



### **SADNESS WITHOUT SORROW:**

*A Further Look at Away From Her  
As Reflection of Ozu and Buddhist Philosophy*

Sadness without sorrow. Such are the feelings conveyed whenever I watch my favorite film of 2007, *Away From Her* (written and directed by Sarah Polley). The feeling of sadness without sorrow is where I believe the emotional core of the film lies, but it would do the film a great injustice to simply label it a transcendent or spiritual one. The meaning of this is nothing more than a further look at what I find to be a profoundly layered and poetic achievement in filmmaking. My intention is simply to broaden the depth of the film with a particular interpretation or further thought.

*Away From Her* is a film that deals with aging, memory, love, and death – all of which are natural forces. They are not created by human-generated law or expectation, but rather natural evolution... Something larger than oneself, perhaps spiritual or transcendent.

While undeniably different both stylistically as well as culturally, watching *Away From Her* does connect with me the way watching a film by Yasujiro Ozu (my favorite filmmaker) does. Even if not consciously intentional, the film is understanding of universal and natural themes often expressed by Ozu, who's films are very reflective of Buddhist philosophy (notably the sufferings of old age, sickness, and death). However, like Ozu such philosophy is never preached, instead a testament seeing past the tragedy of suffering with acceptance and affirmation. Buddhist philosophy views life as illusion, which is solved through meditation thus changing the quest from the way of life towards the way of death. The compassion and grace is in seeing through suffering with the strength and courage to accept it.

I believe *Away From Her*, even if unconsciously, is reflective of such acceptance, and as such, is a reflective statement of its profound care for the natural world and humanity. In her feature debut, 27 year-old Sarah Polley may not have reached the observant or creative levels of Ozu, a master of incomparable depth, understanding and artistry. Yet very much like Ozu, *Away From Her* is a film that poetically transcends beyond the limitations of the world into something greater.