# **くろさわ**

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# Japanese Cinema 310

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# Kurosawa

Akira Kurosawa, a Director whose films changed many of today’s film Director’s lives was considered by many people to be eccentric, stubborn and hard to deal with at times yet brilliant. Brilliant in his craft, called film.

# Effeminate Traits/Manly Man

As a child, Kurosawa was a frail weak child who to some exhibited effeminate traits. He was called Konbeto-Chan as a child because he would always cry in school. I feel this was the start of the world recognizing Kurosawa as a unique person who stood out from the rest of society. (Kurosawa pg.8, 43, 63) Kurosawa himself said “I imagined myself as robustly masculine, yet others still saw effeminate qualities.”(Kurosawa pg.43) Although this idea of him being weak followed him until he reached the age of 30, I believe the stigma people put on him caused him to create characters that exhibited truly masculine roles. If you compare the role of the characters in Sanjuro and Hidden Fortress, the lead character is very masculine. His voice, his posture, his walk and his facial expressions, all are qualities Kurosawa wanted the world to see he had. I believe the success of the films the stigma from his childhood and his family upbringing, were contributing factors to his fascination with the Samurai.

# The Art of the Samurai

Although I feel his desire to prove his masculinity was a major factor in creating several Samurai films, I truly believe the fact that he was born into a Samurai family was the biggest contributing factor to his fascination with the Samurai and their ways. (Kurosawa pg.6) Kurosawa’s father was a strong-willed man who kept control of his household, yet still maintained a since of freedom and liberty so his son could pursue his dreams. You can see this sense of compassion in the lead characters in Sanjuro and Hidden Fortress. Although they are as hard as a rock on the exterior, their heart is soft and full of compassion. In a way he was honoring his father’s memory thorough these characters.

# Pain & Tragedy Leads to Growth

Kurosawa was no stranger to pain. He experienced a lot of pain and heartache growing up.

Although sad to hear that a child can experience frightening scenes such as an earthquake, bullying and death, it made his spirit stronger. Without a strong spirit, he would not have been able to make superb films like he has made because he would have given up when he started facing struggles in his career. Strikes, lay-offs, censoring and other challenges could have made him give up, yet he persevered. He persevered just like the characters he created. In the movie Red Beard, Dr. Niide had several obstacles he had to overcome. His medical establishment was facing cuts by the government yet he stayed strong. He didn’t have enough passionate doctors who had integrity, yet he stayed strong.

# The Beauty in Nature leads to Painting a Perfect Picture

Kurosawa’s talents were born from his ability to paint, his love of literature, theater, music and his love for nature. (Kurosawa pg.90) Kurosawa was a lover of Cézanne and Van Gogh so naturally his passion for paintings would bleed into his passion for film. (Kurosawa pg.71) Kurosawa stated “When I looked at a book of Van Gogh’s paintings they changed the way the real world looked to me. It seemed completely different from the world I usually saw with my own eyes. (Kurosawa pg.88) Dreams was a film that gave Kurosawa’s audience a chance to see Akira Kurosawa up close and personal. The scene when the little boy was visiting his sister during the Doll festival, appears to be his memory of a beautiful time he spent with his sister (Kurosawa pg.18) The Snow scene with the Yuki Demon, shows his love of Kabuki theater. In traditional Kabuki, the actors are silent yet their movement and actions help tell the story. You can see that as the man is struggling with the Yuki Demon. “Nature takes good care of her appearance. What makes nature ugly is the behavior of human beings.” (Kurosawa pg.61) This statement is perfectly painted in the scene where the nuclear plants explode and spread radiation throughout the country. This was Kurosawa exposing the truth of what Man can and has done to Nature and people. Kurosawa closes this movie out perfectly with the beautiful scene in the old village where the Ojiisan discusses today’s world and how life should be more simple everything we need is provided here in nature, yet we do our best to destroy it. That is what I was able to get out of that scene. The scene also showed how it is important to hold onto traditions. The scene where people are placing flowers on a rock was a memory from his past. (Kurosawa pg.63)

# A Stupid Genius

As a child it appears that Kurosawa saw certain parts of his intellectual abilities as slow or stupid. His reasoning for this was his inability to keep up with the other kids in class. Based on his Auto Biography and his films, I cannot agree with his statements that he was stupid. He was a shy Genius. People who are unique and different are the ones that can change lives. Kurosawa changed the way many Japanese film directors handled their craft as well as foreign directors. His use of natural sounds and traditional music all lead to an argument that dismisses his thoughts that he was a stupid child. This man was not stupid, he was an artistic genius. Using natural elements and traditional music before others were doing this makes him one of a kind. (Kurosawa pg.32, 33, 107) “The art of Cinema has been called an art of time, but time used to no purpose can’t be called anything but wasted time.” (Kurosawa pg. 105) Overall this is a Director that I am happy to have been introduced to. He was not given opportunities freely because of his name or because his family had money, he was given opportunities because he was eccentric, unique and just overall talented. This man was and is a Genius of his time.

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