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A more severely poignant evocation of cultural displacement, Hou Hsiao-hsien's 1987 ***Dust in the Wind*** is arguably the director's finest film—as studied in its

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compositions as Ozu, as subtle in its melodrama as Naruse, as finely tuned in its psychology as both. Following a pattern common to their village, a boy and a girl quit high school and leave the mountains of central Taiwan for Taipei. She unhappily finds a job as a seamstress; he works for a printer, then quits and becomes a delivery boy. In the evening, they hang around a friend's studio or have

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drinking parties to send off other friends drafted into the army. (Another friend is a projectionist in a Taipei movie house: The images—and, in one memorable scene, the sound—of the commercial Taiwanese cinema that plot device affords gives Hou's understated classicism a kind of dialectical irony.)

Part of Hou's genius as a filmmaker is the way he allows a narrative to coalesce out of anecdotes. Small incidents eddy the indolent calm: The boy's motorbike is stolen, the girl scalds her arm. (By the end of the movie, his loss and her wound seem emblematic of the irrevocable injuries all the principles suffer.) Ultimately, the hero is drafted and stationed on Quemoy. When his brother writes to tell him the girl has married someone else, the film suddenly comes together as an affecting saga of impossible escape, of passing time, of the iron rule of history, of unhappy love.

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