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**THE PROSTITUTE IN
POSTWAR JAPANESE CINEMA (1945-1975):
MELODRAMA, SOFT-PORN,
AND THE BODY POLITICS OF MODERNISATION**

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Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD

2017

Centre for Film Studies
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Declaration for SOAS PhD thesis

I have read and understood Regulation 21 of the General and Admissions Regulations for students of the SOAS, University of London concerning plagiarism. I undertake that all the material presented for examination is my own work and has not been written for me, in whole or in part, by any other person. I also undertake that any quotation or paraphrase from the published or unpublished work of another person has been duly acknowledged in the work which I present for examination.

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Abstract

The fictional prostitute is a fascinating figure through which to think about economies of power. Despite being a recurrent character that is often read as a political allegory in Japanese cinema, there is yet no systematic analysis of this figure. This thesis examines the representation of female prostitutes in post-Second World War Japanese cinema (1945-1975), and interrogates its impact on the configuration of national history and gender identities in the popular imaginary and the collective memory. Setting the Prostitution Prevention Law (1956) as a milestone, it concentrates on the late 1940s *panpan* films and their revival in the 1960s, on melodramas, and on early soft-core productions known as Roman Porno.

Inspired by scholarship analysing the female body as a metaphor of the nation, it posits fictional prostitutes as allegories for negotiating the traumatic past, and the anxiety and hopes created by the upheaval of postwar Japan. It argues that they effectively articulated discourses on gender, sexuality and class that were pivotal in shaping the image of Japan as a modern nation. It complicates the interpretation of the prostitute as either victim or subversive hero, illuminating how she works in different ways across time, genre, and audience. The analysis of film texts is set against the examination of contemporaneous reviews and profuse primary sources (newspapers, film and women's journals, novels, and prostitutes' unions' publications) to illuminate the ambivalent position of Japanese cinema within the map of discourses 'defining' prostitution and constituting public opinion. Analysis of this character enhances the understanding of postwar transformations of social and sexual mores, and of the impact of industrial and legal contexts on the body politics of Japanese cinema. A self-critical stance invites us to revisit the gender ideologies embedded in film criticism and academia as on-going discursive practices.

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Notes on Translations, Romanisation and Japanese Names

Japanese names are given in the Japanese order, family name first, except in citations to scholars publishing predominantly in English and using their name in western order. For the Romanisation of Japanese words, macrons indicate long vowels, but are not given in words commonly used in English (for example ‘Tokyo’ rather than Tōkyō).

I have used standard English translations of the titles of the films; where the film was distributed under several English titles I have cited them as ‘aka’. The Japanese titles of films, novels, and songs are given in brackets at their first mention in each chapter, alongside the date of release in Japan.

Birth and death dates of filmmakers, actors, artists, and historical figures are similarly given in brackets after their first mention in each chapter. Where the dates are unknown, they are marked as ‘??’.

All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations for Japanese publications:

EG - *Eiga geijutsu*

FK - *Fujin kōron*

KJ - *Kinema junpō*

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Introduction

Was there ever a character in Japanese cinema to better encapsulate the political, social and economic national history than the prostitute? Was there another figure in the postwar era evoking more allegories, controversy and charisma? Probably not. As such, the prostitute constitutes a fascinating iconic figure through which to think about power economies during the tumultuous three decades that followed the end of the Second World War (1939-1945). This was a time of radical transformations in all social domains, and gender and sexuality lay at the centre of the national quest of redefinition towards modernisation. This dissertation analyses the representation of female prostitutes in postwar Japanese cinema (1945-1975), setting the Prostitution Prevention Law (*baishun bōshi hō*, 1956) as a milestone in the evolution of these portrayals. I argue that the figure of the prostitute holds a remarkable allegorical potential to articulate and negotiate the traumatic past as well as the contemporary anxieties aroused by modernisation, in which I inscribe the ban on prostitution.

Due to the ubiquity of the theme of prostitution in the cinema of the time, this research traverses across genres, but mainly focuses on *panpan* films, melodrama, and ‘Roman Porno’ (*roman poruno*), as will be further defined in this section. The aim is threefold: to examine and classify patterns in the depiction of prostitute characters and their narratives; to clarify how they were received and discussed; and to illuminate the ideological implications of these representations in the broader context of history-making in postwar Japan. This study identifies conventions in her representation according to genre and time, but also contradictions and exceptions that challenge previous scholarship. The analysis of selected case studies will

demonstrate the relevance of other female archetypes—namely the mother, the ‘modern girl’ and the wife—in infusing the figure of the prostitute with allegorical meaning.

Debates in the press about the sex trade and films on the subject shed light on the position and potential influence of cinema in the social history of prostitution in Japan. Grounded in the examination of an array of primary printed sources, this study looks at the films’ production and reception contexts, and considers issues of censorship, stardom, *auteurism* and film criticism, in order to illuminate the agents that played a decisive role in creating, circulating, and reading these images. On a broader level, the analysis considers the role of the cinematic prostitute in the configuration of discourses on gender, sexuality, class, and ethnicity, which were pivotal in Japan’s redefinition as a modern nation. Ultimately, my objective in problematising the prostitute figure is to deepen our comprehension of the workings of cinema in the mesh of discourses that constituted public opinion and informed the popular imaginary.

This study posits cinema as ‘a mechanism of mediation that is both constitutive of, and constituted by socio-political discourses’ (Standish 2005: 14). It is grounded on the convergence of scholarship on the female body as metaphor of the nation, and scholarship on the social construction of gender and sexuality in Japanese modernity.¹ Hitherto, as I will elaborate, the fictional prostitute—regardless of time and place—has been mainly read as 1) the ‘Other’ that defines normative femininity by contraposition; 2) a sacrificing victim; and 3) a symbol of counter-

¹ Fujime (1997a, 1997b, 2006); Izbicki (1997); Burns (1998); Igarashi (2000); Bardsley (2002); Hori (2002); Frühstück (2003); Johnston (2005); Standish (2005, 2011); Wada-Marciano (2005); Baskett (2008); Ito (2008); Russell (2008); Kamiya (2009); Bullock (2009); Horiguchi (2012); Mihalopoulos (2011); Cather (2012); McLelland (2012); Burns and Brooks (eds. 2014); Saitō (2014); Phillips ([2003] 2015).

hegemonic liberation. Her representation has been primarily examined in connection with masculinity; that is, as a reflexive site of the desires and fears of masculine identity, which is inevitably imbricated with that of the nation. Without denying the foundation of these theories, I shall argue that these interpretations fall short of grasping the meaning and appeal of this figure in all her complexity. On the one hand, the characters of streetwalkers, brothel prostitutes and call girls need to be divested of the sometimes totalising and simplifying features attributed to ‘*the prostitute*’, and placed in connection to vernacular myths and archetypes. On the other, as a product of a cultural industry, they need to be located along the changing trends and regulations of the postwar studio system.

To my knowledge, this is the first comprehensive work to examine the figure of the prostitute in Japanese cinema, despite the large number, diversity, and impact of prostitution films in the domestic industry. Her presence in film can be traced back to the era of silent cinema,² while the release in 2013 of the comedy *My Life Changed when I Went to a Sex Parlour* (*Fūzoku ittara jinsei kawatta www*, Iizuka Ken)³ and in 2017 of the soft-core pornographic film *Dawn of the Felines* (*Mesu nekotachi*, Shiraishi Kazuya) bear witness to her abiding appeal. Her appearances in a wide range of genres, including melodrama, comedy, horror, thriller, documentary, *jidai-geki* (period films), *avant-garde*, and porn, are also evidence of her versatility.⁴

² During the 1920s, for instance, Mizoguchi Kenji directed *Foggy Harbour* (*Kiri no minato*, 1923)—an adaptation of the theatre play *Anna Christie* (Eugene O’Neill, 1921)—and *Mistress of a Foreigner* (*Tōjin Okichi*, 1930).

³ aka *Fu-zoku Changed my Life*. In current Japanese internet slang ‘www’ stands for ‘laughter’ (*warai*).

⁴ In example, one can mention *Comedy: Selling Women* (*Kigeki onna uridashimasu*, Morisaki Azuma, 1972), the horror film *Ghost of Chidori-Ga-Fuchi* (aka *The Swamp*; *Kaidan chidori-ga-fuchi*, Kōiishi Eichi, 1956), the thriller *Sexy Line* (*Sekushii chitai*, Ishii Teruo 1961), the documentary *Karayuki-san, the Making of a Prostitute* (*Karayukisan*, Imamura Shōhei, 1975), and the *jidai-geki avant-garde* work *Double Suicide* (*Shinjū tenno Amijima*, Shinoda Masahiro, 1969).

Across time and genre, she has exhibited a tremendous potential to dramatise human relations and the struggles of life, to embody class and gender conflict, to titillate viewers, to depict current socio-economic conditions, and to poignantly convey allegories.

Spectators will not be able to forget powerful scenes such as, for example, that of the old Oharu (Tanaka Kinuyo, 1909-1977), once a prestigious courtesan and now an aged, rundown prostitute, being humiliated by a group of monks in Mizoguchi Kenji's (1898-1956) classic *The Life of Oharu* (*Oharu ichidai onna*, 1952); the unabashed Mickey (Kyō Machiko, 1924-) chewing gum and dancing to a tropical rhythm as she makes her first entrance into the brothel in *Street of Shame* (*Akasen chitai*, Mizoguchi Kenji, 1956); and the spectacular death of the military prostitute Nogawa Yumiko (1944-) with her lover in *Story of a Prostitute* (*Shunpuden*, Suzuki Seijun, 1965). As these examples illustrate, the presence of renowned stars and film directors has further contributed to the popular and critical success of many of these films, which have become landmarks in the history of Japanese cinema. Building upon established academic interest in subjects such as representation, subjectivity, *auteurism* and stardom, this dissertation fills a significant gap in the field of Japanese film studies. It provides a new perspective from which to look into celebrated films as well as to discover others that have been long neglected. Furthermore, the prostitute trope has proven an excellent vehicle for a cultural understanding of the transformations of social and sexual mores in postwar Japanese society, and hence this interdisciplinary project could be valuable to other disciplines such as cultural history and gender studies.

I believe it is no coincidence that the Prostitution Prevention Law was passed in 1956, the same year Japan gained membership to the United Nations, and also the same year that the government proclaimed that ‘the postwar is over’ (*mohaya sengo de wa nai*) (Economic Planning Agency 1956: 42). Economic recovery was allegedly evidenced by the GDP that surpassed prewar levels for the first time since the end of the war; but by the time the Economic White Paper was published, ‘the postwar is over’ had already become a popular catchphrase in the media, and its meaning went far beyond financial data.⁵ Celebrating the end of an era, and hence the beginning of a new one, this expression proclaimed the successful modernisation of the nation. Against this backdrop, the state-regulated system of prostitution was at odds with the reforming spirit of the time, because it stood out as a reminder of the past many wished to leave behind. This cinematic figure, therefore, exposes the compromising continuities from the prewar era that were often disregarded by official discourses.

In the studio system, and especially in the golden era of the 1950s, Japanese films were manufactured at great speed, which meant that in just a few months a film project would be produced, distributed and exhibited. This enabled the cinema industry to react almost immediately to issues prominent in public opinion, and to set in play its own discourses with extreme contemporaneity. For instance, in the same year that the Prostitution Prevention Law was enacted, at least five films on the subject were released: the above mentioned *Street of Shame*, *Mother and Child* (*Boshizō*, Saeki Kiyoshi), *Prostitution* (*Baishun*, Numazawa Isezō), *Ghost of*

⁵ ‘The Postwar is Over’ was originally the title of an article published in February written by Nakano Yoshio, a prestigious literary critic and professor of Tokyo University (Nakano 1956). Over more than ten pages Nakano proclaims the accomplished reconstruction of the country that means the end of uncertainty. While he advises the country not to forget the lessons of the past, he lays his expectations on the young generation and cheerfully calls for ‘new meanings’ and ‘new ideals’ for ‘this small nation’ (Nakano 1956: 56).

Chidori-Ga-Fuchi (*Kaidan chidori-ga-fuchi*, Koiishi Eichi), and *Suzaki Paradise Red Light* (*Suzaki paradaisu akashingō*, Kawashima Yūzō). To what extent was there a conscious intention to influence people's views on the subject or simply an interest in benefiting from a generalised boom in the media is a question this thesis considers, although it acknowledges the ultimate impossibility of reaching a definite answer. What is clear, however, is that by delivering representations to a broad audience nationwide, and, at times, also internationally, the cinema industry was multiplying the instances where prostitution was discussed, or at least mentioned. Taking into consideration that until the early 1960s cinema constituted the main entertainment industry, an enquiry into its impact on the social perception of prostitutes is long overdue.

Approaching the prostitute figure

Before discussing and positioning myself within extant scholarship, I wish to outline the premise that underpins this research. Prostitution—understood as an industry, a social phenomenon and a political debate—is essentially defined by the problems of inequality in a certain historical context. As such, it constitutes a compelling site of body politics that reflects the systematisation of knowledge, power, and technology that work to regulate gender and sexuality in a modern nation. Due to the paucity of academic research on the prostitute in Japanese cinema, I have expanded the scope of the review to encompass works on other regions, media and historical eras that serve as the starting point for this thesis. I will then focus on Japan to discuss research on the broader category of 'fallen woman' in several postwar media industries. As these studies are in most cases only tangential to the object of my

dissertation, I refrain from entering into extended discussions that, albeit interesting, lie beyond the scope and scale of this thesis, and I solely concentrate on specific elements relevant to my present endeavour.

In the last few decades, academia has shown growing interest in the fictional representation of the prostitute, although works on the Japanese context remain proportionally few in number.⁶ Among those dedicated to cinema, the majority limit themselves to female prostitution and focus on the prewar period and/or on Hollywood cinema. Russell Campbell's *Marked Women* (2006) is one of the most extensive studies and one of the few to include Japan. Campbell classifies an enormous worldwide filmography according to more than fifteen prostitute character types, which include such types as the 'avenger', 'working girl', 'happy hooker' and 'martyr'. Whilst Campbell's classification was inspiring, when applied to my film corpus it did not reveal meaningful patterns, something that reinforced my belief that the Japanese context demands an understanding of its own narrative and imaginary traditions. Based on common character types, Campbell links representation conventions to film genres and identifies transnational trends, providing a unique overall perspective that emphasises connections and continuities. To his equation of character type-genre, I propose to add the parameter of audiences. In other words, I suggest that by connecting a given category of films to its viewership—e.g. Roman Porno to a predominantly young, urban, middle-class, male audience—one can build hypothesis about how certain patterns of representation of the prostitute relate to distinct audiences, to their expectations, concerns, fantasies, and anxieties.

⁶ Hapke (1989); Parish (1992); Jacobs (1997); Gilfoyle (1999); Cornyetz (1999); Pullen (2005); Campbell (2006); Bullock (2009); Zamperini (2010); Molasky (ed. 2015). Proliferating doctoral theses on the subject provide a more geographically and historically diverse picture, including, for instance, Korean 1970s films, contemporary Russian literature and cinema, and late nineteenth century's public discourse in Japan (Sterba 1989; Schuckman 2008; Davis 2009; Turno 2012; Kim 2014).

The framework of Campbell's work is so geographically and historically broad that it impedes any kind of analysis of the context in which the films were produced, and that is the main disadvantage of his research. Yet, similarly to Campbell, much of the existing scholarship limits the analysis to narrative and characterisation, neglecting the significance of extra-diegetic conditions of production, distribution, and exhibition. Campbell claims that 'cross-cultural differences in the representation of prostitution are not as great as one might expect' (2006: 7) and argues, from a psychoanalytic approach, that this transnational commonality is due to the near-universal establishment of patriarchy. However, and without denying the pervasiveness of patriarchal ideology, other scholars such as Molly Haskell (1974) and Linda Williams (2008) have pointed out structural changes in the international arena and in the film industry that greatly contribute to similarities across nations. These factors include, but are not limited to, the decline of the studio system, the burgeoning of consumer capitalism, the intense urban immigration, the evolution of obscenity laws, the scepticism of the Cold War, the development of new technologies in cinema and the changing trends in viewership. Similar transformations can be found in postwar Japanese cinema, and therefore, drawing on Haskell and Williams's argument, I will consider the institutions, structures and currents configuring the cinematic imagination in Japan, and position them within broader international dynamics.

Informed by poststructuralist and postmodernist theories, scholars such as Shannon Bell (1994), Nina Attwood (2010), and Paola Zamperini (2010) interpret the prostitute as a discursive domain, which has no inherent and immutable meaning. Likewise, I posit her figure as partaking in a two-way dynamic, according to which she is both constitutive of, and constituted by socio-political and ideological

discourses. Zamperini, in her analysis of early modern Chinese literature, highlights the prostitute ‘as a fundamental category to define masculinity, femininity, empowerment, consumerism, nationality and modernity, among other things’ (2010: 197). The relevance of this fictional figure lies in that her representation affects not only prostitutes, but all women and men because her narratives are projected on the real-life experiences of sex, gender, labour, entertainment, and power relations (Bell 1994; Zamperini 2010; Coy et al. 2011). We are, therefore, dealing with a constructed gendered body symptomatic of its context and hence not fixed, which can allow for multiple and perhaps even conflicting meanings.

Zamperini effectively captures the problematic dynamics at play between the represented object and the representing subject—a critical issue in this study—when she claims that ‘understanding the literary figure of the courtesan and how her representation changes over time implies understanding how the men who wrote about her saw the times in which they lived’ (2010: 3). Zamperini concentrates mainly on how these literary representations reproduce hegemonic ideologies, rather than venturing to explore their potential subversiveness. In this regard, Attwood notes that especially the scholarship examining the era of modernity—as in the case of Zamperini—tends to underscore the negative aspects of power, perpetuating the image of the prostitute as irreversibly stigmatised and defined as an evil ‘Other’ (2010: 2-6). In contrast, Attwood’s reading of Victorian representations attempts to reveal the potential ideological flexibility and complexity of these images. Likewise, Kirsten Pullen’s (2005) study of actresses with a ‘whore’ image exposes the contradictory discourses these women could embody, reproducing dominant patriarchal conceptions of a fetishised and commodified female sexuality, while simultaneously expanding the definitions of acceptable female sexuality and

stressing women's financial autonomy and mobility. I find this focus on ambiguity and flexibility key in understanding the appeal of the character of the prostitute in such a diverse range of genres, historical eras and audiences. Challenging the generalised and limiting conceptions of the prostitute archetype and of the ideologies adhered to certain film categories (such as melodrama and soft-porn), this study intends to illuminate subversive elements within hegemonic narratives, and to unmask conservative conceptions inside discourses of counter-power.

In examining a variety of studies on the prostitute in public discourse (whether artistic, legal, medical, or political) across geographical and historical contexts, I have identified several characteristics of her narratives that stand out for their recurrence, regardless of the framework of the research. There seems to be, therefore, a consensus among scholars about what one could call the 'universal' conventions of the fictional prostitute:

1. Contradictory images, such as those of subjugation/freedom, are invested in her figure (Hapke 1989; Cornyetz 1999; Slaymaker 2004; Pullen 2005; Campbell 2006).
2. The prostitute is often inscribed in a narrative of '*madonna-whore*', sometimes presented as the antithesis of a second character with whom we are encouraged to identify, and sometimes as a conflicting compound of both (Hapke 1989; Bell 1994; Igarashi 2000; Campbell 2006; Kamiya 2014).
3. She cannot escape her downward progress: her life is brief and degraded; she will often be humiliated and rejected by society; and she will suffer disease or death (Hapke 1989; Jacobs 1997; Igarashi 2000; Slaymaker 2004; Pullen 2005; Attwood 2010).

4. Depictions of the prostitute are driven by male fantasy and desires. Many scholars point at the predominance of men in the field of cultural production as a major reason for this (Hapke 1989; Igarashi 2000; Slaymaker 2004; Pullen 2005; Campbell 2006).
5. In addition to often being subject of censorship, fictional works on prostitutes arouse debates in public opinion about their potential pernicious effect on morality and public health (Parish 1992; Jacobs 1997; Bell 1994; Hori 2002; Pullen 2005; Attwood 2010).

My emphasis on the specific historical context makes me suspicious of a ‘universal’ archetype. Alleged shared features of the representations of prostitutes could be due to coincident factual characteristics of prostitutes and their life style—which seems unlikely based on differences in regulation and social status—or otherwise, due to a shared system of thought in which their images are produced and consumed. The predominance of early modern western case studies could account for the distinct view on sexuality and punishment these conventions reflect. However, works dealing with Asian countries (Slaymaker 2004; Campbell 2006; Zamperini 2010) seem to suggest that, besides western morals, the shared experience of patriarchy feeds the subjacent structure underpinning the archetype of the prostitute, as Campbell argues. On the other hand, in contrast with the field of literature on which most of the above-mentioned scholarship focuses, authorship in cinema is a much more complex question due to its collaborative nature. Furthermore, whilst men dominated the Japanese cinema industry, many films were adaptations from novels that were often originally written and/or adapted to screenplay by women. Finally, as I will elaborate below, the association implied between the biological sex of the author and the production of discourses of

masculinity is problematic. Wary of these issues, I shall test the applicability of these characteristics on the context of postwar Japanese cinema and elucidate whether we can talk about ‘universal’ conventions.

The prostitute in Japanese popular culture

Whilst the dearth of research on the prostitute in Japanese film studies is striking, her figure has been tangentially examined within broader research projects concerned with the representation of women (Le Fanu 2005; Phillips and Stringer eds. 2007; Smith 2013; Coates 2014; Briciu 2012; McKnight 2012). From a wide range of approaches, including those of phenomenology, *auteurism*, historiography and affect theory, these studies posit the prostitute character as a useful lens through which to look into the image of the nation, the construction of femininity, and the negotiation of trauma. Insights from these works frame the overall approach of this project, which aims to be more exhaustive in its analysis of different kinds of prostitutes. Kamiya Makiko (2009, 2014) has produced two of the very few studies focused on the subject, and more specifically on the *panpan* films depicting the streetwalkers in the early postwar period. Through the analysis of this subgenre, Kamiya considers the ideologies, policies and interests of the Allied Occupation (1945-1952) that shaped the context of cultural production. Based on the promotional materials and censorship reports, she demonstrates that the Occupation fostered the archetypal image of the *panpan*, but simultaneously hampered her representation through strict censorship demands that ultimately led to the decay of the genre. As Chapter 2 will further discuss, I differ from Kamiya on the interpretation of several narrative conventions of the subgenre. However, she provides an excellent articulation of the

interplay among narratives, production contexts, and history that I wish to expand on in order to interrogate the legacy of these images in the ensuing decades.

Focusing also on a *panpan* film, namely Mizoguchi's *Women of the Night* (*Yoru no onnatachi*, 1948), Hori Hikari (2002) has produced an insightful examination of the gender politics at play in the production and evaluation of Japanese cinema. Similarly to Kamiya, Hori grounds her argument on the analysis of contemporaneous paratexts, in this case professional and amateur reviews for the most part. Hori's methodological approach has greatly influenced my study because it posits film reviews as influential discursive formations that have been often overlooked by scholars, partially due to their difficult access. These sources add a compelling layer of meaning and reveal intertextual references that complicate and enrich the analysis of film texts. Based on this material, Hori argues that seemingly aesthetic commentary by critics can work to legitimate and naturalise the gendered economies of power and violence.

As I will elaborate in Chapter 2, this inspiring feminist criticism unfortunately leads Hori to essentialist conclusions regarding how gender and ideology work. I do not entirely reject the idea that men and women may interpret and evaluate a film in different ways; in fact, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how gendered experiences of war, occupation, and economic development might affect these perceptions. However, as brought in earlier in relation to the universal conventions, automatically identifying women with counter-discourses of power, as Hori and others do (Molasky 1999; Slaymaker 2004; Orbaugh 2006), underestimates the ways in which ideology functions and disregards power struggles among women in regards to class and ethnicity. My approach is inspired by Pierre Bourdieu's *Masculine Domination* ([1998] 2001), which argues

that patriarchal ideology works across gender divides because it is legitimised through social constructions that become naturalised, and hence recognised both by the dominant and the dominated. Complementing Bourdieu's theory, the concept of 'intersectionality' compels us to revisit the workings of the discourse on masculinity. Patricia Hill Collins and Valerie Chepp provide an accessible definition of the contested concept of intersectionality:

[A]n assemblage of ideas and practices that maintain that gender, race, class, sexuality, age, ethnicity, ability, and similar phenomena cannot be analytically understood in isolation from one another; instead, these constructs signal an intersecting constellation of power relationships that produce unequal material realities and distinctive social experiences for individuals and groups positioned within them.

(2013: 58-9)

This dissertation aims to bring into focus the intersectionality involved in the social reality of prostitutes and their representation in the media, where certain categories of difference were often disavowed.

Leaving aside the area of film studies, there is a large body of scholarship on the prostitute in other fields of Japanese humanities and social sciences; yet again there remain conspicuous gaps. Historical accounts dealing with this subject in postwar Japan largely focus either on the Occupation era or on the contemporary twenty-first century scenario, whereas works on the 1960s and 1970s (after the ban on prostitution) are reduced to scattered studies conducted by feminist and social movements. This suggests that, in disregard of historical continuities, prostitution has either been consigned to the faraway past or portrayed as a contemporary issue. Likewise, research in the fields of literature and cultural studies tends to concentrate on the early postwar period, and hence, the *panpan* seems to attract most of the attention (Cornyetz 1999; Molasky 1999, ed. 2015; Igarashi 2000; Slaymaker 2004;

Bullock 2009; McLelland 2012). Since the cinema industry frequently made use of literary adaptations, these studies allow me to identify shared features among cultural industries and to spot cinema's distinct ones. Conversely, by broadening the time frame and scope of materials, this dissertation seeks to contribute to the debates on the representation of body, gender, and sexuality in postwar Japanese fiction.

The persistent academic concern with the early postwar period is justified because, as I shall argue, the narratives, symbols and myths that arose in such a traumatic and decisive period of Japanese history echoed for decades in the popular imaginary. Profuse scholarship contends that defeat and occupation triggered a profound crisis of masculinity, exacerbated by the fact that the prewar Japanese empire had been so saturated with the symbolic capital of masculinity (Izbicki 1997; Molasky 1999; Liddle and Nakajima 2000; Igarashi 2000; Slaymaker 2004; amongst others). Elaborated discussion will follow in subsequent chapters, but for now I shall briefly outline the importance of this crisis for the present project. According to contemporary historical discourse, during the Allied Occupation foreign men exhibited what Japanese men had lost and what they yearned to achieve: political, military, economical, and sexual command. This symbolic emasculation was projected on the nation through a gendered narrative that portrayed US as the male who 'rescued and converted Japan, figured as a desperate woman' (Igarashi 2000: 20). Many argue that this crisis underpins the representation of women as sexually and/or morally subjugated to men, because it was intended to provide an illusion of the re-establishment of patriarchal control by Japanese men (Izbicki 1997; Molasky 1999; Igarashi 2000; Slaymaker 2004; Saitō 2003, 2014). Against this background, it is easy to understand why the prostitute, also catering to the American occupier, stands as a powerful allegory of the nation and its relation to the US. As the

commodification of sex based exclusively on money rather than shared class, race, or emotional bonds, prostitution arguably represented the best and the worst of the expansion of consumer capitalism that promised a new freedom to a defeated and exhausted nation.

Relatedly, substantial scholarship on the Japanese ‘fallen woman’ or ‘dangerous woman’ argues that she is intended to comfort and reassure the national subject, who is irremediably addressed as male (Molasky 1999; Cornyetz 1999; Igarashi 2000; Hori 2002; Slaymaker 2004). In these studies, one can identify three main patterns through which she eases the masculine crisis: as object of pleasure and desire, as victim of war, and as the ‘Other’ against the prescribed ‘good’ woman. However, to apply this reading to the entire postwar era would imply attaching a constant meaning to the social perception of the fallen woman, to normative masculinity, and to the menace associated with the US. It moreover implies remaining caught in absolute binaries of male/female, subject/object, power/transgression that disavow the fluid and contested nature of power and identity. As a result, compelling questions remain unanswered: What did the prostitute come to represent once the initial postwar identity crisis was overcome? How did this archetype appeal and function for women spectators? Did male spectators always identify with male characters? What was the outcome of women-written novels adapted to cinema into men-directed films? What other categories of difference (in addition to gender) affect the allegories of power relations?

The above is not intended as a dismissal of previous scholarship, which has had a great impact on my analytical and methodological standpoint. Rather, I suggest that once this reading of the fallen woman has been well established, synchronic and diachronic analysis of concrete female archetypes can help us complicate and qualify

the grand metaphor of the nation and masculinity in crisis. In this regard, Nina Cornyetz, dealing with modern Japanese literature from the standpoint of psychoanalysis theory, contends that there is a meaningful change in the postwar era, when the ‘dangerous woman’ offered in some occasions ‘a site for rethinking female identity, empowerment, and erotic agency’ against her hitherto predominant role in a ‘modern phallic fantasy’ (1999: 16). I find Cornyetz’ approach important in the way that it highlights the potential of this figure to appeal to the also troubled feminine identity, similarly to Pullen’s view of polemic actresses perceived as ‘whores’. Therefore, without neglecting the centrality of masculinity, I approach it as a less monolithical concept to rethink what other functions the prostitute character can perform. Additionally, I wish to explore how the prostitute figure could appeal, and symbolically function, for women and other audiences that may not identify themselves with the normative ‘national subject’.

I have mentioned the profusion of literary adaptations, but the films encompassed in this study also make references to popular songs, news, magazines, radio shows, theatre plays and foreign films. This fact further evidences the popularity of the prostitute character at the time, and more importantly, shows the necessity to read her against multiple fictional and nonfictional discourses. Although the remarkable intertextuality dominating postwar popular culture is often mentioned (Igarashi 2000; Hori 2002; Kamiya 2009; McLelland 2012; Saitō 2014), this project constitutes an innovative attempt to place it at the core of its methodology, transforming this intertextuality into a fundamental object of enquiry and critical analysis. Only in this way can we clarify whether films offered distinct representations. Furthermore, until now, studies on the postwar Japanese prostitutes have either focused on the historical facts, or on their fictional representations as

symbolic entities, but they have generally failed to question the specific dynamics between those two realms. Aware that any historical account is also a discursive practice, it is nevertheless crucial to consider the process of mediation between the person and the character to elucidate which features were constantly selected to construct this iconic figure—and which were left outside. In this sense, as elaborated in Chapter 3, the analysis of *Fujin shinpū*, the journal of the most prominent prostitutes' union, has proven a fascinating source through which to explore how sex workers engaged with their depiction in public opinion and aimed to create their own self-representation.

The 'postwar' and the quest for modernisation

In the West, there is a long tradition of alluding to prostitution as an allegory of the experience of modernity and capitalism.⁷ Retrospectively, Shannon Bell explains:

The modern discourse on prostitution was part of a broader discursive production of female sexuality which separated the female body into the reproductive body and the un(re)productive body: normal female sexuality was defined in terms of woman's reproductive functions; deviant female sexuality was defined in terms of prostitution. Reproductive sexuality, which denied woman active sexual desire and pleasure, was the respectable norm; prostitution was its inversion.

(1994: 41)

Bell's statement bears witness to the impact of the work of Michel Foucault in making the prostitute a prime example of the transformation of body politics under

⁷ In example, Karl Marx emphasised that 'prostitution is only a particular expression of the universal prostitution of the worker' in the capitalistic system ([1844] 1994: 72). Walter Benjamin claimed that '[i]n the form which prostitution took in the great cities woman appears not merely as a commodity but as a mass-produced article' (1985: 52); and Georg Simmel in his influential work, *The Philosophy of Money*, originally published in 1900, dedicated an extended epigraph to prostitution ([1900] 2003).

modernisation. In his groundbreaking *History of Sexuality, volume 1* ([1976] 1990), Foucault argues that the process of becoming a modern nation-state entails an increasing definition and control of the body and sexuality, which lie at the foundation of power relationships. It is therefore not surprising that virtually all the genealogies of sexuality in modern Japan and studies on the prostitute (in Japan and elsewhere) are grounded on Foucault's theories.⁸

Some scholars such as Timothy Gilfoyle (1999), however, warn against this fixation with modernity that seems to suggest that the prostitute was completely re-defined and stigmatised in modernity as if there were no continuity with the past. Gilfoyle calls attention to the fact that 'issues of regulating female sexuality, licensing brothels, restraining male promiscuity, and maintaining the "social order" were significant components of pre-modern society' (1999: 136). In Japan, too, the regulation and the allegorical imaginary of prostitution can be traced back centuries.⁹ Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the Meiji Restoration (1868) brought an unprecedented centralisation and systematisation of state power, which led to the proliferation of medical, legal, and educational discourses that drastically transformed the social order and the experience of sexuality in Japan.

⁸ Garon (1997); Fujime (1997a, 1997b, 2006); Burns (1998); Frühstück (2003); Johnston (2005); Bullock (2009); Burns and Brooks (eds. 2014). In other geographical contexts: Bell (1994); Gilfoyle (1999); Schuckman (2008); Attwood (2010); Zamperini (2010).

⁹ Regarding pre-modern regulation, historian Takamura Itsue (1966) discusses the parallel between the emergence of prostitution as an established and regulated industry and the development of an urban market economy in the Muromachi era (1336-1573). During the Tokugawa shogunate (1600-1868), along with the strict class hierarchy, prostitution was designated by law as one of the occupations *burakumin* were permitted to practise (Yoshino and Murakoshi 1977: 39). The vast number of portrayals of prostitutes in, for instance, the literary work of Ihara Saikaku (1642-1693), the *ukiyo-e* (woodblocks) and erotic *shunga* prints ('spring pictures'), display the iconography that was associated with prostitution in the Edo period (Swinton et al. 1995; Clark and Gerstle 2013; and others). On pre-Meiji prostitution see also Seigle (1993); Goodwin (2007); Imanishi (2007); and Stanley (2012).

Similar to the impact of western policies and industrial capitalism at the turn of the twentieth century, the postwar era of the Occupation and the so-called ‘golden age of capitalism’ deeply transformed the modes of production and management, along with the social and political understanding of family relations, privacy, morality, sexual mores and life rhythms. Regarding the sex trade, both eras entailed intense activity in terms of regulation, public debates, and anti-prostitution movements. Drawing a parallel between these two eras is, however, not new. Japanese thinkers, such as Maruyama Masao (1914-1996), posit the postwar era as a second stage of modernisation that convulsed the foundations of the nation in a similar way to the Meiji period.¹⁰ The cinematic representation of the prostitute in these periods renders a great opportunity to delve into how the meaning and experience of modernity was articulated throughout discursive regimes and technologies. Taking into consideration Gilfoyle’s criticism, I approach modernity not only as a specific era and a cluster of reforming processes, but mainly as a contested discursive formation invoked by different parties in the struggle for power.

In her influential essay ‘The Past in the Present’ (1993), Carol Gluck refers to modernisation as one of the ‘master narratives of Japanese history’, key in configuring the abstract concept of the ‘postwar’ (1993: 79). According to Gluck, agents of public opinion have throughout the years consistently advocated for modernisation as the desired prospect for the nation and equated it with peace and prosperity. The actual meaning of modernity and how to pursue it, however, remains very much contested amongst the four ‘main custodians of the past’: the progressive

¹⁰ On Maruyama’s understanding of this parallelism, see Gluck (1993: 79) and Kersten (1994: 115-118). Similarly, in the 1980s, the prestigious historian Nakamura Masanori insisted on the relevance of looking back into Meiji to understand the postwar period (Nakamura 1989). Expanding on this idea, Gluck refers to modernisation as having a first phase arising in the late Tokugawa era (1603-1868), and another during the postwar, as ‘the second time to get the modern right’ (1993: 79).

intellectuals, the conservative intellectuals, the popular media, and the individual memories (Gluck 1993: 70-79). These custodians produce and disseminate their own historiographies of the ‘postwar’, in which the West appears as a pervasive presence that hovers over Japan’s perception of the modern (see also Yoshimoto 1993; Fujime 1997a; Burns 1998). After the war, domestic reconstruction was inevitably linked to achieving a respected position within the international community. Often equated with the ‘West’, the US emerged as (and proclaimed itself) a reification of the democratic modern, and meanwhile, Japanese regimes of power proactively embraced this discourse (Gluck 1993; Fujime 1997a; Bardsley 2002; Alexander 2003). Whether or not the Japanese people truly equated the West to the modern and hence to peace and prosperity, it seems clear that complying, even if only in the formalities, with western ideologies—consumer capitalism and Christian patriarchy—was strategically perceived as a political and economic necessity, as it had been in the Meiji era. Hamid Naficy, in his study of Iranian cinema, identifies a similar merging of foreign politics with traditional idiosyncrasies, which he refers to as ‘syncretic Westernisation’ (2011: 99). Naficy’s concept is useful in understanding how, after the Occupation, Japan aimed to revive and strengthen ancient cultural and ideological features while simultaneously incorporating modalities of modernity in its cultural, ideological and technological structures. The Prostitution Prevention Law of 1956, I argue, constitutes a suggestive example of Japan’s attempt at ‘syncretic westernisation’.

My understanding of the sex trade in twentieth-century Japan is much indebted to the work of Fujime Yuki (1997a, 1997b, 2006), which concentrates on the interplay of sexuality, gender, and class at the heart of Japan’s endeavour to consolidate a modern national identity vis-à-vis the West. It brought a new and

controversial approach to the matter since hitherto, the history of prostitution had been written primarily by abolitionist groups. Her influential *History of Sexuality* (*Sei no rekishigaku*, 1997a) contends that it was in the name of modernisation that the prostitution industry expanded and became systematised, and paradoxically, that it was also in the name of modernisation that it was condemned and ostracised. Fujime's work has inspired me to concentrate on how the intersection of modernisation and body politics was articulated through the cinematic representation of prostitution. Her emphasis on the manipulation of sexuality and class at the expense of the development of the nation is fundamental in comprehending the ideological repercussions of the cinematic representation. From her work I have identified the key themes and agents to search for in the films—e.g. abolitionist groups, marriage and family, women's movements, the entertainment industry, the press, the military forces and the police, venereal diseases, abortion, urban development, public space, hospitals and rehabilitation facilities, brothel owners, ethnic and caste minorities, and workers' unions.

While Fujime is extremely critical of the abolitionist groups, which she accuses of working to preserve the *status quo* that reproduced their class privileges, Onozawa Akane (2010) argues that Fujime fails to acknowledge the differences within this conglomerate of groups as to their distinct trajectories and goals. Whereas Onozawa underscores the disruption caused by prostitution in communities and neighbourhoods, the prostitute in Fujime's account is neither victimised nor interrogated, but becomes a somewhat idealised subject. Fujime denounces the dehumanisation of the prostitute, who was often depicted as an abstract compound of stereotypes, but partially does the same with the abolitionist groups. Both scholars exhibit a clearly defined agenda and theoretical approach, often replicated in other

historical accounts on the subject. The following chapter deals with this need to counterbalance the voices of conflicting secondary sources (Nishida 1953; Shimizu et al. eds. 1953; Ichikawa ed. 1979; Sievers 1983; Shin Yoshiwara ed. 1989; Baishun Mondai 1995; Sanders 2006, 2012; Tanaka 2012; Kovner 2012; Chazono 2013, 2014).

Research questions

This study aims to answer the following questions, which stem from the critical review of extant literature and the gaps identified therein. The rationale behind their framework will be elaborated in subsequent sections.

- **What are the patterns used to portray prostitutes in *panpan* films, melodrama, and Roman Porno in postwar Japanese cinema (1945-1975)?**

Focusing on these three distinct categories of commercial cinema, the goal is to identify recurrent aesthetic, narrative and rhetorical devices, and to lay bare the strategies intended to configure a conceptual image of the prostitute among the audiences. The mapping of conventions and exceptions reveals the historical evolution of the prostitute figure and the ways in which certain fictional stories and historical events were revisited by cinema over time.

- **How does the representation of the prostitute in Japanese cinema interact with discourses on gender, sexuality, morality and identity?** After the war, traditional prewar social and family hierarchies, as well as gender roles and labour divisions, were rejected or rendered incapable of providing the individual with

security and stability. I suggest that these social constructions in flux were problematised and negotiated through the prostitute character.

- **What allegories are invested in the representation of prostitutes?** Seeking to illuminate the ideologies embedded in these allegorical discourses, the aim of this question is two-fold: to identify female archetypes that inform and complicate the prostitute figure, and to elucidate the role of the prostitute in broader myths and narratives of the nation.
- **Can the cinematic prostitute be read as encapsulating Japan's quest for modernity?** My hypothesis is that she portrays modernisation as an unfinished quest and exposes the contested nature of the vernacular meaning of 'modernity'.
- **What is the position of postwar Japanese cinema in the cultural history of prostitution?** This question enquires into the social impact of cinema and its role in the articulation of body politics. For this purpose, I examine the representations on the screen against the backdrop of other contemporaneous discourses on prostitution.

Theoretical framework

Feminist film studies and the theories of Foucault constitute the overarching theoretical framework of this dissertation. Criticism notwithstanding, Foucault's understanding of power and his emphasis on the body opened new paths in feminist theory for exploring concepts of power and identity.¹¹ For him, power is never

¹¹ In regards to the framework relevant for this research, I would highlight the work of Teresa de Lauretis (1984, 1989) and Linda Williams ([1989] 1999, 2008), who criticise Foucault's selective focus on the male subject that disavows the continuity in the unequal gendered power economies; and that of Zamperini (2008), who denounces his Eurocentric and orientalist approach. On the relation

complete, monopolised, immutable or fixed; but rather is ubiquitous, conflict-based and always in flux. Sexuality, according to Foucault, is neither necessarily obedient nor disobedient to power:

It appears rather as an especially dense transfer point for relations of power: between men and women, young people and old people [...], an administration and a population. Sexuality is not the most intractable element in power relations, but rather one of those endowed with the greatest instrumentality: useful for the greatest number of maneuvers and capable of serving as a point of support, as a linchpin, for the most varied strategies.

([1976] 1990: 103)

In his genealogy, Foucault demonstrates that sexuality effectively works to organise individuals, their gender roles and the public spaces where they interact, and underscores that developing power through sexuality entails articulating knowledge about it. Power cannot be separated from the knowledge in which it participates, and by which it is conversely shaped; and thus it constitutes a force that is simultaneously productive and constraining. It follows that sexuality, as an entangled discursive form of power, knowledge, and pleasure, shapes both the individual and the national body. Consequently, the way sexuality is experienced, regulated, depicted, and located plays a significant role in imagining a nation as civilized, savage, exotic or developed; something vital for the recovery of post-defeat Japan.

Foucault's understanding of power in a modern state revolves around the concept of 'bio-politics', defined as 'diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations' ([1976] 1990: 140). Against the former conception of power strongly connected to death, the technologies of bio-politics focus on life and its management (Foucault [1960] 1989, [1975] 1977,

between Foucault and feminism see also Diamond and Quinby (eds. 1988); Sawicki (1991); McNay (1992); Hekman (ed. 1996); and Taylor and Vintges (eds. 2004).

[1976] 1990). They constitute a means to expand the socio-political power into the private realm and to naturalise the control over subjectivities through normative models of behaviour disguised as objective knowledge. The concept of bio-politics makes visible the connection between morality and economy, and thus compels us to examine sexual mores as a means to organise society and the urban space in which it operates. Through this lens, the definition of an 'acceptable' sexuality, the advocacy of the nuclear family and the commodification and regulation of sex constitute strategies of bio-power, while cinema is rendered a proficient technology of micro-politics and identity. Precisely for being in the margins of the hegemonic, the prostitute constitutes a compelling case study for enquiry into normative modes.

Applying Foucauldian theory to the analysis of postwar Japanese feminist writings, Julia C. Bullock maintains that a prominent feature of regimes of bio-power is that they 'required the consent and active participation of the individuals they targeted' (2009: 6). Relatedly, Judith Butler explores why individuals embrace these regimes that often constrain them, and argues that 'power can act upon a subject only if it imposes norms of recognisability on that subject's existence' (2004: 190-1). Bio-power defines sets of features, behavioural patterns and spaces that confer coherent meaning to the subject, and hence are perceived as identity markers. The subject, according to Butler, desires recognition because those categories guarantee social existence (2004: 191). This connects to the interest brought in earlier as to how the prostitute figure works to configure normative subjects, providing models for both men and women and their sexuality. While extant scholarship tends to indicate that the fictional prostitute works to re-contain women within domesticity and disavow masculine loss of symbolic power, more fluid understandings of power and identity can open the cinematic experience to

new additional interpretations. If one considers that the spectator is often encouraged to identify with the prostitute by her placement at the centre of the narrative, through visual strategies, and by the performance of venerated female stars, this figure can impel the spectator to experience the prescribed models in a different light. When, for instance, mother and prostitute overlap as in *Street of Shame*, when the prostitute advocates a sexual morality dissociated from the body as in *Gate of Flesh* (*Nikutai no mon*, Suzuki Seijun, 1964), and when prostitution is divested of any kind of eroticism or pleasure (as happens in *Secret Chronicle: She Beast Market* [*Maruhi*] *Shikijō mesu ichiba*, Tanaka Noboru, 1974]), the contradictions entailed in the predominate conceptions of sexuality and femininity are unmasked. I shall argue that the prostitute character makes apparent the constructed and paradoxical nature of the norms of recognisability as well as the self-imposed constraints they entail.

Following Teresa de Lauretis' (1989) understanding of cinema as a technology of gender, I have argued that cinema functions as an aesthetic biopolitical regime of visibility, influencing the audiences' experience of the public and private realms through its production of knowledge. Expanding on Foucault, Edward W. Said demonstrates in his seminal work *Orientalism* ([1978] 2003) that the repetition of certain patterns of representation across the media, the arts, the academia and other hegemonic institutions leads to perceiving them as natural and true; and furthermore, that this repetition can determine the way one interacts with the actual object of representation. This leads to what Said refers to as 'imaginative historical knowledge', which may have no connection with factual history (positive history as he calls it) but that 'legitimizes a vocabulary, a universe of representative discourse peculiar to the discussion and understanding' of the subject ([1978] 2003:

47, 71). This study maintains that cinema plays a decisive role in constructing the ‘imaginative knowledge’ about prostitution that can influence the way people and institutions deal with prostitutes in real life. Films contribute to setting ideas and expectations about what a prostitute looks like, how she speaks or walks and why she prostitutes herself. Through identification with fictional characters, spectators can safely experience life in the margins of the social order and reflect on the socio-economic uses of sexuality. In his analysis of postwar Japanese literature, Michael Molasky provides an illustrative account of the enduring effects and implications of media representation:

Literature participates in both the construction and preservation of a society’s memory of an era. This is accomplished not only by compiling narrative accounts but also by generating a finite set of tropes that will circulate through a wide range of discursive contexts. [...] a predictable group of rhetorical figures and narrative strategies appears in works by otherwise dissimilar writers, thereby fostering among readers a common conceptual lexicon to articulate a shared sense of history.

(1999: 2)

It is the ‘common conceptual lexicon’ and ‘sense of history’ of prostitution in Japan that this study aims to unravel. It also follows that cinema has the potential to cast aside representations that have ceased to be appealing, to rework effective myths into new patterns, and to experiment with others that defy hitherto dominant schema. The films under study here are regarded as instances of the never-ending process of re-presentation that needs to be contextualised within the media-saturated landscape of postwar Japan, and within broader narratives underpinning these imaginaries. The abundance and diversity of films suggest that this iconic character was particularly effective both in responding to contemporary concerns and in revisiting dominant myths, and thus ultimately, in articulating the ‘society’s memory of an era’. The goal

of this study hence is to ask what kind of power/knowledge these narratives are constructing.

In her influential study of ‘vernacular modernism’ in Asian cinema, Miriam Hansen argues that films are ‘at once robust and porous enough to allow for multiple readings’ in order to function as ‘reflexive horizons’ where fantasies and anxieties can be ‘reflected, rejected or disavowed, transmuted or negotiated’ (2000: 12, 20). As noted earlier, films become interfaces between the personal and the collective, the actual experience and the representation. It is this approach, combined with Foucault’s understanding of the contended nature of power, that makes me sceptical of totalising readings of victimisation and of sexual liberation as political subversiveness. Such readings envision very limited alternative readings and hence overdetermine the desires and fears audiences could embrace. Since revealing the subjective reading each spectator gives to a certain film is impossible, the concept of ‘heterotopia’ can help us shift the focus onto the social function these reflexive horizons could fulfil. In a lecture in 1967, Foucault defined heterotopia with the following statement:

There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places —places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society— which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.

([1967] 1986: 3)

Heterotopias are sites of otherness that exist to provide society with a space for those individuals and moments of deviation and liminality. Foucault mentions the brothel as one of the most extreme examples ([1967] 1986: 9). As a site where the moral rules in force in other spaces are suspended, the heterotopia undermines the normative relationships of order, and hence it disrupts the traditional forms of

power/knowledge in a given society. Beatriz Preciado, in her compelling study of the Playboy mansion as a 'pornotopia', argues that these sites create 'breaches in the sexual topography of the city, alterations in the normative modes of sexuality and gender codification, in the practices of the body, and in the rituals of pleasure production' (2010: 121).

Cinema, as a space that offers a slippage between the familiar and the unfamiliar, is heterotopic in nature. Foucault notes that cinema and theatre are 'capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible' ([1967] 1986: 6). Being simultaneously a physical and a mental space, cinema creates a world that is other than that of 'reality', but that relates to it in various and contradictory ways. What interests me here is that this space of illusion, according to Foucault, reflects and speaks about the real sites, and shapes the way we relate to them ([1967] 1986: 4). Therefore, by suspending the rules, paradoxically, heterotopias expose the normative. Beyond the brothel and the cinema, this thesis is, in fact, concerned with numerous heterotopias, such as the erotic or 'pink' film theatre as an especial type of pornotopia, the Recreation and Amusement Association (RAA) operating for a short time during the Allied Occupation, the American base towns, the entire red-light district along other neighbourhoods of illegal prostitution, the 'Turkish baths' (*toruko buro*), and the 'love hotels' where call girls operate.

The concept of the heterotopia helps to illuminate intriguing, close connections between cinema and prostitution, despite all their obvious differences. It enables me to connect the space of prostitution, with both the space of the cinema venue and the space of representation where they converge in this study. As social constructions, heterotopias posit a link between space, customs, and rules that is essential to

comprehend the practices of gender and sexuality in relation to the practices of identity and (bio)politics. Moreover, they are constructions that reflect their own transitory and contended nature. As Preciado explains,

[They] are never really completely created or destroyed, but rather, as spatial-temporal bubbles or biopolitical islets, they emerge in specific historical contexts activating pre-existing metaphors, places, and economical relations, but are singularised by evolving technologies of the body and representation.

(2010: 121)

Therefore, the heterotopias of prostitution sites and cinema reflect much more than just the rules governing the normative space. There is a connection between those 'exceptional' practices and identities experienced in the darkness of the cinema and in the chambers of a brothel, and those expected to be observed in the regular normative space. Power and identity lie at the core of this correlation. In heterotopias individuals seek to become someone else, to do what cannot be achieved or what is not allowed outside that space. If each society creates and gives meaning to its own heterotopias, as Foucault explains, their otherness is neither autonomous nor random. In the ultimate instance, they respond to the rationales of the society that creates them, and there is no absolute absence of rules. Therefore, understanding prostitution sites and cinema as heterotopias leads me to inquire, first, what is being reflected about the hegemonic system by suspending its conventions of order; and second, what is there that still remains of the normative, the foundational structures of power that cannot be defied even inside the heterotopia.

Research scope and methodology

Frequently in cinema, controversial topics are pictured in the historical past or in a science-fiction future as a way of overcoming potential criticism or censorship. However, these settings cannot visually portray in an explicit way contemporaneous locations and institutions, the lifestyles, fashion trends and other materialities that are so central to this study. It is for this reason that I look exclusively into *gendai-geki*, i.e. fiction films set in contemporary times (as opposed to *jidai-geki*, period films usually set in the Tokugawa Era [1615-1868]). The film corpus in this study focuses on *panpan* films, melodrama, and Roman Porno. *Panpan* was the expression commonly used to refer to streetwalkers especially in the early postwar period, and is usually—although not accurately—identified with those soliciting foreign servicemen.¹² Whilst the term could be considered derogatory, it is a historically specific term and was widely used in all media at the time; hence becoming normalised in academia as well. Roman Porno refers to soft-porn films produced by the Nikkatsu Studio between 1971 and 1988; in the present study, however, only those released before 1975 will be analysed. The three categories have been chosen because they were commercially successful, portray several kinds of prostitution, appeal to diverse target audiences; and because, I would argue, their representations have notable ideological implications. Moreover, their study contributes to filling gaps that have been under-scrutinised or misconstrued in Japanese film studies. Despite the attention the *panpan* has received in other fields of research, there is

¹² The origin of the word *panpan* remains unclear, but it is commonly accepted that American GIs began using it during the war in the South Seas to denote sexually available women (Dower 1999: 132). The way it was used in Japan, it encompassed several subcategories each with its own names. In this way, for instance, *panpan* dealing with foreign patrons were known as *yōpan*; and hence they constituted just one type among others, contrary to the generalised misconception (Chazono 2014). It is also important to bear in mind that the sex industry was, and still is, so diversified and complex that clear-cut classifications of prostitutes are virtually impossible.

little about her cinematic representation; Roman Porno is only recently being re-evaluated in academia despite its outstanding financial and artistic impact on the industry; and melodrama, whilst the most widely investigated amongst the three, has not been analysed from this particular thematic perspective before.

The approximately forty works encompassing the film corpus in this study have been identified through several scholarly books (Anderson and Richie 1982; Limbacher 1983; Campbell 2006; Corral 2012), internet databases (mainly IMDb and JFDB), synopses published in film journals of the time, and the examination of over two hundred films. The main selection criterion for the case studies is the films' popular success, as demonstrated through contemporary reviews, box-office data, awards obtained, and ranking in 'best films' lists. Many films were examined in libraries, archives and websites during two fieldwork trips to Japan and one to the US accomplished in 2013 and 2015. Unfortunately, several films identified in the journals were not accessible or had been completely lost.

In order to narrow down the vast Japanese filmography dealing with the sex trade, it was necessary to first define prostitution. In much of the existing literature on its representation, the term is neither defined nor problematised (Hapke 1989; Skramstad 1990; Parish 1992), and some scholars have acknowledged the difficulties in providing a non-biased, non-ethnocentric precise definition (Dirasse 1991; Bell 1994; Campbell 2006; Attwood 2010). How can boundaries of the term be established over several decades of rapid change in Japan? Are geishas and mistresses prostitutes? Should *onrii*, those loyal to a single American patron in postwar Japan, be considered prostitutes? These questions are extremely relevant to the past and present of the sex industry in Japan, but lie beyond the scope of this

research. As elaborated in the following chapter, the legal definition of prostitution in Japan contains serious loopholes, but it nevertheless provides me with a functional demarcation. Based on this gender-biased definition, my framework consists of films dealing with women who regularly sell sexual intercourse to several patrons for money; therefore, mistresses, companions, geishas and isolated episodic acts of prostitution are beyond the scope of this study. I use 'prostitute' because the term 'sex worker', although less stigmatising and acknowledging the right to access health and legal services, includes many other practices such as stripping, pornographic filmmaking, and escort services that are not relevant in this project.

In terms of the historical period (1945-1975), this study expands from Japan's recovery from the war through rapid industrialization until its emergence as one of the strongest economies of the world. It comprises three broad eras of the history of Japanese film: the Allied Occupation, when cinema was under the strict control of the Civil Information and Education Section (CIE) and the Civil Censorship Department (CCD) under the Motion Picture Unit of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP), becoming therefore a quasi-propaganda medium; the decade of the 1950s, considered as the second 'golden age' of Japanese cinema by many scholars and critics; and the 1960s and 1970s, when the studio system fell into decay while independent productions blossomed. Drawing a line on the year 1975 appears artificial, and in a sense so does on 1945, as scholars problematise the continuity with the prewar era (Gluck 1993; Bardsley 2000; Yomota 2007; Wada-Marciano ed. 2012). Nevertheless, 1975 can be said to mark symbolically the definite end of the high economic growth period of the country¹³

¹³ The year 1973 is frequently mentioned as marking the end of the rapid industrialisation period (e.g. Gordon 1993; Bullock 2009), while many scholars more broadly say early and mid-1970s (Gluck

and of the hegemony of the studio system after a long, dismal decline.¹⁴ In 1975, for the first time in history, imported films held a greater share of the market and made more money than Japanese ones. Meanwhile, erotic productions expanded profitably and by the late 1970s already occupied 70 per cent of the domestic film production market (Higuchi 2009: 316; Cather 2012: 152). For the young cinema of Roman Porno, too, the mid-1970s brought important changes in the content and structure of the brand.¹⁵

Based on a poststructuralist approach, the main methodologies employed in this study are textual and discourse analysis. The approach is deeply indebted to feminist reworks of Foucauldian methodology and, in particular, to those adapting it to the audio-visual medium of cinema (de Lauretis 1984, 1989; Kaplan 1992; Williams [1989] 1999, 2008). Because cinema did not exist in a vacuum, my methodology encompasses a historiographic approach that emphasises the symbiotic connections between the text and the contemporary socio-political context; something discourse analysis often does not address in depth. The analysis of film texts considers three aspects. It addresses, first, elements related to the narrative and the diegetic world such as plot lines, characterisation, and gender archetypes;

1993; Liddle and Nakajima 2000). Allegedly, by 1975 the film industry would have begun reflecting this change in its productions.

¹⁴ Daiei studio closed in 1971, and Nikkatsu was the only one still hiring new assistant directors, thanks to the thriving Roman Porno market (Koga 1992: 133). Experimental cinema, which had flourished in the 1960s, was also suffering its first big slump in the mid-1970s. Symbolically, the Art Theatre Shinjuku Bunka Cinema, the most legendary venue of the underground film scene in Tokyo, closed down in 1974. Curiously enough, it was later reopened by Tōhō Studio to release the erotic French film *Emmanuelle* (Just Jaeckin, 1974), which will be discussed in Chapter 4.

¹⁵ Higuchi Naofumi explains that until 1975, all the actresses working in Nikkatsu Roman Porno came from the pink industry. From then onwards many came directly into Nikkatsu and, according to Higuchi, this brought a different type of women and eroticism into the films (2009: 295-6). Terawaki Ken, on the other hand, notes that after 1974 the journal *Kinema junpō* stopped dedicating so many pages to Roman Porno, suggesting the end of the so-called first golden age of Roman Porno and the beginning of the boom of sadomasochistic soft-porn (2012: 74- 108).

secondly, formal elements such as *mise-en-scène*, camera movement, soundtrack and editing; and thirdly, factors of the cinema industry, such as stardom, censorship, and the workings of the classical studio system. In addition to feminist film studies, the methodology of this analysis is inspired by the work of scholars such as David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson (2007), Standish (2000, 2005, 2011), and Katō Mikirō (2002, 2011). Bordwell and Thompson propose a meticulous method that enables scholars to set parameters for comparing works of different genres and historical periods; Standish inscribes her textual analysis in the socio-political and industrial dynamics underpinning film production; and Katō employs notable creativity in the analysis of visual elements, rhythms, and aesthetic patterns.

Seeking to understand how these representations were received and used, I have conducted archival research in Japan exploring an array of publications over the time span of thirty years. These include film reviews, promotional material and other relevant articles in major film journals, mainly *Kinema junpō* (*Kinema Report*) and *Eiga geijutsu* (*Film Art*). These were targeted at an intellectual, cinephile audience—especially *Eiga geijutsu*—and offered numerous interviews, both professional and amateur reviews, and reportages about specific films and filmmakers, genres, industries and technologies. Borrowing Gluck’s words (1993), these journals can be regarded as among the main ‘custodians’ of Japanese cinema; as authorities in terms of the knowledge, history, value and memory of films. Foucauldian analysis discourse enables me to explore the formation and evolution of discursive regimes, and identify who uses them and how is their authority legitimised, what is not being said or represented, and what space is there for discourses of resistance.

Films are approached as part of a mesh of texts on the industry of prostitution, on its regulation, and on anti-prostitution movements. In order to clarify

the position of postwar Japanese cinema in the map of discourses ‘defining’ prostitution, and to interrogate the relationship between the discursive and the material, I examine a heterogeneous selection of printed primary sources including newspapers (chiefly *Asahi shinbun*), novels on which the films are based (mainly *Gate of Flesh* [*Nikutai no mon*] by Tamura Taijirō, 1947), pulp magazines (*kasutori* publications), the journal of the Yoshiwara prostitutes’ union (*Fujin shinpū*), and major women’s journals (primarily *Fujin kōron*). *Fujin kōron* (*Women’s Review*) was by far the general publication dedicating more attention to the issue of prostitution, and thus it is here examined as representative of the abolitionist movement. Founded in 1916, the journal advocated for the rights of women from a moderate position, and enjoyed great prestige among intellectual, upper-middle class women. Doctors, university professors, politicians and educators often collaborated in *Fujin kōron* endowing the journal with an aura of authority as the ‘custodian’ of women’s voice and experience.

All primary materials have been chosen for their historical and cultural relevance as well as for their accessibility. Discourse analysis of this selection cannot claim to provide a thorough mapping of all the implicated agents; neither do I intend to project and generalise the results found in this sample on to the entire Japanese population. Instead these texts are regarded as symptomatic examples of on-going discursive practices. The objective is to identify dominant imaginaries and idiosyncrasies as well as the counter-discourses in order to facilitate a comparison between the cinematic prostitute and her representation in other realms such as those of law, medicine, education, and high and low arts. Moreover, discourse analysis can help illuminate in which ways the fictional prostitute may inform the social construction of other collective identities, such as that of the working class, the

outcast *burakumin*, and those women from the old empire's colonies, particularly the Korean diaspora.

If cinema, as Hansen argues, is a porous medium that can integrate various readings, one must be aware of what Stuart Hall (1989) calls the 'position of enunciation', that is, my own position as it is circumscribed by the ideologies and theories that shape what I see. Taking this further, Aaron Gerow (2010) in his discursive history of the origins of Japanese cinema warns of the tendency to adopt a reflectionist model. This model, he claims, merely notes correspondences between historical events and filmic content because 'it assumes a unified synchronic totality encompassing film and society' (2010: 3-4). Instead, Gerow invites us to also interrogate who is talking about cinema and where, and how the relationship between cinema and society is perceived and discussed. Japan holds a rich and solid tradition of film criticism (Gerow 2014) that provides invaluable access to different voices and brings into attention the yet under-examined figure of the film critic, who will occupy an important position in this dissertation. Therefore, the emphasis on primary sources is intended to counterbalance my 'position of enunciation' and to avoid presumptions about the relationship between cinema and its spectators and society. I approach the films' narrative and aesthetics not as reflections but rather as interactions with their milieu.

Ultimately this study seeks to enhance our understanding of the role of cinema in the articulation of body politics and in the construction of public opinion. It is worth noting that in Japan, prostitution and the sex industry today remain a sector as much profitable as controversial. In 2008 the sex industry was said to account for two to three per cent of Japan's GDP, between four and ten trillion yen (Dean 2008: 169), and regulation has not substantially changed since 1956.

Moreover, a Human Rights Watch report published in 2000 estimated that there were 150,000 non-Japanese women employed in the domestic sex industry, most of them from other Asian countries and many under debt bondage (Human Rights Watch 2000). This study provides an insight into the subject from a new perspective by tracing the discursive history of its cinematic representation. Conversely, through the theme of prostitution, it seeks to deepen our comprehension of this convulsive era of Japanese history and the concerns that still hover over the popular subconscious.

Chapters' outline

The first chapter offers a critical account of the modern history of prostitution in Japan. Expanding on scholarship on the relation between the national and the individual bodies, I bring into the discussion the representation of prostitutes in film, literature, and the press in order to interrogate the meaning of prostitution in social, cultural, and political terms over the years. The examination demonstrates that prostitution was intimately tied to the quest of modernisation. The appearance of public space, that is, the management of who can do what, where and how, stands out as a paramount concern. I demonstrate that the flow of body politics, in both the public and the private spheres, was deeply affected by the imagined conception of the West and that of Japan abroad. This historical account sheds light on the complex dynamics of gender, power, class, and ethnicity that intersect in the figure of the prostitute.

The second chapter focuses on the *panpan* films of the late 1940s and their revival in the 1960s, and uses the multiple adaptations of Tamura's novel *Gate of Flesh* as the main case study. I argue that the appeal of the *panpan* is twofold. First, in the public space she acted as an iconoclast of the ideologies and aesthetics of

gender, sexuality, and power. Secondly, she offered a site through which to negotiate the shadow of defeat represented by the American occupier, and, in her later revival, the failure of democracy to accomplish the idealised modernisation. It is her body, and her sexuality in particular, that convey the most powerful allegories. This leads to a critical revision of the relation between the cinematic *panpan* and the debates on body (*nikutai*) and subjectivity (*shutaisei*) that dominated the philosophical and artistic scenes in both eras. However, scholarship has often concentrated on high-brow cultural production and failed to fully grasp the relevance of popular intertextuality. This chapter shifts the focus to low-brow texts and explores the interplay between censorship and popular culture. The cinematic *panpan* emerges as a fundamental element of what I define as the ‘hyperimage’ of the *panpan*: an intertextual and intermedial construction that transcends time by integrating and adapting former archetypes and by projecting its image on future representations of female body politics.

In the third chapter I explore social melodramas referred to as ‘prostitution films’ (*baishun eiga/mono*), and concentrate on *Street of Shame* as a representative example of this category and of the prosperous studio system of the 1950s. Drawing on scholarship on melodrama and its relation to modernity, I argue that these films negotiate the dissonance between the expectations of modernity and the experience of reality. The prostitute figure reifies the result of the problematic and hurried transition from prewar social and sexual mores to democratic ideas of family and gender; and simultaneously she exposes the underlying continuous attempt to restrain women in domesticity. In most films, the focus on emotion and personal struggles effaces the exploitative attention given to the prostitute’s sexual body found in *panpan* films. The analysis of *Street of Shame* enquires how distinct

features of the studio system (such as stardom and genre) worked together to represent the prostitute. A special focus on the reception of the film leads to a discussion of how and to what extent it participated in the debates on prostitution, which was banned soon after its release. The second part of the chapter locates *Street of Shame* within the broader and diverse history of postwar ‘prostitution films’ in order to shed light on the evolution and decline of the prostitute character in melodrama.

In contrast to this decline, the presence of the prostitute in other genres became outstanding from the 1960s onwards. Such is the case of soft-core productions of Roman Porno to which the last chapter is dedicated. The three primary case studies are *Apartment Wife: Affair in the Afternoon* (*Danchizuma hirusagari no jōji*, Nishimura Shōgorō, 1971), *Street of Joy* (*Akasen Tamanoi nukeraremasu*, Kumashiro Tatsumi, 1974), and *Secret Chronicle: She Beast Market*. The analysis of body, sex and violence challenges the applicability of the scholarship of porn studies to Roman Porno prostitute films. Examining the conditions of production, consumption, and evaluation of the brand reveals a complex interplay between ideology and porn, which was poignantly reflected in the obscenity trials that began in 1972. Inscribing this cinema within international trends and the particular context of high-growth Japan, I argue that through the representation of the gendered spaces and sexual economies of the city, Roman Porno reflected on the postwar body politics shaping gender identities. Far from being granted a safe fantasy of pleasure and domination, the spectator is invited to simultaneously commodify and identify with the prostitute. More blatantly than ever, the West and socio-economic developing towards modernisation appear as objects of desire and threat.

Chapter 1

Invisible Pillars of Modernity:

Gender, Sexuality, and Media Representations

In August 1945 Japan was a devastated nation; by 1975 it had become an economic superpower. The increasing professionalisation of the labour market together with the dissolution of the *ie* system fostered migration to the big cities and the normalisation of the nuclear family. Women were granted the right to vote in 1946, and their share in education and in the labour force gradually increased. During these frenetic years, gender identities, roles and spaces were deeply transformed; however, market demands, legal regulations, expectations and every-day reality did not always match. In face of the contradictions and ambiguities embedded in the accomplishment of ‘modernisation’, official and popular forces alike proposed different ways to make sense of a reality that entailed new ways to imagine the nation and the individual.

As explained in the introduction, I propose to read the cinematic prostitute as a site to negotiate these issues that were shaking the foundations of the social order. To begin the enquiry, this chapter considers the problematic relationship between prostitution and the Japanese state in the twentieth century. I shall argue that the meaning and form of the sex trade were constantly altered in service of the interests of the state, thus making prostitution an ‘invisible pillar’ in the quest for modernisation. The aim is threefold: first, to locate prostitution within the broader cultural history of Japanese women; second, to identify the significant gaps between regulation and practical implementation that lay bare the underpinning purposes and

ideologies; and third, intertwined with the legal definitions, to trace the social construction of the prostitute's figure through the debates in public opinion. This will help establish an initial 'common conceptual lexicon' (Molasky 1999) of the prostitute in relation to which films will be examined in the subsequent chapters.

Because the relevance of the 1947 Constitution in changing the status of Japanese women can never be overemphasised, I first consider the gender reforms carried out during the Allied Occupation (1945-1952). The prominence given to the idea of modernisation, associated with western conceptions of morality and gender, leads me to trace the history of prostitution back to the Meiji era (1868-1912), when it became a systematised and centralised industry in connection to those same western ideas. Important historical characters embody the continuity and parallelism with the prewar era. Take, for example, the case of Kamichika Ichiko (1888-1981) and Ichikawa Fusae (1893-1981), two emblematic women who became members of the Diet after the war and played a pivotal role in the movement against prostitution and its subsequent criminalisation. One should not overlook the fact that these two women were born and raised in the ideological structures of Meiji, became renowned activists of the New Women's movement during the Taishō period (1912-1926); and Ichikawa, in particular, collaborated closely with the state in the mobilisation of women during the war years (1931-1945). Therefore, exploring the previous history of the prostitution industry will clarify the legacies of the prewar era and illuminate the grounds on which the postwar Prostitution Prevention Law was formulated and implemented.



Figure 1.1. *Soldiers' Girls* (1958).

新 風 昭和三十一年三月二十五日発行 2)

3. 19. 御徒町駅附近のピラ配り

東京都 街頭宣伝に協力
従組連の

組合員 「死か盗みか」に出動

売春禁止旋風に果敢な抵抗

東京都女子遊藝員組合 奮闘して鋭い論議と
連合会では、直接都民大 同席を喚起するためさ
きに遊藝場の叫びを訴える三月十九日、正午御徒 町
駅正面に勢揃い

町の都連本部に都内各地の街頭に連呼し、赤青黄
の三種のチラシを通行人
に配布し、効果をおさめ

午後三時終了した。
赤いチラシには、「一歩
踏み出すと中央に書
き、婦人組織の旗を
掲げ、上段に書きし
る」

▲最近赤旗人頭は、
経済事情による苦境
は二五歩で役は好奇
心減るから好きで
でやっているのだ
と波言っているが
▲私達の中救済のため
の転落は七五歩で
▲社会から白旗掲げられ
ている私達女性は今

情によるものです。
▲このような誤った理
論の論議から、どう
して正しい政策や法
案が生れましょうか
▲議員の気持と行動
には絶対反対して
下さい。

何かと話かける人もある

運口にも別の組が

Figure 1.2. Prostitutes from the New Yoshiwara union collecting signatures against the ban of the red-light district (*Fujin shinpū* 1956 Mar: 2).



Figure 1.3. *White Line* (1958).



Figure 1.4. Susan Kennedy as a mixed-race prostitute in *Yellow Line* (1960)

The postwar franchise of women

When the new Constitution came into effect on 3 May 1947, it was one of the few in the world to require gender equality, constituting a milestone in the history of women's rights (Liddle and Nakajima 2000: 152-4). By guaranteeing equality in the family, education, employment, and political representation, the Constitution brought women into the social, political, and economic domain, with far-reaching

consequences for the entire society. Article 24 reads:

Marriage shall be based only on the mutual consent of both sexes and it shall be maintained through mutual cooperation with the equal rights of husband and wife as a basis.

With regard to choice of spouse, property rights, inheritance, choice of domicile, divorce and other matters pertaining to marriage and the family, laws shall be enacted from the standpoint of individual dignity and the essential equality of the sexes.

(Constitution 1946)

The emphasis on the individual, which negated the previous *ie* system that defined the household as the basic social unit, was further developed through the revision of the Civil Code, carried out by governmental committees in close collaboration with the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) (Steiner 1950: 296-7). The code, effective 1 January 1948, abolished the requirement that the head of the household consent to the marriage of its members, which meant that, in theory, individuals could no longer be forced to marry someone appointed by their senior males. The number of ‘love marriages’ (*ren'ai kekkon*) rapidly increased and, to a lesser extent, so did the number of divorces (Steiner 1950: 299-303). According to Tokyo’s Family Court, the most common reason for divorce in 1949 was the husband’s adultery, occurring three times more than any other reason (*FK* 1950 Nov: 85). This indicates an important change in women’s approach to marriage and, consequently, in the popular conception of sexual mores. Arranged marriage (*omiai kekkon*) remained a very common practice for the next few decades, sometimes as a formalisation of an existing personal relationship. The fact that articles debating the pros and cons of arranged marriages frequently appeared in women’s journals until at least the early 1960s (e.g. *FK* 1950 Oct: 52; 1958 Jan: 174; 1962 Oct: 90) suggests that the newly prescribed ‘democratic’ practices were not implemented immediately, and perhaps not so widely. It is important to keep in mind this gap between official

discourses and the everyday experience of adapting to socio-political changes, because it is in this negotiation that cinema played a relevant role.

As a priority for democratisation, gender reforms were placed at the centre of the political agenda. They were highly publicised as signs of the Occupation's success, and underlined in pro-American academic discourses as evidence of the good intentions of SCAP (e.g. Steiner 1950; Fueto 1957). According to Mire Koikari, women's high participation in the first postwar general election in 1946 and the resulting thirty-nine female members of the Diet,¹ and their general interest in democratisation workshops were carefully recorded to make Japanese women 'poster girls' for the regime (2002: 29, 37). In the media, they were framed as longstanding victims of male domination and feudal values, which were held to be intrinsic to Japanese culture (Hirano 1992: 165-7). The cinema industry echoed this conception in films such as Mizoguchi Kenji's (1898-1956) trilogy on suffering women caught within the 'feudal' family system and gender structures.² According to Saitō, due to their manifest political and propagandistic objective, these kinds of works were referred to as 'democratization films, democratization enlightenment films, or idea pictures' and tended to feature a heroine who was 'young, rebellious, and a proponent of the new democracy' that 'often and unabashedly criticises patriarchal, conservative men for their sexist views, and challenges their authority by confronting their militaristic past' (Saitō 2014: 329). Thanks to the double censorship of the Civil Information and Education Section (CIE) that examined scripts and completed films, the gender representation in Japanese cinema was adapted to endorse the ideology of democracy, as will be further discussed in Chapter 2.

¹ On the first general election and the female members of the Diet see Mackie (2003: 123-127).

² Mizoguchi's trilogy encompasses *The Victory of Women* (*Josei no shōri*, 1946), *The Love of Sumako the Actress* (*Joyū Sumako no koi*, 1947), and *Flame of my Love* (*Waga koi wa moenu*, 1949).

The Education Law of 1947 (*kyōiku kihon hō*), which made both lower and secondary school free and co-educational, further fostered gender equality. However, even when attending higher education, women were discouraged from working outside the household by their families and by the educational institutions themselves (Liddle and Nakajima 2000: 282-3). This was reflected in the field of employment where the breach between official reforms and actual practice was even more notorious. In spite of the gender equality stipulated in the Labour Standards Act (*rōdō kijun hō*, 1947), women were, if lucky, encouraged to work in positions of service (such as teachers or nurses) or in temporary lower-status positions (such as ‘office lady’ or OL) until they got married (Liddle and Nakajima 2000: 172-81). Therefore, gender constructions in the realms of family, education, and employment indicate a tendency towards containing women within the family and the household. On this basis, it is not surprising that General Douglas MacArthur (1880-1964), in addressing the new female members of the Diet, emphasised that they should not ‘sacrifice the important position of women in the home’ (Koikari 2002: 29). Women were advised to use their new rights for the improvement of their families as an extension and sophistication of their domesticated position.

It is undeniable that the gender reforms brought revolutionary benefits to women, but they reached mainly middle upper-class women; and even among this privileged group, many found it difficult to reach positions of power in the workplace and the household. As Joanna Liddle and Sachiko Nakajima discuss, expanding on Pierre Bourdieu’s (1984) theory on the forms of capital and the fields of power, women who took advantage of their recently granted rights usually belonged to families that already held significant social, cultural, symbolic, and, in most cases, a certain level of economic capital. Therefore, gender reforms

perpetuated and even increased capital among this group (Liddle and Nakajima 2000: 156, 297). Considering that class division is partly defined by the gender power relations constructed within, disavowing class difference contributed to the promotion of the stereotype of the Japanese woman as housewife. This structural relationship between gender and class is crucial in the representation of prostitutes as this study aims to demonstrate how cinema sometimes challenged these hegemonic stereotypes.

In addition to class limitations, Liddle and Nakajima argue that ‘the motives behind these aims [gender reforms] were neither democratisation nor sex equality, but demilitarisation and the restraint of militarist nationalism, for which purpose the establishment of liberal reforms for women performed admirably’ (2000: 153). Likewise, Koikari concludes that in the context of Cold War (1947-1991), SCAP was mainly concerned with women’s role in stabilising the nation as a means to benefit US imperialist and strategic interests in Asia at the time, and therefore the formulation and implementation of the reforms were fragmentary (2002: 25-33). For instance, SCAP entrusted Beate Sirota Gordon (1923-2012), at the time a twenty-two-year-old with no experience or knowledge of legislation, with the decisive task of drawing up the article on gender equality for the new constitution (Dower 1999: 365-9). Moreover, the power structures of the *ie* system remained at work in the *koseki* or family registry, which required nominating a head of household, who may be a woman only in exceptional circumstances. Divorce, illegitimate children, as well as unwed mothers are recorded in the *koseki*, which used to be easily available for others to examine (Sugimoto 1997: 137-8). These vestiges of the *ie* system no doubt restrained many women from taking advantage of their rights for fear of a stigmatisation that include their children.

Regarding sexuality and body politics, the Eugenic Protection Law (*botaihogo hō*, 1948) decriminalised abortion and recognised other reproductive rights of women. At the same time, however, the Ministry of Education promoted ‘purity education’ (*junketsu kyōiku*), which mainly focused on female morality. It prescribed abstinence prior to marriage and established reproduction as the only healthy path for women to experience sexuality (Bullock 2009: 22). The discourses of purity were unceasingly echoed in women’s publications such as *Fujin kōron*. In 1952 this prestigious journal published translated letters by a British sex and marriage counsellor named Leslie Tizard, who strongly advised against sex experience before marriage, claiming that this could jeopardise the future marriage of the couple because of unintended pregnancy and disappointment in sex due to its idealised image in literature (1952: 121-4). Should they not get married in the end, both of them, but particularly the woman, would have difficulties in finding another candidate for marriage. He describes women’s sexuality as something ‘delicate and vulnerable’ that needs a longer time to mature (Tizard 1952:123). Aware of men’s ‘desires’, Tizard advises the male partner against resorting to prostitutes mainly for moral reasons, and concludes:

I would like to strongly emphasise our responsibility in preserving the sanctity of marriage as the only healthy grounding of social life. Those who give themselves over to extramarital sexual experiences, for whatever reason it may be, are assisting the overthrow of this principle.
(1952: 125)

The number of articles written by western authors in *Fujin kōron* in the late 1940s and early 1950s is substantial, especially so in subjects related to sexuality. They probably had a high visual impact because of the foreign name written in *katakana*, the English title accompanying the Japanese heading, and sometimes a

photograph of the author. I would suggest that this foreignness sheathes the articles with a veil of superior moral authority. That is, through processes of generalisation and stereotyping, the personal opinion of an individual represented a whole country, which in turn symbolised a set of morals and cultural capital. In this particular case, Tizard's opinion arguably would be read as exemplifying British mores; and the publicised image of Great Britain as epitome of successful modernity and pioneer in the women's liberation movement served to legitimise the prescribed principles and conducts. On the other hand, foreignness granted sexual morality a universal character, suggesting that many women and men around the 'civilised world' shared the same concerns, and thus the solution was rendered natural and logical.

American women among the occupiers, along with their Japanese collaborators, were actively involved in the formulation and implementation of the gender reforms, as well as in the establishment of the CIE and a women's bureau in the Ministry of Labour (Koikari 2002: 24, 33-4). Their discourses, in line with the example of Tizard's article, were based on white middle-class domesticity and contributed to the perpetuation of some traditional Japanese gender discourses as well as to the assimilation of concealed western gender inequalities. The 'liberated woman' presented by the CIE defined Japanese women primarily as mothers and wives, while the American gender structure was endorsed as a model of democracy and equality. In this regard, Koikari argues that the imposition of a foreign ideology of gender relations presented as ideal and progressive, links these practices with the tradition of colonialist discourses, which, while advocating the 'liberation' of indigenous women, assume the existence of a racially inferior 'Other' who needs to be enlightened and educated (2002: 26-7). Therefore, whilst women reformers did challenge gender relations to a certain extent, they simultaneously reinforced

national and racial hierarchies between US and Japan.

The Occupation discourse that made domesticity the core of women's rights and duties was voluntarily embraced by many Japanese women under the banner of the so-called 'housewife feminism'. Developing in the 1950s, these middle and upper-class women focused on certain social problems, such as education, environment and consumer issues, aiming to support their family and community. They did not intend to subvert social and gender hierarchies, but instead, reproduced the traditional image of nurturing femininity and glorified motherhood (Matsui 1990: 444). Not surprisingly, they received support from the authorities, while feminist groups involved in union activism (*fujin bu*) were repressed or shut down by SCAP. It was through grassroots movements like 'housewife feminism' that prostitution regained attention as one of the main concerns among social debates, and thus the patriarchal perspective that stigmatised the prostitute prevailed. By presenting abolition as an unconditional requirement of democratic modernisation, these groups anchored the prostitute to the 'feudal' prewar period, and framed her as their antagonist, a non-wife, non-mother, and non-community citizen. However, this discourse was not at all a novelty, as the following outline of prewar history will clarify.

Constructing the modern prostitute

In his study of the iconic figure of Abe Sada (1905-??) William Johnston says 'the sexual common sense of Japan before 1900, including that expressed in medical and other discourses, had little in common with that of the West' (2005: 7). In most social

strata virginity was an insignificant concept, while extramarital relationships and children were not punishable by law. Abortion was socially accepted as a decision for the sake of the family unit based on economic rather than moral reasons (Fujime 1997a: 103). Professional prostitutes of the pleasure quarters (*yūkaku*) could hold great cultural value (Teruoka 1989; Burns 1998: 9), while women in many communities would turn to prostitution temporarily or sporadically, without jeopardising their marriage options. I by no means intend to idealise the premodern sex trade, which was primarily grounded on ruthless exploitation; however, these facts should also be acknowledged. With the advent of the Meiji era, sexual mores radically changed as the Japanese people underwent a forced ‘samuraisation’ of values and customs aimed to infuse discipline, loyalty and obedience (Standish 2011: 80). As Johnston notes:

[T]he Civil Code of 1898 supported both the state’s claim to legal modernity and its efforts to strip women of their customary rights. Women suddenly found themselves unable to inherit property, assume the headship of households, or divorce husbands according to established custom. They became legal minors and were cut off completely from political activities. Because the samurai class comprised only 5 to 7 per cent of the population before it was legally dissolved in the 1870s, this nationwide imposition of its values brought about an enormous transformation of Japanese society and culture.

(2005: 30)

In the name of civilisation and modernity, reformists introduced ideals of feminine moral codes, such as that of the *otome* or maiden, that emerged from the confluence of Confucian and European (particularly Victorian) Christian codes. Women were increasingly placed in the dichotomy of ‘good-household woman’ (de-erotised and chaste) and ‘fallen woman’. Once labelled as fallen, having experienced sex outside marriage even if raped, a woman would find it difficult to marry or even in certain social strata to remain a member of her community (Johnston 2005: 30-3).

Under the influence of European practices that associated prostitution with syphilis and other venereal diseases, medical discourses identifying the prostitute as a polluted subject threatening the health of the nation spread at great speed from the 1870s onwards (Fujime 1997b; Burns 1998: 6-15, 18-20). Whilst the officially-prescribed moral and sanitary provisions were not immediately adopted by the entire population, the increasing regimentation of marriage, birth registration, abortion, midwife's duties, and such made it difficult to remain outside the redefined system (Fujime 1997a).

The state regulation of prostitution began in 1872, triggered by the international controversy around the María Luz Incident for indentured labour.³ The Meiji government declared the abolishment of human traffic, and liberated prostitutes and geisha from their forced contracts, but not from their debts (Garon 1997: 92; Sanders 2006: 29; Howland 2014: 23). Prostitution remained under the control of the prefectures with various approaches, until 1900 when, in order to centralise and systematise the trade, the Ministry of Home Affairs adopted an ordinance named the Regulations for the Council of Prostitutes, setting the bases of the state-regulated prostitution (*kōshō seido*). The system was defined by two main characteristics: first, it imposed mandatory medical examinations on prostitutes and geisha, which were often violent, humiliating and traumatic experiences, forced upon only the sex workers but not on the customers (Fujime 1997a: 90; Onozawa 2010: 306-7); second, it was grounded on a paradox that condemned prostitution but allowed it if based on

³ The María Luz was a Peruvian merchant ship with Chinese coolies that anchored in Yokohama. With the discovery of the inhumane conditions of hundreds of enslaved individuals in the ship, Japan found itself caught between foreign demands to fight human trafficking and the dispositions of unequal treaties of nations such as Peru and Japan with western nations. Servitude in the Japanese sex trade was underscored by the Peruvian party, in order to undermine Japan's moral and political authority on the subject. See Sievers (1983); Howland (2014); and Kawanishi (2014), amongst others.

free will or the necessity to fulfil the Confucian principle of filial piety (Fujime 1997b: 140-1; Johnston 2005: 42). This double morality underpinning the approach laid on women the entire responsibility of selling their bodies, while framing the state as ‘helping’ deprived women rather than being held accountable for the disadvantaged conditions in which a great part of the population lived.

Liddle and Nakajima estimate that in the early twentieth century there were between 49,000 and 52,000 licensed women—male prostitution was disavowed (2000: 65). Individuals and establishments sanctioned by the state were highly taxed, and prostitution beyond state control was criminalised. Fujime Yuki demonstrates that many prostitutes came from an impoverished working class, the marginalised *burakumin*,⁴ and former farming families pushed to slums in the cities as a result of several factors such as the aggressive deflation policy, the Land Tax Reform (1873-1881), and the raising taxes intended to nurture the military and police bodies (1997a: 94-97). Among the scarce alternatives was factory work, but this meant a lower salary and enduring perhaps even more terrible conditions (Sievers 1983: 55-90; Liddle and Nakajima 2000: 62). Johnston rightly notes that ‘modernity, which promoted a cash economy, a mobile workforce, and a double standard for sexual morality, also spread prostitution to communities where it had not existed before’ (2005: 34-5). With the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) the situation degenerated exponentially: higher military budgets, higher taxes, more impoverished people, more women without a male provider, higher emigration to the cities and abroad, and consequently, larger numbers of

⁴ The *burakumin* are a Japanese outcast minority, ethnically and linguistically indistinguishable from other Japanese people. Discrimination is based on their association with work dealing with death, which has been historically considered impure, such as performing burials, butchering animals and tanning leather. See Neary (1989, 1997).

licensed and unlicensed prostitutes. The sex trade became a systematised industry, effectively integrated in the political, military, financial and medical systems.

Imperialistic fever brought the establishment of military quarters all around Japan, and with them, new prostitution quarters sprang up in close proximity. The sex trade constituted a stable and highly profitable source of income for the treasury that was classified as ‘miscellaneous income’, thus enabling the government to use it in an unrestrained way. In 1882 this ‘miscellaneous income’ reached 700,000 yen at a national level, and the following year 54 per cent of the collected taxes were allocated to the police budget (Fujime 1997a: 94). According to local authorities, in 1899 the pleasure quarters of Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto received more than eight million customers and had a turnover of approximately six million yen. By 1910 they reached almost ten million customers and six and a half million yen; and yet these figures are thought to have been perhaps even five times higher in reality (Fujime 1997a: 96). As prostitution was already a well-established international market, many women were sent abroad, the so-called *karayukisan*. Imamura Shōhei (1926-2006) and Kumai Kei (1930-2007) have magnificently recounted the tragedy of these women who were deceived, exploited and ultimately repudiated, in the documentary *Karayuki-san, the Making of a Prostitute* (*Karayukisan*, 1975), and the drama based on true events *Sandakan 8* (*Sandakan hachiban shōkan bōkyō*, 1974), respectively.⁵ With Japan’s incursions in other Asian territories, the number of foreign prostitutes (particularly from China, Taiwan and Korea) carried across the empire also increased. Therefore, the economic and militaristic interests of the Meiji state in fact set the ideal conditions for the number of prostitutes to rise dramatically, and simultaneously

⁵ On the depiction of *karayuki* prostitutes on Japanese cinema since the colonial era, see Baskett (2008: 94-97).

those interests were partly financed through the taxation on prostitution. As Fujime summarises it:

[T]he licensed prostitution system was both an outgrowth of colonial modernity, the world capitalist system, and Meiji political and economic class formations, and a vehicle for the extension of these systems through state regulation of national and class boundaries.

(1997b: 137)

The anti-prostitution movement, essentially demanding the abolition of the state-regulated system, developed around organisations such as the Japan Woman's Christian Temperance Union (JWCTU, *Fujin kyōfukai*), the Salvation Army (*Kyūsegun*), and the Purity Society (*Kakuseikai*), all three founded in the turn of the century. They were greatly informed by conservative Christian morality and concerned with the respectability of Japan as a modern and civilised nation. Through rallies and publications like *Purity* (*Kakusei*) and *Women's News* (*Fujin shinpō*), they claimed that abolition was necessary to 'uphold the dignity of Japan in the eyes of the world' (Baishun 1995: 1). For them, the state system was an extension of the premodern one, and hence specific to Japan and intrinsically feudalistic. Not unlike their postwar counterparts, they equated modernity with civilisation, liberation, and superior morality; and in turn connected these ideals with the West, thus positioning Japan as an inferior 'Other'. The fact that Japanese scholarship replicated for a long time the national legacy argument (e.g. Murakami 1970-1973; Yoshimi 1984) not only evidences how rooted this idea was, but also points out the complicity of academia in perpetuating certain discourses. It is particularly striking because Meiji's prostitution system was in fact modelled after European systems grounded in biopolitics (Fujime 1997a: 89-90; Burns 1998: 8). Accordingly, it was systematised at the service of the military (as Napoleon implemented in France) and justified by

medical discourse (as the British Contagious Disease Acts of 1864, 1866 and 1869).

In accordance with Foucault's understanding of power and its relation to sexuality, Japanese abolitionists, who mounted the revolutionary counter-discourses of their time, ultimately failed to challenge the fundamental categories grounding the hegemonic discourses of gender and morality. As Fujime argues, despite their achievements, they ultimately contributed to the perpetuation of structural power relations. Composed mainly of upper-class women, they appealed to a higher standard of morality but did not demand higher salaries for women's labour nor did they condemn the reforms that abused the weakest strata of society. The illusion that prostitution operated based on free will favoured the indolent image of the prostitutes conveyed in *Purity*, where they were rendered 'filthy', 'criminals', 'inferior citizens' and a 'different race' altogether (as translated in Fujime 1997b: 151, 154-6). They advocated that prostitutes should be cast out from the legal system, and even from society—forced to live with the outcast *burakumin* (Burns 1998: 24). Nevertheless, the opinion expressed in abolitionist publications was not the only one, and probably not even the most widely accepted. What is certain is that prostitution and its regulation were fiercely debated in the 'public sphere', as evidenced by the existence of the 'Corpus on the Problem of Prostitution' (*Baibaishun mondai shiryō shūsei*, 1997), a vast collection of articles, statistics and reports from public and private entities from late nineteenth century to the Second World War. Even a literary and aesthetics journal such as the prestigious *Taiyō*—thus not apparently connected to the subject in a significant way—dedicated numerous articles to the prostitution debate (1896 Aug, 1900 Feb, 1900 Sep, 1900 Oct, 1900 Dec, 1901 Mar, 1902 Apr, 1916

Dec).⁶ In them one can appreciate a greater variety of opinions, some justifying the current system, others demanding reforms without abolishing state administration, and yet others sympathising with the misfortune of prostitutes. However, virtually all point at western conceptions and regulations as references to implement in Japan.

With the ‘Taishō democracy’ the approach to prostitution as slavery (and hence the prostitute as victim) gained prominence, although sex workers remained as objects rather than subjects of the debate. The abolitionist movements were reinvigorated in the 1920s due to the support and pressure from the League of Nations, of which Japan was a founding member (Baishun 1995: 1-2). However, as Japan’s militaristic expansion proceeded there was scarce criticism of the military prostitution systems established in the occupied regions of Asia. On the other hand, Taishō also saw the emergence of more radical women movements, such as the Bluestocking (*Seitō*) group which originated around the publication of the magazine of the same title, and the female section of the *burakumin* movement known as the Levellers’ Society (*Suiheisha*). Bluestocking, led mainly by Hiratsuka Raichō (1886-1971) and Itō Noe (1895-1923), represented the so-called ‘new woman’ (*atarashii onna*), who denounced gender discrimination as well as the double morality and stigmas engrained to perpetuate the patriarchal order. Equating marriage under such morals and politics to prostitution, their articulation of female sexual consciousness was revolutionary, and they fiercely attacked conservative reformism (Sievers 1983: 184-5). Itō Noe, one of the most radical, defended prostitution as a legitimate livelihood for women to gain economic independence, but many others simply stood

⁶ Especially the entry of 1916, offers a symptomatic example. Across four pages, different authors discuss prostitution in terms of social order, morality, and health referencing several European models. State-licensed prostitutes are ultimately defended for their social function and their prevention of venereal diseases.

against the state-regulated system (Sievers 1983: 163-187; Klemperer-Markman 2009: 230).

The Bluestockings were the first to make of the prostitute a banner of subversion, linking sexual and political liberation. If they represented a highbrow progressive alternative, *Fujin suiheisha* stood for the lower-class radical alternative. The national movement of the Levellers' Society was established in 1922 by the *burakumin* to join forces with the proletariat, the *zainichi* (Koreans residing in Japan) and other marginalised strata of society (Neary 1989). Its female section, *Fujin suiheisha* asserted that the problem of prostitution lay in the economic system of society, perpetuated by the lack of concern of the privileged ones for human rights. This constituted the first attempt to address the intersectionality pervasive to prostitution. According to Fujime, they debated directly with prostitutes, since many of them were actually friends or relatives, and attempted to bring them into the movement to demand the abolition of state-regulated prostitution (1997a: 164-6). Because *burakumin* were systematically discriminated in labour (not allowed to work even as a housemaid or as a nanny) and marriage (often abandoned after consummation when their origins were brought to light) they had fewer options than the majority of lower-class women. Therefore, considering the triple discrimination for their gender, social class and caste that they suffered, it seems legitimate to infer that a significant number of them would have turned to prostitution. Whilst research on the subject is scarce, a significant amount of references support my assumption.

In the documentary *Karayuki-san*, two interviewees reveal that *buraku* women were forcedly taken abroad for prostitution, more than other women. Imamura had already suggested the relation between *buraku* and prostitution in the

documentary *Post-war History of Japan as Told by a Bar Hostess* (*Nippon sengoshi madamu Onboro no seikatsu*, 1970), where the protagonist's outcast origin is hinted at by references to the butchering family's business. Likewise, the novel *The River with No Bridge* (*Hashi no nai kawa*, [1961-1973] 1990), about a *buraku* community during Meiji and Taishō periods, features two characters sold as prostitutes.⁷ In the 1950s the newspaper *Asahi* published a piece about a group of women in a *buraku* taken away from the village and deceived into prostitution (*Asahi* ed. 1958: 171). According to a villager, 'men work mainly in construction and at the docks, women become geisha, waitresses and prostitutes' (*Asahi* ed. 1958: 172). A striking testimony, cited by Fujime, notes that the fact that prostitution enabled these women to interact with non-*buraku* Japanese people was considered by many as an attraction of the occupation (1997a: 153). Moreover, Kawamoto Yoshikazu, in his study of the potential connection between 'comfort women' and the *buraku*, states that at the end of the policy of closure (*sakoku*) around 1866, the shogunate authorities gathered *buraku* women to offer them to foreigners since other regular prostitutes refused to deal with these men (1997: 122-3).⁸ After the war, too, a significant number of *buraku* women worked at the Recreation and Amusement Association (RAA) (Kawamoto 1997: 193-5)—which will be discussed later on. However, Kawamoto concludes there is no evidence that *buraku* women were particularly numerous among prostitutes in general, only in some regions and specific historical periods (1997: 132).

Although these three groups fought to challenge the state's administration,

⁷ The novel *The River with No Bridge* (*Hashi no nai kawa*, [1961-1973] 1990) was written by Sumii Sue (1902-1997) and later adapted as a film by Imai Tadashi (1970) and Higashi Yōichi (1992). The two prostitute characters end by committing suicide.

⁸ In the Meiji era prostitutes serving foreigners became known as *rashamen*.

they were unable to work together and, in the case of the abolitionists and the Bluestockings, even to actually engage with prostitutes. They projected on them their own agenda, and hence, above gender, it was class and politics that defined their understanding of these women. On the other hand, little is known about the union movements organised by women in the serving industry (waitresses, geisha, and prostitutes amongst others) during the 1920s and 1930s. Prostitutes' unions promoted self-regulation measures in their quarters to encourage solidarity among themselves, demanded improvements in their working and living conditions, and organised several strikes to demand tax reductions (Fujime 1997a: 288-305). Whilst these initiatives were short and sporadic, and received little attention from the media, they are meaningful. All these diverse movements opened a breach leading to potential alternatives, but their strength faded away with the downfall of the liberal democratic period of Taishō. In the late 1920s, prostitution became a sacrifice that lower-class women made for the empire, while upper-class women, contained within the patriarchal family, were advertised as the healthy image of Japan (Liddle and Nakajima 2000: 70). Increasing militarisation along with the lack of international support after Japan withdrew from the League of Nations in 1931 (partly due to the Manchurian invasion) led to the decline of all anti-prostitution movements (Baishun 1995: 3). In fact most social movements, including that of the *burakumin* liberation, were eclipsed by the pervasive ideology of sacrificing for the nation.

The war years

Between 1931 and 1945 bio-politics were dramatically intensified because the body becomes a useful force for the state 'only if it is both a productive body and a

subjected body' (Foucault [1975] 1977: 26). Under the slogan 'beget and multiply' (*umeyo fuyaseo*), the Japanese civil population was bombarded with campaigns to increase the birth rate to produce men, who were objectified as tools of expansion. The financial crisis and the strict sacrifices made for the advance of imperialism led a significant percentage of the working class to lose their jobs. Men were sent to war in ever growing numbers, while women struggled to look after the household. As depicted in Ozu Yasujirō's *A Hen in the Wind* (*Kaze no naka no mendori*, 1948), there must have been many women who, struck by poverty and uncertain about whether their husbands would ever return from war, turned occasionally to prostitution in order to sustain themselves and their children.

While many domestic product factories closed down, munitions factories continued to expand. In order to compensate for the terrible conditions of the workers (and to foster a pervasive control of them), living quarters and entertainment facilities were established in the proximities of factories, which included amenities very similar to the military 'comfort stations' but for factory workers (Onozawa 2010: 236-40); and through the approval of several regulations in the early 1940s, women working as geisha and waitresses were forced to transfer to these facilities (2010: 250-1). Meanwhile, under the culture of *ero-guro-nansensu* (erotic, grotesque and non-sense), especially in the cities, the erotic industry diversified, offering more accessible entertainment. The official number of prostitutes decreased and the sex trade was banned in several prefectures, but the number of *jokyū*—waitresses in bars, cafés and clubs—virtually doubled between 1930 and 1936 (Takemura 1982: 178-9; Fujime 1997a: 284-8). Low salaries prompted many *jokyū* to seek an 'extra income' to make ends meet and consequently, unlicensed prostitution increased under several euphemistic categories. According to the Home Ministry, in 1938 there were more

than 45,000 prostitutes in Japan, while the total number of women involved in the sexual service industry was over 184,000 (Fujime 1997a: 303).

In spite of the symbiosis between the sex industry, the military and the legal authorities, responsibility and blame fell entirely on the prostitutes, who were stigmatised as sources of the diseases that threatened men's health, shattered the happiness of the family, and potentially affected the physical and mental well-being of children (Frühstück 2003: 39). Among several proposals discussed in the Diet, Takemura Tamio (1982) explains one presented in 1933 that suggested the demarcation of specific districts where prostitutes would be organised under a licensed union, while outside prostitution would be severely prosecuted. In this way, state-regulated prostitution would end, but the sex industry could continue and even benefit from the lack of competition from unlicensed activity (Takemura 1982: 183-5). The proposal was harshly criticised for its simplicity and obvious support for brothel owners (Takemura 1982: 185), and I would add that it clearly revealed that the central concern was the respectability of the state and the morality exhibited in the public space, not the sex trade or women's rights. Despite this backlash, the proposal is strikingly similar to how the postwar red-light districts were to be shaped twenty-five years later.

On the war fronts, sexuality became tightly regulated and monitored through the 'comfort station' system of military prostitution established as early as 1932 across the empire, and justified as a measure to control soldiers' sexual urge and aggressiveness, and to protect the troops from venereal diseases (Frühstück 2003: 12). A brief historical outline cannot do justice to the grievous international problem of 'comfort women' (*ianfu*), which has received greater prominence since

the late 1980s, when the sexual enslavement of myriads of Korean women by Japan's imperial army was publicly denounced.⁹ Thus, my intention here is to provide a tentative summary of the demographics of 'comfort women' and their connections to women's movements.

Early in the Asia-Pacific War, the majority of *ianfu* were Japanese *karayuki* and Korean indentured workers residents of Japan. After the Rape of Nanking (1937-1938) military officers increased the number of 'comfort stations' allegedly to prevent the massive rape of civilians, although this meant sexually enslaving many Chinese women. Under the National Mobilisation Law (*kokka sōdōin hō*) in 1938, lower-class and rural women in Japan and in occupied or semi-colonised areas were seized in 'slave raids', while the military urged brothel owners in Tokyo to set privately-run comfort stations in occupied China, granting them protection and diverse privileges (Tanaka 2002: 14-5). By the end of the war, the majority of 'comfort women' were Koreans, although there were also myriads of Japanese, Chinese, South-East Asian, Dutch and Australian women and girls enslaved. George L. Hicks claims that, immersed in this imperialistic psychosis, the number and size of the comfort stations symbolically represented the strength of Japan in a geographical area (1995: 22). Women were held as symbolic capital and sexual subjugation represented power relations between nations. It was not only a system of physical abuse and exploitation, but it also worked to spread the fear and demoralisation among the threatened communities.

The number of 'comfort women' remains unclarified, and the estimates vary considerably depending on the sources, ranging from 50,000 to over 200,000 (Hicks

⁹ In addition to the sources mentioned, see Boling (1995); Ueno and Yamamoto (2004); Soh (2009); Mihalopoulos (2011); Kovner (2012); and Qiu (2014), amongst many others.

1995; Schellstede ed. 2000; Tanaka 2002). They have been depicted in films such as *Desertion at Dawn* (*Akatsuki no dassō*, Taniguchi Senkichi, 1950), which was later remade as *Story of a Prostitute* (*Shunpuden*, Suzuki Seijun, 1965), *Desperate Outpost* (*Dokuritsu gurentai*, Okamoto Kihachi, 1959), the epic trilogy *The Human Condition* (*Ningen no jōken*, Kobayashi Masaki, 1959-1961), and the above-mentioned *Sandakan 8*, amongst others. While most tend to focus on Japanese women, *Story of a Prostitute*, based on a novel by Tamura Taijirō (1911-1983), constitutes an important exception because the heroine is a Korean *ianfu* who falls in love with a Japanese soldier—although the politics of this romance can also be problematic. In his study of ‘comfort women’, Tanaka recalls that he first became aware of the sexual exploitation of Chinese women through Japanese war films of the 1960s (2002: 2), thus demonstrating that cinema has been addressing this issue, although not always from a critical stance, long before it was consolidated as an international debate and an established subject of research.

The position of Japanese women’s groups in this context is complicated. Some such as the Tokyo Women’s Reform Society (TWRS, *Tōkyō kirisuto kyō fujin kyōfukai*), denounced the connections between expansionist imperialism, capitalism, and the sex trade; and feminist Yosano Akiko (1878-1942) had been writing anti-war poetry and criticising Japanese imperialism since the Russo-Japanese War. However, patriotic organisations like the Women’s Voluntary Service Corps (WVSC, *Joshi teishintai*), were heavily implicated in military prostitution as a patriotic service (Liddle and Nakajima 2000: 67-8). Likewise, prominent Takamure Itsue (1894-1964) and Ichikawa Fusae, closely cooperated with the government’s mobilisation of women for war, and Ichikawa was appointed secretary of the Central Association for National Spiritual Mobilisation (*Kokumin seishin sōdōin undō*).

Therefore, during the first half of the twentieth century, prostitution was utilised as an effective means of improving the performance of, and increasing the control over workers and soldiers. As Sheldon Garon summarises it,

Prior to 1946, elite bureaucrats sought to regulate people's sexuality in the service of a broader national agenda -much as they managed welfare and religious organizations. It was more than a matter of providing a hygienic, supervised outlet for male sexuality. Officials regarded licensed prostitution as an integral part of programs aimed at "regulating public morality," furthering economic development, and advancing national power.

(1997: 89)

From the prostitutes' perspective, for many it was slavery and forced abuse, for others a traumatic desperate decision to survive, and yet for others a rational decision to earn a higher salary to sustain themselves and their families. The abuses of the military forces, however, did not end with the defeat of the Japanese empire.

In the aftermath of war

Before the landing of the Allied Occupation forces, anxiety and confusion reigned all over Japan and specially in the major cities and ports. Fearing indiscriminate rape and violence, women and children crammed in the railway stations trying to flee to the countryside. The Japanese government and military were partly responsible for this popular disorder because their wartime propaganda had proclaimed that should the Americans land, the invaders would perpetrate rape and massacre all over the nation (Tanaka 2002: 112-6). Moreover, since their own men had committed similar crimes in Asia, arguably they feared they would be the victims now.

On 18 August 1945, just three days after surrender, Higashikuni Naruhiko's

(1887-1990) government requested prostitution dealers to set up the Recreation and Amusement Association (RAA)—*Tokushi ian shisetsu kyōkai*, literally Special Comfort Facility Association. The RAA was justified as a ‘national policy of protection’ (*kokutai goji*) to prevent rape and miscegenation (Lie 1997: 257). According to the telegraph that the Ministry of Home Affairs sent to the governors and police chiefs of all prefectures, the preparation of RAA is outlined as follows:

1. Allow the business for the foreign troops within limited quarters, regardless of existing regulations of control.
2. The above-mentioned limited quarters should be determined by the [prefectural] police chief, and prohibit Japanese subjects from using the facilities.
3. The police chief should actively give guidance in management of the following facilities and promote their rapid expansion.
 - Sexual comfort facilities
 - Eating and drinking facilities
 - Recreation centres
4. Recruit women required for the business from geisha, licensed and unlicensed prostitutes, waitresses, barmaids, habitual illicit prostitutes and the like.

(as translated in Tanaka 2002: 133-4)

This telegraph demonstrates that the government was deeply implicated in procuring prostitutes for the Allied Forces, although it avoided being directly involved in the management, following the advice of SCAP (Dower 1999: 126). Furthermore it illustrates how professional boundaries among women in the service industry were perceived as ambiguous, or frequently blurred at the authorities’ convenience.

John Dower explains that the establishment of the RAA was an expensive and hasty enterprise, and in face of the reluctance of many prostitutes to join in, deceitful public recruitment was initiated (1999: 127). In addressing the ‘New

Women of Japan’,¹⁰ the recruiting advertisement evoked the progressive image of the 1920s. Since, in addition to comfort stations, the RAA included cabarets, bars, dance halls, restaurants, billiard parlours, and other such establishments, many women were hired as waitresses or dancers and then forced to prostitution. Free accommodation and meals were no doubt extremely attractive to war orphans or widows; and hence once again it was primarily marginalised minorities and lower-class women who were sacrificed for the nation (Molasky 1999: 109; Kawamoto 1997: 193-5). The inaugural ceremony of the RAA was celebrated in the Imperial Palace Plaza (Kōkyōmae hiroba), located on the palace’s premises, on 28 August 1945. The proclamation statement read:

United we advance unhesitatingly to where our beliefs command us,
and through the sacrifice of thousands of “Okichis of the Shōwa era”
we shall build a floodwall to hold back the raging waves,
to preserve and nurture the purity of our race a hundred years into the
future,
and become the invisible pillar at the foundation of the postwar social
order.

(Makabe 1978: 201)

The authorities revived the historical myth of Okichi (1841-1890), a woman recruited to prostitute for the American consul in the mid-1850s when Japan was being pushed to abolish its policy of closure. After the consul left, Okichi, repudiated for interracial ‘fraternisation’, became an alcoholic and ultimately committed suicide. The legacy of this myth in the popular imaginary is evidenced by the significant amount of literary, theatrical and cinematic adaptations of the story.¹¹ In

¹⁰ A complete translation of one of the recruiting advertisement is included in Molasky (1999: 110); the original Japanese in Fukae (1989: 5).

¹¹ By 1945, the story of Saitō Kichi (Okichi) had been adapted at least four times into novels, two into theatre plays, and six into film –probably the most famous nowadays being Mizoguchi Kenji’s *Mistress of a Foreigner* (*Tōjin Okichi*, 1930). Since 1945 there have been a few other adaptations, and some in the West, including the film *The Barbarian and the Geisha* (John Huston, 1958), starring

this light, the statement in fact disclosed the fate of these women as patriotic martyrs, and laid bare the politics of gender and sexuality at stake. Intertextual references were grounded in the accepted commodification of sex, and served to legitimate and reinforce Meiji's discourse on the sacrifices entailed in the nation's 'enlightenment'.

I had seen the speech translated into English in several books (e.g. Lie 1997; Dower 1999; Bix 2001), but it is when I examined the original Japanese that another crucial cultural reference not mentioned in the translations caught my eye. In the original, the term used for 'sacrifice' is 'human pillars' (*hitobashira*), and hence it reads 'on top of thousands of human pillars (*hitobashira*) of Okichis of the Shōwa era we shall build...' First of all, this demonstrates the unequivocal identification of the prostitute as the invisible pillar supporting the social order (not so clear in many English translations); an association that blatantly betrays the double morality that condemns those same women for their 'sacrifice'. But more importantly, 'human pillar' is a very famous type of human sacrifice endlessly narrated in Japanese folklore tales since the renowned *The Chronicles of Japan* (*Nihon shoki*, completed in the eighth century), and hence full of connotations and intertextual references. According to folkloric accounts, a human pillar is an individual buried, sometimes alive, as an offering to the deities at large-scale complicated construction sites (such as dams, castles, and bridges) in order to prevent them from being destroyed by natural disasters or enemies' attacks (Tsuda 1918: 760-767; Dorson 1962: 211-220). Although not a unique Japanese ritual, Tsuda Noritake explains it as an essentially Japanese deed, based on traditional values and customs supporting the 'group consciousness' (*shūdan ishiki*) that demands self-sacrifice and community dedication

John Wayne (1907-1979); and a play attributed to Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) entitled *The Judith of Shimoda* (*Die Judith von Shimoda*, [??], reconstructed and published in 2006).

(1918: 765-7).

Probably for this reason, the myth of human pillars was integrated in the nationalist discourse of the Japanese empire. In his memories of the Battle of the Philippines (1944-1945), Ōoka Shōhei (1909-1989), best known for his novel *Fires on the Plain* (*Nobi*, [1951] 1978—adapted to film in two occasions), recalls their mission of prolonging the war as long as possible with barely any material means. In face of the circumstances, the military command in charge told his troops: ‘[c]arry out resistance in perpetuity to provide assistance to the never-ending Imperial Fortune by turning yourselves into human pillars [*hitobashira*], unperturbed, for the Imperial Nation’ (as translated in Satō 2008: 3). I have not been able to establish to what extent it was a common trope of military discourses at the time, but this excerpt illustrates the transcendental appeal of this figure in legitimating and glorifying sacrifices of individuals’ bodies for the common good.

Deceitful recruitment for RAA was surely conducted in many cases as scholars have noted (Fukae 1989; Dower 1999; Molasky 1999). However, assuming many Japanese people were familiar with the narratives of Okichi and ‘human pillars’, I would argue that the official speech disguised neither the sexual nature nor the tragic consequences of these women’s mission, but rather articulated it as a glorious action: the RAA women were to be offered to the gods (emperor?) to safeguard the reconstruction of the nation. In this way, it appealed to the predominant beliefs and customs considered valid until two weeks earlier. The war had ended, but to conclude that the rationale of the state’s communication to its subjects would change overnight is naïve, and as artificial as the myth of the ‘postwar’ being a clean start of a new era (Gluck 1993). Moreover, the legacy of the

‘floodwall’ metaphor in the popular imaginary is reflected in the title of the melodrama *Soldiers’ Girls* (*Onna no bōhatei*, Komori Haku, 1958), which in Japanese reads ‘the floodwall of woman’ (see Figure 1.1). As further elaborated in Chapter 3, this overlooked melodrama offers a sharp criticism of the RAA, the government’s intervention, and the paraphernalia of the recruitment.

The first RAA opened on 28 August 1945, the day Allied troops reached the shores of Japan (Molasky 1999: 109). It is said that the minimum number of clients a prostitute had to serve each day was fifteen, though some testimonies cite a fourfold amount (Fukae 1989: 6). Some authors note that whilst the physical hardship parallels that of the ‘comfort women’ in the war years, the RAA workers at least received a proper salary (Tanaka 2002: 147; Kovner 2012: 23). The actual number of prostitutes employed by the RAA remains unclear; for instance, data about Tokyo differs from 1,360 to 10,000.¹² In addition to different survey parameters, clear-cut classifications are hard to sustain since GIs also made use of local brothels and streetwalkers (*panpan*),¹³ while some RAA facilities served Japanese customers as well (Kovner 2012: 24). What is certain is that prostitution expanded way beyond the RAA, diversifying and encompassing a greater number of professionals and amateurs. Nevertheless, the new prostitution system failed to become a floodwall for the ‘regular’ Japanese women. Since the Allied Forces’ arrival in Okinawa, a large

¹² Tanaka estimates 10,000 ‘comfort women’ and prostitutes serving the Occupation forces in Tokyo in late 1945 (2002: 155); Kovner that between 1945 and 1946 in Tokyo 30,000 women worked in the sex industry, of whom 1,360 worked in the RAA (2012: 24). At a national level, one source estimated that the RAA employed 70,000 women (Kamiya 2009: 153). By the end of 1945, SCAP considered that there were 150,000 prostitutes in all Japan and 6,000 in the Tokyo area, excluding streetwalkers (Tanaka 2002: 155).

¹³ Some authors use the term *panpan* to refer to women who worked in the RAA, in addition to the streetwalkers, who made up the largest and most prominent group. In order to distinguish and explore the social and economic significance of this type of prostitute specific to the early postwar era, I use the term *panpan* to refer to independent streetwalkers.

number of cases of rape, bodily harm, extortion, burglary and murder committed by GIs were reported all around the country (Fujime 1997a: 326; Tanaka 2002: 110, 116-8). In such a chaotic period, Japanese men were sure to have also committed rape, as often depicted in films of the time, but these stories were frequently silenced (*FK* 1950 Oct: 109; Tanaka 2012).

The RAA closed down in March 1946 after freeing prostitutes from bonded contracts and abolishing state-regulated prostitution in January. SCAP claimed that prostitution was ‘against democratic ideals’, but the rapid spread of venereal diseases is popularly believed to have been the main reason for the shutdown (Dower 1999: 130; Liddle and Nakajima 2000: 154-5). Officially in order to suppress the growing number of streetwalkers, in December 1946 the government declared prostitution legal in delineated red-light districts in each city: the so-called *akasen chitai* or red-light district.¹⁴ State-administration was replaced by privatisation, but many saw in it a revival of the prewar system. It is estimated that most of the women who had worked in the RAA, including many of ‘third country’ origins, moved to red-light districts or became *panpan* (Kamiya 2009: 153). The state in collaboration with women’s associations opened rehabilitation centres, which became a common setting of *panpan* films such as Mizoguchi Kenji’s *Women of the Night* (*Yoru no onnatachi*, 1948), and Naruse Mikio’s *White Beast* (*Shiroi yajū*, 1950), examined later in detail.

Panpan and brothel workers

Because *panpan* worked independently, moved in and out of the sex market, and

¹⁴ The term *akasen*, literally meaning ‘red line’, comes from the practice of the Japanese police of marking street maps with a red line to indicate the boundaries of neighbourhoods of legal prostitution.

frequently changed their city of residence, it is hard to determine how many there were; estimates vary depending on the scholars: 50,000 (Tanaka 2012; Sanders 2012), 70,000 (McLelland 2012) or 100,000 (Fujime 1997a). In any case, they constituted a significant stratum of the population that was virtually impossible to ignore. The first *panpan* are thought to have emerged in the aftermath of defeat from the ranks of the homeless (Sanders 2012: 407). Considering nine million Japanese were homeless due to the incendiary bombing campaigns that the Allies had waged, it is not hard to imagine the chaos and desperation felt in the cities. However, as Holly Sanders' research on the *panpan* clarifies, many were in fact middle-class women who had turned to streetwalking (and even left their standard jobs to do so).

15

According to Sanders, in the late 1940s one third of streetwalkers had at least attained women's higher schools, while at the time only ten per cent of all Japanese women did so (2012: 419-20). Relatedly, though the high income was one of the main appeals of the profession, just half of them cited 'economic hardship' as their chief motivation. More than a fifth claimed to be escaping from troubled homes full of discord; but for others it was 'curiosity' for the *panpan*'s lifestyle that drew them to the streets (Garon 1997: 197; Sanders 2012: 412, 419-20). According to an article in *Kaizō*, a popular socialist magazine that presented itself as 'a monthly review of politics, literature, social affairs, etc.', other common reasons included 'fascination' (*akogare*) for foreigners, but also the experience of rape or seduction by someone into the business (1949: 74). In 1949, *Kaizō* dedicated no less than thirteen pages to a roundtable of *panpan*, in which most women participating were polite and articulate,

¹⁵ Molasky notes that there were also male *panpan*, who, in the case of Tokyo, used to gather in Ueno Park (Molasky ed. 2015: 3).

in contrast with the vulgar stereotype of the streetwalker. Another very positive contemporaneous account, written by novelist Sakaguchi Ango (1906-1955), similarly offered an idealised portrait of middle-class educated women (Sakaguchi [1946?] 1998). In both cases, *panpan* claimed it to be a temporary occupation, and referred to acquaintances who had quit and married or taken another job; an approach in stark contrast with the doomed fate foreseen by the anti-prostitution groups (e.g. Uemura 1952; *FK* 1952 Oct).

One of the biggest false myths of the *panpan* is that they all served foreign men, especially American GIs. Both *Kaizō* and Sakaguchi's piece strongly refute this and demonstrate that different groups would specialise in different kinds of customers: some in foreigners (the *yōpan*) and others exclusively in Japanese men (*wapan*).¹⁶ The group interviewed by Sakaguchi belonged to the latter, and dealt mainly with Japanese wealthy men from the countryside coming on business to Tokyo ([1946?] 1998: 455-6). These women did not dress in the stereotypical *panpan* fashion, and frequently fixed appointments with patrons they already knew (instead of soliciting strangers in the street), just like the call girls of the 1960s. The following chapter will problematise the monolithic stereotype reproduced in the media, the anti-prostitution reports and many fictional accounts that obstinately associated the *panpan* with the foreigners and disregarded Japanese men's implication.

A heterogeneous socio-economic background and independence were the main characteristics distinguishing *panpan* from brothel prostitutes. Streetwalkers answered to no authority. Sanders explains that most worked without a pimp, and

¹⁶ See also Sanders (2012) and Chazono (2014).

tended to introduce other women into the business by word of mouth (2012: 420-4). They often formed gangs, led by an ‘elder sister’ (*anego*), upholding principles of discipline and solidarity to protect themselves from aggressive customers, black market dealers, the police, pimps and rival gangs (*Kaizō* 1949: 77-8; Sanders 2012: 422-3). Many had other ways of producing income apart from selling sex. Those dealing with GIs and those servicing rich patrons like the interviewees of Sakaguchi, obtained quantities of ‘precious’ items, such as canned fruit, cigarettes and makeup, which they could sell in the thriving black market. Sanders notes that because *panpan* negotiated directly with the customers, they could keep all of the earnings for themselves. In *Kaizō*, however, *yōpan* claim to work independently, while those specialising in Japanese patrons acknowledge that they sometimes depend on male gangs (*gurentai*) (1949: 78). In these early postwar publications, *panpan* present themselves as sexually liberated women who form a well-organised and civilised community and voluntarily undertake medical examinations on a regular basis (Sakaguchi [1946?] 1998: 453-5; *Kaizō* 1949: 76).

The earnings of *panpan* differed depending on the city, but ranged between 15,000 and 50,000 yen (Sakaguchi ([1946?] 1998: 456; Tanaka 2012); an enormous amount compared to the monthly salary of a female factory worker or waitress, which ranged between 7,000 and 11,000 yen (Rowley 2002: 42-3; Kovner 2012: 81). Additionally, it must also be noted that in the regular labour market women earned an average of 45 per cent of men’s wages, and that in the aftermath of war many were being dismissed to create vacancies for the men returning from the front (Sanders 2012: 411). Thus, as Sanders has rightly emphasised, the economic power and independence attained by these women make them ‘an anomaly in Japanese and modern world history’ (2012: 405). Due to their purchasing power and consumerism,

panpan were profitable and reliable customers that boosted the local economy, not only for bars and restaurants, but also for housing landlords, hairdressers, and other businesses, and this was surely an exception at the time (Sanders 2012: 418). Tanaka goes as far as to assert:

[I]t is no exaggeration to say that it was not the textile, chemical or other industries that were rehabilitating the immediate postwar Japanese economy but the sex industry, and that this came at the expense of the physical and psychological health of tens of thousands of Japanese sex workers.

(2002: 155)

This was particularly true in military base towns like Sasebo, a port town in Nagasaki prefecture that became the main staging area for Allied troops during the Korean War (1950-1953). According to a detailed analysis by Sarah Kovner (2012), following the establishment of military facilities, the sex industry rapidly sprouted and generous salaries lured women from rural districts to the town (Kovner 2012: 93). Although many profited from both servicemen and prostitutes, the epidemics of venereal diseases often led base commanders to declare the town off-limits for their men; hence jeopardising the local economy. Seeking to protect the market place, and under social pressure for their dependence on *panpan*, Sasebo's business owners established a committee that publicly requested these women to 'stop clinging to foreigners on the street' (as translated by Kovner 2012: 96). By appealing to Japanese 'quiet manners', personal mores, and the honour of Sasebo, Japan and the future generations (as translated by Kovner 2012: 95), they exposed their concern with the appearance of the public space rather than the commodification of sex, and they defined the open expression of sexuality primarily as non-Japanese.

The example of Sasebo must be contextualised within the enormous impact

the Korean War had in Japan. Japan's logistic support of the US army forces in Korea, and later in Vietnam, boosted the national economy. Moreover, despite the social backlash against this cooperation, the government together with SCAP used the war as an opportunity to further intensify the 'reverse course' that had prioritised economic rehabilitation and anti-communism since approximately 1947 (Standish 2011: 39). From a different perspective, it fostered a rise in the number of prostitutes and in their salaries, as Japan became the 'rest and recreation' (R&R) destination for international forces fighting in Asia (Rowley 2002: 45). After signing the Security Treaty on 8 September 1951, there remained more than 700 permanent US military installations around Japan (Sanders 2012: 429), and many of them were built in *burakumin* neighbourhoods, after evicting their inhabitants and forcing them to create new nearby ghettos (Fujime 1997a: 332-3). Life in the base towns was portrayed in the so-called 'base films', including the here discussed *Red-light Bases* (*Akasen kichi*, Taniguchi Senkichi, 1953) and *Black Snow* (*Kuroi yuki*, Takechi Tetsuji, 1965). Among them, Imamura's *Pigs and Battleships* (*Buta to gunkan*, 1961) is probably one of the most critical and humorous depictions of the economies of smuggling and prostitution that ruled these towns.

Tanaka Masakazu (2012) provides a compelling approach to the conflicting and multi-layered perceptions of *panpan* at the time. Expanding on Mary Louise Pratt's concept of 'contact zone' (1992), Tanaka explores occupied Japan as a 'sexual contact zone', a space of bi-directional encounters rather than a unidirectional discourse monopolised by the colonisers. He identifies prostitutes soliciting US military servicemen as collaborators or 'intermediaries' (borrowing an expression of Ōe Kenzaburō, 1934-) of the contact zone. Despite being locals, the intermediaries 'were also deeply involved in furthering colonial rule'. Yet it is noteworthy that 'the

same individual can be both a cooperator and part of the resistance' (Tanaka 2012). Through testimonies of Japanese men, women and children, Tanaka presents a more porous and contended portrayal of postwar society that expands beyond narratives of victimhood and domination. I would argue that cinema recreates this 'contact zone' by casting a spotlight on everyday interactions and illuminating the complex human relationships that unfold between social agents often silenced in other media; and yet as any other mediation of reality, it can often reveal more about the standpoint taken on the subject, than about the subject itself.

Dower explains that personal and emotional testimonies of *panpan* appeared regularly in the newspapers and the radio, where these women were framed simultaneously as victims of war and hardship, and as aggressive sexualised liberated women (1999: 124, 133-4). The expression 'sexually aggressive', which was often used to refer to soldiers' ferocity and rendered a natural feature of their masculinity as reflected in the 'comfort station' discourse, was now in contrast, applied to the *panpan* to designate them 'not normal women'. In public and private testimonies about *panpan*, one can find admiration, contempt, fear and empathy (Sakaguchi [1946?] 1998; *Kaizō* 1949; Dower 1999; Molasky 1999; Sanders 2012; Tanaka 2012), or as Tanaka describes them, 'on-going, multi-layered, and often contradictory representations' (2012). The attention streetwalkers attracted was not only due to the nature of their work or their gaudy appearance, but even more because of their blatant intrusion into public space. In fact, kissing and other forms of physical contact were almost inconceivable out of the private realm before 1945. Moreover, for centuries prostitution had generally been contained in heterotopias located in specific quarters away from other social spaces and hidden from the eyes of most female population. In contrast, *panpan* sold sex in the open; on the streets, in

bars, cabarets and movie theatres, and hence defied all the official policies designed to control sexuality and hygiene, to manage the urban space, and to preserve the tacit social agreements on morality and the public realm.

While some pitied brothel prostitutes as impoverished women working for their families, soon a call for drastic action against *panpan* emerged in public opinion. SCAP in collaboration with Japanese authorities began to arrest all suspicious women in raids that became known as ‘catches’ (*kyacchi*). Women were then transported to the Yoshiwara Hospital to be given physical inspections for venereal diseases, and those with positive results were immediately hospitalised by force. Against the authorities’ intention, however, the ‘catches’ became a site of networking and fraternisation for women, actually triggering the initiation into the business for many (Sanders 2012: 413-4). Between August and November 1946, 2,400 women were indiscriminately picked up from the streets of Tokyo by squads of MPs (military police) and Japanese police (Klemperer-Markman 2009: 236); according to Fujime, in August 1946 15,000 women were arrested nationwide in ‘catches’ (2006: 38). Since the arrests were decided upon such dubious bases as the woman’s outfit or manners, or the time and place where she was found, many women who were not prostitutes suffered this abuse (Fujime 2006; Chazono 2014).

The ‘catches’ were and still are commonly depicted in *panpan* films, such as *Women of the Night*, *Gate of Flesh* (*Nikutai no mon*; in Suzuki Seijun’s 1964 and Gosha Hideo’s 1988 versions), *The Call of Flesh* (*Jotai*, Onchi Hideo, 1964), and the *panpan* thriller *Zero Focus* (*Zero no shōten*, Nomura Yoshitarō, 1961; and its 2009 remake directed by Inudō Isshin). In spite of their presence in popular culture, Chazono Toshimi rightly denounces that they have not received enough attention in

academia as a serious assault against human rights, partially because many victims remained silent fearing stigmatisation (2013: 89). When some traumatic testimonies were revealed, women's associations started to harshly criticise the procedure, but only on the fact that 'decent' women were mistaken for streetwalkers (Chazono 2013: 93).

Despite the emotional response in the media that Dower and other scholars record, a survey conducted in 1948 on the Japanese people's views on prostitution demonstrates that streetwalkers caused great discomfort in public opinion, in contrast with the ambiguous judgments about brothels (*Kokuritsu yoron chōsajo* 1951). Prostitution was perceived as a 'social evil' but one that satisfied a 'certain social necessity' (1951: 5). The majority of interviewees felt that 'the prohibition of organized prostitution will bring about undesirable results' (1951: 9) but favoured 'the establishment of welfare facilities' (1951: 14). A 'sharp distinction is made between streetwalking and organized prostitution' (1951: 4), in that the former should be prohibited and the latter authorised (1951: 16-8). The responsibility of the prostitute is greater than that of the client; nevertheless, 'people feel that the prostitute is a victim of society' (1951: 10). Just like the 'human pillars', prostitution is considered a necessary sacrifice that dispensable members must make for the wellbeing of society (or its privileged members at least), but one that must remain out of sight, preventing the contamination of public space.

Since the 'catches' did not stop the prostitutes from roaming freely in the city, demands for more rigorous policies increased. Whilst proposals of a ban on prostitution were systematically dismissed in the national Diet, some local authorities began to criminalise solicitation through measures intended to contain

streetwalking or ‘scattered’ prostitution (*sanshō*) while exempting the brothels from sanction (Sanders 2012: 425). This trend led in 1948 to the implementation of two decisive national regulations on prostitution: the Sexually Transmitted Disease Prevention Act (*seibyō yobō hō*), requiring regular compulsory medical examination for prostitutes and incarceration of those infected; and the polemic Businesses Affecting Public Morals Regulation Law (*fūzoku eigyō torishimari hō*; hereafter the Adult Entertainment Law) which defined and classified entertainment businesses and venues inappropriate for children, and issued licenses for several kinds of sexually explicit businesses. In practice, this basically meant that many venues often connected to prostitution such as striptease clubs, public baths and rent-per-hour inns secured legal recognition (Sanders 2006: 28), exposing once again the tolerance for indoors prostitution, despite its illegality. For prostitutes, however, it meant increasing pressure to remain under the control of brothel managers and pimps, with their exploitative contracts and threats.

Under the Adult Entertainment Law, the red-light districts expanded. According to a survey by the Ministry of Labour, in 1951 there were 603 districts, 17,226 procurers, 57,000 prostitutes (of the total estimate of 450,000) (Fukae 1989: 6); and in 1957 there were 789 *akasen* districts, an average of 18 per prefecture (Katō 2009: 12). Whilst many of them corresponded to the prewar pleasure quarters, if we consider that in 1932 there were 532 prostitution districts of which a substantial number burned down during the war (Katō 2009: 12-3), it means that in the aftermath of defeat, red-light districts rapidly multiplied, hinting at the role played by the sex trade in the economic and ‘morale’ recovery of the country.

Broadening the category to encompass the *aosen*¹⁷ or unlicensed prostitution districts, those in the vicinity of military bases, and geisha's quarters, there were 1,800 areas of organised prostitution nationwide (Katō 2009: 16-7). As seen in Mizoguchi's *Street of Shame* (*Akasen chitai*, 1956)—see Chapter 3—brothels in the red-light district were labelled as 'dance halls', 'coffee shops' and other euphemistic names, and denominated under the Adult Entertainment Law as 'special bars and restaurants' (*tokushū inshokuten*). In practice they hardly differed from prewar brothels and women were still provided with advanced loans or wages so that they would incur copious debts that few managed to ever clear. According to a sociological research conducted in 1955, 58 per cent of the prostitutes admitted to have taken out a loan at the start of their contracts (Sanders 2006: 32).

Although salaries greatly differed depending on location and status, Katō Masahiro includes a detailed economic account of a brothel prostitute in 1953 that corresponds to the average in the Yoshiwara district (Katō 2009: 49-50; see also Rowley 2002: 41-3). She had two days off in a month, serving a daily average of three customers, with a maximum of seven, although days with only one customer were not rare either. The brothel owner kept 60 per cent of her pay, and after taxes, she received approximately 33,000 yen. Though this salary seems similar to that of a *panpan*, the *akasen* prostitute had to pay the brothel almost 4,000 for her basic hygienic goods, approximately 2,500 yen for the provision and cleaning of material used by customers (such as sheets, condoms, and towels), and another 1,000 yen

¹⁷ *Aosen*, or 'blue line' districts, refers to the urban areas where illegal prostitution concentrated, whilst they were officially 'normal' entertainment districts of bars and restaurants. The Japanese police marked them on street maps with a blue line. In reality, they worked in very similar ways to the *akasen*. However, the definition or common understanding of the categories varied according to prefectures. In Tokyo, for example, the term *aosen* was used to refer to new organised prostitution districts established after the war (Katō 2009: 132).

went to the district association membership (Katō 2009: 49-50). Many brothels also charged for cleaning, heating, telephone calls and even food (Rowley 2002: 43). The prostitute in Katō's example sent 15,000 yen home to her family, and eventually ended the month in the deficit, thus increasing her debt (2009: 49-50). Brothel owners used to persuade the women to buy expensive clothes, makeup, and other cosmetic products in order to assure the continuity of the bondage contract. According to another survey, in comparison with *panpan* and military-base prostitutes, many more women in the *akasen* entered the business due to financial hardship. Their visions of the future also differed: while 55 per cent of the red-light district women sought marriage and 26 per cent wished to work for themselves, in the case of military-base prostitutes, only 25 per cent preferred to marry but 52 per cent wanted to work for themselves (Kovner 2012: 81). These surveys informed the popular dichotomy within the prostitute type (already part of the binary opposition of the normative female subject), wherein the brothel is connected to family, poverty and sacrifice, and the *panpan* to vanity, curiosity and adventure.

The accelerated reconstruction of urban spaces and regulations against streetwalkers were gradually making prostitution concentrate in the red and blue districts, which were further restricted by subsequent reforms of the Adult Entertainment Law. Despite being increasingly hidden, prostitution was evermore present in public opinion, achieving an exceptional 'public presence' across legal, medical, political, moral, fictional, journalistic and educational discourses. The variety of approaches suggests that in addition to constituting a severe social problem, prostitution was a titillating source of recreation that aroused curiosity and engaged audiences also at an emotional level. The women's journal *Fujin kōron*, for instance, published a remarkable number of opinion articles and reportages with

detailed information of the diversity of services, prices, and atmospheres; and sometimes short serialised fictions set in the red-light district, and reviews of films about prostitutes (e.g. *FK* 1950 Aug: 99-103, Aug: 106-119, Nov; 1952 Aug; 1953 May). Readers (mainly women) were eager to learn more about the ‘world of night’; however, in an article about nightlife in Ginza, the author warns not to venture into the night entertainment world because the step from curiosity to prostitution is a shady one (*FK* 1950 Aug: 99). It was a different world, one hidden and prohibited; and readers simultaneously needed to be reassured and justified as to their status as ‘good women’.

With the turn of the decade, articles justifying prostitution almost faded away in *Fujin kōron*, as if the negative image of the *panpan* had eclipsed that of the self-sacrificing victim. Their depiction as vicious and shameless became predominant (even regarding brothel workers), and prostitutes were rendered ‘depraved’, ‘crazy’, ‘mite-like’, ‘insane’, ‘morally and mentally deficient’ and ‘aggressive’. Some writers asserted they were ‘different from Japanese women’, others that their flagrant lack of self-control and perseverance demonstrated they were ‘not like normal people’, and yet others went as far as claiming they ‘not human’ and should not be entitled of human rights (*FK* 1950 Aug: 99-103, Aug: 106-119; Nov: 34). In this way, prostitution came to embody all the decadence and evil that the modern and peaceful postwar democratic society aimed to overcome. Meiji abolitionist discourse resonates in these insults that betray the class prejudice and barriers that never allowed these two female communities to cooperate.

In May 1952, the journal published a letter by Uemura Tamaki (1890-1982) to the wife of Matthew Bunker Ridgway (1895-1993), successor of MacArthur at

SCAP in the last year of the Occupation. Uemura, a major representative of the anti-prostitution movement, and member of the YMCA and the United Church of Japan (*Nihon kirisuto kyōkai*), decried in horror that Japanese children ‘play *panpan*’ by mimicking the vulgarities of prostitutes and GIs while using indecent slang mixed with English (Uemura 1952: 39). Positioned in the ‘universal stance of motherhood’, the conservative movement claimed to feel sorry for the GIs’ mothers and ashamed that it was women of their own country who were perverting these decorous boys (Uemura 1952, 1953). Uemura defines the *panpan* as ‘parasites’, evil criminals who ‘seduce’ innocent American young men (1952: 40). Even when the customers were the occupiers, blame fell exclusively on the *panpan*, but this was, no doubt, a very smart approach that allowed Uemura to criticise openly the prostitution industry while avoiding SCAP censorship, since the military and police personnel were not being attacked but actually praised or even framed as victims.

Uemura’s letter, moreover, is symptomatic of the growing prominence the rhetoric of children’s rights was achieving, partly influenced by the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the UN in 1948. Appealing to western standards of justice, the anti-prostitution movement made children and motherhood (greatly emphasised in the UN declaration too) the new core of their campaign (e.g. Uemura 1953; *FK* 1954 Feb: 132). Backed by the Adult Entertainment Law, which also showed great concern for children (defined as those below 16 years of age), educators and mothers advocated that the presence of streetwalkers infringed upon the right of children to be ‘raised in a sound environment’ free from ‘sexual sights and sounds’ (Sanders 2012: 427). The fact that many prostitutes were also mothers, working for their children, was systematically ignored.

Once Japan regained its sovereignty, criticism of prostitution and its impact on children came to encompass that of the military occupation, until then repressed, as illustrated in several publications that gained critical acclaim in 1953. Focusing especially on those children born to *panpan* and American soldiers, Nishida Minoru reflected on the contradictory feelings aroused by prostitutes in *Women of the Military Bases (Kichi no onna, 1953)*.¹⁸ From quite a liberal stance, Nishida pities them as victims of the war and the Occupation, but nevertheless criticises their money-worship and immoral sexual behaviour. Whilst advocating for rehabilitation, he considers *panpan* as stigmatised forever and hence shows little faith in their reintegration in society. Another popular success was *Children of the Bases (Kichi no ko, Shimizu et al., 1953)*, a collection of essays written by children of elementary and middle schools about their lives in the proximities of military bases. One third of the essays feature the subject of prostitution (mainly *panpan*), and in the majority, children express resentment, fear and confusion towards these vulgar women that occupy their towns shamelessly. However, since the book constitutes a selection of approximately two hundred compositions from more than 1,300 received submissions (Tanaka 2012), it is important to bear in mind the potential role of the editors in projecting a certain image of children's perceptions.

The Chastity of Japan (Nihon no teisō, Mizuno Hiroshi ed. 1953) was a collection of personal real-life testimonies shared by four *panpan*. Immediately becoming a best seller, these almost pornographic diaries accounted in grotesque detail the abuses suffered by women at the hands of GI, which led them to become 'fallen women'. As the title suggests, the book makes of women's bodies a

¹⁸ Not to be confused with *Women of a Base Town*, a short fictional story with the same original title in Japanese (*Kichi no onna, 1953*) written by Nakamoto Takako (1903-1991). See Molasky (1999, ed. 2015).

melodramatic national allegory of defeat, while eroticises violence and rape contributing to a sensationalist mixture of victimisation and shock value. Nevertheless, the book should not be dismissed as irrelevant pulp fiction consumed for its titillating effect. As Michael Molasky notes, it was read widely during the 1950s, mentioned frequently in the debates on prostitution, and referenced in studies of women's history in subsequent decades (1999: 122). Thus, in terms of the popular imaginary, *The Chastity of Japan* played a significant part in interweaving together deviant female sexuality with foreign aggression and the spectacularisation of violence. To further complicate the role of this text in the cultural history of prostitution, Michael Molasky demonstrated in the 1990s that the entire book had actually been ghostwritten by a man who assumed the name Mizuno Hiroshi (officially appearing exclusively as the editor of the collection) (1999: 123).

In *Fujin kōron* articles on prostitution around military bases started appearing in 1952, and although they did not become such a recurrent subject, the message was powerful. An editorial in October 1952 reads

As long as foreign soldiers do not leave our land, these grotesque women born from the blood of war will not decrease, and we have to admit that there is even the possibility that they will spread even further.

(FK 1952 Oct: 27)

These texts reinforce a structural relation between foreign military personnel and *panpan*, disavowing other kinds of prostitution in these areas. On the other hand, pitying the prostitute as victim of war avoids the need to delve into the current specific socio-economic and political practices that stimulated their proliferation. Nevertheless, in comparison to the above-mentioned statements by Uemura, the accent on foreign servicemen as the main root of the problem is not only striking, but

also unthinkable before the end of the Allied Occupation in 28 April 1952.

Like Nishida's book, *Fujin kōron* placed *konketsuji* or 'mixed-race children' as the ultimate victims. Gaining momentum in 1952, articles on the subject appeared almost invariably next to articles on prostitution of military bases, whilst even as Uemura Tamaki acknowledged once, the percentage of mixed-race children born of *panpan* was actually quite low (1953: 44). *Konketsuji* prominently featured in films like *Red-light Bases*, and especially in *Kiku and Isamu* (*Kiku to Isamu*, Imai Tadashi, 1959). As magnificently pictured in Imai's film, children of black men and Japanese women in particular suffered great discrimination, and the general policy was to promote giving the children in adoption to American families and institutions, disavowing the severe racism they would probably face there as well. Difficulties in finding a marriage partner or a job in Japan were foreseen, and for girls in particular prostitution was presented as almost an inevitable choice for the future.¹⁹ Both mixed-race children and *panpan* were perceived as visual evidence of war, defeat and occupation. They reminded people of the unequal relationship between Japan and the US and thus, I would argue, both victims and perverted criminals were to be erased from the public space and the image of 'Japan'. The rhetoric of children's rights and that of sexual morality complemented each other and worked in an extremely effective way for this purpose.

The last struggle for the prostitution prevention law

After late 1952, articles in *Fujin kōron* on prostitution increased dramatically, peaking in 1955 (a year before the Law was approved in the Diet), when there were

¹⁹ On the representation of 'mixed-race' children in Japanese cinema see Ko (2014).

at least eight extended reportages (out of twelve issues) demanding abolition. What spurred this ever-so fierce campaign? Despite the propaganda, SCAP had proved to have no real intention in terminating prostitution, and I suggest, these women's groups knew that regaining sovereignty was a *sine qua non* condition. Conversely, they reasonably feared that, unless it was prevented, a public monopoly like the one operating in the prewar era would be established once again after the end of the Occupation. After almost seven years it was clear that the *akasen* had not succeeded in restraining prostitution to specific districts. In 1955 Kamichika Ichiko claimed that while the number of prostitutes in the red-light districts and military base quarters totalled 120,000, there were approximately 400,000 other women practising independent and illegal prostitution (1955: 68).²⁰ Finally, scholars have pointed that the policies of Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru (1878-1967) that made economic development the highest national priority, brought severe deflation, leading to the restructuring of many factories and small businesses, the crisis of the mining industry, and ultimately caused a 'prostitution boom' (Fujime 1997a: 381-2; Rowley 2002: 43-44). As in the Taishō period, the thriving state of the national economy did not match the living conditions of a significant part of the population.

The features of the campaign can be summarised as follows. Prostitution is considered a 'serious disease of society' (*FK* 1952 Jul: 60), and thus its prohibition is essential to achieve a desirable standard of human rights, public morality and democracy. The former approach of a 'needed evil' is now rejected; there is no place for justification. In general terms, two images of prostitutes are presented: the vicious woman who wishes to continue living a luxurious and shameless life, and the remorseful victim who seeks redemption. The former is a mere object of criticism

²⁰ Kamichika includes geisha among these 400,000 sex workers.

that never appears as a subject of discourse; the latter, in contrast, frequently narrates her pitiful story (e.g. *FK* 1955 Feb: 138; 1956 Jan: 244). The narrative goes as follows. The ‘good’ prostitutes were from a rural background or working-class families afflicted by tragedies of war and privation. Economic adversity combined with an out-dated feudalistic belief system, pushed the families to sell their daughters, or led the women to become prostitutes of their own free will although without fully understanding the implications of their decision. After working in brothels for years, eventually, they were rescued by voluntary groups who had negotiated their debts and found them a job or a place to live. This narrative performed several functions: it legitimated the *raison d’être* of the anti-prostitution movement, it publicised the research and humanitarian work they conducted, and it rendered remaining in prostitution a personal choice no longer dependent on financial need.

Realising that a ban was just a matter of time, prostitutes organised themselves in unions as their predecessors had done in the 1930s. The New Yoshiwara Women's Health Preservation Association (*Shin Yoshiwara joshi hoken kumiai*; hereafter New Yoshiwara) is probably the most outstanding example. It worked on the prevention of venereal diseases, promoted sexual education, and denounced exploitation in negotiating working conditions with brothel owners (Fujime 1997a: 385; Rowley 2002; Kovner 2012: 90-1). Later, prostitutes founded the Federation of Tokyo Women Employees' Unions (*Tōkyō-to joshi jūgyōin kumiai rengōkai*) and finally the National Confederation of Unions of Women Customer-Service Employees (*Zenkoku sekkyaku joshi jūgyōin kumiai renmei*). Gathering no less than 800 members, the New Yoshiwara Association published the monthly newspaper *Fujin shinpū* (*Women's Fresh Breeze*), held meetings, collected

signatures, and distributed leaflets in front of train stations (see Figure 1.2). They engaged, therefore, in diverse public and political activities and demonstrated, as Gaye G. Rowley puts it, ‘that commodified sexuality was not their only social currency’ (2002: 40).

Fujin shinpū started publication in May 1952 and ran to 55 issues until July 1957.²¹ The two major topics were sexual health and the demand for financial and professional support in advance to any sort of criminalisation of the trade. Additionally, the newspaper included serialised short fictions, poems, personal testimonies, practical enquiries, and messages of solidarity, making it a solid political and emotional platform for these women from all around Japan who had, for a variety of reasons, ended up in Yoshiwara. The union knew the end of the red-light district did not mean the end of prostitution, and feared the unrestrained exploitation of gangs and pimps that awaited them in the blue and white (*baisen*)²² districts (Ishii 1956: 1). In defiance, Ishii Lisa, the New Yoshiwara’s president, requested that the government first pay attention to underlying problems such as unemployment, the war widows’ allowance, and the crisis of agriculture and fisheries, which fed unceasingly the brothels of Japan (Ishii 1956: 1).

Prostitutes’ unions were marginalised in the media and ignored even by the socialist party that rejected their status as workers.²³ Public opinion tried to discredit

²¹ The collection, almost complete, is available in a recompilation (Shin Yoshiwara ed. 1989) that I have examined.

²² *Baisen*, or ‘white line’, refers to illegal prostitution that operated in apartments and other places but was not concentrated in a district, as in the case of the red and blue lines.

²³ Exceptionally, Iwauchi Zensaku (1889-1984) and Takahara Asaichi (1904-1962), members of the socialist party, worked hand in hand with prostitutes to enhance their union movement, claiming that these women were victims of capitalism. Their support was essential in the establishment of the Federation of Tokyo Women Employees’ Unions but eventually led them to be expelled from the socialist party (Fujime 1997a: 388-90, 396-7).

the movement claiming that it was just a manipulating strategy of the brothel owners, while a woman Diet member deemed the newspaper a ‘fabricated voice’ (*Fujin shinpū* 1956 May: 3). Ishii insisted that however much they tried to talk to the media, journalists never conveyed their point of view, and instead portrayed them as ‘lazy’, ‘dim-witted’ and ‘shameless’ (1956: 1). As will be further discussed in Chapter 3, my examination of this publication reveals a variety of voices, some politically articulated, others emotional and apologetic; some plain, others sophisticated. Moreover, considering that the newspaper was not that widely read at the time (Shin Yoshiwara ed. 1989: 1), I would conclude that, regardless the possible cooperation of brothel owners, *Fujin shinpū* was mainly written by and for prostitutes.

Meanwhile, Kamichika, one of the most active members of the Diet lobbying against prostitution, famously stated that ‘in order to protect the lives of forty million housewives, we must punish the estimated five hundred thousand prostitutes’ (as cited in Fujime 1997a: 387). In comparison to the survey conducted in 1948, and despite the efforts of prostitutes’ unions and the lobby of brothel owners, in 1957 another survey revealed that the percentage of people defending red-light districts had dropped to 16 per cent (Sanders 2006: 30). As a result, the recently formed Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) presented the Japanese Prostitution Prevention Law, which passed on 24 May 1956. This law is a milestone in modern Japanese history in that it brought to an end more than 300 years of regulated, celebrated, forced and justified prostitution. Criticism notwithstanding, its relevance and distinctiveness should not be overlooked since in a substantial number of countries, even today, prostitution lies in a grey area of legislation, making prostitutes more vulnerable to abuse.

The law consisted of two main principles: the abolition of institutionalised prostitution and the implementation of a rehabilitation policy. Regarding penal disposition, it set up penalties for such acts as soliciting in public, procuring prostitutes, providing places or financial support for prostitution, and establishing systems of indenture. The act of prostitution itself is prohibited but not penalised; thus the law is particularly severe against individuals and organisations promoting and managing the trade, while avoids the complete criminalisation of the prostitute. At least five other proposals, most of them stricter than the final law, had been presented to the Diet since 1946. In *Fujin kōron*, Kamichika explained in detail one version that set up penalties for both the prostitute and the customer, as well as higher ones for procurers that could lead to imprisonment (1955: 66-7). However, Diet members argued that obtaining evidence of prostitution in order to indict sex workers and customers would be an almost unfeasible task entailing constant invasions of the privacy of suspects. Additionally, they emphasised that rehabilitation and not penalisation was at the heart of this regulation, in order not to aggravate the economic hardship many prostitutes already suffered (Ida 1981: 113). Nevertheless, the implication is that the mild approach responded to concealed factors, such as the pressure of the lobby of the red-light district managers, which was suspected of extortion and bribery, and the generalised opinion that penalties against specific customers were an excessive measure (Ida 1981: 113).

Article 2 of the 1956 law defines prostitution as '[t]he act of engaging in sexual intercourse with unspecified persons in exchange for payment or under contract to get remuneration' (Prostitution Prevention Law 1956). Despite its pioneering aspect, the definition has important loopholes. First, the term 'sexual intercourse' was defined by the Japanese law as vaginal penetration, and hence any

other sexual service is not considered illegal (Farrer 2006: 15-6), a key factor in understanding the contemporary Japanese sex industry. Second, the law implies that if there is an identified customer, the sexual act is not regarded as prostitution, which is very difficult to prove in reality. Third, while Article 2 underscores its gender-free definition, subsequent articles repeatedly refer to prostitutes exclusively as ‘women’ (Art. 1, 17, 34), and hence, continue to disregard male prostitution. In this way, the penal disposition focuses on the public visibility of prostitution rather than the act itself, hiding the state’s deliberate permissiveness as well as its perpetuation of gender inequality.

Rowley explains that the law enabled Japan to accede to the UN ‘Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others’ (1949) (2002: 47). It seems improbable that there was any pressure from abroad, since many countries including UK, Germany and the US are not signatories. Replicating several articles of the UN document, the Japanese law can be inscribed in a diplomatic strategy to gain acceptance in the international community, as reflected in Japan’s admission to the UN in that same year.²⁴ Finally, it must be emphasised that the law was not fully implemented in Okinawa until the end of American Occupation in 1972; a fact that exposes that prostitution was not only deeply intersected with social class, ethnicity, and nationality, but also with international political and economic interests. According to the government, by 1971 there were more than 7,000 legal prostitutes in Okinawa; however, the media estimated between 10,000 and 15,000 (Takahashi 2004: 104). Takahashi Kikue’s research evidences that virtually all these women had debts, approximately half of

²⁴ On discussions regarding the impact of the UN convention in the drafting of the law and its subsequent loopholes see Yoneda (1998) and Fujime (2006).

them had children and more than half were divorced (2004: 104-5). As mentioned earlier, military prostitution was virtually the only type of sex trade discussed in relation to Okinawa in the media, fostering the growth of criticism of prostitution interwoven with opposition to the occupiers, feeding into discourses of anti-Americanism and pacifism.

After the ban on prostitution

On 1 April 1957, regulations for the protection and rehabilitation of prostitutes came into effect, followed a year later by the regulations for penal dispositions. The law included two types of rehabilitation: the women's home, where prostitutes could voluntary stay until they set themselves up in another occupation; and mandatory rehabilitation in a women's reformatory determined by judges for prostitutes repeatedly convicted of solicitation (Klemperer-Markman 2009: 239). Yet, based on the results, it is obvious that rehabilitation was never a central concern. According to Fukae Masako, from the original eleven million yen proposed in the Diet for rehabilitation, the actual budget was cut down to three; from the proposed 39 women's homes and 38 women's reformatories only three were operating by February 1956 (1989: 9). Likewise, Sheldon Garon notes that in the law's first year of enforcement only 2,400 women were placed in protective facilities, a tiny fraction of the estimated number of prostitutes (1997: 204).²⁵ In subsequent decades, these women's homes and reformatories began also to accommodate women with mental illness, drug dependency, and victims of domestic abuse (Klemperer-Markman 2009:

²⁵ Garon estimates that there were 133,000 prostitutes in 1957 (1997: 204). As cited above, Kamichika Ichiko talked about 500,000. The Ministry of Labour, on the other hand, calculated 180,000 (Fujime 1997a: 398). In any case, it is certain that the rehabilitation facilities were not conceived to accommodate such large numbers.

239).

Prostitution did not disappear and perhaps did not even greatly diminish, but this probably did not surprise anyone. According to a survey conducted in 1957 by the Ministries of Labour and of Health and Welfare inquiring into the plans for the future of 180,000 prostitutes, between 50 and 70 per cent planned to continue soliciting illegally (*FK* 1957 May: 141). Another survey, published in *Fujin shinpū*, obtained similar results. After the implementation of the law, 86 per cent of the interviewed prostitutes declared that they had experienced economic hardship, 80 per cent had come to depend on a male benefactor (it is not clear if it is a romantic partner, relative or pimp), and 77 per cent intended to continue soliciting despite the banning (*Fujin shinpū* 1957 Apr: 1). Yet another official survey concluded that two thirds of the brothel proprietors had converted the establishment into restaurants, bars, cabarets and other businesses in which prostitution probably continued (Garon 1997: 204). As this demonstrates, most remained in the trade without rehabilitation resources, and moreover, without the little legal protection they used to enjoy, as they could no longer sue an employer or a client, and it became much harder to organise union movements (Kovner 2012: 144).

Despite the inefficiency of the law, referred to as a ‘colander law’ (*zaru hō*, a Japanese expression for laws full of loopholes), public debates on prostitution drastically diminished (Baishun 1995: 7). Kamichika, Ichikawa, and several women’s groups continued advocating for severe reforms of both the Prostitution and the Adult Entertainment laws (Nagai 2002: 118-126), but their claims had comparatively little resonance in the media. Even in *Fujin kōron*, I have located just seven articles on prostitution between 1959 and 1975—only three in the whole

decade of the 1960s; that is fewer articles in sixteen years (1959-1975) than those published in 1955 alone. The journal often discusses female sexuality, agency, and pleasure, probably more than before, but always framed within the boundaries of marriage. The ‘good-household woman’ became a sexualised and erotised subject while the ‘fallen woman’ faded away.

As gangs and organised crime took control of the business, it came to frequently entail the trafficking of homeless women, minors, and foreigners (Norma 2011: 515; Kovner 2012: 144). Reflecting on the limited practical effects of the ban, Ishii Teruo (1924-2005) in his thriller series—including *White Line* (*Shirosen himitsu chitai*, 1958), *Black Line* (*Kurosen chitai*, 1960), *Yellow Line* (*Ōsen chitai iero-rain*, 1960) and *Sexy Line* (*Sekushii chitai*, 1961)—stresses that in most cases managers and workers remained the same, only the outside appearance had changed (see Figure 1.3). Showing the connections to international crime and drug contraband and abuse, in each film Ishii dynamically portrays the diversification of the prostitution industry and the imprint of its history. *Yellow Line*, dealing with the international business of human trafficking in Kobe, features a black white mixed-raced prostitute fluent in Japanese who points at the often overlooked history of Dutch and Australian comfort women (see Figure 1.4).²⁶ In *Sexy Line*, prostitution hides under the cover of a drawing club with nude models that get chosen by the customers to provide sexual services in another place. Besides this kind of sophisticated whitewash, prostitution commonly operated in ‘Turkish baths’ (*toruko buro*), massage parlours, dance clubs, and on demand through call girls, just to mention a few of the emerging categories. Procurers had to come up with new ideas to adapt to the repeated reforms of the Adult Entertainment Law. As Japan was experiencing an

²⁶ The role was played by Susan Kennedy (??-), a white woman painted dark brown.

astonishing economic boom backed by a predominantly male white-collar work force, procurers also needed to innovate to attract this volatile consumer force avid for excitement.

The Prostitution Prevention Law was proving less and less effective within the changing reality. While in 1959 the police investigated approximately 18,500 cases of prostitution, by 1965 the number had dropped to around 10,600, and by 1975 they only attended approximately 3,000 cases (Matsuda 1981: 119-20). Accordingly, the police reduced the number of personnel dealing with prostitution (Baishun 1995: 7), while the budget allocated to rehabilitation and welfare was also significantly cut (Takahashi 2004: 248). Nevertheless, everyone could see that businesses providing sexual services were operating extensively throughout the country. To comply with the Adult Entertainment Law and be issued permits, all they had to do was register their name and address, along with a description of the establishment and its managers. That in a subsequent reform of the Law, these venues were prohibited from operating within 200 metres of schools and libraries, and minors were forbidden from entrance (Kovner 2012: 142), indicates that the authorities were well informed of the true nature of these places, and reveals that the mapping of these heterotopias responded mainly to class difference. However, despite its flaws, some argue that this law has proved more efficient than the prostitution one in practical terms, because it enables the authorities to keep track of individuals and activities as well as resulting financial accounts, and hence to prevent—at least in theory—fraud, human trafficking and contraband (Nagai 2002: 92-3).

The most prominent and controversial prostitution establishment of the

postwar era is undoubtedly the ‘Turkish Bath’ or *toruko*. They were advertised as public bathhouses with private rooms, where the customer would pay an inflated entrance fee and then would be joined in a private room by the prostitute to whom he would hand a voucher, as can be seen in the opening sequence of Ishii’s *White Line*, and more graphically in the Roman Porno *Night of the Felines* (*Mesu nekotachi no yoru*, Tanaka Noboru, 1972)—see Chapter 4. They actually became a popular setting of soft-porn fictions, and docudramas like *Sex Document: The Queen of Turkish Bath* (*Sekkusu dokyumento: Toruko no jo’ō*, Takamori Tatsuichi, 1972). The first *toruko* began operating in 1951 in Higashi Ginza (Tokyo), but it was in 1955 that they reportedly started selling sex, mainly non-penetrative (Kovner 2012: 141). At first they were established in former red-light districts but soon spread even to residential areas (Takahashi 2004: 144), totalling 390 venues in 1963, and rising to 675 in 1966 (Constantine 1993). Fines and arrests in the *toruko* were relatively rare (Ida 1981: 115), and managers alleged that whatever happened inside the rooms was a matter of ‘free love’ between individuals (Nagai 2002: 92). Outraged by such permissiveness, Ichikawa and other feminists claimed that it constituted the new ‘allowed’ prostitution system (Garon 1997: 205; Takahashi 2004: 281). As a result of their protests, the Adult Entertainment Law was reformed in 1966 to include these establishments and grant the prefectures the authority to determine off-limits districts. Nevertheless, the number kept increasing and it is estimated that in 1980 there were 1,575 *toruko* where 19,168 women were employed (Ida 1981: 114). Around that time, Turkish diplomats complained to the Japanese government causing the name to be changed to ‘soaplands’ (*sōpurando*), which only proves that it was common knowledge that these were houses of prostitution.

International criticism also rose against the practice of sex tourism, which

began around 1964, having as major destinations South Korea (known as *kisaeng* tours), Taiwan, and the Philippines; and later on Thailand and China (Kovner 2012: 143). Caroline Norma claims that many companies of all sizes arranged these trips, presenting them as ‘morale boosters’ to ‘reward branch managers and salesmen’ (2011: 516), remarkably resembling the discourses around ‘comfort women’. Takahashi demonstrates that even major tour operators became involved in selling neighbouring Asian countries as sex paradises for Japanese men for all kinds of male groups including senior clubs (2004: 14-5). In the early 1970s, when sex tourism was thriving, denunciations emerged from recipient countries, particularly Korea, as well as from within Japan. The pressure created by the furious criticism played a crucial role in the fall of Japanese sex tourism (Garon 1997: 205), though sporadic scandals still reach the news now and then. Not unlike military prostitution, this practice serves as a site of power relationships where colonialist discourses of gender re-emerge. Although sex tourism is an extremely significant matter for postwar Asia, it is beyond the scope of this research, which focuses on films set in Japan; yet it is worth noting that sex tourism was not frequently portrayed in cinema anyway.

In terms of the social perception of the sex trade, Tada Ryōko (2009) has examined the media representation of prostitutes in the 1960s and 1970s, providing a valuable source among the scarce available literature.²⁷ Through the analysis of popular magazines such as *Josei jishin* (*Woman Herself*) and *Asahi geinō* (*Asahi Entertainment*), Tada concludes that, in general, prostitution became almost invisible in the mass media during the 1960s (2009: 2). However, in the 1970s, there was a

²⁷ Many academic studies focus exclusively on the prewar, the war years, or alternatively the Occupation. Those encompassing a broader history tend to end with the aftermath of the Prostitution Prevention Law, despite criticising its inefficiency. Arguably, it is very difficult to obtain accurate and reliable data on prostitution after it became part of the underground economy.

boom in titillating stories of prostitutes who were housewives and minors. In 1966 a police record stated that '[r]ecently, prostitution due to economic reasons such as deprivation and poverty as in the past has decreased', and instead it was by triggered by 'desires and enjoyment' to fulfil 'curiosity and vanity' (2009: 2). The housewife prostitute, timely represented in the first Roman Porno film *Apartment Wife: Affair in the Afternoon* (*Danchizuma hirusagari no jōji*, Nishimura Shōgorō, 1971)—discussed in Chapter 4, was framed in the magazines as 'frivolous' and 'indecent' (Tada 2009: 5). Unoccupied, bored and sexually frustrated, the middle-class housewife sold her body out of curiosity and sexual desire (2009: 4). Tada concludes that this profile was intended to prevent readers from crossing that line. I would add that the outraged reaction was also motivated by the fact that these prostitutes contradicted the traditional discourse of the family-oriented and faithful middle-class housewife and mother against the indecent 'Other'—the prostitute—that had been the banner of the anti-prostitution movement for decades.

Underage prostitutes, too, were said to often belong to the middle-class, and chose to sell sex out of curiosity and for the money, although they did not suffer economic adversity. The police registered that between 1971 and 1976 the number of underage prostitutes tripled (Tada 2009: 3). Many were high school girls, but some cases of middle-high school and even elementary school girls reached the media (Takahashi 2004: 188-90).²⁸ They were not considered innocent victims because they did not show remorse or shame; however, since they were minors, they were framed as a target of reform and protection, and responsibility was ultimately placed on the lack of morals of society (Tada 2009: 5-6). In both cases, the media blamed it on

²⁸ Minors' prostitution, which was known as 'uniform prostitution' (*seifuku baishun*), was portrayed in films like *Ecstasy of the Angels* (*Tenshi no kōkotsu*, Wakamatsu Kōji, 1972).

moral perversion (the sins of lust and greed) and the social ‘disease that preaches money and excitement’ (Tada 2009: 4); and thus emphasised the ‘free will’ of the prostitute while rejecting any responsibility from the state and male customers. In stark contrast to this frivolous image, one could still find, although very rarely, articles about prostitutes ‘in need’ who were presented as victims of war and the Occupation, stricken by poverty and thus, deserving empathy and welfare (Tada 2009: 6-7). Poverty provided the prostitute with dignity and, through her suffering, ignorance, and traditional values, she was presented with idealism and even nostalgia, while the ‘amateur’ prostitutes were simply disgraceful, reworking the brothel worker/*panpan* dichotomy.

The economic boom incentivised the expansion of the ‘water trade’ (*mizu shōbai*)²⁹ to unprecedented levels. Whether the ‘water trade’ should be considered prostitution is a controversial debate. Based on my experience in Japan, this is an outstandingly diverse industry and thus I do not support the position that all hostesses are prostitutes, although some do sell sex. However, taking into consideration that at the time at least a significant percentage of hostesses did prostitute themselves (Takahashi 2004: 247; Norma 2011), it is hard to overlook that in 1966 there were already more than 350,000 hostesses in the country (Norma 2011: 513). The key here is that the consumption of these services is often not a personal choice, but a social convention of corporate culture. Often criticised for its use of the sex industry, corporate culture has, according to Norma (2011), brought a ‘democratization’ of the consumption of luxurious sexual services, before enjoyed

²⁹ ‘Water trade’ is the term commonly used in Japan for the night-time entertainment business that involves companion services with the exploitation of sexuality to different extents. It mainly refers to the work of host and hostess at ‘snack bars’, ‘cabarets’ and clubs among other establishments, although for some authors it covers the whole sex industry.

almost exclusively by the elites. What is certain is that the culture of the commodification of sexuality prevailed in the postwar period, and played a central role in the way Japan's politics and economics were negotiated in a daily basis (Allison 1994; Norma 2011). Going one step further, Anne Allison (1994) in her comprehensive study of high-class hostesses argues that this mixture of business and 'play' (*asobi*), made possible through the *performance* of the hostess, plays a significant part in the social construction of gender and sexuality, the prescribed roles and the power dynamics within.

Finally, I should add that the AIDS epidemic constitutes another significant factor in the evolution of the industry and the practice of sex tourism. The first case in the country was recorded in 1983 and since then Japan has enjoyed a low rate of reported HIV; something that has unfortunately made the disease simultaneously stigmatised and disregarded. The media have cultivated an exaggerated fear of AIDS and its carriers, while strongly associating the disease with homosexuals, foreigners, and sex workers, which probably leads to many cases not being reported (Maswanya et al. 2000; Bardhan 2001: 292). In her exploration of the metaphors used in imagining AIDS, Susan Sontag notes the common use of a narrative of a plague that 'invariably comes from somewhere else', often 'an exotic, often primitive place' (1990: 47, 51); and this is certainly the case of AIDS in Japan (Russell 1998; Bardhan 2001; JCIE 2004). Fear of venereal diseases also helps to position housewives and underage girls as safe providers of sexual services. In the case of the latter, this partly boosted the practice of *enjo kōsai* or 'compensated dating', as depicted in *Love & Pop (Rabū & poppu)*, Anno Hideaki, (1998). Relatedly, Futoshi Koga concludes that '[t]he outbreak of AIDS, in particular, appears to have effectively wiped out the free sex ideology that appeared during the 1970s' and

fuelled the development and diversification of the sex industry to services further away from actual sexual intercourse (1992: 128). This links to the success of soapland as well as to the expansion of porn cinema, first consumed in the public space of movie theatres, and from the late 1970s increasingly shifting towards the private realm with the expansion of the Beta and VHS formats.

Continuity and variation

As indicated by the revival of the Meiji myth of Okichi in the early postwar years, there are significant parallels between these two historical periods. They both mark radical changes in the social and political status of women (mainly through the respective civil codes) and in the regulation of the sex trade industry and reproductive rights. In times of international upheaval and pressure, the state as well as the abolitionists partially modelled their discourses after western counterparts, but their inequalities and internal contradictions were rarely questioned. The concepts of gender and sexuality that were imposed on the figure of the prostitute were fundamentally shaped by the merging of Neo-Confucian and Christian values, by capitalist doctrines, nationalism, and by the continuity of patriarchal ideology. The dichotomy of the 'good' and the 'fallen' woman was reinforced by presenting a sexualised dangerous 'Other', through the image of the 'new woman' and 'modern girl' or *moga* in the early twentieth century (Wada-Marciano 2005), and later in their postwar radical version of the *panpan*, an argument that will be further developed in the following chapter. At the heart of regulation and its debates, medicine and venereal diseases constantly stand out in the service of a sexist understanding of public health, effectively fuelling the surveillance of bio-power. This chapter has

illuminated the strategies of Japan's 'syncretic westernisation' and demonstrated that the aim was chiefly political and economic. Japan sought to 'redefine' its national identity by portraying itself as a modern and civilised nation according to western standards, while also proclaiming the value, legitimacy, and uniqueness of its tradition. This aimed to proclaim its redefined cultural identity as 'new', and to disavow responsibility in the war.

The analysis of the cultural history of prostitution reveals that the dominant approach from Meiji through Shōwa (1926-1989) was based on contradictions often played out through narratives of dichotomies. In most cases prostitutes were rendered objects of the discussion and their voices were silenced, while the impact of socio-political and economic forces on them were greatly disavowed. In the public opinion, however, abolitionist groups upheld a constant and ever-more urgent claim for action, implying that the situation was worse than ever, despite the fairly constant presence of prostitutes. As several surveys cited in this chapter prove, the number legal prostitutes in particular remained around an average of 50,000 from the early twentieth century to 1957. Women's movements did not always agree with the state's agenda, but were nevertheless in a privileged position that they wanted to defend at all costs. Hence, whilst established in the name of women's liberation, their policies tended to be underpinned by shared upper-class interests rather than gender issues. Kamichika's words on punishing prostitutes in order to protect the housewives of Japan still echoed in the mid-1970s as prostitution remained a fruitful industry, hidden but boosting the economy as an 'invisible pillar'. I should stress that although a critical revision of women's anti-prostitution movements is necessary, the value of their work in raising social and political debates, in challenging (albeit partially) unequal social mores, and in helping individuals in need is remarkable. Especially

since the 1970s women's movements have engaged in a hard process of self-reflection that has led them to cooperate with other Asian organisations, such as the Asian Women's Fund, in order to amend the past complicity with women's sexual abuse, and prevent its revival (Mackie 2003).

These pages provide the necessary background to understand the references shown in cinema, but also to disclose what agents are denied representation. In the following chapter I focus on films produced during the frenetic early postwar years, when re-modernisation was imposed from above, intensifying the gaps between generations, between social classes, and between the city and the countryside. Social and cultural conceptions regarding public space, family relations and morality, as well as costumes and life rhythms were substantially transformed while the scars of war were still open. As we will see, all this aroused fears and anxieties, but also hopes and energetic initiatives.

Chapter 2

Panpan, a Cultural Icon Emerging from the Rubble

The most flamboyant early expression of the casting off of despair and the creation of new space was to be found on the margins of “respectable society.” There, distinctive subcultures of defeat emerged, shocking yet mesmerizing symbols of the collapse of the old order and the emergence of a new spirit of iconoclasm and self-reliance. [...] The marginal groups that electrified popular consciousness came from three overlapping subcultures: the world of the *panpan* prostitute, whose embrace of the conqueror was disturbingly literal; the black market, with its formidable energy and seductively maverick code of behavior; and the well-lubricated “*kasutori* culture” demimonde, which celebrated self-indulgence and introduced such enduring attractions as pulp literature and commercialized sex. All three marginal worlds came to exemplify not merely the confusion and despair of the *kyodatsu* condition, but also the vital, visceral, even carnal transcending of it.

(Dower 1999: 122)

In his influential study of the early postwar period, John W. Dower identifies the *panpan* as one of the chief components of what he calls the ‘cultures of defeat’. Emerging essentially from urban environments, these cultures existed—by choice or necessity—in the fringes of whatever remained of normative socio-economic structures. They embodied new material economies of survival, and, through their actions and aesthetics, they gave rise to alternative and transgressive ways of imagining the nation. Although socially marginalised, the cultures of defeat performed unabashedly in the public space; and they did so with a spontaneity and vitality that was probably unthinkable outside the chaos that convulsed the nation in the aftermath of defeat.

In the previous chapter I explored an array of representations of the *panpan* that ranged from victim to self-assured woman to despicable criminal, revealing the complexity of this paradoxical construct. Ubiquitous in all cultural and creative industries, as well as in public and legal debates, the *panpan* became a cultural icon because she embodied, perhaps better than anyone else, the *status quo* of Japan under the Allied Occupation. The evidence of her impact on public opinion was established in 1947 when Tatsuno Takashi, a renowned professor at Tokyo University, was asked ‘what is the newest—most democratic—thing in Japan?’ and he replied ‘the *panpan* girls’ (as translated in Dower 1999: 132-3).¹ Similarly, prestigious film critic Futaba Jūzaburō identified the *panpan* subgenre as one of the most outstanding features of the domestic production of 1948 (1949: 16). Among the films depicting the adventures and misfortunes of these women, two works stand out in 1948 for their commercial success: *Women of the Night* (*Yoru no onnatachi*, Mizoguchi Kenji) and *Gate of Flesh* (*Nikutai no mon*, Makino Masahiro and Ozaki Masafusa), both central case studies of this chapter.

The case of *Gate of Flesh* is particularly compelling because of its numerous adaptations across media platforms, even up to 2008, when Inohara Tatsuzō (??-) directed a loose adaptation of the story in a television film. The original novel by Tamura Taijirō (1911-1983) was first published in March 1947 in the prestigious literature periodical *Gunzō*, catapulting him to fame. In the novel, a gang of five *panpan* live in a burnt-out building under a strict code of behaviour, but the intrusion into their lives of war veteran Ibuki Shintarō shatters the balance of their community with tragic results. The novel attracted such attention and controversy that just five

¹ The original Japanese quote can be found in Kamiya (2014: 79).

months later it was adapted into a stage play, which also became a sensational hit over the next three years (Saitō 2014: 335). The first film adaptation was released in August 1948 and was followed by several other similar stories; but partially due to the troubled relationship with SCAP's bodies of censorship, the boom of the *panpan* films (*panpan eiga*) did not last very long.² However, it was revived in the mid-1960s when several films portraying streetwalkers were released, two of which were adaptations of Tamura's novel. The story would be taken to the screen on three other occasions, including a Roman Porno version directed by Nishimura Shōgorō (1930-) discussed in Chapter 4.³ This abundance and variety of adaptations make *Gate of Flesh* an excellent vehicle to examine the ideologies and aesthetics of the body in postwar popular culture, and to reflect on issues of memory, which entail the re-imagining of the past in accordance to present concerns.

The position of the original text and its relation to the adaptations has been much debated (Lipsitz 1990; Horton and McDougal eds. 1998; Hutcheon 2006, amongst others).⁴ Linda Hutcheon regrets that the examination of adaptations, influenced by translation studies, has often been dominated by a source-oriented approach; instead she invites us to approach them as both a product and as a 'process of creation and of reception' (2006: 15-6). Hutcheon's understanding of a non-fixed, non-closed text articulated in a two-way process allows me to prioritise the contexts

² The *panpan* subgenre would also include *Mother* (*Haha*, Koishi Eiichi, 1948) and *Our Town Turns Green* (*Waga machi wa midori nari*, Satō Takeshi, 1948). Others were planned in 1948, but were delayed or ultimately not produced (Kamiya 2009: 176). Naruse Mikio's *White Beast* (*Shiroi yajū*, 1950) and Ichikawa Kon's *Nightshade Flower* (*Iraishan*, 1951), both about women coming out of streetwalking could be considered as marking the end of the *panpan* boom.

³ Gosha Hideo directed another soft-porn version in 1988, and the last is the television film mentioned already.

⁴ Horton and McDougal's edited volume (1998), in particular, presents a useful collection of different approaches and methodologies of adaptations studies.

of production and reception of each adaptation, and to illuminate specific historical, socio-political, and industrial dynamics affecting the representation on screen. Relatedly, Robert Eberwein (1998) avoids the single focus on the original text and insists on examining the conditions of spectatorship to contextualise the dialogue between the film and its viewers. I suggest that the dialogue is not only between the audience and the film, but also among a variety of paratexts and agents, past and present. As Leo Braudy explains, the audience ‘brings its own context to what it sees –coming upon each film through a web of significant metaphors, images, semiotic fields, and preexisting tales’ (1998: 330).

In analysing the recurrent presence and variations of certain characters and tropes in narratives of superheroes, Luca Somigli (1998) underscores the pleasure experienced by the audience in the familiar myths underpinning the stories; what he calls the ‘intertextual mythic’ aspects. I intend to illuminate the intertextual mythic components of the *panpan* figure and trace them back to former archetypes of femininity and female sexuality, as well as to explore their evolution in subsequent decades. As George Lipsitz rightly argues, any film ‘responds to tensions exposed by the social moment of its creation, but each also enters a dialogue already in progress, repositioning the audience in regard to dominant myths’ (1990: 169). This chapter combines the ‘intertextual mythic’ approach with the ‘contextual-social construction approach’ (as Braudy refers to Eberwein’s proposition) to examine the adaptations of *Gate of Flesh* as a process that bears witness to the evolving gender politics of postwar Japan.

Scholarship on the multimedia narratives of *Gate of Flesh* is notably scarce.

Tamura's novel, the most discussed, is yet to be translated into English,⁵ and most film adaptations are not easily accessible, hindering the production of critical comparative studies.⁶ Interpretations of the story, and, to a certain extent, of the *panpan* in Japanese fiction, have often revolved around the work of the writers of the 'literature of the flesh' (*Nikutai-ha*), and the Decadent School (*Burai-ha*), due to their relation with Tamura's writings. After discussing these currents of thought, I will shift the spotlight onto images emerging from low-brow media connected to the 'cultures of defeat', such as the *kasutori* publications, which greatly contributed to shape what I call the 'hyperimage' of the *panpan*. These texts are important because, on the one hand, they are potential sources of inspiration for these two groups of rebellious writers, who frequently identified themselves with the demimonde; and on the other, because they may provide a more plastic image to compare with cinema since, as Somigli (1998) highlights, popular culture has more flexibility than high-brow literature to organically transform tales and figures.

My objective in examining the representation of the cinematic *panpan* is to problematise the relations between the female body, the nation, and history-making. I aim to enquire how such a controversial figure was shaped into a commercial character, and to illuminate the codes of signification embedded in her image. For this purpose, it is important to bear in mind that the definition of control over the body is two-fold. On the one hand, there is the physical reality of control that gives social and political meaning to the flesh through, for instance, regulations of abortion and prostitution, research on venereal diseases, and sartoriality (from the *panpan* fashion to gendered school uniforms). On the other there is the

⁵ I have used the original Japanese version and fragments quoted in Igarashi (2000).

⁶ Both 1948's *Gate of Flesh* and *The Call of Flesh* (1964) are only available at the National Film Center, Tokyo.

representation of that reality through, for example, myths, obscenity laws, and trends in the media industry. Based on this premise, this chapter concentrates on the contingent dynamics between popular culture and censorship, which function both as productive and constraining forces.

The *panpan* as hyperimage

Michael Molasky notes that the *panpan* evoked contradictory responses of ‘admiration and disdain, pity and envy, fear and desire’ (1999: 103). In the testimonies included in Dower’s *Embracing Defeat*, these women present themselves mainly as helpless victims (1999: 123-4); whereas one finds much more self-assured and pragmatic statements by *panpan* in their discussion in the magazine *Kaizō* (1949). Sakaguchi Ango (1906-1955) describes them as ‘cheerful’ (*akarui*), ‘free’ and ‘natural’ ([1946?] 1998: 453-7). Dower and Sakaguchi highlight the admiration these women inspired, while my analysis of *Fujin kōron* has revealed the great disdain, danger, and rejection they faced. Molasky underlines that the *panpan* was perceived as the ultimate survivor that ‘nearly every Japanese who lived through the war could identify with’ (1999: 103), and Mark McLelland emphasises the part they played in normalising ‘public displays of courtship and romance among Japanese “new couples” more generally’ (2012: 88). Depending on the context, they were presented as epitomes of decadence and depravity, archetypes of liberation, and influential fashion trend setters who, as Dower puts it, were ‘as close as anyone in Japan might hope to get, in the flesh, to Hollywood’ (1999: 137). Therefore, from different perspectives, factual and fictional stories and portraits of the *panpan* served as an allegory of power relations between Japan and US inscribed in the female

sexualised body on public display.

The *panpan* can be considered the first female archetype in Japanese cinema to be essentially defined by sex and violence, and for this, I would argue, she played a pivotal role in establishing the postwar basis for representing and giving meaning to female sexuality. There is consensus in academia that SCAP's 'sexual liberation' (*sei kaihō*) materialised in the media and the entertainment industries as the commodification of the female body for the pleasure of men and for the benefit of their damaged masculine identity (Izbicki 1997; Igarashi 2000; Slaymaker 2004; Kamiya 2009; Hori 2002; McLelland 2012; Saitō 2014). Joanne Izbicki (1997) and Saitō Ayako (2014) argue that under the banner of 'women's liberation' (*josei kaihō*), the Occupation regime fomented the exhibitionism of women's bodies. This display was publicised as connected intrinsically to women's emancipation from suffocating morals, and to the consequent achievement of democracy and modernisation through westernisation. Izbicki rightly notes that the female nude was already part of Japanese popular culture before the war, but the change lay in the way it was displayed and the meaning ascribed to it. As she writes, the early postwar period became the time of 'the installation of female nudity as public, paid entertainment and as a vehicle for constructing a masculinised notion of liberation' (Izbicki 1997: 111). Expanding on this approach, this chapter aims to elucidate the specific narrative and aesthetical devices through which the *panpan* films participated in this process of redefinition.

Drawing on Izbicki's work, Saitō complicates what could otherwise appear as a safe fantasy of escapism for men, and calls attention to 'the female body that substantiated the new, postwar regime of democracy, at the same time epitomising

the contradiction of postwar democratization' (2014: 331). Due to their emphasis on sex and violence, the *panpan* films offer an effective platform for this double-edged image of liberation and subjugation. Although not referring exclusively to the *panpan*, Saitō argues:

The tangibility of the bodily representations of women in motion in film, that is, the strong impact of *visual* materialization of the woman's body - much more than that of the literary and illustrative field of representation, I would argue, was one of the most conspicuous and problematic articulations of the reality of war defeat and occupation.

(2014: 333)

Saitō stresses the '*visual* materialization' of the female body in motion as being more effective and complex than the static representations in other media. However, the prominent presence of the *panpan* across media and arts should not be dismissed too easily. I argue that the cinematic *panpan* is heavily informed by the profuse depictions in high and low cultural industries, and hence cannot be examined in a vacuum. Moreover, the lived experience of seeing these women working on the streets and buying on the black market, or even being one's relative or friend, also added to the context the spectators brought to the films (as Braudy would put it [1998]).

I propose to approach the *panpan* figure as a 'hyperimage', composed by the conflation of the 'real' streetwalkers and the variety of representations across media, and whose allegorical significance and provocative potential is founded on the synergic effect of this mesh of signifiers. Her impact, therefore, increases exponentially through references to other nodes within this web of representations. In this way, the early *panpan* films, produced under strict censorship policies, worked in conjunction with other products of the cultural and entertainment

industries to evoke more arousing images of the female body and more extreme expressions of sex and violence than those actually represented on screen. Moreover, in addition to the synchronic articulation across media platforms, the hyperimage is constructed diachronically. It transcends time by integrating and adapting mythic components of the past that resonate in the popular imaginary, and by projecting itself on future representations. In the case of the *panpan* films, I will argue that this hyperimage drew on prewar images of the fallen woman and the modern girl, and fed into the female drifter of the 1960s and 1970s. Especially as time passes, the cinematic representation, because of its materiality and visibility, becomes a chief component of the hyperimage. Moreover, because it remains constant (in contrast with theatre plays), it can be partially reproduced in other media (for instance, as still images within film journals), and consumed by wider audiences repeatedly (in contrast with the short-lived *kasutori* magazines). This partially explains why later adaptations of *Gate of Flesh* incorporate more elements from previous film versions than from the novel.

In order to experiment with the concept of hyperimage, I shall contextualise the conventions of the early *panpan* films within the broader field of cultural production and illuminate the mesh of signifiers, associations, myths and traumas that underpin them. The re-articulation of the *panpan* figure in the 1960s documents the evolution of those myths and traumas vis-à-vis the changing socio-political context of production and consumption. Finally, tracing back the history of the independent sexualised female archetype will reveal the abiding anxieties and desires that surface in times of national unrest.



Figure 2.1. Promotion pictures of *Gate of Flesh* (1948) (KJ 1948 Early July: n.p).

OSAKA YOMIMONO SHINBUN

一線の人々の想像することの出来ないバ
び淫技が若い二十とあるこの女性の胸の
ら、若い身体を張つて資金の前を叩く
な義理と人情の端にも男を見せるのでな
るエロフはい、怪の中にも疾風の毒花が妖
る大阪の暗黒街の一面を物語つている

★花痴病法★
一、この花痴病法は、
二、この花痴病法は、
三、この花痴病法は、
四、この花痴病法は、
五、この花痴病法は、
六、この花痴病法は、
七、この花痴病法は、
八、この花痴病法は、
九、この花痴病法は、
十、この花痴病法は、

★前責任状★

真相新聞 創刊號

土木建築へ
日興上達へ
新聞中興社刊行 大阪三
電話 〇二二二〇

Figure 2.2. *Ōsaka yomimono shinbun* (1948 Aug 21: 3) and *Shinsō shinbun* (1948 Apr 5: 1).



Figure 2.3. Ishimoto Yasuhiro, 1953. 'On a Tokyo Street' (Takeuchi et al. 2004: 77).



Figure 2.4. 'Show Business' (*KJ* 1965 New Year: n.p.).

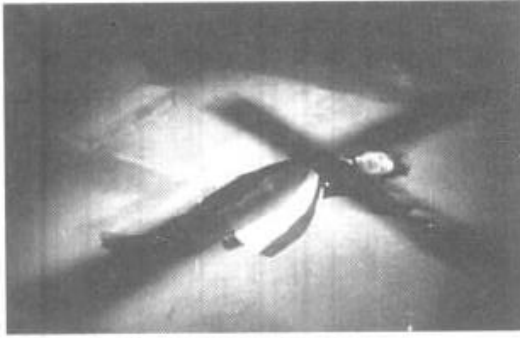


Figure 2.5. Sen's crucifixion in *Gate of Flesh* (1948).

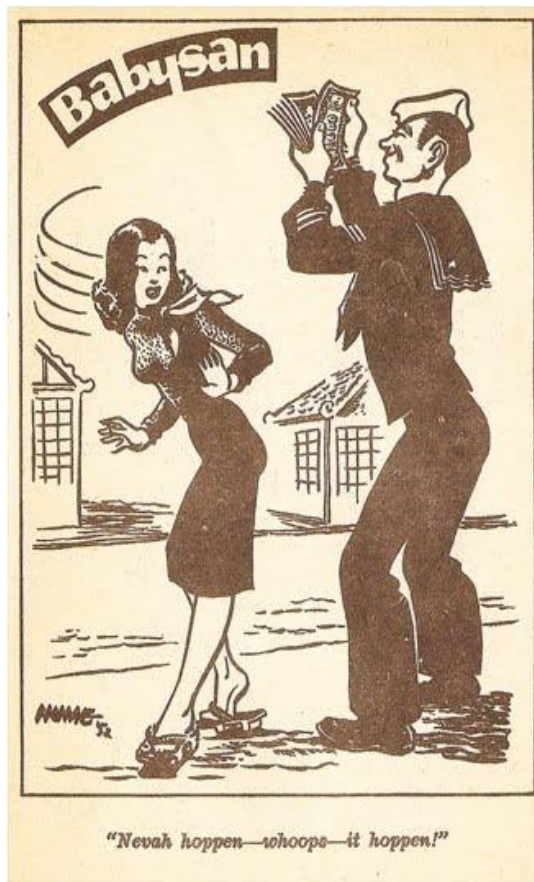


Figure 2.6. *Babysan* (Hume 1953)

Sex and violence in early postwar *panpan* films

Being aware of the cinema's impact on public opinion, SCAP meticulously controlled the industry through pre- and postproduction censorship undertaken by the Civil Information and Education Section (CIE) and the Civil Censorship

Detachment (CDD). In her influential study on Japanese cinema under the Occupation, Kyoko Hirano notes that according to SCAP guidelines, the representation of prostitutes fell under the category of ‘antisocial behaviour’ (1992: 74). The depiction of these activities was only approved if they constituted an integral part of the story, which ultimately ‘must show that crime does not pay and that justice always wins in the end’ (Hirano 1992: 74-75). Thus criminals were not to be portrayed as heroes, and rehabilitation into society should be emphasised (Hirano 1992: 75). Based on these guidelines, censors found many problematic issues in *panpan* films. In regards to *Gate of Flesh*, the CIE ordered ‘the deletion of the scene of the prostitutes’ lynching from the synopsis’ and required the filmmakers to ‘tone down the cynicism of streetwalkers and useless emphasis on money in the revised script’ (Hirano 1992: 283). The representation of the *panpan* was, moreover, deeply affected by the strict prohibition of depicting the Allied Forces and the ‘fraternisation’ of foreigners and Japanese on screen (Hirano 1992; Cather 2012; McLelland 2012); two elements that obviously constituted a fundamental part of unregulated prostitution.

Paradoxically, despite these limitations, SCAP impelled the emergence of the *panpan* subgenre through its relaxation of censorship regarding the depiction of sexuality, and its promotion of characters of liberated women, kissing scenes, and other physical expressions of heterosexual romance. Hirano states:

[F]lush with the newly granted freedom to portray sex (as long as the genital areas were not actually exposed), the Japanese filmmakers flooded the market with so-called “*ero-guro*” (erotic-grotesque) films full of titillating sexual appeals. Subgenres such as striptease films and “*panpan*” (streetwalker) films also arose.

(1992: 164)

The 'freedom to portray sex' must be understood with caution, since as Hirano points out elsewhere, censors insisted that 'nude scenes should be moderated or eliminated altogether' (1992: 79). Nevertheless, in stark contrast with pre-defeat productions, films depicting the 'cultures of defeat' often included gratuitous scenes of scantily dressed women on stage in cabarets and similar venues (Izbicki 1997). Thus the *panpan* films seemed to offer a fertile ground for this kind of titillating diversion.

In Tamura's novel the body is insistently described with provocative details, while the words 'flesh' and 'body' (*niku, nikutai*) are constantly repeated. In the opening sentence the narrator describes the naked body of the leader of the gang, Komasa no Sen, and particularly her breasts, thus setting the tone of the story (Tamura [1947] 1958: 184). When Machiko is beaten up by the other *panpan*, Tamura vividly depicts the way her flesh turns red and swollen as it is brutally whipped ([1947] 1958: 198-9). The sexual act between Maya and Shintarō, the returned soldier, is notably graphic in both its violent and erotic aspects, while Maya's sexual arousal (orgasm?) is explained in detail referring to sensations of vertigo and electric shocks, as a snake running down her lower hip ([1947] 1958: 213). These episodes describe the body in quite a cinematic style, resembling close-up shots of fragmented parts and camera tilts that slowly reveal the details. The sense of physicality is further intensified by plentiful descriptions of smells, sweat and textures evoking a savage eroticism throughout the story.

Considering the graphic depictions found in Tamura's novel and the exploitative theatre play that followed, the first film adaptation of *Gate of Flesh* surely aroused great expectations. The production, however, became complicated

and its release was postponed several times;⁷ but in the meantime, the film journal *Kinema junpō* published three promotional still photographs from the film: in two of them Maya's torso is naked whilst her breasts are hidden, while in the third, Sen (Todoroki Yukiko, 1917-1967) appears lying down in a position that highlights her cleavage and breasts (*KJ* 1948 Early July: n.p. See Figure 2.1). Yet, the resulting film was not the titillating show many were probably anticipating: sexual references are scarce, the female naked body is not exposed at all, and the original story is conspicuously twisted to avoid compromising scenes. For instance, sexual encounters between Shintarō and Machiko and then Maya, whilst pivotal in the novel, are omitted. The transformation of the character of Maya is particularly outstanding as she lays bare the ideological manipulation behind the film.

In the novel Maya is the pragmatic and rational co-leader of the group together with Sen; in the film she is presented as an innocent, curious girl who wishes to join the *panpan* gang so as not to be lonely. Through her character (played by Tsukioka Chiaki [1925-]), the experience of prostitution is depicted as terrifying, divested of any kind of eroticism or excitement. During her first encounter with a man, she suddenly appears to change her mind, screams and runs away in a rapid montage sequence of close-ups of her face and feet. As she repeatedly looks back, the sharp light creates a chiaroscuro, and we see alternatively her frightened face illuminated and the silhouette of her backlit figure. These images evoke the struggle between the 'bright', chaste girl and the woman who falls into moral darkness (note that *panpan* were referred to as 'women of the dark'—*yami no onna*). Like in a

⁷ It is said that Tamura wanted Yamaguchi Yoshiko (1920-2014) to star in the film, but she requested Kurosawa Akira (1910-1998) as director, who demanded to rewrite the script himself but failed to reach any agreements with the studio Yoshimoto Eiga (Kamiya 2009: 157, 177).

horror film, the terrifying effect is magnified by keeping the male patron (perhaps a GI?) out of the frame throughout the scene, and hence hiding the unknown evil.

Probably one of the most arousing scenes takes place early in the film. After Sen's encounter with the priest, whom she has mistaken for a client, she is shown caressing her breasts. The existence of a similar scene in *White Beast* (*Shiroi yajū*, Naruse Mikio, 1950)⁸ seems to suggest the limits of the erotic depiction set by censorship or self-censorship within the studio system, revealing the experimental stage of this new regime of representation of sexuality inaugurated by the Occupation. Whilst definitely demure in comparison with Tamura's book, these scenes may have been considered risky by many at the time. The fact is that the film became a box-office success (Kamiya 2009: 157), but received conflicting reviews. Due to scenes like the one between Sen and the priest, some criticised it as erotic sensationalism (*KJ* 1948 Early July: n.p.), while others found it full of clichés resulting in a far-fetched story (*KJ* 1948 Late Sep: 38; Futaba 1949). On the other hand, *Fujin kōron*, the women's journal advocating the eradication of prostitution, praised it for its realistic depiction of prostitution (1950 Nov: 35). These contradictory readings, as I shall elaborate, suggest that the *panpan* signified different things for different audiences, who made use of her figure to advance their own ideological agenda.

Due to the delay of *Gate of Flesh*, the first *panpan* film to be released was actually *Women of the Night*, in May 1948. The publicity emphasised that it constituted the 'first dirty role' (*hatsu no yogore yaku*), that of a 'fallen woman', by iconic actress Tanaka Kinuyo (1909-1977) (Hori 2002: 49). Her performance was

⁸ The protagonist, a rebellious *panpan* held in a rehabilitation centre, touches her own breasts over her clothes when desperately trying in vain to seduce the director of the centre.

widely praised, and the film ranked third in *Kinema junpō*'s best ten of the year, establishing it as a great popular and critical success (Kamiya 2009: 157).⁹ The film revolves around the lives of three women: Fusako (Tanaka Kinuyo), a war widow who, after being betrayed by her lover, becomes a *panpan*; Natsuko (Takasugi Sanae, 1918-1995), Fusako's younger sister, who becomes entangled with that same man; and Kumiko (Tsunoda Tomie, ??-??), Fusako's sister-in-law and the youngest of the three.

Whilst Mizoguchi Kenji's (1898-1956) film is also quite moderate in the exposure of the female body, unlike Makino and Ozaki's *Gate of Flesh*, it portrays sexual violence in a harrowing way through the character of Kumiko. She is introduced as a naïve, young girl dazzled by the dancehalls and the expensive sophisticated clothes of Natsuko, who embodies the westernisation of the country. Escaping from her dictatorial brother, Kumiko runs away from home but is deceived by a youngster who takes her to a small inn. In a long take the camera forces us to witness Kumiko's rape. After being forced to drink alcohol, Kumiko falls almost unconscious on the floor in the centre of the frame; her weakened body is illuminated while the boy, slightly further left, remains in the shade. As he attacks her, Kumiko backs up vainly looking for shelter in the small room. Struggling, they crawl towards the far right of the frame where the rape takes place. The action is hidden from the viewers behind some boxes and piled up cushions, but Kumiko's terrified voice makes the violence of this scene devastating. It is this episode that pushes Kumiko into prostitution; and hence whilst she is depicted as victim, the

⁹ Based on a novel by Hisaita Eijirō (1898-1976), the film was so successful that it was soon adapted as a stage play (Kamiya 2009: 156-7), constituting another example of the tightly interconnected media map of postwar popular culture.

attraction towards western material luxury is underscored as prelude to her tragic fate.

Mizoguchi's film is an exception because the majority of early *panpan* films do not feature rape; however, the inclusion of women-on-woman beating is an imperative convention of the genre. The so-called *rinchi* scene (wrongly taken from the English 'lynch') depicts the punishment a prostitute receives from others for breaking the gang's rules. As with the representation of sex, 1948's *Gate of Flesh* is outstandingly restrained in its depiction of violence. In its two *rinchi* scenes the emphasis lies not on the physical act of punishment, but on the dialogues and on women's faces, expressing their heightened emotions in the melodramatic style of a succession of middle-close-up shots. *Women of the Night*, on the other hand, has four scenes of beatings and all three female protagonists suffer this violence. The last one is the most emotionally powerful and probably one of the most brutal scenes ever directed by Mizoguchi. Kumiko, now a *panpan*, enters the territory of Fusako's gang unleashing their anger, while Fusako coldly observes from a distance. As Fusako approaches and discovers the familiar face of her sister-in-law, she becomes infuriated at Kumiko's bragging about her new life with no intention of returning home. In a long take that evidences both Mizoguchi's directing and Tanaka's performing excellence, Fusako, consumed by rage, pity, and frustration, begins to pull Kumiko's hair, to kick and buffet the girl, who shows no resistance. Her actions are accompanied by similarly violent words:

Kumiko - *Do you want to live this hell? Do you want to get sick?
To end up blind? To sunk into misery? To give birth to a
monster?*

Exhausted, and realising the madness of her actions, Fusako walks away sobbing in

desperate gasps. The camera follows her as she sits down underneath a stained-glass window of the Virgin and Child, the only remains of the ruined church where the scene takes place. Kumiko, also inconsolably crying, enters the frame from the right crawling towards Fusako and hugs her lap. The two women have finally reunited and are determined to quit prostitution, but now the other *panpan* will not let them go. Fusako is immobilised by several women who grab her by the hair and the arms, while one lashes her with a belt all around her body and face, joined by yet another one who beats her with a cudgel. The rest of the women take sides and a crowded *panpan* fight begins. Therefore, individual *panpan* are rendered victims, of men and of the national collapse after defeat; however, as a collective, *panpan* are represented as violent, cruel, and self-destructive.

According to Hirano, scenes ‘dealing with or approving the subjugation or degradation of women’ were also subjects prohibited by censorship (1992: 44). However, in the *panpan* films the representation of violence and abuse is much more graphic and radical than that of sex. This suggests that SCAP was concerned mainly with restraining representations of man-on-woman violence, which were perceived as a reminiscence of pre-defeat ‘feudalistic’ gender ideologies; but it was quite permissive with others, even beyond the standards of public opinion. Some reviews criticised *Women of the Night* for appealing to the audience’s curiosity for exploitation and hence failing to inspire any kind of moral (*moraru*—note the use of the English word in *katakana*) behaviour or meditation (*KJ* 1948 Early Jul: 27; 1948 Late Jul: 11). Youngsters in Kyoto were banned from watching the film, for fear that the rape scene could incite sexual crimes (*KJ* 1948 Early Jul: 27). Experimenting with the new freedom to portray the body and with the redefined meaning attached to the flesh, the cinema industry, nonetheless, popularised a synergistic interaction of

sex and violence on screen. This obscuring of the distinctions between pleasure and domination, and between liberation and exploitation, served as an escape valve for social frustration for men and simultaneously as a means to contain women socially and sexually.

As with *Gate of Flesh*, other reviews praised *Women of the Night* for its realism (*riarizumu*), which was here identified with Mizoguchi's mastery. From this perspective, the violent scenes were considered tragic, but true depictions of Japanese society (*KJ* 1948 Early Apr: n.p.; 1948 Early Jul: 19). The next chapter will consider the relevance of Mizoguchi's persona and *auteurism* in legitimising certain images of prostitution, but now I would like to focus on 'realism' as a label extensively used by film critics at the time. Often written in *katakana*, the term was associated with the progressive and socially committed movement of Italian Neorealism, which was extensively discussed in *Kinema junpō*. In her analysis of the gender politics articulated in and around *Women of the Night*, Hori Hikari (2002) contends that through the label 'realism', film critics contributed to the perpetuation of sexist ideologies and the justification of the male's scopophilic gaze. Since realism was equated with Mizoguchi's skilful aesthetic, when contemporaneous critics (virtually all men) discussed the violent scenes, they praised them as art. In this way, as Hori convincingly argues, they justify the violence on women as, first of all, natural or logical ('realist') within a certain context (e.g. being alone in a big city, wearing certain clothes), and secondly, as an artistic visual spectacle to be appreciated and hence enjoyed by the viewer (2002: 51-53). In this way, I would add, women were rendered both sinners and victims in need of a strong and stable social (patriarchal) structure to survive, which seems to explain why the women's journal *Fujin kōron* would also ratify these films as 'realist'.

In the opening scene of *Women of the Night* the camera pans over the city of Osaka to then close in on the ruined streets. Two women, dressed in the formulaic *panpan* fashion, one smoking and the other chewing gum, stand in the forefront as the camera begins to slowly move to the left and stops for at least five seconds in front of the following sign:

Warning

Those women standing or wandering about in the vicinity after dark will be identified as women of the dark [*yami no onna*].

Arrests may be conducted, good and decent women [*zenryōna fujō*] please be aware.

Nishinari Police Office

As the camera resumes its movement and the sign exits the frame, we see Fusako, still a ‘decent’ wife and mother, walking in the background paralleling the camera’s movement. This long take presents the dichotomy of the good/fallen woman and accentuates the fine line that exists between the two, foreshadowing Fusako’s tragic destiny. Hori argues that the police sign anticipates that the film is ultimately about ‘monitoring and controlling the female body’, and hence the downfall of the heroines functions as a warning for ‘respectable’ women against experiencing sexual and economic autonomy outside the patriarchal structures of marriage and family (2002: 50). My analysis has identified ‘curiosity’ and ‘realist depiction’ as key words in contemporaneous reviews, reinforcing Hori’s argument. Furthermore, in light of the examination of women’s journals presented in Chapter 1, I suggest that the film was not only a ‘warning’, but also a safe fantasy of excitement and adventure that gave female spectators a glimpse of the underground world they were not supposed to enter, and that ultimately reinforced their normative position.

Especially for this project that must substantially rely on film reviews, Hori’s

analysis is a very poignant revisitation of the male-centre ideology dominating not only the film industry, but also the paratexts that gave meaning to the cinematic imagination and potentially permeate academia as well. In particular, this dissertation is concerned with the use of aesthetical discourses in conferring cultural and political capital to film works. However, despite her insightful analysis, Hori eventually falls into an essentialist reading of ideology. In opposition to the professional male critics' work, she presents reviews written by female viewers who are not professional critics, and finds that they avoid the use of aesthetic categories, such as realism, to justify violence, and instead show more empathy with the plot, the heroines, and the decisions they make. Presenting this as evidence of men's desire to disavow the symbolic emasculation of defeat through the subjugation of women on the screen is not only essentialist but also misleading. My analysis proves that women's journals (primarily written and edited by women) sometimes used similar labels as male critics, and that other reviews, written by men, criticised the films as exploitative. Moreover, in choosing to compare male-professional against female-amateur, Hori gets caught up in the gender preconceptions she claims to challenge. Why not look into amateur male critic clubs, or look at the work of female professional critics, such as Yamamoto Kyōko?

Moreover, a look at the cultural history of prostitution shows that women were active agents in the construction of unequal gender identities and practices (see Chapter 1). Beyond the gender of the writer, I would suggest that the wide range of reviews reflect the social upheaval brought by defeat and the Occupation with its double control of the body (as flesh and as representation). They hint at the confusion and concern arising from the recently established censorship policies and the new field, still under experimentation, of depicting the sexual body. Finally, these

contested views indicate the widespread consciousness of cinema as a social technology playing a significant role in articulating gender and sexual mores.

The body in early postwar popular culture

As the title *Gate of Flesh* suggests, the body is the ultimate protagonist in the *panpan* films, frequently functioning as the direct expression of the psyche of the characters. The heroine of *White Beast* states that her body and sexuality express her independence, while Tanaka in *Women of the Night* claims to use hers to take revenge over men by transmitting sexual diseases. The centrality and meaningfulness of the body, however, is not a unique feature of the *panpan* films, but rather one of the most prominent characteristics of early postwar arts, media and philosophy (Koschmann 1996; Izbicki 1997; Dower 1999; Igarashi 2000; Wolfe 2001; Slaymaker 2004; Dorsey and Slaymaker eds. 2010; Saitō 2014).

Dower explains that in the aftermath of defeat, the widespread emotional and physical exhaustion, confusion, and despair led the Japanese people into numbness. This overall state of psychic collapse, known as the ‘*kyodatsu* condition’, was frequently connected to declining moral along rampant consumption of alcohol and drugs, and hence deemed a major social concern at the time (Dower 1999: 87-89).¹⁰ In the intellectual arena, renowned thinkers engaged in intense discussions known as the subjectivity debates (*shutaisei ronsō*), concerned with issues of individual agency and accountability, the nurturing of a revolutionary consciousness, and the prospects for democracy. Taking place primarily between 1946 and 1948, the debates

¹⁰ *Kyodatsu* is a technical term that can be translated as ‘state of lethargy’.

constituted an attempt to define and legitimise a new political subjectivity and consequently, a new national identity (Koschmann 1996; Wolfe 2001). Simultaneously, literary groups such as the Decadent School¹¹ and those associated with the ‘literature of the flesh’ explored the aesthetic of decadence (*daraku, taihai*), reflecting on the identity crisis and feeling of aimlessness pervasive in Japanese society.

Sakaguchi’s *Discourse on Decadence (Darakuron, [1946])*¹² became an iconic text, not only of the Decadent School, but also of the whole historical era. As his article on the *panpan* illustrates, he was very fond of the cultures of defeat for their social transgression and vitality. Here, calling for the rejection of all moral standards, Sakaguchi invites everyone to descend into complete decadence in order to construct a strong and truly independent subjectivity for Japan and its people. Infusing sexuality with political meaning, Sakaguchi famously claimed:

Let us strip ourselves naked, discard the taboos that bind us, and seek our true voice. May widows find love again—and plunge into hell because of it! May repatriated soldiers set up shop in the black market. Decadence itself is a bad thing, of course, but how are we to grasp the truth about ourselves if we do not put something on the line.

(as translated in Dorsey 2010: 192)

For his detective novels Sakaguchi is commonly grouped with his close friend Tamura, and with Noma Hiroshi (1951-1991) as representatives of the ‘literature of the flesh’. Their writings, in which *panpan* and other prostitutes abound, focused on

¹¹ The main representatives are Sakaguchi Ango, Dazai Osamu (1909-1948) and Oda Sakunosuke (1913-1947), who became also known for their libertine and chaotic lifestyle that led them to meet untimely ends. *Burai-ha* literally means the scoundrels’ school.

¹² It first appeared published in April 1946 in the magazine *Shinchō*. To clarify some issues raised in the piece, Sakaguchi published *Discourse of Decadence, part II*, in *Bungaku kindan* in December 1946. Both are included in the anthology (Sakaguchi ed. 1998), and have been skilfully translated into English by Dorsey (2010).

the liberated carnal body as essential to construct a new subjectivity opposed to the abstract spiritual national body (*kokutai*) of the prewar militarist regime that had constantly repressed corporeal desires. Tamura claims (1948: 13):

The Japanese people thoroughly distrust thought. The body is the truth.
The pain of the body, desire of the body, anger of the body, ecstasy of the
body, confusion of the body, sleep of the body- these are the only truths.
(as translated in Igarashi 2000: 56)

Under the pre-defeat regime, the body was deemed a tool for fighting and for reproduction that served and belonged to the empire. Now people were asked to reject the ideas that had demanded and justified years of material and personal loss, moral and physical sacrifice, pervasive negation of individual needs, pleasures and desires—as epitomised in the wartime slogan ‘extravagance is an enemy’ (Dower 1999: 137). According to these authors, ideas were abstract, unreliable because they could be transformed overnight; in contrast, the body could be seen and touched; perhaps it was the only thing one could trust in such confusion.

In *Discourse on Decadence*, Sakaguchi warns against blindly embracing the new authority in order to eradicate subjugation, and thus hints at the dubious mirage of sudden liberation proclaimed by SCAP. However, the discourse of the body could easily accommodate, especially if transformed into products of popular culture, SCAP’s publicised liberation that entailed a veiled reinforcement of certain conservative ideologies, as discussed in Chapter 1. Whilst Tamura’s characters in *Gate of Flesh* claim to distrust any kind of authority or morals and survive as autonomous subjects, underneath the façade of sexual decadence the narrative reveals the revival of old mores. The *panpan*, for instance, proudly declare that they sell exclusively their bodies while keeping clean and pure their souls (Tamura [1947]

1958: 200); and thus, chastity is framed as the natural and necessary aspiration of any woman, even a prostitute.

In a different example, Machiko and Maya are beaten up by their colleagues because they break the rules of the community, i.e. have sex for free. Although introduced as the embodiment of anti-social subversion; paradoxically, as a group they actually reproduce the structures of control, the hierarchies of power and the systems of punishment that resemble the pre-defeat mentality. The group consciousness (*gun no ishiki* or *shūdan ishiki*) is constantly reinforced, and so is the need for laws to preserve it; thus the principle that the individual must be sacrificed for the wellbeing of the group remains. Ultimately, it is the individual desire aroused by the presence of Shintarō that shatters the cooperative, productive balance of the women's community.

For women, therefore, there is no liberation, no possible existence outside of contained social structures. In opposition, Shintarō lives according to instincts and desires, and Tamura relies precisely on this feature to present him as superior to or more developed than women, who are all irremediably attracted to him. Douglas Slaymaker argues that in these narratives, the *panpan* is presented as a terrain to be explored and subjugated by the male protagonist (2004: 5). He suggests that in Tamura's fiction, 'gazing at others (women) may have been an attempt to deflect gazing at themselves [men] and their situation' (2004: 18). I agree with Slaymaker's conclusion, but I would suggest that it is rather the way they are described that reveals their function in the narrative. Shintarō possesses a muscled body and exhibits great mastery in any physical activity, while Tamura describes some of *panpan*'s bodies as not yet matured and lacking fat. The sublime body of Shintarō

offers an idealised hyper-masculine identity over against the severe crisis of masculinity the nation was experiencing. The casting of leading actors associated with a strong and sexualised physique in all film adaptations reinforces this glorification of the body as a narcissistic homoerotic fantasy for the male spectator. This is particularly conspicuous in the figures of Joe Shishido (1933-) and Nidaime Nakamura Shidō (1972-) in Suzuki Seijun's (1923-2017) and Inohara's versions respectively.

Sharing the same interest in the sexual body but providing a more low-brow approach, the *kasutori* culture rapidly flourished in the aftermath of defeat. The name comes from the *kasutori shōchū*, a strong, cheap, and illegal liquor made of potato and industrial alcohol (*kasutori* means dregs) that was very popular in the black market and with writers and artists, such as those of the Decadent School. William Johnston explains that this subculture constituted a revival of the imagery of the prewar *ero-guro* culture (the erotic and the grotesque—see Chapter 1), and was associated with a self-indulgent lifestyle that celebrated hedonism and escapism from memories of suffering and present-day difficulties (2005: 160). According to critic Futaba, the depiction of the *kasutori* culture was one of the most outstanding features of the film industry of 1948, mainly through narratives of romance set against a background of gangs' quarrels, black markets, cabarets and nightlife in the big cities (1949: 15-16). The *kasutori* culture also produced numerous publications selling sensational stories and erotic pictures that constitute a crucial site for the construction, consumption, and dissemination of the image of the *panpan*.

The *kasutori* magazines were cheap publications that often did not last for more than two issues. Published in November 1946, *Ryōki* ('seeking the bizarre') is

commonly regarded as the first *kasutori* magazine, and therefore is responsible for setting the conventions of the genre that boomed between 1946 and 1949 (Hajima 1995: 1; Kamiya 2009: 152-3).¹³ By the end of 1948 there were more than 150 *kasutori* magazines, focusing on pornography, crime, grotesquery and exposés, where the predominant images included ‘kissing, strip shows, underpants, panpan and “leisurely women,” chastity, incest, masturbation and lonely widows’ (Dower 1999: 150). Addressing primarily young male audiences, these publications placed the female body under the spotlight as a highly sexualised and commodified object of visual pleasure around which sex and violence turned into spectacle.

The connection between sex, freedom, and decadence with western culture was implied in many magazines’ bastardised English titles, such as ‘Venus’, ‘Pinup’, or ‘Thriller’; and more importantly, in the cover pictures that frequently depicted naked or semi-naked Caucasian women (Yamamoto 1998). The magazines presented the western woman as beautiful and voluptuous and stressed her legs and breasts as the core of eroticism. Her gaze revealed a consciousness of her exposed body: she apparently enjoyed an uninhibited sexuality. On the one hand, this image served as a buffer to protect her Japanese counterparts, who were less often presented in this way on the covers, and thus could preserve their image as pure, that is, essentially different from the immoral and sexually available western woman. Thus through her westernised looks, the *panpan* functioned as an intermediate, polluted subject. On the other hand, *kasutori* magazines offered an illusion for Japanese men to observe, commodify and possess the vanquishers’ women. In the body of the female ‘Other’ admiration merged with domination, in an attempt to invert the gender economies of

¹³ Other publications such as *Riberaru* (from the English Liberal), originally a literary magazine launched in January 1946, were already and increasingly selling *ero-guro* content (Yamamoto 1998).

power of the Occupation.

Lesser known are the *kasutori* newspapers, which first appeared in November 1946, and offer a compelling semi-factual depiction of the *panpan*.¹⁴ Most articles dealt with macabre crimes, such as rape and murder, and were consistently accompanied by illustrations of naked or half-naked women. *Panpan* appeared invariably dressed in stereotypical western fashion (e.g. *Jitsuwa shinbun* 1948 Feb 2; *Hairaito* 1948 Mar 10; *Osaka yomimono shinbun* 1948 Apr 23), and the articles repeatedly depicted their gang fights and beatings (see Figure 2.2). Although when talking in the media, *panpan* denied the existence—or at least the widespread nature—of beatings as internal punishment (*Kaizō* 1949: 78), the *kasutori* publications had a great impact on the popular imaginary. Considering that they were already in circulation two years before the *panpan* films, their influence in shaping the conventions and aesthetics of the genre seems undeniable.

In contrast with SCAP's sugar coated discourse of sexual liberation, the *kasutori* culture's eroticism more often than not included violent images of women being battered or abused by other women and men. Especially in the newspapers, the violence tended to be exaggerated, exceedingly graphic, and strikingly cruel. Sexual liberation, therefore, could provide (sadistic) entertainment for men, but for women it is connected to punishment, ultimately reasserting the importance of chastity. Yet, from a different angle, the *panpan* in these publications can be regarded as

¹⁴ Yamamoto (1998) and McLelland (2012) analyse the *kasutori* magazines and their evolution towards a more contained experience of sexuality inscribed in the heterosexual couple and marriage. Hajima (1995) has edited a comprehensive compilation of *kasutori* newspapers. Newspapers commonly cost five yen and consisted of four pages, in comparison to the magazines of between 32 and 48 pages that cost thirty or forty yen (Hajima 1995: 1-2). The first *kasutori* newspaper was *Junkan shinbun shinseiki*, published in Osaka; and in April 1947, *Jitsuwa shinbun* appeared in Tokyo.

expressing contempt against the vanquishers. For instance, economic hardship led many widows to turn to prostitution, a decision that may have differed had they had any financial support. However, SCAP deliberately denied any sort of subsidy for war widows, and instead prescribed remarriage (Kamiya 2014: 73). Thus, the popular narrative of the war widow or wife-turned-prostitute in the *kasutori* publications denounced the degradation and chauvinism many women faced despite the highly publicised new gender equality. All these different perspectives suggest that women, beyond race or nationality, were located as objects for the male gaze.

The depiction of sexuality in the *kasutori* culture was more graphic than in most media, but it concurred with a general trend in the entertainment industries. In these years, new spectacles as the ‘picture-frame nude show’ (*gakubuchi nūdo shō*) emerged—note again the use of bastardised English. This static precursor of the strip show featured scantily dressed women posing inside large-scale picture frames, often imitating famous classical western paintings.¹⁵ The first show was inaugurated at the Teitoza theatre of Shinjuku, the same venue where the stage play of *Gate of Flesh* premiered. It seems, therefore, legitimate to infer that the audience coming to see the theatrical adaptation was expecting a titillating show. Indeed, it is said that the success of the *panpan* play, which was staged in Tokyo alone more than 700 times in a year (Kamiya 2009: 154), was greatly due to the provocative costumes and cunning sexual references, the climax scene being the stripping and beating of an actress by the others (Saitō 2014: 335).

The picture-frame nude show premiered on 15 January 1947, the exact day

¹⁵ The first producer of the ‘picture-frame’ was Hata Toyokichi (1892-1956), an entrepreneur of stage plays who had also written some erotic essays and translated German literature. Although Hata was declared war criminal, he was soon rehabilitated, returning to the industry with the nude show, produced by the Tōhō Theatrical Company.

the first western-style beauty contest was held in Japan, a more ‘respectable’ form of objectification and exhibitionism of the female body. Beauty contests, such as the Miss Atomic Bomb of Nagasaki (*misu genbaku*), sprang up all around the country. Several other types of erotic show emerged in cabarets, clubs, dance halls and such venues; and in 1948 the first striptease show opened in Asakusa. According to Saitō, in the beginning they attracted all kinds of viewers eager to see this new show publicised as western and democratic, but as they proliferated, the target audience narrowed down (2014: 331).¹⁶

All these expressions of popular culture demonstrate that the display of the female body could be found everywhere, from vulgar entertainment to more socially acceptable practices, adapted to different target audiences and ubiquitous in all cultural industries. The male gaze of desire was normalised, transforming gender dynamics and representations for years to come. Speaking in economic terms, for women it meant a vast range of job opportunities—models, dancers, companions, strip girls, waitresses, and prostitutes in whatever form—that paid relatively well; something undoubtedly attractive in dire times. The reinvigorated ‘service industry’, or what I refer to as ‘female body industry’, grounded the notion of the female body and sexuality as marketable products, and indirectly boosted other industries (e.g. alcohol, fashion, makeup, magazines, music, real estate, bars and restaurants). Thus, it cannot be separated from broader strategies encouraging consumer capitalism and from the development of certain types of corporate entertainment (see Chapter 1).

Therefore, as Izbicki (1997) and Saitō (2014) argue, it seems clear that the

¹⁶ Hirooka Keiichi (2003) has published a collection of his postwar pictures of women where he interestingly groups together strip shows, brothels, and beauty contests among other female body industries.

SCAP provided the political, social and economic circumstances to foster the commodification of the female body in the public arena. Saitō says that the political Left referred to the escapist entertainment promoted by SCAP and the conservative party as the ‘three-S policy’: ‘sex, screen and sports’ (2014: 331). However, the analysis of other cultural industries demonstrates that cinema was among the most restrained ones. The depictions of naked women, sex, and violence were far more graphic and extreme in the ‘literature of the flesh’, the *kasutori* publications, and the diverse nude shows, fields in which McLelland argues that SCAP made little effort to restrain the freedom of expression, as long as they did not criticise the Occupation Forces (2012: 61). In film, the majority of scenes depicting scantily dressed women at the time consisted of relatively few shots, often justified in the narrative as a stage performance in a cabaret or such place (Izbicki 1997); but it was not until 1956 that the first female nude scene appeared in mainstream Japanese cinema, with the release of *Revenge of the Pearl Queen* (*Onna shinjuō no fukushū*, Shimura Toshio), starring Maeda Michiko (1934-). Censorship, which was much stricter on the moving image, limited the exhibitionism of the female body as object of visual pleasure, but simultaneously, suppressed the potentially subversive meaning of the original narratives. Kamiya Makiko—one of the few scholars writing about the cinematic representation of the *panpan*—concludes that these films ‘while satisfying the desires of the spectators by presenting the flesh and its aesthetic of decadence, they necessarily had to ultimately deny such sensuality and pleasure’ (2009: 170).

The perception of the films was enhanced by the synergy of the exceptionally prominent images of the *panpan* co-existing in the public arena. The spectators in 1948, I argue, were experiencing the hyperimage of the *panpan*. Watching, for instance, *Gate of Flesh*, would conjure up an array of references: images from the

theatrical play, illustrations of *kasutori* publications, mental images emerging from the reading of Tamura's novel, press articles and radio programs with interviews of and testimonies by prostitutes, and popular songs about streetwalking like 'In the Flow of the Stars' (*Hoshi no nagare ni*). By inserting visual references to the fashion style identified with the *panpan*, lines of dialogue referring to much more titillating fragments of the original novel, certain background music, and scenes that hinted at unrestrained expressions of sex and violence, the film could effectively evoke all the other images of the *panpan* alive in the popular imaginary. The construction of a hyperimage is enabled by the pervasive presence of the *panpan* in the city as well as in public opinion and in creative industries, where the abundance of adaptations across platforms favoured a dense mesh of intertextuality. While feeding into the broader political agenda of the Occupation, *panpan* films worked to release social tension in an attempt to prevent major social upheaval. Without transgressing the moral conventions of censorship, the hyperimage of the *panpan* made them an affective site to negotiate the traumatised male identity through images of women being disciplined.

Taking Kumiko's rape scenes as a case study, Hori finds two possible fantasies provided for the male viewer. First, by holding the dominant gaze over Japanese women, the Japanese male identifies himself with the American male in an illusion of power, and hence falls into 'complicity in the crime' (Hori 2002: 53). Due to the absence of the Occupying male in the big screen, I would add that the dark, isolated hall of the cinema functioned as a heterotopia where Japanese men could temporarily obviate the existence of the Occupying male and his relation to Japanese women. On the other hand, Hori proposes a gender bending identification on the part of the male viewer with Kumiko, according to which he is able construct himself as a

victim of war. Understanding Kumiko as a metaphor of the nation, the Japanese male viewer could disavow his responsibility in war and give himself to ‘self-compassion’ (2002: 53); a cathartic experience, I would add, that could also serve female viewers conscious of their accountability in the imperialistic past of the nation.

Kept out of the frame, SCAP could benefit from this representation that provided an inoffensive restoration of a damaged Japanese masculinity previously so viciously saturated with the chauvinistic image of the nation-state. In transforming the complex and contested social reality of *panpan* into a useful marketable character, the insertion of intertextual references was highly selective. There is no trace of the free, cheerful, and natural portrayal of the *panpan* celebrated by Sakaguchi, neither of the despicable criminals presented by anti-prostitution groups. Cinema offered an intermediate and ambivalent position that made possible the exploitation of sex and violence without defying the dominant patriarchal economies of control, which ultimately demanded the rehabilitation of the male modern subject. Nevertheless, the figure of the *panpan* was extremely problematic and could not be completely transformed into a safe fantasy. As Nina Cornyetz (1999) argues in her analysis of Japanese literature, the character of the ‘dangerous woman’ caught in narratives of desire and subjugation works to bolster the phallic, national subject under construction, but it also irremediably betrays the flaws of the hegemonic structure. Because of the relations *panpan* maintained with the Occupying Forces and/or her financial and sexual autonomy, her presence made defeat and the subsequent symbolic masculine loss even more tangible and undeniable (see Figure 2.3). Despite the erasure of the GI from the screen and at times of the Japanese male, as happens in most beating scenes, male anxieties about power and identity were exposed on her figure.

Finally, I would like to call attention to the song ‘In the Flow of the Stars’,¹⁷ which adds yet another layer of signification to the hyperimage of the *panpan*. According to Dower, the song was inspired by an emotional letter written by a prostitute and published in *Asahi* newspaper. Released in October 1947 (just a few months after Tamura’s novel), the song became a major hit and was used as the background music of Makino and Ozaki’s film (1999: 123). In 1947 Misora Hibari (1937-1989), the most famous child star in Japanese history and ten-years old at the time, performed the song dressed as a *panpan* with the ragged dress, neckerchief, and cigarette at the Asakusa National Theatre in Tokyo (Shamoon 2009: 135-6). This is not only evidence of the song’s tremendous popularity, but more importantly of the complex and contradictory social perception of the *panpan*, rapidly transformed into a marketable product for the mainstream. Years later, ‘In the Flow of the Stars’ was selected as the theme song of Suzuki’s version of *Gate of Flesh* and included in several other prostitution films,¹⁸ establishing itself as a significant component of the *panpan* imagination. The most famous line of the song asks: ‘who has made me this kind of woman?’ (*konna onna ni dare ga shita*); however, as in the films, the question remains unanswered and responsibility is an abstract that feeds into discourses of victimisation.

This song calls attention to the female community since, ultimately, *panpan* films revolve around themes of friendship, violence, solidarity, sexual attraction and rivalry amongst women. In the last strophe, the singer wonders where her young sister may be now, and expresses her wish to meet once again her mother as she cries

¹⁷ The music was composed by Tone Ichirō (1918-1991), lyrics by Shimizu Minoru (1903-1979), and performed by Kikuchi Akiko (1924-2002).

¹⁸ Including *Last Day of the Red Light District: March 31, 1958* (*Akasen saigo no hi: shōwa 33 nen 3 gatsu 31 nichi*, Shiratori Shin’ichi, 1974) discussed in Chapter 4, and more recently *Zero Focus* (*Zero no shōten*, Inudō Isshin, 2009).

in the darkness of the night. There is no trace of a masculine presence here, no mention of a father, a husband in war, or a son to look after. Both war and defeat were extremely gendered experiences where women and men had distinct duties, expectations and problems; and thus homosocial environments were notably common. One can imagine the strong relationships of female bonding that would emerge in, for instance, the factories where women worked and lived together, in the numerous households where all men had been sent to war, and also in brothels, streetwalkers' gangs and prostitutes' rehabilitation centres. As men returned home, the social structures based on heterosexual relationships were being re-established. Meanwhile both women and men had to come to terms with their memories and experiences deeply marked by gender, as they struggled to survival in the midst of a defeated nation. I suggest that the *panpan* films appealed to female audiences because they recreated these intense relationships and addressed the anxieties generated by the experience of sexuality in a chaotic environment where female liberation and subjugation merged.

A politicised revival of the *panpan*

Fifteen years after the short, original *panpan* boom, when prostitution had long been banned from public space, the figure of the *panpan* was revived as a symbol of a historical era and used as a site of negotiation and criticism of present contentions.

As Saitō claims, the traumatic experiences of occupation

were inscribed in women's bodies and haunted the cinematic vision and memory in postwar Japanese cinema for years to come (...) [F]ragments of the cinematic visual memories of the sexualized, liberated body of a woman as a traumatic signifier of the occupation will make unexpected returns to the past in the cinematic field of representation.

Saitō is here referring to a broader category of Japanese films, but her claim seems especially poignant for the re-emergence of the *panpan* subgenre. At least three *panpan* films were produced in the early 1960s; namely *Girls of Dark* (*Onna bakari no yoru*, Tanaka Kinuyo, 1961), Suzuki Seijun's *Gate of Flesh*, and Onchi Hideo's (1933-) *The Call of Flesh* (*Jotai*), both released in 1964. *The Call of Flesh* combines the story of the 1947 novel with that of *The Terracotta Woman* (*Haniwa no onna*, Tamura Tajirō, 1961). Released four months after Suzuki's film, it depicts the reunion of Sen (Kusunoki Yūko, 1933-), Maya (Dan Reiko, 1933-2003) and Shintarō (Nanbara Kōji, 1927-2001) approximately twenty years later. The plot takes us back and forth in time as their reencounter triggers memories of the early postwar years. The scarce explanations about characters and events, which are presented as fragmented episodes, indicate the assumption that the audiences are familiar with Tamura's stories. These three films reproduce certain features of the 1940s films, reinforcing the iconography and conventions of the subgenre; and at the same time, meaningful variations open the hyperimage of the *panpan* to new readings.

Both Suzuki's and Onchi's adaptations conspicuously exploit the aggressive eroticism depicted in Tamura's novel; however, this must be understood within the general context of sexual liberation fuelled with the political meaning of the 1960s, in Japan and elsewhere. As Linda Williams recalls, sexual revolutions in the US at the time were perceived as anti-war, antiracist, and anti-patriarchal statements (2008: 8). Violence and sex functioned as metaphors of the individual's power and freedom; and at times, as tragic representations of the individuals' ultimate failure to achieve absolute independence and to satisfy all desires as they collide with society's structures and norms. In Japan, the trend for more aggressive, more

graphic and more controversial representations in cinema was often referred to as the ‘naked boom’ (*hadaka būmu*) or ‘sex boom’ (*sekkusu būmu*), and in relation to violence, the ‘cruelty boom’ (*zankoku būmu*) (Oshikawa 1964; *KJ* 1964 Early Aug: 22; *FK* 1964 Oct).

This trend, however, must also be understood as a commercial strategy, as the following promotional logline for *The Call of Flesh* suggests: ‘Woman’s unrestrained instincts! Seize her in the raw as sex triggers a revolution in the woman’s body!’ (*FK* 1964 Oct: 228). Even television increased its erotic content (*KJ* 1961 Early Jun: 152), but it was precisely the greater freedom cinema held to portray sex and violence that attracted many viewers and kept the industry afloat when audience numbers plummeted. According to an article by the famous critic and historian Iwasaki Akira published in *Kinema junpō*, out of a ninety million population, only ten million were going to the cinema (1961: 44). Amongst the reasons for this decay, Iwasaki underscored the success of television and the fascination with professional baseball. Nevertheless, studios were also to blame for making a great number of films (under the double-bill program and the block-booking system) that lacked quality and interest, tediously resembling each other in their glaring use of sex to attract viewers.¹⁹ The consequence, or perhaps its cause, was that more and more, the target audience of the big screen was identified as young men (Iwasaki 1961: 44-7). As Kirsten Cather notes, the loss of female audience due to the popularisation of television was also connected to the ‘mass exodus’ to the suburbs with the development of the *danchi* apartment buildings (2012: 120), discussed in further detail in Chapter 4. Either way, the fact is that it

¹⁹ On the crisis of the studio system see also Anderson and Richie (1982); Standish (2005); and Cather (2012).

worked: sex attracted viewers (*KJ* 1961 Early Jun; 1964 Late Jun; 1964 Early Aug; *FK* 1964 Oct). Independent companies had begun producing various types of erotic films, which later became known as ‘pink’ or ‘eroductions’ (*pinku*). Although there are important predecessors, *Market of Flesh* (*Nikutai ichiba*, Kobayashi Satoru, 1962) is often considered the ‘first’ pink film, and by 1965 they accounted for 40 per cent of the domestic production with approximately 200 films produced per year (Koga 1992: 192; Standish 2011: 92).²⁰ Faced with this panorama, studios increasingly sought to benefit from the attraction of sex imagery.

Against this background, in the two 1964 *panpan* films, the female body is repeatedly displayed in association with themes of sex and violence. Maya and Shintarō’s sexual intercourse in Suzuki’s *Gate of Flesh* is depicted according to the conventions of the pink industry, partially blurring the screen in black to hide the lower part of the naked bodies (a technique known as *bokashi*). In *The Call of Flesh* the episode is portrayed with passionate brutality, but rather than the female body, the camera prioritises the physicality of the situation, emphasising the sweat and dirt in their bodies, and the tense muscles as they tussle to dominate each other. Later on, when Maya gets beaten up for sleeping with Shintarō without charging him, close-up shots of her breasts and other body parts are alternated with long shots of her naked body hanging from her wrists, carefully illuminated to underscore her breasts and hide her genitals, creating a highly erotic as well as aesthetical composition. Thereafter, the camera follows a tear from her eye in an extreme close up, as it runs down her face, neck and breasts.

This representation of violence, much more graphic than in the 1940s,

²⁰ The pink industry will be further discussed in Chapter 4. See also Sharp (2008), Standish (2011), Cather (2012), Corral (2012), and Nornes (ed. 2014).

invariably entails the exposure of the naked female body. Close-ups of the actress' face expressing unbearable pain constitute a fundamental feature of the eroticism of the scene, drawing on conventions present in the *kasutori* culture. In discussing the relationship between violence and the erotic in Japanese cinema, Maureen Turim (1993) links the desire to violently subjugate women on screen with the re-enactment of sexual abuse during the imperial era and with the 'comfort women' in particular. Turim argues that 'if the pornographic scene is the site of a displaced lust and a nostalgia for power over the Other, its appropriation to an expression of rebellion against the state seems more problematic than ever' (1993: 84). This argument seems particularly pertinent to the figure of Shintarō in Suzuki's film, the epitome of a free and strong masculinity to whom all women surrender. In Onchi's film his character is more problematic: he is presented twenty years later as a drug addict living on Sen's income (now the madam of a club); nevertheless, his physical and sexual prowess work to articulate the fantasy of domination, arguably appealing more to a male audience.

While Turim refers to scenes in which men are the ones to inflict violence on women, in the beating scenes of the *panpan* films, Shintarō is not the aggressor but the spectator of women-on-woman violence. I argue that this further dislocates the issue of accountability of men in aggression (war) and leaves only the sadistic visual pleasure in which imperialistic conceptions of power and masculinity continue to resonate. Scantly dressed for most of the film, the tanned built-up body of actor Joe Shishido (alter ego of Suzuki) is exposed in all of its strength and nimbleness, and transformed in a homoerotic fantasy of identification. He embodies a rebel masculinity disconnected from the responsibility towards the past, which is fully imbedded in the abstract notion of the state. As Turim's argument suggests, the

biggest failure of Suzuki's film in overthrowing the predominant economies of power is its inability to let go of the chauvinist commodification of women in the construction of a strong masculinity—something that could be said of many other allegedly anti-establishment films of the time. Furthermore, the fact that sex was used as the central commercial appeal, as the promotion of *The Call of Flesh* illustrates, seems to call into question the ideological value of exploitative representation.

The revival of Tamura's story came hand in hand with the revival of the discourses of the 'literature of the flesh' and the Decadent School. In May 1964, coinciding with the release of Suzuki's film, *Eiga geijutsu* published a twelve-page special reportage on the so-called 'flesh films' (*nikutai eiga*). Directors and scriptwriters, including both Suzuki and Onchi, but also Yoshida Yoshishige (1933-), Terayama Shūji (1935-1983), and Shirasaka Yoshio (1932-2015), were invited to discuss the meaning of sex in their films and how they wished to portray it beyond the limitations imposed by the law and the industry (*EG* 1964 May: 31-43). Several of them made references to Tamura and Sakaguchi's ideas, but of special mention are the comments of scriptwriter Shirasaka, contributor to many films by Masumura Yasuzō (1924-1986). Shirasaka hails the *Discourse on Decadence* as his major reference in depicting sexuality as the raw liberation of a woman awakening to subjectivity and, acknowledging he is not certain of quoting properly the text, he claims that this liberation is encapsulated in the text in Sakaguchi's sentence 'widow, turn into a *panpan*' (*EG* 1964 May: 32). Shirasaka is probably referring to the statement 'may widows find love again' (quoted earlier), but the fact is that

Sakaguchi never mentions the *panpan* in his first *Discourse on Decadence*.²¹ What is important to note here is how the figure of the *panpan* had been established in the popular imaginary as the embodiment of counter-culture, defying sexual and hence social mores, and as the reification of the philosophy of the Decadent School. However, as argued above, embracing the male-centredness of this school of thought and the ‘literature of the flesh’ (at times suggestive of misogyny), the celebration of uninhibited (male) sexual desire transforms the female body into a reflexive site of ideological contention where the boundaries between subversion and exploitation are not always clear. Here lies the key to the revision of the *panpan*’s contradictory image as subversive idol and victim: she enables the individual male figure to visualise, explore and satisfy carnal desires, while her tragic situation is blamed on war and the state.

As the reportage of *Eiga geijutsu* indicates, pushing the boundaries of ‘appropriate’ depictions was considered a political act in itself and a bold statement against the establishment. While the representation of sex was becoming more open in some western countries (Williams 2008), in Japan, official censorship practices remained influenced by the system established by SCAP and grounded on legal regulations against ‘obscenity’ (*waisetsu*) dating from the prewar era (Cather 2012).²² Concerns about the increase of ‘obscene’ content in cinema became the subject of heated debates, leading in 1965 to the first obscenity trial against film—

²¹ Sakaguchi mentions the *panpan* in the second part of *Discourse of Decadence*, but not in these terms.

²² Penalties regarding obscene texts were established in article 175 of the Criminal Code, promulgated in 1880 and revised in 1907 (Japanese Ministry of Justice). The definition of obscenity dated back to the Taishō era (1912-1926) and had been revised in 1951 to determine an obscene matter as ‘that which wantonly stimulates or arouses sexual desire or offends the normal sense of sexual modesty of ordinary persons, and is contrary to proper ideas of sexual morality’ (as quoted in Maki 1964: 6-7).

namely *Black Snow* (*Kuroi yuki*, Takechi Tetsuji, 1965), elaborated in the last chapter. Film journals took advantage of the trend, and under the excuse of informing and discussing the ‘flesh films’, the number of pictures of naked or semi-naked women in their pages increased dramatically. Already in 1961 the journal *Eiga geijutsu* had introduced a section titled ‘Cinema Eroticism’ (*shinema erochishizumu*) that included profuse pictures of bare-breasted foreign actresses and other suggestive pictures of semi-nude women with very little text included.²³ Likewise, in 1962 *Kinema junpō*, launched a section named ‘Show Business’ about night life in Japan’s major cities. The first issue revolved around striptease and other nude shows, and was generously decorated with pictures (*KJ* 1962 New Year) (see Figure 2.4). Additionally, between 1963 and 1965, the journal published at least three special issues, in parallel to its regular film journal, dedicated to eroticism in the domestic and international cinema, full of pictures of breasts without a face.

The momentum of the controversy around obscenity must also be located in the context of the Tokyo Olympics celebrated in 1964 where, as Standish notes, the ‘official’ Japan was to be exhibited to the world (2011: 92). The event was a precious opportunity to showcase the national development, not only economic, but also in terms of social, cultural and sexual mores, and to reinforce the image of Japan as one of the most successful examples of modernisation. As a result, in 1964 the pink industry was subject of further censorship and limitations (Richie 2001: 209), but the concern was even greater with the mainstream market. As the promotion of *The Call of Flesh* illustrates, posters and publicity used the most suggestive images they could, sometimes more titillating than anything shown in

²³ It must be said, however, that by 1964 the text and not the images had gradually become the core of the section.

the film itself (*FK* 1964 Oct). Unlike the back-alley cinemas of the pink industry, however, the numerous theatres of the major studios, located in main streets with their big billboards, were exposing the female flesh on the most outstanding public spots of the cities (*KJ* 1964 Early Aug: 23); and hence called into question the image of the ‘official’ Japan. It is no coincidence that the preparations of the Olympics also brought an invigorated campaign in Tokyo to ‘clean up’ the streets from prostitution (Igarashi 2000: 149-150). Therefore, it was hard to refute that the commodification of sex played an important part in the development of postwar society; but as heterotopias, both erotic cinema and prostitution had to be kept away from the public and the international eye.

The Call of Flesh is the adaptation to most closely evoke the mood conveyed in Tamura’s novel. The dynamic camera work, rich in extreme close-up shots of skin, hair and other body parts, effectively recreates the thick atmosphere of the *panpan*’s den and underscores the beast-like existence of these women. The film was greatly praised for its artistic value, but it was nevertheless criticised by some as sensationalist (*KJ* 1964 Early Aug). Likewise, Suzuki’s *Gate of Flesh* received significant attention but a contested reception. Writing in *Kinema junpō*, critic Oshikawa Yoshiyuki deemed the film exploitative; its reliance on excessive images, which would be unthinkable to show on television, was the only reason for its notable box office success. Oshikawa further argues that the remake of such a well-known story is unjustified, since the abundant scenes of sex and violence only present a simplistic revival of the *ero-guro* aesthetic, offering nothing new. More importantly, this ‘grotesque melodrama’ clearly fails to bring contemporaneity to the story and to reflect on the tragedy of these women (1964: 80-1).

Without any intention of denying the exploitative aspects of Suzuki's film, I must disagree with Oshikawa's remark of 'not feeling at all the contemporaneity of the film' (1964: 80). The film's depiction of the Occupation and that of the GIs, although normalised by the 1960s, fills in a vacuum of the previous censored versions of the story. It openly expresses the resentment felt towards the conquerors, and can also be read as a reference to the on-going occupation of Okinawa and the thousands of prostitutes working in the proximities of American military bases, as noted in the previous chapter. Just in the first twenty minutes of the film there are numerous examples of this politicisation. The American flag occupying the entire frame precludes a flashback of Maya having been victim of a gang rape by American GIs. Later on, again an image of the American flag fills the frame while Maya's voice-over advocates rebellion against all authority, denial of respect to every social more and to its authorities. This scene leads to a violent encounter of Maya and her friends with other *panpan* gang that has allegedly trespassed in their territory. Comically, the invading prostitutes appeal to democracy to justify their freedom of movement, while the others enquire if democracy means to sleep with foreigners. Suddenly Maya, who is amused observing the scene, is approached by an American GI. She violently rejects him and is ultimately joined by her friends in beating up the man. The argument between the gangs overtly trivialises the meaning of 'democracy' and 'independence' and criticises the Japan-US relationship, now entangled in the Vietnam war. By transforming the foreign male into the victim of powerful and aggressive Japanese women, this scene reverses the hegemonic power relations of the gendered national narrative of defeat (see Introduction).

The films give representation to those elements not described in the novel or just ambivalently hinted at. Sen's gang in Tamura's work are named as *panpan*, but

whom they solicit is never specified. As the above episode illustrates, Suzuki's film depicts them as *wapan*, that is, those serving exclusively Japanese men, who despise the rival gang for serving foreigners. American GIs are depicted as very sexually active, constantly accompanied by Japanese women; but despite the allusion to rape, in general, they are not fearsome or commanding, but rather seem to be foolishly playing around. The Japanese police, occasionally featured in the background, seem helpless in the face of interracial 'fraternisation', and of the 'catches', which appear to be organised by the American MPs (military police). All these choices effectively work to further extol the masculine identity portrayed by Shintarō as the alternative to these feeble models that are unable to inspire true desire and subjugation in women.

In *The Call of Flesh*, the first flashback is introduced by a more than a minute-long montage sequence of striking images: the atomic bomb, plumes of smoke, Hiroshima's Atomic Bomb Dome, building ruins, wounded and crippled people, the Japanese flag, the chrysanthemum, General Douglas MacArthur (1880-1964) descending from a plane, tanks, the war trial of General Tōjō Hideki (1884-1948), children in ruined schools, veterans in crowded trains, the new parliament, diseased children, the MP patrolling the streets; and finally, the big title credits 'Female Body' (literal translation of the original title) superimposed in white. Since the images do not refer to women in particular, but rather to the national history of Japan as an entity, the two characters constituting the 'female body' (*jo-tai* 女体) evoke the 'national body' (*koku-tai* 国体), establishing the metaphor of woman as nation. The female body becomes the ultimate bearer of history; therefore, radical changes in the socio-political order are inscribed on her flesh. Taking also into account the student movements, along with the anti-America and anti-war

movements effervescing in Japan in the 1960s, these scenes undoubtedly speak of contemporaneous political concerns, and moreover, reveal the underpinning gender discourses; expressed with the seemingly incongruent and comical style of Suzuki, and the lyrical and meticulous compositions of Onchi.

On the other hand, Onchi's montage sequence bears witness to the ways in which the memories of defeat and Occupation were already visually codified and emotionally charged in the mid-1960s. *The Call of Flesh* is thus an example of cinema's significant role as a 'custodian' of cultural history and memory. Many of the images included in this sequence, such as the Hiroshima dome or the children in ruined schools, constitute visual icons that even today immediately transport the viewer to the aftermath of war, often feeding into the victimisation discourse. Inspired by scriptwriter Shirasaka's erroneous quotation of Sakaguchi's text, I suggest that the *panpan* had become another essential icon of this historical era, but with a more versatile use than many of those other images.

Returning to Saitō's reading of the liberated sexualised body of a woman as a traumatic signifier of the occupation, the *panpan* re-emerges from time to time to revive the post-defeat bold subversion perceived in Sakaguchi's work, full of vitality and expectations for the future. Additionally, she works simultaneously to expose and to ease the double crisis felt in the 1960s, that of the defeat in war and that of the defeat of democracy, as illustrated in the structure of Onchi's film that confronts the two historical periods. Furthermore, she remains a victim of history, as implied in Onchi's montage sequence and in the credit scene of Suzuki's film, composed by a succession of illustrations of female naked bodies, some piled up dead, others lying helplessly and other screaming in despair. Yet, above all, the

panpan is emphasised in all films as a survivor, which considering the recurrent allegory of the nation, suggests endurance and hope to overcome crisis.

On the other hand, it is necessary to consider how these films could appeal to female audiences, and resonate with their own concerns. In the past fifteen years numerous women's groups and associations from a wide range of political and social stances had emerged engaging in debates about body politics, female identity, and women's role in society (Uno 1993; Mackie 2003). As outlined in the previous chapter, the productivity and efficiency of postwar society was grounded on gendered labour and space divisions that stipulated the mechanisms of planning and control to optimise society's well-being. This type of social management critically referred to as 'managed society' (*kanri shakai*) placed the middle-upper-class housewife as the ultimate manager of the domestic arena.²⁴ Articles in *Fujin kōron* tended to present a mildly liberated prototype of woman who is a responsible and wise consumer, who nurtures her husband and children, and who learns about and enjoys sexuality within relatively conservative practices (e.g. *FK* 1959 Aug; 1960 Oct; 1964 May). Contemporary Maya in *The Call of Flesh* is introduced as an example of this model, living in a comfortable *danchi* apartment with her understanding husband and their child. However, seeing herself as an anonymous paradigm of the middle class, and jaded in her duties as wife, mother and daughter-in-law, Maya proactively seeks a sexual affair with Shintarō. In order to feel once again the vitality and passion of her *panpan* years and rediscover her inner self, she must rebel against her normative, constrained existence.

²⁴ With the normalisation of the nuclear family, communal spaces substantially decreased in the new apartment buildings and the housewife's management was referred to as 'my-home-ism' (*mai hōmu*). See also Gordon (ed.1993) and McKnight (2012).

Intense debates about whether women should prioritise their role as wife/mother or as a professional worker, developing since the late 1950s, were at the heart of what is known as the ‘housewife debate’ (*shufu ronsō*), which had *Fujin kōron* as its main platform (Ueno ed. 1982; Buckley 1993). As Sandra Buckley argues, the journal increasingly sided with a more conservative, neo-traditionalist argument for the priority of motherhood, disavowing the reality of the majority of women who were part of the workforce but enjoyed little support from the state either to fulfil her nurturing roles or to achieve equalitarian terms in their jobs (1993: 150-3). Against this background, Maya’s depiction in *The Call of Flesh* embodies a political statement against the revival of conservative mores. She is defined primarily as an individual with a strong subjectivity, whereas her facet as mother is conspicuously played down throughout the film. Motherhood and consumer commodities alone do not enable her self-fulfilment; desire and agency do.

While the advancement of reproductive rights was transforming women’s views and approaches towards sex, the general position expressed in *Fujin kōron* advocated for a contained and discreet expression of sexual agency, always kept away from the public sphere. In her analysis of female representation in postwar women’s magazines, Ochiai Emiko argues that the visual imagery of the postwar housewife remained unchanged for decades, as an epitome of ‘grace and self-control’ (1998: 207). Other mainstream magazines, such as *Josei jishin* (*Women’s Own*), offered alternative female archetypes that gained popularity in the 1960s. Published for the first time in December 1958, *Josei jishin* targeted young, single, urban, working women and popularised the use of sexy portrayals of women for a female audience, as well as pictures of men as objects of visual pleasure. However,

as Ochiai notes, in the 1960s the magazine increasingly promoted the paradoxical representation of women that sought sexy looks to attract men, but disapproved of any sexual behaviour beyond that (1998: 210).

Suzuki's women, with their rough look and commercial understanding of sex, stand in total opposition to these two mainstream models. Once Maya unleashes her desire and agency, she literally drags Shintarō, semi-conscious due to heavy drinking, into a separate space to pounce on his body. As mentioned already, throughout the film his nude body is repeatedly exposed and fragmented into close-ups, while the reverse shots present the women as holding the gaze. However, I argue that such female sexual subjectivity is only a masquerade of feminism. As *Josei jishin* was promoting sexual liberation as fashion and thus (expanding on Ochiai's argument), fostering the internalisation of the male gaze of desire as a component of femininity, Suzuki's film provides a superficial liberation that normalises such exploitation. By offering the male body as object of visual pleasure, the politics of commodification of sexuality in cinema are not challenged, but rather reinforced. Objectifying the male does not empower the female: it perpetuates objectification.

Against this background, *Girls of Dark* stands out for its conscious intention of avoiding the gratuitous exploitation of the female body without rejecting the genre conventions. Tanaka Kinuyo had addressed the subject of the *panpan* in her directorial debut in 1953 (see Chapter 3). In *Girls of Dark*, in terms of the beating scene, Kuniko (Hara Chisako, 1936-), a rehabilitated *panpan*, provokes the anger of a group of factory co-workers who prostitute themselves, by refusing to join them. After fiercely fighting against four women, Kuniko is immobilised on the floor,

while one of them burns a candle between her legs. We are neither shown the candle approaching her body nor close-ups of her legs. All we see is a crosscut between Kuniko's face in pain and the sadistic face of her aggressor. The violence is extreme but the female nude is not visually underscored, and there is no gaze of eroticism or desire. The film dislocates the subject of sexuality from the female individual body, to the social body, exploring the attempt of reintegration by a *panpan*, and consequently provides other expressions of agency and subjectivity. As the song of 'In the Flow of the Stars', it is the female community as a site of violence, solidarity and accomplishment, that constitutes the core subject of the film. Notwithstanding, whether this revision of the gender politics of the *panpan* film is due to the fact that it is the only one directed and written by women (Yana Masako [1911-1986] and Tanaka Sumie [1908-2000]) is not so easy to determine.

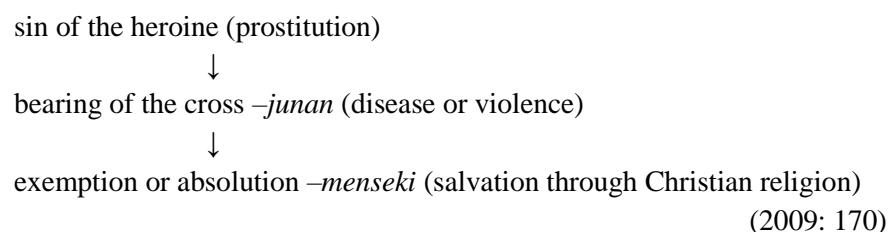
Seeking redemption: Christian iconography in the *panpan* films

In all *panpan* films of the 1940s, Christian iconography appears entangled with themes of punishment and redemption. As noted already, in the final scene of *Women of the Night*, as Kumiko and Fusako exit the frame, the camera tilts to focus in on a stained glass of the Virgin with Child in the ruined church. In the case of *Gate of Flesh*, it was the theatrical play that first added the character of the priest, who is not present in the novel (Kamiya 2014: 80).²⁵ In Makino and Ozaki's film, the priest plays a major role and embodies a positive and democratic alternative of masculinity.

²⁵ The only reference in the novel to employ Christian imaginary is the ending sentence that reads: 'Suspended in the darkness of the underground, Borneo Maya's body was magnificent, like that of the prophet on the cross, enwrapped in a halo of faintly white light' (as translated in Igarashi 2000: 60).

The church and its bells become recurrent visual and aural background props, while Christian imagery is repeatedly inserted, and increasingly so towards the end of the film. During Maya's beating, in a montage-like editing, images of her tortured body are interspersed with Christian paintings of saints and Virgins. Likewise, the framing of Maya resembles that of a portrait of a martyr, lit from above with a soft focus, her face looking up to the camera with a mystic expression of redemption as she calls the name of Shintarō. After beating up Maya, Sen lies on the floor with her arms spread, full of uncertainty and sadness, as the frame of a window casts a shadow over her figure in the shape of a cross. Gradually the shadow becomes bigger and darker, and its outline more defined to the point where it is no longer the shadow of the window frame, and it is impossible not to interpret the scene as a crucifixion (see Figure 2.5).

This conspicuous use of Christian iconography was often criticised by contemporaneous viewers. Writing about *Gate of Flesh*, Futaba blatantly regretted the denouement when 'all of a sudden they are saved by God', because it was too good and exaggerated, and hence not convincing (1949: 17). In her political reading of the subgenre, Kamiya analyses the artificiality of these tropes, and identifies the following narrative pattern:



Therefore, the woman's failure to conform to a normative sexuality is punished; while rehabilitation is presented more as a miracle than a concrete social process. The extremely troubled situation of these women is abruptly resolved or their

opinion suddenly changed, through a ‘unexpected and abstract’ intervention of religious imaginary that Kamiya categorises as ‘*Deus ex machina*’ (2009: 168-71). That this strategy brings closure to the narrative but comes across as illogical and unrealistic is interpreted by Kamiya as a metaphor of a greater narrative:

Japan’s sin (war of aggression)
↓
bearing of the cross (from the air raids and nuclear bomb to defeat)
↓
Occupation by GHQ (liberation from imperialism and Japan’s rebirth)
(2009: 170)

The *panpan* stands for Japan, which must be penalised for its actions but can be miraculously saved by SCAP. Women are equated to the nation, and their sexuality to the nation’s borders, its rights and limits. Thus, ultimately the fallen women are punished, and not those ‘who have made them such women’—as the song goes.

Kamiya suggests that behind the transformation of Tamura’s novel into a Christian narrative of salvation lies the thread of censorship. This argument seems supported by the fact that in the 1960s *panpan* films there is not such a clear pattern in the use of Christian symbols. *The Call of Flesh*, in line with the novel, completely avoids these tropes, while Suzuki’s version makes extensive use of the imagery but with dubious narrative or allegorical meaning. In a flashback to the past we witness a black American priest, played by Chico Rolando (??-??), assisting Maya after being gang raped. A close-up of the crucifix hanging from his neck is shown in the centre of the frame, with Maya’s face out of focus in the background. When they re-encounter, once Maya has already become a *panpan*, she seduces him violently and he gives in against the theatrical set of a church, where he later commits suicide, repenting his sin. Based on Kamiya’s narrative of salvation, Maya’s attitude can be

interpreted as her determination to reject all authority and to follow decadence to its ultimate repercussions, and hence to reject the trope of *Deus ex machina* and the narrative of American saviours. Although Kamiya reads it as a reverse course of history whereby Japan subjugates America (2009: 171), the character of the priest remains secondary and, unlike the priest of the 1948 film, he is not presented as an enlightening alternative leader for *panpan*/Japan. He is not an authority to defy, but rather a sympathetic and powerless individual. Moreover, taking into consideration the politics of race of the time, Chico's character does not come across as an embodiment of American imperialistic and chauvinistic power (in contrast with the white assertive GI beaten up by Maya in the other episode of the film). Therefore, the use of Christian imaginary seems closer to pastiche in a display of iconography that is as aesthetically meticulous as defiant. The film evokes the trauma of 'miscegenation' in its most biased form (that entailing black men), and brings to the fore the taboo many aimed to keep silent (as discussed in the first chapter in relation to the mixed-race children). However, it is primarily the visual, transgressive impact of the scene that the film is concerned with, shaking with cynicism the traumatic issues hovering over the cultural memory.

While *Girls of Dark* does not include explicit iconography, I suggest that Christian idiosyncrasy is subtly entangled with the narrative to portray the liberation of the female body. The film follows *ex-panpan* Kuniko through several jobs where, as soon as her past is revealed, she is invariably abused and despised by employers, co-workers, and lovers. The last scene shows Kuniko, after several failures, now working as a shell diver (*ama*). Still not fully accustomed to the job, she fights against the waves, just as she has been relentlessly struggling in each stage of the film. Her confident and bright expression as she walks out of the water can be

interpreted as an allusion to the concept of baptism; and in fact, a contemporary critic referred to it as a ‘purification bath’ (*mizogi*) (*EG* 1961 Oct: 56). Kuniko has washed away her sins and has been reborn as a new woman. More importantly, she has become a self-sufficient individual who seems unlikely to return to prostitution. Christian iconography, in this case, is not used as an unfeasible abstract salvation, but rather to symbolise real redemption and hope. In a roundtable with men from the amateur critics’ club *Nihon eiga pen kurabu*, Tanaka explained that she wanted an ending that was realistic albeit positive.²⁶ In her opinion, it was only in an environment without men, such as the traditional shell divers’ community, where the heroine could be saved (*EG* 1961 Oct: 56). Some of the discussants stressed that in real life many women like Kuniko are able to quit prostitution by marrying, while others pointed out that working as a shell diver is ‘not really living as a woman’ and that the film deserved a much more tragic ending (*EG* 1961 Oct: 56). Against these statements that contemplate very limited ways for a woman to become a normative subject, Tanaka’s film presents labour, and not heterosexual romance or charity, as the path towards personal fulfilment.

I have mentioned that Kamiya (2009) maintains that in the 1940s the insertion of profuse Christian iconography was due to the censors’ pressure. However, neither in her work nor in that of Hirano (1992) or Cather (2012)—all examining the CIE’s records—have I found specific examples of censors demanding the insertion of religious content. It is true that MacArthur, a fervent Christian who promoted the arrival of missionaries to Japan, contributed to the normalisation of this

²⁶ The much more tragic original novel, *There is a Way But* (*Michi aredo*, Yana Masako, 1960), ends with Kuniko back into prostitution. The scriptwriter Tanaka Sumie (herself a Christian) when asked about the film’s encouraging symbolic denouement declared that the title of the novel ‘suggests that although there is a way, it is ultimately hopeless; the story in this script, however, says that there *is* a way’ (emphasis added- *KJ* 1961 Late Jun: 115).

kind of imaginary. However, Japanese filmmakers must have found a special aesthetic or allegorical appeal in this iconography and foresaw that it would attract audiences if they embraced it so eagerly. My hypothesis is that it relates to the theme of the next generation, that is, the salvation of the youngest, which the following chapter will also address. For instance, at the end of *White Beast*, one of the inmates, named Mariko (note the similarity to Mary) gives birth to a child. Moved by the first cry of the baby, the heroine walks outside as the sun rises. According to Kamiya, the scene refers to the iconography of the Virgin and the child (2009: 165), constituting an abrupt way to represent the heroine's conviction to change her lifestyle. I would add another layer of meaning by pointing to the significance of the new-born baby and the rising sun as symbols of a new beginning, a new bright era for those to come.

The emphasis on the coming generation projects responsibility towards the future, and thus turns its back to the problematic past. Sakaguchi's discourse is, albeit its nihilist appearance, a call for regeneration: '[O]nly by falling to the very depths can it [Japan] discover itself and thereby attain salvation' (as translated by Dorsey 2010: 182-3). As he elaborated in the second part of *Discourse of Decadence*,

To look long and hard at ourselves as restored to this naked state is the primary condition for a resurrection of our humanity. It is only then that we will enjoy a true birth with our nature as humans intact; it is only then that our true history will begin.

(as translated by Dorsey 2010: 191-2)

Here references to religious rhetoric, in a striking similar fashion to the early *panpan* films, create almost mystic images of a truly human future that awaits Japan, because, as Alan Wolfe concludes, the 'ultimate metaphor of the postwar is that of death and *rebirth*, a phoenix like national resurrection' (emphasis added; 2001: 365).

Therefore, in these films the younger characters and infants, often intertwined with Christian imaginary, function, to represent the regeneration of the nation. In *Women of the Night* the theme is embodied in young Kumiko, and in *Gate of Flesh* (1948) in Maya. Here, while Sen's symbolical crucifixion suggests that many female victims of war and defeat cannot be saved and will be deemed martyrs of history, the cheerful and child-like character of Maya underscores that there is hope if society looks after the youngsters and saves itself from total decadence.

Throughout the film, Maya repeatedly recalls the image of a bride in white that she saw in the nearby church and asserts her wish to marry. After the night she spends with Shintarō (sex is completely omitted in this version), he asks her to marry and promises to find a proper job to take care of her. However, the couple are unable to reunite because Shintarō is arrested by the police (emphasising the ultimate victory of justice, morality and law as prescribed by the CIE). Before he is taken away, Shintarō asks the priest to take care of Maya until his return. The priest (Occupation) serves as mediator and guide for the young couple (postwar Japan). As the love story of Maya and Shintarō implies, regeneration entails constructing new structures of justice, but also restoring some hierarchies of power shaken by war, especially marriage and patriarchal power. The young *panpan* serves as a metaphor of the complete fall into decadence of present Japan, but simultaneously as an image of hope for the future. For this purpose, the Christian imaginary of punishment, martyrdom, revelation and forgiveness serves admirably, and a subversive counterculture figure such as the independent prostitute could be effectively utilised to prescribe rather conservative politics of power and gender.

The cinematic adaptations of the 1960s, in contrast, completely reject the

theme of the future generation, and instead focus on the present struggle of the individual. As the depiction of the aged Maya in *The Call of Flesh* suggests, promises of self-realisation for women through democracy, romance, consumerism, marriage or motherhood are ineffectual. By the mid-1960s, optimism about the new Japan that was to emerge from the ashes of war and flourish under democracy as a 'phoenix-like national resurrection' had long disappeared for many. Sakaguchi's sceptical claim in 1946 that only the face of authority has changed but the underpinning system remains seems to echo here.

Tracing back the hyperimage

As with any cultural icon, the *panpan* was associated with a distinctive aesthetics: permanent wave hair style with a wide *pompadour*, pencil skirt with nylon panties and high heels, thick make-up, cigarettes and chewing gum. Rosalind Coward claims that 'women's bodies, and the messages which clothes can add, are the repository of the social definitions of sexuality' (1985: 30). Accordingly, as the phenomenon of the 'catches' or women's raids proved (see Chapter 1), fashion was a reflection of lifestyle and sexual behaviour. Objects of consumption such as lipstick or cigarettes served as evidence of the commodification of sexuality and of the interracial fraternisation.

In the first filmic adaptation of *Gate of Flesh*, the prostitutes exhibit these aesthetics with such sophistication that it is hard to believe that they are living in a burned down building. However, neither Suzuki's nor Onchi's works comply with the stereotype. Closer to the novel, in *The Call of Flesh* the *panpan* are sweaty and their hair is tousled, while Maya, for instance, wears *monpe*, the traditional Japanese

trousers popular in the war years that can be considered anything but sophisticated or erotic. In Suzuki's film, on the other hand, each prostitute is dressed all throughout the film in gaudy clothes of one single bright colour (red, green, purple, and yellow), without any apparent logic. In the 1940s, I suggest, the sophisticated star-like make-up and hairstyles of the actresses in *Gate of Flesh* and *White Beast* served to emphasise the connection of these women to westerners without confronting censorship. Hence, it reinforced the image of the West as sexually and morally decadent, and that of Japanese subjects as victims.

Despite these differences, all the film adaptations of the story—even those post-1975 not included in this study—depict the character of Machiko in kimono. According to Tamura's novel, Machiko is twenty-three years old, the eldest of the gang, and the only one who is a war widow. Whilst in Makino's film Machiko is very close to Sen, in all other versions she fails to fully integrate in the group, partly for being far more refined than the others, as she avoids their vulgar slang and always preserves the locution and voice pitch of a 'respectable lady'. When the others find out that Machiko is giving herself for free to a Japanese married man, they beat her up badly, leading to the famous titillating *rinchi* scene of the story. What interests me here is the way Machiko's embodiment of a different set of values and subjectivity is visually reinforced by her traditional Japanese attire and manners. This consistent depiction of the so-called 'women of the dark' (*yami no onna*) as distant from Japanese sartorial tradition²⁷ arguably leaves the cultural image of the

²⁷ Fallen women were in other occasions visually connected to other, non-western, foreignness. For instance, in *Mother* Mimasu Aiko (1910-1982), who plays the role of a fallen, sacrificial mother looking after younger *panpan* and accused of being their pimp, appears throughout the film in a Chinese dress. Relatedly it is worth remembering that Tamura wanted Yamaguchi Yoshiko, an actress with such an ambiguous national and racial star image, to star in *Gate of Flesh*.

‘Japanese woman’ righteous and uncontaminated.

In all versions Machiko repeatedly asserts her desire to re-marry, to become a ‘wife’, as she considers this the natural path for women to achieve fulfilment. However, by selfishly seeking sexual pleasure against social and communal norms, she is far from embodying the ideal of the submissive and chaste wife. Thus the simplistic identification of the kimono with traditional or conservative mores is deemed invalid. However, if we attempt to read Machiko as an allegory of the Japanese identity based on her distinct sartoriality, what kind of subjectivity does she embody? Is it the deep fall into total decadence that may lead to a new Japan as Sakaguchi illustrated by famously advocating that war widows should love again? As a woman who seeks marriage and, in appearance, complies with traditional protocol, does she represent a nostalgic apology for prewar patriarchy without which women are led astray, victims of their own desires? Or is it a powerful autonomous and passionate identity that does not give in either to the occupiers (choosing a Japanese lover), or to the outlaws (breaking the rules of the *panpan*), or society in general (having an affair)? All these readings are legitimate, and the violent exhibition of courage and beauty by Machiko in the beating scene underscores the affective potential of the character as a representation of the national subjectivity.

In contrast with Machiko as a tragic, but positive, figure visually identified with indigenous vitality, the other *panpan* are rendered as unconscious victims trapped in the new economies of power. According to the narrator, living through the horrors of war at such a young age has left them empty, lacking identity and guides to follow; everything comes down to pure physical survival through economies of the flesh. As Sen points out, the price of beef is forty yen, which is what they sell

their bodies for; hence, she wonders if they sell their flesh to eat, or eat flesh to sell their own (Tamura [1947] 1958: 212). Therefore, if Machiko represents a defiant variation of the national ‘wife’ archetype, the westernisation of the other *panpan* (evidenced in their looks, expressions and mores) appears as a fake and pointless decadence, a banal physical degradation that lacks the passionate spirit that may lead to new subjectivities.

Leaving aside the exception of Machiko, it is hard to disregard that the stereotypical westernised and eroticised looks of the *panpan* resemble in a fascinating way that of the prewar icon of the ‘modern girl’ or *moga* (abbreviation of *modan gāru*). Until this point I have explored on the influence of the *panpan* on later postwar popular culture; now I shall trace her back in history and examine to what extent these two archetypes enact analogous themes and allegories, codified through similar aesthetic and narrative conventions. Critical similarities impel my hypothesis. Both figures refer to the autonomous, working women that emerged mainly in big cities where they were perceived as subversive, both socially and sexually. They attracted a great deal of attention, and in public opinion they were associated both with positive features such as determination, economic autonomy and freedom, as well as with negative ones such as sexual perversion, arrogance and banality. Both figures emerged in the aftermath of catastrophic events, namely the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923 and the end of the Second World War. In both cases physical devastation resulted in reconstruction the urban space, modernisation of the city and further incorporation of foreign influences. They emerged in tumultuous historical times of change that were extremely important also for women’s movements. Finally, the modern girl and the *panpan* are not only symptomatic of their era, but can be considered two of the most effective reifications of vernacular modernisation

through gender constructions of Japanese history.

As in the case of the *panpan*, the popular culture of the 1920-1930s reflected a fascination with the modern girl (Silverberg 1991; Wada-Marciano 2008; Mackie 2013). In her study of the *moga*, Miriam Silverberg analyses the many discourses attempting to define and confine this rising female model in the 1920s, and identifies the main features of her image as depicted in the media (regardless the actual veracity of such features). Following Silverberg's work, I will discuss the applicability of these characteristics and their ideological significance to the hyperimage of the *panpan*. One of the most outstanding features is that the *moga* is constantly defined by her body and looks: western fashion, short hairstyle and 'long straight legs' (Silverberg 1991: 242)—a comment that proves the extent to which essentialist discourses of 'Otherness' were applied to these women. The daring appearance of the modern girl was conspicuously associated with promiscuity and indiscretion (Silverberg 1991: 243). Coetaneous journalist and critic Kiyosawa Kiyoshi underlined how public opinion tended to associate her westernised fashion with the rejection of the normative sexual morality prescribed for Japanese women ([1926] 1981: 147). I would go further and suggest that the looks of the modern girls and the places they frequented (such as cafés and dancehalls) coincided with those commonly connected to the unlicensed prostitutes of the time (see Chapter 1). Thus, it is not surprising that several films depicting the *moga*, such as *Woman of Tokyo* (*Tōkyō no onna*, Ozu Yasujirō, 1933) and *Osaka Elegy* (*Naniwa ereji*, Mizoguchi Kenji, 1936), hint at prostitution-like relationships. This ambivalent connection cannot be equated with the *panpan*, who in fact made a living of selling sex in the open; however, the ways in which sartoriality, westernisation and sexuality are connected through these two figures is very similar.

According to Silverberg's findings, what seemed to upset most of those who criticised the modern girl was that her disgraceful behaviour was staged in the public space (1991: 246). She exhibited her transgression by driving, shopping, and playing sports and by being in the cinema, the café, the theatre, the department store, the dancehall, and the ocean liner (Mackie 2013: 71). While the *panpan* are usually more restricted to alleyways, black markets and demolished buildings, in both cases the stress is placed on the disruption of the urbanscape, where divisions and hierarchies of labour, gender and class are symbolically materialised. What enabled these women of different historical periods to do so was undoubtedly their autonomy, both financial and sexual: promiscuity made them independent from the predominant gendered power economies. Thus, both are presented as a sexual 'Other' who threatens the hegemony, which is built around the normative male subject and everything he represents.

Despite common presumptions in the media about the *moga* belonging to the bourgeois, Silverberg points out that the development of consumer capitalism enabled lower and middle-class women to afford stylish *moga* clothes (1991: 150). As in the case of the *panpan*, where their diversified social background was disavowed, the assumption of belonging to a determined social background suggests a strategy not only to confine these women into a coherent, manageable stereotype but also to attempt to justify their subversive behaviour based on social determinism: affluent decadence in the case of the modern girl, and lack of means and education in the case of the *panpan*. Moreover, identifying the *moga* with a wealthy social class also served in the media to trivialise her as an apolitical, passive consumer although feminist readings have illuminated her significance as a working woman, a political subject and a producer of culture (Silverberg 1991; Wada-Marciano 2008). As an

outcast and illegal worker, it is hard to apply such terms to the *panpan*, but she surely made an impact on conceptions of gender, sexuality, and morality in the public and private spheres. Moreover, through comics such as *Babysan* (Hume 1953—see Figure 2.6) and *More S'koshi Ah So* (Gluck 1954) that targeted American audiences (particularly servicemen), and through the international distribution of films such as *Women of the Night* and Suzuki's *Gate of Flesh*, the representation of the *panpan* also reached international audiences, contributing to the articulation of images of Japanese national identity and gender for foreign audiences.

In her analysis of the modern girl in prewar films, Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano notes that the use of a dichotomy between *moga* and traditional Japanese woman was particularly common in melodramas produced by the Shōchiku Studios (2008: 88). In one such film, *Woman of Tokyo*, the heroine (Okada Yoshiko, 1902-1992) supports her brother by working as a typist during the day and a barmaid at night (most probably prostituting herself). Her double life is visually emphasised by sartoriality; namely, traditional kimono and *moga*'s fashion. When her brother (Egawa Ureo, 1902-1970) discovers her night job, he violently confronts her and, ashamed and unable to understand his sister's sacrifice, commits suicide. Based on this example, Wada-Marciano argues that the modern girl is punished for her unrestrained social/sexual behaviour, and consequently the viewers are warned against rejecting the safe position of traditional normative femininity. Considering that I have also identified a similar 'warning' function in the *panpan* and the recurrence of the *madonna-whore* dichotomy noted by scholars in the representation of prostitutes in Japan and elsewhere (see Introduction), I suggest that this binary opposition occurs with significant variations in *panpan* films.

In *Women of the Night*, which depicts Fusako's fall from the traditional chaste war widow and mother into a self-destructive *panpan*, she begins the film dressed in kimono while she works as a secretary. However, from the moment she becomes a *panpan*, she adopts the stereotypical westernised looks and never dresses in kimono again. Although this portrayal of the dichotomy within one character resembles Ozu's *Woman of Tokyo*, in the case of *Women of the Night*, and following Mizoguchi's common rhetoric, there is no positive female model, since both the traditional woman and the *panpan* are deemed hopeless and all women are presented as victims of war, society, and men. The dichotomy appears again in 1948's *Gate of Flesh* when Sen meets in the streets an old friend who has become a policewoman. Trying to convince Sen to quit prostitution, she claims that they are both the same but have chosen different paths to achieve independence as women. This character, which only appears in this adaptation, does not comply with the traditional femininity of the mother/housewife, but rather represents an alternative modern and democratic female model in accordance with the publicity of SCAP gender reforms. The relationship between these two characters, tinged with sexual ambiguity, could provide an interesting dichotomy of female identities, but unfortunately, the policewoman remains an undeveloped secondary character.

Similarly, in *White Beast* there is an intriguing character opposition between the heroine Yukawa Keiko (Miura Mitsuko, 1917-1969), and the female doctor of the rehabilitation centre Nakahara (Iino Kimiko, ??-??), which suggests a veiled homosexual theme. Here, the contrast between the lifestyles and morals of these two women are effectively highlighted by shared features: both are tall and slim with upright postures and strong shoulders that denote determination; they come from affluent families and have received higher education; they are single, economically

self-sufficient and outspoken; and they both smoke and often appeared dressed up in either sophisticated female clothes or discreet male fashion. The camera work, however, differentiates each woman, influencing the way the audience approaches them. When we are introduced to Keiko, it is through a close-up of her high-heeled shoes, and then the camera slowly tilts up her stylish clothes while tracking out until it frames the whole figure of Keiko. Quite differently, Dr Nakahara is introduced through a medium-long shot of her opening a door and walking towards the camera while she talks to the male director of the centre, Izumi (Yamamura Sō, 1910-2000). Hence, Keiko is presented as a static object for the camera to observe whereas Dr Nakahara is a dynamic subject in action who commands her relationship to the camera.

Dr Nakahara and Izumi develop a romantic relationship that remains platonic. Their love is presented as pure and strong in contrast with the shallow carnal pleasure that prostitutes seek, and as a consequence of which they are deemed unhappy, rejected, sick, or abused. Even more than in Makino's *Gate of Flesh*, Naruse's film praises the new democratic woman who works outside the household, who is economically autonomous and speaks her opinions without reservation, engages with men in absolute equalitarian terms, but who also adheres to a restrained sexual morality; since chastity is emphasised over heterosexual romance. Both films make apparent SCAP's guidelines for the cinema industry: they praise a female model grounded on democratic and western standards of virtue through the embodiment of authorities of medicine, law and education. In contraposition, both the 'good wife, wise mother' and the prostitute are deemed obsolete conceptions of femininity intrinsically connected to 'feudalistic' gender inequalities.

The *panpan*/traditional woman opposition is once more reproduced, or rather parodied, in *The Call of Flesh*. As mentioned earlier, in the 1960s Sen has become the madam of a water trade club, while Maya is married to a quiet man who avoids confronting his wife's past. Maya, wearing barely any makeup, appears dressed in a kimono and a traditional Japanese hairstyle that makes her look much older than Sen, who wears sophisticated, and provocative western clothes and ostentatious makeup. While Maya feels jaded and frustrated, trapped in normative femininity, Sen, on the other hand, longs for Maya's conventional lifestyle and stable heterosexual relationship and despises her own affluent lifestyle built upon the commodification of her body. Hence, not completely unlike *Women of the Night*, the film rather highlights the difficulties women face in order to escape being determined by the use they make of their sexuality, as implied by the original title of the film.

According to Wada-Marciano, the *moga* functioned 'to give corporeal form to an invisible, unacknowledged Japanese anxiety' brought by modernity and westernisation (2008: 87-8). Whereas the modern girl can be said to embody what Wada-Marciano describes as 'the unseen but sensed transformation of Japanese identity within material and cultural flows of 1920s Japanese modernity' (2008: 88), the *panpan*, evermore flagrantly and subversively promiscuous and indiscreet, embodies the violent transformation of all realms of Japanese society in the aftermath of the defeat. Both figures functioned as a reflexive site of the anxiety for some, hope for others and confusion for all, that the encounter with the West and the search for modernisation aroused in Japanese popular culture. Wada-Marciano argues that

the modern girl was used to symbolize the assimilation of Westernness and the Japanese mastery over the encounter. Whether she was used as an

affirmation or a mockery of the Japanese embrace of the West, the image always served to refigure and re-establish Japanese national identity; in either case, the external depiction of Westernness in the modern girl's materiality left the modern subject seemingly intact and safe from the profound interior transformations of the encounter.

(2008: 87)

Similarly, Silverberg has pointed out that disavowing the political role of the modern girl while condemning her libertine behaviour were discourses used by many critics 'who wanted to preserve rather than challenge traditions during a time of sweeping cultural change.' (1991: 263-4). In comparison, the *panpan* is a much more tragic embodiment of the intrusion of the West. *Women of the Night* serves to support the victim complex by presenting women, ruining their lives and facing the burden of an irrevocable stigma as a consequence of defeat and occupation. In the narratives of *Gate of Flesh*, the westernisation of Japan is presented as ruinous decadence, as an oppressive capitalism in which the soul and the flesh are transformed into marketable products, while the character of Machiko portrays the 'Japanese mastery over the encounter'. On the other hand, in the Occupation films, the presence of a positive female model associated with the democratisation enabled by SCAP betrays the *panpan* as a misunderstood westernisation. Yet, when the genre re-emerges after the Occupation, she becomes a radical heroine of anti-American discourses.

If one considers these three historical eras, that is, the time of the *moga* and the *ero-guro culture*, the early postwar period of the *panpan* subgenre, and its revival in the 1960s the link between exploitation and politics becomes unavoidable. This transgressive aesthetic overlaps with years of socioeconomic and political convulsion. In the case of the first postwar *panpan* films, the boom curiously fades away with the relative consolidation of the Occupation regime and Japanese conservatism, the reinvigoration of the 'reverse course' and the outbreak of the

Korean War. Economic and political stability led to more stable and subtle control of popular culture; and consequently, the display and commodification of the female body, as it continued through the sex industry and the beauty contests, was normalised within double-standards of morality and gender equality, and classified through different spaces of the city such as the red-light district. The heterotopia of the brothel will be the setting of the following chapter, where themes here discussed emerge with significant variations.

Drawing on the relation between commodification and socio-political unrest, this chapter has demonstrated that the depiction of the *panpan* is partly shaped by the anxiety felt by masculinity in crisis, in accordance with other scholarship on women's representation (Cornyetz 1999; Hori 2002; Slaymaker 2004; Wada-Marciano 2009; Saitō 2014). Expanding on their work, I would underscore that in these three historical periods, the normative male national subject must adapt himself to drastic changes, often connected to international dynamics of conflict. The improvement of the whole nation relies on the reconfiguration of the identity of the national subject, defined by a set of desirable aspirations and values: whether to become more nationalistic and military powerful, more democratic and international, or more productive and wealthy. Social and personal aspirations were expected to be subservient to these national goals. The anxieties resulting from such pressure were addressed spontaneously by the popular culture, while partially monitored by the structures of power and censorship. This chapter has additionally explored how these works appealed to diverse audiences and spoke of other discourses, such as the new postwar generation, gender politics, and female communities.

In asking himself why certain stories or characters appear over and over

again in fiction, Leo Braudy concludes that the remake is concerned with the

mediation on the continuing historical relevance (economic, cultural, psychological) of a particular narrative. A remake is thus always concerned with what its makers and (they hope) its audiences consider to be unfinished business, unrefinable and perhaps finally unassimilable material that remains part of the cultural dialogue—not until it is finally given definitive form, but until it is no longer compelling or interesting.

(1998: 331)

Reconsidering the definition of hyperimage, it can be concluded that the *panpan* served as a projection of the troubled identity of the national subject and the nation itself, both understood as gendered constructs. Her image is built upon several myths, such as that of the fallen woman, of modernity and of Japaneseness, and fed on aesthetic and narrative patterns of previous female archetypes that had proven effective in popular culture. Her existence moreover served as a site on which to reflect not only the experience of war and western influence, but also issues of justice and responsibility, and the relation between the individual and society. The *panpan*, born under the Occupation, is repeatedly replicated, referred to and revisited to continue negotiating and problematising issues that, just as the *panpan* herself, evoke unfinished business that re-emerge in times of crisis. Her presence in recent films and adaptations, such as *Gate of Flesh* (2008) and *Zero Focus* (*Zero no shōten*, Inudō Isshin, 2009), suggests the on-going currency of her allegorical appeal.

Chapter 3

The Melodramatic Prostitute: Dissonance in Popular Culture

In the early postwar years melodrama was one of the most popular film genres in Japan, partly because the acclaimed ‘masters of Japanese classical cinema’, such as Mizoguchi Kenji (1898-1956), Ozu Yasujiro (1903-1963) and Naruse Mikio (1905-1969), were devoted to this genre. In the 1950s the production of feature films, under the vertically integrated and hierarchic structure of the studio system, rapidly increased over the prewar average of 500 features per year (Anderson and Richie 1982: 455).¹ This growth coincided with what is commonly considered the second ‘golden age’ of Japanese cinema and the heyday of melodrama.

On 18 March 1956, scarcely two months before the Prostitution Prevention Law was passed, Daiei Studio released *Street of Shame* (*Akasen chitai*), which became the last film directed by Mizoguchi Kenji.² Set in the winter of 1955-1956, as the ban on prostitution was being debated in the Diet, the story unfolds in a brothel in Yoshiwara, historically one of the most iconic pleasure districts of Japan. Due to its timely subject, but also to Mizoguchi’s popularity and the dazzling all-star cast, *Street of Shame* became ‘Daiei’s biggest hit of 1956’ (Minaguchi 2004: 125). As I will explore in subsequent pages, the film attracted a great deal of attention from

¹ Film attendance escalated and reached its pinnacle in 1958 at 1,127 million people; feature production and the number of theatres peaked in 1960 with 547 films per year and 7,457 theatres respectively (Anderson and Richie 1982: 455).

² Mizoguchi died of leukaemia on 24 August 1956.

the media and stood at number fifteen in *Kinema junpō*'s ranking of the year, but it also received very negative reviews in the most prestigious film journals, which deemed the work sensationalist and simplistic. Beyond Japan's borders, *Street of Shame* was screened at the Venice International Film Festival in 1956³ and later released in several countries; today, it remains one of the most popular and accessible films of Mizoguchi for foreign audiences.⁴ In the international arena, many critics and filmmakers, such as Jean Douchet (1929-) and François R. Truffaut (1932-1984), hailed the film as one of Mizoguchi's best works, and some regarded it as a masterpiece of world cinema (Le Fanu 2005: 85). In 1959, in a discussion of the depiction of the sex and entertainment industries in Japanese film, Joseph L. Anderson and Donald Richie stated that *Street of Shame* was '[p]robably the best of all these films examining the problems of women in postwar Japan' (1982: 295-296).⁵

Because of its cultural and commercial visibility across time and borders, the film's representation of prostitutes deserves an in-depth examination for its potential impact on public opinion and on the popular imaginary. In the vast number of paratexts the film has generated, there is an intriguing disconnect between domestic and foreign evaluations of *Street of Shame*, which reveals it to be a much more contested work than might be expected. Moreover, Anderson and Richie's statement indicates that Mizoguchi's last work was widely discussed in regards to the veracity of its representation. More than for any other film in this study, the paratexts of

³ The film was nominated for the Golden Lion, and Mizoguchi was granted a Special Mention.

⁴ In addition to its release on VHS and DVD, the film is available on YouTube with English, Spanish, French and Portuguese subtitles. In less than two years since it was uploaded it received over 21,400 views, at 16 February 2016 (YouTube 2014). Due to a copyright claim by Kadokawa Corporation, this link was removed in 2017, but several others were soon uploaded.

⁵ Anderson and Richie's definitive work on Japanese Cinema was originally written in 1959. A reprint and expanded edition came out in 1982.

Street of Shame concentrate on whether its depiction of prostitution is accurate, appropriate, and objective; and they sometimes include judgements about the social problem of prostitution and its regulation. Reviews of other films analysed in this project tend to strictly focus on the appraisal of the artistic and narrative qualities of the work. Only occasionally do they provide explicit information about how prostitution was perceived in public opinion and how audiences reacted to its representation (albeit they have proved extremely useful in illuminating the gender politics of the industry and society as a whole). *Street of Shame* is, therefore, a remarkable exception that not only sheds light on the on-going debates, but actively participates in them.

Focusing on Mizoguchi's film as its primary case study, this chapter examines social melodramas that were frequently categorised as 'prostitution films' (*baishun-mono* or *fūzoku eiga*)⁶ in journals of the time (e.g. *KJ* 1956 Late Apr: 83; 1956 Late June: 78; Fukuda 1956: 32). Previous and subsequent films will be brought into this account in order to clarify whether or not there are consistent patterns of representation throughout the years. The greatly diverse category of 'prostitution films' includes films such as *A Wildcat's Daughter* (*Yamaneko reijō*, Mori Kazuo, 1948), *Red-light Bases* (*Akasen kichi*, Taniguchi Senkichi, 1953), *Ditch* (*Dobu*, Shindō Kaneto, 1954),⁷ *Black River* (*Kuroi kawa*, Kobayashi Masaki, 1957), and *A House in the Quarter* (*Gobanchō yūgirirō*, Tasaka Tomotaka, 1963). The aim of this chapter is threefold: first, to clarify the ways in which *Street of Shame* makes use of the resources (human, technical, narrative and commercial) of the studio

⁶ *Baishun* and *baishō* (also used to refer to this subgenre) mean prostitution; literally 'selling spring' and 'selling laughter', respectively. *Fūzoku*, on the other hand, means 'public morals' but came to signify the sex industry after the establishment of the 1948 Businesses Affecting Public Morals Regulation Law discussed in Chapter 1.

⁷ aka *The Gutter*.

system at its highest splendour in order to represent the prostitute; second, to explore how and to what extent the film participated in the debates on the sex trade; and finally, to reflect upon the reasons for and repercussions of the disparity perceived inside and outside Japan regarding the intentions and functions of the film.

In his seminal work *The Melodramatic Imagination* ([1976] 1995), Peter Brook argues that melodrama, as a compound of narrative and aesthetic conventions, negotiates the anxiety caused by the vanishing of traditional guidelines, or what Brooks calls the ‘traditional sacred’. Based on his work, scholars have expanded on the ways in which melodrama functions as a means of making sense of the experience of modernity (Elsaesser 1987; Dissanayake ed. 1993; Singer 2001; McHugh and Abelmann eds. 2005; Ito 2008; Wada-Marciano 2009). Thomas Elsaesser, for instance, notes that the popularity of melodrama seems to coincide with periods of intense social and ideological crisis (1987: 45). Likewise, Nancy Abelmann argues that ‘a melodramatic sensibility has been pervasive [...] in many moments and locales of rapid social transformation’ because melodramatic texts ‘dramatize issues central to the rapidly changing society, and because they draw their audiences into dialogue’ (2005: 46). Additionally, in discussing the particular case of postwar Japan, Yoshimoto Mitsuhiro underscores that melodrama ‘articulates the conflict between the old and new social structures and modes of production’ (1993: 106). I argue that, as a paradigm of the social understanding of melodrama, *Street of Shame* manifests the dissonance Japan was experiencing and serves as a platform for identification and dialogue for the spectators at a time when the accelerated changes in economy and society seemed to assert that ‘the postwar was over’.

I have indicated in Chapter 1 that in 1956, Japan stood at the threshold of a

new era, foreshadowed by its admission into the United Nations and its economic recovery from war, as indicated by its GDP. Against this backdrop, the process of criminalising prostitution reflected Japan's attempt to consolidate its position as a modern and sovereign nation. For this purpose, it seemed strategically indispensable to bring Japanese official discourse on sexual mores in line with western Christian-based conceptions. Although this process had already started more than a decade before, the radical reforms of the Occupation era, and particularly those affecting gender, had accomplished only a fragmented implementation that complicated familial and social interactions as the new and the old structures conflicted. This confusion and uncertainty fuelled the rise of heated debates about the role and position of women. However, as the aggressive financial policies implemented by Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru (1878-1967)⁸ had widened the socio-economic divide (Fujime 1997a: 381-2), the alternatives that arose from the 'housewife debate', in fact, constituted real options only for a minority of women in Japan (see Chapter 2). Building upon the scholarship on melodrama, I suggest that the prostitution films were particularly effective in expressing the anxiety caused by the difficulty in making use of the arguments, narratives and myths that had hitherto governed social mores and hence provided reassurance, while new functional structures were yet to be fully established.

For her children's sake; for money's sake

The story of *Street of Shame* unfolds in a brothel called Dreamland (*Yume no sato*), where we witness the daily life of five prostitutes and gradually discover their

⁸ Yoshida served as prime minister from 22 May 1946 until 24 May 1947, and then again from 15 October 1948 to 10 December 1954.

background, motives and hopes. Two of them, Hanae (Kogure Michiyo, 1918-1990) and Yumeko (Mimasu Aiko, 1910-1982), are mothers who prostitute themselves to sustain their families. The other three appear not to have any close relationship with relatives. These two categories of characterisation, that is, women as circumscribed by family relations and women as independent individuals, serve as the first site to explore the dissonance dramatised in Mizoguchi's film.

Building on a fruitful tradition in Japanese melodrama, Hanae and Yumeko are essentially defined by their condition as mothers. As they repeatedly declare, their children are literally the only reason why they keep living, and hence it is for their sake that they justify prostitution as an upright profession. The cinematic representation of motherhood cannot be discussed without addressing the *hahamono* or 'mother genre', even more so because Mimasu Aiko (playing Yumeko) was its iconic star par excellence.⁹ Generally speaking, *hahamono* refers to melodramas portraying a mother giving herself to her children, and this subgenre had been popular since the prewar era. According to Itakura Fumiaki, however, in a strict sense this label refers to a group of early postwar 'tear-jerker' melodramas, produced mainly by Daiei Studio (also the producer of *Street of Shame*), which became extremely popular especially between 1949 and 1955, particularly among female and rural audiences (2007: 104). In her fascinating analysis of the *hahamono*, Kamiya Makiko (2014) demonstrates through the analysis of promotional materials that the first two works of that series were in fact advertised as *panpan* films. Released the same year as *Gate of Flesh* (*Nikutai no mon*, Makino Masahiro and Ozaki Masafusa, 1948), both films present Mimasu as a single mother entangled in prostitution in

⁹ Amongst Mimasu's *hahamono* films one could mention *Mother* (*Haha*, 1948), *Three Mothers* (*Haha sannin*, 1949), and *Eyes of a Mother* (*Haha no hitomi*, 1953); all three directed by Koishi Eiichi (1904-1982).

order to provide for her daughter (played in both cases by Sanjō Miki [1928-2015]).¹⁰ According to Kamiya, pressure from the CIE led Daiei to shift the mother figure from the urban sex industries to a rural setting and away from transgressive sexual behaviour in order to continue its successful series with Mimasu (2014: 67-9). Therefore, in the early postwar period, prostitution was often depicted as the ultimate sacrifice of a mother for her children, as we saw also in the case of *A Hen in the Wind* (*Kaze no naka no mendori*, Ozu Yasujirō, 1948) and *Women of the Night* (*Yoru no onnatachi*, Mizoguchi Kenji, 1948) in Chapters 1 and 2.

At first sight, Yumeko and Hanae appear to parallel the classical heroine of the *hahamono*, who, according to Itakura, represents an idealised image of motherhood and femininity who sacrifices her personal and professional life to give her children the socio-economic status she could never achieve herself (2007: 119). While Itakura provides a comprehensive historical analysis of the subgenre against the backdrop of the studio system, it is Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano (2009) who enquires into the political significance of the representation of motherhood to understand why this narrative was so successful at the time. She argues that the mother figure played a crucial role in endorsing the ‘national narrative’ that constructed Japanese citizens as victims of the militarist imperialism that had led to war. This construct had achieved great prominence across the political spectrum and became commonly referred to as ‘victim consciousness’ (*higaisha ishiki*) (Dower 1999; Orr 2001; Standish 2005; Wada-Marciano 2009).

For her discussion of mid-1950s melodrama, Wada-Marciano draws on

¹⁰ The two films Kamiya refers to are *Mother* and *A Wildcat's Daughter*. In the former, Mimasu plays the madam of a little bar and serves as the guardian of a group of young *panpan*. Although not anymore in the business, it is implied that she was a prostitute in the past. In *A Wildcat's Daughter*, she is a low rank geisha/prostitute in Kyoto.

Yoshimoto Mitsuhiro's (1993) conceptions of the modern subject and the lacking or negative subject to assert that the mother figure epitomises the latter. Yoshimoto defines the negative subject as one who is acted upon, and through which the Japanese have created the delusion of 'being innocent victims of evil doings by others' who remain unidentified (1993: 108). Based on this, Wada-Marciano argues that the mother is portrayed as a negative subject who lacks agency and hence responsibility, but must nevertheless suffer the consequences of war and defeat (2009: 25-6). In the previous chapter, we saw a similar articulation of the victim consciousness through the figure of the *panpan*, and likewise, Hanae and Yumeko inscribe themselves in this trend by explicitly claiming that after the war, they had no other option than prostitution.

In the early Daiei's *hahamono*, the husband is always absent, whether missing, dead, or is completely unreliable. In accordance with this pattern, Yumeko is a war widow and Hanae's husband is sick and unable to work; thus, their condition is aggravated by the lack of a functional male to support them. Identifying this feature in other melodramas of the time, Wada-Marciano argues that this absence is intended to avoid characters who, through their power or their masculinity, could be read as accomplices in war and hence hinder the victim discourse (2009: 25). Taking into account that Mizoguchi's filmography in general tends to portray men in a negative way to further glorify the image of the suffering woman, this chapter will consider how, in the specific case of *Street of Shame*, this relates to the victimisation narrative in terms of war and prostitution.

Minaguchi Kiseko points out that another essential convention of the *hahamono* is to reach a happy ending in which, after tragic misunderstandings and

struggles, the mother's sacrifice is finally acknowledged and the lost bond with her children recovered (2004: 112). It is here, however, that Mizoguchi's film greatly differs: both Yumeko and Hanae are despised and rejected by those they love the most. Let us focus for now on Yumeko's story. The eldest prostitute in the brothel, Yumeko longs for the day she will quit prostitution and live with her son, Shūichi (Irie Yōsuke, ??-??), to whom she has been sending her earnings for years. However, Shūichi is deeply ashamed of her lifestyle and has no intention of taking care of her. Realising the breach that separates her from her son, the only way out for Yumeko is madness. Raving in delusion, Yumeko starts singing the popular song of the war years, 'Manchurian Girl' (*Manshū musume*),¹¹ reliving the memories of the time she lived in Manchuria with her husband and son. Already in several prior episodes in the film, she has recalled with great nostalgia those years. In wartime Manchuria, Yumeko embodied the normative subject in that she was fully integrated in the power structures of gender, class, and nation; but that stability provided by the family-state (*kazoku kokka*) vanished with the end of the war.

Yumeko's seeming apology for the Japanese empire would be very problematic if placed in the mouth of a male strong character; but as Wada-Marciano notes, it is because the mother is constructed in melodrama as a character driven by emotions and distant from ideological or even rational discourses, that she is allowed to express suffering and memories of the past with greater freedom than subjects perceived as personifying agency (2009: 25-6). The emphasis on feelings, especially

¹¹ Performed by the popular singer Hattori Tomiko (1917-1981), it became a hit song in 1938. Suzuki Tetsuo (1903-1977) composed the song with lyrics by Ishimatsu Akiji (1907-1945), who lived in Manchuria. Whilst not conveying an explicit political message, 'Manchurian Girl' must be inscribed within the nationalist discourse of a pan-Asian brotherhood peacefully led by prosperous Japan that was becoming increasingly popular in the empire. These ideas would be consolidated in 1940 through the concept of the 'Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere' (*Dai tōa kyōeiken*).

on the fundamental love of a mother for a son, makes the narrative appear depoliticised, and thus, allows without criticism a discourse that disavows Japan's problematic past. Wada-Marciano refers to this melodramatic articulation of the past through the citizen-as-victim as the 'disguising mode of narrative', and contends that it allowed the postwar 'progressive' nationalism to linger without overtly rejecting or explicitly assuming, the responsibility of the Japanese population in war (2009: 20-1). As she explains, the disguising mode 'made possible the expression of the past as a "national narrative," a past that could not be expressed otherwise, given Japan's efforts to repair political and economic relations with other countries' (Wada-Marciano 2009: 21). Drawing on female sexuality (and the alleged binary opposition between mother and prostitute), Yumeko's character offers an even more problematic—and effective—example of the disguising mode, because she expresses not only victimisation, but also nostalgia for the imperialistic past of domination and exploitation.

In her examination of the mother figure, Wada-Marciano discusses *A Japanese Tragedy* (*Nihon no higeki*, Kinoshita Keisuke, 1953), whose heroine Haruko (played by Mochizuki Yūko [1917-1977]) remarkably resembles Yumeko. Both are middle-age war widows of a rural background, who share plain features and earnest natures. Haruko works as a maid (*jokyū*) in several places where prostitution-type relationships are hinted at. Through her sacrifice she has given her two children an education, but they despise her immoral livelihood, and feel that she has neglected them. When Haruko realises that her children have abandoned her, she commits suicide. The unexpected scene showing Haruko in a long shot jumping onto the rails of the train is particularly powerful for its complete negation of melodrama's conventions of sentimentality and hyperemotionalism. Wada-Marciano

argues that this ending expresses ‘the dissonance between collectivism and individualism, through the intergenerational conflict between the mother and her children’ (2009: 28). As elaborated in the first chapter, the Occupation reforms had abolished the *ie* system and consequently rejected the conception of the family as an almost ‘sacred’ social unit. This meant that the honour and duty associated with parents’ sacrifice and filial piety were replaced by a consciousness focused on the individual, and according to which, children could now repudiate their parents.

Moreover, deviance from sexual mores whatever the circumstances was increasingly condemned, as illustrated in the journal *Fujin kōron*, where articles justifying prostitution dramatically decreased from the early 1950s onwards. Therefore, I would argue that in addition to the generation gap created by the conflict of collectivism and individualism, changes in the understanding of morality further dramatised the figure of the mother-prostitute. Under the redefined ‘morality’, Yumeko and Haruko’s sacrifices are no longer honourable, but shameful. Their children, having been indoctrinated in the postwar ideologies through the education and employment systems, were undoubtedly benefiting from the economic prosperity (chiefly achieved through other wars in Asia). They represent the new generation that in reaching adulthood was losing interest in the victimisation discourse because they could not be held accountable for the past. For them, the implications of defeat and occupation combined relief with disavowal and resentment towards the previous generation. Thus, in the prosperous mid-1950s the children despised their mother’s immoral sacrifice, just like the nation turned its back on the women who physically and sexually had supported its development for decades as ‘invisible pillars’.

Similar to the case of Haruko, Yumeko's tragic fate runs against the grain of the conventions of the 'mother genre'. So great was the dissonance that Itakura argues that Mimasu's role as Yumeko triggered the collapse of her star image of the idealised mother, and consequently the decline of the *hahamono* genre (2007: 131).¹² Considering that Mimasu had spent approximately eight years starring almost exclusively in 'mother films', it is legitimate to infer that audiences strongly associated her persona with this genre and, consequently, that they would have felt misled (perhaps betrayed) by her casting in *Street of Shame*. However, Minaguchi argues that this was a deliberate decision of the Daiei Studio to end a genre that was already losing popularity (2004:110). This hypothesis seems also plausible taking into account that soon after this casting, Mimasu left Daiei and signed a contract with the Tōhō Studio, where a new star image was to be constructed. Moving away from trends in the industry and looking at the broader cultural context, Wada-Marciano argues that the decline of the *hahamono* corresponds to the changing socio-economic milieu of the mid-1950s: 'the mother subject of the "national narrative" was no longer necessary due to the ascendant economy at the end of the postwar era' (2009: 22). In this light, Hanae and particularly Yumeko, can be read as anachronistic reminiscences of the narrative of victimisation of the early postwar years; but as such, they fail to receive acknowledgement. Their embodiment of prewar ideals and values renders them victims of war and of the new Japan simultaneously. Thus, they represent a ruined generation that can neither adapt to the new moral and social economies nor be forgiven for their behaviour.

Years later, Imamura Shōhei would cunningly reject the myths of motherhood

¹² Regarding the decay of Mimasu's star image of idealised motherhood, Itakura additionally mentions her role in *Kisses* (*Kuchizuke*, Masumura Yasuzō, 1957), where the self-sacrificing mother is substituted by an independent and divorced mother who is a successful businesswoman.

and victimhood in his anti-melodrama *Insect Woman* (*Nippon konchūki*, 1963). In depicting the mother-prostitute, Imamura emphasises the continuity of exploitation and survival in the economies of power, calling into question the conception of a postwar Japan emerging as a completely new entity opposed to the prewar empire. Bill Mihalopoulos claims that through the theme of prostitution, the film explores the ‘tragic ambiguity of modernization’, as we follow the heroine’s transformation from a country girl involved in family and community relations to a cold-blooded madam who exploits other prostitutes (2008: 277). In stark contrast to the *hahamono* films, Tome (Hidari Sachiko, 1930-2001) is not exclusively, not even mainly, defined by her condition as mother. Rather, she is depicted as an individual who holds personal desires and ambitions independent from her daughter; as someone who engages in complex relations of love, friendship and business with other characters; and as a woman who experiments with and enjoys her sexuality.

In the opening scene of this film we observe an insect in extreme close-up shots obstinately struggling to climb a mound of earth, unaware of the immensity of the world that surrounds it, just as the insect is insignificant for the rest of the world. This composition is mirrored in the final scene, but this time it is Tome, now abandoned by her lover and co-workers, who strains to climb a hill. The parallelism is further underscored by the same background folkloric music playing in both scenes. Faced with these images, the original title of the film—*Records of Japanese Entomology*—seems to invite us to witness the life of Tome without any emotional investment or moral judgement. Like the insect, she is indifferent to all the crucial events that shaped the twentieth century history of Japan, and conversely her life passes unnoticed by the majority of society. Whilst episodes that mark her life coincide with extremely relevant historical moments, such as the emperor’s

capitulation at the end of the war or the student Anpo riots of the late 1950s, Tome is not presented as a product of history, and hence not as a victim. In opposition to the cases of Yumeko and other suffering mothers of previous melodramas, Tome's sacrifice is not glorified, not even overtly acknowledged; but neither is she rejected by her daughter, Nobuko (Yoshimura Jitsuko, 1943-), for her immoral behaviour. Nobuko, in fact, becomes the mistress of her mother's patron in exchange for money, only to then deceive him to establish an agricultural cooperative together with other youngsters in the countryside. Both are fighters, pragmatic survivors, and as the ending scene suggests, Tome will continue her relentless struggle for survival adapting to the present conditions, whatever they might be.

Returning to *Street of Shame*, if Hanae and Yumeko represent the prewar centrality of the family and the sacrifice of its members, the other three prostitutes of Dreamland, who are not mothers, can be said to represent the post-Occupation subjectivity. These women are Yorie (Machida Hiroko, 1924-), an ignorant and naïve woman coming from the countryside who seeks a 'comfortable' life style; Yasumi (Wakao Ayako, 1933-), the ambitious and smart exploiter; and Mickey¹³ (Kyō Machiko 1924-), the reckless Americanised woman who squanders her salary. In opposition to the mother characters caught in prostitution for the sake of their children, they are presented as having 'freely' chosen to work in a brothel among other available occupations. On the one hand, their desire for financial and social autonomy can be read as a positive, albeit radical, reference to the mentality focused on the individual that was prescribed by the 1947 Constitution and the advancement of consumer capitalism in the 1950s. They seek independence from the patriarchal

¹³ This is the common English transliteration of the name of the character, which in Japanese would be pronounced as *Mikkii*.

institutions of marriage and family, and their stories serve as harsh criticism of these social structures.

Yorie wishes to marry in order to quit prostitution, but when she finally leaves Yoshiwara, the longed-for married life turns out to be one of poverty, hard labour and complete lack of independence. Exhausted and full of disappointment, Yorie soon returns to the brothel where she declares that at least she earns a salary she can spend on herself and enjoy some commodities, such as kimonos, make-up and nice food. Bereft of all romanticism, the depiction of marriage as a social contract for female unpaid labour runs against the discourse of the anti-prostitution movements that advocated marriage as the best way to save these women and re-integrate them in society (Fujime 1997a: 101-102, 331-335). Yorie's story hints at the failure of many of these movements (mainly composed by upper-class women) to address the impact of social class on gender dynamics. Nevertheless, as proven by the roundtable of Tanaka Kinuyo with amateur film critics discussed in Chapter 2, many social parties would continue to uncritically advocate the benefits of marriage for these women in years to come.

On the other hand, however, the search for independence of the three women seems derogated by their economic ambition. This attitude, which can be linked to the rampant development of consumer capitalism of the time, conforms to the increasing public discourses that rendered prostitutes idle and covetous, as alluded to in Chapter 1, and hence reveals a concealed moral condemnation of their behaviour. At the end of the film, Yorie and Mickey remain in the brothel, unsatisfied, but without any prospects of a different life. Under the allure of independence and economic comfort, their lifestyle is presented as dangerous and self-destructive,

leading ultimately to a dead-end existence. In this way, the mother/non-mother dichotomy reflects the prewar/postwar mentalities, and the corresponding dominant discourses on prostitutes as victims and as social ‘parasites’. Lacking the strong moral values and guidelines of the prewar era, prostitutes in the post-Occupation era, fall victim to their desire for a life surrounded by material commodities.

Yasumi is the exception that prevents *Street of Shame* from being interpreted as a simplistic dichotomy of mothers who inspire pity and nostalgia and women who chose sexual and economic liberty but cannot escape downfall. She is the most profitable prostitute of Dreamland, and in order to build herself a wealthy life style, she deceives men to increase her savings while lending money to her co-workers at exorbitant interest rates. Yasumi eventually quits prostitution to open her own store, which previously belonged to a patron who went bankrupt, chiefly because of her cajolement. At the end of the film, she is shown selling products to the Dreamland’s owners, her self-assured personality on display. Yasumi inverts the power relations with her patrons by exploiting them, and she transmutes the relationship with her bosses, by becoming an equal business partner. Thus, the only prostitute that succeeds does so not through the support of social welfare and anti-prostitution groups, nor by entering the social contract of marriage, but by taking advantage of her condition as a prostitute, shifting from exploited to exploiter. As this situation is parallel in Nobuko, Tome’s daughter in *Insect Woman*, the bottom line seems to be that more than democracy, with the humanist and moralist values it had encouraged, it is consumer capitalism that has come to govern society and dictate people’s decisions. Money is the ultimate law and one must play smartly by the rules of the game. Among deprived women, those who swindle and exploit, but also have a strong sense of agency, will be the ones to escape prostitution.



Figure 3.1. Mickey in the brothel's clamshell: *I'm Venus*.



Figure 3.2. Yumeko is left alone in the industrial landscape.



Figure 3.3. Hanae defies the 'culture state'.

Crafting the image of prostitution under the light of stardom

In discussing the classic era of the American studio system, Richard Maltby defines stars as ‘the commodities that most consistently drew audiences to the movies’ (2003: 142). In the case of *Street of Shame*, the featured stars participated widely in the promotion of the film, and several reviews highlighted the cast as providing excellent performance and characterisation (e.g. *KJ* 1956 Late March; 1956 Spring). Although the all-star cast is arguably one of the main reasons for *Street of Shame*’s commercial success, it is worth underlining that the strategy of having popular actresses leading distinct subplots is frequently found in prostitution films, as we have seen in the case of all *Gate of Flesh* film adaptations, but also in *Light of the Red Light District Burns on* (*Akasen no hi wa kiezu*, Tanaka Shigeo, 1958), starring Kyō, Nozoe Hitomi (1937-1995), Kawakami Yasuko (who plays Shizuko in *Street of Shame*, [1935-]), and Hasegawa Toshiko (aka Ono Michiko, 1934-). Likewise, the two Roman Porno works about brothel prostitution included in this study, *Street of Joy* (*Akasen Tamanoi nukeraremasu*, Kumashiro Tatsumi, 1974) and *Last Day of the Red Light District: March 31, 1958* (*Akasen saigo no hi: shōwa 33 nen 3 gatsu 31 nichi*, Shiratori Shin’ichi, 1974—hereafter *Last Day*), brought together the most popular stars of the Nikkatsu Studio, including Miyashita Junko (1949-), Seri Meika (1954-), and Oka Naomi (??-??).

The recurrence of stars playing ‘fallen woman’ roles is truly remarkable; especially if we consider the broader category of melodramas about sex and entertainment industries.¹⁴ It is not an exaggeration to state that this kind of role

¹⁴ Several film scholars group together films of prostitutes, geishas and workers of the ‘water trade’ or *mizu shōbai* (e.g. Anderson and Richie 1982; Limbacher 1983; Le Fanu 2005).

served as a star vehicle, forging the fame and charisma attributed to many Japanese female stars, not only to Kyō, Mimasu and Wakao. Other emblematic actresses, such as Tanaka Kinuyo (1909-1977), Takamine Hideko (1924-2010), and Yamamoto Fujiko (1931-), played at the height of their careers roles of madam and hostess of the ‘water trade’, the prostitute, or the geisha. As the case of the acclaimed *Flowing* (*Nagareru*, Naruse Mikio, 1956) shows, using an all-star cast to portray a female community in the entertainment industry (not only prostitution) was not a rare practice in the studio system.

The collage-type structure seen in many prostitution films, where different subplots unfold being given relatively equal relevance, avoids providing a one-dimensional image of the prostitute. In discussing the work of his mentor, director Masumura Yasuzō (1924-1986) noted that although Mizoguchi was generally considered a director of realism, he was particularly skilled in the production of ‘caricatures’, representing individuals in an exaggerated manner (*KJ* 1958 Summer: 93). Whether we refer to it as caricaturing or stereotyping, the narrative structure built upon the stars of *Street of Shame* enables the portrayal of a greater number of extremely different characters within the limited time of a feature film; and consequently, it offers the audiences more diversified sites of identification, through which to negotiate their, sometimes contradictory, memories and desires. Moreover, this structure provides a variety of figures in which the audiences can recognise their conceptions (or preconceptions) of prostitution.

Whilst the multi-strand structure inevitably entails that less time is dedicated to the development of each story, I propose that a more meaningful and complex characterisation emerges from the conjunction with the star image and the

expectations it generates in the audience. The number and diversity of stars cast for prostitute characters indicate that this role was not considered negative in the public opinion, and did not stigmatise the performer. Nevertheless, the fact that certain stars, such as Kyō Machiko, were recurrently cast in these roles suggests significant stereotyping, and hence, the choice to cast a given star can work to reassert or to reject discourses, such as those of victimisation and sexual liberation. Before analysing the ways in which Kyō's star persona contributed to the construction of the image of the prostitute, however, I shall briefly introduce the relation between character and star.

In his influential work on stardom, Richard Dyer identifies three potential strategies of casting: the selective use, when the film aims to 'bring out certain features of the star's image and ignore others'; the perfect fit, when 'all aspects of a star's image fit with all the traits of a character'; and the problematic fit, when the star image 'creates problems in the construction of character' ([1979] 1998: 126-129-). Regarding *Street of Shame*, I have discussed how Yumeko constitutes a betrayal of Mimasu's image in the *hahamono*. Relatedly, Yomota Inuhiko contends that the role of Yasumi rejects the *hitherto* star image of Wakao as a good-hearted, cheerful and humble girl (2003: 28). Both, therefore, can be interpreted as 'problematic fits'; although as I have argued, it is precisely that dissonance what makes Yumeko's character such a richly layered signifier. Mickey, on the other, is informed and even exceeded by Kyō Machiko's star persona, exemplifying a 'perfect fit'.

Before *Street of Shame*, Kyō had played several *femme fatale* and 'fallen woman' roles, such as those in *Bitch (Mesu inu)*, (Kimura Keigo, 1951), *Ugetsu* (Mizoguchi Kenji, 1953), and *Brother and Sister (Ani imōto)*, (Naruse Mikio, 1953).

According to Anderson and Richie, Kyō was ‘the first Japanese actress to have public attention drawn to her alleged sex appeal’ (1982: 232). Along with this erotic image, highlighted in numerous pin-ups, Kyō often appeared in fan magazines dressed in expensive western designer clothes, where she was rendered an icon of new-fashioned femininity—assertive, modern and glamorous (Carter 2014: 183). Her connection with the West was further consolidated by her US publicity tour in 1955, which the American and Japanese press alike covered extensively, and which culminated in her starring in *The Tea House of the August Moon* (Daniel Mann, 1956- released in Japan in 1957). In this comedy set in Okinawa during the Allied Occupation, Kyō plays the role of a geisha who exploits her beauty to manipulate men. Besides Hollywood’s own articulation of her star persona, for the Japanese audience Kyō was ‘a “bad girl”, a perfect example of the increasing westernisation of Japanese culture and a reflection of the social policies actively promoted by the Allied occupation’ (Carter 2014: 175); but simultaneously her attitude was linked to the perceived liberties of western democracy (Russell 2006). In her analysis of the cinematic representation of the female body, Joanne Izbicki notes that Japanese critics hailed her figure as the embodiment of a positive eroticism that was ‘large hearted, without regret’ (1997: 117), and placed her in opposition to the negative and traumatised eroticism of the previous ‘literature of the flesh’ (see Chapter 2). Either as a reflection of a masochistic desire towards Americanness, or as an open expression of women’s spontaneous sexual desire, Kyō was irremediably portrayed as an ‘Other’, ‘seen as not being like most Japanese women’ (Izbicki 1997: 118).

Mickey’s character seizes upon the fundamental features of Kyō’s star persona: erotic, westernised and transgressive. Mickey is in fact the only prostitute character of the film that is largely sexualised in her representation, appearing

scantly dressed, taking a bath, and dancing in an arousing fashion. It is noteworthy that despite the subject matter of the film, all the other stars appear notably de-eroticised. Yasumi and Yorie do not feature in any scenes similar to those of Mickey; Yumeko is ridiculed by patrons, a shop clerk and her own son for her extravagant looks and exaggerated flirting attitude; and the beautiful actress Kogure Michiyo (1918-1990) hides under the frumpish looks of Hanae, divested of any eroticism. In fact, *Street of Shame* stands out for the little visual relevance placed on the sexualised female body, something that becomes particularly noteworthy if we consider that 1956 was also the year of the boom of the *taiyō zoku* (sun tribe) films, which offered a controversial representation of liberated women and aggressive sexuality. It could be argued that both the *panpan* and the *taiyō zoku* short-lived booms constituted waves of subversion that came from time to time to shake the moral conventions of cinematic representation, putting to test the limits of their historical milieu.

The character of Mickey, an ex-*panpan* serving Americans who comes from a wealthy family could come across as a rather negative and despicable character. However, the following scene suggests that the comic component of Kyō's star persona, as exhibited in films like *The Tea House of the August Moon*, also played an important role in *Street of Shame*. When she enters Dreamland for the first time, the camera follows her in a long take accompanied by lively mambo music. She walks in a confident manner, with her cigarette and chewing gum, paying no attention to her future co-workers who stare at her bemused. Mickey's eye is caught by an immense clamshell, which is part of the kitsch decoration of the brothel (designed for the film

by Mizutani Hiroshi [1906-1971]).¹⁵ She steps inside, takes a glamorous pose and proclaims: ‘I’m Venus’ (see Figure 3.1). Kyō exhibits similar playful attitudes, infused with shrewd self-awareness, in other episodes of the film, and it is her capacity to combine eroticism and humour that softens Mickey’s character making her more appealing to the audiences.

In terms of intertextuality, the image of Mickey posing in the clamshell evokes the previously explained ‘picture-frame nude show’, which featured scantily clad women posing inside large artificial frames of famous western paintings, which in this case would be Botticelli’s *Birth of Venus*. Behind Mickey, who begins to dance inside the shell to the off-camera music, there is a man peeping through the window mesmerised by her body and movements. His voyeuristic presence seems to mirror, or even to mock both the men so easily attracted to the renewed postwar commodification of the female body, and the audience of *Street of Shame*, lured by the provocative subject of the sex trade and the presence of stars like Kyō Machiko, who had the reputation of ‘the girl with perfect legs’ (Carter 2014: 177). Her body is contextualised in a western setting through image and sound, denoting the redefined conventions of beauty and eroticism. Her display bears witness to the normalisation of the male gaze under the rationale of democratic liberation and freedom brought by the Occupation (Izbicki 1997); but simultaneously, enclosed in the space of the brothel, it hints at the female body as the object of new regulations and moral codes, partially brought by that same foreign influence. Trapped in this contradiction, the character of Mickey, with her English expressions, her defiant and individualistic

¹⁵ According to Anderson and Richie, writing in 1959, originally Mizoguchi intended to shoot extensively on location to provide the film with a semi-documentary style. However, amidst the public debates on the criminalisation of prostitution, brothel owners refused to cooperate with Daiei, which had to resort to its studio resources to recreate the setting (1982: 295-296).

attitude and her spending habits, establishes a causal connection between consumerism, westernisation and the fallen woman; and thus reveals the continuity of the hyperimage of the *panpan* built upon the image of the modern girl.

On a deeper level of intertextuality, I would suggest that this comical reference to classical western high art can be seen as a parody of the renaissance, hinting at the idealisation of, and the fascination for the West that sometimes led to odd transpositions of western objects and notions into Japan's societal and popular culture. In discussing the melodramatic articulation of the rapid changes that Japan underwent in the early postwar era, Yoshimoto, following Fredric Jameson's concept of 'synchronic uneven development' (1981: 141)¹⁶, explains:

In Japan, melodrama articulated a disparity between modernity and modernization, whose "synchronic uneven development" has been the sociocultural strain of the Japanese for more than a century. While modernization can be achieved by acquiring advanced technology and by fostering the development of industry, Japan has been fundamentally excluded from modernity because the possibility of the latter is dependent on the success of colonialism dividing the world into the West and non-West (...) Yet once the technological advancement got to the stage where Japan could compete with the Western powers, the success of technological modernization was mistakenly equated with the success of implanting modernity in Japan.

(Yoshimoto 1993: 106-7)

This disparity or 'synchronic uneven development' of modernity and modernisation was perhaps the most critical issue in postwar Japan because it was pervasive to all realms of society, both public and private. In previous chapters, I have critically examined the incorporation of western politics, medicine, and moral codes, which were often imposed on the population. These conceptions of body politics, however, had been negotiated to retain vernacular socio-economic practices that perpetuated

¹⁶ Jameson develops the idea from Ernst Bloch's concept of the *ungleichzeitigkeit*, which could be translated as non-synchronic (Bloch 1977).

patriarchal power. The fragmented application of SCAP's gender reforms, in turn, masked the double standards of the American model, and further accentuated the uneven development of the society. Moreover, considering Japan's history in the twentieth century in light of the dichotomies western/modern *versus* non-western/non-modern constructed through colonialism, Japan occupied an intermediary and complex position because it switched from a colonial power to an occupied nation. Thus, on the one hand, Japan needed to reject that dichotomy in order to imagine other forms of modernity where it could be included; but on the other, in the attempt to differentiate itself from other Asian nations, Japan replicated that same model to consolidate its position vis-à-vis western nations. It is in this context that Kyō, through her likeable and approachable otherness, provided an illusion of modernity that represented Japan's mastery over its encounter with the West.

In considering the impact of stardom on the cultural meaning of *Street of Shame*, Mizoguchi's star persona also deserves close attention as one of the major endorsements of the film. As Mizoguchi is usually approached from the vantage of *auteur* theory, to think of him as a star may seem bizarre. However, as one of the most acclaimed directors of his time both inside and outside Japan, his personal experiences, opinions and even feelings were a matter of public interest, thus endowing him with some features of stardom. Dyer defines a star as a mediated identity constructed through a range of texts dealing with personal, professional, and social aspects ([1979] 1998: 60-3). In his work on Alfred Hitchcock (1899-1980), Robert E. Kapsis (1992) draws on star theory to argue that the director persona plays a crucial role in the reputation the filmmaker may achieve as *auteur*, commercial mass-pleaser or craftsman. Against the idea that reputation is earned chiefly based on

the perceived value of his or her films, Kapsis identifies four key components that contribute to the production of a director persona: the biographical legend, consistent motifs and stylistic techniques within film *oeuvre*, critical discourse and reception, and marketing paratexts (1992: 11-3). Merging theories on authorship and stardom, Kapsis' work serves as a useful framework for the case of Mizoguchi because it engages with the particularities of the classical studio system and surrounding industries.

In terms of consistent themes, the depiction of suffering women trapped in the exploitative structures of patriarchal power became the trademark of Mizoguchi's cinema (Freiberg 1981; Santos 1993; Le Fanu 2005; Satō 2006). Because he directed several prostitute films, such as the previously discussed *Women of the Night* (1948), *The Woman in the Rumour* (*Uwasa no onna*, 1954), and many others on the broader sex and entertainment industries, he was regarded as an expert in the subject. In terms of the biographical legend, incidents of his personal life further served to construct a close association between Mizoguchi and women of the entertainment industries. That his elder sister was sold to a geisha house, that for years he was a regular patron of the pleasure quarters, and that he had a love affair with a prostitute who almost fatally stabbed him in the back are some examples of personal experiences that have been fetishistically recalled countless times by critics and film historians (Harvard Film Archive 2014).

This kind of information articulated through fandom, film criticism, and academia, infuse the work of Mizoguchi with an extra value, conferring on it an aura of veracity. Critic Izawa Jun, for instance, praised him for having achieved in *Street of Shame* 'unprecedented realism in Japanese cinema' through the depiction of

prostitutes as only he could have done (1957: 41-2). From a different perspective but still building on the private life of the director, the film critic and historian Satō Tadao—a major agent in the construction of the star persona of Mizoguchi—underscores the claim that he was not so familiar with the world of prostitutes, especially that of the postwar era, as he was with the geisha culture (2006: 212). This statement is most probably based on Mizoguchi's claim that he stopped visiting the pleasure quarters as a customer in 1936 (Le Fanu 2005: 175). Since the early postwar, critics framed Mizoguchi as one who was emotionally involved in the problems of sex trade, and always 'standing by the side of women' (*onnatachi no mikata* – *Asahi shinbun* 1956 Mar 18: 2).

As can be seen in Shindō Kaneto's (1912-2012) documentary on Mizoguchi (1975), critics have highlighted that Mizoguchi personally conducted extensive research on the living and working conditions of prostitutes before shooting *Women of the Night* in order to grasp the reality of prostitution in the early postwar years. In the documentary, the producer of the 1948 *panpan* film recalls that when visiting a prostitutes' ward of the Osaka Municipal Hospital, Mizoguchi was overcome with emotion, and in his distress, declared to the women: 'If you are here (...) it's the fault of men (...) It is *my* fault too' (as translated in Le Fanu 2005: 81; emphasis in the translation). Although since Freda Freiberg's feminist analysis of his work (1981), Mizoguchi's idealisation of suffering women has been criticised for its veiled reinforcement of conservative gender politics, Satō and others define him as a 'feminist' (*feminisuto*). Through these kinds of discursive practices, insistently reproduced up until this day, an image of authenticity and sincerity has been cast upon his prostitution films. Mizoguchi, therefore, played a crucial role in establishing in the popular imaginary a sympathetic albeit victimised image of the prostitute. The

following sections will call into question the foundation of this star image through a closer analysis of his depiction of prostitution in *Street of Shame*.

A non-fictional look at the red-light district

In discussing Korean melodrama, McHugh and Abelmann underline the idea that melodrama is the transformation of political, economic and cultural conflicts into personal narratives (2005: 4). Relatedly, stardom theory argues that the prominence of the stars can eclipse the subject matter of a film (Dyer [1979] 1998; Geraghty 2000). Thus, the audiences are tempted to ‘see’ Dreamland, instead of the economy of state-regulated prostitution, to ‘see’ Kyō Machiko instead of an *ex-panpan*, and to ‘see’ Mizoguchi’s ode to womanhood instead of the life of prostitutes; and in doing so to render the political personal. In order to make apparent the impact of the fictional narrative devices of the studio system, it is useful to look into an entirely different coetaneous mode of cinematic representation.

Prior to the definitive closure of the red-light districts in 1958, Ono Tsunenori (1917-2002)¹⁷ produced a documentary entitled *Akasen, through Sound, Image and Printed Word* (*Akasen: oto to gazō to katsuji ni yoru* [1958] 1993). Presented as an informative piece, scenes of every-day life in the pleasure quarters of Tokyo are featured in combination with detailed quantitative data, maps of the areas and images of their historical sites, as well as explanations about the different categories of prostitution quarters. Women are shown in their daily activities: working, attending the hospital for medical checks, shopping, taking a walk, and chatting in small

¹⁷ Ono will later write extensively about the erotic industries of postwar Japan, being *Underground History of Shōwa* (*Angura Shōwashi: sesōura no ura no hiji hatsukōkai*, 1981) his most cited work.

groups on the streets. Soliciting and their nightlife are depicted but do not constitute predominant elements of the film. The majority of women, especially during their spare time, wear plain clothes (mainly simple kimonos) and discrete hairstyles and make-up, contradicting the constructed stereotype of the garish looks of prostitutes, endlessly depicted in other media. The camera remains on the streets, never showing the interior of the brothels. The lack of intrusive close-ups of the women's faces and body parts, along with the prominence of long shots functions to avoid the objectification of the prostitutes as extravagant specimens, or as objects of desire and visual pleasure. As a result, this anonymity in fact humanises these women, and allows the representation of prostitutes as any other women, with a daily routine integrated in society.

The examination of this documentary causes other meaningful aspects of Mizoguchi's film to emerge. In general lines, both works share a sympathetic approach towards prostitutes and display an ambivalent stance towards the sex trade and its regulation. Like Mizoguchi's film, Ono's documentary fails to identify, let alone discuss, the specific political and social forces involved in the debates that eventually led to the ban on prostitution. However, there are also important differences between the two films. Despite the crucial role of medical discourses in the history of modern prostitution, in *Street of Shame* the regular and compulsory sexual health examinations prostitutes had to undergo are omitted. In fact, we barely see the world outside Dreamland (not even the rest of Yoshiwara). The pervasive indoor sets visually underscore the constraint and lack of freedom of prostitutes, hinting at the stagnancy of the world of brothels. In Ono's documentary, this oppression is veiled by the cheerful attitude of the women who seem to move at will in the public space.

In contrast with the documentary, in *Street of Shame* the prostitutes are rarely involved in interactions with any other people apart from their customers, not even other women of Yoshiwara. They live virtually outside society, in a separate closed world that shares little information and few experiences with others. These features infuse a feeling of claustrophobia, seclusion, irregularity; and hence, ‘Otherness’. The brothel is depicted as a heterotopia functioning completely separated from the rest of society. While ‘normal’ people live, work and socialise in public spaces during daylight, prostitutes live indoors and at night, there is no public space for them. This division seems to foreshadow the impossibility of their reintegration as illustrated by Yorie’s failed marriage, and further dramatised in Yumeko’s experiences in the few occasions she dares stepping outside the red-light district. On her way to the countryside to visit her son, Yumeko is told contemptuously by a woman ‘you can wipe off your rouge, but not the makeup of your trade’. Later, having found out that Shūichi is now living in Tokyo, Yumeko goes to meet him at the factory where he works. Although she pleads with him to stay by her side, he rejects her with brutality and leaves her alone in a desolate industrial landscape. Her kimono-clad small figure against this background accentuates the insurmountable barrier that separates prostitutes from society, especially in this moment of reinvigorated economic development (see Figure 3.2).

On the other hand, despite the presumed objective approach of the documentary, Ono’s film comes across as a nostalgic farewell to prostitution, full of poetic images and emotional remarks. The narrator (a male voice-over) believes both the *akasen* and the *aosen* (illegal prostitution quarters) will soon disappear; however, there is no mention of the threat of organised crime taking over the business, nor of the rehabilitation measures for the prostitutes, despite the fact that by the time of the

release of the documentary, their insufficiency was already apparent. The use of quantitative data, which reveals the high numbers of legal and illegal prostitutes as well as of the districts in which they operate, endows the documentary with a sense of truthfulness and accuracy that is not, however, matched by his optimistic reading of the situation. Ono concludes by expressing his hope that society will become 'brighter' through the closure of the red-light districts, and prays for these women to 'find a job or get married', whilst he wonders if it is possible for them to reintegrate in society. In opposition to Mizoguchi's film, but in accordance with the postwar hegemonic discourses of morality and civic education that made profuse use of the term 'bright society' (*akarui shakai*) (Uno 1993: 313), the documentary presents marriage as a desirable integration of women into society and avoids putting the spotlight on men's responsibility.

Both films present partial portrayals of the subject, and a comparison of them identifies ideologically charged elements and absences. By limiting the depiction of the social life of prostitutes, *Street of Shame* emphasises the entrapment of these women and favours a discourse of ostracised victimisation. The publicised image of an accurate and realist depiction constructed upon Mizoguchi's star persona falters in face of significant omissions and evidence of a predetermined understanding of the prostitute. Ono's film, on the other hand, relies on the expository mode of documentary, which Bill Nichols (2010) defines as characterised by a voice-over narration that circumscribes the meaning of the footage, and hence constructs a fixed narrative that spectators are encouraged to accept. Through a rhetoric that combines informative and lyrical formats, Ono's documentary presents a narrative of unfounded optimism that exudes nostalgia for the pleasure quarters, while accepting their closure as a sign of the times and evidence of society's progress. The film's

stance on the debates, albeit ambivalent, is therefore reified in the words of the narrator, the only voice empowered to make sense of the situation. Quite differently, Mizoguchi's *Street of Shame* presents the viewers with a variety of perspectives on the sex trade. The following section will analyse these voices in order to further illuminate the film's portrayal of the prostitute, and its stance in the heated debates.

Different views on prostitution

In the opening scene of *Street of Shame* the female owner of the brothel (Sawamura Sadako, 1908-1996) discusses the proposed ban on prostitution with a local policeman. She stresses the long tradition of the business as evidence of its indispensable role in society and harshly criticises how, in the past, the government had praised and encouraged procurers to expand (alluding to the Occupation years), but has now betrayed them. In reply, the policeman, who seems familiar with all the women there, blames it on public opinion making a fuss. The opening scene, therefore, posits the film as a stage for the current debates, and provides the first of several opinions on prostitution presented throughout the story. Considering that the policeman is one of the few characters outside the business, his opinion can be read as that of the ordinary citizen, which appears as different from the so-called 'public opinion'. I find this distinction (or contradiction) between the average citizens as individuals and the abstract entity of public opinion very compelling, particularly because it appears in numerous films discussed in this study. Similar to Ono's documentary, it is an ambivalent position that seems to suggest that despite the heated debates and the numerous drafts presented in the Diet, a significant percentage of the citizens were not so concerned about the existence of the red-light

district.

On two separate occasions, the male brothel owner named Taya (Shindō Eitarō, 1899-1977) delivers a passionate speech advocating for the regulated system of prostitution. There are hardly any variations of content or expression between the two instances, making the speeches appear over-manufactured and demagogic. Taya defines himself as a ‘social worker’, taking care of women in need. The ban on prostitution, he claims, will lead to the incarceration of prostitutes. Addressing each woman one by one, he appeals to her personal circumstances and economic needs—needs that, according to him, the state and the politicians have invariably failed to address or even to care about. Based on my historical analysis, it is hard to completely dismiss Taya’s words as lies (at least in regard to the role of politicians). However, the film encourages a distrustful reading in the spectator by framing Taya’s speeches into two structured successions of scenes offering poignant variations.

In both occasions, the speech is preceded by a tragic episode in the life of one of the prostitutes, followed by a quiet scene of the streets of Yoshiwara accompanied by the off-screen sound of the radio news reporting on the debates in the Diet. The camera then cuts to the interior of the brothel where Taya turns off the radio to begin his speech. This sequence first appears in minute twenty-three, and then approximately one hour later, and thus it functions as a syntagm that divides the plot in three acts: introduction, conflict, and denouement. In the first occasion, Hanae and her unemployed husband discuss their delicate financial situation that has led them to consider family suicide (*shinjū*). Later during Taya’s first address, Hanae and all the others stare at him and nod endorsing his views without reservations. From a low angle the camera records the beginning of his speech, emphasising his position of

authority, and then follows Taya as he approaches each woman, in a succession of two-shot frames that establish the personal relationship he has with his workers.

In the second variation sequence, Yumeko is taken to the psychiatric hospital, and Yasumi is attacked by a patron whom she was fleeing. These experiences, together with Yorie's failed marriage, appear to have an impact on the way these women understand their own situation, and their vulnerability. The radio announces that the proposal has been dismissed in the Diet once again. In a celebratory mood, Taya repeats his speech but this time the three remaining prostitutes overtly exhibit disbelief in his words and avoid making eye contact with him. Taya, however, full of enthusiasm, seems not even to notice their reaction. Initially, Taya sits in the foreground with his back to the camera, so we see the distrustful expressions of the women in the background. As he approaches them, the camera changes position to show the women together as a united group in the foreground, and again with their faces visible to the camera as they look away from Taya, who is now in the background. The change in their relationship is further emphasised by the slight high angle of the camera in this shot that makes the women look bigger and located higher than Taya. Nevertheless, in both cases, his authority and power are visually stressed by his capacity to terminate the radio discourse—articulated by another male voice—by turning off the transistor in order to impose his own speech. Therefore, the scene is composed as a chain of male voices that produce one-way communication where the prostitutes are deemed mere recipients who lack a voice.

Hanae's husband offers another view on prostitution; surprisingly, the harshest of all. When Yorie is about to leave the brothel to marry, he vehemently preaches at her to 'become a good wife'. No matter the hardships she has to face, he

insists, she must never return to Yoshiwara because prostitutes are the ‘scum of human beings’. These comments, made in front of the other prostitutes including his own wife, follow the hegemonic chauvinistic discourse found in several media, and condensed in Kamichika Ichiko’s (1888-1981) speech calling for the punishment of prostitutes in order to protect the housewives (see Chapter 1). The prostitute is identified as the diametrically opposite figure to that of the wife, the latter representing the ideal and the normative, while the former is considered as inferior and polluted, both in moral and physical ways. The contradiction found in this dichotomy, considering that Hanae is wife, mother and prostitute, is conspicuous. Furthermore, Hanae’s husband emulates the discourse of those who, from the distance, make of the prostitute an abstract ‘Other’. The way in which he rejects his everyday reality and his close relationships with Hanae’s co-workers lays bare a troubled masculinity divested of the privileges with which it is traditionally associated. In terms of gender roles and sexual mores, the actual experience of Hanae’s husband violently clashes with the normative practices. He is unable to fulfil the role of provider, which is performed by his wife, whose sexuality, moreover, completely escapes his control. Instead of targeting his dissatisfaction at the system that does not provide him work or insurance, or at the men who spend their money on prostitutes, he chooses to blame the women, as if they were polluted and degraded by nature. Through his frustration and contradictions, this scene poignantly exemplifies why the sexual and economic autonomy of the prostitute makes her such a problematic figure for patriarchy.

Hanae’s response comes later on in the film. As she returns home one night, she finds her husband attempting suicide. The always nurturing and understanding Hanae is now outraged and demands acknowledgement from him. She claims that

prostitution is not a crime like killing or stealing, and decries the so much publicised ‘culture state’ (*bunka kokka*)¹⁸ as an empty discourse that has left her no other option but to prostitute herself, although not even by this means can she provide enough to feed her son properly. As a poignant diversion, it is worth noting that the prostitutes’ journal *Fujin shinpū* in 1954 criticised one of the harshest proposals for the ban presented at the time in the Diet for ‘serving the dignity of the culture state as an absurd flower arrangement in an alcove’ (1954 June: 1). Relatedly, Carol Gluck claims that the term ‘culture state’ was part of a strategy to demilitarise the nationalist discourse without completely discarding wartime ideology (1993: 69). Thus, Hanae’s speech can be inscribed in contemporaneous criticism against the government’s attempt to proclaim a new democratic and wealthy Japan, without fully addressing the political and social problems at the foundations of the nation.

Hanae’s determination is visually dramatised, and even glorified, through the photography and *mise-en-scène* indebted to the masterful work of cinematographer Miyagawa Kazuo (1908-1999). In this sequence-shot, characteristic of Mizoguchi’s style, the camera delicately moves to retain Hanae centred in the frame as she manifests her strong will to survive and never give up for the sake of her son. The scene ends with Hanae sitting in the middle of the room, holding her baby in her arms, illuminated by the light coming through an open door she is facing. In contrast, her husband, though in the forefront of the frame, remains in the shadows, kneeling down hiding his head in his hands writhing in frustration (see Figure 3.3). Once again, it is a mother figure who is granted the freedom to defy the state and patriarchy itself in a scene of heightened emotion.

¹⁸ The term is sometimes also translated as ‘nation of culture’.

In addition to these emotionally and politically charged opinions, the spectators of *Street of Shame* are provided with significant information about the management of the red-light district that could allegedly encourage their participation in the debates. We learn about the night curfew and the debt system that keeps the prostitutes tied to the brothel. The sign outside Dreamland, which reads 'Café' along with the legal label of 'special bars and restaurants' (*tokushū inshokuten*), is shown on several occasions, pointing at the current practice of disguising the brothels' true nature. Moreover, references to the state of affairs in Japan allow the audience to locate the prostitution industry in connection to other socio-political forces. The Tayas, members of the Brothels' Owners Association, talk about certain Diet members who are supposed to back their interests, hinting at their connection with politicians; while the critical living conditions in rural areas are connected to the never-ending provision of new prostitutes, especially through the story of young Shizuko, which will be discussed later.

Overall, the film succeeds as a social melodrama that provides a critical analysis of the situation from a humanist approach. Nevertheless, I argue that it constitutes a limited representation of the red-light district that continues to reproduce myths and stereotypes about women and female sexuality (enhanced through stardom); and moreover, it ignores pivotal discourses and practices shaping the existence of these pleasure quarters. Prostitutes are deemed vulnerable, due mainly to economic need, personal problems (originating in dysfunctional families) and ignorance, which makes them easily manipulated. Early in the film, Yorie and Yumeko discuss the potential ban of their trade, but their comments evidence a complete lack of information about what the law entails, let alone the movements fighting for and against the legislation. This condescending and somewhat

paternalistic approach largely conforms to the rhetoric of some women's movements that rendered prostitutes misguided victims in need of salvation; something they were not able to achieve by themselves. But, moreover, it is quite implausible to believe that prostitutes were so ignorant about the debates, especially in Yoshiwara, where the union gathered 800 members, arranged notorious campaigns in the streets, and published its journal since 1952 (see Chapter 1). Neither the anti-prostitution groups and moralist groups (such as the United Church of Japan and the Purity Society), nor the prostitutes' unions and social movements supporting them (such as New Yoshiwara Women's Health Preservation Association and Levellers' Society) appear in the film; nor are they even mentioned. Through this absence, therefore, the film completely negates the impact of these organisations, playing down the immense historical relevance of diverse women's movements while highlighting male voices as authorities. In Mizoguchi's film, Satō (2006) reads the victimisation of women as criticism against the male-centred socio-political to advocate the *auteur's* stance as '*feminisuto*'. However, before anything else, it is on the denial of women's agency and voices that this victim discourse is grounded.

In terms of male representation, I have explored the negative characterisation of Hanae's husband and Taya as a paternal figure, whom the workers call 'father' (*otōsan* – an appellation otherwise common in brothels at the time). The father figure is conspicuously represented as a failure: Yasumi's father is in jail, while Mickey's is self-interested and despicable, whilst to the public eye he is a respectable normative subject. Constantly unfaithful to his sick wife, Mickey's father attempts to take his daughter out of prostitution but only because it is harming his reputation and hence threatening his businesses. We learn thereafter that it is out of spite for her father that Mickey became a sex worker, seeking to objectify men as they objectify women. If

the mother figure, as Wada-Marciano (2009) argues, is a key player of the ‘disguising mode of narrative’, the father is an obstacle to be eliminated or undermined. Wada-Marciano notes that in a public opinion poll conducted in 1953, fifty per cent of the interviewees stated that the main reason why life conditions had improved was the decline of ‘parental authority’ (2009: 120). Parental and specifically paternal authority was intrinsically connected to the political and social system that the 1947 Constitution had sought to eradicate. As Liddle and Nakajima explain:

The emperor personified not only imperial and state power but also class and gender power, and the system of state regulation in the form of the family-state-emperor system was so completely saturated with the symbolic capital of masculinity, class and empire that the authority of the hierarchies of gender, class and nation also collapsed along with that of the state.

(2000: 144)

The prewar imperial family-state had been imbued with hyper-masculinity, culminating in the figure of the father. In cinema, directors such as Ozu and Ōshima Nagisa (1932-2013) explored from different perspectives the physical and symbolical absence of the father. Ōshima went as far as to declare that ‘our generation has no father’ (2011: 11), and contended that the paternal figure was conspicuously identified with the emperor and all kinds of authority in the nation. According to Ōshima, as long as a new image of fatherhood did not emerge, there was to be a negative or absent father figure (Hirose 2007: 257, 264). Thus, in accordance with the melodrama theory on *hahamono* explained earlier, it seems that the more masculine and close to power a character is, the more negative depiction it will be given.

If this is the case, however, the representations of the brothel patrons in *Street*

of Shame become even more problematic. They are the direct agents of exploitation, the determining factor in the persistence of the red-light district; and yet they are very sympathetically portrayed as good-hearted, some even as naïve romantics. This image is further suggested by the casting of stars connected with a positive masculinity, such as Tanaka Haruo (1912-1992) and Tatara Jun (1917-2006). Thus, albeit secondary roles, their characters starkly contrast with the manipulative and exploitative brothel owners, and the dysfunctional fathers and husbands. In this light, the stance taken by Mizoguchi's film towards the *akasen* seems ambivalent to say the least, and surely much more complex than it appears at first sight.

Social criticism or sensationalistic spectacle?

Was Mizoguchi's film perceived along these lines? Did audiences and critics perceive that prostitutes were being victimised or glorified? Was the film considered a veracious depiction of the sex trade, or perhaps an invitation to reconsider potential solutions to the problem? In light of Mizoguchi's star persona, the film was widely promoted as a 'realist portrayal' that earnestly confronted the social problem from a 'very human sense of justice' (e.g. *KJ* 1956 Late March: n.p.; 1956 Spring: 88-9). Moreover, drawing from the popularity of the featuring stars, a double-page article plastered with pictures of the actresses, defined the film as a cry of 'outrage against the unequal and unfair social structures and the poverty of Japanese politics' (*KJ* 1956 Late March: n.p.). Another article in *Kinema junpō* gathered the opinions on prostitution of the main cast. Wakao declared feeling that she had no right to criticise the women of the sex trade towards whom she felt great pity and empathy. Likewise, Kyō stated that responsibility should not lie on these women's shoulders but on the

‘poverty of politics’ (*hinkonna seiji*), and hence she used the same exact words as the other promotional piece (*KJ* 1956 Spring: 89). These texts indicate a deliberate intention of positioning the film in line with contemporaneous humanist discourses, which conferred the film additional social value.

As pointed out at the beginning of the chapter, however, *Street of Shame* was not necessarily received as the promotion strategies intended. The reactions towards the final scene, perhaps one of the most powerful of the film, clearly illustrate this controversy. The scene narrates Shizuko’s first night as a prostitute. This teenager has been working as a maid in the brothel, but as we are informed, her family—miners from rural Kyushu—are desperately asking the Tayas to send them more money, and so Shizuko must sacrifice herself for the sake of her parents. Dressed up in kimono and under garish make-up, Shizuko stands in the doorway, peeping out with fear. She timidly addresses the men passing by with a broken weak voice and a hesitant gesture. There is no counter-shot to Shizuko’s gaze into the camera, giving the impression that she could be also addressing us directly. The scene ends as Shizuko hides again behind the door trembling (see Figure 4.5. in Chapter 4).

My first reaction was to see in this ending a cry against the critical conditions of child trafficking and exploitation that were also being extensively discussed at the time, as explained in the work of Holly Sanders (2006). The sign of the Association of Brothel Owners hanging on the doorframe next to Shizuko’s powerless and anxious expression, suggests a denunciation of the implication of the state in these matters, and of the corruption of the notion of filial piety. I envisioned that this denouement would have left a profound impact on the viewer, and turned to the cinema journals to enquire into the reactions of the audiences. Indeed several

reviews highlighted the power of this scene for condensing the message of the film and for effectively conveying that prostitution is ‘inhumane’ (e.g. *KJ* 1956 Early May: 106; *EG* 1956 May: 70). However, philosopher Fukuda Kidayoshi (1917-2002), who often discussed works of popular culture, stated that when the film was being screened, some spectators reacted with a nervous laughter at innocent Shizuko’s performance, feeling that she was actually inciting them to go to the red-light district. Writing for *Eiga geijutsu*, Fukuda concluded that the entire film could be seen as a promotional tour of a brothel, full of beautiful and desirable women (1956: 32).

Outside Japan, the film has been perceived chiefly as a work of social criticism, and in most cases, as a successful one. At the Venice International Film Festival, renowned film critic Guido Aristarco pointed out its ‘moral sincerity’ and applauded its ‘neo-realist treatment’ (1956: 30-31). After being screened at that prestigious festival, *Street of Shame* was released in several European countries and in the US, where it achieved substantial commercial success (Anderson and Richie 1982: 296). The British journal *Sight and Sound* described it as an ‘unsensational study of an ambience of degradation’ exhibiting a ‘sharp and humane observation’ (as quoted in Andrew and Andrew 1981: 198). More recently, film critic Robin Wood declared it ‘the last in the series of impassioned feminist protests that [...] traverses Mizoguchi’s entire career’ (2000: 25). Likewise, even today in major popular cinema websites, such as Rotten Tomatoes and Internet Movie Database, *Street of Shame* retains a positive reception, which suggests an on-going popular appraisal.¹⁹

¹⁹ Rotten Tomatoes is an American website of cinema and television reviews written by professional critics and amateur users alike. IMDb (Internet Movie Database) is a comprehensive database of

At the time of its release, most newspapers in Japan praised Mizoguchi's film. An article in the *Asahi Newspaper* asserts that it 'attempts to present the problem in a much more radical way than even independent productions of the left' (*Asahi shinbun* 1956 March 18: 2). In the case of these pieces of information, however, it is often not clear whether they are authentic reviews or promotional texts from Daiei Studio. Either way, the point is that, in stark contrast with the reviews from outside Japan and these articles in newspapers, the vast majority of reviews in the major film journals of the country are negative, some truly devastating. Many consider the film simplistic, limited as a 'entertaining, commercial product' that fails to offer a real political confrontation. One claims that the film does not exhibit any interest in the law on prostitution as 'a political matter', and another criticises the depiction of brothel patrons as too positive and not realistic. Another critic condemns the film for only attempting to 'satisfy the curiosity' of spectators for the sexual and the forbidden. It is not social criticism, they claim, only sensationalism. Many argue that the film in fact passively supports the perpetuation of the sex industry, or at least, accepts it as part of an unfair society taking a defeatist position that leaves no margin for change or constructive criticism (e.g. *KJ* 1956 Late Apr; 1956 Early May; 1956 Late June; Fukuda 1956). In recent years, retrospective reviews tend to be more positive but still reflect an ambiguous feeling towards the film (e.g. *KJ* 1992 Early Nov).

The newspaper *Fujin shinpū*, published by the prostitutes' union of Yoshiwara, offers yet another compelling perspective of the film. Although their impact on the general public opinion was low, the testimonies gathered in this

worldwide cinema industries. In 2017 they rate Mizoguchi's film in 82 per cent, and eight out of ten respectively.

publication are extremely valuable because they finally bring the voice of the prostitutes into the debate. One review written by the president of the union, named Iijima, explains in detail why the film is not veracious in its representation of the red-light district. Iijima indicates, for instance, that prostitutes do not grab potential patrons by the neck or the arm on the streets as repeatedly shown in the film. She claims never to have met someone like Yasumi in the trade and insists that, actually, it was very common for prostitutes in Yoshiwara to fall victims to lies, scams and robbery by men, and not the other way around. Foreshadowing the film's impact on public opinion, Iijima expresses her fear that it will contribute to exacerbating the pressure and rejection that prostitutes experience in society. It is significant that for Iijima, the only character that comes across as 'realistic' is Shizuko, who finds herself trapped in prostitution for the sake of her parents, while all the others are terrible and untruthful stereotypes representing prostitutes 'as if they had nothing in common with regular women' (Iijima 1956: 4). She constructs her own discourse of *how* prostitutes are, and endorses on the one hand, the image of the victim symbolised by Shizuko; and on the other, that of hard-working women with a strict code of honour and a strong feeling of community that would, if anything, agree with the prewar ideals embodied by the mother figures in the film.

There is another fascinating review in the union's magazine that partly rejects Iijima's arguments. This text acknowledges that those aggressive types of prostitutes do exist, but the author is rather concerned with the defeatist tone of the film, where there is no 'salvation' for prostitutes. She contends that *Street of Shame* ultimately fails to become a site of dialogue and reflection about the ban on prostitution (*Fujin shinpū* 1956 March: 4). Both texts indicate that prostitutes were very aware of the potential influence of cinema (and of Mizoguchi's film in particular) on social

perception and even on regulation. It is also important to underscore that despite their differences, they both blatantly reject the publicised image of Mizoguchi as supporter of the prostitutes. These reviews constitute another example of what I have been arguing in this study, namely, that the prostitute figure was used in public opinion and film criticism to symbolise certain discourses and ideologies, regardless of the social reality of these women, let alone their own opinions.

Based on the analysis of more than thirty reviews, I can conclude that despite some exceptions, the Japanese specialised critiques differ significantly from the foreign ones, which tend to agree with the domestic promotional material found in the general press. It is fascinating to note that actually all use the same concepts—social value, moral dimension, political criticism, humane sensibility, realism and sensationalism—in order to praise or reject the film. One can infer that the Japanese audiences held a much more comprehensive knowledge of the subject and of its socio-political context; and taking into consideration the array of texts discussing prostitution at the time, they were perhaps even swamped with information about the debates. These circumstances arguably make them quite a critical audience that was perhaps expecting a more in-depth analysis of the problem, or a more radical declaration on the sex industry than the one finally produced by Daiei Studio.

Conversely, most foreign spectators probably lacked that knowledge and thus constituted a more impressionable audience. However, these reviews can also be associated with Orientalist discourses originated in the West, but that were sometimes also encouraged from within Japan in what Roy A. Miller refers to as ‘self-Orientalism’ (1982). As several scholars have argued, Orientalism has traditionally represented the Japanese woman as sensual, submissive and infantile

(Said [1978] 2003; Yamamoto 1999; Tamanoi 1999). This image was accentuated during the Occupation through what Yoshikuni Igarashi refers to as the ‘foundational narrative’ that portrayed Japan as a ‘desperate woman’ in need of rescue, following her masculine saviour—the US (Igarashi 2000: 20; see Introduction). The conception of an obliging and docile femininity has been also used at times within Japan in presenting the country to the world; and thus, one wonders if this gender bias informed the foreign critics’ evaluation of the film’s realistic depiction.

The profusion of reviews demonstrates that the film had a great impact on the media. Both Le Fanu (2005: 84) and the Harvard Film Archive (2014) state that it was instrumental in pushing the ban through the Diet. Neither, however, cites any sources that back up such a strong statement and I have personally not found any primary source supporting this argument. Nevertheless, there is other relevant evidence of its impact, whilst not directly political. As stated already, the film was a tremendous box-office success that ran over three weeks in some cinemas, something exceptional at the time (*KJ* 1956 Late Apr: 83). Immediately after its release, the story was adapted to a theatrical play (just like *Women of the Night*) starring Mimasu Aiko in the role of Yumeko.²⁰ Newspapers published multiple reviews of the play, almost invariably positive, feeding into the promotion of the film (e.g. *Asahi shinbun* 1956 Mar 18; 1956 Apr 10; *Yomiuri shinbun* 1956 Apr 11). The theatrical adaptation and its paratexts worked to convey *Street of Shame*’s conception of prostitution to a wider audience.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, almost twenty years later, two Nikkatsu Roman Porno works arguably took inspiration from Mizoguchi’s film to recreate the

²⁰ The script of the theatre play was written by Kawaguchi Matsutarō (1899-1995), Mimasu’s husband and scriptwriter of most of Daiei Studio’s *hahamono*.

last days of the red-light district. In his comprehensive study of Japanese erotic cinema, Juan M. Corral refers to *Street of Joy* as a free adaptation revisiting Mizoguchi's view of the *akasen* (2012: 230); and I have found similar statements in blogs by amateur critics.²¹ This could be the reason behind the English translation of the title of the Roman Porno film, which evokes a confrontational relation with *Street of Shame*, even though it differs greatly from the original Japanese, which could be translated as 'Tamanoi Red-light District: You Can Pass Through'. The shared features with Mizoguchi's work are mainly only two: *Street of Joy* is set in the winter of 1955 in Yoshiwara, and unfolds through a multi-strand narrative. However, as noted earlier this kind of narrative structure and the all-star cast are common in many other prostitution films, and hence, these similitudes between the two films may seem somewhat trifling. I would suggest, that since *Street of Joy* was screened in Europe in 1976, the English translation of the title (also similar in French and German) was decided as part of the promotional strategy of the film to draw on the popularity and prestige Mizoguchi held in Europe.

On the other hand, whilst *Last Day* has been overlooked in the limited literature on Japanese erotic cinema, it shows far more meaningful similarities with *Street of Shame*. As the title suggests, the story unfolds during the last night of the red-light district in a brothel in Yoshiwara. In *Last Day* one can recognise familiar characters: Yōko (Seri Meika) resembles Yasumi (Wakao) of *Street of Shame* because she tricks customers and repeatedly appears counting her money. Sachiko (Yoshii Akiko, ??-??) reminds us of Hanae (Kogure) from Mizoguchi's film because they are both mothers who live outside the brothel and who receive reprimands for arriving late to work, as well as for their frumpish looks. Moreover, in both films, the

²¹ For instance, in the IMDb website entry, and in a film blog entitled Time Goes By (2003).

strict and miserly madam appears discussing the future of the industry with her husband, who offers some extra pocket money to his workers to keep them satisfied, as Taya does in *Street of Shame*. These similarities suggest the prevalence of character types, while variations in the subplots point at the significant changes in the popular understanding of sexuality and its representation that took place during the two decades that separate these films. In the following chapter, I will discuss in detail how the last scene of young Shizuko is cunningly revisited in *Last Day*; but for now, I would like to stress that these two Roman Porno films bear witness of the lasting impact of Mizoguchi's film on the popular imaginary, for both domestic and international audiences. The commercial success and availability of *Street of Shame* together with the numerous texts directly or indirectly drawing on Mizoguchi's film, establish the film as an outstanding reference point in the representation of the red-light district. However, this analysis has demonstrated that discourses on gender, morality, and politics articulated through the film are not hermetic or unequivocal; and neither are the interpretations we make of them.

Positioning *Street of Shame* in the postwar history of 'prostitution films'

As implied in Hanae's speech, in *Street of Shame* prostitution is depicted not so much as a matter of morality or personal disposition, but rather one of material need: the socio-economic system of the postwar democracy was failing to assure the well-being of the people. Gender and sexuality were articulated in terms of power, and although this is not something new as we have seen in the previous chapters, by the mid-1950s the principles governing such economies had changed. The twentieth century convulsed Japan in all areas of the public and the personal and now finally,

after more than sixty years of radical transmutations, the nation seemed to have reached some kind of stability, but under the surface, uneven dynamics of development were throbbing. As I have discussed, the film alludes to this clash in the social reality through references, for instance, to the generation gap and its resultant opposing conceptions of gender roles, to unemployment and business expansion, to the crisis of primary industries in rural areas and to the advance of consumer capitalism. *Street of Shame* stages a time of negotiation, resistance and contradiction. It is a story of dissonance, between the old and the new, between the official and the personal, and between the expectations and the reality.

This dissonance is captured in the music score of the film, composed by Mayuzumi Toshirō (1929-1997). Having studied in Paris after war and being influenced by Anton Friedrich Wilhelm von Webern's (1883-1945) atonal twelve-tone technique, Mayuzumi was one of the most prestigious *avant-garde* composers in Japan at the time. Using the twelve-tone technique, Mayuzumi's soundtrack for *Street of Shame* is regarded as the first electronic music score in Japanese cinema (Nagato 2012: 281). However, it did not go without controversy. Film critic Tsumura Hideo harshly criticised it, and regretting that the film already lacked Mizoguchi's characteristic sentiment, he deemed the music score the worst flaw of the project (Nagato 2012: 280). Tsumura's inflammatory words published in *Shūkan Asahi* led Mayuzumi to reply in the same magazine, and they engaged in a series of discussions that continued throughout April 1956 in what became known as the 'Street of Shame debate' (*Akasen chitai ronsō*). Mayuzumi contested Tsumura's narrow-minded views by claiming that music holds its own expressive potential independent from the images, and that through the confrontation between the two, the film could reach a new stage of expression (Nagato 2012: 280-1).

Mayuzumi's atonal music is accompanied at times by mysterious female voices that evoke the hypnotic songs of sirens, or perhaps the call of lost souls from another world, which further intensify the disturbing effect of the soundtrack. I would argue that it is this confrontation between *avant-garde* music and an old world in its twilight that expresses the 'synchronic uneven development' of Japan and its experience of postwar modernity (Yoshimoto 1993). In the credit scene, Mayuzumi's score plays as the camera pans over the city of Tokyo. Scattered low traditional houses appear squeezed between the tall concrete buildings of this new city reconstructed after war; this image serves as a mirror of Japan's rapid yet uneven transformation.

In another example, the soundtrack seems to dramatise the end of the mother narrative as Yumeko finally meets her son. Shūichi reprimands her for her looks and behaviour, and Yumeko reacts angrily in an attempt to impose her maternal authority. But when she realises the deep resentment of her son, her voice switches to a sweet tone seeking his empathy. Until that point their conversation takes place without any off-camera sound; then the music starts in a rather slow soft fashion, keeping with the conventions of melodrama and emphasising Yumeko's feelings. However, as their conversation evolves again into open confrontation, and Shūichi pushes her away and runs followed by his mother, the atonality increases, taking over what seemed a traditional melodramatic tune. In the last shot of the sequence (see Figure 3.2), as the screen fades to black, a piercing high-pitched tone ends the episode. According to Elsaesser, in cinema, music may be both functional (punctuating the structure) and thematic (expressing fear, suspense and such emotions) (1987: 50). As the above examples illustrate, the score of *Street of Shame* performs both functions, but in an unsynchronised way that evokes the juxtaposition of conflicting and

incoherent voices producing an almost eerie effect. Whilst Mayuzumi's aesthetic and technical exploration of the expressiveness of music is truly extraordinary, the theme of dissonance—pervasive to aesthetics, morals, and socio-economic structures—lies at the core of the majority of prostitution melodramas of the mid- and late 1950s.

Although 'prostitution films' are a widely diverse category, I suggest that they can be divided into three distinct eras according to the prominence of certain themes, which can be linked to the nation's state of affairs, namely: the moral, starting after the war; the socio-economic, from the mid-1950s; and the personal or subjective, from the early 1960s onwards. There are no clear-cut divisions, and the categories are not translated so much in specific conventions apparent in every film, but rather as a shared focus flowing underneath the narratives. Understanding melodrama as a negotiation of the anxiety caused by the succumbing of traditional guidelines, the chronological examination of this film corpus reveals the changing focus of tension in the quest for modernisation, always yearned for but always contested. Therefore, drawing on the conception of the female figure as a metaphor of the nation, the prostitution films can be said to compose a historiography of the nation and its relation to its subjects.

According to this hypothesis, the mid-1950s approach came to substitute the predominant focus on morality found in the early postwar films. As argued in the previous chapter, the 1940s *panpan* films, which belong to this first group, evolved around the necessity to contain female sexuality within a set of moral principles, where chastity occupied the most prominent position. The figure of the prostitute serves, on the one hand, as a reminder of the vulnerability of the boundaries of a group (whether social class, race, or nation) and of the necessity of preserving the

group's identity through the control of women's sexuality. On the other, however, she is evidence that such thorough control is ultimately impossible, and hence it is the woman who bears control over the group's boundaries in the last instance. The anxiety about contamination and chaos demands the reestablishment and legitimisation of solid hierarchies of power. The early *hahamono* problematised the internal contradictions that this ideology entailed; however, seeking to provide closure to the past without overtly confronting it, they ultimately emphasised the sacrificial, moral commitment of women to family and society—as functional subjects inscribed in the hierarchies of power—above their physical chastity or lack thereafter, which was linked to the past.

These two subgenres, however, were deeply marked by the censorship and recommendations of SCAP. Therefore, it is necessary to look at those films produced after the Occupation, when the country embarked upon a deep process of reflection and renovation. One year after Japan recovered its sovereignty, several melodramas on prostitution were released and, as seen in the analysis of other cultural industries in the first chapter, most of them focused on the connections between the sex trade, the war and the Occupation. Here, the revision and reconstruction of the nation was evoked through the transformation of these fallen women of the past. One such example, *Love Letter (Koibumi)*, Tanaka Kinuyo, 1953)²², depicts the reunion of Michiko (Kuga Yoshiko, 1931-) and her long lost lover Reikichi (Mori Masayuki, 1911-73).

Michiko is an orphan who loses her husband in war and is tyrannised by her

²² Evidence of the inbreeding nature of the postwar media and arts milieu, *Love Letter* was based on a serialised novel by the Niwa Fumio (1904-2005) and published in the newspaper *Asahi* during that same year, ensuring that the story was familiar to the audience. It is also worth noting that it is the first postwar film directed by a woman.

parents-in-law. After moving to Tokyo, she becomes the mistress of an American soldier (*onrii*, as this kind of *panpan* were called) who eventually leaves the country while she miscarries his baby. Reikichi, on the other hand, is a returned soldier who works translating love letters between *panpan* and foreign soldiers, but cannot come to terms with the fact that Michiko used to be one of these women. At the end of the film, Michiko suffers a tragic car accident (perhaps a suicide attempt?) that finally triggers Reikichi's resolution to accept her. One can discern in *Love Letter* a variation of the narrative pattern of sin–punishment–absolution proposed by Kamiya (2009) in her discussion of the early *panpan* films (see Chapter 2). Before reaching redemption, Michiko must suffer for her immoral behaviour; but simultaneously, her vulnerable position as victim of the oppressive prewar family structure, the war, and the Occupation is underscored throughout the film.

Whilst not as the central character, the depiction of the prostitute as victim seeking moral rehabilitation plays a pivotal role in *What is Your Name? (Kimi no na wa, Ōba Hideo, 1953-4)*,²³ the most lucrative film series in early postwar Japanese cinema. The two *panpan* in the film are presented as innocent and hardworking young women for whom prostitution was the only way of surviving. In the first film, Kaseda, a close friend and veteran of war (played by Ryū Chishū, 1904-1993), explicitly blames himself and all the Japanese military for the fate of these young women. According to Kaseda, the *panpan* are a product of war and defeat, and therefore, should not be held responsible for their acts. Nevertheless, he claims, they must reject this lifestyle because now it is time to change and start a 'decent' life,

²³ *What is Your Name?* was originally a radio drama aired by NHK over two years starting in April 1952 (as the Occupation reached its end). The film adaptation was released in three parts, two in 1953 and the last one in 1954. Due to its enormous success, it has also been adapted into a novel, a play and several television dramas.

reintegrated in society. Displaying the melodramatic mode of excess at its height, the story follows all the characters' search for purification, and in the case of the *panpan*, it is through the help and sacrifice of Kaseda and the male leading character, Atomiya Haruki (Sada Keiji, 1926-1964), that they are soon able to reintegrate in society away from prostitution. In discussing the gender politics of *What is Your Name?*, Igarashi argues that:

It becomes clear that sexual desires and their seemingly unhampered flow in postwar society are to be condemned: female sexuality in particular is demonized as destructive to social mores. If we see the social problems of prostitution and interracial children as standing in for the larger issues of Japanese defeat and the presence of the United States, the story of *Kimi no nawa* reverses the causal relations between the defeat and subsequent social confusion.

(2000: 111)

Therefore, the rehabilitation of prostitutes in particular, and that of society in general, is associated with the necessity to restrain women's sexuality in order to re-establish normative patriarchal structures of social and moral order.

Despite the conservative approach, these examples evidence that the cinematic depiction of prostitutes was much more sympathetic and hopeful than that found generally in the media in the early 1950s. As a banner of the 'victim consciousness', the prostitute character performed a cathartic function for the audience. As noted in Chapter 1, the victim discourse was further dramatised through the figure of the innocent rejected child who featured also in numerous prostitution melodramas of the time, including *Red-light Bases*, and *Mother and Child* (*Boshizō*, Saeki Kiyoshi, 1956), *What is Your Name?* and *Soldiers' Girls* (*Onna no bōhatei*, Komori Haku, 1958)—in most cases as a mixed-race child. Although this character undoubtedly underlined the connection between prostitution and the Allied Forces, it

is important to note that in these films, the Occupation is represented as a continuation of the suffering and moral degradation of war, rather than pointed out as a distinct era with different, gendered dynamics of power. Responsibility is more often placed on war, as an abstract tragedy, or alternatively, on the pre-defeat militarist regime.

Most of post-Occupation melodramas highlight the active cooperation of Japanese men in enabling the reintegration of the prostitute, often but not always through romance. In the trilogy of *What is Your Name?* the leading male characters are all depicted as willing to help the women, who are in turn mainly presented as helpless victims or ‘negative subjects’. The disavowal of the post-defeat masculinity crisis is so glaring that virtually all main male characters in the film seem almost unaffected by war, both emotionally and materially. They enjoy successful jobs and are self-confident, which in turn enables them to be very understanding of the tragic past of their female counterparts. *Love Letter*, on the other hand, places greater emphasis on female agency by portraying Michiko’s own process of rehabilitation, independent of her romance with Reikichi. Michiko, infused by the star image of Kuga Yoshiko with a modern and strong-minded femininity, finds herself a job and is determined to rebuild her life with or without him. Furthermore, through the representation of Reikichi’s fears, contradictions, and desires, the film addresses the challenge posed to men to overcome the trauma of defeat, which is allegorically being inscribed in the body and sexuality of Japanese women. Despite its refreshing depiction of masculinity, the intricate romance leads the plot to place the greatest emphasis on having Michiko ‘forgiven’ by Reikichi, and thus indirectly makes her the offender, and he the victim.

Therefore, in these films the much-needed reconstruction of the nation and its identity is approached, firstly, as a matter of female morality, rather than one of physical means or financial development. It is a personal struggle to become a better person. The figure of the prostitute captures both the physical and psychological damage brought by the war; and her reintegration foresees the success of Japan's overcoming its dark past. Serving as a site of identification and projection for the audiences, the prostitute character played a similar role to that of the mother in the national narrative of victimisation; and furthermore, there is an important disavowal of male's position. I argue that, in another disguising mode of narrative—to take Wada-Marciano's term—men must redeem their guilt and suffering through the character of the fallen woman and her punishment, because they cannot speak of their own past and memories, as their guilt and anxiety has no place in the new national narrative.

As the nation's economy improved in the mid-1950s, the moral approach gave way to plots about lower-class communities and dysfunctional families. The prostitute became a recurrent character of humanist films infused with moderate, social criticism. Morality is still relevant, as the story of *Yumeko* depicts; however, the emphasis is located on social inequality and marginalisation. The individual is caught in power dynamics, and becoming a 'fallen woman' or quitting being so is not a matter of moral determination any more. Morality is a pivotal parameter of the societal structure, but is no longer a personal problem. As a liminal example, *Street of Shame* depicts the disappointment after the initial enthusiasm for democracy, equality and consumer capitalism. Other films falling into this category include *Ditch*, *Light of the Red Light District Burns on*, *The Woman in the Rumour* and *Soldiers' Girls*. Blame is directed towards the past, but increasingly more towards

the state for failing its promise to construct a ‘culture state’, and often toward society in general for producing only a cruel rat race for survival. Shindō Kaneto’s *Ditch* is a fascinating example of the latter. A credulous and seemingly half-witted woman named Tsuru (Otowa Nobuko, 1924-1994) finds her way to a *buraku* community that ends up exploiting her as a prostitute. Including a beating by streetwalkers in the style of the *panpan* films, Tsuru experiences all kinds of abuse and confrontation from people who are desperate to survive in an environment where empathy and justice are unaffordable luxuries. Evoking at times both the depiction of Gelsomina (Giulietta Masina, 1921-1994), the naïve and magnetic protagonist of Federico Fellini’s (1920-1993) *The Road* (*La Strada*, 1954), and the aesthetics and techniques of Russian montage, Shindō’s film provides one of the most powerful and ruthless portraits of Japan’s lowest social strata of the time.

From the early 1960s onwards, the decrease in prostitution melodramas is apparent. Although one must take into consideration the gradual decline of the studio system and of the genre, the number of films set in a contemporaneous background is particularly low in comparison to *jidai-geki* and those set in the pre-defeat era.²⁴ In fact, I have not identified a single example between 1970 and 1975. In the few available films, the compound mother-prostitute virtually disappears, and so does her characterisation as the ‘absolute victim’, giving way to more morally complex and ambivalent characters. Such is the case of *Girls of Dark* (*Onna bakari no yoru*, Tanaka Kinuyo, 1961- analysed in the previous chapter) and *A House in the Quarter*. The latter is a curious case that, whilst set in the early 1950s, draws extensively on prewar looks and moral codes to depict the story of Yūko (Sakuma Yoshiko, 1939-),

²⁴ Examples of prostitution films set in the prewar past include *Wave Shadow* (*Nami kage*, Toyoda Shirō, 1965), *Double Suicide* (*Shinjū tenno Amijima*, Shinoda Masahiro, 1969), and *The River with No Bridge* (*Hashi no nai kawa*, Imai Tadashi, 1970).

a young woman sold to a brothel in Kyoto by her family. What initially seems a revival of the former victimisation discourse turns into an intricate story of love and sex.

I would suggest that, as sexual liberation movements advanced and as the economy seemed incessantly to prosper in the ‘Golden Sixties’ under Prime Minister Ikeda Hayato’s (1899-1965) ambitious ‘income-doubling plan’ (Gordon ed. 1993), traditional morality and the socio-economic context ceased being core themes on which to ground appealing prostitute characters. Criticism and subversion against sexual mores and the capitalist system became increasingly radicalised, and hence moved away from the mainstream imagination of the studio system. Although both themes remained relevant to a certain extent, the increasing negative perception of prostitutes in contemporaneous media (see Chapter 1) suggests that they could no longer served as a legitimate melodramatic setting of negotiation. Instead, as discussed in relation to *Girls of Dark* in the *panpan* chapter, these films tend to focus on the personal development of the heroine around themes of romance, self-fulfilment and subjectivity.

Extrapolating Wada-Marciano’s reading of the mother narrative to the prostitute figure I would suggest that her decline in melodrama from the 1960s onwards is the result of the rising economy that made the national narrative of victimisation unnecessary. As argued in Chapter 1, since the Meiji era (1868-1912) prostitution had constituted, through taxation, an important source of income for the state and hence the military budget, while simultaneously enhancing the private development of an economy of consumerism. However, by 1960 the military policies had long been restructured, new entertainment districts and businesses had expanded

greatly (many based on commodified sex but without crossing the official line of prostitution), and private investment had generously fed the economy. Prostitution, therefore, was no longer an invisible pillar of mainstream society, and consequently, narratives of sacrifice and endurance for the sake of the family/nation were no longer necessary.

In the case of the prostitute, however, economy is not enough to explain her cinematic prominence and later absence. Rather I would argue, it is the burden of her allegorical meaning, accumulated through decades that now seemed too problematic. Under the state-regulated system, prostitutes had served the military, the factory workforce, Japanese traders abroad and eventually, the foreign vanquishers. Once Japan regained its sovereignty, official discourses attempted to project an image of the nation in correspondence with western notions of morality, human rights and public space. Against this, prostitution stood as a reminder of the past that was to be justified, reimagined or disavowed in order to construct a progressive Japan. That is, the continuities with the former order betrayed themselves in the enduring presence of these problematic characters. The depiction of prostitutes rendered visible the connection between the sex industry, imperialistic politics and the hardships a significant part of the population endured. Therefore, the link between the state and prostitution needed to be eradicated, or at least removed from normative public spaces.

Paralleling the further isolation and disavowal of the vigorous sex trade of the time, the cinematic prostitute was removed from the spotlight of melodrama. However, she did not lose her allegorical and cathartic potential, but rather evolved to harbour different metaphors and meanings, consistent with the changing reality

new generations were experiencing, and perhaps more suitable for other genres than for melodrama. Thus, from the 1960s onwards, she becomes a recurrent character (albeit often secondary) in yakuza films and thrillers, *avant-garde* cinema and erotic productions. Such is particularly the case of the soft-core pornography of Nikkatsu Roman Porno, discussed in the last chapter, and in which the prostitute re-emerges as a charismatic protagonist.

Chapter 4

Transgressing Boundaries: Roman Porno and Gender Identities

Nikkatsu, the oldest film studio in Japan, celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2012. The commemorative program included a retrospective of Roman Porno, the soft-core films that Nikkatsu produced during almost two decades to stave off bankruptcy. The promotional video of the event, entitled ‘Evergreen Roman Porno’ (*Ikitsuzukeru roman poruno*; hereafter ‘Evergreen’), started with the following written text:

During 17 years, from 1971 to 1988,
It gave birth to many masterpieces that have found a place in history.
It turned out a great number of talented people who have since upheld
Japanese Cinema.
Roman Porno films are not pink films.
They are films **depicting “women” from different perspectives.**¹
(*Evergreen* 2012). See Figure 4.1

Roman Porno is presented as a quality product that will go down in the history of Japanese cinema for its outstanding works and filmmakers. Set against the grain of pink films, the video’s female voice-over stresses that Roman Porno enjoyed the ‘facilities of a first-class studio’ (*Evergreen* 2012). Despite the increasing attention pink cinema is receiving today in academia for its political and artistic value (Fukuma 1996; Sharp 2008; Corral 2012; and Nornes ed. 2014), the implication here is that pink denotes banal, low-quality pornography. By contrast, Evergreen claims that Roman Porno portrays individuals, namely women. The

¹ As shown in Figure 4.1, in the video, over a black background, the bold text appears in bright pink while the rest is written in white.

depiction of nudity and sex are far from being presented as the core of the brand; in fact, the word 'sex' does not appear in the text, and is verbally mentioned only once. What Nikkatsu offers, the promotion claims, is not a monolithic and simplistic depiction of women as some may expect from pornography, but an array of portrayals of female individuals from multiple approaches. The last written line of the video reads 'Women, keep your eyes wide open' (Evergreen 2012). In order to legitimise its representation of gender and body politics in the twenty-first century, Roman Porno addresses women as the major subjects of the films, the agents of its promotional discourse (voice-over narrator), and as the desired audience and enjoying spectators. Femininity and female visual pleasure have been further emphasised in the brand's Reboot Project (*Ribūto purojekuto*), which was launched in 2016 and will be discussed later in this dissertation. However, this chapter aims to demonstrate that, since the beginning of Roman Porno, Nikkatsu was concerned with inscribing its soft-core pornography within the broader narratives of politics, aesthetics, and sexuality that would appeal to its audiences and would infuse its films with cultural value.

Using Nikkatsu's contemporary promotional texts as a starting point, this chapter investigates how Roman Porno depicted prostitutes during its first five years of production (1971-1975), and places them in relation to other Roman Porno female archetypes and to prostitute characters in other genres analysed in previous chapters. For this purpose, I concentrate on patterns of narratives and characterisation, and on those of the depiction of sex and violence. Based on this mapping of conventions, the second part of the chapter turns to explore the prostitute as both a discursive domain and a reflexive site in order to consider what these prostitution films reveal about Japanese masculinity and society in the early 1970s. The last section

problematizes the role of the media and the obscenity trials in providing political meaning to the brand, and thus, indirectly, to the depiction of the prostitute. Before embarking upon the analysis of films, I shall explain the potential and challenges of researching Roman Porno, a field that remains hugely underappreciated and underrepresented in academia despite its industrial and cultural relevance.

Approaching Roman Porno

Roman Porno is an extremely vast category that encompasses at least 700 titles, and over 1,100 if one includes those produced by other companies but released under Nikkatsu's brand. Among them one can find melodrama, thriller, science fiction, comedy, musical, and almost any genre present in mainstream cinema. In addition to the range of genres, changing commercial trends and filmmakers' distinct styles draw a diverse and complex landscape that resists generalisations. The only requirements set by Nikkatsu were that the films last approximately seventy minutes, include a sex scene roughly every ten minutes, and stick to a fixed budget (Nikkatsu 2016a).² Among the sixty Roman Porno films examined for this project, I have found very few shared characteristics; the most prominent are the centrality of female characters and their bodies, the fixation with scopophilia, and the exploitation of the aurality of sex.

Nikkatsu Roman Porno was launched on 20 November 1971 with the premiere of a double program composed of *Apartment Wife: Affair in the Afternoon* (*Danchizuma hirusagari no jōji*, Nishimura Shōgorō, 1971; hereafter *Apartment*

² Whilst the promotional video claims it to be a minimum of 'three sex scenes' per film, not a single one of the works I have examined has such a low number.

Wife)³ and *Castle Orgies (Irogoyomi ōku hiwa, Hayashi Isao)*.⁴ Both films deal with the subject of prostitution, the former set on the contemporary urban middle-class and the latter on the feudal concubine system. In subsequent years, Roman Porno would depict virtually all kinds of prostitutes, including the ‘soapland’ or ‘*toruko* girl’, the streetwalker, the call girl, and the brothel worker.⁵ As heralded by the brand’s debut, plots built around individual women labelled by their occupation became a recurrent feature of the Studio production. Many would become sagas, such as those of the female student, the teacher, the office worker (OL), the nurse, the nun, and of course, the housewife and the sex worker.

Film critic Terawaki Ken recalls the excitement he felt that night of 1971 at the Shinjuku Odeon in Tokyo where *Apartment Wife* was being screened for the first time. The cinema was packed with young men like him, and everyone had high expectations. A major studio shifting virtually all its production to soft-core pornography, and then screening the films in a fully-equipped and respectable venue as the Odeon (instead of the seedy alley street cinemas of pink film), was indeed a daring commercial strategy without precedent (2012: 13-6).⁶ Exceeding by far the seven-million-yen budget regularly allocated to Roman Porno productions (*KJ* 1971 Early Dec: 131), *Apartment Wife* exhibited Nikkatsu’s technical prowess. Marketed

³ When referring to other sequels of the saga the entire title will be provided.

⁴ aka *Eros Schedule Book: Concubine Secrets*, and *Sensual History: Shogun’s Harem Secret Story*.

⁵ ‘Soapland’ is probably the most extensive category, with more than sixty Roman Porno films with the word ‘*toruko buro*’ in the title (Higuchi 2009: 192). Among films set in earlier historical periods, one can find concubines, low-ranking geisha, *jōro* of the pleasure quarters, and Meiji *rashamen* dealing with foreigners (e.g. *Castle Orgies; Secret Chronicle: Prostitution Market* [[*Maruhi*] *Jorō ichiba*, Sone Chūsei, 1972]; and *Foreigner’s Mistress Oman: Holland Slope in the Rain* [*Rashamen Oman: ame no Oranda-zaka*, Sone Chūsei, 1972]).

⁶ Since the mid-1960s, pink films had been only exceptionally screened in major studio-owned cinemas (Standish 2011: 93).

as ‘*roman*’, arguably referring to ‘romantic’ and to the French term for ‘novel’,⁷ it anticipated a *chic* erotic cinema resembling the European productions in fashion at the time. As such, Roman Porno films were ‘all colour’ widescreen, and included sync sound recording, numerous close-ups and the use of soft-focus, as well as carefully decorated studio sets and fashionable costumes; all of these features worked to distance the brand from the pink industry (three-million-yen budget films where only sex scenes were filmed in colour).⁸

Since the mid-1960s, the rapid rise of ‘adult films’ had proven a profitable way out of the dwindling audiences and box office returns major studios were suffering (see Chapter 2). When Daiei Studio closed down in 1971, it was irrefutable that the block booking system was not working (*KJ* 1971 Early Aug: 128). The financial crisis of mainstream productions involved a crisis of national cinema in terms of content and aesthetics, and Nikkatsu was ready (and desperate) to experiment with new alternatives. Building upon the increasing normalisation and spectacularisation of sex and violence, in this new historical stage women became leading characters, allegedly shifting from mere passive recipients to accountable agents at the centre of the story. With the woman at its centre, ‘eroticism’ (*erosu*) became a buzzword that was constantly linked to art, philosophy and politics. Cinema journals followed the development of the soft-porn industries paying special attention to foreign productions, and included extended debates on the definition and potentiality of this regime of representation. Porn magazines, such as *Pocket Punch Oh!* (*Poketto panchi oh!*)—and other descendants of the *kasutori*—regularly featured

⁷ The term allegedly was coined by Nemoto Teiji (1932-2000), who was, at the time, head of Nikkatsu Labour Union and later president of the studio (Nishimura 2006: 21).

⁸ On technical differences between pink and Roman Porno see also Nishimura (2006: 21-23); Sharp (2008: 128-9); McKnight (2012: 4-9); Kimata (2014: 49-50).

pictures and stills of the soft-porn films; but even the women's journal *Fujin kōron* joined the trend. A special reportage on pornography appeared in the journal in December 1967, and many others followed in subsequent years. Alongside pieces on pornography, numerous articles discussing sexual practices, contraceptives, obscenity and censorship suggested that women too were growing accustomed to speaking about sex from a variety of perspectives, which included but were not limited to morality, health, romanticism and feminism (e.g. *FK* 1967 Dec; 1970 Mar: 110-5; 1970 Mar: 140-53; 1972 Mar; 1973 Apr; 1975 May).

In addition to the many-sided, pink industry,⁹ Nikkatsu had to compete with Tōei's 'Pinky Violence' brand¹⁰ and the thriving foreign soft-porn productions, although they were severely censored (*KJ* 1972 Early June: 144; 1973 Late Mar: 148). Early in the 1970s Roman Porno and pink films surpassed the yearly output of the five major studios (Satō 1987: 229). An article published in 1972 noted that, since one third of the imported films—also on the rise—were pornographic works, Shōchiku Studio had announced a new chain of adult cinema venues (*KJ* 1972 Early June: 144). Despite their limited accessibility, the popularity in Japan of works such as the American 'new porno chic' *Deep Throat* (Jerry Gerard, 1972), and especially the French arty erotic film *Emmanuelle* (Just Jaeckin, 1974)¹¹ led to domestic versions, such as *Deep Throat in Tokyo* (*Tōkyō diipu surōto fujin*, Mukai Kan, 1975)

⁹ Pink films on prostitution include *Cruel Map of Women's Bodies* (*Jotai zangyaku zu*, Sakao Masanao, 1967), *Report on Prostitution Assault* (*Baishun bōkō hakusho*, Watanabe Mamoru, 1970), and *Maria, the Prostitute* (*Baishunfu Maria*, Wakamatsu Kōji, 1975), amongst many others.

¹⁰ Tōei Porno, retrospectively known as Pinky Violence, emerged in the late 1960s and included numerous stories about prostitution. The brand was considered more sensationalist and of lower quality than Roman Porno (Higuchi 2009: 72). See also Sugisaku and Uechi (1999); Sharp (2008); Corral (2012); Kozma (2014).

¹¹ *Emmanuelle* became a great hit in Japan and had unprecedented success among women audiences, although it was also criticised for its racist depiction of the Orient. See, for example, *Kinema junpō* (1974 Late Oct: 139-140; 1974 Early Nov) and *Fujin kōron* (1975 May; 1975 Jul). *Deep Throat* received a limited release in 1975 (*Asahi shinbun* 1975 Sep 12: 9).

and the Roman Porno's *Tokyo Emmanuelle* (*Tōkyō Emanieru fujin*, Katō Akira, 1975), which became the first of Nikkatsu's soft-core productions to be distributed in the UK.

In many western countries, with the softening of censorship, pornography enjoyed great attention in both high and low cultural spheres, opening up to mixed audiences in public cinemas in the 1970s (Waugh 2004; Williams 2008: 125-6; Gorfinkel 2011).¹² Linda Williams argues that the convergence of several technological, cultural, and economic factors made the early 1970s a turning point in the ways in which people saw, talked and made sex (2008: 120-7, 141-143). She points to *Last Tango in Paris* (*Ultimo tango a Parigi*, Bernardo Bertolucci) and *Deep Throat*, both released in 1972—the same year Roman Porno was established—as symbolically marking this transformation. The date is not so relevant, but this parallelism underscores the international nature of the phenomenon, and more significantly the convergence of different spheres such as the crisis of the studio system, the Vietnam War, the student movements and the distress of post-industrial consumerism—all of which were staged in Roman Porno films. Therefore, Nikkatsu's brand must be understood within a transnational and trans-media trend of exploitation and the lessening of censorship; and simultaneously inscribed in global currents of political and financial expansion of capitalism, which led to a wave of social movements that made of sexual liberation, and its explicit depiction, political actions.

¹² To mention other few illustrative examples, *Penthouse* magazine began publication in 1965; Denmark removed all restrictions to written forms of pornography in 1967; in 1970 the Wet Dream Film Festival started in Amsterdam and the International Erotic Film Festival in San Francisco; and *Hustler* emerged in 1974.

Over the short period encompassed in this chapter (1971-1975), I have identified twenty dramas set between 1945 and 1975 where a prostitute is the leading character. If we were to consider other genres, films depicting sporadic acts of sex trade, or those set in previous historical periods, the number would easily be three times higher. The film corpus, although very limited in comparison with the immense Roman Porno filmography, includes works by the most acclaimed filmmakers of Nikkatsu at the time, namely Kumashiro Tatsumi (1927-1995), Tanaka Noboru (1937-2006) and Sone Chūsei (1937-2014); performances by the most iconic female stars such as Shirakawa Kazuko (1947-), Miyashita Junko (1949-) and Seri Meika (1954-); and male stars like Maeno Sōichirō (1946-1976),¹³ Takahashi Akira (??-??), and Awazu Gō (1945-2000).

Among these works, three primary case studies have been selected for their commercial and historical relevance, and because each of them deals with a different type of prostitute. *Apartment Wife* revolves around a housewife who enters the world of prostitution, and inaugurated the ‘Apartment Wife’ saga, which now has more than twenty sequels. *Street of Joy* (*Akasen Tamanoi nukeraremasu*, Kumashiro Tatsumi, 1974), considered by some as a free adaptation of Mizoguchi Kenji’s *Street of Shame* (*Akasen chitai*, 1956), tells the stories of five prostitutes working in a brothel in 1955. It was the first Roman Porno to achieve an international release, being screened uncensored in Cannes Film Festival in 1976, where it is said to have received ‘rave reviews from the French Press’ (*New York Times* 2010). Moreover, *Street of Joy* stood at number 13 of *Eiga geijutsu*’s ranking of best films of the year; and still ranks at number 155 of *Kinema junpō*’s best 200 films of Japanese cinema

¹³ Maeno, an ultra-nationalist, is also known for perpetrating a suicide attack on right-wing leader of organised crime Kodama Yoshio (1911-1984) in 1976.

(as of 2017). The third case study, *Secret Chronicle: She Beast Market* ([*Maruhi*] *Shikijō mesu ichiba*, Tanaka Noboru, 1974; hereafter *She Beast Market*),¹⁴ follows a streetwalker in Osaka who attempts to be completely independent. Chosen by *Eiga geijutsu* as the third best Japanese film produced in 1974 (not only within the soft-porn category) (1975 Feb-Mar: n.p.), it is positioned 86th in *Kinema junpō*'s best 200 ranking. Almost forty years later, a still of this film was selected for the poster of the retrospective 'Evergreen' (see Figure 4.2).

Among the twenty films relevant for this chapter—hereafter referred to as prostitution films, I was able to watch eleven and examine synopses and reviews of all the others. Many Roman Porno films, and particularly those of the early years, never made it onto video or DVD. Film archives have traditionally neglected soft-porn films as not worthy of preservation; and hence, pay-per-view websites offering all kinds of pornographic videos are the best source available today.¹⁵ Adult cinemas in Japan still screen old Roman Porno films but as in other countries, these venues are disappearing from the urban landscapes.¹⁶ With the spread of home video technologies, and later the Internet and streaming software, the consumption of film pornography has gradually shifted from the public into the private space. Bearing in

¹⁴ aka *Confidential: Secret Market*, and *Confidential: Sexual Market*.

¹⁵ Some of the most useful sites are: R18.com, previously known as DMM.r18, which is at the present day (2016) the largest Japanese pornographic site of video on demand; Arzon, a Japanese site of sale and rent of adult videos; and to a lesser extent, general Japanese film rental sites, like K-plus, Posren, and Tsutaya—most of them can only be accessed from within Japan. Among internationally available portals for streaming Hot Movie Share and Xvideos are among the most popular.

¹⁶ In most cases, the program rotates every week and consists of three films among which one usually belongs to the late 1970s. The film listings are published in certain local newspapers, but many of these cinemas do not have a website. According to an employee of the cinema Shinsekai Nikkatsu gekiba in Osaka, films are chosen and sent from Tokyo, together with posters and other promotional material (2014). For more on adult cinemas in Japan see Nornes (ed. 2014) and particularly Michael Arnold's chapter.

mind the unavailability of a substantial number of films, the following analysis should be understood as referring fully only to the works here mentioned.

Despite the scarcity and inaccessibility of sources, it must be said that Nikkatsu's 100th anniversary fostered a re-evaluation of Roman Porno. 'Evergreen' toured around fifteen prefectures from Hokkaido to Okinawa between October 2012 and January 2013. Directors such as Kumashiro, Tanaka, and Sone were praised as *auteurs* and referred to as 'Japan's Nouvelle Vague—the gifted ones born from Nikkatsu Roman Porno' (*Evergreen* 2012). Coinciding with the anniversary, the studio released numerous films on DVD, produced several remakes and homage works, including one to *Apartment Wife* directed by Nakahara Shun in 2010. In Japan, new written works on the subject were published (e.g. Terawaki 2012; Matsumoto 2012), adding to a steady building up of bibliography since the mid-1980s (Yamane ed. 1983; Roman Poruno ed. 1997; Uchida ed. 2006; Higuchi 2009). The majority of these publications, however, are limited to film synopsis and profiles of filmmakers and actors (and particularly actresses). Generously decorated with stills and posters of the films, they are mainly written by fans and film critics—virtually all men with the exception of Kitagawa Reiko—and tend to be manifestly subjective, full of nostalgia and personal memories of the viewings. Despite the lack of an academic critical stance, these sources provide insights into the demographics and psychographics of the audiences, and into the atmosphere in adult cinemas in the 1970s. They invite us to reflect upon the branding of Roman Porno, its place in popular culture, and its contribution to the cinematic imaginary as memory. As will be later discussed, the consumption of pornography as a social and public activity, and even as a political action, deserves greater attention. Likewise, the nostalgia with which many recall the experience should not be underestimated. Yet, beyond these

examples of journalistic film history, the generalised paucity of academic literature on Roman Porno constitutes one of the biggest challenges of this chapter.

The prominence of the female body in heterosexual erotic cinema is undeniable; however, there is much controversy over *how* women are depicted and what those representations signify. Pornography has always aroused heated debates, but it was not until the late 1970s that it was systematically interrogated from the perspective of cultural studies. Feminist movements played a major part at this stage, to the point that pornography became a source of reinvigorated energy but also a source of dissension within the women's movement; the so-called 'porn wars' (Ellis [1980] 1992; Stern [1982] 1992; Ussher 1997; Williams [1989] 1999; Shibata 2008). The disagreement continues today, but more and more feminists and academics are shifting from the question of whether there should be pornography, to an analysis of how it functions, what are its conventions, who is involved in its articulation, and what is its impact on popular culture. The work of Linda Williams ([1989] 1999, ed. 2004, 2008) has significantly contributed to the maturity of 'porn studies' as a legitimate area of research, providing it with a theoretical and methodological framework. Drawing on Foucault, she approaches sexuality as a discursive form; and therefore its representation is inextricable from articulations of power, knowledge, and pleasure. For her, the history of the cinematic representation of sex must be approached as a fluctuating dialectic between revelation and concealment, between *on/scene* and *off/scene* (i.e. what is rendered *obscene*) (2008: 2). Her work attempts to illuminate the discursive forces that through time have defined the boundaries between what can be shown and what should remain hidden.

Also within American scholarship, Thomas Waugh in his analysis of stag films argues that underneath the conspicuous prominence given to the female body

on screen, lies the ‘unconscious masculinity on display’ (2004: 129). As he explains, although the male body is systematically marginalised, ‘the stag films, both on-screen and off-screen, are tenaciously engaged with the homosocial core of masculinity as constructed within American society’ (2004: 128). Here Waugh uses the term off-screen to refer to both the filmmakers and the spectators. Masculinity is constructed and reinforced as ‘monolithically uniform’, both through the images of women on screen and through the communal experience of watching those images in a homosocial environment (2004: 132). Despite significant differences with my context of research, Waugh’s approach is particularly useful to enquire into the construction of gender identities through film, and to reflect on the social experience of consuming pornography. The diegetic centrality of femininity can reveal much about the extradiegetic masculinity at play. In the early 1970s Roman Porno was not consumed in a strictly homosocial environment; however, based on the conspicuous predominance of men among audiences, staff, and critics, this chapter considers how on-screen gender dynamics correlate with the off-screen economic, political and cultural factors underpinning the films’ production and consumption.

Much of ‘porn studies’ still focuses on the American market, but crucial differences regarding the historico-cultural context and cinematic conventions make apparent the need to develop a framework tailored to Japan’s soft-porn. Whilst studies on the subject have increased substantially in the last two decades, the majority are located within the discipline of Film History and hence rarely engage in the kind of discussions developed in porn studies.¹⁷ Moreover, most encompass several kinds of sexploitation films instead of focusing on Nikkatsu’s brand. In

¹⁷ See Weisser and Mihara Weisser (1998); Johnson (2003); Sharp (2008); Corral (2012); Kozma (2014) Nornes (ed. 2014). Others focus on censorship and the obscenity trials (Alexander 2003; Standish 2007, 2011; Cather 2012, 2014a).

recent years, nevertheless, inspiring works examining the ways in which certain Roman Porno films reflected upon Japan's cultural and social dynamics have emerged (McKnight 2012; Cather 2014b; Hatokai 2016). These works inform the framework of this chapter, which in turn questions their validity when applied to a broader group of films.

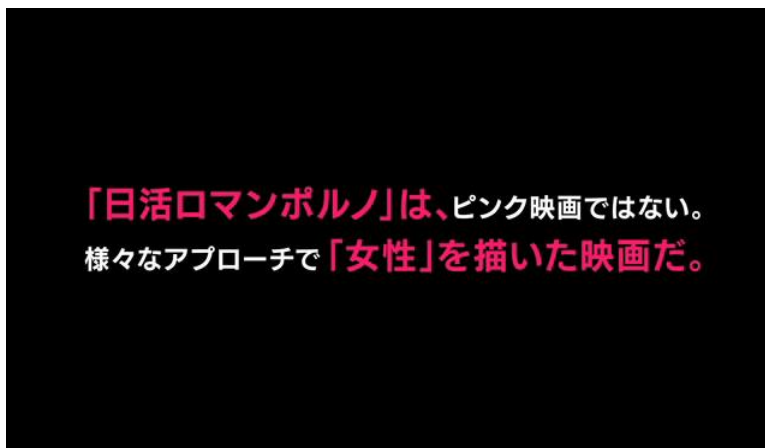


Figure 4.1. A still from the promotional video *Evergreen Roman Porno* asserting the brand's focus on women.



Figure 4.2. Poster of the retrospective 'Evergreen Roman Porno' using a still of *She Beast Market* starring Seri Meika.

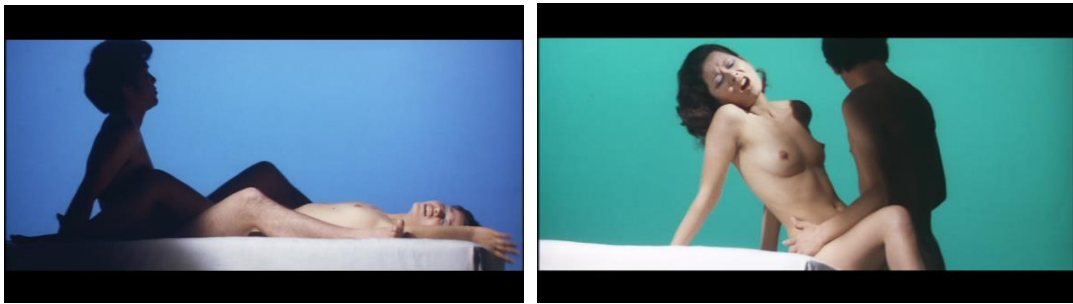


Figure 4.3. Shirakawa Kazuko in *Apartment Wife*.



Figure 4.4. Seri Meika discusses finances with a colleague in *Last Day*. To make ends meet in a month she takes 83 hourly customers and 29 sleepovers, which amounts 122 customers. Calculating the number of sex acts that entails, the total rises to 180 a month.



Figure 4.5. On the left, *Street of Shame*'s last scene; on the right, *Last Day*'s similar ending scene.

Depicting prostitutes from different perspectives:

The opening scene of *Apartment Wife* magnificently sets out the story line. A hand-held camera, like the eyes of an intruder, moves through the air exploring a newly furnished apartment until it finds a dimly lit bedroom. Inside Ritsuko (Shirakawa Kazuko) is having sex with her husband, Ryōhei. He finishes and turns around to sleep:

Ritsuko - *Darling, I haven't yet...*

Ryōhei - *I'm tired, work is so busy.*

Ritsuko is a housewife who spends her days alone idly in her modern apartment complex (*danchi*), while longing for the expensive commodities her neighbours enjoy. Married to a 'salary man' (*sarariiman*) and sexually frustrated, she begins an extramarital affair, which is discovered by a neighbour, who blackmails Ritsuko into working for her. After initial contention, Ritsuko seems to enjoy her new secret life and the luxury goods she can now afford.

By the time of the film's release, Shirakawa had already starred in 200 pink 'eroductions'. Enjoying considerable fame in the erotic film industry, she almost immediately became the number one star of Roman Porno (Terawaki 2012: 27; Kimata 2014: 81). In contrast, director Nishimura Shōgorō had remained a relatively anonymous figure at Nikkatsu. After joining the Studio, he worked as an assistant for Nakahira Kō (1926-1978), a major exponent of the 'sun tribe' (*taiyō zoku*) controversial youth films. Debuting as a director in 1963, Nishimura made several action and youth films, but it was with Roman Porno that he finally found success. In subsequent years, he directed almost half of the sequels of the 'Apartment Wife'

series, including at least three others about prostitution.¹⁸ Claiming to have never seen a pink film before, Nishimura recalls in an interview that he felt very disoriented with the task the Studio has assigned to him in 1971, and spent the entire shoot asking Shirakawa, who could even be considered co-director, for advice and suggestions (Nishimura 1983: 28-9). Without taking Nishimura's statement at face value, what I wish to stress is that the marketing and production of the film was designed around Shirakawa, not Nishimura. In fact, Hatokai Mio explains that projects were conceived tied to specific actresses, and the directors would rotate (2016: 34). Stories were built around the female star image: Shirakawa as a conventional woman bewildered by her own sexual drive, Miyashita as a romantic illogical sweet woman, and Seri as a reckless independent survivor. Therefore, the focus on the *auteur*, dominating Nikkatsu's recent projects and reflected also in the scholarship (Johnson 2003; Katō 2011; Cather 2014b; Hatokai 2016), was not an initial feature of the brand but came later, fostered by film critics, as I will later argue.

In terms of narrative, the prostitute character shows, in most cases, depth and complexity; something that cannot be said about her male counterparts, who often come across as *clichés* of masculinity that lack any substantial character evolution throughout the plot. As the following examples illustrate, women are depicted as determined and proactive subjects who take the lead and make the story advance. The heroine of *New Danchi Wife- The Prostitutes of Building 13* (*Shin danchizuma baishun gurūpu 13 gōkan*, Nishimura Shōgorō, 1975; hereafter *New Danchi Wife*), a

¹⁸ For the complete list of 'Apartment Wife' saga see McKnight (2012: 6-7). Nishimura additionally directed several other films about prostitution for the Studio, such as the remake of *Gate of Flesh* (*Nikutai no mon*, 1977).

mature housewife played by Tama Rumi (1949-),¹⁹ brutally kills the man who abuses and forces her into prostitution. *Crazy for Love* (*Koigurui*, Katō Akira, 1971) depicts Shirakawa as a desiring subject, holding the gaze in a scene that inserts point-of-view shots from her perspective of a man opening his shirt, followed by a close-up of his nipple and then the counter shot of her staring. In *She Beast Market*, when a customer treats Tome (Seri Meika) in a violent and demeaning way, she pushes him away, kicks him, pours beer over his head (as he was doing before to her) and sticks the money in his mouth before she leaves the room. Additionally, these films frequently underscore the prostitutes' role as wage earners who financially support male lovers, siblings or fathers (e.g. *Street of Joy*, *Afternoon Affair: Metamorphosis* [*Hirusagari no jōji: henshin*, Tanaka Noboru, 1973; hereafter *Metamorphosis*], and *White Whore* [*Shiroi shōfu kashin no takamari*, Konuma Masaru, 1974]). Therefore, on a general basis, heroines are presented either not as victims, or as victims who turn the tables with whatever consequences this may bring.

The prominence given to her in the narrative is mirrored on screen, where the prostitute's body flagrantly dominates space, time, and sound. Despite important exceptions that will be discussed later, sex scenes usually constitute a meticulous assembly of numerous shots of great diversity in field size, camera angle, movement and length. In most cases they are shot with hand-held camera in long takes where middle shots abound. Sometimes the camera freely flows around the characters; at others it focuses in on the woman, evoking the gaze of a scopophilic intruder. In discussing the stag films, Waugh points out that the female body is virtually the only protagonist on the screen, while men's faces and bodies are systematically cut out of

¹⁹ As many other Roman Porno actresses, Tama began her career in the pink film industry in the 1960s, before transferring to Nikkatsu. In 1981 she set up to direct soft-core porn films, and later in the 1990s began to write her own scripts as well.

the frame (2004: 128). Whilst exhibiting much more complex camera work than the stag films (characterised by static shots), a similar logic seems to govern the cinematography of Roman Porno to a lesser extent. Lengthy close-ups of the woman's face insistently occupy the screen, interspersed with inserts of her breasts and other fragmented parts of her body, while in stark contrast, the male body is only very rarely fragmented into close-ups. During sex scenes, his face is usually turned away from the camera; and in those exceptions where close-ups of his face appear, they tend to hold a comical or grotesque effect, as in the case of *She Beast Market*. It is worth noting that the marginalisation of the male figure from the screen is consistent throughout the prostitute film corpus, regardless of the different styles in plot, camera editing and female representation. Masculine bodies are narrative devices, secondary props that cannot be spectacularised.

Apartment Wife offers a meaningful example of this gendered screen in a succession of shots featuring sexual intercourse between Ritsuko and several men, as her voice-over declares she has embraced her new facet as a prostitute. Each time the action is set against a plain background of a different bright colour (white, green, blue and red) with an artful lightning that resembles that of a fashion photography studio (see Figure 4.3). In the foreground of a wide shot, Ritsuko is engaged in sexual acts creating stylised compositions, each time in a different position. Despite the distance from the camera, her (non-visible) physical sensations are effectively materialised by the expressivity of her face and body, fully illuminated and in constant motion. Her anonymous and voiceless partners, on the other hand, remain in the shadow of these *chiaroscuro* compositions. One can only see enough of them to realise it is a different man in each shot. As shown in Figure 4.3, in one the male figure appears as a two-dimensional black profile, and in another the man is

artificially turning his face away from the camera and from Ritsuko. The stillness and total lack of expression of the men contrast with her exaggerated contortions. Despite supposedly depicting a prostitute providing sexual services to satisfy men, it is the men who are mere tools for her pleasure.

Consistent with Laura Mulvey's ground-breaking analysis of the gaze (1975), it is clear that despite the agency shown in her characterisation, Ritsuko is above all an object of visual pleasure, and that her sexuality is constructed as a spectacle at the service of the fantasies of the heterosexual male viewer. As Mulvey states,

[t]he beauty of the woman as object and the screen space coalesce; she is no longer the bearer of guilt but a perfect product, whose body, stylised and fragmented by close-ups, is the content of the film and the direct recipient of the spectator's look.

(1975: 14)

In *White Whore* and *Metamorphosis*, too, entire scenes lacking narrative relevance serve only the purpose of exhibiting the female body, giving the spectator time to admire and scrutinise it. *Metamorphosis* is exceptional because the heroine is completely reduced to an object defined by its 'to-look-at-ness'. Aoyama Miyoko (1951-) plays the 'office lady' (OL), Ryōko, who works as a call girl in the evenings to support her dysfunctional family. A lengthy sequence registers Ryōko's evening 'metamorphosis' as she changes her clothes and puts on make-up while playing around the heavily decorated apartment where she works at night. The camera carefully tilts up and down her body in the shower, closes in on her nipples as she applies some kind of lotion, and tracks along her hands caressing expensive clothes. Over and over, her lips, eyes, thighs and breasts are shown in fragmented extreme close-up shots. Ryōko moves in a confident and jaunty manner that exudes eroticism, but it comes across as rehearsed and over-conscious of a spectator's gaze

(whether this is deliberate or an acting issue is hard to tell). Night-time Ryōko starkly contrasts with the daytime OL who keeps a chaste attitude towards her fiancé, but at no point are her behaviour, feelings or motivations explained in any way.

As a result of this lack of characterisation, the spectator is induced to inspect her, rather than to identify with her. Throughout the film the camera records each one of her movements, compulsively closing in on her, not only in the apartment or during sex scenes, but also as she walks the streets, as she works, and as she dresses and undresses herself. The story is based on the familiar archetype of a mysterious woman leading a double life that invites the spectator to discover her ‘truth’, through a systematic observation of her body. Far from challenging the dichotomy of respectable lady (day) and ‘fallen woman’ (night), the film reinforces these stereotypical constructions of femininity, which appears stylised and trapped in the eroticism of visual pleasure. The objectification of Ryōko is further emphasised by her relationship with other characters that position her as a passive recipient of their actions and desires: her parents exploit her, her boss sexually extorts her, customers pay for her sexual services, and a young boy of the neighbourhood who idealises her stabs her upon discovering her night occupation. Ryōko is, therefore, object of desire, economic exchange, power and punishment.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, a third pattern of representation, one which denies the objectification of the female image, can be found in films like Kumashiro’s *Street of Joy* and *Last Day of the Red Light District: March 31, 1958* (*Akasen saigo no hi: shōwa 33 nen 3 gatsu 31 nichi*, Shiratori Shin’ichi, 1974; hereafter *Last Day*). Kumashiro, frequently working with cinematographer Himeda

Shinsaku (1916-1997),²⁰ minimised the use of close-ups and shot/reverse-shots, hampering the identification with the characters. Most sex scenes in *Street of Joy* tend to be sequence shots with low lighting. The camera stays in a wide shot, only occasionally punching in. In more than half of the sex scenes of the film, and in many of *Last Day*, the prostitutes are featured almost completely dressed, while in the remaining scenes only their bare breasts are exhibited. It is striking that, even within the limitations imposed by censorship, there is not a single depiction of an entire nude (neither female nor male). Moreover, Kumashiro's films obstinately play down the aural quality of sex: sighs, so exaggerated in *Apartment Wife*, are sporadic, brief and faltering, whereas voices are often re-recorded (synced in post) with very little ambient sound, which produces a distancing effect in the spectator. By rejecting the spectacularisation of sex and body, these films call into question the alleged sole purpose of erotic cinema as arousing its viewers.

This analysis of characterisation demonstrates there is not a single pattern of representation; the narrative construction of the prostitute as agent is not necessarily reinforced in the audio-visual representation, where she is often deemed an object of visual pleasure. I will later return to this heterogeneity to discuss its implications for the viewer's dynamics of identification. For now, I wish to highlight that nevertheless, the rate of positive and determined female characters in prostitution films is significantly higher in comparison to other Roman Porno genres, such as the 'buddy films', the rebel male antihero stories, and of course to those of rape and (train) molesters, where women tend to be secondary characters or passive victims.

²⁰ The cinematographer of *Street of Joy*, Himeda is also a regular in Imamura Shōhei's crew, working on other films discussed in this study, such as *Pigs and Battleships* (*Buta to gunkan*, 1961) and *Insect Woman* (*Nippon konchūki*, 1963).

Screening sex

In the introduction of *Screening Sex*, Williams calls attention ‘to the double meaning of the verb *to screen* as both revelation and concealment’ and argues that in the cinematic representation of sex, ‘every revelation is also a concealment that leaves something to the imagination’ (2008: 2). Building upon the above analysis of cinematography, this section considers the constraints and opportunities brought about by censorship, and its role in configuring the sexual imagination of Roman Porno.

In *Apartment Wife* and other early Roman Porno films, sex scenes are outstandingly graphic and explicit. The camera is located with great precision to close in on the actors as much as possible, and to enhance the illusion of real sex. For instance, when Ritsuko is practicing fellatio on an American patron, a deal that her husband has unknowingly set up, the camera is located behind the male actor at the height of his buttocks, as he stands with his legs apart. Ritsuko’s neck and chest are seen in between his legs, while the camera focuses on the movements of her throat muscles that provide a vivid illusion of the act of sucking. To avoid the depiction of genitals, scenes are partially blurred (*bokashi*); however, the following example demonstrates how these early films cunningly made of ‘blurring’ a means of manufacturing even more realistic and arousing simulation of sex. After her secret life as a prostitute is exposed, Ritsuko resolves to run away with her lover Kirimura, who is also involved in the sex industry. As they drive away into the countryside along a winding road, Ritsuko performs fellatio on Kirimura. We are faced with what seems to be a blurred image of an erect penis of great size. However, since sex is simulated in Roman Porno, we *know* actress Shirakawa is not performing such act.

That is, there is in fact no penis to be blurred but it is precisely the censorship that fosters the spectator's imagination.

The display of actors' entire nude bodies engaged in sexual activity led to indictment under charges of obscenity scarcely two months after the launch of Roman Porno. The Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department Office of Security seized three of its works and one pink film denouncing they were no different from 'blue films' (hard-core porn films –*burū firumu*) (KJ 1972 Early Mar: 134).²¹ After the indictment on 19 January 1972, *Eirin* (Japanese Film Ethics Regulation Control Committee)²² issued a new set of regulations disapproving any suggestion of genitals or vocalisations during sex scenes (Cather 2012: 142-3). As a result, hyper-realistic simulations of sex diminished substantially, and *bokashi* became commonly substituted by white or black patches superimposed on genitals and sexual acts. However, censorship devices continued to work as an unexpected source of arousal. In his analysis of Kumashiro's style, William Johnson underscores the ambivalent effect of the patches and claims that they 'call attention and imagination to the censored areas, all the more so because the rectangles are continually shifting and the scratches [sic][patches] stand out in fully animated white' (2003: 16).

Linda Williams, building upon Georges Bataille's argument of the essential role of taboo in the erotic signification,²³ describes the arousing effect of the censorship as the 'pleasure of concealment' by which we recreate the off-scene (*obscene*) elements in our imagination (2008: 2-15). The following testimony of a

²¹ Namely, *Diary of an Office Lady: Scent of a She-Cat* (*OL nikki: mesuneko no nioi*, Fujii Katsuhiko), *Love Hunter* (*Koi no karyūdo: rabu hantā*, Yamaguchi Seiichirō), and *The Warmth of Love* (*Ai no nukumori*, Kondō Yukihiko), which was added later to the indictment; and the pink film *High School Geisha* (*Jokōsei geisha*, Umezawa Kaoru); all released in 1972.

²² *Eirin* is the abbreviated name for *Eiga rinri kanri iinkai*.

²³ Williams is referring to Bataille's *Eroticism: Death and Sensuality* (1962).

Japanese film critic about his experience of watching porn in Scandinavia in the 1970s upholds Bataille's hypothesis, which links the breaking down of taboos to a fading of desire. The critic claimed that the experience was so safe and open 'that my excitement is half', because part of the interest in watching porn, he explained, lay on feeling one should not be watching it; and hence if that was to disappear, pornography would 'reach an end point (*endo punto*)' (*KJ* 1973 Late Mar: 162). The persistent use of censorship and of a scopophilic cinematography are still distinct features of the imagination of legal Japanese porn, and one wonders if they constitute an integral part of the pleasure many spectators find in it.

On the other hand, besides legal pressure, financial reasons were behind the decline of the lush style exhibited in *Apartment Wife*. Despite the popular and critical success of some of Nikkatsu's productions, the fact is that Roman Porno was far from being a 'cash cow' (*KJ* 1973 Late Apr; 1974 Early Nov; Kitagawa 1974). Soon more low-budget productions, shot entirely on location, became increasingly common, but directors like Tanaka and Kumashiro turned financial and technical constrictions into their artistic signature²⁴ and gained critical acclaim for it. In recent years, Nikkatsu has retrospectively framed their all-location style as evidence of the experimental taste of its productions, and as an invaluable documentary record of the landscapes and atmospheres of Japanese cities at the time (Nikkatsu 2012).

Depictions of paid sex vary substantially across the film corpus in terms of length, content, and approach. The previous section showed that cinematography and *mise-en-scène* in films such as *Apartment Wife*, *Crazy for Love*, *Metamorphosis*, and *White Whore* transform the sensorial experience into an audio-visual spectacle of

²⁴ On the strategies used by Kumashiro to reduce the budget such as avoiding complex lighting and using post-recorded sound see Johnson (2003). Relatedly, Jasper Sharp in his work on Japanese erotic film compares the style of Tanaka Noboru with the French *Nouvelle Vague* (2008: 134).

‘pornotopia’ (Williams [1989] 1999; Preciado 2010). The prostitute’s body functions as a reification of female sexual desire and satisfaction, and consequently, as a means to display men’s prowess. Sex scenes are abundant and often last over three minutes. *Apartment Wife*, for instance, includes eleven sex scenes, the longest of which lasts 5.5 minutes. The total time occupied in screening sex comprises 25.7 minutes, taking up more than one third of the total 63 minutes of the film. As discussed above, these scenes include virtually no narrative content other than sex; and the plot is suspended to allow the spectator to fully concentrate on the pleasure of seeing sex.

Quite differently, in films like *Street of Joy*, *Night of the Felines* (*Mesu nekotachi no yoru*, Tanaka Noboru, 1972) and *She Beast Market*, sex scenes frequently are interrupted by or overlapped with dialogue, comic gags, and unrelated actions depicted in cross-cutting. This structure prevents the extended and continued spectacle that would facilitate the escapist fantasy traditionally associated with porn. The representation of paid sex is especially grim in *She Beast Market*. Set in the humid summer of Osaka, sex scenes generally take place in wretched rooms and gloomy environments full of sweat and dirt. Tome (Seri Meika), serves any man who takes her, but as one patron notes, makes no effort to pretend to enjoy sex. She often seems completely indifferent, and sometimes her expression reveals mockery, disgust, and pain. The only occasion when tenderness and pleasure arises on her face is when she sexually engages with her mentally challenged stepbrother. In *Street of Joy*, on the other hand, the prostitutes experience sex with different partners in various ways (e.g. romantically, violently, passionately, detachedly and playfully); but discharge and even pleasure are not as central as might be expected. The scene

often is cut before the sexual act reaches a climax, and even when it does, prostitutes rarely experience orgasm.

In contrast with *Apartment Wife*, where the heroine enjoys every sexual act as self-realisation, these films depict sex as labour. This is stressed in all four films by inserting shots of money lying on the bed or held in the hands of a prostitute during sexual acts. For instance, in *Last Day*, a bill is used as an erotic toy by one of the patrons on the body of Seri. *Street of Joy* includes at least four occasions where a clock is inserted in between sex scenes. This image evokes the industrial factory, the notion that time is money, and so is sex for these women. Further demystifying the world of paid sex, Oka Naomi reveals her trick to increase her productivity, which consists in heating her vagina by squatting over the stove in order to make her patrons ejaculate faster, and hence allowing her to take on more customers. Paid sex is, therefore, in most cases presented as a game for the prostitutes; and the sexual act is by no means romanticised, being at times unpleasant, brief, painful, frustrating or simply unfinished. Rejecting pornographic myths, they depict sex as a personal and socio-economic performance, a site of power contentions. In this way, as I will further argue, these films addressed contemporary concerns of gender and sexuality threatening the *status quo*, which were partially triggered by new waves of feminism movements, the fevered market economy, and the crisis of national politics and the Left in particular.

To understand the paradoxical discourses revolving in and around Roman Porno, it is necessary to further consider the disruptive potential of sex images in terms of gender. In *Apartment Wife*, for instance, masturbation is a symbolic instance of agency that marks Ritsuko's awakening to desire, which ultimately will lead her to abandon her husband and her social position as *danchi* housewife. Although not

exempt from patriarchal stereotypes, the exploration of sex as power is staged predominately from the woman's point of view, and enquires how do women experience and use sexuality. During the Roman Porno trial (1972-1980), the prosecutor accused the defendants of having lost sight of 'the concepts of a healthy sexual order and good sexual morality that are fundamental to our nation's citizens' consciousness' (as translated in Cather 2012: 136). Among the explicit depictions considered especially pernicious, the prosecutor mentioned 'sexual intercourse and petting, rape, woman-on-woman petting, and female masturbation and poses alike' (*KJ* 1973 Late Aug: 78).

All of these appear in *Apartment Wife* and *Crazy for Love*, and the fact that female masturbation features in the majority of the film corpus evidences that, despite the indictment, Nikkatsu did not fully comply with those attempting to restrain it. However, what I wish to highlight is that in the trial, women's sexuality was located at the centre of the target, and sources of women's pleasure independent from men were deemed particularly objectionable. Rape is categorised as a sexual act rather than an act of violence, something altogether disregarded in the debates about the acceptability of Roman Porno at the time. Through these kinds of remarks about the gendered experiences of sexuality and their admissibility (or lack thereof), ideology is exposed: the woman is the foremost bearer of 'good sexual morality' and accountable for 'the citizens' consciousness'. Therefore, male-centred conceptions of the symbolic relation between power and sex are as much embedded in the films as they are in the moral-legal institutions evaluating them.

Isolde Standish, analysing *In the Realm of the Senses* (*Ai no koriida*, Ōshima Nagisa, 1976), argues that Ōshima varies the locus of male pleasure to locate it in the woman's active desire; something not so common in western hard-core porn (2007:

218, 225). Yet, as she demonstrates, the female desire remains structured within a male-centric imagination, where the penis is overvalued through narrative and stylistic devices ‘as the sole source of female pleasure’ (Standish 2007: 224). What is truly transgressive of Ōshima’s film, Standish argues, is the numerous shots of flaccid penises, because they ‘open up fissures between the reality of the physical organ and its symbolic function within a patriarchal society’ (2007: 226); that is, between the penis and the phallus. Standish’s approach to the phallogentric imagination pervasive in the porn of the 1970s encourages new ways of understanding the disruptive nature of a group of Roman Porno’s prostitution films including *Street of Joy*, *Last Day* and *She Beast Market*.

First, similar to *In the Realm of the Senses* and contrary to other films in the corpus exemplified by *Apartment Wife*, these films underscore the ineffectual penis in several ways. Although genitals are not displayed in soft-porn, prostitutes often make scornful remarks on the patrons’ flaccid or small penises and their lack of prowess. Moreover, their expressions and attitudes often stress the lack of pleasure and even interest most men are unable to arouse in them. At other times, the artificiality and exaggeration of the prostitutes’ performance is comically exposed. The construct of masculinity is further ridiculed in *Street of Joy*, where a gigantic sculpture of an erect penis (taller than the women) serves as a talisman or totem, which all prostitutes rub as they start their workday praying to attract many patrons. Recurrent mocking reveals the absurdity of the association between the penis and the symbolic power of the phallus. The result is a self-reflexive joke that exposes the fundamental role of the phallus and the disavowed flaccid penis in the fantasy of masculinity that stands at the centre of both porn and prostitution.

Second, while Ōshima's film depicts the penis as the exclusive source of pleasure for Abe Sada, Roman Porno prostitution films (and here I include the entire film corpus) frequently depict female masturbation, cunnilingus, and woman-on-woman petting. In Kumashiro's film, female masturbation is especially relevant because in two out of three occasions it is not presented as a surrogate or preparation for heterosexual sex, but as goal in itself. Thus, female desire and pleasure are not set exclusively around the penis, and not even around the man. If one draws on Jane Ussher's condemning approach to porn, which proposes that 'pornography acts to deny or alleviate temporarily men's sexual anxiety through identification with phallic mastery' (1997: 197), these films create instances of almost a 'porn-dystopia', where independent female sexuality and dysfunctional male performance serve to expose and challenge the symbolic structures of Japanese patriarchy.

The housewife, the brothel worker, and the independent prostitute

In previous sections I have grouped films in terms of patterns of narrative and audio-visual style, and according to their approach to sex. Here I propose yet another classification that links different types of prostitution to archetypal narratives of the female. The stories of the housewife, the brothel worker and the independent prostitute rearticulate images of the prostitute in melodrama and *panpan* films, but also the images of other figures such as the wife and the mother, discussed in previous chapters. In doing so, they provide their own reading of the social perception of prostitution and its history.

The **housewife** narrative, which is perhaps the most compelling category, depicts women who enjoy a comfortable lifestyle in childless marriages. These

heroines are portrayed as holding strong sexual desire, whereas their husbands are absorbed in jobs that make them physically or emotionally distanced from their wives. It is in this vacuum of attention that, voluntarily or by force, women enter the world of prostitution. This sexualised and dangerous housewife can be traced back to thrillers, horror and yakuza films in the 1960s that exploited a sinister facet of the housewife and treated her as a ‘threatening symbol of suppressed desire and hidden agendas’ (Coates 2017: 89-94). On the other hand, the dramatic disjunction between what seems from the outside the comfortable position of the normative woman and the uneasiness experienced in the private realm of marriage, brings to mind the stories of *tsumamono* or ‘wife films’.²⁵ Gathering momentum in the 1950s, the *tsumamono* centred on women’s experiences in upper-middle-class childless marriages going through a crisis, often involving problems of infidelity. While in the classical *tsumamono* sexuality is only abstractly hinted at, Roman Porno locates female sexuality at the core of the plot often leading to a tragic end.

According to Ōi Hinako, a social psychology researcher writing in 1956, the *tsumamono* was intrinsically a postwar phenomenon, grounded on the women’s liberation triggered by the 1947 Constitution. For the first time, Ōi argues, the spotlight was placed on the wife as an individual woman, whereas previously it had been mostly her facet as mother within the feudal family that had gathered all the attention (1956: 62-3). A new approach to marriage and a redefined domestic female role informed these stories about women’s ambitions, frustrations, anxieties and desires. In a similar manner, I suggest that the Roman Porno housewife responds to changes in the approach to the politics of the body and reproductive rights, and

²⁵ Classical examples of *tsumamono* include *Repast* (*Meshi*, Narsuse Mikio, 1951), *The Flavour of Green Tea over Rice* (*Ochazuke no aji*, Ozu Yasujirō, 1952), and *Wife* (*Tsuma*, Naruse Mikio, 1953).

reflects the gendered division of labour underpinning the postwar economic recovery. An early morning scene in *Apartment Wife* shows the housewives standing along the sidewalk of the *danchi*, waving goodbye to their husbands, who head towards the city for work. After the *danchi* has turned into a female enclosure ('a concrete box' according to Ritsuko), Yōko comes to offer Ritsuko a dildo which, she explains, will satisfy the tasks her husband is too busy to perform. Soon after, a salesman comes to offer Ritsuko a heterogeneous collection of condoms, a practice relatively common in the *danchi* of the time. Female body politics have come to the forefront alongside unprecedented commodification, and this conjunction gives way to other type of frustrations and ambitions.

Within the prostitute films, the housewife category features considerable violence, most notably, man-over-women physical and sexual violence. The more reluctant the heroine is to prostitute herself, the more she will suffer, as in the case of *New Danchi Wife*. It was noted in the introduction of the dissertation that narratives of punishment are common in the alleged 'universal' archetype of the fallen woman for their transgression of moral standards; and the housewives' stories are a clear example of this pattern. In all cases, an extra-marital sexual encounter is the first step in the path towards prostitution, which indirectly places the responsibility on women even when forced into the sex trade. However, differences among films reveal meaningful insights. The heroine of *New Danchi Wife* fights throughout the film to escape prostitution and longs to be reunited with her husband, who has been transferred to Germany by his company (note the connection between the West and the absence of the husband's protection). The ending scene shows her in the airport suggesting a successful reunion that will finally redeem her from punishment. This resembles the 1950s *tsumamono*, which tended to offer a conservative denouement

as the couple reaches some kind of compromise and stays together. In contrast, when women embrace promiscuity, they meet a tragic end, as in *Apartment Wife*, where Ritsuko accidentally kills Yōko, the procurer, and also then dies with her lover in a surrealistic car accident.

Illicit sexual behaviour is associated with material greed. In *Apartment Wife* when Yōko gives Ritsuko the dildo in an attempt to unleash her sexual desire and lure her into prostitution, Ritsuko's expression, at first reluctant, turns to lust in a close-up. In the following counter-shot we find out that it is not the dildo, but Yōko's diamond ring what has caught Ritsuko's eye. Later, the film plays again with the viewer's expectations to highlight the same idea. After her affair with Kirimura, constituting her first illicit sexual act, Ritsuko returns home bewildered. A close-up of her face staring at the ceiling conveys a confusing mixture of satisfaction and anxiousness. As the screen fades to black and a romantic tune starts playing, the spectator foreshadows the next scene: perhaps a crosscut showing Kirimura, or a sexual fantasy in Ritsuko's dreams, or maybe just the following morning in her housewife routine. However, against almost any possible conjecture, a colourful sequence of shop windows and commodities unravels as a hand-held camera moves playfully across handbags, shoes and jewellery, very much in the same alluring manner as when recording the sex scenes. Lust for sex is equated with lust for money, and both are portrayed as intrinsic to femininity and doomed to decadence. No one better to embody this metaphor than the suburban *danchi* wife.

Constructed since 1955, these suburban apartment complex had become 'a recognised symbol of Japan's postwar reconstruction and economic achievements' (McKnight 2012: 7). They functioned as aspirational status symbols that only well-paid white-collar jobs could afford; and thus the *danchi* housewife—a minority

among the majority working female population—became a longed-for female ideal of the new prosperous Japan. However, Anne E. Imamura's (1987) fascinating interviews demonstrate that many *danchi* lost this elite image after the first decade, when cohabitation issues became more complicated and many *danchi* wives grew increasingly lonesome.²⁶ Moreover, these communities, referred to as *danchi zoku*, became the subject of great interest and curiosity in the public opinion (Imamura 1987: 57; McKnight 2012: 28). Conversely, it is also important to underline the significant role of Roman Porno in transforming the image of the *danchizuma* from the normative woman—efficiently managing the domestic environment to facilitate her husband's financially compensated work outside the household—into an erotic icon of Japanese popular imaginary (Terawaki 2012: 23). Drawing on the brand's series, myriads of similar pink and hard-core porn productions have been and still are produced; a pornographic video game (*ero*ge or *adaruto gēmu*) about this female archetype was launched in 1983; and in 2010 Nikkatsu released a historical tribute to the 1971 film under the same title, *Apartment Wife: Affair in the Afternoon* (*Danchizuma hirusagari no jōji*, Nakahara Shun) including a cameo role by the original actress Shirakawa.²⁷

Apartment Wife generally complies with the sensationalist press coverage of stories of housewives-prostitutes in the 1960s and 1970s analysed in Chapter 1; that is, a frivolous, bored and sexually frustrated woman who sells her body out of curiosity and prurience (Tada: 2009). However, this negative image is attenuated by including episodes of deception or coercion as the trigger into prostitution, and by

²⁶ See especially Imamura (1987: 52-65), which includes numerous interviews to *danchi* dwellers.

²⁷ Despite sharing the same title, Nakahara's film is not a remake of the 1971 *Apartment Wife*. However, it effectively depicts the evolution of the *danchi* into the twenty-first century, characterised by the aging of its community.

addressing the implication and responsibility of men, something not contemplated in the press coverage. The link between corporate negotiations and prostitution is exhibited as common practice, and both Kirimura and her husband (the normative male subject) set deals for Ritsuko. In conclusion, female sexual agency and desire are celebrated and spectacularised, but are not allowed to be completely unrestrained. A happy ending is dependent on the restoration of patriarchy; and the wife who ultimately rejects the institution of marriage, will be punished. Either way, the male spectator is reassured in his symbolical position of power within the patriarchal hierarchy, by constraining under these two options the female's transgression of the system.

The narrative of the postwar pre-1956 **brothel prostitute** stands in contrast to the housewife narrative, but similarly draws from familiar archetypes and themes. These women are presented as professionals, as mentors and almost artists, who master their occupation and serve a social function by teaching and comforting men. Sensuality and sexual appetite are presented as part of their nature and personality, even though genuine pleasure is not always achieved in their work. Among them, one finds many different character types (such as the romantic, the sacrificial, the mischievous, and the mentally unstable), but virtually all are portrayed in a positive light. The brothel appears as a functional and welcoming working environment, where comic and relaxed moments abound. There is a strong community feeling and solidarity among the workers, and both brothel owners and patrons seem in general lines respectful and good-hearted. Throughout the films there is almost no sign of enforcement or coercion, and only very exceptional instances of physical violence—most of them actually taking place outside of the brothel. It is noteworthy that all

these tropes are also depicted in *Night of the Felines*,²⁸ which depicts the lives of three ‘soapland’ workers. Based on this, I include it in this category and argue that the soapland was perceived in the popular imagination as the descendant of the brothel after the official closing down of the red-light districts.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the references to Mizoguchi’s *Street of Shame* are conspicuous, and the differences revealing. First of all, all films share a multi-strand narrative structure that intertwines the lives of different women, making the most of an all-star cast and their star personae. This structure works to create an overall image of the brothel and hampers identification with one single character, thus allowing the spectators to choose in which character(s) they recognise their own conception of prostitution. In terms of narrative devices, marriage is again presented as an unsuccessful way out of prostitution, but in *Roman Porno*, the failure is based on the sexual frustration women experience in marital life, reinforcing the essentialist depiction of the prostitutes’ sexual desire and promiscuity. In contrast with Mizoguchi’s film, there are no overt distinctions between mothers/wives and single women; and therefore, narratives of the ‘good’ sacrificial prostitute *versus* the careless and ambitious one are prevented, which hints at the decay and evolution of the once idealised archetypes of mother and wife.

The analysis of *Street of Shame* noted references in the film to the history of the sex industry and the agents involved in the 1950s debates (including the press and the lobby of the Brothels’ Owners Association), but also highlighted its significant omissions. In comparison, *Roman Porno* films make more references to sexual health and every-day strategies of body politics, and take a different approach

²⁸ At the time of its release, it was chosen by *Eiga geijutsu* as the best film among the fifty *Roman Porno* works that had been released so far (Kitagawa 1983: 42). It ranks 151 in *Kinema junpō* best 200 films of Japanese cinema (as for 2017).

to the agents involved. In two scenes of *Last Day* where prostitutes are discussing their wages and expenses, and calculating the number of patrons needed to make ends meet, these mathematical operations appear in written texts superimposed over the moving image, drawing the viewers' attention to the economies of labour and away from the fictional narrative (see Figure 4.4). *Street of Joy* includes an animation (by popular illustrator Takita Yū) of a public act of a prostitutes' union, where the speaker exclaims, 'Give us the right to sell our bodies!' In what seems a criticism of the sensationalist coverage the red-light district received in the media, *Last Day* features a journalist hunting for a personal testimony about the imminent ban, but the prostitute slaps him and turns away. Critically imitating documentaries such as the one analysed in Chapter 3, the film ends with the masculine voice-over narrator asserting that the law was ineffectual in terminating prostitution, which from 1 April 1956 continued to operate but just under different names and venues.

In *Street of Joy* there are other historical references that, whilst not so closely related to the prostitution debates, hold a forceful message. These include a customer whistling the tune of the national anthem while he undresses in front of a prostitute, and an insert of crown prince Akihito (1933-) and Michiko Shōda (1934-) playing tennis—a symbolic image of Japan's successful modernisation endlessly reproduced in the media.²⁹ In turn, *Last Day* features Seri, while engaged in sexual intercourse, singing 'In the Flow of the Stars' (*Hoshi no nagare ni*), the 1947 popular *panpan* song discussed in Chapter 2. These instances satisfy primarily a symbolical function by appealing directly to popular memory; hence they are subversive, first of all, for their bold intertextuality. In the introduction of this dissertation, I discussed Carol

²⁹ Note the anachronism, since Empress Michiko and Emperor Akihito supposedly met on a tennis court in 1957, while the film is set in 1955.

Gluck's (1993) illuminating approach to the construction of 'postwar Japan' based upon master narratives of modernisation and the absolute division from the image of the prewar. The national anthem, the snapshot of the democratic prince, and the *panpan* song are poignant references to these narratives and their inherent fallacies. Moreover, its use in the early 1970s demonstrates that they had become repositories of certain national historiographies and of the part played by prostitution within them. This in turn underscores the role of the media industries in producing and disseminating historiographies for future generations. However, it is also worth noting that these powerful images are not further articulated into any kind of significant socio-political criticism in the films. Therefore, I suggest that these images, and that of the *panpan* in particular, were becoming aestheticised signifiers due to their reoccurring articulation in popular culture. They appealed to contemporaneous young audiences because they lend themselves to a kind of pastiche that altogether expressed transgression, even though the specific message formed by the combination of these signs remained vague.

There is one more reference to *Street of Shame* that demands closer analysis. *Last Day* cunningly re-interprets the ending scene of Mizoguchi's film featuring young Shizuko terrified in her first day as a prostitute, looking straight into the camera. In Shiratori's film, as the clock strikes midnight, a drunken prostitute from a neighbouring brothel (thus a secondary character like Shizuko) appears in a dimly lit alleyway. She repeatedly yells: 'Damn you! What will become of me? What are you going to do for me?'³⁰ The camera cuts to a middle shot of the prostitute desperately crying and embracing a pillar, outstandingly similar to the frame of Mizoguchi's scene (see Figure 4.5). It is by far the most violent scene of the film, which is

³⁰ Original Japanese: 'Baka yarō...Watashi wa dō narundayo? Dō shite kurerundayō? Iyada, iyada.'

otherwise characterised by a light tone, and her harrowing voice seems to remind us the crude reality of the sex trade. In Chapter 3, I discussed the contended readings in public opinion of Shizuko's look; here, the prostitute's incrimination is also ambivalent as there is no one else in the alleyway, but the woman does not look into the camera either. However, the following speech, performed by a patron just before this scene, serves as the frame to interpret who might be the recipient of the woman's message. The patron has bought food and drinks for all the brothel workers as means of a farewell party, and states:

Patron - *During many years the red-light district has entertained us [men] and gave us a good time. As of today, it is the end of the district. Well, leaving aside whether that is good or bad, what I want to say is thank you very much for your work.*³¹

These words encapsulate the ambivalent position taken by the film, which does not condemn prostitution and refuses to make male customers accountable. His speech exudes nostalgia towards this kind of organised environment where, according to these films, men are provided with pleasure, knowledge, understanding and reassurance, and where violence is not necessary. As in the case of the housewife, female sexual agency and pleasure are celebrated on the condition that they remain managed within patriarchal economies of power. The depiction of the prostitute as naturally promiscuous further serves to justify institutions of commercialised sex. Portrayed in a positive light, the male patron is, as reflected in the above speech, detached from the responsibility of judging or taking action. Thus, I suggest the recipient of the prostitute's accusations is the state, understood as an abstract

³¹ The last sentence reads in Japanese 'gokurosan', an expression used to show gratitude for the effort done by a person who works for the speaker.

authority. Both the blaming the state and the glorifying of women's sexual liberation contributed to making these films appeal to the target audience that supported Roman Porno in the cinemas and in the court. Having said that, we face again paradox: the brothel is negatively associated with the national body (*kokutai*) through references to the emperor, the national anthem, and the state administration; women, on the other hand, are ultimately rendered victims of this exploitation, as the *panpan* song and the last scene illustrate; and yet nostalgia for this state-regulated institution and the systematic commodification of women as inherited in the soapland is extolled.

The last archetype, the **independent prostitute**, appears in films such as *She Beast Market*, *White Whore*, and *Metamorphosis*. What these films have in common is the depiction of sexual experiences commonly regarded as 'perversion', such as incest and sadism; and of profuse physical, psychological, and sexual violence. Beyond that, however, it is actually difficult to identify a cohesive prostitute narrative pattern. In *Metamorphosis*, as in *Apartment Wife*, lust for sex is equated with lust for commodities, when Ryōko embraces expensive-looking clothes and caresses jewellery in an arousing manner. Similarly, she does not come across as a victim for whom prostitution is the only way out, because, although she supports her family, their situation is not desperate: she has a regular daytime job and is engaged to a young 'salary man'. Alongside objectified Ryōko, Jun (Kazama Morio, 1949-), the youngster in love with her, is actually the co-leading character of the film. Sexually abused by his brother's wife and full of frustration, Jun stabs Ryōko in broad daylight on the streets, upon discovering the truth. The film conforms to a *cliché*d narrative of disgraceful woman punished by a male victim of her deceiving.

Replete with exploitative and grotesque imagery, *White Whore* offers another misogynist depiction of women. Yamashina Yuri (1953-), prolific Roman Porno actress, plays Kyōko, a mysterious call girl who specialises in foreigners. The story, however, mainly focuses on her private life, where she procures teenage victims for sexual abuse by her crippled deranged brother, who she financially supports. As in *Metamorphosis*, the story revolves around her encounter with a young man (also named Jun) who falls in love with her without knowing her occupation. This Jun, too, transforms his desire into violence, but unlike the other, he rapes Kyōko and partakes in her sadistic games, which even entail raping the girl he has been raised together with as a sister. This disrupts the original equilibrium and leads Kyōko to finally engage in sexual intercourse with her brother as the story reaches an end. Both films, therefore, constitute exploitative spectacles of fetishism and voyeurism, where the site of identification is not the female character, but the young man, who takes control by either punishing and/or conquering the fallen woman.

This narrative pattern is, however, completely denied in *She Beast Market*. Tome quits her prostitution job in a filthy inn to become a streetwalker. In her quest for independence, she endures assaults by patrons, yakuza, and another prostitute, who turns out to be her own mother, thus composing a merciless scenario of struggle and survival. She further loses her brother, who commits suicide, and her friend, who disappears. Tome finds her clients among the lowest strata of society, in dirty apartments and bleak wastelands. In the 1970s it is no longer easy to be a streetwalker, and when Tome approaches different men offering her services in a dingy tunnel of Osaka, men systematically reject her. This scene, superbly shot on location, depicts the double morality underpinning the social construction of the cityscape: prostitution has not disappeared, but it is no longer acceptable to be seen

in the public space. Tome is the heiress of the tradition of the *panpan* film (see Chapter 2): she is a drifter; there is no plan, no progress, no way out. Her nihilistic character resembles Sen of Suzuki Seijun's *Gate of Flesh* (*Nikutai no mon*, 1964), who claims in the ending scene she will never change her lifestyle despite being abandoned by all others. Like in Suzuki's story, sex is a mere tool for Tome, but unlike Sen, for her there is no desire, and no regret. Tome, who ends the film triumphantly laughing and dancing around in a wasteland, is the ultimate embodiment of the anti-establishment, with an absolute disregard for conventions and authority from family, gender, labour, and sexuality. Her radical attitude makes her an attractive site of identification without sacrificing her commodification; and thus, she offers a peculiar sadomasochistic site for the spectator.

Though there are meaningful differences, the three films suggest that prostitution is a free choice for these women. In the case of Tome, this can open up new understandings of female agency and desire; but it also entails a simplification and distortion of the workings of the sex industry. The unanimous prominence of violence in this category suggests, by opposition, a veiled apology for some kind of institutionalised system of prostitution, which is safer for women and discreetly accessed by men. In his study of pornography, John Ellis maintains that pornography is 'a contradictory area of signification', rather than 'a regime of signification with a strong internal coherence' ([1980] 1992: 159). In Roman Porno female agency appears entangled with subjugation, male fantasies of pleasure with emasculation and masochistic catharsis. Variations do not seem to respond to any logic. A time-based hypothesis formulating an evolution from a canonical spectacularisation of female sexuality (as in *Apartment Wife*) towards a more experimental and subversive regime of representation (as in *She Beast Market*) is proven false in later examples

such as *New Danchi Wife* and *White Whore*, and further dismantled by critical reviews in the mid-1970s that saw the brand becoming more commercial and predictable (*KJ* 1974 Early Nov: 151). Classifications based on authorship also fail as Tanaka Noboru directed both *Metamorphosis* and *She Beast Market*; and Nishimura Shōgorō *Apartment Wife* and *Gate of Flesh*, making not only use of completely different visual styles but, more importantly, employing starkly different gender and sexual ideologies in their representations.

Masculinity exposed: economies of gender and space

Pornography is often conceived as a fantasy of pleasure and domination. In the words of Valerie Miner, ‘pornography is more about exercise of power than about the expression of sex’ (as quoted in Stern [1982] 1992: 198-199). Leaving aside the heated arguments about whether conventional heterosexual porn renders women object and victim, Waugh argues that the narrative in these films is ‘sutured within the framework of male subjectivity’ (2004: 129); that is, intended as a phallic fantasy of heterosexual domination that reassures masculinity. As explained earlier, this does not necessarily mean that men are protagonists on screen. It follows that women’s actions and expressions on screen work to construct an image of the prowess and authority of masculinity, which invisible as it is, constitutes the pleasurable site of identification for the male spectator. It is obviously problematic to generalise these arguments to such a vast film category as heterosexual pornography; however, just as Williams talks about the ‘patented porn body’ of the female as ‘enhanced breasts, slim waist, long, bleached blond hair’ and that of the male as exhibiting ‘big pecs and a long, frequently erect penis’ of the American contemporary market (2008: 4), a

concept of ‘patented porn gender dynamics’ is a useful starting point to examine Roman Porno.

In the 1970s the consumption of pornographic films in Japan was mainly a public experience, which, after an initial boom of curiosity and novelty, settled down on an almost exclusively male audience (Kitagawa 1974: 107; Nishimura 2006: 25; Nikkatsu 2015). Based on the discussions around the symbolical functions of the prostitute character elaborated in previous chapters, one would expect Roman Porno to provide fantasies to reassure the male national subject in this time of renewed anxiety. Focusing on the American context, Miner claims that the 1970s were a time of ‘declining economic and political stature’. She explains, ‘American men have lost job security, self-esteem, and have been confronted with massive guilt. They feel angry, threatened, and impotent. Women are accessible targets’ (as quoted in Stern [1982] 1992: 197-8). According to Miner, fantasies of subjugation can be interpreted as a desperate strategy to reassure a masculine identity based on attributes and privileges that are no longer available or secured for a substantial percentage of the male population.

Miner’s statement oversimplifies the connections between gender and the socio-economic order; however, the idea underpinning her approach can be applied to 1970s Japan, ‘when the on-rush of ‘modernism’ challenged the traditional foundations of the family’ (Standish 2000: 52). In fact, alongside traditional masculinity, the counter model of transgressive, liberated masculinity upheld by the political Left was also starting to falter (Standish 2000). The failure of the Anpo struggles, the extreme radicalisation of other protests movements (epitomised in the Asama lodge incident of 1972), the great pressure of the education system, and the related disenchantment with the progress of democracy were undoubtedly sources of

alienation, often referred to as post-1972 political fatigue.³² Adding to this backdrop, women were advancing in the labour market, demanding the reform of body politics, and articulating their own sexual pleasure and desire, which for many constituted another menace to men's status. One could highlight the literature of Kōno Taeko (1926-2015), the group Fighting Women (*Tatakau onna*), led by Tanaka Mitsu (1945-), and the debates around the magazine *Woman: Eros* (*Onna Erosu*), which include discussions about prostitution, amongst many others.³³ In Roman Porno, the prolific 'rape subgenre', often victimising working women such as OL and teachers, seems to confirm Miner's argument; and numerous films about unfaithful housewives and illicit sexual relations set in dysfunctional households relate to the alienation described by Standish. There is a sense of protecting or re-establishing a dominant masculinity under threat; however, this section will argue that many Roman Porno prostitute films refuse, or severely complicate, an escapist fantasy of power for the male spectator.

Despite the lack of depth in the development of male characters, one can identify several archetypes in the film corpus. The husband and/or 'salary man', representing the normative subject, is often depicted as inadequate, unable to understand and satisfy women (e.g. *Apartment Wife*, *Street of Joy*, *Metamorphosis*). In contrast, more successful lovers and patrons tend to be rebellious figures that reject the hegemonic structure,³⁴ which hence seems to subdue the savage essence of man and to symbolically emasculate him. As meaningful as this tendency may be, it

³² On events symbolically marking the increasing feeling of political fatigue see Higuchi (2009: 196-8); Standish (2011: 182-5); McKnight (2012: 1). Standish provides a comprehensive chronological index that combines national history with that of the cinema industry.

³³ See also Mackie (2003) and Bullock (2009).

³⁴ These include a porn industry entrepreneur in *Apartment Wife*, and a drug addict and *chinpira* in *Street of Joy*.

is far from being an absolute pattern pervasive to the genre. The most recurrent male type is, in fact, the insignificant man. He is not particularly outstanding in terms of character, career, intelligence, or physique (according to dominant canons), and does not seem to particularly master the art of seduction and sex, as is often commented upon by the prostitutes. These men are often social outcasts, cripples, sick, old, or impoverished men who exude frustration, weakness, or simple shallowness. This mediocre figure can work as a fantasy of self-indulgence, through which the spectator can imagine himself possessing those women on screen. Instead of the alienating ‘patented porn body’, an average of even negative masculine interface conveys a sense of accessibility and of ‘reality’. In discussing the hostess club, Anne Allison rightly notes that men paying for any kind of sexual service are often motivated by ‘narcissistic control’; that is, they seek to be relieved of the responsibility of having to be accountable, relieved from the expectations that pressure them at work and at home (1994: 21-2). These films can be said to reflect that narcissist control of the sex experience, which is in turn re-enacted and enjoyed in the heterotopia of cinema. Although this would account for the depiction of frustrated sex, the subversive masculinity models mentioned above indicate that men also sought idealised sites of identification in these films.

The attractiveness of the ‘I could be that man’ fantasy is further put to the test by other elements such as the presence of foreign men on screen, who seem to imperil the delusion of power for the Japanese male subject. In other categories of the brand, such as the ‘base films’ (e.g. *Gate of Flesh* [*Nikutai no mon*, Nishimura Shōgorō, 1977] and *Sex Hunter: Wet Target* [*Sekkusu hantā: nureta hyōteki*, Sawada Yukihiro, 1972]), foreign men are violent and cruel, abusing Japanese people and repeatedly perpetrating sexual assault of women with impunity. These scenes

involve problematic options of identification for the male viewer, similar to those discussed in Chapter 2 in relation to the *panpan* films. However, both *Gate of Flesh* and *Sex Hunter* include a Japanese male leading character, embodying a subversive potent masculinity, that serves as an escape valve (at the expense of the objectification of women). Quiet differently, in the prostitution films the foreign male appears mainly as a respectful businessman hiring the services of call girls.³⁵

In *White Whore* the prostitute specialises in foreign customers; a fact that her brother stresses as making her job even harder and even more pitiful. Considering the twisted nature of most of the main characters of the film, and the centrality of themes of rape, paedophilia, incest and torture, the presence of foreign men seems to add to the ‘grotesque’ nature of this unrestrained and violent sexual spectacle. The western customer in *Apartment Wife*, on the other hand, is presented as impulsive and determined, but not aggressive or disrespectful. His encounter with Ritsuko leads to the longest and most carefully edited sex scene of the film, a still of which became the cover of the film’s DVD. If Roman Porno aimed at providing an unproblematic fantasy of phallic mastery, why introduce sexually successful foreign men vis-à-vis negative portraits of the Japanese? In her analysis of early postwar exploitative narratives, Hori Hikari (2002) argues that the Japanese male spectator is invited to identify with the American vanquisher to be reassured in his masculinity through the shared experience of subjugating women (see Chapter 2). Yet these foreign performers lack any kind of characterisation, hindering their ability to function as site of identification. Moreover, if the films were to be a fantasy of

³⁵ Foreign men do not feature in the stories of brothels or soaplands, which reinforces the idea of these institutions being represented as safe sites of enjoyment for Japanese men. However, since nowadays numerous sex industry businesses in Japan ban foreign customers, this could also have been the case in the 1970s, although I have not found any data on this.

reassurance of the male national subject and his past glory—as Maureen Turim argues (1993), would it not be effective to use images of the vanquisher’s women and those of the old colonies? Considering the historical context, the sex industry is a setting that could easily accommodate this kind of character (Chaplin 2007: 27-8) and yet, there are no foreign prostitute characters. Under the label ‘blonde porn’ (*kinpatsu poruno*), Nikkatsu produced a series of films with foreign actresses but none played such role (Terawaki 2012: 80-1). This omission suggests that the ways prostitution films worked in the audiences’ imaginary is more complicated than it seems.

Even when not portraying individual foreign men, the ‘West’ functions to highlight the symbiotic relation between prostitution and the national economy. In *Metamorphosis*, as Ryōko hands in money (earned selling sex) for the family expenses, her father is looking at the newspaper and proclaims that the Japanese economy is thriving and will soon overtake the US. Later in the film, after a sex scene of Ryōko with a customer in which her consent is unclear for most of the time, her father hails the outstanding performance of the national economy and foresees that the twentieth century will be remembered as the ‘century of Japan’. This way of hinting at the human cost in the quest for capitalist development recalls the prostitutes hailed as ‘invisible pillars’ who were to sustain the nation against the US while stimulating the national economy (see Chapter 1). Based on these portrayals, I would suggest that the foreign male character functions not as the descendant of the American occupier, but rather as the embodiment of the capitalist system in itself.

Drawing on the recurring metaphor of the prostitute standing for Japan-US relations, Anne McKnight (2012) reads the narrative of *Apartment Wife* against the politics of the ‘managed society’ (*kanri shakai*) that developed in the postwar period

as a strategy for efficient organisation of space and labour (see Chapter 2). In this way she successfully connects the scale of domestic managed life to international dynamics of power. Let us remember that Ritsuko's husband unknowingly hires her services (with the help of her lover, Kirimura) to assure an important contract with an American businessman. Lately, his performance in the company has been poor and now his job depends on this transaction. McKnight argues that

Danchi Wife [*Apartment Wife*] makes explicit how the housewife-prostitute and the financed danchi dwelling link private space and corporate space in intimate and structurally similar ways. It suggests that the women paid to satisfy both approaches to prostitution and "managed society" are one and the same person –wife Ritsuko and prostitute Ritsuko. And it suggests that businessmen-procurers both facilitate prostitution and are threatened by the loss of sovereignty required to make the transaction work.

(2012: 23-4)

McKnight argues that women are sacrificed for the family and the nation in a homosocial continuum of exchange among men, who are moreover tied to international power hierarchies. Expanding on this, the housewife-prostitute can be read as an allegory of Japan in the early 1970s. It is the image of a nation that desires, that dares to experiment with transgression, one that 'prostitutes' itself for ambition; but also of a nation that is betrayed by the promises of modernity, progress and financial wealth that have failed to bring real liberation and fulfilment to the individual. As Allison (1994) convincingly argues, corporate culture—circumscribed by insatiable capitalist expansion—objectifies the individual, both women and men whilst in distinct ways. If men can also be said to prostitute themselves to the system, Ritsuko turns into a site of identification, escapism and catharsis for both male and female spectators.

Hatokai (2016) has explored the spectators' potential identification across gender boundaries in Roman Porno. Focusing in *A Woman Called Abe Sada* (*Jitsuroku Abe Sada*, Tanaka Noboru, 1975), she critically revisits feminist film theories of identification seeking to comprehend the popularity of this film among contemporary female audiences. Inspired by the work of Rhona J. Berenstein (1994), who argues that spectators of horror films partake in dynamics of role-playing and gender bending, Hatokai argues that *A Woman Called Abe Sada* allows fluid and multiple viewing positions beyond their gender and sexual orientation. Based on this, a female viewer can identify herself with Abe and with her lover Kichi and simultaneously make each of them objects of her desire. However, as noted by Hatokai, this is possible due to the film's very peculiar narrative and audio-visual style that subverts the canons of gender representation, and displays the male body as an eroticised spectacle; thus it cannot be easily extrapolated to other Roman Porno films. Nevertheless, Berenstein and Hatokai's approaches can be applied to male spectators, who were the de facto audience at the time.

The above examination has illuminated a heterogenous compound of strategies that make the female character object at times, subject at others, and seemingly both at once in yet others. I would argue that this enabled the male spectator to simultaneously commodify and identify with the prostitute figure, experimenting in a fluid viewing position beyond gender and sexual orientation. The use of hand-held camera and the generalised scarcity of point-of-view shots support this hypothesis. Following Mulvey's understanding of the gaze, if we assume that the spectator identifies with the gaze of the camera, he or she is being invited to play the role of an intruder and not fixed to any character, thus, facilitating this fluidity of emotional investment. Moreover, the fact that in many films neither

commodification of the female body nor spectacularisation of sex played a central role suggests other kinds of cinematic pleasures for the male viewer.

Waugh argues that the prime goal of stag films is to express the experience of having a penis, constructed as the homosocial reinforcement of masculinity, and indirectly, of heterosexuality (2004: 130). Relatedly, Ellis notes that in western pornography 'male figures are attenuated in the sense that their sexuality is never really in question' and thus, '[m]ale pleasure is assumed rather than investigated; this provides the security of the male viewer' ([1980] 1992: 166). In Roman Porno, too, male desire is commonly presented as a natural instinct, essential to the masculine identity, and rarely problematised within the narratives.³⁶ However, I have also identified numerous instances that call into question male sexual performance and success. Therefore, on the one hand, masculinity (and the patriarchal ideology) is ultimately upheld in its most foundational structures; but on the other, it is exposed as a masquerade of hyperbolic gendered performance, rather than an innate identity (following Mary Ann Doane's conception [1982]). The disguise of phallic masculinity is celebrated at times, yet often ridiculed, while the spotlight is cast on the regular man stripped not only of the mask, but also of the pressure and expectations that mask entails. Masquerade in conjunction with fluid identification provide the male spectator with sites of negotiation and catharsis through both male and female characters on screen. The prostitute, as the antithesis of the normative woman, lends herself effectively to these multidimensional viewing experiences.

³⁶ *Night of the Felines* constitutes one significant exception. Here questions about male desire, performance and sexual orientation are placed at the centre of the narrative leading to a tragic denouement with the suicide of a young man. Nevertheless, the other main male character embodies a transgressive, mature, and successful heterosexual masculinity that can provide a safe and attractive site of identification for the male spectator.

Finally, I wish to reflect upon the relevance of the cityscape in articulating the economies of gender and the related fantasies and anxieties evoked in Roman Porno. By applying landscape theory to the housewife narrative, McKnight (2012) calls attention to the intricate relation between space and gender. The development of suburban *danchi* contributed to this distribution of the urban space according to sexual and gendered practices, intended to maximise the productivity of the male worker and the consumption of the female domestic manager. The previously mentioned scene of the condom salesman visiting the *danchi* reveals the bio-politics at play. The rationalisation of the urban space is configured around a male-centred heterosexual economy, where women function to satisfy men's diverse needs and desires in distinct spheres: secretary, waitress, prostitute, and wife. Prevailing unequal dynamics in the realms of family, education, and employment (see Chapter 1) underpin this gendered map. In theory, and hitherto in general practice, men moved more freely across this stratified map, whereas women were confined to a space defined by the role they fulfilled towards the optimisation of male workforce. After 1956, the districts of soapland, love hotels and adult cinemas, as well as areas of illegal prostitution took over the red-light districts as heterotopias of non-productive sexuality.³⁷ However, as women increasingly moved across and acted upon the different spheres of the cityscape, and as they spoke more openly about the dynamics of production and reproduction, anxiety about a teetering system transpired. The emergence of call girls and housewife-prostitutes were symptomatic of the decay of these clear divisions. Roman Porno prostitution films dramatise these gendered territories and their sexual economies, often turning the spotlight onto

³⁷ Sarah Chaplin (2007) has produced a compelling account of the love hotel combining approaches from architecture and cultural studies. It provides insights into the evolution of the spaces dedicated to the sex industry, both their location in the city and their internal arrangement.

individuals who transgress the boundaries. The obscenity trials, discussed in the following section, constitute another symptomatic example of the concerns arousing out of the crisis of dominant gender and sexual mores.

Mediating the sexual liberation

Cather (2012) has produced a comprehensive account of obscenity trials held in postwar Japan, and through the examination of the official accounts of the Roman Porno trial, she explores the social and political perception of the brand. Drawing on her work, my analysis shifts the focus to the texts written by critics and directors, who perform as ‘custodians’ of the art of cinema and its history (as Gluck [1993] would put it). Lynda Nead (1993) argues that differentiations among concepts of art, the erotic and pornography depend upon not only the content, but also upon the means of distribution and consumption, as well as upon the moral and cultural discourses ascribed to them by cultural critics. As the worldwide popularity of *Emmanuelle* proves, through the investment of artistic and cultural value, pornography could become an acceptable and even desirable product of consumption for women and men of middle and upper classes. In the case of Japan, *Kinema junpō* and *Eiga geijutsu* supported Nikkatsu’s bold strategy from the beginning as a much-needed breath of fresh air. Katsura Chiho, a critic and scriptwriter who would soon move to the Studio, praised Roman Porno for encompassing an outstanding variety of genres, many of which could no longer be found in any other production company (1972: 119). According to Katsura, here one could find truly appealing characters, like those playing the lead in recent western blockbusters, and which had

disappeared from the mainstream domestic industry in the last years (1972: 118). He concluded:

Taking advantage of the public's craving for satisfaction a group of entertainment films has emerged. These films have brought about a possibility of closing in on matters, from the multi-layered depths of human psychology to the mechanisms of society.

That is Roman Porno.

(Katsura 1972: 118)

The journals demonstrated their support by immediately including Roman Porno in their prestigious annual rankings. An image of freshness and rebellion was attached to the brand in the 1970s through the words of critics like Katsura, Saitō Masaharu, Takenaka Tsutomu (aka Takenaka Rō), Terawaki Ken and Kitagawa Reiko. The trials proved an excellent source of promotion that ensured Roman Porno coverage in the press during eight years.³⁸ Besides standard reviews and synopses, Roman Porno received three-page reportages in every issue of *Kinema junpō*, and five-page reportages very frequently in *Eiga geijutsu*. The fact that in the former the accounts of the trial were accompanied by unrelated images of Roman Porno's new releases, directors and actors, evidences the added promotional function of these pieces. The role of the critic is particularly relevant in Roman Porno, due to the prevailing scarcity of academic literature and the inaccessibility of many of the films. In light of my analysis of the brand's narrative and stylistic devices, the aim of this section is twofold: to illuminate how these 'custodians' crafted the meaning and value of Roman Porno; and to deconstruct their discourses and lay bare their inherent contradictions. For this purpose, I will concentrate on three main topics around

³⁸ The trial finally reached a conclusion in June 1978, with a not-guilty verdict for all nine defendants, which was upheld by the High Court in July 1980. The films were found 'not obscene' and Eirin was reaffirmed as arbiter of the limits of sexual representation in Japanese cinema. The verdict deemed pornography obscene and undesirable, but acknowledged the demands of the international market according to which the acceptability of representations of sex changed with time (Saitō 1975; Matsumoto 2012; Cather 2012, 2014a).

which Roman Porno commonly appeared equated with antagonism in the journals: the political meaning of sexual liberation, Japan's relation to the West, and cultural elites.

As film historian Deguchi Takehito claims, in Japan by the 1960s, sex and its representations were unequivocally associated with the anti-establishment (2006: 5). Against these expectations, some critics negatively perceived *Apartment Wife* as repressing individual subjectivity. Saitō Masaharu criticised its focus on 'victims of sex' (*sei no higaisha*), which he saw as archetypical of traditional Japanese culture and depicted *ad nauseam* in Japanese cinema, where sex had only been approached from the stance of either a victim or a self-sacrificing character (1972: 156-7). The film, according to Saitō showcased the physical liberation of sex, but the vitality that emerges from sex (*sei no baitaliti*), as experienced by a mature subjectivity, was nowhere to be found (1972: 157). In emphasising the political allegory of sex, Saitō concludes that the film 'has porn but it has not got eroticism (*erosu*)' (1972: 156). Like other critics of the time, Saitō does not seem particularly interested in everyday gender politics, neither in the domestic as a political site. On the other hand, his words imply that soft-core porn must be more than just arousing personal dramas; and for him, Japan's national identity and its long-standing anxieties and fixations constitute the appropriate framework against which to read Roman Porno's debut and its transgression of the *status quo*. Saitō disregards the fact that trailblazer European films on prostitutes that had been highly praised in Japan, such as *My Life to Live* (*Vivre sa vie: film en douze tableaux*, Jean-Luc Godard, 1962) and *Belle de Jour* (Luis Buñuel, 1967), similarly presented characters trapped without escape in unconventional sexual relationships; a fact that therefore undermines his conception of a unique Japanese approach.

Other reviews also searched for symbolism in the prostitute figure. An enthusiastic critique of *She Beast Market* reads the film as a metaphor of the ‘ongoing degrading situation in Japan, of which Roman Porno is no exception’, where ‘intelligence, thought, politics, and even violence are in decadence’ (*KJ* 1974 Late Oct: 151). However, the critic believes that, similar to the heroine of *Pigs and Battleships*, Tome shows us that formidability sometimes lies in resilience. If one is able to just remain, the time to take control and attack will come (*KJ* 1974 Late Oct: 151). Here, therefore, Tome is a desirable site of identification for all spectators, and simultaneously serves as a promising metaphor of subjectivity where inaction is not necessarily equated to victimisation. Both critiques inevitably recall Sakaguchi Ango’s discourse on decadence, proving the prevalence of the prostitute figure in reworking national traumas. However, as discussed in Chapter 2, the motif of sexual liberation often camouflaged conservative gender economies, where female subjects are in fact deemed objects at the service of the masculine revolution.

From another point of view, established critic Satō Tadao in reviewing *Street of Joy* celebrates that the film is ‘not simply a display of eroticism’ but includes a proper ‘drama’, well elaborated thanks to Kumashiro’s mastery (1974: 150). However, he regrets the excessive number of sex scenes that instil a sense of claustrophobia in the viewer. Satō’s review, grounded on classical canons of film criticism, appears somewhat moralistic. He suggests there is an appropriate limit to the amount of sex that should be displayed, but fails to consider that depicting life in a brothel as a concatenation of sex scenes seems much more accurate than the almost asexual Mizoguchi’s *Street of Shame*. Reclaiming an unproblematic fantasy for the male liberal viewer, at no point does Satō seem interested in reflecting on how this claustrophobia relates to the brothel’s labour and to its economy. Most reviews,

therefore, show little concern about the social phenomenon of prostitution. An amateur review of Kumashiro's *Street of Joy*, however, criticises the film's light approach and claims that 'when choosing the red-light district as subject, one cannot disregard the tragedy of these individuals coming from economic hardship' (*KJ* 1974 Early Dec: 154). As this statement shows, some did challenge the idealised image of the brothel depicted in *Roman Porno*, but this kind of commentary remains exceptional.

Kitagawa Reiko, one of the very few female critics regularly discussing *Roman Porno*,³⁹ sometimes points at metaphors of Japan's political and economic affairs, but overall exhibits a very different approach to the films. Using a humorous and outspoken style, Kitagawa comments on the bodies and performance of actors (at times ridiculing the constant sexual ecstasy some actresses deliver); explains what scenes aroused her, how and why; and relates the plots to her own sexual experiences, her ex-partners and other social relations (e.g. Kitagawa 1973a, 1973b, 1974, 1975). The way she highlights the practical knowledge earned from the films hints at other pleasures besides sexual arousal that spectators found in *Roman Porno* (e.g. cognitive, emotional, integrative and tension release). Under this apparently non-political approach away from grand narratives of subjectivity and transgression, Kitagawa's reviews engage more with everyday micropolitics, where *Roman Porno* holds great subversive potential. Moreover, it is legitimate to hypothesise that many women who would not go to see a *Roman Porno* film in the cinema, would nevertheless experience the films through the critiques in the journals, and in particular, through Kitagawa's own approach to sexuality.

³⁹ There were very few prominent women critics at the time. Yamamoto Kyōko and Yajima Midori are probably the other two most relevant figures, but they did not write so extensively on *Roman Porno* as Kitagawa did.

Despite refreshing insights into the pleasure of female spectators, Kitagawa ultimately refrains from challenging the phallogentric understanding of female sexuality, which Hatokai finds pervasive within contemporaneous critiques of Roman Porno (2016: 29-35). Returning to Hori's (2002) discussion of the role of the critics, she notes a homosocial continuum between films—made by men—that worked to re-establish masculinity at the expense of the fallen woman, and critiques—written by men—that legitimised gender and sexual violence as aesthetic realism. I have demonstrated that a significant number of Roman Porno prostitution films reject the classic fantasy of domination that reassures masculinity, and yet ultimately upholds patriarchal hierarchies and moral codes. Both films and critiques seem to take exploitation and violence for granted as inherent characteristics of pornography, and reinforce essentialist definitions of the prostitute. By equating sexual transgression and violence with political subversion, and/or reading the prostitute as an abstraction infused with political and ideological allegories, critics contributed to legitimisation of a misogynist conceptualisation of women and sex, and left unexplored many other compelling readings that the films allowed, as this chapter has illuminated.

Besides shaping how films should be read, critics played a decisive role in constructing masculinity, often articulated through the *auteur* discourse. After 1972, film reviews increasingly focused on the director's technique and his conception of eroticism. In contrast with the credit given to experienced and skilful actresses such as Shirakawa in the early Roman Porno films, now stars were rendered performers and only rarely interviewed, primarily to comment on the director's personality and working philosophy. In her analysis of female authorship, Angela Martin argues that the term *auteur* appears conflated with male-related qualities such as 'virility' and

images of, for instance, youth as an explosion of violent anger that may not easily apply to women's filmmaking (2003: 31). Her analysis is based on writings from the prestigious journal *Cahiers du Cinéma*, which had a great impact on the style and approach of *Kinema junpō*, and film criticism in Japan in general.

An extended article on Kumashiro, written by Saitō (1974) but including commentaries from other critics, actors, and crew members, recounts with some detail the director's collection of sexual and romantic experiences and preferences. Kumashiro comes across as a promiscuous and charismatic man, extremely successful with women and someone who enjoys a chaotic lifestyle. Numerous plot lines and scenes are linked to specific personal experiences and features of the director. The fact that 'buying women' is repeatedly mentioned or implied, and also in reference to other colleagues like Imamura Shōhei (mentor of Kumashiro), evidences the role of paid sexual services in the homosocial relations of filmmakers and critics. The openness of the comments exposes the film industry's complicity with prostitution, and presents the commodification of female sexuality as a social experience constituting a means of bonding within this community.⁴⁰ Against the crisis of progressive masculinity and the blurring of gender and sexual roles, the critics constructed an image of the rebel and vital male *auteur* that fully experienced and dominated sexuality. Far beyond what was being depicted in the films, these paratexts imagined a masculinity akin to that of the 'pornotopia' and made use of the *auteur* discourse to veil gender anxieties.

The second site of opposition revolves around the alleged influence of the West on the expansion of pornography in Japan, which cannot be understood without

⁴⁰ Similar comments on paid sex were commonly made and published in journals and books after the ban of the red-light district (e.g. *Kinema Junpō-sha* ed. 1971: 57-9; Nishimura 2006: 24-5), revealing the normalised and institutionalised status of prostitution in Japan, despite its illegalisation.

referring to the obscenity trials. As noted earlier, since the mid-1960s, the so-called Japanese New Wave (*Nūberu bāgu*), the Art Theatre Guild (ATG)—producing films since 1967—and independent companies such as Wakamatsu Productions were pushing the boundaries of what was considered an acceptable depiction of sexuality, and infusing those images with transgressive political messages that also seemed to be radicalising. The case of *Black Snow* (*Kuroi yuki*, Takechi Tetsuji, 1965), a ‘base film’ produced by Nikkatsu, is symptomatic of its era. It revolves around a youngster living in a brothel with his mother and other prostitutes who serve American GIs in the town of the Yokota Air Base. Frustrated and disturbed because of sexual impotence, he turns to violence against both American soldiers and Japanese women. The opening scene displaying the full naked bodies of a Japanese prostitute having sex with a black GI, and another scene showing a young woman running naked along the military base fence, led Takechi’s film to be indicted in the first postwar film obscenity trial (1965-1969).⁴¹ Controversy immediately sprang up as many denounced the ban of *Black Snow* as an infringement of the right to freedom of expression, and asserted that the film had actually been targeted for its overt political criticism of Japan-US relations.⁴²

In the Nikkatsu trials, the image of the ‘West’ and its relation with Japan was further complicated. The prosecutor presented the West, and US in particular, as a detrimental force of ‘commercialistic sex’ threatening the integrity of Japanese culture, which should be proud of its ‘higher standard of morality’ in opposing the liberation of porn (as translated in Cather 2012: 137, 148-9). Nikkatsu’s lawyers, on

⁴¹ On the *Black Snow* trial see Ōshima (1992), Standish (2011) and Cather (2012, 2014a).

⁴² The legal controversy was based on the collision of Article 21 of the Constitution that abolished censorship with Article 175 of the Criminal Code against obscenity (*waisetsu*). See Chapter 2 note 21. See also Constitution of Japan (1946); Criminal Code (Japanese Ministry of Justice); Maki (1964: 6-7); Cather (2012, 2014a).

the other hand, sought to justify the studio by inscribing Roman Porno within global trends (Cather 2012: 134), and hence indirectly rendered the Japanese film industry a victim of cultural colonialism and the impositions of the capitalist market. On the contrary, Katsura's statement mentioned at the beginning of this section indicates that supporters of Roman Porno hailed the West for its cultivation of individual subjectivity and sexual liberation (Katsura 1972: 118; see also Izawa 1972a, 1972b). Film journals and lawyers for the defence repeatedly brought up examples of western films and regulations to demonstrate the out-dated approach of Japanese Obscenity law, and equated the West with progressive liberation (Cather 2012: 148-9). Journals claimed that Roman Porno was exposing the hegemonic conservative understanding of sexuality, which concealed oppressive ideologies. That being said, films like *Apartment Wife* associated capitalism and consumerism, under American leverage, with illicit sexual behaviour that is eventually punished. Paradoxically, therefore, this image seems much more akin with the rationale of the prosecutor, than with that of liberation advocated by supporters of Roman Porno.

This contradiction suggests that 'Japan' and the 'West' were referenced as abstract and predetermined constructions by both sides of the case. Cather rightly explains:

What was perceived to be at stake at the trial was national cultural identity –the very representation of Japan to itself and to the West. Both the defense and the prosecution were tapping into this rhetoric of national pride and identity, but with completely opposite conclusions. For the defense, explicit sexual depiction was a symbol of modernity and cosmopolitanism, a sign that Japan had shed its feudal roots and joined the international liberal community, and that Japan could compete culturally, economically, and in terms of human rights. For the prosecutor, such films had irrevocably tainted and retarded the illustrious history of Japanese film.

(2012: 140)

The notions attributed to the West were ambivalent and contradictory, and yet, in light of the discourses analysed in previous chapters, they sound very familiar. ‘Decadence’ (now referred to as *taihai*, rather than *daraku*) re-emerged as a buzzword in the debates around the moral precariousness of the nation. Polemics around the *panpan* and the experience of the *Black Snow* trial resonate in these discourses, where political anxiety about the nation was projected on gendered narratives that transformed female sexuality into the crux of the matter. As the conception of the West swung back and forth between that of progressive modernisation and that of savagery and moral evil, Japan’s assimilation of western mores and models of production was at times justified, celebrated, or condemned. Pornography had become a new parameter of measuring modernisation.

Finally, the journals associated Roman Porno with a rejection of the cultural elite and its authority. When charged with obscenity, Takechi declared ‘to be indicted by the state authorities is the ultimate badge of honor for an artist. It beats getting a Cultural Decoration. With this, I’ve become a first-class artist’ (as translated in Cather 2014a: 135). A similar atmosphere combining outrage and pride built up in 1972, with the indictment of ‘eroductions’. Vehemently advocating for freedom of expression, Saitō lamented that the judges and even some lawyers of the defence seemed ‘displeased’ (*fuyukai*) with the subject of pornography from the beginning (1973b, 1973c). He complained that the voices of the directors, who were considered as unquestionable *auteurs* (*sakka*), were not being sufficiently heard (Saitō 1973a, 1973c). With the support of Saitō and other critics, the journals were transformed into an alternative platform where directors could express their views in unrestricted ways, and consequently construct a public image of their work and persona. In an article about his film *Ichijo’s Wet Lust* (*Ichijō Sayuri: nureta yokujō*,

1972), also under threat of indictment, director Kumashiro declared ‘I will spit on this conceited authority’ (Kumashiro 1972: 43). As this statement suggests, the polemic went far beyond the trial. Many saw the situation as a hostile confrontation both with the legal system and its conceptions and authorities, as well as with other filmmakers and critics who were perceived as conforming to the *status quo*. Takenaka, for instance, lashed out at director Kobayashi Masaki (1916-1996) and critic Satō Tadao for their derogatory attitude towards Roman Porno, and accused this ‘cultural elite’ of claiming to defend freedom of expression but setting moral and aesthetical limits to it (Takenaka 1972: 96).

According to Katsura, Roman Porno was bringing together the narrative tradition of the studio system with the appeal to the modern individual, by challenging ‘the taboos that mainstream entertainment cinema, hedged about with old social mores and discipline, could not break’ (1972: 118-9). More importantly, Katsura asserted that Roman Porno was doing so with a ‘clear and plain’ approach unlike the ‘difficult to understand and obscure erotic art films (*geijutsu ero eiga*)’ (1972: 118). Likewise, Takenaka emphasised it was the ‘sexual liberation’ (*sei no kaihō*) for the ‘real commoners’ (*shinjinmin*) (1972: 98). Furthermore, in an incendiary article, veteran critic Izawa Jun claimed that ‘Japan is a country where pseudo-intellectuals are entitled to look down on films’, and where ‘the rich criticise pornography because they can afford to buy sex’ (1972a: 76). Repressing the expression in cinema, Izawa argues, is part of a strategy executed from above to make people ignorant (*guminka*), because this is the easiest way for the state to retain power (1972a: 76). As these statements illustrate, Roman Porno was being framed as merging pornography and politics with the popular, and for this purpose the figure of the prostitute was a perfect fit.

At the heart of comparisons between the inaccessible ‘ero-political’ art films and plain Roman Porno dramas, lay issues of social class and cultural capital. Whilst Nikkatsu directors were presented as oppositional to the elite and closer to the commoner, most of them belonged to that same cultural elite—as most filmmakers bred within the studio system: Nishimura graduated from Kyoto University, Kumashiro from Waseda, and Tanaka from Meiji University, just to mention a few. Hamano Sachi (1948-), one of the few pink female directors, underscores that to enter Nikkatsu you had to be ‘male, and a college graduate. As long as you were a woman, that door was shut’ (as translated in McKnight 2012: 9). Talking also from the pink industry, director Takahashi Banmei (1949-) recalls how they regarded Roman Porno with a mixture of scorn (for being too commercial) and envy (for their technical means) (2013). The trial brought Roman Porno closer to the pink industry in their shared battle. While at times the brand aimed to differentiate itself from these independent productions, this association helped build an image of anti-elite, disregarding the social economy of Roman Porno.

Finally, I would argue that socio-cultural antagonism was partly a commercial strategy by the film journals to reposition themselves in the fluctuating market. As Terawaki recalls, in the late 1960s it was his generation who filled the cinema venues; however, critiques in journals often felt outmoded, detached from current trends and his generation’s interests (2012: 50-5). The studio system crisis entailed, therefore, also a crisis for the film journals and the role of the critic. Answering this concern, in the early 1970s *Kinema junpō* and *Eiga geijutsu*, under the leadership of Shirai Yoshio (1932-) and Ogawa Tōru (1923-1991) respectively, rejuvenated their staff with a significant number of new young critics, some of them in their early twenties. Shirai marketed the newcomers under the label of ‘Kinejun

Nouvelle Vague’, which included amateur critics like Terawaki. This was a generation born in the postwar, raised with television and awakened to adolescence in the boom of eroticism and the political upheaval of the 1960s; a generation that never got to see the black market or the red-light district, but only knew their mediated image in fictional accounts and stories of the elder (*senpai*). Erotic cinema provided outstanding amounts of content to be covered, and was a magnet for the young male who had become the average cinemagoer and journal reader. However, soft-porn first needed to be articulated within discourses of politics and aesthetics in order to be legitimised as an object of critique in prestigious publications. The *auteristic* approach effectively functioned to invest the films with greater cultural capital.

Forty years later, ‘Evergreen Roman Porno’ has aimed to revive this initial image of Roman Porno, different to the one it held in the 1980s when film journals dramatically reduced the attention given to the brand (Terawaki 2012: 207-29).⁴³ It presents the brand as combining the narrative tradition and technical excellence of the studio with the rebellious spirit of the pink films. Reinforcing the association to the counter movements of the past, and adding the feminine touch in an attempt to broaden its audiences, the promotional materials repeatedly associate Roman Porno with ‘freedom’ and ‘revolution of love’ (*Evergreen* 2012; Nikkatsu 2012). Alongside the *auteuristic* approach, the promotional video underlines that the films composing the retrospective have been selected by three renowned film critics; namely Hasumi Shigehiko (1936-), Yamada Kōichi (1938-), and Yamane Sadao (1939-). The presence of these authorities, connected in the public opinion with the cultural left

⁴³ It is significant that seven out of the fourteen films of the retrospective are pre-1975 works, that is, the first four of seventeen years of filmography.

and European thought,⁴⁴ is fundamental to endorse the value of Roman Porno as art while casting upon it an image of political progressiveness.

⁴⁴ Hasumi and Yamada lived in France for several years. Hasumi has translated and written about the work of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze, and applied their theories to Japanese cinema; while Yamada has extensively written on François Truffaut (1932-1984) and Jean-Luc Godard (1930-). Yamane, on the other hand, is known for being an ardent supporter of transgressive Japanese directors such as Suzuki Seijun (1923-2017) and Fukasaku Kinji (1930-2003), as well as of Roman Porno.

Reflections

After the success of ‘Evergreen Roman Porno’, Nikkatsu launched the ‘Reboot Project’ in 2016 to celebrate the brand’s 45th anniversary. Five renowned filmmakers, including Nakata Hideo (1961-) and Sono Shion (1961-), were entrusted each with the task of creating a film inspired by the spirit of Roman Porno. Especially targeting young generations and women, the films had to comply with the following rules: 1) approximate length of eighty minutes; 2) one sex scene every ten minutes; 3) same budget for all films; 4) one week shoot; 5) original script; 6) a first-time director of a Roman Porno film (Takagi and Nishio 2017: 4).¹ Interesting enough, among the five films appointed to revisit its representation of sexuality, one centres on prostitution.

Written and directed by Shiraishi Kazuya (1974-), *Dawn of the Felines* (*Mesu nekotachi*, 2017) tells the story of three prostitutes working in Ikebukuro (Tokyo) as call girls, now commonly known as ‘delivery health girls’ (*deriheru musume*).² Shiraishi is a disciple of Wakamatsu Kōji (1936-2012), the epitome of anti-establishment cinema, and presented the film as an homage to Tanaka Noboru’s *Night of the Felines* (*Mesu nekotachi no yoru*, 1972), examined in the previous chapter (Nikkatsu 2016b).³ There are indeed notable similarities between the narratives as well as in the design of specific scenes and characters, but what

¹ The first four rules applied to old Roman Porno films as well. So far, Nikkatsu seems reluctant to reveal the figures of the films’ budget.

² *Deriheru* is the abbreviation of ‘delivery health’, currently one of the most popular words to refer to prostitutes who are sent to the patron’s house or a hotel, and who usually dress in an ordinary discrete manner.

³ The film features legendary Roman Porno star Shirakawa Kazuko (1947-) in a cameo role as madam of a sadomasochism club, and Yoshizawa Ken (1946-), protagonist of Tanaka’s *Night of the Felines*, as one of the central patrons involved in the plot.

interests me here is that Shiraishi's film reworks the three archetypes discussed throughout the thesis: the independent rebellious youngster, the mother, and the wife. Thus, *Dawn of the Felines* demonstrates that the prostitute remains a significant figure in Japanese cinema, and underscores the on-going articulation of these female archetypes. Working in a *deriheru* agency, Masako (Ihata Juri, 1987-) cannot be said to be 'independent'; however, as a homeless and solitary character who defies those who oppose her, she is the heiress of the 'hyperimage' of the *panpan*.⁴ Along with Masako, there is Yui (Maue Satsuki, 1996-), a single mother who apparently neglects and abuses her son; and Rie (Michie, ??-), a married woman whose infertility and her husband's adultery are her stated reasons for entering into prostitution. Their patrons include a reclusive *hikikomori* (a person who suffers from acute social withdrawal), an aged and lonely widower, and an unsuccessful comedian addicted to drugs. *Dawn of the Felines* indicates that prostitution film narratives continue to function as an important site of signification through which to negotiate gender politics and to reflect upon contemporaneous social issues and anxieties.

The representation of the prostitute has been a long-disregarded subject in Japanese film studies. In addressing this gap, I have posited her figure partaking in a two-way dynamic, according to which her representation shapes and is shaped by socio-political and ideological discourses. Combining historiographic and iconographic approaches has allowed me to bridge the examination of the social phenomenon of prostitution, its cinematic representation, and the context of the film industry. From a feminist stance, I have illuminated the string of meanings and

⁴ Carrying her small suitcase everywhere, Masako is what in contemporary Japanese culture is referred to as 'working poor' (*wākingupua*) and 'net café refugee' (*nettokafe nanmin*), because she sleeps in internet and manga cafés and has no residence or permanent address.

practices that connect body politics to modernity as they unfold in the audiovisual narratives that have become ingrained in the popular imaginary. The analysis of film texts was complemented with that of numerous primary sources in an attempt to trace the genealogy of the prostitute across media platforms, historical eras and female archetypes. Ultimately, the aim of this research has been to examine how the representations of prostitutes transcend the micro context of the narrative and engage in the social construction of gender and sexuality, which in turn correlates with metanarratives of the nation, its history, and its status in the international community.

Building upon scholarship on the representation of women in postwar popular culture, I have argued that the depiction of prostitution in cinema, and the evaluation of such image, is often driven by male fantasy. Qualifying this broad hypothesis, I have illuminated specific narrative, aesthetic and industrial strategies that enable her figure to function as a means through which to negotiate male desires and anxieties in different contexts and for different audiences. However, I have also contended that to limit her significance to this purpose, fails to grasp the rich potential of this icon. This study has explored how she functions as a site of identification of female subjectivity and community, as a site of catharsis and critical reflection, as a tool of political propaganda, and as a site of Orientalism. Three main concerns have guided my approach: First, the need to explore the impact of shared generational experience and consciousness across time. How long and in which ways did the early postwar crisis of masculinity resonate in the popular imaginary? Second, to experiment with the more porous understanding of the cinematic imagination as a heterotopia where identity and categories of difference can be subverted. Third, to problematise the tendency to consider the crisis of masculinity solely as a men's issue, systematically locating women and female cultural production in a different

sphere. It is the intersectionality of axis such as those of class, gender, ethnicity and age that determine the position of a certain subject in respect to masculinity as an ideological discourse of power.

The ultimate aim of this project has been to reflect on the relation between the politics of history and the politics of representation. Consequently, my intention was to draw a picture characterised by fluidity and inconsistency that provides glimpses into both the transitory and the abiding trends. Combining the textual analysis and discourse analysis has enabled me to shed light on how narrative, aesthetic, industrial and ideological devices interact, not always without contradiction. A heterogenous sample of primary sources aimed to counterbalance three main difficulties the project faced: the inaccessibility of various films, the predominance in academia of a retrospective (more or less fixed) reading of the films, and the inherent limitations of audience studies. Thanks to this methodology, a missing film creates a little hole in the map, but can still be traced through its reviews, censorship debates or its featuring of stars; in fact, it is not rare in the fields of arts and cultural production that metatexts become more meaningful and influential than the original text itself.

This kind of interdisciplinary methodology was necessary in order to bring into dialogue the stories of prostitutes, film texts, the cinema industry, regulation, social mores, and international contexts. It is not a matryoshka doll-like structure where each category necessarily nests inside a bigger one, but rather a multidirectional and, at times, disrupted mesh of signifying strings where cause and effect are not always clear. A cultural understanding of cinema demands a methodology that brings the film texts out of a vacuum of interpretation, and produces a map that can serve as the framework to hypothesise ways in which

heterogenous audiences could relate to the films. Each chapter has experimented with variations of this interdisciplinary methodology to shed light on discursive domains, which include stardom, censorship, *auteurism*, literary adaptation, film criticism, and theories of space. The result is a multi-layered and entangled picture, full of contradictions and yet suggesting some cohesive rationales.

This dissertation contends that the definition and depiction of the prostitute, both as a social construct and as a fictional character, epitomises the grand narrative of the (re)construction of the nation, via-à-vis its interplay with the West. The cinematic prostitute and her stories enact the desire to become modern but also lay bare the sacrifices imposed by such desire; they dramatise the breach between the national and the individual projects, exposing the contradictions concealed in the historiography of modernity. She stands as evidence of continuity between the prewar and postwar eras, which still demands discussion and reflection if we aim to deconstruct the narratives of ‘modernity’ and ‘postwar Japan’. Although not necessarily representative of the contemporary dominant discourse, *Dawn of the Felines* hints at a new stage in the history of the popular imaginary of the nation. Here themes of belonging, alienation and fragmentation evoke postmodern concerns circumscribed by the crisis of postindustrial capitalism that deeply affect Japanese society today.

My analysis claims that the prostitute characters, intimately connected to the allegorical discourses of the nation and modernity, functioned as a means to negotiate the changing conceptions and mores in terms of sexuality and gender. During these years, new understandings of female desire and agency as well as of marital dynamics were emerging in accordance to redefined prescriptions of gender roles and identities. From the mid-1960s onwards, these issues were addressed in a

more explicit manner and more closely linked to politics, which does not necessarily mean a more transgressive conception of gender politics. Political progressiveness often advanced hand in hand with the exploitation of female sexuality, at times engaging in contradictory and problematic relations with conceptions of the West, and ultimately of power itself.

Among prostitute characters, the *panpan* is the one to raise more polemical discussion in terms of her allegorical meaning regarding Japan's relation to the US. The hyperimage of the *panpan* is built upon several myths across media platforms and time, and hence it can be traced back to the modern girl and be glimpsed later in the drifter streetwalker. She embodies transgression and rebellion through playful youth. Tied to the thread and allure of the foreign, she works as a projection of the troubled identity of the national subject and the nation itself, and therefore evokes unfinished business that favours her re-emergence in times of crisis. As an icon, she becomes identified with certain symbols, looks, and features, yet the meaning of those visible elements can change or even disappear with time. In the late 1940s, *panpan* stories served as a significant site of negotiation for women. Emphasising the female community, these films spoke of women's gendered experience of war and defeat, while dramatising the opportunities and dangers brought by defeat. Although still present in the 1960s, this aspect of *panpan* films was often overshadowed by the focus on the subversive potential of sexuality for the individual.

The archetype of the mother was very popular in the early postwar period, often overlapping with brothel sex workers, streetwalkers or sporadic acts of prostitution. Drawing on this connection, I have argued that similar to the mother type, the prostitute character is especially useful in embodying the victimisation discourse. Both lend themselves also to critical political allegories denouncing the

exploitation of the past, yet for her sexual agency the mother/prostitute is a particularly problematic figure. Intimately linked to the reinvigorated economic prosperity, but also to the profound transformation of the socio-politic conceptions of sexuality, morality and the public space, the prostitute/mother character fades away in the 1960s. When present, maternity is played down and the relation of mother to children is disregarded, leaving the focus on the woman as individual. On the other hand, the wife who had also been associated with sacrifice and endurance becomes a dangerous site of frustration. Freedom and economic stability open this character to isolation and temptation. In a veiled apology for patriarchal structures, the absence of a strong male figure is emphasised in both cases as a significant reason for the moral decay of women. Yet, it is also this absence that fosters the prostitute to become simultaneously an object of desire/punishment and a site of cathartic identification for both female and male spectators.

Across the three archetypes, the city space plays a determine role in shaping the experiences and categorisation of these women. Gendered division underpinned the socio-economic structures shaping the urban landscape at the service of the development of consumer capitalism, and created, as a result, male and female spaces, family and non-productive sex spaces, working and leisure spaces. The number of red-light districts raised until 1957; after the ban, and parallel to the economic development and the changes in life rhythms, the industry diversified and its boundaries blurred as it grew increasingly less tied to specific spaces. Moreover, along with the economic development, the depiction of the prostitute as victim had almost disappeared by the 1970s. In this light, *Dawn of the Felines* seems to provide quite a predictable development: prostitution is depicted as a personal choice, not as a sacrifice for the family nor due to insurmountable economic difficulty. Masako

shows no determination, no political or moral convictions. She starts as a regular OL, spends too much and ends up in prostitution to pay debts. The mother-prostitute has become a very negative character for whom her child is a social and professional burden. Finally, the wife is actually quite similar to those in the Roman Porno 1970s, where the (emotional) absence of her husband leads to frustration and ultimately to prostitution. I would suggest that the ever-more manifest emphasis of women's free choice is central to how the industry is socially and politically approached in contemporary Japan.

The examination of these archetypes has been grounded on correlations with the historical evolution of the prostitution industry, which I posit as the 'invisible pillar' of the nation. The demographics of prostitution reveal a conspicuous intersectionality of social categories, and the significant impact of international policies and trends. Based on the cultural history that I developed in the first chapter, subsequent chapters point out absences that have far-reaching implications. Discriminated collectives such as the *burakumin*, the *zainichi* Korean diaspora, and the immigrant communities barely received representation. Other meaningful subjects conspicuously disregarded in the films include male prostitution, the sex market in Okinawa (where prostitution remained legal until 1972), and the practices of corporate entertainment linked to prostitution and sex tourism. In exceptional cases, melodramas depict the connection between outcast communities and prostitution as in *Ditch (Dobu)* (Shindō Kaneto, 1954), while Roman Porno addressed sexual slavery in *New Danchi Wife- The Prostitutes of Building 13 (Shin danchizuma baishun gurūpu 13 gōkan)* (Nishimura Shōgorō, 1975), and the exploitation allowed with impunity in Okinawa in *Sex Hunter: Wet Target (Sekkusū hantā: nureta hyōteki)* (Sawada Yukihiro, 1972). Outside the scope of this study, genres such as thriller,

yakuza or comedy do often include these ‘invisibilised’ phenomena, but generally as part of the background where the prostitute is merely a secondary element characterising the scenery, rather than the focus of attention. Against this backdrop, Imamura Shōhei’s historical documentaries on the sex trade, explored in Chapter 1, constitute truly exceptional and challenging works.

In regards to the debates around prostitution, the anti-prostitution groups feature in several films in the 1950s, but rarely after that, even though their movement did not cease to demand more effective legal measures. On the opposite side of the struggle, sex workers’ unions appear only in Roman Porno productions, a fact that illustrates the brand’s distinct contribution to a revision of Japanese history. Issues of health, safety, and working conditions are barely discussed in the films, neither are the violence and extortion of human trafficking. The focus remains on the debate around the political meaning of sexual morality, and ignores the body politics and sexual rights that sustain moral and political practices. I am not implying that fictional films should depict the ‘reality’ of prostitution, because they have no obligation to do so. My point is rather that this mediation reveals cohesive practices of selection, framing, and organisation. These absences are as important and revealing as those elements and phenomena that do get represented, because they illuminate the boundaries of the archetype, the scheme within which the prostitute character is useful or usable. As such, she is a buffer of discontent and anxiety; she can set in motion debates around the justification of prostitution, and she can embody harsh criticism against the state and the national history. However, the prostitute remains virtually always within the fundamental parameters of the hegemonic; and thus, subjacent patriarchal structures and heteronormativity are

ultimately upheld in the great majority of films analysed. It is in this way that she can be romanticised, and the industry pictured as competently integrated in society.

The role of cinema in shaping social perceptions about prostitution should therefore not be underestimated. Chapter 3 clarifies how films serve as a source of knowledge about the red-light district and the prostitutes' lifestyle for female audiences in particular, but also for foreigners to imagine Japan and its societal values. Resembling articles found in *Fujin kōron* in the late 1940s and 1950s, a recently published roundtable of women reviewing *Dawn of the Felines* notes that part of the appeal of the film was to learn about the 'delivery health' business (*Asahi shinbun* 2017 Feb 6). Spectators wished to both satisfy their curiosity and corroborate their own previous knowledge on the subject. In this way, the participants of the roundtable criticise, for example, the looks of the characters for being too well dressed. According to them, in real life sex workers appear all smartened up at first sight, but little details of their clothes and make-up betray their condition. My analysis has attempted to shed light on how the production of such power/knowledge about the trade created in the media, as superficial it sometimes may appear, feeds into the definitions and the expected relations of economies of power.

Censorship exerted significant influence not only on the depiction of sexuality but also in the narratives of a great number of the films encompassed in this study. As Kirsten Cather (2012) reminds us, censorship can bare both limiting and productive potential for the arts. The demure depiction of the *panpan* in the films under the Occupation was partially counterbalanced by making use of the evoking power of the hyperimage of the *panpan*. In Roman Porno, on the other hand, it spurred the creative production of censorship-dodging strategies that could

magnify the titillating effect of the images. Moreover, the censorship trial assured great publicity to the brand and was effectively used by filmmakers and critics to inscribe Roman Porno within the defiant discourses of counterpower which, in turn, enhanced the cultural and political value of the films.

The number and variety of prostitute characters makes it exceedingly difficult to reduce the archetype to simple formulas. Nevertheless, their depiction is mostly that of sympathetic protagonists, and not of repudiated perverts or criminals, as often happened in other media. In cinema, the prostitute is not to blame; instead, the fault lies with abstract entities such as society, which stigmatises and criminalises prostitutes, and the state, which historically used prostitution for its own economic and military benefit. My analysis reveals that despite these diverse approaches to assigning blame, responsibility is never directly placed on the men who constitute the persistent demand for the sex trade. By removing this fundamental element from the equation, prostitution is ultimately approved as something inherent to society, and justified as fulfilling social, emotional and physical needs for men.

Amongst the diverse prostitution business models, the brothel is idealised as a functional heterotopia that smoothly complements normative society without, in fact, undermining its underpinning ideologies. The recently released *Dawn of the Felines* suggests that following the ‘soapland’ (*toruko*), the ‘delivery health’ business is the new inheritor of the brothel, preserving the image of peaceful community that provides a clean, safe, and efficient service. In accordance to current lifestyles and social mores, the *deriheru* further disassociates the trade from specific locations creating a portable heterotopia. Moreover, by focusing on the close relationship each woman builds with one patron, the film disavows the basis of the profession and transforms exchanges of sex for money into personal and at times

romantic relationships between two people where sex is, for most of the time, a secondary matter. In line with current conservatism in Japan, the three subplots blatantly fix sexuality onto heterosexual romance, denying any other kinds of practices and desires. Therefore, while the film succeeds in exploring the needs and desires of those who pay for prostitutes (which indeed expand far beyond physical sex), the lover-friend portrayal of the prostitute works to whitewash the trade.

I suggest that the reason that prostitute characters can often avoid the downward spirals to which they are doomed according to the universal conventions, lies precisely in this veiled social approval. Although many of them end the films sick, dead or abandoned, a substantial number of protagonists simply remain in prostitution while others quit the trade thanks to their own determination. After the late 1940s, marriage is rarely advocated as a successful way out of the trade. While the early *panpan* films were caught in narratives of punishment and redemption under the influence of SCAP, later films tend to move away from this binary opposition, offering more ambiguous and open endings that seem to reveal popular conceptions of sexual mores. It is not my intention to claim that double moral standards are a distinct problem of Japan; far from that, what I wish to highlight is that despite Japan's legal ban on prostitution in 1956 being pioneer and truly radical at the time, prostitution remained normalised in the country.

In addition to films, journals likewise demonstrate that prostitution was openly talked about and almost assumed as a common practice among men, which further explains its extensive role in corporate culture. If that were not the case, critics and filmmakers would not dare talking overtly about it in these publications. Still nowadays, one only needs to check a 'delivery health' website or take a walk through Tobita in Osaka to be struck at how open prostitution can be displayed in a

country officially criminalising the trade. It follows that, as anti-prostitution groups criticise, the 1956 ban was not truly designed to eradicate prostitution. As I have argued, prostitution needed to be taken away from the normative structures because it betrayed the nationalistic and imperialistic past and its legacy, as well as the exploitative Allied Forces Occupation and its own double standards. At the heart of criminalisation lay a political interest in constructing an image of modern and democratic image nation, both for the domestic and international audiences.

As the tacit approval imbedded in film narratives is mirrored in the homosocial environment of the journals, the film critic emerges as a pivotal agent in connecting the two spheres of social reality and fiction, in bridging material production to ideological production. When commencing my research, I was discouraged by the discovery that only rarely did reviews of prostitution films overtly partake in the debates around the sex industry. However, discourse analysis of these texts exposed certain recurring approaches to gender, sexuality, and violence, which indirectly revealed a positioning towards prostitution and its representation. Hori Hikari's (2002) work inspired me to pay closer attention to this homosocial community that operated as progressive opinion leaders and historians, establishing the meaning of terms such as 'realism', 'eroticism', 'subjectivity' and 'freedom'. Chapter 3 illuminated the international ramifications of this discursive regime, while Chapter 4 enquired deeper into the kind of power-knowledge produced within. The two recent Roman Porno revival projects reinforce my hypothesis of the role of the critic in adhering ideological and cultural value to cinema, and of the homosocial environment of male critics and film directors. It is very telling that in the twenty-first century, despite the domestic and international acclaim of Japanese women filmmakers and despite the brand's alleged new focus on women's perspective and

female audiences, not a single woman director was asked to create a film for the Reboot Project.

As any other dissertation, this study has its limitations. For reasons of space and focus, it has not been possible to cover other genres like the thriller and the documentary, which as mentioned earlier, provide a different portrait of prostitution, often bringing forward the violent coercion of the industry. Examination of other media, such as photography and manga, could add to our understanding of the shared aesthetic and narrative codes, especially in terms of sartoriality and identity in connection to the social construction of space. Finally, the subject would lend itself to fruitful comparative studies. Roman Porno and recent remakes of prostitution films such as *Zero Focus* (*Zero no shōten*, Inudō Isshin, 2009) open the door to comparisons of the past and present in the depiction of prostitutes, raising compelling questions about the popular construction of history and the myth of the 'postwar'. On the other hand, South Korea, for example, shares meaningful historical and cultural aspects with Japan as well as poignant differences. This national cinema has also produced abundant prostitution melodramas, such as the classic *Flower in Hell* (*Jiokhwa*, Shin Sang-ok, 1958) set in the Occupation (1945-1948) around the American military bases, the black markets, the prostitutes and the memories of Japanese colonialism. An exploration of Korean filmography could enhance our understanding of the crisis of national identity in a context that lacks the imperialistic past of Japan. It is my hope that this thesis will serve to encourage these and other future research projects in a field that offers much fertile terrain to explore.

In the introduction, I quoted Paola Zamperini in saying that understanding the prostitute meant understanding 'how the men who wrote about her saw the times in which they lived' (2010: 3). Drawing on her words, to understand how men saw

the times in which they lived, implies to understand how masculinity is constructed and experienced. It is striking that despite the seeming consensus in scholarship of the centrality of male subjectivity in the sutures of the cinematic imagination, Isolde Standish's seminal work *Myth and Masculinity in the Japanese Cinema* (2000) remains one of the few systematic attempts to deconstruct the subject. Building upon my analysis of the prostitute, in the future I wish to delve into the representation of masculinity in the cinematic narratives of Japanese postwar history. The figures of the returned soldier and the American GI offer compelling case studies to contribute to debates on representation, and to expand into theories of memory and identification. Based on the findings of the present study, I would suggest that the film critic works as a significant agent in the articulation of masculinity and a mediator between representation and history leading to important questions about the manufacturing and legitimisation of power/knowledge. The methodology here developed has a great accumulative potential that I intend to pursue, to further enhance a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the workings of cinema in this intriguing era of Japanese history.

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Filmography

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A Woman Called Abe Sada (Jitsuroku Abe Sada), 1975. Director: Tanaka Noboru – Nikkatsu.

Belle de Jour, 1967. Director: Luis Buñuel – Robert et Raymond Hakim.

Bitch (Mesu inu), 1953. Director: Kimura Keigo – Daiei.

Black Line (Kurosen chitai), 1960. Director: Ishii Teruo – Shintōhō.

Black River (Kuroi kawa), 1957. Director: Kobayashi Masaki – Shōchiku.

Black Snow (Kuroi yuki), 1965. Director: Takechi Tetsuji – Daisan Productions.

Brother and Sister (Ani imōto), 1953. Director: Naruse Mikio – Daiei.

Castle Orgies (Irogoyomi ōku hiwa), 1971. Director: Hayashi Isao – Nikkatsu.

Comedy: Selling Women (Kigeki onna uridashimasu), 1972. Director: Morisaki Azuma – Shōchiku.

Crazy for Love (Koigurui), 1971. Director: Katō Akira – Nikkatsu.

Cruel Map of Women's Bodies (Jotai zangyaku zu), 1967. Director: Sakao Masanao – Ōkura Eiga.

Dawn of the Felines (Mesu nekotachi), 2017. Director: Shiraishi Kazuya – Nikkatsu.

Deep Throat, 1972. Director: Jerry Gerard – Gerard Damiano Film Productions.

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High School Geisha (Jokōsei geisha), 1972. Director: Umezawa Kaoru – Purima Kikaku.

Ichijo's Wet Lust (Ichijō Sayuri: nureta yokujō), 1972. Director: Kumashiro Tatsumi – Nikkatsu.

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- In the Realm of the Senses (Ai no koriida)*, 1976. Director: Ōshima Nagisa – Argos Films, Oshima Productions, Shibata Organisation.
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- Kenji Mizoguchi: The Life of a Film Director (Aru eiga kantoku no shōgai Mizoguchi Kenji no kiroku)*, 1975. Director: Shindō Kaneto – Kindai Eiga Kyōkai.
- Kiku and Isamu (Kiku to Isamu)*, 1959. Director: Imai Tadashi – Daitō Eiga.
- Kisses (Kuchizuke)*, 1957. Director: Masumura Yasuzō – Daiei.
- Last Day of the Red Light District: March 31, 1958 (Akasen saigo no hi: shōwa 33 nen 3 gatsu 31 nichi)*, 1974. Director: Shiratori Shin'ichi – Nikkatsu.
- Last Tango in Paris (Ultimo tango a Parigi)*, 1972. Director: Bernardo Bertolucci – United Artists, Les Productions Artistes Associés, Produzione Europee Associati.
- Light of the Red Light District Burns on (Akasen no hi wa kiezu)*, 1958. Director: Tanaka Shigeo – Daiei.
- Love Hunter (Koi no karyūdo: rabu hantā)*, 1972. Director: Yamaguchi Seiichirō – Nikkatsu.
- Love Letter (Koibumi)*, 1953. Director: Tanaka Kinuyo – Shintōhō.
- Love & Pop (Rabu & poppu)*, 1998. Director: Anno Hideaki – Rabu & Poppu Seisaku Kikō.
- Maria, the Prostitute (Baishunfu Maria)*, 1975. Director: Wakamatsu Kōji – Mirion Firumu.
- Market of Flesh (Nikutai ichiba)*, 1962. Director: Kobayashi Satoru – Kyōritsu Eiga.

Mistress of a Foreigner (Tōjin Okichi), 1930. Director: Mizoguchi Kenji – Nikkatsu Uzumasa.

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Osaka Elegy (Naniwa ereji), 1936. Director: Mizoguchi Kenji – Shōchiku.

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Red-light Bases (Akasen kichi), 1953. Director: Taniguchi Senkichi – Tōhō.

Repast (Meshi) 1951. Director: Narsuse Mikio – Tōhō.

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- Sandakan 8 (Sandakan hachiban shōkan bōkyō)*, 1974. Director: Kumai Kei - Haiyuza Film Production Company Ltd.
- Secret Chronicle: Prostitution Market ([Maruhi] Jorō ichiba)*, 1972. Director: Sone Chūsei – Nikkatsu.
- Secret Chronicle: She Beast Market ([Maruhi] Shikijō mesu ichiba)*, 1974. Director: Tanaka Noboru – Nikkatsu.
- Sex Document: The Queen of Turkish Bath (Sekkusū dokyumento: Toruko no jo'ō)*, 1972. Director: Takamori Tatsuichi – Tōei.
- Sex Hunter: Wet Target (Sekkusū hantā: nureta hyōteki)*, 1972. Director: Sawada Yukihiro – Nikkatsu.
- Sexy Line (Sekushii chitai)*, 1961. Director: Ishii Teruo – Shintōhō.
- Soldiers' Girls (Onna no bōhatei)*, 1958. Director: Komori Haku – Shintōhō.
- Story of a Prostitute (Shunpuden)*, 1965. Director: Suzuki Seijun – Nikkatsu.
- Street of Joy (Akasen Tamanoi nukeraremasu)*, 1974. Director: Kumashiro Tatsumi – Nikkatsu.
- Street of Shame (Akasen chitai)*, 1956. Director: Mizoguchi Kenji – Daiei.
- Suzaki Paradise Red Light (Suzaki paradaisu akashingō)*, 1956. Director: Kawashima Yūzō – Nikkatsu.
- The Barbarian and the Geisha*, 1958. Director: John Huston – Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation.
- The Call of Flesh (Jotai)*, 1964. Director: Onchi Hideo – Tōhō.
- The Flavour of Green Tea over Rice (Ochazuke no aji)*, 1952. Director: Ozu Yasujirō – Shōchiku.

The Human Condition (Ningen no jōken), 1959-1961. Director: Kobayashi Masaki – Ninjin Club.

The Life of Oharu (Saikaku ichidai onna), 1952. Director: Mizoguchi Kenji – Daiei.

The Love of Sumako the Actress (Joyū Sumako no koi), 1947. Director: Mizoguchi Kenji – Shōchiku.

The River with No Bridge (Hashi no nai kawa), 1970. Director: Imai Tadashi – Horupu Eiga.

The River with No Bridge (Hashi no nai kawa), 1992. Director: Higashi Yōichi – Galeria, Seiyu Productions.

The Road (La Strada), 1954. Director: Federico Fellini – Ponti-De Laurentiis Cinematografica.

The Tea House of the August Moon, 1956. Director: Daniel Mann – MGM.

The Victory of Women (Josei no shōri), 1946. Director: Mizoguchi Kenji – Shōchiku.

The Warmth of Love (Ai no nukumori), 1972. Director: Kondō Yukihiro – Nikkatsu.

The Woman in the Rumour (Uwasa no onna), 1954. Director: Mizoguchi Kenji – Daiei.

Three Mothers (Haha sannin), 1949. Director: Koishi Eiichi – Daiei.

Tokyo Emmanuelle (Tōkyō Emanieru fujin), 1975. Director: Katō Akira – Nikkatsu.

Ugetsu Monogatari, 1953. Director: Mizoguchi Kenji – Daiei.

Wave Shadow (Nami kage), 1965. Director: Toyoda Shirō – Tōkyō Eiga.

What is Your Name? (Kimi no na wa), part I 1953, part II 1953, part III 1954. Director: Ōba Hideo – Shōchiku.

White Beast (Shiroi yajū), 1950. Director: Naruse Mikio – Tanaka Productions.

White Line (Shirosen himitsu chitai), 1958. Director: Ishii Teruo – Shintōhō.

White Whore (Shiroi shōfu kashin no takamari), 1974. Director: Konuma Masaru – Nikkatsu.

Wife (Tsuma), 1953. Director: Naruse Mikio – Tōhō.

Woman of Tokyo (Tōkyō no onna), 1933. Director: Ozu Yasujirō – Shōchiku.

Women of the Night (Yoru no onnatachi), 1948. Director: Mizoguchi Kenji – Shōchiku.

Yellow Line (Ōsen chitai iero-rain), 1960. Director: Ishii Teruo – Shintōhō.

Zero Focus (Zero no shōten), 1961. Director: Nomura Yoshitarō – Shōchiku.

Zero Focus (Zero no shōten), 2009. Director: Inudō Isshin – Asahi Broadcasting Corporation, Tōhō.

Appendix

Glossary of Japanese Terms

Akasen chitai: red-light district (literally ‘red line district’). Refers to the quarters of legal prostitution under the state-regulated system abolished in 1956.

Anpo (*Nihon-koku to Amerika-gasshūkoku to no aida no sōgo kyōryoku oyobi anzen hoshō jōyaku*): Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan. First signed in San Francisco in 1952 and renovated in 1960.

Aosen chitai: ‘blue line’ districts. Refers to the urban areas where illegal prostitution concentrated during the state-regulated system abolished in 1956.

Baisen: ‘white line’. Refers to the illegal prostitution that operated in apartments and other places but was not concentrated in a district, as in the case of the red and blue lines (see above).

Baishunmono: ‘prostitution films’. Used to refer to social melodramas depicting prostitution.

Bokashi: ‘shading off’. Postproduction technique used in pornographic films to blur parts of the screen to avoid the depiction of genitals or other parts of the actors’ bodies.

Bunka kokka: ‘culture state’. Expression used by the government to redefine the national image of Japan as a peaceful nation of culture, in contraposition to the prewar militaristic image.

Burakumin: Japanese outcast minority, ethnically and linguistically indistinguishable from other Japanese people. Discrimination is based on their association with work dealing with death, which has been historically considered impure, such as performing burials, butchering animals and tanning leather.

Burai-ha: Decadent School (*burai* literally means ‘scoundrels’). Although not officially an established literary group, the term refers to the work of certain transgressive writers of the early postwar period, such as Sakaguchi Ango, Dazai Osamu, Oda Sakunosuke, and Ishikawa Jun.

Burū firumu: from the English ‘blue films’. Hard-core porn films (see also *pinku*).

Chinpira: low-level yakuza.

Danchi: suburban concrete apartment complex constructed since 1955 to solve the postwar housing crisis in Japan.

Danchizuma: ‘*danchi* wife’. Refers to the women, commonly housewives, who inhabited the *danchi* apartments (see above).

Daraku: decadence. As an aesthetic and philosophical concept, ‘decadence’ is associated with the early postwar period, and the work of the Decadent School and the literature of the flesh.

Deri heru: abbreviation of ‘delivery health’. This euphemism refers to companies providing call girls in contemporary Japan.

Eirin (Eiga rinri kanri iinkai): Japanese Film Ethics Regulation Control Committee. Eirin is the self-regulatory body of the national cinema industry.

Ero-guro: from the English ‘erotic’ and ‘grotesque’; often also referred to as ‘*ero-guro-nansensu*’ (non-sense). Originally a literary and artistic movement emerging in the early 1930s, it refers to cultural and entertainment productions focused on eroticism, decadence, and a fascination for the bizarre.

Hahamono: ‘mother films’. Refers to melodramas focusing on mother figures.

Hitobashira: ‘human pillars’. According to folk legends in Japan and other countries, a human pillar is an individual buried, sometimes alive, as an offering to the deities at large-scale complicated construction sites to prevent them from being destroyed by natural disasters or enemies’ attacks.

Ianfu: ‘comfort women’ or military prostitutes used by the Japanese army during the war years (1931-1945).

Ie: literally ‘house’ or ‘household’. The *ie* system refers to the traditional model of the extended family, headed by a senior male who had responsibility for and power over the entire family. Based on Confucianist moral codes, it was officially established as the basic socio-economic unit in the Meiji era, and abolished in the 1948 Civil Code.

Kanri shakai: ‘managed society’. Expression used to critically refer to a type of social management prescribed in Japan in the era of post-industrial consumerism and characterised by sophisticated mechanism of planning and control seeking to optimise society’s well-being.

Karayuki: Japanese women trafficked to destinations in Asia to serve as prostitutes for both Japanese and foreign men in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Kasutori: literally ‘dregs’. The *kasutori* culture became popular in the early postwar period, and was associated with a self-indulgent lifestyle that celebrated hedonism and escapism. The name comes from the *kasutori shōchū*, a strong, cheap, and illegal liquor. The *kasutori* publications were short-lived pulp magazines and newspapers of the time.

Konketsuji: mixed-race children.

Kōshō seido: state-regulated prostitution system. Established in 1900 and officially abolished first in 1946 for a short period of time, and ultimately in 1956.

Kyacchi: From the English ‘catch’. Raids organised by SCAP in collaboration with Japanese authorities to arrest all suspicious women of being *panpan*. This practice began in 1946.

Mizu shōbai: ‘water trade’. It is the term commonly used in Japan for the night-time entertainment business that involves companion services with the exploitation of sexuality to different extents. It mainly refers to the work of host and hostess at ‘snack bars’, ‘cabarets’ and clubs among other establishments.

Moga: abbreviation of *modan gāaaru*. Japanese modern girl, equivalent to the western flapper. Her male counterpart was referred to as *mobo* (‘modern boy’).

Nikutai: ‘flesh’, ‘body’. A key word in the postwar culture that was associated with the literature of the flesh (*Nikutai-ha*) and the work of writers like Tamura Taijirō, Noma Hiroshi, and Sakaguchi Ango.

OL (*ōeru*): ‘office lady’. Female office worker who usually performs clerical and secretarial work.

Panpan: Term commonly used in the early postwar period to refer to streetwalkers. Within this broad category, *yōpan* referred to those soliciting foreigners, while those servicing exclusively Japanese men were known as *wapan*.

Pinku: from the English ‘pink’. Refers to low-budget soft-core films produced since the early 1960s. Aka ‘eroductions’.

RAA: Recreation and Amusement Association—*Tokushi ian shisetsu kyōkai*, literally meaning Special Comfort Facility Association. Operating between 1945 and 1946, these recreation facilities that included the provision of sexual services were set up for the Allied Forces during the Occupation.

Rashamen: Prostitutes servicing foreign men during the Meiji and Taishō eras.

Rinchi scene: wrongly taken from the English ‘lynch’. It refers to the beating scene common in *panpan* films.

Sarariiman: from the English ‘salary man’. White-collar worker, particularly those working for corporations.

Seitō-sha: Bluestocking Society. Feminist group originated around the publication of the magazine of the same title, which ran between 1911 and 1916. Main leaders: Hiratsuka Raichō (1886-1971) and Itō Noe (1895-1923). They were referred as representing the ‘new woman’ (*atarashii onna*).

Sōpurando: from the English ‘soapland’. Bath houses that offer sexual services. Originally known as ‘Turkish baths’ (see *toruko* below).

Suiheisha: Levellers’ Society. Established by *burakumin* activists in 1922 to fight discrimination (see *burakumin*).

Toruko buro: Turkish bath. Bath houses offering sexual services that emerged in the early 1950s and proliferated after the ban of prostitution. From the 1980s they are called ‘soaplands’ (see *sōpurando* above).

Tsumamono: ‘wife films’. Melodramas usually focusing on matrimonial issues from the perspective of the wife.

Waisetsu: obscenity.

Yūkaku: pleasure quarters. Famous *yūkaku* include Yoshiwara in Tokyo and Shimabara in Kyoto.

Zainichi: ethnic Korean citizens residents of Japan.