



[Vimeo link for ALL of Bruce Jackson's and Diane Christian's film introductions and post-film discussions in the virtual BFS](#)

[Vimeo link for our introduction to \*Floating Weeds\*](#)  
<https://vimeo.com/517595758>

[Zoom link for all Spring 2021 BFS Tuesday 7:00 PM post-screening discussions:](#)

Meeting ID: 925 3527 4384 Passcode: 820766

**Director** Yasujirō Ozu

**Writing** Yasujirō Ozu and Kōgo Noda adapted Tadao Ikeda's uncredited original screenplay

**Producer** Masaichi Nagata

**Music** Takanobu Saitō

**Cinematography** Kazuo Miyagawa

**Editing** Toyo Suzuki

Roger Ebert gave the film four stars out of four and included it on his "Ten Greatest Films of all Time" in 1991.

### Cast

Nakamura Ganjirō II...Komajuro (troupe leader)  
Machiko Kyō...Sumiko (Komajuro's mistress)  
Hiroshi Kawaguchi...Kiyoshi (Komajuro's son)  
Haruko Sugimura...Oyoshi (Kiyoshi's mother)  
Ayako Wakao...Kayo (young actress)  
Hitomi Nozoe...Aiko (barber's daughter)  
Chishū Ryū...Theatre owner  
Kōji Mitsui...Kichinosuke (lead supporting player)  
Haruo Tanaka...Yatazo (supporting player)  
Mantarō Ushio...Sentaro (supporting player)



Mutsuko Sakura...O-Katsu (prostitute)

Natsuko Kahara...Yae (prostitute)

Tatsuo Hanabu...Rokuzaburo (veteran crew member)

Tadashi Date...Senshō (veteran crew member)

Toyoko Takahashi...Aiko no haha (Aiko's mother)

Hikaru Hoshi...Kimura (manager)

Yosuke Irie...Sugiyama (young crew member)

Kumeko Urabe...Shige (female crew member)

Masahiko Shimazu...Masao (Senshō's grandson)

Tsūsai Sugawara...Buyer at bankruptcy

**Yasujiro Ozu** (December 12, 1903, Tokyo—d. December 12, 1963, Tokyo) was a movie buff from childhood, often playing hooky from school in order to see Hollywood movies in his local theatre. In 1923 he landed a job as a camera assistant at Shochiku Studios in Tokyo. Three years later, he was made an

assistant director and directed his first film the next year, *Blade of Penitence* (1927). Ozu made thirty-five silent films, and a trilogy of youth comedies with serious overtones he turned out in the late 1920s and early 1930s placed him in the front ranks of Japanese directors. He made his first sound film in 1936, *The Only Son* (1936), but was drafted into the Japanese Army the next year, being posted to China for two years and then to Singapore when World War II started. At war's end, he went back to Shochiku, and his experiences during the war resulted in his making more serious, thoughtful films at a much slower pace than he had previously. His most famous film, *Tokyo Story* (1953), is generally considered by critics and film buffs alike to be his “masterpiece” and is regarded by many as not only one of Ozu’s best films but one of the best films ever made. He also turned out such classics of Japanese film as *Flavor of Green Tea Over Rice* (1952), *Floating Weeds* (1959) and *An Autumn Afternoon* (1962). Ozu often employs the recurring theme of changes in post-war Japanese family and society, especially concentrating on relationships between the generations. He is also known through his cinematic trademarks such as rigorous use of static camera positioned only a few feet from floor, use of the color red, and characters looking directly into the camera. The camera was always placed low, close to the floor. He never used cranes, a moving camera, bird's eye shots. Once or twice he tried them early in his career, but he abandoned them. When he edited, he never used overlaps, wipes, fade-ins. He was determined to create a sense of ordinary, everyday life without tricks or mannerisms. To Ozu the camera was never more than an uninvolved observer. It is never part of the action. It never comments on the action. It is through the repetition of short cuts moving back and forth from one character to another that Ozu created a sense of real life. Some of his other 54 directorial efforts are: *The End of Summer* (1961), *Late Autumn* (1960), *Good Tokyo Twilight* (1957), *Early Spring* (1956),



*Early Summer* (1951), *The Munekata Sisters* (1950), *Late Spring* (1949), *A Hen in the Wind* (1948), *Record of a Tenement Gentleman* (1947), *There Was a Father* (1942), *An Inn in Tokyo* (1935), *A Story of Floating Weeds* (1934), *A Mother Should Be Loved* (1934), *Dragnet Girl* (1933), *Woman of Tokyo* (1933), *Until the Day We Meet Again* (1932), *Where Now Are the Dreams of Youth* (1932), *I Was Born, But...* (1932), *Spring Comes from the Ladies* (1932), *Tokyo Chorus* (1931), *The Sorrow of the Beautiful Woman* (1931), *The Lady and the Beard* (1931), *The Luck Which Touched the Leg* (1930), *That Night's Wife* (1930), *I Flunked, But...* (1930), *Walk Cheerfully* (1930), *The Life of an Office Worker* (1929), *Days of Youth* (1929), *Takara no yama* (1929), *Wife Lost* (1928) and *Wakôdo no yume* (1928). He also has 47 writer credits. According to renowned film critic Roger Ebert, “to love movies without loving Ozu is an impossibility.”

**Kogo Noda** (November 19, 1893 – September 23, 1968) was a Japanese screenwriter most famous for collaborating with Yasujirô Ozu on many of the director's films.

**Tadao Ikeda** (5 February 1905 – 5 May 1964) was a Japanese screenwriter and film director. After graduating from Waseda University, he joined the Shochiku studio and came to prominence writing screenplays for such directors as Yasujirô Ozu, Mikio Naruse, Kôzaburô Yoshimura, and Yasujirô Shimazu.

**Takanobu Saitô** (b. December 8, 1924 in Tokyo, Japan—d. April 11, 2004, age 79) studied initially went to the Tokyo University of the Arts with the intent to become a traditional composer. During his schooling, he joined a military music band and later he became conductor of the Japan Air Self Defense Force Central Band, a position he held until he retired in 1976. Saitô’s most well-known contribution to music was his adaptation of the Japanese national anthem “Kimigayo” adding in more orchestration for



the symphony. He scored 8 of Ozu's films and was featured in Wenders' *Talking with Ozu* (1993). His films with Ozu are *Tokyo Story* (1953), *Early Spring* (1956), *Tokyo shadows* (1957), *Equinox Flower* (1958), *Floating Weeds* (1959), *Late Autumn* (1960), *Song of hydrangea* (1960) and *Shirobanba* (1962).

**Kazuo Miyagawa** (b. February 25, 1908 in Kyoto, Japan—d. August 7, 1999 (age 91) in Tokyo, Japan) did cinematography for 88 films, some of which are: *Kurama Tengu* and *Shadows of Darkness* in 1938; *Rashomon* (1950); *Ugetsu* and *Yokubo* in 1953; *Sansho the Bailiff* (1954), *Taira Clan Saga* (1955), *River of the Night* (1956), *Floating Weeds* (1959), *Yojimbo* (1961), *The Outcast* (1962), *Zatoichi and the Chest of Gold* (1964), *Zatoichi's Vengeance* (1966), *Zatoichi the Outlaw* (1967), *Zatoichi and the Fugitives* (1968), and *Devil's Temple* (1969); *Zatoichi Meets Yojimbo* and *Zatoichi Goes to the Fire Festival* in 1970; *Silence* (1971), *The Possessed* (1976), *Island of the Evil Spirits* (1981), *MacArthur's Children* (1984), *Maihime* (1989).

**Nakamura Ganjirō II** (17 February 1902 – 13 April 1983) was a Japanese film actor. He appeared in 48 films between 1957 and 1982.

**Machiko Kyō** (March 25, 1924 – May 12, 2019) was a Japanese actress who was active primarily in the 1950s. She acted in 86 films and television series, including: *Hana kurabe tanuki-goten* and *Chijin no ai* in 1949; *The Motherland Far Far Away*, *Fukkatsu*, and *Rashomon* in 1950; *Gate of Hell* (1953); *Street of Shame* and *The Teahouse of the August Moon* in 1956; *The Loyal 47 Ronin* (1958), *Floating Weeds* (1959), *The Wandering Princess* (1960), *The Age of Marriage* (1961), *Budda* (1962), and *Kinkanshoku* (1975); *The Possessed* and *Tora's Pure Love* in 1976; and *Haregi, koko ichiban* (2000, TV Series).

**Ayako Wakao** (November 8, 1933 in Tokyo, Japan) is a Japanese actress who was one of the country's biggest stars of the 20th century. Wakao began her career contracted to Daiei Studios in 1951 as part of the fifth "New Face" group. She has gone on to appear in over 100 feature films, plus numerous television movies and series. She was a favorite actress of director Yasuzo Masumura, starring in 25 of his films. In addition to her many collaborations with

Masumura, she was a favorite of Kon Ichikawa, having starred or co-starred in seven of the director's works. She appeared in Kenji Mizoguchi's *A Geisha* (1953) and *Street of Shame* (1956). She also appeared in Yasujiro Ozu's *Floating Weeds*. Yuzo Kawashima made three films *Women Are Born Twice* (1961), *The Temple of Wild Geese* (1962) and *The Graceful Brute* (1962) with her.



**from World Film Directors. V.I. Ed. John Wakeman. H.W. Wilson Co. NY 1987**

Yasujiro Ozu, Japanese director and scenarist, was born in the old Fukagawa district of Tokyo, one of the five children of a fertilizer merchant. When he was ten his father ordained that he should be educated at Matsuzaka, in Mie Prefecture, the family's ancestral home. Ozu grew up there, separated from his father and indulged by his mother. This imbalance in his own family presumably accounts for the obsessive analysis in his films of the Japanese family as an institution—especially the role of the father—as well as his preoccupations with themes of separation and loneliness.

By the time he entered Uji-Yamada Middle School at the age of sixteen, Ozu was an intransigent and hard-drinking youth, intellectual in his interests but without academic ambitions. When he was seventeen, an indiscreet letter to a younger boy got him expelled from the school dormitory (though such billets-doux were common enough in single-sex schools like his). Thereafter he had to commute daily from home. Ozu adroitly exploited this punishment to gain greater freedom than ever, and this was typical of his contempt for restrictions of any kind, and his skill in bypassing them.

If his studies did not interest Ozu, literature did, and in middle school he developed a precocious taste for the work of such contemporary writers as Junichiro Tanizaki, Ryunosuke Akutagawa, and Naoya Shiga. And he had an even greater passion for Hollywood movies, playing truant in Tsu and Nagoya to follow the latest exploits of Pearl White and William S. Hart, and writing fan letters to *benshi* (film narrators) in Kobe. He boasted that, when he should have been sitting the entrance examination to Kobe Higher Commercial School, he was actually in a movie theatre watching Rex Ingram's *Prisoner of Zenda*.

Having failed such examinations as he did take, Ozu was unemployed for a time after leaving middle school, then worked for a year as an assistant teacher in a village school near Matsuzaka. By the time the family was reunited in Tokyo in 1924, his heart was set on a film career. His bourgeois father naturally opposed this choice but Ozu, who became famous for his stubbornness, went ahead anyway and, through a family friend, secured an introduction to the Shochiku company, formed a few years earlier. The executives at Shochiku's Kamata studios were astonished to learn that, in all his youthful years of dedicated moviegoing, he had seen only three Japanese films, but they hired him nevertheless as an assistant cameraman—in those days a menial who served as the cameraman's caddie.

Ozu spent most of 1925 in the army reserve, feigning tuberculosis by “dipping the thermometer in warm water and coughing,” and thus contriving to spend the time restfully in hospital. A year after his return to Shochiku he talked his way into a job as assistant director to Tadamoto Okubo, who specialized in risqué “nonsense” comedies. Apart from his fondness for bathroom humor, there is no evidence in Ozu's own films that Okubo had the slightest influence on him. Though he eventually made up for his ignorance of Japanese cinema by studying the work of his seniors at Shochiku, Ozu

maintained that he then “formulated my own directing style in my own head, proceeding without any unnecessary imitation of others....For me there was no such thing as a teacher. I have relied entirely on my own strength

Notoriously hard-working in later years, Ozu enjoyed his stint as an assistant director primarily because he “could drink all I wanted and spend my time talking.” He was nevertheless promoted before the end of 1927, joining the Shochiku division devoted to churning out period films. He made his debut as a director with *Zange no yaiba* (*The Sword of Penitence*, 1927), based on a Hollywood movie called *Kick-In* by the French-born director George Fitzmaurice. The script was by Kogo Noda,



who was to write all of Ozu's major films of the 1950s and 1960s. The young director was called up for another session in the reserve before shooting was complete, and when he finally saw the movie he disowned it.

This was Ozu's only period picture. He switched once and for all to contemporary themes with his second film, *Wakodo no yume* (*The Dreams of Youth*, 1928), a comedy of college life made in imitation of American movies on the same popular subject. Between the beginning of 1928 and the end of 1930, Ozu made eighteen films on an assortment of topics—student life, the problems of young married couples, and the lighter side of life in the Depression. All of them were comedies, and some were made in as little as five days.

It was a hectic apprenticeship. Ozu said it was not until he had made four or five movies that he really knew what he was doing and “began to like being a director.” Even then, however, he was building up a team of regular collaborators, some of whom worked with him for the rest of his life. These early pictures were generally scripted by Ozu in collaboration with Kogo Noda, Akira Fushimi, or Tadao Ikeda, and photographed by Hideo

Shiegehara. Early recruits to the directors's stable of actors included Takeshi Sakamodo, Choka Iida, and Chishu Ryu (who appeared in all but two of Ozu's fifty-three films).

At this stage, Ozu's work still showed the influence of the Hollywood movies he had so loved during his adolescence. But increasingly he was finding his own way and moving in the direction of the *shomin-geki*—the “home drama” of everyday life among the lower middle-classes, in a Japan that was evolving at bewildering speed from feudalism to Western-style capitalism.

The first of his films to bear the hall-marks of the genre was *Kaishain Seikatsu* (*The Life of an Office Worker*, 1929), scripted by Noda. It is a wry comedy about a hard-up married couple who dream all year about the husband's expected annual bonus, then have to come to terms with the fact that, because of the Depression, he loses not only his bonus but his job as well. Here, for the first time in Ozu's work “nonsense” comedy gags took second place to the demands of social and psychological realism. ...

In the course of his career, Ozu would receive six Kinema Jumbo “best ones,” more than any other director in the history of Japanese cinema.

An original script from an idea of Ozu's own, *I Was Born, But...* centers on two small boys whose admiration for their father leads them into a battle with his boss's son. They are shocked when they see their “great man” toadying to his employer and, when he explains that he needs his job in order to feed them, they resolve to eat no more. But their hunger is stronger than their idealism. They abandon martyrdom and, their bellies filled, cheerfully accept the status quo.

This moving comedy was a great success, critically and financially, and is generally recognized to be Ozu's first major film. The father is shown to be weak, foolish, and inconsistent—for example smoking a cigarette while exercising—but his lazy and pompous boss is an equally ridiculous figure, and there is no moral justification for the difference in

status between the two men. When the boys learn to accept this injustice they consign themselves, as their parents realize, to “the same kind of sorry lives that we have.” However amusingly presented, it is a bleak perception of the sort that has antagonized activist critics of Ozu's work, while establishing him in other eyes as “the artist of life as it is.”

The conformity and regimentation of Japanese society is wittily pointed up when a tracking shot of children drilling at a school is echoed, “in a marvelous use of matched cutting,” by one of yawning office

workers at their ranked desks. However, as Audie Bock says, “Ozu would later dispense with such associative editing, camera movement, and cutting on action.” He was already deeply immersed in the exploration of cinematic theory and technique, and working his way steadily towards the chaste simplicity of his mature

style. He only used dissolves once in his entire career (in *Life of an Office Worker*), promptly rejecting the device as “uninteresting,” and by 1932 he was finding the fade equally pointless. Generally dissolves and fades are not part of cinematic grammar,” he remarked. “They are only attributes of the camera.”

Another *Kinema Jumbo* “best one” followed in 1933, the “subtle, beautiful” *Dekigokoro* (*Passing Fancy*), scripted from an original idea of Ozu's. It deals not with the “people like you and me” of the conventional *shomin-geki*, but with the relationship between an illiterate brewery worker and his better educated son. The father, long abandoned by his wife, becomes infatuated with a much younger woman who has no interest in him. The son's recognition of his father's foolishness leads to a fight that brings the latter to his senses. The boy becomes seriously ill and afterwards, to pay for his medical expenses, his father sets off for Hokkaido as a hired laborer. As the boat leaves Tokyo harbor he recognizes a more important responsibility, jumps overboard and swims ashore to rejoin his son, happily repeating a silly joke the boy has told him. “This is a sequence rare in Ozu,” wrote Joan Mellen, “involving a human being immersed in



the elements and there achieving peace with himself. Kibhachi's swimming is filmed as a natural and beautiful act, expressive of an emotional resonance Ozu attaches to the return to his son."

Ozu's own father had become reconciled to his choice of career, and by then he was living in the parental home in Tokyo, as he did for the rest of his life. He was terrified of women and, though he frequently fell in love with his actresses, and sometimes went so far as to arrange meetings, nothing ever came of these assignations and he remained unmarried. His father died in 1934, choosing him as head of the family "though he knew that I was the last person to be relied upon." Much moved, Ozu seems to have taken his responsibilities very seriously and to have matured considerably, though he always remained a heavy drinker.

The director's first picture had been based on one by George Fitzmaurice, and another Fitzmaurice movie, *The Barker* (1928), inspired *Ukigusa monogatari* (*A Story of Floating Weeds*, 1934), which was infinitely superior to its model. Ozu won his third consecutive *Kinema Junpo* "best one" for his rendering of a traveling theatre troupe's visit to a mountain village where the group's leader, now married to a jealous actress, encounters a former mistress and the son he had casually fathered. Donald Richie called this "a picture of great atmosphere and intensity of character, one in which story, actors, and setting all combined to create a whole world, the first of those eight-reel universes in which everything takes on a consistency somewhat greater than life: in short, a work of art."

Ozu held out against sound long after other Shochiku directors had adopted it—he was intent on reducing his means rather than extending them and he had, besides, promised his photographer Hideo Shigehara to wait until the latter had perfected a sound system of his own. "If I can't keep promises like this," Ozu wrote in his diary in June 1935, "then the best

thing would be to give up being a director—which would be all right, too." He finally succumbed the following year, afraid that he was being "left behind by the other directors."

The new medium affected his working methods less than he had expected: indeed, the stationary microphone gave him even greater control over his actors than before, forcing them to rely on the small, stylized movements and changes of expression that for him spoke more clearly and precisely than more expansive action.

His first talkie was *Hitori musuko* (*The Only*

*Son*, 1936), adapted from an old script by "James Maki" (Ozu). The heroine is an elderly woman worn out by her struggle to put her son through college. After a long separation, she uses up her meager savings to visit him in Tokyo and finds that her grand hopes for him have come to nothing—he is an ill-paid schoolteacher, scarcely able to support his wife and child. Nevertheless, he borrows enough to entertain her, and promises to resume his studies; she goes home to "die in peace." In fact, the son seems already quite defeated by life and this is one of the darkest and most poignant of Ozu's films.

He made one more picture before the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, a gently ironic study of a marital crisis called *Shukujo wa nani o wasuretake* (*What Did the Lady Forget?*, 1937). The first film Ozu made at Shochiku's new sound studio at Ofuna, it was also the first in which he addressed himself to the problems of upper middle-class professional people, the subjects of many of his later movies. The same year he was drafted and sent to China as an infantry corporal—an experience he could scarcely bring himself to speak of either in his diaries or in subsequent conversation.

When Ozu returned to Shochiku in 1939, his cameraman Hideo Shigehara had moved on to another company. The two films he made during the war were shot by Shigehara's former assistant, Yuharu Atsuta, who became his regular cameraman....





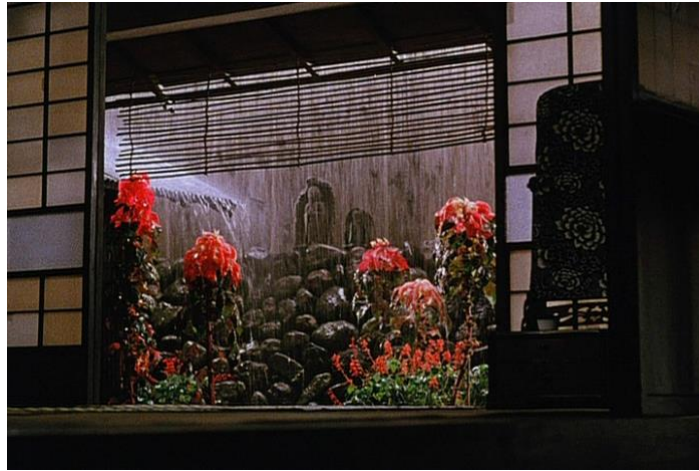
Ozu's admirers claim that, in his two wartime films, he refused to exploit his subjects for propaganda purposes. Joan Mellen agrees that he was neither a propagandist nor an imperialist, calling him in fact "the least overtly didactic of any Japanese director, but argues that the movies he made during and after the war nevertheless endorse a reactionary Japanese spirit: "Ozu evoked traditional ideas not because the militarists forced him to, but because he believed in them," and he accomplishes his propaganda for the war [which is scarcely mentioned] through appeals to a traditional style of obedience, which is, however, only a brief step away from enlisting that obedience in the service of the State."

The facts remain that at least one of Ozu's wartime scripts was rejected by the censors as "unserious," that he somehow avoided making a single militaristic or imperialistic film, and that he took serious risks in defending against the censors the work of fellow-directors like Akira Kurosawa. According to Masahiro Shinoda, "he always made such funny jokes, always got everyone in such a good mood, and was so expert in saying a serious thing in a light way, that nothing ever happened to him." In 1943 Ozu was sent to Singapore to make propaganda films and even then managed to do no such thing. He passed the time viewing confiscated American movies and was impressed above all by one absolutely remote from his own style, Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane*. After six months as a prisoner of war, Ozu was repatriated in February 1946.

By this time, he was very clear about what he wanted to do, and how he wanted to do it. Like many Japanese, he had begun by exploring Western styles and attitudes, but as he grew older turned more and more to the traditional Japanese ideals, defined by Donald Ritchie as "restraint, simplicity, and near-Buddhist serenity." The conflict between the radical individualism of the young and the older generation's nostalgic devotion to these qualities is often a source of tension in his films, whose theme is almost

invariably the Japanese family—most often the relations between parents and children.

"Pictures with obvious plots bore me now," Ozu said after the war. He thought that conventional drama made it easy for a director to arouse emotions in his audience, but was only an "explanation" of human emotions that concealed the real truth. His endless variations on a few simple and archetypal themes gave him all the scope he ever needed for his purpose, which was the rigorous exploration of character as a revelation of what was fundamental in the human condition. It was an approach that had



much in common with the work of one of Ozu's favorite writers, Naoya Shiga, who in his novels also eschewed plot and dramatic effect to study in minute detail the often irrational interactions that take place within the microcosm of the family.

Donald Ritchie writes that "Ozu's later films are probably the most restrained ever made, the most limited, controlled, and restricted." They are typically built up as a mosaic of brief shots—often one for each line of dialogue—taken from directly in front of the actor who is speaking, and from a very low angle. "The Ozu shot," Ritchie says, is "taken from the level of a person seated in traditional fashion on tatami [matting]. Whether indoors or out, the Ozu camera is always about three feet from floor level, and the camera never moves. There are no pan shots and, except in the rarest of instances, no dolly shots. This traditional view is the view in repose, commanding a very limited field of vision but commanding it entirely. . . . It is the aesthetic passive attitude of the haiku master who sits in silence and with painful accuracy observes cause and effect, reaching essence through an extreme simplification." Audie Bock maintains that Ozu consistently shot from a height of even less than three feet, however, and suggests that the effect of this on the audience "is to force [it] to assume a viewpoint of reverence. . . toward ordinary people. Its power is not one of contemplation but of involuntary veneration."

As Bock says. Ozu placed his characters in film after film in similar settings—“the home, the office, the tea salon, the restaurant or bar are the places in which the plain but deeply illuminating conversations occur.” And the director was notoriously perfectionist about the positioning of objects within these sets, often “demanding that furniture, teapots, cups, vases be moved one or two centimeters this way or that until he got exactly the composition he wanted, whether it maintained continuity from shot to shot and satisfied logic or not.”

Ozu was no less demanding in his direction, of actors, Bock says. He would allow no one to dominate a scene....Like the stories, the settings, and the events, if the acting became individualized and special, Ozu’s balance would be upset.” Chishu Ryu, who gave his finest performances under Ozu’s direction and in the later films became in effect the director’s spokesman, said he felt he “was only the colors with which Ozu painted his pictures....I once heard Ozu say, “Ryu is not a skillful actor—that is why I use him.” Less modest performers naturally resented Ozu’s habit of making them rehearse some minute gesture twenty or thirty times in pursuit of an effect that he would not bother to explain, even though his purpose would become clear when the film was finally edited.

The first film Ozu made after the war was *Nagaya no shinshi roku* (*The Record of a Tenement Gentleman*, 1947), a rather uncharacteristic piece drawing on one of his old scripts. *Kaze no naka no mendori* (*A Hen in the Wind*, 1948) was also somewhat atypical with its relatively melodramatic story about a woman forced into a single night of prostitution during the war, when her husband is away and their child needs medical treatment they cannot afford. When her husband is finally repatriated and she confesses her fall from grace, he knocks her down the stairs, but gradually comes to understand and accept that she had no choice. It seemed to Joan Mellen that Ozu “had brilliantly and honestly

confronted the postwar moment,” showing how Japan—like the heroine—had become prostituted to the sleazy values of the Occupation. Ozu himself thought the movie “a bad failure.”

For his next picture, *Banshun* (*Late Spring*, 1949), Ozu was reunited with his favorite scenarist



Kogo Noda, with whom he wrote all of his subsequent scripts. They would begin with the dialogue, always written with particular actors in mind, and let character and setting emerge from that. Both men worked best late at night while consuming huge quantities of sake or whiskey at some inn, and they hardly ever disagreed. Ozu maintained that the quality of a film was directly proportionate to the number

of bottles he and Noda emptied.

*Late Spring* launched the series of almost plotless masterpieces that crowned Ozu’s career. A young woman (Setsuko Hara) lives with her widowed father (Chishu Ryu) and will not consider marriage, preferring her state of cosy dependence to the responsibilities of childbearing and household management. The father, afraid that she faces a lonely and barren future after his death, lets it be known that he himself intends to remarry, and she then sadly and reluctantly takes a husband. The father remains alone as he had always intended, condemned by his sense of duty to a solitary and empty old age.

Ozu’s late films typically open with a sequence establishing a mood of quiet, dispassionate observation. *Late Spring* starts with one in a temple in Kamakura, the old Japanese capital. “nothing happens,” wrote Donald Richie. “No one is visible. The shadows of the bamboos move against the *shoji*; the tea kettle is boiling, the steam escaping. It is a scene of utter calm. There is no subject, no theme, unless it is the gratefulness of silence and repose. This quality having been established, one of the characters enters and the story begins. Empty rooms, uninhabited landscapes, objects (rocks, trees, tea kettles), textures (shadows on *shoji*, the grain of tatami, rain dripping) play a large part in Ozu’s world.”



The most discussed scene in *Late Spring* comes at the very end, after the daughter has left. The father sits alone, methodically peeling a pear. He lets the peel drop and his head falls slightly. “Is it too much to suggest that Ozu...designed the film to set off this one shot? Asked Don Willis. “The slight falling movement of Ryu’s head is the suggestive emotional centre of *Late Spring*, as Setsuko Hara’s great performance is the expressive centre.” And Richie wrote that “the end effect of an Ozu film...is a kind of resigned sadness.....The Japanese call this quality (an essential manifestation of the Japanese aesthetic spirit *mono no aware*, for which the nearest translation might be *lachrimae rerum*, Lucretius’s reference to those tears caused by things as they are.”



From the lonely figure of the father, Ozu cuts away to a deserted shore, and the film ends with an image of gentle waves. Audie Bock believes that the director uses images of this sort not as “symbols in the western sense, but [as] vehicles for the transcendent, ineffable quality of life that takes us outside of mere human emotion.”

This aspect of Ozu’s work is discussed at considerable length by Paul Schrader in *Transcendental Style in Film: Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer*, in which he defines transcendental style as “a form which expresses something deeper than itself, the inner unity of all things.” Schrader continues, “In Ozu’s films as in all Oriental art, the form itself is the ritual which creates the eternal present (*ekaksana*), gives weight to the emptiness (*mu*), and makes it possible to evoke the *furyu*, the four basic untranslatable moods of Zen....The greatest conflict (and the greatest resulting disillusionment) in Ozu’s films is not political, psychological, or domestic, but is, for want of a better term, ‘environmental.’...Ozu responds to the disunity in Japanese life by evoking the traditional verities of Zen art in a contemporary, cinematic context.”\

*Late Spring*, called “one of the most perfect, most complete, and most successful studies of

character ever achieved in Japanese cinema,” was a *Kinema Jumbo* “best one,” and so was *Bakushu* (*Early Summer*) which followed in 1951, after the comparatively minor *Munekata Shimai* (*The Munekata Sisters*). It has been pointed out that Ozu’s

theme is not so much the Japanese family as its dissolution, and this is very much the case in *Early Summer*, in which Setsuko Hara again plays the woman whose late reluctant marriage unravels a close-knit family in this case one of three generations.

*Ochazuke no Aji* (*The Flavor of Green Tea Over Rice*, 1952), dealing with

a middle-aged childless couple, builds to a somewhat more conventionally dramatic crisis than usual. The refined and arrogant wife, scornful of her unsophisticated husband, realizes how much he means to her when it seems that he is about to be sent away on business. At the end they share a quintessentially Japanese mean of rice soaked in green tea which is “simple and unpretentious. It’s how married life should be.” Their “modern” niece whose story provides a subplot, comes to recognize over the same period that “feudal” arranged marriages can sometimes make sense.

Joan Mellen compared this film, to its disadvantage, with Mikio Naruse’s similar *Repast* (1951), saying that in Ozu’s movie “the wife’s side is finally given very little credibility ....Where Naruse blames the wife’s unhappiness in part on social conditions....Ozu, more conservative, suggests that it is in the nature of things for...people sometimes to be thwarted in their desires....In his insight into the silent, forced submission to circumstance of the Japanese wife, Naruse shows a sympathy with the trials of the Japanese woman of which Ozu was incapable.” In fact, Ozu said that he had “wanted to show something about a man from the viewpoint of a woman,” but acknowledged that this film, adapted from an old script, “wasn’t very well made.”

For many critics, the simplicity and purity of Ozu’s mature style reached its apotheosis in *Tokyo monogatari* (*Tokyo Story*, 1953) described by Robert

Boyers as “a work that fairly epitomizes transcendental style.” [Transcendental style is defined by Paul Schrader as “a form which expresses something deeper than itself, the inner unity of all things.”] An elderly couple (Chishu Ryu and Chieko Higashiyami) living by the sea at Onomichi in the south of Japan, visit their married children in Tokyo. They find that their son and daughter have become mean and selfish, dehumanized by life in modern Tokyo, and they are kindly treated only by Noriko (Setsuke Hara), their widowed daughter-in-law, who in spite of her poverty has retained the traditional Japanese virtues.

The old people are hauled off to the hot spring resort at Atami, which they hate. They return to Tokyo, where the wife spends a happy night in Noriko’s small apartment while the husband is out drinking with old cronies. On the way home, the wife becomes ill and the family, concerned at last, assembles briefly at her deathbed. When the others leave to pursue their own affairs, Noriko stays behind to console the old man and it is he who urges her to forget her duty to his dead son and marry again. In the end he is alone but outside, in Onomichi harbor, life goes on.

Richie points out that Ozu could have provided some consolation by ending the film “with a final shot of the daughter-in-law going off into a happier future.” He does not do so partly because he does not believe in such consolations, partly because he “refuses to compromise his theme....By ending the drama (the daughter-in-law) before he ends the film, by returning to the father, by showing us the by-now familiar port shots, which recur like closing chords in this final coda, by referring, finally, to the larger context of city, sea, mountains, he also suggests that what we are seeing occurs every day, that it is common, that it has happened before and will happen many times over, that it is the way of the world.”...Stanley Kauffmann, rating this film as one of his ten personal favorites of all time, writes, “By holding to truth, much more than to naturalism, Ozu gives us a process of mutual discovery, the characters’ and ours.”

...Ozu’s last film *Samma no aji* (*An Autumn Afternoon*, 1962), was yet another variation on his favorite theme, with yet another widower marrying off his daughter and then facing his own loneliness. Tom Milne wrote that this film (like its predecessor) is

mainly light and even ribald in tone, but “closes on a strangely moving almost cathartic note of mingled grief, resignation and tranquility when Harayama, alone at home after his self-sufficient son had gone to bed, breaks down and weeps quietly....Nothing, apparently, has prepared for the emotional depth of the last scene, yet it is a perfectly natural climax towards which the the whole film has been imperceptibly moving through a mosaic of characters and incidents which interlock sometimes obviously and sometimes obliquely, to illuminate the underlying theme of loneliness.” Ozu’s mother died while he was working on this film, and the following year he himself became ill with the cancer that killed him on the eve of his sixtieth birthday.

Younger and more militant filmmakers in Japan, believing that the world can and should be changed, have in recent years tended to reject and scorn Ozu’s theme of acceptance and resignation, the “uncinematic” stasis of his late films and his fondness for the arts and conventions of the feudal past, in particular condemning his nostalgia for the traditional Japanese family structure, which they regard as perniciously conformist and authoritarian.

At the same time, this “most Japanese” of directors has acquired a devoted following abroad, where the purity of his “transcendental” style and the universality of his insights into the “ordinary sorrows” of life established him during the 1970s as one of the masters of world cinema.



**from The St. James World Film Directors Encyclopedia. Ed. Andrew Sarris. Visible Ink Detroit 1998. “Ozu” by David Bordwell**

Throughout his career, Yasujiro Ozu worked in the mainstream film industry. Obedient to his role, loyal to his studio (the mighty Shochiku), he often

compared himself to the tofu salesman, offering nourishing but supremely ordinary wares. For some critics his greatness stems from his resulting closeness to the everyday realities of Japanese life. Yet since his death another critical perspective has emerged. This modest conservative has come to be recognized as one of the most formally intriguing filmmakers in the world, a director who extended the genre he worked within and developed a rich and unique cinematic style.

Ozu enriched this “home drama” genre in several ways. He strengthened the pathos of family crisis by suggesting that many of them arose from causes beyond the control of the individual. In the 1930s works, this often led to strong criticism of social forces like industrialization, bureaucratization, and Japanese “paternalistic” capitalism. In later films, causes of domestic strife tended to be assigned to a mystical super-nature. This “metaphysical” slant ennobled the character tribulations by placing even the most trivial action in a grand scheme. The melancholy resignation that is so pronounced in *Tokyo Story* and *An Autumn Afternoon* constituted a recognition of a cycle of nature that society can never control.

To some extent, the grandiose implications of this process are qualified by a homely virtue: comedy.

Ozu had one of the most distinctive visual styles in the cinema. Although critics have commonly attributed this to the influence of other directors or to traditions of Japanese art, these are insufficient to account for the rigor and precision of Ozu’s technique. No other Japanese director exhibits Ozu’s particular style, and the connections to Japanese aesthetics are general and often tenuous. (Ozu once remarked: “Whenever Westerners don’t understand something, they simply think it’s Zen.”) There is, however, substantial evidence that Ozu built his unique style out of deliberate imitation of and action against Western cinema (especially the work of Chaplin and Lubitsch).



Ozu limited his use of certain technical variables, such as camera movement and variety of camera position. This can seem a willful asceticism, but it perhaps best considered a ground-clearing that let him concentrate on exploring minute stylistic possibilities. For instance, it is commonly claimed that every Ozu shot places the camera about three feet off the ground, but this is false. What Ozu keeps constant is the perceived ratio of camera height to the subject. This permits a narrow but nuanced range of camera positions, making every subject occupy the same sector of each shot. Similarly, most of Ozu’s films employ camera movements, but these are also schematized to a rare degree. Far from being an ascetic director, Ozu was quite virtuosic, but within self-imposed limits. His style revealed vast possibilities within a narrow compass.

Ozu’s compositions relied on the fixed camera-subject relation, adopting angles that stand at multiples of 45 degrees. He employed sharp perspectival depth; the view down a corridor or street is common. Ozu enjoyed playing with the positions of objects within the frame, often rearranging props from shot to shot for the sake of minute shifts. In the color films, a shot will be enhanced by a fleck of bright and deep color, often red; this accent will migrate around the film, returning as an abstract motif in scene after scene.

Ozu’s use of editing is no less idiosyncratic. In opposition to the 180-degree space of Hollywood cinema, Ozu employed a 460-degree approach to filming a scene. This “circular” shooting space yields a series of what Western cinema would consider incorrect matches of actions and eyelines. While such devices creep up in the work of other Japanese filmmakers, only Ozu used them so rigorously—to undermine our understanding of total space, to liken characters, and to create abstract graphic patterns. Ozu’s shots of objects or empty locales extend the concept of the Western “cutaway”; he will use them not for narrative information but for symbolic



purposes or for temporal prolongation. Since Ozu abjured the use of fades and dissolves, cutaways often stand for such punctuation. And because of the unusually precise compositions and cutting, Ozu was able to create a sheer graphic play with the screen surface, “matching” contours and regions of one shot with those of the next.

Ozu’s work remains significant not only for its extraordinary richness and emotional power, but also because it suggests the extent to which a filmmaker working in popular mass-production filmmaking can cultivate a highly individual approach to film form and style.



**Donald Ritchie: “Stories of *Floating Weeds*” (Criterion Essays)**

Floating weeds, drifting down the leisurely river of our lives,” has long been a favored metaphor in Japanese prose and poetry. This plant, the *ukigusa* (duckweed in English), floating aimlessly, carried by stronger currents, is seen as emblematic of our own journey. And sometimes this identity is made explicit—in the lives of traveling actors, for example.

It is with these that Yasujiro Ozu’s 1934 *A Story of Floating Weeds* (*Ukigusa Monogatari*) and his 1959 *Floating Weeds* (*Ukigusa*) are concerned. Both films revolve around a recurring character type who appears in several other Ozu films: the lovable ne-er-do-well usually called “Kihachi” (though in the 1959 version he is called Komajuro). Here, we find Kihachi as the leader of an itinerant dramatic troupe, returning to a small town where he has a lover by whom he has a now-grown son. The boy does not know this but the leading lady of the troupe—the boss’ mistress—finds out and plans her revenge. Though both parents had hoped or some permanence, a family life, the end of both pictures finds the troupe leader again on the road. He continues to drift down the river and Ozu’s major theme—the dissolution of the family—is again demonstrated.

1934’s *A Story of Floating Weeds* was among Ozu’s most successful films, both critically and financially, and Ozu sometimes mentioned an inclination to remake it. He had the opportunity to do so when, in 1959, he was asked by Daiei Studios to make a film for them. Ozu’s contract with Shochiku Studios, his home company, called for a film a year and, because the director was a slow worker, that usually left no time for other labor. That year, however, he had finished *Good Morning* (*Ohayo*) in the spring, and that left the rest of the year free.

Adapting earlier work was not unusual for Ozu. *Late Autumn* (*Akibiyori*, 1960), for example, is an adaptation of 1949’s *Late Spring* (*Banshun*)—with the same actress playing the daughter in the earlier picture and the parent in the later. There are resemblances among other Ozu films as well: *Good Morning* and the 1932 *I was Born, But...* (*Umarete wa mita keredo*), for example.

Given the similarities of Ozu’s films, such adaptation is not surprising. The director thought of his stories as a means of creating characters rather than making plots. He was more interested in who his people were than in what they did. Remaking, in a way, meant revisiting. Perhaps that is the reason he sometimes referred to himself as a “tofu-maker,” able to make all varieties but unable to make anything else.

Though Ozu never mentioned the similarity of *Good Morning* and *Late Autumn* to the earlier pictures, he himself called *Floating Weeds* a remake. “Many years ago I made a silent version of this film. Now I wanted to make it again up in the snow country of Hokuriku [the earlier version was located in Kamisawa, central Japan], so I wrote this new script with Noda [Kogo Noda, his coscriptwriter]...but that year there wasn’t much snow, so I couldn’t use the locations I had in mind in Takado and Sado.”

Consequently, he shot the exteriors in an entirely different location: the island of Shijima, along the Wakayama Kii Peninsula. This radical change of venue, however, occasioned very little change in the script itself—though the lightly revised version was originally entitled *The Ham Actor* (*Daikon Yakusha*).

There are few major differences between the 1934 and 1959 versions, and both are consequently faithful to the plot of the American film that is said to have inspired the original script. This was *The Barker*, a 1928 George Fitzmaurice picture about a traveling carnival which had proved popular in Japan. The

structure of Ozu's two versions is, however, somewhat different from that then current in Hollywood. The use of ellipsis, for example, exemplifies this difference.

The opening sequence in Ozu's 1934 version shows the troupe of traveling players arriving at the station. The shot of the last member leaving the train is followed by a shot of two advertising banners, another showing a poster for their show, an intertitle that reads: "Going to the show tonight?," and a shot of a man having his hair cut in the barber shop.



Film historian David Bordwell has described the continuity of this sequence in the following manner, indicating the elliptical manner of its construction: "The man who asks the question and is having his hair cut is an actor from the troupe; a scene in the barbershop follows, and we are left wondering about the banners that began the sequence. Later they are established as being outside the theater; they precede a number of scenes that take place in the theater and are never shown outside this context again. In this early sequence they evidently indicate that the troupe has established itself in the theater." In this manner Ozu typically uses narrative ellipsis, giving the spectator just enough information to allow him to make sense of the actions, but no more. Perhaps one of the reasons for the fascination of the Ozu film is that the spectator is so often called upon to bridge the ellipsis, to create a connection that the director deliberately left out, to contribute and hence to understand.

Certainly Ozu found no way to improve the construction of the earlier film. The 1959 version of the film uses the same continuity. The opening shots—railway station and port—are almost identical. The arrival of the train and the arrival of the boat are treated in a similar fashion. Characters complain of the rain in the earlier version and of the heat in the later, but otherwise the dialogue is the same.

Likewise, the films share many of the same sequences and compositions, as well as many of the same types of characters. These are often strikingly

similar physical types, though only one actor is in both films: Koji (Hideo) Mitsui plays the son in *A Story of Floating Weeds* and the thieving actor in the *Floating Weeds*. In both films there is the same argument-in-the-rain sequence, just as much smoking (in 1934 a sure indicator of bad female character), the same final scene in the railway station, and the same final shot of the disappearing train.

Such close similarities would indicate that Ozu had discovered in 1934 the best way to tell his story and saw no reason to change much in 1959. Some Japanese critics find in *A Story of Floating Weeds* a new mastery of narrative and have said that the film heralds a new maturity in the Ozu style. Certainly once the director had discovered the effectiveness of any of his narrative ploys, he then seldom failed to include them in his later pictures.

When he was making the earlier film, Ozu was in the process of forming his mature style—the famous invariable camera position, just up off the tatami, its refusal to chase after the actors (the dolly) or even turn its head (the pan); the well-known lack of punctuation; no fades or dissolves, just the straight cut; the invariable mosaic construction of the story; the refusal of plot in any melodramatic sense; whole sections of the story omitted in ellipses—all of these attributes creating a world in which every image counts, all details contribute, and whole sections of continuity can be elided. Every image can be made to vibrate with an integrity which has always had but which we have, through habit, lost the ability to see.

Bordwell has pointed out that this logic of Ozu's camera and character placement was first seen in the 1934 film and that the discernment of the later films "is the same in *A Story of Floating Weeds*." Further, that in the 1934 film "the ideological gravity of Ozu's material weighs down those qualities of self-conscious playfulness that contrasts so fruitfully with stylistic rigor." Though Ozu had made films about the eroding family before this one, it had never been a major theme, nor had it made demands to stop smiling and seriously regard the loss. To notice this, however, is not to criticize Ozu. He had his reasons. He who

called *I Was Born, But...* a dark film was interested in comedy only when it was necessary. It was not necessary in *A Story of Floating Weeds*. Consequently we can see, unadorned as it were, some of Ozu's most interesting stylistic constructions. It is as though the lack of a deliberate humor in this film (in contrast to that of, say, *Passing Fancy* [*Dekigokoro*, 1933]) make the director's stylistic constructions more explicit.

His use of object-as-transition is seen already in perfect form in the *A Story of Floating Weeds*, and he never later found any reason to vary this successful technique. In the film, the son of the itinerant actor rides a bicycle. This vehicle becomes a pivot for transitions throughout the film. The first occurs when he is talking with the girl who will seduce him: cut to the bicycle on its stand at home; he is talking with his mother. The second is composed of a scene in the house: bicycle still on its stand; cut to the boy and girl without the bicycle by the railway track. The third occurs after the boy has run off with the girl—the bicycle at home as before, the boy's empty desk, mother worried. The bicycle makes its final appearance at the end of the film. The vehicle is now in another room, and the room is dark. The implication is that the boy's bicycling days are over and he has grown up.

There are, then, many more similarities than differences between the two films. At the same time there are occasional variances. In 1959, Ozu could show things he couldn't in 1934. In *Floating Weeds* there is a hotel scene: the son and the showgirl have slept together; in *A Story of Floating Weeds* we can only surmise this.

Mainly, however, the differences between the two films are in tone. There are various reasons for this. One was that Ozu was working at a new studio for the first time. The Daiei house style was deliberately bright and the chosen audience was young people looking for novelty. In addition, while domestic drama was a major staple at Ozu's home studio Shochiku, it was not a genre associated with

Daiei.

A new studio also meant a new staff and new actors. The Kihachi character, originally played by Takeshi Sakamoto (who created it in *Passing Fancy*), was now played by the eminent Kabuki star, Ganjiro Nakamura—a fine actor, later cast by Ozu in *End of Summer* (*Kohayagawa-ke no Aki*, 1961)—but nothing remotely like the Kihachi type.

The faithful wife in *Floating Weeds* was played by Haruko Sugimura, familiar to Ozu audiences from her performances in *Early Summer* (*Bakushu*, 1951) and *Tokyo Story* (*Tokyo monogatari*, 1953). A noted stage actress who always experienced difficulty suppressing her style sufficiently for Ozu's purposes,

she suggests little of the despair of Choko Iida in the 1934 version. One result of this is that *Floating Weeds* seems the lighter film, enlivened by color and lacking tragic implications.

The son in *Floating Weeds* was played by Hiroshi Kawaguchi, a rather wooden young actor but the son of one of the most important writer-producers at Daiei. The secondary theme of actor-and-son is rendered almost invisible in the later version because Tokkan Kozo (the lively and mischievous little boy in the 1934 version) was now grown up and the only child available was the far more ordinary Masahiko Shimizu, who had appeared in a number of Ozu films, including *Good Morning*. Indeed, all the characters seem more prosaic in the 1959 film.

Another reason for the tonal differences between the two films is that the Daiei *Floating Weeds* is in color and the color is utilized in a manner different from Ozu's Shochiku color films, *Equinox Flower* (*Higanbana*, 1958) and *Good Morning*. There the color is somewhat sober, in line perhaps with Ozu's original suspicion that color photography could not be controlled as rigidly as could black-and-white.

At Daiei, however, the director was working with a master photographer in Kazuo Miyagawa, a





man who used color in a more dramatic fashion, as in the later films of Kenji Mizoguchi and Kon Ichikawa. In *Floating Weeds*, he created the most pictorially beautiful of all of Ozu's pictures. At the same time, he created something brighter and in a way lighter than the Shochiku Ozu films.

CinemaScope, or Ozu's reaction to it, also played a part in the look of the 1959 film. Though the director finally gave into color, he never did to widescreen, a format standard by then at Daiei but one in which he once compared to toilet paper. About *Floating Weeds* Ozu wrote that "I wanted to have nothing to do with (Cinemascope), and consequently I shot more close-ups and used shorter shots.... This film must have more cuts in it than any other recent Japanese movie."

But among the reasons for the differences between the pictures is not only the difference between Daiei and Shochiku, but also the quarter-century difference between 1934 and 1959—Ozu at thirty-one and Ozu at fifty-six.

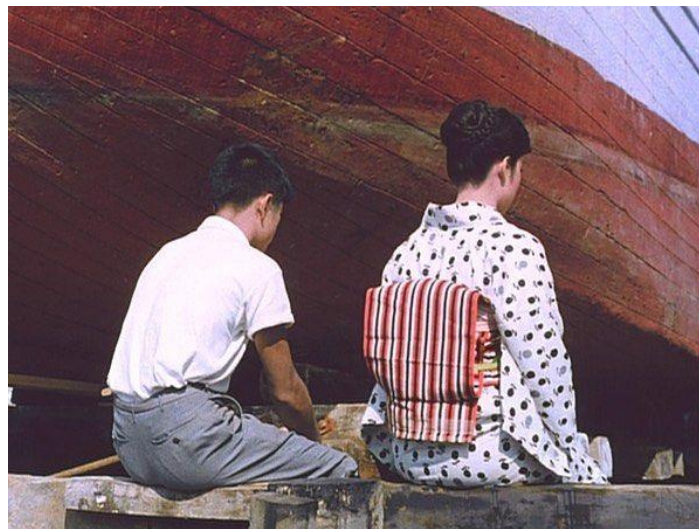
The structural economy of the 1934 picture allows for little that is digressive. The economy of the 1959 film is similar. At the same time, however, there is in the later picture the feeling of relaxation—not of technique, nor of standards, but of attitude.

The main difference is internal. The earlier version seems the more bitter of the two. Toward the end of his life, Ozu mellowed, and one does not, for example, see or feel in *Floating Weeds* the pain of the once-again abandoned mother. To be sure, Haruko Sugimura is by no means happy about further betrayal, but she has become philosophical. Choku Iida in *A Story of Floating Weeds* shows us a bleak despair rarely seen in Ozu's more expansive later work. In 1934, Ozu felt deeply and personally the wrong that life inflicts. Twenty-five years later, he felt just as deeply, but perhaps less personally.

### **Marvin Zeman: "The Zen Artistry of Yasujiro Ozu"**

In my opinion, what the other great Japanese directors, Mizoguchi and Kurosawa, have created is part of Western art (film) rather than Japanese art. Kurosawa, for instance, is for the most part a Western artist since even his themes are similar to those dealt with in the West, to say nothing of his technique. . . . Mizoguchi's art, while dealing with Japanese themes, must also be considered Western: what one remembers from a Mizoguchi film is, most often, purely cinematic—the rippling of the water after Anju's suicide in *Sansho Dayo*, the boat emerging from the fog in *Ugetsu*, the death scene in *Yang Kwei Fei*, ad infinitum, ad gloriam. These scenes, although undeniably great, are clearly imposed from without by Mizoguchi. One of the basic tenets of Japanese art is that it be artless art: the artistry must come from

within the work. As for Mizoguchi's themes, they, too, are not uniquely Japanese: for instance Max Ophüls' *Letter from an Unknown Woman* is a very Mizoguchian film. All this is not to say that Ozu is necessarily better than Mizoguchi or Kurosawa, but it does say that one must bring a new set of values to bear in discussing Ozu's art. The criteria that one must use for Ozu



should be those of Japanese art and not cinematic art.

If one is unsympathetic to Japanese art, one will probably be unsympathetic to Ozu. But if one considers Japanese art on the same level as European art, then Ozu's art will become more lucid and more profound. R.H. Blyth wrote that the placing of Japanese literature on an equal standing with European literature is contingent upon the consideration of Bashô on the same level with Shakespeare, Goethe, Dante, and Homer. I further contend that if one does indeed accept Bashô in this way, then by considering Ozu with respect to Bashô—and Bashô is Ozu's creative ancestor rather than D.W. Griffith—one will come to the conclusion that Ozu is the finest artist to use the film as a medium.

The basic idea behind Japanese art is Zen. Zen is the immediate and therefore inexpressible individual experience whose aim is inner enlightenment. D.T. Suzuki has stated that “Zen is not subject to logical analysis or to intellectual treatment. It must be directly and personally experienced by each of us in his inner spirit.” Art is the form-language of the human soul. The soul tries to disclose through art

beauty—the revealing principle of the cosmos. This beauty is found in the mu (roughly translated as nothingness). If one can penetrate the mu, then one can achieve inner enlightenment/. This beauty can be found anywhere—in a simple flower, in a solitary cloud, in a short poem. The revelation of beauty is the goal of art.

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 April 20 1993 Jane Campion *The Piano*  
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