

From Page to Screen to Page Again: writing and reading Japanese film scripts¹

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Before we embark on a trip to Japan, let us briefly stop by Hollywood. Everyone should have noticed by now that Hollywood really likes to celebrate itself, as attested by numerous films about film industry: just think of the hit movie *La La Land* (Damien Chazelle, 2016). However, despite all these films about filmmaking, only a fraction take up the issue of scriptwriting. But there are a few notable exceptions. There is a recent film, *Trumbo* (Jay Roach, 2015) about the blacklisted writer Dalton Trumbo, played by the wonderful Bryan Cranston, who prefers to work on scripts in a bath with the help of a pair of scissors and a bottle of whiskey. Then there is, what is arguably the finest effort by the Coen brothers, *Barton Fink* (1991), which centres around the eponymous New York playwright invited to work in Hollywood whom ends up procrastinating in a cheap and stuffy hotel room. And last but not least, a film noir starring Humphrey Bogart as Dixon Steele, a scriptwriter with an alcohol problem and an impending murder charge, in the film *In a Lonely Place* (Nicholas Ray, 1950).

What all these films have in common is a seemingly existential struggle: whether it is against alcoholism, madness or McCarthyism. In these films, scriptwriters have to fight for their right to work, for the integrity of their work, and ultimately for the soundness of their minds. As a result, being a scriptwriter has been established as a truly gloomy occupation. These writers are tormented, depressed, disillusioned, dysfunctional, and at times even dead. Another classic film noir, Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard* (1950), is famously narrated in flashback by a scriptwriter shot dead and floating in a pool.

But above all else these characters are, as the title of *In a Lonely Place* astutely suggests, solitary. They work alone on their scripts, and then end up losing all control of their work and indeed, often, of their life. This long-held image of the scriptwriter is precisely what I am hoping to put aside today by looking at Japanese cinema and its traditions of scriptwriting. While in Hollywood, writing film scripts has been seen as a lonely ordeal, in Japan, scriptwriting has mostly been presented as a site

of collaboration and interaction. By way of a paraphrase one could call the space in which Japanese scriptwriting occurs as not a lonely place, but a lively one.

Scriptwriter as wife

All this notwithstanding, in Japan, especially in comparison to Hollywood, there are surprisingly few films about filmmaking, and even fewer about scriptwriters. After watching a thousand or so, I have so far been able to find only two or three such examples. Consequently, my research is mostly based on different kinds of sources: published film scripts, studio histories, memoirs of individuals and so on. However, I would like to start with images from a film. *Cut! The Rights of Japanese Film Directors (Eiga kantokutte nanda!*, 2006, Itō Shun'ya) was produced as joint effort of the Film Directors Guild of Japan, and it deals with film copyright issues. The film's polemical stance insist that current Japanese legislation should be revised in favour of the director as the holder of copyright.

The opening scene of the film, which is both humorous and allegorical, introduces a newly-wed couple in a period drama (*jidaigeki*) setting. The groom, Kantoku Uemon (played by the director Oguri Kōhei) receives the bride Kyakuhon Tayū (played by another male director Sakamoto Junji in drag) in his house. Then, in front of the gazes of something that appears to be a film crew, their marriage is discreetly consummated behind a screen. *Kantoku*, the name of the husband, means director in Japanese, and *kyakuhon*, the name of the wife, denotes film script. The allegory continues when sometime later, a wealthy man (who is obviously the producer) appears at the doorstep with his entourage and demands the new-born baby (that is understandably the film) to himself.

Ironically, this film about fighting for directors' rights has made a deliberate gesture to emasculate and indeed violate the scriptwriter by having the director impregnate him, or her, for the film to be born. This way of depicting the authorial relationship between the director and the scriptwriter might seem quirky and original at first. However, visualised here, it is simply a metaphor that has been around for a long time in Japan to describe the role of the scriptwriter. Curiously, scriptwriters, regardless of their sex or in fact the nature and extent of their contribution, have

often been perceived and constructed as female, or more precisely, wife (*nyōbō*). As if to support this image, there have indeed been examples of working relationships between real life partners where the female invariably takes on the role of the scriptwriter, such as the celebrated duo of Ichikawa Kon and Wada Natto, known for films such as *The Burmese Harp* (*Biruma no tategoto*, 1956), *Fires on the Plain* (*Nobi*, 1959) and *An Actor's Revenge* (*Yukinojō henge*, 1963).

At first glance, these images put together and acted out by a group of male film directors seem to indicate a less than enviable condition for Japanese scriptwriting, especially for women. However, a deeper look into various layers of historical evidence suggests quite the contrary. In fact, several women writers such as Mizuki Yōko and Tanaka Sumie (neither of whom were married to film directors) have made a singular contribution to Japanese cinema, especially during its Golden Age of the 1950s. In a chapter I contributed to the collection *Women Screenwriters: An International Guide*.² But what I am hoping to demonstrate in this article is that scriptwriters and their work in general garnered both critical and popular attention in Japan over the best part of the last century.

Authorial writers

So far the only comprehensive history of Japanese scriptwriting is *History of Japanese Scenario* (*Nihon shinarioshi*, 1989), by Shindō Kaneto (who was also a renowned director and scriptwriter). This two volume work extends from early silent cinema to the 1980s when it was published. Shindō provides detailed accounts of the life and work of numerous scriptwriters, placing them into the context of several rises and declines in the film industry. From this and other similar accounts emerges an understanding of different types of scriptwriters, a kind of taxonomy which takes into account writers' backgrounds, recurring themes in their work, genre diversity, their capacity for innovation and so on. As such, this comes close to the typology employed by Richard Corliss in his 1974 book *Talking Pictures: Scriptwriters in the American Cinema*. Corliss was a notable film critic, and also a student of Andrew Sarris, the godfather of an auteurist approach to cinema that recognises directors as sole authors of the film. Corliss, building on the work of his mentor while trying to polemicise with it, makes a bid to present something of a

counter canon comprising scriptwriters such as Dalton Trumbo.

By definition, this approach means that not all writers can hope to be included in the pantheon. In Japan, one of the most common ways to make such a distinction is to bring into play a pair of contrasting terms such as *sainō* (talent) and *doryoku* (effort), which in turn correspond to the juxtaposition of *tensai* (genius) and *shokunin* (craftsman). For instance, Shindō Kaneto himself has often been described as belonging to the craftsman-type. At the same time, the first two early scriptwriters of the silent era, Susukita Rokuhei and Yamagami Itarō, have been commonly referred to as geniuses. However, labelling someone a craftsman does not necessarily lead to entirely downplaying a writer's contribution, nor even their status. This is because the term 'craftsman' holds a certain dignity in the Japanese cultural context. Another important distinction is the use of the notions of *shinario sakka* (scenario author) as juxtaposed to that of *shinario raitā* (scenario writer).

This trend to look at scriptwriters through a quasi-auteurist prism can be seen at least since the early 1950s. For instance, the leading Japanese film journal *Kinema junpō* (something of a local *Sight and Sound*) published a series called 'A glimpse of scenario authors' in 1952, which included short essays on the style of individual writers complete with friendly caricatures. In another issue of the same journal dedicated specifically to scriptwriting, one critic made a clear distinction between the two types of writers by saying that 'In the Japanese film world, there are many *shinario raitā* but extremely few *shinario sakka*'.³ He then puts one of them in limbo due to his recent mediocre output. It seems, then, that anyone can become a *raitā*, but one has to earn the *sakka* status. And even then there remains the possibility of downward mobility. At any rate, the use of the term *shinario sakka* served as a device to bring scriptwriters into the limelight, at least in film journalism. This was soon to have reverberations in subsequent film histories where it has become a standard term to mark the work of notable writers.

Satō Tadao's authoritative four-volume *History of Japanese Film* (*Nihon eigashi*, 1995) is a good example of this trend. Satō creates separate entries on *shinario sakka* for each decade from the 1930s through to the 1970s. By so doing, he is in fact restructuring film history around the contributions of these 'authorial' writers. I dare to say that

among general film histories this certainly amounts to a radical gesture. Besides exclusively using the term *shinario sakka* to denote scriptwriters, this effort is sustained by the recurring pointing out of themes and motifs that permeate the work of these writers. And these emanate from what Satō calls ‘authorial capacity.’ This notion of ‘author’ has enabled Satō to evaluate the work of each writer in some detail and also to reorganise film history based on the writers’ contributions rather than that of directors, actors, studios or genres.

At times, Satō even attempts to revise the long-held notion of the undivided authorship of directors. For instance, he suggests that Ozu Yasujiro’s celebrated late-career shift to depicting only higher middle class is clearly at odds with most of his pre-war work. And this shift can be traced back to his collaboration with the scriptwriter Noda Kōgo who preferred to steer clear of deeper and more disturbing social issues, in what is one of the most impressive list of screen works in the entire history of cinema.

The script department

This rather more inclusive understanding of film authorship is closely tied to the spatial conditions of scriptwriting. Arguably, an integral part of the practice and also public image of Japanese scriptwriting was its reliance on specific and often homosocial working spaces. The Shōchiku Studio’s script department (*kyakuhonbu*) is considered an epitome of its kind, adding to the studio’s reputation as major innovator in film production since the early 1920s. Kido Shirō, who became the head of Shōchiku in 1924, is particularly famous for his unfaltering advocacy of the script, which he saw as ‘the blueprint of film.’ Kido demanded scriptwriting skills also from his directing staff, which at times led to assistant directors who turned out to be good writers being quickly promoted to full rank. Apart from his working place in the management, Kido kept a desk at the script department; he stopped by whenever he had spare time to engage in lively discussion with writers and to brainstorm ideas for new films. Apparently, Kido modelled his *kyakuhonbu* on experiences gathered from his many foreign trips.

The Shōchiku script department is often characterised by its intimate, family-like atmosphere. Shindō Kaneto has reminisced the

warm welcome that he received upon arriving there, as it was very much in contrast with the markedly feudalistic attitude encountered at his former work place. Nevertheless, the notion of family here is not as cuddly or uncomplicated as it might seem. Steven Price has noted how the establishing of script departments in Hollywood helped to both define and restrict the trade:

only those versed in the more esoteric arts of script writing could enter the portal [...] writing departments would function as a closed shop by professionalising the craft.⁴

Similarly, while appearing as one big family for its workers, or a ‘Scenario Mecca’ (in Shindō’s words) from outside, the Shōchiku script department had its mechanisms of exclusion.

This trend is well represented by the six competitions held between 1928 and 1948 with the stated aim of employing graduates from the best universities as scriptwriters. The studio head Kido himself was a graduate of Tokyo Imperial University (which was very unusual at the time for someone working in the film industry). The fact that many scriptwriters belonged to the social elite while most of the directors had a rather modest background raises the question of how this class dynamic might have worked within film production. There is enough evidence to claim that Kido

broke with the rigid hierarchical systems that governed the traditional theatrical arts by encouraging an open environment where young filmmakers could freely discuss and criticize the works of other directors.⁵

What somewhat undermines such achievements of democratising the ways of Japanese filmmaking, and still made Shōchiku appear somewhat feudalistic, was the practice of training fresh incoming staff under established writers or ‘masters’ (*shishō*). This structure that seems to mirror that of the directors and assistant directors hints at a traditional master–apprentice system, where skills and knowledge are passed on through conversation rather than any textual means.

However, there were ways out of this system as well. It has been

pointed out that this initiation-like ritual at Shōchiku always generated its rebels. Examples include both Shindō and Ōshima Nagisa who, after receiving training at Shōchiku, went on to become independents and dealt with issues rarely seen in films made by their former employer. In his directorial debut, *Story of a Beloved Wife* (*Aisai monogatari*, 1951), Shindō provides both a depiction of the master-apprentice system in action, and an alternative to it. In this semi-autobiographical film, a fledgling scriptwriter is put through much stress by the demanding film director Sakaguchi-sensei (a thinly disguised take on Mizoguchi Kenji). The protagonist, after being told that ‘this is a story, not a screenplay,’ takes a year to read through the collected plays of world literature. Here, Shindō points at another possibility of learning about scriptwriting which is appropriating the dramatic aspect of film through theatrical tradition rather than interaction with the master appointed by the studio.

Although the script department might have appeared family-like, and the skills of the trade were initially learnt from the master, producing the script was still the sole responsibility of the writer. In accordance with this, in Japan, more often than not films receive a single scriptwriting credit. When discussing differences between Japanese and American scriptwriting practices, what has been often pointed out is the prevalence of the collaborative system in the US, where several writers are involved in different stages of the process. Such joint authorship is precisely what has troubled most scholars of Hollywood scriptwriting, mainly because it effectively blurs the notion of authorship as such and makes any claims of investing the writer with power over the text problematic.

In Japan, too, there were script conferences where changes to early drafts were proposed by various members of the production team. However, the same writer was kept re-writing until the end of the process and arguably had more or less integrity for the final draft (*ketteikō*). In other words, unlike what often happened in Hollywood, the script was not taken from his/her hands altogether and given to another writer(s) to finish. Notably, although changes were always made to the script in the process of shooting, the final draft that effectively became the shooting script (*daihon*) remained intact, so to speak, especially as many of these were subsequently published for the general readership as scenarios (*shinario*).

Collaborative writing

Despite this dominant model of assigning a single writer to a project, there are many cases of collaborative scriptwriting in Japan. The most famous of these are associated with the working methods of canonical Japanese film directors such as Mizoguchi Kenji, Kurosawa Akira and Ozu Yasujiro. Yoda Yoshikata is the only one credited as writer in Mizoguchi's later films, but it was apparently the director who was very much in charge of the whole writing process. Mizoguchi was infamous for driving actors mad with his demands, and the same thing was mirrored in his relationship to Yoda, whom he tortured by assigning numerous rewrites.

Kurosawa Akira preferred to team up with a number of writers simultaneously, in what has been called the *gasshuku* (boarding together) model. Kurosawa himself has said that 'if I write alone it tends to get really one-sided. I would rather do it in discussion between two (or more) people'.⁶ What he actually did was sitting several writers together in the same room and had them compete with each other to come up with the best solution for a particular sequence under scrutiny. In a tense atmosphere much like a school exam, the director himself had the final word. It has been said that Kurosawa's model was in fact relying on bringing together several seemingly conflicting types of writing traditions, effectively creating a space where various strengths of Japanese scriptwriting could interact and bear the best possible results. Indeed, the efforts of Kurosawa's writing group have been widely celebrated, and also decorated with the highest international recognition yet for Japanese scriptwriting, the Jean Renoir Award for Scriptwriting Achievement in 2013.

The case of Ozu offers a variation of the 'boarding together' model if only for the fact that the collaborators were limited to Noda Kōgo and the director himself. What seems important in comparison to the way Mizoguchi or Kurosawa saw the role of his writers, is that Ozu apparently had enormous respect towards Noda and treated him as his equal. This is illustrated by an anecdote where in the middle of shooting a film Ozu suddenly decides to change the script by replacing a single a suffix in the dialogue. He immediately takes a break and picks up a phone to call Noda to ask for his permission. In a way, such pedantry is also connected to an understanding of the script as the definitive version of the film

which should not be altered during shooting. In Ozu's opinion, 'when the script is ready, it is the same as having eighty per cent of the film done'.⁷

Privileged writing spaces

What is also important about Japanese scriptwriting is that the actual process of writing rarely took place at the studio. Instead, writers, sometimes paired with directors, as we have seen, and travelled out of town for a longer period to shut themselves in the so-called regular inn (*jōyado*) These inns were rented by the studio for the single purpose of providing their writers a space where they could proceed with writing undisturbed. The notion of *jōyado* permeates histories of Japanese scriptwriting, making it inextricable from those of the department and the master–apprentice or director–writer relationship. In *jōyado*, all expenses were paid by the company, and the pace was rather leisurely. There are numerous accounts of how the first days after entering the inn were spent playing mahjong with other lodging writers; and it was only a few days later that any work commenced. Apparently, Ozu spent most of the early part of the day preparing his special brand of miso soup for others lodgers.

Some writers spent months, and in rarer cases when a writer's block hit, a year or more, in these small hotels tucked away from the bustle of the metropolis and located in travel resorts by the ocean or in the mountains. Shōchiku had one in Hakone Yumoto and another in Chigasaki. During the 1950s there were two to three writers or writing teams staying at each of these places. For instance, Ozu allegedly spend 150 to 200 days a year at an inn in Chigasaki, always using the same corner room Number Two. As such, *jōyado* was an extension of the script department but also something that many writers active during the flourishing of the studio system in the 1950s have thought back to as an idyllic space, a kind of El Dorado for scriptwriting. The task of the scriptwriter, especially when compared to the teamwork of shooting a film, has commonly been seen as a lonely ordeal. However, from various accounts emerges a strong sense of community, which is in parallel to the family-like atmosphere of the script department. *Jōyado*, then, is an example of how the issue of authorship in film can be related to specific

industrial practices through spatiality.

Sure enough, not all writers enjoyed such privileges even during the 1950s. Shindō, who had become an independent after leaving Shōchiku, had to rent working space in central Tokyo in a modest inn next to a small printing house where the rhythmic sound of its machines accompanied him day and night. This less idyllic arrangement might have actually fit Shindō, who has sometimes been described as a writing machine himself. There is an anecdote about a fellow scriptwriter who was staying and working at the same inn as Shindō. The poor guy developed writer's block after hearing a steady rhythmical pattern through the sliding door from the neighbouring room all night long. That was Shindō turning and finishing yet another page of a manuscript in an almost mechanical manner. Last but not least, Shindō was also a teetotaller, and this comes in quite a contrast with a number of other Japanese filmmakers, notably Ozu, who famously linked the production of the script with the number of bottles of sake consumed during the process. Consequently, while Shindō could finish scripts in a matter of days it took Ozu and Noda months to complete theirs.

While the leisurely pace of working at the regular inn might have seemed like paradise to some, accounts by women writers such as Hashida Sugako complicate the picture. Hashida (who is noted for writing the popular TV drama *Oshin* in the 1980s) was once invited to write at an inn, but she instantly felt less advantaged, not least for not being accepted as a mahjong player or bathing companion to the lodging male scriptwriters. *Jōyado*, then, idyllic for some and a site of engaging young writers, could also be seen as one of exclusion. Moreover, if *jōyado* reveals its weakness in gender terms, so does the script department itself. The atmosphere there might have been family-like but this notion has certain negative implications as well. This becomes clear from ways in which women were appointed only certain roles in the industrial hierarchy, mostly as typists at the department who typed the manuscripts created by male scriptwriters into shooting scripts. It could be argued that as a result of this arrangement, women scriptwriters were invariably forced to write alone, while male writers could enjoy the privileges of a homosocial space that was the regular inn.

Hunting for scripts

For the second (and shorter) part of this article, I will shift from the issues relating to writing scripts to these of reading them, from the space of production to the space of reception. The preeminent scriptwriting historian Steven Price has pointed out how film scripts have been more often than not treated as industrial waste, referring to an anecdote about the sizeable collection of scripts from the Ealing studios in London surviving only because it was quite accidentally retrieved from a skip. As a parallel to this, Shindō Kaneto recalls his first encounter with a film script at the film processing unit where he was first employed after entering the industry. He saw that sheets from scripts were used as toilet paper in the outdoor lavatory, having been discarded after the completion of the film print.

To illustrate the typical life span of a silent script, Itō Daisuke, one of the most notable Japanese scriptwriters, has provided the following account.

[S]ilent scripts were handwritten on sheets of lined paper, and five carbon copies were made for distribution to the director, assistant director, chief cameraman, lead actor or actress, and the production department. The director usually wrote in the continuity on his copy of the script and used it as a shooting script. After shooting the film the director and cameramen used a copy of the script once again when editing the negative and separated sequences according to color for the toning process [...] The processed print eventually returned from the lab; the script, which by this point had been reduced to scattered fragments, did not.⁸

However, coinciding with the advent of sound film, things started to change. And from there on, the fate of film scripts in Japan could not be further from these pitiful and at times comical accounts. The majority of shooting scripts have survived and are readily available in a number of research libraries and specialist book stores. I would argue, however, that the special status of film scripts in Japan is best attested by their continued publication in film journals and anthologisation. Satō Tadao recalls how during his school days in the immediate postwar years, in order to appease his hunger for cinema, he sometimes escaped

provincial Niigata and went up to the capital hunting for scripts.

In order to read scenarios, I went through a lot of trouble in my youth. At the time, I was a student at a railroad engineering college in Niigata but on a couple of Saturday evenings every year I took my savings and got on a night train to Tokyo. Those were the postwar days of inconvenient transportation, so on most occasions I slept the nine hours it took, crouching on newspapers spread along the aisle. Then I walked around the whole Sunday in used book stores in the Kanda area and looked for journals and books that would contain old scenario masterpieces. Old journals and the like were cheap so I could buy a lot. Owing to this, I had no other hobbies but did not mind in the least. After stuffing the journals that I had accumulated in my rucksack, I returned to Niigata on another night train and on Monday morning went straight from the station to my classes.⁹

Aside from the particular train trip, what Satō is describing was no doubt a common practice for many young people of his generation with deep interest in cinema. He adds that after reading the scenarios of celebrated prewar films no longer available for watching, he was usually convinced of their historical importance. Above all, this account attests to the role published scenarios played for such self-educated post-war film buffs as Satō. In the same piece, he also notes how the reader of the scenario, holding what is basically a shooting script in his/her hand, is very much in the position of a film director, imagining a yet non-existent film out of the text. To paraphrase Roland Barthes's distinction between readerly and writerly modes of reading, what we have here is a scriptwriterly text where the reader takes on an active role in constructing meanings.

Script publishing

Scenarios first began to appear in various periodicals in the mid-1920s, at the time serving as a main source of learning for aspiring scriptwriters. By then, the first scriptwriting manuals in Japanese already existed, but the method of 'observe and learn' was regarded as the most effective one for immersing oneself in the art of writing film scripts. This utilitarian

approach was complemented in the mid-1930s by calls to read scenarios as autonomous literary texts. This culminated with the publication of the six-volume *Complete Works of Scenario Literature* (*Shinario bungaku zenshū*) which predates the first comparable American collection by several years. This anthology was part of a collective effort by a group of leading film critics called the *Shinario Bungaku Undō* (*Scenario Literature Movement*), aiming to develop the scenario into a full-fledged literary genre. While this effort could be described as largely unsuccessful, the conceptual framework which first emerged from this debate in the late 1930s proved to be very influential in the post-war era, leading to an extended publishing and reading culture where scenario become reading matter (*yomimomo*) and as such a commodity in the publishing market.

By far the most abundant period for publishing scenarios was the 1950s, coinciding with the Golden Age of the studio system in Japan. There are a number of relevant periodicals which came about in the immediate post-war years, some of them published to this day. The monthly *Scenario* (*Shinario*) is mostly targeted to the practitioners, while creating a forum for their work in progress. *Annual Collection of Representative Scenarios* (*Nenkan daihyō shinarioshu*) has been published since 1952, comprising ten scenarios in each volume. However, the most important influence on what I like to call 'scenario culture' was the fortnightly journal *Kinema junpō*. In the course of the decade and beyond, it became the most prolific periodical for scenarios with its numerous special issues and scenario anthologies.

Initially, these were collections of foreign film scripts that included an odd Japanese one, but this ratio was soon reversed in favour of domestic scenarios. Arguably, this mirrors the self-confidence in Japanese cinema vis-à-vis foreign films as it grew during the decade. If we take a closer look, the content of such scenario collections was more or less neatly divided between the productions of the five major studios of the late 1950s: Daiei, Nikkatsu, Shōchiku, Tōei and Tōhō. This practice stands in the starkest possible contrast to what was occurring in the United States at the time when studios who owned the copyright of screenplays were reluctant to let them be published at all. In Japan, there appears to have been an industrial tie-in (*taiappu* in Japanese) where studios made most

of the opportunity to promote their new films while *Kinema junpō* catered for their curious readers.

Scriptreaders

But who exactly read these published scenarios, and for what purpose? Writing in 1959, the critic Okada Susumu describes this phenomenon brought about by the extensive publishing of scenarios:

There is probably no other country besides Japan where scenarios would be so widespread as reading matter and introductions to film. At the same time, more people are trying to write scenarios. Students who have serious ambitions of becoming scriptwriters. Salarymen writing in their spare time. Film fans for whom simply enjoying films is not enough. Even among young women the enthusiasm for writing scenarios is spreading.¹⁰

This account shows how published scenarios enticed readers from different walks of life. And even more importantly, that one of the inevitable results of reading scenarios is the desire to start writing them. Above all, what this trend suggests is that those who are writerly readers conceptually can also become so in actuality. Published scenarios, then, mark the site where scriptreaders can try to become scriptwriters.

While it is admittedly nearly impossible to recreate the kind of readership that Okada is referring to, certain fragments can be discovered. For instance, notes of an anonymous reader in the copy of *Kinema junpō* journal currently held at the main library of Kyoto University of Art and Design, suggest a simultaneous reading/viewing practice where the discrepancies are marked down in the text of Yasumi Toshio's script *Flower Shop Curtain* (*Hana noren*, Toyoda Shirō, 1959). It seems plausible that the reader has made notes with a pencil while watching the film. First, a number of cross-cut scenes (marked 18, 21, 23 and 25) have been rearranged with drawn boxes and arrows. Second, an emotional and climactic scene (number 34) where the protagonist Taka tries on a white garment that reminds her of her dead mother has been emphasised by inserting more arrows and a shaded box around the words "white garment". Third, by adding numeration the reader seems to have been delineating the structure of the scenario based on either

acts or film reels. Finally, the date marked at the beginning of the script also suggests that this was a reader with an access to a pre-screening of the film which opened in theatres only four days later. All in all, this unearthed example hints at the kind of engagement these texts invited from their readers.

At the same time, there are contemporary scriptreaders such as the blogger presenting himself as OKAMURA Hirofumi (<http://acting.jp>) who has made a considerable effort to introduce both the work of scriptwriters and various scriptwriting manuals through the means of social media. In his profile, Okamura provides a list of his favourite scenarios and scriptwriters. A name that stands out in this list is Mizuki Yōko, the foremost female scriptwriter who rather surprisingly gets a nod for comedies and not the socially conscious serious work she is more famous for. Among his favourite writers, Okamura also singles out Kurosawa and his early and late work, completely ignoring what is considered the core of his oeuvre. Included are unproduced scenarios from the early 1940s but also *Rhapsody in August* (*Hachigatsu no rapsodī*, 1991), one of his last and starring Richard Gere, which received generally poor reviews and has failed to earn place in scholarship on Kurosawa. However subjective, and precisely for that reason, these kind of preferences point at how reader reception of cinema can vary considerably depending on whether it is based on a finished film or a scenario. And quite unlike the collective experience of film-viewing in a movie theatre, the space of reception and consumption tend to move towards private.

Conclusion

Before I reach the end of this article, I would like to return to Shindō Kaneto's *History of Japanese Scenario* that concludes with this rather poetic image.

How many writers have appeared and disappeared since Susukita Rokuhei? Each of them invested their whole talent and passion in film. It is their glory and dead bodies that we are now standing upon. They have erected an enormous mountain of manuscript papers [*genkō yōshī*] and one by one filled their slots.

Let us make an experiment. Assume that one scenario is written on 250 sheets of *genkō yōshi*. Now let us say that each year about 500 films of all kinds were made. What would this make in sixty years?

If we place the sheets on the railway tracks sideways, they would cover the distance between Aomori and Himeji. If we did it lengthwise, Aomori and Nagasaki. All sheets densely filled with characters.¹¹

In what amounts to an idiosyncratic cine-geographical fantasy, Shindō has the archipelago and its main railway line from the north of Honshu to the western shores of Kyushu covered with the scenarios of all films ever produced in Japan. And by so doing, Shindō underlines the enormous work scriptwriters have done for the success of Japanese cinema by providing the script a status and visibility that has been held back by the dominance of the final product on the screen. Within this image, what I would particularly like to draw your attentions to is *genkō yōshi*, a slotted manuscript paper, a uniquely Japanese writing device. In parallel to the Courier typeface that evokes typewriter even in the digital age and features in most books on Hollywood screenwriting, *genkō yōshi* is very much the metaphor for scriptwriting in Japan. I already mentioned how writers were often seen as craftsmen and how this goes back to an understanding of the creative process in traditional arts. What is important here is how these handwritten manuscripts allude to both the individuality and craftsmanship behind the writing, suggesting that the script should always be considered as much more than merely a technical document for shooting a film.

Notes

- 1 Parts of this paper have been published as Lauri Kitsnik, 'Scenario writers and scenario readers in the Golden Age of Japanese cinema', *Journal of Screenwriting*, 7/3 (2016), pp. 285-297.
- 2 See Lauri Kitsnik, 'Japanese women screenwriters: collaborators', in J. Nelmes and J. Selbo (eds.), *Women Screenwriters: An*

- International Guide* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 113-120.
- 3 Kitagawa Fuyuhiko, 'Gendai Nihon shinario sakkaron' [On Contemporary Japanese Scenario Authors], *Shinario tokuhon* [Scenario Reader] (Tokyo: Kinema Junpōsha, 1959), p. 52.
 - 4 Steven Price, *A History of the Screenplay* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 54.
 - 5 Isolde Standish, *New History of Japanese Cinema: A Century of Narrative Film* (New York and London: Continuum, 2005), p. 30.
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