Ozu

A Closer Look

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Introduction

Two black-and-white photographs hang, one above the other, on one wall in my study. On top is the sculpted figure of St. John the Baptist from the north portal of Chartres Cathedral. The figure is rendered so spare and angular as to appear almost modern; from his stooped shoulders and sad eyes we understand that he foresees his own fate and that of the man he came to proclaim; but this portrait of weary sorrow also speaks to the inherent pathos of human life itself.

Below St. John, Yasujiro Ozu stares out from a movie set designed to look like a Japanese house. The photograph, cropped from a still for *What Did the Lady Forget?*, has been incorporated into a poster for the New York Japan Society's 1982 retrospective of his work. Ozu's eyes are crinkled in a benign half-smile, one we might associate with the portrait of a Chinese sage, one that laughed at human folly while it mourned life's limitations and was no stranger to the resigned sorrow we see on the face of St. John.

These photographs bookend my academic career. I first saw Chartres Cathedral at the age of twenty-one and decided then and there to study medieval art history. Sometime later I switched to cinema studies. The medieval cathedral was, after all, an early exercise in creating narratives for the masses out of successive images. My dissertation completed, I obtained a press pass to the 1982 Ozu retrospective in New York, with the promise that I would write an article on it for *Film Quarterly*. I have been writing about Ozu ever since.

While still a medievalist, I saw my first Ozu film, *The End of Summer*, in the early 1970s, soon after Dan Talbot of New Yorker Films brought Ozu's films to the United States. Prior to immersing myself in Europe and European art, I had spent a good deal of my childhood in Okinawa. Seeing *The End of Summer* felt like coming home.

Once I began a more serious study of Ozu, I realized I had come into contact with the director many years before. While in Okinawa, my father's secretary offered to accompany him to a celebrated comedy called *Ohayo*. The next morning at breakfast he entertained us with his description of this very funny film in which little boys played farting games. (No one in a Hollywood film at the time ever went to the bathroom, much less farted; the closest thing to it were Andy Griffith's saluting toilets in *No Time for Sergeants*.)

Initially, Dan Talbot distributed *Ohayo* under the translated title *Good Morning*, which is the title Donald Richie used in *Ozu*, his seminal book on the director. The more I read about *Good Morning*, the more I wondered if this was the hilarious film my father had seen over twenty years earlier. Eventually, I realized it was the same film, and, with some excitement because this was now my favorite director, I asked my father if he remembered the Japanese film with the little boys who played farting games. He had no recollection of it whatsoever! What had lodged itself so firmly in my eleven-year-old mind had long since vanished from his. (He would not live into the DVD era when he might have revisited *Ohayo*.)

The book that follows is based on avenues of research I have pursued over the past thirty years, the last of which have been particularly intense. It is intended to both complement previous works on Ozu and to challenge aspects of them with which I disagree. Readers may perceive it as something of a gloss on David Bordwell's *Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema*, and they would not be completely wrong. Bordwell's *Ozu* remains, to my mind, the most important work on the director in English and is a rock on which I stand.

In the 1980s and 1990s I gained a reputation as the anti-Bordwell when, in fact, as an art historian, I had immediately gravitated to his and Kristin Thompson's formalist approach as a foundational way to understand cinema. I was not willing to be limited to this approach, however, and this is where disputes have arisen.

Works of art that describe people and things have meaning, but not all interpretations are equal. Medieval works have iconographic programs based on the theology of the time. The iconography of twentieth-century art is more elusive, but close reading combined with a knowledge of history and culture can unlock it. Bordwell believes, essentially, that Ozu was too preoccupied with his intricate parametric designs to give much thought to his narratives or their meaning, but I contend that the iconographic programs discernible in Ozu's films rival the complexity of his formal structures. The question arises as to whether anyone watching his films as theatrical entertainment would have been aware of these networks of signs and symbols, to which I would answer: probably not. But neither would they have comprehended his formal complexities in their entirety; yet both contribute to the aura the films project.

This book concerns only Ozu's extant films and fragments from films that have otherwise been lost, and it is divided into three parts. Part I is devoted solely to the silent films and begins with his so-called gangster films, which were a full-throttle foray into the modernism that accompanied Ozu's coming of age. Focused on only three films, Chapter 1 nevertheless introduces both the concerns and methodologies that run throughout the book: iconography and meaning discerned through motifs and symbols, Ozu's narrative strategies, and influences on Ozu's art that have not previously been discussed at length, in the case of the gangster films, those of Germany's Weimar cinema.

Chapter 2 isolates Ozu's recurring motifs, discusses their relevance to his stories, and the extent to which they reveal the story he intends to tell. Drawing on the work

of Michel Chion, Chapter 3 investigates the ways in which Ozu visualized sound in his silent films to heighten drama, further his narration, create humor, and/or to suppress or delay narrative information.

Chapter 4 analyzes the narrative strategies that dominate Ozu's silent period, such as his use of synecdoche, reverse of cause and effect, or substitution of one character's emotions for another's. This chapter refutes the widely held notion that Ozu's stories are open-ended and ambiguous by illustrating the narrative logic that informs them. Although Ozu's style and content would evolve somewhat over time, the methodologies for analyzing his films demonstrated in Part I, the interpretation of signs and symbols and the investigation of how he narrates, will undergird successive chapters as they pursue additional lines of inquiry.

Part II examines chronologically Ozu's sound films from his first, made in 1936, to the one he made in the last year of the American Occupation of Japan, 1952. These were years in which history was accelerated. As militarists came to dominate the government, Japan moved into Germany's fascist sphere, into all-out war with China, and eventually into war with the United States and its allies. The seven-year-long American Occupation would follow.

From 1937 to 1939, Ozu served in a combat unit in China. Chapters 5 to 7 chronicle, respectively, the sound films he made in three distinct periods: before he went to China, after he returned until the end of the war, and during the American Occupation. My analysis of these films pays particular attention to the ways in which they were influenced by political and historical events. In this respect Ozu's films are indeed ambiguous, darting and dodging between an outright approbation of government policies and a veiled critique.

Part III takes up particular topics that tilt toward the late films but incorporate evidence from the entire body of extant films. Chapter 8 looks at narrative strategies in what can be thought of as Ozu's life-cycle films (those most familiar to Western viewers). While some critics view these films as repetitive and tired, this chapter reveals instead elegant and seamless narratives that never deviate from Ozu's essential story even while seeming, at times, to mislead the viewer.

Chapter 9 takes on the much-debated topic of religion in Ozu's films and demonstrates that while they may not be religious objects in themselves, as some have portrayed them, they are nevertheless informed and influenced by a wide array of religious iconography, sentiment, and impulse. Chapter 10 examines Ozu's attitude toward a variety of gender issues, particularly those concerning women, and finds him generally sympathetic to the reforms advocated by Japanese feminists and Occupation authorities in their efforts to liberate Japanese women.

Ozu's work has been compared to Noh drama and other Japanese art forms. Chapter 11 looks specifically at the ways in which his work compares to Japanese painting and printmaking, both classical and contemporary to his time. Ozu was aware of traditional art, dabbled in watercolors, and was friends with renown painters. Accordingly,

his work reflects spatial strategies and other interests similar to both traditional and contemporary Japanese painting.

Ozu's influence on other directors has drawn considerable interest over the years and is the particular focus of Jinhee Choi's anthology *Reorienting Ozu: A Master and His Influence*. My final chapter adds to this discourse, discussing Ozu's influence on six directors, Japanese, German, and American, whose admiration for or dependence on him is either well documented or obvious. Each director has a different relationship to Ozu and a different understanding of his work, and each borrows distinct aspects of Ozu's content, style, and ethos.

Each of the book's three parts concludes with an "Afterword." That for Part I discusses Ozu's demonstrated nostalgia for his early films while Part II ends with a discussion of the persistence of war memory in the post-Occupation films. Part III's "Afterword" engages the debate over whether or not Ozu can be considered a modernist.

Because I have not always included a plot synopsis each time I discuss a particular film, a chronological list of plot synopses is available for quick reference at the end of the book. The actors involved in each film are noted, as is information about current DVD copies of the films. Because thorough and detailed filmographies exist in English in Donald Richie's, David Bordwell's and Kiju Yoshida's books on Ozu, I have not included one here. Kyoko Hirano's filmography in Yoshida's *Ozu's Anti-Cinema* has corrected earlier mistakes and omissions.

Although it has become customary in recent writing on Japan to give Japanese names in the Japanese order, i.e., family name first, I have written them in the Western/English order because that is less confusing for English-language readers, not all of whom will be academics or Japanologists. Exceptions to this will occur in Chapter 11, in which the names of Japanese painters are given in the Japanese order because many of these individuals have international reputations based on the Japanese version of their names. I have also followed the custom of referring to these artists by their given names. All Japanese words and names have been romanized using the Hepburn system without macrons.

Footnotes containing the usual references, as well as additional observations, useful information, and interesting trivia, have been placed immediately following each chapter for the reader's convenience. Enjoy them!

Besides Donald Richie and David Bordwell, many individual scholars have contributed to our understanding of Ozu over the last thirty-plus years. I have not always agreed with everything they have written, but, as with Bordwell, I am profoundly grateful for their contributions to this field. Without their insights and, particularly, the background their research has provided, this book would not have been possible.

In addition, I would like to thank the following individuals for their personal assistance: Patricia Murray, Tamotsu Nagano, and Penelope Herbert for their invaluable help with translations; Kiyoshi Kabira, Akiko Miyamoto, Rowland Abiodun, and Jennifer Rutledge for finding and forwarding materials to me from Japan or from American libraries I could not access; David Desser, Woojeong Joo, and Chris Berry for

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2

Signs, Symbols, and Motifs

> Ozu's refusal to adopt the codes of Hollywood illusionism results in an excess of film language, of signs and signifiers.
>
> —Catherine Russell[1]

David Bordwell, leading film scholar and Ozu expert, has inveighed at length against the idea of interpreting films or assigning meaning to the objects in them.[2] The rigorous formalist was, perhaps understandably, uncomfortable with the imprecision of critical interpretation, which is, at best, subjective and intuitive. To make matters worse, artists also work intuitively and may not always be conscious of the meaning with which they have endowed their art. Nevertheless, interpreting signs and symbols and discerning how they fit into patterns of meaning in a film require a rigor similar to detecting formal patterns as well as a knowledge of both the culture and history of the country and the period in which the film was made. A compelling interpretation involves evidence and logic and is not simply invented out of thin air. If art history confined itself to formal analysis alone, it would be a dull subject indeed. Art historians regularly interpret the intent of pictures which don't move or talk or sing or dance as to the story they wish to tell, the moral, religious, philosophical, political, and social themes they express, and the attitudes they convey. Doing the same for moving pictures is not novel, frivolous, or specious.

To this we can add that Japanese write in pictures, and these pictographs (*kanji*) have multiple meanings, which Japanese writers play off one another. Many objects in traditional Japanese culture have meanings, much as they did in medieval European culture. Consequently, endowing objects with meaning would hardly have been an alien exercise for Ozu.

In his attempt to denigrate and discredit interpretative readings of Ozu's films, Bordwell piles on arguments and examples that reach well into the realm of absurdity. In *Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema*, he creates a fictional "interpretative critic" who advances silly interpretations so that Bordwell can shoot them down and prove that interpretation is useless.[3] He and frequent co-author Kristin Thompson have also formulated a list of axioms related to the interpretation of signs and symbols within films

that are both arbitrary and nonsensical. One of these holds that using obvious symbols is ipso facto heavy-handed and thus more or less unthinkable of Ozu.[4]

Obvious Symbols

Such reasoning is, of course, tautological, but, for the record, Ozu was not above availing himself of symbols that might be considered clichéd. The black-and-white symbolism in *Dragnet Girl* is hardly subtle or original. Other obvious symbols have to do with death and dying—small animals battling for life, for example. In *Tokyo Chorus* the father stops by to collect his son, who is playing in a creek with friends. The boy catches a fish in his father's straw hat and then announces that his sister is ill. He dumps his fish on the ground as the two hurry off. The final shot in the sequence is of the beached fish, gasping for life, clearly a reference to the sister's plight. In a subsequent hospital sequence, father and son are reading a picture book when they look up to watch to a moth batting its life out against a hanging light. This motif would be reprised in several of Ozu's sound films. In *An Inn in Tokyo*, a similar hospital scene includes two shots of an insect struggling in a pan of water.

Mikio Naruse's short film from 1931, *Flunky, Work Hard!* (*Koshiben ganbare*), characterizes the health crisis of the protagonist's son with a montage composed of a close-up of a clock's pendulum, then a dripping faucet (life dripping away) that tilts down to reveal an insect struggling in a pan of water. A later shot of the faucet and the pan of water shows the insect nearly dead. In contrast, *That Night's Wife*, from 1930, does not use any of these symbols; the clocks in the film are included primarily to inform us of the long night in which the parents watch the child and the detective watches the parents. Ozu would not use the particular image of the bug struggling in water until 1935. From this we understand both that these images suggesting impending death and/or a struggle for life were not unique to Ozu and that he was not too sophisticated to avail himself of them.

Nooses and rope constitute another category of signs or symbols associated with death. We first encounter the noose as a joke in *I Flunked, But* . . . We are shown a premonitory noose but soon discover it is really part of an overhead lamp cord. Eventually we are shown a student agonizing in front of his dean. We know from the story that he is not very bright, and we suppose he has flunked; but two sequences later we learn he is pleading not for himself but for the protagonist, Takahashi, who tutored him. (Takahashi was busy working out an elaborate cheating scheme instead of studying the night before the exam.) Of the three sequences involving the dim-witted student and the dean, two are preceded by the "noose" shot. In a typical Ozu reversal, the doom implied by the noose is real, but it applies to Takahashi and his friends, not to the anguished underachiever.

In *That Night's Wife*, from the same year, ominous loops of heavy rope are draped over the beams in the stairwell outside the protagonists' apartment. The rope may signal the husband's eventual downfall, but, since he goes off companionably with his

captor at film's end and is not facing a death sentence, the rope, like the police chase and robbery at the beginning of the film, acts as another token of the scary crime film that never materializes.

In *Woman of Tokyo*, however, bits of rope combine with other symbols, including two pairs of *hanging* gloves, to portend and communicate the brother Ryoichi's suicide. Having learned that his sister, Chikako, moonlights as a prostitute, Ryoichi confronts her, then runs out of their apartment. In a subsequent sequence, a tracking shot follows him through an unkempt alley. In the alley we see bits of rope, shards from broken pots, and overturned barrels and tubs. Ryoichi sits, pulls a button off his coat and throws it away. At his feet are a little flame from a lantern, an upright tub, and more rope.

A cut to his girlfriend Harue's home begins with a close-up of her brother, Kinoshita's, white policeman's gloves *hanging* on the wall with his saber, casting a shadow on the wall. A similar shot began the sequence between Harue and her brother the day before when she returned from the movies. In that shot, however, the gloves did not cast the prominent shadow that they do in the shot that begins this second Harue-Kinoshita sequence. In this second sequence, another shot begins with the saber and gloves in the foreground left, out of focus, *hanging* from Kinoshita's side. Two other gloves hang, separately, from a clothesline on the balcony and are silhouetted behind the frosted glass of the sliding door. They appear ominously in the background every time the camera points in that direction during this extensive sequence, which consists: first, of Kinoshita trying to reassure Harue, distraught from the fight she has had with Ryoichi the previous night; second, of his departure for work; and, finally, of Chikako's arrival and her conversation with Harue. This last, the interview with Chikako, includes a call from Kinoshita with the news that Ryoichi has committed suicide. When Harue goes to answer the call at a neighbor's clock shop, we see boots *hanging* in the hallway, to which Ozu deliberately calls our attention when he has the boy who has come for her bat at them while he waits. Subsequently in Chikako's home, we see the shadow of a loop of rope on the wall next to Ryoichi's kimono. Not once are we told that Ryoichi has committed suicide by hanging, but can there be any doubt?

In addition to the rope and hanging objects in *Woman of Tokyo*, Ozu adds clocks as a symbol of mortality. While Chikako waits in Harue's house for her to return, she looks up at a clock on the wall. Cut to a wall of clocks in the shop with the phone. Harue comes into the shot, and there are cuts back and forth between Harue and Kinoshita on the telephone. Each shot of Harue has the clocks in the background. Finally, there is a close-up of the wall of clocks, Harue hanging up the phone, the same close-up of the wall of clocks, then a cut back to the clock on the wall of her home. The scene continues with Harue telling Chikako of Ryoichi's suicide and ends with her collapsing in tears.

Vessels of various kinds create a less obvious but persistent motif that runs through the story, from our first glimpse of Chikako as a prostitute to Harue and Chikako mourning over Ryoichi's body. It begins with a sink full of dirty water at the disreputable cabaret where Chikako picks up her johns, an obvious comment on what she does there. The motif continues in the form of the overturned tubs and shards seen on

Ryoichi's walk through the back alleys. These connect to the tub of wash water Chikako sees in the alley behind Harue's home while she waits for Harue, who returns with the news of Ryoichi's death. Subsequently we see basins in Chikako's home, presumably used to wash Ryoichi's body, which is laid out for mourning. Thus we go from the dirty business of the club, which, when known to Ryoichi, upends his life and shatters his faith (the overturned tub and pottery shards) to the washtub under the hanging laundry (to which other motifs pointing to hanging and death have been added) to the washbasin that has been used to wash his body. This is a journey from the profane to the sacred through the agonies of the heart. These motifs, combined and interwoven with one another, elevate Ryoichi's death above the merely melodramatic to something more elegiac. Despite Chikako's castigating him as a weakling, these various symbols give Harue's sentiment, "I feel terribly sorry for Ryoichi," equal weight.

Critics typically view *Woman of Tokyo* as a Mizoguchi-esque, *shinpa*-inspired story of an impoverished, misunderstood woman, for whom prostitution is the only way to earn enough money to support her brother; but Ozu's story is more Shakespearean than Mizoguchian, and Ozu's symbols guide us to this conclusion. This film is about the bad choices every single major character makes. Chikako's desire to indulge Ryoichi, not simply pay for his schooling—indicated in the conversation between her supervisor and a policeman ("She's very generous to her brother")—has caused her to take up "dirty" work instead of the honest translating she claims to be doing on the side. The shot of the sink full of dirty water, reminiscent of the dirty towel Hiroko's boss wipes his hands on in *Walk Cheerfully*, justifies this reading. Smaller missteps lead to tragedy: Harue's brother wants to warn Chikako that the police are investigating her, but he allows Harue to take on the task instead. When Harue finds Ryoichi instead of Chikako at home, she lets him pressure her into telling what she knows, and his extreme reaction leads him to commit suicide.

These are all bad choices, but critics tend to side with Chikako, who sees herself as a victim—"You never understood me, Ryoichi," she says to his dead body—and dismiss Ryoichi's very legitimate question to her: "Don't you care that your actions may ruin our lives?" Through his piling on of signs and symbols, Ozu helps us to understand Ryoichi's heartbreak and the tragic irony of the bad choice each character makes.

From Motif to Symbol

Another of the Bordwell/Thompson axioms is that an object endowed with symbolic meaning must have the same meaning from film to film, both within a director's oeuvre and even within that of any other director. In fact, Ozu's use of particular objects in his films often moves from a simple motif or even a singular image to a more complex sign or symbol. One wants to say such usage "evolved," but an image could as easily move back again to being a simple motif. Certainly Ozu had an affection for certain objects and how they photographed and introduced them into his films for no

Afterword Part I: ". . . when the studio was in Kamata"

Ozu's silent films had been made at Shochiku's Kamata studio in Tokyo, but as sound came in, filming in Kamata became increasingly difficult because the city, with all its industrial noises, was growing up around it, and in 1936 Shochiku relocated to the Ofuna district in Kamakura. Typically, Ozu was the last one out the door of the Kamata studio, making his last silent film, *College Is a Nice Place* (*Daigaku yoitoko*, 1936), as well as his first talkie, *The Only Son*, there.

From time to time Ozu cited his earlier films in later ones, although it can be difficult to distinguish a deliberate citation from all the bits and pieces he recycled from one film to the next. However, in his first color film, *Equinox Flower*, he made obvious references to four of his silent films. "Ever with us are the dreams of youth," says one character in the film's reunion sequence. *Dreams of Youth* is the title of Ozu's second film (*Wakodo no yume*, 1928). No longer extant, it concerned college-boy high jinks, but the title was recycled into *Where Now Are the Dreams of Youth?* which combined comedy with a serious look at the strains on friendship post-college life can bring. Star of that film, Ureo Egawa, appears, gray-haired and middle-aged, in a cameo in *Equinox Flower*'s reunion scene. (See colorplate 1B.) Kinuyo Tanaka, who plays the mother in *Equinox Flower*, starred in both *Where Now Are the Dreams of Youth?* and *Dragnet Girl*. *Equinox Flower* makes specific reference to *Dragnet Girl* with a shot of an all-neon Nipper dog beaming from the top of Tokyo's RCA building. Meanwhile, window washers, seen from both inside and outside the protagonist's office building in *Equinox Flower*, are an obvious reference to *Walk Cheerfully*.

The Japanese New Wave was beginning to emerge at the time Ozu made *Equinox Flower*. Takashi Kawamata, who worked for a decade on Ozu films as an assistant cameraman, went on to become the chief cinematographer for many New Wave films. Not long before his death, Ozu congratulated Kawamata on his success in the new genre, then added wistfully, "I used to be one [avant-garde filmmaker] myself when the studio was in Kamata."[1]

Note

1. Makoto Igarashi, *Ozu's Films from Behind the Scenes* [Ozugumi no seisaku genba kara] (Tokyo: Shochiku, 2003). This short film is available on Criterion's *Early Summer* DVD, 2004.

5
The Calm

> As the [1930s] advanced, the graphic record of these brittle years conveys stress and contradiction in every direction.
>
> —John Dower[1]

Nationalism and Internationalism

The first time *All Quiet on the Western Front* (Lewis Milestone, 1930) was shown in Berlin, December 5, 1930, Hitler's minions staged a preplanned, well-orchestrated demonstration against it: Nazis planted in the audience rose up to shout it down. The projectionist was forced to turn off the film, whereupon Joseph Goebbels gave a speech from the balcony, after which his comrades threw stink bombs and released white mice into the audience. With Nazi help, protests against the film spread throughout Germany. Six days after its Berlin premier, the film was banned in Germany.[2]

Nothing similar happened in Japan. The already prestigious pacifist film opened in the fall of 1930, won the *Kinema Junpo* first prize for a foreign film, and evoked tears from a Japanese audience, torn between the ideals of war and peace. Peter B. High writes that, since Japan, unlike Europe, had never known the devastation of total war, "there was [in 1930] neither the ideological nor the essential basis for widespread, deeply rooted pacifism." The film could never have evoked the extreme partisanship in Japan that it did in Germany, in which both the film and the novel it was based on were set; nevertheless, it caught the eye of Japanese censors. It was cut in 280 places, losing 20 percent of its length. The deleted scenes included those depicting death in battle, the screams of the wounded, and the hero's ambivalence toward killing. Even before the Manchurian Incident on September 18, 1931, the Japanese government had no intention of dampening the public's perception of war as worthy and valorous.[3]

Ozu included a poster for *All Quiet on the Western Front* in *Dragnet Girl* (1933). The multinational contributions to both the film and the poster—Ozu managed to come up with a French version of the poster—reflect the internationalism continually present—via advertisements, movie posters, and other props—in his early films. One wonders,

though, if his choice of a French poster in this instance was motivated by his desire to avoid the censors' notice, for by 1933 Japan was at war in Manchuria.

Filmmakers in this period were forever dodging or throwing bones to the censors.[4] The latter often took the form of inserting pro-military content into scripts and films. Ozu did this with his boys' stories: not only do the little boys in *I Was Born, But . . .* want to be generals, but a reference to a 1932 suicide mission by soldiers in Manchuria, whipped up in the press and recounted in popular movies, is prominently displayed on a sign in the classroom scene.[5] High reports that the scripted ending to the movie had the older boy meeting up with some soldiers before returning home.[6] Obviously, that scene never made it into the final film, and it is hard to believe Ozu ever intended that it should. Other reminders of militarism, possibly censor-driven, in his early films include the many references to Jiro's military service in *Passing Fancy* as well as movie posters referring to Manchuria in that film. In addition, the company test in *Where Now Are the Dreams of Youth?* contains a question about the Manchurian Incident.

While Ozu threw sops to the censors, he also included sly references that either undercut or questioned his government's positions. In *Passing Fancy* Tomio practices his calligraphy with a paean to filial piety, a moral precept the Japanese government wished to see reinforced, but his father, of course, is nothing like the patriarch imagined in Confucian orthodoxy. In *A Story of Floating Weeds*, Kihachi's play is an 1870 Kabuki drama called *Murubashi Chūya* or *Keian Taiheiki*, based on an abortive 1651 uprising against the shogun, which, nevertheless, sparked uprisings throughout the country in succeeding years. In 1931 and 1932 militarists had assassinated two prime ministers. A third had already been assassinated in 1921. Ozu's choice of drama for Kihachi's performance suggests the fragility of Japan's government in the face of determined opposition.

Along with the compliance and subversion observable in the early films are the many props that suggest Ozu's enthusiastic embrace of foreign influences in keeping with Japan's internationalism in the 1920s and early 1930s. These include the plethora of foreign or Western-inspired objects in *That Night's Wife*; almost the entire milieu of the gangster films, including jazz, boxing, Victrolas, English graffiti, and movie posters; the posters, pennants, and advertisements, mainly in English, in the student films, and the array of foreign movie posters in *A Mother Should Be Loved*. Of particular note in this regard are the international flag decorations used in the party sequences of *Walk Cheerfully* and *Tokyo Chorus*.[7] These are on-screen longest in *Tokyo Chorus*, where they arch above the teacher, Omura, as he sits at the head of the table. Five medium shots of Omura show his head framed by the American flag to the left and the Japanese flag to the right. (See Figure 2.4, p. 50.) For Japanese at this time, the United States stood for everything that was modern and progressive. (It was also heralded as a fellow colonizer).[8]

Countering such unabashed enthusiasm for things foreign were Japan's growing militarism, nativism, and isolationism. In 1933 both Japan and Germany withdrew from the League of Nations. Meanwhile, Japan's slide into economic depression worsened.

Depression (*The Only Son*, 1936)

As the Depression deepened, Ozu's films, already laden with irony regarding education (or the lack of it) and work in 1930s Japan, became darker with *An Inn in Tokyo*, *College is a Nice Place*, and *The Only Son*. For Ozu's characters, any work is difficult to find, good jobs impossible, and the value of education questionable. Despite his characters' vows to keep on trying, prostitution, robbery, despair, and death come to seem like reasonable responses to hopeless poverty.

The Only Son specifically critiques the value of education as a guarantee of upward mobility. Early in the film, the son, Ryosuke, sits at the top of a stairway in his mother's home, listening as she speaks with his teacher, Okubo. Ryosuke has lied to the teacher, telling him that his mother will send him to high school, which is news to Otsune, his mother. She struggles to maintain face while listening to Okubo describe the necessity of higher education and his own ambition to leave their village and continue his studies in Tokyo. When Okubo leaves, Otsune calls Ryosuke, who comes down the stairs, emblematic of the upward mobility he seeks, and tells him she cannot afford to send him to high school. Throughout the scene, we hear the sound of the spinning machines from the silk factory in which Otsune works. This sound effectively announces the path Ryosuke will follow if he doesn't get more education.

Later, Otsune relents and spends all she has sending Ryosuke to high school and college in Tokyo, but a visit to him thirteen years later reveals that her sacrifices did not bring the promised status or security. Neither Ryosuke nor Okubo has done well in Tokyo. Ryosuke's only job is teaching night school, and Okubo, now burdened with four children, runs a small cutlet (*tonkatsu*) restaurant. Ryosuke lives in a poor neighborhood where textiles are manufactured, and, ironically, the sound from this small cottage industry permeates his home just as the sound of the spinning wheels was constantly present in his mother's home.

Of the many shots in Ryosuke's house, some include a bookshelf crammed with books, but his education has not brought him a decent living. In a hospital sequence, Ryosuke stands near a medical manikin, half of whose "skin" is intact but whose other side is exposed to reveal the inner anatomy. Ryosuke's juxtaposition to the half-flayed manikin suggests his vulnerable state.

Competing narratives, however, suggest varying reasons behind Ryosuke's failure. Are the times so bad that even the highly educated cannot get ahead, or is Ryosuke simply not ambitious enough as his mother insists? He has, for example, married the daughter of the owner of the restaurant near where he boarded during college—a character familiar to us from *I Flunked, But . . .* and *Where Now Are the Dreams of Youth?*—which implies he may not have studied very hard in college or, at the very least, wasn't willing to wait for a more advantageous match. (If the latter, education is, indeed, not all that is needed to get ahead.) He has also lied to his mother, like Notomo in *I Graduated, But . . .* , telling her he had a good job in his ward office. (He later tells her he quit that

job, and Bordwell wonders why he left, but I think we are to assume he never held this position.)[9]

A second narrative involves the Buddhist concept of fate. Okubo has resigned himself to his failure to make good in Tokyo, saying, "things go as they're destined." We might suppose this to be a mere rationalization except that Ozu includes many shots of wheels in the film. The wheel is a Buddhist symbol of the endless cycle of birth and death and the fate we cannot change until and unless we reach enlightenment (*satori*). (See Chapter 9.) The film's second shot, an exterior in Otsune's village of Shinshu, and almost every shot inside Otsune's house, include a wheel of some sort. The Tokyo sequences include fewer wheels, but there are large wheels on a cart associated with the noodle vendor near Ryosuke's home. Do concepts like fate still apply in modern, progressive Tokyo? Or are people kidding themselves to think they do not?

Finally, there is the narrative of three "only sons:" Ryosuke, his own baby, and Tomi-chan, neighbor Otaka's son, all trapped in a cycle of downward mobility. Toward the middle of the film, Otsune walks outside with the baby, asking "What will you become?" Ozu employs his morning-laundry iconography to begin this sequence, but the "bright-new-day-full-of-promise" meaning attached to it in the silent films is muted here. As she does throughout most of the Tokyo sequences, Otsune looks worried while she queries the baby about his future.

At least five close-ups of the sleeping baby, one in which the baby is in the foreground with the family out of focus in the background, tell us that he is not only a liability to Ryosuke but, with two poor parents, unlikely to have much of a future. At the end, Ryosuke vows to work harder to give his son a better future, but little in the film encourages us to believe that this will happen.

Meanwhile, the third "only son" Tomi appears as Otsune walks with the baby. An eager student, he begins reciting Japan's prefectural capitals for her. Earlier Ozu has made a point of showing him studying, and at one point he sharpens his pencil like a boy we have seen in Ryosuke's night class. If teaching night school is a dead-end job, what of the students who attend it? Tomi, too, is the son of a poor single mother. Will night school be all he can afford? Subsequently, Tomi is kicked by the horse around which he was playing in order to show off for his friends because one of them refused to lend him a baseball mitt. Tomi had no mitt because his mother is too poor to buy him one. The entire episode emphasizes the spiraling vulnerability of the poor.

Okubo has given Ryosuke a charm, a picture of a child with writing around it, which, when hung upside down, is supposed to stop babies crying at night. This upside-down child, hung on a sliding door in the room with the hibachi, is, like the baby, the subject of three long holds and is seen directly over Ryosuke's shoulder at several points and behind wife Sugiko at others. It is present in many of the shots in or of the hibachi room. The nighttime sequence in which Otsune, unable to sleep, broods in the hibachi room begins with a focused shot of the upside-down child, while Otsune, still in the adjoining room, remains out of focus. This sequence ends with a cut from the sleeping baby to the upside-down child, with Sugiko's crying on the soundtrack. This final shot

Part III

Religion, Sex, and Other Matters

Ozu's late films, 1953 to 1962, focused ever more resolutely on the life cycle, ephemerality, and nostalgia. The most famous, *Tokyo Story*, was the first of these. Four others involve the marriage of a daughter, like the Occupation-era films *Late Spring* and *Early Summer*, and two, *Ohayo* and *Floating Weeds*, were remakes of two critically acclaimed silents, *I Was Born, But . . .* and *A Story of Floating Weeds*.

The two remaining films from the late period handle themes that are somewhat unusual among Ozu's extant films. *Early Spring* examines the disintegration of a marriage while *Tokyo Twilight* looks at the disintegration of a young girl's emotional stability. Understated *Early Spring* succeeds as a classically balanced Ozu film and would become the basis of Masayuki Suo's immensely successful *Shall We Dance? Tokyo Twilight*, in contrast, tried to combine a highly charged, emotional drama with Ozu's normally resigned and elegiac treatment of disappointment and death and was not well received.

Rather than treating these films either singly or as a group, Part III takes up five distinct topics that potentially concern all of Ozu's films although the first of these, "Narrative Strategies in the Late Films," discusses this group in particular, along with *Late Spring* and *Early Summer*. The next three chapters concern the extent to which religion imbues Ozu's films, his attitude toward a variety of gender issues, and his films' relationship to other two-dimensional art forms in Japan. To some extent these chapters revisit and elaborate upon topics that have come up earlier in this book, tying them to Parts I and II.

Part III's final chapter looks at the specific influence Ozu's work, both early and late, has had on particular films and filmmakers, two German, two American, two Japanese. In addition to noting particular borrowings from Ozu's films, this chapter details the ways in which each filmmaker understood Ozu, which were far from uniform and not necessarily in line with my own understanding of him. I have, in the course of this book, discussed studies of Ozu with varying perspectives, some of which I agree with and others with which I disagree, at least in part. Chapter 12 gives us insight into how other filmmakers viewed Ozu and how each one's particular understanding of Ozu's work informed his own.

Most readers will, generally, be more familiar with Ozu's late films than with his earlier ones, but those less familiar with some or all of these films are urged consult the Plot Synopses on pages 253–269 as needed.

8

Narrative Strategies in the Late Films[1]

> Rather than tell a superficial story, I wanted to go deeper to show the hidden undercurrents, the ever-changing uncertainties of life.
>
> —Yasujiro Ozu[2]

Noël Burch, dazzled by the spatial/pictorial inventiveness of Ozu's early films, has called the late films a "final fossilization" of his style; their imagery and diegesis "a senile mannerism."[3] Woojeong Joo sees them showing signs of "diffidence and fatigue."[4] In fact, Ozu had, in his late period, so refined the cinematic "transgressions" that characterized his early films that they flow logically, seamlessly, and ever more complexly, revealing an unorthodox master of both style and narrative.[5]

The films Burch found so distasteful are characterized by scenes made up of perfectly composed, relatively static shots with little or no camera movement; flat lighting; cryptic "empty shots" (empty of identified characters) often used as transitions between scenes; and an even, stately, unhurried rhythm. These films eschew drama, and their plots unfold over a unified time and in locales that are predictable from film to film: the upper-middle-class house, the lower-middle-class apartment, the restaurant, the bar, the office, the train station, the temple, the scenic pilgrimage spot, elements that were present to some extent in *The Brothers and Sisters of the Toda Family* and even more so in *Late Spring*. Beginning with *Early Summer*, Ozu indicated that he was consciously striving to reflect the life cycle, mutability, and ephemerality.[6] As such, the films depict families, composed generally of young children and their parents, young people of marriageable age, and elderly people, some of whom die.

In Chapter 4, I mentioned Bordwell's contention that Ozu's stories were banal in order to accommodate his odd style, but, as we have seen, Ozu's style is frequently, if not always, an integral part of the narrative process and a necessary guide to his narrative and thematic meanings. His frequent use of repetition and ellipsis do not "impose their will" on his plots: they *are* his plots.[7] By paying attention to what has been left out and to what is repeated, one arrives at Ozu's essential story.

The End of Summer, which chronicles the end of a family-owned brewery business when the patriarch, Manbei Kohayagawa, dies, has the most complex narrative structure of all the late films. It opens with two shots of Osaka at night. In the second of these

a large neon sign beams the words "New Japan." They prelude a scene in an Osaka bar where an uncle discusses a possible marriage arrangement for Akiko, widow of Manbei's only son. Akiko arrives at the bar to meet the prospective suitor but quickly excuses herself to telephone home to see if her sister-in-law, Noriko, the younger Kohayagawa daughter, is waiting for her. Photographed from behind, she walks up the passageway between the bar stools and the booths. The camera cuts back to the men waiting for her. Smitten, the suitor, Isomura, orders three gin fizzes. Instead of seeing Akiko return through the aisle in the bar, however, we next see her walking down the hallway outside her own apartment. She enters and chats briefly with Noriko, who is indeed waiting for her. Noriko wants to discuss a proposed *omiai*, and the scene ends with a shot of Noriko from behind as she walks down the same hallway that Akiko came up at the beginning of the scene.

These opening scenes violate a number of narrative norms. First, Ozu suppresses what Akiko learned from her telephone call; only when she is already home do we know its content. We anticipate her return through that passageway in the bar and are momentarily confused to see her in a different but similar passageway. Finally, Ozu includes a gratuitous shot of Noriko walking down the same passageway that Akiko came up. We seem to have both too much and too little information, yet reading what we are given as *information pertinent to the narrative* instead of reading it as deformity allows us deeper insight into Ozu's story.

By not telling us what Akiko learned from her phone call or what excuses she made to her uncle and his prospect, Ozu establishes her rejection of the suitor even though no formal proposal has been made. He does what his character in all politeness cannot: he cuts out the suitor. Figuratively she never returns to him; this becomes literal in a later scene in the same bar in which the suitor waits for her, but she never shows up.

The closing shot of Noriko walking down the hallway outside Akiko's apartment functions thematically. First, it identifies the two women with one another, showing them in especial sympathy since neither wants the marriage arrangements proposed for them. Second, it creates a completed cycle. Like all the films under consideration in this chapter, *End of Summer* deals with the life cycle and is particularly rich in circle imagery, created through both editing and graphic patterning.[8] Circle imagery also relates to Buddhist design and ontology and will be discussed in that context in the following chapter. Finally, it allows Ozu to show the passageway once more. Passageways in houses, corridors in office and apartment buildings, and alleyways through neighborhoods abound in Ozu's films. They can be read as symbolic of the passages in human life from one state to another; or, if that seems too literal, they can be seen as the "go spaces" (*michiyuki hashi*) in *ma*, the Japanese concept of time-space continuity, which connects one time to the next.[9] In either case, they belong specifically to Ozu's vision of an ephemeral world in flux.

The confusion we feel when we expect to see Akiko in the bar only to find her at home contributes to one of the film's major paradigms: things never happen as expected. Its main story event suggests this structure; patriarch Manbei becomes ill

and is feared dying in the middle of the film but recovers only to die suddenly and unexpectedly at the end.

Between the fourth and fifth scenes, another transition occurs in which Ozu deliberately misleads his viewers. Gathered in their living room, members the Kohayagawa family discuss marriage prospects for both Akiko and Noriko. Brother-in-law Hisao remarks that Noriko's *omiai* will take place in the New Osaka Hotel. Soon after the scene ends, a new one begins with a shot of tall office buildings, an indication that we are in Osaka, the business and industrial center of southern Honshu. To remove all doubt, Osaka Castle, an iconic landmark, appears in the background of the following shot, which has been taken out the window of one of the buildings. Surely Noriko's *omiai* will be the subject of this scene. Instead we see an unknown woman talking on the telephone, presumably inside the office building whose window we just looked out of. After hanging up, she sits down at a desk beside Noriko. The telephone call has been an invitation to a party for a fellow employee named Teramoto, who will soon be leaving for a job in Sapporo, capital of Hokkaido. Noriko seems disappointed, and we soon learn that she is in love with Teramoto. Using a sound bridge (the Japanese version of "My Darling Clementine"), Ozu cuts to a restaurant where the farewell party is underway, showing first the hallway outside the party room and then the party itself. The next scene takes place in a train station, where Noriko and Teramoto converse awkwardly while waiting for their separate trains.

Earlier Ozu had led us to believe that we would see Noriko's *omiai*. Instead he showed us Noriko at work. The substitution was not merely a trick, however, for instead of the *miai*-suitor, we meet the man Noriko really loves and will eventually marry. Although Noriko later reports on the formal *omiai*, Ozu does not waste time on the wrong man. But having promised us an *omiai*, he gives us one in the form of the train station scene. Although attracted to one another, Noriko and Teramoto are obviously not in close contact because she first learns of his final decision to move to Sapporo from her officemate. Thus the scene in which they sit on the station platform bench speaking shyly to one another has the character of an *omiai*: each feels pressured by the impending departure and the distance that will separate them to reach a decision about marrying on the basis of relatively little familiarity. Here Ozu substitutes the unexpected for the expected, but, in doing so, he jettisons the unimportant for the important, thus keeping his storyline right on track. (Although Noriko does not make a final decision to marry Teramoto until the end of the film, Ozu includes a spoiler alert in the form of an advertising poster for Fuji Bank, visible to the left of the couple, which announces: "your bright future.")

The film climaxes when Manbei collapses from a heart attack. Noriko runs to telephone a doctor. From Noriko telephoning, Ozu cuts to two empty shots of the Hirayama Clinic, over which the phone keeps ringing. He then cuts back to the corridor, now empty, where Noriko had been telephoning, to the empty living room, to the empty passageway between the living room and the garden, and finally to the bedroom where a doctor is treating Manbei. Again we have been deliberately misled.

12
The Ozu Touch: Influencing Others

> Ozu's austere yet ludic style comprises his distinctive sensibility that is rarely emulated by any other director.
>
> —Jinhee Choi[1]

David Bordwell has noted the extent to which Ozu began influencing other Shochiku directors early in his career.[2] And while we commonly think of Ozu as a stylist, we need only look at his execution of that most basic directorial duty—eliciting good performances from actors—to understand why, from his earliest days as a director, he commanded a following. Two actors from his early films appear in Mikio Naruse's *No Blood Relation* (*Nasanu naka*, 1932), Joji Oka and Ichiro Yuki. Under Ozu's direction both gave indelible performances, Oka as *Dragnet Girl*'s gangster-in-love and Yuki as the infuriatingly incorrigible Watanabe in *Days of Youth*. In Naruse's film the two appear as antagonists: Oka as a lawyer defending a helpless woman and Yuki as a gangster; yet both performances are lackluster and bland and give no hint of what these two actors were capable of.[3] On this basis alone, it is not difficult to understand why Shiro Kido indulged Ozu's eccentricities and others looked to him for inspiration.

In the postwar years, however, Ozu's caché as an influencer in Japan waned as a new generation of directors rejected his quiescent cinema of little drama. In time, however, his films would be discovered in the West and rediscovered in Japan, and disciples and imitators would multiply. To date there has been considerable analysis of Ozu's influence on late twentieth- and twenty-first-century directors in the West, Asia, and the Middle East.[4] This chapter will look at six directors and/or films with a specific connection to Ozu. In each case, Ozu's influence will vary depending on how the filmmakers perceived Ozu's work and/or from which sources their understanding derived.

Hollywood

The first American film (and probably the first in the West) to channel Ozu was Hollywood's *Escapade in Japan* (Arthur Lubin, 1957). It was one of several dozen Hollywood films from the 1950s and early 1960s to be set in and actually filmed in Asia; a substantial subset involved Japan. These were often big budget films, some of

which won Academy Awards; for example, Marlon Brando's *Sayonara* (Joshua Logan, 1957) was nominated for ten Oscars and won four. At the time, tens of thousands of American soldiers and their dependents were rotating in and out of bases in Japan and Okinawa, the latter still under US occupation. Sandwiched between the Korean and Vietnam wars, the films and their goodwill messages had a ready audience.

Hollywood's "Asia films" were a form of what Christina Klein, writing about Rodgers and Hammerstein's Asia trilogy (*South Pacific, The King and I*, and *Flower Drum Song*—all of which were made into movies) has dubbed "Cold War [American] Orientalism."[5] They embraced the erstwhile enemy and reified Japan's own reinvention of itself as a nation of culture. At a time when nearly half the United States still had anti-miscegenation laws on their books, the Asia films pushed interracial relationships and were, on the surface, anti-racist. A significant use of yellow-face undercut these good intentions, however. That and an underlying sexism—Asian women are superior to Western women because they know how to please men—make many of the films difficult to watch today.

Neither of these problems plagued *Escapade in Japan*, however, a road movie that follows two little boys, played by Roger Nakagawa and Jon Provost (just prior to his creating the role of *Lassie*'s Timmy on TV), as they flee from the Japanese police. Victim of a plane crash, young Tony has been picked up at sea by a Japanese fishing family. Kuniko Miyake and Susumu Fujita play the parents, whose son, Asahiko, misunderstands their intention when he overhears them talk about turning Tony over to the police. Supposing the police will put Tony in jail, Asahiko masterminds an escape. (The film is famous in some quarters because Clint Eastwood, an Arthur Lubin protégé at the time, has a bit part as the only rescue pilot with lines to perform.)

Like all of the Japan films, this one gives us a tourist-eye view of Japan as it follows the boys from the Inland Sea through the countryside to Nara by way of Kyoto, and, while the sites and cultural experiences chosen are somewhat unusual for this subgenre, it includes the two that were de rigueur in every Hollywood Japan film: geisha and the Japanese bath. These two conventions fascinated and titillated Americans. In *Escapade*, women in a geisha house take the boys in for a night, pop them in their private home-style bath (less sensational than the communal or spa baths featured in other Japan films), and treat them like little men, hinting at the virtues of Japanese women that were extolled more broadly by other films in the genre.

Given the two-little-boys story line, one thinks of Ozu, and this impression is enhanced by the cast: Kuniko Miyake, long-suffering mother of two boys in *Early Summer* and *Tokyo Story*, plays Asahiko's mother; Tatsuo Saito, the dad in *I Was Born, But . . .*, plays a schoolteacher who lets the boys join his school trip; and a silver-haired Ureo Egawa (*Where Now Are the Dreams of Youth?*) plays Kyoto's chief of police. According to Donald Richie, Shochiku co-produced the film, although this fact, if true, does not appear in the film's credits.[6]

According to its lobby card, the movie was "filmed entirely in the seldom-seen corners of the real Japan!" [*sic*] which suggests guidance of some sort from *real* Japanese.

A number of the sites the children visit are theatrical productions, a vaudeville-like strip show, a Takarazuka-style extravaganza with traditional dance and music, an intimate dance performed by geisha in the geisha house, and a temple dance performed by children. Lubin had a background in theater, so it was natural for him to include as many varieties of Japanese theater as he could.[7] Other sites, the Golden Pavilion (*Kinkakuji*), the *Sanjusangendo* (temple of the thousand-armed Kannon) and the tame deer in Nara Park, are typical tourist stops.

However, there are numerous sites, sets, and situations familiar from Ozu's films: views of the Inland Sea, children singing, views of a pachinko parlor, the way in which the city policemen pass information from one to the other, a sequence in the crowded third-class car of a train along with considerable footage of station platforms, a sequence with the schoolchildren in the Kiyomizu-dera, and numerous references to baseball. (We are told early in the film that Japanese boys love baseball; Asahiko wears a New York Yankees cap; and the geisha do a baseball dance—truly!) All of this raises questions that I do not have answers for: how extensive was Shochiku's role in choosing locations and shooting the film? (Daiei is the only Japanese company to receive a screen credit—for lending Miyake, who was apparently working there at the time.) Was Lubin shown Ozu's films? Did he and his team meet the great director? Was casting Miyake based on her Ozu roles as the mother of young boys?

To what extent anyone was thinking about Ozu when this film was made is an entirely open question. Nevertheless, aspects of his films are present in this story about little boys much more than in any of Hollywood's other Japan films. Two years later Shochiku would release *Ohayo*, also about little boys and starring Kuniko Miyake as the mother of the two principal youngsters. Ozu has said he had the idea for *Ohayo* in mind for a long time and pitched it to other directors, who liked the idea but weren't willing to follow up on it, so he finally made it himself.[8] One has to wonder if *Escapade in Japan* prompted that decision. Perhaps the influence went both ways.

Wim Wenders

Wim Wenders is to my knowledge the first Western director to vehemently proclaim his admiration for Ozu, calling him his "only master."[9] Wenders saw his first Ozu films on a trip to New York in 1973, shortly after Dan Talbot of New Yorker Films had acquired the American distribution rights to most of the postwar productions plus *I Was Born, But . . .* Wenders was making *Alice in the Cities* (*Alice in den Städten*, 1974) at the time, and he felt that Ozu's work gave him permission to not be overly concerned with plot. "My characters . . . are not very bound to the plot . . . [They] are inventing the plot . . . so they are much more able to show their personalities."[10] In *Kings of the Road* (*Im Lauf der Zeit*, 1976), Bruno tells Robert, "No need to tell me your stories." "What do you want to hear?" asks Robert. "Who you are," Bruno replies.

Donald Richie has described how Ozu disliked plot and how he and screenwriter Kogo Noda wrote their characters' dialogue before deciding where they would speak it

Plot Synopses

For those readers who may not have seen all of Ozu's films, I include the following plot synopses for his extant films, along with the lead actors and information about existing digital versions. For complete, annotated filmographies in English for all of Ozu's films, readers should consult Donald Richie's *Ozu*, David Bordwell's *Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema*, or Kyoko Hirano's filmography in Kiju Yoshida's *Ozu's Anti-Cinema*.

Extant Silent Films, 1929–1935

Days of Youth (*Wakaki hi*, 1929)

Waseda student Watanabe (Ichiro Yuki) advertises his room for rent as a ploy to meet girls. When Chieko (Junko Matsui) shows up to take the room, Watanabe must move. Failing to find another place, he moves in with fellow student Yamamoto (Tatsuo Saito), who is also friends with Chieko. After some initial setbacks, both boys follow Chieko on a ski trip and, despite poor skiing skills, attempt to court her. However, they soon find out that she is there to become engaged to Hatamoto (Shinichi Himori), captain of the ski club. Despondent, the boys return to Tokyo. Undeterred by failure, Watanabe hangs another sign in the window, advertising their room for rent.

Ozu ensemble players Choko Iida, Takeshi Sakamoto, and Chishu Ryu also appear in this film in minor roles.

DVD available in a two-disc set, "The Student Comedies," issued by the British Film Institute, region 2 only.

I Graduated, But . . . (*Daigaku wa deta keredo*, 1929)

Nomoto (Minoru Takada), a recent graduate, turns down a job as a receptionist in a company because he feels it is beneath him. However, his mother (Utako Suzuki) has come to Tokyo with his fiancée, Machiko (Kinuyo Tanaka). Afraid to admit he does not have a job, Nomoto marries Machiko and only after his mother leaves confesses that he is unemployed. Without telling her husband, Machiko goes to work in a bar, where Nomoto sees her while on an outing with his friend Sugimura (Kenji Oyama). At home

he scolds Machiko for taking such a job but then admits it is he who has been irresponsible. He returns to the company he turned down, ready to become a receptionist, but they tell him the prior offer was just a test and offer him a good position instead.

Ozu ensemble player Takeshi Sakamoto has a small part.

Only ten minutes of this film survive and are included in the DVD set "The Student Comedies," issued by the British Film Institute, region 2 only.

A Straightforward Boy (*Tokkan kozo*, 1929)

Tatsuo Saito, Takeshi Sakamoto, and Tomio Aoki mug their way through this nonsense comedy, apparently based on O. Henry's "Ransom of Red Chief." Aoki would retain the name of this film as his stage name.

Thirteen minutes of this film survive and can be viewed on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gshM6WBr1nU

Walk Cheerfully (*Hogaraka ni ayume*, 1930)

Kenji (Minoru Takada), a petty criminal and boxer, lives and works with Senko (Hisao Yoshitani). He falls in love with Yasue (Hiroko Kawasaki), a secretary, who works at the same company as Kenji's girlfriend, Chieko (Satoko Date). Yasue's boss (Takeshi Sakamoto) is trying to seduce her, so Chieko, aware that Kenji loves Yasue, helps the boss lure her to a love hotel. Kenji learns of the plan and rescues Yasue, but at the same time she realizes he is a criminal and rejects him. Vowing to go straight to win back Yasue, Kenji inspires Senko to do the same. Meanwhile, Yasue has been fired. All three find jobs at the same company, Kenji as a window washer and Senko as a driver. Kenji has not, however, been in contact with Yasue, who longs for him. Leaving work one day, she overhears Chieko and gangster Gunpei (Teruo Mori) trying to lure Kenji back to a life of crime. Kenji resists their overtures but is shot in the arm by Gunpei. Yasue and Senko come to his rescue, but the police show up soon after, having already arrested Chieko and Gunpei. Kenji and Senko willingly go to prison, eager to be cleansed of their criminal past. Upon their release, Yasue, her mother (Utako Suzuki), and her little sister (Nobuko Matsuzono) host a reunion for them.

Tomio Aoki (Tokkankozo) has a minor role.

DVD available in a three-disc set from Criterion's Eclipse Series 42: "Silent Ozu: Three Crime Dramas."

I Flunked, But . . . (*Rakudai wa shita keredo*, 1930)

Takahashi (Tatsuo Saito) lives with other Waseda students in a room above his aunt's house, where the boys can easily summon snacks from the bakery next door while they study. Takahashi and the bakery girl (Kinuyo Tanaka) are sweethearts. Takahashi has other friends as well, a network of students who work out elaborate, interdependent

cheating schemes, and, on the eve of their last, crucial exam, Takahashi is the designated lynchpin, assigned to write the answers on the back of his shirt. He does so, but early in the morning his landlady sees the marked-up shirt and sends it to the laundry. All of the boys in the cheating network flunk and must repeat their last year of college, while all of the roommates except Takahashi pass. Takahashi is despondent for a time, but when the roommates all fail to find jobs, he and his cronies are happy to be back in school, leading cheers for the school teams.

Chishu Ryu and Tomio Aoki (Tokkankozo) have minor roles.

DVD available in a two-disc set "The Student Comedies," issued by the British Film Institute, region 2 only.

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

Shuji Hashizume (Tokihiko Okada) robs an office to pay for his sick daughter's treatment. The police mount a massive search, but Hashizume eludes them and grabs a cab to get home. The cabbie turns out to be undercover detective Kagawa (Togo Yamamoto), but Hashizume's wife, Mayumi (Reiko Yagumo), uses her husband's pistol to keep him at bay while the couple watches over their child, whose illness has reached a crisis. When they nod off, Kagawa disarms them but agrees to delay arresting Hashizume so that he can stay with his daughter through the night. As day breaks, Kagawa feigns sleep, allowing Hashizume to escape, but he soon returns, preferring prison to a life on the run.

Tatsuo Saito plays the family's doctor and Chishu Ryu, a policeman.

DVD available in a three-disc set from Criterion's Eclipse Series 42: "Silent Ozu: Three Crime Dramas."

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

Absurdly old-fashioned to the point of wearing a beard and a samurai's padded underwear under his business suit, Kiichi Okajima (Tokihiko Okada) is a kendo champion and friend of young Baron Teruo Yukimoto (Ichiro Tsukida). On his way to the Baron's sister's birthday party, Okajima uses his kendo skills to foil an attempt by *moga* Satoko (Satoko Date) and her gang to rob Hiroko (Hiroko Kawasaki). At the party, the Baron's sister, Ikuko (Toshiko Iizuka), and her friends mock Okajima for his stubborn conservatism. Later he interviews for a job and again encounters Hiroko, who is the office receptionist. He fails to get the job, but Hiroko seeks him out to thank him for rescuing her earlier in the week and to suggest he might do better in interviews if he would shave his beard. He follows her advice and not only lands a job in a hotel-based travel agency, but, on a second trip to the Baron's home, excites the interest of sister Ikuko, who subsequently rejects a rich suitor. However, Okajima loves Hiroko. He visits her at home and later agrees to her mother's (Choko Iida) proposal that they marry. Satoko, however, appears at the hotel and tries to ensnare Okajima in a robbery. He foils her

plot but meets her later and takes her to his room in an ostensible effort to reform her. She declares her love for him. He rejects her, but she remains in his room overnight. Ikuko and her family stop by in the morning. Shocked to find Satoko there, they retreat immediately, but Hiroko, who arrives shortly afterward, declares her faith in Okajima and remains. Touched by the couple's trust in one another, Satoko agrees to reform.

Mitsuko Yoshikawa plays the Baron's mother and Takeshi Sakamoto their butler.

DVD available in a two-disc set "The Student Comedies," issued by the British Film Institute, region 2 only.

Tokyo Chorus (*Tokyo no gassho*, 1931)

Insurance agent and father of three, Shinji Okajima (Tokihiko Okada) fights with his boss over the termination of an older employee, Yamada (Takeshi Sakamoto), and is fired. At home he fights with his son (Hideo Sugawara) to whom he has promised a bicycle. Eventually the boy gets his bicycle, but Okajima's daughter (Hideko Takamine) falls ill. To afford her medical treatment, Okajima sells his wife's kimonos. Unable to find another office job, he agrees to help his former teacher Omura (Tatsuo Saito) in his curry rice restaurant but soon discovers that his first duty will be to carry banners advertising the restaurant while Omura hands out leaflets. His wife Sugako's (Reiko Yagumo) dismay over her lost kimonos is nothing compared to her horror when, from a streetcar, her children spot their father carrying the banners. He explains that the job is only temporary until the teacher can find him something better, and she relents, offering to help out in the restaurant herself. In the last scene, Okajima's high school class gathers at the restaurant for a reunion with Omura, and Okajima is offered a job as an English teacher in a country town north of Tokyo.

Choko Iida appears as Mrs. Omura.

DVD available in a three-disc set from Criterion's Eclipse Series 10: "Silent Ozu: Three Family Comedies."

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

Salaryman Yoshii (Tatsuo Saito) moves with his two sons (Hideo Sugawara and Tokkankozo) and his wife (Mitsuko Yoshikawa) to a suburb of Tokyo, which is also close to his boss, Iwasaki (Takeshi Sakamoto). The sons struggle to establish their place in the local children's hierarchy, eventually enlisting the aid of the beer and sake delivery boy. The children's rituals include finding and eating sparrow eggs and "killing" and reviving one another through particular gestures. Iwasaki's son Taro (Seiichi Kato) is one of the gang, and one evening the Yoshii and Iwasaki families gather to watch Iwasaki's home movies. The sons are aghast by their father's undignified clowning in the films, an obvious effort to please the boss. Back home they throw a tantrum and, when Yoshii explains that he needs to please his boss so that they can eat and go to school, the

boys go on a hunger strike. The strike soon ends as real hunger sets in, and they begin to understand the compromises adult life entails.

Chishu Ryu appears in a minor role.

DVD available in a three-disc set from Criterion's Eclipse Series 10: "Silent Ozu: Three Family Comedies."

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

As a student, Tetsuo Horino (Ureo Egawa) helps his buddies to cheat on exams, leads the cheerleading squad, and enjoys the attentions of the local bakery girl, Oshige (Kinuyo Tanaka). When his father dies unexpectedly, he must leave school and take over the family business. A year passes, and his buddies, having graduated, come to him seeking jobs. Still a student at heart, he helps them to cheat on the company's entrance exam while continuing to elude his uncle's (Ryotaro Mizushima) efforts to find him a wife. One day he meets Oshige, who is moving because the bakery has closed. He offers her employment and, his affection for her revived, asks his buddies if he should marry her. They agree reluctantly, neglecting to tell him that one of them, sad sack Saiki (Tatsuo Saito), is already engaged to her. When Oshige informs him of the true state of affairs, he upbraids his friends, Saiki in particular, for treating him as a boss and not as a friend. They explain that economic realities compel them to treat him with deference.

Choko Iida, Takeshi Sakamoto, and Satoko Date appear in minor roles.

DVD available in a two-disc set, "The Student Comedies," issued by the British Film Institute, region 2 only.

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

Chikako (Yoshiko Okada) works as a secretary and moonlights as a prostitute to pay for her younger brother Ryoichi's (Ureo Egawa) schooling. Ryoichi believes his sister stays out late to help a professor with translations and is devastated when his girlfriend, Harue (Kinuyo Tanaka), tells him that her policeman brother, Kinoshita (Shinyo Nara), knows the truth and is investigating. When Chikako returns late as usual, Ryoichi confronts her. She confesses, and Ryoichi leaves, walking the streets in despair. Worried, Chikako visits Harue in the morning, but Harue has not heard from him. Soon Kinoshita calls to inform her that Ryoichi has committed suicide. As the two women mourn over his body, callous newspapermen harass them, hoping to sensationalize the tragedy.

Chishu Ryu appears as one of the reporters; Hideo Sugawara appears as the boy who fetches Harue to the telephone.

Woman of Tokyo is titled after Chaplin's *Woman of Paris*, in which a young woman, separated from her fiancé, becomes a Parisian courtesan. When her fiancé finds her, she is torn between her love for him and her affluent lifestyle. Her ambivalence drives him to suicide.

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