Our Dream Cinema: Western Historiography and the Japanese Film

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It is 1925, and you are in the Asakusa district of Tokyo. Gaily colored banners have coaxed you into a film theatre. What you encounter is charming: a Western institution revised by the East. Removing your shoes, you are given slippers to wear. You ascend the stairs to the balcony, which is outfitted with Western-style seating, but you can see that the ground floor is furnished Japanese style, with mats and cushions and charcoal braziers dotting the floor. Men sit on one side, women on the other, married couples in the center. Before the film starts, a man comes onto the stage, bows to huge applause, and takes up a position at a table beside the screen. The film starts. While piano, violin, and samisen scrape out Western melodies, the man onstage—the *katsuben* or *benshi*—accompanies the film vocally. In a continuous emotional singsong, the *benshi* explains the action as a narrator might. He also provides dialogue by assuming the various characters' voices. At one moment, he speaks as the warrior; immediately, he becomes an old woman. So exhausting is this work that this *benshi* will be relieved at some point by another. You recall that *benshi* are very popular. Fans follow their careers, they are asked to perform at public meetings, and their performances are preserved on records and broadcast on the radio. You watch and listen, entranced by the way the Japanese have converted the preeminently Occidental cinematograph into a visual accompaniment for a live performance. Going to the movies seems little more than a pretext to hear the *benshi*.

This scene has proved irresistably fascinating to Western eyes, since it sums up all that the Japanese cinema promises. It is not just that this cinema is exotic, although the

genres, the performers, the language, and the culture as a whole do lure us with the charm of inscrutability. More deeply, the Japanese cinema has come to represent a wholly different way to conceive of cinema, a distinct alternative to the routines and illusions of Western film practice. The reasons vary. For some Westerners, the Japanese cinema is exemplary in giving the director his proper status as artist.[1] For others, this cinema has shown how the Holy can be represented on film.[2] More radically, the Japanese cinema has been seen as a bold display of the most profound possibilities of film form: in the East, the European avant-garde's old dream of "pure cinema" may finally have been realized.[3] Seek the essence of *mise-en-scene* and you are brought irresistably to Mizoguchi.[4] Seek a political cinema that recognizes desire, and you shall find Oshima there ahead of you.[5] (And Mizoguchi too, whom in 1977 a *Cahiers du cinema* critic calls "almost the only filmmaker to make Marxist films."[6]) Noel Burch, following Roland Barthes in the search for a semiologist's paradise, finds in this nation's cinema an empire of the senses, of sheerly material signifiers; the Japanese cinema presents textures when we expect meanings, yielding a spectacle that is "abrupt, empty, like a fracture."[7] And all this within one of the most flagrantly mercantile of film industries! Like the *femme fatale* in a *film noir*, this cinema, by its impassive otherness, lets us project upon it what we like. We have found our dream-cinema, the cinema of good faith, everything we want cinema to be.

Our fantasies, like our imaginary visit to the theatre, are necessary but not sufficient. A historical examination of the Japanese cinema must confront the fact that it is not wholly other, not a blank, drastic alternative. It is bound up with Western cinema in so many intricate ways that our dream seems not reprehensible but certainly utopian.

For one thing, since 1868, Japan itself was never completely Oriental. The leaders of the Meiji Restoration sought to make their country rival Europe and the United States. Banking, commerce, engineering, education, manufacturing, and cultural life were all transformed by selective borrowing from the West. The government bureaucracy was revamped along Prussian lines. The adoption of machine technology, the creation of joint-stock companies, and an aggressive policy of military expansion all pulled Japan steadily abreast of the West. Social life was likewise transformed, albeit in uneven ways. Western dress became common, especially among the *samurai* class. After World War I, urban Japanese began widely imitating Western customs. This was the era of the houses with one room furnished with chairs, table, piano, and wallpaper; of so-called *mogas*, "modern girls" who favored skirts, blouses and lipstick; of *mobos*, "modern boys" with American-style haircuts and Harold Lloyd glasses. The leisured Japanese took up foreign amusements, such as baseball, skiing, golf, tennis, jazz . . . and cinema.

From the start, the cinema seems to have been recognized as a distinctly Western gadget. Anderson and Richie link the popularity of the early films to the craving for things Occidental.[8] Akira Iwasaki noted that Edison's Kinetoscope and Lumiere's Cinematographe "were brought to Japan within one year of the public announcement of their invention; a fact that has direct bearing upon the conditions of the time, when the rapidly growing Japanese bourgeoisie was engrossed in absorbing Western material civilization immediately after the Sino-Japanese War."[9] The cinema's Western status is important because many historians have sought to establish the Japanese film's affinity with the traditional arts (theatre, painting, literature, tea ceremony, etc.). There is, however, no clear indication that the film's audiences or creators considered cinema to fall within the sphere of Japanese art. Although the medium was soon seen as a way of recording stage performances, films as such were regarded as a Western medium, like the phonograph and the radio. The Japanese quickly picked up English film terms (*cut, cinema, love scene, plot, make-up*).[10] The slightly foreign flavor of the movies may explain why the outstanding early Japanese directors came from backgrounds utterly dissociated from the traditional arts. (Even Mizoguchi was trained in painting at a school specializing in Western design.) Of all the pioneers, only Kinugasa came from a strictly theatrical career (he had been an *oyama*, or female impersonator, in Kabuki), and ironically his films were among the least "Japanese" of the silent era.

Another reason we cannot regard the Japanese cinema as hopelessly alien is the fact that the foreign cinema, and particularly Hollywood, played a crucial part in the development of Japanese filmmaking. Not only was the cinema itself seen as a Western import, but Western films became massively available in Japan. By the end of World War I, American films had established themselves as second only to the domestic product in popularity.[11] At first, the distribution of American films was in the hands of Japanese firms, who bought prints outright, but an expanding market and unmitigated film piracy impelled the American studios to set up distribution branches, with Universal arriving around 1915, and the other studios in the 1920s. Chaplin, George Bancroft, Janet Gaynor, and Clara Bow were celebrated stars in Japan.[12] Toys bore the faces of Laurel and Hardy; Harold Lloyd and Gary Cooper smiled out from playing cards. Writers began to attribute the "Americanization" of Japanese youth to the movies.[13]

Producers shared the audiences' enthusiasm. Shochiku, one of the major Japanese firms, began its production operations in 1920 with an explicit aim: "the production of artistic films resembling the latest and most flourishing styles of the Occidental cinema."[14] Although Shochiku's sweeping modernization proved too hasty, Hollywood remained a source and model. Hollywood's tactic of vertical integration (control of production, distribution, and exhibition) became the dominant Japanese practice. Just as Hollywood imported foreign talent, so did Japan, recruiting actors and technicians from America. Periodically, during the 1920s and 1930s, Japanese studios sent representatives to Europe and Hollywood to study production and marketing techniques and to bring back samples of the latest equipment. Curiously, it appears that America even remained Japan's chief source of raw film stock until the mid-1930s.

Western cinema also shaped Japanese subjects and styles. More than one Japanese writer complained of the studios' drive to turn out "Japanese Hollywood" films.[15] It was not uncommon for the 1920s and 1930s film of contemporary life (*gendai-geki*) to be filled with mansions, Rolls Royces, cigarette lighters, and Western evening clothes. (Yoyos, Sunkist raisins, boxing matches, phonographs, pistols, Hollywood fan magazines, and American film posters are prominent in Ozu's films of the period.) Stylistically, the Japanese were clearly aware of Hollywood rules of script construction and continuity editing.[16] Mizoguchi's scriptwriter Yoshikata Yoda reports that in the early 1930s he was ordered to study foreign films. After several viewings of IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT, THE DOCKS OF NEW YORK, UNDERWORLD, THE LOVE PARADE, and A NOUS LA LIBERTE, Yoda classified the scenes into categories (exposition, intrigue, conflict, crisis, etc.). "All directors thought of constructing a script more or less this way, Mizoguchi included."[17]

Moreover, Japanese directors have been ardent admirers of the Western cinema. Ozu's aversion to Japanese films and love of Hollywood are well-known. Kinugasa's PAGE OUT OF ORDER and CROSSROADS reveal an awareness of the European experimental cinema of the 1920s; he later studied with Eisenstein. Mizoguchi's favorite directors were Lubitsch, Ford, Wyler, Clair, and Renoir.[18] In sum, Western and especially American films helped form the Japanese cinema. A Japanese critic wrote in 1936 that, with the importation of Hollywood films,

> Japanese producers were taught for the first time what a true motion picture must be like, and the new conception was fully illustrated by the American examples. The majority of pioneers in the Japanese film industry were either technicians who had been to Hollywood or else their pupils. The fact that the Japanese screen, in its formative years, thrived on copying the American prototype is very significant. For American imitation has been to this very day one of the essential peculiarities of Japanese movies. They have never been able to free themselves entirely from American influences.[19]

I am not, of course, suggesting that the Japanese cinema is simply Hollywood-in-Kyoto. The point is that the Japanese cinema's history is intertwined, in direct and indirect ways, with that of the Western cinema and that our dream of a paradisiacal filmmaking need not paralyze our analytical instincts. This essay examines historiographical

assumptions and methods in those Western writings which have sought to bring this exotic cinema closer to our understanding.

In the West, the most prolific and penetrating study of the Japanese cinema has been carried out by American scholars. The pioneering work was done by Joseph L. Anderson and Donald Richie, who spent over ten years gathering material for their book *The Japanese Film: Art and Industry* (1957). This remains after two decades the most detailed history of the Japanese cinema in any Western language. Virtually all subsequent research finds its conceptual framework dictated by this magisterial work. Even Noel Burch, whose work is the most original to appear in recent years, continues to rely on data and arguments adduced in *The Japanese Film.* Valuable as it is, however, *The Japanese Film* has won the unfortunate honor reserved for film books: to call a volume the "standard work" usually means that it is the *only* work. Consequently, much of the last twenty years' work duplicates and revises Anderson and Richie.

A significant recent example is Audie Bock's *Japanese Film Directors* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1978). The book's organization is biographical. Ten directors are discussed, in chronological order and in three groups (early masters, postwar humanists, the New Wave and after). Since *Japanese Film Directors* assumes that *The Japanese Film* constitutes an adequate account of the industrial and social history of Japanese film, Bock chooses to do criticism: her essays mix biographical data and descriptions of working methods with brief thematic discussions of the films. What emerges works wholly within the paradigm of period and style proposed by Anderson and Richie. *Japanese Film Directors* may be regarded as helpfully updating the director-by-director study in Chapter 15 of *The Japanese Film.*

Because of the preeminence of Anderson and Richie's work, this essay seeks not only to review ongoing work in Japanese film history but also to propose some questions which might suggest inquiry in new directions. I will concentrate on three areas: the history of the film industry, the history of film styles, and the history of films in a sociopolitical context. In the last analysis, the most powerful questions will cut across these arbitrary divisions.

THE JAPANESE FILM INDUSTRY

Western accounts of the history of the Japanese film industry have stressed three variables: director, genre, and studio, in descending order of importance. *The Japanese Film* usually traces the creation and development of film companies as a backdrop, against which changes of genre and directorial style emerge. Marcel and Shinobu Guiglaris' *Le cinema japonais* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1956) follows the same path. From these two sources, we learn that a few studios dominated production: in the 1920s, Nikkatsu and Shochiku; in the 1930s, Shochiku and Toho; in the 1940s and 1950s, Shochiku, Toho, and Daiei. Anderson and Richie chronicle several changes in each of these companies, concentrating chiefly on management decisions (competitive policies, mergers and the like). Useful as this account remains, it offers no systematic and large-scale explanation of the rise of the Japanese film industry. Many questions about production, distribution, and exhibition remain to be asked and answered.

The most striking factor of Japanese film production between 1925 and the middle 1960s is sheer quantity. Except for the war period, for thirty years Japanese studios produced more feature films per year than any other country.[20] This output is all the more remarkable when one considers that Japanese films have never had the export possibilities enjoyed by the Occidental cinema. Moreover, during the 1920s and most of the 1930s, Japanese firms were purchasing their film stock from abroad, so costs of raw materials probably remained high. As if all this weren't enough, the big studios had no single center of production comparable to Hollywood or Billancourt. Since the 1923 earthquake, each major Japanese firm customarily ran two distinct studio facilities: one near Tokyo, for the production of films with contemporary settings, and a studio in Kyoto, for the production of historical films. Thus equipment and administrative staff were doubled.

Despite all these factors, Japanese companies were turning out more films at a fraction of the cost of the Hollywood product. One 1929 writer estimates the cost of an *average* Japanese feature to be less than three thousand dollars.[21] Four years later, the average cost for a talkie was said to be only ten thousand dollars.[22] Although both Japanese and American companies owned or controlled theatres, the total assets of Japanese companies as reported amount to five or ten per cent of the assets reported by American firms.[23] What can explain the prolific output of Japanese filmmaking? What enabled the studios to make so many films so cheaply? The first question can guide our overall examination of production, distribution, and exhibition. More immediately, we can point out some factors which need further examination if we want to determine what enabled the firms to achieve high outputs.

For most of this century, Japanese industry has been chronically undercapitalized while the country itself has been overpopulated. The result, most economists and historians agree, has been the decision to adopt labor-intensive manufacturing practices.[24] This appears in several forms: dependence on part-time and seasonal labor, exploitation of the female worker, adoption of the piecework system, the sub-contracting of parts manufacture and assembly to home-centered artisans, etc. No film historian has studied the extent to which film companies adopted a similar mode of production.

Much evidence, for example, suggests that the film industry was very labor-intensive. In the 1920s, a film might be made in less than two weeks; Ozu tells of making A STRAIGHTFORWARD BOY (1929) in three days.[25] In 1936, a Nikkatsu director would complete an average of four features a year, and a Shochiku director would finish almost five; in the same year, a Warners director averaged less than three and an MGM director two.[26] It also appears that the firms saved production time in many ways. I have not found out the length of the average studio working day, but probably casts and crews were kept filming far into the night. Most Japanese films were shot on location, thus saving the time and money spent on sets. The codification of genres and the specialization of stars and directors in certain genres certainly accelerated production. Most interesting, perhaps, is a procedure akin to artisanal subcontracting. Before the 1930s, the Japanese firms minimized administrative costs by decentralizing production. It seems that much responsibility would be given to a cadre—director, assistants, writers, and cameramen. This artisanal unit would stay together from film to film.[27] The role of producer seems hardly to have existed. Once the head of the studio gave a director clearance on a script or idea, work could begin immediately. Ozu speaks of starting a film even before the script was finished![28] Still, we need to know much more about division of studio labor, areas of management control, recruitment of staff, and so on. We are far from answering the most elementary questions about the relations of production, but in those relations probably lie part of the explanation for the industry's productivity.

We are also unsure of the status of organized labor in the film industry. The *benshi* were apparently the first to organize, but the coming of sound enabled firms to break *benshi* control. Directors and technicians formed professional associations with no interest in labor organizing. (Of all production workers, directors were usually the best paid.) Like workers in other industries, film workers did not unionize until after World War II, although the coming of sound did create some unrest among *benshi* and theatre musicians.[29] If the film industry escaped labor strife in the prewar era, that may have been because the firms utilized certain tactics of Japanese "paternalistic" capitalism, whereby the company promotes itself as a family, with the manager as the father and the workers, thanks to "lifetime employment," assigned the role of family members.[30] The emergence of very strong managerial figureheads in the film studios (Shiro Kodo at Shochiku, Masaichi Nagata at Daiei) confirms a paternalistic tendency in film production. This ideology inhibited the growth of unions in most industries, but its specific effects on cinema remain to be determined.

If we need to know how production methods and the absence of unions helped Japanese firms maintain high productivity, the financing of that productivity is even more obscure. On this, Western historians have been silent. Where did the capital come

from?

We know least about the earliest big firm, Nikkatsu. Modeling itself on the American Motion Picture Patents Company, Nikkatsu was a combine formed in 1912 out of four small production firms and theatre chains.[31] According to Yoda, this combine was supported by a *yakuza* family, the Senbongumi.[32] This is plausible, if only because in 1912 movies were a distinctly lower-class medium and bank capital would be reluctant to finance filmmaking.

Nikkatsu, which dominated the cinema of the 'teens, was challenged by the very different firm of Shochiku. Shochiku was initially a trust which monopolized the Japanese stage. Two brothers, Matsujiro Shirai and Takejiro Otami, had gained control over most theatre buildings in the country and had contracted with the significant troupes in kabuki, puppet theatre, recitation theatre, and other forms. With a pool of actors and theatre buildings at its disposal, Shochiku turned to film production and exhibition in 1920. This firm, the MGM of Japan, poses many problems. Did the fact that Shochiku branched out into film give it characteristics of the *zaibatsu*, those family-originated oligopolies which controlled vast sectors of the economy? A comparison of the film industry's conduct with that of the *zaibatsu* could yield interesting results. With its theatrical background, why did Shochiku announce a policy favoring "modern," Western-imitation films? Did the firm hope to differentiate its product from Nikkatsu's *kabuki*- and *shimpa*-derived films and to cash in on the popularity of foreign imports?

Western historians have treated Toho Films as the creation of a whimsical entertainment entrepreneur. On this account, Ichizo Kobayashi gained fame chiefly for building the town of Takarazuka and creating an all-woman dance troupe.[33] In the 1930s, Kobayashi bought and built theatres to house his stage shows and then later branched out into cinema. J. O. and Photo-Chemical Laboratories, two minor studios, merged to create Toho Films. From this standpoint, Toho is simply an entertainment combine like Shochiku.

We ought, however, to cast a more jaundiced eye on Kobayashi. Unlike Otami and Shirai, Kobayashi was not primarily a theatre promoter. He had started his career working for the Mitsui Bank and made his first fortune as owner and director of a tramway line. It is true that during the 1920s and 1930s Kobayashi began to take an interest in theatrical enterprises, but he never lost his ties with the mainstream business world. While serving as managing director of Toho, he sat on at least a dozen boards of directors, in industries involving life insurance, fertilizer, power and light, metalwork, and retailing.[34] He retained his ties to Mitsui and became administrative president of Tokyo Electric Light Company in 1933.[35] Western historians of the Japanese film have also neglected to mention that from 1935 to 1945—the years of Toho's formation—Kobayashi served as Minister of Commerce in the government. Kobayashi's position in banking, real estate, and government service helps explain how Toho was able to become so powerful so quickly. There is reason to agree with one Japanese writer that Toho marks the entry of big business capital in the Japanese cinema.[36] More generally, the arrival of sound in Japan forced studios to finance the renovation of production and exhibition. Kobayashi merged two studios with their own sound-on-film systems; did the financing come from outside the film industry? Here again, we need to ask questions about the *zaibatsu*, both as sources of capital and as models of industry consolidation.

Of all branches on any film industry, distribution is the least studied. Since the Japanese industry was vertically integrated, distribution was dominated by the major firms. Foreign distributors started to appear in Japan in the early 1920s, apparently as much to halt film piracy as to penetrate the market.[37] Before World War II, films would be released simultaneously to the first-run houses in the major cities; then second-run and provincial theatres would receive the product. A 1929 source asserts that typically no more than ten prints of a film were distributed, with the average being closer to five or six—an astonishingly low figure that needs corroboration and explanation.[38] In all, we know next to nothing about the mechanics of Japanese film distribution. How, for instance, did foreign distributors manage to get a toehold, since the major studios were also distributing foreign films? To what extent did the lesser production companies have

access to the principal distribution outlets?

We have already mentioned the more colorful aspects of film exhibition—the theatre, the *benshi*—but several other points need to be pursued. One pertains to the quantity of films produced by the industry. Until the late 1930s, Japanese film programs ran very long indeed: three or four hours was not unusual, and double or triple features were customary.[39] Theatres would open at 10 a.m. or noon and run until 10 p.m. Nearly all theatres were controlled by the film studios, either through outright purchase and management or, more commonly, through contracts pledging the studio to supply the weekly fare and committing the exhibitor to policies of block- and blind-booking.[40] The state of exhibition, then, may help clarify the broader question: What strategies lay behind the industry's huge annual output? Film production may have followed Western models, but exhibition drew selectively upon customs bred in the Japanese theatrical tradition. There is some evidence that in the 1920s the cinema functioned as the poor person's theatre, with the Japanese family spending its Sunday going from stage theatre to film theatre and back.[41] *Kabuki* and *bunraku* performances were then very long, sometimes consuming ten hours. If the Japanese cinema was to compete with such marathon entertainments, exhibitors may have thought it necessary to offer double or triple bills. We need to ask whether the competition of the stage helped drive Japanese studios toward producing so many films.

It is evident, however, that film exhibition eventually broke its ties to the tradition of the Japanese drama. Before the coming of sound, the Japanese film theatre operated very much like a stage show, as our imaginary visit to Asakusa suggests. By 1940, however, the film theatre was virtually identical with its American counterpart: uniform seats, usherettes, several floors of balconies, and a candy stall in the lobby.[42] More important, the shift to the Occidental mode probably benefited the firms. The presence of the *benshi* limited the size of the hall to what a speaking voice could fill. With the coming of sound, firms could build larger Western-style theatres, intensifying the profits to be extracted from a single real-estate investment. Furthermore, the *benshi* had been the most visibly organized of film workers, forming a guild of several thousand members.[43] It was the *benshi* who held strikes and protests to slow the production of sound films. Anderson and Richie have told how the *benshi* wielded extraordinary power over audiences and over film production.[44] When a machine could do the work of the *benshi*, the preservation of a quaint tradition mattered little to the studios. By adapting exhibition to Western practice, the studios took a step closer to centralizing and rationalizing production and exhibition.

In the last section of this essay, I shall consider some ways in which government policy affected the film industry. For now I might mention one other imponderable: the role of the Japanese underworld, the *yakuza*. Westerners are on the whole unaware of the degree to which organized crime has influenced Japanese society.[45] Apart from their dealings in gambling, narcotics, petty crime, and prostitution, *yakuza* groups have functioned to break strikes, support right-wing groups, disband political demonstrations, and bribe officials. During this century, the *tekiya*, who extort money from neighborhood merchants, have in fact been prominent in financing and operating large industries.[46] Anderson and Richie mention that gangsters sometimes guarded an endangered star or wrung protection money from film people.[47] But it is possible that organized crime had deeper affiliations with the film industry. As I mentioned, Yoda claims that Nikkatsu was initially financed by a Kyoto *yakuza* "family." It is also said that Mizoguchi seduced a *yakuza* member's girlfriend and that only his producer Nagata's connections with the gang saved him.[48] Similarly, the *yakuza's* skills at labor intimidation probably proved useful in preventing studio strikes. It is also likely that the studios' buying and building of local theatres would necessitate dealing with the local *oyabun* (gang boss, literally "father-figure"). What ties of friendship or finance bound the *yakuza* to film people? Were gang members employed in the studios as bouncers or labor-bosses? Was, as Kenji Kitatani has proposed, the cadre system of directors-writers-cameramen modeled on the *yakuza* hierarchy?[49] While research on the *yakuza* would be very difficult, our knowledge of the Japanese cinema would be enhanced by

asking such questions.

TEXTUAL SURFACES: FILM STYLE

The study of Japanese film styles has been dominated by Anderson and Richie's mild version of the auteur theory. Relying upon assumptions common to the writing of American film history, *The Japanese Film* suggests that early Japanese cinema (1902-1921) simply photographed stage plays. Only after seeing Western films did the Japanese filmmakers learn academically correct staging, shooting, and cutting techniques.[10] After sketching in this background, *The Japanese Film* devotes principal attention to individual directors' works, discussing recurrent thematic and stylistic qualities. More recently, Audie Bock's *Japanese Film Directors* follows much the same line. In these books, the same issues recur: realism, director's biography as a key to his work, an emphasis on world-views and personal vision. These authors conceive of style as simply repeated technical devices. Yet to write a subtle and detailed stylistic history, we must relate film style to a conception of filmic construction in general; notions of form, function, audience experience, and extrafilmic relations must be reckoned into any sophisticated analysis of a national film style.

Only one Western scholar has written such a history. Noel Burch's *Form and Meaning in the Japanese Cinema* may have been published by the time this essay appears. This remarkable, often brilliant book bases itself upon a close scrutiny of films and upon a systematic theory of film art. Some of the assumptions and implications of Burch's argument can be found in his essay "To the Distant Observer: Towards a Theory of Japanese Film." Drawing on the history of Japanese art and architecture and, crucially, on Barthes's *Empire des signes*, Burch claims that Japanese culture has created an alternative signifying practice. This practice is characterized by a refusal of the representational "illusionism" characteristic of the West. While perspective painting and theatre design, for instance, seek to create an impression of depth, Oriental painting and theatre suppress such depth. The result, for Burch, is the tendency of Japanese art "to focus the reader's awareness on its *material and textual surfaces.*"[11] Burch argues that the Japanese cinema, like primitive Western cinema, refuses to conceal its codes in the name of a bourgeois illusionism. The *benshi* is symptomatic of this refusal, since in the *benshi's* "reading" of the image, the image was thereby designated as such, and the narrative became not an "imaginary referent" but rather "a field of signs."[12] Burch itemizes other strategies of dis-illusionment: the use of Western cutting rules not as the norm but as "privileged dramatic devices," the appearance of *Kabuki* theatre's non-realistic codes of gesture and scenography, the decentering of the frame, the flattening of space through *mise-en-scene*, and even the use of superimposed written material.

What is most problematic in this account is the underlying theory of cinema as a signifying practice. First, Burch often assumes that procedures from other arts can be factored into cinema with little remainder. That devices drawn from poetry, architecture, painting, and theatre may be radically warped or transformed upon entering cinema interests Burch less than their common attack on illusionism. Secondly, the very idea of illusionism is questionable. Exactly what does the audience experience as illusionism? Do we take the depth represented on the screen as physically present depth? Obviously not, since unlike Michel Ange in LES CARABINIERS, none of us believe that we can climb into the image. Perceptual psychologists would talk of "depth cues" or "spatial information," but even then the concept of illusion needs to be adequately defined.

On the other hand, what is the Japanese cinema doing in foregrounding materiality? Are we to see the screen as only a flat surface covered with abstract patterns of light and dark? Or are we to see the spectacle as "material" in the sense that we are aware of the image, however "realistic," as a product of human choice and labor? The opposition Burch invokes—narrative as "imaginary referent" versus the image as "field of signs"—epitomizes the theoretical problem. In what sense does the narrative have the

status of a *referent* (and not, as most semiologists would assume, that of a *signified*)? Since semiological theory usually locates a sign's referent in the world of physical objects and processes, the referent of a film image would be the profilmic event (say, Toshiro Mifune) and not the narrative signified (say, Red Beard).[53] In what sense is the audience not *already* aware of the image as a field of signs?

As a concept, "illusion" is slippery. It invites us to see representation as a dupe or a lie rather than a signifying activity. Moreover, "illusionism" easily leads us to assume that the viewer is a mesmerized victim and not a contributing agent in the dynamic process of representation. Finally, to create an absolute opposition between illusion and something else ("distance," "surface," "material") may reduce the intricate interplay of style and meaning in any one text or among texts in history. There will be the urge to toss this film into the dustbin (damned as illusionistic) and to set that film on a pedestal (praised as deconstructive). There will also be the urge to rummage through the film looking for its materialist moments and throwing out the rest.

Ambitious and impressive, Burch's synoptic history remains isolated. Most Western analyses of Japanese film style have narrowed their focus to a single film or filmmaker. Most work has been devoted to the obvious triumvirate: since 1955, Mizoguchi and Kurosawa; since 1970, Ozu.[54] The research on Ozu's films provides the broadest sampling of historical approaches, three of which stand out particularly.

First there is the religious-cultural reading, which sees Ozu's films as embodying Zen principles. For Marvin Zeman, Ozu's films exemplify seven characteristics of Zen art—asymmetry, simplicity, agedness, naturalness, latency, unconventionality, and quietness.[55] For Paul Schrader, Ozu's subjects, so "undramatic," permit us to see the transcendent in the ordinary. Ozu's formalized compositions, rigorous cutting, and static camera all function to reveal the beauty of the everyday. His narratives are organized as a series of discrete, expressionless events leading to a decisive action, but this action reveals only a fundamental stasis, a transcendent refusal to resolve disparity.[56]

A slightly different approach, typified by Donald Richie's *Ozu* (1974), has emphasized the films as realistic character studies. The films' narratives are unconventional as dramaturgy because life will not fit into neat categories. References to what Japanese life is like are used to confirm the verisimilitude of scenes or character portrayals. "It is not the story that Ozu wants to show so much as it is the way his characters react to what happens in the story, and what patterns those relations create."[57] Ozu's technique, then, becomes the means to reveal character. Ozu's low camera creates a stage exhibiting the characters for us, as do the rectangular set designs.[58] Ozu's cutting either advances character psychology (e.g., the celebrated scene with the vase in LATE SPRING) or is simply functional (so that in Ozu's "incorrect" eyeline matches, "the direction of the gaze is unimportant"[59]). The famous intermediate spaces, which serve as transitions between scenes, cue us to the characters' experience.[60] In sum, Richie reads Ozu's films as subtly evoking characters' emotional states.

There are problems with the religious and the character-psychology approaches. Both reify Ozu's work as of a piece; no director has ever been considered more consistent. Yet in fact the Zen and realist readings make Ozu's postwar subjects and themes exemplary of his entire career, which it is not. Although not all of Ozu's films survive, works of the 1928-1945 period are very difficult to treat in transcendental or realistic terms. College nonsense-comedies, gangster films, romantic comedies, and melodramatic thrillers dominate his first ten years' work. Stylistically, as well, these films boldly use many devices—lateral tracking shots, staccato editing, comically displaced intertitles—that are hard to reconcile with accounts of an artist of quiet contemplation. Moreover, both the religious and the realistic approaches designate Ozu as a traditional artist, celebrating, respectively, the peace of *mono no aware* (the sweet sadness of life) or the pain of changes in family life. Still other evidence suggests that stylistically Ozu was far from traditional. His work not only deviated from canons of Hollywood practice but also struck an unfamiliar note to the Japanese. Ozu's peers found him odd: they noted and even joked about his camera's height, his violation of

editing rules, his manipulation of compositions between shots, and his refusal to tell his actors what the characters were feeling.[61] It is the need to come to terms with the films' style, in all its estranging aspects, that has initiated a third approach to Ozu, which I shall call Formalist.

On this account, Ozu's style stands out against Western film practice by its refusal to subordinate cinematic structure entirely to narrative structure. Kristin Thompson, Edward Branigan, and I have argued that there are distinct and rigorous spatial principles governing Ozu's films.[62] Such principles include the construction of a 360° shooting space sliced up in angles divisible by 45°, the construction of intermediate spaces on a dominant-overtone pattern, and graphically matched cutting. Sometimes such systems are subordinate to the narrative progression; at other times spatial patterns claim our attention in their own right. Hence the characterization of Ozu as a "modernist" director, one working upon and against representational conventions of cinematic narrative and space.

The Formalist approach has been criticized in its turn. Some of these criticisms seem to me justified. For instance, a split between "classicism" (Hollywood) and "modernism" now seems much too absolute. I also think that the Formalist work has been too ahistorical (that is, not Formalist enough), not sufficiently sensitive to the discontinuities within Ozu's career. But other criticisms still have not won me over. Joseph Anderson asserts that Yasujiro Shimazu used a spatial style similar to Ozu's.[63] But since Anderson cites no films to support his claim, it is hard to know how to respond to the criticism. (Anderson's assertion does not hold for Shimazu's BROTHER AND HIS YOUNGER SISTER [1939].) Similarly, Robert Cohen has claimed that 360° cutting was common in the "classical realism" of the Japanese film,[64] but the Formalist account has never claimed that 360° shooting was in itself unique to Ozu, only that a particular systematic use of it was. And although Mizoguchi and others occasionally make 180° cuts, the systems thereby constructed differ radically from Ozu's. I have yet to see any other Japanese films, even the Ozu pastiches by Mikio Naruse (e.g., FLOWING, MOTHER) which fit the Formalist analysis of Ozu's work.

Both these critiques also insist that Ozu's films bear little relation to American cinema. Going further, Paul Willemen has accused the Formalist view of "cultural imperialism" in comparing Ozu to Western norms. To claim Ozu's films to be "modernist" is "reminiscent of the cubist and surrealist claims that, for example, African tribal sculpture was 'modernist'."[65] The analogy reveals the weakness of Willemen's case. African sculptors never saw Cubist work, but Japanese filmmakers knew Western cinema very well. Evidence suggests that Western principles of story construction and shooting and editing played a major role in forming Japanese conceptions of accomplished filmmaking. A film like Ozu's DAYS OF YOUTH (1929), with its citations of SEVENTH HEAVEN, its imitation of Harold Lloyd, its match-cutting and narrative symmetries, will convince most viewers that the Western cinema formed a major reference point for at least this Japanese director. While the term "modernism" has been used too loosely in the Formalist approach, the essential assumption remains valid: the American cinema constitutes a pertinent historical background for Ozu's work.

Whatever their insights into Ozu's work, these three approaches typify current stylistic investigation of Japanese cinema. All three carry assumptions about the relation of cinema to the traditional arts, about cinema as a cultural process, and about the fundamental nature of film. We need to ask more precise questions about film style and, more particularly, about the relation of a single filmmaker's style to contemporary and previous work. We require, in short, a theory of *style in history*. Several options are open: a conception of stylistic evolution, the Russian Formalist conception of style as a reaction against prevailing canons, a Marxist conception of style's determination by class and culture, Harold Bloom's categories of stylistic influence, and others. Whatever way we frame the questions, however, the analysis of style will sooner or later be confronted with causes operating in another sphere of social activity—politics.

FILM AND SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

The orthodox chronology of Japanese political history has been repeated so often—both in books and in Japanese films—that the briefest resume will serve.[66] World War I gave Japan a chance to expand its control of China and Siberia, thus establishing Japan as a major military power. During the 1920s, political reform was hampered by business interests and party infighting. After a series of spectacular assassinations and attempted coups, Japan's conservative government sought to eradicate leftists and extreme rightists. In 1931, Japan invaded Manchuria. In 1936, an ultranationalistic army faction captured the center of Tokyo and held it for a little over three days before surrendering; the event strengthened the rival faction and increased the army's control of national affairs. For Japan, World War II began in 1937, with the attack on China, which was followed by the Alliance with the Axis powers and the attack on Pearl Harbor. At the conclusion of the war, the American Occupation announced its strategy of reforming Japan's institutions along Western (bourgeois-parliamentary) lines. The rest of the story—Japan's postwar economic boom and its astonishing entry in the world of multinational enterprise—is well-known. How may we situate the Japanese cinema with respect to the country's socio-political history?

Scholars have tried two approaches. The first, proposed by Joan Mellen's *The Waves at Genji's Door* (1977), seeks to tie the content of certain films to various ideological positions. The second attempt, characteristic of Anderson and Richie's *The Japanese Film*, emphasizes the relation of the film industry to state policy.

Mellen posits that Japanese culture has a "moral vacuum" in its refusal to confront modern social problems. Instead, Japan habitually returns to oppressive, feudal conceptions of human behavior. The person's role in a hierarchy, the code of *bushido* (warrior honor), the status of women, the centrality of the family, the cult of imperial patriarchy, the concept of national purity—all these are seen as haunting the Japanese through the centuries. In films, such feudal conceptions offer escape (e.g., in *samurai* or *yakuza* films, with their appeal to *bushido*), nostalgia (as in Ozu's work), or even solutions (as in some humanist or leftist works), but the feudal conceptions themselves remain unquestioned. It is only very recently, Mellen believes, that directors like Oshima, Shinoda, and Ogawa have revealed the inadequacy of the feudal heritage and have posed democratic political alternatives.

The Waves at Genji's Door has been criticized for misrepresenting the situation of women in Japanese art and history, but here we should pause on the historiographical method Mellen employs.[67] For Mellen, cultural institutions express national consciousness, apparently without mediation or transformation.[68] Similarly, film is the art of the real: "Rooted in an immediate physical existence, and insistently confronting us with things as they are, film seems best able to express contradictions in daily life which one would not ordinarily perceive."[69] The shifts glide by: the passage moves from "physical existence" (presumably, the photographic basis of most cinema) to "things as they are" (not only the brute fact but also, apparently, some conception of truth) to "contradictions in daily life" (definitely a criterion of verisimilitude). The consequence is to see film, like cultural institutions, as directly expressing consciousness. And this is indeed Mellen's approach. Films are grouped by author or subject matter (war, women), and each film's ideological position is ascertained by a reading of its narrative. Characters are progressive or reactionary insofar as they reject or accept feudal modes of thought. Directors argue for something, endorse something, state something, have messages. Mellen judges films by their correspondence with historical reality and criticizes them if they do not address the problem adequately. Feudal ideology is either endorsed (as in Ozu) or criticized (as in Mizoguchi).

What Mellen's approach lacks, it seems to me, is any concept of specificity. Specificity of period and social institution: The Japanese have not been equally "feudal" at all times, nor in all ranks, nor in all places (compare the Tokyo student of the 1920s with the peasant of the 1890s). Specificity of institution: Social organizations such as the

state, the family, the work place do not transmit ideology unchanged from point to point. Even granting the enormous homogeneity of Japanese culture, one cannot ignore the frictions and contradictions among spheres. (To take one example, the appearance of the *moga*, the young woman who wore flapper clothes and worked in an office, created severe problems for the family ideology.) Specificity of artistic work: A film does not come straight from cultural consciousness; ideology does not switch on the camera. Individual workers, production methods, studio policy, genre constraints, and other forces intervene to create a complex whole which is not reducible to ideology *tout court*. Specificity of medium: Film is not simply a record of "physical existence" but a work on images and sounds within representational conventions. Cinema has its own structures and appeals which refract, to one degree or another, ideological impulses. Finally, specificity of the text: Recent film theory has shown, I think, that a film can most adequately be seen as a dynamic process whose ideological work is not unitary but often in contradiction.

One instance must suffice. At a certain level of generality, one can describe Mizoguchi's films as displaying sympathy for the oppressed Japanese woman. Mellen finds this theme in films of very different periods (NANIWA ELEGY, [1936] and RED LIGHT DISTRICT, [1956]) and of quite varied subject matter (MADAME YUKI and GENROKU CHUSHINGURA). By staying at this level of generality, however, Mellen cannot situate each film in particular historical terms. What might such terms be? One would be Mizoguchi's astounding political flexibility: he was able to make both "tendency films" (films of liberal social criticism) and government propaganda. Denounced as opportunism, this trait was not uncommon in the 1930s, when Japanese leftists often quickly became rightists.[70] This tension at the political level is accompanied by one at the aesthetic level, between script and film style. In the 1930s and 1940s, Mizoguchi's use of setting, lighting, and camera prevents us from immersing ourselves in the frequently intense and emotional narrative action.

A convenient example is NANIWA ELEGY, which Mellen calls "a satire of the ruthless, all-pervasive Osaka capitalism."[71] Mellen relies chiefly upon dialogue and action to read the film as an attack on how family and business drive a woman to prostitution. Paradoxically, this political reading does not situate NANIWA ELEGY historically. To do that, one would have to consider that it was made by Dai-Ichi Eiga, an independent production company allowing Mizoguchi and Yoda an unprecedented freedom of social comment; that the film was the first to use Osaka dialect for non-comic purposes, an important deviation from prevailing generic norms; and that the film was made and released during the 1930s debate about abolishing prostitution. Moreover, Mellen's reading cannot disclose a certain historical ambiguity in the film. The satire of Osaka commerce is somewhat ambivalent because the attack on mercantile interests was at the time as characteristic of right-wing polemic as of liberal views.[72] NANIWA ELEGY was Yoda's first script for Mizoguchi and its social criticism owes something to Yoda's leftist sympathies, but the film's critical edge could also have been read as conservative outrage at the corrupt and Westernized bourgeoisie. The film's hesitation is characteristic of Mizoguchi's work in the decade.

There are other complications. Mellen discusses NANIWA ELEGY's visual style in reductively allegorical fashion: a deep-focus shot creates alienated characters, a low-angle shot equals an overwhelming environment. Yet one might see film style not as simply supporting the narrative but as working critically against the narrative by distancing us from emotional identification with Ayako. Mizoguchi stages the action in semi-darkness and shoots in long-shot through impediments (shelves, curtains, screens), thus blocking our vision of character expression. Characters turn and walk away from the camera to deliver their most significant lines. Since Mizoguchi will not cut to dramatically revealing close-ups, almost every scene withholds visual information about characters' mental states. Not only is greater weight thrown onto the dialogue, but the image denies us the satisfaction of sympathetic identification with the characters. In the later films, this tension will emerge as Mizoguchi's famous "aestheticism"; here, the dissonance between script and image makes Ayako's story a case study of a type, an

analysis of what Brecht called the social *gestus*. (The tension may also have something to do with the "sadism" Sybil Thornton points out in Mizoguchi's work.[73]). This is far from a complete analysis, since other factors (especially genre and audience) must be considered. My point is that an analysis of the ideology of the Japanese film cannot ignore the historical and stylistic variables that intervene between social ideology and the film.

Anderson and Richie, on the other hand, provide a more extensive account of certain social mediations, in particular state institutions. Censorship was an important constraint since the 'teens; government policy on import/export, currency, and company mergers affected the industry during the war period; and Occupation policies had direct effect on the number and sorts of films produced.[74] Yet we still know relatively little about key issues relating the Japanese government to the film industry. It is common, for instance, to suggest that during the 1930s government policy simply dictated terms to the film industry. Yet this view needs to be qualified considerably, for government policy and studio policy coincided on many issues. In 1931 the Major Industries Control Law encouraged cartelization through the formation of "industrial associations" and manufacturers' guilds.[75] It was thus to the advantage of the big firms to form the Japan Motion Picture Association; this became another way to dominate and absorb small companies. Still later, the 1939 Motion Picture Law limited the number of production firms.[76]

In other spheres, the industry was not easily brought to heel. The 1930s bear witness to several struggles between the government and the production companies. In the late 1920s, studios leaped to follow the fad for tendency films, even though the governemtn disapproved. The problems which Mizoguchi had with censorship are well-known, but a question arises: if censorship was a powerful threat, why did Mizoguchi's employers continue to allow him to create questionable films? Other conflicts emerge, even at the period when the government was supposedly mobilizing every sector unprotestingly. When the government banned students from theatres, Shochiku promptly established special student theatres.[77] In 1940, the government began to ration film stock, and this became a means for controlling the number and content of films.[78] In 1940, the Finance Ministry suspended the import of American films, an action that hurt the major firms because their theatres relied partly upon the Hollywood product.[79] The government's requirements for "culture films" (a concept yet to be clearly explained), the creation of prizes for the best films, and the compulsory shortening of film programs may have been aimed at pacifying the industry, but disputes still broke out. (When the Education Ministry awarded FIVE SCOUTS a prize and wanted it widely shown, Nikkatsu insisted on showing the film only in its own theatres.[80]) In short, the relations of the industry to state policy are complex and often conflicting. This is one reason that it is difficult to read some clear-cut ideology off the surfaces of the films.

SOME CONCLUSIONS

How, finally, can the study of this exotic cinema be significantly advanced? I suggest two general ways. First a historian of Japanese politics or culture would immediately notice that nearly all studies of Japanese cinema reveal an embarrassing reluctance to search out data. Anderson and Richie have not been helpful here, since their book altogether lacks footnotes and bibliography. Bock's *Japanese Film Directors* deserves praise for its detailed filmographies and scrupulous citations of sources. But another embarrassment arises when we consider what such sources are. Almost no Western historian has worked with *primary print documents* pertaining to the Japanese film. Anderson and Richie say only that their sources include written materials and interviews.[81] Bock draws her data almost entirely from interviews and recent secondary sources (books and articles about the various directors, none earlier than 1953). For example, while Bock does cite 1950s material on Mizoguchi, she does not mention early documents—such as the book of Yoda-Mizoguchi scripts published in 1937.

The reluctance of Japanese-speaking scholars to examine primary data means that the

most basic spadework remains to be done. As I write this, young historians of the American cinema are hunched over microfilm machines cranking through day after day of *Moving Picture World* or sitting in archives paging through studio memos. These historians must be our models. During the 1920s, the Japanese began expending gallons of ink on the subject of the cinema. There were trade journals, fan magazines, film criticism reviews, and studio magazines meant to be read within and outside the companies. Virtually every significant film was accompanied by a printed program. Daily newspapers included film advertisements, studio news, and reviews. Even if studio records remain inaccessible, many firms have published official company histories; Shochiku's mighty volume runs to 971 pages.[82] Elementary establishment of dates, events, and chronology can issue only from diligent probing in primary materials.

It would be too simple, though, to hope that fresh souces of data will automatically advance this research. We must also ask new questions. Recent film theory and critical analysis have shown the problems of the world-view-plus-working-methods career summary. It is no longer enlightening to suggest that a director's upbringing can account for a film's specific artistic qualities. It is no longer adequate to assume that films directly reflect a *Zeitgeist*. Informed by the promising trends in film theory, our research questions can define the salient issues with more precision. Take, for example, the concept of realism, which recurs in Anderson and Richie, in Bock, and in Mellen. Contemporary film theory has yielded several ways of making the concept fruitful and rigorous: Bazin's phenomenological realism, the Formalist view of realism as one sort of motivation, or the more recent insistence on realism as an interplay of ideologically-determined codes. Or take the issue of the "Japanese character." In no area of film studies do generalizations about national temperament circulate so blithely as in this one. We constantly encounter claims about what the Japanese are (ceremonial, courteous, sentimental) and what they like (a good cry, having things explained to them).[83] Although the intent—to imbed cinema within society—is laudable, national types as an explanatory model went out of historical research with the bustle and the straw boater. One of the most exciting areas of current film study is one which explores, again from a variety of theoretical bases, the complex interaction of economic and cultural factors that define cinema as a social practice. As the last section of this essay indicates, no sophisticated theory of film-in-society has yet been applied to Japanese filmmaking.

Our goal is, eventually, a totalized view. How can we see film style, the film industry, and the social matrix in one complex whole? Nothing less than a theory of art in culture is required. The most promising theories today derive from Marxist theories of society, and in other domains the Marxist tradition has produced some brilliant analyses (Adorno on modern music, Benjamin on Baudelaire and Brecht, Macherey on Jules Verne). This tradition is not, however, the only alternative, and historians need to frame their questions and hypotheses within other theoretical systems as well. Given that, our dream-cinema, for all its exoticism, can begin to make sense to Western eyes.

[1]Josept L. Anderson and Donald Richie, *The Japanese Film* (New York: Grove, 1960), p. 346.

[2]Paul Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 54-55.

[3]Noel Burch, "To the Distant Observer: Towards a Theory of Japanese Film," *October* 1 (Spring 1976), pp. 32-46.

[4]As were the *Cahiers du cinema* critics in the 1950s. See, for a specimen, Alexandre Astruc, "What is Mise-en-scene," *Cahiers du cinema in English* 1 (January 1966), pp. 53-55.

[5]Both *Cahiers du cinema* and *Screen* have found in Oshima's work a significant political cinema. See *Cahiers du cinema* 218 (March 1970), pp. 24-42; 292 (September 1978), pp. 45-51; Stephen Heath, "From Brecht to Film—Theses, Problems," *Screen* 16, 4 (Winter 1975/76), pp. 34-45; Heath, "Narrative Space," *Screen* 17, 3 (Autumn 1976), pp. 68-112; Heath, "The Question Oshima," *Wide Angle* 2, 1 (1977), pp. 48-57.

[6]"*Les Cahiers du cinema* 1968-1977: Interview with Serge Daney," *The Thousand Eyes* no. 2 (1977), p. 31.

[7]Roland Barthes, *L'empire des signes* (Geneva: Skira, 1970), p. 148.

[8]Anderson and Richie, p. 21.

[9]Akira Iwasaki, "An Outline History of the Japanese Cinema," in Tadasi Iizima, Akira Iwasaki, and Kisao Uchida, *Cinema Year Book of Japan 1936-1937* (Tokyo: Sanseido, 1947), p. 3.

[10]Inazo Nitobe, ed. *Western Influences in Modern Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), p. 159.

[11]Although World War I enabled the American cinema to flood the European market, Japan seems to have resisted falling under Hollywood dominance. Presumably the strong, vertically-organized Japanese industry could handle the competition. See "The Movies Most Popular in Japan," *Japan Advertiser* (10 March 1919), p. 2.

[12]J. Shige Sudzuky, "Cinema in Japan," *Close-Up* IV (February 1929), pp. 23-24.

[13]Anon. "Our Movies Remaking Japan," *Literary Digest* (6 May 1922), pp. 53-54; Takashiro Tachibana, "The Cinema in Japan," *Contemporary Japan* 1, 1 (June 1932), pp. 120-121; Anon., "Japanese Life Shows Effects of U.S. Pictures," *Japan Advertiser* (7 January 1940), p. 7

[14]Anderson and Richie, p. 41.

[15]Tachibana, pp. 120-121; Iwasaki, p. 7.

[16]Donald Richie, *Ozu* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 199-200; Tadao Sato, "The Art of Yasujiro Ozu (2)," *Japan Independent Film Bulletin* (1966), pp. 86-89.

[17]Yoshikata Yoda, "Souvenirs de Mizoguchi," *Cahiers du cinema* 169 (August 1965), p. 34.

[18]Ariane Mnouchkine, "Entretien aven Yoda Yoshikata and Miyagawa Kazuo," *Cahiers du cinema* 158 (August-September, 1964), pp. 25-26.

[19]Iwasaki, p. 3.

[20]Exact figures may be found in various sources: Pierre de Castillon, *Le cinema japonais, Notes et etudes documentaires* 4158-4159 (5 February 1975); *Film Daily Yearbook* (Los Angeles: Film Daily, 1925-); *International Motion Picture Almanac* (New York: Quigley, 1930-); *Japan Year Book* (Tokyo: Japan Year Book, 1923-); *Cinema Year Book of Japan* (Tokyo: Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai, 1936-39); *Nippon: A Charted Survey of Japan* (Tokyo: Kokusei-sha, 1958-); *United Nations Statistical Yearbook* (Paris: UNESCO, 1951-).

[21]Department of Commerce, Trade Information Bulletin no. 634, *Motion Pictures in Japan, Philippine Islands, Netherland East Indies, Siam, British Malaya, and French Indo-China* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1929), p. 5. Hereafter abbreviated as *Trade Information Bulletin.*

[22]Anonymous, "Theaters Are Becoming More International," *Japan Advertiser Annual Review 1933-34* (Tokyo: Japan Advertiser, 1934), p. 35.

[23]Figures are compiled from Terry Ramsaye, ed., *International Motion Picture Almanac 1937-8* (New York: Quigley, 1937), pp. 896-932, and Iizima et al., pp. 69-80.

[24]William W. Lockwood, *The Economic Development of Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), pp. 175-179.

[25]Richie, *Ozu*, p. 208.

[26]Figures are compiled from Ramsaye, pp. 896-932, and Iizima et al., pp. 69-80.

[27]In June 1937, the three organizations representing directors, writers, and cameramen even united into a single professional association. "Motion Picture Chronology," *Cinema Yearbook of Japan 1938*, p. 59.

[28]Richie, *Ozu*, p. 217.

[29]Anderson and Richie, pp. 165-171. The Japan Motion Picture Employees Guild seems to have been capable of organizing in support of fired musicians; see "Theatrical Strike is Called in Tokyo," *Trans-Pacific* 22, 35 (30 August 1934), p. 14.

[30]The family metaphor is widely discussed in the literature on Japanese business. A typical example is M.Y. Yoshino, *Japan's Managerial System: Tradition and Innovation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1968), pp. 75-83.

[31]Anderson and Richie, pp. 30-31.

[33]Yoda, *Cahiers du Cinema* 169, p. 33.

[34]Anderson and Richie, p. 82.

[35]Entry for Ichizo Kobayashi, *Who's Who in Japan 1940/41* (Tokyo: Who's Who in Japan Office, 1940), pp. 349-350.

[36]F. Barret, *L'Evolution du capitalisme japonais* vol. II (Paris: Editions sociales, 1947), pp. 194-195.

[37]Iwasaki, 12. Yoda claims that Toho rationalized Japanese filmmaking to an unprecedented degree; see "Souvenirs sur Mizoguchi," *Cahiers du cinema* 172 (November 1965), pp. 45-48.

[38]Light is shed on this problem in Donald Kirihara, "Not a White Man's Country" (unpublished paper, University of Wisconsin-Madison, January 1978), and Donald Kirihara and Kenji Kitatani, "The Japanese Film Industry in the 1930s" (unpublished paper, University of Wisconsin-Madison, March 1978).

[38]*Trade Information Bulletin*, pp. 5-6.

[39]Sudzuky, p. 22.

[40]Chikushi Tani, "Japan's 1936-37 Prospects," in Ramsaye, *Motion Picture Almanac 1936-7*, p. 1123.

[41]Kizo Nagashima, "Characteristics of our Dramatic Films," *Contemporary Japan* 9, 7 (July 1940), pp. 878-879; Anon. "Theatres Are Becoming More International," *Japan Advertiser Annual Review 1933-34*, p. 35.

[42]Santaro, "Japan Yesterday and Today—At the Cinema Theatre," *Japan Advertiser* (4 February 1940), p. 4.

[43]*Trade Information Bulletin*, pp. 8-9.

[44]Anderson and Richie, pp. 8-9.

[45]See George A. DeVos, *Socialization for Achievement: Essays on the Cultural Psychology of the Japanese* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), pp. 280-310.

[46]*ibid.*, p. 293.

[47]Anderson and Richie, pp. 87-88.

[48]Hideo Tumura, *Mizoguchi Kenji to iu Onoko (A Man Called Kenji Mizoguchi)* (Tokyo: Yoshiga Shoten, 1977), pp. 130-134. I am grateful to Kenji Kitatani for translating portions of this book.

[49]Conversation with Kenji Kitatani.

[50]Anderson and Richie, pp. 36-42.

[51]Burch, p. 42.

[52]*ibid.*, p. 36. Burch is not using "imaginary" in its Lacanian sense. The "imaginary referent" is the represented world of the narrative, while the "field of signs" is the physical/cultural act of representation itself. To create illusion is for Burch to efface the act of representation.

[53]Umberto Eco explains the distinction between signified and referent in *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), pp. 58-62.

[54]Mizoguchi has been the subject of many essays, particularly in *Cahiers du cinema*. The journal has reprinted important primary materials in "Mizoguchi Kenji," *Cahiers du Cinema hors serie* (September 1978). Books on Mizoguchi include Ve-Ho, *Mizoguchi* (Paris: Editions universitaires, 1964); Michel Mesnil, *Kenji Mizoguchi* (Paris: Seghers, 1965); Peter Morris, *Kenji Mizoguchi* (Ottawa: Canadian Film Archive, 1967), mainly a translation of Mesnil; and Akira Iwasaki, *Kenji Mizoguchi* (Paris: L'Avant-scene, 1968). French and American scholars have also written a great deal about Kurosawa, the chief works being Donald Richie, *The Films of Akira Kurosawa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965); *Etudes cinematographiques* 30-31 (1964); and Sacha Ezratty, *Kurosawa* (Paris: Editions universitaires, 1964). Wide appreciation of Ozu was last to come, although there is now something of an Ozu boom. Apart from the works discussed in the text, see John Gillett and David Wilson, eds., *Ozu: A Critical Anthology* (London: British Film Institute, 1976); Max Tessier, *Yasujiro Ozu* (Paris: L'Avant-scene, 1971); Hubert Niogret, " 'Introducing: Yasujiro Ozu,' " *Positif* 203 (February 1978), pp. 3-12; *Cahiers du cinema* 286 (March 1978), pp. 17-29; Michel Ciment, "Sous les yeux de l'occident," *Positif* 205 (April 1978), pp. 30-36; and Eithne Bourget, "Les rites de la communication et du silence (sur OHAYO)," *Positif*

205 (April 1978), pp. 37-39.

[55]Marvin Zeman, "The Zen Artistry of Yasujiro Ozu," *Film Journal* 1, 3-4 (Fall-Winter 1972), pp. 62-73.

[56]Schrader, pp. 17-55.

[57]Richie, *Ozu*, p. 9.

[58]*ibid.*, pp. 116, 124.

[59]*ibid.*, p. 153.

[60]*ibid.*, p. 169.

[61]*ibid.*, *passim*.

[62]Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, "Space and Narrative in the Films of Ozu," *Screen* 17, 2 (Summer 1976), pp. 41-73; Edward Branigan, "The Space of EQUINOX FLOWER," *Screen* 17, 2 (Summer 1976), pp. 74-105; Kristin Thompson, "Notes on the Spatial System of Ozu's Early Films," *Wide Angle* 1, 4 (1977), pp. 8-17.

[63]Joseph Anderson, "The Spaces in Between: American Criticism of Japanese Films," *Wide Angle* 1, 4 (1977), p. 5.

[64]Robert Cohen, "Mizoguchi and Modernism: Structure, Culture, Point of View," *Sight and Sound* 47, 2 (Spring 1978), p. 111.

[65]Paul Willemen, "Notes on Subjectivity—On Reading 'Subjectivity Under Siege,' " *Screen* 19, 1 (Spring 1978), p. 56.

[66]Good synoptic histories are W.G. Beasley, *The Modern History of Japan*, second edition (New York: Praeger, 1973); Jon Halliday, *A Political History of Japanese Capitalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1975); and Richard Storry, *A History of Modern Japan* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1960). Basic source material may be found in Ryusaku Tsunoda, William Theodore de Bary, and Donald Keene, eds., *Sources of Japanese Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), and Jon Livingston, Joe Moore, and Felicia Oldfather, eds., *The Japan Reader*, two volumes (New York: Pantheon, 1973).

[67]Sybil Thornton, *"The Waves at Genji's Door,"* *Film Quarterly* XXXI, 2 (Winter 1977-78), pp. 55-58. Joan Mellen's response appears in *Film Quarterly* XIX, 4 (Summer 1978), p. 65. An alternative ideological reading can be found in Taihei Imamura, "The Japanese Movie and Way of Thinking," *Science of Thought* II (1956), pp. 1-19.

[68]Mellen, p. 8.

[69]*ibid.*, p. 8.

[70]Famous examples from the arts would include not only Mizoguchi but Kawaraski Chojuro, a leftist who founded the Zenshinza, a left-wing theatrical troupe, in 1928. In 1937, this troupe began performing under government auspices, toured Germany and Italy, and worked with Mizoguchi on the government-supported Genroku Shushingura. After the war, the Zenshinza simply resumed its leftist political activities! See Japanese National Commission for UNESCO, *Theatre in Japan*, (Tokyo: Ministry of Education, 1963), pp. 196-203.

[71]Mellen, p. 253. There are some inaccuracies in Mellen's account of the film (pp. 254-255). Ayako and Nishimura walk past not a construction site but waterfront docks. Mellen seems to mistake Ayako's father for her brother. When Asai visits Ayako, the camera does not assume his point-of-view. In the deep-focus composition Mellen cites, it is not Ayako but her sister who is in the foreground.

[72]On the prostitution issue, see S. Washio, "End of Prostitution System Is Being Held in Abeyance," *Trans-Pacific* 23, 19 (9 May 1935), p. 5. On leftist-rightist parallels, see Beasley, pp. 256-257; Halliday, pp. 120-122; Storry, p. 194; and Rodger Swearingen and Paul Langer, *Red Flag in Japan* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1952), pp. 68-69.

[73]Thornton, p. 57.

[74]Japanese film censorship has caused comment for decades. I have been aided by Tokuji Seno, "Cinema Censorship in Japan," *Contemporary Japan* 4, 1 (June 1937), pp. 87-94; Anderson and Richie, *passim;* Thomas Wisniewski, "The Pretext and Necessity of Censorship: Kokkushugi, Kokuminshugi, and the Cinema in the Japan of the Thirties" (unpublished paper, University of Wisconsin-Madison, April 1978). See also Richard H. Mitchell, *Thought Control in Prewar Japan*

(Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976).

[75]Lockwood, pp. 230, 569.

[76]Mikio Tatebayashi, "The Motion-Picture Law: A Brief Survey," *Cinema Yearbook of Japan 1939* (Tokyo: Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai, 1939), p. 59.

[77]Anon., "Student Movie Houses Showing Culture Films Planned by Shochiku," *Japan Advertiser* (1 September 1940), p. 2.

[78]Anon., "Film Supply Curtailment to Producers May Deprive Country People of Movies," *Japan Advertiser* (5 March 1941), p. 7.

[79]Tsuneijiro Amakata, "What of the Rialto?" *Japan Advertiser* (20 June 1940), p. 8.

[80]Tsuneijiro Amakata, "What of the Rialto?" *Japan Advertiser* (27 February 1941), p. 3.

[81]Anderson and Richie, p. 16.

[82]*Schochiku 80 nen Shi (80 Years of Shochiku)* (Tokyo: Shochiku, 1974). Other company histories include *Daiei 10 nen Shi (10 Years of Daiei)* (Kyoto: Daiei, 1952); *Nikkatsu 50 nen Shi (50 Years of Nikkatsu)* (Tokyo: Nikkatsu, 1962); and *Toho 30 nen Shi (30 Years of Toho)* (Tokyo: Toho, 1973).

[83]Anderson and Richie, p. 23.

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