Figure 11.42 . . . and in the next, she is walking right to left, a flagrant violation of conventional screen direction.

ise-en-scene is Godard's editing. Again he some-
r points he breaks away. Standard shot/reverse-
es **(Figs. 11.37, 11.38).** Similarly, when Michel
le photo in the newspaper, Godard supplies cor-
is a turning point in the plot, the adherence to
the man has spotted Michel and may inform on

quite jolting today are its violations of continu-
cut that the Hollywood editor deplores, it is the
ne is eliminated without the camera being moved
et *Breathless* employs jump cuts throughout. In
an old girlfriend, jump cuts shift their positions
have seen another example, when Godard pre-
icia during a conversation in a car (Figs. 8.113,
first frames of contiguous shots).
camera position between cuts, he may drop out
ors' positions. At many cuts the action seems to
ng on a phonograph record. One effect of this
ythm. At times, as during the murder of the po-
lert to follow the action. This fast pace is rein-
e seen, most of the individual scenes run for un-

overwhelms her conversation with Michel during the long central scene. Later the press conference with Parvulesco inexplicably takes place on an airport observation platform, where the loud whines of nearby planes drown out conversation. Such scenes lack the balance of volumes of the well-mixed Hollywood sound track.

Godard's break with the rules of smooth sound and picture steers *Breathless* away from the glamorous portrayals seen in the Hollywood crime film. The stylistic awkwardness suits the pseudodocumentary roughness of filming in an actual, hectic Paris. The discontinuities are also consistent with other nontraditional techniques, like the motif of the characters' mysterious glances into the camera. In addition, the jolts in picture and sound create a self-conscious narration that makes the viewer aware of its stylistic choices. In making the director's hand more apparent, the film presents itself as a deliberately unpolished revision of tradition.

Godard did not set out to criticize Hollywood films. Instead, he took genre conventions identified with 1940s America and gave them a contemporary Parisian setting and a modern, self-conscious treatment. He thereby created a new type of hero and heroine. Aimless, somewhat banal lovers on the run became central to later outlaw movies such as *Bonnie and Clyde, Badlands,* and *True Romance.* More broadly, Godard's film became a model for directors who wished to create exuberantly offhand homages to, and reworkings of, Hollywood tradition. This attitude would be central to the stylistic movement which *Breathless* helped launch, the French New Wave. (See Chapter 12, pp. 419–422.)

Tokyo Story (Tokyo Monogatari)

1953. Shochiku/Ofuna, Japan. Directed by Yasujiro Ozu. Script by Ozu and Kogo Noda. Photographed by Yuharu Atsuta. With Chishu Ryu, Chieko Higashiyama, So Yamamura, Haruko Sugimura, Setsuko Hara.

We have seen how the classical Hollywood approach to filmmaking created a stylistic system ("continuity") in order to establish and maintain a clear narrative space and time. The continuity system is a specific set of guidelines which a filmmaker may follow. But some filmmakers do not use the continuity system. They may flaunt the guidelines by violating them, as Godard does in *Breathless,* creating a casual, lively film. Or they may develop a set of alternative guidelines—at least as strict as Hollywood's—which allows them to make films that are quite distinct from classical ones.

Yasujiro Ozu is one such filmmaker. His approach to the creation of a narrative differs from that used in more classical films like *His Girl Friday* or *North by Northwest.* Instead of making narrative events the central organizing principle, Ozu

tends to decenter narrative somewhat. As a result, spatial and temporal structures come forward and create their own interest. *Tokyo Story,* the first Ozu film to make a considerable impression in the West, offers an enlightening introduction to some of Ozu's characteristic filmmaking strategies.

Tokyo Story presents a simple narrative of an elderly provincial couple who visit their grown children in Tokyo, only to find themselves treated as inconvenient nuisances. The narrative is quiet and contemplative, yet Ozu's style does not simply conform to some characteristically spiritual Japanese system of filmmaking. Indeed, Japanese filmmakers and critics found his nonclassical approach as puzzling as did Western audiences. By creating a systematic alternative method of shaping spatial and temporal relations, Ozu sought to engage the spectator's attention more deeply. While in Hollywood style is subservient to narrative, Ozu makes it an equal partner. We watch the narrative action, the spatial relations, and the temporal relations unfold simultaneously, and all are equally dramatic and engaging. As a result, even a simple narrative like that of *Tokyo Story* becomes fresh and fascinating.

Tokyo Story's narration is, by classical standards, rather oblique. Sometimes we learn of important narrative events only after they have occurred. The last portion of *Tokyo Story,* for example, involves a series of events surrounding the sudden illness and death of the grandmother of a family. Although the grandparents are the film's two central characters, we do not see the grandmother falling ill. We hear about it only when her son and daughter receive telegrams with the news. Similarly, the grandmother's death occurs between scenes. In one scene her children are gathered by her bedside, and in the next scene they are mourning her.

Yet these ellipses are not evidence of a fast-paced film such as *His Girl Friday,* which must cover a lot of narrative ground in a hurry. On the contrary, the sequences of *Tokyo Story* often linger over details: the melancholy conversation between the grandfather and his friends in a bar as they discuss their disappointment in their children, or the grandmother's walk on a Sunday with her grandchild. The result is a shift in the narrative balance. Key narrative events are deemphasized by means of ellipses, whereas narrative events that we do see in the plot are simple and understated.

Accompanying this shift away from a presentation of the most highly dramatic events of the narrative is a sliding away from narratively significant space. Scenes do not begin and end with shots that frame the most important narrative elements in the mise-en-scene. Instead of the usual transitional devices, such as dissolves and fades, Ozu typically employs a series of separate transitional shots linked by cuts. And these transitional shots often show spaces not directly connected with the action of the scene; the spaces are usually *near* where that action will take place. The opening of the film, for example, has five shots of the port town of Onomichi—the bay, schoolchildren, a passing train—before the sixth shot reveals the grandparents packing for their trip to Tokyo. Although a couple of important motifs make their first appearances in these first five shots, no narrative causes occur to get the action underway. (Compare the openings of *His Girl Friday* and *North by Northwest.*) Nor do these transitional shots appear only at the beginning. Several sequences in Tokyo start with shots of factory smokestacks, even though no action ever occurs in these locales.

These transitions have only a minimal function as establishing shots. Sometimes the transitions do not establish space at all but tend to confuse the space of the upcoming scene. After the daughter-in-law, Noriko, gets a phone call at work telling her of the grandmother's illness, the scene ends in a medium shot of her sitting pensively at her desk; the only diegetic sound is the loud clack of typewriters **(Fig. 11.43).** A nondiegetic musical transition comes up in this shot. Then there is a cut to a low-angle long shot of a building under construction **(Fig. 11.44).** Riveting noises replace the typewriters, with the music continuing. The next shot is another low angle of the construction site **(Fig. 11.45).**

Figure 11.43 In *Tokyo Story,* a shot of Noriko at her desk . . .

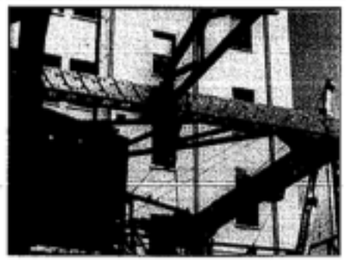

Figure 11.44 . . . leads to a shot of a building . . .

Figure 11.45 . . . and then another of construction . . .

A cut changes the locale to the clinic belonging to the eldest son, Dr. Hirayama. The sister, Shige, is present. The music ends and the new scene begins **(Fig. 11.46).** In this segment, the two shots of the construction site are not necessary to the action. The film does not give us any indication where the building under construction is. We might assume that it is outside Noriko's office, but the riveting sound is not audible in the interior shots.

As usual, we should look for the functions of such stylistic devices. It is hard to assign such transitional shots either explicit or implicit meanings. For example, someone might propose that the transitional shots symbolize the "new Tokyo" that is alien to the visiting grandparents from a village reminiscent of the old Japan. But often the transitional spaces do not involve outdoor locales, and some shots are within the characters' homes. A more systematic function, we suggest, is narrational, having to do with the flow of story information.

Ozu's narration alternates between scenes of story action and inserted portions that lead us to or away from them. As we watch the film, we start to form expectations about these "wedged-in" shots. Ozu emphasizes stylistic patterning by creating anticipation about when a transition will come and what it will show. The patterning may delay our expectations and even create some surprise.

For example, early in the film Mrs. Hirayama, the doctor's wife, argues with her son, Minoru, over where to move his desk to make room for the grandparents. This issue is dropped, and there follows a scene of the grandparents' arrival. This ends on a conversation in an upstairs room. Transitional music again comes up over the end of the scene. The next shot frames an empty hallway downstairs that contains Minoru's school desk, but no one is in the shot. There follows an exterior long shot of children running along a ridge near the house; these children are not characters in the action. Finally, a cut back inside reveals Minoru at his father's desk in the clinic portion of the house, studying. Here the editing creates a very indirect route between two scenes, going first to a place where we expect a character to be (at his own desk) but is not; then the scene moves completely away from the action, outdoors. Only then, in the third shot, does a character reappear and the action continue. In these transitional passages, a kind of game emerges, one that asks us to form expectations not only about story action but about the editing and mise-en-scene.

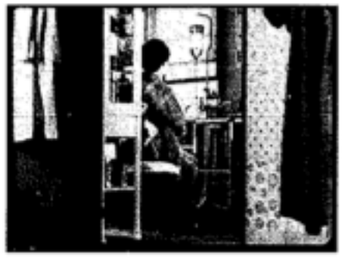

Figure 11.46 . . . before shifting to the locale for the next scene.

"I don't think the film has a grammar. I don't think film has but one form. If a good film results, then that film has created its own grammar."

Yasujiro Ozu

Within scenes, Ozu's editing patterns are as systematic as those of Hollywood, but they tend to be sharply opposed to continuity rules. For example, Ozu does not observe the 180° line, the "axis of action." Nor is his "violation" of these rules occasional, as Ford's is in *Stagecoach* (p. 275). Ozu frequently cuts 180° across the line to frame the scene's space from the opposite direction. This, of course, violates rules of screen direction, since characters or objects on the right in the first shot will appear on the left in the second, and vice versa. At the beginning of a scene in Shige's beauty salon, the initial interior medium shot frames Shige from opposite the front door **(Fig. 11.47).** Then a 180° cut reveals a medium long shot of a woman under a hair dryer; the camera now faces the rear of the salon **(Fig. 11.48).** Another cut 180° presents a new long shot of the room, again oriented toward the door, and the grandparents come into the salon **(Fig. 11.49).** Rather than being an isolated violation of continuity rules, this is Ozu's typical way of framing and editing a scene.

Ozu is a master of matching on action, but he often does so in unusual ways. For example, as Noriko and the grandmother walk toward the door of Noriko's apartment, there is a 180° cut **(Figs. 11.50, 11.51).** The women's movements are closely matched, but because the consistent camera height and distance create such similar framings, the effect at the cut is to make it seem momentarily that the pair "bump into" themselves. Their screen positions, left to right, are also abruptly reversed, something which is usually considered an error in continuity. A classical filmmaker would most likely avoid such an unusual cut, but Ozu uses it here and in other films as part of his distinctive style.

Figure 11.47 In the beauty salon, systematic cutting moves from one side of the axis of action . . .

Figure 11.48 . . . to the other side . . .

Figure 11.49 . . . and back again.

Figure 11.50 From this head-on view of Noriko and the grandmother . . .

Figure 11.51 . . . there is a cut to a tails-on view of them.

Figure 11.52 *Tokyo Story.*

Figure 11.53 *Tokyo Story.*

Figure 11.54 *Tokyo Story.*

Figure 11.55 *Tokyo Story.*

Figure 11.56 *Tokyo Story.*

Figure 11.57 *Tokyo Story.*

As these examples illustrate, Ozu does not restrict his camera and editing patterns to the semicircular space on one side of the axis of action. He cuts in a full circle around the action, usually in segments of 90 or 180°. This means that backgrounds change drastically, as in both previous examples. In a Hollywood film, the camera rarely crosses the axis of action to look at the fourth wall. Because surroundings change more frequently in *Tokyo Story,* they become more prominent in relation to the action; the viewer must pay attention to setting or become confused.

The transitional shots that prolong or thwart the viewer's hypotheses and the 360° space that asks us to notice surroundings can work together. When the grandparents visit a spa at Atami, the scene begins with a long shot along a hallway **(Fig. 11.52).** Latin-style dance music plays offscreen, and several people walk through the hall. The next shot **(Fig. 11.53)** is a long shot of another hallway upstairs, with a maid carrying a tray; two pairs of slippers are just visible by a doorway at the lower left. Next comes a medium long shot of a hallway by a courtyard **(Fig. 11.54).** More people bustle through. A medium shot of a mah-jongg game follows **(Fig. 11.55);** there is a loud sound of talking and moving pieces about. Then Ozu cuts 180° across the axis, framing another mah-jongg table **(Fig. 11.56).** The first table is now in the background, viewed from the opposite side. The next cut returns to the medium long shot along the courtyard hallway **(Fig. 11.57).** In all of these shots, we have not yet seen the grandparents, who are the only major characters present at the spa. Finally, there is a medium shot of the two pairs of slippers by the door in the upper hallway **(Fig. 11.58),** suggesting that this is the grandparents' room. The panes of glass in the wall reflect the lively movement of the offscreen party, and the loud music and talk are still audible. A medium shot of the Hirayamas in bed, trying to sleep through the noise, finally reveals the

Figure 11.58 *Tokyo Story.*

Figure 11.59 *Tokyo Story.*

Figure 11.60 A graphic match created by cutting across the line from the grandfather . . .

Figure 11.61 . . . to his friend as they converse.

narrative situation, and a conversation begins between the couple **(Fig. 11.59).** For seven shots the film slowly explores the space of the scene, gradually letting us discover the situation. The presence of the slippers in the second shot (Fig. 11.53) is almost unnoticeable. It hints that the grandparents are there, but the revelation of their whereabouts is then put off for several more shots.

In these ways Ozu draws our attention away from the strictly causal functions of space and makes space important in its own right. He does the same with the flat space of the screen as well. Figures 8.102 to 8.105 and Color Plates 62 and 63 show examples of graphic matches from Ozu films. The stylistic device is characteristic of Ozu, who seldom uses the graphic match for any narrative purpose. In *Tokyo Story* a conversation situation leads to a shot/reverse-shot pattern but again with cuts 180° across the axis of action. The two men speaking are framed so that each looks off right. (In Hollywood, upholders of the continuity system would claim that this implies that both are looking off toward the same thing.) Because they are positioned similarly in the frame, the result is a strong graphic match from one shot to another **(Figs. 11.60, 11.61).** In this respect, Ozu's style owes something to abstract form (see Chapter 5, pp. 129–135 and Chapter 10, pp. 345–347). It is as if he sought to make a narrative film which would still make graphic similarities as evident as they are in an abstract film like *Ballet mécanique.*

The use of space and time in *Tokyo Story* is not willfully obscure, nor does it have a symbolic function in the narrative. Rather, it suggests a different relationship among space, time, and narrative logic than exists in the classical film. Space and time no longer simply function unobtrusively to create a clear narrative line. Ozu brings them forward and makes them into prominent aesthetic elements in their own right. A large part of the film's appeal lies in its strict but playful treatment of figures, settings, and movement. Ozu does not eliminate narrative, but he opens it out. *Tokyo Story* and his other films allow other stylistic devices to exist independently alongside narrative. The result is that the viewer is invited to look at his films in a new way, to participate in a play of space and time.

DOCUMENTARY FORM AND STYLE

Man with a Movie Camera (Chelovek s kinoapparatom)

Made 1928, released 1929. VUFKU, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Directed by Dziga Vertov. Photographed by Mikhail Kaufman. Edited by Elizaveta Svilova.

In some ways, *Man with a Movie Camera* might seem to be a straight reportorial documentary, yet it does not try to give the impression that the reality it presents is unaffected by the medium of film. Instead, Dziga Vertov proclaims the manipulative power of editing and cinematography to shape a multitude of tiny scenes from everyday reality into a highly idiosyncratic, even somewhat experimental documentary.

Vertov's name is usually linked to the technique of editing; in Chapter 8 (p. 258), we quoted a passage in which he equated the filmmaker with an eye, gathering shots from many places and linking them creatively for the spectator. Vertov's theoretical writings also compare the eye to the lens of the camera, in a concept he termed the "kino eye." (*Kino* is the Russian word for "cinema," and one of his earlier films is called *Kino-Glaz,* or "Cinema-Eye.")

Man with a Movie Camera takes this idea—the equation of the filmmaker's eye with the lens of the camera—as the basis for the entire film's associational form. The film becomes a celebration of the documentary filmmaker's power to

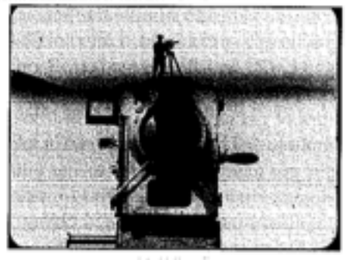

Figure 11.62 Vertov's regular cinematographer, Mikhail Kaufman, as the cameraman in *Man with a Movie Camera.*

Figure 11.63 Vertov alters an ordinary street scene by exposing each side of the image separately, with the camera canted in opposite directions.

Figure 11.64 A crayfish on a plate executes a little dance in the course of this shot.

Figure 11.65 Superimposition to suggest sound.

Figure 11.66 *Man with a Movie Camera* ends with an eye superimposed over the camera lens, staring straight out at us.

control our perception of reality by means of editing and special effects. The opening image shows a camera in close-up. Through a double-exposure effect, we see the cameraman of the film's title suddenly climb, in extreme long shot, onto the top of the giant camera **(Fig. 11.62).** He sets up his own camera on a tripod and films for a bit, then climbs down again. This play with shot scale within a single image emphasizes at once the power the cinema has to alter reality in a seemingly magical way.

Cinematographic special effects of this sort appear as a motif throughout the film. These are not intended to be unnoticeable, as in a science-fiction film. Instead, they flaunt the fact that the camera can alter everyday reality. **Figure 11.63** shows a typical example. Later Vertov uses pixillation to animate real objects **(Fig. 11.64).** In another scene Vertov conveys the sound of a radio by superimposing images of a dancer and of a hand playing a piano against a single black background **(Fig. 11.65).** This motif of virtuosic special effects culminates in the famous final shot **(Fig. 11.66).**

At several points in the film, the camera is also personified, associated by editing with the actions of human beings. One brief segment shows the camera lens focusing and then a blurry shot of flowers coming into sharp focus. This is followed immediately by a comic juxtaposition rapidly intercutting two elements: a woman's fluttering eyelids as she dries her face with a towel, and a set of venetian blinds opening and closing. Finally another shot shows the camera lens with