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Duration and Close Up Shots in *Late Spring*

Ozu Yasujirō's *Late Spring* is about a young woman who is overly selfless and considerate about the needs of others around her and never about the needs of herself. Noriko has a very chipper and bubbly personality through a good portion of the film. However, this personality feels very unnatural and forced. This may have to do with Ozu primarily using his actors more as props and wishing for things to be a certain way, but it could also have to do with the predicament Noriko goes through in the film. When marriage steps into the picture, and whenever this proposal is directed towards her, Noriko's smile seems much more forced. Besides that, she's also very quick to shut the idea down and move on to another topic. Whenever Noriko is questioned about why she wishes not to get married, it is never about her, hence why she is characterized as a rather overly considerate character. Her distaste of marriage comes from wanting to remain with her father, for she worries that he cannot take care of himself and she is accustomed to his ways. However, when Noriko goes over to her aunt's house, she is met with news that her father would potentially be getting with someone by the name of Mrs. Miwa. In that scene, Noriko seems more shocked and bitter. It isn't until two scenes after Noriko and her aunt's meeting where she accepts that reality. To be specific, it is the Noh scene in which the use of synchronization of the music and the pictures portrayed in the close up shots allow the viewer to truly understand the weight of the situation. Through the use of a variety of close up shots and

synchronization, this scene serves as a sort of climax and build up for both the scenes prior and the scenes that will follow after.

To sum up the Noh scene, it is a rather long scene given Ozu also includes the play sequence, thus allowing the audience to also watch the play as if they were sitting beside one of the characters. There comes a point in the play where Noriko's father notices Mrs. Miwa and he lightly dips his head as a nonverbal greeting so as to not disturb those around him in the middle of the play. Noriko notices the fact that her father turns to Mrs. Miwa in her peripherals before she also gives a small dip of her head as a nonverbal greeting as well. After that is said and done, the scene continues on for a few minutes longer. We get a series of close up shots, medium close up shots and medium long shots of Noriko and occasionally Noriko and her father in angled shots. Noriko's curious and intrigued expression from the play subtly converts into a more hurt and devoid emotion.

In this scene, Ozu utilizes a plentiful amount of close up shots between the characters. In using close up and medium close up shots, we as the audience are able to truly observe their facial features as if we are face to face with the characters themselves. Shortly after Noriko's father gives Mrs. Miwa a brief nonverbal greeting in the middle of the play and Noriko follows her father's gesture, we get approximately a medium long shot back to Noriko and her father. In this shot, Noriko is seen slowly looking back and forth to her father and Mrs. Miwa. From there, the audience can see the slow and subtle hints to Noriko's features. A character once seemingly bubbly and chipper in the beginning of the film steadily crumbles to someone rather betrayed over the whole ordeal. Additionally, this would be one of the first occurrences in which Noriko is expressing more saddening emotions to the public eye and around her father. Shot after shot, the audience can see these negative emotions steadily build up before Noriko very reluctantly

accepts this reality. On the other hand, if this feature was opposite of how Ozu presented it, meaning if this scene had more long-shots, this would provide a very different feel to the scene as a whole. If this scene had more long-shots, then the viewer would more than likely pay more attention to not only the amount of people at the play, but also how much she would stick out given she would be the only one there not enjoying this play. In fact, she would be the only one not focusing on the play.

However, that is not to say that the viewers would not get that feel at all. When Noriko turns to look at her father when his head moves, it is clear that they are at least in each other's peripherals. Noriko is able to see when her father moves his head, so why is it that her father never turns to look at her when Noriko starts to look around before eventually putting her head down? It is not as though Noriko is moving slow enough to a point that her father would not notice. When her father moved his head, it was about the same speed as Noriko when she turned to glance back and forth at her father and Mrs. Miwa before putting her head down. To the audience, Noriko seems like the odd one out with her head being the only one down whilst everyone else's head is up. To something that seems very obvious to the viewer does not seem very obvious to Noriko's father. At the very least, her father should be able to see Noriko in his peripherals since they are directly side by side to one another. Albeit a medium long shot being at an angle, it does provide understanding to the audience that these two are sitting directly next to each other. Such an observation and lack of acknowledgement could show a sense of heavy weight. This lack of acknowledgement can also serve as a kind of parallel and symbolism of how those close to Noriko do not exactly take into consideration what Noriko wants to do in terms of marriage. Noriko's feelings are rarely, if not at all, considered when talks of marriage come up.

Here, Noriko is evidently very distressed and displeased, yet nobody seems to take notice or acknowledge said distress.

Lastly, this scene lasts for quite awhile— especially given the biggest takeaway of this scene is to take note of the fact that Noriko is hesitant in accepting this reality. Why does Ozu decide to let this scene drag on longer than it should, and what kind of meaning does the viewer receive from this scene given the duration of the scene? By allowing the audience to enjoy the Noh play alongside the characters, it gives off the appeal that there is a kind of imaginary participant. We as the audience would feel as though we are sitting somewhere in the theater in a sense. With allowing this scene to drag on, it at least provides the implication that this is happening in real time. This sort of real time implication is enhanced due to the other points mentioned above. Had this scene been shorter, or if this scene took place someplace else where it was more quiet and secluded, we would not receive the same tone or meaning from this scene as we do now. Adding onto that, if Ozu took out the sounds of the play as a whole and kept it completely silent, it would take away that real time sensation from that particular scene.

The Noh scene is a powerful scene for *Late Spring* as a whole; this may somewhat have to do with the fact that this scene is directly the halfway point of this film. With this being the halfway point of the film, this scene could serve as a time of pondering for both the viewer and Noriko. During this scene and watching Noriko's despair steadily grow, the viewer can also take that time to think of the build up to where they are now at this point of the scene. Noriko's prior happy-go-lucky moments build up to the Noh play given this is one of the only scenes in which we get mildly long lasting close up shots with Noriko in such a devastating and betrayed state. Additionally, this is also the scene that sets up the film going forward. In scenes after, Noriko is at least contemplating marriage, even if she is not entirely happy with it. She is not quick to shut

it down or move onto another topic as she used to before. Overall, the Noh scene is provided as a sort of climax due to the build up of Noriko's bubblier moments prior before things start to go downhill. The scene right before where Noriko and her aunt are talking about Noriko's father and Mrs. Miwa potentially getting together could be a sort of climax in a sense, but the possibility of them getting together is not accepted until the Noh scene.