
Movie-Made Japan: Japanese Modernity and Narrative Space in Naruse Mikio's *Wife! Be Like a Rose!* and *Every-Night Dreams*

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As Donald Kiriwara observes, Western scholars have long attributed the distinctiveness of Japanese cinema—or more precisely, the distinctiveness of a handful of exemplary auteurs (Mizoguchi Kenji, Ozu Yasujiro, et al.)—to the country's unique culture and history.¹ Noël Burch, for instance, has argued that the conventions of “representational,” illusionist theatre (the proscenium arch, extensive scenery and props, the invisible “fourth wall” between the drama and the auditorium) that emerged in the West in the late 17th century, and which subsequently formed the basis of the classical Hollywood cinema, did not fully take hold in Japan until after World War II, with the result that pre-1945 Japanese cinema was “*in essence* unlike that of any other nation.”² Similarly, although Catherine Russell rejects Burch's thesis for its Orientalism, in claiming that the films of Naruse Mikio perform “a constant process of negotiation between modern and traditional values, between a new visual landscape of urban modernity and an older one of Japaneseness,” she implicitly assumes the existence of a monolithic national essence that preceded contact with the West.³ Accordingly, Russell praises Naruse's *Wife! Be Like a Rose!* (*Tsuma yo bara no yo ni*, 1935) as “a clever hybridization of American and Japanese styles of representation—and styles of being in the modern world.”⁴

However, as Arif Dirlik writes:

To the extent that orientalism had become a part of “Western” ideas by the early nineteenth century, [the Euro-American impact on Asia] included also the impact on Asian societies of European ideas of the orient. How Euro-American images of Asia may have been incorporated into the self-images of Asians in the process may in the end be inseparable from the impact of “Western” ideas per se. One fundamental consequence of recognizing this possibility is to call into question the notion of Asian “traditions” which may turn out, upon closer examination, to be “invented traditions,” the products rather than the preconditions of contact between Asians and Europeans.⁵

The question then is not how a timeless Japaneseness is manifested or negotiated in the work of this or that director, but how did filmmakers like Naruse, who specialised in *gendai-geki* (stories with contemporary,

typically urban settings), participate in its construction, particularly during the interwar period? Juxtaposing an urban, everyday life permeated, in Russell's words, by "modern characters, fashions, and consumer culture" with a rural, essentially premodern lifestyle,⁶ *Wife! Be Like a Rose!* locates an authentic Japanese essence in the memory of an earlier mode of existence that, by the mid-1930s, already no longer existed.⁷ That said, far from suggesting the values it associates with the Japanese countryside are irreconcilable with modernity, the film implies that they are eternal and thus essential so as to "anchor contemporary life in a fixed and authentic ground."⁸

Given then that Japaneseness is not an inert fact of nature but a social construct,⁹ how might we account for the idiosyncratic style of Naruse's films of the 1930s? According to Russell, Naruse's experiments were motivated by "a desire to find an appropriate means of expression for modern Japanese life."¹⁰ And to be sure, the distinctive approach to *découpage* developed at Shochiku's studio in the Tokyo suburb of Kamata, which David Bordwell has termed "piecemeal *découpage*," and which Naruse employed throughout his career, is associated almost exclusively with *gendai-geki*; modelled after the "one-bit-of-information-per-shot approach" of 1920s Hollywood films such as *A Woman of Paris* (Charles Chaplin, 1923) and *The Marriage Circle* (Ernst Lubitsch, 1924), piecemeal *découpage* breaks down each scene into a great many shots, singling out faces, body parts, and details of setting.¹¹ However, as not every *gendai-geki* of the interwar period employs this approach, Mizoguchi's *Osaka Elegy* (*Naniwa ereji*, 1936) being one notable counterexample, it is evident that Russell's hypothesis—which builds upon Miriam Bratu Hansen's assertion that "modernization inevitably provokes the need for reflexivity," and that there is ample evidence, "in American and other cinemas of the interwar period, of an at once modernist and vernacular reflexivity"¹²—is too broad to account for Naruse's particular stylistic choices. To do so, we must ask: What are the uses of piecemeal *découpage*? As Naruse's silent *Every-Night Dreams* (*Yogoto no yume*, 1933) admirably demonstrates, as well as being a suitable style for psychologically-oriented melodramas and a stable backdrop against which expressive and decorative flourishes stand out all the more vividly,¹³ the piecemeal approach can also facilitate an overt, playful narration that foregrounds its own operations—a style that contemporary Japanese critics considered both realistic and uniquely "cinematic."¹⁴ Through an analysis of space in *Wife! Be Like a Rose!* and *Every-Night Dreams*, this article will demonstrate how Naruse's films of the interwar period participated in the construction of a modern Japanese identity and refine our understanding of the relationship between film style and urban modernity.

Constructing Authenticity

As Julia Adeney Thomas observes, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the concept of nature underwent a radical redefinition in Japan, with the successive conceptions of a universal nature dominant in the Tokugawa and early Meiji periods giving way to a new, more jingoistic theory which held that “Japan existed in a coalescent intimacy with a [national] nature known to itself alone”—a notion that came about paradoxically through an engagement with Western ideas, images, and activities such as mountaineering.¹⁵ Accordingly, certain cultural traits and practices, such as Shinto (or at least a particular interpretation of it), became at this time emblematic of an ahistorical national essence.¹⁶ During the same period, however, Japan was becoming increasingly an urban nation. In the aftermath of the 1923 Kanto earthquake, the national government oversaw the reconfiguration of Tokyo so as to absorb the scads of new arrivals who had swarmed into the capital from the surrounding countryside following World War I.¹⁷ And with the emergence of a modern consumer culture in the 1920s, Westernised young people known as *moba* and *moga* (modern boys and girls) started to appear on the streets of large cities,¹⁸ prompting a conservative backlash as their behaviour implied that “identities produced through acts of consumption could be autonomous and even inimical to the national, homogeneous identity.”¹⁹ Accordingly, Naruse’s *Wife! Be Like a Rose!* offsets the potential threat posed by its *moga*-ish heroine by suggesting that her consumerism is compatible with the timeless morality of the Japanese countryside.

Based upon Nakano Minoru’s popular *shinpa* play *Futari zuma* (*Two Wives*), the film begins in Tokyo where its heroine, Kimiko (Chiba Sachiko), lives with her mother, Etsuko (Ito Toshiko), a poetess who writes obsessively of her longing for her errant husband, Shunsaku (Maruyama Sadao). Fifteen years prior, Shunsaku fled to a remote village outside Nagano with a former geisha, Oyuki (Hanabusa Yuriko), whom Kimiko’s uncle Shingo (Fujiwara Kamatari) believes will leave Shunsaku when he runs out of money. In the meanwhile, Kimiko’s dream of marrying her beau, Seiji (Okawa Heihachiro), is on hold indefinitely as the latter’s father refuses to give his approval before meeting Shunsaku. Yet it is not until Etsuko agrees to be the go-between (*nakodo*) for the marriage of an acquaintance’s daughter—an office customarily held by married couples and therefore requiring Shunsaku’s presence at the wedding ceremony, lest Etsuko be publicly humiliated—that Kimiko boards a train to Nagano to drag her father back home.

Upon her arrival, however, Kimiko learns that, far from using Shunsaku for his money, it is Oyuki who is supporting him by working as a hairdresser, and that it is she, not Shunsaku, who sends a money order to

Etsuko each month. Additionally, Kimiko learns that Oyuki and Shunsaku have two children together, Shizue (Horikoshi Setsuko), a sullen girl who is a little younger than Kimiko, and a son, Kenichi (Ito Kaoru), who is roughly the same age as the errand boy in Kimiko's office. Seeing how content her father is with his new family, Kimiko temporarily abandons her intention of reuniting him with Etsuko. But when Shunsaku submits to return to Tokyo briefly to discharge his parental and husbandly obligations, Kimiko suffers a relapse and renews her efforts to bring about a reconciliation. Ultimately, she is thwarted in this aspiration by Etsuko's inability to be the kind of wife Shunsaku wants her to be, and after fulfilling his duties to his legitimate family, Shunsaku avails himself of the first opportunity to skip town. At the last moment, Uncle Shingo materialises in order to offer him a proper job in the city and to berate him for his shabby treatment of Etsuko, but he cannot be coerced into staying, and both Kimiko and Etsuko have already resigned themselves to his departure.

Before introducing any of the major characters, *Wife! Be Like a Rose!* opens with a brief, quasi-documentary prologue set to percussive, uptempo music that drops the spectator into a modern urban landscape of concrete office buildings, crowded train stations, street vendors, and salarymen wearing Western suits and brimmed hats. Indeed, when the film opened in New York in 1937 under the title *Kimiko*, a reviewer for the *Nation*, Mark Van Doren, described this sequence and the subsequent dialogue between Kimiko and Seiji as nothing less than a revelation:

The first five minutes of *Kimiko* are startling. The streets of Tokyo look like the streets of Detroit, and the people going up and down them look exactly like the people we see every day, except they are a trifle shorter. Even the first interior is familiar—a very 'modern' sort of office which a girl in a grey suit is preparing to leave at the end of her day's work so that she may meet a young man, also in a grey suit, downstairs at the corner. The two of them step briskly along, quarrelling and making up as if they were natives of Hollywood, then quarrelling again and refusing to walk together.²⁰

However, as Harry Harootunian points out, in Japan during the interwar period, modernity was perceived as a perpetually incomplete process with different forms of everyday life coexisting both in the public and private spheres.²¹ Accordingly, while Kimiko dons a slightly androgynous suit and tie in the office and when she travels to the countryside to retrieve her father, at home with her mother and when paying a visit to Uncle Shingo, she is more frequently dressed in a kimono.²² Furthermore, the film's dialogue places particular emphasis on Kimiko's practicality and domestic skill. In the first dramatic scene, the errand boy tasked with lowering the curtains at the end of the workday spies Kimiko writing

something at her desk and is disappointed to learn that it is not a love letter but a grocery list. Thus, Kimiko's modernity is kept within respectable bounds, balancing consumption with propriety and familial obligation.²³

Ironically, it is Etsuko who behaves more like a stereotypical *moga*,²⁴ splurging on a new kimono she cannot afford on her meagre income as a poetess. Indeed, the film gently satirises her consumption of traditional Japanese art and clothing to signify refined taste, which echoes the vogue for *Japonisme* in Europe and America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries,²⁵ suggesting Etsuko lacks an authentic feeling for Japanese culture. Accordingly, when Kimiko defends her mother by describing her as a fine woman, Shunsaku replies that she is "too fine," and as Audie Bock observes, all of her poems are dedicated to "a husband with whom she cannot stand to live."²⁶ Thus, the film likens Etsuko to the white roses her students give her in lieu of payment for her poetry lessons and which the more practical Kimiko resents having to water every day. Likewise, Uncle Shingo's *gidayu* singing is merely a pastime for a bored "modern" husband whose wife spends her evenings playing mahjong. When a graphic match humorously compares Uncle Shingo wobbling his head as he sings with a teetering sake pitcher, what is being lampooned is not aristocratic Japanese art per se, as Russell claims,²⁷ but the urban characters' lack of connection with traditional Japanese culture.

Wife! Be Like a Rose! appeared at the tail end of a period of rapid urban development following the Kanto earthquake when the government's plan to reconfigure the capital and its surroundings led to "the huge expansion of Tokyo to its current size, subsuming five counties and eighty-two towns in 1932 and two more towns in 1936."²⁸ Tellingly, it was during this period that the concept of a "hometown" (*furusato*) first gained popular currency in Japan, and the contrast between the gay life of the city and the truer morality of the countryside became a recurrent theme in film, literature, and popular music.²⁹ However, as Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano points out, the image of rural life in *Wife! Be Like a Rose!* and other films of the interwar period is "less a reflection of actual life in the countryside [at this time] than an intentionally created nostalgic space," designed to satisfy an urban gaze.³⁰ In fact, the folklorist Yanagita Kunio observed in 1926 that, "[i]n both the countryside and the remote islands, residents already observe the cultural norms and average living standards that have extended [there] from urban city life during the Taisho period."³¹ Thus, the rural village in the mountains to which Shunsaku flees with Oyuki conforms to Mikhail Bakhtin's conception of the idyllic chronotope as a limited spatial world that is "sufficient unto itself, not linked in any intrinsic way with other places, with the rest of the world."³² Tellingly, the narration elides Kimiko's arrival at the train station, instead moving directly from Seiji's apartment in Tokyo to a river in the mountains where

Shunsaku is panning for gold to a shot of Kimiko walking down a village road carrying a suitcase, as if she had just teleported there.

According to Bakhtin, the idyll assumed a great significance in European literature in the 18th century when a new idea of time was emerging in the West: In several novels of this period, “[t]he real organic time of idyllic life is opposed to the frivolous fragmented time of city life.”³³ Accordingly, in *Wife! Be Like a Rose!*—a film that not only bears witness to the emergence of a new urban middle-class in Japan but also helped to shape the image of that class in the popular imagination³⁴—the portions of the film set in Tokyo move freely back and forth in time, whereas the film’s middle section is entirely linear, suggesting that people in the countryside live in an eternal present without past or future. In other words, the rural lifestyle represented in the film is implicitly a fully achieved state, incapable of any change or modification other than perhaps gradual deterioration and extinction. Significantly, both Oyuki and Shizue earn money through reproductive labour (cutting hair and mending clothes, respectively) that serves to perpetuate the status quo rather than altering it. The first time we see Oyuki, she is dressing a young woman’s hair in the style of a traditional Japanese bride rather than something more fashionable. Furthermore, by making Oyuki a hairdresser, the film associates her with a job Japanese women have performed since premodern times.³⁵ On the other hand, Shunsaku’s dream of getting rich by panning for gold (a venture that requires him to make occasional business trips to Tokyo) and the Western-style suits he wears on the job both imply that he has been less successful at shaking off the temptations of modern life than Oyuki. Indeed, the latter frankly admits to Kimiko that she knows Shunsaku will eventually leave her and return to Etsuko, suggesting that the rural idyll is fated to disappear in the face of encroaching industrialisation.

That said, as Bakhtin writes of the sentimental novel, here there is no doomed attempt to preserve a dying way of life; rather, Naruse’s film makes of the rural idyll “an ideal for the future and sees in it above all the basis, a norm, for criticizing the current state of society.”³⁶ In one scene, Kenichi recites passages on “filial piety” and “wifely duties” from a lesson book that cites mythical figures from the past as models of proper conduct and provides an historical precedent for Oyuki supporting Shunsaku financially in the story of a woman married to a poor samurai who worked in the fields to feed her family. Furthermore, as Kenichi is reading, Oyuki notices Shunsaku’s back is aching from a hard day’s work and offers to give him a massage, spontaneously embodying the Confucian virtue of *wa* (harmony), wherein people cooperate with one another not out of self-interest but out of a mutual concern for the interests of the other.³⁷ Conversely, in their interactions with one another, Shunsaku and Etsuko demonstrate a mutual lack of sensitivity to

each other's needs and interests (*kiten ga kiku*).³⁸ When they go on a day trip together, Etsuko drags Shunsaku to a calligraphy exhibition, indifferent to his lack of interest in high culture, and he in turn takes her to an inn where he proceeds to get drunk on sake, much to Etsuko's consternation. Indeed, even before setting off for the countryside, Kimiko remarks to Uncle Shingo that Etsuko is partly to blame for her parents' estrangement, observing that, even when they lived together, she did not seem to care much about Shunsaku: "When he'd come home at night, she didn't even help him change his clothes. She hardly spoke to him. I don't think she was a good wife." It is this insight that not only enables Kimiko to recognize Oyuki's moral superiority to her mother when she travels to the countryside but also ensures the future success of her marriage to Seiji since, unlike Etsuko, Kimiko knows not to stray too far from traditional Japanese gender roles, which the film implies are both natural and timeless.

According to Wada-Marciano, as Japan transitioned into an urban society, the cinema, literature, and popular music of the interwar period all strove to integrate and manage the scores of new arrivals then pouring into the capital, soothing middle-class anxieties through the creation of a nostalgic hometown space.³⁹ However, rather than eulogizing a quaint rural lifestyle that had already ceased to exist by the time of the film's release,⁴⁰ Naruse's *Wife! Be Like a Rose!* contrasts an everyday modern life with the memory of an earlier mode of existence in order to emphasise the continuity of an atemporal national essence, thereby helping to define that essence in the popular imagination. Given how deeply Naruse's cinema is implicated in the invention of modern Japanese life (which includes the concept of traditional Japanese culture), it would seem to follow that the peculiar style of his films of the 1930s could be productively understood as responding to the sensorial experience of Japanese modernity.⁴¹ But, as we shall see below, this thesis is too broad to account for the specificity of Naruse's filmmaking practice.

Beyond the Modernity Thesis

Writing about Chinese and Japanese films of the 1930s, Hansen observes that films from both countries share a tendency to foreground material objects, ranging from glamorous consumer goods to trash, thereby gesturing toward "a modernist, non-anthropocentric [aesthetic] of contingency."⁴² In other words, Hansen argues, as in Hollywood, commercial filmmakers in East Asia developed a vernacular modernist idiom which provided to mass audiences "an at once aesthetic and public horizon for the experience of capitalist-industrial modernity and modernization."⁴³ That one also finds stylistic experimentation in

Japanese films set in premodern times (*jidai-geki*) does not invalidate this thesis since, as Hansen puts it, “modernism does not reduce to a matter of style.”⁴⁴ By the same token, however, style does not reduce to a matter of modernity. Therefore, while Russell may be correct that Naruse’s films of the 1930s were at the apex of Japanese modernity,⁴⁵ they are not merely a symptom of it. What are the functions of Naruse’s style? In *Every-Night Dreams* (one of the films cited by Hansen as an example of Japanese vernacular modernism),⁴⁶ piecemeal *découpage* facilitates a performance style characterised by a high degree of psychological depth and serves as a foil for expressive and decorative flourishes,⁴⁷ while also calling attention to the narration’s regulation of the flow of story information.

As the film opens, Omitsu (Kurishima Sumiko) has just returned to Yokohama after a short vacation to resume work as a hostess in a seedy dockside bar so as to support her son, Fumio (Kojima Teruko).⁴⁸ On her first night back, Omitsu asks the bar’s stingy owner (Iida Choko) for an advance without success, but when a sinister ship’s captain (Sakamota Takeshi) offers her a loan, she is reluctant to accept. That night, Omitsu comes home to find her estranged husband, Mizuhara (Saito Tatsuyo), who abandoned her two years earlier, waiting in her apartment. But while she initially rebuffs him, for reasons left unexplained, Omitsu abruptly changes her mind and takes him back. At the bar, the captain continues to pester her, but as Mizuhara is unable to find work, in part because he is too physically frail for manual labour, Omitsu cannot quit her job and go straight. To make matters worse, Fumio is run over by a car, and Mizuhara resorts to theft in order to pay the hospital bill, leaving the money with Omitsu before disappearing into the night. The next morning, she learns that Mizuhara has drowned himself in the harbour, and after rebuffing the captain’s advances one last time, Omitsu runs home to exhort Fumio to be strong. The film ends with a series of location shots similar to the opening sequence of *Wife! Be Like a Rose!*, moving from Omitsu’s ramshackle neighbourhood to the harbour where the story opened and where Mizuhara committed suicide.

Describing the title character (Tanaka Kinuyo) in Ozu’s *Dragnet Girl* (*Hijoson no onna*, 1933), Hansen observes that, “[w]hile the plot steers her toward traditional Japanese femininity..., the comic performance of the steps she takes in that direction suggest less a return to authenticity and tradition than a continuation of the modernist masquerade.”⁴⁹ Still more radically, in *Osaka Elegy*, the heroine, Ayako (Yamada Isuzu), adopts in succession the guise of a submissive traditional concubine and a flashy *moga*, and Mizoguchi’s long-take style and Yamada’s performance deny us access to Ayako’s sincere emotions. Conversely, although Omitsu has a similar double identity, being at once a bar hostess who is at ease smoking with sailors by the harbour and a devoted mother

to Fumio,⁵⁰ her appearance and facial expressions clearly indicate when she is acting and when she is being herself.⁵¹ In one early scene, the film dissolves from Omitsu as mother looking at herself in the mirror, her hair dishevelled and a slightly haggard look on her face, to Omitsu as hostess with her hair neatly arranged and her face made up with cosmetics, implying that the former represents her private, “true” self and that the latter is an artificial persona she adopts in public. More subtly, even when she is not at work, Kurishima’s expressions often convey the impression of a woman struggling to suppress an overflow of spontaneous emotions.⁵² Following the robbery, Mizuhara gives Fumio a small coin as a present, and the film cuts to a close-up of Omitsu—who is still in shock after finding Mizuhara bleeding from a bullet wound—with a pained expression on her face, her eyebrows furrowed and her lips slightly pursed [Figure 1.png]. A point-of-view shot shows Fumio holding up the coin for her to see. Cut back to Omitsu giving a forced smile and wiping away a tear [Figure 2.png]. Thus, in contrast with Mizoguchi’s film, where Ayako ultimately remains unknowable, here Kurishima’s facial expressions in close-up leave no doubt as to Omitsu’s genuine emotions.

That said, as Russell points out, “in the Japanese context, ‘modernity’ involved the emergence of the bourgeois individual and the coextensive adoption of realist modes of representation,” such as the *shishosetsu* (“I-novel”).⁵³ Seen from this perspective, it is *Every-Night Dreams*—and by extension, Omitsu—that emerges as more modern than *Osaka Elegy*, where it is only in the climatic close-up, after breaking decisively from all social ties, that Ayako emerges as a true bourgeois subject. It is perhaps significant then that, in the aftermath of the Kanto earthquake when it was the only studio to continue operating in Tokyo,⁵⁴ Shochiku Kamata encouraged its contract directors to adopt American-style continuity editing for use in *shoshimin-geki* (stories about the lower middle-classes), leading to the development of a distinctive house style that Bordwell terms “piecemeal *découpage*.”⁵⁵

As we have seen, the piecemeal approach—which dissects each scene into a series of neat, static shots⁵⁶—is highly conducive to an acting style based in psychological realism, although as Bordwell points out, it could also become “a vehicle for expressive and decorative elaboration as well.”⁵⁷ In particular, he cites Naruse’s manner of stressing the interplay between sharp and unfocused planes throughout *Every-Night Dreams*,⁵⁸ a device that underscores Omitsu’s emotional estrangement from the other characters—most often Mizuhara but also a female neighbour (Yoshikawa Mitsuko) when she suggests that Omitsu find herself a proper job. As Bordwell observes, this technique not only urges the spectator to “notice the switch of foreground and background elements from shot to shot but also to appreciate the way a figure jumps from clear outline to indistinctness.”⁵⁹ Additionally, piecemeal *découpage* provides a stable

backdrop against which isolated stylistic flourishes stand out more vividly as departures from the norm. Naruse's oft-noted track-ins at moments of great drama,⁶⁰ the lateral tracking shots surveying the bar where Omitsu works, the canted angles in the robbery sequence, and the abrupt introduction of nonlinear editing in the scene where Omitsu and Mizuhara learn of Fumio's accident only register as flourishes in a context where static, level framings and linear editing are the intrinsic norm.⁶¹

As Bordwell observes, such stylistic flourishes make the film more self-conscious.⁶² By calling attention to the image as a graphic composition, the interplay of sharp and unfocused planes in *Every-Night Dreams*—like the comparison of Uncle Shingo with a wobbling sake pitcher in *Wife! Be Like a Rose!*—violates the rule in classical Hollywood cinema that framing, cinematography, and editing should strive to efface the picture plane, transforming the screen into a transparent window onto the diegesis.⁶³ Furthermore, Naruse's tight framings often withhold significant areas of scenographic space, thereby foregrounding the narration's regulation of story information. After establishing Omitsu's easy rapport with a pair of comic sailors (one whom casually invites her to come aboard their boat to "have some fun"), the film follows her back to her neighbourhood where a woman is chasing two children with a stick. Naruse cuts from a shot of Omitsu walking down an alley away from the camera to an intertitle reading, "Mom!" As Omitsu enters her neighbour's apartment, the camera tracks in from a medium shot to a medium close-up of her looking down and offscreen right. The next shot is an insert of small feet running across the screen from right to left over some toy blocks on the floor. In medium shot, Fumio runs to Omitsu as the neighbour looks on in the background out of focus. Then, as Omitsu bends down to give Fumio a kiss, the camera tracks in again from a medium long shot to a close-up. Only in retrospect do we infer that it was Fumio, rather than one of the children in the alley, who was calling out to his mother. As this example indicates, Naruse's *découpage* emphasises the autonomy of each shot, somewhat in the manner of Soviet montage cinema. In the film's penultimate sequence, as Omitsu tears up Mizuhara's suicide note and paces up and down her apartment, the film intersperses tightly framed shots of Omitsu (each one from a different camera position) with inserts of crumpled bits of paper on the floor and intertitles reading, "Weakling!," "Coward!," and "Dying like that!," although at no point do we see her lips moving.

Does Naruse's self-conscious style here support Hansen's claim that "modernization inevitably provokes the need for reflexivity and that if sociologists considered cinema in aesthetic and sensorial terms... they would find ample evidence, in American and other cinemas of the interwar period, of an at once modernist and vernacular reflexivity"?⁶⁴

Insofar as I understand her argument, Hansen is not referring here to a “formalist self-reflexivity” that emphasises the physical properties of the medium per se, but a sensory reflexivity that mirrors the conditions of urban modernity more broadly, providing spectators with “an aesthetic horizon for the experience of industrial mass society.”⁶⁵ How then might we account for the presence of the former kind of reflexivity, not only in *Every-Night Dreams*, but also in other films produced by Shochiku Kamata during the same period, such as Ozu’s *Tokyo Chorus* (*Tokyo no gasho*, 1931) and Shimizu Hiroshi’s *Japanese Girls at the Harbour* (*Minato no Nihon musume*, 1933)?

While it may not be possible to answer this question definitively, the discourse of the Pure Film Drama Movement (*jun’eiga-geki undo*) was likely a significant influence. Disparaging the *kabuki*- and *shinpa*-style films of the 1910s, intellectuals associated with the movement championed the adoption of the technical norms of post-1917 Hollywood cinema as part of the larger Taisho-era project of transforming Japan into a modern industrial society.⁶⁶ Founded in 1920, the Shochiku Cinema Company was the first studio in Japan to consciously model itself after American production methods,⁶⁷ and as noted earlier, piecemeal *découpage* is a variant on the editing style of early 1920s Hollywood cinema⁶⁸—an approach that Japanese critics of the time considered both more realistic and more “cinematic” than that of pre-1920 Japanese films, which favoured tableau staging and a histrionic acting style.⁶⁹ Thus, Naruse’s technique in *Every-Night Dreams* can be understood as doubly modern in the context of interwar Japan, facilitating psychological realism while also stressing the unique properties of the medium. Tellingly, in a contemporary review of the film, Kitagawa Fuyuhiko described the scene of Omitsu’s grief alluded to above as “extremely natural,”⁷⁰ despite—or perhaps in part because of—Naruse’s highly fragmented *découpage*.

Conclusion

As Russell correctly points out, Western film scholars have tended to “emphasize the Japaneseness of Japanese cinema at the expense of its modernity.”⁷¹ However, in opposing Japaneseness with modernity, she obscures how the concept of traditional Japanese culture was itself an invention of the modern era.⁷² Ironically, as Japan began to modernise itself in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, its people became increasingly estranged from many of the cultural practices (*noh* theatre, flower arrangement) that came to define Japan for the outside world⁷³—a phenomenon Naruse gently satirises in *Wife! Be Like a Rose!*, where traditional culture has become just another consumer fetish for the urban

bourgeoisie. However, rather than rejecting modernity *tout court* as a foreign intrusion incompatible with the national character, the film follows the lead of writers and intellectuals of the interwar period in trying to uncover, beneath the surface of everyday modern life, the memory of an earlier mode of existence still capable of “providing meaning to Japanese life in a bewildering time of speed, spectacle, and shock.”⁷⁴ Accordingly, Kimiko comes to embody a new type of Japanese woman whose participation in the modern consumer economy—unlike that of the stereotypical *moga*—does not pose a threat to either conventional gender roles or the homogeneous national identity but remains firmly within respectable bounds.⁷⁵

That said, although there is some truth in Russell’s claim that the idiosyncratic style of Naruse’s 1930s films was motivated by “a need to find an appropriate means of expression for modern Japanese life”⁷⁶—perhaps no non-comic filmmaker before Jean-Luc Godard had as many car accidents in his films, reflecting the development of modern infrastructure in Tokyo following the Kanto earthquake⁷⁷—it can only account for his filmmaking practice in a very general way. As well as responding, and making sensually graspable our responses, to “the set of technological, economic, social, and perceptual transformations associated with the term modernity,”⁷⁸ Naruse’s piecemeal *découpage* in *Every-Night Dreams* facilitates a high degree of psychological realism, serves as a stable backdrop against which expressive and decorative flourishes stand out more vividly,⁷⁹ and calls attention to the narration’s regulation of story information. The same is also true of other films produced by Shochiku Kamata and Naruse’s subsequent work at PCL (including *Wife! Be Like a Rose!*) but not of all Japanese films made during the same period, to say nothing of films from neighbouring East Asian nations. In *Osaka Elegy* (produced by Nikkatsu), Mizoguchi’s long-take style renders Ayako psychologically opaque, while in Wu Yanggang’s *The Goddess* (*Shennu*, 1934), the psychological realism of Ruan Lingyu’s performance as a prostitute and single mother is not complimented by a self-reflexive film style, despite a preponderance of tight framings. Thus, it is likely that Naruse and his contemporaries (Ozu, Shimizu, et al.) were responding in their work as much to the discourse of the Pure Film Drama Movement as they were to the lived experience of urban modernity. In other words, if Naruse’s 1930s films were “at the apex of Japanese modernity,”⁸⁰ this did not come about through a kind of osmosis wherein his style unselfconsciously reflected the unevenness of Japanese modernity, but as a result of a studio policy informed by the intellectual discourse around cinema and modernisation in the Taisho era. In sum, rather than hybridizing Japanese and American styles of representation and styles of being in the modern world whose essential difference from one another can be taken for granted,⁸¹ Naruse’s films of the 1930s represent a site where the meanings of Japaneseness and modernity were

negotiated, both in terms of the films' representation of urban and rural spaces and their construction of narrative space.

Notes

1. Donald Kiriwara, "Reconstructing Japanese Film," in *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies*, eds. David Bordwell and Noël Carroll (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 501-503.
2. Noël Burch, *To the Distant Observer: Form and Meaning in the Japanese Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 11, 68-69, 274 [emphasis in the original]; James Naremore, *Acting in the Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 28.
3. Catherine Russell, *The Cinema of Naruse Mikio: Women and Japanese Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 4-5; Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992): 8.
4. Russell, *The Cinema of Naruse Mikio*, 5.
5. Arif Dirlik, "Chinese History and the Question of Orientalism," *History and Theory* 35, no. 4 (1996): 104.
6. Russell, *The Cinema of Naruse Mikio*, 5.
7. Yanagita Kunio, cited in Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano, *Nippon Modern: Japanese Cinema of the 1920s and 1930s* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 25.
8. Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 213.
9. See David Bordwell, *Poetics of Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 352-354.
10. Russell, *The Cinema of Naruse Mikio*, 99.
11. Bordwell, *Poetics of Cinema*, 359-360; David Bordwell, *Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 23-24.

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12. Miriam Bratu Hansen, "The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism," in *Reinventing Film Studies*, eds. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (London: Arnold, 2000), 342.
 13. Bordwell, *Ozu*, 23-24; Bordwell, *Poetics of Cinema*, 359-360.
 14. Daisuke Miyao, *Sessue Hayakawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 242-243.
 15. Julia Adeney Thomas, *Reconfiguring Modernity: Concepts of Nature in Japanese Political Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 30, 169.
 16. *Ibid.*, 188-193; Bordwell, *Poetics of Cinema*, 352-354; Dirlik, "Chinese History," 104.
 17. Bordwell, *Ozu*, 38-39; Wada-Marciano, *Nippon Modern*, 18-19.
 18. Russell, *The Cinema of Naruse Mikio*, 39.
 19. Hideaki Fujiki, *Making Personas: Transnational Film Stardom in Modern Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013), 259.
 20. Quoted in Okubo Kiyooki, "Kimiko in New York," translated by Guy Yasko, *Rouge*, 2006, accessed 6 May 2018, <http://www.rouge.com.au/10/kimiko.html>.
 21. Cited in Russell, *The Cinema of Naruse Mikio*, 51.
 22. *Ibid.*, 102.
 23. Fujiki, *Making Personas*, chapter 9.
 24. As Hideaki Fujiki observes, although "the young women who were labelled 'modern girls' and / or *moga* tended to be described as anonymous, stereotypical, and homogeneous, predominantly associated with consumer culture and sexuality," modern girl actresses were not anonymous but had distinctive star images. Incidentally, over the course of her four films with Naruse, Chiba's onscreen persona rapidly shed its modern girl associations once she became a star. In *The Actress and the Poet (Joyu to shijini, 1935)*, where Chiba has a small but important supporting role, it is only at the end of the film that her character,

a flashy actress who earns more than her husband, submits to male authority. Conversely, in *The Girl in the Rumour* (*Usawa no musume*, 1935), which Naruse made shortly after *Wife! Be Like a Rose!*, Chiba plays the respectable, kimono-clad older sister and Umezona Ryuko the gold-digging *moga* who is coincidentally named Kimiko. Likewise, in *Morning's Tree-Lined Street* (*Ashita no namikimichi*, 1936), Chiba—once again dressed in a kimono—plays a naïve country girl confronted with the temptations of life in the city. Fujiki, *Making Personas*, 253.

25. Miyao, *Sessue Hayakawa*, 31-32.
26. Audie Bock, *Japanese Film Directors* (New York: Kodansha International, 1978), 110; quoted in Russell, *The Cinema of Naruse Mikio*, 101-102.
27. *Ibid.*, 102.
28. Wada-Marciano, *Nippon Modern*, 18-19.
29. Narita Ryuchi, cited in *ibid.*, 25; Bordwell, *Ozu*, 38.
30. Other examples cited by Wada-Marciano are Gosho Heinosuke's *The Dancing Girl of Izu* (*Koi no hana saku Izu no odoriko*, 1933), Shimizu Hiroshi's *Mr. Thank You* (*Arigato-san*, 1935), and Ozu's *The Only Son* (*Hitori musuko*, 1936). Wada-Marciano, *Nippon Modern*, 26-27.
31. Quoted in *ibid.*, 25.
32. Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 224-225; quoted in Paula J. Massood, *Black City Cinema: African American Urban Experiences in Film* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 14.
33. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 208.
34. Russell, *The Cinema of Naruse Mikio*, 104; Wada-Marciano, *Nippon Modern*, 42.
35. Barbara Sato, *The New Japanese Woman: Modernity, Media, and Women in Interwar Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 2.
36. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 231.

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37. Yutaka Yamamoto, "A Morality Based on Trust: Some Reflections on Japanese Morality," *Philosophy East and West* 40, no. 4 (1990): 453.
 38. *Ibid.*, 459.
 39. Wada-Marciano, *Nippon Modern*, 25-26.
 40. Yanagita, cited in *ibid.*, 25.
 41. Miriam Bratu Hansen, "Vernacular Modernism: Tracking Cinema on a Global Scale," in *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives*, eds. Nataša Đurovičova and Kathleen Newman (New York: Routledge, 2010), 294.
 42. *Ibid.*, 291.
 43. *Ibid.*, 294; see also Hansen, "The Mass Production of the Senses," 341-342.
 44. Hansen, "Tracking Cinema," 301.
 45. Russell, *The Cinema of Naruse Mikio*, 5.
 46. Hansen, "Tracking Cinema," 287-288.
 47. Bordwell, *Poetics of Cinema*, 359-360, 380-385; Bordwell, *Ozu*, 21-24.
 48. As the film does not explain where Omitsu went or how she could afford to go on holiday, Wada-Marciano infers that she spent the night in jail for prostitution. However, upon returning to her apartment, she tears several pages from a wall calendar, indicating that she has been away for a week and a half (12 June to 23 June). Wada-Marciano, *Nippon Modern*, 40.
 49. Hansen, "Tracking Cinema," 289.
 50. *Ibid.*, 287-288.
 51. Naremore, *Acting in the Cinema*, 70.
 52. *Ibid.*, 76.
 53. Russell, *The Cinema of Naruse Mikio*, 27.

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54. Wada-Marciano, *Nippon Modern*, 4-5.
 55. Bordwell, *Poetics of Cinema*, 359-360; Bordwell, *Ozu*, 23-24.
 56. Ibid.
 57. Bordwell, *Poetics of Cinema*, 359.
 58. Ibid., 384.
 59. Ibid.
 60. Ibid., 384-385; Bordwell, *Ozu*, 25.
 61. Ibid., 52; Bordwell, *Poetics of Cinema*, 388.
 62. Ibid.
 63. David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 50.
 64. Hansen, "The Mass Production of the Senses," 342.
 65. Ibid.
 66. Miyao, *Sessue Hayakawa*, 242-243.
 67. Joseph L. Anderson and Donald Richie, *The Japanese Film: Art and Industry*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 40-41.
 68. Bordwell, *Ozu*, 24; Bordwell, *Poetics of Cinema*, 359.
 69. Miyao, *Sessue Hayakawa*, 242-243; see also Fujiki, *Making Personas*, 53-69; Roberta E. Pearson, *Eloquent Gestures: The Transformation of Performance Style in the Griffith Biograph Films* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 18-27.
 70. Quoted in Russell, *The Cinema of Naruse Mikio*, 71.
 71. Ibid., 25.
 72. Bordwell, *Poetics of Cinema*, 352-356.
 73. Ibid., 352.

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74. Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity*, 213.
 75. Russell, *The Cinema of Naruse Mikio*, 4-5; Fujiki, *Making Personas*, 259.
 76. Russell, *The Cinema of Naruse Mikio*, 99.
 77. Bordwell, *Poetics of Cinema*, 352.
 78. Hansen, "Tracking Cinema," 294.
 79. Bordwell, *Poetics of Cinema*, 388.
 80. Russell, *The Cinema of Naruse Mikio*, 5.
 81. Ibid.

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