



IN DREAMS ARE MONSTERS

Kuroneko (Yabu no naka no kuroneko)

While her son is at war, a woman and her daughter-in-law are raped and murdered by samurai. They return as vengeful spirits, seducing samurai to their deaths. A young man returns from battle a war hero, charged with destroying whoever is killing the samurai. An unsettling supernatural tale, set in feudal Japan, *Kuroneko* ranks alongside the filmmakers other masterpieces, *The Naked Island* and *Onibaba*.

Kelli Weston, bfi.org.uk

Kaneto Shindo's hyper-stylised take on Japan's classic ghost cat formula does for bamboo what the director's previous supernatural parable *Onibaba* (1964) did for bulrushes. Their towering, swaying forms picked out among the abyssal darkness dominate the aesthetic.

Set during a time of civil war in the medieval Heian era, it's a tale of rape, murder and revenge in which the restless spirits of a mother and her daughter-in-law return from the grave, reincarnated with the spirit of a black cat, to seduce and murder the unruly mob of soldiers responsible for their deaths.

The masterful use of light and shadow, and the repetition and re-staging of key sequences with subtle variations, create a minimalistic dreamscape in which emptiness becomes a crucial thematic and compositional component.

Jasper Sharp, bfi.org.uk, 22 March 2018

Much less extravagant than Shindo's earlier excursion into ghostly horrors with *Onibaba* – no lovers baying at the moon, no demon mask, no pit of corpses – *Kuroneko* is (albeit erratically) more of a mood piece.

It opens brilliantly with a long-held, angled shot of a clearing where a thatched cottage nestles cosily, a stream trickles past the front door, and the long grass gently stirs as the forest in the background suddenly becomes alive with prowling samurai. With their attack and rape of the two women, the style changes abruptly into crude, leering close-ups; then back again to contemplation as the samurai drift back into the forest, a cricket chirps in the empty clearing, and smoke slowly begins to billow from the cottage as it catches fire. This uncertainty of rhythm continues through the film, turning it into an uncomfortable mixture of graceful atmospherics and crude shock effects.

At its best, it is fleetingly reminiscent of *Ugetsu Monogatari* (the ghostly ladies welcoming their prey in the shadowy house), of *Kwaidan* (the journeys through the bamboo forest), of *The Revenge of Yukinojo* (the acrobatic tumbling out of the darkness by the feline monsters). The similarities, alas, are never sustained: the formal welcome to the ghost house and the mother's enigmatic, hieratic dance as her daughter woos the visitor give way to silly junketings around the bed; the splendid shot of the great gateway, with the shimmering figure of the ghost high on the parapet to lure unwary samurai, startlingly beautiful the first time round, is subsequently simply repeated,

rather lamely; and the dreamlike journey through the bamboo forest, also repeated several times, is usually cut off in mid flow with an insensitivity to rhythm which neither Mizoguchi nor Kobayashi would have permitted.

Nevertheless, for all its fits and starts, *Kuroneko* has a sufficiently ingenious story to remain enjoyable throughout, and it sporadically discovers moments of genuinely bizarre invention: the ladies somersaulting, amid billowing draperies, high above their intended victims as they ride through the forest; the monster (human) at bay with its own severed arm (feline) clutched in its teeth; the sudden, tell-tale cut into spectral slow motion as a woman walking along a forest path daintily jumps a puddle. Above all, the soundtrack is a marvel – even by Japanese standards – of care and cunning. With its carefully orchestrated symphony of natural sounds, miaows, grunts, shrieks, souging winds, and Kabuki plops and bangs, it is an entire entertainment in itself, and very nearly holds the whole film together.

Tom Milne, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, April 1979

KURONEKO (YABU NO NAKA NO KURONEKO)

Director: Kaneto Shindo

Production Companies: Kindai Eiga Kyokai, Nihon Eiga Shinsha

Executive Producers: Nobuyo Horiba, Setsuo Noto, Kazuo Kuwahara

Screenplay: Kaneto Shindo

Director of Photography: Kiyomi Kuroda

Lighting: Shoichi Tabata

Editor: Hisao Enoki

Art Director: Takashi Marumo

Make-up: Shigeo Kobayashi

Music: Hikaru Hayashi

Sound: Tetsuya Ohashi

Cast

Kichiemon Nakamura (*Gintoki*)

Nobuko Otowa (*Yone*)

Kiwako Taichi (*Shige*)

Kei Sato (*Raiko*)

Hideo Kanze (*Mikado*)

Rokko Toura (*samurai*)

Taiji Tonoyama (*farmer*)

Japan 1968

95 mins

IN DREAMS ARE MONSTERS

Kuroneko (Yabu no naka no kuroneko) Tue 25 Oct 20:45; Mon 31 Oct 21:00; Fri 18 Nov 18:15

The Fly Wed 26 Oct 21:00

La Llorona

Thu 27 Oct 20:30; Mon 7 Nov 21:00

Frankenstein Fri 28 Oct 18:20; Tue 8 Nov 18:20; Sun 27 Nov 13:00

Celluloid Screams and Live Cinema UK presents: Ghostwatch + Q&A Fri 28 Oct 20:20

Viy Fri 28 Oct 20:45; Tue 8 Nov 20:50

Creature from the Black Lagoon (3D)

Sat 29 Oct 11:40; Tue 1 Nov 20:50

A Nightmare on Elm Street

Sat 29 Oct 18:30; Wed 30 Nov 20:50

Candyman

Sat 29 Oct 20:45; Thu 17 Nov 20:50 (+ intro)

Nightbreed – Director's Cut

Sun 30 Oct 15:10 (+ intro); Sat 12 Nov 20:35

28 Days Later Mon 31 Oct 18:00 (+ Q&A with director Danny Boyle); Sat 26 Nov 20:45

I Walked With a Zombie Tue 1 Nov 18:10

Us Tue 1 Nov 20:40; Sat 19 Nov 15:10; Tue 29 Nov 20:40

The Autopsy of Jane Doe

Wed 2 Nov 18:10; Sat 26 Nov 20:40

Let's Scare Jessica to Death

Wed 2 Nov 20:45; Sat 19 Nov 20:45

Blacula Thu 3 Nov 20:55; Sat 26 Nov 13:00

Cronos Fri 4 Nov 18:30; Sat 19 Nov 12:10; Sun 20 Nov 18:30

Fright Night

Fri 4 Nov 20:50; Tue 22 Nov 20:40 (+ intro)

Possession Sat 5 Nov 20:20 (+ intro by author Kier-La Janisse); Sun 27 Nov 15:30

Ganja & Hess Mon 7 Nov 18:00; Sat 26 Nov 15:20

Inferno Wed 9 Nov 20:40; Sat 26 Nov 18:20

The Entity Fri 11 Nov 17:55; Tue 15 Nov 20:30

Nosferatu (Nosferatu – Eine Symphonie des Grauens) Sun 13 Nov 15:50 (+ intro by Silent Film Curator Bryony Dixon); Sat 19 Nov 14:10

The Skeleton Key Mon 14 Nov 20:45

Def by Temptation

Wed 16 Nov 18:10 (+ intro); Sat 26 Nov 18:10

Jennifer's Body Sun 20 Nov 15:15; Mon 21 Nov 18:00; Fri 25 Nov 20:45

Pontypool Mon 21 Nov 20:30; Sun 27 Nov 12:20

Under the Shadow

Wed 23 Nov 20:40; Tue 29 Nov 18:10

Ouija: Origin of Evil

Thu 24 Nov 20:40; Mon 28 Nov 18:10

Pet Sematary Fri 25 Nov 18:15; Mon 28 Nov 20:40

Good Manners (As Boas Maneiras)

Sun 27 Nov 18:10; Wed 30 Nov 20:25

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