

Love and Death in the Japanese Cinema (2) : Between the Original Play (*Horikawa Nami no Tsuzumi*) and the Screen Adaptation (*Night Drum*)

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Introduction

*Night Drum (Yoru no Tsuzumi)*¹⁾ by Tadashi Imai was adopted from a puppet play, *Horikawa Nami no Tsuzumi*, written by Monzaemon Chikamatsu, the master playwright of classical Japanese theater. This three-act play deals with adultery as its theme in the days of Tokugawa Shogunate. The theme develops centering around the intertwining of love and death. The tragedy starts when a samurai's wife whose husband is away and on duty in Edo gets involved with a drum teacher. When her husband is returned, she is executed by her husband's sword.

Of Chikamatsu's plays there are three which deal with adultery, namely *Daikyouji Mukashi-goyomi*,²⁾ *Yari no Gonza Kasane Katabira*,³⁾ and this original text. The adultery that women in these three plays commit is accidental and unintentional. Chikamatsu describes the adultery as the venial fault. **Synopsis of the Original Play** translates and summarizes Chikamatsu's original text and follows the story to the end which lifts the play to the most tragic heights.

Tadashi Imai is a typical example of a Japanese director concerned with humanistic causes. A self-avowed leftist, his stories deal with the plight of the weak and downtrodden and the corruption of society that allows such flagrant discrimination. In *Night Drum*, too, he emphasizes the harshness of the feudal code which causes great emotional hardship, putting a strain on even the strongest bonds of love. Once its provisions are broken, the penalty is always paid by women.

While this film is far from the original in form, it is close to the original in contents. Imai depicts harsh reality and social injustice in the original with meticulous accuracy. In **The Screen Adaptation**, how Imai interprets and visualizes Chikamatsu's text is discussed in order of the development of the story. How Imai simplifies the plot and the total organization of the original play into the film ; thus making the motive to commit adultery even more clear, is examined and compared.

Clearly Imai's film not only points out the conflicts in feudal times but also suggests what is commonly happening in the present time—husbands' transfers, long absences, wives' loneliness. He attempts to disclose the

tragedy of ethical code and the tradition that Chikamatsu depicts to strive at the understanding and the sympathy of the modern viewers.

Synopsis of the Original Play

Act One (Scene One)

In the courtyard of a house in Tottori, two sisters—Otane and Ofuji—hang out their laundry while Noh chanting is heard from inside the house. The narrator tells us that Otane's husband, a samurai, is with his lord at Edo ; and Otane advises her sister to stay in service and not get married. Her husband, Hikokuro, must spend every other year in Edo and, even when he's home, he must report to the castle every day and stand guard duty ten nights a month. Hikokuro has the samurai spirit and wants to make his mark in the profession.

But Ofuji laughs at her sister. The discipline at his lordship's mansion where she is in service doesn't allow her to spend a single night away, even in her own family's house.

Otane shushes her because of the drum practice going on inside. When it ends, Otane runs to a tree and pretends it is her husband come to relieve her boredom. A song from inside the house tells of a husband presently returning, and this gives Otane some hope.

Otane's son, Bunroku, comes out, finished with his drum lesson, and asks her if she'd like to meet his teacher, Miyaji Gen-emon. Inside the sitting room, Gen-emon introduces himself. He tells Otane that he lives in Kyoto at Horikawa, that he has not yet had the pleasure of meeting her husband, and that her son is exceptionally talented.

Otane explains that Bunroku is actually her younger brother, adopted by Hikokuro. It was Otane's father who arranged for the boy's drum lessons in Hikokuro's absence.

Ofuji appears to apologize for the inconvenience of having the lessons in her father's house, but Hikokuro makes very little money and his house is even more cramped, which is why they do the wash here.

The maid brings sake for the guest, but Otane drinks first—to make sure it's properly heated—and then it is the drum teacher's turn, as the narrator tells us he

comes from a family of heavy drinkers. As he drinks, he praises the sake highly, and the narrator comments on his glibness. "How unfortunate that nobody recognizes this portent of later calamity."

They all have several more drinks and, when her sister Ofuji tries to get Otane to slow down, she won't listen. Another bottle is brought and Gen-emon sings and plays the drum.

A servant arrives to take Ofuji back to the mansion, and Bunroku leaves for the house of the gentleman he waits on, asking Gen-emon to remain there with Otane until his grandfather returns.

Gen-emon is worried about appearances—how will it look if he's found there alone with the boy's mother—and he goes into the next room. Otane tells the boy to stop by their house and ask his grandfather to return and to send her maid too, as she's anxious to go home.

Otane is combing her hair when Isobe Yukaemon, a fellow retainer of her husband's, bursts into the house. He should be in Edo too, but he claimed to be sick. He tells Otane he did it because of her. He wants her love and takes her tightly in his arms.

Otane is a little tipsy but manages to fight him off. She rails at him that he is going against all the rules of human decency. If his lordship hears about it, Yukaemon will be ruined. She demands that he leaves, but he threatens to kill her and then himself, so that all will think they've committed a lovers' suicide.

He grabs her and draws his sword, and the narrator tells us that Otane believes he would do it and she would be branded for a crime of which she is guiltless. So she decides to trick him.

She says her father may return at any moment, so she will meet Yukaemon at her own house the next night. He is grateful for the kindness but wants something now, and he chases her around the room.

From the next room they hear Gen-emon suddenly beat his drum and sing of the demon of lust. They realize they've been overheard. Yukaemon loudly says it was all a joke and dashes out. Otane, worried that the drum teacher will spread word of the scandal, orders the maid to bring more sake and then to go to bed.

She is drinking alone, remembering her husband, when Gen-emon appears to take his leave—he feels awkward in a house with only women.

Otane catches his sleeve and tries to convince him that she only talked the way she did to Yukaemon to deceive him. She begs that he not tell anyone and joins her hands and weeps.

Gen-emon says he doesn't intend to tell anyone about the unpleasant conversation he overheard, although others may start rumors.

Otane clings to him. For her peace of mind, she asks Gen-emon to drink with her as a promise he won't tell. She drinks a large cup, then refills it and drinks half before offering it to him. When he drinks it, she tells him he has shared a cup of sake with a married

woman and his guilt is the same as hers, so he must never tell anything to anyone.

Gen-emon is disturbed at this and rushes for the door, but she throws her arms around him. She calls him infuriating and unties his *obi*. They embrace and move into the next room, as the narrator tells us that this is "a connection doomed from the start."

(Scene Two)

Later that night Otane is awakened by her father's knocking at the gate. Her sash is undone, and she realizes what has happened. She has disgraced herself and she'll suffer for it.

Gen-emon wakes at the sound of her sobbing and they look at each other in shame. There is more pounding at the gate, and Otane looks for a place to hide. She stumbles over the sleeping maid, who jumps up in alarm and knocks over the lantern. In the darkness, Otane tries to shield Gen-emon with her body as she opens the latch.

But it isn't her father outside. It's Yukaemon again, who grabs their sleeves together and cries out, "Now, you adulteress, I've got proof of your crime!"

Otane slams the gate shut, and Gen-emon cuts off the ends of their sleeves, still held by Yukaemon. Gen-emon flees out a side door, and Yukaemon forces his way into the house, stuffing the sleeves into his kimono. He tells Otane that, if she wants him to keep her secret, she'd better show him some love in return.

He gropes for her but bumps into the maid. As the maid slips off to bed, he flops down beside her. As the maid is fending Yukaemon off, Otane's servant comes to take her home and, by the light of the girl's lantern, Yukaemon sees he is with the maid. He gets up and runs out, as the narrator tells us, "The illusion in the dark was lovely."

Act Two

(Scene One)

On the road from Edo to Tottori, the narrator describes the colorful scene of cherry blossoms, brightly uniformed soldiers, and lance sheaths festooned with rooster plumes. Over a year has passed since they left their homes, and casks of sake are opened as his lordship enters his province, presents are exchanged, and there is much noisy celebrating.

The returning Hikokuro was given a raise in stipend when they left Edo and now has a larger retinue of attendants.

(Scene Two)

At Hikokuro's house, messengers arrive with gifts for Otane. Hikokuro's sister's husband sends her hemp thread—the word for which is the same as "par amour." Otane is terrified that her husband may have heard rumors about her, but, when he arrives, he doesn't show it and prepares to go pay his respects to his father-in-law. As Otane goes to get his *hakama*, Ofuji asks Hikokuro why he didn't answer her letters and tries to force another letter on him. With an expression of distaste, he refuses to take it. He admits there

was some talk of their marrying at one time, but he married her sister instead over ten years ago and can't possibly divorce Otane now. He throws down the letter and goes out.

Otane sees what is happening and snatches up the letter. Ofuji grabs her and the sisters struggle. Otane kicks Ofuji to the ground and beats her with a broom until Bunroku rushes in to take the broom away from her. Then she takes a horsewhip to Ofuji until Bunroku takes that away too. He asks her to stop, and she shows him the letter in which Ofuji asks that Hikokuro divorce his wife so he can marry Ofuji.

Again Otane flies at her sister, pulls her hair, and strikes her. Ofuji begs someone to take Otane off her and to hear her excuse. Otane finally agrees but warns that, if her excuses don't hold water, she'll kill her.

The others leave at Ofuji's request and she tells her sister that she was only trying to save her life. She says she knows about the affair with the drum teacher.

Otane flies at her and demands proof, and Ofuji tells her she knows Otane is four months pregnant and has been taking abortion medicine. On top of this, the whole fief is gossiping about her.

Ofuji weeps and tells Otane that's why she wants Hikokuro to divorce her. If she were divorced, giving birth to the child wouldn't be a crime. Ofuji says she's doing this out of duty to their mother, who taught them on her deathbed that a married woman does not even look at another man if she's alone with him. Their mother also asked Ofuji to keep an eye on Otane's drinking.

Otane, choked by tears, says the sake was poison from the sins of a previous existence. She had meant to kill herself but wanted to see her husband's face once more.

There is an uproar at the gate, and they leave as Hikokuro runs in, pursued by his younger sister Yura, who has a lance in her hand. She says something has happened that violate all decency and she can't condone it.

Hikokuro calls her impudent and impertinent and demands to hear her accusations.

Yura laughs at him and tells him about Otane's affair with Gen-emon, the drum teacher from Kyoto. That is why Otane was sent presents of hemp thread, but Hikokuro pretended not to understand so he wouldn't have to avenge himself.

Hikokuro is amazed to hear this and asks what proof Yura has. She tells him his friend Yukaemon caught the two and cut off their sleeves. She has the sleeves, given to her husband by Yukaemon, and Hikokuro recognizes his wife's kimono material. He promises to vindicate the family honor.

He calls everyone together in the sitting room, and they all know some disaster is at hand. The narrator tells us that Otane expects to be killed. Little did she imagine that the pillow she shared with her husband on

the night of his departure would be their last together.

Otane weeps silently as Hikokuro throws the sleeve before her. He blames Ofuji and the servant girl too as the go-betweens in this matter, but Ofuji denies this and the servant girl only admits to having bought abortion medicine.

Now the flabbergasted Hikokuro turns to Bunroku. Why didn't he kill Gen-emon? But Bunroku only heard about the matter this morning. He informed the household retainer, who sent men to kill Gen-emon, but the drum teacher had already returned to Kyoto.

Hikokuro asks for a fire to be lit at the Buddhist altar and tells Otane to stand before him. She can only say that her crime took place in a nightmare and to vindicate herself she must die. She plunges a dagger into her breast, and Hikokuro deals her a death blow with his sword.

He wipes his sword and sheathes it, then takes up his travelling clothes. He is going to report what has happened to his superiors and then he is going to Kyoto. He asks Bunroku to take care of the two women, but, unexpectedly, they all want to go with him.

He is outraged, saying they will bring even more disgrace on him, but they weep and plead, so that he is unable to hide his grief. "If you think so much of your mother, sister, or sister-in-law, why didn't you beg me to spare her life?" he asks. "Why didn't you suggest that she put on Buddhist robes and become a nun?"

As he takes Otane's lifeless body in his arms and shouts his grief over the weeping of the others, the narrator concludes: "This is the heartbreaking conduct demanded of those born to be samurai."

Act Three

The narrator names the prominent streets of Kyoto, ending with Horikawa, the street of the moated river. At dawn the four avengers arrive in the upper town. It is the day of the annual Gion Festival. They discern bad omens for their venture in the conversations of the passersby and consider postponing their revenge for a day. Then they hear more encouraging omens and decide their luck has turned for the better.

Hikokuro's plan is for the two women to enter a little shop next to Gen-emon's house. They can then kick through the *shoji* and enter the house. Bunroku and Hikokuro will break through the courtyard gate and force their way in.

They are interrupted by a samurai and his retinue, who enter Gen-emon's house on some business. Hikokuro gives a beggar priest a coin for his old robe and slips it on. He intones the Kwannon Sutra and attracts Gen-emon's maid, who gives him alms to keep him quiet. Hikokuro asks about the young samurai visitor and learns that he was recently promoted by his lord for his drum playing and has come to reward his teacher. The maid goes inside and Hikokuro joins his accomplices.

They see the young samurai leave the house in

disguise and guess that he has left his servants behind while he is off to see the festival. Bunroku is for charging in and slaughtering anyone who gets in their way, but Hikokuro has a better idea. He goes to the gate and informs the samurai's men that their master has gotten into a fight and there is a mob surrounding him. The men rush out of the house, swords in hand, and Hikokuro sets their original plan in motion. He drops the priest's robe, gives his and Bunroku's dirks to the women, and all hitch up their robes. They say one last prayer, then go to break into the house as planned.

Ofuji spots Gen-emon and calls out. Gen-emon dashes halfway up some stairs, then sits and stares at them. Hikokuro shouts to him that he has discovered his immoral relations with Otane and has killed her. Now he is going to kill Gen-emon.

Gen-emon starts for the second floor. The two women try to follow him, but Gen-emon's wife engages them with a halberd, and servants burst in to block the attackers.

Gen-emon grabs a lance and points it down the stairs, but Hikokuro slashes at it and splits it. In retaliation, Gen-emon throws a *go* board, a backgammon board, a *shogi* board, and other assorted furniture at him.

In the confusion, Yura slips out the door and climbs up the gate to the second floor. She enters to slash at Gen-emon from behind, and he overturns a screen on her. They struggle and he twists the dirk away from her, just as Hikokuro races up the stairs and closes in with his sword. Gen-emon leaps from the window to the street, and Hikokuro jumps after him. As Hikokuro chases Gen-emon onto a bridge, a crowd gathers. The two women call to the people that this is an official vengeance and does not concern them.

Gen-emon slashes away while Hikokuro scarcely moves, but, when he does charge, he slashes down diagonally from Gen-emon's left shoulder to his right hand. Gen-emon falls and they all close in. Bunroku, Ofuji, and Yura stab him in turn, and then the four of them together deal the final thrust.

The neighbors gather to take their weapons and wait for an official order. In the meantime, Hikokuro and his cohorts will be locked up, but they walk off splendidly as word of their vengeance spreads.

The Screen Adaptation

The film *Night Drum* is faithful in broad outline to the original play, but Mr. Imai and his writers have made some important changes in order to strengthen the story's dramatic values.

To begin with, the film starts with the procession from the beginning of Act II and the events of Act I are told later, in flashbacks. It is early summer, 1706, a title tells us, and the villagers along the way bow their heads to the ground as the Lord's retinue passes by to somber music.

Now there is an added incident at an inn where Hikokuro refuses to authorize an expenditure for *sake*

for the men, even though it is his brother-in-law Sagohei who makes the request.⁴⁾ One of the other men remarks to Hikokuro that his wife will be happy to see him and we proceed to the next day's journey, scenic mountains in the background.

Now we dissolve to the home of the elder of Hikokuro's clan in Tottori as his wife cuts his hair. She tells her husband rumors she has heard of Otane's adultery with the drum teacher and he asks her not to repeat them to anyone.

We meet Otane folding laundry as the maid, Orin, scrubs the floor. Otane tells the woman such scrubbing is unnecessary, but the maid says the master gets angry at dust (uncleanness?). There is no mention of a hemp thread present.

Hikokuro arrives, walking down the lane, and, when he is announced by Bunroku, Otane quickly touches up her hair.

In the film version there is no letter from Ofuji asking Hikokuro to divorce Otane, and no fight between the sisters. There is also no mention of pregnancy or abortion medicine, no accusation by Yura about Otane and the drum teacher, and no cut-off sleeves. Instead we dissolve from Hikokuro's homecoming to a scene in which he distributes presents for his family and has words of praise for Bunroku and Yura but none for Otane—at least not in front of the others.

A scene follows at Sagohei's house where he is greeted by his wife, his mother, and a house full of kids. His mother is glad he's back but mentions that he never wrote to them. Sagohei answers that he was sure everything was all right at home and at Hikokuro's house too. The women exchange glances.

After he has sent the servants Orin and Matahei to bed, Hikokuro calls Otane to him. He offers her some *sake* and is surprised when she refuses to drink any. "*Sake* plays tricks on a woman's mind," she responds. Hikokuro comments on the cruel law that requires him to be in Edo for such long periods, but, he says laughingly, it at least has the merit of giving him a new honeymoon each time he returns. And as he blows out the lamp and takes her in his arms the scene fades out.⁵⁾

Fade in the next day when Hikokuro visits Sagohei's home to thank Sagohei's mother for looking after Otane in his absence. Out of hearing of his wife, Sagohei makes reference to the courtesan he knew in Edo and we note that Hikokuro hasn't any similar stories to tell. But he does have a feeling that something is wrong at home. People seem to be whispering behind his back, he says to Yura, and Sagohei tells him about the gossip regarding the drum teacher.

Hikokuro returns home to confront Otane, although he says he still trusts her. In flashback she explains to him the events that caused the rumors.

Around the end of last year Miyaji Gen-emon, the drum teacher, was a guest of the Lord's chief retainer. It was arranged that Bunroku would take drum lessons from him, along with other boys of the fief. The

teacher came to the large house where Ofuji worked for this purpose. We see the lessons in progress and then the introduction of the teacher to Otane by her sister. Miyaji (as he is called in the film) is somewhat teasing about her young age for having such a large son, but the women explain that Bunroku is really their younger brother. And that, Otane tells her husband, is all that happened....

As Hikokuro gallops by on his horse, two of the elders of the clan see him and comment that the family will be discredited because of what Otane has done. The head of the clan overhears them and calls a meeting of the principals involved, including Hikokuro, Sagohei, Yura, and Ofuji. The clan head is gravely concerned and wants to know what caused the rumors. For such a serious transgression of the feudal code, all their property could be confiscated. Hikokuro tries to defend Otane, but Yura is called on to give her testimony.

In flashback we see Yura visiting Otane last autumn during her husband's absence. Otane is weaving while they talk and Yura notices that she airs her husband's clothing every day. On another visit she found Otane taking in part-time work to make ends meet. And that is all she can tell them.

Now they turn to Ofuji for her story. In flashback we see Otane fixing her sister's hair. They are discussing an upcoming wedding and Otane tells Ofuji that being a samurai's wife isn't easy. She's seldom together with her husband.

Ofuji is prodded by the group—what about the drum teacher? And Ofuji's flashback story continues.

It was during the Peach Festival. Their father (an added character who never appeared in the play) supplied *sake* for a picnic with the drum teacher, his two daughters, and Bunroku. Miyaji, the drum teacher, flirts a little with the women and mentions the Gion Festival in Kyoto in June. He stayed all night and left in the morning.

The only other thing Ofuji remembers is that Isobe, Hikokuro's "friend," came by unexpectedly. He was on some business about settling a dispute between two temples. We see Otane covering the sleeping drum teacher and then coming out to Isobe and the others. Isobe volunteers to escort Otane to her own home but she refuses. Isobe left and later that night Otane went home with a servant, her father seeing them off. The last thing Ofuji remembers is the drum teacher walking and chanting in the garden, and later he went back to Kyoto.

There is silence in the room as Ofuji finishes her story, and then the scene fades out.

We fade in to a boat on a stream as Hikokuro and Ofuji return home. The boat docks and they get off. Hikokuro tries to catch a firefly but it gets away. Ofuji begins to weep and finally breaks down and admits that she lied to the others.

In another flashback her story picks up with Isobe's

arrival. But in this version the others have already left for the shrine as Otane covers the drum teacher and, half-tipsy, comes to Isobe. He tells her that her husband has a mistress in Edo and because of a promotion won't be coming back for another full year. Otane hides her dismay at hearing this and the action now is the same as in the play with his advances, her refusals, his threatening her with his sword, and her promise to meet him later as Ofuji, listening at the door, hears the whole conversation. Suddenly Otane and Isobe hear the drum teacher chanting in the garden and realize they have been overheard. Isobe quickly leaves, declaring loudly that he was only joking. There are a couple of brief scenes of the lion dance starting at the festival and then we dissolve back to Hikokuro and Ofuji. That's how the drum teacher saved Otane, Ofuji tells him.⁶⁾

As they walk on we dissolve to a road with two horsemen on it. It is Hikokuro and Isobe riding in the moonlight and after passing along another darker road they stop and walk through the pine trees. Hikokuro accuses Isobe of starting the rumors about Otane and Isobe denies that he loves Otane. As Hikokuro draws his sword and Isobe backs away he asks why he should lie? He saw them!

In Isobe's flashback he remembers that after he left the house he had left a document there. So he stopped his horse and went back. He went in through the gate, found the document and was about to leave again when he saw Otane come out of the drum teacher's room, staggering.

We dissolve back to Isobe in the present as he insists he saw her and Hikokuro starts to run.

We dissolve to Hikokuro at home as he puts up his sword and begins to undress. Otane asks if he wants a bath but he asks her to sit and tell him something. Ofuji told him about the night of the festival, he says. Now he wants her to tell him the truth. Isobe swears he saw her.

Otane runs away, comes back and kneels.

"Then it must be true," Hikokuro says, and Otane cries out "Forgive me!"

He pushes her away as she begs for forgiveness, then pushes her away again and commands her to speak.

Now we hear Otane's story, again in flashback, beginning with the drum teacher chanting in the garden. She pours herself a drink, and then another. Now she goes to confront the drum teacher as flute and drum beats build. She asks him to drink with her as a promise he won't tell anyone what he heard of her conversation with Isobe and when he tries to leave she throws herself at him. If he will never tell . . . His hand enters the front of her kimono and he pulls her close as the scene fades out.

We fade in back in the present as Hikokuro slaps Otane to the ground and then hits her again and again. He goes to bawl out the servants who must have known what was going on in his absence, then comes back to

Otane. He is bitter that she said nothing when first returned. In the servants' quarters Orin sends Bunroku and Matahei for Yura and Sagohei.

At dawn Hikokuro blows out the lantern as menacing music begins.

"Why did you do it?" he asks, in dialogue that was not in the play. She was upset, she says, when Isobe told her husband was not coming home. She thought later of dying, but had to see him once more. Then, when she saw him, she couldn't bring herself to tell him. As she weeps he holds her and then asks: "Why did you tell me the truth?"

Yura and Sagohei enter, Yura ready to believe the worst. Adultery with a common drum teacher is a disgrace that only death can wipe out.

Hikokuro knows what he must do. He goes to the next room to take out a long dagger and when Otane enters and kneels he places it before her. He tells her he will not marry again (a statement that was not in the play). She takes off her *obi* string to tie her kimono around her knees. Even in death she will not want to appear ungraceful.

She tries to stab herself but her hands shake and she drops the dagger. Hikokuro moves swiftly across the room to grab his long sword and slash her. . . . The others slowly come in and the scene fades out.

We fade in on the Gion Festival in Kyoto. Huge portable shrines clog the streets and there is lively music in the air. We dissolve to the Horikawa area and the drum teacher's house. Inside, Miyaji is drinking with his wife as they discuss where he might make the most money on his next teaching job. Suddenly Hikokuro, Bunroku, Yura and Ofuji appear in the house. Hikokuro tells Miyaji who he is and slashes out with his sword. The drum teacher hurls a candle holder at Hikokuro, then runs out and a chase is on through the streets. As we track along beside Hikokuro we see that he has not recently shaved his head and he looks haggard and unkempt. Miyaji comes to a gate that will not open and Hikokuro deliberately runs him through. As his victim falls Hikokuro slashes at him again and then Yura runs in to stab him in the throat.

As a crowd gathers Yura runs among the people telling them that the authorities have a record of this vendetta—it is all perfectly legal.⁷⁾ Hikokuro pries his stiffened fingers from the hilt of his sword and drops it as the camera moves in to his tortured face.

Conclusion

The characters in the film have changed in accordance with its different emphasis. Yura, for example, is not bloodthirsty from the beginning. Only after Otane confesses does Yura demand that she die. She does still stab the drum teacher at the end—the only one of Hikokuro's followers to do so.

Ofuji is much the same in both version. Her version of the events between Otane and Isobe are meant to put

Otane in a good light. She accompanies the group to Kyoto but does not actively fight as in the play.

The father, strangely missing in all the goings-on in his house in the play, appears briefly as a pudgy, cheerful type with a liking for *sake*. (Could Otane have learned to drink from him?)

Otane is portrayed as hard-working, loving and dutiful, as she was in the play. Loneliness is the catalyst that turns opportunity into action and she engages our sympathy completely.

The biggest change is in Hikokuro. In the play it takes less than a page and a half of dialogue for Hikokuro to learn of his wife's infidelity and to summon the relatives, actions that consume the whole film in Imai's ingenious flashback approach. His gradual development from the happy scenes of his homecoming, to the beginnings of the rumors, to his investigation of them, and to his final discovery of the truth is the film, ending with his cry "Why did you tell me the truth?"

As described above, he is like a man possessed as he pursues Miyaji. His hair style is careless and his face like a dead man's, forcefully emphasized in the camera movement in to him at the end. Nothing could be farther from the stage direction in the play: "The crowd surrounds the four avengers, who walk calmly off, a splendid, noble, heartening sight." It should be noted, however, that the third act of the play is rarely performed.

Imai followed the original play very closely, even more so than many stage versions. He emphasized the importance of Hikokuro's feeling of sorrow and emptiness at the end of the film. Although one of playwrights saw Otane's adultery as being of her own free will,⁸⁾ he blamed it on her drunkenness. In the film, too, there is only one adulterous incident, although there are rumors of more than one in the play. Parenthetically, the Japanese word for adultery refers only to a woman's action—by definition it is something a man does not commit. Imai also imagined that Otane had a natural admiration for a drum teacher from Kyoto, as drum-playing was a way for a samurai to please his lord.

In the film, Imai drew a parallel between the temptations of the old days when feudal law separated husband and wife for long periods and those of the present when Japanese businessmen are frequently away from home on long trips.⁹⁾ One of his purposes was to unfold the manner in which feudal values remain a vital intrinsic component of Japanese society, part of the psychological and social fabric of life in Japan.

Notes

- 1) The original title of the film was *Adultery (Kantsu)*, but Eirin (Motion Picture Ethics Regulation and Control Committee) forced Imai to make it more moderate before release. He reluctantly changed it to *Night Drum (Yoru no Tsuzumi)*. The film was also called *Adulteress* in foreign showings. The detail information of the film is as follows:

Night Drum (Yoru Tsuzumi)

Released in 1958 by Gendai Production-Shochiku
Black and White, running time 95 minutes.

Credits:

Screenplay by Shinobu Hashimoto and Kaneto Shindo

Based on the play by Monzaemon Chikamatsu

Photography by Shun-ichiro Nakao

Art Direction by Hiroshi Mizutani

Music by Akira Ifukube

Produced by Tengō Yamada

Directed by Tadashi Imai

Cast:

Hikokuro Ogura Rentaro Mikuni

Otane, his wife Ineko Arima

Bunroku, their son Mannosuke Nakamura

Gen-emon Miyaji, drum teacher Masayuki Mori

Ofuji, Otane's sister Keiko Yukishiro

Yukaemon Isobe Nobuo Kaneko

Sagohei Masayama Taiji Tonoyama

Yura, Hikokuro's sister Sumiko Hidaka

Matazaemon Kurokawa Eijiro Tono

- 2) Filmed in 1954 by Kenji Mizoguchi as *Chikamatsu Monogatari*.
- 3) Filmed in 1986 by Masahiro Shinoda as *Yari no Gonza*.
- 4) One factor that explains Hikokuro's refusal was the requirement for his lord to maintain a residence in Edo and shoulder the expense of traveling with his entire retinue from his home in Tottori to Edo or vice versa every year. This was a great financial burden and control was especially tight over lords with domains not too far from Edo. In the distant provinces, the Shogunate had less control, and the eventual overthrow of the central government was accomplished by these less-dominated local leaders.
- 5) Although Hikokuro's marriage to Otane was undoubtedly an arranged marriage, there is still an apparent love relationship between them. He refers to the honeymoons he has to look forward to, even though she has borne him no heir, which could constitute legal grounds for divorce.
- 6) Otane's drinking disturbs Ofuji because of the strictures against such behavior for married women. The fear is that, if intoxicated, they might lose control. Under stress Otane does exactly that, but our sympathies are with her. We know how she has suffered from loneliness, and the prospect of another year without her husband is more than she can bear.
- 7) It is mentioned that killing the drum teacher is a registered vendetta and therefore beyond legal punishment. The social rationalization behind this is that the musician is inferior in the hierarchy of samurai-artisan-merchant, falling somewhere between the last two categories. The double standard is also an element is Otane's death; a man could associate sexually with women of lower status than himself, but a woman was expected to remain faithful. She was responsible for the continuity of the family and was also considered the possession of the man, whose pride would be hurt by an act of unfaithfulness.
- 8) The playwright is Sumie Tanaka, who wrote *Tsuzumi no*

Onna based on her interpretation of Chikamatsu's original text.

- 8) In interview with Imai, the authors asked if he saw a parallel between the two. His answer, with a smile, was "Perhaps." (The authors met Mr. Imai in the 8th floor tea-room of Shinjuku Station Building in Tokyo on July 28, 1977.)

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