

I think i'm turning  
japanese



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The beginning of the sociological conflicts between America and the Japanese began after World War II. After the war, the U. S. Occupation Forces required the Japanese to watch documentaries educating the Japanese people about American culture. In a way, it was an act of brainwashing.

There were specific messages the Americans attempted to convey to the Japanese. The meaning behind these messages, along with the real way in which these messages were conceived, has had a lasting effect on the Japanese American interaction to this day.

The American infatuation with Japan started here after the bombing of Hiroshima, a very tragic incident regretted by many Americans. The conflicts that lead up to Hiroshima, as well as the lingering regret that Americans still feel for it, combine to form a complex interaction between America and Japan. This is a relationship that is most apparently depicted in American Hollywood films.

(II) Cultural conflicts (mainly shown in Black Rain and Lost in Translation)

This Japanese/American interaction is most apparent in the films Black Rain and Lost in Translation. These films make an attempt at addressing the differences in culture and the social conflicts that occur, as well as show how this depiction in film has changed from the 80's to present day. It still must be remembered that these films are still both the product of Hollywood and drenched in American bias.

Black Rain, directed by Ridley Scott and starring Michael Douglas attempts to make a realistic assessment of the culture within the Japanese underworld.

The American character played by Michael Douglas is the protagonist because he is meant to represent the American point of view, similar to a tour guide.

He is also a reminder to the audience that even though they're traveling far from home, they are still in Hollywood. One of the first examples of cultural difference between Americans and the Japanese is the scene on the airplane where Douglas's character, Nick Conklin, is transporting a Yakuza gangster by the name of Sato over seas. While on the flight, Conklin is playing solitaire, Sato looks over and smirks when he notices Conklin cheating at the game.

This is a contrast between the American ideal of ambition and Japanese ideal of honor. Other cultural references the film makes are depicted in Sato's crime scheme and tactics, like how he beheads Conklin's partner Charlie, or how he makes counterfeit U. S. currency to get reparations for the bombing of Hiroshima. These are cultural references extending as far back as WWII.

This conflict puts Nick in the position as the sole descendant of the United States in the war with Japan. Sato represents the tyrannical aspects of Japan, and Matsumoto, the Japanese detective assisting Nick represents the innocent. This is to remind the audience that both were killed during the Bombing of Hiroshima.

After Nick kills Sato, instead of confiscating the counterfeit printing plates, he slyly gives them to Matsumoto to do with them what he will. The metaphorical message here is to pose the possibility that in this act Nick has made right what was done wrong with Hiroshima. This idea is obviously

preposterous and is a clear sign of the 80's American's ignorance towards the severity of WWII.

Along with the filmic repentance for crimes done to the Japanese, Hollywood often gives themselves a societal pat on the back for having such an influence on Japanese culture. This is best represented in the film *Lost in Translation*.

In Emanuel Saccarelli's article *Whispering retreat*, he argues that Sofia Coppola's film is more a subtly dark comedy at the expense of the Japanese than true depiction of the cross cultural conflicts. The premise of the film is very unique. It strays away from an over the top action plots common of many of the late 80's early 90's films, *Black Rain* for example (2003).

The film attempts to make a genuine window into Japanese culture as well as an interpretation of the differences between Americans and the Japanese. The idea being that by presenting examples of social interactions between American tourists and the citizens of Japan, the audience will convey more meaning within the gaps of communication.