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**Western Literature in Japanese Film
(1910-1938)**

**Ph.D. in Literary Theory and Comparative Literature
(2019)**

Alex Pinar

Thesis Supervisors:

Dra. Meri Torras and Dr. Mark Williams

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Notes on Personal Names and Film Titles

According to stylistic conventions, Japanese personal names are written in the traditional manner, with the surname followed by the given name, except in the case of the Japanese research cited, for which names are given in Western order. Japanese terms are written in italics, and when needed, macrons have been included in all cases except for widely used terms. Films' titles are transcribed in *rōmaji* (Latin script) using the modified Hepburn style, followed by an English translation in parentheses.

Notes on Copyright

Some of the stills included have been provided by the National Film Center in Tokyo, which authorized me to use them in this dissertation. Since this institution holds the copyright, figures that mention its name cannot be reproduced elsewhere without its permission. The rest of the stills that appear in this dissertation were published in different newspapers and cinema magazines during the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s, or are screen captures of the extant films. Since the Japanese Copyright Law stipulates that copyright shall expire 50 years after publication for printed materials, and 70 years after publication or distribution for motion pictures, those stills are currently in the public domain.

Abstract

Since the beginning of cinema, innumerable films have been derived from classic or popular literature. Film adaptation of a literary work can be considered as an interpretative process in which the film director creates a new artistic work through several transformations in the structure, content, aesthetics, and narrative discourse. There are hundreds of films in which the directors have adapted literary works from their own cultural sphere, but there are fewer examples of directors who have made movies based on literary works from a different culture and literary tradition.

That is the case for some Japanese film directors, such as Kurosawa Akira, who adapted foreign literature for the screen. Many scholars in the field of Film Studies have focused their attention on the adaptations made by Kurosawa and other Japanese directors in the 1950s and subsequent decades: a period during which Japanese cinema received acknowledgment worldwide and achieved an international presence in prestigious film festivals. However, there has been little or no attention to the adaptations of Western literature produced in Japan during the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s, throughout the so-called Meiji, Taishō, and Shōwa pre-war eras.

The objective of this research is therefore to explore the intertextual relations between those films and the Western works on which they were based, and to describe the cultural transformations in the structure, content, aesthetics, and narrative discourse carried out in the process of adaptation. The methodology employed follows Stam's intertextual dialogic approach, and takes into account the most recent theoretical frameworks, which suggest adding historical, cultural, and contextual aspects into the analysis of film adaptations. This dissertation goes far beyond the scope of the previous investigations, as it examines Japanese movies based on Western literature produced during the first half of the twentieth century that have never or barely been studied.

Resum

Des del inicis del cinema s'han realitzat un innumerable nombre de pel·lícules basades en obres literàries. L'adaptació cinematogràfica es pot considerar un procés interpretatiu en què el cineasta crea un nou treball artístic mitjançant la transformació de l'estructura, el contingut, l'estètica i el discurs narratiu de l'obra literària. És freqüent veure pel·lícules en les que els directors han adaptat obres literàries del seu propi àmbit cultural, però és menys comú trobar exemples de directors que han creat pel·lícules basades en obres d'una esfera cultural i tradició literària diferent.

Aquest és el cas d'alguns cineastes japonesos, com Kurosawa Akira, que va adaptar amb èxit obres destacades de la literatura universal. Moltes investigacions han centrat la seva atenció en les adaptacions realitzades per Kurosawa i altres directors japonesos en la dècada de 1950 i posteriors, un període en el qual el cinema japonès va rebre reconeixement a tot el món i va aconseguir presència internacional en prestigiosos festivals de cinema. No obstant això, hi ha hagut poca o gairebé cap atenció a la les adaptacions de literatura occidental produïdes al Japó durant els anys 1910, 1920 i 1930, al llarg de les anomenades èpoques Meiji, Taishō i Shōwa- preguerra.

L'objectiu d'aquesta investigació és, per tant, explorar les relacions intertextuals entre aquestes pel·lícules i les obres literàries en la qual es van basar, i descriure les transformacions culturals en l'estructura, el contingut, l'estètica i el discurs narratiu realitzats en el procés d'adaptació. Així, la metodologia emprada segueix l'enfocament dialògic de Stam, tenint en compte altres propostes metodològiques recents, les quals suggereixen afegir aspectes històrics, culturals i contextuals a l'anàlisi de les adaptacions cinematogràfiques. Aquesta tesi té la intenció d'aportar una nova perspectiva als estudis de les relacions intertextuals entre cinema Japonès i la literatura universal mitjançant

l'anàlisi de pel·lícules produïdes durant la primera meitat del segle XX que no han estat mai o han estat molt poc estudiades.

Resumen

Desde los inicios de la historia del cine se han realizado un innumerable número de películas basadas en obras literarias. La adaptación cinematográfica se puede considerar un proceso interpretativo en el que el cineasta crea una nueva obra artística a mediante la transformación de la estructura, el contenido, la estética y el discurso narrativo de la obra literaria. Es frecuente ver películas en las que los directores han adaptado obras literarias del su mismo ámbito cultural, pero es menos común encontrar ejemplos de directores que han creado películas basadas en obras de una esfera cultural y tradición literaria diferente.

Este es el caso de varios cineastas japoneses, como Kurosawa Akira, que adaptó con éxito obras destacadas de la literatura universal. Muchas investigaciones en el campo de los estudios del cine japonés han centrado su atención en las adaptaciones realizadas por Kurosawa y otros directores en la década de 1950 y posteriores, un periodo en el que el cine japonés consiguió reconocimiento en todo el mundo y obtuvo presencia internacional en prestigiosos festivales de cine. No obstante, ha habido poca o casi ninguna atención a las adaptaciones de literatura occidental producida en Japón durante los años 1910, 1920 y 1930, a lo largo de las denominadas épocas Meiji, Taishō y Shōwa-preguerra.

El objetivo de esta investigación es, por tanto, explorar las relaciones intertextuales entre estas películas y las obras literarias en la que se basaron, y describir las transformaciones culturales en la estructura, el contenido, la estética y el discurso narrativo realizados en el proceso de adaptación. De este modo, la metodología empleada sigue el enfoque dialógico de Stam, incluyendo otras propuestas metodológicas recientes que sugiere añadir aspectos históricos, culturales y contextuales al análisis de las adaptaciones cinematográficas. Esta tesis tiene la intención de aportar una nueva

perspectiva a los estudios relativos a las relaciones intertextuales entre el cine japonés y la literatura universal mediante el análisis de películas producidas durante la primera mitad del siglo XX que han sido muy poco o nunca estudiadas.

Introduction

Filmmakers started to shoot movies based on classic or popular literature works soon after the invention of cinema. From that point onwards, adaptations have been continually filmed all over the world. There are innumerable examples of movies in which the directors have adapted literary works from their own cultural sphere, but there are fewer examples of directors who have made cross-cultural adaptations: i.e, based their films on works from a different literary tradition and culture. That is the case for some Japanese filmmakers, such as Kurosawa Akira, who adapted Western works of literature for the screen in well-known masterpieces such as the period films *Kumonosu-jō* (Throne of Blood, 1957) and *Ran* (1985), which are based on Shakespeare's plays *Macbeth* and *King Lear* respectively.

Many scholars in the fields of Literature and Film Studies have focused their attention on the adaptations made by Kurosawa and other Japanese directors in the 1950s and subsequent decades: a period during which Japanese cinema received acknowledgment worldwide and achieved an international presence in prestigious film festivals. However, there has been little or no attention to the considerable number of adaptations of Western literature produced in Japan during the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s, throughout the so-called Meiji, Taishō, and Shōwa pre-war eras. Searching in different movie databases, in newspapers and cinema magazines of that time, and in archives of

Japanese cinema studios, it has been possible to identify around fifty movies, mostly shot during the 1920s and 1930s, which were based on or inspired by Western literature works.

Most of the films produced in those decades were destroyed by natural disasters or by the continual fire-bombing of the biggest cities during the Pacific War: thus, only six of these adaptations remain completely extant, while two are partially intact and one has just a few minutes surviving. Nevertheless, Japanese institutions, such as the National Film Center of Tokyo and the National Diet Library, preserve movie stills and cinema magazines from that time, from which it is possible to find plot summaries and film reviews or critiques. Many of those texts, alongside the extant stills, provide sufficient information to conduct a comparative study of some of the lost pictures, although in some cases the data found is insufficient and only allows a perfunctory glance at the adaptation.

The objective of this research is to survey and examine adaptations of Western literature produced in Japan during the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s, to explore the intertextual relations between the films and the Western literary works on which they were based, and to describe the cultural transformations in the structure, content, aesthetics, and narrative discourse carried out in the process of adaptation. The investigation therefore aims to answer two fundamental research questions: a) How were the Western literary works transformed and adapted to the Japanese cultural sphere? b) How did the historical, ideological, and sociocultural context of Japan influence the process of adaptation?

To address these questions, the films will be analysed following Stam's intertextual dialogic approach, which proposes to explore the permutations in narratological elements such as locale, plot, characters, language, and time. Furthermore, this study will take into account the most recent theoretical frameworks, which suggest adding historical, cultural, and contextual aspects into the analysis of the movies. As

mentioned above, in the case of adaptations that are lost, the examination draws from extant stills and film reviews found in publications of that time.

The dissertation is divided into two parts. The first, entitled ‘Film and Literature’, comprises three chapters. The first explores the relationship between film and literature and describes the methodological approach followed to conduct this research. The second chapter surveys the reception of Western literature in Japan and its influence on the development of modern Japanese literature and cinema. The third examines Western influence in the development of modern Japanese literature and cinema.

The second part, entitled ‘Western Literature in Japanese Cinema’ comprises chapters Four to Nine. Chapter Four provides an overview of the history of Japanese film from the Meiji to the Shōwa pre-war eras: that is, from the advent of cinema until a few years after the arrival of the talkies. Chapter Five analyses films based on Russian literature, which had a remarkable influence on modern Japanese literature and theatre. Chapters Six and Seven examine movies based on French and German literary works that were particularly popular at that time. Chapter Eight explores adaptations of literary works written in English, and finally, Chapter Nine studies films based on Catalan and Spanish literature.

Since most of the Japanese films based on Western literature produced in the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s have never or barely been studied, this dissertation aims to broaden the existing academic literature on the field, going far beyond the large number of investigations that examine the transpositions of Western literature into Japanese films produced after the Pacific War.

PART 1:
Film and Literature

Theories of Adaptation: Methodological Approaches

Filmmakers started to adapt works of literature from the beginnings of cinema. It is remarkable that by 1900, short adaptations of literary works had been already filmed in several countries. For instance, in Germany, Oskar Messter directed *Hänsel und Gretel* based on Brothers Grimm tale in 1897. In the United Kingdom, Walter Pfeffer Dando and William K. L. Dickson filmed Shakespeare's *King John* in 1899. In Japan in 1899, Shibata Tsunekichi directed *Momijigari*, based on a famous *kabuki* play.¹ In 1900 in France, Clément Maurice filmed Edmond Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac*, and in the same year in the United States, Arthur Marvin directed *Sherlock Holmes Baffled*, based on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's character.

Soon, many intellectuals began to criticize film adaptations and cinema itself. For them, literature was a genuine art – a high culture product – while film was considered as low-class mass entertainment. Cartmell and Whelehan² remark that 'writers and literary

¹ *Kabuki* is a classical Japanese dance-drama which dates from the early 17th century, with singing and dancing performed in a stylized manner. It combines music, dance, mime, and staging and costuming.

² Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan (ed.). *Screen Adaptation: Impure Cinema* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p.2.

critics considered film adaptations as abominations, crude usurpations of literary masterpieces that threatened both literacy and the book itself.’ Perhaps the best-known example of this hostile reaction to films is Virginia Woolf’s essay *The Cinema*, published in 1926,³ which she wrote after watching the 1920 German expressionist film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*.⁴ In her essay, Woolf portrays the spectators as modern barbarians when stating that:

People say that the savage no longer exists in us, that we are at the fag end of civilization, that everything has been said already, and that it is too late to be ambitious. But these philosophers have presumably forgotten the movies. They have never seen the savages of the twentieth century watching the pictures.⁵

Besides, she describes cinema as a predator medium that destroys the essence of the literature, which becomes ‘the victim’ of the film’s covetousness. Thus, for her, cinema and literature are incompatible, so film adaptations are a kind of unnatural perversity:

³ Virginia Woolf’s essay ‘The Cinema’ was first published in the 3 July 1926 issue of the political weekly newspaper *The Nation and Athenaeum*. It was released along with other essays in 1950 in the volume *The Captain’s Death Bed and Other Essays* (Hogarth Press), pp.160-171.

⁴ Directed by Robert Wiene, this silent horror film is considered the quintessence of the German expressionism. It had a strong influence on the films produced worldwide during the 1920s.

⁵ Woolf, ‘The Cinema,’ p.160.

All the famous novels of the world, with their well-known characters, and their famous scenes, only asked, it seemed, to be put on the films. What could be easier and simpler? The cinema fell upon its prey with immense rapacity, and to this moment largely subsists upon the body of its unfortunate victim. But the results are disastrous to both. The alliance is unnatural.⁶

Also, over decades, for many scholars who wrote about film adaptations, a movie derived from literature works was considered as an inferior cultural product, often defined using pejorative terms such as ‘infidelity, betrayal, deformation, violation, and desecration, each accusation carrying its specific charge of outraged negativity.’⁷ There existed a ‘binary, hierarchical view of the relationship between literature and film, where the literary work was conceived of as the valued original, while film adaptation was merely a copy, and where fidelity emerged as the central category of adaptation studies.’⁸ According to Stam,⁹ there exist several prejudices that can explain the perception of

⁶ Ibid., p.168.

⁷ Robert Stam, ‘Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation’, in James Naremore (ed.), *Film Adaptation* (Rutgers University Press, 2000), p.54.

⁸ Mireia Aragay, ‘Reflection to Reaction: Adaptation Studies Then and Now,’ in Mireia Aragay (ed.), *Books in Motion: Adaptation, Intertextuality, Authorship* (Rodopi, 2005), pp.12-34, p.12.

⁹ Robert Stam, ‘Introduction: The Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation,’ in Robert Stam and Alessandra Raengo (eds.), *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation* (John Wiley & Sons, 2005), pp. 1-52, p. 4.

literature as a superior medium and the consequent spread of animosity towards adaptations:

Although the persuasive force of the putative superiority of literature to film can be partially explained by the undeniable fact that many adaptations based on significant novels are mediocre or misguided, it also derives, I would argue, from deeply rooted and often unconscious assumptions about the relations between the two arts. The intuitive sense of adaptation's inferiority derives, I would speculate, from a constellation of substratal prejudices.

Stam identifies certain biases that explain the hostility towards film adaptations. First, he considers that there is a 'valorization of historical anteriority and seniority,' that forms 'the assumption that older arts are necessarily better arts.' Second, there is an assumption that there exists a 'dichotomous thinking that presumes a bitter rivalry between film and literature,' in which film adaptations are perceived as the 'enemy.' Stam also indicates as reasons for the animosity to film the cultural 'iconophobia' and 'logophilia,' which are defined as 'a deeply rooted cultural prejudice against visual arts,' and 'the exaltation of the written word as the privileged medium of communication' respectively. Another source of the hostility towards adaptations is the assumption that films are 'anti-corporeality,' which creates 'distaste for unseemly 'embodiedness' of the filmic text.' The 'myth of facility' – that is, 'the complex uninformed and somewhat puritanical notion that films are suspectly easy to make and suspectly pleasurable to watch' – is another powerful assumption that explains the hostility towards movies. In the same way, there exists a class or elitist prejudice, since the cinema is often 'seen as degraded

by the company it keeps – the great unwashed popular mass audience, with its lower-class origins in ‘vulgar’ spectacles like slideshows and carnivals.’ Finally, an additional source of hostility towards adaptation is the charge of parasitism, since adaptations are ‘seen as parasitical on literature.’¹⁰

It was not until the 1950s that a new perspective in adaptation studies appeared. Unlike previous decades, film and literature started to be perceived as different mediums with their own idiosyncrasies. Since then, several methodological approaches have been developed, with the aim of providing a methodology that is suitable to study film adaptations. I shall now describe the most influential ones, stating the reasons why I discard or adopt them to analyse cross-cultural film adaptations.

The Fidelity Approach

The first scholar to study film adaptation as a medium with its own formal characteristics was Bluestone.¹¹ His method of analysis, based on the evaluation of additions, deletions, alterations, and deviations from the literary source, has been criticized, since it ‘perpetuated a reliance on fidelity as a primary criterion for judgment’ and ‘unwittingly defines an adaptation’s scope and quality in terms of its allegiance to the primacy of the source text.’¹² Bluestone’s approach has also been criticized for assuming the superiority of the literature: ‘his subject matter and entire approach tend to

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ George Bluestone, *Novel into Film* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1957).

¹² Christa Albrecht-Crane and Dennis Cutchins, ‘Introduction: New Beginnings for Adaptation Studies,’ in Christa Albrecht-Crane and Dennis Cutchins (eds.), *Adaptation Studies* (Cranbury: Rosemond, 2010), pp.11–22, p.12.

confirm the intellectual priority and formal superiority of canonical novels, which provide the films he discusses with their source and with a standard of value against which their success or failure is measured.¹³

Throughout the next decades, still with the concept of fidelity in mind, many researchers have compared film adaptations, mostly from the Anglo-American literary canon, usually judging them as ‘successful’ or ‘unsuccessful’ according to the degree to which the director kept the ‘meaning’ and maintained the ‘essence’ of the literary work. As Whelehan points out:

For many people the comparison of a novel and its film version results in an almost unconscious prioritizing of the fictional origin over the resulting film, and so the main purpose of comparison becomes the measurement of the success of the film in its capacity to realize what are held to be the core meanings and values of the original text. These commentators have already charted the problems involved in such an exercise and the pitfalls created by the demands of authenticity and fidelity – not least the intensely subjective criteria which must be applied in order to determine the degree to which the film is ‘successful’ in extracting the ‘essence’ of the fictional text.¹⁴

¹³ James Naremore, ‘Introduction’, in James Naremore (ed.), *Film Adaptation* (Rutgers University Press, 2000), pp. 1-16, p. 6.

¹⁴ Imelda Whelehan, ‘Adaptations, the Contemporary Dilemmas’, in Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan (eds.) *Adaptations, from Text to Screen, Screen to Text* (Routledge, 2013), pp. 3-20, p. 3.

Nowadays, this approach is considered unproductive and inappropriate for several reasons. One of them is the assumption that an adaptation is a copy that should be 'loyal' to the literary work, so the fidelity approach 'has coded adaptation as a form of artistic reproduction rather than production.'¹⁵ Another reason is the fact that the fidelity theoretical- methodological approach is based on the presupposition that a literary work has only one possible interpretation, which the film-director should seek to transfer faithfully and correctly in the film to guarantee a 'successful' adaptation. In this sense, McFarlane¹⁶ remarks that:

Fidelity criticism depends on a notion of the text as having and rendering up to the (intelligent) reader a single, correct 'meaning' which the filmmaker has either adhered to or in some sense violated or tampered with. (...) Since such coincidence is unlikely, the fidelity approach seems a doomed enterprise and fidelity criticism unilluminating.

Furthermore, some scholars question this approach, asking whether fidelity itself is possible or even desirable:

¹⁵ Shelley Cobb, 'Film Authorship and Adaptation', in Deborah Cartmell (ed.), *A Companion to Literature, Film, and Adaptation* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp. 105-121, p.108.

¹⁶ Brian McFarlane, *Novel to Film* (Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 8-9.

The shift from a single-track, uniquely verbal medium such as the novel (...) to a multi-track medium such as film, which can play not only with words (written and spoken), but also with theatrical performance, music, effects, and moving photographic images, explains the unlikelihood – and I would suggest even the undesirability – of literal fidelity.¹⁷

It is remarkable that, although this approach has been considered unproductive and has hence been rejected since the 1980s, several scholars, such as Desmond and Hawkes, still follow a methodological approach based on a ‘re-conceptualized’ idea of fidelity. They assert, for instance, that they use the concept of fidelity ‘not as an evaluative term that measures the merit of films, but as a descriptive term that allows discussion of the relationship between two companion works.’¹⁸

I argue that the fidelity methodological approach is not applicable to study cross-cultural adaptations such as the ones I analyse in this dissertation. Besides the arguments previously expounded, it is important to remark that fidelity ignores the idea that a text is interpreted and re-interpreted infinitely according to the time and place in which it is read. That is even more significant when a text is adapted for the screen in a different cultural sphere, such that the text itself and the *mise-en-scène* are transformed in a way that the audience can understand: in this case, especially until the end of the American occupation of Japan, Japanese cinema-goers were largely unfamiliar with Western cultural codes.

¹⁷ Robert Stam, ‘Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation’, p.55.

¹⁸ John M. Desmond and Peter Joseph Hawkes. *Adaptation: Studying Film and Literature* (McGraw-Hill Humanities/Social Sciences/Languages, 2006), pp. 2-3.

The Taxonomies/Categorization Approach

Several scholars, aware of the limitations of methodology based only on fidelity, developed methodological approaches that involved categorizing adaptations by establishing lists of taxonomies according to the ‘degree of proximity to the ‘original’¹⁹ that ‘seek to measure how closely the film follows the book.’²⁰ The most well-known are the categorization approaches of Wagner,²¹ Andrew,²² and Klein and Parker.²³ McFarlane remarks that ‘there is nothing definitive about these attempts at classification, but at least they represent some heartening challenges to the primacy of fidelity as a critical criterion’²⁴ Wagner’s approach differentiates among three categories of adaptations. The first, ‘transposition,’ is a type of adaptation ‘in which a novel is given directly on the screen with a minimum of apparent interference.’²⁵ The label ‘commentary’ is given to the adaptations ‘where an original is taken and either purposely or inadvertently altered in some respect,’ so that it is possible to observe that there was a

¹⁹ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (Routledge, 2012), p.7.

²⁰ Thomas Leitch, ‘Adaptation Studies at a Crossroads.’ *Adaptation*, vol.1, no.1, (2008), pp.63-77, p.70.

²¹ Geoffrey Wagner, *The Novel and the Cinema* (Rutheford, Madison and Teaneck: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1975).

²² Dudley Andrew, ‘The Well-Worn Muse: Adaptation in Film History and Theory’, in Syndy Conger and Janice R. Welsch (eds.), *Narrative Strategies: Original Essays in Film and Prose Fiction* (West Illinois University Press: Macomb, 1980.), pp. 9-17.

²³ Michael Klein and Gillian Parker, *The English Novel and the Movies* (Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1981).

²⁴ Brian McFarlane, *Novel to Film*, p.11.

²⁵ Geoffrey Wagner, *The Novel and the Cinema*, p.222.

‘different intention on the part of the film-maker, rather than infidelity or outright violation.’²⁶ The third type, called ‘analogy’, refers to adaptations that take the literary work ‘as a point of departure (...) for the sake of making another work of art.’²⁷ Andrew and Klein and Parker also established lists of three taxonomies similar to Wagner’s. Andrew labelled his categorization of adaptations as ‘Borrowing, intersection, and fidelity of transformation.’²⁸ On the other hand, Klein and Parker classified adaptations as those that show ‘fidelity to the main thrust of the narrative,’ adaptations that ‘retain the core of the structure of the narrative while significantly reinterpreting or, in some cases, deconstructing the source text,’ and adaptations that treat ‘the source merely as raw material, as simply the occasion for an original work.’²⁹

Recent researchers point out the limitations of these types of approach. Cartmell and Whelehan,³⁰ for instance, observe that:

The danger of posting such a model of approach is whether such taxonomies risk privileging the notion of ‘closeness to origin’ as the key business of adaptation studies; additionally, the boundaries between the various classifications are impossible to define and an adaptation can fit into a number of categories at once.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 223-224.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 226.

²⁸ Dudley Andrew, ‘The Well-Worn Muse: Adaptation in Film History and Theory’, p. 10.

²⁹ Michael Klein and Gillian Parker, *The English Novel and the Movies*, pp. 9-10.

³⁰ Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan. *Screen Adaptation: Impure Cinema* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p.6.

Aragay also warns against this approach, especially Wagner's work, considering that a methodology 'that relies on the centrality of the literary source or the original' has 'limited theoretical and practical validity,' and maintains the assumption that literature is a superior medium, being 'still trapped by an unspoken reliance on the fidelity criterion and a concomitant (formalist) focus on the literary/filmed adaptation binary pair.'³¹ Moreover, as Constandinides remarks, 'classification systems tend to ignore the form and aesthetic criteria of the cinematic medium where the operations of its technical elements are not simply invisible but become meaningful through a dynamic interaction with the story'³² and 'omit the possibility of multiple generic intertexts involved in an adaptation process.'³³

I agree with the scholars who criticize the categorization methodological approach. I also think that this approach is unproductive to analyse cross-cultural adaptations, since, besides the reasons quoted before, a taxonomy itself does not describe important issues such as the cultural context of the adaptation.

³¹ Mireia Aragay, 'Reflection to Reaction: Adaptation Studies then and Now', p.16.

³² Costas Constandinides, *From Film Adaptation to Post-Celluloid Adaptation: Rethinking the Transition of Popular Narratives and Characters Across Old and New Media* (Bloomsbury Publishing. Continuum, 2010), p.13.

³³ Ibid., p.15.

The Narratological Approach

The work of McFarlane³⁴ and his narratological approach provided a new perspective in adaptation studies, since it unsettled ‘the primacy of fidelity as a major criterion for judging film adaptations.’³⁵ With this method, consisting in comparing narrative strategies ‘in order to better establish what key shifts are made in the process of transition’³⁶ from novel to film, McFarlane presented a methodology:

for studying the process of transposition from novel to film, with a view not to evaluating one in relation to another but establishing the *kind* of relation a film might bear to the novel it is based on. In pursuing this goal, I shall set up procedures distinguishing between that which can be transferred from one medium to another (essentially, narrative) and that which, being dependent on different signifying systems, cannot be transferred (essentially, enunciation).³⁷

In order to pursue the objective of distinguishing the narrative features that can or cannot be transferred from one medium to another, McFarlane follows Barthes’

³⁴ Brian McFarlane, *Novel to Film*.

³⁵ Mireia Aragay, ‘Reflection to Reaction: Adaptation Studies then and Now’, p.23.

³⁶ Imelda Whelehan, ‘Adaptations. The Contemporary Dilemmas’, p.9.

³⁷ Brian McFarlane, *Novel to Film*, p. vii.

distinction of narrative functions.³⁸ Barthes identified two main groups: distributional (named functions proper, which refer to actions and events) and integrational (labelled as indices, which refer to information about characters, space, time, and so on). At the same time, he subdivides functions proper into cardinal functions (which refer to the main actions that sustain the development of the story, its structure and the sequence of the narration) and catalyzers (secondary actions that complement the cardinal functions). McFarlane considers that ‘the most important kinds of transfer possible from novel to film are located in the category of functions proper, rather than that of indices, though some elements of the latter will also be seen to be (partly) transferable.’³⁹

Thus, for him, it is essential to distinguish between ‘transfer’ (that is, the narrative elements that are transferable) and ‘enunciation, (that is, the elements which cannot be transferred⁴⁰), without a complex process of adaptation, which McFarlane calls ‘adaptation proper.’ In sum, to analyse the ‘transfer’ of an adaptation, McFarlane suggests following several ‘strategies,’ such as distinguishing between story/plot and distributional and integrational functions, identifying character functions and fields of action, and identifying mythic and/or psychological patterns. On the other hand, to analyse enunciatory matters – that is, ‘adaptation proper’ elements – he suggests distinguishing between conceptual (print) and perceptual (audio-visual), novel linearity and the film’s spatiality, and codes (language, visual, non-linguistic, and cultural).

This methodological approach has been criticized as ‘narrowly formalistic,’ since it privileges questions of ‘narrativity to the detriment of other aspects such as cultural

³⁸ Barthes’s classification is described in ‘Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives’ in Roland Barthes’ *Image-Music-Text*, edited by Stephen Heath, (Fontana/Collins: Glasgow, 1977), pp. 89.

³⁹ Brian McFarlane, *Novel to Film*, p. 13

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 23

conditions’⁴¹ and leaves out intertextuality or contextual factors.⁴² McFarlane himself is aware of the limitations of his approach and admits that he has ‘marginalized’ other ‘potentially productive’ approaches to adaptation, such as ‘the influence of the industrial and cultural context in which the film is made on how the original novel is adapted.’⁴³

I agree with scholars who remark on the limitations of this approach. In my opinion, describing what can and cannot be transferred is not a useful methodology to analyse cross-cultural adaptations and to describe the process of cultural transformation. To do so, I believe that the most recent approaches described below are more suitable than the ones so far described.

The Intertextual Dialogism Approach

During the 2000s, several scholars have argued that it is necessary to broaden the field and abandon the idea of adaptation as a one-directional transformation of one form to another. Stam develops this idea and advocates considering adaptation as a dialectical process, not just a product. He borrows Genette’s intertextuality classification, described in *Palimpsests*,⁴⁴ to develop the idea of a ‘grammar of transformation.’ Genette described five types of transtextuality. The first type, intertextuality, refers to a text segment present in another text in the form of quotation, plagiarism, or allusion. The second category, ‘paratextuality,’ refers to the relation between the text and its ‘paratexts,’ such as titles,

⁴¹ Mireia Aragay, ‘Reflection to Reaction: Adaptation Studies then and Now’, p.23.

⁴² Robert Stam, ‘Introduction: The Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation.’

⁴³ Brian McFarlane, *Novel to Film*, p. viii.

⁴⁴ Gerard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in Second Degree* (University of Nebraska Press, 1982).

dedications, footnotes, prefaces, epigraphs, illustrations, and so forth. The third type, 'metatextuality,' refers to texts that evoke or comment explicitly on other texts; meanwhile 'architextuality,' the fourth type, refers to the text being positioned directly or indirectly into a generic category due to its title. Genette's fifth type, 'hypertextuality,' can be defined as the relationship wherein a text alludes to or derives from a previous text. Stam suggests that the concept of 'hypertextuality' is the most suitable to study film adaptations. According to him, the film adaptation should be seen as dialogic-transformation between a 'hypotext' (the literary work) and/into a 'hypertext' (the film), in which different processes intervene, each mediated by a series of filters:

One way to look at adaptation is to see it as a matter of a source novel hypotext's being transformed by a complex series of operations: selection, amplification, concretization, actualization, critique, extrapolation, analogization, popularization, and reculturalization. The source novel, in this sense, can be seen as a situated utterance produced in one medium and in one historical context, then transformed into another equally situated utterance that is produced in a different context and in a different medium. The source text forms a dense formational network, a series of verbal cues that the adapting film text can then take up, amplify, ignore, subvert, or transform. The film adaptation of a novel performs these transformations according to the protocols of a distinct medium, absorbing and altering the genres and intertexts available through the grids of ambient discourses and ideologies, and as mediated by a series of filters: studio style, ideological fashion,

political constraints, auteurist predilections, charismatic stars, economic advantage or disadvantage, and evolving technology.⁴⁵

Furthermore, applying Bakhtin's concepts of dialogism, Foucault's ideas of anonymity of discourse, and a Derridean deconstruction of the hierarchical relationship between original and copy, he proposes an intertextual dialogism approach to analysing adaptations. Stam's intertextual dialogism approach advocates studying the transformations of the source hypertext in the film hypertext through analysis of the permutations in locale, time, language, and the transmutations of plot, characters, point of view, focalization, changes in novelistic events and narrative sequencing due to ideological reasons and aesthetic innovations. According to Constandinides, the 'intertextual dialogism approach not only breaks away from the conservative discourse of early adaptations studies,' but also 'enables an analysis of a film adaptation to be liberated from a comparative study based strictly on evaluative judgments.'⁴⁶

New Approaches

Other researchers also highlight the importance of studying the context and the process of the adaptation itself. Aragay suggests that 'the literary source need no longer be conceived as a work/original holding within itself a timeless essence which the

⁴⁵ Robert Stam, 'Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation', pp.68-69

⁴⁶ Costas Constandinides, *From Film Adaptation to Post-Celluloid Adaptation: Rethinking the Transition of Popular Narratives and Characters Across Old and New Media*, p.17.

adaptation must faithfully reproduce, but as a text to be endlessly (re)read and appropriated in different contexts.⁴⁷ Moreover, she argues that, since adaptation is a cultural practice, it is necessary when analysing adaptations to take into consideration the ‘particular era’s cultural and aesthetic needs and pressures.’⁴⁸ On the other hand, Hutcheon⁴⁹ argues that there is a need to use an approach that sees the adaptation as a process wherein the film is the adapter’s creative interpretation/interpretive creation, in which the cultural and historical contexts have a crucial role. For her, adaptation analysis should include the context, time, and place of production, as well as the elements of presentation and reception which determine the changes in setting and style. These ideas are also defended by Geraghty,⁵⁰ who suggests that studying an adaptation should involve both textual and contextual analysis, and by Bruhn,⁵¹ who argues that it is also necessary to describe, analyse, and interpret the process of adapting. More recent scholars, such as Schober, also point out that it is important to study the cultural context in which adaptations take place. Schober asserts that media are always bound to their particular aesthetic, cultural and production contexts: that is why ‘to discuss adaptations means to

⁴⁷ Mireia Aragay, ‘Reflection to Reaction: Adaptation Studies then and Now’, p.18.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 19.

⁴⁹ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (Routledge, 2006), p. 18.

⁵⁰ Christine Geraghty, *Now A Major Motion Picture: Film Adaptations of Literature and Drama* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2008), p. 4.

⁵¹ Jorgen Bruhn, ‘Dialogizing adaptation studies: From one-way transport to a dialogic two-way-process’ in Jorgen Bruhn, Anne Gjelsvick, and Frisvold Hanssen (eds.), *Adaptation Studies* (Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 69-88, p.73.

acknowledge their complex textual environment, their cultural implications, and their multi-layered process of signification.’⁵²

In my opinion, to interpret the phenomenon of adaptations from one cultural sphere into another, it is necessary to examine the intertextual relations among the two media, to describe the historical and cultural context in which the adaptations are produced and consumed, and to describe the cultural transformations in the structure, content, aesthetics, and narrative discourse carried out in the process of adaptation. Thus, I will analyse adaptations following Stam’s intertextual dialogic approach and the most recent theoretical frameworks mentioned above. The analysis of extant films, and in the case of the lost movies, when the film reviews, summaries, or extant stills allow it, will consist therefore in a comparative examination of the permutations in the following narratological aspects, emphasizing the description of the process of ‘reculturization:’ that is, the elements that have been adapted to the Japanese cultural framework and the contextual reasons that explain those changes:

- Locale: Continuity or transformation of the settings where the action occurs;
- Plot: Events from the original source that have been eliminated, added, or modified;
- Characters: Elimination, addition, or alterations in the characters;
- Language: Adaptation or modification of the characters’ or locations’ names and their symbolism (if relevant);
- Time: Changes in the historical time frame of the hypotext.

⁵² Regina Schober, ‘Adaptation as connection – Transmediality reconsidered’, in Jorgen Brunh, Anne Gjelsvick, and Frisvold Hanssen (eds.), *Adaptation Studies* (Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 89-112, p.91.

The results of this study should answer the research questions stated in the introduction: How were the Western literary works transformed and adapted to the Japanese cultural sphere? How did the historical, ideological, and sociocultural context of Japan influence the process of adaptation?

Reception of Western Literature in Japan

Japan had its first contact with the Western world through Portuguese merchants who arrived in 1543 in Kyushu,⁵³ on the island of Tanagashima, near the city of Nagasaki, after the ship in which they were travelling sank. These traders were carrying muskets, a fact that aroused the interest of the *daimyō*⁵⁴ in firearms and other foreign products. This situation favoured the establishment of commercial relations with Portugal. Subsequently, trade relations with other countries began: with Spain in 1584, with the Netherlands in 1600, and with England in 1613. In 1549, only a few years after the beginning of the commercial relations between Japan and Portugal, the Jesuit Francisco Javier (1596-1552) arrived in Kagoshima and introduced Christianity to Japan. Many of the *daimyō* of Kyushu openly received the Jesuit missionaries, believing that being tolerant would facilitate trade with Western countries.

⁵³ Kyushu is the third biggest island of Japan, situated to the south-west of the archipelago.

⁵⁴ *Daimyō* were feudal lords who were subordinate only to the Shogun (the military dictators who ruled the country from the twelfth until the nineteenth century). Mikiso Hane points out in *Modern Japan, A Historical Survey* (Westview Press, 1986), p. 23, that in the early seventeenth century there were 295 *daimyō* in Japan.

From that moment, European missionaries translated into Japanese theological and moral content works. They had the conviction that, by using the local language, it would be easier to disseminate the Catholic doctrine and to catechize, helping the people to convert to Christianity. According to Boxer,⁵⁵ the first books translated into Japanese were religious works such as *Flos Sanctorum*,⁵⁶ *Contemptus Mundi*,⁵⁷ *Guia do Pecador*,⁵⁸ and *Fides no Doxi*.⁵⁹ The first Western literary work translated into Japanese was Aesop's *Fables*, which was printed in 1593 as *Esopo no Fabulas*. This was a free translation, in which the nearest Japanese equivalents were substituted for unfamiliar European animals and objects.⁶⁰ Extracts from Homer, Aristotle, Plato, Caesar, Seneca, Cicero and other Greek and Latin authors were also translated.⁶¹ It is likely that other Western literary

⁵⁵ Charles Ralph Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan: 1549-1650* (University of California Press, 1951), pp. 191-192.

⁵⁶ This was a compendium of the lives of the saints, translated as *Sanctos no gosagyō* and published in Kazusa in 1591.

⁵⁷ This work was written in 1536 by Thomas à Kempis. It was translated from the Latin into Spanish by Luis de Granada in 1562. Granada's version was translated into Japanese and published in Amakusa in 1596.

⁵⁸ It was published in 1599 in Nagasaki. It had a second edition in 1606. It was an abridged edition of *Guia de pecadores* (The Sinner's Guide) by the Dominican Luis de Granada, published in 1557 and reedited again in a revised version in 1567.

⁵⁹ This was a translation of *El sumario de la introducción del símbolo de la fe* (Introduction of the Symbol of Faith) by Luis de Granada, published in 1582. The Japanese version was printed in Amakusa in 1592.

⁶⁰ Sukehiro Hirakawa, *Japan's Love-Hate Relationship with the West* (Global Oriental, 2005), p. 356.

⁶¹ Armando M. Janeira, *Japanese and Western Literature. A Comparative Study*. (Charles Tuttle Company, 1970), p.121.

works were orally introduced and influenced subsequent Japanese literature, such as the folktale *Yuriwaka Daijin*⁶² (known in English as *The Story of Yuriwaka* and also as *The Great Lord Yuriwaka*).

Soon after, the *daimyō*, especially Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598), whose political reforms laid the foundations for the future Tokugawa Shogunate (also known as Tokugawa *bakufu*), came to distrust the Christian religion and the missionaries. He observed that the Christian religion was spreading rapidly, and that conversions frequently occurred.⁶³ Besides, Toyotomi Hideyoshi perceived that, after converting, many subjects showed respect for the church and the Christian God: a fact that seemed incompatible with the expected loyalty of the vassals toward their *daimyō*. Catholicism then began to be perceived as a threat, so, to avoid its expansion, an edict of expulsion of all Western missionaries was promulgated in 1587, although it was not enforced until 1597.

After the death of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, there began a struggle for power between the different *daimyō*. In the year 1600, Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542-1616) achieved supremacy, starting the Tokugawa Shogunate, a military government headed by the Tokugawa clan that would last until 1867. In that year, imperial power was reinstated and there began a period of modernization and opening-up of Japan: the so-called Meiji

⁶² This story is a fictional recreation of the historical event of the Mongols' attempts to invade Japan in the thirteenth century, whose hero is a nobleman named Yuriwaka. Several scholars have found parallelisms with the story of Ulysses, which incorporates elements from both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. For further reading, see the article by James Araki: 'Yuriwaka and Ulysses. The Homeric Epics at the Court of Ouchi Yoshitaka,' *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (Spring, 1978), pp. 1-36, p. 2-3.

⁶³ According to Mikiso Hane, in 1582, thirty-three years after the arrival of the Jesuits, there were around 150.000 Japanese Christians and 200 small chapels. By 1614 there were about 300 thousand. *Modern Japan, A Historical Survey*, p. 24.

Restoration. During the *bakufu*, the Shogun held military and political power, while the emperor was merely a symbolic figure, with little authority. With the aim of maintaining its hegemony and ensuring his power, Tokugawa Ieyasu conducted various policy reforms, including banning Christianity in 1614, stepping up repression against Christians, prohibiting Japanese from leaving the country, and restricting trade contact with foreigners. This resulted in a period of almost absolute isolation, known as *sakoku*. Thus, by 1641, the only Western country that had permission to dock in Deshima – an artificial island built in the bay of Nagasaki – and to maintain commercial relations with Japan was the Netherlands. These isolationist politics lasted until 1853, when the American Commodore Matthew Perry (1794-1858) arrived in Tokyo Bay with four warships, demanding, on behalf of the United States, the opening of trade relations and the establishment of diplomatic relations.

Between 1641 and 1720, aiming to prevent the spread of Christian ideas and thus to encourage the definitive eradication of Christianity, a ban on the entry or translation of Western books was imposed. From 1720, the restriction was relaxed, and the entry and translation of publications was authorized, but exclusively for books in Dutch of non-religious content. As such, the only knowledge of the West which entered Japan from that point and throughout the Tokugawa isolation is known as *Rangaku*, or Dutch studies.

During the first years of the abolition of the Decree of prohibition, only extracts or parts of books were translated. Later, complete translations of scientific, technical or medical books appeared. For instance, in 1774 *Tafel Anatomia (Kaitai Shinsho)* was published, translated from a Dutch version of a treatise of anatomy written in 1731 by the anatomist German Johann Adam Kulmus (1689-1745). At the end of the century, the translation of the treatise of astronomy *New Book on Astronomy (Rekisho shinsho, 1798)* was completed. This was also translated from a Dutch version of the work of the Scottish mathematician and astronomer John Keill (1671-1721), published a century earlier. The

books that could enter the country were chosen for their utilitarian content, emphasizing the practical value of Western learning,⁶⁴ so no fiction, drama, or philosophical works were translated during this time. Western literature would not appear in Japan until the beginnings of the Meiji era (1868-1912).

Meiji Restoration and the Reception of Western Literature

The arrival in Japan in 1853 of Commodore Perry with his warships, requesting permission to deliver a letter from the US President Millard Fillmore (1800-1874) – which asked the Shogunate to open its ports and settle commercial relations, among other demands – meant the end of the isolation of Japan and the beginning of the decline of the Tokugawa clan. After Perry, other Western countries made similar demands: under this pressure, the shogun Tokugawa Iemochi (1824-1858) and his successor Tokugawa Yoshinobu (1837-1913) signed treaties that were unfavourable to Japan. Their inability to understand the new times and to handle the economic and political situation provoked riots and rebellions. Gradually the *bakufu* lost political authority, until Tokugawa Yoshinobu was forced, in 1867, to relinquish power to the young emperor Meiji (1852-1912), initiating the Meiji era.

Following the restoration of imperial power, the country was opened, eager to leave behind its feudal past and reach the cultural, economic, technological and military level of the Western nations. In addition to opening its doors, the country established a system of scholarships to send young people to study languages, social sciences, and other scientific disciplines overseas, with the objective that, upon returning, they would

⁶⁴ Donald Keene, *The Japanese Discovery of Europe* (Stanford University Press, 1969), p.73.

disseminate the knowledge acquired and use it to cooperate in the development of the country. The growing curiosity and interest in Western culture is manifested in the large number of translations of literary and philosophical works that was made during the Meiji Era. Many of these works, brought by students returning to Japan after their stay abroad, were translated by themselves or by contemporary intellectuals.⁶⁵

Throughout the first two decades of the Meiji era, Western literature and philosophy invaded the country ‘in a tremendous wave of translations of both important and unimportant works.’⁶⁶ Throughout the 1870s, a wide range of complete or partial translations of Western books was published, sometimes separately, sometimes serially in newspapers and magazines.⁶⁷ These works were often selected according to political, didactical, or practical content rather than aesthetic criteria, literary quality, or the significance of the author. According to Keene, the early translators of Western literature during the Meiji era can be divided into three groups, depending on the intention of the translation:

The first consisted of men whose avowed intent was to instruct ignorant readers, and who were therefore much less concerned with the literary qualities of the works they translated than with the lessons that the books contained for the Japanese (...) The second variety of translator was prominent especially in the 1860s, when political ideas inspired

⁶⁵ It is interesting to note that Some of the authors and works introduced in Japan at that time would subsequently be adapted to the screen from the beginning of the cinema industry in the late Meiji and the subsequent Taishō era (1912-1926).

⁶⁶ Armando M. Janeira, *Japanese and Western Literature. A Comparative Study*, p.128.

⁶⁷ William G. Beasley, *The Rise of Modern Japan* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson Beasley, 1990), p.89.

many translations. The readers for whom these books were intended were mature men to whom the translators wished to transmit the political views expressed in western novels (...) The most important group of translators, however, was the third: men who were interested in foreign literature for its own sake. The chief purpose of this group was to convey the emotional life of the European through their literature.⁶⁸

It is important to emphasize that, at the beginning of the Meiji era, due to the poor training of translators or their poor command of foreign languages, the translations were actually free adaptations in which ‘large sections were often either omitted or added and sometimes only the most essential plot of a book was retained.’⁶⁹ This did not prevent interest in Western literature from growing and changing widely throughout the next decades. At first, English and American literature was the most translated, although subsequently French and Russian literature came into vogue.⁷⁰ Also, works from German and Spanish literature and authors from other countries, such as Henrik Ibsen and Giovanni Boccaccio, were translated before the end of the century, although most of these works were translated from versions in English.

⁶⁸ Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era: Fiction* (Holt Rinehart & Winston, 1984), pp.63-66.

⁶⁹ Paul Varley, *Japanese Culture* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), p. 261.

⁷⁰ Saburo Ota, ‘Comparative Literature in Japan’, *Jadavpur Journal of Comparative Literature*, vol. 3 (1963), pp.1-10.

During the early Meiji era, the first Western ideas entered Japan through translations of the works of American and English philosophers. The first Western non-literary work translated into Japanese was a version of Samuel Smiles' *Self-Help*,⁷¹ published in 1870 as *Saigoku risshihen* (Success Stories of the West). As in the United Kingdom, the book was a complete success, selling more than one million copies by the end of the Meiji era.⁷² One of the reasons for this achievement was the fact that it 'resembled the ethic of the samurai class, which was taught to rely on its own moral integrity, as expressed in the code of *bushidō*⁷³, rather than on the saving grace of a divinity.'⁷⁴ Following *Self-Help*, in 1871, *On Liberty* by John Stuart Mill and subsequently works by other thinkers such as Henry Thomas Buckle and Herbert Spencer appeared.

The first English work of fiction translated into Japanese was the 1719 novel *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe. This version was written in 1850 from a Dutch

⁷¹ *Self-Help* was published for the first time in the UK in 1859. According to the *Oxford Companion of English Literature*, the book 'was immensely successful due to it preached industry, thrift, and self-improvement, and attacked 'over-government'; it has been much mocked as a work symbolizing the ethics and aspirations of mid-19th century bourgeois individualism.' *Oxford Companion of English Literature*, edited by Margaret Drabble (1995), p. 943.

⁷² Sukehiro Hirakawa, *Japan's Love Hate Relations*.

⁷³ For further reading about the concept of *bushido* throughout Japanese history, see the article by G. C. Hurst III: 'Death, Honor, and Loyalty: The Bushidō Ideal,' *Philosophy East and West*, vol. 40, no. 4, (Oct., 1990), pp. 511-527.

⁷⁴ Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era: Fiction*, p.61.

translation of the English, although it was not published until 1872. It was translated into Japanese as *Hyōkō kiji* (Record of Wanderings), stating that it was ‘written by an Englishman, Robinson Crusoe.’ Apparently, the translator believed that Robinson Crusoe was a real character and that he had written the book to explain his experiences as a castaway.⁷⁵ A new version of the novel was published in 1883 as ‘An Extraordinary Adventure: An account of Robinson Crusoe, the Castaway,’ but this time the translator remarked in the preface that Crusoe was a fictional character, not an actual person.⁷⁶ Following the success of *Robinson Crusoe*, several translations of biographies of prominent persons such as Homer, Shakespeare, Voltaire, and Napoleon appeared.

Probably the work that was ‘most appreciated as a source of information of Western manners’⁷⁷ was Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s novel *Ernest Maltravers*, translated in 1878 as *Karyū haru hanashi* (A Spring Tale of Blossoms and Willows). Also successful were translations of other Bulwer-Lytton novels, such as *Last Days of Pompeii* and *Paul Clifford*, both published in Japanese in 1879. In the following years, a huge number of English and American literary works were translated, such as Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* in 1880, *Lady of the Lake* by Scott in 1881, *Coningsby* by Benjamin Disraeli – a novel that became very popular – Charles’ Dickens *Oliver Twist* in 1885, and Edgar Allan Poe’s *Murder in the Rue Morgue* in 1887.

Most of the translations carried out during the Meiji era were actually free adaptations. Shakespeare was one of the most adapted authors during this time. The first Shakespeare play to be adapted in Japan was *The Merchant of Venice* in 1877. In it, the

⁷⁵ Sukehiro Hirakawa, *Japan’s Love Hate Relations*, p. 100.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ William G. Beasley, *The Rise of Modern Japan*, p.89.

action was transferred to Japan, and the names of the characters were suitably altered.⁷⁸ Several adaptations of *Hamlet* appeared throughout the Meiji era: in 1879, in 1886 and in 1905. In 1911 a new version of the play was published, which was ‘the first complete translation of the entire text to appear on stage.’⁷⁹ Also in 1879, a translation of *King Lear* was released for the first time. In the following years, the first complete translations of many of Shakespeare’s prominent works appeared, including *Julius Caesar* and *As You Like It* (both in 1883), *Romeo and Juliet* (1884), and *Macbeth* (1885).

French Literature and Philosophy

The first French works translated into Japanese were philosophical essays by Montesquieu and Rousseau. Montesquieu’s *On the Spirit of the Laws* appeared in 1876. His theory of natural rights ‘was enthusiastically adopted as the intellectual basis for attacks on the government of the day which was determined not to concede political power to the people at large.’⁸⁰ A translation of Rousseau’s *The Social Contract, or Principles of Political Law*, was published in 1877. This book had an enormous influence on the founders of the Japanese Liberal Party, which stood for political views based on French conceptions of egalitarianism, and particularly on Rousseau’s work.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Tetsuo Kishi and Graham Bradshaw, *Shakespeare in Japan* (A&C Black, 2006), p.84.

⁷⁹ Mark Williams and David Rycroft, ‘To Adapt, or Not to Adapt? Hamlet in Meiji Japan’, in Gordon Daniels and Chushichi Tsuzuki (eds.), *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations 1600–2000* (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2002), pp.118-145, p.123.

⁸⁰ G.B. Sansom, *The Western World and Japan: A Study in the Interaction of European and Asiatic Cultures* (Knopf, 1962), p. 433.

⁸¹ Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era: Fiction*, p. 79.

French literature was translated from both the original and from English translations. As with the case of works from other languages translated at this time, the translations were actually abridged adaptations of the original, in which the plot had substantial modifications, and the setting of the action and the characters' names were changed. The first novel translated into Japanese was Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days*, published in 1878, five years after publication of the original. This novel, translated from the original in French, was a success and came into vogue as a sort of annotated handbook on foreign travel.⁸² Verne became a famous writer, and due to his popularity, a large number of his works were subsequently translated, such as *From the Earth to the Moon* and *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea*, both published in 1879.

During the next decade, attention turned to writers like Alexandre Dumas (father and son), Émile Zola, Guy de Maupassant, and Victor Hugo, whose works became widely popular. Most of the works published at this time were also free translations or adaptations.⁸³ Thus, a large number of the Dumas father and son's works, such as *The Three Musketeers*, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, and *The Lady of the Camellias*, was serialized in newspapers during the 1880s. An abridged version of Zola's novel *Nana* also appeared at that time. Victor Hugo's novel *Les Misérables* was translated for the first time at the beginning of the twentieth century. It was serialized in 1902 in a newspaper and was later published in two volumes in 1906. A new translation was released in three volumes in 1914 and republished in 1918. Hugo's novel became very popular and was adapted for the screen several times in Japan throughout the Taishō era.

⁸² William G. Beasley, *The Rise of Modern Japan*.

⁸³ Yoshie Okazaki (ed.), *Japanese Culture in The Meiji Era vol. 1: Literature* (The Toyo Bunko, 1956), p.128.

Translations of Russian literature started in Japan in the 1880s. Although it was introduced several years after the appearance of literary works by French and American-English writers, Russian literature is regarded as having been the most influential in the shaping and development of modern Japanese literature during the Meiji and Taishō eras.⁸⁴ The first literary work translated was Pushkin's *The Captain's Daughter*, published in 1883 as 'A Diary of a Butterfly Meditating over a Flower's Souls: Astonishing News from Russia.'⁸⁵ The same Pushkin work was translated again and published in 1904, this time directly from Russian. Soon after the first publication of Pushkin's novel, works of prominent Russian writers such as Leo Tolstoy, Ivan Turgenev, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Nikolai Gogol and Maxim Gorky were also translated, mostly from English versions.

The first Tolstoy novel that appeared in Japan was *War and Peace*, published in 1886 as 'Weeping Flowers and Lamenting Willows: Ensanguined Remains of the Last Battles of northern Europe.'⁸⁶ This was actually a free adaptation of the plot. A complete and more literal translation of the novel was published in four volumes several decades later, in 1914. Other Tolstoy works, such as the short story *Lucerne*, the short novel *The Cossacks*, and the novel *The Kreutzer Sonata* – the latter translated directly from the original Russian – were also published at the end of the decade and during the 1890s.

⁸⁴ Tetsuo Mochizuko, 'Japanese Perceptions of Russian Literature in the Meiji and Taishō Eras,' in J. Thomas Rimer (ed.), *A Hidden Fire: Russian and Japanese Cultural Encounters, 1868-1926* (Stanford University Press, 1995).

⁸⁵ Gavriel Shapiro (ed.), *Nabokov at Cornell* (Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 177.

⁸⁶ Ludmilla B. Turkevich, 'Russian Literature in Modern Japan.' *Russian Language Journal / Русский язык*, Vol. 31, No, 108 (1977), pp. 69-90, p. 75.

Novels such as *Anna Karenina* and *Resurrection* – which was also adapted for the screen several times throughout the Taishō era – were translated in 1903 and 1908 respectively. Interest in Tolstoy’s work increased enormously at the beginning of the twentieth century, as demonstrated by the fact that by 1925 around 250 different translations of Tolstoy’s short stories, plays, and novels had been published,⁸⁷ and that between 1916 and 1919 a journal dedicated entirely to studies of Tolstoy existed⁸⁸.

The first Dostoevsky novel published in Japanese was *Crime and Punishment*. It was partially translated in 1892 from an English version. Other versions quickly followed, influencing modern Japanese writers like Futabatei Shimei⁸⁹ (1864-1909). He was the most remarkable translator of Russian literature and a prominent author during the Meiji era. Futabatei translated the works of distinguished Russian writers directly from the originals in Russian. The author for whom he translated most works and who had an enormous influence on his own writings was Turgenev. Futabatei’s versions of Turgenev’s *The Rendezvous* (published in 1883) and *Three Encounters* (published in 1889) ‘roused great enthusiasm in the reading public and literary circles.’⁹⁰ Following these successful translations, Futabatei Shimei translated more of Turgenev’s works: in 1896 he published a new version of *The Rendezvous*, the novella *Asya*; in 1897 a translation of Turgenev’s first novel appeared, and stories such as *Petushkov* (published in 1898), among others, soon followed.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p77.

⁸⁸ Tetsuo Mochizuko, ‘Japanese Perceptions of Russian Literature in the Meiji and Taishō Eras,’ p.19.

⁸⁹ Ludmilla B. Turkevich, ‘Russian Literature in Modern Japan,’ p.72.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 71.

Besides Turgenev's works, Futabatei translated works by other Russian authors, such as Gogol, Tolstoy, and Gorky. His translations of Gogol stories such as *The Portrait*, *Old-Fashioned Farmers*, and *Diary of a Madam* appeared in 1898, 1906, and 1907 respectively. He translated Tolstoy's and Gorky's works at the beginning of the new century. His translation of Tolstoy's story *The Wood Felling* was published in 1904. Subsequently, his translations of Gorky's works such as *Kain and Artem* (in 1905), *Melancholy* (1906), and *A Mistake* (1907) appeared.⁹¹

German Literature

German literature was less popular in Japan than American-English, French, or Russian literature. Although German philosophy – especially the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud – had a major influence on Japanese literature, Japanese writers learned more novel-writing techniques from French and Russian novelists.⁹² The first translation of a German literary work was Friedrich Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*, which was published in 1882. A second translation of the same play appeared in 1905. In 1884 the first translation of a Goethe work, the fable *Reynard the Fox*, was published. After its publication, three biographies of Goethe appeared in Japan. The most well-known works of Goethe – *The Sorrows of Young Werther* and *Faust* – were not published until 1901 and 1904 respectively. *Werther* became a literary success,

⁹¹ An analysis of the few translations done by Futabatei Shimei and a list of works translated by him can be found in the book *Style and Narrative in Translations: The Contribution of Futabatei Shimei*, by Hiroko Cockerill (Routledge, 2014).

⁹² Kenji Takahashi, 'German literature in Japan.' *Japan Quarterly*, Vol.7, No.2 (1960), p.193.

and after its first publication, the book was translated several times in subsequent years. By 1960, around thirty different translations into Japanese of *Werther* had appeared in the country.⁹³

Most of the German literature published in Japan throughout the Meiji era comprised translations from the English, with the exception of several works translated directly from German by Mori Ōgai (1862-1922), an officer of the Japanese army who studied in Germany and became a prominent translator, novelist and poet. His most remarkable translation was Hans Christian Andersen's autobiographical novel, *The Improvisatore* (1835), published serially between 1892 and 1901.⁹⁴ Mori Ōgai also contributed considerably to the translation and publication of several poetry collections. Before the end of the nineteenth century, he published translations of the works of German poets and dramatists such as Heinrich Heine, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Heinrich von Kleist, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Gerhart Hauptmann, and Rainer Maria Rilke.⁹⁵

Spanish Literature

During the Meiji era, the works of two prominent Spanish writers were translated or adapted in Japan, both belonging to the Spanish Golden Age. The first Spanish author to be translated was Miguel de Cervantes. As with literary works from other countries, Cervantes' novels were adapted or translated from the English or French versions. The first Spanish works to appear in Japan were adaptations of two short novels included in

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era: Fiction*, p. 356.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p.188.

the collection entitled *Exemplary Novels*. These novels were introduced as *gesaku*⁹⁶ literature, changing the original title and omitting or transforming important parts of the plot to emphasize love affairs. The first, *The Deceitful Wedding*, was published in a literary magazine between 1885 and 1886 with the title *Ōshū jowai tamabara*, which could be translated as ‘European Story of a Beautiful Woman’s Love Affairs.’⁹⁷ The novel was translated again and published as a book in 1897, this time with the title *Ōshū joshi bijin no wana* (The Sentimental Story in Europe: A Trap by a Beautiful Woman). Also in 1887 the short novel *The Force of Blood* appeared, with the title *Ōshū shinwa tanima no uguisu* (Another Story in Europe of the Nightingale in the Valley).⁹⁸ The translators of these works asserted that they had translated parts of *The Quixote*, and that the author was a French author named ‘Cervanto’.⁹⁹

The first translation of *The Quixote* was published in 1887, entitled *Donkiō kikōden*. This title, which could be translated as ‘The Story of the Strange Behaviour of a

⁹⁶ *Gesaku*, translated in English as ‘playful composition’, was a popular kind of fiction produced during the last century of the Tokugawa Shogunate, mostly about love affairs. Its average literary quality was very poor.

⁹⁷ Kenji Inamoto, ‘Don Quijote convertido en samurai: adaptación cultural en los primeros intentos de traducción al japonés del Quijote,’ in Antonio Bernat Vistarini and José María Casasayas (eds.), *Desviaciones Lúdicas en la crítica cervantina*. (Universidad de Salamanca, 2000), pp. 305-310, p.308.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.308.

⁹⁹ Lucas Cid, ‘Llegada y recepción del Quijote en la literatura y la cultura popular japonesa,’ in Christoph Strosetzki (ed.), *Visiones y revisiones cervantinas. Actas selectas del VII Congreso Internacional de la Asociación de Cervantistas. Centro de estudios cervantinos*. (Alcalá de Henares, 2011), pp. 215-226, p.217.

Funny Old Man with Little Ingenuity,'¹⁰⁰ stressed the image of Don Quixote as an irresponsible fool. This was also an abridged free adaptation of the first twenty chapters of the original book, in which relevant passages were omitted. It was published in a magazine in eight parts. Subsequently partial versions of *The Quixote* appeared in the years 1893, 1896, 1901, 1902, 1909, and 1914, all of them translated from the English. It is remarkable that the 1893 version, translated as *Donkiō bōkentan* (The Adventures of an Old Man with Little Ingenuity),¹⁰¹ was illustrated with an image of Don Quixote wearing samurai armour. A complete translation of both parts of the novel, also derived from an English version, was published in 1915 as *Kōfu no timeru shinshi La Mancha no Don Kihōte* (Don Quixote of La Mancha, Gentleman of Many Devices)¹⁰² – a title that was closer to the original. The first translation from the Spanish of *The Quixote* would not appear until 1948.¹⁰³

Calderón de la Barca was the second Spanish author translated during the Meiji era. His play *Mayor of Zalamea* was translated by Mori Ōgai in 1889, probably from a version in German. Mori Ōgai discovered Calderón de la Barca's play when he was studying in Germany, and was fascinated by this work. His translation was serialized in a newspaper in twelve parts.¹⁰⁴ Then it was published in book format in 1906, but in both

¹⁰⁰ Kenji Inamoto, 'Don Quijote convertido en samurai: adaptación cultural en los primeros intentos de traducción al japonés del Quijote,' p.308.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 308.

¹⁰² Kunio Kuramoto, 'Don Quixote and Natsume Sōseki.' *Review of Japanese Culture and Society*, Vol. 18 (2006), pp. 57-74, p.61.

¹⁰³ Lucas Cid, 'Llegada y recepción del Quijote en la literatura y la cultura popular japonesa,' p.218.

¹⁰⁴ Ayako Saito, 'La primera traducción japonesa del *Quijote* y la autocensura del amor,' in H. C. Hagedorn (ed.), *Don Quijote en los cinco continentes: acerca de la recepción*

cases, the play made little impression in literary circles and went unnoticed by Japanese readers. Although Mori Ōgai made some changes to the title¹⁰⁵ and the plot to make it more understandable for Japanese readers, the storyline, characters' behaviour and actions, the moral message, and the motifs of the play – such as the sixteenth-century Iberian concept of 'blood purity' – were culturally unintelligible for the Japanese of the Meiji times.¹⁰⁶ Probably for that reason, Calderón's play would not be translated again until the Shōwa era, in 1927.

Literature from other Countries

Besides the adaptations and translations of American-English, French, Russian, German, and Spanish literature and works of philosophy, remarkable authors from other nations were also introduced in Japan at this time. For instance, throughout the Meiji era, a partial translation of Boccaccio's *The Decameron* and an adaptation of several of the tales of *One Thousand and One Nights* appeared in 1882 and 1883. Also, partial translations of Henrik Ibsen's plays *An Enemy of the People* and *A Doll's House* were

internacional de la novela cervantina (Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla La Mancha, 2015), pp. 483-500, p. 486.

¹⁰⁵ Ayako Saito translates Mori's adaptation as 'The Guitar Sings a Resonant Song'. (Ibid., p. 486), meanwhile Yoshie Okazaki translates it as 'A Guitar Song with High Notes'. Yoshie Okazaki (ed.), *Japanese Culture in The Meiji Era vol. 1: Literature*, p. 95.

¹⁰⁶ Saiko Yoshida, 'Una traducción temprana de El alcalde de Zalamea al japonés: Mori Ōgai, 1889. En torno al problema de la aceptación.' In Ignacio Arellano (ed.), *Calderón 2000: homenaje a Kurt Reichenberger en su 80 cumpleaños: actas del Congreso Internacional, IV centenario del nacimiento de Calderón* (Universidad de Navarra, Vol. 2, pp. 425-432.

published in 1893 and 1901 respectively. After his death in 1906, Ibsen's works became very popular and exerted a great influence upon Japan at this time.¹⁰⁷ An abridged version of Dante's *Divine Comedy* was published in 1903. Subsequently, over the Taishō era, new versions of Dante's work and translations of Gabriele D'Annunzio's novels, like *The Triumph of Death* (published in Japan 1913), appeared, making a profound impression on the Japanese intellectuals of this time.¹⁰⁸ Translations of authors from other nationalities, including plays by dramatists like the Czech Karel Čapek and the Norwegian Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, appeared and were performed on the stage during the last years of the Taishō era.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷Yoshie Okazaki (ed.), *Japanese Culture in The Meiji Era vol. 1: Literature*, p. 521.

¹⁰⁸ Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era: Fiction*, p.632.

¹⁰⁹ Brian Powell, 'Japan's First Modern Theater. The Tsukiji Shogekijo and Its Company, 1924- 26.' *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 30, No.1 (1975), 69-85.

Western Influence in the Development of Modern Japanese Literature and Film

In the decades before the introduction of Western literature in Japan, many readers consumed stories which contained ‘tedious didacticism, bawdy comedy, and bloody adventure.’¹¹⁰ The most popular genre was the *gesaku*, the majority of which was of dubious literary quality. *Gesaku* authors would write about the same topics, repeatedly rehashing already exhausted literary formulae:

Wrote mainly for poorly educated townspeople that preferred to read about expected, familiar themes when they bought a book. The *gesaku* authors (...) knowing their market, continued to grind out formless anecdotes or else variants of the hackneyed materials of the preceding two hundred years.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Paul Varley, *Japanese Culture*, pp. 256-257.

¹¹¹ Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era: Fiction*, p.14

According to many critics, except for a few works such as Tamenaga Shunsui's novel *Shunshoku Umegoyomi* (Colors of the Spring: The Plum Calendar,' published in 1830), the situation of Japanese literature before the profound influence of Western literature and philosophy during the Meiji period was not very promising:

Poetry was mummified, lost in a sterile repetition of traditional themes and forms. The novel had lost all its vitality and imagination, searching for its subjects apart from social reality and the life of the people. Literature, conventional and exhausted, continued being content with its empty forms (...) Literature had consumed all its substance and explored all the possibilities of form.¹¹²

Throughout the last decades of the Tokugawa regime, Japanese literature was at a virtual standstill: thus, Western literature when it arrived was received enthusiastically:

Fiction seemed to be trapped in a quagmire of outmoded, moribund habits and incapable of making a fresh start. The readiness with which the *gesaku* writers abandoned their dying profession, and the alacrity with which translations of Western literature were welcomed, provide plain evidence of the lack of vitality in the Japanese literary world.¹¹³

¹¹² Armando M. Janeira, *Japanese and Western Literature. A Comparative Study*, p.128.

¹¹³ Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era: Fiction*, p.13

Japanese and Western Literature

Thus, Modern Japanese literature started to develop throughout the Meiji era under the direct influence of Western literature, rather than the previous Chinese influence.¹¹⁴ According to Varley, ‘Western influences had wrought a change in prose literature as profound as in any other area of Japanese culture during the modern era.’¹¹⁵ For that reason, the translations of European literature that appeared during the Meiji, Taishō, and Shōwa eras were ‘the absolute condition for the creation of a new Japanese literature.’¹¹⁶ The appearance of these adaptations and translations, as well as visits to Western countries by individual authors, nurtured a generation of Japanese novelists who developed a different concept of literature to that of their Tokugawa predecessors.¹¹⁷ In parallel with the introduction of new literary ideas, literary language and criticism were also revitalized and updated:

The impact with the West provoked a profound change in style and content. The language was emancipated, and literature admitted more and more of the spoken language. New concepts were adopted: scientific, philosophical, artistic, and literary. Criticism was revitalized by a wave of new ideals, unknown methods; demands were made for

¹¹⁴ Saburo Ota, ‘Comparative Literature in Japan,’ p.2.

¹¹⁵ Paul Varley, *Japanese Culture*, p. 257.

¹¹⁶ Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era: Fiction*, p. 60.

¹¹⁷ William G. Beasley, *The Rise of Modern Japan*.

more realism, exactness of expression, accuracy of thought, and faithfulness of literature to life.¹¹⁸

The reception of Western literature and thinking and its subsequent influence helped to reinvigorate and modernize Japanese literature after its isolation for more than two centuries. In that period, Japanese writers adopted artistic ideas and styles imported from the West, creating a new type of literature that was radically different from the classical literature and the popular *gesaku* works fostered before the Meiji Restoration. Scholars consider that Modern Japanese literature begins with the essay of Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859-1935), ‘Shōsetsu shinzui’ (Essence of the Novel), published in 1885, and with the novel *Ukigumo* (The Drifting Cloud), written in 1887 by Futabatei Shimei. Tsubouchi, in this theoretical and critical study, argued that it was necessary to reform the novel, emphasizing the idea of realism and showing real people in an authentic social environment. For Tsubouchi, literature should be independent of morality and should deal with truth and not conventions, portraying human emotions and the actual conditions of life. Moreover, he criticized lewd, bloodthirsty, or didactic aspects of the literature, demanding new Japanese literature works based on Western novelistic models.¹¹⁹

After the publication of Tsubouchi’s essay, some remarkable works appeared that initiated the Modern Japanese literature, such as Futabatei’s novel, considered Japan’s first modern novel. With this novel, strongly influenced by Russian realism, and especially by Turgenev, Futabatei introduced Western-style realism in Japan and used

¹¹⁸ Armando M. Janeira, *Japanese and Western Literature. A Comparative Study*, p.130.

¹¹⁹ Tsubouchi, Shōyō. *The Essence of Novel*. Trans. Nanette Twine. Queensland: Queensland UP, Japanese Department, 1981.

colloquial Japanese language in literature for the first time. Unlike previous *gesaku* novels, this work ‘has a unified and sustained plot and probes the feelings and psychological motivations of its principal characters.’¹²⁰

The influence of Western literature can be seen in the works of other prominent writers of the Meiji and Taishō eras. For instance, it is possible to find Turgenev’s influence in both Shimazaki Tōson’s (1872-1943) and Futabatei’s novels, as well as in the works of authors such as Kunikida Doppo (1871–1908), Oguri Fuyo (1875-1926), and Tayama Katai (1871-1930). The ambience and characters of Dostoyevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* are present in Shimazaki Tōson’s (1872-1943) novel *Hakai* (The Broken Commandment, 1906). Dostoevsky also influenced writers of proletarian literature¹²¹ that appeared in Japan throughout the Taishō era, after World War I.¹²² Resemblances to Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* can be perceived in Arishima Takeo’s (1878–1923) novel *Aru onna* (A Certain Woman, 1919).¹²³ Moreover, Tolstoy’s literary techniques and anti-authoritarian way of thinking are also latent in the works of Tokutomi Roka’s (1868-1927) *Omoide no ki* (Memory, 1901), and *Kuroshio* (Black Current, 1903).¹²⁴

French authors also had a profound influence on Japanese writers, especially romantic and naturalist authors. For instance, Nagai Kafu’s (1879–1959) writings were strongly influenced by Zola. Also, resemblances to Zola’s novel *Nana* can be seen in

¹²⁰ Paul Varley, *Japanese Culture*, p. 261.

¹²¹ Tetsuo Mochizuko, ‘Japanese Perceptions of Russian Literature in the Meiji and Taishō Eras,’ p.19.

¹²² Proletarian literature became prominent in early Shōwa era, in late 1920’s and 1930’s.

¹²³ Ludmilla B. Turkevich, ‘Russian Literature in Modern Japan,’ p. 72.

¹²⁴ Tetsuo Mochizuko, ‘Japanese Perceptions of Russian Literature in the Meiji and Eras,’ p.19.

Kosugi Tengai's (1865-1952) novels *Hatsusugata* (New Year's Finery, 1900) and *Hayari-uta* (Popular Song, 1902).¹²⁵ Guy de Maupassant was probably one of the authors most imitated by young writers during the Meiji era, his appeal lying 'mainly in his unemotional, dispassionate manner of describing the ordinary tragedies of daily life.'¹²⁶ On the other hand, American and English literature – particularly the works of Walt Whitman, Jack London, Mark Twain, and Edgar Allan Poe – had a strong influence throughout the Taishō era. Poe was probably the most influential American writer. His works inspired novelists such as Tanizaki Jun'ichirō (1886–1965), Satō Haruo (1892-1964), and Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892-1927), who shared anti-naturalism positions. For instance, Poe's *Landor's Cottage* and *The Domain of Arnheim* inspired Satō's Haruo short story *Supein-ken no ie* (The House of the Spanish Dog, 1917) and Tanizaki's tale *Konjiki no shi* (The Golden Death, 1914) respectively.¹²⁷

Works and authors from other countries, such as Cervantes' *The Quixote*, also influenced some Japanese writers. Although its importance in the literary and academic worlds was not as high as in the West,¹²⁸ Cervantes' novel influenced authors like Natsume Sōseki (1867-1916) and Shimazaki Tōson. Critics found in Sōseki's novel *Gubijinsō* (The Poppy, 1907) a resemblance between the two main characters and Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. Scholars also highlight the fact that Sōseki, in the novel *Kōjin* (The Wayfarer, 1912), imitated Cervantes' short novel *The Man Who Was Recklessly*

¹²⁵ Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era: Fiction*.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.225.

¹²⁷ Ken Inoue, 'The Influence of American Literature in Taishō and Prewar Shōwa Japan,' in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature*, p.2.

¹²⁸ Seiro Bantaro, 'Modern Japanese Literature and *Don Quixote*.' *Review of Japanese Culture and Society*, Vol. 18 (2006), pp. 132-146, p.132.

Curious, which appears interpolated in *The Quixote*.¹²⁹ In the case of Shimazaki Tōson, the influence of Cervantes and *The Quixote* is overt, since both are cited in Shimazaki's novel *Shinsei* (New Life, 1918).

These outlined ideas show that Western literature had a profound influence on Japanese writers of the Meiji and Taishō eras. There is no doubt that Western writers also influenced authors of the Shōwa era (1926-1986) and contemporary literature, such as Mishima Yukio (1825-1970) – whose works like *Confessions of a Mask* and *The Golden Pavilion* ‘ponder on the human strains depicted by Dostoevsky’¹³⁰ – or Murakami Haruki (1949-), whose novels are strongly influenced by American authors like Raymond Chandler, Truman Capote, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Kurt Vonnegut.¹³¹ It is also essential to highlight that Western literature contributed likewise to the development during Meiji and Taishō eras of two new forms of theatre: *shinpa* (new school) and *shingeki* (new drama), which coexist with the classical forms such as *etoki*,¹³² *kabuki*, *noh*,¹³³ and *bunraku*.¹³⁴

¹²⁹ Kunio Kuramoto, ‘*Don Quixote* and Natsume Sōseki,’ p.57.

¹³⁰ Ludmilla B. Turkevich, ‘Russian Literature in Modern Japan,’ p.72.

¹³¹ Jay Rubin, (ed.), *Modern Japanese Writers* (Charles Scribner & Sons, 2001), p.229.

¹³² Japanese traditional pictorial storytelling developed between the tenth and the nineteenth century, combining words, images, and didactic speech.

¹³³ *Noh* is a classical Japanese musical drama whose origins date back to the 14th century. *Noh* plays are based on traditional tales in which a supernatural being is transformed into a hero in human form. The performance combines elements of dance, drama, music and poetry.

¹³⁴ *Bunraku* is a form of puppetry founded at the beginning of the 17th century in which half-life-size dolls act out a chanted dramatic narrative, to the accompaniment of a narrator, chanting, and *shamisen* (three-stringed Japanese lute) players.

Shinpa and Shingeki Theater and the Development of Japanese Cinema

Shinpa theatre appeared in the 1880s as a potential replacement for *kabuki*, ‘whose feudalistic forms were no longer capable of reflecting the mores of a modernizing Japan.’¹³⁵ *Shinpa* plays dealt with contemporary themes in a realistic but melodramatic style, although they still shared a number of features with *kabuki*. *Shingeki*, on the contrary, was a Western-style theatre that aimed at realism. It tended to be highbrow, avant-garde and political, and until the 1920s it was alien to the vast majority.¹³⁶ Even so, from the first decade of the twentieth century and especially throughout the 1920s, *shingeki* theatres staged translations of plays or adaptations of novels by remarkable Western authors like O’Neill, Ibsen, Chekhov, Gorki, or Tolstoy, and also plays by Japanese writers such as Osanai Kaoru.¹³⁷

Both new movements encouraged the development of Japanese cinema: on the one hand, *shinpa* theatre made possible the beginning of a more sophisticated type of cinema.¹³⁸ On the other hand, *shingeki* dramatists were an important influence on the emergence, during the 1910s, of the ‘Pure Film Movement’ (*Jun'eigageki undō*). This movement championed the use of new narrative techniques, and thus contributed enormously to modernizing Japanese cinema, which was still using the original *kabuki* methods. Several film directors who adopted the ideas of the ‘Pure Film Movement’

¹³⁵ Tadao Satō, *Currents in Japanese Cinema* (Kodansha, 1982), p.20

¹³⁶ Tadao Satō, *Mizoguchi and the Art of Japanese Film* (Berg, 2008), p. 20.

¹³⁷ Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era: Poetry, Drama, Criticism*.

¹³⁸ Donald Richie, *A Hundred Years of Japanese Film* (Kodansha, 2012), p. 29.

adapted for the screen a significant number of Western literary works, some of which had previously been performed on stage in *shingeki* theatres.

PART 2:
Western Literature in the Japanese Cinema

**Western Literature in Japanese Cinema:
From the Meiji era to Shōwa Prewar (1910-1938)**

Cinema arrived in Japan in 1897, during the Meiji era, soon after its invention. The Cinématographe Lumière was shown in Osaka, while Thomas Edison's Vitascope was seen in Tokyo shortly after. In the same year, the first motion-picture camera was imported, and, as in many other countries, the first cameramen began filming scenes in the streets. In 1899, Komada Koyo formed the *Nihon sossen katsudō shashin kai* (Association of Japanese Motion Pictures), and thus Japan's film industry was born. Subsequently, new companies appeared. The Japanese film industry grew rapidly during the last decade of the Meiji era and developed economically and artistically during the Taishō and subsequent eras. Unfortunately, only a few of the films produced before 1945 remain extant.¹³⁹ Most were destroyed in natural disasters such as the 1923 *Kantō daishinshai* (The Great Kantō Earthquake) that devastated Tokyo city, where the majority of the studios and film companies were situated at this time, and events such as the

¹³⁹ According to Penelope Houston, only 4% of the movies filmed until 1945 survive. *Keepers of the Frame: The Film Archives* (BFI Publishing, 1994), p. 69.

continual fire-bombing of the main cities during the Pacific War and the post-war Allied Occupation burning of banned films.¹⁴⁰

Early Japanese Cinema

The first shorts made by Komada's company showed *Geisha* dances and excerpts of well-known *kabuki* plays such as *Momijigari* (Maple Viewing, 1899),¹⁴¹ shot by Shibata Tsunekichi to record the performances of Ichikawa Danjurō IX and Onoe Kikugorō V, the most famous *kabuki* actors of that time. Soon, other companies were founded and started to offer screenings of Japanese and foreign shorts to large crowds of spectators. The tickets were sold at a similar price to those for theatres, but unlike theatre performances, these films lasted seconds, or a few minutes at most. The exhibitors had to find a way to lengthen their shows, so they began to offer film sessions in which they screened sets of joined shorts. Another way to make shows last longer was to use a commentator who could entertain audiences by explaining, for instance, what the films were about, or describing cultural elements that appeared in the Western movies¹⁴² that were unknown or incomprehensible to Japanese spectators.¹⁴³ These live commentators,

¹⁴⁰ Donald Richie, *A Hundred Years of Japanese Film*, p.4.

¹⁴¹ This short film by Tsunekichi Shibata, whose original running time was 3 minutes and 50 seconds, is the oldest extant Japanese film.

¹⁴² According to Hiroshi Komatsu, by the turn of the century French, American, and British films dominated the market. Hiroshi Komatsu 'Japan: Before the Great Kanto Earthquake,' in G. Nowell-Smith (Ed.), *The Oxford History of World Cinema*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 413-422, p. 415.

¹⁴³ Jeffrey Dym, 'Benshi and the Introduction of Motion Picture to Japan'. *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 55, No. 4, (2000), pp. 509-536, p. 529.

known as *katsuben* or *benshi*, were readily accepted, since they fitted into the common theatrical forms and other popular solo narrative genres of Japan,¹⁴⁴ such as *kabuki*, *bunraku*, and *noh*.¹⁴⁵



Fig. 1. Scene from the film *Momijigari* by Shibata Tsunekichi, starring the famous *kabuki* actors Onoe Kikugorō V (left) and Ichikawa Danjūrō IX (right).

¹⁴⁴ Noël Burch, 'To the Distant Observer: Towards a Theory of Japanese film,' *The MIT Press*, (1976) Vol.1, pp. 32-46, p. 34.

¹⁴⁵ One of the main elements of those traditional theatre is the presence of one or more chanter-narrators, called *gidayū* in *kabuki*, *jōruri* in *bunraku*, and *jiutai* in *noh*, whose role is to sing commentaries on the action and describe the mental state of the characters.

Thus, from the beginning of the industry until the arrival of sound in the early 1930s, both Japanese and foreign silent films were accompanied by a small ensemble of *gakushi*¹⁴⁶ and by a *benshi*'s verbal explanations, which 'involved dialogue, narration, an interpretation of content, and incidental comments while the movie was being shown.'¹⁴⁷ The function of these explanations was to read the images for their narrative content – 'read off the diegesis' – removing the burden of the narrative from the picture on the screen.¹⁴⁸ These professionals were often more popular than the movies they narrated. They became such important figures that it was common for people to go to the cinema to hear their favourite *benshi* rather than to see a particular star or director. The scope of their importance can be seen in the fact that until the 1920s they had a strong influence on the final production of films, suggesting or asking for modifications to make the movie suitable to their talents.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Cinemas that screened Western films or Japanese Western-style dramas used European-style music, played by musicians called *gakushi*. They comprised an ensemble of three performers (a pianist, a violinist, and a trumpet or clarinet player), or larger orchestras with eight to sixteen musicians in the first-class movie-theatres. The *kabuki*-based pictures and the period films were accompanied by *shamisen* and other traditional Japanese instruments employed in *kabuki*, *noh*, and *bunraku* theaters. 'Spoken Silents in the Japanese Cinema; or, Talking to Pictures: Essaying the *Katsuben*, Contextualizing the Texts.' In Nolletti, A. & Desser, D. (Eds.). *Reframing Japanese Cinema: Authorship, Genre, History*. (Indiana University Press, 1992), pp. 259-310, p. 289.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 260.

¹⁴⁸ Noel Burch, 'Approaching Japanese Film.' In Heath, S. & Mellencamp, P. (Eds.), *Cinema and Language* (The American Film Institute. University Publications of America, 1983), pp. 79-96, p. 88.

¹⁴⁹ J. L. Anderson, 'Spoken Silents in the Japanese Cinema; or, Talking to Pictures: Essaying the *Katsuben*, Contextualizing the Texts.' p. 260.

The growing cinematic industry of the first decade of the twentieth century noticed that *kabuki* scenes attracted the audience, so the studios increased the production of adaptations of *kabuki* sections and also started to shoot *jidai-geki* films: that is, period movies set before or during the downfall of feudal Japan. The genre, often erroneously described as ‘samurai’ film,¹⁵⁰ emerged from the practice of filming scenes of *tachimawari* (*kabuki* sword combat), such as the short *Momijigari*. Directors as Makino Shōzō soon began to shoot longer films with simplistic plots based on *kōdan* (traditional Japanese oral storytelling),¹⁵¹ depicting at first the vicissitudes of samurai or supernatural spirits, in which actors performance stylized and slow movements as in a *kabuki* play. This theatrical acting was replaced by a more realistic fighting style, which prevailed until the early 1920s. Subsequently the genre evolved, and the pictures began to portray other type of characters under the influence of the shifts in popular culture and the changing economic and political climates.¹⁵²

From the early period films until the end of the Pacific War, the genre presented narrative patterns, in which characters’ actions were motivated by so-called Confucian

¹⁵⁰ The term ‘samurai film’ is not appropriate to define period films, since not all the main and supporting actors are samurai. For instance, the subgenre *yakuza* period films depict outlaw thieves or ‘gangsters’ who challenge the authorities to protect the downtrodden.

¹⁵¹ According to Mastangelo, the genre has its origins in the 14th century. It derived from the oral explanation of the Buddhist canon, as well as shintoist or classical literature texts. It previously had a wide influence on the Japanese theatrical and literary world. Matilde Mastrangelo, ‘Japanese Storytelling: A View on the Art of *Kōdan*. The Performances and the Experience of a Woman Storyteller.’ *Rivista Degli Studi Orientali*, 69(1/2), (1995), pp. 207-217, p. 207.

¹⁵² Lisa Spalding, ‘Period Films in the Prewar Era.’ In Nolletti, A. & Desser, D. (Eds.). *Reframing Japanese Cinema: Authorship, Genre, History*. (Indiana University Press, 1992), pp. 131-144, p. 131.

feudal values such as honour, loyalty, rectitude, and filial piety. The most frequent narrative patterns depicted the theme of vengeance, whose protagonists were Manichaeic characters. Thus, the stories of the films were accounts of the pursuit and capture of dangerous criminals by Tokugawa-period detectives; legendary accounts of factional struggles within clans; stories about sensible and lenient officials who defended the weak against despicable lords, venal local officials, and rapacious loan sharks; accounts of the exploits of legendary swordsmen, focusing on exaggerated battles in which the hero defeats a host of enemies; or depictions of outlaw thieves and *yakuza* who challenged authority in their fight to defend the oppressed.¹⁵³ The *Yakuza* genre derived from a traditional cultural substratum, which included popular literature, dramatic, and oral-literary traditions.¹⁵⁴ The narrative pattern that came into vogue from 1923 to 1931 – a time of economic volatility and social discontent – was the ‘Rebel subgenre,’ which depicted a new type of hero that reflected the common unrest manifested in those years.

Along with *kabuki* passages and *jidai-geki* movies, studios also started to film *gendai-geki* (films with a modern setting), screening scenes of *shinpa* plays: a popular form of theatre that appeared during the 1880s. In contrast to *kabuki*, which addressed historical subjects set in past ages, using old Japanese language, *shinpa* dealt with contemporary themes in a melodramatic style, using a colloquial language and relaxing the formalized and stylized movements that characterised the *kabuki*. *Shinpa* theatre, however, maintained many features of *kabuki*, such as the style of declamation, the

¹⁵³ Ibid., 136.

¹⁵⁴ Keiko McDonald, ‘The Yakuza Film: An Introduction’. In Nolletti, A. & Desser, D. (Eds.). *Reframing Japanese Cinema: Authorship, Genre, History*. (Indiana University Press, 1992), pp. 165-192, p. 167.

mannerisms in acting, and the presence of *oyama*: male actors playing female roles.¹⁵⁵ Although some scholars consider that *shinpa* plays ‘enriched the dramatic literature of modern Japan very little,’¹⁵⁶ this form of theatre had a strong influence on the development of the early Japanese cinema, since it made possible the beginning of a more complex type of cinematic narrative. In this way, while *kabuki*-based movies ‘continued to be constructed of various snippets abstracted from popular stories long part of the collective consciousness,’ adaptations from the melodramatic *shinpa* theatre ‘provided a stronger narrative and thus generated longer films.’¹⁵⁷

However, film adaptations of *shinpa* plays, such as *Ono ga tsumi* (My Sin, 1909) by Kichizō Chiba,¹⁵⁸ were stuck with the theatrical conventions characteristic of those days. For instance, male actors continued to play female roles, the pace of gestures was slow, and the camera was static – without variations in angle or distance – following the ‘one-scene, one-shot’ technique and evoking *kabuki* and *shinpa* stage plays.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, the pictures’ narrative depended on the *benshi* explanations or the prior knowledge of the

¹⁵⁵ *Oyama* actors, also known as *onnagata*, had taken *kabuki* female roles since 1629, when the Shogunate issued a decree prohibiting all women on the stage. According to Adolphe Scott, the authorities considered that women’s acting had a negative effect on public morals. *The Kabuki Theatre of Japan* (Courier Corporation, 1999), p. 40.

¹⁵⁶ Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era: Poetry, Drama, Criticism*, p. 396.

¹⁵⁷ Donald Richie, *A Hundred Years of Japanese Film*, p. 23.

¹⁵⁸ This film was the first adaptation of a *shinpa* play, which was itself an adaptation for the stage of the popular homonymous novel written by Kikuchi Yuho in 1900. No copy of it survives.

¹⁵⁹ Keiko McDonald, *From Book to Screen* (M.E. Sharpe, 2000), p. 4.

audience.¹⁶⁰ That procedure prevented Japanese cinema from assimilating Western forms of filmic narrative techniques, such as the use of intertitles and shot organization.¹⁶¹

First Adaptations of Western Literature

At the beginning of the 1910s, studios also started filming short adaptations of *shingeki* plays. The first adaptations of a *shingeki*-based play were filmed in 1910. In April of that year, the short *Aa mujō* (Ah, no Mercy) was released: it was based on Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* and was produced by the companies Kinen Daishokan and M. Patê, but its director and cast are unknown.¹⁶² In June, the short *Fukkatsu* (Resurrection) appeared, produced by the Yoshizawa Shoten Company, based on Tolstoy's novel. Again, the names of the director and the cast are unknown, except for one of the main actors, Satō Toshizō, a well-known *shinpa* performer of that time. It is likely that those shorts, like the adaptations of *kabuki* or *shinpa* plays, followed a theatrical *mise en-scène* consisting in 'one-scene, one-shot' that would be explained by the *benshi*.

The Meiji emperor passed away in 1912. During the subsequent years, known as the Taishō era, progressive and democratic ideals took over from the restrictive post-

¹⁶⁰ Aaron Gerow, *Visions of Japanese Modernity. Articulations of Cinema, Nation, and Spectatorship, 1895-1925*. (University of California Press, 2010).

¹⁶¹ Hiroshi Komatsu, 'Japan: Before the Great Kanto Earthquake,' p. 417.

¹⁶² It was common practice at that time not to include credits showing the names of the director and cast. According to Bernardi, the roles of the director and scriptwriter were largely overlooked due to the importance given to the *benshi*, who had more authority than them. For instance, they could impose changes on the script and even dictate the maximum number of shots per reel. Joanne Bernardi, *Writing the Light: The Silent Scenario and the Japanese Pure Film Movement*. (Wayne State University, 2001).

feudal governmental policies adopted during the Meiji era. Thus began a period of cultural changes and of artistic progress, in both literature and film, in which ‘the modern, the new, and the foreign thrived.’¹⁶³ As mass media expanded, the Japanese became estranged from many of the traditional cultural practices.¹⁶⁴ In the cinema, the so-called “canned theatre” mode of representation of pictures, consisting of long shots and long takes, continued in force until the mid-1910s, when the theatrical mode of filmmaking changed drastically.¹⁶⁵ The film industry then increased the production of *shingeki*-based plays, starting at the same time a process of westernization of Japanese cinema. That was crucial for the evolution of Japanese film, facilitated by the adaptation of *shingeki* plays, which contributed to its modernization.¹⁶⁶ *Shingeki* theatre also stimulated the appearance of the ‘Pure Film Movement.’ The initiators of this movement considered that Japanese film was overly theatrical and defended the utilization of more realistic narrative and visual techniques. Furthermore, critics who promoted the emergence of this movement championed the use of cinematic screenplays, criticized the films’ narrative reliance on the *benshi*, and attacked the existence of the *oyama*, claiming that actresses should play female roles.

The first successful adaptations of Western literature works made following the realistic narrative style of the *shingeki* plays were released in the mid-1910s by the directors Hosoyama Kiyomatsu and Tanaka Eizō. They adapted for the screen several

¹⁶³ Joseph Anderson and Donald Richie. *The Japanese Film: Art and Industry*. (Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 48.

¹⁶⁴ David Bordwell, *Poetics of Cinema*. (Routledge, 2007), p. 352.

¹⁶⁵ Hiroshi Komatsu, ‘Some Characteristics of Japanese Cinema before World War I.’ In Nolletti, A. & Dessler, D. (Eds.) *Reframing Japanese Cinema: Authorship, Genre, History*. (Indiana University Press, 1992), pp. 229-258, p. 231.

¹⁶⁶ Donald Richie, *A Hundred Years of Japanese Film*, p. 38.

Western novels, most of them Russian literary works such as Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, previously performed on the stage in *shingeki* theatres. Nevertheless, as shown by the few extant stills of the films and the reviews published in newspapers and magazines of that time, Hosoyama and Tanaka sought to make 'faithful' adaptations to the hypotext, preserving the main events of the plot and recreating the cultural milieu of the story through the settings, *mise-en-scène*, costumes, and the like.

Western Literature in the Cinema of the 1920s and 1930s

Filming innovations and acting techniques defended by the 'Pure Film Movement' and adopted by filmmakers such as Hosoyama Kiyomatsu and Tanaka Eizō became so prominent that by the 1920s, the traditional form of Japanese cinema had become old-fashioned. The first years of the decade saw the emergence of new companies such as Shochiku Kinema¹⁶⁷ and Taikatsu Co.,¹⁶⁸ which aimed to produce movies following European and American filming and narrative techniques. Studios and filmmakers progressively abandoned some theatrical conventions such as the use of *oyama*,¹⁶⁹ and created movies with close-ups, flashbacks, more elaborate *mise-en-scène* and complex editing. Adding intertitles also became common practice, minimizing the scope of *benshi*

¹⁶⁷ Shochiku was a Western-film-style oriented company that began making movies in 1920, introducing American formulas in film direction.

¹⁶⁸ Taikatsu Co. was created in 1922 with the objective of producing intellectual films inspired by Western filming aesthetics.

¹⁶⁹ According to Anderson and Richie, Shochiku Company used actresses instead of *oyama* from its beginning. Joseph Anderson and Donald Richie. *The Japanese Film: Art and Industry*, p. 42.

rendition.¹⁷⁰ In that sense, Japanese silent film began to intersect different forms of narration: the verbal narration of the *benshi*, the explanations of dialogues using intertitles, and the films' capacity to show the story. From that moment, the former 'canned' filming style gave way to one similar to the American and European movies,¹⁷¹ which by 1920 had taken 75% of the Japanese market.

The first innovative adaptation of a Western work made following the 'Pure Film Movement' cinematic modes of filmmaking and adapting the story to the Japanese cultural context was *Rojō no reikon* (Souls on the Road, 1921), directed by Murata Minoru in cooperation with *shingeki* theatre director Osanai Kaoru. Besides *Rojō no reikon*, Murata filmed several more silent free adaptations of Western literature works renowned in Japan, including *Osumi to haha* (Osumi and her Mother, 1924), based on the short story *La vieja del cinema* (The Old Woman of the Movies, 1921) by Vicente Blasco Ibáñez – who also wrote the novel *La maja desnuda* (Farewell to Youth), which was taken to the screen by Shigenori Sakata in his 1924 film entitled *Wakasa yo saraba* (Farewell to Youth) – and *Tsubakihime* (The Lady of Camellias, 1927), based on the Alexandre Dumas *fi*ls novel written in 1848.

Rojō no reikon, based on the play *The Lower Depths* by Gorki and the drama *Children on the Street* by Wilhelm Schmidtbonn, achieved general acclaim due to its technical innovations, the way in which the characters' identifiable misfortune is portrayed, and the message it depicts. One of the results of the acceptance of the movie was that, subsequently, 'for the first time in Japan directors were free to make films about

¹⁷⁰ J.L. Anderson, 'Spoken Silents in the Japanese Cinema; or, Talking to Pictures: Essaying the *Katsuben*, Contextualizing the Texts', p. 273.

¹⁷¹ Aaron Gerow, *A Page of Madness: Cinema and Modernity in 1920s Japan*. (Center for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan, 2008), p. 8.

Japanese life as it was.’¹⁷² A new trend appeared in the country. People demanded to see Japanese films about Japanese life, and to see heroines and heroes who were much like everyone else, with ideas of their own and modern consciences.¹⁷³ There was no longer space in these adaptations for realism and faithfulness to the ‘original’ story. From that moment, most of the films based on Western literature were free adaptations in which the story was suited to the Japanese cultural context, making it more appealing to the new demands of the audiences.

The year 1923 is regarded as a crucial date in the history of Japanese cinema. On Saturday September 1, an earthquake devastated Tokyo and Yokohama. Despite the destruction of many movie theatres and filming studios of important companies such as Nikkatsu, the earthquake gave ‘the decisive impetus for the development of the new kinds of Japanese film.’¹⁷⁴ After the disaster, Nikkatsu, Shochiku, and other companies moved to Kyoto and stimulated innovation and the production of ‘pure film’ movies, so old forms were abandoned. Many directors adopted American cinema techniques or imitated avant-garde European cinema trends such as the newly introduced German and French impressionism.¹⁷⁵

Westernization and modernism characterized the urban cultural life. In the cinemas, the subject of interest turned to the ordinary urban middle-class masses who composed the majority of the cinema audience at that time. Thus, new genres emerged, such as *shomingeki* (about the lower middle class), *shōshimingeki* (serio-comedies about

¹⁷² Donald Richie, *The Japanese Movie* (Kodansha, 1965), p. 27.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Hiroshi Komatsu, ‘The Classical Cinema in Japan’, in G. Nowell-Smith (Ed.), *The Oxford History of World Cinema*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 413-422, p. 413.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

salary earners), and sentimental satire.¹⁷⁶ Since the middle classes worked and lived in big cities, urban spaces became cinema's 'crucial iconography, one that expressed Japanese modernity's contradictory impulses toward rationality and the equality of classes, as well as insufficiency and displacement.'¹⁷⁷ Cinema reflected the emergent social discontent through the search for the nihilistic hero in period films and through the encouragement of the fight against economic inequality in the so-called *keikō-eiga*:¹⁷⁸ 'tendency films' with a left-wing outlook.

Film directors' interest in Western literature continued during the 1920s, adapting works that had been previously staged in *shingeki* theatres, and they also began to make free adaptations of plays, novels and short stories that had never been performed in theatres. Most of them were based on popular Western literary works of the time, written by contemporary authors, some of whom had won or would go on to win the Nobel Prize in Literature. The theatrical practices followed in former adaptations, such as the 'faithful' reproduction of the plot and the use of realistic Western-style settings and customs, were discarded. Filmmakers and scriptwriters were no longer concerned with theatrical conventions or with imitating the cultural framework. On the contrary, the adaptations were made following intercultural and intertextual processes in which the hypotexts were freely modified and adjusted to the Japanese socio-cultural sphere.

Nevertheless, during the 1930s, over the Shōwa era, the number of Western literature adaptations decreased considerably in comparison with previous years. This era, in contrast to previous years, was a less democratic and more repressive period marked

¹⁷⁶ Donald Richie, *Japanese Cinema: An Introduction*. (Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 26.

¹⁷⁷ Wada-Marciano, *Nippon modern: Japanese Cinema of the 1920s and 1930s*. (University of Hawaii Press, 2008), p. 18.

¹⁷⁸ Joseph Anderson and Donald Richie. *The Japanese Film: Art and Industry*, p. 67-68.

by economic strain, social unrest, and the emergence of authoritarian militarism. During the 1930s, the authorities promoted the resurgence of traditional values and old ideologies, such as sacrifice, self-restraint, and loyalty to the group, in complete contrast to the existing indulgent and individualistic behaviours. Progressively, Western cultural influence was rejected and a new trend, known as *Nihon kaiki* (return to Japan), was embraced by middle-aged intellectuals. This movement aimed to ‘redefine Japanese tradition over and against the foreign influx of the 1910s and 1920s.’¹⁷⁹

The director who made the largest number of Western literature adaptations during the 1920s and 1930s was Mizoguchi Kenji, who had previously worked as an assistant to Tanaka Eizō. Mizoguchi is considered one of the most important film directors in the annals of Japanese film, well-known for his masterpieces *Gion no shimai* (The Sisters of the Gion, 1936), *Naniwa eregii* (Osaka Elegy, 1936), *Ugetsu Monogatari* (Tales of Ugetsu, 1953), and *Sanshō Dayū* (Sansho the Bailiff, 1954). He shot the majority of his adaptations during the 1920s, while working for the Nikkatsu company. Most of the films he made in the 1920s are lost, except for *Furusato no uta* (The Song of Home, 1925) and a fragment of *Tokyo kōshinkyoku* (Tokyo March, 1929), and none of his adaptations of Western literature filmed in this decade have survived.

The first Western works that Mizoguchi adapted were *813 - Rupimono* (813: The Adventures of Arsène Lupin), based on the novel *813* written by Maurice Leblanc in 1910, and *Kiri no minato* (Foggy Harbor), an adaptation of Eugene O’Neill’s play *Anna Christie*. After the 1923 earthquake, Mizoguchi Kenji moved to Kyoto and continued working at the Nikkatsu studio, where he made several silent adaptations of Western works during subsequent years. Before the end of the year, he shot two films based on Western literature: *Chi to rei* (Blood and Soul), based on the novella *Mademoiselle de Scudéri* by

¹⁷⁹ David Bordwell, *Poetics of Cinema*, pp. 353-354.

E.T.A. Hoffmann, and *Yoru* (The night). *Yoru* was based on Jack Boyle's character Boston Blackie, who also inspired the film *Yuki no yobanashi* (Night Tales of Snow) shot in 1928 by Inoue Kintarō. According to Mizoguchi, *Yoru* consisted of two plots. One depicted a story in which Boston Blackie 'breaks into a house but it turns out to be a house of ill-repute' while the second was 'about a man who runs a Chinese restaurant.'¹⁸⁰

Mizoguchi directed ten movies for Nikkatsu in 1924, four of them based on Western literature: *Kanashiki hakuchi* (The Sad Idiot), *Shichimenchō no yukue* (The Trace of a Turkey), *Tōge no uta* (The Song of the Mountain Pass), and *Jinkyō* (This Dusty World). He claimed that *Kanashiki hakuchi* and *Shichimenchō no yukue* were loosely inspired by Western literature works, although he did not recall their titles.¹⁸¹ *Tōge no uta* was inspired by Murata's *Rojō no reikon* and Wilhelm's Schmidtbonn *Mutter Landstrasse*. *Jinkyō* was based on Àngel Guimerà play *Martha of the Lowlands*. Subsequently Mizoguchi made *Shirayuri wa nageku* (The White Lily Laments, 1925), an adaptation of Galsworthy's play *The First and the Last*, written in 1919, and *Dōka-ō* (The Copper Coin King, 1926), based on Herman Landon's story 'The Copper Coin King'.

The 1920s also saw the debut of Ozu Yasujirō, who, along with Mizoguchi and Kurosawa, is regarded as one of the masters of Japanese cinema. During the 1920s he made slapstick comedies such as *Tokkan kozō* (A Straightforward Boy, 1929), based on O. Henry's story *The Ransom of the Red Chief*, melodramas like *Tokyo no onna* (A Woman from Tokyo, 1933), and gangster movies such as *Hijōsen no onna* (Dragnet Girl, 1933), all influenced to varying degrees by American pictures. In the mid-1930s, Ozu reached a mature style, directing movies that depicted the realities of the middle classes, social problems, and family dramas like *Hitori musuko* (The Only Son, 1936). After the

¹⁸⁰ Kenji Mizoguchi, 'Mizo on Mizo'. *Cinema* 6, No. 3, (1971), pp. 15-18, p.16.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Pacific War, he directed renowned films such as *Banshun* (Late Spring, 1949) and *Tokyo monogatari* (Tokyo Story, 1953), in which he examined the Japanese family system and the breach between generations.¹⁸²

Besides the films and directors mentioned above, the 1920s and 1930s saw the production of several adaptations of popular Western literary works created by Russian, French, and German writers. These included the films *Kemuri* (Smoke, 1925), by Itō Daisuke, slightly inspired by Turgenev's story *Smoke*; Kōjirō's *Sasaki Jinsei no uramichi* (Back Alley of Life, 1929), partly based on Dostoyevsky's novel *The Idiot* (1869); and *Fukkatsu* (Resurrection, 1935), a new version of Tolstoy's novel filmed by Yoshimura Misao.

Alongside Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, Victor Hugo's novel *Les Misérables* was the most frequently adapted Western literary work. Between 1923 and 1931, three different versions were released. Thus, in 1923, the films *Aa mujō - Dai ippen: Hōrō no maki* (Ah, no Mercy- part 1: Wanderer's Reel), directed by Ushihara Kiyohiko and *Aa mujō - Dai nihen: Shichō no maki* (Ah, no Mercy - part 2: Mayor's Reel) filmed by Ikeda Yoshinobu, appeared. In 1929 Shiba Seika presented his particular transliteration of the story, a period film in two parts entitled *Aa Mujō: Zenpen* (Ah, no mercy: Part 1) and *Aa Mujō: Kohen* (Ah, no mercy: Part 2). Two years later Uchida Tomu's movies *Janbarujuan: Zenpen* (Jean Valjean: Part 1) and *Janbarujuan: Kohen* (Jean Valjean: Part 2) were released, named for the main protagonist of Hugo's novel, albeit slightly modified for Japanese pronunciation.

Other French works of literature were adapted in those years: *Chairo no onna* (The Dark Woman), based on Maurice Leblanc's novel *Andre Lupin contre Herlock Sholmes*, was directed in 1924 by Saegusa Genjirō; *Onna no isshō*, a version of Guy de

¹⁸² Alexander Jacoby, *A Critical Handbook of Japanese Film Directors* (Stone Bridge press, 2008), p. 242-243.

Maupassant's novel *Une vie*, directed by Ikeda Yoshinobu, was released in 1928, and this director also filmed the picture *Tsubakihime* (The Lady of Camellias), a new adaptation of the Alexandre Dumas *fil*s novel, in 1932.

Regarding German literature, apart from Hoffmann's novella and Schmidtbonn's drama, several of Gerhart Hauptmann's works were adapted. His play *Drayman Henschel* was taken to the screen by Shimazu Yasujirō in the film *Yama no senroban* (The Crossing Watchman of the Mountains, 1923) and in a different version shot by Saegusa Genjirō entitled *Aiyoku no kiro* (Crossroads of Lust, 1925). Hauptmann's plays *The Assumption of Hannele* and *The Sunken Bell* were adapted by Kaeriyama Norimasa and Ikeda Yoshinobu respectively. Kaeriyama shot *Chichi yo izuko e* (Where is Father Going?) in 1923, while Ikeda made *Kanashiki koi no gensō* (Sad Visions of Love) in 1925.

The Arrival of the Talkies

The Talkies arrived in Japan in 1931. In this year, the film that is considered the first Japanese talkie, *Madamu to nyōbō* (The Neighbour's Wife and Mine) by Gosho Heinosuke, was released, although some films had experimented with sound earlier. In 1927, Osanai Kaoru employed a sound-on-film system in his film *Reimei* (Dawn). Sound-on-disc recordings were also used in 1929 by Makino Masahiro in the film *Modori hashi*, and in 1930 by Ushihara Kiyohiko in the movie *Daitokai: rodehen* (The Great Metropolis: Chapter on Labour). There were also part-talkie films, such as Mizoguchi Kenji's 1930 film *Furusato* (Hometown), which included sound dialogues, intertitles, and scenes without dialogue performed in silent film-style pantomime, which resulted in an

unnatural combination.¹⁸³ All of these experiments were technically inferior and were not considered talkies in the strict sense of the word.

Both talkies and silent films coexisted in Japan until the end of the decade, but by 1935 talkies had become the dominant form of domestic production. However, in 1937 one-fifth of all new Japanese films were still silent. That coexistence finally ended in 1941, when the government prohibited the making of silent films.¹⁸⁴ Financial and cultural reasons explain the slow implementation of the talkies. On the one hand, equipping studios and movie theatres to produce and to screen sound films was extremely expensive. On the other hand, *benshi*, aware that the talkies would make their presence unnecessary and that they would end up losing their jobs, found ways to fight against spoken movies. Strikes became one of the most common forms of resistance. In 1932, just one year after the screening of the first Japanese spoken film, there were 203 strikes against talkies.¹⁸⁵ *Benshi* often turned off the sound on movies, replacing the dialogue with their own interpretations, explanations and comments. However, despite their attempts to halt the talkies, hundreds of musicians and *benshi* started to lose their jobs. Some of them, such as Kurosawa Akira's elder brother, felt so defeated that they committed suicide.

From 1935 until 1938, several sound adaptations of the works of French, Russian, and German writers were produced. The first talkie adaptation of a Western work was directed in 1935 by Mizoguchi Kenji, namely *Maria no oyuki* (Maria the Virgin), based

¹⁸³ Kenji Iwamoto, 'Sound in the early Japanese talkies,' In Nolletti, A. & Dessler, D. (Eds.). *Reframing Japanese Cinema: Authorship, Genre*, pp. 312-326, p. 315.

¹⁸⁴ Hiroshi Komatsu, 'The Classical Cinema in Japan', p. 416.

¹⁸⁵ J.L. Anderson, 'Spoken Silents in the Japanese Cinema; or, Talking to Pictures: Essaying the *Katsuben*, Contextualizing the Texts', p. 291.

on Guy de Maupassant's story *Boule de suif*. Two more sound adaptations of French literature were made in subsequent years: in 1938, Mansaku Itami directed another adaptation of Hugo's novel, titled *Kyojinden* (Saga of the Giant Man', also known as 'The Giant' and 'The Legend of a Great Man). Also in 1938, Yamamoto Satsuo shot *Den'en kōkyōgaku* (Rural Symphonie), based on André Gidé's novel *La Symphonie Pastorale*.

Miziguchi also directed sound adaptations of Russian works of literature: *Gion no shimai* (Sisters of the Gion, 1936), partially based on Alexander Kuprin's novel *Yama: The Pit*, and *Aien kyō* (The Straits of Love and Hate, 1937), inspired by Tolstoy's novel *Resurrection*. On the other hand, in 1936 Murata Minoru directed a movie based on a Russian play, *Sakura no sono*, an adaptation of the well-known Chekhov drama *The Cherry Orchard*. Regarding German literature, Takizawa Eisuke shot a movie derived from Friedrich Schiller's *The Robbers*, presented in two parts, of 74 and 67 minutes respectively. The first part, *Sengoku guntō-den - Dai ichibu: Toraōkami* (A Tale of Thieves in Wartime' also known as 'Saga of the Vagabonds, Part One: Tiger-wolf), was released on 11 February 1937. The second part, *Sengoku guntō-den - Dai nibu: Akatsuki no zenshin* (Saga of the Vagabonds, Part Two: Forward at Dawn), was screened nine days later.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁶ The majority of the adaptations mentioned previously are lost. Only six of these films remain completely extant: Murata's *Rojō no reikon* (Souls on the Road, 1921); Mizoguchi's *Maria no oyuki* (Maria the Virgin, 1935), *Gion no shimai* (Sisters of the Gion, 1936), and *Aien kyō* (The Straits of Love and Hate, 1937); Mansaku's *Kyojinden* (Saga of the Giant Man), and Yamamoto's *Den'en kōkyōgaku* (Rural Symphonie, 1938); two of them partially: Ozu's *Tokkan kozō* (A Straightforward Boy, 1929) and Takizawa's Eisuke *Sengoku guntō-den* (Saga of the Vagabonds, 1938); and from one of them just a few minutes have survived: *Aa mujō* (Ah, no Mercy, 1923).

A Decade without Western Literature Adaptations

After 1938, no more adaptations of Western literature works were produced for a decade. Regulations concerning film proliferated throughout the 1920s and particularly the 1930s, culminating in 1940. Until 1937, censorship had banned scenes from national and foreign films which were against ‘public decorum’ or ‘public morality’ – such as adultery by women, nudity, kissing, and even hand-holding – and movies reflecting negatively on the Royal Family or depicting communist or proletarian ideas.¹⁸⁷ However, in 1937, after the so-called China Incident, regarded as the start of the second Sino-Japanese war, government increased ideological control of the film industry by prohibiting the making of films ridiculing the army or showing the horrors of the war, and by banning scenes of the suffering of men and their families when they were called to the army, as well as depictions of pleasure-seeking.¹⁸⁸ In 1939, a law was approved that gave the state absolute control over all Japanese cinema. That law was a result ‘of the militaristic and nationalistic political climate, which had grown much stronger after the 1937 invasion of China by Japan, and the need to control opinion.’¹⁸⁹

The state then encouraged the production of films which praised the war or actively promoted the fascist ideology,¹⁹⁰ and supervision and censorship became

¹⁸⁷ Hirano, *Mr. Smith Goes to Tokyo: Japanese Cinema under American Occupation (1945-1952)*. (Smithsonian Inst. Press, 1992), p. 16.

¹⁸⁸ Peter High, *The Imperial Screen. Japanese Film culture in the Fifteen Years War, 1931-1945*. (The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), p. 292.

¹⁸⁹ Donald Richie, *A Hundred Years of Japanese Film*, p. 92.

¹⁹⁰ Hiroshi Komatsu, ‘The Classical Cinema in Japan’, in G. Nowell-Smith (Ed.), *The Oxford History of World Cinema*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 413-422, p. 419.

rigorous and harsh, with frequent scissoring of whole scenes. As the war progressed, the laws on films became stricter. In August 1940, the Home Ministry Censorship Division also proscribed *shōshimin* films, films depicting the pursuit of personal happiness, films revolving around the lives of the wealthy, and films showing people drinking in cafes or women smoking. The use of foreign words and films dealing with sexual frivolity were also prohibited.¹⁹¹ In sum, any films depicting lifestyles other than those officially decreed were banned and considered an offense to the authorities.¹⁹²

When the war ended, the Japanese film industry happened to be regulated by the film policy of the American occupation government. The American authorities abolished previous film laws and introduced new regulations in order to reorient and control the Japanese film industry politically and ideologically. Besides the burning of banned films,¹⁹³ the Civil Information and Education Section, under the control of the military intelligence, established a censorship department that suggested and prohibited subjects for films. On the one hand, the authorities encouraged the production of films promoting democratization and demilitarization, proposing to show aspects such as free discussions of political issues (except communist or left-wing ideas), individual initiative and enterprise, the principles of the new constitution, or the return of Japanese prisoners. On the other hand, the censors banned, for instance, the shooting of films depicting or

¹⁹¹ Hirano, *Mr. Smith Goes to Tokyo: Japanese Cinema under American Occupation (1945-1952)*, p. 16.

¹⁹² Peter High, *The Imperial Screen. Japanese Film culture in the Fifteen Years War, 1931-1945*, p. 169.

¹⁹³ In 1945 the Psychological Warfare Branch of the Office of War Information banned 236 films considered antidemocratic ‘for having been utilized to propagate nationalistic, militaristic, and feudalistic concepts.’ Hirano, *Mr. Smith Goes to Tokyo: Japanese Cinema under American Occupation (1945-1952)*, p. 41.

criticizing the American occupation, fraternization among the military and Japanese women, the atomic bombs and the devastation caused, or traditional themes of period films such as feudal loyalty and revenge as a legitimate motive.

The Japanese film laws and censorship enforced from 1939, as well as the subsequent American film regulations imposing and prohibiting subjects such as those detailed above, restricted the production of adaptations of Western literature. In June 1949, however, the Civil Information and Education Section was dissolved and the *Eiga rinri kanri iinkai* (Film Ethics Regulation Control Committee) was established. Official censorship ended, opening the way to more informal means of control, although the American Civil Intelligence Division continued monitoring films in post-production until 1952, when the occupation ended.¹⁹⁴

A period of greater flexibility and creativity freedom began in 1949, and film directors and studios were able to shoot new adaptations of well-known Western works that had been successfully adapted in the past. For instance, in 1950, Itō Daisuke and Makino Masahiro each filmed one part of the adaptation of Hugo's novel *Les Misérables*, produced by Tokyo Eiga co. Ltd: *Re Mizeraburu: kami to akuma* (*Les Misérables I: Gods and Demons*, 112 minutes) and *Re Mizeraburu: kami to jiyu no hata* (*Les Misérables II: God and the Flag of Freedom*, 122 minutes). In the same year, Shochiku produced Nobuchi's *Akira Fukkatsu* (*Resurrection*) – a new version of Tolstoy's novel – and in 1951 Kurosawa Akira filmed *Hakuchi* (*The Idiot*), an adaptation of the homonymous Dostoyevsky novel, for Toho Studios. Western literature adaptations of classic and pulp fiction continued throughout the century. A few of them, such as Kurosawa's adaptations

¹⁹⁴ Joseph Anderson and Donald Richie. *The Japanese Film: Art and Industry*, p. 168.

of Shakespeare plays – *Kumonosu-jō* (Throne of Blood) and *Ran* – would become masterpieces.

Russian Literature Adaptations

Russian literature was first translated in Japan in the 1880s, a few years after the publication of French and American-English literary works. Thereafter, Russian authors, particularly Tolstoy, had a deep influence on the development of Modern Japanese literature during the Meiji and Taishō eras. Tolstoy's works become extremely popular in the country, especially the novel *Resurrection*, which was adapted for the screen several times before the beginning of the Pacific war. As mentioned previously, besides Tolstoy, other remarkable Russian literary works were adapted during the Meiji, Taishō, and Shōwa prewar eras.

Kachusha (Resurrection, 1914)

The first successful film adaptation of a Western literature work, in 1914, was Hosoyama's short movie *Kachusha* (known as 'Resurrection'), based on a dramatization of Tolstoy's novel *Voskreséniye* (Resurrection), which was released in 1899 and published for the first time in Japan in 1908. Tolstoy's novel received worldwide acclaim,

and soon after the invention of cinema, several short adaptations of this novel were filmed in different countries. In America alone, three different versions were released before the 1920s: D.W. Griffith's 12-minute short in 1909, with the same name as the novel; the film *A Woman's Resurrection*, shot by J. Gordon Edwards in 1915; and Edward José's 50-minute movie, also called *Resurrection*, in 1918.¹⁹⁵ In Japan, the first adaptation of Tolstoy's novel was shot in 1910 by an unknown director.

Tolstoy's novel was adapted for the theatre and performed on stage in Japan in 1914 by a *shingeki* group called *Geijutsuza* (The Arts Theatre), founded in 1913 by the writer and critic Shimamura Hōgetsu and the actress Matsui Sumako. It became one of the most popular plays of the early Taishō period. In the dramatization of *Resurrection*, Matsui played the role of Katyusha, having previously played Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, being the first woman to act in a theatre after almost three centuries of prohibition of women's performance in *kabuki* and *noh*.¹⁹⁶ Shimamura's production rapidly became 'the first popular success of a *shingeki* play.'¹⁹⁷ The scope of its extraordinary achievement can be seen in the fact that the *Geijutsuza* troupe interpreted the play not only in Tokyo, but also in cities all over the country, in occupied or annexed territories, and abroad, in places such as Formosa (currently Taiwan), Korea, Manchuria, and Vladivostok.¹⁹⁸ Even a song composed to be sung on the stage for the protagonist Katyusha, entitled *Kachūsha*

¹⁹⁵ A. Goble, (Ed.) *The complete index to literary sources in film*. (Walter de Gruyter, 2011), p. 463.

¹⁹⁶ John Swain, *Geijutsu-za*. (The Routledge Encyclopedia of Modernism. Taylor and Francis, 2016).

¹⁹⁷ Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature of the Modern Era: Poetry, Drama, Criticism*, p. 397.

¹⁹⁸ Toyotaka Komiya, *Japanese Culture in the Meiji Era Vol. 3: Music and Drama* (The Toyo Bunko, 1956), p. 41.

no uta (Katyusha's song), became very famous and came to be known throughout the country, eventually selling 20.000 records.¹⁹⁹

The novel depicts the relationship between Princep Nekhludoff and Katerina Maslova, better known as Katyusha. Katyusha lives in Nekhludoff's aunt's house. During a visit to his aunt on his way to the war against the Turkish, Nekhludoff manages to seduce Katyusha, who is in love with him. They have a sexual encounter, and without any regret, the following day he gives her money and leaves the house. Years later he discovers that she became pregnant and had to leave his aunt's house. He is not aware that she was compelled to abandon the baby in the foundling hospital, where it soon died, and ended up working as a prostitute to survive. Several years later Katyusha is accused of complicity in the murder of a Siberian merchant. She is taken to trial in a criminal court in which Nekhludoff has been called to serve as a juror. There Nekhludoff sees that the accused is Katyusha, and learns about her life's tribulations. He gradually begins to feel guilty and remorseful, conscious that his past actions have driven her to her current situation. Katyusha, though innocent, is sentenced to four years of hard labour in Siberia, due to an incompetent judge and a legalistic oversight by the jury. Nekhludoff, feeling that he is obliged to help her in order to make amends for the consequences of his acts, consults a lawyer to discuss the possibility of an appeal. Furthermore, he feels the need to cleanse his soul and decides that he will marry Katyusha and give up his land, selling it for a low price to his peasant servants.

Nekhludoff visits Katyusha several times at the prison and gives her money. She treats him coldly, and becomes angry with him when he says that he wants to marry her. While she is waiting in prison to be deported to Siberia, Nekhludoff goes to St. Petersburg and sees various prominent people, asking them to use their influence to obtain a pardon

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 296

for her. Back in Moscow, Nekhludoff decides to go with Katyusha to Siberia, following the prisoners' convoy. On the long march to Siberia, Nekhludoff sees Katyusha whenever possible. Upon arrival in a remote town in Siberia, even though she has once again fallen in love with Nekhludoff, she refuses to tell him her feelings and declares that she will spend her life with a political prisoner called Simonson. Nekhludoff, feeling that he is no longer needed, prepares to return to Moscow.

Hosoyama's film, of 39 minutes, produced by the Nikkatsu Company,²⁰⁰ was premiered on 31 October 1914. It was based on part of the *shingeki* theatrical version staged by the *Geijutsuza* troupe. The film showed the influence of new *shingeki* theatre, especially in the acting technique inspired by Stanislavski,²⁰¹ although the treatment of social questions was still melodramatic, as in the *shinpa* plays.²⁰² Moreover, though the director tried to create a realistic atmosphere by keeping the original names of the characters and by using Russian costumes and settings (see fig.2), the final product was still stage-like by contemporary conventions, such as the use of *oyama* impersonators. Due to the popularity that the film achieved, Hosoyama Kiyomatsu filmed two more

²⁰⁰ Nikkatsu Company (abbreviation of the Nippon Katsudōshashin Company) was founded in 1912. By 1914 it was producing an average of fourteen films a month, leading the production in Japan. It also dominated the import and the exhibition of foreign films during the 1910s.

²⁰¹ The Stanislavski method was introduced into Japan in 1913 by the *shingeki* theatre director Osanai Kaoru, who had previously travelled to Russia and met Stanislavski in person. According to Kaori Nakayama, Osanai Kaoru applied the acting method for the first time in Japan in his production on the stage of Gorki's play *The Lower Depths*. Kaori Nakayama, 'A Producer's Perspective: Stanislavsky in Japan.' In J. Pitches & S. Aquilina (Eds.). *Stanislavsky in the World: The System and its Transformations across Continents*. (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), pp. 196-204, p. 198.

²⁰² Keiko McDonald, *Japanese Classical Theater in Films*. (Dickinson University Press, 1994), p. 25.

shorts in 1915, also based on parts of the *shingeki* adaptation of Tolstoy's work: *Nochi no Kachusha* (Katyusha Afterwards', 40 minutes) and *Kachusha zoku zoku hen* (Katyusha, Part Three', 55 minutes), released in January and in October respectively. It is not known which scenes from the novel each film includes. It is possible to assume, however, since the extant still from the first *Kachusha* shows Nekhludoff wearing a uniform, that the film included the key scene in which, during a visit to his aunt on his way to the war against the Turkish, he takes advantage of Katyusha.



Fig. 2. Still from Hosoyama's *Kachusha*. Left, the *oyama* Tachibana Teijirō playing the role of Katyusha. Right, Tappatsu Sekine playing Princep Nekhludoff. Notice that the actors wear Russian-style clothes and hairstyles. Nekhludoff's uniform suggests that the film included the scene in which, during a visit to his aunt on his way to the war against the Turkish, he took advantage of Katyusha.

Hosoyama also adapted in 1915 two films based on Western literary works, both also lost. One of them was *Tsubaki hime* (The Lady of the Camellias), a 29-minute short based on the theatrical version of the Alexandre Dumas *fils* novel written in 1848. Dumas' story was published in Japan in 1885 (it was actually an adaptation in which the characters' names and settings were Japanese), and in 1889 was serialized in a magazine. The other film was *Shikan no musume* (The Officer's Daughter), a 30-minute short based on Pushkin's novel *Kapitanskaya dochka* (The Captain's Daughter, 1837) – a work that was published in Japan in 1883 translated from an English version, and later in 1904 directly from the Russian. No reviews or stills from either of these movies remain extant, so it is not possible to make categorical statements about the degree of realism of the films or to compare them with the literary work. However, considering the extant still from *Kachusha* and the influence of *shingeki* theatre on the film industry at that time, it may be inferred that in these adaptations, the director also tried to reproduce 'faithfully' the plot and stories and to recreate the cultural context of the works by using Western costumes and settings.

Ikeru shikabane (The Living Corpse, 1918)

The success of Hosoyama's adaptation of Tolstoy's *Resurrection* stimulated the Nikkatsu Company to produce during the 1910s more films based on Western literature that had previously been successfully staged in *shingeki* theatres. Thus, new adaptations, inspired by Western screen-acting techniques, were directed by Tanaka Eizō, a former actor in the *shingeki* theatre influenced by the 'Pure Film Movement.' He incorporated the aesthetics of *shingeki* into his cinema, becoming an important figure in the Japanese film history for his innovative technique and his contribution to the modernization of

cinema.²⁰³ However, Tanaka was still following theatrical conventions such as the use of female impersonators. He continued to use *oyama* in his films until 1923, the year in which he filmed the successful *Dokuro no mai* (Dance of the Skull), in which he employed actresses for the first time.

Tanaka Eizō directed four films based on *shingeki* plays. *Sakura no sono* (The Cherry Orchard), an adaptation of Chekhov's 1904 play, was released in April 1918, but no reviews or stills from this film remain extant. The play had been staged by a *shingeki* company named *Mumeikai* (Nameless Society) between 1914 and 1917.²⁰⁴ Just one month later, in May 1918, *Ikeru shikabane* (The Living Corpse) was premiered: this was an adaptation of Tolstoy's play published in Russia in 1911 and for the first time in Japan in 1913. The play had been previously staged by the *Geijutsuza* troupe and by the *Mumeikai* group in 1914.²⁰⁵ Tolstoy's drama was renowned worldwide and, soon after its publication, several short adaptations were filmed in different countries, such as *Zhivoy trup*, directed by Boris Chaikovsky and V. Kuznetsov in 1911; *Il cadavere vivente*, shot by Oreste Mentasti and Nino Oxilia in 1913; and *Der lebende Leichnam*, made by Richard Oswald and Arthur Wellin in 1918.²⁰⁶

Subsequently, in 1919, Tanaka filmed a new version of Tolstoy's *Resurrection* entitled *Fukkatsu (Kachusha)* (Resurrection (Katyusha)), released in February, and *Osero* (Othello), an adaptation of Shakespeare's play released in March, from which there are no extant reviews or stills. This play had been staged for the first time in 1903 by

²⁰³ Alexander Jacoby, *A Critical Handbook of Japanese Film Directors*, p. 300-301.

²⁰⁴ Toyotaka Komiya, *Japanese Culture in the Meiji Era Vol. 3: Music and Drama*, p. 260.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

²⁰⁶ A. Goble, *The Complete Index to Literary Sources in Film*. Walter de Gruyter, pp. 842-843.

Kawakami Otojirō's troupe, with the action set in Taiwan,²⁰⁷ although the text was a faithful translation of the original.²⁰⁸ This version was performed several times in subsequent years by different theatre companies. Two different translations of the play appeared before the end of the decade. One was represented by *Mumeikai* group in January 1914, and the other was performed in 1917 by a company formed by two famous actors of these days.²⁰⁹ It is likely that the screenwriter of Tanaka's film, Matsumoto Kiyoshi, based his script on the 1917 translation of Shakespeare's play.

The most influential of these movies, and the ones for which film reviews and some stills survive, were *Ikeru shikabane* and *Fukkatsu (Kachusha)*. *Ikeru shikabane* had a profound impact at the time and became very popular. The scope of its success can be seen in the attention it received from the magazine *Katsudo no sekai*, which included a fifteen-page review of the movie in the issue published in June 1918.²¹⁰ Also, it is possible to observe the popularity of the film in the number of copies that existed at the time: five copies were distributed, when the norm was to make one or two prints.²¹¹ Its success was probably due to the innovative cinematic techniques Tanaka used in the movie: he filmed a larger number of shots, introduced some dialogic titles, and attempted to use a more

²⁰⁷ Kevin J. Wetmore, Jr., Siyuan Liu, Erin B. Mee, *Modern Asian Theatre and Performance 1900-2000* (A&C Black, 2014), p. 7.

²⁰⁸ J.T. Rimer, M. Mori, & M.C. Poulton, *The Columbia Anthology of Modern Japanese Drama* (Columbia University Press, 2014), p. 7.

²⁰⁹ Ryuta Minami, 'A Chronological table of Shakespeare productions in Japan.' In Takashi Sasayama et al. (eds.) *Shakespeare and the Japanese Stage* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 266-268.

²¹⁰ *Katudo no sekai* no. 3, vol. 6, June 1918. The author of the review is unknown.

²¹¹ Aaron Gerow, 'One print in the age of mechanical reproduction: film industry and culture in 1910s Japan', *Screening the Past*, vol. 11 (2000).

realistic style, reproducing Russian settings, making the cast act in a less theatrical manner, and shooting exteriors. Since the play is a drama with indoor scenes and little action, ‘which provided little visual attraction for a silent film adaptation,’²¹² shooting exteriors was an innovation by Tanaka that increased the film’s appeal to the audience, contributing to its success.

The aim of imbuing the film with realism can be seen in the attempt to recreate features of the cultural *milieu* of the play. In the movie stills published in the magazine *Katsudō no sekai*, it is possible to observe that customs, furniture, houses and other settings were broadly similar to those that could be found in Russia. Tanaka’s effort to reproduce a Russian atmosphere is praised in the film review published in the newspaper *Yomiuri shinbun*,²¹³ written by an unknown reporter. The critic stresses the fidelity of the movie to the ‘original’ play by mentioning that it keeps the ideology and the message and by emphasizing the sense of realism conveyed by the costumes and the use of Russian-style objects and furniture. Furthermore, the critic remarks on the actors’ efforts to imitate foreign behaviour – something that was common in contemporary Japanese acting.²¹⁴ However, the reviewer criticizes the actors as being, in spite of everything, ‘too Japanese’ in their acting: their facial expressions are not animated enough, their movements are slow, the male impersonators are awkward, and the use of Japanese style make-up is

²¹² Lauri Piispa, ‘Tolstoy film adaptations in Russia, 1909-17.’ *Tolstoy Studies Journal*, Vol. 23, 44-61, (2011), p. 48.

²¹³ *Yomiuri shinbun*, March 29th 1918, p. 6.

²¹⁴ According to Burch, in most of the Japanese films made at that time, the actors, make-up, bearing and gestures were often modelled on those of Western films screened in Japan. Noël Burch, *To the Distant Observer: Form and Meaning in the Japanese Cinema*. (University of California Press, 1979), p. 100.

distracting. For the critic, those reminiscences of *kabuki* and *shinpa* acting manners minimize the overall realism of the film:

This one seems to have been turned into a film with a lot of struggles. First, it is impressive that the movie was filmed in Karuizawa [in Nagano Prefecture], the most exotic place in Japan. The costumes and instruments were not chosen at random but with a lot of consideration. Furthermore, actors were also trying to behave like foreigners as much as they could. All of these must have been thanks to the efforts made by the directors Masumoto and Tanaka. Throughout the film, ideologies and concepts were represented well, and the way it was filmed was skilful, too. The movie would be interesting for everyone to watch. In particular, Yamamoto, who was playing the role of Fueja, did outstanding work. Liza by Tachibana, Kalenin by Ōmura, Masha by Azuma and others also did a great job. The gypsy dance by Ishii and Sawa added vivid colour and flavour to the dark and gloomy atmosphere with their cheerful and brilliant dance. However, the lack of facial expression and sluggish behaviour as typical deficits among Japanese people, and the awkwardness of men playing the roles of women, sometimes gave unsatisfying impressions. In addition, those who wore Japanese style make-up and those overtly wearing wigs were very distracting.²¹⁵

²¹⁵ *Yomiuri shinbun*, March 29th 1918, p. 6.

The plot of the play, probably based on a real-life story well known both to Tolstoy and to Moscow society,²¹⁶ revolves around the relationship of three characters: Fedya Protasov, a kind-hearted but squandering aristocrat; Liza, his wife; and a friend of the two, Victor Karenin, a well-reputed aristocrat considered by all to be a reliable person. Liza discovers that Fedya has squandered all of the family money partying with the gypsies; at the insistence of her mother, she decides to end their marriage and marry Victor, despite still loving her husband. Since Fedya is obsessed with the belief that Liza has actually always loved Victor and that she should have married him, he agrees to a divorce. However, both to avoid embarrassment during this process and to facilitate Victor's and Liza's wedding, Fedya resolves to fake his own suicide at the instigation of Masha, a gypsy woman who is in love with him.

²¹⁶ Andrew Wachtel, 'Resurrection à La Russe: Tolstoy's 'The Living Corpse' as Cultural Paradigm.' *PMLA*, Vol. 107, no. 2, (1992), pp. 261–273, p. 262.



Fig.3. Stills from *Ikeru shikabane* published in the magazine *Katsudō no sekai* in June 1918. Top: indoor scene in which the mise-en-scène recreates a Russian-style room. Bottom: outdoor scene with Fueja (Fedya), played by Yamamoto Kaichi, and the *oyama* Kinusaga Teinosuke (right) playing Liza (Lisa). Note that the actors wear Western-style clothes and that the scene is shot exteriors, which was one of the innovative cinematic techniques used by Tanaka. Kinusaga would become a film director when actresses started to play female roles. His more successful work as a director was the experimental film *Kurutta ippei* (A Page of Madness, 1926).

Fedya's plan is successful: everybody is convinced of his death and Liza marries Victor. Unfortunately for all, Fedya's identity is discovered after he explains his story while drunk in a tavern. He and Liza are brought to trial, accused both of bigamy and of being accomplices in the fraud. Fedya, aware that the judge will annul Liza's second marriage and probably condemn them to be deported to Siberia, and realizing that the only way to save Liza and Victor's relationship is by actually committing suicide, shoots himself inside the court.

The detailed description of the film published in *Katsudo no sekai* includes the dialogic titles of the movie and the lyrics of three songs that do not appear in Tolstoy's play: *Sasurai no uta zoku* (The Song of the Vagabond), *Bāru no uta* (The Song of the Bar), *Sasurai no uta* (The Song of the Vagabond [Continued]). These songs were played in the theatrical version staged by the *Geijutsuza* troupe in 1914, but also in one of the most important movie theatres in Tokyo, the Yurakukan cinema in Asakusa. In that cinema, the songs were performed live by the opera singer Kagawa Shizue.²¹⁷ The summary of the plot indicates that it was divided into five parts, corresponding to the five acts of the play. The action of the film was set in Russia, and the names of the roles were the same as in the literary work, albeit phonetically adapted to facilitate Japanese pronunciation. The movie reproduced the main events and maintained almost all characters of the plot of the hypotext, although the sixth act, in which Fedya, Liza, and Kalenin testify in the court, was omitted. Thus, the denouement described in the final act differs from the one in the movie.

²¹⁷ Shuhei Hosokawa, 'Sketches of silent film sound in Japan', in Daisuke Miyao (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Cinema* (Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 288-305, p. 300.



Fig. 4. Stills from *Ikeru shikabane* published in the magazine *Katsudō no sekai* in May 1918. Top: outdoor scene with Fueja (Fedy) and Masha, played by the *oyama* Azuma Takeo (right), with a group of gypsies. Bottom: Fueja (left), wearing Western-style costume, and Liza (Lisa), played by the *oyama* Kinusaga Teinosuke (right), reading a letter, probably the farewell note that Fedya sends to Lisa before faking his death.

In the play, while drinking in a tavern, Fedya explains to his friend Petushkov that he is a 'living corpse'. Artemyev, a rascal, listens to the conversation and suggests to Fedya that they blackmail Liza and Karenin, assuring him that the couple will give them money if he and Fedya threaten to denounce them as bigamists. Fedya refuses, so Artemyev reports him to the police in revenge. Fedya, Liza, and Karenin are taken to court on charges of bigamy and of having set up Fedya's fake death together. To liberate Liza and to prevent her from being punished by exile to Siberia and the annulment of her marriage to Karenin, Fedya shoots himself in the heart inside the court. As in the play, in the film Artemyev drinks in a tavern next to Fedya, and after overhearing him telling Petushkov about his fake suicide, Artemyev comes up with the idea of threatening to sue Liza for bigamy and gain money. Fedya refuses and tries to stop him, but Artemyev leaves the bar. At that point the film differs from the play, ending the story in a completely different way: Artemyev figures out where Liza and Karenin live and goes to their home to tell them the truth about Fedya's false death and demand money from them. Before he can finish, Fedya appears and shoots him to death without saying a word. Next Fedya points the pistol to his own temple and shoots himself, falling to the ground. As Fedya collapses, he looks at Liza and apologizes to her for not having any other way to free her. At that point, Masha the gypsy appears. Fedya holds her in his arms and tells her not to cry.

On the other hand, in one scene in the film there are two characters who are mentioned in the play but do not appear: Fedya's uncle and a debt collector. In that scene, Fedya meets the debt collector in a bar, and is asked to repay his debt. Then Fedya's uncle, who is looking for him, enters the bar and pays 2000 roubles to the debt collector. But Fedya takes the money and runs away from the bar. Liza's mother, Anna Pavlovna, explains this event to Karenin in scene IX of the First Act, to stress Fedya's incorrigible character and to justify why she wishes Liza to divorce him. However, she mentions a

situation in which the debt collector is not present. In the play, Anna Pavlovna recalls that Fedya's uncle has met him and given him money, but Fedya, instead of paying his debts, drops out of sight, while his wife waits at home with a sick child.

That scene, although brief, is significant, since it describes Fedya's character, who puts his degenerate lifestyle before his wife and child. Since that scene could not be filmed using flashbacks – a technique that would be introduced to Japan by Murata Minoru in the film *Rojō no reikon* – it is depicted through acting. It is likely that Tanaka included this scene to highlight Fedya's personality as a man who 'has admirable qualities, but is also a drunkard and a spendthrift, a man not to be trusted.'²¹⁸ Another added scene is the gypsy dancing, praised by the film reviewer of *Katsudo no sekai* as mentioned above. In the play, at the end of the second act, all the gypsies sing. In the film, however, this is replaced by dancing, which provides the film with the sense of a realistic recreation of Fedya's threats.

²¹⁸ Andrew Wachtel, 'Resurrection à La Russe: Tolstoy's 'The Living Corpse' as Cultural Paradigm,' p. 268.



Fig. 5. Still of an outdoor scene with the gypsy Masha (right) and Fueja (left), probably after having faked his death. Both actors had previously played in Tanaka's film *Sakura no sono* and subsequently acted in *Fukkatsu (Kachusha)* by the same director. National Film Centre, Tokyo.

Fukkatsu (Kachusha) (Resurrection [Katyusha], 1919)

The notoriety of Hosoyama's Kiyomatsu adaptations of Tolstoy's book encouraged Nikkatsu Company to produce another version of the story, *Fukkatsu (Kachusha)* (Resurrection (Katyusha)) in 1919. The film's stills reproduced in the magazine *Katsudō no sekai* on 1 March 1919,²¹⁹ and those kept at the National Film Centre in Tokyo, show that Tanaka also tried to be 'faithful' to the novel, as in his adaptation of Tolstoy's *The Living Corpse*, by creating a realistic atmosphere using Russian-style settings, furniture, costumes, objects and religious iconography (see fig. 6, 7, and 8).

The review of the film published in the magazine *Katsudō gaho* shows that the account of the origin of Katyusha's decline is the same as appears in Tolstoy's novel. The plot's explanation focuses, as the author of the critique remarks, only on a description of one scene – narrated in the 17th chapter of the first part of the novel – in which Nekhludoff (called 'Nefuryudofu' in the film) seduces Katyusha. Besides the description of how Nekhludoff finally manages to enter Katyusha's room, the article highlights the fact that Nekhludoff, as in the novel, does not regret taking advantage of her feelings and that he has no intention of pursuing their relationship further, which is the main cause of Katyusha's decline:

(...) One night, after everyone went to bed, Nefuryudofu was still awake and thinking about a girl named Kachusha—the girl he was in love with—and he decided to go and see what she was doing alone in her room. First, Nefuryudofu looked into Kachusha's room from

²¹⁹ *Katsudō no sekai*, Vol. 4, no.3, 1 March 1919.

outside through the window, and she seemed to have some troubles on her mind. Kachusha did not notice that she was being watched. After a while, Nefuryudofu knocked on the window, and Kachusha was surprised and scared. Then Nefuryudofu asked Kachusha to come out to the garden, but she refused and stayed by the window. Soon after, Kachusha was called by someone from inside and left her room. While Kachusha was away, Nefuryudofu wandered around the house. Later, when Nefuryudofu looked into Kachusha's room again, she was there, and this time she immediately noticed his presence. She fled the room, trying to escape from Nefuryudofu, but he caught her outside the house. Kachusha managed to escape from Nefuryudofu and ran back into her room and locked the door. Nefuryudofu also returned to his room, but could not get to sleep. So he decided to sneak into Kachusha's room through the corridor, and he called her name. Kachusha seemed to be angry at Nefuryudofu, but he somehow felt as if she was trying to tell him 'I'm all yours.' Nefuryudofu asked Kachusha to open the door; she did so without a word. Then Nefuryudofu took Kachusha to his own room. After Kachusha left Nefuryudofu's room without even saying goodbye, he stood at the entrance, trying to understand what had happened. He asked himself whether it was a great pleasure or a great misfortune. However, he did not know the answer and concluded: 'This could happen to anyone. Everyone does this.' He went back to his room and slept.²²⁰

²²⁰ *Katsudō gaho*, Vol. 3, no. 3, April 1919, pp. 142-145.

The critique of the film published in the magazine *Katsudō gaho* also shows that the film reproduced a scene in which Katyusha sings a song to Nekhludoff, which does not appear in the hypotext. It was probably the case that this scene was accompanied by live performance in some of Tokyo's cinemas of the famous *Kachūsha no uta* (Katyusha's song), successfully staged by *Geijutsuza*'s troupe in previous performances of the novel and sung during the exhibition of Hosoyama's adaptation of Tolstoy's work:

(...) The actor Tachibana Teijirō who played the role of Kachusha in the former movie was really successful in his acting, but the actor in the new movie [Kachusha: The Resurrection] named Azuma Takeo was not as good as him, especially in the scene where Kachusha sings a song while sitting on a sofa next to her lover Nefuryudofu (...) ²²¹

The summary and critique do not allow us to make categorical assertions about which scenes were included and which were omitted. However, the film's extant stills show that Tanaka filmed scenes that are crucial to the development of the novel's plot, such as the imprisonment of Katyusha and her relationship with other prisoners, Nekhludoff visiting her in the jail, and the march to Siberia. The still preserved at the National Film Centre (Fig.6) shows Katyusha and Nekhludoff surrounded by other prisoners, which seem to be the troop of prisoners on their march to Siberia. Another extant still at the National Film Centre (fig.7) shows Katyusha in a cell along with other prisoners, drinking vodka that she probably bought with the money Nekhludoff gave her

²²¹ *Katsudō gaho*, Vol. 3, no. 3, April 1919, pp. 156-157. The author of the critique is also unknown.

on one of his visits. Moreover, the still published in the magazine *Katsudō no sekai*²²² (fig. 8) allows us to observe that there was at least one scene in which Nekhludoff visits Katyusha in prison and gives her money.



Fig. 6. ‘Katyusha’ (played by Azuma Takeo), ‘Nefuryudofu’ (played by Yamamoto Kiichi), and other unknown prisoners on their march to Siberia. National Film Centre, Tokyo.

Furthermore, the film’s credits show that the main characters were kept, although their names were modified or adjusted to the Japanese pronunciation: Maria Ivanovna, Nekhludoff’s aunt and childhood guardian of Katyusha; Selenin, a public prosecutor and an old friend of Nekhludoff; Vera Doukhova, a political prisoner who supports Katyusha; Lydia Shoustova, Vera Doukhova’s friend; Matrona Kharina, Katyusha’s aunt; and

²²² *Katsudō no sekai* vol. 4, no. 3, 1 March 1919.

Valdemar Simonson, the political prisoner who falls in love with Katyusha on their way to exile in Siberia.



Fig.7. Katyusha in a cell, drinking with other prisoners. These characters seem to be Véra Doukova, a political prisoner who is interested Katyusha's welfare, and Lydia Shouístova, who supports Katyusha during the first weeks of her captivity.

The fact that these characters appeared in the film show that it is likely that the movie included crucial scenes from the novel that evolve the plot, such as Katyusha's expulsion by Nekhludoff's aunt on discovery that she is pregnant, and the scenes related to the relationship between Katyusha and Simonson, whom she decides to marry instead of Nekhludoff. On the other hand, a considerable number of secondary characters used in the novel to criticize and condemn aspects of Russian society, such as the upper classes,

the criminal justice system, and the peasants' misery, were left out. These include, among others, the cynical lawyer Fanarin; Maslennikov, the conceited Vice-Governor of St Petersburg; and the reactionary Procurator of the Holy Synod, Konstantin Pobedonostsev.

As previously mentioned, Tanaka's movie included the main events of the novel's plot, such as Katyusha's fall and Nekhludoff's attempts to redeem himself. He begins his own process of moral regeneration – his 'resurrection' – through helping her in any way possible, including accompanying her to Siberia and proposing marriage. The religious references to falling and resurrection, which begin with the citation of four epigraphs from the *New Testament*, is suggested and sustained throughout the novel. However, it is likely that in Tanaka's film, as well as in Hosoyama's trilogy and the theatrical version of the novel staged by the *Geijutsuza* troupe, the religious component and quotations, and the critique of the Orthodox Church, were not transferred for cultural reasons. Since there was only a tiny Christian community in Japan at that time²²³ and most of the common people knew nothing about the Christian doctrine and traditions, the directors probably faced difficulties in reflecting in their films, in ways that were understandable to the general audience, the religious metaphor of Nekhludoff's resurrection, the Christian references, and the attack on the church depicted in the novel.

²²³ According to a study carried out by Balette and Ligneul at that time, by 1900 there were around 62000 Christians in Japan (Catholics, Protestants, and Russian Orthodox): a number that includes foreigners working in Japan, foreign religious personnel, and the Japanese population. Balette, Justin and Ligneul, François. 'Japan.' *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 8. (Robert Appleton Company, 1910), pp. 297-322, p. 309.



Fig. 8. Stills published at *Katsudō no sekai* on March 1919. Bottom: Nefuryudofu visits Katusha in prison and gives her money. Top: Still from the scene in which Nefuryudofu and Katusha, along with other prisoners, march to Siberia.

Rojō no reikon (Souls on the Road, 1921)

The first innovative adaptation based on a Western work made in the 1920s following the 'Pure Film Movement' cinematic mode of filmmaking was *Rojō no reikon* (Souls on the Road, 1921), directed by Murata Minoru in cooperation with *shingeki* theatre director Osanai Kaoru. Murata is considered one of the most remarkable directors of the 1920s, due to his ability to combine symbolism and realism.²²⁴ His movies often contained social criticism, as in *Rojō no reikon*, a story about the human need for compassion; *Kaijin* (Ashes, 1929), an account of the sufferings of a liberal idealist; or *Mantenrō* (The Skyscraper, 1929-30), a critique of the corrupt practices of large companies.²²⁵

Rojō no reikon is regarded as the film that marks the beginning of Japanese film history due to its innovative cinematic modes, championed by the 'Pure Film Movement'. It was the first picture based on a Western work made in the 1920s that did not follow theatrical conventions or attempt to be 'faithful' to the hypotext, or to show concern for imitating the cultural framework of the literary work. The movie was made entirely on location, presenting a new and innovative aesthetic and an atmosphere that reflected the mood of the characters. Moreover, Murata's film was one of the first to use actresses instead of female impersonators, to show poor people as central characters, and to employ the technique of flashbacks to sustain the action.

The film was inspired by D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance*, 'both in its concern for social significance and the manner in which it unified under a single theme several

²²⁴ Alexander Jacoby, *A Critical Handbook of Japanese Film Directors: From the Silent Era to the Present Day*, pp. 191-192.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

paralleling stories.’²²⁶ Thus, Murata, like Griffith in *Intolerance*, employs a dramatic technique consisting in developing two parallel stories which are complemented and counterpointed throughout the film, attempting at social criticism and ‘*mono-no-aware*, a characteristic wistful reflection on the sadness of life.’²²⁷ The picture presents different levels of intertextuality due to the influence of Griffith's *Intolerance* and the hypotexts on which Murata based the parallel stories depicted. One of them was inspired by Wilhelm Schmidtbonn's play *Mutter Landstrasse (Children on the Street, 1901)* – a drama in three acts translated in 1911 by Mori Ōgai. The play portrays the story of a prodigal son, named Hans, who returns with his wife Gertrud and his daughter Sophie to his wealthy father's farm in the Bavarian Mountains. Bater, his relentless father, rejects Hans, although reluctantly takes in his wife and daughter. Finally Hans leaves both Gertrud and Sophie. He becomes a vagabond, eventually dying in the streets.

The film depicts a similar story-line, although the ending is more tragic. The plot revolves around a son who returns home after leaving his father in their hometown to become a violinist in Tokyo. He is unsuccessful and comes back home penniless, with a wife and a daughter. Upon arriving at his father's house, exhausted and starving after the long trip, they are greeted with a frosty and hostile reception. His father refuses to feed them and give them shelter, so the son and his wife and daughter die from exhaustion and hunger.

²²⁶ Peter High, *The Imperial Screen. Japanese Film Culture in the Fifteen Years War, 1931-1945*, p. 73.

²²⁷ Adam Garbicz and Jacek Klinowski, *Feature Cinema in the 20th Century. Volume One: 1913-1950*. (Planet RGB Limited, 2012).



Fig. 9. Still from the story of the prodigal son. Left: Hanabusa Yuriko, playing the character of the daughter; Centre: Suzuki Denmei playing Koichiro; Right: Hisamatsu Mikiko, playing the role of Fumiko, Koichiro's wife. Among other innovations, the movie was shot on location and was one of the first films to use actresses instead of *oyama*.

The other story depicted in Murat's movie was based on Maxim Gorky's play *Nadine* (The Lower Depths, 1902). It revolves around two ex-convicts who wander starving, seeking a livelihood. In contrast to the prodigal son, they receive help from a wealthy family, who feed and clothe them before they continue on their way. The two stories come together when the wanderers, setting off full of hope and courage for the future, find the rejected son dead in the snow.

The Lower Depths became very popular in Russia and Japan, as well as in other European countries. In Russia, the publication was so famous that by 1903 it had reached

fourteen editions. In Japan, the play had been successfully presented on the stage by Osanai Kaoru in 1913, in a performance in which he applied Stanislavski's acting method for the first time in Japan. The play portrays the arrival of 'Luka' at a lodging house for the down-and-out and marginalized, such as a thief, a gambler, an ex-aristocrat, an alcoholic ex-actor, and a prostitute, among other dehumanized characters. For various reasons, they have all met misfortune and are trapped in poverty, unable to get out. Unlike the inhabitants of the lodging-house, Luka believes in mankind, in mercy, and compassion, and he tells the other inhabitants stories to express his ideas, trying to open their eyes and redeem them. Upon Luka's arrival, a domestic drama arises between 'Kostlyov' (the landlord), 'Vassilissa' (his wife), and 'Vasska' (her lover), who is in love with 'Natasha' (Vassilissa's sister) – a conflict that ends with the murder of Kostlyov. After the homicide, Luka disappears, with the other characters carrying on with their lives as if nothing had happened. Beside this lurid story, the play depicts different events involving other characters, such as the suicide of the ex-actor and the death of Anna, a sick woman neglected by her husband Klestch.

In Murata's film, however, none of the main events or the characters portrayed in the literary play appears. Actually, the plot of the story of the two ex-convicts narrated in *Rojō no reikon* is based on the following short account, which the pilgrim Luka explains to Natasha in the third act to exemplify his philosophy of life and his ideas about the need for mankind to be merciful:

NATASHA. You're so good, little father—why are you so good?

LUKA. Good, did you say? Well—call it that! [Behind the brick wall is heard soft singing and the sounds of a concertina] Someone has to be kind, girl—someone must pity people! Christ pitied everybody—and he said to us: 'Go and do likewise!' I tell you—if you pity a man when

he most needs it, good comes of it. Why—I used to be a watchman on the estate of an engineer near Tomsk—all right—the house was right in the middle of a forest—lonely place—winter came—and I remained all by myself. Well—one night I heard a noise—

NATASHA. Thieves?

LUKA. Exactly! Thieves creeping in! I took my gun—I went out. I looked and saw two of them opening a window—and so busy that they didn't even see me. I yell: 'Hey there—get out of here!' And they turn on me with their axes—I warn them to stand back, or I'd shoot—and as I speak, I keep on covering them with my gun, first the one, then the other—they go down on their knees, as if to implore me for mercy. And by that time I was furious—because of those axes, you see—and so I say to them: 'I was chasing you, you scoundrels—and you didn't go. Now you go and break off some stout branches!'—and they did so—and I say: 'Now—one of you lie down and let the other one flog him!' So they obey me and flog each other—and then they begin to implore me again. 'Grandfather,' they say, 'for God's sake give us some bread! We're hungry!' There's thieves for you, my dear! [Laughs] And with an ax, too! Yes—honest peasants, both of them! And I say to them, 'You should have asked for bread straight away!' And they say: 'We got tired of asking—you beg and beg—and nobody gives you a crumb—it hurts!' So they stayed with me all that winter—one of them, Stepan, would take my gun and go shooting in the forest—and the other, Yakoff, was ill most of the time—he coughed a lot... and so the three of us together looked after the house... then spring came... 'Good-bye, grandfather,' they said—and they went away—back home to Russia...

NATASHA. Were they escaped convicts?

LUKA. That's just what they were—escaped convicts—from a Siberian prison camp... honest peasants! If I hadn't felt sorry for them—they might have killed me—or maybe worse—and then there would have been trial and prison and afterwards Siberia—what's the sense of it? Prison teaches no good—and Siberia doesn't either—but another human being can...yes, a human being can teach another one kindness—very simply!²²⁸

The story of the ex-convicts presented in the film is very similar to Luka's account: two wanderers are caught by a guard while trying to enter a house to steal food. But instead of being handed over to the authorities, they receive help and mercy. Nevertheless, there are some remarkable differences: Luka's encounter with the thieves – called Stepan and Yakoff – is set near Tomsk, in an estate situated in a lonely forest where he and the wanderers spend the winter together. In Murata's film the action is set in a wealthy family's villa in a rural Japanese town. In contrast to the play, the watchman is not alone in the house. The owner's family is there, busy preparing for Christmas celebrations.²²⁹ Yoko, the Peer's daughter, after seeing discreetly how the guard makes

²²⁸ Maxim Gorki, *The Lower Depths. A Drama in Four Acts*. Edited by Oliver M. Sayler and translated by Jenny Covan. (Brentanos Publishers, 1922), pp. 91-93.

²²⁹ Although Christianity was a minority religion, Christmas had been very popular in Japan, especially in the big cities and among urban middle classes, since the last decades of the 19th century. By 1900 it was common to decorate shops and some commercial streets, display images of Santa Claus, and send Christmas cards. According to Plath, by the 1920s, Christmas celebrations had spread to the lower classes and rural regions. David

the wanderers (two ex-convicts named Tsurikichi and Kanezo) flog each other, intercedes and forgives them. Moreover, she offers them food and shelter, inviting them to spend Christmas Eve with her family and servants. Tsurikichi and Kanezo leave the house next morning – not after three months, like Stepan and Yakoff –having received new clothes and provisions for their trip.



Fig. 10. The ex-convicts Tsurikichi (played by Minami Kōmei) and Kanezo (played by Tsutamura Shigeru) wandering in the forest.

The most significant difference between Luka's narration and the play is the 'status' of the wanderers. Luka explains that Stepan and Yakoff were armed fugitives who had recently escaped from a Siberian prison camp. In the picture, the vagabonds are

Plath, 'The Japanese Popular Christmas: Coping with Modernity.' *The Journal of American Folklore*, 76(302), (1963), pp. 309-317, p. 309.

free men: ex-convicts recently released from jail. This subtle change in the characters' condition – from armed fugitives to liberated men –was necessary to remain in accordance with the prevailing values and the current neo-Confucianist social theories, in which the social order was paramount. Thus, a film depicting fugitives who have broken the law receiving compassion and shelter from well positioned and reputed citizens could be interpreted as an apology for delinquency and an attack on social stability. Furthermore, according to the censorship regulations settled in 1912 after the so-called 'Zigomar incident',²³⁰ and the regulations for the control of motion pictures issued by the Tokyo Metropolitan Police in 1917, the film could have been banned if it had presented the wanderers as runaways instead of ex-convicts. These norms stated that screening permission should not be granted to films that, among other restrictions, indicated support for lawbreakers or glamorised the means of crime.

²³⁰ *Zigomar, le roi des voleurs* (Zigomar, King of Thieves, 1911) was a French film directed by Victorin-Hippolyte Jasset, based on the novel by Léon Sazie. The movie, which depicted the adventures of a criminal mastermind, was released in Japan in the same year with the title *Jigoma*, attracting crowds of spectators. The impressive commercial success motivated Japanese studios to produce Zigomar imitations such as *Nihon Jigoma* (Japanese Zigomar, 1912) and *Shin Jigoma daitantei* (New Great Detective Zigomar, 1912). Many bureaucrats and educators considered that these films were inspiring the audience to commit crimes imitating what they had seen in the cinema. To avoid such negative influence, which they thought could threaten the social order, many claimed that the authorities controlled or banned the screening of these types of films, as it finally happened.



Fig. 11. The guard of the villa (played by Okada Sōtarō) points his gun at the ex-convicts after forcing them to flog each other with a branch.

In this way, the movie does not convey the political message of Gorki's drama, which denounces social inequality and injustice and depicts the need for social change. Although the film claims solidarity among humankind and introduces the idea that it is necessary to be merciful and compassionate to one's fellows, it does not question the social and economic order or the usefulness of the prison system, as Luka does. Nevertheless, the picture, as it appears in Luka's account, underlines the fact that lack of mercy can lead to deplorable social consequences. Luka mentions this idea in his discourse, asserting that if he had not been compassionate, he could have been killed by the wanderers and subsequently they could have been sentenced to prison again. However, this is highlighted at the end of the film, when Yoko sees the wanderers resume their journey. Intertitles and images of them killing the guard, as well as a flashforward to them in prison, represent what she is imagining about what could have happened if she had not felt sorry for the ex-convicts.

The film ends by emphasizing the message of the need for mankind to be merciful, adding intertitles with a quotation from the play: ‘Someone has to be kind, girl—someone must pity people! Christ pitied everybody—and he said to us: ‘Go and do likewise!’ However, we refuse to do so.’ It is difficult to assert whether the audience could understand the reference to Christ, but it is likely that they would have grasped the message of generosity and goodwill at a time in which an ‘individualistic ethos’ was growing among the urban middle class, becoming a major preoccupation in Japanese intellectual discourse of the Taishō era.²³¹

Murata’s picture was praised by critics for its modernism, its innovative filming style, the characters portrayed, with whom the audience could identify, and the message of solidarity it represented. From that moment, most of the films based on Western literature would adapt their stories to the Japanese cultural context.

Jinsei no uramichi (Back Alley of Life, 1929)

During the 1920s and 1930s, more adaptations of Russian works appeared. In 1925, Itō Daisuke directed *Kemuri* (Smoke), which was loosely based on Ivan Turgenev’s 1867 novel *Dym* (Smoke). This work was translated for the first time in Japan in 1913 with the title *Kemuri: Sumōku*. Later, in 1929, Sasaki Keisuke (as Sasaki Kōjirō) directed *Jinsei no uramichi* (Back Alley of Life,), produced by Shochiku. This film was partially based on Dostoyevsky’s *Idiôt* (The Idiot, 1868). The first translation of the novel in

²³¹ Sharon Nolte, ‘Individualism in Taishō Japan.’ *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 43(4), (1984), pp. 667-684, p. 667.

Japanese was released in Japan in 1914, divided into four volumes. In Sasaki's film, as shown by the plot summary published in *Kinema Junpō*,²³² none of the main events or the central characters portrayed in the novel appeared. The plot was inspired by an anecdote that the protagonist, Prince Myshkin, narrates to Lizaveta Prokofyevna and her three daughters about the time he spent in Switzerland. In that story, depicted in the first part of the novel, Myshkin explains his relation with Marie, a homeless woman suffering from tuberculosis, for whom he feels pity and provides aid until she dies. In the movie, set in Japan, the main character Ichirō, a compassionate man, gives succour to Ochiyo, a downtrodden woman. The film depicts their friendly relations from the moment they meet until she dies, grateful for the mercy shown by others for the first time in her life. Apparently, the compassionate personality of the movie's protagonist was similar to Myshkin's good-natured character. However, Myshkin's Christ-like spirituality and quixotic behaviour were not portrayed.

Fukkatsu (Resurrection, 1935)

Although the first Japanese talkie was produced in 1931 and the film industry increased its own sound-on-film production from this point, silent movies were still made until the end of the decade. *Fukkatsu* (Resurrection, 1935), the last silent film adaptation of Western literature, was shot in 1935. It was directed by Yoshimura Misao and produced by the *Dai to eiga* company. Between 1930 – the year in which he started his career – and 1945, when he died in Tokyo during an American air raid, Yoshimura made a massive number of movies. Many of them were 'B movies' and propaganda war films, such as

²³² *Kinema Junpō* No. 346 on October 21st, 1929, p. 84.

Omoi okoseyo Nogi shogun (Remember General Nogi, 1932), which celebrates heroes of the 1905 Russo-Japanese war and depicts unconditional loyalism and self-sacrifice, and the military documentary *Daigōrei* (Great Order, 1934), commissioned by both the Japanese army and the navy.²³³

In Yoshimura's version, in contrast to Hosoyama's and Tanaka's 'faithful' adaptations, the novel was transformed to the Japanese cultural context, presenting remarkable differences in its hypotext. According to the summary published in the magazine *Kinema Junpō* (February 11th 1935), the film focused on the decline of the protagonist, named Otsuya, combining elements of 'fallen woman melodrama' and 'maternal melodrama', both common in Japanese cinema. The film's plot revolves around Otsuya, a beautiful young woman who lived on a farm owned by the aunt of Murase's Kazuhiro, a wealthy First Lieutenant. While on leave visiting his aunt, he has an affair with Otsuya, who becomes pregnant. When the family finds out about her pregnancy, she is forced to flee and stays at the house of an old man called Yasaku. However, she has to leave her new home because of spiteful gossip and moves to Tokyo, where she gives birth. Due to her miserable life, she is obliged to work as a prostitute to support her baby. Nevertheless, despite all Otsuya's sacrifices, the baby dies, leaving her dejected. Moreover, shortly afterwards, by some misfortune she is accused of murder. At that point, Kazuhiro reads in a newspaper about Otsuya's fall and her charge. Feeling guilty, and advised by a friend, Kazuhiro comes to her aid and saves her from being unjustly condemned:

²³³ Peter High, *The Imperial Screen. Japanese Film culture in the Fifteen Years War, 1931-1945*, p. 48.

A First Lieutenant Murase Kazuhiko took leave and went to a farm where his aunt Oba and the beautiful Otsuya lived. Kazuhiko and Otsuya spent a wonderful time together at the farm, and later he went back to work. Day after day, it became obvious that there was something wrong in Otsuya's body. From then on, being pregnant, Otsuya had to escape from Kazuhiko's family, who blamed him for his unrighteous act. Otsuya stayed at the house of an old man, Yasaku, who helped her in various ways until she had to move to the city of Tokyo in order to escape from those who spoke ill of her. An innocent soul [a baby] started breathing on the 2nd floor of a small and dirty urban hospital. Otsuya's life was very miserable because she had to 'cover her face thick with powder' [work as a prostitute] for the sake of her beloved child. Furthermore, her only hope in her life, the baby, soon passed away and left her behind. She kept walking in the dark until she could no longer tell if she was alive or dead. To make matters worse, she became a suspect in a murder case. At that moment, Kazuhiko, who was suffering from a twinge of conscience, came to know all these facts through a newspaper, and saved Otsuya from danger with advice from his colleague Omiyo.²³⁴

As the *Kinema Junpō* plot shows, Yoshimura's film kept the main story-line: a rich male character has a sexual encounter with a young lady who lives with his aunt. She

²³⁴ *Kinema Junpō*, No. 531, 11 February 1935, p. 99.

becomes pregnant and has to leave the house. Her life becomes wretched, and she ends up working as a prostitute. After their encounter, Kazuhiko takes no further interest until he finds out that she is accused of murder. At that point, regretting what he has done, he helps her.

Tolstoy uses the character of Katyusha as an archetype of the fallen women to elaborate his critique of Russian society and the judicial system, which Nekhlyudov defines as having been conceived just to benefit the upper class and its interests. In the film, however, there is no social or political criticism. Yoshimura portrays Otsuya as a victim of hard times and a self-sacrificing mother who, unlike Katyusha, does not abandon her baby and is obliged to work as a prostitute to be able to support it. Her poverty and her subsequent fall into prostitution are her natural destiny, not uncommon among single poor women from rural and urban areas of that time. Otsuya, like other underprivileged females, is pushed into prostitution. In fact, from the 1930s until the end of the war, prostitution was boosted by the government, which also oversaw the sale to brothels overseas of thousands of girls, known as *karayuki-san*, ‘doomed’ to satisfy the sexual appetites of Japanese troops and expatriates.²³⁵ On the other hand, Lieutenant Kazuhiro is presented as an archetypical army officer who rescues Otsuya from a miserable life and a bleak future in prison when he learns of her misfortunes.

Thus, all the episodes narrated in the novel after Katyusha’s sentence²³⁶ and used by Tolstoy to attack Russian elites, to condemn peasants’ misery, the individual ownership of property, and to denounce endemic injustice – such as Katyusha’s life in jail, Nekhludoff’s travels to meet prominent persons to ask them to intercede for her, the

²³⁵ Jennifer Robertson, ‘Japan Post-Meiji Period’. In Helen Tierney, (ed.). *Women's Studies Encyclopedia*. (Greenwood Publishing Group, 1999), pp. 784-785.

²³⁶ A Chief Judge (Rintarou Fujima), a Prosecutor (Saburou Kumoi), and a Chief of Police (Kentarou Miyako) appear in the film.

journey to exile in Siberia, and Katyusha's relationships with the political prisoner Simonson and other inmates – remain undepicted.

The sociopolitical and ideological context explains the changes to the portrayal of the characters and the omission of fundamental narrative events. Since the birth of cinema, authorities have imposed regulations and norms on the film industry. By 1929 and subsequent years, while the increasing militarism dominated political and social life, all productions were strictly controlled by film policy and censorship. The 'fallen woman melodrama' did not become a cinematic code to subvert social order in the 1930s by itself, since the alienated status of 'fallen women' was endorsed by the marginal status of women in general, within the framework of pre-war Japan.²³⁷ Nevertheless, it was not permitted to screen a story which represented elements that could be perceived to be subversive, such as portraying a 'dishonest' officer, the inclusion of criticism of the legal system, the depiction of a trial conducted by incompetent judges and sloppy government employees, or unfair sentences or cruel punishment, such as those that appear in Tolstoy's story. The existence of political prisoners or negative judgments of private property could not be mentioned or insinuated at a time at which totalitarian and extreme right-wing political ideologies were emerging.

²³⁷ Ryoko Misono, 'Fallen women at the edge of the empire: Shimizu Hiroshi's Yokohama films and the image of imperial Japan in the 1930s.' *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema*, 2013, 5.1-2 (2013), pp. 3-19, p. 5.

Gion no shimai (The sisters of the Gion, 1936)

Gion no shimai is a *keikō* film that focused on the critique of the contemporary socio-political issues of the time. By using the perspective of discrimination against women, the movie could depict a critique of the social system without being totally censored.²³⁸ The picture was a loose adaptation of Alexander Kuprin's novel *Yama* (Yama: The Pit), published in Russia in three parts between 1909 and 1915 and translated into Japanese in 1923. Kuprin's story, set in an unspecified city, narrates the lives of a group of prostitutes who work in a brothel in the Yama red light district, on the outskirts of the town. The first part depicts in detail life in the brothel and the tedious daily routine of the girls who spend their lives confined there, while the second and third parts contain long sections of minimal relation to the main plot. The novel, considered a failure nowadays by the critics, constantly introduces digressions and unnecessary details that make it difficult to understand clearly the thread and meaning of the work.

The main storyline revolves around the characters Zhenka and Lyubka, who represent opposite viewpoints and attitudes towards life and their profession. Zhenka is an educated prostitute who spends her non-working time reading. She perceives prostitution as a profitable business in which she can improve her position if she takes advantage when the opportunity appears. For her, the current job is temporary: she expects to leave once she has saved enough money. However, she contracts syphilis and eventually commits suicide, when she is already physically wrecked, having consciously infected as many men as she could. In contrast, Lyubka is an uneducated and innocent but affable girl to whom Likhonin, an idealistic student, wants to teach a profession so that she can redeem herself. Incapable of learning, she merely aspires to be Likhonin's

²³⁸ Tadao Satō, *Kenji Mizoguchi and the Art of Japanese Cinema*, p. 48.

mistress and servant. However, Likhonin becomes tired of Lyubka's unsuitability and decides to give up his plan. Lyubka is forced to return to the brothel. Unlike Zhenka, Lyubka is conformist and accepts her status, since it provides her with food and shelter, expecting that nothing will make her lose the 'steady' income and the 'security' of the brothel.

The story of the two prostitutes inspired the script for the movie, written by Yoda Yoshitaka. The plot, set in Kyoto, revolves around two sisters who live together and work independently as low-ranking *geisha* in the area of Gion, one of the most exclusive and renowned *geisha* districts of the country. The two sisters have completely different approaches to the *geisha* business. Umekichi, the elder, is a traditional *geisha*, embedded with the archaic culture of *giri*: that is, the social obligation of reciprocity and gratitude to those who have given something in the past. Omochya, the younger sister, in contrast to the other *geisha* in the city, is a *modan gāru* (modern girl)²³⁹ who has graduated from a women's high school and wears Western clothes except when she is working.

²³⁹ The term *modan gāru*, or *moga*, refers to the Japanese urban young women who adopted Westernized clothes, lifestyles and behavior in the 1920s. Economically independent and sexually liberated, they represented the opposite to the traditional role of *ryōsai kenbo* (good wife, wise mother) promoted during the Meiji era and advocated throughout the 1930s by the nationalistic ideology that emerged in that decade. Weinbaum, A. E., Thomas, L. M., Ramamurthy, P., Poiger, U. G., Dong, M. Y., & Barlow, T. E. 'The modern girl as heuristic device: Collaboration, connective comparison, multidirectional citation.' In *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Duke University Press, 2008), pp. 1-24, p. 9.



Fig. 12. Left: Umekichi, played by Umemura Yōko, wearing the traditional *kimono* and hairstyle. Right: Omochya, played by Yamada Isuzu, wearing ‘*modan gāru*’ western-style clothes, make-up, and hairstyle.

Due to her sense of *giri*, Umekichi gives shelter and food to the ruined silk dealer Yoshizawa, her former *danna*,²⁴⁰ who has just abandoned his wife and son after an argument while the family possessions are being auctioned.²⁴¹ When Omochya asks her why she is helping Yoshizawa even though they are both struggling to earn enough to survive, Umekichi explains to her sister that she owes him gratitude because in the past he helped her to become a ‘full-fledged’ *geisha*. Omochya makes a futile attempt to convince her sister that her traditional sense of *giri* is senseless and that she does not owe

²⁴⁰ The *danna* was a wealthy married man who provided for his family and also for the *geisha*.

²⁴¹ It was not unusual for some *danna* to end up becoming bankrupt by spending too much money on *geisha* or by being fooled by a ‘malevolent’ one.

her ex-patron anything. For Omochya, men with money like Yoshizawa buy or sell *geisha* ‘like chattel.’ Therefore, all men are their enemies, since none of them treat them like human beings.

Omochya sees the opportunity to get rid of Yoshizawa when the *okaasan*²⁴² tells her that she wants her sister Umekichi to act in a high-class celebration. Omochya thinks that by attending this event, Umekichi will have the chance to meet a new *danna*, thus ending her *giri* to Yoshizawa. The *okaasan* stresses that Umekichi must look impeccable and wear a new kimono to increase the reputation of *ochaya*, and Omochya, aware that they cannot afford to buy a new one, devises a plan. She visits Kimura, a clerk in a kimono-making store who is in love with her, and manages to persuade him to give her a new kimono. Omochya, behind Umekichi’s back, also convinces Jurakudo, an antiques dealer, to become Umekichi’s patron and give her some money. Omochya gives money to Yoshizawa, asking him to leave Umekichi and return to his family. He accepts, but instead of looking for his family, he moves to a friend’s house. However, Omochya’s plan misfires when Umekichi discovers her sister’s ruse and meets Yoshizawa again.

²⁴² *Geisha* use the word *okaasan*, which means ‘mother’ in English, to refer to the women who manage the *ochaya* (teahouses) in which they perform.



Fig. 13. Jurakudo, played by Okura Fumio y Omocha, in a taxi. Since she is working, she changes her clothing style and wears a *kimono* and a *geisha* wig. In that scene, Jurakudo is totally drunk, and Omocha, instead of seeing him home as she has promised, takes him to a restaurant's private room where, when he sobers up, she convinces him to become Umekichi's patron.

At that point, Kudo, the owner of the kimono store, realises that Kimura has stolen clothes from the shop and runs to the sisters' house, demanding that they return his goods. However, Omochya sweet-talks Kudo into becoming her *danna*. Kimura, madly jealous and hurt at having being manipulated by Omochya and fired from the store, seeks his revenge. He informs Kudo's wife about his relations with Omochya and then abducts her with his taxi driver friend, throwing her out of the moving car and injuring her grievously. The last scenes of the film show the two sisters defeated. Umekichi has been abandoned by Yoshizawa, who has found a job as a director of a factory in his wife's hometown,

while Omochya is seriously injured. The movie ends with a despondent soliloquy in which Omochya speaks ill of the *geisha* life and the existence of *geisha* itself.

As previously mentioned, the script of the film was inspired by the relationship and the personalities of the two prostitutes, Zhenka and Lyubka. In that way, there exist parallelisms between them and the sisters of Mizoguchi's film. On the one hand, Omochya and Umekichi, like Zhenka and Lyubka towards prostitution, have completely different perceptions of their profession and attitudes towards men. Omochya and Zhenka, both educated young women, feel that men treat them as mere objects, and hence, that they have the right to take advantage of them whenever possible, lying, manipulating, or breaking the established rules if necessary. Furthermore, both characters suffer physical deterioration caused by men: Zhenka is wrecked by the syphilis passed by her customers, while Omochya is seriously injured by a spiteful suitor whom she deceived. On the other hand, Umekichi and Lyubka are naïve and resigned to their destiny and the unfairness of their hardship. Furthermore, they do unnecessary favours for men, such as giving shelter to a patron in the case of Umekichi, or embroidering a shirt, as Lyubka does for a customer: acts that Omochya and Zhenka consider to be degrading and a waste of money.

Beside the evident differences in the locale, plot, and characters, there are remarkable dissimilarities in the themes addressed in the movie and the novel. On the one hand, Kuprin's story focuses on whoredom, depicting in a somewhat disorderly documentary reportage style the social and moral issues of its age, such as ignorance, inequality, philanthropy and liberalism, socialism and anarchy, education, environment, and the economic pressures that lead to prostitution.²⁴³

On the other hand, Mizoguchi criticizes women's discrimination and their available means to resist the patriarchal system and to fight male-dominated society by

²⁴³ Nicholas Luker, *Alexander Kuprin*. (Twayne, 1978), p. 134.

portraying the hard life of the *geisha* and the feudal nature of the profession.²⁴⁴ At that time, as well as in previous eras, it was common for a *geisha* to have a *danna* or patron, who supported her and covered her large expenses or her expensive training, outfits, instruments, and so on.²⁴⁵ The *geisha* could get a patron as a trainee or after her training period. Since a *geisha* is not a prostitute, she was not obliged, theoretically, to have sexual encounters with her patron. However, it was expected that at the end of her formative period, she would participate in the ritual of *mizuage*, which involved offering her virginity to the patron who had paid for her training, or would become the mistress of the *danna* she obtained during her professional life. In both cases, intimate relations were not considered the payment for the patronage. Nevertheless, the patronage system would put *geisha* into debts that were difficult to repay with the income obtained from their artistic skills. Thus, *geisha* were often in need of a *danna*, upon whom the *geisha* became dependent and to whom they owed a debt of gratitude, often repaid with something other than artistic performances.

Sakura no sono (The Cherry Orchard, 1936)

In 1936, Murata Minoru directed the movie *Sakura no sono*, the only talkie based on a Western work made before the Pacific War that is lost. It was an adaptation of the well-known Chekhov play *Vishnyovyi sad* (The Cherry Orchard), produced by *Shinkō*

²⁴⁴ Tadao Satō, *Kenji Mizoguchi and the Art of Japanese Cinema*, pp. 49-50.

²⁴⁵ For further information about the *geisha*'s burdens, see *The Gei of Geisha: Music, Identity and Meaning*, by Kelly M. Foreman.

Kinema, a company that, during its ten-year lifespan (1931-1941), made pictures with other remarkable directors such as Mizoguchi Kenji and Uchida Tomu.

The play, considered a drama despite the author stating that it was a comedy, revolves around an aristocratic family that has fallen in the world. It deals with a variety of themes, such as the apathy and passivity of the nobility, the emancipation of the serfs, the emergence of the middle-class, and class conflicts. The story opens with the return to Russia of the aristocrat Madame Ranevskaya, who had moved to Paris five years previously after the deaths of her son and husband in the hope of forgetting her sorrows. Upon her arrival, she discovers that her estate, including a cherry orchard, is deep in debt. It has to be sold at auction to pay these debts, but Lopakhin, a merchant whose father was once a serf on the estate, proposes to cut down the cherry orchard and build summer cottages whose rental could provide a not inconsiderable income. Ranevskaya, like her brother Gaev, her daughter Anya, and her adoptive daughter Varya, thinks that it is possible to find other ways to pay the debts and keep the property, saving the orchard at the same time. However, everyone has a negligent and passive attitude, and nothing is actually done to find a way to resolve the problem. Finally, the estate has to be sold at auction. Lopakhin, who buys it, announces to the family that he plans to cut down the cherry orchard. At that point, Ranevskaya, devastated, decides to return to Paris. When packing, she can see the workers starting to cut down the cherry orchard. At the end, offstage, the audience hears the echoing axe chopping down the trees.

In Murata's version, the story is set in the countryside of Japan, portraying the same characters as the play with Japanese names. According to the critique published in *Kinema Junpō* written by Tatsuhiko Shigeno,²⁴⁶ the film tried to depict the same events

²⁴⁶ *Kinema's Junpō* no. 576, 11 May 1936, p. 101.

as in the play. However, Murata failed in adapting the story to the Japanese cultural context, due to the fact, according to the critic, that he did not understand that the play and Chekhov's sophisticated dramatization style could not be reproduced or reflected in a film:

(...) this movie directed by Minoru Murata puts Chekhov's original story directly into the context of the countryside in Japan (...) Despite its relatively longer production and higher production cost compared to the average Japanese film, it turned out to be a product of Murata's self-centred confidence and determination. This may be an unnecessary speculation, but Murata did not seem to understand Chekhov's original story (...) and made *Sakura no sono* without much thinking (...) Taking these into consideration, it is obviously important to think how one can transplant *Sakura no sono* from the ground of Russia to that of Japan (...) In addition, it is difficult to replace the very tight-knit form of dramatization in Chekhov's original story with the cinematic form of dramatization.

The reviewer also criticized the poorly-made dramatization of the movie and the inclusion of irrelevant scenes. Furthermore, he blamed the way in which Murata intended to portray the metaphorical elements of the play. For instance, the symbolic glorification of the past, featured in Ranevskaya's and her family's attempt to keep the estate and preserve the cherry orchard intact, was represented in the film by overlapping images of the procession of a *Shogun* across a line of cherry blossom:

(...) In a scene of the film where the land owners of the cherry orchard recall their past glory, Minoru Murata overlaps, in an effect called 'multiple exposure,' the image of a procession of *Shogun* with a text saying 'The great eleventh Shogun was standing on the same ground as we are now'. Needless to say, such a sad fate should be represented by all those giant cherry blossom trees lined up along the street and by the depressed people who were once regarded as a prestigious family (...). Such lack of metaphor can also be seen in the scene where a young man falls down stairs. I have no idea what the director meant by showing the young man dramatically falling down stairs. Close to the end, the scene where a young couple shouts 'New life, Banzai!!' as they depart in a horse-drawn carriage, and the scene where a big cherry blossom tree is cut down, were even less powerful and impressive. The metaphors in the last scene cannot be clear, given that the previous scenes were nonsense. Besides such problems in fundamental lack of understanding, the most preeminent flaw was its poor way of dramatization. (...) So it is no wonder that this movie was ultimately a failure.



Fig. 14. Actors in a carriage playing the roles of Trofimov, a left-wing student; Anya, Madame Ranevskaya's daughter; and Madame Ranevskaya, among other characters. In this scene they seem to be enjoying the view of the cherry orchard. National Film Centre, Tokyo.

In sum, Murata failed in his attempt to transfer the play's themes, such as the growth of the middle class in Russia and the fall of the aristocracy, to the Japanese context. Despite his intent to adapt the play to the Japanese cultural sphere, by using, for instance, images of a *shogun* procession as an allegory for the attachment to a memorable past, the result was a nonsensical film whose metaphors and symbolism were meaningless.

Aien kyō (The Straits of Love and Hate, 1937)

In 1937, Mizoguchi directed *Aien kyō* (The Straits of Love and Hate), his last film adaptation of a western literary work. The movie was inspired by Tolstoy's *Resurrection*,

although the story was completely modified to portray the socioeconomic issues of that time – such as the massive unemployment that affected *gakushi* and *benshi* after the transformation of the cinema industry upon the arrival of sound in the cinema – and to include narrative conventions of the Japanese ‘maternal melodrama’ and *shinpa* love tragedies. *Shinpa* melodramas, as in *Aien kyō*, often depict a woman who suffers on account of an undependable man and follows the typical plot wherein ‘a pure-hearted country girl loves a youth who so yearns for life in the city that he abandons her while she is pregnant, returning after having become a failure.’²⁴⁷

The plot of Mizoguchi’s film is set in Japan in contemporary times, shortly after the arrival of the talkies. It revolves around Kenkichi, the son of a *ryokan*²⁴⁸ owner situated in the province of Shinshū (currently named Nagano Prefecture), and Ofumi, a maid who works there and whom Kenkichi has impregnated. The movie opens with a scene in which Kenkichi’s parents try to convince him to give up the idea of moving to Tokyo instead of running the inn with his father. He had planned to go alone and then bring Ofumi to join him in the near future, once he was settled. However, when Ofumi’s uncle appears at the inn claiming that she is going to join his troupe of itinerant actors, Ofumi, fearing that he is a perverse man who will sell her to a brothel as soon as he can, begs Kenkichi to let her leave the inn with him and move to Tokyo. He accepts reluctantly, and they both undertake the trip to Tokyo.

There, neither of them has a job. Kenkichi spends the days at home, doing nothing, and only Ofumi actively seeks employment. By chance, she meets Yoshitarō, a former

²⁴⁷ Tadao Satō, *Currents in Japanese Cinema*, p.20

²⁴⁸ *Ryokan* is a traditional Japanese inn which features *tatami* rooms, communal baths called *ofuro*, and offers for breakfast and dinner the traditional multi-course Japanese cuisine known as *kaiseki*.

*gakushi*²⁴⁹ in a movie theatre in Asakusa who had lost his post when the talkies arrived. To help her to find a job, he asks the owner of a bar he knows to hire her as a waitress, to which the barman agrees. Meanwhile, Kenkichi's father arrives at his son and Ofumi's home and convinces Kenkichi to return to the inn right away. Ofumi arrives home to find a letter left by Kenkichi, in which he tells her he is returning home, and realises that he has abandoned her and the coming baby. Her life becomes still harder when the owner of the bar realizes she is pregnant and fires her. Once the baby is born, with no means of support, Ofumi finds a foster family to take care of him temporarily.

The next scenes show Yoshitarō entering a hostess bar to play the accordion for customers in exchange for some coins. He encounters Ofumi with a group of other girls, drinking and entertaining a man. Two years have passed, and both Ofumi and Yoshitarō are still struggling to make a living. At that point, Ofumi's uncle meets them in a park and invites them to join his troupe, to which they agree. The uncle pays the debt to the family who are caring for Ofumi's child and brings it to her.

²⁴⁹ *Gakushi* began to lose their jobs soon after the sound systems were installed in the movie theaters. According to Anderson, they lost their jobs much earlier than the *benshi* because 'many early sound films had recorded musical accompaniment but little or no dialogue, so there was still a place in theaters for *benshi*,' and because 'musicians were anonymous employees without specific box office appeal.' J.L. Anderson, 'Spoken Silents in the Japanese Cinema; or, Talking to Pictures: Essaying the *Katsuben*, Contextualizing the Texts', p. 291.



Fig. 15. Ofumi, played by Yamaji Fumiko, desolate after reading Kenkichi's letter in which he tells her that he has returned to Shinshū, abandoning her and the coming baby.

The troupe moves around and performs in different places. At the end of the year, they arrive in Ofumi's hometown, where Kenkichi's family *ryokan* is located. Kenkichi attends the show and sees Ofumi and Yoshitarō performing a *manzai*,²⁵⁰ a comical stand-up dialogue in which they narrate Ofumi's dramatic story.

²⁵⁰ *Manzai* is a traditional style comedy that began in the Middle Ages as a rite performance at New Year, evolving in subsequent centuries. Joel F. Stocker, *Manzai: Team Comedy in Japan's Entertainment Industry*, pp. 51-77. In Jessica Davis (ed.) *Understanding Humor in Japan* (Wayne State University Press, 2006), pp. 55-57.

Manzai performances during the 1920s and 1930s were double-act shows, in which two actors, usually dressed in casual kimono or Western-Style clothes, as in the film, first performed a dialogue full of jokes based on misunderstandings and double-talk, and then sang and played instruments. Normally one of the comedians would play the role of a fool while the other portrays a smart character. Thus, in the picture she portrays herself, the clever one, and Yoshitarō plays the role of Kenkichi, the nitwit. The *manzai* ridicules Kenkichi by portraying him as a stingy, immature, weak, and cruel man who abandoned the girl and their baby without hesitation, incapable of facing life's difficulties and standing up to his father. Since the audience is aware of the signification of the traditional opposite roles of the *manzai*, and probably also know about Ofumi and Kenkichi's story, the radical parody of Kenkichi increases the comic effect of the dialogue.

Humiliated, Kenkichi leaves and meets Ofumi's uncle backstage before the show ends. Feeling remorse, he offers him and his troupe free accommodation in his *ryokan*. Once in the inn, Kenkichi begs Ofumi to forgive him and proposes to make it up to her, to marry her and to start a new life all three together in the hotel. Although she confesses to him that she is love with Yoshitarō, Ofumi ends up accepting his proposal for the sake of the child's future. However, Kenkichi's father disapproves of the relationship and rejects Ofumi and her child. Kenkichi, still unable to confront his father, watches passively as Ofumi and the child leave the house. Ofumi rejoins the company and resumes her *manzai* interpretations with Yoshitarō.



Fig. 16. Yoshitarō (played by Kawazu Seizaburō) playing the accordion and Ofumi playing the *shamisen* at the end of the *manzai* performance, after the dialogue in which they ridiculed Kenchiki's behaviour.

As previously mentioned, the movie was inspired by Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, although the plot and characters – as shown in the summary of the film – were completely altered to incorporate elements of the *shinpa* melodramas and to portray the socioeconomic struggles of the unprivileged and the unemployed of that time. The film and the novel both depict a story of a naïve young girl who falls in love with a wealthy man, becomes pregnant, is abandoned by him, and becomes a self-sacrificing woman who faces a tough life. However, there are remarkable differences in the story-line and in the characters.

Tolstoy's story begins with Nekhludoff's encounter with Katyusha in court, where he serves as a juror. After discovering the vicissitudes faced by Katyusha after he took advantage of her – such as the death of the baby and her fall into prostitution – the novel narrates his determination to redeem himself for his past behaviour and his efforts to aid her. His process of moral regeneration, suggested and sustained throughout the novel by religious references to the fall and resurrection, leads him to propose marriage to Katyusha and to accompany her to Siberia following the prisoners' convoy.

In *Aien kyō*, Ofumi receives the aid of the humble musician, Yoshitarō – whom she actually loves and to whom she will return at the end of the film – before she meets Kenkichi again. In that sense, the character of Yoshitarō draws together the roles of Nekhludoff and the political prisoner Simonson, whom Katyusha prefers to marry instead of Nekhludoff. Kenkichi encounters Ofumi again at the end of the film, when he sees her acting with Yoshitarō in the *manzai* performance in which she narrates a comic account of the experiences she suffered because of his behaviour. The performance becomes a sort of trial where Kenkichi undergoes a humiliating public judgment in which he is the accused instead of Ofumi/Katyusha, as in the novel. Like Nekhludoff in Katyusha's trial, Kenkichi's conscience awakens during his 'indictment' and he is determined to repair the damage he caused by marrying Ofumi and acknowledging paternity of the child. However, Kenkichi will act once more as the selfish, mean, and cowardly man portrayed in the *manzai* performance, rejecting Ofumi and his son instead of confronting his father.



Fig. 17. Ofumi in one of the final scenes in which she takes her son and leaves the house after Kenkichi's father (played by Yukata Mimasu) tells him that he disapproves of their relationship. Kenkichi (played by Shimizu Masao) lowers his head in shame without saying or doing anything.

After Mizoguchi's film, the popularity of Tolstoy's novel continued, and a new version of the story directed by Nobuchi Akira, also entitled *Fukkatsu* (Resurrection, 1950), was released after the Pacific War, during the American Occupation. It is unquestionable that Tolstoy's character, Katyusha, had a profound impact on Japanese film history. During the silent era, every movie with a self-sacrificing heroine was a *kashusha-mono*, named after the heroine of Tolstoy's *Resurrection*.²⁵¹

²⁵¹ Joseph Anderson and Donald Richie. *The Japanese Film: Art and Industry*, p. 315.

Besides Tolstoy's novel, Dostoyevsky's *The Idiot* also enjoyed great popularity during the 1950s. Two adaptations of this novel were produced, in 1951 and 1953. The first was Kurosawa's version, titled *Hakuchi* (The Idiot, 1951), and the second was *Chi no hate made* (Until the End of the Earth, 1953), shot by Hisamatsu Seiji. Kurosawa filmed one more adaptation of a Russian literary work in 1957, namely *Donzoko* (The Lower Depths), based on Gorky's play.

6

French Literature

The first French works were translated into Japanese during the Meiji era. The first to appear were essays by Montesquieu and Rousseau, and subsequently French literature works translated from both the original and from versions in English were published. In the 1880s and 1890s, attention turned to writers like Alexandre Dumas (father and son), Émile Zola, Guy de Maupassant, and Victor Hugo, with their novels and stories becoming widely popular. Works from these authors, with the exception of Alexandre Dumas *père* and Zola, were taken to the screen during the Taishō and Shōwa pre-war eras. Besides classical authors, Japanese studios also produced films based on contemporary detective stories written by Maurice Leblanc.

813- Rupimono (813: The Adventures of Arsène Lupin, 1923)

The first film based on a French work, made during the 1920s, was Mizoguchi's *813 – Rupimono* (813: The Adventures of Arsène Lupin, 1923), based on Leblanc's 1910 novel *813*. The book was translated for the first time in Japan in 1913, with the title *Kojō no himitsujō* (Secret of the Old Castle). Apart from the title, the characters were also given

Japanese names, with Arsène Lupin being renamed Senkan Ryūken. A new translation of the novel was published in 1919. This time it kept the original title and character names, although these names were adapted slightly to accommodate Japanese pronunciation.²⁵² In Mizoguchi's movie, the story was set in Japan instead of Paris, and the characters' names were Japanese. Nevertheless, the protagonist was portrayed with Arsène Lupin's characteristic stylish appearance: that is, with a top hat, a black cape, a cigar, and a monocle.



Fig. 18. Still from 813 - *Rupimono* published in the magazine *Katsudō Zasshi* (November 1923). Kōmei Minami plays the role of Arsène Lupin, called Katayama Gorō in the film. He is portrayed with Arsène Lupin's characteristic clothing style.

²⁵² M. Carton, 'Enquete philologique sur les traductions des aventures d'Arsene Lupin au Japon.' *Etudes francaises* 24 (2017), pp. 1-22, p. 3.

Chairo no onna (The Dark Woman, 1926)

Another film based on Leblanc's character was filmed in 1926 by Saegusa Genjirō. His film, titled *Chairo no onna* (The Dark Woman', or literally 'The Woman in Brown), was based on the book *Arsène Lupin contre Herlock Sholmes* (Sherlock Holmes' name was disguised for copyright reasons), published in 1908. The book is a collection of two stories: 'The Blonde Lady' and 'The Jewish Lamp'. According to the film review written by an unknown critic published in *Kinema Junpō* in December 1926,²⁵³ the movie was based on the first of these stories, in which Lupin steals an antique desk that had recently been purchased by Monsieur Gerbois, a mathematics professor. Inside there is a winning lottery ticket worth a million francs. Lupin proposes to Monsieur Gerbois that they share the money, but after the professor refuses, he asks a friend – a blonde lady – to abduct Suzanne, Gerbois' daughter. Gerbois has to yield and accept Lupin's proposal. Later Baron d'Hautrec, the owner of a valuable blue diamond, is discovered murdered. It initially appears that the diamond has not been stolen, but actually what the police find is a copy substituted by Lupin. The police nonetheless suspect Lupin, and appeal to Sholmes to resolve the case. He discovers the identity the person who killed the Baron – the blonde lady friend of Lupin called Clothilde Destange – and her links with Lupin. At the end of the story, after a battle of wits, Sholmes arrests Lupin, yet he manages to escape.

Saegusa's film, set in Japan, followed the same storyline, although it omitted the episode of the lottery ticket and the kidnapping of Gerbois' daughter. The summary of the plot shows that the film depicted the murder of the Baron, named in the picture 'Baron Oda', and the 'clashes' between Arikawa Ryūtarō (Lupin) and Shōno Housuke

²⁵³ *Kinema Junpō* no. 248, 11 December 1926, p. 46.

(Sholmes). However, there were significant plot differences in this film. In the adaptation, the diamond is not stolen, but is kept by a relative of the Baron, Count Kuroda. It is this character who hires the private investigator ‘Holmes’, aiming to find the Baron’s murderer:

One dark night, a car with bright headlights stopped in front of a grand European-style building and a young gentleman got out. He was Arikawa Ryūtarō [Arsène Lupin]. The building was owned by the family of Baron Oda (...) The bell suddenly rang aloud and the servant went to the owner’s room. There he found the corpse of the owner, mercilessly murdered (...) Despite the investigation by the police, the criminal was not caught. In Oda’s house, there was a famous diamond (...) However, the diamond was not lost because it was being kept by the wife of Count Kuroda (Oda’s relative) at the time. One day, Mrs. Kuroda (...) filed the case with a private detective called Shōno Housuke [Holmes]. Mainstream newspapers promptly wrote articles with titles such as ‘the fight between Holmes and Lupin begins!’ The incident descends into chaos as Holmes, with his assistant Iguchi [Watson], Lupin, with a large group of his subordinates, and a mysterious lady referred to as ‘the woman in brown’ engage in a triangular fight.

Lupin’s stories were not taken to the Japanese screen again until the 1950s, in which three more adaptations of Leblanc’s character appeared. During the 1920s and 1930s, studios and directors opted to shoot films based on works written by renowned

authors such as Victor Hugo. In fact, Hugo's novel *Les Misérables* was adapted several times during the Taishō and Shōwa prewar eras. The release of multiple different versions of the story within a short time can be explained by the economic and ideological contexts. On the one hand, Hugo's novel was well known among the middle-classes and the intelligentsia, and in the 1920s, studios probably considered that a film based on his story could increase the chance of box-office success. On the other hand, due to the universality of the themes it depicted – such as human rights, inequality, injustice, and authoritarianism – Hugo's story became an expressive way to reflect the social unrest latent in Japan in the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s.

Aa mujō (Ah, no Mercy, 1923)

In 1923, Shochiku released an adaptation of Victor's Hugo novel *Les Misérables* (1862), the Western work that, along with Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, has been most frequently taken to the screen in Japan. The novel first appeared in a Japanese newspaper in 1902 and was later published in two volumes in 1906. A new translation in three volumes was released in 1914 and republished in 1918. In those editions, the story was divided into five parts, as in the French version. Four of them are named for their main protagonists, and one for its setting: *Fantine* (part 1), *Cosette* (part 2), *Marius* (part 3), *The Idyll in the Rue Plumet* and *The Epic in the Rue St. Denis* (part 4), and *Jean Valjean* (part 5). Each part is further subdivided into shorter subsections.

The cinematograph version of the novel was presented in two parts. The first episode, entitled *Aa mujō – Dai ippen: Hōrō no maki* (Ah, no Mercy – part 1: Wanderer's

Reel), was directed by Ushihara Kiyohiko.²⁵⁴ Although Ushihara had filmed more than twenty films between 1921 and 1923, he did not achieve success until 1926, when he made the melodrama *Junange* (Suffering Women), after returning from a stay in America where he studied filmmaking under Charles Chaplin.²⁵⁵

The credits of the film, set in China instead of Paris, show that five characters appeared, with the same names as in the novel: Jean Valjean, Javert, Bishop Myriel, Fauchevelet, and Petit Gervais. Thus, it is likely that the first part of the movie focused on the depiction of some of the events narrated in the first part of the story, in which Jean Valjean is freed from prison after a 19-year sentence for stealing a loaf of bread to feed his starving sister and her family. He had been sentenced to a term of five years but the sentence was later increased due to his attempts to escape. After his release, he wanders around and faces rejection from innkeepers, since his passport reveals that he is an ex-convict. He finds help from the Bishop of Digne, who gives Valjean food and shelter. However, during the night, he steals the bishop's silver cutlery and runs away. He is arrested by the police with the bishop's goods. When they are returned, the bishop states that the silverware was a gift, so Valjean is freed. However, shortly after this, he steals a 40-sous coin from 12-year-old Petit Gervais and chases the boy away. He quickly repents and searches the city for the boy; meanwhile, his theft is reported to the authorities. Valjean flees and moves to another part of France, where he assumes a new identity as Monsieur Madeleine. There he becomes a wealthy and respected citizen, after opening a factory that employs a large number of people, and ultimately is elected mayor. One day he saves the life of Fauchelevant, after his horse breaks two of its legs and fell underneath

²⁵⁴ Only nine minutes of the film are extant and are preserved at the National Film Centre in Tokyo.

²⁵⁵ Alexander Jacoby, *A Critical Handbook of Japanese Film Directors: From the Silent Era to the Present Day*, pp. 327-328.

his cart, which is stuck and sinking into the mud. Valjean crawls under the cart and lifts it off, releasing Fauchelevent. After his recovery, Valjean procures Fauchelevent a job as a gardener at the Petit Picpus convent, where Cosette also finds shelter after escaping Javert's pursuit.

The review by an unknown critic published in *Kinema Junpō* on April 1923 describes the film as dull and tedious and criticizes the casting, particularly the leading actor who plays Jean Valjean. However, the reviewer praises the direction, dramatization, and the *mise-en scène*:

This film is boring. Not only is it monotonous, but also exaggerated facial expressions by Inoue Masao [playing Jean Valjean's character] are rampant in all of the episodes. The value of this film is completely determined by this aspect. The dramatization is fairly well-made, and the director's skill is unquestionable. I cannot complain about the way it was filmed either. It would have cost an enormous amount of money for a Japanese film, and there must have been concerted efforts and countless struggles in the process of filming. The effect can be certainly perceived in this film, but the tremendously bad casting has unfortunately made it boring.²⁵⁶

The second part, *Aa mujō – Dai nihen: Shichō no maki* (Ah, no Mercy – part 2: Mayor's Reel) was filmed by Ikeda Yoshinobu. It included scenes with the characters of Jean Valjean, Fantine, Cosette, Monsieur and Madame Thénardier, Javert, and

²⁵⁶ *Kinema Junpō* No. 130 on April 11th, 1923, p. 4.

Champmathieu. It is likely that a few minor un-credited characters also acted in this part, such as those who played in Jean Valjean's trial. Thus, it is likely that Ikeda's movie depicts the events narrated in the first and second parts of the novel that were not portrayed in Ushihara's film.

These sections of the novel describe the story of Fantine, who works in Valjean's factory. She is unjustly dismissed when a foreman discovers that she is a single mother. Her illegitimate child, Cosette, leaves with Monsieur and Madame Thénardier, who demand increasing amounts of money over time for her support, but treat the child cruelly as a slave, depriving her of her basic necessities. Without a job, unable to pay the increasing demands of the Thénardiens for Cosette's support care, the desperate Fantine sells her hair and then her teeth, and finally becomes a prostitute. One night, Inspector Javert arrests her while she is walking the streets. When Valjean hears the details of her situation and learns that she has tuberculosis, he sends Fantine to a hospital and promises to bring Cosette to her. At that point, Javert, whose lifelong goal has been to arrest the escaped convict Valjean for having stolen Petit Gervais, falsely accuses Champmathieu of being Valjean. Unwilling to let an innocent man be unfairly condemned, he goes to Arras for the trial and identifies himself as Valjean. After telling the authorities where the real Valjean can be found, he goes to Fantine, and before she dies, he promises her that he will rescue Cosette from the Thénardier family.

Valjean is captured again and sentenced to forced labour for life. Imprisoned in the military port of Toulon, he rescues a sailor trapped in the rigging of a ship. Valjean sees the opportunity to be free and fakes his own death by throwing himself into the sea. The trick is successful and the authorities consider him dead. Subsequently Valjean travels to the Inn of the Thénardier in search of Cosette. Discovering how she is being treated, he decides to adopt her as his daughter. They live on the outskirts of Paris until they have to flee, chased by Javert.

The film review published in *Kinema Junpō* in May 1923 by an unknown critic does not provide details about the plot, and thus does not allow us to compare the events narrated in that part of the novel and depicted or omitted in the film. The critic remarks that the film is uninteresting, and criticizes or approves actors and actresses. However, this reviewer, like the one of the first episode, praises the *mise-en scène*, particularly the scene of Jean Valjean's prosecution:

Unfortunately, I have not yet seen episode I. It is therefore a shame that I cannot compare these two episodes. However, I must say that there is nothing special about episode II. Director Ikeda Yoshinobu succeeded in making the story zip along, but it does not leave the audience with any lingering elusive feeling. Inoue Masao acted in a more reserved manner than usual, though this is certainly ascribed to the director. As for Fantine, performed by Nobuko Satsuki, I thought she beautified herself too much. Fantine should assume a different type of sadness or sorrow than what Nobuko [the actress playing the role] expressed. Cosette, performed by Takao Mitsuko, deserves acclaim. Iwata, Yonezu, and Shiga [playing the roles of Monsieur Thénardier, Madame Thénardier, and Champmathieu respectively] made the most out of their respective roles. The stage set was successfully designed, especially during the trial scene. Great effort and struggle must have gone into filming it.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁷ *Kinema Junpō* no. 134, 21 May, 1923, p. 3.

Apparently, both films, following the Japanese cinema industry line of the 1920s, included *shinpa* melodramatic elements. Thus, both adaptations depicted only scenes from the first and second part of Hugo's novel – perhaps the most dramatic ones – omitting decisive narrative events such as the battle in the barricades, the episode in which Jean Valjean aids Javert, happens on the injured Marius and takes him into the Paris sewers, or the relationship between Cosette and Marius.

Aa Mujō (Ah, no mercy, 1929)

In 1929, Nikkatsu produced a new adaptation of Hugo's novel *Les Misérables*, again in two parts: *Aa Mujō: zenpen* (Ah, no mercy: Part 1) and *Aa Mujō: Kōhen* (Ah, no mercy: Part 2), directed by Shiba Seika. According to the review written by an unknown reviewer in *Kinema Junpō*, it was a period film was set in Japan during the Meiji Restoration. The critic praises the dramatization and the acting, but criticizes the fact that, since Hugo's story is very popular, the movie has been conceived as a box-office work:

I have seen multiple versions of Jean Valjean performed by Henry Krauss,²⁵⁸ Gabriel Gabrio,²⁵⁹ and William Farnum.²⁶⁰ In Japan, the movie was set in China, as is much of film studio Shochiku Kamata's work, and Inoue Masao acted as a Chinese version of Jean Valjean.²⁶¹ (...) Now it has been adapted into a Japanese period film by Shiba Seika. He selected Japan around the Meiji Restoration as the setting, which is a better idea than China. The dramatization is truly well-made. (...) Through all 18 rolls, the film provides thrills and suspense at a suitable rhythm while displaying the enthusiasm of those who were involved in making it. However, the film apparently focuses on creating box-office success. (...) The story itself is already down-market. It has much potential to attract people.²⁶²

²⁵⁸ The reviewer refers to either the French film of about 3 hours *Les misérables* (1912) by Albert Capellani, or to the series of movies directed in 1913 by the same film-maker, titled: Époque 1: Jean Valjean; Époque 2: Fantine; Époque 3: Cosette; Époque 4: Cosette et Marius. In all of them, the actor Henry Krauss played the role of Jean Valjean.

²⁵⁹ Gabriel Gabrio played the role of Jean Valjean in the French film *Les Misrables* directed in 1925 by Henri Fescourt, whose runtime was about six hours.

²⁶⁰ William Farnum played Jean Valjean in the American film *Les Misérables* directed by Frank Lloyd in 1917.

²⁶¹ The critic refers to Ikeda's Yoshinobu 1923 film *Aa mujō - Dai nihen: Shichō no maki* (Ah, no Mercy, part 2: The Major's Reel), set in China, in which the main role is played by Inoue Masao.

²⁶² *Aa Mujō: zenpen and Aa Mujō: Kohen. Kinema Junpō* no. 334, 21 June 1929, p. 72.

The film's credits name only six actors, so obviously most of the events and characters represented in the novel were not depicted. Yet, through the reading of the *kanji* used in the names of the film's characters, it is possible to deduce that they represented the roles of the protagonists of Hugo's novel, which are essential in the development of the story-line. The leading character's name is Jaan Gijūrō (邪安義十), which retains the name of the novel's protagonist, Jean Valjean. The first *kanji*, 邪, means wicked, which has reminiscences of the protagonist's deceitful personality. On the other hand, the novel's antagonist – Javert, the fanatical policeman – is known in the film as Jashirō (蛇四郎). Here, the first syllable 'ja' (written with the *kanji* 蛇) means 'snake', highlighting the character's evil nature.²⁶³ Another male character, Ushigoro (牛五郎), whose first *kanji* (牛) signifies the bull, played the role of Marius Pontmercy – the young revolutionary who is in love with Cosette. The *kanji* suggests this character's nonconformist personality, vigour, and force, similar to that of Marius at the barricades. Moreover, the character of Cosette is known as Harue (春江), whose first *kanji* (春) represents spring or puberty, symbolizing her youth when the fight in the barricades occurs and her relationship with Marius begins. Fantine, her mother, is called in the film Otsune (お常). Here, the *kanji* means unchanging or eternal, which is reminiscent of this character's premature death.

²⁶³ Snakes were traditionally perceived in Japanese Buddhism as messengers of gods. However, during the Meiji Restoration, the religious reform banned beliefs in and worship of local ancestral gods, including many associated with snakes. Subsequently, negative perceptions of snakes progressively arose, and they acquired harmful symbolism.



Fig. 19. Harue (Cosette), played by Umemura Yōko, and Ushigoro (Marius), played by Takase Minoru. National Film Centre, Tokyo.

The character of nun Mitsuki (光月尼), whose first *kanji* means light, brightness or illumination, also appears in the film: she is a Buddhist nun who replaces the role of Bishop Myriel, who helps Jean Valjean in the first part of the novel. Moreover, the names of the characters and the fact that the extant stills show scenes of a fight (fig. 20) allow us to presume that the film's storyline is similar to that of the novel. It is likely that the film depicted the change in the protagonist's life due to the advice of a religious figure (in the film, Mitsuki, a Buddhist nun); persecution by an official (Javert-Jashirō); and, in

contrast to the adaptations shot by Ushihara Kiyohiko and Ikeda Yoshinobu in 1923, the relationship between the protagonist's 'daughter' and a young man (Harue-Ushigoro/ Cosette-Marius); and the fight in the streets in which he is injured.



Fig. 20. Jaan Gijūrō (Jean Valjean) played by Soba Yōnosuke. National Film Centre Tokyo.

It is likely, as in other period films, that the events, with the aim of providing credibility to the story, were framed in real historical occurrences, in one of the two main rebellions that occurred during the Meiji era. The still (fig. 20) shows an electric lamp at the entrance to the place but, given that electricity was not widespread throughout the country until 1883, this allows us to surmise that the action was set at the time of the so-

called Chichibu Rebellion.²⁶⁴ Thus, it is plausible to suggest that the main characters in Shiba's movie – Jaan Gijūrō and Ushigoro – appeared to be involved in the Chichibu rebellion, as Jean Valjean and Marius in Hugo's novel were embroiled in the 1832 anti-monarchist insurrection of Paris.

The reasons why the director transformed the story into a period film, besides creative factors, can be explained by the cultural, economic and ideological context. On the one hand, period films were extremely popular at that time, with their production representing around 50 percent of the total number of films made in Japan.²⁶⁵ Thus, the combination of the popularity of Hugo's novel and its transmutation into a period film was highly likely to guarantee profitable box-office success. On the other hand, Hugo's story fitted into a new genre known as 'The Rebel Subgenre,' which emerged in the early 1920s. It became very popular from 1923 to 1931: a time of economic instability and social unrest. This new genre, both in novels and film, gave psychological dimensions to familiar characters and created new heroes who reflected the common discontent manifested in those years. Furthermore, by setting the stories in an actual historical context, directors could avoid censorship bans on their films despite depicting traditional

²⁶⁴ The Chichibu Rebellion was an extensive peasant revolt that took place in the Chichibu district of Saitama Prefecture in November 1884. Previously, the Meiji government had created new laws on land ownership, and established new taxation systems that harmed and impoverished farmers, tenants, and peasants. Their situation worsened during the 'Matsukata Deflation,' which caused a drop in the price of rice, at a time when they could barely pay taxes and land rent. The uprising was prompted by the creditors' refusal to allow a suspension on the repayment of loans. D. L. Howell, *Geographies of Identity Nineteenth-Century Japan*. (University of California Press, 2005), p. 108-109.

²⁶⁵ According to Spalding, from 1926 through 1940, production ranged from 46 percent to 56 percent, with a yearly mean of 51 percent. Lisa Spalding, 'Period Films in the Prewar Era,' p. 131.

distinctions between good and bad as mere hypocrisy, rejected feudal values as ineffective, and glorified the hero for rebelling against authority.²⁶⁶ In this framework, the contemporary audience could easily identify with Jean Valjean, the protagonist of Hugo's novel, and with Jaan Gijūrō, Shiba Seika's main character, who were both defiant heroes and victims of hardship, injustice, and corruption.

Janbarujan (Jean Valjean, 1931)

It was probably the success of Shiba Seika's adaptation that stimulated Nikkatsu studios to produce another adaptation of Hugo's novel, directed by Uchida Tomu and released in two parts in 1931. Although Uchida is known nowadays as a director of period films, he began his career making *keikō* films such as *Ikeru ningyō* (A Living Doll, 1929), about an unscrupulous man who tried to prosper in society by any means, and *Adauchi senshu* (Champion of Revenge, 1931), a satirical period film about the codes of bushidō.²⁶⁷ Uchida's version of *Les misérables*, titled *Janbarujan: Zenpen* (Jean Valjean: Part 1) and *Janbarujan: Kōhen* (Jean Valjean: Part 2), had a total length of 180 minutes.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 138.

²⁶⁷ Alexander Jacoby, *A Critical Handbook of Japanese Film Directors: From the Silent Era to the Present Day*, p. 322.



Fig. 21. Jean Valjean (played by Yamamoto Kaichi), characterized as in the novel with white hair, and Cosette (played by Irie Takako), wearing a *kimono*. (Still published in *Kinema Junpō* no. 392)

The picture was set in Japan, and according to the film critic Suzuki Shigesaburō, both the script writer and dramatizer Tadashi Kobayashi and the director ‘made this movie straightforward and therefore it was faithful and true to the original plot in translation as well as in storyline.’²⁶⁸ Besides asserting that the film was faithful to Hugo’s plot, the reviewer does not provide further information that can be used to make assertions about what events and characters were or were not portrayed. However, through the extant stills at the National Film Centre, it is possible to observe that this was

²⁶⁸ *Kinema Junpō* no. 392, 21 February 1931, p. 46.

also a period film, probably set during the samurai's Satsuma Rebellion,²⁶⁹ and that it included crucial events depicted in Hugo's novel, such as the battle in the barricades and the scene in which Jean Valjean happens upon the injured Marius and takes him into the Paris sewers. Setting the film during the Satsuma uprising could provide verisimilitude to the story as a whole and make credible the crucial events depicted in the film.



Fig. 22. Jean Valjean carries Marius (played by Yamamoto Kaichi), injured, after having fought in the barricades with his katana (Japanese sword) during Satsuma's samurai's rebellion.

²⁶⁹ The Satsuma rebellion was an insurrection of the discontented samurai to the reforms of the Meiji Government, which abolished the social status of the samurai class. It started nine years after the imperial restoration, lasting from February to September 1877.

In sum, as in Shiba's film, transmuting Hugo's famous story to a period film and framing it in the popular 'Rebel' subgenre could on the one hand satisfy audiences' desire to watch on screen heroes who reflected their discontent and with whom they could identify and, on the other hand, guarantee a box-office hit.

Tsubakihime (The Lady of the Camellias, 1927)

Murata Minoru directed one more silent adaptation before the end of the decade. In 1927 he directed *Tsubakihime* (The Lady of the Camellias), based on the Alexander Dumas fils novel *La Dame aux Camélias* (The Lady of the Camellias, 1852). The novel was published for the first time in Japan in 1885 (it was actually an adaptation in which characters' names and settings were Japanese), and then again in 1889 (serialized in a magazine). It was released as a book in 1903. It became very popular and several editions appeared during the Meiji, Taishō, and Shōwa eras.

Dumas' story is set in Paris during the mid-1800s. It revolves around the relationship between Marguerite Gautier, a beautiful young courtesan who is known to all as the lady of the camellias because of her singular love for this delicately scented flower, and her lover Armand Duval, a regular middle class man. Ill with tuberculosis, she abandons her wealthy lifestyle to start a new life with Armand, although he is not as rich as other her suitors. Due to their social differences, their relationship becomes a scandal that affects their reputation.

Armand's father, with the aim of saving both his son's honour and that of his younger sister, for whom he has arranged an advantageous marriage, begs Marguerite to abandon Armand. To prove her love, she agrees and returns to her old lifestyle. Armand cannot believe that she has left him and searches for her, finally finding out that she has

a new lover, the Count of Varville, a rich man who has wanted a relationship with her for many years. Nevertheless, some time later, Armand and Marguerite have a new encounter.

Having spent the night together, Marguerite leaves once again while Armand sleeps. Armand cannot stand what is for him a new humiliation, and takes revenge by giving her money in the middle of a ball, screaming in front of everyone that it is payment for her services. This incident leads Marguerite to be rejected by society and by her friends, and she eventually dies alone and destitute. However, Armand reads Marguerite's diary, learning of her illness and her love for him, along with the extent of the suffering he had caused.

The movie was set in contemporary Japan, and, according to the film reviewer Uchida Kimio, it depicted the tragic story of 'a woman who dresses herself in a modern style but still has a traditional mindset.'²⁷⁰ Thus, as it is possible to observe in the stills (fig. 23 and 24), the protagonist was characterized as a *modan gāru*, although her mindset enables her to switch at will to a traditional woman in a kimono.

²⁷⁰ Kinema Junpō no. 264, 11 June 1927, p. 57.



Fig. 23. Scene in a night club of the characters Tsubakihime (Marguerite's role, played by Natsukawa Shizue, left), and Haruo Mizusawa (Armand's role, played by Higashiboujō Yasunaga, right).



Fig. 24. Tsubakihime wearing traditional clothes. This still contrasts with the previous one, in which she wears Western clothes and hairstyle as a *modan gāru*. National Film Centre Tokyo.

The picture was involved in a scandal that affected its production: the main actors, the famous stars Takeuchi Ryoichi (playing the role of Armand), and Okada Yoshiko (playing Marguerite), eloped before finishing the shooting. Murata had to start again with different actors: Natsukawa Shizue in Marguerite's role, and Higashiboujō Yasunaga playing Armand. Since the script was intended for different actors,²⁷¹ Takeuchi and Okada, the movie was not an artistic success, as it seemed to be the unfinished first version of the film.²⁷² However, according to Uchida Kimio, the change of actress provided the character of Marguerite (called Tsubakihime in the film) with a more modern and contemporary touch:

Alexandre Dumas *films* seems to be one of the most gifted geniuses. His 'Tsubakihime' has been reborn and died countless times, even after his own death. As time goes by, there some changes have been made to 'Tsubakihime' from the original, and later it also came to Japan. The script of the movie was written for Okada Yoshiko (who was indeed the most suitable person for the main character) as 'a tragedy of a woman who dresses herself in a modern style but still has a traditional mindset,' and it was going to be filmed with Shinichi Takeuchi as a good actor for the role of Armand. However, this was

²⁷¹ The Japanese star system was highly influenced by Western cinema. According to Fujiki, it 'arose in the realm of distribution before it did in production.' Hideaki Fujiki, 'The Advent of the Star System in Japanese Cinema Distribution,' *Jōhō bunka kenkyū*, 15 (2002):1–22. Quoted by Aaron Gerow, *Visions of Japanese Modernity: Articulations of Cinema, Nation, and Spectatorship*, 1895-1925. p. 152.

²⁷² Hiroshi Komatsu, *The Foundation of Modernism: Japanese Cinema in the Year 1927*, p. 374-75

cancelled due to the change of the main actress. The role of Tsubakihime being played by Natsukawa Shizue as the new main actress was not really like the original, but more modern and contemporary. Therefore, the film required a brand new script as well as new costumes and make-up, and regrettably, for all these changes, it was not successful (...) ²⁷³

Uchida's review does not provide sufficient information about the film's plot to allow us to compare it with the hypotext. Nevertheless, his assertions show that the movie's storyline was in some aspects different from Dumas's work. For Uchida, the story was not as moving and tragic as the novel, and it included realistic scenes which the critic considered disturbing, since they were not part of the 'original':

(...) The dramatization of the film was for a delicate and calm narrative. However, the actual movie gave me a fresh and vivid impression through the freedom of its camera movement and its unique dramatization. It was active and lively with a light touch of narrative, but it was occasionally disturbed by being mixed up with a touch of reality. Furthermore, the film did not have the 'Tsubakihime-style' tearful dramatization which can be observed in the original. At the same time, the delicacy was also eliminated from its dramatization by fresh lively movements in the movie. Hence, those who expected to cry when

²⁷³ *Kinema Junpō* no. 264, 11 June 1927, p. 57.

they watched the film complained about it, and those who wanted to immerse themselves in a sweet story of love were not satisfied either. Nevertheless, this film should not be denied its existence due to these factors. The set design should be praised for its great help in the fresh dramatization of the movie. Additionally, the efforts made in the camera work should also be recognized. Moreover, the subtitle texts also made a favourable impression, although they were sometimes annoying.²⁷⁴

Onna no Isshō, (A Woman's Life, 1928)

In 1928, Ikeda Yoshinobu directed *Onna no Isshō* (A Woman's Life), which was an adaptation of *Une Vie* (1883) by Guy de Maupassant. Ikeda also made an adaptation of a French novel in 1932. This film, entitled *Tusbakihime*, was based on the Dumas *films* novel *The Lady of the Camellias* in 1932, and was produced by Shochiku studios. In Japan, Maupassant's novel *Una Vie* became very popular and was translated several times during the Meiji and Taishō eras: Between 1913 and 1914 alone, four different translations of the work appeared.

The novel depicts the life of Jeanne Le Perthuis des Vauds, after she and her parents go to live in an old castle in the country. Whilst there, Jeanne meets Viscount Julien de Lamare, whom she will marry. During their honeymoon and after their return home, Julien selfishly takes control first of the money and subsequently of the estate.

²⁷⁴ *Kinema Junpō* no. 264, 11 June 1927, p. 57.

Moreover, he soon begins to neglect his appearance and to pay little attention to his wife. Jeanne's disenchantment is absolute when, discovering Julien and her foster sister and maid Rosalie in bed, she realizes that he is the father of the maid's newborn illegitimate baby. Jeanne wishes to end her marriage to Julien, but since she is pregnant, she agrees to a reconciliation. However, after the baby is born, Julien begins a relationship with a neighbour, the Countess de Fourville. The Count finds out about this affair and kills them both in fury. Jeanne then turns all of her attention to her son Paul, until, at the age of fifteen, he is sent off to school. When he is seventeen, Jeanne finds out that her son has a secret life: He has debts, he is not going to school, and he is living with a mistress. He repeatedly asks Jeanne for money, and she sends it to him until she, bankrupt, moves to a small house with Rosalie, who has returned to take care of her. Several years later, Jeanne receives news from Paul. He explains that his wife is dying, and he implores her to take care of him and their young daughter. Jeanne, pleased, accepts.

Ikeda's film is set in contemporary Japan, adapting the story to the Japanese cultural context. However, this meant that the film received a negative critique from the reviewer Suzuki Shigesaburō:

The script of the movie was translated and dramatized by Oda Takashi, and became something completely different from the original plot, with the character of a Japanese woman, Hanako, played by Kurishima Sumiko, as well as a more modern style of dramatization. It would not only be rude to the original author Maupassant to say that this film originates from his work (probably due to different ways of dramatization), but also insulting to all those who took part in the production of this film, including Oda Takashi. In essence, although the

storyline was still in line with the original plot, this film was completely 'Japanized' in its way of dramatization.²⁷⁵



Fig. 25. Scene in which Hanako (Jeanne Le Perthuis), played by Kurishima Sumiko, gazes at the sea with her husband Tomomitsu (Viscount Julien de Lamare), played by Shin'yō Nara, during their honeymoon. National Film Centre, Tokyo.

²⁷⁵ *Kinema Junpō*, no. 294, 1 May 1928, p. 80.

According to this critic, although the movie did to some extent follow the hypotext storyline, the plot was completely different. For him, the dramatization of the movie was ‘too Japanese,’ so it could not be said it was an adaptation of de Maupassant’s novel. It is likely that the reviewer regarded the way in which the novel was adapted to the Japanese cultural sphere to be a failure.

Maria no oyuki (Oyuki, the Virgin, 1935)

Mizoguchi’s *Maria no oyuki* was produced by the Daiichi Eiga company, formed by the producer Nagata Masaichi and Mizoguchi, in 1934. In that studio Mizoguchi found his greatest degree of creative independence.²⁷⁶ The result was the production of remarkable films, such as his masterpieces *Naniwa erejii* (Osaka Elegy) and *Gion no shimai* (Sisters of the Gion) – the last loosely based on Kuprin’s novel *Yama: The Pit* – both made in 1936 shortly before the company failed.

Maria no oyuki was an adaptation of Guy de Maupassant’s story *Boule de suif* (Ball of Fat), a story which also inspired John Ford’s renowned *Stagecoach* (1939). The story was published for the first time in Japan in 1915, in a version titled *Senjin* (Battle). Different translations appeared in subsequent years, published with the title *Shibō no katamari* (literally ‘Mass of Fat), which was closer to the original. The movie, of which

²⁷⁶ David Bordwell, *Figures Traced in Light: On Cinematic Staging* (University of California Press, 2005), p. 88.

Mizoguchi was not fond,²⁷⁷ was a period film set in the Meiji era. Mizoguchi had previously started to direct period films to depict social criticism, after becoming aware that he was under investigation by the police after he made *keikō* films stressing proletarian ideology, such as *Tokai kokyogaku* (Metropolitan Symphony, 1929) and *Shikamo karera wa yuku* (And Yet They Go, 1931), which both suffered heavy censorship.²⁷⁸

Maupassant's story, set during the Franco-Prussian war in 1870, relates the carriage trip of a group of people who are fleeing the Prussian troops from Rouen – recently occupied by the Prussian army – to the port of Dieppe. These passengers are citizens from different social classes: a plump prostitute, nicknamed Ball of Fat; Cornudet, a left-wing democrat opposed to the aristocratic government; Monsieur and Madame Loiseau, and Monsieur and Madame Carré-Lamadon (both couples bourgeois wealthy traders); the Comte and Comtesse Hubert de Bréville; and two nuns. Due to the prostitute's condition, the other travellers – who constitute a microcosm of French society – reject her, but when she offers them the food she has with her, they hypocritically accept it. At nightfall, the carriage stops at the local coaching inn, which is in an area occupied by the Prussian army. A Prussian officer does not allow them to continue their trip unless Elisabeth Rousset – the 'Ball of Fat' – spends the night with him. Initially she does not accept this proposal, but after a few days at the inn, she gives in, pressured by other passengers. After spending the night with the prostitute, the officer allows the travellers to continue their trip. However, once they are on the road again, they refuse to talk to her or to share their food with her as she had with them earlier.

²⁷⁷ Mizoguchi asserted that it was 'a bad adaptation of Maupassant's *Boil de suif* (...) I didn't do well on this one – maybe the script wasn't good.' Kenji Mizoguchi, 'Mizo on Mizo', p. 17.

²⁷⁸ Tadao Satō, *Mizoguchi and the Art of Japanese Film*, p. 45.

Maria no oyuki is set in the midst of a battle for Hitoyoshi town during the Satsuma Rebellion. This was an insurrection of discontented samurai that started nine years after the imperial restoration, lasting from February to September 1877. The unrest was provoked by the reforms of the Meiji Government, which, for the sake of modernization of the country, abolished the privileges and the social status of the samurai class. The revolt took place in the Satsuma domain (in today's Kagoshima prefecture, on the island of Kyushu) and was led by the retainer Saigō Takamori. The rebellion was stifled by the governmental army, which exceeded Saigō's forces in weapons and soldiers. Approximately 60,000 imperial troops fought against the rebels, suffering 7,000 combat deaths, while only a few hundred of the 30,000 Satsuma troops survived. The consequence of the rebellion was the total abrogation of the samurai class.²⁷⁹

The film opens with images of the battle for Hitoyoshi town between the samurai troops and the government army. Once the government forces have taken the town, they start to requisition food. Since the town is half destroyed and facing the prospect of not having anything to eat, a group of inhabitants of the Hitoyoshi village flee in a coach. They plan to reach the port and take a barge to arrive at a place of safety, far away from the war. The passengers comprise people from different social classes: Oyuki and Okin, both prostitutes working at the town's small brothel; an uppity aristocratic couple; a shopkeeper and his wife; and a food merchant with his daughter, named Ochie. The other travellers, incensed by the presence of the prostitutes, try unsuccessfully to get them off the vehicle. As it happens, a monk stops the coach and asks the driver to let him in. They continue their trip, but the coach eventually loses a wheel, leaving the passengers stuck

²⁷⁹ James H. Buck, 'The Satsuma Rebellion of 1877. From Kagoshima through the Siege of Kumamoto Castle.' *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Winter, 1973), pp. 427-446, p.427.

in the countryside waiting for repairs. They become hungry, and despite their mistreatment and the fact that the aristocratic woman tried to steal Oyuki and Okin's food, Oyuki decides to share the food with them. Meanwhile, the monk who joined the group continues the trip on his own.



Fig. 26. Scene in the interior of the coach. At the bottom, Oyuki and Okin, suffering the mocking and disdain of the rest of the travellers. On the left side sit the aristocratic couple and the shopkeeper. On the right, the food merchant, his daughter, and the shopkeeper's wife.

The next scenes show the government soldiers chasing the monk through the forest. He is taken to the residence in which the general and the soldiers are quartered. The stagecoach passengers are also being held there, having been arrested by the army. The general in command, Asakura Shingo, interrogates them, having ordered the execution of the monk, who is actually a spy serving Saigō Takamori. After the useless interrogation, the general orders Ochie to spend the night with him. The other passengers put pressure on her to give herself to the general in order to save the whole group. Okin offers herself to Asakura, but she is rejected. Then, Oyuki, touched by Ochie's desperation, sacrifices herself for the sake of the group and tries to convince the general to take her instead of Ochie. In the middle of their conversation, the orders of withdrawal arrive. The general and his troops depart, leaving the passengers free to continue their trip. Once at the port, the captain and other passengers refuse to allow Oyuki and Okin to board the barge due to their condition. None of the 'distinguished' travellers, whom the girls had fed and tried to help, intercede on their behalf. Abandoned on the shore, the girls decide to go back to Hitoyoshi. Once in town, Oyuki and Okin reveal to each other that they have both fallen in love with Asakura. At this point, they are informed that Saigō's men are looking for a fugitive – an officer of the government's army – and that there is a reward for his capture. It turns out to be Asakura, who, as it happens, is hidden, bound, in Oyuki and Okin's place. Okin, hurt because he rejected her, wants to turn him in, but Oyuki manages to stop her. Finally, with the girls' aid, he escapes.



Fig. 27. Oyuki and Okin at the moment at which the captain of the barge and other passenger block their way and do not allow them to board.

The plot of the film follows the same storyline as Maupassant's story, although there are significant differences. It is remarkable that the movie depicts the story, not narrated in the hypotext, of the monk-spy, who is captured and executed on the general's orders. General Asakura, after hearing the shots that end the spy's life, praises the samurai's values, his honour, bravery, sense of loyalty, and his self-sacrifice for the sake of victory. After that episode, he orders Ochie to sleep with him. Oyuki goes to Asakura's room to 'sacrifice' herself to save Ochie's chastity, as well as the lives of the other travellers. During the conversation between Asakura and Oyuki, the general is shown as a descendant of samurai who endures the burden of the duty of having to fight or execute

other samurai. When the order to retreat arrives and their conversation ends, it is shown that he actually had no intention to force Ochie to sleep with him, but was just trying to get the travellers to show their authentic essence and to ridicule them by comparing their ‘miserable’ values with those of the samurai who had just been killed.

The picture also depicts a different ending. Maupassant’s story ends when the travellers resume their journey: They show Elisabeth Rousset their disdain again, while she sobs in a dark corner of the coach. In the film, Oyuki and Okin are not allowed to board the barge, and they return to their town. In the last scenes, which portray a short melodramatic story of unrequited love, it is confirmed to the audience that both girls have fallen in love with the general. Upon their discovery of the general hidden at their place, Okin wants to hand him in out of spite, since she feels that he besmirched her honour by rejecting her. Meanwhile, Oyuki expresses her pain because their profession means that their love would never be requited by anyone.

It is noteworthy that the officer, in contrast to Maupassant’s story, is depicted in detail in the film, with his role becoming important. He is portrayed as man of honour, imbued with neo-Confucianist and bushidō values – such as courage, loyalty, duty, and self-sacrifice for the group – that are characteristic of the samurai class. On the other hand, Oyuki is described as a Christian, compared by the general, first with Jesus and then with a samurai due to her attitude and principles, such as compassion and self-sacrifice. The portrayals of both Asakura and Oyuki contrast with the contemptible and sanctimonious behaviour and the despicable demeanour of the travellers, who are depicted, as in the hypotext, as hypocritical, cowardly, selfish, materialistic, and extremely self-centred. Thus, while the prostitute is the bravest character and the real patriot in the story, in the film it is Oyuki who is more human and has higher ethics and dignity than the upper-class characters.

In conclusion, setting the story in the Meiji era enabled Mizoguchi, like other filmmakers, to introduce social criticism while avoiding censorship. Thus, *Maria no oyuki* denounced the social condition of the *burakumin* and vindicated neo-Confucianism and collectivistic values – such as self-sacrifice and loyalty to the group – at a time at which the individualistic mindset was growing amongst the urban upper and middle classes. In the film, Oyuki, due to her profession, is a *hinin* – a member of the outcaste group at the bottom of the Japanese social order. The *hinin* (non-human), along with the *eta* (extremely impure), formed the *burakumin*: the lower social class, which suffered discrimination and ostracism. These classes comprised people who held professions considered impure in Buddhist or *Shinto* beliefs, such as itinerant entertainers, beggars, and prostitutes (*hinin*), or tanners, butchers or executioners, among other professions (*eta*).²⁸⁰ Mizoguchi highlighted in this film the humanity and honour of the *hinin* despite their condition, and showed evidence of the difficulty of the lives of prostitutes, condemning at the same time the existence of the *burakumin* status and its discrimination both in the previous eras and in contemporary times.

Before the end of the decade, in 1938, two more adaptations of French literature were released: *Kyojinden* (Saga of the Giant Man) directed by Mansaku Itami, and *Den'en kōkyōgaku* (Rural Symphonie), made by Yamamoto Satsuo. The first was a new adaptation of Hugo's novel *Les Misérables*. It was set in the Meiji era, during the Satsuma Rebellion. The second was based on André Gidé's novel *La Symphonie Pastorale* (1919),

²⁸⁰ The discrimination against the *hinin* and *eta* began in the medieval era and continues in contemporary times, despite the legal abolition of the *eta-hinin* status after the Meiji Restoration, and despite the efforts to eliminate discrimination during the 1920s and after World War II. Keiji Nagahara, 'The Medieval Origins of the Eta-Hinin.' *Journal of Japanese Studies*, 5(2), (1979), pp. 385-403, p. 389.

and was set on the island of Hokkaido. Both films remain extant; however, it has not been possible to find copies and watch them before finishing this dissertation. It is thus inappropriate to carry out a comparative analysis of these films and their hypotext through plot summaries and reviews. Therefore, a study of these two films will not be included.

German Literature

German Literature was less popular in Japan than American-English, French, or Russian literature during the Meiji era. Most of the German literature published in Japan throughout the Meiji era comprised translations from the English, with the exception of several works translated directly from German by Mori Ōgai, a distinguished translator, novelist and poet. However, during the Taishō era, novelists such as E.T.A. Hoffmann and contemporary German dramatists such as Wilhelm Schmidtbonn and Gerhart Hauptmann become very popular. Different editions of their works appeared in that time and several adaptations of their plays were released during the 1920s.

Chi to rei (Blood and Soul, 1923)

The first film adaptation of a German author's work was Mizoguchi Kenji's *Chi to rei*. This was an experimental movie influenced by German Expressionism, especially Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920). It was based on the novel *Chi to rei*, an adaptation by Ōizumi Kokuseki of E.T.A. Hoffmann's novella *Das Fräulein von Scuderi. Erzählung aus dem Zeitalter Ludwig des Vierzehnten* (Mademoiselle de Scudéri.

A Tale from the Times of Louis XIV). Hoffmann's story, published in 1819, appeared in the third volume of the four-volume collection of horror and mystery entitled *The Serapion Brethren*. The novella was published for the first time in Japan in 1889, in a translation by Mori Ōgai. *Chi to rei* was probably the most intertextual of Mizoguchi's films, due to the variety of its intertexts.

Hoffman's story revolves around the elderly Mademoiselle de Scudéri, a well-known poet who lives in Paris during the reign of King Louis XIV in the late seventeenth century. At that time the city is under siege, suffering a spate of murders and robberies of wealthy people by what seems to be a well-organized band. Most of the victims are lovers who have bought jewellery and are on their way to meet their mistresses with these gifts. At the same time, the city is astonished by a series of strange poisonings. One night a young man arrives at de Scudéri's house, begging her maid for permission to meet Mademoiselle urgently. However, he hears the police approaching and flees, leaving behind a small jewellery box. The next morning, de Scudéri finds the jewellery, along with a note in which the jewel thieves thanks her for her support in the form of a verse that she wrote to the king. Mademoiselle de Scudéri, dismayed by the contents of the box, seeks advice from her friend Marquise de Maintenon. He asserts that the jewellery is a work of the world-renowned artist goldsmith René Cardillac, who is well-known for his attachment to the pieces he creates: he does not want to part with the jewellery, and delivers it to his customers under protest, with long delays.

Several months later, Mademoiselle de Scudéri receives a letter in which she is requested to return the jewellery to Cardillac. Otherwise, she will be killed. She decides to heed this order, and two days later she takes the jewellery to Cardillac. She arrives to find that he has been murdered and that Olivier Brusson, his assistant, has been arrested for the crime. Cardillac's daughter Madelon, who is engaged to Olivier, claims desperately that he is innocent. Mademoiselle de Scudéri, touched by Madelon's despair,

feels sorry for her and takes her to her house to look after her. Convinced of Olivier's innocence, de Scudéri meets La Régnie, the president of the 'Chambre ardente' – a special court created by the king with the aim of investigating and punishing the culprits of the murders and poisonings that are terrorizing the city – to intercede on Olivier's behalf. However, La Régnie shows her evidence which proves that Olivier is the murderer. Not convinced, she asks permission to speak with Olivier.

Desgrais, who is de Scudéri's friend and a police officer, offers to arrange a meeting with Olivier, hoping that he will confess. Olivier is brought to de Scudéri's house, and while guards wait outside, he falls on his knees and tells her that he is the son of the impoverished young woman, Anne, whom de Scudéri had lovingly raised as her own daughter and from whom she has not heard since she married. Olivier, who became an apprentice goldsmith, was hired as an assistant by Cardillac in Paris. However, when Cardillac found out that his daughter Madelon and Olivier had fallen in love, he threw him out of the house. Olivier returned to Cardillac's house, hoping to see Madelon again, but instead he saw Cardillac slip out through a secret entrance. He followed him and saw him killing a man with a dagger. Cardillac, realizing that Olivier had seen the murder, invites him to return home and offers him his daughter in marriage. Olivier tells Scudéri that he knew that this meant he had to keep the secret, which left him feeling intense guilt. Eventually, Cardillac decided to give Mademoiselle de Scudéri some of his best work in thanks for the verse that she had quoted to the King. He asked Olivier to deliver this gift. At that point, Olivier saw a chance to re-establish contact with the woman who had loved and cared for him when he was a child and to reveal his unfortunate situation.

Some time later, Cardillac was desperate to get back the jewellery he had given to de Scudéri. To prevent this, Olivier wrote the letter begging her to return the jewellery as soon as possible. Furthermore, he decided to follow Cardillac to prevent him from attacking her. One night, he saw Cardillac attacking an officer, who stabbed him with his

dagger and then escaped. Olivier brought Cardillac and the dagger back to his house, where Cardillac died of his injuries. Subsequently, Olivier was arrested and charged with his murder.

Believing in his innocence, de Scudéri attempts to save Olivier, including writing a letter to La Régnie, but she is unsuccessful. Unexpectedly, an officer in the King's Guard by the name of Miossens visits her and reveals that he is the person who stabbed and killed Cardillac in self-defence. With this information, de Scudéri convinces the King to review the case. After a month he reveals to the Mademoiselle that Olivier has been freed, that he will be allowed to marry Madelon, and that he will receive a generous dowry on condition that the couple leave Paris. Olivier and Madelon move to Geneva, where they live happily.

The plot summary by the film critic Uchida Kisao shows that Mizoguchi's film follows the hypotext storyline and portrays the main characters, although it follows the changes in novelistic events and the ending depicted in Ōizumi's adaptation. As in Hoffmann's novella, the city is terrorized by a series of mysterious murders. A young man, Ushijima Hideo, an apprentice of the jeweller Otori Untai, is accused of killing him and of being guilty of the series of murders. The writer Sugi Sadako believes in his innocence and helps him, and it is eventually revealed that Otori, an insane artist who is obsessed with jewellery, was the author of the crimes and that he was killed in a fight with a drunkard:

The incident happened in a city. People were frightened by the mysterious murders being committed almost every night without a clue about the suspect or the motive. However, one night, Ushijima Hideo—the apprentice of a jeweller named Otori Untai, who was in love with

Otori's daughter—walked through the city carrying Otori's corpse. Later, Ushijima was arrested by the police as the suspect in the serial murders, and people thought that he was the criminal because the killings stopped after he had been caught. Nevertheless, when a writer named Sugi Sadako visited Ushijima in jail and listened to what he said, it turned out that the real culprit was Otori himself. Otori was extremely obsessed with jewellery, having inherited this trait from his mother. The strength of his compulsion led him to kill people who possessed jewellery. Eventually, Otori was killed in a fight with a drunk.²⁸¹

The summary and the stills of the film allow us to observe that the action is set in contemporary Japan, rather than in the late seventeenth century, during the absolutist reign of King Louis XIV. Moreover, both the plot and the credits of the film indicate that several characters and events that appear in Hoffmann's novella are omitted. The movie portrays the characters of Ushijima Hideo, apprentice to Untai Otori, the jeweller; Sugi Sadako, Otori's daughter; a drunkard who kills Otori; and also Otori's mother and father. The character of the King, and the description of the superficial and frivolous atmosphere of his court, as well as the character of La Régnie – the president of the 'Chambre ardente' – and its brutal methods are not depicted in the movie. Nor are the episodes in which de Scudéri asks the King to intercede to help Olivier, or Miossens, the officer in the King's Guard who visits de Scudéri and reveals that he killed Cardillac in self-defence. In the absence of these characters, the film has a different ending. In Hoffman's novella,

²⁸¹ *Kinema Junpo*, no. 145, 1 December 1923, pp. 4-5.

Olivier's fate lies in the monarch's hands. The King makes the decision to free him after reviewing the case, on the condition that he leaves France with Madelon. In the film, Otori dies in a fight with a drunkard and Hideo is considered the murderer. However, he is released thanks to Sadako's aid, without the intercession of any authority and without having to move to another country.



Fig. 28. Still published in the magazine *Katsudō gahō* in September 1923, in which Untai Otori is showing jewels to Ushijima Hideo.

Hoffmann's novella also depicts a parallel story of a series of poisonings perpetrated by Sainte Croix and the Marquise de Brinvillier. They are pure villains who choose their victims at random and commit crimes merely for the sake of destruction and a desire to assert their power over others.²⁸² That story contrasts with the main plot, highlighting the fact that Cardillac's inability to control his criminal behaviour is determined from birth due to his mother's pathological appetite for jewellery during her pregnancy. He robs and murders because he has an innate and irrational obsession with the beauty of the jewellery and has the uncontrollable need to recover his artistic creations. Furthermore, he has a pathological desire for sole ownership of his masterpieces no matter what, since he believes that society undervalues art and artists and is convinced that artistic creations belong to the artist who conceives them.²⁸³

The film dispenses with the story of the poisoners and focuses on the insane behaviour and crimes of the jeweller, highlighting the parental influence in his disturbed mind by introducing the characters of Otori's parents. Thus, as the title suggests, the soul and personality are in the blood, inherited from the parents. The film remarks on this deterministic idea in its title and by showing in the opening intertitles²⁸⁴ a quote in Japanese from *Zones of the Spirit: A Book of Thoughts* by the Swedish dramaturg August Strindberg: "The life of the soul is in the blood," says the Old Testament; and it is probable that there is something mysterious in it which we do not understand, as in all

²⁸² Birgit Röder, *A Study of the Major Novellas of ETA Hoffmann* (Boydell & Brewer, 2003), p. 45.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 46.

²⁸⁴ The intertitles were reproduced in a plot summary written by an unknown reviewer, published in the magazine *Katsudō Zasshi* no. 9 in September 1923.

sacraments, which we understand as little.’²⁸⁵ The expressionist aesthetics – the actors’ make-up, the dark streets, the dramatic lighting, and the distorted houses and furniture – metaphorically stress both the state of Cardillac’s obsessive disorder and the agitated mental state of the characters caused by the wave of enigmatic murders, emphasizing fear and horror. As in Robert Wiene’s *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, the oppressive atmosphere of the film becomes a symbolic representation of the duality of human nature.



Fig. 29. Still published in the magazine *Geki to eiga* in September 1923. The sets of the film, such as the lopsided streetlights and the crooked buildings, which create tension and an oppressive atmosphere, were inspired by Wiene’s film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*.

²⁸⁵ The quote used here is extracted from Strindberg’s book translated by Claud Field in 1913. A. Strindberg, *Zones of the Spirit: A Book of Thoughts*. (G.P. Putnam, 1913), p. 274.

Tōge no uta (The Song of the Mountain Pass, 1924)

In 1924, Mizoguchi directed another film inspired by a German play: *Tōge no uta* (The Song of the Mountain Pass). Many scholars have asserted that this movie was an adaptation of the comedy *The Image* (1909) by Lady Gregory,²⁸⁶ since Mizoguchi affirmed in an article written several decades later that *Tōge no uta* was based on an Irish play.²⁸⁷ Although he did not mention the title, the translator assumed that he was referring to Lady Gregory's comedy.²⁸⁸

A summary of the plot and the film credits demonstrate that it was not based on that play. Lady Gregory's comedy, which is an allegory of the disunity among the Irish, revolves around the idea of service to the community and a failed attempt to erect a statue to a non-existent hero. It depicts the events that occur after two whales have been washed ashore. The priest decrees that the money from their oil should be invested for the good of the community. The oldest men of the area meet to discuss the issue and finally decide to spend the money on erecting a statue to a distinguished patriot. A man then proposes to build it to Hugh O'Lorrha, a name that he read on a plaque, believing that he was a hero, although this is actually the name of a fairy-tale character. All the elders vote in favour of this suggestion for their own reasons, such as personal interest, fear of voting

²⁸⁶ It is said in influential studies such as in the book by Dudley Andrew and Paul Andrew *Kenji Mizoguchi: A Guide to References and Resources*, published in 1981.

²⁸⁷ Kenji Mizoguchi, 'Mizo on Mizo', p.17.

²⁸⁸ Lady Gregory was the pen name of Isabella Augusta Persse, a figure of the Irish Literary Revival. According to Toyotaka Komiya, the first Gregory play presented in Japan was the comedy *The Poorhouse*, written with Douglas Hyde in 1906. It was produced again in 1909 by students of an acting school founded by Fujisawa Asahirō. Toyotaka Komiya, *Japanese Culture in The Meiji Era Vol. 3: Music and Drama*, p. 305.

against other opinions, or just to have fun with the others. When they are ready to ceremoniously present the drawing of the statue to the authorities and the countrymen, they find out that O'Lorrha is a fictional character and not a patriotic hero. Moreover, they realize that the whales have been stolen, so there is no oil to sell and no money to spend. At that point, the old men happily return to their daily lives as if nothing had happened.

In contrast, a summary of Mizoguchi's movie published in issue 147 of *Kinema Junpō* shows that the movie depicted completely different events and characters from *The Image*. Furthermore, the review published in issue 148 of *Kinema Junpō* described the story, not as a comedy, like Gregory's play, but as a drama – 'very superficial and too sentimental' – asserting that it 'ends up no different from other sentimental, simplistic films.'²⁸⁹ Since the plot is reminiscent of Murata's *Rojō no reikon*, it is likely that Mizoguchi's film was based partly on Murata's movie and partly on Wilhelm's Schmidtbonn play *Mutter Landstrasse* (Children on the Street), on which Murata based one of the two parallel stories narrated in his film. *Tōge no uta* depicts the story of a prodigal son, Kyoichi, who returns home with his wife Miyoko and their baby, all of them exhausted after having walked a long way through forests and mountains. The villagers and Kojiro, his father, reject Kyoichi because he had once committed a murder and fled the town. Kojiro expels his son, although he agrees to take care of Miyoko and the baby. Kyoichi, downhearted, commits suicide.

²⁸⁹ *Kinema Junpō*, no. 148, 21 January 1924, p. 8.



Fig. 30. Miyoko (played by Sawamura Haruko) begs Kojiro (played by Yamamoto Kaichi) to forgive his son and allow him to stay at his house. National Film Centre Tokyo.

Like *Rojō no reikon*, *Tōge no uta* develops a second interwoven story. It depicts the miserable life of Rokuzo, an old man who roams the streets of Kyoichi's hometown, selling sweets to children and playing the harmonica to earn some money. He meets Kyoichi and his family in a poor hostel and helps them. At the end of the film, the wanderer dies on the street a short time after the prodigal son, devastated by Koichi's death:

In the dusk of late, chilly autumn, a poor young man came to a wooden hostel with his sick wife and infant child. They laid down, feeling exhausted. People who were cast out of the village for being severely poor often stayed overnight at this hostel. An old man, who had roamed on a journey selling sweets and playing the harmonium for children, took good care of the poor young man. The following morning, the couple finally came back to the home they had missed after having passing through some forests and crossing a mountain pass. While nature warmly welcomed the couple back, the people in the village, including the young man's father, condemned them for the crime they had committed in the past. He did not warmly welcome his son, who had committed a crime and eloped with a prostitute six years ago. His niece, who was supposed to marry his son, was still single. Because he felt sorry for his niece, he would not let his son into their home, although he took care of his wife and child. The young man left the village as the sun tilted towards the mountain in the west, because his father told him to come back again after he had redeemed himself. After contemplating the sunset, the young man chose death. At the same time, the old sweet seller, singing along with the melancholic melodies from the harmonium, felt that it was getting cold as the sunlight grew weaker. He lay down on the street where the cold corpse was shining ominously. The old sweet seller vanished into the dusk, mourning the death of the young man.²⁹⁰

²⁹⁰ *Kinema Junpō*, no. 147, 1 January 1924, p. 18.



Fig. 31. Scene in which Rokuzo (played by Mizushima Ryotaro) talks to Kyoichi (played by Mimasu Yutaka) and his wife Miyoko. National Film Centre Tokyo.

Yama no senroban (The Crossing Watchman of the Mountains, 1923)

Shochiku Kinema subsequently continued to produce Western-style films, including film adaptations of Western literature. In 1923, the company released films in Japan based on well-known Western works. In February of that year, they released *Yama no senroban* (The Crossing Watchman of the Mountains), deemed by some scholars ‘one of the best of the early Shochiku films.’²⁹¹ It was directed by Shimazu Yasujirō, who had

²⁹¹ Joseph L. Anderson and Donald Richie. *The Japanese Film: Art and Industry*, p. 44.

worked previously on *Souls on the Road* as assistant director and technician. He was one of the founding contributors to the so-called *Kamata* style, which flourished at the Shochiku film studios in the Kamata suburb of Tokyo between 1920 and 1936 and is considered representative of the industrial production of modern mass culture.²⁹² Shimazu Yasujirō made nearly one hundred and fifty films, almost all of them subsequently lost. Most of his movies, such as his early comedies *Otōsan* (Father, 1923) and *Nichiyōbi* (Sunday, 1924), and the drama *Tonari no Yae-chan* (My Neighbor, Miss Yae, 1934), focused on the dynamic of modernity in Tokyo's middle-class neighbourhood life.²⁹³

Shimazu's *Yama no senroban* was an adaptation of Gerhart's Hauptmann play *Führmann Henschell* (Drayman Henschel, 1898), a naturalistic social drama in five acts. The play had previously been performed on the stage by a *shingeki* theatre troupe called *Butai Kyōkai* (The Stage Association) between 1913 and 1918,²⁹⁴ after Hauptmann was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1912. His works, which often played on themes of social reality and proletarian tragedy from a Nietzschean liberation of the individual perspective, were very influential on Japan's literary scene.²⁹⁵

The drama, which is set in 1860, revolves around the drayman Henschel and his relationship with Hanne, a servant. Henschel loses his wife, who, before she dies, begs him to take care of the sick baby they had months earlier. Moreover, she makes him

²⁹² Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano, *Nippon modern: Japanese cinema of the 1920s and 1930s*, p. 114.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

²⁹⁴ Toyotaka Komiya, *Japanese Culture in the Meiji Era Vol. 3: Music and Drama*, p. 298.

²⁹⁵ Kenneth Henshall, *Historical Dictionary of Japan to 1945* (Scarecrow Press, 2013), p. 234.

promise that he will never marry their young and attractive maid, Hanne, whom she perceives as an ambitious and unscrupulous person. However, with the intention of becoming Henschel's next spouse, Hanne takes responsibility for the household, cares diligently for the baby, and manages to seduce Henschel with a combination of discreet flirtation and emotional blackmail. Thus, in the third act, the play makes a flashforward. The baby has already died and Hanne is presented as Mrs. Henschel. But in contrast to Henschel's first wife, she is unfaithful and careless.

In the next act, Henschel becomes aware of Hanne's wicked personality, especially when he returns from a trip to buy horses. Henschel brings with him Hanne's illegitimate six-year-old daughter, who was living with her alcoholic grandfather. Hanne is terribly upset about Henschel's rescue, and gives her child a rude and cold reception. At that point, Henschel, displeased with her cruel abuse of her own child, sees clearly that Hanne is not as he had imagined. Furthermore, he discovers that gossip is being spread around the town which asserts that he and Hanne had caused the deaths of his wife and child. Downhearted, he starts to have hallucinations about his first wife, who reminds him of his broken promise. Henschel is finally convinced that Hanne had hastened the death of his first wife and their baby through neglect: consumed by guilt and sorrow, he commits suicide.

A summary of Shimazu Yasujirō's film, published in the magazine *Kinema Junpō* by an unknown reviewer, reveals that the story was adapted to the Japanese cultural context, modifying the time of the action, the characters, and the plot:

Yūhei, a railway guard on a calm mountain, was living in peace with his wife Osada and their daughter Omitsu. However, a sorrowful wind started to blow through this peaceful household; Osada suddenly fell sick and passed away. Omitsu became more and more timid once

the new wife, Otaka, who had formerly worked as a barmaid, came into the house. As time went by, Otaka became a typical abusive stepmother. While Yūhei was away, Otaka threw a smoking pipe at Omitsu and burnt her with hot tongs. Omitsu eventually reached the point where she could no longer just put up with such abuse: she cried out and ran to the level crossing where her father worked, but she was run over by a train on her way and became a cold corpse. Yūhei went mad. Otaka collapsed under the shine of a blade [murdered by Yūhei]. Yūhei, with a sinister smile on his face, stood alone under the sky as night fell.²⁹⁶

As in the play, the story is set in a mountainous area, but the action occurs in contemporary times (the 1920s), when the railroad had already arrived in almost all parts of Japan, rather than in 1860. The character of the drayman Henschel – called Yūhei in the movie – is a railway guard at a level crossing. Besides having different names and occupations, the two characters also have completely opposite personalities: Henschel is a weak and sad man, aware that his occupation is being displaced by capitalist and technological progress, and is being superseded by the railway.²⁹⁷ He succumbs to Hanne's sensuality and her manipulative behaviour, incapable of confronting her and her lover, even when he comes to suspect that she was responsible for the death of his first wife and daughter. Instead, distressed by guilt and consumed by melancholia, he ends up committing suicide. In contrast, Yūhei is enraged when he realises that his second wife,

²⁹⁶ *Kinema Junpō*, no. 127, 11 March 1923, p. 5.

²⁹⁷ Robert F. Gross, 'Fuhrmann Henschel and the Ruins of Realism,' *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 50, No. 3, (IL) (Oct., 1998), pp. 319-334, p. 320.

Otaka, was responsible for Omitsu's death. Like many protagonists of Japanese plays, novels and films, he needs to perpetrate *kataki-uchi* (blood revenge),²⁹⁸ and he avenges his daughter by killing Otaka with a sword.

The characters of Malchen and Gustel, Henschel's first wife and daughter, fall sick and die: first the mother, and then, shortly after Henschel's marriage to Hanne, the baby. Everybody in the town suspects that Hanne is responsible for their deaths. In the film, Yūhei's first wife, Osada, also dies of sickness, but not her daughter Omitsu, who is an older child rather than a baby. Apparently, Otaka plays no part in Osada's demise, since she works as a barmaid and does not live with the family. Nevertheless, Otaka marries Yūhei and becomes a cruel and abusive stepmother. Otaka's cruel treatment of Omitsu hastens her death when she runs away to avoid another beating and is hit by a train.

²⁹⁸ *Kataki-uchi* is a common motif in Japanese literature and film. According to Kominz, it became the subject of countless *kabuki* and *bunraku* plays and novels, being a real boom at the turn of the 19th century. L. R. Kominz, *Avatars of Vengeance: Japanese Drama and the Soga Literary Tradition*. (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies. University of Michigan, 1995), p. 139.



Fig. 32. Stills published in the magazine *Kinema Junpō*, no. 127 (March 1923). The first shows Yūhei, Omitsu's father (played by Sekine Tappatsu). The second shows a scene in which Yūhei argues with his second wife, Otaka (played by Hayashi Chitose), while Yūhei's daughter (played by Takao Mitsuko) listens, apparently scared.

Hauptmann's drama 'repeatedly puts forward suggestions of violence and cruelty,'²⁹⁹ although this is not described explicitly. In contrast, according to the film review and the critique, the film changes the plot of the play to depict openly the violence against the child by her stepmother: a motif called *mamako ijime*, which becomes the core subject matter. This narrative pattern is habitual in traditional medieval Buddhist oral tales – collectively known as *Sekkyō-bushi* – in stories such as *Shintokumaru* or *Aigo no Waka*,³⁰⁰ in late medieval narrations such as *Hachikazuki* (The Bowl Bearer Princess),³⁰¹ and in modern novels of the Meiji and Taishō eras such as Tokutomi Roka's *Hototogisu* (The Cuckoo, 1900), one of the most widely read novels in the Meiji era.³⁰² It is remarkable that the film review written by an unknown critic praises the fact that the movie deals with child cruelty and its mental consequences for a child, highlighting that it is described in a realistic and therefore disagreeable way, until it turns to a more 'conventional' and superficial depiction:

I am glad that the movie depicts the so-called 'abuse of a stepchild' in a humane way, unlike the conventional, unpleasant way, by expressing the daughter's mental state becoming timid. However,

²⁹⁹ Robert F. Gross, 'Fuhrmann Henschel and the Ruins of Realism,' *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 50 (3), (IL) (Oct., 1998), pp. 319-334, p. 322.

³⁰⁰ Nobuko Ishi, 'Sekkyō-bushi.' *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 44 (3), (1989), pp. 283-307, p. 288.

³⁰¹ C. Steven, 'Hachikazuki. A Muromachi Short Story.' *Monumenta Nipponica*, Vol. 32 (3), (1977), pp. 303-331, p. 303.

³⁰² Kōjin Karatani, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature* (Duke University Press, 1993), p. 100.

toward the end of the movie, it is negatively affected by the conventional depiction. There is a very minor compromise in the middle of the film. The dramatizer's experiences can be seen in the film's dramatization, but I expected it to be critically summarized a little better. Firstly, the director is successful in making use of the girl who plays the main character, but the movie seems to be too shallow for Shimazu's work. Sekine [playing the role of Yūhei] is old, and his calm smile is indescribably good. Mitsuko [playing Yūhei's daughter] does an excellent job. Tamaki [playing Yuhei's first wife] is good in acting a soft character, and Chitose [Yūhei's second wife] does quite well in portraying exactly the opposite strong character. Nevertheless, it seemed difficult for them to act because of the compromises, as formerly mentioned. The way of filming was as beautiful as *hinoki*³⁰³ and picturesque in a sense. Other than that, the movie was careless in two or three parts.³⁰⁴

In sum, the plot summary and the critique published in *Kinema Junpō* allow us to observe that Shimazu's adaptation neglected common themes of the realistic drama depicted in Hauptmann's *Drayman Henschel*, such as the triangle of husband, wife, and lover, and the loss and recovery of a child. In contrast, Shimazu's film introduces Japanese motifs well known to the audience, such as the depiction of child abuse and its

³⁰³ This is the name of a Japanese cypress.

³⁰⁴ *Kinema Junpō*, no. 127, 11 March 1923, p. 5.

impact on the child's mental state (*mamako ijime*), and the blood revenge (*kataki-uchi*) prompted by the daughter's death as a consequence of her mistreatment.

Hauptmann's drama would be adapted one more time by Saegusa Genjirō in 1925, this time with the title *Aiyoku no kiro* (Crossroads of Lust). That version was also a free adaptation of the play. Nevertheless, in contrast to Shimazu's version, Saegusa's film, as suggested in the picture's title, focused on depiction of the second wife's 'lustful' extramarital relations, leaving aside the matter of the abusive stepmother and the father's vengeance.

Aiyoku no kiro (Crossroads of Lust, 1925)

In 1925, Saegusa Genjirō directed *Aiyoku no kiro* (Crossroads of Lust) – a new adaptation of Gerhart's Hauptmann's play *Drayman Henschel*. In the summary of *Aiyoku no kiro* published in the magazine *Kinema Junpō* by Suzuki Shigesaburō, it is possible to observe that the story was adapted to the Japanese cultural context, modifying the time of the action, the characters, the location, and the plot. As in the play, the story is set in a mountainous area, but the plot takes place in contemporary times. The character of the drayman Henschel, known as Kichizō, drives a stage-coach that takes customers from the nearest village's bus stop to a hot spring resort. After his wife's death, Kichizō marries another woman, Okyō, following advice from a friend. She, like Hanne in the play, mistreats Kichizō's daughter, Omichi, and is unfaithful to Kichizō. She runs away with her lover, although they are caught:

A driver of a stage-coach which goes between a small bus stop in a mountain village far from the capital and an *onsen* [hot spring resort],

Kichizō was spending lonely days with his daughter Omichi after his wife's death. He later married his second wife Okyō, as recommended by his friend, but Okyō indulged in wicked pleasure and abused Omichi while Kichizō was away from home. By the time Kichizō found out the truth, Okyō and her wicked lover had already disappeared. Eventually, the two culprits were caught by the hand of justice, and from then on, Kichizō and Omichi could continue to live in peace.³⁰⁵

Saegusa's adaption keeps in the story the triangle of husband, wife, and lover depicted in Hauptmann's *Drayman Henschel*, which is a common theme of realistic dramas. However, the film changes the plot of the play and focuses on Kichizō's second wife and her adultery, which was a punishable crime (only for women) in Japan until 1946, when a new civil code and the new constitution were approved.³⁰⁶ The movie depicts Okyō's extramarital relations, showing her escape with her lover and how they are caught and punished by justice. The director omits the matters of the abusive stepmother, the loss of the child, and the suicide of the protagonist portrayed in Hauptmann's play. According to Suzuki's critique, the changes to the plot and themes bring inconsistency to the story line, with the film becoming weak as a result. Furthermore, he praises the adaptation of Hauptmann's drama made previously by Shimazu Yasujirō in 1923, entitled *Yama no senroban* (The Crossing Watchman of the Mountains):

³⁰⁵ *Kinema Junpō* no. 190, 11 April 1925, p. 25.

³⁰⁶ K. Steiner, 'The Revision of the Civil Code of Japan: Provisions Affecting the Family.' *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, 9(2), (1950), pp. 169-184, p. 169.

This movie is directed by Saegusa Genjirō after the film *Yusha no Shōri* [‘The victory of the brave’]. It is translated and dramatized from Hauptman’s *Fuhrmann Henschel*. *Yama no Senroban*, produced by Shouchiku Kamata Eiga, was also translated and made into a movie from the same story. Honestly, *Yama no Senroban* is incomparably better than this film. This film is a poor piece of work with nothing to be praised other than the beautiful way of filming. However, Nakamura Kichiji’s experienced acting is good.³⁰⁷

Chichi yo izuko e (Where is Father Going?, 1923)

Another film based on a work of Hauptman’s, *Chichi yo izuko e* (Where is Father Going?), was released in August 1923. The film, directed by Kaeriyama Norimasa, was an adaptation of the symbolic play *Hanneles Himmelfahrt* (The Assumption of Hannele, 1893). The first translation of Hauptmann’s play appeared in Japan in 1913. A second version was published in 1916, and soon after its publication, it was performed on stage by the *Butai Kyōkai* troupe. The play, defined by the author as a ‘dream-poem’, is divided into two acts. The first act depicts Hannele and her illness: she is a child who has lost her mother and lives a tragic existence with her brutal stepfather. The second represents her ‘Assumption’ – that is, a dream she has before she dies, in which she enters heaven.

The movie, of which there remain no stills or film reviews from which to make comparisons, was produced by Teikoku Kinema Engei. This company, founded in 1914,

³⁰⁷ *Kinema Junpō* no. 190, 11 April 1925, p. 25.

let directors make ‘Pure Motion Picture Dramas’³⁰⁸ – that is, films following Western forms such as the intensive use of long, medium, and close-up shots. Kaeriyama Norimasa was an important director of that time for his contribution to the ‘Pure Film Movement.’ From the beginning of his career, in movies such as *Sei no kagayaki* (The Glory of Life, 1919), he applied theories of movement, becoming one of the first film directors to use actresses in the main female roles instead of *oyama*, and employing innovative techniques such as close-ups and camera movements.³⁰⁹ Kaeriyama made another adaptation of a Western literary work, *Shōnen koshu* (Teenage Drummer, 1926), based on Edmondo De Amicis’ children’s novel *Cuore* (Heart). It was published in Japan for the first time in 1915 and subsequently in 1920, and both editions are included in collections of young fiction literature.

Kanashiki koi no gensō (Sad Visions of Love, 1925)

In the same year, 11 September saw the release of the film *Kanashiki koi no gensō* (Sad Visions of Love), an adaptation of Hauptmann’s *Die versunkene Glocke* (The Sunken Bell: A German Fairy Tale Drama, 1896) directed by Ikeda Yoshinobu and produced by the Shochiku Kamata studio. The work was published in Japan in 1907, entitled *Shin’yoku Urashima* (A New Version of Urashima). A new translation appeared

³⁰⁸ Hiroshi Komatsu, ‘From Natural Colour to the Pure Motion Picture Drama: The Meaning of Tenkatsu Company in the 1910s of Japanese Film History.’ *Film History*, Vol. 7(1), (1995), pp. 69-86, p. 72.

³⁰⁹ Alexander Jacoby, *A Critical Handbook of Japanese Film Directors: From the Silent Era to the Present Day*, p. 100.

in 1917, with the title *Chinshō* (Sunken Bell), which was represented successfully by the *shingeki* troupe *Geijutsuza* and was one of the troupe's last successes.³¹⁰ The scope of the play's popularity in Japan can be seen in the fact that records of songs performed by the characters of the Nicklemann and Rautendelein were marketed with great success.³¹¹

Hauptmann's play is a fantasy drama written in blank verse in which fantastic characters appear. It keeps some naturalistic characteristics, although it was aligned with the German literary trend, concerned with 'intimately personal problems of the creative artist' instead of depicting sociopolitical themes.³¹² The drama is considered a self-portrait of its author, in which he describes his own doubts as an artist after the failure of his play *Florian Geyer* (1896), his problems with his wife, and his spiritual aspirations.³¹³

The human protagonist is Heinrich, a master founder of bells. He has completed a bell that is to be placed in a church on a mountain inhabited by creatures. They try to avoid the placement of the bell and manage to overthrow the wagon that carries it. The wagon falls over a precipice, sinking the bell into a lake. Heinrich survives, lying injured on the land of the old witch Wittikin. Rautendelein, her elfin granddaughter, wants Heinrich for her own. But she has to abandon her wish when the humans who were following the wagon to help with the hanging of the bell arrive to rescue Heinrich. Once he is at home, he feels that he has failed in achieving his artistic ideal and that he would prefer to die rather than recovering. However, Rautendelein comes to Heinrich's home in the guise of a maid. There she convinces him to leave the village and live in the mountains,

³¹⁰ J. L. Anderson, *Enter a Samurai: Kawakami Otojirō and Japanese Theatre in the West* (Wheatmark, 2011), p. 212.

³¹¹ Per Warren Maurer, *Understanding Gerhart Hauptmann* (Twayne, 1982), p. 74.

³¹² *Ibid.*, p. 74.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

where he would be able to create the most beautiful and perfect bell. Heinrich thus leaves his wife and two sons and moves to the mountain, where he works on a new bell. The vicar, the schoolteacher, and the town barber find him and try to make him reconsider his decision and return home, but they fail. Nevertheless, he feels remorse and returns to the village when he learns that his wife has died. He returns to the mountains, but when the phantom forms of his two children appear, bearing a bucket filled with their mother's tears, Heinrich renounces Rautendelein. She marries the Nickelmann, a water spirit to whom she was intended before meeting Heinrich. At that point, Heinrich, wishing to regain Rautendelein, and aware that only in death can he be with her, drinks poisoned wine. Embraced by Rautendelein, he dies.

The story in Ikeda's film is set in an imaginary place called Rie and also includes supernatural characters. The main characters, Rautendelein and Heinrich, are called Hiname and Takamaro in the movie. Hiname is a girl who lives in the forest, but unlike Rautendelein, she is not a fantastic creature, half child and half fairy. On the other hand, Takamaro, like Heinrich, has a job related to religion. Rather than making bells, he is a sculptor of Buddhist images. The other characters in the play, with the exception of Heinrich's wife, known as Kiyome, are replaced in the film with different creatures. The symbolic characters of the vicar, the barber, and the schoolmaster, (who represent the spirit, the body, and the mind respectively), Heinrich's child, the water spirit Nickelmann, old Wittikin, the wood-sprite, and the elves, trolls and dwarfs (fantasy folk creatures with which the Japanese audience were not familiar) are not portrayed in the movie. Instead, it includes the characters of an old wizard of the mountains, a mountain man called Shurama, and a swamp man named Tankima, whose role is similar to that of the Nickelman.



Fig. 33. Scene in which Takamaro (played by Nara Shin'yō) saves Hiname (played by Kurishima Sumiko) from the swamp man Tankima (played by Furukawa Toshitaka). National Film Centre Tokyo.

The plot summary published in the magazine *Kinema Junpō* shows that the film's storyline includes the loving relationship between the artist and the female character who lives in the mountains, as well as her wedding to an unloved creature. However, it presents important differences from the hypotext. In the movie, Hiname is saved by Takamaro from the swamp man Tankima. Hiname and Takamaro fall in love, but their relationship is not allowed by the inhabitants of the mountains. They try to run away twice, but both times their escape is blocked by other characters or by a curse. Furthermore, in the mountains, the supernatural events that take place affect the humans that do not belong there: Takamaro's wife, Kiyome, commits suicide after being converted into an ugly

being, while Takamaro goes insane after his Buddhist sculpture turns into an evil image. In his madness, he rejects Hiname, who eventually marries Tankima. Takamaro, aware he cannot get Hiname back, vanishes into a marsh:

One night, Takamaro saved the forest maiden Hiname from the swamp man Tankima. The flame of love flared in her heart, but this love was not allowed in the mysterious mountain. After being accused of talking with a human many times that day, she broke the admonition the following day. Takamaro tried to run away with Hiname, but was caught by Shurama [a mountain man] and Tankima [a swamp man] and thrown into the plunge pool of a waterfall. Hiname was also sentenced to a severe penalty. Although Takamaro found a way to escape with Hiname, Tankima prayed to the devil god in the forest, asking him to put a curse on Takamaro and Hiname. Kiyome [Takamaro's wife] went to Takamaro's cursed cabin, but was driven away, changed to an ugly creature. She ended up committing suicide and plunging into the marsh.

The Buddhist sculpture that Takamaro had made gradually looked evil, causing Takamaro to go crazy. He called Hiname a devil, pushed her away, and disappeared himself. Hiname, whose soul was shattered, became Tankima's wife that night. Even the fields, the mountains, and the leaves on the trees moaned with sorrow as Hiname walked around the marsh, soaking in the blue moonlight. Takamaro had nowhere to go in Rie, as he had broken the silence of the mountain. He saw the beautiful girl by the marsh, but he had no way to win her back, and, like a ripple in a quiet marsh, he vanished without a trace. The flowers

floated in the marsh, enveloping his soul. The fog once again shrouded the mountain in mystery, while water birds sang sorrowfully.³¹⁴

The movie highlighted the fantastic elements of the play and the plot, as the title suggests, focused on the impossible love of the main characters. The symbolic elements of the hypotext, as an exploration of the significance of the artistic activity and a reflection on human limitations and the possibility of achieving the perfect work of art, were not depicted. Nor was the metaphoric role of the mountain as a symbol of human aspiration and ambition. As a result, Ikeda's film was probably too sentimental and plain, leading to a poor reception and a negative critique. The unknown *Kinema Junpō* reviewer attributed its lack of success to the fact that, besides the poor acting, the Japanese spectators were not accustomed to fantasy films and rejected this type of movie. At that time, the subject of the audience's interest was the ordinary urban middle-class masses, portrayed in comedies about working men or in sentimental satires, while urban spaces had become emblematic of the cinema. In that sociocultural context, Ikeda's adaptation was doomed to failure:

(...) This film was made based on *Die Versunkene Glocke* by Gerhart Hauptmann. For a Japanese classic fantasy, production of the movie was quite a bold attempt. This kind of film, however, is not well received by Japanese movie viewers, as many might have expected. To make matters worse, it seems that the actors were not confident, which has made people even more reluctant to watch the film. Even though

³¹⁴ *Kinema Junpō*, no. 197, 21 June 1925, p. 26.

they are beautiful, in gorgeous costumes, their bad acting is demonstrated once they start to perform (...) ³¹⁵



Fig. 34. Scene in which mountain man Shurama (played by Dekao Yokoo) talks to Hiname. National Film Center Tokyo.

After the production of Ikeda's movie, Hauptmann and other German authors lost popularity, probably since studios preferred to make films focusing on the middle classes, or on adaptations of contemporary Western works that were popular at that time. No new

³¹⁵ *Kinema Junpō*, no. 197, 21 June 1925, p. 26.

adaptations of German work appeared until 1937, when *Sengoku guntō-den* (Saga of the Vagabonds, 1937) was released.

Sengoku guntō-den, the first and only talkie based on German literature, was directed in 1937 by Takizawa Eisuke, a director who specialized in *jidaigeki* productions. It was inspired by Friedrich Schiller's *Die Räuber* (The Robbers, 1781): a play that was published for the first time in Japan in 1924. The picture was a period film set in Hakone – a town in Kanagawa Prefecture – during the Sengoku-era.³¹⁶ The story, whose plot revolves around a samurai seeking revenge on the lord who accused him of being a traitor, was presented in two parts, of 74 and 67 minutes respectively. The first, *Sengoku guntō-den – Dai ichibu: Toraōkami* (A Tale of Thieves in Wartime', also known as 'Saga of the Vagabonds, Part One: Tiger-wolf), was released on 11 February 1937. The second, *Sengoku guntō-den – Dai nibu: Akatsuki no zenshin* (Saga of the Vagabonds, Part Two: Forward at Dawn), was screened nine days later. Both films are also lost. Only a short compilation of scenes from the two films remains extant at the National Film Centre of Tokyo. Unfortunately, it was not possible to watch this compilation, or to find detailed reviews, so a comparative examination cannot be carried out.

³¹⁶ The Sengoku era (*Sengoku jidai*, in Japanese) was a time of frequent uprisings and military conflicts between *shogun* who aimed to reach national power. This period lasted from 1467 to 1567, although the strife did not end completely until the establishment by Tokugawa Ieyasu of the so-called Tokugawa shogunate (*bakufu*) in 1603. The Tokugawa clan ruled the country until the restoration of the Imperial power in 1868.

Literature in English

During the early Meiji era, the first Western ideas entered Japan through translations of American and English philosophers. The first Western non-literary works that appeared were versions of Samuel Smiles' *Self-Help*, published in Japan in 1870, and John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*, released in 1871. During the following years, a large number of English and American literary novels were translated, such as Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, and Edgar Allan Poe's *Murder in the Rue Morgue*. During the Taishō and Shōwa pre-war eras, works by contemporary remarkable or minor authors, such as the British writer John Galsworthy, the Irish dramatist Eugene O'Neill, and the American novelists O. Henry, Jack Boyle, and Herman Landon, were published and subsequently adapted for the screen by Mizoguchi Kenji and Ozu Yasuhiro.

Kiri no minato (Foggy Harbour, 1923)

The melodrama *Kiri no minato* (Foggy Harbour) was directed in 1923 by Mizoguchi Kenji. The film was based partially on the drama in four acts *Anna Christie*

written by Eugene O'Neill in 1921 and awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1922.³¹⁷ It was a short free adaptation (lasting about 49 minutes) written by the scriptwriter Tanaka Sōichirō, made directly from an edition of the play in English.³¹⁸ The movie, of which Mizoguchi was fond and which he praised even decades after it was directed, became very popular.³¹⁹ Inspired by German Expressionism, the film aimed to transmit the intensity of the human drama by employing a realistic style to present psychological events in a stark, European-inspired style.³²⁰ To create and keep the intensity of the drama and the dark atmosphere of the film, Mizoguchi made cinematic use of the camera and eliminated 'distracting' elements: he omitted intertitles and dispensed with *benshi* explanations.³²¹

The first O'Neill play translated into Japanese was *Beyond the Horizon*, published in 1923. In the same year appeared a translation of *Thirst*, and later *The Hairy Ape*, *Desire under the Elms*, and *Anna Christie*, all published in 1927.³²² The first O'Neill play staged in Japan was *Beyond the Horizon*. It was performed in 1924 in Tokyo's *Tsukiji shōgekijō* (Tsukiji Little Theatre). This theatre, founded in 1924 by Osanai Kaoru and Hijikata Yoshi, was devoted to staging Western dramas by authors such as Chekhov, Karel Capek,

³¹⁷ Mizoguchi's film was the first adaptation of O'Neill's *Anna Christie* anywhere in the world. The second was the film *Anna Christie* by John Griffith Wray, released on November 25th.

³¹⁸ The first translation of *Anna Christie* did not appear in Japan until 1927.

³¹⁹ Kenji Mizoguchi, 'Mizo on Mizo'. *Cinema* 6, No. 3, 1971, pp. 15-18, p.17.

³²⁰ Peter High, *The Imperial Screen. Japanese Film Culture in the Fifteen Years War, 1931-1945*, p. 76.

³²¹ Joseph L. Anderson and Donald Richie. *The Japanese Film: Art and Industry*, p. 46.

³²² H. Frenz & T. Y. Kim, *Notes on Eugene O'Neill in Japan. Modern Drama* Vol. 3 (3), (1960), pp. 306-313, p. 306.

Ibsen, Gorki, Pirandello, Shakespeare, Hauptmann, Gogol, and Shaw, among others.³²³

Its innovative set designs exerted wide influence on Mizoguchi's films made in subsequent years.³²⁴

O'Neill's play focuses upon the dynamics of the love-hate relationships of the three central figures. It depicts the reunion in the docks of New York of the disturbed old sailor Chris Christopherson and his daughter Anna, whom he has not seen since she was five years old. After his wife died, he neglected his daughter and sent her to live with cousins on a farm in America, while he spent his life on the seas. Anna hopes that she can stay with her father to recover from her life as a prostitute, into which she fell following her escape from the farm after being abused several times by her cousin. However, she does not reveal this to her father, but instead leads him to believe that she is a nurse.

Chris allows her to live with him on his barge. Ten days later, they rescue some shipwrecked sailors. One of these men is Mat Burke, a religious Irish immigrant. He and Anna become close and fall in love. Chris does not want his daughter to marry a sailor, so he tries to convince Anna that Mat is a bad choice. When Mat and Chris violently argue about Anna's fate if she marries a sailor, she explodes and reveals her past. Mat, thinking she has deceived him, leaves, swearing never to see her again. Chris also disappears for two days. When he returns, Anna has packed and is ready to go back to her old life. He asks for her forgiveness and explains that he has signed onto a steamer that sails for South Africa, promising he will send her money. Mat also reappears, wanting to have a last conversation with Anna before embarking on the same trip as Chris. They talk about her past and her feelings toward him. He believes she truly loves him and

³²³ B. Powell, 'Japan's First Modern Theater. The Tsukiji Shogekijo and its Company, 1924- 26.' *Monumenta Nipponica*, 30(1), (1975), pp. 69-85.

³²⁴ Donald Kirihara, *Patterns of Time: Mizoguchi and the 1930s*. (University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), p. 66.

forgives her, assuring her that he will marry her before he goes. She accepts, happy to escape her past life. She promises Chris and Mat that she will find a house and be waiting for them there when they return from their voyage.

It is possible to observe in the plot summary and critique by Ikeda Shigechika, published in *Kinema Junpō*, that Mizoguchi's movie was inspired by the characters of Chris, Anna, and Mat, and by the foggy harbour in which they live. The picture recreated the dark atmosphere of the play, but it narrated a completely different story. Set in contemporary Japan, it portrays the characters of Otsune, an old sailor who rules a boarding house, his daughter Oyō, and Katsuji, a young sailor who stays in the boarding house and is in love with Oyō. Their lives are altered by the presence of the old seaman Senkichi, who spends the night in the boarding house at Katsuji's invitation. Katsuji gives Senkichi support and shelter after saving him from a beating when he tries to leave a foreign (and probably expensive) restaurant without paying his bill. Despite the family welcoming Senkichi, he intends to steal Otsune's money when they are all asleep. Katsuji, furious about this deceit and ingratitude, fights with Senkichi and accidentally kills him. The next morning, Katsuji leaves the family and the foggy harbour and goes to the city office to confess his crime:

In a foggy port town, there lived Otsune, the owner of a boarding house, who was very miserly and thought about nothing but money. Otsune's daughter Oyō was in love with a sailor, Katsuji, who had been staying at the boarding house for a long time. One rainy night, Katsuji gained 5 yen by chance, and with that money he went to a foreign restaurant to take shelter from the rain. He encountered an old seaman being beaten by a group of people for trying to run away without paying his bill. Katsuji saved the old seaman with his chivalrous spirit and he even sincerely asked the boarding house to let the old seaman stay over.

As the night fell, the silence was broken by Otsune screaming ‘A thief!’ Katsuji rushed in and found the old seaman, whom he had already saved twice, trying to steal money from Otsune’s safe. Katsuji erupted with anger, and after a fierce fight, the old seaman was eventually killed. Early in the next morning, Otsune and Oyō saw Katsuji disappear into a dense fog as he headed to the city office to confess his crime.³²⁵



Fig. 35. Katsuji (played by Mori Eijirō) talks to the customer who gives him five yen. (Still published in *Katsudō zasshi*, November 1923).

³²⁵ *Kinema Junpō*, no. 143, 21 August 1923, p. 4.

According to the plot summary, in the film *Otsune*, Oyō, and Katsuji live together and all get on well. The narratological conflict begins only when Shenkichi disrupts their lives. In contrast, in *Anna Christie* the main roles have internal conflicts and clash, and they need to face and overcome their past mistakes and current contradictions. Anna, Chris, and Mat are confronted with the decision of whether or not to forgive themselves and each other. During the play, the characters evolve, change, and experience a transformation, accepting their own and the others' history, and are eventually regenerated by the sea: Chris learns that all men must return symbolically to the sea, to reality, so that they can undertake their journey to self-knowledge and exploration of the non-self.³²⁶ Anna, on the other hand, finds a new sense of self through her contact with the sea and through a loving relationship with Mat, which lets her re-establish a symbolic connection with life.³²⁷ And Mat transcends his puritanical prejudices towards 'fallen' women and establishes a connection to life through his love for Anna.³²⁸

The sea in *Anna Christie* becomes a symbolic element that represents, as in other O'Neill plays, the forces of life that are ineffable, uncontrolled, and sometimes cruel.³²⁹ The idea of the existence of forces that are beyond human control and that determine people's fate was also present in Mizoguchi's film. As with Katsuji, the life of a benevolent man can change in twenty-four hours due to fateful chain of chance events: He won five yen by chance; then it started raining unexpectedly, so he found shelter in a restaurant; there he helped Senkichi and kindly took him to the boarding house;

³²⁶ F.R. Cunningham, 'Romantic Elements in Early O'Neill.' In James J. Martine (Ed.). *Critical Essays on Eugene O'Neill*. (GK Hall and Co., 1984), pp. 65-72, p. 66.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

³²⁹ John V. Antush, "Eugene O'Neill: Modern and Postmodern." *Eugene O'Neill Review*, Vol. 13 (1), (Spring 1989), pp. 14-25.

subsequently Senkichi tried to steal Otsune's money and there was a fight; Katsuji accidentally killed Senkichi; finally, his life was cut short, since he had to face his punishment: probably several years in prison or even the death penalty. However, as it is possible to observe in the Ikeda Shigechika critique, instead of the sea, evil is the uncontrolled force that determines humans' fate: The wickedness of individuals and the evil 'lurking in people's hearts' can have harmful consequences for kind-hearted people:

Despite being saved several times by benevolence and goodwill, a dirty and corrupted soul which lies at the very bottom of a dark abyss never understands morality or virtue. On the other hand, people with good nature do more good than they are expected to, and yet their consequences are really tragic. Thus, the world is an endless chain of contradiction and irony. All the incidents in the movie occur within 24 hours, merely a whole day and night. However, this film dissects the beauty and ugliness lurking in people's hearts boldly, accurately, and thoroughly. There is no other short movie in Japan which has as brilliant an expression as this one. I was truly amazed by Tanaka Sōichirō's dramatization of the film. He was very successful in attracting the interest of the audience through the unique personalities of the four main characters: Katsuji, Senkichi, Otsune, and Oyō. The movie is well equipped with meaning and understanding. This flawless dramatization clearly shows his qualities as a first-class dramatizer. (...) ³³⁰

³³⁰ *Kinema Junpō*, no. 143, 21 August 1923, p. 6.



Fig. 36. Still published in the magazine *Katsudō shashin* in November 1923. Katsuji tries to help Senkichi (played by Yamamoto Kaichi). Bottles of Champagne show that they are in the expensive foreign restaurant in which Senkichi starts the altercation.

The play and the picture convey different cultural approaches to the idea of the destiny. Mizoguchi's film reflects a fatalist neo-Confucianist point of view: Humans meet prosperity or misfortune by chance due to the variability of the heavens' mandate, so they should resign themselves to their fate and should not be unhappy.³³¹ Since Katsuji

³³¹ M.E. Tucker, *Moral and Spiritual Cultivation in Japanese Neo-Confucianism: The Life and Thought of Kaibara Ekken (1630-1714)*. (SUNY Press, 1989), p. 220.

becomes a victim of a destiny shaped by Senkichi's lack of virtue, he cannot do anything but accept this adversity and give himself up to the police. In contrast, O'Neill's play provides a less deterministic perspective in which free will is possible: Anna refuses to accept her fate, makes choices, and manages to fight the forces that shaped her past life, overcoming them and finding ways to change her life.



Fig. 37. Scene on location in which Oyō (played by Sawamura Haruko) talks to Katsuji in the harbour.

Subsequently Mizoguchi made two more adaptations of literature in English. *Shirayuri wa nageku* (The White Lily Laments, 1925), and *Dōka-ō* (The Copper Coin King, 1926). The first was based on Galsworthy's play *The First and the Last* (1919). According to an unknown reviewer, the movie depicted a 'a bitter love which leads a ruined woman and a disappointed youth to a dead end,' and also revolved around 'a

billionaire who is obsessed with fame and lineage, a nasty rascal who is always hooking up with women, and a pathetic old man who is thought to be a murder suspect.³³² The second adaptation was based on Herman's Landon story *The Copper Coin King*. The reviewer of the film, also unknown, wrote a negative critique, highlighting that it was 'childish and boring,' 'poorly made,' and that it failed 'to give the audience much thrill and excitement, as it is lacking in the potential that a detective film should have.' According to the reviewer, if Mizoguchi 'had added some of the more mysterious flavour that detective films should have, it would have been more interesting.'³³³ The succinct information provided by the extant reviews of both films does not allow a comparative analysis of the intertextual relations among the hypotexts and Mizoguchi's productions.

Tokkan kozō (A Straightforward Boy, 1929)

In 1929 Shochiku produced the short comedy *Tokkan kozō* (A Straightforward Boy), directed by Ozu Yasuhiro. It was an adaptation of the story *The Ransom of Red Chief* (1910) written by O. Henry. The original length was 38 minutes, of which only 14 minutes remain extant. It was shot in three days and was the sixth film to be released in 1929 by Ozu,³³⁴ who would become an important figure in the history of world cinema due to movies such as *Tokyo monogatari* (Tokyo Story) and *Banshun* (Late Spring).

³³² *Geki to Eiga* no. 3, June 1925.

³³³ *Kinema Junpō* no. 219, 21 February 1926, p. 68.

³³⁴ David Bordwell, *Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema*. (Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 195.

The first translation of O. Henry's work into Japanese was the story *Roads of Destiny*, which appeared in 1920 in the magazine *Shinseinen* (New Youth): the most representative periodical of Japanese modernism. That journal, published monthly between 1920 and 1950, had an enormous influence on the development of Japanese literature, since it promoted modernist movements by introducing a wide range of genres and short stories by local and Western authors.³³⁵ The story of *The Ransom of Red Chief* is explained by an autodiegetic narrator, Sam. The plot is an ironic depiction of the kidnapping of a child, Johnny Dorset, the son of a wealthy man, perpetrated by villains Sam and Bill. To carry out their plan, Sam and Bill fit out a cave where they can keep their victim and rent a buggy with the intention of approaching the child, promising him sweets and a buggy ride. However, the child takes control of the situation once the kidnappers get him to their cave: he annoys his captors with chatter and questions, keeps them from sleeping and beats Bill several times, amongst other mischiefs, having a great time with them. When they demand a ransom from Johnny's father, he reacts by demanding a large payment from the kidnappers, in return for which he will take his son home. Bill tries then to convince Johnny to go back home, but the child refuses. He just wants to be with his new playmates. Sick of the boy, they finally have to run away to get rid of him.

Ozu's version, set in a neighbourhood on the outskirts of Tokyo, depicts a similar storyline, although the movie's original beginning and the end, as well as the episode in which the kidnappers try to return the child to his father, are lost. The film has a circular structure which depicts the boy being kidnapped, held in the rogues' den, and finally being freed at the same place where he had been abducted. The movie begins with the

³³⁵ K. Omori (2003). *Detecting Japanese Vernacular Modernism: Shinseinen Magazine and the Development of the Tantei Shosetsu Genre, 1920-1931* (Doctoral dissertation, Ohio State University).

intertitle 'Today seems to be the right time for a kidnapping', which is ironic, since the kidnapping will turn into a nightmare for the villains: As in O. Henry's story, in a series of comic reversals, the expected event is replaced by its opposite.

The first images show a small group of children playing hide-and-seek. The abductor, Bunkichi, roams the area and notices a child, Tetsubo, who has just hidden behind a fence. Bunkichi thinks that the boy could be an easy victim and attracts his attention by offering to find him a better hiding place. Tetsubo accepts and Bunkichi takes the boy to another alley. There, to gain Tetsubo's confidence, the kidnapper begins to make faces and grotesque poses, imitating animals, and manages to attract the boy's interest. At this point, Bunkichi invites Tetsubo to go to a funny place, and the child accepts without hesitation. During their journey, the kidnapper buys him a small gift in a shop, but the child also wants more things that he has seen there. Tetsubo cries until Bunkichi, afraid of arousing other pedestrians' suspicions, reluctantly gives in and buys the boy several toys.

In the next scene, Tetsubo eats a snack on a park bench next to Bunkichi. Suddenly Bunkichi notices that a policeman is observing them from a distance, but he banishes any suspicion by pretending that he is playing with his son. Shortly afterwards, the kidnapper takes the child to his boss's hideout. Gontora, the boss, is pleasantly surprised by his subordinate's initiative. Thinking that the child is docile and will be easy to handle, Gontora is pleased that the kidnapping has been a good idea.

The subsequent original scenes are lost. In them, it is likely that Bunkichi contacts the boy's father and demands a ransom, which the father refuses. He returns to Gontora's place and goes into the next room to rest. In the next extant scene, the child, bored, begins bothering Gontora. The film shows Tetsubo getting up to comical mischief that progressively exasperates Gontora, such as throwing toy arrows at Gontora's head, filling a water pistol with saké, and kicking over a bottle of saké. Sick of tolerating the boy,

Gontora wakes Bunkichi and asks him to take Tetsubo back to where he found him. Bunkichi obeys and takes Tetsubo back, laden with the toys that he had previously bought him.



Fig. 38. Still from a lost scene in which the kidnapper Bunkichi (left, played by Saitō Tatsuo), and his boss, Gontora (right, played by Sakamoto Takeshi), deal exhausted with Tetsubo, the abducted boy (played by Aoki Tomio).

Once in the street, when the child is distracted, Bunkichi tries to slink away through the alleys, but Tetsubo finds him. He wants to keep on playing with his abductor, and begins asking him to make faces. Bunkichi tries to escape again, but the police officer he saw in the park reappears, so he has to stay with the child. When they arrive at the

place where Bunkichi found Tetsubo at the beginning of the movie, the boy's friends see the toys and ask him where he got them. Meanwhile, Bunkichi begins to sneak away. Tetsubo tells his friends that the toys were bought by the kidnapper, whereupon the other children chase Bunkichi, asking him to buy toys for them too. The movie ends with the image of the abductor fleeing across open land, pursued by a group of children demanding new toys.

The short story and the film both begin with a sentence that ironically suggests that something unexpected will happen. In the story, it is Sam, the narrator, who says 'It looked like a good thing: but wait till I tell you.' The action in the story takes place in a quiet town in Alabama. Sam and his friend Bill Driscoll have planned the kidnapping in detail: they have chosen as their victim Johnny Dorset, the son of a wealthy man, found a cave in which to hide the boy, and rented a buggy in which to approach him with the promise of sweets and a buggy ride. In the film, the victim is selected apparently at random in the streets of Tokyo, and instead of attracting the boy's attention by using a buggy, the kidnapper makes funny faces and does animal impressions. Nevertheless, in both the story and the movie, the captors and the captive switch roles, with the kidnappers reduced to exhaustion, defeated physically and financially by the child.

Ozu's film was the last adaptation of a literary work written in English during the Shōwa pre-war era. The next adaptation of an English author would not be released until 1949, when *Konna onna ni dare ga shitta* (known as 'Utako's Story'), a film by Yamamoto Satsuo based on Thomas Hardy's novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), was produced. Subsequent years saw the release of adaptations of the works of remarkable authors such as Shakespeare and of pulp fiction or *noir* novels written by authors such as Ed McBain, Cornell Woolrich, and Edouard Atiyah, among others.

Catalan and Spanish Literature

The first work of Catalan literature to arrive in Japan was *Terra baixa* (Martha of the Lowlands), written in 1896 by the Catalan dramatist and poet Àngel Guimerà. The screenplay, written by Tanaka Sōichirō, was based on a version of Guimerà's play written by Osanai Kaoru in 1916 and entitled *Jinkyō*. The play was staged at the Yuraku-za theatre for the first time in 1922, directed by Osanai and interpreted by the *Shingeki-za* troupe.³³⁶ There are different opinions about which hypotext Osanai translated and adapted. The film critic and comedian Furukawa Roppa asserts in his review of the film, published in the magazine *Kinema Junpō* in 1924,³³⁷ that Osanai's version was based on a play entitled *Martha of the Lowlands* – the English translation of Guimerà's drama. On the other hand, Kariya Hiroko, a Japanese specialist in Catalan theatre, explains that Osanai translated and adapted the opera *Tiefland* (1903) by Eugen d'Albert into a libretto

³³⁶ *Shingeki-za*, 'The New Theatre Company', was established by Hanayagi Shōtarō and Yanai Eijirō in 1919, staging *shinpa* plays and western dramas. M. Poulton, *A Beggar's Art: Scripting Modernity in Japanese Drama, 1900-1930* (University of Hawaii Press, 2010).

³³⁷ *Kinema Junpō*, no. 160, p.10.

in German by Rudolph Lothar which was based on Guimerà's play.³³⁸ Translations of the works of classical and contemporary Catalan authors, such as Joanot Martorell, Pere Calders, and Montserrat Roig, were not made directly from the Catalan language until the 1990s.

Regarding Spanish literature, during the Meiji and Taishō eras, several translations of works of Cervantes and Calderón de la Barca, both distinguished authors of the Spanish Golden Age, appeared in Japan. At that time, the majority of their works appeared as abridged free versions, although more accurate translations from English or German versions were published later. The first author whose works were translated directly from the Spanish was Vicente Blasco Ibáñez. This writer had been well-known in Japan since the publication in 1921 of the novel *Los cuatro jinetes del apocalipsis* (The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse), published shortly after the screening in Japanese movie theatres of the successful Hollywood adaptation of Blasco's novel,³³⁹ directed in the same year by Rex Ingram.³⁴⁰ Due to the popularity of Blasco's works, studios produced two film adaptations of two of his novels: Murata's *Osumi to haha* (Osumi and her Mother, 1924), based on the novella *La vieja del cinema* (The Old Woman of the

³³⁸ Hiroko Kariya, 'Baruserona niokeru engeki to katarūnya kindai engeki kakuritsu omegutte adoriā guaru no katsudō o chūshin ni.' In Akira Kinosita (Ed.), *Baruserona katarūnya bunka no saisei to tenkai* (Seiyō kindai no toshi to geijutsu 6), Chikurinsha, 2017, p. 393 – 424.

³³⁹ David George, 'Blasco Ibáñez en el cine japonés.' *Revista de Estudios sobre Blasco Ibáñez/Journal of Blasco Ibáñez Studies*, No. 3, (2014), pp. 37-60, p. 41.

³⁴⁰ Ingram's film was screened worldwide, becoming a global phenomenon and having a deep cultural impact. Further, it brought large profits to Metro Pictures Corporation's studio. According to Barton, the success of *The Four Horsemen* introduced a new era of epic productions, many of them with anti-war storylines. R. Barton, *Rex Ingram: Visionary Director of the Silent Screen* (University Press of Kentucky, 2014).

Movies), and Sakata Shigenori's *Wakasa yo saraba* (Farewell to Youth, 1924), inspired by the novel *La maja desnuda* (Woman Triumphant).

Jinkyō (This Dusty World, 1924)

Jinkyō (This Dusty World) was an adaptation of Àngel Guimerà's play *Terra baixa* (Martha of the Lowlands) directed by Mizoguchi Kenji in 1924. The screenplay, written by Tanaka Sōichirō, was based on the version of the play written by Osanai Kaoru in 1916, entitled *Jinkyō*. Guimerà's drama became very popular worldwide, and was translated into several languages shortly after its first publication. Furthermore, several film adaptations of the drama were released in different countries before the end of the 1920s. Thus, in 1907, Fractuós Gelabert filmed *Tierra baja* (The Lowlands); in 1913, an Argentinean version appeared with the same title, directed by Mario Gallo; an American production titled *Marta of the Lowlands* by J. Searle Dawley was made in 1914; and a German adaptation titled *Tiefland* was shot in 1922 by d'Adolf Edgard Licho.

Guimerà's drama is set in a rural area of Catalonia. The plot revolves around Sebastià, a landowner who is facing economic problems and has mortgaged all his properties. He has a love affair with Marta, a servant who has worked for him since she was a little girl. However, to resolve his financial issues, Sebastià decides to marry an heiress from a wealthy family. His relationship with Marta is an open secret, but he is aware that he will not be able to find a spouse unless people think this relationship is over: thus, he forces her to marry Manelic, a shepherd who lives in the mountains. Sebastià pretends to maintain his love affair with Marta in secret after the wedding, and he convinces Marta that Manelic is aware of the deception and will consent to their relationship after the marriage. Nevertheless, Manelic, who fell in love with Marta the

first time he saw her, marries her, trusting that she is in love with him too. From the very beginning, he cannot understand why Marta detests and rejects him.

Eventually, Manelic finds out that his wife has a lover and that the marriage was a sham, and decides to return to the mountains. At that point, Marta understands that Manelic is innocent, that he knew nothing about the farce, and that he truly loves her. After arguing with Manelic, she realizes that she is in love with him and they decide to escape together and live in the mountains. Sebastia arrives on the scene at this point: realizing that he is about to lose Marta, he throws Manelic out of the house. Finally, Manelic returns and fights with Sebastia, killing him. Both Manelic and Marta flee to the highlands, a pure place away from the corruption and malevolence of the lowlands.

The plot summarized by the film critic and comedian Furukawa Roppa in *Kinema Junpō* shows that the movie's storyline is similar to Gumerà's play, although it was adapted to the Japanese cultural context. Thus, in rural Japan, a rich but ruined landlord, called Senkichi, decides to marry a wealthy woman and use her money to pay his debts. Nevertheless, he desires to maintain his relation with his mistress, Omatsu, so to avoid suspicions he forces her to marry another man, a woodcutter called Rokuzō, who lives in isolation in the mountains. She rejects him, whereupon he realizes that the wedding was a farce and announces that he will return to the mountains. Omatsu decides to follow him and leave Senkichi's lands. The landlord is opposed to their relationship and ends up fighting with Rokuzō, who strangles him:

A mountain landlord called Nomura Senkichi was deeply in debt due to business failures, and thus decided to marry a rich woman to get her dowry. However, Senkichi had a lover called Omatsu, with whom he had become acquainted through a travelling entertainer. He decided

to force her to marry another man for the sake of appearances, while still keeping her as his mistress. Senkichi chose a manly woodcutter called Rokuzō to marry Omatsu, and he was delighted to come down from the mountains on the day of the wedding. Omatsu was in fact scared of Rokuzō and angry with Senkichi for giving her away to this rough-looking man. Omatsu cried and Rokuzō was astonished. On finding out the truth of the situation, Rokuzō decided to leave this ‘dirty world’ and return to the mountain. Omatsu found Rokuzō’s reaction noble and followed him. Senkichi was surprised that Omatsu had followed Rokuzō, so he chased them. After a fierce fight, Rokuzō strangled Senkichi to death. Rokuzō said, ‘My dear Omatsu, let us go back to our mountain,’ and they disappeared.³⁴¹

The film depicts six characters (instead of twelve, as in the play, or eleven, as in Rudolph Lothar’s libretto). The supporting characters included are relevant for the development of the drama: Orié (playing the role of Nuri), Gonji, a water mill guard (playing Perruca, a country house owner and subject of Sebastia), and Soncho, the village chief (playing the character of Mossèn, a sinister overseer). The main characters, Senkichi, Omatsu and Rokuzō, have similar personalities and narrative functions as in the play. Nevertheless, the roles were adapted to the Japanese cultural context, thus becoming more understandable for Japanese audiences.

³⁴¹ *Kinema Junpō*, no. 160, p.10.



Fig. 39. Scene in which Senkichi (played by Takagi Eiji) talks to Rokuzō (played by Suzuki Denemi) and Omatsu (played by Urabe Kumeko), probably suggesting that he marry her. National Film Centre Tokyo.

Senkichi, like Sebastia in Guimerà's drama, is a selfish and unscrupulous landowner who rules the lives of his peasants, seeing them as his property. In the film, Omatsu is a travelling entertainer who makes a living playing the *biwa*.³⁴² She meets Senkichi on one of her trips and accepts his invitation to stay with him and enter into an extra-marital relationship, something that was considered improper in both Japanese and Western societies at the time when the play was written and the film shot. Both Marta's

³⁴² A Japanese short-necked fretted lute, often used in narrative storytelling by itinerant minstrels.

and Omatsu's misery force them to agree to cohabit with their landlords. On the one hand, Marta has lived her entire childhood with her mother in a state of extreme poverty. When she is fourteen, her mother dies, and she lives thereafter as a beggar. Wandering aimlessly, the two arrive at Sebastià's lands. He invites them to live and work at the mill. Soon Sebastià and Marta start a friendly relationship and eventually become lovers. Despite feeling that this is not right, Marta accepts the situation because she has shelter and stability and she feels she owes Sebastià a debt of gratitude.

In contrast, Omatsu, due to her profession as a travelling entertainer, is a *hinin*, a member of the outcaste group at the bottom of the Japanese social order. As mentioned in Chapter Six, the *hinin* were considered 'non-human': this caste contained people who worked in professions considered impure in Buddhist or *Shinto* beliefs, such as itinerant entertainers like Omatsu, beggars, and prostitutes. The *hinin*, along with the *eta* – a group included tanners, butchers or executioners, among other professions, who were regarded as 'extremely impure' – formed the *burakumin*, the lower social class. It was impossible for a member of the *eta* group to change caste, but *hinin* were allowed to do so. Thus, Omatsu, after meeting Senkichi, has the opportunity to abandon her caste and join a higher status. She, like Marta, can have a more stable life by staying with the landlord and being his mistress.

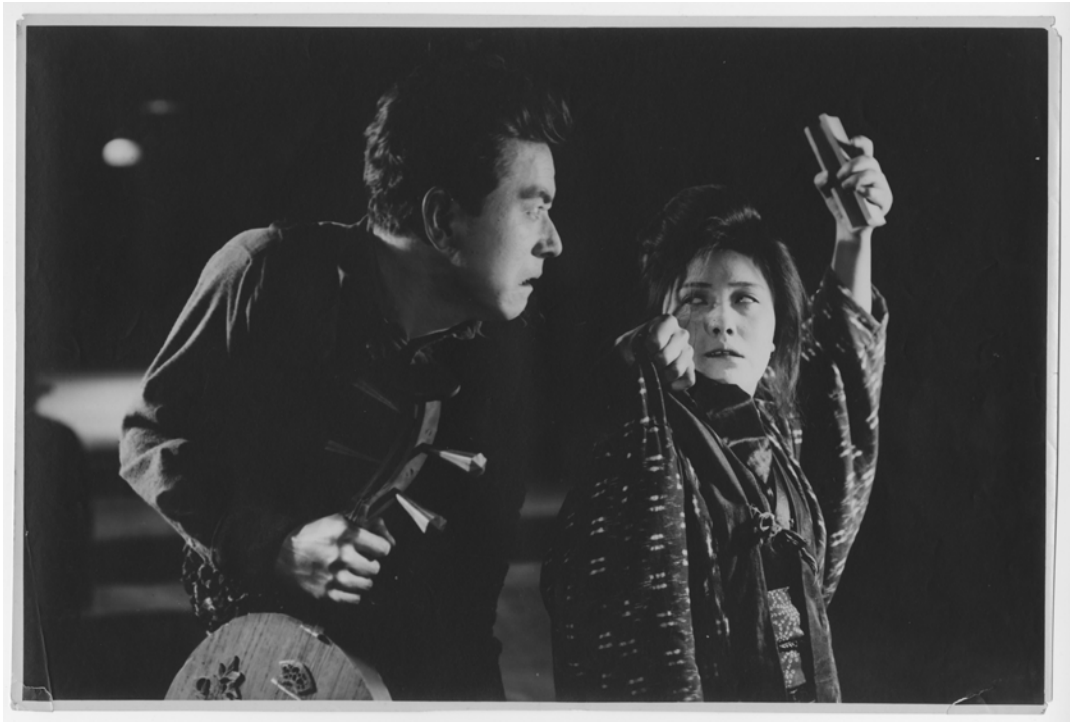


Fig. 40. Rokuzō threatening Omatsu. He holds her biwa, the Japanese short-necked fretted lute used in narrative storytelling by itinerant minstrels such as Omatsu. National Film Centre Tokyo.

The roles of Rokuzō and Manelic share many similitudes. Both are naïve, rude and solitary men who live and work alone in the mountains. They descend to the plains to get married, deceived by their landlords, and end up fighting with them. However, Rokuzō is a woodcutter instead of a shepherd. There are remarkable cultural reasons for the modification of the protagonist's occupation and its implications. On the one hand, it would have been implausible for the audience to see a Japanese character working as a shepherd, since this was an uncommon profession in Japan at the time, despite the unsuccessful efforts by the government during the Meiji era to encourage and promote

sheep farming so that Japan could become self-sufficient in wool.³⁴³ Furthermore, in the play, as in Western cultural tradition, the figure of the shepherd is associated with the wolf, the most feared animal for shepherds, seen as a threat to flocks and to human livelihoods. In literary tradition, from classical works such as the Homer's *The Iliad*, Aesop's *Fables*, and Dante's *Divine Comedy* to popular oral tales, the wolf is depicted as a metaphor for avarice, violence, and evil. The wolf becomes the *leitmotif* of Guimerà's drama: Sebastià is symbolically a wolf from whom Manelic, the shepherd, has to protect Marta, his sheep. At the end of the play, Manelic kills Sebastià with his bare hands, as he did – as he recounts to Marta – with a wolf that was frequently attacking his flock, screaming after the murder that he has killed the wolf:

MANELICH. Make way there! I killed the wolf!

[He points to SEBASTIÀ.] I killed the wolf!

[MANELICH encircles MARTA with his right arm, and looks into her face; she returns his look, trembling, terrified; with a powerful sweep of the left arm, he points to the mountains; MARTA nods assent; they leave quickly, the people falling back to make way for them.]

CURTAIN.³⁴⁴

³⁴³ Takekazu Ogura, *Agricultural Development in Modern Japan* (Japan-FAO Association, 1963), p. 584.

³⁴⁴ Àngel Guimerà, *Martha of the Lowlands* (Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1915), p. 112.

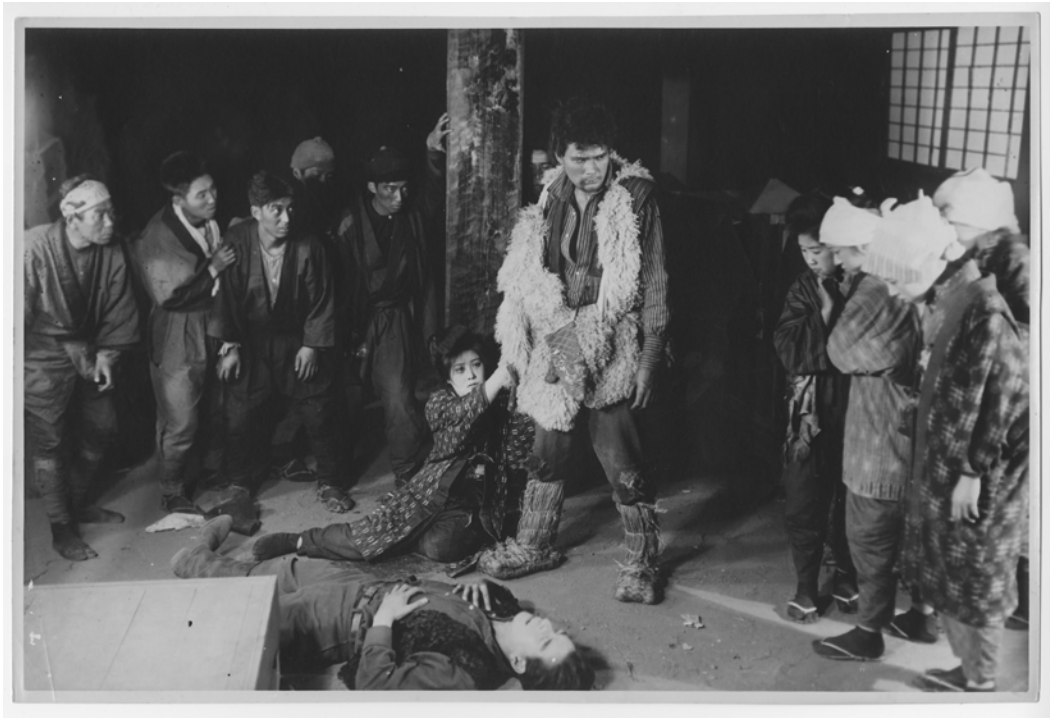


Fig. 41. Scene in which Senkichi lies dead on the floor, killed by Rokuzō (despite Omatsu trying to stop him. National Film Centre Tokyo.

In contrast, Japanese mythology presents the wolf as a favourable animal, and in *Shinto* beliefs, it is regarded as a messenger of the Gods. Far from being considered a threat to villagers' livelihoods, the wolf is seen as a creature that protects them from farm-raiding forest animals.³⁴⁵ Moreover, in Japanese folklore, there is the belief in the *okuriōkami* (escort wolf) that follows humans walking alone through a forest until they reach their destination without doing them any harm.³⁴⁶ According to tradition, a wolf-killer could expose himself and his family to the risk of spiritual retribution. Thus, besides

³⁴⁵ John Knight, 'On the extinction of the Japanese wolf.' *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol. 56 (1997), pp. 129-159, p. 140.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.136.

the fact that wolves became extinct in Japan in the 19th century, the symbolism and killing of the wolf by the shepherd depicted in the play might be incomprehensible to Japanese audiences. In Japan, bears – amongst other wild animals – are a source of perceived danger. Japanese folklore tells of a mythological monster called the *onikuma* (demon bear), which occasionally emerges from the forests to look for food, and which reacts aggressively if it encounters humans.³⁴⁷ Thus, in concordance to the cultural tradition, the film substitutes the wolf for a bear, a common threat to those who work or live in the mountains, like Rokuzō. Senkichi symbolically becomes an *onikuma* – a danger to Otsumi and Rokuzō. Like Manelic with his landlord, Rokuzō kills Senkichi with his bare hands, as he had with the bear that attacked him (see fig. 42).



Fig. 42. Picture of the shooting of the scene in which Rokuzō fights against a bear, instead of a wolf as in Guimerà's play (Published in *Eiga sutaa zenshu*, vol. 1).

³⁴⁷ Kazuhiko Komatsu, *An Introduction to Yōkai Culture: Monsters, Ghosts, and Outsiders in Japanese History* (Japan Library, 2017).

As previously mentioned, Rokuzō and Manelic live in the highlands, and descend to the lowlands to marry. Both spaces in the drama and the movie are symbolic. The highlands are a wholesome, pastoral area that represents freedom, purity, honesty, and all that is good by nature. In contrast, the lowlands are a materialistic and malicious place that represents human misery, prejudice, and the evil of humankind. This is highlighted at the end of both the play and the film, when Rokuzō and Manelic, after killing their landlords, return to the mountains with their wives.



Fig. 43. Still of the final scenes in which Rokuzō takes Otsumi to the highlands (Published in *kinema Junpō*, no. 160 May, 21, 1924).

The dichotomy between the highlands and lowlands and its symbolism is also remarked upon in the original title of the film, *Jinkyō* (塵境), which has a deep allegorical meaning. It is formed by the *kanji* (塵) *Jin* and (境) *Kyō*. *Jin* represents dust and dirt, and in Buddhist texts, is an object perceived with the mind or the senses that represents defilement, impurity, and affliction. *Kyō* means border or boundary, but also an area or territory. In Buddhist texts, *Kyō* is a cognitive object that is perceptible by the senses or the mind. Thus, the title refers to the place where the main action occurs – the lowlands – which is perceived as an impure and corrupt region and a source of suffering. Furthermore, it suggests the idea of the frontier between good and evil: that is, between the untainted mountains and the morally degraded plains.

Osumi to haha (Osumi and her Mother, 1924)

In 1924, Murata Minoru directed the German Expressionist-influenced *Osumi to haha* (Osumi and her Mother), based on Blasco Ibáñez's novella *La vieja del cinema* (The Old Woman of the Movies). The story was converted into a novella from the script of the film *La vieille du cinema* (The Old Woman of the Movies) – an anti-war picture directed by Blasco Ibáñez and Max André in 1917.³⁴⁸ It was published in Spain in 1921 in the collection titled *El préstamo de la difunta* (The Loan of the Deceased). In Japan, Blasco's story was printed in 1924, in the book *Shikei kufu onna* (The Condemned Woman) – the title of one of the five stories and two short novels included in the volume.³⁴⁹ The writer

³⁴⁸ J. L. León Roca, *Vicente Blasco Ibáñez* (Valencia: Prometeo, 1967).

³⁴⁹ David George, 'Blasco Ibáñez en el cine japonés.' *Revista de Estudios sobre Blasco Ibáñez/Journal of Blasco Ibáñez Studies*, p. 43.

was already well-known in Japan since the publication in 1921 of the novel *Los cuatro jinetes del apocalipsis* (The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse), released shortly after the screening in Japanese movie theatres of the successful Hollywood adaptation of Blasco's novel,³⁵⁰ directed in the same year by Rex Ingram.³⁵¹

Blasco's novella *La vieja del cinema* tells in four chapters the story of an anonymous old woman, a humble vegetable seller on the streets of Paris, who is taken to a police station after a fight in a movie theatre. The first chapter depicts the old woman's statement. She recounts to the captain the vicissitudes of her life: her soldier husband became disabled during the Franco-Prussian war³⁵² and her daughter died young, leaving two children, Alberto and Julieta, whom she raised. The old woman explains that her beloved grandson, Alberto, died in the First World War a year ago, leaving a wife and a son. She also tells him that her granddaughter, with whom she has a distant relationship, works in a cabaret and is a famous dancer. She goes on to explain why the altercation started: In a war film, which included real scenes of life in the trenches, shot a long time ago, she had seen her grandson Alberto, sitting writing a letter and smiling at the camera when he realizes he is being filmed. This shook her considerably, and she moved closer to the screen to see him better, disturbing other people, and ending up fighting with the

³⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 41

³⁵¹ Ingram's film was screened worldwide, becoming a global phenomenon and having a deep cultural impact. Further, it brought large profits to Metro Pictures Corporation's studio. According to Barton, the success of *The Four Horsemen* introduced a new era of epic productions, many of them with anti-war storylines. R. Barton, *Rex Ingram: Visionary Director of the Silent Screen*. (University Press of Kentucky, 2014).

³⁵² The Franco-Prussian war (July 19, 1870–May 10, 1871) was a clash between France and a coalition of German states, led by Prussia. The German victory ended the French hegemony in continental Europe and resulted in the creation of a unified Germany.

cinema's employees when they tried to throw her out. After listening to this explanation, the sympathetic captain frees the old woman.

In the next chapters, the old woman goes to the cinema several more times to watch Alberto in the film. She decides to invite his wife, who is working in a factory making howitzers, and her great-grandson to the movie. Alberto's wife accepts, but after watching the movie, she declines the old woman's invitation to go again the next day. The old woman also visits her granddaughter Julieta to suggest that she go to see Alberto in the film. Julieta refuses because she has a date with an aviator who is on a few hours' leave. The last chapter begins with the announcement of the armistice. After spending the day roaming with the masses celebrating the arrival of peace, she goes to watch 'Alberto's film' again. However, the movie theatre has changed its program and is screening an American comedy instead. The desperate old woman's wish to see her grandson writing a letter from the front contrasts with the people's euphoria and their desire to start to forget the war, symbolized by the replacement of the war film with a comedy. Devastated and exhausted, the old woman wanders around until she sees Alberto's phantom. She follows it, and they both vanish through the streets.

Osumi to haha was released just three months after the publication in Japan of Blasco's story. The review and the announcement published *Kinema Junpō*,³⁵³ and the summary that appeared in *Katsudō zasshi*,³⁵⁴ show that Murata's adaptation followed the storyline of the hypotext, although the actions take place in Kyoto and revolve around the characters of Otsumi and her mother, depicting a different ending. The mother, a humble woman whose name is unknown, like the old woman in the novella, has lost her son Shōji

³⁵³ *Kinema Junpō* no. 163, June 21 1924, p.17 (review) and *Kinema Junpō* no, 164, 1 July 1924, p. 17 (announcement).

³⁵⁴ *Katsudō zasshi*, 10 August 1924, p. 110.

in an armed conflict, probably in Siberia during the Japanese intervention³⁵⁵ as part of the international coalition deployed in Russia to overthrow the Bolshevik government.³⁵⁶ On the other hand, Otsumi is a young woman who changes her lifestyle before her brother Shōji is drafted to serve in the army. She quits her job and her mother's house and becomes a *geisha*. Like Julieta with her grandmother, she and her mother drift apart. Subsequently, Otsumi aims to change her economic status when the millionaire Yamazaki becomes her patron³⁵⁷ and lover, enabling her to have a luxurious life while her mother continues to live in misery.

³⁵⁵ David George, 'Blasco Ibáñez en el cine japonés.' *Revista de Estudios sobre Blasco Ibáñez/Journal of Blasco Ibáñez Studies*, p. 46.

³⁵⁶ According to Fumitaka Kurosawa, Japan deployed approximately 73,000 troops during the Siberian intervention, of whom 1,399 died in combat and 1,717 from injuries and diseases. Fumitaka Kurosawa, 'Japan, Army'. In Tucker, S. & Roberts, P. M. (Eds.). (2005). *World War I: A Student Encyclopedia* (Vol. 1). ABC-CLIO, pp. 967-970.

³⁵⁷ It was usual for *geisha* to have a *danna* or patron, who supported her and covered her huge expenses. It was rare, however, for the *geisha* to become the patron's mistress during her professional life.



Fig. 44. Otsumi (played by Urabe Kumeko) and her brother Shōji (played by Takagi Eiji). National Film Centre Tokyo.

One day, the mother sees her son on a newsreel shown in the cinema. She is shocked, and looks for Otsumi to tell her about it. She finds her daughter on the street with other *geisha*, but Otsumi, ashamed by her mother's poor appearance, pretends that she is a stranger and sends her away. However, Otsumi is later remorseful and reconciles with her mother, inviting her to visit her home. At that point, Otsumi's rival, a *geisha* named Kohan, sees Otsumi's mother getting into her car. Kohan discredits Otsumi in front of Yamazaki and thus becomes Yamazaki's favourite, replacing Otsumi. The film ends with the mother roaming the streets looking for her son, like the old woman in the novella, while Otsumi tries to recover her lost position.



Fig. 45. Otsumi meets her mother (played by Ishikawa Harue) by chance and pretends she does not know her.

In both Blasco's novella and Murata's film, the appearance on the screen of a dead relative affects the characters' lives. In the novella, considered a plea against the war, Alberto's death serves to denounce the consequences of the armed conflict and the effects of its cinematic use on individuals and on society. In contrast, Murata employs Shōji's death and the screening of his images as the factor that sparks the conflicting emotions, reactions, behaviours, and lifestyles of the two different generations portrayed in the film. The director highlights the contrast between tradition and modernity, within the constriction and the materialism personified by the mother and by Otsumi.³⁵⁸ There is a

³⁵⁸ David George, 'Blasco Ibáñez en el cine japonés.' *Revista de Estudios sobre Blasco Ibáñez/Journal of Blasco Ibáñez Studies*, p. 46.

meta-cinematic component in that dichotomy. The character of Otsumi represents the concept of *modanizumu*, a popular modern aesthetic inserted into cinema after the 1923 earthquake, whose main characteristic was the depiction of the more individualistic, jovial, and frivolous modern lifestyle.³⁵⁹ On the other hand, the mother and the war newsreel in which her son appears typify the old cinema and the political use of films in the service of the nation-state's conventions, in an era of intense nationalism and exaltation of traditional values.



Fig. 46. Expressionism-influenced image in which Otsumi is hounded by umbrellas, suggesting her remorse for treating her mother as a beggar and pretending she does not know her.

³⁵⁹ Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano, *Nippon modern: Japanese cinema of the 1920s and 1930s*, p. 111.

Wakasa yo saraba (Farewell to Youth, 1924)

Shortly after the release of Murata's movie, Sakata Shigenori filmed an adaptation of a different work by Blasco Ibáñez, namely *Wakasa yo saraba* (Farewell to Youth), based on *La maja desnuda* (translated as 'Woman Triumphant') written in 1906. The novel was published in Japan in 1923 with the title *Ratai no bijo* (Nude Beautiful Woman). Blasco's story, which alludes to Goya's painting with the same title, revolves around Renovales, an artist of humble origin who achieves international fame. However, he is obsessed with the fugacity of life and the loss of the youth. The film kept the story-line of Blasco's novel, although it was set in a Japanese context and presented some dissimilarities in the depiction of certain events and in the ending portrayed.³⁶⁰



Fig. 47. Eizō (played by Takada Minoru) shows his painting to Mariko (played by Utagawa Ruriko). (Still published in *Kinema Junpō* no. 178).

³⁶⁰ David George, 'Blasco Ibáñez en el cine japonés.' *Revista de Estudios sobre Blasco Ibáñez/Journal of Blasco Ibáñez Studies*, p. 46.

In contrast to Murata's *Otsumi to haha*, Sakata's film received negative critiques. The unknown reviewer criticized the deficient dramatization, the fact that the movie included irrelevant or redundant scenes, and the performances of some of its actors. Furthermore, the critic highlighted the fact that the picture seemed disorganized, making the plot extremely boring:

The title is interesting as a novel title, but it would accompany a multitude of problems if used as a movie title. This is because the title describes the suffering and agony of a painter who truly loves beauty. Although Sakata's selection of this topic was bold, his effort is not rewarded. The dramatization is poorly made in the first place. The first two volumes about childhood should have been removed, as this would have alleviated the redundancy of the film to some degree. Due to the director's laziness, even the main plot felt extremely boring. The director cares too much about the details, which makes the film a little disorganized as a whole. He uses too many titles, and is terrible at putting each scene together. He does not need to use so much fade-out effect. The redundancy of this film would make the audience disengage completely before they see the splendid climax. Although the climax is portrayed effectively, it seems that the film has lost its effect due to the redundancy. The actors performed quite well. Takada Minoru played his role well, understanding its significance. Mr Takada, on the other hand, should have learned more about painters. He should have learned how writers hold a pencil. His performance was too cold. Mrs Utagawa

needs to learn more about acting too. The movie might become popular, but I must say there is still a long way to go for this film.³⁶¹

The most remarkable differences between the movie and the novel revolved around the approach towards painting of the main character, Eizō. He rebels against Japanese aesthetics, based on Chinese tradition, in which he was educated, and chooses the Western style of painting. Thus, Sakata's film explored the controversial relations between tradition and modernity, and the dilemma – latent since the end of the nineteenth century – of how to adopt Western aesthetics and techniques while keeping or developing the Japanese essence.³⁶²

Since the adaptations of Blasco's stories, no more films based on works written in Spanish have been shot in Japan, with the exception of *Saraba hakobune* (Farewell to the Ark), filmed by Terayama Shuji in 1984. This film was a loose adaptation of the Gabriel García Márquez novel *100 Years of Solitude*.

³⁶¹ *Kinema Junpō* no. 178, 21 November 1924, p. 21.

³⁶² David George, 'Blasco Ibáñez en el cine japonés.' *Revista de Estudios sobre Blasco Ibáñez/Journal of Blasco Ibáñez Studies*, p. 51.

Conclusions

The objective of this research has been to survey and examine adaptations of Western literature produced in Japan during the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s, and to explore the intertextual relations between the films and the Western literary works on which they were based. The films have been analysed following Stam's intertextual dialogic approach, adding historical, cultural, and contextual aspects into the study. Thus, the analysis has taken into consideration the era's cultural and aesthetic needs and pressures, as Aragay suggests³⁶³. Further, drawing on Hutcheon's arguments,³⁶⁴ it has included the context, time, and place of production, as well as the elements of presentation and reception which determined the changes in setting and style. It also has taken into account of the cultural implications and the multi-layered process of signification of the literary source and the film, as advocated by Schober.³⁶⁵

Through the analysis of several movies, it has been possible to describe the process of 'reculturization', that is, the cultural transformations in the structure, content, aesthetics, and narrative discourse, as well as the permutations in narratological elements such as locale, plot, characters, and time, carried out in the process of adaptation. The

³⁶³ Mireia Aragay, 'Reflection to Reaction: Adaptation Studies then and Now', p.18.

³⁶⁴ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (Routledge, 2006), p. 18.

³⁶⁵ Regina Schober, 'Adaptation as connection – Transmediality reconsidered', p.91.

findings of this dissertation have to be seen in light of its limitations. Most of the movies analysed are non-extant, and their study has been drawn from stills and film reviews found in publications of that time. Therefore, it has not been possible to make an exhaustive and detailed analysis of all of the films, which might affect the interpretation and the results of this research.

Nevertheless, the results obtained allow us to answer the research questions stated in the introduction: How were Western literary works transformed and adapted for the Japanese cultural sphere? And how did Japan's historical, ideological, and sociocultural context influence the interpretations of Western literary works and the production of films?

In relation to the first question, it is important to highlight the fact that film adaptations performed transformations, as Stam points out, under the influence of the 'ambient discourses and ideologies,'³⁶⁶ mediated by filters such as the studio style (i.e. Nikkatsu and Shochiku companies, which dominated the market during those years), auteurist predilections, political constraints, and censorship.

The first adaptations of Western literature shot in the 1910s were based on *shingeki* plays: that is, highbrow Western-style theatre that staged works by notable contemporary Western authors. While those adaptations adhered closely to certain theatrical conventions, such as the use of *oyama*, the adaptations of *shingeki*-based works facilitated the process of westernization and modernization of Japanese cinema, and stimulated the appearance of the 'Pure Film Movement', which argued that movies should be less theatrical and should develop their own forms of expression.

Similar to theatre directors, the first adaptations of *shingeki*-based plays tried to be faithful to the hypotext, preserving the cultural milieu of the literary source. The plots

³⁶⁶ Robert Stam, 'Beyond Fidelity: The Dialogics of Adaptation', pp.68-69.

were minimally modified, retaining the main events of the storyline, and portraying the characters with the same names and behaviours as in the literary works and wearing Western costumes. Moreover, actors in these films were expected to play as Westerners, often applying Stanislavsky's acting techniques. Intellectuals who wrote film reviews, such as the one who commented on Tanaka's *Ikeru Shikabane*, disliked actors' performance if their acting style was 'too Japanese' and reminiscent of traditional theatrical forms such as *kabuki* or *noh*. The intelligentsia, therefore, appreciated film directors' abilities to take Western works to the screen and the degree of 'fidelity' to the literary source achieved in the depiction of the events, the portrayal of characters, and the level of realism and verisimilitude of the *mise-en-scène*. Thus, it was expected that movies would maintain all of the cultural components and aesthetics of the hypotext. Cultural elements that appeared in the adaptations but were unknown or incomprehensible to the Japanese audience would be explained by the *benshi*.

By 1920, filming innovations and acting techniques defended by the 'Pure Film Movement' had become prominent. New studios, such as Shochiku Kinema, began to produce movies following European and American filming and narrative techniques, abandoning theatrical conventions such as the use of *oyama*. The adoption of Western cinematic modes, such as the use of close-ups, flashbacks, elaborate *mise-en-scène*, and intertitles, meant that theatrical modes of representation were abandoned. In the same way, adaptations no longer had to be shot as *shingeki* plays; nor did they need to be 'faithful' to the hypotext. Therefore, filmmakers began to have more creative freedom to adapt Western literature works to suit the Japanese cultural context.

The first innovative adaptation of a Western work made following the 'Pure Film Movement' cinematic modes of filmmaking and setting the story in Japan was Murata's *Rojō no reikon* (Souls on the Road, 1921). After Murata's film, a new trend appeared in the country. There was no interest in searching the adaptations for realism and fidelity to

the ‘original’ story. From that moment, most of the films based on Western literature would be free adaptations in which the narrative events, characters, and *mise-en-scène* were Japanized, making them more appealing to the new demands of middle-class audiences.

During the 1920s, studios adapted Western works by contemporary authors that had been staged in *shingeki* theatres, but also others that had never been performed. Thus, film-makers based movies on plays by Gerhart Hauptmann, Wilhelm Schmidtbonn, and Eugene O’Neill; on novels or stories by renowned authors such as Victor Hugo, Leo Tolstoy, and Guy de Maupassant; on the works of famous writers of that time, such as Vicente Blasco Ibáñez; or on popular detectives’ stories written by authors such as Maurice Leblanc, Herman Landon, and Jack Boyle. In some cases, such as in Mizoguchi’s *Chi to rei* (Blood and Soul, 1923), the adaptations were based on free literary adaptations of Western works that had previously been written by Japanese authors, adding different levels of intertextuality.

With regard to permutations in locale, it was mentioned above that all films set their events in Japan – with the exception of both parts of the movie *Aa mujō* (Ah, no Mercy, 1923), directed by Ushihara and Ikeda, which were set in China – depicting the stories in urban or rural areas, as in the literary sources. Transferring the stories to Japan entailed modifications in the plot and in the depiction of certain events and characters, to make them suitable for the cultural context and understandable for the audience. For instance, in Mizoguchi’s *Jinkyō* (This Dusty World, 1924), the plot was set in a rural area, as in Guimerà’s play, but the symbolic episode in which the main character recalls a fight against a wolf – an extinct animal in Japan, regarded in *Shinto* beliefs as a messenger of the Gods rather than a symbol of violence and evil, as in Western countries – is transformed into a fight with a bear, an animal perceived in rural areas of Japan as a threat to humans. In the case of the adaptations of Hugo’s novel *Les Misérables* – *Aa mujō* (Ah,

no Mercy, 1929) by Shiba and *Janbarujan* (Jean Valjean, 1931) by Uchida – the episodes of the uprising did not take place in a big city like Paris, but rather in rural areas in which actual rebellions took place during the Meiji era.

In relation to the transformations in the plot, many films followed the main storyline of the hypotext, although a considerable number of events and characters were omitted, added, or altered to adjust the stories to the Japanese cultural context and to provide verisimilitude. Furthermore, the plots were often modified to introduce Japanese motifs or social concerns of the period. For instance, in *Yama no senroban* (The Crossing Watchman of the Mountains, 1923), Shimazu transformed the story to depict violence against a child by a cruel stepmother – a familiar narrative trope in traditional medieval Buddhist oral tales named *mamako ijime*, which became the subject matter of the picture – and to include the motif of *kataki-uchi* (blood revenge), common in Japanese literature and film. In *Gion no shimai* (Sisters of the Gion, 1936) Mizoguchi transformed the story of the two Russian prostitutes to depict a critique of contemporary socio-political issues, such as discrimination against women, the feudal-patriarchal system of patronage, characteristic in the *geisha* world, and the old concept of *giri* which somehow converted *geisha* into their patrons' 'property'. On the other hand, Mizoguchi modified the plot of Tolstoy's *Resurrection* in the film *Aien kyō* (The Straits of Love and Hate, 1937) so that as well as including narrative conventions of the Japanese *shinpa* love tragedies, it also portrayed socioeconomic issues of that time, such as the struggles of the underprivileged and the massive unemployment that affected *gakushi* and *benshi* after the transformation of the cinema industry upon the arrival of sound cinema.

In some cases, such as in *Rojō no reikon* or in *Jinsei no uramichi* (Back Alley of Life, 1929), the plots were based on an episode narrated by one of the characters in the literary work, with the main part of the storyline of the hypotext being omitted. In others, the permutation of the plot implied that motifs, themes, or critiques contained in the

literary work were not depicted in the movie, since they could be prohibited by censorship, go against prevalent neo-Confucianist ideas and values, or simply because they might be incomprehensible or irrelevant to Japanese audiences. For instance, Yoshimura's adaptation of Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, entitled *Fukkatsu* (1935), focused on the protagonist's decline, combining elements of the 'fallen woman melodrama' and the 'maternal melodrama', both common in Japanese cinema. Thus, as in other adaptations of Tolstoy's story, episodes and characters used in the novel to criticize and condemn aspects of the Orthodox church and of Russian society – such as the upper classes, the criminal justice system, the ownership of property, the existence of political prisoners, and the peasant's misery – were not depicted.

In relation to the modifications of characters, it is remarkable that it was common for films – particularly those based on long novels such as Hugo's *Les misérables* or Tolstoy's *Resurrection* – to omit characters, often only portraying those that were essential to maintain the narrative storyline. The absence of some characters also meant transformations to the film's plot, and in some cases, such as Mizoguchi's *Chi to rei*, the depiction of a completely different ending than that in the hypotext.

Normally characters were portrayed with Japanese names, which on occasions – such as in Shiba's film *Aa mujō* – also had a symbolic meaning that highlighted the character's personality or narrative function. In general, the actors wore Japanese costumes or Western-style clothes worn by Japanese people in urban areas in the 1920s. There was no intention to 'dress' the character as in the hypotext – as had been done in the adaptations made before 1920 – with the exception of Mizoguchi's film *813-Rupimono*, in which the protagonist was portrayed wearing the same Western clothing style as Arsène Lupin, the character on which the film was based. In films such as Murata's *Osumi to haha* (*Osumi and her Mother*, 1924), *Tsubakihime* (*The Lady of the Camellias*, 1927), and Mizoguchi's *Gion no shimai*, the portrayal of characters with both

Japanese and Western-style clothes was employed to show generational or behavioural conflicts related to social changes – represented, for instance, by the *modan garu* – or to highlight the contrast between tradition and modernity.

The transmutations in the plot often entailed permutations in the characters' psychological dimensions. For instance, in *Yama no senroban*, Shimazu provided the protagonist with a stronger personality, enabling him to perpetrate revenge after realizing his second wife is responsible for the death of his daughter, instead of becoming consumed by melancholia and guilt and committing suicide like the protagonist of the play. In contrast, in Mizoguchi's *Aien kyō*, the character of Nekhludoff – who in the novel intends to redeem himself for his past behaviour by aiding Katusha and thus undergoing a process of moral regeneration – was portrayed throughout the film as a selfish, mean, and cowardly man, incapable of confronting his father.

By setting the stories in a Japanese context, many characters were depicted with different occupations or socioeconomic origins. In Mizoguchi's *Jinkyō*, the main male protagonist was a woodcutter instead of a shepherd, while the main female character had humble origins. In the film, she was portrayed as a travelling entertainer, a *hinin* member of the outcaste group at the bottom of the Japanese social order, who, like the protagonist in the literary source, was able to secure a more stable life by staying on the landlord's estate and becoming his mistress.

The films also presented variations in the times at which the hypotext's stories took place. Most of them set their events in contemporary Japan, although the literary works were set in previous eras. For example, Mizoguchi's *Chi to rei* was based on a Hoffmann novella whose plot takes place in Paris in the late seventeenth century. However, in the period films *Aa mujō* (the 1929 version) and *Janbarujan*, as well as Mizoguchi's *Maria no oyuki* (Maria the Virgin, 1935), the action occurs during the Meiji era, with the characters being involved in or affected by actual events such as the Satsuma

Rebellion or the Chichibu Uprising, which took place in 1877 and 1884 respectively. Film directors set their movies in this historical context for two reasons: first, to provide verisimilitude to the whole story and make credible the crucial events depicted in the films; and second, to depict the social unrest in contemporary times while avoiding censorship, satisfying the audience's desire to watch heroes who reflected their discontent and with whom they could identify.

Regarding the second research question, previous paragraphs have outlined the influence of the historical, ideological, and sociocultural context in the process of adaptation. The context had a significant impact on the permutations of the plot, on the portrayal of the characters, and on the time at which the events of the story take place. That is particularly noticeable in the different versions of Hugo's *Les misérables* and Tolstoy's *Resurrection*. The 1923 adaptations of Hugo's novel followed the industry demands of the 1920s by including *shinpa* melodramatic elements. Both movies depicted only melodramatic scenes from the first and second parts of the hypotext, omitting decisive narrative events such as the battle in the barricades. In contrast, the versions released in 1929 and in 1931 omitted melodramatic events of the first parts of the novel but did include the episodes of the uprising and the fight on the streets, which, as mentioned above, were set in the context of the actual rebellions that occurred during the Meiji era. By fitting the adaptations into the period film genre known as 'The Rebel Subgenre,' directors could prevent censorship bans on their movies, despite the way they reflected the social unrest manifested in those years by exalting heroes that rebelled against authority.

In the case of the 1935 adaptation of Tolstoy's novel, for example, the sociopolitical and ideological context explains the changes to the characters and the omission of fundamental narrative events used by Tolstoy to critique Russian society. At that time, in which totalitarian and extreme right-wing political ideologies were emerging,

it was not permitted to screen a story which represented elements that could be perceived to be subversive, such as the inclusion of criticism of the legal system or the display of left-wing ideas.

In addition, the ideological context, along with the cultural values of the period, entailed modifications in the portrayal of the characters and in the depiction of the themes of some movies. In *Rojō no reikon*, for example, to remain in accordance with the prevailing values and the current neo-Confucianist social theories – in which the social order was the paramount – the wanderers portrayed in the film were free men, ex-convicts who had recently been released from jail, instead of fugitives who had escaped from prison as in the hypotext. Portraying wanted men who had broken the law receiving compassion and shelter from well positioned and reputed citizens could be interpreted as an apology for delinquency and an attack on social stability. Furthermore, according to the censorship regulations, no screening permission should be given to films that, among other restrictions, presented elements that tended to support lawbreakers or made appealing the means of crime. In this way, the movie did not contain the political message of Gorki's drama, which denounced social inequality and injustice and depicted the need for social change.

In conclusion, the comparative examination of the films has made it possible to describe the cultural transformations involved in the process of adaptation of Western literature works in Japanese cinema. It is feasible to confirm that cross-cultural adaptations produced during the 1920s and 1930s resulted in novel modifications in locale, plot, characters, and time, influenced by the historical, ideological, and sociocultural context.

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APPENDIX

List of Western Literature Adaptations Analysed or Mentioned

(In order of Release Date)

1. Title (rōmaji): *Aa mujō*
Original Title: 噫無情
Title in English: *Ah, no mercy! (The Misérables)*
Release Date: April 25, 1910
Director: Unknown
Based on: Novel *The Misérables*, by Victor Hugo
Production: Kinen Daishokan/ M. Patē Shōkai
Length: Short

2. Title (rōmaji): *Fukkatsu*
Original Title: 復活
Title in English: *Resurrection*
Release Date: June 1, 1910
Director: Unknown
Based on: Novel *Resurrection*, by Leo Tolstoy
Production: Yoshizawa Shōten
Length: Short

3. Title (rōmaji): *kachūsha*
Original Title: カチューシャ
Title in English: *Katyusha*
Release Date: October 31, 1914
Director: Hosoyama Kiyomatsu
Based on: Novel *Resurrection*, by Leo Tolstoy
Production: Nikkatsu-Mukōjima
Length: Short 39 minutes

4. Title (rōmaji): *Nochi no kachūsha*
Original Title: 後のカチューシャ
Title in English: *Katyusha Afterwards*
Release Date: January 1915
Director: Hosoyama Kiyomatsu
Based on: Novel *Resurrection*, by Leo Tolstoy
Production: Nikkatsu-Mukōjima
Length: Short 40 minutes

5. Title (rōmaji): *kachūsha zoku zoku hen*
Original Title: 後のカチューシャ
Title in English: *Katyusha, Sequel Story*
Release Date: October 24, 1915
Director: Hosoyama Kiyomatsu
Based on: Novel *Resurrection*, by Leo Tolstoy
Production: Nikkatsu-Mukōjima

Length: Short 55 min

6. Title (rōmaji): *Tsubaki hime*

Original Title: 椿姫

Title in English: *The Lady of the Camellias*

Release Date: February 1915

Director: Hosoyama Kiyomatsu

Based on: Novel *The Lady of the Camellias*, by Alexandre Dumas fils

Production: Nikkatsu-Mukōjima

Length: Short 29 minutes

7. Title (rōmaji): *Shikan no musume*

Original Title: 士官の娘

Title in English: *The Officer's Daughter*

Release Date: February 1915

Director: Hosoyama Kiyomatsu

Based on: Novel *The Captain's Daughter*, by Alexander Pushkin

Production: Nikkatsu-Mukōjima

Length: Short 30 minutes

8. Title (rōmaji): *Ikeru shikabane*

Original Title: 生ける屍

Title in English: *The Living Corpse*

Release Date: May 31, 1918

Director: Tanaka Eizō

Based on: Play *The Living Corpse*, by Leo Tolstoy

Production: Nikkatsu-Mukōjima

9. Title (rōmaji): *Sakura no sono*

Original Title: 桜の園

Title in English: *The Cherry Orchard*

Release Date: April 15, 1918

Director: Tanaka Eizō

Based on: Play *The Cherry Orchard*, by Anton Chekhov

Production: Nikkatsu-Mukōjima

10. Title (rōmaji): *Osero*

Original Title: オセロ

Title in English: *Othello*

Release Date: March 16, 1919

Director: Tanaka Eizō

Based on: Play *Othello*, by William Shakespeare

Production: Nikkatsu-Mukōjima

11. Title (rōmaji): *Fukkatsu Kachusha*

Original Title: 復活 (カチューシャ)

Title in English: *Katyusha's Resurrection*

Release Date: February 1, 1919

Director: Tanaka Eizō

Based on: Novel *Resurrection*, by Leo Tolstoy

Production: Nikkatsu-Mukōjima

12. Title (rōmaji): *Rojō no reikon*

Original Title: 路上の靈魂

Title in English: *Souls on the Road*

Release Date: April 8, 1921

Director: Murata Minoru

Based on: Plays *The Lower Depths*, by Maxim Gorky & *Mutter Landstraße*,

by Wilhelm Schmidtbonn

Production: Shōchiku Kinema Kenkyusho

Length: 112 minutes

13. Title (rōmaji): *Yama no senroban*

Original Title: 山の線路番

Title in English: *The Crossing Watchman of the Mountains*

Release Date: February 22, 1923

Director: Shimazu Yasujirō

Based on: Play *Drayman Henschel*, by Gerhart Hauptmann

Production: Shōchiku Kinema Kenkyusho

14. Title (rōmaji): *Aa mujō - Dai ippen: Hōrō no maki*

Original Title: 噫無情 第一篇 放浪の巻

Title in English: *Ah, no mercy- First Episode: The Wanderer's Reel*

Release Date: April 1, 1923

Director: Ushihara Kiyohiko

Based on: Novel *The Misérables*, by Victor Hugo

Production: Shōchiku Kinema Kenkyusho

15. Title (rōmaji): *Aa mujō - Dai nihen: Shichō no maki*

Original Title: 噫無情 第二篇 市長の巻

Title in English: *Ah, no mercy- Second Episode: The Major's Reel*

Release Date: April 30, 1923

Director: Ikeda Yoshinobu

Based on: Novel *The Misérables*, by Victor Hugo

Production: Shōchiku Kinema Kenkyusho

16. Title (rōmaji): *813- Rupimono*

Original Title: 813- ルピモノ

Title in English: *The Adventures of Arsène Lupin*

Release Date: May 31, 1923

Director: Mizoguchi Kenji

Based on: Novel *813*, by Maurice Leblanc

Production: Nikkatsu-Mukōjima

17. Title (rōmaji): *Kiri no minato*

Original Title: 霧の港

Title in English: *Foggy Harbor*

Release Date: July 29, 1923

Director: Mizoguchi Kenji

Based on: Play *Anna Christie*, by Eugene O'Neill

Production: Nikkatsu-Mukōjima

18. Title (rōmaji): *Chichi yo izuko e*

Original Title: 父よ何処へ

Title in English: *Where is Father Going?*

Release Date: August 31, 1923

Director: Kaeriyama Norimasa

Based on: Play *The Assumption of Hannele* by Gerhart Hauptmann

Production: Teikoku Kinema Engei

19. Title (rōmaji): *Yoru*

Original Title: 夜

Title in English: *The Night*

Release Date: October 26, 1923

Director: Mizoguchi Kenji

Based on: Boston's Blackie stories, character created by Jack Boyle

Production: Nikkatsu-Mukōjima

20. Title (rōmaji): *Chi to rei*

Original Title: 血と霊

Title in English: *Blood and Soul*

Release Date: November 9, 1923

Director: Mizoguchi Kenji

Based on: Novella *Mademoiselle de Scudéri. A Tale from the Times of Louis XIV*, by E.T.A. Hoffmann

Production: Nikkatsu-Mukōjima

21. Title (rōmaji): *Toge no uta*

Original Title: 峠の唄

Title in English: *The Song of the Mountain Pass*

Release Date: December 31, 1923

Director: Mizoguchi Kenji

Based on: *Mutter Landstraße*, by Wilhelm Schmidtbonn

Production: Nikkatsu-Mukōjima

22. Title (rōmaji): *Jinkyō*

Original Title: 塵境

Title in English: *This Dusty World*

Release Date: May 1, 1924

Director: Mizoguchi Kenji

Based on: Play *Terra baixa* (Martha of the Lowlands) by Àngel Guimerà

Production: Nikkatsu-Mukōjima

23. Title (rōmaji): *Osumi to haha*

Original Title: お澄と母

Title in English: *Osumi and her Mother*

Release Date: June 29, 1924

Director: Murata Minoru

Based on: Story *La vieja del cinema* (The Old Woman of the Movies), by

Vicente Blasco Ibáñez

Production: Nikkatsu-Mukōjima

24. Title (rōmaji): *Wakasa yo saraba*

Original Title: 若者よさらば

Title in English: *Farewell to Youth*

Release Date: November 1, 1924

Director: Sakata Shigenori

Based on: Novel *La maja desnuda* (Triumphant Woman) by Vicente Blasco

Ibáñez

Production: Tōa Kinema

25. Title (rōmaji): *Kemuri*

Original Title: 煙

Title in English: *Smoke*

Release Date: June 1, 1925

Director: Itō Daisuke

Based on: Story *Smoke* by Ivan Turgenev

Production: Toho

26. Title (rōmaji): *Kanashiki koi no gensō*

Original Title: 悲しき恋の幻想

Title in English: *Sad Visions of Love*

Release Date: September 11, 1925

Director: Ikeda, Yoshinobu

Based on: Play *Die versunkene glocke*, (The Sunken Bell), by Gerhart

Hauptmann

Production: Nikkatsu

27. Title (rōmaji): *Aiyoku no kiro*

Original Title: 愛慾の岐路

Title in English: *Crossroads of Lust*

Release Date: March 27, 1925

Director: Saegusa Genjirō

Based on: Play *Fuhrmann Henschel* (Drayman Henschel) by Gerhart

Hauptmann

Production: Nikkatsu

28. Title (rōmaji): *Shirayuri wa nageku*

Original Title: 白百合は歎く

Title in English: *The White Lily Laments*

Release Date: June 12, 1925

Director: Mizoguchi Kenji

Based on: Play *The First and the Last*, by John Galsworthy

Production: Nikkatsu

29. Title (rōmaji): *Dōka-ō*

Original Title: 銅貨王

Title in English: *The Copper Coin King*

Release Date: February 7, 1926

Director: Mizoguchi Kenji

Based on: Story *The Copper Coin King*, by Herman Landon

Production: Nikkatsu

Length: 39 minutes

30. Title (rōmaji): *Shōnen koshu*

Original Title: 少年鼓手

Title in English: *Teenage Drummer*

Release Date: June 18, 1926

Director: Kaeriyama Norimasa

Based on: Story *Cuore* (Heart) by Edmondo De Amicis

Production: Kōro Eiga-sha

31. Title (rōmaji): *Chairo no onna*

Original Title: 茶色の女

Title in English: *Brown Woman (aka André Lupin contre Herlock Sholmes)*

Release Date: January 14, 1927

Director: Saegusa Genjirō

Based on: Novel *André Lupin contre Herlock Sholmes*, by Maurice Leblanc

Production: Nikkatsu

32. Title (rōmaji): *Tsubaki hime*

Original Title: 椿姫

Title in English: *The Lady of the Camellias*

Release Date: May 1, 1927

Director: Murata Minoru

Based on: Novel *The Lady of the Camellias*, by Alexandre Dumas *films*

Production: Nikkatsu

33. Title (rōmaji): *Yuki no yobanashi*

Original Title: 雪の夜話

Title in English: *Night Tales of Snow*

Release Date: March 8, 1928

Director: Inoue Kintarō

Based on: Boston's Blackie stories, character created by Jack Boyle

Production: Makino Eiga Seisakusho

34. Title (rōmaji): *Onna no isshō*

Original Title: 女の一生

Title in English: *A Woman's Life*

Release Date: April 15, 1928

Director: Ikeda Yoshinobu

Based on: Novel *Une vie* by Guy de Maupassant

Production: Shōchiku Kinema Kenkyusho

35. Title (rōmaji): *Jinsei no uramichi*

Original Title: 人生の裏路

Title in English: *Back Alley of Life*

Release Date: October 10, 1929

Director: Sasaki Kojirō

Based on: Novel *The Idiot* by Fyodor Dostoevsky

Production: Shōchiku Kinema Kenkyusho

36. Title (rōmaji): *Tokkan kozō*

Original Title: 小津 安二郎

Title in English: *A Straightforward Boy*

Release Date: November 24, 1929

Director: Ozu Yasuhiro

Based on: Story *The Ransom of Red Chief*, by O. Henry

Production: Shōchiku Kinema Kenkyusho

37. Title (rōmaji): *Aa Mujō: Zenpen*

Original Title: 噫無情 前篇

Title in English: *Ah, no mercy: Part 1*

Release Date: May 10, 1929

Director: Shiba Seika

Based on: Novel *The Misérables*, by Victor Hugo

Production: Nikkatsu

38. Title (rōmaji): *Aa Mujō: Kohen*

Original Title: 噫無情 後篇

Title in English: *Ah, no mercy: Part 2*

Release Date: May 17, 1929

Director: Shiba Seika

Based on: Novel *The Misérables*, by Victor Hugo

Production: Nikkatsu

39. Title (rōmaji): *Janbarujan: Zenpen*

Original Title: ジャン・バルジャン 前篇

Title in English: *Jean Valjean: Part 1*

Release Date: February 17, 1931

Director: Uchida Tomu

Based on: Novel *The Misérables*, by Victor Hugo

Production: Nikkatsu

Length: 72 minutes

40. Title (rōmaji): *Janbarujan: Kohen*

Original Title: ジャン・バルジャン 後篇

Title in English: *Jean Valjean: Part 2*

Release Date: February 25, 1931

Director: Uchida Tomu

Based on: Novel *The Misérables*, by Victor Hugo

Production: Nikkatsu

Length: 91 minutes

41. Title (rōmaji): *Tsubakihime*

Original Title: 椿姫

Title in English: *The Lady of the Camellias*

Release Date: December 31, 1932

Director: Ikeda Yoshinobu

Based on: Novel *The Lady of the Camellias*, by Alexandre Dumas fils

Production: Shōchiku Kinema Kenkyusho

42. Title (rōmaji): *Fukkatsu*

Original Title: 復活

Title in English: *Resurrection*

Release Date: February 7, 1935

Director: Yoshimura Misao

Based on: Novel *Resurrection*, by Leo Tolstoy

Production: Dai to eiga

43. Title (rōmaji): *Maria no oyuki*

Original Title: マリヤのお雪

Title in English: *Maria, the Virgin*

Release Date: May 30, 1935

Director: Mizoguchi Kenji

Based on: Story *Boule de suif* by Guy de Maupassant

Production: Daiichi Eiga

Length:

44. Title (rōmaji): *Sakura no sono*

Original Title: 桜の園

Title in English: *The Cherry Orchard*

Release Date: May 16, 1936

Director: Murata Minoru

Based on: Play *The Cherry Orchard*, by Anton Chekhov

Production: Shinkō Kinema

45. Title (rōmaji): *Gion no shimai*

Original Title: 祇園の姉妹

Title in English: *Sisters of the Gion*

Release Date: October 15, 1936

Director: Mizoguchi Kenji

Based on: Novel *Yama: The Pit*, by Alexander Kuprin

Production: Daiichi Eiga

46. Title (rōmaji): *Aien kyō*

Original Title: 愛怨峽

Title in English: *The Straits of Love and Hate*

Release Date: June 17, 1937

Director: Mizoguchi Kenji

Based on: Novel *Resurrection*, by Leo Tolstoy

Production: Shinkō Kinema

47. Title (rōmaji): *Sengoku guntō-den - Dai ichibu: Toraōkami*

Original Title: 戦国群盗伝 第一部・虎狼

Title in English: *A Tale of Thieves in Wartime* also known as *Saga of the Vagabonds, Part One: Tiger-wolf*

Release Date: February 11, 1937

Director: Takizawa Eisuke

Based on: Play *The Robbers*, by Friedrich von Schiller

Production: PCL Eiga seisakusho

Length: 74 minutes

48. Title (rōmaji): *Sengoku guntō-den - Dai nibu: Akatsuki no zenshin*

Original Title: 戦国群盗伝 第二部暁の前進

Title in English: *A Tale of Thieves in Wartime* also known as *Saga of the Vagabonds, Part Two: Forward at Dawn*

Release Date: February 20, 1937

Director: Takizawa Eisuke

Based on: Play *The Robbers*, by Friedrich von Schiller

Production: PCL Eiga seisakusho

Length: 67 minutes

49. Title (rōmaji): *Kyojinden*

Original Title: 巨人伝

Title in English: *Saga of the Giant Man*

Release Date: April 11, 1938

Director: Mansaku Itami

Based on: Novel *The Misérables*, by Victor Hugo

Production: Toho Eiga

Length: 66 minutes

50. Title (rōmaji): *Denen kokyogaku*

Original Title: 田園交響楽

Title in English: *Rural Symphonie*

Release Date: June 11, 1938

Director: Yamamoto Satsuo

Based on: Novel *La Symphonie pastorale* by André Gidé

Production: Toho Eiga

Length: 96 minutes

