

The Death of Horror: On Kiyoshi Kurosawa's *Cure*

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Abstract

This article makes the case that horror cinema is undergoing a fundamental shift which depicts the dissolution of the emotion of horror itself. This change in the genre is anticipated by the Japanese film *Cure* (1997), directed by Kiyoshi Kurosawa. *Cure* focuses on a series of murders committed by people who have fallen under the power of a hypnotist. The film's protagonist, a detective, discovers that the murders constitute the performance of a ritual by a cult from the 19th century. The detective's fragile mental condition, however, makes him vulnerable to the suggestions of the drifter who has been hypnotizing various individuals to commit murder. The investigation derails into the detective's initiation into a cult that has the apparent objective of destroying society by mass murder. To achieve this goal, the hypnotist eliminates in his victims their reflex and feeling of horror at the idea of killing other human beings. This plot element enables *Cure* to turn the genre against itself by evoking a perspective in which one no longer experiences horror at committing murder and butchery. The loss of the emotion of horror in *Cure* anticipates recent trends in horror cinema that point to the dissolution of horror itself as a genre.

Keywords: *Cure*, Kiyoshi Kurosawa, hypnosis, mass murder, genre, horror, initiation, social disintegration

Introduction

The contemporary Japanese filmmaker Kiyoshi Kurosawa (no relation to Akira Kurosawa) is notable for having made a cycle of horror films in which a single, seemingly random crime is revealed as being one of a series of similar acts of violence. These incidents are then shown to multiply uncontrollably, to the point where they destroy society itself. At the end of *Retribution* (*Sakebi*, 2007), a detective who has come to the realization that he is a murderer wanders through the deserted streets of Tokyo, the inhabitants of which have perished because of a curse placed by a ghost. He carries in a travel bag the remains of the woman whose angry spirit is the source of the curse. Similarly, in his earlier film *Pulse* (*Kairo*, 2001), the Internet becomes the domain of ghosts that drive the living into suicidal depression, which results in the city being emptied of all human life. But it is the film *Cure*, from 1997, which fleshes out most completely the mechanism whereby the single crime comes to stand ominously for the annihilation of the social whole. The film centers on the creation of culprits, each of whom performs a single act of killing in an almost identical manner.

The Natural Thing to Do

At the start of *Cure*, the Tokyo police find themselves utterly baffled by a rash of murders. In each case, a long and deep “X” has been cut into the lower neck of the victim, severing the carotid artery. The suspects are all very different, seemingly with no connection to each other. In one instance, it is a middle-aged man who murders a prostitute, in another, a beloved primary school teacher kills his wife, and in a third, a female doctor claims her victim in a public bathroom and proceeds to peel off his face. None of the killers can give a motive for their actions once apprehended—one of the suspects simply states that at the time, it seemed like the “natural thing to do.” The detective in charge of the case, Takabe, speculates that some kind of mind-control technique might be involved, given the fact that the suspects are all clearly distraught and despondent after the act. The police eventually take into custody a drifter named Mamiya, a former medical student who appears to be suffering

from amnesia. Takabe investigates Mamiya's shack, where he discovers a collection of books devoted to the German pioneer of hypnosis, Franz Mesmer, and the mummified remains of a monkey tied to a bath-tub pipe with its limbs twisted into the shape of an X.

The psychiatrist Sakuma is at first skeptical that hypnosis could be behind the murders, because, in his view, no hypnotist, except possibly a superhumanly powerful one, can change a person's basic moral sense. However, Sakuma, against the wishes of Takabe, places Mamiya in a psychiatric ward, and warns Takabe not to get too deeply involved with him. For Sakuma is wary of Takabe's obsessiveness, knowing that the detective is currently under severe psychological strain because of his wife's slow descent into insanity. The film does a remarkable job of showing how its psychotic manipulator gets into the heads of his preys. Whenever Mamiya encounters a new person to hypnotize, the shabby-looking drifter tells his new victim that he cannot remember who he is. Or rather, it is his interlocutor who infers this, because Mamiya asks the same questions over and over again, in the befuddling manner of a mentally vacant, spaced-out drug addict. "Where am I?" he asks a concerned school-teacher. "Azuma Beach" the teacher replies. "Where?" Mamiya asks again. The teacher repeats the answer. "Where is that?" Mamiya asks, and the teacher then speaks the name of a nearby town, which prompts Mamiya to ask once more, "Where?" Mamiya repeats this pattern for all other topics, shirking any question directed at him about his identity, until he grabs a lighter, flicks it on, and says to the other person, "Tell me about yourself." The film is adroitly reticent about what people tell him as they become transfixed by the flame, or by the reflection of light on spilled water, but it is not difficult to conclude that Mamiya guides his victims to the murkiest levels of fantasy in which, according to the Lacanian dictum, all are murderers.¹

As the narrative unfolds we are given more detailed glimpses of how he operates. The policeman who kills a fellow officer admits that he found his colleague irritating, as the latter always insisted on doing everything by the book. The female doctor is told by Mamiya that she must have had a difficult time in entering her profession, "because women are inferior beings to men." He adds: "the first time that she saw

a man naked was when she dissected a corpse.” Mamiya then refers to her real desire, that of becoming a surgeon, and speaks to her sense of grievance, alluding to the satisfaction that she would feel in cutting open members of the opposite sex whose prejudice has hindered her career from the outset. Mamiya induces a kind of emotionless stupor in his victims: when they carry out their killings, they appear calm and methodical, as if obeying a principle of a blind automatism. The marvelous irony of the film consists of its insight that when people act on their most repressed desires and fulfill their most disavowed fantasies, they do so mechanically, even mindlessly, with all the gusto of robots or zombies.

But Mamiya’s power is demonstrated not only through the actions portrayed on the screen but also in the emotions aroused in the viewer. In the scene where the vagabond is shown to a room full of law enforcement officials, he flusters one police chief so much that the latter, having lost his nerve, turns away and casts a helpless and aghast look at his colleagues. Mamiya turns the tables on his questioner by relentlessly badgering him with the question, “who are you?” each time the chief tries to get some information. He even deploys a deft bit of rhetorical judo when he brazenly chides his hapless interrogator by adding, “You think about that.” The blunt and inane way in which Mamiya repeats the question, “who are you?” makes it clear that the only acceptable answer to it is the void of subjectivity itself. Earlier, he tells Takabe, “the detective or the husband—which is the real you? There is no real you.” Like both the detective and his boss, the viewer feels outraged and disgusted by the drifter’s bewildering demeanor, the way in which he replies to each question with another question, and his overwhelming apathy towards those whom he manipulates and their victims. In short, *Cure* highlights one quality not conventionally associated with serial killers, or with sublime demoniac rebels for that matter—the fact of being annoying. The imperious charisma and disdainful allure often attributed to cinematic portraits of evil, such as Hannibal Lecter, are utterly lacking in Mamiya, a disheveled sort whose scrawny, almost delicate frame and perpetually vacuous bearing convey an overall impression of shabbiness.

But the very fact that we find Mamiya annoying, and almost welcome

the impulse to lash out at his physically frail body, is precisely what renders us vulnerable to his power, for annoyance serves as the germ carrying far more violent and destructive emotions. Indeed, the film's spare and barren portrayal of Tokyo gives rise to a truly ominous portrait of the metropolis, where murderous rage appears never far below the strained courtesies of everyday life. Director Kurosawa creates an atmosphere of dread and barely suppressed violence in the events of the narrative that are subsidiary to the main storyline. When Takabe goes to the dry cleaners, the sound of the manager obscenely cursing his employee, and then threatening physical violence, is clearly audible in the background, before the employee approaches the counter with Takabe's clothes. Takabe's first gesture whenever he returns from work is to shut off the dryer, which his wife, Fumie, leaves running all day without any clothes in it. Fumie's increasing withdrawal from reality is registered in the repetition of an enigmatic scene which appears to be a dream but is at first impossible to ascribe definitively either to her or to her husband. In this scene, Fumie and Takabe are the sole passengers on a bus, which appears to be flying through the air, as moving clouds and a blue sky are clearly visible through the windows. She asks him when they will be going on vacation to Okinawa, and Takabe says that they will not be going. Fumie then remarks how beautiful it will be, as if she hadn't registered her husband's reply. When the scene is repeated, Takabe is shown sitting alone.

The detective disobeys Sakuma's advice and decides to interrogate Mamiya. In a sequence that subtly transforms the physical space of Mamiya's cell into a landscape of the unconscious, the camera frames Takabe sitting to the left in a darkened room, with Mamiya above in a well-lit bathroom in the center of the frame. The lighting emphasizes the demarcation between the two spaces, yielding the sense that the well-lit space in which Mamiya sits is the image of Takabe's consciousness. Takabe grows infuriated when Mamiya tells him that he knows about his wife's worsening condition, and how it is undermining his ability to do his job. Knocking down Mamiya's lighter just as he lights the flame, Takabe declares that he will wait in the room until Mamiya gives him answers. In the silent interlude that follows, the screen grows darker

until the sound of a downpour is heard. Then, in a blurry, low angle shot of the detective, a black stain expands slowly on the ceiling just to the left of his head, as if it were an excrescence of his own consciousness. Dirty water then drips from the stain onto the table near Takabe, who is immediately transfixed by the sight of the puddle.

The excretory nature of the wish fulfillment brought about by Mamiya's technique of hypnosis is conveyed by his enigmatic remark, "I was once full, but what was inside me is outside now," at once underscoring the negative ontological status of evil and the process of voiding one's interiority that, as Mark Seltzer points out, distinguishes the serial killer.² After this encounter with Mamiya, which leaves the viewer with the suspicion that Takabe has been hypnotized, the film becomes increasingly elliptical, with abrupt transitions separating the scenes. Takabe is informed by Sakuma about a murder case at the turn of the century in which a woman, a follower of a mysterious cult, killed her son and slashed an "X" into his neck. When Sakuma switches on his bedroom light, we see a large "X" painted behind him on the wall. The actual scene of Mamiya's escape is not shown, although it is clear that he has somehow brought about the killing of his guard. Then there is a cut back to Sakuma's apartment, where the police discuss how Sakuma had handcuffed himself to a pipe before strangling himself. It would appear that Sakuma's "basic moral sense," at the cost of his own life, has kept him from committing murder. Takabe travels to an abandoned house which served as a headquarters for the cult. Mamiya, waiting for him there, tells the detective, "Anyone who wants to meet his true self is bound to come here." Takabe responds by shooting Mamiya twice, but the dying drifter merely raises his arm, pointing toward another room. Takabe, still infuriated, empties his gun into Mamiya's body, and then goes into the room, which turns out to house several baths. Inside, Takabe finds an old Edison home phonograph player. Turning it on, the detective hears a garbled, disembodied voice calling out, "Fearsome heart of his healing hand.... Take sword, a man but dew ... road of healing not a long ... heal ... oh water-grass, oh winter ... falls snow that heal.... Take in hand ... heal."

The unsettling, malevolent voice coming from the phonograph

evokes some of the earliest responses to Edison's recording technique. In his article on the role of the voice in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Ivan Kreilkamp observes that the phonograph at first seemed to promise a new, technological form of immortality that would preserve for all time the trace of human presence. Thomas Edison himself proclaimed that his invention would be superior to the photograph in "preserving" and passing on to posterity the wisdom of great men.³ But the voices recorded on the phonograph made a very different impression on many of its early listeners. The recordings sounded not like the "natural emanation of a human subject" but rather as an "independent autonomous material fragment with a disconcertingly inhuman resonance."⁴ The technological mechanism for preserving the human voice evoked profoundly troubling associations—the "disembodied voice," detached from the "corporeal ground of a speaker's body," struck them as a "demonic agency" and a "new kind of inhuman 'horror.'"⁵ Thus, in the period before the phonograph came to be used primarily to record music, the new invention was "understood less as a popularizing technology than as a magical one" for the ominous and forbidding manner in which "it transformed language into the eerie sound of an impersonal, mechanistic universe."⁶ For Kreilkamp, the final words spoken by the dying Kurtz, "the horror, the horror," indicate Conrad's fascination with the new media technologies that could sever speech from its connection to a bodily presence and turn it into an "autonomous fragment of sound."⁷ The barbaric acts of Kurtz, who manages an ivory trading post in the Congo Free State in the service of the Belgian crown, are given expression in a disembodied voice, a mad and demonic voice that has in effect devoured the body from which it originates.

If the demonic, disembodied voice from the early phonograph serves as a vivid synecdoche for the horrors of European imperialism in Africa, the baleful and forbidding words emanating from the record player at the end of *Cure* would also be suggestive of the inhuman and even apocalyptic dimensions of the Japanese experience of modernity. The scene that follows the playing of the old recording takes place in the psychiatric hospital where Takabe has committed his wife. A nurse apprehensively turns around at the sound of a gurney being wheeled

behind her in a corridor—it is Fumie, propped upright on a platform, with an “X” carved into her neck. Then we see the detective vigorously finishing a meal in a restaurant—in an earlier scene in the same establishment he had been unable to eat at all. The waitress clears away the plates, and Takabe lights a cigarette. In an astonishing long shot, we see the waitress going back to the kitchen to fill more orders, until the manager approaches her. The waitress nods at the manager’s words, and then picks up a butcher knife. She then hurries out of field, presumably to do a killing. The quick cut to the credits implies that the “ceremony” mentioned by Sakuma will continue to be performed until it devours the whole of society.

It is tempting to interpret *Cure* as a political allegory. The occult version of hypnosis depicted by the film enters Japan in the late nineteenth-century, and thus would stand as a potent metaphor for the atrocities the nation would inflict and the calamities it would suffer over the course of its efforts at imperialist expansion during the following century. Modernity came to Japan in the form of a curse which, according to Sakuma, the Meiji authorities tried in vain to suppress but only managed to drive underground. Alternatively, one might also produce a reading of the film in light of more recent events, such as the sarin attack on the Tokyo subway carried out by the doomsday cult, Aum Shinrikyo. Indeed, the connection between healing and murder was a central element of the theology developed by Shoko Asahara, the partially blind, failed herbalist who was the leader of the cult. Asahara drew from Tibetan Buddhism the notion of *poa*, whereby a guru by the strength of his meditation can “transfer either a human soul or an animal” into higher realms, and combined it with parables in which spiritually enlightened persons kill and eat animals—a seeming violation of the Buddhist imperative to revere all life which is revealed in the end as the merciful act of absorbing the “bad karma of these creatures and so elevating their lives in death.”⁸ Asahara transformed the idea of *poa* into a doctrine of altruistic murder, whereby the spiritual elevation of the people who were not adherents of the cult and were thus leading “worthless lives,” could be accomplished by killing them. The release of sarin into the subway system was intended to trigger a nuclear

conflagration, after which Asahara and his followers would inherit a purified world. Because Asahara viewed himself as the Final Liberated One, he could freely dispense immortality to all in his planned omnicide, as *poa* became for Aum a shortcut to Enlightenment through the act of killing.

But the detached and minimalist style of the film makes it difficult to find any concrete point of reference on which to anchor a historical or political allegory. Time—or perhaps our own forgetfulness—has bleached away the features of the original hypnotist of the cult in the sole surviving photograph of him, so that his eyes and nose appear as the thinnest of traces on fading newsprint. Although he is capable of the occasional sarcastic quip, Mamiya, like the founder, is likewise defined by a state of desubjectification. Mamiya is far more apathetic than he is diabolical. He comes across as wholly uninterested in presenting himself as a victim or in assailing society or the state for the guilt of having committed worse violence than his own. The cult appears blithely unconcerned with inflicting a tardy retribution for historical atrocities, refusing to make use of the crimes of the past as an alibi to advance its murderous project. We may say that the repressed returns, but here it takes a form strangely devoid of the charged emotions typically engendered by the exposure of buried psychic material, in this case the desire to kill. Instead, the act of bringing this material to the surface provides Takabe with a feeling of release—he finds himself liberated from the burden of caring for a wife who is losing her sanity and recovers his appetite. He regains the will to live and even recovers an inner tranquility by the activity of rousing from within the repressed depths of others their desire to kill.

A Void in the Psyche

In an article titled “The Empty Return: Circularity and Repetition in Recent Japanese Horror Films,” Aaron Gerow praises the virtuosity of Kurosawa’s film in evoking the terrifying impulses that spring from a void in the psyche. The exposure of this horrifying emptiness which generates murderous acts nevertheless, thanks to Kurosawa’s talents as a

filmmaker, produces a distinct feeling of pleasure in the viewer. Gerow ascribes this pleasure to the viewer feeling “tempted” by the “gospel of a new wonderfully empty existence” propagated first by Mamiya and then Takabe.⁹ But I would argue that the haunting power of the film resides in its formalist restraint. Such an effect is achieved by the alternation of meditative scenes, where the camera lingers in an unhurried manner and in which Kurosawa patiently allows a mood to build, with scenes of actions and events that are clipped and last only as long as it takes for the viewer to notice what has happened.

This is not to say that the scenes showing killing and even gore are not graphic—after the female doctor has killed her victim, the camera shows her flaying the skin from his face. But during this sequence, a close-up of her face with a vacant, though slightly guilt-ridden expression goes on for eight seconds, punctuated by shots of her victim lying on the floor of the public restroom. The sequence closes with a quick shot of her victim with his face removed followed by a cut to an overflowing sink. The horror evoked by the gruesome image of the face being flayed gives way to a different sort of alarm, which, because of its quotidian nature, signals that something has gone awry at the very roots of the everyday life we feel free to take for granted. Fluids are not draining properly and are accumulating in ways that are certain to erode the most firm and solid of human structures. The cutaway shot, which Kurosawa employs at crucial moments, creates a form of detachment that neither neutralizes the horror nor revels in it. Indeed, the muted expressions of the killers and the automatism guiding their actions come together with shots of everyday objects to produce an unnerving form of suspense in which the viewer finds himself or herself overcome by curiosity about what it would be like to inhabit a world where these killings would not longer be a cause for horror. Indeed, once Takabe has fallen wholly under Mamiya’s spell, the camera holds back from showing how his wife is murdered. In the final scene in the restaurant, the hypnotized waitress is shown grabbing the knife, but the camera cuts away from her right after she presses on with determination toward her presumed victim. It is an interruption of her gesture that, because her action is not shown and left to the imagination of the audience, suggests that the killings will

continue on in an endless series.

The film leaves the viewer hanging, producing an impression of overwhelming dread. The absent-mindedness of the killers it depicts, however, compels the audience to reconsider what horror actually is, since the hypnotized murderers are, after all, only satisfying their deepest urges. Moreover, in depicting the protagonist's loss of the capacity to feel horror at acts of killing and mutilation, *Cure* mounts a subversive challenge to the genre of the horror film itself. The film reveals itself in the end to be a narrative of initiation, in which the detective becomes drawn into the grip of a cult that appears devoted to orchestrating the extinction of the human population. Of course, the actual beliefs and practices of the cult are not depicted in any detail, aside from its objective of bringing about mass murder and the singular technique it employs to achieve this purpose. But the resolution of *Cure* casts the shadow of what the horror film might become, if the film had adopted the perspective of Takabe himself and shown that the violent and gruesome actions which strike us as horrifying are in end not truly horrifying.

Why does this question merit our attention? In recent years horror films have come to test the limits of the genre. The failure to kill a group of young people in a brutal manner results in the destruction of the world (*The Cabin in the Woods*, 2012). A young couple whose sexual activity turns them into the prey of a demon engage in sex with others in order to postpone being hunted by the entity (*It Follows*, 2014). A seventeenth-century teenaged Puritan whose entire family is wiped out by a witch sells her soul to the devil to become a witch herself (*The Witch*, 2015). One might also think of the *Twilight* series or the show *Hannibal* where demonic figures such as vampires and predators like serial killers become not only objects of sympathy but also of admiration and sexual desire. In these narratives, the human goes over to the other side, the side of the monstrous, the demonic, and the inhuman. There is an obvious element of novelty in such a twist, as it expresses a relentless drive to step beyond pre-existing boundaries of what constitutes horror. But these narratives might signal a broader shift in social values as well, if we consider the redemptive arguments made on behalf of horror as a genre. For the view that horror cinema serves a salutary social function,

whether by enabling the viewer to confront and work through his or her fears, or by treating him or her to a cautionary tale about the dangers posed by hubris in a technological society, nevertheless relies on a traditional moral framework which regards being turned into a monster as a worse fate than being the victim of a monster. The recent wave of horror films inverts this view, so that the fate of becoming oneself a monster is presented as an outcome more positive than being killed by the monster. The possibility of heroically defeating the forces of darkness is on the other hand discounted as a wholly unrealistic fantasy.

The drastic character of this shift in contemporary horror cinema, which pushes the genre to the point of self-immolation, becomes evident when one considers the significance accorded to the symmetry between the emotions shown by the characters in a film and the emotional responses of the audience. In his study, *The Philosophy of Horror*, Noël Carroll argues that the horror genre is distinguished by the “mirroring effect” whereby the “audience response” parallels the “shuddering, nausea, shrinking, paralysis, screaming, and revulsion” displayed by the characters as they are being victimized by the monsters.¹⁰ The defining element of horror consists of its ability to produce emotions in the audience that reflect those shown by the characters on screen or on the page, whereas the need for the audience to duplicate the emotional states of tragic heroes like Oedipus or King Lear is not a hallmark of tragedy, according to Aristotle’s concept of catharsis. Carroll further notes that the key features of this encounter with the monstrous go beyond the rational desire to avoid or escape a life-threatening danger, but rather entail “revulsion, nausea, and disgust.” The monster is not only a threat to one’s life, but it is also a repulsive entity, “impure and unclean”: “They are putrid and moldering things, or they hail from oozing places, or they are made of dead or rotting flesh, or chemical waste, or are associated with vermin, disease, or crawling things.”¹¹ Horror evokes fear of violent death, but it relies on the aversive effects of disgust and revulsion in depicting the worst of fates, in which the insult of disgust and loathing is added to the injury that brings about a violent death.

Carroll observes that because it focuses so overwhelmingly on evoking negative emotions, whereby feelings of security and “confidence”

are “replaced by a sense of the vulnerability, impotence, and contingency of individual lives,” horror registers the “demotion of the person.”¹² Although his analyses do not encompass the turn taken by contemporary horror narratives, Carroll’s account of horror demarcates in a precise and insightful manner the limits of the genre itself, emphasizing that the element of disgust and revulsion are as fundamental to horror as fear and danger. Horror arises from the “disturbance of cultural norms, both conceptual and moral,” and generates a “repertory of symbolism for those times in which the cultural order—albeit at a lower level of generality—has collapsed or is perceived to be in a state of dissolution.”¹³ But the plot developments in much contemporary horror break with the model elaborated by Carroll in fundamental ways. The resignation that the monsters cannot be defeated, either because the evil is too powerful or because it is too pervasive, such as in the twist that reveals ordinary human beings to be the true monsters, leads to resolutions where the violent and disgusting creatures are revealed to be sympathetic, in that they kill the human beings who threaten the protagonists, as in *The Cabin in the Woods*. The audience then finds itself in the position of cheering the monsters massacring the human beings who run a control center for the performance of human sacrifice. In *It Follows*, the male protagonist suppresses his disgust reflex and casts aside his moral restraints first to become contaminated by the curse that threatens the girl he loves and then to pass along the curse to others by having sex with them. In *The Witch*, the female protagonist, a teenager whose family has been wiped out by the title character, not only suppresses her moral conscience but also her desire for vengeance by selling her soul and joining those who have victimized her loved ones. The new horror can thus be said to evoke the symbols of social disintegration only to press the audience to accept social disintegration, that is to say, not to find such a prospect horrifying.

There is thus a core of irremediable despair within this turn in horror narratives, a turn which prefigures the dismantling of horror as a genre itself. For if there is no way to triumph over the forces of darkness, then the most that one can hope for is to join them, if becoming their victim is the only other alternative. This calculus of course only holds because it

reflects a wholly despiritualized perspective, in which there is no value or concern that can rank above the brutish condition of mere existence. Seen in the light of contemporary horror, the technique of hypnosis in *Cure* emerges as a operation of despiritualization, which brings its unfortunate prey into a state where their souls, as well as their minds, briefly leave them. But as the more recent American horror narratives reveal, there is a strong element of flattery in the despiritualization, an element which Kurosawa's film eschews by holding the audience at a distance from the transformations that overtake his detective protagonist. It is only Takabe who is initiated into the cult, and the oblique manner in which the film treats this initiation means that its interpellative force does not extend to the viewer. For the demise of horror rests on the illusion of the viewer that he or she can become ruthless, heartless, cunning, or glamorous enough to be counted among the predators than among the prey. The horror film in its death throes then becomes a medium whereby the viewer is initiated into this more violent and antisocial mode of existence. If *Cure* emerges out of the malaise of what Japanese sociologist Miyadai Shinji calls the "endless everyday,"¹⁴ in which the Japanese feel themselves languishing in an unchanging and pacified society, then the more recent films and television programs that turn into a narrative resolution the loss of horror—which is still only momentary in Kurosawa's film—reflect the transition from this stifling but peaceable posthistorical age to darker and more atavistic times.

Notes

¹ See Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991).

² Mark Seltzer, *Serial Killers: Death and Life in America's Wound Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 166-67.

³ Quoted in Ivan Kreilkamp, "A Voice without a Body: The Phonographic Logic of 'Heart of Darkness,'" *Victorian Studies* 40, no. 2 (1997): 216.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 215, 220.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 213-14.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 214.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 224.

⁸ Robert Jay Lifton, *Destroying the World To Save It: Aum Shinrikyo, Apocalyptic Violence, and the New Global Terrorism* (New York: Metropolitan, 1999), 66.

⁹ Aaron Gerow, "The Empty Return: Circularity and Repetition in Recent Japanese Horror Films," *Minikomi: Information of the Academic Working Group Japan* [Minikomi: Informationen des Akademischen Arbeitskreis Japan] 64 (2002): 24.

¹⁰ Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 18.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹² *Ibid.*, 213.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 214.

¹⁴ Gerow, "The Empty Return," 24.