

The Body Emerging from Darkness: A Cross-Section of Post-World War II Japanese Cinema from the Perspective of Media Criticism (2019)

I. From Obviousness to Darkness

In the sentence "There is no grammar in film," quoted in the previous chapter (in my book "Frame-media literacy by modern cinema"), Yasujiro Ozu said, "As long as the positioning of AB (the interlocutors) is clear in a long shot, it does not matter what angle you shoot from" (#) and "The direction of the close-up is not important, but if the positioning of the interlocutors is not explained, the audience will be confused and not enter the film." (#) The shots that show their positional relationships are very common in current TV dramas and movies aired on TV. However, as mentioned in the previous chapter, Ozu's own films, which "are shot in a different way from others (as Sadao Yamanaka and Tomu Uchida said), so they are difficult to see at first, but you get used to them," are exactly the kind of films that "should be obvious" in terms of positioning, but "for those who are not used to" that way of shooting (that is, for those who are forced to recognize it as a visual medium This is the starting point of modern cinema, which can be said to reveal the medium of film in that it continues to evoke an eerie sense of discomfort "for those who are not accustomed" to the way it is shot (that is, for people today who are forced to recognize it as a visual medium and are therefore reluctant to become accustomed to it), even though the positioning is strictly "obvious. However, Ozu's films are still "masterpieces" of old cinema for those who simply follow the textual information and ignore the way they are shot, which makes them very troublesome and even "dangerous. And perhaps even for the new generation of Japanese filmmakers who emerged after World War II, the films of Yasujiro Ozu were "troublesome" whether they denied or praised them.

In the films of Ozu's contemporary Kenji Mizoguchi, for example, the position of the interlocutor is obvious. In *Zangiku Monogatari/The Story of the Last Chrysanthemums* (1939), for example, Otoku (Kakuko Mori) comes out of the theater with sound of clappers, drums, and shamisen background after witnessing Kikunosuke's (Shotaro Hanayagi) success on the Osaka stage, shaking with sickness and joy. The camera moves forward from a long size of Otoku coming out to a bust-size shot of her walking with Kikunosuke who followed her, then overlaps to the next scene. The large set in the background, from the theater to the cityscape, is probably intended to keep the distance from the uncompromising subjects. In another scene near the end of *Saikaku Ichidai Onna/The Life of Oharu* (1952), the sound of a koto (a Japanese harp) is being violently played, and every time Oharu (Kinuyo Tanaka) approaches the young lord to take a glance at his own child, her retainers stop her, but when she says "My child," they momentarily flinch and let her go, and rush after her to They rush after her and try to pull her back. The positioning of the young lord's procession and the pursuing Oharu and her retainers is also obvious, and the set seems to have been built to achieve the strict distance of each long shot. Mizoguchi shares with Rossellini the point that a dramatic film is also a documentary of actors being

hunted down by camera. However, while Rossellini tried to show only human beings in the frame, Mizoguchi, as the successor to the German expressionist Murnau, tries to show the relationship between the device and the actors, i.e., the space, in the frame. Distance is necessary for this purpose. However, a perfect set to realize this distance without compromise, i.e., a device to catch up with the actors, is probably not possible in today's age of CG. Even if a set were to be realized, the distance between the actors and the production staff managing the budget would not be the same as Mizoguchi's, given the current shift from PCs to smartphones as the major video equipment.

Or the last scene of Tomu Uchida's *Gyakusyu Gokumon Toride/Rebellion from Below* (1956), where the peasants, including Shozo (Chiezo Kataoka), who revolted, drive out the deputy (Ryunosuke Tsukigata), and even the one shot taken by a crane that pulls a rope to destroy the house and run up to the roof, the positional relationship between the peasants and the deputy is clear and traceable for the audience. The position of the peasants and the deputy is clear and traceable to the viewer. On the other hand, in Nagisa Oshima's *Amakusa Shiro Tokisada/The Revolutionary* (1962), which also deals with the uprising by the peasants, a scene in the dark following the explanation of the period by subtitles at the beginning of the film is clearly told in the soundtrack as the officials abduct and take away a woman pregnant with child to pay tribute, while the remaining peasants go to Amakusa Shiro (Hashizo Okawa). The peasants, however, are visually indistinguishable from the rest of the film. Then, in the second half of the film, the figures are spotlighted in the darkness and disappear into the darkness after their own speeches until Yosanemon (Tokue Hanazawa), Uemonsaku (Rentaro Mikuni), and their killers Kakuzo (Takao Yoshizawa), Tamezo (Choichiro Kawarazaki), and the instigator ronin (Rokko Taura). The positioning of the people, which would certainly have shown the entirety of the peasants holed up in the castle, becomes ungraspable, and when Shiro and the ronin face each other, the entire scene is finally visible in the frame again.

While Ozu said, "Unless the positions of the interlocutors are explained, the audience will be confused and will not be able to enter the film," several outstanding filmmakers who appeared in postwar Japanese cinema did not make it easy to grasp their positions, but instead concealed them in darkness, obstructed the gaze, or made it difficult to follow them in the distance and with a hand-held camera. That is not the same as using a black shot. For example, while web viewers of Guy Debord's *Hurlements en faveur de Sade* (1952) can skip over the black shot (which means that the film is now more suitable for cinemas than before), Japanese filmmakers I mention have tried to make the audience's gaze follow them on the relevant screen while at the same time trying not to. In *Hakuchi/The Idiot* (1951), a film adaptation of Dostoevsky that Akira Kurosawa shot under the influence of German Expressionism and of Abel Gance and others in the 1930s and that won the acclaim of Grigory Kozintsev and Andrei Tarkovsky in the Soviet Union, Akama (Toshiro Mifune), who has murdered Taeko (Setsuko Hara), loses his mind and with Kameda (Masayuki Mori) collapses in a heap in the darkness. This scene at the end of *Hakuchi*, which was shot after the

international success of *Rashomon* (1950), which later became the subject of Yoshishige Yoshida's *Eros + massacre* (1969) deconstruction, but was met with forced shortening and unpopularity, is not yet so dark that the positions of the characters cannot be grasped. However, the immobility of the long figures, the insane monologue, and the relentless length of the scene make the stylized image itself strongly conscious. Ever since his debut film, *Sanshiro Sugata* (1943), depicting a protagonist who refuses to move in a pond, immobility, people sitting on the ground in a circle, has been a much more important theme for Akira Kurosawa's films than motion. Kurosawa then reached his peak with *Dondoko* (1957), a cinematic adaptation of *Gorky with multiple cameras*. And *I live in Fear* (1955), *Dodeskaden* (1970), *Dreams* (1990)... But with the decline of the studio, he became less prolific.

## 2. People of the 1960s

Prior to the aforementioned Amakusa Shiro Tokisada, Nagisa Oshima's *Nihon no yoru to kiri/Night and Fog in Japan* (1960) already made it impossible to grasp the positions of the characters due to darkness. When Masahiko Tsugawa arrives at a wedding and is about to congratulate the bride and groom (Fumio Watanabe and Miyuki Kuwano) and recount their beginnings, the lights go down and it is pitch black, and spotlights reveal students mired in the student movement, and the young bride and groom are among them, crying and singing over the death of a female student. Nagisa Oshima, who was active in theater at Kyoto University, was also able to direct the back-and-forth between the past and present as a documentary = theater = cinema in front of the camera. The technique of using the moving frame as a theatrical stage with people coming in and out of the frame is similar to Alain Resnais from this perspective, but as in *Night and Fog in Japan*, which left Masahiko Tsugawa's mistake, Oshima established his style by specializing in the "documentary" of the performance, but then he was always able to make even low-budget films. By requiring some kind of stage/background, he left a sign that his roots were in studio films, which led to a "return" after *Ai no Corrida/Empire of Senses* (1976).

Yoshishige (Kiju) Yoshida, in his post-Shochiku independent films from *Mizu de kakareta monogatari/A Story Written with Water* (1965) to *Juhyo no Yoromeki/Affair in the Snow* (1968), a documentary of Mariko Okada's transformation, so to speak, changed the background of the space where she is confined from the blackness of a Japanese-style room with dimmed lights to the whiteness of a blanket of snow. From the bottom of the boat with Shigeru Tsuyuguchi in *Onna no Mizuumi/Woman of the Lake* (1966) to the love scene in the villa with Takeshi Kusaka in *Hono to Onna /Impasse* (1967), when the camera circled around her and captured the nape of Mariko Okada's neck, which shone white in the lighting, it was a scene that was never in focus in the media, and that could not easily be recovered in textual information (for example like her genitalia). The film's persistence in capturing a part of the body that is not focused on in the media, nor is it easily captured in textual information such as genitalia, was a challenge to see if it was possible to personalize a film for general theatrical release in Japan at that

time (in contrast to *Nihon shunka Kou/Sing a Song of Sex*(1967) in which Nagisa Oshima most heavily relied on Akiko Koyama's body and voice in only the final part of the film). Of the trilogy of films dealing with politics from "Eros + Massacre" to *Kaigenrei/Coup d'Etat* (1973), *Rengoku Eroica/Heroic Purgatory* (1970) is the most important in the sense that it is a film about the maze space itself, which moves back and forth between times and places. Yoshishige Yoshida puts several characters on the same screen, but instead of centering them in the center of the screen, he brings them to the edges or hides them almost entirely in the foreground. The apartment where the main characters, Mr. and Mrs. Shoda, live is a real scene, and the background cannot be moved as in the sets of Ozu's films. Therefore, the camera angle is not centered on the people, and each time the cut changes, the people are placed at the edge of the frame differently from the previous shot, and the background is enlarged. The abstraction of the background space created by the intense whiteness and angles of the black-and-white images, and the dilution of the relationship between the background and the people in it, allow us to see, for example, a group of people including Mariko Okada, who plays the year 1970, at the trial and execution of a comrade of the revolutionary group in 1952, and the location of the trial and execution can be an indoor or outdoor space each time the cut is made.

As representative works of their contemporaries who created space by covering the positions of their characters with darkness, we can cite Toshio Matsumoto's *Shura/Demons* (1970) and Atsushi Yamatoya's *Uragiri no kisetsu/Season of Betrayal* (1966). *Shura* is a period drama set in darkness, beginning with the sun setting at the beginning of the film. When Gengohei (Katsuo Nakamura) first returns home after being chased by his captors, he sees Koman (Yasuko Sanjo) being slain, but it is a dream, but the real nightmare begins after he wakes up = Gengohei himself repeats the dream. The scene is repeated many times until the scene of seppuku (ritual suicide) of Sanjyo Taishi, as if to emphasize that the tragicomedy is played out in the background covered with darkness. On the other hand, *Season of Betrayal* is set in a room of an apartment building where a Vietnam War cameraman (Yuzo Tachikawa) tries to kill his colleague and take his wife, and an organization is after him to steal his colleague's photographs. On the wall of the darkened room, which is never shown in its entirety, a photograph taken by a colleague is stretched and pasted. This wall and the image of the colleague's arm that the protagonist has severed evoke memories of his colleague and the battlefield in Vietnam, and he is haunted by the fear that he too is being targeted. In both works, the positions of the people in the space where the scene takes place are intentionally covered by darkness, so that the audience does not grasp their relationship to the background. This may of course be due to the budgetary constraints of independent productions and pink films, as in the case of Oshima and Yoshida mentioned above, but it may also be to establish a continuity for the fictionalization of the film.

### 3. The Case of Seijun Suzuki

What about the case of Seijun Suzuki? As is well known, like his contemporaries Tai Kato and Yasuzo Masumura, Seijun Suzuki's films were above all inextricably linked to the studios and sets. At least until the time when he was dismissed from Nikkatsu for *Koroshi no rakuin/Branded to Kill* (1967), in which Atsushi Yamatoya also participated as Guryu Hachiro in the screenplay, and when he shot *Hishu monogatari/A Tale of Sorrow and Sadness* (1977) at Shochiku, he was known for his ideas for action films such as the suspended gun battle in *Yaju no Seishun/Youth of the Beast* (1963), the glass floor in *Irezumi Ichidai/A Life of Tattoo* (1965), the white club in *Tokyo Nagaremono/Tokyo Drifter* (1966), etc. At the same time, however, Seijun Suzuki's films had a logic of "continuity of discontinuity" that other filmmakers did not have, showing that even movement and stillness captured by a fixed screen, and sometimes even diametrically opposed directions of action, could be connected in a strict manner. For example, when the phoenix Tetsu (Tetsuya Watari) sings as he walks down a snowy street in *Tokyo Drifter*, the yakuza gangsters of the Otsuka clan shout "It's Tetsu!" and suddenly Tetsu appears. At the end of the scene, Tetsu is surrounded by the gang and throws his gun on the floor and picks it up and shoots them all at the same time, and then to the traitor boss (Ryuji Kita) he throws his gun up and shoots him while dodging the bullets. Suzuki shows Tetsu running to the right, but insert the close-up of the gun falling down and connects he running to the left, catching the gun and shooting it. This is like the scene in *Branded to Kill* where Hanada (Jo Shishido), who is escorting a man (Koji Nanjo), who later turns out to be the number one assassin, recognizes the enemy on the roof of a building, then runs into a car blocking the road in a tunnel, exits the car, and shoots in an unexpected direction, followed by a distant view of the enemy falling from the roof. It is a chain of spaces that is possible only in a film that cannot exist in reality. In *Branded to Kill*, Hanada fails to commit the murder he is asked to commit and is taken prisoner by Misako (Marianne), but no matter how many butterflies are affixed to the walls of the room where he is trapped, the room is a set, and of course the camera can maintain a distance to move across it in Cinemascope size. In other words, that "freedom" or "avant-garde" was supported by the studio system of classic films at their heyday.

In *Zigeunerweisen* (1980), which he later shot after leaving the studio, Aochi (Toshiya Fujita) is invited by Sono/Koina (Naoko Otani) to enter her house and walks down a pitch-dark hallway where red lights flash and heavy bass and female voices are heard. Despite the delicate lighting that conceals her from the waist down, we can see the limitations of the studio's lack of freedom to remove walls for mobile filming. However, the following film, *Kagero-za* (1981), can be seen as a critical point work in which professionals who left the studios played with all the limitations of the time, just like Orson Welles' films that left Hollywood. For example, in the scene where Shunko Matsuzaki (Yusaku Matsuda), led by a raccoon band, walks aimlessly and finds Shinako (Michiyo Ogusu) at a shrine, Matsuzaki's figure walking from the back of the screen is presented by jump-cut editing from the distant view of a country road to the middle view, including some repetition of the same background that seems like a roundabout. It just reminds us of K's walk toward the

final execution in Welles' *The Trial*, but in daylight, there is no shadow, only distance and frame to support the fiction, an art of supreme skill. And the scene of the two talking to each other in the midst of falling cherry blossoms, with the two clearly distant from each other at different places, as usual, is the pinnacle of "discontinuity of continuity," which even Welles and Resnais, Western writers who assume continuity, and Manoel de Oliveira and Raul Ruiz, who were later cited in Western literature discussing Seijun Suzuki, did not do. But even there, the use of zooming instead of moving shots reveals the limitation of not being shot in a studio. And this limitation becomes fully visible in the films after *Capone oini naku/Capone Cries a lot* (1985), which shows that the former studios have been replaced by the television system. The same can be said for the later works of other filmmakers from studios who lived at the peak of classical cinema, such as Tai Kato's *Hono no gotoku/Flames of Blood* (1981) and Masumura Yasuzo's *Sonezaki shinju/Double suicide Sonezaki* (1978), but perhaps Kato, who regarded Daisuke Ito as his ideal, and Masumura, who said Visconti's *Terra Trema* was his ideal, were not willing to show their limits. It would have been historically impossible to think that Masumura, who was studying in Italy, would have been different if he had considered Rossellini as his ideal, like the French Nouvelle Vague directors, instead of Visconti (see, even if one sees the scene in *The Garden of Eden* (1980) in which the couple paints on the wall as a homage to Rossellini's *Stromboli*). In contrast, Seijun Suzuki's later works, just as Nobuo Nakagawa, who probably considered Masahiro Makino's *Itaro Yamagami* screenplay to be his ideal, took a critical distance from it (the appearance of Kuroko in the title of *Tokaido Yotsuya Kaidan/Ghost Story of Yotsuya* (1959) can be taken as a sign of theater=cinema), are documentaries about how to play with the limitations of the times, or how to fight and lose. This is why the inclusion of backstage footage in *Operetta Tanuki Goten/Princess Raccoon* (2005) is appropriate to this attitude.

### 3. 1970s to 1980s

The images of certain Japanese filmmakers of various genres who were active in studios at the height of their careers and entered the 1970s surrendered their position as a major entertainment medium to television, and amidst the bankruptcy and downsizing of studios, the replacement of staff and techniques that were mainly used for television, and the shift from black and white to color filming, the images of these filmmakers were "found" in various forms as part of the medium. The "resistance" to the subordination of bright, clear screens and textual information to the goal of "comprehensibility" in various forms as part of the media was demonstrated as "invisibility" for the audience. The excellent Japanese films of the 1970s are documentaries of such "resistance. In the late works of the aforementioned Tai Kato, this "invisibility" is shown everywhere. In his *Hana to Ryu: Seiun Hen, Aizo Hen, Doto Hen/Flower and Dragon-Story of Youth/Story of Love/Story of the Angry Waves* (1973), in the silent close-up of Mitsuko Baisho on the station

stairs with Hibari Misora's song playing in the background, the fight scene in which the camera is held below the ground to capture the face of an angry screamer, while objects, snow and water in the foreground continue to block the viewer's gaze. The film realizes a surprisingly wide range of sound moments, from a battle scene in which the camera is held below the ground to capture a face shouting in anger while objects, snow and water in the foreground continue to obstruct the viewer's gaze. In one of his last works, "Za Ondekoza" (1979), there is a scene where the loudest drum sounds correspond to the trembling behind the drummers' knees, shot at an elevated angle, and in Edogawa Rampo no inju/A Scream from Nowhere (1977), like the close-up of the white tabi socks and wounds in the encounter scene between Samukawa (Teruhiko Aoi) and Shizuko (Yoshiko Kayama), Tai Kato suddenly condenses everything from the din and clamor to a single point, and this is the most beautiful moment and the final brilliance that could only be realized in a film made during the studio era. On the other hand, the hand-held cameras of Toei's real-life yakuza films, for example series of The Battle Without Honor and Humanity by Kinji Fukasaku from around 1973 to 1977, and the night shootout in Toru Murakawa's Mottomo kiken na yugi/Games of Maximum Risk (1978) are not about following the battle, but rather about the moment of losing oneself in the darkness. It can be said that these images show the fictional limits of classical cinema as a medium.

The directors of Nikkatsu Roman Porno also had resisted against the bright, clear screen. Noboru Tanaka's Hitozuma shudan boko chishi jiken/Rape and death of a housewife(1978), Masaru Konuma's Sasuraai no koibito: memai/Wandering Lovers: Dizziness (1978), and Chusei Sone's Tenshi no Harawata: Akai Kyoshitsu/Angel guts:red classroom (1979) presented a "glimpse" of the naked body rather than expose it to the light of day. And especially in Tatsumi Kamishiro's Akai kami no onna/The woman with red hair (1979) and A! Onnatachi: Waika/Oh! Woman: A Dirty Song (1981) and "Mika madoka:Yubi o nurasu onna/Woman who wets fingers (1984), the long scenes in which the acting of the sex act between a man and a woman and the conversation are combined, are not reassuring for the audience who thinks that no other act takes place in the sex scene as in most films and does not want to watch a long sex act It is an excellent "theater=cinema of the sex act" in front of the camera in the sense that the audience needs to follow the whole performance. For example, in A! Onnatachi: Waika, Yoko (Yuriko Nakamura) injures George's (Yuya Uchida) leg with a kitchen knife while he is having sex with Kae (Yuriko Kado) and takes it away from him, while Kae continues to cry and scream. In Modori gawa/Modori river (1983), a scene in which Gakuyo (Kenichi Hagiwara) and Akiko (Mieko Harada) are on a boat struggling to stop suicide with sleeping pills, and a night fog envelops them, making the dialogue even harder to hear and see. This scene was also a defiance against the easy use of text and information by making it difficult to hear and see the dialogue.

Furthermore, it was the early works of Shinji Somai that "unintentionally" advanced the criticism of informatization through this "invisibility. In the long shot using a crane that begins at the school swimming pool where the first scene of Shonben Rider/P.P. Rider(1983) appears and continues to the schoolyard, and in the

famous scene of lateral movement at harbor of Kiba, where children and a yakuza gangster fall in and out of the water, the characters who speak the dialogue move violently in and out of the frame, creating a utopia of movement without giving the audience any textual information. In the same way, when the viewer is also exposed to a long shot that shows more than 10 scenes of the heroine Iori's life before Yuichi (Takaaki Enoki) takes her in as a child in *Yuki no dansho:Jonetsu/Lost Chapter of Snow:Passion* (1985), a conversation scene in a cab at night which is colored by a song by Momoe Yamaguchi in *Love Hotel* (1985), and fishing on a boat blocked by wind, rain and waves in *Gyoei no mure/The Catch* (1983), the long shots and camera shaking in each scene, which are shot through objects that obstruct the viewer's line of sight, force us to be aware of the camera itself first, rather than the subject itself. Apart from Kenji Mizoguchi, however, we shouldn't easily compare to Somai's long shots with long-shot directors in other countries in this period, such as Theo Angelopoulos' *The Hunter* (1978) and O Megalexandros(1980) (who controlled completely-too completely-movement of camera and off-screen sound and space) or Jánecsó Miklós' *Sirokko*(1969) and Fényes szelek(1969) and Tarr Béla (both Hungarian directors could not use off-screen space) . Somai's incomplete tightrope walk without a budget and state support for a major film that could achieve one scene and one cut was a document of the difficulties of Japanese cinema itself and its production situation, which was forced to be an entertainment medium despite the fact that it had ended as an industry.

No other Japanese film, at least not one that uses off-screen space as much as Shintaro Katsu's *Kaoyaku*(1971), is a film that is so "hard" for viewers to watch because Katsu develops scenes with close-ups of people and objects without clearly locating the interlocutors, and, like John Cassavetes, who was mentioned in Chapter 3, for letting viewers stares at details of people who are not speaking the dialogue. This is because the viewer stares at the details of the person who is not speaking the dialogue. In the third episode *Mysterious Journey* (1979) of the TV series *Shin Zatoichi*, Zatoichi (Shintaro Katsu), led by a beggar played by Mieko Harada, enters a deserted house, and when Harada, who has changed his voice from beggar to nun, walks along the wall to tell his story, the position of the two interlocutors is unknown in the darkness. This long scene, in which close-ups and out-of-frame voices can be heard, is probably far beyond the limits of television. The monologue of the murderer in the room with the walls painted with blood in *Colt Government M1191*, the second episode of *Keishi-K/Inspector K*, is shot behind his back and through glass, and the final dialogue between father and daughter Katsu is in a low voice, which seemed to be the limit of hearing with the simultaneous recording microphones of the time, and also in a long shot of a trailer house with a night view, so much so that nothing is visible. By using close-ups and darkness (although in some cases, as in "*Zatoichi Monogatari*," episode 23, *Shinju Aiya-bushi* (1974), the entire surface is white snow) to make the distance between the speakers non-deterministic, Katsu became one of the last of the filmmakers who resisted the use of textual information, and in the 1980s, he was rejected by the television industry. Apart from this darkness, the direction of not



showing the distance between interlocutors, or when to show it, as mentioned in Chapter 4 on American films, can be seen, for example, in the scene where Nobuyo (Masako Mori) visits the store that is Jiro's (Kenichi Kato) home in the first night (1981) of the 10th episode of TBS TV Sunday Theater *Omoide zukuri/Memories in the Making* directed by Shinichi Kamoshita. It also survived into the TV dramas of the 1980s, as in the scene where the husband (Keiki Kobayashi) imagines that his wife (Fumiko Wakao) will kill him with scissors in same Kamoshita's *Gentle Wife is a Murderer* (1986), but it has all but disappeared now.

#### IV. Takeshi Kitano, Kiyoshi Kurosawa, Shinji Aoyama, Teiichi Hori, and...

It is an undeniable fact that Takeshi Kitano's early works were "external" to the dominant visual image of Japan at the end of the 1980s, when darkness had disappeared even from the screens of the aforementioned artists. Already in *Sono Otoko, Kyobo ni Tsuki/The Violent Cop* (1989), there is a combination of the rhythm of dialogue, which could be felt in *Two-Beat's* comic dialogue or the narration of a radio personality (Kitano became the most popular TV star by them), and long periods of stillness plus a moment of violence; sounds outside the frame, which are mostly bursts of violence; the expressionless faces of the main cast; the use of fixed long shots rather than close ones; and the use of the "gag" effect by moving away from the camera in a fixed long shot, etc. The following films, *3-4X October* (1990) and *Ano Natsu, Ichiban Shizukana Umi/ A scene at the sea* (1991), are representative of Japanese cinema of this period, and were at the forefront of their time in using unknown people and the power of documentary to film fiction. However, while Shintaro Katsu and even Shinichi Kamoshita were careful not to easily show the distance between two people in dialogue or antagonism, Kitano seems not to be concerned with showing the distance in the final confrontation in *Sono otoko kyobo ni tsuki*, the beating at the union office in *3-4X October*, and the scene in *Ano Natsu, Ichiban Shijima na Umi* where a woman greets a man returning from the sea. Kitano does not seem to be concerned with showing distance. Perhaps the movement from expressionlessness and stillness to momentary violence (or gag) has replaced it? Indeed, in the scene where Iguchi (Takashi Iguchi/Gadalkanal Taka) is stabbed in *3-4X October*, the frame begins with his hands, lower body, and the face of the person sitting in the back seat of the car facing him, then cuts to a conversation outside the frame, and suddenly Iguchi, stabbed in the stomach, falls back and is hit back in the face. This is followed by another shot of Iguchi suffering as he is stabbed again from the front. In this Bresson-like scene, however, Kitano does not remove Iguchi's suffering face from the frame. In the baseball scene where Masahiko (Masahiko Ono/Yurei Yanagi) hits a home run and overtakes Kazuo (Minoru Iizuka/Duncan), the runner in front of him, and in the scene where a car making fun of Masahiko hits a parked car, the former is in slow motion and the latter is a jump cut, with the person/car in front of him in the frame. In other words, Takeshi Kitano treated the out-of-frame sound as a complement to the in-frame spectacle, and the film was in the

category of classic films, but the box-office failure of 3-4X October indicates that this was a "critical point" for Kitano and the Japanese audience at the time, who wanted to remain with classic films.

For now, the last person to carry on the lineage of "invisibility" in postwar Japanese cinema is probably Kiyoshi Kurosawa. It is the presence of invisibility, or blackness and shadow, somewhere on the screen that still makes him Japan's most important filmmaker. Oddly enough, this seems to be the end of the "invisibility" trend that began with Akira Kurosawa's "Hakuchi" (The Idiot), a film by a filmmaker with the same surname Kurosawa. However, for Kiyoshi Kurosawa, the "difficulty of seeing" began with his films made in the era of 8mm film, which had the most blurred image quality. It is obvious if we recall and contrast the second half of Toso zenya/The Night Before Escape (1982), or Kunitoshi Manda's masterpiece Draw the Line of Escape (1984), which consists only of clear movement, with the blurred long shots in Kurosawa's School Days (1978) and Shigarami Gakuen (1981). However, when using an 8mm camera with a wide-open exposure on an overcast or dimly-lit day, the graininess and shaky trackback make it even more difficult to see what is happening, and it is not immediately clear what is happening. After the introduction of 35mm film, it was legitimized as a horror film shadow in Sweet Home(1989), became a shadow of film noir in Revenge (1997), The Way of the Snake (1998), and The Eyes of the Spider (1998), and after CURE (1997), it became a trademark of Kurosawa's films. The human being who disappears as a black stain in Pulse (2001) is a rather "happy" example where the story and the artist's specific subject matter coincide. This leads to the dark shadows of the police station in Creepy(2016) and the darkness behind the vinyl shimmering in the wind at the abandoned factory at the end of Before we vanish (2017). The "invisibility" of Kiyoshi Kurosawa's works is not limited to shadows and blackness, but also includes the invisible faces of women, including spirits, in Pulse and Barren Illusion (1999) and LOFT (2005), the back view of Mizuki's (Eri Fukatsu) dead father in Journey to the Shore(2015), and various other forms of distance, shadow, and framed sections. The viewer is caught off-guard by the freedom of the film to change its form in various ways, such as distance, shadow, and the portion of the image cut off from the frame. What strikes the viewer more than the last scene of "Doremifa musume no chi ga sawagu" (1985) or the title of Bright Future (2003), in which the camera appears, is that it makes us strongly aware that we are simply looking at things through images. This is what we might call a "film of vision," in which the way we see things determines whether we live or die. At the same time, however, it runs the risk of missing out on the danger, ease, and subtlety of Antonioni's method of objectifying the human figure, which I discussed in Chapter 1. (in my book "Frame-media literacy by modern cinema").

In Japanese cinema, which is subordinated to television, where the techniques of film production and the old studios do not exist, and where clear images and sounds, realistic or not, are forced as tools to convey information, can images and sounds emerge from their own

existence and stop being the manipulators of the gaze? No. Whether the filmmakers intend to or not, there are still various attempts to do so, but they have moved to a more subtle level, not to the point of not letting the viewer grasp the relationship between the position of the images and sounds. In the case of Shinji Aoyama, for example, we can see this in a smaller work than *Eureka* (2001), which is generally regarded as his masterpiece. Even if *Wild Life* (1997), like the aforementioned Yamatoya's *Season of Betrayal*, is a film about the actions of people manipulated by a dead man, and even if Saga (Ishibashi Ryo), a former detective who is determined that he cannot be the Jo Shishido of *Branded to Kill* at the end of *Tsumetai Chi/In Cold Blood* (1997), is not able to repeat the jump outside the stadium. And the discussion at the end of *Lakeside Murder Case* (2004) by parents who are covering up a murder reminds us of Nagisa Oshima's *Shiiku/The Catch* (1961), there is no darkness or device that visually obstructs the viewer's gaze. However, the *Wild Life* is not a film that is visually disturbing to the audience. However, just as the physicality of the comical one scene/one shot in which Rie (Yuna Natsuo) breaks an ornament while Sakai (Kosuke Toyohara) is on the phone while the past and present coexist in the two scenes/one cut and double flashback of *Wild Life* emerges, the physicality of *Tsumetai chi* The playful suicide in the stadium and the ex-cop jumping with people in hazmat suits are played out knowing that the fiction of the film studio is no more = a small documentary of people playing. And even if the stone-throwing gestures of Tsukumi (Etsushi Toyokawa) yelling at parents at their wits' end for defending themselves in *Lakeside Murder Case* are a repetition of Manchuo Sakurada's gestures in Nagisa Oshima's *Gishiki/The ceremony*, the ridiculousness of playing with the ugliness of the Japanese community through images and sounds that have been cleaned up for a TV station's production This is the decisive difference between the two. In other words, it captures the moment when the bodies of those who "perform" classic or genre films emerge from the system, and at the same time, it shows the gap between them and their predecessors, i.e., their historicity.

Teiichi Hori's *Mousou Shoujo Otaku Kei /Girl with a Mind for Nerds*(2007) is a comedy about Rumi (Asami Kai), a high school girl who has to pass through the world of boys' love comics to make contact with boys, but there are several fictional stages she passes through. Rumi fantasizes about a BL relationship between Abe (Masei Nakayama) and Chiba (Toru Baba), then draws pictures based on Abe's model, enjoys playing the character with Yoko (Aya Kiguchi), who also likes BL comics, and ends up dressing up because Chiba's sister was a manga artist. Like someone who can only grasp the world through media, Rumi actually suffers in front of Abe's naked body, and after a beautiful scene in which she sees the senior boys of the judo club confess their feelings for Chiba, and with the help of Yoko, tries on makeup as an adult woman and weeps, she confesses to Abe that she should go out with the boy inside her. When Rumi and Yoko perform their fantasies, they are naturally "theater=cinema" and there are references to Jacques Rivette's films, including insert screens with rough image quality, like the 16mm film. Teiichi Hori seems to be saying that "cinema" is to capture the moment when

the vivid bodies of the girls who are narrating and acting the BL comics emerge, just like when you watch a film in a foreign country without subtitles. In Hori's next film, masterpiece *Ren* (2008), even though we cannot believe in the future world and its rules as described by Ren (Rei Okamoto), a high school girl who says she is a "prisoner of time in future world" like Rudolf Thome's *Der Philosoph* (1989). Like Howard Hawks, Hori does not show her past/ future, so we can only follow her behavior. The 14 minute fixed shot of the final night, in which Ren and Reito (Toru Baba) and Shuji (Masei Nakayama), who calls himself the "will of time," settle down around a campfire, proves that even if we cannot believe or understand the science fiction/truths that Shuji tells us, if we can capture the relationship between the actors, their voices, and the background, it can only be wonderful. Hori's next documentaries, series of *Tenryu-ku*, took him to a time when there was no information at all. Here are some beautiful scenes from Teiichi Hori's *Tenryu-ku, Okuryoke Osawa, Winter* (2014). The old couple's voice talking about the once bustling Inari Shrine on the mountainside and sericulture is cut off, and the background sound is all that is left on the screen, which then turns away from the sound of the stream and into the forest, and from the sound of rain on the eaves of the roof to a long shot of the smoking mountainside, and close-ups of chili pepper, taro and Jizo, the color of rain hitting the tin roof and stone pavement Rich sounds can be heard. In between, the fixed screen and microphones follow the sound of water, while the space rises and falls, from far to near, and the editing creates a dynamic audiovisual music. Before his sad passing in 2017, Hori told me that he had in mind the scene in *Ozu's Late Spring* (1949) that leads from the urn to the garden of Ryoanji Temple, and this film may be the only modern cinema that embodies the tradition of Japanese cinema of the studio era, in which the story is told through the accumulation of scenery and objects shot on a fixed screen, as an individual work.

Today, as more and more one-person productions are made with digital video and smartphones, images that retain a personal rhythm and moment are seldom seen, and the majors have come to be dominated by tragic and cruel spectacles that make money for television. The children of the next generation will grow up in a uniform visual environment, watching them from birth, and the long shots that are seldom seen in a myopic visual environment will have to be acquired through acquired learning. For these reasons, workshops in schools have become important in the world as a place where collective work can be established in opposition to commercial images that uncritically take over from classical images. In recent Japanese cinema, for example, school and other workshops have been the site for films with original rhythms, such as Ryusuke Hamaguchi's *Happy Hour* (2015), Natsuka Kusano's *Domains* (2019), and Takuji Suzuki's *People of Poppo Town* (2012) and *Jogging Migratory Birds* (2015), Hiroshi Takahashi's *Carol of the Old Masters* (2011) and *Spiritual Bolsheviks* (2008), Yoichi Nishiyama's *INAZUMA Lightning* (2005) and *Kasanegafuti* (2011), Makoto Shinozaki's *Since Then* (2001), and Makoto Shinozaki's "Since Then" (2001). However, unless it escapes from the

uniformity of the media and the rhythm of commercial images, and unless it is conscious of creating space and rhythm as a living band (theater, for example, could be a base for this), it will gradually disappear.

Not all of the images that I have arbitrarily described here are claimed to be intended as a critique of the media. In an age when excessive visual images are eroding our daily lives and manipulating us, self-critical images that obstruct our gaze, or "invisibility," or that were condemned, rejected, or ignored in various ways in the past, have been revived with importance from a new perspective. Especially in a country like Japan, where it is easy to create a closed linguistic environment, and where we are constantly exposed to the danger of monitors surrounding us all speaking the same discourse at the same time, it seems urgent to defend visual images that make the audience aware of their own discomfort and self-criticism in their audiovisual perception.

(#) There is no Grammar in Film," Yasujirō Ozu, *geijutu-shincho* 1959, Apr.

© Akasaka Daisuke