ground, the camera panning with her.

273   MS: she sits upright as the camera dollies in. Her mouth opens and over the sound of the wind the voice of the samurai is heard.

SAMURAI-MEDIUM (CONT'D) The bandit, after attacking my wife, sat down beside her and tried to console her.

The sound of the unearthly voice and drum stops abruptly.

217

274   LS: the woods. In the clearing where the rape took place, the bandit is sitting beside the woman, talking to her, touching her arm to get her attention. The samurai's story is accompanied by a somber musical theme which plays over most of the scenes through shot 305.

SAMURAI-MEDIUM (O.S.) (CONT'D) She sat there on the leaves,

looking down, looking at nothing. The bandit was cunning.

Camera dollies back to reveal the husband bound in the foreground.

SAMURAI-MEDIUM (O.S.) (CONT'D) He told her that after she had

given herself, she would no longer be able to live with her husband-why didn't she go with him, the bandit, rather than remain behind to be unhappy with her husband? He said he had only attacked her because of his great love for her.

The husband turns his head toward them.

275   CU of the wife as she looks up as though she believes what Tajomaru is saying, her eyes dreamy.

SAMURAI-MEDIUM (O.S.) (CONT'D) My wife looked at him, her face soft, her eyes veiled.

276   MCU of the medium in the prison courtyard, as at the end of shot 273.

SAMURAI-MEDIUM (CONT'D) Never, in all of our life together, had I seen her more beautiful.

277   MCU of the husband in the woods; he stares at the others, then closes his eyes.

SAMURAI-MEDIUM (O.S.) (CONT'D) And what did my beautiful wife

reply to the bandit in front of her helpless husband?

278   MS: the woman looks up at Tajomaru, imploringly.

WOMAN
Take me. Take me away with you.

279   The prison courtyard. A black sky; the medium's face rises into view, the wind whipping her hair. From MCU range she runs away from the camera, which pursues her; she then moves forward, the camera retreating before her. Through all this, the unearthly voice fades in and out.

SAMURAI-MEDIUM
This is what she said.

The medium turns away, then abruptly faces the camera again.

SAMURAI-MEDIUM (CONT'D) But that is not all she did, or else I would not now be in darkness.

280   MS: in the woods, from behind the husband's back. Tajomaru picks up the husband's sword and moves off-screen. He returns, leading the woman off into the woods.

281   MCU of Tajomaru as he is jerked to a stop by the woman.

282   MS of the woman holding Tajomaru by the hand. She points toward her husband.

WOMAN

Kill him. As long as he is alive I cannot go with you.

She moves behind Tajomaru, clutching him.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
Kill him!

283   MS of the medium in the prison courtyard, the wind howling about her.

SAMURAI-MEDIUM
I still hear those words.

The medium writhes in circles on her knees.

SAMURAI-MEDIUM (CONT'D) They are like a wind blowing me to the bottom of this dark pit. Has anyone ever uttered more pitiless words? Even the bandit was shocked to hear them.

284   ECU of the woman in the woods, clinging to the bandit's shoulder, digging her nails into him.

WOMAN
Kill him!

285   LS: the bandit and the woman from behind the husband's back; the woman takes a step toward the husband, pointing at him.

219

WOMAN (CONT'D)
Kill him-kill him!

286   MCU of Tajomaru, yanking the woman back to him. The look in his eyes makes her back off.

287   LS, as in 285: the bandit throws the woman from him.

288   MS of the woman as she falls to the ground; the bandit places his foot on her back.

289   CU of the medium in the prison courtyard. She throws her head back and then forward and the dead man's laughter pours from her unmoving lips.

290   LS: Tajomaru, still standing over the woman, addresses the husband.

TAJOMARU

What do you want me to do with this woman? Kill her? Spare her? Just nod if you agree.

The camera dollies around to show the husband in profile.

SAMURAI-MEDIUM (O.S.) For these words I almost forgave the bandit.

291   LS of the husband in the background; in the foreground (MS) Tajomaru continues pressing the woman to the ground with his foot.

TAJOMARU

What do you want me to do? Kill her? Let her go?

Now Tajomaru walks toward the husband. As soon as he has gone a few steps, the woman springs up and runs away. Tajomaru turns to chase her, the camera panning to show them disappear among the trees. Her screams die away in the stillness of the woods.

292   LS of the husband; still bound, he makes no effort to free himself.

293   MS of the husband.

294   MCU of the husband.

295   Dead leaves on the ground in the late afternoon sun.

SAMURAI-MEDIUM (O.S.)
Hours later-I don't know how many.

220

296   MS of the husband's back. Tajomaru appears in the background, on the far side of the clearing, stomping along, slashing in disgust with some rope at the bushes. He walks up to the husband and stands looking down.

297   MS from reverse angle. Tajomaru takes his sword and cuts the captive's bonds.

TAJOMARU

Well, she got away. Now I'll have to worry about her talking.

He turns and goes.

The husband looks off after him, then down, then up at the sky.

298   Trees against the sky.

SAMURAI-MEDIUM (O.S.)
It was quiet.

299   Dead leaves on the ground.

SAMURAI-MEDIUM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Then I heard someone crying...

The camera tilts up along the leaves to reveal the husband (MS). The bell-like tinkle of wind chimes is heard.

300   MCU of the husband crying. The camera dollies back and he rises to his feet. He moves painfully (pan), rests his head against a tree. There is the soft sound of grief, but it comes from the husband himself.

301   MCU as he rests his head against the tree, sobbing. Finally he raises his head and begins to wander off, but stops when he notices something on the ground.

302   MS from behind the husband, the dagger sticking up before him. Slowly he goes to it, picks it up, and turns to walk back toward the camera, staring at the dagger.

303   MS as he moves forward into the clearing; he stops, raises the dagger high above his head and brutally thrusts it into his chest. He begins to fall.

304   MS: his falling motion is completed by the medium in the prison courtyard (priest and woodcutter sit in the background). The medium sinks down as though dead, then slowly sits up.

305   MCU of the medium.

SAMURAI-MEDIUM (CONT'D) Everything was quiet-how quiet it was. It grew dark and a mist seemed to envelop me. I lay quietly in this stillness. Then someone seemed to approach me. Softly, gently. Who

could it have been? (MORE)

SAMURAI-MEDIUM (CONT'D) Then someone's hand grasped the dagger and drew it out.

The medium falls forward.

Music up and out.

306   LS: in the shadow of the Rashomon gate, the priest and commoner are seated at the fire; the woodcutter is pacing up and down, the camera panning with him.

307   MS as the woodcutter stops in the background and turns to the others.

WOODCUTTER

That's not true. There wasn't any dagger there-he was killed by a sword.

The commoner looks up from tending the fire. The woodcutter, very agitated, moves farther into the background and sits down; the commoner rises and goes back to sit beside him.

308   Reverse of preceding: in the background, the commoner sits next to the woodcutter; the priest is in the background.

COMMONER

Now it's getting interesting. You must have seen the whole thing. Why didn't you tell the police?

WOODCUTTER
I didn't want to get involved.

COMMONER

But now you want to talk about it? Well, come on and tell us then. Yours seems the most interesting of all these stories.

309   Reverse of the preceding: the priest in the foreground.

PRIEST

I don't want to hear. I don't want to have to listen to any more horrible stories.

The commoner stands and comes forward to the priest.

COMMONER (to the priest)
Stories like this are ordinary enough now. (MORE)

COMMONER (CONT'D)

I heard that demons used to live in the castle here by the gate, but they all ran away, because what men do now horrified them so.

He goes back to the woodcutter.

310   CU of the woodcutter and commoner.

COMMONER (CONT'D) How much do you know about this story?

WOODCUTTER
I found a woman's hat...

COMMONER
You already said that.

COMMONER (CONT'D)

Then, when I'd walked about twenty yards farther, I heard a woman crying. I looked out from behind a bush and saw a man tied up. There was a woman crying. And there was Tajomaru.

COMMONER (CONT'D) Wait a minute. Then it was a lie when you said that you found the body?

WOODCUTTER
I didn't want to get involved.

COMMONER
All right, then. Go on. What was
Tajomaru doing?

WOODCUTTER

He was down on his knees in front of the woman and seemed to be begging her to forgive him.

311   MS: the woods. Tajomaru crouches by the woman, the samurai behind them. She is sobbing. From the beginning to the end of the woodcutter's story, there is a noticeable absence of music. The only sounds heard, aside from those made by the three people, are occasional noises natural to the woods.

TAJOMARU

Until now, whenever I wanted to do anything bad, I always did it. It

was for me and so it was good. (MORE)

TAJOMARU (CONT'D) But today is different. I've

already taken you, but now I want you more and more-and I suffer. Go away with me. If you want, I'll marry you. Look.

He bows his head low.

TAJOMARU (CONT'D)

I am Tajomaru, the famous bandit, known all over Miyako, and yet here I am on my knees in front of you.

312   MS from the side. Tajomaru puts his hand on her, trying to soothe her.

TAJOMARU (CONT'D)

If you want, I'll even stop being a bandit. I've got enough money hidden away. You can live comfortably. And if you don't want me to steal, then I'll work hard-I'll even sell things in the street. I'll make you happy. I'll do anything to please you if you'll only come away with me, marry me.

She only sobs the harder.

313   MCU from same angle as shot 311. Now the bandit tries to cajole her.

TAJOMARU (CONT'D) Please say yes. If you don't, I'll have to kill you.

314   CU of Tajomaru; he is becoming desperate.

TAJOMARU (CONT'D) Don't cry. Answer. Tell me you'll be my wife.

224

Unable to endure her silence, he suddenly pushes her.

315   CU from over Tajomaru's shoulder. He bends over solicitously again.

TAJOMARU (CONT'D)
Tell me.

316   MCU from reverse angle. She sits up, almost in possession of herself.

WOMAN

But, how could I answer? How could I, a woman, answer a question like that?

317   She rises on her knees, the camera panning as she crawls over to the dagger and yanks it out of the ground.

MS of the samurai, trussed up, in the foreground. Tajomaru, in the background, leaps aside and trips to the ground as the woman spins around with the dagger in her hand. But she is going to her husband with it. She cuts his bonds, then backs away sobbing, stumbling, and falls to the ground between the two men.

318   MS of Tajomaru, crouching at the ready.

TAJOMARU

I understand. You mean that we men must decide.

He reaches for his sword.

319   LS from behind Tajomaru. The samurai is struggling to free himself of the bonds now that the rope has been cut.

320   MS of the samurai as he jumps to his feet and nervously backs away.

SAMURAI

(holding up his hand in front of him)

Stop! I refuse to risk my life for such a woman.

321   MCU: Tajomaru looks at him hesitantly.

322   MCU: the woman sits up and looks in disbelief at her husband.

323   MS: the samurai, now haughty and self-possessed, walks up to his wife.

225

SAMURAI (CONT'D)

You shameless whore! Why don't you kill yourself?

324   LS of the same, with Tajomaru in the foreground.

SAMURAI (CONT'D) (to Tajomaru)

If you want her, I'll give her to you. I regret the loss of my horse much more than I will regret the loss of this woman.

He turns away.

325   CU of the woman; shocked, she turns from her husband to look at the bandit.

326   MS: she stares up at Tajomaru, who looks from her to the samurai.

327   MLS: the samurai in the foreground, Tajomaru staring at him. The samurai looks from one to the other.

328   ECU: Tajomaru looks at the woman distrustfully.

329   CU: she, sweating visibly, looks at Tajomaru.

330   ECU, as in 328: Tajomaru looks at her with distaste, wipes the sweat from his face.

331   MS: she watches him cross behind her as if to go, then gets up and runs after him (pan), both of them passing the husband, who stands immobile.

WOMAN
Wait!

Tajomaru turns and calls back.

TAJOMARU
And don't try to follow me.

332   MS: through Tajomaru's legs the woman is seen falling to the ground, her husband standing behind her. Then the husband steps forward.

333   MCU of the husband.

SAMURAI

Don't waste your time in crying. No matter how hard you cry no one is going to be taken in by it.

334   MS of Tajomaru as he steps forward to contradict.

TAJOMARU

Don't talk like that to her. It's unmanly of you. After all, women cannot help crying. They are naturally weak.

335   MS of the woman on the ground. Her weeping has been heard behind Tajomaru's words; now the sobs change and she laughs. She rises, screeching with hysterical laughter.

WOMAN

It's not me, not me-it's you two who are weak.

Pan as she goes to her husband.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

If you are my husband then why don't you kill this man? Then you can tell me to kill myself. That is what a real man would do. But you aren't a real man. That is why I was crying. I'm tired, tired of this farce.

Pan as she crosses to the bandit.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

I thought that Tajomaru might find some way out. I thought that if he would only save me I would do anything for him.

336   CU of the woman and Tajomaru. She spits in his face, then backs off, laughing (pan).

WOMAN (CONT'D)

But he's not a man either. He's just like my husband!

337   MS of Tajomaru, looking shamefaced.

WOMAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Just remember...

338   CU, as in 335, of the woman.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

...that a woman loves only a real man.

She moves nearer the bandit-pan.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

And when she loves, she loves madly, forgetting everything else. But a woman can be won only by strength-by the strength

(she is now at Tajomaru's side)
of the swords you are wearing.

339   MS of the husband. He looks at her abjectly, then reaches for his sword.

340   CU of the husband as he moves toward Tajomaru now ready for a fight.

341   MS of all three; the woman and bandit, his sword already drawn, are in the foreground. From too far away, the samurai hurriedly swings his sword at Tajomaru, then backs quickly off. The woman smiles scornfully.

342   MS: the woman looks from one to the other, laughing and pointing gleefully.

343   LS: the two men, from high above, through the branches of the trees. They stand facing each other from a safe distance, the woman between them.

344   MCU of the woman. She seems to realize what is happening and a frightened look comes over her face. The sound of the combatants' nervous panting is heard now, and runs throughout the fight scene. It is a tense, gasping sound, unrelieved by music or any sound other than the occasional clash of swords.

345   MS of the bandit, circling, feinting, a concerned expression on his face.

346   MS of the samurai, advancing uncertainly.

347   MS, as in 345, of the bandit advancing.

348   MS, as in 346, of the samurai advancing.

349   MCU of the woman, watching fearfully. The camera dollies back until the two raised swords are visible in the frame. Suddenly the tips of the swords touch.

350   LS: the men recoil from the touching of the swords, stumbling backward away from each other. The samurai trips to the ground. Tajomaru runs after the samurai, but falls down himself. Both men swing wildly and blindly as they get to their feet and run in opposite directions from each other.

351   LS: Tajomaru in the foreground. The men are separated now by a great distance.

352   CU of the woman as she peeks out from behind the stump of a tree.

353   MS of the samurai, who has fallen against the side of a slope. Finally he stands up and advances.

354   MS: back-tracking shot of Tajomaru, advancing fearfully. His arm shaking violently; he seems almost unable to bear the weight of the sword. His breath comes in short gasps.

355   MS, as in 353, of the samurai advancing, terror written on his face.

356   MS, as in 354, of Tajomaru advancing.

357   MS of the woman, terrified; the camera dollies back as the men enter from either side of the frame. Each thrusts, frightening the other, but this time the samurai turns to run first at the sound of the woman's scream, and Tajomaru pursues him over to the slope (pan).

358   MS: they both slip and fall on the slope. Tajomaru thrusts at the samurai but misses, and his sword sticks in the ground. He can't extract it. Now the samurai swings, but the bandit rolls out of the way.

359   LS: Tajomaru continues to roll away (pan) to another part of the slope, which he tries to crawl up but fails to get a handhold.

360   MS as Tajomaru dodged another thrust.

361   MS: the samurai scampers after him but keeps stumbling and missing with his flailing swings.

362   MS: the bandit gets back to his sword but still can't pull it out. The samurai keeps lunging and missing; Tajomaru keeps dodging.

363   LS: the bandit runs and makes another attempt to mount the rise but falls (pan). Now he runs away from the slope (pan) and falls by a tree stump. The samurai aims another stroke wildly as Tajomaru falls behind the stump.

364   MS: the samurai's sword lodges itself in the stump; Tajomaru seizes the opportunity by leaping up at his assailant and pushing him down.

365   MS: Tajomaru tries to run past the fallen man but the samurai grabs him by the ankle and pulls him down. Dragging the samurai after him, Tajomaru begins to inch toward his own sword.

366   MS from reverse angle. Slowly and with great effort, the bandit inches toward his sword, the samurai holding onto his foot. Then Tajomaru kicks him away and at last frees the sword from the ground.

367   MS: the samurai, still on the ground, backs off in alarm.

368   MS: Tajomaru, out of breath, rises shakily.

369   LS: pan as Tajomaru advances on the samurai, who pushes himself along on his hands farther and farther into a thicket. Dolly in on the trapped man, who screams.

SAMURAI

I don't want to die! I don't want to die!

Slight tilt upward to Tajomaru raising his sword and hurling it, out of frame, into the man lying in front of him. Then he whirls around triumphantly.

370   LS: Tajomaru in the foreground, the woman cowering in the background. He backs away from the body and stumbles to the ground in front of the woman.

371   MS of Tajomaru and the woman. They stare over at the body. Tajomaru, an idiotic expression on his face, rises and takes her hands, but she pulls them away and begins to back off frantically (pan), ending near the tree stump in which her husband's sword is still lodged. She utters little inarticulate cries. Tajomaru has followed stupidly, and now, half-crazed, he pulls the dead man's sword free and swings it mightily at her as she flees.

372   LS: she rushes off into the woods; he follows but trips. She disappears as he lies collapsed on the ground.

373   MS of Tajomaru's back. He sits up slowly, breathing hard, dirty, sweaty, exhausted. Silence-then the sound of distant cicada.

374   LS as he sits stupefied. After a long time, he gets to his feet and goes off, to where the body lies, reappearing a moment later with his own bloody sword as well as the samurai's.

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375   MS: dragging the swords along, Tajomaru backs off and limps away into the woods.

376   LS: the Rashomon gate. The three men sitting, framed overhead by a huge horizontal beam. The sound of the great downpour. The commoner laughs.

377   MS: the priest is in the foreground. The commoner stands.

COMMONER

And I suppose that is supposed to be true.

WOODCUTTER (getting to his feet)

I don't tell lies. I saw it with my own eyes.

COMMONER
That I doubt.

WOODCUTTER
I don't tell lies.

COMMONER

Well, as far as that goes, no one tells lies after he has said that he's going to tell one.

PRIEST

But it's horrible-if men do not tell the truth, do not trust one another, then the earth becomes a kind of hell.

COMMONER

You are right. The world we live in is a hell.

PRIEST
No. I trust men.

He turns away from the commoner and rises.

378   MCU of the priest, standing by a column.

PRIEST (CONT'D)

But I don't want to believe that this world is a hell.

The commoner appears behind him, laughing.

COMMONER

No one will hear you, no matter how loud you shout. Just think now. Which one of these stories do you believe?

Before the priest can answer, the woodcutter begins to speak. As he does the camera pans past the column to a MS of him.

WOODCUTTER
I don't understand any of them.
They don't make any sense.

The commoner steps forward from behind the column and goes up to the woodcutter.

COMMONER

Well, don't worry about it. It isn't as though men were reasonable.

He turns to walk off.

379   LS: the commoner walks to the fire he has built, squats, and throws several of the burning pieces of lumber out into the rain. Just then the cry of a baby is heard. All look around. The commoner stands up.

380   MS: the three men try to locate the source of the crying. Then the commoner runs to the back and heads behind a partition of the gate. The priest and the woodcutter look at each other, then run over to the broken panels of the partition (pan) and peer through to where the woodcutter has disappeared.

381   MS from the other side of the partition. The heads of the two men appear through openings in the panels; in the distance, the commoner is kneeling over the baby, stripping off its few clothes.

382   MS of the commoner as he finishes removing the clothes and examines them.

383   MS of the priest and woodcutter watching; they dash around the partition (pan), the priest picking up the infant and the woodcutter going up to the commoner and pushing him.

WOODCUTTER

What are you doing?

COMMONER
What does it look like?

384   MCU of the priest holding the baby protectively.

385   MS of the three men, priest in the background, commoner partially hidden by some steps (shot from a low angle).

WOODCUTTER
That's horrible.

COMMONER

What's so horrible about it? Somebody else would have taken those baby clothes if I hadn't. Why shouldn't it be me?

WOODCUTTER
You are evil.

COMMONER

Evil? Me? And if so, then what are the parents of that baby?

Pan as he moves up close to the woodcutter.

COMMONER (CONT'D)

They had a good time making it-then they throw it away like this. That's real evil for you.

WOODCUTTER

No, you're wrong. Look! Look here at the amulet case it has on. It's something the parents left to guard over it. Think what they must have gone through to give this baby up.

COMMONER

Oh, well. If you're going to sympathize with other people...

WOODCUTTER
Selfish...

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COMMONER

And what's wrong with that? That's the way we are, the way we live. Look, half of us envy the lives that dogs lead. You just can't live unless you're what you call "selfish."

The commoner turns and goes off. The woodcutter moves into MCS range.

WOODCUTTER
Brute!
(With gathering anger)

All men are selfish and dishonest. They all have excuses. The bandit, the husband... you!

His face distorted in anger, he leaps in the direction of the commoner.

386   MCU as the woodcutter grabs the commoner by the neck and shakes him; they struggle out into the rain, and continue to argue there.

COMMONER

And you say you don't lie! That's just funny. Look, you may have fooled the police, but you don't fool me.

387   MCU from reverse angle, the woodcutter facing the camera now. The commoner's words have affected the woodcutter. Guiltily he lets go his hold on the commoner.

388   MCU from reverse angle. The commoner smiles, then shoves the woodcutter; he comes forward and shoves him again, this time out of frame. Smiling, the commoner follows him out.

389   MS of the two men back under the roof, out of the rain. As the commoner speaks, he continues to shove the woodcutter back (pan), finally pushing him against the partition near the priest.

COMMONER (CONT'D)

And so where is that dagger? That pearl-inlay handle that the bandit said was so valuable? Did the earth open up and swallow it? Or did someone steal it? Am I right? It would seem so. Now THERE is a really selfish action for you.

He slaps the woodcutter and laughs harshly.

390   MCU of the priest holding the baby.

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391   LS of all three men.

COMMONER (CONT'D)
Anything else you want to tell me?
If not, I think I'll be going.

The baby starts to cry. The commoner glances at it; then, laughing, he turns to go.

392   LS from outside the gate. The commoner comes out in the rain toward the camera and disappears off-screen. The other two remain under the gate, seen in LS through the rain.

DISSOLVE.

393   MS: the two men, from closer; the sound of the rain diminishes.

DISSOLVE.

394   MS: the two men, closer yet; rain slowly stopping.

DISSOLVE.

395   MCU: the two men still standing as before; the sound of the rain has stopped; the baby cries.

396   LS: the two men seen from outside the gate as in shot 392, but now the rain has stopped. Drops of water drip from the gate onto the steps. The priest steps forward.

397   MS: he walks past the woodcutter, patting the baby, and leaves the frame. The woodcutter stands for a moment, then follows.

398   MS: the woodcutter approaches the priest and moves to take the baby away from him; the priest violently resists.

PRIEST

What are you trying to do? Take away what little it has left?

399   MS: priest in the foreground. The woodcutter, very humble now, shakes his head.

WOODCUTTER

I have six children of my own. One more wouldn't make it any more difficult.

400   MS from reverse angle; woodcutter in the foreground.

PRIEST

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that.

401   MS: priest in the foreground, as in 399.

WOODCUTTER

Oh, you can't afford not to be suspicious of people these days. I'm the one who ought to be ashamed. I don't know why I did a thing like that.

402   MS: woodcutter in the foreground.

PRIEST

No, I'm grateful to you. Because, thanks to you, I think I will be able to keep my faith in men.

403   MS, as in 399: priest in the foreground. The woodcutter bows, and the baby, who has been crying all during this dialogue, stops. The priest holds out the baby and the woodcutter takes it. Finale music begins, a distinctly traditional Japanese music.

404   MS from farther back. The woodcutter accepts the baby and steps back. The men bow to each other and the woodcutter turns to go.

405   LS from behind the men as the woodcutter, holding the infant, leaves the gate; the sky is clear, the priest watches as he goes.

406   LS from reverse angle. The woodcutter moves toward the camera. He stops and bows again to the priest. Then he turns and continues on his way, the camera tracking backward with him. The whole gate and the sunny sky come into frame. The woodcutter walks past the camera; the tracking stops and the priest is seen, small standing under the gate.

407   The great signboard of the gate. Music up and out.

THE END

Appendix 2: Observer's comments

http://www.amazon.com/review/RXP5N1KHYMXKL/ref=cm_cr_pr_viewpnt#RXP5N1KHYMXKL

From December 13, 2002 to November 17, 2012, retrieved on 29 November 2012

1.

Thankfully the English dub is optional, with the Japanese LPCM sounding much better.... One of Kurosawa's best early films with a great print on the blu-ray....one story told several ways as the truth fades away into obscurity.... Toshiro Mifune is terrific as usual--beautiful camera work and stunning cinematography tell as much truth as the witnesses.... Definite must-see....

2.
I rushamon all the way to my dvd player with my sushi in hand and enjoyed every minute of it.

3.
This is one of the greatest films of all time. The story, the cinematography, the directing and the amazing acting make it both puzzling and enthralling.

Don't try to piece it together. Don't try to figure it out. There is absolutely no way. Just accept the point that we often cannot know reality, but we must go on living anyway!

4.
I'm interested in films: it's nice to be able to add this to my collection. Since it's discussed at length elsewhere, I won't explain why everyone should have this in their DVD collection.

5.
Deservedly classic. Beautiful cinematography. One of the best, most realistic, and funniest fight scenes ever. This is among Kurosawa's best - and he made a lot of good films.

6.
A bandit kills a man and rapes his wife. Or did a bandit have a fair fight with the man after having sex with a willing wife? Or...what is the truth? When there are many views of the same event, can there be one truth or many types of truth?

And if there are many types of truth, how can there be justice? How you decide what is right or wrong if everyboy has a different idea of what happened, who is at fault, or even what the faults were?!?!?

Rashomon asks us so many questions that it is impossible to answer them all. What I can answer is - is this a great movie? YES.

I would suggest watching it a couple of times before watching it with commentary by Donald Richie - he is a good historian but you want to give yourself a chance to understand the film before he gives some of the meanings and layers away.

Enjoy!

7.

I just watched Rashomon. There are a number of lies and a number of evidences that help build a picture of what happened at the crime scene. Factors distorting the truth in the case is ego, shame culture, and revenge. The wood cutter testimony was distorted by his fear of not wanting to get involved. The wood cutter had an active imagination and made up a large part of the story. The woman was shamed and sought a version that was favorable to her position. The bandit testimony was distorted by the fact he had a reputation to uphold; so he elaborated on the events of the crime making him seem more of a villain. A dead man's voice can not be considered credible.

The soothsayer created a drama of her own to speak the mind of the dead husband using a fantastic play and imagination and those theatrics can be dismissed completely. You can't trust an actor who know the events of the crime and acts out a drama from an unseen world to dramatize and entertain people resulting in more business.

The bandit was found injured at the river bank in Katsura; the wifes gray horse and the husband's black lacquer quiver was found near the bandit along with 17 arrows. The bandit could not purse the wife because he had been shot by arrows by the husband. The husband's bow was not found at the river. Tojomaru and the woman's story both include a version of conquest and submittable with both version resulting in forced copulation. Both version seem hedge towards hiding shame of their acts, willful or willful. The wife believed she had lost her creditability with the husband. It seems like the wife's testimony could be dismissed as fantasy because her statement did not match the facts. She is obviously not telling the truth.

However it seems the husband fought to his death, giving his wife a chance to escape. The actions of the husband demonstrated he fought for his life and the life of his wife.

Tajomaru says he defeated the husband in a fight and tied the husband to a stump. Tajormaru was known to be a killer by the priest. In Tajomaru version he abandons the woman, who wants him to take her because of her disgrace. Tajomaru releases the husband and duel occurs. The womans says Tajomaru refused her offer to become his wife. The woman claims to have killed her husband and fainted. Such, an act would

bring her death, retribution, and alleviation from shame. I don't believer her testimony.

The woodcutter says Tajomuru was begging the womans forgiveness and offering marriage, but if she refused then he would kill her. The wood cutter says the husband freed and enraged at his wife calling her shameless. The husband gives the wife to the bandit. I don't think the husband would have done such an act. Instead, there was a duel and the bandit injured the husband allowing the wife to escape. The husband died of injuries, but not before shooting the banding with four arrows. It seems the bandit goal was to steal the wife, the horse, and the arrows. The bandit knew where on the road from Sekiyama to Yamishima to hide.

The testimony of the priest verifies the wood cutters version of the couple.

8.
Roshomon is beautiful in ever way; the story line is excellent, the acting is genuine, the script is realistic and not filled with fluff, the camera angles are perfection, and it's as much a story of an incident as an exploration of human nature.

It's the story of the murder of a man told from several different angles; the robber; the wife; the murdered man; and the woodcutter. Each view varies differently and every story is changed a little (or a lot). It makes the viewer constantly question which story is true or which parts of each story are true, even after watching the movie dozens of times. It also makes the viewer consider "point of view" in everyday life, how the same incident is seen in several different lights and how can it be that 3 people can witness the same thing and come to different conclusions.

9.
Akira Kurasawa may be the greatest director of all time and it is very presumptuous of me to attempt to rate this film. I had seen it several times on TCM and decided that I needed to be able to see it frequently to try and discover all the nuances of this extraordinary film. Basically, Kurasawa uses some of his best company actors, notably Toshiro Mifune, Takashi Shimura and Minoru Chiaki with cinematographer Miyagawa and musician Fumio Hayasaka to create one of the best films ever made.

The story of a rape and a murder is told through the eyes of three different people, three different points of view and three different realities or truths. The viewer must decide what really happened and whether what happened really matters in the overall scheme of things. Are people and events ever really what they seem to be on the surface? The black and white cinematography is dazzling, the music brilliant and the plot unfolds in a very masterful way with the viewer forced to look more carefully at the inherent qualities of truth and at the nature of humanity.

This is a marvelous film with great commentary so that even the uninitiated need not

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fear a lack of understanding. This great film is available at Amazon for a great price...an offer you cannot refuse!

10.

Rashomon is one of the relatively few movies that truly deserves the name "classic." There are so many reasons why Rashomon is worth watching and so much has already been said about the movie, but here's my take. I watched it recently with my wife and my 16 and 15 year old kids, and I could tell that although it wasn't one my kids would have chosen, they understood that they were in the presence of something greater than the typical movie they've seen.

So why should you watch Rashomon?

1. It's a groundbreaking film. Many of Kurosawa's techniques were cutting edge at the time Rashomon was filmed. While this is one of the main reasons film critics give for rating movies highly, in my opinion it's not enough of a reason to call a movie great.

2. Great acting. Many moviegoers wouldn't recognize this as great acting because the culture and moviemaking are so different from what they're used to. The greatness of the acting is best seen in how each actor or actress has to adapt to fit the 4 versions of the same story. But even great acting isn't enough to make a great film for me.

3. Multiple perspectives and richness of meaning. We live in an age when we've come to expect that every story has multiple angles and no one right answer. I'd like to officially blame Rashomon for that. While the use of multiple perspectives has now become a common part of the grammar of cinema, with Rashomon it was revolutionary. The 4 different versions of the story not only create a deep layering effect on the question of what really happened but also create a sort of 3-D effect in terms of gaining some understanding of human nature. While Kurosawa's actors wanted to know which was the "real" story, the big K told them that no single one was correct. Even though, personally, this irks me just a little, the truth is that the movie reveals a lot about human nature.

4. The movie reveals a lot about human nature. Now here's perhaps the best reason for calling a movie great. This is also why great movies like Rashomon transcend time and culture. I'm a 21st century Christian in America watching a Japanese movie from 1950 set in an unspecified time. And while the multiple perspectives preclude knowing exactly what happened, Kurosawa still manages to communicate truth. I can't reduce the message of the movie to a moral, but suffice it to say that Rashomon leaves you with a strong sense of the evil of humanity but also with the possibility of redemption.

5. Great storytelling. What I noticed first about watching Rashomon with my kids was

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that the story sucked them in, and it did it without the following: rapid scene changes, a blaring soundtrack, lots of sound effects, rapid action, color film, noise that fills every crevice of the film's aural canvass, and a director who tells you exactly what to think and what he tells you to think is the same shallow, safe moralism - or anti-moralism and anti-heroism - that most movies offer. No, at the center of this story was a question: "What happened?" But the way the story was told and developed engrossed all of us.

I wish some grand experiment could be conducted on teenagers (and adults!) today and have millions of them all sit down and watch Rashomon. I'd like to see if perhaps, in spite of the usual pablum they serve themselves, they wouldn't catch a glimpse of a deeper world that is worth thinking about and worth thinking about long after the trance induced by the movie had worn off.

11.
The film Rashomon is a pure classic. The acting and plot twists make this a truly enjoyable movie to watch for everyone from film students to casual viewers. When you start watching the classics, you start to realize that modern film is built off of classic film like this. Truly, Akira Kurosawa's much revered movie has become a model off which countless other movies have been made. Overall, the film is enjoyable to watch, and the storytelling is superb, especially when taken in perspective with modern film. The structure of the story is one which has been copied in many movies, even those which are quite famous.

What makes Rashomon notable, besides the fact that it was made in 1950 in Japan, well before the modern convention was used in most films, is that is uses a non-linear approach to the tale. Instead of having a static protagonist and setting, the same story is told from many points of view. In Rashomon, there are four main perspectives from which the same story is told. The event which the story revolves around is a rape and murder. However, just as in real life, the truth about what really happened is not as clear as we would like.

The movie is full of action which keeps most viewers entertained, but it is also home to a stunning story of truth, justice, and consequences. The director, Kurosawa, focuses on the difficulty in knowing what human nature is really like, as it goes through the different perspectives of the characters in the story. The picture is better because background information about the film indicates that the director's favorite actor, Toshiro Mifune, plays the lead role. This unity is obvious throughout the film which is a work of art.

12.
Okay, it's an interesting point that people who experience or witness a crime (or any life experience) can have different points of view, and that their perspectives on truth can be relative. Perhaps that was a shocking consideration in 1950. Nowadays, erg, it seems

trivial. Add to that that the acting was often silly and overdone in a big way (seemed more like Kabuki than film), the silent film-esque sort of vibe got tedious, and the music grated on me after a certain point.

All that said, perhaps this film was a mind-blower sixty years ago, but I can't help but think that the Wizard of Oz seems a hundred times more modern than this and came out 11 years earlier

It's difficult to add much to a film that has been reviewed so many times. This film, of course, was the inspiration for the Paul Newman Western, 'The Outrage', so if imitation is the highest form of flattery this fascinating film has been flattered plenty.

It is redundant to point out that this film tells the tale of a rape and murder told from four separate points of view i.e. 1. the rapist 2. the raped woman 3. the murdered husband via a medium and 4. an unseen witness. All 'testimonies' vary as to the facts and the points of view. Unlike the 'Outrage', though, the bare 'facts' aren't enormously variable. The bandit 1. ties up the husband and rapes his beautiful wife in front of his eyes. 2. The husband ends up dead. 3. the wife may or may not have put up an initial struggle but sometime during the 'rape' she seems to have passively, if not actively, yielded/participated with her ravisher 4. The husband, before his death, is appalled/horrified/contemptuous of what has happened to his wife or his wife's pleasure in it.

The questions revolve around the details. Did the wife demand a duel to decide who would get her? Did she simply insist on her husband's execution? Did she slay her own husband, herself, unable to take the contempt in his eyes?

The questions are subtle enough to gain different interpretations or misinterpretations. Lie, Truth and simple misinterpretation are explored. There are no real villains only perpetrators and/or victims. In one version [the bandit's] the husband comes out as something as a hero, dying manfully in a duel. Otherwise--at one level or another--all three are at some level complicit. An interesting film. It made me think.

13.
Akira Kurosawa's highly acclaimed film Rashomon isn't about who did it or why it was done. It is more about the who is telling the truth about a samurai's killing. Did the bandit really kill him? Or did he commit suicide? Is the woodcutter's story more true than ones dictated by the bandit, the samurai's wife, and the samurai himself? The viewer will never know the events that lead to the tragic death of the samurai.
The movie in itself is interesting to watch because, as the commoner said, a lie can sometimes be entertaining. As is today with the tabloids and reality television, it is more interesting to hear what is not true than what isn't true. And that is where humans become confused, lost, and sometimes angry. Akira Kurosawa is very indepth with

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human emotion. The rain symbolizes the emotion that can be drained from people when they have lost faith in others and themselves. The sun is a reflection of what is expected to come when people go on about their business.

But in the end, there is always a new beginning for hope and faith. Rashomon deserved acclaim.

14.

Rashomon was the first movie where Akira Kurosawa really found his filmmaking voice.

Visually, Rashomon is stunning. The techniques used by Kurosawa were years ahead of their time. The outdoor filming, especially in the forest, gives the film an authenticity that you just can't get on a soundstage.

As far as the story goes, there is enough ambiguity to keep people discussing this movie for decades. Is it about lying? Distorted memories? People lying to themselves? Selfishness? Or is it about all of the above?

Kurosawa's story of a murder told from four different points of view that come across with distinctly different details is captivating. In the end we still aren't 100% sure exactly what happened, although we have a fairly good idea. Toshiro Mifune is, as he often is, over the top as the bandit. But being Toshiro Mifune over the top works extremely well. It comes across as genuine, and not just hammy acting. Mifune would take this performance and refine it further in Seven Samurai just four years later.

As for the Essential Art House DVD, it is the Criterion version without the extras. The picture quality is quite good, as the contrast is just about perfect, and the picture has a sharpness and clarity that is very pleasing. The sound doesn't fare quite so well, as there is a lot of hiss and crackling to be heard, but not so much as to be a deal breaker. The voices come through clearly, as does the rain and other forest sounds.

Why buy this version? Price. It is roughly half the cost of the fully loaded Criterion release, so that makes it a lot easier to make the purchase. Yes, the extras on the full Criterion version are quite good, but if you're on the fence about buying the movie this would be the one to get (especially if price is a major consideration).

15.
This is classic Kurosawa at his best. The actors do an excellent job protraying the alternate stories. The cinematography is excellent. I especially like Rashomon because of the mystery of which story is true. Criterion has done an excellent job with this DVD in terms of qulity and Special Features.

16.

This movie needs no endorsement from me, it is a classic. But I think it should also be required viewing for high school age students as part of learning about citizenship. This movie and 12 Angry Men provide a dramatic insight into the need for skepticism and moral courage in making judgements. Each of the witnesses here testify in self-serving but mutually exclusive ways. In 12 Angry Men it is prejudice that infects the process. Both are able to get a philosophical point across while still being a tense drama. They should show both of these to anyone called for a jury pool as well.

17.

A rather wierd film with histrionic acting, exaggerated facial gestures, outbursts of creepy laughter and an obtuse philosophy. Yes, I undestand the basic premise, but the execution itself is flawed. Somewhat interesting insofar as dealing with Japanese customs and rituals with which most of us be might be unfamiliar. The only real reason to view this film is that it's been deemed a "Classic"--so it's good to find out what all the fuss is about. And make up your own mind.

18.

Rashomon, one of Kurosawa's masterpieces, is a deceptively clever and moving portrayal of human nature. You'll read many reviews and commentaries on how the film is about "the subjectivity of truth", but this couldn't be further from the truth! The film is about the human tendency to DENY the truth, which is both real and essential to the growth of the individual.

Kurosawa himself said of the film's message: "Human beings are unable to be honest with themselves about themselves. They cannot talk about themselves without embellishing. This script portrays such human beings--the kind who cannot survive without lies to make them feel they are better people than they really are."

The film makes no statement about the reality of truth, or even its attainability, but instead about our unwillingness to take an objective look at ourselves. The films characters embody the variety of responses and choices we take in life: selfish cynicism to moral despair, to true responsibility in the face of an unpleasant view of our true natures. The characters are similar in that they lie to themselves, to "save face", and to see themselves as better than they actually are. And yet they differ in their willingness to suffer the pain of a view of themselves.

It is in this willingness that the road to truth exists, and self-knowledge is the key in Kurosawa's vision. The final scene is hauntingly beautiful in its symbolism: the man who has taken the first step to self-knowledge bears the child - his own soul - into the world.

19.

RASHOMON is, as most prior reviewers have acknowledged, a classic film that put director Akira Kurosawa, leading man Toshiro Mifune, and cinematographer Kazuo

Miyagawa on the map, not only in Japan but around the world.

Even people who have not seen this wonderful film understand a "Rashomon" situation as being what this movie portrays: a series of events that play out entirely differently when recalled by various people at a criminal arraignment. This case involves a brutal rape and murder, but a loggerman, a priest, a bandit (Mifune), a veiled lady and her dead husband (portrayed by a ghost) all tell different stories. Whether intentionally or un, each player in the atrocity tells a version most favorable to him- or herself. This provokes a crisis of faith in the priest, who begins to wonder if there is any such thing as verifiable reality. And there's even a surprise ending! (Or two, if you count the last witnessing.)

All the cast is good, but Toshiro Mifune, here relatively early in his career, is stellar playing the thief who waylays (or is it encounters?) an upper-class veiled woman on horseback and her solicitous spouse. He plays about every human emotion portrayable in an over-the-top performance that is completely convincing nonetheless. It doesn't hurt that Mifune had one of those intensely masculine faces that are fun to watch under any portrayal. (His career embraced over 70 feature films, mostly Japanese, including most of Kurosawa's output.)

Criterion Collection's version of the DVD has some very good bells-and-whistles that help open up the film. There's a (subtitled) documentary made for Japanese TV network NHK about cinematographer Kazuo Miyagawa and his work on RASHOMON, in which he relates his experiences during filming. Another plus is film scholar Donald Richie's audiotrack commentary, which reveals further interesting cinematographic innovations: RASHOMON was a very early film (perhaps the first commercial release in Japan) to photograph the sun directly, and to encourage solar "flare" (optical streaking that on film prints extends from the sun itself). There was also a great use of mirrors (including one full-length mirror borrowed from the wardrobe department) for highlighting and the occasional impressionistic effect.

Unfortunately this restoration's technical quality, while excellent under any circumstances, does not achieve the level of technical perfection under Criterion's restoration as other classic films I've seen from them, such as RULES OF THE GAME or LA STRADA. Obvious blemishes had been banished, but the occasional freckling gets through anyway. Also noticeable at times is the kind of flickering many of us have been exposed to in other black-and-white movies (not to be confused with the deliberate impressionistic use of mirrors as related above). I doubt these minor demerits will detract from anyone's enjoyment of the film, though; but for the sake of perfection I hope Criterion will restore it yet another time with the very, very latest technology.

I also want to point out that RASHOMON is not only profound, but profoundly entertaining. It uses a very precise screenplay that bears close attention and makes each

witness's testimony at least plausible. It's also fast-paced, well-acted, and engrossing. This film holds up under multiple viewings, partly to coordinate the plotworks from different sources, but also for the sheer joy of seeing an outstanding movie. Does anyone making films today put together philosophical, narrative and technical elements so well, and combine them with such outstanding action scenes?

20.

Regardless of whether you are a serious movie goer or not, you MUST watch this. Better watch it twice for better grip. Script is tight and the plot is simple but when we hear four different versions of a same incident from four different persons in the film, it is perplexing and even confusing. I watched this after a long time, still it was as fresh as when I watched it for the first time.

The film on surface revolves around rather a simple incident of rape of wife of a samurai by a bandit and subsequent killing (or suicide?) of the samurai by the bandit. However beneath the visuals, it deals with something more fundamental and abstract - that is of our perception of truth. When we describe or tell something, we may deliberately tell a false. That is simple. But we may tell something, that we BELIEVE to be true, but we MAY BE wrong in our perception in the beginning. This is a second type of lie (or truth?). When the film ends after delivering one of the finest example of imagery even by today's standard, we are also puzzled - like the woodcutter and the priest - within this conflict of apparent and real truth. Enjoyable is also the Japanese version of Ravel's Bolero used in the background score along with the brilliant photography.
A MUST for everyone.

21.
I know this is far from a popular opinion, but I find this lauded classic to be quite sloppy. It's a messy, redundant film that has a deep message yet fails to really capitalize on its promise. I really expected (especially with all the heaps of praise) for this film to blow my mind, and sadly it did, just not in a good way.

Can you say `over the top'?

Better yet, can you say `unnecessary'?

Telling the tragic tale of a rape and murder through the eyes of fur separate people who were either party to or witness to the crime, `Rashomon' feels desperate in its attempt to alienate our emotions and cast aside all logic. It is a film that begs you to get confused, because that is the point. The film basically tells you up front that truth is nothing more than a belief subject to our own interpretation. None of the stories told are wrong because they are `as they see it' and so we are not supposed to piece together this chaotic puzzle, we are just supposed to take in the `deeper meaning'

Kurosawa presents to us.

I would have loved to have done that, but I just couldn't.

The film for me suffers in a few major areas. The pacing is an issue for me. Telling the same story four times becomes rather tedious and redundant. There could have been a better way to have constructed this film. While it is true that the four stories differ drastically, the inclusion of the same setting, scenery, characters and actions tends to grow tiresome. There isn't enough variety to completely reign in my attention. Another issue is the spastic acting. I have mentioned this issue before in previous reviews, but my opinion of Asian cinema is not as high as others. I find the unrealistically theatrical way they act these films to be rather off putting. It is chaotic to the enth degree. In some films it works, but in a film as deeply entrenched (or so it would like to be) in the raw emotional realism of `truth' I found the acting here to be distracting and out of place.

What strikes me as even more `hurtful' to the films message is the fact that, when all is said and done, it fails to convey the message thoroughly enough to really make a valid impact. I got what Kurosawa was trying to say, but I didn't really `feel' it the way it is apparent he wanted me to.

Visually, the film is stunning, and there are moments (the ending and that medium scene) that are stellar, but overall, `Rashomon' was a miss for me. It could have really been a beautiful spectacle, one that I would stand behind and laud immensely, but instead it remains one of those films I just `don't get'.

22.
Few classics in the cinematic world achieve such rare levels of cult status. This movie has not just inspired many movies, series and plays but also finds mention in literature. The beauty of the movie comes from the way how everybody's truth and lies differ. The truth is never found eventually because the truth is all dependent on the individuals and all of them are convicts in some way or the other. The guilt in each individual as well as the attempt to save themselves determines the stories. The movie actually throws up a very important question that if the essential data is kept intact the interpretation is completely dependent on the stakeholders. A masterpiece that has been around for over 50 years and even today anyone watching world movies will find it extremely enjoyable. Must watch

23.
In a brief introduction to this edition, Robert Altman talks about how 'Rashomon' influenced him as a director - how the day after watching he incorporated into his own work camera angles he'd first seen the day before. From the perspective of a film buff, even from a casual one, this is instructive and educational. Others who aren't concerned

about film techniques and storytelling methods may wonder what all the fuss is about.

Part of the problem when dealing with groundbreaking films like 'Rashomon', and which is unavoidable, is that other filmmakers, like Altman, are going to pilfer from the original until it's as common as its imitations. Without clues, as a modern viewer, I already have trouble picking out exactly what it was that made the first film so unique, though when it's pointed out, as in commentaries, I do find it noteworthy. Not necessarily compelling though - and not the primary reason I have for watching a film.

As an average member of the audience, it's the story in which I'm interested. In fact, absorbing stories and different outlooks are why I seek out foreign films in the first place - I'm looking for a distinct perspective on the human condition. The way that it is told - the art of direction and editing - plays an important part in the effective transmission of that story from director to audience, and may even add depth to the story, but particular techniques tend to lose their surprising originality over time, especially in the case of pioneering, often copied directors like Kurosawa. So the question is, does 'Rashomon' still tell a compelling story after the once startling imagary is old hat?

It begins in a torrential downpour. Two men, a priest and a woodcutter, have taken refuge in the ruins of an abandoned gatehouse and are joined by a third, a boorish ruffian. He notices the others are under a horrible mental strain, and badgers them until they tell of the trial they had recently witnessed, and of four eyewitness accounts of a murder and a rape. Each participant's account is un-reconcilable with the other, until it is unclear if anyone is telling the truth.

While the on-screen events of the film may have been somewhat daring for 1950's America, the idea that people will twist their stories around to suit their own temperament and needs could hardly have been astonishing. Maybe my own cynicism gets in the way, but that the lies of the trial's participants would affect the priest and the woodcutter down to their existential core seems unlikely and contrived.

'Rashomon' is a critical favorite - it won the Oscar in 1951 for Best Foreign Language film, is in the top ten of director's favorites, and currently enjoys clear popularity in the film community as evidenced by its ranking on IMDB. Those factors, and the idea that the film dealt with the slippery notion of truth, led me to expect a truly engaging and thought-provoking film. By no means is 'Rashomon' a bad movie, but have to say I was under-whelmed. Of Kurosawa's films, I would handily recommend 'Throne of Blood' over 'Rashomon' for an intense movie experience - and even though it's a different type of movie, I'd say that 'Seven Samurai' is also a better choice.

I'm glad that such films as 'Rashomon' are still prized and in print - I enjoy seeing how the medium has evolved and learning about film in general. But it would be unfair to recommend unreservedly 'Rashomon' to those who are not likely to appreciate it for

what it is - a good film with pioneering camera and storytelling techniques that will probably seem ho-hum by today's standard. Budding auteurs and film buffs will find much to value - those looking solely for morally and mentally challenging content will likely be disappointed.

24.

Take one part murder mystery, add a hint of super stardom name Toshiro Mifune and mix up the batter with legendary director Akira Kurosawa and what do you get? A masterpiece of human emotion with great depth which questions morality in man. This film's ending is one of the great arcs I have seen in that it delivers such a punch of emotion and hope into you. I center my attention on the priest at the end of the film as the thief questions the morality of man and rocks the priest's belief in the good of man, but I exclude the real whammy, as all hope is not lost. I wanted this review to be miniature and to tell people plain and simple "watch this movie if you enjoy great films made by epic directors.

25.

This film is both aesthetically beautiful and provoking of some of the long standing questions of our existence. In a world of relativist perceptions and competing ways of interpreting the world, can there ever be any such thing as absolute truth? Like Socrates arguing the sophists on the nature of virtue, truth slips away as we try to pinpoint it, and eventually we realize absolute truth is unknowable. Plato tried to construct that city of virtue and here we have a construction of the opposite of the absolute. Kurosawa constructed a world for the revealing of the impossibility of absolute truth, replacing it with hope in human kindness and empathy.

I view this film favorable alongside Bergman's "Through a Glass Darkly" as an investigation of our clouded moral compass, fractured perceptions, and potential for redemption in love.

The cinematography is stunning... especially the usage of light/dark in a symbolic fashion, the images of the rain, and the decay of the building that shelters them. The acting is superb (Toshiro Mifune is always great) and the narrative captivating.

26.

At the ruined gate
Hard rain pours without ceasing
Truth is elusive

27.

Without doubt, Akira Kurosawa is one of the greatest cinematographic directors of all time.

He is a master in delivering a complex message in mind-penetrating fashion. He reveals to us the onion's innermost by carefully dissecting away each layer from the surface, providing us with a clear view of the layer underneath.

Rashomon is a story about the truth and the frustrating difficulty of finding the facts even in a seemingly simple event. A spectator tells the story. A judge must decide on a crime based only on testimony. He finds as many accounts of the crime as there are parties involved. Each story is different. In the end, the judge is left with as many realities as there are people involved. The contradictions of the witness accounts are so irreconcilable that they drive the story's teller mad. Kurosawa reveals the limitations of our mind to grasp actuality. The quest for truth in the story of mankind is a never ending journey.

28.
This is a brilliantly told and acted film. And it leaves you thinking about what really happened, long after the film has ended. Kurosawa was a master and this film is a good reason why. I highly recommend it.

29.
In Kurosawa's examination of good and evil, he missed the point, namely, that all men are evil. This is a film which featured four different accounts of a rape and murder, seeing it from different points of drunkeness. There are several reasons why this film is painful to watch. The first reason is the childish cinematography. I have a somewhat ambivalent reaction to it. Though the film is entertaining if the audience is gassed with sleeping fumes.

30.
Rashomon's framing scenes don't work too well (especially the ending ones) and the message is diluted somewhat by the use of a medium to tell one of the stories, but Rashomon is still interesting and worthy of a look.

31.

If you are interested in film history, you might find this movie interesting since it is directed by Legendary director Kurosawa. If, however, you want to watch a good movie, then you should skip this, because this is absolutely one of the worst movies I've ever seen.

The movie starts out with 3 bums seeking shelter from a downpour in a ruined temple. One of the bums tells the story of a murder victim he found and the resulting inquest. In his story, he tells of the 3 people involved in the crime: the bandit who is suspected of the murder; the woman the bandit rapes; and her husband, the murder victim. Each person tells their own version of events, including the murder victim who tells the story through a medium. Each version differs greatly.

The problem with this movie is that it is boring, the plot is completely not interesting in the least, the acting is absolutely over-the-top atrocious, and none of the characters is even remotely likeable.

And the fight scenes! Oh my. It's like watching mentally disabled people trying to whack each other with sticks after drinking a fifth of whiskey. Falling, tripping, clumsily grappling and missing, and flailing around in the dirt like spastic monkeys.

And while Kurosawa may indeed be a legend, I have to wonder why in the world he chose to do some of the things he did in this film. For example, when the bum begins to tell his tale, he says he was walking through the forest to cut some wood. The scene then cuts to a backflash of the bum walking through the woods. This walking-through-the-woods scene goes on FOREVER. It's just the bum ... walking through the woods ... from 1000 different angles ... while incredibly annoying drum music is playing in the background. And that's all there is: bum, woods, walking, and drums, and it lasts a ridiculously long time. If that is an example of what good directing is, I'd hate to see what qualifies as bad directing.

To sum up: I've seen Star Trek movies that are more artistic and more skillfully executed than this abysmal waste of 2 hours. You've been warned.

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33.

Everytime I watch "Rashomon," I'm reminded of the problem of the synoptic gospels. How can three accounts of the same person differ so much in detail? And do the differences between them render them false?

It seems to me that Kurosawa invites viewers to reflect on memory, narrative, and accuracy in this gripping synoptic account of the murder of a husband and the rape of his wife. That the two crimes took place is indisputable. But the four witnesses to them-- a woodcutter, the wife, the criminal, and the victim (through a medium) all famously give different accounts of them. Kurosawa deliberately leaves the viewer in suspense as to the "correct" account. Accuracy isn't what's important here so much as the four different narratives and the psychological reasons why the four witnesses experienced the same event so differently. If there was ever a compelling argument against taking eye-witness reports literally, this is it.

And yet truth emerges from the four accounts, as from the three synoptic gospels. It's not literal truth, but is what might be called existential truth. We learn something valuable about the way in which memory reconstructs events and about human passions, fears, hopes, and yearning.

So much has been said about Kazuo Miyagawa's cinematography here and elsewhere that I've nothing to add. It's really genius the way he manages to capture the dappled

light of the forest, and his ability to switch back and forth between the faces of the witnesses without in any way blocking the story's flow is admirable. The acting, while a bit overblown in places for western tastes (particularly Toshiro Mifune's portrayal of the criminal), isn't bad at all.

The Criterion edition is, as usual, nicely transferred. Robert Altman's accompanying video commentary on the film is worse than useless--rambling, full of platitudes, repetitive. But the accompanying booklet is well-written and informative.

34.
Let me start off by saying I love Kurosawa and have seen many of his films, but this one was a little slow and felt too simple and shallow. I got the point of what he was trying to say almost immediately (truth is relative and depends on the person and that everyone's version of a story is told to make him or her look best), and didn't need to go through every character's perspective to get that point. It felt like he painfully belabored the point and not much else was added to make the plot interesting. And in some places the acting was overdone for the plot/genre and was actually a little bit distracting to me. I'm not saying that I disliked the movie, I just didn't think it was that it could qualify as a masterpiece.

35.
A man is dead, a woman was raped, and that's all that can be definitely said. Somebody has committed murder, but nobody knows whodunnit.

And that's the basic plot of Akira Kurosawa's "Rashomon," a hauntingly pessimistic look at how the "truth" can be warped and changed by different people's perspectives. It's a magnificently eerie piece of work, filled with suspense and some really astounding acting -- particularly from Toshiro Mifune as a laughing bandit.

At the Rashomon Gate in eleventh-century Japan, a man (Kichijiro Ueda) takes shelter with a priest (Minoru Chiaki) and a woodcutter (Takashi Shimura) during a rainstorm.

The woodcutter is depressed and the priest is horrified, over a recent crime: the vicious bandit Tajômaru (Toshirô Mifune) was arrested for murdering a man named Takehiro (Masayuki Mori) and raping his wife Masako (Machiko Kyô). But when taken before the police, Tajômaru claims that he had his fun with the woman and killed her husband honorably in a fight.

But Masako begs to differ; she claims to be the victim first of the sadistic bandit, then of her cold-hearted husband, whom she says she stabbed. And when a medium calls up the spirit of Takehiro, he claims that Masako was unfaithful, asking the bandit to murder him, then spurned by Tajômaru. Her actions drove Takehiro to suicide. But the woodcutter himself claims to have seen the altercation -- and his version is wildly

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different from them all.

During the filming of "Rashomon," director Akira Kurosawa stated that the film is a reflection of life, which doesn't always have clear meanings. The same could be said of truth. Questions are raised by the events of "Rashomon," but given no easy answers -- sometimes no answers at all (my biggest question was how Masako's gown stays so white if she's always weeping on the ground).

Are Kurosawa's insights dark and depressing? In a fascinating, hypnotic way... yes. But while calmly pointing out the ability of human beings to lie even to themselves, he acknowledges that there's good in there too. The illusions and innocence of the young priest are stripped away, yet the knowledge of how despicable people can be is tempered with the knowledge that "real" truth isn't necessary to have goodness.

And Kurosawa's directorial skill is no less striking -- light and shadow whirl and dance in a frankly beautiful woodland setting, serving as a pretty backdrop for some very ugly acts. Kurosawa was even brave enough to touch on the unique idea of having the deceased testify. The spinechilling seance scene, starring a downright spooky, stark-faced Fumiko Honma, is a haunting classic scene.

And the masterful fight scenes deserve an extra shout-out -- they reflect the person telling the story. Tajomaru's are more stylized and choreographed, while the woodcutter just sees two freaked-out guys rolling and staggering with swords.

Toshirô Mifune chews the scenery with gusto as the barbarian bandit, especially with that crazy hyena laugh. Machiko Kyô initially seems to be overacting, until you see how unhinged her character has become, and Masayuki Mori does a pretty solid job for a guy tied to a tree. Minoru Chiaki and Takashi Shimura add an extra dimension as the innocent young priest and the tormented woodcutter.

Gloomy, thought-provoking and ultimately quite freaky, "Rashomon" still defies conventional filmmaking, brilliantly crafted and exceptionally directed. And that's the truth.

36.
Let me start by reminding people of the world that there are only a hand full of basic stories in existence. The rest of the stories are diverse versions of these basic hand full of plots. It's what makes Shakespeare a Classic... and the rest of those great artists.

The concepts of betrayal, loyalty, love, and death. Money and murder etc.

Rashomon had a plot o this magnitude, and for the time, this film is amazing. The scenes

254

are amazing! I can't imagine what this guy looked like on set making it happen, but I imagine every time I watch this film.

37.
"Rashomon" is one of the great movies for the ages. It challenges us to think about what "reality" might be, and leads us to wonder if we can truly comprehend "reality."

Let me begin this review with a fragment about postmodern perspectives. One key point here is that subject and object cannot be separated. We cannot "get outside" ourselves in order to objectively observe the world around us--including the world of human affairs. This is oversimplified, of course, but it provides one lens through which to consider Akira Kurosawa's great work, "Rashomon."

This 1950 film, starring Toshiro Mifune as a bandit, is based on what seems to be a straightforward event. A samurai is killed and his wife raped. The movie starts with three people seeking refuge from a heavy rain under a decayed gate in 12th century Japan. The three: a woodcutter, a priest, and a peasant. They begin talking about the incident just noted.

Then, we see the murder and rape through the eyes of the three people involved--the samurai, his wife, and the bandit. And each version (the dead samurai's version is provided through a medium) differs remarkably from the other two. In short, we have three eyewitnesses telling of a fundamentally different event. So, what is reality? That is the question at stake. And, to make matters even murkier, the woodcutter finally mentions that he had observed the whole scene himself--and his view was different still! Thus, four very distinct interpretations of a single event. The woodcutter's version might seem most plausible, but then he trips himself up by revealing something that raises questions about his motives.

Why speak of a postmodern perspective earlier in this review? Because postmodernists argue that it is difficult for people to step outside themselves and their unique perspectives and biases to observe "objective reality." And contemporary psychologists tell us the same: humans are remarkably able to distort reality to protect self-image and make their motives appear to be good (and competitors' to be not so good). In that sense, there is a great deal of human nature, psychology, and philosophy at stake in this movie.

Things sound pretty bleak, but the movie closes with an event that actually provides some hope that humans can produce value and make positive things happen.

All in all, a wonderful movie. Effects are pretty simple (the budget was unbelievably small). In the end, though, this is a movie well worth viewing, in large part because of the difficult questions that it raises.

38.
"Rashomon" is, without any hint of doubt, one of the world's greatest motion pictures. One can go on and endlessly extol the marvel that is Akira Kurosawa, his technical prowess, the unparalleled cinematography which is still ground-breaking after 50 or so years, the theatrical acting led by Toshiro Mifune that effortlessly heightens the dreamlike tone of the film, and the unsolvable mystery of the tale by Ryunosuke Akutagawa. Or you can forever discuss who among the characters is telling the truth.

Technicals aside, critics have tried in vain to define what Kurosawa actually wanted to convey in this film. Can we define truth? Do we all see different sides of a story? Who is telling the truth? Some say that somewhere in the movie, there is a hint on what the truth was. Was there, in fact, a secret hidden in the movie? Outside of the most controversial films ever made, "Rashomon" provokes the mind of its viewers just by its sheer 'complex simplicity'. And it is utterly frustrating to search for the truth in this film.

Which is the main point-the truth, in its absolute purity, cannot be deciphered. We as human beings taint the truth with our own prejudices, concepts, and convictions. While this leads us to lose faith in man as the monk did, within us there is always that one little spark of hope that gives worth to a life filled with despair, deceit, and uncertainty.

The ending was in fact leered at by critics, but why dwell on too much unresolvable gloom? This movie posed exactly that question.

In short, you can enjoy "Rashomon" as a true perfection of a film, or as a philosophically enlightening parable.

39.
Akira Kurosawa's 1950 masterpiece was the western culture's introduction to the greatness that is Akira Kurosawa. This is an incredible film. One of the best of all time, one that is not dated, features great acting, amazing direction, and one doozy of a story. This just may be my favorite Kurosawa film. It's an intellectual and entertainment treat.

Criterion always releases overstuffed DVDs and this one does not disappoint. Featuring a commentary and a number of awesome featurettes, you'd be foolish to pass this one up.

40.
It would be difficult to over estimate this movie's effect on college age movie goers of the early 60s. In that age of conformity it confirmed some of their worst fears: That they were being turned into vegetables & parents & elders shouldn't be believed. Truth was used simply as a tool of the powerful. Truth was an exercise of power; hence: Mutable. A few years later LA DOLCE VITA confirmed another suspicion that the behaviour of

one's betters, when behind locked doors & away from the sight of their children, was atrocious. In this magnificent Kurosawa film set in 9th century Japan a nobleman & his wife traveling through a forest are set upon by a highwayman. The nobleman is killed, his wife raped & the whole thing is witnessed by a woodsman. The highwayman is later arrested & at his trial these incidents are examined & re-examined by having each of the 4 participants tell their version. The dead man speaks through the mouth of a medium. Each narrator relates the same incidents but in each telling the narrator becomes the protagonist & the nuances are different. How can one know the truth of anything? And with each telling the puzzle deepens & becomes more & more fascinating. A word of warning: The wife's voice is chalk on slate & you may find yourself hitting the mute button. Also the music is by a Ravel 'wannabe'. It's BOLERO written by a supremely untalented plagiarist. When the movie was first released here some exhibitors instructed projectionists to turn off the sound during long stretches without dialogue. (Ravel was revered by the beats of the time.) A stage version was produced on Broadway & later on many college campuses. And an American film version (THE OUTRAGE) was made with Paul Newman & Claire Bloom. RASHOMON as a concept entered the culture. Not to be missed.

41.
I usually watch many kinds of different movies, but I wasn't a fan of old Asian movies, at least not until a friend lent me this beautiful classic, directed by Akira Kurosawa. Now I know what I was missing...

"Rashomon" (1950), shot in black and white, is nothing short of stunning. The first scenes show us a priest and a woodcutter taking refuge in an old temple, in order to escape from the heavy rain. A third man shows up, and they start talking about a recent crime that troubles them. Despite the fact that these men were at the trial in which those involved were judged, they don't have a clue regarding what happened, due to the fact that they hear very different versions of the events that took place that fateful day. Will the truth ever be found out? And is there such a thing as truth, or an objective point of view?

This is the first film by Kurosawa I have watched, but it won't be my last. Highly recommended ! And... thanks, Rubén :)

42.

Sometime during the 12th century in Japan, three men, a woodcutter, a commoner and a priest, find themselves under the ruin of the Rashomon as they seek shelter from the heavy rain. As they wait for a break in the weather, they discuss the trial of the bandit Tajomaru, accused of killing the samurai Takehiro after having raped his wife. But was it what truely happened? The more we listen to the witnesses, the further we seem to drift away from the truth....

As I read reviews here and there, I quickly realized that there were basically two sides: the enthusiasts (the majority), some of which almost implying that there just can't be anything to complain about since this movie is widely considered as one of the most important in cinema history. And then there are those who are quick to argue that this movie is overrated, even boring. So, are the former just name-droppers in select parties, hoping to pass for the artsy-witsy type? Or are the latter either ignorant or trying to be hipper than hip by going against the greater number's judgement?

I think the main issue here is that those two sides just aren't talking about the same aspects of the movie. If there's one thing that's undeniable about Rashomon, the movie that truely revealed its director to the world, earning him a Golden Lion in 1951 at the Venice Film Festial and a honorary award at the Oscars, is that at the time of its release, this movie broke grounds both technically and in terms of story-telling. Maybe the most famous of those technical "innovations" is the pointing of the camera directly at the sun: to us now, it may comes as completely anticlimatic, but this was breaking one of the biggest taboos at the time

But maybe the one aspect of this movie that immediatly impressed the most was the storytelling, this presentation of several perceptions on what happened that fateful day, leading us only to accept in the end that the factual truth, because we couldn't experience the events first hand but only through the eyes of the various witnesses who all played a part in them, is forever lost to us. Such use of subjectivity to present a singular fact to the audience, therefore shaking their confidence in what they have actually seen, continues to this day to influence movies. Surely, if Rashomon hadn't been made, another director would have done just the same, but the first happens to be Kurosawa, and whatever one's appreciation of this movie is, the fact remains that, for those reasons alone, it deserves our utmost respect

But does it deserve our love? Now that's the hard one. It is certainly not an emotionally engaging movie: you're never really brought to care for the characters, which is probably the one reason why I couldn't give it 5 stars, no matter how much of a piece of history that movie is: I just need to emotionally connect with a movie at some level to be fully engrossed in it, and Rashomon just doesn't do that for me. However, it definitely is an intellectually engaging movie, and relatively short. The multiple layers in the visual, the acting, the philosophical statements all almost make up completely for it, and it ends before the lack of emotional ties leads you to lose interest in the story

Also, if you are after a Kurosawa movie which will entertain you from the word go, you would be far better off watching "Seven Samurai" or even "The Hidden Fortress". Rashomon lacks this fun factor - on the surface: dwelve on it some and the irony of the woodcutter's second tale, between Tajomaru's child-like glances and the swordfight's parody, which come in direct contrast with the others' tales, and in particular

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Tajomaru's own, can definitely qualify as funny, although it is much more likely to bring a soft chuckle rather than an outright loud laugh out of you

You may be put off by other details: the lack of dialogues for one. I would however argue that more dialogues wouldn't have been necessary, nor would they have shed anymore light on the case. What the director wants us to know without being put into words transpires through clever camera work, precise use of space and of the elements the environment provides (weather conditions, light, shadows of the foliage, etc). What may also grate on your nerves is what may pass as overacting (in particular in Mifune's and Machiko Kyo's cases): that being said, for one, acting standards in Japan are slightly different from those in the West. What I mean by that is that what they consider good acting may often be considered as unnatural and overacting by us. There's also another explanation: we aren't witnessing the facts as they actually happened. In a sense, the characters involved in this deadly affair are all, as they testify, performing, hoping to convincingly present the events in a way that will best serve their interests and, in the words of the others, they are but mere puppets who are made acting to suit their needs. No wonder therefore that a sense of surreality permeates these performances

Another point that may be annoying is the lack of resolution: sure, the image the woodcutter walking away with the baby under sun that is at last shining forth provides for a hopeful note. But the movie, through the camera angle during the testimony scenes at the court, puts you in the position of the judge, of the person who is there to seek out the truth. Yet you are forced to admit in the end that you'll never find it

But then the next question should be: do we need to know? Tajomaru, whatever the role he played, has, from what we are told, killed other women already: even if his role in this affair remains unclear, his fate, now that he is in the hands of justice, shouldn't. The samurai's wife, whether she has encouraged this violent act or not, will live a life of shame, a fate maybe worse than death. The samurai will cannot be brought back to life anyway. As for the woodcutter, even if he has taken the dagger to resale it, his generosity towards the child certainly more than redeems the theft

Interestingly enough, Kurosawa, it seems, never thought of Rashomon as of one of his best movies. And as for myself, I tend to agree with that statement, if only because it isn't too engaging on an emotional level. Still, Rashomon remains a movie that should be watched by any aspiring film-maker as well as any person more or less interested in the art of film-making in general. But I would also definitely recommend it to anyone not afraid of rather depressing yet tinted with hope, philosophical statements, and willing to spend the necessary time to reflect on it afterwards and possibly treat themselves to more than one viewing

A last word on the DVD itself: I've only watched the Criterion Collection edition of this movie, and I don't think I'll ever need another one. The restored transfer's quality is

absolutely superb, even though I am tempted to say that the image faired better than the sound. The translation, from what little I can judge, is adequate; I have, however, only listened to the English dubbing for a hanful of scenes, so I can't say much, apart that it seemed terribly out of sync sometimes. The extras are all insightful, be it Robert Altman's introduction, the documentary extract on Kazuo Miyagawa, the cinematographer, or the audio commentary by Donald Richie. Also, the booklet that accompanies the single disc contains the two short stories on which the script was based, which is a most welcome addition.

43.
In the Bible, Pilate asks, "What is truth?" and, as Roger Bacon puts it, "would not stay for an answer."

I felt a bit the same way after seeing this remarkable film by Japan's celebrated film maker, Akira Kurosawa. It is set in 12th century Japan, and while most viewers would say it examines the nature of truth and finds it slippery, I think it more properly examines the nature of the feudal Japanese society.

We have as representatives of that society, a priest (Minuru Chiaki) and a woodcutter (Takashi Shimura) sitting out a rain storm in a place called Rashomon. It might pass for a ruined Greek temple except that its pillars and roof are made of wood. The priest and the woodcutter declare that they just can't understand it. They shake their heads and stare at the ground. Along comes a commoner (Kichijiro Uedo), a cynical man who asks what it is that they cannot understand.

They have witnessed an investigation into the death of a samurai, Takehiro (Masayuki Mori). He is in some ways the equivalent of a medieval knight. He has a horse and lady, Masako (Machiko Kyo). The accused is an infamous outlaw named Tajomaru (played brilliantly by Toshiro Mifune, who obviously had a lot of fun with the part). He tells his story. He admits to having his way with the lady, but lets the court know that she liked it so much that she began to embrace him while her husband was tied up watching. Afterwards he says that she insisted that they fight over her. Tajomaru obliges. He cuts the rope holding Takehiro and they sword fight. Tajomaru wins.

Next the wife tells her story. It is different of course. This causes the court to get a medium (Fumiko Honma) to tell the story from the point of view of the dead Takehiro. His story is different yet again. Finally the woodcutter reveals to the priest and the commoner that he saw the whole thing, and he then gives his version, again different of course.

The commoner has some terrifically cynical lines. Here are three:

"It's human to lie. Most of the time we can't even be honest with ourselves."

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(To the priest:) "Not another sermon! I don't mind a lie if it's interesting."

"Man just wants to forget the bad stuff, and believe in the made-up good stuff. It's easier that way."

He speaks for the natural or animalistic man.

His counterpoint, the priest, opines, "If men don't trust each other, this earth might as well be hell."

He speaks for moral man.

Near the end of the film a baby is discovered crying. The woodcutter, who has five or six children of his own, takes the baby home.

He represents civilized man.

Masako represents the samurai's view of the nature of women when she is heard to say, "A man has to make a woman his by his sword."

What impressed me most about this film is the way Kurosawa was able to create an emotional atmosphere in each of the sittings. "In the Grove" we feel the trees and the light that sparkles through the leaves, and the disturbed serenity. At Rashomon in the rain we feel the men isolated and waiting, and in the sterile court scene we feel the severity of the tragedy.

44.
The Bandit is so obinoxious, it's not even funny, the movie hardly mean't be laughable anyway

45.

This is, without a doubt, an amazing acomplishment in post-war Japanese cinema, as well as my personal favorite Kurosawa film (though Yojimbo comes in close second). From start to finish; simple, understated, austere, and yet it works so well under the circumstances. Kurosawa seamlessly blends a unique multi-angle form of storytelling with a simple elemental setting, and his own minimalist direction to create a truly fascinating vision. The use of pounding rain, sweltering heat, a cool breeze, the shade of a tree, all serve so well to convey the atmosphere of each of the respective scenes. Still, equal praise must be lavished upon the actors themselves. Takashi Shimura brings a

wonderful humility and honesty to his role as the woodcutter, and serves to tie the various accounts together. Toshiro Mifune, in one of his earlier performances, creates a striking mix of ferocity and malaise, evoking a predatory lion, toying with his prey. Truly, a masterpiece from start to finish, and one of the greatest films to even come out of the land of the rising sun. Watch it as soon as humanly possible. You shall not be disapointed.

46.

It is a measure of how memorable I found Rashomon that, while watching it earlier this week, I realized roughly three-quarters of the way through that I had seen it about five years previously and utterly forgotten. (Worse, what brought the original viewing back is Machiko Kyo's vastly annoying derisive laugh about three-quarters through, a sound that grates on my nerves even worse than Julianne Moore's hideous faked cough in Safe.) That said, and taking the fact that I'd forgotten I'd seen the film before into account, it's a pretty good little flick.

The story: A bandit accosts a man and wife on their way through the woods. The husband winds up dead. Simple, right? Well, no. Not really. The story is told from four different perspectives, and those perspectives are related secondhand through the experiences of a trio of travellers who have been thrown together by coincidence during a rainstorm. It's the unreliable narrator, but fractured and diffused to the point where no one-- including the traveller who, it has been hypothesized by some, is the actual killer-- knows what's real and what isn't. The idea here, according to most critics, is that Kurosawa was examining life and our perceptions of it-- the idea that nothing we know is true in any empirical sense, that all of it is filtered through our perceptions. True enough. And it's certainly not a bad film; it's rich, complex, well-acted (well, except for that laugh), well-directed, and fun to watch. But I'm not sure why it gets so much more attention that a number of other, more brilliant, Kurosawa films (Ikiru is the obvious contemporary choice). Enjoyable, but not Kurosawa's best.

47.

I just want to comment on the quality and speed of delivery aspect in this case. It was very professional indeed. It is a good...NO...great delivery system. We are very appreciate on how u guys handle. (Even though we are in Indonesia). Once again, Thanks!

48.

IF YOU LOVE SUSPENSE, GREAT ACTING, GREAT COSTUMES, THEN THIS IS FOR YOU. IT HAS ENGLISH SUBTITLES. SO, BE FORWARNED. IF YOU DON'T LIKE SUBTITLES DON'T BUY IT. BETTER YET, BUY IT SO YOU WILL APPRECIATE A MOVIE WITH SUBTITLES.

49.

Rashomon (1950; directed by Akira Kurosawa and starring Toshiro Mifune) is one of those films that the truly hip have seen, and not many others; rather like certain books-- On the Road, The Satanic Verses, One Hundred Years of Solitude, Naked Lunch--it has a certain hip cache, being one that cineastes have all seen and can discuss in great detail. Name-droppers know they need only mention the name in a knowledgeable context to be viewed with awe.

In truth, however, Rashomon is the sort of film that everyone should see; it's a true classic, in a league with Casablanca, Citizen Kane and others. The film examines truth, in the context of a rape and murder in 12th Century Japan, from four different perspectives; a woodcutter who witnessed the whole incident yet was afraid to report it, the bandit who committed the crime, the murdered man's ghost (through a medium) and the rape victim (the murdered man's wife). There are a few elements which remain constant from each version of the story--that the murdered man was tied up and forced to watch the bandit ravish his wife, and that he did indeed die--but how he died varies. It was either a swordfight with the bandit, at his wife's hand with a dagger, or suicide resulting from his being absolutely crushed by his wife choosing to leave with the bandit. Did she demand his death? Did he look at her with scorn after the crime? Was she really raped or did she yield consensually to the bandit? Honesty is also explored in detail, with the wife's honesty being most in question, but also with the three men sheltering from a rainstorm at the ruined gate of Rashomon who relate the story between themselves.

This was one of the late Toshiro Mifune's (1920-1997) first collaborations with Akira Kurosawa, and his criminally-insane Tajomaru is masterfully acted. So effective is Mifune's acting that you truly loathe Tajomaru; you're torn between pity and disgust for the wife (Masahiko Kyo, also a brilliant actress), and there are truly few really sympathetic characters among the cast here. The camera work is exemplary, shows what Kurosawa was best known for--unusual perspectives in some truly arresting shots, proving that his eye for detail was as sharp in black and white as it would later be in colour (cf. Dersu Uzala, Kagemusha, and Ran, 3 latter-day Kurosawa masterpieces). Absolutely worth seeing, and proof of the saying that there are three sides to every story (to wit: mine, yours, and what really happened)--but also proving that what really happened isn't even ever certain.

50.

This bleak, B&W film from 1950 was revolutionary in its time, but I have a bit of sympathy for those who might find it stylized and even a little pretentious today. What is truth?--surely a hard theme to tackle. Seems to me that whether the samurai was

killed with a dagger or a sword could be easily determined--at least today. There would be fingerprints, etc. On the other hand, consider how much of the story depends on interpretation. Does the samurai really look at his wife with disgust after she is raped? After all, only she would really know--he doesn't say anything. Is she really fierce, as the bandit says, or weeping and weak as she appears in court? Was Kurosawa really poking fun at the genre with the clumsy fighting, or was he depicting stark reality for an audience that still romanticized ancient times? And is the ending really redemptive--I found myself wondering if the woodcutter would go off and sell the child if it was a girl. Even though Kurosawa intended it to be uplifting--note the shining sun--couldn't we wonder otherwise?

I found this film extremely interesting as a precursor to the notion that truth is ambiguous--but not non-existent.

Did anyone notice that during Machiko Kyo's (the wife) testimony, the score sounded suspiciously like Bolero--but not quite. It was written by a composer named Hayasaka, but I haven't uncovered anything, except that I'm not the first one to think this.

51.

Somewhat curiously, Japanese critics were not enthusiastic about RASHOMON when it was released in 1950 Japan. Today, however, RASHOMON is generally considered to be the film that introduced both master director Akira Kurosawa and Japanese cinema to the west; it is also often cited as the film that prompted The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to create an award for Best Foreign Language film. It is widely regarded as a masterwork of world cinema.

Set in 12th Century Japan, the film's premise is at once both very simple and very complex. A man is found dead in a forrest, and several people are brought forward to give testimony in the matter. In some respects their accounts agree--but in numerous others, some obvious and some very subtle, their stories differ. As each character gives his or her version of events, the various differences pile higher and higher, leaving the viewer to wonder at the motivations involved.

Has each person simply interpreted the same facts in different ways? Do they deliberately lie in order to protect themselves? Are the differences in their stories deliberate or subconcious? The film offers no easy answers. Some have criticized the film for seeming to state that there is no such thing as ultimate truth, but RASHOMON is more complex than this: it is essentially a meditation on our inability, be it deliberate or unintentional, to reach more than an approximation of ultimate truth due to the very nature of humanity itself.

Much has been written about the look of the film, which is indeed memorable. Filmed

by Kazuo Miyagawa, it presents the forrest as a living, breathing entity; the images are powerful, the editing remarkable. No less so are the performances, which require the various actors to shift in behavior as each person involved gives their own account of the event; this is particularly true of Toshiro Mifune, a frequent performer in Kurosawa films, and actress Machiko Kyō. But whether lead or supporting player, all performaces are equally astonishing.

The film has been extremely, extremely influential over the years, and as such it no longer has quite the same "shock of the new" that it had for audiences of the 1950s; nonetheless, this is director Kurosawa working very close to the height of his power, and while he would create other films that equalled and bested RASHOMON, it remains among his masterworks. The Criterion edition is quite fine, offering a near-pristine print with your choice of subtitles or dubbing (the former is recommended) and several memorable extras. Strongly recommended for fans of world cinema.

52.

Or for that matter, what is the truth? Director Akira Kurosawa leaves this for the viewer to decide. As the films narrative moves forward, we all know that a crime has been committed, and more importantly, by whom. So what is Kurosawa out to prove in this masterful film? That everyone has a different view of the truth? Perhaps some of us embellish the truth? Or possibly something altogether different? In Akira Kurosawa's film, "Rashomon," the viewer is introduced various witnesses to the rape of a woman, and the murder of her husband. Why are there different interpretations by the various witnesses to the crime in the film? Are they lying? Or is there a mixture of both lies and truths? Director Akira Kurosawa has left this for the audience to decide. This is a great film, however, I do not believe that it is Kurosawa's greatest film. "Ikiru," holds that distinction---for me at least. "Rashomon" has always been one of the most talked about films in Japanese cinema, and many place it amongst the greatest films ever, be it foreign or domestic.

This films narrative is an attempt to let the viewer decide who is telling the truth, or why the different characters each have a different interpretation. But why are they all different? There have been many different opinions of this film, and even after all these years since its release, this film has been discussed at length. So what is Kurosawa out to prove? That even the innocent may have something to hide? Or that our perceptions of reality differ? The film starts off with a man that has just testified to a horrible crime. And from here the film begins innocently enough with a woodcutter walking through the woods. This woodcutter is portrayed by the late, great actor, (Takeshi Shimura). He is a witness to a crime. But he is not the only witness. There are four different versions of a murder and rape: the woodcutter, the deceased mans wife, the killer (Toshiro Mifune), and the victim---through the use of a medium.

The one thing I was really impressed with by this film, both at the time I first saw it many years ago, and recently again on this CRITERION DVD was the way Kurosawa used his camera. The way the woodcutter is walking through the forest, and especially the way the wind seems to capture the forest breathes life into the film. The forest appears to come alive as Takashi Shimura is walking through the woods. Plus, the way the wind blows and the sound of the rain falling at the beginning and ending of the film makes one feel they are part of the forest itself. This film will be talked about as long as cinema exists, and many will give their own interpretations of the film.

For me, however, the film is telling in many ways, as each of the characters have something to hide: be it their own perception of the truth, or their unwillingness to come to terms with the truth: Be it guilt or shame. Moreover, I really like the way that Kurosawa uses the non-verbal area of the film: The visuals themselves. As in many Kurosawa films, the cinematography does much of the talking---and just looking at the scenery, and trying not to focus too much on the dialogue; one can see that Kurosawa relies heavily on the visuals themselves, as they are as much, if not more, of the story. As for who is telling the truth? And why are there different versions? This I leave for others to decide for themselves.

53.

This is a fairly good movie, ridiculously overrated. It is the story of a bandit's assault on a couple in the woods. Perhaps he rapes the woman. Perhaps he kills the man. Perhaps the woman prefers the rapist to her husband. Perhaps not.

The most annoying thing about the analysis of this movie is that people come to the conclusion that there is no such thing as absolute truth, that it all depends on who is telling the story. Baloney. There is such a thing as absolute truth. It doesn't all depend on who is telling the story. The opposing view is just a bunch of over-intellectualized garbage. Either the bandit killed the man or he didn't. Either the woman asked him to kill her husband or she didn't. Those who take an opposing view are just being silly and stupid. They are over-intellectualizing. Keep it simple, stupid.

How about this. I punch you in the head. Then I say I didn't do it, it all depends on who is telling the story. Make sense to you? That's the argument being used by fools who draw idiotic conclusions after seeing this movie.

It is the quantum theory of movies. There is no truth. It is one of the stupidest positions that Stephen Hawking ever took. You can't just say that one thing happened. Every possible thing happened. Gimme a break. Would a grain of common sense be inappropriate?

It seems clear that the overly heroic version told by the bandit, about his daring

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swordfight, about the woman begging to be his wife after she was raped by him, is a bunch of bull, because he has a motive to tell things this way. His motive is to paint himself as the kind of hero he admires.

Nobody really tells a convincing story here. One thing I like about the movie is that one of the witnesses is a trance medium who channels the dead man. He should know what happened, and he should have no motive to lie. What was his story anyway? You hear so many stories, you forget who told what. Did he say it was suicide? If the movie had more emotional power, I'd care more what happened to the characters. It is emotionless. That is its biggest weakness.

It is a bit of a comedy. The acting is overdone. The duels are overdone. The director was consciously making fun of the genre, of the Japanese movies that stage stupid duels with the same stock things happening, the sword getting stuck, the men chasing each other around a tree, one guy falling, sort of like old cowboy movies that keep showing you similar fight scenes. The woman getting blamed for her own rape. So many cliches pulled out for us. A lot of "in" jokes for the viewer, making fun of the same old same old in Japanese films.

In the end, they pull a baby out of a hat. The baby has absolutely nothing to do with the film. Nothing. It isn't the raped woman's baby. It is so completely incongruous to the rest of the movie that I thought it must be the raped woman's baby somehow, but it isn't. It's just a baby pulled out of a hat.

On the commentary, the speaker makes a big deal about how the baby symbolizes hope, and how great Kurosawa is for thinking of using this baby to symbolize hope. What a bunch of baloney that is. It is over-intellectualized nonsense. The diagonals that are shown on screen, the triangles that are shown on screen, all further the plot, all show the greatness of Kurosawa. No they don't. It is all over-intellectualized nonsense. Diagonals and triangles do not make a great film. They just give lecturers something to flimflam their audiences with. I don't doubt that Kurosawa used these diagonals and triangles purposely. I don't care either. It's just a bunch of baloney. I'm not emotionally moved by a triangle, nor even by a diagonal. The subtlety of it is just a wee bit too subtle to make an impact on me.

To sum up, this is a pretty interesting movie that is ridiculously overrated. To be great, a movie should move us. This one doesn't. It's pretty good. That's about it. Kurosawa fans be damned, I'm not lining up behind him.

54.

Rashomon was a film I seriously never heard about until I took a film class at my College a few years back. Boy was I surprised how well this popular movie was shot, the camera

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trickery through the woods is spectacular, I love how the sun blazes and blinds the camera in certain shots. There are five different points of view throughtout the film and I think the last take on what really happened to the young married couple is the probably the truth and the best story of Rashomon. Of course this film is foreign so don't forget to set the subtitles on your DVD player. A fabulous and etertaining DVD, don't skip this one. Enjoy!

55.

Rashomon still contains hope that humankind on planet Earth may be a sort of "WORK-IN-PROGRESS".

FIRST OFF - This is the film where numerous perspectives/viewpoints of the same event illustrate rather persuasively how [literally] there are often two or more sides to most stories. The central event in this story has been the basis of many similar themes since. The Roshomon knock-off that is the most fun to watch and most illuminating to me is probably an episode of "All IN THE FAMILY" titled, "EVERYBODY TELLS THE TRUTH". Of course, Archie Bunker does not deal in subtlety, so it is an interesting and comical take on the Roshomon theme.

Another similar treatment, but this time a drama, is on the big screen and features Paul Newman, "The Outrage", from 1964, with William Shatner, Lawrence Harvey and Claire Bloom as co-stars. This film is hard to find, but well worth the effort.

RAMBLING ON ABOUT "RASHOMON":

This film is NOT an easy thing to watch. In English it is somewhat less effective and in Japanese one must contend with the subtitles. Still, I suggest the Japanese with subtitles. Be aware, however, that this is a highly visual film so avoid getting bogged down in the subtitles. More than any other film I have seen, "Rashomon" shows rather than tells, so be prepared to pay very close attention to seemingly small details. Like Kubrick, everything you see and the way you see it has been reduced or altered to be just what is needed for the story. In essence, this is a rather stark though epic production and it may take a few viewings to truly appreciate "Rashomon's" true splendor and significance. It is a short movie that I wished was longer though I was quite satisfied with the ending.

WHAT THIS FILM IS ABOUT: [Without giving away the plot of course.]

HOPE! Through the re-enactment of some perceptional permutations and nuances of a tragic event we are almost left with the conclusion that human beings are fatally-flawed, evil, weak beings fueled by lust and driven with selfish motives and little else.

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THE MESSAGE OF HOPE:

But then there is a ray of hope in the form of a helpless abandoned infant and what follows. What we see is intrinsically-flawed humans that through self-awareness may seek to improve their character. If this is true, maybe then through self-awareness, human flaws may be intrinsic but solvable over time making us flawed but NOT FATALLY FLAWED! Sentience may over time be our deliverance in the form of character and integrity. If this is true, then humans are not naturally depraved and everything may not be preordained. Perhaps we are a kind of "work-in-progress". What a nice thought, though Kurosawa gives it to us rather like castor oil.

56.

Set in feudal 12th-century Japan, it is a far more intimate film than its vaunted reputation leads one to believe and quite brief at 88 minutes. Ostensibly a courtroom drama, the multi-layered story focuses on the rape of a woman and the murder of her husband in a forest grove. The events of the crimes are told from four different perspectives - a swaggering bandit named Tajômaru, a woodcutter who witnesses the crime, the wife and even the murdered husband by way of a medium. Each account unfolds in a distinct style - an extravagant samurai adventure according to Tajômaru, the wife's melodramatic recollection as a victim, a heroic martyr's tale from the dead husband. In a blessedly economical style, the contradictions in their accounts multiply as the story unfolds.

The framing device is the woodcutter's own flashback of the incident as told to a commoner, but his version is far from the definitive one as he may have stolen a dagger from the crime scene. Kurosawa does such a brilliantly dexterous job in structuring the differing accounts that as the film progresses, it becomes less about seeking the truth and more about the power and inevitable conflicts arising from everyone's sense of ego. The only thing that becomes clear by the end is how individual perceptions shape reality and that the absolute truth is a myth. Miyagawa's expert camerawork is stellar in a way that raises the bar for subsequent cinema, especially the vivid facial close-ups of the main characters, the sharp angles of the sun-dappled forest scenes, and the dramatically ink-tinted raindrops.

A sterling cast has been assembled with Kurosawa's muse, Toshiro Mifune, a youthfully feral presence as Tajômaru. Masayuki Mori and an especially vibrant Machiko Kyô, who later reunited in the ghostly "Ugetsu", lend particular distinction to the couple ensnared by the tragic situation, and the three legendary actors show impressive versatility in highlighting different aspects of their personalities in the various accounts. Takashi Shimura, who later starred in Kurosawa's poignant "Ikuru", is also superb as the woodcutter. Many filmmakers have since copied Kurosawa's then-daring narrative structure (for example, Martin Ritt's "The Outrage" and Edward Zwick's "Courage Under

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Fire"), but none comes close to capturing the pervasive sense of ambiguity that makes this movie retain its initial power.

57.

Kurosawa stands out as one of the great directors of modern cinema. This movie in particular is often cited as a shining example of his artistry.

The sets, lighting and cinemotagraphy are superb. Where the film falters is in editing. It is choppy in parts to the point of being laughable.

Add to that the scenery chewing overacting of Toshirô Mifune and the viewer is left with the sense that Kurosawa missed the mark on this ambitious project.

The great director resorts to some rather hamfisted sentimentalities at the end as he attempts to salvage the tale's sound and fury into something of significance. He is only partially successful. "Faith in man" is no faith at all, except (apparently) when compared to what otherwise would be our confidence that mankind is not worthy of our faith

58.

This film is mysteriouse...we have four different versions of a crime,told in wonderfull flashbacks by the people conserned and a witness,every version tells something new that we did not know and we start to understand what happened;yet we are pulled more and more from the "truth"everytime we hear one they even are contradictory at times,we are lost just like the characters in the film seeking for what realy happened...;the acting is excellente and Toshiro Mifune is perfect,his character is the sort of "dramatic scale" in the story...will we ever know the truth?we don't know perhaps not...but thats what gives the film it's charm,because the truth "is" and will remain hidden deep inside the heart of the film...tough the film might hide the truth at times theire is one truth that one knows after watching...it's that this film is a tresor.

59.

Quaint and to the point(even for Kurosawa). The basic idea is deceit and how a story can be manipulated. A film like this must be seen for the simple fact that it draws the audience into the story with every possible element. The acting aspect though theatrically hoaky which is typical of most early Japanese works can be amusing. Yet at the same time when it counts the acting is bang on, even by westernized popcorn flick standards. Until the end we are told how to think in various different ways, and though debatable as a sufficient conclusion; in my opinion we have an opinion and thats more than enough. Kurosawa gave us a choice and with a choice to judge we must relate to

our own lives for experience. To give the audience the ability to relate keeps them in the story even when they leave the theater.

60.

So many films nowadays (Memento and Hero being two of the most recent) follow the format of one story, told through differing viewpoints. But Akira Kurosawa's Rashomon has become so famous that "Rashomon" is often used to describe a situation where everyone has a story, but the truth is frustratingly elusive. And we see this in everyday life -- in every trial, usually there are differing viewpoints of what happened. Rashomon represents the nature of reality, and the elusiveness of truth. Rashomon is the rare thing: an absolutely perfect film. It is 88 minutes, where not a moment is wasted.

The movie starts with three men in front of the town gates, the "Rashomon." It is raining furiously, as a Priest (Minoru Chiaki) and a Woodcutter (Takashi Shimura) are talking about a horrifying story. The Woodcutter was at the scene of the crime, the Priest heard the story at the courthouse. The Priest relates the stories of the wife, the bandit, and the dead man. A third man is known as the Commoner, who draws the story out of the men.

One one level, Rashomon is the ultimate murder mystery. The only certain fact is that a man (Masayuki Mori) who was travelling with his wife (Machiko Kyo) has been found dead in the forest. The second fact is ambiguous, and it is that the man's wife had sexual intercourse with someone involved with the crime. Whether the sex was consensual or not is up to debate. Whether it was a murder or not is also up to debate. The weapon used to kill the man (a sword or a dagger?) is uncertain. Rashomon presents four stories: that of the famous bandit Tajumaro (Toshir' Mifune), the man's wife, the dead man himself (since he's dead, his side of the story is told through a medium, played by Fumiko Honma), and finally the Woodcutter. Their stories differ wildly. All four characters seem to live in their own world, with their own reality. And thus the movie's question: what is truth? Who is telling the truth? No one? Everyone? In the end, the viewer comes away with the impression that every story is a mixture of truth and falsehood. As the Commoner says, "It's human to lie. Most of the time we can't even be honest with ourselves."

It is part of Kurosawa's genius that the four stories all stretch credibility. There are holes a mile wide in each story. The bandit, the wife, the murdered man, and the Priest all tell their stories with a mix of conviction and calculation. The bandit Tajomaru laughs wildly as he tells his story -- after awhile, one senses that the macho swagger is a defense mechanism. The wife cries constantly, and after awhile, that seems calculated also. The murdered man's story makes himself such a noble martyr that his story also stretches credibility. And finally the Woodcutter is caught in a lie before he tells the "real story." But, as the Commoner said, if you already lied, why should I believe you? On the other

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hand, Kurosawa also makes each story emotionally credible. The facts may not stand up to scrutiny, but the emotions (the bandit's smugness, the wife's trauma and outrage, the husband's shame, the woodcutter's horror and guilt) are all strikingly believable. Kurosawa does not merely make his movie a whodunit. He shows the psychology behind each character's story. The film almost voyeuristically focuses upon the eyes of the characters. Their eyes convey horror, hatred, lust, deceit, and conviction.

The one pervasive theme in all four stories is honor. Each character has his/her idea of honor, and the stories they tell all make themselves look honorable. Even the bandit has his moral code. Honor is obviously important in Japanese culture, so it is believable that all these characters would sacrifice truth for honor. Yet the differing accounts are by no means self-serving, for reasons that are obvious once you've seen the film. The film ends with the symbol of an abandoned newborn baby. The Woodcutter takes the baby home. Is this a sign of the Woodcutter's inherent decency (and thus honesty), or is he trying to atone for shameful deeds? It's another question mark for the viewer.

61.

This movie was beautifully put together. The black and white with slight yellow colorwashing was a good look for the story and added to the heat.

The basic storyline is that a murder was committed in the woods and the only few people that have a clue as to what happened tell conflicting stories. The underlying storyline is that everyone involved lies or bends the truth when they're telling their stories to the officials. Every one of the people, even the dead man's tale through the medium, try to make themselves look better rather than tell the truth and have the situation resolved.

Very beautiful music and coloring and storytelling methods. Kurosawa did a wonderful job on this movie and it was very enjoyable.

62.

To have a film that holds the coveted title of being the reason that the "Best Foreign Film" category was created for the Oscars is one thing, but to be able to back up that myth with a powerful film that speaks both about humanity and the strength of truth is a whole new angle. Often we witness powerful foreign films that slip through the lines of cinema, regarded by so many as valuable assets to the film community, but never see the gold of Oscar. In the same sense, sometimes the most popular of those foreign films eventually become Oscar contenders, not because they are worthy enough, but because studios had the funds to allow bigger distribution to audiences, thus allowing popularity to do the rest. Rashômon is one of those few films that succeed in giving us both a quality film and the accolades to represent it. Rashômon is a rare breed of film. The

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Japanese filmmaker Akira Kurosawa took many bold steps with this film (pointing his camera at the sun, filming deep within the jungle, and the mockery of truth), that it is unlikely that you could go to a modern day Hollywood film without seeing one of these techniques being "borrowed". His bold storytelling, creative camera work, and powerful characters give us a unique story that should be included in everyone's film library.

While the characters were strong, the direction was flawless, and the story was compelling, there is a theme that needs to be discussed while talking about Rashômon. This is the story of murder, betrayal, and rape and in any typical "courthouse" film you would have some spineless witness finally break down and confess the truth. At the end of these films the truth is discovered, but not in Rashômon. Kurosawa gives us the "black sheep" of themes by never really giving us what we really wanted from the beginning of this story. As I began this film, I thought I was going to get a clear-cut story with honesty and troubled souls, but instead I was handed no prize at the end. What I sought after the most is not handed to me in a Happy Meal container at the end, but instead trapped still within the film. Kurosawa gives us the meaning behind the story, that there possibly is no way of knowing the true "truth". Four different souls, seeing the same event all culminating to four different results means that the "truth" may never be known. Kurosawa has taken the story and provided us with the main character being truth, and like Kaiser Soze, the greatest trick it ever pulled was convincing us that "it didn't exist". Deep within Rashômon the truth is hidden, and it may never emerge, but that is what Kurosawa intended. A viewer could walk away from this film, after several viewings, and discover different truths about the characters and story. This is a constantly evolving film that will continually get better with time.

Outside of these beautiful themes, Rashômon is a flawless film. From the execution of the actors to the simplicity of the direction, there is plenty in this film to keep your mind busy and your jaw nearly dragging on the floor. To begin, the performance by Toshiro Mifune ranks among the best in film history. In each of the stories he is portrayed differently (even in his own) and with precise execution he delivers every time. He is insane, passionate, loyal, and villainous all at the same time. While some may see his acting as eccentric or over-the-top, I found each of his portrayals as accurate and astute. When Mifune is on the screen his presence commands your eyes and you cannot help but become involved. Second to his performance is that of the troubled wife. While her characters is the most confusing/suspicious of them all, Masayuki Mori keeps us intertwined with the story by controlling her character with the greatest of ease. When it is time for her to be unleashed, the true drama of the story is thrown in your face with brilliance and expertise.

Overall, I thought that this was a near perfect film. Kurosawa is intense, original, and adeptly secure about his stories. I have seen the same passion in Ran, and it cannot be denied. My only concern with this film is that if you are going to watch this movie, make sure that you can devote your entire mind to it. I found myself watching it three times

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because I could not stay focused (outside factors) enough to see those darkly hidden themes. I especially enjoyed the unearthed darkness of humanity, which is hinted on at the end. The fact that after hearing these stories of murder and rape, it doesn't stop one from continuing along a similar path. It is a powerful tale that should be enjoyed by all!

63.

RASHOMON was a groundbreaking film for its time, one that called into question whether or not we can really know the "truth" behind anything since everyone's viewpoint is limited to their own subjective personality. The film recounts the same incident from different viewpoints, taking a bold narrative approach that would greatly influence filmmakers for several years, even up to this very day.

While I feel there are some parts of the film that don't hold up very well, overall the movie has a very powerful effect at the end as everything finally comes to a head.

For some interesting comparisons to RASHOMON, I would suggest the Paul Newman flick, THE OUTRAGE (1964), and Italian director Mario Bava's ultra-rare obscurity, FOUR TIMES THAT NIGHT (1969), which puts a campy, erotic spin on the material.

64.

First of all, let me just say this: if you are not a fan of Japanese films, Kurosawa, or "Samurai" flicks in general, you owe it to yourself to see RASHOMON and change your opinion. It is a gorgeous film visually, emotionally powerful, and is short enough to keep even the most impatient filmgoer content. The plot is deceptively simple: a heinous crime has been committed in the dream-like landscape of the forest. A samurai has been found dead in the woods and his wife raped. What unfolds is four different "versions" of what happened, told by each of the persons involved in the incident.

Many viewers have complained about the lack of objective truth in the film. They do not want four "versions" of the story. They want the truth. Some viewers expect this film to be a murder/mystery, a "whodunit" film. "So who actually killed the samurai?" they ask. But the film is not about discovering who, nor is it concerned with figuring out the objective truth. If anything, Kurosawa's film cares about humanity's inability to experience life unfiltered from our subjective viewpoints. The result: a statement that there is, perhaps, no such thing as objective truth. RASHOMON seems to be interested in the way that each of us experiences and observes the world differently by enlarging and distorting the role that we play in various events. Each of the initial three storytellers claims to be responsible for the crime, suggesting how we each "personalize" reality to provide ourselves with meaning and understanding. The effect is marvelous.

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Realism looms large in the film. From their own viewpoint, our samurai warriors are the paragons of bravery and military excellence. Yet, from a different viewpoint, they are both examples of cowardice, yielding one of the most truthful and honest swordfighting sequences I have ever seen. I'm talking about a sequence in which people get exhausted (fighting is tough) and are afraid to die. Few films manage to capture life with such a purity.

The visual cinematography in this film is absolutely stunning. The film begins with a dreary rain sequence in which the audience is invited under a shelter with some of its principle characters. The rest of the film flashes back and forth in time between the crime and the dreary rain. The contrast of the downpour with the "dreamlike" forest is effective and disturbing. The forest sequence, which soon follows the opening, finds our principle storyteller walking into the woods, as if to symbolize a journey to another reality. The camera work in the woods is phenomenal and we get to witness several new techniques being tried out: shooting directly at the sun through the leaves of trees, casting dark (false) shadows from fake trees on the characters' faces, and one long-rail shot that, for its time period, is light years ahead of its time. The trial sequence is also unique and interesting. Rather than show us who is doing the questioning, instead we just get to hear the witnesses' side of the investigation. Moreover, the witnesses speak directly into the camera, giving the film the feel that they are confessing their story to us, the audience.

RASHOMON is a brilliant film and I believe it holds up to Kurosawa's THE SEVEN SAMURAI, often regarded as his masterpiece. Buy this film today. You will be transported to another world only to find yourself facing difficulties in your own life.

65.

Yes, this is a very important and influential movie, but it is also fascinating to watch. Made more than fifty years ago, only five years after the end of World War II, it holds up extremely well and even without understanding all or even most of the things in the movie that speak directly to Japanese culture. The movie challenges us by providing us a sense of reality and then undermining our certainty. At the end of the movie it is common for a viewer to think that there is no independent reality, that reality is simply a personal construct and that all our personal "stories" are simply lies. That is indeed a very twentieth century post-modern college sophomore lesson to derive from it.

The story opens with two men sitting forlornly at the ruined Rashomon (Dragon gate) outside twelfth century Kyoto. It is pouring rain and they keep muttering that they don't understand, they don't believe what they have recently been through. An unnamed man, obviously a poor and very cynical individual, joins them inside the structure to get out of the rain. He breaks off pieces of the structure to make a fire and, overhearing the muttering, and asks the men to tell what it is they don't understand.

The woodcutter tells how he went into the woods to get the firewood he sells and came upon a body and ran to get the police. We learn that the other man is a priest and his encounter with the man and his wife before they met the bandit. The woodcutter then recounts the trial of a bandit. Tajomaru (Mifune) and his testimony of how he came to kill the man and rape his wife. After the testimony we think we have the story. However, they then bring in the wife who has been found hiding out. She tells a completely different story including the statement that SHE killed her husband.

The dead man testifies through a woman who evokes his spirit. She becomes possessed and recounts what he knows about his death. He doesn't know who killed him or who removed the weapon. The cynical man senses something is wrong with the woodcutter's story and challenges him to tell what really happened. We then get another very different version.

There is much more to the story than this broad outline, but I don't want to take away from your viewing pleasure.

There is a very interesting commentary on the disk by Donald Richie, an authority on the films of Kurosawa. He sounds a lot like a professor teaching undergraduates driving home the same points multiple times. One of them is that every one of the speakers has his or her own story and that each is true for them and that there is no other truth to know.

This is clearly a lesson you could learn from the film, but that would be like learning you can never get a pepperoni and mushroom pizza because the driver delivered a ham and pineapple pizza instead. It may well be that there is no perfect or Platonic Ideal pepperoni and mushroom pizza. Some may have more pepperoni than others, others may use different kinds of mushrooms. What is pizza anyway? Yet, when I give you a pizza, you know if it is pepperoni and mushroom or something else, right?

As for the impossibility of reconciling these stories, well, we have forensics nowadays. Even before scientific analysis, intelligent folks could and did compare the various testimonies given and then did some analysis to come up with a more likely scenario that is different than any individual testimony. It will also likely be incomplete and wrong in details, but will reveal more than accepting only one version or none.

It is also important to remember that the testimonies recounted here are also not direct, but are also recounted by the woodcutter even though we see them as if they were direct accounts. So, there is another level of potential distortion. And it is clear that everyone here is indeed bearing false witness. This is a very different thing than a person who is trying to provide a truthful account, but is limited by the human condition and is only able to provide a partially complete version (even with errors). This kind of

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error is quite different than a conscious lie that is meant to deceive. The person telling a real lie often understands how their story differs from reality because they are calculating their distortion to be believable but deceptive. It may be that they eventually commit so strongly to the lie that they forget reality, but others can still get closer to what really happened than accepting the lie at face value and shrugging one's shoulders saying, "Well, what can you do. It is his reality."

66.

Rashamon is an incredibly influential film. In 1951 it seemed odd indeed with its five points of view, it's camera movement, it's melancholy theme, rape and murder. There is also a self-mocking element to the Samurai sword fighting and Kimono doll histrionics. The overacting is actually snide sarcasm about Japanese film or societal convention. Japanese film folks were surprised Western viewers grasped these ideas. After all, American Westerns have their formal rituals, the gunfight at noon, the horsy loner, and so on. 12th Century Samurai and their sword fighting, the status of women in Japan, their victimization, all is standard film fare in the East.

This one is a thoughtful film with interesting, original cinematography, but for those looking for huge battles as shown in the later Ran, this one is a Perry Mason court case.

67.

Kurosawas ingenious breakthrough feature examines the elusive nature of truth, and our ability to reshape it to suit what we want to believe. Brilliantly composed and shot, the film's dreamlike quality is hypnotic. Thought-provoking and surprisingly accessible, Rashomon is a cinematic triumph.

68.

One of the timeless classics offering a profound insight into the nature of human beings and the stories we tell. How we see things, the filters we place on our view of the world, say more about us than the "truth" of the events we "witness". This film is a masterpiece - a must see not only for film lovers but for anyone looking to art as a reflection of human realities.

69.

A nobleman and his wife are attacked by a bandit deep in the forest; the woman is raped, the nobleman killed (or is it suicide?). The bandit, the wife, the nobleman's ghost, and a woodsman who discovers the aftermath (or witnesses the whole thing?) tell their version of the crime, and each is very different from the others. Kurasawa is exploring

what truth is and to what extent will someone twist it to protect oneself. It's a great idea, but what really makes the picture work so well is that through each version of the story the characterizations deepen and become multi-layered. Only the very ending, which seems to be more about selfishness than truth, might their be a misstep; otherwise the movies is perfect. Deservedly a classic, and devastating in its message of mistrust. Definitely worth a watch.

70.

This really is a work of art, from a film-making and acting perspective, but the DVD comes up short in several areas.

I won't get into Rashomon as a work of art, as it has been amply covered in other posts. But the "Criterion Collection" DVD itself suffers a bit in several respects: shakiness in the opening title scenes and some early shots of the temple (which I believe is the result of the film conversion process, rather than shaky camerawork) and the 1.3/1 aspect ratio. This latter is particularly irritating in the courtyard testimony scenes, when the other witnesses are cut off, but is also apparent in some of the fight scenes. And imagine how glorious those dappling-sunlight-through-the-trees scenes would have been in widescreen! A shame.

71.

The mystery of the story can be summed up with a simple question: "Who stabbed the samurai Takehiko Kanazawa?" The short story the movie is based on, Yabu no Naka (In a Grove) gives three versions of the rape of a woman and the death of her husband, one from each of the three participants: A samurai, his wife, and the bandit. The movie adds a fourth version told by a woodcutter who is not in the original story, whom I shall ignore for now and return to later.

I was actually a bit surprised by this movie, having heard many times of it as the story of competing realities, how different people can view the same events differently. I therefore expected I might see several disinterested witnesses recount different, but ultimately compatible, versions of the same event. Perhaps one witness saw the beginning, a second witness the end, and a third witnessed the entire event. Under those circumstances, different interpretations would certainly be possible. Or perhaps one witness could see something from his vantage point that others couldn't from theirs. On the contrary, the three versions are presented by the participants, who are certainly not disinterested, and naturally have motives to distort the truth. And the three versions are irreconcilable: if any one is telling the truth, the other two cannot be.

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Contrary to the suggestion that different realities might be at play, at least two of the three participants must be lying. For example, there is no mental distortion that would make a man who was stabbed in a long, violent sword fight think he had dejectedly stabbed himself after long lonely contemplation.

The story is a mystery with a strange twist. Each of the three participants confesses to the stabbing! So any solution to the mystery needs not only to explain why the culprit did it, but also why the other two innocents confessed to it.

In the movie, Kurosawa has told us which version he believes is true by creating the woodcutter, who is not in the original story. The woodcutter, once he admits stealing the woman's short sword - thus clearing up a minor mystery in the short story (who took the woman's sword?), has no apparent reason to lie. He then tells a tale that is essentially the tale as told by the bandit Tajomaru. They both agree the man was stabbed in a fair swordfight instigated by the woman after she was raped. Their stories differ only in some details Tajomaru left out. In the woodcutter's version, the two men are reluctant to fight, showing some fear of each other. The woman has to goad them both, questioning each his manhood, before the fight commences. Tajomaru would understandably want to conveniently omit this goading as evidence of his own fear. It is also to his benefit to omit the samurai's fearfulness, since the braver the opponent, the more noteworthy the victory. Tajomaru's version of the swordfight understandably omits the clumsiness and nervousness in the woodcutter's version, but a blow-by-blow description with no psychological speculation would be essentially identical. So the swordfight in Rashomon gives the only rashomonesque scenes in the film.

So if the bandit killed the samurai, why would the samurai say, in his message from the dead as transmitted by a medium, he'd killed himself? Probably for the sake of his name. He lost honor enough when he was tricked by the bandit, and failed to prevent the rape of his wife. To have then lost a swordfight when no trickery was involved would have also made him incompetent at his vocation. In Japanese culture, suicide is an acceptable method of regaining lost honor and it does not have the approbation it receives in the West-in fact, the author of the story, Ryunosuke Akutagawa, later died by suicide himself. So an atoning suicide was better than losing a fair fight to a common thief.

The wife's lying is more problematical. Why would she take the blame for Tajomaru's deed? Perhaps she was angry at her husband for not preventing her rape, so wanted to add insult to injury by saying he was killed by a woman. This would be the same motive that caused her to instigate the fight to begin with, and she punished her husband further by denying his reputation the death in honorable combat.

The short story was left completely open, with no hint as to who to believe, so I like that version better, but the movie is masterful and will keep you thinking, almost as much as

the short story, where it feels you could certainly know who to believe if you could only figure out who has the woman's sword.

72.

Director Robert Altman speaks about the film and influences from Kurosawa. And one of the more informative features is an excerpt from "The World of Kazu Miyagawa, the film's cinematographer. This, too, is a wonderful lesson on the skill used in shooting this visual masterpiece.

A booklet is included, no page numbers, but it includes the full-length dialogue from the source stories "In a Grove" and "Rashomon".

The story is based on four people's interpretation of what happened to a man who was murdered and his wife raped in the woods. The movie leaves the viewer without any concrete answers; it allows the viewer to decide who is telling the truth, or, if the truth is even spoken.

73.

A Warrior, his Wife, and a Thief encounter each other in a forest. The Wife is raped and the Warrior dies. Establishing who is responsible for what and what truly happened proves difficult, if not impossible. Through a series of flashbacks and stories-within-stories we come close to learning the `truth,' learning the limitations of `truth' in the process.

I approached RASHOMON with a certain amount of trepidation. I watched it years and years ago and don't remember much about the first viewing. I'm happy to report that RASHOMON can be enjoyed without notepad or textbook. It's a beautiful looking black-and-white film that was more or less Kurosawa favorite Toshiro Mifune's coming out movie. Mifune plays the Thief with a full palette. As the various stories unfold, the Thief ranges from noble to craven, from hysterical to plotting. Sometimes Mifune seems a little... excessive to me, but sooner or later I catch up with what he's doing. In other words, he's brilliant, and repeated viewings won't catch him playing it false. And if there's ever been a movie that rewards repeat viewers, it's RASHOMON.

There are classics and there are Classics, and Akira Kurosawa's RASHOMON is a 600-pound lumbering giant of a Classic. Capital-C Classics can be a little intimidating and more than a little disappointing. RASHOMON can be enjoyed without digging deep into it. The commentary track by Donald Richie is informative, if a little didactic. He tends to tell us what we're seeing, although he compensates by also letting us know what to look for in repeated viewings. The introduction by Robert Altman could probably have been

dispensed with without too much harm - basically it's six minutes of Altman telling us how much he likes the movie. The except from The World of Kazuo Miyagawa is interesting and abrupt.

74.

This is the type of movie that will make you think. For those that want to disengage their brain and be entertained - look elsewhere. This is an intriguing movie where the witnesses of horrific act each tell their own version of what happened. The story takes a peek into how the mind copes with what it can't understand (or isn't ready to). For those unfamiliar with Kurosawa's work, this film is a masterpiece. Kurosawa makes clever use of the camera in building the audience's suspense in a very similar fashion to what Alfred Hitchcock did. Contemporary audiences may find this technique more agitating than viewers in the 1950's as audience attention spans have shrunk - however this only makes the technique more effective.

For those seeking a psychological exploration of the human mind at it's worst (and best), you will definitely enjoy this film. It bears resemblance to classic greek plays where the audience is asked to think and reflect rather than be whirled around on ride like modern films. For film students, it is an first-hand example of innovation in film-making technique and dramatic effect.

75.

Weather forms a central character in Kurasawa's Rashomon.

In the story line, it's so hot...that the breeze that stirs the sleeping satyr-like panther Mifune, causes him to kill. The scene where he pulls slowly at the leather thong to which his sword is tied as he looks up into the dazzling light filtering down through the leaves...that slow movement to evil, caused by the heat and one breath of air.

The rain that relentlessly batters the Rashomon gate forms another plot point, and sets the mood..one feels completely paralyzed....the poor humans grappling to understand the complex distortions of the horrible human drama..are frozen by their inability to understand why the story is different, depending of who tells it..and unable to leave the story alone...paralyzed from shaking it off by the rain which forces them into contemplation as they sit under the rotting gate.

Some trickery going on, here. Why do the stories differ? A simple answer, and the one Kurosawa gave to his uncomprehending assistant directors was that we all invent our own little worlds, and our version of a story flatters our own self-concept.

The bandit wishes to be seen as bold and powerful, beyond the confines of law. The husband, confronted with the rape, wishes to see himself as wrongfully betrayed by his wife. The wife wishes to see herself as victim. The woodcutter, when finally confronted, wishes to "tell the truth".

The film puts "the truth" into a relativistic purgatory, and is unfathomable, and yet, completely truthful. The mental pretzels one can make trying to figure out the "truth" are less satisfying than the experience and acceptance of the story as it plays out. Hey, there are some things in life you are just not going to know.

Kurosawa missed the beauty of the silent cinema, and aimed, in this film, to bring back a way of storytelling that depended on visual cues, camera movement, shot compostion and acting rather than dialogue to produce the film's power and emotion. This is surely one of the most exquisitely filmed works of all cinema, so sensitively photographed that the shades of grey suggest colors...!

I see Mifune's eyes, lit by a reflection of the sun from a mirror laced with foilage (a trick the cinematographer used to increase the available light in the forest while retaining the proper "leaf-filtered" quality of the light) in color. His eyes appear chestnut.

There is no way to understand the communication of color in a black and white film, other than to say that the communication of seeing is so fulsome, that nothing seems missing, and hey! That's kinda like the film, huh? We invent our reality.

Rashomon is the film that catapulted Japanese film into the international cinematic consciousness, made a reputation for Kurosawa, launched Mifune to international stardom, and revolutionized cinematography.

76.

This film is really something special - it has received so many good reviews that another one is kind of redundant - but I am sure there are quite a few people out there who have not seen it - so if I can convince someone to watch it I think it is worth my time. This is one of the finest Japanese films I have seen - I am not particularly into the whole samurai genre - so this philosophical film about truth is probably my favorite Kurosawa film - and along with Ozu's 'Tokyo Story' and 'Floating Weeds' my favorite Japanese film. My favorite aspect of the film is the photography - the atmospheric qualities - the rain, the lighting, the forest with sun coming through the trees. Even the close-ups of people are very powerful and every bit as classically cinematic as anything from hollywood. The story is so intriguing as well - I don't think the act of murder is really the focus of the film - it is more like an incidental element - the morality is not what is being examined - it is more about the nature of story-telling - so Kurosawa in a way is examining himself - the

story-teller. Thus, we are at a duplicity - and one that leads to philosophical contemplation - something central to art.

77.

Rashomon remains one of the most popular and most famous Japanese films of all time. It is very deserving of it's honor and worthy the "Criterion Treatment." The film won an Academy Award® for best foreign language film. The movie also has excellent cinematography which has been imitated by many filmmakers.

The story is about 4 people who recall the recent murder of man and the sexual assault of his wife. Each person recalls the events differently from each other.

78.

A man travelling with his wife in feudal Japan is murdered by a bandit... or is he? As the main protagonists - the bandit, the wife, a passer-by and (I kid you not) the man himself - tell their versions of events, a series of contradictions emerge. Who, if anyone, is telling the truth?
Rashomon's Byzantine plot structure was unique at the time, and still feels fresh over half a century down the line. Presenting no easy answers (there is reason to doubt the motives, and thus the stories, of all of those involved), it leaves the audience to make up their own minds about who to trust. Fans of latterday head-spinning efforts such as The Usual Suspects and Memento will find plenty to get their teeth into here.
It all looks gorgeous, to boot (Kazuo Miyagawa's cinematography is done justice by an excellent DVD transfer here), and the performances - especially Toshiro Mifune, as the bandit Tajomaru, cackling hysterically and pausing mid-fight to swat mosquitoes on his neck - are superb. If I've got one gripe, it's the slightly pat "redemptive" ending, but that's a minor fault at best.
Otherwise, Rashomon is downright essential. It's too easy to get all rose-tinted when trying to assess a long-established "classic", but this is one that's more than stood the test of time.

79.

When Akira Kurasawa released this film in 1950, it was not expected to do well. When it won various awards around the world, including the Academy award for best foreign film, the reaction was one of some surprise. Now, over 50 years later, Rashomon stands as a benchmark in cinema, a film that has been copied and ripped off countless times, but never duplicated. The camera work, storytelling, script, and setting are flawless, giving us the proper mood right from the start.

The start is a torrential rainstorm, where several men sit around discussing a trial they have either witnessed, or taken part in. The trial concerns the murder of a samurai and the

rape of his wife, apparantly at the hands of a famous bandit (played by Toshiro Mifune, a Kurasawa favorite). The story of what actually happened is told through the point of view of the bandit, the woman, the dead man (through a spriritual medium) and a woodcutter who was there and now is standing with these men at the beginning of the film.

The interesting thing is that we as the audience are left to assume what really happened, as the film gives no definitive solution. The subject is really the nature of man, and how point of view will change the perception of a scenario to favor or in some cases, cast a negative light on events that transpire.

This was the first film to shoot directly at the sun. In fact, the beginning shot of the woodcutter traveling into the woods to cut lumber is breahtaking, the camera weaves in and out, up and down, through branches and leaves, showing just how far out of the way these things will be happening. The excellent DVD has a feature on the camera work, which you will find interesting and will help you when you go back to the film for a second viewing.

Also included with the disc is a booklet with the two short stories Kurasawa used as the premise for the film (most notably "In the Grove")along with an excerpt from Kurasawa's book about the shooting of the film and the apprehension of the Japanese film companies about the fact that the story seemed to have no good ending. Kurasawa explained that the story was not about the solution of the murder as it was about the nature of man.

Film fans need to see this movie. So many movies made in the last few years (Snake Eyes, The Usual Suspects) owe themselves to Rashomon, movies which show us points of view that are not necessarily the truth. The fact is that four people can see a situation but report it four completely different ways. What's the truth? The truth is--that's just human nature.

80.

Rashomon is a masterpiece. This film shows us a hard statement that maybe disagree to many people; the truth doesn't exist. We see always fragments of it no matter how old you are.
Aesop in his fables states: in every man always there are three ; that who he thinks he is; what other people think he is and finally that one who really is. In that sense Goethe talked about four levels of the reality; lineal, literal, methaporical and finally the cosmic. In what level are you when you assume the judgement about a fact?
Remember his beliefs are always relative; your ethical world depends about a lot of issues; such as your social status; your religion; your birthplace; your culture and even

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your age; so be careful when you say are in possesion of the absolute true.

And that's what the movie shows us; a terrible murder; five persons state about the fact ; and before you five different versions are given. So, the questions is; who of these persons is lying and who is true?

All of us have a sight blind; and because of this you may agree with some of these people; and your close friend or even your couple may be perfectly disagree with you.

The reasonable doubt is a very well konwn device employed by all the lawyers in their cases . Indeed, this term inspired to Sidney Lumet for making his opera prima "Twelve angry men" in 1957.

Back to Rashomon we find to Akira Kurosawa in one of his major achievements. The handle camera is superb; and this is the first film in the story where , by the first time the camera shows us the sun; a brilliant methapor and also a challenging aaproach by this master director.

Mesmerizing ; unforgettable ; you'll be shocked every time you watch. Remember what the woman says uin a sequence: "The men lie because they are weak".

And this point is remarkable, just because the fragile human condition; the human being always will keep his dignity, pride and a set of values above all the odds; and through this process, the truth is always put in a second place, by obvious reasons.

Heissenberg established the uncertain principle in 1930 and this review is far to explain about this issue, but what it deserves to call your attention at the time you say ; I found the truth; or even worst; I represent the truth.

This procedure is typical of dictatorial regimes; the state is me and other similar statements reveal a syntom of being out of the life and even the nature, a wise mind always thinks and acts; after rethinks and reacts; but never remains quiet.

Kurosawa adapted this film from a novel from the same title Rashomon from 1927 written by Yabu no Naka.

This film is a wonderful exploraton of truth and human weakness.

In fact this film is watched and analyzed in Post Grade School of Management, for purposes related with another goals.

This film was remade in 1964 as Outrage for Martin Ritt, where Paul Newman plays the role of Toshiro Mifune in the original version.

A true landmark. Don't miss it.

A superb classic!

81.

I can't stand it any longer! Am I watching the same film as everyone else here posting a review? Invariably the words "murder" and "rape" are being used in people's reviews to describe the main events in the story either as a premise or as undeniable facts in the case! We cannot reasonably make these assumptions. Even the back of the DVD propogates this mistake when it says "...the story of a man's murder and the rape of his wife". I suggest that we can NOT be sure that either of these crimes (as we commonly

understand the terms) ever really happened. If we are to believe the deadman's story, then his death was by his own hands -- a suicide. And, if we are to believe the bandit's story, the supposed "rape" becomes very questionable, especially when you consider the almost loving embrace she gives to the newcomer (i.e., the bandit) and the contemptuous attitude she holds for her husband during one of the other versions of the story. I beg of you, be careful in how you refer to the events in this great, great film. The film questions truth ... please question your own (and shame on Criterion for allowing that unfortunate blurb to appear on the back of the DVD). Thank you.

82.

This is an excellent movie with lots of deep meaning. Intriguing and wonderful. The director is genius

83.

Kurosawa's study on the nature of truth, of reality, and human nature is perhaps one of the greatest films ever made. it is the story of a rape and a murder and that is all we ever know that occured during during the course of this movie. it tells the story from the perspectives of 4 sperate characters; a woodcutter, a bandit, a man, and his wife. they all have different stories and we are never told who is really telling the truth. Because this is a story about the bleakness of human nature, the evil tendencies we have. but there is redemption in the end. according to what i've been told and have read this is the first film to have a shot that's pointed directly into the sunlight and to use light reflectors to help light the actors. it also gained noteriety for its phenominal camera work. I highly recommend you buy this this is a great film toanyone who enjoys an engrossing experience.

84.

I'm afraid I'll get a lot of heat from this, but if you liked this movie, you've lost your mind. I'm afraid all too often people are influenced by critics and intimidated by old black and white films with subtitles. Though it may be a ground-breaking style of film, that does not make it a good film. In a sad attempt to confuse the truth about the death of a man, Kurosawa frustrates audiences with a bad Twilight Zone episode; too long and without that creepy plot twist so very needed. Best performance goes to the bad dubbing-over for the psychic.

85.

In my top ten movies of all time. I would say that this is Kurosawa's masterwork. Obviously he has created many classic films, but this simply, for me, defines what he

was all about. The DVD itself is extremly well done, with a commentary by Robert Altman. Highly Recommended.

86.

This was a difficult movie to rate because the concept was excellent and well-presented but I felt the movie lacked a little to maintain the interest of the viewer from start to finish. As such, I found myself looking and thinking ahead rather than focussing on the current scene on the screen.

This is an older movie which should be appreciated for what a masterful work it was in its' time. It hasn't lost much during its' tenure but the texture of this black and white movie has seen better days. The acting is very good and, to better appreciate it, I watched it in Japanese with sub-titles. The DVD has other options for viewing including English dubbing. I will probably look at that option the next time I view it.

The story is simple yet complex. There is a rape and murder in the countryside. The story of what happened is related by four witnesses including, in a very impressive use of make-up, the deceased himself. Everyone's story is slanted towards their role in the events. The participants tend to see themselves as victims and so the truth looks different depending on who is telling the story. This is the magnificence of the movie.

There are three persons who serve as a sort of narration and editorial team which helps give the movie greater impact. The story begins in a poring rain with the story-line just as dismal. It ends with the sun shinning and we are given a note of hope to finish up with.

In my line of work, I have become accustomed to hearing many a complaint. I have learned (the hard way) not to pass judgement until I hear the other side (or in some cases "sides") of the story. Sometimes I get lied to but often the differences come from individual's perspectives of how they are affected by the events in question. Some people feel themselves a victim in many cases. Still other feel responsible for many things completely beyond their control. "Rashomon" reminds us that all is not necessarily as it seems. It is a short (88 minutes) but effective treatise on the subject.

87.

Rashomon is a fabulous film. When a nobleman is murdered and his wife raped while travelling through a wooded area, a bandit, played by Toshiro Mifune is accused of the crimes and an inquest is held. The witnesses--including the spirit of the murdered noblemen--each recount conflicting and contradictory accounts of what actually happened. To what extent it is the result of simple faulty memory or the product of willful deciet is for the viewer to decide, thus making for a very thought-provoking movie.
88.

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A man is dead, a woman was raped, and that's all that can be definitely said. Somebody has committed murder, but nobody knows whodunnit. Genius filmmaker Akira Kurosawa's "Rashomon" is a classic for its skillful direction, suspense and wonderful acting. It's one of those movies you think must be vastly overrated until you see it, and are blown away by it.

At the Rashomon Gate in eleventh-century Japan, a man (Kichijiro Ueda) takes shelter with a priest (Minoru Chiaki) and a woodcutter (Takashi Shimura) during a rainstorm. The woodcutter is depressed and the priest is horrified, over a recent crime: the vicious bandit Tajômaru (Toshirô Mifune) was arrested for murdering a man named Takehiro (Masayuki Mori) and raping his wife Masako (Machiko Kyô). But when taken before the police, Tajômaru claims that he has his fun with the woman and killed her husband honorably in a fight.

But Masako begs to differ; she claims to be the victim first of the sadistic bandit, then of her cold-hearted husband. And when a medium calls up the spirit of Takehiro, he claims that Masako was unfaithful, asking the bandit to murder him, then spurned by Tajômaru. Her actions drove Takehiro to suicide. And the woodcutter himself claims to have seen the altercation -- and his version is wildly different from them all.

During the filming of "Rashomon," director Akira Kurosawa stated that the film is a reflection of life, which doesn't always have clear meanings. The same could be said of truth. Questions are raised by the events of "Rashomon," but given no easy answers -- sometimes no answers at all (my biggest question was how Masako's gown stays so white if she's always weeping on the ground).

Light and shadow whirl and dance in a frankly beautiful woodland setting, serving as a pretty backdrop for some very ugly acts. The fight scenes are masterful -- they look like real fights, as opposed to choreography. Tajômaru's are more stylized, whereas the woodcutter sees two guys rolling and staggering around with swords, obviously freaked out. Kurosawa was even brave enough to touch on the unique idea of having the deceased testify. The spinechilling seance scene, starring a downright spooky, stark-faced Fumiko Honma, is a haunting classic scene.

Are Kurosawa's insights dark and depressing? In a fascinating, hypnotic way... yes. But while calmly pointing out the ability of human beings to lie even to themselves, he acknowledges that there's good in there too (a scene where the woodcutter adopts an abandoned baby as the priest watches). We lose our illusions and innocence as the priest loses his, forced to look on how despicable people can be, but while being comforted with the knowledge that people aren't all bad, and that unadulterated truth isn't really necessary to have good in you.

Toshirô Mifune chews the scenery with gusto as the barbarian bandit, laughing and jerking like a hyena just to see people jump. At first glance, Machiko Kyô seems to be

overacting, until you see how unhinged her character has become by whatever happened. Masayuki Mori doesn't get to act as much as the others (the poor guy spends most of his time tied to a tree), but is good when the camera zooms in on him. Minoru Chiaki and Takashi Shimura add an extra dimension as the innocent young priest and the tormented woodcutter.

Gloomy, thought-provoking and ultimately quite freaky, "Rashomon" still defies conventional filmmaking and will suck you right in. It's brilliantly crafted and exceptionally directed, and must be seen by all lovers of cinema. And that's the truth!

89.

Once you have passed through, you will be stripped of all pretense. This shocking movie leaves you wondering what has just happened. That it is able to do this in Japanese is all the more amazing.

You are left looking at the shell of a destroyed society, wondering how it could have happened in the first place-and wondering if it is possible for man to learn his lessons.

90.

In the first chapter of Burton F. Porter's excellent new book, Philosophy through Fiction and Film, he discusses the problem of obtaining reliable knowledge and he uses Akira Kurosawa's ground breaking film, Rashomon, to illustrate the difficulty of determining the truth value of what we think we see and know. Professor Porter gives us a careful summary of the film with his thoughtful comments on the challenge of knowing the absolute truth about what we experience.

When asked about what he knew for certain, Albert Einstein said that the only thing he could be certain of was the speed of light, and even that was open to question. Kurosawa and Einstein appear to be in accord and Rashomon is Kurosawa's attempt to show how difficult it is to know the truth of what actually happened, even when an event is viewed by several eyewitnesses.

Rashomon is now available on DVD, courtesy of the Criterion Collection of Films, and the black and white print we see on the screen is sharp and clear and the sound is good. This film does not translate well to the small televison screen. I sat up close to my 32" Panasonic and wished I had a larger TV so that I might be drawn in more completely as a witness to the complex and engaging story.

The movie opens at the Rashomon Gate in feudal Japan. A woodcutter and a priest are sitting patiently waiting for a rainstorm to subside. Soon another man, a commoner, joins them and the woodcutter begins to share with the two other men his confusion about the facts surrounding a recent rape and murder. We learn later that the woodcutter is an

eyewitness to the crimes, but first he tells us about his experience as he watches intently an investigation/trial. A judge is listening to a bandit, a woman, and a dead samurai, whose testimony is revealed through a medium, tell the judge their version of the rape and murder.

The bandit first tells us he is reponsible for rape of the woman and the death of the samurai. Next the woman seems to indicate that she might be responsible for the death of the samurai, her husband. Then the samurai, by means of a medium, indicates that he committed suicide. Finally, the woodcutter tells us that the bandit is indeed responsible for the murder. Each of these stories is visually recreated in effective flashbacks.

Lest any viewer think this problem is factual and straight forward, all the viewer needs to do is to write out his version of the various stories and then check with what even well respected critics have to say to see that the viewer's version will differ sometimes signficantly from various professional reviews. Kurosawa demonstrates convincingly that in the telling of events each viewer is likely to put forward a version that enhances the way that viewer is perceived by others. This film is about truth and lies and the point made is that the person we are most likely to be untruthful to is ourself. If we are unable to tell the truth to ourselves, how will we be able to be honest with others?

Everthing we see and experience is filtered through the total experience of our lives. In a world filled with competing stimuli, where do we focus our attention? We miss more than we see, sometimes even things right under our very noses. Reality is fabulous, as in this Kurosawa film, but he shows us that it is also as ephemeral as the light passing through the trees in the forest creating shadows everywhere.

Rashomon was made for a Japanese audience and was very popular in Japan. In 1951 it was shown at the Venice Film Festival and won the Golden Lion Award. Since that time it has taken its place among the finest films ever made.

It is not without its flaws, chief of which, in my opinion, is the music score, particularly the adaptation of Ravel's Bolero, which distracts the viewer from the events taking place on screen. Also, at the very end of the film a baby is found at the Rashomon Gate and the woodcutter takes the baby home to add to his large family. This plot device to soften the negative impact of the film on the audience and to give hope where little has been experienced weakens the impact of all the events in the story we have just seen. For a film meant to be shown to a Japanese audience, this "Hollywood" ending seems out of place and untrue.

The greatness of the film is the story it tells and the superb perfomances of all the actors. I cannot agree with critics who feel that some of the perfomances of the actors, particularly the bandit, were "over the top." This film is a highly visual, almost a throwback to silent pictures. We learn about the characters from what we see more than from what we hear. Additionally, the superb camera work is a most important part of the story telling process.

Rashomon is a must for students of the cinema and, as was mentioned earlier in this review, for anyone interested in trying to learn the truth value of knowledge.

91.

Rashomon is about the war. The image of a half-destroyed Japan as represented by the half-destroyed Rashomon gate appears in the opening scene. Beneath it, several people find shelter in the undestroyed portion, and as the rain forms them into a group, they seek to understand why a terrible crime has occurred. Rashomon opened to Japanese audiences in 1950, about four years after the Emperor spoke to his nation and ended the war.

Watch carefully as Kurosawa takes his audience through the process of understanding. We never get to the truth of the actual events of the murder, and that was the experience of the Japanese public regarding their country and WWII. Instead, like their truths, the truth seen by the Rashomon audience is distorted through viewpoints. The warrior class samurai-turned-bandit knows he'll be blamed, and then recounts the episode with self-aggrandizing machismo in true kamakazi fashion. The cleric did accurately recall the deceased's weaponry in type and number and didn't see the woman's face. The woman says she can't remember if she's responsible, but we all know she herself was a victim. The dead man, who speaks to us through a medium, claims responsibility for his own death, and thereby absolves the living -- almost. Later we learn that the woodcutter, the average Japanese worker, saw the whole thing and did nothing to stop it. That, as it turns out, is the most horrible crime of all.

The movie concludes at the Rashomon gate, where we are left with the guilt of the average Japanese citizen for failing to stop the warlords, and a priest. We then discover that in the half-destroyed structure, there is now someone else, an orphan. The skies clear and the woodcutter, who already has six children, insists that the priest allow him to take the baby. Charity is penitence.

92.

Rashomon was the second Akira Kurosawa film I have seen after Yojimbo and I am proud to call it my best film experience so far. The plot is amazing and leaves the audience stunned with its mystery long after the film has ended.

The screenplay and photography is wonderfull along with the incredibly amazing acting staff that really gave me a new perspective on films and how strong they seem. I really love this movie and is recommended very strongly.

A stunning Masterpiece of a Film, everything is good about it and you wont get dissapointed.

93.

Rashomon was the second Akira Kurosawa film I have seen after Yojimbo and I am proud to call it my best film experience so far. The plot is amazing and leaves the audience stunned with its mystery long after the film has ended.

The screenplay and photography is wonderfull along with the incredibly amazing acting staff that really gave me a new perspective on films and how strong they seem. I really love this movie and is recommended very strongly.

Without doubt, this is one of the most wonderfull films to ever exist. Watch it and be prepared for a emotional experience

94.

If your a beginning film buff looking to expand into Japanese films or a Japanese film sage this is the DVD for you. Based on Akutagawa's short story "In A Grove" , Kurosawa has transferred the page deftly and seamlessly to film. Short (compared to other Kurosawa films) and easy to understand (hint: lighting {or lack thereof} and angles) make it enjoyable for anyone wanting to explore CINEMA.

95.

The recent Criterion release of Rashomon was, to me at least, very satisfying. While others are not totally satisfied with the picture quality, it's not really bad at all. It was, after all, a small scale low budget film (Kurosawa was still a relative new-comer-probably along the lines of Spielberg after Jaws), but there is nothing in the lines of picture and sound that detract from the viewing experience.

And that experience is indeed a memorable one, between the artful collaboration of Kurosawa and Miyagawa. The four accounts of the incident are like the filming of the characters going into the forest....almost mystical, and surreal with strong contrasts in sunshine and shade, the sunlight (truth....?)itself being obstructed by the mysteries of the forest.

The disc includes an intro by Robt. Altman, some material with Kazuo Miyagawa, the cinematographer, and an interesting commentary by film historian Donald Ritchie.

The accompanying booklet has, among other things, selections from Kurosawa's autobiography and the original two short stories upon which Rashomon is based.

While certainly not definitive, there is enough material to whet the appetite (at least) to one of filmdom's truly great masters, and is nothing that Criterion needs to be ashamed of!

96.

Criterion deserves praise for it's presentation of Kurosawa's "Rashomon." Kazuo Miyagawa's cinematography is incredible in it's use of camera movement, light, shadows, rain and wind effects. I enjoyed the bonus excerpts from Miyagawa's documentary. I was intrigued by the film's approach of story telling from 4 difference sources i.e. the Woodcuter (Takashi Shimura), the Bandit (Toshiro Mifune), the raped Wife (Machiko Kyo), and the dead Husband (Masayuki Mori) told thru a Medium. The viewer must play detective to piece together the "truth" of what has taken place. We learn from "Rashomon" is that we all have our own personal vision of "reality." In this study of human nature, the characters see what they want to believe. Donald Richie's expert commentary was essential in understaning the film's structure. Richie discusses the films use of visual triangles in portraying the three main characters (Mifune, Kyo, & Mori). It's a must-see film for anyone that appreciates great art.

97.

Rashomon is a great cinematic feat. Filmed in 1950 and released here in the states in '51, it was very ahead of it's time. Akira Kurosawa, probably best known here in the states for The Seven Samarai, creates a puzzling movie that the mind can't help but ponder over long after the movie is finished.

The simple plot is about three people. A warrior, his wife and a bandit. The wife is raped, the warrior is murdered and the bandit is captured. The story is being narrated to us by two men, a woodsman and a priest, both who witnessed not only parts of the crime but also the testimony of the wife, the bandit and even the warrior (via a medium) in court.

What this movie eventually becomes is an experiment on truth and reality. As all the testimonies contradict each other, we begin to doubt each person's reality. The story is told 5 different times, none of them in agreement, and what we begin to realize is that Kurosawa is trying to show us how our reality is altered by our perceptions.

The extras on the DVD are great, Criterion has succeeded again in putting together a great deal of extras that add to a movie that would easily stand on its own. Robert Altman introduces the movie, and talks about why the movie is one of his favorites. Also, a Kurasawa expert, Donald Richie, has recorded a commentary that helps the viewer really appreciate the subtle nuances of Rashomon, little points like how much silent film influenced Kurosawa.

This movie is a classic and has influenced film makers in the states for years. Once you see it, you too can't help but be influenced by it.

98.

I have always loved Kurosawa's Samurai movies. From Yojimbo to the Samurai Trilogy, from Ran to Seven Samurai. I think his greatest two movies though are not samurai but more realistic (down to earth) movie dealing with the human mind. Red Beard is one and Rashomon is the other. I think Rashomon is a great movie to sit down and watch over and over again just to try and figure out the true answer in the movie. Yes, yet another movie that Director Kurosawa-san brought out Mifune-san as one of the lead actors, although this was one of the early years.

I beleive that Toshiro Mifune is the greatest actor of all time. I beleived that he was a compassionate doctor in Red Beard, a very strong Miyamoto Musashi, and even a Noble Makabe Rokuroto in Hidden Fortress. In Rashomon, I actually beleived he was a little son of a gun thief and lunatic.
Another good, but short role is played by Minoru Chiaki. It seems that he always gets the same role and always short. He also stars in a few other movies with Mifune/Kurosawa.

99.

The word "Rashomon" has long become a must-have-and-used word in the Orient as to interpretate the very same thing by different person with different point of views. The word "Rashomon", in modern days in America, can be used to explain how the Republican and the Democratic Parties to view and pitch or approach any agenda so differently such as Tax Cut, Health Care, Social Security, Foreign Policy, National Defense(oh, shall I say, the newly populared "Homeland Security" by the Republican government?). The word "Rashomon" can also be miserably used to explain why the Islamic people hate the Jews or Americans, but we Jews or Americans never hate anybody but themselves when watching a NFL or NBA game won by the teams they never like or support enough to buy their merchandise. The word "Rashomon" only tell us, there always some other different explanations or views by different persons, in different ages, sex, moods, or in different time frames. Nothing is absolutely right or wrong, only depend upon where, how, why you choose to stand. The word "Rashomon" is a too deep philosophic word, yet a word you should grap at a certain moment or certain time to remind you and all of us, always leave some room or space to yourself and others, your world is sometime not the exactly world other people live in. Your very own birthday is already long past 24 hours earlier in the Far East, 3 hours ago in the East Coast, 2 hours ago in Central region. Even almost every single track house looks alike to

the next or around, the furniture in each house is never the same. "Rashomon" is also the word to remind you how important the word "Tolerance" is.

100.

Akira Kurosawa, known as one of the greatest directors of all time, got international attention with this film, that opened up the Japanese film market to the world. Released in 1950, this film, along with the director won many coveted awards. The story is simple, but at the same time the film is very complex. Tajomaru, a bandit, played wonderfully by the great Toshiro Mifune, is accused of raping a woman, and murdering her husband, in the woods. Tajomaru, the woman, a witness, and the man himself (speaking through a medium) tell their version of the events. The thing is each one tells a different story, with their own perspective on the events, and perception of those involved. So as each story is told we go into flashback and see the different events, and how the characters act differently.

The film from a technical standpoint is perfect, with innovative use of the camera, and editing. Acting is done superbly, with each actor, playing a slightly different version of their characters in each flashback. The script cannot get better, based on two short stories. The film is very serious, and is a meditation on the nature of truth.Its about how truth is relative, and how we each have a different viewing of events, tastes, and concepts. It is also about how each person makes up their own truth, lies, to deceive themselves. Our ego is so big we need to comfort it, and keep it safe from harsh reality. In all this film is perfect, and is even sometime called Japan's Citizen Kane, in the way it impacted Japanese filming. The two films have many similarities. If you enjoy serious films, investigating the nature of truth, and ourselves, see this film. 5 stars.

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Article: Anis Pervez

I am editor of the journal tripleC that published Anis Pervez' article "Information Form" in Volume 7 (2009), issue 1, pages 1-11.

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With kind regards,

Prof. Christian Fuchs,
Editor of tripleC

Appendix 4: Curriculum Vitae

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The University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

Professional Training:

Training in Video Production
15 April – 8 May 2000
University Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

Advances in Family Health and Social Communication
February 2-18, 2099
Bangladesh Center for Communication Program, Bangladesh

Advanced Training Course on Research Techniques in Social Science
20 July – 21 August 1985

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Bureau of Economic Research, Dhaka University, Bangladesh

Film Appreciation
January – June 1982
Bangladesh Film Institute

Research Interests:

New media, Film reception, Knowledge management, Development informatics, Theatre for development, Information behavior, Rural media, Constructivism and Autopoiesis.

Work Experience:

Current position:

Communication Expert
Blue Gold Program
(A Dutch Bangladesh water management for development initiative)
Since April 2013

Responsibility: Knowledge management, campaign design, media
                 planning and newsletter editing

Adjunct
Media and Communication
Since May 2012
Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB)
Bangladesh

Responsibility: Teaching graduate communication courses,
                 supervising master's thesis

Media Advisor (Part-time)
Perfect Textiles Ltd.
Since May 2013

Responsibility: Publicity and media planning

Previous positions:

Teaching

Position	Organization	Job Responsibility	Period
Associate	University of Liberal Arts	• Teaching	September

Position	Organization	Job Responsibility	Period
Professor	Bangladesh (ULAB) Dept. of Media Studies and Journalism	• Directing media lab • Reviewing undergraduate and graduate curriculum • Directing graduate program • Directing university library • Policy contribution as Academic Council member	2009 – January 2012
Faculty	American International University Bangladesh (AIUB) Dept. of Media and Communication	• Teaching	January 2009 – August 2009
Adjunct	Center for Studies in Global Change Indiana University, Bloomington. USA	• Developing course • Teaching	Spring 2005
Adjunct	International Summer Institute Indiana University, Bloomington. USA	• Teaching	Summer 2004, 06, 07
Assistant Professor	Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) Dept. of Media and Communication	• Teaching • Curriculum development • Advising • Directing the "UNESCO and IUB Project of Development Communication" • Directing the "IUB and Hemline University (USA) Cooperation Project" • Overseeing Media lab	July 1997-December 2000

Position	Organization	Job Responsibility	Period
		• Administrating student's magazine *Decode*	
Assistant Teacher	Nordvold School for Autistic Children, Oslo, Norway	• Teaching	August 1992 – May 1993

Research

Position	Organization	Job Responsibility	Period
Research Sociologist	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) Dhaka, Bangladesh	• Research design • Proposal development	May 1996- August 1996
Research fellow	Center for Technology and Culture Oslo University Oslo, Norway	• Electronic communication research	October 1995 – April 1996
Research Assistant	Dept. of Sociology Oslo University Oslo, Norway	• Evaluating graduate program • Evaluating IT facilities	June 1994 – September 1995
Junior Program Organizer	Proshika Human Development Center Dhaka, Bangladesh	• Field research • Establishing IT facilities	March 1985 – August 1986
Research Assistant	National Institute for Local Government Dhaka, Bangladesh	• Questionnaire design • Organizing research workshop • Field supervision	May 1984 – February 1986

Media & Journalism

Position	Organization	Job Responsibility	Period
Media Editor	Adoptive Technology	• Edit media	May 2008-

Position	Organization	Job Responsibility	Period
	Center Indiana University, Bloomington	materials	July 2008
Production Assistant	Media TV Oslo University Oslo, Norway	• Broadcasting	March 1988 – April 1988
Executive Editor	*Monthly Textile*, a Bengali monthly Dhaka, Bangladesh	• Editing • Policy contribution • Overseeing production	November 1984 - March 1985
Reporter	*Weekly Purbany*, a Bengali cine weekly Dhaka, Bangladesh	• Reporting • Feature writing	April 1981-September 1984
Staff Artist	Drama Department Radio Bangladesh Dhaka, Bangladesh	• Acting • Recitation	February 1980 – July 1985

Information Management

Position	Organization	Job Responsibility	Period
Program Associate	Center for Studies in Global Change Indiana University, Bloomington, USA	• Database support • Website evaluation • Designing digital library • Teaching at International Summer Institute for Teachers • Project management	September 2003 – May 2008
Library Manager	Eigenmann Residential Hall Library Indiana University, Bloomington, USA	• Personnel administration • Material collection	October 2001-July 2003

Position	Organization	Job Responsibility	Period
		• Customer service	

Executive

Position	Organization	Job Responsibility	Period
Monitoring Coordinator	Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service (RDRS) Rangpur, Bangladesh	• Personnel administration • Budgeting • Editing quarterly monitoring report • Administrating evaluation research	September 1996- June 1997

Courses Taught:

Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB)

Graduate Program:

1. Issues in film and TV studies
2. Documentary filmmaking
3. History of cinema and TV
4. Digital culture
5. Political economy of media and communication

Undergraduate Program:

1. Communication theories
2. Mass media
3. Reporting and editing
4. Development communication
5. Population communication
6. Communication and rural development
7. Communication technology
8. Video communication
9. Communication research
10. Introduction to social science

University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB)

1. Approaches to film studies

2. Reading media texts
3. Media ethics
4. Social context of media
5. Media, technology and society
6. Digital Culture
7. Communication research methodology
8. Online publications
9. Introduction to sociology

American International University Bangladesh (AIUB)

1. Introduction to communication
2. Development communication
3. Research methodology
4. Basics in social science

Indiana University, Bloomington, US

1. Information, communication and development
2. Micro-credit and alternative economy

Publication:

Academic work:

1. Pervez, A.(2015). Cognitive film theory. *Journal of Bangladesh Film Institute, 1* (2),
2. Pervez, A.(2015). Methodological Approaches in Information Science Research on Computer-mediated Communication. *PEARL: A Journal of Library and Information Science, 9* (1), 37-43.
3. Pervez, A., & Samadder, M. (2015, January). *Popular theatre.* BRAC Research Paper: 41.
4. Pervez, A. (2014). Theoretical approaches in Information Science research on asynchronous computer mediated communication*, International Research: Journal of Library & Information Science, 4*(3, September), 427-442.
5. Ohlmacher, J., & Pervez, A. (2014). Negotiating identity: Islam in the films of Tareque and Catherine Masud. In B. Shoesmith & J. W. Genilo (Eds.), *Bangladesh's Changing Mediascape: From State Control to Market Forces*, 151-174, London: Intellect Ltd
6. Pervez, A. (2013). Revisiting Stella Dallas from a cognitive theory of film perspective. *Offscreen, 17* (12), http://www.offscreen.com/index.php/pages/essays/stella_dallas_cognitive_theory/
7. Pervez, A., & Samadder, M. (2013). Discourse-centric development approach to popular theatre: A case in Bangladesh. *Global Media Journal, 4* (2), 58-64.
8. Pervez, A. (2013). Computer Mediated Communication: Disseminating Information. *Global Journal of Computer Science and Technology, 13*(11 version 1.0), 58-64.
9. Pervez, A. (2012). Music and identity: A frame analysis of contemporary popular Bangladeshi music. *Journal of Bangladesh Studies,* 137, 42-55.
10. Pervez, A. (2012).Film as information systems. *Celluloid, 33*(1-2), 5-12.
11. Pervez, A. (2009). Information as form. *TripleC, 7*(1), 1-11.
12. Pervez, A. (2006). Cybernetic Self and Self-Observation in Email. *Cybernetics and Human Knowing, 13*(3-4), 73-85.

13. Haque, R., & Pervez, A. (1998). Food Security: Some Pertinent Issues. *Journal of International Affairs, 4*(2). 30-41.
    .

Technical Report:

1. Pervez, A. (2013). G*ood practice of Empowerment of LAs and NSAs in responding to economic development opportunities and climate change and disaster vulnerabilities (PRODUCE) Project*, CARE Bangladesh, SKF
2. Pervez, A. (2012). *Poor and extremely poor women's engagement in local government development initiative*, CARE Bangladesh
3. Pervez, A. (2012). G*ood practice of Local Governance Project on poor/extremely poor women's engagement in local government development initiatives*, CARE Bangladesh
4. Pervez, A. (2012). *Market analysis of plastic crates*, Padma Plastic Industries, Bangladesh
5. Pervez, A. (2011). *Evaluation of IFB Home Garden Program in Chuadanga District*, Impact Foundation Bangladesh
6. Pervez, A. (2009). *Knowledge Grounding and Effects of Popular Theatre,* Social Development Program, BRAC. Bangladesh
7. Pervez, A. (2008). *White Paper: Digitizing the Global and International Education Materials*. Bloomington: Center for Studies in Global Change, Indiana University, USA.
8. Pervez, A. (2007). *Evaluation of Access International Information System*. Bloomington: Center for Studies in Global Change, Indiana University, USA.
9. Pervez, A. and Ahmed. (2000). *Needs Assessment of Training in Development Communication in Bangladesh: A National Report*. Dhaka: Independent University Bangladesh.
10. Pervez, A. (1995). *Students' Use of Mac and IT at The Dept. of Sociology: An Assessment*. Oslo: Oslo University.
11. Pervez, A. (1995). *Study Progress of Graduate Students in Sociology: An Evaluation Report*. Oslo: Oslo University.

Film Review:

1. Pervez, A. (2014, May 30). SHUNTE KI PAO: Magnificence of Ordinary People, The Daily Star.

Book:

1. Pervez, A. (2006). *Node* (Bengali translation of Norwegian novel *Nåde* by Ketil Bjørnstad) Dhaka: Sandesh.

Organizations served as consultant:

UNESCO Asia-Pacific, BRAC, CARE Bangladesh, Save the Children Fund, Impact Foundation, Rupantar, Center for Services and Information in Disability (CSID), Perfect Textile, Padma Plastic Industries, Indiana University USA, Independent University Bangladesh (IUB)

Development and communication consultancies (Selected):

1. Overseeing knowledge management and campaign design, Blue Gold, ongoing
2. Information, communication and publicity management Perfect Textile Ltd. July 2012-March 2013
3. Assessing online information systems, Center for Studies in Global Change, Indiana University, USA. 2006-2007
4. Designing electronic storage system, Center for Studies in Global Change, Indiana University, USA. 2007-2008
5. Proposal development for *Impact of corruption on disadvantaged children* research project. *Project*, Centre for Services and Information on Disability (CSID). November-December 2012
6. Consultant, *Market survey of plastic crates*, Padma Plastic and Industries, April-June, 2012
7. Documenting *good practice of Local Governance Project on poor/extremely poor women's engagement in local government development initiatives*, CARE Bangladesh, September-October 2012
8. Documenting *good practice of Empowerment of LAs and NSAs in responding to economic development opportunities and climate change and disaster vulnerabilities (PRODUCE) Project*, CARE Bangladesh, November-December 2012
9. Web planning and content development, Governance project, Rupantar, January-March, 2011
10. Consultant of *Evaluation of IFB Home Garden Program in Chuadanga District*, Impact Foundation Bangladesh, 2011
11. Chief Investigator of *Knowledge Grounding and Effects of Popular Theatre,* Social Development Program, BRAC. Bangladesh, 2009-2011
12. Directing quarterly monitoring of development program, RDRS, April 1996 – June 1997
13. Chief Investigator of *Needs Assessment of Training in Development Communication in Bangladesh: A National Report*. UNESCO Asia Pacific and Independent University Bangladesh. 1999
14. Evaluating *Graduate program in sociology,* Oslo University, 1994- 1995
15. Assessing students' use of ICT, Oslo University, 1994- 1995
16. Researching *The causes of disintegration of grassroots organization*, BRAC, April 1996 – July 1996
17. Coordinating field research for *Citizen's perception of local governance in Dhaka City*, National Institute of Local Governance, March – August, 1985

Training conducted

1. Grassroots communication, Blue Gold, August, 2013
2. Module development and training in *Effective communication for development work*, The Leprosy Mission Bangladesh, October, 2009

Reviewer:

    I.   Journal of Media and Communications Studies
    II.   ULAB Journal of Science and Engineering (2010-2012)

Presentations:

Conference:

1. *The Nature of Information Science,* Paper presented at the Information Science Research Forum Conference. Bloomington, 6 October 2007.
2. *Information as Form,* Poster presented at Information Science Research Forum Conference. Bloomington, 17 September 2007.
3. *An Autopoetic Understanding of Information,* Paper presented at Information Science Research Forum Conference. Bloomington, 18 September 2004.
4. *Cognitive Theory of Information and Film*, Paper presented at the Information Science Research Forum Students' Conference. Bloomington, 11 October 2003.

Academic Talk:

1. *Qualitative immediacy: inherent problem of cinema,* Curriculum MSJ Colloquium , 24 November, 2011
2. *Frame theory: Everyday perception,* Curriculum Integration Seminar, 16 June 2011
3. *Happiness in Bangladesh: A sociological understanding,* Curriculum Integration Seminar, 21 October 2010
4. *New media and the domestication of film,* 22 July 2010
5. *The emerging faces, portraits and identities of Bangladesh,* Curriculum Integration Seminar, 17 June 2010
6. *Technology, thinking and talking in contemporary Bangladesh,* Curriculum Integration Seminar, 4 March
7. *Nature of contemporary Bangladeshi family,* Curriculum Integration Seminar, 15 October 2009 *Nature of contemporary Bangladeshi family,* Curriculum Integration Seminar, 15 October 2009, University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh
8. *Mask and Identity,* Annual Summer Talk, 21 June 2009, University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh
9. *Information as Form,* Paper presented at Information Science Brown Bag Talk, 2 November 2007, Indiana University, Bloomington

Conference and Workshop Attended:

1. The Information Science Research Forum Conference. Bloomington, 6 October 2007.
2. The Information Science Research Forum Conference. Bloomington, 17 September 2005.
3. The Information Science Research Forum Conference. Bloomington, 18 September 2004.

4. The Information Science Research Forum Students' Conference. Bloomington, 11 October 2003.
5. South Asian Development Communication Workshop, Rangpur and Dhaka, 6-15 April 1997.
6. UNHCR Bangladesh Workshop on Human Settlement, Dhaka, 5-7 October 1996.
7. North West Area Development Workshop, Dhaka, 2-3 October 1996.
8. Oslo University Sociology of Literature Workshop, Oslo, 20-25 March 1995.
9. Oslo University International Workshop on Systems Theory, Oslo, 2-5 May 1994.
10. Norwegian National Video Conference, Bergen, 12-15 April 1989.

Guest Speaker:
1. International Studies Summer Institute (ISSI) for Middle and High School Teachers, Indiana University, USA. Summer 2007, 2006, 2004
2. Global speaker, Indiana University, USA. May 25, 2004

Video Production:

A Night with Nietzsche (2000)
A Day of Arusha (2004)

Film Production (16mm):

After the Blow (2002)

Exhibition:

Indiana University Spring Photographic Exhibition, 2006

Language Aptitude:

1. Bengali: mother tongue
2. English: fluent
3. Norwegian: fair

Award Received:

1. Best paper award at The Information Science Research Forum Conference, Indiana University, USA, 2003.
2. Communication research fellowship 1995 at The Center for Technology and Human Value, Oslo University, Norway.