

# **THE TWO WORLDS OF THE TWO UGETSU MONOGATARI**

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Degree: Bachelor of Philosophy

Type of Document: Undergraduate Thesis

School: University Honors College

Program: French and Japanese

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

2010

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

HONORS COLLEGE

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April 28, 2010

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE TWO WORLDS OF THE TWO UGETSU MONOGATARI**

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University of Pittsburgh, 2010

What is it about one work that would inspire another artist to re-explore his own views in that context? The similarities and differences between Akinari's *Ugetsu monogatari* and Mizoguchi's revisititation, *Ugetsu*, reveal tantalizing clues about their authors and the society in which they were created. *Ugetsu monogatari* is the product of Tokugawa-era Japan, a time of a restrictive government that censored works and even imprisoned authors if they voiced disagreement with government policy. *Ugetsu* was filmed in postwar Japan, while the American occupation impressed its own views upon the Japanese film industry. This thesis is an exploration of the factors that may have influenced the plotline and character portrayal in *Ugetsu monogatari* and *Ugetsu*. It examines the differences between Akinari's *Ugetsu monogatari* and Mizoguchi's *Ugetsu* and questions why those differences exist.

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The 1953 film *Ugetsu monogatari*, or “Tales of Moonlight and Rain” in English, directed by Mizoguchi Kenji, is a re-representation of many of the themes presented in Akinari Ueda’s 1776 collection of short stories of the same name. Mizoguchi pulls several important issues from Akinari’s work and depicts them in a new medium.<sup>1</sup> *Ugetsu* is peppered with allusions to Akinari’s stories, from plot similarities to the very names, which serves to cement the thematic connection between the two works. The common themes include the nature of women and their treatment in Japanese society, fidelity and conformity to one’s societal role, and the value of eschewing wealth in favor of enlightenment, among many others. The portrayal of women in both of these works is a many-layered masterpiece, and the nature of their representations in 1776 and 1953 can be used to examine the evolution of women’s representation in Japan’s media, and the state of the women’s movement in Japan. Also, in comparing the representation of the female characters in the 1776 story to that of the 1953 film, one can gain a new understanding of how the usage of the mediums of literature and film relate to gender dynamics in Japan.

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<sup>1</sup> For the sake of convenience, I shall refer to Akinari Ueda’s collection of short stories as *Ugetsu monogatari*, and to Mizoguchi Kenji’s filmic work by its American release name, *Ugetsu*.

What changes between their original portrayal in 1776 and their adapted portrayal in 1953 exist, and why? How do the women in these stories relate to the model of “femininity” of their respective times in history? Are they ideal models of femininity, or do they break the rules? What are Akinari Ueda and Mizoguchi Kenji attempting to show with these characters, and why did they choose this portrayal? In attempting to answer these questions, I will be comparing and contrasting the “two worlds” of Tokugawa Japan and Meiji/Taisho Japan in examining the history of feminism in Japan, including changes in women’s rights and important social issues during 1776 and 1953, the biographies of Mizoguchi and Akinari, and the existing conventions, portrayals, and didactics as pertaining to gender during their respective times.

It is important to note that neither Akinari nor Mizoguchi were “feminists” as such—rather, they worked within the existing artistic traditions of their times to paint their female characters in a moving, resonant manner. To examine their works strictly through the lens of the women’s movement would be to do them an injustice, to render the psychological complexity of their fictional worlds utterly two-dimensional. Instead, I will attempt to present a well-rounded analysis of their works and all of the characters therein, not as men and women, but as people, paying special mind to how their portrayals relate to the gender-related ideals of their respective times.

The changes between *Ugetsu monogatari* and *Ugetsu* include the consolidation of Katsushirō and Toyoo into one character, Genjuro, the changing of Manago the lustful serpent to Lady Wakasa the ghost, and the addition of Genichi, Miyagi’s child, and the Obama/Tōbei plotline to *Ugetsu*. There is a greater emphasis on war in *Ugetsu*, shown in many aspects, including that Miyagi does not die of longing, but is killed by soldiers. These and other important differences will be treated.

I will be examining many ideologies and trends that may have been influential on Akinari and Mizoguchi's representations. Among these are the Tokugawa-era *kokugaku* and *shingaku* philosophies, the literary genre of *kaidan*, and *jōruri* plays, and the naturalism, Noh and *shinpa* theater of Mizoguchi's time. I will also devote time to the question of how Mizoguchi's and Akinari's characters relate to other literary and filmic representations of their times.

## **2.0 UGETSU MONOGATARI AND THE TOKUGAWA ERA**

*Ugetsu monogatari*, or *Tales of Moonlight and Rain* by Ueda Akinari is a collection of nine short stories that was published in 1776. Its complex structure and its plotlines that allude to such literary classics as *The Tale of Genji* established the place of *Ugetsu monogatari* in the Japanese canon, and may be why Mizoguchi ultimately chose to borrow plot elements from two of its stories, “A Serpent’s Lust” and “A Reed-Choked House” when creating the plotlines for his film *Ugetsu*. Using Akinari’s work, we can discuss some of the complexities of the Tokugawa era’s gender politics in preparation for the ultimate comparison between the world of *Ugetsu monogatari* and *Ugetsu*.

### **2.1 THE ORIGINS OF UGETSU MONOGATARI**

The origins of *Ugetsu monogatari* are both diverse and culturally significant. The basic plot arc of “A Serpent’s Lust” is derived from that of a Ming Chinese vernacular tale called “Eternal Prisoner under the Thunder-Peak Pagoda” (Chambers, 157-158), and that of “A Reed-Choked

House,” from a ghost story preserved in the *Konjaku monogatarishū*, or a 30-volume collection of stories taken from Chinese, Indian, and native Japanese sources which dates from the Heian period (794-1185) (Chambers, 93). “This monument of Japanese literature includes over a thousand tales and probably dates from about 1100.” (Tyler, 326.) According to Tyler, the vast majority of the tales in the *Konjaku monogatarishū* are about Buddhism, and some are about Court life, such as little snippets of behavior or anecdotes. “Many of these items can hardly be called stories at all. They interested compilers and readers less as entertainment than as examples of conduct, judgment, or skill.” (Tyler, lii.) These stories should not be confused with folk tales, although a slim number of them could superficially appear as such-- their intended audience was not the common man, but the educated Court elite. With this in mind, one can guess that the stories immortalized in the *Konjaku monogatarishū* were perhaps both recordings of history as the nobles knew it, and also intended as didactics to encourage model behavior. Even the name of the collection itself, which translates as “Tales of times now past,” evokes a sense of history and resonance.

When one compares the intended audience of the *Konjaku monogatarishū* with that of *Ugetsu monogatari*, one immediately gains a sense of the drastic difference between Heian society and Japanese society during the early modern period. Instead of an educated court noble writing for a small circle of the elite, Akinari was a *chōnin*, or a member of the educated merchant class writing for the public, many more of whom were literate consumers of the arts than ever before in Japan’s history. “[...] with the creation of a new socioeconomic structure, the government promotion of education, and the spread of print capitalism [...] by midcentury, almost all samurai-- now the bureaucratic elite-- were able to read, as were the middle to upperlevels of the farmer, artisan, and merchant classes.” (Shirane, 2.) The highest realms of

education, such as Buddhist teachings, Chinese classics, and refined forms of native Japanese art such as flower arrangement, were available for anyone willing to pay to learn, as opposed to the Heian days where such learning was restricted only to the very elite.

The story from which Akinari drew “A Reed-Choked House” has been translated by Royall Tyler, and published in his excellent collection, *Japanese Tales*, pages 190-191. The name, “She Died Long Ago” is of Tyler’s invention. The tale, taken from the *Konjaku monogatarishū*, features a poor man who offers himself in service to the governor of a “distance province.” Upon being accepted, he leaves his similarly impoverished wife for a rich woman who accompanies him to the new province. However, he begins to miss his first wife, so much so that “he could hardly stop himself from rushing back to the Capital.” When the governor’s seven-year term ended, he returns to Kyoto, and to his wife’s house. “Everything had changed. The house seemed uninhabited and was falling to ruin. A wave of anguish swept over him as he gazed at the desolation, lit up as it was by an autumn moon just five days off the full. The night was chilly too. He felt very sad.” He finds his wife lying in the house, who welcomes him with happiness. She tells him she has been living in extreme poverty, without a single servant, and the two talk until almost dawn. The husband then wakes to find, to his horror, “The woman in his arms was dried skin over dead bones.” He runs to a neighbor’s house and asks him, “Where’s the woman who used to live next door?” The neighbor responds, “She? Oh, her husband left her and went off to some province, and she was so hurt she got sick [...] she had no one to take care of her, and last summer she died. Of course, there was no one to dispose of the body either, so she’s still there [...].” The husband leaves, frightened.

This short story, preserved in the *Konjaku monogatarishū*, shows us the original framework upon which Akinari expanded to create “A-Reed Choked House” and its main

characters, the husband, Katsushirō, and his wife, Miyagi. In Akinari's version, both the husband and the wife are infused with a psychological depth that does not exist in the original. "A Reed-Choked House" is continually grounded with concrete details, which gives it an air of credibility and heightens the unearthly effect of the frightening supernatural and horrific elements.

In the *Konjaku monogatarishū* version, which shall from now on be referred to by the name given to it by Royall Tyler, "She Died Long Ago", the man is driven by his poverty to accept a post with a provincial governor which requires him to travel. In "A Reed-Choked House", Katsushirō decides to try selling silk in the capital because of his dislike of his original occupation, rice farming. He sells off his paddies to gain the money to invest in silk to sell and leaves his wife for the capital. He is prevented from returning by roadside bandits, then again by rumors of war that had reached his home province and would block his return. Assuming his wife is dead, he lingers on in the capital for seven years before making his way home again to see what happened to Miyagi. When he returns, Miyagi, unlike the woman in "She Died Long Ago", does not welcome him with happiness, but sobs and tells him of her regrets, and when he wakes, she has merely disappeared, not reverted back into a corpse. In another difference from the original, we are privy to Miyagi's last moments vis-à-vis an old man, who was her friend and neighbor, and who also managed to make her a makeshift grave, which is marked by her last words, a *waka* that commemorates her heartbreak. Katsushiro and the old man attempt to give Miyagi a proper funeral service, and spend the night lamenting her fate.

## 2.2 UGETSU MONOGATARI ANALYSIS

The Miyagi of “A Reed-Choked House” is different in a number of ways from her counterpart in “She Died Long Ago”. The spirit of the wife in the original never explicitly tells the husband of her resentment, but instead gives her wayward husband a false sense of security and happiness by greeting him happily, then relies on the terrible shock of her decomposing body to punish him for the error of his ways. Miyagi is both more active and more passive than her predecessor--more active in that she personally tells her husband of her resentment, but more passive in that she does not personally show her husband that she is dead, but makes him realize it indirectly by disappearing and leaving him to discover her fate when he looks in her room and finds her makeshift grave. Miyagi has more of a voice than the wife in “She Died Long Ago”, through the waka, the old man, and her own words. Similarly, Akinari shows us the aftermath of Katsushirō’s realizations through Katsushirō’s conversations with the old man and their makeshift funeral. One can see the grave extent to which Katsushirō is affected by the consequences of his actions.

*A Serpent’s Lust* has several features similar to that of “A Reed-Choked House”. Its main character, a fisherman’s son named Toyoo, is unsuited to his inherited profession because of his taste for learning and his refined spirit. His father allows him to study under a Buddhist priest for lack of a better option. He is caught in a rainstorm one day, where he meets a beautiful woman named Manago who is traveling without a male escort. Hoping to see her again, he lends her his umbrella. The next day, he goes to collect his umbrella and lingers at her house, where they drink copious amounts of sake together. Manago tells him that she is of noble birth, but her parents and husband are dead. She appeals to him to protect her, and he agrees, telling her that he will even

forsake his filial obligations to do so, saying: “If you are willing to put up with all adversity, than I will do anything to stand by you, forgetting filial obedience and my status for the sake of the mountain of love, where even Confucius stumbled” (Akinari, 164). Manago presents Toyoo with a valuable sword, which she says was owned by her late husband, Agata, a provincial governor. The next day, Toyoo’s family notices the sword, and investigates the story, finding the name “Agata” to be unfamiliar. They realize that the sword was stolen from a nearby temple. Toyoo’s father decides to report Toyoo to the authorities, saying, “For the sake of our ancestors and descendants, I will harbor no regrets over one unfilial child. Turn him in tomorrow morning” (Akinari, 167). The authorities take Toyoo, who tells them of Manago, and together they venture to investigate Manago’s house. They find Manago, who disappears with a clap of thunder, leaving the rest of the stolen treasures on the ground. Toyoo, exonerated but embarrassed, leaves to live with his sister and his sister’s husband, where Manago and her servant find him and convince him that she is not a demon. Pacified, Toyoo and Manago live together until Manago’s demonic nature is revealed to Toyoo by an old man who tends the Yamato shrine. Incensed, Manago and her servant disappear, and Toyoo asks the man how best to protect himself against the snake-demon, Manago. The old man tells him, “You, for your part, have been bewitched by the shape that it took and have lost your manly spirit [...] you must quiet your heart” (Akinari, 173). Toyoo agrees, and marries a woman named Tomiko. Unfortunately, Tomiko soon becomes possessed by Manago, who threatens Toyoo jealously. After many failed attempts, Toyoo’s family is able to exorcise the demon, and Toyoo is freed.

Similar to Katsushirō of “A Reed-Choked House”, Toyoo is dissatisfied with his station in life, and in a sense, longs for a certain kind of social mobility. Instead of applying himself to fishing, he spends his time in pursuits that are idle and pointless for one of his station. He also

comes across as one who is distinctly dreamy and out of touch with the world he lives in-- he did not even realize that there was no provincial governor named Agata. Through both of these stories, the male character's troubles were first launched when they strayed too far from their inherited roles, and their problems were compounded when they continued to act in an unfilial manner. Katsushirō neglected his wife, who according to Tokugawa-era ethics is entirely reliant on him, and Toyoo acts without his father and brother's permission, with a lack of reverence for their authority over him.

### **2.2.1 Influential factors on *Ugetsu monogatari*: kaidan, kokugaku, shingaku, and jōruri**

Besides the basic plot arcs, the two stories are studded with allusions to other Chinese and Japanese literary classics, including *The Tale of Genji* and the *Manyoshuu* (Chambers, 91-93). It makes sense that Akinari as a *kokugaku* scholar, would look to base his stories on such paradigms of Japanese literature. Interestingly, *Ugetsu monogatari* is considered to be the epitome of *kaidan*, or “tales that horrify and excite by employing supernatural elements” (Reider, 1). <sup>2</sup>Tales dealing with the supernatural have existed in Japanese literature almost as long as Japanese literature has existed, but the *kaidan* genre as such was invented in the Tokugawa era. Belief in the supernatural was widespread, even as late as the Tokugawa era. Many citizens of Edo and even the highly educated such as Akinari himself viewed supernatural events and beings as a way of life. As such, one of the past functions of *kaidan*-type stories was as a didactic or a warning for the everyman, although the genre moved away from that function throughout the

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<sup>2</sup> All of the historical information about *kaidan* is from Reider, Noriko T. *Tales of the Supernatural in Early Modern Japan: Kaidan, Akinari, Ugetsu Monogatari*.

Tokugawa era, especially as many *kokugaku* scholars such as Akinari himself explicitly rejected didactic interpretations of literature. “Yet he also acknowledged that tales could be read allegorically, believing that truth could be the basis of entertainment or social criticism” (Reider, 76). Perhaps in rejecting didactics, Akinari was only rejecting those didactics that supported the status quo. I believe that Akinari profits from the reputation of *kaidan* as didactic literature and uses this popular conception to mask his true message, a rejection of the status quo.

A more obvious influence on Akinari’s *Ugetsu monogatari*, and Akinari himself, was the *kokugaku* movement. Similar to *shingaku*, the *kokugaku* movement of which Akinari was a part evolved in the context of the Tokugawa period. *Kokugaku* scholars concerned themselves with recovering and preserving “native” Japanese traditions in art, literature, theater, religion, and political forms. “As a form of scholarship, *kokugaku* can refer broadly to scholarship centered on native Japanese texts, but the term is usually used more narrowly to indicate a certain attitude towards these texts, one that tries to find in them a uniquely Japanese spirit or tradition.” (Shirane, 600.) This search for the Japanese spirit may have influenced Akinari’s choice of sources in writing *Ugetsu monogatari*, as he relied on works such as *Genji monogatari* and the *Konjaku monogatarishū* which are highly regarded in the *kokugaku* philosophy.

Instead of the emperor-centric court of the Heian period, the Tokugawa period (1603-1868) was characterized by the rule of the daimyo, which preserved the feudal class structure while consolidating political power into a strong centralized government. While the Tokugawa government could be said to have been an improvement over the preceding years of internal civil strife, it exercised a higher degree of control over its population, both in the economic and social arenas. It sought to impress strict societal structure, partially because “during the Tanuma era [1767-1786] [...] the shogunate was beset by administrative inefficiency and political corruption.

[...] Ruling authorities began to see moral instruction as one way of restoring the social order.” (Sawada, 12.) The government’s interest not only in educating the public but providing them with a specific kind of “moral education” as a means of social control can be seen in the rise of the *Shingaku* or “heart-learning” movement, which both catered to and exhorted members of the burgeoning middle classes in glorifying the “Way of the Merchant.” *Shingaku* and its accompanying ethos is an important element to consider in relation to the depiction of Tokugawa women in *Ugetsu monogatari* because, as we will see, this aspect of Neo-Confucianism contained many specific exhortations towards Tokugawa women and was pervasive enough to have been influential on commoners.

*Shingaku* as a movement can be said to have grown out of the other religions of Japan: Buddhism, Shinto, Confucianism, and Taoism. “The *Shingaku* openness to different religious elements was shaped by a fundamental premise: human beings can reach moral perfection by experiencing the true nature of the mind.” (Sawada, 4.) As such, education and self-improvement through education is held to be a virtue, as are filial piety, honesty, diligence, and frugality. (Shirane.) *Shingaku* was not merely a remote philosophical, intellectual movement, but one that was effectively communicated to the members of the public through formal education and vernacular literature, such as translated Chinese Confucian tales or stories based on Chinese Confucian tales. According to Janine Anderson Sawada, “Many of these were aimed towards women and girls, such as *The Elementary Learning for Women*, *The Doctrine of the Mean for Women*, *The Analects for Women*, and *The Great Learning for Women*.

The Tokugawa period was a time of strictly enforced societal hierarchy. The Tokugawa government regularly issued edicts to provide clear guidelines pertaining to different societal roles, such as the farmer, the samurai, and the merchant. “This hierarchy of ideal social and

occupational statuses was further complicated by the coexistent operations of a separate sex-gender system.” (Robertson, 89). Much of the flavor of the Tokugawa decrees concerning women was similar to that of the *Shingaku* discourse on women of the same time period. As well as the *Shingaku* texts mentioned above, the women of the time were instructed by less explicit models of behavior as exemplified in popular theater and literature, as well as explicit actions of *baifuku* lawmakers, who in fact had an active role in the conditions and laws surrounding Tokugawa women. “The *baifuku* prohibited women from theater-related and “nonprescribed” labor-- that is, work other than domestic sewing and weaving [...] Women working in nontraditional fields were singled out for resocialization into *baifuku*-defined gender roles” (Robertson, 91). There is historical evidence of such actions being carried out. Aside from the prescribed role of “Good wife, wise mother,” the only other option was entry into a religious order.

The ideal *Shingaku* woman, according to the lectures and writings of *Shingaku* thinkers, differed according to her rank and occupation. The way a farmer’s wife, for example, was expected to behave, was different from the model of behavior for a courtesan. “A woman’s discovery of “original heart” was tantamount to her achievement of the Confucian “six virtues for women”: obedience, purity, goodwill, frugality, modesty, and diligence. Female-likeness was thus best achieved, according to Baigan and his successors, in the context of a marriage,” (Roberston, 94).

Toyoo is also criticized for being too enraptured with Manago, when the old man tells him he has lost his manly heart. Similarly, Manago pursues Toyoo, acts jealous, and vengeful. She certainly does not conform to the Confucian “six virtues for women”: obedience, purity, goodwill, frugality, modesty, and diligence that were touted by the *Shingaku* movement, to be

described in greater detail later, and one of its contributors, Teshima Toan, as the ideal for women. Interestingly, “In Toan’s view, [...] females who strayed from *onnarashi* deportment were monsters disguised as humans. Because of her negatively valued sex, a female who did not discover her original heart (*honshin*) merely accelerated her descent to the level of beasts” (Robertson, 94). A woman’s “original heart” her conformity to the six virtues for women, was what separated her from a monster. Manago, who is truly a demon, cements the link between acting monstrously and being a monster.

In reviewing these facts, I am attempting to establish that the prescribed social models of appropriate female behavior were implicit, explicit, and in fact, actively enforced. The model of Tokugawa-era femininity (or merchant or samurai or any other status) was not merely a distant ideal, but one that truly impacted the lives of the people. That being said, we have limited evidence as to how Tokugawa women felt about their prescribed roles, and if most of them existed as conformists or rule-breakers, or somewhere in between.

As stated above, there existed a number of instructional texts, penned by prominent figures in the *Shingaku* movement. There is evidence that women were exposed to *Shingaku* teachings. Kenkan, a *Shingaku* adherent and thinker, “[...] noted that her morning lectures drew a peak audience of 700-900 women and men, and her afternoon and evening sessions some 1,200 persons,” (Robertson, 103) when she was eulogizing in Edo. The number of female writers fell drastically between the Heian and Tokugawa eras, and Tokugawa women as a whole were significantly less literate than Tokugawa men. However, Haruno Shirane tells us in *Early Modern Japanese Literature: an Anthology, 1600-1900* that there was still a market for female-aimed literature, and women were avid consumers of the performance arts such as theater, kabuki, and *jōruri*, as well as the published scripts of *jōruri* plays.

“Many eighteenth-century jōruri depict women who must suffer as a result of their husband’s infidelity or lack of concern, although the actions of these men are rarely punished. [...] But these female characters are not simply exemplaries of Confucian self-sacrifice and devotion; instead, they reveal the extremely difficult position of women” (Shirane, 14). Akinari’s women seem to relate to this model.

### 2.3 ANALYSIS

Miyagi and Manago of *Ugetsu monogatari* provide two different extremes of the portrayal of the Tokugawa woman. On the one side, there is Miyagi, the faithful, intelligent woman whose fate was decided by her neglectful husband. On the other, there is Manago, who shows us the nature of women who stray from their prescribed gender roles, and the punishment of men who allow them to do so. But as Shirane accurately points out, there are multiple levels to these characters. A superficial reading of the plotlines would show that Miyagi is the ideal Tokugawa woman, and Manago is a moral lesson in gender roles. However, perhaps the portrayal of these characters is more nuanced than that analysis would suggest. For example, at the beginning of *The Kibutsu Cauldron*, another story from *Ugetsu monogatari*, Akinari addresses the reader with the following:

“A jealous wife is intractable, but with age, one knows her merits.’ Alas! Whose words are these? [...] there is no telling how many since ancient times have suffered this poison. The kind who, after death, vents her wrath by turning into a serpent or a violent thunderbolt will never rest [...] The husband who behaves uprightly and instructs his wife carefully can surely escape this affliction;

and yet with some trivial thing he will incite her perverse nature and bring grief upon himself. It is said that ‘what controls a bird is the human will, what controls a wife is her husband’s manliness.’ Truly, this is so.” (Akinari, 142).

While superficially this passage seems to be a condemnation of such ‘jealous women’, and an affirmation of the attitude that fosters it, the story that follows is an outright example of the wayward husband getting what he deserves. In *The Kibutsu Cauldron*, the two seemingly opposite feminine tendencies portrayed by Miyagi and Lady Wakasa are reconciled in one character, Isora, demonstrating a perception of human nature as being fluid, mutable, and not clearly ‘good’ or ‘evil.’

While we get the sense that Katsushirō, Toyoo, and Manago are deserving of their fate in some sense due to their innate failings as members of their designated lots, their characters evoke some degree of sympathy nonetheless. There is the implicit idea that, in some sense, their fate was inevitable due to their inadequacies, of which they share only a small degree of responsibility. Toyoo even says to Manago, “You terrify me. Nevertheless, your love for me is, in the end, no different than the love that humans feel” (Akinari, 179) implying that she is driven by her demonic nature and not responsible for it. The one character that can be truly said to be blameless and in conformance with her prescribed role is Miyagi, and her fate could be said to be the saddest of all. One gets the sense in these stories that society precludes happiness, whether or not its laws are broken.

Akinari, similar to both Katsushirō and Toyoo, was unenthusiastic about his lot. Adopted into a merchant family, he ran the shop that he inherited from his adopted father until it was lost in a fire. Eventually he turned to the study of medicine, then finally, to earning his living with his pen. “In China during the late Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) *wenren* (Chinese literati) found their freedom of expression restricted, often for socio-economic and political reasons. In response to

these constraints, the *wenren* [...] found consolation as well as livelihoods in the act of artistic creation. [...] By the eighteenth century, Japanese literati, *bunjin*, were feeling similar constraints” (Reider, 70). The restrictive Tokugawa government strictly fixed men and women into their gender or occupational roles. Even an intelligent, promising person such as Akinari had little hope of a future outside his inherited social class. Besides societal rank, the government also restricted publishing, banning works that criticized its practices and often punishing their authors.

Akinari takes advantage of the *kaidan* genre’s literary history as a didactic genre, making his characters appear as though they are being punished for transgressing societal laws when in fact they exist in challenge and defiance of them. *Ugetsu monogatari* is set, as were many works of this time period, far in the past, the better to escape the scrutiny of Tokugawa censorship. The women and men in *Ugetsu monogatari* give the appearance of being didactics of Tokugawa-era societal roles, but Akinari’s life, his rejection of didactics that support the status quo, and the fates of his characters would lead us to believe otherwise. Miyagi and Manago are not prescriptions for Tokugawa women to follow, but depictions of the unfortunate inevitability of unhappiness that results from the strict governmental control of Tokugawa society.

### **3.0      UGETSU AND THE MEIJI, TAISHO, AND SHOWA PERIODS**

After the Tokugawa era, Japan opened to the West and in its attempt to “modernize,” reorganized its government under the reign of the Meiji Emperor. The four-class society and restrictions on employment that so plagued Akinari and his compatriots was abolished, and many other governmental and societal reforms were made. As major institutions of Japanese society were being re-evaluated, the position of women came under scrutiny. “By 1874 the discussion of women’s issues was country wide; arguments were full of contradictions, and the debate itself, carried in growing numbers of newspapers and periodicals [...] it is clear from the statements and actions of Japanese women in the following decade that they were reading and listening to the issues in this debate with a great deal of interest” (Sievers, 16). Official governmental policy changes included mandatory elementary education for girls and the official abolition of prostitution.

Both the Japanese government and women themselves in the Meiji period were exploring and redefining the role of women. “State propaganda exhorted women to contribute to the nation through their hard work, their frugality, their efficient management, their care of the old, young, and ill, and their responsible upbringing of children” (Nolte & Hastings, 152). Similarly, it continued to espouse the “Good wife, wise mother” slogan. On the other side, there existed an academic discourse concerning polygamy, popular rights, and equal rights for women that often

featured input from women themselves. Prominent female voices during this period include Yoshioka Yayoi, Tsuda Umeko, Hani Motoko, and many others. The Meiji period is considered by many to be the beginning of the women's movement in Japan.

Women's engagement in the public sphere was more than academic. There are concrete historical records of the massive female workforce in and after the Meiji period. “[Women] constituted an average of 60 percent of Japan’s industrial labor from 1894 to 1912” (Sievers, 55).

### **3.1 MIZOGUCHI’S LIFE**

Mizoguchi Kenji was born on May 16, 1898, in the midst of this period of tumultuous political and social redefinition for Japan. His family quickly fell on hard times after his father decided to pursue an unsuccessful business making raincoats during the Russo-Japanese war (February 10 1904-September 5 1905). His elder sister, Suza, was sold to a geisha house. During her career as a geisha, she became the mistress of the Viscount Matsudaira Tadamasa and eventually married him. Suza became the sole supporter of her family, paying for everything, including her mother's hospitalization and funeral. While Mizoguchi often depicts prostitutes and prostitution in his works, as well as poverty, it is difficult to say whether his personal life story was a direct cause. In any case, one can clearly see Mizoguchi's intellectual influences in his choices of *Ugetsu's* source material, even while other possibly influential factors remain unclear.

### 3.2 ORIGINS OF UGETSU

In *Ugetsu*, according to Keiko McDonald, the two major plotlines are ostensibly based on *A Serpent's Lust* and “A Reed-Choked House” from Akinari Ueda’s *Ugetsu monogatari* as well as *Decoré*, a short story by Guy de Maupassant, a French writer of the naturalist movement. The two Akinari tales were combined in one plotline, while the other plotline was even more loosely based on *Decoré*. The tales of Tōbei and Katsushirō are collapsed into one storyline, while the other storyline is devoted to Mizoguchi’s Maupassant-inspired plot.

*Decoré* is a short story in which a man, Alexander, becomes obsessed with earning the Legion of Honor. He neglects his wife in pursuit of this decoration. She starts an affair with Rosselin, the man who was offering Alexander guidance in earning the Legion of Honor. Alexander returns home to find a jacket with the Legion of Honor on it. His wife convinces him that he has secretly been awarded the Legion of Honor, and he is too blinded by joy to see the truth-- that the jacket is Rosselin’s. To avoid being discovered, Rosselin maneuvers to have Alexander awarded the medal. Mizoguchi took only a germ of an idea from this story, that of a man who is self-absorbed to the point of idiocy, neglects his wife and in effect, exchanges his wife’s honor for the attainment of his dream. In Mizoguchi’s version, the pathos lies in the lot of the neglected wife and not entirely on the foolish husband.

### 3.3 UGETSU'S PLOT

*Ugetsu* features two couples-- Ohama and Tōbei, and Genjuro and Miyagi. Genjuro and his wife, Miyagi, make pottery with Ohama and her husband, Tōbei.<sup>3</sup> All four main characters are farmers, but pursue pottery as well. The film, like *Ugetsu monogatari*, is set during the Sengoku period in Japanese history (1467-1573). The film begins with Genjuro realizing that he can make large profits during wartime when he manages to sell his wares in town for huge sums of money. Tōbei, Genjuro's neighbor, accompanies him on his trip to town in order to try and become a samurai against the advice of his wife and village. Genjuro's wife, Miyagi, while happy with the wares and presents he has brought, emphasizes that to her, family and her husband matter the most. Genjuro, however, is blinded by greed. He starts to work relentlessly, neglecting his child, Genichi, and his wife. Miyagi obediently helps him produce his pottery, but warns him against his new priorities-- "All I want is for us to work together happily-- just the three of us. I don't care about anything else." Even the village headman notices, telling Miyagi, "What wild ambition! And Genjuro is just as bad as Tōbei, really. I don't object to seizing an opportunity, but gains made in wartime have a way of vanishing into thin air. And it doesn't take much money to work up a greedy appetite." Ohama, wife of the ambitious Tōbei, is even less subtle in her criticisms than Miyagi. "You don't even know how to hold a spear! And you think you'll be a great samurai? Stick to what you know. Don't go running off after bad luck." Unfortunately, neither Tōbei nor Genjuro listen to their wives. Even a raid on the village does not deter Genjuro from risking his life to complete his work. Miyagi, Genjuro, Genichi, Ohama, and Tōbei head off

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<sup>3</sup> All dialogue translations used are taken from *Ugetsu-- Kenji Mizoguchi, director* by Keiko McDonald.

to the city to sell their wares, even going as far as to take a boat since the roads are too dangerous. In a haunting scene on the lake, the group encounters a dying man floating in a boat on the lake. He tells them he has been attacked by pirates, warning, “When they catch you, they will take your cargo and your life. Women they take with them. Beware...” He dies. Frightened, the group leaves Miyagi and Genichi on the shore despite her pleading. Genjuro promises her he will be back in less than ten days, and she watches them leave with tears in her eyes.

The scene shifts to the marketplace in town. Tōbei runs off after a group of samurai, taking the earnings with him to go to try to buy a sword and armor. Ohama chases after him futilely. Meanwhile, a beautiful, noble woman orders a large amount of Genjuro’s wares and asks him to deliver them to his mansion. Ohama, lost after chasing after her husband, is accosted and raped by a group of soldiers.

When Genjuro delivers the noblewoman’s order to her mansion, he pauses by a kimono stand. The shopkeeper, scoffing, warns him that the wares are too expensive for the wife of a man like him. Genjuro assures the man that he can afford it. Gazing at the kimono, he pictures Miyagi examining the kimono delightedly. He is interrupted by the noblewoman and her nurse, who guide him to the mansion. In the mansion, the noblewoman, Lady Wakasa, pays him many compliments on his wares, and dances for him. When she dances, the ghostly presence of her late father makes itself known as it chants from an ornamental helmet. Lady Wakasa explains that her entire clan, the Kutsuki clan, was exterminated by Oda Nobunaga. Lady Wakasa and her nurse convince Genjuro to marry Lady Wakasa.

As Genjuro and Lady Wakasa idle their days away in bliss, Miyagi is violently killed by starving soldiers. In the meantime, Tōbei manages to steal the head of the already dead enemy commander, and use it to gain a horse, a suit of armor, and men. Proudly, he parades home,

followed by his men. The proprietors of houses of prostitution along his path try to convince him to sample the pleasures of the establishments. His men beg him to stop, but Tōbei demurs, saying, “No! I’m going straight home. I want to show my success to my wife. I don’t have time to spare.” Finally, he is convinced to stop at a brothel, where he discovers his wife, Ohama, as she overtakes a customer who is trying to leave without paying her. Tōbei, shocked, confronts Ohama. Ohama at first tries to brush him off derisively, but then breaks down. Running outside, she tries to throw herself down a well as Tōbei stops her. He apologizes profusely. Crying, Ohama says, “I wanted to kill myself so many times. But I couldn’t, because I wanted to see you just one more time. I hated myself for that desire! Still, I couldn’t bear to kill myself without seeing you again! I couldn’t die!”

Genjuro, meanwhile, discovers the true nature of Lady Wakasa when a Buddhist priest stops him on the road and warns him that he is headed for ruin. “Don’t you have a home? Family? If so, rejoin them quickly. If you stay here much longer, you’ll die. Go quickly--home!” Genjuro protests, but the priest says, “You have been beguiled by a forbidden kind of love. Don’t you love your family? Do you want to sacrifice your wife and children and your life, too?” Genjuro, realizing that Lady Wakasa is a ghost, returns to the mansion, protected by Sanskrit characters painted on his body. Lady Wakasa and her attendant, realizing that they have been discovered, try to prevent him from leaving with guilt, threats, and physical restraints. The nurse asks, “Why did you wed my lady when you had a wife already? A man’s mistake is overlooked, but a woman’s...” It is revealed that Lady Wakasa died before she had known a man’s love, so she has returned to rectify that error. Genjuro manages to escape, and faints outside the manor.

He is found the next morning by officials who accuse him of stealing the sword he used to escape the Kutsuki manor. They take his money and let him go. Dazed, Genjuro starts on his way back to Miyagi.

He returns to his village, where he is greeted by Miyagi. Overjoyed, she greets him. He tries to explain, but she brushes off his attempts, saying that she is simply happy that he is back. He curls up and goes to sleep as Miyagi quietly tidies up and mends his robe. The scene fades to the morning, when the people who had been caring for Genichi knock at the door. Genjuro greets them, and then calls for Miyagi. Confused, the visitor explains that Miyagi was killed by soldiers. The movie ends by showing us Genjuro, Ohama, and Tōbei living as they did before, while paying respect and remembrance to Miyagi's spirit. The last moments of the film show Genjuro going about his daily tasks, like cooking and making pottery, while Miyagi's disembodied voice comments. Finally, Genjuro hands Genichi a bowl of food. Genichi takes the bowl, runs outside, and places it on his mother's grave as an offering. The camera pans up to show the entire village, then the movie ends. The ending of the film, supposedly, was the result of a compromise of Mizoguchi's original vision. Mizoguchi wanted a decidedly more pessimistic film, but Daiei, the production company, would accept only a happy or at least neutral ending. (Sato, 113).

Through *Ugetsu*, one can see the unique mingling of Mizoguchi's influences. Notable aspects of *Ugetsu* include its pessimism, its representation of works of literature, its antiwar sentiment, its concrete setting and its supernatural elements. It is impossible to say which of the influences on Mizoguchi are responsible for each feature, as they overlap in many of their characteristics. In fact, it is more likely that Mizoguchi's inspiration comes from multiple sources as well as his own ingenuity.

### **3.4 INFLUENCES ON *UGETSU*: NATURALISM, NOH, SHINPA, AND THE OCCUPATION**

Mizoguchi, born as he was into a family that was not economically stable, had a very low level of formal education. However, he read many works of literature, including “such nineteenth-century European writers as Leo Tolstoy, Emile Zola, and Guy de Maupassant, along with the major Meiji novelists Soseki Natsume, Koyo Ozaki, Kyoka Izumi, and Kafu Nagai” (McDonald, 18). Subsequently, he was interested in naturalism as a movement. He was also influenced by Noh, often incorporating aspects of Noh into his works in order to avoid relying too heavily on Western forms of representation, and to infuse a more traditional feeling into films that could not be based too closely on pre-Occupation values. Similarly, his early work in film studios was during the development and production of *shinpa*, a form of Japanese theater which often features melodramatic storylines, hence the elements of *shinpa* present in his films. A more thorough discussion of *shinpa* elements is to follow shortly.

Through *Ugetsu*, we can see Mizoguchi’s complex interweaving of various sources. The literary movement of naturalism features the use of detailed realism to point out that environmental factors and heredity exert an inescapable force in shaping the character of humanity. It was a reaction to idealized genres such as romanticism, surrealism, and realism. In Japan, the sequence of literary movements followed that of Europe, the only difference being that what happened in Europe over the span of hundreds of years was in Japan compressed into

about 50 years. “When we look at Meiji literature as keeping pace with the advancement of modern European literature, we are able to make the following distinctions: prior to 1886, the Enlightenment; the era of Classicism until about 1894; from then until about 1905, the transitional period from Romanticism to Realism; thereafter until 1912, the period from Naturalism to Neo-Romanticism and Decadence; the era of Neo-Idealism after the entry into Taisho” (Okazaki, 26).

As stated previously, Mizoguchi’s influences are both literary and non-literary, and very varied. Consistent with the pessimism of naturalism, melodramatic *shinpa* theater seems a complimentary influence. *Shinpa*, or New School Theater, is considered by many to be the origin of modern film. Until the 1920s, it was the most popular form of theater. “The term *shinpa* film is confusing. It is loosely used to denote theater-derived dramatic productions such as those mentioned above as well as comedies and any other type of story with a setting later than the 1880s that was made during this period” (Bernardi, 39). Films influenced by *shinpa* were also influenced by Western romantic melodramas and kabuki. “The two leading male roles were based on long-accepted concepts: that of a strong and reliable man who does not form any attachments; and that of a frivolous and unreliable but handsome man, a matinee idol, specializing in love scenes” (Sato, 20).

Women in *shinpa* were initially played by *onnagata*, the female impersonators of the kabuki tradition. Their characters, like the content of the films, were generally based on “family novels” adapted to film. During the Meiji era, Western dramas in which women were generally portrayed differently than in traditional Japanese plotlines were brought to Japan. Tadao Sato tells us, in so many words, that seeing women as an important factor in the decisions made by the male characters as well as deserving of the respect that in Japan had previously been reserved

only for parents and elders was surprising for the general Japanese audience, and while these plotlines were generally eschewed because they were too “fanciful,” “Love as an ideal-- which people began to take some pride in [...] was adopted by a small section of progressive individuals of the upper classes” (Sato, 19) and can be seen as an influence in some works of literature of the time. Many *shinpa* of this time featured novels adapted to film.

One could say that the Meiji era, with its expansive influx of new thought, opened such artists as Mizoguchi to the same Western influence visible in *shinpa*. However, it is important to note that “[...] to a certain extent, the outside influences of the Meiji era were accepted only after they had been Japanized, and the traditional spirit which accepted them is a part of the stream of literature from the earliest times [...] tradition was not only preserved but was further developed.” (Okazaki, 11). Similarly, both the social and feminist consciousness that grew in Japan during and after the Meiji era was a natural reaction to an environment conducive to the questioning of previous social and political norms. Thus this social and feminist consciousness may have been influenced by Western thought, but cannot be said to have been necessitated by it.

The individual-centric ethos of Christianity is also commonly cited as an underlying cause for the shift in the view of women during the Meiji era, although the Meiji era was by no means the first contact Japan had had with Christianity. Christianity had been initially introduced to Japan during the Muromachi period (1336-1573) but it was suppressed during the Tokugawa period. (Kasahara) The Meiji period triggered a renewed interest in Western thought, and philosophy and art of the Christian West may have re-transmitted individual-centric values on a larger scale. Whether an emphasis on the individual can be seen as Christian or merely Western

remains to be determined, as does the concrete effect this influence had on the general populace's attitudes towards women or Western-style courtships.

At the dawn of the film era, during the Taisho period (1912-1926), the screen was populated with love melodramas and films that highlighted the suffering of women, based in part on adapted literature of the time. However, "After *The Warm Current* in 1939 love melodramas gradually ceased to be made, as Japanese citizens were required unselfishly to give up romantic love, as well as any other private desires, for the sake of the nation" (Barrett, 130). However, romantic films that were based on women's liberation were encouraged under the Occupation, starting in 1945. It is possible that the Occupation's emphasis on women's liberation in film was some sort of misguided or ill-informed attempt to "democratize" Japan through its women to instill American values on the losers of World War II. Similarly, films that hearkened back to pre-Occupation "undemocratic" values were discouraged. Mizoguchi's use of *Ugetsu monogatari* by Ueda Akinari as source material neatly allowed him to evoke a traditionally "Japanese" feel while broaching a more modern subject matter without arousing the disapproval of the Occupational regime. Mizoguchi masks his true themes by hiding them in Akinari's plot, and setting them far enough in the past that they are not obvious enough to disturb the authorities. Mizoguchi makes important changes to Akinari's storylines in order to accomplish these goals.

As in works of naturalism, one gets the sense that the characters are irrevocably influenced and their actions determined by their environment. Interestingly, treating subjects in a naturalistic manner usually meant depicting them hyper-realistcally and eschewing the idealistic, surrealistic, or supernatural, but the characters in *Ugetsu* are, as one could say, naturalistically shown supernatural. Again, like Akinari's *Ugetsu monogatari*, the film is

anchored by concrete details such as its settings and its time period. These details evoke naturalism while heightening the supernatural, *kaidan*-esque elements of the plot. Also, the pessimism typical of naturalistic works permeates the film.

Noh elements are present in the film's soundtrack and presentation- for example, when Lady Wakasa dances, the voice of her ghostly father is heard chanting from a helmet in a manner reminiscent of the chorus of a Noh play. Her face is made up like a female Noh mask. Elements of *shinpa* can be seen in the characters. There are two main male characters, a trait common in *shinpa*, even though all of the source literature features only one male. In *shinpa* one male lead was supposed to be strong, reliable, and not form attachments and the other, an unreliable romantic. Mizoguchi seemingly plays on these concepts in that both of his characters, Genjuro and Tōbei, are unrealistic, unreliable, and unattached in different ways. *Shinpa* “exemplified (among other things) the conflict between old and new views on the importance of conjugal love and tragedies about women oppressed by a male upper class” (Bernardi, 51) and the Miyagi/Genjuro plotline certainly evokes these themes.

### **3.5 BARRETT'S ARCHETYPES OF JAPANESE FILM**

In analyzing the women in Mizoguchi's film, it is instructive to consider them in relation to various archetypes of Japanese film. Even though Mizoguchi's characters achieve a depth and complexity not found in a simple archetype, the differences between the archetypes and Mizoguchi's characters are telling. “Characters are the constituents of realistic drama and literary

art. Archetypes are the stuff fantastic entertainments and commercial films are made of. Yet, archetypes are probably the best way to study popular culture, since they are not only the focus of popular sentiment but also the simple embodiments of endearing values” (Barrett, 14). As identified by Gregory Barrett in his analysis of Japanese film, three possibly applicable archetypes are the vengeful spirit, the passive male and the suffering female. While Barrett’s overarching descriptions of archetypes in Japanese film can be broadly applied in a useful way, I will argue against his specific categorization of Miyagi and Lady Wakasa as protective and vengeful spirits respectively, while paying heed to what the differences between the filmic archetypes of the protective/vengeful spirit and the characters of Miyagi and Lady Wakasa can tell us.

According to Barrett, the vengeful spirit archetype in Japanese films is usually a wronged woman. This archetype draws off artistic precedent in literature and theater. She exists because the resentment she has against the man who wronged her is strong enough to keep her from the afterlife. She represents justice through revenge, however a vengeful spirit can become a protective spirit if pacified properly. Barrett uses the two ghosts of *Ugetsu* as examples of the vengeful spirit (Lady Wakasa) and the protective spirit (Miyagi). He claims that because Lady Wakasa is a malevolent, vengeful spirit in that she died before she could marry and have children, producing no descendants to pacify her with memorial rites. She “bears the living world a grudge because she missed out on a major phase of the life cycle” (Barrett, 105). Conversely, Miyagi is a protective spirit, since she has a family to honor and remember her.

However, there are points to consider in opposition to Barrett’s argument. Lady Wakasa is not nearly as vengeful as Manago, the original snake demon in Akinari’s *Ugetsu monogatari*. In watching the movie, one gets the sense that she is merely a pawn of circumstance, that her

presence in this world is due more to regret than vengeance. The negative influence she exerts over Genjuro is merely another aspect of her existence that is not strictly intentional. When Genjuro reveals that he already has a wife and child, she is hurt in the same way that an ordinary woman would be, not angry like a vengeful spirit or Akinari's snake demon. They even refer to her in relation to the status of women in general, referencing their passive status: "Why did you wed my lady when you had a wife already? A man's mistake is overlooked, but a woman's..." Similarly, Miyagi appeared to Genjuro as a kind, protective spirit even before she was offered gifts of food and worshipped by her family. I believe Miyagi's appearance relates more to her lingering desire to see her husband than to her transformation into a protective spirit, a desire parallel to the desire of the living Obama, which I will discuss in more detail later. Likewise, I am inclined to believe that Lady Wakasa, while she is fiercely powerful when wronged, is not necessarily a malevolent, man-hating, vengeful spirit, but a lonely ghost whose lingering regret was that she never got to experience "a woman's joy". I believe that these characters linger out of attachment and interpersonal bonds rather than out of malevolence. These characters are too complex to be simple archetypes, and do not strictly fit the mold.

The Obama/Tōbei plotline is relatable to another archetype as identified by Barrett-- the all-suffering female and the passive male. Again, the categories are not a perfect fit, although Obama is certainly the all-suffering female. Tōbei is not exactly the passive male archetype, as it is not his passivity that causes Obama's suffering, but his neglect of her in favor of his own desires. Also, he ultimately reforms in face of Obama's fate, and actively rectifies his wrongdoings.

These archetypes-- the vengeful spirit, the all-suffering female, and the passive male, are merely shallow filmic conventions to which it is worthwhile to compare *Ugetsu* for the sake of

showing the latter's complexity. The psychological depth of the characters, especially of the ghosts, is worthy of analysis in a historical and literary context as well.

### **3.6 THE WOMEN OF UGETSU AS GHOSTS**

The expectation that one brings to ghost stories in the Japanese tradition is that the departed has returned in order to address a lingering resentment. Both Miyagi and Lady Wakasa conform to this expectation. Interestingly, Ohama expresses the same idea when she tells Tōbei, “I wanted to kill myself so many times. But I couldn’t, because I wanted to see you just one more time. I hated myself for that desire! Still, I couldn’t bear to kill myself without seeing you again! I couldn’t die!” Ohama, like Miyagi and Lady Wakasa, is unable to release her resentments and desires and truly depart this world. These characters seem to have almost a didactic function, as reminders to men not to neglect or mistreat the women in their lives. As ghosts whose resentments keep them from moving on, their origins may lie in a Buddhist-inspired didactic against forming strong attachments in this world, however, I doubt that their intended function in this film is in any way related to that original moralistic function. Rather, their existence more likely recalls older characters in literature while supporting Mizoguchi’s more compassionate rendition of his female characters.

## 4.0 ANALYSIS

Both the differences and the similarities that exist between Akinari and Maupassant's characters and their filmic counterparts are telling. In both *Ugetsu* and *Ugetsu monogatari*, the husband nurses dreams that are above his station. In *Ugetsu*, Genjuro wants to profit from selling wares during wartime, similar to Mizoguchi's father. In *Ugetsu monogatari*, Katsushirō merely dislikes farming and decides to attempt becoming a merchant. Katsushirō's fate is thus probably more tied to Akinari's feelings about the class rigidity of Tokugawa society while Genjuro's character possibly mimics the fate Mizoguchi envisions for the foolish entrepreneur who tries to profit in shortsighted schemes during wartime. Tōbei's dreams of social mobility render him utterly pathetic, similar to the character in the Maupassant story, except Tōbei tries to take advantage of the confusion of war to change his fate while the *Decoré* character does not. In both *Ugetsu* and *Ugetsu monogatari* the Genjuro/Katsushirō character is separated from Miyagi by war, however Katsushirō gives the sense that he enjoys the luxurious capital life too much to worry about his wife, while Genjuro is seduced both by luxury and another woman. In *A Serpent's Lust*, Manago is a ruthless snake demon who relentlessly pursues Toyoo, while Lady Wakasa is a lustful ghost. Manago is portrayed as considerably more evil than Lady Wakasa, who seems not to truly want to hurt anyone. Yet, both are humanized to different extents-- Toyoo sees humanity in Manago when he says, "You terrify me. Nevertheless, the love you feel for me is, in the end, no different

than the love that humans feel” (Chambers, 179). Lady Wakasa is referred to as a woman, and seems to function in much of the same way. For example, she does not already know that Genjuro is married with a child, and is saddened to hear of it, and even more sad to be left by him. The theme of men abandoning their wives, their proper duties, and their loyalties while their wives retain their loyalty and sense of duty to their husbands is common to both versions. Both Miyagi characters are chaste throughout the separation from their husbands, Akinari’s Miyagi because she guarded her chastity against the suitors who accosted her, and Mizoguchi’s Miyagi only in contrast to her unfortunate counterpart, Ohama. The chastity of Mizoguchi’s Miyagi reflects less on her character than the chastity of Akinari’s Miyagi, but Mizoguchi’s Miyagi demonstrates other positive qualities over which she has more control.

A significant consistency is that in both *Ugetsu* and in *Ugetsu monogatari*, Genjuro/Katsushirō is lured into complacency by the appearance of Miyagi’s ghost. Then, he wakes up to find her gone, seeks her, and then realizes that she is dead. The psychological complexity of the process of realization-- hope, shock, denial, and grief-- humanizes the male character. Through it, the reader or viewer can see that he realizes the repercussions of his actions, and we can realize them with him.

In “She Died Long Ago”, the husband wakes up next to a corpse rather than his wife simply disappearing, and he must find a neighbor to tell him what happened. In “A Reed-Choked House”, the wife’s corpse is in the house, but has at least been buried in a makeshift grave, and Katsushirō wakes up to find his wife gone and his house deteriorated. He finds a neighbor who tells him his wife’s tale-- the man who made his wife’s grave. The narration stays with Katsushirō long enough to show him conducting a funeral for his wife. In *Ugetsu*, Miyagi has a proper grave outside the house, and Genjuro is woken up by the people who can give him an

immediate explanation as to his wife's disappearance. The conclusion of the film shows the continuation of Genjuro's life without his wife, a sad and telling portrayal of a husband haunted by his loss. With each retelling, the effect is less gruesome and less immediate. The emphasis becomes less about the discovery of the wife's death, and more about the husband's realization of the consequences of his actions, and the psychological aftereffect of this realization. There is always the possibility that the methods and manner of storytelling has changed over the centuries- that perhaps the Heian-period reader of the *Konjaku monogatarishuu* was expected to fill in the psychological details with their imagination, while the filmic rendering of *Ugetsu* bares all to its viewing audience. Yet the progression of psychological complexity encapsulated here is not representative of a progression in all Japanese literature, as there are works of great psychological detail that date back to early in Japanese history. It is more likely that the author's intended message changed with each retelling- that the same story was used to mean different things.

One possible interpretation of the delay in Genjuro's realization of Miyagi's death, as suggested by Clark Chilson, is that it is meant to speak to the experiences of Japanese soldiers who participated in World War II. When they returned from battle, their wives had often been killed in the extensive firebombing, and were already buried. While earlier in history the government's emphasis had been on the traditional familial unit, the expansion of Imperial ambition lead to an erosion of these values in favor of service to the nation. *Ugetsu* may be making a subtle critique of this shift.

Another difference between *Ugetsu* and *Ugetsu monogatari* is that in *Ugetsu* the three female characters are set up in directly comparable pairs. Miyagi and Wakasa show the two extremes of the abandoned woman, quiet forbearance and active protest. Obama and Miyagi

show the two paths abandoned women can take-- virtuous death, or a scarred life. True to both the naturalistic school, and Buddhism in a unique dovetailing of influences, one gets the sense that these characters were doomed because of forces beyond their control.

In Mizoguchi's version, Miyagi is killed by soldiers, not heartbreak, leaving her child to rely on the kindness of neighbors for survival. Ohama is raped by marauding soldiers. These differences show a more explicit description of the ravages of war, while the previous versions seem to be less strongly engaged with the horrors of war as a theme. The presence of Genichi, Genjuro's son, heightens the pathos of Miyagi's position. When Akinari's Miyagi encounters her husband after their prolonged separation, she tells him of her anger and resentment herself. Mizoguchi's Miyagi, on the other hand, silences Genjuro when he tries to explain his absence, and simply quietly cares for him without speaking of any ill feelings. In contrast to a typical ghost, Mizoguchi's Miyagi lingers in this world not in vengeance or resentment, but out of a desire to see her husband one last time, a desire parallel to the living Ohama.

It is difficult to say how the characters in *Ugetsu* relate to the prescribed models of femininity of their time. While the Tokugawa era featured direct and explicit instruction on how to be feminine, women of post-war Japan labored under a different sort of instruction, or lead the way towards advancement themselves. The US Occupation encouraged films that engaged with women's issues, but other than that, the models of femininity were far less regulated than in the Tokugawa era. One can only discuss how women were depicted in the arts, and infer how that related to their day-to-day lives.

*Ugetsu*'s Miyagi, Lady Wakasa, and Ohama relate closely to the literary and artistic conventions of their time-- the vengeful spirit in Noh, and suffering women of *shinpa* and melodramas. The pessimistic plotlines in which they are situated are a product of Mizoguchi's

own vision as expressed through these relatable filmic traditions. His emphasis on female suffering seems to be a product of the film industry of occupied Japan to some extent, but also expressive of his own true inclinations. The realistic psychological complexity with which he infuses his characters gives the impression that his message was meaningful to him.

In *Ugetsu*, a poor peasant potter and his wife are engulfed by the fury of war in Medieval Japan. The peasant, Genjuro, and his ambitious, glory-seeking brother-in-law Tōbei take advantage of the pre-war boom to make a large profit on Genjuro's handmade pottery. The two peasants and their wives struggle to manufacture and sell pottery in extremely dangerous conditions so they can increase their wealth. As the plot unfolds, the men lose sight of their values more and more as their focus turns to wealth and prestige rather than their duty to their families. Tōbei's wife, Ohama, is raped by soldiers and becomes a prostitute, and Genjuro's wife, Miyagi, is killed by soldiers while waiting for her husband to return from his trip to the city to sell his wares. In the end, all three living characters recommence their previous lives.

In Akinari's collection of stories, there are two in particular that are used by Mizoguchi-- ““A Reed-Choked House”” and *A Serpent’s Lust*. The *Ugetsu* storyline arc of Genjuro and Miyagi is almost exactly the same as “A Reed-Choked House”-- the ambitious husband goes off to the capital in the midst of wartime, leaving his wife to wait for his return. While seeking wealth, the man becomes distracted by luxury, forgetting his previous life. His faithful wife, Miyagi, dies amidst the chaos of war. Remembering Miyagi, the husband journeys back to find her waiting and the two enjoy a blissful reunion-- until the husband wakes in the morning to find that his house is in ruins and a wife who died a long time ago.

The woman who tempts Genjuro into forgetting Miyagi in *Ugetsu*, Lady Wakasa, is a borrowing from another Akinari tale, *A Serpent’s Lust*. In this story, a young man meets a

beautiful and elegant noblewoman while traveling, who lures him to her house. Serving him sake, she spins a tale of her misfortunes and convinces him to marry her, giving him a sword she says belonged to her late husband. When the young man returns home, his father becomes suspicious of the sword, which turns out to have been stolen from a nearby temple. The son is arrested, pleads his innocence, and leads the government men to the house of the woman who enchanted him. There, they find the house in ruins and a pile of other stolen treasures with the woman sitting inside. When they try to capture her, she promptly disappears. The woman, who is actually a lustful snake continues to pursue him, even after the young man marries a second time. Eventually he manages to trap the snake and rid himself of its pursuit.

The behavior of Lady Wakasa in *Ugetsu* is parallel to the behavior of Akinari's lustful serpent from *A Serpent's Lust*. When both figures speak of their misfortune, they speak of being raised by their nurse, and both offer the object of their seduction gifts of stolen valuables that eventually cause them to be noticed by the authorities. In *Ugetsu monogatari*, the serpent, when the young man tries to leave her, says, “ [...] But if you believe what others say and try to avoid me, I shall hate you and take revenge.’ [...] [The serpent] spoke to him [...] now soothing, now threatening, but he remained unconscious until dawn.” (Akinari, 177). *Ugetsu*'s Lady Wakasa reacts the same way when Genjuro tries to leave her-- warning of horrible things that will happen to him, and transforming from a beautiful, richly feminine character into a frightening, demonic presence.

The common theme of abandonment, pronounced in both *Ugetsu* and *Ugetsu monogatari*, subtly explores the complicated dynamic of women, both their place in society and their treatment at the hands of men. In *Ugetsu*, the abandoned Miyagi waits faithfully for her wayward husband to return. When she is killed because of his infidelity, her spirit inflicts a very

subtle, passive punishment on him. Miyagi tricks Genjuro into thinking that he has returned to his loving, faithful wife and that they can happily resume their previous life. She allows him one night to enjoy all that he had and has lost because of his imprudent greed in the face of danger. The next morning, he awakens to the stark, heart-wrenching reality of the consequences of his actions. Miyagi was the ideal wife, who conformed flawlessly to her role in society. Her very blamelessness served as a reprimand to her not-so-ideal husband. Whether this reprimand was intentional on her part or merely a side effect of an appearance motivated by her desire to see her husband one last time will be analyzed in more depth later.

Meanwhile, Lady Wakasa embodies the other extreme of the abandoned woman, the kind who is jealous and vindictive, inflicting an active punishment. Wakasa, much like Akinari's serpent, intimidates and threatens Genjuro. The only thing that saves Genjuro from harm is the Sanskrit sutra painted on his body, which protects him from her demonic powers. It is important to note that both Wakasa and the serpent were not truly 'women'-- Wakasa was a lustful ghost and the serpent, a snake that changed its form into that of a human female. I believe that while the character of Lady Wakasa could be taken as representative of a ghost or a demon, that she is thematically meant to represent a woman, while Manago is definitely a demon whose departure from the prescribed feminine model of the Tokugawa era was meant to be instructive.

What are these characters, and what do their changes tell us about the changes in Japan over time? The women of *Ugetsu monogatari* conform to the prescribed model of femininity of the Tokugawa era, but their conformance to the rules does not earn them happiness. Their plight may be a protest against a restrictive society, constructed in order to appear as approval of the very system it protests. In *Ugetsu monogatari*, all of the characters suffer under the burden of their prescribed roles in society in the same way Akinari suffers. The emphasis in Mizoguchi's

portrayal of the same characters switches to the suffering of women at the hands of neglectful or abusive men. Yet one feels sympathy for all of the characters, male or female, as they are rich with appealing and identifiable psychological depth. These characters make bad choices, try to redeem themselves, and then realize they are too late, but that they must live with the consequences of their actions anyway. Mizoguchi's characters do not exist as a protest against the government or society, but as a protest against the cruelty of life itself.

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