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### **Ozu's Cinematic Master in Late Spring**

In Yasujiro Ozu's masterpiece Late Spring, film language is highlighted and put on display, creating a film that is full of emotion, tradition, and human connection. With his meticulous attention to detail, and careful use of cinematic technique, Ozu creates scenes that can resonate with all types of audiences. Ozu delves into the complexities of human relationships, societal norms, and the society of post-war Japan throughout the film. With techniques such as pillow shots and tatami shots, Ozu invites viewers on a serene journey of self-discovery and introspection. In this essay, we'll examine how certain scenes in "Late Spring" demonstrate Ozu's use of film techniques to convey a story about a family's love and loss.

A scene that best exemplifies Ozu's use of film techniques happened in the family's living room. Noriko and her father are having an emotional conversation about Noriko possibly getting married as well as her father possibly remarrying. The light in the room is soft and warm which helps to symbolize the bond between Noriko and her father. Ozu specifically uses long takes and stationary camera positions in order to capture every detail of this conversation as if to represent how sensitive of a conversation it was for the two. As Noriko wrestles with the idea of the societal expectation that she get married, her reluctance to do this becomes obvious. It is also

obvious that the idea of her father remarrying makes her angry. The use of the long take after Noriko storms off really puts emphasis on the impact that this moment had on her. This is one of the instances where we can see Noriko's desire to preserve her close relationship with her father while also maintaining her own independence. Ozu's film technique really shined in this scene as he utilized many long takes and tatami shots. This scene also utilizes the static camera to better immerse the audience into the scene and to give the scene more emotional depth

Another compelling scene occurs during Noriko and her father's visit to a noh play. During the play Noriko sees a woman eying her father, who is later revealed to be the woman that he is remarrying with. After this happens Ozu fixed the camera on Noriko as she looks down, saddened at the thought of the loss of her father to another woman. The camera goes back and forth between the woman, and Noriko, staring at her. This use of the camera helps the audience understand that this moment in the movie is no longer about the play that Noriko and her father are watching, it is about the new woman, and Noriko being pushed out of her father's life. This is one of the scenes in the film where the audience can truly see that Noriko has no desire to leave her father at all. The scene then cuts to a long pillow shot of a tree that had nothing to do with the scene. This and the many other pillow shots used in the film had a clear purpose to amplify the emotional magnitude of many scenes. In this case, the long shot allows for the audience to ponder how the impact of a new woman entering Noriko's father's life would impact her.

A third scene that shows Ozu's use of film technique in the film would be when Noriko's aunt goes to ask her if she would like to marry Satake. When Noriko's aunt

goes upstairs, the camera cuts to her going into the different rooms of the house in a way that was different from the rest of the film. The cuts in this specific scene felt quicker than normal, almost as if to give off the feeling that Noriko did not want to be found by her aunt. After Noriko says she will marry Satake, there are two things that stuck with me. One was that her response to agreeing to get married was simply saying yes and nodding. Noriko's lack of conversation as well as her lack of enthusiasm makes this scene that, in most other movies, would be very cheerful and happy, feel incredibly sad and solemn. Along with that, after she says yes, Noriko is not shown on camera as the seat she is sitting in is behind a wall, not visible to the camera. This once again, makes it seem as if Noriko was trying to hide and make herself small in order to get away from the societal expectation for her to get married and move away from her father. With these subtle techniques, Ozu makes it obvious to the audience that although Noriko agreed to be married, she has no desire to be anywhere other than where she currently is. This is a sentiment that is echoed later into the film as before she gets married, Noriko tells her father "Even marriage couldn't make me happier. My greatest happiness is to be with you."

Finally, the last scene where I felt that Ozu's use of film techniques could be highlighted is the last scene of the film. I wanted to highlight this scene because it shows that Ozu utilized film techniques to get his point across from the beginning of the film to the end. In the final scene Noriko's father enters the house, sits down in a chair, and starts peeling an apple. This scene is one of the most relatable scenes in the film to any parent whose child may have moved out and the dark color palette in the scene adds to that tone. The peeling of the apple in this scene was symbolic as that is

something that he normally would not have to have done on his own if Noriko was there. The scene ends with a final pillow shot of the sea which is a fitting ending as the sea represents eternity and the inevitability of change much like the movie itself.

In addition to these scenes, there are many other instances of Ozu using film techniques to create compelling and resonating scenes that allow for the audience to better understand how it may feel to truly be part of the scene. The constant use of tatami shots throughout the film gives a feeling of intimacy, allowing audience members to feel as if they are sitting with the characters themselves. This is especially apparent in the final scene of the film where Noriko's father is peeling the apple. The lower camera angle allows for us to see his eyes as he peels the apple and we can see him get more and more sad. This is a prime example of how the tatami shot can help us to feel more immersed into the film as with a regular shot, we may not have been able to see Noriko's father's face as well and it would not have been as compelling. The long takes in the film also give off the feeling of immersion by allowing for the scene to appear in real time with no cuts.

Something else that Ozu did in the film that I found really interesting after thinking more on it was that he never showed Noriko's wedding or her fiancé. This allows for the audience to fill in the blank of what this scene may have looked like. By doing this, Ozu leaves it up to the audience to think about the details of the wedding. Whether Noriko was happy or sad and whether her father would be ok without her were never shown because it was up to the audience to observe all that happened in the film to decide how everything went after.

All in all, *Late Spring* is a meditation on the passage of time and the inevitability of change. Noriko and her father's relationship in the film is a reminder of the power of film to provoke thought and emotion. Through its superb use of film language, *Late Spring* invites us to think more on societal expectations about love and loss, as well the relentless passage of time. In doing so, Ozu's masterpiece continues to resonate with and inspire audiences around the world, cementing itself as an example of cinematic language. Ozu's exploration of familial relationships and societal expectations is relatable to any type of audience, allowing us to reflect on our own relationships and the people we hold close to our hearts. Altogether, *Late Spring* serves as a striking example of the connection between meticulous cinematic technique and the production of meaning within a film.