

Document Citation

Title	Japanese film : art and industry -- excerpt. Shiro Toyoda
Author(s)	Donald Richie Joseph L. Anderson
Source	<i>Princeton University Press</i>
Date	1982
Type	book excerpt
Language	English
Pagination	281
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Yukiguni (Snow country), Toyoda, Shirô, 1957

of a new life, and Taniguchi's *Fog Horn* (Muteki), a remake of an early Minōru Murata film based on a Jiro Osaragi novel about a rather singular love triangle between a foreign trader, his mistress, and their footman.

From the Meiji period, those directors interested in the *junbungaku* literary movement made the natural move up to the Taisho period, and one of the finest results of this change of period was Toyoda's 1955 film, *Grass Whistle* (Mugibue), based on a Saisei Muro novel. A sentimental, talented son of a Buddhist abbot has only one real confidant, a rakish fellow-student who is also interested in writing. The two quarrel over their rival affection for a restaurant-keeper's daughter. Later the friend dies and when at the end of the film, both the girl and abbot's son go to the grave, the boy's mixed emotions prevent him from coming to an understanding with her. The film was an excellent example of what the Japanese call "remembrance of youth pictures," and the period-atmosphere was perfect.

In 1957, Naruse, who had been specializing almost entirely in contemporary-life stories, made the Taisho-period *Untamed* (Arakure), shown in America as *Untamed Woman*. Based on a Shusei Tokuda novel, the story was about a strong-willed and independent girl who refuses to believe that it is a man's world—an almost heretical opinion in prewar Japan. She runs away from an arranged marriage and becomes the second wife of a petty merchant. When he proves too overbearing she leaves him to work in a small resort-hotel, eventually leaving—after more self-centered men—to open up a tailor shop with a man with whom she has fallen in love. At the end of the film he too has proved a disappointment and she is planning to run off with one of his apprentices. The girl was one of the strongest characters Naruse ever created. She had more plain will power than all the people of his other films put together. That she was not even stronger was perhaps due to Hideko Takamine's introducing a definitely postwar strain of neuroticism into her performance, a quality which gave such pictures as *Floating Clouds* (Ukigumo) added strength, but which seemed out of place in this film.

This *Floating Clouds*, based on a Fumiko Hayashi novel, was one of the strongest of the *junbungaku* series with modern settings and won the *Kinema Jumbo* "Best One" Award for 1955. It was the story of a man and a girl who first met during the Indonesian campaign. After the war they continue to meet until she discovers that he has long been married. Not knowing where to turn, she becomes the mis-

280
back-
ground

tress of an American soldier and finally becomes a prostitute, all the time cherishing the great love she feels for the married man. At last, after she has stolen some money for him from a rich uncle who has turned his military commander's talents into cash as the leader of a "new" religion, they run away together to a small island, where she dies. He approaches her bier and very slowly paints her face to make her look young, as when they first met. Then he collapses in sorrow over her dead body—the first time he has shown sincere affection. The film was outstanding for a number of reasons, one of them being the accurate portrayal of postwar life, another being the performances of Hideko Takamine and Masayuki Mori in the leading rôles. It was also filled with an eroticism not often seen in Naruse's films though its thesis, that love is an illusion, is common to most of the director's other pictures.

Another of Fumiko Hayashi's works was the basis of Yasuki Chiba's *Downtown* (Shitamachi), an excellent adaptation about a poor working woman who finds love only to lose it when the man is accidentally killed. Again the feeling of the period just after the war was beautifully captured and, again, the impermanence of love and the tragedy of being a woman were emphasized.

Shiro Toyoda brought this theme up to date in his 1957 *Snow Country* (Yukiguni), based on the Yasunari Kawabata novel. In the rather literal film adaptation, an artist staying at a hot-spring resort has relations with one of the local geisha. He keeps returning from time to time, but since he is married and since he is by nature laconic, there is little chance of their making their attachment legal or even permanent. Toyoda had wanted to make the novel into a film for twenty years, and when Toho finally gave him the chance he himself worked for four years on the preparation. Despite the strength of the film this elaborate preparation seems to have been insufficient. If anything the picture was less successful as a novelistic adaptation than many of Toyoda's others. Talky, discursive, with an ending different from the novel, it yet contained a number of scenes of psychological revelation, feelings shown rather than talked about, which are Toyoda's speciality.

Much more successful was his 1955 *Marital Relations* (Meoto Zenzai), to which Toho gave the English title *Love Is Shared Like Sweets*; a tender love story based on a Saku-nozuke Oda novel. The wayward son of a well-to-do Osaka family is keeping company with a lower-class geisha. Thanks

281
long-
shot