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Japan beyond Its Borders: Transnational Approaches to Film and Media



Edited by Marcos P. Centeno-Martín and Norimasa Morita

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Edited by Marcos P. Centeno-Martín and Norimasa Morita

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Editors: Marcos P. Centeno-Martín
Norimasa Morita

Theorizing Transnational Japanese Film and Media

Marcos P. Centeno-Martín
Norimasa Morita

Introduction

The present publication is the result of a collaborative project originally entitled ‘Japanese Transnational Cinema,’ whose aim was bringing together well-established scholars as well as young researchers working on innovative approaches towards Japanese cinema. The aim of this project is proposing new analytical methodologies and theoretical frameworks concerning the transnational complexities of film and media culture related to Japan and challenging the old ‘national’ paradigm by highlighting the limitations of studying film and media as a phenomenon confined to its national borders.

The project was led in partnership between Birkbeck College, University of London and Waseda University and also in collaboration among colleagues from other British and Japanese universities. Some outcomes of our research were published in a special issue of *Arts*, an international open-access peer-reviewed journal edited by Marcos P. Centeno-Martín and Norimasa Morita in 2019 and presented in the international meetings, a two-day seminar held at Birkbeck in May 2019 whose second part took place few months later as a two-day symposium at Waseda, Tokyo, in July 2019. This European-Japanese exchange was possible thanks to the generous financial support from Waseda University, MEXT-Top Global University Project, Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation, Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation, Birkbeck School of Arts,

and Nagoya University which allowed Japanese scholars to attend the event in London and UK-based scholars to be present in Tokyo.

Theorising Japanese Cinema as a ‘National Cinema’

Being one of the oldest and most prolific film industries in the world, second only to Hollywood until the 1960s, Japanese Cinema has become a fruitful field of study which has inspired scholars across the world since the last decades of the 20th century. Influential works were written in the late 1970s (Bordwell and Thomson 1976; Burch 1979) assessing seriously the singularities of Japanese films and how Japanese film makers managed to create their own narratives and stylistic codes. They inspired subsequent studies focusing on how Japanese films challenged the modes of representation which had been developed in the West. During the following years, more scholars joined this ‘turn to the Orient’ and explored the traits of the Japanese aesthetic and philosophical tradition in Japanese cinema. They embarked on these projects seeking to demonstrate how Japanese cinema ignored Western film-making conventions, codes, and techniques as well as film and narrative forms and styles, while it created its own cultural referents, which for Burch, dated back to the Heian period. These studies tried to demonstrate more or less successfully how Japanese film makers developed a mode of representation not paralleling with Hollywood’s, if not so much as an act of opposition to it. According to them, Japanese film makers were indifferent to Hollywood traditions. Burch tried to justify this hypothesis with two arguments. First, except the period of the postwar occupation, Japan was never been colonized or placed in quasi-colonial conditions unlike other Asian countries and the Japanese film industry, too, maintained its independence. Secondly, Japan developed its own film studios and trained its own professionals, directors, cameramen, scriptwriters, etc. Thus, the uniqueness of Japanese cinema may have been the result of the technical and economic independence from foreign influences.

The critical contributions such as Burch’s were not small, in making us to realise that there existed a cinema tradition that did not follow American and European film makers and emulate their films. They were crucially important for the appreciation of the values of early masters like

Ozu Yasujirō. The pervading calmness, tranquility, laconism, narrative and formal harmony and consistency as well as his elliptic styles in Ozu's films, were generally traced back to the Zen Buddhist tradition with which he must have had been familiar. The Japanese cultural context may provide epistemological keys to appreciate, for example, Ozu's contemplative style and his privileging of the present-tense narrating over the flashback, because such narrative and formal characteristics are associated with the sensitivity to the ephemerality and transience of things in *mono no aware* (pathos of things). Additionally, Ozu's reflexion on lifecycles – being born, growing up, getting married, aging and dying – was interpreted as if it were connected to the Buddhist teaching of the three marks of existence (*sanbōin*): 'impermanence' (*mujō*), 'suffering' (*ku*) and "emptiness or absence of self-nature" (*kū*). The ubiquitous presence of mysterious empty shots, whose narrative function has intrigued many scholars (Burch; Bordwell 1994), may not have been merely accidental, if he had been inspired by the aesthetics of *yohaku no bi* (beauty of emptiness) in the ink painting (*suibokuga*). Even Ozu's artisanal conception of cinema throughout which he made the same kind of film again and again by using similar motifs, themes, rhetoric, actors and characters (Centeno 2017: 141-144), may have developed from the practices of certain traditional art forms such as *Sadō* (tea ceremony) *Shodō* (calligraphy) and *Budō* (martial art).

The National Cinema approach has frequently been applied in the exploration of the singularities of the films of Kurosawa Akira as well, who like Ozu, is often regarded as the key figure in the discussion on the national paradigm of Japanese cinema. Kurosawa's *Rashōmon* (1951), which triggered the postwar reappraisal of Japanese films in European film festivals, is not only based on a Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's short story "In a Grove" (Yabu no Naka, 1922),¹ but also contains elements echoing Nō theatre, such as the inclusion of a spirit of a dead person, the Mediaeval settings, and the presence of a Buddhist monk as *waki* (the main supporting character). The theatrical reference in Kurosawa does not stop here, as one can find many interrelations between his films and *Kabuki* dramas like the one in *Seven Samurai*

¹ Kurosawa's *Rashōmon* also contains elements from Akutagawa's homonymous short story 'Rashōmon' (1915).

(*Shichinin no Samurai*, 1954) where the leading character Shimada Kambei is the embodiment of *tachiyaku* (male protagonist) and his assistant Okamoto Katsushirō *nimaim*e (good-looking young man) (Satō 1987: 15-30).

However, these approaches from “national” characteristics of films had various structural limitations, because they normally took essentialist views in regarding Japanese cinema as something unique and neglecting the complexity of transnational influences that interacted at the local level. The same examples provided before can be used to illustrate this problem. Even films of Ozu, ‘the most Japanese of the Japanese filmmakers’ (Richie 1974), who truly developed singular styles, cannot be fully explained without taking into account Hollywood influences in the earlier stages of his career, which helped him modernise Japanese cinema. His decision to dispense with the *benshi* (narrator) on the stage of a movie theatre and replacing him by intertitles is an example of this American influence. Similarly, Kurosawa’s works are generally considered as an epitome of Japanese National Cinema but it is also well known that in creating them, he heavily relied on the stories of moral and philosophical conflicts such as William Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* and *King Lear*, Leo Tolstoy’s *Death of Ivan Ilyich*, and Maxim Gorky’s *The Lower Depth*.

Limitations of the ‘National’ Paradigm

Film critics and historians started in the 1980s to raise their voice against this national cinematic paradigm and urge to expand the study of Japanese cinema beyond the limits of its national borders. This approach entailed dismantling the previous theoretical framework and breaking down the notion of Japanese Cinema as an isolated and self-referential artifact. Works like Yamamoto Kikuo’s *The Influence of Foreign Films on Japanese Films* (1983) challenged the previous understanding that Japanese cinema was unique because it developed in isolation from the rest of the world and also opened up ways to liberate the study of Japanese film culture from earlier essentialist views.

At the end of the decade, Andrew Higson (1989) tried to deconstruct more systematically the general paradigm of National Cinema. Demonstrating that its theoretical framework is only too unstable, Higson poses a simple but penetrating question: what are we talking about when we talk about national

cinema? Engagement in this discussion allows him to note that there is no universally applicable notion of 'national cinema' and on the contrary this concept is used in a large variety of ways. According to him, 'national cinema' was first used as an economic term referring to all the films produced within a nation. In other words, national cinema was established in correspondence with the emergence and development of the 'domestic film industry.' This view that was mainly concerned with where and by whom films were made became obsolete in the 1980s when the number of international co-productions dramatically increased.

The second 'consumption-based' view of this term was concerned with what films audiences watched within a domestic market. However, it was exposed to a problem, when it was found that a significant proportion of the films that audiences watched in the domestic market was foreign, particularly Hollywood, ones. Another problem is some films are consumed mainly outside the nation where they were produced due to either local censorship imposed by the authoritarian regime or to international success and popularity. An example is Luis Buñuel's *Viridiana* (1961), a masterpiece of Spanish cinema which won the *Palme d'Or* at the Cannes Film Festival, while it was banned in Spain by the Franco regime. Higson (1898: 39) refers as examples to the films made by the Sixth Generation film makers in China which were chiefly watched abroad. They presented social criticism and discontent dodging the state censorship via international funding, distribution and exhibition. More recently, Jia Zhangke, a Chinese Sixth Generation film maker, made success at international film festivals with his *Still Life* (*Sānxiá hǎorén*, 2006) and *Platform* (*Zhàntái*, 2000) which were funded, if partially, by Office Kitano. The consumption-based views of national cinema paradoxically disclose that films transcend the national context and become part of a shared global culture. This is particularly relevant for examining the global circulation of Japanese films from the 1990s, such as *J-Horror* (Stringer 1989, McRoy 2005), films included in the 'Asia Extreme' catalogue created by Tartan Distribution Company (Shin 2009), movies like *Battle Royal* (Bowyer 2000), and Studio Ghibli' animation films (Denison 2001) and also the rise of a global fan communities or transnational audiences with shared interests (Dew 2007; Napier 2009). These examples are essential to understand the relevance of films for the so-called Japanese 'soft power' (McGray 2002; Iwabuchi 2002).

The third view of national cinema is based on a sort of ‘text-based approach,’ through which narratives and visual forms are closely examined in order to extract shared national characteristics in styles, narrative tropes, systems of representation and aesthetics. This analytical approach had specific relevance in the definitions of Japanese ‘national cinema’ from the 1970s (Bordwell and Thomson 1976; Burch 1979). The inherent problem in this perspective is, however, that such shared national characteristics can easily be transformed or intentionally undermined by film makers. This is the case with the experimental and *avant-garde* authors like Oshima Nagisa whose deconstruction of the *Jidai-geki* (period drama) genre and the heteronormative sexuality of the samurai class in *Taboo* (Gohatto, 1999) is illustrative. In another instance, the text-based approach may reveal how film makers reproduce codes of representation and cultural referents beyond the national boundaries. Its example is the adoption of the codes of American youth culture in the 1950s embedded in movie icons such as Marlon Brando and James Dean into the *Taiyōzoku* films starring Ishihara Yūjirō (Centeno Martín 2016; Raine 2000); the reproduction of the iconography of the American West in the *Wataridori* series starring Kobayashi Akira (Kitamura 2012) or more recently in Takashi Miike’s *Sukiyaki Western Django* (2007) and Lee Sang-il’s *The Unforgiven* (Yurusarezaru Mono, 2013) (Exley 2018).

The text-based film criticism was the (self)reflexive approach developed by critics and film makers from the 1950s such as André Bazin, Alexandre Astruc and François Truffaut who presented new theoretical frameworks centering on formal analysis and sought to identify ‘quality cinema.’ This provided film critics and historians with theoretical ammunition for defining various forms of New Cinema as ‘National Cinema’ that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s as alternatives to Hollywood’s ‘Institutional Mode of Representation’ (IMR) according to the term coined by Burch (1969).² This was a criticism-led view that, as Higson noted, tended to posit ‘world cinema’ as the ‘other’ of Hollywood, and grounded itself on a traditional distinction between ‘highbrow’ and ‘lowbrow’ cultures. According to this view, national cinema only refers to those films associated with high culture, but not those which are designed to satisfy the tastes of the popular audience. Interestingly, this analytical

² Previously described by Bazin as the “Myth of total cinema” (1967)

approach appeared simultaneously with the postwar ‘discovery’ in the West of Japanese films, which Westerners found as a possible alternative to Hollywood movies. However, it came with an extra complication, because, as noted above, even classical film makers such as Ozu Yasujiro and Mizoguchi Kenji belonged to a group of modernisers in prewar Japan who adopted IMR codes.

These critical shortcomings and inconsistencies mostly derived from the fact that the paradigm of ‘Japanese national cinema’ was to a great extent postulated outside Japan. After the ‘discovery’ of Japanese cinema in the 1950s, European and American scholars elaborated ideas of Japanese national cinema merely from the films that were available in the West. This means that they constructed such a large concept by watching a fraction of the entire body of Japanese films. All the films that succeeded at important European film festivals and/or won Academy Awards were *Jidaigeki* (period dramas) made by Kurosawa, Mizoguchi, Yoshimura Kōzaburō, Takizawa Eisuke, Imai Tadashi and Inagaki Hiroshi. It was more than anything else the exoticism projected on screen that fascinated Western audiences and created ‘kimono craze’ (Weinrichter, 2002). Japanese film studios and distributors deliberately sent *Jidaigeki* to European festivals, since they had discovered that a recipe for success abroad was to capture the imagination of Western audiences by screening images of a country stuck in its legendary past and traditions (Centeno Martín 2018). However, the popularity of the works shown in the West hardly corresponded with the general preferences of Japanese audiences: in the early 1950s, the production of *Gendaiigeki* (contemporary dramas) was twice as big as *Jidaigeki*, and at the end of the decade, the number of the former was almost four times larger than the latter (VV.AA. 1963, p.36; Centeno Martín 2018: 8). This evidently shows how the perception and reception of Japanese cinema abroad was grounded on the viewing experiences that were markedly different from those at the home market — in fact, Japanese screens at the time were filled with the new *Seishun Eiga* (youth cinema) reflecting various forms of American popular and youth culture. Nevertheless, this transnational intertextuality was overlooked by distant observers. The national paradigm tended to be built only by assembling the stylistic traits that were exotic for and unfamiliar to the Western norm and this made its theoretical framework greatly unreliable and vulnerable.

Local Traditions in Transnational Cinema

Higson returned to his critique of national cinema two decades later (Higson 2000) by reflecting on the celebrated idea of 'imagined community.' A nation is a socially constructed community, imagined by the dominant group of people living in it and believing that their community is homogeneous ethnically and culturally. Films as well as the media have traditionally been playing the role of a vehicle for spreading this kind of the notion of nationhood. Social diversity, and ethnic, regional, linguistic, and cultural varieties within the same community were rarely represented on screen till recently, in spite that societies are in reality a diverse space where people with different ethnic backgrounds live, different languages are spoken, and different faiths are practiced. This is the problem with national cinema, particularly Japanese national cinema. In Japan where the myth of racial and cultural homogeneity is deeply rooted, it is remarkably easy to imagine a national cinema which consisted of the films which share the same kind of narrative and thematic distinctiveness, aesthetic sensibility, social and political values, and artistic and stylistic uniqueness.

In the age of globalization in which great many people move around the globe and the volume of culture and information travel fast and wide, the notions of national identity, national homogeneity and national cinema no longer hold. Higson, however, makes an interesting point that new mass migrations or visible diasporas in the time of globalization brought about a new form of imagined society, that is, a vision of far-away homeland shared by immigrants who are living in the tension between unity and disunity and also home and homelessness (Higson 2000: 65). The study of identities, homogeneity and uniqueness beyond national borders become an increasingly relevant for film studies and is crucial in redefining the unstable category of national film and media in the 21st century. Diaspora, multiculturalism and cultural hybridity are phenomena of our time that little by little find their place on screen. Moreover, cinematic rebels or mavericks occasionally appeared in any nation and challenged the notion of national cinema. It is, therefore, a site of crisis, resistance and negotiation.

Transnational approaches in film studies call into question national paradigms, but at the same time, this does not mean that it is a complete

analytical method that can explain everything and has universal applicability. This introduction does not attempt to suggest that the transnational approach can supplant arguments for national cinema. In fact, while national elements may seem irrelevant in transnational cinema, investigation into them may still be meaningful. Let's take for example Japanese horror films or so-called *J-Horror* in the late 1990s and the early 2000s. This genre is a fascinating case and has recently attracted a lot of scholarly attention (Stringer, McRoy, Shin). It began with Hideo Nakata's *Ring* (Ringu, 1998), the film adaptation of Suzuki Kōji's novel with the same title, which had been published by Kodakawa Shoten in 1991.³ *Ring* was followed in the subsequent years by a spate of films and subcultural products that integrated the transmedia and transnational qualities like Nakata's trendsetting film. He directed one year later a sequel, *Ring 2* (Ringu 2, 1999), and the following year Norio Tsuruta made *Ring 0: Birthday* (Ringu Zero: Bāsudei, 2000), a prequel to *Ring* which was based on a short story, 'Lemon Heart' by Suzuki and scripted by the screenwriter of the first *Ring*, Takahashi Hiroshi. *Ring* was then turned by Nagai Kōichirō into a series of *manga* loosely based on Nakata's film and Suzuki's novels. The popularity of this franchise expanded beyond Japan and *J-horror* became a sort of transnational genre. A South Korean version, *The Ring Virus* (Kim Dong-bin, 1999) was an adaptation of Suzuki's *Ringu*, including scenes inspired by Nakata's *Ring*. American companies began the production of its own remakes from 2002, starting with Gore Verbinski's *The Ring* which was released the year before the publication of the English translation of Suzuki's novel in 2003. Then, Nakata travelled to the US to make another *Ring 2* (2005), which is a sequel of the American version rather than a remake of his own Japanese version of *Ring 2*. By the early 2000s, *J-horror* became a global cultural phenomenon prompted by films coming from Japan and the US. Watler Salles made *Dark Water* (2005), a remake of the homonymous film directed by Nakata in 2002. In 2006, Jim Sonzero made *Pulse*, a remake of *Kairo* (*Pulse*, 2001), which was directed by another Japanese horror

³ The novel had already been adapted in television series *Ringu: Kanzenban* (1996) when the Kodakawa produced Nakata's film and also *Spiral* (Rasen, George Iida, 1998), an adaptation from the second Suzuki's novel, *Rasen* published in 1995. While *Rasen* had a poor reception at the box office, *Ring* became a hugely successful film.

maestro, Kurosawa Kiyoshi. Simultaneously, Shimizu Takashi, who made *Ju-On* and *Ju-On 2* both released in 2003 in Japan, made his own remakes of these films in Hollywood as *The Grudge* (2004) and *The Grudge 2* (2006) respectively.

Nakata's films and *J-horror* were integrated into global media flows and characterized by transnational synergies, because of which they could migrate and be globally consumed, adapted and transformed. In this process, Stringer also explores the role of Hollywood as a global media franchise and demonstrates how Hollywood continues to do what it has always done, that is, to absorb a local culture and sell it to the rest of the world including the country where it originally comes from. (Stringer 2007: 301)

Ring and *J-Horror* are truly transnational cinema in this sense but assessing them under national parameters may illuminate their national, rather than, transnational qualities. While most of films in this genre tell ghost stories, their settings are in the postmodern society. Ghosts travel through post-modern technologies and electronic devices such as videotapes in the *Ring* or computers in *Pulse*, but these supernatural creatures are traditional *onryō* (vengeful spirit) found in *Kaidan* cinema (films on the 'supernatural'), one of the Japanese national genres. *Onryō* is a trope developed from Japanese folk stories, religious sermons, Kabuki plays and the Nō theatre, whose ghostly tales frequently contain Buddhist moral teachings. One of the earliest *Kaidan* films were probably *The Peony Lantern* (*Botan Dōrō*), a series of seven films, released between 1911 and 1937 (all of them have been lost). These are based on the story created by a storyteller called Sanyūtei Enchō, who borrowed it partly from a 17th century ghost story, partly from a local legend, and partly from what he heard from other people. Another earliest *Kaidan* film was *Yotsuya Ghost Story* (*Yotsuya Kaidan*), which was based on a 1825 *Kabuki* play by Tsuruya Nanboku IV and it went on to be adapted into a film over 30 times since 1912. However, some of the most prominent *Kaidan* films were made by a group of postwar humanists in the sixties, such as Kobayashi Masaki's *Kwaidan* (1964), assembling four folktales collected by Lafcadio Hearn, and Shindō Kaneto's *Onibaba* (1964). *Shindō* features *Shura* (spirit of a warrior) and masks of a demon which are taken from Nō plays and in this way does not conceal the links between *Onibaba* and the traditional Japanese theatre.

Proposal for a ‘Trans/national’ Methodology

The texts gathered in this volume in one way or another bring a fresh view to the transnational aspects of Japanese and other cinema that have been missed within the national parameters of film studies and criticism. They challenge the ‘national’ paradigm of Japanese film which mainly consists of three axioms: first, Japanese cinema is reproducing the essential features of its cultural tradition, second, it is closely associated with a culture that has remained unchanged throughout its history and third, Japanese film took its unique shape being isolated from the rest of the world.

The following chapters show how analyses of the transnational traits of Japanese films should be able to overcome the feelings of estrangement and bewilderment experienced by early distant observers and critics, as well the essentialist view in which Japanese cinema is considered as being utterly unique and original. Many of them also question in their own way Orientalist positions of film critics and historians who have been neglecting the interactions between the local and the global. More recently scholars have opened up avenues for studying Japan beyond Japan. This must be a key to explore more accurately complex issues such as: first, the role of Japanese films in the global cultural flows; second, the world representation of Japan and Japan’s representation of the world; third, the way in which foreign codes of representation have been adapted in Japan and how Japanese patterns have been accepted in the world. Many chapters in this anthology especially touch upon the third issue and demonstrate that transnational influences and Japanese singularities are not mutually exclusive. As Hjort (2010) notes elsewhere, while a wide range of issues related to the national model remain pertinent today, in other respects the national cinema approach has already become obsolete or irrelevant. Hjort provides a useful catalogue of transnational practices, which she defines as “cinematic transnationalism,” where the national makes sense only in relation to the transnational.

However, the transnational approach that we propose here is not concerned with the definition or classification of transnational practices that may occur at national, international or global level, but rather analytical methods of interrogating the ‘trans/national’ interactions between the local and the global. These interactions may happen beyond the Japanese national boundaries, but

also inside Japan. Therefore, this approach may entail the exploration of issues concerning more than one culture, that is transculturality and multiculturalism in terms of representation. It may also involve studies about international co-productions and works consumed in international markets (e.g. the markets of countries and areas with ethnic, linguistic or cultural affinity, which Hjort calls as ‘affinitive transnationalism’) or global markets, which she calls as ‘globalising transnationalism’ (Hjort, 2010). Moreover, it may include analyses on transnational migration of iconographies, narrative and visual styles, or other film making practices, creating a ‘transcultural mimesis’ (Nornes 20214: 115) or even a ‘translocal imagination’ (Miyao 2019: 115),⁴ all of which try to prove the existence of a shared visual culture in the (post)modern world.

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⁴ ‘Translocal imagination’ is simultaneously universal and local imagination where the concept of ‘nation’ as such is not relevant any more. Miyao takes the concept from Appadurai (1996)

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Section I

Transnational and global film cultures

Transnational or Transcultural?: Kurosawa's Shakespeare Adaptations¹

Dolores P. Martinez

Abstract

This essay traces a possible answer to the question of ‘what is a global or transcultural film?’ by focusing on Kurosawa Akira’s *Kumonosu-jō* (Spider Web Castle, 1957, based on *Macbeth*, 1606) and *Ran* (Chaos/turmoil/ revolt, 1985, based on *King Lear*, 1605/6). Shakespeare appears to have had a particular resonance for the Japanese director in relation to two themes that dominated much of his work, the first being the horror of war and, the second, his exploration of what happens to people who came to power in societies dominated by greed and violence. The ‘gappiness’ of his plays make for Shakespeare’s translatability both as staged performances and as film and this paper argues that Kurosawa not only filled those gaps but created something new, vibrant and of his own in these films.

Key words: Shakespeare on film, adaptations, transnational, transcultural, Kurosawa Akira, war, violence

Introduction

A recent *The Guardian* list (Dickson 8/2/19) of the twenty best film adaptations of Shakespeare put Kurosawa Akira’s (1910-1998) *Throne of*

¹ My thanks go to David Gellner and Marcos Centeno for their comments, as well as to all those who asked questions when I gave this as a paper.

Blood (1957, *Kumonosu-jō*, Spider Web Castle, based on *Macbeth*, 1606)² at number one, with *The Bad Sleep Well* (1960, *Warui yatsu hodo yoku nemuru*, based on *Hamlet*, 1599-1602?) at number 14. Although his *Ran* (1985, Chaos/turmoil/revolt, based on *King Lear*, 1605/6) did not make the top twenty, Dickson added a note to say he had it at 21 because he loved *The Bad Sleep Well* much more.

To have three Kurosawa films in the top 21 of Shakespeare adaptations is an impressive acknowledgement, not just of how influential Shakespeare's plays are, but also of their cross-cultural impact. What do such lists tell us? Should we speak of Shakespeare and Kurosawa's works as being transnational and explore how they travel via large global, economic and legal structures; or as transcultural (Ortiz, 1940) that is, as creative acts that end in the formation of a new and common culture? My argument is that we need to consider how the transnational and the transcultural work together to provide innovative interpretations of 'traditional' stories.

Here I note that while some critics and scholars argue that *The Bad Sleep Well* is Kurosawa's version of Hamlet, I will not discuss it because I remain unsure if it is really a version of Hamlet, or indeed, if it owes anything to that play. My focus is also rather less on *Throne of Blood* than it is on *Ran*. Both these films are based on plays that date from the last ten years of Shakespeare's career, written during the reign of King James I in the seventeenth century; both are tragedies that depict the violence and immorality of war as well as considering its effect on human beings. In this essay I will emphasize the ways in which Kurosawa's adaptations of these plays echo Shakespeare's depictions of the corrupting effect of power while also offering viewers something new that reflected his own vision and era.

On travelling the globe

Why has Shakespeare's work survived the ages and travelled so well? His persistence into the present is a complicated story that involves his plays falling in and out of fashion over the centuries; owes much to the history of empire and thus to the transnational structures that empire puts in place; and

² See Martinez 2018 for a detailed discussion of *Throne of Blood*.

implicates contemporary British nationalist sentiment. The fact of the British empire allows us to chart the plays' journeys across colonized countries and languages and to see how they also reached independent nations such as Japan during its modernizing Meiji and Taishō eras (1868-1926). As Silverberg (2009) has documented, the educated urban classes of the time were equally well versed in 'world' literature and their own culture. Both were part of Kurosawa's education as was his experience of film going from early in his life: in his autobiography he cites a hundred or so foreign films he remembers viewing during the years 1919 to 1926 (Kurosawa, 1983: 73).

This is one example of how the film industry, particularly in the industrializing West, had come to exploit the transnational and transcultural possibilities of exporting silent films. All that was necessary was that the subtitles be translated, or to have a narrator, as the Japanese did with their *benshi*. Thus, almost from the moment the technology was developed and moving pictures were made and distributed, the birth of a new global culture can be traced. Here, I find the transnational in the formation of the new capitalist networks that involved not only the movement of the technology to make films, but also required discussions about rights and royalties. To track the legal negotiations involved in showing a foreign film, or in the remaking of one is interesting, but more fascinating is the question of why movies succeed when they are shown cross-culturally.

This leads to the issue of the transcultural, as expounded by the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz (1995). Ortiz described how the deculturalization of Spanish and African history allowed for their cultures' *métissage* (mixing) with the present, producing Cuba's Afro-Cuban society. He discusses at length how this new culture's 'conception' depended on the transnational trade of sugar and tobacco. Thus, in my use of the term I am interested in the concept of a global cinema: in the very fact that films can travel cross-culturally.

The distinction between transnational and transcultural may seem unimportant, particularly as film theorists recently have tended to use the transnational as a more nuanced term than 'international' (see Miyao 2019), theorising it in a manner that evokes the transcultural.³ However, I posit that

³ For another example of this see Marcos Centeno's discussion in *Revisiting the Film History Survey* (2019).

key to the concept of the transcultural is that *through* films' particularity they evoke "the *universality* of human experience – experience, in a word, that transcends cultural boundaries" (Taylor 1998: 19, original emphasis). I would amend this definition thus: they evoke the *various experiences* of our universal modernity – so as to incorporate social differences. My use of 'various' acknowledges that modernity takes many forms across different societies, but despite Latour's (1991) claim that 'we have never been modern', it cannot be denied that contemporary capitalism and its products have touched even the most remote parts of the globe. The experiences of this modernization are polythetic: that is, they share common characteristics that may be differently organised across time and place while allowing for a recognition of their commonalities.

My argument is that films should be labelled *transnational* when seen as part of an international economic system (see Acland 2003) within which they also share techniques and technologies that influence each other globally. Film is *transcultural* because it succeeds in expressing universal human predicaments in the particular cultural idiom of a specific place and society, while potentially contributing to a global *transculture*. This last point has been obscured by the rise of nation-states from the ashes of the empires that had governed much of the globe until the First World War and which completely disappeared after the Second World War. The shift in modes of governance and political power fomented the discourse of nationalism, an ideology that led to the concept of national cinemas,⁴ while also deculturating shared empiric pasts. If movies are part of a nation's unique cultural production, how can a local film be understood and appreciated by non-natives except as exotic oddities or as displays of knowledge capital by intellectuals? Or perhaps some movies are not 'national' enough but cater too much to Hollywood standards? These questions plagued the career of Kurosawa (see Martinez 2009: 19-30).

We should remember that audiences, from the very beginning of the industry, included both the general masses and film-makers. In my research into Kurosawa's legacy, which involved interviews with film directors, what struck me was how they are avid consumers who watch whatever is available to

⁴ See Choi's (2006) critique of this concept.

view -- that is both local and ‘foreign’ films, past and present. For them movies are a visual artform based on a shared language that knows no borders and which is articulated through techniques that can be reproduced, reworked, or improved on by any director. Thus Raine’s (2014) use of ‘transcultural mimesis’ to describe this process is interesting but does not destabilise the national versus transnational discourse to the extent which it should. Despite calling upon Taussig’s (1993) deconstruction of the term, Raine’s use of mimesis raises the spectre of ‘copying’ by lesser artists rather than invoking the creativity that cross-cultural film-making -- involving techniques, visual tropes and even narratives -- actually gives rise to.⁵

Here Deleuze and Guattari’s (1986) exploration of creativity through the processes of de-assemblage and re-assemblage that can end in the birth of something new is more helpful than mimesis. This ingenuity, so central to movie-making, is what I refer to when I use Ortiz’s concepts of transculturality and the transcultural. Nationalist discourse may attempt to undermine the fact that films travel and are understood cross-culturally, but in fact all films are products of *métissage*: they are conceived through both transnational business networks and our imbrication with the structures of modernity.

To answer the question of ‘what makes a film transcultural?’ I turn to Kurosawa’s Shakespeare’s adaptations. We might ask: why *Macbeth* and *King Lear*? Kurosawa had adapted other foreign writers – Dostoevsky (*Hakuchi*, *The Idiot*, 1951), Tolstoy (*Ikiru*, 1952), Gorky (*Donzoko*, *The Lower Depths*, 1957), Dashiell Hammett (*Yōjimbō*, 1961), Ed McBain (*Tengoku to Jigoku*, *High and Low*, 1963), and Vladimir Arsenyev (*Dersu Uzala*, 1975) – as well as adapting Japanese plays and stories, but Shakespeare appears to have had a particular resonance for him in relation to two themes that dominated much of his work: 1) the horror of war⁶ and 2) explorations of what happens to people who came to power in societies dominated by greed and violence. There is an added, often misunderstood because poorly subtitled, Buddhist theme in these two films.

⁵ This is not to criticise Raine’s argument, which builds on Taussig’s brilliant use of Benjamin’s (1968) discussion of authenticity, further developed by Raine through Kracauer’s (2004) discussion of the dialogic nature of audience viewing, but rather to point to how the term mimesis is more commonly used.

⁶ In 17 of the 30 films Kurosawa directed, war and its effects are either referred to or depicted.

Kumonosu-jō is, as Kurosawa himself described, a version of Macbeth co-written with Hashimoto Shinobu, Kikushima Sōjirō and Oguni Hideo without any reference to Japanese translations of the play. It is set in feudal Japan when warring clans vied for the mastery of forts rather than kingdoms. Thus Kurosawa found a transcultural commonality in British history, while, as Richie (1991) notes, [he] saw also as “parallel between medieval Scotland and medieval Japan which illuminated contemporary society; and further, a pattern which is valid in both historical and contemporary contexts.

In *Kumonosu-jō* Shakespeare’s three weird sisters have become one prophet, who tempts Washizu (Mifune Toshiro) into trying to escape his destiny. Additionally, to heighten the shared moral issues between the original and his version, Kurosawa refers to Noh theatre by having the main actors made up and, in the interior scenes, move as if they were on the Noh stage. I have noted previously (Martinez 2018) that of all the bard’s plays Macbeth is often seen to be the closest to Greek tragedies, which were religious masked performances: morality tales about the relationship between the gods, men and fate. Noh also uses masks and has its origins in Zen Buddhist morality tales. Kurosawa’s referencing of this through mask-like maquillage that reveals his characters’ internal states of mind links to Shakespeare’s very individual characters who invite us into their thoughts through soliloquies.

Buddhism is invoked through the chanted prologue and epilogue that frame the film: “the ruins show the fate of demonic men with treacherous desires. Life is the same now as in ancient times” (Niki 1984: 109, 206). The prophetess, whom Washizu encounters, also sings a song that could be described as Buddhist: “... what men do in this world, burning ourselves with the flames of five desires, bathing ourselves in the waters of five impurities, piling up our sins more and more...” (Niki 1984: 161). The film asks, then, what is the moral cost of having been taught to kill in the name of one’s lord? Also posed is ‘what happens to the women who inhabit a constantly warring world’? Both are post-war questions. When Washizu says to Asaji, “I’d rather live peacefully, content with my lot,” she replies: “You won’t have that peace,” and goes on to describe the violent nature of their society: “In this world, struggling for fame and distinction, parents kill their children and children kill their parents. This is a corrupt age when we must kill others to avoid being killed” (Niki: 1984: 167). This is the culture that has shaped Asaji.

In *Ran* this speech is echoed by Lord Saburo (Ryū Daisuke), the third son of Lord Hidetora Ichimonji (Nakadai Tatsuya):

You have spilled so much human blood you cannot measure it. You have lived without mercy or pity. But Father, we, too, are children of this degraded age of strife; you do not know what we may be thinking - "my dear children," you think. To me, Father, you are none other than a madman - a senile old madman. (Shishido 2011: 10)⁷

Saburo is trying to talk his father out of dividing his kingdom and predicts the violence and chaos that will follow. The dream Ichimonji has just before announcing his decision to divide the kingdom is also prophetic: "I had a dream... A wilderness... no matter how far I went I saw no one. I shouted and screamed, but no one answered" (ibid.: 5).

Kurosawa co-wrote the script for *Ran* with Oguni Hideo and Ide Masato thinking of the great daimyo Motonari Mori (1497-1571) and only later came to realize that it resembled Shakespeare's *King Lear*. *Ran* shares various themes with his earlier *Throne of Blood*: the first I have touched on, these allusions to being born and raised in an era of violence; second, how politics and wealth corrupt the men who play to win, while also depicting how women suffer in such contexts. In *Throne of Blood*, Lady Asaji goes mad and kills herself. In *Ran*, Lady Sué (Miyazaki Yoshiko), once her father's domain has been conquered, is married to Ichimonji's second son Jiro (Nezu Jinpachi) and dies as do all Ichimonji's concubines. Lady Kaede (Harada Mieko), the daughter of another conquered lord, is married to Taro (Terao Akira), the eldest son, and is brutally slaughtered as well, but only after she has vengefully orchestrated the Ichimonji clan's downfall.

Finally, despite his avowal that his religious sentiments did not appear in his films (see Gadi 2008: 32), the use of Buddhism, the dominant religion of the Japanese medieval era, which was prevalent amongst the ruling classes, allows us to see both films as morality tales. I touched above on how this is articulated in *Throne of Blood*, while in *Ran* we have Lady Sué,

⁷ I use here and below the translation of the screenplay, rather than the *Ran*'s subtitles since the latter, when it comes to Buddhist terminology, are rather confusing.

a daughter-in-law whose marriage to Ichimonji's son 'sealed' the conquest of her father's domain. Her parents killed themselves rather than give up that domain and her younger brother was blinded by Ichimonji, yet she devotes herself to the worship of the Buddha, to the making of merit for her dead family and, it is implied, in praying for the souls of her husband and her father-in-law. The first scene between Sué and Ichimonji is poorly subtitled, obscuring its Buddhist message. Correctly translated it runs as follows:

LADY SUÉ: I do not hate you. Everything has been preordained in our previous lives... All things are the heart of the Buddha.

HIDETORA: The Buddha again? There are no Buddhas in today's world (sic). This is a degraded age, when the Buddha's guardians, Bonten and Taishaku, have been routed by raging Asuras. It is not a world where we can rely on the Buddha's compassion. (Shishido 2011: 31)

It is this unwillingness to believe in some sort of redemption, a reluctance matched by Ichimonji's refusal to give acting as the head of his clan, that lead to the destruction of his domain.

The notes for the translated screenplay also describe the destruction of Ichimonji's castle, the first he conquered, in these words:

A terrible scroll of Hell is shown depicting the fall of the castle. There are no real sounds as the scroll unfolds like a daytime nightmare...The music⁸ superimposed on these pictures is, like the Buddha's heart, measured in beats of profound anguish, the chanting of a melody full of sorrow that begins like sobbing and rises gradually as it is repeated, like karmic cycles, then finally sounds like the wailing of countless Buddhas. (ibid: 100)⁹

This scene is preceded by two soldiers' cries of despair:

⁸ Cisneros (2005: 123) touches on the power of Takemitsu Toru's score for the film in this scene as an example of the sublime in *Ran*.

⁹ The description of this scene has now been omitted from the online translation of the screenplay.

KYOAMI: (Yelling) Is there no God¹⁰ or Buddha in this world? ...Are they so bored in Heaven that they enjoy watching men die like worms?

TANGO: ...Do not slander God or the Buddha! They are the ones who are crying! The evil of human beings... the stupidity of the sinful creatures, who believe their survival depends on killing others, repeated again and again throughout all time... Even God or the Buddha cannot save us from it... Human beings seek sorrow, not happiness, and prefer suffering to peace. (ibid: 99)

A final shared theme between the films is that both Washizu and Ichimonji are left without heirs -- there is no one to pray for them in their afterlife, no one to make merit for their sins, so that they can be reincarnated or finally reach Nirvana/Heaven. The death of their heirs condemns them to hell (for Buddhism has many hells) or a wandering afterlife as 'hungry ghosts'. This is hinted at by the opening scene in *Throne of Blood* when the mists part to reveal a Japanese grave-marker, not commemorating Washizu's grave, but just noting that Kumonosu castle once stood there. In *Ran*, Ichimonji's wanderings with his fool Pītā (Kyoami) after the destruction of his castle is a foretaste of what his afterlife will be like.¹¹

Yet, as Japanese as this interpretation is, it resonates with something of the Protestantism of Shakespeare's age in which the burden of sin was inescapable (see Martinez 2018). Moreover for both the Tudors and Stuarts, as well as the medieval (and modern) Japanese, the death of children mattered. I have noted why descendants were important for Buddhists; for the English monarchs it had been the source of civil unrest, so much so that bringing in William, the husband of Mary Stuart, to rule Britain in 1688 was termed 'the Glorious Revolution' because it did not involve a war.

¹⁰ *Kami* here is translated in the singular as God but should be seen as a reference to the Shinto gods (in the plural) of the Japanese native religious pantheon.

¹¹ That the witches meet on a 'blasted heath' in *Macbeth* and Lear wanders over a heath during a storm is another link between the two plays. Kurosawa turns stage directions and Shakespearean descriptions of the weather in dialogue into filmic reality.

Concluding points

These are very brief descriptions of the films and some of their key elements, but they provide just enough material to enable me to return to the question of transculturality. In her recent book on Shakespeare's enduring influence, Smith argues that it is a 'gappy quality' in his works that allows for what I term Shakespeare's transcultural success. This quality comes from the fact that:

Shakespeare's plays are incomplete, woven of what's said and what's unsaid, with holes in between... This means that the clues to personality that we might expect from a novel, or from a film, are not there... No authorial or narrative voice tells us more than the speeches of the characters themselves. (Smith, 2019: 2)

Kurosawa makes use of and plays with these gaps in both movies using his camera to fill in visual details. For example, Lear wanders over a heath during a storm, the sounds for which are indicated in the stage directions. Kurosawa builds on such annotations and Shakespearean descriptions of the weather in dialogue, turning them into filmic reality. In *Ran* particularly, the long shots of the sky and weather are indicators of Ichimonji's state of mind and fate (see Ryan 2012). Not only does Kurosawa literally 'film nature' to fill these Shakespearean gaps but adds Japanese elements, mostly in his use of animal symbolism. A hare crosses the scene in which Ichimonji dreams of being lost in the wilderness and his attendants hush Pītā, the Fool, for making a joke about it. Hares are symbols of rebirth, with links to the Buddha, a fleeting hare might be seen as prophetic: something is leaving Ichimonji's world. More obvious are the continuous references to foxes in *Ran*, vixens especially, pointing to Lady Kaede's duplicitous nature (see Serper 2001). Additionally, Kurosawa wanted to know about Lear's past and his interest in this provides the rationale for the treachery and murders that follow:

How did Lear acquire the power that, as an old man, he abuses with such disastrous effects? Without knowing his past, I've never really understood the ferocity of his daughters' response to Lear's feeble attempts to shed his

royal power. In 'Ran' I've tried to give Lear a history. I try to make clear that his power must rest upon a lifetime of bloodthirsty savagery. Forced to confront the consequences of his misdeeds, he is driven mad. But only by confronting his evil head on can he transcend it and begin to struggle again toward virtue. (Kurosawa in Grilli, 1985: 1)

These few examples give a sense of how *Macbeth* and *King Lear* not only were able to travel throughout an empire -- borne on the back of the colonial institutions that followed in the wake of large economic networks, to become known globally -- but also managed to appeal transculturally. The 'gappiness' of his plays make for Shakespeare's translatability both as staged performances and as films -- they can be given modern and local settings, the language can be (but often isn't) updated and it certainly can be translated.¹² Such gaps lead to "radical uncertainties which function as dramatic and intellectual cues to readers, playgoers and theatre-makers" (Smith 2019: 322). Using 'clues' rather than 'cues' would be clearer here, for what are clues but signs that each reader might well interpret in their own manner?

Does 'gappiness' also explain these two films' transcultural success? Kurosawa certainly was keen to fill in some of the originals' gaps and he did so both visually and narratively, but what made the cinematic world sit up and take notice? A complete answer to that question would require a longer paper, however a simple, short response has to refer to the visuality of both films. From the long take that tracks Washizu and Miki (Kubo Akira) through the misty forest at the start of *Kumonosu-jō*, to the 360 degree turn that follows Washizu as he is shot full of arrows (and the sheer brilliance of how that was achieved without benefit of CGI), the audience is confronted by Kurosawa's mastery of the moving picture camera. In fact Kurosawa's skill in filming with more than one camera, particularly in battle scenes, continues to inspire film-makers.¹³ Additionally, as touched on in the discussion of *Ran*, Kurosawa

¹² See Chun's (2010) discussion of how *Ran* uses medieval Japanese to echo Shakespearean language.

¹³ Most modern war films have sequences that critics compare with Kurosawa's work, often to find them lacking. For a recent example, see Miguel Sapochnik's interview (Hibberd 2016) on how *Ran* was the key reference for his 'Battle of the Bastards' battle sequence in *Game of Thrones*, season 6, episode 9.

was very keen on working outdoors and filming nature. His assistant Nogami (2006) wrote an entire memoir about cast and crew waiting for the right weather. This 'right' weather, of course, was also about how he used light in his work (see also Nishimura, 1990).

As an auteur, Kurosawa co-wrote and edited his movies, while obsessively overseeing their musical scoring. When he moved to colour film, as a former art student and keen painter, Kurosawa used colour boldly and symbolically. He also worked with cinematographers and camera crews who shared his vision and relied on actors willing to work as he demanded. Most importantly, I would argue, he felt himself to be entirely Japanese in his work, yet stated that anyone wanting to be a director "must also see the great films. You must read the great screenplays and study the film theories of the great directors." (1982: 193). Like Shakespeare, who was English but who mined the mythology and stories of continental Europe for his plays, Kurosawa was equally a local and global citizen. Both men knew how to unmake and re-make others' narratives to create something of their own.

Above I cited Deleuze and Guattari's argument that dis-assembling and re-assembling are part of the continuous production of works within any given genre, yet both processes also may result in a text that is both political and somehow new. The 'new' in Kurosawa's case is the recasting of the story in a different context, as well as from the interpretative relationship that the audience has with the medium. For the political message we need to consider the vision of the auteur as part of this process, and here we see Kurosawa's enduring interest in mankind's thirst for power and the violence to which it leads. Briefly put, Kurosawa found commonalities in Shakespeare's work that resonated for him -- we often forget that Shakespeare himself lived through the 20 years of war that England fought with Spain (1585-1604), which overlapped with the Nine Years war with Ireland (1594-1603). Thus both men shared the experience of living in a violent society in which the concepts of humanity, loyalty, and moral responsibility were constantly being called into question. So 350 years after they were written, Kurosawa took Shakespeare's plays, plotted them somewhat differently, and told them through narrative filmic techniques that made them into Japanese and transcultural movies.

Yet film's transcultural quality is neither simple nor uncomplicated (see Martinez 2009). In fact as a global cultural form, movies' depictions of shared

modern human experiences can be problematic, often are essentialised, and sometimes are vague to the point of being difficult to discern. As a transcultural medium they may be experienced as ‘foreign’ and can only speak to common experiences through the process of contrast: ‘this doesn’t look like our society, but I recognise the situation of needing/wanting to find a husband, planning revenge for wrongs done to a family, being haunted’, etc. Theories revolving around ‘this doesn’t look like our society’ negate the commonalities that audiences may well also recognise in a movie. Kurosawa’s genius was his ability to both find and share these commonalities. These shared human experiences when depicted in films -- and when they appeal cross-culturally -- do so on the back of a transnational business that has enabled the creation of a transcultural visual lexicon to which Kurosawa so importantly contributed.

Biographical Note

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Do it for Fun: A Call for Studying Japanese Film Comedy

Jose Montaña

Abstract

One of the aspects this book aims to highlight is how the presumed uniqueness of Japan and its culture affects the way its cinema is received and analyzed in the West. This biased approach is made evident on the kind of films that critics and commentators had written about, and in what they have stated. But what has been left out from this selection, the invisibility of some aspects (films, filmmakers, topics, genres...) might be not less revealing.

How many books, articles or dissertations on Japanese film comedy have we read? Even scholars devoted to Japanese culture –when not specifically to its cinema–, will answer that a few, or maybe none. How many have been written? Yes, comedy is one of the aspects often neglected by critics and scholars. But, is it worth it for us to spend our research time revolved around such a topic?

This paper aims to trigger and foster discussion around the humorous genre, its inherent value and the need for more specialized research around it. Mitani Koki's film *Welcome Back Mr. McDonald* and its reception by critics in Japan and the United States, an example borrowed from Yoshida (2006), will be used to show how limiting the framework of the national is and why a transnational approach is needed.

Key words: Comedy, humor, film criticism, Mitani Koki

Every researcher with interest in Japanese cinema might be familiar with the online group discussion Kinejapan and how lively discussions might become when a member raises an issue. On May 12th 2017, professor

Tim Iles sent a post through the Kinejapan mailing list that might perfectly introduce this chapter.¹ Iles complained on the few scholarly works on film comedy, Japanese in particular but not only from this country. He lamented that comedy and humor seem to be left out of the academic interest, despite Japanese cinema has “produced some truly great comedies. From droll and dry to madcap and silly, frenetic to deadpan... Is the academic mood really that comedy is too frivolous to study?” (Iles 2017)

The reaction by the mailing list members to this post is worth commenting on. As I am personally interested in the topic, I replied immediately explaining my view on Iles’ reflection and suggesting some bibliography. Three days later, there was another reply, adding a new entry to the bibliographic suggestions. And then, not a single new entry to this discussion thread was added. Iles, in his initial message, accurately described a situation that was confirmed by the lack of interest by the Kinejapan community.

In my reply to the post, I concisely summarized my conclusions on why there is little interest in comedy amongst film critics and scholars, based on my PhD thesis devoted to reception of Contemporary Japanese film by Spanish film criticism (Montaño 2016). There are two key factors to explain that situation: first, the unconscious search for legitimation from critics and scholars. Second, the sense that Japanese humor is inapprehensible for the non-Japanese.

Legitimizing cinema as an academic subject

According to Cristina Pujol, who follows David Borwell (1989) theories, film criticism, including journalist criticism, published essays and scholar literature, acts as an institution. As such, given that perpetuating itself is the primary objective of any institution, it tends to regulate and standardize criticism as a practice (Pujol 2011: 53). Under this perspective, the lack of critical and scholarly interest in comedy lies beneath the fact that cinema, as a relatively new phenomenon and mainly regarded as a consumption good for

¹ The mentioned post and its subsequent thread is accessible through the following link <https://mailman.yale.edu/pipermail/kinejapan/2017-May/thread.html>

mass audience, lacks the prestige that arts or literature hold. It is an issue of distinction under a binary consideration on what is and what is not relevant, that seems connected to the notion of high culture vs. low culture. How this affects comedy is better explained by Susan Sontag:

[...] humor has been equated with something that was light, as opposed, presumably to something that was dark. It was equated with what was entertaining, as distinguished from what was serious, solemn, and possibly not entertaining. It was sometimes equated with what was more accessible to a large audience, as distinct from something that, because of its solemnity or seriousness, was available only to a more restricted audience. (Sontag 1987: 99)

This idea is elaborated in depth in the book *Quest-ce qu'un bon film?* ("What is a good film?") by the French scholar Laurent Jullier (2006), which analyzes film criticism criteria and its appropriateness. Jullier asserts that a marked Kantian rationalist affiliation can be detected in film criticism, which he synthesizes in the four basic ideas expressed by the Prussian philosopher in his *Critique of Judgement*; namely, that the faculty of aesthetic judgment is neutral and disinterested, universal, intuitive, and dissociated from the body (Jullier 2006: 24-26).

First, the alleged *neutral and disinterested* nature of criticism forces us to consider that preferences and personal experiences of the critic, for example his mood when watching the film or his friendship with its producer, do not influence his evaluation. But the other three aspects are of more relevance regarding the assessment of comedies.

The second consideration, the *universal* dimension of film judgement imposes something like an aesthetic common sense, so that the opinion of the expert entails being shared by the rest of the audience.

Third, the *intuitive* quality of criticism, implies that it is unnecessary to give reasons. Criticism is therefore freed from sustaining its conclusions in a scientific way. When an expert says that a certain film is a masterpiece or that another is a terrible film, the mere assertion by the expert certifies it.

The universal-intuitive pair raises the forth issue, *dissociation from the body*: if good sense must be detached from any emotional or bodily

reaction; sensual and emotional pleasure are to be despised and must not affect the evaluation of a film. Therefore, laughter –as well as tears or sexual excitement– should not be admitted as part of the set of judgements. This is ironically explained by the author stating that a film critic “might leave the projection with reddened eyes for not having stopped crying and declare, between two sobs, that he has just seen the biggest piece of junk of the year”² (Jullier 2006: 54).

As Cristina Pujol explains, criticism functioning as an institution, tries to affirm its authority over the field of its activity and the legitimacy of this field (Pujol 2011: 23-4). Therefore, in the same vein of what Jullier claims, criticism tries to avoid having its legitimacy as an evaluator put into question by hiding the criteria it uses. This “ideology of natural taste, according to Pierre Bourdieu, consists in camouflaging its strategies of distinction under the mask of logical evidence, of good sense”³ (Jullier 2006: 19). And good sense requires privileging what is considered serious and commonly accepted as relevant.

Literature on Japanese film comedy and its “national” bias

While the above is a general consideration, in the specific case of Japanese cinema the issue is more intricated. The bias to analyze any Japanese cultural product from its alterity and the stereotyped impossibility to grasp their humor by the non-Japanese complicates even more the acceptance of its comedy. An essentialization of japaneseness that is highlighted through the scarce literature in English devoted to the Japanese film comedy as a topic, wich can be listed in only three references: two short pieces, one conference transcription (Buruma 1987) and a book chapter (Barrett 1992), and one PhD dissertation (Yoshida 2006) is actually all about the subject. There are some other references on particular films or filmmakers, but nothing else

² My translation.

³ My translation.

elaborating on Japanese film comedy as a topic.⁴ The first of these references, starts with an argument that would be interesting to reproduce here:

Do the Japanese have a sense of humor? There is a general feeling, among westerners as well as Asians, that they do not. Japanese laugh a lot, to be sure. But laughter is not always a sign of humor. (Buruma 1998: 26)

The rest of the speech⁵ nuances a bit this initial statement, but without denying it categorically. In fact, it affirms that Japanese humor is inclined to violence and eschatology because the Japanese are not capable of irony due to the collective characteristic of that society which lacks individualism. Ironically enough, he praises some comedy films and filmmakers, including Kinoshita Keisuke, Suzuki Seijun, Itami Juzo or Morita Yoshimitsu, for its remarkable sense of irony. However, he considers them mere exceptions that confirm the rule.

Intermission: Is Japanese humor unintelligible?

Buruma's speech was replied by Susan Sontag, who wrote a conclusion for the Film Symposium devoted to humor, held in conjunction with the Hawaii International Film Festival, where it was delivered.⁶ In her article, Sontag points out that the majority of contributions were provided by the speakers to make statements about their countries, their culture, history

⁴ As informed in the third email posted to the Kinejapan thread described in the introduction of this chapter, there is also one book edited by Udine Far East Film Festival about comedy: Garcia, R., Russell, N.U., & Placereani, G. 2011. *Asia laughs! A survey of Asian comedy films*. Udine: Centro espressioni cinematografiche. According to its title and to the information provided in the email exchange, it is a book with an Asian perspective, so probably in the Japanese case we are again talking about just a book chapter. Unfortunately, the extremely limited availability of this book has made it impossible for me to find a copy yet, so it is not possible to comment further on it here.

⁵ Pronounced by Buruma in the annual Film Symposium held by The East-West Center in conjunction with the Hawaii International Film Festival in its 1987 edition. A selection of the speeches given at the symposium was compiled and published by the East-West Film Journal, in December 1987 (volume 2, number 1). It included Buruma's speech as well as the final remarks by Susan Sontag, who strongly criticized his stance as will be explained below.

⁶ See previous footnote.

and other national dilemmas (Sontag 1987: 100). Even valuing the interest that this may have, since the existence of discursive traditions of humor particular to the different countries or cultures is obvious, she expresses her disappointment for how the universal in humor has been excluded from the debate (Sontag 1987: 102).

The consideration of humor as a national feature is not exclusive to that particular conference but a widely accepted assumption. Let us see, as an example, the August 2013 issue of Spanish magazine *Es*, whose title, *Las fronteras de la risa*, (literally “the borders of laughter”), is as categorical as its cover image,⁷ where diverse nationalities are represented separated in different panels. No connection, exchange or influence seems possible between them.



⁷ It can be accessed online following the link <http://hemeroteca.lavanguardia.com/preview/2013/08/17/pagina-1/92336246/pdf.html>

Reading its articles –including, or especially, the editorial–, even if they reproduce at some point opinions of different experts denying it, the notion of the impossibility of understanding humor from a different country is a nonnegotiable premise for the authors. The issue is also a reminder of the strongly prejudiced conception of Japanese culture as inapprehensible, a conception widely shared in the West. And if its culture is obstinately rendered unfathomable due to its alleged extreme otherness, what can be said about its humor?

To counterbalance those ideas, we can comment on an example as famous as the *Otoko wa tsurai yo* (*It's Tough Being a Man*) series. Filmmaker Yamada Yoji wrote its 49 films and also took over direction for all of them except for the third and fourth installments, produced for the major Shochiku between 1969 and 1997. Popularly known as the Tora-san film series, of great popularity for decades in Japan, it has regained currency since a 50th installment of the series has been just released. The eponymous character, Tora-san, everlastingly played by comedian Atsumi Kiyoshi, is an anachronical Japanese man, apparently unable to accommodate to a rapidly changing country. Knowledge on the context seems, therefore, unavoidable to understand the comicalness of the films. First, because of the particularities of Japan during the times depicted on screen, as well as the peculiarities of the old-fashioned character. Second, due to the extreme serialization of this line of films, apparently making its characters and situations well known for Japanese audiences, but not for foreign cinema goers. Furthermore, according to Mark Schilling, “Atsumi was a brilliant comedian, though he got laughs more from his verbal dexterity than his physical clowning.” (Schilling 2019) Conversely, Schilling continues:

This made the series harder to sell abroad, though it certainly had its overseas fans. Some of his comedic bits [...] are understandable by anyone, such as Tora’s outrage on discovering that Sakura and the others have consumed a melon –his present from yet another trip– without leaving him a slice.⁸ Atsumi’s timing is flawless, his sputtering anger hilarious. (Schilling 2019)

⁸ This scene appears in the 15th installment, *Tora-san, Love Under One Umbrella* (*Otoko wa Tsurai yo: Torajiro Aiaigasa*, 1975, Yamada Yoji).

And yet, despite the alleged understandability of this famous scene, Atsumi himself left an interesting statement on it. In an interview for television (Tetsuko's Room 1979), the actor commented on the diverse reaction he witnessed in different screenings he attended. While the audience in a theater in Shinjuku burst out laughing at that scene, the response in an Asakusa venue was cold at it. Both places might represent the classical division into two areas of Tokyo, with differentiated demographics, lifestyles and cultural identities. While Shinjuku, in the Yamanote area, represents the well-off, highly educated Tokyo, Asakusa might embody the less affluent population of the working-class area of Shitamachi. The humorous effect of the scene seems to depend on cultural sensibilities, but obviously not in any national awareness.

Reducing the idea of humor in terms of nationality as an entity devoid complex social constructs such as class, gender or group of age is creating a false homogeneous framework. Humor is something dynamic that might respond to different circumstances and fads, which develop in a given time and cultural environment and do so differently in others (Wells 2006: 193). Therefore, the national frame should not be the measurement for understanding or enjoying humor. On the contrary, it can have the effect of reducing its visibility and underestimating its relevance. A good example of this might be found in the main approaches to Ozu Yasujiro by international critics and scholars:

Ozu studies in the West itself has historically developed with more focus on Ozu's later postwar works such as *Late Spring* or *Early Summer*. Critics like Bordwell, trained in formalistic approaches, would discover in Ozu's postwar masterpieces their "Dream Cinema" (in contrast to earlier works that were more similar to Hollywood products). (Yoshida 2006: 152)

To the name of David Bordwell, Yoshida adds others as those of Donald Richie or Joan Mellen among the revered scholars that have introduced Ozu to the West and acted as interpreters of "who Ozu was, what he believed in, and, most of all, how his cinema captures the essence of traditional Japanese aesthetics" (Yoshida 2006: 140).

The vast literature on Ozu includes more nuanced approaches to the topic of humor. The recent *Reorienting Ozu* edited by Jinhee Choi (2018), by

the way, includes two chapters on humor, one authored by Yoshida himself. Nevertheless, heeding to Yoshida, the bulk of the literature on Ozu is biased towards minimizing comedy while analyzing his work:

His critique of alienating urban life and empathy for the working poor provide us with a rich ground to trace a vernacular form of materialist philosophy. Yet, it is this comedic populist terrain that has been downplayed and overshadowed by the dominant “idealist” mode of thought that reads Ozu Yasujiro as “the most Japanese film director.” (Yoshida 140)

Hindered by the traditional assessment of the art and politics of the filmmaker, misjudgment or disregard of Ozu’s comedies compromise the better understanding of his life’s work.

(More) literature on Japanese film comedy and its “national” bias

Resuming the account on the literature on Japanese film comedy, after Buruma (1987), the next reference is the chapter by Gregory Barret included in the book *Reframing Japanese Cinema* (Nolletti and Desser, 1992). In it we read:

Little is known about Japanese film comedy (*kigeki*) in the West. To be sure, Western critics have noted the humor in the films of Ozu and Kurosawa, and have praised the few isolated 1950s comedies that they have seen. (Barrett, 1992: 211)

Indeed, apart from Buruma (1998), which is actually a conference proceeding, there is no other previous attempt to publish about Japanese film comedy.⁹ Certainly, 1992 seems a late date for a first try. And yet, there will not be another attempt until 2006, and it will be in the restrictedly disseminated form

⁹ In the introduction to Barret’s chapter, the editors mention four references, but two of them are texts devoted to specific authors and films, another is a brief overview of the history of Japanese cinema that dedicates five pages to comedy, and only one is devoted to Japanese humor, which is the same Buruma’s article already mentioned.

of a PhD thesis entitled *Origins of Japanese Film Comedy and Questions of Colonial Modernity* (Yoshida 2006), this study also starts by lamenting the scarce interest towards film comedy.

Yoshida is unable to find any other specific reference than those of Buruma and Barret, and highlights precisely its lack of transnational perspective. Also, he claims that in Japanese language, the interest is also scarce and there is no better literature, with *Nihon Kigeki Eigashi* [History of Japanese film comedy] (Hara and Nagataki 1995) as the only reference he considers reliable even if, in any case, also biased towards the discourse of Japanese exclusivity:

From the very beginning, the discourse of *nihon kigeki eiga* (Japanese film comedies) has designated itself as a site of ethnographic truths where a distinctive cultural trait –“sense of humor”– waits to be discovered. This explains why the current discourse of Japanese film comedies would look rather pale when compared with the more academic, in-depth textual analysis of Japanese films in the field of Film Studies. (Yoshida 2006: 5)

From Yoshida’s dissertation, I want to borrow one of the examples he uses, the film *Welcome Back Mr. McDonald* (*Rajio no jikan*, Mitani Koki 2011), to critically analyze the limitations of the national focus compared with the most productive transnational approach. However, before doing so, I should start by defining what I understand as transnational in this context.

Overcoming the “national” approach to Japanese film comedy

The purpose of this chapter is promoting research on Japanese comedy films from an approach, borrowing Daisuke Miyao’s words talking about his own scholarship, aimed to overcoming “the tendency of the culturalism that Japanese cinema studies has embraced” (2018: 111). To do so, our standing point should be that of a “negotiation that grasps the tension and dialogism between national and transnational in global power relations and political economy”. (Miyao 2018: 112).

In his article, Miyao warns to carefully define what transnational means, differentiating it from practices that might be labelled as cross-cultural or

just international approaches (Miyao 2018: 111). To explain how I envision transnationality when talking about the analysis of Japanese film comedy, I will resort to Deborah Shaw, who considers “transnational” an umbrella term used with vagueness from different approaches (Shaw 2013: 51) and has extensively worked towards the definition of this terminology (Shaw 2017).

Shaw considers useful setting different practices and categories of the transnational for film analysis. One of these practices is critical reception (Shaw 2013: 51), from which she established the category of *Transnational critical approaches*, explained in her article altogether with the category of *Transnational influences* (Shaw 2013: 58). In her words:

“These categories assume intertextuality in that every film made has been consciously or unconsciously shaped by pre-existing cultural products from all over the world. This, in turn, also infers that national cinema cannot exist in isolation” (Shaw 2013: 58).

Moreover, some authors consider that from all the forms of cinema, comedy can be considered the genre most susceptible to be intertextualised and blended with other genres, as well as other genres bear the potential to become comic in turn (Yamasaki 2011: 124).

Shaw cites the notion of a world systems approach defined by Dudley Andrews, according to whom a film or a national cinema should be analyzed pondering on the interdependence of images and its increasing mobility around the globe (Andrews 2006: 22). The author considers that traditional studies of national cinema address their own subject of study as if it had the shape of a tree. Under this analogy, there are roots from where the national film grows, evolves and spreads in different tendencies of filmmaking as if they were branches, but the different trees of each national cinema do not interfere with one another. He defends an alternative approach describing it with a different analogy, that of waves of influence between films or national cinemas (Andrews 2006: 21-2). This is the point of departure from where start defining transnationality in the study of Japanese film comedy.

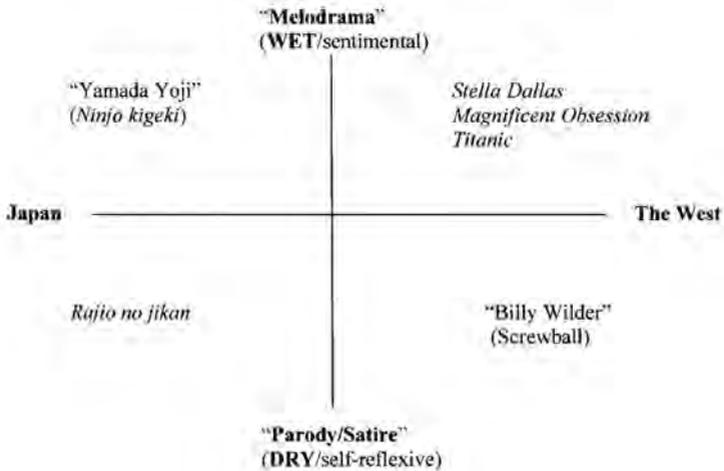
Welcome Back Mr. McDonald and its critical assessment

Welcome Back Mr. McDonald narrates the live radio transmission of a soap opera, the original script of which tells the romantic story of a young couple in Tokyo. Due to a series of unexpected events, the story that is finally aired ends up being the interplanetary action odyssey of two NASA astronauts.

The film had a modestly successful release in the US. American critics praised the film, interpreting it as an example of how Japanese authors reflect the westernization of Japanese society by adopting the Hollywood style in original-copy logic (Yoshida 2006: 238). Sure, Mitani's filmmaking style uses Hollywood techniques, as he does not hide his inspiration in Billy Wilder's comedy. Influences from films and filmmakers from different countries are just a common expression of transnationality in film. As in the rest of the world, Hollywood films have been widely distributed in Japan, especially from the postwar era. And this is not only because of the American occupation in the country.

In 1958, the six major film studios in Japan agreed to deny broadcasting rights to television stations. That was just one year before thirty-four new private stations were given license to start operating. The increase of demand for content was largely covered by US productions, contributing to normalizing consumption of the American audiovisual products and cultural standards they promoted (Zahlten 2017: 59). This is relevant since foreign films were never above local production in the preference of Japanese audiences, but new generations of television consumers were exposed to this window to the American way of life and to how they conceive moving images. That process took place during Mitani's childhood, and he has declared his love for Billy Wilder and American screwball comedy starting back those times and through television (Yoshida 2006: 249-251). Interpreting the decline of national industries, Alexander Zahlten says the surge of television has been "singled out as the main culprit" (Zahlten 2017: 59). "As in other countries", he adds, reminding us the dimension of a phenomenon that is non-exclusive of Japan. Conceiving it only as a Japanese process of receiving Western influence, or rather American influence, in a bilateral logic instead of a truly transnational logic of the industry is misleading, or at least it is limiting to our comprehension of the whole phenomenon.

The other side of the same coin is the reaction within Japanese critics, interpreting the film as a critique towards Japanese film industry and its dynamics from the postwar era. This criticism especially points out the so-called *naki-warai* (tears-laughter) style, characteristic of the “humanistic comedy” (*ninjo kigeki*) as can be seen in the following conceptual map provided by Yoshida:



(Yoshida 2006: 262)

This style labeled *naki-warai*, which combines humor with sentimentalism, described as “wet and muddy”, would have not only been a product of the conservativeness of the big studios, but would have also contributed to perpetuate it (Yoshida 2006: 259). For Japanese critics, this contrasts against the style, considered “dry”, of the sophisticated American comedy. Contraposed to this, *Welcome Back Mr. McDonald* is seen as an adaptation to local tastes of the American comedy that overcomes the conservative dynamics they denounce in their own country’s industry.

But, once again, this approach disregards the real dimension of it all, not confined by national borders but permeating them. It is a “simplistic influence study approach”, as put by Yoshida (2006: 278). Writer-director Mitani, according to Yoshida, is expressing his nostalgia for his beloved Wilder’s films and film style, replaced or erased in the blockbuster era. It

was Hollywood that developed contents in an aggressive colonial pattern of an overwhelming cinema. One that disallowed space for less funded national cinemas, with its exuberance in special effects, action and spectacular filming sets, unattainable to producers from other countries. But in this policy, Hollywood was served by Sony and other Japanese conglomerates providing the video technology that granted its domestic penetration all over the world (Yoshida 2006: 268-271).

With his film, Mitani seems to be making a critical statement on the described course of events in global filmmaking (Yoshida 2006: 272). I believe we all might agree that this alternative interpretation, not confined to the national perspective, is more interesting and intellectually engaging and productive.

Conclusion: why is it important to study Japanese film comedy?

If there is a gap in knowledge, as it happens with Japanese film comedy, once it is detected we cannot but feel the urge to explore it. By doing so, chances might probably arise to acquire new perspectives, to challenge assumptions currently firmly established in our field of studies. And we should attempt to do it with a transnational attitude, in order to avoid the narrow approach that reduces everything to a simplistic description of peculiarities of Japanese culture.

Above all, Comedy bears a potential to break up with solemnity, a “potential for reflective speech, troublesome inquiry and decipherment of the human” (Costa 2010: 12). Trying to extract from comedy this potential sounds engaging enough, even more doing so from a perspective that transcends the confinement of national borders, given the unsettling times we are living in, with the rise of populism that lean on the exacerbation of nationalist discourses based on essentialism and exclusive identities. Denying the national character of humor and comedy is itself a contribution, even if small, against such obnoxious tendencies.

And finally, the conclusive reason to study film comedy is as simple as doing it for the fun.

Biographical Note

Jose Montaña holds a PhD in Humanities from Universitat Pompeu Fabra (Barcelona), obtained with a dissertation on contemporary Japanese cinema and its reception by Spanish film criticism. Previously, he completed an MA in Contemporary Cinema and Audio-visuals in the same institution, as well as an MA in East Asian Societies and Cultures at the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (Barcelona). Currently, he is a part-time lecturer at different institutions as Rikkyo University and Toyo-Gakuen University. At Kanda University of International Studies/IES-Tokyo he teaches contemporary Japanese cinema. His research interests are Japanese cinema from the 80s onwards and Japanese film comedy.

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When *Monsters* Collide: The Transcultural Vampire and Its Representations in Japanese Animation

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Abstract

In the words of researcher Susan Napier, *anime* can be considered “the Other of animation,” which offer “an exhilarating vision of difference, in which identity can be technological, mythological, or simply an ecstatic process of constant metamorphosis” and which can be defined as a powerful form of expression “in the new transnational culture” (Napier 2005: 292).

The vampire myth is no different, with its many representations – from the monstrous to the beautiful *bishōnen*, from a virus to an ancient noble – it is an integral part of the popular culture and imagination that highlights the hybridity (Stam 2013: 33) of Japanese animation. As myths contain both the familiar and the Other, transcending national, cultural or even symbolic borders, their reinterpretation in the Japanese animated medium pertains to the current trends of globalization, shared meanings and cosmopolitanism, creating a potent and sometimes critical “transcultural homology” (Hills 2002: 5-6; Chin and Morimoto 2013: 93).

What is the current place of the vampire in Japanese animation? Drawing on the concept of transcultural homology proposed by Hills and Chin and Morimoto, while using the lens of hybridity as analysed by Robert Stam, I address in this study the current status of the vampire, aiming to highlight the transcultural space of meaning developed through anime.

Key words: transcultural vampire, anime, vampire representations

Introduction: the transnational and transcultural natures of vampires and anime

The vampire has been a creature of both nightmares and desires ever since its first representations as we know it today, from Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) to the classic German *Nosferatu* (dir. F.W. Murnau, 1922) and Hollywood's own *Dracula* (dir. Tod Browning, 1931), transforming into a long-lasting metaphor of the liminal and the Other (interpreted in terms of race, ethnicity, colonial views, feminist views, etc.). As Joan Gordon and Veronica Hollinger underline, the vampire is the proper vessel for every time and every generation to express something that encapsulates fear, strangeness and a certain degree of familiarity (Gordon and Hollinger 1997: 1-30), being a composite, transnational and transcultural figure from its beginnings.

Far from the simple textbook definition of vampire as “the reanimated body of a dead person believed to come from the grave at night and suck the blood of persons asleep” (Merriam-Webster 2019), the creature now represents the ultimate teenage fantasy (the *Twilight* saga, dir. Catherine Hardwicke, 2008-2012), the rock star (*Queen of the Damned*, dir. Michael Rymer, 2002) a form of nostalgia for a different past (*Only lovers left alive*, dir. Jim Jarmusch, 2013), or an obsolete comical monster (*What we do in the shadows*, dir. Taika Waititi, Jemaine Clement, 2014) etc. Ultimately, the vampire is the consumer par excellence, fit to be “normalized” in the age of the digital and the global, not forgetting its aristocratic and colonial past, but transforming into a frightening and enticing figure to be consumed.

In this context, it is no wonder that the vampire entered Japanese popular culture carrying its Western legacy only to be further transformed and hybridized. It all started in the fifties with Bram Stoker's novel being translated and achieving a huge success on the Japanese market, after which, in the fifties and sixties, Japanese movies centred on vampires referred to as *kyūketsuki*, literally meaning “bloodsucker,” populated with blood-eating demons and vengeful spirits, vampire women and vampire cats. As there is no vampire figure in Japanese folklore, the European literary and cinematic version, especially in the British *Hammer* films, its then Hollywood counterpart, travelled transnationally and settled comfortably in Japanese animation (see Melton 2015: XXIV-XXVIII for a thorough transnational

vampire filmography), in which the vampire was appropriated and hybridized.

The main features of the vampire that crossed the Japanese border in the fifties and later on were already deeply transnational, reworking Eastern European folklore and Gothic romantic literature. Both Bram Stoker's literary *Dracula* and Hollywood's first depiction of the cinematic monster were "associated with elegant dress, mysterious accents, mesmerizing seductions, and undead travels" (Hudson 2017: 3), underlining its old, aristocratic nature and its faint supernatural power of repelling and attracting at the same time, with its hypnotic and shapeshifting abilities. The Christian mythology of crosses, holy water and silver bullets, the fear of sunlight, along with the Gothic aesthetics of elegance and darkness, coffins and capes, became symbols of the vampire, later on to be questioned, negated or satirized.

Ergo, the meeting between two liminal concepts – the vampire and Japanese animation or anime – turned out to be quite prolific, because the animated medium offered new avenues for hybrid representations: from powerful demons that can sometimes transform into other powerful creatures (*Servamp*, dir. Hideaki Nakano, 2016, *Rosario + Vampire*, dir. Takayuki Inagaki, 2008) or that live in symbiotic harmony (*Vampire Hunter D*, dir. Yoshiaki Kawajiri, 1985), to ones that have telekinetic and telepathic powers (*Vampire Knight*, dir. Kiyoko Sayama, 2008), or which can manipulate magic, blood or other supernatural substances (*Overlord*, dir. Naoyuki Ito, 2017, *Hellsing*, dir. Umanosuke Iida, 2001).

When looking at the plethora of vampiric interpretations in anime, as briefly shown above, one cannot help but think about this constant metamorphosis that goes beyond a single origin, a national or cultural identity, to embrace a different frame of understanding. Ultimately, there is a vampire for every century, space and place, embodying aristocracy, democracy, erotism, social rebellion, social phobias and so on (Auerbach 1995: 8-9). But first, one needs to address the status of anime in the cinematic ecosystem, as it was thoroughly analysed and debated for decades in terms of being a global media product *per se* (Napier 2007: 26), a part of the "common international culture" (Allison 2003: 383), a new way of creating animation that transforms the cinematic into an experience of flow, direct spectatorship and consumption (Lamarre 2002: 332-333), and a transnational product (Leong 2011; Suan 2018) that is Japanese, although erasing its national origins through content

and representation. The transnational aspect of anime from this point of view can be explained both in terms of production, as a network of animators and material sources, but mainly in terms of reception, as it constantly gains popularity outside Japanese borders.

However, for the scope of this article, I will follow the line of research proposed by Koichi Iwabuchi, regarding form and content analysis, and define Japanese animation as being *mukokuseki*, translating to “culturally odourless” or “stateless,” implying “the mixing of elements of multiple cultural origins” or “the erasure of visible ethnic and cultural characteristics” (Iwabuchi 2002: 71), and thus becoming something new, to be understood simply as inhabiting the anime universe of a particular series. Ultimately, transformation or metamorphosis is the special feature of animation as a medium, as Paul Wells first stated, converting reality into something different and believable (Wells 1998: 10-11). So the transition to anime means perfecting the metamorphosis both at the technical level and at the visual and narrative level in order to produce new variations of the animated medium.

In this larger context of anime as a “stateless” media product and a new version of the animated medium, I propose to analyse the vampire through the same lens of transculturality and highlight its transformations through the animated medium. Furthermore, as Hepp argues, “trans” is the prefix to use in terms of connectivity, as the vampire crosses borders of meanings and imagination:

‘Trans,’ as a prefix, guides the focus from questions of locality (on which, for example, media anthropology focuses in particular), to questions of connectivity. If research is centred on translocality, this emphasizes, on the one hand, that those questions pertaining to all that is local still matter, but that on the other hand today’s locales are connected physically and communicatively to a very high degree. And that is the reason why the local does not cease to exist, but rather, changes. (Hepp 2009: 9)

Looking at the vampire at the junction of production and consumption, I will use the concept of transcultural homology that was developed by researchers Matt Hills (2002) and Chin and Morimoto (2013) to characterize the figure of the vampire, while analysing three anime series ranging from the hybrid

vampire that rejects its bloodthirsty nature and remains in an in-between state (*Owari no Serafu*, dir. Daisuke Tokudo, 2015), the ethnic werewolf transformed into a vampire (*Shiriusu Shiriusu za Yēgā*, dir. Masahiro Andō, 2018) and the *otaku* vampire who refuses to consume blood, but instead consumes Japanese popular culture (*Buraddo Raddo*, dir. Shigeyuki Miya, 2013).

Matt Hills first defined transcultural homologies in relationship to fandom practices, considering that “subcultures can use representations of other national subcultures to articulate a shared identity or devaluation” (2002: 13), while Chin and Morimoto continued this line of analysis with the notion of affective affinities between fans for the border-crossing object, arguing that transcultural fandoms are based on “affinities of industry and/or semiotic practice between two or more popular cultural contexts” (2013: 98-99).

In order to better understand the vampire as a transcultural homology, I will also briefly comment on Japanese popular culture as a transcultural space of meaning-making, while focusing on its hybridity in relation to its Western counterparts (comics, TV series and young adult novels). The concept of hybridity that I use for the purpose of this research is in line with Robert Stam’s modes of the hybrid when discussing world cinema and third cinema: “colonial imposition (...) or other interactions such as obligatory assimilation, political co-optation, cultural mimicry, commercial exploitation, top-down appropriation, or bottom-up subversion.” (2003: 33). Is the Japanese vampire, as a transcultural homology, a new form of understanding this supernatural creature? Is its hybrid nature a particularity of Japanese interpretation? What is the ultimate nature of the cinematic vampire in anime?

The hybrid vampires of *Owari no Serafu* (*Seraph of the End*, 2015) and *Shiriusu Shiriusu za Yēgā* (*Sirius, the Jaeger*, 2018)

Drawing from the horror genre, which was already developed in Japanese cinematography (for details, see Balmain 2008), but also heavily influenced by European and American movies of the decade, from the fifties to the seventies, vampire films created in Japan thrived, infused with Gothic decor, curses, acts of revenge and undead creatures with fangs, claws and a

thirst for blood. For instance, in *Lady Vampire* (*Onna Kyūketsuki*, dir. Nobuo Nakagawa, 1959), Japanese folklore and history mix with the figure of the vampire, dressed in Western-style clothes and a black cape, seducing women and fighting men. Then, the cult classic *Bloodthirsty* trilogy (dir. Michio Yamamoto, *The Vampire Doll* 1970, *Lake of Dracula* 1971, *Evil of Dracula* 1974), depicts a European white man who renounced Christianity and spat on his cross, only to develop a thirst for blood. The vampire is represented with ghost-like skin, dressed in white, with a black cape, sucking human blood, but also killing together with a resurrected corpse.

Still, it is anime as a particular medium in which vampire appropriation turns interesting, starting with the eighties, representing the vampire as a creature of the post-apocalypse and a hunter (Stein and Browning 2008), a vampire killing other vampires and protecting humanity, or an invading race of aliens (Denison 2010: 228-229). Coming closer to our decade, departing from the vampire as romantic interest which is specific to *shōjo* anime (series targeted at female teenagers), let's take a closer look at two *shōnen* series (a term literally translating to “young boy”), aimed at teenage boys and usually focusing on action, camaraderie and being a hero, as they portray vampires in something that resembles the Western-Gothic legacy, but also something else: the jaded hero and the hybrid demon-vampire. *Seraph of the End* and *Sirius, the Jaeger* are both *shōnen* anime series in which humanity battles vampires one way or another, with both sides fighting for power and survival.

In *Seraph of the End*, based on the dark fantasy manga with the same title (2012 - present) and directed by Daisuke Tokudo, the vampires rule the world after a so-called “human-made” virus killed almost all the global populace, leaving only children under the age of thirteen alive. Of course, the vampires pose as saviours and protectors of humans, in exchange for their blood “donations,” making them close to the now “classic” interpretation of vampire as colonial subjugator.

The narrative, then, follows two “brothers,” both members of the former Hyakuya Orphanage: Yūichirō and Mikaela, as they try to escape along with other children. A vampire intercepts the attempted escape, Mikaela sacrifices himself, and Yūichirō manages to run, while the others die. Yūichirō is later found by the Japanese Imperial Demon Army and starts training to avenge this family and kill all vampires. He becomes a member of the Moon Demon

Company, a special force that fights vampires with Cursed Gear: weapons inhabited by demons who grant special powers to the wielder. While the plot contains familiar motifs like revenge, fighting evil, becoming a true hero and so on, I would like to emphasize the characteristics of vampires in contrast with one special character: Mikaela. In this post-apocalyptic setting, an almost totalitarian social hierarchy is in place and vampires rule the world in cold-blooded feudal fashion. They are an immortal, ageless race, who were human at some point, but changed when ingesting vampire blood, although they have forgotten their origins. They have red eyes, fangs, no body heat, no pulse, and no feelings: all “stock” features of the Western cinematic figure of the vampire. The most powerful individuals are called progenitors (like Ferid Bathory and Krul Tepes), a type of vampire royalty, who are the only ones allowed to turn humans into vampires, making them part of the noble rank, but of a lesser standing than their sire.

In *Seraph of the End*, the universe is populated by humans, vampires, demons, and angels, reinterpreting Christian symbolism and mythology, but mixing Japanese folklore references in its terminology: thus, if a vampire starves it transforms into a demon or *oni*, one of the Japanese names for a specific type of *yōkai* (the generic name for Japanese folkloric spirits and supernatural creatures). Apparently, vampires were also human at some point. One of the light novels (*Seraph of the End: The Story of Vampire Michaela I*, Takaya Kagami, 2015) suggests that it was the fall of the angel Michaela that generated the first vampire on earth, a silent nod to the Lucifer myth and a distant resemblance to another Hollywoodesque reinterpretation of the vampire myth origin as the biblical Judas in *Dracula 2000* (dir. Patrick Lussier, 2000).

The seraph of the end that the title hints at turns out to be a result of human experimentation with ‘angels’ (the anime uses the Japanese term *tenshi*) inside human hosts, thus granting them magical abilities. One of the main protagonists, Mikaela, is one of those human hosts. When he is turned into a vampire by progenitor Krul Tepes, he also becomes an incomplete vampire, refusing to drink vampire blood that would complete the transformation. He thus retains his human blue eyes and his ability to age, while also suppressing his thirst for blood and his feelings (which he is starting to somehow lose). It is later revealed that both he and Yūichirō, the

other protagonist, possess the Seraph gene, giving them the power to bring a new Apocalypse.

Thus, Mikaela is human, vampire and “angel,” a hybrid and liminal character, whose battle is mostly with himself as he is driven to protect the only individual, Yūichirō, for whom he has sacrificed himself from the beginning. This character is unique in representing quite a mash-up of popular culture elements and mythological references, as Mikaela has the genes of what appears to be a demonic fallen angel (the reinterpreted Lucifer myth), while also retaining his human nature and later being transformed into a vampire – a rare combination in the plethora of vampiric interpretations seen in Japanese animation. John Gordon Melton characterizes the vampire as a rebel, a fighter for alternate ways, underlining the importance of this creature as symbolizing a critique of the social status quo and a metaphor for both oppression and subversion:

The most obvious role thrust upon the contemporary vampire has been that of cultural rebel, a symbolic leader advocating outrageous alternative patterns of living in a culture demanding conformity. (Melton 2015: 5)

From this point of view, Mikaela embodies this rebel who fights the status quo, while his vampiric qualities offer the necessary strength to support his ideals and create a different life and, even, world. The vampire imagined in the world of *Seraph of the end* functions as a transcultural homology for questioning social hierarchies imposed by traditional power and religion, harking back to such vampire anti-heroes like *Blade* (dir. Stephen Norrington, 1998) or *Angel* (from the series with the same title and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Joss Whedon, 1997-2001), while presenting progenitors as the foreign, imperialist power. Even their names are meant to sound foreign, referencing their European-Western descent: Krul Țepeș (a reference to the Romanian medieval leader, Vlad the Impaler), Ferid Bathory (a reference to the Hungarian medieval countess, Elizabeth Bathory, whose reputation for killing remains in history and legends) or Crowley Eusford (perhaps a reference to Aleister Crowley, a renowned English occultist).

Throughout the series, the *shōnen* tropes like power upgrades and fights for protecting the innocents are the backdrop for an aesthetic and ideological

transculturality: the demons which help humans have Asian-sounding mythological names in contrast to the vampiric counterpart: *Asuramaru*, *Kiseki-Ō* or *Gekkōin*, referencing, once more, a hybrid of the *oni*, the Japanese folkloric demon that resembles a troll or ogre and, possibly, a Buddhist interpretation of the demon as a tormentor of sinners in Hell.

Almost like looking in the mirror, *Sirius, the Jaeger*, a 2018 original anime series directed by Masahiro Andō, depicts a universe where vampires are becoming sick and coming close to extinction. It is 1930 and a group of powerful vampires flees from China to Japan, pursued by vampire hunters called *Jaegers* (the German term for hunter). Among these hunters is Yuliy, a *Sirius* werewolf whose home village (*Dogville*) in Sakhalin was destroyed by vampires and who is set on revenge. He is saved by his older brother, Mikhail Jirov, who later appears as a Royal vampire under the rule of Yevgraf, the king of an old vampire clan.

An unknown disease turns vampires into beasts who are used as slaves by the other vampires, while Yevgraf searches for the Ark of Sirius, a mysterious artefact believed to be the cure. The Ark is of course the legacy of the *Sirius* werewolf tribe, residing in the same region of Sakhalin.

The universe of *Sirius* is populated with references to tribal and animistic beliefs. The werewolf tribe have their roots in Asia, specifically Mongolia, again in contrast to the aristocratic vampires who have their origin in Eastern and Western Europe, and Russia¹. Perhaps a historical reference can also be hinted at, as Sakhalin was part of the territories lost by Russia to Japan, after their armed conflict in 1904-1905, together with an ethnic reference, as the Jirov brothers and their family are presented in flashback throughout the series wearing Asian tribe-inspired clothing and having such motifs in their home.

Apart from the literally transnational narrative universe, as in *Seraph of the End*, the brother is an interesting character I would like to analyse, as he is a werewolf transformed into a vampire. While popular culture series usually cast the two supernatural creatures as enemies, a trope that is hinted at in this series as well, combining the two natures is not often seen in the cinematic

¹ Although this is not explained so clearly in the anime series, its official site contains an explanation of its world with all the details: <http://sirius-the-jaeger.com/world/>

interpretations of the two transnational monsters, thus making Mikhail an interesting add-on to the gallery of anime vampires and the constant transformation of the myth. It is worth mentioning that the Romanian folkloric name for werewolf is also *vârcolac*, a term seen throughout the Slavic region but with different translations, including undead creatures more similar to the modern zombie that may have vampiric traits as well (Husić 2010). How the elements continue to be reinterpreted through literary and cinematic means represents a line of research to be further investigated.

Returning to the character Mikhail, his hybrid nature of human, werewolf and vampire, makes him a peculiar instance in anime as such. He can resist direct orders from Yevgraf (he is his maker, so he can use compulsion over him, making him obey every command) and he fights to protect his younger brother once more, partially resembling Mikaela in that regard. Mikhail Jirov, also, keeps his blue-grey eyes while being a vampire and manages to challenge the *status quo*, refusing to work for either the vampires or the human vampire hunters.

Although the vampiric lore in *Sirius, the Jaeger* is not so well developed, apart from the aristocratic hierarchy, blood consumption, red eyes and grotesque fangs, it uses the same type of orphan-revenge motifs, military organizations fighting for power, and Christian references as *Seraph of the End*. If the latter uses the terms demons and angels as well, underlining the Christian iconography, in *Sirius* we are presented with the Ark as an object of divine intervention to be used wisely to bring peace or chaos to the world, a reference to the biblical Ark of the Covenant that brought both doom and salvation.

Also, if the vampire clans that consider themselves the apex of civilization on Earth, hinting at the “classic” colonial interpretation, in other series, the term for vampire is different: in *Seraph of the End*, they are *kyūketsuki*, using the Japanese appropriation name, while *Sirius* calls them *bampire*, underlining their foreign invasive nature.

The two series, all in all, bring to life two hybrid characters that further transform the vampire and its transcultural homology-like legacy, as they combine “Asian” magical origins with the already cult Western vampire, having double or even triple natures and erasing one single cultural, ethnical or even religious identity. It is something that is not so common in cinema,

but a growing trend in anime, as monsters, supernatural beings and so forth overrule a single mythological source.

The vampire otaku as the ultimate consumer in Buraddo Raddo (Blood Lad, 2013)

Last but not least, *Blood Lad*, a 2013 anime series based on *seinen* manga (targeting a mature male audience) by the same name and directed by Shigeyuki Miya, introduces a vampire that rejects his nature and, instead, acts as an *otaku*, a term with a complicated history for Japan, used in a derogatory manner to describe anti-social fans, but which non-Japanese fans of anime and manga have embraced to refer to themselves and their passion for these media products as a badge of honour (Jenkins 2012).

The universe in *Blood Lad* depicts a Demon World ruled by powerful bosses and a human world. Staz Charlie Blood is the protagonist, ruler of the Eastern district in the Demon World and a powerful vampire, as a direct descendant of Dracula. Yet he refuses to be an elite vampire who drinks blood (although that is his reputation) and wants to be left alone to play video games, read manga and be a proper *otaku* obsessed with everything human and, mostly, everything Japanese. When a Japanese human girl, Fuyumi Yanagi, enters the Demon world, Staz is ecstatic, as his dream seems to come true. Her name itself represents an interesting foreshadowing, for the willow (*yanagi*) is associated with ghosts and the supernatural in the Japanese imaginary. Ergo, Staz soon discovers that the girl was previously eaten by a carnivorous plant and has become a ghost (signified by the Shinto white triangle on her head), so he vows to bring her back to life and gives her his blood as a source of sustenance.

Blood Lad uses a hybrid universe as such to introduce Western-style vampires and werewolves, together with ghosts, third-eye sorcerers and magic inspired by Buddhist, Shinto and even Taoist iconography: for instance, Hydra Bell, the sorceress who helps Staz in his quest to revive Fuyumi, can wield dimensional magic (crossing between dimensions), perhaps a loose reference to *onmyōji*, specialists in magic and divination from feudal Japan that combined Taoist and Buddhist purification practices and spells. Also, her companion Mamejirō has the powerful third-eye, a syncretic Hindu-Buddhist

reference to the spiritual eye of insight of the god Shiva.

In terms of vampiric characteristics, Staz is attracted to blood, related to Dracula and very powerful, but he also has demonic capabilities, once again the universe referencing Japanese magical beliefs and *shōnen* tropes: he can use long-range magic, can manifest his magic as a giant physical hand, can bite and absorb the magical powers of an opponent, and, most importantly considering the *otaku* references throughout the show, can do the *Imitation Kamehameha* as a beam of blue light, a reference to the *Dragon Ball* anime series protagonist and his super powers.

Again, Staz is a rebel, a true anti-hero as he only agrees to fight to protect his ultimate passion, a Japanese girl and the embodiment of what he perceives as *otaku* culture. The supranatural representations become hybrids of both commercial exploitation and bottom-up subversion, as the parodic undertones of *Blood Lad* include a critique of *otaku* behaviour, a western genre style OVA (original video animation) with samurais and mummies as vampire hunters, a ghost girl in Japanese school uniform (which is another humoristic nod to *otaku* obsessions) and so forth.

If we regard *Blood Lad* as a parodic entry in the world of vampire anime series, then the homology further develops as Staz is both a lazy *otaku* and a powerful being, both familiar and Other enough to instil fear. His sister, Liz Blood, is the ruler of Hell, judging if a person is innocent or guilty and inflicting punishment accordingly. Franken Stein is the mad scientist of the demon world, while Hydra Bell is a powerful spatial sorceress. Again, Japanese and non-Japanese mythic elements are combined in the narrative to create a new magical realm in which vampires and other creatures live unperturbed.

Foster defines *yōkai*, as has been said of the “monster” in the West, as “an embodiment of a certain cultural moment – of a time, a feeling, and a place.” (Foster 2009: 5) The vampire is, also, defined as pertaining to the particular logic of every generation. Staz Blood, with his self-explanatory name and his human and magical friends, represents this complete hybrid, the next level of *otaku*-ness with almost limitless power. It is, probably, the character which is the most relatable, while also desirable in terms of wanting to be like him: ordinary and extraordinary all at once. Yet he is unique in terms of vampire lore, being the only *otaku* vampire, a consumer at heart and representing a double critique of society.

Conclusion

Romantic interest or anti-hero, *otaku* or cursed fighter and saviour, the vampire is a character that creators and fans love to reinterpret. Japanese animation is doing a great job at finding new ways of depicting vampires, sometimes reshuffling the European mythic legacy, sometimes ignoring it, but always inserting it into a Japanese context, while reinterpreting Japanese mythology and folklore and erasing a single-origin identity. Is it an entirely new vampire that is being born out of hybridization? I would say not quite. But it is, definitely, a transcultural homology specific to anime consumption, that can be further transformed by producers and fans alike, with their creative energy.

The anime vampire, as I have shown with the three *shōnen* series analysed, especially as the main character, departs from the Western / Occidental vampiric paradigm to become the ultimate hybrid: a Japanese demon of European descent, with Asian magic at his side and a thirst for protecting weak humans, while preserving some of his own humanity, both on the physical level and on the spiritual level. What makes this figure familiar is his anti-heroic quality which is also found in Hollywood vampire movies, but what makes him different is precisely the Japanese lore that it engulfs, while being Japanese and non-Japanese at the same time (another argument for the *mukokuseki* character of anime *per se*).

Where is the vampire heading next? Probably continuing to increase the transcultural elements of the homologies, as it is constantly hybridized in production, while inviting audiences to empathize with the Other and become that Other who is no longer foreign or exotic, but which represents a way of better understanding humanity and its own monstrosities. Furthermore, the vampire is a productive pretext for understanding the transnational and transcultural nature of anime, beyond spaces of production (whether Japanese studios or international co-productions), but as a space for creating new cultural meanings that are part of an imaginary world that producers and fans alike share in multiple localities.

Biographical Note

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Section II

Alternative gender identities and sexualities

The Modern Boy and the Screen: Media Representation of Young Urban Men Wearing Western Style Clothing in 1920s and 1930s Japan

Lois Barnett

Abstract

In contemporary scholarship, the term “Modern Boy” (*mobo*) is employed to describe young urban Japanese men with a Western-style fashionable appearance. The term appears in interwar Japanese print media, often alongside the term “Modern Girl” (*moga*), the Japanese equivalent of the flapper. While the Modern Girl image is criticised for its flagrant consumerism in some accounts, it is also presented by cosmetics and film companies as a fashionable archetype for women. But was the Modern Boy a fashion icon for young Japanese men? To date, no study discussing the usage of the term “Modern Boy” has been conducted, with this image in the popular imagination today existing as an innocuous Dandyesque figure. However, analysis of the usage of the term “Modern Boy” in interwar Japanese media reveals associations with criminality, suicide and empty-headed superficiality, owed to its association with a fondness for Western-style aesthetics and popular culture. The Modern Boy was positioned as an “Other” amongst Japanese youth, marked by his consumption of “Other” cultural products – particularly, the cinema. Brands courted the Modern Girl aesthetic – could the same be said of the Modern Boy image, and did young male Japanese consumers refer to themselves using this term?

Key words: Japanese fashion, Japanese cinema, Modern Boy, moral panic, fashion history

Introduction

Scholars of the visual culture of the interwar period will be immediately familiar with the image of the Modern Girl, or *moga*, most succinctly

defined as Japan's answer to the Hollywood flapper, typically represented as a young woman with short bobbed hair, copious cosmetics and Western-style clothing or accessories. The Modern Girl image has been subject to much scholarship, ranging from the work of The Modern Girl Around The World Research Group (Weinbaum et al., 2008) to Miriam Silverberg's "The Modern Girl as Militant" (Silverberg, 1991). A less familiar figure is her male counterpart, the Modern Boy, or *mobo*; contemporary scholarship in Japanese and English treats this image as a peripheral and innocuous companion to the more visually striking and subversive Modern Girl. Iwamoto Kenji provides a concise example of this contemporary perspective, stating that "Images of Modern Boys and Modern Girls... Personified the frivolousness, brightness and newness of modernism... [they were] bathed in the audience's gaze - a gaze half of aspiration, and half of jealousy" (Iwamoto 1991: 50, my translation).

The Modern Boy is never discussed alone: "the young men with whom *moga* went dancing, drinking and to baseball games" (Clark and Fersh 1989: 45); "the *moga*'s less flamboyant counterpart was the Modern Boy" (Ebrey and Walshall 2013: 398). The common factor linking these two archetypes are their affinity for Western-style clothing and their leisure activities, particularly the cinema; they exist as an embodiment of Japan's transnational media climate, in which a Hollywood aesthetic is directly imposed upon a Japanese body, to mixed reception. Here I specifically examine the Modern Boy image: did young Japanese men in the interwar period aspire to this image, and did film and cosmetics companies use this image as a marketing archetype in order to sell Western-style fashion products? What did the term 'Modern Boy' mean when it was used in its contemporary context? I explore this by using print media and film examples from the period in order to compare and contrast the usage of Modern Boy and Modern Girl images, followed by an examination of the application of the specific term *mobo* and representations of young Western-attired Japanese men in contemporary media. I argue that the Modern Boy exists as a precursor to later transnational moral panic figures appearing onscreen in Japan during the post-war period, who are similarly emblematised by a Hollywood-esque fashionable appearance. In reference to "the Californian look of *taiyōzoku* ('Sun Tribe') characters, with sunglasses, baggy trousers and Hawaiian shirts," Marcos Centeno Martin notes that

“critics of the time complained that the portrayal of youth in novels and films was not a faithful representation of its social reality... more recently, scholars have interrogated how these characters created a transcultural iconicity that somewhat conveyed the anxieties, daydreams, inferiority complexes and aspirations of the post-war youth” (Centeno Martin 2018: 8). I posit the Modern Boy as a demonstration of the lineage of these observations, which are almost identically represented in the interwar context I stress the thoroughly transnational nature of Japan’s fashion industry at this time. I use the term ‘Western clothing’ as a catch-all term for dress formats originating from non-Asian (and specifically non-Japanese) sources. This does not apply specifically to the garment’s country of manufacture, as Western-style garments were being produced by tailors in Japan, but instead the garment’s cut and how it engages with the body itself to generate meaning, as seen in fitted dresses and suits. This contrasts with the historical use of fabric and pattern to differentiate socio-economic status within the uniform, square shapes of ‘Japanese’ garments such as kimono.

The Modern Girl as a Commercial Image

In order to understand the Modern Boy’s significations, it is important to understand the reception of his counterpart, the Modern Girl: a polarised image, subject to simultaneous derision and lucrative popular appeal. Deborah Shamoan notes that “while images of modern girls appeared sporadically in the early 1920s, it was not until the late 1920s and early 1930s that the modern girl look became widespread both in media and women’s fashion” (Shamoan 2012: 1068). The moral panic surrounding this image, which had been proliferated by print media, intensified by the mid-1930s, reflected in films such as Mizoguchi Kenji’s *Osaka Elegy (Naniwa erejii, 1936)*. This film directly references the role of newspapers and magazines in forming a negative image of Western-attired women, opening with the Western-attired Modern Girl protagonist reading a newspaper. The headline reads ‘Woman Ruined, All for Money,’ a precursor to her fate when she begins an affair with her boss in order to pay her unemployed father’s debts.

Conservative male figures such as Fujita Tsuguharu, an artist who painted in the Western-inspired *yōga* style, described a distinct relationship

between dress, the cinematic and vocal expression: “when dressed in Japanese costume, (women) must behave according to Japanese customs of modesty and quiet, and it is wrong for them to imitate American movie actresses” (Brown and Minichello 2003: 21.) Fujita’s commentary presents the Japanese female appropriating the American cinematic body via her attire as being inherently un-Japanese, with Fujita defining Japanese identity expressed through costume in terms of moral and vocal characteristics. Considering the presentation of the Americanised cinematic female as being the antithesis of the kimono-clad Japanese woman, it is to be assumed that her characteristics would also be the opposite of “modesty and quiet” – immodest and vocal.

Journalist Kiyosawa Kiyoshi described “modern girls (as) Westernised young women... girls who secretly socialise with young hoodlums, have sexual relationships with foreigners and have day jobs... they embody resistance against male-dominant morality and society” (Wada-Marciano 2008: 87). While Fujita’s comments were most prominently aimed at young Japanese devotees of American stars such as Clara Bow, whose appropriation of her bodily image similarly “tended to highlight contradictions between her fans’ consumption habits and their national identity” (Fujiki 2013: 270) it is an observation which may be easily applied to the portrayal of Westernised Japanese female stars within the cinematic sphere. In the late 1920s, Japanese female-focused print media frequently defined female beauty in comparative terms, with publications such as *Shufu no Tomo [the Housewife’s Friend]* determining the allure of the Western star’s cinematic body as rooted in her “genuine beauty of facial expression... (being) natural and reflecting her culture” following an interview with the wife of an entrepreneur working in Hollywood (Fujiki 2013, 134). While opinion concerning the Westernization of young cinema-going Japanese women was mixed, there were incentives for filmmakers to provide outwardly Westernised female Japanese stars onscreen who exhibited not only the physical but also emotional qualities pertaining to their Hollywood counterparts.

Some films actively courted the divided opinion of the Modern Girl image: Japan’s first all-sound film, Goshō Heinosuke’s *The Neighbour’s Wife and Mine (Madamu to nyōbō, 1931)* centres around the contrast between a conventional Japanese housewife and a raucous Modern Girl jazz singer living next door. The film’s male protagonist is a playwright, working to a

tight deadline, who is interrupted by loud jazz music coming from next door – he goes next-door to confront them to find a raucous Western-style jazz band headed by a curvaceous Western-dressed singer, the ‘Madam’ of the title (Date Satoko). He is initially intimidated by the band’s Western-attired women, but their song ultimately motivates him to finish his script on time, meaning that the Modern Girl in this context even constitutes a positive influence. This process becomes distilled in an interaction between the protagonist and his wife Kinuyo (Tanaka Kinuyo). When the protagonist returns home, he is confronted by Tanaka shouting “did you just go around to play with that modern girl? That’s the Madam next door!” Tanaka spits out the words *modan gaaru* and *madamu* in disgust, the Western-derived terms providing emotion in a way impossible in the silent cinema. His reply specifically softens the Westernised Modern Girl image - “she’s just wearing Western clothes.” She retorts “Madams these days are dangerous... I would say that it was definitely something erotic!” The reversal of the ‘modern’ versus ‘traditional’ roles of the two women is made complete when Tanaka then stabs the protagonist with her long Japanese hairpin - despite her branding the Madam as “dangerous”, it is she who causes him harm using a Japanese fashion accessory.

In *The Neighbour’s Wife and Mine*, the Modern Girl is portrayed as fashionable and daring, but ultimately good – perhaps even misunderstood. The relationship between the film, the use of Western-style loan-words and the purchasable Modern Girl consumer image is symbiotic; in the same way that the film utilised print-media derived ‘buzzwords’ in order to localise the immersive talkie format and realistically depict the moral panic surrounding the Modern Girl onscreen, the Japanese *Club* cosmetics company appropriated the specific modern-style vocabulary of the film - namely the title of the film’s theme song ‘Age of Speed’ - in order to market its cosmetics products. *Club* commissioned a half-page informative cosmetics article in the *Yomiuri Shinbun* entitled ‘Cosmetics *A La Mode* for 1931’. Ostensibly a general article on the latest cosmetics, the fact that the article mentions only *Club* products and a large pictorial advertisement for the company makes its financial agenda clear; a large section of the article is entitled ‘You Can Do It in Just One or Two Minutes: Fresh Elegance With Speed Make-up’, and the products advertised are introduced with the following words: “if you’re in a hurry to go out, but you still want that ‘Female Student Look’, here are four kinds of

quick cosmetic products, filled with the spirit of the ‘Age of Speed’” (*Yomiuri Shinbun* 1931: 3). The film did not merely condone a Western-inspired aesthetic for women, it actively encouraged an emulation of the specific Modern Girl archetype, imbuing the outward look with the connotations of progressive and modern inner qualities. In the marketing materials of the Shiseido cosmetics company, the relationship between a Hollywood-inspired aesthetic and attractive “modern” ideals can be clearly seen:

The Modern Girl is a young woman who holds modern (kindai-teki) beliefs. [She] chooses Western clothing over the kimono. You can see her intelligence shine out; her individuality is made clear... She is a woman who shatters notions of a conventional appearance and recognises herself through her clothing and cosmetics, and who beautifies herself as much as possible’ (*Shiseido geppō* 1926: 5. My translation)

While elsewhere the Modern Girl was criticised for her focus on self-decoration, here she was applauded for her modern individualism, expressed via her consumption of cosmetics. The Modern Girl exists as an almost constant advertising archetype for Shiseido, with this idea of progressive individualism realised via consumption also being visually represented: a 1926 in-store campaign image depicts an entirely Western-dressed woman with short bobbed hair at the summit of a pyramid, gazing at her reflection in a mirror held in one hand and brandishing an electric hairdryer (a truly modern invention!) in the other (Shiseido: 1926).

The Modern Boy: A Delinquent Archetype

Was the Modern Boy a similarly polarised image, and did he appeal as a marketing archetype? A survey of all uses of the term *mobo* used in headlines published in the *Asahi* and *Yomiuri Shinbun* between 1923 and 1939 certainly depicts the Modern Boy as carrying the same negative connotations as the Modern Girl. He is associated with criminality: the *Asahi Shinbun*’s first documented use of the term is in the headline ‘The Modern Boy’s Vulgar Public Trial: A Man Who Was Walking Around Harassing University Students Strolling Around The Ginza and Other Modern Boys’ (*Asahi Shinbun*

1927b: 2), while the *Yomiuri Shinbun* deigned that ‘Modern Boys are to Blame for Half of All Crime’ (*Yomiuri Shinbun*: 1929).

The Modern Boy is associated with modernity as a corrupting influence: ‘The Imported Modern Boy and Modern Girl: Looking to England When There Are No Words for These New Things’ (*Asahi Shinbun* 1927a: 7); ‘The Three Big Gangs Terrorising the Whole Country Are Arrested: Over Thirty Demons Found in Dancehalls Associated With Modern Boys and Other Evil Influences’ (*Asahi Shinbun* 1931: 11). As in scholarship today, he is much more frequently discussed in tandem with his female counterpart: ‘A Country of Modern Boy and Modern Girl Panic’ (*Asahi Shinbun* 1929a: 2). Here we do not see the glamorisation and commercialisation that we see with the Modern Girl image: instead, the Modern Boy is presented with a degree of absurdity and idleness – and in dizzying infatuation with the Modern Girl.

Yet, like the Modern Girl, he is constantly visually represented through his consumption of Western-style fashion products: are his Harold Lloyd spectacles (specifically referred to as *Roido* in reference to the silent film star and frequently described as not containing functioning lenses) and baggy trousers.. The *Yomiuri Shinbun* published a series of cartoons in 1929 in which he Modern Boys are always depicted using exaggerated depictions of these sartorial signifiers.. The “foreignness” of the Modern Boy is implied further by the fact that he is always depicted with a comically enlarged nose, a visual trope usually associated with Japanese caricatures of white Westerners.

A notable quality of these cartoons is their depiction of the Modern Boy as a peripheral satellite of the Modern Girl, rather than an identity in his own right: in the fifth instalment of the cartoon, a hybridised Modern Girl is depicted reclining within a circle, surrounded by stylised love hearts, supported by six Modern Boys who peek over at her. The image is captioned “As youth is short, the present-day girl is somewhat of a philanthropist,” referring to her implied promiscuity (*Yomiuri Shinbun* 1929, 3). This quality of the Modern Boy image describing a male archetype defined by his relationships with women posits him as an unlikely figure of fun despite his violent and criminal associations. In the *Japan Times* Frances M. Fox reproduces a list of qualities pertaining to the Modern Boy as recounted by a male Japanese university student, which describes the Modern Boy in both effeminate and comical terms, depicting a young urban man who is

promiscuous, but stupid; frivolous and overly concerned with his appearance, but stingy. The qualities range from absurd fashion choices (wearing lensless spectacles) to hypocrisy: “he speaks as to Marx or Lenin, but wears beautiful clothes himself” (Fox 1928: 4). The list opens with an apt summary: “he is a bad boy, he has many sweethearts, he is weak-willed and can do nothing.” (Fox 1928: 4). The Modern Boy presents a paradox: he is simultaneously threatening, yet comical; dangerous, but ethereal and lazy.

‘Modern Boys’ or ‘Dandies?’ Ozu Yasujirō and Nakamura Shinjirō

Iwamoto describes Ozu Yasujirō’s film output as not representing the Modern Boy lifestyle, but “Dandyism,” defining it as a “calmer” male identity archetype responding to the “brightness” of Japanese modernity in terms of both aesthetics and mood:

The fun and humorous conversation, the neatness of the composition and storytelling, the laid-back stylishness of the clothing and decor - Dandyism in Ozu’s films can already be identified in the 1930s. If the brightness of the Modern Boy was accompanied by raucousness and showy posturing, then Dandyism’s brightness was accompanied by feelings of an elegant, calm steadiness... Ozu’s films show us the means of achieving a typically Japanese version of Dandyism. (Iwamoto 1991, 178. My translation)

Iwamoto’s assessment of the Modern Boy as superficial and “raucous” in contrast to Ozu’s laid-back, easy-going style both on- and off-screen provokes me to question of comparison, not only between Ozu’s own appearance and this image, but between such ‘raucousness’ and the Modern Boy image which Iwamoto himself previously described as “bathed in the audience’s gaze - a gaze half of aspiration, and half of jealousy” (Iwamoto 1991: 50). Iwamoto’s description of Ozu’s “dandyism” as being more relaxed in nature is concurrent with the images of Ozu’s personal style accompanying his commentary. Iwamoto’s statement is accompanied by a selection of candid photographs taken of Ozu during the production of his films (a photographic genre known as *sunappu*, “snaps”, which were frequently featured in film fan magazines), in which he typically wears a soft-brimmed Fedora hat with a suit and tie or a

full dark-toned suit; in one example he nonchalantly smokes a cigarette.

The published edition of Ozu's diaries compiled by Tanaka Masasumi released in 1993 is also accompanied by a number of images in which Ozu wears this same ensemble. This contrast with Ozu's male leads, who are frequently smartly-dressed and well-groomed – amongst the stills provided by Iwamoto, the clearest example of this is from *An Introduction to Marriage* (*Kekkongaku nyūmon*, Ozu, 1930), a comedy in which a dentist flirts with another man's young wife on a train, leading to him becoming embroiled in a series of comic misunderstandings between his own wife, the woman on the train and her husband. The still features the film's male lead, dentist Mitsuo (Saitō Tetsuo), alongside the young woman's husband, Shinichiro (Takada Minoru), both wearing stylish outfits with individualised accessories. They both wear long silk scarves (Takada's in polka-dot, Satō's in a vibrant multi-tonal check) crisp white wing-collared shirts with neckties (bold stripes for Satō, finer pin-dots for Takada), watch chains and pinstripe trousers. Both men have neatly styled hair, and are depicted in an elegant bar setting. There does appear to be a significant distinction between Ozu's own dress and that of his sharp-suited male leads – is this a visual depiction of the distinction between the more relaxed “Dandy” style archetype and the more “raucous” Modern Boy? Ozu's *The Lady and the Beard* (*Shukujo to hige*, 1931) explores this comparison to some extent: the story's arc revolves around an old-fashioned university kendo champion, Kiichi (Tokihiko Okada), who struggles to find love or employment until he learns to contend with modern fashions and leisure pursuits, under the instruction of his office lady love interest, Hiroko (Kawasaki Hiroko). Kiichi meets Hiroko when he rescues her from being robbed and attacked by a modern girl, Satoko (Date Satoko) and her unnamed modern boy henchmen. While Western-style leisure pursuits, such as ballroom dancing, and clothing such as officewear and suiting are presented in a positive light, Satoko's suited and booted Modern Boy henchmen remain both delinquent and peripheral rather than having any significant role. The modern boy characters have few lines and merely swagger around Satoko, who is both the most vocal and active member of the delinquent group, doing her malevolent bidding. In Ozu's diaries and in his films, to wear Western attire made one modern, but not necessarily a “Modern Boy.”

While the term “Dandy” appears not to be in widespread use, the term

“Modern Boy,” too, appears to be absent from both Ozu’s diaries and the period’s male-focused fashion media. Even when fashion items specifically linked to the Modern Boy aesthetic in the press, such as wide-leg trousers, are advertised in male-targeted fashion magazines, they are never marketed specifically towards ‘Modern Boys;’ the mixed-gender fashion magazine *Style (Sutairu)* for example marketed them towards “stylish men” (*date otoko*) (Seriba 1939: 44). As seen in my earlier analysis of newspaper headlines, this is consistent with the confused connotations of the term Modern Boy; it is particularly difficult to specifically define what it meant to be a Modern Boy as it does not appear that men publicly identified themselves with the archetype presented onscreen and in print media, and this aspect was noted in the Japanese press itself. A 1929 *Asahi Shinbun* article simply titled “Trumpet Trousers”, referring to the emblematic Modern Boy “Oxford bags”. acknowledges that press coverage of both the Modern Boy and Girl were not necessarily reflective of reality:

Trumpet trousers are not the trousers of the next age, the cloche hat is not the hat of the next age, and jazz is not the music of the next age... Nothing about this is real. Its existence is nothing more than an illusion. (*Asahi Shinbun* 1929b: 3)

This commentator portrays the Modern Boy and Modern Girl as media fabrications. This acknowledgement from within Japanese print media itself provokes a difficult proposition when considering the position of Western-style menswear in Ozu’s films: perhaps there was no such thing as a “real” Modern Boy at all. What can be seen is a conflicted caricature with cinematic appeal: a slick Western-style fashionable appearance and enjoyment of related leisure pursuits, a desire for Hollywood-style romantic love, the thrill of criminality and the humorous combination of pseudo-intellectualism, superficiality and foolishness.

It is for this reason that films such as Ozu’s *Pumpkin (Kabocha, 1928)*, a madcap nonsense comedy, were advertised using material directly referencing the inclusion of Modern Boy characters. Yet none of his surviving works feature characters who are explicitly referred to within the film’s diegesis as such - the Modern Boy acted as a simplistic, two-dimensional distillation of

these basic entertainment motifs. Ozu's own diaries support this perspective: despite the content of his film output and his own affinity for fashion products and lifestyle pursuits linked to the Modern Boy image, there is no evidence that he identified with the term himself or that he was described as such by external media. However, one specific link can be made between Ozu and a figure who was specifically described as a Modern Boy in the media: the fashion columnist Nakamura Shinjirō, author of the "Vogue en Vogue" fashion column appearing in *New Youth (Shinseinen)* magazine which focused on Western-style clothing and leisure pursuits. Ozu himself was known to read the publication, adapting storylines from short stories published in the magazine for his own films, such as *That Night's Wife (Sono yo no tsuma, 1930)*.

Nakamura was explicitly described as a "Modern Boy" following his role in an attempted double suicide (*Asahi Shinbun* 1932b, 2). The other participant in the suicide attempt, 18-year-old Takanawa Yoshiko of the Shinjuku Moulin Rouge, had died (Nakano 1998: 32). With the headline 'Survivor of The Double Suicide, Writer Nakamura is Taken To Prison With the Calm and Collected Appearance of a Modern Boy', the article details the outfit worn at the time of his arrest, associating it with the Modern Boy's nonchalance: he is described as being taken to prison "with the calm appearance of a Modern Boy in his belted overcoat" (*Asahi Shinbun* 1932b: 2). This was not the first time that the *Asahi Shinbun* had featured Nakamura: almost a year earlier he contributed an article to the paper's 'Household' (*katei*) section, a segment of the paper specifically aimed at middle-class married women (*Asahi Shinbun* 1932a: 5). At no time in his *New Youth* column did Nakamura refer to himself or others, including film archetypes, as a 'Modern Boy'; the fact that a national newspaper - particularly one which was partially government funded - deemed Nakamura fit to instruct the nation's middle-class housewives on their choice of hairstyle depicts him as a rather innocuous figure. Instead, it appears that Nakamura's public image became transformed in the press as a direct response to the suicide event, which fitted neatly into the previously faceless Modern Boy panic image. The Modern Boy image became personified and identifiable, rather than a nameless Western-dressed bogeyman.

This association between the Modern Boy image and Western-style menswear, too, allowed for Nakamura to be seamlessly integrated within this existing trope. However, this does not necessarily mean that the fashion

items themselves held innate Modern Boy connotations. Similar Western-style outfits to those featured in Nakamura's column were featured simultaneously in the *Asahi Shinbun*: one article features hats, socks, shirts and neckties for men (*Asahi Shinbun* 1933: 5). Another advertises fashions from the Takashimaya department store with the headline "A tough time for Modern Boys? Young men's Autumn fashions are suddenly transformed into angular, broad-shouldered shapes; a farewell to trumpet trousers!", placing young men's Western-style clothing items in direct opposition to the wide-legged trousers of the Modern Boy stereotype (*Asahi Shinbun* 1933: 5). The term 'Modern Boy' appears to be entirely externally imposed upon Nakamura and his readership as a direct consequence of his criminal activity; like Ozu, Nakamura never uses the term 'Modern Boy'. He employed other Western-style terms, either 'boy' in Roman lettering or the katakana rendition *boizu*, or the Japanese terms *otoko no ko* ('boy') or *danshi* ('young man,' a term also associated with male students). It is clear that the vocabulary used to describe the reader's own fashionable identity is important, giving the absence of the "Modern Boy" term more gravity. This is mirrored in Ozu's own film output: in *The Lady and the Beard* (1931), the more "traditional" samurai-style model of Japanese masculinity is actively shunned in favour of the new, neatly shaven, Western-attired white-collar male student model, with this preference made clear when the film's bearded protagonist is forced to shave off his beard in order to gain employment. Yet, as in Nakamura's column, at no point is this Western-style appearance associated with the Modern Boy image. Instead, the clean-cut middle-class office worker image of Western style is presented as something business-like, desirable and even necessary for a successful modern life – a sharp contrast to the delinquent Modern Boy image.

Conclusion

I concur with Barbara Sato's comment that "the modern boy was clearly a media construct whose chief justification was to act as a balance for the modern girl... the modern girl was received with raised eyebrows while the modern boy received only snickers" (Sato 2003: 64-5). However, I add that this image is significantly more complex, existing not only as a figure of ridicule, but also fear and derision. The Modern Boy was a moral panic

figure centred not only around young male delinquency, Westernisation and material frivolousness, but also of the mobility of women displacing and overshadowing male prominence, emblematised by the greater prominence of the Modern Girl image throughout interwar popular culture.

It is evident that young Japanese men were specifically targeted as consumers by Japan's fashion-related industries and that they were encouraged to consume Western-style fashion products via Hollywood-inspired imagery. However, unlike the Modern Girl, the Modern Boy was not presented specifically as a goal image: instead there existed various Western-inspired terminologies and male fashion archetypes with more neutral connotations with which the consumer could choose to identify – Western-style clothing was not innately linked to the Modern Boy image. A consumer was unlikely to call himself a 'Modern Boy' – the label appears to have only been applied externally by critics. Male figures existed whose public personae aligned with the Modern Boy image, via both their aesthetic fashion choices and publicised social activities, but there is no evidence of a mobilised 'Modern Boy' subculture, or emblematic Modern Boy stars, being in existence. This is the key distinction between the Modern Boy image and the Hollywood-style male protagonists of the *Taiyōzoku* films of the post-war period: the relationship between Western-style clothing and male delinquency symbolised by the generic, nameless and faceless Modern Boy becomes anchored to specific Hollywood personalities in a process that Centeno Martin describes as "a transnational corporeity and cultural cross-breeding," with the sartoriality and corporeity of Japanese male stars directly referencing personalities such as Elvis Presley, Marlon Brando and Tony Curtis (Centeno Martin 2016, 154)

The media-constructed Modern Boy image enacted an us/them dichotomy, both onscreen and in print media, which normalised other fashionable Western-dressed male identities; to desire to be "modern," did not make one a "Modern Boy". The repetition of this image across film, fashion iconography and print media, melding a specific Western-influenced aesthetic to a Japanese youth panic image, presents a phenomenon that transcends the screen, with the cinema acting as a sensory-immersive catalyst for this process. The Modern Boy image forms a crystallised demonstration of Lola Martinez's summary of film as a transcultural medium with the ability to express universal human predicaments within the specific cultural idiom of a

place and its society, while also contributing to global cultural flows (Martinez, 2020). The Modern Boy image, propagated via cinema and related print media, harnessed and adapted transcultural youth imagery in order to represent local anxieties surrounding youth and Westernisation, forming the basis for later male youth panic images appearing onscreen and in print media.

Biographical Note

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Detail from Shiseido in-store advertisement, 1926 (courtesy of Shiseido Corporate Museum) Citation: Shiseido. 1926. *In-store Campaign Image*. [Print]. At: Shizuoka: Shiseido Corporate Museum.



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Who's Afraid of Virtual Sissies?: Effeminate Characters in Japanese Post-war *Gendai-geki* Films

Kenta Kato

Abstract

This paper analyzes the characterization of effeminate characters in *gendai-geki* (modern dramas) during the post-war Japanese studio era. It has been noted that sissy and pansy characters in Hollywood cinema are represented as being non-threatening since their sexuality is repressed, but the Japanese counterpart is deemed to be intimidating precisely because of their sexuality. Effeminate characters in Japanese cinema can be categorized into two types: heterosexual philanderers who employ effeminate charm to seduce women and abnormal figures with non-normative sexuality and criminal associations. In either case, effeminacy is regarded as a threatening by-product of Japan's modernization, which can jeopardize the traditional values of the nation. Such strong rejection of effeminate characters is a manifestation of societal phobia towards "a man acting like a woman." In Japanese cinematic examples, effeminophobia is intertwined with a threat to nationality, and the body of effeminate characters allows the negotiation of the national identity of Japan by becoming a benchmark against which the transformation of identity and culture in Japan is measured.

Key words: Japanese cinema, queer cinema, sissy, effeminophobia, national cinema

Introduction

An incredible scene takes place at the beginning of Kihachi Okamoto's debut feature, *Kekkon no Subete* [*All about Marriage*] (1958), a romantic comedy in a modern setting. A semi-naked couple is passionately making

out in a boat near the seaside. As the camera pulls out from the couple and unveils the presence of a crew with shooting equipment, it is revealed that the kiss was done for a film. A narrator is lamenting that there are too many films that exploit the body and provoke carnal pleasure. The narrator continues to problematize the overflow of sex in modern Tokyo; from alluring jazz numbers to advertisements on buses, modern culture is inseparable from sexual stimuli. Even an intelligent young woman is motivated to read a Japanese translation of Western sexology about women's eroticism. Modern cities, like Tokyo, are morally corrupted because of modernization. Curiously enough, two queer characters appear in the opening sequence as examples of such moral decay. Attired in feminine clothes and speaking in women's register, they express anger for being mistaken as men despite their gender identification as a woman. In today's understanding, they would be transgender women. The narrator, however, seems to regard transgenderism as an unfortunate outcome of modernization.

At the same time, Okamoto's very first sequence in his long directorial career is edited in a fast-moving, talkative, jazzy, and captivating manner. Accompanied by an uplifting jazz number, montage images of an unapologetically sexual and vigorous modern lifestyle look extremely fun. In spite of the conservative narrator, the opening montage is meant to be an enjoyable sequence as the visual is betraying the narrated criticism on modern life. The opening of *Kekkon no Subete* illustrates a sense of both danger and attraction, which is a sign of the ambivalence the Japanese felt towards modernization. And, one way the film shows this ambivalence is through sexually unconventional characters.

Many queer characters appear in post-war Japanese studio cinema, especially in *gendai-geki* (modern dramas). Although there are various kinds of gender-bending roles, such as transgenders, cross-dressers, and gay boys, this paper simply refers to such figures as effeminate characters. Though such an approach ignores the complexity of sexuality and the presence of queer women, it is also true that queer men had stereotypically been represented on screen merely as effete men. This paper focuses on the politics of effeminacy, men's failure to become "properly masculine," to examine how a non-masculine state embodies the fear of the Japanese in the face of modernization. Especially, effeminate characters in studio-produced

gendai-geki films from the fifties and sixties are analyzed to illustrate how mainstream cinema regarded the sexuality of these figures as threatening to the nation. As a means to negotiate the ambivalence found in modern society, the body of effeminate characters was established as a transnational icon, only to be dismissed and ultimately reinforce the national identity of Japan.

Sissy Characters in Hollywood and Japan

In spite of the lack of research on effeminate characters in Japanese cinema, the representation of queer characters in Hollywood cinema has been examined in academic discourses. Mainly before the stricter implementation of the Motion Picture Production Code in 1934, known as the Hays Code, Hollywood films introduced effete characters on screen as a sissy or a pansy. According to David M. Lugowski, “The queer in his more subdued form appears as the dithering, asexual ‘sissy,’ sometimes befuddled, incompetent, and, if married, very henpecked [...] and sometimes fussy and officious, (1994:4) or as “the more outrageous ‘pansy,’ an extremely effeminate boulevardier type sporting lipstick, rouge, a trim mustache and hairstyle, and an equally trim suit, incomplete without a boutonniere” (1999:4). Based on pejorative stereotypes of male homosexuals with effeminate and anal qualities, sissies and pansies, whose homosexuality is discreetly coded, were treated as insignificant comic relief. The number of sissy and pansy characters had significantly decreased after the enforcement of the Hays Code in 1934.¹ In the Production Code, it is clearly stated, “*Sex perversion* or any inference of it is forbidden” (Doherty 2007:353).² Pre-code Hollywood was a peculiar period when effeminacy flourished and was enjoyed by the mainstream audience for a good laugh.

In a similar way that sissy and pansy characters were represented in Hollywood cinema, effeminate characters were also treated in post-war Japanese films mostly as comic relief. Unlike the Hays Code, however, the

¹ The implementation of the code of ethics, however, did not simply lead to the complete extinction of effeminate characters. According to Harry M. Benshoff and Sean Griffin, “the pansy did not disappear after the Code was enforced; he merely became less obviously homosexual” (2006:31).

² Italicized in the original.

Japanese production code did not seem to be so interested in problematizing effeminacy or possible homosexual connotations. In the immediate post-war period, Japanese films were censored by the Occupation force, both by the Civil Information and Education Section (CIE) and the Civil Censorship Detachment (CCD). So that the Japanese film industry could have its autonomy in regulating film contents, however, the CIE worked closely with industry representatives from 1946, to constitute a Japanese motion picture code, based on the Hollywood model (Kitamura 2010:47). As a result, the Film Ethics Regulation Control Committee (known as the *Eirin*) was established as the industry's self-regulatory organization in June 1949, along with the implementation of the Motion Picture Code of Ethics. The Japanese production code does problematize queer content, as it says, "Do not depict activities based on sexual deviancy or perverted sexual desire" (*Eirin* 2006:186).³ However, it is highly ambiguous as to what is meant by "activities" or "sexual deviancy." It is actually possible to speculate that the *Eirin* was not very concerned about queer content. Tatsuo Endō, who was part of the regulatory committee, remembers that there were not so many regulations about sexual perversity except for several discussions about cross-dressers or male prostitutes (1973:93). The *Eirin*'s indifference to sexual deviancy could, after all, stem from the policy of the Occupation force. According to Mark McLelland, who has researched pulp magazines in the Occupation period, "The censors clearly did not consider either homosexuality or male prostitution to be problematic per se since numerous accounts can be found in both the mainstream and *kasutori* press [cheaply-printed, low-quality magazines with erotic and grotesque content]" (2012:155). Like McLelland's research, this paper unveils that the presence of effeminate characters becomes proof that the *Eirin* was unconcerned about effeminacy or often overlooked coded homosexuality. Although it is frequently noted that Japan's Motion Picture Code of Ethics is based on the Hays Code in Hollywood (Endō 1973:48; Kuwabara 1993:18), the Japanese version is not as restrictive as the American one in terms of queer representations. The self-regulatory code of ethics did not deprive effeminate characters of their citizenship on the Japanese screen.

³ Translations of all Japanese sources cited in this article are by the author.

Effeminacy in Post-war Japanese Studio Cinema

This paper argues that, though sissy and effeminate characters are generally represented as being gaudy and effete, the Japanese and American characterizations are dissimilar in terms of how much these characters are deemed to be threatening. Sissy and pansy characters could establish themselves as rigid character types in Hollywood cinema precisely because of their non-threatening state. As stated by Niall Richardson, “The popularity of the sissy, arguably, lay in the fact that he did not seem to have a sexuality at all” (2012:139). The asexual nature of effeminate characters functioned to repress their homosexual interests in other men. As Vito Russo notes in his influential *The Celluloid Closet*, those characters “were only symbols for failed masculinity and therefore did not represent the threat of actual homosexuals” (1987:33). Whether or not the contemporary audience was conscious of coded sexuality, sissy and pansy characters were used to elicit from heterosexual viewers laughter at men who acted like women. Richard Dyer describes gender performativity of effeminate characters as “in-betweenism,” referring to “people who in failing, because of not being heterosexual, to be real women or men, at the same time fail to be truly masculine or feminine in other ways” (1993:37). The failure to perform any gender properly allows sissies and pansies to be “seen as tragic, pathetic, wretched, despicable, comic or ridiculous figures” (Dyer 1993:37). In that sense, the disparaging and jeering reaction to effeminate characters seems to stem from gender issues, their inability to successfully perform gender, rather than sexuality that is deemed to be non-existent. As long as homosexuality is hidden in the closet, there is nothing threatening about failed masculinity for the normative audience.

Unlike the asexual sissies in Hollywood, however, effeminate characters in Japan do possess sexuality and, thus, they are perceived as a national threat. In some cases, effeminate characters are heterosexual philanderers. It has been often noted by British scholars that dandy men historically utilize their effeminate charms to attract women’s attention (Sinfield 1994; Jordan 2009). In Japanese cinematic examples, effeminacy is presented in the form of a caricatured imitator of Western dandyism and is a means for highly modernized heterosexuals to woo women. In other cases, those who possess

non-normative sexuality are simply represented as the embodiment of moral corruption in modern cities. Though active sexual practices among men existed in the pre-modern era, homosexual acts and queer sexuality came to be identified as a product of modernization and urbanization in modern Japan. In the early twentieth century, for example, Japanese literary discourse associated male-male sexuality with male prostitutes involved in criminal activities in urban landscapes (Pflugfelder 1999:310-1). Effeminate characters in post-war Japan are the continuous visualization of sexual deviancy as the dark side of modernized areas. In either case, effeminacy is deemed to a product of Japan's modernization: unknown outsiders that can threaten the traditional values of the nation. Representations of effeminate characters on Japanese screen are not merely a homophobic mockery of non-normative sexuality, but strongly associated with the reactionary rejection against Western hegemony.

This paper will analyze the two types of characterization of effeminate characters in *gendai-geki* during the post-war Japanese studio era.⁴ The characters analyzed in the following section are identified by their stereotypically effeminate behavior, which includes a high-pitched voice, exaggerated mannerisms, and especially the use of the female register (*onna-kotoba*). Such representation makes use of the synecdoche “taking the part for the whole” (Dyer 1977:32). According to Dyer, “By signaling gayness from the character’s first appearance, all the character’s subsequent actions and words can be understood, explained, and explained away, as those of a gay person” (1977:32). Effeminate characters analyzed below are not necessarily outwardly gay, or depicted as heterosexuals despite their coded queerness, but the effeminate iconography or the fact that they use women’s language, signifies their non-normative sexuality.

The sexuality of effeminate characters is strongly emphasized through their flirtatious behavior towards women. On the one hand, Japanese cinema often satirized modern men as being weak and effete. Film adaptations of Bunroku Shishi’s *Jiyū Gakkō* [*School of Freedom*] (1950) directed by Minoru Shibuya at Shochiku (1951) and by Kōzaburō Yoshimura at Daiei (1951),

⁴ This paper frames the post-war studio era in Japanese cinema from the end of World War II to the bankruptcy of Daiei in 1971.

are good examples of this. In gaudy Western cloths with manicured nails, Takafumi Hori⁵ who speaks in the female register, is a caricature of the young generation in modern society who has new ideas of marriage. In spite of his engagement to Yuri, Takafumi is willing to devote himself to older women, thoroughly worships them, and puts himself completely in their hands.⁶ The humor of *Jiyū Gakkō* partially derives from Takafumi's fervent wooing of Komako, the female protagonist whose marriage is in a crisis and whose marital values are threatened by the new generation.⁷ Effeminacy, in the film, becomes a satirical signifier of the modern world with its newness, aggressive sexuality, and the total abandonment of male gender roles that could jeopardize marriage conventions.

A similar characterization is found in following films as well. In Kon Ichikawa's *Aoiro Kakumei [The Blue Revolution]* (1953), Fukuzawa (Rentarō Mikuni) appears as a lodger who is fond of dancing ballet and playing the guitar. Despite his popularity at work, Fukuzawa is only eyeing Miyoko (Asami Kuji), a niece of the house-owner, to the extent that he becomes her admirer. Another example is Kei'ichi Noro (Kanji Matsumoto) in Umetsugu Inoue's *Heiten Jikan [Closing Time]* (1962). Attired in a fashionable but garish Western suit and talking in a high-pitched voice, Kei'ichi is the young, inexperienced, and replaceable playmate of Sayuri (Kyōko Enami). During his brief appearance in the film, this female admirer strongly dissuades Sayuri from getting married as matrimonial life will restrict her capricious lifestyle. Jun Fukuda's *Nippon Scandal Jidai [The Age of Japanese Scandals]* (1963) is a slightly odd example in which Mickey Curtis plays a pulp magazine journalist, Hidehiko Kasuya. As with British dandies, Hidehiko takes advantage of his effeminate charms and fashionable style to impress girlfriends. Curiously enough, the company somehow imposed on him the task of seducing men to create sex scandals. Gladly accepting the duty, cross-dressed Hidehiko successfully fulfills the task. *Nippon Scandal Jidai* is a remarkable example of

⁵ Takafumi Hori is played by Keiji Sada in the Shochiku version and by Akira Ōizumi in the Daiei version.

⁶ Yuri is played by Chikage Awashima in the Shochiku version and by Machiko Kyō in the Daiei version.

⁷ Komako is played by Mieko Takamine in the Shochiku version and by Michiyo Kogure in the Daiei version.

effeminate philandering actually turning into homoerotic interest. Effeminacy in this case is clearly associated with some kinds of sexual deviancy that could threaten heteronormative conventions. The possible collapse of conventional values is comically represented in these films and female admirers and effete men are deemed to be responsible for such changes in society.

In other cases, heterosexual philanderers with effeminate traits are insidiously horrible men. In Yūzō Kawashima's *Ginza 24-chō* [*Tales of Ginza*] (1955), for instance, Tōru Abe plays a scheming Francophile, if not modernized, painter, Gō Momoyama. This deceitful womanizer approaches the protagonist, Wakako (Yumeji Tsukioka), as the painter of her unauthorized portrait, in hope of enticing her into a sexual relationship. Momoyama, a Westernized pseudo-dandy, is tied to untruthfulness and a philandering tendency that women should be warned against. Another untrustworthy philanderer and constant liar appears in Eizō Sugawa's *Boku-tachi no Shippai* [*Our Failures*] (1962) as Toyoda (Hiroshi Tachikawa), the protagonist's co-worker in a factory. Also, Kenji Kimura (Masami Taura), that horrible boyfriend of Akiko Sugiyama (Ineko Arima) and one who is not willing to be responsible for her pregnancy in Yasujirō Ozu's *Tokyo Boshoku* [*Tokyo Twilight*] (1957), comes across as an effeminate modern philanderer.

A more horrifying example is Yoshitarō Nomura's *Donto Ikōze* [*Boldly Forward*] (1959), a romantic comedy about university students in a radio club. Rika Sakurai (Noriko Maki), the female protagonist and a leader of the club, happens to interview a notable student writer Shinzaburō Ikue (Munenori Oyamada), who is known to be a womanizer. Fashionably dressed and speaking in the female register, Shinzaburō becomes instantly fond of Rika and invites her to a rural area without seriously answering her questions. Rika reluctantly follows him for a journalistic purpose to a rural inn where Shinzaburō forcefully tries to take advantage of her. At the critical moment, Rika is rescued by Saburō Momoki (Masahiko Tsugawa), her love interest who happens to be Shinzaburō's childhood friend. What is so striking about *Donto Ikōze* is the way in which Shinzaburō makes use of language. The polished but forceful female register is used by Shinzaburō when he sexually approaches Rika, whereas he speaks to Saburō in a non-feminine manner. It is telling that the non-female register is tied to his normative state, and he uses women's language to impress on others that he is an up-and-coming writer

and to woo female fans. In *Donto Ikōze*, effeminacy is merely a performative mask that one puts on, behind which a malicious sexual predator is hiding. These examples reveal that effeminacy is an indicator of the horrifying, untrustworthy, and irresponsible womanizer who utilizes the modernized style to seduce women.

Along with the new views about marriage and sexual aggressiveness, the sexuality of effeminate characters is regarded with suspicion because it is tied to perversity and criminality in modern society. As illustrated in the analysis of *Kekkon no Subete*, transgenderism or male impersonation of the female gender is, despite its comical treatment, considered to be an example of moral corruption in urban areas. In the montage sequence of Shochiku's *Jiyū Gakkō*, Iosuke (Shin Saburi), a runaway husband, is dragged around the subterranean world of Tokyo by Kajiki (Eitarō Ozawa), an ultra-nationalist who is a former soldier of Imperial Japan. Kajiki believes that the corruption of Japan is epitomized by gambling houses, no-tell motels, and brothels. After this glimpse into questionable underworld, Iosuke takes a rest at a public bath only to encounter male prostitutes speaking in the female register. A reaction shot of Iosuke is inserted to comically emphasize his revulsion and surprise. As narrated by Kajiki, the modernized city is morally bankrupt and male prostitution is one of the indicators of this.

There are similar representations in the following two films. In Kawashima's *Joyū to Meitantei* [*The Actress and the Detective*] (1950), a poor detective (Shin'ichi Himori) in Ginza pursues a female thief for the financial reward. During the investigation, the detective finds, smoking by a river, a person who is dressed identically to the thief. When he approaches the suspect, a medium close-up shot reveals that the person is actually a cross-dressed man who forcefully kisses the detective with the intention of "playing" with him. The scene with the prostitute is comically directed but scary, as the female-looking appearance prevents characters and spectators from instantly perceiving the "true" gender of the effeminate characters.

In Nomura's *Hanayome no Onoroke* [*The Bride's Fond Talk of Love*] (1958), moreover, Takeo Hirose (Teiji Takahashi) and Hideko Abe (Mariko Okada) accidentally set foot in what seems to be a transgender bar. In it, a female-looking bar waitress whispers something in Takeo's ear and, for some reason, takes his luggage to the room on the left. Takeo follows the waitress

and, several seconds later, rushes out from the room and from the bar itself. The humor of the scene is overshadowed by the subtle horror; no one knows what happened to Takeo in the secret room. In addition, the entire scene is shot from a distance and does not allow the spectators to observe the details. Therefore, the audience is allowed to peep into the underground queer bar, but also warned not to look too closely for its perversity. In both cases, the main characters fail to distinguish whether the person in front of them is a man or a woman, and because of this failure, they are sexually attacked by characters who are presented as perverts. The deceptiveness of effeminacy is comically and ominously presented as a sign of modern corruption.

Furthermore, effeminacy is often considered to be threatening because of its ties to criminality. Narrated by a taxi driver Matsumura (Toshirō Mifune), Senkichi Taniguchi's *Fukeyo Haru Kaze* [*My Wonderful Yellow Car*] (1953) contains multiple episodes of the protagonist's job experience, one of which recounts an encounter with a thief (Rentarō Mikuni). One night, Matsumura picks up an effete man, dressed in a fine suit and speaking in women's language, who points a gun at the driver to take him to Gotanda. On the way, the thief, feeling unwell, takes out a handkerchief to wipe his sweats and accidentally drops something. A close-up shot shows it is a drug container. In the end, Matsumura intentionally causes an accident and the thief cowardly runs away. *Fukeyo Haru Kaze* exemplifies how effeminacy functions as an indicator of abnormality. The audience is initially introduced to the thief as another customer, but the menacing features of the thief are insinuated by an effete quality along with low-key lighting and Matsumura's narration. From his first appearance, his maliciousness, criminal activity and possible drug use are suggested by signaling effeminacy as an indicator of such qualities.

In other filmic examples, effeminacy and criminality are intertwined with queer sexuality. Based on Haruhiko Ōyabu's original novel, Sugawa's *Yajū Shisubeshi* [*Beast Shall Die*] (1959) portrays Kunihiko Date (Tatsuya Nakadai), a graduate student who commits unlawful activities as social rebellion. One night, Kunihiko is accosted by a young, effeminate man. Through their intimate interactions shot in a close-up, it is clear that they know each other and are closely acquainted. Several scenes later, however, the young man is shot to death for being involved in a gunfight between

Kunihiko and two men from a criminal organization. Intimacy between the protagonist and the effete teenager not only implies Kunihiko's queer sexuality, but the larger societal perception of queerness's close connection with criminality. Similarly, Kōji Machida (Shigeru Amachi), a journalist investigating a secret prostitution ring in Teruo Ishii's *Kurosen Chitai* [*Black Line*] (1960), steps into a transgender bar. Under chiaroscuro lighting, the bar looks bewitching and seductive with several transgender women singing and serving customers. As Machida's visit is motivated by journalistic reasons, to investigate possible connections with the prostitution ring, queerness is again associated with criminality and antisocial forces that are making a profit out of drugs and prostitution. In Kō Nakahira's *Ryōjin Nikki* [*The Hunter's Diary*] (1964) as well, a lawyer Kentarō Hatanaka (Kazuo Kitamura) visits a possibly transgender bar for investigation, only to be shocked by the presence of queer people. Effeminacy, therefore, becomes an example of the corruption of morality in underground Tokyo where queerness and criminality intersect.

As the analysis of the aforementioned examples demonstrates, effeminate characters are represented as a modern threat to the Japanese nation. These characters can be categorized into two types: heterosexual philanderers who employ effeminate charm to seduce women and abnormal figures with non-normative sexuality and criminal associations. In either type, these Japanese examples assume that effeminate characters are threatening due to their sexuality, be it aggressive heterosexual desire or non-normative sexual desire, and represented as an unfortunate by-product of modernization. Because they caricature modernization, it is possible to argue that effeminate characters are a transnational icon; that is, their excessive performance of Western manners can embody the assimilation of Western culture in modern Japanese society. More importantly, however, the fearful rejection of such characterization implies that effeminacy and modernization are intertwined together to establish the other of the Japanese nation.

Between the National and Transnational

Such strong rejection against effeminate characters is a manifestation of societal phobia towards a non-masculine state. According to David M. Halperin,

Any gay man who forsakes the ranks of the privileged gender and the desired gender style, who lowers himself to the undignified, abject status of the effeminate, the fairy, the poof, the bitch, the sissy, the flaming queen, incurs the easy ridicule and cheap contempt of both the straight world and the gay world. (2012:307)

Being effete and boisterous is looked down upon because of the voluntary abandonment of men's hegemonic status and used as an excuse for constant mockery and ridicule. Pejorative representations of sexual minorities in cinema are not simply informed by homophobia or transphobia, but strongly incurred by effeminophobia.⁸

In the case of Japanese cinema, effeminophobia also stems from Japan's ambivalence towards modernization. For the Japanese, the figure of the dandy and that gaudy fashion style that are associated with effeminate characters were foreign Western imports that were outlandish in Japan. According to Jason G. Karlin, the change in style in modern Japan incurred two opposite reactions; the European bourgeois style was considered to be a sign of sophistication, whereas some thought the effeminacy of style would lead to the emasculation of the nation as well as a loss of morals and ideals (2002:41-2). Karlin continues that "the socially constructed identification of femininity with the pejorative, regressive qualities of fashion, consumption, and materialism resulted in femininity being constrained and condemned as inimical to Japanese nationalism" (2002:42). The rejection of effeminacy can be attributed to the fear of the impact it might have on Japan and towards the destruction of national values, as effete traits were deemed to be a foreign threat.

Effeminate characters in Japanese cinema, therefore, can be regarded as cinematic examples that embody tensions between the national and transnational. Despite its sole focus on modern dramas, this paper does not necessarily regard *gendai-geki* as instances of Japanese transnational cinema. According to Daisuke Miyao, the term itself is self-contradictory in that, while transnational is supposed to mean going beyond the national borders, the word Japanese itself establishes a boundary (2019:111). As Miyao argues, therefore, "it is more productive to discuss specific tensions between

⁸ The term, effeminophobia, was first coined by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1991).

national and transnational in the history of Japanese cinema” (2019:111). And effeminophobia on screen is a cultural site that incorporates such tensions. Effeminate characters seem to be a transnational icon, judging from the Japanese enacting and parodying supposedly Western traits as an everyday practice. Nevertheless, examples interrogated here endeavors to draw a clear national boundary between conventional Japan and abnormal imports from the West. It is a reactionary attempt to desperately hold on to the idea that there is something purely “Japanese” that is not tainted by cultural imperialism. The strengthening of the nation by othering the West situates effeminate characters in an equivocal state between the national and transnational. In the face of rapid modernization, cultural products can become a site of contestation in the rearticulation of nationhood. During its process, the body of effeminate characters becomes a scapegoat that is mercilessly blamed for being overly modernized, sexually non-normative, and utterly foreign despite its Japanese status. The othered traitor is necessary “to come to terms with the anxiety and insecurity felt during Japan’s moments of identity transformation” (Suganuma 2012:44). In the case of effeminate characters, therefore, “the transnational” is ideologically established only to be rejected and manipulated to further strengthen the national.

Conclusion

Unlike the asexual Hollywood counterpart, Japanese effeminate characters are more complex in that their sexuality is deemed to pose a national danger. Whether flirtatious heterosexuals, sexual minorities or queer criminals, effeminacy is regarded as a threatening indicator of danger and corruption in modernized cities. Constant jeering towards, prejudice against, and loathing of effeminate characters result from the identity negotiation of Japan to reconfigure its nationhood. The “transnationality” of effeminate characters only serves a national purpose, to skewer those who are unabashedly modernized. Despite the lack of research in Japanese film scholarship about the representational pattern of effeminate characters, their cinematic presence points to a history in film, not merely of sexual minorities being treated in a stereotypical manner, but also of such representations being a site of a complicated intertwining of homophobia and effeminophobia.

Further research must be conducted to differentiate and examine the way the varied sexualities were represented and how effeminate characters had historically transformed. This paper has employed the term effeminacy to encompass various kinds of sexuality, such as heterosexuality, homosexuality, and transgenderism. This is a conscious attempt to put more focus on the significance of gender in homophobic representations, but it is certainly important to investigate how such depictions can be different in accordance to the sexual orientation and gender identification of characters. Moreover, the research disregards the historical transformation of effeminate characters by looking at the post-war studio era as a single period with no historical change. Post-war society was a turbulent period in which Japan's national identity was demolished, reestablished, and constantly renegotiated. Under such conditions, it is necessary to examine how socio-political contexts informed particular characterizations. By doing so, it is possible to gain a new perspective on the history of queer representation in Japanese cinema.

Biographical Note

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Female Pleasure Matters: The Transnational Phenomenon of an Alternative to Male Desire-centred Pornography

Maiko Kodaka

Abstract

Pornography has been a source of controversy in academia, especially among feminists. Recent academic interest has shifted towards considering pornography as cultural material. In addition to that, the recent emergence of a global #MeToo movement has highlighted the sexual objectification of women beyond the confines of academia; therefore, there are increasing numbers of voices arguing for the need of a non-aggressive and non-violent forms of pornography.

Alternative pornographies stand here for depictions of sexuality which challenge the representational and structural problems of gender and power. A Swedish feminist pornographer Erika Lust attempt to produce pornography which depicts male and female pleasure. On the other side of the world, one of the biggest Japanese Adult Video production company launched new lines for female users by surveying women's opinions. The emergence of those alternative pornographies was a reaction to entrenched expectations of how men and women should behave in porn, but their initial purposes were quite different. Nonetheless, the point here is to consider the politics of sex by looking at different systems of the gaze in pornography and their relationship with preexisting frameworks of gender.

Key words: pornography, feminism, gender, and sexuality

Introduction

“Pornography is the theory, and rape is the practice”, said by Robin Morgan (1978, 2014), an anti-pornography feminist activist. Morgan was partly right, in the sense that pornography is a discourse and does not define any absolute object. Several academics highlight the difficulty of defining what pornography is (Hunt 1993, Kendrik 1996, and Paasonen 2011). The idea of pornography travels through time and space often accompanied with the idea of obscenity. It is used for pleasure, entertainment, education, and sometimes to illustrate political points, a classic literature such as *L'Ecole des filles* (The School of Venus: or the Ladies Delight) by Michel Millot in 1680 which depicts the anatomical explanation of both male and female pleasure by suggesting sexual exploration without the string of marriage. Since the 1970s, when several US made pornographic films met international success - often described as “the Golden Age of Porn” - feminists were divided into anti or pro’pornography camps. Some anti-pornography feminists claimed that pornography is demeaning to women, while pro-pornography feminists believed that pornography can empower women and other sexualities. Moving beyond this anti/pro dichotomy, in this paper I will follow media scholar Susanna Paasonen and understand pornography as a market genre, ‘with considerably low cultural status, continuing popularity, and high visibility (Paasonen 2011: 19).

Linda Williams (1989) specifically argued that there is a necessity for the female gaze to be included in pornography, and since around 2000 there is an increasing presence of feminist and alternative pornographers to mainstream male desire-centered pornography. Erika Lust, a Swedish pornographer who claims to be influenced by Williams became an iconic figure of alternative pornography in Europe. In Japan, *Josei-muke*” (literally means “for women”) pornography was launched in 2008 by Soft on Demand (SOD), one of the monopolistic porn companies in Japan. Although these alternative pornographies emerged in different contexts, it is worth discussing the politics in gender and porn industry which these women have brought to the fore. This paper is based on series of interviews I have conducted with Erika Lust and Eri Makino, a producer of ‘*Josei-muke*’ pornography. Based on the content analysis of increasing female friendly pornography and series of

interviews with those who engage in porn industry as female figures, my aim here is to discuss the importance of inclusive global gender politics within the current porn industry and to show that female pleasure is equal to men's by employing the voice of female figures in transnational porn industry.

Defining pornography

The definition of pornography remains vague. What counts as pornography for one person, might not do so for another. Tracing back to its origin, the words pornography first entered in the Oxford English dictionary in 1857 (Hunt 1993). This was during Victorian era when sexually explicit artifacts of the Greco-Roman world were rediscovered and showcased in secret room of European museums, which only the educated and the wealthy male elite had access to. Although the word is Greek in origin, a combination of *porne* (prostitute) and *graphos* (writing), it has no direct connection to the ancient Greek patriarchal system as Andrea Dworkin, an iconic figure of the anti-pornography feminist movement has pointed out (1981: 222). Rather, the idea of pornography has existed in print culture as a vehicle to criticize political and religious authorities in early modern Europe (Hunt 1993: 11). Looking at the other side of the world, Japanese *shunga* is a genre of sexually explicit paintings which was very popular among Japanese people during the Edo period (1603-1868) regardless gender and social class. *Shunga* was originally derived from both Chinese traditions which celebrated sex as origin of the universe and Japanese idea indigenous of sex as something pleasurable (Ikegami 2015). Although *shunga* were also known as *Warai-e* (humorous pictures) because many depictions of sexual intercourse had a comical element, *shunga* were also often used to satirize the Shogun government during Edo period. Kendrick (1996) argued that pornography became a public issue of obscenity due to the technology of mass publication during the 19th century in Europe. The Meiji government in Japan, which was strongly influenced by England and Germany at that time, started to ban *Shunga* because it was inappropriate for a “modernized” nation, thus aligning the idea of obscenity with the pre-modern world. The idea of obscenity was first legally defined in the US in 1973 as:

the [pornographic] work depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law, and the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value. (Justia law 2019)

In other words, pornography is defined by a lack of aesthetic quality which renders it different from erotica, or erotic art. However, this difference is difficult to define. As Kendrick pointed out, “pornography’ names an argument, not a thing” (1996: 31), that is, the definition of pornography itself is a discourse and varies from different perspectives. Straightforwardly and controversially, the Adult Film Makers Association (AFMA) in the US defines pornography as sexually explicit depictions that include ‘cum shots’, male ejaculation (Cornell 2000). Due to this hetero-sexist definition of pornography the industry ignores large parts of LGBTQ community. This exclusive definition of pornography clearly points to gendered power differentials and to enduring assumptions about the viewership of hardcore pornography. So-called ‘mainstream’ pornography is strongly tied to the visual pleasure of the male gaze due to its heteronormative assumption that men watch porn while women do not.

Conceptualizing pornography

The academic discussion on pornography has been strongly associated with feminists’ interests in Euro-American countries since the popularity of pornographic films started to rise during the 1970s. The US met the golden age of pornography during the early 1970s due to the international success of pornographic films such as *Deep Throat* (1972 Damiano Bryanston Pictures), *Behind the Green Door* (1972 Mitchell Mitchell Brothers Film Group) and *The Devil in Miss Jones* (1973 Damiano VCX Ltd), which became controversial among American feminists for the reason that for them pornography was discriminating women and the law for civil equality was needed. Famously or infamously, Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon, a radical feminist legal scholar, proposed the *Anti-Pornography Civil Rights Ordinance* to regulate pornography in 1983 by prohibiting it entirely. They argued that pornography was inherently misogynistic, discriminated

against women and that a law for civil equality was needed (Dworkin and MacKinnon 1988). Dworkin and MacKinnon maintained that women who were demeaned by pornographic representation had to have the right to prosecute porn producers, directors, distributors, and exhibitors for sexual discrimination. This ordinance eventually was rejected by courts due to its violation of freedom of speech. The problem was the ambiguity of Dworkin and MacKinnon's definition of pornography, which makes any legal act difficult in general. Moreover, images of objectified women are not only found in pornography but also in magazines, advertisement, TV commercials, almost everywhere. It is therefore difficult to argue that the prohibition of pornography alone would lead to the deconstruction of patriarchal society.

In contrast to anti-pornography feminists, academics such as Nadine Strossen and Gayle Rubin provided a more positive, different perspective. In *Defending Pornography Free Speech, Sex, and the Fight for Women's Rights* (1995) Strossen argues that any censorship of pornography could lead to more oppression of women. According to Strossen, there is a contradiction in the anti-pornography arguments by feminists such as Dworkin. The regulation of pornography by censorship is often claimed by groups of people who emphasized traditional ethics, family values and religious beliefs which Dworkin criticizes as being part of a male-dominated system. Strossen, on the other hand, suggests that pornography may empower women and encourage understanding of different sexualities in society. Similarly, the anthropologist Gayle Robin (1993) strongly criticizes anti-pornography feminists pointing out the contradiction of anti-pornography feminists such as Dworkin and MacKinnon because their protests against pornography echoed with the argument of religious conservatives who oppressed women's right. Rubin writes, '[t]he right has already adopted feminist anti-porn rhetoric, concepts and language, conveniently stripped of its already marginal progressive contents' (1993: 39). In addition to that, the politics of anti-pornography feminists could endanger women in the sex industry because they stigmatize pornography. Certainly, the abuse of women in the sex industry should not be justified in any sense. However, I believe that sex workers rights' have to be protected when they choose their job as free choice. As well as that, pornography can be a tool for empowering sexual minority people by representing them for them, by them.

Debates regarding sex, sexuality, pornography and sexual activities among the second wave feminists from the late 1970s to early 1980s were often known as *Sex Wars* defined by Duggan and Hunter in 1995. Those who contributed to the *Sex Wars* also interpreted and analyzed pornography from different political viewpoints. As Rubin argued, “feminism’s critique of gender hierarchy must be incorporated into a radical theory of sex, and the critique of sexual oppression should enrich feminism. But an autonomous theory and politics specific to sexuality must be developed” (1999: 170). After that, academic interest has shifted from the anti/pro dichotomy towards considering pornography as it is.

With the publication of her well-known book, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the “Frenzy of the Visible”* in 1989, Linda Williams shifted the debate away from the *Sex Wars* by looking at pornography as a cultural material. Williams analyzed the development of cinematic hardcore pornography in relation to Foucault’s term *scientia sexualis*. Williams acknowledged that the early cinematic pornography as an expansion of the study of sex had been problematizing the female body and pleasure; however, she also concluded that pornographic representation had been expanded to include the female gaze. In this sense, Williams mediated between anti- and pro debates. In addition to that, Pamela Church Gibson’s edited collection *Dirty Looks: Women, Pornography and Power* (1993), written from an anti-censorship perspective, provided a media and cultural studies approach to the study of pornography as cultural material, that is, as part of the visual ecology of the modern world, just like other lowbrow products such as pulp fiction or Britney Spears.

Alternative pornographies

As Annie Sprinkle, a former porn actress, a stripper, a prostitute and sex-positive feminist with a Ph.D. in human sexuality, states: “The answer to bad porn isn’t no porn... it’s try to make better porn!” (Sprinkle in Tarrant 2016: 170) Feminist pornographers such as Tristan Taormino, Ovidie, and Erika Lust attempt to produce pornographies which depicts male and female pleasure equally in a range of styles: educational, romantic, and sometimes hardcore. Feminist pornographers believe that pornography can empower

female audiences by showing a more egalitarian vision of sex. In addition to that, the role play of BDSM which is often misunderstood as the depiction of violence is also featured in order to show different forms sexual pleasure to be taken by being objectified or dominated. The Feminist Porn Award since 2006 annually conducts feminist porn competitions in Toronto and began to organize annual international feminist porn film festivals in 2017, indicating an increasing public attention and popularity of feminist porn world widely. Similarly, queer porn which depicts sexual acts of different gender, sexuality, race, and sexual fetishes, not from heterosexual male-desire centered gaze as it is often featured in the mainstream pornography, has also gained public attention in the last decade. Queer porn film festivals have been organized by LGBTQ organizations in Berlin, London, New York and Rome. They challenge heteronormative sexual practices in order to create alternative platforms for marginalized groups of people who have not been represented in mainstream pornography. Both feminist porn and queer porn claim to be alternatives to the mainstream pornography and sometimes take highly political stances against the male-dominated porn industry. Thus, it would be more accurate to describe the term “alternative” pornography as an umbrella term for non-cisgender heterosexual male desire-centered pornography.

The aforementioned Erika Lust became an iconic figure in alternative pornography in the Euro-American countries. Lust came across Linda Williams’ book when she studied political science, which inspired her filmmaking career. She entered the porn industry to present a female gaze as Williams suggested; however, this was not welcomed by the mainstream porn industry:

The focus in my films is also on female pleasure and that’s something that is often overlooked on mainstream sets. At the beginning of my career this focus was the cause of some pushback from within the mainstream industry - they did not want my feminist perspective coming in and changing ‘their porn’. They refused to acknowledge the problems in mainstream porn - the complete disregard for female pleasure, the harmful categorisation and othering of marginalised groups, the gender role stereotyping and so on. I was challenging the male gaze and prioritising female pleasure: this was something scary and new to many people in the mainstream industry and they didn’t like it. (Kodaka 2019).

Nonetheless, Erika Lust's works gained several awards from The Feminist Porn Festival and her production company is now a main sponsor of several porn festivals in Europe. Her iconic series *XConfession*, which has started five years ago, is a collection in which she gathers different sexual stories, fantasies, and desires from people across the world online. The variation of stories is enormous: polyamorous sex in a dystopian degenerated world, in the night museum surrounded by art or with a stranger at techno club in Berlin. These "confessions" of different individuals are then brought to the screen by Erika Lust:

In my work I fight back against this tide of emotionless, sterile pornography by trying to portray the performers in my films as part of a wider narrative - as real people, with thoughts, emotions and desires rather than identical sex robots monotonously playing out trite and uninspiring storylines. (Kodaka 2019).

Lust employs more than thirty film crew members on set at once. This differs from the mainstream pornography which often consists of three or four people on set. Lust's purpose is to create cinematic pornography alternative to the mainstream ones made from home-video cameras. Lust puts an emphasis on sex as part of the intimate communication of human beings often lacking from mainstream pornography, which only focuses on sex as an action. In an age when pornography has become the main tool of sex education for younger generations, it is important to show that both male and female pleasure, consensual, ethical sex is possible.

Japanese alternative pornography, *Josei-muke* Adult Video

In 2008, when the whole Adult Video (AV)¹ industry in Japan faced a downturn due to the popularity of free online porn sites, one of the biggest AV companies in Japan, Soft on Demand (SOD), decided to launch a new production line for female consumers, which is known as SILK LABO as *Josei-muke* AVs. The term *Josei-muke* literally signifies "pornography for

¹ Japanese pornography is signified as adult videos (*adaruto bideo*).

women” in Japanese language. The founder and producer of SILK LABO, Eri Makino stated that she did not question the existing gender dichotomy and was not aware of any of feminists’ challenges to the porn industry in Japan. Rather, her motivation was to encourage more enjoyable sex lives for SILK LABO consumers. In addition to that, Makino described SILK LABO products as targeting women who were not familiar with watching AVs and often suggested that SILK LABO products were a first step for them to enjoy pornography.

SILK LABO productions can be described as “melodrama with explicit sex scenes” (Makino in Kodaka 2019). Unlike other mainstream pornography, SILK LABO scenes explicitly depict the ‘putting-on-of-condom scene’ which is often described as a “turn off” by male viewers (Makino in Kodaka 2018). Despite of the fact that SILK LABO was a subsidiary of SOD, Makino and her fellow staffs often received unpleasant comments from male colleagues at the early stage of SILK LABO (Iijima 2015). Hegemonic ideas that stipulate that women are not supposed to talk openly about sex are still strong in Japan.

SILK LABO films often start with a female protagonist who has problems in her life: overwork, body injury, or any possible boy-related issues for example, as seen by titles such as *Arinomama Dakishimete* (Embrace me as I am) in 2019 and *Rihabiri no Sensei* (Instructor of Rehabilitation) in 2018. Analysing the narratives of SILK LABO films, there are certain conventions which differ from the mainstream adult video industry male audiences. Makino once stated that “the everlasting theme of SILK LABO is couples who constantly misunderstand/miscommunicate with each other” (Kodaka 2018). Often the male protagonist appears as a life-saving figure, through whom the initial problem of the female protagonist is solved; mostly through the power of intercourse. According to an employee of SOD, SILK LABO products were detail-oriented in a such a way that props on set, for example magazines and bottles of drinks, are custom made in order to keep a cinematic atmosphere, that distinguishes it from pornography for men. In general, pornography for men tend to apply pixelization for pre-existing merchandises rather than preparing special props for the reason that men are used to watch pixelization on pornography anyway.² Furthermore, while pornography for

² In Japan, it is illegal to produce, distribute, and exhibit pornography without genital pixelization due to the prohibition of commercial sexual intercourse. (Watanabe 2017)

men focuses on the action of sex itself, SILK LABO focuses on the narratives behind ‘how-they-end-up-making-love’. Pornography for women, therefore, requires a lot of cinematic efforts for performance, props, and scenarios.

Following to the popularity of SILK LABO, SOD launched an online streaming site for female friendly pornography, GIRLS’ CH in 2012, which was initially made from cuts and edits from pre-existing pornography produced by SOD that were considered female friendly. Since 2013, GIRLS’ CH led by the producer, Momoko Taguchi, started their own production line for female costumers who sought to watch more extreme versions of SILK LABO. For instance, the new genre of “man-being-submissive” which depicts the objectification of boy-band lookalikes is becoming popular among female users. Although masochistic male figures in contrast to female dominant figures pre-exist in the mainstream pornography, GIRL’S CH products primary focus on male bodies while burring female figures. It applies pre-existing structures in mainstream pornography for men such as the explicit objectification of bodies. Alexandra Hambleton has argued that the discourse which SILK LABO produces retains the female-as-submissive trope because it is ‘reinforcing ideas of normative female desires and sexual behaviour’ (Hambleton 2016: 439) in Japanese society. However, it is too simplistic to argue that female friendly pornography is only pandering to a heterosexual idea of gender norms. Makino stated that Japanese women are getting familiar with online pornography, and as a result of this familiarity they started to demand hardcore materials compared to the mainstream SILK LABO products (Kodaka 2018).

The crucial innovation of SOD was the cult-like fandom that has evolved around its male actors, the *Eromen* and the *Lovemen*. The former belongs to SILK LABO, the latter to GIRLS’ CH. These categories are fluid because some male actors perform in both productions. The physical appearance of *Eromen* and *Lovemen* is that of a *hoso-macho* (that is, not too thin or fat and not too overly “macho”, in a healthy and attractive way) which is often described in mass media as ideal shape among Japanese women. Their main job is to act in SOD’s films. On top of the release of the films every month, they interact with fans at fan events where fans can shake hands, take photographs, or hug them. In addition to that, SOD organizes special events once every few months at which *Eromen* or *Lovemen* appear in live

talks, dinner or lunch parties with fans, or game parties with fans. Sometimes fans that belong to official fan clubs can apply for lunch or telephone dates with *Eromen*, so that they can enjoy a fleeting intimate pseudo-relationship. In the current era when not so many people consume DVDs, it was necessary for the industry to idolize their actors and appeal to the ‘stable fans’ in monthly basis. The fandom of *Eromen* or *Lovemen* itself became like a safe space for Japanese women to talk about their sexual desires when Japan is still a highly stressful society for women.

As Makino stated, she was not taken any political stance on feminism. Her main concern is to provide customers with what they demand. Therefore, SILK LABO constantly becomes a victim of feminists’ critiques and is accused of “reinforcing heteronormative desire” or exhorted that “women should express more power over men” (Kodaka 2018). However, the crucial point here is that, since the emergence of female friendly pornography such as SILK LABO and GIRLS’ CH, there is an easy doorway for women to watch pornography and to enjoy their own sexuality. Moreover, the SOD office at Shin-Nakano, has a whole floor for the section of female-friendly pornography and most employees there were actually women. This inclusive atmosphere for women in the otherwise male-dominated porn industry is nothing but highly political. Despite of the fact that Makino tends to avoid gender political standing points in the same way as Western feminists’ pornographers, the presence of *Josei-muke* AVs has opened up accessibility for women to watch pornography in Japan. The relationship between Western alternative pornography and Japanese *Josei-muke* AVs might seem arbitrary at a glance; however, there is a certain significance in transnational gender politics in porn industry.

Female pleasure matters

Thirty years after Linda Williams (1989) argued that pornography should include the female gaze, it seems that porn industry has expanded enough to gain attention from female audience. That does not mean that women did not have sexual desires before; but that online-based porn consumption has raised the level of accessibility of porn contents. The emergence of those alternative pornographies in the West and Japan was a

reaction to entrenched expectations of how men and women should behave in porn, and their initial purposes were quite different. Nonetheless, the point here is to consider the politics of gender and sex by looking at different systems of the gaze and the politics inside the porn industry.

Laura Mulvey's *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975) has discussed the gender dichotomy in Hollywood films, which is highly relevant for the consideration of the gendered landscape of pornography. Mulvey employed Freudian scopophilia and the Lacanian gaze to analyze female objectification in Hollywood films. The first is the act of voyeuristic fantasy of the act of seeing and being seen in the process of self-identification. According to Mulvey, gender representation in Hollywood films consisted of the dichotomy of male/active and female/passive figures in the male-dominated Hollywood industry. "In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*" (Mulvey 1975: 62) The male gaze here suggests that female protagonists only exist for male "phantasy" and are well-illustrated as ideal and pleasurable figures for audiences, while male protagonists appear to be commanding the narrative. Although Mulvey's analysis has been criticized by several scholars due to her lack of consideration of the dynamics of gender and sexuality on screen (a point which Mulvey conceded later in 1989), I argue that the construction of a particular gendered gaze is exceedingly applicable to the discussion of pornography. Gender and queer studies scholar Shimizu Akiko (2016) elaborates Mulvey's gaze for the analysis of an alternative gaze in relations to pornography and its politics. Shimizu claims that it is important to examine "seeing"/"showing" in alternative pornography in relation to pre-existing gender politics (2016: 158). Considering that mainstream pornography is designed for a male audience by male producers, it is arguable that women making alternative pornographies is challenging to the whole structure of the porn industry. As mentioned earlier, both Erika Lust and Eri Makino have experienced conflicts with men in the porn industry. The presence of female pornographers in the industry is already challenging as such, but the representational changes they have brought in are also crucial to understand 'seeing/showing' relationships that are different from mainstream pornography. It is also important to note that, although this dichotomy of

mainstream and alternative might seem gendered due to its origin as a reaction opposed to male desire-centred pornography, it does not and should not mean that alternative pornographies are exclusive to cisgender heterosexual male audiences. Makino spoke of the category of *Josei-muke*:

Certainly, it is misleading to use the word *Josei-muke*. However, we as female employees at SOD had worked before SILK LABO started. We do watch pornography. I am not sure if the name *Josei-muke* is appropriate, this might underlie the idea that women do not normally watch pornography. We often say “it is a pornography for women by women”, when we asked the definition of *Josei-muke*. But in reality, it is not the case. The term is just a label to signify ‘our’ porn. If we could find better name to appropriate, we would use that. (Kodaka 2018).

The current dichotomy of “mainstream” and “*Josei-muke*” or “alternative” is just about labelling, which makes it convenient for users to search for their needs. But it is important to show the presence of female pleasure in pornography which has been missed out from mainstream pornography. Thus, the significance of alternative pornographies is that people, especially women, have options to choose different kinds of pornography alongside with the mainstream pornography. This inclusivity demonstrates that all pleasure matters and should be represented on screen regardless of gender and sexuality.

When Erika Lust visited Tokyo in December 2018, she was enthusiastically looking for Japanese people in the film industry to work with her. Her aim was to promote a diversity of voices from all around world. However, the problem was that domestic porn industry in Japan was a mostly closed world. In addition to that, if any Japanese actor engaged in the production of uncensored pornography in or outside Japan, s/he could be charged for obscenity. It is doubtless that the transnational phenomenon of alternative pornography both in West and Japan have the same gender political implication in common. However, the differences in legal system of each country makes solidarity of women’s in porn industry difficult. This is something to be overcome, yet the date is unknown.

Conclusion

This paper looked at the transnational phenomenon of alternative pornographies by examining similarities and differences between European and Japanese alternative pornographies as recent global trend. By drawing on debates on how to define pornography, I made clear that the idea of pornography itself is a discourse and always open to different interpretations; regardless the division of anti/pro pornography feminism. Within the framework which understands pornography as a discourse, feminist pornographers have emerged and they use pornography to reclaim female sexuality back to women's control. This political attitude is implicated consciously or unconsciously in both Western and Japanese alternative pornographies. The patriarchal structure in the respective porn industries exists regardless of cultural contexts. On a broader note, it seems that this transnational phenomenon of alternative pornography is a challenge to the pre-existing mainstream pornography in terms of inclusivity and diversity of gender and sexuality.

However, the legal systems regulating the porn industry differ from country to country, which makes it difficult to draw a horizontal line of solidarity between transnational alternative pornographers. At this point it is fair to say that the presence of sexual pleasures of women in alternative pornography has considerable potential for those who have not been represented enough in the mainstream. In addition to that, cultural, social, political, and structural systems in the porn industry of a specific culture requires in-depth research, which would be a task for further study.

Biographical Note

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Filmography

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Section III

Transnational modes of representation

From Japan to Africa: Transnationality in Hani Susumu's Theory and Cinematic Experience

Marcos P. Centeno-Martín

Abstract

This paper assesses the transnational dimension of Hani Susumu's film theory and practice. Hani engaged in the theoretical discussions about avant-garde art, which was developed by the culture circles that proliferated in postwar Japan. However, his 'filmmaking method' is to a great extent shaped by foreign influences: a 'synthetic art' combining photography and literature and emotional approaches to the social reality of the thirties by American authors linked to the 'New Deal', the humanist tendency in the British documentary movement, Robert Flaherty, the authors who engaged in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and the personal criticism developed by Polish filmmakers.

Hani's filmmaking method which proposes filming non-scripted action with non-professional actors is aimed at capturing a world free from filmmakers' pre-established ideas. *The Song of Bwana Toshi*, shot in East Africa, is the first of a series of films that Hani made in remote places. Africa becomes a place that allows Hani to challenge the reality that is imposed by a filmmaker, as he can film spontaneous actions by characters that do not know cinema and are alien to concept of acting. Thus, Hani finds in Africa a cinema that rejects cinema and its artifice. Hani also uses these remote locations to present the protagonist's encounter with Japan outside Japan where the dichotomy between the concepts of *uchi* (inside) and *soto* (outside) become ambiguous. Hani's case reveals an extraordinary sensitivity to foreign ideas and transnational film practices and illustrates how the singularities of Japanese Cinema are not necessarily the result of the isolation of this film culture.

Key words: Hani Susumu, *The Song of Bwana Toshi*, Africa and cinema, transnational cinema, New Wave, Japanese film theory, art of synthesis, *uchi* and *soto*

Introduction

The approach to the work of Hani Susumu is essential to understand the theoretical discussions and film innovations that took place in Japan since the second half of the twentieth century. Hani is a widely known figure of the Japanese New Wave for his films made in the sixties. However, in this paper I seek to explore a lesser known aspect of his career: the transnational dimension of his film contribution which is two-fold, theoretical and practical. Firstly, the transnational dimension of his theoretical writings. Hani participated in the Japanese debates that emerged in the post-war culture circles, represented the positions of the New Left in Japanese documentary cinema, challenging old forms of realism and proposing new subjective approaches to reality. Yet, not all the debates, epistemological tools and references that Hani handled came from a national context. What was the role of Flaherty's works, the British Documentary Movement and the authors representing the Spanish Civil War in articulating his theoretical approach?¹

Secondly, Hani developed a singular filming based on "protagonists who do not act" that he adapted in his documentary films made in the fifties. However, from the sixties, Hani engaged in a series of transnational productions that brought him from Africa to Latin America and Southern Europe. The second part of this text focuses on *The Song of Bwana Toshi* (1964), the first work that Hani made abroad and probably the first film made by a Japanese filmmaker in Africa. The analysis of this case study is supported by Hani's own writings in order to cast light on the reasons why Hani decided to move his productions to distant places from Japan.

Transnationality in Hani's film theory

From the beginning of his career as a documentary maker for Iwanami Eiga, Hani was a prolific film essayist, critic and theorist. He wrote texts on film theory between 1955 and 1967, on the television medium (1959-1960),

¹ I am deeply grateful to DAIWA Anglo-Japanese, Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation and Waseda University and Japanese Government (MEXT), which have financially supported this research as part of the project entitled "Japanese Transnational Cinema".

and on visual arts and mass media (1969-1972). Hani anticipated the renewal of the cinematic language of the fifties and sixties both in practice and in theory through dozens of texts that he published in this period. I assessed elsewhere how Hani engaged in the theoretical discussions developed by the culture circles that proliferated in Japan from the aftermath of World War II led by Marxist critics Hanada Kiyoteru, Sekine Hiroshi, Hariu Ichirō, the painter Okamoto Tarō and the writer Abe Kōbō and the fine arts student and later New Wave filmmaker Teshigahara Hiroshi (Centeno-Martín 2019a).

These authors sought new ways of representing (documenting and transforming) reality and engaged in the creation of a ‘synthetic art’ (*sōgō geijutsu*) whose aim was dismantling genre codes and breaking down boundaries previously established in literature and arts. Hani Susumu, together with the avant-garde filmmaker Matsumoto Toshio, joined the aforementioned authors in 1957, in a group that was named Kiroku Geijutsu no Kai (Documentary Arts Society), and the notion of ‘document’ acquired within the circle a broader sense, including visual and performing arts, as it was stated in their new leitmotiv: “from printed culture to visual culture” (Key 2011: 13). Thus, Hani promoted an active exchange between documentary film and other means of expression: “Today there is an exchange between different genres outside the cinematic arena: music, fine arts, dance, etc. I think we can make some headway in cinema if we try a similar collaboration” (Hani 1959b: 71). Hani implemented these ideas in the collective documentary *Tokyo 1958* (1958), made alongside Teshigahara and other seven other members of the experimental group Shinema 58. The film challenged previous cinematic conventions combining a documentary style with elements from advertising, TV commercials, theatre (*kakegoe* voices in the soundtrack), classical music (*gagaku*), plastic arts (*ukiyo-e*, woodblock prints) and photography (Centeno-Martín 2019a).

Hani also participated in the ideological rupture of postwar Japan and represented a new left of intellectuals and artists which responded to old forms of realism and pretensions of objectivity, which were seen as a mark of an authoritarianism (Centeno-Martín 2019a: 4). He also engaged in discussions with the veteran Kamei Fumio (Hani and Kamei 1957, pp. 40-47) and the young Matsumoto Toshio (Hani et al. 1956, pp.45-52) about the new approaches to reality that avant-garde documentary makers should

propose. Hani rejected Matsumoto's experimentation with visual effects and defamiliarising techniques in order to project on screen filmmaker's fantasies and concerns. Instead, he repeatedly claimed that documentaries should explore the emotional plane of characters before the camera rather than the subjectivity and pre-established ideas existing in the mind of the filmmaker (Centeno-Martín 2019a: 4).

Throughout a number of texts, Hani developed a consistent method of documentary filmmaking based on interrogating the inner world hidden in the external world, challenging filmmaker's prejudices, which might be achieved through technical aestheticism, filming on location, improvisation, rejecting scripts and professional actors and repetition of certain topics and narratives tropes (Centeno-Martín 2018a). However, I would like to highlight in this manuscript the transnational dimension of Hani's theoretical framework, which is incomplete if it's only studied in relation to debates raised within the national context. His writings present a rich variety of references to authors, films, concepts and methodological approaches which shaped his theoretical approaches and go far beyond the national parameters.

First, Hani identifies antecedents of the 'synthetic art' explored by the avant-garde circles in postwar Japan in examples which proliferated in the world in the thirties. In the US, authors from the New Deal era portrayed their social reality by bringing together the fields of literature and photography like Erskine Caldwell's novels *You Have Seen Their Faces* (1937) and *Say, Is This The USA* (1941) on the conditions of peasants in the southern states which include pictorial surveys by his wife, the photographer Margaret Bourke-White. Hani also reviews other examples like John Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) in which literature and photography take on an informative role close to the documentary, just like John Dos Passos' trilogy *U.S.A.* (1930-1936) which blends several narrative forms using fiction literature, press clippings, song lyrics and biographies of well-known characters. A combination of different means of expression would also be found in Archibald MacLeish's works, *The Fall of the City* (1937), the first American verse play written for radio and in *Land of the Free* (1938) about poverty and the class struggle combining poetry and photography (Hani, 1960: 73-75).

However, rather than proposing any objective depiction of the social

reality, Hani finds interesting the emotional approach of these works interesting and how they help authors to think ways to get closer to human reality. Hani articulates a sort of subjective realism in a truly interdisciplinary way, drawing on Robert Bresson's proposal of dealing with the filmed objects claiming that "progress is made by bringing together real circumstances and subjective circumstances" (Hani 1960: 57). Also combining the 'life document' (seikatsu kiroku) practices of the 1950s Japan and consisting in amateur writings (Centeno-Martín 2018b) with the psychological pragmatism developed by William James (cfr. Hani 1975, 345-349; 1981).

Hani also admired the works by the British documentary movement and published reviews of films by Stuart Legg, John Grierson, Paul Rotha, Basil Wright, Alberto Cavalcanti, Arthur Elton, Howard Hawks, Richard Rosson and Stanley Hawes.² The British movement was an inevitable reference although Hani did not follow their depiction of the working class but the tendency to humanism they present which, as Hani notes, was motivated by presence of Robert Flaherty in Britain. While Hani acknowledges that Flaherty's films had been undermined for his staged sequences, such as those in *Nanook of the North* (1922), he claims that this is a pioneering film for the human eye with which Flaherty portrays the Inuit's world (Hani 1972: 36).

Hani also finds this tendency in two other examples before World War II. First, the humanism of "proletarian spirit" found in Charles Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1936), particularly for the representation of capitalism and power relations (Etō, Hani and Satō, 1960: 47). Second, the authors who depicted social injustices and were personally engaged in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). Hani finds the emotional approaches of André Malraux, Ernest Hemingway and John Dos Passos' novels extremely inspiring. Similarly, Robert Capa's photography brings a new kind of photojournalism which goes beyond the portrayal the social reality and captures human fears, anxieties and desires of the people featured in the image (Hani 1960: 80). This combination of topical issues and emotional depth that they developed is a trait that, according to Hani, should be implemented by documentary makers. To Hani, the Spanish Civil War is a pivotal moment in which authors from different countries merged arts and journalism with a singular

² Hani comments on the conversation he had with Stuart Legg in Hani 1958: 88-120.

humanism that he also wanted to explore (Hani 1959: 47-50; 1960: 80). So does Capa's birth of modern photojournalism as well as Ernest Hemingway and Norman Mailer with their literary journalism (Hani 1960: 80). These authors combine a portrayal of current affairs and psychological depth in a kind of 'art of synthesis' which merges journalistic practices and arts. As Hani notes in relation to the Spanish case: "it is problematic to separate artists from journalists [...] they all have the privilege of building the object and the news according to their own expressive capacity" (Hani 1960: 80). All of them expressed great emotional empathy with the objects they depicted. Hani highlights that these authors inaugurate a way of portraying the current affairs of a reality that had to be denounced, in a journalistic sense, with a close gaze to the human condition.

The aforementioned break within the Japanese left which Hani embodied is a cultural phenomenon that also had a lot to do with events happening outside Japan. To a great extent, the discussions within the Japanese avant-garde circles were prompted a result of authors' rejection of the Soviet repression of the Hungarian Uprising in November 1956. On the occasion of his visit to Hungary and Poland in the end of the 1950s, Hani publishes several articles in which he nuances that the Hungarian uprising was triggered by a desire to improve socialism rather than to return to capitalism but also criticizes Stalinism and the restoration of János Kádár's government (Hani 1961a, 1961b, 1961c). In addition, he writes reviews of Polish films by Andrzej Wajda, Andrzej Munk, and Jerzy Kawalerowicz in which he finds interesting responses to socialist realism (Centeno-Martín 2019b) through their "personal criticism" (*jiko hihan*) which contributes toward the expansion of the idea of authorship that was being debated in the context of the New Waves (Hani 1963: 132).

Transnationality in Hani's Film Practice

Throughout his writings published between 1950s and 1960s, Hani proposed a singular film-making method, the aim of which was to capture this inner dimension free from filmmakers' subjectivity, prejudices and pre-established ideas. In order to do that, he proposed that documentary makers should work with several kind of protagonists who don't act (Hani 1958). I

studied before how Hani implemented these theories in his documentaries made for Iwanami Eiga in the fifties, by filming children and animals (Centeno-Martín 2016). The reasoning for choosing these characters was that their spontaneous actions allow exploring unconscious instincts and a psychological dimension that is not controlled by filmmakers. I also analysed how Hani even applied his method for the shooting of a temple (Centeno-Martín 2019b) and for his first feature film *Bad Boys* (Furyō shōnen, Hani 1960) (Centeno-Martín 2018b). However, I would like to pay attention now to Hani's transnational production. In the early sixties, Hani embarks on a series of projects shot on remote locations, *The Song of Bwana Toshi* (Bwana Toshi no uta, 1964) in East Africa, *Bride of the Andes* (*Andesu no Hanayome*, 1966) in the Peruvian Andes and *Mio* (*Yōsei no uta*, 1972) in Sardinia. In this text, I will focus on his first production abroad, *The Song of Bwana Toshi*, also probably the first made by a Japanese director in Africa, to interrogate the motivations behind this transnational cinematic experience.

The shooting of *The Song of Bwana Toshi* took place in Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyica (current Tanzania) between July and November (Hani 1965: 5-16) with a slim team of six operators and only two professional actors: the protagonist, Atsumi Kiyoshi, who became a popular star a few years later for his leading role as Tora-san in *Otoko wa tsurai yo*, the longest-running film series starring a single actor with 48 instalments, released between 1969 and 1995; and Shimomoto Tsutomu, who plays the role of Onishi, a photographer working on pictorial reports of gorillas. Among the crew members, one can find several figures who were closely linked to the Japanese New Wave: the cinematographer Manji Kanau and sound recorder Yasuda Testsuo, who had already worked under Hani's direction in *Bad Boys* (Furyō shōnen, 1960), a semi-documentary in which the inmates of Kurihama reformatory play themselves. Thus, Manji and Yasuda were already trained in Hani's kind of collaborative work based on improvisations, shooting on location and with no professional actors. Also, the musician Takemitsu Toru, who composed soundtracks for Teshigahara Hiroshi, Shinoda Masahiro, Oshima Nagisa and Imamura Shohei's films, became hallmarks of the New Wave.

The Song of Bwana Toshi is based on Katayose Toshihide's homonymous novel (Katayose 1963) although, following Hani's principle of rejecting the traditional idea of script, the shooting was largely left to

improvisation. The story revolves around a Japanese technician, Kataoka Toshio (Kiyoshi Atsumi), called ‘Toshi’ by the locals. Toshi arrives in rural Tanganyika to build a prefabricate house for a Japanese study group only to find that they have become ill and returned to Japan. The protagonist is left alone to erect the house but there is no way to do it without the support of the Africans. Without knowing the local language and culture, Toshi needs to learn about adapting to the locals’ leisurely and unpretentious lifestyle. He first attempts to speak with the leader of a village but his attempts to speak Swahili lead to confusion and instead of helping him build the house they end up giving him a job as a cowherd. Unable to carry out this job, Toshi goes back to the house-building works and bumps into Hamisi (Hamisi Salehe) who is looking for a job. Both start working together but Toshi does not allow Hamisi’s wife to stay with them so she decides to find a job at the plantation of a white man, where she will suffer tragedy and Hashimi won’t see here again. Little by little, more young men end up assisting Hani in the building of the house but their way of working infuriates Toshi and he ends up hitting Hamisi. Despite all this, Hamisi forgives Toshi and after a trial for Toshi’s treatment to his assistants, Hashimi agrees to help him again and finish the house, giving a moral lesson about the human values of the locals.

Filming Protagonists who do not Act in Africa

Hamisi and the other African characters in *The Song of Bwana Toshi* were not professional actors but locals who agreed to collaborate in the film, and as Hani notes, they belonged to different tribes: Hamisi came from the Isanzu, while other characters like Samuele, were Kikuyu and Mardi, another collaborator was a Lega person from Maniema in Congo (Hani 1966: 146).³ Hani carefully observed the specific cultural codes of these communities, and through their actions, he discovered an uncanny and mysterious universe. This allowed Hani to explore the complex world beyond the filmmaker’s common

³ Hani’s film *Bride of the Andes (Andesu no Hanayome, 1966)* was screened at the National Film Archive of Japan (NFAJ), as part of the programme for the second symposium on ‘Japanese Transnational Cinema’ hosted by Waseda University between 22nd and 23rd July 2019. I am in debt to Japanese Government (MEXT) as well as Professor Nori Morita from Waseda University and Alo Joekalda from NFAJ for their support.

sense and pre-established ideas which he claimed through his writings. He acknowledges that he did not always understand their behaviours but he made efforts to capture this reality in the film (ibid). For example, in one scene, Hamisi and Muze ask Toshi whether he has cows in Japan. Hani wondered why the people in the village had cows and were interested in them as there was barely any grass, their milk was scarce and the locals hardly ever ate meat. However, Hani would later notice that the value of a cow was a fortune and they needed them to be able to marry (Hani 1973: 107).

Here one can find one of Hani's main motivations for traveling to East Africa. First, this remote location allowed him to challenge the reality that is imposed by filmmakers. Second, Hani could put into practice his ideas about filming spontaneous behaviour and capturing the veracity of non-planned and non-scripted actions (Hani 1973: 155). Africa provided Hani a place where he could access a deep level of the human condition by filming characters who behave according to their own intuition —a strategy that he had already explored through his cinematic experiences with children and animals—. According to Hani, the characters on screen did not know cinema, theatre or literature; in other words, they were alien to concepts such as acting, performance and representation. They did not transmute themselves into an 'alter-ego' before the camera and they were not necessarily conscious of being playing a role (Hani 1973: 152). Occasionally, Hani claims to have captured real feelings and emotions, like those of Hamisi toward the young woman who played the role of his wife in the film. Hamisi fell in love with her during the shooting, they would usually eat together and after the filming they usually stayed talking passionately until Hamisi finally proposed to her (Hani 1973: 111).

The social and historical context also ends up playing a role and shaping the narratives of the film. In a sequence before Toshi's trial, images of a meeting in the village where a spokesman talks about the development of the country are followed by an officer telling Toshi that foreigners have only brought violence to their land. The viewer should bear in mind that when Hani filmed *The Song of Bwana Toshi*, Kenya had just achieved its independence from the United Kingdom the year before, and resentment towards foreigners was quite intense. Hani found that even in the independent African countries he visited, most of the technicians and bureaucrats were still foreigners and

there was an atmosphere of mistrust, as the locals were concerned about the possibility of white people retaking the power and discriminating against the black population again (Hani 1966: 139).

Thus, Hani proposes in Africa a cinema that rejects cinema and its artifice. While the characters acted following certain instructions from the film crew, they were not aware that they were making a film (Ibid). Since the cinematic medium was unknown to them, their only base for their acting was remembering how they behaved in past experiences. According to Hani, they did not explain the film plot to the actors- as in any case, they did not seem too interested- but merely presented them with a situation, and showed them the position before the camera (Hani 1973: 152). Therefore, they were left with no choice other than to follow their own instincts, which in the end, projected a more faithful portrayal of these individuals' inner world.



Hani Susumu and Hamisi, during the shooting of *The Song of Bwana Toshi*. Source: Hani 1965: 154.

During the shooting, Hani and his crew also devoted much energy and time to filming wildlife. Hani had already worked observing animals' behaviour in *Zoo Diary* (Dōbutsuen nikki, 1957), which was shot in Ueno Zoo, Tokyo.

The Song of Bwana Toshi features elephants, giraffes, snakes, antelopes and other animals which anticipate Hani's later works on African fauna such as his TV documentaries *The Animal Family* (*Dōbutsu kazoku*, Fuji TV, 1974-1975), *Hani Susumu's Mother Africa* (*Hani Susumu no mazā Afurika*, TBS, 1993-2009) and his film, *A Tale of Africa* (*Afurika monogatari*, 1980). In *The Song of Bwana Toshi*, Toshi bumps into another Japanese man, Onishi (Shimomoto Tsutomu), a passionate photographer of gorillas. Toshi accompanies Onishi to the mountains to take photos of these animals, only to find the dead body of one of them. This sequence reproduces the actual trip of Hani and his crew crossing Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda and reaching the border with Congo to film the gorillas as well as other animals (Hani 1965: 5-16).

In addition, Onishi embodies metaphorically the encounter with Japan outside Japan, a trope that Hani repeatedly uses in his transnational films. Hani uses the relationship between the protagonist and other Japanese characters to renegotiate traditional ways of understanding and representing the concepts of *uchi* (inside) and *soto* (outside). I follow here Creight's argument understanding *uchi* and *soto* as a "general sense that all of Japan creates an *uchi*, a national inside boundary of affiliation, in contrast to everything that is *soto* or outside of Japan" (Creight 2009: 212). According to Creight, foreigners reaffirm this dialectic that founds Japanese identity, as they embody *soto*. However, Hani challenges these forms of 'national' affiliation in *The Song of Bwana Toshi*, where distinction between *uchi* and *soto* becomes increasingly blurred. While at the beginning, Toshi sees the local Africans as an 'other' whose language and culture are incomprehensible, his interactions with the other evasive Japanese, who refuses to live with him, reveals that the idea of *uchi* needs to be redefined. Thus, Hani dismantles this dichotomy *uchi/soto* by forcing the protagonist to engage with the 'other' and find his place outside. Toshi ends up building closer ties with the Africans and these interactions help the viewer rethink the notion of 'otherness' in the film. In the last scenes, the protagonist eventually changes his mindset and attitudes, showing that the 'other' is now his previous self, leaving Japan and the rest of the Japanese in an ambiguous position between the *uchi* and *soto*.

Conclusion

A close study to the transnational dimension of Hani's theories reveals a truly fascinating phenomenon of global flows of ideas, discussions, images and concerns. While it is still essential to assess Hani's approaches to filmmaking in relation the theoretical debates that took place in Japan among postwar culture circles and avant-garde artists, his theoretical stance cannot be completely understood without taking into account Hani's interactions with authors, ideas and film movements beyond Japan. In addition, it is revealing to see how in order to apply his 'filmmaking method', Hani pioneered a kind of transnational production shot in remote places, which allows him to explore worlds that are alien to that of the filmmaker and common Japanese people.

The case study presented here, including both Hani's writings and film, is interesting as an example illustrating how, unlike early Western accounts suggested, the singularities of Japanese Cinema are not necessarily the result of the isolation of Japanese authors. This essentialist and often 'Orientalist' approaches to Japanese Cinema tended to neglect the sensitivity of Japanese filmmakers to foreign ideas and transnational film practices. Hani's case reveals precisely how Japanese Film can be studied as an exceptional place for international exchange of images, conceptual frameworks and filmmaking styles. Examples like this make increasingly evident the need to reformulate the old 'national' paradigm, as Japanese film and media often expanded beyond its national borders. This should not undermine the weight of Japanese aesthetical, philosophical and theoretical tradition but on the contrary, should help us to contextualize it properly within the global film culture.

Biographical Note

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Finding Identity through Style: Seijun Suzuki's *Tokyo Drifter* (*Tōkyō Nagaremono*, 1966)

Maxim Tvorun-Dunn

Abstract

Though never formally identified as part of the 1960s Japanese New Wave, Nikkatsu director Seijun Suzuki is often associated with the movement through his folkloric struggle against studio stylistic conventions, ultimately leading to his firing in 1967. Suzuki's films became increasingly 'camp' throughout his career, contributing to a pop art aesthetic embodying a search for Japanese national filmic identity in a post-occupation era, not dissimilar from the New Wave's primary contributors.

Creating a juxtaposition between the American Western and the Yakuza Film through the set-piece action scenes, *Tokyo Drifter* (1966) depicts a merging of national filmic styles through contrasting representations of violence. *Drifter's* whistling hero, Tetsu functions as a transnational archetype that can be seen as part yakuza and part cowboy.

Through an examination of this film my paper will assess the works of Seijun Suzuki as negotiations with national identity within a transnational context. Observing this film acts as a dialogue between American and Japanese styles and heroes; and how this dialectic places Seijun's objectives in the same line as the wider Japanese New Wave of the time.

Key words: Seijun Suzuki, Genre Studies, Yakuza Eiga, Japanese New Wave

Finding Identity Through Style: Seijun Suzuki's *Tokyo Drifter* (*Tōkyō nagaremono*)

As the origins of the modern *yakuza eiga*¹ (yakuza film) genre coincided with the post-war occupation of Japan by the United States, this genre can provide a useful framework to examine the ways Japanese filmmakers encountered and engaged with the increasing presence of American films and styles through the coming decades. Through textual analysis of a specific work by the idiosyncratic Seijun Suzuki, this paper will examine his yakuza films as transnational dialogues between American and Japanese styles and tropes.

Working under Japan's Nikkatsu studios between 1954 and 1967, Seijun Suzuki became a prolific filmmaker of forty movies directed within only eleven years. Like Sam Fuller, Suzuki is known for embedding formulaistic B-Movies with auteur stylings (Desser 1988:67). First noticeable in his 1963 films *Youth of the Beast* (*Yajū no seishun*, 1963) and *Kanto Wanderer* (*Kantō mushuku*, 1963) Suzuki would lessen the focus on the melodramatic plots of his typical gangster films and instead gradually heighten camp stylings and comic sensibilities. Despite warnings from the studio, Suzuki's later works play less like yakuza flicks and more like absurdist pop art, introducing ever-more vibrant colors, jump-cut editing, and tableaux framing throughout his career. Ultimately Suzuki's refusal to "play it straight" with regards to style lead Nikkatsu to fire Suzuki in 1967 for the perceived incomprehensibility of *Branded to Kill* (*Koroshi no rakuin*, 1967) (Field et al. 1994:28).

Though Suzuki's penchant for style may have been too much for Nikkatsu executives of the time, in retrospect his filmic exaggeration appears as a solution to the increasingly quotidian yakuza genre of the sixties. This emphasis on exaggerated stylings can be viewed as a sort of "camp" art; as defined by Susan Sontag in her seminal "Notes on Camp:"

"[Camp] is one way of seeing the world as an aesthetic phenomenon... not in terms of beauty, but in terms of style... emphasizing texture, sensuous surface, and style at the expense of content." (Sontag 1964:516-517)

¹ Beginning with *Drunken Angel* (*Yoidore Tenshi*, 1948) (Schilling 2003:314)

Through these camp sensibilities and an absurdist presentation of violence, Suzuki's films revel in the formulaic signifiers of Japan's popular gangster films of the time, while abandoning plot and melodrama. As critic Hasumi Shigehiko writes, Suzuki "disorders a 'ready-made' film genre, not by deviating from it or parodying it, but by effective use of previously neglected details" (cited in Field et al. 1994:16). Suzuki likens his stylistic approach of emphasizing genre tropes over narrative content to 'demolition,' arguing that:

Making things is not what counts. The power that destroys them is. For example, when Chusonji, the famous Buddhist temple grounds at Hiraizumi, was still standing, travelers would simply pass it by. I think they only began to notice it after it was in ruins. What is standing now isn't really there. It is just something reflected in our eyes. When it is demolished, the consciousness that it is, or was, there first begins to form. (Suzuki; cited in Satō 1982:224)

In the removal of all but generic signifiers, Suzuki's films act as a search for the identity of the yakuza genre, and by extension a search for a national filmic identity not unlike the primary participants of the Japanese New Wave. This paper will analyze the national and transnational signifiers found within the stylization and structure of Suzuki's penultimate *yakuza eiga* to assess how his films engage with the Japanese New Wave's search for Japanese identity in film. Examining *Tokyo Drifter* (*Tōkyō nagaremono*, 1966) as a juxtaposition between the generic signifiers of the American Western this paper will situate the works of Seijun Suzuki as dialogues between American and Japanese styles and heroes.

Suzuki in Japanese New Wave

As the Japanese New Wave developed during the postwar economic miracle of Japan, the question of identity and the invention of "Japaneseness" became a key topic of exploration within the New Wave in response to increasing visibility of American styles and political conflicts (Desser 1988:76). Increasingly, youth and later New Wave films presented corporeal images of foreign bodies as reminders of US presence, and references to

the student protests against ANPO appear in several² New Wave works as indicative of Japan's struggle for national identity (Centeno Martin 2016:155). Works by Nagisa Oshima act as dialectics analyzing elements of Japanese Identity: In *Night and Fog in Japan (Nihon no Yoru to Kiri, 1960)* Oshima uses national memory of the ANPO protests to inspect the political divides of Japanese revolutionaries and generational gap between post-war students and their wartime teachers. In *Death by Hanging (Kōshikei, 1968)* Oshima assesses national identity and state power through the (in)distinction between Japanese authority figures and an arrested Korean. In his book on Japanese New Wave, *Eros Plus Massacre*, David Desser defines a key characteristic of new wave filmmaking as “a radicalization of traditional forms,” later quoting from Carol Sorgenfrei that these films dealt with “the fragmentation of reality on the general level and the fragmentation of identity on the individual level” (Desser 1988:24). Filmmakers within the New Wave expanded upon and modified the traditional styles of the Japanese Golden Age of the 1950s, questioning standards of presentation in order to find filmic identity within the medium.

While never officially a filmmaker of the Japanese New Wave, his folkloric subversion of stylistic standards in the face of Nikkatsu execs associate Suzuki with the greater New Wave's rejection of traditional cinema. As noted by Satō Tadao, a key feature of Suzuki's later films that align him with Japan's New Wave is the use of Brechtian theatrics (Satō 1982:227). The bright red background behind a gangster suddenly switching to white as he is gunned down by Tetsu in *Tokyo Drifter*, or the bird and butterfly designs masking the screen in *Branded to Kill*, remind the audience of the overt artificiality of Suzuki's films. Bertolt Brecht's suggestion that the alienation effect is “necessary for the criticism of society and for historical reporting on changes already accomplished” (Brecht and Bentley 1961:136) had great sway over the left-leaning filmmakers of the New Wave in Japan as well as France³ and elsewhere. Unlike Nagisa Oshima's or Shohei Imamura's use of

² Examples include *Night and Fog in Japan (Nihon no Yoru to Kiri, Nagisa Oshima, 1960)* and *The Insect Woman (Nippon Konchūki, Shohei Imamura, 1968)*

³ Most notably within the films of Jean Luc Godard and André Téchiné (Reeder 2011:68-69) (Marshall 2007:12)

Brechtian freeze-frames to confrontationally alienate the audience in *Night and Fog in Japan* and *The Insect Woman* (*Nippon Konchūki*, 1968), Suzuki employs these inserts with less theoretical or philosophical intention and instead uses them when they appear most interesting.

An example of Suzuki's use of alienating effects appears around the mid-point of *Tokyo Drifter*: just before Tetsu has a shootout on the railway tracks of an incoming train, a montage of shots showing Tetsu walking through snow all include a dark filter at various angles dividing the screen. Each of these filtered shots, though overtly artificial, do not aggressively force the viewer out of engagement with the film as it would if employed by Godard. Instead these filters act to make the shots more visually balanced. One wide shot in particular of Tetsu following a path in the snow would without this filter be a heavily imbalanced composition, but as the filter draws more attention to the left of the screen this is not the case. In this fashion, Suzuki's moments of seemingly Brechtian theatrics are not used to distance the audience from the psychology of the scene as Brecht would have intended, but instead simply to make an otherwise utilitarian shot more interesting, with the byproduct of making the audience come to notice the artificiality of the filmic medium and gangster genre.

Suzuki may not have maintained the same degree of attention towards contemporary political events as Nagisa Oshima or Shohei Imamura, nor the freedom to produce works unencumbered by genre as his contemporaries in the New Wave. However his attempts to examine and push beyond the conventions of genre cement Seijun Suzuki within the broader context of the Japanese New Wave. As does and his grappling with the identity of and within Japanese film; as I will assess in the following sections.

Tokyo Drifter as Camp Art

From the black and white opening shots of *Tokyo Drifter* Seijun Suzuki sets up a world where archetype is more important than character. High contrast lighting leaves the faces of each character indistinguishable with only the sunglasses of the villainous gangster Otsuka and the light suit of our protagonist taking-a-beating as signifying features of the film's characters. A brief extradiegetic moment of color properly introduces us to

the heroic Tetsu as we see him acrobatically gun down a group of gangsters while wearing a bright orange suit against a black background. The contrast of this hurricane of violence to Tetsu's current predicament acts as filmic shorthand for a Takakura Ken style "Young Hero"⁴ archetype; loyal to his *oyabun's* (mob-boss) attempts to reform from a life of crime (Barret 1989:65-67). Tetsu's loyalty in refusing to fight is further reinforced when Tetsu finds his broken 'Colt' pistol colorized a similar orange as his earlier suit. At no point in Suzuki's film are characters given dimension through emphasis on psychology or conversation, instead Suzuki uses each character to express genre clichés through visuals first and dialogue second.

A common plot of sixties *yakuza eiga*, "concerns a feud between a small, traditional gang and a larger, more ruthless group," where good is associated with traditional and bad with corporations (Chaplin 2018:360). Visual evidence of this cliché within *Tokyo Drifter* can be seen in even a cursory glance at presentation of the remaining cast. Alongside the loyal young gangster, Otsuka acts as the villainous modern mob boss residing in a club where corporate modernity is expressed through sixties pop dancing and a myriad of colors. The homely and traditional *oyabun* Mr. Kurata is presented in muted sweaters and owns a building decorated with Roman frescos. Tetsu's singing love interest, Chiharu, works in the architecturally astonishing Club Alulu with its emphasis on pure empty space signifying her innocence and pureness that the 'young hero' must typically defend (Barret 1989:67). Seijun's emphasis on style defining the events of the film can best be identified as a Sontag's concept of "camp art" with its utilization of artificiality and texture/style over content. As Suzuki likened his filmmaking to a form of demolition, *Tokyo Drifter* removes any moment of melodrama or mundanity, until all that remains are stylistic signifiers of generic conventions, frequently stylishly introducing one conventional moment and then jump-cutting to the next.

A humorous example of Suzuki's camp 'style-over-content' approach occurs early on, when love-interest Chiharu is kidnapped by a group of gangsters. The scene opens with a level shot of the public space of a busy

⁴ Gregory Barret describes Takakura Ken's "Young Hero[s]" as ever-loyal to their *oyabun* and always in platonic sexual repression towards their pure love-interests (1989:67)

highway, but then tilts into a Dutch-angle to look on the hidden underworld of the alley below. As the gangsters' racing-striped car enters the frame slow tempo triangle and saxophone music evocative of sixties crime films, particularly *The Pink Panther* (Blake Edwards, 1963) plays while the gangsters load Chiharu in the car and seemingly escape; only for the reveal that Tetsu is driving the car. Tetsu incapacitates the gangsters through reckless driving and the film then immediately hard cuts to Tetsu and Chiharu safe and sound at an arcade in the evening. The two are shown playing a pellet-gun game together as an act of obvious foreshadowing for the violence to come later. In this cut between scenes Suzuki makes it clear he is not interested in showing the details of how Tetsu and Chiharu made their escape. As the Yakuza genre was at its peak in 1966 it would be well assumed that audiences knew the conventions of these films, so Suzuki, like Jean-Luc Godard with *Breathless* (*À bout de souffle*, 1960), shows only moments visually relevant to audiences and cuts out everything in between.

The repeated use of the theme song further adds to the film's camp "demolition" of the genre; similar to Robert Altman's subversion of the noir genre in 1973's *The Long Goodbye*. Both films reuse variations of a core theme song played with several music genres and instruments to highlight the repetition and internal variation of their respective genre clichés. The fact that Suzuki was commissioned to popularize the song through his film seems only to add to the film's cynical critique of the heavily commercialized genre (Schilling 2003:101).

Tokyo Drifter and Westerns

Through Suzuki's camp Art approach to highlighting the artifice of the Yakuza genre, Seijun's film manages to not only attack gangster films but also to shed light on the inherent artifice of any film adhering to presupposed tropes, regardless of national boundaries. Within *Tokyo Drifter* particular emphasis on this boundaryless artificiality of genre is aimed towards the Hollywood western. During the taxi ride from the arcade, Chiharu invites Tetsu home, which he seemingly agrees to, but as Chiharu leaves the cab Tetsu closes the door and drives off. This behavior towards Chiharu will be repeated multiple times throughout the film and acts as *Drifter's*

representation of the conflict between *giri* (duty) and *ninjō* (personal feelings) typical of Yakuza films of the time (Hanley 2011). As is typical of the genre, *giri* for the most part wins out over *ninjo* but in the conclusion when it is revealed that Tetsu's boss has betrayed him, a conflict is created over whom this sense of duty exists for. This section will discuss how the resolution of this conflict through Tetsu's transformation to a masterless drifter marks this film's complicated association with the western.

In accordance with Japanese New Wave's search for Japaneseeness in response to increased visibility of American bodies and products, much of *Tokyo Drifter*'s structure can be conceptualized as a transnational dialectic between Japanese and American signifiers. Aside from a few minor scuffles and getaways, *Tokyo Drifter* has three major action set pieces: one in the wintery town of Shonai, another at the Western Cabaret in the southern port-city of Sasebo, and ultimately the final shootout in the Alulu club. Of note about this structure is the juxtaposition of the battles in Shonai and Sasebo. Within the wintery setting of Shonai, the architecture of the city is comprised entirely of traditional style Japanese houses and the weapons wielded by the gangsters of both sides consist primarily of Japanese swords and spears, with only a few guns mixed among the combatants. When action erupts in Shonai, Tetsu comments that his pistol has a firing range of 10 meters; the camera pans and zooms to a pair of sandals on the ground, then pans towards the enemy yakuza, providing a marker for Tetsu's shooting distance. When Tetsu fires and hits a thug in the face, Suzuki's close-up emphasizes the gore of a now missing eye.

Though the technical details of combat are present in many English language war films of the time, Suzuki creates an association between Japanese signifiers and realities of violence.⁵ He juxtaposes this with an association between American signifiers and absurdity: the Western saloon fight in Sasebo is an absurdist circus of action and slapstick comedy with jabs at post-war American occupation and cowboy media. Though the fight is started by a gang out to find Tetsu, the fight itself is an all-out brawl with no clear objectives; the clearest distinction between the battle's sides is the juxtaposition of American soldiers and Japanese patrons. One shot features

⁵ A similar emphasis on attack distance can be seen in *The Dam Busters* (Michael Anderson, 1955)

a group of drunken and battered American's being marched by Japanese women up to the bar counter the women are seated on; when told to stand at attention the men turn only to be bashed on the head and seemingly knocked out, only to get back up again moments later when ordered. In the film's most baffling cut, an upskirt shot of a woman hanging from a balcony transitions to a mustached man looking up and laughing (suggesting the previous shot was from his point of view), when a blob of whipped cream-like foam lands on his face, with the created assumption that it must have come from the woman's bloomers. At one-point Tetsu is even shot in the back but when it is assumed he has died, he begins whistling the theme song and the shooter commits suicide for his failure.

All of this combined with the fight's sheer duration (lasting about 4 minutes uninterrupted) mark this scene as a massive leap into absurdism and commentary towards American cowboy films as unrealistic and nonsensical; as it is the introduction of a blatantly Western signifier that sparks this shift in tone. A comparison of these two fight scenes reveals Suzuki's distaste of American Hollywood films, where realism (through attention to technical details like firing range and gore) is associated with Japanese characteristics while absurd over-the-top comedic violence is associated with American genres and soldiers. This would not be the first time Seijun Suzuki portrayed American soldiers in post-war Japan in a negative light, as his earlier *Underworld Beauty* (*Ankokugai no bijo*, 1958) and *Gate of Flesh* (*Nikutai no mon*, 1964) included a number of similarly drunken unruly sailors.

However, *Tokyo Drifter's* relationship with Western conventions is more complicated than a simple dichotomy. As hinted at earlier, Tetsu's life as a drifter has a number of similarities to the Hollywood Western. By shifting his sense of *giri* from loyalty towards his traitorous boss to loyalty to the life of the drifter, Tetsu's archetype transforms from unquestioning loyal 'young hero' to a '*nagaremono*,' (drifter) similar to the *rōnin* of Samurai films or importantly, their Hollywood counterpart of the solitary cowboy. His final walk into the distance mirrors the final shots of *The Searchers* (John Ford, 1956) or *Shane* (George Steven's, 1953), and similarly Tetsu's relationship with Chiharu mirror's Shane's relationship to Marian in the latter film, both of whom stoically rebuke the advances of love-interests. Unlike the lone wandering of the noir hero, whose flaneurie acts as a vehicle for the

audience to examine class structure from his perspective, the wanderings of a cowboy are typically less subject to audience scrutiny. Rather the western hero is an outsider coming from the untamed world to solve the problems of the civilized; as such the bulk of his wandering is typically relegated to an introductory and/or closing shot as he enters or leaves the civilized realm of the camera frame. Similar to this structure, when Tetsu leaves Tokyo to become a drifter his wanderings are shown only in a montage of landscapes. Suzuki does not let us walk with Tetsu in his travels, and when he appears in later scenes it is either in a transitory state: his brief wanderings into the Western saloon; or as a temporary re-entry to solve civilized problems: his return to the Tokyo to confront the Otsuka. When he leaves Tokyo again at the finale his departure signals a return to the wanderings of an urban cowboy. Similar to Suzuki's employment of a simultaneously repetitive yet varied soundtrack, the shift from yakuza to cowboy seems to implicate both national genres as being bound to rigid fill-in-the-blanks conventions; where it makes little difference as to the national origin of the hero. Tetsu borrows American cowboy archetype while maintaining the costuming and setting of a Japanese yakuza⁶.

While this statement may initially seem in conflict with the earlier described juxtaposition between national styles in battle sequences, this can be resolved through analysis of the final fight scene. When the final battle occurs, it is within the strikingly built Club Alulu, beginning in total darkness aside from spotlights on the characters and a red lit donut-shaped statue. When Tetsu, now dressed in all white, appears the lights come up revealing the strange and empty architecture of the club. The ensuing battle takes place mostly in the open, using only Doric columns as cover. The emphasis on spacial emptiness creates a minimalist effect, where the battle taking place makes little realistic or tactical sense, but makes compositional sense as the placing of combatants makes for an incredibly well-balanced framing of scant few objects. This minimalism effectively encapsulates Suzuki's strategy of filmic 'demolition' as the pure white coloring and empty space

⁶ Similar to the ways which *taiyōzoku* characters "adapt a pseudo-American identity but at the same time resist it," though in *Tokyo Drifter's* case "resist" may better be thought of as maintaining the ability to choose which signifiers to adopt (Centeno Martin 2016:157).

quite literally removes all details not immediately relevant to the scene and setting. At one point during the battle Tetsu rolls his gun to the center of the empty room and the other gangsters wait for him to pick it up again to begin firing in a moment very much in-line with the ‘rules’ of a western quick-draw duel. When comparing this battle to the two other set-piece fights of the film a structure is revealed not as a juxtaposition between nationalities but as a dialectic between Japanese and American modes of representation. Where the first fight stands for realism and distinctly Japanese aesthetics, the second presents absurdist and comedic American sentiments, albeit taking less from any existing Hollywood film of the time and more from American and British pop artists like Andy Warhol or Richard Hamilton. Finally the Alulu battle mixes aesthetics: keeping the grounded gunplay of the first but reducing the environment to a pop minimalism not unlike Edward Ruscha’s barren architectural paintings. Just as Tetsu keeps his sense of *giri* but uses it to change archetypes from the reformed gangster into the cowboy-like wanderer, Suzuki’s film suggests a process of progression with American styles, where traditional elements merge with new ideas to produce unique styles.

Furthering *Drifter*’s association with Westerns, a number of shots share the signifiers that cowboy films use to place their works in the desolate west. An example of this is the repeated shot of Tokyo Tower appearing behind a naked tree. About this shot scholar Norimasa Morita writes, “The naked tree is the representation of the defenseless yakuza’s prickly character and the tower as the only sign signifying that the actions are set in Tokyo stands for aloneness and isolation. Tokyo is [an] urban desert and there is no haven for the lonely yakuza” (Morita 2013:144). This use of the naked tree is very similar to that of a prickly cactus or bull skull in a western film, setting a lonesome inhospitable place for the oft-whistling lone wanderer. Adding to the connection between these shots and westerns is an examination of modernization, where the tree stands for old traditional values while the newly built Tokyo Tower acts as a stand-in for modernism encroaching in the same fashion as the railroad in *Once Upon a Time in The West* (*C’era una volta il West*, Sergio Leone, 1968). In the final uses of these shots, after it is revealed that Kurata has betrayed Tetsu, the same composition is used but the sun has gone down, making only the naked tree visible, stressing Tetsu’s abandonment by a modernized Japan. In context with the greater discussion

between national identities *Tokyo Drifter* presents this adoption of western signifiers and fear of abandonment by a modern world can be read as an urge to adapt to the influx of Americanization in Japan; borrowing styles as needed while maintaining national identity.

Conclusion

In *Tokyo Drifter* Suzuki combines the juxtaposition of Japanese and American films with an appropriation of camp aesthetics in order to remove all but generic signifiers. The combination of these two devices acts to suggest genre as a tool that may surpass national borders and may borrow transnationally while maintaining a local aesthetic. *Tokyo Drifter* provides an optimistic dialectic where American and Japanese styles may form together into a transnational aesthetic combining the two approaches and adhering strictly to neither culture; where a protagonist may be simultaneously cowboy and yakuza without sacrificing either.

Though he may never have officially been a part of the Japanese New Wave, *Tokyo Drifter* demonstrates Seijun Suzuki as keenly able to engage with the adoption of a transnational Japanese cinematic and personal identity. By revealing Kurata's betrayal of Tetsu, the traditional and archetypal relationship between loyal *oyabun* and young hero is subverted. Tetsu's shift of archetype is only mended through engagement with the western cowboy archetype. Likewise, the film itself shifts from *mise-en-scène* of Tokyo and traditional Japanese architecture, to an American western saloon, to an abstract postmodern mish-mash of nonspecific national architectures in the Club Alulu. Read more broadly, this dialectic between traditional Japanese and modern American scenes and tropes can be viewed as a response to Japan's defeat at the end of the Second World War. Suzuki's film seems to suggest post-war Japan may learn from its betrayal-by wartime militarism⁷ and interaction with American occupation to create a new transnational identity; on and off-screen.

⁷ Which associated itself with the "revitaliz[ation] of traditional virtues" (Dower 1986:3).

Biographical Note

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Action Cut: Screenplay Analysis of Yasujirō Ozu's *Equinox Flower* (*Higanbana*) Remarks on the Screenplay and the Aesthetics of Montage in a Transcultural Comparison

Andreas Becker

Abstract

The text analyzes Yasujirō Ozu remarks in the original screenplay of *Equinox Flower* (*Higanbana*) and asks the question if Ozu used the special cutting technique intentionally. After a discussion of Edward Dmytryk's theory of montage and the term 'action cut', the screenplay of *Equinox Flower* and a close reading of a scene the article comes to the conclusion that Ozu must have been well aware of his uncommon cutting style. This could be shown clearly by comparing his "a-c" remarks with the film.

Key words: Yasujirō Ozu, Screenplay, Equinox Flower

Forms of editing

In his book *On Film Editing* the director and cutter Edward Dmytryk distinguishes two forms of the montage: the 'Hollywood' montage and the 'European' montage. The former is based on a transition, which is often unnoticed and tells the story using indirect indications. The latter is characterized by "straight cuts" (Dmytryk 1983: 135) and uses contrasts, which Dmytryk illustrates using Sergei Eisenstein's famous staircase scene in *Odessa in Battleship Potemkin* (*Bronenosets Potemkin*, 1925) (Dmytryk 1983: 135). I want to show the example of Yasujirō Ozu's *Equinox Flower* (*Higanbana*, 1958b), where the Japanese director chooses a third type of

montage that combines the Hollywood and European styles. Ozu's montage is transcultural in a way that he combines the two styles. He merges them. The main characteristic of his 'Japanese style' is then a kind of hybridization which knows the contexts well but does not stick on them. Ozu tells his stories using a kind of montage, which is indeed inspired by the Hollywood aesthetics with its 'invisible' cuts, but breaks (western) conventions of montage by also showing uncommon contrasts. Regarding his space and dialogue presentation (the 'shot-reverse shot'), this has been described previously by David Bordwell (1988), Kristin Thompson (1988), Edward Branigan (1976) and others who performed a structural analysis of the films. But it remains unclear whether Ozu used his technique of montage with an *awareness* of the existing contexts or if he just followed cultural habits of reception.

Herein, I will discuss these uncertainties using a close reading of the original working screenplay of *Equinox Flower* (Ozu 1958a) using at least one example: the *action cuts, the cutting into the movement*.

Reviewing the original *Equinox Flower* screenplay with Ozu's remarks

The *Equinox Flower* screenplay was published by Kazuo Inoue in Ozu's *Collected Works* in Japanese, but unfortunately without the remarks and abbreviations I want to discuss here (Ozu 2003: 305-340). In autumn 2014, I had the opportunity to sift through the original screenplay at the *Kawakita-Foundation Tōkyō* (Ozu 1958a) (Fig. 1).¹

As in most of his works, Ozu co-wrote the screenplay with Kōgo Noda; it is based on the novel with the same name by the Japanese writer Ton Satomi (Satomi 2003: 166-223). The screenplay is mainly a printed dialogue text with necessary additional information briefly provided. It is interesting that Ozu inserted many remarks regarding the shooting, and that he even

¹ Thanks to the *Kawakita-Foundation*, especially Yukiko Wachi, Akiko Ozu, Shōchiku, especially Kiwamu Satō and Hiromi Fujī, for the opportunity to investigate and publish parts of the screenplays and other materials. Also thanks to Kentarō Kawashima, Chisa Tanimoto for helping with some Kanji-readings and Simon Frisch for the productive discussions.



III. 1. The front page of Ozu's screenplay *Equinox Flower* (Printed with friendly permission of the *Kawakita-Foundation*).

supplemented and changed the dialogue in some parts. However, he primarily used a handwritten symbol and sign system throughout the whole screenplay, and provided notes on the way the screenplay would be put into a filmic and acting practice. Ozu uses this system in other screenplays so we can take a further examination on that topic. In addition, the questions should be raised if Ozu followed a Shōchiku standardized studio-technique, or if he used special notes for his own films. I provide my interpretation only after a close reading of the film *Equinox Flower* (Ozu 1958b).

As is usual in Japanese books, Ozu's storyboard scrolls from right to left, and the script flows counterclockwise. Ozu's remarks are written with a pencil or crayon, and are mostly placed in special text passages. What is first noticed is a broad red line, which runs continuously across the top margin. There are also some small graphic sketches and other references written by hand in the screenplay.

Numerous colored symbols and boxes are used to comment on the text. Furthermore, there are numbers enclosed in circles written in pencil in the upper margins. These are at the starting point of every scene, and are ticked

off with colored pencil. Perhaps these are attributions to the scenes, but this hypothesis must be proved; Ozu did not explain this symbol and sign system. Other preserved screenplays, storyboards, notices and diaries could clarify some of these notations (Ozu 1993), but a phenomenological analysis and the correlations with the film was the procedure I chose. The film as a phenomenon (as it appears) is our reference then.²

Even at first sight, the character abbreviations ‘a-c’ attract attention. They alternate between uppercase and lowercase letters, and sometimes are within round or angle brackets. Thus, one sees the variations ‘A-C’, ‘(A-C)’, ‘(a-c)’, or ‘<a-c>’ in the manuscript. Altogether, there are nearly 100 such notations (exactly spoken 96), 74 of which being ‘a-c’ notations. Therefore, I concentrate on that the latter notations.

An important remark was noticed in the *Akibiyori* screenplay (*Late Autumn*, 1960; Ozu 1960a). In this screenplay, two pages contain notes that were probably by hand with a fountain pen: “action cut” and “<action cut>” (Ozu 1960a: d-4 and e-14). I used these clues to apply the 89 ‘a-c’ remarks (including variations) written in the screenplay to the filmic material of *Equinox Flower* in an attempt to solve the mystery of the cipher. In all cases, I noticed that there was a montage, and all were easily and precisely identified. Ozu also cuts in other cases not marked with a-c in the screenplay, but the marked cases are obviously important moments for Ozu. Indeed, we see that the indicated montages are usually more complex and, in terms of content, more important than the unmarked montages. Sometimes, they do not seem so important; in these cases, the ‘a-c’ marks are perhaps practical notes for shooting because the director or the editor has to look more closely at the cutting and the connection of the movements.

About the practice of the action cut

Let us return to Dmytryk’s text, where he establishes different rules of montage. The first rule is that one should not cut without an intention: “*Never*

² For a reading of Edmund Husserl’s phenomenological picture theory as a film theory, the importance of comparative aesthetics and the term ‘cultural world’ (‘Kulturwelt’) see Becker (2020b: 11-33), for a summary in English and Japanese see also Becker (2020b: 334-339).

make a cut without a positive reason“ (Dmytryk 1984: 23, cursive printing in the original). According to the second rule, one should prefer cutting longer passages over shorter ones: “When undecided about the exact frame to cut on, cut *long* rather than short“. (Dmytryk 1984: 23, cursive printing in the original). The third rule is of greatest importance, because it is found in Ozu’s films so easily: One should cut *into* the movement, which means that the two parts of the fragments should *both* contain a movement: “The cutter should look for some movement of the actor who holds the viewer’s attention and use that movement to trigger the cut from one scene to the next. A broad action will offer the easier cut, but even a slight movement of some part of the player’s body can serve to initiate a cut which will be ‘smooth’ or invisible (Dmytryk 1984: 27). The viewer’s attention can only focus on *one* of the superimposed movements, either the intradiegetic of the protagonist *or* the extradiegetic of the cut. Usually, we would concentrate on the movement of the actor. Therefore, the montage uses its transition to establish a second, subliminal layer, which usually is in itself unperceived, even if it is the premise of the filmic reception. The viewer is misdirected, as in a magic trick, and is distracted by the body movements of the actor. Even if one knows that a cut has occurred, and even for the trained eye, it is hard to be attentive to the ‘unseen montage’ of the action cut. The protagonist is seen as an entity, but phenomenologically speaking, this impression consists of and is seen through a synthesis of kaleidoscope-like filmic perspectives, from which the virtual center is the body of the protagonist—or the portrayed room.

The continuous narration can only emerge if the *Hollywood* cutter has a micro timing. The cut must be adjusted very precisely; only then the subterfuge takes place: “Three frames too much or too little on one side or the other can effectively spoil the match” (Dmytryk 1984: 24).

This is surely a mostly transcultural signature of human perception that such a movement, which shifts *between* the montage, is unnoticed and that the scene seems to be moving fluidly. The difference between the aesthetic and narrative allocation of such montages differs greatly between cultures, and vary tremendously even from director to director. Mostly, this technique is used to show movement in space. I want to show through one scene of *Equinox Flower* how Ozu proceeds and where his style differs from Hollywood cutting.

The cutter in *Equinox Flower* was Yoshiyasu Hamamura, who did the montages for 13 of Ozu's films, beginning with *Todake no kyōdai* (*The Brothers and Sisters of the Toda Family*, 1941), and for the late classics, including *Tōkyō monogatari* (*Tōkyō story*, 1953), *Ohayōu* (*Good Morning*, 1959), *Sanma no aji* (*An autumn afternoon*, 1962), and *Akibiyori* (*Late Autumn*, 1960). However, Ozu obviously had such concrete ideas of how important the montages in some scenes were that he marked those sections of the screenplays.

Action cuts and 'silent cuts'. Ozu's *Equinox Flower* notes: scene analysis

Dmytryk's examples can be concretely traced in *Equinox Flower*, and one can show how Ozu's work differs from the Hollywood system: "In a full shot, a player enters an office, approaches a desk, and sits down in the desk chair. The full shot has established the scene's setting, and it is now necessary to zero in on the character as he proceeds about his business, so a close shot of him at the desk is in order" (Dmytryk 1984: 27).

Dmytryk described such a grounded, fundamental and (in Western filmic practice) self-evident convention that it seems unnecessary to waste words describing it. But it is interesting that Dmytryk tries to bridge the discontinuity of the cut with the movement of the actor, and that he thinks this is absolutely necessary. *While* sitting down, which is a fraction of a second; the temporal gap, is the most privileged moment for the cut: "[...] the cut would probably be made at just about the point where the seat of the chair and that of the player are about to collide" (Dmytryk 1984: 28).

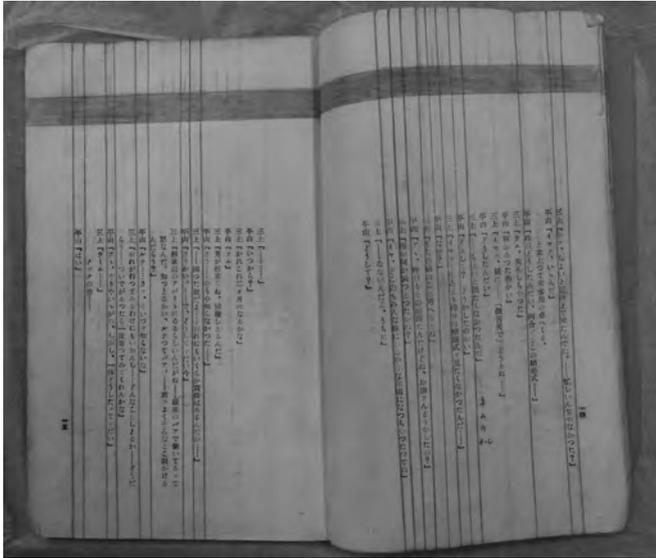
Therefore the movement, enduring through the cut frames, seems to be homogeneous and links the images as a kind of red thread: "The important consideration here is that there be just enough movement to catch the viewer's attention" (Dmytryk 1984: 29).

How does Ozu work? Let us look at one scene of *Equinox Flower* (Ill. 2). It is set in Wataru Hirayama's (played by Shin Saburi) office. His classmate Shukichi Mikami (Chishū Ryū) visits him and asks him for a favor. He is ashamed, one sees it even in the way he walks, of the behavior of his daughter Fumiko (Yoshiko Kuga). She works in a bar, and this is why



###Ill. 2. Montage in Ozu's *Equinox Flower*. Wataru Hirayama (Shin Saburi) and Shukichi Mikami (Chishū Ryū).

Mikami does not join the wedding of the daughter of his other classmate Toshihiko Kawai (Nobuo Nakamura). The conversation is superficial because Hirayama already knows the circumstances. So the whole dialogue is more gesture-like than content based. Noteworthy is the montage where Mikami waits before the door as he enters the office and talks with Hirayama; they are visually separated by cuts. The conversation partners are not shown even in one shot together. Only the edge of Hirayama's desk, a motionless object, connects both because it is overlapped in the two shots. Even when Hirayama stands up, is *in movement*, the following cut does not show him. We see only Mikami, standing solitary in the doorstep. Here the two shots are optically stringed together, but the movement, as an interconnecting element that guarantees continuous narration, is being omitted. Then, a short dialogue follows (Ozu 1958a:14; Ozu 1958b, 16' minute). Let us have a look at the screenplay (ill. 3):



###III. 3. The passage from Ozu's screenplay *Equinox Flower* and his remarks (printed with friendly permission of the *Kawakita-Foundation*).

The Japanese in transcription (page 14, scene 17):

Hirayama: “dōshitandai”

Mikami: “--- choitodetakunakattanda.” Hirayama no a-c

Hirayama: “dōshite? dōkashitanokai”

Translated into English:

Hirayama: “What’s going on?”

Mikami: “... I likely will not want to go out” Hirayama’s a-c

Hirayama: “Why? What’s going on?”

The cut analyzed above is not commented in Ozu’s screenplay, but now, as Hirayama sits on the armchair together with Mikami, Ozu notes: “Hirayama no a-c”. Let us read this abbreviation as *Hirayama no action cut*, which can be translated as: *Hirayama’s action cut*.

What is so special that Ozu makes such a remark? Let us just look at the montage-ensemble. Again Ozu breaks Dmytryk’s rule. Hirayama talks and sits down in a long shot. It is shown how he sits a moment and just *after that* he looks into the camera, which means the dialogue is intradiegetically spoken to

Mikami. One could reckon that, by such a connecting cut, one does not need to make a preparation because the body movement from one take to the other is in fact not undertaken. Ozu's film pauses a little, and even the dialogue just begins with the frontal cut on Hirayama. Why does Ozu remark that there must be an *action cut*? Nothing moves.

I think we can answer this question only when we assume that Ozu understands even *waiting, pausing* as an *action*. That is why he treats even the quiet moments in ways that, in the following cut, everything is attuned: gesture, facial expression, posture and even the order of the objects. The center of Ozu's attention is not the movement in the sense of moving forward, but the quietness, that even in exterior space *nothing* must happen between shot and shot—and that this *nothing* knows valence: the inward movement, the imagination. Thus, he uses a 'silent cut', which he adopted from Hollywood cinema for action, and adapts it to the silence. Silence knows many varieties, and to picture that is as difficult as adopting a Hollywood action-cut to the movement in the scene that was analyzed above. One needs to think of the metaphysics of nothingness, emptiness, renunciation. We are irritated because in the Hollywood system there is no rest without a reason. Ozu's film is made of such an unspoken, silent space. But we must shift our attitude to be receptive enough to follow his narration. Even in the micro-narration of the montage, a shifting of the premises is taking place. And Ozu marks it even with *action cut* ('a-c'), but that means a cultural adaption *without the premise from Hollywood cinema*. Transculturality in this regard is a way of overlaying contexts and a kind of hybridization of filmic conventions with other cultural traditions. Seen from the point of the filmic spectator it is a process of resonance in perception. Ozu is making something new out of something old by restructuring it in a creative and open-minded way, a reminiscence to Hollywood without repeating it. Ozu brings the rules of narration which we mostly have taken for granted in a process of resonance. He explores the filmic history and refreshes it by crossing the (narrative) borders.

Biographical Note

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Filmography

Ozu, Yasujirō (1958b): *Higanbana, Equinox Flower*, Yasujirō Ozu 1957-1962 DVD-Box meisaku serekushon II, Shōchiku.

Ders. (1958c): *Higanbana (Equinox Flower)*, Criterion Collection (2007).

Ders. (1960b): *Akibiyori, Late Autumn*, Yasujirō Ozu 1957-1962 DVD-Box meisaku serekushon II, Shōchiku.

Ders. (1960c): *Akibiyori (Late Autumn)*, Criterion Collection (2007).

(This is a shortened version of chapter 5 of Becker 2020b: 124-177, with friendly permission of the publisher *transcript*)

Soundtracking a New ‘Japaneseness’ — Musical Aesthetic and Aspiration in Japan’s Economic Bubble

Laurence Green

Abstract

Japanese animation (anime) has become one of Japan’s most popular cultural exports, but the audio component of this audio-visual medium has to date been largely ignored in English-language scholarship. Beginning in the 1980s, buoyed by the socio-economic backdrop of Japan’s economic bubble, music began to take on a larger role in the emerging ‘media mix’ of associated product (eg. CDs, toys, model kits, VHS) that accompanied the production and consumption of anime.

This paper takes as its focus the career of multi-million-selling pop producer Tetsuya Komuro to illustrate how the nature of anime music became increasingly transnational in nature during the years of Japan’s booming economy. Spurred on by his time spent in the UK, where he was influenced by the budding rave culture he found there, Komuro quickly became known for the synthesised, Western-influenced sound of his productions, the soundtrack for a new breed (*shinjinrui*) of twenty-something consumers living in life’s fast lane. Both generating and reflecting a new image of Japanese affluence and aspiration, this music was consumed at a national level, but crucially, was representative of wider global trends in pop cultural aestheticism. Incorporating a mix of Japanese and English lyrics, Komuro’s music allows us to unpack the question of an ‘auditory Japaneseness’ and its role within the wider socio-cultural backdrop of the time.

Key words: Anime, Japanese Music, Jpop, Japanese composers, Soundtracks

Introduction

The term ‘anime’ is used to refer to animation originating from Japan, traditionally hand-drawn, although increasingly incorporating computer generated elements, and can be understood as a specific artistic style or medium, encompassing within it a wide spread of distinct genres. Although early examples of Japanese animation date back as far as the early 1900s, the beginnings of what is typically seen as ‘anime’ are generally linked to the work of Osamu Tezuka in 1960s, where, influenced by the Western animation of Walt Disney, he introduced many of the aesthetic archetypes now associated with anime. Historical accounts of the Japanese animation industry see the burst of activity in the 1960s surrounding the landmark release of Osamu Tezuka’s *Astro Boy* (1963) as a watershed moment, marking the ‘beginning of a new age in Japanese animation’ (Clements 2013: 116). This was then followed by a ‘long 70s’; a gestation period of sorts, in which incremental technical and stylistic advances in anime-as-medium bubbled away beneath a veneer of relative stability (Clements 2013: 155). The 1980s, in contrast, saw change happening on a far more rapid, dynamic level. Expanding from 324 individual animated productions in the 1970s, production in the 1980s boomed to a total of 926 works across the decade (Anime News Network), driven by a sudden expansion in ‘adult-oriented’ material and the commercial prospects entailed by the arrival of home video. Indeed, Japanese home-video sales of anime increased from 2.7 billion Yen in 1983 to 28.4 billion Yen in 1989, indicative of the booming economy of the time and the increased availability of investment capital which was working its way through the production system (Clements 2013: 157).

As a fundamentally audio-visual medium, music plays a key role in defining the aesthetic and wider ‘value’ of anime for its audiences. Taking centre stage in this paper is composer Tetsuya Komuro, whose music for anime such as *Vampire Hunter D* (Kyūketsuki Hantā Dī, Toyō Ashida, 1985) and *City Hunter* (Shitī Hantā, Kenji Kodama, 1987) preceded his rise to fame as a multi million-selling record producer for some of Japan’s biggest popstars in the nineties. Komuro, in particular, is useful to focus on because his musical career incorporates both traditionally composed ‘background music’ (BGM) as well as the vocal-led ‘Opening’ and ‘Ending’ theme songs

that invariably accompany anime, allowing us to trace evolutions in both the style and application of his music across a defined period of time.

By examining Komuro's career and output in closer detail, as well as the societal backdrop he and his contemporaries were creating music in, I will look to interrogate to what extent we can envision them as specifically transnational pop cultural outputs within the context of what John Fiske describes as 'Popular Productivity' (Fiske 1991: 142); specifically, production as consumption, in which 'the products of capitalism became the raw materials, the primary resources, of popular culture'. He envisions a struggle between the nature of these resources (as provided by the financial economy) and the cultural needs of everyday life. In this manner, popular culture is more than simply a consumption of images (or sounds), but a 'productive process'; something that invites us to ask not only 'what' is being created/consumed, but also 'how'. It is this specific process that I will seek to locate within Komuro's music for anime; the kind of 'popular text' that Fiske sees as characterised by their flow into both 'each other' and 'everyday life'. Further to this he states that 'one of the main distinctive features of popular culture against high culture is its resolute refusal of any distance between the aesthetic and the everyday' (Fiske 1991: 126). Popular texts such as anime and the music that accompanies it epitomise this space between the aesthetic and the everyday; products of the societal backdrop that created them, but also reflections of it.

In the 1980s, Japan found itself in the grip of a 'bubble' economy; a period marked by uncontrolled money supply and loose controls on credit, which led to real estate and stock prices becoming highly inflated. This wash of money lent itself to an era characterised by young people switched-on to leisure activities and 'consumerism as a way of life' (Manzenreiter & Ben-Ari 2004: 494). Against a backdrop of Bubble Japan, aesthetic *became* the everyday; a kind of lived aspirationalism driven not only by commodities themselves, but the image of owning said commodities. As popular texts and commodities in their own right, to what extent can we see music and anime as forces for generating (and reflecting) this new image of Japanese affluence?

For this, we must turn to what Fiske sees as the two core functions of commodities: the material and the cultural. The material function is, in essence, the identifiable real-world use-value of the commodity. In the

instance of anime music, this could encompass a number of dimensions: To advertise the show it accompanies, to provide background music for it, to sell CDs, to provide pleasure to the listener, to give them something to dance or sing along to. The cultural function is more nuanced, as Fiske puts it, '[it] is concerned with meanings and values: All commodities can be used by the consumer to construct meanings of self, of social identity and social relations' (1991: 11). Here, we might consider how consuming anime music might make the consumer *feel*. A sense of inclusiveness, of 'coolness', of affluence, and so on; a whole gamut of social identifiers that signify their position (and who they, themselves, are) within a wider society, because of the *kind* of music they choose to consume.

As the next section will aim to highlight, the career of Tetsuya Komuro and the music he was creating for anime in the eighties is an ideal lens through which to examine many of the above questions about the production, consumption and value of anime music as pop-cultural 'commodity'. For Fiske, the link between a society and its popular product are self-evident: 'We live in an industrial society, so of course our popular culture is an industrialised culture, as are all our resources,' (1991: 27). In line with this, the suggestion is that a systemised flow of commodities from producer to consumer will naturally give rise to a systemised 'kind' of commodity, one in which its very purpose and existence as a piece of *popular* culture is reflective of the societal conditions it emerged from.

Tetsuya Komuro - The soundtrack to success

Today, Tetsuya Komuro is best known for his work as a songwriter and producer for hit Japanese pop acts such as Namie Amuro. In Japan's Oricon singles chart of April 15th 1996 he monopolised the Top 5 positions (McClure 1996: 44), and, as of 2008, records produced by him had sold more than 170 million copies. His career has even encompassed international collaborations, such as with French electronica musician Jean Michel Jarre on 1998 FIFA World Cup theme song *Together Now* and production work for the Dannii Minogue-featuring club track *Rescue Me* as part of his dance group EuroGroove in 1995. For all his status as a kind of 'musical tycoon' (Craig 2015: 5) however, it is worth noting that Komuro's earliest successes

in the eighties were as part of the anime industry, producing both soundtracks and theme songs for a number of properties (eg. *City Hunter*, *Mobile Suit Gundam*) that would go on to become some of the most fondly remembered titles of the decade.

Komuro's first solo compositional work was the soundtrack for the feature-length film *Vampire Hunter D* (1985), released on Epic Sony Records. A fittingly dark, atmospheric collection, the record's sombre, melancholy soundscapes recalls the background music for fantasy video-games from the same era. Although the musical palette is limited to electronic keyboard instruments, it manages to effectively conjure up an aura of decaying, baroque splendour; an ample match to the flowing, effeminate character designs created for the anime by Yoshitaka Amano (best known for his illustrations for the video-game series *Final Fantasy*). The clarity and melodiousness of these sonic leitmotifs not only highlight deft usage of film music tropes as processed through electronic instrumentation (as opposed to a traditional, classical score), but also hold hints of the kind of pop fare Komuro would go on to create as a producer and pop musician. In this respect, it is important to note that his role within *Vampire Hunter D* was not merely limited to creating the background music for the film's soundtrack; it also encompassed his band TM Network, which he had formed a year earlier with Takashi Utsunomiya and Naoto Kine, providing the closing credits theme *Your Song*, highlighting how even at this early stage, Komuro was operating simultaneously as both composer and performer.

Two years later, TM Network would get their big break, when their single *Get Wild* was released as the first ending theme for the anime *City Hunter* (1987). The openly (perhaps even indulgently) transnational nature of the song is evidenced not only in the fact its title is written in English characters as opposed to Japanese, but also in the particular kind of sonic aesthetic it strives to construct. A product of clear Western influence, and yet resolutely situated within the cultural space created by both the Japanese pop music and anime industries, the song's auditory identity is worth interrogating in closer detail to better understand its engagement with, and possible subsumption of, the transnational mode. Blending both Japanese and English language lyrics, *Get Wild* is emblematic of the increasingly 'adult' direction anime themes had been taking across the decade. Whereas the kinds of tracks

attached to shows in the early eighties had often favoured a 'brighter', more rock-orientated sound, *Get Wild* was sleek, sensual and, most importantly, sounded like something at the cutting edge of current club trends. Both critics and the public were quick to pick up on TM Network's ear-catching sound, tagging them as the 'group that plays pop music with futuristic sounds making full use of synthesizers' (PIA) with their sound frequently compared to 'Eurobeat', the high-energy dance music genre that was rapidly gaining in popularity in the clubs across Europe at the time. Komuro had spent time in the UK and been 'profoundly inspired' by the rave culture he had experienced there; the influence plain to hear in the music he would go on to create in the late eighties and early nineties (Brasor 2008). In descriptions of their sonic aesthetic, TM Network's identity is fully encompassed by their electric, 'synthesised' nature; in essence, they are as much a product of the eighties as their keyboards and synthesisers. Even the band's name, which is reportedly an abbreviation of 'Time Machine Network', lends itself to a feel of mechanised interconnectedness. Komuro would further play with knowingly mechanical self-branding in the nineties and 00s with his subsequent project 'trf', aka. Tetsuya Komuro Rave Factory, who contributed theme songs to the anime series *Black Jack 21* (*Burakku Jakku*, Makoto Tezuka, 2006) and *Wangan Midnight* (*Wangan Middonaito*, Tsuneo Tominaga, 2007). Across his varying incarnations, Komuro's music would posit a potent cocktail of high technology and 'European'-influenced sound; something resolutely 'beyond' the hum-drum everyday, a promise of barely controllable excitement in line with TM Network's original call to *Get Wild*. Following the initial 1987 series of *City Hunter*, three subsequent seasons followed, alongside a number of theatrical features, one-off TV specials and even a live-action adaptation starring Jackie Chan, cashing in on the global popularity the show had reached by the early nineties. (Clements & McCarthy 2015: 137-138).¹

The show offered up two core thrills that would become the driving factors behind its popularity; violence and sensuality. With an empowered male lead who is shown to possess notable skill with his weapon (a Colt Python .357 Magnum) and a revolving cast of attractive women for him to

¹ The Anime Encyclopedia is notable in specifically commenting on how closing theme *Get Wild* became a hit 'in its own right', beyond its simple attachment to *City Hunter* itself

act lecherously toward, *City Hunter* essentially became a kind of tick-box exercise in satisfying a particular kind of masculinity; one that would go hand in hand with anime’s increasing lean toward more mature audiences in the eighties (MacWilliams 2014: 54). This friction between pain and pleasure would manifest itself directly in the lyrics of *Get Wild*:

<i>It's your pain or my pain or somebody's pain Dareka no tame ni ikirarerunara It's your dream or my dream or somebody's dream Nani mo kowakuwanai</i>	<i>It's your pain or my pain or somebody's pain If you can live for someone It's your dream or my dream or somebody's dream You won't be afraid of anything</i>
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In presenting a segment of the lyrics to *Get Wild*, it is worth unpacking some of the complexities present in the mixing of English and Japanese within the song; a trend that has characterised Komuro’s music throughout his career. In his account of the Japanese music industry, Martin provides a useful explanation of the way language can be utilised with specific agency to convey meaning not only on the literal level, but also the conceptual:

Language doesn’t just embody meanings of individual words; it also embodies thought processes, and these aren’t always mutually and directly transferable. Language can be seen as a set of rails on which thoughts can travel, and different sets of rails carry thoughts to slightly different places. (Martin 2016: 171)

In essence, it is not just the literal meaning of the line ‘It’s your dream or my dream or somebody’s dream’ in *Get Wild* that carries a certain thought process for the listener, but more importantly, hearing this line sung in English (as opposed to Japanese) creates a *different* kind of thought process. Moody touches on similar themes, commenting on the use of English within Japanese popular culture and Japanese pop music (J-Pop) in regard to the role language-use can play in forming expressions of identity, and more specifically, that ‘individual expressions may function as a vehicle of change in identity, and

an expression of the community's desires rather than practice' (Moody 2006: 220). Much like Martin's comments on the distinction between individual meaning and the embodiment of a thought process, if we are to read the use of English within Komuro's songs as embodied *desire*, we encounter a new kind of ambiguous playfulness, in which these theme songs act as a playground in which the specific act of utilising English embodies a freedom not possible in singing the same words in Japanese. This chimes with Fiske's observation of title sequences and music videos as not only commodities of 'explicitly commercial purpose', but also moments of 'licensed play' and a 'carnavalesque, liberated pleasure' (Fiske 1989: 205). In this manner, we can envision TM Network's title music sequence for *City Hunter* as precisely this kind of 'licensed play' area, a space designed not only for the immediate auditory pleasure of the music itself, but somewhere to locate various kinds of aesthetic desire.

Writing in the late eighties, Fiske fills his study of popular culture with an analysis of many of the most recognisable commercial signifiers of the decade; Madonna's music videos, Coke commercials and the TV show *Miami Vice*. Fiske sees the style of *Miami Vice* as 'borrowed' from music videos and commercials, utilising hit pop songs to soundtrack (in much the same way *City Hunter* did within the medium of anime) masculinised images of 'cruising the urban landscape' (Fiske 1989: 208). His subsequent close analysis of the show and the lyrics of one of the songs that appears in it centres on pleasure, as mediated through the imagery of its signifiers (eg. fast cars, porn, drugs etc). In this context, can we perhaps read the desire embodied in Komuro's English lyrics as a similar kind of pleasure; a signifier of something above and beyond what the lyrics literally translate as? Fiske offers hints at unravelling this separation between signifier and meaning in his explanation of a specific kind of 'commodified pleasure'. Here, he cites examples of people window-shopping in malls as a way of consuming not commodities, but the image and space said commodities occupy (Fiske 1989: 214). For these people, consuming the *image* of the commodity, the *desire* of owning it, is enough; to be in the same shared, physical space as the commodity is to be part of its world, part of its aesthetic excitement. In much the same way, for Japanese audiences hearing the English lyrics in Komuro's music, the meaning is supplementary to the concept of Englishness and the liberated pleasure entailed in using it.

‘Multihyphenate’ identities - Defining the ‘Japanese composer’

What can Komuro’s dual identity as both ‘anime composer’ and hit pop producer tell us about his status as a creator, and the appetite for his particular ‘brand’ of music in Japan? Komuro’s eventual rise from a creator of domestic Japanese product in the eighties, to someone operating within the global music market in the nineties, also presents interesting questions about how we might juxtapose his international status and influences with his identity as a Japanese creator, and to what degree the ‘pop-ness’ of his music eclipses its status as a ‘Japanese’ cultural product. These kinds of frictions form part of an ongoing dialogue regarding contemporary Japanese music, with De Ferranti commenting that ‘little of extant scholarship gives sustained attention to the theme of Japanese popular music as Japanese music,’ before going on to note that ‘[Japanese] musicians have often articulated the urgency of their struggle to reconcile Japanese cultural identity with the Euro-American roots of jazz, rock and other genres’ (De Ferranti 2002: 199). We have observed already how much of the excitement and newness attributed to Komuro’s music was due to the ‘European’ nature of his electronic, keyboard-driven dance-pop style, but it is also useful to observe similar discussions of musical nationality in regard to two of his contemporaries: Joe Hisaishi and Ryuichi Sakamoto. Like Komuro, both were born in the 1950s, growing up in the rapidly recovering economic climate of post-war Japan and ultimately were to become famed for the ‘melodic recognizability’ or familiarity of their compositions (Lewis 2009; Roedder 2013: 55; Hadfield 2018). As arguably Japan’s most famous ‘anime composer’, in the 1980s Hisaishi’s profile rose dramatically following his work with Studio Ghibli. With iconic soundtracks to films like *Laputa: Castle in the Sky* (Tenkū no Shiro Rapyuta, Hayao Miyazaki, 1986) and *My Neighbour Totoro* (Tonari no Totoro, Hayao Miyazaki, 1988), the partnership between Hisaishi and Ghibli’s Hayao Miyazaki has been likened to that of John Williams and Steven Spielberg, and his music is arguably now synonymous with the wider Ghibli ‘brand’.

Ryuichi Sakamoto presents a more immediate comparison with Komuro - moving fluidly back and forth between the pop and film music industries. His soundtrack for Studio Gainax’s anime *Royal Space Force: The Wings of Honnêamise* (Ôritsu Uchūgun: Oneamisu no Tsubasa, Hiroyuki

Yamaga, 1987) followed his earlier successes with *Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence* (*Senjō no Merī Kurisumasu*, Nagisa Oshima, 1983) and his position as part of the influential electronic music trio Yellow Magic Orchestra (also known as YMO). To Western audiences, he remains particularly memorable for not only providing the score for the aforementioned *Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence*, but also acting in it, alongside David Bowie. Indeed, such is the plurality of his career that some have lamented the ability to easily offer a retrospective or encapsulate the entire scope of his work. This can be seen, for example, the documentary film *Ryuichi Sakamoto: Coda* (Stephen Nomura Schible, 2017), which ignores his score for *Wings of Honneamise* in favour of his Oscar-nominated soundtrack for *The Revenant* (Alejandro G. Iñárritu, 2015) (Clarke 2018). Such was Sakamoto's global success that his status as a 'Japanese' musician began, it seemed, to morph. By the mid-nineties, critics were identifying him as a 'transnational' star, more easily located within a wider, nebulous context of 'world music' than as a creator of specifically 'Japanese' music (Currid 1996: 69-102; Young and Treat 1998: 143). Much like the discussions surrounding famed Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu (Siddons 2001: 12-18), descriptions of Sakamoto's work on one hand applaud his use of Western compositional techniques while others, like De Ferranti, focus on his use of 'Asian scales' within contemporary music (something also identified in Komuro's music). Sakamoto himself goes one further, seeing this intermixing as a coming full-circle, stating that: 'Asian music heavily influenced Debussy, and Debussy heavily influenced me' (Yalcinkaya 2018). The circularity of this argument might suggest that the question of nationality is in fact entirely irrelevant to the music in the end. The important distinction here, however, is that nationality doesn't only manifest itself sonically (ie. in overtly Asian-sounding scales of notes), but also in the creative influence, technique and mode of production of the music. Does a Japanese composer working in a traditionally 'non-Japanese' musical idiom such as dance-pop or classically orchestrated soundtracks make that music somehow less 'Japanese'? Sakamoto's self-contradictory statement, that the auditory origin of his music is inherently circular in nature, in fact lays out the fundamental role inspiration plays within the transnational flow of music; namely, that by identifying music as part of a locale 'other' to that in which a creator resides, it possesses a particular, and identifiable allure, even if that allure can

ultimately trace its origin back to self-same point.

Figures like Sakamoto and Komuro call into question not only an identifiable national identity within their music (an auditory Japaneseness), but also their hybrid, combinatory roles as both producers and composers; functioning under different guises at different points in time and at different locales around the world. Komuro is particularly indicative of this, transitioning the dance-music record label Avex, through which he released many of his productions, from small independent outfit to major-league player; in essence replicating the trajectory of his own career path. In this manner, Komuro shifted in status from an individual creator fulfilling a singular role (soundtrack or theme song) as part of a larger media mix, to an organisational figure with specified agency in developing his own 'brand name' further. De Ferranti sees this flow of creative talent as linked closely to the role of 'individual producer-composers' as having particular agency in this 'fluidity of labour exchange' between the various spheres of 'mainstream and independent pop music scenes' (2002: 204). In essence, the moveability of musical talent between the designated roles of 'producer' or 'composer' gives rise to a value in that process of movement itself, whereby much in the same way transnationality adds breadth to a national 'music', this 'fluidity of labour exchange' adds a similar breadth to the kind of talent (and its creative influences) producing that music.

These ideas chime with Hischak's discussions of 'multihyphenate' (2015: pp.109, 230, 376, 607) creators and how their existence problematises the classification of film composers. Does the title 'composer' necessitate the creation of a 'film score', or can it also include individuals responsible for the creation of any kind of 'movie music'? To what degree does the term 'composer' imply a career wholly devoted to compositional work, at the expense of other creative outputs, musical or otherwise? Namely, if a composer begins to become better-known for work outside the specific oeuvre of orchestrated, classical concert music, do these supplementary identities begin to complicate the validity or 'seriousness' of their existence as a composer in the first instance. It is exactly this kind of problematisation that Siddons touches on in his biography of Toru Takemitsu (2001: 12-18).

The role of identity, as attached to the figure of the composer, can be observed in Steve McClure's observations of Komuro's individual agency at

the core of not only a wholesale reconfiguring of not only the Japanese music industry, but the creation of a new kind of awareness of what ‘dance music’ meant in Japan. For him, the Japanese music industry prior to figures like Komuro was a markedly more un-transnational place, where Japanese labels were unable to distinguish between particular sub-genres of dance music. With Komuro at the helm of indie label Avex, his figure-head like approach to bringing commercial club sounds to the masses typified exactly this kind of attributable, brand-like agency. (McClure 1998: 84). McClure’s account of the relationship between Komuro and Avex is open in its admission of the brand-name qualities of the label, claiming that at the time, dance music was ‘virtually synonymous with Avex’, and that the label had become one of Japan’s top five record labels by the mid nineties. Much of this success is attributed to a distinct business-savviness and marketing acumen; relying initially on the ‘overseas’ allure of imported dance records, before eventually morphing into the thrill of a ‘new generation’ (echoing Condry’s ‘new breed’) of pop idols like Namie Amuro, for whom Komuro produced a multitude of best-selling singles. Additionally, in December 1994, Komuro launched the nightclub Velfarre (McClure 1998: 91)². The real bubble may have by that point burst, but for Velfarre’s club-goers, the dream could live on.

Conclusion

Just exactly what Komuro’s music was ‘producing’ can be cast as part of a far larger narrative of music’s role within Japanese society, and the cyclical creation of a series of ‘new’ Japans in tandem with the introduction of Western-influenced music to the country. Indeed, as Galliano notes, ‘the creation of the figure of the composer’ in Meiji-era Japan (1868-1912) was something completely alien, having not previously existed within traditional Japanese music (Galliano 2002: 33). Galliano sees the emergence of a newly urbanised Japan in the early 1900s as going hand in hand with the ‘aim’ of music producers creating popular hits with the explicit purpose of entertaining the masses. In this sense, popular music is not merely the product of a ‘modern

² A venture in which its reported 3 billion yen cost and glamorous decor openly recalled Japan’s ‘early bubble economy’.

consumer society', (Galliano 2002: 108) but also one of the drivers behind that transformation. The role of the society is important, because it was precisely the kind of societal 'miscellaneous knowledge' that Komuro's music represented for Japanese music fans that compelled them to learn his tracks to sing at karaoke; the pressure to be part of something bigger. By performing karaoke with friends, this effect was to be magnified up and down the country, countless local 'performances' of music manifesting themselves on a national level; bringing with it an enlarged, national consciousness of popular song.

This picture of a heavily systemised, societally cohesive engagement with popular song at a national level is one that rarely matches up to the diversified, individualistic drive of consumer culture observed in the West. In *Understanding Popular Culture*, Fiske observes that 'white patriarchal capitalism has failed to homogenize the thinking and the culture of its subjects.... Our societies are intransigently diverse, and this diversity is maintained by popular and cultural forces in the face of a variety of strategies of homogenization' (1991: 29). But what if, instead of a white patriarchal model of capitalism, we were to instead take the image of a harmonious, homogenous eighties Japan, as suggested by Kubota (2003: 73) as our subject? Would these kinds of cultural conditions give rise to a different kind of popular product and a different manner of engagement with it? It is perhaps in this light that we can better understand the emergence of karaoke culture within Japan, of the sense that karaoke can reinforce a kind of group mindset or shared 'karaoke space' (Ogawa 1998: 46). Within this space, we are not only sharing a physical locale with our fellow karaoke-goers and friends, but also a kind of mental locale that is reinforced through our knowledge-in-common of popular songs; a group mindset that exists on a larger, societal level. When Get Wild's lyrics speak of 'your dream... my dream... somebody's dream', it is as if Komuro's brand-name image becomes everybody's image; a plasticised emptiness that, in an osmosis-like manner, commands to be filled - whether by a succession of processed dance-pop starlets, colourful anime characters, or by countless karaoke fans up and down the country.

The significance of Komuro's music is that at its most basic level, it is fundamentally transnational in nature; at the forefront of bringing the kind of electronic dance music popular in the West in the late eighties and early

nineties to mainstream Japanese audiences. And yet, as the above arguments about an auditory Japaneseness and the kind of national consciousness that can be created by an engagement with popular song demonstrate, Komuro is also more than simply a musical ‘tycoon’, importing foreign sounds to domestic Japanese audiences. By complicating the essence of what it means for popular music to sound Japanese, his ‘new breed’ of song, and the audience it engendered poses the question: if said music is fundamentally absorbed into the national consciousness of a nation, does it cease to be transnational in nature? This paper would suggest that rather than individually reinforcing or dismantling a sonic sense of Japanese identity, Komuro’s music is important precisely because it manages to do both, simultaneously. Much like Sakamoto’s comments about the cyclical nature of inspiration behind the ‘Asian’ sound observed in his music, we would suggest that Komuro’s music could instead be positioned as part of a newly global musical modernity. This modernity is Japanese, yes; through virtue of its creators and consumers, but it is also simply ‘popular’; with all the associated guises of global, contemporary capitalism that brings with it.

Biographical Note

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The body is a canvas: transnational perspectives of desire in erotic cinema

Maria Roberta Novielli

Abstract

Soft core erotic cinema was one of the most popular genres of Japanese film from the early 1960s to the 1980s when their spectators began to dwindle with the availability of censored hard core sex films on VHS and DVD. However, it has survived it and a good number of them are still produced now as *Seijin Eiga* (adult film) or V-Cinema (video film). This paper is reevaluating Japanese soft porn erotic cinema, better known as *Pinku Eiga* (Pink Cinema), against its transnational misunderstanding and bias through which it is considered to be a mere sexual titillation and to have no artistic value. Despite physical and material restrictions, film makers creating *Pinku Eiga* were given not a small amount of artistic and creative freedom and for a long term it has been a training grounds for young film makers. This paper also explores the more controversial issue of sexual violence against women and examines the ways in which the female body has been used by Japanese film makers as a canvas on which political and sexual repressions are exposed.

I see, I live the Japanese films like erotic dreams, and I let them with pleasure install within me their magic, all of slowness, brucque movements, and piercing cries in the nights with the moon exaggeratedly swollen and motionless. Refinement and sadism combine, in decorations in transparent cardboard boxes, with winding alleys, to make elegantly suffer and die of love of strange creatures

imprisoned in long jet hair.¹ (Ado Kyrou)

From the early 1960s onwards, soft-core erotic cinema has always been a very successful genre in Japan. This genre, enriched over the decades by numerous subgenres, is called *Pinku Eiga* (“Pink Cinema”²), the color selected to attract even female audiences to theaters. Unlike the hardcore and pornographic counterpart (AOV - Adult Original Video) that has flooded the market with the birth of the home video, pink films have turned out to be excellent medium for experimentation for young emerging directors, including the now internationally renowned Kurosawa Kiyoshi, Suo Masayuki, Oki Hiroyuki, and Sono Shion.³

In spite of budgetary restrictions, a reduced number of working days, and the obligation to include a certain number of erotic scenes, creative freedom has to some extent prevailed, and they were allowed to include political implications. One of the most interesting aspects of this film genre consists in the fact that from the beginning it has preserved profoundly transnational nature, making use of codes and languages that are also employed in other cultural contexts, especially the European ones. For this reason too, film critics and historians have long read in it the political-narrative logic of desire which was first theorized by Georges Bataille⁴ and in Europe fully developed only a decade later in the 1970s. We will see in the following pages that the main transnational challenge consists in the “liberation of the woman”, a path

¹ Je vois, je vis les films japonais comme des rêves erotiques, je les laisse avec plaisir installer en moi leur magie, toute de lenteur, de mouvements brucques, de cris perçant dans les nuits à la lune exagérément gonflée et immobile. Le raffinement et le sadisme s’allient, dans des décors en cartons transparents, aux allées tortueuses, puor faire élégamment souffrir et mourir d’amour d’étranges créatures emprisonnées dans de longs cheveux de jais. Ado Kirou, *Amour – Erotisme & Cinema*, Paris, Eric Losfeld, 1966, p.75.

² *Market of Flesh (Nikutai no Ichiba, 1962)* is regarded as the film that started the *Pink Eiga* genre in Japan. The name Pink Eiga was invented in 1963 by the critic Murai Minoru. Other names were also used for this genre, including “eroduction films” (*erodakushon eiga*) and “three-million-yen-films” (*sanbyakuman eiga*).

³ Other directors began their career working in different roles for the production of *Pink Eiga* productons including Sakamoto Junji and Aoyama Shinji.

⁴ Many other European thinkers, including Pierre Klossowski, Maurice Blanchot and later Jacques Lacan, Gilles Deleuze, and Michel Foucault developed theories of desire and transgression.

that must inevitably go through the logic of “desiring” her body, which is her physical cage.

When analyzing this film genre, it should be taken into account that in Japan the censorship of erotic contents has always been very rigid, especially when the genitalia is exhibited. For this reason, the display of private parts is carefully avoided by using special camera angles, close-ups on other bodily parts, blurring or obscuring visual effects, or blocking them by objects such as furniture or lamps. Thanks to these shooting acrobatics, over the years an extremely fetishistic vision of the body has developed, which is linked to the sublimation of the few visible parts. As in photography, the fragmentation of the body-image into parts guide the gaze towards individual movements — jolt, contortion, cuddle, graze —, subverting it into a fetish in many instances of desecration. For this reason several films present episodes of violence and violation, and many of them are sadomasochistic, which are alien the sexual life of most of people. Violence becomes somehow a necessary tool, since:

The approach to film and politics here operates with a different assumption. its primary focus is on film form rather than content or narrative. The cinematic art (...) is political not because its content references familiar political institutions or situations, but because of the way it challenges familiar senses of reality. It does so through its temporal rhythms – the way it composes images, words, and sounds – and through the way it disables viewers ordinary modes of perception, in some cases with an aesthetic of shock that disrupts habitual viewing expectations, and in some cases by restoring what perception tends to evacuate.⁵

The restriction on the exhibition of nudity has fostered the use of a rich panoply of plops such as ropes, leather and a whip and simulacra such as fake sperm, blood and urine. There have been protests against the censorship, as in the case of the striking pink actress Kuroki Kaoru. She gained her fame in 1988 for her decision not to shave the hair in the armpits (which evokes public

⁵ Michael J. Shapiro, “Film and world politics”, in *Popular Culture and World Politics – Theories, Methods, Pedagogies*, ed. by Federica Caso and Caitlin Hamilton, Bristol, E-International Relations Publishing, 2015, p.84.

hair), elevating her desire to a symbol of sexuality and an artistic form. But the further importance of this actress, is pointed out by Rosemary Iwamura:

Kaoru changed the image of AV girls; she didn't seem to be making videos because of a lack of options but rather as an informed choice. She denies that when she is beaten and raped in videos that it is a sign of submission. Instead, she says that she has masochistic tendencies, 'on screen and off, the winning side is the one that gets an orgasm' (Bornoff 616). Kaoru believes that she is a model to women, 'that she draws out their desires and helps them discover themselves' (618). But in some ways she is indicative of the paradoxical representation of women in the media. As one journalist, Shoji Suei, notes, Kaoru is pandering to the man's idea that woman is his servant; but on the other hand, her outspoken views and her assertive behaviour in some of her videos intimidate men (Bornoff 618). And while she may be a turnoff to some men, women enjoy hearing her outspoken views.⁶

Even if they managed to bypass the censorship or overcame inconvenience, the political implications of their films triggered legal disputes or prosecutions. It is the case of one of the first directors of pink, Takechi Tetsuji, who in particular with the film *Black Snow* (Kuroi yuki, 1965) denounced prostitution and environments objectifying women that flourished at the American base in Yokota. He had to defend himself against the accusation of obscenities in a long trial, where many intellectuals of the time lined up in his support.

The "New Cinema" of the Sixties led by Oshima Nagisa and other filmmakers in the equal caliber has many affinities with the French Nouvelle Vague, and simultaneously laid the foundations for overcoming national limits in terms of style, content and typology of characters. Global positions and slogans were taken in Japanese New Cinema, reminiscent of other countries' similar student struggles, sexual liberation and denunciations of political oppressions. As it happened in contemporary European cinema, eroticism

⁶ Rosemary Iwamura, "Letter from Japan: From Girls Who Dress Up Like Boys To Trussed-up Porn Stars - Some of the Contemporary Heroines on the Japanese Screen", in *Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media & Culture*, Vol.7, No.2, 1994, also available at <https://www.mcc.murdoch.edu.au/ReadingRoom/7.2/Iwamura.html>. Iwamura also quotes Bornoff, Nicholas, *Pink Samurai*, London, Grafton Books, 1991.

rendered itself as a symbol of self awareness with respect to conventions and institutions. In the Japanese context, the name that has been the most notable in the history of political Pinks is Wakamatsu Koji, a filmmaker who has created dozens of films in the field, almost all of them with strong political subtexts. The metaphors for the society in great turmoil because of numerous student movements and demonstrations against the renewal of the Japan-US Security Treaty that would once again subject Japan to the American hegemony, inserted between various scenes of SM actions. Many images recall the former dictatorship and repressions, and stand for the Japanese modern history composed of tragedies caused by the military power.⁷

The great popularity of the first *Pink Eigas* stimulated different film studios to the production of similar erotic films. Toei, started the production of so-called “Pinky Violence”, Tokatsu’s “New Poruno” series, and Nikkatsu’s Roman Porno (romantic-pornographic) were among the first ones. In almost all these films, the woman’s body became a canvas on which gender oppression is visualized, and at the same time a visual metaphor for the responsibility of the society has in shaping the mental disturbances of a rapist. However, in the long history of the Pink Cinema, female characters have often proved to be strong, free and able to oppose to the role assigned to them by the society. Already in the “Roman Porno” genre, spearheaded by the directors like Kumashiro Tatsumi, Tanaka Noboru, Fujita Toshiya and Sone Chusei, repeated sexual violence evidently fails to shape women’s personalities, since female characters at the end manage to turn their sexuality into a symbol of their social independence. For Kumashiro, even, the woman fully declares her desire, creating a further state of disturbance in the rapist.

The most interesting case of this female portrayal is found in the novels and films by Dan Oniroku (pseudonym signifying “Six Demons”, his real name is Kuroiwa Yukihiko⁸), a writer, producer and filmmaker who since

⁷ A great contribution to the political works of Wakamatsu’s films comes from the writer and collaborator Adachi Masao, who in turn is the director of various pink movies and documentaries. In a few years Adachi would also join the Japanese Red Army and in 1973 he moved to Lebanon (from where he was extradited in 2001) to join the PFLP.

⁸ Hiroki Ryuichi, one of the most interesting directors of Pink cinema who appeared on the scene in the 1990s, dedicated an important tribute to Dan Oniroku with the film *I Am an SM Writer* (Futei no kisetsu, 2000).

the 1960s dedicated his entire career to the genre of sadomasochistic themes. Particularly in his series of novels (later adapted into films) *Flower and Snake* (Hana to Hebi), he showed how the concept of erotic torture in Japan has a completely different value from the Christian and Manichaeic Western one. Nonetheless, it is exactly the use of “transnational” iconology that allows him to underline this difference. The distinction is highlighted by the use of many fetishistic imageries associated with the religions, such as Christian and Buddhist nuns. Furthermore, preferring the display of the details of bondage and torture to sexual intercourses, Dan found the aesthetic of cruelty typically Japanese, which is not consisting in “deprivation” or “subtraction”, but rather as an “addition” to the completion of the fetishistic body. The eighteen-year-old porn actress Tani Naomi became an icon of Japanese SM film. Dan Oniroku wrote fifteen screenplays starring her with sadomasochistic themes. She played many roles of a strong woman with an indomitable personality, who are gradually “educated” and finally find new forms of pleasure.

However, not all the Pink movies offer a strong and free feminine typology — indeed, the representation of violence against women is tragically a mirror of what happens in reality and is often the subject of the Pink films. This is typically the case of the sub genre of *Chikan Densha* (train molestation), emerged in the 1980s and serialized by the production company Shintocho. The director Takita Yojiro⁹ specialized this sub-genre. Statistics show that about 60% of Japanese women from 20- to 30-year old have experienced molestations in the train at least once; the penalties given to the offenders are still extremely light, and for this reason many victims do not bother to report to the police. The list of subgenres associated with sexual crimes is long, including stories of violence against very young girls, often committed by a group of men.

The generations of Pink filmmakers who gradually established themselves in the 1990s even more artistically enhanced the genre, and their works even became the subject of special programs at prestigious institutions like the Tokyo headquarters of the Athénée Français. Of particular interest are the films made by three groups of filmmakers: those known as Shitenno (“Four Heavenly Kings”- Sato Hisayasu, Zeze Takahisa, Sano Kazuhiro and Sato Toshiki); the so-called Shichi Fukujin (“Seven Gods of Fortune”- Ueno

⁹ In 2009 he was the Oscar winner for the best foreign film *Departures* (Okuribito, 2008).

Toshiya, Enomoto Toshiro, Tajiri Yuji, Kamata Yoshitaka, Sakamoto Rei, Imaoka Shinji and Meike Mitsuru); finally, the trio known under the collective pseudonym “Go Ijuin”, - Nakamura Genji, Ishikawa Hitoshi and Hiroki Ryuichi. However, we should not fail to mention Hamano Sachi (Sachiko), a multi-award-winning director and producer of Pink films, who with her production company, Tantansha, has produced and directed over 300 titles.¹⁰

Each filmmaker has developed a stylistic and personal narrative, while moving easily within the Pink framework. Eroticism has become a symbol of the alienation of individuals, often with dark and violent tones (Sato Hisayasu), with metaphysical reflection on life itself (Zeze Takahisa), with weak, losing characters at the crossroad of fundamental choices (Sano Kazuhiro), or with the ironic description of the human essence (Sato Toshiki). The psychological depth of the female characters, at the same time, reveals the existential torments of these protagonists, who often manage to resolve their own sense of inadequacy through eroticism.

In almost all these cases, sexuality somehow becomes a tool to bring to the surface the most widespread youth issues explored in cinema all over the world: the inability to communicate with others, to recognize oneself in a defined social entourage, to give substance to one’s future. A notable example is the beautiful film *Vibrator* (2003) by Hiroki Ryuichi, which was presented at the Venice Film Festival: a young woman prey to “voices” that guide every moment of her life, deconstructs her physicality through sex and finally manages to find herself.

The reception of Pink Cinema in the West has generated false myths about Japanese people being pervert. Violence in many cases has been interpreted as part of the general social predisposition which is instigated by films, manga and animations. Oshima Nagisa, one of the greatest authors of the history of Japanese cinema and director of the famous *In the Realm of the Senses* (Ai no koriida, 1976), which was the most strictly censored in Japan, often asserted in his numerous essays that exposing even violent sexuality does not predispose people to crime, but rather it is useful to exorcise them from repression. Writing about the cinema of his friend Wakamatsu Koji, for

¹⁰ Besides Hamano we must add that of Asakura Daisuke, the (male) pseudonym of Sato Keiko, president of Kokuei, who produced most of the films of the Shitenno and Shichifukujin.

example, he explained how it was a representation of “dramas of human existence” in which the physical violation is a medium for the dramaturgical role between the victim and the executioner.¹¹ Finally, he argued in another essay that the new sexual consciousness of the Japanese people, which emerged after the war, was conditioned to the point of making man a “thing” that could be manipulated, reduced to a mere organic matter, and that therefore his violation, with the diachronic reiteration of crime assumes the nuance of a distorted use of the flesh.¹²

Anyone who admires *Shunga* erotic woodcuts of the Japanese artistic genre *ukiyo-e*, knows the exaggeration of the sexual signs (penis, vagina, lips and tongue). Pink Cinema operates a similar stylization of the body and its values, especially in the (pink) symbol represented by women.

Biographical Note

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¹¹ “(...) if male sexual impotence is a powerful metaphor for the failures of contemporary 1960s Japanese society in films of Yoshida and Oshima, in ‘pink’ films released by Wakamatsu and directed towards male heterosexual desire, this attack on masculinity through impotence is problematic for male audience identification. This problematic can only be satisfactorily answered through the psychologically misogynistic point-of-view taken in the films which clearly places the blame for male violence perpetrated on women onto the victims and the society at large.” Isolde Standish, *Politics, Porn and Protest: Japanese Avant-Garde Cinema in the 1960s and 1970s*, New York, Continuum, 2011, p.113.

¹² All these references are quoted in Novielli, Maria Roberta, “Hajime ni sei ga atta” in *Ōshima Nagisa chasakushū– Vol III*, ed by Yomota Inuhiko, Tokyo, Gendai Shichōshinsha, 2009, pp.293-303.

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Section IV

Interactions between Japan and the West

Inabata and the Lumières — Exploring the Transnational Foundations of Cinema in Japan

Kerstin Fookien

Abstract

When Inabata Katsutarō was sent as a schoolboy to study in France in 1877, little did he know that his future classmate Auguste Lumière along with his brother Louis would develop the Cinématographe, one of the most important apparatuses in cinema history, and that Inabata himself would be central in bringing it to Japan. In this work-in-progress paper I explore the transnational nature of these early screenings taking place in Japan in the 1890s and how it informed the tensions of external and internal technological and cultural forces that shaped cinema in Japan from the outset. Questions regarding business relations between Inabata and the Lumière Company, competition for first screenings with international competitors, programming for local audiences, early films shot in Japan by Lumière Company technicians and those shot locally by Japanese cameramen with foreign technology all point to profound transnational interrelations while being complexly related to local practices. I argue that in addition to negotiations between the transnational, the national and local, a synchronic view of other art forms like painting and photography will furthermore reveal a transmedial referentiality that is particularly pertinent in cinema's formation period in which commercial considerations are also never far from this burgeoning industry.

Key words: Early Cinema, Lumière Cinématographe, Inabata Katsutarō, Japan

When Inabata Katsutarō (1862-1949) was sent as a schoolboy to study in France, at Lyon's technical school La Martinière in 1877, little did he know that his future classmate Auguste Lumière (1862-1954) along with

his brother Louis (1864-1948) would develop the Cinématographe, one of the most important apparatuses in cinema history, and that Inabata himself would be central in bringing it to Japan. The story of Inabata is not new to the interested reader and it is only one of several stories of how film screenings reached the shores of Japan in the late 19th century. While Gerow (2010) rightly argues that cinema was ‘present’ in Japan through written discourse already before the first film projection took place there, in this work-in-progress paper I explore the transnational nature of these early screenings taking place in Japan and how it informed the tensions and negotiations of the external and internal technological and cultural forces that shaped cinema in Japan in its production, exhibition and consumption from the outset. My understanding of the transnational in relation to Japanese cinema is guided by recent discussions of scholarly approaches by Higson, Hjort, Gerow and others to the applicability of conceptions of national or transnational cinema by Centeno Martín (2018) and Miyao (2019). Both authors elaborate on the established twofold criticism of a Japanese national cinema: the essentialising external perspective of ‘Japanese cinema’ as an Other to Western modes of filmmaking and at the same time the impossibility of the internal perspective to assert ‘Japanese cinema’ as an unequivocal manifestation of a national culture through the context in which it was produced (cf. Centeno Martín 2018: 1-2, Miyao 2019: 109).

In line with both authors’ remarks, important for my argument is the necessity to discuss specific tensions between the national and the transnational while studying Japanese cinema history and how this can be reflected in a ‘Japanese transnational cinema’. The 1890s of course were a time in Japan during which conceptions of a modernising nation state had just begun to take hold, when notions of what ‘cinema’ was to be were far from settled and the formation of domestic industrial-scale film production was still more than a decade away. Nevertheless, the transnational nature of the cooperation between Inabata and the Lumière Company, the undeniably local element to screening and filming practices as well as the context of the international competition come together to form a complex picture of the dawn of cinema in Japan. I furthermore adopt Miyao’s approach to synchronically locate the Lumière films, their subject matter and aesthetics in a wider web of creative interactions between different media and art forms

like painting and photography at the time (cf. Miyao 2016: 69).¹ I argue that in addition to negotiations between the transnational, the national and local, such a synchronic view of other art forms will furthermore reveal a transmedial referentiality that is particularly pertinent in cinema's formation period in which commercial considerations are also never far from this burgeoning industry.

Setting Out

Inabata Katsutarō was born in Kyoto in 1862 and earned a scholarship to go to France to study textile dyeing in Lyon between 1877 and 1885. Inabata thus left Japan within the first decade since the Meiji Restoration of 1868, a time when the big exploratory missions like the Iwakura Embassy had returned from the US, Europe and other countries, bringing back with them insights into Western technological modernisation as well as their political, military and educational systems. The privileged young were sent abroad to study in more depth and help facilitate Japan's rapid transformation to a modern nation state. The parents of Auguste and Louis Lumière on the other hand moved to Lyon in 1870 to join the burgeoning photographic industry and open a photographic portraiture business eventually producing photographic plates. After eight shared school years, Inabata and the Lumière brothers met again in France in 1896. In the intervening 11 years, Inabata had returned to Japan and successfully set up his own textile company (Inabata Senryōten, later Inabata & Co.), while the Lumière brothers had gone on to invent the Cinématographe, one of the most important apparatuses in cinema history. On 28th December 1895 they had held what is often labelled the 'first public event projecting film onto a large screen for a paying audience' in Paris. Between the three of them, they decided that there was an opportunity to expand business to Japan.

While it is difficult to overestimate the importance of the invention of

¹ Miyao bases this approach on Gaudreault's writing who suggests to "write the history of this work [by the Lumière brothers] by comparing it synchronically with other work from the cultural practice from which it is derived" as in their practice the Lumière brothers "amalgamate[d] themselves with these products." (Gaudreault 2008: 43 as in Miyao 2016: 69).

the Cinématographe for cinema history, at the time, what ‘cinema’ would be was far from a settled concept and so there were many rivals and competing apparatuses offering different experiences of the ‘moving pictures’: from Magic lanterns slides in Europe since the 17th century, Muybridge’s and Marey’s experiments in chronophotography to Max and Emil Skladanowsky inventing the Bioscop and Thomas Edison’s company building the Kinetoscope and the Vitascope. So while the Lumière brothers are today often called the ‘Fathers of Cinema,’ they were by far not the only ones venturing into the field by the final decade of the 19th century.

The Lumière Company had, however, quickly established a particular business model based also on their apparatus’ three-in-one capability to film, develop and function as a projector of compact size and relatively easy portability. Rather than selling their Cinématographe on a larger scale, they trained company-employed cameramen (*opérateurs Lumière*) who would eventually travel the globe not only to present screenings of Lumière Company films but also to film local scenes and bring the world in moving images back to France. While Inabata was never formally trained as Lumière technician, it was agreed that he would obtain the concession for the Cinématographe in East Asia and facilitate its first screenings there, accompanied by Lumière technician Constant Girel (Takanashi 1938: 297-298). In terms of business relations and commercial agreements, their contract was not a flat equipment hire fee but a payment of 60% of the takings per screening was to go back to the Lumière Company facilitated by Girel (Takanashi 1938: 297). What films were they bringing to Japan? With the length of their films being fixed by the standard 17m length of roll film at the time, projected at 16 frames per second, most Lumière films run up to approximately 50 seconds in length. In terms of content, a large part of the Lumière films were actualities, but they also showed everyday life, family life, little comic skits etc. Actualities were often of current events, though not yet quite the newsreels that would emerge later, showing iconic places, like the pyramids in Egypt, military parades, state visits and travelogues from foreign countries.²

² As such they also took part in the French imperialist project by presenting Westernised infrastructure built in the French colonies, overseas military parades etc.

Transmedial References

In terms of transmedial aesthetics, Komatsu (1991: 87) argues that as one concern of photography at the time was to reproduce painting, so also in early films, the significance of directionality of lines was probably adopted from paintings to the way films were shot and could now be enhanced by movement of objects across the screen. Apart from filming and exhibition location, Miyao argues that transnational and transcultural referencing can furthermore be seen in elements of the Japonisme-movement inspiring the aesthetics of the Lumière films (2016: 69). Japonisme was an art movement based mainly in France between the 1860s and approximately 1910 popular among the Impressionist and Postimpressionist painters like Degas, Manet, van Gogh, Monet and Bonnard. They shared a fascination with Japanese art and aesthetics, and particularly also the Japanese *Ukiyo-e* woodblock prints. Miyao argues that the woodblock prints' particular sense of perspective and stylisation with a strong sense of foreground and background as well as the differences of scale of the visible objects, exaggerating the contrast between the two planes were taken up by the Japonisme painters and thus became relevant to the aesthetics of the Lumière films (Miyao 2016: 70). Referring to art historian Mabuchi Akiko, Miyao argues that this interaction between the two planes was then adopted into the Lumière films with stillness in the background and movement in the front through an *à travers* effect across the screen (2016: 71). Of course, playing with panels of foreground and background is also evident in theatre and opera staging, and is not only related to Japanese woodblock prints. Such a synchronic view, however, points to a transmedial referentiality of aesthetics between different forms like painting, photography and stage arts at the outset of the moving images.

Arriving in Japan in January 1897, Inabata and Girel soon discovered that the "American competition" had arrived practically at the same time and was also seeking to present their moving pictures to the Japanese (Inabata 1897: 1, own translation). In conditions not unlike those in the Europe, these early film screenings took place in Japan among magic lantern slides that had also found their way to Japan via Dutch traders, which then served as

the foundation for local *utsushi-e* and *gentō* performances.³ Photography was also present through early Western photographers like Felice Beato, Baron Raimund von Stillfried-Rathenitz or Adolfo Farsari along with prominent Japanese photographers like Shimooka Renjō, Kusakabe Kimbei or Tamamura Kōzaburō working in studio and landscape photography (cf. Bennett 1996). In fact, Edison's Kinetoscope had already been presented in Japan in 1896, but since it was rather a box-shaped viewing device suitable only for one person to look into at a time, it is usually not counted as a public projection of moving images. Edison's Vitascope, however, was a competitor for the Lumière Cinématographe and the team bringing it to Japan were heading for Tokyo while Inabata and Girel were setting up in the Kansai-region. In the end it was a matter of only a few weeks that Inabata and Girel and their first screening of the Cinématographe at the Nanchi-Theatre in Osaka on 15th February 1897 were ahead of the Vitascope premiere in Tokyo in the Kinkikan-Theatre on 6th March 1897 (cf. Komatsu 1996: 433). The fact that these activities were experienced as a 'competition' already at the time, also points to the commercial element of this undertaking.

The Transnational and the Local

A fascinating insight into how Inabata framed his business activities in Japan for the Lumière Company comes from a set of letters that has recently become available through the research of Hase and Hori (2019). In his first letter to the Lumière brothers, dated 18th March 1897, Inabata retrospectively elaborates on the range of difficulties and practical impediments they had encountered on a local level in setting up their first screenings in February in Osaka and Kyoto, from visits of the imperial family forbidding public entertainments to having to facilitate special installing of electricity in the locations to be used for the screenings. He acknowledged that the American competition was already having screenings in Tokyo since 5th March and that

³ Literally 'projected pictures,' *utsushi-e* had then gone on to develop separately from the European phantasmagoria and were immensely popular in Japan from the beginning of the 19th century. European Magic Lantern slides were 're-introduced' to Japan in the wake of the Meiji Restoration and were then usually referred to as *gentō* (cf. Komatsu 1996: 431, Kusahara 1999).

Tokyo was “the important place” for public screenings. This prompted him to send personnel to Tokyo to organise events there while Girel had trained two Japanese to hold screenings in Kyoto and Osaka so that he could focus on the Tokyo premiers himself (Inabata 1897: 1-3). The first screenings were very successful to sold out houses and between five and eleven o’clock in the evening, eight different films were projected with the programme changing every day (Komatsu 1996: 433). Inabata outlines that the screenings in Kyoto, commencing on 2nd March, have had the desired success from the outset with on average approximately 1,000 people per day attending screenings and paying 10 sen admission (cf. Inabata 1897: 2).⁴

Content-wise, Inabata’s biography lists several films that he and Girel had brought along from France. Among these were topics of swimmers jumping into a pool in Milan, images of a lion in a zoo and scenes of a boat race (Takanashi 1938: 298). Komatsu (1996: 434) quotes Okuda Saichiro’s description of an early screening in Kyoto to inform us of at least three identifiable Lumière films shown at the event: *Dragons traversant la Saône à la nage* (1896, Lumière Catalogue number, LC no. hereafter, 186, unknown operator), *96e de ligne en marche* (1896, LC no. 191, unknown operator), and *Joueurs de cartes arrosés* (1896, LC no. 115, unknown operator). Already these three films are quite representative of the range of Lumière films that were shown at the time. Everyday curiosity events like horsemen crossing Lyon’s Saône River on swimming horses, the march of a military regiment, and a comedic skit of a card game quickly descending into a brawl that can only be resolved by the gardener present in the background pointing his watering hose at the quarrelling parties.

Maybe it were these early screenings showing French waterways and comedy skits that made Japanese audiences keen for more, but the assortment of films that Inabata ordered from the Lumière Company in his letter from 18th March 1897 for screenings in Japan specified an eclectic but interesting mix. Without further explanations, he said he would be pleased if films pertaining to the following subjects could be sent to Japan to be shown to Japanese audiences: “Arroseurs et arrosés [variations on a famous early Lumière

⁴ The 10-sen coin, worth one tenth of one Japanese Yen was used between the 1870s and the end of the second World War.

comedy skit], thunderstorms, comical scenes, games and anything relating to water“ (Inabata 1897: 3, own translation). Inabata’s specific selection ordered from the Lumières might be seen as an indication that audience taste at the time lay with comedy, the dramatic and tending more towards the notion of attractions, which would dominate much of the first decades of cinema (cf. Gaudreault 2008, Gunning 2006). It might be speculated that this selection was furthermore a nod to the international competition whose films also featured vaudeville performers, magic shows or boxing matches that audiences might have seen or read about in specialist magazines.

Framing ‘Japan’

What becomes clear is that there seems to have been a mismatch between the contents of the list of films Inabata sent to France of the films he wanted to show to Japanese audiences and that of the films that were shot in Japan by the Lumière cameramen. According to the Lumière catalogue’s website, there is a total of 33 extant films the Lumière Company made in Japan and there are no others from countries in East Asia, except for Cambodia and Vietnam which were related to French colonial rule in the region. These films were shot by Constant Girel who was the first Lumière operator in Japan and by Gabriel Veyre who arrived after Girel had left. Interestingly, there is also a Japanese person listed among the *opérateurs* on the website of the Lumière catalogue: Shibata Tsunekichi, who made films for the company in Japan in 1898, in between the sojourns of Girel and Veyre.

It must be mentioned that even though some of these early Lumière films were also shown in Japan at the time, these films were primarily taken back to France and shown there as well as being included as parts of other screening programmes around the globe, so the Japanese were not necessarily among the primary target audience.⁵ The discrepancy between what was to be shown *of* Japan (internationally) and what was to be shown *to* Japan

⁵ The Lumière Catalogue website notes with several of the Japan-made films that they were shown (at least) in a programme in Nagoya in 1898. This would require further research with archival sources in Japan. For example: <https://catalogue-lumiere.com/arrivee-dun-train/> (last accessed 15th November 2019).

(domestically) is nevertheless noteworthy.

It is striking that while both Girel and Veyre filmed heads of states or coronation ceremonies as well as instances of modernisation in various locations around the world, in Japan no footage of the head of state, the imperial family, or official state events exists nor are they focussed on Japan as a modernising nation (Miyao 2016: 79).⁶ Rather, in their desire (and potential remit) to document and ‘fix’ Japan in an Orientalist vision, they created a version of a timeless, and crucially, unmodernised Japan rooted in beautiful and exotic traditions, the land of the woodblock prints and their objects that also relied on the sexualisation of the ‘traditional’ feminine (cf. also Miyao 2016: 82, 89). The latter seems to have been particularly pertinent to the work of Veyre, whose seven of ten films featured traditional female performers. Girel first had focussed more on capturing the everyday as well as traditional martial and performing arts excluding female performers while also travelling the most widely within Japan and importantly also filming the Ainu in Hokkaidō.⁷

It is equally striking that there is an element of complicit performativity in these films, in which short but noticeable glimpses at the camera indicate an awareness of the performance of a certain image to be filmed. While Centeno Martín analyses this sense of performativity and gazes “leak[ing] onto the representation” of the Ainu (2017: 204), Miyao argues that this shows that the Japanese people in front of the camera were not merely “passive subjects of the controlling gaze but accidentally empowered by the duration of a shot” (2016: 89). Apart from the films on the Ainu, this can be seen particularly in three films. The first is Girel’s filming of Inabata and some of his family members ostensibly engaging in a private family meal to be documented by the camera (*Repas en Famille*, 1897, LC no. 733, Constant Girel). However, as has also been noted by Miyao and others, the scene in many ways does not resemble a Japanese family meal but something that has been staged

⁶ Komatsu notes though that Veyre had made contact with the Konishi Photographic Store (today Konica Minolta) with hopes to exhibit the Cinématographe to the Meiji Emperor and to shoot films of the imperial family, which were in the end not realised (1996: 437).

⁷ For more on the early filmic representations of the Ainu in relation to documentary film, ethnographic cinema and visual anthropology see Centeno Martín 2017.

to create the impression to the taste of the Western Orientalist gaze. While nobody is actually eating but rather drinking tea or smoking, Inabata, whose back is turned towards the camera at a slight angle, repeatedly turns around to glimpse towards the camera, particularly one clear gaze back at Girel after he as the household-head has inappropriately bowed deeply towards the maid of the household demonstrating what would be seen as 'Japanese' customs abroad (cf. Miyao 2016: 82). Inabata, who had lived abroad for several years would have been aware of these orientalising tendencies and performed the image accordingly. The second film displaying this sense of performativity for the camera is Veyre's filming of a traditional female performer playing the shamisen in *Chanteuse Japonaise* (1898-1899, LC no. 1026, Gabriel Veyre). In this film, and also in *Japonaise faisant sa toilette* (1898-1899, LC no. 1027, Gabriel Veyre) as the third film, the Japanese women in traditional kimono-outfits repeatedly gaze and hesitantly smile at the camera, conscious of being filmed in their performance.

This element of a staged performativity can also be found in the works of early photographers in Japan, again indicating a referentiality at the time to different media and art forms with a transnational component. Particularly if we look at the studio photography in Japan of Beato and Stillfried from the 1860s to the 1880s, women in traditional Japanese dress are depicted in what is made to look like private interiors, but are in fact based in the photographers' studios. In an argument similar to the above, Laps (2016) acknowledges that Beato's work in Japan is filtered through the occidental imaginary of scenes and people, some of whom turn away and some who fix us with their gazes. It is interesting in Bennett's selection of early images of Japan by Western and Japanese photographers that also the early Japanese photographers like Shimooka in the 1870s and Kusakabe in the 1890s took such photographs of traditional female Japanese performers in similar settings and that also in these photographs the women return the gaze directly (as in Bennett 1996: 97, 116). Often these photographs were taken for foreign consumption and sold as souvenir photo albums making their way abroad but it is nevertheless also conceivable that they functioned as transmedial references for the early Japanese filmmakers who would make films of geisha as well.

Shibata Tsunekichi's films, then, were a curious case. In his five films for the Lumière Company, he focussed on public spaces and street scenes

in Tokyo but was less at pains than Girel and Veyre to exclude instances of Japanese modernisation with people in Western dress appearing in the frame as well as electricity lines in the backgrounds. It is remarkable then that also Japanese cameramen like Shibata together with Asano Shirō, his colleague at the Konishi Photographic Store, also made films of geisha (*Geisha no teodori/ Geisha's dance*, 1897, not extant, cf. also Miyao 2016: 88). Asano furthermore shot test films of Nihonbashi street scenes and later kabuki actors in 1897 (Komatsu 1996: 435). In 1899, after filming for the Lumière Company with the Cinématographe, Shibata shot *Momijigari (Maple Viewing, 1899)* as a record of the two famous kabuki actors Onoe Kikugoro V and Ichikawa Danjūrō IX performing a scene from the kabuki play *Momijigari* (Komatsu 2005: 363). The film is often mentioned to be the oldest extant 'Japanese' film and is the first film to be designated an 'Important Cultural Property' by the Japanese government in 2009.⁸ It is, however, debatable what would make this film more 'Japanese' than the earlier Lumière films shot by Shibata as all these films featured transnational components by using imported cameras but being operated by Japanese cameramen filming 'Japanese' scenes.

Miyao argues that Japanese men at the time and particularly intellectuals and trained technicians like Shibata and Asano were "attempting to identify their gazes with the Western male gaze" (2016: 88). He references art historian Saeki Junko who connects the image of the geisha with the pre-modern and the sexual, arguing that "by defining women to be sexual, Japanese men [in the Meiji period] tried to identify themselves with the 'Western male,' stand in a superior position to the 'Japanese female,' confirm themselves as the transnational male subject (...) and obtain a 'civilized' national image" (Miyao 2016: 88). It is worth noting, as Miyao does, that such films about geisha made by Japanese cameramen were also popular with Japanese audiences (2016: 88).

Komatsu, however, offers a different explanation as to why early Japanese cameramen also shot films of geisha and kabuki actors. He argues that one of the early characteristics of Japanese films was that private life was not selected for representation and that if occurrences were of the everyday,

⁸ For more on *Momijigari* as non-fiction or fiction film see Komatsu 1995, or on *Momijigari* as *Important Cultural Property* see Gerow 2009.

they rather resembled scenes from photographic picture postcards or they featured people already “playing a part” such as kabuki actors or also geisha (Komatsu 1996: 435). Komatsu further argues that this rejection of the everyday also represented a rejection of the bourgeois aesthetics that came with the Lumière Cinématographe, which often presented topics that could feature in a private French family photo album (1996: 436). Next to this transnational dialogue we can also see here again a specific reference to other art forms as models for early filmic imagery.

Common to both Miyao and Komatsu’s arguments is that early films shot in Japan were not only about what *was* shown, but also about what was *not* shown and that those omissions were particularly indicative of who was behind the camera. In terms of how things developed from initial test and earliest film, it is also worth noting that Japanese cameramen like Shibata and Asano did not continue making films primarily about geisha or kabuki. Asano soon went on to making contemporary-set ‘transnational remakes’ of scenes he had seen in Cinématographe or Vitascope shows. He shot the famous scenes from the beginnings of cinema: a train entering Ueno station or the coast at Shinagawa. In addition to these types of films, he also began making trick films likely inspired by contemporary French and American films (Komatsu 1996: 436). While this points to the notion, perhaps bolstered by Inabata’s wish list of films, that Japanese audiences at the time saw ‘cinema’ more as a spectacle, a medium of attraction and entertainments, French audiences and cinephiles, who had been reared on Japonisme and Lumière imagery, decades later still demanded that films from Japan feature images of geisha and paper lanterns.⁹ This already predates discourses on the ‘discovery’ of Japanese cinema in the West during the 1950s when several eminent directors like Mizoguchi Kenji, Kurosawa Akira or Kinugasa Teinosuke won awards and critical acclaim for their *jidaigeki* period dramas in the Western film festival circuit while within Japan the contemporary-set *gendaiigeki* dramas were well-received with *jidaigeki*’s popularity in decline (cf. Centeno

⁹ When Mori Iwao, then scriptwriter for Murata Minoru’s 1925 Western-style love tragedy *Machi no tejinashi* (*The Street Juggler*), was travelling with the film in Europe to show it to audiences in Berlin, Paris and London in 1926, he was told by an eminent French cinema manager in Paris “I thought this would be a Japanese film, this isn’t Japan, isn’t this an imitation of the West? Where are Mt Fuji, the geisha and the paper lanterns?” (as in Saiki 1989: 62, own translation).

Martín 2018). Also here was a certain sense of ‘complicit performativity’ in this specific kind of imagery for foreign consumption in that these films had been specifically selected in Japan to compete in international festivals (Centeno Martín 2018: 4). Perhaps one could see here traces lingering from Inabata’s glance to check on his nonsensical bow or the geisha’s smile for Veyre’s camera.

Concluding Thoughts

It is not my intention to conflate historical circumstances or ignore significant events or developments between the late 1890s and the 1950s, yet there also have been some recurring motifs in what Japan stood for as a ‘nation’ and what ‘transnational’ dimensions involved in terms of cinema. As we have seen above, the early films made in Japan by the Lumière Company and by early Japanese cameramen were neither produced nor consumed in any sense of ‘national’ isolation, yet were part of a national identity formation that involved the construction of a national image for foreign consumption by transnational means. However, as we have also seen, apart from the tension between the transnational, the national and the local, a synchronic look at other art forms like painting and photography revealed a transmedial referentiality, that, while also involved in a transnational dialogue, represented another constituting component, particularly in the early days of cinema. In conclusion the almost too obvious fact persists that cinema regardless of locality is always also a commercial enterprise that seeks specific imagery in order to capitalise on its investments – and it has been from its very inception.

Biographical Note

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The ‘Festival of Nations’ That Never Was: Nationalist Transnationalism in The 1940 Winter Olympics and the Japanese-German Film Collaboration *The People’s Oath* (1938)

Iris Haukamp

Abstract

This chapter takes a critical look at the understanding and usage of the concept of the ‘transnational’ by examining the production history of *The People’s Oath* (Kokumin no chikai, 1938). This film about two aspiring Japanese ski jumpers and their German coach was made by Tōhō Studios in collaboration with German cast and crew in the run-up to the 1940 Winter Olympics in Sapporo. Japan would have been the first non-Western nation to host the Olympic Games, and they were associated with high hopes for international prestige. However, both film and Olympics display the strong nationalist discourses of their time and places, and both mobilise the transnational ideal and appeal to that purpose. Within the field of tension between the national and the transnational in this specific context of production and reception, the latter became a mere vehicle for the former, and the film’s relevant messages were edited according to concrete national requirements in Japan and, for a later release under very different auspices, in Germany.

Key words: Olympics, film coproductions, nationalism, transnationalism, winter sports

The celebration of the Olympic Games in Tokyo means not only the attainment of the highest ideals of mankind as manifested in the competitions in the field of international sports, but it is an added glory to the Japanese nation, because the year falls on the occasion of the 2600th anniversary of the founding of the Empire. (1st preparatory meeting, 7 December 1936, Organizing Committee 1940: 22)

The concept of transnationality in film or representational practices appears to offer a liberation from the nationalist spectre that has haunted the world since the rise of the concept of the nation-state as hegemonic. Yet, looking more closely at transnational film projects within their specific historical contexts, they can appear as a balancing act, in fact revealing an underlying tension between the national and the international. A similar conundrum can be observed in the Olympic Games. Conceived of as an international festival to bring the people of the world together on a level playing field, they, more often than not, reveal national motivations and nationalist (and economic) agendas. This dictum certainly applies to the 1936 Berlin Games that gave the National-Socialist regime the chance to present the current state of affairs in Germany in the best light, as well as to the 1940 ones in Tokyo that were eventually cancelled due to Japan's war with China. If the Olympic Games are much concerned with representing one's nation on the international stage, the same can be said about the film co-productions that Japan and Germany had been involved in since the early 1930s.¹ Part of the attraction of embarking on co-produced or collaborative² projects was their international aspect, which then as now appeared progressive and aspirational, and thus increased their production value. Furthermore, these projects enabled the participants to combine their various ideas, aesthetics, techniques and ideologies, to best to appeal to the anticipated audiences. Unsurprisingly, with the worsening of international relations, these representational endeavours displayed an increasing urgency to 'correct' perceived international misconception through the dissemination of — however defined — positive images. In all these cases, the represented country was Japan, and in all of them, Japan had initiated the project or was heavily involved.

The 'biggest' in terms of budget, advertising, aspiration, and scholarly coverage of these projects is *New Earth* (*Atarashiki tsuchi*, *Die Tochter des Samurai*, 1937, Itami and Fanck), the production of which took over one year, and increasingly became thematically involved with Japan and

¹ For the backstory of ultimately failed attempts see Haukamp (2017).

² I here use 'collaborative' in the sense of only one or two participants from either country, whereas 'co-production' denotes a more full-blown project, where both countries appear in the credits due to contractual provisions between two partners or studios.

Germany concluding their first military agreement, the Anti-Comintern Pact of November 1936.³ In this chapter, I trace its immediate follow-up project, *The People's Oath* (Kokumin no chikai, Das Heilige Ziel, 1938, Nomura), a narrative film planned to advertise the 1940 Winter Games in Sapporo, Hokkaido, the cancellation of which signalled the breakdown of international cooperation. Athletes and films — or cinematics topics, trends, and aesthetics — crossing borders to act as builders of bridges between nations are appealing endeavours, but the eventual outcome depends on their contexts. Both *People's Oath* and the 1940 Olympics bring into the spotlight objectives born out of an increasingly tense international environment in the interrelated realms of culture, industry, and politics, where the transnational became caught between international aspirations and national objectives.

Richard Angst had been the head cinematographer for *New Earth*, which was released in Japan in February 1937, and in Germany in March 1937 as *The Samurai's Daughter* (Die Tochter des Samurai). In this context, Ogasawara Takeo and Kido Zensō of the Japanese film company Kokkō Eiga scouted out film-related business opportunities in and with Germany (*Film-Kurier* 1937). Considering the German film industry's export difficulties due to an international wave of protest and boycotts regarding the persecution of its Jewish members, production company Tobis could be quite satisfied with their distribution agreement with Kokkō for a significant number of Tobis films. While in 1929, export revenue had recovered the production costs of a third of the feature films produced, it covered only eight per cent in 1934-35, dropping to seven per cent in 1938-39 (Welch 2001: 23-4,73). The two firms also set up a shared company for this purpose, Cocco-Tobis-Nippon (C.T.N.) (*Der Film* 1937a; S-k. 1937). C.T.N.'s other declared goal was modelled on *New Earth*, but with a more ambitious aim: Instead of co-productions that mobilized German technique and artistic sensibilities combined with Japanese scenery, subject matter, and funding in order to launch Japanese films onto

³ *New Earth* exploded the initial idea of binational collaboration. The German director and his Japanese co-director did neither agree on script nor on the directing style, and each made his own version from the same script in order to produce a result from over one year of labour, high-production costs and advertising. Both versions were shown in Japan under the same title, *New Earth*, but only the German director's film was released in Germany. See also Hansen (1997, Segawa, 2017, Sierek 2018).

international markets, they planned to produce “genuinely Japanese films” for international screens; albeit actually using the very same strategy of inviting German staff and technology (S-k. 1937).

For their first venture, Kokkō invited Angst back to Japan. While *New Earth*'s German director, Arnold Fanck, did not receive unanimous praise in Japan due to his script and directing style, Angst's cinematography had been much admired and commented on. It stands to reason that Kokkō aimed at eliminating the main source of irritation, namely a foreign author-director's intervention, while fully employing Angst's technique, German camera technology, and the appeal of an international crew. *Typhoon* (Taifun), a 'great export film' about Japan's fishing industry, was to have an exclusively Japanese cast and a 'universally comprehensible and interesting plot' (*Der Film* 1937b) and — wisely — only one, Japanese version. *New Earth* still weighed on people's minds, as Japanese reports also noted that after the criticism that *New Earth* was boring, this project would have great entertainment value (*Asahi Shinbun* 1937b).

According to Bieber, it was a young director, Wolfgang Loë-Bagier, who brought Ogasawara and Angst together (2014: 507-8). Kokkō subsequently hired Angst as cinematographer, Bagier as directing consultant and Swiss screenwriter Richard Schweizer as editor (*ibid.*) (*Der Film* 1937b). They left for Japan in mid-June, but *Typhoon* never materialized. Bieber argues that the plan was first postponed and then cancelled due to the war with China, and that this was the reason for Angst developing the plan for a film to promote the 1940s Olympics to Japanese and German audiences (2014: 507-8). Yet, it is the Marco-Polo Bridge Incident (Lúgōuqiáo Shibìàn; Rokōkyō Jiken) of 7 July 1937, an exchange of fire between Japanese and Chinese forces and its aftermath, which is widely considered the starting point for the war. And by this time, the Germans were well on their way; Ogasawara, Angst and Bagier arrived in Kobe by ship on 19 July, and Schweizer via the Trans-Siberian Railway (*Asahi Shinbun* 1937a). *Typhoon*'s production, in cooperation with the Shōchiku Ōfuna Studios, was to begin in September and finished in November (*ibid.*). Why the war would have impacted specifically on a film about fishing remains unclear, and furthermore, the making of a short documentary-style 'culture film' (*Kulturfilm, bunka eiga*) about the preparations for the Olympic Games in Tokyo 1940 had been already

announced in June (*Der Film* 1937b). Neither was Angst remaining in Japan to make a ‘film about fisherman’ a recent idea, but had emerged one year earlier, with the plan of the Japanese producer of *New Earth* financing and facilitating this follow-up project (*Der Film* 1936). While we cannot cajole history into giving us a straightforward story, this background nevertheless provides insight into the opportunistic, spontaneous, and often downright confusing reality of making films within the political, social, and cultural contexts and intersections of Japan and Germany in the late 1930s.

In any case, the idea about a culture film about the 1940s Olympics turned into a full-blown feature film. According to Bieber, Angst was inspired by a newspaper article about two young men who swore that they would concentrate on the Olympics and give up their personal lives for two years to learn ski-jumping from a German specialist (2014: 507-8).⁴ Kokkō adopted the plan, and Bagier, Schweizer, and veteran scriptwriter Noda Kōgo (1893-1968)⁵ turned Angst’s treatment into a screenplay: Two Japanese ski jumpers, Kojima Takeo (Sano Shuji) and Maeda Akira (Isono Akio) are talent-scouted for the ‘upcoming Olympics’ by ‘famous German coach’ Peter Sturm (Sepp Rist). Shop clerk Takeo balks from the idea of the tough training and giving up his personal life, and he also has a sick mother to care for. His boss, however, tells him off and promises to provide a caregiver. Akira and his girlfriend Natsuko, who is also Taeko’s sister (Takasugi Sanae), work in a chemistry lab. Natsuko encourages him to participate in the Olympics, promising to take on his work as well. Eventually the two men are persuaded by everyone around them and, in turn, persuade Peter to stay on in Japan as their coach.

The directing was entrusted to the successful Shōchiku director Nomura Hiromasa. For the role of the ‘German specialist’, Angst decided on German actor Sepp Rist, who came to Japan in October 1938. Rist and Angst had worked together many times before, for instance on *Storm over Mont Blanc* (*Stürme über dem Mont Blanc*, 1930, Fanck) and also in Fanck’s

⁴ I have not been able to locate this article; it also remains unclear where Angst encountered it and in what language.

⁵ Noda is mostly known for his postwar collaborations with Ozu Yasujiro, the most prominent being *Tokyo Story* (*Tōkyō monogatari*, 1953), but he had been working with Ozu from 1927, and also wrote the Shōchiku hit *The Love-Troth Tree* (*Aizen Katsura*, 1938), also directed by Nomura Hiromasa.

first major international coproduction *SOS Iceberg* (*SOS Eisberg*, 1933) with Universal Studios. Rist, with his successful skiing and ski jumping background, always embodied the same, heroic, physical type, and in 1937 he had participated in the adventure two-parter *The Tiger of Eschnapur* and *The Indian Tomb* (*Der Tiger von Eschnapur*; *Das indische Grabmal*, 1937/1938, Eichberg) as the lover of screen idol La Jana. While Rist fell violently ill during the stunt shootings in India and the role fell to Gustav Diszl (Lehmann no date), his experiences seemed to make him ideal for the ‘Olympic film’ produced in Japan. Regarding film’s arguable ‘transnationality’, in terms of its physical and ideological border crossing, as well as the flows of styles, techniques, technologies, people, and topics, however, there is one more likely influence on the “sudden” idea about what became *People’s Oath*. In 1934 Angst and Rist had both worked on the German-Swiss sports comedy *The Champion of Pontresina* (*Der Springer von Pontresina*, Selpin). Angst was part of the cinematography unit, and true to his star persona, Rist played the captain of a German student ski jumping team. The film features a light-hearted love-triangle plot, yet the narrative’s crisis resembles that of *People’s Oath*, albeit with a less nationalistic outlook: Tielko (Vivigenz Eickstedt) loses interest in the sport because of his infatuation with an English girl (Violett Moore, played by Annie Markart), and captain and team try to convince him to refocus on the upcoming competition. Eventually, Tielko finds out about Violett’s engagement and is made temporary team captain; all ends well (filmportal.de).⁶ In *People’s Oath*, Akira runs away from the training camp after Natsuko is injured in an accident in the laboratory, and it takes a rueful return and an almost fatal avalanche to reconcile the athlete and his disappointed coach. *Champion of Pontresina* had been released in Japan as *The Girls of St. Moritz* (*San Moritsu no otometachi*) in 1936 (*Kinema Junpō* 1936: 55) and therefore — rather than being created from scratch — *People’s Oath* capitalized on this forerunner and Sepp Rist’s established star persona as an athlete and coach.

On the other hand, Rist apparently being a rampant alcoholic (the film does depict him imbibing on several occasions) and causing various embarrassing moments, evoked the German embassy’s displeasure, as

⁶ I here rely on the plot summary provided by filmportal.de.

did Loë-Bagier's Jewish heritage (Bieber 2014: 508). Responsible for the "international export version", Bagier, in fact, would never return to Germany.⁷ Japanese trade journals and fan magazines neglected these titbits, but reported enthusiastically about the progress of the production and the location shooting in Niseko and Sapporo, also expressing hopes for the promotion of Hokkaido as a prime winter sports location, which would of course also host the 1940 Winter Olympics.

Olympic Games and Martial Endeavours

The task of celebrating the XIIth Olympic Games will be the greatest ever given to a country, for it does not mean merely to pursue the Olympic Torch through the universe and to unite the whole of Asia with the Modern Olympism in a most cordial manner, but also to combine Hellenism, the most precious civilization of ancient Europe, with the refined culture and art of Asia. (Baron Pierre de Coubertin, letter from Geneva dated 29 July 1937; cited in Organizing Committee 1940: 13)

The 1940s Tokyo Olympics, and in extension the 1940s Winter Olympics in Sapporo, are notable because they never happened.⁸ In August 1936, Tokyo, as the first non-Western city, had been awarded the right to host the Games. Following international tensions and Japan leaving the League of Nations after the controversies regarding the annexation of Manchuria and the establishment of the puppet-state Manchukuo in 1932, their bid was represented by Japanese officials as a chance to re-join the international community, and for the International Olympic Committee (IOC) as the legitimation for their claim that the Games were indeed universal (Collins 2007: 956-7). Yet, the mere fact that the decision on Tokyo was announced during the Olympic Summer Games in Berlin that overtly, and with the IOC turning a blind eye, used the 'festival of nations' — immortalised in Leni Riefenstahl's controversial documentary (*Fest der Völker*, 1938) — for

⁷ He became a US citizen in 1941 and made film as Douglas Bagier.

⁸ For a detailed discussion of the 1940s Olympics and the related controversies and aspirations see Collins (2008).

National-Socialist Germany's self-advertisement and self-aggrandisement throws a shadow of doubt on the idea of apolitical, philanthropical motifs. At the same time, the seeming "contradiction of hosting an international event for national purposes" (Collins 2008: 2) is not alien to the Olympic Games as a modern construct. Its founder, Pierre de Coubertin, saw international competition as a means for facilitating the encounter between and subsequent empathic understanding of different nations:

[N]ationalism is by no means detrimental. However, it would quite easily develop in that direction unless corrected by a sincere internationalism. ... national peculiarities are an indispensable prerequisite for the life of a people and that contact with other people will strengthen and enliven them. (Coubertin 1901; cited in Spaaji 2014: 4).

Yet, while the knowledge and tolerance to be gained from such non-chauvinistic international encounters perhaps works best on the personal level, on the national state-level other objectives, prestige or economy for instance, take centre stage. It is reasonable to assume that Coubertin's stressing of the Olympic spirit of unity in the epigraph to this section was in response to trends that crystallised with the official outbreak of war with China, three weeks before he wrote his letter. The 1930s as a hotbed of nationalist militarism provided an environment to tip the scales towards the negative self-centred nationalism that would result in the opposite of Coubertin's idea, namely, to posit one's own culture at the top in order to legitimize the subordination of others. In this respect, the 1940s Olympics and the German-Japanese film collaboration *People's Oath* provide a telescopic lens under which to observe the workings of this nationalist transnational rhetoric.

"First and foremost, the City of Tokyo and the Japanese government wanted to commemorate 1940 as the 2,600th anniversary of the foundation of Japan (*Kigen 2600nen*) by hosting the Tokyo Olympic Games and the International Exhibition in Yokohama" (Collins 2008: 1). While many members of the committee members and the public undoubtedly were genuinely interested in the athletic aspect, the fact that the Organizing Committee not only included the Mayor of Tokyo but also Vice-Minister of the Navy, Yamamoto Isoroku, and Vize-Minister of War, Tōjō Hideki

(Organizing Committee 1940: 16), aroused the IOC's concern. President Baillet-Latour reminded the Committee that the "Games are given to the town of Tokyo and not to Japan" to stress their civic rather than national nature (Collins 2008: 90).

Many influential circles, in particular the army, was not enamoured of the idea of hosting the Games, as it would deplete the nation of funds and resources needed for military campaigns and distract from mass mobilisation efforts. And indeed, after the outbreak of war with China in July 1937, House of Representatives member Kono Ichirō immediately called for a cancellation of the Games (ibid.: 140), an episode that questions the idea that the intended film about fishing was cancelled because of the war, but could have provided a reason for *Kokkō Eiga*, Angst, and people in the background to mobilize the collaboration's international aspects to, indeed, promote the Olympics. Due to the German participants' aforementioned background, the decision to focus on the Winter Games seems well-founded.

The topical focus on the somewhat exotic ski jumping discipline can be explained by Rist's athletic and cinematic background, but also by previous controversies between the IOC and the International Skiing Federation (FIS): Alpine Skiing was first included in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, 1936, but due to the Olympics' supposed 'amateur' character, the IOC excluded professional skiing instructors from the competition. This caused Austrian and Swiss skiers to boycott the competition, 'with the exception of a few Austrians who decided to represent Germany' (olympic.org), in an eerie foreshadowing of Germany's annexation of Austria in March 1938. This issue also impacted on the planning for Sapporo, as it remained unclear whether skiing would be included; ski-jumping therefore provided a reliable and attractive topic. Apart from the skiers, several countries began considering a boycott of the 'Japanese Games', be it due to increasing international tensions or concerns as towards the sufficient status of preparation (Collins 2008: 149-53). Both the IOC and the Organizing Committee kept pushing the Olympics forward, but doubts grew with the war continuing for longer than anticipated (Kluge 2015). Still, the production of *People's Oath* made good progress, and completion was announced for early April 1938 (*Asahi Shinbun* 1938).

Fade-in: National flags and international aspirations

As the year for the Olympic Games would have coincided with the celebration for the 2600th anniversary of the founding of the Japanese Empire, and also because it would afford a wonderful opportunity to introduce our national status to the world, the people of Japan, as a whole, has placed high hopes on the Games. (Marquis Kido, Minister for Public Welfare; cited in Organizing Committee 1940: 122)

People's Oath firmly connects itself to the Olympics and to the nation. The soundtrack makes this apparent from the very beginning, opening on “Hashire tairiku o” (Race the continent), sung by a women’s choir. Prominent composer Yamada Kōsaku⁹ re-recorded his “Kokusai orinpiciku senshū haken ōnka: hashire tairiku o” (“Send-off song for the athletes to the international Olympics”), originally made for the 1932 Los Angeles Games.¹⁰ Performed by popular jazz baritone Nakano Tadaharu, it was released by Columbia Records in 1932, and due to its popularity also used for the 1936 Berlin Games. As was “Ageyo hi no maru” (“Raise the national flag”), the next Olympia-related collaboration between Nakano and Yamada in 1936. Both songs were re-used for *People's Oath*, establishing the Olympic lineage and at the same time emphasizing the national standing in the international community: In the lyrics of “Hashire tairiku o”, the athletes’ legs, arms, spirit and glory become those of the nation, and the title of the 1936 work speaks for itself. The national flag is also immediately raised in Nomura’s film; in fact, three of them are shown in the first frame, followed by shots of athletes hurtling down the jump upon which the flags are fastened (Figure 1).¹¹

The jumpers on the platform in are determined to “show this foreign expert what we can do”, as the dialogue and subtitles inform the respective audiences. The foreign expert is Peter Sturm, observing the talents in the

⁹ Yamada was also the composer for *New Earth*.

¹⁰ The lyrics were by the winner of the *Asahi Shinbun*’s contest for an Olympic send-off song, seventeen-year old Saitō Ryū.

¹¹ According to Japanese copyright law, the film is in the public sphere. Both visual and audio quality of the print used here are rather low, partly due to age, but the Tōa Sound Western Electric system used for post-recording did not perform well; also some shots have camera rolling sound.



Figure 1

competition, utterly unimpressed until Takeo and Akira's performances. The transition between a close-up of Sturm watching them preparing for their jumps is significant, because the dissolve reveals them standing underneath a large national flag that takes the upper right side of the frame and the following dissolve to a reverse-shot of Sturm momentarily unites the two athletes, the national flag, and the critical foreign expert onlooker (Figure 2). The eyes of the world are on the two Japanese jumpers who perform for their country — before they are even selected for the team.

The film clearly references the Games, as Peter, Takeo, and Akira are being introduced to “Count Ōsawa, of the Olympic Committee” (Yamanaka Kōji). The presence of a foreign (German) coach — and a famous German cameraman — and the polyglot dialogue in German or Japanese stress the Olympics and the film's transnational component and appeal. At the same time, the film emphasizes the national narrative, and the similarities between the discourse initiated in the film about why these — initially reluctant but gifted — two should give up their personal lives for Olympic success and those who were already giving or about to give their lives to



Figure 2

the nation is striking. Takeo's boss calls him to his office and nullifies the athlete's reluctance with strong articulations that silence any retort, such as "Don't think about yourself. It's for the national cause", "When the Olympic Committee needs you, you have got to follow," and, finally, "Japan, your fatherland, is calling you." And indeed, Takeo and Akira eventually decide that private matters now have to take a back seat and "Let's imagine we were soldiers." The young women's roles, at first glance, seem to contradict the wartime ideal of "good wife and wise mother" (*ryōsai kenbo*), as Natsuko is working in a high-tech laboratory, and Akira's sister Yoshiko (Maki Fusako) is very chic and outspoken. Yet, all women, including Takeo's sick mother who we never see but only hear about, fulfil their national mobilization role of encouraging their men to sacrifice all for the national cause. When Akira sneaks out of the training camp to return to Tokyo and Natsuko after her accident, she reacts angrily and tells him to go back at once. Turning her back at him, she walks out of the frame. Even Takeo's mother had told him that, for the Olympics, one has to give one's body and heart to the nation, a statement which allows him to continue training after her passing away. In this sense,

the women in this international Olympic film (*kokusai eiga*) foreshadow the mother and sisters of the young pilot of Yamamoto Kajirō's Pearl-Harbor commemoration spectacle *The War at Sea from Hawaii to Malay* (Hawaii Mare oki kaisen, 1942). In this "national policy film" (*kokusaku eiga*), as the son is about to leave the family for a military mission, his sisters placate his concern about their mother being worried: "No, she actually said 'He is not my son'." Thus, just like Akira and Takeo are constantly reminded of in *People's Oath*, the citizens' bodies and hearts belong to the nation, be it on the battle- or on the sports field.

I cannot leave unmentioned one particular scene, which, on the one hand, corresponds to de Coubertin's ideal of non- chauvinistic nationalism and international understanding, but, on the other hand is so far-fetched that it is hard to imagine its international reception, had it come to that: The Japanese athletes and ski hut personnel kindly organize a surprise, German-style Christmas party for Peter, including a Christmas tree and many local adults and children singing *Silent Night* in Japanese (*Kiyoshi kono yoru*; sung by a choir). Peter is visibly touched by the gesture, and the shots through falling snow and into the window and the cosy hut, in interplay with the song, create an atmosphere of international respect and harmony. Soon, the event develops into a lively, Japanese-style drinking party (*nomikai*), and the children start dancing a traditional circle dance (*bon odori*). Peter also joins in, and later returns the favour with a traditional Alpine folk dance (*Schuhplattler*). Seeing Peter in his "Bavarian outfit", complete with hat, *lederhosen*, etc., which he specifically must have brought with him to the hut in Niseko, is bizarre, to say the least (Figure 3).

The plot about the friendship between Japanese and German sportspeople cemented the current idea of German-Japanese connectedness, enunciated with the conclusion of the Anti-Comintern Pact of November 1936 and Hitler's acknowledgment of Manchukuo in May 1938. Yet, the hierarchical, coach/disciple relationship did nothing to upset implicit racial hierarchies between the Aryans of the West and the honorary Aryans of the East. Despite producer Ogasawara's claim that he pursued no political aim with this project but aimed for a successful export film, and that he would have also pursued this goal with another country had there been any pre-existing ties (Ogasawara 1938: 95), it is difficult to see how the film's content



Figure 3

could have been considered entirely apolitical by the producers. On the other hand, as discussed in the previous section, a nationalised rhetoric is not alien to the Olympic discourse, and likely even more so within the militarizing context of the late 1930s, where martial, nationalistic expressions became, if not naturalized, at least more mainstream.

Interestingly, the film that had opened on three national flags, closes on the Olympic flag with its five rings (Figure 4), but it is fair to say that this does not denote a narrative development from nationalism to transnationalism. The film features impressive shots of the two protagonists skiing downhill very skilfully, just as their foreign coach taught them, and of course, Angst's characteristically excellent mise-en-shot, such as mountain scenes with dramatic backlighting, an eyeline-match shot from inside the hut to the athletes warming up outside the door, and a "classical" German mountain film gimmick where the camera is fixed to a ski —GoPro's forerunner, so

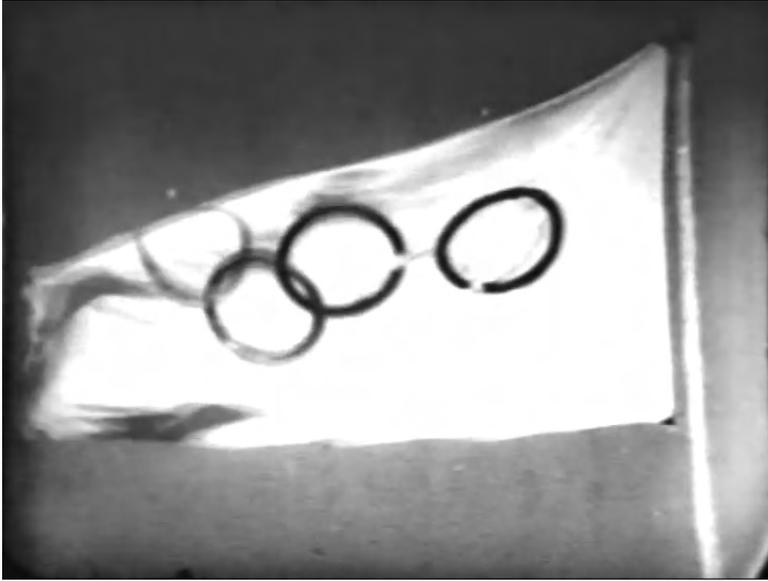


Figure 4

to speak — affording the audience a point-of-view experience.¹² Intended to attract foreign distributors, both plot and style reveal national desires for international prestige by utilising transnational narrative elements, aesthetics and techniques.

¹² Angst was a member of the so-called “Freiburg Film School” of cinematographers (Freiburger Filmschule) around Arnold Fanck who initiated and defined the German mountain film (*Bergfilm*) genre from the 1920s. Their films are characterized by location shooting, mainly in the European Alps, the use of high-tech equipment for the genre’s specific requirements (difficult terrains, extreme temperatures, natural light). The majority of cast and crew had a background in amateur or professional mountain sports (skiing, climbing, etc.), hence the films featured action-laden scenes of ski racing or mountain climbing and mountain rescues. Mostly unscripted, the focus was less on the very simple plot, but on spectacular landscape shots in high contrast, and dynamic moving shots with expressive backlighting. For a while, these films such as *Mountain of Destiny* (*Berg des Schicksals*, 1924) or *White Frenzy* (*Der weiße Rausch*, 1931) were very successful. They have also come under critical scrutiny, beginning in 1947 with Kracauer’s psychosocial study of the German cinema, *From Caligari to Hitler* (1947: 110-2). His analysis of mountain films as harbingers of National Socialism due to their emphasis on reckless heroism has been relativised in recent years (e.g. by Elsaesser 2002).

Fade-out: Changing contexts and purposes

... in a crisis like the present the whole nation is united as one man, ready ... to make any sacrifices, however serious, in order to safeguard the general interest of the nation ... The Olympic spirit is found in the country more enlivened spiritually than bodily at present and the people of Japan do not falter in their faith to cope with the situation, like athletes on the field of sports do their best to show their admirable deeds and heroic attitude. (Organizing Committee 1940: 8)

People's Oath, rather unfortunately, was released on 12 June 1938, one day after the Battle of Wuhan (*Bukan sakusen*) began, which would continue for over four months and result in large casualties on both sides (MacKinnon 1996: 931). Prime Minister Konoe's 'New Austerity Plan' — announced on 23 June 1938 in the light of the war — also impacted on the Olympics: While not deterring the Games openly, the government cut the budget by roughly thirty-five per cent (Collins 2008: 158-60). The Grand International Exposition, to be held in Yokohama from March to August 1940, like the Games "in celebration of the 2600th anniversary of the accession of the first Emperor Jimmu to the throne" (International Exhibition 1937) was cancelled on 14 July (Kluge 2015: 25). On the following day. The Olympic organising committee — on governmental advice — forfeited the right to host the Games in Japan: "We regret that, owing to protracted hostilities with no prospect of immediate peace, we have decided to cancel the Tokyo and Sapporo Games. We intend to apply for 1944 Games" (Organizing Committee 1940: 121). The Summer Games 1940, rescheduled to take place in Helsinki, were eventually cancelled due to the war. Looking for a new host for the Winter Games, the IOC's decision on St. Moritz, Switzerland (host of 1928), creates an interesting palimpsest of transnational film history. Angst had sharpened his cinematographic skills in terms of winter sports with his first ever cinematic documentation of the Winter Games. *The White Stadium* (Das weiße Stadion, 1928, Fanck and Gurtner) thus provides a further background for Angst's work in Japan. When St. Moritz fell through as a location due to the ongoing conflict between IOC and FIS about the participation of professional skiing instructors, misguidedly — and not only in hindsight — the IOC settled on Garmisch-Partenkirchen in Germany, the host of 1936. Germany's invasion

of Poland on 1 September 1939 started World War II in the European arena, and the IOC's blind eye had become untenable. The 1940 Winter Games were cancelled altogether, as were the 1944 Winter Games scheduled for Cortina D'Ampezzo, in Italy, the third axis country.

Angst left Japan in 1939 and took *People's Oath* with him to Germany, where it underwent mandatory censorship on 18 April 1939. But, perhaps due to a lack of interest in the cancelled Games, it was not released before 1942. The tides of war had turned against Germany, while Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor had raised its military reputation. Japan became significant again, as the potentially (re-)moralizing instance of a powerful ally, and various related films made or remade it to the German screens, such as *New Earth* under the new title *Mitsu's Love* (*Die Liebe der Mitsu*) (Bieber 2014: 884-6).¹³ Consequently, the "foreword" to *People's Oath*, or rather *The Holy Goal* (*Das heilige Ziel*), inserted for the German release, refers to the cancelled Games but more importantly stresses German-Japanese collaboration ... in skiing, which "had been introduced to Japan by German specialists". In fact, it was Austrian military attaché Theodor von Lech in 1911 and his compatriot Hannes Schneider in 1932, who introduced Alpine skiing techniques and equipment in Japan. By 1942, the demarcation lines between Germany and Austria had become blurred conveniently for the purpose. A second self-serving intervention in the film is the German subtitle "translating" the cut-in of a Japanese newspaper article towards the end (Figure 5): The original celebrates "Japan's bright skiing stars aiming for Olympic victory", while the subtitles proclaim a "German-Japanese skiing friendship". The "Germany" that was not present in the original shot and Japanese context (apart from "Peter" in the photograph) became necessary for the new target audience and context. While in 1938, the transnational aspect was imagined to improve the film's chances on international markets and promote Japan as an Olympic nation, in 1942 it was likely seen to strengthen German confidence. In both cases, however, the 'transnational' is merely a means to the national(ist) end,

¹³ Contrary to expectations, the intelligence agencies argued for the immediate cancellation of screenings of film such as *Nippon's Wild Eagles* (*Nippons Wilde Adler*), an adapted and subtitled version of the fighter pilot spectacle *Burning Sky* (*Moyuru ōzora*, 1940, Yamamoto), as it led to inferiority complexes amongst the German soldiers (Haukamp 2015: 606-7).



Figure 5

instead of the former overcoming the latter.

Like *People's Oath*, the 1940 Olympics are an instance of the transnational being hijacked by the national, but while the film had an afterlife and changed its readings, the 1940 Olympics were obliterated. The Tokyo Games of 1964 and the Munich Games in 1972 signalled both countries' final 're-entry' into the international community, and we stand and wonder what the 2020 Tokyo Games will accomplish with regard to de Coubertin's ideals. As observed with *People's Oath*, transnational aspects — aesthetics, viewpoints, technologies, capital, people etc. — are imagined as helpful in increasing the quality and appeal of cooperative events and projects, but within the field of tension between the national and the international, specific contexts can tip the scales towards either side. Observing such projects in detail, therefore allows inferences as towards the nature of the very contexts of their inception and reception.

Biographical Note

Iris Haukamp is a Lecturer in (Japanese) Film Studies at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. Her research interests include the Japanese film culture of the early Shōwa Period as well as cinematic border crossings of films, film styles, and film people. She has published on the construction of the star persona of iconic actor Hara Setsuko in transnational context, on Japanese film-collaboration in the transwar period, as well as the issue of film censorship in Japan under changing regimes of thought. Her book on the German Japanese coproduction *New Earth* (Atarashiki tsuchi, 1937) is forthcoming from Bloomsbury (Film and Media Studies Series) in 2020.

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Frankenstein; or the Postwar *Kaijū*: Contrasting Interpretations of *Frankenstein Conquers the World*

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Abstract

This paper examines *Frankenstein Conquers the World* (*Furankenshutain tai chitei kaiju Baragon*, 1965, Ishiro Honda), a Japanese postwar *kaiju* film featuring Frankenstein's creature. It analyzes the tension between the national, international and transnational elements in the film, focusing on its attitude towards science – a socially, politically and culturally charged concept in postwar Japan. In the national context, the film reflects the characteristic of the *kaiju* genre in the mid-1960s, where 'dangerous' science, associated with the nuclear bomb and radiation, was repressed and replaced with images of heroic scientists and promises of peace and prosperity based on 'good' science. However, viewing the film from the transnational cultural discourse of *Frankenstein*, a narrative that questions the authority of the creator/scientist in relation to the creation/monster, doubt is thrown on the previously outlined message of the film. In this reading, the seeming heroism of the scientist is discredited and the ability of science to solve problems is challenged. In this study, I seek to highlight the importance of exploring the transnational dimensions of the *kaiju* genre, which has so far been largely concerned with, and discussed, in exclusively national terms.

Key words: Frankenstein, *kaiju* films, postwar Japan, science

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the issue of transnationalism within the context of Japanese cinema. Marcos Centeno Martin has criticized essentialist visions regarding the scholarship of Japanese cinema from the Western perspective, calling for a more comprehensive

approach that takes into account various transnational phenomena from the viewpoints of production, distribution and consumption (Centeno Martin 2018: 7). Daisuke Miyao has interrogated the concept of the transnational in greater depth, criticizing the naïve approach taken by some scholars in positing it as a “panacean alternative to national cinema”, while also pointing out their inadequacies in clearly defining and distinguishing related terms such as the international and the multicultural (Miyao 2019: 110-111). He instead suggests discussing the tension between the national (with delineated boundaries) and the transnational (transcending boundaries) within the history of Japanese cinema (Miyao 2019: 111).

This study draws on these researches to explore an example of the transnational phenomena in *Frankenstein Conquers the World* (*Furankenshutain tai chitei kaiju Baragon*, 1965, Ishiro Honda). At first glance, this film is an average Toho *kaiju* film: one of a collection of radioactive monster movies made in the postwar period, the majority of which are (as is this film) produced by Tomoyuki Tanaka, directed by Ishiro Honda, and with special effects by Eiji Tsuburaya. Yet this film is unique in that it is the first co-production with the United States in the *kaiju* genre and that it utilizes Frankenstein’s creature instead of a home-grown Japanese monster. The film can be seen as a site of contention between the national, international and transnational: national because it belongs to the postwar *kaiju* genre, which is largely produced and consumed as being specifically Japanese; international because it is a Japanese-American co-production and stars an American actor; and transnational because it features Frankenstein’s monster, a creature that has evolved through various adaptations into a cultural icon unrestricted by any particular national context. I differentiate between the ‘international’ and ‘transnational’ so as not to fall into the trap of what Miyao is criticizing; namely that scholars, as a reaction against the ‘national’, have too quickly jumped at the ‘transnational’ idea and have failed to define the concept or differentiate between related terms such as international, cross-cultural, and multicultural. I refer to the co-production as ‘international’ because it involves two different countries but delineates boundaries nonetheless; not to say that there exist real national boundaries in film production, but to indicate that what the American star and his role in the film represent are ideologically driven by what ‘America’ signifies in the cultural

sphere of mid-sixties Japan. This is in contrast to Frankenstein's monster who, being a transnational figure, is not restricted by such boundaries. This paper seeks to highlight the tension between these elements within the film, in order to explore the transnational dimensions of the *kaiju* genre which, in previous literature, has been largely concerned with and discussed in national terms.

Postwar *kaiju* films have been discussed predominantly in academic circles in relation to their specific Japanese locality, especially in connection to the atomic bombings and fear of radiation. In one of the earliest mentions of the *kaiju* genre, Donald Richie applies the idea of *mono no aware*, a particularly Japanese attitude of "transience of all earthly things" that is exhibited in postwar films which refer to the bombing of Hiroshima, to describe the treatment of death and disaster in the *kaiju* films (Richie 1961: 22). Although a very significant pioneering study, his reading is essentialist in the way Centeno Martin has criticized, since the films are assessed as to how they reflect the particular philosophical tradition of Japan. Some critics such as Susan Sontag (1965) and Chon A. Noriega (1996) place the films within the Cold War paradigm and fear of nuclear destruction in the fifties, and broaden the critical scope of the genre. Nevertheless, their arguments are not transnational *per se*, since Noriega's focus is more on the international, analyzing *Godzilla* (*Gojira*, 1954, Ishiro Honda) as a reenactment of the problematic relationship between the U.S. and Japan (Noriega 1996: 54-74), while Sontag's study is a theoretical investigation of the imagery of disaster in the SF genre, one which essentially disregards the national (Sontag 1965: 38-53).

This study examines *Frankenstein Conquers the World* in a way that looks beyond Japanese specificity: not to ignore or deny the national, but to introduce a transnational aspect that has not been explored in depth. The creature of Frankenstein and his story are undeniably transnational – they have been adapted into various national and cultural contexts other than England, where the original novel by Mary Shelly was first published in 1818. As Carol Margaret Davison and Marie Mulvey-Roberts have argued, the tragic tale of the overreaching scientist and his creation endures across a broad spectrum of historical periods and cultures because it exceeds generic bounds and assumes mythic proportions: the novel itself draws on the popular Greek myth of Prometheus (Davison and Mulvey-Roberts 2018: 7-8). This

mythic aspect allows the *Frankenstein* narrative to “lend expression to various culturally relevant natural or social phenomena” (Davison and Mulvey-Roberts 2018: 8), whether they deal with politics, class, race, or gender in any cultural context. The creature has proved especially valuable when used in allegories that articulate anxieties related to those of scientific progress, as the monster has transformed into machines, chemical mixes and intelligent robots, depending on the innovation in fashion.

As such, the use of this creature in a *kaiju* film such as *Frankenstein Conquers the World* makes it ripe for scholarly research, but critics have tended to overlook the cultural discourse of Frankenstein’s creature and regard him simply as either another radioactive monster or symbolizing a Western Other. Hiroaki Yoshii, for example, falls into the former category, arguing how the film reflects characteristics of the sixties *kaiju* genre (Yoshii 2007: 141-173), while Susan Tyler Hitchcock falls into the latter, writing briefly of a battle between a “Caucasian giant” and an “ancient dragon of the East” (Hitchcock 2007: 240). This study focuses on the cultural discourse of Frankenstein’s creature and the *Frankenstein* narrative in the film, placing particular focus on its attitude towards science. What happens when a transnational creature like Frankenstein’s monster is assigned with the task of being a *kaiju* in a co-production film? The result is a film that invites two contradicting interpretations regarding the socially, politically and culturally charged concept of science.

Viewed within the national framework, the film demonstrates themes exemplary of the *kaiju* genre in the mid-sixties: the fading sense of the threat of nuclear weapons and fear of radiation, the effacing of wartime memories against the backdrop of economic prosperity, and the ultimate justification of even ‘dangerous’ science for peace and progress. However, examining the film within the cultural discourse of Frankenstein complicates the reading of the story. Using Andy Mousley’s idea of the issue of posthuman in the *Frankenstein* narrative, one which explores the myth surrounding our idea of what it is to be ‘human’ (Mousley 2016: 158-172), the previously outlined message of the promotion of science becomes questionable. In this reading, the deconstruction of the categories of human/scientists and inhuman/monster challenges the authority given to the young heroic scientists who embody the promising future of Japan based on scientific progress. This paper explores

this contradiction of interpretations that stems from underlying tensions between the national and the transnational in the film, offering an example of a 'post-national' approach to the study of the Japanese *kaiju* genre.

Frankenstein comes to Japan

Frankenstein Conquers the World begins just before the end of World War II in Germany. As Allied forces close in, a group of Nazi military personnel risk their lives to deliver the beating heart of Frankenstein's monster to the Imperial Japanese Army via submarine. A military doctor in Hiroshima is preparing to experiment on the heart, hoping to create soldiers who cannot be killed by bullets, when the atomic bomb hits, and all is lost. Fifteen years later, a strange-looking homeless boy roaming the streets is picked up by doctors at a radiation treatment facility. A visiting American researcher, Dr. Bowen (Nick Adams), his colleague and lover Dr. Togami (Kumi Mizuno), and Dr. Kawaji (Tadao Takashima) discover that the vagrant boy is Frankenstein's creature who has grown from the heart into a fully-sized human, fed by radiation. Meanwhile, a prehistoric creature called Baragon emerges from the sea and burrows underground, causing destruction across Japan. When the boy, now simply called "Frankenstein," grows too big for the facility, he escapes to the mountains. He encounters Baragon at the foot of Mount Fuji, and they engage in battle until Baragon is destroyed; however, the ground gives way and Frankenstein is swallowed up along with Baragon.

A few simple steps allowed Frankenstein's creature to travel to Japan and transform into a *kaiju*. The first of these was the realization of a Japanese-American co-production, the first ever in the *kaiju* genre, which germinated when Henry G. Saperstein, head of United Productions of America (UPA; called Benedict Productions for overseas distribution), was approached by marketers looking for theatrical-quality monster pictures: "the most prolific were Hammer Studios in England and Toho Studios in Japan. I had no desire to deal with Hammer, so I spoke to Toho" (Saperstein 1995: 44). The copyrights regarding the use of Frankenstein's creature were obtained by UPA, and the preliminary script was brought to Honda, with Nick Adams

attached to play the lead.¹ Honda flew to the U.S. for a discussion on the final script,² but since “the guys over there never came to the set,” and as his contract stipulated that he would have the final say as director for all scenes, the filming process did not differ much from his usual Toho productions (Honda 1994: 181-182).³ Moreover, Saperstein did not seem too involved with the creative process in their co-productions; instead, he took a back seat to Toho’s internal operation, which he describes with admiration:

Toho had an unusual, wonderful team working together. Tanaka as producer was very, very knowledgeable. Honda was really a good, what I’d call a workmanlike director. That combination with Tsuburaya is what made those pictures what they were. (Saperstein 1995: 45)

Thus, both American and Japanese accounts show little evidence of a strong motivation to use Frankenstein’s creature, as Saperstein merely wished to make monster movies and Toho treated the process in the same way as other *kaiju* films.

Whatever their motivations, however, the use of the creature is more than appropriate for the *kaiju* genre, since, in its essence, the *Frankenstein* narrative and the traditional *kaiju* film explore the same theme: how humans’ overreaching scientific pursuits may result in the creation of a monster. Tomoyuki Tanaka, the producer of all of Honda’s *kaiju* films at Toho, has stated that the inspiration of the first Godzilla movie was a reaction to U.S. nuclear testing at Bikini Atoll:

Due to nuclear testing, a dinosaur somewhere in the Pacific Ocean will awaken and destroy Tokyo. This is an allegory about the hydrogen bomb, a machinery of civilization that humans have created, harming Tokyo, a great metropolis that humans have also built; in other words, the idea that humankind will be revenged

¹ Nick Adams was a moderately successful television actor fresh off a supporting actor Oscar nomination for *Twilight of Honor* (1963).

² Jerry Sohl, a writer known for notable science fiction works such as *The Twilight Zone* (1959–1964) and *Star Trek* (1966–1969) is credited with the story in the script, but only Honda’s frequent collaborator Takeshi Kimura (under the pseudonym Kaoru Mabuchi) is given on-screen credit.

³ My translation; all subsequent quotes from this source are my translations.

by humankind. (quoted in Takahashi 1993: 68)⁴

Other early *kaiju* films like *Rodan* (*Sora no daikaiju Radon*, 1956, Ishiro Honda) and *Mothra* (*Mosura*, 1961, Ishiro Honda) also share the same theme – the monsters in these films are the products of arrogant anthropocentrism and the films warn against reckless scientific advances.

Moreover, Frankenstein's creature represents contradictory views similar to what a traditional *kaiju* embodies. In the *Frankenstein* narrative, the creature is at once the perpetrator and the victim; his very abjectness is an offense, but it is a crime he cannot take responsibility for and one which torments him more than anybody else. And since his abjectness is given birth to by none other than his creator, in this sense he is "the ultimate other and at the same time a mirror of the deepest self" (Hitchcock 2007: 5). This paradoxical image also haunts the traditional *kaiju*. Characters like Godzilla and Mothra both symbolize the nuclear bomb but are also victims of it. Both monsters are awakened and driven away from their peaceful habitats by nuclear tests, and when they wreak havoc in Japan they leave traces of radiation and an aftermath of total destruction reminiscent of the effects of the atomic bomb. And since the bomb created by humans creates these monsters, they can also be said to symbolize both the 'self' and the 'other'.

The creature in *Frankenstein Conquers the World* embodies these aspects that overlap between Mary Shelley's monster and the *kaiju* in postwar Japan. Honda had great admiration for Frankenstein's creature and insisted that films featuring the monster need to look critically at science:

It is a tragedy that an eternally living heart, from Nazi Germany, should give birth to such a creature. Frankenstein himself is a tragedy. So my approach to such creatures is always a reflection on science. (Honda 1994: 185)

As such, *Frankenstein Conquers the World* reflects a cautious attitude towards science: Frankenstein's creature, much like Godzilla, is an innocent being who has been made, by radiation, into a monster. He is seen as both a victim and an embodiment of radiation, since it is radiation that makes him

⁴ My translation.

grow unusually large and excludes him from human society, and it is also radiation that makes people regard him with fear and contempt. In an early scene, there is a shot of a newspaper that sensationalizes his existence with the following headline: “Baptized by the bomb? Hiroshima / Monster-child resistant to radiation”.⁵ ‘Monster-child’ seems an appropriate characterization, as it signals simultaneously a sense of horror and innocence. The film sets him up as a lesson on science, a *kaiju* that has been created because of the ‘evil’ science of the bomb, and a *kaiju* who, in the end, must not be allowed to exist. In this regard, the film readily adapts the cultural significance and implications of Frankenstein’s creature that the *kaiju* represented in postwar Japan. However, this ‘lesson on science’ only go so far due to Honda’s own ambiguous attitude towards science, the promotion of science in the immediate postwar years, and the changing social climate of the sixties.

Frankenstein as 1960s *kaiju*

As stated above, the *kaiju* genre traditionally began as a reflection of a real fear of nuclear weapons and the effects of radiation in postwar Japan, with a warning message against ‘dangerous’ science. However, due to Honda’s own ambiguous attitude towards science as well as the promotion of ‘science’ as a universal agent of social progress in the years immediately following defeat, the genre remained inconclusive and not fully committed to its cautionary message. Moreover, by the mid-sixties, direct representations or even allusions to nuclear weapons or radiation in the *kaiju* genre were fading due to the changing social milieu; the economic prosperity of the time, especially with the Tokyo Olympics in 1964, led to the repression of war memories in popular culture. *Frankenstein Conquers the World* reflects these aspects of the *kaiju* genre, as the threat and fear of what created the monster is justified for reasons of peace and progress, and the film points towards a bright and hopeful future based on ‘good’ science.

Firstly, Honda is generally ambiguous in his representation of science and technology due to his own personal views on the matter. On the one hand, Honda holds a critical view of the reckless use of science and warns of

⁵ My translation; all subsequent quotes from the film are my translations.

the potential catastrophes that could result from them: “With scientists, there is always the risk that someone will try to control the world through things like the atomic bomb” (Honda 1994: 134); on the other, he was influenced by his oldest brother who was a doctor, read science magazines as a child, and admires what he calls the “spirit of science” (Honda 1994: 19). This is why, despite his warning against scientific overreach, in his films the doctors, researchers and scientists are usually depicted as good and sincere, like the heroic Dr. Serizawa in *Godzilla* (1954) who sacrifices himself for the people of Japan. In *Frankenstein Conquers the World*, the hero is Dr. Bowen, the visiting American researcher who is portrayed as highly competent and who earns the trust of all his co-workers and patients. Unusual for this genre, he is given a backstory of how he was previously involved in the creation of the bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima, but came to Japan because he “wished to devote [his] life to the restoration of humanity, not to its destruction.” He exudes intelligence, compassion, and even charming likeability with his goofy ‘American’ jokes, and leads the trio of scientists in their effort to investigate the cellular mechanisms that allow Frankenstein’s creature to thrive despite being exposed to radiation.

It is not only Honda’s personal views that have affected the leaning towards a positive portrayal of scientific discourse in this film and others; in the immediate postwar years, scientific progress was greatly associated with social progress as a whole. The oft-quoted line from *Asahi*, “We lost to the enemy’s science,” (*Asahi Shimbun* 1945: 2)⁶ elucidates just how crucial science was seen to be after the dropping of the atomic bomb led to Japan’s defeat: “‘Science’ soon became almost everyone’s favorite concept for explaining why the war was lost and where the future lay” (Dower 1999: 494). Thus, although ‘science’ was associated with memories of defeat, it was also deeply connected to the promise of future progress, echoing Honda’s own contradictory views.

With economic prosperity in the sixties, however, even this ambiguity regarding the outlook of science in the *kaiju* films diminished as the genre

⁶ My translation.

lost its connection to the ‘dangerous’ science of bombs and radiation.⁷ Hiroaki Yoshii argues that, in the *kaiju* films in the sixties:

[r]epresentations and images of atomic and hydrogen bombs incorporated in the films were ‘bleached’ away, and the ‘realness’ that poured out with anti-bomb attitudes or the connection with Hiroshima and Nagasaki imprinted in *Godzilla* was instantly lost. (Yoshii 2007: 141)⁸

This effacing of wartime memories and the ultimate promotion of science for future progress can clearly be recognized in *Frankenstein Conquers the World*, by the film’s treatment of the tragedy of Hiroshima and the love affair between the Japanese and American scientists. Early in the film, Dr. Bowen has a brief interaction with a young dying patient who gives him an embroidered cushion as a present to thank him for treating her. After he accepts her present, he discusses her impending inevitable death with other doctors, and muses:

Hiroshima is the tragedy of all tragedies. Yet it gave us a chance to explore the regeneration of damaged cell tissue. We must work to bring eternal peace and happiness from this tragedy.

With this single line, he belittles the victims of the bomb and their suffering, associates what happened at Hiroshima with a positive attitude of ‘scientific progress’, and ties it together with a hollow promise of “eternal peace and happiness”. Yoshii criticizes this scene as wanting to “tidy up the negative aspects of the tragedy of the bomb and the cause of its production to a ‘prescribed’ portrayal of a radiation victim and a ‘prescribed’ display of sympathy” (Yoshii 2007: 166). This criticism is appropriate, but it is also important to recognize that it is symptomatic of the larger social environment

⁷ The creature in *Frankenstein Conquers the World* is the last of the early *kaiju* films to originate from nuclear weapon-related causes. Ghidorah who made his debut a year earlier came from outer space with no connection to nuclear weapons, and subsequent *kaiju* films began to lose their connection to atomic bombs and radiation.

⁸ My translation; all subsequent quotes from this source are my translations.

of post-Olympic Japan. Yoshikuni Igarashi argues that with the preparation and execution of the Tokyo Olympics, the nation staged a drama of recovery that transformed prewar suffering into the necessary conditions for recovery in the 1960s: “The painful memories of defeat were paired with eventual reconstruction and thus rendered benign” (Igarashi 2000: 145). Thus, when Dr. Bowen remarks that the tragedy of Hiroshima gave them a chance to carry out research that would eventually lead to “eternal peace and happiness,” he is illustrating one case in which wartime memories were effaced and replaced with promises of prosperity and progress in the cultural sphere of sixties Japan. In a sense, his words can be interpreted as a justification of the use of the bomb – a necessary evil for the progress of Japanese society.

This replacing of suffering with progress within postwar cultural expressions also applies to the explicit or implicit representations of the United States vis-à-vis Japan in the *kaiju* genre. Needless to say, it is no coincidence that it is the American doctor who speaks those lines regarding Hiroshima, not the other Japanese doctors. To the extent that the ‘enemy’ in “We lost to the enemy’s science” was America, if science was progress, then progress meant America. But the traditional *kaiju* film illustrated a more problematic relationship between the two countries: in *Godzilla* (1954), the *kaiju* represents the U.S. (the ‘other’) in terms of the atomic bomb, nuclear tests and occupation itself, but it also represents Japan (the ‘self’) in the form of the imperial past and the souls of the victims of war: “[the monster] embodies both Japan’s loss and the United States that inflicted that loss” (Igarashi 2000: 117). Reenacting the attack, then destroying the monster is a form of processing the trauma, or a “means [of] exorcis [ing] the monstrous past” (Igarashi 2000: 105). In *Frankenstein Conquers the World* the creature does not contain or symbolize the same critical engagement between Japan (the self) and the U.S. (the other). Rather, with the introduction of the American doctor as the leading figure and the creature’s strong association with the Nazi German past, the film conveniently removes the U.S. from the ‘other’ while keeping the allusion to the atomic bomb (from which the U.S. is inseparable), and shifts it onto the present, economically-prospering ‘self’. This is accomplished through a strong emphasis on the romantic relationship between Dr. Bowen and Dr. Togami, which constitutes the emotional core of the story. Compared to earlier postwar films like *House of Bamboo*

(1955, Samuel Fuller), or *Sayonara* (1957, Joshua Logan) which depict the complicated relationships between American-Japanese couples at the time, *Frankenstein Conquers the World* shows an easy and loving companionship based on mutual respect. Dr. Bowen and Dr. Togami work together, support each other and share their different cultures. Many scenes in the first half of the film are devoted to establishing their relationship, such as cooking each other food from their own country or taking a stroll through Itsukushima Shrine – most of which are not directly related to the main plot.⁹ Moreover, the American-Japanese couple become almost surrogate parents to the child creature of Frankenstein, allegorically performing the domestication of the former offspring of Nazi Germany. At the end of the film, the monsters are eradicated but the scientists remain; thus, the film seems to be signaling a wish to move away from the past – and the association with Nazi Germany – to a bright future based on mutual cooperation between Japan and the United States and ‘good’ science. In the process, then, the cautionary message of overreaching science is consequently dismissed, and the use of ‘dangerous’ science associated with the bomb is even justified.

Transnational Frankenstein

What the above reading does not take into consideration, however, is the use of Frankenstein’s creature, an iconic figure with a wealth of accoutrements dating back to the 19th century. This transnational element in *Frankenstein Conquers the World* offers a contrasting interpretation to the previously outlined reading which advocates scientific progress at the expense of the cautionary message rooted in real fear and memories of destruction.

One of the central and enduring motifs of the *Frankenstein* narrative is the duality of Victor Frankenstein and his creation, one that is sustained symbolically by Mary Shelley’s refusal to give the creature a name, leading many to erroneously refer to the monster as “Frankenstein”. This technical error is emblematic of the deeper theme in the story where Victor becomes the monster by way of his monstrous act of creation – they are two sides of

⁹ Nick Adams and Kumi Mizuno were also having an affair off-screen, even though Adams was married at the time, which may explain their excellent on-screen chemistry (Kalat 1997: 83).

the same coin. Andy Mousley explores this duality through the discussion of the ‘posthuman’, a concept he does not necessarily associate with advances in technology – the popular idea that our ‘humanness’ will be questioned with the rise of artificial intelligence or developments in the field of virtual reality, for example – but one which he claims is a tendency innate to the human condition:

The posthuman and its near conceptual neighbours – the inhuman, subhuman, superhuman, anti-human, trans-human and non-human – have from this perspective arguably always shadowed the human, with the idea of the intactness of the human and human subjectivity being more the stuff of myth than reality. (Mousley 2016: 159)

This ‘myth’ is explored in the *Frankenstein* narrative, first with the creature who resists all categorical boundaries regarding the human/non-human, natural/unnatural, or life/death. He is made in the form of a human, yet unusually large, with hideous features; his body is assembled from parts of deceased people, yet brought to life by electrocution; he is regarded as barbaric and monstrous, yet speaks with eloquence and intelligence. Mousley also extends the discussion to Victor Frankenstein himself, arguing that his urge to exceed the limits of human capabilities, his almost automatic drive to create then destroy his creature, and his inability to sympathize with or care for a being he himself has brought into this world all point to traits of the posthuman. This is in contrast to the creature himself, who exudes compassion and rationality: “the world of Frankenstein is ... a topsy-turvy one in which the human seems more monstrous than the monster, and the monster outstrips the human in its humanity” (Mousley 2016: 160).

Throughout its approximately two hundred years of history, various adaptations and retellings of the story have in one way or another explored this posthuman duality of the creature. Only a year after the novel’s first publication, the creature was mistakenly referred to as “Frankenstein” by a publishing company (Hitchcock 2007: 79). This symbolic error/commentary has continued in its subsequent representations; in the climax scene of the silent short film *Frankenstein* (1910, J. Searle Dawley) the creature reflected in the mirror in a flash turns into Frankenstein, while in *The Revenge of*

Frankenstein (1958, Terence Fisher), the second film from the Hammer series, Victor transplants his own brain into a body he created by assembling together decapitated body parts, thereby symbolically (and literally) merging himself with the monster. This discourse is also reflected in *Frankenstein Conquers the World*, not necessarily because the creature is called “Frankenstein,” but because the film questions the creature’s humanity in a way that other *kaiju* films do not, and that in turn calls into the question the humanity of the scientists.

What is strikingly noticeable about *Frankenstein Conquers the World* is that while other *kaiju* films have actors that wear full bodysuits or use a puppet, this monster is played in the flesh, with prosthetic makeup. Two different actors were used to play the part of the monster: one when he is still a child, and another when he has grown up. Honda was probably most influenced by Universal Picture’s film series which began with *Frankenstein* (1931, James Whale), in which actor Boris Karloff’s portrayal of the monster cemented the ‘look’ of the monster in people’s minds and became the standard to which all successive characterizations were to reference¹⁰: “(I had in mind) that *Frankenstein*, and the great actor Boris Karloff’s wonderful portrayal. He exudes something tragic with both his make-up and his acting” (Honda 1994: 186). This look is borrowed and recreated for both the child and the adult actors in *Frankenstein Conquers the World*: the characteristic large forehead heavily set on top of his eyes, making his eyelids look drooped, minus the stitches and the bolts (since this creature has grown organically). The creature’s mannerisms resemble those of Karloff as well, since he cannot talk but tries to communicate through body movements and grunts, and also displays a wonderful range of expressions.

As the creature is the only *kaiju* to be portrayed by an actor in the flesh in *Frankenstein Conquers the World*, the ‘humanness’ of the creature is frequently called into question: in one exchange, Dr. Kawaji remarks “he is not a ‘proper’ human. He is a constructed human,” to which Dr. Togami, a surrogate mother-like figure for the young Frankenstein, objects: “even if he is constructed, he is human all the same.” After he escapes from the research

¹⁰ Karloff played the character in the first three films of the Universal Picture Series: *Frankenstein* (1931), *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935) and *Son of Frankenstein* (1939).

facility, he immediately visits Dr. Togami's apartment. Looking through her window, he opens his mouth as if to say something, but failing to utter articulate sounds, he slowly wanders away. This scene gathers the sympathy of the audience and captures the creature's tragedy in a way reminiscent of Karloff's portrayal.

Perhaps what is more interesting is the various 'Victor Frankenstein's' in *Frankenstein Conquers the World* who, although they seem to be devoting their lives to research in order to help victims of war, are in the end revealed to be incompetent or inhumane, their efforts ultimately futile. The first such figure is the military doctor who seeks to use Frankenstein's eternally living heart to create soldiers who will never die, thus trying to arrogantly defy death itself. Another such figure is Dr. Kawaji, who possibly resembles Victor Frankenstein the most, since he dismisses any regard for the creature's wellbeing as soon as the creature is discovered to be Frankenstein's monster. He focuses purely on preserving a part of the creature's body for scientific research, intending to destroy him. His humanity is 'outstripped' by the creature, to use Mousley's words, when the creature comes to save him during an attack by Baragon.

And finally, this reading also applies to the hero of the film, Dr. Bowen. Despite his popularity among his patients and peers and seeming high competence as a doctor, Bowen does not save the young dying patient nor make any progress in unraveling the mechanism of the monster's cells. In the very last scene, when, after a long and futile effort to domesticate the creature, Frankenstein is swallowed up into the ground along with Baragon, Bowen remarks: "He may be better off dead. After all, he is a monster." In striking contrast to Dr. Togami, who insists on the 'humanness' of Frankenstein, Bowen dismisses him as a 'monster' and casts him away; these last lines seem to negate all his heroic acts in the entire film. He is one in a long line of Victor Frankenstein's throughout the cultural history of *Frankenstein*, beginning with the one in the original novel who dismisses the monster solely on his 'monstrosity':

I compassionated [the creature] and sometimes felt a wish to console him, but when I looked upon him, when I saw the filthy mass that moved and talked, my heart sickened and my feelings were altered to those of horror and hatred. (Shelley 1831[1818]: 148)

In the end, then, the scientists in *Frankenstein Conquers the World* can be seen as inhumane in their relation to the monster, incompetent in achieving a solution through research, and ultimately uncaring in their intentions. This also exposes a certain divide between the American-Japanese couple, who, despite being almost like surrogate parents to the young creature, end up with very different attitudes towards him. Viewed in this light, scientific progress cannot be viewed so positively, and neither can the future prospects of a stronger Japan-U.S. alliance based on such ‘good’ science.

Conclusion

This study sought to highlight the tensions between the national, international, and transnational elements in *Frankenstein Conquers the World*. Viewed in terms of the national, the film exemplifies an outlook of the *kaiju* genre in the sixties, where the warning against overreaching scientific endeavors rooted in real fear of the atomic bomb is only superficially alluded to, then quickly abandoned and replaced with the figure of the heroic scientist transforming the future of Japan based on ‘good’ science. This future of Japan is also represented in the form of the international couple, whose strong and healthy relationship, based on mutual respect, in a way a reflection of the U.S – Japan co-production environment itself, lights the way toward peace and prosperity. The transnational element contrasts with this reading; the use of Frankenstein’s creature exposes the posthuman duality of the creature and scientists, and calls into question the validity of the latter and ultimately the validity of science itself. Following the tradition of the *Frankenstein* myth, the film reprimands the overreaching scientists for trying to create soldiers that cannot die, or laboring to exploit the monster’s abnormal cellular regeneration powers, all the while ignoring or repressing the issues that actually created these situations. In other words, this reading suggests that humans trying to “fix” the problems of war with science, or displacing the issue of war and nuclear bombs with the pursuit for more scientific progress will end in failure, because humans can never control nature.

Frankenstein Conquers the World, then, reveals disparate analyses based on the tension between the national, international, and the transnational elements within its single narrative. As a transnational figure, Frankenstein’s

creature is able to adapt to and engage with the specific ideas, concerns and imagination of 1960s Japan, while retaining the powerful myth that has sustained his significance in popular culture. As Hitchcock has so appropriately declared, “the monster’s story says something important. Otherwise we would not keep telling it” (Hitchcock 2007: 8-9); so it is no wonder that the creature was used to tell its enduring story at a time when science was crucial in confronting the anxieties and uncertainties associated with memories of the bomb, the effects of radiation and promises of social and technological progress in postwar Japan. Simply put, the creature allows both the local and the universal, a fundamental yet rarely achieved requirement in the discussion of transnational cinema.

Biographical Note

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Section V

Zainichi Cinema

Japanese National Cinema Unsettled: *Zainichi* Films since the 1990s

Norimasa Morita

Abstract

The myth of the homogeneity in language, culture and ethnicity is so deep rooted in Japan that it is not easily going away even in the 21st century, when the 12.40 % of the population in Shinjuku Ward are foreign residents.¹ Japan is not a racially homogeneous nation and in the postwar years there were 600,000 settlers from the Korean peninsula. The Koreans resident in Japan rarely appeared on the silver screen till the end of the 20th century, when *Tsuki wa Docchi ni Teteiru* (All under the Moon) made a critical and popular success in 1993 and more films focusing on Koreans in Japan and their lives followed. Certainly these films since the 1990s unsettled the traditional idea of Japanese National Cinema, because they presented what Japanese film makers did not present before – different ethnic characters, culture, customs, values and humour and also displayed aesthetic and visual sensitivity different from that of traditional Japanese film makers. In this paper I will trace the trajectory of *Zainichi* (Koreans in Japan) cinema from the end of WWII till now by dividing it into three stages, the 1950s and 60s, the 1970s and 1980s and the 1990s and after and then demonstrates that it was in the last stage that *Zainichi* cinema began to unsettle the stability of Japanese National Cinema and brought transnational dimensions to it.

Key words: *Zainichi* (Koreans in Japan) Cinema, National Cinema, Sai Yōichi, Lee Bong-Woo, ethnic minority culture

¹ While writing this paper, Deputy Prime Minister Asō Tarō was reported to reiterate his conviction that there is no other country in the world but Japan where the same single race has continued to live, the same single language has been spoken, and the same monarchy has been maintained. This was immediately criticized by the media because his utterance contradicted even the Ainu Act, which officially recognized the Ainu as indigenous people of Japan. *Mainichi Shinbun*, January, 14, 2020.

Among the postwar Japanese films made during the 45 years between 1945 and 1989, some 26 drama films featured *Zainichi*² characters and touched upon their issues. Among those films, nine films had *Zainichi* as their protagonists, and their problems and concerns as the films' main motifs and themes. They were Morizono Tadashi's *Omoni to Shōnen* (Mother and Boy, 1958), Imamura Shōhei's *Nianchan* (My Second Brother, 1959), Mochizuki Yūko's *Umi o Wataru Yūjō* (Friendship across the Sea, 1960) and Imai Tadashi's *Are ga Minato no Hi-da* (That's the Light of the Port, 1961). All these films were created by liberal and socially conscious film makers. *Omoni to Shōnen* is about a *Zainichi* woman, Mrs. Kim, who agrees to be the foster parent of a Japanese orphan, Ichirō, though she herself is extremely impoverished while living on collecting and selling refuses. The idea of the film was provided by Iwasaki Akira, who was a Marxist activist in the prewar period and involved in the production of liberal, anti-war films after WWII. Imamura's *Nianchan* is based on the published diaries written by a 10-year-old *Zainichi* girl, Yasumoto Sueko, and centers on the breakup of the family of the four brothers and sisters after their father's death and the eldest brother's loss of employment. The film is set in and out of a mining town and the sheer poverty described in the film reminds of Neorealist films, but its theme is more about the poverty, greed, and struggles for survival in general observable in the areas left behind the postwar economic recovery.

Mochizuki Yūko, who had appeared in a large number of *Haha-mono* (films about mother) and was known as Mother of Japan, showed in *Umi o Wataru Yūjō* impressive directorial talent as well.³ The film tells the story of *Zainichi* brothers who had settled in Tokyo, but when the Repatriation Project

² *Zainichi* simply means 'residing in Japan' but is used as a name referring to 'Koreans' living in Japan, because it is shortend from *Zainichi Kankoku- and Chōsenjin* (South and North Koreans residing in Japan). At the time of the annexation of Korea into Japan in 1910, only several thousand Koreans lived in Japan, but by the end of 1945 some two million Koreans were in Japan. Though the majority of Korean residents in Japan returned to Korea after the end of WWII, some 600,000 remained in Japan and constituted the postwar *Zainichi*. John Lie, *Zainichi (Koreans in Japan): Diasporic Nationalism and Postcolonial Identity*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008, and Sonia Ryang and John Lie, *Diaspora without Homeland: Being Koreans in Japan*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.

³ Mochizuki was later elected as a member of the Upper House of the Japanese Diet representing Japan Socialist Party.

began after the Korean War, a brother made a decision to return to North Korea with his family. His son does not speak even a word of Korean and believes that he is a Japanese, so that this is a film about the hope and excitement, as well as the anxiety and apprehension felt by *Zainichi* who decide to return to their homeland where they have never been. Mochizuki appeared in Ōshima Nagisa's *A Town of Love and Hope* (1959) and played a role of the single mother supporting two children as a shoeshine. She consulted with Ōshima, because she found her project had a lot of things in common with Ōshima's film, characters, themes and narrative. Finally Imai's *Are ga Machi no Hi-da* is quasi-action film about Japanese fishermen who fish in the Korean waters deliniated by the Syngman Rhee Line. Among the fishermen, there is a *Zainichi* man hiding his identity but when it is discovered, he comes to be mistrusted by his fellow fishermen. The ironic ending is that the *Zainichi* fisherman is caught by Korean coast guards and lynched to death. This film is a tragedy involving two races across the sea. *Are ga Minato no Hi-da* was a project by the Mingei Theatre Company, which was known for its political liberalism and, though it was a theatrical troop, it was also making its own educational and enlightenment films. All these films are serious and dark with little humour, treating *Zainichi* characters primarily as victims of poverty, prejudice, discrimination or social injustice.

In the mid-1970s young *Zainichi* film makers emerged and started making films on Koreans living in Japan like themselves, and the personal and social problems that they were facing. In 1975, 29-year-old I Hagin made his feature debut with *Ihōjin no Kawa* (The River of Strangers) and it became the very first feature film about *Zainichi* made by a *Zainichi* film director. Ryokutōsha that I Hagin founded with his cinematographer friend, An Sung-Min, produced the film, but it was mainly funded by Nakamura Atsuo, a film and TV actor.⁴ The film's protagonist was played by a *Zainichi*, Park Woon-Hwan, who had been better known till then as Johnny Ōkura of a popular rock band, Carol. It was through appearing in this film that the public came

⁴ Nakamura Atsuo made a fortune by appearing in a TV series called *Kogarashi Monjiro*.

to realize Ōkura was a *Zainichi* and his Korean name was Park Woo-Hwan.⁵ He let himself credited by his Korean name. The film tells the story of a young *Zainichi*, who has been hiding his Korean background from everybody except his family. In the film he finds out more about the political condition of Korea, learns its history and is awoken with national consciousness through falling in love with a *Zainichi* girl. The self-conflict revolving around which ethnic and cultural identity should be assumed, Korean or Japanese, is one of the motifs that *Zainichi* films since the 1970s repeatedly have been dealing with, but *Ihōjin no Kawa* must have been the first film that extensively and squarely confronted this issue. I Hagin came to make two more *Zainichi* films, *Shiu Obasan* (Mrs. Siu, 1977) and *Akai Tengi* (Red Tengi, 1979). The former is about the young *Zainichi* who is wrongly arrested, tortured and killed by KCIA while studying the Korean language in Seoul and the latter is about the false accusation case involving a *Zainichi* man and his request for retrial.⁶

Oguri Kōhei's *Kanako no Tameni* (For Kanako, 1984) is based on the *Zainichi* writer, I Feson's novel of the same title and tells the romantic but restrained love affair between a second generation *Zainichi* man and a Japanese woman who was adopted and raised by a Korean and Japanese childless couple, and the separation of the young lovers. It is almost plotless and without much dramatic suspense. The only dramatic scene is the confrontation between the daughter and her parents. The young *Zainichi* man and his Japanese lover who are now living together in a small, dingy Tokyo apartment are visited by her parents in the early morning without notice. The parents who had no idea that they were living together get furious to see their daughter in bed with the young man, rebuke their moral looseness and demand their daughter's immediate return to her home in Hokkaido. The irony in this sequence is that it is the Japanese mother who herself marries a *Zainichi* that never hides her anger and disappointment that her Japanese daughter is having an affair with a *Zainith* youth. Nowhere before

⁵ Exactly speaking, Johnny Ōkura for the first time admitted he was a second generation *Zainichi* in his book, *Bōryoku Seishun* (Violent Youth) that he wrote before the rock group broke up and he appeared in *Ihōjin no Kawa*. (Izutsu, 2007, 45)

⁶ The film was never shown because of the disagreement between the film makers on the one hand and the accused, his family and his support group on the other about the way the case was handled in the film.

the relationship between a Japanese and a *Zainichi* is screened more tenderly, intelligently, and sensitively than in this film, or nowhere before the inner conflicts of a *Zainichi* Korean and his or her Japanese partner are displayed on screen more honestly, subtly, and intelligibly.

In contrast, Kim Woo-Sung's film, *Jun no Machi* (The Town of Yun, 1989) tells the story of the tender love relationship between a young Japanese man and a *Zainichi* girl and is set in the real Korean town in Ikuno, Osaka with plenty of local and ethnic colours. Its director, Kim Woo-Sung, was deeply moved by Visconti's *Rocco and his Brothers* while he was a student at Waseda University and this made him to pursue a career in film making. He first served as an assistant director for liberal film directors such as Shindo Kaneto and Yamamoto Satsuo and it was this time that he came across the prize-winning script, *Jun no Machi*. It was written by Kim Soo-Kil, when he was still a first-year student at Yokohama Film and Television School (later the Nihon Film School) founded by Imamura Shohei (watching his *Vengeance Is Mine* was a direct reason for him to enter his school). The film has few dramatic plots and observes various problems that *Zainichi* face, centring its narrative on Junko, a third generation 16-year-old *Zainichi* girl, and rugby-loving Yuji, working in part-time at the construction site near her home. The problems that the film explores include the guilt of hiding *Zainichi* identity and the fear of revealing it, the choice of nationality, mutual mistrust between *Zainichi* and Japanese, Japanese prejudice against *Zainichi*, and a topical issue of that time, finger printing which non-Japanese were forced to carry out for alien registration. Kim Woo-Sung, however, has not returned to a *Zainichi* subject after his debut film. As we have been examining, the films made in the 1970s and 80s were noticeably divergent from those in the 1950s and 60s. *Zainichi* were depicted from inside in the 70s and 80s films by *Zainichi* themselves who knew their lives, values, and ways of thinking at first-hand. The themes were no longer poverty and open discrimination but more personal affairs such as their love, marriage, and identity.

Only these nine films that I have described above placed their main narrative and thematic focus on *Zainichi* characters, while in the other seventeen films they remained as minor or fringe characters. *Zainichi* were not much visible in Japanese cinema during the periods of the 50s and 60s, when 400 Japanese films were released on average every year. The absence

of *Zainichi* on cinema screen echoes the almost total erasure of Koreans from public records. Japanese citizenship was withdrawn in 1952 from all Koreans in Japan, unless they were naturalized, and Japanese public records excluded Koreans from the national census, the Japanese government banned them from public service jobs and cancelled their public pension schemes.

Jun no Machi was released in 1989 at Shinjuku Cine Pathos, a ‘mini theatre’⁷ which was a major channel of exhibiting independent and art films. The new phase of *Zainichi* cinema opened in 1993 with Sai Yōichi’s *Tsuki wa Docchi ni Deteiru?* (All under the Moon), which turned out to be so popular among both critics and audiences that it was given a long run, won an array of prizes, was voted the best Japanese film of the year in *Kinema Junpo* and was turned into video. It was mainly through the success of this film that *Zainichi* film⁸ came to win a wider recognition and the way was opened for film makers to produce films dealing with *Zainichi* and their issues from their personal point of views and visions. As I mentioned above, during the period between 1945 and 1989, only some 26 drama films contained *Zainichi* characters. However, after the success of *Tsuki wa Docchi ni Deteiru* till now, 48 drama films had *Zainichi* characters. The number is even greater if you include V-cinema (film which is made not for theatrical, but VHS release) and those which were never given a theatrical release. It is not only the number but the ways *Zainichi* and their lives are treated in the films that counts. They are no longer just a vignette or token, but their centre and focus. Quality matters, too. Films like *Go* (2001), *Gūzen nimo Saiaku na Shōnen* (Worst by Chance, 2003), *Pacchigi!* (2004), *Chi to Hone* (Blood and Bones, 2004), *Kazoku no Kuni* (My Homeland, 2012) are excellent as films.

The rise of *Zainichi* film of course cannot only be attributed to the success of *Tsuki wa Docchi ni Deteiru*. It triggered the production of a handful of good *Zainichi* films, and they contributed the sea change. In this regard the role played by independent film companies was crucially important. Their

⁷ Small movie theatres with fewer than 200 seats are generally called ‘mini-theatre.’ They are independent theatres and free from the block booking system of large production and distribution companies.

⁸ In this paper, I use the term *Zainichi* films as works created by both *Zainichi* and Japanese film maker and featuring *Zainichi* characters.

number steadily increased since the 1980s reflecting the rising demand of contents for video distribution and the satellite broadcasting that started in the 1980s. Also since this period more and more films came to be created independently through the 'production committee' or the 'production project' system in which a producer raise funds from multiple corporates, typically, television stations, publishers, advertising agencies, and game companies, each time he produces a film. Small-budget films co-financed by multiple companies reduced the financial risk of the investors and this lead to the increase in the number of independently produced films, which in return allowed film makers creative freedom. Among many competent and successful film producers, nobody made greater contributions to the development of *Zainichi* cinema than Lee Bong-Woo. He is a second generation Korean and after graduating from Chosun University in Osaka, he founded a production, distribution, and exhibition company, Cine Quanon, in 1989. Starting with importing and exhibiting European art films, Lee organized a Korean film festival in 1990 well before the Korean Wave boom started and also produced his first feature film, *Tsuki wa Docchi ni Deteiru*. In 2000 Lee was the distributor in Japan of the Korean blockbuster film, *Shiri* which was watched by 1.3 million people and was said to earn for him 1.9 billion yen (180 million dollars). In 2005 he founded Cine Quanon Korea to distribute Japanese films in Korea and in Japan he continued to produce both critically and financially successful films such as *Hula Girl* and *Pacchigi!*

A number of mini-theatres opened in Tokyo and provincial cities since the 1980s also helped the growth of *Zainichi* cinema since the 1990s. The first mini-theatre was Iwanami Hall opened in 1969 and its general manager, Takano Etsuko and the distributor, Kawakita Kashiko, founded Equip de Cinema, distributing and exhibiting films that had high artistic values but could not be put on roadshow circuits. In the 1980s the staple of the mini-theatres were European and American films such as *New Cinema Paradise*, *Wings of Desire* and Jim Jarmusch films, but since the 1990s they began to show more Japanese and Asian films. Most of *Zainichi* films were shown first in mini-theatres including the theatres owned by Lee Bong Woo.

The number of *Zainichi* films increased in the new millennium and in 2002 and also in 2004 five films were released respectively and most of them had *Zainichi* protagonists. This sudden surge of *Zainichi* films must

have something to do with the Korean Wave that began around the time of 2002 Football World Cup that Japan and Korea jointly hosted and the first broadcasting of the Korean melodrama, *Winter Sonata*. When Korean TV dramas, K-pop, and later Korean films flooded the Japanese entertainment market and more Japanese began to visit Korea (*Winter Sonata* tourism for example) and more Koreans started coming to Japan (Otaru suddenly became a popular tourist destination for Koreans and Asians after the success of Iwai Shunji's *Love Letter* in 1995), the mutual cultural barrier partly came down and the mutual mistrust to some extent disappeared. *Zainichi* after all came from the country whose contemporary culture young Japanese adored.

How are the recent *Zainichi* films since the 1990s different from the earlier ones, or are they different at all? First of all, the stereotypical representation of *Zainichi* in the earlier films as *Sangokujin* (Third National)⁹, slave labourers, *chima-chogori*-clad women, prostitutes, and gangsters and thugs disappeared. Typical *Zainichi* male characters in the 50s and 60s films were exploited workers and labourers, who were engaged in a tough, menial job, such as mining in Uchida Tomu' *Dotanba* (The Last Moment, 1957), *Nianchan*, Kumai Kei's *Chi no Mure* (A Crowd on the Land, 1970), or fishing in *Arega Minato no Hi-da*; or Yakuza (Yamashita Kōsaku's *Nihon Bōryoku Rettō* (Violent Japanese Archipelago, 1975) and Fukasaku Kinji's *Yakuza no Hakaba* (The Graveyard of Yakuza, 1976). Female *Zainichi* were a prostitute in *Arega Minato no Hi-da* and a worker at Pachinko Parlor in *Kyūpora no Aru Machi* (Foundry Town, 1962). However, in *Tsuki wa Docchi ni Deteiru* the protagonist, Tadao, is a taxi driver and his boss is also a *Zainichi* and an owner of a taxi company. He is Tadao's his high-school classmate and an entrepreneur who involves in property investment. *Tsuki wa Docchi ni Deteiru* is Japan's answer to Stephen Frears' *My Beautiful Laundrette*, which tells the story of the gay relationship between Pakistani startup business-owner and the former skinhead classmate in the Thatcherite Britain. In Sai's film, a Korean

⁹ This term was used during the occupation period by GHQ referring to people like Koreans and Chinese, because they were neither Japanese nor the citizens of the occupying countries. However, the government of Yoshida Shigeru, the first postwar Prime Minister, defined in *Measure for Korean Residents in Japan* (1949) Koreans living in Japan as illegal immigrants, though they had been Japanese when Korea was a Japanese colony. There are many historical interpretations how *Sangoku Jin* came to be used as a pejorative term for Koreans.

taxi driver flirts with a Filipino hostess who works for the bar that his *Zainichi* mother runs. The film is set in the last stage of the bubble economy in which Filipino bar hostesses, property developers and taxi drivers enjoyed the boom.

What differentiate *Tsuki wa Docchi ni Deteiru* from the earlier *Zainichi* films is more than anything else the ways *Zainichi* characters and their problems are handled. Korean-Japanese characters in the earlier films were as I mentioned before, either victims of poverty, discrimination, exploitation and racism or were exploiters themselves as gangsters or thugs, therefore, they could be typecast into chiefly two types, the poor but innocent, or the better-off but villainous. In *Tsuki wa Docchi ni Deteiru* everyone is an ambiguous character. Tadao is frequently a target of prejudice and discrimination, but he himself is not an unblemished character – womanizing, frivolous and dishonest. Tadao seems to be no longer upset by prejudicial behaviors and discriminatory terms, at least on surface, and casually put up with them. One of the taxi drivers is a punch-drunk former professional boxer and keeps asking Tadao to lend him money by saying, ‘I like you, Mr. Chu, but I don’t like Koreans. Koreans are cunning, dirty and ill-educated.’ Fed up with the Japanese repeating these words, Tadao quietly answers back, ‘Then, you are just like an Korean.’

The film is full of ironies and sarcasms like Tadao’s characterization. Though his mother has also been suffering from prejudice and alienation for all her life, she herself is not conscious of exploiting and despising ethnic minorities like herself and even her fellow *Zainichi*. She takes advantages of Filipino bar hostesses, who do not have a work permit, and keeps repeating to them, ‘Money is everything you need in this world.’ Tadao’s boss, who has no trust in Japanese bankers and financiers, is in the end cheated by his compatriots in investing for the project of developing a golf club. Japanese exploit *Zainichi*, but *Zainichi* also exploit other ethnic minorities. Conflicts and frictions exist not only between *Joppari* and *Zainichi*, but also between North Koreans and South Koreans, and the first and second generation *Zainichi* and so called ‘new comers’ who arrived in Japan to reside more recently. The wedding scene after the opening credit contains an ironic and hilarious sketch about the South Korean *Zainichi* guests bitterly complaining to the MC that only North Korean music is played and they are never given a chance to sing a South Korean song. The observation like this is only possible

through the eyes of *Zainichi* and the script was co-written by two *Zainichi*, Chong Wui-Sin and Sai Yōichi.

Tsuki wa Docchi ni Deteiru departs from earlier films also in film styles and this is noticeable from the very moment that the film opens. The movie title is designed by the famous pop artist Kuroda Seitarō and it is accompanied by a big band tune, *Crazy Rhythm*, taken from the Broadway musical *Here's How*. *Crazy Rhythm* was well known for older audiences, because a comic group Crazy Cats and female twin duo singers, the Peanuts, played it in the extremely popular television variety, *Shabondama* (soap bubble) *Holiday* Sunday after Sunday. The tone of the credit scene is light and pop and this is kept throughout the rest of the film. The buoyant tone is not broken even in the serious scene where Tadao and his girlfriend break up and in the climax where Tadao's boss set his taxi depot on fire discovering that he can do nothing but selling his business in order to pay off his debt to a *Zainichi* loan shark. The film is vibrant stylistically, too. The opening scene is filmed in a Hitchcockian crane shot in which the camera first shows the entire precinct of the taxi depot and then comes closer to the people on the ground and a window of the depot building. In other places every time the taxi driver who has no sense of direction calls up the depot to find out where he is, the telephone operator asks him, 'Look, where can you see the moon?' In these scenes the camera shows in a low angle and deep space shot the driver with the moon behind him. Fujisawa Junichi was the cinematographer in this film and excellent in filming in confined spaces with his super 16 mm camera.

Production and set designs were done by Imamura Tsutomu, who frequently worked with Sai Yōichi and Morita Yoshimitsu. He found a run-down taxi depot in Takenotsuka, Tokyo and made it look a fantastic set despite the budgetary restriction. It pleased the film director so much that he congratulated Imamura by saying, 'it was our Cine Citta.' Imamura is good at using existing places and turn them into film settings. Connie, the Filipino bar hostess's apartment was found in Shin-Okubo and that of Tadao's mother in Ryōgoku and Imamura made them into settings that vividly reflected their local atmosphere, that of Korean Town in the former, and that of the right bank of the Sumida River, a residential district since the early Edo Period, in the latter.

Many *Zainichi* films after the 1990s have teenagers as their protagonists.

Takahashi Yōichirō's *Mizu no Naka no Hachigatsu* (August in the Water, 1997), Lee Sang-il's *Ao-Chong* (Blue, 1999), Kaneshiro Kazunori's *Go*, Goo Su-Yeon's *Gūzen nimo Saiaku na Shōnen*, Izutsu Kazuyuki's *Pacchigi!* (Head-Butt, 2004), and its sequel, *Pacchigi! Love & Peace* (2007), Narushima Izuru's *Fly, Daddy, Fly* (2005), Inoue Yasuharu's *Hyonjae* (Brother, 2006), Okuda Eiji's *Kazeno Sotogawa* (Outside of the Wind, 2007), Hanado Junji's *Anata o Wasurenai*, (We Never Forget You, 2007), Katashima Kazuki's *Asia no Junjo* (Innocence of Asia, 2011), and Nagahara Shigeki's *Inu no Kubiwa to Korokke to* (Dog Collar and Croquette, 2012) are all about susceptible teenagers who are growing up facing and experiencing identity problems, ethnic misunderstanding and mistrust, and cultural tension and conflicts. They try to overcome these problems and sometimes do so in violent manners, without finding any easy solution to them. Solutions are doubly difficult because the *Zainichi* youth have problems which derive from their ethnicity as well as those that young people universally share. Nevertheless, most of these films are far from gloomy or dark. Like *Tsuki wa Docchi ni Deteiru* they refuse to be pessimistic and even too serious about the problems that *Zainichi* have to face and in this respect they are fundamentally different from the postwar films till the 1980s that I discussed above.

Izutsu Kazuyuki has made several films featuring young *Zainichi* boys and girls such as *Gaki Teikoku* (Empire of Brats, 1981), *Pacchigi!* and *Pacchigi! Love and Peace*. He also featured a K-Pop star, Max Changmin in *Ōgon o Idaite Tobe* (Fly with Gold, 2012). In two *Pacchigi!* Izutsu showed straight anger against the narrow-mindedness, meanness, ignorance, and prejudicial mentality and behaviours of Japanese people towards *Zainichi*, in this sense he is unlike Sai Yōichi who laughed away racial prejudice, mistrust, and suspicion in both Japanese and *Zainichi*. This difference must have derived not only from the two directors' temperaments, but also from their racial backgrounds. *Zainichi* like Sai can afford to make fun of his 'compatriots', but Japanese like Izutsu cannot do so easily. *Pacchigi!* is an angry and violent film, but it does not fail to be humorous and uplifting at the sometime as the film's subtitle, 'We shall Overcome, Someday' well demonstrates. *Pacchigi!* is a serio-comic (not tragicomic) Romeo and Juliet story, in which a naïve Japanese boy falls for a cute but tough *Zainichi* girl

and tries to win her by making better understanding of her culture and values and overcoming the mutual ethnic suspicion and mistrust. It is also full of ironies and paradoxes and they are embedded in the comic title *Paccigi!* a Korean word for break through as well as head-butting. This pun wonderfully summarizes the film in which *Zainichi* and Japanese high school boys are constantly fighting each other with punches and head-butts, but the *Zainichi* girl and the Japanese boy try to break through ethnic barriers. In the film's ending, he sings in a live radio programme a Korean song, *The Imjin River*, which is about the division of a country into North and South and was banned from broadcasting in the 1960s Japan, because it sounded too sympathetic to North Korea.

Asked why Izutsu made a *Zainichi* film such as *Pacchigi!* in an interview with Li Bong-Woo, he answered it was a destiny. If he had been born in a middle-class residential area in Tokyo, he would not have made this film, but he came from Kansai, where there were a large number of *Zainichi*, and he knew many of them, particularly poor ones, in his neighbourhood. Its sequel *Pacchigi! Love & Peace* tells the story of a *Zainichi* girl, Kyonja who is an aspiring actress, but not allowed to use her Korean name to be accepted and succeed in the entertainment business. Izutsu fills the screen with his indignation against injustice *Zainichi* have to endure by showing that the girl is first seduced and abandoned by a Japanese movie star and then succumbs to the demand of a sleazy film producer to sleep with him in return for a big role. Kyonja is finally given a coveted principal film role on the condition that she continues to hide her ethnicity by using in public her adopted Japanese name. Kyonja strikes back, however, against the conservative system and chauvinist mentality of the Japanese film industry by announcing in the climatic press conference scene that she is an ethnic Korean and by embarrassing the producer and Japanese movies stars who forced her to use the Japanese name. Kyonja in the film asks, 'Why do people in the entertainment business have to hide that they are *Zainichi*?' The film accuses the tradition of show biz companies and agencies, in which *Zainichi* are not allowed to make their ethnic identity public. Nakamura Yuri, who plays the role of Kyonja in the film, revealed in a newspaper interview after the film was released that her father was a third-generation *Zainichi* and her mother was born in Korea and commented at the same time that she had not intended to hide it, but thought

it not necessary to venture to say that she was a *Zainichi*. (*Asahi Shinbun*, May 20, 2007) The film's setting is supposed to be in 1974 and the film was released in 2007, therefore, it is hoped that *Zainichi* film stars, singers and athletes have no longer need to conceal their ethnic background.

The two *Pacchigi!* are not subtle, but energetic films and much of this energy owes to Tomita Nobuko's unobtrusive but excellent editing. *Zainichi* films made after 2000 were stylistically a lot more sleek and hip than the earlier ones including *Tsuki wa Docchi ni Deteiru*. Yukisada Isao's *Go* is refined with accomplished cinematography and frenetic editing, while Goo Su-Yeon's *Gūzen nimo Saiaku na Shōnen* is more adventurous and experimental with unsteady compositions, odd camera angles and movements, and sudden and rugged jump cuts. There are lots of Tarantinoesque and Takeshi-like absurd violence in *Gūzenimo Saiakuna Shōnen*, but because it is shown in a pop style, as if it were music video, violence looks the least realistic. His *Hard Romanticker* (2011) is, in contrast, a visceral gangster film and tells the story of a young *Zainichi* hoodlum, who becomes a target of the revenge for the murdered grandmother of a rival thug with a postmodern visual style. In the film the *Zainichi* hoodlum admits, 'There's no place in Japan for guys like me,' but he fights back by saying, '[therefore] We're fighting for our lives.'

National cinema is still an elusive and equivocal concept despite critics' consorted efforts to define and theorize it.¹⁰ One of the main difficulties derives from the fact that 'nation' is an imagined concept and defies any clear delineation and delimitation. National cinema is a compound of elements extracted from a cinematic storage of national genres, national cinematic styles and aesthetics, and national motifs and themes. However, the compound continues to be unstable because it is subject to constant alterations and rearrangements. Japanese national genres are, for example, *Jidai Geki* (Period Drama), with their subgenres such as *Samurai* film, *Ninkyō Eiga* (Chivalry Cinema), *Sengoku-mono* (Films of Civil Wars); *Gendai Geki*

¹⁰ Marcos Martin Centeno's recent article introduces a host of discussions on national cinema and it includes, 'Introduction: The Misleading Discovery of Japanese National Cinema,' *Arts*, 7 (4), 87, 2018, Crofts, Stephen, 'Reconceptualizing National Cinema/s,' *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 14, 1993, 49-67, and Higson, Andrew, 'The Concept of National Cinema,' *Screen*, Vol. 30, Issue 4, 1989, 36-47.

(Contemporary Drama) with their subgenres such as *Haha-mono* (Films about Mother), *Shōshimin-mono* (Films about Common Folks), *Yakuza* film, and *Jun'ai Eiga* (Pure Love Romance); and *Tokusatsu Eiga* (Special Effects Movies), J-horror and Anime. In Japanese National Cinema unique styles and aesthetics may have been developed in the way to challenge Western patterns of representation and by choosing unconventional film making approaches (Burch, 1979). However, the compound called Japanese National Cinema is constantly changing its shapes and colours reflecting the vicissitude of genres, styles and aesthetics as well as themes and motifs. Old genres go out of fashion and new genres gain more popularity; old styles decline and new styles are invented; and old themes and motifs stop attracting film makers and audiences and new themes and motifs emerge.

In the postwar Japanese cinema till around 1970, *Zainichi* rarely appeared on the silver screen and when they did, they were observed from outside as sufferers of poverty, unemployment, racial mistrust and prejudice, and social injustice. From the 1970s *Zainichi* film makers and script writers autobiographically or semi-autobiographically began to look into what was going on inside *Zainichi* characters and told stories of their inner experiences such as their conflicting ethnic and cultural identity, anxiety and aversion to be accepted in Japan, and love and hate towards their 'adopted' country. *Zainichi* cinema, particularly the one after the 1990s, has been a catalyst to unsettle the stability of the compound called Japanese National Cinema and has changed the course of its development. For not only a good number of films have been made about *Zainichi* for recent years, but also they are by now a not insignificant part of Japanese cinema. *Zainichi* and Japanese film makers who created films about *Zainichi* have made great cinematic and artistic contribution to the formation of contemporary Japanese cinema and are now expected to continue to do so, to speak cynically, as long as *Zainichi* remain as strange others in Japan, ethnic frictions and conflicts continue, and *Zainichi* go on feeling uneasy and unwelcomed like the protagonist of *Hard Romanticker* confesses. *Zainichi* cinema as a genre may one day decline or disappear completely, if *Zainichi* are accepted entirely as not strange but important and invaluable others.

Biographical Note

Norimasa Morita is a professor in film and literary studies at Graduate School of International Culture and Communication Studies and School of International Liberal Studies in Waseda University. He obtained his BA and MA degrees at Faculty of Letters, Arts and Sciences of Waseda University, his second MA at University of Kent and his Ph.D. at the same university. His specialty is film theory, literary theory, World Cinema and World Literature. His publications include *Marginalia: Undiscovered and Disappeared Literature* (1999), *Britain and Japan: Biographical Portraits* (2005 – 2016), *World Literature/Japanese Literature* (2012), *Modern Literature – World Literature: Historical and Theoretical Perspective* (2018) and refereed papers such as ‘Avant-garde, Pastiche and Media Crossing: Films of Terayama Shuji’ (2006), ‘Painterly Cinema: The Art Design of Awazu Kiyoshi’ (2009), ‘Yasuzō Masumura, Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, and Italian Cinema’ (2010), ‘Colonialist Films of the Manchuko Film Association’ (2012), and ‘Tokyo Tower: Semiotic Analysis of the Tokyo Landmark’ (2013). Morita has been invited to lecture in a large number of universities and they include Purdue University, Chulalongkorn University, Seoul National University, University of Venice, Cà Foscari, University of Rome, La Sapienza, and University of Rome II, Tor Vergata and he was a visiting researcher at Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia.

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A Minority among Minorities: Yang Yong-hi's Zainichi Film Transcending Japanese and Korean Cultures¹

Hyunseon Lee

Abstract

Within a decade, Korean-Japanese filmmaker Yang Yong-hi has come to represent Zainichi cinema with a transnational appeal. Her debut documentary *Dear Pyongyang* (2005) was awarded prizes at various film festivals. She followed this success with another documentary film *Sona, the Other Myself* (*Itoshi no sona*, 2009), which deals with her family life in Osaka and Pyongyang. *Our Homeland* (*Kazoku no kuni*, 2012), another autobiographical work, and her first feature film, has enjoyed critical acclaim, particularly at international film festivals in Berlin, Busan, and Tokyo, and it was even selected to be shown at the the 85th Academy Awards for Best Foreign Language Film.

Where is the 'homeland' of Zainichi Koreans? Here I deal with questions related to the way in which the film *Our Homeland* articulates two points: first, the homeland of the Zainichi, and second, Japanese and Korean cultures. The discussion thus looks at how to explain the transnational character of *Our Homeland*. Focusing on the critical acclaim awarded at international film festivals and the function of film festivals, I explore the way in which North Korea, one of the most fascinating themes in this global age, matters both in terms of this film and its reception. I also show that the strongest transnational attraction is related to the historical link between North Korea and Japan.

Key words: Zainichi film, North Korea, repatriation project, film festival, transnational cinema

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Introduction

Yang Yong-hi's film *Our Homeland* (*Kazoku no kuni*, 2012) is an auteur film, as shown by the various awards it has won at international film festivals.² In her films, Yang has consistently dealt with the theme of her Korean origins – specifically her father's connection to North Korea. Her main theme has become her Zainichi identity. Zainichi literally means 'residing/existing in Japan', or 'a foreign citizen residing in Japan'. Thus, the term Zainichi Koreans refers to 'Koreans living in Japanese territory'. However, among Japanese the term Zainichi has been used almost synonymously with 'Koreans living in Japan'. My premise here is that the subject of Yang's film, given that she is North Korean and Japanese, is important in her feature film *Our Homeland*, as well as in her previous documentaries on North Korea. This theme of being a Zainichi elevates her films to transnational cinema.

Transnational cinema depicts 'transnational culture', which is synonymous with 'global' or 'world culture'. As Ulf Hannerz points out, a global culture is "marked by an organization of diversity rather than the replication of uniformity. It is created through the development of cultures without a clear anchorage in one territory. These are all becoming sub-cultures within the wider whole" (Hannerz 1990: 237). One of the most striking characteristics of global culture has been the dialectics of the global and the local, which can be regarded as two sides of the same glocality coin. The global and the local are so deeply intertwined that the separation of the two dimensions is only heuristically possible. So, a culture can be both national and international, transnational, or in an often used term, multicultural, and embrace the differences between the self and the other. According to Arun Appadurai, culture is not usefully regarded as "a substance but is better regarded as a dimension of phenomena, a dimension that attends to situated and embodied difference. Stressing the dimensionality of culture rather than its substantiality permits our thinking of culture less as a property of individuals and groups and more as a heuristic device that we can use to talk about difference" (Appadurai 2001: 12).

The transnationality of film can be discussed not only in relation to

² Korean names will be given in the Korean way: family name followed by given name.

content and the representation of a national culture in heuristic terms, but also from the point of view of production, distribution and consumption. The intentionality of the agents is crucial here, as a film can easily exhibit traces of transnationality if the agents intentionally direct the attention of the viewer towards various transnational properties, particularly through the transnational elements of film production, which can be identified through the cast, the crew and the location, and through the intended audience.

International film festivals have become important because they are places where a transnational culture has been created, celebrated and reflected. Film festivals present not only locally or nationally bounded films but also inter- or transnational films with globally attractive content, as clearly demonstrated by Yang Yong-hi's film *Our Homeland*.

The subject of North Korea in particular makes this film transnational in terms of reception and consumption, as it attracts attention to one of the most fascinating and controversial themes of our global age: North Korea, and its transnational appeal. The film's main theme, the repatriation of Zainichi Koreans in the 1970s, and its aesthetic devices, invite questions about Japanese society and why Zainichi family members were sent to Pyongyang. Shota Tsai Ogawa wrote:

much of the existing literature on Yang Yong-hi's film has focused on putting the event of 'repatriation' in perspective either by further elaborating on her family history or providing the broader socio-historical context: the so-called repatriation project that ran from 1959 to 1984, relocating as many as 93,340 people from Japan to North Korea. (Ogawa 2017: 2)³

To contextualize the aesthetic strategies of filmmaker Yang Yong-hi, it seems appropriate to describe Mika Ko's investigation of nationalism and multiculturalism as two sides of the same coin. Ko differentiates between the dominant discourses of Japaneseness and cinematic portrayals of prominent minority groups. She suggests that the promotion of contemporary multiculturalism and cultural hybridity disguise the maintenance of nationalism and functions to 'neutralize' the conflict between the 'Japanese'

³ This also included around 3000 Japanese wives of Zainichi Koreans.

and ‘others’ (Ko 2012: 31), and that multiculturalism in contemporary films represents both a confirmation and a challenge to cosmetic multiculturalism and nationalist ideologies (Ko 2012: 172). Keeping this assumption in mind, in the following section I will begin by briefly introducing the good reception that Yang Yong-hi’s films have enjoyed at international film festivals. These film festivals function as a transnational platform and contact zone at which to present the ‘minority among minoriteis’ (Kim 2012), which is a term used in *Our Homeland* (see below p.15) and coined by Kim Ji-seok (1960-2017). Kim was a film critic and the director of the 17th Busan International Film Festival in 2012. He used the term in relation to film authors and to themes such as the ‘repatriation’ of Zainichi family members to North Korea in the 1970s. I will then move on to the issue of aesthetic devices dealing with both Japanese and North Korean cultures and the homelands. I will address how and why Yang’s Zainichi films can be categorized as transnational Japanese cinema. Where is the ‘homeland’ of Zainichi Koreans? I will explore issues related to whether the homeland of the Zainichi is articulated in the film *Our Homeland*, and the way in which the film represents Japanese and Korean cultures.

Yang Yong-hi’s films at international film festivals

In less than a decade the Korean-Japanese filmmaker Yang Yong-hi became synonymous with Zainichi cinema by attracting global audiences and building a reputation as an international film festival celebrity. Here, Zainichi cinema means films dealing with the theme of Zainichi identity in Japan, and these films are largely produced by ethnic Korean film directors living in Japan. Born in Osaka in 1964, Yang Yong-hi is a second-generation North Korean resident of Japan (Zainichi). Her films present the unique story of her family. Her father Yang Gong-seon, born on Jeju Island on the southern coast of Korea in 1927, moved to Osaka as part of the mass migration of Jeju Islanders, as Osaka was the largest industrial center in Asia during the Asian Pacific War (1937-1945). He remained in Japan even after the end of the colonial and wartime periods (1910-1945). In 1948, Korea was divided into North Korea (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea/DPRK) and South Korea (Republic of Korea/ROK). Although Jeju fell under American occupation, and subsequently became a South Korean province, Yang’s father

identified with the socialist state of North Korea and its Marxist ideology. He became a founding member of *Chongryun* (The General Association of Korean Residents in Japan), a pro-Pyongyang organization established in 1955. Among several ethnic Korean groups registered in Japan, two organizations have played historically significant roles in Korean society in Japan: *Chongryun* and *Mindan*. *Chongryun* is an organization supporting North Koreans in Japan with passport and travel problems, and it acts as a pipeline between North Korea and families in Japan. By contrast, *Mindan*, established in 1946, has closer ties to South Korea. Roughly 25 percent of ethnic Koreans affiliate themselves with *Chongryun* and 65 percent are members of *Mindan*.

This background is significant in terms of understanding and contextualizing Yang's films in relation to Korean history. Jeju, her father's birthplace, experienced a traumatic period during the *Jeju Uprising* (*Jeju sasam sageon*), which lasted from April 1948 to May 1949. During this leftist uprising against the anti-communist South Korean regime, almost 10% of Jeju Island's population (between 14,000 and 30,000 people) died and 4,000 more fled to Japan. The Jeju population subsequently suffered cruel suppression that lasted six decades. It is only in recent years that the *Jeju Uprising* has become publicly acknowledged and the subject of debate and national remembrance.⁴ Repressed by South Korean anti-communist regimes for decades, the *Jeju Uprising* created what Kwon Heonik calls "political ghosts": "family-ancestral identities whose historical existence is felt in intimate life but is traceless in public memory" (Kwon 2010: 400-13). It was not until 2006 that the South Korean government officially apologized.

In this context, Yang Yong-hi's father's identification with North Korea and communist ideology appears to be a natural choice. In addition, Marxist ideology was fashionable among the working class, leftwing intellectuals and politicians in Japan during the early post-war and Cold War eras. It must also be remembered that North Korea was admired by many Zainichi

⁴ According to Cho Myōng-ki and Chang Seyong the emphasis on peace goes hand in hand with the state's legal designation of Jeju as a "Free International City" in 2002 and the subsequent proclamation of Jeju Island as a "Special Self-Governing Province" in 2006. Jeju has been defined as "the hub of East Asia" wherein "companies are free to do business, and people, goods, and capital can move freely" (Cho and Chang 2013: 225-6).

Koreans including those born in both North and South Korea. It is also worth mentioning that the majority of Korean migrants in Japan were workers who leaned to the left politically making them ideologically closer to socialism at that time, since North Korea had started its ambitious industrialization efforts in the 1950s with the support of the global communist bloc. Various engineers and experts from the Soviet Union, the Democratic Republic of China, and the German Democratic Republic among others were sent to North Korea to help with its industrial development. Compared with the North, South Korea in the 1950s was struggling economically and was dominated by poverty and frustration. Its first president Rhee Syngman would soon be overthrown in the *4.19 Revolution* of 1960. In 1961, the May 16 *coup d'état* led by Park Chung-hee displaced the South Korean government and Park's regime ruled the country for 18 years (1961-1979).

Under the circumstances, the prospect of living in North Korea appealed to Zainichi Koreans, as they had largely been left behind during Japan's rapid economic growth in the late 1950s: "(The) Unemployment rate for Zainichi Koreans reached 60 percent, and the lives of the unemployed were made more difficult by the discriminatory policy implemented in 1956 that halved the number of Koreans receiving benefits" (Mizuno and Mun 2015: 145-6). *Chongryun*, a Zainichi organization, of which Yang's father was a member and an official, played a central role in demanding and facilitating the 'repatriation' project in the 1970s.

"With the promise of housing, education, and employment upon arrival, 'repatriation' symbolized open opportunities that Zainichi Koreans could only dream of in Japan" (Ogawa 2017: 3-4). Due to the realization of the 'repatriation' project, Yang sent his three sons to North Korea on a one-way ticket in 1971. This departure and its consequences provide the core of Yang Yong-hi's films.

Yang Yong-hi's debut documentary *Dear Pyongyang* (2005) is about her visit to Pyongyang to see family members who had lived there for decades. *Dear Pyongyang* was awarded prizes at various film festivals, including the 2006 Sundance Film Festival (where she won the Special Jury Award in the World Cinema section for documentaries), the Network for the Promotion of Asian Cinema (NETPAC) Award for Best Asian Film at the 56th Berlin International Film Festival in 2006, and Special Mention at the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival (YIDFF). It was also shown at the

2006 Busan International Film Festival (BIFF). BIFF's Asian Network of Documentary Fund gave her a seed grant, and South Korean co-producer Zio Entertainment distributed her film. In this way Yang found audiences for her film in South Korea, her other 'homeland'. Subsequently, the ethnic Zainichi Korean Yang Yong-hi acquired South Korean nationality. Yang followed this success and recognition with another documentary film *Sona, the Other Myself* (*Itoshi no sona*, 2009). This is an essay film where the film director exclusively used video footage that she had shot during her previous visits to Pyongyang. This film was another career success and dealt with her family life in Osaka, Japan, and Pyongyang.

Yang's documentary films are autobiographical and the author portrays the lives of her family that has been split into two parts; her parents and herself in Osaka and her three brothers and their families in Pyongyang. As a daughter of a high-ranking *Chongryun* official, Yang was given the privilege of visiting her brothers in North Korea regularly in the 1980s as *Chongryun* members were allowed to travel to North Korea to see their families. Equipped with a small video camera, Yang Yong-hi was able to record over 150 hours of home video depicting the daily lives of her North Korean family. However, after the huge success of her first film at international film festivals, *Chongryun* refused to give her a visa to visit North Korea, which means that she is no longer able to record her North Korean family on camera.

Yang's films, which are based on those home video clips, clearly show the exotic side of North Korea. On one hand, the films show the repatriation of Zainichi Koreans to North Korea. On the other hand, a film depicting the everyday lives of North Koreans in Pyongyang as seen by a videographer is certainly a promising project as portraits of North Korean daily lives have been a desired subject, but one that was generally portrayed only through (propaganda) documentary films dominated by those made from a touristic journalistic perspective.⁵

With her films on the North Korean family enjoying a transnational

⁵ A few recent examples are *Under the Sun* (2015), a Russian documentary film directed by Vitaly Mansky; *Meine Brüder und Schwestern im Norden* (2016), a German documentary by Sung-Hyung Cho (a filmmaker born in South Korea); *MRS. B. A North Korean woman* (2016), a Korean/French documentary by Jéro Yun; *The Happiest People on Earth* (2017) by Natalya Kadyrova, RT Documentaries.



Dear Pyongyang (2005)



Sona, the Other Myself (2009), also known as *Goodbye, Pyongyang*

appeal, Yang Yong-hi rose from being a freelance video journalist to become a leading minority director in Japan. Her third film, *Our Homeland*, is another autobiographical work, and her first feature film. In the meantime, her eldest brother and her father passed away. Therefore, in *Our Homeland*, the audiences are not shown images of Pyongyang or of her real father and brothers. Instead of home video images recorded in Pyongyang, she captures images of Tokyo. Remembering her two deceased family members that had served as her link to Pyongyang, Yang deals with the temporary return of her eldest brother to Tokyo to receive treatment for his brain tumor.

Our Homeland has also enjoyed critical acclaim, particularly at international film festivals. It won the Best Art Cinema Award/CICAE from the International Confederation of Art Cinemas Panorama Film Award at the 62nd Berlin International Film Festival in 2012, Best Picture at the 55th Blue Ribbon Awards, Best Screenplay at the 67th Mainichi Film Awards, and Memorial Best New Director at the 34th Yokohama Film Festival. It was presented at Nippon Connection in 2012 and selected as the Japanese entry for the Best Foreign Language Oscar at the 85th Academy Awards, although it was not nominated.

The 2012 Busan International Film Festival showed *Our Homeland* along with other North Korean films such as *Comrade Kim Goes Flying* (*Kim Dongmuneun Haneuleul Nanda*, 2012), a Belgium, UK and North Korea co-production, which was received well at over 48 film festivals including at international film festivals in Toronto, Pyongyang, and Rotterdam. It shows the popularity of the theme of North Korea on the film festival circuit.

The success of *Our Homeland* at international film festivals was not only thanks to its North Korean theme, but also to its portrayal of the strong division between North and South Korea, and the thrilling Cold War atmosphere. Ogawa points out that “Other Zainichi Korean talents such as Sai Yoichi, Kim Su-jin, and Lee Bong-ou have, for instance, carved out a niche in the film industry by actively collaborating with South Korean studios, producers, and directors”, while Yang Yong-hi’s films are “less border-crossing than border-tracing” (Ogawa 2017: 6). Indeed, Yang’s films are border-tracing rather than border-crossing, as they mark North Korea(ns) as the exotic ‘other’, even foreign to family members, and this exotic nature attracts the curiosity of audiences. And this curiosity is increased by the film *Our Homeland*, as North

Korea can only be perceived imaginatively through dialogue.

In this context it is significant that the film festivals that have supported Yang's work have been held in cities where the history, memory, wounds and trauma of the Cold War are still alive, such as in the Berlinale, the Busan International Film Festival, and the Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival. As De Valck mentioned, the Berlin International Film Festival itself began as "propaganda under American occupation", "a product of the Cold War; founded in 1951, the festival was originally a U.S.-led instrument designed to showcase Western Bloc films in border-zone theatres" (De Valck 2007: 47-53). The Berlinale was, in the words of Heidi Ferenbach, "the epicenter of Cold War topography", "a celebration of Western values" and "the Western cultural showcase in the East" (cited in De Valck: 53). For Ogawa, "In this paradoxical logic, Yang's story resonates across the borders precisely because it shows the obstinate relevance of national borders, family separation, and ideological division even in the post-Cold War era" (Ogawa 2017: 6).

Accordingly, Yang's film could have been understood as a North Korean film. Yet, Yang vigorously denied this as follows:

I never tried to make a film about North Korea! I am actually not interested in North Korea or in political issues at all! I don't care about the Kim family; my documentaries are about my family. It's an interesting family with very good characters: my father, Sona, my niece... Nice and simple people, very talkative... good characters for a documentary! But, in order to talk about my family history, I have to touch North Korea and the history of Zainichi (second-generation Koreans) in Japan. (Yang 2017)

Indeed, her film shows that her family history cannot be told without involving North Korea and the history of Zainichi, and no other theme shows this more clearly than the 'repatriation' project. *Our Homeland* is a film that concerns over 90,000 North Korean-Japanese people who traveled voluntarily to North Korea, looking for their genuine homeland. But it is also a history of North Korea and its relationship with Japan from the 1970s to 1997, and onwards to the present day. It is also important to point out that the geographic homeland of the vast majority of those who went to North Korea was South Korea. Their ideological homeland was in the North. Some object to these

people being called ‘North Koreans’, and Tessa Morris-Suzuki suggests in her book on the ‘repatriation’ that not all Korean residents in Japan went to North Korea ‘voluntarily’ and many Zainichi Koreans, Japanese and other nationals were in fact abducted (Morris-Suzuki 2007). According to Paul Fisher, “the late 1970s were undoubtedly the Golden Age of North Korea’s practice of kidnapping”.⁶ This abduction continues to be an issue in international relations between North Korea, Japan and USA (DiFilippo 2012).

Repatriation, migration, and being North Korean Zainichi

The film *Our Homeland* begins with a title sequence stating, “Since 1959, more than 90,000 Koreans living in Japan emigrated to North Korea. They are often referred to as “Returnees”/Going back to Japan... It’s very hard”. Seong-ho’s father sent his children, three boys, to Pyongyang motivated by his desire to spare his sons the social discrimination suffered by North Korean boys in Japan.

According to Kim Ji-seok *Our Homeland* does “a superb job of casting a light on the difficult and sometimes forgotten subject of repatriations” (Kim 2012). In this story about the Korean diaspora, a troubled Zainichi man temporarily returning to his family in Japan after 25 years in North Korea, is represented as a “minority within a minority” (Kim 2012), as one of those 90,000 Zainichi who voluntarily went to North Korea with the dream of returning to paradise. One of their motivations was social discrimination:

Many ‘pure’ Japanese families still run clandestine investigations on their children’s prospective marriage partners. Corporate discrimination against Korean-Japanese remains an ugly, festering problem and relations between Japan and North Korea aren’t likely to turn even remotely friendly any time soon. (CNN Travel 2011 May 4)

⁶ Fischer points out that the reason was Kim Jong-Il: “The Dear Leader had never had any military training, never studied espionage, never worked in an intelligence agency, never left his country; *but* he had seen and loved every James Bond film” (Fischer 2015: 144). The most prominent kidnapped figures were the South Korean actress Choi Eun-hui who was abducted in Hong Kong in 1978 and taken to North Korea to meet Kim Jong-Il and the abduction of filmmaker Shin Sang-ok followed six months later.

The 10th Feb. 2012 edition of the *Hollywood Reporter* stated that *Our Homeland* “manages the unlikely and unfortunate combination of being both drab and histrionic” yet an:

ongoing global fascination with North Korean politics and society, sharpened by recent upheavals in the ultra-secretive Communist nation, will nevertheless ensure plentiful festival bookings – especially at events specializing in human-rights themes and which primarily select on the basis of subject-matter rather than cinematic merit. (Hollywood Reporter 2012)

Our Homeland is a film about Yoon Seong-ho’s reunion with his family in Tokyo after 25 years in North Korea. Rie is his younger sister, who could be viewed as the director Yang’s alter-ego. Seong-ho officially came to Tokyo for three months for treatment after having been diagnosed with a brain tumor five years earlier. It is stated in the film that it is “Summer 1997”, which was a time when the North Korean people suffered from a nationwide famine called the North Korean famine or ‘The March of Suffering’, which lasted from 1994 to 1998. This period also saw the death of the Great Leader Kim Il-sung in 1994.

We see Tokyo streets, a Japanese house (their home), and the office of the Korean Life Counselling Centre with photos of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jung-il on the wall. This is the place where his reunion with his father, mother and sister takes place. Seong-ho’s reunion with his old family is presented slowly, in silence, and with no sound effects, no music, and the silence enhances the emotional attachment. However, this reunion is only possible on the condition that he returns to his North Korean ‘homeland’, since his own family is waiting for him – his wife, son, and two other brothers were to remain in North Korea.

He is promised treatment in a Japanese clinic as his brain tumor requires an operation. However, he has to return to North Korea earlier than expected, without receiving any treatment, after being ordered to do so by the North Korean government. We later discover that he came to Tokyo not for treatment, but to find an agent or spy among his family members.

Questions remain regarding the theme of this film. Where are their homelands? What happened to this family 25 years ago? Why did Seong-ho go to Pyongyang? However, no one answers these questions clearly, as he and



Rie and her brother Seong-ho in *Our Homeland*

his old school friends speak in Japanese and reminisce about life 25 years ago. One of his friends, Cho Ri, makes the brief comment: “Back then, you’d want to go to North Korea. Everyone considered it”.

The ‘repatriation’ to North Korea in the 1970s and its aftermath is a major theme, but the film does not deal directly with the ‘repatriation’ project or North Korea. These themes are not clear, but not absent either. It is a film about North Korea, but North Korea is not seen. On one hand, Yang said: “Part of me is still in Pyongyang (...). It’s a feeling that transcends politics and its consequences. I’m there, because my brothers and their families are there” (Shoji 2011); on the other hand she said, “There’s just no other way to describe it. But a huge part of me is Japanese. This is where I return to and manage the balance of politics and life and be myself – if only for a brief spell” (Shoji 2011).

Although this is a film about North Korea, the country only appears through images, photos of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jung-il, and in the uniforms and stereotypes of agents. This is a North Korean film without North Korea – it appears only in caricaturistic images and conversations, where it is

referenced as ‘North Korea’, ‘your country’, ‘in that country’, or ‘homeland’. When a doctor asks if Yoon Seong-ho is from Korea, his mother answers, “Sorry, not Korea. From Chosun. From North Korea”; Rie explains again, “My brother was born in Japan. He moved to North Korea and lives in Pyongyang”. This expresses the fact that her brother is a North Korean Japanese.

In another conversation the father says: “Have you been ordered to work behind the scenes? I know where you stand as a citizen”; the son shouts, “You do not know anything”. This is followed by the father saying, “Back then ... they left the country with big hopes”. The son should not be an agent but focus on treatment. However, Seong-ho is not allowed to speak too much. Instead of telling us about his life of 25 years in Pyongyang, he is an agent, and is spying on his old homeland.



North Korean agent Mr. Yang and Rie

The most Korean character is represented by the North Korean party comrade, Mr. Yang, played by the South Korean actor Yang Ik-jun. However, the character played by Yang is also a caricature, an idea of a North Korean spy, and his stereotypical image does not allow him to have a rich personality. Yet, his North Korean accent and demeanor have received a positive appraisal:

Indeed, the most engaging presence is Mr. Yang - played by the writer-director-star of the outstanding South Korean gangster thriller *Breathless* (2008). As in that movie, Yang exudes glowering menace with aplomb - indeed, he's rather more a street-thug than a communist apparatchik, and there's some irony in how it's him who succumbs to 'western' temptations (he chugs beers while watching porno in his hotel) rather than his meek charge. (Young 2012)

As no access to North Korea was possible, we cannot see anything concrete. And no proper realistic representation of North Korea was either possible or intended. Both men, Mr. Yang and Seong-ho, also speak in Korean. However, *Japan* is not questioned at all in this film, as if no critical approaches are allowed. There are no political or social comments. Only Cho Ri, Seong-ho's gay friend says, "What has changed is that there are many gays like me and that Japanese people are open-minded. Still, different kinds of discrimination exist but... things are better than before. I am a minority among minorities. I know that". As they are not allowed to speak too much, the friends sing the song "White Swing" together. It is a sad moment.

The family language is obviously Japanese, although Korean words appear occasionally in their daily conversations. They seem to feel free if they speak Japanese. Their dinner time is nicely presented, and it is very Japanese. It is the happiest scene, set in the atmosphere of a 1990s Japanese home, and their appearance is influenced by their environment.



Family dinner with a Japanese atmosphere in *Our Homeland*

In that moment, despite the ambiguity of the film title, the ‘homeland’ of these Zainichi seems to be Japan – not only owing to their family language, but also to how they behave. All the main roles except for the North Korean agent, Mr. Yang, are played by Japanese star actors – Rie (Sakura Ando), Mother (Yoshiko Miyazaki), Seong-ho (Arata Iura). The film is produced and distributed by a Japanese company in Japan, and the main language is Japanese.



The stars at the 17th Busan International film festivals from left to right Yang Yong-hi, Sakura Ando, Arata Iura, Yang Ik-jun

The dominant ‘habitus’ in the film can be considered Japanese, in the sense used by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Power can be culturally and symbolically created, and constantly re-legitimized through an interplay of agency and structure. The main way that this happens is through what Bourdieu calls habitus or socialized norms and tendencies that guide behavior and thinking. Habitus is neither the result of free will, nor determined by structures, but created by a kind of interplay between the two over time: dispositions that are both shaped by past events and structures, and that shape current practices and structures and also, importantly, that condition our very perceptions of these (Bourdieu 1984: 170). In this sense habitus is created and reproduced unconsciously, “without any deliberate pursuit of coherence... without any conscious concentration” (Bourdieu 1984: 170). It is created

through a social, rather than individual process leading to patterns that are enduring and transferrable from one context to another, but that also shift in relation to specific contexts and over time. Habitus “is not fixed or permanent, and can be changed under unexpected situations or over a long historical period” (Navarro 2006: 16).

It is significant that Seong-ho sees all the evidence of Japanese ambience on his way home from the airport and then again when returning to Pyongyang, in streets, architecture, supermarkets, shops and other places, all his memories of childhood; it is his home town, his homeland, although he calls out to her, ‘Mother’ in Korean, as he sees his mother in their Japanese home.



Mother and son on his way to Pyongyang

North Korea, one of the most fascinating themes of the global age, matters both in this film and its reception, and the most striking transnational attraction is related to the historical link between North Korea and Japan. This North Korean film without North Korea’s presence brings to mind the history of repatriation, but also Zainichi film history, including the transnational, colonialist propaganda films of the 1930-40s – a cinema of assimilation, which claimed Japan and Korea as one body, one nation.

The policy of *naesŏn ilch'e* (in Japanese *naisen ittai*, Japan and Korea as “One Body”) went hand in hand with the volunteer soldier system, which the Japanese colonial government implemented in 1938 in Korea after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War. Also, gradually recognizing film’s “rapid influence on the minds of human beings” (Yosuke 1941: 195), the Japanese government established a film control system in order to exploit film as an effective propaganda tool, and the target audience of the Chosun Federation’s propaganda campaign was specifically young Korean men who were old enough to enlist in the army.

However, war propaganda films were also aimed at Korean women including mothers. The medium of film has played an important role in Japanese colonial policy, by helping to mobilize young Korean men and send them to war, and the families in these respective films were all happy and proud of their son’s departure to death as clearly demonstrated in the films *Straits of Chosun* (1943), *Vow of Love (Ai to chikai hi)*, (1945), and *Dear Soldier (Heitai-san)*, (1944). In these propaganda films we can see how Korean men become volunteer soldiers and imperial subjects, and they also depict patriotic mothers both willingly urging their sons to join the army and encouraging them to devote their lives to the empire. By the time the Chosun Film Regulation was enacted in 1940, the colonial government began to concentrate on circulating a discourse emphasizing the importance of film control in Korea and creating the image of “the mother of the national army”, which was widely produced and circulated by Japan’s mass media during World War II (Baek 2010).

Conclusion – Zainichi film as a transnational cinema

Yang Yong-hi’s film *Our Homeland* shows a North Korean-Japanese family whose (cultural) identity is articulated both in Japanese and (North-) Korean. Their Japanese way of daily life is deeply rooted in Korean culture, and also disturbed by three family members living in North Korea. The transnational elements of this film mean that its subject matter is both Zainichi and North Korea.

On one hand, the film deals with North Korea as a homeland (of the father, mother, and brothers). Even Rie says, as she answers her brother’s

question as to whether she has a boyfriend, “I don’t like Japanese men. And although I am Korean, I don’t care for Koreans either”. However, this homeland is distant to her, as she “is against all the ideas of North Korea.” She cannot go to South Korea either. Thus, North Korea as a homeland remains an idea, a concept, with no presence at all, so that she cannot properly represent this country in the film; it is an emblem of death by famine. On the other hand, Japan is presented in a poor light as three boys were sent to Japan hoping for a better future, and even 25 years later, it still does not feel completely like a homeland for that family. It shows the fate of a Zainichi family, whose homeland has been denied them, and so presents another transnational theme of migrants and migration. In that sense, it doubles the attraction of the theme of Zainichi, particularly with respect to migrants from North Korea or pro-North Korea Zainichi living in Japan. This ongoing global subject of a ‘minority among minorities’ makes this film transnational.

Biographical Note

PD Dr Hyunseon Lee is a Research Associate at the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, SOAS, University of London where she has taught Korean cinema for the last 4 years. She is also a Privatdozentin at the Faculty of Philosophy, Siegen University, and teaches German - /Media Studies. She has published various works on German literature, film and media aesthetics, intermediality between literature, opera and film, Japanese film, South and North Korean films, and visual culture. Her publications include *Metamorphosen der Madame Butterfly. Interkulturelle Liebschaften zwischen Literatur, Oper und Film* (Heidelberg: University Press Winter, 2020), a Database *Korean Peninsula Cinema* (2018), edited books *Opera, Exoticism and Visual Culture* (co-edited 2015), *Murderesses* (co-edited 2013), *Akira Kurosawa und seine Zeit* (co-edited 2005), *Geständniszwang und ‘Wahrheit des Charakters’ in der Literatur der DDR. Diskursanalytische Fallstudien* (2000), *Hyunseon Lee: Günter de Bruyn – Christoph Hein – Heiner Müller. 3 Interviews* (1996). Her current research interests focus on film festivals, Korean peninsula cinema, film and history with a focus on Korean cinema, war and women. She is currently editing two books *Film and History: The Korean Experience* (publisher TBC), and *Korean Film and Festivals: Global Transcultural Flows* (Abingdon/London: Routledge 2020).

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Photographs:

Sona, the Other Myself (2009), also known as Goodbye, Pyongyang

(Photo: Korean film archive <https://koreanfilm.org/yangyh.html>)

Rie and her brother Seong-ho in Our Homeland

(Photo: <https://fctemporary.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/ourhomeland.jpg>)

North Korean agent Mr. Yang and Rie

(Photo: www.youtube.com/watch?v=C\spYud16RiA)

Family dinner with a Japanese atmosphere in Our Homeland

(Photo: <https://koreanfilm.org/yangyh.html>)

The stars at the 17th Busan International film festivals from left to right Yang Yong-hi, Sakura Ando, Arata Iura, Yang Ik-jun

(Photo: *Yonhap*)

Mother and son on his way to Pyongyang

(Photo: http://asianwiki.com/images/f/ff/Our_Homeland-002.jpg)

‘The Third Way’ in *Zainichi* Youth Films — A Comparative Analysis of *Gō* and *Pacchigi!* —

Guy Pinnington

Abstract

In this paper, I discuss the cinematic representation of ‘the third way’ amongst post-1970s *zainichi* youth in the film *Gō* (2001). In order to facilitate the analysis, the paper compares *Gō* with another film, *Pacchigi!* (2005) which similarly depicts adolescent *zainichi* youth and their identity struggles. By scrutinising the ways in which different directors juxtapose common themes found in the genre of coming-of-age cinema (*seishun eiga*), I discuss how key elements found in this genre allow them to convey political messages concerning the post-colonial construction of the *zainichi* community, yet also manage to turn such complex themes into commercially successful films. Further, I argue that the depictions of different time periods in these two films highlight the emergence of what a *zainichi* scholar Kim Tong Myung has called ‘the third way’ in the *zainichi* community. In conclusion, the paper discusses the possibilities and limitations of representing *zainichi* identity within the framework of *seishun eiga*.

Key words: *Zainichi*, youth films, the third way, hybridity

Introduction

According to the Ministry of Justice, there are approximately 600,000 Koreans living in Japan today.¹ Although this number includes so-called

¹ Immigration Services Agency of Japan, <http://www.immi-moj.go.jp/toukei/> (Access date: November, 2019)

‘new-comers’, the vast majority are those who came to Japan during its annexation and colonisation of Korea from 1910 to 1945 and their descendants. Constituting one of the largest ethnic minorities in Japan, such Koreans residing in Japan are often called *zainichi* in Japanese, which is an abbreviation for such terms as *zainichi chōsenjin* ([North] Koreans in Japan), *zainichi kankoku chōsenjin* (North and South Koreans in Japan), or *zainichi korian* (Koreans in Japan). The use of the term *zainichi* has been criticised for its ambiguity. By deleting words indicating ‘Korean’, the term ‘*zainichi*’ conceals various issues concerning the past and present relationships between Japan and Korea. Nonetheless, in another sense, this ambiguity accurately characterises the state of many Koreans in Japan (Ko 2010: 123). Those issues include the fact that the younger generation of *zainichi* Koreans do not possess a strong sense of being Koreans, due to a lack of real contact with Korea. Having parents and even grandparents who have grown up in Japan, and whose native language is Japanese, the only cultural or ethnic ties they might have with Korea are often through their names or nationality. Even then, an increasing number of *zainichi* Koreans have taken Japanese nationality due to the benefits they can then receive, such as access to the national pension scheme or social welfare. Furthermore, a significant number of *zainichi* Koreans use so-called *tsūmei*, which are either a Japanese way of reading their Korean name, or a Japanese name designed to conceal their Korean identity.

Faced with this ambiguity, there have been a variety of attempts by both Japanese and *zainichi* scholars to theorise the resulting new trends within the *zainichi* community. David Chapman cites the concept of ‘the third way’ coined by the *zainichi* scholar Kim Tong Myung (Kim 1988; cited in Chapman 2004). According to Chapman, the term ‘third way’ was first presented by Kim Tong Myung in an interview with an eminent scholar on *zainichi* issues, Iinuma Jirō, in 1979. (Chapman 2004: 34) The interview was organised in response to concerns regarding the widely accepted myth of Japanese homogeneity. In response to this, Kim described a possible ‘third way’ as a way to live in Japan as one’s home, without being either totally Korean or Japanese, but instead by being a ‘*zainichi*’. In other words, the third way was the “creation of a space for multivocal negotiation away from dominant notions of identity located in hegemonic definitions of a nationhood to a space where new identities could be imagined” (Ibid., 34). This notion

resembles the theory of ‘the third space’ which was coined by a leading scholar of postcolonial theory, Homi Bhaba:

It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricised, and read anew. (Bhaba 1994: 37)

In other words, in Bhaba’s conception, the third space refers to a dimension that lies in between the oppressor and the oppressed, which has the power to overthrow the hierarchical relationship between the two spaces, and to open up a possibility for a hybrid sphere. This idea is a useful one for understanding the theory of the third way, whereby the antagonistic rivalry between Japanese and Korean nationalisms, the former performed through Japanese state power and the latter by both the pro-North Korean *zainichi* affiliation *Sōren* and the pro-South Korean *Mindan*, could be challenged by the emergence of new generation of *zainichi* youth starting in the late 1970s.² They possessed an identity which could neither be categorised by a complete allegiance to the Japanese state nor within the politically-driven ideologies of the *Sōren* or *Mindan*. Instead, through the hybridity of their Japanese cultural and Korean ethnic identity, they attempted to assert a new form of identity that made better sense as ethnic Koreans residing in Japan permanently.

In this paper, I will discuss the cinematic representation of ‘the third way’ amongst post-1970s *zainichi* youth in the film *Gō* (2001). In order to facilitate the analysis, the paper will compare *Gō* with another film, *Pacchigi!* (2005) which similarly depicts adolescent *zainichi* youth and their identity struggles³. By scrutinising the ways in which different directors juxtapose the

² *Sōren* is an abbreviation for *Zai-nihon Chōsenjin sō rengōkai*, or the General Federation of Korean Residents in Japan, which was founded in 1955. *Mindan* is an abbreviation for *Zai-nihon Daikan Minkoku kyōryūmindan*, and it was founded in 1946 as a pro-South Korean organisation, and was changed to the current name in 1948.

³ These two films have been discussed together by Kuraishi (2009: 81-107), but his focus there is completely different from mine. He discusses the death of two characters from these films, but he does not make the contrast that I am making here, nor connect the films to the theme of the third way.

common themes found in the genre of *seishun eiga* (youth cinema), it will discuss how key elements found in this genre allow them to convey political messages behind the postcolonial construction of the *zainichi* community, yet also manage to turn such complex themes into commercially successful films. Further, I argue that the depictions of different time periods in those films, *Gō* depicting the 1990s and *Pacchigi!* 1968, highlight the emergence of ‘the third way’ in the *zainichi* community, even though *Pacchigi!* was produced after *Gō*. In conclusion, the paper will discuss the possibilities and limitations of representing *zainichi* identity within the framework of *seishun eiga*.

Despite the presence of a *zainichi* Korean population in Japan from the prewar period, postwar Japanese cinema saw very few representations of this ethnic minority. There were films such as *Nianchan* (*My Second Brother*: Imamura Shōhei 1959) and *Kyūpora no aru machi* (*Foundry Town*: Urayama Kirio 1962) which depicted *zainichi* characters, but they were almost always cast as either sub-characters or as villains, and it was only in the early 2000s that Japanese cinema began to see the introduction of positive and central roles for *zainichi* characters. In this sense, the two films *Gō* and *Pacchigi!* reflect the recent changes in Japanese cinema towards a more transnational context that more accurately represents the fact of multiethnic coexistence within Japanese society. In this paper, I have chosen to discuss these two particular films for two reasons. The first of these is that they were the most commercially successful films from the 2000s portraying *zainichi* characters. The second is that these two films illustrate well the emergence of the third way amongst new generations of *zainichi* youth.

Seishun eiga as a cinematic genre

The genre of *seishun eiga* has witnessed a gradual development in the post-war period. Indeed, the very concept of *seishun* was itself greatly influenced by the development of post-war films in Japan (see: Satō 2003). Sato claims that the tendency to see *seishun* as a blossoming period of one’s life had only started a few decades earlier, when films and songs about *seishun* became capable of commercially targeting younger audiences. He points out that films were one of the few forms of entertainment that the younger generation could afford to enjoy. Sato’s argument here seems

somewhat exaggerated, but nevertheless it is true that this theme takes on a special prominence in the post-war world⁴.

In the immediate post-war period, the depiction of youth became a distinct theme in Japanese cinema. Films such as *Waga seishun ni kui nashi* (No regrets for our youth: Kurosawa Akira 1946), and *Aoi sanmyaku* (Blue mountains: Imai Tadashi 1949) depicted new images of Japanese youth, which were closely linked to a dominant narrative which saw Japan's defeat in WWII as a liberation from excessive militarism and the beginning of a new era (Yoshimoto 2007: 170). This idea of youth marked the beginning of a new, post-war Japanese cinema, and these new depictions of youth indeed played a decisive role in the direction of Japanese cinema in the mid-1950s, when the group of rebellious youngsters known as the *taiyōzoku*, or the sun tribe, started to attract media attention.

This cultural movement was initiated by a series of films that came under the category of 'sun tribe films', which became sensational after the novel by Ishihara Shintarō, *Taiyō no Kisetsu* (*Season of Violence*: 1966), won the prestigious Akutagawa prize in 1955 and was turned into a film. This novel was celebrated amongst Japanese youth for its explicit depictions of sex, violence, and youthfulness, in a manner that had not been seen in Japanese novels or films before. Although there were only five *taiyōzoku* films made in this period due to concerns from conservative critics about their immoral content, the film director Ōshima Nagisa argued that they marked a 'permanent change to the screen through the introduction of more explicit sex and violence which tested the limits of representation imposed by the Japanese film industry's censorship board' (Ōshima, in Yoshimoto 2007: 170).

Despite the many transitions that occurred in the development of *seishun eiga* as a popular genre, cinematic features of such films from the 1950s and 1960s reappear in more recent films depicting youth, such as *Kirishima bukatsu yamerutteyo* (*The Kirishima Thing*: Yoshida Daihachi 2012). Some of the key features of such films include the portrayal of young protagonists who suffer from anxiety over love and sexual desire, the uncertainty of the youngster's future in the midst of a moratorium

⁴ For further discussion of the development of *seishun eiga* as a genre, see Centeno Martin 2016: 143-160, Raine 2000: 202-225, and Schilling 2007: 30-41.

between childhood and adulthood, and a sense of uselessness and enervation. Traditional *seishun eiga* are simultaneously concerned with other qualities of youth, such as hopefulness, the strength to achieve a breakthrough, or the purity to follow one's goals. Recent Japanese youth films, however, have become more complicated than before. As John Berra has noted, some directors have continued to use the youth film as a way to comment on contemporary Japanese life, reflecting not only changing technology, but also the way in which teenagers have been trying to find themselves through the exploration of alternative identities. (Berra 2012: 284) Such new features of the work of contemporary *seishun eiga* directors are, to a great extent, relevant to *zainichi eiga* (*zainichi* films) as well.

Film Analysis: *Pacchigi!*

Here, I would like to introduce the film *Pacchigi!* and analyse the ways in which this film is equipped with common cinematic features found in the *seishun eiga* genre, and how it not only deals with issues concerning the lives of people in the *zainichi* Korean community in the 1960s, but at the same time succeeds as a popular film with unusual box office sales for a film that focuses mainly on *zainichi* characters. Set in 1968 Kyoto, *Pacchigi!* closely follows a love story between a Japanese hero, Kōsuke, and a *zainichi* heroine, Kyung-ja.

A *zainichi* Korean high school student, An-seong, is a juvenile delinquent who spends his days fighting with Japanese high school students in his neighbourhood in Kyoto together with his classmates, Jaedeugi and Bang-ho from a Pro-North Korean *Chongryon* ethnic high school. One day, An-seong skips class with his friends and tells them that he has decided to repatriate to North Korea, in the hope of one day becoming a football player there and playing in the World Cup. He has come to this decision because he realises that he could never become a professional football player in Japan due to his ethnic background and Korean nationality. Later, a Japanese protagonist, Kōsuke, is made by his Japanese teacher to visit this *Chongryon* school with his classmate Norio to invite the *zainichi* football team to a 'friendly match' so as to improve their relationship. There, he meets An-seong's sister, Kyung-ja, and falls in love with her at first sight. Oblivious

of Kōsuke's feelings, Kyung-ja tries to avoid him, fearing that he might harass her like other Japanese high school students who tease her in the beginning of the film for her Korean ethnic costume, the *chima chogori*. In order to win her love, Kōsuke tries to memorise Korean, and learns to play a Korean song, *Imjin Gang* (Imjin River), on his guitar, and in this process gradually understands more about the colonial history that lies between Japan and Korea. Kōsuke is eventually invited to An-seong's farewell party before he leaves for North Korea, and he performs *Imjin Gang* in a duet with Kyung-ja. After a series of events, one of An-seong's best friends Jaedugi is brutally beaten by Japanese thugs, being mistaken for An-seong, and he eventually dies in a truck accident.

Deeply saddened by this event, Kōsuke visits Jaedugi's funeral, which is conducted by a *zainichi* Korean shaman, and there Kōsuke is severely criticised by the shaman and Jaedugi's family for his ignorance of the colonial past and he is asked to leave the funeral. Shocked by this event, Kōsuke decides to learn more about the historical background of *zainichi*. In the meantime, An-seong and Bang-ho participate in a revenge attack against Japanese high schoolers and they have a fierce fight on the river. Towards the end of the film, after successfully singing and playing *Imjin Gang* on the Japanese radio, Kōsuke finally confesses his love to Kyung-ja, and she accepts his love.

Throughout this film, we find a variety of elements that are also found in stereotypical Japanese youth films, such as the difficulty of winning one's love and the uncertainty of one's future. These elements, nevertheless, are carefully linked with issues specific to the lives of *zainichi* Koreans in Japan during the 1960s. For instance, An-seong's decision to repatriate to North Korea to achieve his career choice reminds us of the Hitachi incident of 1970, where a second-generation *zainichi* Korean student had a job offer cancelled after the Japanese company discovered his ethnic Korean roots, which then led to a court case that ended with a victory on the student's side. The fact that *zainichi* Koreans often suffered discrimination in the job market is reflected in this theme of their uncertainty about the future. Furthermore, An-seong's decision to repatriate to North Korea also points to the repatriation movement amongst *zainichi* Koreans in the 1960s.

More importantly, however, many issues in the *zainichi* community are

portrayed in the film as ‘hardships’ that the protagonist has to overcome in order to achieve his goal, namely, to win the heroine’s love. As presented in the film, in the 1960s, intermarriage between *zainichi* Koreans and Japanese was not as common as nowadays (see Lie 2008: 32), and it was seen as something of a taboo. This in part reflected the rejection and discrimination that *zainichi* Koreans received from Japanese society in a variety of aspects, such as education, jobs, and welfare. On the other hand, it also reflected the antagonistic attitudes shared by first-generation *zainichi* Koreans who still held vivid memories of Japan as their pre-war oppressor.

Such issues are portrayed in the film as obstacles that lie between Kōsuke and Kyung-ja. Towards the end, Kōsuke asks Kyung-ja if she would become his girlfriend. Kyung-ja responds by asking him “If I become your girlfriend, and if it works out and we marry, then will you be able to become a (North) Korean?” Kōsuke can only stay silent. In this scene, the montage helps to set up such ethnic issues as an obstacle. Kōsuke stands on the lower level of a river bank. Kyung-ja, on the other hand, is standing on a higher level, which reminds us of the iconic scene from *Romeo and Juliet*. Here, the invisible issue that lies between them is visualised through the cinematic disposition of hero and the heroine.

Likewise, historical issues stand between Kōsuke and Kyung-ja in the scene of the funeral of Jaedugi. Kōsuke is criticised by a *zainichi* shaman and other elderly characters for his ignorance of historical issues between Korea and Japan, such as the colonial history and the forced labour of Koreans during World War II. Through the film, Kōsuke learns about the historical issues between Korea and Japan. The audience of the film learns about such problems together with Kōsuke, and ‘grows up’ as the narrative proceeds. The production company of *Pacchigi!*, Cine Qua Non, is a *zainichi*-owned firm, and contrary to *Gō*, which was distributed by a Japanese blockbuster company, Tōeī, this film inevitably deals more with the political aspects of *zainichi* settlement in Japan (Dew 2016: 130).

These political motifs are made easier for the audience to digest through the tropes of *seishun eiga*. Nonetheless, one of the key differences between *Pacchigi!* and *Gō*, as we shall see in the next section, lies in its absence of clear identity conflicts amongst the *zainichi* characters. In the film, conflicts only occur when Kōsuke sets foot in the *zainichi* community,

and such conflict is felt only through the rejection Kōsuke receives during his interactions with *zainichi* characters. This makes better sense when considering the fact that ‘third way’ discussions only began to occur in the late 1970s with the emergence of third and fourth generations of *zainichi* Koreans.

Film Analysis: *Gō*

Despite the usage of similar cinematic tropes to *Pacchigi!*, *Gō* deals with more recent issues in *zainichi* society through its setting in 1990s Japan. In *Gō*, while a variety of key features of *seishun eiga* are employed to highlight political issues in the *zainichi* community, it further allows for a more realistic representation of a new generation of *zainichi* youth, by expanding on the possibility of a hybrid identity, respecting Korean ethnic identity without any specific allegiance to Korean organisations, and also allowing for the embrace of a Japanese cultural identity that is fostered through their lives in Japan.

The narrative is a straightforward one. Sugihara, a third-generation *zainichi* Korean high schooler, spends his days having fights with his Japanese schoolmates, which always ends in his victory thanks to the training from his father, who is an ex-boxer. One day, Sugihara goes to a birthday party of one of his friends, where he meets a Japanese girl, Sakurai, and falls hopelessly in love. After a few dates, they become intimate. Before long, Sugihara learns that his best friend from Korean junior high school, Jong-il, has been stabbed to death by a Japanese high school student. Sugihara seeks comfort from Sakurai, and that evening they decide to make love to each other. Only then, does Sugihara confess his Korean ethnicity to her. Sakurai, however, takes the confession badly, and rejects Sugihara.

Heartbroken by this event, he decides to engage in a fist-fight with his father, who was also saddened by the news that his brother has passed away in North Korea. He provokes the father by claiming that the sentimentality and laments of the second-generation *zainichi* have caused so many difficulties for the later generation. The fist-fight ends with the ultimate defeat of Sugihara by his father, and then Sugihara realises that his father had switched his nationality from North to South Korea in order to make it easier for Sugihara to live in Japan. Towards the end of the film, Sakurai calls Sugihara after

a long time, and they decide to meet each other on Christmas Eve. When Sugihara sees Sakurai in a park, he yells out “Who am I? Zainichi? Don’t label us without our permission! I am ME! No, from now on, I am No one!” In response, Sakurai answers “Sugihara is Sugihara. I don’t care what your nationality or ethnicity is anymore. I finally realised that.” In the end, they hug each other and the snow starts to fall.

As such, similarly to *Pacchigi!*, *Gō* traces the love story between the hero and the heroine. The difference, however, lies in the reverse positions of their ethnicity. In *Gō*, Sugihara is a third-generation *zainichi* Korean high schooler, and Sakurai is a Japanese girl while in *Pacchigi!*, the protagonist is a Japanese high school boy and the heroine is a *zainichi* Korean. This difference is significant, as Sugihara is a hero who goes through his own identity struggles in his attempts to win Sakurai’s love. From the audience’s perspective, compared to *Pacchigi!*, it is harder for them to relate to the protagonist unless they possess a similar hybrid identity. Instead, the emotional detachment of the audience allows them to shape Sugihara as an exotic, cool super-hero. It should also be noted that the actor Kubozuka Yōsuke, who plays the role of Sugihara, is a celebrated pop icon amongst Japanese youth (Ko 2010: 161). This use of a popular actor also allows the creation of a *zainichi* figure that could be idolised by the mainstream audiences.

Gō is filled with ‘pop’ overtones that allowed for its commercial success while dealing with more serious, political issues. At the beginning of the film, there is a scene where Sugihara attempts a *Sūpā chikin rēsu* (super chicken race), where one has to step right in front of a running train and run fast enough not to be run over. This scene is dramatised with thrilling music and several jump cuts, and it is followed by a cross-over of Sugihara and other delinquent high school students running away from the police while colourful credit titles show the film title and names of the producers and actors. Throughout the film, there are a series of fighting scenes which occur in a similar manner with jump cuts and dramatic music, which stimulate and entertain the audience.

Such pop overtones are combined with the familiar tropes of *seishun eiga*. As we have seen with *Pacchigi!*, *Gō* also employs a similar narrative structure where a juvenile delinquent protagonist meets a beautiful girl

and falls in love. However, there are hardships that the protagonist has to face in order to achieve his love. Eventually, the protagonist finds a way to break through such difficulties, and ultimately wins the heroine's love. This clichéd narrative style, nonetheless, is juxtaposed with a variety of issues that exist among contemporary *zainichi* youth, and thus obtains more depth in its depictions of events. For example, Sakurai's rejection of Sugihara's confession as a *zainichi* Korean highlights multiple issues.

First, it signals what Youngmi Lim calls "the colourless colour line between Japanese and *zainichi*" (Lim 2009: 82). In other words, despite possessing different ethnic backgrounds, the ethnic identity of *zainichi* cannot be recognised by skin colour or language. Instead, they become an 'invisible minority' whose ethnicity only comes to light through confession. Second, Sakurai metaphorically represents the Japanese state and exhibits the deeply rooted discrimination against *zainichi* Koreans in Japanese society. If Sugihara had not confessed his true ethnic identity, Sakurai would not have rejected him. However, the moment she finds out his Korean identity, this becomes a reason for rejection, based on her father's racist prejudices concerning Koreans and Chinese. This represents the issues in the *zainichi* community where they have no choice but to use their *tsūmei* and disguise their Korean identity in order to avoid discrimination in Japan. The emotional burden on Sugihara here is conveyed visually through the lighting. In this scene, the couple sit on the bed close to each other by the window. The moonlight that comes through the window almost exclusively casts light on Sakurai, and Sugihara's face is unrecognisably dark. Here, the emotional pain Sugihara receives is expressed in this binary contrast between the bright and the dark. Similarly, in the scene towards the end, Sakurai calls Sugihara up, and the house experiences a sudden black out, which also makes Sugihara's facial expressions invisible, and it reminds the audience of the scene of her rejection.

The film also points out the detachment of the new generation of *zainichi* youth from identity politics and the *zainichi* essentialism of the past generations, that is, the propagandistic ideologies spread through allegiance to the *zainichi* organisations, *Sōren* and *Mindan*. In reaction to the (post) colonial history of *zainichi* settlement in Japan and the political situations of North and South Korea, the previous generations of *zainichi* Koreans created ideologies that assume the *zainichi* consciousness as a collective unity. However, in a

similar manner to the myth of Japanese racial purity and homogeneity, this idea also essentialises the nature of what it means to be a *zainichi* Korean, whereas, in reality, the identity of *zainichi* differs from generation to generation, and there is a complex formation of different identities manifested in the three nationalities of *zainichi*: North Korean, South Korean, and Japanese. In *Gō*, a young, third-generation *zainichi*, Sugihara, is not interested in such cliched ideologies. Instead, the audience is repeatedly reminded throughout the film that in Sugihara's words, "this is a story about my love" (*kore wa boku no ren'ai no hanashi da*), which implies that this film is not so much about politics or the history of *zainichi* struggles, but is ultimately a love-story.

This idea of one's detachment from political ideologies is further exemplified through Sugihara's frustration over his own father. Faced with his father moaning over his brother's death, Sugihara angrily screams at him, blaming the first and second generations of *zainichi* for being caught up in such political ideologies vis-à-vis the Japanese, and that it has burdened the future generations. This line highlights the reality among the new generations of *zainichi* youth who feel increasingly assimilated into Japanese society, and who do not have enough contact with their (imagined) motherland of Korea to relate to the political ideologies that the older generations stubbornly cling onto. Therefore, for the new generations, it makes more sense to assert their place within Japanese society through the hybrid identity as a 'third way' that excludes both anti-Japanese *zainichi* ideologies and the assimilative pressure from the Japanese state.

In this respect, *Gō* serves as a significant representation of a new wave in the *zainichi* community: the emergence of the third way as an alternative identity. Such hybridity of identity is explored, for instance, in a scene where Sugihara's best friend Jong-il talks back to the teacher at a Korean ethnic junior high school after he calls Sugihara a traitor to their country due to Sugihara's decision to attend Japanese high school, and here, Jong-il claims to the teacher that he has "never had a motherland".

The hybrid identity of young *zainichi* is also portrayed through an (in)ability in languages. In a scene where one of Sugihara's classmates from the Korean school, Wonsu, is scolded by his teacher, the intricate relationship between *zainichi* youth and their mother language is shown. Here, Wonsu

is scolded for his use of Japanese in school, which is prohibited by the Korean school rules. Wonsu uses the Japanese phrase to say “I really wanna take a shit”. Satan Kim tells him the way to say this in Korean is “I want to defecate”. However, Wonsu tells him, “That does not sound like what I felt. So I said I really wanna take a shit in Japanese”. Here, despite the humorous dialogue, we can find the conflict between one’s ethnic and cultural identity.

Conclusion

This paper has analysed two Japanese films depicting the lives of *zainichi* Korean youths, *Pacchigi!* (2005) and *Gō* (2001). The analysis explored the ways in which these films employed popular cinematic elements found in the genre of *seishun eiga*, and here, I would like to raise a few limitations and possibilities that are highlighted through such juxtaposition of *zainichi* issues with the popular film genre of *seishun eiga*.

On the one hand, a limitation is inevitably imposed by the popular representations of *zainichi* youngsters within the framework of youth films. For instance, while *Gō* succeeds in creating a *zainichi* hero who is exceptionally attractive, the portrayal of this unrealistic character creates a fantasy world far from that of contemporary *zainichi* youngsters. Similarly, the plot of *Pacchigi!* as a love story between a Japanese protagonist and a *zainichi* heroine in the 1960s creates a narrative which is less likely to be a true-to-life story. In both cases, there is no apparent solution offered for the identity conflicts that take place on screen. In *Pacchigi!*, the issues of conflicting ethnic and cultural backgrounds of Kōsuke and Kyung-ja are blurred when they become a couple in the last scene. In a similar manner, *Gō* presents the clash of Sugihara’s Korean ethnic identity and Japanese cultural identity, yet it all ceases to be an issue after he wins Sakurai’s love at the end of the film.

However, by portraying *zainichi* youths from different time periods, the two films illuminate the gradual identity shifts of *zainichi* youths over time. Through the comparison of these two films, it becomes clear that the film *Gō* represents a new generation of *zainichi* Koreans, who, in the words of Kim Tong Myung, possess an identity of ‘the third way’, which pledges allegiance to neither the assimilative Japanese state nor the ethno-nationalistic

zainichi essentialism. Instead, it is the alternative identity that is asserted in the hybridity of Korean ethnic identity and Japanese cultural identity.

Biographical Note

Guy Pinnington is a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Cambridge. His current research looks at the construction of the category and canon of *zainichi bungaku* (literature by resident Koreans in Japan) in post-war Japan, focusing in particular on the discourses created by three male *zainichi* writers: Kim Sok-pom, Yi Hoesong, and Yang Seok-il. His research interests include minority literatures in Japan, postcolonial theories, modern Japanese literature, and Japanese and Korean cinema.

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Redefining *Zainichi* Identity: Portrayal of *Zainichi* Women in Japanese Cinema from Adaptations of Yû Miri's Novellas

Lu Siyu

Abstract

The term *zainichi* is used to refer to permanent ethnic Korean residents in Japan, most of whose ancestors came to Japan during the colonial period. As one of the largest ethnic minorities in Japan, present day *zainichi* still struggle with their identity. In Japanese cinema, the portrayal of *zainichi* is often associated with an emphasis on the ethnic discrimination and unfair treatment they experience. *Zainichi* women, in particular, face more than just ethnic discrimination. Since they live in a patriarchal system, their image tends to be stereotyped and lack diversity in Japanese cinema. In this paper, I will discuss the portrayals of *zainichi* women characters in the films *Kazoku Cinema* (1998) and *Inochi* (2002), created by a female *zainichi* playwright and novelist Yû Miri. By relating her personal experience, I argue that her work not only presents the multiple dilemmas *zainichi* women face in Japanese society, but also promotes the diversity of this transnational topic in Japanese cinema.

Key words: *zainichi*, *zainichi* women, Japanese cinema, Yû Miri, transnational cinema

During the 35 years that Korea was a Japanese colony, more than two million Koreans traveled to Japan both willingly and unwillingly to provide cheap labor. After the war ended, a large number of Koreans chose to stay to avoid the turbulent political postwar situation on the Korean peninsula. According to statistics provided by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications in 2016, there are approximately 490,000 Koreans living

in Japan as permanent residents (Statics Bureau, 2016), making them one of the largest minority groups (*zainichi*) living in Japan. Although the word *zainichi* implies residents settled in Japan with foreign origins, it is commonly used to refer exclusively to the Korean *zainichi* group. The term *zainichi* is sometimes considered problematic but despite its ambiguity, namely that it omits a sense of being Korean while implying a sense of not being Japanese, it is appropriate for describing the in-between status of the group. In this paper I will use *zainichi* to refer to people from the Korean peninsula, who came to and settled in Japan during the colonial period, and their descendants, regardless of the nationality they hold. Having existed in Japan for more than 70 years, the *zainichi* group is now into its fifth generation, however younger *zainichi* born and raised in Japan still face challenges caused by their ethnic identities. Women in particular, find it hard to voice their opinions since they are a vulnerable group in terms of both gender and ethnicity. The contradiction represented by the *zainichi* group's close association with Japanese society and its uncertainty as regards national identity makes it a transnational topic worthy of study. By discussing the presentation of *zainichi* women's identity in two recent Japanese films based on the works of Yû Miri, I argue that her characters renegotiate the concept of national identity and contribute to the increasing diversity of the representations of *zainichi* women on Japanese cinema screens.

It is unsurprising that representations of the *zainichi* group are rather limited in Japanese cinema. In the early 1930s, Korean characters appeared in small roles in several Japanese films and their identity as the colonized was always emphasized. In films, such as *Kono haha o miyo* (*Look at This Mom*, Tasaka Tomosaka, 1930) and *Arigatosan* (*Mr. Thank You*, Shimizu Hiroshi, 1936), Koreans were depicted as impoverished laborers living outside the mainstream. According to Yang (2005), Koreans were introduced as an exotic object to be observed by Japan (Yang cited in Ko 2013: 137). As Ko also points out, the course of objectifying Asian neighbors began in tandem with Japan's process of modernization in the late nineteenth century, and this tendency first appeared in literature in the Meiji period (Fujii, 1993). Later, in the 1930s, the sensitive topic of colonized Korea is normally avoided in Japanese cinema due to the strengthened government control over the film industry (Satō, 1990). Earlier films that described Koreans' hardships were

considered to be critical of Japan's colonial regime and were either censored or banned. In the 1940s, the use of the slogan *nai-sen ittai*, which means "Japan and Korea are one", was encouraged as part of government's assimilation policy for conscription purposes. With the aim of depicting a harmonious relationship between Japan and its colony, filmmakers from both Korea and Japan contributed to a large number of pro-Japan films, in which Koreans were always portrayed as "obedient subjects" who greatly appreciated Japanese control (Ko, 2013: 138). For example, one of the most successful Korea-Japan co-productions during the colonial period (Baskett, 2008: 85), *Kimi to boku (You and Me)*, Hinatsu Eitaro, 1941), told the story of a young Korean volunteer soldier, Eisuke, who fights loyally for the emperor and marries a Japanese girl.

Koreans were rarely mentioned in Japanese cinema until the end of the Second World War. Some filmmakers focused on the discriminatory treatment and identity crises from which the *zainichi* suffered, in other words, they emphasized their roles as victims of an unjust society and the history of colonization. Such stereotypes remained common when portraying *zainichi* even when they started appearing in more diverse genres such as literary adaptations and documentaries from the 1970s (Monma, 1994: 221). The predicaments of *zainichi* depicted in those narratives were often associated with their marginalized position living in the underworld, where it was common to present men as yakuza or criminals. Women, in particular, were often stereotyped by being presented in traditional Korean costumes playing roles as hostesses, such as in *Otokonokao wa rirekisho (A Man's Face Shows His Personal History)*, Katô Tai, 1966) and *Yakuza no Hakaba: Kuchinashi no Hana (Yakuza Graveyard)*, Fukasaku Kinji, 1976). This emphasis on women's ethnic garments reveals the superficial exploration of *zainichi* women, as their portrayal was simplified into a symbol of their ethnicity and gender regardless of their generation. Yang states in her research that even in films where a *zainichi* woman was not wearing traditional clothes, her ethnicity would be implied in other ways, for example from her style of dress and accent (2003: 45).

In more recent Japanese cinema, the active participation of people from a *zainichi* background has contributed to overturning the conventional image of *zainichi*. Some films, adapted from *zainichi* authors' novels, also enhance

the diversity of the way *zainichi* are presented in Japanese cinema. These include female *zainichi* writer Yû Miri's work, which is worth analyzing, since it de-emphasizes *zainichi* ethnicity and offers new insights into the presentation of *zainichi* women in Japanese cinema.

Yû Miri and Her De-*Zainichi* Writings

Yû Miri was born in 1968 and is a second generation *zainichi*. Her parents migrated to Japan as children before the Korean War. Born and raised in Japan, Yû is not able to speak Korean and writes in her native language Japanese, nonetheless she still has South Korean citizenship. As her works parallel her own life, she is considered a representative of the "I-Novel" literary genre. Before becoming a novelist, she joined a theatre group and was a stage actor for two years. As a writer, the depth and variety of the topics shown in her writing have won her several prestigious awards and made her popular in both Korea and Japan. Despite the fact that she is writing about her own life, she differs from other *zainichi* authors in that she does not emphasize her identity as a *zainichi* or distinctly express any nostalgic feeling for her motherland. She has previously mentioned that she does not want the discussion of her work to be limited to a *zainichi* discourse (Bungakkai, 1997: 122-136). Therefore, some may argue that it is inappropriate to discuss her work within a *zainichi* framework. Certainly, her work is not limited to the subject of a minority group's struggles as found with many authors from a *zainichi* background. But it is unreasonable to restrict the scope of *zainichi* works to those with political undertones. On one hand, "*zainichiness*" is an idea that is closely related to the creators' self-awareness, which *zainichi* scholar Yûn has pointed out, it is based on the people's obsession with the recognition of identity, regardless of whether or not it was intended (2007: 71). Critic Kuroko Kazuo further explained in his article on the future trend of *zainichi* literature that *zainichi* works are based on an awareness of the author's cultural background from the Korean peninsula (2007: 49). On the other hand, the scope of *zainichi* works is not restricted to a discussion of *zainichi*'s difficulties and the political relationship between the two lands. Compared with early *zainichi* generations, the challenges that the younger generations are currently facing are more indirect, and such nuances are constantly revealed

in Yû's works. Yû has emphasized many times that she is indifferent to both the Korean and Japanese languages, and she does not feel that she belongs to either her motherland Korea or her birthplace Japan. Her ambiguity as regards her identity is consistent with the dilemma that the *zainichi* face today. Her different perspective from other *zainichi* writers reveals a new interpretation of *zainichi*, and also enables films that are adapted from her works to promote diverse images of *zainichi* women in Japanese cinema.

The two films discussed here were adapted from her novellas with the same titles. *Kazoku Cinema (Family Cinema)* was published in 1997 and won the prestigious 116th Akutagawa Prize. Her best-selling memoir *Inochi (Life)* was published in 2001 and was considered to be a representative of the "I-Novel" genre. These two novellas are not only considered representative of Yû's work, but also display a shift in the focus of Yû's writing at two different stages. The film *Kazoku Cinema (Family Cinema)*, Park Cheol-Su, 1998) was an attempt to realize a Korea-Japan coproduction and involved the participation of many people with a *zainichi* background, but it was not as popular in Japan as the film *Inochi (Life)*, Shinohara Tetsuo, 2002). The analysis of the representation of *zainichi* women in the next section is based on a discussion of the female characters in these two films as well as Yû's personal experience.

Kazoku Cinema (1998) and Women in Dysfunctional Families

Kazoku Cinema is a Korea-Japan co-produced film directed by Korean director Park Cheol-Su. It tells the story of an estranged family's reunion in order to make a semi-fictional film that will help the younger daughter's declining career as a pornographic actress. As the family members reveal their secrets during the course of filmmaking, they realize that their destructive family relationship cannot be overcome, and they eventually go their separate ways. Although the film makes no reference to the family's Korea-related background, many *zainichi* participated in making the film. Yang Sogil, who played the role of the father, was also a *zainichi* writer whose semi-autobiographical books have been adapted by Sai Yoichi as *Tsuki wa dotchi ni dete iru (All Under the Moon)*, 1993, and *Chi to hone (Blood and Bones)*, 2004).

There are three women characters in *Kazoku Cinema*, the protagonist

Motomi, her mother and her younger sister. The mother's appearance from the beginning is fairly different from any conventional image of a *zainichi* mother in Japanese cinema. By showing her with her lover, she was introduced as a profligate woman, and this image was reinforced by her constant fighting for attention. For example, in the scene of the family filming in Motomi's apartment, she changes her dress several times and asks the directors for suggestions. In the story, 20 years previously she had left home with Motomi and her youngest son for a married man because she could not stand her husband's endless gambling and violent behavior. Her impulsiveness is illustrated in a scene where she pours gasoline over her lover and uses a lighter to threaten him for not staying at her place. As a mother, her twisted relationship with the father traumatizes all three children and becomes the source of their suffering. At the same time, however, she is also a victim of the father thus revealing the patriarchal power within the family.

Motomi's younger sister was the only child who remained with the father when the mother left the family. On one hand, being ignored and abandoned induces her rebellious act of dropping out of high school and becoming a pornographic actress; on the other hand, it results in her indifferent attitude towards her family members during the film.

Similar to her sister the protagonist, Motomi, is also suffering from the trauma caused by this dysfunctional family. The childhood memories of constant conflicts inside the family affects her greatly and makes her anxious about their reunion after 20 years apart. Finding it difficult to deal with family members, later in the story she even turns for comfort to an old artist who has a fetish for women's behinds.

The dysfunctional family portrayed in *Kazoku Cinema* is a constant theme in Yû Miri's early writings. Although problematic family relationships are not exclusively a *zainichi* issue, it provides an example of the status of a *zainichi* family and the dilemma *zainichi* women face. Yû's mother worked as a bar hostess while her father was a compulsive gambler who physically abused his wife and children. When the social situation is taken into consideration, men in Japanese society are expected to be the breadwinner and have the highest authority inside the family. At the same time, living as an ethnic minority, the *zainichi* are often alienated and discriminated against. The father figure, in particular, is likely to act out the unfair treatment he has

experienced inside his family, where he is dominant. By contrast, women have to face not only ethnic and gender discrimination in society but also patriarchal oppression from inside the family. The mother's, sister's and protagonist's obedient acceptance eventually leads to an outburst of rebellion; the mother escapes and finds happiness in an immoral relationship, and the children show no respect for their father when he tries to reunite the whole family.

Inochi (2002) and *Zainichi* Women's Self-Recognition

Kazoku Cinema can be seen as a transnational attempt to deal with *zainichi* subject matter through a Korea-Japan co-production, but commercially it did not receive the same level of acknowledgement as the original novella. Another film adaptation of Yû Miri's renowned memoir, *Inochi*, directed by Shinohara Tetsuo with a Japanese crew, was a success. It won both the Best Actress and Best Film awards at the Asia-Specific Festival in 2002; it was also nominated in several categories at the prestigious Japanese Academy Awards the following year. The story records Yû Miri's experience when giving birth to the baby of her married lover while supporting her ex-lover, Higashi, in his struggles with cancer. In the process of her welcoming a new-born baby and witnessing Higashi's death, she discovers a new form of family and gains courage and self-recognition.

As mentioned earlier, Yû Miri has little attachment to either Korea or Japan, and her position in between two cultures results in the idea of "nowhere to belong to" a central theme in her writings (Weickgenannt, 2002). At the time *Inochi* was created, we can observe that her focus shifts from a collapsing traditional family relationship to a person's search for belonging, especially in relation to those with a similar background. Therefore, her semi-autobiographical, non-fiction story provides us with good material with which to analyze *zainichi* women's struggles with identity and attempts to find their position in society, shown from the viewpoints of two female characters with respect to family and their efforts to merge into society.

Representing first and second generation *zainichi*, Yû's mother has very different thoughts from Yû regarding family relationships. In the scene when Yû tells her mother that she is pregnant by a married man, her mother first bursts out laughing. After being told that the father is a married man, she asks

Yû if he has any children. Learning that he has no children, she says: “Then no problem. A husband and wife are strangers without a child... Your unborn child is his descendant with his face and personality. Go and have the baby. It will bring him back eventually.” Later her mother explains to Yû’s sister why she laughed when she learned that Yû was pregnant:

She should have the baby, she won’t die so simply, not after having a baby... When she (Yû Miri) was at her 14, 15, I wondered when she would commit suicide. And now at last I’m free... Even I thought about killing her and dying with her, but I couldn’t. You can’t die when you have kids. Women won’t die.

According to Yû’s mother, women gain their sense of belonging and self-recognition from motherhood. A blood relationship not only links men and women together, it also gives women a reason to continue living. Therefore, she believes that it does not matter whether Yû’s lover is married or not, as the child will win him back. Her thoughts correspond with the expectation and both the social and gender responsibilities imposed on a woman as a mother and as a wife by family and society.

The protagonist, on the other hand, chose a different path. In *Inochi*, such belonging does not lie in forming a traditional stable family with her child’s biological father and becoming a good mother and wise wife. Instead she insists on giving birth and taking care of her child on her own and forming a family-like relationship with her fatally ill ex-lover Higashi. There is no blood relationship between Higashi and the baby, but the unborn baby becomes a reason for him to continue fighting against his cancer. It is difficult to conclude that the relationship between Yû Miri and Higashi is simply love between a couple or affection between family members, and yet it brings comfort to them both. We can say that there is a new form of family presented in the film, one that transcends a blood-linked relationship or marital status. Compared with the destructive and poisonous family relationship between the real family members in *Kazoku Cinema*, the relationship shown in *Inochi* seems more like a family to Yû Miri. The film attempts to show that it is not kinship or physical union but life itself that strongly binds people together, and so the protagonist says, “I would love to live with Higashi and my son and form a family.”

Bearing in mind the different ideologies, it is ironic to see that the blood-bond family that Yû Miri's mother believes in, falls apart in *Kazoku Cinema*. Whereas in *Inochi*, the film ends with a scene full of hope, the protagonist walks into the sunset with her son with a smile on her face, telling the audience that she will carry on living as a single mother even when her soulmate Higashi has already passed away.

The uncertainty as regards her identity as *zainichi* is reflected in their names. Aoki states it is easier for the dominant group to control subordinate groups if the latter take names from the former's language (2012: 2). For that reason, many *zainichi* choose to use a Japanese name, or a name that is pronounceable in Japanese, to hide their ethnicity. There is no doubt that it is challenging to live as an ethnic minority, and there is no expectation for Yû Miri. She has experienced bullying as a child, a racist backlash, and even bomb threats at her work. Yû Miri mentions in her novel that her name "Miri" was given by her grandfather, and that it is pronounced the same in both Korean and Japanese. The name might have been given in the hope that she would survive well in Japanese society. In *Inochi*, Yû's mother shows similar concern when thinking about the name and nationality of the unborn baby:

If it's a girl, "Nino" is a good name, it means 'February field', and also means the two countries of Japan and Korea... I think the baby should take Japanese citizenship... they said the child can get Japanese nationality with the father's recognition before birth, and you can choose your surname too.

Eventually, Yû did not choose a Japanese surname for her son and used the same Korean surname. Most *zainichi* Koreans in Japan use their homeland's traditions as a reference when choosing names (Aoki, 2012: 13). Yû names her son Takehara based on the names of the chief priests at a shrine dedicated to early Korean settlers in Japan (Yû, 2017).

Conclusion

The *zainichi* in Yû Miri's work do not have strong opinions as regards colonial history and hardships, and this allows her characters to be more than stereotypes. However, as a member of an ethnic minority, she has also

suffered from bias, and her work can sometimes cause controversy, for example, *Kazoku Cinema* was attacked by the conservative press for the way in which it portrayed Japanese people. Her vast readership and popularity are closely related to the fact that she found a well-balanced way of placing *zainichi* in the wider context of social problems that are not *zainichi*-exclusive. In her search for her own sense of belonging, she reveals how *zainichi* women need to face the double dilemma of patriarchal power from inside the family and ethnic and gender oppression from society. But without limiting her characters to victims of ethnic discrimination, she always offers a silver lining whereby women escape from patriarchal power and achieve self-recognition. In *Kazoku Cinema*, the mother runs away from her despotic husband, and the ending implies that the protagonist no longer needs to be part of a useless attempt to restore family relationships. In *Inochi*, the protagonist walks into a future full of hope without being restricted by traditional family bonds. Even as a disadvantaged minority, *zainichi* women can survive in patriarchal world. In this sense, Yû's works correspond to feminist ideologies that challenge the authority of the patriarchy by illustrating the inevitable collapse of the traditional family. When we look at recent representations of *zainichi* women in Japanese cinema, we can see that they have emerged from an exotic landscape, and can be seen individuals living and struggling inside Japanese society. The images of *zainichi* women in Yû Miri's stories transcend the boundary between two cultures and redefine the concept of national identity. The film adaptations of her works in particular, offer more chances for her subtle *zainichi* narratives to be seen and accepted by the public, and can be considered a breakthrough in promoting the diversity of *zainichi* women in Japanese cinema.

Biographical Note

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Yasujiro and Naruse Mikio's films set in postwar Japan. Her current research interests include the study of Asian female filmmakers, gender representations in both Japanese and Chinese cinema, and the Chinese film industry.

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Section VI

Japan in South Asia

Visions of Trans-Asian Orientalism: Indo-Japanese Cinematic Plagiarism, Misrepresentations, and Voluntary Blindness

Rea Amit

Abstract

This paper explores several interactions between the cinemas of Japan and India. First, I examine Indian films that project an image of Japan, such as *Love in Tokyo* (dir. Chakravorty, 1966) and *Japanil Kalyanaraman* ([Kalyanaraman in Japan], dir. Muthuraman, 1985). I then move on to discuss Indian films that are loosely based on Japanese films such as *Koshish* ([Effort], dir. Gulzar, 1972), which is a remake of *Na mo naku mazushiku utsukushiku* ([Happiness of Us Alone], dir. Matsuyama, 1961), and *Inkaar* ([Refusal], dir. Sippy, 1978), a remake of *Tengoku to jigoku* ([High and Low], dir. Kurosawa, 1963). The paper concludes by using the reception of Indian films in Japan to contextualise the reproduction of Japan's image in Indian cinema. Despite the existence of such transnational channels, the paper argues that Indo-Japanese cinematic relations are in fact indicative of the pervading state of localism, as well as national and cultural borders.

Key words: Japanese cinema, Indian Cinema, Regional cinemas, Transnational cinemas, Remakes Studies

Voluntary Blindness

Interest in Indian cinema grew exponentially in Japan in the mid-1990s, mainly for Tamil-language films from South India. The most notable film in this regard was *Muthu* (dir. Ravikumar, 1995), and the trend continues to this day with other screenings of films such as *Baahubali: The Beginning* (dir. Rajamouli, 2015). However, rather than displaying an openness to global

media flows, the cinematic exchanges between India and Japan showcase a creative imagining of a ‘cultural other’ that the two countries project inwards, catering to a specific mode of consumption that is unique to local viewership. I elaborate on this dynamic by drawing attention to aspects of the consumption and production of images that project communal forms of appropriation that are akin to outdated orientalist discourses. Writing about similarities between Indian and Japanese cultures, film scholar Yomota Inuhiko suggests that blindness might be conceived differently in these two countries than elsewhere, particularly in the West. Whereas Western cultures often regard blindness as an extreme form of punishment or tragedy, the Indian Sanskrit epic *Mahābhārata* depicts a case of a woman who intentionally chooses to impair her vision. Similar cases are also visible in Japanese culture, especially in cinema. Yomota calls this the ‘voluntary blindness’ motif (Yomoto 2009: 111-118).

It is debatable just how much explanatory power such a ‘motif’ or theme can have with regard to any country, let alone those boasting rich and varied cultures like India’s and Japan’s. This is because different scholars have used the same ‘motif’ to describe cultural products in other parts of the world, in the West as in the East. For example, French art historian Jean-Jacques Lebel has used the term (albeit in passing) to denote the evolution in the relationships between different art forms—‘traditional’, on the one hand, and newer kinds, on the other—as well as those between communication and perception (Lebel 1968: 89-90). The problem is thus not that the concept lacks explanatory potential, but rather that it is too abstract and general for the purpose of aptly and specifically converging on a single phenomenon without analysts first narrowing its range of possible meanings.

Acknowledging these difficulties with Yomota’s term, however, I do see value in applying it in this context, albeit in a different form. Instead of the original sense in which Yomota used the term, in this article I apply the concept of ‘voluntary blindness’ to delineate the transnational cinematic exchanges between India and Japan. I argue that rather than operating as a narrative principle, the concept can actually illustrate the larger Indian and Japanese propensity of choosing to see certain aspects in the other country while intentionally ignoring others. That is to say, unlike fictional characters in films who voluntarily choose to give up their ability to see, I argue that

it is film culture as such in both of these countries that intentionally avoids recognizing its counterpart on its own terms.

In order to contrast to this tendency in the Japanese and Indian film worlds, as it plays out with respect to the other country, it is useful to first show how a more straightforward case of ‘voluntarily blindness’ works vis-à-vis a Western counterpart. Matsumoto Toshio’s 1969 film *Bara no sōretsu* ([*Funeral Parade of Roses*]) is particularly telling in this context, as it is a modern and specifically Japanese adaptation of the famous Greek tragedy *Oedipus Rex*. More than the fact that the film contains a scene where the main protagonist, as in the original play, blinds himself, what is significant is that in another scene, the film refers directly to a recent cinematic adaption of the film—namely, Pier Paolo Pasolini’s 1967 *Edipo re* ([*Oedipus Rex*]). The film is not a remake of Pasolini’s adaptation, and Matsumoto sharpens the contrasts between his film and Pasolini’s by seemingly inverting the meaning of blindness as symbol in his version. He does so by having his protagonist be not so much blind as visually impaired, in the sense of being ignorant to his destiny, with the film itself acknowledging the recent Italian adaption by means of a visual reference (Phillips 2016: 38).

Remaking Japanese Films in India

Unlike the Japanese remake of the Western tragedy, remakes of Japanese films in India seem to turn a blind eye to the possibility of being seen as non-original works. For example, the 1971 film *Koshish* by the famous Indian director Gulzar is a clear remake of the Japanese *Na mo naku mazushiku utsukushiku* ([*Happiness of Us Alone*] dir. Matsuyama, 1961), but the credits do not mention the work it is based on. Both the original and the Indian remake are remarkable for their depiction of people with disabilities. Although the theme might be equally untreated in both the Japanese and Indian film industries, Matsuyama did continue to deal with the topic of disability in other films (Nakamura 2006: 79). Yet whereas the Japanese director received little critical attention for his 1961 film, scholars such as Atanu Mohapatra celebrated Gulzar’s version without acknowledging that it is based on a Japanese source (Mohapatra 2012: 126).

Although *Koshish* may be criticised as an unauthorised reproduction of

a Japanese cinematic source, Anjali Roy suggests an alternative conception of what plagiarism or cinematic ‘borrowing’ might mean in the Indian context. Rather than using the term *remake*, Roy puts forth the term *naql* to refer to the notion of ‘copy’ in popular Indian cinema. She argues that rather than working towards a ‘production of a faithful replica’, Indian filmmakers working under this conception aim at ‘a parodic imitation of the original through exaggerated play that produces laughter’ (Roy 2016: 230). Roy even acknowledges *Koshish*’s original Japanese source, but pays more attention to the director’s film *Parichay* ([Introduction], 1972), a remake of *Sound of the Music* (dir. Wise, 1965). Roy argues that one should see this production, as well as other Indian films that make free use of Western sources, as a ‘postcolonial transformation’ of a Hollywood production into a specifically Indian artifact (Roy 2016: 226).

The most obvious problem with this conception in the context of *Koshish* is that the source on which it is based on is not a Western production. Moreover, unlike *Parichay*, which may seem like a parody of an international blockbuster, both *Koshish* and *Happiness of Us Alone* are somber films that depict their protagonists’ harsh lives. While Bollywood does radically transform most of the foreign works that it remakes, mainly by incorporating addicting song and dance sequences, *Koshish* is unique in that it features neither songs nor dances. Yet, rather than singling out any generic or other element in the narrative, I argue that it is impossible to theorise Indian remakes of any Japanese productions along the lines of *naql* because Indian reproductions intentionally obscure the original sources. Even if local distributors do not circulate Hollywood films in the same way they do in other parts of the globe, broad knowledge about these films is assumed. Whereas some uneducated Indian viewers or those uninterested in international films might never have heard about any Hollywood productions, others (including diasporic communities who often commute between India and their adoptive countries) do know of them, a fact that local producers and filmmakers alike must take into consideration. In contrast, the Japanese film industry often caters to a local viewership; therefore, ‘borrowing’ from it could go unnoticed both domestically and globally. In other words, Indian filmmakers can turn a blind eye to fact that they are actually performing (no matter how creatively) an act of cinematic plagiarism.

Of course, non-Hollywood productions can become international as well. This is the case with works by globally acclaimed filmmakers, and the best known Japanese example is probably director Kurosawa Akira. This might legitimise *Inkaar*, the Indian remake of the Japanese director's 1966 film *Tengoku to Jigoku* as a possible *naql* reproduction. Moreover, Kurosawa himself based his work on an American novel, Ed McBain's *King's Ransom* (1959), thereby ostensibly diluting the film's nationality. Seen in this light, Raj N. Sippy's 1977 debut film *Inkaar*, which is based on Kurosawa's adaptation, might seem as a case of a 'postcolonial transformation', particularly given that by this time Japan had become the second largest economy in the world and that the film stars Japan's most internationally recognised actor at the time, Mifune Toshirō. Furthermore, Sippy does transform Kurosawa's somber film into a rather typical Bollywood production by adding song sequences that were absent in the 'original' Japanese cinematic adaptation. However, *Inkaar* does not simply showcase a creative 'borrowing'; rather, it domesticates Kurosawa's work contextually as well as stylistically.

The narrative conveyed by both of the films and by the novel is rather similar: a boy is kidnapped for ransom because he is mistaken to be a rich person's son, while he is actually the chauffeur's. While both films place much emphasis on ethics and the main protagonist's moral dilemma in the first half of the story, *Inkaar* eases the tension by depicting the kidnapper as an increasingly morally abject character. In Kurosawa's film, by contrast, it is not only that the bifurcation between 'good' and 'evil' becomes more opaque; what is more, as Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto points out, the binary opposition in the film exists formally as well as thematically, in terms of film style (Yoshimoto 2000: 370). This is an aspect of the original that *Inkaar* flatly denies. Tellingly, the title *Inkaar* actually means 'denial' or 'refusal', both of which are suggested by the film's plotline; yet these meanings signify a radical divergence from, or indeed a denial of or refusal to acknowledge, the original cinematic source.

Even when an Indian filmmaker does acknowledge a Japanese source as an influence, it might again reveal more Indian-ness than a meaningful exchange with another Asian nation. This is the case with another Hindi Kurosawa remake: namely, the transformation of *Shichinin no samurai* ([Seven Samurai], 1954) into *China Gate* (dir. Santoshi, 1998), which opens with an

acknowledgment that the production is a 'humble tribute' to the Japanese director. Santoshi's adaptation of the famed Japanese film into the Bollywood formula is nuanced and achieves more than simply relocating samurai from feudal Japan to a modern Indian setting. For example, Maidul Islam argues that the dialogue in the film bridges gaps between conflicting Indian religious communities, and that the film is also 'significant in representing the pan-Indian character of the Indian Army' (Islam 2007: 415-416). However, David Desser categorises the film as one that more than borrowing just a few elements from the original, or playfully reworking *Seven Samurai*, constitutes a 'direct remake'. Moreover, despite the inward looking aspects of the movie, Desser argues that the film is a clear acknowledgment of a 'transnationalised or 'globalised' image of the Japanese cinema, one that can serve as an introduction to popular Indian cinema for international audiences (Desser 2008: 33-34). Thus, like the remakes mentioned before, *China Gate*, too, signifies plagiaristic tendencies and the turning of a blind eye towards Japan as a meaningful source for binational Asian cinematic dialogue. Another example of an Indian film with an open eye for international viewership can help to illustrate this inclination.

A different case that sheds light on tensions between the local and the global in Indian cinema is Deepa Mehta's 1996 *Fire*. One scene in the film recalls the story of Karva Chauth, about a beautiful girl who pulls out needles that have been stuck into her husband's body, day after day. However, another girl pulls out the last two needles: those in his eyes that prevented him from seeing throughout that time. The husband then mistakes the girl pulling out the last two needles as the one he should be thankful to. In the film, an East Asian woman symbolises a man's unfaithfulness, not just to his wife, but also to Indian tradition. This is also the case with *China Gate*. While the film acknowledges Kurosawa in the opening sequence, the title actually refers to China, leaving viewers with a broken link to the film's true source of inspiration.

Rahul Gairola poses Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's question 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (Spivak 1994: 90) with regard to Mehta's film. Evoking Srinivas Aravamudan's notion of 'tropicopolitans' (Aravamudan 1999: 4), Gairola then suggests that the answer can be yes, given the film's resistance not just to Hindu traditions but also to the West (Gairola 2002: 319-322). With

regard to *China Gate*, however, as well as other Indian films that make free use of Japanese sources, the more interesting question to pose is whether the subaltern can see. The simple answer is, of course, yes, as this is not a matter of mere capability. Yet, on a different level, it is a question about a voluntary or willful disability, and about disregard for another Asian nation that the West has seen as subordinated to its values, similar to the way it has viewed India.

Japan as a Site and Setting for Indian Films

Indian cinema clearly sees Japan, but its inability to properly acknowledge Japan's existence on its own terms is visible in Indian films that are set, at least partially, in the East Asian nation. An example of this dynamic can be found, first and foremost, in the Bollywood production *Love in Tokyo* (dir. Chakravorty, 1966). Although filmed mostly in Japan, the film falls short of being a transnational phenomenon, and similarly to other Bollywood productions that were filmed in foreign locations, such as *An Evening in Paris*, *Around the World*, and *Night in London* (all three released in 1967), *Love in Tokyo*, too, showcases more nationalistic tendencies than transnational ones. Set against the background of the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, the film's narrative revolves around a trip to Japan by a wealthy Indian businessman (played by Joy Mukherjee) on a mission to bring back home to India a boy born to a Japanese mother and an Indian father who have both just passed away. The boy refuses to leave his current home country, so the man needs to convince him that India is a remarkable country, even better than Japan. The point of this demonstration, beyond the level of plot, is to affect the intended Indian viewer, to promote feelings of national pride.

This latent yet dominant patriotic feature of the film is visible also in other Indian productions that were filmed in Europe; but unlike those films, *Love in Tokyo* treats its setting as a peculiar site. The film seems to follow Hollywood films set in Japan, including *The House of Bamboo* (dir. Fuller, 1955), *The Teahouse of the August Moon* (dir. Mann, 1956), *Sayonara* (dir. Logan, 1957), and *The Barbarian and the Geisha* (dir. Huston, 1958), films that Yoko Ima-Izumi discusses as a second phase in the evolution of 'geisha films,' in which geisha find romantic love' (Ima-Izumi 2009: 87-90). Similar to these films, *Love in Tokyo*, too, ushers in the most stereotypical image of

the Japanese people, especially Japanese women, or what Russell Meeuf labels an ‘American story about the exotic Other’ (Meeuf 2013: 31-32). Yet, Meeuf does not simply level a critique, but rather argues that such films can also promote Japanese transnational interests in the world. In contrast, unlike global Hollywood, the local Bollywood production of *Love in Tokyo* catered to a specific audience, one that had little concern for Japanese pseudo-traditions or interactions with geisha, let alone Japan’s international interests. For example, misrepresentations are evident in the film when it comes to the name of the boy’s Japanese dead mother: she is referred to as ‘Nishiyoshi’, which is not a Japanese female’s name.

Moreover, *Love in Tokyo* offers only minimal meaningful interaction between Indian and local characters, although at least the main Indian female protagonist is said to be fluent in Japanese. Most of the dialogue in the film is in Hindi, between non-Japanese characters, and it takes place indoors, while on-location scenes seem to fall neatly into the category David Bordwell calls ‘flourishes’ (Bordwell 2008: 375-394). Bordwell uses this term to describe stylistic elements in prewar Japanese cinema that are not necessary for the plot but augment it playfully, satisfying a unique mode of appreciation for cinema at that time. In the same vein, Japan and the Japanese people appearing in *Love in Tokyo* are just an added spice into the masala of the melodramatic extravaganza that became the first in a trilogy of ‘love-in’ films, although none of the sequels even mentions Japan.

Not just narratively but also at a visual level the film projects stereotypical images of Japan. The film does celebrate Japan’s modernity, showcasing its fashionable department stores, bustling streets, entertainment facilities, and fast-paced urban landscapes. However, to a larger extent, the film shows premodern images of the country, such as Japanese gardens, antiquated architecture, and, even glimpses of geisha. In one scene, although the characters are supposed to be in Tokyo, they inexplicably appear at the famous Itsukushima Shrine, which is located far away from the Japanese capital, on an island off the shores of Hiroshima. The film does not mention the atomic bombing of the city, and it flattens the country by presenting Tokyo as a synonym for the entire Japanese archipelago.

The Indian film Industry returned to Hiroshima two years later with *Aman* (dir. Kumar, 1967), which was the second major Indian production that

was set mainly in Japan. The narrative of the film revolves around an Indian scientist who is determined to find a cure for radiation victims, and who then falls in love with a Hiroshima bombing survivor. The film's promoters advertised it as 'a love story of this atomic age' (Kaur 2015: 105), but the film's romantic aspects fall short of successfully tying an Indian man to a Japanese woman. The protagonist (played by Rajendra Kumar) dies after successfully finding a cure for radiation, leaving behind his Japanese love interest. An Indian actress (Saira Banu) plays the Japanese woman the Indian scientist falls in love with, not a local actress. The woman never speaks Japanese, and the explanation the film provides for her fluency in Hindi is her intensive language studies. However, unlike *Love in Tokyo*, Japan and Japanese women in *Aman* appear to be modern. The film also features a bold and honest (for a Bollywood production, at least) reference to Hiroshima's recent history. Yet, while the film's ominous background is atypical for any popular production, let alone a Bollywood musical, its overall treatment of Japan remains superficial. The film tours Japan for its target Indian audience, and while it mostly presents the country as a technologically advanced nation with fast trains, high rises, and flashy nightlife, it also portrays a more stereotypical image of premodern Japan with temples, pagodas, and a sequence in which the film's female protagonist wears a kimono.

Bollywood productions that center on Japan are scarce among all the films the industry releases. However, as Bollywood gradually became more global, and representations of Japan in Hindi-language films lost some of their early popularity, other local Indian industries continued to film in Asia, and in Japan specifically. First and foremost in this respect is the Tamil-language film industry known as Kollywood. For example, the production of the science-fiction Tamil film *Ulagam sutrum valiban* ([Globetrotting Youngster], dir. Ramachandran, 1973) uses several Asian locations, in what Joyojeet Pal argues is an effort to bolster 'separation from authentic Tamilness' (Pal 2009: 295). The film's climax takes place in Japan, and as Pal acknowledges in a later study with Preeti Mudliar, this movie, along with other Tamil-language films set in foreign countries, such as *Priya* (dir. Muthuraman, 1978), *Varuvan vadivelan* (dir. Shankar, 1978), and *Ninaitthale inikkum* ([Sweet Memories], dir. Balachander, 1979), promote an exotic or perhaps even orientalist image of the Far East as the 'orient' (Mudliar and Pal 2016: 237).

A similar dynamic can be found in another, later Tamil film set in Japan, *Japanil Kalyanaraman* ([Kalyanaraman in Japan], dir. Muthuraman, 1984), which also treats the contested issue of what Pal calls ‘Tamil-ness’ vis-à-vis Japanese Otherness. Some changes can be seen, however, in the evolution of Indian filmmakers’ use of Japan as a location for the local film industry. While the earliest Hindi-language films emphasised human subjects, particularly Japanese women, and also premodern features of Japanese culture, later films tend to focus more attention on Japan as an exotic location, emphasising Japan’s natural landscapes. This trend continues into the twenty-first century, with films such as *Theeya velai seiyyanum kumaru* ([You Have Got to Work Like Fire, Kumar!], dir. Sundar C., 2013) and *Jilla* ([District], dir. Neason, 2014). While the latter film does feature a song sequence with women wearing kimono, the overall image the film showcases is touristic, particularly given the location, Kyoto, where tourists, Japanese and foreign alike, often roam the city in premodern garb. Thus, the shift in attention in the Indian industry does signify a more globalised vision of Japan, perhaps due to a growing Indian middle class that can afford travelling to the country (Choudhury 2015: 1-24). However, the more direct the connections between the local and global have become among Indians and the Japanese, the more evident it is that the ‘blindness’ in the mediated relationships between the two countries is voluntary. This blindness is especially apparent on the Japanese side.

Indian Films in Japan

Interestingly, just as the more recent Indian interest in Japan stems from the southern Indian state Tamil Nadu, the Japanese interest in India, or at least in Indian cinema, centers on Tamil-language films. The earliest hint of this Japanese interest is Kinoshita Keisuke’s 1976 *Suri Ranka no ai to wakare* [Love and Separation in Sri Lanka], which, although not set in India itself, takes place in the largely Tamil-speaking country of Sri Lanka. A much more significant development in the history of Japan’s interest in South India in general, and in specifically Tamil-language films occurred in 1997, when the 1995 film *Muthu* (dir. Ravikumar) became a surprising hit in the country. I have argued elsewhere that, given its overwhelming successes in Japan, the film can rightfully be considered as Japanese, or at least as an important

chapter in Japan's film history (Amit 2017b: 48-55).

In a separate study, I have also elaborated on the appropriative process through which Japan received *Muthu* as the 'Dancing Maharaja', even though the film's narrative makes no mention of the premodern Indian monarchy (Amit 2017a: 636-659). I argued there that participatory screenings of Indian films, including *ōen jōei* (supporting screenings), *chiaringu jōei* (cheering screenings), *hassei gata jōei* (speaking-type screening), or *zekkyō jōei* (screaming screenings), in effect render the films themselves secondary to the Japanese conditions of watching them. Initially, the most common label for such screenings of Indian film was *masara jōei* or masala screening, based on a wrong impression about Indian audiences of musicals in India who do not in fact normally sing and dance during screenings; but it is still a common practice for film theaters in Japan to screen Indian productions in this way, and to encourage Japanese viewers to dance during screenings of Indian films (Amit 2017a: 645-646). This is true also in more recent screenings of the Tamil-language films *Baahubali: The Beginning* (dir. Rajamouli, 2015), which was released in Japan as *Bāfubari: Densetsu tanjō* in 2017, and the film's sequel *Baahubali 2: The Conclusion* (dir. Rajamouli, 2017), which was released in Japan as *Bāfubari: Ō no gaisen* in the same year.

Thus, although Japan may not be at fault for cinematic plagiarism or for misrepresenting India in films (at least not to the same extent that Indian films have been vis-à-vis Japanese movies), Japanese viewers have likewise been engaged in voluntary blindness. While this might seem a harsh critique, stemming from an unreasonable expectation for ordinary Japanese filmgoers to meet high moral standards, I do not intend to place ethical judgment against individuals. Rather, to the same degree that in India it has been the film industry that has continuously generated a local vision of Japan, one that producers envisioned as catering better to local consumers, it is the Japanese media that have propagated equally fictitious images of India for local media consumers. Moreover, my intention is not to suggest that producers in either Japan or India are racially or ethically motivated, or are actively exploiting false narratives about the other country, in parallel with what the West has done for decades. Rather, my point is that international flows—global ones in general and inter-Asian flows in particular—are altered when they meet local circumstances.

Conclusion

Unlike Western misconceptions about the East that fueled the creation of Orientalist works, which can largely be blamed on a lack of knowledge, the Indian and Japanese cases this article discusses are more recent, occurring at a time when more information was available. This is particularly true with regard to the Japanese appropriation of Indian cinema, as information in Japan has been more easily accessible since the advent of the internet. However, I argue that the idea of voluntary blindness applies equally to both parties. This is not because certain Indian filmmakers have knowingly engaged in cinematic plagiarism, but rather because local conditions often dictate how foreign content is consumed. While it is true that some media producers have more agency or responsibility in distributing visual content, the acceptance of visual ideas is a responsibility shared also with consumers who, as free agents, choose how to appropriate such visions on their own terms.

Seen in this light, voluntary blindness identifies not a questionable ethical state of affairs, but rather a grassroots, communal vision shared by consumers who are more interested in the signified image of an Asian Other than its actual signifier. That is, even if there is confusion or if the images do promote misconception, viewers consciously detach themselves from the source by which reproduction has been made possible, and actively manifest their own agency by interpreting the other country based on their own unique local sets of expectations, desires, and needs. Following this logic, one might pardon even misrepresentations of the East by the West, or indeed any unappropriated envisioning of a cultural Other. Yet, unlike such cases, or even the nationalistic call by early-twentieth-century jingoistic Japanese thinkers for a pan-Asia ideal that clearly assumed the nation state as the condition for cultural flows, the appropriation of Indian and Japanese images in Japan and India signifies a sub-national phenomenon, one that circumvents both national and transnational discourses for the sake of local ones.

Although I discuss separated trends within common national cultural borders, I emphasise how representations of Japan in Bollywood, arguably the Indian national cinema, are discontinuous with those that take place in Kollywood, a regional film culture. In Japan, although the scope of the article does not permit further elaboration, participatory screenings are by

nature a local phenomenon, limited to the number of participants in any given screening. While the local gets short shrift in media discourses, and while more attention is given to national or, more recently, transnational or global features, the idea of voluntary blindness suggests ways of understanding the agency and potency of the local, despite its inherent visual impairment.

Biographical Note

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Idealising India through the Tokyo Trials: Transnational Co-Production and Nationalist Narratives

Syada Dastagir

Abstract

Justice Radhabinod Pal from British India was the only judge during the *IMTFE* (or Tokyo Trials) who disagreed with the convictions of the Japanese defendants. Pal has become a key figure in India-Japan relations since the rapid development of economic, political and even informal military ties since the 1990s until the present day, allowing the creation of a myth of historical ties between the two countries. He has also been used by nationalist discourse in both Japan and India which respectively seek to promote revisionist histories. This has been previously emulated in the 1998 Indian-Japanese movie *Puraido: Unmei no Toki (Pride: The Fateful Moment)*, which had Radhabinod Pal and INA (Indian National Army) Leader Subhas Chandre Bose as central characters. This paper seeks to examine the 2016 Dutch-Japanese-Canadian Co-production *Tokyo Trial*, which again uses Pal as a moral focal point of the narrative, and to what extent these nationalist narratives continue to be present within a much more international co-production.

Key words: Radhabinod Pal, Tokyo Trial, Transnationalism

Introduction

This paper aims to identify how transnationalism may ironically encourage domestic narratives of nationalism. This will be illustrated using the case study of how representations of the Tokyo Trials have provided cultural support for Japan and India's strategic partnerships as well as nationalist rhetoric within each respective country. Mette Hjort introduces the

subject of transnationalism by critiquing the idea that it acts as a challenge to the rigid boundaries, borders and ideologies of nation-states, suggesting that we should in fact be wary of some of its forms (2009: 13). Hjort describes affinitive transnationalism in cinema as finding similarity or common ground across countries or even entire regions (as in the case of the Nordic TV and Film Fund) (2009: 21). As Hjort points out, these similarities may not necessarily be rooted in cultural practices, but could act as an identification of pertinent overseas issues which may also manifest themselves in a domestic context. This will be discussed in relation to *Tokyo Trial* – a 2016 miniseries directed by Pieter Verhoeff and Rob King. A key point of interest is how the historical and transnational figure of Indian judge Radhabinod Pal has been represented, and how this representation may have been shaped by the contemporary political relationship between Indian and Japanese administrations, as well as domestic nationalist rhetoric in each respective country.

The *International Military Tribunal For The Far East (IMTFE)*, or the Tokyo Trials, were tribunals spearheaded by the Allied powers. They were presided over by judges from eleven countries including Allied powers and former colonies of Japan (Australia, Canada, China, France, Soviet Union, United Kingdom, British India, Philippines, United States, New Zealand). In an attempt to emulate the Nuremberg Trials after World War II, the goal of the Tokyo Trials was to prosecute high ranking government and military officials for their roles in Japan's military aggression. Justices Radhabinod Pal from British India and Delfin Jaranilla from the Philippines were added to the tribunal after some trial proceedings had already elapsed. Pal was the sole dissenting judge who argued that the very premise of the trial itself was hypocritical, with no basis in international law as it stood at the time and that none of the accused should be prosecuted (Varadarajan 2015: 795). Pal's judgement has been capitalised upon by history revisionists within Japan to promote a wartime imperialist ideology of Pan-Asianism (Takeshi 2011: 1).

Japanese military expansionism before and during World War II was bolstered through a distinct form of Pan-Asian ideology known as the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (*Dai Tōa Kyōeiken*). The ideas of kinship and racial solidarity were, however, largely superficial, a ruse to justify colonialism and military aggression. Ultimately transnationalist rhetoric was

deliberately utilised to bolster nationalist motives and create a hierarchical construction whereby the Japanese “Self” was deemed superior to their “Other” Asian neighbours. As South Asia was never formally a part of the “Greater East-Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” (*Dai Tōa Kyoieikin*), a new form of Pan-Asianism is developing between Japan and India, one that again aspires to this toxic form of affinitive transnationalism to further nationalist rhetoric. Whilst Pal is recognised as being a key figure in this conceptualisation, the focus on his use for nationalist propaganda has largely been examined in a Japanese context. Through this paper I also aim to shed light on how affinitive transnationalism between Japan and India has been exploited to also promote nationalism in India and Indian media.

India and Japan’s political relationship since the 1990s until the present day has been strengthening and growing, including an informal military and naval alliance (Jaishankar 2018: 44). As these international ties have been developing, right-wing nationalist sentiment in both Japan and India are actively promoted by current political leaders. Narendra Modi, the incumbent and newly re-elected Prime Minister of India, is a member of the right-wing Hindu nationalist party *BJP* (*Bharatiya Janata Party*), champions of the *Hindutva* (literally “Hinduness”) movement which seeks to define India as a Hindu nation at the exclusion of religious minorities, secularists, and low-caste Hindus (Basu 2019: 3). In the case of Shinzō Abe, Japanese nationalism has come in the form of deliberately stoking international tensions by promoting revisionist and apologist rhetoric regarding Japan’s former military aggression and colonisation of Asia (Kingston 2019: 13). Both of these countries have been capitalising on a form of affinitive transnationalism, one that uses the idea of historical links and lineages between the two countries to make their current special relationship appear as a natural result of these cultural connections.

The legend of Pal in Japanese collective memory

Radhabinod Pal has become a key figure in the affinitive transnationalism formed by Japan and India. Both Yasukuni and Kyōto Ryōzen Gokoku Shrines feature identical memorials dedicated to the memory of Radhabinod Pal. They feature a photo of the judge alongside one of his quotes: “When

time shall have softened passion and prejudice, when reason shall have striped the mask from misrepresentation, then justice, holding evenly her scales, will require much of past censure and praise to change places” (Pal 1948: 1235). The first one built was at Kyōto Ryōzen Gokoku Shrine in 1997 shortly after Pal’s death and the second at Yasukuni in 2005. Within this time period, diplomatic and economic ties between Japan and India were expanding and developing at an unprecedented rate. The name of Pal has been used more and more often by diplomats and politicians to make these recent developments appear as a natural result of kinship and good faith between the two nations (Mukherjee, 2018: 845). Pal’s judgement is used to forge an international link that has seemingly existed for decades when it is, in fact, a recent development. As the two countries took different economic paths post World War II, as well as India’s use of nuclear weapons, diplomatic ties between the two countries were at times non-existent or politically opposed (Yamada, 2008: 148). It is therefore important to establish how Pal has been constructed within Japanese collective memory regarding World War II and used to prop up revisionist history. Abe has stoked international tensions through statements, publicly visiting the controversial Yasukuni shrine, and staging a public meeting with Pal’s son during a state visit to India in 2007 (Mukherjee, 2018: 845).

Nakajima Takeshi has written extensively on how the words and quotes of Justice Pal have been frequently taken out of context and capitalised on by Japanese history revisionists (2011: 16). At the time of Japan’s imperialism, military aggression was justified through the ideology of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere (*Dai Tōa Kyoieikin*) (Oguma 2002: 264). This was the idea that Asians, who had a shared heritage and genealogy, should form a united front against Western imperialism (but with the culturally superior Japan as leader). The next section will further discuss how Pal’s words, and other South Asian figures from World War II as well as a particular vision of transnationalism in the form of Pan-Asianism (which supposedly promotes Asian solidarity due to a shared cultural heritage) have been represented in popular culture to promote an intersection of right-wing political agendas from both Japan and India.

Pal in Japanese media

Japan and India's leaders, since the start of the special strategic new partnership, have been using the memory of Pal to create a mythology of shared historical and cultural ties between the two countries. Whilst Pal has been honoured for decades, his name has seen increased prominence in recent years. Even summaries of bilateral relations between Japan and India on each countries' respective embassy websites use Pal as an example of the strong connection between the two countries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan 2019; Embassy of India Tokyo, Japan 2019). After the re-election of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP political party in 2019, Modi addressed Indian diaspora in Japan and again invoked the name of Justice Pal (The Hindu 2019). The name of Pal, though prevalent in Japan since World War II, has been undoubtedly capitalised upon since the strengthening of political ties between Japan and India. Justice Radhabinod Pal has also made frequent appearances in Japanese literature and popular culture over the last few decades in Japan (Takeshi 2011: 3-4).

Right wing *mangaka* (manga artist) Kobayashi Yoshinori, who often pushed a nationalist agenda through his works, featured Pal in *Sensō Ron* (*On War*, 1998) and *Paru Shinron* (*The True Arguments of Pal*, 2008). In these, views and facts are presented from the perspective of the author who is also drawn in as a main protagonist. Pal is depicted as a heroic figure, vehemently against not only the judgement of Tokyo, but also strongly in favour of Japan's Pan-Asian ideology. A year after the first monument to Pal was built at Kyōto Ryōzen Gokoku Shrine, director Shunya Itō released the movie *Puraido: Unmei no Toki* (*Pride: The Fateful Moment*) (1998) which features not only the character of Radhabinod Pal but also Subhas Chandre Bose, leader of the INA (Indian National Army) or *Azad Hindh Fauj*. The INA was an organisation of South Asians who allied themselves with the Axis powers (especially Japan) in their struggle against British colonialism. The INA and its members continue to be pushed as a powerful example of Japanese Pan-Asianism. Scenes of the Tokyo Trials in *Puraido* are intercut with scenes of independence celebrations in India and patriotic speeches made by Subhas Chandre Bose to this army. Missing from this movie, are the South Asian prisoners of war and civilians targeted by Japanese military campaigns

in South East and South Asia. The production committee of *Puraido* was spearheaded by former head of the Japan-India Goodwill Association Kase Hideaki, a conservative figure in Japanese politics who served as advisor to prime ministers Takeo Fukuda and Yasuhiro Nakasone (Nuckolls 2006: 818). In a distorted form of affinitive transnationalism, *Puraido* finds common ground between Japan and India through resistance against Western occupiers and nationalist iconography. The nationalist rhetoric of both India and Japan respectively fuel each other whilst also promoting commonality and ideological kinship between the two countries. Conservative Indians who support the BJP party were also involved in the production of, and starred in this movie. Pal and Indian National Army leader Subhas Chandre Bose are played by Suresh Oberoi and Anupam Kher respectively. Both of these actors are well-established in Bollywood and have also been vocal supporters of the BJP party. Suresh Oberoi's son Vivek Oberoi (also a Bollywood actor) played Narendra Modi in his 2019 biopic *PM Narendra Modi* (Kumar 2019), released in the midst of a general election and international tensions with Pakistan. BJP propaganda has become rife within Bollywood, whilst this usually involves anti-minority rhetoric, a consistent thread is also sustained negative portrayals of the opposition the Congress party (Ayyub 2019).

Mahatma Gandhi, more than Pal or any INA figure, is one of the most known and recognised people of Indian origin across the world, including Japan. Whilst there have been legitimate concerns raised regarding Gandhi's anti-blackness etc., the *Hindutva* movement views itself as being ideologically opposed to Gandhi (and the Congress party to which he belonged), particularly Gandhi's messages of inter-faith unity and non-violence - Gandhi himself was assassinated by a member of the volunteer organisation affiliated with the BJP, the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS). Anupam Kher, the pro-BJP actor who portrayed Subhas Chandre Bose in *Puraido*, posted a screenshot of himself in his role from the 1998 film on the occasion of Bengali New Year on his Facebook page in 2018 (Kher 2018). The significance of Kher posting this memory lies in a tradition of right-wing nationalists falsely claiming Indian freedom fighters as champions of the *Hindutva* movement (Sinha 2017: 4168). 2019, again the year of the general election, saw a flurry of pro-BJP movies released from Bollywood, Anupam Kher starred in *The Accidental Prime Minister* (Gutte). Based on Congress

Party's Manmohan Singh and his tenure as Prime Minister between 2004 and 2014, this was a film highly critical of the Congress Party and in particular their candidate for Prime Minister, Rahul Gandhi.

Kobayashi Yoshinori's manga also leans on *Hindutva's* anti-Congress discourse to bolster the idea of Japanese nationalism and the right of Japan to be a military power. In Yoshinori's manga, *Paru Shinron* (2008) Gandhi is depicted as an almost demonic figure whose message of non-violence was imposed on the Japanese by the evil American occupiers. In one particularly harrowing image, Indians are walking out of the enlarged and ominous-looking head of Mahatma Gandhi whereupon they are met with British soldiers beating and killing them. The following panel is an image of shackled Japanese people smiling with outstretched arms at their American oppressors. The accompanying text denounces Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence saying it turns people into slaves, and that Gandhism was imposed on to the Japanese people in the form of Article 9. It is no secret that figures of the INA have been co-opted by right wing movements such as the BJP and their sister volunteer organisation, the hard-line group RSS to promote nationalist discourse on a domestic level (Sinha 2017: 4168; Puniyani 2019). This is often done by comparing Gandhi's approach to the oppressors with what they view as the INA's more "proactive" approach. Similarly, the second volume of *Paru Shinron* uses the INA to denounce the "Gandhism" ideology behind article 9 (a stipulation that was written into Japan's constitution when it was occupied by America). He claims that whilst leader of the INA Subhas Chandre Bose and Gandhi had similar motives, Gandhi was more radical for allowing activists to go up against their oppressors without any weapons. Pal himself was a centre-right Indian nationalist who supported the INA's struggle for Pan-Asianism with the Japanese Imperial Army (Nakazato 2016: 138), and this connection or lineage is graphically documented in *Paru Shinron* and *Puraido*.

Nuckolls (2006) states that India acts as a symbol of an Asian country which managed to gain its independence as a result of Japan's war effort and ideology of Pan-Asianism. Disregarding nations which were invaded and colonised by the Japanese military (as well as encounters of the Japanese Imperial Army with the South Asian subcontinent), India is presented through Radhabinod Pal and Subhas Chandre Bose. It is important to note that Pal is

not the only figure used to skew relations between Japan and British India during World War II. The INA are also used to bolster the idea that Japan's military aggression throughout Asia was somehow justified by a desire to liberate Asia from Western imperialism. Flawed as this ideology may be, largely due to its erasure of Japan's military aggression in South Asia and against South Asians, it unfortunately continues to define Japan and India's relationship today. Furthermore, a film such as *Puraido*, which predates the current strong political alliance between Japan and India (but was being made when diplomatic ties were starting to strengthen and gain momentum), asserts the special role of India by specifically marking it as a separate entity to Japan's "Other" Asia.

Radhabinod Pal is remembered and portrayed as being definitively Indian. Indeed during the time of the trials he was a colonial subject of British India, a monolith used to label a large portion of the South Asian subcontinent. After partition in 1947 and the War of Bengal in 1971, however, what was formerly recognised as British India subsequently formed three different postcolonial nations: India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Pal himself came from East Bengal located in present-day Bangladesh. This is not, however, particular or unique in the case of Pal. The Indian National Army was comprised of members from across British India and yet the association between Japan and India through this movement is solely accredited to what is recognised as India in the present day.

Defining Pal as Indian can be understood by his nationalist leanings and his own identification with postcolonial India. However, to homogenise the entire struggle of British colonial subjects in South Asia as Indians is not only problematic but factually inaccurate. This is a conscious decision, however, which deliberately excludes a large number of freedom fighters simply because their postcolonial nation is either Pakistan or Bangladesh. India, and India alone, can be the space through which Japanese ideology of Pan-Asianism may be represented as having had fruitful results. As with Japan, this nationalism intersects and intertwines with an internationalist discourse and agenda between the two countries. This agenda strategically highlights the continuing power balance and hierarchies that continue to exist between postcolonial nations; particularly in the realm of international law, war and empire.

The series *Tokyo Trial*, however, comes within a much more different production context as well as medium. Released almost 20 years after the film *Puraido*, a television miniseries (self-contained series which runs for only one season) *Tokyo Trial* was co-produced between Japanese public broadcaster *NHK*, Dutch *FATT* productions and Canadian *Don Carmody Television*. Originally broadcast in Japan on *NHK*, the series then became available to a global audience through streaming service *Netflix*. It is evident, therefore, that *Tokyo Trial* was definitely made for an international as well as Japanese audience. This means the overtly nationalist agenda prevalent throughout *Puraido* must be diluted to a certain degree. Unlike *Puraido*, this story is co-directed by Dutch Pieter Verhoeff and American Rob W. King, and so whilst the propagation of Japanese revisionist history may not be so flagrant within *Tokyo Trial*, where it does exist its arguments are being seemingly made by non-Japanese directors. Previous incarnations and constructions of Pal are reused, but in a much more subdued and nuanced way in order to subtly argue that Japanese imperialism had positive intentions and was right to promote an ideology of Pan-Asianism which fought against Western dominance.

Irrfan Khan's Pal in *Tokyo Trial*

In behind the scenes clips of the *Tokyo Trial* miniseries, director Pieter Verhoeff and producer Hans De Weers state that they were aware of the sensitivity of the series' subject matter and that *NHK* wished to recreate the Tokyo Trials with accuracy (De Weers & Verhoeff 2017 cited in DCTV 2017). Through *Netflix*, this series is available to a global audience however it was first aired on Japanese Public Network *NHK*. As will be discussed, whilst Pal is one of the main characters in this series, he is not the protagonist. Instead the story of the Tokyo Trials is told from the point of view of the Dutch Judge Bert Röling. He had also expressed doubts about the sentencing convention during the Tokyo Trials, and whilst his thoughts were noted, he ultimately voted with the rest of the judges in favour of the ruling. It can be argued that Röling is supposed to signify neutrality and a positioning in the middle of the spectrum of Judges' opinions in the Tokyo Trials. This puts him in between the rest of the judges on one side, who (as we will discuss) are shown to be

driven by a sense of vengeance rather than justice, and Pal is on the other side, alone in his dissent at the very premise of the trials itself.

Whilst discussing the construction of Pal as an Indian figure in this series, it is important to note what “Indianness” is being constructed. As already mentioned, Pal was from East Bengal and in behind the scenes interview, actor Irrfan Khan states that he had initial concerns whether or not to reproduce the Bengal accent for his role. He was told by the directors and producers however, that international audiences would supposedly have too much trouble understanding this type of accent and that he should instead do his own, standardised Indian accent (Khan 2017 cited in DCTV 2017). Despite the executive producer David Cormican’s claims that they were determined to have actors who were from the countries they were supposed to represent (Cormican 2017 cited in DCTV 2017), through the case study of Pal it is clear to see that any heterogeneity or diversion from pre-established assumptions about race and ethnicity are suppressed in favour of producing a homogenised and sanitised image of “Indianness”. Whilst Khan’s portrayal of Pal may not be recognisable as being from East Bengal, for Japanese audiences he is certainly identifiable as the judge honoured at two Japanese shrines

Pal’s character is not introduced until the second episode; in his first scenes he is shown in-trial, these scenes of the tribunal are mixed with archive footage from the time and so the ‘staged’ shots of the trial are in black and white. When we first see Irrfan Khan’s Pal therefore, he is in black and white, prompting a connection with the static, black and white image of Pal on his memorial at both Yasukuni and Kyōto Ryōzen Gokoku Shrines. Immediately for Japanese audiences, the Pal represented by Irrfan Khan is recognisable as the Pal honoured at these shrines and becomes associated with the controversies surrounding them. Similarly, Yoshinori’s manga *Paru Shinron*, opens with the same quote engraved on Pal’s memorials which have been used to convey that the Tokyo Trials were unjust. The construction of Radhabinod Pal in the manga and miniseries provide a strong connection with the revisionist history to which some viewers have already been exposed.

Shortly after the testimony the scene changes back to colour as the judges are now in their chamber and discussing the day’s proceedings. This is one of many scenes in Pal’s introductory episode which clearly mark out Pal’s

positioning as an Indian man within a Western-centric racial hierarchy. After initial discussions about the technicality of what charges should be brought against Japanese officials, Pal raises a motion to dismiss crimes of aggression on the basis that such a law did not exist at that time. His objections to the very premise of the trial itself become increasingly clear, much to the outrage of the other judges. This ultimately culminates in a British judge and former RAF pilot, William Patrick, telling Pal that he should return to Calcutta. Pal responds that he has not come from a country struggling for its independence only to be told to go back home. The fact that his opinion is met with a demand for him to return is an attempt to expose the hypocritical views of Western imperialist nations alongside Pal's status as an ongoing colonial subject or subaltern becomes the focal point of his character. He immediately becomes the lone wolf or the rebel who goes vehemently against the grain and the other judges.

Immediately Pal becomes a rebellious figure to the audience, but in a way which does not require him to necessarily act rebelliously. Among the explosions and emotional appeals from the other judges, Pal's demeanour is contrastingly calm. Pal is painted as potentially the only objective figure in the room, with the exception of Röling who is shown to be plagued with doubt about the trials. In his initial (sole) objections to the charge of crimes of aggression, the most vocal and aggressive opponent of Pal's views is the British judge who told him to return to Calcutta. When Röling agrees with Pal by presenting his peers with a paper on why the crimes of aggression charges are legally baseless, the immediate reaction of Patrick is to assume that Röling has been swayed or pressured by Pal. The power and continuing colonial legacy of Western powers is demonstrated when, in an attempt to have the chief justice mediator removed from the proceedings, they threaten to resign from the trial and cause a scandal. When this is discussed by the British Prime Minister and his advisors at 10 Downing Street, the two dissenters are referred to as 'the Indian' and 'Justice Röling'. The latter is recognised as a professional, one of their peers, whereas the former is seen as nothing more or less than his race and ethnicity. This deliberate use of language at once emphasises to the audience the colonial mindset within the judges who were condemning Japanese colonialism.

To what extent is this series a commentary on the dominance of

certain nations (particularly America) over the application of international law? The hypocrisy of these nations in the case of the Tokyo Trials is made abundantly clear and whilst these are all valid points to be made, they appear conveniently touted by Pal. Whilst Pal has been shown to denounce the Japanese war crimes, his character ultimately continues to perpetuate arguments in defence of Japan's aggression. Further, his arguments support Japan's Pan-Asian ideology which superficially argued for a collective Asian front to be formed against the threat of Western imperialism. Scenes such as these, which are littered throughout the series justify Pal's defence of Japan as if it had been seeking to protect its Asian neighbours.

The Indian financial newspaper *Mint* published a review of the series on its website *Livemint* entitled "Radhabinod Pal: The forgotten Indian and the Japanese Hero" (Deb 2018). In this article, as in the series itself, Pal is painted as a brave rebellious figure who '....refused to be the token Indian on the bench'. The author (like the series) omits out the objections of the Indian government to Pal's ruling at the time (Banerjee 2014: 90-91). *Tokyo Trial* also became available to Indian viewers on Netflix in 2019, the same year which saw the recent increase in conservative propaganda films in Indian cinema reach a peak, in no small part due to the general election. Whilst the author of this review laments that Pal is not widely known in his home country of India; the constant evoking of his name by high-ranking politicians as well as his representation in different forms of transnational media will undoubtedly see an increase in awareness of Pal. Along with this awareness of Pal will also result in increased exposure to ideas of Pan-Asianism in the form of resistance against Western domination, but ones that are rooted in nationalist ideologies.

Conclusion

Affinitive transnationalism has been the typology best used to describe the type of transnationalism formed and expressed through media between Japan and India. Although in the case of Nordic Film and TV, which was in response to American globalisation of these medias, Hjort's conceptualisation of the term does not necessarily translate to the toxic form of Pan-Asianism expressed by Japan and India's special relationship. This new form of

affinitive transnationalism is one that seeks globalised outlets in order to support their own domestic agendas of right-wing nationalism.

Tokyo Trial is a series which certainly manages to convey the complexity of the *IMTFE* and definitely raises important questions which are relevant today. What are the power relations at play when deciding international law and how it is enforced or adhered to on a global scale? How just is victor's justice exactly? In doing so, however, these provide convenient excuses to at times obscure or justify Japanese military aggression. Whilst this does not reach the toxic nationalism displayed in *Paru Shinron*, *Tokyo Trial* similarly centralises the character of Radhabinod Pal as a British Colonial subject who found reason in Japan's "Greater East-Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere". As India-Japan relations show no signs of slowing or cooling down in the near future, media texts such as *Tokyo Trial* will continue to play their role in furthering narratives which favour and embellish these ties. Again, this is not done as explicitly as was evidenced in Kobayashi Yoshinori's manga. This speaks to a new form of nationalist rhetoric which is presented diplomatically within an international setting or medium for which it has had to be transformed to a certain extent.

Biographical Note

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