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Yôkihi (Princess Yang Kwei-Fei), Mizoguchi, Kenji, 1955  
Josei no shôri (The victory of women), Mizoguchi, Kenji, 1946  
Akasen chitai (Street of shame), Mizoguchi, Kenji, 1956

## Feminism

Mizoguchi falls within the strong tradition of "feminists" in Japanese film, literature and drama.<sup>24</sup> However, this English loan word has nuances in Japan that differ considerably from its western usage. Aside from its predictable meaning, "proponent of women's rights, equality or liberation," it has a second, more popular usage: "a man who is indulgent toward women; a worshiper of women." In the arts such men with a marked fascination with women are epitomized by one of Mizoguchi's favorite writers, Kafu Nagai (1879–1959), whose portrayals of the downtrodden women of the prostitutes' quarters are among the most famous in Japanese literature. However, these finely drawn portraits, in Mizoguchi's case as well as Kafu's, do not necessarily imply a political concern with the improvement of women's status in society. The fascination becomes an end in itself.

In this respect Mizoguchi's feminine portraits reveal inherent contradictions, as does the Japanese use of the word "feminist" and the director's attitude toward the women in his own life. His hatred for his father is hardly vindicated by his behavior toward Suzu, who continued to give him money until well after he had become a director at Nikkatsu. He neglected his Kyoto mistress, protected her from the police after she tried to murder him, quit work to look for her, lived off her when he found her and finally abandoned her to prostitution. He went through complex machinations to secure his wife, who was still married to someone else, and proceeded to neglect her. She in turn refused to cook for him at unusual hours, allowed him not a penny of his own salary, and was occasionally dragged around by the hair by Mizo during bursts of sadistic vengeance.<sup>25</sup> When she went insane in 1941 due to "hereditary syphilis" in Mizoguchi's words, he had her institutionalized for the rest of her life. After the Pacific War, he took his wife's widowed sister and her two daughters into his home out of pity. He lived with his sister-in-law as a wife, but proposed marriage to his leading actress, Kinuyo Tanaka, around 1947. She refused him and from 1953 on would have nothing further to do with him because he tried to prevent her from directing her first film. In short, Mizo was "unusual in the extent to which he suffered at the hands of women. He hated women; he was contemptuous of women. On the other hand, when he fell in love, it was with the sincerity of a little boy."<sup>26</sup> All of the admiration, exploitation, fear and pity concerning women shown in his life would find expression in his films.

In the mid-1930s Mizoguchi reached a peak of what has been dubbed



social realism through his deepening portrayals of women on the screen. The two types of heroines he developed during this period would reappear in slightly varying incarnations throughout his films to the end of his life. His reason for selecting the social and psychological position of women as the prevailing theme of his work may be seen as a logical progression from the concerns of his late 1920s to the early 1930s "tendency" films, for "He had long thought that after Communism solved the class problem, what would remain would be the problem of male-female relationships."<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, the story content of his films shows not a positive call for active revolution on the part of women, but a bleak condemnation to the status quo. What his two types of heroine have in common is a singular pathos—the fate of the long-suffering ideal woman is as grim as that of the spiteful rebel. It has been suggested that Mizoguchi himself was too deeply implicated in the psycho-social system that ensured the oppression of women to be able to cast them as revolutionaries, and that his life work consisted rather of the "purification of a national resentment" regarding women's tragic role.<sup>28</sup>

Mizoguchi's ideal woman is the one who can love. This love consists, however, of a selfless devotion to a man in the traditional Japanese sense. She becomes the spiritual guide, the moral and often financial support for a husband, lover, brother or son. The prototype of his self-sacrificing ideal is Taki, the heroine of the 1933 *Taki no Shiraito, the Water Magician*. Her pride of self-realization consists of her ability to ensure her lover's worldly and moral success, and his financial and spiritual dependence on her is her proof of his love. She is driven to the point of stealing and inadvertent murder in order to keep her promise of financial provision for him, and the reward for her perseverance appears in her chance to see him dressed in his judicial robes, handing down the just verdict that condemns her. Her eyes shine with pride and admiration at the image of his achievement, and never does she for a moment blame him for the cruel judgment. We do not actually see her forgive him for doing what the law demands, but her devotion is compensated by the guilt that drives him to commit suicide.

Taki's relationship with her lover expresses a value system that remains very much a part of Japanese life. Not only is she the feminine ideal of the Meiji and Taisho periods (1868–1926), when speedily modernizing Japan subscribed to the democratic theory that anyone can get ahead by subordinating women's achievements to the worldly success of their men,<sup>29</sup> but she represents the classic mother-son interaction in which the parent shows her suffering to induce guilt on the part of the child who is absolved only by achieving and fulfilling the mother's expectations.<sup>30</sup> The fact that Taki and her lover resemble a mother-son relationship more than an egalitarian male-female love relationship in the

western sense reveals the lingering cultural definition of love in Japan as dependence, entailing a man's expectations of continual indulgence, forgiveness and encouragement by a woman.<sup>31</sup> In Mizoguchi's own life the model who most obviously corresponds to the image of Taki is his older sister Suzu, but a generous lacing of his uncomplaining mother may well be part of this saintly ideal.

The women who embody Mizoguchi's ideal often live in a time too far in the past to be role models for today, a quirk of which Mizoguchi seems to have been aware. He once said of himself that he portrayed "what should not be possible as if it should be possible,"<sup>32</sup> a statement that most aptly describes the virtues of his period heroines. Otoku, the devoted maid in his 1939 *Story of the Last Chrysanthemum*, is, like Taki, a Meiji Period woman. She loses all for the sake of her man's success on the Kabuki stage, sees him through years of hardship, and dies alone at the moment he fulfills her hopes for him. Mizoguchi felt that he was saying what he really wanted to say in this picture<sup>33</sup> made when suppression of free speech was already the rule. His wartime goal would be the celebration of the Japanese virtues of self-sacrifice and dedication, expressed not only in the revenge and suicide of *The Loyal 47 Ronin*, but also in his four-film cycle on performing artists beginning with *The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum*.

Mizoguchi's ideal postwar women show the same self-sacrificing characteristics, but they move yet farther into the past while developing a spiritual power to transcend their physical suffering. Oharu, the court lady in *The Life of Oharu* who declines into prostitution because she once allows herself to love a man beneath her station, moves out of our view, not living comfortably in a temple and prattling glibly to a couple of curious young men as in Saikaku's original late seventeenth-century story, but alone and homeless, reciting sutras from door to door with a begging bowl. The seriousness of Mizoguchi's treatment of Oharu's ever intensifying social decline, poverty and humiliation leaves no doubt in the spectator's mind that her final rejection of worldly concerns is total and sincere. Behind the flippant amorality of Saikaku's fiction, Mizoguchi read his own deep resignation. Oharu blames no one for her fate; she prays for all humanity.

Miyagi, the murdered wife in *Ugetsu* (1953), lives on despite death in her sixteenth-century setting. When her deluded husband has returned to fulfill her ideal, her voice encourages him, her spirit turns his potter's wheel. Anju, the devoted sister in the eleventh-century world of *Sansho the Bailiff* (1954), commits suicide to help her brother escape from their slave compound. Their aristocratic mother, after years of forced labor as a prostitute, crippled and blind, rejoices at reunion with her son, whose return to humanitarian values was brought about by a supernatural



summons from her spirit. But the most remote feminine ideal is Mizoguchi's last and most maudlin, *Princess Yang Kwei Fei* (1955). The eighth-century Chinese scullery maid turned imperial concubine molds herself into the distracted ruler's image of perfection, and then walks calmly to her death to save his life. The voice of her dead spirit remains to reassure the broken, powerless emperor of a love that transcends death.

In all of these paragon portrayals, the vision of society remains the same. The dramatic form is tragic, and spiritual success brings death and worldly defeat. Even in the 1954 *Story from Chikamatsu*, where love is the only goal, the lovers must die for their adultery according to the feudal code. The society of every age is pictured as vicious, greedy, unfeeling. Worldly ambitions, though often encouraged by women for their men, bring spiritual loss if they are fulfilled. All ideals are envisioned in societies where the basic problems of economic class structure, abusive power and avarice have not been solved.

The other side of the paragon is the rebel. She is often a prostitute or geisha or similar social outcast, and most often a contemporary woman. She resents the abuses of fathers, employers, and men who buy her and leave her, and attempts to lash back. But her solitary, proud, spiteful opposition does nothing to change the system, and in fact she usually subscribes to its corrupt values, using seduction, deceit and financial exploitation as her methods for revenge. She has nothing spiritual with which to replace the consuming love relationship, and in rejecting it she condemns herself to a life of self-seeking bitterness. She often appears with a meek woman counterpart who underscores the unviability of either stance in the modern world.

Ayako, the innocent switchboard operator of the 1936 *Osaka Elegy*, seeks the financial help of her poor boyfriend. Rejected, she turns to exploiting the system that exploits her. By letting herself be set up as a mistress she attains financial security, but loses love, and in the end is cast out onto the street by her apprehended patron, her horrified boyfriend, and her ashamed family.

Omocha (literally "toy"), the modern geisha in *Sisters of the Gion* (1936), resents the way men treat women as objects and mocks her older sister's devotion to a bankrupt former patron. Setting out to beat men at their own game, she deceives and ruins a sincere young store clerk and has his employer provide her with what she wants: money, pretty clothes and fancy restaurant meals. But as surely as her sister's old patron returns to his wife and a new business opportunity, the clerk takes revenge on Omocha, and she ends up in a hospital bed decrying the institution of geisha while her abandoned sister sits sobbing at her side.

Women like Omocha and her sister reappear in Mizoguchi's postwar

films about prostitutes and geisha from the 1946 *Utamaro and His Five Women* to the 1948 *Women of the Night*, the 1953 *Gion Festival Music* and his last work, the 1956 *Street of Shame*. In this last film, Yasumi, the callous young woman who steals men from and lends money at usurious rates to her fellow-prostitutes, is as spiritually defeated in her economic success as Hanae, the middle-aged woman who sells her body to provide for her family, is admirable in her honest, devoted poverty.

In Mizoguchi's life these vivacious, volatile, condemned women were the geisha and prostitutes of Kyoto's Pontocho and Gion, Tokyo's Tamanoi and Ueno, of Osaka and every other city in which he dallied. They were also his razor-wielding mistress and the wife who went insane. These and the enduring spirit mother-sister ideals were what he knew best, and his lack of understanding for any other type of woman is best shown in his own work. The accusation that he did not really grasp the new postwar humanism proves itself in the similarity of the prostitute's dismal fate in the 1948 *Women of the Night* to that in his 1931 *And Yet They Go*.<sup>34</sup> His attempts to portray feminist movement heroines like Sumako Matsui (*The Love of Sumako the Actress*, 1947) and Hideko Kageyama (*My Love Burns*, 1949) show them as confident and good only as long as they have a man to whom they can devote themselves. They end by discovering they are "only women." Perhaps the most ironic of his portraits of successful women is the severe, pedantic, lonely heroine of the 1946 *Victory of Women* who shows precious little that is attractive in her encouragement of others to follow her lead.

Yet there is one heroine who retains both love and moral courage in life. Fumi, the country stage entertainer of the recently rediscovered 1937 *Straits of Love and Hate*, survives male abuse, poverty and the temptation to sell out. When the wealthy student who abandoned her with a child asks her to come back to him years later, she decides to stay with her stage partner, the man who has been her moral support through the years. She grabs the baby away from his indolent, proud father and the grandfather who has accused her of avarice in returning, realizing that the advantages her son would receive in their rich home are not worth the humiliation she would have to endure. The last shot shows her back on the stage doing comic skits with the partner who had stepped back to let her do what was best for her, and we are assured that her son will grow up poor but with people who love him and each other. One cannot help but wonder if, had the war not intervened—by the following year Mizoguchi was already making propaganda films—the director might not have developed this more positive view of love and high ethical standards into a truly modern feminism.

Takashima and Kawaguchi; ph: Tatsuyuki Yokota; cast: Isuzu Yamada, Daijiro Natsukawa, Demmei Suzuki et al. Meiji melodrama about the love of a Liberal Party supporter and an itinerant actress who meet at a mountain pass. (No extant prints, negative or script.)

*The Downfall of Osen (Orizuru Osen)*

pr: Daiichi Eiga; orig. story: Kyoka Izumi; sc: Tatsunosuke Takashima; ph: Shigeto Miki; cast: Isuzu Yamada, Daijiro Natsukawa et al. Another story about the life of prostitutes, a subject which Mizoguchi liked but felt he did not capture adequately in this film. (FC; negative at Shochiku, Tokyo.)

1935 *Oyuki the Madonna (Maria no Oyuki)*

pr: Daiichi Eiga; orig. story: Guy de Maupassant, adapted by Matsutaro Kawaguchi; sc: Tatsunosuke Takashima; ph: Shigeto Miki; cast: Isuzu Yamada, Komako Hara, Daijiro Natsukawa et al. Based on *Boule de Suif*, a story about a prostitute with a heart of gold, Mizoguchi made it a period drama set during the Satsuma clan rebellion, near the end of the feudal age. (FC; negative at Shochiku, Tokyo.)

*Poppy (Gubijinso)*

pr: Daiichi Eiga; orig. story: Soseki Natsume; sc: Daisuke Ito; ph: Minoru Miki; cast: Kuniko Miyake, Ichiro Tsukida, Chiyoko Okura et al. A proud woman, rejected by a man whose engagement she breaks up, ends by committing suicide. (FC; negative at Shochiku, Tokyo.)

1936 *\*Osaka Elegy (Naniwa Ereji)*

pr: Daiichi Eiga; orig. idea: Mizoguchi; sc: Yoshikata Yoda; ph: Minoru Miki; cast: Isuzu Yamada, Eitaro Shindo, Kensaku Hara, Benkei Shiganoya et al. First film about modern women, first work with Yoda, and the beginning of true realism. A young telephone operator is ruined because of an innocent need for money. Her boss takes advantage of her, his wife takes it out on the girl's family, and her fiancé stands helplessly by. *KJ* #3. (FC, MOMA, AB)

*\*Sisters of the Gion (Gion no Shimai)*

pr: Daiichi Eiga; orig. idea: Mizoguchi; sc: Yoshikata Yoda; ph: Minoru Miki; cast: Isuzu Yamada, Yoko Umemura, Benkei Shiganoya, Eitaro Shindo et al. Realistic look at the glamorous world of traditional geisha in Kyoto's Gion district. The older sister is strict and traditional, while the younger is modern and opportunistic, going from man to man for money. *KJ* #1. (FC, MOMA, AB)

1937 *\*The Straits of Love and Hate (Aienkyo)*

pr: Shinko (Tokyo); orig. story: Matsutaro Kawaguchi; sc: Yoshikata Yoda; ph: Minoru Miki; cast: Fumiko Yamaji, Seizaburo Kawazu, Masao Shimizu et al. Continued pursuit of realism focusing on women. A girl who works at a hot spring hotel falls in love and runs off to Tokyo with her lover. The boy's father takes him back, and she is left with a baby. She joins a traveling theater troupe and meets her lover again. His father opposes their reunion, and she returns to the troupe and the poor stage partner she really loves. *KJ* #3. (FC; Nishihara Collection, Tokyo.)



***My Home Town (Aa Furusato)***

Shinko (Tokyo); orig. story: Hideo Koide; sc: Yoshikata Yoda; ph: Ichiro Aoshima; cast: Fumiko Yamaji, Masao Shimizu, Seiichi Kato et al. Mizoguchi wanted to show a woman's resistance to the pressures created by big business moves into a small town. A man who is struggling to manage a hot-spring hotel tries to force his daughter to marry a rich man, but waits for her student fiancé to return from America. He does and marries someone else. The girl and her father go back to Tokyo. *KJ* #9. (No extant prints or negatives; script extant.)

***The Song of the Camp (Roei no Uta)***

Shinko (Tokyo); orig. sc: Shuichi Hatamoto; ph: Junichiro Aoshima; cast: Fumiko Yamaji, Akira Matsudaira, Seizaburo Kawazu et al. Mizoguchi was forced to direct this film and resented this so much that he resigned. Based on a battle song. (No extant prints, negative or script.)

***The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum (Zangiku Monogatari)***

Shochiku (Kyoto); orig. story: Shofu Muramatsu, planned by Matsutaro Kawaguchi; sc: Yoshikata Yoda; ph: Shigeto Miki; music: Senji Ito; cast: Shinko Mori, Shotaro Hanayagi, Yoko Umemura, Gonjuro Kawanazaki et al. Sentimental tragedy set in the Meiji era. A spoiled young actor from an important Kabuki family learns from the maid that he must work harder to perfect his art. He leaves home to join a provincial troupe and lives in terrible hardship. His family at last takes him back, after he has made a name for himself, but the faithful maid, whom he has always loved, dies. Powerful insight into the ruthless snobbery of the Kabuki world. Mizoguchi felt he finally came into his own with this film, as he was allowed to do what he wanted. *KJ* #2. (FC, AB)

***The Woman of Osaka (Naniwa Onna)***

Shochiku (Kyoto); orig. idea: Mizoguchi; sc: Yoshikata Yoda; ph: Shigeto Miki; music: Senji Ito; cast: Kotaro Bando, Kinuyo Tanaka, Ryotaro Kawanami et al. Lives in the world of the Osaka Bunraku puppet theater. Excellent characterization of a domineering, aggressive wife who comes to realize her own faults. *KJ* #4. (No extant prints, negative or script.)

***The Life of an Actor (Geido Ichidai Otoko)***

Shochiku (Kyoto); orig. story: Matsutaro Kawaguchi; sc: Yoshikata Yoda; ph: Kohei Sugiyama; music: Senji Ito; cast: Senjaku Nakamura, Yoshiko Nakamura, Kokichi Takada, Minosuke Bando, Yoko Umemura et al. Another story of the Kabuki world, this time about the life of Ganjiro Nakamura and played by his son, Senjaku. Born as the illegitimate son of a Kabuki actor, he is encouraged to become an actor. After his first successful stage appearance, he and his mother go to look for his father, but find that he has died of an illness. *NEZK* #4. (No extant prints, negative or script.)

***\*The Loyal 47 Ronin I-II (Genroku Chushingura I-II)***

Shochiku Koa Eiga; orig. story: Seika Mayama; sc: Kenichiro Hara and Yoshikata Yoda; ph: Kohei Sugiyama; music: Shiro Fukai; cast: Utaemon

Ichikawa, Isamu Kosugi, Mieko Takamine, members of Zenshinza theater troupe et al. A two-part extravaganza Mizoguchi was forced to make because of the outbreak of the war and the demand from above for films glorifying feudal loyalty and self-sacrifice, but at least his version is based on the historical incident instead of the Kabuki play. Part II: *NEZK* #7. (FC, AB)

**1944 *Three Generations of Danjuro (Danjuro Sandai)***

pr: Shochiku; orig. sc: Matsutaro Kawaguchi; ph: Shigeto Miki; cast: Kotaro Bando, Kinuyo Tanaka, Gonjuro Kawanazaki et al. Another that Mizoguchi was forced to make, about a famous Kabuki family. (No extant prints, negative or script.)

***Musashi Miyamoto (Miyamoto Musashi)***

pr: Shochiku; orig. story: Kan Kikuchi; sc: Matsutaro Kawaguchi; ph: Shigeto Miki; cast: Gonjuro Kawanazaki, Kinuyo Tanaka, Kanemon Nakamura et al. Mizoguchi said he made films like this (about a famous feudal swordsman) to keep from getting drafted, but despite the feudal ethics message, the portrayal of Musashi's girl admirer comes out well. (FC)

**1945 *The Famous Sword Bijomaru (Meito Bijomaru)***

pr: Shochiku; orig. sc: Matsutaro Kawaguchi; ph: Haruo Takeno; cast: Eijiro Yanagi, Shotaro Hanayagi, Isuzu Yamada et al. Same type of subject matter as the above, focusing on the wife of the swordsmith. (FC, ME)

***Victory Song (Hisshoka)***

pr: Shochiku; codir: Mizoguchi, Masahiro Makino, Hiroshi Shimizu; orig. sc: Matsuo Kishi and Shimizu. Omnibus film ordered by the propaganda office to encourage a fight to the bitter end. Mizoguchi remarked on Kishi's script about a railroad snow removal laborer that he had not succeeded in showing the collective work spirit of the nation. Kishi agreed and shooting began. The film was lambasted by the critics. (No extant prints, negative or script.)

**1946 *The Victory of Women (Josei no Shori)***

pr: Shochiku (Ofuna); orig. sc: Kogo Noda and Kaneto Shindo; ph: Toshio Ubukata; music: Kyoka Asai; cast: Kinuyo Tanaka, Michiko Kuwano, Mitsuko Miura et al. Assimilation of U.S. Occupation ideas on female emancipation in a story about professional women in the law courts. Pedantic, static film in which it is hard to see what the heroine gains in her lonely victory. (FC; negative at Shochiku, Tokyo.)

***\*Utamaro and His Five Women (Utamaro o Meguru Gonin no Onna)***

pr: Shochiku (Kyoto); orig. story: Kanji Kunieda; sc: Yoshikata Yoda; ph: Shigeto Miki; music: Hisato Osawa; cast: Minosuke Bando, Kinuyo Tanaka et al. A story about government censorship and jealous women, based on the life of early nineteenth-century woodblock print artist Utamaro Kitagawa. Mizoguchi personally appealed to Occupation authorities to let him make a period drama, and with this film he emerged from his wartime slump. *KJ* #7. (FC, NY)



- 1947 *The Love of Sumako the Actress (Joyu Sumako no Koi)*  
pr: Shochiku (Kyoto); orig. story: Hideo Nagata; sc: Yoshikata Yoda; ph: Shigeto Miki; music: Hisato Osawa; cast: Kinuyo Tanaka, So Yamamura, Kikue Mori, Chieko Higashiyama et al. Though this film about the first modern stage actress was commercially successful, even Mizoguchi did not feel it was as good as Teinosuke Kinugasa's version of the same year. (FC; negative at Shochiku, Tokyo.)
- 1948 *\*Women of the Night (Yoru no Onnatachi)*  
pr: Shochiku (Kyoto); orig. story: Eijiro Hisaita; sc: Yoshikata Yoda; ph: Kohei Sugiyama; music: Hisato Osawa; cast: Kinuyo Tanaka, Sanae Takasugi, Mitsuo Nagata et al. Excellent portrayal of the postwar scene and women's pathos and bitterness through a story about an Osaka streetwalker. *KJ* #3. (FC, AB)
- 1949 *My Love Burns (Waga Koi wa Moenu)*  
pr: Shochiku (Kyoto); orig. idea: Kogo Noda; sc: Yoshikata Yoda and Kaneto Shindo; ph: Kohei Sugiyama; music: Senji Ito; cast: Kinuyo Tanaka, Mitsuko Mito, Eitaro Ozawa et al. About a woman who was one of the more famous in the postwar women's movement, Hideko Kageyama. From a provincial aristocratic family, she goes to Tokyo for a man who turns out to be a government spy. Eventually she marries a man in a democratic movement, but is disillusioned, leaves him, and decides to dedicate her life to women's rights. (FC; negative at Shochiku, Tokyo.)
- 1950 *\*A Picture of Madame Yuki (Yuki Fujin Ezu)*  
pr: Takimura Prod./Shin Toho; orig. story: Seiichi Funahashi; sc: Yoshikata Yoda and Kazuro Funahashi; ph: Joji Ohara; music: Fumio Hayasaka; cast: Michiyo Kogure, Eijiro Yanagi, Yoshiko Kuga, Ken Uehara et al. Set in Atami, the seaside hot spring resort close to Tokyo, shows the decline of a provincial aristocratic family and a woman's dissatisfaction with her marriage to a playboy husband. Though Mizoguchi wasn't satisfied with this film, it is a beautiful treatment of a proud and delicate woman threatened by insensitivity and financial collapse around her. (FC; negative at Kokusai Hoei, Tokyo.)
- 1951 *Miss Oyu (Oyu-sama)*  
pr: Daiei (Kyoto); orig. story: Junichiro Tanizaki; sc: Yoshikata Yoda; ph: Kazuo Miyagawa; music: Fumio Hayasaka; cast: Kinuyo Tanaka, Nobuko Otowa, Yuji Hori et al. Based on *Ashikari* (The Reaper of Rushes), a film with which Mizoguchi was not satisfied, and which makes the widow who is loved by her sister's husband appear a much more selfless person than in the original. (FC; negative at Daiei, Tokyo.)
- Lady Musashino (Musashino Fujin)*  
pr: Toho; orig. story: Shohei Ooka; sc: Yoshikata Yoda; ph: Masao Tamai; music: Fumio Hayasaka; cast: Kinuyo Tanaka, Masayuki Mori, So Yamamura, Yukiko Todoroki et al. Melodrama about the wife of a university professor living in the Tokyo suburbs. Mizoguchi tried to do something along

- the lines of *A Picture of Madame Yuki* but felt that he failed. (FC; negative at Toho, Tokyo.)
- 1952 *\*The Life of Oharu (Saikaku Ichidai Onna)*  
pr: Shin Toho; orig. story: Saikaku Ihara; sc: Yoshikata Yoda; ph: Yoshimi Hirano; music: Ichiro Saito; cast: Kinuyo Tanaka, Hisako Yamane, Toshiro Mifune, Yuriko Hamada et al. Another story of the life of a prostitute, based on the work of a seventeenth-century writer. Oharu declines gradually from court lady to cheap prostitute as she is victimized by men for money and sex. Told in flashbacks, with beautiful photography. *KJ* #9; Venice Film Festival International Prize. (FC, NY)
- 1953 *\*Ugetsu (Ugetsu Monogatari)*  
pr: Daiei; orig. stories: Akinari Ueda; sc: Matsutaro Kawaguchi and Yoshikata Yoda; ph: Kazuo Miyagawa; music: Fumio Hayasaka; cast: Machiko Kyo, Mitsuko Mito, Kinuyo Tanaka, Masayuki Mori, Sakae Ozawa et al. Beautifully eerie story of a sixteenth-century potter, his fascination with and near death at the hands of a lovely ghost. Mizoguchi wanted to make the ending more bitter than the company would allow. *KJ* #3; Venice Film Festival San Marco Silver Lion; Italian Critics Award. (FC, JA)
- \*Gion Festival Music (Gion Bayashi)*  
pr: Daiei; orig. story: Matsutaro Kawaguchi; sc: Yoshikata Yoda; ph: Kazuo Miyagawa; music: Ichiro Saito; cast: Michiyo Kogure, Ayako Wakao, Seizaburo Kawazu, Eitaro Shindo et al. Remake of the 1936 *Sisters of the Gion*, but set in postwar Japan. Again Mizoguchi complained that the company changed the script, and the film indeed has an unfinished feeling. *KJ* #9. (FC; negative at Daiei, Tokyo.)
- 1954 *\*Sansho the Bailiff/The Bailiff (Sansho Dayu)*  
pr: Daiei; orig. story: Ogai Mori; sc: Fuji Yaihiro and Yoshikata Yoda; ph: Kazuo Miyagawa; music: Fumio Hayasaka; cast: Kinuyo Tanaka, Kisho Hanayagi, Kyoko Kagawa, Eitaro Shindo, Masao Shimizu et al. Romantic ideals contrasted with brutal reality. An eleventh-century aristocratic family is broken up by politics, and then further by slave traders. The son struggles to live by his father's ideals of compassion and equality, and finally succeeds for a moment in the end, only to give up his new political power. Lovely atmospheric settings. *KJ* #9; Venice Film Festival San Marco Silver Lion. (FC, AB)
- The Woman of the Rumor (Uwasa no Onna)*  
pr: Daiei (Kyoto); orig. sc: Yoshikata Yoda and Masashige Narusawa; ph: Kazuo Miyagawa; music: Toshiro Mayuzumi; cast: Kinuyo Tanaka, Yoshiko Kuga, Tomoemon Otani, Eitaro Shindo et al. About the life of a woman who runs a geisha house in Kyoto's Shimabara district. Melodrama as she realizes her lover prefers her proper pianist daughter, but the portrayal of the geisha's life compensates somewhat. (FC; negative at Daiei, Tokyo.)
- \*A Story from Chikamatsu/Crucified Lovers (Chikamatsu Monogatari)*  
pr: Daiei; orig. play: Monzaemon Chikamatsu, adapted by Matsutaro Kawa-



guchi; sc: Yoshikata Yoda; ph: Kazuo Miyagawa; music: Fumio Hayasaka; cast: Kazuo Hasegawa, Kyoko Kagawa, Yoko Minamida, Eitaro Shindo et al. Based on the seventeenth-century play, "The Almanac-Maker's Tale." A woman of the merchant class unjustly accused of adultery escapes with her supposed partner in crime, a servant. They are eventually caught and executed, but not before they realize that they really are in love. Strongly anti-feudal film focusing on the woman's status, with superb photography. *KJ* #5. (FC, NL)

1955 *The Princess Yang Kwei-fei (Yokihi)*

pr: Run-Run Shaw/Daiei; orig. sc: Matsutaro Kawaguchi, Masashige Narusawa and Yoshikata Yoda; ph\* (color): Kohei Sugiyama; music: Fumio Hayasaka; cast: Machiko Kyo, Masayuki Mori, So Yamamura, Eitaro Shindo, Sakae Ozawa et al. The famous story of the concubine who caused the downfall of an eighth-century Chinese emperor. But Mizoguchi has her sacrifice her own life to save the emperor. His first color film, shot on location in Hong Kong. Decorative, contrived atmosphere. (FC, NY)

*New Tales of the Taira Clan (Shin Heike Monogatari)*

pr: Daiei; sc: Yoshikata Yoda, Masashige Narusawa and Hisaichi Tsuji; orig. novel: Eiji Yoshikawa; ph (color): Kazuo Miyagawa; music: Fumio Hayasaka; cast: Raizo Ichikawa, Yoshiko Kuga, Naritoshi Hayashi, Michiyo Kogure et al. Almost a period spectacular; not quite Mizoguchi's element. Conflict between the decadent court and the exploited but rising warrior class at the end of the twelfth century. (FC, NL)

1956 *Street of Shame (Akasen Chitai)*

pr: Daiei; orig. sc: Masashige Narusawa; ph: Kazuo Miyagawa; music: Toshiro Mayuzumi; cast: Machiko Kyo, Ayako Wakao, Aiko Mimasu, Michiyo Kogure et al. Mizoguchi's last film, on one of his favorite subjects: prostitutes. Sensitive treatment of the hardships of several prostitutes and the reasons they are what they are—trying to send children to school, supporting unemployed husbands, trying to get fathers out of prison, and so on. Social consciousness with some shallow and some excellent character portrayal, and very irritating music. (FC, MOMA, JA)