

Tokyo Story was directed by Yasujiro Ozu and released in Japan in 1953. It is about an old married couple that travels to Tokyo to visit their children. They are greeted warmly, but are treated as if they are just an annoying sidetrack from the childrens' busy lives. The mother becomes ill and dies soon after they return home, leaving the family to reflect on her visit. Some striking scenes include the grandmother dreaming of her future during a walk with her grandson, the old couple's visit to a spa, and three old men discussing the failure of the future generations. The subject matter of the story consists of a social commentary on Japanese middle-class family life and more acutely, an examination of human mortality, alienation, and modernity.

The main contention of Ozu's unique style of directing is the importance of mutually supportive formal and stylistic systems, a contention that is absent from the classical Hollywood films of this period. Whereas in most of the movies of this time the stylistic aspects would be subordinate to the narrative, the systemics of Ozu coexist independently of one another. This inimitable quality of Tokyo Story can be reflected on through the examination of continuity, transition, and the discretion of the non-diegetic filmic properties. The consideration of these elements suggests that a stylistically driven film can succeed regardless of the degree of narrative motivation.

The freedom of the stylistic system to not be dependent on the narrative creates the distinctive spatial and temporal aspects of Tokyo Story. The intentional discontinuity of the diegetic world is accomplished mainly by the use of non-traditional editing. Ozu's disregard of the necessity of respecting the conventions of the graphic match and the 180-degree line contribute to the originality of the film. For example, one of the opening sequences in the movie is a conversation between the married couple that deliberately cuts back and forth over the 180-degree line in each successive shot. The effect of this technique is that each character achieves perpendicularity with the camera, which creates the illusion that the characters are speaking directly to the audience. This contributes to the viewer's involvement in the world created in front of the camera. Another example is the introductory dialogue between the old couple and their daughter's family. An entirely different style was employed for this scene in which every character is in the frame at once. Ozu conveys through this scene his ability to layout a complex shot construction and perform scene manipulation. Despite the seeming disregard for the typical continuity, driven by eye-line matches and montage, this film achieves a stylistic originality and independence that complements the narrative rather than just highlighting it.

An interesting difference in the formal system of Tokyo Story is the use of transitional scenery in connection with the overall film aesthetics. Under normal circumstances in a classical Hollywood film, a long shot consisting of a natural or environmental representative of a specific area will be used to establish location. In this film, an establishing shot is substituted for an isolated landscape. This scene is used to provide transition between chapters of the story. It also reflects the integrity of the film's values by presenting the use of space to the viewer, rather than using it simply to further the narrative. For instance, preceding each sequence that takes place inside the office of the couple's daughter-in-law, there is a shot of construction. While this shot is associated with the same surroundings throughout the film, it is entirely independent and unrelated to the narrative. Not a single graphic match connects it with the formal system. This type of scene is Ozu's comma, and can be looked at as a relative setting, a pause for comprehension. The scenes of transition in Tokyo Story are the bookends of the film and provide moments of observation that present insight without relating to the formal system.

The overall diegesis is maintained beautifully, despite the rejection of conventional filmmaking, through the minimalist stylistic system that Ozu uses. The cuts of Tokyo Story are precise and each new scene is necessitated by the previous idea. These invisible editing techniques lend

themselves to the three-dimensionality of the film's space and the reality of the underlying circumstances. For example, the scene following the arrival of the parents when each person leaves the room and returns to their respective daily tasks, the shot remains for a brief moment and captures the emptiness of the room. Often these simple shots reflect thoughts or emotions that are beyond the narrative explanation, which is why it is so integral that the stylistic features do more than just merely support the formal system. Another subtlety of the film is the contemplatively low camera angle. According to Tadao, this level is called the 'tatami' shot, named after the floor mat that the normal Japanese viewer would be sitting on when they screened the film. This is yet another intricacy of Ozu's manipulation of the camera that added to the naturalism and reality of the film. These invisible techniques are products of the cinematography, mise-en-scene, and editing that bring the focus to exterior elements of the film without disturbing the diegesis.

In summation, this film is a great example of Ozu's style as a director and as a reflection of 1950's Japanese culture. Some parts are extremely emotional and can suggest ideas on more than one level of thought. The story is purposely simple in the method of understating the necessity of the formal system and the dependence on it to guide the direction of the film. Reliance can be placed on the stylistic system as a significant contributor

to the narrative story and the profound implications of the film alike. The deeper meanings and observations arise through the assessment of the continuity, the transition, and the non-diegetic portions of Tokyo Story.