


Intertextuality in Kurosawa's Film Adaptation of Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*

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**Abstract:** In her article, "Intertextuality in Kurosawa's Film Adaptation of Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*" Saera Yoon analyzes the role intertextuality plays in the adjustments Akira Kurosawa made when he translated the classic novel by Dostoevsky onto screen. Kurosawa's *白痴* (*Hakuchi*), a film adaptation of Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*, has been the subject of mixed reviews. While some consider the film a successful adaptation that captures the spirit of the original, others criticize *Hakuchi* for its overly faithful rendition of the novel. What has been missing is an investigation of Kurosawa's filmic strategy. Yoon examines the transposition of a chronotope — the spatial move from the center to the periphery and the treatment of the time setting — and suggests that *Hakuchi* is no simple modernization of the novel, but a work in which we can see how Kurosawa fleshes out his own interpretation of a tragic journey. In so doing, it becomes apparent that Kurosawa rationalizes the polyphonic novel and attempts to create a new kind of melodrama.

Saera YOON

### Intertextuality in Kurosawa's Film Adaptation of Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*

Of the many films directed by Akira Kurosawa, his twelfth feature film *白痴* (1951) (*Hakuchi*) is perhaps the most ill fated. Its history is infamous: as originally produced, it was a staggering 265 minutes long in two parts, but the Shochiku production company cut the running time by 100 minutes against Kurosawa's protests. Erratic editing crippled the film and the deleted footage was considered lost. All of this made it difficult for general audiences to follow the narrative of Kurosawa's adaptation of Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*.

The reactions of viewers have been divided. Some found the film worthy, but such viewers may have been partial to *Hakuchi* because of Kurosawa's reputation. Other viewers of the film simply dismiss it altogether. Donald Richie, one of the most perceptive critics of Kurosawa in the English-speaking world, asserts that Kurosawa's blind worship of Dostoevsky restricted the film's creative potential. Stephen Prince agrees with Richie and passes an uncompromisingly negative judgment calling the film a failure. The critical reception in Japan was also harsh (see, e.g., Iwamoto). Interestingly, however, *Hakuchi* received a warm and enthusiastic reception from Russians, particularly fans of Dostoevsky. For example, two of Russia's great film directors, Andrei Tarkovsky and Grigori Kozintsev, hold Kurosawa's film in high regard (see Igeta 126; Iwamoto 325-26). Tarkovsky sums up the strengths of Kurosawa's film as follows: "His *Idiot* is a wonderful film. Setting the film at the present time and on his own national soil makes a very interesting film version. It's on quite a different principle, and actually very exciting. Imagine making *Electra* in a modern setting" (Tarkovsky qtd. in Chugunova 356). Tarkovsky remarked positively on the crucial elements of Kurosawa's adaptation pointing out that the charm of Kurosawa's intergeneric translation lies in the transposition of time and locale: that is, the temporal, spatial, and — potentially — cultural shift. This shift deserves an in-depth investigation for another reason: it crosses the borders between two distinct cultures, namely nineteenth-century Russia and twentieth-century Japan.

*Hakuchi* is fertile ground for taking a closer look at intertextuality. Intertextuality is, in its most restrictive sense, "limited to the relation between a given text and only the other texts from which it directly derives" (Goodwin 9; on intertextuality see also Juvan). Although any text contains, in principle, intertextuality — for "intertextuality encompasses any signifying unit in relation to the forms of communication, cultural codes, and social customs that endow it with meaning" (Goodwin 9) — in poststructuralist and deconstructionist theory, Kurosawa's *Hakuchi* invites a discussion of intertextuality in its most narrow sense as well since it is an outright adaptation of Dostoevsky's novel to the extent that the title remains unchanged (*白痴* idiot in Japanese) and Dostoevsky is mentioned in the first intertitle that summarizes the character of the hero, a clear indication of the film's indebtedness to the original. For Kurosawa, who was fascinated by European literature and Hollywood westerns from his childhood days, film is nothing short of an attempt to create a cinematic *lingua franca* that appeals to people across racial and geographical boundaries. Kurosawa made several film adaptations of Russian and English literary classics, including works by Dostoevsky, Gorky, and Shakespeare. In this respect, the application of intertextuality allows insights into Kurosawa's creativity. As Mikhail Bakhtin suggested, intertextuality is by its nature dialogic, for a good adaptation emerges in the process and as a result of citing, reiterating, commentating, and revising the original (on Bakhtin and chronotope, see, e.g., Keunen <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1069>>). Therefore, an attempt to elucidate the intertextuality between the original text and the film adaptation amounts to an investigation tracing the dialogic relationship between Kurosawa's film and Dostoevsky's novel. Along these lines, I pursue two goals: the first is to analyze the intertextuality in *Hakuchi* trying to unravel how Kurosawa transposes and adjusts focal points of Dostoevsky's novel and the second is to examine the motivation behind Kurosawa's transposition and re-contextualization of the original text.

Among the adjustments Kurosawa introduced into his Jversion of Dostoevsky's novel — from the names of characters to the deletion of minor details of the novel — no other changes have an impact as profound as the differences in chronotope. As Bakhtin demonstrated, the chronotope (or

basic time-space coordinates) is one of the most important aspects of human existence and its significance for the novel cannot be emphasized enough. In this respect, St. Petersburg, Dostoevsky's choice of locus for *The Idiot*, is inevitable for its role in Russian society, let alone its rich history. St. Petersburg is a city constructed in a swamp in 1703 Peter the Great who deserted Moscow to erect his capital in the north. At its origin, St. Petersburg is "the most abstract and premeditated city" as Dostoevsky once stated through the mouth of the Underground Man (*The Best* 99). The city is known for the deep ambivalence that lies at its heart: on the one hand it is beautiful architecturally, but on the other hand it was built on the backs of the downtrodden "little men" whose sacrifices enabled Peter to realize his imperial ambitions. From the beginning of the city's history, many thousands of people lost their lives in the process of founding the city in its inhospitable setting and under impossible circumstances. Even after Petersburg's completion, lowly bureaucrats, best represented by Gogol's fictional characters, lived lives of isolation in this fragmented city while aristocrats enjoyed flamboyant, Westernized lifestyles. This intriguing dualism has fascinated Russian writers since Pushkin in the early nineteenth century and by the middle of the century when the golden age of novels dawned in Russia, St. Petersburg had become the crucible in which social turmoil was brewing with ever more increasing intensity (see, e.g., Berman). Dostoevsky, an urban writer par excellence, utilized this setting to highlight social issues capturing the sense of social upheaval of the time.

In *The Idiot* the protagonist Prince Myshkin is returning to St. Petersburg from Switzerland where he has just undergone a prolonged treatment for mental illness: for Myshkin St. Petersburg stands in stark contrast to the idyllic provinces of Western Europe, let alone Switzerland, a country that occupies a special status in Russian culture because of its association with Jean Jacques Rousseau whose call to "return to nature" exerted considerable influence on Russian intellectuals (see, e.g., Barran). Against this backdrop, Kurosawa eschews Japan's capital and "center" choosing as the setting for his adaptation Hokkaido, the northernmost island of Japan. If Kurosawa had planned to follow Dostoevsky faithfully, his choice of location would naturally have been Tokyo, not Hokkaido. Why did Kurosawa choose Hokkaido over Tokyo? The question is all the more intriguing given the fact that Kurosawa was a native of Tokyo, knew the city intimately, and often used it as the setting in his films. What is interesting is of course the artistic impact Kurosawa's choice of location has in the film: moving the action from Japan's capital to the northern periphery was no simple task. It involved moving the crew a considerable distance and stationing them in Hokkaido for more than a month (from February to mid-March) to shoot the film. Hokkaido residents, unaccustomed to film crews, flocked to each shooting, causing considerable chaos (see Sato 150-52) and thus Kurosawa must have considered the inconvenient and unusual choice of setting important for the meaning of his film. Kurosawa's choice of location represents a transposition from Russia's capital to Japan's periphery. While he follows Dostoevsky's model on the level of plot structure, Kurosawa unsettled the dynamics of the Dostoevskian chronotope by placing his own narrative at the margins of his own country. The journey by Kurosawa's hero who returns to Japan from abroad runs parallel to Myshkin's return trip to Russia. The first sequence of the film narrates the dialogue of the two central characters in a jam-packed ship, again a clear invocation of the first episode of *The Idiot*, which occurs on a crowded train. Having awakened from a nightmare, Kameda (the Japanese counterpart to Dostoevsky's Myshkin) tells Akama (Rogozhin) that he is on his way to Hokkaido after having been released from a prisoner of war camp in Okinawa (Okinawa was annexed to Japan only in 1974 and therefore, at the time of making *Hakuchi*, was not yet a part of Japan).

To spell out the role Hokkaido plays in *Hakuchi*, we need to take into account the cultural implications of the northern island. In the first place, the northern periphery offers a perfect setting for endowing the film with exotic coloration and evoking similarities to Russia. It cannot be accidental that Hokkaido is the island closest to Russia and Kurosawa's intention to raise the sense of Russianness is not limited to the visual aspect and several musical scores by Russian composers were inserted (Durkin 496-97). The snowy winter season captured in the film strengthens this association, since Russia is generally associated with long, cold winters: snow abounds in the film with Kurosawa taking advantage of the seasonal bounty upon shooting the film during the peak of winter. Unlike Emma P. Marciano's claim that the visual "ambiances are impersonal and indifferent

to the unfolding drama" (768), snow in *Hakuchi* functions as more than part of the backdrop and emerges as a meaningful presence and force to be reckoned with in the film. Further, snow plays an intriguing role because it contributes to the contrasting color scheme of black and white. This contrast, with white primarily taking the form of snow, reaches its spectacular climax at the snow carnival at night. What is interesting is that Kurosawa chose night time rather than day time to present the winter carnival because this way white snow stands out in sharp relief against the darkness. Yet the function of snow is not simply to underscore the conventional limitations of the medium of film rooted in the color scheme's binary opposition. The emotional intensity of the scene is built upon the masked skaters swirling around chaotically, if not ominously. Kurosawa arranged the color symbolism in the masquerade and the ensuing episode and at the snow carnival darkness reigns and its sinister ambience is reinforced by the skeleton masks by the characters. Taeko (Nastas'ya Filippovna in the novel) visits the carnival unexpectedly and creates a stir among the other characters. In confronting Kayama (Myshkin), who resumes his courtship of Ayako (Aglaya), Taeko humiliates him and provokes Ayako at the same time. As if in a reflection of the chaotic masquerade, their relationship takes on a dizzying dynamic. The film narrative then takes an interesting turn when the carnival sequence is followed by a scene that could not have created a greater contrast: it takes place the next day in a moment of bright morning sunshine. The contrast is even more striking given that the spot where Kameda and Ayako meet is no other than the festival site with an ice sculpture visible either in the corner or in the background. In keeping with this visual cue, the bright morning scene deals with the tryst between Kameda and Ayako, the two innocent characters of the film.

Needless to say, snow is rich in its color symbolism, representing across cultures purity and innocence and such conventional symbolism appears to be fitting considering that Kameda embodies the "truly good man" Kurosawa sought in the world (全集 黒澤明 Vol. 3, 346). However, Kurosawa draws upon another dimension of the winter and snow symbolism hinting at the ambivalence of the image of snow. From the outset of the film as the protagonist arrives at Hokkaido during a blizzard, the image of the snow storm is prevalent to the point of being nearly ubiquitous. Snow is visible not only in the scenes set outdoors, but also in some scenes filmed indoors as drifting snow is seen through wide windows, for example at Taeko's birthday party. It is a rare occasion — a sunny day with snow on the ground — when Kameda takes a walk with Ayako and the setting projects a sense of their innocence. At other times, however, the visual image of snow conveys a claustrophobic atmosphere, for example when it appears in the shot of Akama's house. In this connection, snow also prefigures immanent disaster: when snow that has piled up comes down with a great thud right after the conversation among the Ono-s (the Epanchin-s), in which Akama's possible murder of Taeko is mentioned, the symbolic connotation is obvious. Kurosawa used the setting of snow to evoke both innocence and the treachery of nature with its elemental forces which humans cannot possibly control. On the one hand, snow works as a typical symbol of innocence, a reference to Kameda and the other hand it conveys to the spectator the presence of dark, elemental forces.

It is significant that both a sense of foreboding and literal "darkness" are narrated in the film. For example, when Ono remarks that they have not seen the sun for months, he speaks with his wife about a possible murder at the same time. The implication is that Kurosawa used nature to reflect the mental state of his characters and that is why he chose Hokkaido during a harsh winter as his setting for *Hakuchi* as I suggest above. In the same way, the only bright sunny day in the film occurs in the scene I discuss above, when Kameda meets with Ayako the day after the snow carnival. Such a setting corresponds to the semantics of the moment, since Ayako and Kameda are the only characters who represent light and innocence. In contrast, Taeko always appears in black and Akama, who is placed in opposition to Kameda, is connected with darkness: his house is associated with *kurai* (gloomy, dark), which Kameda uses repeatedly upon his visit to Akama. It comes as no surprise that the dark and spooky house turns out to be the scene of the murder. Hokkaido, as depicted in the film, is a dark place (literally and figuratively), the darkest point of which appears to be Akama's room.

The importance of snow and weather can also be inferred from the changes Kurosawa made in the temporal setting of the film as he removed summer altogether from the original novel. To be

more specific, *The Idiot*, comprised of four parts, begins in November, but it jumps to six months later in part two and all of the action in parts two to four takes place in the summer and thus it is not winter, but summer that predominates in the novel. By contrast, the entire film of *Hakuchi* is set exclusively in winter. Since *Hakuchi* follows the storyline of *The Idiot* more or less faithfully, the discrepancy between the two timelines stands out. In many respects such as its distinctly exotic outlook and northern climate, Hokkaido distinguishes itself as a place dissimilar, if not contrary, to Tokyo and most other parts of Japan. At the time *Hakuchi* was made, Hokkaido was by far the most Western and the most dehistoricized place in Japan. The fairly un-Japanese landscape (with both dairy farms, a rarity in Japan at that time, and Western-style buildings) and sense of location at the periphery contribute to the implication that moving the action away from Japan's physical and cultural center has an ideological significance. It is a cultural cliché to blame the center for being susceptible to influences from the outside world. By contrast, the periphery tends to be viewed positively for preserving traditional values. Yet by situating his film on the margin of Japanese culture and displaying ugly materialism and human vices such as greed, Kurosawa changed such assumptions and conveyed the sense of decaying morality as something that has spread well beyond the center to reach the remotest corners of the nation.

Kurosawa transformed the St. Petersburg chronotope of Dostoevsky's novel into the world of his film where ubiquitous winter created a phantasmagoric atmosphere and the here and now almost fades into the background. We see this in particular in the case of the historical context invoked at the beginning of the film when Kameda mentions his war experience: this contextualization of the action is all but subsumed in the symbolic setting. Snow-enveloped Hokkaido with its almost mythic quality represents Kurosawa's transformation of a specific contemporary setting into a filmic chronotope that defines the world he creates in *Hakuchi*. What remains for us to explain is what the filmmaker hoped to achieve in this transformation of Dostoevsky's world. Kurosawa's admiration for Dostoevsky notwithstanding, he appears to have been unsatisfied (if only subliminally) with certain parts of *The Idiot*. We see this in the way he replaces Dostoevsky's ambiguity with his own concrete "logic" despite the metaphysical motivation behind the ambivalence in Dostoevsky's novel: the film preserves "uncertainty as to the kind of story and universe" (Durkin 497), but in my view Kurosawa does much to clarify what is left ambiguous and indefinite in the novel. While the origin of Myshkin's illness is not clearly explained in the original, Kurosawa assigns an all-too-clear social context to the protagonist's epilepsy: "the shock of being pardoned just before execution caused him [Kameda] to have a fit" (unless indicated otherwise, all translations are mine). In addition to reminding us of Dostoevsky's real life experience, Kurosawa attributes his hero's illness to the traumatic experience he had undergone in war. It is well-known that Dostoevsky, convicted of involvement in the revolutionary activities of the Petrashevsky circle, was about to be executed when the emperor's messenger came to commute the punishment and he also suffered from occasional epileptic seizures. Thus, Kurosawa interweaved Dostoevsky's biography into his protagonist's story, although there is no reason to infer an explicit medical connection between this traumatic event and the writer's own epilepsy.

Kurosawa's protagonist also finds an empirical explanation for his attraction to the heroine, Taeko, played by the superstar Setsuko Hara. Kameda sees a parallel between her eyes and those of a fellow convict who had been awaiting his execution in terrible agony: Kameda's spontaneous sympathy for the suffering heroine thereby receives a rational foundation. In this way, Kurosawa filled in what he apparently deemed lacunae in Dostoevsky's story by using the historical and social context of World War II. Kurosawa's motivation for rationalizing the characters' emotions, however, overrides one crucial aspect of Dostoevsky's poetics: religious spirituality. In the novel, Myshkin's "mysterious" illness implies a link to the other world. When Dostoevsky's Myshkin suffers seizures, he sees an inner light: "Then suddenly something seemed torn asunder before him; his soul was flooded with intense inner light. The moment lasted perhaps half a second, yet he clearly and consciously remembered the beginning, the first sound of the fearful scream which broke of itself from his breast and which he could not have checked by any effort. Then his consciousness was instantly extinguished and complete darkness follows" (233-34). Kurosawa's Myshkin also falls victim to a seizure, but his seizure is not accompanied by spiritual revelation. Serving as a climax



of *Hakuchi*, the seizure sequence is prepared with an increasing degree of tension. Apart from the dramatic effect, the protagonist's seizure hardly informs the spectator about Kameda's inner world.

The removal of the novel's religious dimension accounts for the deletion of one important secondary character, Ippolit, in the film version. Myshkin and Ippolit are, as Victor Terras points out, the main antagonists on the religious level, whereas Myshkin pairs up with Rogozhin prominently on the level of the love triangle (72). Christianity in Dostoevsky's novel is not compatible with a Japanese cultural context and plays little role in Kurosawa's adaptation; nevertheless, in *Hakuchi* during a sequence involving a family shrine, we do see references to Shinto religion and its importance in traditional Japanese culture. In the novel when Myshkin meets with Rogozhin's mother in Rogozhin's house, a stifling and shadowy den that reflects the distorted mentality of its owner while in the film this meeting takes place in front of the Akama family altar. The ambience this family altar evokes differs from that of the novel let alone other parts of the Akama house. At the family altar, a bright space filled with warmth, Akama's mother smiles all the time as a sign of welcoming the guest. However, Akama's old mother has hearing problems and is therefore unable to communicate with others. Given that she is the only character in the film associated with religion to any extent, her handicap suggests that religion has little impact on the characters and is largely, if not totally, disconnected from society as a whole. This hint of religion carries some weight, however, as a point of contrast particularly in relation to Akama. Inasmuch as Akama lives with his mother, the contrast of the two worlds is the more striking. The mother's bright room seems to be a world apart from the rest of the house Akama's lightless house included. This source of warmth and light can be traced to the otherworldly atmosphere and for the prodigal son Akama, the now defunct world over which his mother presides. Furthermore, it is a world associated with Akama's own past, as he recalls it, when as a child he would pray under his mother's guidance.

Religious aspects in Dostoevsky's novel are reduced to such an extent in *Hakuchi* that even the most positive hero, Kameda, admits to atheism. While a bell is chiming from the Akama family altar, he tells Akama that he does not especially believe in god and soon afterward he pays a visit to Akama's mother described above. Although Kameda speaks haphazardly and with no striking effect, the scene signals Kurosawa's revision of Dostoevsky's novel. The novel's religious dimension is reduced as can be seen when Rogozhin and Myshkin exchange of crosses, a religiously charged moment is replaced with Kameda and Akama's more neutral act of exchanging charms. Another example of Kurosawa's use of rational approaches to what Dostoevsky considered spiritual questions can be found in the treatment of evil. Kurosawa implied that materialism is a source of evil in the world as he pursued the dramatic opposition between the pure man and the corrupt world surrounding him: both the novel and the film are saturated with references to money. Taeko's birthday party scandal testifies to the fact that the beautiful heroine is treated as a commodity up for sale. In order to give even more emphasis to the evils of materialism, Kurosawa made some adjustments to the original text. For instance, in the film Taeko's photograph hangs in a photo studio window, whereas the portrait in the novel circulates only within the intimate circle of the Epanchin family. Kurosawa took the photograph of the heroine out of the bounds of a family circle and placed it on the street (moreover, in front of a train station) for all to see. The shot becomes more poignant when we take into account the heroine's disgraced social standing as a fallen woman (from childhood she has been kept as something like a courtesan by an old, wealthy man). The *mise-en-scène* of the shot implicates visually the fate of the heroine as a coveted commodity and an object of exchange and competition between men: "within this composition, no one of the three is represented in person; it contains only a photographic replica of the woman under the regard of the mirrored reflections of the two men" (Goodwin 75). This shot implies that (com)passion and desire incarnated by the characters are no less illusory than the pale photographic image and it also prefigures the tragedy that awaits the three protagonists. René Girard's theory concerning the nature of mimetic desire helps in my analysis of this shot: Akama's glance switches back and forth between the photographed woman and Kameda thus implying that Akama's desire for the woman is intensified upon witnessing what he interprets as another man's recognition of her value, although Kameda is overwhelmed by compassion.

At the heart of the tragedy Kurosawa depicts are human vices, greed, and desire run amok. The photograph of a defiled woman on public display is a covert sign of materialism and the commodification of human beings. This notion reaches its climax at the Kayama house when Taeko visits a prospective husband (i.e., "a buyer") and also at the heroine's birthday party where suitors start an unabashedly blatant competition for her by wagering money. Therefore, Kurosawa's revision of the episode centered around the heroine's photograph adds a layer to the original by underscoring the rampant materialism behind the exploitation of women's physical beauty and thus Kurosawa critiqued Japanese society of his time. In the same vein, Kurosawa modifies Myshkin's sudden ascent to wealth. Again, Kurosawa presents the episode with a more convincing plot than Dostoevsky's simple one. In the novel, Myshkin all of a sudden becomes the heir to a recently deceased millionaire who happens to be a distant relative Myshkin had never met or heard of. In the film, Kameda's fortune does not materialize so miraculously: his father left him a lucrative dairy enterprise, but he is unaware that his rightful fortune has been usurped by his close relations when Ono steals Kameda's inheritance by taking advantage of the error that caused him to be declared dead during the war, but confesses his wrongdoing later at Taeko's birthday party. In handling the twist of the protagonist's fate, Kurosawa made the narrative more feasible, rational, and critical of a materialistic society marred by greed.

Although Kurosawa deliberately omitted and changed some motifs and even episodes of the original text, he followed Dostoevsky's lead in presenting his hero as a "truly" good man who embodies a notion of goodness that can be realized in a secular world. Yet it should be emphasized that in comparison to Dostoevsky's notion of goodness Kurosawa's is rather one-dimensional: for Dostoevsky, it is inseparable from god encompassing both this world and beyond, but for Kurosawa that is not necessarily the case. Kurosawa's Myshkin is more "pure" and "simple" than his Russian counterpart. Note that Dostoevsky's Myshkin admits that "in his own soul there was darkness, since he could imagine such horrors" as those that preoccupy Rogozhin. The ambivalence or the wide spectrum of Myshkin's character is partly attributable to the ever-changing plans of the novel with a multitude of twists and turns. In the novel Myshkin was provided with traits which were later transferred to Rogozhin (see Frank). Kurosawa removes any traces of a "dark side" from his hero. For example, the introductory intertitle summarizes the nature of Kameda and this an indication as to how Kurosawa interpreted the protagonist: "Dostoevsky, the author, wished to portray a truly good man. Ironically, he chose an idiot for his hero. But a truly good man may seem like an idiot to others. This is the tragic record of the ruin of a pure and simple man" (全集 黒澤明 Vol. 3, 346). The film's ending demonstrates again how Kurosawa provided clarification for the ambiguities and baffling contradictions which are at the heart of Dostoevsky's novel. While Dostoevsky's Aglaya turns out to be a far cry from an ideal woman of her time, her Japanese counterpart Ayako repents over her hubris and concludes the film with an outright didactic message: "If we could only live our lives just loving people like he did instead of hating all the time ... I must have really been crazy. I think I am the one that was an idiot" (全集 黒澤明 Vol. 3, 145). Thus the statement inserted at the film's outset is repeated in different statements by different characters who serve as mouthpieces for Kurosawa in their affirmation of the good man's teachings.

As the beginning and the ending of the film illustrate, Kurosawa's interpretation of the hero is clear, straightforward, and coherent. In his dialogue with Dostoevsky's novel, Kurosawa revises, simplifies, and attempts to rationalize the story from his perspective. In this respect, it is natural that the emphasis of *Hakuchi* should be placed on the hero's tragic journey. To dramatize that journey, Kurosawa focuses on the story of his ill-fated love and resorts to the triangular composition that helps to create a dramatic effect. Kurosawa's intention to set a new example of melodrama with *Hakuchi* is expressed in one of his interviews (see Ogi 154). There is no question that *Hakuchi* draws upon some key elements of melodrama in film such as "great emotional intensity, heightened by music, gesture and *mise-en-scène*" (Russell 144). In particular, if in the first part the film is set out the story with the strategy of rationalization, the emphasis of the second half shifts to capitalizing on the melodramatic moments charged with emotional intensity and conflicts among the four central characters.

Melodrama in film is usually associated with women because it is often "dominated by an active female character" and addresses "the questions, problems, anxieties, difficulties and worries of



women living in a male-dominated, or patriarchal, society" (Buckland 113). In light of the general attributes of film melodrama, Kurosawa's idiosyncratic approach to the genre stands out. While *Hakuchi* foregrounds a woman's plight, it is the male protagonist to whom Kurosawa directs the utmost attention. Taeko's suffering and other melodramatic attributes are, after all, subordinate to the journey of Kameda, the "truly good man." In this regard, we can find one idiosyncratic aspect of Kurosawa's "new melodrama": it tells its story from the perspective of a male protagonist. Love is the overarching theme of the hero's tragic journey and in contrast to Dostoevsky Kurosawa modified the narrative structure and named his two parts "Love and Suffering" and "Love and Hate." As these titles suggest, in the film two variables ("suffering" and "hate") wrestle with love, which is incarnated by the major characters. Interestingly, all three keywords selected for the titles appear to correspond to specific characters: Kameda embodies love, Taeko is the sufferer crushed by people's greed and lust, and "hate" is associated with Ayako and Akama. While the theme of love continues to predominate in the film, Kurosawa shifted emphasis from "suffering" to "hate" centering the action first around the triangle of Kameda, Akama, and Taeko and then around Kameda, Taeko, and Ayako. Whereas the former is a love triangle over one woman, the latter involves two women embroiled in a rivalry over the protagonist. The two triangles are intertwined to the extent that one changes the dynamics of the other and this is what precipitates the final catastrophe. In the second part of the film "love" and "hate" are intermingled in the hearts of Akama and Ayako. If Akama struggles with the opposite emotions for Taeko, who does not return his passion, Ayako is torn between her love for Kameda and hate (induced by pride and jealousy) for her rival, Taeko. Kurosawa may have had reasons for simplifying the novel's metaphysical and polyphonic dimensions which had to do with a subject he himself was exploring in his films. His interest in and search for a "good" man had begun before *Hakuchi*. For example, *酔いどれ天使* (1948) (*A Drunken Angel*) is a film that pits a yakuza against a humanist physician. As the title suggests, its main character has his flaws, but he exhibits compassion for others when he overcomes his initial contempt for the gangster and attempts to save him. A similar theme of a good man and his legacy emerges again in Kurosawa's *生きる* (1952) (*Ikiru*), a film of an ordinary, good man's journey even after death.

The novel ends with the downfall of all the four major characters: Myshkin falls into insanity and is returned to Switzerland, Rogozhin is sentenced to fifteen years in Siberia for his murder of Nastasia, and Aglaya goes abroad after marrying a Polish revolutionary who soon abandons her. This way, Dostoevsky's novel ends with the dispersal of the four main characters, none of whom remains in St. Petersburg. By contrast, Kurosawa's film does leave room for hope, given that some of the characters realize their folly: *Hakuchi* ends with Ayako's tearful admission that she might be the idiot, not Kameda. In addition, the ending is preceded by a sequence in which Ayako's mother expresses a similar view. Although the innocent man fails to save anyone let alone the sufferer, a few characters are touched by him. It is no accident that the "confessions" of the mother and daughter come at the very end, the point most marked for artistic effect. This denouement contains a seed of hope — the good man's legacy — that some people are able to see through their mistakes and embrace truth.

In conclusion, Kurosawa's *Hakuchi* invites us to travel across the written text to the visual medium and from the chronotope of Russia's nineteenth-century capital to the chronotope of Japan's postwar periphery. In dealing with the temporal setting, Kurosawa foregrounded the winter landscape rather than maximizing the postwar framework. Using the setting of Hokkaido in winter to exploit the visual possibilities of snow symbolism, Kurosawa transposed the tragic journey of a "good man" to a chronotope of his own creation. The film suggests Kurosawa's drive to rationalize and provide clarity to the characters' motivations in his adaptation of Dostoevsky's novel. He filled in what in Dostoevsky is a space of ambivalence and ambiguity with his own critique of moral decay and rampant materialism and the complex relationships between Dostoevsky's characters become melodramatic storylines which provide the possibility of personal growth and reconciliation. While the film remains crippled owing to its editing, *Hakuchi* stands firmly in Kurosawa's explorations of humanity in a world of vice.

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