The Cinema of the Victim

Gender and Collective Trauma in the Postwar Japanese Woman's Film

....

By

Bianca Briciu Otilia, Master of Arts

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of

Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in Film Studies

Carleton University

OTTAWA, Ontario

May 21st, 2008

2008, Bianca Briciu Otilia

Library and Archives Canada

Published Heritage Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque et Archives Canada

Direction du Patrimoine de l'édition

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-40592-5
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-40592-5

NOTICE:
The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

AVIS:
L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.

Abstract

From our contemporary position weary of the feminist victimization discourse and critical of the postwar Japanese victim attitude, I attempt to pursue an analysis of this type of discourse in postwar Japanese cinema. Narratives and imagery of victimization open the possibility of investigating the subjective dimension of certain historical periods. Focusing on woman's films, a genre only recently considered in film studies, I am offering a culturally, historically embedded reading of the cinematic representation of Japan's postwar period through the trope of female victimization. Bringing together studies of gender and genre, my objective is to offer a historically articulated theory of woman's film not only as a "feminine" genre but also as an emotional collective memory of suffering. Besides the textual analysis of the films' representation of subjective history, I am highlighting the role played by pathos for the emotional involvement of spectators.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express special thanks to my advisor, Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano for her dedication to scholarship, her continuous guidance and support in moments of need and also for welcoming me into her home at times when I felt so out of place.

I am grateful to Barbara Gabriel, Chris Faulkner, André Loiselle, Ming Tiampo, for their intellectual brilliance, which I was fortunate enough to experience. Many thanks for your advice and kindness that helped me survive my first Canadian winters and the challenges of accommodating to a new place and a new life.

Thank you to my colleagues for their sense of humor, their intelligence and maturity.

Thank you to my husband and son who nurtured my soul and gave me a home (where the heart is). Each in his own way helped me stay organized and focused.

Note: I have used the Japanese order of writing names for filmmakers, actors and theorists residing in Japan (family name, first name). For Japanese theorists writing in English or whose work I accessed in the English translated version, I used the English order (first name, family name).

Table of Contents

Introduction **1**

Chapter 1. The Return to the Mother **23**

A Japanese Tragedy, Tragedy of the Mother, Tragedy of the Nation 25

Twenty-four Eyes, The Eyes that Witness History 41

Chapter 2. The Feminization of Memory: Woman as Witness to the Japanese Male Collective Trauma **62**

A Hen in the Wind, Violence and the Possibility of Traumatic Catharsis 65

Floating Clouds, The Politics of Gender and Memory 77

Chapter 3. The Prostitute Between Native and Foreign Patriarchy **90**

Women of the Night, Stripping the Body, Stripping the Soul 93

Streets of Shame, How Evil Is Prostitution? Victimization and Empowerment 110

Conclusion **123**

Bibliography **134**

Introduction

This thesis will be situated at the intersection of three theoretical venues: collective trauma, film genre and gender. A consideration of Japanese melodrama in a situated historical context will reveal the connection between historical events, cinematic representation and type of spectatorship. Along with Ben Singer's idea that melodrama brings into question "a kind of profound, beneath-the–surface reality," I will follow the representation of Japan's postwar historical circumstances at the level of the female subject as narrative agent of melodrama.[1] I intend to pursue the relationship between the melodramatic tropes of female suffering and the representation of Japan's collective trauma in the years after defeat in WWII, through an analysis of six postwar woman's films as subgenres of melodrama.

Studies of melodrama have pointed out the dynamic existing between the representation of the world outside the text and the textual level constructed through fictional devices. Melodrama must conform to the rules of a socially constructed reality when representing highly symbolized characters and events. The films I consider focus on the chaotic period at the end of the WWII, portraying a society that has undergone traumatic changes. At the same time, these changes are represented through the symbolically charged figures of victimized women. As Christine Gledhill has pointed out, the woman's double role as symbol of a patriarchal culture and as representative of a

[1] Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 51.

female point of view has produced contestations between theoretical approaches.[2] Feminist considerations of melodramas are concerned with the recuperation of a specifically female point of view, while historical readings are concerned with the coded ideologies of a certain historical period. My purpose is to bring feminist readings and historical readings into dialogue by analyzing the dynamic between the representation of a gender problem and the symbolic reading of collective trauma. Arguing for a consideration of melodrama both in historical and gendered terms, I will analyze the relationship between women's victimization as an emotional representation of Japanese women's lives in the postwar period and the symbolic implications of their victimization for Japan's collective trauma. Women are victimized by the socio-historical circumstances following Japan's defeat in WWII. At the same time, the representation of this female victimization serves not only as testimony to women's historical situation, but also as a reflection on the trauma of the society as a whole. In that sense, women's bodies are not only a repository of individual, but also of cultural memory. The representation of their victimization stresses the social character of embodied experience appealing to the emotions of both male and female spectators in the postwar years. The films construct a public narrative that represents collective trauma in a melodramatic way through women's suffering. Kinoshita Keisuke's two films: *A Japanese Tragedy (Nihon no higeki,* 1953) and *Twenty-four Eyes (Nijushi no hitomi,* 1954) explore how subjects are engaged and changed by history, inscribing women as powerless figures in spite of their strength of character. Ozu Yasujiro's *A Hen in the Wind (Kaze no naka no mendori,* 1948*)* represents

[2] Christine Gledhill, "Introduction," in *Home Is Where the Heart Is,* ed. Christine Gledhill (London: British Film Institute, 1978), 37.

of a double loss of masculine authority: as the result of fighting a lost war and as a result of the wife's infidelity. The wife's suffering addresses the dynamics of gender relationships against a chaotic society, problematizing the male trauma experienced by Japanese men in the postsurrender years. Naruse Mikio's *Floating Clouds (Ukigumo, 1956)* portrays a woman's suffering in the pursuit of a love relationship that starts in the colonized Southeast Asia and continues hopelessly and sadly in a war devastated Japan. She is an emotionally implicated witness to the male trauma experienced by her lover, to his demasculinization and disavowal of memory. Mizoguchi Kenji's *Women of the Night (Yoru no on'natachi,* 1948) *and Streets of Shame (Akasen Chitai,* 1956) combine social consciousness with character portrayal in their representation of the prostitutes' life. Women's pathos and bitterness are analyzed from a historical perspective and we see the impact of the postwar changes in their lives. What is common to all these films is the representation of historical reality through female subjects who are condemned to lack of agency and victimization as wives, mothers, lovers or prostitutes. These female roles within the patriarchal culture allow for different symbolic readings, which reflect on the Japanese collective trauma. Mothers symbolize a lost Japanese tradition of strong family ties, innocence and affective relationships; wives and lovers represent the ground against which a lost male identity must be reasserted, while prostitutes' abjection allegorizes the unrepresentable shame of the nation.

Women in these films are no longer confined within the domestic sphere although they are conditioned by it; in a society undergoing traumatic changes they undermine the separation between the public relegated to the masculine and the domestic relegated to the feminine. They enter the social sphere, receiving the full blow of a patriarchal culture

deeply shattered by history, and their specific female suffering connects with national suffering. I will analyze these films focusing on three main problems; the melodramatic representation of the postwar cultural, historical situation, the double role of female characters as representing a specifically female suffering and as symbolizing collective trauma, and last, the implications of the film's melodramatic tropes for a feminized, historically defined spectatorship. In the film analyses, I will move within this triangle exploring the relationship between the textual level of the film and the postwar historical period, the melodramatic tropes (both iconic and semantic) at the films' textual level, and the construction of an affective collective memory.

The Benefits of the Genre Approach

The genre approach to film is important not because it gives us new criteria of classifying films but because it allows an exploration of the triangle made of historical reality/film and filmmaker/audience. Until recent years Japanese cinema has been approached in Western scholarship mainly through "auteur" criticism, cultural influences and questions of spectatorship being relegated to brief background mentions.[3] The genre approach allows for the exploration of Japanese cinema as an instantiation of the "story of the people" belonging to a new version of history: the history as the construction of common people.[4] Films as stories of the people rework their cultural, historical background offering representations of the way history has been lived, constructing an

---

[3] Freda Freiberg, "Japanese Cinema," in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies,* ed. John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 562.

[4] Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano, "Sengo nihon no merodorama (The Postwar Japanese Melodrama)," in *Kazoku no shozo (The Disappearance of the Family),* ed. Iwamoto Kenji (Tokyo: Shinwasha 2007), 286.

emotional dimension of collective memory. In this sense, I am using genre less as a strict point of demarcation between different bodies of films and more as a historically determined dramatic mode. I will explore the woman's film as a subgenre of melodrama and its relation to Japan's postwar historical context in an effort to address a genre that has been scarcely and superficially considered. Woman's films have been criticized for their lack of social consciousness and some of the directors above, especially Ozu Yasujiro have been criticized for their cinematic confinement to the family in times of cultural and social disorientation. Women's weepies were considered to belong outside history since they represented general female problems: birth, death, love, the split between mother and child, intergenerational conflict.[5] However, I would argue that these female problems are themselves subject to historical change. As Thomas Elsaesser argues, the family is the means through which social crises can be delineated in personalized and emotional terms.[6] What links together the films I have chosen is the overwhelming presence of history in the very domain that was thought to be outside change: home and the heart. The home is no longer the enclosed structure of protection since it lacks the paternal head of the family, while the heart no longer pertains to a stable ideology. Both home and the heart are in crisis in the ten years following defeat in WWII.

Does the Woman's Film Belong to Women? –Melodrama and the Woman's Film

---

[5] Thomas Elsaesser, "Tales of Sound and Fury," in *Home Is Where the Heart Is,* ed. Christine Gledhill (London: British Film Institute, 1978), 84.

[6] Ibid. 84.

In order to define woman's film, I will first introduce theories of melodrama that consider the patterns, codes and conventions shared by filmmakers and their audiences. In this sense, I will approach melodrama less as a genre and more like a sensibility that reflects the desires, concerns and anxieties of certain historical periods. Peter Brooks and Ben Singer avoid a clear-cut genre definition, leading towards a historical, culturally situated account. Singer writes: "One way to deal with the term's general slipperiness is to stop trying to understand it as a genre and think of it as a dramatic mode."[7] Singer usefully highlights melodrama as a cluster concept that varies in relation to different configurations of a range of five basic features. These features are: "pathos," "overwrought emotion," "non-classical narrative structure," "moral polarization" and "sensationalism."[8] What all theorists of melodrama agree upon is the melodrama's use of pathos and excessive emotion. As Singer's broad definition states, "Melodrama as it generally is used today refers to a set of subgenres that remain close to the heart and hearth and emphasize a register of heightened emotionalism and sentimentality."[9] A number of scholars have interpreted melodrama as a cultural response to the moral insecurity and material vulnerability people felt as they faced a world no longer ruled by the stable structures provided by monarchic, feudal and religious authority. When John Mercer and Martin Shingler summarize the thirty years of debates around melodrama, they point out the different definitions of the genre according to the interest of critics concerned with it. Their conclusion is that melodrama means different types of films at

---

[7] Singer, 6.

[8] Ibid. 44.

[9] Ibid. 37.

different times. It is an evolving form and approaching it as a style or a sensibility might prove more useful than approaching it as a genre. [10]

Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto contextualizes Japanese melodrama as the result of a contradiction between modernization and modernity. He refers to the U.S. hegemonic position in the world and Japan's position as a subordinated, passive victim.[11] However, I would argue that Japanese melodrama addresses not only this contradiction but also the trauma of defeat in WWII, as a cultural response to people's insecurity and vulnerability. In this sense, the Japanese woman's film aligns female victimization with the victim attitude dominating the postwar discourse.

Besides the attention given to melodrama as a discourse of excess and of moral legitimization, feminist critics have attempted to explore the relationship between gender and genre, analyzing the female dimension of the melodramatic mode. They define woman's film as a subgenre of melodrama, sharing the above techniques and features of melodrama and differentiating itself through its narrative agent and form of address. According to Annette Kuhn, "one of the defining features of the woman's picture as a textual system is its construction of narratives motivated by female desire and processes of spectator identification governed by female point-of-view."[12] Mary Ann Doane adds to this dimension the films' content, referring to woman's films that deal with problems

[10] John Mercer and Martin Shingler, *Melodrama-Genre, Style, Sensibility* (London: Wallflower, 2004), 37.

[11] Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto, "Melodrama, Postmodernism, and Japanese Cinema," in *Melodrama and Asian Cinema,* ed. Wimal Dissanayake (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 110.

[12] Annette Kuhn, "Women's Genre," in *Re-Vision- Essays in Feminist Film Criticism,* ed. Mary Ann Doane, Patricia Mellecamp and Linda Williams (L.A.: American Film Institute, 1984), 339.

specifically feminine like domestic life, children, love relationships.[13] Linda Williams proposes one of the most interesting definitions of the woman's film as a "bodily genre" characterized by "bodily excess."[14] She argues that the woman's film offers the spectacle of a woman's body caught in the grip of intense sensation or emotion as a form of ecstasy. Women function in this subgenre of melodrama as embodiments of emotional pain, functioning as "the moved and the moving."[15] It is considered as the low genre of weepies since it proposes the spectators' identification with a passive position of suffering and victimization. I will analyze the chosen films focusing on the relationship between the melodramatic tropes associated with female victimization and their role in the representation of a traumatic historical moment of the nation.

Producer Kido Shiro at Shochiku, a studio specializing in woman's films went into the making of films for a female audience because he believed that "women have much stronger feelings than men and because art is founded on feeling; movies are art, so women would necessarily view movies as important."[16] Shochiku consistently made woman's films both in the prewar and in the postwar period but when the studio starts having financial problems due to the persistence of their old style "Ofuna flavor" films (woman's films made in the Ofuna studios), the studio starts modernizing its old tear-jerkers. Kido rightly believes that modern audiences too need laughter and tears, but "what

[13] Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire- The Woman's Film of the 1940s* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), 56.

[14] Linda Williams, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre and Excess," *Film Quarterly*, vol. 44, no 4 (1998): 4.

[15] Ibid. 5.

[16] op. cit. Audie Bock, *Japanese Film Directors* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1978), 198.

was required was an updating of methods that cause the public to laugh and cry."[17] Kido tries to grasp in the films produced at Shochiku what is unchangeable in human emotion and how cinema can provoke certain emotions but he also understands the need to introduce a historical dimension of emotionality.

Historical Background of Postwar Japan

Since I will discuss the postwar years as a specific historical configuration of collective trauma, I would like to clarify the uses and the usefulness of the term "postwar." Japanese historians have long debated the accuracy of "postwar" and I will try to make clear my use of this concept as well as its historical relevance for this thesis. Many historians use the fated day of August 15, 1945 as the zero point of a new beginning but also as a break that disconnects the prewar from the postwar. Japan's version of WWII is characterized through a lack of continuity marked by the refusal to acknowledge the country's position as an imperialist aggressor. "Severed history, radical discontinuity, a new beginning-such were the fictions of *sengo* (postwar) that emerged from cataclysmic war," notes Carol Gluck arguing that the past is the ever present issue in Japan's national consciousness.[18] Although the term "postwar" is widely used to describe the end of the war to the present, there are many generational differences not only at the level of institutions but also at the level of social life. Between 1945 and 1952, Japan is an occupied nation trying to recover from economic and political collapse. A survey of opinion done in 1954 shows that it is the first year of economic and social stability in

---

[17] op. cit. Joseph Anderson and Donald Richie, *The Japanese Film-Art and Industry* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), 235.

[18] Carol Gluck, "The Past in the Present," in *Postwar Japan as History,* ed. Andrew Gordon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 70.

decades while Nakano Yoshio and the Liberal Democratic Party proclaimed the end of the war in 1956.[19]

The usefulness of this delineation of "postwar" as the period from 1945 to 1956 comes from its problematic place in history and its terrible strain on people. It is the period when collective trauma is the most visible not only through the social disorientation and *kyodatsu* (exhaustion and despair) condition of the Japanese individuals but also in the way it puts under question the idea of a unitary Japanese nation. The films I chose are not only made during this period, but they also reflect on it. Women's suffering, the main subject of woman's film is now articulated against the background of profound social and cultural instability. In order to relate to this period as to a period of collective trauma, I need to address the theoretical configuration of collective trauma.

Collective Trauma as a Break in the Construction of Collectivity

Trauma theories use the term "trauma," borrowing its definition from medicine and psychiatry and metaphorically extending it to the collective bodies of nations, races or ethnic groups. Piotr Sztompka extends the notion of trauma from medicine and psychiatry to culture as "the damage inflicted by major social change on the cultural, rather than biological tissue of a society."[20] Although different theorists use different inflections like "national," "collective," "historical" trauma, they generally refer to the pathology of

---

[19] Wada-Marciano, 287.

[20] Piotr Sztompka, "Cultural Trauma: The Other Face of Social Change," in *European Journal of Social Theory,* vol. 3. no. 49 (2000): 420.

collective agency, a break or a displacement of a taken-for-granted universe or of a cultural configuration involving a collectivity. [21]

Japan's loss of war and the crumbling of various institutions that carried collective agency and collective unity entailed cultural disorientation and a traumatizing experience for the majority of Japanese people. More than that, the hardships of poverty, defeat, uncertainty and chaos are marked by an acute sense of loss of collective or national identity. In this sense, collective trauma is not only a group of individual wounds but also the rupture at the very level of the phantasmatic construction of the nation or of the collective. This rupture at the site of the construction of the nation is manifested through the multitudes of discourses in the postwar years that question the relationships between individual and society, between subjectivity and victimization. The outcome of defeat in WWII was not only devastation and chaos but also an irreparable rupture of national unity manifested in the relationship between citizens and the emperor. The individual was immersed in the collective and this rupture brought deep questioning about the government's betrayal and the suffering of Japanese subjects.

Japan's Collective Trauma and the Woman's Film

The ideology of imperialist Japan involved an "organic" relationship between citizens and the emperor as the symbolic figure of the sacred father is the most important site of the construction of nation. A strong sense of national identity prevailed during the war years, reinforced by the revival of ancient myths and by the presence of the enemy. However, as Chizuko Ueno points out, the nation was represented through male subjects.

---

[21] Ibid. 327.

Women played their role in the construction of the nation as "second-class citizens."[22] They participated in the public sphere as mothers and wives supporting their sons and their husbands. The shock of defeat denounced the sites that had constructed a unitary, militaristic nation through two main narratives.

The first narrative is pointed out by Yoshikuni Igarashi as "U.S. (male)-Japan (female)-melodrama of conversion and rescue through the highly sexualized figures of Douglas MacArthur and Emperor Hirohito."[23] The bomb and conclusion of the conflict are mediated through the figure of the emperor who turns from symbol of masculine authority to the one of feminine subjection to the conquerors.[24] Japan as the formerly strong, masculine nation that conquered other countries in Asia takes itself the place of the colonized, feminized nation.

The other narrative pervading not only the intellectual and political circles is the narrative of victimized citizen. This narrative belongs to larger debates about subjectivity and war responsibility and has been considered by Eric Cazdyn in his meta-theoretical consideration of Japanese film as the second moment of Japanese modernity illustrated by the dominant cultural themes in film in the triad: "1.colonized/colonizer 2. individualism/collectivism 3. national/transnational."[25] For the purposes of my argument, I

---

[22] Chizuko Ueno, *Nationalism and Gender,* tr. Beverly Yamamoto (Melbourne: Trans-pacific Press, 2004), 16.

[23] Yoshikuni Igarashi, *Bodies of Memory: Narratives of War in Postwar Japanese Culture* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 24.

[24] Ibid. 24.

[25] Eric Cazdyn, *The Flash of Capital –Film and Geopolitics in Japan* (London: Duke University Press, 2002), 5.

will focus on this second narrative and the way it emerges in the postwar *gendaigeki* (contemporary film).

The genre of *gendaigeki* in the postwar period is pervasively represented by melodramas and woman's films, due to two main reasons. The first reason is the severe SCAP (Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers) censorship, which made directors turn to family melodramas and women's film as a safer way to approach the present. Since films representing male characters in this period were liable to raise suspicions about representations of feudal or militaristic attitude, of nationalism or of a patriotic representation of history which were among the list of forbidden subjects, many directors turned to woman's films as a safer way to approach a problematic present. [26]

The second reason that explains the overwhelming presence of melodrama and woman's films in the works of the postwar period is the need to represent the present from the point of view of the victim. Women and children were the embodiment of innocent victimhood since their suffering did not involve any questions about war participation. More than that, female characters in melodramas and women's film represented the crisis of the whole nation through their symbolization. Their victimization addresses both a specific female victimization and the symbolization of collective trauma. The ruins of the nation are perpetuated in the lives of displaced and suffering people. Gilles Deleuze refers to the "any-spaces-whatever" proliferating in Europe after WWII. These are spaces no longer familiar, cities in ruins, wasteground, inhabited warehouses. "In these any-spaces-whatever a new race of characters was stirring, kind of mutant: they saw rather than acted,

[26] Anderson and Richie, 160.

they were seers."[27] Neo-realist filmmakers invent a new kind of image for Deleuze: the time-image, in opposition to the action-image. Paraphrasing his idea and removing it to a different cultural context in the wake of WWII, I would argue that the characters pervading postwar melodramas are lacking agency, they are acted upon, rather than act themselves and they turn the on-screen image into a highly affective one, where characters witness the nation's cultural trauma and they suffer its consequences.

Isolde Standish makes a useful differentiation of this thematic preoccupation in the postwar film bringing to light not only differences among directors but also a gender differentiation of narrative agents. One version is represented through Kurosawa's films that designated a humanism based on the individual's capacity for improvement. Not surprisingly, Kurosawa's films have men as their main characters and they represent a male point of view. Standish notes that "on the other hand there is the more dominant derivative victimization (*higaisha ishiki*) characterized by the films of Kinoshita Keisuke (1912-1998), Imai Tadashi (1912-1992), Kobayashi Masaki (1916-1996) and Ieki Miyoji (1911-1976). In these films the individual is often depicted as a powerless pawn, caught in the machinations of a geo-historical trajectory that, in its cinematic form, transforms *mise-en-scene* as location into a causal force acting against the individual."[28] Most of these films have female characters as narrative agents, carrying the vision of the most notable directors in the postwar period: Ozu Yasujiro, Kinoshita Keisuke, Naruse Mikio, Mizoguchi Kenji. They bring to the public consciousness a gendered dimension of

---

[27] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, tr. Hugh Tomlison and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), xi.

[28] Isolde Standish, *A New History of Japanese Cinema* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 220.

victimization reworked in the narrative and *mise-en-scene* of the woman's film as the epitome of innocent suffering at the hands of an all-pervading social evil. On the one hand, these films carry in their subtext aspects of women's oppression in the postwar period, while on the other hand they construct a discourse of collective trauma reflecting on tropes of loss and suffering.

Displacement of Japan's Collective Trauma

Why does collective trauma, which is mainly a trauma of the male subject, come to be represented through female characters? The answer is offered by the psychoanalytic concept of displacement defined as a defense mechanism whereby the mind redirects affects from an object felt to be dangerous or unacceptable to an object felt to be safe or acceptable.[29] Both Saito Ayako and Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano argue that melodramas in the postwar period reopen a dialogue with a past that cannot be spoken of, they allow the (male) national subject to address the historical trauma inflicted by the loss of war.[30] The displacement of national trauma from the male subject to the female subject raises questions about the very constitution of the subject.

In order to explain why it is unacceptable for the male subject to admit loss, shame and victimization, I will use Kaja Silvermann's theory about male subjectivity and trauma. Through a Lacanian framework, she shows how traumatic events bring men as the agents of meaning to a feminized position as bearers of meaning. She defines the masculine trauma as a feminization, as the contact with the lack, which characteristically defines the

---

[29] J. Laplanche and J-B Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnak Books, 1988), 67.

[30] Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano, "Sengo nihon no kokuminteki merodorama (The Postwar Popular Japanese Melodrama)," in *Intelligence*, no.1 (2004): 96.

female: "by historical trauma I mean any social event, whether socially engineered or of natural occurrence, which brings a large group of male subjects into such an intimate relation with lack that they are at least for the moment unable to sustain an imaginary relation with the phallus, and so they withdraw their belief from the dominant fiction."[31] The dominant fiction is in her interpretation the primary agency of social consensus, ideological reality, faith above all else in the unity of the family and the adequacy of the male subject. The male subject finds adequacy either in its participation in a collectivity based on male values, or in its assertion of authority over women.

Thus the role of women as narrative agents in Japanese postwar woman's film is double: on the one hand they address collective trauma through the symbolization of the loss and rupture of the categories entailing collective unity, while on the other hand, they address a specific, historically determined form of female suffering. Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano refers to the mother character present in the majority of postwar melodramas as a "lacking subject" (*ketsuraku no shutai).*[32] The "lacking subject" is the opposite of the modern subject, since it is characterized by lack of agency. Instead of being the initiator of an action, the "lacking subject" is the bearer, the passive recipient of an action. Women, especially in their status as mothers, suffer the results of the postwar devastation without having been the agents of war; they must endure the suffering because they are not in the position to change the causes the suffering. Their main strategy of coping with their own suffering and the sympathy for the suffering of others is through the shedding of tears.

---

[31] Kaja Silvermann, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 55.

[32] Wada-Marciano, 296.

What is characteristic about woman's films in this period is that they are complicit with an ideology that poses women as innocent victims, but at the same time, they are subversive since they also address the collapse of patriarchal ideology. They bring to the forefront the "lacking subject" as the innocent victim who suffers without the possibility of acting out against suffering and in this sense they are bearers of the collective trauma of defeat but at the same time they give women narrative and cinematic agency because they disclose strategies of coping with suffering, through pathos and tears, allowing a great on-screen space to female points of view.

The Melodramatic Language of Pathos-Masochistic Spectatorship?

The continuous shift between the representation of an immediate traumatic event and its symbolic implications for a collective memory is made accessible to spectators in an affective way through pathos. Pathos, as we have seen before, is the main characteristic of melodrama and it requires identification: "the power of pathos derives from a process of emotional identification or, perhaps more accurately, of association, whereby spectators superimpose their own life melodramas over the ones represented in the narrative. Melodrama is so moving because it hits home."[33] Women as protagonists of melodrama and initiators of pathos touch a sensitive string because they represent deeply seated fears or desires as well as an emotional dimension of experienced reality. This form of spectatorship privileged by melodrama needs deeper exploration since it provides a space for identification with suffering, passivity and loss, a space relegated to a feminized spectator.

[33] Singer, 45.

Feminist theories of melodrama are caught in the dilemma of defining the pleasure of feminine spectatorship as masochistic pleasure. Words etymologically related to "pathos," sympathy and empathy are evocative of the culturally constructed understanding of the woman's relation to the Other. The woman's relation to the Other, which involves empathy and identification, is also the feminized position of spectatorship. How can then spectators identify with a passive position of suffering? For Mary Ann Doane, the feminized position of spectatorship breaks the distance between subject and object, between spectator and image.[34] However, I would argue that the masochistic position of identification with lack and victimization has further implications. It allows spectators to experience catharsis and to accept a painful reality by shedding tears. Collective trauma is overcome through the recognition that the victim position is one that creates a new collectivity and the means of coping with victimization are tears shed collectively. The repetition of innocent suffering and helplessness creates a space of identification, which cannot be simply dismissed as masochism. The act of crying as a result of an imaginary but no less hypnotic identification with a character in melodrama is ultimately an act of catharsis.

The Return to the Mother

In the first chapter I will analyze Kinoshita Keisuke's two films: *A Japanese Tragedy* and *Twenty-four Eyes.* Characterized as a humanist director, Kinoshita Keisuke is concerned in many of his films with the consequence of historical changes for individuals. The most beloved filmmaker in the postwar period, Kinoshita strikes a collective sensitive string through his sympathy for the common people and his belief in purity and honesty.

---

[34] Doane, 13.

Although quite experimental in cinematic technique, his films use the codes of melodrama sentimentalizing and depoliticizing their antiwar statements. Both films reflect on the burden of history on the victimized individual and both have female characters as narrative agents. Their relationship to the historical representation of the postwar background is, however, different. *A Japanese Tragedy* explores a personal tragedy against the backdrop of a national tragedy, a melodramatic story against a history represented through documentary and newsreel footage. *A Japanese Tragedy* both in narrative structure and in technique portrays the dialectic between the historical representation and the personal event; the diegetic world of the film presenting the mother's story is interspersed with newspaper headlines and documentary footage of actual events. *Twenty-four Eyes* on the other hand represents a nostalgic past of innocence and beauty, both through the stunning landscape and through children characters. This film, although criticized in the 80's controversies around war responsibility for its unabashed sentimentality that avoided issues of history and politics, has remained one of the most endeared film to the Japanese public.

The individualized victimization of the mother in *A Japanese Tragedy* is present as collective victimization in *Twenty-four Eyes.* The mother figure functions similarly to represent national or collective loss: the loss of traditional values in *A Japanese Tragedy* and the loss of purity and innocence in *Twenty-four Eyes*. The mother figure also functions in the latter film as a relational concept of victimization, addressing the language of melodrama as a collective contagion of tears. She perceives and tries to counteract the others' victimization and suffering but her lack of agency condemns her to ineffective tears, the only means to work through the powerlessness at the suffering of others. Crying

together is the mechanism through which the film represents suffering and helplessness at the textual level. My task when approaching these films will be to highlight the role of the mother figure in the representation of female suffering and collective trauma.

The Feminization of Memory: Woman as Witness to the Collective Male Trauma

In the second chapter I will analyze Ozu Yasujiro's *A Hen in the Wind* and Naruse Mikio's *Floating Clouds.* Both films deal with the consequences of defeat in the war for gender relationships. Women suffer together with men the hardships of a devastated society, but they also witness the masculine loss and they try to restore it. The wife in *A Hen in the Wind* is victimized by the dire economic circumstances forcing her to resort to prostitution in order to pay for her child's medical expenses. When the husband returns from the war, he feels deeply betrayed and he can only gain his lost masculine authority through violence against his wife. The woman in *Floating Clouds* lives a romantic idyll in colonized Asia, an idyll that becomes impossible in a chaotic, defeated Japan. The man she loves is unable to respond to her love because of his loss of masculinity. Both female characters are victimized by poverty and social insecurity, but, despite the adversity, they are trying to restore male authority to the men they love. The woman in the first film succeeds, but only at the price of being brutalized while the woman in the second film fails in her efforts to redeem the man she loves, with her own love becoming a profoundly masochistic act. Collective trauma can be read in the films as a break at the level of gender relations, provoked by the collective trauma as loss of masculinity. It is only through the woman's suffering that this rupture can be sutured. From a cinematic point of view, both films employ the techniques of emotional, melodramatic excess. They are both exceptions in the canon of each filmmaker, famous for their restraint as a method of filmmaking.

The Prostitute between Native and Foreign Patriarchy

In the last chapter I will discuss the controversies around prostitution as a form of agency and as the ultimate female victimization using Mizoguchi Kenji,'s two films, *Women of the Night* and *Streets of Shame*. Women's pathos and bitterness are portrayed by Mizoguchi as indictments against Japanese patriarchy but at the same time, prostitution engages the issue of Japan as a colonized country. The power relationships between the conqueror nation and the defeated nation are reenacted at the level of the exchange of women. The defeated society cannot support its women and their survival depends on bridging the relationship with the conquerors through their bodies. What distinguishes the representation of female characters in the case of these two films from the previously analyzed films is the presence of another mechanism of coping with suffering: anger and violence. This bodily dimension of suffering symbolizes the trauma of a nation, which must "sell" itself to the victors by abandoning its pride and integrity. The prostitute's subject and body are the vehicles used by Mizoguchi not only to represent women's postwar conditions, but also to provide a mirror to the nation itself.

Conclusion

Throughout these chapters I will bring into question the representation of a specifically female experience of a historical reality, the symbolization of collective trauma and the melodramatic tropes engaging spectators at an emotional level. The embodiment of suffering and victimization, women characters in these films symbolize the trauma of the cultural body as a rupture of *kokutai* (national body): collapse of family relationships, wounded masculinity, sense of betrayal and desperation, loss of the nation as home, in short, the devastated body of the nation. In his *Bodies of Memory*, Yoshikuni

Igarashi focuses on the narratives of war in postwar Japanese culture, arguing that the body becomes the central site for the reconstruction of Japan's national image.[35] I would argue that the female body and the female subject present in melodrama offer to the postwar Japanese spectators mechanisms of coping with trauma through a shared sense of helplessness.

This thesis is meant on the one hand, to deepen and go beyond the limitations of the Japanese woman's film interpretation as the cult of female victimization glossing over issues of war responsibility. I agree that media and film helped the government's evasion of war responsibility, but this single sided view puts artistic creation under complete ideological authority. As Dower's "embodied" version of postwar history suggests, Japanese people were not only facing the economic and social traumatic results of the war but also a deep sense of betrayal and loss manifested at different levels.[36] Arguing for a reconsideration of melodrama both in historical and gendered terms, I will follow the relationship between women's victimization as an excessive representation of women's oppression in the postwar period and the allegorical, emotional implications of the films' melodramatic tropes.

---

[35] Igarashi, 56.

[36] See John Dower, *Embracing Defeat- Japan in the Wake of WWII* (New York: W.W Norton, 2000).

Chapter 1. The Return to the Mother

Kinoshita Keisuke (1912-1998)

Belonging to the new generation of humanist directors in the postwar period, Kinoshita Keisuke has been a prolific filmmaker, producing over forty-two films in twenty-three years. He was also one of the most successful filmmakers with Japanese audiences, while remaining fairly unknown in the West. He shows a concern for the plight of the common people, which he represents with heightened emotionalism in his films. This melodramatic characteristic endeared him to the public of his time. Refusing to be bound by a certain genre, he experiments with comedy, melodrama and period films, using various techniques from photographic realism to stylization and *kabuki* stage techniques. A continuous innovator, he is also concerned with a great variety of subjects, which are summarized by Donald Richie when he describes the two trends that run throughout most of his works. On one hand there is a criticism of traditional Japanese values in comedies such as *Broken Drum (Yabure daiko,* 1949), *Carmen Comes Home (Carumen kokyo ni kaeru*, 1951) and *Carmen's True Love (Carumen junjosu*, 1952). On the other hand there is a defense of traditionalism presented in a lyrical and nostalgic way in films like *Times of Joy and Sorrow* (*Yorokobi mo kanashimi mo ikutoshitsuki,* 1957), and *Twenty-four Eyes (Nijushi no hitomi,* 1954).[1] In the latter works he places a high value

[1] Donald Richie, *Japanese Cinema: Film Style and National Character* (New York: Garden City, Doubleday Anchor, 1971), 97.

on innocence, purity and beauty. Even his antiwar films and his social criticism have been articulated around these values and whatever betrays or destroys them.[2]

He has been criticized for excessive sentimentality, but, at the same time, critics like Saito Ayako and Keiko McDonald have shown that his devotion to the plight of the common people has both revealed the dimension of an unconscious collectivity and touched it through the emotional involvement of his audiences. His social criticism is never direct as it is often disguised in sentimentality, and his dimension of history is always subjective. History is that which hurts innocent and pure individuals; it is the implacable change that takes people along with it with or without their will.

It is this dimension of subjective history and its implication in the representation of an affective collective memory that I will consider in this chapter through the analysis of his two films *A Japanese Tragedy* (*Nihon no higeki,* 1953) and *Twenty-four Eyes* (*Nijushi no hitomi*, 1954). The reason I am choosing these two films is because of their subtle interpretation of the influence of history on individuals, more specifically, the influence of the war and postwar years on women and children. Through a consideration of the melodramatic dimension of female suffering, I will show how these two films subtly represent a traumatic history of the nation as rupture between generations in the first film and loss of innocence and collective affectivity in the second film. My analysis of the films will point out the melodramatic tropes of female suffering, their relationship with Japan's trauma of defeat and their impact on the public of their time.

---

[2]Audie Bock, *Japanese Film Directors* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1978), 191.

A Japanese Tragedy, Tragedy of the Mother, Tragedy of the Nation

Postwar Japanese melodrama incorporates historical events infusing them with emotion, while the woman's film expresses the emotional dimension of history through women's affect. The woman's film creates a collective memory that speaks about the postwar impact of history on people's lives using the female point of view. Made one year after the end of the American Occupation, *A Japanese Tragedy* shows that people's lives are influenced in the long term by historical events.

Haruko (Mochizuki Yuko), a widowed mother is struggling to raise her two children, Utako (Katsuragi Yoko) and Seiichi (Taura Masami), in a period of extreme poverty and instability. Leaving them in their uncle's care, she works as a maid, sending them money for education. However, when they grow up, her son wants to be adopted by a wealthy family in order to become a doctor, while her daughter rejects her by running away with her lover. The mother who sacrificed everything for her children is cruelly abandoned by her children and in utter desperation she commits suicide.

The mother character builds the gap between a history that traumatizes and the way that trauma is lived by people, especially by women. History is subjectivized and individualized, restored as emotional memory, as a collective event, since the tragedy of Japan (as the loss of war with all the casualties inflicted) entails the tragedy of the mother character and in turn, she allows for a symbolic reading of the nation's tragedy as a spiritual loss. In his book *Embracing Defeat*, John Dower suggests, "In the long view of history, Japan rebounded quickly from defeat. For ordinary people however, the postwar

recovery seemed agonizingly slow."[3] For women, the immediate postwar years were especially painful since their suffering was relational. Their own suffering was many times increased through witnessing the suffering of their loved ones. Their status as second-class citizens, whose main role was to support the family condemned them to double suffering; the social and economic hardships following the defeat and the oppressive relational status of the woman under traditional patriarchy.

This issue raises one important question about my double reading of the films: on one hand the mother as a category existing prior to the film and on the other hand the mother as a sign appropriated by the patriarchal discourse. Saito Ayako makes the challenging argument that women's tears and their suffering as cultural signs have been appropriated by the wounded Japanese males unable to directly address the collective trauma of a shattered masculinity in the years after defeat.[4] While agreeing with Saito's argument, I want to add that woman as sign in filmic practice is inseparable from women's positions constructed within society. As a consequence, the tears of the onscreen female characters are not only the males' tears but also women's own tears, since victimization is the result of their position in society at a certain historical time. [5] Women's social position has had a strong connection to the affective performance of shedding tears, mourning the loss, sharing sorrow, all of which are characteristics shown in melodramas.

---

[3] John Dower, *Embracing Defeat, Japan in the Wake of WWII* (New York: W.W Norton, 2000), 105.

[4] Saito Ayako, "Ushinawareta farusu wo motomete (Reclaiming the Lost Phallus)," in *Eiga no seijigaku (Film Politics)* ed. Hase Masato and Nakamura Hideyuki (Tokyo: Shosha, 2003), 87.

[5] See Elizabeth Cowie, "Woman as Sign," in *Feminism and Film,* ed. E. Ann Kaplan (New York: Oxford University Library, 2000).

The film's representation of the mother victimized by history shows the mother's lack of agency, inscribing her as the "lacking subject."[6] The mother serves as the ground against which children's subjectivities emerge and she also serves as the basis for expressing collective trauma. The mother's victimization speaks for the repressed masculine discourse which grafts the trauma of defeat onto the woman signifier. The melodramatic mode expressed through tears and pathos creates a place for a problematic memory, the memory of suffering and loss that enables Japanese people to reassess the problematic history after the defeat. In *A Japanese Tragedy,* the tragedy is both the mother's tragedy and the nation's tragedy expressed as the loss of its most basic social unit, the family.

A Japanese Tragedy, both in narrative structure and in technique portrays the tension between the historical representation and the personal event: the diegetic world of the film presenting the mother's story is interspersed with newspaper headlines and documentary footage of actual events. The mother character builds the gap between history as an impersonal course of events and the female subject. The disjunction between documentary and melodrama, which problematizes the film's unity, brings to the forefront the paradoxical disjunction and unity between the personal and the political, the individual experience and history. Even though there is a representational gap between the real, collective, history as documentary and the fictional, individual character of the melodrama, they influence each other and construct each other in this film. The collective as the macro-dimension of history is represented through the subjective, micro-dimension of the

[6] Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano, "Sengo nihon no merodorama (The Postwar Japanese Melodrama)," in *Kazoku no shozo (The Disappearance of the Family),* ed. Iwamoto Kenji (Tokyo: Shinwasha 2007), 304.

individual's life within that history. As Isolde Standish comments, "Kinoshita utilized in this film the docu-drama structure as the macro-political frameworks that link generational divisions, allegorized through the micro-narrative of the fissures that result in the dissolution of the Inoue family, to the failures of postwar political institutions."[7]

The film starts with a rapid montage of documentary footage, anchoring its contemporary spectators in a familiar history: loss of war, emperor worship and the Tokyo war criminal trial as the documents of official history. Corruption, poverty, crime and violence are the social events directly influencing people's lives. The news headlines and the insertion of documentary footage alternate between politics, social events and personal events like the suicide of a mother with her three children. Subtitles explain the meaning of the events: "eight years since the end of the war; continued lack of political ingenuity; insecure livelihood...life of the Japanese is entangled in this black crucible." The mother's story is only a seed of the tragedy that may spread throughout the land of Japan. The chaotic and highly discordant avalanche of documentary footage accompanied by a staccato rhythm of drums is transformed through a musical transition into scenes representing the story of the mother. The personal thus pins down the political and it fills it with meaning and emotion showing how directly the social events affect the mother and her children. The documentary and the fictional scenes in the film are not clearly separated since they appear to stem from each other. Two newspaper headlines, the first reporting on the emperor's proclamation of the end of the war and the second referring to the Tokyo War Crimes, are juxtaposed to intertitles about common people: "Mother and three children commits suicide." Spectators are closely involved in the events of the film not

[7] Isolde Standish, *A New History of Japanese Cinema* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 35.

only through empathetic response to the mother's suffering but also through the mediation of a shared experience of history. The sentimentality of the mother's story is assured by the audiences' experience of the reality shown in the documentary style of the film. The mother's suffering is not unique, since all the characters are victims. When Haruko remembers her trip by train, people talk about their hardships and the lack of trust in the government. "Who can live honestly in this world? To hell with Japan! Whoever tells me I'm wrong, should give me back my son." The collective trauma of war as a series of individual suffering and loss is coupled with the trauma as the break in the collective unity, the break between the social and the personal. The mother's suffering speaks for the suffering of the characters around her and also for the suffering of the spectators.

How can we respect the tragedy of Japan without dismissing the tragedy of the mother? The connection between woman's films and a national melodramatic representation is best exemplified by Richie and Anderson's consideration of *A Japanese Tragedy*: "Japan's tragedy is not merely the tragedy of the mother (which is regarded as pathetic and sentimental). It is her story which reflects the larger tragedy of Japan."[8] Melodrama becomes pathetic and sentimental when it deals with distant, outside issues. A mere maternal melodrama would not emotionally involve male spectators since it deals with a specific female problematic. However, this film invites the spectators of its time to identify with suffering regardless of their gender because the mother's victimization is not only a form of feminized discourse, it also addresses a collective memory of traumatic historical times.

---

[8] Joseph Anderson and Donald Richie, *The Japanese Film-Art and Industry* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), 152.

There are two results of the film's double structure. First, the docu-drama style gives spectators a sense of reality, of "truth" which involves them directly in a reality personally experienced by them. The documentary space emerges not to rupture the autonomy of the fictional world but to anchor it in a space and time contiguous with the spectators' knowledge. This charge of the real ethically implicates spectators into a fictional story. It gives credibility to the mother's melodramatic story, since it anchors it in a present, socio-political "reality." The fictional world is brought home to spectators. Second, the mother's tragedy as a consequence of social and political chaos gives poignancy to the failure of political institutions, subjectivizing history and inscribing the nation's loss through the individual death of the mother. The sense of real emerging from the documentary footage contaminates the fictional world, while at the same time, the fictional world explains and highlights certain aspects of the historical reality, which implicates spectators.

The Ever Present Past-Flashbacks of Suffering

Besides the fragmented structure of the film, which alternates between news headlines, documentary footage and the melodramatic story, the characters' existence is also fragmented through the continuous slippage between the present of the film and their suffering in the past. The memory is a traumatic one. It interrupts the present by momentarily projecting the individual back in a timeless suffering, through the emergence of flashbacks.

In her book, *Flashbacks in Film,* Maureen Turim analyzes the relationship between flashbacks in film and psychoanalytic theory. Flashbacks as scenes describing personal memories inscribe the individual into history, presenting the cause after the

result. What is most interesting in her analysis is the mechanism through which memories are stored, repressed and the way they return from the repressed through flashbacks. "Flashbacks films make specific use of the theory of associative memory, the way an event in the present brings forth a memory trace that was since forgotten."[9] Flashbacks are devices through which unconscious memories emerge to break the continuity of the film's diegesis. History returns as unconscious memory, as the haunting events that possess characters. The time of the film thus becomes a subjective time explaining the present through the events in the past. The viewer is placed in an omniscient position, having access to the past causal link that determines the character's behavior.

Both the mother and her children are haunted by flashbacks, and their experience is rendered by Kinoshita with a subtly psychological nuance expressed through dynamic cinematic techniques. Scenes that differ in time are cut together so that an event in the flashback is followed by a contemporary shot, as if it were a direct reaction-shot to the flashback. Every time Haruko is hurt by her children, there is a straight cut to the scene of her running away from policemen after she stole rice to sell in the black market. When she is faced with the inevitable and cruel rejection on the part of her children, the shots of Haruko in the train are invaded by the flashbacks of the times she cried. The time she was abused is edited together as a string of memory in a paroxysm of victimization, which foreshadows her later suicide. Her memories of being victimized return and haunt her in the moments she feels victimized, creating a psychological continuum of suffering that feeds the present suffering with the suffering in the past. The personal flashbacks sometimes mingle with documentary scenes like the flashback of the mother in the train.

[9] Maureen Turim, *Flashbacks in Film-History as Memory* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 19.

A man gets angry with the government and expresses his anger for the loss of his son in the war. The next scene is a montage of American soldiers with Japanese prostitutes walking through the market. There is no clear delineation in the film between documentary footage and fiction, between personal events and collective events, which shows that they cannot be separated. The mother's story becomes entangled with the nation's story.

At the same time, Utako, her daughter is haunted by the memory of rape and every time she is about to give in to her attraction for the English teacher, straight cuts to the scene of rape intervene in the diegetic structure of the film with the single piercing sound of broken glass. Her flashback reveals that this sound was made when she threw the oranges she had received from the cousin who raped her, breaking the window. Her flashbacks are different from her mother's, since they explain her present attitude towards sexuality through the past experience of rape. Love in the present is hindered by the abuse in the past. Her flashbacks are explanatory ones, putting the spectators in the analyst position, unlike the mother's flashbacks, which serve to highlight the pathos of her unjust victimization.

Flashbacks have important implications for spectatorship. Their naturalization as personalized painful memories invites identification. The omniscient spectator can understand and sympathize with the characters by accessing their unconscious and their past histories. Christine Gledhill argues that "if a melodramatic character appeals to our sympathy, it is because pathos involves us in assessing suffering in terms of our privileged

knowledge of its nature and causes."[10] The particularity of Japanese postwar melodrama is that the nature and causes of female suffering are metaphorically caught in the nation's suffering, which allows both male and female viewers to be moved by the pathos of the mother. The nation's suffering implies economic deprivation, social and political chaos on one hand and the breakdown of a cultural order on the other hand. This film refers specifically to the breakdown of the family system due to the war and the postwar economic and social conditions. The flashbacks in this film merge the two levels of real experience and fictional world, inscribing spectators as subjects of a collective emotional memory through identification with fictional characters placed in a seemingly familiar history.[11]

Projection of Painful Memory onto the Mother

Could we read Haruko's tragedy as a metaphor of memory that must be forgotten and denied in order to survive in the postwar society? She embodies the unconscious filled with suffering of the two children's memories. Her presence is a continuous reminder of a past of suffering and shame, while her love is a burden. She represents for them the vulgar reality based on the struggle for survival. At the same time, she also symbolizes the ultimate maternal love that must be rejected for the emergence of national subjects. Seiichi, the son, can become a successful doctor if he gets adopted by an old couple, despite his mother's refusal. Utako, her daughter, runs away with her lover, refusing to ask for her mother's approval. They both assert their agency by rejecting their mother. They

---

[10] Christine Gledhill, "The Melodramatic Field: An Investigation," in *Home is Where the Heart Is,* ed. Christine Gledhill (London: British Film Institute, 1978), 45.

[11] Turim, 20.

are individualized since they choose their own fate, Seiichi by pursuing his career and Utako by entering an illicit love affair. The film suggests this profound gap between generations as a traumatic rupture between the traditional Japan bound to disappear and the new Japan. Traditional Japan is seen as the place of collectivity, of compassion and understanding, of sacrificing the personal well-being for the others, whereas the new Japan is represented through the selfishness and cold-heartedness of the two children. Her son tells Haruko that she is a depraved woman who only understands *sake* and men. "I know how to live in today's Japan better than you do." This rupture between generations is marked by the death of the mother. Her disappearance from the screen epitomizes the disappearance of unconditional, self-sacrificing maternal love and, together with that, the disappearance of a traditional Japan.

The maternal melodrama talks about the modern family and social structure with children who break away from their initial families, in a socially articulated Oedipal way. The mother's suffering is represented as the need to give up one's children to the patriarchal society: boys for independence and girls for marriage. The mother's love remains an excess that flows in melodramas through the cinematic language of pathos. However, the particularity of the Oedipal story in this film is that the mother does not have a husband and her maternal love is not balanced by sexual love within the family. She dedicates her whole life to her children asking for their dedication and love in return, a love they cannot provide. *A Japanese Tragedy* represents a phenomenon fairly frequent in the postwar society, the struggle of families without a providing father. Haruko, the mother in this film fails to be the perfect mother governing children's fantasies: caring and loving, all-embracing, ever-present and soothing. She becomes the fatherly mother who

must relate to her children through the money she provides for them. However, instead of successfully fulfilling both roles, the mother fails by raising two children that would reject her. Her flashbacks add more pathos to this Oedipal crisis, since she raises her children with so much suffering and self-sacrifice. At the beginning of the film, she comes to her daughter's place happy to see her boy Seiichi. However, once he starts telling her that he wants to be adopted, she refuses to consent and starts crying. A flashback is inserted showing her running away with a sack of stolen rice and her arrival at home dead-tired. Children's ungratefulness is rendered all the more poignant as we are made aware of the efforts she made to raise them. The two children, Utako and Seiichi, project the frustration and sense of betrayal onto their mother, resenting her and wanting to break free from her. Jung regards projection as an unconscious transfer of subjective, psychic elements onto an object or a person.

In Jung's view, projections change the world into the replica of one's own unknown face.[12] Projection is similar to displacement, a term employed by Freud as the transference of dangerous or unacceptable psychical energy from one idea to another or from one person to another.[13] It is a defense mechanism in which the other is made responsible for one's psychic processes, and in the case of the two children disavowing their mother, the memory of painful events. She becomes the embodiment of children's frustration and suffering, in the same way women bear the projection of male anxieties and repressed

---

[12] C.G Jung, *The Archetypes and The Collective Unconscious*, 2nd ed. Collected Works, Vol.9, Part 1 (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 44.

[13] J. Laplanche and J.B Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis,* tr. Donald Nicholson-Smyth (New York: W.W Norton, 1974), 122.

feelings. Her only escape is suicide since she realizes she cannot reach her children anymore.

The sense of truth and morality lacking from a chaotic, defeated and suffering society is found in the representation of maternal love as the only virtue that remains seemingly unchanged in the face of a shifting history, albeit a virtue condemned to disappearance. Haruko's trust in the stability and power of maternal love and filial piety as the most basic form of human trust is finally betrayed. Trauma theories have shown that in periods of social upheaval people try to create forms of basic trust as a way of healing or counteracting the ruptures at the level of cultural practices that give meaning.[14] However, this basic form of trust is disappearing, and the mother's suffering for her children proves to be useless. It is not only society that has changed, but its core values as well. "If a mother knows her children love her, she can keep on living, regardless of hardship. People are very cold." Her maternal love pushed to excessive limit by the hardships endured struggling to survive and to secure a future for her children, becomes an unbearable burden for them. Instead of gratitude for her struggle to protect her children, she comes to represent exactly the reality of suffering that she tried to keep at bay.

Ishihara Ikuto argues that the coexistence of motherhood and sexuality led to the children's rejection of the mother.[15] They call her "loose woman" and their traumatic childhood flashback shows through a series of point-of-view shots their drunken mother embracing a man in front of the inn where she used to work. The parallel editing between

---

[14] M.Marcello Suarez-Orozco and Robben Antonius C.G.M, eds. *Cultures under Siege: Collective Violence and Trauma* (New York: Cambridge University Press. 2000), 24.

[15] Ishihara Ikuto, *Isai no hito, kinoshita keisuke (A Different Talent, Kinoshita Keisuke)* (Tokyo: Pandora, 1999),180.

the shots of the two children's anguished gaze at their mother and the shots of the mother laughing hysterically while embracing a man mark the tension between children's pain and the mother's useless effort to protect them from pain. Making available to spectators both the mother's and the children's trauma, the psychologizing device of flashback requires empathy for both the victim (the mother) and the victimizer (the children who have been in turn victimized). Seiichi even accuses his mother for marrying because she was pregnant, thus showing his disgust at her sexuality. He feels he has no duty to care for her in her old age since she raised them "only for her pleasure." The guilty feeling at having been the cause for the mother's suffering makes them deny it and perceive it as selfish pleasure that deserves to be punished. This presence of the mother's sexuality seems to justify any ill-treatment, inscribing her sexual body as the abject onto which they can displace their own suffering. Since Utako has been raped, her fear and abhorrence of sexuality is closely related to her impossibility of identifying with her mother as bearer of sexuality. The cousin who raped her justified his act by saying "your mother is only a *panpan* (prostitute serving Americans)." Her memory of her mother as prostitute brings hate and her strongest desire is to break away from her mother and be independent. However, the film itself does not show the mother as prostitute, showing only her rejection of the customers' proposals. Her sexuality and abjection exists at a deeper level in the children's repressed memories that emerge any time they want to justify their rejection.

Although the film brings the mother and the nation together through its permanent exploration of the connection between the personal, the social and the political, it also makes explicit the specificity of the mother's tragedy as a woman. Since her husband died

during the war, she has to fend for her two children in a period of extreme insecurity. Her only way of earning money is entertaining or serving men. Her position in society as well as the chaotic social structure account for the ensuing tragedy. Inheritance issues force her to leave the children with their uncle who will abuse them since she has no power to protect them. Throughout the film she is constantly abused by her benefactor, by the cook and by her brother-in-law. Her presence and words act as a return of the repressed, bringing back to men certain truths that they want to deny. The cook, a brilliant student who couldn't continue his schooling because his father and brother died in the war, hits her when Haruko intervenes in his love affair. Her benefactor hits her when she reminds him of his failure. As a result, she becomes the scapegoat for their dissatisfaction. The righteousness of the victim is a characteristic of melodramas, which usually show the final triumph of the innocent. However, the mother does not triumph in this film, although spectators are constantly made aware of her innocence and righteousness.

It is through Haruko's suicide, the disappearance of the mother's body, that the emergence of a collective memory becomes possible. The contradictions she embodies, her "dirty," "stupid" body disappears from the screen enacting symbolically the erasure of a painful memory, which makes possible the emergence of individual subjects. This phenomenon allegorizes the opposition between collectivism and individualism. Collectivism as the expression of a traditional Japan is bound to disappear and only through its symbolic denial are Japanese subjects able to emerge as individuals. There is a

profound rupture between the mother's "lacking subject" and her children as modern subjects.[16]

The tragedy of Japan is the loss of this mother, the loss of memory, the loss of collectivism as love and understanding between people. In his book *Maturity and Loss,* Eto Jun regards the loss of the mother as a renunciation to the unconscious part of the self. Japan's adoption of capitalism's patriarchal influence is equaled to the loss of mother Japan. The split from the mother and from the unconscious is not a natural development; it is ineluctably enforced by a foreign power, a split that cuts all the possibilities to go back, making the loss irretrievable. Eto points out that the result of perceiving that loss is not a normal maturity, it is permanently refused and lived on with the feeling of guilt and with an inner mourning.[17] The sense of familial unity and collectivism established by the emperor system is forever lost, forcing people to become individual subjects. In an interesting montage, Kinoshita shows violent demonstrations accompanied by the non-diegetic sound of a crying baby showing how intensely private and how acutely public suffering is. Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano argues that the suffering of the mother creates a space of collective memory that allows healing and at the same time it allows the dialogue with a past that cannot be represented. The past as the war time and the present as the postwar are tied together through the materialization of memory as space in the case of *Twenty-four Eyes* and as the body in *A Japanese Tragedy.*[18]

---

[16] Wada-Marciano, 304.

[17] See Eto Jun, *Seijuku to soshitsu, haha no hokai* (*Maturity and Loss-The Collapse of the Mother*) (Tokyo: Kodansha Bungei Bunko, 1993).

[18] Wada-Marciano, 299.

The mother's body in *A Japanese Tragedy* is the maternal body that allegorically represents the nation. In the postwar years, the wartime allegory of the father, Emperor, turns into the maternal allegory posing the nation as female. For the novelist Tamura Taijiro, the only hope for social change and cultural revitalization is the body, since thought had proved to be a source of manipulation. His writings stress the possibilities of freeing the sexual body from the repression imposed by the military regime. However, it is not only the sexual body that gives meaning but also the maternal body, which stands for collective memory. Unlike the sexual body, the maternal body is not a representation of freedom and hope but one of nostalgia and loss. *A Japanese Tragedy* gives new expression to the woman's film by fusing realism with the melodramatic and by turning the mother's suffering into a gendered reading of national suffering. The timeless Oedipal crisis is historicized, turning the victimization of the mother into an allegory of national victimization and the loss of the mother into a discourse about the emergence of the modern subjects. This woman's film does not address only female audiences, since it creates a space of cathartic identification for both men and women in postwar Japan. The film brings together the personal and the collective, the past and the present, two different generations, and out of their clash emerges a new vision of Japanese history. The next film I will analyze employs the figure of the mother as a figure of nostalgia and memory of innocence that connects a generation of adults influenced by war to their childhood prior to the war. The mother in the second film represents connection, unlike the mother in the first film, who enacts separation and loss.

***Twenty-four Eyes*, the Eyes that Witness History**

Even more directly than *A Japanese Tragedy, Twenty-four Eyes* explores the relationship between history and the individual fates caught in its web. *Twenty-four Eyes* materializes memory through three devices: the idyllic landscape of Shodoshima, a rural island; the collectivity of children whose fate is influenced by history, and finally through the maternal figure of the teacher Oishi. Made nine years after Japan's defeat in WWII and three years after the end of the Occupation, this film has assumed a mythical status, being categorized as the most successful "Japanese film made for the Japanese," even in the poll done by NHK in the 1983.[19] It is the film where Japanese spectators shed the greatest amount of tears and its excess of sentimentality is explained by Keiko McDonald through the distinction between Japanese and Western viewers. Japanese viewers would not call the film a tear-jerker because of their genuine emotional involvement with it. However, its melodramatic excesses might be considered an overkill for Western audiences.[20] Since this film was the most successful with Japanese audiences, I will devote a considerable part of the following analysis to the debates surrounding spectatorship theories. An enclosed, mythical view of the Japanese collectivity emerges with the debates surrounding it, so the second point of my analysis will be to highlight the rules of collectivity established by the film. The third point will be concerned with the film's representation of collective trauma and the gender differences implied in the characters' relationship to their historical times.

---

[19] Saito, 66.

[20] Keiko McDonald, *Cinema East. A Critical Study of Major Japanese Films* (New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983).

The film tells the story of a generation of twelve children and their teacher, Oishi (Takamine Hideko) from 1929 to 1946, with a focus on the changes that history brings to the children living on an isolated rural island. Subtitles break the story into four parts, each corresponding to a historical period. The first part in 1929 is generally pervaded by a rather happy atmosphere, focusing on the teacher Osishi's assignment to Shodoshima and on the nascent attachment between her, and the children in her class. The second part, five years later, shows Oishi's marriage and the excursion children take to see her. The third part shows influences of Japan's imperialist expansion marked by the China incident in 1937, the Tripartite Pact and finally WWII. The peaceful life of the villagers is threatened by the influences of the war. The last part takes place in 1946, one year after the end of WWII. Resignation and nostalgia pervade the aged teacher's meeting with some of her adult former pupils who survived the war.

The Ritual of Tears

Saito Ayako undertakes a study of Kinoshita's three films: *Twenty-Four Eyes* (1953), *You Were Like a Wild Chrysanthemum (Nogiku no gotoki kimi nari*, 1955) and *To The Lighthouse (Yorokobi mo kanashimi mo ikutoshitsuki*, 1957), interpreting them as a ritual of passage for the wounded male subjectivity. [21] The purpose of her study is to offer an explanation for the incredible success of the films and the tears spectators shed when viewing them. The ritual is also a ritual of healing the trauma of war by touching a collective unconscious. As a chronicle of war tragedy, *Twenty-Four Eyes* carries the people's antiwar feelings and captures the flow of the period starting with 1929, reactivating the memory of suffering.

[21] Saito, 17.

The critic Tadao Sato is among the first to point out the double effectiveness of the film for the tears it causes. His main idea is that Kinoshita captures the feelings of the Japanese through tradition and spirituality. The pathos and sadness that mark the film comes from traditional arts and religion, as an expression of the separation between children and parents and as a feeling of impermanence. For Sato, the public's tears were the "nostalgia of return to childhood."[22] However, he also acknowledges the film's historical, contemporary dimension. The *hansei* (repentance) prevalent in the postwar years connects to the loss of confidence in the war that asked so many sacrifices. He explains the spectators' tears when viewing this film as a return to the state of helplessness experienced in childhood or as a return to the mother due to a dangerous psychological condition. In this interpretation, the spectators, regardless of their gender, identify with the tearful figure of the mother. The nostalgia of childhood is strongly tinged with the trauma of history, the war as a futile process of dehumanization and individual sacrifice for collective goals repudiated in the postwar years. Linda Williams points out the fantasies of quest to return to the origin of the self which dominate the spectatorship of melodrama. "In these fantasies the quest for connection is always tinged with the melancholy of loss."[23] The desire of returning to childhood for the Japanese spectators contemporary to this film can be interpreted as a desire to escape a traumatizing history and a traumatizing present. The nostalgia for childhood connects with the nostalgia for political and historical innocence, for the purity of the children unaware of imperial aggression. As Mitsuhiro

[22] Ibid. 68.

[23] Linda Williams, "Melodrama Revised," in *Refiguring American Film Genres,* ed. Nick Browne (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 11.

Yoshimoto suggests, the melodramatic dimension of this film disavows any issues of war responsibility, turning Japanese citizens into innocent victims of an overwhelming history that somehow happens to them.[24]

The article written by Keiko McDonald is the perfect example of the film's emotional involvement of its spectators. It is one of the most personalized pieces of film criticism, the critic examining her identification with the characters and with the situations in the film. She does not study the film for its melodramatic aspects, but what she refers to as "lyricism." Audiences are involved in the film through three devices: identification with the characters, well-known children's songs and the rhythmic continuity of the drama. In this film, Kinoshita does not resort to sophisticated camera work in order to emotionally involve his audiences; instead, he relies on standard techniques such as close-ups, point-of-view shots, characters verbally expressing their emotion.[25] Viewer identification with suffering, helpless characters on screen is a characteristic of spectatorship of melodrama, so I would argue that what McDonald calls "lyricism" in this film's case can also be called "melodramatic." Nostalgia is evoked through many devices and it strongly appeals to the public's sentimental reaction. The nostalgia for a primitive nature untainted by modernity is evoked by the primitive island while nostalgia for a childhood untainted by politics and for a hometown untainted by the outside world is suggested by the strong bond created among the children in Oishi's class. As McDonald suggests, "We really do not feel any indignation against the injustice done by war to these survivors. Instead, we encounter the

---

[24] Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto, "Melodrama, Postmodernism and Japanese Cinema," in *Melodrama and Asian Cinema*, ed. Wimal Dissanayake (New York.: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 108.

[25] Keiko McDonald, *Reading a Japanese Film: Cinema in Context* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 240.

feelings of quiescence, which lead the individual characters to accept things as they are. It is in *mujo* (acceptance of impermanence) that we spectators, Oishi and her ex-pupils are finally united together."[26]

The political dimension of Kinoshita's attempt to represent a controversial history turns into a ritual of tears for the trauma of war. The way tears shed by the characters in the films are framed invite the public's own tears, thus turning the film into a social ritual. The strong feelings evoked by the film point out its ability to appeal to a collective unconscious, which is also represented at the film's textual level. What is peculiar about the orchestration of tears in this film is the alternation between sobbing tears shown in close-up and the more subtle expression of restrained suffering in close-ups of moist eyes. At the graduation ceremony, the camera pans in close-up to the faces of each pupil in Oishi's class, showing tears running down their faces, a scene followed by a medium shot of Oishi surreptitiously wiping a tear. When Oishi visits Kotoe, a girl in her class who has become sick with TB, the girl starts telling the teacher her misfortunes while she gradually starts crying. The camera shifts back and forth from medium close-ups of Kotoe to medium close-ups of the teacher, both women's faces bathed in tears. However, when we are shown the boys' conscription, the pain of separation is rendered more subtly through close-ups of the boys' faces on the verge of tears. This mode of representation hints at the repression of male affect.

---

[26] Ibid. 251.

Collectivity and Empathy

Many critics have pointed out the concern with an enclosed, peaceful collectivity, disrupted by events from outside, which pervade the Japanese imaginary.[27] In her intelligent analysis of the film, Saito Ayako regards this concern with collectivity as the mark of all Kinoshita's films. In his films there is always a house or a small group which is threatened or changed by something coming from outside. "In Kinoshita's world the house or the collectivity is closed. Not only are they powerless towards the outside but they also become spaces where the individual pain is healed by a rich sympathy."[28]

Before I discuss the functions of collectivity I would like to point out the three levels of collectivity implied by the film. The geographic setting explained through the establishing shot is the island of Shodoshima. Next, the landscape shots are followed by the shots of the small village where Oishi, the main character, will come to teach. However, the most important level of collectivity is the elementary class of the twelve pupils. This group or collectivity becomes the main source of pathos and emotional involvement through the attachments established and the separation entailed by social and historical conditions. Besides these three levels of collectivity marked as the space of the island, the village and the class, there is the symbolized level of Japan as a collectivity, which will explain the deep emotional involvement of Japanese spectators with this film.

How do these levels of collectivity function at the textual level of the film? As Saito Ayako has pointed out, there are two important functions: the group as enclosed

---

[27] See Takeo Doi, *The Anatomy of Dependence*, tr. John Bester (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1989) and Eto Jun, *Seijuku to soshitsu, haha no hokai* (*Maturity and Loss-The Collapse of the Mother*) (Tokyo: Kodansha Bungei Bunko, 1993).

[28] Saito, 75.

collectivity threatened by an outside that imposes change in a timeless space. The second and the most important function for this analysis is the group established through strong bonds of sympathy. Within this group, individual pain is healed through empathy and collective shedding of tears. The first function appears through the hostility villagers have towards Oishi, who is the embodiment of modernity. The villagers are scandalized by her Western attire and especially by her bicycle as the threat of technology in the pristine space of the island's village. Their hostility becomes unreasonable when they complain about the teacher being too friendly to her pupils. The proprietress of a haberdasher shop complains that Oishi is calling pupils by their nickname and she has even made the comment that one of them was cute. The teacher's straightforward and honest ways, the presence of her agency appear threatening to the villagers who have always lived by conforming to the rules of their collectivity. However, the teacher becomes finally integrated in the village through the reciprocal sympathy between her and her pupils. There is also a ritual of integration called by Saito a "ritual of castration," when the modern girl characterized through agency is made helpless by a trap set to her by fourth graders.[29] When Oishi falls into the trap she sprains her ankle. Sanae, one of the twelve pupils sees the tears in her eyes and she bursts into tears, with other children following her. Although she has not yet been accepted by the villagers, she belongs to the group of her twelve pupils. Children respond sympathetically to her pain, her tears become their tears. Through this ritual, Oishi is accepted by the village because it was the moment she acknowledged her sense of helplessness and her lack of agency. As a result, she is hospitalized and the pupils miss her terribly.

[29] Ibid. 77.

The contagion of tears appears many times throughout the film and it evokes the healing function of the collective through empathy and shared suffering. Oishi explains to Fujiko, a girl in her class who cries because her parents have become bankrupt, that individuals are victims of forces beyond their control. "Your suffering is not your fault, nor your parents'. You must be strong. This is all that I can say. When you feel like crying, please come to see me anytime. You and I will cry together." This suffering that does not have a recognizable source is the motif running throughout many melodramas in the postwar period. It is a suffering that does not invite conscious revolt but unconscious identification through tears. Tears are the sign of helplessness towards circumstances that cause suffering and they are also the sign of impossible agency. In the film, they become the means of healing a pain one could not fight against, through empathy with others.

This perpetual sense of suffering and victimization without a clear cause that pervades the atmosphere of postwar melodramas and woman's films can be explained using Cathy Caruth's and Dori Laub's definition of trauma. The extreme impact of traumatic events is not registered by consciousness, causing a psychic rupture that inscribes the event literally in the mind of the victims. Traumatic experience cannot be conceived of according to the regular parameters of space and time; it is perceived as perpetual anguish with no tangible cause. [30] The only way to escape the haunting of a repetitive return of the traumatic event is to turn it into a narrative that is being listened to by others. This sharing of trauma involves transference, where the self narrating trauma and the self witnessing it become interchangeable. The listener or the viewer becomes involved in the other's trauma

[30] Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 11.

through empathetic identification. [31] This reciprocal involvement with each other's suffering is also the process initiated by the spectators' reaction to this film. They become involved with the pupils' suffering by relating it to their own suffering.

The film problematizes this aspect of transference of an all-pervading anguish from the pupils to the teacher. Although she does want to help them overcome their hardships, all she can do is cry together with them and cry for them when she hears about their fate. Despite her position of authority and her position as a modern girl and as an independent subject, she acts similarly to the "lacking subject" of the mother in *A Japanese Tragedy.* She cannot protect her pupils from suffering and all she can do is try to alleviate their pain by listening to them and crying for them.

Another one of her pupils, Matsue, lives in an extremely poor family and her dream is to have a lunch box with a lily pattern on it like her classmates. Her mother dies in childbirth and she has to quit school to care for the baby. Oishi, the teacher, is present at the tragedy and the lunch box she bought as a present comes too late; Matsue does not enjoy it, being overwhelmed with anguish at her mother's death and at the grim prospect of giving up school and being excluded from the group that could offer her solace from misery. Later, Oishi learns from one of her pupils that Matsue has been taken away by a strange woman. The pupil relates in full detail the plight of Matsue, intensifying the moment of pathos, of excessive suffering that leaks over to the listeners (Oishi and spectators). "Matsue clung to the pillar at the entrance to the garden and cried that she

---

[31] Dori Laub, "Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening," in *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History,* ed. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 16. See also Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995).

would not go. Her father first cajoled, but finally pushed her back and beat her hard." When she hears this, Oishi starts sobbing, shedding tears of empathy with the misery and the helplessness of the girl.

A third girl in her class, Kotoe, confesses that she has to quit school after sixth grade in order to cook for her family, while her father goes fishing and her younger sister is in school. Kotoe feels very sorry for the hard life of her mother but when Oishi asks her if she will marry after being apprenticed as a seamstress, she happily answers yes. Oishi feels sad and despondent at the thought that the girl will repeat her mother's misery. They both cry together, Kotoe for the pain of leaving her group and Oishi for Kotoe's pain. The children's fate and especially the girls' fate are already decided from the circumstances of their families.

The graduation scene is a fundamentally melodramatic scene that shows the children's tears and their teacher's tears shed for the sadness of parting. The camera pans to each child's tearful face, to Oishi weeping and then sweeps to the close-up of a cherry blossom. Tears are now shed at the impermanence of all things, at the fate of the human life subjected to change. In spite of the strong bond formed among them, the children and the teacher have to part, each following his or her own fate. The song "Nanatsu no ko" (Seven Baby Crows) appears as a melodramatic leitmotif of the teacher's maternal bond with her pupils. It is played many times in scenes of nostalgia for the shelter-like group, when Matsue sobs runs in the alley to see her teacher and her former classmates, when Oishi comes a few years later to visit Kotoe who is bedridden with tuberculosis.

As we can see from these examples, the greatest sadness and the greatest amount of tears are provoked by the pain caused through the enforced separation from a collectivity

tied by emotional bonds. Kotoe cries because of her family's hardships but also because she has to abandon school, Matsue cries because her mother dies but also because she has to give up school, Fujiko cries because her parents have become bankrupt but also because she has to part with her classmates and her teacher. Children cry when their teacher must go to the hospital to treat her injury, they cry when she has to leave them, while both teacher and pupils cry at the graduation ceremony. This ritual of crying together is an effort to counteract the disruption of collectivity. The three poor girls who are forced by adverse circumstances to leave the group can alleviate their pain and sadness through the teacher's compassion and her sobbing together with them. Children cry together through a contagion of tears and their pain becomes more bearable through the shared sadness. The maternal figure of the teacher unites the group by offering solace, understanding and compassion to her pupils.

As Takeo Doi has pointed out in his analysis of *amae,* the maternal figure is closely connected to the groups mentality or, in other words to a sense of emotionally bound collectivity. The presence of an emotional bond within collectivity evokes the child's relation to the mother, based on emotional identification without individual boundaries. In his study, *The Anatomy of Dependence* Doi brings to the forefront the concept of *amae*, which means to lean on a person's goodwill, or "a tendency to depend too easily on *somebody* who is close to and older than one." Doi connects it to the mother-child relationship: "the psychological prototype of *amae* lies in the psychology of the infant in relation to its mother."[32] Using *amae* in relationships is regarded as the denial of separation from the mother, generating a sense of identity with one's surrounding,

[32] Doi, 75.

intuitive thinking and mentality of the group. He argues that this basic meaning of the mother-child bond extends at the level of the group mentality. In the case of the group of children in the film, their relationship is based on strong emotional bonds both with each other and with their teacher. They identify with each other and with their teacher, their tears passing easily from one to the other through a melodramatic collective suffering that alleviates individual suffering. The heroine resembles the figure of the mother in Japanese Mahayana Buddhism. According to Ogoshi Aiko, in this tradition, womanhood is mainly defined as "comforting motherhood," which "exists only for men and children so as to give them physical comfort and devotion."[33] Such a mother figure is gratifying to men because she is with him in the infernal torture. This mother figure alleviates pain through empathy and partaking of suffering. She is the dominant figure in the postwar maternal melodrama.

The group of children and their strong collective bond evoke not only experiences of childhood to the spectators but also the island of Japan represented on a small scale through the island of Shodoshima. The pain of separation evokes not only the aesthetic feeling of sadness at the passage of time but also the pain suffered by men who were sent to war in unknown places, breaking up with their families and their collectivities. The group of children is disrupted by adverse circumstances as well as by the necessity of graduation. The disruptive element comes from outside and threatens the peaceful place of collectivity. In the same way, it has remained an overwhelming feeling among Japanese

[33] Ogoshi Aiko and Minamoto Junko, *Kaitai suru bukkyou sono sekushuariti kan to shizen kan (Demolishing Buddhism, Its View on Sexuality and Nature)* (Tokyo: Daito Shuppansha, 1994), 124.

that the war has come from outside, destroying the collectivity, an illusion created by the victim mentality prevalent in the postwar years and by the disavowal of war responsibility.

Kinoshita's use of the camera to convey suffering and sadness as well as the non-diegetic presence of well-known nostalgic songs invite spectators to the same contagion of tears represented within the film. I will analyze one of the most poignant moments in the films focusing on the way the camera works with identification with suffering and nostalgia to invoke the audiences' tears. The third part of the film starts with an overview panning shot of a procession that accompanies young people being drafted to war. The patriotic song gives a burst of energy to the scene, which is one of deep nostalgia and loss. The next shot brings the camera closer to the group showing each person, moving afterwards to a close-up shot of the picture with Oishi's class. Further on, the camera moves even closer, in close-up shots of each face in the picture, stopping at Kotoe who will occupy the following sequence. The camera moves from the representation of the collective to that of the individual, from the representation of people being caught in the wave of history to the eternal moment of childhood immortalized in the picture. Oishi visits Kotoe who is bedridden with TB and the scene highlights the inevitability of fate and the solution to the suffering it creates. Both characters are framed in medium close-up, the camera alternating back and forth with close-up shots of Kotoe and Oishi's faces. They are both crying and Oishi tries to comfort Kotoe by telling her about the other pupils' misfortunes and hardships, saying that she is not alone. The sequence is symmetrically constructed and the two women's conversion returns to memories of Kotoe being a pupil in Oishi's class. From the medium close-up of the room, the camera moves back to a close-up of the picture accompanied by the song "Seven Baby-Crows" and in the

following shots to close-ups of the boys in the picture. In the following scene, the camera takes us back to the procession that accompanies the boys' drafting. This time however, the static camera catches in close-up the face of each boy in Oishi's class. What follows is a long shot of the ship about to leave. The next image shows us the villagers waving good-bye and the worried face of the teacher alternating with close-ups of the boys' faces on the verge of tears. From their faces, the camera moves to the teacher's hand holding a reeling band that momentarily connects the ship to the people on the island. The boy pupils are taken away by historical events and the pain of separation associates with the nostalgia and yearning for the happy moment represented in the picture.

Collective Trauma and Gender-Can the Female Replace the Lost Phallus?

After analyzing the three parts in which the film is organized, each part corresponding to a historical period and to children's age, my next question would be how does history affect the collective and how is the collective gendered? The first subtitle of the film coincides with the mythical dimension of childhood and the island's privileged space outside of change. It is only with the second part that history breaks in the mythical space with the subtitle: "The Ocean and the Mountains are just the same as they were five years ago. However, in the past five years, the Manchurian Incident and the Shanghai Incident have occurred and the depression has set in. Not knowing what would await them in the near future, the children have grown, experiencing their own joy and sorrow." Poverty, deprivation and censorship are the marks of Japan's militaristic period.

The teacher Oishi is the only person who actively shows her disapproval of war and of Japan's policies, but she is constantly reprimanded by people around her. When Kataoka, a colleague, is investigated by police for being a Communist she tells the school

director that she has read to her pupils the collection of writing written by anti-war activists. He orders her to keep silent and burns the manuscript. When boys in her class express their willingness to become soldiers in order to escape the poverty of being farmers or fishermen on the island, she tells them that she prefers them to be alive than to be soldiers. "My male pupils say that they want to become soldiers, but I am afraid to let them die." Unlike the principal who believes that children should be educated to serve their country, Oishi bears a humanistic vision valuing people's lives above the national ideology. When her husband goes to war, she refuses to drink for the "happy event" and she gets angry when her child expresses regret for not being able to join the army. "Do you want to die in the war so badly? You don't mind your mother living in tears every day despite the fact that I am devoted to you, body and soul, do you?" Her attitude towards the national policy represents the gap between the female subject and the "dominant fiction" of Japan's militaristic aggression. Like the other heroines of the films considered in this thesis, she is not only situated outside the dominant ideology but also against it. However, her rebellion lacks effectiveness and her valuation of people's lives undermines the political message she carries in the film. Keiko McDonald criticizes this undermining of her political message through its transformation into a generalized humanistic vision.[34]

Unlike Oishi, all men in the film actively support the country's policies, and boys even idealize the war as a means of escaping poverty and finding a meaning in fighting for one's country. Oishi's older child is disappointed that his mother is not proud of being a soldier's wife or a hero's mother. He thinks she is a coward because instead of supporting her country, she only wants her loved ones to be alive. However, the things loved by the

---

[34] McDonald, 242.

mother are stolen by history since her husband dies in war and only one of her drafted pupils survives. As she feared, the war only brings misery and suffering to people.

The third part of the film shows an acceleration of history's influence on the lives of Oishi's pupils and Oishi herself. The third subtitle coincides with a very poignant moment in the film, when Oishi's pupils are drafted. "A full four years passed. The war in Asia spread. The last four years have witnessed an increase in tombs of soldiers, who participated in the war." Shodoshima's villagers accompany drafted young men to the ship singing patriotic songs and holding threads that tie them to the future soldiers a few moments after the ship leaves. The scene evokes mixed emotions: boys are proud to become soldiers, but they are also sad at leaving their hometown and their loved ones while parents and relatives are proud but also worried that the young might never return. The war years are clearly expressed from the woman's point of view as a suffering, passive subject, while men are actively participating to the country's ideology. At the same time, the film stresses Oishi's maternal absoluteness and her anti-war rhetoric appeals to the postwar public like a fulfilled prophecy.

If we are to consider the historical relationship between the period represented in the film, the film's text and its audience, an inevitable question arises. Why is history presented from a female perspective? Is it true, as Saito Ayako suggests, that women's tears and their suffering are appropriated by a patriarchal discourse in order to reconstruct a wounded male subjectivity?[35] The absence of men at the textual level shows not only the gender gap in the war period when men were drafted and women were left to care for home and children but also a repression of masculine representation. Saito argues that

[35] Saito, 81.

female characters in Japanese postwar melodramas are projections of the wounded male selves. Female bodies are called forth to support a lost masculinity.[36] "We can read beyond the postwar Japanese films' representation of women's relationship to the war the attempt of the wounded Japanese males to reclaim a lost masculinity by appropriating the woman's (especially the mother's) body."[37] The wounded Japanese masculinity as a form of castration appears prominently in the film's last scene. Out of her former five pupils only two survived and one of them is blind.

The last scene shows the meeting of the now old Oishi, who has retuned to a teaching position on the island, and her former pupils. The camera frames the group in a medium close-up followed by a close-up of the teacher and Sonkichi, the blind pupil next to her. In a very moving scene, the blind pupil "reads" the picture taken when they were Oishi's pupils with his mind's eyes. He caresses the picture, pointing to the name of each person. His memory is preserved in his heart and it is revived through the sense of touch. This gesture shows that the time spent in Oishi's class was the best time of his life and that the war was a victimizing experience. The picture appears as a motif of timelessness and happiness in a period ravaged by history. It is a metaphor of a collective memory untainted by the war experience, suggesting a mythical dimension that defies history. The teacher starts crying, deeply moved by Sonkichi's unfortunate experience of war but also by the nostalgic memory of that group's time before the war. The camera pans in close-ups of each pupil's face accompanied by the beautiful voice of one of the girls who sings "*Umibe no uta*" (The Song of the Shore), a leitmotif song that appears throughout the

[36] Ibid. 86.

[37] Ibid. 87.

film. Tears run down the girls' faces while the other surviving boy Kicchi sits deeply engrossed in memories. The film ends in a long shot of the shore with the teacher riding the bicycle she got as a present from her former pupils. There is a symmetrical construction of time coming back in a circle, with the teacher now teaching relatives and children of her former pupils. Although history traumatized her pupils' generation, it has now returned to the same idyllic space where generations succeed each other and time is cyclic.

There are multiple reasons for presenting history from the perspective of the teacher's maternal figure. One of them is, as Saito suggests, the representation of male lack projected on the female. The second reason is the teacher's non-participation in the militaristic ideology, which poses her as a heroine whose suffering is unjust. The third reason is the fluidity of the female figure as a signifier that speaks not only for itself but also for the collectivity. The female signifier also suggests the relational positions of empathy and identification, which are the key points of the film. Saito bases her argument on Kaja Silverman's account of the impact of historical trauma on male subjectivity. I will expand Silverman's argument in the next chapter, but I would also like to point out its usefulness for the analysis of this film. Silverman argues that "the dominant fiction not only offers the representational system by means of which the subject typically assumes a sexual identity and takes on the desires commensurate with that identity, but forms the stable core around which a nation's and a period's reality coheres."[38] It relies on the constant repetition of images and stories through which a society figures consensus (cinema, literature, media, etc). What happens when this dominant fiction is threatened by

[38] Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 41.

historical events? How can it be restored? Saito argues that like the three films analyzed by Silverman, which denounce the collapse of male subjectivity after WWII (*The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946*), It's a Wonderful Life* (1946) and the *Guilt of Janet Ames* (1947)), Kinoshita's postwar melodramas restore the threatened dominant fiction. I would argue against Saito that the maternal image does not restore the dominant fiction but serves to mourn Japan's collective loss brought by the defeat in the war through female suffering and tears. The tears function to alleviate a shared sense of powerlessness and lack of agency which is usually the position of the female subject but which, in the postwar years, includes the position of the Japanese male subject. Japanese male critics readily acknowledge their tears when viewing this film and they try to find an explanation for this phenomenon both in a specifically Japanese aesthetics and in the film's historical circumstances.[39] Gender displacement permits male spectators to explore emotions vicariously and identify with the pathos of the female image.[40]

Conclusion

The postwar Japanese collectivity is represented through the maternal image, which replaces the former Emperor's paternal image. Women's suffering as the epitome of the pathos of melodrama has been employed in other films to portray the contradictions of modernity as the frustration of female desire.[41] Women as signifiers are, as Saito

---

[39] Saito, 67.

[40] This is the main thrust of fantasy theories, see Jan Campbell, *Film and Cinema Spectatorship* (London: Polity Press, 2005) but I would argue that the fluidity of gender is the characteristic of certain cultures at certain historical times while being forbidden or repressed in others. In Japan's case it is historical trauma that temporarily shatters very strict gender dichotomies.

[41] See Catherine Russell, "Overcoming Modernity: Gender and the Pathos of History in Japanese Film Melodrama," *Camera Obscura*, no 35 (May 1995): 131-158.

suggests, appropriated by a patriarchal discourse, but they represent not only its contradictions or discontents but also allow a space for the female. In other words, I agree with Saito's argument, but I argue that women's tears are not only replacements of the male tears, but they also address the politics of historically determined female suffering. The particularity of the films considered here is that they address not only a female audience, but also appeal to male audiences since they indirectly represent Japanese men's loss and suffering. The tears function to alleviate a shared sense of powerlessness and lack of agency which is usually the position of the female subject, but which in the postwar years includes the position of the Japanese male subject. Japanese male critics readily acknowledge their tears when viewing this film and they try to find an explanation for this phenomenon both in a specifically Japanese aesthetic and in the film's historical circumstances.[42]

Twenty-four Eyes can be considered as a representative film for the rite of passage from the past of war, through the trauma of the first years after defeat, to Japan's rebirth through economic miracle. It invites its spectators to catharsis through two mechanisms: nostalgia and tears shed for a collective suffering. There are many forms of nostalgia present in the film: the nostalgia of absolute motherhood, of childhood, of primitive nature, of purity and innocence. The film rewrites memory attempting to alleviate the pain of historical trauma through the nostalgia for a return to a past untainted by history.

Both Kinoshita's films considered here build a collective memory of victimization using the female subject as a focal point for pathos and empathy. The past is remembered through the figures of women and children as the innocent victims of a traumatizing

---

[42] Saito, 67.

history. As Yoshikuni Igarashi has suggested in his *Bodies of Memory,* "The tension between the desire to forget and the desire to remember the past, has shaped the cultural productions of postwar Japanese society."[43] The films bridge the gap between social historical reality and the individual fates caught in the web of history creating a memory of innocent victimization. The melodramatic trope of virtuous and innocent suffering as a source of moral agency is not restored through an ideological ending of the films with the triumph of the innocent. On the contrary, both films invite the acceptance of inevitable suffering, offering as the single solution a collectivity created through empathy and tears. While *A Japanese Tragedy* shows the impossibility of empathy due to a generation gap, *Twenty-four Eyes* revives it through the nostalgia of a mythic past.

[43] Yoshikuni Igarashi, *Bodies of Memory: Narratives of War in Postwar Japanese Culture* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 41.

Chapter 2. The Feminization of Memory: Woman as Witness to the Japanese Male Collective Trauma

When addressing the politics of memory in postwar Japan, Lisa Yoneyama notes the overwhelming role played by women in the articulation of a dialogue with the imperial past and with the devastated present. She calls this phenomenon the "feminization of memory" as "dominant national representations in which past experiences whether remembered by men or women are marked as those of Japanese women." [1] In this chapter I will explore how the collective trauma of Japan's defeat is represented through women as the narrative agents of two postwar films: *A Hen in the Wind (Kaze no naka no mendori)* (Ozu Yasujiro, 1948) and *Floating Clouds (Ukigumo)* (Naruse Mikio, 1955). Japanese men's experiences of a devastating, victimizing present are filtered through women as main characters in the films, called to support a masculinity in ruins. Using Kaja Silverman's account of male subjectivity in relation to war trauma, I will analyze the role played by women as witnesses of the Japanese male collective trauma.

In order to gain access to representations of collective and national traumas, we need to look at the various places where the collective and the national are sutured. Trauma in its most general meaning appears as a rupture, a shattering of a previous organic unity, whether at the level of the body or the level of the psyche. When trauma appears as a rupture, a wrenching of collectivity, it denounces the ideology that has previously created unity. However, the registration of this historical event is only made

---

[1] Lisa Yoneyama, *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space and the Dialectics of Memory* (London: University of California Press, 1999), 189.

possible, as Barbara Gabriel has pointed out, through "delays and displacements." [2] Women in postwar Japanese melodrama register the collective trauma of the nation through displacement. They are only indirectly national subjects since they have participated to the making of the nation in their role of wives and mothers. The trauma of defeat in WWII as the trauma of the Japanese nation and of the Japanese male subject is displaced onto the woman who becomes the signifier of suffering and victimization. Her tears are not only hers but also the tears of the male who cannot give way to his affect because the direct representation of loss of masculinity is unbearable. Through displacement the affect is directed to women, who have always been marks of affectivity due to their social and symbolic positioning,

I will refer in the analysis of these two films to one aspect of collective trauma as loss of masculinity, using Kaja Silverman's account. I will argue that this aspect of trauma is indirectly represented through films having women at their center, films which represent not only the loss of masculinity but also its consequences for gender relations. Kaja Silverman talks about collective trauma as a trauma of the male subject. She uses the expression "dominant fiction" to define the ideological system through which the normative subject lives its imaginary relation to the symbolic order, based on closure and coherence, denying differences. The meaning and consensus which construct collectivity as a unitary whole are given by the dominant fiction. According to Silverman, dominant fiction is "the primary agency of social consensus, ideological reality, faith above all else

[2] Barbara Gabriel, "The Wounds of Memory: Mavis Gallant's Baum Gabriel (1935-), National Trauma and Postwar French Cinema," *Essays on Canadian Writing*, no. 80 (Fall 2003): 189.

in the unity of the family and the adequacy of the male subject."[3] It is established and preserved through the images and stories that create consensus in a society. Wartime Japan established the dominant fiction of a militaristic society based on the ideology of an organic relationship between male subjects and the Emperor as the figure of the sacred father. Every individual existed for the collective and self-sacrifice was the most valued virtue. The unity between individual, family, and Japan as a nation was suddenly shattered with the end of the war when Japanese people felt betrayed by their government and were faced with the ideological operations behind that organic unity. Once the social consensus was ruptured, people felt victimized and betrayed, not only by the historical circumstances of economic collapse and occupation, but also by their own nation. Japanese men could not proudly identify with the nation or with the Emperor since the nation became feminized due to the new colonial order. The presence of the Occupation reinforced the sense of shame and loss in the masculine subject, by denouncing Japanese masculinity as a mark of militaristic ideology. Both films I chose here confer narrative agency to female characters in order to address the collapse of male subjectivity and the nation's trauma. They offer a glimpse of the complicated gender relations created as a result of the male trauma by using women as involved witnesses. More than that, both films are concerned with mechanisms of survival in a chaotic post surrender world, which are divided along gender lines, with women standing not only as representatives of the female gender but also as signs of the nation and of memory.

Ideology in a certain society is sustained around key privileged terms, one of which is the penis/phallus equation. Trauma disrupts the cohesion between the formation

[3] Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 41.

of the subject and the dominant fiction revealing the illusion behind the cohesion between penis and phallus. "By historical trauma I mean any social event, whether socially engineered or of natural occurrence, which brings a large group of male subjects into such an intimate relation with lack that they are at least for the moment unable to sustain an imaginary relation with the phallus, and so they withdraw their belief from the dominant fiction."[4] Using a Lacanian framework, Silverman offers a critique of the male subject predicated upon the illusion of coherence and control. Trauma created by a historical event like WWII operates the disintegration of the male's bound and armored ego, faced with the rupture of the dominant fiction that guarantees its identity. Silverman compellingly demonstrates the representation of male lack and male failure in Hollywood films between 1944 and 1947. She explains individual cases of male trauma due to men's exposure to the unbinding death drive in the war. However, in Japan's case it is not only men's experience of war that disrupts ideology and male subjectivity but also the loss of war. How do *A Hen in the Wind* and *Floating Clouds* represent this rupture of male identity from the collectivity that has offered meaning and control for its male subjects during the militaristic period?

A Hen in the Wind, Violence and the Possibility of Traumatic Catharsis

A Hen in the Wind (1948) is a unique film in Ozu Yasujiro's career because of its depiction of domestic violence, a subject that is at odds with his general interests. Many critics have overlooked this film, dismissing it as a minor film, and even Ozu was finally

---

[4] Ibid. 55.

dissatisfied with it.[5] I would argue, however, that its representation of the intricate gender relationship within the family in the postwar years and especially its subtle interpretation of male trauma, make it a very valuable film.

While her husband (Sano Shuji) is away in the war, a wife (Tanaka Kinuyo) struggles to make ends meet and care for her son. When the son falls critically ill, she has to resort to prostitution in order to pay for his medical expenses. When the husband comes home after the war, he finds out about her actions, and despite understanding her desperate situation, he feels deeply hurt and betrayed. Not only has he been betrayed by his government but also by his own wife. Their relationship grows colder, culminating in a scene where the husband hits her and pushes her down the stairs. As a result of this extreme gesture, the husband feels vindicated and the film ends with their embrace.

It is one of the few Ozu's films in which he directly confronts the postwar devastation and the influence of collective trauma on the family structure. The typical family in Ozu's films is the affluent bourgeois family and the main concern is the loss of traditional values, an elegiac subject employed from his prewar films. Joan Mellen interestingly reads the relationship between the husband and the wife in *A Hen in the Wind* as an allegory of the Westernized Japan prostituting itself to the culture of the Occupation. "Ozu's aim is to reconcile the Japanese to their culturally decimated homeland, just as the husband must come to terms with his wife's impurity. She prostituted herself to protect what was good in Japanese life, symbolized by the child, Hiro, named, not coincidentally,

---

[5] Joan Mellen, *The Waves at Genji's Door* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976), 217.

for the Emperor."[6] On the surface the film does not speak about tradition, but its disappearance is implied through the husband's trauma as a double betrayal. It is not only his wife that betrays his masculine authority, but also his country, which is occupied by the former enemy, rendering null the value of his war experience. The "dominant fiction" of Japan as a pure culture, similar to the family system formed by Japanese people and the Emperor, is deeply shattered. This rupture reveals the sacrifices women need to make in order to support the dominant ideology.

The wife is both an allegory of Japan and a representative of the female gender. As an allegory of Japan, the wife is a feminized version of a nation, which loses its integrity in order to save its sacred symbol: the Emperor. Her sacrifice betrays the ambivalence between the necessity of the gesture and it's unfortunate outcome. Despite the nobility of her act, which saves the child, the wife bears the stigma of impurity, of betrayal, in the same way Japan as a feminized, occupied nation must bear the stigma of impurity despite the preservation of the Emperor. As a representative of the female gender, the wife is situated at the intersection of a patriarchal family system in which the husband has exclusive access to her sexuality, and a collapse of that system in the last years of war and the first years after surrender. In the patriarchal family system pertaining to the dominant fiction, the husband provides for the wife and children but with her husband away in a war doomed to failure, the wife must provide herself for her child. The only means she has to earn money is prostitution, an economic exchange reserved for women.

Ozu is well-known for his restraint in representation and for his subtle creation of psychological states. Melodramatic excess does not characterize his films, which are based

[6] Ibid. 216.

more on the creation of atmosphere of internal conflicts and states of mind. Tadao Sato notes the choreographic acting as one technique peculiar to Ozu as a director. "In contrast to Mizoguchi and Kurosawa films with impassioned performances, Ozu's characters are usually calm, taking their time and delivering their lines with a slight smile."[7] Actors were given very specific and minute directions, since Ozu wanted to make perfect still-lives on film, internal tension linked on the surface by the most tranquil of sentiments. However, I would argue that in this film, Ozu allows the presence of melodramatic excess just resurfacing against the usual restraint. When the child suddenly gets sick, the shots linger on Tokiko's face, ravaged with worry. The tracking shot alternating between back and front shots punctuates the melodramatic tension of her desperate walk with her child's limp body in her arms. Her extreme suffering and anxiety as she watches over her unconscious child creates a culmination of pathos that breaks Ozu's usual formal restraint. Spectators identify with the mother, understanding and forgiving her later decision. Her lack of agency becomes the main vehicle of pathos since she can only watch over her child hovering between life and death, being unable to help him. She keeps whispering in his ear: "Please get better for me. If you don't, I will be in great trouble." Her happiness at his recovery is emotionally invading the shots that gain a fast tempo alternating between inside and outside in a turmoil reflecting her state of mind.

Tokiko is alone in her struggles since her husband is away on the front, but he is still present as a figure of authority through his picture where he is dressed up in military uniform. She engages in dialogue with him, trying to find an answer to the dilemma of paying for the child's medical bills, but he is silent. Instead, she must face herself in the

---

[7] Tadao Sato, *Currents in Japanese Cinema* (Tokyo: Kodansha Amer. Inc., 1982), 192.

mirror. The film subtly avoids the actual presentation of Tokiko's presence in the brothel, which is only suggested through her final tearful decision in front of the mirror and later in the film through the husband's visit there. A medium shot of Tokiko leaning over her child and happily manifesting her gratitude for his recovery is followed by a close-up of her face in the mirror. Her face is bathed in tears and her first gesture of covering up her face, a gesture of shame at the mere thought of earning money through prostitution is followed by a long direct confrontation with herself. A straight cut takes us away to a different location, the empty room of the brothel accompanied by the diegetic jazz music. There is no shot showing Tokiko actually present at the brothel. The suggestion that she did go is confirmed only when her husband goes to visit the brothel, many scenes later. The spectator confirms, together with the husband, Tokiko's single act of infidelity. Instead, the spectators are overwhelmed with the pathos pervading her decision, a scene quite unlike Ozu's general cinematic technique. Later, the husband visits the brothel to confirm his wife's infidelity and Mellen suggests that "we don't see her there precisely because Ozu wishes to argue that, spiritually, in her deepest self, she never was there, just as a real and authentic Japan can and will continue to resist."[8] Tokiko prostitutes herself against her own will, revealing the ambivalence of the female subject, torn between the need to protect the other and the need to preserve one's integrity. However, even her integrity must be protected for her husband in acknowledgement of his authority, which poses the woman as existing exclusively for the members of her family. When Tokiko's husband returns from the war, the film's point of view shifts to the husband's anguish, which splits the film into two: the female and the male point of view.

[8] Mellen, 216.

Upon his return, Shuichi asks his wife about the child, and from one phrase to the other, he gets to ask about her means of getting the money to pay for the medical expenses. As he asks her, he grows sadder and lonelier but also angrier with her. He becomes her prosecutor attacking her with short and brutal questions. She bursts into sobs and he ends with a soothing phrase, "you too suffered so much," implying his own suffering in the war, which is never revealed by the film. As Fredric Jameson has argued, the text, both in its literary or cinematic aspect, is both the site where the strains of repression emerge and a utopian compensation for the repression of the real.[9] The absence of men's experiences of the war and their suffering in most postwar films, suggests a repression of the male trauma, which is only revealed through displacement, as women's suffering. This psychological repression is accompanied by an ideological repression, manifested through SCAP censorship. The American Occupation forbade any representation of militaristic ideology, which included a sympathetic description of men's suffering in the war and which allowed mainly women to speak for the victimizing memory of the war years. The films compensate for the repression of the male perspective by transferring it to the female.

The husband grows restless, he is unable to sleep and he confesses to his friend at work. The friend's advice reveals Japanese men's deeply troubled relationship with the historical past, a problem explained by Wada-Marciano as a forbidden or repressed memory.[10] "This is past now. Forget everything through will power, and do it fast. Just

---

[9] Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1981).

[10] Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano, "Sengo nihon no merodorama (The Postwar Japanese Melodrama)," in *Kazoku no shozo (The Disappearance of the Family),* ed. Iwamoto Kenji (Tokyo: Shinwasha, 2007), 299.

love your wife and forgive her. You have to push down your anger." Male collective trauma appears not only in the rupture between individual and the collective, between ideology and subject but also between past and present. In order to survive, men must disavow not only their belonging to the militaristic ideology but also their memories about the war. The husband's answer discloses his ambivalent attitude: "I forgave her. I understand she was suffering. But I can't calm down. I want to shout, I am so angry..." Despite understanding the necessity of her action, the eradication of his authority over her creates anger that he is unable to repress. The male privilege of exclusive ownership over a woman's sexuality is trespassed. The shock of defeat reveals the profound contradictions in the previous militaristic ideology based on the creation of a strong, coherent male subject. An ideology privileging the male has at the same time betrayed him, leaving his family without support and thus robbing him of the other mark of masculinity: patriarchal authority within the family. The anger he feels at being betrayed by his country is channeled towards the anger he feels at his wife.

His visit to the brothel enacts another mark of a troubled masculinity. As a male, he has the privilege to buy a woman's body and he is actually offered a beautiful, young woman. However, instead of enjoying this privilege, he wants to hear why she became a prostitute. More than the interest in her sexual body, he is interested in her as a human being. They both glance at the window, hearing the singing voices of children in the school next door. She herself once went to that school, and she confesses that she must prostitute herself because the war has made her the single supporter of her family. The husband is impressed with the honesty and purity of the girl and he decides to save her from prostitution by finding her a decent job. As Silverman has shown, "the lack situates

the man in a relational position usually reserved for the female subject."[11] The Japanese male subject created through the eradication of difference and through the illusion of coherence and control is shattered by the historical event of defeat. The acknowledgement of his lack allows the male to accept and even sympathize with the difference, thus being able to understand and identify with women's suffering.

However, since feminization must be avoided at all costs in order for the male ego to survive, the husband tries to reclaim his lost masculinity through violence against his wife. Despite sympathizing with his wife, Shuichi must punish her in order to shore up his masculinity. Mellen suggests that this act of male sadism is approved by the director himself: "In some sense, the director half sides with the husband, sadistically punishing the woman for not somehow, however impossibly, being stronger."[12] I would argue against Mellen that the punishment is not because the woman has not been stronger but because through her punishment, the husband can regain his lost authority over her and thus reclaim a wounded masculinity. However, I agree with her that there is an alignment between the narrative of the husband punishing his wife and the on-screen image of the punishment, which is a form of visual sadism used by the filmmaker to influence his audience. Is this sadism a form of visual pleasure for the audience or is it an explanatory image meant to deepen the spectators' identification with the wife's unjust suffering? The same visual sadism appears in Mizoguchi's *Women of the Night* (1948), a film I will analyze in the third chapter and in Kinoshita's *A Japanese Tragedy,* which I analyzed in the first chapter. In Mizoguchi's film, a prostitute wants to quit prostitution and she is

---

[11] Silverman, 74.

[12] Mellen, 219.

cruelly beaten by her fellow prostitutes in a ritual of revenge and pent up hostility. In *A Japanese Tragedy,* Haruko, the mother is beaten by her benefactor when he is out of luck and she is hit by the cook when she interferes too much in his personal life. The punishment of the woman brings a changing point in the narrative but it is also an arresting point at the level of the image. The violence against a woman's body not only assuages the anger and desperation of the punishers, it also enacts a visual transfer of affect, painfully blending visual sadism with narrative identification. Identification in this sense complicates the sadism of the image, since there is no distance that would offer voyeuristic pleasure to sadism. Visual, bodily suffering as a result of violence echoes the moral suffering characters go through, a pain spectators partake of instead of visually enjoying.

The relationship between husband and wife grows colder. He hits her, he doesn't talk to her and he refuses to come home after work. His male trauma has a double-effect: on one hand he feels the compulsive need to victimize his wife, but on the other hand he understands her and partakes of her suffering, the same way he has sympathized with the girl at the brothel. The film culminates in his violent aggression rendered cinematically in an almost tactile manner in the concluding scene.

The camera is placed in their upstairs small room, the wife sitting on the floor. The husband comes in and sits down, his back to her. This medium shot is followed by a rapid tempo of alternating close-ups of the wife's face and her husband's back, as she appeals to him. The third close-up of her face shows her increasing pain at his angry silence. She starts crying and apologizing, entreating him to stay home with her and their child. A medium shot (Ozu's famous pillow shot) follows, placing the husband and the wife in

different positions within the frame. We see her on her knees embracing his legs and entreating him not to leave, while we only see his legs. When Tokiko tries to prevent him from leaving the house again by grabbing him, he pushes her down the steep stairs of their second floor room. The climactic scene of violence is created in melodramatic fashion, alternating between close-ups of the husband and the wife's face in order to highlight their emotion. The medium shots explain their relation and especially the disproportionate power relationship between them. The husband is always situated higher than the wife, shots of his back are more numerous than of his face and his face is much more petrified than hers, with only a suggestion of his emotion. Her emotions on the other hand are vividly displayed, ranging from tears, pain, anguish and despair. A low angle shot at the base of the stairs, captures Tokiko's tumbling body. For a few painful moments, the camera stares at her immobile body lying at the base of the stairs, which alternate with close-ups of his husband's face calling her name. In the long run, she answers and she stands up with great difficulty because she has sprained her leg. Again the shots alternate between her standing husband and her injured, lying down body. She crawls up the stairs in pain, the static camera registering her limp body crawling up the stairs. The husband retreats without offering her any help. The camera is placed again in their upstairs room, cutting to close-ups of the wife's face contorted with pain and the husband's back. She crawls close to him, facing his back and she starts sobbing and apologizing for making him feel so angry. "I don't want to see you suffer so much. Hate me! Do what you want with me...You can despise me. Hit me. Let me suffer, but don't cry. I don't want to see you crying." Despite being victimized by her husband, Tokiko tries to take his anger and especially his anguish upon her. She wants to alleviate his pain by suffering instead of him.

We witness an instance of male affect, which is repressed as an image and transferred upon the wife, who willingly takes all anguish and pain upon herself. However, after her almost unbearable entreaties, spectators are offered a glimpse of hope coming out as a result of her sacrifice and devotion. The husband finally turns and we see his face in a close-up shot. "I understand how you suffer and I don't think you are to blame. Let's forget all about this. Let's become true husband and wife." The alternating close-up shots of their faces reflect now hope in the restoration of the family together with the restoration of the husband's authority.

As Klaus Theweleit has shown in his account of German soldiers, and which can apply to a certain extent to Japanese soldiers, their masculinity was constructed through a hysterical defense against the unbounded female body. The body armor of masculinity armed the fascists against their extreme fear of dissolution and felt bodily flows. [13] Crying is of course, one of the forbidden acts for a militaristic masculinity, being the bodily flow of helplessness and pain. Desperate at witnessing this performance of loss of masculinity, the wife wants to take his pain onto her and cry for him. The unbearable presence of the man's tears reveals the unbearable dimension of the ruined masculinity. This process of transferring affect and tears onto the women had as a result the overwhelming onscreen presence of women's tears and their suffering as a displacement of male trauma.[14]

The film ends with a medium shot of their embrace, her hands tightly clasped at his back. It is suggested that they can be a family again despite her pain and his violence,

---

[13] Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies,* vol. 1, tr. Stephen Conway (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

[14] Saito Ayako, "Ushinawareta farusu wo motomete (Reclaiming the Lost Phallus)," in *Eiga no seijigaku (Film Politics),* ed. Masato Hase and Nakamura Hideyuki (Tokyo: Shosha, 2003), 86.

because she has helped her husband overcome his male trauma by restoring his authority over her. The film's end suggests the possibility of catharsis for the pain of the male trauma through two mechanisms: forgetting and displacement onto the woman. The male subject faced with his lack and with the illusion of his coherent, powerful subjectivity attempts to turn away from this unbearable vision, repressing and displacing it. Tokiko, the wife, helps her husband recover his ruined masculinity through the catharsis offered by her acceptance of his violence. She acts as a witness and as a victim to his male trauma but she is willing to be victimized in order to help her husband regain his dignity within the patriarchal family. His trauma appears both as a rupture from a sense of collectivity and as a loss of male ownership of a woman's sexuality within the marriage system. The male denial of lack and the proclamation of an illusion of authority is helped by Tokiko through her denial of his lack by taking it upon herself. She witnesses the disempowerment of the male and his lack but she finally absorbs it within herself as her own lack, allowing for the catharsis of the male trauma.

We see in this film the melodramatic eruption not only in the female point of view but also in the male point of view. Both wife and husband cry and suffer but the representation of male tears recalls the taboo on male affect, which triggers its transfer onto the female character. The film's lack of success with the public may be explained in two ways: its singularity within the corpus of Ozu's films and the portrayal of the violent, inexcusable means used by the male in order to achieve catharsis. The woman not only witnesses the male trauma but she also helps the healing process by denying the male disempowerment. Her self-sacrifice redeems the male and the film ends in an optimistic way with the restoration of the couple. Unlike *A Hen in the Wind,* Naruse's film, which I

will further consider, reflects on the impossibility of the woman's sacrifice to restore to men their lost masculinity. Physical violence is replaced by psychological violence and the male trauma is represented in all its public and private aspects, unlike this film, which focused exclusively on the male trauma as loss of male authority within the family. This trauma is healed through the wife's sacrifice and through the displacement of the husband's emotions onto her body. The message of hope is that they can be again a husband and a wife because the husband is vindicated and he regains his injured authority through violence against her. The only condition is that they forget what happened, a negation of memory that is analyzed more deeply in Naruse's *Floating Clouds.*

Floating Clouds, the Politics of Gender and Memory

Naruse Mikio's *Floating Clouds* represents the deeply troubled Japanese masculinity in the postwar years and the politics of gender relations against a period of chaos and devastation. Naruse approached his subjects from an angle that has much in common with Ozu and Mizoguchi, yet he remains "the most withdrawn and the most clinical, and, consequently, the one with the darkest view of life."[15] His favorite subject is the plight of women outside the family system, struggling to preserve their honesty and dignity. All women characters in his films submit to fleeting illusions of salvation through love but they all end up being disappointed by the men they love like Yukiko in *Floating Clouds*.

The greatest discovery in Naruse's career was Hayashi Fumiko's (1904-1951) writing in the 1950s. Her novels about independent women hopelessly struggling to

[15] Audie Bock, *Japanese Film Directors* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1978), 101.

survive in a patriarchal society by finding genuine love suit Naruse's view of life. He made six adaptations after her novels, the most successful one being *Floating Clouds*. Hayashi's quotation sums up the coincidence of their world views: "I cannot help but feel an excruciating love for the pitiful assiduousness of human beings, managing their lives in the midst of endless time and space."[16] Both Hayashi and Naruse are fascinated with human suffering and the impossibility of finding salvation. Both of them find this defiant but doomed struggle in women's lives.

Naruse focuses on characters and their feelings less than on landscape and atmosphere. His films are all pervaded by emotionalism and lyricism, but the pathos of women's suffering and their defeats are always accompanied by acts of defiance. The acceptance and even the relish of pathos and suffering present in woman's films achieves a particular twist in Naruse's films, where women refuse to accept their fate, but, nevertheless, they are finally forced to acknowledge the impossibility of their dreams. As Audie Bock has poetically put it, "there are no happy endings for Naruse, but there are incredibly enlightened defeats."[17]

Floating Clouds explores the postwar years following defeat through the story of a woman trying to find salvation in love. Relying on memories of a genuine passion experienced with a Japanese man in colonized Indochina, she tries to recover that ideal love in a devastated Japan where every person is a victim. The man is unable to revive their love because he is weak, fickle and insensitive. Although disillusioned with her lover unmanned by his loss of social position and by his inability to live a genuine passion, she

---

[16] Ibid. op. cit., 110.

[17] Ibid. 118.

accepts any kind of humiliation just to be with him. However, she also keeps reminding him of his own failure as a male, since she is aware of his weakness. Following him on his assignment to a far-away rainy island, she dies of tuberculosis before they can establish a life together.

There is a contradiction appearing in different discourses of postwar Japan regarding women's status. In socio-political discourse the increased visibility of women in areas where they have been previously excluded suggested their liberation from the prewar authority of the state, militarism and the prewar household system. The Occupation introduced in the new constitution equal opportunities for women, allowing them to participate in politics.[18] However, in the cinematic discourse, films featuring strong, independent, successful women were very few and most of them unsuccessful. Gender relations in the postwar years were much more complicated than the general view operating persuasively in popular memories and summed up by Tadao Sato: "It was said that in Japan women have become stronger because men have lost all confidence in their masculinity due to Japan's defeat."[19] Despite the possibilities a new political order opened for women, most of them were struggling to survive in a period of devastation.

The breakdown of a previous social order caused by defeat created new and complicated gender relations exposed in *Floating Clouds* as the opposition between passion in a colonizing world and the masochistic, hopeless pursuit of love in a devastated Japan. The male character, Tomioka is haunted by emptiness and desolation on his return to Japan, and the destruction of his spirit parallels the events of Japanese history. His fate

---

[18] Yoneyama, 188.

[19] Sato, 81.

is closely connected to historical events. The film poses the opposition between the colonized space and Japan's postwar devastated space through the dialectics of memory. Beginning with the repatriation of Yukiko, the main character, we are shown the passion between her and Tomioka through flashbacks.

Maureen Turim has suggested the ideological implications of the flashbacks, which render history as individual, emotional experience devoid of larger political implications. "Flashbacks in film often merge the two levels of remembering the past, giving large-scale social and political history the subjective mode of a single, fictional individual's remembered experience."[20] The woman's point of view reduces all the implications of Japan's imperial aggression to a paradise of sexual freedom and exoticism. Upon returning to a ruined and devastated Tokyo, Yukiko goes to visit her lover, Tomioka who has now returned to his wife. While waiting for him, the scene changes to a flashback of her arrival in Dalat and their first encounter.

I will analyze in more detail the sequence of their first encounter because of its dialectics of memory which complicates the issues of time and space. A long shot of Yukiko walking along a street bordered by shabby building is followed by medium close-ups of her visit at Tomioka's house. Alternate close-ups of Yukiko's face, his wife's face and Tomioka's face highlight their feeling: jealousy for the two women, embarrassment for Tomioka, joy at seeing him in Yukiko's face. We follow Tomioka's and Yukiko's walk through a tracking shot alternating with long shots of the two of them against a poor, sad environment. When she remains to wait for him, the scene changes to Dalat and the mood changes completely from low-key lighting to high-key lighting, from winter to

[20] Maureen Turim, *Flashbacks in Film- Memory and History* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 2.

summer, from city to nature. The flashback seems to expand the time and enlarge the space, since it represents a time and space of happiness, freedom and empowerment. The flashback is symmetrically followed by a straight cut to her waiting for him, followed by a shot of the two of them in the black market. They sit at a restaurant table and the dialectic of memory starts as a combination of dialogue memory, of her words accompanying the flashbacks that carry images expressed by her words, with memory as image. We are taken back to the beginning of their relationship, starting with flirtatious teasing and ending with a passionate kiss that connects the past with the present. She is beautiful and radiating feminine charm, while Tomioka appears strong and self-possessed, teasing her but also being nice to her. The house is a rich colonial house in Western style, decorated with huge bouquets of flowers and the strikingly beautiful Asian maid appears to be Tomioka's mistress. The codes of the colonizers as rich, strong, beautiful and white are in striking contrast to images of the present Japan.

Unlike the typical psychoanalytic discourse, the trauma is not located in the past but in the present. The past becomes the lost paradise to which characters connect through nostalgia. It becomes an object of desire due to its intense and liberating attributes and its presence in the mind of the characters render the present situation even more unbearable.[21] The flashback kiss is immediately followed by a close-up of their present kiss but despite the same gesture, there is an obvious difference: their present love seems dark and desolate. For Yukiko, their memory is the most precious thing they have, while for Tomioka their memory is a foolish moment that should be forgotten.

[21] Ibid. 12.

The next series of flashbacks occur when Tomioka and Yukiko sit together at a table and talk about themselves and their relationship. Her desire to build the present according to the past is refused by Tomioka. He says: "It's no use remembering the past. To say the truth, we were only seeing a dream then. Everything changed upon our returning." Her answer shows her determination to use the past as a reason for living: "That past is our most precious belonging. If we lose that, we have nothing left." Their conversation is invaded by the flashbacks of their walk together in Dalat's woods and their first kiss. Once the colonial order crumbled and has been proved wrong, Tomioka's impulse is to forget that history, because his own personal life is caught in the national discourse. Japan's dream of colonizing Asia has been only an illusion, just as their passion has been only an illusion crumbling with their return to the defeated Japan. Unlike Yukiko who went to Dalat in order to escape a confining patriarchal system, Tomioka has been sent there as part of Japan's national movement to colonize Asia and all his privileges are the fruit of Japan's colonial invasion. The same way, he returns home due to the national process of repatriation. As Noriko Mizuta suggests, Tomioka is deeply changed although he returns to his previous family. "Being a colonizer during the war has devastated him mentally; the defeat of Japan in the war is his personal defeat, and Japan's postwar devastation is his own devastation."[22] He wants to repress the memory of his years as a colonizer in spite of Yukiko's efforts to preserve and revive it. For Tomioka there is no possibility of return just as there is no possibility for Japan to return to its past imperialistic position.

---

[22] Noriko Mizuta, "In Search of a Lost Paradise," in *Woman's Hand-Gender and Theory in Japanese Women's Writing,* ed. Paul Gordon Schallow and Janet Walker (California: Stanford University Press, 1996), 341.

The male subject breaks away from the dominant fiction of Japan as a colonial power but he is also taken down by its collapse. Once the dominant fiction of the colonizing Japan and the power of the male subject belonging to the male colonizing Japan are ruptured, the male trauma appears. Silverman's account of the alienation of penis from phallus, the alienation of the male subject from the power invested in him by a patriarchal discourse, appears in this film as Tomioka's male trauma. "History may manifest itself in so traumatic and unassimilable a guise that it temporarily dislocates penis from phallus, or renders null and void the other elements of the dominant fiction with which it is closely imbricated."[23] His loss of masculinity appears not only in his unkempt, weak appearance and lack of social power, but also in his relationship to women. He returns to his wife out of cowardice, but he cannot rebuild family stability and he also continues an irregular relationship with Yukiko, being unable to respond to her genuine love.

Yukiko, on the other hand, is more independent from the national discourse than Tomioka. She goes to Dalat looking for independence and freedom from Japan's patriarchal institutions. The primeval forests of Indochina liberate her vitality and sexuality, as a dreamland located outside confining institutions. She unwillingly returns to Japan, but the chaos of its social system makes possible her anarchic existence outside society and thus allows her a twisted form of freedom and independence. She becomes decadent, starting as a homeless person looking for work, even becoming prostitute to an American soldier. When Tomioka visits Yukiko the second time after their return, he finds her dressed up and beautiful. An American soldier eventually calls for her. She goes out

---

[23] Silverman, 47.

with him while Tomioka gloomily waits for her return, but he does not get angry. On the contrary, he is envious of her ability to overcome poverty and deprivation. Faced with his lack, he realizes that in the postwar years, women have more chances to survive and adapt to a new political order. Far from feeling hurt and betrayed, he envisions Yukiko as an object of desire since she is desired by other men. Because he has lost his patriarchal power, he doesn't feel rivalry towards the other men in Yukiko's life and he does not feel hurt by the presence of the American soldier. He has long before abdicated his privileged masculine position trying to merely survive by preying on women's love.

Their encounters punctuate their unstable, drifting life, since the places keep changing. Tomioka too changes jobs, he has to sell his house and move to the countryside, but then he rents a small room, while Yukiko stays for a while in her improvised room in the market, made of cardboard. They go to different inns together, twice with the intention of committing suicide. The first time they go, they both think about suicide, disillusioned with their lives. Tomioka acknowledges again his sense of loss: "You can't revive what has been between us by remembering. I became a worthless, soulless human being." However, he wins back his desire for life when he meets Osei (Okada Mariko), the young and beautiful wife of the inn owner. Osei wants to escape her marriage to the old man and her boring life at the inn; she wants to go to Tokyo and become a dancer. Tomioka sees in her beauty and youth a bridge towards the hope for life, for a vitality he has lost. They go together to take a bath and it is subtly suggested by their exchange of gazes and gestures that they finally slept together. Giving up their intention to commit suicide, Tomioka and Yukiko return to her miserable room in the market, she, deeply disillusioned by his betrayal, and he, with a restored cynical intention to survive. Yukiko sees beyond his

appearances, she perceives his inner core, his shattered subjectivity because she has known the Tomioka before the war and she can see how he has changed. Relentless, she faces him not with the illusion of unity and coherence like Tokiko, the wife in the previous film, does. She denounces the disjunction between his true self and his apparent self. "You are handsome but you are a coward. You can only pretend to be brave through the power of *sake*. You can only win other people because you are so cunning." He cynically accepts her judgment because he knows she is right. His country's defeat has deprived him not only of his social status but also of his masculine pride and belief in the coherence and unity of the self. The instability of place as seen in their permanent drifting from one place to the other, suggests Tomioka's spiritual drifting. The only stable thing in their lives is their memory of the past.

Yukiko is not the usual heroine of melodrama, but despite her inner strength and her independence, she masochistically tries to restore to Tomioka the power for their previously experienced passion. Her suffering is rendered subtly as disillusionment and inner despair that starts surfacing more in the second half of the film, as her memory of their love grown fainter and seems more hopeless. Naruse believed in women's independence and freedom, but he also believed that the price women paid for their independence was unhappiness and failure: "The people won't turn out for stories about a strong, independent woman. The audience prefers and is pleased only with stories about a weak woman's torment and abuse. But I shared none of their feelings that untraditional women are unattractive, that strong-hearted women are despicable and disgusting."[24]

[24] op. cit. Mellen, 270.

Yukiko is a strong, independent survivor in the postwar years, but she remains nevertheless a victim of her memories and of her love for a worthless man. The first time she cries is when she finds out about Tomioka's relationship with Osei. When she remains pregnant, she visits Tomioka hoping to restore their relationship, but Osei now lives with him. She will later have an abortion that seriously threatens her life and she discovers that Osei has been murdered by her jealous husband. Sick and desperate she visits the neglectful Tomioka and she cries for the second time, accusing him of selfishness at a time when she was so close to death. He acknowledges his fault adding that he feels so empty. His emptiness only uses women's love like a vacuum, but he is unable to answer back and be compassionate to them. He is devoid of affect, but he needs women's affection. Unlike the husband in Ozu's film who tries to hide his emotions of anguish and anger, Tomioka is empty and cynical. Together with his memories, he has relinquished his emotions. "Our romance was wiped out with the defeat. Stop dreaming about the past," he angrily says her before he tells her that he will leave to work on a remote island.

In the end, he goes to Yakushima, a remote island covered with ancient forests, and he allows Yukiko to accompany him. Desperate that he will leave, she begs him to take her although her health deteriorates visibly even before getting to the rainy island. "Yakushima suggests the ancient forests of Indochina, but it cannot become the site of Yukiko's emancipation. Instead, it becomes the site of her ultimate ruin and death."[25] Bedridden with tuberculosis, Yukiko dies alone in the middle of a storm when Tomioka is away in the mountain.

---

[25] Mizuta, 343.

The last scene of the film displays the outburst of Tomioka's emotions together with the emergence of his memory. Shots alternate between the raging storm outside and the still atmosphere inside. A man rushes in the mountain to bring the news of Yukiko's death. His entrance is immediately followed by a close-up of her still, dead face. After an exchange with her caregivers, Tomioka remains alone with her and the camera shows his back as he looks at Yukiko's dead body. Cut to a medium shot of the camera placed on the opposite side and we see Tomioka washing her face. He takes a lamp and brings it closer to her face, which is shown in a close-up in the next shot. Tomioka applies lipstick to Yukiko's cold, dead lips in an effort to restore her beauty and youth, after which he looks at her. Cut to a close-up of his face, which shows for the first time signs of grief and anguish. The following close-up of her face cuts to a dissolve of a flashback describing scenes of a young and beautiful Yukiko in the forest of Indochina. This flashback is the first sign of his memory that emerges in melodramatic fashion, when it is too late. As Mellen points out, "Naruse suggests that Tomioka's very emptiness has resulted in this memory's assuming a primary place in his consciousness."[26] However desirous Tomioka has been to forget the past, the repressed past returns to haunt him by pointing out the break in his subjectivity, between his self prior to defeat and his self after Japan's defeat. Although the memory is not one of trauma, but of happiness and fulfillment, it is shut away from consciousness because of the rupture it produces between past and present. Upon remembering Yukiko's youth and vitality in Dalat's woods, Tomioka collapses in tears, faced not only with his trauma as a break in his subjectivity, but also with the inexorability of Yukiko's death. The same way he is unable to restore life to Yukiko's

---

[26] Mellen, 228.

body, he has been unable to restore life to his dead memories and to their passion extinguished after the war.

Conclusion

One of the most successful of Naruse's films, *Floating Clouds* reflects the gender disparity prevalent even when the symbolic order collapses. Called upon to support a wounded masculinity, women face the difficult task of filling men's emptiness. Their love feeds the hungry lack in men without any hope of compensation for their self-sacrifice. Memory operates differently, too. For Yukiko, memory becomes a lost paradise that she keeps trying to restore, while for Tomioka the memory of colonial times enacts the painful rupture he feels between Japan's colonial times and its colonized times as well as between a self meaningfully connected to national ideology and a drifting self separated from that ideology. Male trauma operates in this case differently than in Ozu's film. Instead of the husband searching to reestablish his patriarchal authority through his wife's victimization in the first film, the lover in this film acknowledges his loss of masculinity, but he too tries to make up for it by using women as sources of vitality. The woman is in Naruse's film is the bearer of memory and she tries to bridge the gap between the past and the present, which the man finds insurmountable.

As Barbara Gabriel has suggested, the nation "serves as an important mirroring for the stability of the subject, in a relay of identifications that contribute to the fiction of coherence. When the mirror shatters, what is broken is not only the phantasmatic of the nation but also the very ground of dailyness."[27] Japan's national trauma is closely connected with the trauma of the male subject, manifested in the first film as betrayal

---

[27] Gabriel, 200.

resulting in anger and violence and in the second film, as rupture between the past and the present and the spiritual instability resulting in emptiness and cynicism. In both films women try to help men recover from their male trauma but while *A Hen in the Wind* suggests a glimpse of hope, *Floating Clouds* portrays the uselessness of the woman's sacrifice. Once the Japanese nation stops mirroring the stability and adequacy of the male subject, women are called forth to reestablish the coherence and unity of the male. However, they can only restore the illusion of coherent, powerful masculinity through their self-sacrifice and both films reflect on the intricate mechanisms of gender relations in the postwar years. The first film shows the possibility of restoring the masculine authority within the patriarchal family, but *Floating clouds* offers a darker vision: the male can only access his feelings when it is too late, his memory being ruptured by the breakdown of national ideology.

Chapter 3. The Prostitute between Native and Foreign Patriarchy

Mizoguchi Kenji (1898-1956)

One of the earliest Japanese film directors, Mizoguchi Kenji produced the majority of his films in the prewar period. Many of the writings on his work are concerned with his particular "pictorial style" found mostly in *jidaigeki (*period films).[1] Through this pictorial style, Mizoguchi reconstructs certain historical periods in all their complexity, giving a vivid life to environments and lyrically portraying landscape scenes. The images of some of his period films acquire the quality of paintings. He approached cinema through the related arts of painting and literature, being famous both in Japan and abroad for the picturesque atmosphere of his films.[2] Besides his pictorial style and the old-fashioned cinematic technique of one scene one shot, another trait that distinguishes him among his contemporaries is the unwavering subject that runs through the majority of his films: the portrayal of women. In the mid-1930s Mizoguchi's films representing women's lives have been categorized within the parameters of social realism. As Audie Bock and Saito Ayako have noted, there are two types of heroines: one who willingly sacrifices herself for the good of the male (motherly love). The second type is the woman as victim of unjust social systems who rebels against them trying to assert her independence. This type describes the sign of femininity as sexuality, as the body. [3]

---

[1] Audie Bock, *Japanese Film Directors* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1978), 39.

[2] Joseph Anderson and Donald Richie, *The Japanese Film-Art and Industry* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), 352.

[3] See Audie Bock, *Japanese Film Directors* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1978), 41 and Saito Ayako, "Sei to sei-Mizoguchi o meguru futatsu no onna (Saintliness and Sexuality-Mizoguchi's Two Types of

In this chapter I will focus on the second type of woman represented as prostitute in Mizoguchi's two postwar films: *Women of the Night* (1948) and *Streets of Shame* (1956). In his four films dealing with prostitution, *Osaka Elegy* (Naniwa ereji, 1936), *Straits of Love and Hate* (Ayenkyo, 1937) *Women of the Night* (1948) and *Streets of Shame* (1956), Mizoguchi constructs a critical depiction of society through a female gaze, conveying women's rebellion against oppressive systems.[4] The two films I analyze explore the postwar life in two crucial moments: the anguished years following Japan's defeat in WWII in *Women of the Night* and the time when the Prostitution Prevention Law finally passes after long years of debate dealing with controversial policies on prostitution in *Streets of Shame*. There are two main aspects I will consider in this chapter. One is the dialectic between the cinematic representation of prostitution at a particular historical time and a consideration of the cultural, historical background of the films. The films are directly anchored in Japan's postwar years and the narrative of the prostitutes' lives reveal a dimension of gendered, subjective history. They reflect on the impact the postwar years had on women by constructing highly memorable female characters that reveal prostitution's multiple and controversial sides. From this point of view, the films are directly critical of Japanese patriarchy and indirectly critical of the Occupation, since most of the situations that characters find themselves in, are a result of Occupation policies.

The second aspect I will explore is the style of the films and the way they portray a controversial image: the image of the prostitute's body. The victimization of prostitutes is

---

Women)," in Eiga tokushu mizoguchi kenji (Film Collection, Mizoguchi Kenji), ed. Yomota Inuhiko (Tokyo: Shinyosha, 1999), 278.

[4] I am not considering the films portraying geishas. Including these, there will be a total of seven films.

emotionally represented through various camera techniques, the aim being to offer spectators a very specific cinematic pleasure: the pleasure of sympathy. The two films' techniques are different, since *Women of the Night* is highly melodramatic while *Streets of Shame* offers a more objective vision of prostitution underlying not only its evils but also its necessity. The first film projects prostitution as a decaying of the body and spirit, an attitude resembling the fear of sexually transmitted diseases and the public opinion towards the Japanese prostitutes serving American GI's. The two aspects are closely related since both films reflect on the process through which women are victimized (or empowered in some cases) by the social and historical circumstances that force them to resort to prostitution. At the same time, the prostitutes address certain cultural problems like the presence of the Occupation and the dramatic changes in Japanese society.

What I argue through the analysis of these films is that Mizoguchi is very much concerned with the prostitutes' subjectivity and the way this subjectivity engages their body, refusing to offer the image of the female body as an erotic object of desire. Both films obsessively highlight the dire circumstances each woman finds herself in, trying to make spectators partake of each prostitute's suffering both through an explanatory diegesis and through the camera techniques conveying the characters' emotions. While in *Women of the Night* Mizoguchi's concern is exclusively with the ethical implications of prostitution for the women who enter it, in *Streets of Shame* he offers a glimpse on prostitution as a social system.

Audie Bock has argued that Mizoguchi was too implicated in the system that oppressed women to be able to cast them as revolutionaries, his work consisting rather of

the "purification of a national resentment" regarding women's roles.[5] Both his long-suffering, self-sacrificing ideal woman and the spiteful rebel are finally defeated by adverse circumstances. However, despite the lack of revolutionary efficacy, Mizoguchi's films reveal intricate systems of women's oppression and they open up questions about gender, history and society. The prostitutes in these two films problematize the vicious, unfeeling postwar society and the diverse circumstances that drag even the proudest women into prostitution. Much of the quality of both films is given by the richness and depth of its female characters fighting their way through a web of adverse events.

***Women of the Night,* Stripping the Body, Stripping the Soul**

The film portrays the life of three women who must sell their bodies in order to survive in a devastated society. Fusako (Tanaka Kinuyo), the main character finally enters the row of prostitutes despite her opposition due to a rapid succession of unfortunate events: her husband dies in the war, her child dies of illness and her sister-in-law becomes involved with the man she works for. Natsuko (Takasugi Sanae) is a single woman repatriated from China who dreams of finding love and having a family. She remains pregnant but her child dies and her lover abandons her. Kumiko (Nagata Mitsuko), Fusako's young cousin wants to taste the freedom of a solitary existence but she is raped and she finally joins the group of prostitutes. The three women try to help each other and finally Fusako abandons the world of prostitutes in an attempt to save the young Kumiko.

Mark Le Fanu's comments on the film's neo-realist style stating that *Women of the Night* "is one of Mizoguchi's fiercest and swiftest," governed by an extraordinary physical

---

[5] Bock, 41.

impact, "a cry of pain from beginning to finish."[6] Filmed on-location, the ruins and slums of Osaka give an unmediated sense of the rawness of characters' lives. All hopes are doomed to die while violence, degradation and despair proliferate. It is not only the landscape that is devastated, but also a previous social order and a way of living. As Mizoguchi's screenplay writer, Yoda Yoshikata remarks, "defeat has given birth to savage customs. It stripped both body and soul naked, it brought an evil sensuality into everyday living."[7] Unlike Tamura Taijiro who celebrates this sensuality as a positive one, as a way of indicting the ideology that has led to war and destruction, Mizoguchi condemns this sensuality as a mark of women's objectification.[8] He indicts sensuality as a sadistic enjoyment of the Other's pain and objectification, mainly a prerogative of men, both Japanese and foreign. Far from celebrating women's sensual awakening, Mizoguchi depicts the prostitutes as decadent beings who have lost their integrity as persons. The three characters become *panpans* (prostitutes serving Americans), an occupation regarded in the beginning of the film with the utmost fear and shame, being associated with evil.

The film starts with a panoramic traveling shot of the black markets in Tennoji and Amagasaki. An iconic image of the postsurrender years, we find images of the black market in the other films considered in this thesis, *Floating Clouds* and *A Japanese Tragedy.* The static camera zooms-in on a medium-shot of Fusako who goes to borrow money from a market dealer. The dealer suggests that she knows a method of making money but Fusako is terrified at the mere thought of becoming a *panpan*. Events proceed

---

[6] Mark Le Fanu, *Mizoguchi and Japan* (London: BFI Publishing, 2005), 81-82.

[7] Ibid. op. cit. 83.

[8] Yoshikuni Igarashi, *Bodies of Memory Narratives of War in Postwar Japanese Culture, 1945-1970* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 56.

rapidly and in a sketchy form, through a fragmented editing pattern: Fusako finds out that her husband died in the war and when she returns home to mourn him, her child breaks a high fever. The pathos involving the child's death is avoided and as Le Fanu suggests, it is one of "the least sentimental deaths in the history of cinema."[9] We find out about the child's death in retrospect when Fusako has a conversation with her sister-in-law whom she meets by chance. They both relate their misfortunes and the deaths of their families, emerging as victims of historical times. They start living together and Fusako can earn her living by working as a secretary for Kuriyama, a male employer who tries to seduce her. He finally seduces her sister-in-law, Natsuko and in her justification we hear for the first time a leitmotif that will appear in different forms throughout the film: "I am no good. My body has been messed up in the process of repatriation. I thought I would be happy once I returned but it might have been better if I was sold somewhere." The lack of personal dignity and integrity uttered by Natsuko is connected to objectification. The objectification of her body brings with it a stripping of her subjectivity, a form of dehumanization. The self-hatred and self-contempt resulting from experiences of rape or other forms of objectification appears as an initiation for prostitution, since the rape victim tries to overcome the trauma of objectification through reliving the experience of being turned into an object. Both Natsuko and Kumiko suffer sexual traumas, which eases their entrance into prostitution, while Fusako chooses this path both out of poverty and as a form of rebellion.

Although the film avoids the presence of the Occupation, the system of prostitution, which the three women enter, is a direct result of Occupation policies. The

[9] Le Fanu, 81.

difficult circumstances in which these women find themselves are reflected in Mizoguchi's decision to shoot on-location, conjuring up a variety of historical connotations concerning prostitution. The *mise-en-scene* is suggestive of the ruins and degradation following the end of WWII, while the narrative of the prostitutes' situation evokes postwar policies regulating prostitution. Beyond the film looms the dark shade of war. The camera registers the ruins of Osaka and the crowd of *panpan*, but at the same time it tries to capture the human cost of defeat and poverty. However, Mizoguchi avoids delving deeper into the circumstances of the *panpan* system. American soldiers are completely absent from the film and the guilt for the miserable conditions in which the street prostitutes live is transferred on to Japanese men. One can sense Mizoguchi's own guilt as he depicts the films' prostitutes as sympathetic characters, harshly condemning the patriarchal Japanese society (and indirectly Occupation). Mizoguchi admits this guilt in an open way early in 1948 when he visited the prostitutes' ward of the Osaka Municipal hospital. According to Shochiku producer, Itoya Hisao, Mizoguchi was overcome with emotion: "If you are here, it's the fault of men. It is my fault too."[10]

The film focuses on immediate circumstances that force women into prostitution overlooking the larger implications of Japan's occupation. In this sense, historical circumstances are represented indirectly and the problems of a society that has undergone traumatic changes is transferred onto the world of the prostitutes. As Keiko McDonald notes, "Mizoguchi offers a starkly candid view of prostitution as the epitome of social and

---

[10] Ibid. op. cit. 81.

economic evils suffered by postwar Japan."[11] One explanation for the avoidance of addressing the American presence is the strict injunction against anything that could be construed as criticism of the Occupation enforced by severe film censorship. The majority of films portraying the postwar years carefully avoid images of foreigners, especially scenes criticizing their presence.[12]

In his book *Japan's Comfort Women* Tanaka Yuki explores the prostitution system in the years following Japan's defeat in WWII. According to his findings, seventy-seven point five percent of prostitutes had become sex workers due to poverty, while a big majority of the rest had entered prostitution because of a rape experience.[13] By the end of the war most of the brothels and geisha houses had been closed and sex workers had left big cities searching shelter in countryside, but the Japanese government encouraged their return by establishing a range of prostitution facilities in Tokyo, Chiba and Atami by November 1945 under the name of Recreation and Amusement Association. The moralizing story they employed for gathering prostitutes serving Americans, was that they needed to protect innocent women from being raped by the occupying army.[14] However, due to the rapid spread of sexually transmitted diseases in 1946, the General Headquarters of the US Occupation forces (GHQ) issued an order abolishing the licensed prostitution system. GHQ and the Japanese government, however, declared the sale of sexual services

---

[11] Keiko McDonald, *Cinema East. A Critical Study of Major Japanese Films* (New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983), 80.

[12] Kyoko Hirano, *Mr. Smith Goes to Tokyo: Japanese Cinema under the American Occupation, 1945-1952* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 16.

[13] Yuki Tanaka, *Japan's Comfort Women* (London: Routledge, 2002), 143.

[14] Ibid. 143-144.

undertaken of one's own free will to be legal. "Accordingly, 'licensed brothel districts' (*yukaku*) became 'special restaurant streets' or 'red light districts', and 'prostitutes' (*shogi*) became 'hostesses' (*settaifu*)."[15] A large number of women became streetwalkers loitering around the U.S. bases. Since the epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases (STD) was still far from being contained, the Military Police of the Occupation forces and Japanese authorities began rounding up women on the streets and forcing them to undergo medical examination. Many girls who just happened to pass by had a very humiliating experience being forcibly taken to the hospital and detained.[16]

No longer protected by the brothels, the prostitutes in the film are forced to fend for themselves in the streets. Despite being servants for American soldiers, the prostitutes are never depicted with them, the film failing to depict the American presence. The phenomenon described above by Tanaka, the abusive rounding up of women for medical examination is vividly presented in the film in the scene when Natsuko goes to look for Fusako, ending up in a detaining facility for prostitutes. Natsuko is arrested and the next shot introduces us to the gloomy atmosphere of the hospital. The camera remains static, focusing on the rush of prostitutes in the room. Most of them look half-crazed, laughing and gesturing hysterically, harassing the men who run the facility. The scene is presented in Mizoguchi's typical long take; Natsuko entering the room as a group of prostitutes surround her. They start attacking and brutalizing her until she cries for mercy and acknowledges their superiority. The next shot is a close-up of Fusako's heavily painted

---

[15] Yuki Fujime, "Japanese Feminism and Commercialized Sex-The Union of Militarism and Prohibitionism," *Social Science Japan Journal*, vol. 9, no. 1 (2006): 39.

[16] Tanaka, 163.

face peering through the bars of a hospital bed. Her appearance has completely changed. Angry and now visibly bitter, she does not resemble the other Fusako we have been acquainted with in the first half of the film. The next long take contains their dialogue while emotions are conveyed through facial expressions of the two women. The facility where prostitutes are detained together with randomly arrested women on the streets is a direct consequence of the Occupation policies. It is an effort to contain the spread of STDs, despite its psychological effects on the women detained. The film is on the other hand exclusively concerned with women's situation, offering vivid portraits of what such policies ignore: women's victimization.

Besides the direct victims of faulty social practices, women are also victims of war. The young Kumiko is an iconoclastic victim of the social and moral turmoil of defeated Japan. Situated outside the patriarchal system that both confined and protected them, all three women search for an ill-fated form of freedom. For Fusako, selling herself is the only form of independence and a protest she can make against the male-dominated society. However, she becomes aware of the costs of her rebellion and tries to regain her sense of self-worth by helping the other two women. As Julia O'Connell Davidson argues, the prostitute is powerless because her degraded status dissolves any entitlement to the protection and respect accorded to other women.[17] The exclusion of the prostitute not only from a social community but also from the general definition of humanity is enacted as a form of social death, manifested as lack of power and honor. I will explore how the two forms of exclusion operate in the film turning the dream of freedom into a nightmare.

---

[17] Julia O'Connell Davidson, *Prostitution, Power and Freedom* (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1998), 133-34.

Social exclusion is enacted at the level of the policies regulating prostitution. Japan provided the Occupation forces with prostitutes, excluding these women from the boundaries of normal society. What Japanese leaders tried to avoid was not mass rape but the feminization of themselves by the occupying forces. At an imaginary level Japan's surrender to the Allied Powers turns a male colonial power into a feminized place, possessed by its occupiers. The power positions have been reversed not only politically but also at an imaginary level. "The sexual implications of having to accommodate hundreds of thousands of Allied servicemen had been terrifying, especially to those who were aware of their rapacity their own forces have exhibited elsewhere as well as of the huge numbers of non-Japanese women who were forced to serve the Imperial troops as *ianfu* or "comfort women."[18] Japanese leaders sought to avoid the humiliation of being feminized through the possession of their country's women by foreigners, with the shameful racial mixture bound to follow. They attempted to avoid not only mass rape but also to displace the imaginary feminization of the nation, by sacrificing a limited number of "prostitutes" viewed as marginal to the nation-state.[19] Their existence on the fringe of society strips them of their civil rights justifying many forms of abusive treatment. As Fujime Yuki has argued, the laws criminalizing prostitution did not prevent the spread of STDs, but they were used frequently to justify sexual violence and exploitation.[20] Prostitutes were rounded up by the police, detained and checked for STDs against their will, while cases of rape were pardoned with the excuse that the raped women were

---

[18] Dower, 124.

[19] Tanaka, 181.

[20] Fujime, 44.

prostitutes. This narrative of marginality and exclusion appears many times throughout the film even among the prostitutes themselves. They attack Natsuko when she visits the hospital and also Kumiko because she is a newcomer. In order to counteract their exclusion from society, they form tightly bound gangs, practicing a violent form of exclusion. Just as society strips them of their rights and subjectivity, groups of prostitutes strip outsiders who do not belong to their group of their subjectivity, seeking to humiliate and degrade them. The figure of the prostitute subverts social moralizing norms on gender and sexuality, stigmatizing other women: "Prostitutes often buy into discourses about gender and sexuality which attach stigma and moral blame to prostitutes, rather than to their third-party-exploiters or clients."[21]

The second form of exclusion is objectification. The prostitute is imagined as an Other that does not belong among the normal women. She is reduced to her sexuality, used as an object to be exchanged for monetary value. As Davidson comments, in client-prostitute sexual relations "the social constraints (on the part of the clients) are removed because the prostitute, who is symbolically excluded from the sexual community, does not have to be fully acknowledged as a human subject."[22] The Otherness of the prostitute entails abjection, which is represented in the film in different forms. According to Julia Kristeva, the abject figure exists outside the symbolic world threatening it with dissolution and thus provoking fear and disgust. The abject threatens a breakdown in meaning and in the distinction between subject and object. As Kristeva states: "It is thus not lack of

---

[21]Davidson, 39.

[22] Ibid. 133.

cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules."[23] The prostitute is the abject of sexuality and economy, she threatens a sexual system and an economic system, but what is more threatening is the lack of distinction between subject and object. The prostitute must be a body devoid of subjectivity, an objectified body used by others, but at the same time, she is a human being. She is an objectified subject and she is devoid of humanity and subjectivity in order to make possible the projection of male fantasies of power and eroticism. As Kristeva has shown, the reaction to the abject is one of disgust and rejection. The abject is that which is thrown away in order to preserve the coherence and borders of certain systems. At the same time, the abjection of the prostitute's body enables the projection of sexual fantasies forbidden in the sexual system regulated by strict rules. Davidson refers to this phenomenon as the "eroticization of social death" pointing out how prostitute use enables the association of sexual arousal with hostility and aggression.[24] How do the prostitutes in *Women of the Night* solve this irreconcilable paradox of becoming persons devoid of personality, sexualized, debased bodies devoid of subjectivity?

As we see in the film, the abjection of prostitutes appears less as an objectification at the hands of male clients but as self-objectification and self-hatred. The power implied in the objectification of women is not situated at an external level of patriarchy but pervades women's relationship with each other and their relationship with themselves.

---

[23] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror-An Essay on Abjection,* tr. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 4.

[24]Davidson, 138.

Their anger at an unjust social and gender system turns into violence against themselves. Unlike Fusako who enters prostitution due to dire economic circumstances, Kumiko undergoes a double ritual of dehumanization. Eager to "taste the joy of freedom," she innocently follows a young man in a bar where he forces her to drink, takes her money and rapes her. Downstairs are a group of decadent young boys and girls who secretly enjoy her downfall. After raping her, the boy takes her downstairs and accompanied by the lurid laughter of the group, he violently pushes her out. The second assault occurs when the group of young girls follows her and brutally strips her to her undergarments. This symbolic ritual is a stripping not only of her body but also of her subjectivity and humanity. The camera remains immobile as she is pinned to the ground and stripped. After the group of girls leaves, she painfully stands up and walks towards the camera, her face bathed in tears. The anguish of the rape scenes is communicated through the visual metonymy of physical touch.[25] The same anguish is communicated in the last scene where we have the reverse ritual: when Fusako wants to abandon prostitution taking Kumiko with her, she is cruelly beaten by the gang of prostitutes. As a result, Kumiko drifts in the world of prostitution and we become aware of her state only in the last scene of the film. Stripped of her dignity as a human being, she is ready to turn into an object. The objectification enacted socially both at an interpersonal level with the clients who want to reduce their body to a sexual object and at the social level of general association of prostitutes with dehumanized, sexually promiscuous beings, is internalized and it turns into self-objectification.

---

[25] Le Fanu, 82.

In order to explore the process of self-objectification, I will use Judith Butler's theory on subjection. The novelty that Butler brings to the theory of subjection as the process of becoming subordinated to an external power is an attention paid to psychic incorporation of the power at the very formation of the subject. Using a Foucauldian framework, she shows how the regulations of the body turn from external pressures to internal ethical imperatives. The ethical imperatives are carried by the soul, which forms and regulates the body. The formation of a subject takes places through the subordination or even the destruction of the body. "The subject not only effectively takes the place of the body but acts as the soul which frames and forms the body in captivity."[26] While this idea refers to a general philosophical theory on the formation of the subject, my question is how we can refer to the formation of the prostitute's subjectivity as a form of inner subjection. What more empirical studies suggest is the preclusion of a self in the prostitute. Prostitution produces a denial of the self or an anti-self, which overpowers any positive identity.[27] Studies conducted on prostitutes and their clients, show that prostitutes report having serious problems with their self-respect and with the ability to maintain personal relationships. They tell of having crises of identity and of the self. [28] The prostitute must offer clients the fantasy of a selfless sexualized body, while at the same time internalizing the society's moral imperatives against sexuality. The violence entailed by this form of internalized power is a continuous self-objectification.

---

[26] Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 92.

[27] Hugo Letiche and Lucy van Mens, "Prostitution as a Male Object of Epistemological Pain," *Gender, Work and Organization*, vol.9. no. 2 (2002): 11.

[28] Ibid.10.

Since I do not attempt to create a general theory on prostitution, I will restrict the analysis to the way Mizoguchi represents prostitutes in this film. The three women enter prostitution due to different reasons, Kumiko because of the rituals of objectification when her existence as a person is denied by the man who rapes her and the women who strip her. Fusako becomes a prostitute because of economic reasons but also because of her anger that she directs against her body. Natsuko feels overpowered under these circumstances around her, affecting her self-esteem. Natsuko's damaged sense of subjectivity reflects the anger and violence that pervades the prostitutes' sense of self. They seem to be governed by an urge for self-destruction and self-debasement, both fueled by anger and frustration. Their bodies are problematized through their simultaneous acceptance and refusal to be solely identified as sex objects. The troubled body of the prostitute can be seen in the film's concluding scene.

In the concluding scene, there is an unusual low angle shot at the group of women gathering among the ruins of an abandoned Christian church. Mizoguchi abandons his non-engaging long take, breaking the scene into different shots that try to capture the characters' violent emotions. The close-up of Fusako's face who joins the group of prostitutes out of curiosity is followed by a close-up of Kumiko's face illuminated by a lighter Fusako uses to help identify her. The close-up of the girl's frightened and surprised face highlights her dehumanized identity. She is dirty and unkempt and she stares in astonishment with her eyes wide open. Next, Fusako admonishes her for her fall, but her reproach is accompanied by violent gestures of pulling the girl's hair, beating and kicking her with her legs when she falls to the ground. In a frenzy of anger and despair, she objectifies Kumiko punishing her for wishing to enter the world of prostitution. The

alignment of the body with subjectivity, which prostitution endangers, is salient in her words: "Well then, get sick. Let your eyes become blind; let your nose fall and the flesh on you rot. Let yourself get rotten to the bottom of your soul." She obviously hints at the dangers of contacting syphilis but at the same time, she warns about the danger of dehumanization, of allowing oneself to turn into an object-like body. Deeply resenting herself for being a *panpan* and resenting Kumiko for that reason, she wants to quit and return to a normal life. However, the other prostitutes want to punish her but, undaunted, she suffers the cruel beating. Twice, the camera disturbingly focuses on her face in close-up, first when she says that she is not afraid and second, when she expresses her wish that there might never be any woman made like her.

The message of the scene and of the whole film is rendered through Christian iconography. She suffers a cruel punishment in order to absolve her and the other prostitutes' bodies of their sins. Two women hold her hands in a cross-like manner; one grabs her hair, while another hysterically hits her with a belt. Her dress gets torn uncovering her back and the camera creates an eroticization of pain by alternating between shots of her body and her face. The emotion conveyed is of catharsis, an expiation of guilt through pain, which might be considered tragic rather than melodramatic. The other prostitutes express their sense of empathy for her pain, with tears, and opt to intervene in the scene's violence. The iconic representation of her body in pain and her hysterical crying grip the spectators' emotions acting as counterpoints for an embodied subjectivity that overpowers the prostitute as a sexual object. Throughout the film, Mizoguchi is wary of the eroticization of the prostitute's body as an image. In this last scene, the body of the prostitute is associated with pain, distancing the spectator from taking free voyeuristic

pleasure in the scene. The rapture provoked by the vision of the body in pain is punctured by the voice of the prostitute, her subjective presence, which interrupt spectators' voyeuristic tendencies. More than that, the initial sadistic pleasure the other women in the film enjoy is followed by pity, an on-screen change paralleled by spectatorial emotion.

The film ends with a static shot of the painted glass of the church, the Christian image of the Virgin Mary holding baby Jesus. This image suggests how the symbolic figure of the Virgin Mary turns the rebellious, fallen woman into the nurturing woman, the two types of woman Mizoguchi is fascinated with.[29] Fusako is redeemed by her decision to save Kumiko and care for her. It is an image of hope suggesting that the two women abandoned the attempt to find a precarious and destructive freedom in order to return to society and care for each other. A return to subjectivity is possible by renouncing the objectification of the body in prostitution but at the same time, by punishing the body.

As I suggested before, the film is very much concerned with the relationship between the women's bodies and souls, between their subjectivity and the objectification entailed by prostitution. As cinematic images, their bodies are not eroticized and objectified because they show resistance and a permanent anger apparent both in their gestures and in their words. When Fusako waits outside for Natsuko to give birth, she violently reacts to a man's moralizing speech. He talks to the prostitutes about the miracle of birth and the guilt pervading their profession, but Fusako answers: "You should take revenge on people who turn a woman into a toy as soon as they lay eyes on her, no matter how honest and fine she tries to be." Angry, she turns her back on him but he tries to reach

---

[29] Sasou Tsutomu, "*Mizoguchi kenji zeneiga (Mizoguchi Kenji All Films),*" *in Mizoguchi kenji-eishoushahon (Mizoguchi Kenji, The Book of Cinematic Representation) (Tokyo: Fuirumu ato sha,* 1997), 116.

her: "Did you win? You are corrupted and full of wounds. What has been left of you but your pain?" He points out at her corrupted body that brings with it a corruption of the soul, a view endorsed by Mizoguchi himself. The soul is contaminated by the corrupted body and purification is possible through the punishment of the body.

How does this film engage the emotions of its spectators? Critics argue that even though the film is neo-realist in style, it also allows for the intrusion of melodramatic tones. Mizoguchi's old-fashioned long take makes up for the majority of the film's scenes, but, at the same time, he employs expressive devices like close-ups. Close-ups highlight Fusako's emotions in moments of crisis. The shot of her crying against the wooden barrier, the close-up of her face in pain when she is beaten by other prostitutes, a close-up of her angry expression in the hospital, are all shots that attempt to align spectators with Fusako's emotions rather than with a non-committed eroticization of her body. As Le Fanu argues, "experienced in the right conditions the emotion communicated is unmistakenly one of pity and awe the film achieves that essential resolution which Aristotle calls catharsis."[30] Keiko McDonald holds the same opinion detecting a strong bid for universal sympathy in the last scene. The camera is more committed than in a work of realism like *Sisters of Gion*.[31] However, I would argue that the emotion conveyed by this film is not like the empathetic emotions experienced through Kinoshita's woman's films. Dudley Andrew offers an interesting interpretation of the identification required by Mizoguchi's films. Distinguishing between empathetic and sympathetic imagination, the

---

[30] Le Fanu, 83.

[31] McDonald, 84.

first one being the symbiosis of two consciousnesses into one (spectator suffering with the characters), and the second one a meeting of two consciousnesses (spectator suffering for what he/she imagines the character to feel), he argues that Mizoguchi's films are governed by sympathetic identification. The experience of Mizoguchi's films involves a paradox of distance and involvement. The distance comes from Mizoguchi's refusal to cut within an action while involvement comes from the intensity in the creation of certain actions.[32] Instead of identification with passive victimization, Mizoguchi's films blend victimization with rebellion and anger. The last scene involves two levels of spectatorship: the angry prostitutes witnessing Fusako's brutal punishment and their tears, pity and awe which make them stop the ritual, and the spectators witnessing Fusako's body writhing in pain accompanied by her determination, "Let there never be another woman like me." She appeals for the eradication of prostitution through her decision to leave the profession and care for Kumiko, but she must offer the catharsis needed for the establishment of a new order of things.

How is spectatorship divided along gender lines in this case? Mary Ann Doane has argued that the woman's film de-eroticizes the gaze, the result being a disembodiment of the spectator.[33] However, I would argue that this film, even though it de-eroticizes the gaze, appeals to a different set of visual pleasures than the voyeuristic one. In that sense, de-eroticization does not mean disembodiment but a different type of embodiment. It produces sympathy, in other words, identification with the characters through a thorough

---

[32] Dudley Andrew, "The Passion of Identification in the Late Films of Kenji Mizoguchi," in *Film in the Aura of Art* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 192.

[33] Mary Ann Doane, Patricia Mellecamp and Linda Williams, ed. *Re-Vision- Essays in Feminist Film Criticism* (L.A.: American Film Institute, 1984), 295.

understanding of their situation. I argue that sympathy is not divided along gender lines for the film's contemporary spectators, since it precludes the male voyeuristic tendencies. I argued before that the prostitute is an abject of the social system, and an abject of sexuality, which turns identification into sympathy, not empathy, in other words complete identification.

While *Women of the Night* represents the post-surrender years and problematizes the ruin of the body and soul of the prostitutes against the backdrop of Osaka's ruins, *Streets of Shame* is constructed like a case-history of six prostitutes at a historical moment: the debates concerning the abolition of prostitution and the passing of the Prostitution Prevention Law in 1956. Unlike the first film shot on actual location, a vivid mark of its relationship to a particular historical time, Mizoguchi retreated to studio in order to make *Streets of Shame*, due to opposition from brothel owners to do location shooting.[34] This film too combines the representation of specific historical times with the character study of women as prostitutes and my analysis will be divided along the same lines like in the case of the first film.

***Streets of Shame*, How Evil Is Prostitution? Victimization and Empowerment**

The film has been mainly considered in regards to the historical circumstances of the abolition of prostitution, sidestepping the other problems involved in the representation of each character. Mizoguchi himself stated that he wanted to represent prostitution from many angles through this film, rather than making a film about the

[34] Richie and Anderson, 353.

abolition of prostitution.[35] The social consciousness of the film made it partly instrumental in pushing the anti-brothel legislation to parliament after many years of delay. At the same time, the film is pervaded with a fierce indignation at women's oppression, following in five episodes their various reasons for choosing prostitution and the outcome of their decision.

The Dreamland, the name of the brothel in Yoshiwara, is a far cry from its name; it is anything but "a dreamland." Women are all amateurs forced into prostitution due to uncontrollable life circumstances, living in a decrepit reality. The female characters are brought together in this place by adverse life circumstances, but unlike the prostitutes of *Women of the Night,* the place offers them a certain degree of protection from the dangers of the streets. Yasumi (Wakao Ayako) is a girl who finally frees herself from prostitution by cheating on a customer who wants to marry her. Yumeko (Mimasu Aiko) is the mother whose son is ashamed of her despite her being into prostitution to support him. Hanae (Kogure Michio) is a wife who sustains her husband and child and she is the least glamorous of the five women being harassed by a permanent cold. Yorie (Machida Hiroko) supports her poor parents. Mickey (Kyo Machiko) is the only one showing an aptitude for the game. She is the former girlfriend of a black soldier and her nonchalance and cynicism offer a very different image of the prostitute as a sexually conscious person. Keiko McDonald argues that the style of the film is one of "cold detachment and naturalistic observation discarding the lyrical and sentimental tone of *Women of the*

[35] Saito, 279.

Night."[36] However, the subject itself is considered melodramatic, since each woman's story reveals the circumstances of her victimization. The melodramatic subject is balanced by the camera's distant attitude. The camera follows each case story with the attitude of a pathologist studying physical phenomena.

The film starts with an establishing shot of Yoshiwara highlighting its longevity through subtitles: "Yoshiwara-Tokyo's red light district for more than three centuries." The camera moves next to a view of the street and then, the inside of the Dreamland. Discussions about the Prostitution Prevention Law appear many times throughout the film, especially marking its beginning and end. However, unlike in *Women of the Night*, the film is not exclusively committed to showing the tragedy of prostitution, allowing for glimpses of it as a form of freedom. At the same time, pro and contra opinions are balanced not only in the different views expressed but also in the stories of the six women. Each woman is both victimized by prostitution and empowered by it because it offers them means to survive in an age of extreme poverty.

Using Yuki Fujime's account of the debates surrounding the Prostitution Prevention Law, I will first analyze the film's relationship with its cultural background, leaving for the second part the analysis of the cinematic representation of the prostitute's bodies and how this representation aims to reach spectators. Fujime has a critical attitude towards the Prostitution Prevention Law by analyzing the relationship between Japan's Occupation and Japan's policies concerning women. Less preoccupied with the prostitutes' fate, the state in collaboration with the Occupation forces and even with feminist groups, was concerned with the control of STD in the first place and with Japan's

---

[36] McDonald, 156.

image in the world in the second place. A discourse of moralization governed the approach to prostitution. "One of the main reasons that the state and civic groups united in pursuit of the Prostitution Prevention Law was because it was argued that if they did not, Japan would have lagged behind international standards, and this would have become an obstacle to regaining a respectable position in international society."[37] She goes on to argue that this idea was a fiction since most of the countries had a system prohibiting the exploitation of prostitution (of another) but not prostitution itself. The policies of the U.S. Occupation prohibiting prostitution around the military bases was misrepresented as a worldwide trend and thus the Japanese government attempted to criminalize prostitution itself and not the exploitation of women. The consequences of this law did not offer a better life for prostitutes because many of them were forced into illegal prostitution being subjected to an even greater control by pimps and to punishment by law.[38]

It is only in the first scene of the film that this union of militarism and government policy is mentioned. A policeman comes and talks to the owners of Dreamland and to two of the prostitutes about the Prostitution Prevention Law. The owner complains: "when the American Occupation began, we were told that we'll be protecting innocent women. Now they want us to close down. Yoshiwara is 300 years old. We're here for four generations." She is worried that they hadn't even paid their debt they made when establishing the place. The business's justification is ambivalent since they protest the abolition of prostitution as a mark of Japan's ancient tradition but at the same time, they also refer to the reinforcement of prostitution due to occupation. Despite its longevity, the tradition of

[37] Fujime, 43.

[38] Ibid. 45.

the pleasure quarters has decayed and well-trained courtesans are replaced by amateur, desperate girls. One of the prostitutes is all in favor of the law but the other becomes worried about her future. The policeman assures them that the government will provide for them and give them jobs.

The debate continues when the male owner of the brothel gives a moralizing lecture after hearing the news on the radio about the defeat of the anti-prostitution law. Although they are exploiting the girls by taking 60 percent of their salary, and by keeping them in debt, they also offer a form of protection. "It's the owners that protect you. We're social workers. We make up for the inadequacy of the welfare policy. We're the only friends you have." The owners seem to be even more concerned than the prostitutes about the law so they try to keep them on their side by friendly speeches. The system of prostitution is deeply meshed with power relationships since brothel owners use economic means of coercing women working for them even when they do not use physical power.

The law worries the prostitutes and the public debates have a negative effect on their income, with devastating results in Hanae's and Yumeko's cases. The two of them seem to be the most bound by the trade because of their efforts to get money for their family. They also seem to be the least apt for the trade and the most victimized of all because of the double stigma attached to them. Despite working exclusively to provide, Yumeko for her son and Hanae for her husband and baby, they are despised by the very persons for whom they sacrifice themselves. While Yumeko and Hanae are victims, Yasumi, Yorie and Mickey find in prostitution a form of personal freedom. Yasumi deceives men and especially a man who wants to marry her, into giving her large sums of money and she finally escapes the trade by buying a bedding company. Yorie dreams of

getting married and her most treasured possession is a set of household articles. However, after the law assures women that their debt will be annulled, she gets married but comes back completely disillusioned. "He wanted a hired hand without paying. He's so poor. He slaves for nothing...I even tried to find a decent job but the pay is so low..." At least, being a prostitute, she can earn money and find a form of pleasure in spending it instead of slaving away. In this case, men's fate is not happier since men do not have the possibility to escape poverty. Instead of victimization and subjection, prostitution appears in her case a form of empowerment.

Mickey is the most cynical of the characters-chewing gum, smoking and imposing her sarcasm on others. She spends everything she earns on things she buys for herself and uses prostitution as a means of escaping a tyrannical father. She even regards prostitution as a form of revenge against her father who is a well-off man who tyrannized his wife. The scene of the father's visit is the only time when Mickey appears vulnerable and hurt. The camera itself is more committed, strongly focusing on her emotions, which sharply contrast with her emotional flatness throughout the film. Instead of Mizoguchi's usual long take, the camera follows the 180 degree rule and inserts close-ups of Mickey's face. Her father tells her that he has come to take her home. Upon hearing that her mother has died, Mickey completely changes. A close-up of her face underlines her shock and sadness. The father then goes on that he needs her to come home because her sister cannot marry if she stays in the trade and her brother cannot get a government job. However, when Mickey hears that he got married again, her sadness turns into rage. Apparently her father had cheated on her mother with mistresses and prostitutes: "I am only following your example. You are to blame. I want you to suffer" she shouts and then regains her sarcastic

composure and creates a theatre of prostitute and client. She tells him her price and that he can have her. She violently solicits him dragging him to bed from where he stands up terrified. Then she pushes him out the door, repressing her feelings of sadness and anger: "What an unpleasant melodrama." The scene is melodramatic in its intensity of feeling: her sadness highlighted by close-ups alternates with the anger and violence of her gestures towards her father. The three women find a form of freedom and independence in being prostitutes, but at the same time, their entrance into trade is marked by subjection and oppression. Yasumi was sold for 2000 yen to provide bail money for his father, while Mickey ran away from her tyrannical father ending up as a *panpan*.

The film comes back to the second defeat of the law in the last scenes, when the brothel owners and the prostitutes listen to the radio. While the former are happy, the latter are deeply engrossed in thoughts and worries. Hanae can continue to provide for her son and husband but it seems that her salary is not enough since they are evicted and they are left homeless. The end offers a pessimistic view on the continuity of the trade. The madam of the brothel prepares a young girl from Kyushu for her first soliciting experience. Mickey becomes sad when she sees the girl but she tries to regain her composure by offering the girl an advice about women's general fate. "Don't worry. Many do it for foolish men for nothing." The last shot is a close-up of the girl's heavily painted face half hidden behind a wall, shyly and sadly trying to solicit customers. McDonald criticizes the end of the film, stating that "Mizoguchi overplays the final moment of the film. Realistic perspective yields to sentimental compromise."[39] However, I will argue that despite the

---

[39] McDonald, 162.

sentimental overtone, the film allows for the ambiguity in the condemnation of prostitution and its support, since this is the only means through which the girl can escape poverty.

Unlike the vision of doom pervading *Women of the Night, Streets of Shame* offers a less committed and more accurate representation of the prostitution system as both a form of oppression and of empowerment. Women want to escape the trade and the stigma associated with it but they are aware that their situation would only get worse. The film thus focuses not only on the enclosed world of prostitution, problematizing larger social and gender aspects. How does the cinematic representation of the prostitute's body engage larger historical and ethical issues? In order to answer this question, I will analyze in detail the scenes describing Yumeko's lapse into insanity and Hanae's relationship to her family.

The action of the film takes place in a pivotal setting. The long shot, pan and deep focus reflect the hustle and bustle of the pleasure district where relations are fleeting. [40] When the camera is stationed in the street, it offers a grim view of soliciting. Women almost harass and attack passer-bys and they in turn push them or follow them. The prostitutes' bodies, despite the glamour of their outfits, are made to look dangerous and aggressive. They insistently put their arms around men's necks and try to drag them inside. The soliciting is not only visual, it is also highly tactile, thus conferring weight to the images governed not by visual seduction but by tactile forms of aggression.

In a scene depicting Yumeko's cruel rejection by her son and her consequent lapse into insanity, the camera work controls the audience perspective. Mizoguchi does not edit the scene in order to highlight the characters' emotion. Instead, the characters come close

[40] Ibid. 161.

or go far from the camera. Thus, instead of inserting shots with the close-ups of the characters' faces, we become aware of their emotions through their own movement. A long shot shows Yumeko searching for her son, Shuichi. When they get together, their conversation is accompanied by a tracking shot which shows the huge gap between their feelings: the mother is happy to see her son, she caresses him with her gaze, expressing her love. However, the boy is angry and cold, snapping short answers to his mother's questions. Finally, the camera comes to a standstill when the mother stops and lights a cigarette. She starts talking about the uncertainty of her future and her desire to be finally reunited with him. Shuichi comes close to the camera, his face contorted by painful anger and he snaps at her: "Everyone back in the village knows what you are doing. Aren't you ashamed? You whore!" The mother stands up and comes close to the camera, with a surprised pain on her face. "I did it to raise you." Despite her justifications, the son retorts that it was her duty to raise him. "I want no part of you. Never think of me as your son." She tries to persuade him to forgive her and live together but he pushes her in such a violent way that she falls to the ground. The eerie music highlights the emotional intensity of the scene, while the last shot shows the mother running after her son. The tactile violence of his gesture brings an unusual, almost physical intensity to the Oedipal drama. Highly resembling the scene in Kinoshita's *A Japanese Tragedy*, the son's breaking apart from the mother is associated with the abjection and rejection of the mother as a sexualized being. The mother's sexual body, although serving the son, does not bring feelings of gratitude but rather a violent rejection. As result of this unexpected and cruel rejection, Yumeko goes mad and the following scene has a subtle melodramatic intensity highlighted by the music which stops as if a cord has snapped, suggesting how Yumeko's

mind has snapped. The high angle shot suggests her dejection, and her crazed song is accompanied by a frenzied proclamation of her true identity. Trying to break free from the burden of being a prostitute and a mother, Yumeko affirms her identity as a person only in insanity. Mark Le Fanu considers the melodramatic intensity of this scene as too theatrical. "Try as I might, I am unable to think of the scene in which Yumeko goes mad-in response to her son's rejection-as anything other than 'theatre' in a bad sense."[41] I argue along Dudley Andrew's lines that the emotions elicited from spectators are governed by sympathy.[42] Identification with a woman's suffering as a passive, unjust victim is not in this case an empathetic response with tears, since it introduces a distance of interpretation. The mother's insanity precludes a symbiotic empathy inviting an interpretative sympathy. The close-up is of her inscrutable expression after she becomes crazy, not of her emotions aiming to be transmitted to spectators.

The second series of scenes of emotional intensity reaching pathos are the scenes showing Hanae and her husband. It's the end of the year and the husband waits for Hanae out in the streets, holding their child. His haggard looks and desperate expression are not only a result of his fever but also of his lack of power and hope. He is emasculated by his wife's profession and by his inability to care for his family. The low-key lighting underlines their feelings of despair and exhaustion. A back long shot of their walking together show Hanae's back pain suggested by her limp walk and her hand hitting her back. They go to have noodles at a shabby restaurant nearby and when Hanae holds the baby, she shows no sign of joy or fulfillment. In a subsequent scene, the husband tries to

---

[41] Le Fanu, 86.

[42] Andrew, 192.

commit suicide but Hanae arrives just in time to push him from his chair and they collapse on top of each other, both crying in anger and desperation. "We didn't do anything wrong and still, we cannot buy for our son. Is this our culture?" The scene is one of great emotional intensity, tears of powerlessness and despair being accompanied by an angry criticism of society. The husband cannot bear her continuous but shameful sacrifice, offering spectators a pathetic and painful image of the Japanese men's wounded masculinity in the postwar years. The darkness pervading society and human relations in the postwar years are suggested by the mother's insanity and the husband's powerlessness and desperation.

Streets of Shame is not only a film about the debates surrounding the abolition of prostitution, it is also a film portraying rich and complex characters, which imbue its realistic style of cold detachment and observation with human pathos and emotional intensity. Criticism of society is made indirectly through the tragedy haunting the characters since the film introduces a multitude of points of view pro and against prostitution. The complexity introduced by Mizoguchi precludes a definite answer because it is not only prostitution that is a social evil as supporters of anti-prostitution law proclaimed.

Conclusion

Mizoguchi's two films address Japan's postwar years through the sign of the prostitute, indirectly criticizing occupation and the postwar cultural configuration. Like the other films analyzed here, they construct a subjective dimension of history emotionally appealing to their spectators through sympathy. While *Women of the Night* construct prostitution as a corruption of the body that reaches the soul, as a stripping away of

women's subjectivity, *Streets of Shame* offers a non-committed view to the sometimes necessary evil of prostitution. The insistence on the decadence of the body of the *panpan* is replaced in the second film with a variety of images of bodies with more focus on their erotic potential. Yasumi flirting and kissing her clients, Yorie's relationship with her boyfriend and most of all Mickey's frivolous, defiant carnality inscribe the prostitute's body along an eroticism of the image carefully avoided in the first film. Women who engaged in prostitution during the Occupation became symbols of Japan's betrayal experienced through the military defeat. They were also emblematic of the suffering and despair of the immediate post-defeat years.[43] The body of the prostitute who must objectify herself in order to survive is an epitome of Japan's surrender and its objectification by a foreign power, which might explain Mizoguchi's highly committed attitude with the 1948 film. Bodily decadence is in this sense not a trope of sexual liberation from regulatory regimes imposed by militarism but a trope of humiliation and debasement, a sign of Japan's collective trauma. However, *Streets of Shame*, produced four years after the end of occupation takes distance from the ethical implications of prostitution describing it as a decaying old Japanese tradition. Prostitutes become sites of struggle between the indirect representation of Occupation and the Japanese patriarchy. Both *Women of the Night* and *Streets of Shame* transfer the trauma of Japan's defeat with its subsequent social changes on the sign of the prostitute, but they do not restrict themselves to this symbolic transfer. They are also genuinely concerned with the politics of gender and women's oppression. Women are not reduced to bodies that symbolize

[43] Joanne Izbicky, "The Shape of Freedom: The Female Body in Post-Surrender Japanese Cinema." *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal.* no.12 (1997): 120.

history since both films also denounce the violent processes through which they are stripped of their subjectivity.

Conclusion

All six films considered in this thesis construct a subjective, gendered history, representing Japan's collective trauma following the end of WWII from the perspective of victimized women. This dimension of subjective history is portrayed in a melodramatic fashion, with emphasis on the pathos resulting from unjust suffering, a pathos that engages spectators emotionally with the films.

My main argument is that the woman's films I have analyzed belong to a specific historical and cultural moment, Japan's postwar period. They employ female points of view without being restricted to the domestic sphere, since they portray a period when the domestic sphere was shattered. At the same time, they work through a process of identification governed by a female point of view, but they involve both male and female spectators, since the whole notion of masculinity was disrupted upon Japan's defeat. Male and female spectators are brought together through the trope of victimization, a trope appealing to people who suffered the deprivations and acute sense of betrayal and loss in the postwar years. This trope of the innocent victim operates on many levels, precluding questions of war responsibility, forming a subversive anti-American discourse and constructing a collective memory of shared suffering. The sense of victimization that spectators shared with the on-screen characters through identification could be regarded as a ritual of passage, an attempt to heal the collective trauma through a sympathetic suffering and powerlessness. Wolfgang Schivelbusch argues that the creation of certain myths in the wake of collective traumas functions as emotional fortresses against a reality

unbearable to the psyche.[1] The myth prevalent in Japan's postwar years was one of victimization and betrayal, present in many discourses. In the cinematic discourse of the woman's film, this myth articulates various ways of coming to terms with a painful historical moment, specifically through the melodramatic device of pathos and tears.

The woman's films analyzed in this thesis construct highly symbolic characters that are placed in a recognizable historical moment. Negating the scopophilic dimensions of objectification in the cinema, these films historicize the postwar period through emotional stories and posit the female image as a site of victimization versus pleasure. The films offer a masochistic, negative form of pleasure, as Mary Ann Doane, Thomas Elsaesser and other critics of melodrama and woman's films have pointed out.[2] Melodrama closely allies itself with the delineation of a lack of social power characteristic of the cultural positioning of women; it offers characters a negative, passive identity in suffering through adverse circumstances. This gender specificity is matched with the cultural specificity of the postwar period. However, we can say more about this form of cinematic pleasure enacted through tears and sympathetic suffering. Its purpose is to alleviate suffering through two psychological mechanisms. The first mechanism is catharsis, a purification of the spectators' own suffering through the emotional intensity operating within the films. Catharsis is also a mechanism of coping with trauma as opposed to forgetting. It implies a repeated return to the scene of one's experience of

---

[1] Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning and Recovery* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003), 26.

[2] See the collection of studies on melodrama: *Home Is Where the Heart Is,* ed. Christine Gledhill (London: British Film Institute, 1978).

suffering in order to bind that experience and consciously integrate it into one's identity.[3] Japanese spectators in the postwar years refer back to their own suffering through the viewing of characters' suffering, which is specifically constructed as a consequence of historical events. The second mechanism of this type of masochistic viewing is empathy, a sense of collectivity that empowers the individual, albeit through disempowerment. Individual suffering is alleviated by a shared collective suffering. Studies of melodrama have focused more on the subversive aspects, associating emotional identification and pathos with political quietism or even with political illiteracy.[4] Steve Neale tries to see beyond the academic suspicion of tears and pathos, noting that crying is a demand for reparation. "There would be no tears were there no belief that there might be an Other capable of responding to them."[5] I argue that even more than the fantasy of reparation, what is important in the tearful response to melodramatic pathos is a sense of collectivity of suffering, which reinforces a collective victim identity, but at the same time it works to alleviate the pain of victimization.

As I stated in the introduction, my purpose has been to bring together feminist readings of woman's films with historical readings, arguing that the female characters in the films analyzed are not only representative of the female social position at a certain historical and cultural time, but that they are also signs used to address various other cultural issues such as the rupture of collectivity, the shame of occupation, the loss of

---

[3] Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 55.

[4] Keneth MacKinnon, *Love, Tears and the Male Spectator* (London: Associated University Press, 2002), 100.

[5] Steve Neale, "Melodrama and Tears," *Screen* 27, no.6 (1986): 22.

masculine authority. There are four types of female characters, each appearing in these films: the mother, the wife, the lover and the prostitute. Each type engages not only a specified female identity within a patriarchal society but also a specific construction of collective trauma. The mother appears in *A Japanese Tragedy, A Hen in the Wind,* allegorically in *Twenty-four Eyes* and briefly in *Streets of Shame.* These films portray the tragic consequences of women with children deprived of the economic and social privileges coming with paternal figures. Fathers are absent as a consequence of war and women can only provide economically for their children by resorting to prostitution. While the U.S. Occupation was generally met with optimism for the improvements it brought to women's lives, the social positioning of women did not allow them many forms of independence that did not include selling their bodies.[6] The films' representation of the mother victimized by history shows the mother's lack of agency, inscribing her as the "lacking subject."[7] Mothers serve as the ground against which children's subjectivities emerge but also the ground which children contemptuously reject when they find out that they have been raised through their mothers' dishonest activity as prostitutes.

The mother figures in these films are not only representative of many Japanese women's situation in the postwar years, but they are also symbols of the nation's collective trauma. In *A Japanese Tragedy,* the mother speaks about Japan's loss of its most traditional unit, the family. The self-sacrifice and maternal devotion are rejected by the new generation of children raised in the postwar years. The mother's suicide

---

[6] John Dower, *Embracing Defeat- Japan in the Wake of WWII* (New York: W.W Norton at Company, 2000), 241-242.

[7] Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano, "Sengo nihon no merodorama (The Postwar Japanese Melodrama)," in *Kazoku no shozo (The Disappearance of the Family)* (Tokyo: Shinwasha 2007), 304.

allegorizes the opposition between collectivism and individualism. Collectivism as the expression of a traditional Japan is bound to disappear and only through its symbolic denial are Japanese subjects able to emerge as individuals. There is a profound rupture between the mother's "lacking subject" and her children as modern subjects.[8] The mother portrayed in *A Hen in the Wind* allegorizes a feminized version of the nation, which loses its integrity in order to save its sacred symbol: the Emperor. Despite the nobility of her act, which saves the child, the wife bears the stigma of impurity, of betrayal, in the same way Japan as a feminized, occupied nation must bear the stigma of impurity despite the preservation of the Emperor. Mizoguchi's mother prostitute appearing in *Streets of Shame* problematizes the abjection of prostitutes even by their kin. In this case, the mother figure does not address Japan's collective trauma, restricting the point of view to the female gender. Kinoshita's *Twenty-four Eyes* depicts teacher Oishi as a mother figure characterized by tenderness, care and sympathy, although she is not directly represented as a mother. The film highlights the fluidity of the mother figure as a signifier that speaks not only for itself but also for the collectivity. She suggests the relational positions of empathy and identification.

The wife and the lover types of female characters are portrayed as witnesses to the Japanese male collective trauma. The dynamics of gender relations in a period of chaos and destruction are explored through the narrative agency of female characters. Their suffering is double as in the case of mother figures; they suffer because of economic and social insecurity and because they relate to the Other's suffering. The suffering of males who have lost their masculine privileges is displaced onto female figures struggling to

[8] Ibid. 304.

help the reestablishment of a ruined masculinity. Ozu's film, *A Hen in the Wind* portrays the possibility for the male to overcome his trauma though violence against the female. Patriarchal authority is restored through the husband's transfer of affect onto his wife. Naruse's female character in *Floating Clouds,* on the other hand, tries in vain to restore a lost masculinity to her lover. His refusal of the memories prior to Japan's defeat and his flight from emotions leave all the burden of affect onto the female character who finally dies in pursuing the impossible dream of a genuine passion.

The prostitutes in Mizoguchi's *Women of the Night* and *Streets of Shame* work as emotionally charged signs for female oppression and for cultural corruption in the postsurrender years. While *Women of the Night* constructs prostitution as a corruption of the body that reaches the soul, as a stripping away of women's subjectivity, *Streets of Shame* offers an ambivalent view to the sometimes necessary evil of prostitution. Through these two films, Mizoguchi casts a harsh shadow not only on the American Occupation but also against Japanese patriarchy. At a symbolic level, the prostitute represents the corruption of the nation as a form of evil but necessary survival. The objectification of the prostitute parallels the objectification of the nation manifested as the impurity of sexual and cultural domination by a foreign power.

What are the marks of collective trauma that each film problematizes through women's various roles? The mothers speak about the loss of family values, the loss of innocence and a sense of collectivity in Japan's postwar years. The wife and lover address Japan's collective trauma as the loss of masculinity while the prostitutes refer to the shameful objectification of the nation through surrender. Prostitution is a metaphorical stage in the battle over the cultural configurations of postwar Japan. The role of the

women as narrative agents in these films is double: on one hand, they address collective trauma through the symbolization of the loss and rupture of the categories entailing collective unity and integrity, while, on the other hand, they address a specific, historically determined form of female oppression. From a feminist perspective, these woman's films are complicit with an ideology that poses women as innocent victims, but, at the same time, they are subversive since they address the collapse of patriarchal ideology as a national ideology. Female characters act as signs of the collective trauma of defeat because they disclose strategies of coping with suffering through pathos and tears. Ben Singer argues that "melodrama as it generally is used today refers to a set of subgenres that remain close to the heart and hearth and emphasize a register of heightened emotionalism and sentimentality."[9] As a subgenre of melodrama, these woman's films bring together the "heart and the hearth," constructing a cultural myth of healing or a ritual of passage in Saito Ayako's words.[10]

Many studies on spectatorship have focused on the visual aspect of cinematic pleasure as a form of voyeurism or fetishism, including Laura Mulvey's seminal essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema".[11] Vivian Sobchack and Laura Marks extend the range of visual possibilities through a phenomenological approach to the film's

---

[9] Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 6.

[10] Saito Ayako, "Ushinawareta farusu wo motomete (Reclaiming the Lost Phallus)," in *Eiga no seijigaku (Film Politics),* ed. Hase Masato and Nakamura Hideyuki (Tokyo: Shosha, 2003).

[11] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Screen, vol.16. no. 3 (1975): 6-18.

engagement of spectators' various other bodily senses.[12] While I do find these positions pertinent and valuable, I argue for a culturally and historically determined cinematic potential of involving spectators. In this respect, the spectator is not a transcendental subject, but a gendered and historical subject placed in a cultural configuration through specific experiences. The present group of films fictionally reconstructs a world familiar to spectators, employing contemporary situations to audiences of the period that these films were released and on-location shooting. In this sense, they appeal to a nationally imagined community. The cinematic language in which these woman's films work is one of witnessing and empathy. Narrative and image combine to create a form of spectatorship governed by empathy with the Other's suffering, a form of visual pleasure radically different from voyeuristic pleasure. The representation of women's victimization stresses the social character of embodied experience appealing to the emotions of both male and female spectators in the postwar years. The woman's films rely on the stylistic language of pathos conveyed at the level of the image through close-ups of characters' faces, the abundant presence of tears, emotional flashbacks and a *mise-en-scene* familiar to spectators. The *mise-en-scene* proposes recognition, anchoring the films in a familiar present: the black market, the ruins of bombarded cities, the idyllic, nostalgic village on an island. Besides these techniques used to convey pathos, most of the films create through the image an almost tactile response involving the spectators' emotionally-charged bodies: the woman hit by her husband while she tries to caress him, the mother pushed to the ground by her son, the blind man caressing a picture, the girl pinned to the ground and

---

[12] See Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts-Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004) and Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of Film* (London: Duke University Press, 2000).

stripped of her clothes, the mother embracing her sick child, two women supporting each other. The tender touch and the violent touch visually problematize the dialectic between victimizing the Other and comforting the Other's suffering. The films attempt to construct an embodied visuality through insisting on the power of touch. Pushing the mother is a bodily representation of memories of betrayal and disavowal, the wife's hitting evokes memories of anger directed at innocent targets. The caressing of a picture unites the sense of bodily touch with the memory of the picture a blind man carries in his mind. The mother embracing her child and the women supporting each other embody the issue of healing and comforting initiated by trauma. These images bring closeness and involvement, encouraging the viewers to engage actively with the images through the activation of a cultural memory of the body. As Gilles Deleuze has argued, the cinema cannot give us a body, it can give only the "the genesis of an unknown body, which we have in the back of our heads."[13] The power of pathos derives from a process of emotional identification whereby spectators superimpose memories of their own experiences over the ones represented in film.

The purpose of these cinematic devices is the spectators' identification, what has been considered a feminized form of spectatorship. The masochistic position of identification with lack and victimization allows spectators to experience catharsis and to accept a painful reality. Collective trauma is overcome through the recognition that the victim position creates a new collectivity marked by the collective shedding of tears. Mizoguchi's films offer a slightly different form of identification, one marked by

---

[13] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, tr. Hugh Tomlison and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 201.

sympathy. The melodramatic language of pathos works both on an imaginary level, internal to fictional production, and on a realist level, which refers to the world outside the text. In this case, the films produce identification through the device of emotional involvement with the characters' suffering, while also placing characters in circumstances and locations familiar to spectators.

What I attempt in this thesis is to offer a culturally grounded consideration of the woman's film, arguing that it offers an emotional representation of Japan's postwar cultural chaos and devastation. Although its narrative agents are women and the form of spectatorship they involve is the feminized position of identification, the narrative and imagery of suffering go beyond a strict gender delimitation. Work to be done beyond the parameters of this thesis may include adding two other groups of films that represent the postwar years. One group of films is produced after 1956, when there are fewer censorship constraints and a less direct emotional involvement of directors. Some of the directors making film in the 70s and 80s, although addressing what Oshima Nagisa has referred to as a new film audience unconcerned with the war trauma, still go back to the problematic period after the defeat in an effort to come to terms with a haunting collective memory. Imamura Shohei, Kobayashi Masaki and Shinoda Masahiro provide what trauma theories call the belatedness of memory in some of their films, investigating the trauma of defeat in a more historically critical way. My intention is to further explore this belated version of history, accounting for the difference with melodramatic representations made until the 60's. The other group of films belongs to what Yoshikuni Igarashi refers to as a revival of

interest in the body as the central site for the reconstruction of Japan's national image.[14] Joane Izbicky focuses on the cinematic representation of the female body in the postsurrender years in films like *Ikiru (To Live*, 1950), *Jiyu gakko (Freedom School*, 1950), *Senso to heiwa (War and Peace*, 1947).[15] She argues that the reduction of the woman to her naked body emphasizes men's difference, allowing them to wrest power over women away from American GIs. Japanese men take possession of women through the act of looking at the body of the Japanese woman, initially displayed for the entertainment of the Occupation.

Besides the woman's films considered in this thesis, I would like to include an analysis of other groups of films concerned with the representation of the postwar traumatic years. Adding other postsurrender films using the female body as a trope of liberation and a group of films dealing with the postsurrender years produced after 1960s, I intend to explore a more varied attitude towards Japan's collective trauma and towards gender representation.

---

[14] Yoshikuni Igarashi, *Bodies of Memory: Narratives of War in Postwar Japanese Culture* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 56.

[15] Joane Izbicky, "The Shape of Freedom: The Female Body in Post-Surrender Years," *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal,* no.12 (1997): 112.

Bibliography

Andrew, Dudley. "The Passion of Identification in the Late Films of Kenji Mizoguchi." In *Film in the Aura of Art.* 172-192. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984.

Berger, Peter and Luckmann, Thomas. *The Social Construction of Reality.* New York: Anchor Books, 1996.

Bock, Audie. *Japanese Film Directors.* New York: Kodansha International, 1978.

Butler, Judith. *The Psychic Life of Power.* California: Stanford University Press, 1997.

Caruth, Cathy. *Trauma: Explorations in Memory.* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995.

Cazdyn, Eric. *The Flash of Capital –Film and Geopolitics in Japan.* London: Duke University Press, 2002.

Cowie, Elizabeth. "Woman as Sign." In *Feminism and Film.* ed. E. Ann Kaplan, 48-66. New York: Oxford University Library, 2000.

Doane, Mary Ann. *The Desire to Desire-The Woman's Film of the 1940s.* Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987.

Doanne, Mary Ann, Mellecamp, Patricia and Williams, Linda. ed. *Re-Vision- Essays in Feminist Film Criticism.* L.A.: American Film Institute, 1984.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. tr. Hugh Tomlison and Robert Galeta, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.

Doi, Takeo. *The Anatomy of Dependence*. tr. John Bester, Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1989.

Dower, John. *Embracing Defeat- Japan in the Wake of WWII.* New York: W.W Norton at Company, 2000.

Elsaesser, Thomas. "Tales of Sound and Fury." In *Home Is Where the Heart Is.* ed. Christine Gledhill, 43-69. London: British Film Institute, 1978.

Eto, Jun. *Seijuku to soshitsu, haha no hokai (Maturity and Loss-The Collapse of the Mother).* Tokyo: Kodansha Bungei Bunko, 1993.

Freiberg, Freda. "Japanese Cinema." In *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies.* ed. John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson, 562-569. New York.: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Fujime, Yuki. "Japanese Feminism and Commercialized Sex-The Union of Militarism and Prohibitionism." *Social Science Japan Journal.* vol. 9. no. 1 (2006): 33-50.

Gabriel, Barbara. "The Wounds of Memory: Mavis Gallant's "Baum Gabriel (1935)-, National Trauma and Postwar French Cinema." *Essays on Canadian Writing.* no. 80 (fall 2003): 189-216.

Gledhill, Christine. "Introduction." In *Home Is Where the Heart Is.* ed. Christine Gledhill, 5-39. London: British Film Institute, 1978.

Gluck, Carol. "The Past in the Present." In *Postwar Japan as History.* ed. Andrew Gordon, 64-95. London: University of California Press, 1993.

Hirano, Kyoko. *Mr. Smith Goes to Tokyo: Japanese Cinema under the American Occupation, 1945-1952.* Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992.

Igarashi, Yoshikuni. *Bodies of Memory: Narratives of War in Postwar Japanese Culture.* New Jersey: Princeton, University Press, 2000.

Ishihara, Ikuto. *Isai no Hito-kinoshita keisuke (A Different Talent-Kinoshita Keisuke).* Tokyo: Pandora, 1999.

Izbicki, Joanne. "The Shape of Freedom: The Female Body in Post-Surrender Japanese Cinema." In *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal.* no.12 (1997): 109-153.

Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious.* New York: Cornell University Press, 1981.

Jung, Carl Gustav. "The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious." In *Collected Works of C. G. Jung.* vol. 9. part 1. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981.

Kaplan, E. Ann. *Trauma Culture- The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature.* New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2005.

Kido, Shiro. *Nihon eigaden (A Japanese Film Collection).* Tokyo: Bungei Shunjusha, 1956.

Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror-An Essay on Abjection.* tr. Leon S. Roudiez, New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.

Kuhn, Annette. "Women's Genre." In *Re-Vision- Essays in Feminist Film Criticism.* ed. Mary Ann Doane, Patricia Mellecamp and Linda Williams, 437-449. L.A.: American Film Institute, 1984.

Laplanche J. and Pontalis J. B. *The Language of Psychoanalysis,* tr. Donald Nicholson-Smyth, New York: W.W Norton, 1974.

Laub, Dori. "Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening." In *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History.* ed. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, 57-75. New York and London: Routledge, 1992.

Le Fanu, Mark. *Mizoguchi and Japan.* London: BFI Publishing, 2005.

Letiche, Hugo and van Mens, Lucy. "Prostitution as a Male Object of Epistemological Pain" In *Gender, Work and Organization.* vol.9, no. 2 (2002): 167-185.

MacKinnon, Keneth. *Love, Tears and the Male Spectator.* London: Associated University Press, 2002.

Marks, U. Laura. *The Skin of Film.* London: Duke University Press, 2000.

McDonald, Keiko. *Cinema East. A Critical Study of Major Japanese Films.* New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983.

_______. *Reading a Japanese Film: Cinema in Context.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006.

________. *Mizoguchi.* Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984.

Mellen, Joan. *The Waves at Genji's Door.* New York: Pantheon Books, 1976.

Mercer, John and Shingler Martin. *Melodrama-Genre, Style, Sensibility.* London: Wallflower, 2004.

Miyoshi, Masao. *Off Center-Power and Culture Relations between Japan and the United States.* London: Harvard University Press, 1991.

Mizuta, Noriko. "In Search of a Lost Paradise." In *Woman's Hand-Gender and Theory in Japanese Women's Writing.* ed. Paul Gordon Schallow and Janet Walker, 329-352. California: Stanford University Press, 1996.

Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Screen.* vol.16. no. 3 (1975): 6-18

Neale, Steve. "Melodrama and Tears." *Screen.* vol. 27. no.6 (1986): 6-22.

O'Connell, Julia Davidson. *Prostitution, Power and Freedom. Michigan:* The University of Michigan Press, 1998.

Ogoshi, Aiko and Junko, Minamoto. *Kaitai suru bukkyou sono sekushuariti kan to shizen kan (Demolishing Buddhism, Its View on Sexuality and Nature).* Tokyo: Daito Shuppansha, 1994.

Orr, James. *The Victim as Hero; Ideologies of Peace and National Identity in Postwar Japan*. Honolulu: Hawaii University Press, 2001.

Richie, Donald. *Japanese Cinema: Film Style and National Character.* New York: Garden City, Doubleday Anchor, 1971.

Richie, Donald and Anderson, Joseph. *The Japanese Film-Art and Industry.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982.

Russell Catherine. "Overcoming Modernity: Gender and the Pathos of History in Japanese Film Melodrama." *Camera Obscura*. vol. 35 (May 1995):130-157.

Saito, Ayako. "Ushinawareta farusu wo motomete (Reclaiming the Lost Phallus)." In *Eiga no seijigaku (Film Politics).* ed. Hase Masato and Nakamura Hideyuki, 62-106.Tokyo: Shosha, 2003.

______ . "Sei to sei –mizoguchi o meguru futari no onna (Saintliness and Sexuality Mizoguchi's Two Types of Woman)." In *Eiga kantoku mizoguchi kenji (The Filmmaker Mizoguchi Kenji).* ed. Yomota Inuhiko, 280-295.Tokyo: Shinwasha, 1999.

Sasou, Tsutomu. "*Mizoguchi Kenji zeneiga (Mizoguchi Kenji- All Films).*" In *Mizoguchi Kenji-eishoushahon (Mizoguchi Kenji-A Book on Representation).* Tokyo: *Fuirumu a-to sha,* 1997.

Sato, Tadao. *Currents in Japanese Cinema.* Tokyo: Kodansha Amer. Inc., 1987.

Schivelbusch, Wolfgang. *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning and Recovery.* New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003.

Silverman, Kaja. *Male Subjectivity at the Margins.* New York.: Routledge, 1992.

Singer, Ben. *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.

Sobchack, Vivian. *Carnal Thoughts-Embodiment and Moving Image Culture.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

Standish, Isolde. *A New History of Japanese Cinema.* New York: Continuum, 2005.

Suarez-Orozco, M. Marcello and Robben Antonius C.G.M. ed. *Cultures Under Siege:*

Collective Violence and Trauma. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Sztompka, Piotr. "Cultural Trauma: The Other Face of Social Change." *European Journal of Social Theory. vol.* 3. no 49 (2000): 449-466.

Tanaka, Yuki. *Japan's Comfort Women.* London: Routledge, 2002.

Theweleit, Klaus. *Male Fantasies.* vol. 1. tr. Stephen Conway, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

Turim, Maureen. *Flashbacks in Film-Memory and History.* New York: Routledge, 1989.

Ueno, Chizuko. *Nationalism and Gender.* tr. Beverly Yamamoto, Melbourne: Trans-pacific Press, 2004.

Wada-Marciano, Mitsuyo. "Sengo nihon no merodorama (The Postwar Japanese Melodrama)." In *Kazoku no shozo (The Disappearance of the Family).* ed. Iwamoto Kenji, 285-310. Tokyo: Shinwasha, 2007.

________. "Sengo nihon no kokuminteki merodorama (The Postwar Popular Japanese Melodrama)." *Intelligence.* no. 1 (2004): 91-99.

Williams, Linda. "Melodrama Revised." In *Refiguring American Film Genres,* ed. Nick Browne, 42-88. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

________. "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre and Excess." *Film Quarterly.* vol. 44. no 4 (1998): 1-13.

Yoneyama, Lisa. *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space and the Dialectics of Memory.* London: University of California Press, 1999.

Yoshimoto, Hideo. *Kinoshita keisuke no sekai (The World of Keisuke Kinoshita).* Tokyo: Shine furonto-sha, 1985.

Yoshimoto, Mitsuhiro. "Melodrama, Postmodernism, and Japanese Cinema." In *Melodrama and Asian Cinema.* ed. Wimal Dissanayake, 101-127. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.