

“We’ll embrace one another and go on, all right?”

Everyday life in Ozu Yasujirô’s post-war films 1947-1949.



University of Turku  
Faculty of Humanities  
Cultural History  
Master’s thesis  
Topi E. Timonen  
17.5.2019

The originality of this thesis has been checked in accordance with the University of Turku quality assurance system using the Turnitin OriginalityCheck service.

UNIVERSITY OF TURKU

School of History, Culture and Arts Studies

Faculty of Humanities

TIMONEN, TOPI E.: "We'll embrace one another and go on, all right?" Everyday life in Ozu Yasujirô's post-war films 1947-1949.

Master's thesis, 84 pages. Appendix, 2 pages.

Cultural history

May 2019

---

Summary

The subject of my master's thesis is the depiction of everyday life in the post-war films of Japanese filmmaker Ozu Yasujirô (1903-1963). My primary sources are his three first post-war films: *Record of a Tenement Gentleman* (Nagaya shinshiroku, 1947), *A Hen in the Wind* (Kaze no naka no mendori, 1948) and *Late Spring* (Banshun, 1949). Ozu's aim in his filmmaking was to depict the Japanese people, their society and their lives in a realistic fashion. My thesis offers a close reading of these films that focuses on the themes that are central in their everyday depiction. These themes include gender roles, poverty, children, nostalgia for the pre-war years, marital equality and the concept of arranged marriage, parenthood, and cultural juxtaposition between Japanese and American influences. The films were made under American censorship and I reflect upon this context while examining the presentation of the themes. My close reading combines methods from cultural history and film studies, whereas my position is that of a cultural historian.

I argue, that cinema affects the way people view themselves and their nation. By presenting Japanese society with certain cultural, societal and moral features the films also produce this kind of a national mentality. I found this to be especially true with the female depictions in the films. The films give their female protagonists new forms of freedom in different stages of life, for instance relating to the arrangement and the execution of the marriages. I found that through their narratives and characters the films campaign for a subtle reformation of the values within the Japanese family system, but also strive to ensure the continuance of this family culture. Preservation through transformation also becomes a central feature in the post-war national mentality and the Japanese-ness of the characters.

Keywords: Japanese film, Ozu Yasujirô, film studies, cultural history, modernization, gender roles, Japan, everyday life, family dynamics, representation

## CONTENTS

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Background and research questions ----- 1
- 1.2 Research methods, the films and Japanese film studies ----- 4
- 1.3 The approach of cultural history in relation to previous Ozu studies --- 7

### 2. Contemporary emotional poverty: *Record of a Tenement Gentleman* (1947)

- 2.1 Changes in the state of censorship ----- 12
- 2.2 Depictions of poverty and children ----- 17
- 2.3 Nostalgia: contrast between the present and the past ----- 26

### 3. The politics of forgiving: *A Hen in the Wind* (1948)

- 3.1 The representation of a Japanese woman ----- 33
- 3.2 Working towards marital equality ----- 42
- 3.3 Tanaka Kinuyo and the post-war femininity ----- 51

### 4. Happiness and work: *Late Spring* (1949)

- 4.1 Family dynamics and paternal parenthood ----- 57
- 4.2 Arranged marriage in contrast to love matches ----- 63
- 4.3 Modern and traditional imagery of post-war Japan ----- 68

### 5. Conclusion ----- 74

### Sources ----- 78

### Appendix: Ozu Yasujirô's directorial filmography ----- 85

Cover photo: Aoki Hôhi and Iida Chôko in *Record of a Tenement Gentleman* (1947). Photo source: Internet Movie Database.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background and research questions

Japanese Ozu Yasujirō<sup>1</sup> (1903-1963) directed 54 feature films in his lengthy career spanning from 1927 to 1962. 37 of these films survive today and have garnered Ozu reputation as possibly Japan's most important and respected filmmaker.<sup>2</sup> During the 1930's, Ozu specialized in the genre of *shomin-geki*, which means drama that focuses on the Japanese working-class people and their home environment. Ozu's lead characters were usually close to his own age while making the films, which creates a sense of natural aging and advancement to his filmography. He spent practically his whole career working for the same studio, Shochiku, where he initially gained considerable critical acclaim by winning the Kinema Junpō top prize three consecutive years from 1932 to 1934.<sup>3</sup> Much of Shochiku's output, both *shomin-geki* and melodramas were considered to be for female audiences. Ozu's audience was also predominantly female.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout his career, Ozu's work combined traditional and modern influences. In the 1930's, he was seen as a keen modernist whose work was heavily inspired by the American filmmakers that he adored. In the 1950's, the younger critics started seeing him as a conservative traditionalist bent on his ways.<sup>5</sup> Yet there was not any particular, sudden change in his style of filmmaking. His films always avoided traditional, forced movie plots and instead relied on characters and dialogue. Through these Ozu attempted to create an experience of relatable everyday existence. Japanese society went through a process of accelerated modernization during this era. When we combine Ozu's interest in both the old and the new forms of culture, and his objective to depict Japanese families as they really

---

<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, Japanese names appear in the traditional Japanese way, family name first.

<sup>2</sup> Richie 1974, xi.

<sup>3</sup> *Kinema Junpō* is Japan's oldest film magazine, which publishes an annual "ten best films" list that is considered very prestigious. Ozu won the first prize a total six times during his career, for the films *I Was Born, But...* (Otona no miru ehon - Umarete wa mita keredo, 1932), *Passing Fancy* (Dekigoroko, 1933), *The Story of the Floating Weeds* (Ukikusa monogatari, 1934), *The Brothers and Sisters of the Toda Family* (Todake no kyōdai, 1941), *Late Spring* (Banshun, 1949), and *Early Summer* (Bakushū, 1951). Source: Wikipedia.

<sup>4</sup> Bordwell 1988, 38.

<sup>5</sup> Bordwell 1988, 9-11.

were, his films open to us as a valuable audio-visual window into the years of Japan's most intense socio-cultural change. It has also been pointed out, that the existence of national cinema in itself is a form of modernization.<sup>6</sup>

I have chosen three of Ozu's films as the subject of this thesis: *Record of a Tenement Gentleman* (Nagaya shinshiroku, 1947), *A Hen in the Wind* (Kaze no naka no mendori, 1948) and *Late Spring* (Banshun, 1949). These were his first three films after the war had ended in Japan's defeat. The research question I wish to answer in my master's thesis is: how do these films depict the everyday life after the war? For this thesis, I have defined everyday life to mean family relations, gender equality, the worldview held and represented by the characters, and the outlook the films have on the contemporary society and the change brought by modernization. I am interested in how people are shown to readjust to normal society, how their lives are depicted, and what things are included in their everyday existence. Are women treated differently from men and how do these films treat the theme of poverty? What do the films tell about this time in history, and how do the characters in the films see the past, the present and the future?

These films were made under unique circumstances. Japan had never been occupied before during its long history. The new political situation also forced its way into the field of cinema. In March 1946, The Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers<sup>7</sup> formed a Civil Information and Education Section that was to inspect all Japanese screenplays from 1946 until 1952. The SCAP officials took control over the production of all Japanese media and culture issuing guidelines to the Japanese artists. This led the Japanese screenwriters to practice self-censorship in order to get work. Ozu's films of the era contain many of the themes that the Americans preferred. *Record of a Tenement Gentleman* and *A Hen in the Wind* for instance feature endings that are considerably more upbeat and optimistic about the future than the director's other work. *Late Spring* on the other hand provoked great controversy between

---

<sup>6</sup> Vitali & Willemen 2006, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Henceforward SCAP. The title referred to both General Douglas MacArthur and the different branches of his staff.

Ozu and the censors due to its subject of arranged marriage, seen by the Americans as a feudal Japanese custom they wanted to get rid of. SCAP also greatly disliked the Japanese custom of bowing, something which is ever-present in an Ozu film.<sup>8</sup> Due to the context, it is interesting and important to consider, how the presence of American censors affected the contents of the films and whether the relations between Japan and the United States are dealt with.

This thesis is interdisciplinary between cultural history and film studies. Because they depict mundane things, the films contain many overlapping themes. For instance, the first two clearly feature a female protagonist, so in order to answer how the films depict everyday life, I'm bound to also explore how the films depict women and their cultural roles in society. For this purpose, books by scholars Iwao Sumiko (1993), Imamura Anne E. (1996) and Kumagai Fumie (2014) have helped me better understand the role of women in Japanese society of the late 40's. The great thematic similarities and in some cases, dissimilarities make it fruitful to compare the films with one another. I have chosen to write this thesis in English, because the field of studies is international.<sup>9</sup> My disposition features the films in their own individual chapters, in the order of their release. Subchapters will tackle the most important themes in the films. I am using Ozu's filmography, and the films made by his contemporaries, as a frame of reference in order to find out the ways in which the films are unique, or how they fall into wider trends. I have previously written papers about Japanese cinema, and of Ozu. The bachelor's thesis I made for media studies was about Ozu's 1958 film *Equinox Flower*. That thesis was about the depictions of families and happiness in the film.

---

<sup>8</sup> Anderson & Richie 1982, 162.

<sup>9</sup> Even the Japanese scholars often write in English, since this increases the number of readers they can reach. I also have plans to continue in this field of studies in the future, which supports writing this paper in English.

## 1.2 Research methods, the films and Japanese film studies

My own position is that of a cultural historian. Though I am very much a fan of Ozu's, the interest of this thesis for these films lies not in artistic mastery, but in the social realism displayed, their value as historical source material and the depiction of people, customs and mentality. My aim is therefore not to review the films, but to analyse their content through their context, and in relation to the research questions that I have laid out. It is also noteworthy, that I am looking at the ways in which these things are visible in the film's representation of physical everyday reality, instead of trying to psychoanalyze how the films accidentally reveal hidden parts of the national psyche between the lines, in the vein of Siegfried Kracauer's study *From Caligari to Hitler* (1947). The method I am using to achieve this is the close reading of the films. Cultural historian Hannu Salmi argues that a good way to build the close reading of a film is to break down its narrative structure into sequences, which is what I have done in this thesis.<sup>10</sup> Salmi also points out how the detailed nature of the close reading must be selected case by case, as it is not necessary to analyse every film shot by shot.<sup>11</sup> This was very true with Ozu's films, and I have narrowed the thematic divide of this thesis to the themes and elements, which I view to be central in their everyday depiction, thus setting a direction for the close reading. I shall now briefly describe the three films that are my subject.

*Record of a Tenement Gentleman* is about a middle-aged lady, who unwillingly has to look after a little boy. It seems that the boy's father has abandoned him because of poverty. The woman does not want the boy, but eventually warms up to the idea. In the end, the father returns and takes the boy. The protagonist decides to adopt a child for herself from an orphanage. The film's central theme is broken families, but it features a hopeful atmosphere, and at times serves as a comedy. In the chapter dealing with this film I start with a little background about Ozu and how the rules laid out by SCAP officials changed filmmaking in Japan. I will then offer a close reading of the film first with the theme of

---

<sup>10</sup> Salmi 1993, 143.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.



children and poverty and then in the final subchapter from the theme of nostalgia for the pre-war era.

*A Hen in the Wind* also has a female protagonist. It tells the story of a 28-year-old wife, whose husband hasn't returned from the war yet. Their son gets sick, and because the wife can't pay the medical bill, her only way to earn the much-needed money is to resort to prostitution. When the husband returns, they have a marital crisis. The film has a darker tone than Ozu's films usually do. It features domestic violence, but the film also is clearly on the woman's side in the conflict. It ends in the couple forgiving one another. I will look at the female representation in the film and how marriages are viewed in the film's narrative. The final subchapter will expand on the theme of female agency by focusing on the presence of the film's star, Tanaka Kinuyo.

*Late Spring* is about 27-year old Noriko who still lives with her widowed father. The father is trying to arrange a marriage for his daughter. Noriko doesn't want to get married because this would leave him all alone. The father insists upon the matter, because he wants Noriko to have somebody after he himself has died. With this film, I am most interested with the depiction of the relationship between the father and the daughter, the marriage culture and the juxtaposition of things Japanese and western. Most likely for many of these reasons, *Late Spring* is one of the most famous Japanese films of all time. It has also been seen by critics as "the quintessential occupation film", due to its timely content and the problems it faced with censorship.<sup>12</sup>

The attention the films have received has not divided equally. For a long time only Ozu's post-war works were known in the west and most writing about Ozu still focuses on the films he made from 1949 onwards. His two first films after the war, *Record of a Tenement Gentleman* and *A Hen in the Wind* are however among Ozu's least-known films based on the small amount of research that has been dedicated to them. Unlike the director's other

---

<sup>12</sup> Geist 2006, 121.

films, they were not popular with the audiences or the critics when they were released.<sup>13</sup> *Late Spring* is the exact opposite, Ozu's most popular work after *Tokyo Story* (1953).<sup>14</sup> The general availability and the critical acclaim of the films have been large factors in how they have been subjected for writing. It is also noteworthy, that Japanese films weren't seen in the west before 1951, the year Kurosawa Akira's film *Rashomon* (1950) won the Golden Lion at the Venice film festival.<sup>15</sup> Ozu only started to gain international critical acclaim in 1963, the year he died.<sup>16</sup>

Film scholar Scott Nygren has pointed out that the western audiences received these films initially without their context and without knowledge of Japan's history and culture. Instead, the films circulated around the globe decades before the film theory to help understanding them.<sup>17</sup> After Japanese films had established a wider visibility in foreign countries, the western writers influenced by Japanese cinema started building the foundation for a field of studies dedicated to it. It is again noteworthy that for a long time Japanese voices were absent from the discussion.<sup>18</sup> The most important western writer is Donald Richie, who lived in Japan and wrote books about Japanese cinema from 1950's onward. Richie's *Ozu* (1974) is a pioneering work that helped make Ozu's films more known in the west. Since the publishing of the Richie book, Ozu has grown to be the most-written-about Japanese filmmaker along with Kurosawa. David Bordwell's *Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema* (1988) is one of the most thorough books written about Ozu so far. It has also benefitted from Richie's earlier work. Both books are among the main sources for this thesis. Of the later books about Ozu, Woojeong Joo's *The Cinema of Ozu Yasujiro: Histories*

---

<sup>13</sup> Bordwell 1988, 10.

<sup>14</sup> In 2012, *Sight and Sound* asked the world's most acclaimed 358 directors for their favourite film of all time. *Tokyo Story* received the most votes, *Late Spring* coming in at number 15.

<sup>15</sup> This peaked an interest into the uniqueness of this distant national cinema. One could see the attention coming rather late, considering the large role that Americans had played in Japanese film production since 1945.

<sup>16</sup> Nornes 2007, 79. He claimed that the foreign critics who did see his films did not properly understand them and simply "called them Zen". The first Japanese films to receive popularity outside Japan were usually period films (jap. Jidaigeki) featuring samurais and swordplay, not quiet modern-day home dramas.

<sup>17</sup> Nygren 2007, viii.

<sup>18</sup> Nygren 2007, ix. The first book about Japanese cinema by a Japanese writer to be released in English was Sato Tadao's *Currents in Japanese Cinema*, published as late as 1982.

*of the Everyday* (2018) has been an important source. Of these three writers, Joo's approach to Ozu is closest to my own, difference being that I am narrowing my thesis to only three films and a very particular historical period.

From 1990's onwards the interest in Japanese film has been on the rise by both audiences and historians. This has to do with Japanese popular culture receiving more international attention, but also the fact, that in our modern age the films themselves have become more available through DVD releases and internet. Japanese film has become a popular field of studies, and articles from books such as *Reframing Japanese Cinema* (1992), *Theorizing National Cinema* (2006) and *Japanese Cinema: Texts and contexts* (2007) have given me a great deal of material for this paper. As a positive turn of events, Japanese writers have also participated in the international discussion. Hirano Kyoko's book *Mr. Smith Goes to Tokyo: Japanese Cinema Under the American Occupation 1945-1952* (1992) proved to be invaluable help for this paper, for it is the most comprehensive work written about the period in the country's film history that I'm dealing with.

### **1.3 The approach of cultural history in relation to previous Ozu studies**

For the purposes of academic cultural history, films can serve as either the source material or the research subject.<sup>19</sup> My thesis is an example of the latter case, since I am studying the films themselves and their depiction of the contemporary everyday life. Hannu Salmi has noted that films, just like history, serve as a memory for mankind, even if they are not always truthful.<sup>20</sup> The films in my thesis are fictional and I do not expect them to relate a perfectly honest view of their subject matters. Yet I believe their existence itself, and the ways in which they have been put together, can tell us a lot about their historical context and how the Japanese people viewed the subjects of these films at the time. Through this, the films convey social history. Since the 1980's, there has been a cultural shift in historical studies and historical shift in film studies, further enabling the application of micro-, social-

---

<sup>19</sup> Salmi 1993, 13.

<sup>20</sup> Salmi 1993, 14.

, and gender-historical perspectives on the research.<sup>21</sup> I view the films to be not merely telling of the social context in which they were made, but to also being constantly communicating a certain social order through their contents: besides being products of history they also serve as its producers. I have referred to the films in present tense, since this better conveys both the communicative nature of the medium of film, and the fact that I am looking at them from a different era than the one in which they were made.

I have contextualised my thesis in a way, that emphasises the films as works of Japanese culture and society, instead of being representative of global cinematic history at a given time. Yet I understand, as film scholar Paul Willemen puts it, that cultural zones aren't made with uncrossable borders.<sup>22</sup> Whereas I do consider the American SCAP officials as a heavy influence to their contents, I feel Ozu's initial purposes with the films are best reached, by viewing them as indicators of their contemporary Japan. According to Scott Nygren, Japanese films have often been studied as historical continuum, where one film relates to the ones made before it.<sup>23</sup> However, I would argue, that in many Japanese film histories the history of the medium is handled quite separate from the larger national history, which reinforces the need for a cultural historian's approach to them. Ozu has been studied in the context of Japanese film history and through his own personality cult among film-lovers, but most of the academic studies dedicated to him would fall closer to film studies than cultural history. Woojeong Joo's writings do view Ozu cultural-historically, but I feel my thesis is more focused on the physical embodiments of everyday life in Ozu's films, instead of the influences and the construction of the zeitgeist within them.<sup>24</sup> Yet for most other writers Ozu seems to be an island, separate of everything else, as he is not compared to his contemporaries or viewed as a filmmaker out to make a profit.

---

<sup>21</sup> Mulari & Piispa 2013, 8.

<sup>22</sup> Willemen 2006, 31.

<sup>23</sup> Nygren 2007, 15.

<sup>24</sup> Joo 2017, 3-4. Joo argues that everyday life is a universal concept, hard to define for academic studies. According to him, Ozu's everyday depictions are both temporally and spatially demarcated. His writings focus on how Ozu constructs this experience of everyday in his films, whereas my thesis is more centred around which things Ozu chooses to include in this everyday existence, and how they are depicted.

For purposes of historical studies, merely watching the films is not enough but must be supported by other sources to achieve a functional contextualisation.<sup>25</sup> This is problematic, since Japanese cinema as an international field of studies was created by film critics, and not historians. Therefore, the interest of the scholarship has been more centred around auteur filmmakers, and not in the public taste.<sup>26</sup> Hannu Salmi argues that the masterpiece tradition in writing of film histories ignores the communication films have with their audiences and also the collective spirit that goes into filmmaking.<sup>27</sup> This effect is often evident while reading national film histories. For this thesis, I was not able to find accounts about how the individual films were received by people who were not critics. This is a shame, because the films contain such important and thought-provoking topics. For instance, the scene in *A Hen in the Wind* where the husband slaps his wife undoubtedly was seen in a different light by a Japanese female moviegoer in 1948 than a Finnish male film historian in 2019.

Besides his body of work, Ozu is well known for his reputation as “the most Japanese filmmaker”.<sup>28</sup> While it’s an interesting notion, I do not find it important to analyse. After all, Ozu most likely did not try to be the most Japanese director. It is also not possible from the standpoint of academic cultural history to make deductions about the Japanese-ness of one director compared to others. Still this old argument persists and has for decades directed many scholars to a certain angle from which to view Ozu’s work. Even more than with other auteur filmmakers, Ozu the person has been seen inseparable from Ozu the director. The fact that little is known about him outside his films has helped him to become a mythical figure for many. Abe Mark Nornes’ article about *Late Spring* starts off by analysing Ozu’s

---

<sup>25</sup> Salmi 1993, 56. The contextualisation of this thesis is based on the films themselves and all the source literature that was available.

<sup>26</sup> In the west, we therefore know primarily the films that the critics loved, and not necessarily the films the people loved. As a critic’s director, Ozu is more the former than the latter.

<sup>27</sup> Salmi 1993, 20.

<sup>28</sup> Critics have agreed, that Ozu’s work has a national flavour, which makes the films more “Japanese” than those by other directors. This distinction that seems to have always existed, is the starting point for most texts about Ozu. David Bordwell mentions it in the first chapter of his book’s introduction, Donald Richie throws it out in the first sentence. Bordwell 1988, 1. Richie 1974, xi.

gravestone, as if it was the “key” to understanding his films.<sup>29</sup> Many critics try to discover autobiographical elements from the films, which can lead to over-analysing them. I view the films as works of a consistent artist, but also as products of a certain time in history and a certain cultural environment. I argue the films are best served by analysing them based on their content and their context.

Ozu’s style as a filmmaker is both visually and thematically unique in an instantly recognizable way, which has led many writers to write about his work in general. A frequently used term that people use to describe Ozu films is “mono no aware”, a concept that means the sadness we experience while we acknowledge the passing of time and the fading of beautiful things.<sup>30</sup> This feeling is certainly present especially in his later films, but also in the usage of such a wide term lies the danger of generalization. Ozu’s canon also includes lighter comedic works, and even in his saddest films the element of comedy is always present. Also, it is noteworthy that Ozu never mentioned the term himself.<sup>31</sup> Much of the scholarship has examined how Ozu made his films, the patterns in his screenwriting and composition of his scenes. Richie calls Ozu an architect<sup>32</sup> and both his and Bordwell’s books focus on the form and the structure of the films.

For decades the spreading of Japanese films outside Japan’s borders happened one director at a time. This approach turned the focus to so-called auteur directors, such as Kurosawa, Ozu and Mizoguchi Kenji. To this day, our conception of older Japanese cinema is very director centred, because these are the films that have gained international visibility. Japanese film scholar Yoshimoto Mitsuhiro has stated that a central feature of auteurism is seeing the films as the director’s personal expression.<sup>33</sup> Film critic Tony Rayans notes that while most scholars do see stylistic and narrative differences between different Ozu

---

<sup>29</sup> Nornes 2007, 78. Ozu’s gravestone does not bear his name. It merely has the symbol “mu”, which translates to “nothing”.

<sup>30</sup> For more extensive definitions, see: Richie 1974, 52. Bordwell 1988, 26-29.

<sup>31</sup> Richie 1974, 175.

<sup>32</sup> Richie 1974, 18.

<sup>33</sup> Yoshimoto 2000, 55.

pictures, the films are similar enough to warrant the adjective “ozu-esque” and give the people an immediate understanding of what that means.<sup>34</sup> Ozu did not allow any improvisation from his actors but instead dictated every gesture and every blink of an eye.<sup>35</sup> This has led to critics viewing Ozu’s work in a very auteur-centred way. Donald Richie has offered a critique of director-centrism by pointing out how Japan more than most cultures values harmonious contribution over single-minded determination.<sup>36</sup> Personally and for the purposes of this thesis I do see Ozu as the driving force behind the formation of his films, while also keeping in mind the contributions by other people, such as the actors. Ozu’s way of casting people in roles that fitted their personas and star images also means that by simply being present, a certain actor in a certain role affects the way one views the film.

---

<sup>34</sup> Rayans 2010, 23.

<sup>35</sup> Wood 1986, 552.

<sup>36</sup> Richie 2001, 12. Despite this, Richie’s own book about Ozu is very much auteur-centric.

## 2. Contemporary emotional poverty: *Record of a Tenement Gentleman* (1947)

### 2.1 Changes in the state of censorship



Aoki Hôhi and Iida Chôko in *Record of a Tenement Gentleman* (1947). Photo source: Internet Movie Database.

*Record of a Tenement Gentleman* was Ozu's first film in five years. This was the longest break between films in his entire career. Many people feel that the English language title of the film is not accurate. This is obvious already in the fact that the film is not about a "gentleman", but a woman and a child. According to David Bordwell a better translation would be "A Who's Who of the Tenements".<sup>37</sup> Film scholar Edward Fowler chose to use Bordwell's title for the film in his article about it.<sup>38</sup> Not to cause confusion, I have chosen to refer to it as "*Record*". In this first subchapter I will analyse the historical context in which Ozu created his first post-war work, how it differed from the past, and how it affected the themes and the contents of the film. I will also offer a look on how the film was received initially and in later years.

---

<sup>37</sup> Bordwell 1988, 296.

<sup>38</sup> Fowler 2010, 274.



Like the whole society, Japanese cinema went through a massive change after the surrender of Japan was announced on August 15, 1945. During the early 1930's, Japan had a flourishing national cinema with a huge annual output of films and a number of renowned directors with distinctive styles. During the decade Ozu, who had started his career as a camera assistant in the 20's, rose to be considered as one of his country's most acclaimed filmmakers.<sup>39</sup> Towards the end of the 30's Japanese cinema started changing. Personal and individualistic films had to make way for state-controlled war propaganda with strict doctrines for the filmmakers to follow. In 1937 Ozu was drafted and served as a corporal in China for two years. After his return he made two films, before the army sent him to Singapore to make a propaganda film, that never materialized. His two war-time works, *The Brothers and Sisters of the Toda Family* (1941) and *There Was a Father* (Chichi ariki, 1942) contain some propagandistic elements, but still substantially less than most films produced in Japan during this time. As an admirer of American culture, Ozu left the topic of Americans completely undiscussed in these two films. Later in life, Ozu did not like to talk about his war-time experiences.<sup>40</sup> Though it's not always easy to make the distinction, his post-war filmography seems to display a direr need for peace and harmony in life than the films before. This is the case also with many other Japanese filmmakers.

Hirano Kyoko argues that the Americans and the Japanese chose to view to their enemy differently. After Japan had started the war Americans sought to gain information about the Japanese culture which they originally knew very little of. There was racist propaganda about the enemy, but beyond the surface there was also planning about how the threat of Japan was to be neutralized after the war. The Japanese chose to portray the Americans and the English as devils from whom nothing good could be gained, and everything associated with American culture was banned.<sup>41</sup> After the war ended, the mentality of both the filmmakers and the people was mixed. Many saw peace as a relief but were also worried about what was to come. Even though they had been portrayed as the enemy in war-time

---

<sup>39</sup> Bordwell 1988, 11.

<sup>40</sup> Richie 1974, 226.

<sup>41</sup> Hirano 1992, 24-25.

propaganda, many Japanese were glad about the Americans becoming their primary occupiers opposed to the alternative, The Soviet Union. Their society had borrowed many elements from the west in the years before the war, whereas communism had long been a subject of fear.<sup>42</sup>

According to Joseph Anderson and Donald Richie, over half of Japanese movie theatres had been destroyed during the bombings, but the film studios miraculously survived and the film production never stopped completely.<sup>43</sup> The filmmakers who had previously made films to support the war effort knew they had to change the themes and the direction of their work, even if they weren't initially sure how. Hirano has presented cases of film studios merely ordering re-shoots for the films they had in production to make the films ideologically harmless.<sup>44</sup> Richie and Anderson also view that the change from state censorship to SCAP censorship was not instant, but a slow dissolve.<sup>45</sup> In the bleak days following the surrender there was a great need for entertainment and cinema was one of the few options. The Americans had observed the humanistic elements the Japanese had implemented in some of their war-time film output and figured that incorporating something like this to peace-time filmmaking could have a positive effect.<sup>46</sup> Therefore the need to establish a common protocol was very urgent for them as well. Directors such as Ozu, Naruse Mikio and Gosho Heinosuke were just the thing for this new era in filmmaking, since their work was already known for its mix of warm humanistic characterization and progressive social commentary.

As early as September 1945 the SCAP officials met with Japanese film executives from different studios and suggested them a list of themes for their films. This was not an order but a recommendation. These themes included for instance soldiers returning to everyday

---

<sup>42</sup> Totman 2008, 451.

<sup>43</sup> Anderson & Richie 1959, 159.

<sup>44</sup> Hirano 1992, 148.

<sup>45</sup> Anderson & Richie 1959, 160.

<sup>46</sup> Hirano 1992, 27.

life, individualism and co-operation to build a peaceful nation.<sup>47</sup> It's arguable that Japanese cinema would have proceeded towards these topics even without the American encouragement, but it certainly made it plain for the filmmakers about what was to be expected from them. In November, SCAP issued a list of forbidden subjects, this time not a suggestion. The list included everything the Americans viewed as a threat, such themes as militarism, nationalism, unjust treatment of women or children, revenge, approval of suicide, anti-democratic opinions and feudal loyalty.<sup>48</sup> The last one made it near impossible to make period films and for a short time in the late 1940's almost all Japanese cinema was in the genre of *shomin-geki*.<sup>49</sup> Again for Ozu this was a lucky break, since this was the genre he already worked in. The two lists offered the filmmakers an understanding of what the occupiers wanted. During the following years the SCAP officials inspected every screenplay before it was filmed, and every film before it was showed, ordering changes if they saw them necessary.

Ozu was still tired in 1947, but Shochiku rushed him to work, and the screenplay for *Record* was written in only 12 days.<sup>50</sup> He always worked with a partner while writing, and for this film it was his frequent pre-war collaborator Ikeda Tadao. Though the themes of the film include confusion about the present and the future, stylistically there is a strong feeling of continuance, as if the director had just picked up from where he left off in 1937. Before the war, Ozu had developed an instantly recognizable visual style to his storytelling and recycled many of his actors from one film to the next. Ozu reunited with much of his previous cast and crew in *Record*, which also serves to remind the audience of his previous style. I would argue, that the familiarity of the actors in his films, makes the viewer feel that not only are the films about families, but also made by one. In *Record*, this can also be seen as a way to show that all these familiar people, this professional family unit, made it through the terrible experience of war. Though things seem bleak, this sends an optimistic message. The

---

<sup>47</sup> Hirano 1992, 38.

<sup>48</sup> Anderson & Richie 1959, 161.

<sup>49</sup> Richie 2001, 117.

<sup>50</sup> Richie 1974, 233. In comparison, *Tokyo Story* took 103 days to write. Von Bagh 1989, 438.

film also resembles Ozu's pre-war days in its length. At 72 minutes, it is by far the shortest film he directed after the war.

Ozu's films showed constant interest in the modernization of Japan ever present in the Tokyo of the 1930's, and later returned to this inspiration in the 50's. Focusing on Tokyo helps the films encapsulate the rapid social change, the presence of both the old and the new in the same space. It is almost inseparable from an Ozu film, for as David Bordwell has stated, 49 out of 54 of his films take place there and five have "Tokyo" in their title.<sup>51</sup> However, his first post-war films do not contain this familiar landscape, and *Record* takes place on the very outskirts of the city. Central Tokyo was the area with the most damage from the bombings.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, it's possible that the filmmakers purposefully avoided showing it. *Record* handles many timeless themes, but the milieu presented in it, is also resonant of the times. The bombings and the shortage of building materials after the war exploded the already-existing housing crisis that would not be completely over until 20 years later, and during this time overcrowding, flimsy shantytowns and widespread homelessness were all common phenomena in Japanese society.<sup>53</sup> Ozu based the film on the people he had seen in his childhood neighbourhood of Fukugawa: people who only owned one set of dirty clothes and drank cheap sake.<sup>54</sup> Thus he had a clear idea of what the actors and the milieu were supposed to look like.

Unlike Ozu's previous films, *Record* did not open to critical acclaim nor large audiences. People were craving for entertainment, but the films that did get big had a more escapist and more sunshiny nature to them. For example, in the same year, Goshō Heinosuke directed the sentimental romance *Once More* (Ima hitotabi no, 1947) which was hugely popular with both critics and the movie-going public.<sup>55</sup> However, many big-name directors struggled to gain popularity in the immediate years after the war, which lead to flops or

---

<sup>51</sup> Bordwell 1988, 39.

<sup>52</sup> Waswo 2002, 2.

<sup>53</sup> Waswo 2002, 2.

<sup>54</sup> Richie 1974, 142.

<sup>55</sup> Noletti 2010, 59-60.

changes in their style. *Record* was for years one of Ozu's lesser known pictures also in the west. When BFI and Criterion started to publish Ozu's catalogue on DVD, which has made many of his films considerably better known, *Record* again did not receive a wide DVD release. The only other Ozu film to share this distinction is another occupation-era film of his, *The Munekata Sisters* (Munekata kyôdai, 1950). *Record* has at times been available via YouTube, which has become a semi-illegal harbour for many a forgotten Japanese classic.

The reasons for poor availability are hard to tell. Most Ozu-scholars agree that the director's acclaimed "late period" started with *Late Spring* in 1949.<sup>56</sup> The final chapter of this thesis will deal with some of the reasons for this. Because *Record* has been difficult to see, it has not received much attention in Ozu studies before the 2000's. Edward Fowler's 2010 article, concerning Ozu's play with the censors, was a welcome addition to Ozu writing. Before Fowler, Richie dismissed the film with half a page in his 1974 book, writing that the "un-Japanese" ending where the woman decides to open a center for war orphans almost ruins the film.<sup>57</sup> The fact, that Richie ignores the film almost all-together, and then misremembers the ending, would suggest that he too had last been able to see it many years ago. Bordwell however had a very different opinion, stating that: "if Ozu had only made this seventy-two-minute film, he would have to be considered one of the world's greatest directors."<sup>58</sup>

## **2.2. Depictions of poverty and children**

Poverty was the central theme from the beginning of the production, the defining characteristic of the everyday life depicted in the film. *Record* takes place in a poor tenement neighbourhood and we get to see a variety of occupants and their interaction. The film opens with some shots of the tenement buildings during an evening, then cuts indoors, where the character Tamekichi (Kawamura Reikichi) is sitting by himself, reciting a monologue. It begins with: "Even the moon is shadowed once in a while, let alone small

---

<sup>56</sup> Bordwell 1988, 11.

<sup>57</sup> Richie 1974, 233.

<sup>58</sup> Bordwell 1988, 301.

human beings".<sup>59</sup> This weirdly theatrical procedure sets the stage before main characters in the story appear. Tamekichi's roommate Tashiro (Ryû Chishû) then enters the house with a young boy, Kohei (Aoki Hôhi), who got separated from his father while they were traveling in Kudan. The central conflict of the narrative is presented in a very clear-cut manner in the very first scene, which is rare for an Ozu film. We also already witness the first example of poverty, since two middle-aged men living together probably is an arrangement that has been made for this reason. Sharing apartments had been a common practise even before the war, since the housing demand in big cities was overwhelming and the cost of living high.<sup>60</sup> Tamekichi doesn't want the boy in his house, so Tashiro takes him to their neighbour Otane (Iida Chôko), a middle-aged widow who lives alone. She doesn't want the boy either, but Tashiro comically runs away and leaves him there. Otane tries to scare the boy away but is ultimately unsuccessful and the film cuts to next morning.

As an important narrative device, we do not hear the boy in *Record* speak for a very long time. Ozu's films often feature silent and stone-faced children but for this particular film it also serves as a poignant way to portray the psychological state of the child. The film starts with various individuals trying to get rid of the child, instead of helping him find his father. Both Otane and Tamekichi rationalize their unwillingness to accommodate him by stating that they hate children, while he is standing right in front of them. Tashiro is the only character who shows a positive attitude towards the youngster, but as a subtenant he is not at a position to house him. In his essay about Ozu's film *I Was Born, But...*, Alastair Phillips presents that in the film childhood and adulthood exist as separate worlds.<sup>61</sup> This line of thinking fits *Record* as well, because for such a long time there is no dialogue between adults and the child, and the adults can not view the situation from his point of view.

---

<sup>59</sup> *Record of a Tenement Gentleman*, timecode 1.40 – 2.41. According to Edward Fowler, the monologue is from the play *Onna keizu* by Izumi Kyoka. Fowler 2010, 274.

<sup>60</sup> Waswo 2002, 1-2, 45.

<sup>61</sup> Phillips 2007, 29.

From the beginning the child is viewed as a financial strain for whoever gets stuck with him. According to Hirano Kyoko, one of the civil censors Konno Toshio filed an objection because he thought the film treated children too cruelly. Hirano suspects that this might have been a case where the censors were bribed, since all the objected scenes survive in the finished film.<sup>62</sup> One of the issues was that the boy is objectified in a clear and an impersonal way. Many of the characters make their living by trading goods and so the boy is presented as another commodity they desperately want to ditch. In the morning Otane, Tamekichi and another neighbour Kawayoshi Kihachi (Sakamoto Takeshi) draw lottery about who has to accompany the child to look for his father. Otane is stuck with the boy comically again, because the two others cheat. Tricks and ploys such as this were a common element of Ozu's films, but the fact that the sympathetic characters of the film resolve to them in order to not have to help a child in distress, serves as a successful way to portray the coldness of the post-war mentality of the poorer people. The director still plays the scenes out as comedy, which was usual for Ozu while tackling darker narratives.

Along with the storyline, the casting plays an important part in creation of the film's themes. Ozu had to know the actors of his films before writing the screenplay, so that he could give them roles and characteristics that fitted them individually. Since he was a perfectionist, who dictated even the slightest motion or gesture by them, Ozu did not care about acting talent, but instead who the actors were as persons.<sup>63</sup> Using the same actors over and over again playing similar or dissimilar characters played with the viewer's expectations. The actors Iida Chôko, Ryû Chishû, Kawamura Reikichi and Sakamoto Takeshi are all at an age, where many people already have children. With the exception of Kawamura, the actors have all appeared in Ozu's previous films and played positive parental figures. Iida previously played the mother who sacrifices everything for her child in *The Only Son* (*Hitori musuko*, 1936), Ryû had portrayed the wise dad in *There Was a Father*, and Sakamoto was most famous for playing likeable characters also named Kihachi in several Ozu films of the

---

<sup>62</sup> Hirano 1992, 74.

<sup>63</sup> Richie 1974, 28.

30's. The casting of these people in this situation encapsulates the changed mentality and the emotional poverty central to the film.

The morning does not find things much better between Otane and the young visitor. After getting scared during the night, the child wets his bed. In the morning, the mattress is hanged outside the house, and angry Otane tells him to dry it with a fan. It is noteworthy, that the mattress greatly resembles the American flag with a huge piss stain on it.<sup>64</sup> Later in the film we have almost exactly the same scene, and it is baffling how Ozu could have managed to put these images past the American censors. Donald Richie has pointed out how Ozu had also treated the war-time Japanese censors in ways, that would have gotten other people in jail.<sup>65</sup> Isolde Standish, on the other hand, sees Ozu's films from the 1930's parodying regimentation.<sup>66</sup> Through these examples, we can gather that the director had a habit of poking fun of whatever he saw was at hand, and at all times did the surrounding society offer him some material to work with. According to the director Masahiro Shinoda who knew Ozu, the director got away with things like this, because he was such a funny guy, who had a gift of saying serious things in a light-hearted way.<sup>67</sup> Edward Fowler has viewed the flag aspect in *Record* as Ozu's revenge about the SCAP censors' complaints about the harsh treatment of children.<sup>68</sup> Be that as it may, I think it just serves as another light-hearted visual gag, an amusing "ozuism" without ulterior political motives.

The bedwetting itself is not a strange element for the film. As Richie has pointed out, the director often chose to implement "earthly touches" such as farting, picking one's teeth with a finger, or going to the toilet to his films, because these are moments when humans are most human.<sup>69</sup> The bedwetting motif in *Record* serves first as a source of conflict, but also something to identify with in the second half of the picture, when Otane confesses:

---

<sup>64</sup> *Record of a Tenement Gentleman* (1947), time code 6.30 – 7.20. The mattress is seen again at 45.10 – 20.

<sup>65</sup> Richie 1974, 230.

<sup>66</sup> Standish 2005, 114.

<sup>67</sup> Richie 1974, 230.

<sup>68</sup> Fowler 2001, 283.

<sup>69</sup> Richie 1974, 36.



“Come to think of it, I wet the bed at that age too.” Another unappealing physical motif to first alienate, and then bring the two together, is the presence of lice. The boy is constantly wriggling his shoulders, because he is itchy. Since the boy doesn’t defend himself by talking, the pissing and the wriggling serve as a bad first impression, and a good reason to keep him out. Yet later, when Otane regrets treating him so harshly, she herself starts wriggling. The director fond of the less-shiny side of everyday life, tells us that the child has made his way into the woman’s heart, by showing that the woman now has the same bugs.

Otane takes the boy to Chikasagi to look for the father. It turns out the father is a travelling carpenter, whose house got destroyed during the war, and who afterwards has lived as a subtenant wherever he finds employment. Due to the housing crisis, Japan tried to restrict people’s mobility in 1946, by passing legislature that forbade moving to cities where the population was more than 100 000.<sup>70</sup> Thus we can see that drifters looking for employment were not viewed positively. The fact that Kohei’s father left for Tokyo with everything he owned, makes Otane believe that the boy did not get lost, but was abandoned by a no-good father, and she is also quick to blurt this to the boy. She then tries to abandon the child herself to a beach in a segment, that reminds the viewer about the director’s history in directing silent comedies.<sup>71</sup> When we then cut to next scene at Tamekichi’s house, we discover that Otane has not managed to shake off the child, and has taken her revenge by making him carry 16 pounds of potatoes back home, so that the trip wasn’t totally pointless. This was another scene objected by the censors as child brutality, that remains in the film nonetheless.<sup>72</sup>

These scenes depict the harsher realities of post-war everyday life. The journey is quite long and there is no functioning public transportation. People were difficult to find as many did not have permanent addresses. These scenes take place in bombed-down neighbourhoods which creates an association to the people, who were uncared for in the aftermath of

---

<sup>70</sup> Waswo 2002, 48.

<sup>71</sup> *Record of a Tenement Gentleman* (1947), time code 16.00 – 20.00.

<sup>72</sup> Hirano 1992, 74.

the bombings. Edward Fowler's article about *Record* argues that both the critics who have written about the film, and the contemporary SCAP censors, were pre-occupied with the plotline. His reading sees Ozu purposefully directing their attention to the story, while inserting the film full of images that are at war with it, presenting a more critical assessment of the state of occupied Japan.<sup>73</sup> Personally, I don't believe Ozu is trying to hide anything. On the contrary, he lingers on these shots, and makes sure we notice them. *Record's* storyline amounts to very little we don't read it within its historical context. The context is presented as purposefully bleak and relatable on a national level, so that the emotional breakthrough of the final act would feel more rewarding and hopeful. This is not to say that Ozu would shy away from the darker realities of the post-war, but that he manages to use this aspect to support the narrative in a way that's visually present, but doesn't distract the viewer's attention too much, either.

After they return, the evening's regular neighbourhood meeting gets a festive tone, because Kawayoshi's son has won 2000 yen in the lottery.<sup>74</sup> Because he is about the same age as Kohei, Otane manages to turn this into another reason to dislike the boy, who didn't win the lottery for her. The kid does not get to come to the celebration. This is important, since gatherings such as this in the post-war films of Ozu bring the characters closer to the viewer and help create the communal feel of the films. The neighbours share their superstitious beliefs about the lottery. Earlier we have seen how the future seems very uncertain to these characters. Tashiro makes his living as a fortune teller though he can't even predict the weather. When it comes to the hopes of having a better financial situation, they have more confidence in chance than in active socio-cultural change.

The film refrains from making observations about the political context of the times and settles to showing the present reality for these characters. This is a shared quality with almost all of the director's social realism. Ozu's contemporaries such as Mizoguchi, Naruse

---

<sup>73</sup> Fowler 2010, 281.

<sup>74</sup> *Record of a Tenement Gentleman* (1947), time code 22.50 – 28.00.

and Goshu were known to campaign for social change, but Ozu was always more interested in depicting the present. Donald Richie sees Ozu's work consisting of unique individuals and not representative types.<sup>75</sup> I don't think these two necessarily rule each other out. Ozu's characters feel real and personal, but even though they represent individuality more than the average film characters, their meaningful presence also stems from their relatability and the familiarity of the problems they face. I agree with Richie about how Ozu's films draw their vigour from the fact that the director manages to make the audience love these characters and get invested in their everyday lives.<sup>76</sup> I would argue, that it also leads to a growing interest about the socio-cultural space they inhabit, which would lead one to think that they do possess an amount of representativity.

After an evening of quality sake, the next morning opens with a discussion about the rationing of flour. Rationalization was still in practise when the film was made, and the food crisis did not ease until 1948. This also led to the flourishing of the black market.<sup>77</sup> Ozu shows the neighbourhood co-operating and exchanging both resources and information, but not actively resolving to the black market. One would think that the optimistic co-existence and communal spirit visible in *Record* was exactly what the SCAP censors wanted to see in a Japanese film. Yet because it doesn't heavily differ from the usual atmosphere of an Ozu picture, it doesn't seem that the director was drudging to please them specifically. The film also shows, how for some food ingredients people had to travel a long distance, as was the case with the potatoes earlier.

Ozu's films often presented a variety of characters at a similar stage in life and defined individual characters in comparison to their friends, relatives and neighbours. Isolde Standish argues, that through narrative structure, camera position and editing, Ozu tries to limit the viewer's identification with any particular character, instead making the audience

---

<sup>75</sup> Richie 1974, 17.

<sup>76</sup> Richie 1974, xiv.

<sup>77</sup> Totman 2008, 453.

view the group as a whole.<sup>78</sup> Despite having a short running time, *Record* has a very communal feel to it and manages to present a whole tenement neighbourhood with people trying to make ends meet. Tamekichi is a trader of things, Otane also buys and sells products for profit, Tashiro reads palms and Kawayoshi is a dyer. Women being most often financially dependent of their men would often cause economic problems for them upon becoming widows.<sup>79</sup> Though not rich, Otane is shown to be an economically independent woman, who in no way is depicted to be in need of a husband, or even to want one. The wealthiest occupant we meet is Kikuko (Yoshikawa Mitsuko), a friend who comes to visit Otane. Her stable financial status has a reason to it as she owns a geisha house. Ozu paints the wealth gap between the two women in an amusing way, when Otane is interested in obtaining white flour, and Kikuko wants a pampas grass brush so that her mother can clean her false teeth. The first one is a basic requirement, while the other is something to help preserve the luxury product you own.

Otane is constantly finding things she can blame Kohei for. She is first mad that the boy didn't win the lottery with the ten yen that Kikuko gave him, and later she thinks the kid has eaten her dried persimmons without asking, although it was Tamekichi who ate them. While being scolded for these things the boy is crying, and after wetting his bed for the second time, he runs away because he is so afraid of the woman's wrath. Tamekichi calls it "a case of piss-and-run" and is certain, that the boy is too afraid to return. However, in the evening Tashiro brings the boy back and makes Otane promise, that she won't scold him anymore. In the interval the woman has had time to rethink her stance towards the child, and after another discussion with Kikuko she understands, that she actually has become fond of him. Due to the short running time of the film, the storyline comes across in a more clear-cut manner than in the other post-war Ozu films where the story seems more sprinkled around, but the theme of family conflict and reconciliation is a frequent one for the filmmaker.<sup>80</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> Standish 2005, 51.

<sup>79</sup> Iwao 1993, 34-35.

<sup>80</sup> The gap between the generations is frequently highlighted as a central theme of Ozu's work, for instance by film critic Peter von Bagh (1989, 435). Of the films in this thesis it is also heavily present in *Late Spring*, whereas *A Hen in the Wind* focuses on marital conflict and reconciliation. Many of Ozu's films, like *Equinox*

*Record* differs from the majority of Ozu's work in the fact the final scenes seem to find a primary lesson to be learnt here. Richie has written that Ozu did not want to interpret his material, but only to present it and let the audience make their own deductions.<sup>81</sup> This led to his films not preaching about how life should be, but about how it is with these certain characters. The question that comes to play at the final third of the film is about parental age. The film has already hinted this: the first time Kohei opened his mouth he called Otane "grandma", after which she corrected him to call her "auntie" instead. Otane is a middle-aged widow who doesn't have (living) children. After Tashiro brings Kohei back, the woman asks him if he wants to be her son. They spend a day together going to the zoo and to a photographer's studio, but the newly formed family is quickly torn apart when Kohei's father returns for the boy. A moment later Otane asks Tashiro and Tamekichi if she is too old get a child by adoption and they encourage her to it. Japan being a country where a line of heritage is considered very important<sup>82</sup>, the film thus urges Japanese people to adopt orphans if they have the financial means to it. It also displays the importance of kindness with children, since Otane greatly regrets her past scolding of her young visitor.

The film closes with a visual reference to the national past and present. The final shots feature the statue of Takamori Saigo (1828-1877), a samurai who campaigned for militaristic expansion into continental Asia.<sup>83</sup> Around the statue we see children left orphans by the last expansionist war.<sup>84</sup> Alastair Phillips sees Ozu's *I Was Born, But...* using the analogy between the child characters and the adult characters to position an argument about the future direction of Japanese society.<sup>85</sup> Again I feel this statement adaptable for

---

*Flower*, present families slowly being driven at odds with each other, and then slowly starting to work their problems out.

<sup>81</sup> Richie 1974, 160.

<sup>82</sup> Ronald & Alexy 2011, electronic source. For many centuries, especially the heritage line of the oldest son has been considered important and dignified.

<sup>83</sup> Bordwell 1988, 301.

<sup>84</sup> Shimizu Hiroshi's film *Children of the Beehive* (Hachi no su no kodomotachi, 1948) dealt with the subject of war orphans in a more direct way than *Record*.

<sup>85</sup> Phillips 2007, 27.

all of the director's work. The children we see in the final shots of *Record* are showed to us as completely normal, but without supervision and parental guidance. Because of this, some of the kids are smoking cigarettes while others sit wide-eyed and waiting. The first half of the films showed characters dodging the responsibility over Kohei, whose presence is symbolic of the society's future, of which they are very uncertain. When Otane finds out that the boy's father has not abandoned him but instead done his utmost to provide for the boy, she decides to adopt. This act is not done only to gain happiness, for it also serves as her decision to take an active role in the shaping of the future of her surrounding society.

### **2.3 Nostalgia: contrast between the present and the past**

As we have seen earlier, the passing of time and the sense of *mono no aware* are central to the themes and atmosphere of Ozu's films, and also some of the most frequent aspects tackled in the film studies dedicated to them. The term "nostalgia" is also applicable to the works, although originating from western culture. The term was first coined in Switzerland in 1688 to mean "home-sickness".<sup>86</sup> Since then, it has grown to be understood as a longing for a period of time previous to the present.<sup>87</sup> In *Record*, the characters remember the pre-war days as a happy past, but the contrast also serves as a source of sadness in the present. The past thus opens to them almost as an unreachable place. This subchapter looks at the ways in which the characters are affected by the past and how it relates to their views of the contemporary everyday life.

Hannu Salmi argues, that film as a medium takes part in two different dialogues, one with the films made before it and another with the surrounding society.<sup>88</sup> This is very much true with *Record*. The film serves as the director's reaction to the post-war reality but also resembles the films he had made before the war. As the director's first post-war film, *Record* looks both to the past and to the future to define the national present. The opening of

---

<sup>86</sup> Draaisma 2013, 135-6. Dr. Johannes Hofer originally used the German term "Heimweh" (homesickness) and then translated it to Greek, by putting together the words "nostos" (homecoming) and "algia" (pain). Originally nostalgia was seen as a potentially dangerous sickness with physical symptoms, like weight loss.

<sup>87</sup> Collins dictionary, electronic source.

<sup>88</sup> Salmi 1993, 42.

*Record* can be seen as metaphoric about the state of Japan and the national state of mind. It's night, there's darkness everywhere and people are sitting by themselves contemplating this. Tamekichi's thematic monologue about the darkness also underlines this: "the past is past, now is now". The motivation for the recital also stems from loneliness, though Ozu again lightens the mood in a comedic way by the end of the scene. Japan's defeat in the war gave the people a sentiment of modernity gone wrong, that the country had ventured to modernize itself only to end up causing a devastating military conflict.<sup>89</sup> We only see very little electric light in the opening, which relays this notion of the country being pushed backwards by the defeat. This is further reinforced by the images of shack houses and bombed neighbourhoods in the film.

Nostalgia in *Record* is conveyed through both the filmmaking and through individual lines. The general style of the film has more in common with Ozu's films from the 1930's than his later works and thus creates a feeling of continuance after a break. Isolde Standish has discussed the ways in which Ozu's home studio Shochiku was a key factor in creating the visual image of the modernized Japan in the 1930's. After the destruction caused by the 1923 Great Kantō earthquake, much of Tokyo was left destroyed and had to be rebuilt. This led to the replacement of traditional wooden houses by modern buildings which, along with public transportation and the presence of cars, gave Tokyo a different look from the other Japanese cities of the time.<sup>90</sup> For cinema, this soon caused the divide of period films being produced in the old capital Kyoto, while films set in the present day were made in Tokyo. Since Shochiku specialized in the latter, the company's films were quick to relay the image of the newly rebuilt Tokyo to Japanese all over. According to Standish, by the 1930's Tokyo had become the physical embodiment of modern consciousness.<sup>91</sup> Therefore it is possible to consider that Ozu's decision to set his first post-war film not in the heart of the city, but on the very outskirts of it, might have been a conscious decision to heighten the divide between what modern used to be, and what it was now.

---

<sup>89</sup> Phillips 2006, 89.

<sup>90</sup> Standish 2005, 42.

<sup>91</sup> Standish 2005, 42.

Ozu's films from the 1930's serve as a rich cinematic collage of the rapidly growing city and its various parts. One thing that the films have in common with *Record* is that in the early 30's Japan was also recovering from an economic recession. With the director always depicting lower class characters, some of the films would be set or feature scenes in tenement neighbourhoods very similar to this film. Ozu made a series of films known as "Kihachi films" which included a poor but resourceful leading character always named Kihachi, always played by actor Sakamoto Takeshi. These films, *Passing Fancy* (Dekigoroko, 1933), *A Story of the Floating Weeds* (Ukikusa monogatari, 1934) and *An Inn in Tokyo* (Tôkyô no yado, 1935) dealt with the living conditions and the challenges faced by the Japanese poor, presenting a gloomy vision of the present but building towards a more optimistic outlook of future due to the goodness within the human spirit. In *Record*, Ozu brings Sakamoto back to play the supporting character Kawayoshi Kihachi. His presence serves as a form of continuity in both Ozu's work and the Japanese society presented in it, also reminding audiences of the pre-war positive outlook of reforms possible by socio-cultural change.

*An Inn in Tokyo*, Ozu's final extant silent film, is the work *Record* resembles the most due to both the landscape featured in the films and recycled plot element. In the film, the widowed Kihachi character struggles to provide food and housing for his two sons. The protagonist does not have a house nor a job, but instead roams the outskirts of the town looking desperately for work. Towards the end, the father has to temporarily leave the boys to a friend, interestingly enough, also played by Iida Chôko. The main narrative of the film was thus recycled to *Record* as Kohei's father's backstory, which we don't get see but hear and recognize. The familiarity of the narrative also displays how things have not changed that much after all, because people are still the same. The similarity of the problems the characters face in different Ozu films also serves to make the world they present more cohesive. Richie writes that Ozu's films are known to make sacrifices of realism for beauty's



sake in order to create a higher reality.<sup>92</sup> I would argue that the cohesiveness of Ozu's filmography in terms of style, themes and narrative makes the films feel more realistic than they are, because they are constantly building their own emotional and coherent inner realism.

The characters in *Record* appear pessimistic, melancholy, weary and confused about the times they live in. This sentiment is due to the characters seeing their present day in comparison to their past, which for many has become a one-sidedly positive memory. Though it's never defined in the dialogue, it is clear from the context that the period they reminisce is the pre-war years. In the celebration at Kawayoshi's house, the sake they drink reminds them of times before, when such luxury was available, and the warm nostalgia relating to these memories brings everybody to a better mood. The people encourage Tashiro to sing a song and even though he is bashful at first, he agrees to sing a song about a naval ensign who fell in love with the general's daughter. Ozu's late films often featured performances of this sort, and out of respect for the characters they are always shown in their entirety.<sup>93</sup> In *Record* it is however an interesting addition, since the subject of the song deals with war. Military songs in Japanese films were strictly forbidden by American censors.<sup>94</sup> Though not strictly a military song, it seems that again Ozu rebels without a care and gets away with it for reasons unknown. The song does have a tragic ending but its effect on the group mentality is positive, and even Kawayoshi's young son is shown imitating the adults, who participate in the song by clinking their sake cups with spoons.<sup>95</sup>

In Ozu's films characters frequently share memories from their past. Since Otane in *Record* is without a family, the reminiscence is often provoked by elements in the surrounding material reality. Her friend Kikuko brings her a snack that Otane calls "precious, just like the old days". When Kikuko offers one to Kohei, Otane forbids her saying: "Don't give it to him.

---

<sup>92</sup> Richie 1974, 234.

<sup>93</sup> Richie 1974, 121.

<sup>94</sup> Hirano 1992, 49.

<sup>95</sup> *Record of a Tenement Gentleman* (1947), time code: 25.00 – 27.20.

It's too good. He won't appreciate it, it's expensive." The taste has aroused a nostalgic feeling for Otane that she doesn't want tarnished by the present day, embodied in this situation by the young boy. The past is seen as something so virtuous it can not be understood by anyone, who hasn't lived it personally. Otane also views Kohei in contrast with what children used to be like when she was one. Kohei collects cigarette butts and nails for his carpenter father. Otane finds this disgusting and recalls how in her childhood she used to get coins from her father to buy candy and how "there was nothing to worry about in the whole world".<sup>96</sup> This line shows how Otane's cold behaviour towards Kohei doesn't actually mean that she hates the boy, but that she is saddened by the way in which the world turned out. In the film she goes from a character carrying the past as a burden to a character looking optimistically into the future. Since we know practically nothing about her personal history, the ever-present element of time opens to us simultaneously on a personal and national level. After Kohei has left with his father, Otane admits wishing that she had pampered the boy more. This shows how children are not different from what they used to be, and that the dissimilarity between the past and the present is not as massive as was previously thought.

Possibly the most oft-quoted and debated thing ever said about Ozu, besides "the most Japanese director argument", is Richie's famous remark about how Ozu only has one major subject in his films, the Japanese family, and only one major theme, its dissolution.<sup>97</sup> Most scholars dealing with Ozu have argued either for or against this theory. In my bachelor's thesis about Ozu's *Equinox Flower* I came to the conclusion, that not all of his films fall under the theme of dissolution, but instead the film in question was about the renewal of the family system and the shifting of its values into more humane ones.<sup>98</sup> In *Record's* case we can also see that the film's central theme is the rebuilding and reinforcing of the family system. Otane and Kohei parting company in the end may be a sad moment, but their time together has had a positive effect for both. The question of dissolution or renewal is akin to

---

<sup>96</sup> *Record of a Tenement Gentleman* (1947), time code: 31.29 – 36.10.

<sup>97</sup> Richie 1974, 1.

<sup>98</sup> Timonen 2016, 25.

the question of Ozu being a dramatic or comedic director, which is near-impossible to tell. According to Richie, the distinctive flavour of an Ozu picture stems from the incongruous juxtaposition of the sad with the funny.<sup>99</sup> Bordwell feels that best word to describe the director's narration is playful.<sup>100</sup> I agree with these two assessments. The fact that the director mixes the elements so freely and leaves such a lot for the viewer to interpret leads to the fact, that for some the films open more as tragedies and vice versa. Ozu draws much of the humour from sadness. For me personally, his films bring to mind Tolstoy's famous opening line from *Anna Karenina*: "Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way."<sup>101</sup> Had he read it, Ozu probably would have thought this to be the greatest joke ever told.

An argument that could be made against the social realism of this film compared to Ozu's previous, is that the problems that the characters are facing seem almost imaginary by the end of it. The film follows the change in Otane's world view and almost seems to imply that things can be made better by simply improving one's attitude. The film is one of Ozu's most optimistic and heart-warming and much of this could be linked to the presence of the American censors, but it's all-together a different question should we do this. The collective spirit, and the positive outlook so prominently displayed, would in my mind suggest that SCAP officials were looking at the big picture. As long as the general message was positive, the humourist director was allowed to get away with some of his shenanigans such as the treatment of the child, the song about a naval officer, maybe even the piss-stained "flag". These elements also make it seem that the director was allowed to do what he wanted with this film and wasn't going out of his way to please anybody.

I find Edward Fowler's reading of the film to be very interesting, but I personally view the film as more optimistic and sincere than he does. In Fowler's view the film is using the story

---

<sup>99</sup> Richie 1974, 29.

<sup>100</sup> Bordwell 1988, 72.

<sup>101</sup> Tolstoy 2009, 17. Director Mona Arhache's film *Le hérisson* (2009) has also drawn the line from the quote to the Ozu canon.

to hide its “blunt and indeed xenophobic message”, meaning an anti-American sentiment.<sup>102</sup> I would argue that the frustration over the current state of Japan is only barely hidden, and Ozu also makes fun of people living in the past. The film’s emotional narrative relies upon the viewers first seeing things as bleak so that the ending would feel more rewarding by giving the audience hope. I think *Record* is an interesting mix of old and new, both in terms of content and narration. In under 72 minutes it manages to tell an engaging story, introduce a set of lovable characters and serve as a document of the times it was made in. There is absolutely no reason to shut it out of the director’s available films or his canon discussed in academic studies, since based on its contents, it holds up just as well as the more popular Ozu films.

---

<sup>102</sup> Fowler 2010, 278.

### 3. The politics of forgiving: *A Hen in the Wind* (1948)

#### 3.1 The representation of a Japanese woman



Sano Shûji and Tanaka Kinuyo in *A Hen in the Wind* (1948). Photo source: Internet Movie Database.

Ozu's films usually divide attention between family members but still feature male protagonists. Female-centric films like *Record* and *A Hen in the Wind* (from now on *Hen*) are a rarity in his filmography. In his book about Ozu, Woojeong Joo offers a definition for a women's film: "films for female spectators, appealing to their sentiments and interests through a particular type of narrative and female protagonist" later adding, that the genre also serves male interests by ideologically re-enforcing a male-dominant system in society.<sup>103</sup> *Hen* is an interesting film to examine in this light, being a clearly female-driven film primarily for female audiences, yet produced in a masculine studio system by a male director. In this chapter, I will first offer a look at how the film's lead character is represented as a Japanese woman. I will then deal with the depiction of the marriage, the values presented and the question of equality between the spouses. The final subchapter will look at the film through the career and star persona of Tanaka Kinuyo, and in doing so, strive to

---

<sup>103</sup> Joo 2017, 81. Joo spoke of the genre in reference to some of Ozu's 30's films, but I find it theoretically applicable for this film as well.

argue that although film productions of the time were arranged by masculine forces, female agency did contribute to the shaping of the finished works.

The absence of the typical male characters in Ozu's first post-war films can be contributed to the war, since for many it took considerable time to return home from the front.<sup>104</sup> This is included on a narrative level in *Hen*, where one reason for 28-year old Tokiko's (Tanaka Kinuyo) problems is that her husband Shuichi (Sano Shûji) has not returned from the war yet. The first act of the film is filled with uncertainty and prolonged waiting. The drama is drawn from the solution Tokiko has to make, while her husband is not around, and the reaction he has to it, upon returning. When their son Hiro gets sick with a catarrh of colon, and has to be hospitalized for ten days, Tokiko is forced to prostitute herself for one night in order to pay the bill. As is the case with most Ozu films, the director draws plot elements from his earlier works, but the final film stands bleaker and more brutal than the rest. It is a considerable change from the people's comedy featured in *Record*.

According to David Bordwell, the fact that little attention has been given to this film, could have to do with the fact that it's atypical for the director, whom the audience has become to know.<sup>105</sup> This was the case in some way with *Record*, which doesn't fully feel like a post-war work, but especially true with a film like *Hen*, which sticks out in an aggressive manner. *Hen* was the only film Ozu made with co-writer Saito Ryosuke. Ozu usually worked with a kindred spirit while writing and since he wasn't a director known for fierce political commentary, we can assume that the atypical portions of the narrative prominently feature Saito's contribution. In 1959 Ozu remarked that he could enjoy some of his failures, but this one was "a bad failure".<sup>106</sup> Since we know him to a perfectionist, with a clear vision about how things are to be done, this comment could also imply that this film was less than a fully-auteuristic work experience.

---

<sup>104</sup> Ozu himself was repatriated 12.2.1946. Joo 2017, 147.

<sup>105</sup> Bordwell 1988, 302.

<sup>106</sup> Richie 1974, 234.

Jonathan Rosenbaum, who wrote the introduction to the film's DVD release, speculates that the title, which has never been explained to western audiences, stems from some Japanese expression.<sup>107</sup> This would not be unheard of for Ozu. Like *Record*, the film does not take place in central Tokyo, but the suburbia featured here is still recognizably wealthier than the outskirts of his previous feature. The characters in *Hen* are struggling financially, but this seems a special condition due to the times and the absence of many of the men. Though it's clearly a female-driven film, the ownership of the physical space clarified by the fact, that as an audience we see a photograph of the husband, before being introduced to the wife-protagonist. Yet it is not even the husband who owns the living space, since the family is shown to merely rent an upstairs room of the house. The house-owners living downstairs in a larger space are introduced to us in the very beginning, as if this was a hierarchical courtesy.

The film does not express exactly when it is taking place, but the first lines make it understood, that it has already been awhile since the war ended.<sup>108</sup> The very beginning of *Hen* informs the viewer that this is a different kind of time and a nation in great distress. At the opening stages of the film, Tokiko has just sold her last kimono to provide for her son Hiro. Orié (Minakami Reiko), an acquaintance who owns a brothel, makes a casual remark to Tokiko's friend Akiko (Murata Chieko), that for a pretty girl like her there is an easier way to make money. This is initially interpreted as either an insulting suggestion or a joke. Through the discussion between the women, the film tells us that the price of food has skyrocketed, and is now ten times as high as it used to be. Though the characters at the beginning are smiling, it is made clear that survival has become a constant strain with no end in sight: Tokiko does not have any idea when her husband might be repatriated. Her situation is underlined by the fact that we see a full family living downstairs in the same house, and even they seem to have a somewhat tough time of it. Tokiko is nevertheless shown as a dedicated and up-spirited mother to her son.

---

<sup>107</sup> Rosenbaum 2011, 12.

<sup>108</sup> *A Hen in the Wind* (1948), timecode: 3.00 – 4.30.

The film hits a very timely theme by dealing with the rights of the ordinary Japanese women. The emancipation of women through legislative agendas was one of the main goals of the SCAP officials, and Japanese women received the right to vote in 1945. The Americans felt Japanese women had been victimized by their society and issued strict rules about how women were to be treated in films.<sup>109</sup> The degradation of women by any manner was forbidden and films showing women to have working careers were viewed positively.<sup>110</sup> Sometimes the best-laid plans of the well-meaning Americans caused confusion with the Japanese filmmakers. Some screenwriters felt that the Americans did not want the films to show how Japanese people would normally act in a certain situation, but how they would act in this situation if they were “democratized”.<sup>111</sup>

Western people have a tendency to often define modernity through ourselves, though modern and western should not be viewed as synonyms.<sup>112</sup> It is however clear, that for SCAP officials the desirable outcome for cinematic feminine depiction was to resemble the way women were shown in American films. In this line of thinking, modernity and equality are linked together, which in a foreign context has a danger of presenting things too black and white. Scholar Iwao Sumiko argues, that the Americans and the Japanese view gender equality in different ways. According to her, Japanese women do not want to be treated exactly like men, but nonetheless see themselves equal, even if they’re not working.<sup>113</sup> This fits the general representation of femininity in Ozu’s filmography very well, since the films constantly draw humour from the masculine anguish over expectations and inner confusion, while portraying women as resourceful and determined.

---

<sup>109</sup> Hirano 1992, 72.

<sup>110</sup> This was actually not a new trend. After the recession hit Japan in the early 30’s, many women joined the workforce. Shochiku’s ten most popular releases of 1934 featured plotlines that focused on working women. (Standish 2005, 59.) This encapsulates both the studio’s goal of depicting the society in a realistic, timely way, and also the fact that they were known to make mostly female-oriented films.

<sup>111</sup> Anderson & Richie 1959, 162.

<sup>112</sup> Nygren 2007, 18.

<sup>113</sup> Iwao 1993, 3. Iwao does not examine Japanese femininity in any particular historical decade, but as a more flexible continuum in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



Imamura Anne E. has noted that the traditional model of Japanese woman as housewife and mother has been too one-sidedly dominant to be fully accurate.<sup>114</sup> Though a conservative nation in terms of the percentual number of women in the working life, Japanese womanhood has consisted of different types and different life paths for women.<sup>115</sup> In the representation of women, Imamura points out the keywords “role”, which is linked to the reality of women in the country, and “image”, which is the depiction that cultural forces choose to convey of the women.<sup>116</sup> Cinema, like all art forms, provides us an important medium to view ourselves, our times and our culture, but also provides the ones producing the films a way to control us, to influence what we are to expect from our lives, and how we should expect to be treated by others. At worst, the ulterior motives behind the production may turn representations into stereotypes.

Richard Dyer has argued that stereotypes in cultural products produce a faulty consensus about an expression of values. Through repetition of imagery, they confirm older notions about how things should be by showing them as such and thus supporting negative social structures, such as the otherness of women.<sup>117</sup> During the studio era of Japanese cinema, the majority of female roles dealt with the traditional expectations of being a mother and a wife. Imamura notes that the roles started to diversify from the 70’s onwards.<sup>118</sup> This coincides with the change in society in terms of gender roles, since the generation born after the war has been seen to have made the biggest change.<sup>119</sup> Yet there have always been different types of representation and even more interestingly, many directors like Mizoguchi Kenji, Kinoshita Keisuke and Naruse Mikio feature a somewhat cohesive and recognizable way of viewing women in the work.

---

<sup>114</sup> Imamura 1996, 1.

<sup>115</sup> The number of women in the working life has increased slowly in the post-war decades. Iwao Sumiko argues that the generation born after the war were the biggest modifiers to the tradition, mainly because they received higher education than the previous generations. Iwao 1993, 2.

<sup>116</sup> Imamura 1996, 2.

<sup>117</sup> Dyer 2002, 50 – 52.

<sup>118</sup> Imamura 1996, 3.

<sup>119</sup> Iwao 1993, 19.

Ozu's intention of depicting the Japanese people realistically can actually be seen as a depiction of his own generation at different times. Ozu's films from the 30's often feature modern girls, who wear western clothes, drink, smoke and have casual relationships. This was then seen as a new type of female representation, popular with the audiences and influenced by the flapper trend in the American films of the 1920's.<sup>120</sup> Therefore we can see, that Japanese cinema taking cues from Hollywood as to how women were to be shown on screen was not a new phenomenon in the post-war days. Ozu's post-war films showed this earlier generation becoming like the generations preceding it, by resulting to similar family roles, again relating to the reality of the times. The depiction of the younger generation was cleaner and more civilized, as if this generation knew a little better. Iwao Sumiko argues, that the western way of viewing Japanese women as to being unequal because they are not working and instead stay at home tends to dismiss the ways in which the women contribute to society.<sup>121</sup> Because of the realistic aspirations of Ozu's films, working women are next to none, but the female characters are still depicted as to being equal and contributing to the society by tending to their family. The subject and the context of the times shape *Hen* to be Ozu's re-examination of traditional womanhood in modern times, a theme he would continue with in *Late Spring*.

More than usual in an Ozu film, *Hen* draws dramatic force from anticipation by showing images that will become meaningful later on. The first line of the film is said by a police officer, which foretells that the protagonist is going to get mixed in shady dealings. Ozu also constantly cuts to the image of the staircase in the main character's house from the same angle, which stresses the violent fall in the films climax.<sup>122</sup> Ozu also shows us images of clocks, which indicate the inevitability of Tokiko's choice and possibly the inevitability of the consequences. The most repetitious visual image in the film is the large circular gasholder located near their house. Ozu frequently cuts from the characters to this structure, without

---

<sup>120</sup> Standish 2005, 57.

<sup>121</sup> Iwao 1993, 5.

<sup>122</sup> Rosenbaum 2011, 16.

no apparent reason. I would argue this is meant to show the impossibility of escape from this environment. The huge gasholder we frequently get to witness, also serves to remind us of the soon-to-explode marital crisis as an elephant in the room that can't be left unnoticed. When Tokiko grows to understand what she has to do, there are no other characters present for her to have dialogue with. The subject being somewhat risqué, this procedure of cutting away to the gasholder, makes the psychological narrative clear to the viewers, without the director having to show the more disturbing moments. The active imagination of the viewer plays an important role in the first third of the film, since we are often cast out of the room, instead of witnessing the details of Tokiko's night of prostitution. This plays well to the narrative since it later on allows us to learn much about what happened simultaneously with the husband.

Though it sometimes happens in Japanese cinema and in the western discussion, Ozu's films do not confuse prostitutes and geishas, but present them as two separate things. In the few Ozu films that feature geishas, they are seen as entertainers.<sup>123</sup> It takes training to become a geisha, and as was the case in *Record*, the owners of geisha houses can be respected members of the community. Prostitution on the other hand is shown to be a desperate choice. In the 1930's a few Ozu films featured prostitution as a plot element, a sacrifice that women were forced to make under difficult circumstances. In the shock twist of the film *Woman of Tokyo* (Tokyo no onna, 1933) the male lead discovers, that his sister has paid his college education by prostituting herself. This then leads him to commit suicide.<sup>124</sup> The fact that the husband in *Hen* does not kill himself may have to do with the SCAP censors.<sup>125</sup> I would argue, that a suicide in an already bleak film like *Hen* would have made the picture darker than what the director would have been willing to do.

---

<sup>123</sup> For example, In *What Did the Lady Forget?* (Shukujo wa nani o wasureta ka, 1937) there is a comical sequence where a college professor gets drunk with his niece who then demands him to take her to see a performance in a geisha house.

<sup>124</sup> In *Woman of Tokyo*, Tanaka Kinuyo plays the girlfriend who informs the male protagonist about the sister's actions. This serves as another example of Ozu recycling the same actors to similar situations but different sides.

<sup>125</sup> Since approving suicide directly or indirectly was forbidden. Hirano 1992, 44.

To understand the themes of sacrifice and shame in *Hen*, we must consider the attitudes surrounding prostitution at the time. Prostitution was legal in Japan until 1956. It was outlawed in the wake of Mizoguchi Kenji's brutal and highly popular final film *Street of Shame* (*Akasen chitai*, 1956) which many felt had an impact on the national mentality over the issue.<sup>126</sup> Sarah Kovner, who has written a book about prostitution in post-war Japan, argues, that the new legislation made the work less visible and more dangerous for the women.<sup>127</sup> In the early post-war years the films that dealt with the topic usually focused on the war years and showed destitute women resorting to sex work as a final means to stay alive.

The SCAP officials had forbidden the depiction of interracial relationships.<sup>128</sup> Tokiko's solitary customer in the brothel sequence is shown briefly. Most likely this was done in order to establish him as Japanese. When the occupation began, and hundreds of thousands of allied soldiers arrived in Japan, the amount of sex workers exploded. According to Kovner, the visible presence of these objectionable Japanese women served as a constant reminder of defeat.<sup>129</sup> Geishas had also become a dated institution, since the soldiers were interested in more upfront streetwalkers. The brothel featured in *Hen* is located near a school. In the postwar reality prostitutes weren't confined to regulated areas and sex could be sold also in the vicinity of such respectable institutions, often without a brothel but on the street.<sup>130</sup> Japanese cinema would eventually get to depicting the brutality of occupation era prostitution in the 1960's when film censorship was less of an issue.<sup>131</sup>

Tokiko's decision-making process is shown in a very delicate manner, by cutting in and out of the building and seeing her stare at herself in the mirror. She asks what she should do

---

<sup>126</sup> Criterion Collection, electronic source.

<sup>127</sup> Kovner 2012, 1.

<sup>128</sup> McLelland 2012, electronic source.

<sup>129</sup> Kovner 2012, 2.

<sup>130</sup> Kovner 2012, 4.

<sup>131</sup> For instance: Suzuki Seijun's *Gate of Flesh* (*Nikutai no mon*, 1964) and Takechi Tetsuji's *Black Snow* (*Kuroi yuki*, 1965).

from her sleeping son, but there is nothing but silence and a distant, expectant sound of drumming: Tokiko's facial expressions tell the rest. The brothel sequence is very short, but it is notable that there is Hawaiian guitar playing as diegetic music. This builds mental associations to Pearl Harbour and to the later defeat and occupation. We don't see the sexual act and don't even see the protagonist at all during this sequence. This again guides the audience to view her as more innocent. We merely see the man get out of the room into a lobby and having a short conversation with the other customers and the female owner Orié. He is asked how it was, to which he answers that it "didn't work out". The people are shown drinking, smoking and gambling as they complain that Tokiko is too stubborn and "never puts out".<sup>132</sup> Through this, the director makes it extremely clear that Tokiko does not belong to this kind of company so that there is no possibility for anyone to view her as a bad or a sinful woman. Donald Richie, whose evaluation of *Hen* is once again closer to a film review, and negative in tone, has criticized this sequence over the rest of the film. Richie feels that the realism of the film suffers from the fact, that the brothel is depicted as unrealistically clean with fresh bedsheets. Contemporary Japanese critics also took notice of this.<sup>133</sup>

The next morning, Akiko comes to visit Tokiko. She has heard from Orié what happened and scolds Tokiko for acting immorally. Akiko says that Hiro would be ashamed if he knew how she got the money. Her anger stems from the fact that Tokiko had saved her from a similar situation in the pre-war days, when they worked at a dance hall, and now she had not in turn come to her. Tokiko soon understands it was foolish for her to do what she did and that she should have sold her furniture before her body, but didn't do so, because she was afraid of her husband's reaction.<sup>134</sup> Days pass, Hiro gets better and the two women take him for a picnic. The women look at the happy child and discuss, what they wanted from life when they were his age. Tokiko remarks how she wanted to marry a policeman, a house

---

<sup>132</sup> *A Hen in the Wind* (1948), timecode: 22.00 – 24.40.

<sup>133</sup> Richie 1974, 234.

<sup>134</sup> *A Hen in the Wind* (1948), timecode: 25.00 – 28.30. It almost seems as if this line was added last minute, because the writers noticed a huge plot hole.

in the suburbs with a big lawn, a dog and a Max Factor make-up set.<sup>135</sup> None of these wishes have materialized, but the film plays with the expectations ordinary people make of their futures, by showing a police officer in the opening of the film, and a dog in the final shot. These childhood wishes also show Tokiko being part of a generation used to western influence and longing for material things, perhaps even explaining her unwillingness to part from her furniture.

### **3.2 Working towards marital equality**

Gender roles in cultural products are often defined in contrast to one another, and therefore, in order to get to the bottom of the film's depiction of post-war family dynamics, we must analyse how this dualism plays out in *Hen*. Jonathan Rosenbaum notes, that a factor distinguishing the handling of the subject as recognizably "ozu-esque", is the balance in the way the marital spouses are depicted.<sup>136</sup> We are first introduced to the wife and we understand, what she was going through in her husband's absence. Our sympathy is directed to her, but once Shuichi returns, we start following him and his thought process over the next days. The film's dramatic force stems from the divide between the two, and by positioning the viewer between them the screenplay starts building our expectation of potential reconciliation.

Shuichi's return starts off as a tender re-union. Upon returning from the picnic the downstairs neighbour informs Tokiko that he is upstairs. They find him sleeping, but he soon wakes up and they all rejoice about seeing each other. Hiro is first shown to be awkward with his father, because he is too young to remember him. By the evening, the situation has improved, and the kid is seen running in circles out of pure joy.<sup>137</sup> Tokiko immediately starts performing the role of a wife by tucking his husband in and going to get food and cigarettes

---

<sup>135</sup> *A Hen in the Wind* (1948), timecode: 32.40 – 35.49.

<sup>136</sup> Rosenbaum 2011, 13.

<sup>137</sup> As a film, *Hen* does not give much of a personality to the character of Hiro. Tanaka Kinuyo later played a supportive role in Goshō Heinosuke's film *Yellow Crow* (*Kiiroi karasu*, 1957), which focuses on the conflicting relationship of a young boy and his father who returns from the war and thus starts competing with the child of the mother's attention.

for him. The neighbours also contribute by giving the couple the little amount of rationed sake that they had, for the celebration. The evening comes to a sad close when Tokiko can't bring herself to lie to her husband.<sup>138</sup> Akiko later criticizes Tokiko about this, since knowing the truth will only make Shuichi suffer. Through the comparisons with different characters, we grow to understand Tokiko's honest nature, which is shown to be a key factor in a working marriage.

The film mentions that Tokiko and Akiko stopped working when they were 21 and got married. This is a typical procedure in the Japanese society of the time and part of the film's attempt to feel realistic. It is however noteworthy, that by positioning women at home or in lower-ranking jobs, the women in this film having been dance hall girls, media products sustain a social order that involves the inequality of women.<sup>139</sup> Tokiko is presented as an ideal woman and part of this depiction is that she is perfectly contented with her place being at home. Her role as a good mother is reinforced by the fact that we constantly see her carry Hiro in her back, which indicates a physical tie to the home environment and traditional family role. Staying at home and being economically dependant of one's husband was considered to be something women should pursue.<sup>140</sup> Yet it could be argued, that since Tokiko's great distress is caused by her economical dependency of Shuichi, the film communicates that there are also flaws in a system without a back-up plan.

The morning after his return already finds Shuichi at the workplace by his desk, since the atmosphere of the home environment had grown unpleasant and he wasn't able to sleep after Tokiko's confession. We see the building from outside and it serves as another reminder to Shuichi that he has returned to a different place than the one he left four years ago. In a clever visual gag, there are big signs on the wall that read "TIME", "LIFE" and "International" after the American papers that have now established themselves in the conquered Asian nation. Shuichi's job is not specified, but from the looks of his work

---

<sup>138</sup> *A Hen in the Wind* (1948), time code: 43.11 – 44.37.

<sup>139</sup> Rosenberger 1996, 12.

<sup>140</sup> Rosenberger 1996, 13.

environment he might actually be a reporter.<sup>141</sup> At the workplace Shuichi meets his friend and co-worker Kazuichiro (Ryû Chishû), who informs him about some of the new innovations present in the city like night clubs and jazz music, also offering to loan some money to Shuichi.<sup>142</sup> As a film, *Hen* has less of a communal feel to it than *Record*, but it is noteworthy that the supporting characters we do see outside of the main family seem to be happy and optimistic about the future.

*Hen* would be an uplifting film about getting past traumatic experiences, if it weren't for the two sequences of domestic violence. The audience is directed to initially feel sympathy also towards Shuichi, because he has returned home after a strenuous war only to be dealt another blow by his wife. Things however escalate when Shuichi returns home late at night. Obsessed with the past, he starts interrogating Tokiko about where the brothel was and makes her live the traumatic experience all-over again by repeating the walk to the brothel mentally. He pushes the wife around, throws her with a can and finally in an ultimate moment of anger, rapes her.<sup>143</sup> The film cuts away from this. This sequence is by far the darkest moment in any film directed by Ozu. It is later accompanied by the climax, where Tokiko tries to stop her husband from leaving her, which causes Shuichi to push her down the stairs, possibly by accident. He then freezes, unable to help her. Bordwell has noted that Shuichi's masochism and paralysis of will makes this sequence excruciating to watch.<sup>144</sup> The stoic nature of Shuichi's anger is also the hardest thing for Tokiko, since before the accident she states that she can take violence from him but can't stand to see him suffer.

These two sequences are undoubtedly viewed differently by modern audiences than the Japanese people who saw the film when it was released. The fact that the film ends in a loving reunion also highlights the issue and is possibly less acceptable for people who view

---

<sup>141</sup> In the Ozu films that feature his typical white-collar salary men, the jobs and companies are also usually kept vague. This is most likely since the films choose to focus on the family lives of these people instead of the careers.

<sup>142</sup> *A Hen in the Wind* (1948), timecode: 47.33 – 49.53.

<sup>143</sup> *A Hen in the Wind* (1948), timecode: 50.45 – 54.22.

<sup>144</sup> Bordwell 1988, 304.



the film outside of its context. It is also mysterious how the SCAP censors approved these scenes since brutality towards women was among the forbidden topics. *Record* may have gotten around some minor taboos by being a witty and a fun film with an all-around positive outlook, but *Hen* is very serious in its tone and yet is allowed to go in a very dark place with the material. Yet there are few things that must be noted about the scenes. The film does not condone violence. Few scenes before Tokiko's fall Shuichi explains to Kazuichiro that he has already forgiven her in thought but can't bring himself to act it out.<sup>145</sup> Violence is depicted as an uncontrollable darkness within him, in part nurtured by Japan's defeat in the war. Through him the film shows that good people are capable of violence when they are in psychological distress. Another important factor to take into account is that although the topic was forbidden to film, and Ozu certainly did not like to insert it in his films, spousal rape and marital violence were things that took place in reality and weren't treated as crimes from society's point of view.<sup>146</sup> By showing them in negative light and directing our sympathy to the suffering Tokiko the film could be seen to make a pro-women statement.

Film critic Sato Tadao has argued, that the meaning of these scenes was to show how the nation had lost their national purity: Tokiko's prostitution is contrasted with Shuichi's violence towards her and the violence is meant to encapsulate how Japan lost the noble cause of the war effort through ruthless brutality.<sup>147</sup> The loss of personal purity shown overlapping with the national purity as a history that can't be changed but must be acknowledged in order to go forward. This kind of thinking process behind *Hen's* meanings is visible in the finished work, but Sato's theory casts the filmmakers into the role of a pioneer too directly, provoking a risk of anachronism. Japanese cinema of the late 40's was far from ready to address the war crimes that the Japanese troops had committed in continental Asia. The audiences did not wish to relive the experience and the censors would have hardly agreed with it either. It is likely Ozu would have had knowledge of the crimes,

---

<sup>145</sup> *A Hen in the Wind* (1948), timecode: 1.10.35 – 1.10.55.

<sup>146</sup> As of 2019, marital rape is still not criminalized in clear terms in the Penal Code of Japan. Source: Sexual Rights Database.

<sup>147</sup> Cited in: Bordwell 1988, 302-3.

since he probably witnessed some of them first hand upon serving in Nanking in 1937.<sup>148</sup> Still it's unlikely that he would have wanted to incorporate this to one of his films on an allegorical level. This topic would first come up in the late 50's in the war films directed by the likes of Kobayashi Masaki and Ichikawa Kon and even then, it was made clear that the Japanese soldiers were also greatly suffering at the time.<sup>149</sup>

*Hen* makes no mention of Shuichi's wartime experiences. The topic does not even come up upon his return, or at least it isn't shown being discussed, and we merely hear Tokiko ask how the train ride back was. Rosenbaum notes how the war and prostitution are both unseen, but must be accepted and worked through, although the film clearly chooses to focus on the prostitution.<sup>150</sup> Ozu relays Shuichi's suffering in a similar manner from his later suffering male protagonists in *Early Spring* and *Equinox Flower*: by mostly showing him a blank canvas from which the audience can make their own deductions. Richie has noted how Ozu's films usually choose protagonists, who have the capability to contemplate and remain for relatively long periods of time seemingly inactive.<sup>151</sup> This is true also of Shuichi, even though the anger he carries resulting to a physical reaction is atypical. The conflict is shown to be strictly about Tokiko's actions and not the possible actions Shuichi could have committed during the war. In the end when they apologize to one another, it is also expressed in a very exact manner, which eludes the possibility of his guilt being interpreted on a national level.

In order to get even with his wife, Shuichi decides to visit the brothel himself. His walk there is contrasted with Tokiko's previous walk to the hospital with Hiro. Both the hospital and the brothel are told to be located near a school. The film directs us to Tokiko's side again by contrasting her motive of loving her family with Shuichi's motive of hate and revenge. The

---

<sup>148</sup> Geist 2006, 119. Ozu served in the military together with the male lead of the film, Sano Shûji. Richie 1974, 225.

<sup>149</sup> For example, see Kobayashi's *The Human Condition* (Ningen no jôken, 1959-1961) and Ichikawa's *Fires on a Plain* (Nobi, 1959).

<sup>150</sup> Rosenbaum 2011, 13.

<sup>151</sup> Richie 1974, 56.

brothel seen at daytime is shown to be almost empty and probably to the dismay of many critics, very clean. We hear joyful singing of children from the nearby school and the girl they send for Shuichi notes how she used to go to that same school. Richie's notion of how Ozu's search for aesthetic beauty clashes with the serious subject matter of the film, and breaks the realism, is a fair one.<sup>152</sup> Yet it misses the purpose of these sequences within the larger narrative. Shuichi goes to the brothel expecting to witness vice and sinful people, but instead arrives in a perfectly ordinary building, meeting a perfectly ordinary 21-year old woman named Fusako (Fumiya Chiyoko), who works there because she has to support her family and doesn't have an alternative. After they have a discussion, Shuichi decides not to sleep with her, but to instead arrange a proper job for her with Kazuichiro's help.<sup>153</sup> The questions Shuichi asks Fusako do however show, that his previous knowledge about prostitution is astonishingly lacking. The way this comes out in the screenplay gives the film the feel of a public service announcement, a common effect in many political films at the time.<sup>154</sup>

Whether it was done on purpose at the time or not, *Hen* provides an interesting look at the double standard existing between the sexual behaviour allowed for men and the sexual purity expected from women. Women were expected to be virgins upon entering marriage and fidelity was a strict rule for them afterwards. On the other hand, men weren't expected the same, and married men could visit red light districts without it having an effect on their respectability or their family life.<sup>155</sup> Fusako is uncertain to even try change her life, since she feels men would only scorn her. Shuichi feels empathy towards her and admits feeling it for his wife as well, yet he can't bring himself to act it out. Only after Tokiko has fallen down the stairs, climbed back up without his husband's help, and then urged him to get the anger out of system by hitting her, are they able to put the negative past behind them. Bordwell

---

<sup>152</sup> Richie 1974, 234.

<sup>153</sup> The brothel visit at: *A Hen in the Wind* (1948), timecode: 59.00 – 1.09.20.

<sup>154</sup> If Shuichi in fact is a reporter, it was narratively a good choice that suits the obligatory preachiness of certain sequences like this one, where he asks a lot of questions before forming his final opinion.

<sup>155</sup> Iwao 1993, 105-6.

analyses that he is able to forgive Tokiko only after seeing her in a truly pitiful state.<sup>156</sup> I would say that it is Tokiko's monologue, that makes it clear to Shuichi that she is feeling great empathy towards him and understands his suffering, which in turn frees him to feel the same for her. Modern audiences would most definitely feel the resent battery and the not-too-long-ago rape to be enough of a reason for Tokiko to leave Shuichi, but the marital representation must be judged within the context of the time and what the filmmakers were trying to say with it.

After she gets up the stairs, Tokiko apologizes that she has made Shuichi feel this way. The husband finally sees things clear and says that he has nothing but sympathy for her and understands that she did not have a choice. They both agree to put it in the past and Shuichi also apologizes for his violence towards her. His speech extends itself also to a national level and is clearly meant that way:

*"Let's forget it. Both you and I will forget about it. We'll speak of it no more, we'll think of it no more. Let's be more open and love one another more deeply. - - Forgive me for causing you so much grief. - - We have a long way to go together. Anything can happen. But whatever happens, we'll take it on our stride. We'll trust each other no matter what. That's how a true married couple should be. - - We'll embrace one another and go on, all right?"*<sup>157</sup>

The tender, beautiful moment is strengthened by the non-diegetic music playing in the background. Even though it is preceded by violence, Shuichi's apology feels heartfelt and confident.

When we assess Sato's notion of national purity in context of this final scene, two conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, the Japanese nation agrees to put the past where it belongs and not to mention it again. After the war Japan started to build a modern nation

---

<sup>156</sup> Bordwell 1988, 304.

<sup>157</sup> The final exchange of apologies at: *A Hen in the Wind* (1948), timecode 1.18.00 – 1.22.00.

concentrating on the future. Although Japan has issued several apologies concerning the war crimes the country committed in continental Asia, they have also been criticized of insincerity and whitewashing of history.<sup>158</sup> After the war ended, the majority of Japanese people started to believe the viewpoint most prominently expressed by the media, that a small number of militarists within the Japanese government had been the reason for the war.<sup>159</sup> Bordwell and Sato feel that *Hen* cuts deeper and does not try to cast the blame off to an invisible group of villains.<sup>160</sup> The final monologue admits the blame in everyone and urges them to admit it and then move on.

Finally, there remains the question of the film's final stance on marital equality and the motivation behind it. Though Ozu was not a political director, it would be difficult to watch a film like *Hen* without at least speculating upon the socio-political realities kicked around in the thought-provoking plotline. Bordwell like many others has noted the ending of the film to be moralistic in a timely way.<sup>161</sup> The moralising elements may well have contributed to its failure to connect with audiences and critics. Jonathan Rosenbaum also notes that the timeliness of the work might have been the reason for Ozu's own later dislike of the film.<sup>162</sup> The final monologue by Shuichi certainly preaches about the direction that they must take both as a couple and as a country. In tone and content, it was probably to the liking of the American occupiers and possibly again the reason, why Ozu's earlier disregarding of the SCAP rules concerning the treatment of women, was left unpunished.

The film condemns violence against women and most likely all other kinds of violence as well. It seems to present, that on a moral level, women should not be judged differently from men. Yet the depiction of the equal spouses, even if spotlighted in a brighter fashion than usual for a Japanese film, does not ultimately differ from the usual chemistry among

---

<sup>158</sup> Dahlstrom 2015, electronic source.

<sup>159</sup> 28 military and political leaders were sentenced for war crimes in the so-called Tokyo Trials, that were held 29.4.1946. Beasley 2001, 215.

<sup>160</sup> Bordwell 1988, 303.

<sup>161</sup> Bordwell 1988, 302.

<sup>162</sup> Rosenbaum 2011, 12.

married couples in Ozu's later films. Iwao writes that Japanese women view equality on a much longer timeframe and more multidimensional context than American women.<sup>163</sup> The housewives in Ozu's films do not consider themselves to be unequal to their husbands and are often shown to be happy or at least contented with their lives. Marriage is shown as an institution, where the wife is economically dependent of the husband, but in many ways the husband is even more dependent of the wife. This also represents the realities of Japanese society, where in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century men's position in society was just as much pitied, since their daily needs rely heavily on their spouses, but due to work they have to spend long times away from home.<sup>164</sup> Ozu's typical salarymen are tragic-comedic characters who lack the power to change the way things happen in life and society. By advocating the possibilities of man-made change in such a clear-stated way, *Hen* differs from Ozu's other work and feels like film made to please the SCAP officials. However, the marital equality in itself, is not atypical for the director's films, and does not feel forced on him as a theme.

The final shot we see of Shuichi and Tokiko has them standing up and embracing one another, but we do not see their facial expressions. We see Shuichi's back and Tokiko's hands slowly coming together to enfold him tighter while at the same time crossing fingers in a prayer-like position. While obviously presenting hopes for a better future, Rosenbaum also finds the scene to significantly convey that it is she, who accepts him and thus seals their reconciliation.<sup>165</sup> This is a very important observation of a gesture, that silently creates equality to a scene otherwise dominated by the dialogue, nearly all of which is delivered by Shuichi. The ending thus finds the couple "democratized", without finding itself too blatantly distanced from the realities of the society depicted.

---

<sup>163</sup> Iwao 1993, 13.

<sup>164</sup> Iwao 1993, 7-8.

<sup>165</sup> Rosenbaum 2011, 17.

### 3.3 Tanaka Kinuyo and the post-war femininity



Tanaka Kinuyo in *A Hen in the Wind* (1948). Photo source: Internet Movie Database.

As we have previously seen, Ozu fits the classic definition of an auteur filmmaker, but the expected consistency and coherence in expression also directs the viewer to look at the films with certain expectations. One reason for Ozu being held as such a clear example of an auteur is the absence of competing forces within his body of work. For most Japanese filmmakers of this time the defining touch of the finished film would most prominently display the house style of the studio that had produced it. All the people contributing to the making of the films had contracts with the studios, and some like Ozu worked almost exclusively for one studio all their lives.<sup>166</sup> Shochiku was different from its competition in the fact that the studio was more interested in developing great directors than establishing star actors. *Hen* is a rare kind of Ozu film in the sense that it has been made with another artist, who could be viewed as an auteur of sorts, the actress Tanaka Kinuyo (1910–1977). This subchapter views the womanhood presented in *Hen* through Tanaka's persona and

---

<sup>166</sup> Ryans 2010, 23.

filmography to company the previous exploration of female representation within the film with a consideration of female agency in the film's production.

The sacrificing womanhood presented in *Hen* bears resemblance to many other parts played by Tanaka and also her private life. From young childhood, she had to financially provide for her impoverished family and in her final years, the majority of the money she had earned during her 50 years as an actress went to support her ailing siblings.<sup>167</sup> On screen, she became associated especially to director Mizoguchi Kenji (1898–1956) whose films depicted the sacrifices women were forced to make in a patriarchal and unfair society. In these films, Tanaka played through a gallery of strong, but tragic women whose suffering went unrecognized by the surrounding characters, but not by the audience. The central theme and the lead actress have led many to see a “mizoguchian” element in *Hen* as well and to make comparisons. Bordwell notes how Mizoguchi would have left the psychological anguish of Shuichi undiscussed.<sup>168</sup> Rosenbaum presents how Mizoguchi would have had a clearer focus on the unjust suffering of Tokiko while Kurosawa would have focused more on the male anguish.<sup>169</sup> Based on their styles these remarks are plausible and help to separate Ozu's marital depiction from his contemporaries.

*Hen* was released in September 1948, a few months after Mizoguchi's *Women of the Night* (*Yoru no onnatachi*, 1948), another film about women being forced into prostitution in post-war Japan, again starring Tanaka. This may have been a factor in the film's weak box office, although out of the two, Ozu's film takes the unpleasant subject and strives to tell it in a constructive way. Mizoguchi's work is harsher, grittier and dirtier, telling stories of several prostitutes, showing the darkest sides of their life, featuring sexual violence and invoking to Christian imagery to culturally frame the downfall of these women. Tanaka is memorable in both films, giving two performances that patch the material where it's lacking. She brings emotional brutality to Ozu's film and a sympathetic lead-character to Mizoguchi's. This

---

<sup>167</sup> Furukawa 2018, xii - xiv.

<sup>168</sup> Bordwell 1988, 303.

<sup>169</sup> Rosenbaum 2011, 13.



serves to show how, although often working with auteur-directors, her presence was often a crucial factor in a film's final appearance.

Tanaka's filmography provides an interesting perspective on how the women in her generation were depicted in cinema and thus, how they were seen by society at different times. Japan had a long history of not letting women perform in Kabuki theatre but instead having men (*Onnagata*) play the female roles. Deguchi Takehito has noted, that since women only entered the medium of film in 1919, they themselves became a manifestation of modernity.<sup>170</sup> Tanaka had become a child star on stage, before starting her film career in 1924, aged 14. She achieved wide popularity and played the lead role in Japan's first full talking picture, *The Neighbour's Wife and Mine* (*Madamu to nyôbô*, 1931). In early films, Tanaka often played modern girls, who wore western clothing, make-up and had active dating lives. Her early screen image has been compared to the American stars, Clara Bow<sup>171</sup> and Janet Gaynor<sup>172</sup>, both of whom can be seen as influences. The fact that both Tanaka and Ozu worked at Shochiku also brought them to collaborate on several occasions, most notably in *Dragnet Girl* (*Hijôsen no onna*, 1933).<sup>173</sup> This was a crime film, where Tanaka played a gangster's girlfriend, also named Tokiko, whose appearance and early actions capture the wicked side of the western-styled modernization, but deep down include also a more rightful morality.

The presence of moral reformation in the two Tokiko roles of *Dragnet Girl* and *Hen* is another example of casting being an important factor in Ozu's storytelling. *Dragnet Girl* ends with Tokiko shooting her boyfriend in the leg so that the police would catch him, and he could amend his bad deeds by serving a prison sentence and then start a new, respectable life with her. This shows that in contrast to Mizuguchi, whose films showed

---

<sup>170</sup> Cited In: Standish 2005, 53.

<sup>171</sup> González-López & Smith 2018, 7.

<sup>172</sup> Standish 2005, 39.

<sup>173</sup> Tanaka appeared in nine Ozu films from 1930 – 1958. Because of the irregularity and the fact that none of these are among Ozu's more famous films, she is usually not viewed as a member of Ozu's stock company, but instead remembered for her work with Mizoguchi.

Tanaka in a victimized position, Ozu's two Tokiko pictures advocate her agency and let her actively take part in the shaping of her future. Ozu's films also end on an optimistic note. The timeliness of *Hen* in terms of female representation becomes evident when compared to the pre-war work by both Ozu and Tanaka. During the wartime the gender roles were seen in a conservative and over-simplified way and Tanaka played her share of mothers and girlfriends of soldiers in various propaganda films.<sup>174</sup> The moral strictness concerning women is still visible in *Hen*, which at every turn strives to show the protagonist as an idealized and decent individual, thus differing from Tanaka's more nuanced characters of the 30's and 50's.

A key factor in the relatability of *Hen*'s main couple on a national level, is that they are presented initially as somewhat of an ideal Japanese couple. They married young, she stayed at home to raise the child while he embarked on a career most-likely in the service of one company. Tokiko is caring and thinks of her family's well-being before her own. Shuichi served his military duty and also has some features that Japanese women at the time found positive in a husband. According to Iwao Sumiko, many felt that a strong and silent husband who didn't vocally express his feelings, but whose reflections were still silently communicated to the understanding spouse was an ideal marital candidate.<sup>175</sup> The conflict in *Hen* feels more distressing because they are a well-balanced, typical couple. This is also highlighted by the fact that they are played by Tanaka and Sano, two long-time stars, who were known for playing ideal depictions of their given gender roles in films. The fact that *Hen*'s lead characters have been cast in such recognizably traditional family roles also makes it easier to view them representant of all Japanese families, even without endorsing all of Sato's ideas about symbolic national purity.

In 1953, Tanaka directed *Love Letter* (Koibumi, 1953) and became Japan's first female director. She went on to direct five more movies. As a woman director she was a pioneer

---

<sup>174</sup> González-López & Smith 2018, 10-12.

<sup>175</sup> Iwao 1993, 98.

and also her talent was recognized from the beginning.<sup>176</sup> Her films also carry influence from both Mizoguchi and Ozu, and the screenplay for *The Moon Has Risen* (Tsuki wa noborinu, 1955) was written by Ozu and Saito Ryosuke in 1947, though they had abandoned the project in favour of doing *Hen*. Like *Hen*, Tanaka's *Love Letter* was about the choices women were forced to make in order to survive, and the need to be able to forgive one another. Since it was made a year after the occupation had ended, the film was able to take a more nuanced look at these things. Whereas *Hen* had avoided mentioning Americans, *Love Letter* showed that Japanese women mostly prostituted themselves to foreigners and also had actual romantic relationships with them. The dialogue also noted, that Japanese people had no right to complain about the harshness of the immediate post-war years, since Japan had been the aggressor that started the war.<sup>177</sup> The argumentation cast the guilt to all Japanese, a bold statement, that could not have been made in dialogue at the time *Hen* was made, further showing the affect censorship had upon the reflection of national trauma.

Irene González-López and Michael Smith, editors of the first academic collection of articles about Tanaka published in English, state the cultural meaning of her films in the introduction:

*“Tanaka’s work offered up alternative, socio-politically grounded feminine subjectivities during a time when Japanese, and arguably global cinema was organized, managed and authored almost exclusively by masculine forces.”*<sup>178</sup>

Looking at her filmography, I would argue that her presence, whether defined auteuristic or not, also adds a certain emphasis to the films, in which she only serves as an actress.

Isolde Standish writes that Tanaka's star persona in the 1930's was defined by her “ability to bridge the contradiction between the traditional and the modern”.<sup>179</sup> She was part of a generation of Japanese women, whose lives and womanhood were shaped in constant

---

<sup>176</sup> Furukawa 2018, xiv.

<sup>177</sup> *Love Letter* (1953), time code: 1.34.40 – 1.35.20.

<sup>178</sup> González-López & Smith 2018, 1.

<sup>179</sup> Standish 2005, 57.

dialogue between traditionalist values and modern possibilities, Japanese culture and western influence. Unlike most Japanese actresses of the time who at a certain stage of life retired to start a family, Tanaka worked through her entire life playing parts in films set in both present-day and the past. Her filmography thus opens as valuable source material of how women in her generation fitted the societal order of Japan in different times, what womanhood consisted of in different stages of life and how female agency participated in the shaping of cultural roles through the medium of film.

Viewing *Hen* as a vehicle for Tanaka Kinuyo helps to put aside the fact, that the film was directed by a filmmaker not known for piercing political commentary. Tokiko and Shuichi are only shown together in three sequences during the film. The narrative strives to bridge the gap that has formed between them and stresses the importance of truth, harmony and dialogue. Dialogue is not only important between men and women, but also between the old ways and the new ones. The democratic representation of everyday reality sprouts an outlook over the present-day Japan, that's progressive to a point of unrealistic, but manages to serve as a candid reminder of the cultural dialogue taking place between Japan and the United States, in their newly formed union.

## 4. Happiness and work: *Late Spring* (1949)

### 4.1 Family dynamics and paternal parenthood



Ryû Chishû in *Late Spring* (1949). Photo source: Internet Movie Database.

Like *Record* and *Hen*, *Late Spring* focuses on family dynamics and the expectations for the individuals within a wider family system. It introduces an angle from which Ozu would choose to view families in many of his later films: the perspective of a father trying to arrange his daughter's marriage. 56-year old professor Somiya (Ryû Chishû) lives together with his 27-year old daughter Noriko (Hara Setsuko). Noriko does not want to marry, apparently because this would leave her father alone and helpless, but Somiya insists upon this, as he doesn't want her to be left all alone after he has died. In this subchapter, I will look at the film first focusing on the roles of the father and daughter. The second subchapter examines the institution of arranged marriage and how the film views it. This theme is also important in the discussion over the juxtaposition of modern and traditional values in Ozu's work. The final subchapter looks at the worldview of the film, the post-war free-time and the cultural presence of foreign influences in the film's Japanese space. Due to its popularity, a lot has already been written about *Late Spring* from variably different points

of view.<sup>180</sup> However, I would agree with Woojeong Joo that the intense scholarship should give more consideration to the historical context of this marriage depiction.<sup>181</sup>

Ozu's critically most well-regarded late period is usually seen beginning with *Late Spring*.<sup>182</sup> It is interesting that the watershed was not the war, like it was for many directors. David Bordwell notes two major changes between this and his previous *Hen*. In his previous films Ozu worked with several writing partners, but from 1949 to his death he would only write films with Noda Kogo, with whom he had last worked in the early 30's. There was also a changing of the guard in terms of actors.<sup>183</sup> Many faces immediately associated with Ozu's 1930's work like Iida Choko and Sakamoto Takeshi made their final appearances in an Ozu film in either *Record* or *Hen*. However, there is no known fallout between Ozu and any of his actors. *Late Spring* would also see the director working with actresses Hara Setsuko and Sugimura Haruko for the first time. The biggest change is that Ryu Chishu, an actor known for his impressive run of bit-parts in nearly every film made by Ozu would from now on become his principal male lead.<sup>184</sup> Before this, Ryu had only been the lead in one of his films, the war-time *There Was a Father*, in which he appeared covered in old-age make-up. For most of Ozu's late works Ryu would be made to look older than he was in reality. Through his characters the films would find a main theme to explore in paternal parenthood and the formation of a generational gap within the Japanese family system.

---

<sup>180</sup> For this thesis, I have relied upon texts written by Kristin Thompson (1988), David Bordwell (1988), Robin Wood (1998), Alastair Phillips (2006) and Woojeong Joo (2015 & 2017).

<sup>181</sup> Joo 2017, 142.

<sup>182</sup> Richie 1974, 235. This notion is repeatedly shared by many scholars, and the late Ozu films are the ones most often discussed. A rare example of a western scholar not agreeing with this is Noel Burch, who finds that Ozu did his best and most important work between 1934 – 1942. (Burch 1979, 143).

<sup>183</sup> Bordwell 1988, 12. Though Noda remained Ozu's only writing partner, the films did often find a basis in literary works from various authors. *Late Spring* is based on the novel *Father and Daughter* by Hirotsu Kazuo. Arguably due to the strong visual storytelling, the literary origins are usually given very little attention in the Ozu discussion, if mentioned at all.

<sup>184</sup> Ryu remembered having appeared in all but two of Ozu's films (*Sight and Sound*, Spring 1964). This claim caught on, and most published works about Ozu repeat the notion of the actor having performed in 52 out of 54 films. In reality, a quick viewing of Ozu's early filmography shows that a greater amount of films than two do not feature him. Still, Ryu is Ozu's most-used actor, and the pair are very closely associated with one another. Robin Wood (1986, 552) views Ryu as Ozu's mouthpiece, whose presence is a "directorial trademark".

Towards the end of his career many of Ozu's films featured characters who were doing better financially and often living in places other than Tokyo. He felt that the poorer people of Tokyo had lost some of the humane feeling he wanted to depict in his films and instead grown more cold-hearted.<sup>185</sup> The family in *Late Spring* lives in Kamakura, about 30 miles south of Tokyo. They live in a house that is quite big, enormous for just two people. This is also a massive change from the tight living quarters featured in the director's last two films. Though it is not mentioned when or how Noriko's mother died, the wide space serves as a reminder of her absence. It also stresses the solitude that the father will have to face after Noriko has married off. Ozu's films would often look at the occasion and the build-up towards the daughter's marriage from the perspective of the bride's father, creating an often-melancholy anticipation of separation. The father in *Late Spring* is not shown alone until the final scene, yet we understand this solitude to be inevitable.<sup>186</sup> The children's marriage in the films has also been seen as melancholy, since it also reminds us of the older generation's mortality.<sup>187</sup>

We are introduced to both characters when they're separate and in the company of others: Noriko with her friends and Somiya with his assistant Hattori (Usami Jun). At evening time when they are both home together, we get to witness the symbiotic relationship that has formed between father and daughter. Somiya's every-day skills are greatly lacking, and he goes around the house frequently requesting Noriko's help. Noriko is shown to be glad to be able to assist him by fetching things such as tea or a towel. There is almost a sense of automatization to this everyday routine and the film takes time to establish it, in order to strengthen the emotionality of the ending. Even though it is usually the father needing Noriko, the relationship is not one-sidedly divided into the working roles of an employer and a maid. When Noriko has a friend visiting, the father is more than happy to reverse the

---

<sup>185</sup> Joo 2015, electronic source.

<sup>186</sup> *Late Spring* (1949), timecode: 17.20 – 17.45. A scene opens with the father alone, but he is soon accompanied by Noriko.

<sup>187</sup> Geist 1992, 110.

roles and serve them bread and tea.<sup>188</sup> Their co-existence is thus established to be harmonious, mutually agreeable and caring.

The home environment has become safe and pleasant for Noriko, further strengthening her reluctance to marry. However, when Somiya urges her to it, she makes it clear, that her primary reason not to marry is for her to be able to keep taking care of him. Seeing this, the father then makes Noriko believe that he is about to remarry and thus release her from her daily duties of caretaking. The film has previously established Noriko's conservative mindset and that she views the notion of getting married a second time a sinful act.<sup>189</sup> The thought that her father would deliberately go against her set of values is hurtful and causes the two of them to cease being on speaking terms. The brooding silence intensifies the atmosphere of waiting and gives the film a sense of uncertainty, since Noriko's lack of words combined with actress Hara Setsuko's ambiguous smiling puts the audience in suspense, about how the character is actually feeling about the future laid out for her. It again serves to show, how in Ozu's films dialogue might be quite mundane, but the lack of dialogue a source of great drama, as was the case with *Hen*.

According to David Bordwell, *Late Spring* introduced a new kind of father figure to Japanese cinema, one who is wise because he recognizes the freedom of choice and the need for mutual happiness in a marriage. Bordwell also makes the important distinction, that instead of ordering her to get married, Somiya has to trick Noriko into wanting that for herself.<sup>190</sup> *Late Spring* defines the father and the daughter in relation to one another. Noriko is noted by her aunt Masa (Sugimura Haruko) to be "old-fashioned for her generation"<sup>191</sup>, while Somiya is constantly showing progressive attitudes towards his surrounding loved ones. Masa complains about the fact that nowadays young women drink alcohol, but after Noriko has gotten married, the father is shown to be happily drinking with her friend Aya (Tsukioka

---

<sup>188</sup> *Late Spring*, timecode: 38.00 – 39.30.

<sup>189</sup> *Late Spring*, timecode: 14.33 – 17.10.

<sup>190</sup> Bordwell 1988, 308.

<sup>191</sup> *Late Spring* (1949), timecode: 1.15.00 – 1.16.00.



Yumeji). The film introduces Noriko when she is at a traditional tea ceremony, thus connecting her to old, conservative ways. The father is introduced when he and Hattori browse a dictionary trying to find the German economist Friedrich List, which communicates the character's openness to foreign influences.<sup>192</sup> Before the end of the war, Japan's patriarchal system had placed great importance on the father's blessing of a marriage, but throughout *Late Spring* the openminded family atmosphere and focus over the daughter's own approval relay western, progressive attitudes.<sup>193</sup>

After Noriko has agreed to marry Satake, she goes to one last journey together with her father to Kyoto, Japan's old capital and thus a connection to its past. These moments remind Noriko of the happiness she has enjoyed up to this point, which causes her wanting to call the wedding off. Somiya then has to have a talk with her about why it is essential. This is another turn where the seemingly conservative film shows modern values. In Japan, the main purpose of getting married has been to continue the family line.<sup>194</sup> Somiya is not concerned over this and not once in *Late Spring* is the notion of grandchildren mentioned. Instead he is most interested in Noriko's happiness.<sup>195</sup> However, there is a clear difference to and possibly a commentary on the western notion of marital bliss. Somiya explains to Noriko how happiness is not something to be instantly expected upon marriage, but something that a new couple has to work for and gradually build for themselves. This is resonant of how Japanese people have the tendency to judge happiness and sadness from a longer timeframe.<sup>196</sup> Further bridging the old and the new he compares the couple about to marry to his own marriage, noting:

“Your mother wasn't happy in the beginning. We had our troubles for years. So many times I found her weeping in the corner in the kitchen. But

---

<sup>192</sup> According to David Bordwell (1988, 308) List influenced much of the economic policies of the Meiji-era (1868-1912).

<sup>193</sup> Thompson 1988, 319, 323.

<sup>194</sup> Kumagai 2014, 49. This, of course, applies to many other countries as well.

<sup>195</sup> This motivation has been noted also by previous scholars, such as Thompson (1988, 321) and Joo (2015, electric source).

<sup>196</sup> Iwao 1993, 10-13.

your mother put up with me. You must have faith in each other. You must have love for each other. Show Satake all the warmth and love you have shown me. Alright? Then your new, true happiness will emerge.”<sup>197</sup>

This monologue, similar to Shuichi’s final monologue in *Hen*, most plainly states the film’s central thesis about happiness in marriage and the work it requires, also managing to convince Noriko to go on.

Another key scene during the Kyoto sequence is Somiya’s short conversation with his friend and colleague Professor Onodera (Mishima Masao). They are sitting on a temple courtyard where Somiya notes that a daughter makes one worry if she doesn’t get married, yet makes one feel let down if she does marry, and thus it is better to have a son. Onodera answers that this can’t be helped and that their wives, too, were somebody’s daughters.<sup>198</sup> The exchange is phrased in a comedic way, but still emerges as a revealing character moment. Donald Richie writes that in Ozu’s films the parents and the children all suffer a degree of disappointment.<sup>199</sup> The characters in Ozu’s films are not perfect and, being apart from Noriko, the father is able to admit that her marriage is also a cause of sadness for him. This scene is placed immediately before Noriko’s plea to call the wedding off, underlining that there are also sad and negative sides to genuine parental love. The film returns to this in the final scene, when Somiya returns to an empty house. He peels an apple, the skin of which grows bigger and bigger, before finally falling off, this being a metaphor for a child who grows up and leaves the parent.<sup>200</sup>

I have previously noted in my bachelor’s thesis, that in Ozu’s marriage films the possibility of a father and daughter meeting after the daughter’s marriage, is almost never discussed. Instead other characters, like Aya in *Late Spring*, comfort the abandoned parent by assuring

---

<sup>197</sup> The monologue at *Late Spring* (1949), timecode: 1.33.00 – 1.35.15.

<sup>198</sup> *Late Spring* (1949), timecode: 1.28.48. – 1.30.32.

<sup>199</sup> Richie 1974, 68.

<sup>200</sup> *Late Spring* (1949), timecode: 1.46.23 – 1.47.25.

him that they are going to start visiting him, so that he wouldn't feel lonely.<sup>201</sup> No doubt this is left unsaid to add dramatic weight to the endings and, especially as an only child, Noriko would probably meet his father again sometime in the future. It is however telling of the Japanese culture, where a married daughter becomes foremost a member of the husband's family and her stages of life are thereafter tied to those of her children.<sup>202</sup> In Japan it is expected, that adult children will take care of their aging parents and possibly take them to live with their family, but in modern times it has become rarer.<sup>203</sup> These kinds of extended and stem families are featured in Ozu's late films, but there is not a case of an aging father living in the household of his daughter, as this was not usual. Therefore, the marriages in the films serve to remind how time flees away, the solitary fathers show us the eventual loneliness of old age and the daughters the continuation of the cycle.

#### **4.2 Arranged marriage in contrast to love matches**

Marriage being the central theme in much of the late Ozu films extends the reflection of cultural transformation and resistance to a mundane, relatable context. Japanese family issues are characterized by the co-existence of modern and traditional values without neither completely taking over.<sup>204</sup> Marriage is an issue, where this contrast gets a visible indicator and where the old ways and the new ones are at odds. In 20<sup>th</sup> century Japan, there were two different ways in which marriages started: an arranged marriage (*miai-kekkon*) and romantic marriage (*ren-ai-kekkon*). Though romantic unions would grow to be the majority by the end of the century, at the time *Late Spring* takes place arranged marriage was still the norm that dominated.<sup>205</sup> However, ideologically it might have seemed like an old-fashioned norm, since by the 1950's polls showed majority of the Japanese people preferring love matches over arranged ones, despite *miai* still being the majority.<sup>206</sup> By

---

<sup>201</sup> Timonen 2016, 7. *Equinox Flower* was a rare exception to this rule, since the film ends in the father travelling to see his daughter to end their old argument.

<sup>202</sup> Iwao 1993, 125.

<sup>203</sup> Kumagai 2014, 27-28.

<sup>204</sup> Kumagai 2014, 2.

<sup>205</sup> Kumagai 2014, 49-50.

<sup>206</sup> Thompson 1988, 320.

devoting several films to the exploration of the theme as executed by different Japanese families, Ozu's films form a larger body of evidence about the conflicting attitudes, albeit one written entirely by the same two screenwriters. This subchapter looks at how *Late Spring*, Ozu's first film about the topic, views the institution of arranged marriage, based on the values and motives expressed within the film's narrative.

For scholars, marital depiction has been a key factor and a tool with which to categorize Ozu as either a modernist or a traditionalist.<sup>207</sup> Kristin Thompson argues that the fact that some audiences are viewing the films from a modern-day, western perspective, makes Ozu seem more conservative than he really is.<sup>208</sup> Though he himself does not see things quite as black and white, David Bordwell notes that *Late Spring* might seem to give great evidence to the critics who see Ozu preserving Japanese tradition in the face of modernization.<sup>209</sup> He also calls it the film a prototype<sup>210</sup> for many of the later marital depictions and I would agree with this. The later films contributed layers of comedy and additional voices in the form of supportive characters. They can be viewed as commentaries or alternative narratives to this film. Perhaps the disciplined way how *Late Spring* is organized combined with the more serious tone of the narrative serve as the reasons, why it is usually the main film, through which Ozu's depiction of the marital theme is assessed.

In the late Ozu films that feature the plotline of a daughter getting married, the notion of marriage is usually introduced by the family comparing themselves to other families they know. In *Late Spring* it is initially brought up by Onodera, whose 25-year-old daughter is very much against marriage.<sup>211</sup> The film builds a comparison between different characters, both seen and unseen, by referring to their age. The title of the film refers to Noriko's stage of life. The father's initial plan is for Noriko to marry Hattori, because they seem to get along

---

<sup>207</sup> Again, it is noteworthy, that in recent years many researches like Woojeong Joo (2015, electronic source), have argued against such simple categorizations.

<sup>208</sup> Thompson 1988, 319.

<sup>209</sup> Bordwell 1988, 307.

<sup>210</sup> Bordwell 1988, 311.

<sup>211</sup> *Late Spring*, timecode: 19.40 – 20.00.

great. When this is brought up, Noriko starts laughing and reveals to him that Hattori is engaged to a girl three years younger than she is.<sup>212</sup> This is a major setback for him. Not only is he left without a plan, but he is also faced with the fact that his daughter is at the older spectrum of girls getting married. Later we get to hear that a former classmate of Noriko's already has four children, which as a piece of information, serves the same function to the audience. Luckily, aunt Masa is eager to take the matter of arranging the marriage into her own hands. It was indeed customary for a family friend or a relative to serve as the matchmaker.<sup>213</sup>

Dating, in the western sense of the word, was still quite uncommon in Japan during the late 40's.<sup>214</sup> However, the constant presence of western influence had already started to transform the way the Japanese viewed romance. Traditionally the Japanese had seen physical signs of affection as intimate and not to be displayed in public. Kissing was forbidden in Japanese films before the occupation, and only introduced in 1946. Despite being one of the biggest young stars at the time, Hara Setsuko made a policy to decline onscreen kissing until kissing had become a natural habit for the Japanese people.<sup>215</sup> This shows how stars, just as the characters they played, had to carefully situate themselves and their screen images between traditional and modern values.

*Late Spring* does not include kissing, nor do later Ozu films. I don't think this is because the habit is too recognizably western, since many of the films explore western imagery with great enthusiasm. Instead, I would argue that kissing as a gesture does not leave much to be interpreted on an emotional level, and thus would not fit the films that value the ambiguity of expression as an important trait. Western influence over romance is nevertheless thoroughly present in *Late Spring*. The scenes between Noriko and Hattori play with the American notions of dating, as we see them bicycling to a picnic, meeting at a café

---

<sup>212</sup> *Late Spring*, timecode: 28.00 – 30.50.

<sup>213</sup> Iwao 1993, 32.

<sup>214</sup> Iwao 1993, 31.

<sup>215</sup> Hirano 1992, 154, 160.

and finally Hattori inviting her to a concert, to which she doesn't show up. The fact that this path fails to lead into a marriage is contrasted with the traditional Japanese way that is shown to do so.

Another reason why *Late Spring* seems to be Ozu's most definite statement about marriage is the sincere motivation behind the character's actions. Somiya and Noriko are shown to be genuinely affectionate and wanting the best for one another, the sad fact being that what's best for the father isn't best for the daughter.<sup>216</sup> Ozu's later marriage depictions added more cynical twists to the marital depiction. In *Early Summer*, family members pressure Noriko (Hara Setsuko again) to marry mostly, because the fact that she doesn't plan to get married doesn't fit their worldview and annoys them. *Early Summer* also created greater ambiguity over why the lead-Noriko does not want to do so, with the character being a free-spirited modern woman, who unlike the Noriko in *Late Spring* has a job. There is even a slight concern over whether Noriko is heterosexual, which is not present in any other Ozu film.<sup>217</sup> In *Equinox Flower*, an argument breaks out between the father (Saburi Shin) and the daughter (Arima Ineko), because she has chosen a love match, and the father felt it was his patriarchal privilege to arrange her marriage. Somiya in *Late Spring* is shown to be liberal in this sense, since he initially assumed Noriko and Hattori would form a love match. Kathe Geist notes that in most Ozu films, the young people actually themselves choose who they are going to marry.<sup>218</sup> Therefore, it's hard to see the film campaigning for arranged marriages, since it merely presents that as an institution, they can exist alongside modern alternatives.

Though the film depicts a traditional arranging of a Japanese marriage, it does not present the traditional method as to being without any problems. Noriko's frustration about being

---

<sup>216</sup> Robin Wood believed that the fact that the audience is not tempted, even on an unconscious level, to think that their relationship is incestuous, is due to a cultural difference, as this most likely would be the case, were the film to be re-made in the west. Wood 1998, 116.

<sup>217</sup> In *Early Summer*, Noriko's boss (Sano Shûji) smilingly asks a friend of hers if she is "queer" and whether she is interested in men or women. *Early Summer* (1951), timecode: 1.20.20 – 1.21.00. This is the only clear mention of sexual minorities in Ozu's work.

<sup>218</sup> Geist 2007, 102.

left out of the decision-making process is made very clear and when she does agree to marry Satake, her father is pleasantly surprised. The fact that the audience does not get to witness most of the stages preceding the wedding also highlights Noriko's passive role. Though it's a common trait for all of Ozu's post-war works, *Late Spring's* narrative leaves a surprising amount of key moments to the viewer's imagination. The most interesting is how the film builds towards a wedding, which we never get to witness, nor do we ever meet Satake, the man Noriko is marrying. Thompson has noted how it would be impossible to imagine this in a Hollywood movie, which then serves to distance the film from western influence.<sup>219</sup> Structurally this divides Noriko's life in two, first there being the years with the father, last chapter of which is this film, and secondly her future in some other place, with someone else, which we much like Somiya, do not get to witness for ourselves.

Robin Wood has presented a darker assessment of *Late Spring's* marriage narrative than most scholars. Wood finds that in the film, the characters are seen sacrificing their individual happiness to tradition: his reading sees that Noriko is defined by the freedom she is able to experience while living with her father, and in the final scene when we see her before her wedding, she is longer Noriko but a "wife".<sup>220</sup> I agree with Wood that, at least to some extent, Noriko is using the aging father as an excuse to remain single. However, I do feel his cynical reading does not line with the emotional contents of the film and makes the characters seem more self-obsessed than they are. Ozu is very careful not to let their more selfish sides to stand out too dominantly. I would argue that a problem in Wood's viewing of the film is, that he is reviewing the film together with Ozu's later films *Early Summer* and *Tokyo Story*. Though the three films are often seen as a loose trilogy<sup>221</sup>, they still are separate works. While the love of the modern-day freedom would seem to be the core motive to stay single for the lead character in *Early Summer*, this does not automatically make it the case in *Late Spring*, a film with a very different tone and different family dynamics.

---

<sup>219</sup> Thompson 1988, 343.

<sup>220</sup> Wood 1998, 116 – 119.

<sup>221</sup> Wood 1998, 114.

Finally, some thought should be given to the notions of a possible second marriage and divorce within the film's narrative. Noriko's disapproval of Onodera's second marriage dies down when she sees how happy they are together, and what a nice woman he has found. Yet in the end, Somiya makes it clear to Aya that he never had any intention to get married a second time, despite letting Noriko think so. There is no given reason for him not to consider it, but it comes across as a generational thing. This is resonant of many later Ozu films, where characters do not disapprove the notion of a second marriage, but in their own traditionality, choose not to want it for themselves.<sup>222</sup> Both second marriages and divorces are shown as modern options that are allowed to exist in Japanese society, even if the protagonists of the Ozu films do not resolve to them. Aya encourages Noriko to marry, stating that if it doesn't work out, she can divorce him. Aya is a divorcee herself and shown to be happy being single and working as a stenographer. In many ways, she is the most modern character in the film, urging Noriko to get married not because it will for sure bring her happiness, but because it might do it. Her advice clashes with the advice later given by Somiya, but after the wedding they are shown happily drinking together, relaying that in this film, nobody has the final word on marriage.

#### **4.3. Modern and traditional imagery of post-war Japan**

*Record* and *Hen* depicted Japan immediately after the war, still in turmoil and faced with problems of poverty and survival. Their narratives were tightly focused on the plotlines of the characters solving their problems. In *Late Spring* Japan has already returned to the normal everyday cycle of things and the film's early scenes take time to show the continuity in the daily routines of this particular family.<sup>223</sup> The film is not rushed by the plotline of

---

<sup>222</sup> *Late Autumn*, a re-telling of *Late Spring*'s storyline with Hara Setsuko playing a widowed mother, is the most obvious comparison. Robin Wood (1998, 114) has noted how in *Tokyo Story* the character played by Hara Setsuko is urged to re-marry instead of getting married for the first time, even if she does not end up doing so.

<sup>223</sup> Historians have greatly debated as to how to define the "post-war years" with a timeframe. There is no official year when the post-war period ended. Joo 2017, 142-143. I would however argue, that since the direct consequences of the war are visible both in the film and its production history, it is safe to call *Late Spring* a depiction of post-war everyday reality.



marriage, but instead takes time to show what these people and this period of time are alike. There is a great deal of imagery centring on free time and city landscape, which would continue as core elements of Ozu's everyday realism until the end of his career, but had not been stressed in his two previous films. This subchapter looks at the contrast between traditionally Japanese and modern or western influence over *Late Spring's* imagery of the post-war landscape, customs and characters. Finally, I aim to show how the film does not merely depict these things, but also through its existence participates in the shaping and the maintaining of the Japanese way of life.

Like *Record*, *Late Spring* also builds the experience of the modern everyday life from the comparison and the acknowledgement of Japan's history.<sup>224</sup> Much of the historical imagery is in the form of architecture and customs, that let the past exist alongside the modern, without stressing it too much. Woojeong Joo argues that the traditional Kyoto and the unseen bombed sites of Tokyo work antagonistically to each other in the re-examination of traditional and modern in the post-war.<sup>225</sup> Japan's recent history is addressed only a few times in the dialogue always in an ambiguous manner. There were also few lines in the original screenplay that got Ozu in hot water with the SCAP censors. Somiya and Onodera briefly discuss how difficult the war years must have been for Noriko.<sup>226</sup> Original dialogue mentioned her working for the navy, but since the censors were overly sensitive about anything that might seem to condone Japan's military, it was changed to merely mention forced labour.<sup>227</sup> In Kyoto, Somiya notes what a relaxing and nice place it is, also mentioning that Tokyo has nothing like it because it is full of ruins. The Americans objected this, and the line was toned down to merely express that Tokyo is "too dusty".<sup>228</sup>

---

<sup>224</sup> Donald Richie has argued, that it is this juxtaposition which gives the films of Ozu and Naruse Mikio their "Japanese accent". Richie 2001, 119.

<sup>225</sup> Joo 2017, 153, 156.

<sup>226</sup> *Late Spring* (1949), timecode: 18.37 – 19.00.

<sup>227</sup> Hirano 1992, 49. In the final version, Onodera's line is: "It was all because of forced labour during the war, wasn't it?"

<sup>228</sup> The line is heard at *Late Spring* (1949), timecode: 1.24.18 – 1.24.26. Interestingly enough, the screenplay introduced the setting of Kamakura as "a quiet, wealthy residential area, which escaped the war-time air raids", the latter part of which was removed by censors though it wasn't even part of the dialogue. Hirano 1992, 54.

*Late Spring* features scenes that take place in both private and public locations. Before the war, the public space in Japan had been much faster to adapt western-looking features than people's homes.<sup>229</sup> This would also be the case in the post-war and *Late Spring* is the first of Ozu's films to explore the westernization of the cultural landscape after the war, most evidently in the scenes where Noriko visits Tokyo. As her task in life has been to look after her father, she is daily left idle when he goes to work to a university in Tokyo. Noriko therefore has lots of free time on her hands, which she is shown to spend by occupying herself with activities that affirm both her bourgeois background and how westernized the free time options for the young people of Japan had become. Some of these activities coincide with "the dating" happening between Noriko and Hattori, discussed in the previous sub-chapter. Noriko is also shown sitting in a restaurant with Onodera, though not drinking. Onodera also accompanies her to an art exhibition, though this is not shown.

In contrast to this, the Somiya home is shown to be more traditionally Japanese. Kristin Thompson notes however, that uncommonly for the time they do not have a shrine in their home.<sup>230</sup> Though Ozu's films from every decade feature Buddhist imagery, religion is rarely addressed in a straight-forward manner, but merely conveyed as a part of the cultural atmosphere. There is a privacy to religion, which keeps it out of the mundane dialogue exchanged by the characters in their everyday conversation.<sup>231</sup> We do not see the wedding, so we can't tell as to what extent religion played a role. However, as Noriko is about to leave the home, we hear a bit of Richard Wagner's *Bridal Chorus*. Most likely this is nondiegetic music from the film's score, though a young boy is shown honking the horn of a car almost to this tune.<sup>232</sup> This could be a comment over the possible future westernization of the wedding culture in a film where the traditional Japanese ways have just prevailed.

---

<sup>229</sup> Okkonen & Okkonen 2010, 23.

<sup>230</sup> Thompson 1988, 326.

<sup>231</sup> Ozu of course is not the only director with whom this is true, as religious matters are often considered private.

<sup>232</sup> *Late Spring* (1949), timecode: 1.36.33 – 1.36.54.

Besides the main setting of Kamakura, the Kyoto scenes provide the film with traditional Japanese architecture and imagery. Alastair Phillips argues that Kyoto in the film is represented as a kind of a museum for tourists and a place of shared belonging to a common past: it's a place where the characters escape modern national reconstruction and retrieve a sense of national continuity.<sup>233</sup> Though appreciated and respected, this past is also clearly separate from everything else in the film. Woojeong Joo states that although Kyoto is presented in contrast to the bombed Tokyo, Ozu does not communicate that this fantasy of the past should replace the modern.<sup>234</sup> The characters are shown to be fond of the past, but nonetheless slipping away from it. Kristin Thompson has written that although tea ceremonies are a part of traditional Japanese culture, the one in the film's opening has taken a new kind of meaning as a sort of women's hour.<sup>235</sup> I would say that the casualness of the ceremony is greatly highlighted by the fact that the first lines are about mending an uncle's trousers. Somiya and Noriko also attend a Noh performance<sup>236</sup>, which is another tourist-like excursion to traditional Japanese culture, that is shown to be more interesting for the older generation. The things associated with the younger generations are recognizably western. Noriko sits in a European styled café called Balboa Tea & Coffee with Hattori, and later when they go bicycling they pass a Coca-Cola sign. When aunt Masa is trying to hype Satake to Noriko, she mentions that he looks just like Gary Cooper, whom Noriko apparently likes.<sup>237</sup> There is also a brief glimpse to a children's baseball game, another clear symbol of America's influence that had gotten enormously popular in Japan.<sup>238</sup>

Yet, the balancing of modern and traditional is most prominently seen in the character of Noriko, who is constantly walking the line between the two. Robin Wood, among others, argues that the emergence of a new kind of femininity in Ozu's films coincides with Ozu

---

<sup>233</sup> Phillips 2006, 95.

<sup>234</sup> Joo 2017, 157.

<sup>235</sup> Thompson 1988, 325.

<sup>236</sup> Noh is traditional Japanese musical drama.

<sup>237</sup> *Late Spring* (1949), timecode: 44.31 – 45.15.

<sup>238</sup> *Late Spring* (1949), timecode: 41.45 – 43.00.

beginning to work with Hara Setsuko.<sup>239</sup> I would argue there having been traces of this before. Tamekichi's daughter, seen briefly in *Record*, also represented post-war Japanese modernity, but was viewed as a comedic curiosity.<sup>240</sup> Noriko in *Late Spring* is the first case of this feminine modernity taking centre stage and being viewed multi-dimensionally. Yet, as was the case with Tanaka Kinuyo in *Hen*, there is a danger of auteur-centric viewing giving Ozu too much of the credit and preventing us seeing the female agency of the film's star. In the west, Hara Setsuko is known primarily for her work with Ozu, but in Japan she was already one of the country's biggest movie stars when their collaborations started. Therefore, we can't give Ozu the credit of building her star image with *Late Spring*. Two of her post-war films stand out having been especially important in the building of this new kind of on-screen femininity.

In 1946 Hara starred in Kurosawa Akira's *No Regrets for Our Youth* (*Waga seishun ni kuinashi*, 1946), a look at liberal students in the 1930's, which turned out to be film of great impact due to its democratic societal depiction.<sup>241</sup> A year later she played the wise daughter in Yoshimura Kôzaburô's *The Ball at the Anjo House* (*Anjô-ke no butôkai*, 1947), a film that viewed the abolishment of the pre-war class system in a positive light and won great critical acclaim.<sup>242</sup> These roles and these career choices show Hara as a generational actress, whose performances re-negotiate Japanese-ness in a changed cultural landscape. This continued in her work with Ozu. According to Woojeong Joo, *Late Spring* revitalised Ozu's career after two films that had been received only lukewarmly and made the director able to "compete" with the before-mentioned younger directors.<sup>243</sup> No doubt some of this was due to Hara Setsuko, since the film manages to bank on her unique ability to effortlessly encapsulate the collision of old and new ways, adding to it Ozu's ambiguous sense of humour in the face of *mono no aware*.

---

<sup>239</sup> Wood 1998, 114-115.

<sup>240</sup> Edward Fowler went even further presenting that the depiction of Tamekichi's daughter was Ozu's way of criticizing western democracy. Fowler 2010, 82-83.

<sup>241</sup> Hirano 1992, 180.

<sup>242</sup> Kinema Junpo ranked it as the year's best film.

<sup>243</sup> Joo 2017, 152.



Hara Setsuko in *Late Spring* (1949). Photo source: Internet Movie Database.

David Bordwell summarises that “*Late Spring* introduces Ozu the liberal who acknowledges the need for change, though he regrets the damage it will cause”.<sup>244</sup> I would call this a good way to describe the balance between traditional and modern ever-present in *Late Spring*. The film’s ending feels sad, but it is sad, because of the way the audience has been positioned to look at it from the perspective of the father, who is left alone. Change is the central factor in the film’s narrative, present both in terms of characters and settings. Shifting between traditional and modern is an almost automatized practise in the film’s view of post-war everyday life. Through this juxtaposition it also produces this kind of modernity, where adaptability and scepticism both take important roles in the newly rebuilt national identity, as much as freedom and openness rise to the centrum of a functioning family system. *Late Spring* was Shochiku’s most popular release that year.<sup>245</sup> The film thus clearly resonated with the contemporary audiences, either by representing the world view they held, or by presenting them with new notions worth considering.

---

<sup>244</sup> Bordwell 1988, 312.

<sup>245</sup> Joo 2017, 152.

## 5. Conclusion

In this thesis, I have looked at Ozu Yasujiro's first three films after the war, and come to the conclusion, that they paint a portrait of the post-war Japan, that is both diverse and comprehensive. Though scholars often write about Ozu's work as a whole, based on just these three films, I found it to be full of different voices and distinct viewpoints. The auteur-centric view also faced a challenge, since other contributing forces were shown to clearly affect the ways in which the films turned out. *Record*, *Hen* and *Late Spring* were made with three different co-writers, and this together with the distinguishable female leads Iida Chôko, Tanaka Kinuyo and Hara Setsuko influenced the views the films projected about modern Japan and its people. Through these changes, the films also serve to tell about the quick societal transformation taking place between 1947 and 1949, and the direction that the Japanese state decided to take for the future.

My close reading has strived to open the films' narrative structures and the meanings the filmmakers planted within them. For cultural history the films also serve as a very lively source material of their contemporary Japan, through their existence. I initially asked, how do these films depict the everyday life after the war, to which the films replied with a plurality of different realities based on time, location, age, class, and gender. *Record* and *Hen* feature the more immediate aftermath of the war and, through their characters, clearer attempts at coping with the new situation than *Late Spring*, which shows the Japanese already having put the worst behind them. In the first two films, the war was present as a contributing force to the narratives, mainly manifesting itself in the form of poverty. The films highlight the importance of co-operation and friendship, also heavily presenting that this kind of a positive shared mentality can help the nation rise from the ruins and resume the normal everyday cycle of life.

Though optimism was appreciated by both SCAP censors and contemporary audiences, the films do not shy away from showing the blackened mentality of the poverty-stricken nation. The narratives show characters face their problems in different ways, but they clearly rely

on themselves in their solutions, instead of outside forces. Unlike many other contemporary films, Ozu's post-war works did not directly refer to religion or political reformation through legislature. Yet both *Record* and *Hen* do argue, that society should not look the other way from the plight of the main characters, whether orphans or housewives. All of the three films featured long monologues with societal undertones, even though the endings were more focused on the emotional aspects of the narratives for their particular characters. Thus, the likeability or the relatability of the characters was used to affect the way, in which the viewers experienced the narrative contents; to make the scenarios speak to the audience in a more direct manner.

Throughout the three films, the living conditions changed from poorer to wealthier, from *Record's* shack-houses to *Hen's* rental suburbia and finally to *Late Spring's* bourgeois small-town environment. There was also a great variety of femininity in the lead characters, with the first film depicting a widow, the second a wife, and the third one a bride-to-be. The lack of Ozu's typical salarymen characters, to which he would return soon after in his 1950's output, also contributed to the clear female-centrism of these works, which made it legitimate to compare them. The films gave their female leads individuality, without omitting the things that they wanted for their lives that would appear traditional for the audience. Otane in *Record* understood she wanted a child, Tokiko in *Hen* wanted to keep her family unit unified and Noriko in *Late Spring* had to explore the line between traditional family roles and independent freedom. Though much of the previous research painted Ozu's films to have a somewhat unified view of gender roles, these films presented a great variety of lifepaths, and I have no doubt the diversity would have grown even more, if this thesis had included later Ozu films, like *Early Summer* (1951) or *Late Autumn* (1960).

*Record* and *Hen* positioned themselves to a more directly progressive societal stance than what is typical for Ozu. That is to say, they were less ambiguous with their messages, than what he is known for. Their endings are also more optimistic and lacking the usual *mono no aware* feeling. I believe that these two films, which are often cast out of the academic Ozu

discussion, are exceptions in his body of work, but I do not view this as a negative thing. On the contrary, their unlikeness made writing this thesis a more exciting experience. Yet I feel it is important to note, that had the source material been *Late Spring* and two other Ozu films, the overall atmosphere of this thesis would not have been quite as upbeat. The characters in *Record* and *Hen* are initially sad about the current state of Japan, especially Otane in *Record* who is shown to be extremely nostalgic for the pre-war years. Yet their sadness and their struggles do not imply a wish for the nation to return to this past, since it is shown to be impossible. Instead, through the narratives they discover that Japan can once again be the happy place they remember it being, if they improve their attitude towards other people and life itself. The characters are thus embracing the future, which differs from the bittersweet tone of *Late Spring's* ending, even though the belief in future happiness also serves as the motivation for the characters' actions in this film.

The great amount of literature dedicated to *Late Spring* alone served to me as a proof of the amount of different readings, one could make from a later Ozu film. The directness of this progressive social commentary in *Record* and *Hen* might have been affected by the presence of the SCAP censors, yet the content was not un-characteristic for the director's work. The films, all in their different ways, strive to build a peaceful, harmonious and equal society, which is what the American occupiers wanted, but almost certainly also what the Japanese wanted. In the emotional conflicts of the three films, the continuity of this society is at stake. Yet, through Otane's adoption, Tokiko and Shuichi's reconciliation and Noriko's marriage, this continuity wins. The Japanese society goes on and the things the characters have learned through the films serve as emotional improvements to the family system, also showing how it's worth preserving through transformation.

The Japanese family is the central focus of most Ozu films and though there are repeated patterns, such as the father trying to arrange a marriage for his daughter, there is also a variety of different family roles and character types. Through this repetition and change the films re-negotiate these family models and their functions. Thus, the films are not only



trying to depict the diversity of their contemporary society, but also constantly producing this family system, with individual family units that are alike in some ways and unlike in others. For the purposes of this thesis, the more narrowed context of the post-war years contributed additional focus. Yet, I would argue that the logical direction to continue this research, would be to look at the different kinds of family roles in all of the director's post-war works from 1947 to 1962. Ozu is a director, who is constantly being re-discovered and re-discussed even half a century after his death, by film-lovers and film-scholars all over the world. This is a considerable feat which speaks volumes of his work and the universally compelling nature of the films. Yet, even in the age of DVD releases and online streaming, most scholarly attention these films receive, falls under the familiar territory of film criticism and analysis of form and meaning.

I argue, that the films can still use research from a cultural historian's perspective, focusing on the attitudes, mentalities, social roles and values that are presented in them through content and narrative, as well as beyond them. Even though it is tempting to seek hidden meanings in the Ozu's ambiguous experience of the everyday, it is also important to stop and consider what is visible and what things are given central focus in this depiction. A larger amount of films as the research material would ensure more diverse readings through comparison and contextualisation, also exposing a wider perspective of the post-war years and the transformation that Japan underwent both as a country and as a people. I am hoping to write a book about this one day, since writing this thesis has only increased my interest in these films, also giving me a great deal of ideas for further research.

## Sources

### The main films:

*Record of a Tenement Gentleman* (Nagaya shinshiroku). Screenplay by Ikeda Tadao & Ozu Yasujirô. Directed by Ozu Yasujirô. Cinematography by Atsuta Yûharu. Film editing by Sugihara Yoshi. Music by Saitô Ichirô. Sound Department: Saitô Rokusaburô & Senoo Yoshisaburô. Starring: Iida Chôko (Otane), Aoki Hôhi (Kohei), Ozawa Eitarô (Kohei's father), Yoshikawa Mitsuko (Kikuko), Kawamura Reikichi (Tamekichi), Mimura Hideko (Okiku), Ryû Chishû (Tashiro), Sakamoto Takeshi (Kihachi), Takamatsu Eiko (Tome), Tonoyama Taiji (Photographer). Produced by Shochiku Eiga / Kubô Mitsuzo. Release date: 20.5.1947 (Japan). Duration: 71 minutes.

*A Hen in the Wind* (Kaze no naka no mendori). Screenplay by Ozu Yasujirô & Saitô Ryôsuke. Directed by Ozu Yasujirô. Cinematography by Atsuta Yûharu. Film editing by Hamamura Yoshiyasu. Music by Itô Senji. Sound editing by Senoo Yoshisaburô. Starring: Tanaka Kinuyo (Tokiko), Sano Shûji (Shuichi), Murata Chieko (Akiko), Ryû Chishû (Satake Kazuichiro), Minakami Reiko (Orie). Produced by Shochiku Eiga / Kubô Mitsuzo & Watanabe Dai. Release date: 17.9.1948 (Japan). Duration: 84 minutes.

*Late Spring* (Banshun). Screenplay by Ozu Yasujirô & Noda Kôgo based on the novel *Chichi to musume* by Hirotsu Kazuo. Directed by Ozu Yasujirô. Cinematography by Atsuta Yûharu. Film editing by Hamamura Yoshiyasu. Music by Itô Senji. Sound editing by Sasaki Hidetaka. Starring: Ryû Chishû (Professor Somiya), Hara Setsuko (Somiya Noriko), Tsukioka Yumeji (Kitagawa Aya), Sugimura Haruko (Taguchi Masa), Aoki Hôhi (Katsuyoshi), Usami Jun (Hattori Shoichi), Miyake Kuniko (Miwa Akiko), Mishima Masao (Onodera Jo). Produced by Shochiku Eiga / Yamamoto Takeshi. Release date: 13.9.1949 (Japan). Duration: 108 minutes.

**Other films:**

*Akasen chitai* (Street of Shame, 1956). Produced by Daiei Studios. Directed by Mizoguchi Kenji. Release date: 18.3.1956.

*Anjô-ke no butôkai* (The Ball at the Anjo House, 1947). Produced by Shochiku. Directed by Yoshimura Kôzaburô. Release date: 27.9.1947.

*Hachi no su no kodomotachi* (Children of the Beehive, 1948). Produced by Hachi no Su Eiga-bu. Directed by Shimizu Hiroshi. Release date: 24.8.1948.

*Le hérisson* (The Hedgehog, FRA-ITA 2009). Produced by Les films des Tournelles, Eagle Pictures, France 2 Cinema, Pathé, Topaze Bleue. Directed by Mona Achache. Release date: 3.7.2009 (France).

*Kiiroi karasu* (Yellow Crow, 1957). Produced by Kabukiza Eiga. Directed by Goshô Heinosuke. Release date: 27.2.1957.

*Koibumi* (Love Letter, 1953). Produced by Shinto Film Distribution Committee. Directed by Tanaka Kinuyo. Release date: 13.12.1953.

*Kuroi yuki* (Black Snow, 1964). Produced by Daisan Productions. Directed by Takechi Tetsuji. Release date: 9.6.1965.

*Madamu to nyôbô* (The Neighbor's Wife and Mine, 1931). Produced by Shochiku. Directed by Goshô Heinosuke. Release date: 1.8.1931.

*Nikutai no mon* (Gate of Flesh, 1964). Produced by Nikkatsu Film Company. Directed by Suzuki Seijun. Release date: 31.5.1964.

*Ningen no jôken* (The Human Condition, 1959). Produced by Ninjin Club, Shochiku. Directed by Kobayashi Masaki. Release date: 15.1.1959.

*Nobi* (Fires on a Plain, 1959). Produced by Daiei Studios, Kadokawa Herald Pictures. Directed by Ichikawa Kon. Release date: 3.11.1959.

*Rashômon* (Rashomon, 1950). Produced by Daiei Motion Picture Company. Directed by Kurosawa Akira. Release date: 26.8.1950.

*Waga seishun ni kuinashi* (No Regrets for Our Youth, 1946). Produced by Toho Company. Directed by Kurosawa Akira. Release date: 29.10.1946.

*Yoru no onnatachi* (Women of the Night, 1948). Produced by Shochiku. Directed by Mizoguchi Kenji. Release date: 26.5.1948.

### **Other original sources:**

Tolstoj, Leo: *Anna Karenina*. Finnish translation by Lea Pyykkö. Kariston kirjapaino oy, Hämeenlinna 2009. Originally published in Moscow, 1875 – 1877.

### **Bibliography:**

Anderson, Joseph L. & Richie, Donald: *The Japanese Film: Art and Industry (Expanded Edition)*. First Edition published 1959. Princeton University Press, Princeton 1982.

Beasley, W.G.: *Japan – Political, Economic and Social Change Since 1850*. Orion Books Ltd., London 2001. 213-227.

Bordwell, David: *Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema*. British Film Institute, London 1988.

Bordwell, David: "Watch Again! Look Well! Look!" From: *Reorienting Ozu: A Master and His Influence*. Edited by Jinhee Choi. Oxford University Press, London 2018.

Burch, Noel: *To the Distant Observer: Form and meaning in Japanese cinema*. Revised and edited by Annette Michelson. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1979.

Choi, Jinhee: *Reorienting Ozu: A Master and His Influence*. Oxford University Press, London 2018.

Draaisma, Douwe: *The Nostalgia Factory: Memory, Time and Ageing*. Yale University Press, New Haven 2013.

- Dyer, Richard: *Älä katso! Seksuaalisuus ja rotu viihteen kuvastossa*. Edited and translated to Finnish by Martti Lahti. Vastapaino, Tampere 2002.
- Fowler, Edward: "Piss and Run Or How Ozu Does a Number on SCAP". From: *Word and Image in Japanese Cinema*. Edited by Dennis Washburn and Carole Cavanaugh. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2010.
- Furukawa, Kaoru: "Preface: Light and Shadows in the Life of Tanaka Kinuyo". From: *Tanaka Kinuyo. Nation, Stardom and Female Subjectivity*. Edited by Irene González-López and Michael Smith. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2018.
- Geist, Kathe: Narrative Strategies in Ozu's Late Films. From: *Reframing Japanese Cinema: Authorship, Genre, History*. Edited by Arthur Nolletti, Jr. & David Desser. Indiana University Press, Indianapolis 1992.
- Geist, Kathe: Ozu and the Nation. From: *Theorizing National Cinema*. Edited by Valentina Vitali & Paul Willemen. BFI, Lontoo 2006.
- González-López, Irene & Smith, Michael (ed.): *Tanaka Kinuyo. Nation, Stardom and Female Subjectivity*. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2018.
- Grant, Catherine & Kuhn, Annette (ed.): *Screening World Cinema: A Screen Reader*. Routledge, New York 2006.
- Hirano, Kyoko: *Mr. Smith Goes to Tokyo: Japanese Cinema Under the American Occupation 1945-1952*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington D.C. 1992.
- Imamura, Anne E. (ed.): *Re-imaging Japanese Women*. University of California Press, Los Angeles 1996.
- Iwao, Sumiko: *The Japanese Woman. Traditional Image and Changing Reality*. The Free Press, New York 1993.
- Joo, Woojeong: "Rethinking Noriko: marriage narrative as historical allegory in Ozu Yasujiro's The moon has risen and other Occupation-era films." Published in *Screen*, Autumn 2015 issue 3.
- Joo, Woojeong: *The Cinema of Ozu Yasujiro. Histories of the Everyday*. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2017.
- Koskiahho, Briitta: *Japani – yhteiskunta murroksessa*. Painatuskeskus Oy, Helsinki 1995.
- Kovner, Sarah: *Occupying Power: Sex Workers and Servicemen in Postwar Japan*. Stanford University Press, Redwood City 2012.
- Kracauer, Siegfried: *Caligarista Hitleriin. Saksalaisen elokuvan psykologinen historia*. Originally published in 1947. Finnish translation by Reijo Lehtonen. Valtion painatuskeskus, Helsinki 1987.

- Kumagai, Fumie: *Family Issues on Marriage, Divorce, and Older Adults in Japan : With Special Attention to Regional Variations*. Springer, Singapore 2014.
- McLelland, Mark: *Love, Sex, and Democracy in Japan during the American Occupation*. Palgrave MacMillan, New York 2012.
- Mulari, Heta & Piispa, Lauri: *Elokuva historiassa, historia elokuvassa*. Tampereen yliopistopaino, Tampere 2009.
- Noletti, Arthur Jr.: "Once More and Goshō's Romanticism in the Early Occupation Period". From: *Word and Image in Japanese Cinema*. Edited by Dennis Washburn and Carole Cavanaugh. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2010.
- Nornes, Abe Mark: "The Riddle of the Vase: Ozu Yasujiro's *Late Spring* (1949)". From *Japanese Cinema: Texts and contexts*. Edited by Alastair Phillips & Julian Stringer. Routledge, New York 2007.
- Nygren, Scott: *Time Frames: Japanese Cinema and the Unfolding of History*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 2007.
- Okkonen, Tuula & Okkonen, Jari: *Yhdysvaltojen kulttuuriperintöpolitiikka miehitetyssä Japanissa*. Tornion kirjapaino, Tornio 2010.
- Phillips, Alastair: "Pictures of the past in the present: modernity, femininity and stardom in the postwar films of Ozu Yasujiro". *Screening World Cinema: A Screen Reader*. Edited by Catherine Grant and Annette Kuhn. Routledge, New York 2006.
- Phillips, Alastair: "The Salaryman's Panic Time: Ozu Yasujiro's *I Was Born, But...* (1932)". From: *Japanese Cinema: Texts and contexts*. Edited by Alastair Phillips & Julian Stringer. Routledge, New York 2007.
- Rayans, Tony: "Ozu Yasujiro, Tofu Maker". *Sight & Sound*, Feb. 1, 2010.
- Richie, Donald: *Ozu*. University of California Press, Los Angeles 1974.
- Richie, Donald: *A Hundred Years of Japanese Film*. Kodansha International, New York 2001.
- Ronald, Richard & Alexy, Allison (ed.): *Home and Family in Japan: continuity and transformation*. Routledge, New York 2011.
- Rosen, Philip: "History, Textuality, Nation". From: *Theorizing National Cinema*. Edited by Valentina Vitali & Paul Willemsen. BFI, Lontoo 2006.
- Rosenbaum, Jonathan: "Rebuilding from Ground Zero: *A Hen in the Wind*". Essay published along with the DVD release of *An Autumn Afternoon* and *A Hen in the Wind*. BFI, London 2011.

Rosenberger, Nancy R.: "Fragile Resistance, Signs of Status: Women between State and Media in Japan". From: *Re-imagining Japanese Women*. Edited by Anne E. Imamura. University of California Press, Los Angeles 1996.

Ryu, Chishu: "Yasujiro Ozu". Published originally in *Sight and Sound*, Spring 1964. Published along with the DVD release of *Early Summer* and *What did the Lady Forget*. BFI, London 2011.

Salmi, Hannu: *Elokuva ja historia*. Painatuskeskus Oy, Helsinki 1993.

Standish, Isolde: *A New History of Japanese Cinema: A Century of Narrative Film*. Continuum, New York 2012.

Thompson, Kristin: *Breaking the Glass Armor: Neoformalist Film Analysis*. Princeton University Press, Princeton 1988.

Timonen, Topi E.: *Onnelliset lapset, masentuneet vanhemmat: Avioliiton ja onnellisuuden kuvaus Yasujiro Ozun elokuvassa Sovinnon kukka*. Bachelor's thesis for Media studies at the University of Turku, unpublished, 2016.

Totman, Conrad: *A History of Japan*. Second Edition. Blackwell Publishing, Oxford 2008. 449-545.

Waswo, Ann: *Housing in Postwar Japan - a Social History*. Routledge, New York 2002.

Willemen, Paul: "The National Revisited". From: *Theorizing National Cinema*. Edited by Valentina Vitali & Paul Willemen. BFI, Lontoo 2006.

Vitali, Valentina & Willemen, Paul: *Theorizing National Cinema*. BFI, Lontoo 2006.

von Bagh, Peter: *Elämää suuremmat elokuvat*. Otava, Helsinki 1989.

Wood, Robin: "Chishu Ryu". From: *The International Dictionary of Films and Filmmakers: Volume III: Actors and Actresses*. Edited by James Vinson. St. James Press, Chicago 1986.

Wood, Robin: *Sexual Politics and Narrative Film: Hollywood and Beyond*. Columbia University Press, New York 1998.

Yoshimoto, Mitsuhiro: *Kurosawa: Film Studies and Japanese Cinema*. Duke University Press, Durham 2000.

### **Other sources:**

*Sight and Sound* director's poll. Link verified 15.5.2019.

<http://www.bfi.org.uk/news/sight-sound-2012-directors-top-ten>

<https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/2408-sight-sound-poll-2012-tokyo-story>

The definition of “nostalgia” in Collins English dictionary. Link verified 15.5.2019.

<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/nostalgia>

Criterion Collection’s introduction of *Street of Shame* (1956). Link verified 15.5.2019.

<https://www.criterion.com/films/970-street-of-shame>.

Japan in Sexual Rights Database. Link verified 15.5.2019.

<http://sexualrightsdatabase.org/static/country-445.html>

Pacific Atrocities Education blog about Japan’s reluctance to admit crimes committed during the war in China. Written by Nicole Dahlstrom. 12/10/2015. Link verified 15.5.2019.

<http://www.pacificatrocities.org/blog/has-japan-really-apologized-for-wwii-atrocities>

Wikipedia article that lists the films that have been chosen as the year’s best in Kinema Junpo’s annual poll. Link verified 15.5.2019.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kinema\\_Junpo\\_Award\\_for\\_Best\\_Film\\_of\\_the\\_Year](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kinema_Junpo_Award_for_Best_Film_of_the_Year)

*Record of a Tenement Gentleman*, *A Hen in the Wind* and *Late Spring* in Internet Movie Database (IMDb). All movie stills in this thesis are from these pages. Links verified 15.5.2019.

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0039651/?ref =tt rec tt>

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0040505/?ref =tt rec tt>

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0041154/?ref =nv sr 1?ref =nv sr 1>



## **Appendix: Ozu Yasujiro's surviving directorial filmography**

*Student Romance: Days of Youth* (Gakusei romansu: wakaki hi, 1929).

*Fighting Friends Japanese Style* (Wasei kenka tomodachi, 1929). 14 minutes survive.

*A Straightforward Boy* (Tokkan kozo, 1929).

*I Graduated, But...* (Daigaku wa detakeredo, 1929). 10 minutes survive.

*Walk Cheerfully* (Hogaraka ni ayume, 1930).

*I Flunked, But...* (Rakudai wa shitakeredo, 1930).

*That Night's Wife* (Sono yo no tsuma, 1930).

*The Lady and the Beard* (Shukujo to hige, 1931).

*Tokyo Chorus* (Tokyo no korasu, 1931).

*I Was Born, But...* (Umarete wa mita keredo, 1932).

*Where Now Are the Dreams of Youth?* (Seishun no yume ima izuko, 1932).

*Woman of Tokyo* (Tokyo no onna, 1933).

*Dragnet Girl* (Hijosen no onna, 1933).

*Passing Fancy* (Dekigoroko, 1933).

*A Mother Should Be Loved* (Haha wo kowazuya, 1934).

*A Story of Floating Weeds* (Ukigusa monogatari, 1934).

*An Inn in Tokyo* (Tokyo no yado, 1935).

*Kagami jishi* (1936). Short documentary.

*The Only Son* (Hitori Musuko, 1936).

*What Did the Lady Forget?* (Shukujo wa nani wo wasureta ka, 1937).

*Brothers and Sisters of the Toda Family* (Todake no kyodai, 1941).

*There Was a Father* (Chichi ariki, 1942).

*Record of a Tenement Gentleman* (Nagaya shinshiroku, 1947).

*A Hen in the Wind* (Kaze no naka no mendori, 1948).

*Late Spring* (Banshun, 1949).

*The Munekata Sisters* (Munekata kyodai, 1950).

*Early Summer* (Bakushu, 1951).

*The Flavor of Green Tea Over Rice* (Ochazuke no aji, 1952).

*Tokyo Story* (Tokyo monogatari, 1953).

*Early Spring* (Soshun, 1956).

*Tokyo Twilight* (Tokyo boshoku, 1957).

*Equinox Flower* (Higanbana, 1958).

*Good Morning* (Ohayo, 1959).

*Floating Weeds* (Ukigusa, 1959).

*Late Autumn* (Akibiyori, 1960).

*The End of Summer* (Kohayagawa-ke no aki, 1961).

*An Autumn Afternoon* (Sanma no aji, 1962).