DECENTERING
THE WESTERN MODE OF REPRESENTATION
Yasujiro Ozu's Spatial Strategies

WILLIAM LIM
HT004072Y

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ABSTRACT

Initial Impetus
This dissertation stems from an initial curiosity in the peculiarities of Yasujiro
Ozu's films. As proclaimed by Paul Schrader to be the 'most Japanese of all
directors', this investigation aims to uncover certain traits of 'Japaneseness' in
his works. It is believed that an intimate relationship exists between this
distinctive quality of Ozu's work and his conception (and presentation) of
space.

Method
Many have been written on the association between Ozu's narrative and Japan
culture, yet due to the elusive nature of Japanese philosophy, many such
writings are inconclusive and at best, speculative in nature. This study attempts
to focus on the formal aspects of Ozu's films, particularly his unique filmic style,
and its resulting perceptual effects in order to elucidate his 'Japaneseness'.
Subsequently, his spatial strategies and presentation of space will be analyzed
as part of this "Japanese" trait.

Findings
It has been found that Ozu's eccentric techniques (as a 'decentering' of
mainstream western cinema codes) reveal a presentational quality (as opposed
to a representational motivation) in his works, an attribute that is common in
many traditional Japanese Arts. In particular, this presentational quality is
produced by a 'flattening' of space due to his various unique spatial strategies.

Dissertation Supervisor: Tsuto Sakamoto
Title: Fellow