HUMANIZING JAPAN AFTER WORLD WAR II: MOTIFS OF SENTIMENT AND SENSIBILITY AS EXPRESSED BY THE MOTHER FIGURE IN KINOSHITA KEISUKE’S HAHAMONO FILMS

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By

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REFLECTIONS ON A HUMANIZED JAPAN:
MOTIFS OF SENTIMENT AND SENSIBILITY
AS EXPRESSED BY THE MOTHER FIGURE IN HAHAMONO FILMS

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ABSTRACT

Hahamono cinema, a sub-genre of Japanese melodrama, focuses on the characterization of maternal figures. The peak in hahamono film production was in the 1940s-50s. This era coincides with the period of war and trauma of defeat. This thesis analyzes how depictions of mother figures’ suffering in hahamono reflect Japan’s war trauma. Through a close reading of director Kinoshita Keisuke’s hahamono films made between 1944-54, this thesis illustrates that the mother figures’ suffering in relation to their national duties and families humanizes Japan, depicting it as a war victim rather than a perpetrator. The rupture between the state and the individual makes it possible for the common people presented in these films to appear as mere victims of governmental policies. In films set in wartime, including Rikugun (1944) that was made during wartime, the maternal figure is forced to passively accept her role as a patriotic mother to a national family; however, in her heart she wishes nothing more than to perform the role of a mother to an individual family. During the postwar era, films such as A Japanese Tragedy (1953) portray a different maternal figure—in this case, one forced to engage in illegal activity to support her children. This mother’s painful choices ultimately come to represent not only the struggles of all mother figures in Japan, but also the position of the Japanese masses—and Japan itself—as war victims.
The research and writing of this thesis are dedicated to the following people:

To Director Kinoshita Keisuke,
whose films never stop to amaze me.

To my parents,
who always support me and teach me to believe in myself when I am in doubt.

To Professor Kimberly Icreverzi,
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Chapter I Introduction: Women, Trauma and Defeat in post-WWII

The first time I encountered Japanese cinema was in a film course I took in my junior year of undergraduate study. In the final project for that class, I analyzed Clint Eastwood’s *Letters from Iwo Jima*. My intention was to ask in what sense is it a Japanese movie. Despite the fact that this film was directed by an American director and distributed by an American company, the audience able to identify “something Japanese” in the film—and to feel sympathy for the suffering of Japanese soldiers. In this context, the reception of this movie is interesting: in the United States, the film won “Best Foreign Language Film” at the 64th Golden Globe Awards. In Japan, it was selected for the outstanding “Foreign Language Film” at the Japan Academy Prize competition (“Letters from Iwo Jima”).¹ If national cinema is defined simply in terms of the country of production, then the reception of *Letters from Iwo Jima* indicates that something more culturally Japanese than the film’s American origin gets portrayed and communicated to the audience.

For non-Japanese people, mass media such as film and TV have played a crucial role in understanding Japanese culture. Looking back in history, one finds that the sense of Japanese-ness as people sense today is closely associated with the period of Japanese history since 1945, when Japan was reconstructing its national identity and culture after being defeated in WWII. Post-WWII movie productions, such as *Gojira (Godzilla 1954)*, deal with the controversial issue of Japan’s war responsibility, and particularly with how Japan dealt with war trauma and memory in this sensitive historical period.²

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¹ This movie is listed under the Japanese movie collection at Lauinger library.
*Gojira (1954)* is not the only film made in post-WWII era that deals with Japan’s war trauma. Film scholar Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano suggests that there is a negative correlation between the popularity of *hahamono* genre and the development of economy and political situation in 1940s-50s Japan.³ *Hahamono* films reached their peak in both production and reception in the 1940s-50s, which coincides with the period when Japan recovered from the defeat of WWII. Since the mid-1950s, the *hahamono* genre gradually lost its popularity, which corresponded to “the ascendant economy at the end of the postwar era”.⁴ In other words, the suffering mother tropes appeared on the screen more often when Japan tried to recover from the defeat of the WWII, when its economy was in a downturn, and the country’s national identity was in crisis. Thus, the timing of *hahamono*’s popularity draws our attention to the relationship between the portrayal of maternal figures and Japan’s recovery of war trauma. Before elaborating on this relationship, this paper contextualizes the definition of melodrama and the historical background of war trauma.

Such an approach also has a gendered component, in that on the movie screen, there is a dichotomy of gender: male and female. Throughout Japanese history, moreover, the dominant gender in Japanese society is always male. However, in the context of the defeat in WWII, the destruction of male pride suggests that there is a need for the female to step in to reconstruct such male pride. With the goal of better understanding Japanese culture through Japan’s dealing with its war defeat, this thesis accordingly focuses on a close study of female roles and characters.

⁴ Ibid., 22.
Chapter II Literature Review

Defining Melodrama and *Hahamono*

The word “melodrama” originates from the Greek word *melos*, which refers to “a stage play accompanied by music.”5 While music gets separated from melodrama over time, the meaning of this term highlights the high level of intensity on emotions and sensations.6 Melodrama film has been viewed as women’s films since it focuses on characterizations on the exaggeration of characters and events to appeal to the audience’s emotion. This makes scholars criticize it as an equivalence of low culture.7

However, the melodrama cinema that this paper analyzes aligns more with the definition offered by film scholar Ben Singer, who conceptualizes melodrama as a film genre that is “close to the heart and hearth and emphasize a register of heightened emotionalism and sentimentality.”8 Film scholar Yoshimoto Mitsuhiro succinctly points out that melodrama’s exaggeration of emotions is merely a disguising mode of narrative that hides the true emotions the director hopes to deliver in the film. It asks the audience to focus on the emotions delivered in the movie. Yoshimoto cites Peter Brook, who suggests that the meaning of melodrama is “hidden behind the mute surface of things.”9 This indicates that the part that is “unspeakable,” which is the emotions contained within the movie, is “the only genuine discourse” that helps the audience to understand the meaning of a melodrama best.10 Moreover, while western melodrama

6 Ibid., 1.
7 Ibid., 1.
8 Wada-Marciano, 21.
10 Ibid., 12.
films center around “the individual in the context of the family,” the Asian melodrama films focus on “family as a unit.”¹¹ This thesis will focus on the latter since it deals with the Japanese melodrama.

The Hahamono that this thesis discusses is a subgenre of Japanese melodrama cinema, which focuses on the characterization of maternal figures. Hahamono films emphasize the depiction of the sacrifice and pain endured by the mother, for the sake of her husband and children.¹² A hahamono film usually projects the audience to the position of the maternal figure and causes the audience to sympathize with her suffering through factors such as emotional plots or characters.¹³ The audience resonates and identifies with her more through her helplessness.¹⁴

War Trauma and Victim Consciousness

Japan’s surrender was a humiliating experience and laid the foundation for Japan’s traumatized war memory in the postwar period. To recover from the defeat, Japan has depicted itself as a war victim instead of a perpetrator. In Victim as Hero, historian James Orr cites Japanese historian Imahori Seiji, who stated in 1985 that “in Japan, everyone from successive prime ministers to the Communist Party has repeatedly declared [us] ‘the only nation ever to have been atom-bombed.’”¹⁵ This self-identification puts Japan in a vulnerable position that merely suffers from the war and implicitly blames

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¹¹ Dissanayake, 4.
¹⁴ Richie, 318.
the United States for dropping atomic bombs on Japan. What Japanese people seem to forget, as pointed out by Imahori, is the perpetrator role it plays in issues such as “Japan’s war of aggression” in China and its Attack on Pearl Harbor.16

In *The Long Defeat: Cultural Trauma, Memory, and Identity in Japan*, sociologist Akiko Hashimoto cites Maurice Halbwachs, stating that “collective memory is always selective.”17 Hashimoto further demonstrates that memories are “immutable” to the extent that they are “subjectively constructed to fit the present.”18 In Japan’s case, the shameful experiences transformed into a collective memory that formed the so-called cultural trauma in Japan. This selective memory, according to Orr, switches Japan from the side of the aggressor to the aggressed, which puts “innocent Japanese people on the high ground of victimhood.”19 In contrast, abstract ideas such as “the military,” “the militant state,” and “the [wartime militaristic] system,” are blamed for initiating WWII.20

The term “victim consciousness” is another way of describing Japan’s selective memory of its war defeat. Yoshimoto defines it as “we (i.e., Japanese) are merely powerless, innocent people so that whatever problem we are faced with is not the result of our action but that of the overwhelming social evil and constraint of which we are only victims.”21 Moreover, Yoshimoto classifies victim consciousness into “heteropathic/centripetal” and “idiopathic/centrifugal.”22 “Heteropathic/centripetal,” or “introverted narcissism” refers to an internal self-identified victimhood, as when Japanese people

16 Orr, 2.
18 Ibid., 4.
19 Orr, 3.
20 Ibid., 3.
21 Yoshimoto, 40.
22 Ibid., 40.
view themselves as war victims collectively.\textsuperscript{23} “Idiopathic/centrifugal,” or “extroversive narcissism,” is an identification from self to others, as when Japan identifies itself as a victim of the West.\textsuperscript{24} To Yoshimoto, these two types work together to form the idea of victim consciousness.\textsuperscript{25}

Orr’s study introduces the historical background of the formation of victim consciousness. He cites heavily the social critic and political activist Oda Makoto, the first peace activist of his generation to “publicize his discovery on victim consciousness”.\textsuperscript{26} Oda’s definition of victim consciousness is similar to that of Yoshimoto. In addition, Oda further points out that the idea of victim consciousness has been exploited by both the masses and the Japanese government. The common Japanese people separate their actions from the state’s actions and blame all the war crimes on the side of the government.\textsuperscript{27} In return, the state “adopted our [the common Japanese people’s victim consciousness] as its own.”\textsuperscript{28} The result of this cynical progress, according to Oda, is the general masses identify together with the nation-state as victims, to the extent that the victim consciousness has become “one element or aspect” of depicting Japan as a war victim instead of a perpetrator.\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 40.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 40.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 40-41.
\textsuperscript{26} Orr, 6.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 4.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 4.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 4.
The U.S. Occupation and The Formation of War Trauma

The formation of war trauma originated from the U.S. Occupation Period (1945-1952) when movies became a crucial media form to smooth both the ruling of the Allied Powers (the United States, the USSR, China, and Australia on behalf of Britain). The signing of the Potsdam Declaration (the terms of Japan’s surrender) signified the end of WWII and the beginning of the Allied Occupation. Soon the United States took control of the situation in the Allied Forces; therefore the Allied Occupation was also termed as the U.S. Occupation. The primary goal of the Occupation was to prevent Japan from initiating any war by introducing American values and reconstructing Japan’s socio-political system. In the 1947 Constitution drafted under orders from General MacArthur, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (hereafter SCAP), democratic rights such as “universal suffrage,” “freedom of assembly and speech,” “agrarian reform,” and “unionized labor” got introduced to the Japanese general public.

With the rise of the Cold War, the United States’ top priority was to exploit and bolster the democratic ideological frontier of Japan against neighboring communist powers such as China, the Soviet Union, and North Korea. Thus, the United States government was lenient in forgiving Japan for its war crimes, both during the 1946 Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal and the establishment of the San Francisco Treaty in 1951. To make the U.S. Occupation of Japan as seamless as possible, General MacArthur and

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31 Ibid., 3.
32 Ibid., 3-4.
33 Ibid., 3.
the U.S. government protected Emperor Hirohito by depicting him as a victim who suffered from the deception of Japanese military leaders during the war; in the mind of the public, the Emperor “emerged… as the peacemaker who saved Japan from annihilation.”

To smooth the execution of Occupation policy, the U.S. Occupation Officials decided to make use of mass media, especially films, to “re-educate” Japanese general public after they learned how Japanese prewar and wartime propaganda films impacted people’s minds. Soon after the Occupation started, the Civil Information and Education Section (CIE) of the Occupation government commanded the Japanese film industry not to make any films that went against the goals of the Occupation policies. A couple of months later, CIE issued contents that were not to appear in Japanese movies and “banned 236 Japanese films made in 1931 and 1945” since they were “ultra-nationalistic,” “militaristic,” or “propagating feudalism.”

Yoshimoto points out that in this time of turbulence and frustration, cinema offered “one of the most effective means” for the Japanese people to “accept the collapse of what they had believed to be the order of the world (the Japanese wartime policy).” The type of movie Yoshimoto refers to is “a sentimental melodrama cinema” that reflects “the ideologeme of victim consciousness and its cinematic actualization”. The Occupation officials enforced film policies that aimed to re-educate the Japanese general public with American’s “new democratic values.”

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36 Ibid., 7.
37 Hirano, 4-5.
38 Ibid., 5-6.
39 Ibid., 6.
40 Yoshimoto, 4.
41 Hirano, 4.
42 Ibid., 4-5.
theater, and print media, all became “important vehicles” to ensure the smooth progression of the Occupation policy. Under the policy enforced by the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP), films on melodrama and women became “a safer way to approach the present,” while films about males ran the risks of “representing feudal or militaristic attitude, of nationalism or a patriotic representation of history.”

Hahamono’s Reflection of Japan’s War Trauma

Several critics have discussed the hahamono (mother’s film) genre, including Jennifer Coates, Bianca Briciu, Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano, and Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto. While scholars generally reached an agreement on hahamono’s reflection of Japan’s collective war trauma, each elaborates differently on how this effect has been achieved. In addressing the relationship between the maternal figures and Japan’s recovery from its war trauma, film scholar Jennifer Coates states that the mother figures are a symbol of “trauma itself,” so the depiction of these figures in the hahamono film reflects Japan’s war trauma. Similarly, Bianca Briciu also views the mother figures as a representation of “suffering and collective trauma”; she points out that although each characterization of the maternal figure is intrinsically distinct from one another, the “national or collective loss” share the same essence. While mother figure in the film Twenty-Four Eyes (1954) symbolizes “collective victimization,” the depiction of the maternal figure in A Japanese Tragedy (1953) exemplifies “individualized victimization.” Second, although the

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43 Ibid., 5.
44 Ibid., 13.
45 Coates, 22, 181.
47 Ibid., 19.
depictions of traumatic experience are intrinsically distinct from one another in each of the *hahamono* films, the “national or collective loss” that gets represented in each movie is similar.\(^\text{48}\)

Yoshimoto’s study addresses the problem of victimhood through an application of methods in psychoanalysis, cultural anthropology and historiography. Without directly analyzing *hahamono* films, Yoshimoto illustrates Japanese melodrama’s reflections of Japanese modernity and modernization through the formation of victimhood consciousness in the postwar era. For Yoshimoto, the postwar melodrama serves to “convert the Japanese from victimizers to victims” in building on August 1945 as “a decisive point of rupture” in modern Japanese history.\(^\text{49}\)

The four *hahamono* films that this paper analyzes all come from director Kinoshita Keisuke, who is considered one of the “greatest postwar directors” and the “most popular [director] with Japanese audiences,” although he is not known well outside of Japan.\(^\text{50}\) Out of the four movies, *Army (Rikugun 1944)* was made during the war and *Morning for the Osone Family (Ôsone-ke no ashita 1946)* were made during the Occupation Period, and *Tragedy of Japan (Nihon no Higeki 1953)* was made after the Occupation period. All four movies focus on the depiction of the mother’s suffering in a single family and generalize to the plight of Japan as a nation-state. It is crucial to contextualize the factors that contribute to forming such a relationship before analyzing how such an effect gets achieved in each film. The two following sub-sections will demonstrate how the family system and the family-state concept, uniquely developed in

\(^{48}\) Ibid., 19.  
\(^{49}\) Yoshimoto, 41-42.  
Japan, make a single family in the *hahamono* film represent Japan’s war trauma.

The Emperor, the *ie-seido* (Family System), and the *kazoku-kokka kan* (the Family-state concept)

Japanese literature scholar Ken Ito succinctly explains the relationship between the *ie*-system (*ie* as household in Japanese) and the family-state concept when writing about melodramatic novels in the Meiji period (1868-1912). Ito argues that historians use these two concepts to refer to “the family developed in the 1890s by state-aligned ideologues”.51 Scholars working on the *ie*-system, such as Japanese jurist Takeyoshi Kawashima, state that the *ie*-system in Meiji period aimed to “sustain the patriarchal and patrilineal structure of samurai families of the Tokugawa period (1603-1868).”52 Ito further cites Japanese sociologist Ueno Chizuko, who argues that *ie*’s ties with the past are “largely imagined”; by “seeing *ie* as a tradition,” ideology gets “naturalized” and formed over time.53

Japanese philosopher Tetsujiro Inoue illustrates the idea of the family-state concept more in detail when he comments on the *Imperial Rescript on Education* (i.e. guiding principle on Japan’s education) under the request of the Ministry of Education.54 Inoue writes:

The emperor to his subjects is like a father and mother to their offspring. Which is to say that a country is an expansion of the family and that for a ruler to direct and

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52 Ibid., 24.
53 Ibid., 24.
54 Ibid., 27.
command his subjects is not at all different from parents giving compassionate
guidance to their children. Thus, now that his majesty, our emperor, speaks to us
as his subjects, we his subjects must all listen respectfully and attentively, with
the feelings of children toward a strict father or a loving mother.\textsuperscript{55}

A primary moral education textbook in Japan expresses a similar idea, stating that the
general public should love the Emperor in the same way as they love their father.\textsuperscript{56} Thus,
Meiji melodramatic fiction reflected the state ideology in “constructing the family as the
moral foundation of the nation.”\textsuperscript{57}

The \textit{ie}-system (Family System) and Changing Roles of Japanese Women

Film scholars such as Jennifer Coates and Peter B. High have discussed the
relationship between the representations of Japanese women and their gendered bodies
under Japan’s wartime ideology under the \textit{ie}-system. Coates cites High, who states that
militarist mother (or ‘gunkoku no haha’) is a crucial concept to understand the wartime
“nationalist militarization,” given her struggle between serving the nation and being
herself as an individual.\textsuperscript{58}

Additionally, Coates argues that the Emperor is the highest organ of the State with
no actual power. The body was viewed as “a symbol of a recreated nation-state,” in
which the body of the maternal figures also indicates “a metaphor of Japan itself.”\textsuperscript{59}

During the wartime, one of the duties that mothers had to fulfill was to devote themselves

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 27.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 27.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 21.
\textsuperscript{58} Coates, 79.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 78.
to “motherhood for the sake of the nation” (or “kokutai bosei” in Japanese). Mothers were required to “remain stoic” to send their children off to the battlefield to be sacrificed for the country.60 The “tai” in “kokutai” refers to “a body, a community, and a set of standards” that contains an “immutable quality or set of characteristics.”61

Coates’ statement demonstrates the importance of mother-son relations in promoting the wartime family-state ideology. According to Japanese historian Kano Masanao, the Japanese government put more emphasis on mother over father to advocate the family-state structure.62 This decision laid the foundation for Japan to fight in the “sacred war.”63 “Fecundity” and “warmth of blood relations” are related with mothers; the image of the mother who sends her son to the battlefield delivered a message that “imperial Japan would exist forever as long as her family system continued.”64 Films made during this time, such as director Kinoshita Keisuke’s 1944 hahamono film Army, reflect the mother-son relations under the family-state system. Army portrays a mother who “emotionally struggles” with sending her son to enter the war.65 Japanese historian John Dower argues that this movie is an example that demonstrates the alignment of duty and sacrifice in wartime Japan. The heartbreaking moment for a mother to send her son off to the battlefield is also viewed as the mother fulfilling her wartime duty to her country.66

60 Ibid., 78-79.
63 Ibid., 271.
64 Ibid., 271.
65 Brehrer, 67.
The State’s promotion of the mother’s role in the family-state system won favor from the feminists, who previously criticized the Japanese government for neglecting gender equality. Feminists believed this was an excellent opportunity to promote gender equality, given that this was the first time that women were granted official recognition to in public. However, the recognition of the roles of mothers is nothing more than Japanese government’s exploitation of mothers to promote warfare. In *Motherhood in the Interest of the State (Kokkateki bosei no kozo 1945)*, Mori Yasuko praised the mother’s commitment to the nation with languages such as “self-sacrifice,” “subservience,” and “benevolence.” She referred father in a family as “the revered the commander to deliver the state’s rationality, while the mother is the “loyal subject [that follows the order of the father].” In other words, the recognition for the mother figures is not for the sake of women in Japan, but for the sake and interest of the nation’s interest. As a result, Mori’s conceptualization of the mother’s roles in embracing the family-state system got promoted by the Japanese government in the pre-war period. In the Meiji period, the father’s morality was viewed as superior to the benevolent mother, however, in the Showa era, the father and the mother’s morality were depicted as equivalent, to the extent that “women’s maternal contributions” are comparable to “soldiers’ contributions” to the nation.

The expectations of the mothers changed in the postwar period when the maternal figures became a representation of *furusato* (or hometown). The idea of *furusato* is

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67 Miyake 273-274.
68 Ibid., 276.
69 Ibid., 276.
70 Ibid., 277.
71 Ibid., 276-277.
72 Coates., 79.
often associated with the mother in the hometown, which ties with the images of the
Japanese traditional values. By connecting the mother with the idea of *furosato*, the
hometown, usually associated with remote villages, brings the maternal figures a sense of
innocence and allow the audience to resonate with her suffering during the wartime.\(^73\)

Liberation of women, however, ruptures such connection on “a symbolic level by
“destabilizing the fantasy of the mother as *furusato*, or the female body as nurturing
space.”\(^74\) In the Occupation period, the SCAP strove to transform Japan’s ideologies. The
notion of “adopt[ing]… a nuclear family structure” was reinforced “and “given a legal
basis” during this period.\(^75\) Such action signified abandoning the *ie*-based mother and
strengthening the image of “romantic couple at the center of a new American-style
nuclear family unit.”\(^76\) This was a challenge for the younger generations and parent-
children relations in Japanese society, since “the upbringing of the child underwent
drastic change due to a social reimagining of motherhood.”\(^77\)

\(^{73}\)Ibid., 79.
\(^{74}\) Ibid., 79.
\(^{75}\) Ibid., 70.
\(^{76}\) Ibid., 71.
\(^{77}\) Ibid., 71,
Chapter III The Dual Roles Mother Figures Perform
and Their Reflections of War Trauma

Research on 1940s-50s’ Japanese melodrama focus on tropes of the mother’s suffering in representing the nation-state’s (i.e., Japan) collective trauma. However, researchers often do not distinguish the mother’s suffering from wartime to postwar. It is necessary to make such distinction and to build on previous research to complicate the description of the mother’s suffering during wartime, which I will elaborate below.

Coates demonstrates *hahamono* films’ reflections of Japan’s postwar widespread fear and anxiety by displaying “recurrent trends” of female images within films. To Coates, the wartime mother figure’s image, namely the militaristic mother (or “gunkoku no haha” in Japanese) and mother for the sake of the nation (or “kokutai bosei” in Japanese), make them not appear as a war victim in the film due to their presumed prowar roles. Therefore, the depiction of these mother figures is often associated with “nostalgia and childhood,” to sustain the sense of innocence and lay the foundation for the formation of victimhood.

Similarly, Briciu examines female bodies’ reflection of war trauma. She analyzes the relationship between “the films’ melodramatic tropes” and “double role” of female characters. According to Christine Gledhill, the double role of women in melodrama consists of “[a] symbol of a patriarchal culture” and “representatives of a female point of view.” Briciu elaborates on Gledhill’s definition of the double role by contextualizing it

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78 Coates, 22.
79 Ibid., 136.
80 Ibid., 137.
81 Ibid., 2.
82 Ibid., 2.
in Japan’s defeat in WWII. She describes women’s suffering as an allegory of Japan’s collective trauma in the postwar period by focusing on “[individualized] women’s victimization as an emotional representation of Japanese women’s lives,” and “a symbolic collective trauma.”\textsuperscript{83} Moreover, Briciu argues that the collective trauma is comprised of three categories—mother, wives and lovers, and prostitutes—each represents a unique characterization. Specifically, “mothers symbolize a lost Japanese tradition of strong family ties, innocence, and affective relationships; wives and lovers represent the ground against which a lost male identity must be reasserted, while prostitutes' abjection allegorizes the unrepresentable shame of the nation.”\textsuperscript{84}

This paper expands on previous research and argues that the depiction of mother figures in Kinoshita’s \textit{hahamono} goes beyond expressing the war trauma, to the extent that it lays the foundation for the formation of victim consciousness in 1944-1955. As stated previously, Yoshimoto and Orr define victim consciousness as a perspective that presents the Japanese people as blameless (i.e. as victims instead of a war perpetrator). Without justification for the warfare, the audience is projected into the position of the maternal figure, who often has to sublimate her emotions and thoughts for the sake of the nation’s (Japan)’s future. This powerless position regarding the cruelty of the war gives rise to the victimhood consciousness in the movie. This chapter accordingly uncovers themes and tropes that are used to express such victimhood consciousness, with a closing reading of Kinoshita’s melodrama films, whose work best exemplified in the melodrama genre. Through analyzing Kinoshita’s films, this chapter demonstrates melodrama’s reflection of the historical development of victim consciousness, which influences

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 2.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 3.
present-day perceptions of Japan.

Coates’s arguments demonstrate that the wartime militaristic mother figures’ wartime support makes them hardly appear as a war victim. However, in this paper, closer examinations demonstrate that militaristic mother figures, presumably prowar, appear as war victims in Kinoshita’s *hahamono* films. It is necessary to adapt Wada-Marciano and Briciu’s idea of the “double roles of female characters,” by linking the double role the mother plays within the Japanese wartime family. For movies set in wartime (1937-1945), “dual roles mother figures perform” concerning the family, namely a national family’s mother and an individual family’s mother, are insightful to make a deeper understanding of mother figure’s suffering possible. The national family’s mother, represented by the militaristic mother or the mother for the sake of the nation, must fulfill the expectations and perform the duties assigned by the government. In other words, the mother should feel honored to send her sons or husband to the battlefield to fight for the country. The mother of an individual family, however, often reveals the mother’s intention of not wanting to send her sons or husbands to the war, due to her fear of their never returning. The victim consciousness gets formed through the mother’s struggles between two roles. Although she seems to have a choice of roles to perform (i.e., being a nation’s mother or an individual family’s mother), eventually the side of being an individual family’s mother gets suppressed. Hence the mother figure has no choice but to perform her role as the nation’s mother. The reason for the mother’s lack of choice does not always get explicitly mentioned in the movie. Presumably, it is an implicit critique of the wartime aggressive policy enforced by the Japanese government.

The characterization of the suffering mother tropes in *Army (1944), Morning for*
the Osone Family (1946) and Twenty-Four Eyes (1954) follow a similar pattern. The pattern usually starts with the maternal figure’s devotion to Japan’s wartime policy and to fulfill her duty as a mother of the national family. Idyllic memories are usually associated with the maternal figures and their families so that the audience takes a liking to the maternal figures from the beginning. The emotional feelings usually arise in the middle or near the end of the movie, when the soldiers’ deaths open up spaces for the maternal figures to express their deep emotions and sadness, the characteristics that belong to a mother of an individual family.

Without any detailed descriptions of how soldiers sacrificed, the audience usually learns about the reason that leads to causes of sacrifice in a sentence or two from the comrade of the sacrificed soldier. Often what represents the soldiers’ death is an object that soldiers took with them to the battlefield (such as a watch). In Morning for the Osone Family, for example, the watch is covered in a white cloth and is sparkling clean. The watch appears just as it did when the mother gave it to her son, which emotionally appeals to the audience to wish for the son to stay with the family instead of sacrificing on the battlefield. While the watch gets returned home, the son can no longer be with his mother. Such depiction makes the soldiers’ death honorable, and viewers tend to resonate more with the mother’s grief. When the camera cuts back to objects that represent time—including the pre-war era’s nostalgic memories – the audience tends to identify with the grief the maternal figures have to endure.

Moreover, the depiction of warfare becomes simplified in Kinoshita’s hahamono films, so that the mother’s sending her son (or husband) to war becomes conflated with Japan’s ultimate victory. The family-state ideology, widespread during wartime, states...
that each family is a miniature of Japan. That is, the nation is an expansion of multiple singular families. This idea makes it possible for the focus on a single Japanese family to represent Japanese society. Without justifying the necessity of WWII, *hahamono* films only emphasize the maternal figures’ struggling under the repression of the wartime militaristic policy. Such depiction makes the audience empathize with the pain of mother figures and doubt the value of initiating the war. As a result, the audience identifies more with the maternal figures as the victims of the war, while blaming the wartime Japanese government for causing maternal figures’ struggles.

For films that reflect social situations in the postwar period, the “double role” mother figures perform in the movie, suggests Japan’s collective war trauma. This thesis borrows Wada-Marciano and Briciu’s definition of “double role,” which denotes the mother’s suffering as a female and her symbolic representation of Japan’s collective war trauma.\(^5\) Set in 1945-1953, the mother figure in *A Japanese Tragedy (1953)* is an extension of the mother figures stated above. The mother Haruko in this movie is no longer the elegant and moral mother; instead, her work as a sex worker and her trading on the black market make her appear as immoral. The story in this film focuses on the suffering of the mother due to the unfortunate economic situation during the postwar period. Thus, there are neither scenes in which the mother figure sends family members to the war, nor any depictions of the double roles of being a maternal figure in an individual family and a national family, as described above. This movie focuses on the struggles of the mother Haruko, who has no choice but to work as a prostitute and trade in the black market in order to support her children. None of her children appreciate her

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\(^5\) Wada-Marciano and Briciu, 3.
sacrifice; instead, they view her occupation as a choice of lifestyle, rather as an economical need. When her daughter flees with her married English teacher, and her son insists on being adopted by a wealthy doctor family, Haruko commits suicide on her way back from Tokyo to Atami (her place of work).

Coates applies discourse analysis and affect theory to analyze the maternal figures’ reflections on expressing Japan’s war trauma. Similarly, Wada-Marciano and Briciu adopt a cultural anthropology and historiographical approach to study the relationship between portrayal of mother figures and its representation of Japan’s recovery from war defeat. Without directly analyzing hahamono films, Yoshimoto’s research (1993) addresses the problem of victimhood through an application of methods in psychoanalysis, cultural anthropology and historiography. Yoshimoto illustrates Japanese melodrama’s reflections of Japanese modernization and modernity through the formation of victimhood consciousness in the postwar era.

Building on previous research, my own approach makes more use of feminist scholarship regarding what is often termed "sensibility," including its relationship to sentiment and sensitivity. Previous discussions on the gendered bodies' reflections of the war trauma have focused more on well-recognized directors such as Ozu, Mizoguchi, and Naruse. My own contribution will consider directors who have not been discussed as widely. According to film critic Beverley Bare Buehrer, Kinoshita is one of the “greatest postwar directors” and one whose “cinematic styles are so diverse that movie critics find it hard to define a ‘Kinoshita style’”. Through analyzing Kinoshita's three movies in 1944-1954, I hope to explore patterns that reflect Kinoshita's overall cinematography.

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86 Buehrer, 67.
Moreover, I will also apply ethnographic and cinematic theory to examine the spectatorship and suturing progression in these films. For each film, I will conduct an audio-visual analysis on two to three scenes that give a detailed description on cinematic elements such as the sound, lighting, and mise-en-scene. Instead of treating each film as a special case, I will conduct the analysis by themes, in order to deliver a coherent and comprehensive description on how the maternal figures presented in the hahamono films, along with its individual war trauma, represent Japan’s war trauma as a whole. The purpose is to uncover the message hidden inside the melodrama, as Yoshimoto succinctly points out that in melodrama cinema, the message the director tries to deliver is in the parts that are “hidden behind” the surface (i.e. what has been explicitly expressed in the films).\(^87\) In addition to discussing maternal figures, I will look at the portrayal of the entire family in each film, and ask how the depictions of other family members (such as the son going to war) both expands on and problematizes the image of the mother trope.

\(^{87}\) Yoshimoto, 12.
Chapter IV Recurring Tropes of Mother Figures’ Suffering

*Army (Rikugun 1944)*

1. Plot and Background Information

Produced in 1944, *Army* depicts a Japanese family during wartime; as loyal subjects of the Emperor, the family is proud of sending its eldest son to the battlefield to fulfill their duty to the country. However, the final scene in which the mother figure sees her son off to the army has been the most discussed and most controversially received due to its anti-war implications.

Film critic Peter B. High elaborates on the mixed reviews for the final scene. After *Army (1944)* screened in the movie theater in November 1944, some critics applauded the final scene for “stirring propaganda effect”. Other postwar critics, however, praise Kinoshita’s bravery for including an anti-war message in a supposed propaganda movie. An anonymous reviewer for *Nihon Eiga* in 1945 commented that the final scene is “a miscalculation on the part of the director” that impairs “this otherwise fine piece of work.” Hirano offers a similar critique and further points out that under the 1939 law, the harsher ideological regulations “imposed a standardized morality based on an austere lifestyle and an unquestioning sense of dedication to the war effort.” Hirano also cites film critic Tadao Sato who writes that “contemporary viewers were conditioned to recognize this scene as an expression of natural human feelings, but that every Japanese was obliged to overcome such private feelings for the more important national

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89 Ibid., 402.
90 Hirano, 17.
cause of the war effort.”

Scholars such as film critic Beverley Bare Brehrer and Japanese historian John Dower argue that the final scene reverses the intention of promoting warfare. Brehrer states that the *Army* is an anti-war film per the criteria of the Information Ministry since it portrays a mother who “emotionally struggles” with sending her son to enter the war.

Dower agrees with Brehrer, further demonstrating that the heartbreaking moment for a mother to send her son off to the battlefield also signifies the mother fulfilling her national wartime duty (i.e., sending her son to the battlefield honorably). As a result of the final scene, Kinoshita was subjected to enhanced attention from the censors until the end of the war. Kinoshita was prohibited from releasing another film until after the war ended.

2. Scene analysis

The moment when the family (father Tomosuke, mother Waka, eldest son Shintaro, and younger son Reizo) have dinner together, is joyous and peaceful. This is the last meal Shintaro has at home before going to the war the next morning. Therefore, he occupies the center of the camera frame and gets the most attention from viewers. The peaceful non-diegetic music in the background, which cannot be heard by characters, is used to create the same sense of peace and joy as a national family should felt in the 1940s’ Japan. Part of the intention for using non-diegetic sound here is to match the

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91 Ibid., 18.
92 Brehrer, 67.
93 Dower, 49-50.
94 Richie, 93.
mood of this scene to a wartime propaganda film, in which a Japanese family sees enlisting as an honor—and which often use non-diegetic music to create a mood of ostensible joy about military honors. The director’s adoption of this non-diegetic music as a disguise of the mother’s individual feelings foreshadows her suffering and concern of seeing her son off to the battlefield with the possibility of not returning back home alive—since the joyful background music works to cover and contradict her suffering.

After dinner, Shintaro proposes to massage his mother’s shoulders, so we have the mother at the center of the frame (Figure 1). At first glance, the camera frames father at the right of the screen, which indicates that the father is not supposed to get viewers’ attention at this moment. However, we later see that the father’s seat at the dinner table is closer to the center of the camera frame compared to the mother, so that the father’s representation as an authoritative figure in the family gets reinforced here. As the younger son Reizo offers to massage his father’s shoulder, the camera pans to the right so that the father is put more at the center of the camera frame. Again, the father appears as a dominant figure compared to the mother. More importantly, the nationalistic belief he holds in sacrificing for the Emperor at all costs dominates this family. In a patriotic family like this, the father appears as a more active figure than the passive mother. Earlier in the movie, we are told that the father works as a teacher at an organization called “Serve the Country Club,” in which he teaches students the meaning of being a good soldier and serving their country. The father says: “It’s war. It’s normal if you die.” Instead of sacrificing oneself for fame, the father emphasizes that the most honored sacrifice is to “kill your fame, empty yourself, [and] simply devote yourself to his Great Majesty.”
In contrast, the mother says only “体だけは気をつけてな,” which literally means “just take care of your body (i.e., health).” The English subtitle in this movie translates this line as “just take care of yourself,” which highlights the mother’s more personal wish. This contrastive wish reveals the mother as an individual figure who puts individual feelings above national benefits (i.e., winning the war at all costs). That is, she cares for her son’s health (a private matter) more than having him die for the Emperor.

When the clock bell rings, the smile disappears from the mother’s face; she looks in the direction of the father with worry and horror, which further strengthens her image as a submissive figure to both the family and to the country. She does not want to, but she has to, send her son to the battlefield. The father, on the contrary, smiles happily, glad that his son can fight and die honorably on the battlefield.

Earlier in the movie, the audience learns that the family honorably fought in the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, during the Meiji era. However, the father did not fight on the battlefield due to his health condition; thus, he has high expectations for his sons and hopes they can fight gloriously for the country, just like their ancestors did. Similarly, the mother, too, appearing to be a strictly loyal subject to the Emperor, is well aware of her responsibilities to support Japan’s war. In a conversation she has with her husband previously, the mother states that for twenty years, she has raised her sons to support the Emperor, and it is time to give them back to the Emperor. In Japanese Women: New Feminist Perspectives on the Past, Present, and Future, Masami Oshinata states that during the Sino-Japanese war (1937-1945), mothers “…raise the boys and girls of the empire.” They were termed the “emperor’s babies,” or tenno no sekishi in

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Japanese; it indicates that children mothers gave birth to were “an important asset” to the Emperor.  

Yet her feelings are actually more complex. This does not necessarily mean that the mother is as nationalistic as the father. More accurately, she performs both roles—a nationalistic mother and an individualistic mother. She wishes for her son’s wellness, and her concerned look, when she hears the ringing of the clock, contradicts the nationalistic view she holds.

In the next scene, we follow Oito (a woman from the neighborhood) and see through her eyes: the mother is busily cleaning the family store, without seeing her son off at the station in the morning. The black kimono the mother wears blends in with the dim room; this image makes the mother figure almost invisible in the background. The mother is so slim that her body occupies only a small portion of the frame; she looks too tiny to be seen in the crowded grocery store her family runs. This image reflects her relatively inferior social status as a mother in the family and a woman in the Japanese society during war time. While the mother explains to Oito why she does not go to see her son off at the station, the camera shifts 180 degrees, so that viewers now see from the mother’s perspective. Viewers now occupy the spectatorship position of the mother, enabling us to see and understand her perspective: if the street outside of her family store is allegory to the Japanese society, then the supposedly nationalistic mother here merely obeys her role, by staying at home and supporting sons and husbands going to the war. The next shot cuts to the mother continuing to busily clean the family store after Oito leaves. Oito’s presence plays a role of reminding the audience of the hidden emotions of  

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97 Ibid., 202.
the mother: she uses chores to hide her feelings, specifically in not wanting her son go to the battlefield (Figure 2 and 3).

After the mother cleans the room, viewers witness her sitting in the backyard to take a break. A close-up of her face shows that there is no smile when she recites the Five Teachings (five disciplines on how to be a good soldier in wartime Japan). A selfless mother in wartime Japan was expected to send her son off to war with honor and joy, just as that of the father showed during dinner last night. In other words, the lack of joyfulness on her face when she recites the Five Teachings emphasizes her inner struggle regarding seeing her son enter the war. When the diegetic sound of the military horn resonates on the street, she finally makes up her mind to see her son off. There are a lot more people, moreover, who run to see the soldiers off along with the mother. In contrast with these people (who wave Japanese flags and run to the street), the concerned look on the mother’s face and the fact that she holds no flag in her hand indicate that her care for her son wins over her care about Japan’s glory.

When the mother runs to the parade on the street, the camera captures her running from the front; the audience is put in the same angle of viewing as the camera frame, so it looks like the mother runs to the camera as well as to the viewers. Moreover, the camera moves back as the mother runs, so that spectators can capture the mother’s running as ongoing progress. As more people, who look stronger and run faster than the mother, occupy most of the camera frame, the mother who is left behind becomes hard to recognize. While other people run to the parade to send soldiers off, the mother rushes to

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98 According to *Rikugun (1944)*, Five Teachings on how to be a good soldier include: (a) A soldier’s true duty is to serve with loyalty; (b) A soldier must maintain polite manners; (c) A soldier must value valor; (d) A soldier must value honor; (e) A soldier must lead a life of frugality.
the parade to see her son one last time. The nationalistic thoughts are in contrast with the individualistic wishes of the mother; Kinoshita’s hiding of the mother figure in this sequence of shots, therefore, is to reinforce the lack of recognition of individual thoughts under the nationalistic wartime policy. This point gets re-emphasized when viewers witness the Japanese flags held in the hands of people running next to the mother, indicating their nationalistic belief. In contrast, the mother, without holding any flag, runs to the parade only to see her beloved son one last time, before he heads to the battlefield. Thus, the mother who runs behind others indicates that she is a vulnerable figure both in society and as a woman. More importantly, this sequence of shots emphasizes her role as the mother of an individualized family, rather than the mother of a national family.

As the camera cuts to the street and quickly pans to the right, viewers get a view of the parade that sends off the soldiers to the battlefield. The camera catches the mise-en-scene on the top, in which the shape of the antenna resembles a spider net or a cage that traps the people in the parade. If the allegory of a cage here represents the government’s way of controlling the mind, then people in the parade are supposed to support Japan’s wartime militaristic policy. As viewers get a close-up of the parade, we see the ordinary people joyously waving Japanese flags, while the mother dressed in black anxiously looks for her son in front of a group of National Defense Women dressed in white clothes. The National Defense Women belongs to an organization called “the Greater Japan Women’s National Defense Association” (Dai Nippon Kokubo Fujinkai). Established in 1932, this organization devotes to responsibilities such as “encouragement of soldiers.”99 The contrast between the color of the mother’s clothes and those of the

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national defense women invites the audience to look for the difference between them. Similar to the rest of the people who send soldiers off, the joy on the faces of National Defense Women represents people who support the wartime national agenda without question. The worried look on the mother Waka’s face, and her black clothes, again indicate the opposite; she cares more for her son than for the Japanese soldiers in general (Figure 4).

It takes the mother quite some time to find her son in the parade. As the army moves forward, she runs along the parade hoping to see her son. When she does see him and starts to run to catch up, the militaristic horn changes into a song that encourages soldiers to fight for the Emperor and Japan. The lyric of this song is as follows: “Father and Mother’s tender love that has nurtured me. Now I’m a man, how many years has it been? In a military uniform / Now I’m dressed, you can’t see this war I’m going. In my heart I’ve inherited, this blood from my ancestors. It will flow, forever, to protect the homeland”. When the mother finally catches up with Shintaro, the lyric changes to suggest that the only choice that a soldier has is to fight for His Majesty the Great Emperor.¹⁰⁰

The lyrics here are “there is only the path of the soldier…For his Majesty the Great Emperor/ For our homeland” in the movie. Although it does not directly say soldiers should die for fighting the Emperor, it implies the same meaning in the lyrics. Although the lyrics encourage soldiers to sacrifice their lives for the Emperor and the nation-state, the visual scene questions this interpretation. In fact, given the presence of

¹⁰⁰ *Army (Rikugun)*. Directed by Kinoshita Keisuke. 1944; Tokyo, Japan: Shochiku Co. Ltd, 2014. DVD.

the mother’s tears on the screen, and her proud smile while watching her son marching off to the war, we see this scene as ironic. That is, it implicitly criticizes the wartime militaristic policy and the socially-constructed role (as a national family’s mother) that she is forced to perform. Hidden beneath her smile is her pain at seeing her son leaving—and being well-aware that he will not return alive. The mother’s struggle makes her appear as an innocent victim of the war since she has no power and no choice but to obey the state’s order.
Figure 1: Shintaro massages his mother’s shoulder after dinner

Figure 2: The mother is busy with cleaning family stores when her son is joining the parade to go to the battlefield
Figure 3: The mother (right 1) continues cleaning the family store when her neighbor Oito (left 1) asks her why she does not go seeing her son off.

Figure 4: The mother’s worried look in contrast with other people’s joyfulness in the parade scene.
Twenty-Four Eyes (Nijiushi no Hitomi 1954)

1. Plot and Background Information

Kinoshita Keisuke’s movie Twenty-Four Eyes (Nijiushi no Hitomi, 1954) adapts a novel of the same name, written by Sakeo Tsuboi. The story spans a total of eighteen years (1928-1946) when Oishi-sensei (i.e., teacher Oishi) and her twelve students experience the turbulent wartime and postwar era in a remote and rural village called Shodoshima. The first half of the movie happens before the Second World War, and it is full of the happy memory of Oishi-sensei and her students studying in the classroom and playing outside of class. The latter half of this movie takes place during the wartime and postwar, when Oishi-sensei’s students have to deal with difficulties in their lives. Through the eyes of the protagonist Oishi-sensei, audiences witness her students facing harsh realities: male students are drafted and sacrificed on the battlefield, while female students are forced to leave home to work to support their families. The happy prewar memory stands in contrast to the traumatized postwar memory, therefore echoing an anti-war message.

Twenty-Four Eyes (1954) is widely considered as one of the masterpieces in the postwar melodrama genre. Many says that one of the masterpieces in postwar melodrama genre is Twenty-Four Eyes (1954). In The Japanese Film: Art and Industry, Anderson and Richie (1982) argue that this movie was touching since it dealt with “the problems of the 1930s and subordinated the political and social questions to those concerned with character.”¹⁰¹ Twenty-Four Eyes won several awards, such as the Kinema Junpo “Best One” Award in 1954, Golden Global Award for Best Foreign Language Film (1955), and

Hollywood Henrietta Award. The French critic Georges Sadoul commented that Twenty-Four Eyes (1954) would “certainly have won the highest award had it only been entered” in “festival competition in 1955.”

Japanese scholar James Orr states that Twenty-Four Eyes (1954) delivers an anti-war message by presenting “Japanese innocents victimized by the vast anonymous forces of war”; however, the movie avoids talking about “Japanese aggression abroad and actual acts of oppression in Japanese society.” He analyzes how the depiction of innocent students and teachers helps to convey an anti-war message in the movie. Orr further cites film critic Tadao Sato’s discussion of “a gendered compartmentalization of memory in the antiwar genre.” According to Sato, “women may object to the war and to the pointless destruction it brought to Japan, but their opposition should be social and cultural, not political.”

Film scholars Keiko McDonald, Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano and Bianca Briciu all point out the association between women and emotions. McDonald comments from the perspective of film techniques used in this movie, specifically on how Kinoshita’s usage of long shots represents his philosophy in creating a sense of realism and sentimentality through “nature and old houses and the like.” Wada-Marciano and Briciu compare this movie’s reception in the U.S. and Japan. While the western audiences view this movie as “a kind of emotional overkill—mere soap opera,” Japanese audiences “find genuine

102 Ibid., 292.
103 Ibid., 292.
104 Orr, 107.
105 Ibid., 116.
106 Ibid., 115-116.
emotional cultural involvement in tragic events.”

2. Scene Analysis

In “Orchestration of Tears: The Politics of Crying and Reclaiming Women’s Public Sphere,” film scholar Saito Ayako indicates that *Twenty-Four Eyes* is an anti-war and anti-rearmament movie based on its historical context in the 1950s. The tears of Oishi-sensei “assimilate the unassimilable [war crime]”; thus, she becomes the “magical healer” of Japan’s fragmented cultural identity in the post-WWII period by depicting Japan as a victim. To deliver an anti-war message, Kinoshita exploits the contrast of emotions between the happy memory in the prewar period and the cruel reality during wartime. Tropes such as a photo, flowers and the landscape of Shodoshima signify the happy memory in the past; their recurrence in the second half of the movie invites audiences to identify with the suffering of Oishi-sensei and her students. Therefore, the implied helplessness from the perspective of the ordinary people in changing the wartime situation, making the delivery of an anti-war message possible.

What is consistent throughout the movie is the innocence of Oishi-sensei and her twelve students. To reinforce such an impression, Kinoshita first lets audiences identify with “the lovingly intimate memory,” which refers to the peaceful and happy life enjoyed by Oishi-sensei and her students before the war. Later, Kinoshita contrasts this emotion with the cruelty of the warfare that breaks down the peace and happiness that stay fresh in audiences’ memory. Although Oishi-sensei is not the biological mother of any of these

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108 Wada-Marciano and Briciu, 23.
110 Ibid., n.p.
twelve students, her care for her students makes her appear as a maternal figure.

Before presenting the three tropes (a photo, flowers and the landscape of Shodoshima) that build on the victimhood consciousness, Kinoshita foreshadows such tone in the opening credit. It shows calm water of a river flowing on the screen, setting an innocent tone for the rest of the movie. The music first stands as the background music, then follows the voice of children singing the same song. The well-known children’s songs appeal to the emotions of Japanese audiences in the 1950s with their “sentimental memories of their own childhood.”111 Thus, the sense of purity gets reinforced through children’s singing and offers a space for wartime generations to “indulge in mourning” of war trauma immediately after the defeat in WWII.112

Earlier in the film, there is a scene that shows Oishi-sensei and her twelve students studying together in the classroom. It is the first day of school, and Oishi-sensei starts the class by calling each student’s name and patiently asking them if they have any preference for a nickname. Each time a student’s name is called, the camera cuts to that student with a close-up of his/her face, inviting audiences to be impressed by and emotionally attached to the innocence on their faces. Later, when Oishi-sensei corrects her students’ homework at home, the camera cuts to, and zooms in, on each student’s name as she looks at their homework. Each time the camera frame zooms in, the audience visualizes the close-up of each student’s face from the earlier classroom scene. Meanwhile, there is a synchronization of Oishi-sensei’s voice calling students’ names during class. When the classroom scene gets recreated, the naivety on students’ faces and

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112 Ibid., n.p.
the gentle voice of Oishi-sensei work together to fortify an impression of their innocence and foreshadows a sense of victimhood during wartime.

After the end of WWII, Oishi-sensei returns to the primary school in Shodoshima to teach. When she calls students’ names again, the camera cuts to the students’ faces as Oishi-sensei recognizes that they are relatives of the first class she taught previously. The recreation of the previous classroom scene completes a cycle that jogs audiences’ memories of the happy time that Oishi-sensei spends with her students in the first place. Moreover, the resemblance between these two scenes connects the prewar with the postwar eras, which invites audiences to distance themselves, and almost forget, the trauma of the war. Already emotionally attached with Oishi-sensei and her students in the prewar, audiences wish nothing more than that the peace lasts for these sympathetic characters, even into their future when they see Oishi-sensei in both scenes. Oishi-sensei’s aging face reminds audiences of the passage of time. Her gentle voice remains the same. The editing in these two scenes is similar to one another: it serves to remind audiences of Oishi-sensei’s unchanging care of her students. Oishi-sensei, who associates postwar generations with prewar generations, thus creates a sense of continuity between these two periods. Moreover, Oishi-sensei’s tears, showing her crying for the suffering of her students, invite audiences to feel sympathetic for the suffering of her previous students and to wish for such cruel warfare to not happen again during the lifetime of the postwar generations. The consciousness of victimhood, therefore, bridges the gap between the prewar and postwar, making audiences forget – or at least distance themselves from the traumatized memory during the war.

The first trope is a photo of Oishi-sensei, and her twelve students take together.
This photo captures a background of endless sea and mountains of Shodoshima Island, in which the broadness of the background brings audiences a sense of peacefulness.

The photo becomes a carrier of memory to demonstrate an anti-war message through the contrast of emotions. This photo reappears in the house of Kotoe, who is one of the twelve students of Oishi-sensei. After graduating from primary school in Shodoshima, Kotoe goes to Osaka to work as a maid to support the family. She works so hard that she gets tuberculosis. Without directly telling the audiences that the teenage girl laying on the bed is Kotoe, the camera first shows the photo that Oishi-sensei and her students took together many years ago. The diegetic sound of the militaristic music in the background, which can be heard by characters in the movie, represents the political situation of the present, juxtaposing with the peaceful life in the past (represented by the photo). The militaristic music is filled with characteristics of war songs that encourage soldiers to fight for the country. This is in contrast with ballads that praise the beauty of nature, sung by students when they were young. The difference between militaristic music and ballads, therefore, makes audiences wonder what happens with Kotoe now. After that, the camera quickly cuts to the young Kotoe in the photo, following with another quick cut to the teenage girl on the bed. At this moment, audiences realize that the girl laying on the bed is Kotoe. When her parents go fishing during the day, she has to stay at home all day alone, and that photo is the only thing that comforts her. This indicates that Kotoe misses the time she spends with Oishi-sensei and her classmates. Meanwhile, the diegetic sound of the military music, continuing in the background, reminds audiences that the ongoing war makes Kotoe’s situation worse.

After Oishi-sensei gives Kotoe the present she brings to her, Oishi-sensei sees the
photo she took with her students, hanging next to Kotoe’s bed. As Oishi-sensei cries, the non-diegetic sound of children singing is accompanied by a close-up of each student’s face. This is the moment when Kinoshita reminds audiences of the naivety of these children when they were young, a time when they do not need to confront so many difficulties in life. Then the camera cuts to a medium shot that includes the boys in the front row. Before the images of the photo fades away in the camera frame, the sound of militaristic music replaces children’s singing. This indicates that the happy and peaceful life that the children, especially the boys, used to enjoy, will now be replaced by the cruel life brought by wartime militaristic policy. The imagination of what could happen to these boys incites the audience’s fears that Oishi-sensei’s male students will sacrifice for the country. Audiences, however, do not blame these boys but the government for initiating the war—mainly because the images of the boys come across as utterly innocent. This indicates that these boys who will possibly enter the war are already viewed as victims at this moment.

The next shot cuts to Oishi-sensei sending her students and other soldiers to the battlefield. She wears a sash labeled for “the Greater Japan Women’s National Defense Association” (Dai Nippon Kokubo Fujinkai). As stated previously, this organization encourages Japanese women to devote to responsibilities such as “encouragement of soldiers.” Including Oishi-sensei at this moment is strategic for Kinoshita, since he intends to humanize the soldiers as victims of the war. As the boys grow up to young men, their faces change in a way that makes it difficult for audiences to recognize them and connect them with their childhood faces. The way Kinoshita deals with this difficulty

is first to present a medium shot of the name on the sash each soldier wears, following with a close-up of their faces. This is not an absolute recreation, but mimicry of the classroom scenes, in which Oishi-sensei calls a student’s name, and the camera then cuts to the face of each student. In this way, audiences can easily connect the grown-up faces with the names, which therefore transfers their sympathy and emotional attachment from Oishi-sensei’s students to the young soldiers. The militaristic song sung by the people in the parade, with lyrics such as “the duty of the soldier is to die, for the sake of his emperor,” urges soldiers never to attempt to come back alive. None of Oishi-sensei’s students seem to be shocked by these lyrics, which encourage soldiers to die for the nation-state. Implicitly, Kinoshita criticizes the wartime militaristic policy here for manipulating the lives of the ordinary people -- the government cares more about winning the war than the value of individual life.

As the war in Asia spreads in the next four years, the parade scene is repeated and changed in crucial ways. This time, there are fewer people sending soldiers off, which implies a population decrease due to the deaths of soldiers in the previous parade scene. These people, mostly school boys and girls, are also much younger. Meanwhile, soldiers that are going to fight in the battlefield are also much younger than the boys in the previous parade scene. With the absence of Oishi-sensei, who is taking care of children at home, audiences have no signifier to identify with any of the soldiers marching to the battlefield. This indicates that an emotional attachment to the soldiers is not as strong as before, which suggests that Japanese society at the time may be complicit. Without justifying the reason to continue the war, the victimhood generalizes from Oishi-sensei and her twelve students to the nameless masses, therefore partly blaming the inhumanity
of the warfare and the Japanese wartime militaristic policy that initiates such war.

The third time this photo appears is near the end of the movie when Sonki joins Oishi-sensei and his classmates in a teacher-student gathering after returning from the battlefield. Despite the fact that he loses both of his eyes during the war, Sonki can recognize everyone’s position on the photo correctly. This is crucial because a blind person is not supposed to visualize anything. Although the movie never specifies the reason for Sonki’s blindness, audiences presumably assume this happens due to a war injury. He tells his classmates that “he would rather be dead,” indicating that he struggles with the fact that he is alive psychologically, while his comrades are still sacrificing on the battlefield.

Given that the expectation of Japanese soldiers during wartime is not to come back alive, it seems odd that Kinoshita would have Sonki come back and join in a welcome-back party with Oishi-sensei and classmates. One way to explain this is to view Sonki as a person immersed in the pleasant memory he had with his classmates and Oishi-sensei. Without displaying any war scenes, the audience assumes that Sonki has fought bravely on the battlefield and this made him lose his eyesight in both eyes. Sonki may carry memories about him fighting on the battlefield as well; however, Kinoshita chooses not to present any concrete depiction of the war—such as how Sonki became blind—on purpose. A description of the war scenes and memories would have been a chance to let the audience identify Sonki as a war perpetrator. A connection with the past, on the contrary, makes the audience recognizes Sonki as a symbol of suffering and a war victim, instead of an accomplice of the Japanese government that initiated WWII.

Without directly looking at the photo, Sonki accurately describes everyone’s
position in the photo (Figure 5). This suggests that he loves his classmates and teacher so much that their images are already in his mind. The background of this scene first has a long shot of the sea and mountains from the vantage point of the inside of the restaurant, then cuts to a medium shot of the crying Oishi-sensei. The happiness from the past seems to come back but carries a more complicated feeling compared to the first time the photo is shown in the movie. The war has changed the lives of these twelve students dramatically. The contrast of emotions between the happy prewar and the miserable wartime carried by this photo evokes sympathy from the audience to deliver an anti-war message.

The second object that carries a contrast of emotion is the flower. It first appears in the movie when Oishi sensei plays with her twelve students in the mountains filled with cherry blossoms and sings folk songs. The mi-se-scene captures the scenery filled with flowers, along with students and Oishi sensei running past trees. A rope connects Oishi-sensei and her students in a line when they are singing and playing on the mountain (Figure 6). The rope is a metaphoric symbol of Oishi-sensei’s protection to her students. Having a rope that connects students and teachers makes sure everyone stays together and safe. This also means that, symbolically, Oishi-sensei’s protection of her students is only limited to their childhood. When students grow up, they are forced to enact wartime cruelty in real life. In other words, they have less freedom in deciding what they would like to pursue but have to follow what the nation-state requires them to do during wartime. That is, Oishi-sensei can no longer protect her students anymore.

However, later in the film, when Oishi-sensei’s students die on the battlefield, she goes to the same mountain to gather flowers to mourn them. In contrast to the beginning
of this movie, there is no rope tied on anyone’s body but only her lonely and weakening figure shown by a long shot from behind. Flowers function as a carrier of emotions, bringing the audience a sense of loss before and after the war. The reappearance of the flower after the war brings a sense of nostalgia for the moment when Oishi-sensei plays with her students, who are protected by her and their families so that they do not need to confront any difficulties in life by themselves. The emotional attachment the audience has been built with these twelve students throughout the movie now turns into a longing to stop the war.

Shodoshima’s landscape is the third carrier of this emotional attachment used in this movie. Literary scholar W.J.T. Mitchell suggests that when the landscape is treated as a verb instead of a noun, it invites a reading from the spectator, in which the landscape becomes “a process by which social and subjective identities are formed.”\(^\text{114}\) Mitchell also views the landscape as “a medium of cultural expression,” to the extent that it expresses both value and meaning.\(^\text{115}\) Despite the time and cultural difference between Mitchell’s writing on the 19\(^{th}\)-century British landscape painting and Kinoshita’s making of Twenty-Four Eyes, the landscape’s cultural meaning still resonates with the audience today. Building on Mitchell’s idea, this sub-section argues that the cultural meaning residing within the view of Shodoshima invites a political reading as well.

The establishing shot, which usually helps audiences to identify the location of a place, displays scenes of Shodoshima with vast surrounding mountains, a peaceful sea, and a clear sky. Shodoshima is a remote village, only accessible by boat and by bus.


\(^{115}\) Ibid., 14-15.
These are signs that local people live a peaceful but isolated life. Although Shodoshima falls behind in the progress of modernization compared with large cities like Tokyo or Osaka, its preservation of traditional beauty, usually communicated through long shots of mountains and rivers, invites audiences to identify with Japan as a paradise. Moreover, the romanticization of the landscape also evokes a nostalgic feeling, indicating the appreciation of traditional Japanese beauty. The spacious, idyllic, and serene Shodoshima invites an appreciation of nature’s beauty; meanwhile, it also displays the Shodoshima people’s ignorance of the outside world. This tactic is strategic since once this ignorance, which implies innocence of Shodoshima, gains acceptance by the audience, it will generalize to the point that it becomes an innocence of Japan as a nation. Thus, Japan becomes a victim of WWII. Here again, the filmmaker depicts the people of Japan as innocent victims—not as perpetrators.

When the war starts, Shodoshima becomes more crowded, with people waving flags to send soldiers to the battlefield. Although nothing seems to change in the landscape, the rising nationalism, represented by the two parades to send soldiers off to the battlefield, interrupts the peaceful life in Shodoshima and makes the appreciation of tradition disappear. Without witnessing actual scenes of the war, the audience witnesses only the emotional trauma suffered by Oishi-sensei and her students. As the audience emotionally identifies with the innocence of Oishi-sensei and her twelve students, so nostalgically attached with the past, the beautiful scenery that Shodoshima will always preserve that innocence.
Figure 5: Blinded Sonki (first from right) recognizes people in the photo that the class takes with Oishi-sensei (second from right)

Figure 6: Oishi-sensei and her students play and sing with a rope connects them
Morning for the Osone Family (Osone-ke no Ashita 1946)

1. Plot and Background Information

Soon after the end of WWII, Kinoshita produced his first postwar film, "Morning for the Osone Family (1946)." This movie won one of Japan’s top film prizes -- the Kinema Junpo Award in 1947.\(^{116}\) Made during the U.S. Occupation, "Morning for the Osone Family (1946)" covers the period from 1943 to 1945. It focuses on the tension between the Osone family and the father’s brother, uncle Issei. On one hand, despite a long tradition of service in the military, the Osone family would be considered, by most standards, to be quite liberal. On the other hand, uncle Issei, a colonel in the military, holds conservative and militaristic ideologies. When uncle Issei and his wife move in with the Osones, the confrontation between their contrasting ideologies reaches its peak.

With the support from the Allied Occupation government, Kinoshita promotes American democratic values and expresses his critique of wartime Japanese militaristic policies.

The Osone family is composed of widowed mother Fusako, daughter Yuko, and sons Ichiro, Taiji, and Takashi. Ichiro gets arrested and imprisoned, due to an anti-government article that criticizes the wartime Japanese government for initiating WWII. Taiji is an artist who wants to devote his whole life to painting. He has to relinquish his ambition after being forced to enlist. In contrast, Takashi enlists voluntarily at his uncle’s encouragement. Both Taiji and Takashi die on the battlefield. Yoko’s fiancé, Mr. Minami, breaks their engagement when he goes to serve in the military. In the end, despite the Osone family and Japan as a nation-state having endured a great crisis caused by the devastation of the war; nevertheless, their future is filled with hope, thanks to the

\(^{116}\) “Kinema Junpo Award for Best Film of the Year.” Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia. 4 February 2019.
democratic values brought by the Occupation government.

According to Japanese historian Joseph Anderson and Donald Riche, the meaning of ‘morning’ in the title refers to the “new life for the family occasioned by the end of the war”. Similarly, Hirano illustrates that this movie criticizes wartime militarism and delivers a hopeful message for the future of postwar Japan. This message may be best exemplified by the final scene, which depicts the Americans liberating Japan’s political prisoners. Kinoshita originally planned to include portrayal of the U.S. Occupation government in the movie in the first place. However, this part was eliminated, based on the suggestions from the U.S. censorship committee in Japan.

2. Scene Analysis

Set in 1943, the opening scene of Morning for the Osone Family (1946) portrays the family gathering together during Christmas time, which had always been a season of great happiness for them in the past. Outside the window, snow falls down. Meanwhile, viewers hear the diegetic sound of the Christmas song, “Silent Night,” accompanied by a piano played by Fusako, and are most likely filled with the holiday spirit. As the song goes on, the camera slowly pans to a medium shot of each person in the room. The men are all dressed in formal wear and sing Christmas songs together. Near the end of “Silent Night,” the camera cuts to a Christmas decoration and then to a portrait of Mr. Osone, before showing the children applauding the mother’s impressive piano performance.

This is the happiest moment in the film; and perhaps its only happy moment. In

117 Anderson and Richie, 78.
118 Hirano, 152.
119 Ibid., 152.
fact, at this early point in the narrative, audiences experience the peace and love of the family before they get torn apart by a wartime militaristic policy for the rest of the movie. Mr. Osone’s portrait serves to reinforce the happy life the Osone family had enjoyed under the influence of the father, who has since passed away. Later in the film, the father’s portrait will appear once again, when Issei criticizes the father’s liberal education to the children, and suggests that it has led to their lack of determination to serve the country. At this moment, the camera cuts back to the father’s portrait as a reference.

This is the most idyllic moment in the film since nobody sacrifices on the battlefield yet. This scene lets the audience emotionally attach to the happiness of the Osone family, and associates them with American liberal and democratic values. Later on, when Issei moves in and disrupts the equilibrium in the Osone family, the audience feels hostile attitude towards Issei, and by extension the militaristic attitude he represents. Issei disrespects the educational policy of Fusako and her deceased husband and manipulates everything, such as marriage and family education. Issei’s interruption of the Osone family’s domestic life results in breaking off Yoko’s engagement with her fiancé, Mr. Minami. Similarly, Issei urges the youngest son Takashi to enlist in the army. These actions are an allegory of Japanese government’s overt intrusion into the lives of Japanese people during WWII. Without any justification for the warfare being offered by Kinoshita--or any emotional alignment with Issei—the audience identifies more with the Osone family and their associated democratic values, rather than with the Japanese government’s nationalistic, militaristic values.

In the second scene, Fusako consults with Issei about whether Takashi should enlist. Without even asking what Fusako thinks, Issei encourages Takashi to enlist in the
army. This is a crucial moment, since this is the first time we witness the mother reveal her emotions as an individual (i.e., wishing Takashi not to enter the war) instead of a citizen. Similarly, although she is not satisfied that Issei meddles with Yoko’s engagement with Mr. Minami without notifying her in advance, she says this only behind Issei’s back. In both cases, this indicates that Fusako, and women’s social status, are inferior to the men (i.e., Issei). This imbalanced gender power gets demonstrated more explicitly in the next scene, when the mother has to force herself to agree with the uncle to let Takashi enlist.

In the beginning of this scene, Issei and his wife have welcomed a meeting with Mr. Tanji in the Osone’s guestroom, who works in a military-related business. A steady medium-long shot captures Issei, his wife and Mr. Tanji in the room for quite some time. In a medium-long shot, it is relatively difficult for the audience to capture each character’s emotion, which indicates that the purpose here is to let the audience focus on the conversation, rather than emotions expressed by the characters. It is when Yoko enters the room to serve tea and greet Mr. Tanji, that the camera shifts to a medium shot for the first time in this scene. This medium shot captures Yoko’s unhappy face when she talks to Mr. Tanji. The change of camera shooting angle here serves as an underline to focus on Yoko, particularly her subtle expression, showing her overtly oppressed emotions that cannot otherwise be picked up by a long shot. After greeting Mr. Tanji, the camera follows Yoko’s eyesight and captures the moment when uncle Issei is about to sign a document. Even the camera shoots the document in a close-up, the audience is still unable to visualize on the content of this document. This denotes that the deal between uncle Issei and Mr. Tanji are unrevealed. If uncle Issei is an allegorical figure of the
Japanese wartime government, then Kinoshita implicitly criticizes that the government secretly making deals that benefit them, while seeking no benefits for the common Japanese people.

In the middle of the meeting, the mother knocks on the guestroom door and asks for the uncle's opinion about Takashi’s enlisting; Takashi has been on the phone with Fusako and is waiting on hold. The camera first cuts to a close-up of Fusako’s face when she describes Takashi’s situation. Then it cuts to the uncle’s reaction, and then cuts back to Fusako’s face once again. This form of editing is known as “shot-reverse-shot,” and informs audiences that two people are in conversation with one another. While Fusako speaks in an honorific form to Issei, Issei replies in a casual form. Honorific form is often used in Japanese when an ‘inferior’ to a ‘superior,’ while a casual form indicates the opposite when a ‘superior’ talks to an ‘inferior’. Here, the difference in language usage indicate that although the Osone’s house belongs to Fusako, she has no authority over Issei. This is an illustration of discrimination against women. Moreover, if the audience identifies Issei as a representation of the Fusako Japanese government and the mother as a representation of Japanese masses, then the imbalanced gender dynamic can be symbolically read to represent the government’s privileged position over the common people.

In this case, the ideological confrontation between Fusako and Issei also underlines the difference in emotions both characters have towards Takashi’s situation. Fusako’s worried face and trembling voice, both indicate that women are not allowed to explicitly show their emotions. In contrast, Issei’s excited voice and happy expression. Without even noticing Fusako’s sadness, Issei goes back to the guest room to announce
the good news. Issei is happy to see one more man sacrifice for the country and seems proud of his nephew. This implies that the mother and the uncle are in opposition in the stance on Takashi’s enlisting. If the audience interprets the guest room as a space to discuss national warfare matters, then the separated space of the hallway, in comparison, is a space in which individual family matters gets discussed. The door that divides the room and the hallway into two spaces demonstrates a lack of interaction between personal and national affairs. Issei returns to the guest room and praises Takashi’s bravery in front of his own wife and Mr. Tanji.

As an allegorical figure of the Japanese military-government, Issei’s indifference to the mother’s concerns over Takashi’s enlisting implies that the Japanese government does not cherish the values of common people’s lives. His returning back to the guest room and praising Takashi’s bravery illustrates that all he (or the Japanese government) cares about is recruiting more soldiers to fight for the country.

After that, Issei runs to the phone and tells the awaiting Takashi that enlisting is the correct decision. While the uncle talks on the phone at the other end of the hallway, the camera focuses on Fusako, while Issei stays off-screen. Fusako now is free to express the emotions she suppresses and worries for Takashi. However, this does not necessarily mean that the mother can shout out her worry for her son; instead, she uses her facial expressions to demonstrate her true feelings. The audience witnesses a medium shot that frames the mother’s face with a hopeless expression; she turns away from the camera to face a door. Meanwhile, the uncle assures Takashi: “Your mother? She’s happy with your decision.” While Issei is on the phone, the camera shoots the reaction of Fusako. The camera captures the mother’s heart-broken face in a medium shot; she looks like she will
faint at any moment.

Without saying a word, the mother slowly walks off the screen and looks helplessly. The camera stays on screen for a while with nobody appearing in the screen (Figure 7). One way to explain this is that Fusako is disempowered in her own house. Medium shots of Fusako’s facial expressions denote her lack of decision power in her own house, while medium-long shots of Issei, which encourage the audience to pay less attention to emotions, builds Issei as an authoritative figure in the Osone family. Fusako walks off-screen without a word, indicating that her suffering is unresolved in this scene. In other words, she will forever have to endure the pain of having sent her son to WWII and to death. The silent tension between Issei and Fusako in this scene gives way to Fusako’s boiled-over anger and resentment towards the uncle in the next scene, when Takashi’s colleague Furuno visits the Osone family and announces Takashi’s death.

When Furuno arrives at the Osones, the camera captures his actions in folding his coat, after he greets Fusako and Issei. The medium-long shot of Furuno grasps his sorrowful emotions on his face. The focus on Furuno taking time to fold his clothes is significant here, a signal of the formality of gestures, implies that Furuno pays respect to Takashi’s death. As the camera pans up, the tears in Furuno’s eyes indicate that something terrible has happened to Takashi. Without saying a word, Furuno almost cries, showing Fusako and Issei the watch that she had given to Takashi before he left for the battlefield. The watch is covered in a white cloth and is sparkling clean, just as it did when Fusako gave it to Takashi. Seeing this, Fusako leans on the door next to her and weeps, indicating that she already has a feeling Takashi’s death. Issei is unable to sense the upsetting atmosphere, asking what happened to Takashi. Similar to Issei’s unconcern
over Fusako feeling in the previous scene, once again, his inability to sympathize with Takashi’s death illustrates that he does not care about Takashi’s life at all. Once again, Issei’s reaction denotes Kinoshita’s critique on wartime Japanese government’s selfishness for only caring its own feelings.

As Furuno explains that “Takashi plunged into the ocean in his warplane the night before the war ended,” soldiers whom the audience is unfamiliar with the film comes in to listen and mourn for Takashi’s death. This way of showing respect, along with Furuno’s gestures of folding the clothes, denotes that Takashi’s death is honorable. In the next shot, the camera Fusako’s emotions with a close-up of her hateful look towards the uncle. She turns to the uncle slowly with tears in her eyes. Without saying a word, Fusako’s anguish reveals her resentment towards Issei, because he convinced Takashi to enlist in the first place. Speechless, Issei looks down and feels uncomfortable. Just like the Japanese government did not apologize for sacrificing any soldier’s life during wartime. Similarly, Issei’s behavior indicates his reluctance in admitting his wrongdoings. In the previous scene, a medium-long shot of Fusako’s face reveals her lack of control over family matters, such as Takashi’s enlisting, inside of the Osones. Fusako suppresses her feelings as an individual family’s mother by not confronting Issei publicly and performing her role as a national family’s mother well. In this scene, however, the same camera placement produces the opposite effect. Fusako’s helplessness from the previous scene transforms into her anger towards Issei, when she hears of her son’s death from Furuno.

The sound of the Christmas song from the opening scene returns, clearly non-diegetic, which suggests that Kinoshita is directly reminding us of a happier time which
way no longer be, while the camera cuts to the photos of the young Takashi, smiling happily and naively. Above Takashi’s photo is a photo of his elder brother Taiji, and the audience recalls that Fusako prayed for him in a previous scene. Previously, the audience learns that Taiji fell ill and was hospitalized in an Army hospital in Hiroshima. Although the reason for Taiji’s death is not clear, the audience presumably takes his death as another soldier’s sacrifice for the country. Now when the camera cuts back to Fusako’s crying face one more time, viewers feel the grief for the mother’s loss more strongly than ever. The mother-son relationship grants her autonomy to confront Issei and freely express her pain of losing her son. This autonomy gets taken away soon after when the camera captures Fusako starring at the photos of her two dead sons and she cries. In other words, Fusako’s independence is conditional. She depends on her sons in order to gain her freedom of emotional expressions.

When the opening scene showed the mother playing the piano and singing together with her family, audiences began to develop an affinity for the mother; perhaps even an emotional attachment. Throughout the movie, the presence of the uncle (representing the Japanese military) does nothing more than disturb the peaceful and happy life the Osone family once had. The sacrifice of the two sons makes the audience dislike uncle Issei and make them align more with the mother; this emotional resonance lays the foundation for the formation of victim consciousness. As Yoshimoto succinctly points out, victim consciousness refers to an awareness, individually and collectively, that “we (i.e., Japanese) are merely powerless, innocent people, so that whatever problem we are faced with is not the result of our action but that of the overwhelming social evil and
constraint of which we are only victims.”

The photograph has a crucial function of mother figure’s inflicted pain in both *Morning for the Osone Family (1946)* and *Twenty-Four Eyes (1954)*. The different setting of these movies, however, ensures that each movie has its unique presentation of Japan’s collective trauma.

In *Morning for the Osone Family (1946)*, the photos of the young sons—Taiji and Takashi—appear only after their comrades report the news of their sacrifices and death. The photos, taken from happier times, are transformed in this new context into a symbol of loss, and a wish that the soldiers did not need to lose their lives for the country; they could have stayed at home safely and happily with their mother. In this way, the photo is used as a remembrance of the dead. The fact that Fusako is a widowed mother means that her son(s) are all she can depend on in her life. With their deaths, Fusako is all the more vulnerable and even more heartbroken with so much loss. This is not only the case for the Osone family, but could happen to any family in Japan during wartime. The sentimentality of the mother and the grief she has to endure for her sons’ deaths is expressed through the photo. This expression of sadness, therefore, encourages audiences to identify not just with this mother, but with all the mothers in Japan as victims of WWII.

The use of the photo in *Twenty-Four Eyes* functions in a similar way which reminds audiences of the happy and joyous memory between Oishi-sensei and her students in the prewar period. On the other hand, the photo that Oishi-sensei takes together with her students appears both before and after the death of the soldiers, instead

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120 Yoshimoto, 40.
of only appears after the death of the soldiers in *Morning for the Osone Family*. One way to explain this difference is the type of message that Kinoshita delivers in the film. Even though both films deliver an anti-war message: without any justification on the reasons for initiating WWII, Kinoshita only focuses on how the wartime Japanese militaristic policies destroyed the peaceful life that the Japanese masses once enjoyed. However, in *Twenty-Four Eyes*, the anti-war message is Japan’s self-identified awareness of its innocence. It is crucial to emphasize the consistent blameless feelings both before and after the war. As an emotional signifier, the photos congruous appearance is therefore necessary to ensure that the audience’s unvarying identification on the Japanese masses’ goodness. *Morning for the Osone Family* is anti-war by depicting the Allied Forces as a savior for Japan. The focus of this movie is to distinguish the innocent Japanese common people from the evil-willed Japanese government. As a representation of the Japanese masses, the Osones’ innocence gets presented by the audience’s dislike towards uncle Issei for meddling with the Osones’ family matters. This sense of hostility turns out as the audience’s sympathy on the Osones.

Oishi-sensei’s tears function as a signifier of her innocence, along with her caring and motherly characteristics in regard to her students, which already made audiences emotionally attached to her, long before the photo she takes with her students. Each time when the photo appears, Oishi-sensei always appears in the screen and functions as a witness to the happy memories she created together with her students. Even though Oishi-sensei’s students grow up and we may not recognize their faces, Oishi-sensei’s caring remains constant, so that bridging the gap between prewar and postwar becomes possible. The preservation of the photo, as well as the purity it signifies, transitions into
audiences’ desire to sustain such purity in the postwar period. Therefore, the awareness of victimhood is formed successfully, which makes the audience identify with Oishi-sensei and her students and share the sense that the Japanese masses merely suffer from the Japanese military government.
Figure 7: The camera’s focus on the indoor decoration after Fusako walks off the screen
1. Plot and Background Information

*Tragedy of Japan (Nihon no Higeki 1953)*

A Japanese Tragedy (1953) takes place between 1945 and 1953 and centers on the struggles of Haruko, a widow who tries her best to support her daughter and son financially and resorts to prostitution to do so. Haruko’s work keeps her busy, so she must relinquish primary caretaking of her children, Utako and Seiichi, to relatives. As Utako, her daughter, and Seiichi, her son, enter adulthood, neither of them appreciates all that Haruko has sacrificed for them. Instead, they despise Haruko for her illegal and illicit work as a sex-worker (or panpan in Japanese) and trading in the black market, as well what they perceive as her neglect of them. Utako and Seiichi envision themselves on high moral ground, judging Haruko’s behaviors as a choice of lifestyle, rather than an economic necessity. This judgment is, of course, ironic, since they rely on this money for their survival. Eventually, Utako runs away with her English teacher Akazawa-sensei, and Seiichi is adopted by a wealthy doctor’s family whose son died during the war. Heartbroken, Haruko commits suicide on her way back home from Tokyo, where she has traveled to visit Seiichi’s new family.

Kinoshita portrays a controversial mother figure in Haruko, one who is quite the opposite type of maternal character from those we have encountered in Kinoshita’s other movies analyzed in this thesis. The mother figure here is no longer an elegant and moral figure, and none of her children understand her sacrifices or feel positive emotions for her. However, the audience, who sees the sacrifices she has made for her children, empathizes for her lack of presumable elegance and morality. Through Haruko’s suffering and powerlessness in the face of postwar difficulties, this film offers new
insights into the various difficult situations facing Japanese citizens, and particularly women during the 1940s-50s.

Film scholar Beverley Bare Buehrer points out that the usage of newsreel footage and the fast-paced editing in this film juxtaposes the past with the present and depicts how the U.S. democratic social values seem to “corrupt the innate goodness of those it touches.” Similarly, Japanese historian Donald Richie states that unlike conventional filmmaking in melodrama cinema, Kinoshita adopts several film techniques in this movie—namely documentary footage, newspaper clips, and flashbacks—to depict the suffering of “the little people.” In the opening scene, Kinoshita incorporates a range of archival footage to foreshadow the tragedy of Japan he envisions in the immediate postwar period (1945-1953). The newsreel footage and newspaper images start with the video footage of the Tokyo Trial, followed by a newspaper article that indicates the Emperor is not answering any questions during the Trial. With the announcement of the 1947 Constitution, the Japanese masses are filled with joy and gratitude when they see the presence of the Emperor in public. In a close-up of the general public meeting the Emperor, middle-aged and old women lift their hands over their shoulders, indicating their respect for the Emperor.

However, the subsequent newsreel footage indicates postwar reality in Japan. Behind the seemingly peaceful and smooth transition from wartime to post-war, the Japanese government’s inability to handle Japanese domestic and international affairs

121 Buehrer, 67-68.
122 Richie, 117.
Banzai refers to the gesture of holding arms over shoulders. This is often used to show respect to the Emperor in Japan.
leads to protests, numerous crimes repeated day after day, violence, and insecure livelihoods. In other words, Japanese people live a much more difficult life than they had imagined. It is worth noting here that government’s ineffectiveness in dealing with the socio-political situations not only implicates the postwar Japanese government but also implies a critique of the Occupation government that was later instituted.124

Film scholars Wada-Marciano and Briciu insightfully point out that A Japanese Tragedy (1953) “depoliticize[s] [blame, through the use of]… [a] melodramatic representation of female characters who were presumed to lack agency in affecting the government’s policies”.125 If the depiction of ordinary people had been associated with the Japanese government, then the audience would hardly view the ordinary people as innocent. Therefore, the rupture between the state and individual makes it possible for the ordinary people presented in this film to appear as mere victims of governmental policies.

2. Scene Analysis

Kinoshita’s focus on Haruko working as a panpan (unlicensed prostitutes from 1945-56) is strategic in creating her powerless image in confronting life’s difficulties. Kinoshita intentionally inserts flashbacks, which demonstrate that Haruko’s work as a panpan is out of economic need rather than a lifestyle choice. The first scene to follow the opening credits presents Haruko working as a maid in a hot spring hotel in the postwar period. She wears makeup and dresses up in a well-made kimono, drinking and entertaining her customers and other panpans. The mother’s occupation thus implies both her infidelity to the father and her wicked morality. These all contribute to making the

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124 Wada-Marciano and Briciu, 24.
125 Ibid., 24.
audience dislike her. In another scene, when Haruko visits her son Seiichi and daughter Utako, her behavior in front of her children is childlike. When she hears that Seiichi is going to be adopted by a wealthy family, Haruko immediately cries without asking him to explain his reasoning for the adoption. When Seiichi finally gets a chance to explain himself, Haruko shows her impatience by chewing a biscuit loudly rather than listen to her son’s reasoning. This also suggests that she is unreasonably opposed to this idea. Up until this moment, these pejorative characterizations make the audience dislike the mother for her impatience in front of her children. Thus, the disgraceful actions of Haruko in these two scenes reinforce the image of Haruko as a problematic and unsympathetic mother figure.

Nonetheless, Kinoshita gradually reverses the audience’s negative impression of Haruko, again through the insertion of flashbacks. One example occurs is when Haruko rides in a train and talks with other passengers about her experiences. She recounts how after her husband was killed, she had to raise Seiichi and Utako all by herself. To feed them, she was willing to become a prostitute and even took the risk of getting arrested for other illegal behavior (i.e., trading on the black market), as long as it brought financial stability to her family. One male passenger stands next to her and agrees that it is difficult for a woman to raise two children all by herself. Another male passenger affirms that “if I obey the rules, I can’t live…Honesty does not pay. To tell us not to hoard, but everyone does anyway.”\textsuperscript{126} These sentences implicitly criticize the government for ignoring personal rights for the sake of Japan’s harmony, which forces many people into st

\textsuperscript{126}Tragedy of Japan (Nihon no Higeki). Directed by Kinoshita Keisuke. 1953; Tokyo, Japan: Shochiku Co. Ltd, 2003. DVD.
starvation.

In the next shot, the camera shows Haruko on her way to a hot spring hotel in Atami (a famous hot spring resort area in Japan). The camera first shows street advertisements in Atami, with the hot spring hotel’s ad in the center of the frame. When Haruko walks near the hot spring hotel’s advertisement, she pauses for a moment to check that she is going the right way. In the next shot, Haruko looks back to make sure nobody sees her, reinforcing the impression that she feels ashamed of walking to a hotel to meet her customer. Moreover, the camera also shoots Haruko in a long shot, to keep the audience’s distance from her. Since the audience does not know what Haruko goes to the hot spring hotel for, Kinoshita adopts the long shot to let the audience focus on Haruko’s actions rather than her emotion.

A man dressed in yukata (a casual style of kimono worn in summer) sits in a room waiting for Haruko in the hotel. Haruko appears hesitant. It is intentionally not clear at this point, whether she is meeting this man to engage in sexual activity or perhaps for some business related to the black market. However, the client’s lecherous gaze at Haruko indicates that, regardless, he intends to manipulate her. Shortly after they meet, Haruko opens the door of the room and runs to the stairs to calm herself down. The male customer follows after her; he smiles and touches her shoulder, saying “don’t be a worrywart now. With my help, you will get goods right and left. Your kids don’t have to starve.” His words are so persuasive—are manipulative—that Haruko does not refuse when this man holds her hand and walks her back to the room. Here again, Haruko is portrayed as a victim—a woman deprived of agency, forced to act against her better judgment.
It is interesting here that Haruko does not look at the camera directly. She hides from the camera in this scene: she either looks down or turns her back to the camera so that the audience does not catch her emotions. Coates cites Japanese scholar Sarah Kovner, who demonstrates that a panpan’s lack of direct gazing at the camera “may have been intended to protect their privacy.” Moreover, Haruko’s avoidance of direct interaction with the camera also denotes her lack of choice in front of the pressure from life. From lines of the man that Haruko is meeting with, the audience witnesses that he promises Haruko enough financial reward that her children will not starve. From the previous scene, the man on the train states frankly about the difficult life in the postwar Japanese society. He states that people will starve if they follow the government’s rules. From this perspective, Haruko is merely one of many women who is forced to work as a sex-worker and trade on the black market in order to live more comfortably. In this way, women’s suffering represents Japan’s suffering from the manipulation of governmental officials’ inability in dealing with Japan’s political issues.

In the following scene, this man abuses Haruko for not giving him money to support his business. His business is not doing well, so he keeps borrowing money from Haruko. To be able to support her family, Haruko refuses to lend him money anymore. Thus, in this scene, Haruko again appears as a victim of the war for being forced to work as a panpan.

Besides her suffering from other people’s disapproval or discrimination against her occupation, Haruko also suffers from her children’s misunderstanding of her sacrifice. Haruko’s children have misunderstood Haruko. As noted above, her son

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Seiichi, a medical student studying in Tokyo, asks to be adopted by a wealthy doctor’s family. He feels embarrassed even to walk Haruko to the train station when she comes to visit him and Utako one night.

Moreover, the daughter Utako hates her mother so much that she does not want to lend her any money. Since Haruko is away working in Atami, Utako and Seiichi live together with their uncle and aunt, who not only use their house for liquor business but also nitpick Utako after she does all the chores. Because of all these horrible childhood experiences, Utako hates Haruko for causing these pains. With the hope of escaping from her mother one day, Utako learns English at Akazawa-sensei’s place and studies how to make dresses at a dressing school. Utako finally gains her independence by deceiving Haruko that she will lend her money. In fact, she elopes with Akazawa-sensei before Haruko arrives at her place, putting Haruko in the position as a victim.

When Haruko calls Utako to ask for a loan one day, Utako is again studying at the dressing school. Before Haruko calls Utako, Akazawa-sensei’s wife comes to school to ask Utako where Akazawa-sensei is. The wife suspects that Utako and her own husband are having an affair; she is so jealous that she wants to humiliate Utako at her school publicly. When Utako answers the call, she pretends that she is talking to her lover Akazawa-sensei; in fact, it is her mother that is on the line. Both Utako and Akazawa-sensei’s wife face the camera in the same direction (Figure 8). Akazawa-sensei’s wife, however, stands further away from the camera frame, making her unable to observe Utako’s facial expressions. Although Utako’s voice is as sweet as one can imagine while talking to her supposed lover, her facial expressions reveal her to be upset and unhappy. Utako’s voice gives a false impression to Haruko that she can borrow money from her
daughter. Even after Haruko hangs up the phone, Utako keeps talking on the phone to pretend she is flirting with Akazawa-sensei. She says: “I can’t tell you now. No, don’t say things like that. Impossible. Later, with more time.” Later on, when Haruko looks for Utako at her place, Utako elopes with Akazawa-sensei.

In Kinoshita’s *A Japanese Tragedy*, men appear as cold-blooded people who deceive women, who are mere victims of deception. In Haruko’s case, she is tricked by her manipulative customers to work as a *panpan*. Haruko appears as a mere receiver of these deceits. Her looking away in all scenes that are related to *panpan* indicates that she feels embarrassed about her occupation. Nevertheless, she is willing to be judged by other people, as long as her children stay well. Her sacrifice for her family rather than herself contributes to victimhood portrayal—as a woman, a mother and a representative of the Japanese masses in 1945-1953.
Figure 8: Utako (left 1) talks with her mother Haruko on the phone, while the wife of Utako’s English teacher Akazawa-sensei (right 1) suspects Utako having an affair with her husband.
Chapter V  *Hahamono* and Beyond

This thesis analyzes five *hahamono* films made by director Kinoshita Keisuke in 1944-54. Given that *hahamono*’s productions were prominent during the war and Japan’s recovery in the post-war period, this thesis presents close reading of plot, character development, and audio-visual elements in all five movies. The findings indicate that the trope of mother figures’ suffering reflects Japan’s war trauma through a demonstration of victimhood. Without any justification for WWII, Kinoshita portrays the warfare as equivalent to the Japanese military-government’s forcing people to live in poor economic conditions and sending their beloved family members to war. At the same time, since every Japanese citizen is compelled to follow the same governmental order, they come to represent uniform, Japanese masses: a single image of suffering, representing the Japanese national identity. What is more, the mother figures’ suffering is representative of this misery of the Japanese masses. In this context, then, Japan also becomes blameless--a victim of government officials’ deceptions.

For his films set during wartime, Kinoshita brings into focus the dichotomous conflict the mother figures face: they are torn between their roles as a national family’s mother who sends her son to the battlefield honorably, and an individual family’s mother who is unwilling to send family members to death. Not surprisingly, the audience identifies more with a mother’s role as an individual family’s mother, instead of with the role of a national family’s mother. That is, a mother’s personal wish for family members’ safety appeals more to the audience, compared with the waste of lives resulting from the wartime duty of a national family’s mother.

In all four movies, tears of the mother and photos of the sacrificed husband or son
are two consistent tropes that represent victimhood. The silent tears of mother figures, often remaining hidden for most of the film, are signifiers of moments when mothers reveal their true emotions as an individual family’s mother. Given that mothers’ silent tears emerge at the same time that she sees her son or husband to the battlefield, the implication is that the sacrifice of her family members characterize her as a passive sufferer of wartime Japanese policy. In *Rikugun* (1944), it is the mother’s speechless tears at seeing her son off to war that express her unspeakable wish to not send him to the battlefield. In *Morning for the Osone Family* (1946), the mother’s outbreak of anger at hearing of her son Takashi’s death leads her to express her hidden wish and anger towards uncle Issei for encouraging Takashi to enlist. In *Twenty-Four Eyes* (1954), Oishi-sensei’s tears, upon seeing her male students off to the battlefield, implicitly demonstrate her wish for not sending them to the war.

As noted above, photos are another trope that consistently appears in each film, the audience of the undisturbed life that the deceased soldiers and mother figures could have lived if no warfare had occurred. In *Morning for the Osone Family* (1946), the photos of the young sons—Taiji and Takashi—appear only after their comrades report the news of their sacrifices and death. The photos, taken during happier times, are transformed in this new context into a symbol of loss, and a wish that the soldiers did not need to lose their lives for the country; that is, they could have stayed at home safely with their mother. In this way, the photo is used as a remembrance of the dead—and a critique of the policies that led to such widespread maternal suffering.

The use of the photo in *Twenty-Four Eyes* functions in a similar way, reminding audiences of the joyous memories shared between Oishi-sensei and her students during
the prewar period. Each time when the photo appears in the film, it is associated with Oishi-sensei’s crying in sympathy with the difficulties her students have to deal with in wartime Japan. Oishi-sensei’s tears function as a signifier of her innocence, along with her caring and motherly characteristics in regard to her students. (This maternal attitude had already made audiences emotionally attached to her, long before the photo she takes with her students.) Each time the photo is shown, Oishi-sensei appears on screen, functioning as a witness to the happy memories she created together with her students. Even though Oishi-sensei’s students grow up—and we may not recognize their faces—Oishi-sensei’s caring remains constant, so that bridging the gap between prewar and postwar becomes possible. The preservation of the photo, as well as the purity it signifies, transitions into audiences’ desire to sustain such purity in the postwar period. In this context, Oishi-sensei and her students are portrayed as victims of the wartime militaristic policy. More generally, their representation of the Japanese masses similarly suggests that the Japanese masses suffer passively, as a result of the military government’s policies.

Besides tears and photos, Twenty-Four Eyes (1954) is the only film in this thesis that adopts flowers and the landscape of Shodoshima as two other symbols signifying the innocence of the Japanese masses. Over time, although the aggressive wartime policy forces Oishi-sensei and her twelve students apart, flowers and landscape preserve its beauty. These unchanged parts are associated with the idyllic prewar memory, therefore resonating with the audience regarding the guiltlessness with Oishi-sensei and her twelve students. For example, flowers first appear in the movie when Oishi-sensei plays with her twelve students in the mountains filled with cherry blossoms and sings folk songs. The
mi-se-scene captures the scenery filled with flowers, along with students and Oishi sensei running past trees. However, the same scene of flowers reappears when Oishi-sensei’s students die on the battlefield and she goes to the same mountain to gather flowers to mourn them. The reappearance of the flower after the war brings a sense of nostalgia for the moment when Oishi-sensei plays with her students, therefore resonating with the audience the regarding blamelessness of Oishi-sensei and her students, and the Japanese masses in general.

For films set in the postwar period, the mother’s roles as a national family’s mother and an individual family’s mother no longer apply. Instead, in *A Japanese Tragedy* (1953), Kinoshita focuses on depicting the mother Haruko’s suffering as a woman, such as her relationship with her children and other people’s prejudice against her working as a sex-worker. Since Haruko’s situation is common among Japanese women in the immediate postwar era, her misery as a female can be read as the symbolic suffering of Japan as a nation.
Coda: Future Study

There are at least two possibilities for future research into the themes of this study. The first one is to diversify the research methods applied in the analysis. Beyond a close reading of Kinoshita’s films, other research methods, such as content analysis, could be used to further study this topic. From a quantitative analysis perspective, content analysis would also support the analysis of hahamono films. Content analysis would require a larger sample size to compare with the five films analyzed in this thesis, in order to make sure that the sample was representative of the population (i.e., hahamono films in general). In a large sample, the pattern of hahamono films’ depictions of mother figures’ suffering would become more convincing and more generalizable to a broader scope of hahamono films.

Future study should in any case consider more hahamono films, in order to provide a more comprehensive picture of tropes that represent mothers’ struggles—and also to ask whether there are any differences among the war traumas that each hahamono film tries to depict. This larger sample would accordingly include more melodrama films made by various directors, across different periods in history.
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