

# The Fragmented Family on Film:

## Kinoshita Keisuke's *Nihon no Higeki* (The Tragedy of Japan) (1953) and the Antecedents of the Contemporary Fragmented Family in Japan

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1. From moral panics in print media to recent films such as Kurosawa Kiyoshi's *Tokyo Sonata* (2008), Japanese mass culture has been much concerned with the image of the fragmented family. Fragmentation is often discussed as a recent occurrence caused by the alienation of the internet age, or contemporary phenomena such as the otaku, the kyōiku mama, the salaryman dad or the parasite single.[1] Using Kinoshita Keisuke's *Nihon no Higeki* (The Tragedy of Japan) (1953) as a case study, I want to suggest that a public discourse of the fragmented family was present in Japanese mass culture as early as the post-defeat years of the 1950s. Analysing Kinoshita's film in its historical context demonstrates the occurrence of fissures in the family structure during Japan's first decade of postwar independence. I posit film as a mass medium through which social anxieties such as those of the fragmented family were not only discussed, but also to a certain extent negotiated and alleviated.
2. In the introduction to the *Nihon no Higeki* screenplay published in 1953, Kinoshita 'makes an appeal to universal principles of humanity that transcend politics.'<sup>[2]</sup> In *Nihon no Higeki*, Kinoshita positions the family as the core image of postwar Japanese 'humanity,' depicting family fragmentation in a style that calls on viewer empathy for the fate of the nation during crisis while also emphasising the complexity of familial relations in the wake of defeat in war and the Allied Occupation of Japan. Close analysis of *Nihon no Higeki* shows that as early as 1953, only one year after the end of the Occupation, there was clear public articulation of the detrimental effects on the Japanese family of both the war and subsequent reforms implemented by Occupation authorities. Paving the way for sixty years of media discourse on the fragmented nature of the Japanese family, Kinoshita locates responsibility for this fragmented state in the difficulty of achieving mutual understanding between the members of the generations that experienced the war, and the members of the generation that, while never experiencing war, had certainly experienced its fallout. Although many of the social reforms introduced during the Occupation era had positive consequences for individuals, the uneven enforcement of these reforms can be seen to have destabilised the institution of the family already made fragile in Japan by the experiences of war.
3. Using Kinoshita's film text as an indicator of popular attitudes towards the family in the first year of Japan's postwar independence, I read *Nihon no Higeki* as both a symptom of the fragmented family and, at the same time, a discursive space in which the effects of this fragmentation are explored. In reading Kinoshita's film as an example of early postwar popular discourse on the family, I am following Miriam Bratu Hansen's identification of film as a form of 'vernacular'<sup>[3]</sup> expression which addresses and negotiates everyday experience. Hansen imagines the cinema during periods of modernisation as 'the juncture of classical cinema and modernity reminds us, finally, that the cinema was not only part and symptom of the crisis and upheaval as which modernity was experienced and perceived; it was also, most

importantly, the single most inclusive, cultural horizon in which the traumatic effects of modernity were reflected, rejected or disavowed, transmuted or negotiated.'<sup>[4]</sup>

4. As a director, Kinoshita Keisuke was committed to bringing Japan's social issues to the screen, drawing for example on his own homosexual identification to produce *Sekishincho* (Farewell to Spring) (1959), often cited as Japan's first gay film. Kinoshita's work, however, was more often concerned with nuclear war and atomic issues, family dynamics, and the impact of aging on the family and on society. These were themes he explored in films such as *Nijūshi no Hitomi* (Twenty-Four Eyes) (1954), *Osone Ke no Asa* (Morning for the Osone Family) (1946), and *Narayama Bushiko* (Ballad of Narayama) (1958). Kinoshita was the director of Japan's first colour film, *Karumen Kokyō ni Kaeru* (Carmen Comes Home) (1951), suggesting that Shōchiku studios trusted the prolific director with this groundbreaking and expensive project. This trust was no doubt based on Kinoshita's consistent popularity with audiences and critics alike. Despite the sensitive nature of many topics in Kinoshita's oeuvre, and the director's refusal to offer palliative or conciliatory narratives on difficult issues, his films were respected not only by audiences and critics, but also by the Japanese government, which in 1991 awarded him the Order of Culture. In this respect, *Nihon no Higeiki* can be understood as a truly vernacular discursive space, in which large numbers of the diverse postwar Japanese population participated, as demonstrated by the high box office takings indicating large audiences.

#### **Allied interventions: Changes in the structure of the Japanese family**

5. During the Allied Occupation of Japan (1945–1952), the General Headquarters of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (hereafter SCAP GHQ) handed down to the public a set of social reforms designed fundamentally to change everyday life in Japan. While many of these reforms were hailed as successes, others, such as the emancipation of women, are generally acknowledged to have been incompletely assimilated into everyday life.<sup>[5]</sup> In spite of this incompleteness, however, the impact on the postwar family of SCAP's attempts at the emancipation of women cannot be over emphasised.
6. The *ie* (lit. 'house') family system, in which three generations of Japanese families had lived under an elder patriarch, typically cared for by the most junior married woman, was a prime target for SCAP's reform policies. The Occupation's attempt to emancipate women in Japan brought with it several major changes at the level of the family; post-defeat, for example, women were given the right to inherit property and petition for divorce, two major developments which challenged the old inter-dependant three-generation family system. New urban and suburban housing in the 1950s further encouraged a shift in living arrangements, as the desirable modern apartments of the *danchi* housing complexes were designed for a nuclear family rather than multiple generations. Of course, many families, particularly in the countryside, continued to live as three generations under one roof. While popular discourse on changes to the Japanese family structure and loss of Japanese tradition has tended to focus on the developments within cities and suburbs, there remained great differences in both lifestyle and attitude between rural and urban areas.<sup>[6]</sup> During the Occupation and its aftermath however, popular discourse largely reflected SCAP's rhetoric of total social change, from the family level up throughout wider society.
7. The American-style nuclear family with the romantic couple as its centre was positioned as a desirable ideal in cultural production that included film, pulp media and advertising. At the same time, SCAP attempted to destabilise the strong parent-child bonds encouraged by popular interpretations of neo-Confucian ideology, on the grounds that this conceptualisation of the family had been central to wartime Japan's 'feudal' social order. As romantic love became the basis for the nuclear family ideal, young men and women were encouraged to

forego the *omiai* system of arranged marriage and choose their spouses independently. In this respect, ideally if not always in practice, parents were no longer responsible for their children's marriages, and so became further removed from their adult children's lives. Co-education was introduced, bringing the genders together from a young age, and the duration of compulsory schooling was expanded to nine years. Women were further encouraged to enter tertiary education, and to work before marriage, bringing Japan's urban female population out of the home for a good deal longer than had previously been the case. Changes in the consumer market, such as the wide dissemination of electric household goods, decreased housework and posited the modern housewife as a public consumer and a market demographic unto herself. As the nuclear family became both a popular ideal and a reality for many, the roles of wife and homemaker became the subject of public discourse, as evident in the 'Housewife Debates' (*Shufuron*) published in *Fujin Kōron* magazine from 1955. While mass media continued to discuss the role of mothers and ideal modes of childrearing, much popular discourse on women in the family was given over to the husband-wife relationship.

8. The emancipated women from Japan's new romantic modern family unit were visible on billboards, on screen, and in the flourishing public press. SCAP used mass media censorship to encourage the ideal of romantic heterosexual love, and to place the image of the couple at the centre of the family. Producers of films, books and magazines were encouraged to depict happy young men and women choosing their marriage partners freely, and forming modern American-style nuclear families. However, studies on the actual state of the postwar Japanese family indicate that SCAP's reforms penetrated only so far. Koyama Takeshi, investigating for UNESCO in 1961, noted that many young couples still opted for arranged marriages. Relations between husband and wife within the home appear to have remained unequal, and many families upheld the tradition of male inheritance, often at the insistence of women family members.[7] In the immediate postwar period, the divorce rate peaked. This is often attributed to the chaotic state of postwar Japan, and the extreme social upheaval experienced by many families at that time. However, the number of divorce suits instituted by women continued to increase into the post-Occupation era, with 77.2 per cent of all divorce suits brought by wives in 1952.[8]
9. Towards the end of the Occupation, a noticeable gap began to appear between SCAP's reforms and the actual state of life in Japan, a gap that was nowhere more noticeable than in the context of the postwar Japanese family. Reforms that could be enforced in the public spaces of school and work could not be enforced in the private space of the home. As a result, a sharp disjuncture began to appear between public life and private experience. In the popular media, the SCAP-approved post-censorship images that appeared on screen and in print deviated markedly from the actual experiences of everyday Japanese. While the Japanese population had been sold a bright future that did not often translate to personal experience, a great divide opened between the generations old enough to have participated in the war effort, and those who had inherited its results. Epitomised in the *après guerre*, or *apure*,<sup>[9]</sup> the young women and men who had not known the war and who embraced the call to decadence and amorality made by novelist, Sakaguchi Ango's (1906–1955),<sup>[10]</sup> struggled within the environs of the nuclear family. Accused of nihilism and lack of respect, this generation railed against their elders in student protests, on screen and in the pages of the *taiyōzoku* novels made famous by writers such as Ishihara Shintarō (b. 1931).<sup>[11]</sup>

### **The fragmented family on film**

10. Kinoshita Keisuke's *Nihon no Higeiki* characterises this divide in the ravaged relationship of Inoue Haruko, played by Mochizuki Yūko (1917–1977), and her *apure* children, daughter Utako and son Seiichi. Mochizuki rose to fame in the prewar era, playing long-suffering

mother characters in early hahamono ('mother dramas'), the Japanese film genre given over to elegiac images of maternal suffering and stoicism. As Haruko, Mochizuki follows the common genre trope of a mother forced into the *mizu shōbai*, or 'floating world,' of sex work. This long-running pre-war filmic trope continued into the postwar, with actresses such as Kogure Michiyo in Mizoguchi Kenji's *Gion Bayashi* (*Gion Bridge*) (1953), or Tanaka Kinuyo in Ozu Yasujiro's *Kaze no Naka no Mendori* (*A Hen in the Wind*) (1948) earning sympathy from postwar audiences for similar plights. In *Nihon no Higeiki*, however, Haruko's children, brought up in the postwar era of woman's emancipation, choose to believe their mother has abandoned them for a life of pleasure.

11. Since paid labour by women was required to restart the economy in the early postdefeat period, it is interesting that Kinoshita chose to situate Haruko in the older world of the *mizu shōbai* at the end of a decade where women had been conspicuously present in the Japanese workforce. Though the Labour Standards Law was enacted in April 1947, introducing equal pay for equal work (Article 4), maternity leave (Article 65), nursing leave (Article 66) and menstruation leave (Article 67), in reality the number of women in the workplace decreased steadily after the war, mirroring the situation in several nations across the globe, including those victorious in World War II. Haruko's decision to turn to the *mizu shōbai*, and the devastation this wreaks on her family, symbolises the failure of many of SCAP's reforms to achieve real change in everyday lives. There is also the implication, in the emphasis placed on Haruko's age, that the opportunities of the working world are for younger women, and that many Japanese began the postwar already too old to benefit from SCAP reforms. Haruko's situation is contextualised in a newsreel shot, featured midway through the film, of postwar *panpan* sex workers accompanying Allied soldiers in the Tokyo streets. The scene indicates that despite the passing of Imperial Ordinance 9 on 31 January 1947, which punished those who caused women to engage in sex work, the practice clearly remained widespread throughout the postwar period.
12. Kinoshita hints, however, that the apure themselves are no better than their elders; Haruko's daughter Utako, played by Katsuragi Yōko (1930–2007), begins an affair with her married English teacher in exchange for his financial support, while her son, Seiichi, played by Taura Masami (1932–), pursues adoption into a wealthy family, despite the fact that he is almost eighteen. In other words, Kinoshita portrays the literal break up of a family in the sense that the characters end the film no longer tied by even the family name. Yet while all traces of the patriarchal *ie* are gone, the viewer is left in doubt as to whether any social progress has been made. In particular, there is little to suggest that the women of this family have been successfully emancipated. Utako fails to support herself as a seamstress and becomes her older teacher's mistress instead, echoing the narratives of prewar hits such as Mizoguchi Kenji's *Naniwa Ereji* (*Osaka Elegy*) (1934), while Haruko's desperation after a failed attempt to play the stock market results in her suicide. In the final scene, the only ones to publically mourn Haruko's death are her two 'adopted sons,' a cook and a busker who work at the same inn.
13. *Nihon no Higeiki*'s debt to the hahamono genre is openly acknowledged, most notably in a scene in which a drunken Haruko urges the cook to be kind to his mother. Characters repeatedly comment on Haruko's role as a mother throughout the film; the wife of Utako's English teacher remarks, 'It's hard to believe she's your mother.' Through her own and other characters' utterances, Haruko is repeatedly articulated as a mother before any other role. The children, however, clearly display a sense of generational difference and disdain for their mother. Seiichi gives voice to this distaste in a scene in which he and Utako have travelled to their mother's inn, only to be repulsed by the sight of her flirting with a guest. Utako attempts to comfort him, advising, 'We're not like mother. We're different.' Seiichi insists, 'But there will always be women like her.' The articulation of their mother as a 'woman like her,' draws attention to a perceptible inconsistency between the image of the 'mother' and that of the

'woman,' indicating that Haruko's troubles may stem in part from attempting to occupy these two roles simultaneously. The blunt rudeness of the comment, 'a woman like her,' also recalls the contemptuous discursive treatment to which sex workers are often subject; Seiichi is prompted to use the expression after seeing his mother engaging sexually with a customer. Public discourse during the Occupation era separated sex workers from the 'good woman' of everyday life. This polarisation was initially articulated in the immediate aftermath of defeat, when advertisements seeking female workers for the Special Comfort Facility Association (Tokushu Ian Shisetsu Kyōkai), later renamed the Recreation and Amusement Association, explicitly called upon women working in the sex trade to provide a 'human barrier' for the middle and upper class Japanese women imagined to be at risk of rape by the Allied Forces. The first RAA brothel opened on 25 August 1945 and a total of twenty-one ran until 27 March 1946, employing between 55,000 and 70,000 women. The rapid spread of venereal disease caused SCAP to rethink this arrangement, and on 2 February 1946 the rules regulating licensed sex work were abolished. On 14 November 1946, the government declared all contracts of prostitution void.[12] However, the image of the sex worker as a separate category of woman, a 'woman like her,' remained creating a generational fissure between Utako and Seiichi, who identify as lower-middle class, and their working class mother, Haruko.

14. Neighbourhood gossip also articulates an inconsistency in Haruko's roles as mother and working woman in the film narrative. In flashbacks which show the children growing up in the yakeato, or 'burnt-out ruins' of Tokyo, cared for half-heartedly by their uncle and his family, the children pass the neighbourhood's criticism on to Haruko, including such points as their uncle's scorn for her 'flashy' kimono, and his assertion that she enjoys her work at the inn more than her role as a mother. Haruko's role as inn maid and entertainer in the old world of the mizu shōbai clash with postwar perceptions of what it means to be a mother, indicating the split that divides the postwar Japanese family along the lines of pre and postwar expectations of familial roles.
15. While the family portrayed in *Nihon no Higeiki* is of course fictional, Kinoshita's insistence on tying their narrative to that of postwar Japan as a whole through the use of flashback scenes and newsreel footage indicates a connection between the state of the postwar family and the trials and legacy of the Occupation. In the film's title Kinoshita clearly points to the Inoue family as allegory for postwar Japan as a whole. Isolde Standish has suggested that Kinoshita 'links these generational divisions, allegorized through the micro-narrative of the fissures that result in the dissolution of the Inoue family, to the failures of postwar political institutions.' [13] The first shot of the film shows a newspaper with the headline 'War Ends at the Promulgation of an Imperial Rescript' firmly tying the narrative to its postwar context. Newsreel footage of the trial of Tōjō Hideki at the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal follows, along with another newspaper headline proclaiming the emperor exempt from the trials. A minute of newsreel footage culminates in the title 'Eight years since the war's end,' followed by shots of the Diet, and the intertitle 'However politics are still pitiful.' Documentary scenes of protest and demonstrations follow, indicating the turbulent political context of the film. Shots of destitute civilians and the newspaper headline 'Mother-child triple suicide' foreshadow the introduction of the unfortunate Inoue family. This footage continues for almost three minutes before the opening credits, and firmly places the story of the Inoue family within the context of Japan's postwar national crisis.
16. Other newsreel footage is scattered throughout the film, and is used to foreshadow many of the events in the Inoue family's lives. Scenes of Japanese women accompanying American servicemen are featured before Haruko decides to take a job at an Odawara inn, the implication being that the job involves sex work. Fictionalised incidents are also used to emphasise the postwar nature of the Inoues' existence, such as several school scenes shown in flashbacks from the children's perspectives. In the first, a group of young schoolchildren

participate in a co-ed class election, conducted outdoors next to the bombed-out ruin of the old school. A classmate objects to Seiichi's election on the grounds that his mother sells black market rice. The moral hierarchy of the immediate postdefeat is depicted here, as the objecting child insists 'Someone who buys black market rice out of hunger, and the person who sells it are different.' This uneven moral hierarchy is later employed against Haruko, first by her brother-in-law, who looks down on her profession, and later by her children, who despise both her work and her lifestyle. As Takemae Eiji has noted, sex work and the black market were conflated in the popular imagination in postwar Japan, where sex workers 'represented a despised underclass against which better folk defined morality.' [14]

The seemingly unrestrained behaviour of sex workers, their intimate contact with the American occupier and their survival outside of the officially sanctioned economy were unsettling to Japan's dominant élites, with their patriarchal values and notions of racial exclusivity. [15]

These attitudes clearly contribute to the generational gap which causes the fragmentation of the Inoue family, as can be seen in several scenes where Haruko's adult children berate her for her unrestrained drunken or flirtatious behaviour.

17. The camera follows each character into her or his private space, away from the others, giving the viewer a privileged knowledge of the life of each character, knowledge that the other characters lack. Standish notes that this 'all-knowing omniscient placement' works to support 'the protagonists' positions as "victims of the times," as they are only partially aware of their circumstances vis-à-vis the other characters. [16] This strategy also serves to emphasise the distance between the generations, as the children are often shown eating or walking together, while Haruko is usually seen alone or with a man during working hours.
18. The theme of war responsibility running throughout the film further divides the generations of wartime adults from the yakeato jidai, or 'burnt out ruins generation,' symbolised by the children in the film. When a classmate accuses her teacher of having deceived his class by teaching 'bad history,' Utako smiles disbelievingly at the teacher's claim that he, too, was deceived by the military state. In a later scene showing Haruko returning from a foraging trip to the countryside on a packed train, the foragers begin to voice grievances about the hardships they now endure caused by an imperial war they had never endorsed. Several denounce Japan, complaining of a 'senseless' war during which they gave their all for nothing, and also of the difficulties they continue to suffer after being 'liberated' from the oppressive wartime government. The older generation complaining on the train contrasts sharply with the black and white judgement of the schoolchildren, who are encouraged to condemn their elders. The viewer can see the generation gap widening as the pre and postwar generations interpret each other's lives and responsibilities very differently.
19. While the older generation articulates their role as that of protectors of the children, the sense of postwar Japan as a nation still very much in crisis is evoked throughout the first half of the film in newsreel footage showing rioting and firebombing, and in shots of newspaper headlines describing General Douglas MacArthur's call for greater police powers. Since it assists us to understand the extreme danger through which she has guided her young family, the mounting sense of crisis created in the first fifteen minutes of the film works to increase viewer sympathy for Haruko. Flashbacks are also used to encourage empathy with Haruko. In an early scene in the present time of the film narrative, she pleads with Seiichi not to allow himself to be adopted out of the family. In a flashback, we see Haruko with a group of foragers in the countryside, running from the police. As she falls behind the group and tumbles into a ditch, a close up on her face shows her fear. In the present time of the film narrative, the cold-hearted children throw her out, and we are shown another flashback, this time of the crowded train carrying foragers who commiserate together. The understanding

that Haruko finds among her own generation aboard the train contrasts starkly with her children's inability or refusal to understand her postwar reality.

20. Although there are few shots of the occupiers themselves, the presence of English throughout the film hints constantly at the American presence in Japan. Utako studies English while training as a dressmaker, and English is spoken by the conductor of the train on which Haruko travels back to Tokyo with her new patron. The subplot of Utako's English lessons, in which she is pursued by her married English teacher and engages in a battle of wills with his wife, presents another fragmented family narrative. Branded 'a failure of a man,' the English teacher is despised by his wife and daughter, who blame him for their middle-class position in life. Utako's landlady also fights constantly with her husband, and leaves him just at the moment at which Haruko discovers that Utako has run away. The presence of English in the narrative and female characters leaving their families are, in fact, conflated with Utako's running away with her English teacher. In what we might read as a reference to the fracture at the social level of the family of SCAP-enforced emancipation, these negative aspects mirror the media moral panic of 1947, the year in which divorce rates reached a new high of 79,551.[17]
21. Both children eventually leave their mother, Utako for a life as her English teacher's mistress and Seiichi for adoption into a wealthy family whose own son died during the war. Wartime deaths are often used in the narrative to highlight the generational positions of the surviving characters; younger than the wealthy couple's son, Seiichi was not conscripted, and as Haruko points out, unlike Seiichi's dead father, the postwar children are all recipients of a compulsory education.
22. Two other male characters, the cook and the busker at Haruko's inn, are spliced in the generations between Haruko and her children, indicating the possibility for intergenerational understanding, but not at the level of pre and postwar. With experience of wartime suffering, the cook and the busker understand Haruko's life narrative and address her as the mother of the hahamono, admiring her suffering and comparing her to their own mothers. They are able to read the filmic codes of her characterisation while her postwar children cannot. This pair, nonetheless, offers little in the way of hope. While mourning Haruko's suicide, the busker confesses to the cook that he drank the money Haruko gave him to buy food for his mother.
23. Suggesting that his film is a kind of revision of the hahamono, Kinoshita has commented that Haruko is 'not such a splendid mother as those who have appeared up to now in films made in the "mother" genre.'[18] However, the difference between the character of Haruko and the mother characters of earlier hahamono to which Kinoshita refers is unclear. Perhaps Haruko complains a little more frequently, and by the end of the film has failed to secure a brilliant future for her children. She does not succeed in finding a husband for her daughter, for example, while her son secures his future by disowning her. She is often drunk, and cannot protect her children from the realities of her work life, or from the violence visited on them in the course of the narrative. Nonetheless, Haruko tries as hard as she can, and is a sympathetic if occasionally irritating character. Kinoshita's description of her as 'not such a splendid mother' may be based on her generation's complicity with the war effort rather than any serious failings as a mother.
24. Satō Tadao notes that by the time she appeared in Kinoshita's film, Mochizuki had made her name playing mother roles. This suggests that Kinoshita's audience would expect to see the 'splendid mother' of her previous performances and thus experience heightened disappointment in her character in *Nihon no Higeiki*. Sato, however, also points out that Mochizuki's 'tragic visage' appealed to audiences. In other words, in spite of the fact that she was plain and lacking in conventional charm or beauty, audiences would be likely to sympathise with her and thus be unlikely to blame her character, Haruko, for the family breakdown. As the critic explains, 'These melodramatic mother dramas draw sympathy from the typical Japanese mothers in the audience, who share the same feelings, and they make Japanese young people appreciate their own mothers' struggles.'[19]

25. Satō and Yoshida Chieo argue that the popularity of the hahamono genre was based on the viewer's complex identifications with the mother trope, suggesting that viewers took a protective attitude towards the 'little mother' and the 'working sister' characters of shomin eiga, or films about the 'common people'.<sup>[20]</sup> Viewers' sympathy for the suffering mother and their desire to protect her is encouraged by the centrality of the role of the mother in most viewers' personal experience, whether as children or as mothers or potential mothers themselves, creating the conditions whereby 'the audience feels the working mothers' hardship in their hearts.'<sup>[21]</sup> Eiga Geijutsu critic Ito Toshio observes that hahamono were particularly popular with young girls, who may have imagined becoming mothers in the future.<sup>[22]</sup> However, men and women viewers and critics alike record feelings of sympathy and identification with the mother character of the hahamono, suggesting that the codes of the genre work across gender divides, whether the mother character is 'splendid' or not.
26. Tania Modleski argues that all viewers of melodrama are constituted as 'a sort of ideal mother' by the codes and structures of the genre, which position the audience as having a greater knowledge of the situation than any single character (mirroring the concept of 'mother's wisdom'), sympathising with all characters equally (as does a mother's love), and having no agenda of one's own (reflecting a mother's selflessness).<sup>[23]</sup> The characterisations common to melodrama, and the genre's tendency to depict a range of characters and storylines sympathetically, positions the viewer according to the qualities imagined as ideally 'motherly'; observing and affected by events onscreen but discouraged from exclusive identifications or judgements. The viewers of Kinoshita's *The Tragedy of Japan* may have imagined themselves as such kinds of mothers, sympathising with the conflicting claims of the major characters and willing their happiness even in the knowledge that such an outcome is impossible within the conventions of the genre. While Kinoshita's drama depicts the fragmentation of a family along generational lines, its effect on viewers may have been to bring wartime mothers and postwar children together in their sympathy for Haruko, and their acceptance of the impossibility of bringing the fragmented family of the hahamono genre together. Balancing the affective appeal of sympathy or identification with the character of Haruko with an understanding of the narrative requirements of the hahamono genre allows the audience to use the vernacular discursive space of the film to vent emotions related to the fragmentation of the postwar family, and at the same time accept this fragmentation as inevitable.
27. Kinoshita's film is not only embedded in the genre history of the prewar hahamono, but it also referenced the earlier *Nippon no Higeiki* of 1946, scripted and directed by Kamei Fumio. Kamei's film was banned by Occupation censors after only a few days, and in any case it failed to find substantial commercial distribution. However, the film is famous in particular for its final scene, in which an image of the emperor in civilian clothing is slowly superimposed over an image of the wartime emperor. Kamei visually implies that postwar Japanese society is in reality not very different from wartime society, having achieved merely a 'change of clothes.' Kinoshita's film could be read in a similar manner; Haruko's empty death at the end of the film implies that despite the fanfare associated with the claims of the emancipation of women under the Allied Occupation, not much has changed for the mother of the hahamono. Notwithstanding the postwar promotion of the nuclear family structure, the Inoue children each returns to patriarchal prewar social structures for financial support while securing livelihoods under the 'new clothes' of the postwar—Utako as mistress to her English teacher and Seiichi as the adopted son of the wealthy elderly couple. Only Haruko, who is unable to rely on the financial support of her nuclear family unit, has failed to secure her livelihood at the end of the film.
28. With its newsreel footage, Kinoshita's *Nihon no Higeiki* also echoes its namesake stylistically. Kamei Fumio made up the greater part of his 39-minute documentary from newspaper pages, still photographs, and scenes from newsreels and documentaries, some provided by Nichi-ei studios and others taken from American documentary war films of the prewar and wartime



eras. While Kamei, however, employs a strident voiceover that lectures the audience on what they are viewing, Kinoshita dispenses with this, featuring instead Haruko's ragged breathing over many of the flashbacks. When her children run away from her at the Odawara inn, we hear her raucous, relentless laughter extra-diegetically super-imposed over the scene. Here, Kamei's articulate denunciation of the generation that drove Japan to war is reduced to the uncontrolled outbursts of a middle-aged female body in the post-Occupation period. Kinoshita's film can therefore be interpreted as a re-scaling of Kamei's criticism of postwar society to the scope of a family melodrama. In focusing his critical attention on a single family rather than Japan as a whole, Kinoshita personalises Kamei's bleak image of postwar Japan.

## Conclusion

29. Kinoshita's portrayal of the fragmentation of the Japanese family leaves the viewer in no doubt that concern about the collapse of the family as a social institution was present in Japanese public discourse as early as 1953. The year itself is significant, marking Japan's first full year of postwar independence and the Japanese film industry's first year of complete freedom from SCAP censorship. This is in spite of the fact that a form of self-censorship continued under Nihon Eiga Seisaku Renmei or Eiren (The Japanese Association of Filmmakers), formed on 1 March 1947. It is likely that under the Allies' watchful eyes, Kinoshita's criticism of the importation and imposition of the nuclear family structure in Japan would have been subject to severe revisions, or censored completely. That the fragmented family was one of the first topics addressed by Japan's mainstream studio system immediately after the departure of Occupation forces indicates that this had been a burning issue during the Occupation also.
30. While we can clearly read criticisms of both wartime ideology and SCAP-enforced social reform in the narrative of the film, we must also question the role of film itself in the fragmentation of the Japanese family. Hansen writes that modernisation-era cinema 'made this new mass public visible to itself and to society,'<sup>[24]</sup> and indeed Kinoshita's text constitutes the 'appeal to humanity' he wished for in exposing the Japanese family to the full horrors of itself. Perhaps the text can also be read as an intervention against the social role of cinema particularly the cinema produced under Occupation censorship, which did not make postwar Japan 'visible to itself and to society,' but rather held up an ideal image to the Japanese viewer. In the same way that, as noted above, many of SCAP's reforms found their way into public but not private life, many Occupation reforms shown on screen as a putative 'reflection' of everyday life in Japan in reality never took hold. In this sense, the image of the Occupation-era family on film can be seen as a point of fragmentation in itself, dividing the image of the perfect family from the experiential realities of the families of everyday life.

## Notes

[1] The otaku (obsessive fan), the kyōiku mama (education-focused mother), the salaryman dad (a company employee working long hours) or the parasite single (a young working person living in the parental home in order to maximise their disposable income) are key figures in the more recent media discourses of a collapsing society in postwar Japan. The singular focus of each figure is condemned as selfish, wasteful, or excessive, leading to the atomisation of society by lessening social interaction, in popular magazines, newspapers, and television shows.

[2] Isolde Standish, *A New History of Japanese Cinema*, New York and London: Continuum, 2005, p. 205.

[3] Miriam Bratu Hansen, 'The mass production of the senses: Classical cinema as vernacular modernism,' in *Reinventing Film Studies*, ed. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams, London: Arnold, 2000, pp. 332–350, p. 333.

[4] Hansen, 'The mass production of the senses,' pp. 341–42.

[5] Koyama Takeshi, *The Changing Social Position of Women in Japan*, Paris: UNESCO, 1961, p. 45.

[6] Tsurumi Kazuko, *Social Change and the Individual: Japan Before and After Defeat in World War II*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970, p. 229.

[7] Koyama, *The Changing Social Position of Women in Japan*, pp. 45–54.

[8] Koyama, *The Changing Social Position of Women in Japan*, p. 48.

[9] The French term 'apres guerre,' or 'postwar' was interpreted in Japanese as 'apure.'

[10] Sakaguchi Ango, *Darakuron (Discourse on Decadence)*, *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 1 (October 1) (1986): 1–5. Sakaguchi Ango, also known as Sakaguchi Heigo, was an essayist and writer most famous for his 1946 polemic essay, cited here, that incited readers to give in to decadence as a means to 'save' Japan and the Japanese population after defeat in 1945.

[11] The taiyōzoku or 'sun tribe' genre began with Ishihara Shintarō's (1932– ) novel *Taiyō no kisetsu* (*Season of the Sun*, 1955), which won the Akutagawa Prize and was adapted into a film (*Taiyō no kisetsu*, Furukawa Takumi, 1956) featuring his brother, Ishihara Yūjirō (1934–1987). The taiyōzoku genre of novels and cinema depicted wealthy young Japanese living decadent and cosmopolitan lives underscored by violence and nihilism.

[12] Vera Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan: Citizenship, Embodiment and Sexuality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 136.

[13] Standish, *A New History of Japanese Cinema*, p. 205.

[14] Takemae Eiji, *Inside GHQ: The Allied Occupation of Japan and Its Legacy*, trans. Robert Ricketts and Sebastian Swann, New York and London: Continuum, 2002, p. 69.

[15] Eiji, *Inside GHQ: The Allied Occupation of Japan and Its Legacy*, p. 69.

[16] Standish, *A New History of Japanese Cinema*, p. 207.

[17] Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan*, p. 130.

[18] Standish, *A New History of Japanese Cinema*, p. 207.

[19] Satō Tadao, 'Hyumanizumu ni jidai,' in *Kōza Nihon eiga vol.5, Sengo eiga no tenkai* ed. Imamura Shōhei et. al, Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten, 1985–1988: 2–75, pp. 9–10.

[20] Satō Tadao and Yoshida Chieo, *Nihon Eiga Joyushi*, Tokyo: Haga Shoten, 1975, p. 133.

[21] Satō and Yoshida, *Nihon Eiga Joyushi*, p. 223.

[22] Ito Toshio, 'Hahamono to Kankyaku Shinri,' *Eiga Geijutsu*, 7(4) (April 1959): 100–101, p. 100.

[23] Modleski, Tania, *Loving with a Vengeance: Mass-Produced Fantasies for Women*. New York and London: Routledge, 2008, p. 84.

[24] Miriam Bratu Hansen, 'Fallen women, rising stars, new horizons: Shanghai silent film as vernacular modernism,' in *Film Quarterly*, 54(1) (Fall 2000): 10–22, p. 12.