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## It's Tough Being a Man: Film Critical Review and Interpretation

"The family melodrama....more often records the failure of the protagonist to act in a way that could shape the events and influence the emotional environment, let alone change the stifling milieu....Melodrama confers on them a negative identity through suffering, and the progressive self-immolation and disillusionment generally ends in resignation; they emerge as lesser human beings for having become wise and acquiescent to the ways of the world." (Elsaesser, 78-79)

This quote from Elsaesser's *Tales of Sound and Fury* encompasses the nature of *It's Tough Being a Man* as a family melodrama, showcasing the both likeable and unlikeable Torajiro, a rough-around-the-edges member of the yakuza who returns to his birthplace, Shibamata, and unintentionally causes trouble for his loved ones. Tora's narrative is one of frustration. The audience feels badly for him for his history of abuse from his father, but gets frustrated with him when he doesn't understand the implications of his crude behavior in particular social environments.

When he clashes with Hiroshi, a factory worker in love with Sakura, Tora is rather silent and ignorant of Hiroshi's question of whether or not Tora has ever been in love with a woman he cannot have because of his background (specifically, his lack of college education). On the first occasion of this twice-asked question, Hiroshi foreshadows what the viewer might glimpse in Tora's then blossoming feelings for Fuyuko. She is not yet explicitly inaccessible, but later in the film, when Tora visits Fuyuko for a fishing trip together, he receives a taste of his own medicine when a man, in business attire, is revealed to be Fuyuko's (educated) future husband. Thus, the audience sees tragic yet ironic parallelism that Elsaesser mentions at the beginning of his essay on page 70, and Tora once more returns to his life as a drifter, albeit in a more tragic frame, seen as a he weeps in a restaurant after dismissing Noboru in the last few minutes of the film.