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Japanese Mind

Professor Painter

Feedback 3

In class last week, we had brought up the subject of “seishun/青春”. According to what we discussed and saw on the in-class videos, it’s the time of being young. I guess saying that isn’t enough. From the perspective of the youth, it is a time of when everything is new and the future is ahead of them. From the perspective of the older generation, it’s a look back at a more nostalgic time before becoming an adult and being what the class said “worldly”. The more ironic part about this is what was also mentioned in class, that it looks back at school days being nostalgic. But while it’s nice, it was brought up that school days are when kids were pushed the hardest to find their way into the best college/future they can, which is probably the most stressful, least sleep filled, most intense part of their childhood: especially since from reading the Kawai article, the kids are seen and judged based on who they are based on their grades. I feel it’s a bit ironic to look back at and feel nostalgia for a rather rough part of one’s life. Thinking about school in America, there isn’t much emphasis on nostalgia for school days. The only thing closest to that would be a high school reunion to visit old friends, but there isn’t much cultural emphasis or advertisement on looking back on school days. Even if one looks back, it isn’t the same thinking of it being the time before being “worldly” or “impure”. I think that the American culture seems to put more emphasis on the “now” of one’s time. “You are here, this is your age, celebrate this time now” and then once graduated to the next stage “forget the past, live in this present, this is the now”.

The recent movie in class is Ozu’s film on a typical Japanese family structure, or based on what an ideal one is. First of all, the men: what’s weird is how they’re so involved in trying to find a guy for Ayako, especially when she’s not even related or a daughter to any of the three main guys of this movie. Maybe they feel obliged since she’s the daughter of their old dead friend, or it could be a cultural aspect to get the women married off at a young age, but it’s a bit odd to me that the guys are asking around and trying to get her a guy. Plus one of the main characters has a daughter of their own, and he’s more involved in getting Ayako a husband rather than his own daughter; very odd to me. Not only do they

freely go out and smoke and drink, but they also come home and expect the women to pick up after them and take care of everything. There was a scene in the movie where one of the three main men came home, and started to take off his coat and shoes and just put them onto the floor, left down to just be picked up by the wife. Maybe it's just me, or being from the West, or from a different time period, but that is just being ridiculously lazy. I don't really believe that other family structures here would allow that to happen. That coat and shoes would be in the same place as they would've been put. The women of this movie are portrayed as quiet and submissive to the men. They also can work, but it seems that the ones that work are young women. The housewives are in traditional looking wear and take care of the house work.

Lastly, the Kawai article on violence in the home: very interesting article about the "good child". I would like to relate a part of this to my good friend/brother back home. On page 300 of the article, it talks about in paragraph two, about the maternal principle and removing the concept of "independence" and "individuality". My friend comes from a family whose parents are Asian, but he is American grown. Known the family for a few years, I can say that the structure of their family is Japanese like, where the parents try to control the kids completely and make them submit to them and do as they say. Anyway, we've become close enough to call one another brother, and tell me a bit about how his parents have tried to also make him live "submissively at the orders" of his parents. Like it said in the article, "when the child reaches puberty, this desire may explode". Unlike the rest where it mentions showing violence, instead, with him, we've done things like, go behind their back and go out late at night (until 4am or so), gone places without their consent, and even lied to them before. I even started teaching him how to drive for six months. His parents were constraining his ability to get a license until 18, but I help him try to learn how to drive. I guess that he was trying to "break away from the all-enveloping mother and seek self-dependence."