modernisation. *Nihon no higeki* (The Japanese Tragedy) is a more cynical rendering of the same subject.

Towards the end of the 1950s, the representation of women underwent an important shift: the female body grew visible as both the object and the subject of desire. The rise of youth films enhanced public attention to the body and sexuality; the abolishing of legal prostitution in 1956 helped to undermine the wife (or mother)/whore dichotomy in cultural representations. Imamura Shôhei's heroines, and the women embodied by Wakao Ayako in *Masumura Yasuzô*’s films actively seek to fulfill their sexual desires. In the 1960s, female sexuality was provided politically and/or aesthetically militant male directors, such as Ōshima Nagisa, Yoshida Yoshishige and Wakamatsu Koji, with a fertile subject of inquiry. They attempted to break through to the depth of humanity (or inhumanity) via an encounter with the woman as the unknowable, opaque Other, vacillating between misogyny and fascination.

Commodification of the female body, accelerated by the decline of the studio system in Japan, culminated in Nikkatsu becoming a pornography studio in 1971. Soft porn made in Nikkatsu, though often staging sexual violence against women, sometimes ironically centred on female subjectivity and pleasure. The 1980s can be described as the decade of *shôjo* or teenage girls. The destabilised sense of identity in late capitalism society found its manifestation in *shôjo* caught between adults and children, which appeared on the screen embodied by idol singers and young actresses, as in *Taiju kurabû* (The Typhoon Club). Unfortunately, many of the most innovative Japanese directors of the 1990s seem relatively uninterested in the representation of women, so the topic remains rather incompletely explored in more recent film.

**See also**: censorship and film; women in the film industry

**Further reading**


KINOSHITA CHIKA

**Women’s Union**

The Japan W(omen) Un(ion) (WCTU) (Nikōshū, ni*; women’s org: temperance, n*; behaviour. Its: prostitution sy to leave this is the WCTU se and victims.)

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Further reading

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