modern cinema as media criticism (1)

"Cinema" is over. That's fine. What you used to call cinema is already over. However, even after the end of "cinema",a great number of images are still being produced, and they are called "movie-like things," "moving images," "contents," or the most conceptual and common term, "images". They are constantly threatening us everywhere in our lives, from street screens to smart phones. Sometimes they can even move you and put your life in danger (without you being aware of it, of course). If we retain the memory of a movie, we can still revive it in a different way to avoid the "danger of images". It is, however, different from what you used to call "cinema". It is a reflection on the history of the past, when the monopoly of the combination of sound and image was used by the powers that be to make people believe, manipulate, and drive them to war. It is a film that gives the audience a gaze that deconstructs the film itself, therefore, to defend it is to oppose the war. I call it "modern cinema" for the moment, but by passing through it, the audience can learn or be given the audiovisual senses to analyze the films of the past, the "classics". In other words, we can begin to atone for the sins of "classic cinema". It must have been difficult because no one could have foreseen the coming of an era in the world in which images would move people so much, but if the postwar Japanese government was serious about contrition and repentance for the wars waged by the Empire of Japan, the best way to do so was to spread "modern cinema" full of diverse, free, and sometimes wildly ridiculous ideas. at a time when television was in the process of replacing classical cinema as the main medium.
This, too, would be a laughing matter, but this advocacy would not be the kind of subsidies that "encouraged the art" of Germany and France, the "European cinema" of the 1970s and 1980s. It would have been an image of the eternal atonement of a war-torn nation, which would have given money and allowed "diverse and free production," no matter how much it lost. Modern cinema can be both a free and a redemptive cinema.

From the post-World War II U.S.-Soviet regime, to the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, from the Gulf War to the Iraq War, and up to the present, television has taken the place of classical cinema as the primary visual medium, and has become the prmother of today's mainstream films, the descendants of "classical cinema. In place of film, television has replaced film as the mainstream film medium by making itself transparent (in this case, "transparent" does not mean that it is telling the truth), that is, by hiding the limitations of the medium (sometimes this hiding includes laughter, which has the effect of consuming the medium without letting it be seen). In other words, the media continues to incite the viewer by "hiding its own limitations. Fortunately, the advent of the Internet, a two-way medium that can be verified by the receiver of information, has shaken this position (although it is still possible for the Internet to turn into a mere incitement machine through numerical supremacy). On the other hand, while television is forced to subordinate images to textual information in order to maintain its power as a one-way medium, most films have long since lost their power as a medium, becoming cheap and increasingly personal. For those films, "classicism" should be "dead," but for those produced by television, "classicism" has to be prolonged because it has to be broadcasted on television and collected in programs, so they cannot be free. The propaganda of Islamic State (IS) murders, which has taken over the war crimes of television to the Internet, imitates current Hollywood movies because of its "classicism," and ironically, it has

surpassed dramatic films and documentaries that pursue realism and scandal by actually killing in front of the camera. It is a "film" that will become a model and a subject for other films in the future.

On the other hand, the "modernity" of the so-called masterpieces of classical cinema is, as I mentioned earlier, the variety of moments in which modern cinema can revive the classics through the gaze of our audience. Of course, in reality, it is impossible to recreate the time and circumstances in which the classic films were made and shown, and only the senses of the audience of the time in which they are revived can bring about a different revival for each person of that time. For example, the way Hitchcock, Lang, Lubitsch, and Dreyer placed things and people in the frame may seem incredibly unnatural and ridiculous to those who only see digital images today, due to the limitations of the equipment, materials, censorship, and other factors that have become apparent in later times. However, each time we recognize the various limitations and the fact that they were created by genius, luck, and other factors that took advantage of them, the images bring about different thoughts.

And the fact that they so clearly mark an era in which the perfect construction of the unnaturalness of the classical era has become impossible is a testament to the work of two filmmakers, Roberto Rossellini and Robert Bresson, the fathers of modern cinema, who have deliberately shown the limits of cinema as a medium outside the frame, and who continue to be a source of inspiration for those who seek to make films with low budgets and little material. Looking at the current state of independent filmmakers around the world, it is clear that the Nouvelle Vague generation is strongly influenced by Roberto Rossellini, while the post-Nouvelle Vague generation is strongly influenced by Robert Bresson. In the 1950s, after the end of World War II, they had already begun to criticize the subordination of today's visual media to textual information. It is a detail that we casually overlook, but when it is shown together with contemporary films, the range of their influence appears to our eyes and ears, which are immersed in excessive images and sounds, as something that did not appear in the context of their time, but is shocking today.

A camera set up through the glass keeps capturing the frontal view of a woman driving a car from the neck up. The woman, a married woman, seems to be grasping the steering wheel and looking at the scene outside while complaining about her husband who left her early in the morning to go to Capri. While Ingrid Bergman plays Catherine, the Englishwoman who is driving the car, several shots of the city of Naples and people passing by are inserted into the screen. The direction of her gaze and the direction of the passing scenes are sometimes different at the end, which has sometimes been pointed out as Rossellini's amateurism and laxity, and at other

times defended as Rossellini's or Italian cinema's generosity. I am not here to argue about the rightness or wrongness of the editing of the scene in Viaggio in Italia (1954). What is at issue here is what the screen, which is supposed to show us where Ingrid Bergman's eyes are looking, actually captures.

In the first, we see a funeral procession of people dressed in black behind the children; in the next, a woman walking down the street; in the next overexposed shot, we see a fat woman standing in front of her, but they are not focused on as the decisive subjects in the street scene. It is hard to say that Bergman's woman stopped to look at those people, because they pass by without being focused on as a decisive subject in the street scene. On the other hand, Bergman's eyes tremble and her expression changes as if she is fascinated by something in the time it takes her to see and pass through these scenes. As the scene ends without any dialogue, the audience is not able to grasp exactly what is happening to her. What is going on here?
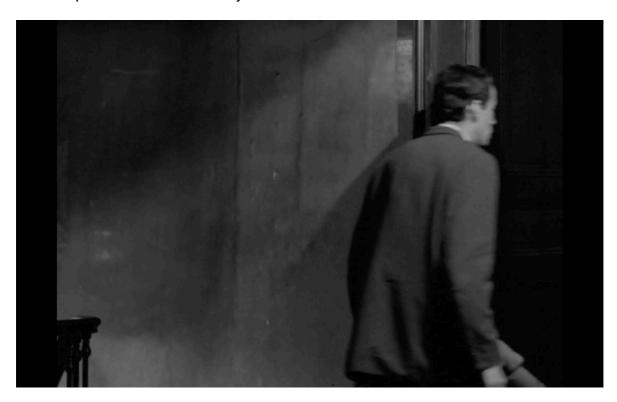
In other words, in this scene, it is not clear exactly what the woman played by Bergman has reacted to. Rossellini, unlike his American contemporaries, does not point out specific symbols on the screen, as he does in the films of Alfred Hitchcock. In Hitchcock's case, the scene in Vertigo(1958) where James Stuart realizes that the two women are the same person the moment he sees the pendant, or the final rooftop scene where he is torn between anger and love as he listens to Kim Novak's face and confession. This is because the person or thing pointed to in a shot showing what a person is looking at cannot be obscured per se, even if it is intentionally a part or shadow of a person or thing.

Not only Hitchcock, but any classic Hollywood film of the time would not have used, and probably would not have been tolerated by the producers, a screen in which it is unclear what exactly is being pointed at in order to make the subjective shot of the person work. In contrast, in this scene where Bergman is driving in Viaggio in Italia, the shot of her appearance does not point to what exactly her reaction is due to. The scene must be the same when the appearance shot is removed, as in, for example, the first part of La voce Umana in Amore (1948) starring Anna Magnani, also by Rossellini, or the scene in which the heroine of Angst (1954) starring Bergman talks to an invisible person on the phone. However, in the scene of Viaggio in Italia, which I am discussing here, I can only think that the director dares to use the appearance shots in such a way that it is impossible for the audience to determine what is capturing Bergman's Catherine.

In other words, what we can see in this scene is that "Catherine is not sure what she is looking at, but as time goes by, she is fascinated by the scene captured by her gaze. And this appearance of the shots was necessary because what captures Catherine is not the same as the voice that captures the heroines of La Voce Umana and Angst but at least it is something that comes in through sight. What Rossellini wanted to achieve here on the screen could be described as "the change in the face of Catherine, played by Bergman, who is fascinated by something visual in a short period of time that is indistinguishable to viewers. In other words, what is important in this scene is "the change in Catherine's face," not the visual cause of the change, which is why it was necessary to use a shot with unclear instructions. And this series of parts, more complex and procedural than the long shots of the heroine on the phone in La voce Umana and Angst mentioned earlier, which so to speak disguise

themselves as American film editing and criticize its function, is just like the later Israeli/American Cannon Films production of Godard's King Lear (1987) which is a radical scene that declares the invalidity of the POV shot, just like the scene in King Lear where a black shot is often inserted between the close-up of a character and the POV shot.

Rossellini often compared the camera he used to a microscope, and at least in this period of his career, his film scenes were designed to allow the audience to experience the time spent observing how a person captured in the frame reacts to stimuli from outside the frame, just like stimulating a microorganism on a preparation with an eyedropper and observing the changes. (This is, of course, what the close-ups in Godard's films of the 1980s were based on.) And the existence outside the frame is often unclear to the viewer, and it is not clear what gives rise to the joy, anger, sorrow, and actions of the characters in the frame. This is not to say that Rossellini disregarded the existence outside the frame, but rather that he rejected the easy media causality established by the POV shot, and rather pointed outside the frame of causality. At the same time, the short, moving scene in Viaggio in Italia is an example of the limitations of film as a medium, in that it does not always clearly capture the people who can be captured by the frame and those outside of it. However, people easily accept the easy causality created by the manipulation of the media and forget about the images themselves, and do not pay attention to the limit areas as Rossellini shows now and then. And when we become accustomed to easy causality, we do not know how to escape from it when we are plunged into danger by the manipulation of that causality.

The importance of the substitution of frame and off-screen sound in Bresson's films has already been discussed by a lot of people, but even so, there is something to be said about a factor that gradually alienated audiences after Un Condamne a mort s'est echappe (1956) and Pickpocket (1959), a moment that later films shed new light on. If we review the scene in Un Condamne a mort s'est echappe where Fontaine (François Leterrier), a Frenchman sitting in the back seat of a car on his way to be escorted away from his capture by Nazi Germany during World War II, looks for an opportunity to escape, pauses at a railroad crossing, and escapes, only to be caught again and brought back. When reviewing the scene, Bresson's off-screen sounds still seem to be contained within the context of a crime film. When Fontaine escapes at the same time as the car comes to a halt with the brakes applied, the camera continues to capture the empty back seat as Fontaine disappears from the front. Then, off-screen, the sounds of gunfire and people running are intermingled, and the scene that follows overlaps with Fontaine being brought back into the frame, sitting in his original seat and being beaten with a gun by a man in a hat who looks like a Nazi. In the film, narrated by the protagonist Fontaine's voiceover, it is only in this scene and the scene where he kills the sentry in the process of escape that Fontaine himself temporarily disappears from the camera that follows his actions from beginning to end, and then returns to the camera. In the scene of the sentry's murder, the off-screen sounds have the same relationship to the empty space in the screen as in the escape scene. As Fontaine jumps out from behind the wall just in time to hear the German soldier's footsteps and turn around, the sound of a passing train, which seems to be passing nearby, covers everything, and when the audience recognizes Fontaine's upper body, which slowly appears, they imagine a scene that they could not see due to the wall.
In Un Condamne a mort s'est echappe the relationship between sound and visual seems to fall within a narratively satisfying classicism, as the off-screen sounds impede or advance Fontaine's escape process, which he learns about by listening to the approaching danger of the guards in his cell. However, when the artist decided to

remove the figure of the protagonist from the screen and replace it with sound, leaving the life and death of the protagonist to the imagination of the viewer, it is clear that sound became more than just an audible complement to the visible movement. This is confirmed by the interchange of sound and the visible in Bresson's later works. His next film, Pickpocket, which depicts a young pickpocket's technique, is of course a film about manual labor, just like Un Condamne a mort s'est echappe, but the exchange of visible objects for sound is not limited to the pickpocket's technique. Indeed, the pickpocketing at the racetrack at the beginning and end of the film is shown in close-up, while the audience's gaze is directed in the same direction, and the race itself is never shown on the screen, but the sound of horses running and the cheers of the audience are heard instead. In Pickpocket, the relationship between the protagonist and the sound of his handiwork is very close. However, in Pickpocket, Bresson really moves forward in the shorter moments when the characters leave the screen and only the sound of their footsteps remain in the empty screen, such as in the opening scene where Michel (Martin Lassalle), the protagonist arrested near the racetrack, walks home after being released for lack of evidence. Bresson proposes a more difficult task for the spectator than in Un Condamne a mort s'est echappe since the steps of the person leaving the screen are visually cut off and cannot be followed, and each time they are exchanged for footsteps, the spectator suddenly has to pass the baton of sensation from eye to ear. In Bresson's book "Notes for a Cinematograph," it is stated that images and sounds must work in a kind of relay (p. 80, japanese translation, Chikuma Shobo). At the same time, it shows the limitations of media and art in terms of seeing through the seemingly unremarkable depiction of "following a single person". At least as long as the footsteps remain, the disappearance of the person from the screen does not mean that the existence itself has disappeared. Of course, the disappearance of the footsteps does not mean the disappearance of the existence, but the audience will find it difficult to follow the transition from the visual movement of the person or thing on the screen to the sound, that is, from the movement in the screen to the movement of the sound coming from outside the screen. This is because unless the audience believes and hears that the sound is coming from the same individual, in other words, unless they can instantly transform the visual presentation into the manipulation and staging of sound, this transfer cannot take place.

At least for later audiences who know that Bresson at this time was creating sound after the shooting, listening to the footsteps is an essential task in order to follow his direction. And this "staging" makes us understand that in the media in general, it is difficult to make such a transformation from visual movement to sound. In mass media such as television, and even in classical cinema, which once had the status of mass media, sound is subordinate to the movement and information on the screen, and to upset this relationship is to bring about an inadequacy in the transmission of information itself. This is why Bresson's films, even when they only show "people walking away," seem unacceptable to audiences accustomed to classic images. Straub-Huillet's Nicht versöhnt/Not reconcield (1964), which took Bresson's work and evolved it in later years, adds to this transformation from visual movement to sound the "unintersecting eye movements" and "composition without centering the person" that Bresson frequently used in Pickpocket, as well as the recollection form. I have already mentioned on another occasion that Bresson's frequent use of "non-crossing eye movements" and "composition-space without centering the person" in Pickpocket, together with the recollection form, seem to make it difficult to follow the

narrative (see "Audiovisuals of the Masters at the End of the 1960s" in Chuo-Review No. 281). However, by recognizing this performance, we are able to follow the functions of sound and image in the visual media more closely. And for another rich variation of this "moment when a person crosses the screen" moment, when we see it juxtaposed with the slow motion of Nathalie Baye on the bicycle scene in Godard's Sauve qui peut / la vie (1980) against the works of Raoul Walsh and Don Siegel, we can extract even richer thoughts. However, this is a topic for another article(#).

If low-budget classics such as the so-called American B-movies are still interesting, even if they are failures, or even trash films, it is because they show and don't show, and through the use of off-screen sound, they show the historical limitations of the medium and the struggles of the filmmakers in a way that is more explicit to the audience because of the lack of budget. Jean Renoir liked American B-movies even as a filmmaker, or perhaps it can be said about the early talkie films of masters such as him and John Ford, because he knew that the image that records on the screen the struggle to go beyond the limits is always "alive".

However, even today, Holywood movies as an industry, whether it is a low-budget film or a film like Zero Gravity (2013) where a lot of money is invested in almost a single character and background, the vector for the establishment of fiction is unshakable, and it does not make us question the function of the screen or sound (just as the Islamic State (IS) had to manipulate and conceal information and truth about itself other than its current murderous acts in order to protect itself). Rather, the images of independent filmmakers from a generation of people who were able to make films on a low budget for the first time thanks to digital equipment show the limitations of the medium from the perspective of conflict with itself.

For example, Lois Patinho's Costa da morte (2013), a film from the new wave of Galician cinema in the Spanish-speaking world that has been surprising us with the emergence of new and excellent filmmakers one after another in recent years, is a film that captures the life of Galician people almost entirely in long shots, with no way to tell who the people are or whether or not they are acting, even though the sound is coming from nearby. Arrianos (2012) by Eloy Enciso, also from Galicia, is a documentary-like fragment of a theatrical performance, somewhat reminiscent of Straub-Huillet, by people who seem to live in a village on the border between Portugal and Spain, interlaced with long scenes of the daily work and lives of the villagers, including them, and of uninhabited houses, rivers, and trees, without any context. El rostro (2014), a new film by Argentinean Gustavo Fontan, depicts the daily lives of fishermen who seem to live on the banks of the Paraná River without dialogue, almost as if it was made to experience the texture and editing rhythm of the black and white (8mm and 16mm converted to digital) handheld camera rather than the people who are the subjects. In his La Madre(2009), the mother (Gloria Stingo) wanders through the woods drinking, and after she passes through the frame, several unattended shots are appeared, and gradually the sound of rain subsides to reveal birdsong and silence. Fontan is the only one director in Latin America to have developed Bresson's off-screen sound musically. Also, although a bit closer to traditional dramatic films than they are, Historia de la meva mort (2013), a new film by the Catalan Alberto Serra about Casanova (after Honor de Cavalleria and the El Cent dels ocells), is particularly interesting. The second half of the film in particular, is reminiscent of Cuadecuc Vampir (1970) and Umbracle (1970) by Pere Portabella,

the producer of Buñuel's Viridiana,(using footage from the making of Jess Franco's Count Dracula during the Franco dictatorship). The conflict can be felt in the length of the scenes of cow slaughter and vampire rituals, which ignore the plot.

Of course, these films, contrary to American B class classics, insist on a unique experience of light and sound that is embodied in the work itself through fragmentation and the deliberate absence of textual information. Therefore, there is a danger that these works will become more like video installations or attractions, and be confined to the narrow context of art, like conventional experimental films (see note). However, on the other hand, these works are created "as resistance" because the people mentioned above are living memories of the control of visual media under the dictatorship in their countries. This is where the old French-speaking Swiss master Godard's film Adeiu au Langage (2014) has a chance to connect with their young films... In Japan, where the film distribution and release system is no longer keeping pace with global trends, criticism is still manipulated by the boring discourse of isolating Godard. I wonder if the generation that regards him as a classic will one day revive this film accordingly.

（Serra, for example, said, "Video art has always been really awful. But the people who supported it don't want to admit that they were wrong, so they created the concept of "moving image" and want to integrate it with film.
http://fourthreefilm.com/2014/08/story-of-my- death-an-interview-with-albert-serra/