

*The Weatherhead East Asian Institute at Columbia University,  
in conjunction with the Donald Keene Center of Japanese Culture, present*

## OUT OF THE ASHES Early Postwar Japanese Movies

*Curated by Linda Hoaglund*

As Japan emerged from the catastrophic wreckage of WWII, many film directors turned to the bleak realities of the postwar to inspire their movies, and audiences flocked to newly-built theaters, hungry for entertainment that spoke to their privations. Ironically, through these stories of poverty, orphaned children, political turmoil and corruption, filmmakers ushered in Japan's golden age of film. Working with a stylish palette of black humor, irony and compassion, Japanese postwar movies—some of the best of which are featured in this series—unflinchingly stared down a ruined nation and championed the unlikely heroes struggling to resurrect it.

---

“Children of the Beehive” (SHIMIZU Hiroshi, 1948)

Tuesday, February 26, 2008

6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Arledge Cinema, Columbia University

**This event is free of charge, but registration is required; please RSVP by Friday, February 22 to [outoftheashes\\_weai@hotmail.com](mailto:outoftheashes_weai@hotmail.com)**

Film Summary:

A motley crew of real-life war orphans—shrewd, exuberant and vulnerable—latches onto a repatriated veteran as he wanders homeless through the desolate ruins of postwar Japan searching for work and shelter. Devoid of sentimentality and graced with an optimism that defies all odds, this landmark film is a precious near-documentary record of the wreckage of the immediate postwar.

---

“Battles Without Honor and Humanity” (FUKASAKU Kinji, 1973)

Tuesday, March 11, 2008

6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Davis Auditorium, Columbia University

**This event is free of charge; no registration is required.**

Film Summary:

Perhaps the only film to *open* with the mushroom cloud over Hiroshima, this sprawling *yakuza* yarn bursts out of the black markets dominating postwar Japan. The film, which was a smash hit and launched a series, charts a violent but ultimately decent man's evolving relationship with the unscrupulous boss who controls his syndicate. Though superficially a gangster film, Fukasaku's lifelong theme was Japan's lost opportunities for genuine freedom and radical democracy as it rebuilt itself.

---

“Doctor’s Day Off” (SHIBUYA Minoru, 1952)

Monday, March 31, 2008

6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Arledge Cinema, Columbia University

This event is free of charge, but registration is required; please RSVP by Thursday, March 27 to [outoftheashes\\_weai@hotmail.com](mailto:outoftheashes_weai@hotmail.com)

Film Summary:

Set in 1946, on the first anniversary of Japan's defeat, this film chronicles the hopeless efforts of a doctor in a poor neighborhood, trying to take a day off. His attempts to nap are foiled by a colorful stream of characters scarred by postwar trauma and lawlessness. The film's guileless heart guides this tragic comedy to a deeply affecting conclusion. (Based on the short story by Ibuse Masuji.)

---

“Pu San” (ICHIKAWA Kon, 1953)

Tuesday, April 8, 2008

6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Arledge Cinema, Columbia University

This event is free of charge, but registration is required; please RSVP by Friday, April 4 to [outoftheashes\\_weai@hotmail.com](mailto:outoftheashes_weai@hotmail.com)

Film Summary:

Inspired by the eponymous comic strip, *Pu San* traces the misadventures of a hapless widower edging past his prime, trying to stay employed and out of jail, while keeping an eye on the landlord's daughter, fittingly named Stubborn. Ichikawa manages to stir up a wicked and sardonic brew of raucous politics, rambunctious students, inflation, and corruption.

---

“Black River” (KOBAYASHI Masaki, 1957)

Tuesday, April 15

6:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Arledge Cinema, Columbia University

to be followed by brief intermission and then a Panel Discussion

This event is free of charge, but registration is required; please RSVP by Friday, April 11 to [outoftheashes\\_weai@hotmail.com](mailto:outoftheashes_weai@hotmail.com)

Film Summary:

An early film by Kobayashi Masaki, who made a career out of films “pitted against entrenched power,” *Black River* exposes the organized crime, prostitution and corruption that proliferated around American military bases during and after the occupation. At the center of it all, a mild-mannered college student helplessly fumes as a girl is sucked into a life of prostitution by *yakuza*. Featuring a startling debut by the legendary actor Nakadai Tatsuya, this film is gripping from start to finish.

---

This series is presented in conjunction with the following  
Columbia University East Asian History courses:  
G8871--Colloquium on the History of Modern Japan  
W3869--Modern Japan, 1800 to the Present

---

<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/weai/events/OutofAshes.htm>