Consuming the Bright Life in Cinema

Portrayals of 1950s Japan in the films

Ohayō *(1959) and* Always: Sanchōme no yūhi *(2005)*

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1. Introduction

Socioeconomic factors are known to be of great influence on the way people perceive themselves. Consuming certain kind of products can shape someone's identity and status in society. Within this framework, I would like to look at two representations of a specific place and period in time, the Japan of the 1950s. Japan was recovering from the Second World War, its economy started to slowly grow again and consumption became an important matter in creating a homogenous middle-class in society. Important in this process was the idea of "electrifying" households. The government tried to introduce new policies, including one called "the bright life" (*Akarui seikatsu*) to change the Japanese war-struck society. Electronics companies took advantage of this policy and connected this "new way of life" to their products in advertising. This started the process that is now known as "electrifying Japan" (Partner, 2000, 153). Consuming electronic products for in one's household became the new way of life.

This phenomenon that took off in the 1950s is also displayed in media. This thesis looks at representations of consuming through the lens of cinema and analyzes how patterns of consuming electronic products such as the "three sacred treasures" (*sanshu no shinki*), the black and white television, the refrigerator and the washing machine, are displayed and what kind of effect acquiring these products may have on individuals and the people surrounding them. By looking at films that are set in this time period of change in Japan, I want to analyze how consuming products in the films' stories construct how characters view each other, how it determines relations between them, and how this consumption resonates with other elements of people's daily life as portrayed in the films.

In order to narrow these questions down this thesis analyzes and compares two films. The first film is *Ohayō* (1959), directed by Ozu Yasujirō (1903-1963). Ozu's film is itself from the 1950s and consumption is an important theme throughout its story. It gives a more contemporary account of the consumption phenomenon and how it affected the everyday life of people.

The second film is *Always: Sanchōme no Yūhi* (2005), directed by Yamazaki Takashi (1964-), a more recent film where the story takes place in 1957 and 1958. Like *Ohayō,* the film also features elements that connect the characters' way of perceiving themselves and each other through consuming certain products and the electrification of the household. The nostalgia factor that is present in the film has a great influence on

how the consumption phenomenon and certain elements in society are depicted in the film, and brings differences in its presentation.

It leads me to the following main research question: in representing the elements of everyday life in 1950s Japan and displaying the effect of the consumption phenomenon and the electrification of society, what differences in the function of consuming electronics such as the "three treasures" are present, in the films *Ohayō* and *Always: Sanchōme no Yūhi*?

As was previously seen, both films might be set in the same period; the films are made in the period itself and in a different era. This brings forth clear differences in the portrayal of everyday life in, and the overall look of, Japanese society during these times. In this research, the previously mentioned concept of nostalgia plays a dominant role, especially surrounding the film *Always: Sanchōme no Yūhi*, which had a part in strengthening the so-called "Showa boom" (*shōwa būmu*), a concept which is further explained in coming chapters. It brings forth clear differences with *Ohayō* in the representation of not just consuming certain products and the electrification of the household and how was dealt with the changes, but also with elements of everyday life.

But before analyzing the two films separately and comparing findings, first the time period in which both films take place is briefly looked at. Elements such as the electrification of Japanese society after the Second World War and the rise of the consumer society are dealt with in the coming chapters.

2. The rise of the "middle class" and the "consumption phenomenon" from the 1920s onwards

The "consumption phenomenon" that came into being in the 1950s and 1960s is a process that, most authors argue, is part of a development that was set into motion around and during the 1920s. The "electrification of Japan" and the desire to buy and own certain products during the 1950s did not come out of nowhere and to fully understand the consumption behaviour of the Japanese population in these times, one must look back from the 1920s onwards to analyze the early beginnings of the phenomenon. Consuming products is something that was of course already present in the far past before the 1920s, because just as postwar industrial and technological growth took a century of development, so, too, did the mass consumer market in Japan have a long prelude, as Simon Partner argues (Partner, 2000, 17). But as Andrew Gordon writes, it was in this trans war period, from the 1920s up to the 1960s, that elements such as the rise of mass consumer society and the spread of commercialized leisure, which are both aspects of global modernity in the 20th century, emerged to prominence in Japan (Gordon, 2007, 1). Partner also adds to this that the trends of the 1920s prefigured the mass consumer society that burgeoned in the late 1950s and 1960s (Partner, 2000, 19). The 1920s also saw the goods and practices that defined middle-class life widely recognized by the Japanese population thanks to the spread of media (Gordon, 2007, 4). It is therefore that this research does not take the pre-1920s in account, but starts from the 1920s. This part of the paper will briefly view this trans war period to uncover the run-up to the 1950s, where this research focuses on.

An important element and trend in this trans war period that goes hand in hand with the consumption phenomenon that is analyzed throughout this thesis, is the rise of the so-called 'middle class', or 'new middle class' that became more and more prominent in society from the 1920s onwards (Gordon, 2007, 1). Gordon sees this 'middle class' as the pioneers of the modern consumer society (Gordon, 2007, 1). Penelope Francks agrees with this and also views the Japanese population of the 1920s as such pioneers (Francks, 2009, 123). She further notes that the Japanese consumers in the inter war years (1920s up to the Second World War) laid down the outlines of the consumption patterns of all those who were able to join the "middle classes" created by the post-war economic miracle (Francks, 2009, 123). In these interwar years, the urban middle class grew bigger and bigger as they sought to obtain and accommodate new consumer goods

derived from Western countries such as The United States and the lifestyle embodied in them (Francks, 2009, 110). According to Partner, it was during the 1920s that the middle-class culture took former root in Japan as the ideal Western style family home (known as *Mai Hōmu*) became more central during these times (Partner, 2000, 19). To the so-called White-collar workers households, the *hōmu* became an important symbol of the new middle class (Partner, 2000, 19).

As mentioned earlier, a reason why most see the consumption phenomenon having its beginnings in the 1920s was partly because during these times the goods and practices that defined middle-class life were widely recognized thanks to media (Gordon, 2007, 4). The selling of newspapers increased during these times and magazines found their audience with women and youngsters. The rise of women's magazines brought with it a new culture of advertising, focusing especially on products that could be used in the kitchen because there was the assumption that middle-class wives had enough influence over family finances to purchase products like this (Partner, 2000, 20). Because of media focusing on the housewife, the 1920s also witnessed the rise of the consuming housewife as the center of the middle-class household (Partner, 2000, 20). Francks also discusses a rise of advertising in the interwar era. Just like Gordon, she also mentions that most advertising was seen in newspapers, but various department stores also advertised their goods in shopping windows, and with posters and displays. Smaller businesses did the same and even the government started advertising more (Francks, 2009, 120). Siding with Partner, Francks also agrees that the advertisements were mostly aimed at housewives (Francks, 2009, 121).

Gordon and Francks both mention that bicycles were very popular as outdoor products while sewing machines were desired for indoors (Francks, 2009, 133). Products such as refrigerators were widely sold in United States but in Japan having those kind of electronic products in one's household was still something that only happened in a far away 'dreamland' and advertisers even stopped advertising them (Gordon, 2007, 6). According to Gordon it was therefore during the 1920s that it started: the beginning of consumer's dreams and noticing their frustrated reality (Gordon, 2007, 5). But as he writes, there was still a very big gap between people reading about this lifestyle and a small minority that was actually shopping and able to afford these products (Gordon, 2007, 6). Partner states that it is indeed an important point that the developments that took place in setting up the mass consumer society of the 1950s and

60s only applied to a very small proportion of the population during the 1920s and 1930s (Partner, 2000, 19). An example of this can be seen in the fact that while refrigerators and washing machines started filling up homes in the United States as previously mentioned, only some super rich Japanese families owned such products during these times (Francks, 2009, 133).

As we reach the end of the 1920s, radio's popularity spread, the sewing machine had massive popularity, and also products like heaters, fans and irons were beginning to become more popular. But as Francks argues, and as mentioned above, all these products were still mainly confined to the really well-off (Francks, 2009, 133). Gordon agrees with this as he notes that it was still a privilege to only the urban middle class (Gordon, 2007, 6). But although there remained a wide gap between the modern consumer life as a dream and as a materially owned reality, across the 1930s it did began to close (Gordon, 2007, 8) Francks adds to this argument, stating that during these times, household consumer goods were becoming a key element in defining the respectable, modern, middle-class. This was a definition in terms of the kind of goods in one's possession, rather than the quantity or cost, and many of those who wanted to have this middle-class status, did this with their earnings (Francks, 2009, 136). Even the vast majority of Japanese who did not belong to the middle class were influenced by the idealization of middle-class lifestyles portrayed in the mass media. Factory workers and craftsmen read magazines and newspapers that showed Westernized middle-class families and their "rational" lives. Popular leisure activities aimed at the working classes, such as spectator sports, saw an enormous increase in popularity, a trend reinforced by heavy newspaper coverage (Partner, 2000, 21).

This rise of consuming products did raise a lot of tension on different levels. As Gordon's research discusses, two main tensions came into existence with the rise of consumption. First of all, friction between different classes came into being. The growing urban middle class was able to buy products that lower classes did not have the money for (Gordon, 2007, 12). Next to this, both Gordon and Francks mention a clash between the new 'modern' and 'western' lifestyles that were introduced to the Japanese population and traditional Japanese customs. Consumer choices crystallized in the expression of living a "double life" (Gordon, 2007, 12). While for most people, this everyday switch between traditional Japanese customs and buying western leisure goods did not seem to be a problem for most consumers but the conflict was mostly

questioned by politicians and intellectuals (Francks, 2009, 136). The main question that these individuals asked was: how one can be Japanese when craving western goods? (Francks, 2009, 137).

By the end of the 1930s, the road to the Second War World did have an influence on the consumer's behavior to some extent. There was a certain contradiction going on during these years leading up to war, as the government wanted the people to serve their nation by 'destroying the private and serving the public' (Gordon, 2007, 13). This included buying certain products that were seen as leisure goods. In 1940 this even lead to a slogan that said that 'luxury is the enemy', condemning the consumer's choice in buying certain goods (Gordon, 2007, 15). Partner writes that the war experience in many ways reversed the 1920s trend toward the emergence of a mass consumer society. Resource shortages severely limited consumption and eventually slowed down the manufacture of goods (Partner, 2000, 41). But even though rules were strict, consumption did find a way as many people turned to black markets where wanted products were still sold. Trends could not be cast out easily, as Gordon states (Gordon, 2007, 16). Also right after the war, with consumption being heavily restricted by occupation rationing, regulatory restrictions on imports, retail provision and consumer credit, it was very limited what consumers could purchase. But just like during the war, the black markets also flourished in the post-war period (Francks, 2009, 148). Even though the war did hurt the progress that the mass consumer society had been making over the years, Partner comes with some important aspects that did not get affected as much during the war and even flourished. Some trends were intensified by the government's campaign for total mobilization, for instance. Newspaper circulation continued to rise, and also more people came to own a radio. He also states that despite the shortage of men during the war, white-collar segment of the population also grew substantially (Partner, 2000, 41). Next to all this, the ideal of the Western housewife did not retreat during the war; on the contrary, it gained strength, Partner argues (Partner, 2000, 41). He concludes that researches universally see the war years as a "blank space" (*kūhaku*), where everything stood still. This powers the idea of the miracle recovery that Japan had in its postwar era. But Partner says that by taking a closer look shows that the Japanese electrical goods industry hardly stood still before and during the war and that this clearly uncovers that important continuities extend throughout Japan's modern history (Partner, 2000, 42).

These continuities that Partner mentions are indeed what set up the Japanese population for the consumption phenomenon that hit them during the 1950s. As can be seen, throughout the 1920s up to right after the Second World War, the consumption patterns of the Japanese population went through many changes. A new “middle class’” came into existence, a process that went hand in hand with being able to buy certain products; something that clashed with lower classes that could not afford such things. It also brought forth a clash between staying “traditionally Japanese” while buying “Western products”, a concept that is described as living a “double life”. This leads to arriving at the 1950s, a time period in Japanese history that would change Japanese society and the consuming patterns of the Japanese population completely. These changes and concepts are discussed in the next chapter.

3. A time of change: the electrification of Japan in the 1950s

The 1950s were a time where the act of consumption took a dramatic turn, forever changing consumption habits of the Japanese population and setting the blue print for the generations to come. Both films that are analyzed in the next chapters are set in this time period, so this chapter looks at the consumption phenomenon a bit closer than the previous chapter did when analyzing the inter war period. Next to the act of consuming itself, this chapter also focuses on the sense of homogeneity that lived under the Japanese population during these times and how consuming certain products changed this and what it meant for individuals living in their social class. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, a "middle class" or "new middle class" was formed during the inter war years, becoming the pioneers of the modern consumer as Partner, Francks and Gordon argued. Consumers from this "middle class" came to play an even bigger role during the 1950s and 1960s. The desire to consume, most notably electronic products, came into existence and is now one of the most well known trends that characterises Japan of this period. Products like the "three sacred treasures", which were the refrigerator, the washing machine and the black and white television became popularized objects of desire in this period and are known to have shifted from leisure products to necessities in daily life. But it was not until the mid-1950s that the surroundings and situation people lived in became more fortunate.

Right after the Second World War, the desire to own electronic products like the "three sacred treasures" was still unimaginable. Japan had lost the war, was hit by two atomic bombs and had to rebuild its economy and society from the ground up. In these dark times, consumption was all about getting enough food on the table to survive. While in the second half of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s, when society and the economy was slowly and certainly started to grow and function again, Partner's research demonstrates that there were many political movements trying to turn the Japanese population in the "right" direction again. One of these political movements was the "Bright Japan" movement, introduced by the Hatoyama cabinet in August 1955, a concept that wanted to bring Japan back to its so-called glory days from before the war and away from the path towards a capitalistic consumer society, like America had taken (Partner, 2000, 147). But as Partner writes, the political leaders were not that clear about this and left the local population confused as in how to achieve this so-called

"Bright Japan", which soon came to be known as "the bright life" (*akarui seikatsu*)(Partner, 2000, 149). Electronic companies wanted to sell their products so took advantage of this confusion. They started to connect their advertisements to this notion of a "bright life" and tried to make people believe that their electronic products were needed to achieve it. In this way they set into motion what came to be known as Japan's golden age of advertising (Partner, 2000, 153).

Part of the electronic products that were advertised, were the above mentioned three electronic products that came to be known as the "three sacred treasures": the black and white television, the refrigerator and the washing machine. The concept of "three scared treasures" comes from Japanese history, as these three treasures were the three regalia or items that symbolized the authority of the Japanese emperor had in his possession: a sword, a mirror and jewels (Yoshimi, 1999, 155). This concept was borrowed for the above named products, as they became the three electronics every Japanese household ought to have. As Yoshimi argues, it became a symbol for authenticating the identity of individual households as being "modern families" (Yoshimi, 1999, 156).

When finding what lead to the Japanese population desiring these "sacred treasures", it cannot be denied that advertising did play a big role, as was already mentioned above. Advertising before the 1950s was, next to the described elements in the previous chapter, still mostly focused on medicine. But this changed; as during the decade electronic appliances became a major topic (Yoshimi, 1999, 156). Advertising focused on how electronic goods made your household happier, healthier and more efficient, and came to be viewed as central to the middle-class, housewife-run lifestyle (Francks, 2009, 173). The housewife was most of the time featured in the advertisements, and was not just depicted as a recipient of a life with electronics, but she was projected as a subject who would promote and manage such a living (Yoshimi, 1999, 160). One of the "three sacred treasures", the television, played arguably the most dominant role in achieving "the bright life", and also in advertising it. As Gordon notes, instead of just advertisements in the streets, these television sets would bring the advertising of "the bright life" right in the households' living rooms (Gordon, 2007, 17). This made the spreading of the message even easier and more dominant in people's lives. Gordon adds to this with that an important indication of the blurred boundary between dreaming of living the bright life and its material possession is the fact that

next to radios, the television stood high on the list of items that were owned by most Japanese families. Especially the television was very expensive, too expensive for most people, but it was still bought with money from loans. Gordon argues that the success of the consumer culture was fuelled mostly by money that people did not yet have (Gordon, 2007, 17). This argument displays how essential it became for people to own these electronic products. Even though money was sometimes still hard to come by, people used it to buy these expensive electronic products, which strengthens the notion of these luxuries becoming daily necessities, as is discussed later on.

Next to advertising, an important element that should not be neglected is a sense of social competition within a certain feeling of homogeneity that was present during these times. In the 1950s, after being present and slowly growing in previous decades, the so-called "middle-class" emerged, and being able to purchase certain goods, like the "sacred treasures", became status symbols for that class. People wanted to be equal and part of this group in society, even though there still was a competition going on beneath the surface of this homogeneity to stand out and differentiate from others within your class (Francks, 2009, 178). In the urban areas this meant purchasing products of a high quality or an expensive brand to outdo your neighbours. Ezra Vogel demonstrates this by mentioning an example of people letting their new electronic product be delivered during the daytime, when everybody can see it; in a big truck that has the company's name on it (Vogel, 1963, 82). Francks mentions that indeed it did matter to a lot of people which kind of television you bought and trying to impress the neighbours was also a common sight of the times (Francks, 2009, 179). But Partner also writes about a good example from the countryside, which kind of shows the opposite situation, but does display a different kind of desire to consume the "sacred treasures". In the countryside of Japan during the 1950s, the electrification process took longer than in the urban areas, but some people still felt the desire to be part of the modern life style, and the "bright life". Partner names the example of people in the countryside purchasing a washing machine, and getting it delivered at night, when nobody is watching. In this way, the neighbourhood would not know that that individual owned a washing machine, so status-wise it would not change anything. But for that person his or herself, it would fulfil the desire to own such a machine (Partner, 2000, 182). It also clearly shows the idea of homogeneity that was present during these times. People living in the countryside, just like was seen in the urban areas, wanted to fit in with the other people

living around them and that is why they did not want the neighbourhood to see they owned, for example, a washing machine, while others in the neighbourhood did not have one in their possession. This of course changed during the 1960s, when more and more electronics were also purchased in the countryside, and people did not feel the need to hide it.

Status and wanting to "fit in" can be argued to have played its role in wanting to own the "three treasures" and making it necessities in everyday life. As was mentioned before, Gordon writes that from the 1920s onwards, there always was the dream to live the consumer life and own certain products, but there was always a big gap between dreaming about it and actually living such a life. During the 1950s, this gap came to a close as it became possible to actually live such a life (Gordon, 2007, 17). All you had to do was purchase certain items, like a refrigerator, to make your life more comfortable, more "bright", and be part of the desired class in society. Gordon's main argument is therefore that during these times, items that were normally seen as luxuries, such as the television, made a dramatic shift to becoming necessities in the household and everyday life (Gordon, 2007, 18). The life of the middle-class, modern consumer, became part of most peoples daily routines of the present and also of the desires for the future (Gordon, 2007, 19). In a society where advertising shows you that a life with certain electronics makes living more comfortable and makes you able to live the desired "bright life", it can be argued that, including a certain pressure of living up to your neighbours and wanting to be part of a certain group in society, desires are awoken. Before circa 1955, many people did not have the desire to own electronic products like the refrigerator, a television or a washing machine. But after advertising started to introduce a "bright life" with these products, these three items transformed into "sacred treasures"; from luxuries to necessities. As has also been explored, a feeling of homogeneity wanted people to remain equal and owning certain products became eventually part of this. However, beneath the surface of this homogeneity, people felt the desire to be better than persons from the same class surrounding them, something that also awoke desires to purchase these goods.

With this brief look at the 1950s, this research takes these explored aspects in consideration when viewing part of its case study, the film *Ohayō*, in the next chapter.

4. Ohayō

Ohayō (aka *Good Morning*) is the first film that is analyzed in this research, looking at how consuming products has an effect on individuals and the community they live in. The film was released in 1959, and the story takes place around that same year, presenting contemporaneous look into the late 1950s, as it was the present state of society at the film's release.

The film is directed by Ozu Yasujirō (1903-1963), and is the portrayal of a story that follows the daily lives of a family, their neighbours and other people surrounding them. As we follow the different characters, we are faced with everyday activities such as gossiping about neighbours, dealing with door-to-door salesmen, visiting the local bar and the sons going to school and after school classes. At the centre of the plot are the two young sons of the Hayashi family that go on a silent strike in the hope to make their parents buy a television, but also to revolt against the everyday small talk adults have with one another, conversations which seem totally useless and unnecessary to the boys. *Ohayō* is partly seen as a remake of an earlier film by the same director, *Otona no miru ehon – Umaretawamitakeredo* (*I was born, but...*) (1932), which also deals with two sons going on a strike, rebelling against their parents. But next to this, *Ohayō* is clearly a film of the 1950s, David Bordwell argues. Certain elements are inspired and almost copied from Ozu's earlier films from the 1950s, from plot devices to certain characters (Bordwell, 1988, 348).

For nearly his entire career, Ozu made his films with Shōchiku studios, and specialized in making films in a genre that came to be known as *Shomingeki* (or *Shoshimingeki*); films that were made for and about the 'little people', the lower classes, in society (Richie, 2001, 47). These films were a big success because people liked the novelty of 'seeing themselves' on the screen, as Donald Richie writes (Richie, 2001, 47). Knowing that Ozu specialized in a genre that centralizes the 'average Japanese citizen' and their 'normal everyday lives' strengthens the idea that Ozu's films are a social observation of society.

Ozu is known for having returning themes and patterns in his work, as Richie demonstrates in his research concerning Ozu's repertoire. According to Richie, Ozu had but one major subject in all his films: the Japanese family. Within this subject of family, there was one major theme that drove most of the plot: a family's dissolution (Richie,

1974, 1). In his later films, the whole world in the films' stories even consists of one big family rather than being just individual members of a society (Richie, 1974, 1). The theme of a family dissolving is not just an important theme throughout Ozu's films, but also seen as more of a catastrophe in Japan and Asia in general than in Western Countries such as The United States. Richie states that while leaving the family is seen as a sign of maturity in The United States, to live together and take care of one's family and most of all being able to identify oneself with a family and daily activities, is of more central importance in Japan (Richie, 1974, 4). It is therefore that Ozu's films deal with the sensitive topic of family dissolution in the modern age, but the filmmaker did change his approach throughout his filmmaking career of nearly forty years. Richie argues that while his earlier films concentrate more on the external social conditions impinging the characters, his later work puts more emphasis on the importance of constrains on the human condition imposed from within (Richie, 1974, 5). Ozu was criticized for this change at the time, as he abandoned the idea that unhappiness is caused solely by social wrongs. He came to recognize that unhappiness is also caused by being human and consequently aspiring to a state of being that is impossible to acquire (Richie, 1974, 6).

It may be noted that some other Western critics believe that Ozu links this unhappiness to a Western influence in Japan. However, Richie argues that this view is mistaken: Ozu was simply reflecting Japanese life as it was at the moment (Richie, 1974, 13).

Being one of his later films, *Ohayō* indeed concentrates on family and its dissolution and demonstrates the notion of unhappiness coming from being human. With analyzing *Ohayō*, this is an important notion to remember, since it follows people in their everyday lives with electronic products penetrating their households, as can be read in the next section which analyzes what elements of consumption and consuming "the bright life" are present in the film, and how it affects the plot's characters.

4.1 Consuming "the bright life" in Ohayō

The story is mostly centred on the Hayashi family, living in a small neighbourhood in Tokyo. The family consists of the father (played by Ryū Chishū), the mother (played by Miyake Kuniko) and their two sons Minoru (played by Shitara Kōji) and Isamu (played by Shimazu Masahiko). Next to these characters, the neighbours that live nearby and next door also play a central role, especially when it comes to how consumption affects

relations and individuals. According to Kathe Geist, all of Ozu's films reflect a synthesis between traditional Japanese and Western culture (Geist in Desser et al, 102, 1992). As is seen in the analysis, *Ohayō* demonstrates how "Western" technology infiltrates the homes of Japanese middle class families during the 1950s, and how it clashes with the everyday lives of individuals. In this sense it portrays one of Gordon's two notions of the frictions that arose in society from the 1920s onwards; that of living "the double life", where both Japanese customs and a Western lifestyle meet each other. As the following chapter shows, this friction is also present in *Ohayō*.

As the film opens, we are immediately introduced to the neighbourhood where the story will unfold. Large electricity towers surround the houses, suggesting the electrification of society has been taking place for some time already. We are also introduced to one of the "three sacred treasures" during the film's first minutes as soon as two neighbours meet. The two ladies gossip about the head of their local women's association, who accepts their financial contribution every month. According to gossip she used the money to buy a washing machine. It demonstrates how buying a washing machine is immediately associated with money, as they wonder where she obtained the money and assume she used the contribution money to buy it, projecting a negative image on her. As the story continues, it appears she in fact did not use the contribution money to buy the washing machine but simply took a loan to buy it, making the allegations against her false.

The fact that the woman took a loan to buy the washing machine demonstrates the earlier discussed importance for people to own the "three sacred treasures". Gordon's argument of people buying products with money they do not have is clearly depicted here in the film. The woman mentions she does not have a lot of money, but the will to own a washing machine, one of the "three scared items", is strong, and she accepts being in debt to be able to own it.

The hurtful gossip towards an individual owning a new electrical appliance is a theme throughout the film, leading to several misunderstandings or simply creating negative connotations. Another example is a young couple that lives next door to the Hayashi family. They are a modern and happy couple, singing songs while walking through the neighbourhood. Children love to visit their house, as they own a television, and allow the children to watch sumo-wrestling matches with them. The mothers of the children dislike this, frequently telling their children not to go to the neighbours to

watch television. The young couple is the victim of gossip, as the neighbours talk about the girl's past, who according to rumour has been a showgirl. One of the mother's also mentions that it is fine that her children go and watch sumo there, but she still worries about her children because "they only learn bad things from the people who live there". This subplot about the young couple eventually ends with the young woman looking for a new apartment. When asked why she is looking for one she replies that she wants to move because she thinks her neighbours are too nosy and annoying. The neighbourhood views the couple as a bad presence while the film's direction clearly shows the couple as friendly and loving, the opposite of what people make believe (Partner, 2000, 165).

Partner demonstrates that the scenes considering the young couple and the head of the women's association show that the ownership of these electronic goods, in spite of its glamour, is connected to the breakdown of morality and of the established order (Partner, 2000, 165). According to Partner, the film depicts how far the ideology of electrical goods had already permeated the Japanese society and how much ambivalence it provoked in observers and participants (Partner, 2000, 165). The families portrayed in the film are all not that wealthy and part of the lower middle class, according to Partner (Partner, 2000, 165) But while they do not have much money, electrical products seem to be a central part of their lives (Partner, 2000, 165).

The gossip that ensues comes from people's jealousy and the sense of inequality they feel brings forth Richie's mentioned theme that is present in most of Ozu's later films. The gossip that brings strife and discontent between and within people are clearly emotions that come from within individuals. Ozu's recognition of the unhappiness coming from being human and consequently aspiring to a state which is impossible to attain, or in *Ohayō*'s case, out of reach for one person, but obtainable for the other, comes into view here, exposing the recognized theme in Ozu's pictures.

The earlier discussed topic of homogeneity also comes into play here. In the story, the homogeneity that was present between the families in the neighbourhood is disrupted by the arrival of these electronics, as not everyone can afford a television or washing machine, but those who do immediately stand out and are looked at with a different mindset. It brings back one of the two frictions Gordon discussed; the friction between classes, but also as we can see in the case of *Ohayō,* within classes. Some people are able to buy certain products, while people from other classes, or from the same class,

do not have the money to do so. This creates a sense of inequality and brings a clash between individuals.

By looking at the similarity between houses that Ozu uses as set pieces in the film, David Desser also points out notions that power this sense of homogeneity in a visual style. He notes that in the refusal of the director to use master shots, the row houses and the families within that remain spatially somewhat vague (Desser et al, 1994, 299). Who lives where and how their house is placed both inside and outside is never really clear, with shots of rooms within houses looking through a hallway into another house (Desser et al, 1994, 300). This similarity to one another adds to the sense of sameness in the neighbourhood. The people living there can be seen as one big family that are basically living in one big house, with the arrival of the '"treasures" creating strife and inequality within it. It points out Richie's earlier mentioned argument about Ozu's later films. *Ohayō* demonstrates the whole neighborhood basically being depicted as one big family. The use of space, camera angles and editing power this theme.

Of the "three sacred treasures", the television undoubtedly plays the largest role in the film and has the largest influence on the characters. It all starts with the Hayashi family's sons, who beg their parents to buy a television. When the parents say they will not, the boys first refuse to eat their dinner, which later turns into going on a "silent strike" until a television is bought. The boys are very consistent and keep silent for a number of days, even at school and their private English lessons. When a television is finally bought, the boys are happy and start to speak again. In this way, attitudes towards television brings troubles and conflict within the otherwise well functioning family. The television's absence makes the boys rebel against their parents, but when it does finally arrive, things go back to normal again. The theme of the boys on strike also demonstrates the decline of parental authority, as Bordwell points out. The boys defy their parents with ignoring them and eventually reaching their goal when a television is bought (Bordwell, 1988, 350).

Gordon's theory of the "three sacred treasures" transforming from luxuries to daily necessities is also seen through the actions of the boys in the neighbourhood, although this transformation process is not without its problems. They do not want to act normally until a television set arrives in their home, and persistently keep their silent strike going. A television is not something that is just a luxury to them, but something they want, and need, in their lives. This can also be viewed as typical

children's behaviour. It may be argued that not just the children's behaviour point to this; the gossiping housewives seem to fulfil a similar role. The jealousy that is created by not owning certain electrical appliances demonstrates the need people feel to own those products themselves. Conversely, their inability to acquire what now seems to have become a daily necessity results in Gordon's friction. When they do not have the resources to acquire these products for themselves, the people who do have the desired product are treated as a sort of outcast, and gossip ensues about them.

As seen in the above-described scenes, the electronic appliances that feature in the film, the washing machine and the television, clearly creates social frictions in the neighbourhood, and as Partner described is connected to the downfall of morality. It brings forth a lot of gossip, jealousy and misunderstandings, being a theme throughout the film. A scene that strengthens the notion of television being morality's downfall is when Hayashi visits a local bar, talking with other people about the subject. A man sitting at the bar is very enthusiastic about television and cannot wait to own one, while Hayashi is not as impressed. The man at the bar mentions that he does not have enough money to buy himself a television, but Hayashi explains that to him it is not a matter of money as he thinks television turns the Japanese people into idiots. He quotes a saying: "Television brings forth a hundred million fools" and another man at the bar agrees with him. He also notes that too much convenience in one's life is not good.

The reason why Hayashi eventually does buy a television is to support his neighbour who, after a long struggle, finally finds a job as a salesman in an electronics store. Being another theme in the story, unemployment is frequently mentioned. Throughout the film, the abovementioned neighbour is mostly seen in the bar or coming home drunk, talking about not being able to find a job. Another character, Minoru and Isamu's English teacher, also mentions that the company he used to work for went bankrupt, leaving him no choice but to work freelance, giving private English lessons and translating articles. The theme of dealing with unemployment is therefore clearly present throughout the film, showing the troubles Japanese society went through during these times. Even though electronic devices are present in the story as a main element, mostly from a negative point of view, it can be argued that the story does seem to point towards it being an inevitable part of the future. Towards the end of the film, the man who could not find a job finally does find employment in selling the very products that cause gossip and misunderstandings in the neighbourhood. Even though the arrival of

electronics brings forth tension between people in the same class, the plot basically states that it is the way of the future, with even Hayashi buying the machine that "brings forth a hundred million fools".

Another scene connected to consumption is that of door-to-door salesmen who try to sell their products to the people living in the neighbourhood. The first salesman we see is portrayed negatively, trying to sell products people already have or do not need, like pencils. The sleazily talking man does not want to leave, and keeps pushing his customer to buy something. It is not until the grandmother living in the house is able to bore the salesman and eventually scare him away. Another scene dealing with a salesman coming to someone's house is differently dealt with. He comes to sell an electronic security system to scare off burglars, and this time, the man is younger, less pushy and eyes more sophisticated than the greasy salesman a few scenes back. The inhabitants are more interested in his goods and even decide to buy his product. With this scene it can again be argued that, just like with the character that finally finds employment in selling electronics towards the end of the film, the electrification of society is here again portrayed as the way of the future, and an inescapable element that people gradually start to embrace. As Bordwell notes, *Ohayō* is full of gags both audible as visual. The scenes with the salesmen are also part of these gags, but the symbolic meaning also makes it able to see these scenes differently. One gag in particular makes it, through a certain angle, look like a female character is praying to the electrical tower (Bordwell, 1988, 354). This gag may very well have a symbolic meaning in how electronics have come to play a big part in people's lives, and transformed from luxuries to necessities.

As a motion picture produced and released in the same era, *Ohayō* shows us a contemporary view of the changes and complications that electronic products such as the "three sacred treasures" brought forth in society. Owning these products was very desirable, but at the same connected to the downfall of morality, as Partner pointed out and *Ohayō* demonstrates. Debts were created by obtaining the products with loans, stimulating the economy with money people did not actually had, as Gordon mentioned. *Ohayō* is known for being a comedy, but if one looks behind the gags and misunderstandings, it can see that it actually projects a gloomy perspective on society where unity is challenged and families, like in most of Ozu's films, dissolve. In the case of *Ohayō,* electronic products are the cause of this dissolution.

The next chapter deals with the second film in this research, *Always: Sanchōme no yūhi* and looks at the same elements of Japanese society during the 1950s.

5. Always: Sanchōme no yūhi

The second film that is analyzed is *Always: Sanchōme no yūhi*, internationally known as *Always: Sunset on Third Street*, and from here on in this paper referred to as *Always*. As earlier mentioned the film was produced and released in 2005, and is directed by Yamazaki Takashi (1964-). While the film was made in 2005, the story is set in 1957 and 1958, 48 years before the film was released. Unlike *Ohayō*, this brings forth certain factors that have to be taken into account while researching this motion picture, from which most importantly, is the factor of nostalgia that coats and affects the depiction of the story and how certain elements are shown, a characteristic that *Ohayō* does not have.

In this chapter, this nostalgia factor is briefly looked at before moving on to a further analysis of *Always*. This nostalgia is connected to the so-called "Showa Boom" (*shōwa būmu*), which came into being in the early 1990s. This popularity boom is also taken into account as it plays an important role in how certain elements in the film are displayed. Next to this, it is argued that the release and success of the film, which got two sequels in 2007 and 2012, helped to strengthen and keeping alive the "Showa boom" throughout the 00s (Morita, 2012, 3).

5.1 Always and the power of Nostalgia

Nostalgia is mostly described as a certain longing to the past that an individual feels. But this feeling of longing is misguided as what nostalgia actually does is not saying something about the past as it took place, but making people long for an idealized version of that past (Yomota, 2012, 30). It has the power to make the past seem like a fairy tale; a long lost paradise when comparing it to the present, and those who surrender to these feelings are actually misguided (Yomota, 2012, 32).

Nostalgia is a term that contains different types depending on who the person is that feels it and what causes the individual to feel such an emotion. While older people might have truly experienced the times they feel nostalgic about, younger people who feel attracted to a time when they were not born yet has partly to do with that it feels new to these people. This newness of feeling the atmosphere of, for instance, the Showa period, causes them to feel nostalgic (Morita, 2012 10).

The “Showa Boom” that rose in the early 1990s is strongly connected to the power of nostalgia, creating many themed restaurants, theme parks, advertising and movies that try to capture and transmit the ‘feel’ and atmosphere of the Showa period (1926-1989). The longing for the past that came into existence right after the Showa period ended in 1989 with the death of its emperor Hirohito, has different causes, as Katagiri Shinji describes. According to Katagiri, there are four main reasons why this phenomenon started and mostly why the 30s of the Showa period (1956-1966) became the central period that is longed for in this “Showa Boom”.

The first is that a new era, the Heisei period, started with the death of the emperor, which made people extra conscious of that the long Showa period that lasted for over 60 years had come to an end. Everywhere, from media to the streets to inside people’s living rooms, dates showed the new name of the current era (Katagiri, 2007, 54).

The second, as was already mentioned in the first reason, is that the Showa period lasted a long time. During this long time, the Japanese society underwent many changes. Because of these changes, people tend to look at where the society changed the most, which was the 30s of the Showa period, making this period central to the popularity boom (Katagiri, 2007, 55).

The third reason is that immediately in the first years of the new Heisei period, the economic bubble that Japan’s economy was thriving on, burst, causing an economic depression. This made people look back to times where even though the majority of people were poor, they still dreamed of the future and sought happiness in the small things of life, which again creates nostalgia for the 30s of that era, when times were changing and life became more optimistic (Katagiri, 2007, 55).

The last reason is that people who were born during the post war baby boom period (1947-1949), just turned 40 at the start of the Heisei period, making them long to the times when they were still little children, again making the 30s of the Showa period the most popular time to long to (Katagiri, 2007, 55). According Katagiri this reason can be easily seen as a central element in *Always* (Katagiri, 2007, 55). Indeed while analyzing *Always* in the upcoming section, this reason for becoming nostalgic about the past is clearly present and explored within the film.

Morita Ayaka names two reasons of the boom’s existence, overlapping with one of Katagiri’s reasons, that of the economic depression hitting society right at the

beginning of the Heisei period, making people long for times when it was economically better (Morita, 2012, 5). The second reason that Morita names is the strength of the nuclear family. In the Heisei period family ties became weaker according to many, and the rise of the Internet during this era helped in making people more individualistic. This makes people yearn to when family was important and family ties were still strong (Morita, 2012, 5).

Having looked at the causes of the Showa nostalgia boom, as earlier mentioned it is generally known that not just people that were born or lived during the so-called heydays of the period in the 1950s, but also younger generations seem to feel nostalgia for the period, making this boom being particularly connected to the previously described misguided feeling that nostalgia brings. *Always* helped play a role in creating such emotions and is a good example of this. Katagiri looks at youngsters watching the film and feeling attracted to the time period, saying that "times then surely were nice" (Katagiri, 2007, 57). But older people who actually lived during those times expressed different opinions like "they depicting it too beautifully" and "actually we didn't live in such nice neighbourhoods" (Katagiri, 2007, 44-45). These statements give a realization of the true conditions of the era than those shown in the film. Katagiri notes that nobody would want to live in those rough economic times and if young people knew and could see what those times were really like, there would be a high possibility that the Showa Boom would quickly come to an end (Katagiri, 2007, 57). Siding with Katagiri's notions, Morita states that the film makes people not long to the actual Showa period, but a fantasy, a dream image of what it actually was (Morita, 2012, 5).

It should also be mentioned that the Showa nostalgia boom is not something that is completely new and original in influencing the Japanese population. Katagiri briefly describes how people who lived in the period preceding the Showa era, the Taisho period (1915-126), were also known for feeling nostalgia towards the past during the Showa period. This feeling of nostalgia became known as Taisho Romanticism (*taishōrōman*) (Katagiri, 2007, 52). But the difference with the "Showa Boom" in this case is that the Taisho period only lasted for 11 years, making it quite short compared to the Showa period. This does affect the sense of how strongly the nostalgia hits people as it immediately misses some of the previously known reasons for the rise of the "Showa Boom". The Taisho period was quite short, so not that many changes took place during

this period, which does make nostalgia for the Showa period different and arguably stronger.

The above statements show that while analyzing *Always*, the notion of nostalgia and the creation of a dream image of the Showa period, instead of asking what was its historical reality, has to be taken into account to be able to compare patterns with a film like *Ohayō*, which was produced and released in the actual period. The next segment focuses on the actual film, looking at the consumption phenomenon and how it influenced people's lives in society according to how it is portrayed on the screen.

5.2 Consuming "the bright life" in Always: Sanchōme no yūhi

Always takes place in a neighbourhood in Tokyo, following the Suzuki family in their daily lives and the people surrounding them. Central figures are the family members, which are the father, Suzuki Norifumi (played by Tsutsumi Shin'ichi), his wife Tomoe (played by Yakushimaru Hiroko) and their young son Ippei (played by Koshimizu Kazuki). Next to the family, important characters are a young country girl that moves into their house to work in Suzuki's car repair shop, named Mutsuko (played by Horikita Maki), the owner of a small bar, Hiromi (played by Koyuki), writer Chagawa Ryunosuke (played by Yoshioka Hidetaka) and an abandoned boy that eventually moves in with Chagawa, named Junnosuke (played by Suga Kenta). All these characters are of importance to the story but also to analyzing how consuming products and the electrification of the households had its influence on people living during these times. Also, the previously described elements of nostalgia play a big role in how certain aspects of the film are depicted, both story wise as visually.

One of the first elements that capture the viewer's attention is the neighbourhood in which most of the story takes place. It is a very colourful place that looks very tidy. Streets are very clean and there is no sign of poverty anywhere. These two notions are part of the overall nostalgia cloak in which the film is wrapped, as it gives the illusion that life was colourful in those days, and the clean streets that look fashionable in every season strengthen this feeling. Also the ignoring of poverty and unemployment, both elements that were still very present in 1957, brings forth an illusion. The only sense of poverty we are getting during the film is through one of the main characters, the writer Chagawa. He is a struggling author who is desperately trying to win literature prices, sending his stories to magazines, but losing every time. He is portrayed as the laughing

stock of the neighbourhood with people making fun of his constant failure. Even though he is struggling and portrayed as the character in the neighbourhood that is worst off, and sometimes has to borrow money from his neighbours or ask for his salary in advance to buy something, he still has a roof above his head which is connected to a small candy shop he inherited from family. Next to this, he is not unemployed, and does manage to make a living, not giving the sense of poverty. These are all elements that seem to ignore the harsh reality people actually still lived in during most of the 50s.

Prosperity is a theme in the story and the film shows these times as a time of constant change and progress. The Second World War is mentioned a few times throughout the film, mostly in the sense of "those sure were bad times; now everything is better". Also, when trying to make a speech for a large crowd who have come to watch a boxing match on his brand new television, Suzuki says "We finally have a television in this house. We all survived thirteen years after the war-", before being cut off by the excited crowd. Another main character that moves in the neighbourhood and supports this notion of prosperity is the earlier mentioned Ishizaki Hiromi. She used to be a showgirl, dancing and seducing men to earn money, but is introduced in the film opening her own bar. She mentions that she left the showgirl life behind her, and is now having a respectable job in being able to open her own business. It is a time of change, and people are not afraid to dream about a brighter and more successful future. Suzuki has his own little repair shop and is certain that cars are the best new thing. Next to this he is absolutely certain he can make his small repair shop in a big company one day and sell cars in foreign countries. The future is bright in every sense and times have evolved since the war.

A theme strengthening this sense of prosperity that flows throughout the film, and clearly one of the most visually and story-wise present elements, is the presence of the "three sacred treasures" and the influence it has on people's lives. Immediately at the beginning of the film Suzuki's son Ippei runs through the streets with his friends, yelling 'Television! Television! Television!". Ippei runs into the house, meeting his mother, excitingly asking if the television has arrived yet. His mother replies that it is not yet there, and that the shopkeeper is all backed up on orders, presenting the viewer with how popular the television was at this time. Ippei asking if the television is already delivered is featured a few times in the film, expressing how much Ippei is looking forward to it. When Mutsuko moves into Suzuki's house to work in his repair shop, Ippei

visits her on her room, telling her that they will have a television soon. Mutsuko is delighted and amazed, excitingly asking when it is coming. When the television finally does arrive, it is a scene full of excitement. The whole neighbourhood visits the Suzuki family, all wanting to watch a boxing match that is broadcast that night. Suzuki is dressed for the occasion, wearing a tie; something he normally does not wear. People are congratulating him on getting a television and present him and his wife with gifts. It is displayed as a very special moment, with, as mentioned earlier, Suzuki opening the evening trying to give a speech, but with people interrupting him, telling him to please turn on the television. When he does, and the boxing match appears on the screen, everybody starts yelling towards the screen in excitement, punching in the air and making gestures at the screen. To strengthen the feeling of the excitement and unity the people are feeling during this moment, the rest of the scene is displayed in slow motion with emotional music. This clearly emphasises the nostalgia factor surrounding the arrival of television in the 1950s. As Suzuki's wife says when people are congratulating her and her husband for having a television: "I can't believe people are making such a fuss over such a small matter", which is exactly the way most people would feel about such a scene taking place nowadays. But the newness and excitement of purchasing a television is underlined with this scene, with nostalgia making it an extra exciting and emotional experience. What this scene contradicts is the earlier discussed sense of homogeneity, the feeling of wanting to "fit in", and the social competition that was present underneath the sense of equality. For instance, Francks and Vogel argued that it was a common sight to show off to one's neighbours. The above described scene takes this argument in a totally different way, as all the people in the neighbourhood are clearly happy and overjoyed for the Suzuki family to own a television, and do not seem to care that they do not own one themselves. In this way, the sense of wanting homogeneity or the presence of social friction is totally absent, showing a different view than Francks and Vogel. There is no sense of pressure to own the same products, being equal or outshining your neighbours.

The refrigerator is the third of the "three sacred treasures" that finds its way into the Suzuki household (A washing machine is never shown but is mentioned and apparently already in the family's possession). Before the scene where the arrival of the new refrigerator is shown, a scene shows a salesman bringing big blocks of ice to the family's house to cool an old style refrigerator they still own. But the inconvenience of

preserving food in such a way is brought to the audience's attention when Suzuki's wife suddenly realizes she still had some creampuffs in there that are now rotten. Mutsuko still cannot resist secretly eating one and ends up with food poisoning, again emphasising how inconvenient the old fashioned way of preserving food was. When the electric refrigerator finally arrives, the scene shows the entire family standing in front of their brand new acquisition, staring at it, as in not sure what to do with it. Suzuki tells his son to open it, who sticks his head in, exclaiming how cool it is inside. The father pulls him away, sticking his head in next, also getting excited by how cool it is. This scene portrays the presence and the importance of having "the three sacred treasures" most in the entire film, as Suzuki's wife says, while counting her fingers: "A refrigerator, a television and a washing machine; now we have all three of the treasures!" She asks her husband if they will be alright with that, meaning the money they have spend on them. Suzuki replies: "No problem! If we all work hard we will be fine in about ten years." Him saying this gives the audience a look into Suzuki's financial affairs.

As Gordon mentioned earlier, most of the economical success that happened during these times, came from money that people did not yet have. Apparently, Suzuki also had to borrow money to buy the "three 'treasures", since his wife wonders if it's alright to have spent so much. With Suzuki replying that they will be alright after about ten years of hard work displays the importance people felt for owning these "treasures". The light-heartedness in which Suzuki replies strengthen this but also shows a certain sense of nostalgia. Of course having a new refrigerator in those times could be an exciting thing, but looking forward to ten years of hard work to pay your debts is not something people would normally view in such light-heartedness. It is also another demonstration of how important the "three sacred treasures" had become to people, as they took gigantic loans to buy these electronic products, underlining Gordon's main argument of the products turning from simple luxuries to daily necessities.

When viewed from a visual perspective, the two "sacred treasures" are both presented in a certain fashion, creating unity and being the centre of attention. In the scene where the television arrives, it is placed in the back of the living room, with everybody seated in front of it, sitting close together to be able to watch the screen. This placement makes the television the centre of attention during the scene, with every single person in the room facing towards it, underlining the product's importance and role, making it the most important "character" in the scene.

The refrigerator is presented in a similar fashion. When it first arrives, the Suzuki family is circled around it, amazed and at the same time a little overwhelmed by its shiny white presence. The product is also presented at the centre of attention, bringing the film's characters together around it. Therefore, just like the television in the previous scene did for the entire neighbourhood, it creates unity within the Suzuki family.

In her case study on the nostalgia that is present in *Always*, Yabuki Mai sees the presence of the "three treasures" in the film as a sign of underlining the prosperity factor. She argues that the scenes in which the "treasures" feature demonstrate how people wanted to show themselves that it was not any longer like just after the war and times had changed. With buying the "treasures" they took a step forward towards a new and rich lifestyle, and thus in creating a rich family. The nostalgia here strengthens the sense that in those times nobody was afraid to hope for a better future (Yabuki, 2008, 105). This symbolism for hope is emphasized quite a few times in the film, according to Yabuki. She also sees the construction of Tokyo Tower, which throughout the film gradually progresses, as one of the symbols for the hope of a better future. She argues that nowadays, people have no such hope and that particular feeling is lost (Yabuki, 2008, 106). The nostalgia in *Always* therefore powers the idea of everyone still being hopeful during these times. The above described scenes such as the arrival of the television and the acquisition of a refrigerator, including the happy reactions of the Suzuki family, also makes us aware of the importance of the ideal of the Western family home (*Mai Hōmu*), a concept discussed earlier, which started to rise to popularity during the 1920s. As Partner argued before, the *hōmu* became an important symbol of the new middle class (Partner, 2000, 19). The purchasing of the "treasures", takes steps in creating a rich lifestyle and family, but also in creating the *hōmu*, as the scenes in *Always* demonstrate.

Next to the "three treasures" that are obviously shown in the previously described scenes, the act of consuming itself is very present throughout the film in different scenes, mostly connected to the different seasons of the year. When it is summertime, an older lady who works in a small shop selling cigarettes, drinks Coca Cola. When Suzuki comes to buy something, he asks what she is drinking. She tells him it is an American soda drink called Cola, which is just new on the market. She offers him to try it but Suzuki declines in disgust, not wanting to drink something that looks like soy sauce. It can be argued that the older lady represents the Americanization that Japan

went through in the 1950s. She drinks Coca Cola while listening to Rock 'n Roll music on her radio, wearing Western clothes. Even though she is of an older generation, she is embracing the Western lifestyle and newness without hesitation. This scene with American products dominating a Japanese citizen's daily life, demonstrates that Japan had indeed taken the path of a capitalist consumer society, just like the United States had decades earlier, as Partner mentioned.

This theme of Americanization is most clearly shown in the winter, during Christmas. Poor writer Chagawa strolls through the streets of Ginza, where Christmas decorations are seen everywhere in shopping windows. He sees a man dressed up as Santa Clause and immediately feels guilty he cannot buy anything for Junnosuke. He asks the boy what he wants for Christmas and ends up buying a fountain pen with money he borrows from Suzuki. Chagawa is clearly influenced by what he sees in Ginza, and therefore buys something. In the story, Christmas is not shown as a Christian celebration, but purely as a consuming activity. Suzuki and his wife also buy presents for Ippei and Mutsuko, especially because Ippei believes in Santa Clause. This is all they do for the holiday, and all that Christmas is portrayed to be. This element of believing in Santa Clause and getting presents shows the Americanization of Japan. It also shows the so-called "consumption dream" as it makes family ties stronger and brings happiness with giving each other presents.

The "strong and happy family" is also a theme throughout the film, one of the early mentioned causes of the "Showa boom", as Morita demonstrated. Yabuki argues that *Always* indeed helps in creating a sense of nostalgia towards times when the bond between family members was still strong. She says that emphasis is put on this fact during a certain scene where it is dinnertime and the whole family is sitting around the table, happily talking with each other. This is something that according to a lot of people does not happen a lot anymore nowadays, and the way in which family ties are shown in *Always* helps strengthening this feeling with its audience (Yabuki, 2008, 104).

One of the elements that Kitagiri names as a cause of the "Showa Boom", is people feeling nostalgic towards these times because of the life they used to live as children in the Showa era (Kitagiri, 2007, 55). This sense of nostalgia is very present in *Always*, mostly focusing on Suzuki's son Ippei. Being around 10 years old, Ippei and his classmates are mostly shown running and playing outside, putting emphasis on the fact that children really wanted to play outside in those times, highlighting the difference

with nowadays when computers and staying in one's room have become more central to children's lives. Yabuki agrees with this statement as she also highlights this factor in the film. Throughout the film, Ippei is almost constantly shown wanting to leave home immediately after coming back from school to play outside (Yabuki, 2008, 102). One scene shows a lot children playing outside together, doing all kind of different activities from playing tag to playing with hula-hoops. Showing this does not help the story forward, but it is shown to underline this and power the nostalgia people feel for being a child during that period.

Just like the scene of children playing outside, the film contains quite a few moments that do not help in progressing the story, but are mostly shown just to show how certain daily life activities were during the 1950s. A few examples are the big clean up of the house, where Ippei is allowed to break the paper in the paper doors, and enthusiastically does so, again emphasising and sugar-coating the joy children had during these times. Another scene shows a salesman visiting the house and Suzuki's wife buying some products. Her buying goods in stead of refusing the greasy salesman and trying to get rid of him as is seen in *Ohayō,* is another small detail in the film that demonstrates the characteristic of consuming products during the 1950s.

The very last scene of the film features a message to the audience, as the Suzuki family looks out over Tokyo from the top of the hill, while a magnificent sunset is taking place. Suzuki and his wife say how beautiful it is, with their son Ippei responding: "But of course! Tomorrow too, the day after that too, 50 years from now as well, the sunset will always be beautiful!". As Yabuki demonstrates in her research, Ippei saying "50 years from now as well", is a direct message to the audience living nowadays, watching the film. According to Yabuki, it points out the idea of the existence of the "great past" while we are living in a "terrible present". The people in the film have high hopes for a bright future, where it will be a continuation of the happiness they have in life at that very moment (Yabuki, 2009, 108). Therefore, the title of the film is "Always: sunset on third street", indicating the hope for the continuation of the "great past" people used to live in, strengthening the notion of nostalgia for those times.

Being a look in the past instead of reflecting the contemporary state of society, *Always* demonstrates how feelings of nostalgia can sweeten a representation, showing something different from what it actually was. The "treasures" are presented at the midst of everything, creating unity and presenting a newer and better lifestyle.

Economic reality is largely ignored, and the 1950s are presented as a new age of dreams, where everything was possible. This depiction of society emphasizes the warm feelings for the past, strengthening a sense of hope that people feel was still alive then, but lost in contemporary society nowadays.

The next chapter places the findings of *Ohayō* and *Always* next to each other and researches the differences in the depiction of daily life and how consuming products and the way it affected people's surroundings and relationships with each other is shown.

6. Consuming "the bright life" in different decades

Now that both films have been analyzed on the concept of daily life in the 1950s and the electrification of the household and consumption, there are some overlapping elements, but mostly striking differences.

From the previous chapters one can almost immediately see that the factor that is mostly responsible for the differences between the representations of the consumption phenomenon in the two films is "time". The concept of nostalgia enchanted certain elements in people's minds over time and therefore also in the film. As Yomota pointed out earlier, nostalgia brings forth a misguided feeling of longing. What it actually does is not saying something about the past as it took place, but making people long for an idealized version of that past.

The difference in representation that is almost as opposite as black and white, and most present in both films, is the presence of the "three scared treasures" and with that the "electrification" of Japanese society. Both films deal with the effect that the television had on people, and as this research demonstrates, bring forth almost opposite representations. In *Ohayō,* having a television is seen as something negative as it brings forth social friction. It connects to the fall of morality and the people owning a television are gossiped about and eventually feel the desire to move to another neighbourhood to escape their nosy neighbours. In *Always* the arrival of a television at the Suzuki family is loudly and enthusiastically met, an agent of social cohesion even, with people looking immensely forward to its coming. When it arrives, the whole neighbourhood visits the Suzuki's, giving them presents and congratulating them on their acquisition. The reaction of the people watching turns into an emotional spectacle in slow motion and demonstrates how the power of nostalgia enforces a totally different feel on the matter than is seen in *Ohayō*. In *Ohayō*, the neighbours are annoyed by the television and rather see it disappear, thus creating friction and individualisation between people. The scene in *Always* takes it in a totally other way, showing how the television brings ultimate joy and also, opposite to *Ohayō*, the unification of people. The nostalgia factor here underlines how television brought people together and how special it was when television came into peoples' lives, something that the occurrences in *Ohayō* do not support. The acquisition of a refrigerator is also met with enthusiasm and joy, even though Suzuki mentions they just have to work hard for the coming 10 years to pay it all

back. In *Ohayō*, buying the "treasures" is not seen from such a point of view. Buying a washing machine for the head of the local woman's association was an expensive undertaking, as she mentions she had to take a loan and is not very wealthy, when defending herself against the rumour that she might have used the contribution money to buy it. In this case, Gordon's notion of buying with money that people did not yet have is faced differently in both films. In *Ohayō* it is clearly met with a more realistic view, while *Always* shows how the enthusiasm of buying such expensive products overshadows the debt it creates, vividly making the nostalgic feelings towards finally having such a product overshadow the financial reality of the times.

The above-mentioned harsh financial reality was still strong during most of the 1950s. Even though there was prosperity, Japanese society still had to deal with much poverty. While in both films the main characters are all not very rich and part of the lower middle classes, the audience of *Always* hardly gets a sense of the poverty and unemployment that was troubling society at the time. The character of Chagawa, the down on his luck writer, is the only glimpse of poverty we get, even though it is mostly in no way in a negative sense. In *Ohayō* this is clearly different. A reoccurring theme throughout the story is people having trouble to find work and being unemployed. It shows a better contemporary portrayal of the state of society during the times.

Next to hiding financial reality, the nostalgia in *Always* also brings forth moments in the film that do not help the story forward, like the salesman selling goods to Suzuki's wife, but it is shown for the sake of showing how certain things were during the 1950s. As is seen in the previous chapters, *Ohayō* also deals with salesmen in certain scenes, not because it is especially important to the plot neither, but it does function more to the story than it does to *Always*. In *Ohayō* it is mostly part of a series of gags within the film, but it does also show how people eventually decide to buy an electronic product from a salesman to warn them for burglars and also unwanted salesmen.

As the films deal with scenes that show elements of the time as they were for different purposes, being a child during the late 1950s is also shown with different emphasis in both films. *Ohayō*'s plot features the children going on strike to get their way, and portrays the decline of parental authority, as Bordwell points out. The father figure is strict towards the boys but they ignore him. *Always* shows the father-son relationship differently. Suzuki is not as strict towards his son and a notable difference is that Ippei does not have to go on a certain strike or rebel against his parents; the

television is already on his way. Nostalgic feelings also underline the children playing outside together, and the joys a child had growing up in the 1950s. *Ohayō* focuses more on the children having to study hard, deceiving and rebelling against their parents.

The relationship with the parents and family bonds is also a reoccurring theme in both films. While in *Ohayō*, television creates strife within families and misunderstandings; in *Always* it creates unity and happiness. As Yabuki also demonstrates, *Always* shows the family all together, eating dinner and happily talking with each other, creating nostalgic feelings towards the days when family bonds were still strong. *Ohayō* shows the decline of parental authority, children running away from home, refusing to eat their dinner and keeping silent to get their way. Of course it is depicted this way because of the film's plot, but also reminds us of the fact of how thickly the family bond is demonstrated in *Always*, with nostalgia playing a role in portraying it.

Last but not least, the difference in portrayal can be seen by the overall visual style of both films. *Ohayō*, made in 1959 and with its story taking place around 1959, portrays its world and story in bleak colours, while *Always* creates an almost magical look with deeper and warmer colours, that were brought about artificially. *Ohayō* was Ozu's first color film. Ozu is known for the use of colours to set certain patterns in his films, as Desser points out, and this is also the case in *Ohayō* (Desser, 1994, 300). Therefore, it cannot be said that Ozu's colour usage in the film is more realistic than that of *Always*, but when viewing the overall look of the film, the colours are, compared to *Always*, of a less warm tone. As the complete title of the film *Always* already suggests, the films deep and warm colours that most of the film is cloaked in, can be easily compared with the colours of the setting sun.

Next to this, the streets in *Always* are surprisingly tidy and clean, even though the neighbourhood depicted seems to be a poorer neighbourhood than the one in *Ohayō*. The neighbourhood that is the backdrop for the story in *Ohayō* is newly constructed, and at that time more modern one. *Always* takes place in the older parts of town (*shitamachi*), which puts emphasis on the nostalgia factor and displays the influence of the "Showa Boom". Themed restaurants that came with the "Showa Boom" have this *"shitamachi* look", as it strengthens the feeling of history and the past. By placing its story in an old neighborhood, *Always* gives the audience the feeling they are viewing the past, which is completely different from the present.

Concluding, this research has shown two representations of a past era and the changes and developments that took place within it. Passing time has had its effect on how certain elements are shown, with *Ohayō* dealing with everyday problems that were present in 1959, in a not necessarily more realistic way, but definitely in a more contemporary fashion. The world that is shown in *Always* is clearly not the real Showa period, but a dream world of how people want to remember it. As Partner, Francks, Gordon, Vogel and Yoshimi demonstrated in the previous chapters, electronic products such as the "three sacred treasures" got a foothold in society during the 1950s and both films play with this element in different ways. The films are both dealing with the same developments Japanese society went through, but the representations of happenings in society like the arrival of television and the unity that it brings among the population in *Always* are met with *Ohayō*'s gossiping neighborhood that have no kind words for their television owning neighbors. The representation of the past is something that can be easily misguided by warm feelings of certain concepts and happenings. Analyzing two films such as *Always* and *Ohayō* demonstrate this with its differences about same concepts that are portrayed in different eras.

Film is a medium that can bring different visions to life in a variety of possibilities. When it comes to portraying the past, sometimes without noticing, or unwillingly, the power of nostalgia can start playing a lead role. It is up to the viewer to get caught up in the dream or not.

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