

Lightweight: Mizoguchi, *Ugetsu*, and the Displacement of Criteria

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Imagine it were really a case of patterns on a long ribbon. The ribbon moves past me and now I say “This is the pattern S,” now “This is the pattern V.” Sometimes for a period of time I do not know which it is; sometimes I say at the end “It was neither.” . . . But why in the case of the patterns does one make this distinction *that is so difficult to grasp*? Because it is of importance in our life.

—Ludwig Wittgenstein¹

Mizoguchi Kenji (1898–1956) is by general consensus one of the great directors of classical Japanese cinema (fig. 1). Yet he is less endearing than his friend Ozu Yasujirō, less exciting than his rival Kurosawa Akira; his films lack the novelistic depth of the former’s *Late Spring* (1949) or the excitement of the latter’s *Yojimbo* (1961). “I believe it is much more important,” Mizoguchi once said, “to show the film’s subject—the author’s thought—than to tell a story.”² This notion of “showing thought” implies a fairly broad definition of intellection. It recurs thereby to perennially unsettled issues of nondiscursive rationality, hence of the availability of movies to theoretical, and more specifically academic, discourse. Mizoguchi’s films are melodramas, but they avoid the genre’s usual techniques of focalization (flashback, point of view,

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1. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Inner and the Outer, 1949–1951*, vol. 2 of *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, trans. C. G. Luckhardt and Maximilian A. E. Aue, ed. G. H. von Wright and Heikki Nyman (Malden, Mass. 1992), pp. 42–43.

2. Quoted in Yoshikata Yoda, *Souvenirs de Kenji Mizoguchi*, trans. Koichi Yamada, Bernard Béraud, and André Moulin (Paris, 1997), p. 112. André Bazin agreed: “The rhapsodic narration is not concerned with any dramatic progression” (André Bazin, “*La Vie d’O’Haru*,” *L’Observateur d’aujourd’hui*, 11 Feb. 1954, p. 22).

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FIGURE 1. Mizoguchi with his collection of pottery.

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close up and so on) and do not prioritize identification with characters.³ Standard exegetical strategies in terms of character and action can therefore seem inapt. Avowedly interested in perceptual psychology, psychosomatics, and synaesthesia, Mizoguchi wanted his shots to be hypnotic, a response inimical to the language of problem solving and moral evaluation that pervades mainstream film studies.⁴ This quality makes his films particularly interesting both in themselves and as historiographic specimens: anything so obdurate is apt to reveal background conditions of intelligibility at a given historical juncture.

Ugetsu monogatari is exemplary in this regard. This film established Mizoguchi's international reputation by winning a Silver Lion at the Venice Film Festival in 1953.⁵ Generically, it is a ghost story about a sixteenth-century potter and his family, alternating episodes of enchantment with harsh realism. Yet it was also a follow-up—and a response—to Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950), the famous tale of rape and murder recounted by four unreliable narrators. *Rashomon* took the top prize at Venice in 1951, and the Daiei studio hoped to repeat its success with another period piece featuring the same leads (Kyo Machiko, Mori Masayuki) and the same cinematographer (Miyagawa Kazuo). Both films are head-scratchers: where *Rashomon* belabors a gap between testimony and truth in order to sublime what “really happened,” *Ugetsu* uses themes of ghosts and illusion to narrate a series of problems around the fallibility of the senses, the nature of reality, and so on.

3. On Mizoguchi's “free indirect POV,” see Chika Kinoshita, “*Mise-en-Scène of Desire: The Films of Mizoguchi Kenji*” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2007), pp. 443. For an astute discussion of a flashback in *Sansho the Bailiff* that is focalized through multiple characters, see Gilberto Perez, *The Material Ghost: Films and Their Medium* (Baltimore, 1998), pp. 79–80.

4. Mizoguchi reports his association with the psychologist Naito Kojiro in Kishi Matsuo, “A Talk with Mizoguchi,” in *Mizoguchi the Master*, ed. Gerald O'Grady (Toronto, 1996), p. 11; hereafter abbreviated “ATM.” See also Chika Kinoshita, “Kukumei zen'ya: Mizoguchi Kenji no tojin Okichi (1930 nen),” *Eizōgaku* 89 (2012): 36. Problem-solving is an interpretive rubric especially associated with David Bordwell and his students; see, for instance, Donald Kirihaara, *Patterns of Time: Mizoguchi and the 1930s* (Madison, Wisc., 1992), a book full of insights. Moral evaluation is omnipresent at the intersection of film studies and philosophy; Robert Pippin offers the most sophisticated version of this approach in “Agency and Fate in Orson Welles's *The Lady from Shanghai*,” *Critical Inquiry* 37 (Winter 2011): 214–44, an especially clear, even programmatic statement.

5. The screenplay adapts two tales by Ueda Akinari (1776), pastiches of archaism and vernacular usage. To this material it adds a subplot that derives from a short story by Guy de Maupassant, “*Decoré*” (1883), unacknowledged in the credits, as if to weave internationalism into its very fabric. On Ueda see Dennis Washburn, “Ghostwriters and Literary Haunts: Subordinating Ethics to Art in *Ugetsu Monogatari*,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 45 (Spring 1990): 39–74, and James Araki, “A Critical Approach to the *Ugetsu monogatari*,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 22, no. 1/2 (1967): 49–64. This was not Mizoguchi's first ghost story. His *Passion of a Woman Teacher* (*Kyōren no onna shishō*, 1926, now lost) was based on the story “The Ghost of Kasane Swamp” by Sanyūtei Enchō; *Blood Spirit* (*Chi to rei*, 1923, lost) drew on the tales of E. T. A. Hoffman; *The Downfall of Osen* (*Orizuru osen*, 1935) uses double exposure to represent hallucinations. For a handy overview of ghosts in Japanese cinema, see Jay McRoy, “Spectral Reminders and Transcultural Hauntings: (Re)iterations of the *Onryō* in Japanese Horror Cinema,” in *Cinematic Ghosts: Haunting and Spectrality from Silent Cinema to the Digital Era*, ed. Murray Leeder (New York, 2015), pp. 199–217.

Yet the two films differ in nearly every other respect. *Ugetsu* presents its conundrums only to reveal them as nonsensical—consequences of particular ways of seeing. In place of metaphysical rumination, it proposes a different mode of rationality: the absorbed exercise of skill, exemplified in the manufacture and assessment of pottery. Such activities call for a situational discernment quite distinct from if-then deliberation, hypothesis testing, and detached evaluation. In a Western idiom, the Aristotelian term *phronesis* (practical rationality) comes very close to capturing this mode; as I'll try to show, in fact, recent work on this topic by the philosopher John McDowell proves invaluable in coming to terms both with *Ugetsu's* difficulty and with its larger significance. A *phronesis* of the visible, I'll argue, is the film's central concern; all the melodrama and ghosts are means to that end.

More intriguingly, perhaps, *Ugetsu's* thematic of situational discernment amounts to a prescription for the film's own viewing; we are not supposed to take on board a set of propositions about epistemology but to *see in a new way*. The film at once requires and narrates a distinctive mode of attentive comportment. On the one hand, this way of seeing fits uneasily, if at all, into modern canons of judgment: because it is unreflective, it can seem (wrongly) to be nonconceptual as well. *Ugetsu* thematizes the relation between skill and judgment not just in artisanal craft but in spectatorship as well. On the other hand, this impetus to action, to a new way of seeing, carries a powerful ethical charge. More specifically, *Ugetsu's* ethics bears comparison to a strand of thinking, running roughly from Iris Murdoch to Sandra Laugier, that emphasizes the open-endedness of ethical criteria and attention to detail (*l'attention au particulier*) as a sort of moral skill that requires continual exercise. In this way, *Ugetsu* overlays artisanal and moral phenomenology in a way that is at once significant in its own right and sharply at odds with mainstream approaches to film in both moral philosophy and cultural studies.⁶ This stance makes it an antitheoretical film, perhaps even an antiphilosophical one.

André Bazin saw the point at once: reporting from Venice in 1953, he praised *Ugetsu* for eschewing the “tedious philosophical explanation” that “weighed down” *Rashomon*.⁷ But he left it to his followers at *Cahiers du Cinéma* to offer a positive account. *Ugetsu* quickly became a touchstone for these critics: Alexandre Astruc called it “one of the most beautiful films in

6. But see the brilliant discussion in Daniel Morgan, “Max Ophuls and the Limits of Virtuosity: On the Aesthetics and Ethics of Camera Movement,” *Critical Inquiry* 38 (Autumn 2011): 127–63.

7. André Bazin, Michel Mayoux, and Jean-José Richer, “Petit dictionnaire: Pour Venise,” *Cahiers du Cinéma* 27 (Oct. 1953): 7. On Bazin and Mizoguchi, see James Phillips, “The Fates of Flesh: Cinematic Realism Following Bazin and Mizoguchi,” *Angelaki* 17 (Dec. 2012): 9–22.

the world” and made it the centerpiece of an important essay on *mise-en-scène*; Jean-Luc Godard declared it “Mizoguchi’s masterpiece, and one that ranks him on equal terms with Griffith, Eisenstein and Renoir.”⁸ All struggled to come to grips with a form of behavior that was nondiscursive yet concept-laden and intelligible. The fact that the film was Japanese, hence exotic in the somewhat provincial context of 1950s Paris, only intensified the issue. As Jacques Rivette put it, “How does one talk about Mizoguchi without falling in a double trap: the jargon of the specialist or that of the humanist?”⁹ *Ugetsu* was a pressure point where the cinephile’s exaltation of pure visibility came up against film’s cultural, historical, and ethical import.

One solution was to draw an analogy with music: the time-bound, non-discursive art par excellence. Eric Rohmer, for instance, singled out the endings of Mizoguchi’s films for their “musical quality,” their “sumptuous chords” retrospectively illuminating all that preceded them.¹⁰ Jean Douchet was blunt: “Mizoguchi’s art is musical,” he said, because his stories “add nothing new.”¹¹ Rivette likewise downplayed plot: “What do the stories matter?” he asked.¹² Mizoguchi allowed tiny alterations of “pitch” (*valeur*) in a “scale” (*gamme*) of grey on grey to produce “harmonies held without end” between space and psychology, pattern and plot: “an art of modulation” (“MV,” p. 265).¹³ In recent years, David Bordwell has adopted this phrase to describe Mizoguchi’s style in terms of tiny gestures or “microactions” on the part of actors, which “modulate” a given scene in order to deepen character and propel plot—but the *Cahiers* critics clearly had something else in mind.¹⁴ The animating idea was, in each case, to find a way past the ideal of pure beholding (*pur regard*). A fugue may be analyzed into so many mathematical relationships of tones and yet, as Vladimir Jankélévitch once put it,

8. Alexandre Astruc, “Qu’est-ce que la mise en scène?” *Cahiers du Cinéma* 100 (Oct. 1959): 14. Jean-Luc Godard, *Godard on Godard: Critical Writings by Jean-Luc Godard*, ed. Jean Narboni and Tom Milne (London, 1972), p. 71.

9. Jacques Rivette, “Mizoguchi Viewed from Here,” trans. Liz Heron, in *Cahiers du Cinéma: The 1950s: Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave*, ed. Jim Hillier (Cambridge, Mass., 1985), p. 264; hereafter abbreviated “MV.”

10. Eric Rohmer, “Rue de la Honte: Un Japon sombre et racé,” *Arts*, 30 Oct.–5 Nov. 1957, p. 7.

11. Jean Douchet, “La Connaissance totale,” *Cahiers du Cinéma* 114 (Dec. 1960): 56.

12. Rivette, “Mizoguchi vu d’ici,” *Cahiers du Cinéma* 81 (Mar. 1958): 30.

13. Rivette et al., “Rétrospective Mizoguchi,” *Cahiers du Cinéma* 81 (Mar. 1958): 32. Rivette seems to envision something like Claude Debussy’s *Pelléas et Mélisande*, an opera without melodies or harmonic development, which he would adapt in 1976’s *Noroi*; see Mary M. Wiles, *Jacques Rivette* (Urbana, Ill., 2012), pp. 64–73.

14. David Bordwell, “Mizoguchi, or Modulation,” in *Figures Traced in Light: On Cinematic Staging* (Berkeley, 2005), p. 97. See also Bordwell, “Mizoguchi: Secrets of the Exquisite Image,” *Observations on Film Art*, 10 May 2014, www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2014/05/10/mizoguchi-secrets-of-the-exquisite-image/

“a harmonic modulation is an *act* that expects to influence a *being*.”¹⁵ This act is at once concrete and insubstantial: the string is plucked, the key touched, but it produces only a fugitive vibration that is nonetheless efficacious insofar as it generates a response in auditors. Just so, a movie is susceptible of formal description even as it has concrete effects in the world. Music was, in short, a way to anneal formal description, ephemerality and worldly consequence, even ethics.

This outlook owed more than a little to Henri Bergson—and, probably, to Jankélévitch, Bergson’s foremost exegete in 1950s Paris.¹⁶ Rivette nailed his colors to the mast by declaring every Mizoguchi film a “meditation on duration [*durée*]” (“MV,” p. 265). Stories (*les anecdotes*) are unimportant: all end, he continued, “with the serene joy of one who has conquered the illusory phenomena of perspectives,” that is, the centrality that perspectival projection affords to viewpoint (one of Bergson’s favorite targets and, of course, the animating idea of *Rashomon*) (“MV,” p. 265). This emphasis on ways of seeing—a reversion from perspectivalism to an as-yet-unspecified alternative—seems particularly germane to *Ugetsu*. If we agree with Pierre Hadot that “Bergson defines philosophy as a transformation of perception,” as “a decision, an attitude, a comportment, a way of seeing the world,” then *Ugetsu* is the most Bergsonian of films.¹⁷

An ancillary interest of *Ugetsu*, then, is its role in the articulation of a quasi-Bergsonian film theory that preceded the decisive interventions of Gilles Deleuze (*Le Bergsonisme* appeared in 1966).¹⁸ For example, Rivette’s suggestion that the film image is a harmonic modulation of fugitive relations anticipates Deleuze’s formulations of the 1980s (“The image itself is the system of the relationships between its elements, that is, a set of relationships of time from which the variable present only flows”) without coinciding exactly.¹⁹ Of particular interest in the present context is the specifically ethical tenor of both *Ugetsu* and the responses to it—not least because the attempt to en-

15. Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Music and the Ineffable*, trans. Carolyn Abbate (Princeton, N.J., 2003), p. 2.

16. Rivette’s vocabulary echoes Jankélévitch, *Henri Bergson* (Paris, 1959), the standard French text of the day. Terms such as *charm*, *duration*, *ecstasy*, the *illusion of perspective*, and above all *modulation*—the last of which is Jankélévitch’s own distinctive concern, where Bergson himself prefers the image of a melody—argue for influence, but hard evidence is lacking. For points of contact see Jankélévitch, *Henri Bergson*, trans. Nils F. Schott, ed. Alexandre Lefebvre and Schott (Durham, N.C., 2015), pp. 34–35, 40–42, 61–62.

17. Pierre Hadot, *The Present Alone Is Our Happiness: Conversations with Jeannie Carlier and Arnold I. Davidson*, trans. Marc Djaballah (Stanford, Calif., 2009), pp. 126, 125.

18. See Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York, 1988).

19. Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis, 1989), p. xii.

vision an ethics that did not lapse into “the jargon of the humanist” seems an apt description of the later work of Deleuze’s friend Michel Foucault. Through the lens of *Ugetsu* we can discern a sort of subterranean parahistory of French theory, a counterfactual or “what if?” world in which the Bergson of Jankélévitch and Hadot remained no less vital than that of Deleuze, in which Foucault’s late ethics could never be mistaken for a break with his *soixantehuitard* past but would have to be recognized as its culmination. This parahistory remains to be written (unless one considers it to exist already in the oeuvre of Arnold Davidson). That Rivette’s criticism terminated in an abandonment of prose essays for filmmaking practice is not the least significant thing about it in this regard.²⁰ Is theory a sterile exercise?

Mizoguchi and *Ugetsu*: Thematics

In Omi province on the shores of Lake Biwa live the potter Genjuro (Mori Masayuki), his wife, Miyagi (Tanaka Kinuyo) and their little son. Next door are Genjuro’s sister, Ohama (Mito Mitsuko), and her husband, Tobei (Ozawa Eitaro). The year is 1583 and war ravages the countryside. When Genjuro finds a market for his wares in a nearby town, he and Tobei begin to dream: Genjuro of wealth, Tobei of becoming a warrior. The family embarks on a trip to market. Rowing across the mist-shrouded lake, they come upon a drifting boat, its sole occupant a dying man who warns of pirates. Fearful, the family turns back to deposit Miyagi and the boy on the shore before setting out again. The sale goes well, and Tobei runs off to buy armor. Ohama tries to stop him, only to be set upon by a gang of soldiers and raped. Genjuro, meantime, encounters the beautiful Lady Wakasa (Kyo Machiko), who asks that he deliver some of his creations to her palace, Kutsuki Manor. Wakasa turns out to be a ghost: the daughter of a defeated general and a casualty of war, she has chosen Genjuro to teach her about love. The potter tarries with Wakasa for days or weeks; back home, his wife Miyagi is stabbed by soldiers and left for dead. Tobei becomes a successful samurai by means of trickery. Pausing at a brothel, he encounters Ohama, now a prostitute; after a tearful reunion, he discards his armor and returns home with her. Genjuro comes to his senses when a wandering holy man paints magic

20. In Rivette’s case, the film was *La Religieuse* (1966), which adapted a novel by Denis Diderot in the manner of Mizoguchi. The implicit connection between Rivette and what Michael Fried has called the “Diderotian” tradition in art criticism cannot be pursued here (Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* [Chicago, 1980], p. 4). Rivette’s trajectory has an almost exactly contemporary analogue in the case of Terrence Malick; Richard Neer, “Terrence Malick’s New World,” *nonsite.org* 2 (June 2011), nonsite.org/issue-2/terrence-malicks-new-world. Bringing it all full circle, Malick tried to adapt Mizoguchi’s *Sansho the Bailiff* for staged performance at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 1993–1994, but the project never got beyond the workshop stage; see Lloyd Michaels, *Terrence Malick* (Urbana, Ill., 2009), p. 57.

characters on his body. He flees the Manor, faints, and awakens amidst ruins, clutching the sword of Wakasa's father; some passing samurai confiscate the blade. Genjuro makes his way home, where he reunites with his wife and son in a scene of great tenderness—but Miyagi is another ghost and vanishes during the night. Life goes on; the ghost-Miyagi comments on shots of the family at work and prayer. The little boy tends her grave, and the camera cranes up to show peasants at work in distant fields.

As this summary suggests, *Ugetsu* is very much a postwar film and is certainly open to programmatic readings—what Rivette called “the jargon of the humanist.”²¹ Beyond Mizoguchi's preoccupation with the torment that men inflict upon women, the film critiques Japanese militarism and cultural nationalism through the stories of Tobei and Genjuro, respectively. That Tobei's fate reveals the poverty of martial ideals is self-evident.²² The Genjuro episode, meanwhile, concerns bewitchment by the past—which, in this case, takes the form of a classically “Japanese” refinement. The two themes combine in the disembodied voice of Lady Wakasa's father, singing a Noh-style song through the empty mask of a warrior. This heavy-handed conceit risks turning the film into a program piece. Mizoguchi's longtime screenwriter, Yoda Yoshikata, seems to have felt that symbolism conferred seriousness on their projects.²³ Some have called the results Brechtian, yet the films offer little analysis despite their topical themes: a given situation is deplored as unjust or painful, but how it came about or what might be done to change it is not a concern.²⁴ *The 47 Ronin* (1941–1942), at once the least exciting samurai film and the least effective propaganda piece imaginable, is emblematic in this regard. Messaging is secondary; if anything holds the viewer's interest, it is not plot or theme but the hypnotic *look* of the thing.

21. On thematic readings of Mizoguchi, see Felix Martialay, “The Master Mizoguchi in Six Critical Perspectives: *Ugetsu*,” in *Ugetsu: Kenji Mizoguchi, Director*, ed. Keiko I. McDonald (New Brunswick, N.J., 1993), pp. 137–42. Good examples include Darrell William Davis, *Picturing Japaneseness: Monumental Style, National Identity, Japanese Film* (New York, 1996), pp. 107–30, and Tony Rayns, audio commentary in *Ugetsu*, dir. Mizoguchi (1953; New York, 2005).

22. Yoda calls it “an antiwar film” in *Mizoguchi: The Life of a Film Director*, dir. Kaneto Shindo (1975; New York, 2005).

23. See Yoda Yoshikata, *Souvenirs de Kenji Mizoguchi*, trans. Koichi Yamada, Bernard Béraud, and André Moulin (Paris, 1997), p. 67, and Dudley Andrew, “Ways of Seeing Japanese Prints and Films: Mizoguchi's *Utamaro*,” in *Mizoguchi the Master*, pp. 17–20.

24. For *Brechtian*, see Jacques Aumont's citation of Bernard Eisenschitz in Jacques Aumont, “Apprendre le Mizoguchi,” *Cinemathèque* 14 (Autumn 1998): 15, and Tag Gallagher, “Mizoguchi and Freedom,” Screening the Past, tweb.latrobe.edu.au/humanities/screeningthepast/firstrelease/fr1201/tgfr13b.htm. There do exist partial exceptions to the absence of analysis, such as *Sisters of the Gion* (*Gion no shimai*), dir. Mizoguchi (1936; New York, 2008) and *The Victory of Women* (*Josei no shōri*), dir. Mizoguchi (1946). See Catherine Russell, “Kenji Mizoguchi and His Women,” in *Classical Japanese Cinema Revisited* (New York, 2011), pp. 53–68.

Mizoguchi and *Ugetsu*: Style

This point leads to formalism, “the jargon of the specialist” (“MV,” p. 264). Mizoguchi’s style is fairly consistent and it is possible to generalize. In his best work, characters, entities, and actions appear as elements within larger compositional arrays, like the bits of glass in a kaleidoscope.²⁵ Stately camera movements and careful choreography continually reorganize these patterns as one might twist the kaleidoscope; “the slightest shift,” as Rivette put it, “inflects all the lines of space” (“MV,” p. 265.) The camera keeps its distance and rarely cuts, yielding dense, evolving images in which graphic flatness coincides with pictorial depth in a sort of mobile *Gestalt*. Although, generally speaking, to see a mere pattern is precisely not to see a three-dimensional diegetic world, in Mizoguchi this distinction seems not to pertain; there is a distinctive doubleness to everything onscreen, which means that literally everything is a potential source of visual interest.

As with shots, so with larger units. Cuts between scenes are sharp, with few dissolves or wipes; Mizoguchi tends to round off each scene so that it reads as a semiautonomous unit, often fading to black.²⁶ Yoda concluded that the director just didn’t care about editing, but the effect is clearly deliberate.²⁷ It makes narratives seem like assemblages of discrete blocks and renders conspicuous the connections between scenes. In short, just as a relation of part to whole governs the internal composition of shots, so it governs the organization of scenes and the aggregation of scenes into dramatic narratives, in an architectonic form that seems to reimagine Eisenstein for a long-take aesthetic. Characters, entities, and actions are thus essentially relational in their onscreen presence, constituted in their visible involvement with and openness to a wider world.

This approach is inimical to psychological realism, even as the actors do a lot of emoting. Rarely with Mizoguchi is it helpful to psychologize or to speculate about deep motivations (another point of contrast with *Rashomon*).²⁸ Instead of explanation or diagnosis, Mizoguchi’s concern is the relation between characters and spaces or figures and grounds. “Our primary responsibility,” he once said, is to “study the film image and its potential for expres-

25. Bordwell argues that Mizoguchi “challenges the centrality of the actor” in the interest of a “radical negativity” that prioritizes cinematic structure over narrative (Bordwell, “Mizoguchi and the Evolution of Film Language,” in *Mizoguchi the Master*, pp. 21, 22). Angela Dalle Vacche paraphrases Bordwell in “Kenji Mizoguchi’s *Five Women Around Utamaro*: Film between Woodblock Printing and Tattooing,” *Cinema and Painting: How Art Is Used* (Austin, Tex., 1996), p. 212.

26. See Noël Burch, *To the Distant Observer: Form and Meaning in the Japanese Cinema*, ed. Annette Michelson (Berkeley, 1979), p. 244, and Aumont, “Apprendre le Mizoguchi.”

27. See Yoda, *Souvenirs de Kenji Mizoguchi*, pp. 115–16.

28. An exception being *Taira Clan Saga* (*Shin heike monogatari*), dir. Mizoguchi (1955), which motivates the hero Kiyomori by putting his paternity at issue.

sion,” that is, to clarify these relations, to render visible the mutual implication of the self and the onscreen world (“ATM,” p. 12). Characters and events can seem curiously lightweight, yet they solicit powerful responses all the same; people find these movies devastating even though they undo many of the standard devices of narrative involvement. In effect, Mizoguchi reverses the priority of dramatic action over cinematography and staging without relinquishing any claim on the audience’s responsiveness.

Miyagi’s death scene provides a good example of this approach.²⁹ In a single crane shot lasting nearly two minutes, Miyagi runs toward the camera, bearing her child on her back (fig. 2); three soldiers enter the frame at right; they rob Miyagi and appear to stab her; she stumbles past the camera, which pans left to follow her, and collapses by a tree as the soldiers fight over the loot in the distance (fig. 3). Thanks to a long lens, a high horizon, and a gradual reduction of depth cues, Miyagi’s forward movement reads also as a vertical descent from the top of the screen to the bottom (curtain-like drops of rain accentuate the effect). When she stumbles past the camera, a pan shifts our view to profile; now Miyagi moves *across* the screen instead of *down* it. The background opens up, yet a lattice of branches in the foreground produces a *crazing* or *crackle* across the screen plane that inhibits the sense of depth (fig. 4).³⁰ These branches, though parallel to the screen, align elegantly with receding furrows in the background, such that near and far interweave for a moment. Fade to black.

This shot has attracted a lot of admiring commentary. What seems to get most attention is the combination of a long take with a long shot. The camera’s distance from the action appears to many as a sort of cosmic perspective, producing a combination of pathos and detachment. Robin Wood is eloquent: “We are not asked to respond simply and directly to the physical horror of a spear entering a woman’s belly, but to *an event existing in a context*. The detachment with which the camera compels us to watch the action makes the emotion it evokes much less immediate and overwhelming, but also much finer and deeper.”³¹ This seems right, although the idea of detachment may anthropomorphize the camera unduly. What shows up for viewers, at any rate, is a particular relation between figures, grounds, and the

29. See Ron Lim, “*Ugetsu* (1953): Miyagi Waylaid by the Defeated Soldiers,” 19 Mar. 2012, www.youtube.com/watch?v=qQJgzAvX5Bo

30. The effect recurs throughout the film and may reflect its theme of pottery (compare figures 8, 12, and 13). Crazing is a prized effect in certain Chinese and Japanese ceramic wares: when, during cooling, a vessel’s glaze contracts more than the clay itself does, the result is a spiderweb of cracks over the painted surface. Crazing can develop over hours, weeks, or even years.

31. Robin Wood, “Mizoguchi: The Ghost Princess and the Seaweed Gatherer,” in *Ugetsu*, ed. McDonald, p. 149; my emphasis. Also see Mark Le Fanu, *Mizoguchi and Japan* (London, 2005), p. 61. See also Serge Daney, “The Tracking Shot in *Kapo*,” in *Postcards from the Cinema*, trans. Paul Douglas Grant (New York, 2007), pp. 17–35.



FIGURE 2. *Ugetsu*—Miyagi's death scene (beginning).



FIGURE 3. *Ugetsu*—Miyagi's death scene (end).

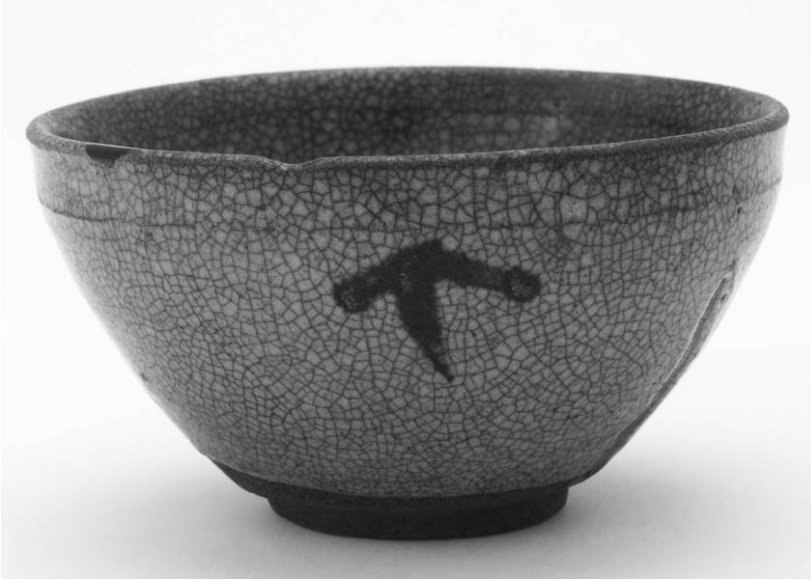


FIGURE 4. Tenmoku tea bowl, Karatsu ware. Stoneware with iron pigment under wood-ash glaze. Japan, Momoyama period, 1596–1615. Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.: Purchase—Rosalind, Sidney, and Stephen Glazer Memorial Fund for Chinese Ceramics and Jane and Raphael Bernstein-Parnassus Foundation.

quadrature of the screen. Miyagi's movement through the landscape delineates the screen's extension in two dimensions, up-and-down and side-to-side; pictorial space appears first deep, then flat, then both at once. The result is a diagram of the literal shape of the projection, an array of x , y , and z axes on a plane surface. This shape, no less than the diegetic world of medieval Japan, is the context in which Miyagi's death is seen to exist. If the scene's pathos derives from the camera's distance, then it derives also from what that distance makes visible: the dissolution of character into the very infrastructure of screened projection itself. The murder itself is, as it were, a gloss on this visual effect: it characterizes visual style as *the destruction of a persona*.

Mizoguchi and *Ugetsu*: Exiting Characters

This mutual implication of event and context is Mizoguchi's great theme. His narratives, in fact, consistently allegorize or recapitulate the relationship on a large scale. They do so by centering on intimate relations within matrices of restrictive protocol, and by taking the image itself as a leitmotiv (figs. 5–6). Again and again, men constitute women as images or attractions—whether in sympathy, egotism, or some combination of the two. A geisha performing before an audience is the most common motif, but drawing (*Five Women*



FIGURE 5. *The Downfall of Osen*—monk prays to Osen.



FIGURE 6. *The Life of Oharu*—puppet theatre.

around *Utamaro*, 1946), puppetry (*Miss Oyu*, 1951 and *The Life of Oharu*, 1952), religious sculpture (*The Downfall of Osen*, 1935), stage performance (*The Love of the Actress Sumako*, 1947), magic shows (*The Water Magician*, 1933) and reverie (*Yōkihi*, 1955) all serve similar ends. The women respond with desires or aversions of their own, which conflict with those of the men and produce drama.

Douchet concluded that, in Mizoguchi, “One doesn’t love a woman” so much as “a fetishized, eroticized object of masculine desire.”³² But this formulation is only half correct. Mizoguchi’s films are not really about the *objectification* of women or anyone else; rather, they show how a combination of private and public necessities (desire, politics, class, war) *subjectifies* everyone involved. In these films, conflict arises when attachments or events uproot people from everyday routine and constitute them as dramatic leads. *The Water Magician* is an archetype; a sideshow performer sacrifices everything to put a young man through law school, only to find herself facing a murder charge with the newly minted lawyer as her prosecutor. The film is virtually an allegory of what Tom Gunning calls the taming of attraction by narrative, as the magician goes from performing onstage to recounting her confession in the dock.³³ What matters for present purposes is that the woman does not *become* an object or spectacle: she starts out that way. Rather, she *becomes* a subject, that is, a protagonist, compelled by government to confess herself. Mizoguchi’s characters generally try to escape this predicament, that is, to stop being subjects.

Heir to a tradition of melodrama, Mizoguchi often figures this predicament in terms of desire; to be a protagonist, in these films, is to be constitutively desirous of an object or end.³⁴ In one film after another, he reads out the variations: the end may be escape (*The Crucified Lovers*); an erotically fulfilling relationship (*The Portrait of Madam Yuki*); material advancement (*Osaka Elegy*, *Ugetsu*); honor (*The 47 Ronin*); or just happiness (*Sansho the*

32. Jean Douchet, “Mizoguchi: La réflexion du désir,” in Yoda, *Souvenirs de Kenji Mizoguchi*, pp. 11, 12.

33. See Tom Gunning, “The Cinema of Attraction[s]: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde,” in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, ed. Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam, 2006), p. 240. On the film see Chika Kinoshita, “In the Twilight of Modernity and the Silent Film: Irie Takako in *The Water Magician*,” *Camera Obscura* 60 (2005): 90–127.

34. On Mizoguchi and the *shimpa* tradition of melodrama see especially Kinoshita, “Mise-en-scène of Desire,” pp. 332–33, and Le Fanu, *Mizoguchi and Japan*. Basic resources on melodrama include Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven, Conn., 1976); *Imitations of Life: A Reader on Film and Television Melodrama*, ed. Marcia Landy (Detroit, 1991); *Melodrama and Asian Cinema*, ed. Wimal Dissanayake (New York, 1993); Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York, 2001); and Linda Williams, *Playing the Race Card: Melodramas of Black and White from Uncle Tom to O. J. Simpson* (Princeton, N.J., 2001).

Bailiff). Its attainment can be endlessly deferred, but its realization is always disastrous.

Lots of movie plots run on desire, but the sticking point, in Mizoguchi, is the antithetical relation of subject and object that desire seems to require.³⁵ The resolution is not to attain one's end but to stop wanting it—which, in the logic of melodrama, means to cease being a character altogether.³⁶ Although prewar films like *Osaka Elegy* (1936) and *Sisters of the Gion* (1936) end with dramatic close-ups of their suffering protagonists, from the late 1930s Mizoguchi dispenses with the device.³⁷ Instead, men and women alike just melt away. Shinnosuke slips into the reeds in *Miss Oyu*, Yuki disappears in *The Picture of Madame Yuki* (1950), Oharu walks offscreen in *The Life of Oharu*, Anju walks into a lake in *Sansho the Bailiff*, and so on (figs. 7–8). Even in this company, *The 47 Ronin* stands apart as a film single-mindedly devoted to exiting the position of protagonist: Mizoguchi famously refuses to show any heroic deeds as the main figure, Oishi Kuranosuke, works tirelessly over some four hours of running time to get himself into a position to commit suicide. Or take *The Love of the Actress Sumako*, a biopic about the woman who created the role of Nora in *A Doll's House* for Japanese audiences; the entire film is about becoming the hero of one's own life, but the moment Sumako succeeds, she vanishes and the picture ends abruptly.³⁸ To be a protagonist is insupportable.

The best one can hope for, in these films, is reimmersion into the everyday. Rivette called it “the serene joy of one who has conquered the illusory phenomena of perspectives,” the point about perspectives being *not to have one* (“MV,” p. 265).³⁹ Miyagi's disappearance at the end of *Ugetsu* is perhaps the most extreme case. We see her (ghost) at work, and then she becomes the film itself, her soliloquy in the final minutes giving voice, as it were, to the visible world.

To recap: Mizoguchi overlays the relation of artist to creation, beholder to spectacle, and lover to beloved within a matrix of onscreen pattern work and “lightweight” character. Plots and characters are less important than the structures of beholding they articulate; as Astruc put it, “What is seen is less important . . . than a certain way of *needing to see and to show*.”⁴⁰ The function

35. For a brilliant but rather different treatment, see Kinoshita, “Mise-en-scène of Desire.”

36. *Shin heike monogatari* is again the exception.

37. The historical personage is Matsui Sumako (1886–1919). The film does end with a close-up—but in the context of an open-casket funeral. The relation of this shot to the very similar ending of *The Sisters of the Gion* would repay study.

38. *Miyamoto Musashi* (1944), a wartime film of which Mizoguchi was rightly ashamed, is the exception that proves the rule; as the hero renounces the art of sculpture in favor of the way of the warrior, he poses before a waterfall, sword in hand, in a shot that evokes Fritz Lang's *Siegfried* (1924, released in Japan in 1925).

39. On perspectivalism, compare Jankélévitch, *Henri Bergson*, p. 61.

40. Astruc, “Qu'est-ce que la mise en scène?” p. 16; trans. mod.



FIGURE 7. *The Life of Oharu*—Oharu exits.



FIGURE 8. *Sansho the Bailiff*—Anju's suicide.

of drama is to clarify this importance, this need—to “study the film image and its potential for expression.”

It remains to be shown, however, just how *Ugetsu* effects this study and just why the result is an alternative to philosophical explanation (on a certain understanding thereof). The only way to do so is through close attention to a few sequences. In the arc of its plot and the composition of its shots, *Ugetsu* exhibits two negative versions of beholding—total absorption and distanced interpretation—and then offers a positive one.

Ways of Seeing: Pictorialism (Genjuro’s Idyll)

Genjuro’s enchantment, for starters, is a captivation by elitism and desire, but it is also, more literally, captivation by a picture. A long scene in the dream palace transpires before a folding screen that depicts a flowering tree over a river bank (fig. 9). Genjuro sits on a square pad as Wakasa putters about, striking poses that harmonize prettily with the painting. Next, she seduces him in a hot spring: although chaste by twenty-first century standards, the scene was racy in its day. The eroticism issues in bliss of a different sort: after a magical transition that elides an indeterminate number of days or weeks, we see the couple on a lawn, in daylight, by the shores of Lake Biwa (fig. 10). The ghost lady performs a song, in a long shot of conspicuous refinement—an outstanding example of what Dudley Andrew has called Mizoguchi’s “compellingly delicious pictorialism.”⁴¹

The two shots, palace and lawn, make a matched pair: each features a rhomboid panel on the ground with Genjuro at right, Wakasa at left, and a large tree over water and plants in the background (painted in the first shot, real in the second). Yet where the interior is full of depth cues (notably, the nurse in the foreground), the lawn is eerily planimetric. It is almost as though, under the Lady’s spell, Genjuro had entered the flatland of a traditional Japanese painting—or, better, as though the folding screen had become the movie screen and pictorialized the entire world.⁴² Genjuro is

41. Dudley Andrew, *Film in the Aura of Art* (Princeton, N.J., 1984), p. 174; hereafter abbreviated FAA. On Mizoguchi’s pictorialism see Bordwell, *Ozu and the Poetics of Cinema* (Princeton, N.J., 1988), p. 23 and “Mizoguchi: Secrets of the Exquisite Image.”

42. Visually the lawn scene evokes the *rinpa* aesthetic, a refined neoclassicism that arose about a century after the events in *Ugetsu*. Particularly characteristic are the overall flattening and the way each element seems to float on a uniform ground, enclosed within its own contour. Mizoguchi’s *The Woman in the Rumor* (1954) uses a *rinpa* motif as the backdrop for a geisha performance, associating the technique with theatricality and a basic falsity. On Mizoguchi’s attention to period style see his interview by Takizawa Hajime, “Before Filming,” in *Mizoguchi the Master*, p. 13; Joan Mellen, “History through Cinema: Mizoguchi Kenji’s *The Life of O-Haru* (1952),” in *Japanese Cinema: Texts and Contexts*, ed. Alastair Phillips and Julian Stringer (New York, 2007), pp. 90–101.



FIGURE 9. *Ugetsu*—Nurse, Wakasa, Genjuro before folding screen.



FIGURE 10. *Ugetsu*—Lawn by Lake Biwa.

overwhelmed: “I never imagined such pleasures existed!” he cries while rolling on the grass, “This is exquisite! It’s paradise!” He speaks for a good many cinephiles as well. The shot, we are told, represents “the very essence of Mizoguchi’s lyricism,” and has come to symbolize the golden age of Japanese cinema.⁴³

What happens when a folding screen becomes a movie screen?⁴⁴ The short answer is that it ceases to be an element *within* a diegetic world, and instead becomes *the world itself*. This shift involves the articulation of space. The painted screen is emphatically three-dimensional; zigging and zagging across the background, it both occupies and delineates space within the room. But the lawn shot is different. Far from merely containing a stylized image, it presents a world wholly stylized, wholly given over to the spectator’s delectation. It does so by effecting a reciprocity between the literal flatness of the movie screen and the flatness of the dreamworld projected upon it. This reciprocity is what gives the shot its uncanny aspect of a world composed, but it is also, more prosaically, what distinguishes a movie screen from a folding one—hence what distinguishes the relationship that each can have with its beholders.⁴⁵

At issue, in short, are the resources of a medium. The lawn idyll delivers a visible world in which depiction and material support, narrative and historical reference, all coincide perfectly. Projection onscreen can make real trees, a real lake and real people into a spectacle of the most refined aesthetic and sensual pleasure. It can do so, these scenes suggest, exactly because the screen is flat, not folded, the basis of the spectacle and not a prop within it, as though *the world itself* were an objet d’art for the audience’s delight.

Flatness thus occupies a role diametrically opposed to the one it had in modernist painting. Flatness in modernism was, as T. J. Clark puts it, “construed as a barrier put up against the viewer’s normal wish to enter a picture and dream, to have it be a space apart from life in which the mind would be free to make its own connections.”⁴⁶ In *Ugetsu*, by contrast, flatness *removes* any such barrier precisely by giving us a total spectacle. This sequence narrates the total absorption of an artist into art, and the attendant transfigura-

43. McDonald, “*Ugetsu*. Why Is It a Masterpiece?” in *Ugetsu*, ed. McDonald, p. 14.

44. Note that Japanese, unlike English, uses different words for a folding screen and a movie screen: the former is *byōbu*, the latter *eisha maku* (projection curtain). Since Mizoguchi’s comparison is visual, not verbal, this distinction does not affect the argument, but I do not mean to suggest a pun.

45. For an insightful discussion of the scene’s flatness as a corollary to its suspension of time, see Alain Bergala, “De l’intervalle chez Mizoguchi,” *Cinémathèque* 14 (Autumn 1998): 38–39.

46. T. J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (Princeton, N.J., 1999), p. 13.

tion of, literally, everything. The resulting pictorialism transforms the movie theater into a dream palace.

The lawn idyll is a dazzling and much praised shot, but it is a lie. Everything depends upon this point—such bewitchment is *bad*. We are not to roll on the ground in a swoon, like Genjuro, while our family suffers unspeakable horrors. This point, it must be said, goes against the entirety of the secondary literature, which seems quite willing to fall under the spell and praise the *japoniste* beauty of the thing.⁴⁷ Yet Mizoguchi is brutal, cutting directly from the lawn to Miyagi's murder with all the subtlety of a sledgehammer. Aesthetic enchantment, a congeries of modernism and tradition that delivers a world perfected, is everything the film renounces.⁴⁸

The plot glosses the shot and helps us to see why this image is pernicious; in a way, that is all the plot is for. It is not just that Kutsuki Manor is false but that its falsehood manifests itself in the complete stylization of the world: a simultaneous characterization and pictorialization of Mizoguchian stagecraft. Which is precisely not to deny the appeal of the shot, any more than it is to deny the appeal of Wakasa herself, a character no less pitiable than any of the others. The remainder of the film explores this renunciation of beauty.

Ways of Seeing: Deliberation (Genjuro's Cure)

The opposite of absorption is distanced interpretation. Desire for knowledge is of a piece with all the other varieties, and the constitution of the movie itself as what Laura Mulvey calls a *topography of curiosity* emerges at exactly the moment that the princess disappears.⁴⁹ The Wakasa episode blends reality and illusion, yes, but in the end there is no ambiguity. When Genjuro come to his senses, the sword of Wakasa's father proves that the enchantment really did occur, just as the empty ruins show that it has come to an end. The question of reality and illusion has a conclusive answer: a spooky ship on Lake Biwa turns out to be mundane, the palace turns out to be su-

47. See McDonald, "Ugetsu: Why Is It a Masterpiece?" p. 14. Donald Richie praises the shot frequently; see, for example, Donald Richie, *A Hundred Years of Japanese Film: A Concise History, with a Selective Guide to DVDs and Videos* (New York, 2005), pp. 351–52. Wood's essay on *Ugetsu* once again stands out, highlighting the contrast between the lawn scene and Miyagi's death; see Wood, *Sexual Politics and Narrative Film: Hollywood and Beyond* (New York, 1998), p. 244. For a highly pertinent discussion of Mizoguchi's critique of traditional aesthetics, see FAA, pp. 184–90, using the example of *Miss Oyu*.

48. On the invention of tradition in Japanese painting and its complex relation to Modernism see Chelsea Foxwell, *Making Modern Japanese-Style Painting: Kano Hōgai and the Search for Images* (Chicago, 2015).

49. See Laura Mulvey, "Pandora's Box: Topographies of Curiosity," in *Fetishism and Curiosity* (Bloomington, Ind. 1996), pp. 53–64.

pernatural. Magic is an aberration of the senses, a temporary malfunction that need not generalize into global skepticism. Its successful resolution only reinforces the structure of knowledge in principle.⁵⁰

Dudley Andrew has shown that a “problematic of reading and interpretation” is a leading motif of Mizoguchi’s work; *Ugetsu* is no different (*FAA*, p. 174). To resolve illusion one must interpret signs, as the yin-yang master reads Genjuro’s face to see his enchantment, as the ruined house signifies war, as the sword is evidence of past events, as, supremely, the text on Genjuro’s skin shatters Wakasa’s spell (fig. 11).⁵¹ Even the charred beams of Kutsuki Manor, black against the sky, resemble the characters on Genjuro’s back (fig. 12). It is as though both body and world had become scripts to decipher. The analogue in the story of Tobei is a series of lies and hypocrisies: Tobei is a fraud, but so is the warrior ethos.⁵² It is bad enough that he did not really kill the enemy general; even worse that his lord does not care but gives him honor anyway. But if the system is corrupt, then Tobei is, in a way, an exemplar and not a phony. At issue here is less epistemology than morality, a question not so much of fact as of value. On the basis of a lie (a question of fact), Tobei advances, but the deeper lie is the system in which such a creature can flourish (a question of value). The film plays up these falsehoods and, in so doing, reaffirms the operative distinctions. Instead of reading, however, the solution to bogus value is recognition: seeing his wife in a prostitute, the fool comes to his senses (fig. 13). The correct application of criteria of identity solves the problem.

Ways of Seeing: Beyond Perspective (Genjuro’s Homecoming)

Yet *Ugetsu*’s final act dissolves the whole problematic. Genjuro’s return to his village (unlike, say, Dorothy’s return to Kansas) does not reveal the fact of the matter, or complete a correction of the senses. Instead, he finds only another ghost: home is a dream palace, too (figs. 14a–14d).⁵³ Godard was eloquent on this point:

Genjuro returns home. He does not know that his loving wife, [Miyagi], is dead. He enters, looks in all the rooms, the camera panning with him. He moves from one room to the next, still followed

50. J. L. Austin’s remarks on “dream-like” narratives seem perfectly applicable: see J. L. Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia* (New York, 1962), pp. 42, 48–49.

51. Written in the special, esoteric *siddham* script; see Steven Heine, *Shifting Shape, Shaping Text: Philosophy and Folklore in the Fox Koan* (Honolulu, 1999), p. 154.

52. Reportedly Mizoguchi initially wanted Tobei and Ohama to wind up corrupt and happy but was forced by the studio to include a more conventional ending.

53. See susiekeil, “*Ugetsu* Sequence Analysis Clip,” 5 Oct. 2010, www.youtube.com/watch?v=pG7POe2OGwo



FIGURE 11. *Ugetsu*—Legible body.



FIGURE 12. *Ugetsu*—Legible landscape.



FIGURE 13. *Ugetsu*—Tobei recognizes Ohama in the brothel.

by the camera. He goes out, the camera leaves him, returns to the room and frames [Miyagi], in flesh and blood, just at the moment when Genjuro comes in again and sees her, believing (as we do) that he didn't look properly and that his gentle wife really is alive.⁵⁴

Godard's insight—which is unprovable except by anecdote—is that the audience shares Genjuro's error. We have not seen Miyagi since the soldiers stabbed her (and we didn't even get a good view of that); Mizoguchi exploits this ignorance to pull off a coup de théâtre, her miraculous re-appearance in a simple movement of the camera. The "conjuring trick," however, cements the recursive relation between the film's narrative and its beholding: the audience shares the protagonist's error.

Only gradually does it become clear what it means to "look properly" at this film, as Mizoguchi uses the final minutes to lay out an alternative model of spectatorship. When Genjuro goes to sleep, Miyagi remains, in a pair of long, wordless sequence shots that truly are "the essence of Mizoguchi's lyricism." No less ghostly than Wakasa, she nonetheless inhabits her ghostliness differently. Instead of performing for an audience, Miyagi arranges everyday objects in a space that contrives to be flat and deep at the same time: full of depth cues (*repoussoirs*, overlappings, converging lines) but so dark as to re-

54. Godard, *Godard on Godard*, pp. 71–72. Godard bungles Miyagi's name in the original.



FIGURES 14a–14d. *Ugetsu*—Genjuro enters his house by the front door; walks past the camera and out the back (the camera pans left ninety degrees); circles around the outside of the house (the camera pans back to right as we glimpse him through the window); and re-enters the front door to find Miyagi.

semble a painting by Georges de La Tour. The objects she handles call to mind events on the other side of the lake—a robe, a pair of sandals—in which she herself took no part. She tends her family as they sleep; when last we glimpse her she is sitting in lamplight, absorbed in sewing (fig. 15).

There is no analogue, in this homecoming, either to the textualization of the world that concluded the Wakasa episode, or to the determination of identity that triggered Tobei's disillusion.⁵⁵ Miyagi disappears but the world looks just the same. Gone is the stylization of image into spectacle that characterized the dalliance on Wakasa's lawn, and the field of signs that was its undoing. Miyagi just vanishes, like so many of Mizoguchi's protagonists. First she is a silent presence, then a disembodied voice that gives way to the closing music. She stands to the action rather like a *benshi*, the commentator who would accompany Japanese films during the silent era.⁵⁶ In this

55. The son is also present, of course, but he is not a creation of the dreamworld in the way the kimonos and sword were figments of Kutsuki manor.

56. Miyagi is not exactly like a *benshi*, as she does not narrate the action but editorializes on it. Commentary could, however, be part of the *benshi*'s repertoire. On the *benshi* see Donald Kiriwara, "A Reconsideration of the Institution of the *Benshi*," *Film Reader* 6 (1985): 41–53; Burch, *To the Distant Observer*, pp. 76–84; and Kinoshita, "The *Benshi* Track:



FIGURE 15. *Ugetsu*—Ghost Miyagi sews.

movement from the phantasmatic to the “acousmatic,” she becomes the film’s own voice as much as, or more than, a character within it.⁵⁷ The woman’s voice, either aggressively silenced or sternly critiqued hitherto, becomes that of the film itself.

Ethics, Criteria and Skill: Criteria

Is the content of sense perception open to skepticism? What is the ontology of the cinematic image? On the basis of what criteria do we know our husbands, wives, lovers? How does classical Japanese cinema relate to its historical context? These are the sort of ponderous “philosophical” questions that Bazin found objectionable in *Rashomon*.⁵⁸ *Ugetsu* certainly poses them, but—and this is the point—it then proceeds to set them aside. The film is

Mizoguchi Kenji’s *The Downfall of Osen* and the Sound Transition,” *Cinema Journal* 50 (Spring 2011): 1–25. On Mizoguchi’s strained relation with *benshi* performers see Yoda, *Souvenirs de Kenji Mizoguchi*, p. 28. On his thematization of the *benshi*, see FAA, pp. 181–82.

57. See Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, trans. and ed. Claudia Gorbman (New York, 1994). See also Andrew, who writes beautifully of “the absolute separation of action and telling” in Mizoguchi (FAA, p. 181).

58. On the seemingly endless attraction of such questions see Malcolm Turvey, *Doubting Vision: Film and the Revelationist Tradition* (New York, 2008).

not, in the end, a parable of epistemology, any more than the lawn idyll is merely a confection for the eye. On the contrary, what Genjuro sees (what Mizoguchi shows) is that what he (and we) had taken for questions of knowledge are really something else entirely.

Rather than criteria of knowledge, what seem to matter here are criteria of a different sort: those that govern the application of concepts—specifically the concepts that subtend sociability, that is, getting along with others. Stanley Cavell draws the distinction nicely:

Criteria are “criteria for something’s being so”, not in the sense that they tell us of a thing’s existence, but of something like its identity, not of its *being* so, but of its being *so*. Criteria do not determine the certainty of statements, but the application of the concepts employed in statements.⁵⁹

Cavell’s own stylistic flourishes, notably his use of italics, bring out the way that syntactical parsing will not recognize the difference between these two notions of the criterion: “*being* so” and “being *so*” are lexically and grammatically identical but mean quite different things. To capture the difference requires immersion in a broader context.

Ugetsu is all about criteria in this latter sense, even if it proceeds by way of the former one: it narrates a displacement from one to the other.⁶⁰ Each of the film’s final recognition scenes dramatizes this displacement. Tobei recognizes Ohama in a brothel and, in so doing, ascertains a social fact: the woman he took for a whore was in fact somebody else. Such discriminations involve criteria of knowledge; here, as often, it is a matter of simple recognition.⁶¹ Genjuro, for his part, also ascertains a fact: what he took for a lover was really a shadow. In this case, however, the problem was not identity but existence. The question is not *who* but *what* Wakasa is, if she is anything at all: not “being *so*” but “*being so*.” Mizoguchi’s way of representing ghosts means that there are no visible markers to help us say, in advance, which sort of question is germane in any given shot, still less how to go about answering either one.

By the end of the film, Genjuro’s senses have been corrected, yet he sees Miyagi all the same; so do we. The concept of illusion seems inapt to this cir-

59. Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (New York, 1979), p. 45.

60. This displacement tracks some arguments on realism in Morgan, “Rethinking Bazin: Ontology and Realist Aesthetics,” *Critical Inquiry* 32 (Spring 2006): 443–81.

61. On this sort of application of criteria see Austin, *Philosophical Papers*, ed. J. O. Urmson and G. J. Warnock (New York, 1979), pp. 79–86, and Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, pp. 49–64.

cumstance. Is the comfort Miyagi provides false, is her love self-serving like that of Wakasa? Does Genjuro, for his part, fall into error when he speaks to her, or does he do exactly the right thing at every turn: hug his son, express joy at the sight of his wife, fall asleep at home? Miyagi does not disappear when he closes his eyes, only when the film cuts.⁶² If *Ugetsu* consistently presents images as illusory, still there is nothing onscreen that is not image in this sense. More attentive reading, a correction of the senses, will not help; there is nothing to wake up *to*.

In other words, the trouble is not with pictures but with a certain relation to them: their construal variously as spectacle or script. Both ways of seeing are equally pernicious; part of the film's work is to identify the two in order to clarify our relationship to them. This hankering to get out of aesthetic distance (hence aesthetic proximity) and into knowledge recapitulates the hankering, on the part of so many of Mizoguchi's characters, to get out of the condition of being a protagonist, to conquer "illusory phenomena of perspectives." The one is the figure of the other. All these relationships stand in need of reorientation, even conversion. Epistemology and ontology turn out to matter less than comportment: a renunciation of interpretation and, with it, a metaphysical concept of illusion. If, as Astruc put it, "What is seen is less important than a certain way of needing to see and to show," then *Ugetsu* calls for a new way of seeing, exemplifies a new way of showing.

Ethics, Criteria, and Skill: A *Phronesis* of the Visible

What would a better relation to images be? If the lawn idyll provides a negative model of absorption as the total aestheticization of the world, exemplified in its pictorialism and its classicism, then the contrasting positive model is work (fig. 16). "Work, work, work," as Mizoguchi once said, "A man who can't work is a man who can't live well" ("ATM," p. 11). *Ugetsu* clarifies this imperative. At issue, by the film's end, is no longer profit or knowledge but absorption in a task: an intense concentration that is at once skillful and, importantly, unreflective. Genjuro's return to pottery is exemplary in this regard: an absorption in the task without apparent regard for any particular ambition beyond an ongoing perfection of the craft. To theoretical reflection on epistemology and ethical choice—Bazin's "tedious philosophical explanation"—Mizoguchi opposes the exercise of skill, specifically, the manufacture and appreciation of pottery. Exemplifi-

62. For a highly relevant discussion of the ontological status of ghosts in modern Japan, showing that they are not to be understood as specters or illusions, see Richard Lloyd Parry, "Ghosts of the Tsunami," *London Review of Books*, 6 Feb. 2014, www.lrb.co.uk/v36/n03/richard-lloydparry/ghosts-of-the-tsunami



FIGURE 16. *Ugetsu*—Absorption in work.

cations of skill include working at a wheel, discerning whether pots are fired or not, and appropriate admiration of fineware. The film contains a number of scenes of such skillful seeing, as when the family returns to their village and discovers that their wares have been fired successfully. Miyagi has a trained eye; she opens the kiln, removes a pot and immediately exclaims, “They’re done!” No particular epistemological problems arise in these cases, there is never any doubt or uncertainty as to whether the pots really are well-fired, never any puzzle to solve or error to correct. Deliberation is unnecessary; there is a certain obviousness to things.

At issue here is a kind of know-how that Aristotle called *phronesis*, or practical wisdom.⁶³ *Phronesis* is “knowledge of the ultimate particular thing,” that is, the concrete situation in which one finds oneself at a given moment; it “cannot be attained by systematic knowledge but only by perception.”⁶⁴ As

63. It should be noted, however, that Aristotle sets artistic excellence, as of a sculptor, under the category of *sophia* and manual skill under *poiesis*; see Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1141a1–2. Since I am not suggesting that Mizoguchi was himself an Aristotelian, this divergence does not affect the argument unduly. A likely discursive antecedent to Mizoguchi’s treatment of illusion and handicraft is the Daoist tradition of Zhuangzi; see A. C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China* (Chicago, 1989), pp. 185–95. But, as with Aristotle, the establishment of a genetic relation of Mizoguchi to philosophy is not my brief.

64. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1142a25–27.

McDowell puts it, *phronesis* involves “a concretely situation-specific discernment.”⁶⁵ That it is situation-specific means that *phronesis* cannot “be captured in general prescriptions for conduct, determinately expressible independently of the concrete situations in which the *phronimos* [skillful person] is called on to act” (“WM,” p. 340). In deciding how to act in a given situation, one does not subsume the case under situation-independent rules to reach a determination; one simply proceeds apace. It is for just this reason that *phronesis* is a specifically *perceptual* capacity (McDowell’s “discernment”). Practical wisdom is the capacity to see “what matters about the situation,” to discern what if anything about it might call for action.⁶⁶

It does not follow that *phronesis* is innocent of concepts or rationality; on the contrary, as McDowell insists, “the domain of conceptual articulation includes thoughts that are not intelligible in abstraction from particular situations” (“WM,” p. 342). Concepts and rationality are perfectly apt to *phronesis*; it is just that “the practical rationality of the *phronimos* is displayed in what he *does* even if he does not decide to do that as a result of reasoning” (“WM,” p. 341; my emphasis). There is no better way to get a handle on this rationality than by observing the action. For the “rationality is *in* action, and just as situation-dependent as action is—not *behind* action, in the guise of a ‘maxim’” (“WM,” p. 351 n. 13).

Recent discussion of *phronesis* has been largely in the domain of moral philosophy, yet its pertinence to aesthetics is obvious as well. Aesthetic concepts are perhaps the clearest examples of ones whose application is not determined by necessary and sufficient conditions but, in the words of Frank Sibley, vindicated in “perceptual proof.”⁶⁷ Indeed, the judgment of beauty is for McDowell a prime example of the exercise of *phronesis* (see “WM,” p. 342). Both uses of the term are relevant to the present case.

The suggestion that practical wisdom stands at the intersection of morality and aesthetics brings us back to the film image itself. By giving such prominence to discernment, by comparing the world onscreen to a work of art, *Ugetsu* puts this relation at issue. That is one point of the lawn idyll: *Ugetsu* is a crafted thing no less than the pottery it depicts. Absorption in a movie can be distinct both from weighty philosophizing (skepticism about sense perception, say) and from sheer delight (“This is exquisite! It’s paradise!”). As if to emphasize that the issues are as much moral as aesthetic—or, better, the imbrication of the categories—the film also shows the failure of respon-

65. John McDowell, “What Myth?” *Inquiry* 50 (Aug. 2007): 340; hereafter abbreviated “WM.”

66. McDowell, *Mind, Value, and Reality* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1998), p. 29.

67. See Frank Sibley, *Approach to Aesthetics: Collected Papers on Philosophical Aesthetics*, ed. John Benson, Betty Redfern, and Jeremy Roxbee Cox (New York, 2001), pp. 1–51.



FIGURE 17. *Ugetsu*—Rapists study Ohama.

sive seeing; at the end of Ohama's rape scene, one of her attackers squats down and watches her weep, at once amused and unmoved (fig. 17). Such disinterest is sociopathic, a counterpart to Genjuro rolling on the grass.⁶⁸ The rapist epitomizes, in fact, a dispassion that Mizoguchi's critics detect in those films that chart the systematic degradation of women, like *The Life of Oharu* or *Women of the Night*.⁶⁹ He rejects it.

In place of both disinterest and ecstasy, Mizoguchi proposes an unreflective (but nonetheless concept-laden) involvement, a *phronesis* of the visible. *Ugetsu* narrates a modulation from aesthetic bliss to absorption in craft—a displacement of criteria in perception. A work of art demands sustained, heightened involvement, like that of a potter at the wheel or of Miyagi when she sews or comments with affection upon what transpires onscreen.

68. Gazing upon a recumbent figure is in fact a leading motif in the film. One might contrast the rapist's view with the two very different ways in which Lady Wakasa and Miyagi watch Genjuro as he sleeps: the one hungrily, the other in an attitude of care. Both are modes of interest, and one concern of *Ugetsu* is to assay the differences between them.

69. On Mizoguchi's cruelty, see Andrew, "Ways of Seeing Japanese Prints and Films: Mizoguchi's *Utamaro*," in *Mizoguchi the Master*, p. 19; *Bellezza e crudeltà: il cinema di Kenji Mizoguchi*, ed. Guy Borlée (Bologna, 2000); Daney, *Postcards from the Cinema*, pp. 26–27, 53, 70; Jean-Christophe Ferrari, *Les Amants crucifiés* (Chatou, 2005), pp. 41–48; and Kinoshita, "Mise-en-scène of Desire," pp. 350–70. Mizoguchi sidesteps the charge in a 1952 interview; see "ATM," p. 11.

(Rivette seems to have had something of the sort in mind when he praised Howard Hawks for exhibiting “an artisanal intelligence, applied directly to the empirical world, that seeks to be effectual by taking the precise view of a craft,” and it is not too much of a stretch to see something similar in his praise of Mizoguchi.)⁷⁰ *Ugetsu* simultaneously narrates and solicits a conversion to this way of seeing. Everything onscreen seems at least potentially to matter, in terms both of the depicted narrative (small details have dramatic significance) and of our response to it. Cinema becomes, therefore, an exercise in seeing “what matters about the situation” in the absence of independent, standing criteria. It is a way to probe or assay what Cavell calls “mutual attunement” in criteria, mutual agreement in what goes unreflectively as a “natural reaction” (which, as such, may exemplify an ideology).⁷¹ At stake is nothing less than the everyday world of sociability, a *modus vivendi* in relation to family and political economy alike.⁷² The test of this attunement is, precisely, responsiveness to the onscreen tragedies *in the absence of the usual comforts of melodrama*, notably relatable characters, complex motivations, and so on. Thus Mizoguchi’s lightness is of a piece with his overall project.

Ethics, Criteria, and Skill: Conversions of Seeing

The idea of ethics here chimes with the work of philosophers such as Murdoch, Cora Diamond, and Laugier.⁷³ All share a concern to reorient moral

70. Rivette, “Génie de Howard Hawks,” *Cahiers du Cinéma* 23 (May 1953): 21.

71. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, p. 115. Compare Cavell identifying mutual attunement in criteria with Wittgenstein’s “form of life”; (Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker, and Joachim Schulte, ed. Hacker and Schulte [Malden, Mass., 2009], §1.241, p. 94; hereafter abbreviated *PI*).

72. Terry Pinkard gives a sense of what a Hegelian version of this account might look like:

The ideal, as it were, built into self-conscious life is the ideal of a unity, or even a harmony, between self-consciousness and absorption, that of being fully engaged in an activity while at the same time being aware of doing it right, of fully attending to the normative proprieties of the activity. (Examples are easy to line up: the dancer who feels happiest in the public performance of the dance; the scientist fully focused on her work; the reader in rapt absorption with the text; the artisan fully absorbed in his craft.) What a conception of “true” spirit would show us therefore would be the conditions under which the union of self-consciousness with such absorption could be achieved not in isolated individual cases but as a condition of the form of life itself. [Terry Pinkard, *Hegel’s Naturalism: Mind, Nature, and the Final Ends of Life* (New York, 2012), p. 121]

Hegel’s point is that such harmony is essentially past, premodern; *Ugetsu*, likewise, is a period drama, but pointedly asserts its pertinence to the contemporary.

73. See, for example, Iris Murdoch, “Vision and Choice in Morality,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes* 30 (1956): pp. 32–58; Cora Diamond, “We are Perpetually Moralists”: Iris Murdoch, Fact, and Value,” in *Iris Murdoch and the Search for Human Goodness*, ed. Maria Antonaccio and Walter Schweiker (Chicago, 1996), pp. 79–109 and

philosophy away from general principles and their deployment in judgments and toward everyday comportment and ordinary language. Murdoch, for instance, based her own conception of the moral life on what she called “a total vision”:

When we apprehend and assess other people we do not consider only their solutions to specifiable practical problems, we consider something more elusive which may be called their total vision of life, as shown in their mode of speech or silence, their choice of words, their assessments of others, their conception of their own lives, what they think attractive or praise-worthy, what they think funny: in short, the *configurations of their thought* which show continually in their reactions and conversation.⁷⁴

Substantive moral disagreement, then, is not just a matter of reaching different conclusions in light of agreed facts, but one of “a total difference of *Ge-stalt*.”⁷⁵ Only this capacious view, Murdoch argued, could properly account for the constitutive role of moral criteria in a world of meanings.

Bordwell’s notion of “microactions”—those tiny gestures that “add nuance and expressive depth to the drama”—acquires new significance in light of this emphasis on criteria and moral responsiveness. The importance of microactions, however, is not primarily as a contribution to dramatic psychology; that is not Mizoguchi’s main concern. Rather, they solicit a particularly focused viewing, a close attention. In so doing, they foreground a relation to criteria that lack clear, situation-independent rules of application. Wittgenstein, for instance, was eloquent on the way that “subtleties of glance, of gesture, of tone” function as evidence in the ascription of psychological states (*PI*, §2.360, p. 240). He called such evidence “imponderable” (*unwägbarer*): the gesture itself is the only evidence for the ascription, and the criteria for what confers its evidentiary status are permanently opaque, yet it can count as evidence all the same. “I may recognize a genuine loving look, distinguish it from a pretended one (and here there can, of course, be a ‘ponderable’ confirmation of my judgement). But I may be quite incapable of describing the difference. And this not because the languages I know have no words for it” (*PI*, §2.360, p. 240). The very insightfulness of Bordwell’s read-

“Murdoch the Explorer,” *Philosophical Topics* 38 (Spring 2010): 51–85; and Sandra Laugier, *Wittgenstein: Le mythe de l’inexpressivité* (Paris, 2010), pp. 193–226, “The Will to See: Ethics and Moral Perception of Sense,” trans. Jonathan Chaliier, *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 34, no. 2 (2013): 263–81, and “The Ethics of Care as a Politics of the Ordinary,” *New Literary History* 46 (Spring 2015): 217–40. See also Hilary Putnam, *Ethics without Ontology* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004).

74. Murdoch, “Vision and Choice in Morality,” p. 39; my emphasis.

75. *Ibid.*, pp. 40–41.

ings exemplify this point: microactions do deliver a kind of knowledge, albeit not certainty (Wittgenstein called it *Menschenkenntnis*) (see *PI*, §2.355, p. 239).⁷⁶ Yet they require something other than decipherment. Wittgenstein compared the handling of such evidence to the connoisseurship of works of art, exactly the sort of discriminating beholding that figures in *Ugetsu* as the assessment of pottery.⁷⁷ At issue is not the propositional content these microactions betoken so much as the mode of attention they solicit: a *phronesis* of beholding, “a certain way of needing to see and to show.” Wittgenstein’s analogy, in the epigraph to this article, to the discrimination of patterns on an unspooling ribbon is nicely apt to the case of Mizoguchi and his strips of celluloid: “But why in the case of the patterns does one make this distinction that is so difficult to grasp? Because it is of importance in our life.”

What Laugier calls “ethics as attention to particulars” involves a discriminating vision of these “differences of *Gestalt*.”⁷⁸ Such vision is itself the very stuff of an ethical comportment:

Our capacity for attention is the result of developing a perceptive capacity, the ability to see a detached detail or gesture against its background. This particularism of attention to detail is the source of the shift of perspective in moral philosophy: from the examination of general concepts and norms of moral choice to the examination of particular visions, of individual “configurations” of thought.⁷⁹

For Laugier, this attention issues in an emancipatory, feminist politics, precisely because it continually tests our agreement in criteria, and thereby holds open the possibility that those criteria could always be otherwise.

Ugetsu solicits just this form of attention; more strongly, it aims to convert us to it, in its circular movement from artisanal intelligence to aesthetic bliss and back again. On the way it undoes much that, as Wittgenstein might put it, seems “great and important,” revealing such concepts as *Luftgebäude*, “castles of air,” or, more freely, dream-palaces (*PI*, §1.118, p. 54, trans. mod.). *Ugetsu* undoes psychological depth, dissolving character into the onscreen world; it undoes aesthetic bliss and disinterest; and it undoes the philosophical dilem-

76. The distinction between knowledge and *Menschenkenntnis* is an antecedent to Cavell’s distinction between knowing and acknowledging; see Cavell, “Knowing and Acknowledging,” in *Must We Mean What We Say? A Book of Essays* (New York, 2002), pp. 238–66.

77. See Wittgenstein, *Preliminary Studies for Part II of “Philosophical Investigations,”* vol. 1 of *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, §§925, 927, pp. 119, 120.

78. Laugier, *Wittgenstein*, pp. 221–23.

79. Laugier, “The Ethics of Care as a Politics of the Ordinary,” p. 222.

mas that, as Bazin put it, “weighed down” films like *Rashomon*. Instead it effects an open modulation, Rivette’s “harmony without end” between characters and context—which, by a happy resonance of metaphors, amounts to a sounding of what Cavell called mutual attunement in criteria. Exactly because Mizoguchi’s style renders characters kaleidoscopically lightweight—dispersing them across the screen and, in so doing, making literally *everything* a source of visual interest—it puts the mode or scale of this attunement at issue. *Ugetsu* suggests that we do not know, in advance, what might fall under moral concepts, or even when they are applicable. We do not know what the object of a moral-philosophical reflection might be, what is or is not an apt object of aesthetic attention, what a character or an action might be in the world of a movie. We do not know because the criteria by which we might come to a decision are not given in advance, an openness that the aesthetic and the ethical turn out to share.

This approach is not immune to criticism. That one should found sociability on that which “goes without saying” is an almost Heideggerean thought, which should suffice to bring out its danger. It seems to render reflective disputation incompatible with politics as such. Rivette himself was alive to this threat, which he identified with an “attitude of ‘pure viewing’” in early *Cahiers* criticism; it led one, he wrote shortly before leaving the journal, “to submit to the present, to accept it as such, to contemplate it, so to speak—but, I fear, rather as cows contemplate a passing train, fascinated by the movement or the color yet without any possibility of understanding what makes these fascinating objects move, and sends them more to the right than to the left.”⁸⁰

Rivette’s polemic is where we enter the “what if?” world, the parahistory of French theory mentioned at the beginning of this essay. It is where the analogy of Mizoguchi and music can seem open to a charge of formalism, where the exercise of the self can seem like moral dandyism. *Ugetsu*, however, is not merely quietistic. On the contrary, it exemplifies the way in which this moral phenomenology might figure in a practical syllogism, that is, issue in action—for the film itself is an action of sorts, “an *act* that expects to influence a *being*.” Mizoguchi’s goal is not just to narrate a transformation in perception but also to effect one.

This ambition was not uncommon amongst modernist filmmakers. In an *éloge* of Davidson, however, it is impossible not to observe that Mizoguchi’s version is close to what Foucault, in his writings on the Stoics, called “a conversion of the gaze,” a pivot away from knowledge and toward “an athletic kind of concentration.”

80. Rivette, “Revoir Verdoux,” *Cahiers du Cinéma* 146 (August, 1963), p. 42.

I strongly emphasize this, that this demand for a reversal of the gaze . . . does not lead to the constitution of oneself as an object of analysis, decipherment, and reflection. It involves, rather, calling for a teleological concentration. It involves the subject looking closely at his own aim. . . . We must be aware, permanently aware as it were, of our effort. . . . What separates us from the aim, the distance between oneself and the aim, should be the object, once again, not of a deciphering knowledge (*savoir*), but of an awareness, vigilance, and attention.⁸¹

This conversion is by no means a retreat from the political but, as Davidson himself has emphasized, the opening up of “another space of struggle, the space of an ethical practice.”⁸² Mizoguchi likewise opens up the possibility of a politics of the everyday as an artisanal labor that is also a self-forming activity: in a word, an *ascesis*.

This politics is not, in itself, adequate to the present crisis, right now in 2018. But it is integral to any response—for, as Davidson insists, “both a strategic political struggle and an inventive ethical work are necessary in order to transform our relationship with others and with ourselves.”⁸³ A “total difference of *Gestalt*” seems an apt way to describe America’s current political division, and a vigilant attention to the distance between oneself and one’s aim is a necessary condition of the requisite transformation.

81. Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981–1982*, trans. Graham Burchell, ed. Frédéric Gros (New York, 2005), pp. 217, 222. In the present context it is relevant that Foucault himself goes on to adduce the unfortunate example of Japanese (more precisely, Zen) archery, which he seems to have learned about through Eugen Herrigel’s *Zen in the Art of Archery*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (New York, 1953); see Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, pp. 222, 227 n. 58. Foucault was presumably unaware that Herrigel was a Nazi (although it was hardly a secret; Gershom Scholem noted the point as early as 1961) but in any case militaristic nonsense is exactly what Mizoguchi wants to avoid. On Herrigel, see Shoji Yamada, *Shots in the Dark: Japan, Zen, and the West*, trans. Earl Hartman (Chicago, 2009), and Brian Victoria, “A Zen Nazi in Wartime Japan: Count Dürckheim and His Sources—D. T. Suzuki, Yasutani Haku’un and Eugen Herrigel,” *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 12 (Jan. 2014): 1–52.

82. Arnold I. Davidson, “From Subjection to Subjectivation: Michel Foucault and the History of Sexuality,” in *Foucault and the Making of Subjects*, ed. Laura Cremonesi et al. (New York, 2016), p. 59.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 59.