

The Representation of Elderly Women in Japanese Film

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Japanese cinema in the 1950s discovered the elderly as filmic protagonists, and produced films such as *Tokyo Story* (1953), *The Legend of Narayama* (1958), and a series of *Mito Komon* films (1957-78). The elderly had scarcely been framed on the screen before the fifties in Japan, probably with one remarkable exception of Teinosuke Kinugasa's *A Page of Madness* (1926). Kinugasa explained that the motif of this film was "an old man and a mental hospital"¹; hence, the male protagonist working in a hospital must have been regarded as "old" in the 1920s. But we would find it difficult, on the present scale of life span, to call the man "old," for he looks no older than being in his late fifties.

"Old age" is defined differently from one culture to another, from one era to another. The generally agreed beginning of "old age" in Japan today is sixty-five, at which age people are provided, by their communities, with various services such as free rides on local transportation vehicles, free admissions to some museums and parks, discount fares for most entertainments, and small gifts on the Respect-for-the Aged Day. The concept of the aged as men and women of and over sixty-five years old must have been reinforced by the legislation, in 1963, of Aged Welfare Law, which clarifies that the aged "of and over sixty-five" are eligible to receive welfare services at home or to move in to welfare homes.² The pensionable age is currently sixty-five, as is defined in the institution of National Pension inaugurated in 1961.³ The term "old age" uniformly refers to sixty-five and over in the current daily use, typically found in newspapers, which frequently speak of problems of our "aging society." In my examination of elderly women in Japanese film, I accept this established

definition of "old age," regarding its range as sixty-five years old and over until death extinguishes the last breath of life.

The aged have long been ignored in film criticism, both in the East and the West, even after they became conspicuously visible on the screen.⁴ Japanese film has been increasingly framing the aged as protagonists since 1950s, so that films about the aged could be examined as genre in the way films about women are as a genre called "women's film."⁵

The aged in Japanese film are represented distinctly from those at the prime of life, for old age is closely associated with decaying and death rather than growing up. The old people in Keisuke Kinoshita's *The Legend of Narayama* (1958), for example, are expected to die, or rather to commit suicide, at the age of seventy in order to reduce mouths to feed in the perpetual famine. The old female protagonist in Yasujiro Ozu's *Tokyo Story* (1953) is likewise grasped by the hands of death; she abruptly dies on her journey back from Tokyo.

Equally aged, her husband does not die, however. The male survives, raising a question of gender difference. It is not only the aged man in *Tokyo Story*, but the Mito Komon figure, an aged retired Vice Shogun in the *jidaigeki* (or samurai drama with sword battles) series first filmed in 1957, that clearly illustrates gender difference through the male's exclusive possession of what is desired. Mito Komon is idealized, beyond the limits of human abilities, as a wise man with authoritative power, with which he helps the poor, righteous, and exploited and punishes wicked magistrates. Usually under the disguise of traveling old man with two young attendants, Mito Komon reveals his true identity in the climax of each episode (Figures 1-2) when he punishes the wicked, who fall flat in front of him (Figure 3). He is welcomed wherever he may go, and his popularity derives from his characteristic laughs (Figure 4), which do not fail to expell evil and restore happiness. It is significant to note that Mito Komon's old age is associated, not with disease and death, but with desirability — wisdom, power, and happiness. It is more significant, however, to point out that there is no female equivalent for this idealized elderly man in Japanese film.

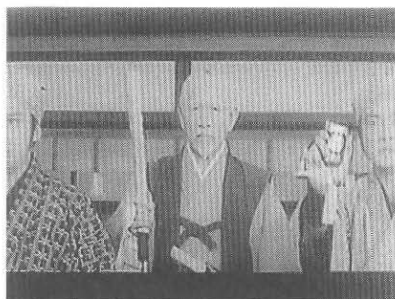


Fig 1

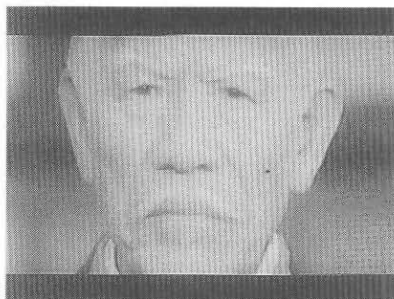


Fig 2

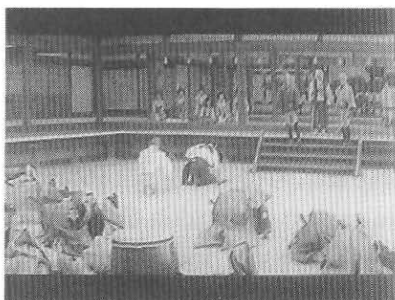


Fig 3

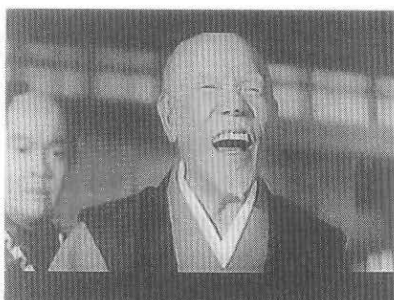


Fig 4

Tadashi Sato locates the films of Mito Komon in the tradition of an ancient popular entertainment featuring deified Okina (old men)/Ouna (old women), regarding Komon as representative of Okina. Sato correctly points out the lack of the equivalent of Ouna in Japanese film.⁶ Old women were not, however, absent from the screen in the 1950s; they were depicted, only differently from the way old men were. No attempt has been made to illustrate gender difference clearly seen in the representation of the elderly, who have not been paid due attention in the first place. I will examine the way old women are represented in Japanese film, by clarifying such gender difference.



Fig 5

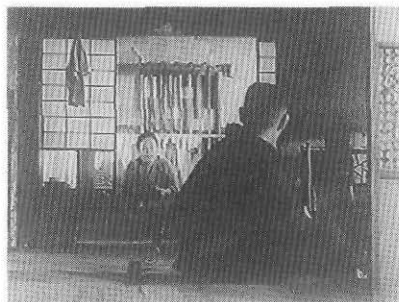


Fig 6

The Aged Mother in *Tokyo Story*

Tokyo Story directed by Yasujiro Ozu in 1953 broke new ground by positioning the aged in the center of the plot and the frames. No film had previously shot the elderly as main characters. *Tokyo Story* is about an aged couple going on a journey to Tokyo to visit their adult children. It is a journey to death for the aged woman. The loss of the woman is quietly presented, with no explanation of the cause of her death, and is intended to be deeply felt by a shot placed towards the end of the film, a shot almost identical to one that appears at the beginning. The two shots (Figures 5-6) have the same composition — a neighboring woman facing the camera and greeting the inhabitants inside the house, the only remarkable difference being the aged woman's absence in the second shot. The whole film questions the meaning of this loss.

The complete lack of an explanation for the aged woman's sudden death intensifies the symbolic meaning of the death. Nothing happened in Tokyo to her except her repressed sufferings from ill treatment by her ungrateful adult daughter. *Tokyo Story* is, in sense, a film about a conflict between the aged mother and her adult daughter, a conflict which kills the former but reveals the intolerable, obnoxious selfishness and ingratitude of the latter. The daughter is far from respectful to the elderly, and practically abuses and abandons her aged parents. The old woman functions to indicate whether her adult children are paying due respect for the eld-



Fig 7



Fig 8

erly, that is, whether they are observing seniority. By her death, the old woman silently charges her daughter with breaking the seniority system.

It is commonly assumed that all the adult children of the aged couple, except for their dead son's wife, are heartless to them, but it is not so. The eldest son, a busy doctor, goes out to station to meet his parents and welcomes them home. He even tries to please them by taking them out for sightseeing, but he is unexpectedly called for by one of his patients. His wife also does her best to prepare a comfortable room for her parents-in-law, and is willing to serve *sashimi* or raw fish, regarded as expensive food, along with meat dishes. The youngest son of the aged couple cares for them enough to meet them at a station near his city when the parents change trains there, and lets them stay in his room when the mother falls ill on the way back home from Tokyo. It is the aged couple's daughter, Shige, who behaves as a selfish, ungrateful monster in total disregard of seniority.

Shige's arrogant and oppressive attitude towards her parents is visually revealed in a shot of her reception of them, where she stands high and large, looking down upon the sitting, small, aged figures (Figure 7). The shot makes an interesting compositional contrast to a similar shot, in which the aged couple are being received by their daughter-in-law (Figure 8). In the latter shot, all the three characters are framed in the same size and on the same horizon, with an intimation of harmony and interchange among them.

The film stresses Shige's arrogance and brutality in treating her aged parents. She rejects the idea of serving sashimi dishes to her parents, thinking such food to be too good for old people. She complains to her husband for the same reasons, when he buys white-bean cakes for the aged parents, assuring him that cheap rice crackers are enough for them. When asked who they are, she denies her relation to them, answering: "Acquaintances. They have come out of country." She furthermore sends her parents away to a very cheap inn at Atami, a hot spa, for it is, according to her, much cheaper than taking care of them at home. She is particularly cruel to her mother; she makes the aged woman do some darning, and will not lend her any footwear except for a pair of dirty worn *geta* or clogs. Receiving a telegram saying that her mother is dying, Shige wonders whether she should go at all. The film depicts Shige's final unfilial act as her greedy desire for her mother's effects such as the mother's precious *obi* or sash. The old woman does not exert an manipulative power over other characters, but certainly functions as an operative index of seniority, against which Shige is judged as cruel and inhuman. The old woman in *Tokyo Story* thus cultivated a possible way in which old women would be represented: they function as a reminder of seniority.

Aged Women in *Ugetsu* and *Odd Obsession*

The old woman in *Ugetsu/Ugetsu Monogatari* (1953) makes a step further, successfully manipulating two young protagonists of the film, Genjuro and Wakasa. At the time of the civil war, poor farmer-peddler called Genjuro goes to a big town to make money by selling his pottery. He is asked to deliver many of his pieces to a house where Princess Wakasa, her old nurse, and their servants live. Arriving at the house, Genjuro is invited in by the old nurse, who arranges an audience for him with Wakasa. When he asks Wakasa how he can improve his skill in making artistic pottery, the old woman, so far observing the two, immediately takes over the subject and twists it into an issue of marriage: "You only have to wed Lady Wakasa [in order to improve your skill]. Now is your opportu-



Fig 9

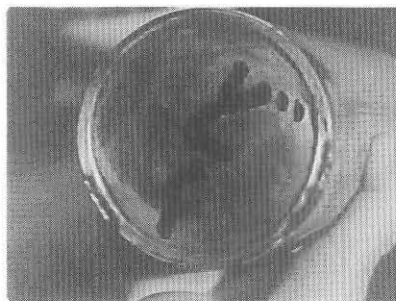


Fig 10

nity! Marry her at once!" Upon hearing these words, servants begin to prepare a wedding ceremony, the old woman being in the lead. When their marriage is broken by Genjuro later, the old woman blames him and towers high over the crouching man (Figure 9), her act being copied by Wakasa.

The power of the old woman is equally manifest in *Odd Obsession/Kagi* directed by Kon Ichikawa in 1959. The film is usually regarded as an unusual expression of an aged man's fatal obsession with sex. The couple only appear to function as cursory protagonists, however; the real protagonist is an aged, manipulative woman who works in the household as a domestic.

The power of the aged domestic is ultimately revealed in the sequence of the death of three family members (the mother, the daughter, and the fiance). She is indignant with their cruel treatment of the head of the house, who is despised by his daughter, abused by the daughter's fiance, and virtually murdered by his wife, who raises him to an unbearable level of sexual excitement. The wife has by then had an affair with a young man, her daughter's fiance. In the family's final meeting following the death of the aged father, the daughter reveals her hatred for her mother by poisoning the mother's tea. The mother does not die, however, for the red can, supposedly containing poison, actually holds detergent. The real poison has been previously transferred into the green can by the elderly domestic. As if she did nothing unusual, this domestic sprinkles poison



Fig 11

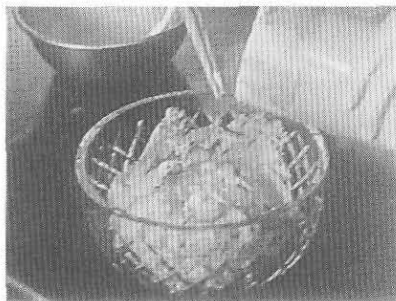


Fig 12



Fig 13



Fig 14

into the family's salad from the green can, at the bottom of which are clearly seen the letters "DOKU" or "POISON" (Figures 10-12). A medium shot of the aged woman staring at the camera (where the middle-aged woman is supposedly located) cuts to a close-up shot of her from the shoulder up, beyond whom a small figure of the middle-aged woman is seen (Figures 13-14). The contrast between the towering old woman occupying a half of the frame and the small middle-aged woman seen in the background spatially illustrates seniority and the power given to the old woman.

The favorable treatment of the aged woman is verbally affirmed. She is not blamed by anyone, for no one has a slightest idea that she would deliberately poison a person. Even the poisoned middle-aged mother interprets the murderous situation being caused by the aged woman's careless-

ness, saying: "You have confused those two cans again." Though she confesses her murderous intent to the police later, the aged woman is judged innocent instantly. The police concludes that the three people must have committed suicide out of despair at the loss of the aged man, the only breadwinner for the family including the would-be husband of the daughter. The apparent puzzles of why such great manipulative power is given to the aged woman and why she is released from the police without being criticized can be answered only with reference to the institution of seniority. It is beyond imagination that aged women, expected to be wise, thoughtful, and respectful because of their advanced age, would or could perform an act of murder.

Woman and Death in *The Legend of Narayama*

The powerful representation of the supreme authority of elderly women is seen in *The Legend of Narayama/Narayama Bushi Ko* directed by Keisuke Kinoshita (1958) and its remake by Shohei Imamura (1983). These films make it clear that it is an aged female protagonist who is respected for her wisdom and experience, and who therefore embodies seniority. Imamura's *Legend of Narayama* illustrates the dominant power of the female protagonist, aged sixty-nine, over other characters, in spite of a plot that sees her carried off by her eldest son to starve in the snows of Mount Narayama.

The film begins with a long take of the landscape of snowy ridges, which turn out to be Mount Narayama (Figure 15). There is no distinct shot, such as a close-up shot of the old woman, to indicate centrality of her, but the ultimate authority assigned to her becomes evident as the film develops. It is always this old woman who commands the other characters: she chooses a wife for her first son, buries alive her grandson's lover who threatens the family by repeatedly stealing food during a famine, persuades a neighboring woman to lend her body one night to appease her second son who is mentally retarded and sexually frustrated, forbids her first son to admit to murdering his father, and instructs every other mem-



Fig 15

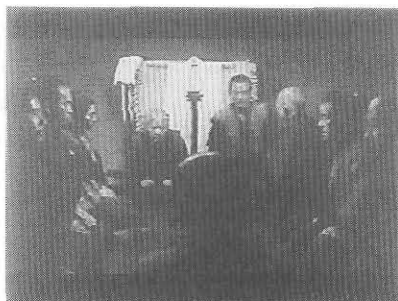


Fig 16



Fig 17



Fig 18

ber of her household in what to do. Though strong and healthy, this old woman is obliged by her advanced age — she is reaching seventy — to give up her life so that younger people may consume her share.

Having ascended the ladder system of seniority to the very top, she is expected to disappear from the top of the vertically structured community without losing face, that is, without falling down disgracefully to a lower stage. In order to preserve her top seat in seniority, the old woman must heroically follow a ritual of dying, which can be summarized as follows: she bids farewell to her villagers (Figure 16) and, being accompanied (or rather carried) by her son (Figure 17), enters Mount Narayama to be left there until she starves to death. The ultimate shot representative of seniority is that of the aged woman driving away her hesitant son and decisively sitting in the snows to wait for her own death (Figure 18).

Elderly Men in the 1970s to 90s

It is significant to note that, in *The Legend of Narayama*, an elderly man in the village coincidentally enters Mount Narayama on the same day as the old woman does, but that he dishonorably resists being abandoned in the mountain and clings to his son who has carried him up there. Throughout the film, this elderly man is represented as useless garbage and a superfluous mouth to feed. He does not conform to the seniority system, making a sharp contrast to the respected and admired elderly woman. To represent the elderly male as useless garbage forms one of the representational conventions, which is the very opposite of depicting them as idealized, deified characters.

Such an unfavorable representation of the elderly male became prominent around the time the Mito Komon figure disappeared from the filmic sphere. In other words, the elderly male as garbage substituted the elderly male as idealized wise man, as a filmic topic, in the late 1970s, the last film of the Mito Komon series being made in 1978. Though the tradition of depicting the elderly male as an idealized, wise man has not completely disappeared, it has certainly been fading.⁷ The only sign for such a tradition today is the intermittent appearance of what can be called Okina in films such as Akira Kurosawa's *Dreams*, where an aged male protagonist in the eighth dream, supposedly aged 103, represents an ideal, happy, and wise life in and with nature. This old man is always framed against a river or other forms of nature (Figure 19), and leads, in woods, a funeral procession, which looks so gay and happy that a young traveler mistakes it for a festival (Figure 20).

The elderly male as garbage was not suddenly materialized in the 1970s, but was already perceptible in films of the fifties, when the elderly began to appear as protagonists. In *Street of Shame* made in 1956, for example, an aged man is represented as the bedridden, decayed creature in contrast to a lively elderly woman in the sequence of a middle-aged prostitute's trip to her home village. Even back in 1953, such a representation of the elderly male is foreshadowed in *Tokyo Story* by Shige's statement at



Fig 19



Fig 20



Fig 21



Fig 22

the death of her old mother: "It would have been better if Father died instead of Mother." Shige does not elaborate on her statement, which however is illustrative of an image of the Japanese male as solely belonging to the public sphere and, with his retirement from such a sphere, slipping into a void or vacuum or nothingness. He would not contribute to household work but would only eat, excrete, and complain.

With dementia, such a being would cause perpetual fear mixed with disgust to his family members. Aged men with dementia began to be depicted in the seventies, in films such as *The Man in Ecstasy/Kokotsu no Hito* directed by Shiro Toyoda in 1973 and *Nursery Song/Hanaichi Monme* directed by Toshiya Ito in 1985. In these films, an aged man is bereaved of his wife, and begins to show symptoms of dementia, and then becomes completely debased, characterized by acts such as dirtying his own clothes



Fig 23

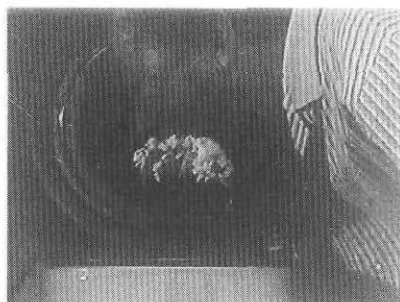


Fig 24



Fig 25

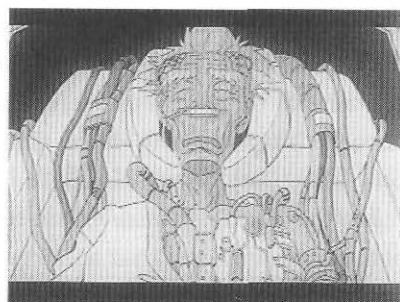


Fig 26

(Figure 21), giving free rein to his delusions (Figure 22), and devouring food most of the time (Figures 23-24). The most recent example, *The Aged Man Z/Rojin Z* (1991), an animation, follows suit, the elderly male protagonist being a bedridden vegetable. This helpless man is planted in a computerized, mobile bed, which feeds him, disposes his excrement, bathes him, gives him medical treatments, speaks to him, and carries him (Figures 25-26).

In contrast, there is no film dealing with aged women with dementia except for a documentary film directed in 1986 by Sumiko Haneda, *A World of the Aged with Dementia/Chihosei Rojin no Sekai*, where aged women are presented as interesting and inspiring human models. What this documentary filmmaker says about the elderly is worth noting, for it clarifies a certain aspect of gender difference of the elderly. Analyzing

the reasons for focusing elderly women and not elderly men in her *World of the Elderly with Dementia*, Haneda notes: "Different from [elderly] women, [elderly] men do nothing but sit inert.... They are uncommunicative and isolated." She says that she could not have made a film out of motionless men, though she makes it clear that her almost exclusive attention to women was unintentional.⁸

It is interesting that the established image of the elderly male as trouble-making garbage is different from their image that the documentary filmmaker presented in her observation of the elderly. Most of the actual elderly male, as Haneda notes, have a quiet, undemanding life. This unfair gap between representations and realities seems to be being demolished in a certain way: elderly men virtually disappear as main characters from the filmic screen in the 1990s so that their plight may be concealed from the eyes of the spectator. The protagonist of *The Critically Sick Man/Dai Byonin* directed in 1992 by Juzo Itami, the director who made the *Taxing Woman* series, is a man who stands at the entrance of old age but who is not yet an old man. The process of his dying of cancer is comically filmed, but significantly, the man dies before he becomes an authentically "aged" man. In other words, all negative symptoms of his deteriorated state are never shown on the screen.

The Old Woman in *Rhapsody in August*

Elderly women are more prominently and dominantly represented in the nineties than ever before, with full energy and power to control other characters. Akira Kurosawa's *Rhapsody in August/Hachigatsu no Kyoshikyoku* (1990) frames, at the end, the aged female protagonist madly running on the hill, with her umbrella blown inside out, in the thunder-shower, which reminds her of the day of the nuclear bombing (Figures 27). She is chased by four grandchildren and her son and his wife, all of whom worry about her (Figure 28). The straight line composed by all the characters running on the hill, with the aged woman in the lead, visually represents the seniority system preserved in her family.



Fig 27

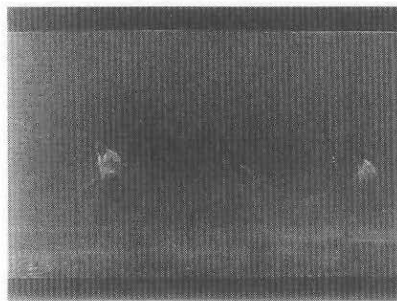


Fig 28

I must note one negative aspect, however, which the aged woman in *Rhapsody in August* reveals. Though respected and cared for by her children and grandchildren, she is overwhelmed and overcome by the idea of death, typically associated with the elderly. While frantically running on the hill, she is under the hallucination of the nuclear bombing, which she suffered more than forty years ago, and which brought death to many people she loved, including her husband. She is too frightened to control herself. The straight line of people expressive of the orderliness of seniority is, after all, generated out of the aged woman's fear of a nuclear death. The representation of this aged woman is not exempt from the conventional association of the elderly with death.

The issue of death is probably one of the immediate concerns for the elderly, for it waits eagerly for them. The association of the elderly and death cannot be dissolved. Even the stout elderly woman in *The Legend of Narayama* is not exempt from such an association. She surrenders herself to death, without fighting for life. No matter how powerfully elderly women may be represented, they are overshadowed by death. It is so until the advent of *Big Kidnapping: The Rainbow Kids / Dai Yukai: Reinbo Kizzu* directed by Kihachi Okamoto in 1990.

The Old Woman in *Big Kidnapping*

Big Kidnapping signals a dissolution of the conventional coupling of

an elderly woman and death. Toshiko, the eighty-two-year old female protagonist, rewrites a scenario of the legend of Narayama, shifting its emphasis from death to life.

Toshiko is the rich owner of a lavish mountain villa, elegantly maintained by her many servants. Kidnapped by three young men in their twenties, this wily old woman gradually acquires their respect and takes charge of the kidnapping. Seeing an opportunity, she uses the kidnapping to have her properties sold and to get ten billion yen (or a hundred million U. S. dollars) in cash as a ransom for herself. Under the circumstances, the government acquiesces to a partial tax exemption for capital gains so that the old woman's properties may produce the requested ten billion yen in cash. It is an outrageous plotline that pokes fun at the government's taxation policy. What is more remarkable, however, is the fact that the feeble old woman of eighty-two years old exerts manipulative power over the three kidnappers, the press, the police, the public, the government, and above all, death.

It is the bathroom sequence, located at the beginning of the film, that addresses itself to the issue of death. The camera frames Toshiko's face in close-up from the bottom of the basin through the water, while she is washing her face. Her disproportionally huge hands approach the bottom of the basin (that is, the camera) in order to dip up water. Her face is disfigured by the rippled water, and then is covered by the huge hands (Figure 29). The larger-than-life image of her face is certainly an indication of her being the protagonist, but is ominous, because it is disfigured by the ripples, and because it is ensued by shots which focus on her hand opening a window to reveal a landscape of mountains (Figures 30-31). A long take of the mountains (Figure 32) gives enough time for the spectator to consider the conventional association of old women and mountains, crystallized in the legend of Narayama. The implied association of the mountains in *Big Kidnapping* with Mount Narayama becomes palpable when the old woman and her maid, Kiyo, go into the mountains. As if she were following a ritual of Mount Narayama, Toshiko bids farewell to her servants and villagers (Figure 33), and walks, accompanied by her maid, on



Fig 29

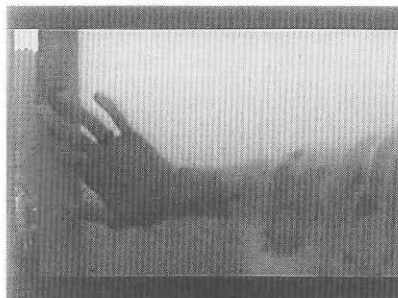


Fig 30



Fig 31



Fig 32



Fig 33



Fig 34

the mountains (Figure 34), where she finally falls into the hands of the deadly kidnappers (Figure 35).

The bathroom sequence is repeated, in flashback, at the end of the



Fig 35



Fig 36

film, to reveal what is previously concealed from the spectator. It is Toshiko's fear of dying. When placed at the beginning of the film, the bathroom sequence did not describe Toshiko's shock to discover a sudden loss of her weight. The spectator learns, in the bathroom sequence in flashback, that she took the weight-loss as a sign of her dying of cancer. The spectator also learns that Toshiko broods over her own death while staring at the mountains out of a bathroom window.

The turning-point comes to Toshiko, when, entering the mountains, she encounters three young men instead of a Mountain-God or Death. She welcomes this vital sign of life and begins to pursue the kidnapping plot in conspiracy with the young men. The centrality of the old woman begins to be shown in *mise en scène*: Toshiko occupies the very center of frames, when negotiating with the kidnappers about releasing Kiyo (Figure 36). When she points out flaws of their project, the kidnappers begin to count on the old woman, whose intellectual ability to develop logical inferences impresses them. The power relations between the old woman and the kidnappers shifts from that of assailant/victim to that of master/subordinate, and the shift is visibly presented by two contrasting shots of the two parties in a car (Figures 37-38). The first shot shows the old woman as a captive, her eyes blindfolded, whereas the second shot interestingly reveals that it is the kidnappers who cover their faces with white masks and black glasses, with the old woman giving instructions on where to go and what to do. She now gains a superior position and, taking over their pro-



Fig 37



Fig 38

ject, starts acting as their master. The kidnappers are assigned supporting roles for the old woman.

Toshiko later defines the kidnapping as “a fantasy for her, a fantasy that every elderly woman desires.” She does not elaborate on such a “fantasy,” but it becomes clear that, in her fantasy, she exerts a manipulative power over others, and emerges a public hero. Toshiko is the head of a historic family called Yanagawa, and is respected and served by many subordinates and four adult children, to begin with. But she wishes to extend her power beyond her family. When she makes the three men contact the police, she requests that all the details of the transaction between the kidnappers and the police should be broadcast, thereby successfully arousing public interest in the kidnapping. The audience rating soars to 88% or the highest rating among all TV programs when the kidnapping is broadcast. She is the focus of all Japan (Figure 39). Her fantasy comes true: she has power over others — the kidnappers, the police, the press, the anonymous TV audience, and ten billion yen in cash. Kenji, the leader of the kidnappers, is so impressed by her shrewd dealings that he decides to live in her house to be hired as a carpenter, saying to her: “I want to observe closely your way of living.” He wants to learn from her. “A teacher of life,” a Japanese cliché for the elderly, is embodied in *Big Kidnapping*. The elderly, at the top of seniority, are valued for their skill and experience. The relationship between Toshiko and Kenji is that of master/disciple, strong/weak, giver/given.



Fig 39



Fig 40

At the conclusion of the film, the idea of death is expunged, as her weight-loss turns out to have nothing to do with cancer. The film ends with a long take of the mountains, the connotation of which changes from death and Narayama to affirmation of life and vigorous power of the elderly female. *Big Kidnapping*, in a sense, is a strong re-writing of the legend of Narayama, shifting the implied emphasis from death to life.

* * * * *

The recent rise to stardom of two elderly female twins (Figure 40) emphasizes the desirability of aged women in Japan. The one-hundred-and-three year old twins, Kin and Gyn, have been treated as major celebrities — interviewed, pictured on magazine covers, and given commercial endorsements. Songs about the twins have been recorded and sold on compact disc. Gyn once commented that it must be a crazed world to pay so much attention to decaying women like them, but their popularity tells that elderly women are favored because of their quick-wittedness, audacity, and intelligence. The audience enjoys hearing the witty comments that Kin and Gyn make about the world, and wishes to learn from what Kin and Gyn have to say about their lives of over one hundred years, regarding them as models or teachers of life. Unlike elderly men, elderly women were not idealized or deified, but have always been represented within the human scale of seniority. Elderly men were either above or be-

low the human limits, and have mostly disappeared as protagonists from the screen, while elderly women have continually been providing interesting material for film in Japan.⁹

NOTES

1. Teinosuke Kinugasa, *My Youth and Film/Waga Eiga no Seishun* (Tokyo: Chuko Shinsho, 1977), quoted in *Motion Picture Times* (Special Issue "The Great Films of the World: Japan," May 1982), 20-21.
2. Kazuhiro Ichikawa summarizes how the Aged Welfare Constitution uses the age of sixty-five in *Welfare for the Aged*, ed. Yuji Ogasawara (Kyoto: Minerva, 1995), pp. 39-40.
3. See *Welfare for the Aged*, p. 51.
4. Among the Western examples are *Limelight* (1951), *Harry and Tonto* (1975), *On Golden Pond* (1981), *Mommie Dearest* (1981), *The Trip to Bountiful* (1985), *The Whales of August* (1987), *Driving Miss Daisy* (1989), *Fried Green Tomatoes* (1991), *Memento Mori* (1992), only to mention a few.
5. See Molly Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987, 1973) and E. Ann Kaplan, *Women in Film Noir* (London: British Film Institute, 1980).
6. See Tadashi Sato, "Old Men in Film," in *New Feminism Review: Agism*, ed. Keiko Higuchi (Tokyo: Gakuyo Shobo, 1992), pp. 154-155.
7. The drama series of Mito Komon has been televised since 1969, with occasional intermissions, and is ranked as one of the longest-run programs today. It has successfully survived the unfavorable change in representations of aged men, having preserved the idealized image of the elderly male even after the film series of Mito Komon ceased to exist. The secret of its long life is analyzed in Naofumi Higuchi, *The Creation of the TV Hero* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1993), pp. 66-74. The Komon figure is currently starred by Asao Sano, the third generation since the first TV Komon, Eijiro Tono.
8. See Sumiko Haneda, "Men and Women in *The World of the Elderly with Dementia*," in *New Feminist Review*, pp. 164-165.
9. Kaneto Shindo's latest film, *A Will Made in the Afternoon*, to be premiered in June 1995, features two elderly women, one of whom is starred by Nobuko Otowa, the director's wife.