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The artist's desire: Eight films of Mizoguchi Kenji

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University of Hawaii, 1989
THE ARTIST'S DESIRE:
EIGHT FILMS OF MIZOGUCHI KENJI

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF
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By

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Note: Japanese proper names will be written in the Japanese style of surname followed by first name. The Japanese name of a film will be used only the first time the film is introduced.
ABSTRACT

Japanese film director Mizoguchi Kenji (1898-1956) was an artist whose concern with the depiction of those on the fringe of society led him to focus on performing and visual artists as emblems of the human ability to survive and maintain dignity despite obstacles. The artists in particular struggle to maintain the integrity of their work in the face of both external and internal opposition.

The following Mizoguchi films feature a performing or visual artist as the main protagonist: *White Threads of the Cascade*, *The Straits of Love and Hate*, *The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum*, *A Woman of Osaka*, *The Life of an Actor*, *Utamaro and his Five Women*, *The Love of Sumako the Actress* and *Ugetsu*. For the purpose of analysis, these eight films are divided into three periods, along chronological and conceptual lines.

In particular, these eight films are examined in light of the theory of "triangular desire" of Rene Girard. Girard's premises are also reflected in the descriptions of the nature of the artist posited by Rollo May and Robin Wood, and in the theme of return and renewal associated with the journey motif which grows in complexity with each succeeding film.

While the mediating force in the "triangular" relation between artist and object of desire remains elevated, the artist-figures in Mizoguchi's films lose in subjectivity. With a lowering of the mediating ideals, and with a return to concentration on work within a sheltering setting, the artists acquire a renewed ability to endure and create.
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Japanese film director Mizoguchi Kenji (1898-1956) [Plate 1] was an artist whose concern with the depiction of those on the fringes of society led him to focus on women, and on performing and visual artists, as emblems of the human ability to survive and maintain dignity despite obstacles. The artists in particular struggle to maintain the integrity of their work in the face of both external and internal opposition. The development of this focus on the artist as creative survivor began with Mizoguchi's more descriptive approach to the artist in his earlier films, and culminated in his placing of the artist as a central figure in a philosophical discourse of greater magnitude in his post-war productions.

This study will examine eight Mizoguchi films featuring a performing or visual artist in order to determine if any developmental or philosophical schema can be discerned which will help expand our view of Mizoguchi as a director. After a brief review of some of the major literature in the field, and a brief survey of important aspects of Mizoguchi's life and directorial style, the eight films will be discussed, in chronological order, in terms of the issues mentioned above. These eight films—White Threads of the Cascade (Taki no Shiraito, 1933), The Straits of Love and Hate (Aienkyū, 1937), The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum (Zanikiku Monogatari, 1939), A Woman of Osaka (Naniwa Onna, 1940), The Life of an Actor (Geidō Ichidai Otoko, 1941), Utamaro and His Five Women (Utamaro o Meguru Gonin no Onna, 1946), The Love of Sumako the Actress (Joyū Sumako no Koi, 1947), and Ugetsu
Plate 1. Mizoguchi Kenji.
(Ugetsu Monogatari, 1953)—will be studied in light of several thematic considerations concerning the artist, namely: the role of desire, the criteria for artistic integrity, the nature of the artistic "journey," the role of passion and rebellion, and the ability to survive on the fringes of society. In addition, specific examples of both the direct and the indirect use of theatrical inspiration in the films will be highlighted.

Although these themes recur in Mizoguchi's work, there is no attempt to imply that the director produced films on artists with some set schematic design in mind. Rather, the emphasis in this study is on following the theme of the artist as it develops throughout the body of Mizoguchi's work.

Along with Ozu Yasujirō and Kurosawa Akira, Mizoguchi is frequently cited as one of the three major Japanese film directors who helped establish the Japanese cinema as a major art form. Mizoguchi's life spanned the most important years of the development of the Japanese cinema, a development furthered through his concern for excellence, and for innovation within tradition, on both a thematic and formalistic level. He was a complex artist whose films ranged from the starkly realistic to the most hauntingly lyrical. Well-known for his skill in creating atmosphere in his films, he has been praised for his attempts to harmonize opposites: light and shadow, harshness and beauty, societal pulls and individual needs. European critics, who originally turned Mizoguchi into a cult figure in the 1950s, spoke of his merging of Zen aesthetics and the Christian view of the soul (Bokanowski 40). Donald Richie describes these seeming dichotomies in Mizoguchi's work in the following perceptive manner:
In Mizoguchi... we find a balance, rare in Japanese cinema, between the classic poles of the traditional—the acceptance of feudal values, the affirmation of the home, the joy of submitting to restraint, and the individual—the impatience with restraint, the criticism of all traditional values, the joy of overcoming obstacles, of enlarging horizons. (Japanese Cinema 1961, 114)

This kind of complexity is particularly apparent in the depiction of artists in the eight films under study. Mizoguchi did not make films about set art forms but rather about the artist in reaction to his or her society. The Mizoguchian artist is engaged in an active struggle not to be silenced or minimalized, and an active search for the most perfect medium of expression. This is a search which develops in complexity with each new film related to this theme.

In addition, with each successive film on this theme, Mizoguchi depicts an artist who grows in his or her ability to achieve satisfying personal relationships, especially in terms of a reunion with family. The artist's power in society, however, remains problematic. The only artists the director allows to survive are those who are able to lower their ideals and become reconciled to their own limitations and to the limitations society imposes on them. As the artist-figures move toward the transcendental, they tend to lose in individuation, in a sense of distinctness. With a lowering of their motivating ideals, and a return to concentration on work within a sheltering setting, the artists acquire an ability to endure and create.

In the eight Mizoguchi films under study, the themes of the journey, and of a loss of individuation, are intimately tied to the theme of desire. Desire, which can be defined as the experience of a lack of
something, ranges from the desire for mastery or for material possession, to the desire for self-affirmation. It can extend to the desire for a love of spiritual or erotic nature (or a combination of these qualities). Julia Kristeva points out that "desire is the desire of the Other, which includes the subject as divided and always in movement" (Revolution 131). This state of constant movement in desire impels the desiring one to take risks—at times to embark on a metaphoric, or actual, journey—in order to approach the Other. Desire is inherently disruptive of the established order. Desire seeks change.

To the Mahayana Buddhists, whose thought influenced Mizoguchi as he grew older, desire is delusory, but it provides the "fuel, the 'firewood,' of ultimate enlightenment" (Donahue 29). In other words, desire itself is seen as a means toward the transcendence of desire. No matter how lowly a person might be, he or she is considered by the Mahayana Buddhists to be capable of becoming enlightened at any time. The journey, therefore, becomes a journey within desire, toward detachment from desire. The artists in Mizoguchi's films move toward a transcendence of desire, not by repressing it, but by incorporating it into their lives in a modified form, just as the camera at the end of Ugetsu includes the larger village within the frame in one final fluid motion.

One central reason for the artists' loss of individuation mentioned above lies in the situation of "triangular desire" Mizoguchi constructs in relation to these artist-figures. This metaphorical concept of "triangular desire" is influenced, in this study, by the writings of literary critic René Girard concerning the presence of a mediator of desire which assumes a role between the subject and the object, and
which transfigures the object. Girard's approach is of interest here because of its application to the way Mizoguchi develops the theme of the artists' movement toward a more realistic assessment of their creative and personal ideals.

According to Girard, the less in touch with reality the subject finds himself or herself, the more the struggle with the mediator of desire intensifies. Although this mediator may be an imaginary ideal, the mediation is nevertheless real in the mind of the subject and it casts an illusory glow over the object of desire. At this stage, it is the mediator, and not the subject, which actually chooses the object of desire. The subject enters into a kind of dream world, constructed around desire, in which everything seems possible, and very little actually is.

In this context, the desire for love, particularly for erotic love, can be a problematic, ambivalent one, as it entails both the desire for fulfillment and the desire for the perpetuation of the desire itself. Kristeva insightfully addresses this issue of the mediator in a love relationship:

As if, at the very moment when the individual discovered himself to be intensely true, powerfully subjective, but violently ethical because he would be generously ready to do anything for the other, he also discovered the confines of his condition and the powerlessness of his language...Are not two loves essentially individual, hence incommensurable, and thus don't they condemn the partners to meet only at a point infinitely remote? Unless they commune through a third party: ideal, god, hallowed group....(Tales 3)
Although we tend to focus on the object of desire, it is actually the mediator which is both the starting point and the end point of the state of desire in this context.

Girard uses Don Quixote as one example of a kind of triangular desire in which the object (Dulcinea) is only a means of approaching the mediator (the chivalric ideal of Amadis). The more the subject (Don Quixote) approaches and desires to absorb the mediator, the greater is the rejection of his own self. Don Quixote cannot face the truth of desire because, by doing so, he would have to see the rather tarnished nature of the mediator. On the other hand, without rejecting this metaphysical desire, and without reducing the distance between the subject and the mediator, he can experience no real passion (which Girard differentiates from desire as being something which arises from within).

In the case of the eight Mizoguchi films about the artist-figure, the artists become less individuated as the mediator of desire becomes more elevated. Girard's differentiation between an external and an internal mediator of desire is helpful in this context. With external mediation, the distance between the two spheres of possibility occupied by the mediating ideal and the subject is so great that contact is impossible. With internal mediation, the distance is reduced to the extent that the mediator becomes housed in another person, and therefore the subject imitates what he or she thinks another (admired) person desires (Deceit 7-9). In the eight Mizoguchi films, the mediator of desire moves from a highly external to a more internal sphere of influence with each successive film. Initially, Mizoguchi's work tends to contain an
implicit sense of the object as more of a projection of the artist's subjective desire than as a reality in itself. Only through a rigorous, and passionate, insistence on artistic integrity, and a sincere attempt at union with another, can the artist transcend the need to rely on a mediator of desire by recognizing reality where only illusion had previously resided.

In his essay on Mizoguchi in *Personal Views: Explorations in Film* (1976), Robin Wood's thesis of the three kinds of pots in *Ugetsu* as emblematic of Mizoguchi's artistic testament is connected with this threefold depiction of desire (237). Wood writes that the first set of pots, those hastily-produced commercial objects, bring "easy money" and spiritual disorder. At this stage, art is merely a means toward an end. The second set, those illusory "ivory tower" objects placed before the potter Genjūrō by Lady Wakasa, belongs to the illusory world in which it is displayed. At this stage, art is an ideal mediating force, at a distance from reality. Finally, there is the third set of pots that Genjūrō fashions after having returned home from his adventures, a wiser man. This set shows a true sensibility that mark Genjūrō as an artist, rather than as a mere craftsman or deluded dreamer. At this third stage, art is a true passion, not a distorted desire. Assimilated experience has become the keynote, helping to balance the tragic sense of loss with a new sense of creative endeavor and spiritual affirmation.

The progression in the artist's spiritual growth in Mizoguchi's films will be presented in this paper according to the following pattern (which reflects Woods' threefold paradigm). In the earlier films (exemplified by *White Threads of the Cascade*), art and life are
shown as extremes, almost mirror images, of each other, and in which death is the only possible outcome. This presentation of the artist ties in more closely with the common Mizoguchian theme of the need for sacrifice (especially by women) in order to aid loved ones and to preserve a sense of personal integrity. The artist performs/produces in these earlier films in order to fulfill another goal (such as self-survival or the support of a lover) rather than because of the perception of any real intrinsic value in the artistic act itself. In fact, the accoutrements of the artistic career (a false stage name, painfully long tours, unsophisticated rural audiences) are seen as hindrances to a meaningful life. Art and life cannot be reconciled at this level, and status differences between the artist and the loved one frequently remain.

In the "middle period" films (exemplified by The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum), a greater perfection and degree of self-realization through art is realized, but fulfillment in the artist's personal life remains elusive. By the end of these films, status issues become somewhat resolved but an incomplete union between art and life mark the majority of Mizoguchi's films about the artist during this period. When Kikunosuke leans over the fatally ill Otoku and begs her not to die since he can now have fulfillment both in art and in life, he is voicing the usually unspoken, still unattainable, desire of the artist in Mizoguchi's worldview.

In the final film, Ugetsu, one's true art and one's union with loved ones is finally fulfilled, although not totally within the phenomenological world. In this light, it is important to remember
that, to the traditional Japanese, the natural and the supernatural were not two distinct forces. Although his wife Miyagi had been killed, she did not die to Genjūrō in spirit, but rather continued to nurture his art in a real, rather than merely philosophical, way. This is shown by the sequence of the potter's wheel being "turned" by her spirit as Genjūrō works on into the night on his new, more carefully-crafted compositions. Mutuality between the artist and his loved one is now possible, because the mediating ideal has been brought within realistic limitations.

The triadic nature of desire described by Girard can be seen in several more aspects of Mizoguchi's work. On a more formalistic level, it is reflected in the trilogy format of several series of Mizoguchi films (although Yoda reminds us that there were no original plans to produce trilogies; rather they evolved in the course of making the films [Hito 107]). Not only was there the "theatre trilogy," to be discussed in this dissertation, there was also an intended "Kansai trilogy" in the writing of Osaka Elegy (Naniwa Hika, 1936) and Sisters of the Gion (Gion no Shirai, 1936). Mizoguchi had planned to make a third film about a Japanese man in Kobe who had a foreign wife, but he never carried the plan through. (Even Yoda doubted if Mizoguchi could have adequately depicted the real nature of the foreign wife [Hito 88]).

Triangular love affairs are another common pattern in Mizoguchi's oeuvre and can be seen in films like Nihonbashi (1929) (Plate 2), Hometown (Furusato 1930), The Straits of Love and Hate, Miss Oyū (Oyūsama, 1951) [Plate 3], A Woman of Rumor (Uwasa no Onna, 1954), and Ugetsu, among others. In A Woman of Rumor, for example,
Plate 2. Nihonbashi (1929).
Mizoguchi skillfully inserts a kyōgen stage performance about an older woman in love with a younger man which parallels the love of the mother, Hatsuko, for the manipulative younger doctor, Matoba, thus highlighting the triangular configuration through a play-within-a-play format. Mizoguchi even creates a triangular form out of one of the geishas in *Utamaro and his Five Women*, when the artist sketches nurse and child on the back of the courtesan Takasode [Plate 4]. In these triangular configurations, a merging of the image of woman as nurterer and as sexual object is achieved (similar to the effect later attempted by director Shinoda Masahiro in his *Double Suicide* (*Shinjū Ten no Amijima* 1969) in which his wife, Shima Iwashita, plays both the courtesan Kataru and wife Osan in his cinematic version of the Chikamatsu play).

The movement in the eight Mizoguchi films, from the more ephemeral theatrical milieu to the more tactile world of the woodblock artist or potter, mirrors the movement from external to internal mediation, and finally to the transcendence of the need for mediation. This movement is reflected in the media the artists use for the projection of their art, a progression that moves from song and water, to theatrical impersonations, and finally to the more transformative sphere of fire and clay. This progression in the media used by the artists in Mizoguchi's films is thus one that moves from water, the most fluid and yet unmalleable element, to clay, the most tactile and malleable (and yet most firmly established when fired). This parallels the general movement from isolation to union that the artists travel (with varying degrees of success), as well as their movement from the illusory toward the real. On a more cynical
Plate 3. Otowa Nobuko, Hori Yuji and Tanaka Kinuyo in Miss Oyu (Oyusama, 1951).

Plate 4. Bando Minosuke (right) in Utamaro and His Five Women (Utamaro o Meguru Gonin no Onna, 1946).
note, it may also reflect the relatively conservative aspect of the ending of *Ugetsu*, which will be discussed in more detail below.

The artist's journey toward the object of desire is presented as part of the threefold configuration discussed above. The journey, with its pattern of embarkation, return and renewal, is associated with the working through of a metaphysical or psychological problem concerning the nature of desire. The threefold nature of the journey is also tied in with the journey's progression from possession, to loss, to a (partial) restitution of what is lost. It is thus more of a subjective or metaphoric journey than a geographical one, although almost all of the artists undertake an actual journey from one place to another during the course of the film. In the journeys undertaken by the artists in Mizoguchi's films, there is a tendency for the central figures to first descend, both in status and geographically, before ascending again, either in a real or metaphoric sense.

In his discussion of this same pattern in the Japanese puppet drama (*bunraku*), Gerstle contrasts the rising and falling pattern of the *jōruri* narrative storytelling, particularly in history plays, with the opposite pattern, the fall through hubris, seen in tragic drama in the West (*Circles* 63). The Japanese pattern of a journey "downward" in fortune, followed by a return "upward" to one's original point of departure, transformed, is especially evident in films like *The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum* and *Ugetsu*, reflecting the fact that these are more fully-conceived works. This pattern also mirrors the Buddhistic teaching that each person passes through cycles of death and then rebirth, as he or she transverses different levels of illusion before emerging spiritually transformed.
The image of the fall—the descent before the ascent—is particularly prevalent in Mizoguchi's work. Mizoguchi's characters react strongly and physically to each other, often in rather surprising gravitational falls toward each other [Plate 5]. As Masson observes in his "Rêvers de la Quiétude": "In the organization of gestures, the fall sketches the paradoxical alliance of an immobility and a fullness" (Dans l'organisation des gestes, la chute ébauche l'alliance paradoxale d'une immobilité et d'une ampleur [28]).

A sense of transformation, essential to the dynamic quality of the films, accompanies this pattern of fall and then ascent during a journey. The return of the artist from his or her journey is marked by the "lowering" of the mediator of desire with a concomitant acceptance of certain limitations, and also by death in some form, as a result of the intense, and frequently life-threatening, nature of the artists' struggles. In any culture, at any time, a journey can be viewed as a time when the unknown prevails. In Japanese classical literature and theatre, the journey is consequently often treated as a metaphor for life itself, as in the famous opening lines of The Narrow Road to the Far North (Oku no Hosomichi) of the poet Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694): "The months and days are the travellers of eternity. The years that come and go are also voyagers" (Keene, Anthology 363). In traditional nō theatre, the journey (michiyuki) often involves a merging of the present state of the protagonist (shite) with the unresolved conflicts of those who have gone before. In kabuki and bunraku theatres, the michiyuki is often the path star-crossed lovers take in their attempt to escape societal scorn.
through double suicide (shinju), which was believed to insure reunion after death.

In the opening sections of Ki no Tsurayuki's travel diary The Tosa Diary (Tosa Nikki, c. 936), a traveller about to embark on a long, and inherently dangerous, journey is subjected to endless farewell parties for days before his or her departure by people who are never sure if they will ever meet again (Keene, Anthology 82-84). In traditional Japanese thought, the traveller's ability to successfully complete the journey was always considered an uncertainty.

Associated with the return aspect of the journey motif is the fact that, in Mizoguchi's films, the artists need to create not only an object or a performance, but also an entire world, a refuge in which they can continue to work. This world could consist of a village, or a small circle of friends, a private studio or an intense and exclusive love affair. As the potter Genjūrō in Ugetsu exclaimed while examining the pots put before him: "It is amazing how much the right environment can do to bring out the beauty of an object." Implicit in this reconciliation with one's environment, however, is a political implication that the best artists are those who remain in simple, poorer circumstances (like Genjūrō in Ugetsu) or who accept traditional roletypes (like Kikunosuke in The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum). The image of the artist in Mizoguchi's films reflects such an ambivalence that can be seen throughout his career: a vacillation between desires for revolt and security, passion and resignation.
Nevertheless, accompanying the ascent aspect of the journey, for the Mizoguchian artist, is the ultimate lesson that art for its own sake, and for the sake of a true voice, is what matters, not the way others receive one's work or the money it draws. This realization is only possible when art as a mediating ideal is brought closer to the real struggles and needs of the artists within the fabric of their lives. This is not to be viewed, however, as a final, static condition. Like the horizontal scroll (emakimono) nature of many of Mizoguchi's films, the viewer is made aware of the continuance of the story beyond the last frame. The desire of the artist to continue to nourish a life of the imagination sets their motivating ideals off from those of many of the other (primarily female) characters, whose overwhelming desire is to restore (rather than create) a harmony and union which has been buffeted by the crueler forces of society.

In Mizoguchi's films, the artists who successfully maintain their vision and yet return to society fulfill a basic drive inherent in Japanese society: that of remaining part of a larger whole, reflected not only in nature but also in ties to other persons. In Japanese traditional thought, individuals can be seen as aspects of each other and as needing each other for completion and for the linking of destinies. Even if these "essential others" are now dead (as is the case with Miyagi in Ugetsu), the return of the artist has ensured the renewal of basic ties so fundamental to his sense of identity. Those who remain isolated from a supportive community (like Matsui Sumako in The Love of Sumako the Actress) do not survive.

Mizoguchi's concern with the "underdog" artist (and with other devalued members of society) could be called progressive, although
veteran screenwriter Yoda Yoshikata maintains that Mizoguchi himself would not have thought of himself in that light. Rather, Yoda terms it "something deeper than empathy" (dojō yori fukai mono) for those who have been discriminated against by society (Yoda interview 1988). In an earlier interview with Ariane Mnouchkine, Yoda reported that whenever Mizoguchi would ask him to write a scenario, he would always remind Yoda not to forget the social context (Cahiers 28).

I have made twenty films with him, and it is only now that I begin to understand what he wanted; when I worked with him it was very difficult. He said: "In your scenario, you must put in everything, everything, that deals with human beings: the social aspect, what was good, and what was dirty. But make it beautiful." I would try to make it beautiful and he would say to me: "It is too beautiful, life is not so simply beautiful, you must put in everything, but you must not disperse it. It must seem crystallized, concentrated. Not too beautiful, not too ugly, not too dirty, not too logical." (Cahiers 24)

Many of the down-and-out characters in Mizoguchi's films rebel, but there is a sense of idealization and incompleteness to Mizoguchi's image of the rebel. This theme of rebellion, in relation to the theme of the artist-figure, will be examined in more detail later. Unlike the fate of those who have found ways to reintegrate themselves into society, the characters who decide to maintain a critical stance toward accepted social conventions suffer in ways far more lasting. In this sense, rebellion is not presented by Mizoguchi as a necessarily triumphant state, but it is nevertheless implicitly respected by the director.

Another window onto the world of the artist which will be used in this analysis is provided by the writing of psychoanalyst Rollo May who has explored the dynamic of artistic creation, mainly in his The Courage to
Create (1969). Drawing from a diverse spectrum of sources, including the writings of artists themselves, May describes creative courage as the courage to live out one's imagination, to risk an encounter with reality and thus to discover new forms. This is intimately connected with the concept of the lowering of the mediator of desire presented in Girard's schema. This process, fraught with anxiety, insecurity and self-doubt, is described by May as being, in its own way, a rebellious struggle with the gods because, in actuality, the creative act is a form of reaching beyond one's own mortality. May writes: "The artist presents the broken image of man but transcends it in the very act of transmuting it into art" (Love and Will 23).

May describes the intense emotional state accompanying artistic creation as one of joy or passion, as opposed to the kind of happiness or fulfillment expected from an inflated desire. In the same way, one remarkable aspect of the interrelationship between Mizoguchi's characters is the degree of passion they display.

One distinguishing characteristic of the encounter is the degree of intensity, or what I would call passion. I am not referring here to the quantity of emotion. I mean a quality of commitment, which may be present in little experiences—such as a brief glance out the window at a tree—that do not necessarily involve any great quantity of emotion. But these temporally brief experiences may have a considerable significance for the sensitive person, here viewed as the person with a capacity for passion. (May, Courage 100)

What is attractive about May's thesis is that his view of the artist does not apply a reductive or neurotic label to the artistic experience, but rather seeks to discern what is universal in such an experience. In
this sense, he is closer to the kind of worldview Mizoguchi expounded over the course of his career.

May adds the caveat that limits are an intrinsic aspect of creativity and that confronting these limits could actually turn out to be expensive. Included in these limits is a consideration for form and pattern, two inseparable elements of any Mizoguchi film. The limits are those imposed by turning desire (with its concomitant illusory framework) into a passionate engagement with reality, a process that incorporates the artists' choices as they move toward a new, syncretic union of image and form, of work and domestic stability. This movement toward union is a primary determining factor in the artists' ability to develop on both a creative and a personal level.

Finally, on a metafilmic level, there is also the desire felt by the film viewers for fulfillment through the narrative, and through the viewing of the film. Viewers can (and are encouraged to) displace their desire onto a substitute (the film), an act which is both voyeuristic and metaphoric.

The component parts of a narrative evoke an imaginary whole, something like a promise made by the narrative text as it projects an ending, a promise of compositional unity in which the viewing subject might reconstitute itself in a fiction of wholeness. (Sandro 146)

As Metz has pointed out, the viewer identifies with what he or she sees on the screen, and also with the camera (which represents the act of seeing itself). Nevertheless, the viewer is denied full reciprocity with what is displayed on the screen (Hesling 184-185). In most of Mizoguchi's
films, the narrative also defers the fulfillment of desire in order to build up a certain tension. A greater sense of closure and harmony would have been possible if the movement in Mizoguchi's films were always from the realistic to the transcendental, but this was not the case. Instead, his work, like the dynamic artists he depicts, reflects a strong underlying search for the most truthful mode of expression.

**Statement of Purpose**

In this analysis of eight Mizoguchi films, I will examine the image of the artist in terms of the nature of his or her encounter with reality during a journey beyond commercialization toward true form, within newly-found limits. I assume that the theme of the artist was an important one for Mizoguchi because he devoted a (relatively) large amount of attention to an exploration of the worlds in which Japanese artists live and create. The general parameters provided by Girard, May and Wood will serve as guidelines in an investigation of several key questions asked of each of the eight films:

- What are the objects of desire of the artist-figures in the eight films under study? Is there a mediating force that helps mold those objects of desire?
- What struggles did the artists undergo in their attempts to draw closer to these objects of desire? What triumphs did he or she achieve?
- How, and why, did Mizoguchi's depiction of the artist change over time?
- Is a union between work and life ever achieved by an artist as depicted by Mizoguchi? If so, to what degree? Could this possibly mirror an ideal in Mizoguchi's own life?
Did Mizoguchi's portrayal of artists have philosophical or political (as well as personal) implications?

For the purpose of analysis, the eight films are divided into three chronological and conceptual periods. These three periods can be summarized as: an initial stage in which the personal is regarded as a higher priority than one's creative work, and in which there is a sense of futility regarding the union of art and life, a progression toward a higher degree of integrity and harmony in one's creative life, but to a lesser extent in one's personal life, and finally a relatively close marriage between a truthful artistic and personal vision within newly-realized limitations.

Brief plot synopses and historical information will precede the analyses of the films in chapters three through five. Attention will also be paid to critical reviews of the films by Japanese, American and European critics. Particular emphasis will be paid to symbolic and theatrical devices in the films which add additional significance to a character or an object.

While not disputing the value of more recent formalist investigations, this study maintains a basically humanistic/auteuristic point of view. The auteur theory asserts, in the words of one of its proponents, Andrew Sarris, the technical competence, the "distinguishable personality" (i.e., the personal style) and the "interior meaning" and artistry of the director as a criterion of value (Mast and Cohen, Film Theory 537-538). It points to the body of a director's work rather than to just a few of his or her best films. Historically, this appellation of auteur was granted not only to directors of art cinema works but also to the works of
less famous directors, sometimes from the popular culture, whose styles and worldview were judged to be both unique and consistent (Andrew, Concepts 119). Although it is actually more of a "policy" than a theory per se (Wood, Personal 174), it remains a useful means of highlighting aspects of an artist's work which are not always apparent to the casual viewer.

Although directors can vary widely in the kinds of films they produce, in the work of a director deemed auteur one expects to find connecting threads, a discernible and developing filmic vocabulary. Although it is true that the works of Mizoguchi were very much a collaborative effort (particularly with artists like cameraman Miyagawa Kazuo, screenwriter Yoda Yoshika, actress Tanaka Kinuyo, and others), it is nevertheless Mizoguchi's overriding "signature" that distinguishes a Mizoguchi film from any other. As Wood pointed out in his essay entitled "Reflections on the Auteur Theory: "(The Reckless Moment) is the work of a director--Ophuls--whose 'auteur' status no one, I imagine, would challenge: there is no artist in the cinema, save perhaps Mizoguchi, for whom I would make greater claims" (Personal Views 180). Contradictions occur in Mizoguchi's work over time, but these contradictions are not substantial enough to negate the sense of Mizoguchi as the ultimate determining factor in the configuration of the body of cinematic products that bear his name.

I believe that an isolated examination of any one Mizoguchi film, without consideration of how it relates to major themes developed during the course of his career, could tend to lead to a distorted view both of the director and of the work itself. As Robert Cohen warns: "By placing greater value on the films of one period over another, the understanding of Mizoguchi's work in general suffers" (Textual Poetics 94).
Although a general schema related to the artist, as depicted by Mizoguchi, is developed in this study, this is not to assert that the director set out to present any particular message, nor that any pre-mediated plan influenced the progression of his films. As McDonald points out in the concluding personal note she appends to her book on the director, Mizoguchi was neither a moralist nor a visionary, but rather was (as the director once said of himself) a "dedicated observer and recorder" (Mizoguchi 165). Nevertheless, in retrospect, an outside observer can discern themes that may have been less apparent at the time the films were first created. If the discussion advanced in this paper offers a few new insights into the work of this enigmatic and often inspired artist, then the effort will have been a fruitful one.

Ultimately the best way to view Mizoguchi's works is, as he himself said of an object of art (quoted by Mnouchkine, in the words of his artistic director Mizutani Hiroshi):

He said, of an object of art, that one must go beyond the attraction that one had for it, because it was then still a separate entity. One must dissolve in it and it must itself dissolve in you. (Cahiers 13)

(Il disait d'un objet d'art, qu'il fallait dépasser l'attirance qu'on avait pour lui, car c'était encore en être séparé. Il faut se fondre en lui, qu'il se fonde en vous.)

In this light, a degree of subjective involvement in the eight films under study will be incorporated into the more linear and schematic analyses. To avoid that level of involvement would be to miss some of the qualities that makes a Mizoguchi film so rich, and yet so difficult, on both a textual and a formal level. The eight films will be explored as
stages along a journey. Like most journeys, this will not be a purely linear progression but rather one that advances tentatively, at times doubling back, and yet finally reaching a sense of fullness. The eight Mizoguchi films on artists are an exploration of a theme which is at once intensely personal and yet meditative. In discussing these eight films we can see "the color of the blood" of the protagonists (Narusawa interview 1988), and yet we can also rise above their struggles (and our own), in the same way that the camera rises above the travails of Genjūrō in Ugetsu and of Zushiō in Sanshō the Bailiff at the close of the films, and their return from their journeys.

**Literature Review and Methodology**

Material for this study was collected through a combination of intensive film-viewing, interviews with five of Mizoguchi's chief collaborators, and study of primary and secondary sources in English, Japanese, French, Italian and Spanish.

A five-week field research period in Tokyo and Kyoto, in March and April 1988 under an East-West Center field research grant, included film-viewings at the National Film Center of the Tokyo National Museum of Modern Art, the Audio-Visual Division of the Japan Foundation, and the Kawakita Memorial Film Library. The films viewed through these organizations were Mizoguchi's *White Threads of the Waterfall*, *The Downfall of Osen* (Orizuru Osen, 1934), *Osaka Elegy*, *Sisters of the Gion*, *The Straits of Love and Hate*, *The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum*, *The Loyal 47 Ronin* (Chūshingura, 1941-42), *Utamaro and his Five Women*, *The Love of Sumako the Actress*, *Sanshō the Bailiff* (Sanshō Daiei, 1954), *A Woman of Rumor*, *A Story from Chikamatsu* (Chikamatsu Monogatari, 1954)
and New Tales of the Taira Clan (Shin Heike Monogatari, 1955). In addition, I was able to view Shindo Kaneto's documentary-style film on Mizoguchi's life and work, The Life of a Film Director (Aru Eiga Kantoku no Shōgai, 1975).

Other films related to the theatre which were viewed during that research period included: Kinugasa's Actress (Joyū, 1946), Inamura Shōhei's Stolen Desires (Nusumareta Yokujo, 1958), Kinoshita Keisuke's 1958 version of The Ballad of Narayama (Narayama Bushiko) and Ichikawa Kon's 1963 version of the Kinugasa classic The Revenge of Yukinojō (Yukinojō Henge). The films which were available only through the National Film Center in Tokyo were viewed in their unsubtitled Japanese versions.

In July of the same year, I was also able to see three of the rare Mizoguchi films again at the Film Study Center of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. These were: White Threads of the Cascades, Osaka Elegy, and Utamaro and his Five Women. The latter film was brought to the Cleveland Museum of Art in October, where I introduced it to the general public. I also saw another film related to the theatre, Kurosawa's The Men Who Tread on the Tiger's Tail (Tora no O o Fumu Otokotachi, 1945) in Washington, D.C., through the American Film Institute there.

During the research period in Japan, I carried out interviews with the following people who had worked with Mizoguchi: actress Kagawa Kyoko, cinematographer Miyagawa Kazuo, screenwriters Yoda Yoshikata and Narusawa Masashige, and director Shindo Kaneto. All of the interviews were conducted by the researcher in Japanese. Hayashi Kanako of
the Kawakita Memorial Film Library also attended the Shindo interview and helped ask many of the Japanese questions I had prepared.

Kagawa Kyōko [Plate 6] appeared as the older Anju in Mizoguchi's Sanshō the Bailiff and as Osan in A Story from Chikamatsu, while she was still in her early twenties. Kagawa has also appeared in such exemplary films as Naruse Mikio's Mother (Okāsan, 1952), Ozu's Tokyo Story (Tōkyō Monogatari, 1953) and Kurosawa Akira's The Lower Depths (Donzoku, 1957), High and Low (Tengoku to Jigoku, 1963) and Red Beard (Akahige, 1965).

Miyagawa Kazuo [Plate 7] served as Mizoguchi's main cinematographer for eight films during the latter part of the director's career, from Miss Oyu (1951) to Red-Light District (Akasen Chitai) in 1966. During that period, Miyagawa and Mizoguchi collaborated on such masterpieces as Ugetsu, Sanshō the Bailiff and A Story from Chikamatsu. Miyagawa also filmed his first color film for Mizoguchi, New Tales of the Taira Clan. Miyagawa is also famous for his inspired camerawork in such films as Kurosawa's Rashōmon (1950) and Yojimbo (1961), Ichikawa Kon's Conflagration (Enjō, 1958) and Tokyo Olympiad (1965) and, more recently Shinoda's Gonza the Spearman (Yari no Gonza, 1987).

Yoda Yoshikata [Plate 8] served as Mizoguchi's chief screenwriter for twenty films, from Osaka Elegy (1936) to New Tales of the Taira Clan (1955). The films they collaborated on include Sisters of the Gion, The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum, The Straits of Love and Hate, Utamaro and his Five Women, The Love of Sumako the Actress, The Life of Osharu, Ugetsu and A Story of Chikamatsu. Most of Yoda's scripts were given a final review by Kawaguchi Matsutarō, a popular novelist and childhood friend of Mizoguchi's, whom Mizoguchi considered to be in tune with popular tastes. To Mizoguchi, the scenario was probably the most
Plate 7. Miyagawa Kazuo (right) and Mizoguchi (center).

Plate 8. Mizoguchi (left) and Yoda Yoshikata (right).
important element in determining the mise-en-scène, although he was also known to alter the script to fit individual actors. Yoda was writing the script for Mizoguchi's *Osaka Story (Osaka Monogatari)* when the director died.

Narusawa Masashige had a more limited encounter with Mizoguchi, but it was one which had a lasting effect on Narusawa as a writer and director. He served as the chief screenwriter for Mizoguchi's last complete film, *Red-Light District* (1966) and, earlier, served as co-writer with Yoda of *A Woman of Rumor, The Princess Yang Kwei-fei (Yōkihi, 1955)* and *New Tales of the Taira Clan*. Narusawa became Mizoguchi's disciple at the age of 16, during World War II, and they frequently went to see foreign films together (Tsumura 222). Narusawa is also known as the screenwriter of Toyoda Shūō's cinematic version of the Mori Ōgai novel *Wild Geese* (Can, 1953).

Shindō Kaneto, now a director with his own professional reputation, was Mizoguchi's assistant art director for *The Loyal 47 Ronin* and co-writer of *The Victory of Women* (*Josei no Shōri, 1946*) and *My Love Has Been Burning* (*Waga Koi wa Moenu, 1949*). He is perhaps best known in this connection for his documentary-drama film *The Life of a Film Director (Aru Eiga Kantoku no Shōgai, 1975)*. Shindō's own films, as a director, include the first post-war film on the atomic bomb, *Children of the Atom Bomb (Genbaku no Ko, 1953)*, and *The Island (Hadaka na Shima, 1960)* and *Onibaba* (1963).

In addition to the interviews mentioned above, I also spoke at length with Joanne Bernardi, Columbia University doctoral candidate who is writing her dissertation on Yoda Yoshikata, and with Hirano Kyōko, film program coordinator for the Japan Society and an expert on Japanese
films made during the American Occupation period. The 1988 Tenth Ohio University Film Conference, focusing on Asian Cinema, provided additional insights into related issues.

Compared to sources on Mizoguchi in Western languages, the material on Mizoguchi from the Japanese is more plentiful. One advantage of the Japanese sources is that they cover a wider range of Mizoguchi's films as, until recently, only a handful of his films have been available in the West. Mizoguchi himself rarely wrote about his own films, and even claimed to dislike seeing them after they were completed (Mizoguchi Zadan'kai 256). He did offer some scant comments in published interviews and "roundtables."

One important work in Japanese is by Mizoguchi's collaborator Yoda Yoshikata, entitled Mizoguchi Kenji: Man and Art (Mizoguchi Kenji: Hito to Geijutsu, 1970). This book includes anecdotal material related to the years they worked together, as well as briefer descriptions of the films before the 1936 Osaka Elegy. It is arranged in a roughly chronological order, with chapters devoted to his travels with Mizoguchi to China, Venice and Rome.

Shindo Kaneto's The Life of a Film Director (Aru Eiga Kantoku no Shōgai, 1975) is a verbatim transcript of the 39 interviews of his documentary-drama film, including interviews with actresses Tanaka Kinuyo, Kyō Machiko, Irie Takako, Yamada Isuzu, Kagawa Kyōko, Kogure Michiyo, and Wakao Ayako, actors Nakamura Ganjirō and Yanagi Eijirō, directors Itō Daisuke, Masumura Yasuzō and Sakai Tatsuo, cameramen Miki Shigeru and Miyagawa Kazuo and friends such as the writer Kawaguchi Matsutarō. The interviews tend to take on the slightly melodramatic tone that Shindo projects into his own films, although his respect and
admiration for his mentor is also apparent. Shindo's film was awarded "Best Film" of 1975 by the poll taken that year through the film journal Kinema Junpō. (Since 1926, Kinema Junpō has awarded a prize to ten Japanese films per year which the critics deemed prizeworthy, although originally only foreign films were judged.)

Critic Satō Tadao's book, The World of Mizoguchi Kenji (Mizoguchi Kenji no Sekai, 1982) is largely biographical, with special emphasis on Mizoguchi's move from shimpa-influenced drama to what Sato terms "naturalistic realism" (shizenshūgi riarizumu), and then to a realism based on social criticism (shakaihyōronteki riarizumu). He also devotes a chapter to Mizoguchi's use of the beau-part (nimaime) hero, another to Yoda Yoshikata, and an entire section to Mizoguchi's camera techniques, including comparisons to Ozu's preferred styles. This latter section has been translated into French by Jean-Paul Le Pape. Many of Satō's writings have been translated into English by Gregory Barrett and collected into the volume entitled Currents in Japanese Cinema. Satō's writings tend to look more to Japanese popular culture, than to traditional culture, in analyzing Japanese films. At the end of both Satō's and Yoda's books, a detailed timeline of Mizoguchi's life is included.

Other Japanese sources consulted for this study include articles in film journals such as Kinema Junpō, Eiga Ryōron and Lumière. Excellent Japanese language monographs published by the National Film Center and by the Kyoto Film Library were also consulted.

In Western languages, the first two works on Mizoguchi were in French. Kenji Mizoguchi, by the Vietnamese authoress Ho-Xich-Ve [Ve-Ho], 1963, began as a thesis under the direction of Jean Mitry, and
deals with the standard biographical data, as well as with certain
details concerning Mizoguchi's personality and work habits, and an
analysis of the themes in his films. In his 1964 *Japan Times* review of
Ve-Ho's book, Donald Richie criticized Ve-Ho for making Mizoguchi into
an aesthete rather than examining the way the director synthesized the
varying aspects of Mizoguchi's earlier works (the proletariat,
realistic, aesthetic, sociological, and so on) into his mature works.

The other French text on Mizoguchi, that of Michel Mesnil in 1965,
depicts the director as an individualist who was concerned with social
issues. Part of Mizoguchi's individualism, in Mesnil's words, lies in
his depiction of nature as both poetic and isolating. Satō Tadao wrote
an appendix to the Japanese translation of Mesnil's work in which he
placed Mesnil in the Bazinian tradition of viewing certain directors,
such as Mizoguchi, as masters of the film medium who use cinema in a
unique way, irreducible to any other form.

French journals with articles on Mizoguchi which were consulted for
this paper include *Cahiers du Cinéma*, *Cinématographe* and *Positif*.

In English there are several writers who should be mentioned for
the critical stance they have taken toward Mizoguchi in their writings
on Japanese cinema. Each of these writers tend to approach Mizoguchi
through different theoretical frameworks, including those of feminism,
structuralism, and a more traditional historical perspective.

In their important text, *The Japanese Film: Art and Industry* (second
edition 1982), Joseph Anderson and Donald Richie focus on Mizoguchi's
themes such as "the way a woman's love and sacrifice can save a man's
soul" (353). In an interview for *The Economist* in 1984, Richie claimed
that the reason he never wrote a book on Mizoguchi (like his other two

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books on Ozu and Kurosawa) was that he finds the director "a troublesome mix" in which "whole sections of his career were soggy" (81). Although it is definitely true that there are frustrations in attempting to write a focused analysis of Mizoguchi's work, with all of its fluctuations in tone and quality, it is also true that his films yield insights into human nature which cannot be reduced to overly-concise formulas. Richie acknowledges this in writing that Mizoguchi was a "humanist, in the Japanese sense of the word, a believer that life is, generally, a worthwhile proposition" (Roud 703).

Joan Mellen applies a Western feminist perspective to the study of Japanese cinema in her *The Waves at Genji's Door: Japan Through Its Cinema* (1976). In his review of Mellen's book in *1000 Eyes*, Bill Thompson criticizes Mellen for placing her interpretations before the descriptive material, and for dismissing several important Japanese films because they do not fit into her political framework. In her *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* review, Patricia Erens praises Mellen's insistence on presenting the effects of feudalism and xenophobia in Japanese society. Nevertheless, expanding Mizoguchi's views to fit a Western feminist perspective is as misleading as reducing his works to labels like "old-fashioned" (as was the case for many Japanese critics).

Audie Bock's synopsis of Mizoguchi's life and work in her 1978 *Japanese Film Directors* tends to merge with Mellen's strongly polemic position in criticizing Mizoguchi for lack of a strong conviction, although Bock does claim that "Mizoguchi's late films are suffused with a view of life that transcends politics" (51). Bock's conclusions about Mizoguchi are, in some cases, inaccurate, especially in her quoting of Kishi Matsuo whose statements on Mizoguchi are sometimes not
founded on established fact (note Andrew and Andrew, Guide 254). Her filmography of Mizoguchi is a valuable reference source for the general reader.

Formalist theory is stressed by Noel Burch in his seminal To the Distant Observer: Form and Meaning in the Japanese Cinema (1979). Burch states that the "golden age" of Japanese cinema came primarily during the 1930s, with directors like Mizoguchi and Ozu consciously discarding the established Western cinematic modes in favor of styles that more directly reflected Japanese sensibilities in terms of the movement away from what he considers to be a Western emphasis on "representational illusionism." Another reason Burch considers this period a "golden age" is that he sees the films of that time as more related to the Japanese artistic traditions prior to massive Western influence. (A more general consensus is that the post-war 1950s were the "golden age" of Japanese cinema.)

Burch feels that the stylistics overshadow and, in essence, lessen, the distinctive quality of Mizoguchi's later films, especially in terms of their being closer to Hollywood practices. In his essay on Mizoguchi in his Film in the Aura of Art, Dudley Andrew questions this by stating that "what Burch finds to be 'academically decorative' and 'opportunistic' is in fact a working past 'decoration' in search of its authority and its value" (184).

Although he praises Burch's work for opening up the study of Japanese film, Donald Kirihara, in his 1987 Journal of Film and Video article, adds a cautionary note about Burch's conclusion that all of Japanese cinema is a separate mode of representation from that of the West. Kirihara notes that Burch proposes the idea of "superposition,"
as stated by Shuuichi Kato in his introduction to *Form, Style and Tradition*, an idea that deals with the coexistence of forms in Japanese art. Kirihara does not find this idea particularly true of the Japanese arts after the Meiji Period and feels that there is a more dynamic equilibrium at work in Mizoguchi's work: "The purity often attributed to Mizoguchi's style can be seen not as a hermetically-sealed Otherness, but as a process of distillation" (23).

Scott Malcolmson also questions Burch's placing of Japanese cinema as a kind of "puristic" counter-argument to Western modes of representation, and notes that Burch's original argument changes somewhat when he address the films of Kurosawa and the New Wave. In his *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* article entitled "Toward a Theory of Japanese Narrative," Robert Cohen contrasts Burch's "regressive assimilation theory" with Anderson and Richie's "progressive" one, in terms of using Western commercial cinema as a means of judging the development of Japanese cinema (185). Burch's work is certainly based on an idealistic view of Japanese society, but he is to be praised for the attention he has drawn to the formalistic richness of Japanese cinema.

Using the framework of semiology and structuralism, Robert Cohen's dissertation on Mizoguchi, entitled *Textual Poetics in the Films of Kenji Mizoguchi: A Structural Semiotics of Japanese Narrative* (1980), and his article in *Sight and Sound*, point out how Mizoguchi's cinematic interpretations differ from Western narrative principles. He states that the Japanese lyric, with its emphasis on creation of atmosphere and on a stream of thoughts and images, has affected this narrative structure, as have traditions in Japanese art which allow for multiple
perspectives on a scene. Ellipses in Mizoguchi's stories, or contradictory points of view, are also seen by Cohen as consistent with patterns in Japanese culture and thus are not signs of modernism per se (with modernism defined as "the questioning of the very act of representation" [Modernism Ill]). Writing about the last decade of Mizoguchi's career, Cohen notes a greater concern with psychologically-based issues, and with issues of memory, plus a growing pessimism.

Dudley and Paul Andrew's Mizoguchi Kenji: A Guide to References and Resources (1981) is a valuable source not only for the variety of citations presented, but also for the insights in the essays included in the text.

The best general source on the director, Keiko McDonald's Mizoguchi (1984), part of the Twayne Filmmakers Series, presents clear descriptions of all of the major extant films, as well as concise biographical material. Not only is McDonald's work the first book-length text on Mizoguchi in English, but it is also a more balanced (and more Japanese) point of view than either that of, for example, Burch's formalism or Mellen's feminism. In his 1985 article entitled "Turning Back the Clock in Japanese Cinema Studies: Kurosawa, Keiko McDonald, and Tadao Satō," Allan Casebier notes this in his praise of McDonald's skill (in her earlier Cinema East) in showing "the underlying presence of Japanese culture as conveyor of meaning, as context in which meaning is created" (168) but he also feels that she fails to keep up with some of the newer philosophical trends in film interpretation. In his 1985 review of the Mizoguchi text in the Journal of Asian Studies, Anderson criticizes McDonald's book for what he considers to be its somewhat
superficial critical perspective and for its romanticization of the director. This kind of claim is disputed in Desser's review of the same text (in Film Quarterly), although he does affirm that her view is "traditionally auteurist" (34). Desser points out McDonald's emphasis on Mizoguchi as a narrative presence, with the camera as an integrated (not separate) plane which enhances the narrative. Rosenbaum mentions in his review of the McDonald book in The Quarterly Review of Film Studies that McDonald's ability to incorporate Japanese sources into her analysis marks a real advance over the earlier French texts.

General articles in English on Mizoguchi which were consulted for this study include those in journals such as Film Quarterly, Wide Angle, Film Reader, Quarterly Review of Film Studies, Sight and Sound, Journal of Film and Video, Cinema and 1000 Eyes.

Although much has already been written on Mizoguchi, he is a director of sufficient complexity to call for further examination. It is my opinion that writers who have been willing to face the dynamic, changing nature of Mizoguchi's vision as it develops over time are the most successful in describing and analyzing this complex artist. I feel there may never be a "definitive text" on Mizoguchi, but rather a spectrum of critiques and appreciations which still leave aspects of his work open to interpretation by individual viewers.

Scope

In his Film Reader essay entitled "Our Dream Cinema: Western Historiography and the Japanese Film," David Bordwell states that Japanese cinema seems to present an "Otherness" onto which one can project whatever ideas of the ideal cinema he or she might have.
Instead, he reminds us that the Japanese cinema is more tied to, and influenced by, the Western cinema than our fantasies would have us believe. In writing on the dilemmas of Western scholars of Japanese film in his article in the *Journal of Film and Video* (1987), Peter Lehman cautions against several common theoretical stances that can create a kind of "dream Japan."

Most contemporary scholars do their best to avoid an imperialistic representation of the Orient as an entity that cannot represent itself (Said 6). More subtle forms of "Orientalism" are more difficult to weed out from one's analysis. For example, Malcolmson calls the work of Roland Barthes in his *Empire of Signs* a "consumption" of the authentic artifacts of an Other which allows the reader to avoid any responsibility or self-awareness (27). As insightful and beautifully-written as Barthe's book is, Malcolmson's critique of Barthes' mystification and decontextualizing of Japan is certainly valid.

There is always a danger in using a Western theory as even a preliminary base for an investigation of an Asian art form. Keeping this in mind, the concentration in this dissertation will be on the general theme of desire, with the theories of writers like Girard, Wood and May, and with consideration of Buddhistic concepts of desire, only as guidelines. Mizoguchi was influenced both by Western and by indigenous artistic and philosophical systems; therefore, this approach seems appropriate.

Two possible avenues of investigation related to the theme of desire will not be explored in detail in this study. I will not draw conclusions about the personality of the director through the
characters in his films except in an occasional and tentative fashion. In addition, Freudian psychoanalytic theories of the nature of desire will not be used as a general reference point. It is my belief that these theories would not be a profitable frame for the basically traditional Japanese material which Mizoguchi used as inspiration for the eight films under study because they tend to place the characters and underlying themes within a reductive sphere. Views, such as those of Lacan, that desire is basically insatiable and tied to the fetishistic nature of the object (Psycho-Analysis 278-279) fail to deal with the aspect of transcendence which is so important in Mizoguchi's later films. Kristeva is closer to Mizoguchi's framework in writing that "desire also designates the process of the subject's advent in the signifier through and beyond needs or drives" (Revolution 130), although she is mainly referring to the death wish in this case. Feminist views of desire will be cited here in terms of some of the female protagonists in the eight Mizoguchi films, but such a discussion is better reserved for an investigation of the larger body of Mizoguchi's films that focus on women.

As a Western scholar who has spent considerable time living in Japan, and studying about Japanese literature and theatre over the past twenty years, I can only endeavor, as much as possible, to view Mizoguchi's films within their own cultural milieu, rather than as objects disassociated from the world in which they were created. In that light, it is important to deal briefly with some background materials relevant to a deeper understanding of the director and of the eight films specifically under study.
Biographical Information

It is tempting to surmise that the image of the artist projected in Mizoguchi's films reflects, in some ways, his own path as an artist. Were there some similarities between the film director's own life and his characters, such as the vacillating, tradition-bound kabuki actor, the imaginative woodblock print artist whose hands are temporarily tied by societal demands, the potter who dreams of glory but returns to find emptiness and renewed labor? In this light, it is instructive to examine briefly some aspects of Mizoguchi's life that might have contributed to the development of the themes mentioned in Chapter One. As stated earlier, this is not to imply that there is a one-to-one correspondence between the director himself and the images he creates, but rather that certain insights can be drawn from seminal events in Mizoguchi's life which might help explain some of the choices he made as a director.

Mizoguchi's work reflects the main influences in his background: his upbringing in the poor downtown (shitamachi) section of Asakusa in Tokyo, his early training as a painter and his subsequent move to the more "rarified" air of Kyoto following the 1923 Kanto earthquake.

The effect on Mizoguchi of painful events involving the women in his family can be seen in the increasingly sympathetic eye he casts on his female protagonists, and on the image of the long-suffering, compassionate woman that frequently appears in his films, such as Otoku in The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum and Miyagi in Ugetsu. Both Mizoguchi's sister Suzu and his mother suffered from his father's
callousness. Mizoguchi's father, a roofer's carpenter, was unsuccessful in his business schemes during the Russo-Japanese War, causing him to sell the older sister, Suzu, into a geisha house at an early age. Considering the fate of many women in her situation, Suzu was relatively fortunate to become first the mistress, and then the wife, of a wealthy aristocrat, Tadamasa Matsudaira. She was able to help support Mizoguchi and the younger brother, Yoshio, until they could become somewhat financially stable. (After World War II, Mizoguchi was able to repay her kindness by supporting her when the Japanese aristocracy declined in power.) Mizoguchi's mother died when he was seventeen years old.

Mizoguchi's father's ill-treatment of his mother and sister served as a prototype for the male characters in his films, who tended to be self-serving and "wishy-washy" (mizukusai [Yoda interview 1988]) and ultimately much weaker spiritually than the women. In general, Mizoguchi himself admitted that when his films centered on men or were produced on order, the results were less than satisfactory (Cinema 18).

As a young boy, Mizoguchi hated his family life and escaped for one year to the home of an uncle in the northern city of Morioka, where he finished primary school before returning to Tokyo. He suffered from arthritis from an early age, and that cold environment (in which his subsequent film The Straits of Love and Hate is set) could not have been easy for him.

Prior to entering the world of cinema, Mizoguchi also received training as a painter in Western-style watercolor and oil, under the direction of Kuroda Seiki (1866-1924), the European-inspired plein-air artist of the Aoibashi Institute. Kuroda, who had studied painting with Raphael Colin in Paris for nine years before returning to Japan in 1893,
painted pictures such as *Lake Shore* (1897) in which a young Japanese woman is depicted in traditional dress, but also with an air of intelligence and self-sufficiency. Like Kuroda Seiki's work, many of the memorable scenes in Mizoguchi's films display a distinctly painterly quality with a subtle attention to light, as well as a focus on the inner lives of women.

Before becoming a film director, Mizoguchi also apprenticed for short periods of time with a kimono designer and a porcelain designer, as well as with an advertising page designer for a Kobe newspaper. While working for the Kobe newspaper, the 19-year-old Mizoguchi was able to indulge his love for the theatre. Homesick, he impulsively quit the work in Kobe and returned to Suzu's home in Tokyo, where he continued to read all day and attend the theatre at night. The influence of the traditional and more modern theatre forms on Mizoguchi will be explored in more detail in this chapter.

By the age of 21, Mizoguchi was introduced to the film world of the Nikkatsu Mukojima Studios through a friend, a Japanese lute (biwa) teacher, with whom he was staying in Tokyo while unemployed (a fairly frequent state for the young Mizoguchi). Although he was originally hired by director Wakayama Osamu as an actor, it is unclear whether Mizoguchi actually ever acted or not. He soon became, instead, an assistant director for Wakayama and then, in 1922, for another director, Tanaka Eizō, thus following the traditional route for becoming a director in Japan.

Around this time, he also became known for bouts of intense drinking. Periods of feverish activity and concentration alternated with relatively long periods when he found no inspiration for work at
all. Despite his natural shyness, he would often spend time with geishas and prostitutes. (Mizoguchi found it more difficult to relate to "proper" women and could not even look some of his actresses in the eye when speaking to them.) Wherever he lived, Mizoguchi displayed a fascination with the subcultures of his environment (including the theatre worlds, the prostitute quarters, the world of lower-class bars), a fascination which is reflected in his films. He was best at depicting the struggles of lower-class women (geishas, prostitutes, kept women, peasant wives, office girls) but failed to be able to fully depict the more intellectual woman of the Meiji and post- Meiji periods. According to Shindo, Mizoguchi only understood women who lived "through their bodies" (karada de ikite iru) (Shindo interview 1988).

In addition to his concern with the visual and theatrical arts, Mizoguchi also was an avid reader of both Japanese and Western literature. Mizoguchi was said to have read works by famous Meiji/Taishō period novelists Izumi Kyōka (1873-1939), Nagai Kafū (1879-1959), Tanizaki Jūnichirō (1886-1965) and Natsume Sōseki (1867-1916). Although he admired Ihara Saikaku (1642-1693), his adaptations of Saikaku's work show little of the satiric wit of the original. In addition, Mizoguchi avidly read translations of works by such Western writers as O'Neill, Tolstoy, Zola, Hugo, Dostoyevsky, Maupassant, Balzac, and Stendhal, among others. Among film directors, he expressed a special admiration for Renoir, Lang, Rene Clair, Wyler, King Vidor and von Sternberg, yet he was critical as well. Mizoguchi would often go to see foreign films and declare that the director was still "green" or "affected" or that he "played to the audience" (Tsumura
222), and Yoda reports that when Mizoguchi met Wyler at the Venice Film
Festival he was not impressed by him personally (Mnouchkine 12]).

It is ironic to think that Mizoguchi's start as a director in 1922
came about as a result of a walkout of actors, many of whom were female
 impersonators (onnagata), protesting new policies at the Nikkatsu
studios. Although Mizoguchi did use onnagata in some of his earlier
films, he also helped promote the use of actresses in Japanese cinema.

Mizoguchi took some marked political stands during his career, but
there was also a great deal of fluctuation in his allegiances. At times
Mizoguchi has been criticized for insincerity because of this
eclecticism (Andrew and Andrew, Guide 25), although the fact is that he
was probably a basically apolitical person. This vacillating tendency
will be reflected in many of the main characters depicted in his films,
particularly in the beau-part (nimaike) characters. In Kawaguchi
Matsutarō's interview with Mnouchkine, Mizoguchi's childhood friend
compared Mizoguchi to a "cork in the water," bobbing along with
the currents of the time (Cahiers 7). Mizoguchi was known to be
easily cowed by a stronger authority, although he could, at the same
time, be quite stubborn (especially toward his cast and crew) when
convinced of his own views.

On the other hand, his work also shares in the rebellious
qualities found in many of the Mizoguchian characters. He did produce
some leftist-inspired "tendency films" (keikō eiga) in the late 1920s
and early 1930s, such as Metropolitan Symphony (Tokai Kōkyōgaku, 1929)
and And Yet They Go On (Shikamo Karera Wa Yuku, 1931). Run-ins with
nationalistic censors troubled him with films like A Chronicle
of May Rain (Samidare Zōshi, 1924) about a Buddhist priest's love
for a geisha, *No Money No Fight* (*Musen Fusen*, 1925) which satirized war and the Chinese, and with non-Meiji Period films like *Osaka Elegy* and *Sisters of the Gion*, both of which dealt with sensitive social issues related to society's exploitation of women.

*Osaka Elegy* [Plate 9] marks the first collaboration between Mizoguchi and screenwriter Yoda Yoshikata and was one of the first Japanese films to faithfully reproduce the Osaka dialect in a non-comic manner. Although Mizoguchi was allowed only twenty days for shooting due to financial difficulties in the production company, Daiichi Eiga, the movie proved successful in Japan, opening to good reviews in May, 1936. The film was made during the debate concerning the banning of prostitution in Japan that was going on in the 1930s, and government sensitivity to Mizoguchi's depiction of social problems caused the major distributor to show it in other than the first-run theatres. After 1940, the film was banned until the end of the war.

Mizoguchi's *Sisters of the Gion* [Plates 10 and 11], made in 1936, was the only Mizoguchi film that ranked first in any of the film journal *Kinema Junpō* 's "Best Ten" polls. The studio, Daiichi Eiga, went bankrupt, however, because of this film, partially because Shochiku, its parent company, refused to show controversial films like *Sisters of the Gion* in first-class theatres. Burch considers *Sisters of the Gion* to be an example of all of Mizoguchi's mature systemics, including his long take, his decentering of the human form, and his rejection of principles of editing, such as the close-up and the reverse-field cut (Distant Observer 224). (The reverse-field cut is when two opposite segments of a scene are presented successively.)
Plate 9. Shiganoya Benkei (second from left), Umemura Yōko (center), Yamada Isuzu (second from right) and Shindo Eitarō (right) in *Osaka Elegy* (*Naniwa Hika*, 1936).
Plate 10. Yamada Isuzu in *Sisters of the Gion* (Gion no Shimai, 1936).
Plate 11. Yamada Isuzu and Umemura Yōko in *Sisters of the Gion*.
Mizoguchi also became a national film consultant in 1938, a role that put him in a highly-conservative camp. Earlier in his career, Mizoguchi had also been willing to produce a film (The Man of the Moment [Toki no Ujigami, 1932]) using a scab cast and crew and he produced a nationalist propaganda piece in the early 1930s (The Dawn of Manchuria and Mongolia [Manmō Kenkoku no Reimei, 1932]). Later, he became president of the right-wing Director's Society.

During World War II, Mizoguchi directed the two-part version of The Loyal 47 Ronin (Chūshingura, 1941-42), in an unusually stately and bloodless style compared to other versions of this famous epic. For lack of any other possible project, he directed several films of lesser quality: Musashi Miyamoto (1944), The Famous Sword Bijomaru (Meitō Bijomaru, 1945) and Victory Song (Hisshōka, 1945).

During this same period, Mizoguchi did make another film directly related to the theatre—Three Generations of Danjūrō (Danjūrō Sandai, 1944)—but it is now, regrettably, impossible to find primary sources about this film. With a script by Mizoguchi's childhood friend Kawaguchi Matsutaro, and photography by Miki Shigeto, this film starred Tanaka Kinuyo and recounted the story of the seventh and ninth generation of actors named Ichikawa Danjūrō (Andrew and Andrew, Guide 108-109). In his timeline of Mizoguchi's life, Sato refers to this film as a minor work which suffered from the wartime restrictions placed on the entire Japanese film industry (Mizoguchi Kenji no Sekai 323).

After the war, Mizoguchi was allowed to make the first post-war historical drama (jidaimono) permitted by the American Occupation censors, Utamaro and His Five Women. He also directed, with only qualified success, three films that have been called his "Fighting Women
Trilogy: The Victory of Women (Josei no Shôri, 1946), My Love Has Been Burning (Waga Koi wa Moenu, 1949), about feminist activist Hirayama Eiko, and The Love of Sumako the Actress. He also directed his less successful "trilogy" of films on upper-class women, A Portrait of Madame Yuki (Yuki Fujin Ezu, 1950), Miss Oyû (1951) and The Lady of Musashino (Musashino Fujin, 1951) [Plates 12 and 13].

For a short while after the war, he was named president of the more left-wing Shôchiku Union (which was an odd move considering his tendency to "drive" his fellow workers beyond accepted working norms and his dislike of strikes). Mizoguchi quit this post after only three months. The Japanese film industry had tended to be labor-intensive, without strong unions, and with probable financial backing from organized crime (yakuza) (Bordwell, Dream Cinema 51). During the postwar years, however, the Shôchiku Union brought about better working conditions, including a cost-of-living increase for employees and set work hours. Shochiku's was the first of the studio labor unions, followed by unions at studios like Tôhô and Daiei.

To spend much time in criticizing Mizoguchi's changes of political allegiance would be to focus on the wrong issues when looking at this director. Mizoguchi's concern was more social than political, both in the sense of a concern for depicting social issues of injustice as well as a concern for his relative position in the world of Japanese cinema. Mizoguchi himself attributed his shifts of allegiance in his films to his having the nature of an "Eddoko" (Tokyoite), known to like new things, and he contrasted himself to director Ozu Yasujirô in this sense (Kishi, Kinema Junpô 45).
Plate 13. The Lady of Musashino.
During most of Mizoguchi's career, Japanese film studios were in a process of formation and amalgamation. Mizoguchi worked for several studios: Nikkatsu, Shinbō Kinema Studios (with a subcontract to actress Takao Irie's production company, with which he worked until March, 1934), Daiichi Films, Shōchiku Films, Koa Eiga, Shin Tōhō and Daiei.¹

Sato claims that Mizoguchi was often given exceptional working conditions in the studios, including permission to film in large open sets, because the studios recognized the higher artistic value of a Mizoguchi film (On Kenji Mizoguchi 5).

Mizoguchi attracted a loyal group of collaborators including screenwriters Hatamoto Shūichi (for many of his silent films) and, after 1936, Yoda Yoshikata, cameramen Miki Minoru, Miki Shigeto and Miyagawa Kazuo, art director Mizutani Hiroshi (from 1933) and music director Hayasaka Fumio. Mizoguchi relied heavily on the people he trusted (Takizawa 39) and in that sense he was, as Yoda pointed out, skillful at managing people (hitozukai no jōzu na hito [Kinema Junpō 41]). He was convinced he could draw out of them their best performance, either as cast or crew, and he did listen to their opinions. Mizoguchi himself rarely (if ever) actually looked through the camera during filming (Miyagawa interview 1988).

(Additional information on his directorial methods will be offered later in this chapter).

Despite his successes in the thirties, Mizoguchi's career lagged by the early post-war period, and his lead actress, Tanaka Kinuyo, was reputed to be over the hill as she approached the age of forty (Shindo interview 1988). With The Life of Oharu (Saikaku Ichidai Onna 1952) [Plates 14 and 15], starring Tanaka, a film which Mizoguchi had long
Plate 15. Tanaka Kinuyo (left) in *The Life of Oharu*.
wanted to produce, a Mizoguchi film was selected to represent Japan at the Venice Film Festival, where it won the Silver Lion.

Today, many Japanese critics and film artists (including Yoda Yoshikata himself [Yoda interview 1988]) consider The Life of Oharu to be Mizoguchi's most quintessentially Japanese work. At the time, however, it only ranked ninth in the Kinema Junpo "Best Ten" list. No large Japanese studio would support this film and so it had to be made through the determination of the cast and staff members involved, with distribution promised through the Shin Tōhō studio.

After the large-scale introduction of his work in Venice, Mizoguchi became a great success among the French New Wave critics who praised him in terms both earthy and mystical. The French critics of André Bazin's Cahiers du Cinéma described Mizoguchi's cinematic style as highlighting the strengths of the art form itself, i.e., which could not be imitated in total by any other art form. The director Jean-Luc Godard, for example, praised Mizoguchi's realistic mise-en-scène and the depths of his character portrayals in the following way:

If poetry is manifest in each second, each shot filmed by Mizoguchi, it is because, as with Murnau, it is the instinctive reflection of the film-maker's creative nobility. Like the director of Sunrise, the director of Ugetsu Monogatari can describe an adventure which is at the same time a cosmos (Godard on Godard 70).

In an essay translated into Italian in the 1980 Venetian Biennale on Mizoguchi, Jean Douchet proclaimed: "Kenji Mizoguchi is for cinema what J.S. Bach is for music, Cervantes for literature, Shakespeare for the theatre, Titian for painting: the greatest" (Apra 78) (Kenji Mizoguchi è
Bazin himself was somewhat more reserved in his praise of Mizoguchi, referring to him as "the tender and musical Mizoguchi" (*le tendre et musical Mizoguchi*) [Vivre 36]. Bazin also cited interest in Kurosawa Akira who, in comparison to Mizoguchi, had generally been met by French critics with what Bazin referred to as "the snobbism of exoticism" (*le snobisme de l'exotisme*) [Vivre 36]. According to Shindo, what Europeans saw in Mizoguchi's films was not "exoticism" per se, but rather the fact that human beings were portrayed frankly and forcefully (*ningen ga namanamashiku eqaite iru* [Shindo interview 1988]).

This renown overseas in turn affected Mizoguchi's treatment in Japan in a positive way. As critic Donald Richie stated in a recent interview in the Japan Times: "The only way to get the people's attention [in Japan] is to go abroad, win a prize and come right back. And don't stay too long" (Kirr 3). Satō reports that there had been a tendency among Japanese critics to consider Mizoguchi old-fashioned and obsessed with detail (*Currents* 100). Yet, in his appendix to the Japanese translation of Mesnil's book, Sato also contests Mesnil's view that Mizoguchi was an "unrecognized genius" in Japan (*On Mizoguchi* 5). Although he was certainly influenced by traditional Japanese aesthetics, Mizoguchi was far from merely "old-fashioned" and can instead be considered innovative on both formalistic and thematic levels. Nevertheless, Dudley Andrew is correct in stating that the relationship between Mizoguchi and Japanese critics was a "stormy" one (Japan Film Center, *Mizoguchi* 6).
In the years following *The Life of Oharu*, Mizoguchi went on to produce such masterpieces as *Ugetsu* (1953) and *Sanshō the Bailiff* (1954), both of which won high awards at the Venice Film Festivals of those respective years. In Japan, Mizoguchi also received awards for his *The Song of Home* (*Furusato no Uta* 1925), *The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum*, *A Woman of Osaka* and *A Story from Chikamatsu*, which he appeared to disdain but actually relished with an almost childish glee (Shindo interview 1988). His *A Story from Chikamatsu* (*Chikamatsu Monogatari*, 1954) again brought the world of theatre and cinema closer together in Mizoguchi's version of the story of star-crossed lovers, Osan and Mohei. *A Story from Chikamatsu*, based on Chikamatsu Monzaemon's play *Daikyoji Sekireki*, ranked fifth in the Kinema Junpō list for that year and also received an award from the Ministry of Education. Although it is the tragic story of two lovers from different social classes who are ultimately unable to escape the punishment of death by crucifixion imposed on adulterers by the feudal society of eighteenth century Japan, it is also a moving tale of the dignity of the individual in the face of injustice.

Mizoguchi's collaboration with actress Tanaka Kinuyo, which had gone on for almost 15 years, ended with the filming of his *A Woman of Rumor* in 1954. (Tanaka had starred in twelve of Mizoguchi's films since her first appearance in *A Woman from Osaka* in 1940). Mizoguchi had trouble accepting a woman giving orders and, as a Daiei board member, had convinced Tanaka to turn down a directorial chance which Ozu and Naruse had taken pains to help her secure.

One of the real paradoxes of Mizoguchi's life was his deep insight into, and appreciation of, female psychology as displayed in his films,
and the relative lack of real female warmth and companionship in his own adult life. Although he married twice, he is perhaps best-known for the fact that a call-girl/girlfriend, Ichijō Yuriko, attacked him with a razor in 1925, causing a national scandal, and for his rumored unrequited love for one of his chief actresses, Tanaka Kinuyo.

An event related to the health of his first wife strongly affected Mizoguchi's depiction of women. His first wife, a dancer named Saga Chieko who had been mixed up with a Kobe mob, proved to be a strong-willed companion. Stormy arguments and power struggles marked their marriage until the time when Mizoguchi was compelled to commit her to a mental institution in 1941 due to the deterioration in her condition brought on by syphilis. This occurred during the filming of his epic rendering of the Chūshingura tale. Mizoguchi nurtured a sense of guilt over Chieko's illness, although doctors disclaimed him as the cause. Mizoguchi's second wife, Fuji, was his first wife Chieko's sister, and a war-widow with two children.

Mizoguchi's last few films do not measure up to his earlier masterpieces, but they are of interest historically. The Princess Yang Kwei-fei (1955) [Plate 17] was partially financed by the Shaw Brothers of Hong Kong. Mizoguchi felt unable to bridge the cultural barriers of this Chinese tale and became increasingly difficult on the set, firing veteran actress Irie Takako who had starred in his silent film White Threads of the Cascade.

His color film New Tales of the Taira Clan [Plate 18] presented an emphasis on characterization rather than on the standard battle scenes of this historical tale, and was praised for its subtle and effective use of color. The Red-Light District (1956) [Plates 19 and 20], better
known by the inappropriate English translation of Akasen Chitai, Street of Shame, is a documentary-like expose which reveals the struggles of five prostitutes in a cheap Tokyo brothel called "Dreamland." Fledgling screenwriter, Narusawa Masahige, reported that Mizoguchi told him that he wanted to see in the script the "color of the five women's blood" (gonin no onna no chi no iro ga mitai [Narusawa interview 1988] in this gaily-lit, but depressing, locale.

In writing of Mizoguchi in her Japanese Film Directors, Bock states that the finely-drawn portraits of women in his films do not "necessarily imply a political concern with the improvement of women's status in society. The fascination becomes an end in itself" (40). Bock's statement is not entirely accurate, as evidenced by the effect of Red-Light District on the Diet's debate concerning the formation of Japan's anti-prostitution law which took place in 1957. During the preparation for Red-Light District, Mizoguchi is reported to have cried in front of the ill prostitutes in a Yoshiwara hospital, exclaiming that men like himself were to blame for all of their troubles.

On August 24, 1956, Mizoguchi died of leukemia, with Yoda's script of what he had hoped to be his next film, Osaka Story (Osaka Monogatari) at his bedside. This film was subsequently realized by director Yoshimura Kozaburō. Shortly before his death, Mizoguchi stated that he felt he was just beginning to master and add to the art of cinema, after more than thirty prolific years in the field. Always eager to learn about new cinematic techniques, he was just being introduced to the possibilities of Cinemascope by Miyagawa before his death (Film Center, Miyagawa 15). In his final years, he had also grown closer to the
Plate 20.  Кю Мачико (left) in Red-Light District.
Buddhist faith, a fact that may have affected the more transcendental quality of some of his later films.

It is unclear how many films Mizoguchi made during his roughly 34-year career. A large percentage of the earlier films have been destroyed through natural or war-related disasters (such as the 1945 fire raids on Tokyo) or just through poor preservation methods. McDonald's bilingual list includes 85 films (Mizoguchi 177-183) while Cohen mentions 90 films, with only 32 extant (Textual Poetics ix).

In Japan, Mizoguchi has had no real disciples, although directors like Shindo Kaneto, Yoshimura Kimisaburō, Masumura Yasuzō and Shinoda Masahiro and others say they have been influenced by him. He is, nevertheless, respected and revered by many of the luminaries of Japanese cinema. According to Yoda, modern directors want to create a "lighter" (motto karui) film and cannot think of being as concerned about details as Mizoguchi was, due to budgetary constraints and lack of patience for such matters (Yoda interview 1988). The New Wave movement of the 1960s in Japan reacted against the styles of the older masters like Mizoguchi and sought instead to reveal the contradictions in Japanese society through other, newer controversial techniques, such as the use of the hand-held camera, "rouger" editing, explicitly sexual and/or violent scenes, and a rejection of the classical styles of humanism.

**Directorial and Camera Styles**

On the whole, Mizoguchi himself was rather reticent about speaking about his art, but a phrase which has become associated with him is his statement: "Let us say that a man like myself is always tempted by the
climate of beauty" (Roud, *Cinema* 699). This fascination with the "climate of beauty" of particular historical periods did not color Mizoguchi's awareness of all that is not beautiful in life, but it did compel him to choose certain predominant directorial and camera styles.

As the descriptions below will show, Mizoguchi was known as a perfectionist and his demands on his staff and cast are legendary. If something (a prop, a line in a script, an actor's interpretation) did not match his internal vision, he would ask for it to be redone without explicitly explaining what might be wrong. Members of his casts were rarely given explicit instructions but rather were told: "You're the actor—you decide" (Yoda interview 1988). This somewhat vague sense of obsession which grows progressively stronger in the artist-figures in his films may be a reflection of this personal trait of the director himself.

When an actor or actress would complain that they had spent the previous evening learning their lines, only to find new lines on the blackboard in the morning, Mizoguchi would inform them that memorizing lines was not the nature of true skill as a performer. Screenwriter Narusawa Masashige reports that Mizoguchi's attitude toward acting was not to show something but rather "to draw forth something from deep inside (nainen kara no mono o dasu)....He felt that first you must have the spirit, and then the proper words would come out" (Narusawa interview 1988). Actors were advised by him to enter deeply into the characters they were portraying, and not to anticipate their lines, as they really had no idea what lay ahead in a scene. In this way, the actors were given a lot of freedom to decide about their roles for
themselves, which proved to be liberating, but also time-consuming and often exhausting.

Mizoguchi was deeply concerned with making sets, props and costumes authentic to the period of the film, and he immersed himself in books, exhibits and scholarly treatises on the period represented in the films. He was even known to burden actors and actresses with stacks of scholarly works related to the kind of character they were to portray (as was the case for Kagawa Kyōko, with the role of Osan in A Story from Chikamatsu and Tanaka Kinuyo for the role of Ochika in A Woman from Osaka). Weeks before rehearsals began, actors and actresses might be asked to wear period costumes, even in their daily life. Masumura Yasuzō explained that this perfectionistic drive was tied in with Mizoguchi's desire to immerse his actors in as perfect a setting as possible, in order to help them forget daily consciousness and draw out of them their best performances (Kinema Junpō 80).

Although, from this description, it might appear that Mizoguchi was aiming for a highly realistic presentation, Yoda balks at the word "realism" when applied to Mizoguchi, as he feels that the term has more of an ideological nuance to it than Mizoguchi intended, and also because he feels it lacks the sense of religion and humanism that emerges in the later films (Yoda interview 1988). (In his What is Cinema? [vol. 4], Bazin defined realism, in terms of the cinema, as "any system of expression, any narrative procedure, which tends to make more reality appear on the screen" [McCabe 91]. Yoda prefers the term "naturalism" to describe Mizoguchi's films, in the sense that they present "just what is there, as it exists" (ari no mama o dashite iru) or, in other words, they "follow what appears in nature" (shizen ni aru mono ni shitagau.
Although many discuss the "naturalism" of Mizoguchi's works, it must be remembered that Mizoguchi preferred the more controlled, beautifully-fabricated atmosphere of a set to the unpredictability of filming on location, where he resented the unexpected passing of cars and curious onlookers. For that reason, when he did have to shoot on location, he preferred to go to isolated mountain spots, or to his favorite Lake Biwa. Yoda also writes that he sensed an underlying rational (gōriteki) nature to Mizoguchi's directorial style which was not inconsistent with the fact that Mizoguchi's responses to his scenarios were sometimes illogical (Kinema Junpō [1956] 41).

As a wider interpretation of Mizoguchi's perfectionism, Kurosawa's remarks on Mizoguchi are particularly revealing:

His greatness was that he never gave up trying to heighten the reality of each scene. He never made compromises. He never said that something or other "would do." Instead, he pulled—or pushed—everyone along with him until he had created the feeling which matched that of his own inner image. An ordinary director is quite incapable of this. And in this lay his true spirit as a director—for he had the temperament of a true creator. He pushed and bullied and he was often criticized for this, but he held out and he created masterpieces. This attitude toward creation is not at all easy, but a director like him is especially necessary in Japan where this kind of pushing is so resisted (Richie, Kurosawa 97).

One hears the same kind of "horror stories" about Mizoguchi that one hears of other demanding directors like Kurosawa, von Stroheim and Chaplin. For example, during the filming of New Tales of the Taira Clan, Mizoguchi kept hundreds of extras in heavy costumes waiting on top
of Mount Hiei for hours until screenwriter Yoda Yoshikata could arrive to change a few lines of the script which Mizoguchi no longer found acceptable (Miyagawa interview 1988). He would use the difficult process of trying a large number of variations of a line until he could find the one he felt was most natural. Yoda reports that Mizoguchi always told him: "Don't write a movie-style scenario" (eigateki na senario o kakanai de kure [Yoda interview 1988]). In other words, he instructed Yoda to try to draw reality out of fiction rather than concentrating on constructing a plausible fiction.

Tanaka Kinuyo told Mnouchkine a story of Mizoguchi's demands which is, in retrospect, both amusing and revealing. Mizoguchi had insisted that she grow thinner during the filming of Sanshō the Bailiff, due to the changes in her character. She followed a hunger regimen religiously until one day, near the end of the filming, when she knew she only had to finish up some dubbing that day. After treating herself to a large steak, she went to the studio to dub in Tanaki's plaintive song of longing for her children, Anju and Zushiō. Mizoguchi noticed something different in her voice and, infuriated, made her sing the song for five hours outside, in the dead of winter, until her voice assumed the desired quality (Cahiers 32).

Despite these kinds of stories, none of the people I interviewed, and few of the ones who appeared in Shindo Kaneto's documentary on Mizoguchi stressed this aspect of their working relationship with Mizoguchi. Rather, they stressed their appreciation for the quality of performance or craft that he helped them to reach. I believe this was their true feeling. This could be due to typically Japanese politeness or to the passing of time, but I sensed not.
In a fascinating article entitled "The Passion of Identification in the Late Films of Kenji Mizoguchi," Andrew cites what he terms Mizoguchi's intermediate stance between illusion and involvement. In other words, Andrew states that, in viewing a Mizoguchi film, we are "captive neither of artwork (traditional illusionism) nor of our own constructions (modernism)" (192). In the same light, this balance between obsessive preparation and the spontaneous freedom of the immediate performance is analogous to Mizoguchi's vision of the artist as one who combines detached, contemplative analysis with passionate, revolutionary response (Reference Guide 36). Mizoguchi never looked for quick artistic solutions but rather felt that there must be an authentic, deeply-felt performance that was yet to be realized. Work itself became Mizoguchi's whole life, and one feels that his propensity to remain on the set and to remain rigidly disciplined within the production, may have been as much a desire to stay close to the reality as desired, as visualized, as it was to create a film based on that visualization. In this sense, Mizoguchi himself was an artist whose elevated ideals drove him forward, through a series of difficult situations, to a level of creation only imagined at the outset of his career. Also, in this sense, his work and his life found a common expression.

Mizoguchi is best known for the extended one-scene-one-cut (also called the "long take") method, often shot from a long distance. This was a technique which evolved over the course of his early films, in response to individual actors' performances and even in response to wartime shortage of film stock (Cohen, Textual Poetics 427).
camera-to-object distance and a moving camera, sometimes with an inclusion of contradictory points of view, that could be seen as precursors to a more formalized one-scene-one-shot technique. His prewar films (notably the silent films Mistress of a Foreigner (Tōjin Okichi, 1930) and The Downfall of Osen) began the experimentation with camera movement (and with the one-scene-one-cut technique in particular), with many (somewhat distracting) inner-titles in the silent films. In his postwar films, the camera tends to follow the flow of the actors' movements even more fluidly.

Brian Henderson writes that he considers the one-scene-one-shot technique "the presupposition or a priori of mise-en-scène, that is, the ground or field in which mise-en-scène can occur" (Nichols 315). André Bazin praised the "long take" for its temporal realism, reflecting what he considered to be the real temporal and spatial configuration of the event being filmed (What is Cinema? 9-16). In his To A Distant Observer, Burch calls this Mizoguchian camera movement a "montage within the shot" in which a series of successive "discrete and interpenetrating" tableaux are filmed by the passing lens(229). Burch's description is somewhat misleading, as the montage technique lacks the fluidity of Mizoguchi's preferred camerawork, but it does express the dynamic nature of Mizoguchi's sophisticated use of this one-scene-one-shot technique.

In Mizoguchi's films, the camera acts as an observer, but not an idle one. Rather, it is deeply involved in the way events affect the characters, and responds as if a human eye, by following in close attention or by turning away from the moments of horror that occur. (This is in contrast to the focus on the violent and erotic that mark so
many contemporary Japanese films.) The camera is never moved for its own display, but rather as an integral part of the whole texture of the film.

Mizoguchi's analogy of a film to a kind of horizontal picture scroll (emakimono) was particularly meaningful to Miyagawa (Film Center, Miyagawa 13). Emakimono are unrolled and viewed in a leftward linear direction, with the pictures examined from right to left, sequentially. The narrative episodes also develop in that direction. In the case of the traditional picture scroll, the eye gazes at each section but then moves on, in an irredeemably forward fashion.

No matter which segment of the scroll we see at one time, it makes a beautiful composition, although when we examine it as a whole it possesses no more unity than a river landscape seen from a moving boat (Keene Japanese Literature 37).

Mizoguchi felt that the viewer of a film must have the same experience as if looking at an emakimono, and should be able to understand the film just from seeing the visual image, even if there is no dialogue (as in a silent film). As in the traditional way of viewing an emakimono, in traditional (pre-video) film-viewing, a person could not return to review what he or she had just seen. Mizoguchi also explained to Miyagawa that, as in an emakimono, everything need not be revealed in a scene— "what isn't needed is all hidden in the clouds" (iranai mono wa zenbu kumo de kakushite aru (Film Center, Miyagawa 12)).

Mizoguchi's form of connecting scenes was not through the more disruptive close-up but rather through a scroll-like connection between performances (engi o tsunageru). Miyagawa Kazuo stressed that
Mizoguchi told the cameramen there were two things the camera must capture, no matter how long the shot was or how dark the setting: atmosphere (funiki) and the entire performance (shibai) (Miyagawa interview 1988). The decentering of the character in many frames of Mizoguchi's films, like the asymmetrical treatment of figures in the emakimono, helps the viewer see the social context in which the characters interact. Mizoguchi's exquisite use of sweeping opening and closing panoramas, and his use of the diagonal (whether in an interior or exterior scene) leads the eye outward, to what might lie outside of the frame of the screen, connecting the inner with the outer world (Plate 21). His frequent use of the crane gives a sense of instability to many of the scenes which is in keeping with the unstable conditions in which many of the characters find themselves (Plate 22). At times Mizoguchi also employed a stationary camera, with the characters entering and leaving the frame under the camera's unmoving gaze. This technique also reminds the viewer of the larger context in which individual characters act out their personal dramas.

Mizoguchi's cinematic techniques thus add new dimensions onto the narrative which help give his films such an unusually rich contemplative level. The best of his films both "exalt the spectator" and "promote distance, impartiality," in the style of all great reflective art (Sontag, Against Interpretation 177).

Mizoguchi also began to use this one-scene-one-shot technique out of his desire to assist his friend, the actor Hanayagi Shōtarō, in his role in The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum, in which Hanayagi (whose performing experience had been on the stage) played a character over twenty years younger than his actual age. The long shot helped convey
Plate 21. Tanaka Kinuyo in Miss Oyu.
Plate 22. Use of the crane during filming of The Life of an Actor (Geidō Ichidai Otoko, 1941).
the illusion of youth while preserving the integrity of the famous actor's performance.

In terms of cinematic punctuation, Mizoguchi preferred the dissolve as a less intrusive accompaniment to the allusions and ellipses filtering through his works. He used the close-up sparingly, and tended to rely on panning and tracking during dialogue rather than on the typical Hollywood formula of shot/reaction shot.

In his essay in *Cinema and Language*, Bordwell also points out some of the other radical differences between Mizoguchi's style and that of the Hollywood continuity approach to editing. These differences include Mizoguchi's decentering (and sometimes "dwarfing") of actors within the setting in moments when the Hollywood-style practice of frontality and conventional visibility in spacing are not employed. In general, Hollywood continuity editing stresses compositional centering, frontality, a balanced *mise-en-scène* and the shot/reaction shot editing format. It also employs a standard 180-degree rule in editing, in contrast to Mizoguchi's frequent use of a 90-degree cutting pattern within a 360-degree total sphere. (The 180-degree line is a canon of Hollywood cinema which assumes that characters can be placed in such a way that they face each other on two sides of an imaginary axis.) Mizoguchi's work on the use of deep space in the cinema also came before, and differed from, the Hollywood deep-focus style described by Bazin in the 1940s. (Deep focus is a technique in which objects in the front of a shot and in the rear of a shot are in focus at the same time.)

The differences between the two systems, however, does not imply that Mizoguchi did not know or understand the Western modes of
representation, as he avidly viewed and critiqued foreign films. Narusawa even reports that he viewed some foreign films with a watch in hand, timing the cuts (Shindō, Aru eiga 63). Mizoguchi seemed to actively choose alternatives that more closely matched his own aesthetic preferences, while vigorously investigating other Western and Japanese directors' styles. This choosing of alternative filming styles was a process that continued up to Mizoguchi's death. As one of his art directors, Mizutani Hiroshi, reported to Mnouchkine:

For him, the shooting was not—as for certain directors—the realization, the fulfillment, the sought-after finish, but rather a commencement, it was the attack! I think this is why he never reached the summit of his genius, even in his last films: He would always continue to correct, always. (Cahiers 12)

(Pour lui, le tournage n'était pas—comme pour certains cinéastes—la réalisation, l'accomplissement, la fin recherchée: mais un commencement; c'était l'attaque!) C'est pourquoi je pense qu'il n'a jamais atteint le sommet de son génie, même dans ses derniers films: il aurait toujours continué à corriger, toujours.)

The mysteries in Mizoguchi's work still remain, despite all efforts to categorize his techniques or the narratives themselves. French critics, like Masson, recognized this and embraced it, calling Mizoguchi "the film director of the invisible light without which nothing appears" (le cinéaste de l'invisible lumière sans laquelle rien n'apparaît [Revers 36]). Bordwell places Mizoguchi's films, along with the work of directors like Dreyer, Ozu, and Bresson, within the category of films of a "parametric" narrative style (Narration 299) which Bordwell describes as creating a sense of mystery or mysticism, especially in comparison
with other basic narrative styles such as the classical Hollywood paradigm, the historical-material paradigm, and the art-cinema style.

In general, Mizoguchi's films tend to be rather dark, having more of a contracted, yin (in) than an expanded, yang (yo) quality (Miyagawa interview 1968). Humorous moments are rare, as are scenes in bright sunlight (except when used for a harsh, "reverse-light" [gyakko] effect, as in Sanshō the Bailiff). Sugiyama perceptively notes that the flip side of Mizoguchi's darkness is a search for stability (Eiga Hyōron 39). The mediating ideal for Mizoguchi's genius was a pursuit of excellence, of a special blend of the darkly realist and the mysteriously luminous [Plate 23], in an art form which was still in the process of formation, drawing on, and rebelling against, its theatrical roots.

**Influence from the theatre**

In reality, such influences (of the traditional theatre), at least direct influences, are very rare, first because the authentic vein of Japanese cinema is a realistic one....Actually, in most cases, the influence of no or kabuki on Japanese cinema is as important as the fables of the Middle Ages on François Truffaut or on Jean-Luc Godard. Except in some cases, including, precisely, that of Mizoguchi (Mesnil 52).

As Mesnil indicates, in Mizoguchi's films, influence from the theatre was both direct (through use of stage plays and the lives of actors as inspiration) and indirect (through mood, camera technique and timing). Mizoguchi's cinematic depiction of persons related to the theatre cannot be separated from the entire traditional or contemporary theatrical milieu in which those persons functioned. For a director so
Plate 23. Tanaka Kinuyo in Miss Oyu.
influenced by the traditional theatrical forms, the adaptation of stage plays into cinematic form becomes another problematic issue in itself.

Mizoguchi's love of the atmosphere of the Meiji period (1868-1912), which figured so prominently in many of his films, came partially from his love of the shimpa (literally "new school") drama. Shimpa, which began in the late 1800s as a political theatre and as a reaction to the highly-stylized kabuki, eventually became more of a sensational and melodramatic form of drama which featured tragic heroines. The peak of shimpa's popularity was in the first decade of the twentieth century, the time of the beginning of Mizoguchi's interest in the theatre and in the growing film industry. Among the innovations ushered in by the shimpa movement of Sudo Sadanori, Kawakami Otojirō and his wife Sada Yakko were an elimination of the traditional style of musical accompaniment and narrative, a partial rejection of the stylized kata (forms) of the kabuki theatre, and a reintroduction of the actress onto the Japanese stage.

After Mizoguchi's death, shimpa troupes continued to stage their own versions of his films, often adapted by one of Mizoguchi's first screenwriters, and close friend, Kawaguchi Matsutarō. Joseph Anderson states that the entire Mizoguchi canon manifests a fundamental shimpa milieu and sensibility (Journal of Asian Studies 621), although Satō adds another dimension by writing that "although (Mizoguchi) started out making shimpa films, he eventually destroyed that world from the inside" (Currents 23). Sato's view is the more perceptive in this case, in light of Mizoguchi's genius for contemporizing and "sharpening" even the most melodramatic story.
Mizoguchi was able to effectively combine the strong points of both theatre and cinema in a uniquely syncretic way. In examining theatrical influences in film, it is important to keep in mind certain differences between live theatre and cinema. Theatre is generally more limited in terms of time and space than cinema, although it can boast of an immediate human quality which a film can never achieve in the same way. As Antonin Artaud pointed out in his *The Theatre and its Double*: "The theatre is the only place in the world where a gesture once made can never be made the same way twice" (12).

Bazin argues that it is not true that the cinema denies the presence of the actor, asking rhetorically: "What we lose by way of direct witness, do we not recapture thanks to the artificial proximity provided by the photographic enlargement?" (Mast and Cohen 358). Due to the mobility of the camera, cinema is free of the concern with frontality and projection that the stage tends to demand; in fact, too grandiose a gesture on screen usually rings false.

In contrasting Western and Japanese cinema, Burch reminds that it is a generally-accepted belief that Western cinema had to mature by developing its own language away from its theatrical roots (although there is some question over whether this referred to the conventional theatre of the entertainment industry or the theatre of innovations, as the latter tended to be considered a beneficial source for innovations in cinema) (*Cinema and Language* 82).

This drive toward separation of the two art forms was not felt as strongly in Japan. A fascination with, and close ties to, the theatre was not unique to Mizoguchi among Japanese directors, although he was one of the earlier directors who integrated theatrical principles into
the cinematic format in an especially effective manner. From the early period of Japanese cinema when actual stage performances were filmed and when the female impersonator (onnagata) was still used in films, to the more recent use of Brechtian-style distancing techniques in avant-garde films, the theatre has remained a reference point for Japanese directors, screenwriters and art directors. The historical drama (jidaigeki) swordplay format from the stage transferred rather well onto the screen, as did a more naturalistic style of acting which developed, along with the shingeki (New Theatre) movement in the 1920s. Among the Japanese theatre directors who turned to movies during their career were Kinoshita Keisuke, Imai Tadashi, Kurosawa Akira and Yoshimura Kosaburō. Mizoguchi is one of several Japanese film directors who have shown special interest in the theme of the artist, particularly the theatrical artist. Other examples of note include Ichikawa's An Actor's Revenge (Yukinojō Henge, 1963), based on the 1936 Kinugasa version, which features the star actor Hasegawa Kazuo, in the dual role of female impersonator (onnagata) and kind-hearted thug, in his 300th film appearance. The life of travelling performers is depicted in Naruse Mikio's Traveling Actors (Tabi Yakusha, 1940 [no extant print]), Imamura Shōhei's Stolen Desires (Nusumareta Yokujo, 1958) and Ozu Yasujirō's A Tale of Floating Weeds (Ukiusa Monogatari, 1959, a remake of his 1934 version), among others. Interestingly, all three of the above-mentioned films have strongly humorous aspects, in contrast to the more grim depiction of traveling performers in the Mizoguchi œuvre.

On a structural level, the influence of the traditional theatre is apparent in the early Japanese cinema hall where drums were beat to inform viewers of the beginning of a film, and where the length of
cinema programs was influenced by the day-long series of performances in the theatre. A form combining film and theatre, and associated originally with the shimpa school, called "chain-drama" (rensageki) enjoyed some brief popularity in the early 1900s (Anderson and Richie 27–28). The format of the rensageki featured alternating cycles of events enacted on stage and then "continued" on a quickly-lowered film screen.

Another possible connection between the Japanese theatrical and cinematic worlds was the silent film narrator (benshi or katsuben) who sat on the side of the screen, like the jōruri chanter who sits on the side of the bunraku stage. Just as the bunraku chanter was more popular than the puppeteers, so was the benshi often even more popular than the films he was supposed to explain. Burch maintains that the presence of the benshi helped Japanese directors and screenwriters of the 1920s and 30s go beyond the concern for linearization in editing common to early Western cinema (Cinema and Language 86). Anderson's comparison of the screen narrator (benshi/katsuben) to the "commingled media" narrative traditions of jōruri, the emakimon and traditional storytelling techniques (Spoken Silents 13) is helpful in placing this seemingly-unique phenomenon within a broader cultural context.

Although Mizoguchi's early films were part of the benshi tradition (and one extant film The Downfall of Oseen [1935, Plate 24] still has a benshi narration on its soundtrack), he also eagerly embraced the new innovations in sound. In fact, in many ways, Mizoguchi tried to subvert the power of the benshi in silent films like Foggy Harbor (Kiri no Minato, 1923), based on Eugene O'Neill's Anna Christie, which used neither benshi nor intertitles but only the flow of images.
In his "Reconsideration of the Institution of the Benshi," Donald Kirihara attempts to dilute some of the more romantic interpretations of this figure as an emblem of the representational nature of Japanese cinema and as the main reason for the resistance to sound films in Japan. "The function of the benshi," Kirihara writes, "was not to serve as a neutral 'explainer' nor as a dominant narrator. It was to reinforce, interrupt, counterpoint, and in any case, to intercede" (48). Anderson also points out that the benshi was an audience representative who could shape the audience's emotions toward the film (JFV 21, 25).

In Mizoguchi's works, obvious influence from a traditional theatrical form, the no drama, appears in Ugetsu in the dance that Lady Wakasa performs for the entranced Genjūrō, in the song "chanted" by the helmet of the Lady's father, and in her subsequent transformation into her true ghostly form in which her face itself grows to resemble a no mask. It can even be seen in the configuration of some of the rooms and corridors of the "mansion" itself (Cohen, Modernism 117). Actual no or kyōgen stage performances appear in Mizoguchi's The Loyal 47 Retainers (1941-42) and in his The Woman of Rumor (1954). In the latter film, the events on stage mirror the psychologically-based drama between the three main characters in the film. There is also a puppet performance in Osaka Elegy and in The Life of Oharu.

Critic Toida Michizo compared the movements of the main actor (shite) in a no performance to that of the long shot in Mizoguchi's films, both of which he saw as entrancing the viewer into following the sequence of the scene (Kinema Junpō 67). McDonald compares Osan's sudden decision to embrace Mohei in the boat, and thus not commit double
suicide (shinjū) to the sudden halt (meriharī) device in kabuki (Mizoguchi 144). In a poetic fashion, another Japanese critic, Satō Tadao, offered the following analogy between Mizoguchi's camera techniques and the traditional Japanese performing arts:

The close relationship between Mizoguchi's style and the old performing arts is apparent, and only in this limited sense can his works be called premodern. His characteristic "one scene equals one cut" technique, for example, is like the musical accompaniment in traditional dance, in bunraku puppet theatre, in no, and in naniwa bushi, popular storytelling accompanied by the samisen. Unlike the dynamic, rhythmic movements of European dance and ballet, Japanese dance emphasizes the beauty of shape, for the dancer momentarily holds a certain pose or gesture. These moments are called kimaru ("form resolution"), and in moving from one to the next, the body changes its balance in a smooth, flowing manner. Similarly, Mizoguchi's one scene one cut technique is sequential motion, motion changing from one exquisite shape to another....Thus, far from being static, Mizoguchi's long one cut is filled with visual restlessness, interspersed with interludes of breathless anticipation for, even as we watch, the structure of any single scene is always in the process of dynamic transformation (Currents 181).

Through this perspective, all of Mizoguchi's films—not only those which deal specifically with actual stage experiences—can be seen as extensions of traditional theatrical principles, as "performances in film" (Andrew, Films 181), i.e., performances not only of actors, but also of the camera, the music, the interplay between the human form and the set, and so on.

Screenwriter Narusawa Masashige reported that Mizoguchi advised him to see kabuki for its beautiful form (yōshiki) and sense of space and timing (ma), comic banter and storytelling (manzai or rakugo) for their "exclamation points" (ochi), and Japanese classical dance (Nihon buyō)
for its sense of rhythm (Narusawa interview 1988). Cameraman Miyagawa sensed that Mizoguchi probably had some concept of no or kabuki movement and timing in his mind to help him determine the accuracy of certain movements in a scene (Miyagawa interview 1988).

The role of the observer in Mizoguchi films provides another link to the traditional theatre. In his chapter on Mizoguchi in his Film in the Aura of Art, Andrew points out how the use of sympathetic observers in many of Mizoguchi's films resembles the narrators of bunraku theatre or even the silent film narrators (benshi) (39). It could be added that such an observer is also a figure in Japanese landscape painting, drawn on Chinese models. The view of these observers closely matches that of the audience (Cohen, Modernism 112). In his more elaborate definition of performance as times of formalized observation, Cohen includes not only the scenes in the Mizoguchi films mentioned above, but also such moments as the courtroom scene in White Threads of the Cascades, the final river parade in The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum, the musical performances in Miss Oyû (Oyû-sama, 1951) and in The Empress Yang Kwei-Fei (1955) and the classroom scene in The Lady of Musashino (Musashino Fujin, 1951) (Modernism 114). This expanded definition of the observer helps include the film audience in the actual unfolding of the narratives. As observers, we also embark on a journey, in which each successive film takes on the same role as a place name in the Japanese michiyuki, a technique used in traditional theatre which depicts the movements of characters who pass by significantly-named places (Nakanishi 119). Like the journeys of the artists, our michiyuki through Mizoguchi's films marks an aesthetic and philosophical path, passing through darkness to regeneration.
The following chapters will present more specific examples of both the direct and the indirect use of theatrical inspiration, and of the moments of formalised observation, in the eight Mizoguchi films under study.

Eight Films about Artists: An Overview
Before examining eight of Mizoguchi's films about artists, in chapters three through five, it will be useful to present them first in brief synopses. These eight films which feature the life of a performing or visual artist are: White Threads of the Cascade (1933), The Straits of Love and Hate (1937), The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum (1939), A Woman of Osaka (1940), The Life of an Actor (1941), Utamaro and his Five Women (1946), The Love of Sumako the Actress (1947) and Ugetsu (1953).

Two Earlier Films
There are two earlier Mizoguchi films related to the theme of the artist which should be mentioned before describing the eight films in more detail. Actually, the very first film attributed to Mizoguchi as a director, The Resurrection of Love (Ai ni Yomigaeru Hi, 1923), tells the story of a tragic love affair between an artist (an apprentice potter) and the daughter of his master. As is the case with all of Mizoguchi's first 26 films, there are no extant negatives or prints of The Resurrection of Love.

This Nikkatsu studio film, with a screenplay by Wakayama Osamu, met with opposition from the censors, and the non-censored segments of the film were connected by lute (biwa) accompaniment. The film contained
realistic scenes of the life of poor artisans and of a double suicide (shin'jū) which the daughter carries out with another man. By adding the political note of an implicit condemnation of society for the characters' misfortunes, Mizoguchi was already beginning to show the unique style of his later works. Donald Richie describes this story as close to that of the subsequent film *A Story from Chikamatsu* (Roud 697).

Another early film by Mizoguchi that features an artist is *Hometown* (*Furusato*, 1930) in which a young singer, Fujimura, is aided by a wealthy and ruthless patroness, Natsue Omura, who helps him achieve success until an untimely automobile accident threatens an early end to his career. Natsue quickly abandons him. The common Mizoguchian theme of the redemptive love of a woman is introduced at this point when Fujimura's jilted girlfriend Ayako helps Fujimura revive his singing career despite his injuries.

This film, with screenplay by Mori Iwao, Kisaragi Toshi and Hatamoto Shuichi, was Mizoguchi's first sound film and his second film to survive. Although it preceded what is generally acknowledged to be the first "talkie," Gosho Heinosuke's *Madame and Wife* (*Madamu to Nyōbō*, 1931), the quality of the sound probably was not up to Mizoguchi's expectations, as he went on to direct two more silent films before his next sound film (in 1932). *Hometown* was introduced by a monologue concerning the advantage of new sound techniques. A popular tenor, Yoshie Fujiwara, played the role of Fujimura Yoshio, and songs from his repertoire make up some of the numbers in the film.

*White Threads of the Cascade*

*The Resurrection of Love* and *Hometown* were precursors to the
subsequent eight films which form the focus of this study. The silent film *The White Threads of the Cascade* (1933) is based on a shimpa play which was in turn inspired by the Izumi Kyōka novel *Giketsu Kyoketsu*. This film describes the life of a carnival performer who helps a poor young man become a lawyer, only to find him later as her prosecutor.

*White Threads of the Cascade* won the second best ranking in the *Kinema Junpō* poll of that year. It followed Mizoguchi's earlier (and less successful) cinematic adaptation of another Izumi Kyōka novel, *Nihonbashi*, in 1929. His third attempt at adaptation of this Meiji Period writer was his 1935 *The Downfall of Osen*.

The heroine of *White Threads of the Cascade*, known by her stage name Taki no Shiraito, first taunts and then befriends a young carriage driver, Kinya [Plate 25]. Shiraito realizes that she has fallen in love with the man and is determined to help him fulfill his dream of becoming a lawyer. Although she is concerned about her ability to keep up her work (since the seasonal nature of her act causes it to lose popularity in the winter), her love for Kinya gives her the strength to continue.

With the decline of the carnival's popularity, Shiraito's generosity to Kinya and to others puts her deeper and deeper into debt. She borrows money at an exorbitant rate of interest in order to be able to send some to her lover so he can continue his studies, but she finds herself unable to pay the money back. After being pursued for sexual favors and robbed of the money she plans to send to Kinya, she becomes hysterical, and stabs and kills the lascivious owner of the troupe, Iwabuchi, who had set up the carnival knife thrower to steal the money back from Shiraito.
Shiraito flees to Tokyo where she learns from Kinya's landlady how well Kinya is doing with his studies and how appreciative he is of his "sister's" help. Although eager to see him again, Shiraito also fears such an encounter and runs away as he approaches his boardinghouse. An unsuccessful attempt at suicide follows. Saved from that fate by two former carnival performers she had befriended, Shiraito is nevertheless arrested as a suspect in Iwabuchi's murder.

In an unexpected, and rather melodramatic plot twist, Shiraito is tried by a new judge, who turns out to be her former lover, Kinya. Although Kinya is thrown into turmoil by the situation, he ends up proclaiming the death sentence for her.

An extremely mobile camera is used throughout this film, with some markedly expressionistic touches in the mise-en-scène and lighting, such as the scene when the shredded scraps of Kinya's letter of resignation from the judgeship of Shiraito's case swirl around his feet as he speaks to the accused Shiraito. (Earlier films by Mizoguchi, in particular his Blood and Soul [Chi to Rei 1923], were influenced by German Expressionism, which sought to give symbolic expression to inner experience.) Close-ups and intertitles are more prevalent in The White Threads of the Cascade than in the latter Mizoguchi films. Many of the technical attributes of Mizoguchi's films of the thirties are apparent in this film, including the mobile camerawork, the frequent use of long shots, and the many 90-degree and 180-degree cutting patterns.

Unfortunately, the film was lost until 1958, and most of the present versions of the film, reconstructed from the original after World War II by Matsuda Michio, are incomplete, mostly with the ending missing. Most extant versions of the film end at the point of the sentencing at the
trial, but additional footage which has been salvaged reveals that Shiraito then kills herself by biting off her own tongue in court in order to spare Kinya the horror of seeing his judgement carried out. In remorse, Kinya also kills himself at the bridge where he and Shiraito had their first romantic encounter. A still used in the reconstructed version shows him holding a revolver, a symbol of the modernity with which he has become allied.

The Straits of Love and Hate

The Straits of Love and Hate (1937) recounts the story of an impoverished young servant who joins a travelling carnival troupe in order to earn money for the care of her illegitimate child. This film shows the poor but honest life of a carnival performer to be superior to hypocritical bourgeois existence.

The Straits of Love and Hate, like the earlier White Threads of the Cascade, depicts the harsh life of a travelling performer. A difference between these two films, however, is that the protagonist, Ofumi, in Straits is ultimately able to reconcile a domestic and a theatrical life, thus avoiding the extremes which ultimately overpower Shiraito.

Loosely based on Tolstoy's novel Resurrection, this story was adapted by Kawaguchi Matsutarō and the script was written by Yoda Yoshikata. The story was already familiar in Japan from the popular 1914 film version entitled Kachūsha directed by Hosoyama Kiyomatsu, in which the heroine is played by onnagata Tachibana Teijirō. Mizoguchi's film was given a premier at the Imperial Theatre and it ranked third in the Kinema Junpō "Best Ten" poll for 1937. This film marks Mizoguchi's first assignment with Shinkō studios.
Yoda reports that, drawing on the original story, Mizoguchi chose a location for filming that resembled Siberia (Yoda interview 1988). The filming of the northern countryside is especially beautiful, even in the rather unclear print housed in the National Film Center in Tokyo. Skillful use of the lines of Japanese architecture to frame characters, and the accent of white snow against the dark backgrounds of bare branches or tiled rooftops, adds a rich texture to an otherwise rather conventional narrative. At times the scenes seem amazingly dark, with the greatest whiteness coming from laundry being hung up to dry or from ripped shoji screens. The frequent use of long shots invites the viewer to consider the characters against the wintry views of the Japan Alps or the harsher contours of northern city life.

Ofumi is first introduced as a servant in an inn in Shinshū in northern Japan. She is forced to flee the household with the owner's only son, Kenkichi, after she becomes pregnant with his baby. Hard times drive the timid son away, leaving Ofumi and the baby basically penniless. Ofumi tries to both work and care for her son, and she is aided in this by her neighbor Yoshitarō. Unfortunately, Yoshitarō ends up in jail after a bar quarrel and Ofumi turns to waitressing at a low-class restaurant in order to survive. She also begins drinking too much and assumes the garish make-up and flirtatious demeanor of a rather cheap woman.

Freed from jail, Yoshitarō finds Ofumi in the restaurant and promises to stay with her. Armed with Yoshitarō's accordian [Plate 26], they join a troupe of travelling carnival performers and eke out an
impoverished, but not unhappy, existence performing an act that parodies both kabuki aesthetics and the troubles of her former life.

Later, when the troupe is performing in Ofumi's former village in Shinshū, Kenkichi recognizes her. The stage production viewed by Kenkichi is shot in a manner that highlights both the performers and Kenkichi's reaction to the performance. The camera shifts from an establishing shot of the theatre front to a backstage view of the performers preparing to go on stage. As the act progresses, the camera moves from a medium close-up of the two actors, Ofumi and Yoshitarō, onstage, to a full shot of these two, stressing their close relationship.

Following a high angle shot of the stage from Kenkichi's point of view in the audience, the camera turns on a medium close-up of Kenkichi watching with his parents from a box in the theatre. Kenkichi drops his head when he realizes the basis for the satiric routine being performed on stage. Then, in a close-up, Kenkichi is shown trying to hide behind a pole near his seat. This alteration between high angle shots of the performance, stage-right angles of the performers, and follow-up reaction shots of Kenkichi continue until one shot reveals that he has fled from the theatre and is waiting outside. Cohen points out how the excessive editing of the scene adds an unusual emphasis to it, especially as an indication of the forthcoming reunion between the two former lovers (Textual Poetics 310-311).

Kenkichi belatedly offers to help Ofumi with the child care if she will return to him. She accepts his offer because the baby is ill and in need of medical help, although she describes herself to him as
an artist (geinin). This restoration of a traditional domestic life is short-lived, however, as Kenkichi's father steps in to reject Ofumi and the baby and to drag the timid son away. The last shots of the film show that Ofumi has rejoined Yoshitaro for a life on the stage, despite its hardships. A full proscenium-level shot from the audience level glorifies the performers on stage fully.

The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum

The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum (1939) marks the first of a trilogy on the theatre, along with A Woman of Osaka and The Life of an Actor. Tragically, the negatives of the latter two films were burnt in the fires of the Kyoto Shochiku studios, and no positive prints remain.

Set in the late 19th century, The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum concerns a son (Kikunosuke) who has been adopted into the famous Onoe Kikugorō kabuki family. Kikunosuke's aspirations to succeed, and his familial connections, outweigh his innate talents [Plate 27]. Only Otoku, the family wetnurse, is willing to critique the future Kikugoro VI's poor performance. A feeling of affection develops between these two characters, and Otoku is forced to leave the Kikugorō family when she is falsely accused of misconduct. Eventually Otoku and Kikunosuke do join together, after Kikunosuke has left the confines of the Tokyo kabuki world in order to develop his skills in another city, farther from his father's influence.

Adapted from a popular shimpa play, this film (like The Life of Oharu, A Story from Chikamatsu and Ugetsu that follow) alters the nature of the female protagonist. In the original tale of The Story of the
Plate 27. Hanayagi Shōtarō (left) in *The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum* (Zangiku Monogatari, 1939).
Last Chrysanthemum, Otoku was more of a fallen woman intent on seducing Kikunosuke (Sugimura 146).

Uncle Tamizo, with whom Kikunosuke studies in Osaka after fleeing his father's influence, is more nurturing than the father, and more willing to be patient with Kikunosuke's stumblings. "None of us were any good when we were young," he tells his disciple. Unfortunately, the ailing Tamizo dies and the rest of the troupe, less patient with Kikunosuke, fire him, forcing him to go on the road in order to meet expenses.

Otoku encourages Kikunosuke along the slow, and poverty-stricken, path toward developing his art. The time on the road stretches into four long years which leave Otoku exhausted and Kikunosuke bitter and rough-mannered. She tries to remind him of his resolution when he left Tokyo to make it on his own, but he dismisses it all as a "lost dream." In his low mental state, he claims that he prefers the unsophisticated rural audience because they like whatever he does. Even this comfortably cynical mood is broken when the news is brought in that the troupe's managers have fled, and that a team of hefty women wrestlers are taking over the kabuki players' slot. As the travelling actors' set is rudely struck by the wrestlers men, the camera slowly pans backstage, stopping on a shot of the rain pouring steadily, like tears, off the eaves.

Finally, Otoku (again on her own initiative) convinces the Kikugoro family to allow Kikunosuke another chance to perform with them. They agree to do so, on the condition that she leave Kikunosuke forever.

Only after Kikunosuke has successfully returned to perform, and after hearing of Otoku's worsening health, does the family accept the
two as husband and wife. Unfortunately, time has run out for Otoku, who has returned to Osaka, penniless, to die. An effective series of cross-cuttings reveal Kikunosuke taking his place at the head of the celebratory river procession with the rest of his family as it winds its way diagonally across the screen, while Otoku dies alone. Although Kikunosuke has become skillful in his field, and is allowed to re-enter the family fold, he has become diminished in stature by failing to support the servant/lover who had once been the only one to offer an honest and caring critique of his ability.

The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum was the first film Mizoguchi made after quitting Shinko's Oizumi studios and joining Shōchiku's Shimokamo studios. The shimpā play on which the film is based was itself a successful stage production at the time Mizoguchi came to Shōchiku. Mizoguchi's film features Hanayagi Shōtarō (1894-1965) [real name Aoyama Shōtarō], a famous shimpā actor who played female roles (onnagata) and who was instrumental in the revitalization of the shimpā movement. Besides his film debut in Mizoguchi's work, Hanayagi Shōtarō also later appeared in Naruse's The Song Lantern (Uta Andon, 1943) and in Mizoguchi's war-time film The Famous Sword Bijomaru (Meito Bijomaru, 1945). For these works, and for his many stage appearances, he was awarded the title of Living National Treasure in 1960, and became a Person of Cultural Merit in 1964.

In many ways, Mizoguchi intended the film as a vehicle for Hanayagi Shotaro, who was also a close acquaintance. The extensive use of the long shot and the one-scene-one-cut technique was partially in deference to the actor's stage experience and age. Hanaya gi Shōtarō had refused several earlier offers to appear in films (by Kinugasa Teinosuke and
others) as he considered the works to be inferior to his art. He had, however, already appeared in The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum on stage. Hanayagi reported how much he enjoyed making the film with Mizoguchi and, despite the long hours, never got bored (Kinema Junpō 41). Yoda feels that this film was among the first Japanese films to feature a famous performer of considerable stage experience, although actors from the Literary Society (Bungei Kyōkai) and the Free Theatre (Jiyū Gekijo) had appeared in earlier films (Hitô 94).

Despite some improbabilities in the script, The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum marks the beginning of a mature style concerning the depiction of the artist in Mizoguchi's work, a style which begins to struggle with larger issues of the pressures placed on the artist who wants to both succeed, and be supported emotionally, in the rigours of the Japanese artistic world. It also was a movement away from the harsher realism of the mid-30s films (Sugimura; Shimizu).

A Woman from Osaka

Printed synopses and scripts of A Woman of Osaka (1940) reveal that it was a tale of rivalries in the world of bunraku, the traditional Japanese puppet theatre. Mizoguchi had conceived of the idea of making a film on Danpei Toyozawa (1827-1898) almost five years before actual shooting began. The idea for the story arose from Mizoguchi's personal interest in the famous player of the shamisen (a three-stringed plucked instrument), but the actual script by Yoda had to be revised six times over a period of as many months, to fit Mizoguchi's standards (Andrew and Andrew, Guide 173).
A Woman of Osaka marks the first time the star Tanaka Kinuyo worked with Mizoguchi [Plate 28]. It turned out to have been a real introduction to Mizoguchi's style of directing for her, as Mizoguchi had an assistant director deliver a large stack of scholarly treatises on bunraku to the actress, instructing her to study them thoroughly and also to attend bunraku performances in Osaka before beginning rehearsals. She reports having been surprised by this, but also feeling impressed by Mizoguchi's concern for authenticity (Shindo, Aru eiga 389). According to Yoda, this was a film to which Mizoguchi attached considerable importance (Hito 98).

A Woman of Osaka centers around the lives of two performers at the Bunraku Theatre (Bunrakuza): a shamisen player Danpei Toyozawa and a joruri chanter Koshiji Dayu who were in a basically competitive stance toward one another (Yoda, Hito 99). The central female role is that of Ochika, the daughter of a restaurant owner who becomes Danpei's wife after nursing him from an illness. Ochika, played by Tanaka Kinuyo, is depicted as an intelligent woman who is almost obsessive in her love and ambition for her husband. She fears that Koshiji Dayu's fame might outshine that of her husband, so she manipulates events in such a way that Koshiji Dayu ends up joining another theatre.

This plan does not go along as Ochika had anticipated, as Danpei's popularity does not rise but rather, conversely, falls to such an extent that the troupe he is in must travel in order to survive.

When an opportunity arises for Danpei to work again with Koshiji Dayu, Danpei angrily turns on Ochika, realizing how her machinations have potentially hurt several careers. Ochika is inspired by the sight of her earlier rival, the more conservative Okuni, caring for the former...
puppeteer/gangster Fumikichi, who had earlier been blinded in a misguided attempt to steal property from the Bunrakuza. As she watches the solicitous Okuni guide Fumikichi's hands on his puppet, Ochika realizes that she herself has been misguided.

Ochika later proudly watches Danpei's performance from the rear of the hall, remaining part of, and yet separate from, the rest of the audience.

The Life of An Actor

Unfortunately, no negatives or positive prints of The Life of an Actor (1941) exist [Plates 29 and 30]. The latter film tells the story of actor Nakamura Ganjiro who, as the illegitimate son of a poor but talented actor, enters the acting profession despite his father's admonitions that it is not a worthwhile profession. The Life of an Actor is generally regarded as the film of lesser quality in the "theatre trilogy." The script was adapted by Kawaguchi Matsutaro and written by Yoda Yoshikata. The film placed fourth in the Kinema Junpo listing for 1941.

This film opens with the story of two Kyoto lovers, Uzo and Otae, who have a three-year-old son Tamatarō. Uzo had trained as an actor but gave it up because he disliked the strict discipline that was involved. Otae's parents own a respectable fan shop and dislike the idea of their daughter marrying an actor who will not help carry on the business. Uzo's parents also oppose the lover's desire to marry because they fear it will interfere with his acting career.

Uzo subsequently leaves Otae and becomes a famous actor in Edo, under the stage name Kanjaku. The child Tamatarō who has grown up in
Plate 29. The Life of an Actor.
Plate 30. The Life of an Actor.
poor circumstances, due to the failure of the fan business, eventually
learns of his father’s profession and decides to also try his hand at
acting, eventually earning the stage name Ganjirō. The father searches
out the son to try to convince him that acting is not a good profession
to pursue but the son will not listen because he holds a grudge against
the father for deserting his mother.

In an effort to help his son, the ailing Kanjaku transfers funds
over to Otae and Ganjirō, and arranges for Ganjirō to have a role in a
new kabuki play at the Dotonbori theatre in Osaka. Ganjirō achieves
recognition for his performance of this role and assumes that he has
received the role solely on his own merit. He is informed by his
mother, however, that his father has been instrumental in helping him
enter the kabuki world. This helps Ganjirō accept his father’s love and
also reconciles the boy to the father. Otae and Ganjirō travel to Kobe
for a reunion with Kanjaku but learn that he has just died while
performing on the stage. Otae and Ganjirō weep by his side and Ganjirō
pledges to carry on his father’s name.

Nakamura Senjaku I (later Nakamura Ganjirō II), the actual son of
the character Tamatarō (stage name Ganjirō I) played his father in this
film.

Utamaro and His Five Women

Utamaro and His Five Women (1946) depicts the famous 18th-century
woodblock (ukiyo-e) artist Kitagawa Utamaro (1753-1806) as a
"democratic" rebel whose drawings of women cause artistic and social
outrage among the more conservative members of his society. Utamaro was
produced with limited means during the post-war occupation period.
(1945-1952), a period in which the American authorities (who were aware that cinema can be a powerful force in shaping the mores of a people) did their utmost to suppress and destroy films that they deemed propagandistic, militaristic, or feudalistic, while encouraging values they considered "democratic." This practice lasted up until three months before the end of the occupation (Hirano 202). Particularly odious to the officials of the American Civil Information and Education Section (CIE) and the Civil Censorship Detachment (CCD) were films that depicted such factors as feudal loyalty, ritual suicide, revenge, the degradation or exploitation of women or children, and violence involving swordplay (but not, necessarily, guns) [Hirano, 195-196]. Even films which were, on closer examination, essentially satirical in their treatment of feudal values, such as Kurosawa's The Men who Tread on the Tiger's Tail (Tora no O o Fumu Otokotachi, 1945), were banned.

Within this restrictive post-war framework, Mizoguchi was able to gain permission to film the first historical drama (jidaimono), Utamaro, only by convincing the occupation authorities that he would depict the artist Utamaro as a "democratic" figure who was more in touch with the people than with the established classical schools. He also had to promise to make other films that dealt more directly with women's emancipation. In his screenplay, Yoda had to dilute much of the eroticism of the original story by Kunieda Kanji, a fact that angered the original author. Yoda expressed some disappointment in this film and stated that he would have liked to have spent more time on the script (Yoda interview 1988).

Although it is not necessary for a film to adhere totally to historical truth, it is especially interesting in this case to compare
Mizoguchi and Yoda's variations with what we know of the actual atmosphere of the period in which the Utamaro worked. Historically, Edo boasted many artistic schools, attracted there by the powerful shogunal influence and by the presence of the Chinese (and even some Dutch) scholarship. As the merchant class grew in power, the craftsman also rose in stature and created new styles of art that contained more of the vigour of the folk styles. Genre painting and woodblock prints became more popular and the subject matter shifted from the refined pursuits of the nobility to more popular amusements, particularly those of the demi-monde, the so-called "floating world" (ukiyo). This section was so called because of its separation from the more mundane commercial and residential areas, but also because of the sense of "unreality" and evanescence, in a Buddhistic sense, connected with the pleasure this district provided.

This demi-monde, the gay quarters (irezato, yūjōmachi) of the Edo period, was also the gathering grounds of artists, as well as of the rising middle-class merchants and disguised samurais. It was a place where the outmoded was scorned and where tasteful innovations were welcome. Despite its air of freedom, it was also a subculture in itself. In his article on the onnagata and actors, Tamotsu Hirosue writes: "as the fiction of the pleasure quarters differed from the perfectly self-contained fiction of the theatre, the pleasure quarters required, with a special ruthlessness, adherence to their code of decorum" (19).

Utamaro, a celebrated frequenter of the gay quarters, was a recognized master of the depiction of female beauty and it must be
remembered that these ideals of female beauty were also part of the illusion of the "floating world."

A courtesan (oiran) was a high-level prostitute who provided refined spiritual, as well as physical, attention to her male customers. A highly-ranked courtesan often received careful training in music, dance, and the arts of witty conversation and elegant entertainment. On the other hand, the essential nature of the courtesan's role should not be glossed over with too many rationalizations. Dalby offers a slight rationale for separating the role of geisha from that of prostitute in writing that "of the numerous hours men spent in the Yoshiwara pleasure quarters, relatively few were devoted to sex. Most of the time was engaged in partying—sociable banter, poetry, preening, singing, dancing, eating, drinking" (Geisha 55). In the light of his depiction of women in these situations, it is doubtful that Mizoguchi would have been impressed by this logic.

The five women [Plate 31] mentioned in Mizoguchi's film all begin, or end up, associated in some way with the gay quarters. Okita, a tempestuous courtesan, refuses to compromise in her passions and this leads to her destruction. Takasode, the tattooed courtesan with matchless skin, runs away with Okita's lover and then suffers from Okita's revenge. Yukie is the refined daughter of the artist Kanō whose unrequited love for another artist, Seinosuke, leads her to hardship and then to greater self-realization as she leaves the comforts of her childhood home and status. Oshin, the corpulent courtesan, provides the only note of comic relief through her relationship with Utamaro's helper/apprentice Takemaru. Finally, Oran, the daughter of a poor samurai, consents to model for Utamaro and Seinosuke and then runs away.
Plate 31. Utamaro and His Five Women.
with the latter. All of these five women who inspire, and influence, Utamaro are also inspired by him to value their beauty, and themselves, more highly.

The Love of Sumako the Actress

The Love of Sumako the Actress (1947) [Plate 32] is based on actual events in the life of modern theatre (shingeki) actress Sumako Matsui, especially those concerning her love affair with the progressive critic and director Shimamura Hōgetsu. It also shows the development, and internal dissensions, in the Geijutsuza, a shingeki theatrical group founded by Hōgetsu and Sumako.

The historical background of the major characters, and of the theatrical form they helped develop, is of import in understanding the way Mizoguchi interpreted this story. Historically, the shingeki movement sprang from a fascination with new alternatives presented by a Western literature and drama which began to enter Japan with the beginnings of the Meiji Period and gained special prominence during the Taishō Period (1912-1926). Shingeki was never really a popular theatre; rather it was a theatre of the intellectual, the disaffected. The rise of shingeki signaled the decline of the more hybrid, melodramatic shimpa drama. While the shimpa was more of an attempt to assimilate Western-style conventions of performance, the shingeki was a more serious attempt to deal with the content of Western drama.

The Literary Society (Bungei Kyōkai), formed in 1909, was originally planned as a broad-based literary organization, but only its drama branch flourished and eventually took over the name of the entire organization. Under the leadership of noted Shakespearean scholar and
playwright Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859-1935) and director/scholar Shimamura Hōgetsu (1871-1918), an educational program was established to train amateurs into professionals in the new, modern style. Lectures at the school included instruction in elocution, stage fighting (tachimawari), comic drama (kyōgen), theatre history, English conversation and the philosophy of art. A rehearsal theatre provided a place for practical training.

Early productions of the Literary Society, with the aid of the Imperial Theatre, included Hamlet, The Merchant of Venice, Julius Caesar and A Doll's House, as well as plays by Hauptmann and Strindberg, all translated and performed in Japanese. The Literary Society's production of A Doll's House was the first shingeki production in which women played all of the female roles, although women had acted in shimpa productions since around 1900. The Literary Society was one of the first co-educational institutions in Japan.

After resigning from the Literary Society in May 1913 due to Shoyo's disapproval of their love affair, Hōgetsu and Sumako went on to form their own shingeki troupe, the Geijutsuza (Art Theatre). The first production of the Geijutsuza was a double-bill of Maeterlinck's Monna Vanna and Intérieur in September 1913. This was followed by a production of Oscar Wilde's Salomé and Ibsen's The Woman from the Sea. The third production, of Tolstoy's Resurrection in March 1914, included a song by Nakayama Shimpei entitled "Katusha's Song" (Kachūsha no Uta) whose popularity helped boost Sumako's reputation nationwide. This fame encouraged Hōgetsu to concentrate on the commercial aspects of the productions and it turned Sumako's head until not even Hōgetsu could control her arrogance. Hōgetsu's death from pneumonia in November,
1918, followed by Sumako's suicide by hanging in January, 1919, spelled the end of the Geijutsuza.

The historical Matsui Sumako (real name Kobayashi Masako, 1886-1919) was a country girl from Nagano prefecture, the youngest of eight children. Although not a beauty, Sumako's dynamism and perseverance gave her star quality. She was twice married and became known for her interpretations of female roles like Shakespeare's Ophelia, Ibsen's Nora, and Magda of Sudermann's Heimat. The first performance of Heimat by the Geijutsuza was banned by the police because the attitude of Magda toward her father was seen as contrary to loyalty and filial duty (chuko). After Hōgetsu appealed to the Undersecretary of Home Affairs and agreed to modify the script, the play was allowed to continue (Kamiya, Meiji 45). As might be expected, all of the publicity led to a successful tour of Heimat.

Other Geijutsuza programs in which Sumako starred included adaptations of Anna Karenina, Anthony and Cleopatra, Carmen and Tolstoy's The Power of Darkness and The Living Corpse, as well as original plays by Hōgetsu and other Japanese playwrights. Between the time of Hōgetsu's death and her own suicide, Sumako starred in a production of Carmen at the Yurakuza in January 1919, and also as Okichi in Nakamura Kichizō's Butcher Shop (Nikuten).

Mizoguchi's cinematic version of this historical story opens with Shimamura Hōgetsu lecturing on Belgian playwright Maurice Maeterlinck. The camera moves back and forth between the lectern and the eager faces of the students—the first "audience" presented in the film. Later, in a group discussion with Tsubouchi Shōyō and others, Hōgetsu insists on introducing Ibsen's A Doll's House to the Japanese public, despite
Shōyō's desire to leave Ibsen up to actor/director Osanai Kaoru. Others at the meeting express doubt that an appropriate actress can be found to play the role of Nora, and they discuss whether or not to use an onnagata for the production.

Finally, the proper actress is found in a strong-willed young woman, Matsui Sumako, who insists on becoming an actress despite the objections of her family. The intensity of rehearsals for the Ibsen production draws Hōgetsu and Sumako closer, while at the same time increasing the growing estrangement between Hōgetsu and his wife, who considers A Doll's House [Plate 33] inappropriate for a Japanese director and audience. Shōyō tries to reason with the wife, stressing Hōgetsu's role as a shingeki proponent.

In the meantime, Sumako rehearses feverishly, even while alone in her room, and refuses to stop during rehearsals until the director has pronounced his satisfaction with her interpretation of the role. Hōgetsu approaches Sumako romantically, but at first she hesitates to return his affections.

The love between Hōgetsu and Sumako is very much that of a meeting of like minds and like spirits. This mutuality was not experienced by either of them in their respective marriages, and Hōgetsu eventually leaves both his family and his association with the Literary Society, when his mentor expresses his displeasure over Hōgetsu's and Sumako's relationship. Hōgetsu's and Sumako's newly-found cohesiveness is stressed in scenes like that of the boat trip which opens with an intimate close-up of the two protagonists. Only after establishing the primacy of this relationship does the camera pull back to reveal the entire vessel and the others in the party.
Plate 33. Sumako as Nora in The Love of Sumako the Actress.
In Mizoguchi's film, much is made of the difficulties Hōgetsu and Sumako had to face in terms of societal resistance to their love. Shōyō tries to convince Hōgetsu that he is shirking his responsibilities as a teacher whose behavior is necessarily observed by his pupils, and he warns Sumako that society will not allow such a relationship [Plate 34]. Hōgetsu's mother scolds him for forgetting his obligations (giri) and even his daughter tries to make him feel guilty by answering his admonishment to marry for love with the cry "I won't marry. I'll stay single all my life!"

Financial difficulties plague the Geijutsuza troupe and they are forced to travel, even as far as Manchuria, in order to be able to keep performing. As in *White Threads of the Cascades*, a long shot of a train crossing a bridge gives the sense of the loneliness of an extended period of continued travelling. Arriving in a town, the actors parade through the streets in rickshaws, attempting to stir up an audience. Sumako complains about the rough rural audiences, and wishes to do "real theatre," but Hōgetsu repeats that they must go on to yet another town in order to meet expenses.

Members of the troupe argue among themselves, and Sumako angrily tells them to leave the troupe if they don't like what is being done. It is obvious that they resent her dominating presence as the star of the company and her privileged position with the director. Low spirits permeate the troupe and ill health threatens Hōgetsu himself as Sumako and Hōgetsu nurse each other in turn.

During a rehearsal, Sumako learns that Hōgetsu is dying. Rushing to his side, she finds a ceremonial scene in which weeping women, and men with bowed heads, cluster around the prostrate body. Finally only three
Plate 34. The Love of Sumako the Actress. With Tono Eijirō (right) as Tsubouchi Shōyō.
people (Sumako, Shōyo and Nakamura, Hōgetsu's colleague) are left in the room, while Sumako lights a candle.

After Hōgetsu's death, Sumako's desire to act becomes more dissipated and she craves death. The same man who had earlier discouraged the lovers' union, Tsubouchi Shōyo, now berates her for this stance and encourages her to continue. As he had mentioned to Hōgetsu earlier, he reminds her of her important role in raising the status of shingeki.

Sumako's spirit is as empty as the shot of the dressing room, devoid of human form, that Mizoguchi inserts into the sequence that follows Sumako's next stage performance. She returns exhausted from the stage. As others crowd around to congratulate her, she sits silently, oblivious to the praise. Later, back in her own room, she lights incense before Hōgetsu's memorial shrine and asks the photograph of Hōgetsu which is displayed there how he found her performance. Aware of the futility of it all, she falls, weeping, onto the tatami mats on the floor.

A quick cut to a performance of Carmen shows Sumako in the title role, arguing with the actor playing Don Jose that he should put more feeling into the final stabbing scene. They rehearse the scene feverishly several times, but never to her satisfaction.

The actual performance of Carmen on stage serves as a foreshadowing of what might come, considering Sumako's unstable emotional state. It is a scene full of shadows and screams, with a rare close-up of Sumako wearing the heavy make-up of Carmen, lying "dead" on the stage as the legs of the actor playing Don Jose tower over her. As the curtain drops, the audience gets up to leave. The next day, news of Sumako's suicide arrives, and the film ends with a funeral scene.
This film was produced in a race with Tōhō Studio's director Kinugasa Keisuke who was making a version of the same story starring Yamada Isuzu. Mizoguchi's film presents the subtle shadings of the unusual love affair more richly while Kinugasa's version presents a clearer picture of intra-group rivalry.

It is surprising that Mizoguchi's film turned out as well as it did, considering the fact that the management of Shochiku refused to give Mizoguchi free reign to explore all of the vicissitudes of the Sumako character, preferring to present a sympathetic heroine (McDonald, Mizoguchi 80). What saves Mizoguchi's film from turning maudlin (a fate Kinugasa's version does not avoid) is Tanaka Kinuyo's sensitive, almost painful, portrayal of the actress, although Kinugasa's choice of Yamada Isuzu for the role insured a more sensual, aggressive performance which was also in keeping with the character of Sumako. To Yođa, Mizoguchi blushingly called Tanaka "the Sumako of our times" (Hito 205). One Japanese critic, Tsumura Hideo, questions Tanaka's ability to convey the kind of sensuality needed in many of her roles [Inoko 413]. Tsumura is correct in that Tanaka's most successful performances are not of the rebellious prostitute, but rather of the noble "princess" or the altruistic, sacrificial "priestess" (to use David Desser's triadic schema [Fros 111-114]), such as the role of Tamaki in Sanshō the Bailiff [Plate 35] and Miyagi in Ugetsu.

Ugetsu

The last film which will be examined at length in this study is Ugetsu (1953). Ugetsu parallels a rural potter's attempt to escape
Plate 35. Tanaka Kinuyo (second from left) in Sanshō the Bailiff.
into a fairytale-like world with scenes of war's destructiveness and of man's perversity toward women.

The story is based on two tales in Ueda Akinari's *Ugetsu Monogatari* (those of *The Lust of the White Serpent* (*Jasei no In*) and of *The House Amid the Thickets* (*Asaji ga Yado*) and on the short story *Décoré* ("How He Won the Medal of Honor") by Guy de Maupassant. The nine tales of physician-writer Ueda Akinari (1734-1809), published in 1776, are based on Chinese sources and reflect real and imaginary events ranging from the seventh to the seventeenth century. Akinari's work deals with ghosts and with Taoist and Buddhist ideals. In adapting the stories, Mizoguchi and Yoda particularly changed the depiction of women shown in Akinari's version as primarily seductive, evil creatures to characters desiring stability within a love relationship. For example, in the Chinese tale, the Princess Wakasa figure is an embodiment of a snake, whereas Mizoguchi, in his film, makes her a human and female figure, seeking fulfillment.

In his preface (in Chinese), Akinari explains that the title of his work (literally translated as *Tales of Moonlight and Rain*) is derived from the fact that he completed the stories on a night when the moon had shone through the clouds after rain had fallen. (Actually, the title was taken from the no play *Ugetsu* in which Saigyō plays the main role (Young 53). Zolbrod explains that the title itself contains contrasts, in that rain connotes youth, innocence and love, while the moon implies maturity, enlightenment and sorrow (21) and Yoda commented that his first impression of the word *ugetsu* was of a night when the moon was shining in the darkness, but was invisible to the naked eye (Hito 206). All of these interpretations have relevance to the film itself.

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Although Akinari did have some belief in the supernatural, especially in the supposed ability of foxes and badgers to bewitch, he was essentially not a superstitious man and only wrote this one (relatively subdued) piece of literature of the supernatural. Young explains:

Throughout Ugetsu, Ueda retains control over his ghosts, never letting them get the better of him, using them not to convey terror for its own sake, but to enhance the ideas and sensibility that he wished to stress. (53)

In this sense, Mizoguchi was quite faithful to the intentions of the original.

Not only was Akinari’s book familiar to many Japanese viewers but The Lust of the White Serpent had also been made into a film adaptation in 1921 by director Thomas Kiriha, with a script by Tanizaki Junichirō.

According to Shindo, Mizoguchi had meditated on this theme for fifteen years before its actualization in 1953 (Sadoul 32). Although Ugetsu only ranked third in the Kinema Junpō listings for 1953, it was received with great acclaim in the Venice Film Festival, where it won the San Marco Silver Lion and the Italian Critics award. In the Cahiers du Cinéma Best Film Listing of 1959, it was chosen for first place (Hillier, Cahiers 287). Iwasaki Akira explained that the lukewarm Japanese response was due to the confusion over the way Mizoguchi had interpreted the original story, an interpretation which was viewed as dissonant (Sadoul, Cahiers 32).
Mizoguchi's *Ugetsu* centers around the aspirations of Genjūrō, a poor rural potter, and his brother Tōbei, a farmer, who want to improve their lot as quickly and easily as possible, once given the opportunity by the chaos of the civil wars during the 16th century. Genjūrō aspires to wealth while Tōbei, the greater simpleton, aspires to obtain the status of a samurai. Genjūrō's wife, Miyagi, is content with her life in the village, helping her husband with his work and caring for their son, but is unable to dissuade her husband from the dangerous enterprise of transporting his pots to the provincial capital during the wartime conditions of the 16th century.

Lord Shibata's army, scouring the village for forced recruits, creates such chaos that prudent villagers flee into the woods for temporary refuge. Even before the soldiers have totally left the village, Genjūrō hurries back to check his kiln. As their men risk their lives and the lives of their families in order to produce and sell more pots, Miyagi asks Ohama, Tōbei's wife: "Is this a man's way?....War changes a man." This puts clearly into words the dichotomy Mizoguchi sees between the greed of the majority of men and the desire for peace, the spiritual satisfaction, of the more enlightened women.

While in the capital selling his wares, Genjūrō's life takes a surprising turn when he is approached by a mysterious, beautiful lady, dressed in fine clothing, who wishes to buy some of his pots [Plate 36]. With but lingering thoughts for his wife and child, Genjūrō visits Lady Wakasa's mansion where she flatters and seduces him. He enters deeper and deeper into a liaison with her, thus cutting himself off from his past. In the meantime, Miyagi, en route to their village, is badly
Plate 36. Kyō Machiko (center) and Mori Masayuki (right) in Ugetsu (Ugetsu Monogatari, 1953).
wounded for a mere handful of rice by a group of hungry, drunken soldiers.

As the secondary plot develops, Tōbei snatches away the money he and Genjūrō have earned selling pots and buys himself a suit of armor and a lance. Chancing upon a chieftain being beheaded by his soldier according to his own suicide orders, Tōbei seizes the opportunity, and the head, and presents it to a rival chieftain as proof of his own prowess. With the new title of general, and with a troop of men accompanying him, the swaggering Tōbei stops at a brothel en route to his native town. In a sudden twist of plot, Tōbei finds his wife Chama there, having fallen to this depth after being raped by a group of soldiers as she was searching for Tōbei near the marketplace. Genjūrō is somewhat awakened to the fact that he is in danger at Princess Wakasa's mansion when a wandering priest informs him that he sees death on Genjūrō's face, and proceeds to draw Sanskrit prescriptions on Genjūrō's body as a safeguard. Aware of some change in her lover, Princess Wakasa and her nurse reveal to him the secret of her past: that she is the ghost of a young, virginal woman brought back to the world of the living to taste the pleasures of being with a man. In terror, Genjūrō retreats through the mansion, flailing a sword about him, and falling unconscious outside. When officials arouse him some time later to find out how he acquired such a valuable sword, Genjūrō is amazed to find the mansion burnt to ruins (although its run-down appearance when he first arrived there had offered clues, to the observant, of its true nature).

Wandering home, Genjūrō finds his house seemingly abandoned but, after entering it once more, sees Miyagi there with their son. In
parallel form to the earlier family scenes, an intimate family composition is echoed near the close of the film, as Genjūrō, the ghost of Miyagi, and Gennichi gather around the fire. The camera moves closer gradually until only Miyagi fills the frame as she wipes away her tears with the sleeve of her kimono. At this point, she appears quite substantial as she remains awake, sewing, until the dawn summons her ghostly figure away. Only the next morning, upon awakening, does Genjūrō (and the viewer) learn with certainty from the village elders that Miyagi was killed en route to the village.

Mizoguchi's original plan for the secondary plot was to leave Tōbei unreformed in his ludicrous, ambitious behavior. He wanted to leave a more "bitter" taste, but the studio wanted to "sweeten" the ending for commercial reasons (Mizo on Mizo 18), thereby softening the sense of a "trailing note" (yoin). Yoda stated that Mizoguchi did not set out to create an anti-war film, although Mizoguchi did write in a letter to Yoda that what he wanted to emphasize as the main theme of the film was "how violence, disguised as war, oppresses and torments the populace both physically and spiritually" (McDonald, Mizoguchi 116). The fact that Mizoguchi took the time to write down over 70 points related to the writing of Ugetsu for Yoda was quite unusual, as they met almost every day in the process of making a film.

On the technical level, the transformations into the supernatural world in this film were achieved in an extremely subtle manner. Kyō Machiko's transformations as Princess Wakasa were accomplished primarily through gradual shifts in make-up and lighting (Film Center, Miyagawa 12). In the same fashion, Wood praises the way Mizoguchi did not insert powerful close-ups in the scene of the stabbing of Miyagi in order to
"go for impact" (Personal Views 233). Instead, Mizoguchi positioned the camera at a slightly raised level and positioned the action at a diagonal, thus pointing to the world beyond the screen, while still maintaining the unity of action. Even the scenes with Miyagi as a ghost are constructed to avoid cutting as much as possible. After Genjūrō passed through his house the first time, an assistant director or member of the crew rushed in and lit the fire, as the camera continued following actor Mori Masayuki (Genjūrō), so that the greatest continuity of movement could be maintained.

Triangular compositions and triangular relationships mark moments of particular intensity in the film and serve as a kind of punctuation point for the viewers' recall. In Ugetsu, these triangular compositions include: the initial gift scene in the house, the close composition of Genjūrō and Tōbei peering down at the dying man in the other boat, the asymmetrical trio of Genjūrō, Wakasa and the elderly nursemaid in the ghostly mansion, the illusory return scene, with the family clustered around the fire, representing a moment's happiness and the memories of happiness.

Critical response to this film, on both sides of the ocean, was mixed. For example, in a rather impressionistic 1954 New York Times review, Bosley Crowther admitted to being perplexed by the vagueness of the film, calling it a "wierd, exotic stew" (40). In his 1953 Kinema Jumpō review, critic Ueno Ichirō, like many Japanese viewers, stated that he felt less comfortable with the mix of the supernatural and the realistic in the film, attributing the "weakness" to the fact that Mizoguchi tried to contemporize the tale.
As these synopses of the eight films show, Mizoguchi was concerned with themes of the artists' need to perfect themselves through their struggles, to seek a nurturing environment (if only in the company of one trusted confidante) and to remain true to their personal visions. Low social status, self-doubt and intra-group manipulations serve as obstacles (but not insurmountable ones) to the artists' desires to improve their work and their lives, and to their efforts to actualize those desires.
CHAPTER THREE
Early Stages

In chapter two, brief thematic and formalistic synopses of each of the eight films under study were offered. In the next three chapters, these eight films will be discussed in detail in terms of the insights they provide into Mizoguchi's view of the artist, in relation to the themes of desire, rebellion and integrity. With each film, Mizoguchi explores in greater detail the level of connotation of the artist as a real entity in (and often against) society, and also as a transcendental figure.

This chapter will focus on two of Mizoguchi's earlier—and now rare films—White Threads of the Cascade (1933) and The Straits of Love and Hate (1937). Both films feature a female travelling performer as the main protagonist. Except for the post-war film The Love of Sumako the Actress, these are the only two Mizoguchi films which explore the world of the female artist. The main themes that will be discussed in this chapter are: the goals and desires of the self-sacrificing woman/performer, the difficult nature of the life of the travelling artist, and the need for a meaningful encounter (deai) in order to give ones life a meaning which art alone cannot supply. (Deai can be defined as "an encounter which signified [in ancient times] a profound involvement, something more than a mere going out (de) and meeting (ai) someone. The term connotes a dialogue brought about by the brandishing of something itself brought about by the encounter" [Komparu 19]).
**White Threads of the Cascades**

The first major film to be considered is the silent film *White Threads of the Cascade* (1933). In this film, the protagonist, Shiraito, subordinates her personal desires to the career of a man she barely knows. The romantic fantasy she weaves around Kinya, the object of her desire, serves as the mediating force which she defines as giving her life meaning, even as it eventually leads to the end of her life. As in his portrayal of most of his female characters, female artists like Shiraito are shown by Mizoguchi to have little fascination with the first kind of art mentioned by Wood—that of an obsession with commercialization. At this stage, the female artist's illusion, and strength, is her love and, in a metaphorical sense, it is her art itself, containing all of the purity of the third set of pots in Wood's schema. Shiraito's reward is her ability to see the fruits of her labor in Kinya's newly-elevated status.

One motivating factor for Shiraito is her desire for encounter (deai). This encounter (deai) is an essential element in understanding the dynamics of the artist in Mizoguchi's worldview, and is intimately connected with the Japanese view of family which Nakane considers "a concept which penetrates every nook and cranny in Japanese society" (4).

As in most Mizoguchi films, the passion of encounter is conveyed both subtly and overtly [Plate 37]. In the scene in *White Threads of the Cascade* in which Shiraito's declaration of love is echoed by Kinya's discovery of her sensual appeal, Shiraito is shown reflected behind a screen while Kinya rests, rubbing his hands nervously on his knees. No actual scene of embrace, let alone love-making, is shown, but the quick cut to a high angle shot of the sunrise and of water flowing along a
Plate 37. Irie Takako and Okada Tokihiko in *White Threads of the Cascade*. 
stream is symbolic of the release of tension between the two protagonists. Mizoguchi's unsensational manner of depicting an attraction between a man and a woman can be, for the perceptive viewer, highly charged.

Shiraito's intense longing for her lover can be felt in the scene in which we see only her back as she waves goodbye to the train carrying away her one moment of union. As in the scene in The Life of O-Haru in which the family is sentenced to exile, moments of deep emotion are presented discreetly by Mizoguchi, from a distance, with only the posture and bearing of the characters revealing their inner feelings. Later, the back of Shiraito is again presented expressively, as she waves goodbye to the two lovers from the carnival who are escaping on a boat, thanks to her aid to them.

A contrast to the desire for death is the scene of distorted passion, displayed in a more explicit form, in which the troupe owner Iwabuchi drags Shiraito around the room before she responds by unconsciously stabbing him. He dies on the decorative alcove (tokonoma), a defamation of its clean and sacred nature. The knife is a symbol both of heartless technique and of passion gone astray as in an earlier scene of the knife-thrower's act which stresses the routine of this carnival act, with the camera's alternation between shots of the man tossing the dart, and the woman on the board enduring the spectacle. In contrast, the actual stabbing scenes are shot in an expressionistic staccato fashion. Light glistens off the knife, and then precedes Shiraito like a beacon, as she wanders around Iwabuchi's house, dragging her unravelled obi behind her.
Connected with this desire for deai is Shiraito's need for a sense of subjectivity, of self-reflexivity. In a moment of self-disclosure, Shiraito mourns the fact that she is 24-years-old, and must continue to wear an old-fashioned hairstyle and use a false name which reflects the nature of her carnival act. Mizoguchi stresses her role as a symbol, rather than as a real person, by first introducing us to her as a name on a theatre poster before we actually see her in person. Later in the film, as Kinya gazes up at the theatre billboard which announces the name of the star "Taki no Shiraito," she scoffs and tells him that only around him can she be who she really is: Tomo Mizushima. It is the only time in the film that we hear her real name mentioned. In a sense, Kinya also has a dual identity—that of a poor coach driver, and of a member of a samurai family who has fallen on hard times (Cohen Textual Poetics 146).

Another motivating factor in Shiraito's desire for Kinya is an attempt to escape the limitations of her life as a travelling performer. As a sign of the down-and-out life of the travelling performers, Mizoguchi inserts a desolate autumnal scene of falling leaves blown aimlessly away and of snow beating down the winter grasses. Close-ups of Shiraito writing a letter to Kinya are intercut with a shot of snow blowing in a parallel motion outside, a reminder of what lies outside the refuge of her love. Only after the two lovers from the carnival, Shinzo and Nadeshiko, have escaped, with the hope of a better life, does Nature become metaphorlic in another way: the cherries blossom.

The shocking lack of privacy the travelling performer must endure is emphasized in the scenes in which the members of the troupe sleep almost side by side, some with a towel thrown casually over their faces.
Before an opening performance, the members of the troupe parade through town on foot or in carriages. Shiraito's bored and somewhat pained expression conveys the impact this ritual has on her. An extreme long shot of a train moving into the distance across a field backed by snow-capped mountains adds another desolate note to Mizoguchi's depiction of the life of a performer forced to travel from one backward town to another in order to survive.

After a performance, when the set is struck, a harshly contrastive note to the gaiety of the performance scenes enters. As the lantern is taken down in front of the now-empty theatre, Shiraito wanders alone outside, feeling it a shame to sleep on such a lovely moonlit night. The famous bridge scene that follows adds another contrasting mood, with the possibility of companionship or love introduced when Shiraito discovers Kinya asleep on the bridge, curled up against the cool evening air. A series of alternating perspectives reveal her towering above him [Plate 38]. Later this contrast is reversed as she lies in a room with him kneeling over her. Love has changed her from a proud, but isolated, verticality to the embodiment of softer, horizontal lines, but it also has made her dangerously vulnerable.

The desire of the audience in this film seems close indeed to an overt form of voyeurism, based on a general perception of Shiraito as a symbolic, not a real, woman. This voyeurism is not unrelated to the role of the audience watching a film, as Andrew pointed out in his Film in the Aura of Art: "The voyeur concealed before a fascinating spectacle he does not control, that spectator wants in part to be caught out, framed suddenly by a turning of the light on him" (55).
Plate 38. Irie Takako and Okada Tokihiko in *White Threads of the Cascade*. 

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The audience in this film is first introduced to the viewer through a circuitous route (McDonald, Mizoguchi 28). A travelling shot reveals a carnival barker, a monkey act, and then the camera moves across the heads of the waiting audience, past a balancing act, to a shot of the musicians and finally to a vision of the star, Shiraito, putting on her make-up. A quick switch to a flashback introduces Kinya in a scene of a race between a carriage and a rickshaw. At the end of the flashback, a return to present time reveals the audience gazing intently, if somewhat perplexedly, at Shiraito's act.

The relationship of the audience portrayed on the screen to the protagonists provides another clue into Mizoguchi's sympathies for the artist. We see the performer through the audience's eyes, but what we are seeing is an ideal form, a passing curiosity. In this film, the audience is shot in a highly individualistic manner and varied expressions of wonder light up individual audience members' faces in their initial introduction to the water-juggling act. The camera moves in to show details of Shiraito's act and then pulls back to reveal the entire stage [Plate 39]. As the act progresses, the audience becomes even more involved when Shiraito directs cool sprays of water out into the audience itself. The camera moves back until, at the finale of the act, the audience itself is viewed through the jets of water. In this sense, the audience is shown as participating in the artist's display, and yet also as limiting her as an individual.

Later, other "audiences" openly display a kind of voyeurism and parasitic involvement in the display of a beautiful woman in scenes as varied as the actual carnival scenes, and those of men in the barbershop,
public bath, and even in the courtroom itself, feverishly discussing Shiraito's supposed role in the murder.

In accordance with Cohen's sense of ritual performance as times of formalised observation, the satiric use of polite ritual-performances like the tea ceremony is introduced in White Threads of the Cascade, and later echoed in A Story from Chikamatsu. The rich import merchant from whom Shiraito goes to borrow money tries to seduce her while conducting a private tea ceremony for her. Maintaining her private sense of dignity, she rebukes him angrily: "I sell my art, I don't sell myself. I'm an actress, but I'm different." Later, she is forced to succumb to the desires of the troupe owner, Iwabuchi, in order to receive money to send to Kinya. In a high angle shot that reduces the statuesque actress Irie Takako to a small kneeling form, Iwabuchi circles around her like a bird of prey as she clutches the money she has just received.

At the trial, Kinya admonishes Shiraito that she must tell the truth because she is, after all, an artist. One senses that he means she is different, perhaps superior, to ordinary people. Kinya's words mark the beginning of a discourse on artistic integrity which will continue throughout the next seven films. Kinya stresses that, as an artist, Shiraito must care about her name and her reputation. Despite the elevated nature of those words, they contain a note of hypocrisy, and didacticism, considering the situation.

Unlike Shiraito, who belongs to a low, transient class of performers, Kinya is from a respectable samurai-class family and deeply resents his fall in social status due to his parents' untimely death. During the first bridge scene, Kinya (who is obsessed with his own needs) asserts that he does not plan to be a servant forever. He walks away, unhearing,
as Shiraito tries to interject mildly that "It's hard for us all."

Later, as Shiraito enters Kinya's official chambers, the camera focuses on the large pile of legal books in the foreground, stressing the contrast between her disheveled, simple appearance and his new erudite stature. This shot of the pile of scholarly books is also in contrast to the one book which Kinya leaves Shiraito after their first encounter. When Shiraito first appears on the screen, she is nostalgically tracing Kinya's name on the volume, as a metonymic replacement for her brief moment of affection. This single volume is a link in a chain; the pile of books is a barrier. In his new role as a public prosecutor, the now white-gloved Kinya clutches the bare hands of the murderer, Shiraito, and we are aware that all hope for a compassionate judgment for Shiraito is lost.

The ending of this silent film—in whatever version—reveals the fact that Mizoguchi was just beginning to explore the nature of desire in relation to the artist in these early films. The version of the film at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City ends with a shot of flowing water, like the earlier shot of the flowing stream after Kinya and Shiraito's night of lovemaking. De Baecque has pointed out how Mizoguchi often emphasizes the feminine nature of water, its infinite gentleness and softness (douceur) (Cahiers 30). Water is, after all, the media of Shiraito's carnival act. Along with the feminine qualities associated with water, the image of flowing water also brings to mind the Buddhist sense of the evanescence of life, introduced in the first moonlit bridge scene in which Shiraito playfully bows to a Buddhist statue half-hidden in the grass. The film then closes with a shot of the same bridge where Kinya and Shiraito first really communicated, and where Kinya commits suicide. As in the endings of later films like The Life of Oharu and Sansho the
Bailiff, a woman's sufferings are shown to be tied into larger forces that transcend daily existence. In this fact lies a partial vindication for Shiraito's struggles.

Mellen considers the ending of the film to be a reflection of Mizoguchi's condemnation of the treatment of women in the Meiji period, a condemnation of a time when progress was believed to be worth any cost, no matter who was sacrificed (Waves 252). Satō also reflects that "although the plot is fraught with coincidence and the acting is melodramatic, this film has a marvelously redeeming quality in that it connects the image of the unfortunate woman with the tragic side of modernization" (Currents 78). It is in this sense that Mizoguchi transformed the shimpa origins of the stories from within.

Shiraito's death, through a self-imposed silencing, remains within the schema of her initial desire, namely, the absorption of the mediator (an ideal love) which (as Girard points out) implies the rejection of the self. Although it is true that Shiraito's sacrifice is merely reflective of the kind of sacrifices which Japanese families, especially women, have made in order to send one son to college (Satō, Currents 78), and although the film is suffused with a poetic rhythmic sense, this does not ameliorate Shiraito's personal tragedy. By the end of the film, Shiraito continues in the pattern of the self-sacrificing female in her attempt to "aid" Kinya through her suicide, which frees him from having to carry out his sentence. In terms of Wood's threefold schema, Shiraito has escaped the commercialism of the carnival life, but remains within an illusory view of life as lacking in reciprocality.

Cohen writes that Shiraito's suicide reveals that she values her individuality more than the will of collective institutions like the law
(Textual Poetics 146) and that she serves as a "mediating figure establishing a fusion between law and art, emotion and reason" (149). This is surely an overly-optimistic view as Shiraito lacked the ability for the kind of objective thought which would permit such a balance of polarities and, within the melodramatic framework of the story, she also lacked sufficient individuation and self-reflexivity to save herself before she reached a point where death was the only solution. As E. Kaplan has pointed out in terms of the representation of women in film, one cannot both lose one's subjectivity and own desire (5). Shiraito's desire to be absorbed into another implies her lack of faith in the value of her own being.

For Shiraito, her art is of secondary import to her desire for the sense of family. (In this light, it is interesting to note that Kinya called Shiraito his "sister" when speaking of her to his landlady.) In Shiraito's case, a form of ideal, redemptive love serves as the mediator of her desire, with Kinya as the illusory object of her desire. The less in touch she becomes with the reality of Kinya's increased distance from her, on both an emotional and status-oriented level, the more she casts a veil of illusion over him, turning him into a kind of illusory refuge. Her love itself becomes her art, as her art becomes merely a means toward that illusion of reciprocality.

Nevertheless, Shiraito's story is an important first step in the presentation of the theme of artistic integrity, as emphasized by Kinya's courtroom speech. Though a victim of the callousness of stronger forces in society (including her former lover), Shiraito tale represents the beginning of a struggle toward a sense of mutuality with the object of desire, albeit clothed in a melodramatic framework.
The Straits of Love and Hate

In The Straits of Love and Hate (1937), the protagonist Ofumi comes to realize that life among outcast artists is to be preferred to security among those who persist in treating her like a servant. Before joining the travelling theatre troupe, Ofumi had found that neither the conservative rural society nor the city employers had offered her any support; even the foster mother of her baby had cheated her. A focus on Ofumi standing on the train tracks and crying over her baby, with the smokestacks of a factory in the background, reveals the director's sympathy for the plight of a woman left alone in a rapidly industrializing nation. Instead of resigning herself to these deplorable conditions, Ofumi finds companionship with wandering performers who fit into no specific milieu.

Ofumi's process of growth includes a descent into the role of a cheap, and often drunken, waitress, in order to gain money for herself and her son, and then a more spiritual ascent through her work and her attachment to her performing partner, Yoshitarō, which become her refuge from a world which has dealt her more than her share of blows. Ofumi's growth as a character is directly due to her acceptance of herself as an artist (geinin), despite social disapproval of that role. The shy, hesitant servant girl in the first frames of the film blossoms into a self-assertive, charming performer by the end. Although not a great actress, Ofumi displays the kind of creative courage Rollo May addresses as she discovers both the limits of her art and the limits of her need to be involved with the painful aspects of her past. Like Shiraito, she is willing to forgive, but she is not willing to reconcile herself to her father-in-law's accusations that her return to Kenkichi has caused
(in his view) justifiable village gossip. One senses that, if the father had not dragged Kenkichi away, she would have left him anyway.

Kenkichi himself is very much in the tradition of Mizoguchi's version of the beau-part (nimai-me) actor. In contrast to the bold and assertive tachiyaku actor of leading roles, the nimai-me has a softer, more tentative nature which can be alternately tender and painfully indecisive. The nimai-me role-type often causes trouble for the women who, unable to see past his gentleness, become attached to him. The classical nimai-me type would never want to hurt a woman and would die with her, if circumstances came to that end. In Mizoguchi's interpretation, however, the nimai-me tends to be more of a "worthless fellow" who cannot bring happiness to women (Sato, Currents 23). The kind of relationship Mizoguchi sets up between a nimai-me-type man and a strong woman, like Ofumi in Straits, parallels the wagoto (more gentle male role) and courtesan (keisei) relationship in early kabuki drama of the Kansai (Kyoto-Osaka) area.

One interesting aspect of Ofumi's stage art is that it is basically an art of parody of many of these kabuki traditions. Ofumi's and Yoshitaro's kabuki-like movements and vocal quality have an appeal and an originality of their own that fall outside of the established canons. As an artist, this gives Ofumi a freedom not possible for characters like Rikunosuke of The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum who must mold themselves to traditions, and it links her more with independent spirits like Utamaro of Utamaro and His Five Women and Matsui Sumako of The Love of Sumako the Actress.

Despite the relative gaiety of these kabuki stage scenes, the camera does not turn away from the harsher aspects of Ofumi's struggle.
for survival. As was the case with its predecessor, White Threads of the Cascade, the life of the travelling performer is not romanticized in The Straits of Love and Hate. Marching with their instruments through isolated villages, performing in small rural theatres to nearly empty halls, trying to calm a feverish baby on crowded trains—all of these travails of travel are suggested both visually and through the dialogue. The camera pans from a leggy dance number of "My Blue Heaven" out to a nearly empty hall. These amateurish dancers cast long shadows on the back wall, further emphasizing the fragility of the travelling performers' milieu. Mizoguchi will always side with those who are most fragile, and will go to great lengths to reveal such characters' inner strengths and resiliency.

In The Straits of Love and Hate (1937), Ofumi, unlike the heroines in the shima-influenced tragedies The Downfall of Osen and White Threads of the Cascade, displays a strength and ability to compromise which allows her to find a form of happiness. The fact that, out of the eight films under study, only this scenario is based on a Western source, Tolstoy's Resurrection, may be of import here. (Other Mizoguchi films based on Western sources include: 813: The Adventure of Arsène Lupin, based on a detective novel by Maurice Leblanc, Foggy Harbor, based on Eugene O'Neill's Anna Christie, and Oyuki the Madonna, based on Guy de Maupassant's short story "Boule de Suif.")

One reason for Ofumi's apparently happy reconciliation with her fate (so rare in Mizoguchi's oeuvre) is the relatively "un-triangular" nature of her desires. In other words, Ofumi is willing to reduce the distance between herself and the mediator of her desires in order to face the tarnished nature of her ideals more directly [Plate 40]. Unlike many of
Plate 40. Yamaji Fumiko and Kawazu Seizaburo in *The Straits of Love and Hate*.
the self-sacrificing women in Mizoguchi's films, she does not remain valiantly in love with the first object of her desire but rather adapts to circumstances in accordance with her actual needs and abilities. By facing up to Kenkichi's lack of sincerity, and by accepting the emotionally (if not geographically) stable life with Yoshitaro as a travelling performer, Ofumi becomes the passionate subject of her own story. Although she is trapped within the melodramatic framework, Mizoguchi was able to extract a sense of reality and happiness in this character (Iijima 227) that makes this film an unusual landmark among Mizoguchi's works.

Laura Mulvey has pointed out that the recognition of women in melodrama has some aesthetic and psychological importance, but the outcome of events in the melodrama are never beneficial to women (Kaplan 26). This film of Mizoguchi's could be seen as a preliminary argument to the contrary, although the abundance of troubles Ofumi endures, both before becoming a travelling artist and afterwards, make her sense of implied fulfillment at the end of the film a precarious one indeed, and one which is still tied to the continuation of the journey. It would probably be wrong to attach too much importance to this story as an exception to the pattern developing in Mizoguchi's films about artists, as even the screenwriter, Yoda Yoshikata, referred to it as a fairly minor and "light" work (karui mono [Yoda interview 1988]).

In the next group of films with this central theme of the artist, Mizoguchi explores the intricate nature of art as a mediating ideal more fully. The focus in White Threads of the Cascade and The Straits of Love and Hate on artistry as a method of survival, and on the struggles of women in the face of obstacles, will be developed further in
Mizoguchi's next film about an artist, *The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum*, which marks the director's greater mastery of his art.
CHAPTER FOUR
Mature Stages

This chapter begins with an analysis of the so-called "theatre trilogy" (geidōmono) concerning Meiji period theatre, The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum, A Woman from Osaka and The Life of an Actor, a trilogy which has been called an "étude on human nature" (Iijima 238). I then continue to look at two other subsequent works, Utamaro and His Five Women and The Love of Sumako the Actress, which depict artists of more independent spirits. These five films, discussed in chronological order, are grouped together in chapter four because they serve as transitional works between more tentative depictions of the artist in films like White Threads of the Cascade and The Straits of Love and Hate, and the more complete philosophical schema developed in Mizoguchi's last film to deal with an artist figure, Ugetsu.

The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum

In The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum, serious consideration is given to an attempt to integrate professional and domestic aspects of the life of the artist and to draw attention to his struggles for identity. During the initial evening meeting between Kikunosuke and Otoku (in a magnificent example of Mizoguchi's one-scene-one-cut technique), Otoku boldly reminds Kikunosuke of his father's injunctions: "Your art is your very life. If not, even Kikugorō VI would be no different than other people." As they walk together along a quiet street while Otoku tries to calm the fussy baby, the camera, from a
markedly low angle, lovingly follows them, pausing when they pause and moving ahead with Otoku when she suddenly takes a stronger role.

Throughout the rest of the film, an awareness of an artist's desire for recognition and popularity predominates. In her honest, realistic assessment of events, Otoku realizes that ultimately it is Kikunosuke's career which will prevail over his love and need for her. Only when Otoku is near death does the actor-father Kikugoro admonish his adopted son that "an actor can't gain his art just by being skillful," thus acknowledging the aid of Kikunosuke's "wife" (the first time this term is mentioned by the family). Reaching the seriously ill Otoku, Kikunosuke tells her not to die, as now he can be happy both in his life and in his art [Plate 41]. This is not, however, to be the case yet in Mizoguchi's depiction of the artist. At the end of the film, Kikunosuke still remains in the midst of a journey toward a union of art and life. Otoku's death implies that this union is still viewed as impossible for the artist who is unaware of the essential nature of this desire.

The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum juxtaposes images of theatre and life, showing non-theatrical figures bathed in light in dark settings and the use of stylized natural sounds as background to scenes of daily life (McKegney 113). Not only are these images juxtaposed, there is also a fairly constant reminder of the actual choices artists must make between the rigors of their art and their desires in life. Even with a companion as devoted and self-sacrificing as Otoku, the choice is enforced on Kikunosuke by the restrictions placed on the actor in order to succeed in the kabuki world.

The theme of rebellion is one that appears in every Mizoguchi film about artists, as it does in his films about women who strike out on
Plate 41. Hanayagi Shōtarō and Mori Kakuko in The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum.
their own, even if this struggle brings about their downfall. Rebellion in this film is most clearly exemplified by the role of Otoku, a woman who is both stronger and more far-sighted than the male characters, a role that was foreshadowed by the heroine in Mizoguchi's Mistress of a Foreigner (Tōjin Okichi 1930) and, to some extent, by Ofumi in The Straits of Love and Hate. Although it is true that Kikunosuke is rebellious in leaving Tokyo to pursue his kabuki training elsewhere, he is more in the tradition of the vacillating naimaime character. Even the scene in which Kikunosuke reads Otoku's farewell letter in the train, and argues with his family about his need for her, is a relatively restrained one. This no doubt was due to the demands of the strict kabuki world into which he had just been reaccepted, and which he feared losing again. In comparison to the priorities of the female artists discussed so far, the mediating force of Kikunosuke's desire remains at once an elevated view of art and a self-serving view of himself as an artist.

On the other hand, the note of rebelliousness implicit in the love affair between Kikunosuke and Otoku must not be ignored. This is a theme which was found in The Straits of Love and Hate and which will be expanded in later Mizoguchi films, such as The Loves of Sumako the Actress and A Story from Chikamatsu. In The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum, during the scene in which Kikunosuke and Otoku remain behind while the rest of the family goes to watch fireworks along the river, for example, Kikunosuke insists that Otoku remain with him to eat the watermelon they have cut together, instead of her eating separately as would have been customary. In one sense, they are both outsiders to the family—she as a servant, he, as an adopted son whose position is
being usurped by the newly-born male child. Kikunosuke refers to Otoku's earlier honest appraisal of his acting abilities as being "like drinking cool water on a long walk in the mountains," a metaphor of union with one person (with water, again, as a female symbol) while being also isolated from the press of society.

Despite these moments of rebellion, the conclusion of the film finds the feudalistic and paternalistic nature of the kabuki society intact as Kikunosuke reenters the fabric of the family. The status quo and basic class-conscious structure reigns in the end. The reversal of the family's decisions concerning Otoku and Kikunosuke's relationship can be considered merely an ornamental display (albeit a symbolically potent one), as they are well aware of the severity of Otoku's illness, for which they are indirectly responsible. Within the three-fold nature of the journey, by the end of the film, Kikunosuke has only been able to reach a point of restitution of what he once possessed in terms of his family, not in terms of a larger personal sphere.

Yoda claims that Mizoguchi's intent in this film was to show the pity (awaresa) of the kind of feudalistic spirit in which one gives everything to one's master. For this reason, Yoda explained that, although this film received a Ministry of Education award, the officials did not really like it (Yoda interview 1988). The kabuki world was known to be a closed world in which actors attracted attention because of such factors as their family connections and their physical attributes, as well as by their acting talents (Brandon et. al, Studies 36), a fact that is still often sadly true in the theatrical and film industry around the world today. If successful onstage, the kabuki actor could expect public recognition and a luxurious life, another fact
of which Kikunosuke was certainly aware and which influenced some of his
decisions.

Other conservative factors in the kabuki world were the actors'
guilds (gekidan) which, like the trade guilds (za), helped maintain a
sense of social stability so important to the Japanese (Ernst 5). These
gekidan were hereditary units which maintained strict codes within the
group. Cohen considers the kabuki troupe a metaphor for the family
(Textual Poetics 314). This is applicable if both the positive and
negative aspects of the family and the group are considered: its role in
nurtering, protecting and training, along with its concomitant role in
restraining individual freedom for the good of the group. As Iijima
noted, within the relatively narrow world (sekai) of the kabuki elite, a
sharper focus on human nature is possible (Nihon Eiga Shi 238). Iijima
even claims (in an Italian translation of his writing, published in the
1980 Mizoguchi Biennale):

Mizoguchi's study of the human being is not only limited to the
lives of artists, but in this one finds its most complete
expression (Apra 69).

(Lo studio dell'uomo di Mizoguchi non solo non si limita alle
biografie di artisti, ma proprio in esse trova la sua più
completa espressione.)

The ending of the film marks, at best, an ambiguous triumph for
Kikunosuke. As is the case with Genjūrō in Ugetsu, the artist's return
is clouded by the demise of a beloved spouse (although The Story of the
Last Chrysanthemum lacks the transcendental implications of Ugetsu's
ending). The processional scene in The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum
includes a rare close-up of Kikunosuke with arms outstretched and face
set in an unreadable "mask," accepting the applause of an adoring populace invisible to the viewer. Mellen points out, "Bowing to the crowds becomes synonymous with his surrender to the unspeakable dictates of his family, with his having sacrificed the person he loved for success and worldly approval" (Waves 162).

Mellen's view of this final scene is certainly too limited, as the placing of Kikunosuke at the head of the processional boat is also a positive sign for the artist of his ability now to live through his work on stage, the only possible life allowed a full-fledged artist at this stage of development in Mizoguchi's work. At this point, the artist only lives fully on stage and therefore the recognition and admiration of the audience is essential. Unlike the no theatre which developed under aristocratic patronage, the commercial nature of the kabuki and bunraku theatres meant that pleasing the audience was of paramount importance to the survival of the actors. Initially, part of Kikunosuke's failure was that his performance brought no pleasure to the audience.

This final bowing scene is also a punctuating mark for the long journey Kikunosuke has completed—a journey (geographically) from Tokyo to Osaka, to Nagoya, back to Tokyo and finally to Osaka again, as he honed his skills. Cohen points out that each of these geographically-based sections of the scenario begins with a theatrical sequence and ends with a travel motif (Textual Poetics 317). Kikunosuke's training involves travelling to a string of cheap theatres and poorer lodgings, with the final indignity delivered by the troupe of female wrestlers who displace the unpopular kabuki troupe.
Despite the hardships, Mizoguchi reminds the viewer of the charm of the kabuki life style which help explain why Kikunosuke's desires move so strongly in that direction. When Kikunosuke becomes successful, he is informed that a lantern has been purchased in his name. Details of backstage life, such as bowing to the lead actor as he prepares to enter the stage, are also painstakingly reproduced. As they leave the theatre, screaming fans crowd around popular actors, demanding souvenirs of makeup. Mizoguchi carefully incorporates details like the use of torches to light the stage, colorful playbills to advertise an upcoming play, wooden ki and tsuke clacks to punctuate the performances and the hand-clapping (te-uchi-shiki) ceremony to mark the decision of the troupe to go to Osaka.

This film, which marks Mizoguchi's mature use of the long take, includes many examples of the metaphorical and theatrical use of architecture. In particular, scenes of intense emotion are associated with stairs, such as the early scene when Kikunosuke ascends toward his father's dressing room to be rebuked for his poor performance. Attention is also paid to ascending stairs when Otoku first joins Kikunosuke in his poor garret in Osaka, echoed in the ending when he goes to see the dying Otoku there. When Otoku first goes to see Kikunosuke's family to plead for his cause, she hides in the shadow of the stairs. A stationary camera allows the characters to enter and leave via the stairs, as if the stairs themselves were the primary actor in the scene. Later, when the doctor and relative confer at the bottom of the stairs, the muffled nature of their conversation emphasizes that area as a neutral zone. Cohen connects this "vertical hierarchy" which the kind of hierarchy seen in the kabuki troupe and in the typical
Japanese family structure (Textual Poetics 317, 370), a fascinating (if perhaps overly-ambitious) interpretation.

This exquisite use of Japanese architectural features to frame characters gives both a pictorial and claustrophobic sense to many of the scenes. For example, in the beginning of the film, the post-performance party is glimpsed through the window slots, later echoed by the slotted window in the couple's poor garret in Osaka. In both cases, a sense of privacy but also of confinement is reinforced. The narrow corridors of the Kikugoro home and of the theatre serve as conduits for moments of transition, as in the scene in which Otoku is being fired, and the new nursemaid can be seen through the middle glass section of the shoji screen.

Sato specifically connects this scene of the firing of Otoku, filmed in a one-scene-one-shot format, with traditional Japanese performance styles, in writing that

it expresses the long continuous resistance in one's breathing during this unrelenting sense of pressure, and thereby brings into the film the heavy restraint and anguish found in the tradition of Japanese storytelling genres such as in Noh drama and in the Osaka folktales. (On Kenji Mizoguchi 15)

As Kirihara has pointed out in his chapter in Cinema and Language, the dramatic differences in the filming of the three kabuki sequences in this film form an interesting contrast to the more classical narrative structure and help set up a tension between the genres of film and theatre (100). Except for these three kabuki scenes, the film is mostly a series of mobile sequence-shots, unlike the denser, highly-edited
kabuki scenes. (In comparison with the typical Hollywood film, which has as many as five hundred or a thousand shots [Monaco 103], The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum has only 144 shots, 48 of which are in the kabuki sequences [Kirihara, Kabuki 100]). The three kabuki sequences again reflect a threefold developmental schema, moving from mere theatrical display, to proof of increased performance skill, and finally to a real performance in the full sense of the word.

It is intriguing to ask why Mizoguchi chose to show a highly presentational art form in such a representational manner. The large-scale kabuki theatrical form, with its rich visual display and sense of sensual magnificence, does not tend to be as concerned about strict historical accuracy or about the details of the psychological development of a character as do Western representational modes of theatre. The close-ups in the kabuki sequences in The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum, in contrast, reveal the reactions of significant characters to Kikunosuke's performances in a highly-detailed manner, and the rapid cutting of scenes imposes a somewhat artificial rhythm on the traditional performances.

The first kabuki sequence, a performance of the ending of the Yotsuya Ghost Story (Yotsuya Kaidan), is basically a means of showing how poor Kikunosuke's performance is in comparison with that of the other actors. A medium close-up of Kikunosuke's awkward gestures is positive proof of the problem that will form a central motif of the rest of the film. The camera then moves back as the curtain closes. This sequence of shots resembles a Hollywood-style series of spatial shots, from the long shot to medium close-ups to the close-up, and it
eliminates some of the important aspects of the performance itself, such as the quick costume change on stage (hayagawari).

The second kabuki performance takes the form of a test of Kikunosuke, in the female impersonator (onnagata) role of Sumizome. In comparison to the first kabuki sequence, more of the entire performance area is revealed and the presence of observers is given utmost importance. While family members and performers watch from behind a scrim (agemaku) backstage or from different corners of the hall, Otoku flees beneath the stairs under the stage, too anxious to watch the performance itself. Her silently praying figure becomes, paradoxically, that of the ultimate observer, although she denies herself vision of the performance and can only tell its outcome by the sound of applause. She is also the ultimate critic, as she was from the very beginning of the story. As fellow actors rush to congratulate Kikunosuke after the performance, she exits the theatre alone, overjoyed about his success yet saddened by what it means for their relationship.

Another reason for this shift in perspective in this second kabuki sequence is that Mizoguchi wants us to focus on the actual subject of the dramatic tension, which is in the spectators and not in the players on stage. Although it is Kikunosuke's fate that hangs in balance, he is but the pivot around which the passions of the other characters revolve. His own passion is for recognition, a relatively simple goal compared to Otoku's more self-sacrificing one. Mizoguchi's unique editing of the second kabuki sequence, as well as his frequent focusing on Otoku, leaving others in shadow, serves as a reminder of this state.

The third kabuki sequence is a celebratory one in which the performance itself is finally highlighted. Attention is no longer on
isolated aspects of an actor's performance or on isolated observers. Rather, the total expansive sense of a kabuki performance is conveyed, with musicians on stage and performers in magnificent costumes, makeup and wigs. This lion dance performance marks a family reunion, with father, cousin and adopted son taking the main roles and unabashedly showing off their mastery. Their newly-found unity is symbolized by the rhythmic swinging of the long "manes" in near unison on the stage.

Cohen contests this above-stated view that the editing of the kabuki sequences is representational, and maintains that Mizoguchi uses a two-dimensional flatness and excessive editing in filming those scenes, in a manner which was not divergent from patterns he had already established in his previous work (Textual Poetics 320,324). Although there are certainly connections between the earlier works and this general editing pattern, the fact that such a large number of shots is devoted to these three kabuki sequences adds credence to Kirihara's interpretation that the kabuki scenes are divergent from the editing pattern of the rest of The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum, with its emphasis on the one-scene-one-shot technique. In addition, the three kabuki sequences are emphasized cinematically because they indicate the progression of Kikunosuke's journey from possession (of family name, but not of skill), through loss, to restitution of name.

In depicting the kabuki theatre in this manner, Mizoguchi also may have been trying to draw attention to the fact that in the Edo period in particular, the kabuki audience was not considered separate from the performers onstage, but rather was an integral aspect of the entire theatrical milieu which drew its origins from popular street dances (fûryû odori). Kabuki is a theatrical form which was always in touch
with the people, especially with the urban middle and lower classes. Performances were always held during the day, which meant that the audience could be fully seen. In his study of *Audiences and Actors* in the traditional Japanese theatre, Raz notes that painters and printmakers of the period often included audience scenes in their depictions of theatrical life because

the physical distinction between "stage" and "auditorium" was unclear. Thus there was no such thing as watching a "clean" stage, a pure "artistic" stage. Physically and conceptually, audiences were part of the scene and therefore when one attempted to describe the theatre, the whole theatre was a natural unit to depict.

(181)

Edo period fans, who idolized their favorite actors, would shout actors' stage names or other encouraging phrases (*kakegoe*) in time with the rhythm of the play. The actors' gestures and vocal expression were very much audience-oriented, rather than necessarily directed toward other actors. The walkway (*hanamichi*) in particular brought the actors into close proximity to the audience.

It is true that the Meiji period, the period of *The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum*, brought with it an increased Westernization in theatrical design, even in traditional art forms like the *kabuki*. Conscious of possible misunderstandings from newly-arrived Westerners, reform movements advocated "cleaning up" the language of the *kabuki* plays and the abolition of the *onnagata*.

There was nothing odd in Japanese society for a woman like Otoku to be devoted to a man whose art form was female impersonation. It must be remembered that *kabuki* developed during a time of relative
peace and isolation from the outside world and its unique characteristics, like the onnagata, were not filtered through Western aesthetics. The onnagata had developed with the banning of the young boy's (wakashū) kabuki and of women's (onna or yūjo) kabuki between 1629 and 1652, due to government concern for the way the young actors' and actresses' attractiveness was distracting the attention of some members of the audience. The onnagata distilled essential aspects of wanianly speech and movements, and their artistic goal was to portray the decorative essence of womanhood, rather than its reality. In this sense, it is very much an art form, not a caricature or a perversion.

Until recent times, a kabuki actor was generally held to one roletype. Acting families also specialized in certain roletypes— for example, the Ichikawa Danjūrō family became famous for its aragoto (rough, bold style) and the Nakamura Utaemon family for onnagata roles. Therefore, there was nothing unusual about Kikunosuke concentrating on the onnagata role.

In his article on "The Social Environment of Tokugawa Kabuki," Donald H. Shiveley explains:

The lack of realism in the acting style of the onnagata was not a deficiency in the eyes of a Tokugawa audience. One of the more popular styles of male acting, aragoto (rough business), which was characterized by the exaggerated movement and bombastic language appropriate to the superhuman prowess of warrior heroes, was equally unnatural. In the earliest kabuki, not only did women play men and men women, but plots were steeped in the fantastic. In later plays as well, action is often illogical and fantastic elements frequently intrude. The art of the theater makes such action plausible, not real. (Brandon et al., Studies 40)
Tamotsu Hirosue, in his article entitled "The Secret Ritual of the Place of Evil," address the fact that, to the audience, the onnagata were not just female surrogates but were, paradoxically, both objects of aspiration and scorned outcasts (like the courtesans whose roles they frequently played). Tamotsu's thesis was that both the actor and the courtesan were viewed in an arena (based on ancient animistic/shamanistic beliefs) in which "nobility and debasement, beauty and wretchedness, were indivisibly mixed" (20).

Tamotsu elaborately classifies the eroticism associated with the onnagata as a reconstruction of a "predifferentiated eroticism" (17), but it is important to remember that this is a fictitious eroticism, just as the onnagata represents a fictitious ideal of "feminine perfection." It is intriguing, in that light, to note the progression from the parody that forms the basis of Ofumi's simple stage act in The Straits of Love and Hate to the elaborate female impersonation expected of the skilled onnagata that Kikunosuke has become. In The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum, Kikunosuke's object of desire, the role of onnagata, remains at a distance from himself as a young man who is in love with an actual woman of lesser social status. He has acquired a level of performance skill sufficient enough to admit him back into the family fold and to be respected onstage, but he remains within a role that disallows harmony on any other level.

Through the mediation of an ideal image of performance, the object of Kikunosuke's desire remains a mixture of the commercial and the illusory. Though this object of his desire, success as an onnagata, is far closer at the end of the film than it was at the beginning--due to his hard efforts and Otoku's support--Kikunosuke's role as an artist
still remains a precarious one. This is exemplified by the somewhat precarious perch (emphasized by the low camera angle) which he maintains at the head of the river procession boat at the close of the film. He has regained his original artistic family but Otoku's death, largely due to his neglect and vacillation, has robbed him of a personal family of his own. The open-ended nature of the final section of this film suggests that Kikunosuke's journey, like the river boat procession he is heading, will continue to wind its way diagonally through time, beyond the screen, within the limitations of the hierarchical kabuki world.

A Woman from Osaka

In the next two works of this "theatre trilogy," A Woman from Osaka and The Life of an Actor, Mizoguchi continues this exploration into the tensions in the life of a performing artist. Unfortunately, there are no extant prints of these two films, and what can be said about them is from published accounts in the screenwriter Yoda's book on the director and from a very small group of reviews. Yoda claims to recall few details that would illuminate the development of the films, outside of the rather cursory descriptions in his book on Mizoguchi (Yoda interview 1988).

In Mizoguchi's notes reproduced in Yoda's Mizoguchi: A Man and His Art, it can be seen that, in A Woman From Osaka, Mizoguchi established a contrast between the two main artists in this film, by making Danpei the kind of artist who sought fame, and who would discard the present for hope of some future gain. In contrast, he described the shamisen player Koshiji Dayū as a weak-willed man who was never satisfied with his own skill (Hito 101). Danpei is also portrayed as a serious and committed
artist, qualities that attract Ochika to him while she is nursing him back to health. Ochika's intelligence is shown to be both her strength and her stumbling-block, as others oppose Ochika's marriage to Danpei on the grounds that she is "overly-educated." In any event, her seemingly clever manipulations concerning her husband's career prove disastrous.

The women in this film form another kind of triad, with each woman displaying a different response to her artist-husband (Satō, Sekai 153). Ochika is an even more outspoken version of Otoku in The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum in her endorsement of her husband's career. Otaku, Koshiji Dayu's wife, fails to understand her husband on any deep level, and remains in a traditional, separate sphere. Okuni, the most passive and gentle of the three, responds loyally to her blinded puppeteer-husband's needs as he expresses them. These three women, like the three sets of pots Wood outlines in the case of Ugetsu, contain elements of the commercial, the illusory and the profoundly truthful—qualities that form the artist's universe.

In a review of the film translated into Italian for the Venetian Biennale, Iijima Tadashi praised Mizoguchi's sensitive portrayal of the vicissitudes in the life of an artist, but criticized the lack of depth in the treatment of bunraku itself:

This film denounces the grandeur and misery of bunraku, but one cannot say that the latter is well presented, as to how much it looks at the fact of succeeding to communicate bunraku's significance to the public.

(Questo film denuncia la grandezza e miseria del Bunraku, ma non si può dire che quest'ultimo venga ben presentato, proprio per quanto riguarda il fatto di riuscire a comunicare il suo significato al pubblico [Apra, Biennale 66]).
As will be discussed more fully in the section on Utamaro, Mizoguchi did not make films about art forms per se, but rather about the effect of society (including the artists' closest associates) on the artists themselves and about how this affected the creative process. In this film, it appears that Mizoguchi's intent was to explore an historical story of an artist from the point of view of an observer, Ochika, who must proceed toward a higher degree of self-realization, and a heightened awareness of her own limitations. In that sense, Ochika differs from women like Shiraito and Otoku in that her efforts for the object of her desire prove harmful rather than beneficial. On the other hand, this higher degree of self-awareness also allows her to survive, a fate denied the more purely self-sacrificing women.

The artists' media in this film, puppets (Plate 42) and musical instruments (the shamisen), can both be considered extensions of the human form. As Barthes has commented, in his essay on the "Three Scripts" of the puppet theatre, bunraku "does not aim to 'animate' an inanimate object so as to bring a piece of the body, a shred of man, to life" (60). Instead, Barthes addresses what he calls three separate scripts: the puppet (the effected gesture), the manipulator (the effective gesture) and the vociferator (the vocal gesture). Although I do not agree that these are separate entities rather than "commingled media," as Anderson states, it is true that, as Barthes claims, in bunraku, the manipulator's work becomes visually apparent, and the usual dramatic chain between character and role is broken. In this sense, Mizoguchi is starting to enlarge the philosophical universe in which he deals with artists in his work by adding a higher level of self-reflexivity to the depiction of the protagonists.
Plate 42. Tanaka Kinuyo in *A Woman from Osaka*. 
On the other hand, like Kikunosuke in *The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum* (who is himself a kind of puppet in the feudalistic kabuki system), the artists in *A Woman from Osaka* present a study of the still unresolved interface between the artifice implied in performance, and the actual dilemmas in the artist's personal life.

Ochika's initial desire, the success of her husband over all else, becomes enlarged by the close of the film to include her concern for a larger theatrical world, exemplified by her place as just one member of a larger audience, witnessing her husband's artistry. The mediating ideal which had compelled her—an elevated view of herself as muse and as an agent of fate—is lowered to the extent that family and harmony can be restored. Like *The Straits of Love and Hate*, *A Woman from Osaka* is unusual among these eight films for the relative degree of closure allowed by the end of the story, and for the fact that there is no death to serve as a catalyst toward a higher level of self-awareness.

**The Life of An Actor**

In *The Life of an Actor*, the father-son relationship in the world of art, and in private life, is explored, in a parallel fashion to the depiction of a love affair. This is a relatively rare theme for Mizoguchi, and was seldom treated in detail by Mizoguchi in subsequent films (although, as we have seen, attention was paid to the father-son relationship in *The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum*, as well as in *Sansho the Bailiff* and in *New Tales of the Taira Clan*). Actually, in *The Life of an Actor* [Plate 43], Mizoguchi did not want to express this father-son relationship as one of conflict, because he felt that, during
Plate 43. Mizoguchi (left) and Nakamura Senjaku (right) in The Life of an Actor.
the war period of the early 1940s, this could be interpreted as casting aspersions on the Emperor (Hito 111-112).

Both the parent Uzo (stage name Kanjaku) and the child Tamatarō (stage name Ganjirō I) in The Life of an Actor have to learn to temper their pride in order to develop more fully as artists. Rebellion against the father, whose artistry represents an ideal form of expression, serves both as a catalyst to the son's artistic commitment, and as a deterrent to his further creative development. In this sense, it is a story within a story, in that several generations (first Uzo and then Tamatarō) question the acting profession and then come to respect it.

The son's line of development is toward a greater sincerity, and a broader understanding of the need for mutual aid. At the time of directing this film, Mizoguchi particularly disliked the reserved aspect of the general Kyoto-Osaka area (kansaijin), and therefore he depicted Ganjiro as a spoiled child who, like many kansaijin did not display his emotions on his face (Hito 108-109). Therefore, according to Yoda, no matter how straightforward or mischievous Ganjirō seemed to be in his relationship to his father, it is not possible to know what violent feelings might be in the character's heart. Although Ganjirō desires recognition as an actor, he fails to understand the role his absent father has played in helping him secure his chance in the closed kabuki world [Plate 44]. This ignorance, or intentional blindness, casts an illusory veil over his objects of desire, namely, success as a kabuki actor and a larger degree of self-sufficiency. Until this disproportionate craving is broken, due to a sudden insight into his
Plate 44. The Life of an Actor.
father's love, Ganjirō cannot move forward within realistic limitations and achieve his goal.

Somewhat paradoxically, a sense of family is restored just as the physical family is severed through death. In this sense, the ending of *The Life of an Actor* resembles the effective (albeit melodramatic) ending of *The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum*. In both cases, the actors pledge to continue to perfect their art, as their loved ones had desired. These pledges add a note of mutuality which will be seen more explicitly in the ending of *Ugetsu*, in which the spirit of the loved one, Miyagi, remains "present" as a guiding force for the artistry of her husband.

The next three artist-figures in Mizoguchi's films express their desires more straightforwardly and completely, in a growingly explicit struggle to bring ideals within realistic parameters in order to allow their artistry to materialize in a form which lives in the present.

**Utamaro and His Five Women**

Mizoguchi's next major film about an artist, *Utamaro and his Five Women* (1946), is the tale of struggles between tradition and innovation, compromise and individualism, in the world of Tokugawa period visual arts. As the title suggests, this film centers not only around the woodblock print (*ukiyo-e*) artist but also around the women (and men) whose lives are touched by him. In fact, in many ways the story as told by Mizoguchi is less about the artist himself than about the effect he has on the people he encounters, and the effect they have on him.

The movement in the film is from constraint to freedom, symbolized by the elegantly stylized parade of courtesans and attendants at the
opening of the film and the final exuberant downpouring of sketches at the end (Greenspun 31). Unlike the other artists discussed previously, Utamaro himself does not undertake any lengthy journey, in a spatial sense, in order to perfect his art or to earn funds for survival. Utamaro's journey is one of learning to distill the sensual variety with which he is daily inundated into essential artistic form, and to grow through his struggles with (and against) the achievements of his predecessors.

With this film, Mizoguchi begins to move closer to a union between the media of the art form, and the truth of the projected image. As the discussion below will illustrate, in Utamaro's case, the distance between the mediator of desire and the subject begins to be reduced. Utamaro's ideal is an artistic distillation of natural beauty, exemplified in this film by feminine beauty. The object of his desire, his creations, are (literally) within reach. They are tangible objects inspired by figures from all levels of life, representing the fact that, when the mediator of the artist's desire draws nearer, "unity is broken up into multiplicity" (Deceit 92).

In the film, Utamaro is depicted as a self-confident, strong-willed, iconoclastic artist. In a rather obvious attempt at depicting creative courage, Mizoguchi has him declare: "I would not make prints if I feared the sword or power." In only one scene is his confidence shown as seriously wavering. An unusual high-angle shot reveals Utamaro in his room with sheets of white paper scattered all around him. Unable to achieve the artistic results he desires, he angrily orders his apprentice/helper Takamato to close all of the shutters, despite the fact that it is broad daylight outside. Drawing a lantern closer,
Utamaro attempts to draw again, but is again frustrated. The artist cannot face the imperfections outside, and does not have enough inspiration at this point to draw completely from internal memory. Later, a discussion between three of Utamaro's admirers reveals that the cause of Utamaro's malaise might be the arguments he has been having with the high-strung Okita (Plate 45).

In other scenes involving his work, Utamaro moves decisively and with grace. Touching the fine skin of Takasode, Utamaro takes over for the hesitant tattooer and boldly sketches a large design of Kentoki, the wonder boy, and his nurse on the courtesan's back. His manner of touching the woman's skin and of adjusting her clothing is both sensual and objective at the same time. He is thrilled to be able to paint on a new and living medium—human flesh—and yet it is as a medium for art and not necessarily for eroticism that he approaches the tattooing of Takasode.

Although he is later dismayed to learn that Takasode has run off (of course carrying his "painting" with her), he recognizes that this is a natural extension of the dynamism of his radical approach to art. In drawing the sketch, he felt pleased that the design would share the ups and downs of life with Takasode. At her death, a close-up of Takasode's back reveals the tattoo exposed, as if the murderess Okita had wished to emphasize its power and its intimate correspondence with the essence of Takasode herself. In the same way, Okita's last words to Utamaro are to beg him to take good care of his print of Okita herself.

The choosing of Oran as a model also shows Utamaro's concern for beauty of line and form within an erotic context. Oran was one of the women sold to a wealthy lord with a fetish for watching nearly-nude
Plate 45. Tanaka Kinuyo in *Utamaro and his Five Women*. 
maidens fish with their bare hands. Utamaro had been "smuggled in" by his comrades to a teahouse on the lord's property where he could watch the spectacle, and hopefully regain his inspiration for drawing. This scene of voyeurs viewing a voyeur can be seen as yet another level of commentary on art in which inspiration is drawn not only from beauty but from the titillation of observing beauty in a more exposed form.

Visibly excited, Utamaro pleads with his friends to somehow get Oran to his studio so he can sketch her. She is convinced to pose for him "for the sake of ukiyo-e itself." In contrast, his disciple Seinosuke is more rough and direct in his request to Oran when he finds her alone in Utamaro's studio, surrounded by Utamaro's sketches of (in Seinosuke's words) "the sheer physical beauty" Utamaro had captured.

These examples show that Utamaro, the artist, is portrayed by Mizoguchi as more of a protector and admirer of women than as a manipulator of their emotions for the possession of their bodies alone. (Unfortunately, the same could not be said for most of the male characters in Mizoguchi films.) Although it might seem a trivial comment, it would have been equally possible for the director to have featured other aspects of Utamaro's work, such as the detailed prints of natural objects, but all other aspects of Utamaro's life were "trimmed" in this film to allow for a concentration on the close interplay between Utamaro and his immediate female contacts.

On the other hand, there is a kind of cold quality to this portrayal of Utamaro. Earlier in the film, Okita stresses that "Uta doesn't love me. He loves all women, to capture their souls." Okita rationalizes her jealous and passionate act of murder of her fickle lover Shozaburo and of his new favorite, Takasobe, by stating that she has done in life
what Utamaro has achieved in his art—to never compromise, to never
deceive herself. Her actions prove even more extreme than anything
conceived of by the artist himself. In her final confession to the
sympathetic Utamaro, Okita affirms: "I'm not mad....I wanted to be true
to myself....I won't fool myself with a lukewarm and selfish love"
(Plate 46).

Okita is thus the mirror image of artists like Kikunosuke of *Last
Chrysanthemum*, in that she has lived her life to the fullest while he
has only been able to live through his art. Mizoguchi seems to
empathize with Okita, by allowing her to dominate the screen at this
point. While such passion and rebellion is not overtly negated by
Mizoguchi, his inherently conservative strain will not allow him to show
Okita as able to survive. Like Sumako who will follow, we realize that
she is too extreme and must die, both literally and within Mizoguchi's
schema of the artist and desire.

Not only Okita, but all of the women in this film make decisions
which involve some degree of liberation from societal restrictions, even
if they bring in additional hardships. Among the five main women in the
film, several give up the relative shelter of the licensed district, or
of an aristocratic lineage, or of a patron, to flee either on a lovers'
journey (*michiyuki*) or in pursuit of a lover who has moved on to someone
else. The women are more than ornamental. As models for the great
artist, they are the very embodiment of vitality and of fascination
itself.

The "audiences" in *Utamaro* regale the women in the film, primarily
on an ornamental, distant level. For example, there are the people who
watch the elaborate procession of geishas and attendants (intended
Plate 46. **Utamaro and His Five Women**.
solely for display) at the beginning of the film, and the gathering which observes Utamaro’s creative outbursts in the tattooing scene and in the "sketching duel." In some ways, the viewers of Utamaro’s skills are more dynamic and visibly appreciative than those who watch many of the actual performing artists in other Mizoguchi films. This is another indication of the dynamism of the artist himself. Like the extra-theatrical audiences in White Threads, these spectators/voyeurs displace their desire onto the artist and the women who are in more direct touch (both figuratively and literally) with sources of inspiration.

Much of the depiction of Utamaro in this film contrasts the traditionalism of the Chinese-style Kanō school with Utamaro’s experimentation. This is not entirely accurate on an historical level, as Utamaro himself was also associated with the Kanō tradition for a period, and his art was originally popular with the upper classes. His paintings were also more orthodox than his prints. As Andrew and Andrew write:

Utamaro, especially, about whom (Mizoguchi) made one of his most personal films, was the prototype of the middle-class artisan who turned a trade (the sale and production of wood-block prints) into the most refined and sublime of arts, while seldom varying from the standard genre rules. (Guide 26)

It is true, however, that artists of established schools like the Kanō school were referred to as "genuine artists" (hon-eshi) while woodblock artists were derisively called "town artists" (machi-eshi).
In Mizoguchi's film, Utamaro's commitment to representing the people so inspires a rival Seinosuke that the latter abandons his future with the traditional and influential Kanō School (and with Kanō's daughter Yukie) and attempts to learn from this new master. In those times in Japan (and now), loyalty to one's school was especially important, and there was even a political rivalry between the two principal schools of Kano (associated with the Shōgun) and Tosa (associated with the Emperor). After approaching his new master, Seinosuke is amazed to see how humbly Utamaro lives, and Utamaro instructs him: "If one needs a luxurious room, he is not an artist." This simple room represents Utamaro's attempt to create a refuge for himself within boundaries he can control.

The seriousness of Seinosuke's decision to join Utamaro is not to be underrated, as it meant he faced expulsion from his former master's school and from his family. Nevertheless, he is somewhat the dilettante in his new world, grabbing at any new experience, such as a flirtation with a looser woman like Okita who is only using him as a means of getting back at her own fickle lover, and turning away from the loyal Yukie (Plate 47). From the time of the "sketching duel" between Utamaro and Seinosuke, the latter is shown as an adequate artist, nothing more.

Unfortunately, Seinosuke's character is not fully developed in the script, leaving the viewer uncertain about whether he was or was not meant to be a foil for Utamaro. The last we hear of Seinosuke is that he has taken ill, following his flight with the beautiful model Oran. He seems to have learned some lessons about the need for objectivity in art from Utamaro, only to run off with one of Utamaro's most prized
Plate 47. *Utamaro and His Five Women*.
models, an act that puts this objectivity into question. Seinosuke's own development as an artist is only lightly sketched in.

Utamaro's own punishment—to be handcuffed for 50 days for having displeased the lords with his prints of Hideyoshi, who was a former enemy of the current Edo regime—is a satirical commentary on the inability of society to silence a true artist. Though unable to actualize his visions, Utamaro can form, and refine, images in his mind which he joyfully hastens to put on paper the moment the handcuffs are removed. This punishment makes him more keenly aware of the ephemeral nature of his art. While Takamaro, Yukie and others indulge in a sake party to celebrate the end of Utamaro's sentence, the artist himself sits alone, calling back the images of Oran, Okita, Takasode and the other women who have surrounded him during those days. The "undamming" of this creative flow is represented by an outpouring of prints which, wave after wave, form a background for the final shots of the film, and serve as a testament and a form of memory.

Although caution must be taken in assuming too much about the director from the subjects in his films, relatively strong points of similarity can be drawn between Mizoguchi as an artist and his subject for this film, Utamaro. In both cases, the artists draw much of their inspiration from the unique qualities of women. Both artists were firmly grounded in the traditional arts and yet were also intent on innovation and personal expression. Both received scorn from their contemporaries at times and more universal praise after death, as innovators. Both artists also depicted lower-class women, as well as the upper-class, the young as well as the old. Both were bold and yet subtle in the sensuality of their depictions. (For example, in the case
of Utamaro, tradition disallowed the showing of full nudity, but he sometimes boldly showed bare breasts in his prints (Murase 220). The subtlety of sensual scenes in Mizoguchi's films is part of their great beauty.

Utamaro and His Five Women itself is not one of Mizoguchi's finest films, primarily because he fails to focus on the process of Utamaro's development as an artist, but rather presents him as a fully-formed character. Nevertheless, this film does represent another stage in the development of Mizoguchi's depiction of the artist because the character Utamaro's life, as well as his art, serve as an inspiration to others. By the conclusion of the film, Mizoguchi shows that he is moving toward a sense of fullness, and of fulfillment, in his depiction of the artist, and an extended view of family. The mediating ideal which motivates Utamaro, that of an art which serves as a natural, sensual medium, moves him closer to a fresh style of expression, and to the people he is representing. As a more individuated, detached artist than the ones previously depicted by Mizoguchi, he can respect the individuality of those around him as expressions of life's vitality. Reconciled, on a superficial level, to the need to restrain his sense of rebellion, he courageously continues on a journey, through the death or disappearance of loved ones, to a form of artistic expression which is both immediate and personal.

The Love of Sumako the Actress

The Love of Sumako the Actress (1947) moves to a more contemporary period, and yet highlights some of the same issues seen in Utamaro and His Five Women. The "courage to create" that May addresses, with its
serious, if flawed, attempt to reconcile life and art, is embodied in the talented but troubled character of modern theatre (shingeki) actress Matsui Sumako.

In Mizoguchi's presentation of the story, the mediator of Sumako's desire is a mixed one, following her dual role as both a highly individuated woman and also as a committed artist. As a woman, her ideal is encompassed in her dependent love for Hōgetsu, but as an artist this ideal (also centering around Hōgetsu) is a frank artistic desire to illuminate, and liberate, herself and, by extension, the role of women in Meiji period Japan. In this sense, the distance between her desire and its actualization is relatively close indeed, because of the fact that the roles she plays on stage mirror her own struggles as a strong, outspoken woman in a country where such traits were (and still are) not valued for women. In contrast to the presentational, stylized kabuki scenes in The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum, the scenes from the Western plays in which Sumako stars resemble more closely the tensions in Sumako's own life regarding marital conflicts, problems with self-definition as a woman, and feelings of jealousy and nostalgia.

Both Sumako and Hōgetsu take radical and rebellious steps in leaving their families and superiors, and in entering into an uncertain future together, like the radical step they took earlier of presenting (what Hōgetsu's wife described as) an "un-Japanese" play, Ibsen's A Doll's House. Hōgetsu's mentor, Tsubouchi Shoyo, warns them that "the world is not ready yet for such a love." In many ways, the couple was not prepared for the implications of that love either.

The extra-marital love affair between Sumako and Hōgetsu did little indeed to assuage the public's fear of the consequences of allowing
women on stage (a practice which had begun in the 1870s). Sumako truly was an "original," as there were no established actresses at that time to serve as role models for her (except possibly Sada Yakko Kawakami [1871-1946] who had established her reputation overseas).

We can understand the seriousness of Shoyo's dismay over the lovers' affair from the following paragraph by Komiya in his Music and Drama in the Meiji Era:

Tsubouchi Shōyō, who had preached anti-idealism as opposed to Mori Ogai's idealism, who had advocated moderatism as opposed to the radicalism of Sumatsu Kenzo and others, and who invariably compromised with reality in his works and translations, had at last succeeded in establishing his Literary Society, and taken the first step in his practical movement of "reform of the drama" by establishing his study centre. It was most unfortunate that a crack in the organization should have opened in an unexpected direction, a crack which was to end by destroying the whole of Tsubouchi's great dream. So great a misfortune cannot be found elsewhere in the history of the modern Japanese drama. (Komiya 45)

Mizoguchi shows that part of the misfortune lies in the fact that Sumako's love for Hōgetsu borders on the obsessive, a quality she shares with many of Mizoguchi's other female characters. Hōgetsu is the object of her desire, with the mediator of desire a more modern concept of art and of self-expression than had been seen previously in Mizoguchi's films featuring artists. For his students, his family, even for Sumako, Hōgetsu maintains the distance that helps cast an illusory sense over the object of desire (Plate 48). For those like Sumako and Hōgetsu's daughter, it also means that the disappointment will be intense (even fatally so) when the mediator draws closer, exposing the illusion.
Plate 48. The Love of Sumako the Actress.
Unfortunately, neither Sumako's nor Hōgetsu's development as an artist is explored sufficiently in this rather hastily-made film. Yoda expressed dissatisfaction with his portrayal of the intellectual Hōgetsu in his scenario, claiming that he could not adequately show the volatile mixture of passion and philosophy embodied in this unique historical figure (Hito 185). Although Hōgetsu reaches out to Sumako, he is little different from the majority of other Mizoguchi male characters in that his need for Sumako, and his move away from his family, is as much motivated by his selfish need (for art, as he describes it) as it is for his love for her as an individual. In this sense, he is very similar to Mizoguchi's depiction of Utamaro and to the kind of man Tanaka Kinuyo saw in Mizoguchi himself—a man who loved the characters the actress portrayed rather than the actress herself (Shindo, Aru eiga kantoku 418-424). (Whether this was actually true or not in Mizoguchi's case will always remain a matter of conjecture).

Actual theatrical scenes in this film are edited in a more conventional manner than those in Late Chrysanthemum, although some attempt is made to set them off from the rest of the film. With the exception of the shots of Carmen's stabbing scene, the lack of emphasis in the camerawork of these theatrical scenes makes them harder to read as indicative, on a deeper level, of interpersonal dynamics. The concentration is on the performance itself rather than on audience reaction, although the camera does occasionally focus on the stage from the back of the audience and from a lower audience level.

Much of the stabbing scene of Carmen is shot in eerie shadows, but the sound of applause and the lowering of the stage curtain momentarily breaks the illusory sense of reality in the performance which has been
built upon what we know of Sumako's unstable emotional state at that time. Despite these stylistics, the use of the distraught Carmen as metaphor for Sumako's despair is too facile.

In typical Mizoguchi fashion, the most violent scenes are only presented obliquely. A deceptively peaceful, misty shot of the empty hall, with the room lightening as daylight approaches, is interrupted by the ring of the phone, bringing a report that Sumako has died suddenly that morning. (In contrast, Kinugasa's version of the same story stretches out the preparation for the suicide to an almost unbearable degree, with repeated sentimental flashbacks, and punctuations by a watchman periodically checking the empty theatre where the suicide will take place.)

In the Mizoguchi version, Sumako's final audience can be said to be the people who attend her funeral and crowd around her casket. The camera pans in over the rear of the crowd, until the last shot shows people placing flowers around her corpse in an unnecessarily sentimental finale--one of the rare moments when Mizoguchi allows a purely banal note to dominate. No doubt the studio considered this ending inspiring, but it is actually more pessimistic than that of many of Mizoguchi's other postwar films as it belies any sense but the melodramatic.

As in many Mizoguchi films, the actual process of a character's development is presented in a rather elliptical, and at times confusing, fashion. In contrast, Kinugasa develops the theme of Sumako's ostracism from others in more detail in ensuing parts of the story in which the jealousy and resentment of other members of the troupe becomes a major factor in the development (or lack of development) of the Geijutsuza, especially after Hōgetsu's death. Kinugasa also depicts the rehearsal
process more fully, so the viewers can get more of a sense of the process of preparing for a shingeki performance.

In both presentations of the Sumako/Hōgetsu story, the actress experiences the anxiety and self-doubt May identifies as a part of the creative encounter, and also the discovery of limits in her ability to project her art and to actualize her desires. This latter discovery leads more directly to the kinds of radical interpretations of desire which Mizoguchi takes with Ugetsu. Despite Sumako's artistic skill, her refuge, like that of Shiraito and Okita of Utamaro, is so entwined with the fate of the male object of desire that the demise of that central relationship signals her inability to survive. Sumako's desire is too obsessive and too lacking in detachment (in a Buddhistic sense); therefore, she is denied the final restitution of a harmonious state which marks the closure of Mizoguchi's schema of desire.

It can be said, however, that Sumako was the first artist portrayed by Mizoguchi who felt more comfortable in a Western art form, with its ideals of self-expression and self-determination already aspired to by earlier artists like Utamaro who felt they were reforming an art form grown stagnant. After Sumako, Mizoguchi never depicted another Western-style artist. Shimamura Hōgetsu was Sumako's teacher, but she was very much her own creation as an actress and as a woman. This film shows that both the actress, Sumako, and the director, Hōgetsu, enjoyed a kind of mutuality and communication rare among the couples represented in Mizoguchi's films (with Mohei and Osan of A Story from Chikamatsu and Kiyomori and Tokiko of New Tales of the Taira Clan as notable exceptions). In keeping with the Western nature of her art, Sumako's journey is more in the Western pattern (to use Gerstle's description) of
a dizzying ascent followed by a descent into self-doubt and isolation. A rebellious and demanding artist to the end, Sumako enjoys, for a moment, a union of artistic and personal satisfaction which transcends that experienced by any artist depicted by Mizoguchi prior to The Love of Sumako the Actress. With the next (and last) film on this theme, Ugetsu, Mizoguchi explores a more fundamental realization of the artist's desire for union, mutuality and success.
Ugetsu

Writing of Ugetsu (1953), Anderson and Richie state: "as a period film, it was more unusual, fitting into no category at all, self-sufficient, nearly allegorical, and a film experience both beautiful and disturbing" (Japanese Film 226). Disregarding the less significant secondary plot of Tōbei and Ohama's travails (which ended differently than Mizoguchi had wanted, due to pressures from the company), Ugetsu is very much the story of the triangular configuration between a subject, object of desire, and a mediating ideal which both compels the subject forward and casts an illusory veil over the object of desire. This triangular configuration is reflected in the relationship between Genjūrō and the two women who expand his world, his wife Miyagi and the ghostly Princess Wakasa. To a greater extent than any of the artists discussed so far, Genjūrō's development as an artist and as a man is intimately tied to the larger themes of the film, which will be examined below.

Ugetsu, in itself, depicts a transformative journey between external and internal mediators of desire. At the beginning of the film, the mediator of Genjūrō's desire is an external one: a desire for a rapid rise in status based on wealth alone. In the middle part of the triadic structure of the film, Princess Wakasa herself becomes the mediator of desire. (Although she is the object of Genjūrō's physical desire, she is even more a distant ideal of perfect beauty which moves him along the path as an artist while it threatens his existence as a man.) In the
final section of the film, the mediator of desire, "embodied" in the ghostly Miyagi, is internal and immediate. In the Japanese view, the natural and supernatural co-exist.

Wood's theory of the spiritual growth of an artist, exemplified in the three types of pots that appear in the film, is of central importance to an understanding of this film. Wood's thesis of the three pots stresses that creation requires maturity and a breadth of vision brought on by time and discipline. The three pots can be stated as: the uniform and frantically produced, the overly-ornamental and, finally, the true form that requires more careful nurture. Phrased another way, the same could be said for the three kinds of kimonos offered as gifts by Genjūrō to Miyagi. First there was the simpler one which Genjūrō brought back from his initial trip to the city and which pleased Miyagi as an indication of his love for her [Plate 49]. The second is the one he envisions bringing for Miyagi, although the city shopkeeper rudely tells him it would be too good for any woman he could possibly have. Genjūrō even imagines for a moment that Miyagi is there, in peasant attire, trying on the luscious silks. This scene also marks a turning point away from Miyagi (the real), as Genjūrō begins to follow the unreal, the ghostly pair of Wakasa and her nurse who approach. Even all the money in Genjūrō's newly-filled bag can not buy what is only part of a world of desire, not of actuality.

The third kimono—the one he returns with, after awakening outside the ruins—again figures into a simpler, domestic scene, with Miyagi repairing it into the night. It plays a part in the scene of domestic warmth and happiness which was also captured in the triangular composition of the initial kimono scene. This third kimono is pivotal.
Plate 49. Tanaka Kinuyo and Mori Masayuki in *Ugetsu*.
in that it has become again an object belonging to the village, and yet it also is now connected with the ghost Miyagi, in the thin border between the real and the illusory.

In addition, there are three kinds of love related to the artist which are depicted in Ugetsu: the utilitarian and selfish love Genjuro first feels for Miyagi, the illusory and transformative love he feels for Princess Wakasa, based on a dream-like, yet physical, desire, and the spiritual devotion he discovers in himself for Miyagi, who, as a ghost, is beyond transformation. This latter state more clearly reflects Girard's assertion that: "True love...does not transfigure....it is based on a perfect agreement among reason, will and sensibility. It is, indeed, vanity which transforms its object" (19).

Initially, the war forces the choice between pots and lives, and Genjūrō is sorely torn. His pots, like the war itself, are merely vehicles for his ambition and have no meaning of their own. The world of war and the world of commerce join at another moment when the soldiers, eager to plunder, spot Genjūrō's kiln and, unaware of its purpose, eagerly pull objects out of it. Their excitement soon turns to disgust, however, as they realize that what they hold are "only pots." The true potential of an object cannot be appreciated in war, only in peace, as in the final scene of Genjūrō fashioning what Miyagi praises as "such a gracefully-shaped pot." It is only after Genjūrō's return from the illusory repose of Princess Wakasa's palace that the deeper implications of the war, and of his role as a potter, become clearer to him.

Although Mizoguchi had already devoted considerable attention to the spiritual division between men and women in previous films, Ugetsu marks
the most fully conceived examination of this common theme in terms of the artist. The separation between men and women is physically stressed in the hauntingly beautiful Lake Biwa scene [Plate 50] in which Genjūrō and Tōbei huddle in one end of the boat to hear the report of the dying man in the "ghost vessel," while the two women (Miyagi and Chama) are left to their own fears in the other end of the vessel. Although all of the characters are engulfed in an overwhelming sense of anxiety, it is the women who are particularly decentered and vulnerable in this composition. Even more so is Miyagi in the following scene, as she and their son are left alone for "safekeeping" on shore, with their voices barely carrying across the lake to the departing boat which carries Genjūrō, Tōbei and Chama to the city. This theme is echoed later in the film when Chama reproaches Tōbei during their meeting behind the brothel where she works: "For a man's success, someone has to suffer."

In this stage of the artist's desire in which commercialization reigns, the darker side of Mizoguchi's thought, closely related to violence, can be seen in several scenes in the film in which the actual weight of money is stressed, as if there were something soothing in the substantiability of the coins. When Genjūrō first returns from the city, he invites Miyagi to feel the weight of his purse. Later, he answers the scornful shopkeeper at the kimono store with an indication of how heavy his bag is with coins. The soldiers who rape Chama test out the weight of the coins before tossing them down to her prostrate form. Later, as a prostitute, Chama chases after a customer who has tried to run away without paying, and grabs his bag of coins, feeling its heaviness in her grasping hands. The triangular relationship between Genjūrō, Wakasa and Miyagi is motivated, to a large extent, by
Plate 50. (from left) Ozawa Sakae, Mori Masayuki, Tanaka Kinuyo and Mito Mitsuko in Ugetsu.
conflicting desires related to the importance, and power, of money in securing one's livelihood and another's love.

In contrast, the sisterhood of women is shown in a much simpler way: an elderly woman presses a mound of rice for the child into Miyagi's hands as mother and child escape from yet another village under siege.

Some critics have claimed that another aspect of Mizoguchi's ambivalence might be the slightly sadistic nature of his view of women, accompanying his markedly sentimental and sensual views (Tsumura 28). Tsumura cites the cold sound of the coins being tossed to Ohama in the rape scene in *Ugetsu* as an example of Mizoguchi's "sadism" (28). This is surely an example, not of sadism, but of the utmost empathy. The telling shot of Ohama's sandals in the sand shows how even the director himself could not deal with that degree of pain inflicted on women.

Most critics stress the ethereality of Mizoguchi's treatment of the story, and yet, it is also a film of passion and of fierce longings. Mizoguchi moves from scenes of the most intense realism to unexpected forays into the supernatural with a restraint and fluidity seldom achieved before. *Ugetsu* is not just a series of contrasts—natural versus supernatural, war versus peace. The fine line, almost the intermingling, of the worlds of the real and the unreal in Japanese thought make such a simple dichotomy impossible. The magnificent blending of the supernatural and the natural is presented in such a practical, non-sensational way as to be almost imperceptible.

Zambrano explains:

Unlike the demons of Christian myth who deliberately seek to carry men's souls to perdition, those of Shinto tradition are accepted as part of the natural
order. The spiritual is not superior to man's earthly nature, but rather its equal. According to Japanese mythic tradition, all living things both natural and supernatural sprang from the same source. (Throne of Blood 269)

In her essay on "Atmosphere and Thematic Conflict in Mizoguchi's Ugetsu," Keiko McDonald stresses the way Mizoguchi uses atmospheric effects to show different levels of thematic conflict which then "requires us to vacillate between detachment and empathy" as we view the individual character's action from a wider position (Cinema East 104). This kind of fluid movement can be seen in our deeper empathy during the rare close-ups (such as that of Miyagi reaching for her child in preparation to flee the ransacking Shibata army) and the subsequent detachment caused by the introduction of the seemingly supernatural in the famous boat scene on Lake Biwa. McDonald points out how the camera's movement from the general to the particular, and back again to the general, helps to both establish the setting at the opening of the films and to remind the viewers of the cyclic patterns of time by the film's closing frames.

This alteration between the realistic (represented by the depictions of war and the fate of the two women in the face of war) and the supernatural and illusory (exemplified by the Princess Wakasa scenes) provides, in my opinion, not detachment, but disorientation which is finally resolved in the merging of the supernatural and the realistic in the family reunion scene near the end of the film. In these final scenes, the image of the ghostly Wakasa is replaced by what seems to be the flesh-and-blood Miyagi. What seems real becomes unreal, while the unreal becomes more apparent than anything imagined. In his Film Ideal review,
Martialay is especially aware of this in his statement (reminiscent of the famous one in Calderon's La Vida Es Sueño [Life is a Dream]):

The truth that we dream and the truth that we live are the same. Then permit me the same sophism as Mizoguchi when he arrives at the conclusion that to deny the dreamt truth would be to deny the living truth. And that would be to deny everything. (44-45)

(La verdad que sonamos y la verdad que vivimos son una misma verdad...Luego permítaseme el mismo sofismo que a Mizoguchi cuando llega a la conclusión de que negar la verdad schada sería negar la verdad vivida, Lo que sería negarlo todo.)

Ugetsu is very much a film of the discovery of appearances, the penetration of mists, like the mists over Lake Biwa and the mists a disproportionate desire casts over the artist's eyes. The audience, like Genjūrō himself, is seduced by the surface beauty of the film, thus entering deeply into Genjūrō's dilemma as a man and as an artist.

Miyagawa Kazuo's exquisite camerawork plays a large role in the success of this film, and Miyagawa claims that this is the only film in which Mizoguchi specifically praised his camerawork (Japan Film Center, Miyagawa 6). The emergence of the boat out of the mist, as if on an eternal voyage, is a visual delight, as is the pan across the rocks of the spring, to the raked sand, and on to the shimmering grass of the famous picnic scene. Both Yoda and Miyagawa stressed the influence of Chinese aesthetics on this film (Yoda interview 1988; Shindo, Aru eiga kantoku 316-317).

The picnic scene with Genjūrō and Wakasa is shot in full daylight, with the lake glistening in the distance, yet it is a scene of great darkness and delusion. The almost expressionless maidens who light the lamps in the mansion are only illusory bearers of light and are no more
substantial than the shadows that mark the path of Princess Wakasa and the nursemaid leading Genjūrō into their trap. Even more painfully, the warmth of the hearth upon Genjūrō's return is an illusory point of communion. A more substantial contrast between the two worlds is seen in the frontal shot of Genjūrō's rural house the morning after his return. In the viewer's mind, the sharp spears of wood that marked the demolished mansion are contrasted with this solid, roofed structure that remained much as Genjūrō had left it before his adventures.

Light, like desire, is transformative, and yet deceptive, in Mizoguchi's version of this story. The flames of the kiln that bake the pots and turn them into viable wares are later echoed in the lamp overturned by Genjuro as he flees in panic from Princess Wakasa's mansion—a lamp whose flames, we assume, then destroyed the mansion (if it ever actually existed at all). There is thus a direct corollary between fire as destructive and also as transformative. When Genjūrō thinks the flames of the kiln have died, he loses hope of success, although this success is one that will later scar him deeply. The men who finally awaken the unconscious Genjūrō inform him that it was the fire itself that saved him from going to jail.

The scenes between Genjūrō and Lady Wakasa point out the danger, and vanity, of beauty seen for its own sake. Martíaláy refers to the discussion between Lady Wakasa and Genjūrō as "a treatise of esthetics and, at the same time, of ethics" (un tratado de estética y a la vez de ética) (Film Ideal 44). As the Princess presents what she claims are Genjūrō's bowls elegantly assembled on a tray, Genjūrō is moved by her flattery and he relaxes his guard even further. Gradually he forgets his responsibilities to his real family, and becomes immersed in his
illusions, as he is immersed in the delicious spring of the illusory mansion. Serceau compares Genjūrō's dangerous predicament to that of the artist:

One knows that in Mizoguchi's thought the danger is threefold: the danger of beauty, but also of spectacle and finally of art and the artist himself. This potter who disdains his wife and spurns his son—doesn't he occupy the same position as an artist sacrificing everything to his work? Doesn't he confront the principal danger of artistic creation, being so difficult to realize but so easy to be dreamt, which avoids the direct and definitive confrontation with an authentic materialization of things. As for beauty, by the wonderful pleasure that it gives him, doesn't it tend to become an end in itself? Personal delight then takes precedence over social responsibility, pure generation of perfection of forms over the value of use of the object produced, their contemplation over action. (Revolte 44)

In this statement, Serceau points out the danger to the artist of a mediating ideal which is so far removed from reality that it beguiles the artist away from a truthful realization of forms.

Like a great director, Princess Wakasa prepares the scene and carefully lights it. It is Genjūrō who is chosen by Lady Wakasa. He appears small as she towers over him when they first meet, initiating a claustrophobic sense of confinement. Even when, later, it is Genjūrō who embraces her, as in the high angle shot of the lovers on the grass, the sense of claustrophobia is not dispelled. And yet, Lady Wakasa also becomes herself the victim of man, and of his deceptions. The theme of the evanescence of life is reinforced by the song Lady Wakasa sings at her wedding, with its comparison of the fading of even the finest silks, like the finest love, when lovers are untrue. Richie points out that both Lady Wakasa and Miyagi die needing love and are not to be reduced to a simpler
theme of merely sacred versus profane love (Japanese Cinema 115). In this way they are parallel, rather than opposing, structures.

There is yet another, more positive, level that Princess Wakasa (and later Miyagi bring to this story as told by Mizoguchi. As figures of the fantastic, they are representations of the imagination of the artist when they becomes his teachers, showing him how to deepen his talent. In his Love and Will, May explains the difference between fantasy and imagination in the following way:

> Both fantasy and imagination are capacities by which personal meaning is given an act. Imagination is the home of intentionality and fantasy one of its languages....Fantasy is the language of the total self, communicating, offering itself, trying on for size. It is the language of "I wish, I will"--the projection in imagination of the self into the situation. (281)

Although the fruits of Genjūrō's imagination did not ripen in a healthy manner until near the end of the story, they provided the necessary seeds for the development of his life as an artist. Only when Genjūrō returns to his village--in an ending as life-affirming as it is supernatural (and as it is conservative)--does the real child reappear, as if by magic, to reclaim his rightful place and to serve as another source of inspiration.

As in the case of Utamaro, it is tempting to try to read analogies between the director and the artist-protagonist in his films. Such an attempt can only be partially satisfactory, as it remains too dependent on conjecture. Nevertheless, there are parallels, as revealed by comments such as the one by Yoda quoted earlier which reminds that Mizoguchi was aware there could be such a thing as too much beauty, too much perfection.
Like Genjūrō, Mizoguchi tried to immerse himself, at points in his career, in an abstract beauty and in the glories of a past time (Tokugawa or Meiji periods), but ended up devoted more to "the sheer process of [their] trade" (Andrew and Andrew, Guide 32). Shindo feels that the ending of Ugetsu is indeed Mizoguchi's life itself, reflecting Mizoguchi's desire for a union or reunion with a wife and with his sister and mother. As in Mizoguchi's actual life, the male protagonist in Ugetsu returns, laden with guilt, only to find his wife has become a ghost (or mad, like an apparition, due to syphilis [Shindo interview 1988]).

Ultimately, it may be that Mizoguchi should be considered first and foremost a great craftsman (in the non-pejorative sense of the word). He could become as exhilarated over the beautiful balance in a clay jar (tsubo) (Tsumura 78) [Plates 51 and 52] as in any beautiful cinematic image. Traditionally, the Japanese did not distinguish between "crafts" and "fine arts," and respected a skillful potter, for example, as much as they did a skillful painter (Moes 7). In this context, one other craftsman presented by Mizoguchi—the calendar-maker's chief artisan, Möhei, of A Story from Chikamatsu—should be mentioned. In Mizoguchi's cinematic version of this famous love story, Möhei and Osan, the calendar-maker's wife [Plate 53], attempt to find refuge in a kind of caring mutuality which challenges the very fabric of the feudalistic social system. Möhei's growth is not as an artist (a theme which is barely developed in the scenario) but as an individual. Then again, the two aspects of the journey cannot be so strictly divided. "The characters [Osan and Möhei's] attempts, both successful and unsuccessful, to break away from the forces which separate them [Plate 54], is nothing more than
Plate 51. Mizoguchi as a young man, admiring pottery.
Plate 52. Mizoguchi as an older man.
the artist's attempt to create a universe for himself" (Belton 19). The scene depicted in plate 54 summarizes a central concern of Mizoguchi's creative world: two Mizoguchian symbols of vulnerability—a woman and an artist/artisan—are physically separated by a symbol of society's oppression, a selfish, materialistic man, but they are not long overwhelmed by that oppression. The lovers in A Story from Chikamatsu embark on a michiyuki (lovers' journey) which begins their spiritual ascent (although also their ascent to physical death), just as Genjūrō's return journey in Ugetsu marks his ascent.

The journey motif is undertaken by each of the four characters of Ugetsu, to varying degrees. Established first in Genjūrō and Tōbei's marketing forays into the city and back, and then repeated in the circular wake of the boat in the Lake Biwa scene, this circular journey motif provides a rare sense of closure in Mizoguchi's films. In this sense, Genjūrō's journey can also be called Dantean, as it is a journey of a living man to a kingdom of death—a journey involving a purification through trials, a painful passage through fire, and a final purification and then an ascent toward a greater spiritual purity, guided by a woman (Beatrice/Miyagi) who has never lost touch with this purity in herself.

It cannot be ignored, however, that the return of both Tōbei and Genjūrō to their impoverished life in the village has a problematic, ambivalent aspect in that it shows a spiritual reconciliation within an implicit political message that one should be content with one's poverty and not journey forth to try to conquer new worlds.

In his Cahiers du Cinéma article entitled "La Splendeur du Vrai," Philippe Demonsablon compares Ugetsu to Homer's Odyssey in that both are poems of adventure and foolish love (poèmes d'aventure et d'amour fou).
Plate 53. Hasegawa Kazuo and Kagawa Kyōko in *A Story from Chikamatsu*. 

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Plate 54. Kagawa Kyōko, Shindō Eitarō and Hasegawa Kazuo in A Story from Chikamatsu.
both deal with the pride of men, with war, and with long journeys. (Millier, Cahiers 33). Tōbei’s is a more ordinary struggle and illusion than that of Genjūrō, and his veil can be rent more expeditiously (or allowed to remain, as in Mizoguchi’s original plan for the story). Most notably, it is Genjūrō as an artist who undergoes the greatest transformations.

On one level, Ugetsu is a story of sleep and awakening, and yet it never rests in either state. Rather, each awakening leads Genjūrō into a deeper dream until he becomes immersed in the dream of his art, a point in which visible reality and mental image merge on a more elevated plane, like the plane the camera assumes over the village at the close of the film. On the one hand, there is a detached, objective plane in which the human form, like that in a Chinese painting, is subsumed into the environment. And yet, also as in a Chinese painting, the landscape is empty without the human form.

The film closes with a long shot of the village, and then a final pan to the larger natural world, transcending the human one. As in the closing of the subsequent film Sanshō the Bailiff, Mizoguchi reminds that even the most terrible human occurrences can be transcended by a wider inclusion in the natural order of things. Ve-Ho comments:

The Universe is eternally present, immense and stable, as if to protect man from his weaknesses, in order to calm and decant his futile passions and vain agitations (931).

(L’Univers est éternellement présent, immense et stable, comme pour protéger l’homme de ses faiblesses, pour apaiser et décanter ses passions futilès et ses agitations vaines.)
From this perspective, humans achieve their proper (relatively insignificant) stature. And yet, that same natural world also, paradoxically, requires the reunion of community, the return of father to son, of child to mother. Only in the human world is the journey completed.

On the other hand, the artist's return is not fully a restitution of a previous harmony (or potential harmony). Genjūrō is now both a man of solitude, set off from the village by his excursions into the supernatural, and a reinstated community member who is more aware of his responsibilities than ever before. In Ugetsu, the village is seen as the repository of values embodied both in the women, Miyagi and Ohama, and in the village elders who warn that "easy money flies away on wings."

In renouncing divinity, the hero renounces slavery. Every level of his existence is inverted, all the effects of metaphysical desire are replaced by contrary effects. Deception gives way to truth, anguish to rememberance, agitation to repose, hatred to love, humiliation to humility, mediated desire to autonomy...[The genuine heroic conversion] cannot be expressed either in terms of absolute solitude or in terms of a return to the world...True conversion engenders a new relationship to others and to oneself. (Girard 295)

Genjūrō returns, not only to his home and his village, but also to himself, in a new, and more humble, encounter (deai) with the true nature of his own story and of the false mediator of his desires. He "recaptures the past" (Girard 38) by realizing that he must form his own impressions of his world. The potter's wheel, highlighted in the beginning and end of the film, can be seen as a catalyst of material creation, but also as emblematic of the Buddhist wheel of life and death. In Buddhist cosmology, the wheel is both the symbol of the endless spinning of time,
and of the Law. Initially the potter's wheel is a central gathering place for the family, with Miyagi helping her husband spin the wheel. After the war and his misguided adventures, the circle is completed. Genjūrō has returned and receives the unseen but still invaluable aid of his wife, having learned the lesson that "art must be a balance between form and function" (Cohen, Textual Poetics 672). The higher artistry achieved through a renewed balance of art/work and family is accompanied by an acceptance of some of society's, and life's, injustices.

_Ugetsu_ stands as the pinnacle of Mizoguchi's exploration of the soul of the artist. As a film it is both immediate and transcendental, an engrossing narrative based on possible historical circumstances and a cosmogony. Infused with a sense of realism within a subtle, yet stunning, atmospheric beauty, _Ugetsu_ invites contemplation. Taking the artist on a journey of purification downward, through violence and near self-destruction, it then returns him to family, transformed. The new mediating ideal, exemplified by the third set of pots, those coarse yet elegant vessels, is, literally and figuratively, within reach and sufficient of itself. The artist has not lost desire but he has become more detached from its more obvious manifestations, becoming what Miyagi, from her objective stance in another world, terms "a perfect man." Moving through stages of temptation, in a Dantesque or Buddhistic sense, the artist, on a journey within desire, moves to a greater detachment from desire—moving from the marketplace of the world back to memory. Genjūrō's return calls forth all of the closure, and all of the openness, of memory, with its visions of family and creation.
CONCLUSION

A piece of calligraphy that used to hang on Mizoguchi's wall read: "For each new look, it is necessary to cleanse one's eyes (A chaque nouveau regard, il faut se laver les yeux [Mouchkine 22]). Like the artists in his films, Mizoguchi was aware that he was the kind of director who had to start anew each time he tried to create an important film. He was never content with merely the realistic, the romantic or the transcendental. He did not rest content with either the traditional or the innovative; neither was he so fascinated with beauty as to ignore relevant scenes of the most profound horror. His best films are complex explorations of a theme rather than preconceived themes subsequently realized. Prophetic yet filled with nostalgia, a superior Mizoguchi film can elevate, and yet unsettle, the viewer's emotions. Although the films themselves resolve no issues, they offer a path toward a personal resolution. As another famed Japanese director, Kurosawa Akira, stated: 'With the death of Mizoguchi, Japanese film lost its truest creator' (Retrospective 1981, 3).

My study of eight Mizoguchi films which feature theatrical or visual artists focused on several themes (as enumerated in the Statement of Purpose): the role of desire and its mediating ideals, rebellion against and triumph over oppressive forces, and the possibility of a union between one's professional and personal life. The two major lines of development in the lives of the artists—success in the world of the imagination, and fulfillment in meaningful personal relations—grow progressively closer to each other with each successive film.
Initially, in *White Threads of the Cascade*, these two spheres are of unequal import to the artist-protagonist, who chooses an attachment to a distant lover over survival itself. With films that I have loosely grouped into a middle period, the creative endeavors of the artists become a higher priority, and Mizoguchi's artists also move, tentatively, toward finding a satisfying spiritual partner. Finally, with *Ugetsu*, the poles join within a sphere of mutuality, after a long and arduous journey in which the artist first descends toward the illusory object of desire and then ascends, transformed.

The mediating ideal that molds the artist's object of desire either centers around love or artistic accomplishment. This ideal transforms the potentially simpler subject/object relationship into a complex triangular format in which the mediating ideal makes the object of desire appear increasingly distant and seductive as the artist loses touch with existing realities. Within this triangular relationship of artist/ideal/object of desire, the artist loses subjectivity, remaining either in the mold of the self-sacrificing woman (Shiraito) or of the obsessive wanderer (Genjūrō).

Rebellion is a trait of all of the artists Mizoguchi depicted. Under the substantial surface beauty of many Mizoguchi films lies a tension caused by desire struggling to appear and at times erupting into passion. Many of Mizoguchi's films are fundamentally a protest (kōgi [Yoda interview 1988]) against a society that marginalizes and silences its artists and degrades its female members. The artists' struggle for individuation increasingly centers around their assertion of the value of a creative life. This life of the imagination also serves as their best refuge from an insensitive world (as it did for the director.
himself). Mizoguchi shows that the path toward that refuge is not a straight one, but rather is a long descending journey through periods of hardship, anxiety and disillusion before an ascent which brings renewed vigor and conviction, along with a sense of restitution of what seemed lost. This journey (in the style of a long horizontal scroll) is a movement from isolation to union, from the illusory to the real.

The artists struggle, not only with society, but also with the way they are viewed by others. Like the onnagata, and like real female characters in Mizoguchi's films, the artists are also the objects of the desire and fantasy of others. Like the second set of pots in Wood's thesis, this desire casts an aura of illusion over the artists which tends to obscure at times the rougher nature of their struggles for identity. Only after artists like Kikunosuke and Genjūrō have undergone spiritual hardships do fantasy and reality meet, allowing a new sense of mutuality to grow between the artists and their loved ones.

In Mizoguchi's worldview, when the artist's rebellion is transcended, family and work are restored to their proper balance. This new sense of equilibrium is like the third set of pots that Miyagi describes as "so gracefully balanced." The end of the artist's struggle brings with it the conversion of an illusory desire into a passionate confrontation with reality. It also implies a more conservative acceptance of limitations. In the Mizoguchian world, only the artists who are willing to lower their ideals to fit realistic parameters, and thus to face the limitations society imposes, can transcend those limitations and produce real works of art that move beyond commercialization.
What is truly extraordinary about the line of development in Mizoguchi's worldview is that he is able to perceive and then depict a more transcendental level related both to the paradoxes of desire and to the resolutions of daily life. The kind of transcendental quality which Mizoguchi presents in the endings of films like *Ugetsu*, *Sanshō the Bailiff* and *A Story from Chikamatsu* is described in the following beautiful excerpt from Levinas:

The Infinite is not indifferent to me. It is in calling me to other men that transcendence concerns me. In this unique intrigue of transcendence, the non-absence of the Infinite is neither presence, nor re-presentation. Instead, the idea of the Infinite is to be found in my responsibility for the Other. (113)

The triumphs of the artists largely center around issues of artistic integrity and dignity. This is the issue raised by Kinya in his courtroom speech to Shiraito in *White Threads of the Cascades*, by Ofumi in her self-definition to Kenkichi in *The Straits of Love and Hate*, by Otoku to Kikunosuke in the riverbed sequence in *The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum*, by Okita in her farewell speech to Utamaro, by Shoyo in his encouragement of Sumako after Hōgetsu's death, and by Miyagi in her consoling words to Genjūrō from her place in the world of death at the end of *Ugetsu*. This integrity is connected with the need of the artists to be truthful to themselves, painful as that might be, and to work to perfect their art. This integrity is apparent not only on a thematic level, but also on a formalistic one, in the sense of a "tezukuri no kanji" in camerawork and editing—a quality
which cameraman Miyagawa Kazuo describes as an inventiveness and a form of trusting one's own intuition (National Film Center 11).

Although society is shown in Mizoguchi's films as placing artists, as well as women and servants, on an inferior level, their internal resourcefulness and the positive use they make of their suffering allows us to see them as superior to those who claim to be masters or patrons. As Wood states in his review entitled "Poet of the Cinema:"

What is consistent through all [of Mizoguchi's later films] is the emphasis on personal integrity and self-definition, growing out of an awareness of self and of the conditions of one's existence. Awareness is one of the supreme Mizoguchian values, expressed everywhere in the style of the films. The other is the preservation of essential human feeling in a violent and brutalizing world. (86)

Changes in Mizoguchi's depiction of the artist over time can be seen metaphorically in the changes in the media the artists use for expression: water for Shiraito, parodies of words and gestures for Ofumi and Yoshitarō, impersonation for Kikunosuke, puppets for Danpei, imitation (of the father) for Ganjirō, wood and paper for Utamaro, translations of foreign words and themes for Sumako, and finally earth and fire for Genjūrō. Concentrating on just the first and the last examples, we can see a movement from the most fluid and shapeless media (water) to the most tangible and yet still malleable (clay).

In the case of White Threads of the Cascade, juggling water is juggling nothing at all. When Shiraito's act ends, nothing remains but a few stage props, such as the conduits through which the water is propelled. In the same fashion, the performer becomes but another conduit, remaining spiritually depleted by the close of the performance.
An object of desire for the admiring, yet distant, audience, she yearns for a more substantial response. By the end of the film, however, her fate, and that of the object of her desire (Kinya), flow away like the ephemeral nature of her artistic medium.

Equally illusory is the parody of kabuki performed by Ofumi and Yoshitarō in The Straits of Love and Hate, and the onnagata role of Kikunosuke in The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum. In both cases, the performer dons a role separate not only from daily life but also from their own gender (since part of Ofumi's performance involved a parody of the kabuki aragoto (masculine, rough style) acting. As Tamotsu has pointed out in terms of both the onnagata and actors in general, an aura of desire mixed with disgust is attached to these theatrical figures, partially because of their power of illusion.

A Woman from Osaka brings forward the image of the puppeteer. In Japanese culture, puppets are often considered more "real" than human beings themselves, and are constructed and clothed with great attention to detail. Despite this, they merely mimic the human form. At this juncture in his career, Mizoguchi still had not produced an artist who is integrated with the medium of his or her creations.

In the case of Utamaro, Mizoguchi moves into a new arena—that of the visual artist who draws inspiration, not from the world of entertainment, but from an interaction between the artist's imagination and his environment. Like performing artists, the ukiyo-e artist's media is a syncretic one, relying on the artist's skillful manipulation of several elements in order to achieve expression. Mizoguchi's depiction of Utamaro as an "artist of the people" was, of course, partially a ploy to appease
the Occupation forces, but it also reflects a new trend in his work, moving toward the artist as Everyman.

The Love of Sumako the Actress returns again to a story of an exclusive love affair (as in White Threads of the Cascade), but it also recounts the brief career of a woman who represented, on a microcosmic level, modern Japanese women aspiring to a more truthful expression of self. The medium of Sumako's expression—translations of modern European plays and original Japanese shingeki productions—closely and concretely mirrored her own struggles as an artist, and as a woman.

Finally, Ugetsu presents, in itself, a movement toward the concrete and redeemable. Like Utamaro's ukiyo-e prints, Genjūrō's pots have the potential of remaining, in a spatial sense, and of producing pleasure beyond the actual life span of the artist. Molded by the human hand, they can also exist independent of it. Unlike the puppet, which is an elaborate metaphor for a human being, molded clay represents an intimate, and essential, metaphor for the human form. The potter, like the woodblock artist, and like the actor and actress, remains a conduit, but the medium of creation has grown progressively more intimately connected with the essence of the artists themselves.

The view of Mizoguchi's artist presented here does not fully agree with the prevalent critical view, as exemplified by Joan Mellen in The Waves at Genji's Door:

Utamaro's answer to the question later posed by Yeats in "The Choice"—whether to choose 'perfection of the life, or of the work'—is that only the latter falls within the realm of possibility. Utamaro feels free as an artist and is able to create only when he is not, like others, beset by passion. When his emotions are engaged outside of his art, he scatters his sketches...Mizoguchi, after Yeats, believes that the
artist or the revolutionary, the truly dedicated person, offers his life as a sacrifice to his vocation. If the artist or innovator is exceptional, his total devotion, commitment, and concentration belong to his work as to a mission. It may be argued that obsessional need will undo what it serves—whether creative or political change—and the person whose vocation is a substitute for his or her life will end in distorting both. But Mizoguchi would not agree, although he is well aware that Utamaro, despite his resolve, cannot prevent his passions from recurring. (102)

While Mizoguchi was more prone to depict fulfillment in art than fulfillment in life, he did not necessarily mean that artistic fulfillment was the intended goal, only that it was the perceived reality up to a certain point in the artist's development. Films like *Utamaro and His Five Women* and *The Love of Sumako the Actress* were hampered by Mizoguchi's concern with fulfilling a new style "democratic" vision which he only partially understood. Such films cannot be used as the prime example of Mizoguchi's views on this subject. Mizoguchi's Utamaro was an intellectual creation; Sumako, a multifaceted and difficult woman, was "squeezed" into a mold agreeable to commercial studio interests. Of the artists in the earlier films, Shiraito lacks much self-awareness and is most noted for her stoic acceptance of death when her goal of self-sacrifice is achieved. Ofumi of *The Straits of Love and Hate* is closer to the rebellious female model than to that of a real artist. Only in Kikunosuke and Genjūrō do more psychologically-complex artists develop, under the watchful eye of the camera which, from its long distance, reveals the characters' weaknesses with the same objectivity as it highlights their strengths.

To those who claim that Mizoguchi's films can be reduced to nothing more than a series of beautiful images, or (as Anderson and Richie once
suggested) to a sense of the setting as the real "hero" [352]), we must reply like the director himself in an interview with Takizawa Hajime:

Takizawa Hajime: "To conclude, according to you, what is mise-en-scène?" (Pour conclure, selon vous, Qu'est-ce que la mise-en-scène?) (Serceau 11)

Mizoguchi Kenji: "It is the human being! One must try to express the person well" (C'est l'homme Il faut essayer de bien exprimer l'homme.)

Mizoguchi's world was both a warmly humanistic (ningen kusai), and a strictly-disciplined one (especially in terms of stylistics)—two seemingly disparate traits that mark many of the best of world-class directors (Okada 64). In this, and other ways, Mizoguchi's worldview is defined by its ambiguities. Yoda recounts a story in which, during their visit to Paris following the Venice Film Festival, Mizoguchi scolded Yoda for spending all of his time taking pictures of famous monuments: "Yoda, an artist studies by using his heart to see things. You're taking photos just like a regular tourist—that's worthless, idiotic!" But after returning to Tokyo, Mizoguchi suddenly requested copies of all of the photos, as a momento (Tsumura 110). In essence, Mizoguchi transcends the photographic in his work, while he also values the truthfulness of the camera's gaze.

Just as we must take an intermediate stance between illusion and involvement in viewing Mizoguchi's films (Andrew, Films), so must we recognize that Mizoguchi takes an intermediate, objectified stance in relation to the artist-figures in his films. Although Mizoguchi's treatment of women perhaps grew "warmer" and more empathetic following the onset of his first wife's illness (Shindo interview 1988), in
contrast he grew more philosophical, with each subsequent film, from the artists he portrayed. This philosophical stance does not imply a lack of sympathy, but rather a greater perspective which allows the viewer more insight into the fundamental desires of the artists (and of themselves).

The development of the theme of the artist and desire was not a steady one in Mizoguchi's entire body of work, but rather was one that waxed and waned over the course of his career. Like the softly curving or diagonal lines in Mizoguchi's mise-en-scène, the emphases in his films assume a kind of graceful arc stemming from a central concern with the depiction of individual integrity in the face of society's cruelty.

Mizoguchi's drive, his desire to succeed (both on a commercial and an artistic level) was a drive he subsequently imbued into each of the artist-figures in his films. Like the artists in his films, Mizoguchi himself was mainly able to reconcile his art and his life on a higher plane than that of daily consciousness. Yet, like the artists he so lovingly depicted, he never removed himself, or his films, from the travails of daily life. The artists he depicted shared with Mizoguchi a desire for beauty mixed with action, even rebellion, and a desire for refuge mixed with resignation—a combination only a director of the calibre of a Mizoguchi could successfully project.
Chapter I

1 J'ai fait vingt films avec lui, et c'est seulement maintenant que je commence comprendre ce qu'il voulait; quand je travaillais avec lui, c'était très difficile. Il disait: "Dans ton scénario, il faut mettre tout, tout ce qui concerne l'homme: ce qui est constant en lui, ce qui passe, le côté social, ce qu'il y a de bien en lui, et les sales côtés. Mais il faut que ce soit beau." J'essayais alors que ce soit beau, et il me disait: "C'est trop beau, la vie n'est pas si simplement belle, il faut tout mettre, mais il ne faut pas s'éparpiller. Il faut que ce soit cristallisé, concentré. Pas trop beau, pas trop laid, pas trop sale, pas trop logique." C'était évidemment très dur d'obtenir cela.

Chapter II

1 Shōchiku was established in 1902. Shinkō Kinema was an independent outgrowth of Shōchiku. Nikkatsu Studio was established in 1912. Mizoguchi helped establish Daichi Films, with Nagata Masaichi and others, during the years 1934-36. (It closed in 1937). Tōhō Films was established in 1935. Kōa Elga was formed by several directors in 1941, in an attempt to avoid some government restrictions during the World War II period. Daiei was founded by Nagata Masaichi in the early 1940s.

By the late 1950s, there was a monopoly of six major studios: Tōhō, Shōchiku, Daiei, Shin Tōhō, Nikkatsu and Tōei.

2 En réalité, de telles influences [du théâtre traditionnel], au moins directs, sont très rares, d'abord parce que la veine authentique du cinéma nippon est réaliste... En fait, dans la plupart des cas, l'influence du théâtre no ou kabuki sur le cinéma japonais est aussi important que peut l'être celle des fabliaux du Moyen Age sur François Truffaut ou Jean-Luc Godard. Sauf dans quelques cas, dont celui de Mizoguchi, précisément.

Chapter V

1 On le sait, dans la pensée de Mizoguchi, le danger est triple. Danger de la beauté, mais aussi du spectacle et finalement de l'art et de l'artiste eux-mêmes. Ce potier qui dédaigne sa femme et conspue son fils n'occupe-t-il pas la même position qu'un artiste sacrifiant tout à son œuvre? N'affronte-t-il pas le danger principal de la création artistique qui, ayant tant de peine à se réaliser quand il lui est si facile de se relâcher, évite l'affrontement direct et définitif avec une authentique matérialisation des choses? Quant à la beauté, par les prodigieuses jouissances, qu'elle lui procure, ne tend-elle pas à devenir une fin en soi? La délectation personnelle prend alors le pas sur la responsabilité sociale, la pure génération d'une perfection des
formes sur la valeur d'usage de l'objet produit, leur contemplation sur l'action.
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The Boy of the Sea (Kaikoku Danji). Nikkatsu Daishōgun.
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1930
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1931
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The Dawn of Manchuria and Mongolia (Manmō Kenkoku no Reimei).
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1933
(Silent)
The White Threads of the Cascade (Taki no Shiraito). Irie Prod.
(a.k.a. The Water Magician).
(Silent)
Gion Festival (Gion Matsuri). Shinkō Kyoto.

1934
(Silent)
(Sound)
The Mountain Pass of Love and Hate (Aizō Tōge). Nikkatsu Tamagawa.

(Hereafter, all of Mizoguchi's films were sound)

1935
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1936

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1937

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*Ah, My Hometown (Aa Kokyō). Shinkō Tokyo.*

1939

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1940

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1941

*The Life of an Actor (Geidō Ichidai Otoko). Shōchiku Kyoto.*

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1944

*Three Generations of Danjūrō (Danjūrō Sandai). Shōchiku.*

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*Victory Song (Hisshōka). Shōchiku.*

1946

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1947

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1948
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My Love Has Been Burning (Waqa Koi wa Moenu). Shōchiku Kyoto.

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1951
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1952
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1953
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1954
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