



## TOKYO BOSHOKU (EL COLOR DEL CREPUSCLE A TOKYO)

Yasuhiro Ozu 1956

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*per Alfred Carol*



Ozu filma lentament, amb seqüències de plans molt clàssiques de ritme pausat. La camera sempre està un pel baixa, en un lleuger contrapicat. Perquè? Es potser el punt de vista normal del japonès assegut – agenollat? La història, com molt sovint, tracta de la quasi impossibilitat de les noies per desenvolupar-se normalment en la societat japonesa. En aquesta pel·lícula fins i tot sembla pitjor. El fatalisme de la situació es tan aclaparador que no sembla que ningú sigui ben bé responsable de les desgràcies. Si de cas el noviet tarambana, encara que tot l'ambient el porta a conduir-se amb la irresponsabilitat en que ho fa. **Ozu filma en exteriors naturals i no descarta ensenyar els elements mecànics de la gran urbs.** No hi ha una recerca d'efectes estètics en els plans. Insisteix molt en la presentació de les relacions – conflictes - entre personatges a base d'escenes d'interior d'aparença banal però d'un gran rigor. Els

personatges actuen moguts per atavismes ètnics dels quals, és clar, no son conscients, que progressivament i imparabile van tancant totes les sortides del personatge femení protagonista, una noia jove tot just sortint de l'adolescència, fins a la seva destrucció total: el suïcidi. Es punyent a *Tokyo boshoku*, veure com la noia ferida de mort, quan es desperta a l'hospital, diu que no vol morir, que ho vol tornar a començar tot a partir de zero.

El personatge de la mare “pecadora” es una troballa, un èxit increïble de “casting”. Se la veu com una pobre dona confusament conscient de què abandonant el marit i les dues filles per anar-se'n amb un altre home va organitzar un merder de dimensions colossals i que no para de créixer amb el temps. A nivell domèstic, però hi ha en aquesta pel·lícula alguna cosa de l'engranatge fatal de les tragèdies gregues que acaba masegant tutti quanti sense que ningú ho vulgui. Hi pocs moments de violència explícita a la pantalla, per'xò, cap el final, quan el noviet, pobra pallasso inconsistent, intenta excusar-se amb el expedients de costum i li noia li fum quatre o cinc bufetades ben donades amb ràbia, fa l'efecte d'una explosió atòmica.

Remarcable també com la qüestió de l'avortament es tracta sense embuts i sense falsos dilemes. La noia va es fa avortar i ja està.

Les noies no tenen sortida: a la germana petita i més inconformista l'empenyen al suïcidi. La germana gran, més resignada, ha de triar entre tornar amb un marit insuportable o quedar-se amb el pare abassegador: mal que mal, decideix tornar amb el marit!

### La família Yagawasha

Un altre “retrat de família en intern”. La companya estable Ozu hi és al complet. Tots plegats, les tres filles: la viuda, la casada i la soltera; el pare – viudo – la tia i “l'amiga” del pare, es passen per la pel·lícula sense estridències ni massa pena ni glòria. Vivint la banalitat de les

situacions amb una mena de resignació. No passa res d'espectacular, la pel·lícula, que va seguint tots els components, ara l'un, ara l'altre, se centra més aviat en la figura del pare que se la passa molt bé amb l'amigueta - ex amant – que visita tot sovint d'amagat de la família. La pel·lícula és en color, uns colors plans, molt discrets, banals quasi. La viuda viu la incomoditat de la pressió social que considera que s'hauria de casar. La noia soltera està angoixada per l'elecció entre dos pretendents: el candidat de la família, i el noi que a ella li agrada: un company de treball que ha estat destinat en una oficina allunyada. Totes les relacions humanes estan presentades evitant qualsevol rastre de pathos. Lo qual no vol dir que vagi en detriment de l'aspecte humà, ans el contrari. Aquest es un dels secrets d'Ozu. L'activitat amorosa del pare es mal vista per la filla casada que mira d'entorpir-la, ara quan el pare té un atac de cor i està a punt de morir, la noia es penedeix de veritat de la seva actitud mesquina. El pare acaba morint del cor mentre es diverteix amb la seva amant. L'escena del funeral, a l'aire lliure, és d'una bellesa colpidora: que macos els kimonos negres de les germanes contra el paisatge verd. Ozu es deixa anar a un petit festival de plans de les dues germanes des de diferents angles que aconsegueix uns moments de gran bellesa.

## YASUJIRO OZU

### Late Spring

Ozu's themes have been widely misinterpreted. First of all, I do not think Ozu was a minimalist. It is true that Ozu's famous films of his later years restrict themselves to daily life. They deal with regular people of modern times, not with cops and robbers or historical heroes. But within this world of everyday life, they are wonderfully detailed. They feature complex characters, who have rich varied relationships with each other. There is also much detailed observation about daily life itself, and how it was lived in the Japan of various eras in which the films were shot. During the last 40 years, we have seen all too many films that are genuinely minimalistic. Usually these are pretty dreary experiences: stories in which nothing happens, characters who are little more than puppets, dead visual space. Ozu is nothing like that at all. His films are very rich and full. They are simply about everyday life, not genre subjects.

Secondly, Ozu's perennial subject is a family pressuring a grown son or daughter to marry, and the sadness and devastation this leaves in its wake. I have seen many different critical interpretations of this: that the kids are too "lazy" to take on adult responsibilities, that the parents are doing this out of a sense of "duty" or "sacrifice", that this is a universal experience of children leaving the parent's nest. I think all of these points of view are wrong, and are not supported by the films in question. Instead, I think these scenes should be given a different interpretation. First of all, Ozu seems to be a gay man, although nobody wants to say so. He was a man who was unmarried, and who never had an active relationship with a woman. He was expelled from boarding school as a teenager for writing a love letter to another male student. What Ozu seems to be criticizing in his films is the huge pressure society puts on people to marry, whatever their sexual orientation. Such pressure can be bad for some straight people who are temperamentally unsuited for marriage. But it is absolutely devastating to gay people who are pressured into marriage against their will. What we are seeing in Ozu's films is what the poet Adrienne Rich called "compulsory heterosexuality", the huge machine of social pressure put on everybody to lead a heterosexual life, whether they are suited to it or not.

The early part of many Ozu films shows how happy everyone is living as part of a family, with a parent-grown child relationship and friends. These scenes show a blissful, ecstatic happiness. They are an outpouring of pure joy, and a picture of paradise on earth. Then, part way through the picture, pressure starts on the grown child to marry. It comes from everybody: all the relatives and friends of the parent. It is relentless, and the machinery grinds on. The child is forced into marriage, something that at the end of the movie leads to the destruction of the happy family, as the child goes off to the new home, and painful sorrow and despair for both the parent and the child.

No one in the film speaks out against marriage as an institution. The child resists, but has no ideological weapons. All voices are raised in favor of marriage as a universal obligation. But the film never makes any transcendental moral argument in favor of marriage. It shows that it is socially demanded, but it never shows it benefiting anyone, or hurting anyone by its absence. No moral case for marriage is ever made in the film. It is merely unthinkingly accepted by everyone as the natural order of things, a universal obligation of nature. Ozu's films are not ambiguous on this point: they do not make the slightest case for marriage as a moral obligation. So critics are reading into Ozu's films when they use words like "duty" to describe the characters' actions. Critics who summarize an Ozu film as "the father steps aside so that the daughter can find happiness in marriage" are also seriously misreading the movie.

While the father's friends might make such an argument to him in the film, the film itself does nothing to support it. The heroine clearly is not going off to a life of happiness, but to a total hell.

Critics who assert that marriage is part of nature, or the inevitable cycle of the generations are also misreading Ozu. He nowhere makes that assertion. Instead, the daughter in *Late Spring* fights against her marriage with every ounce of her moral being. How can anything be "natural" or "inevitable" that human beings fight against with every fiber of their being?

I also think it is a disservice to Ozu to suggest that he regards the suffering in his films as the tragic result of the human condition. Nowhere does Ozu make the claim that the social custom of universal marriage is part of the human condition, part of man's timeless fate on Earth. Instead, one can easily imagine a society where it is not so, where people who are happy and who are not harming anyone are left alone and allowed to flourish.

Ozu in fact shows people making a choice. They are happy in the early parts of the films, before they choose marriage for the child. The subject of marriage is consciously introduced, and unhappiness follows immediately. The choice is made under tremendous social pressure, but it is a choice all the same. It is not "natural" according to Ozu, not "moral", not "mature", not an "inevitable part of life". It is just a very bad choice.

It is very easy for film makers to show moral obligations, without being preachy. For example, in Billy Wilder's comedy *The Fortune Cookie*, Jack Lemmon's character is exaggerating a minor injury to get insurance money. Instead of preaching in words that this is wrong, Wilder makes the nice guy football player who innocently "injured" him a major character in the film. His guilt and remorse, thinking he is responsible for an injury that in fact is just faked by Lemmon's character, are constant reminders of how wrong it is to lie about such things. Lemmon keeps getting his nose rubbed, hilariously and satirically, in the bad consequences of his actions. Such devices are very common in motion pictures. My point is, that we see no such justification for marriage anywhere in Ozu's film.

I would really like to see some air let into discussions of Ozu. A stereotyped set of interpretations of his films has built up, which the films do not support.

The word "universality" is also used in inconsistent ways to characterize Ozu's films. During Ozu's lifetime, his films were rarely exported abroad. It was thought that they were "too Japanese" to appeal to foreign audiences. After his death, in the 1970's, this statement turned out to be untrue: they were shown throughout the world to great success. In this sense, Ozu's films are certainly "universal" they appeal to people of all nationalities. Since the 1970's, it has become a standard part of Ozu criticism to refer to their universality. However, this word has other meanings that tend to creep into this discussion, with much less justification in fact. That is to suggest that Ozu's parent-child dramas show a universal experience, one that every parent and grown child goes through. I have been unable to find any claim in Ozu's films that the experiences of his characters, in particular their problems with marriage, represent a "universal" experience of all human beings in this sense. Ozu certainly regards the experience of his characters as of burning importance: he is showing their central life experiences. But he makes no claim, as far as I can see, that these experiences are shared by everyone, or in particular, by all heterosexuals.

## **An Autumn Afternoon**

### **Color**

*An Autumn Afternoon* (1962) is Ozu's last film. Although most of Ozu's movies were in black and white, his last films were in color. The color design of this film is spectacular. Often times objects in the film are in bright, primary colors, such as red, yellow or blue. This gives Ozu's work the brilliance of a film by Godard, say. However, Ozu's work is not restricted to a

few colors - unlike Godard, who typically showed red, yellow or blue against a white background, or Pedro Almodòvar, who likes red-orange and blue against white, gray or black backgrounds. Instead, Ozu uses a broad range of different color shades. Ozu's colors tend to be on the bright side. In terms of color charts, this means they have less black mixed in them, and a bit more white. This is not just a personal preference of Ozu. Other Japanese directors of the 1960's, such as Seijun Suzuki, also liked color schemes involving pastel shades. However, Suzuki liked a bright monochromatic background, such as a pastel blue, whereas Ozu tends to concentrate his colors into individual objects, or specific background regions of his compositions, such as a wall panel.

The hero's office is full of devices to make Ozu's trademark visual compositions. Stripes on a chair are photographed so that they run in a vertical direction in one region of the composition. These add to the frequent "groups of repeated parallel straight lines" found in Ozu's compositions. He also includes a beautiful blue plastic bucket on the floor; this is the typical "circular object on the floor or table in an otherwise largely rectilinear composition" familiar in Ozu. Its bright blue color is also typical of Ozu's color design in his color films: bright primary colors for the circular objects, muted but pleasant whites, yellows, grays and beiges for the rectilinear parts of the screen.

### **Composition: The Scenes with People**

Ozu's shots of people tend to place them against elaborately composed backgrounds. These backgrounds tend to be made up of a series of rectangles. The rectangles have a "dynamic" quality, a visual exuberance that suggests motion. They remind one irresistibly of Mondrian. Mondrian's first pure plastic paintings of the 1920's had a "static" quality, of rectangles in a static, fixed balance. But Mondrian switched in the 1930's and 1940's to a "dynamic" balance, one in which the composition suggests motion. It is this latter sort of composition that one finds in Ozu. However, Ozu's eye is distinctly different from anyone else, and his compositions are at once recognizable as his, and different in formal style from Mondrian. Japanese architecture encourages the use of rectangular patterns. Ozu's contemporary Mikio Naruse also favored backgrounds composed of rectangular regions. Both Ozu and Naruse "generated" these backgrounds in the same way: by photographing Japanese rooms straight on, with their different walls and panels. Once again, however, Ozu and Naruse each have their completely different, recognizably personal styles. The differences go right to the geometry that they use in their compositions.

Stills from *Tokyo Story* (1953) often show the characters' heads framed by a separate rectangular region of the composition. Such framing is extremely common in film world wide, occurring in many older Hollywood directors, for instance. In *Tokyo Story*, this framing is often against a rectangular grid making up a window or door panel. This grid is made up of many repeated smaller panels. In some of the shots, the heads of both characters are outlined against such repeated grid areas, whereas the many rectangles that make up the rest of the composition are not composed of such grids. One wonders if the grids are a special region, one that attracts the eye. Since the characters' heads are also central zones of expressiveness in the composition, this could combine two "highlighted" areas into one in the composition, making the characters' faces with the grids behind them into the focus of the composition. The complexity of the grid also expresses the complexities of the characters' thoughts. After all, the mind is the richest object in the known universe, as Isaac Asimov liked to point out, and the many repeated regions of the grid suggest some of this complexity. The grids tend to have repeated vertical lines that are strongly emphasized. These are similar to the repeated vertical black bars that are such an important element in Mondrian's later paintings. They tend to lend Mondrian's later compositions an aspect of "movement"; they are the most important element

generating the "dynamic" quality of Mondrian's later work. The vertical lines in Ozu's grids have a somewhat similar effect.

Other vertical lines are in *An Autumn Afternoon*, in the opening pillow shot: we see repeated smoke stacks. The repeated wires in many of that film's pillow shots also form a "dynamic" series of lines.

Many shots where the characters are at tables show vessels used for eating and drinking. These vessels tend to be brightly colored, and of many different interesting rounded shapes. They form a "still life", usually at the bottom of the composition. These shapes tend to form major points of emphasis within Ozu's compositions.

Ozu often shoots down long corridors. His motivations for this might be mixed. He might be trying to distance the viewer from the action. He might be trying to create geometric patterns on the screen: typically, these shots show many pieces of the rooms along the corridor, with rectangular panels and screens facing the viewer. This makes most elaborate compositions on the screen. He also might be trying to show the viewer much of the characters' houses or offices, establishing a context for the actions depicted. Another possibility: Ozu might be getting some three dimensionality into his shots. His frontal style of composition could be unbearably flat, if it simply lined up his characters against a flat background. The corridor shots instead create a sense of visual depth on the screen.

Ozu tends to keep his corridor shots balanced, with rooms shown on either side of the screen. There is rarely full, mirror symmetric imagery. Instead, there are pleasing differences on the left and right side of the compositions.

The shot showing the young son at home with his wife shows an unusual composition. We see the hero standing in a rectangular region, and this region is entirely surrounded by other rectangular regions on screen. These regions flow under his feet, and over his head. They occur on both the left and right vertical sides of the screen, as well. There is a sense of circular flow of this composition around the hero and his body.

## **The Pillow Shots**

Ozu mixed in exterior shots in his work. These are known as "pillow shots". These shots tend not to have the characters of the film in them, although there are exceptions to this - one shot in *An Autumn Afternoon* shows the heroine and one of her boyfriends waiting for a train. These shots tend to be of exteriors, showing in general terms the environment in which the characters live. Although such shots are often described in film criticism as an Ozu trademark, one also finds very similar things in the work of Mikio Naruse. Naruse's films often have the same ground plan as Ozu's: a series of characterless exterior shots, elaborately composed, alternating with longer interior scenes showing the characters and their problems, acted against backgrounds made up of rectangular regions of Japanese buildings. It would be interesting to know the historical context of this film ground plan. Do other directors use it as well, or is it limited to Ozu and Naruse? Both Ozu and Naruse concentrated on dramas of Japanese daily life, known as *shomin-geki* in Japanese; was this ground plan associated with this genre of Japanese films? Or was it something unique to the two directors? Which used it first? Did their styles evolve, and influence each other? Unfortunately, I know far too little to answer these questions.

The pillow shots in *An Autumn Afternoon* tend all to be of cityscapes. They show purely man made objects, unlike the natural backgrounds one often found in the pillow shots of *Late Spring*. Both films have shots of trains, however: Ozu finds these as photogenic as most directors do. One remembers the wonderful montage in Renoir's *Grand Illusion* (1937), where the train arrives at the station.

The pillow shots in *An Autumn Afternoon* have a distinctly 3D quality. Ozu likes to show perspective shots on buildings, with them receding into the background, setting up strong

three dimensional effects in the shots. Other parts of the shots have lines or planes pulling in completely different directions. This emphasizes their completely 3D nature. Ozu often includes wires in these shots. These generate complex networks of lines join the different regions of the composition. Ozu also likes round objects, such as the revolving cylinders used as signs on the streets in front of Japanese business, or spherical objects on roofs.

Ozu's shots show a visual language. This language is clearly related to that of modern abstract art. The pillow shots differ from much 20th Century painting, however, in that they emphasize the 3D quality of the buildings they depict. There are abstract painters whose work is 3D: one thinks of El Lissitzky and his Prouns, and the American painter Emil Bisttram.

The pillow shots in Ozu's films are spectacularly beautiful. One looks forward to the next one at all times, and hope that it is coming up soon. The addition of color to them in *An Autumn Afternoon* makes them even more interesting.

## **The Opening Shots**

The opening pillow shot of *An Autumn Afternoon* relies on color for its full effect, with red and white rings on the smokestacks in the shot. A series of drums in the lower part of the shot are also striped, and echo the candy stripes on the stacks themselves. Factories and industrial areas are often brilliantly painted, in both Japan and in the United States. I have always found factories to be especially beautiful. They are full of complex geometric shapes. The bright colors with which they are painted also add to the effect, by making their geometric patterns even more complicated. Ozu clearly shares this enthusiasm. Many of the pillow shots are designed to show people how rich, complex, visually imaginative and beautiful the man made world of industry is.

The first shot of *Early Autumn* is the most complex of all the establishing shots in the film. This must clearly be deliberate; it forms an opening image of the whole film, its complexity suggesting the complexity of the lives of the characters to follow.

Ozu likes wires in his establishing shots. There are power wires here stretched between telephone poles. The cylindrical smoke stacks also look as if they have a second set of wires between them. These wires are faintly visible in this first shot, and are slightly more visible in the second - if I am not imagining things! Ozu like transparent grids in his compositions. Here these include wires, and a cyclone fence running along the whole base of the shot. The red and white stacks are also a grid, through which we can see the building. The smoke itself appears and disappears; it forms another kind of "grid" through which we can see the background of the composition. Other establishing shots show a person walking though them, or a train arriving and leaving. These too are transparent layers - we can see what lies behind the train's position before it arrives, and after it leaves. This sort of transparency allows Ozu to make more elaborate compositions. He can pile many different kinds of objects in front of each other, and the viewer can look through and see all the layers.

Ozu has chosen a visually interesting factory building, as well. Its front goes in an out, with rectangular regions thrusting towards the viewer, with recessive regions in between. The thrusting regions have rows of high windows along the top. Ozu like objects high up in the sky, such as these roofs and windows. Many of his establishing shots show such elevated structures - e.g., the baseball stadium lighting towers shown later. Ozu also like row like structures along the tops of rectangles, such as these rows of windows. Two shots later, his hall will feature rows of blinds raised up against the top of windows in the hall, making striped top shadows along the other wall.

There are also visual puns in this opening shot. One of the black towers supporting the power lines does not have the conventional telephone pole shape. Instead, it has the shape of a bottle. This shape will echo that of the many bottles shown on tables and elsewhere throughout both this film, and others of Ozu's.

The second shot of the film shows the striped cylinders again. Here the lower frame is filled with two black buildings. Their gently sloping roofs are among the most beautiful images in the film, making a delightful visual pattern.

Later we see the cylinders through the hero's window. The cylinder nearest to the viewer is apparently shot so close, that we can no longer see any striped rings on it. This gives an odd effect that stirs questions in the viewers subconscious. I hope these are in fact the same cylinders we saw before, but I cannot prove it. It is hard to build up any coherent geometry from these opening shots. We do not get a clear view of the black buildings from shot 2 in shot 1, for example; and where the hero's office is is not clear in shot 1 either.

### **Later Establishing Shots**

One of the most beautiful establishing shots shows buildings at night. The scene is photographed in blue and red, continuing Ozu's love of primary colors.

Ozu's shots like to show the corners of buildings. This gives a 3D effect to the shot: we are seeing the intersection of two perpendicular streets. He does similar things with power lines: sometimes they come in from more than one direction in a picture. The guard fence on the train is similar: one side is shown, which is at a right angle to the long side of the rail, which is parallel to the tracks. However, the 3D effect seems somewhat limited. The cross direction tends to be quite short compared to the long direction, often just the side of a building or a fence. The cross direction is often very limited in features compared to the main direction: one building just has a blank wall. One can also see these shots not as 3D, but as the meeting of two diagonal lines projected on the flat rectangle of the screen. This is true of any line in any film, of course, but Ozu's lack of emphasis on the cross direction tends to highlight and underscore this effect.

A shot that rivals the opening in complexity shows the apartment house with many rugs draped for cleaning over its balcony. The whole face of the building is a grid of colored rectangles. It is a shot that goes through a Mondrian effect to total ecstasy! It is not as complex in 3D structure as the opening shot - most of the rugs are in a single visual plane - but its color, variety and two dimensional visual design are staggering. Ozu links it through what David Bordwell calls association to the scene that follows: the son's wife is cleaning rugs in their apartment.

### **Possible Philosophical Meanings in Ozu's Establishing Shots**

Some scholars, notably Paul Schrader in his book *Transcendental Style*, have seen philosophical or religious meanings in Ozu's establishing shots. I can sometimes see that they suggest such meanings, but not always. Many of Ozu's shots have some simple motion in them: a train arrives and departs, smoke puffs out and dissipates. Such events can be seen to suggest the transience of things in this world - that our lives come and go like a puff of smoke.

A second kind of interpretation: Ozu often shows events with a recognizable, fixed beginning and end. An early shot shows a young man entering a corridor, walking across the screen, then leaving the image. Such an action suggests the cycle of birth, life and death. His entry into the image from off screen is a kind of birth, his exit is a form of death, and the walk between suggests the course of his life.

These shots can be interpreted very differently. After the smoke puffs out once, it puffs out again. Ozu often shows actions that are rhythmically repeatable. At the climax of *Early Spring*, a wave arrives and crashes on shore. These shots can suggest the recurring rhythms of life. Events will happen and recur, and Ozu is capturing their pulse. One might note that these events have irregular rhythm: they do not occur on a beat, like a dance number or some kinds



of machinery, such as train wheels or pistons. So Ozu sees life as full of irregular rhythms, not something cut to a beat.

A different interpretation: these actions, such as a puff of smoke or a train's arrival or a man walking, can be seen as the small units out of which all actions in life can be built up. It is if Ozu is looking at the tiny, irreducible monads out of which everything else in the universe is built. They are the building blocks of all actions. This is my favorite of the various interpretations, but I am by no means sure if it is correct! These various interpretations are by no means consistent with each other.

A kind of recurring imagery shows revolving, circular objects on top of poles. These can be seen as phallic symbols. So can the trains, smokestacks, baseball towers and men walking through the establishing shots. Ozu's scenes with people often include coat racks in them which similarly are poles with rounded tops. Ozu is perhaps suggesting that there is something deeply central about such phallic imagery, that it is at the center of life. The fact that these objects are frequently moving, either forward like the men and trains, or around, like the revolving barber shop signs, suggests that these phallic entities are sources of energy in the universe.

Many scenes in the film deal with time passing. One scene shows the son winding a clock. This scene and other suggests that time is something that people manufacture themselves. There is much talk about installment plan payment for the golf clubs, for instance, which creates a monthly schedule. The clock at the opening is in a business context. Ozu seems to suggest that how people view time is something made up by society. Just as he saw marriage as a purely social demand, not something fixed in natural law, even the way people view time is something built and constructed by society. Since time passing by is often used to pressure people in marriage, the arbitrary, social construction of time is a key insight into marriage pressure.

## **Social Events**

In real life, Ozu liked nothing more than going out drinking with his buddies. *An Autumn Afternoon* is full of scenes showing this, especially in its happy first hour. Most of Ozu's script writing was apparently done at such sessions, where Ozu and his constant scriptwriter Kogo Noda would go drinking at inns. It is easy to undervalue such scenes. To Ozu, they clearly represented the center of existence, the main source of joy in life.

Another key scene in the first hour of *An Autumn Afternoon* is where Koichi and his friend go golfing together. This too is a scene of pure bliss. It is hard not to read a gay sensibility into this scene. It shows two men sharing a common activity. For both, it is deeply fulfilling. It is clearly an idealized portrait of male companionship. The two men are dressed virtually identically, in suits and ties, further accentuating their affinity with one another. The classical leading man good looks of the actor who plays Koichi are also underlined here. Similarly, in *Late Spring* the heroine regards Gary Cooper as the ultimate movie star; it is clearly this sort of leading man type that Ozu found most interesting.

Happy scenes of companionship in Ozu are often related to "Western" activities. There is the lyrical bike ride to the beach in *Late Spring*, and the golf and baseball in *An Autumn Afternoon*. One of the main themes in *Late Spring* was the Westernizing of daily life in Japan. Ozu regards this with a slight tone of bemused satire - one can cite the classic bar conversation in *An Autumn Afternoon* about what would have happened if Japan had won the war, and America had been "Japanicized" instead. But one feels that Ozu is also not so secretly thrilled with Western activities. They often seem to be linked to the characters' fondest desires and happiest moments.

Ozu's hero has to struggle to find other men willing to socialize with him. Everyone regards this as a secondary priority - they would rather go to a baseball game or go home with their

wife. We could interpret this personally - the widowed hero is lonely. Clearly he is not offensive to the other characters - he is very respectable and dignified, and he is clearly always in good taste and socially acceptable. However, I think a structural interpretation here is preferable. Finding male companionship was a number one priority to Ozu, and to people like him. Ozu is showing the difficulties in finding this companionship in Japanese society. Such relationships are not necessarily institutionalized. Quite the reverse, in fact. The society insists they always be treated as casual meetings, however essential they are to his characters. So the hero's daily struggle to put such meetings together is a hidden but key struggle in his life. Day after day, one meeting at a time, he tries to put together the male socialization that is the key to his being. He is always polite, always smiling, always struggling to get such meetings going. He wades through an endless series of social conventions that insists such meetings are insignificant and of no importance.

The young son Koichi in the film also has a struggle. He really wants to play golf with his friend. It is his dream. Ozu includes a powerful shot of the son fondling his friend's beautiful golf clubs. Several shots of the son using the clubs show him only from the neck down. It emphasizes his body. Golf is something he does with his body: the head is not involved, it is a purely physical activity - and need.