V-Cinema: canons of Japanese film and the challenge of video

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2. Parallel Canons: Japanese Cinema in the Eyes of the World, 1951-2000

To say that the Western world discovered Japan as a filmmaking nation in 1951, when *Rashomon* won the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival, is to deliver a cliché, to state a truth, and to perpetuate a creation myth all at once. The story is probably the most oft-repeated anecdote in Western accounts of Japanese film history: the film 'stunned' (Nornes 2014: 245) a Venice festival programmer, who selected it without the knowledge of its director Kurosawa Akira and against the wishes of Daiei studio president Nagata Masaichi, who initially found the film incomprehensible (Richie 1998: 70).[1] Though *Rashomon* was successful in the domestic market as well, Japanese film critics puzzled by the honor bestowed upon the film explained the phenomenon away as a fluke, a mere example of Westerners' taste for the exotic (Kurosawa 1982: 187). The following year, *Rashomon* received the Academy Award for Foreign Language Film and, flush with the success of "his" film, Nagata Masaichi saw

[1] In a festival environment in which the selection and screening of films at international festivals formed part of the cautious game of post-war diplomatic relations, it seems miraculous that the film could be screened 'against the wishes of studio head Nagata Masaichi' (Nornes 2014: 245) and without the knowledge of director Kurosawa Akira. Richie (Richie 1998: 80) calls the process that led to *Rashomon*'s Venice win 'a series of fortuitous circumstances' and clarifies that Daiei only agreed 'with the greatest reluctance' to send the film to Venice. Kurosawa himself (1982: 187) mentions that the 'stunned' programmer in question was Giuliana Stramigioli, head of Italiafilm's Japanese branch – who would have been well acquainted with the game of diplomatic relations.

himself elected president of the newly formed Foundation for the Promotion of the Japanese Film Industry (Nihon Eiga Sangyō Shinkōkai, or Eisanshin). The same year, an indefatigable Nagata set out to conquer the Southeast Asian market, establishing and heading the Southeast Asian Motion Picture Producers Association as a means to facilitate co-production between Asian countries. On his tour along the prospective member states, he screened *Rashomon* before each meeting with local delegates 'to reestablish his credentials as a successful international producer' (Baskett 2014: 8).

Today, Japanese cinema's status as an enduring object of study and enjoyment for audiences worldwide remains incontestable, as the broad international distribution of its films and the reams of books, academic and otherwise, on the topic demonstrate. The country's film industry has a history of well over a hundred years, much of it as one of the world's most prolific producers of motion pictures: between 300 and 550 films annually since the early 1920s (Phillips and Stringer 2007: 2). Japan's importance as one of the world's leading national cinemas is furthermore confirmed by the awards bestowed upon its films and filmmakers at international film festivals, and the "master" directors that are placed very firmly in the pantheon of global cinema.

The American film critic Jonathan Rosenbaum argues that, since cinema is still a relatively young art form, film canons are not set in stone or matters of general consensus like literary canons, but are malleable, subject to politics, active attempts at furthering interests, and declining or increasing concern from groups of potential decision-makers.

Noting the increasing influence of the Hollywood industry on the American film canon through for example the Academy Awards, Rosenbaum posits that critics and academics taking an active role in canon formation can 'combat the reductive canons of studio publicists' (Rosenbaum 2004: xvii), thus making canonization a political act.

This chapter will look at how differences in selection, diffusion and reception of Japanese films in different parts of the world created different histories of Japanese cinema and different canons of Japanese films and filmmakers, which exist side-by-side with little or no interaction or influence. Following from Koichi Iwabuchi's expansion of the simplistic notion of an East-West dichotomy by means of an 'asymmetrical totalizing triad between "Asia," "The West," and "Japan"' (Iwabuchi 2002: 18), I will compare the situations in Western Europe and North America on the one hand and in Japan on the other, while also looking at the role the Asia-Pacific region played as a facilitator for the interests of both.[2]

[2] Since other canons of Japanese cinema exist beyond its scope, Iwabuchi's 'asymmetrical triad' is not quite so totalizing as he presents it. There is the canon of Japanese cinema established in Brazil, for example, where the company Nippaku Shinema-sha organized traveling screenings of Japanese films for São Paulo's Japanese immigrants from as early as 1929 (Fiorini Rodrigues 1995: 165). Similar distribution forms targeting Japanese immigrant communities arguably influenced the canon elsewhere too, notably in the case of Los Angeles film theatres such as the Toho La Brea and the Kokusai, which in the wake of *Rashomon*'s international success contributed to the development of American audiences' appreciation for Japanese cinema (Desser 2003: 185). Thanks to their proximity to the hub of the American film industry in Hollywood and to universities with film studies and filmmaking programs such as UCLA and USC, these neighborhood theatres also attracted industry insiders and

Using Karine Barzilai-Nahon's theory of network gatekeeping, I will endeavor to identify who functioned as gatekeepers in this process of selection, diffusion and reception of Japanese films, and who served as gated. I will investigate how these roles shifted and switched, and what (or whose) interests were served by decisions and politics that eventually shaped the canons of Japanese cinema.

I - Through Western Eyes

Rashomon's award-winning journey to Venice opened the eyes of the world to Japanese cinema and inspired a surge of interest. The story is true and not only because it has been so often repeated. It is also, however, a creation myth: this was not the first time a Japanese film had screened in Europe or North America. Director Kinugasa Teinosuke, for example, whose *Gate of Hell* (*Jigokumon*) would win the highest honors at the international film festivals of Cannes and Locarno in 1954, took his film *Crossroads* (*Jūjirō*) to Moscow and Berlin in 1928, where he organized private screenings. In Germany he sold it to a distributor, after which the film was also screened in, among other places, Paris, London, and New York (Sharp 2004: 18). Tanaka Junichirō identifies the first instance of Japanese cinema being shown on the American continent at an even earlier date, with the screening of newsreels from the Russo-Japanese War by producer Kawaura Kenichi at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair. (Tanaka 1957 (1): 117-118)

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would-be filmmakers throughout the second half of the twentieth century (Thomas 1990; Macias 2000).

Rashomon was also not the first Japanese film to screen at a European festival. *Children in the Wind* (*Kaze no naka no kodomo*), directed by Shimizu Hiroshi, and *Five Scouts* (*Gonin no sekkōhei*), by Tasaka Tomotaka, had already played in competition at Venice in 1938, a year in which the festival's pro-fascist bias and the favoring of works from fellow Axis powers were becoming so apparent (Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia* won the grand prize, the Mussolini Cup) that the "Ministry for Popular Culture Cup" awarded to *Five Scouts* was surely overshadowed by the withdrawal of the French delegation and the British and American jury members, which directly inspired the foundation of an Allied counter-festival in a resort town on the French Riviera called Cannes (Elsaesser 2005: 89; Sharp 2011: 205).[3]

By contrast, *Rashomon*'s post-war win opened the proverbial floodgates: after it had also received the Academy Award for Foreign Language Film in 1952, Japanese films went on to win top prizes in 1953 (Silver Lion in Venice, *Ugetsu* / *Ugetsu Monogatari*, dir: Mizoguchi Kenji), 1954 (Grand Prizes in Cannes and in Locarno, Academy Awards for Foreign Language Film, Costume Design, and Color, *Gate of Hell*), 1955 (Academy Award for Foreign Language Film, *Samurai Part 1* / *Miyamoto Musashi*, dir: Inagaki Hiroshi), and 1958 (Golden Lion in Venice, *Rickshaw Man* / *Muhōmatsu no isshō*, dir: Inagaki Hiroshi).

[3] In any case, the outbreak of war would have hindered wide diffusion of Tasaka's film.

These facts demonstrate that, as Nornes argues, film festivals have been the main interface between Japanese cinema and its audiences around the world (Nornes 2014: 245). They continue to hold this function today, even if their role, focus, and number have changed quite drastically from the days of *Rashomon*. Back then, film festivals were showcases for national cinemas. Generally, the festivals would rely almost entirely on the suggestions of national selection committees, government agencies, or key local informants (Nornes 2014: 249; De Valck 2007: 53). For Japan, the local gatekeepers were a married couple who had forged numerous ties in pre-war Europe while acquiring films for their Towa Trading Partnership (Tōwa Shōji Gōshigaisha), Kawakita Nagamasa and Kashiko.[4] They had also been instrumental in *Rashomon*'s inclusion in the competition at Venice.

Throughout the post-war era and up until the 1980s, the Kawakitas acted as advisors to European and North American festivals. A year after her husband's death in 1981, Kawakita Kashiko founded the Kawakita Memorial Film Institute, which to this day fulfills a crucial function in the gatekeeping process as a private screening room for visiting foreign festival programmers.

The Kawakitas Considered as Gatekeepers

Karine Barzilai-Nahon argues that all forms of gatekeeping revolve around information control (Barzilai-Nahon 2008: 1496). The crucial role

[4] The Kawakitas had also acted as supervisors on the 1937 German-Japanese co-production *The New Earth* (a.k.a. *Daughter of the Samurai* / *Die Tochter des Samurai* / *Atarashiki tsuchi*, dirs: Arnold Fanck & Itami Mansaku)

the Kawakitas played in the diffusion of Japan's films over a period of several decades invites us to ponder the centrality of information control in this process and in the subsequent one of canonizing these films and their makers.

Barzilai-Nahon's theory of network gatekeeping proposes a framework for exploring and identifying this process of information control. She considers not only the role of the gatekeeper but also and particularly that of the gated (the entity on whom gatekeeping is exercised), by way of the concept of "gated salience": a set of attributes possessed by the gated and identified by the gatekeeper that help define the relationship and the degree of influence between gatekeeper and gated from a bottom-up perspective. She states the four attributes by which the gated demonstrate their salience to a gatekeeper as: their political power in relation to the gatekeeper; their information production ability; their relationship with the gatekeeper; and their alternatives in the context of gatekeeping. (Barzilai-Nahon 2008: 1498)

In this model therefore, the gated is not a passive entity. This is borne out by the case of the Kawakitas, who, outside their home country, did not deal directly with festival audiences or members of the press: their gated were the festival directors, programmers, and curators. That they recognized the salience of these gated is demonstrated by the example of a retrospective program of 142 Japanese films held in Paris in 1962 and 1963, which they organized with Henri Langlois, head of the Cinémathèque française. The Kawakitas clearly recognized the political power and information production ability of the gated Langlois, and in return assumed the mantle of

gated to him by organizing screenings in Japan of 155 French films, as part of the Japanese-French Film Exchange Festival (Nichi Futsu Kōkan Eigasai). (Gerow 2013: 189, 190)

Barzilai-Nahon argues that network gatekeeping has three main goals: a "locking-in" of gated inside the gatekeeper's network; protecting norms, information, gated, and communities from unwanted entry from outside; and maintaining ongoing activities within network boundaries without disturbances. (Barzilai-Nahon 2008: 1496) Aaron Gerow's comments on some of the events organized or facilitated by the Kawakitas are useful in illustrating the couple's gatekeeping mechanisms and goals. He starts out by emphasizing the crucial role the Kawakitas and their various organizations[5] played in introducing Japanese films abroad and assisting foreign programmers in selecting films, acknowledging that their 'early historical presentations helped shape the canon of Japanese film both at home and abroad'[6] (Gerow 2013: 189). However,

> 'the Japan Film Library Council programmes established new

[5] Before the Kawakita Memorial Film Institute, Kawakita Kashiko had founded the Japan Film Library Council in 1960 when the national film library proved inadequate for gathering and preserving film prints.

[6] The films shown in France as part of the Film Exchange Festival were subsequently screened as a program in Japan. Filmmakers introduced through events abroad facilitated by the Kawakitas include Ozu Yasujirō, Naruse Mikio, and Gosho Heinosuke, as well as Masumura Yasuzō and Suzuki Seijun.

> perspectives or critiqued the canon less than they perpetuated established standards of good cinema and master filmmakers, generally upholding visions of the 1930s and the 1950s as golden eras of humanist cinema. [...] The thematic retrospectives on the family or women were rather conservative in vision, and [...] none of the programmes themselves were thematically structured around a critical interrogation of Japanese cinema or Japanese history (questioning wartime cinema, for instance).'
> (Gerow 2013: 191)

After first helping to establish and shape the canon of Japanese films, the Kawakitas' subsequent activities gradually refrained from critiquing it – controlling information in an attempt to perpetuate and consolidate their early efforts. This implies that during those years other gatekeepers emerged and gained prominence, who would build on, expand, and in some cases challenge the groundwork laid by the Kawakitas.

The Gatekeeper Triumvirate

Three groups of gatekeepers can be said to have played a significant role in the diffusion and canonization of Japanese cinema during the latter half of the twentieth century: festivals (and their informants), film critics, and film scholars. The essential question that then arises is: who influenced whom? Or: who were the gatekeepers and who the gated?

As we have seen, the "discovery" of Japanese cinema happened in the early 1950s at a film festival. Other film festivals then extended and broadened this initial discovery

and fed the audience's growing curiosity by screening other films by other filmmakers from Japan.[7] By the end of that decade, the audience was curious and numerous enough to warrant publication of an English-language text that offered historical context and also indexed the key players and their works: Joseph L. Anderson and Donald Richie's *The Japanese Film: Art and Industry*, first published in 1959.[8]

What these two authors also provided was an argued selection and critical evaluation of a handful of individual filmmakers, 'those few men [...] who have the integrity and sheer brute strength to fight against what is surely one of the most conservative, artistically reactionary, inefficient, and unprofessional film industries in the world.' (Anderson & Richie 1959: 345) Though working from Japan, Anderson and Richie's selection corresponded by and large with the filmmakers the Kawakitas advocated through their contacts in Europe and North America, notably Kurosawa Akira, Mizoguchi Kenji, Ozu Yasujirō, Naruse Mikio, Kinoshita Keisuke, and Gosho Heinosuke.

By that time, film critics in France had also taken to selecting, evaluating and championing individual filmmakers, an act that had taken on political dimensions in the latter half of the 1950s with the formulation of the

[7] As part of what James F. English calls, the 'economy of prestige' (English 2005), the Academy Awards ceremony is similar enough in its structure of nominations and awards to a film festival (at least to the latter's most influential function, the handing out of awards) to be included in that category.

[8] Although it was preceded by a French publication, *Le cinéma japonais*, written by Shinobu and Marcel Giuglaris (Éditions du Cerf, 1956).

politique des auteurs by critics writing primarily for the monthly *Cahiers du cinéma* and the weekly *Arts* (in particular Claude Chabrol, Jean-Luc Godard, Jacques Rivette, Eric Rohmer, and François Truffaut). Two Japanese filmmakers became symbolic for the new lay of the land in Parisian critics' circles: the *Cahiers* writers sanctified Mizoguchi Kenji by placing him among their pantheon of *auteurs*, while their rivals at *Positif* championed Kurosawa Akira. Befitting a political claim, both camps vigorously defended their positions, not seldom by attacking the competition, as per these words of Rivette in 1958: '[T]he little Kurosawa-Mizoguchi game has had its day. Let the last of Kurosawa's defenders withdraw, one can only compare that which is comparable and of equal ambition. Mizoguchi alone imposes the sense of a specific language and a specific universe that is accountable only to him.'[9] (Rivette 1958: 30)

The force of the polemic does not obscure the fact that the Parisian critics had to fish from a sparsely populated pool and were dependent on the films that were available to them via film festivals and curated film programs; the Mizoguchi/Kurosawa debate reached its apex in the late 1950s, several years before the Cinémathèque française's program of 142 Japanese films curated by the Kawakitas and Henri Langlois. One could argue that the sparse availability of Japanese films facilitated the adoption of a political stance, that it was the critics' very unfamiliarity with the length and breadth of the country's prolific output of motion pictures that made two

[9] My translation. (*Cahiers du cinéma*, 'Mizoguchi vu d'ici,' n°81, March 1958, pp. 28-30)

Japanese directors the perfect foil for Parisian agendas. The selection made by the festival gatekeepers in this way became a *fait accompli*: the claim of 'Mizoguchi alone' was all the easier for a lack of examples to help dispute it.[10]

This strategy of maintaining a reduced (or reductive) canon for an industry that has long been phenomenally prolific is in line with the main goals of network gatekeeping as formulated by Barzilai-Nahon: once the canon has been established (and a reduced canon is, logically speaking, easier to establish than an encompassing one), it becomes difficult to deviate from the template, since the gatekeepers' positions are at stake with every mutation.

Japanese films and filmmakers would also serve a useful purpose to the emerging field of film studies. As Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto has pointed out, in order to legitimize the existence of film studies as a discipline, American humanities professors in the 1960s needed *auteurs* and the concept of individual authorship as applied to cinema. (Yoshimoto 2000: 35) American film critic Andrew Sarris was instrumental in introducing the French *politique des auteurs* to the English-speaking world, renaming it *auteur theory* and thus removing the political implications of the French critics' original stance in opposition to an accepted definition of "quality" in French

[10] Rivette further mentions specifically: Imai Tadashi, Gosho Heinosuke, Naruse Mikio, Kinugasa Teinosuke, Yamamura Satoru, Shindo Kaneto, and Kinoshita Keisuke.

cinema.[11] That particular debate meant little in the different cultural and film-industrial context of the United States. What remained was a school of thought about cinema that could be applied to that of any nation, a program that was 'widely embraced [...] as a way of defining and organizing the syllabus for film courses' (Rosenbaum 2004: xv).

Similarly, other debates that raged in France, such as over which Japanese director was worthy of the status of *auteur*, lost relevance when transplanted from a context of criticism as practiced in Europe to one of scholarship as developing in the United States: to the fledgling discipline of film studies, Mizoguchi and Kurosawa mattered not as opposing stakes in a rhetorical battle but for their status as established, sanctified *auteurs* (Sarris presented his reduced canon of twenty filmmakers in the essay 'The Auteur Theory in 1962', which ranked Mizoguchi alongside such names as Hitchcock, Chaplin, and Eisenstein[12]) and how this status could be employed to further the discipline's ends.[13]

[11] Sarris' *auteur theory* did not pass without opposition of its own, notably from Pauline Kael, who argued that Sarris's loose definition of what constituted an auteur hardly added up to a theory. See: Kael 1963.

[12] While Sarris also hints at 'as many as two hundred other potential *auteurs*', this number is in itself a reduction – all the more so for filmmakers from outside the United States or Europe, the dominant territories in the Sarris canon.

[13] 'The influx of art films in the 1950s and 1960s, mainly from Europe, dramatically changed the image of cinema in the United States. Fellini, Bergman, Antonioni, and others were celebrated as serious artists, and in the eyes of many intellectuals and professors, these directors' films were as important as the canonical works of English literature, music, and fine arts.' (Yoshimoto 2000: 30) It is not

In addition, as Yoshimoto and Robert Ray have pointed out, in its early stage of institutionalization, film studies emphasized the international nature of cinema as means to emphasize that film studies could not fit the university's existing national/linguistic divisions. Dudley Andrew notes that this process was initially driven by a desire for pedagogical innovation rather than research (Andrew 2000: 343): traditional departments were deemed unsuitable, which meant that a new academic unit had to be established. In this 'disciplinary power struggle' (Yoshimoto 2000: 35), the example of Japanese cinema supported the perception of film studies as an intercultural discipline: it proved at the same time cinema's universal appeal and its culturally specific nature, its status as high art and its roots in popular culture – i.e. the "dialectic of the universal and the particular".

In brief, the gatekeeping process in the diffusion of Japanese films in the West initially developed as follows: festivals offered a first selection; from this selection, film critics chose and defended their *auteurs*; the corpus of auteurs and "masterpieces" thus established then helped legitimize film studies as an academic discipline. In years following this initial stage, however, the order of influence shifted as a result of developments within these three fields that altered their focus or function.

New Waves of Cinema

The format of the film festival as showcase of national cinemas had been under fire since at

surprising then, that a critical "theory" of cinema as art, also imported from Europe, that endeavored to canonize filmmakers as serious artists would provide the basis.

least the latter half of the 1950s. In 1956, the last-minute exclusion of Alain Resnais's documentary about the Nazi concentration camp system, *Night and Fog* (*Nuit et brouillard*), from the Cannes festival selection after unofficial objection from the German authorities caused an uproar that resonated even in government circles: the French state secretary of trade and industry, Maurice Lemaire, had the final say over the festival selection, but the media attacks on Germany caused problems for the minister of foreign affairs, former deportee Christian Pineau, who was thus inadvertently held accountable and forced to intercede. The affair demonstrated the tenuous nature of a film festival largely organized by and for diplomats.[14]

Two years later, the Cannes Festival refused François Truffaut's request for press accreditation as a measure of punishment for his virulent criticisms of the festival's 'progressive degeneration,'[15] not paying enough attention to film as an art form and not making enough effort to recognize young

[14] For a detailed account of the "*Night and Fog* affair," see Lindeperg 2014: 156-172. As the author notes, there was nothing particularly out of the ordinary about *Night and Fog*'s exclusion after diplomatic protest, which was a common enough occurrence at festivals during their first "national showcase" phase. What was uncommon was the media scandal that followed. The same year, for instance, the Japanese delegation requested and obtained the withdrawal of the British film *A Town Like Alice* (dir: Jack Lee, 1956), which dealt with the Japanese occupation of Malaysia. The only sign of protest from the British side was a polite reminder that three years earlier Japan had been allowed to screen *Children of Hiroshima* (*Genbaku no ko*, dir: Shindō Kaneto, 1952) in Cannes without objection from the American delegation. (Lindeperg 2014: 168-169)

[15] The reprisal was for a series of articles in the pages of the weekly *Arts*, not *Cahiers*.

filmmakers. He attended anyway, signing his reports with 'François Truffaut, the only French critic not invited to the Cannes Festival' (de Baecque & Toubiana: 126). The following year, however, Truffaut returned to Cannes as a filmmaker and won the Palme d'or for *The 400 Blows* (*Les quatre cents coups*, 1959), thus securing the official recognition of the *Nouvelle Vague*, the group of *Cahiers* critics turned film directors.[16]

The same group would be a major catalyst behind the radical reorientation of the Cannes Festival in 1968/'69 from a showcase of national cinema to an institution for the promotion of cinema as art, a move swiftly followed by Venice and Berlin. In February of 1968 they had banded together to form a committee to protest the dismissal of Henri Langlois as head of the Cinémathèque française by minister of culture André Malraux. These protests continued at the Cannes film festival, with the country already on edge due to nationwide strikes by farmers and factory workers. After the occupation of the Palais des festivals, the entire event was eventually shut down prematurely and would return the following year thoroughly transformed.[17] This

[16] The term 'Nouvelle Vague' was first coined by Françoise Giroud in *L'Express* in 1958, for a series of articles on the youth of France. *L'Express* re-applied it in its reports on the 1959 Cannes Festival to refer to an emerging generation of young French filmmakers. It was a promotional campaign by Unifrancefilm, the semi-governmental organization charged with promoting French film abroad, that finally cemented the slogan's connection with cinema. (Marie: 3-5)

[17] Including an additional section, or more accurately a counter-festival: the Quinzaine des réalisateurs or

marks the beginning of what Marijke de Valck posits as the second historical phase for film festivals. In this second phase, the status of cinema and the film director had grown and films had to be selected for their artistic achievements, not screened as a matter of national prestige. The 'age of programmers' (de Valck 2007: 167) had begun.

De Valck argues that, after 1968, festivals adopted the notions of the auteur and the new wave into strategic discourse in order to classify themselves as institutions of discovery. The festival programmer, it was implied, actively searched out and selected the best in global cinema. By grouping films and presenting theme programs, the film festival became a microcosm of the state of the world, artistically but also politically. The more committedly political bent was perhaps inevitable, given the climate that had nurtured the uprising at Cannes. And so, in the wake of the French New Wave followed a flood of similarly pitched "movements" from other countries, from Brazil to Poland and from West Germany to Japan, whose 'novelty and relevance could be credited to formal innovation, controversial subject matter, and their socio-political message' (de Valck 2007: 175).[18]

Directors' Fortnight, which operated independently from the main festival and showed films that were deemed too radical for the official selection.

[18] The Japanese New Wave had been fabricated by the Japanese themselves before it became seen as such by the world at large. The Shochiku studio had consciously employed the term *Nūberu bāgu* at the tail end of the 1950s, when it launched the directorial debuts of a number of young filmmakers, notably Ōshima Nagisa, Yoshida Yoshishige, and Shinoda Masahiro, all of whom had until

The second phase was also characterized by a proliferation of film festivals. In addition to the parallel sections at Cannes (Quinzaine des réalisateurs), Venice (Giornate del Cinema Italiano), and Berlin (Forum des jungen Films), the decade following the upheavals of 1968 witnessed the birth of festivals in Rotterdam (from 1972), Toronto (from 1976), and Salt Lake City (from 1979), to name but a few of those that would rise to international prominence. Such an expansion meant that an increasing number of programmers went looking for an increasing number of exciting developments in global cinema, meaning that, as de Valck notes, the various new waves and other cinematic movements came with an expiration date: once the sheen of "discovery" had worn off, the system craved 'fresh input.' (de Valck 2007: 176)

This process fit in with the auteurist nature of festival programming during this period. Festivals would continue to follow filmmakers who had been "discovered" as part of a wave or movement, on their way to becoming individual "auteurs" whose films carried their unique personal signature:

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then been employed by the studio as assistant directors. Like their counterparts in France, these filmmakers also took a political stance in opposition to an earlier form of "quality" filmmaking, in this case Shochiku's "Ōfuna flavor" melodramas, exemplified by the works of a filmmaker who, despite being of the generation of Mizoguchi and active since the days of silent film, was only beginning to be discovered by the West in the years following his death in 1963, Ozu Yasujirō. Prior to becoming directors in their own right, Shinoda had been assistant director to Ozu, while Ōshima and Yoshida had published critical writings on the subject of Ozu's films. Another filmmaker associated with the Japanese New Wave, Imamura Shōhei, had also assisted Ozu, but he had left Shochiku for Nikkatsu in 1954.

'Filmmakers [...] need prolonged recognition via favorable film criticism and festival awards to reach the cultural status of true auteurs' (de Valck 2007: 176).

What this meant for Japanese cinema is visible from the annual festival selections, even when we limit ourselves to the competitions of Cannes and Berlin[19]: between 1969 and 1979, nary a year went by without at least one Japanese film competing for the top prize, with directors Shinoda Masahiro and Kumai Kei making repeat appearances, sometimes in consecutive years.[20] As far as awards were concerned, Teshigahara Hiroshi had won the special jury prize in Cannes for *Woman in the Dunes* (*Suna no onna*, 1964) in

[19] Venice suspended its competition section and gave out no prizes between 1969 and 1979.

[20] Selections of Japanese films in competition at the Cannes and Berlin film festivals between 1969 and 1979 were as follows:

Japanese films in competition at Cannes, 1969-1979:

1969: *Nihon no seishun* (Kobayashi Masaki)
1971: *Yami no naka no chimimoryo* (Nakahira Kō)
1972: *Chinmoku* (Shinoda Masahiro)
1974: *Himiko* (Shinoda Masahiro)
1975: *Den-en ni shisu* (Terayama Shūji)
1978: *Ai no bōrei* (Ōshima Nagisa)

Japanese films in competition at Berlin, 1969-1979:

1969: *Aidō* (Hani Susumu)
1970: *Chi no mure* (Kumai Kei)
1971: *Ai futatabi* (Ichikawa Kon)
1972: *Yakusoku* (Saitō Kōichi)
1973: *Kanashimi no beradonna* (Yamamoto Eiichi)
1974: *Asayake no uta* (Kumai Kei) + Zeami (Harada Susumu)
1975: *Sandakan hachibanshokan bōkyo* (Kumai Kei)
1976: *Honjin satsujin jiken* (Takabayashi Yōichi)
1978: *Tōi ippon no michi* (Hidari Sachiko)

1964 and Kobayashi Masaki's *Kwaidan* (*Kaidan*, 1964) received the same honor the following year. Ōshima Nagisa was named best director at Cannes in 1978 for *Empire of Passion* (*Ai no bōrei*, 1978).

The auteurist bent also colored a variety of curated programs, which formed a next step in the process of canonization of Japanese films and filmmakers. Throughout the 1970s these programs were still largely the domain of the Kawakitas, who would introduce unfamiliar names such as Tanaka Kinuyo (already known to Western audiences as an actress, particularly in the works of Mizoguchi, but not yet as a director), and, as part of a program of 'Twenty Contemporary Japanese Film Directors' in 1974, Masumura Yasuzō, Nakagawa Nobuo, Suzuki Seijun, and Fukasaku Kinji. (Gerow 2013: 190)[21] Donald Richie, who had published his book *The Films of Akira Kurosawa* in 1965,[22] became particularly active as a curator during the 1960s, putting together retrospectives of Mizoguchi, Kurosawa, and Ozu, as well as Japanese film programs in Europe and North

[21] Due in part to the collapse of the Japanese studio system (of the six major studios, Toho, Shochiku and Daiei had by 1974 seized production, while Shintoho had gone bankrupt in 1962), Nakagawa and Suzuki had effectively stopped making films since the late 1960s, and could therefore barely lay claim to the title of 'contemporary film director.'

[22] Which Yoshimoto argues is a more important book on Japanese cinema in the context of 1960s auteurism than Anderson and Richie's *The Japanese Film*, since 'it was not only the first comprehensive study of the work of a Japanese film director but also one of the earliest examples of serious film books devoted to *any* auteur's work.' (Yoshimoto 2000: 11-12)

America before serving as Film Curator at the Museum of Modern Art in New York from 1969 through 1972 (MoMA 1969, 1970).

New Waves of Scholarship

This steady supply of new auteurs kept Japanese cinema in the eye of film scholars throughout the 1960s and 1970s. The discovery of Ozu Yasujirō and his films in the latter half of the 1960s inspired the publication in 1972 of Paul Schrader's *Transcendental Style in Film: Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer* and in 1974 of Donald Richie's monograph *Ozu: His Life and Films*.[23] In the late 1970s, as Philips and Stringer note, scholarly interest in Japanese cinema gave rise to 'powerful debates' about film theory and history (Philips and Stringer 2007: 2), in which the works of Ozu, and the way Schrader and Richie approached them, play a central role. Yoshimoto sees this as a 'second wave' of scholarship on Japanese cinema, one characterized by formalist and Marxist theory and the celebration of Japanese cinema as an alternative to the dominant Hollywood mode of filmmaking. (Yoshimoto 2000: 8) Freda Freiberg argues that this shift occurred because film theorists entered the 'terrain' of Japanese cinema, previously the domain of film critics and Japanologists. (Freiberg 1998: 565) The expansion of cinema studies demanded a more rigorous, theoretical approach, and the search for a grand theory of film analysis brought formalism, psychoanalytical theory, Marxism,

[23] Both published by University of California Press.

structuralism, and post-structuralism.[24]

This search to develop a 'Grand Theory' was a natural consequence of efforts to achieve academic respectability for the fledgling discipline. As early criticism even from outside academia already pointed out, the new notion of auteurism did not provide a powerful enough theory and certainly did not possess much in the way of academic respectability: '[a]n analysis of Hitchcock that purported to demonstrate a theory of signification or the unconscious was more worthy of academic attention than an analysis of recurring authorial motifs.' (Bordwell and Carroll: 19)

The central work in this regard is Noël Burch's *To the Distant Observer: Form and Meaning in the Japanese Cinema* (1979), which casts Japanese cinema and culture as oppositional to those of the West. In this phase Japanese cinema fulfilled, if anything, even more the role of foil for gatekeepers' (or those aspiring to the stature) agendas: while the theories were fresh, Japan remained, as per earlier studies such as Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946), the absolute Other, the 'Not-us (or Not-U.S.)' (Geertz 1988: 106). What more ideal Other than a filmmaker who was 'the most Japanese of all film directors' (Richie 1974: the phrase appears on pages xi, xiii, 1, and 189), Ozu Yasujirō? Burch's study devotes its longest chapter to the works of Ozu, but like all other examples of Japanese cinema in the book, they serve primarily as 'a detour through the

[24] These were furthermore employed to the ends of what were to a greater or lesser extent political projects, such as feminist film theory – notably applied to Japanese cinema in Joan Mellen's *The Waves at Genji's Door: Japan through Its Cinema*.

East' (Burch 1979: 11) on a route that leads to the actual object of study: Hollywood's 'institutional mode of representation'.[25]

Burch's study and his approach to Japanese cinema have been criticized and commented upon numerous times,[26] and these discussions in themselves inspired what Yoshimoto sees as the third phase in Japanese film studies, characterized by dual trends: on the one hand those scholars who seek to produce more contextualized studies of auteurs, movements, and periods in Japanese film history; on the other hand cross-cultural analysis, which seeks to 'continue theorization of Japanese cinema and simultaneously construct a new historical narrative of intercultural exchange.' (Yoshimoto 2000: 23) Exemplifying the former trend are the works of David Desser, in particular *Eros Plus Massacre: An Introduction to the Japanese New Wave Cinema* (1988), which Freiberg argues helped add the name of Ōshima Nagisa to the pantheon of Japanese masters, thus making for a 'Big Four', alongside Kurosawa, Mizoguchi, and Ozu.[27] (Freiberg: 567)

Paralleling Edward Said's criticism of literature studies' preoccupation with 'textuality' at the expense of 'the circumstances, the events, the physical senses that made it

[25] Burch states this clearly in his preface. As Freiberg notes, since then Burch has concentrated his publications on investigating and defining this "institutional mode of representation," and he did not return to the topic of Japanese cinema.

[26] For an overview of reactions to Burch, see Yoshimoto 2000: 20-23.

[27] It must be noted that these were already the four main filmmakers covered by Burch in *To the Distant Observer*.

possible and render it intelligible as the result of human work' (Said 1991: 4), the contextualizing trend in film studies broke with one of the underlying assumptions of auteurism, which argued that auteur filmmakers transcended the limitations of industry and genre conventions from which they sprang. Such context was disregarded entirely or treated with a degree of contempt, serving at best as a counterexample to underline the exceptional artistry of the auteur. In this manner, Ozu Yasujirō was seen as transcending the workaday reality of delivering the "home dramas" that were the hallmark of Shochiku's Ōfuna studios; Suzuki Seijun was branded a "maverick" within the 'assembly line' (Miyao 2007: 194) mentality of Nikkatsu's borderless action films, an argument aided by the oft-repeated anecdote of Suzuki's dismissal from the studio in 1967 for being insubordinate and making 'incomprehensible' films (Ueno 1986: 216; Mochizuki 1996: 5; Teo 2000, et al.).

Over the years, publications by leading scholars have implied or suggested the names of other contenders for the status of "fourth master" in the Western canon of Japanese cinema, notably Imamura Shōhei, Ichikawa Kon,[28] and Naruse Mikio.[29] In part due to a falling out of favor of auteurism among scholars, academia has made few challenges to the established canon in recent years – a development noted by Rosenbaum, who contends that academics no longer play a role

[28] James Quandt (ed.), *Shohei Imamura* (1999) and *Kon Ichikawa* (2001), Toronto: Ontario Cinematheque

[29] Catherine Russell, *The Cinema of Naruse Mikio*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008; *Classical Japanese Cinema Revisited: A New Look at the Canon*. New York: Continuum, 2011

of importance in canon formation (Rosenbaum 2004: xiv). Yoshimoto, writing in 2000, went even further and argued that film studies 'no longer pays much attention to Japanese cinema' at all (Yoshimoto 2000: 48). Nevertheless, the contextualizing trend continued well into the 1990s, expanding the canon beyond the limited realm of auteurist art cinema to include for instance *Gojira* (1954, dir: Honda Ishirō), a popular genre film that owes its canonization in film studies in part to its pertinence in relation to studies of the image of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.[30] The Mick Broderick-edited anthology *Hibakusha Cinema: Hiroshima, Nagasaki and the Nuclear Image in Japanese Film* (1996), which features a chapter on *Gojira*, sees cinema as a significant cultural practice whose discourse both reflects and influences a coming to terms with the tragedy of the nuclear bombings.

One might argue, though, that Yoshimoto is correct in his assessment by pointing at how other disciplines, such as cultural studies and adaptation studies, seem to take a more active and diverse interest in Japanese cinema than film studies does. Academic writing on Japanese animation cinema was largely the realm of popular

[30] *Gojira*'s place in the wider canon of Japanese cinema is also in large part thanks to the film's American adaptation, released in 1956 as *Godzilla, King of the Monsters*, which turned the titular creature into what Leon Hunt and Leung Wing-Fai call 'the region's first transnational icon'. Additionally, as David Desser (2003: 183) has pointed out, the acceptance of *Godzilla* and other subsequent *kaiju eiga* (giant monster movies) by American audiences was aided by how these fitted an already existing genre film paradigm, exemplified most famously by *King Kong* (1932).

culture studies from the second half of the 1990s onward (although Broderick's volume mentioned above contained a chapter on Ōtomo Katsuhiro's *Akira*) and even in the new millennium, the *Mechademia* series of books, dedicated to 'anime, manga, and the fan arts' – published annually from 2006 and semiannually from 2014 by the University of Minnesota Press – is multidisciplinary, though it features contributions from such prominent film scholars as Daisuke Miyao and Abé Mark Nornes.[31]

Perhaps to insist on distinguishing disciplines to such a degree is to miss the point of, as Dudley Andrew noted in 2000, cinema's (and, by evidence of the above examples, Japanese cinema's) wide and ongoing appeal to scholars and students alike, be they of literature, the liberal arts, area studies, or anthropology. Perhaps this in itself is the 'impasse' in film studies Yoshimoto perceived that same year: film was being studied across and as part of so many departments at the start of the 21st century that the discipline of film studies itself was lost for ways to be relevant.[32] Yoshimoto's detailed

[31] For another recent example of the pluridisciplinary approach to scholarship of Japanese cinema, see William M. Tsutsui and Michiko Ito, *In Godzilla's Footsteps: Japanese Pop Culture Icons on the Global Stage*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

[32] Sinnerbrink points out that not only are film studies' insecurities part of a wider crisis of conscience in the humanities, they also run parallel with profound 'cultural and technological changes' in the medium of film: 'its shift from celluloid to video, from analog to digital image forms, from mechanical editing to digital software, from live action to CGI animation and post-production image composition, etc.' (Sinnerbrink 2012). He suggests that such anxieties and insecurities revolve around the unanswered (and

analysis of the field's evolution, however, largely glosses over the dynamic changes in film studies that occurred during the 1990s, which saw a move away from striving for a "Grand Theory" of cinema applicable to any particular film or body of films, to what David Bordwell has called 'middle-range inquiry': an approach that focuses on specific problems and questions, and which provides empirical data. An important example of this new line of inquiry is the revival of interest in the role of audiences. Research on the issue of perception and spectatorship, empirical or otherwise, became increasingly common from the mid-1990s onward, in part as a reaction to what Sinnerbrink calls 'an erroneous "tabula rasa" view of human beings' in film studies that was a legacy of constructivism. (Sinnerbrink 2012)

Nevertheless, Yoshimoto's oversight does not invalidate his observation about film studies' lack of interest in Japanese film during this period. There is clearly a dearth of relevant writing on the topic during the 1990s, in particular from American scholars, who were at the vanguard of the introspection that led to these methodological changes. The "other" was no longer sought in the cinematic output and traditions of other cultures (the "not-U.S."), but was, as a concept, thoroughly re-evaluated from an American standpoint. Attention to spectatorship meant an interest in defining various groups of audiences: female spectatorship, minority spectatorship, and so on. As American film scholars rebuilt their discipline, they sought to redefine it from within, and once again looked at Hollywood

unanswerable) question that forms the basis for the study of the cinema: *What is cinema*?

cinema to provide a solid foundation – a mission that did not lead via Japan.

This is borne out by the lone chapter on Japanese film in what is often considered the emblematic publication of these changes in film studies, *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Theory*, edited by David Bordwell and Noël Carroll. Donald Kirihara's essay 'Reconstructing Japanese Cinema' misses the boat by attempting to explain why Japanese cinema continues to fascinate Western film scholarship. The central premise of his approach, formulated around several variations on the long-held supposition '*We assume Japanese cinema is different because...*', suggests that study of the Japanese cinema had remained unchanged since Burch's *To the Distant Observer*, which Kirihara's essay rather belatedly re-examines in great detail. In trying to explain why and how culture affects film style and its development, Kirihara does not so much open up new avenues for the study of Japanese film as synthesize his predecessors. As epoch-making as Bordwell and Carroll's tome is often, deservedly or not, considered to be, Kirihara's essay today is almost entirely forgotten.

It would take until the new millennium before the academic study of Japanese film received a new set of impulses. The rise of transnational film studies in particular appears to have had some invigorating effect, in particular as regards Japanese cinema; it inflects notably the writings of Miyao and Baskett, in both cases with a focus mainly on pre-war and wartime cinema: Miyao's studies into transnational stardom through the figure of actor Sessue Hayakawa (1886-1973) and into the edifying effect that Hollywood-trained Japanese cinematographers had on early

industrial filmmaking practices in Japan, both look at intercultural negotiation; Baskett's *The Attractive Empire* investigates the role of cinema in Japan's pan-Asian empire before and during the Pacific War. Neither scholar appears terribly concerned with putting forward new names for inclusion in the pantheon, at least not the names of auteur directors.

At the same time, the first decade of the new millennium has seen several attempts to rewrite the century-old history of Japanese film, in ways that open up avenues for the reappraisal of the established canon. Among these "new" histories we find Donald Richie's *A Hundred Years of Japanese Film*, first published in 2001 and revised in 2005. This volume seems to be generally regarded as an updated and expanded version of his and Anderson's *The Japanese Film*, but it is worth noting the change in title, in particular from the definitive article 'The' to the more open-ended 'A'. 'Here are a hundred years of Japanese film,' the West's most preeminent scholar of Japanese cinema seems to say, 'but there may be other, equally valid parallel accounts.'

One such parallel version[33] can be found in Isolde Standish's *A New History of Japanese Cinema: A Century of Narrative Film*, first published in 2005. 'A' history again,

[33] Another notable example would be Eric Cazdyn's *The Flash of Capital: Film and Geopolitics in Japan*, which focuses on links between the country's capitalist history and its film history. Cazdyn's study culminates in a final chapter that brings together Kinugasa's *A Page of Madness*, Mizoguchi's *Sisters of the Gion*, Ozu's *Late Spring*, Kurosawa's *Rashomon*, Tsukamoto's *Tetsuo: The Iron Man*, and Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell* – all of which he refers to as 'canonical' – before rounding off with an epilogue on documentary filmmaker Haneda Sumiko, who he calls 'one of the most important directors in Japan'. (Cazdyn 2002: 256)

though in the contextualizing tradition of two decades prior, because written from 'the need to break out of the narrow confines of the minutiae of postmodernist academic analysis and return to overviews of the major discourses of history and theories of capital.' (Standish 2006: 341) Standish organizes her history of cinema as social practice along some of the twentieth century's central discourses, including modernism, nationalism, humanism, and gender. In her approach, she finds as much merit in discussing the chameleonic phenomenon of actress Ri Kōran[34] as the nihilist antihero Tsukue Ryūnosuke, the bloodthirsty samurai protagonist of Nakazato Kaizan's novel *The Great Buddha Pass* (*Daibosatsu tōge*), adapted for the screen on multiple occasions, most notably[35] in *Sword of Doom* (dir: Okamoto Kihachi, 1967). Ironically, Standish drew criticism of an auteurist nature from Richie, who argued that a book that 'does not even mention Naruse Mikio, cannot be called a history.' (Richie 2005)

Indeed, in spite of all the permutations in film studies, auteurism is far from passé when it comes to scholarly and critical writing on Japanese films and their history. The tables of contents of two notable recent volumes specifically designed for use as textbooks on the topic follow a chronological order of major films by canonized, auteur directors: Keiko I.

[34] Ri Kōran, a.k.a. Yamaguchi Yoshiko, a.k.a. Shirley Yamaguchi, adapted herself to precisely these major discourses of history and theories of capital in a career that took her from filmmaking Manchuria in the 1930s to a seat in the National Diet in the 1980s.

[35] Notable because it received a U.S. theatrical release in 1967. See Thompson 1967.

McDonald's *Reading a Japanese Film: Cinema in Context* (2006) and Alastair Phillips and Julian Stringer's *Japanese Cinema: Texts and Contexts* (2007) suggest their allegiance to well-established traditions through the wording of their similar-sounding titles alone. As Phillips and Stringer argue in their introduction: 'the brand name of the *auteur* continues to provide the terms of reference through which cultural institutions both inside and outside Japan present and promote Japanese cinema.' (Phillips and Stringer 2007: 15) It is in the context of film festivals that these films and filmmakers accrue the cultural capital necessary to attain the status of canonical works and auteur directors.

The 'Third Phase' of Film Festivals

Concurrently with the changes in film studies throughout the 1980s (and not entirely dissociated from them), film festivals evolved into a third phase in which these events and their organizers and programmers sought to cast their nets wider – beyond the reach of the informers that had long served as their intermediaries in the established national film industries. After becoming aware of the extent of their own salience during the 'age of programmers', the gated sought to break out of their existing networks[36] and build gatekeeping networks of their own. The breakdown of the previous network's gatekeeping mechanisms meant liberation from limitations imposed by the gatekeeper. De Valck argues that this period marked the start of a third phase in the

[36] Though often while keeping one foot inside the gatekeeper's network: see the Kawakita Memorial Film Institute's continuing role as a facilitator for the selection of Japanese films by foreign festival programmer.

development of film festivals, a phase characterized by the global spread of such events, their increasing professionalization and institutionalization, and the emergence of a global system known as the 'film festival circuit', within which festivals became interdependent (de Valck 2000: 19-20).

New selection criteria and new discoveries were a logical consequence of this process of liberation and the construction of new networks, whose interdependence expanded their reach: in the 1980s and the 1990s, Asian cinemas (and Asian film festivals) in particular provided fertile territories for new discoveries. The programmers themselves ventured out into the world to scout films, particularly through regional festivals, and returned with more new waves, including New Taiwanese Cinema and China's Fifth Generation, and eventually a Japanese "New New Wave."

Thomas Elsaesser speaks of a 'fanning out' of these "new" cinemas towards a wider interest from festivals, businesses, and the media in Chinese, Hong Kong, and Taiwanese cinema, 'where (to us Europeans) complicated national and post-colonial histories set up tantalizing fields of differentiation, self-differentiation and positions of protest.' Elsaesser goes on to emphasize the role of the (mostly European) festivals in fixing and assigning them with different kinds of value, 'from touristic, politico-voyeuristic curiosity to auteur status conferred on the directors.' This acquisition of cultural capital as set in motion by the festivals gives the films and filmmakers access to economic circulation (theatrical distribution, television and home video sales, etc.), critical attention through

media coverage, and scholarly attention through their study in university seminars. (Elsaesser 2005: 46)

That Elsaesser's book is titled *European Cinema*, rather than *European Cinemas*, hints at the changing role of national cinemas in this process of realigning networks. Just as separate film festivals coagulated into the "film festival circuit," films from various and diverse Asian countries came to form "Asian cinema" through the festival programmers' game of leapfrog, made possible by their increased access to and reliance upon regional festivals. New waves and cinemas from Asia followed each other in rapid succession, allowing each to benefit from the trail blazed by its predecessor. A rapid succession that includes, but is not limited to, John Woo's *A Better Tomorrow* (Berlin Forum, 1987), Edward Yang's *The Terrorizers* (Locarno, Silver Leopard winner, 1987), Wong Kar-Wai's *As Tears Go By* (Cannes Critics' Week, 1989), Hou Hsiao-Hsien's *City of Sadness* (Venice, Golden Lion winner, 1989), Zhang Yimou's *Raise the Red Lantern* (Venice, Silver Lion winner, 1991), Ang Lee's *The Wedding Banquet* (Berlin, Golden Bear winner, 1993), Chen Kaige's *Farewell My Concubine* (Cannes, Palme d'or winner, 1993), Kitano Takeshi's *Sonatine* (Cannes Un Certain Regard, 1993), and Tsai Ming-Liang's *Vive l'Amour* (Venice, Golden Lion winner, 1994) creates a dense synergy of what today are canonical works and fully established auteur filmmakers from Asia – including the ones that did not win prizes. One could argue that "continental cinema" or "regional cinema" overtook "national cinema" in the perception of

programmers, critics, scholars, and audiences.[37]

II – Through Asian Eyes

Nagata Masaichi's about-face on the merits of *Rashomon* has been noted by scholars and historians. In the unexpected international success of the film he initially found 'incomprehensible,' the Daiei president recognized an ideal occasion to revive his long-held ambition for building a pan-Asian network for the promotion and production of films from the region. An earlier attempt during the years of the Pacific War to get such an incentive off the ground as part of Japan's imperialist plan for a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere had failed to come to fruition, but as Baskett (2014: 9-11) points out, the plan provided the blueprint for the post-war establishment of the Southeast Asian Motion Picture Producers' Association (in 1953) and subsequently the Southeast Asia Film Festival (in 1954, named the Asian Film Festival from 1957).[38]

Already in his efforts to establish the Foundation for the Promotion of the Japanese

[37] A telling example in this regard is the *24 Frames* series of books published by Wallflower Press in the U.K. (today part of Columbia University Press) between 2004 and 2012, which focus for the most part on regional cinemas, yet carry titles featuring the word 'cinema' as a singular, including *The Cinema of Latin America* and *The Cinema of Japan and Korea*.

[38] 'Histories that emphasize the newness of Japan's postwar internationalization of its film industry tend to obscure Japan's complicated past as the only non-Western nation to colonize in Asia.' (Baskett 2014: 5)

Film Industry[39] – a trade organization representing the interest of Japan's five major film studios[40] – earlier in 1953, Nagata reminded his fellow studio heads that around the world '*Rashomon* is remembered as a *Japanese* film and not a Daiei product', and that they should therefore form a united front to 'Sell Japan First', instead of individually pursuing their own companies' interests (Baskett 2014: 7).

In spite of the praise heaped upon *Rashomon* in Europe and the United States, though, the American market proved a particularly tough nut to crack. This is one reason why Nagata focused his attention on the 'more natural' markets in Southeast Asia: 'America is a hard market for every country, not just Japanese films. This is why I worked to convince producers in Southeast Asia to first form a federation for the purpose of raising the artistic level of films produced in Asia to a global standard.' (Nagata, quoted in Baskett 2014: 8)

After establishing the Foundation for the Promotion of the Japanese Film Industry, with himself as its president, Nagata departed on a tour of seven Asian countries (the

[39] This is the translation given by Yau (2010). Baskett refers to the organization as the Motion Picture Promotional Corporation, or MPPC (Baskett 2014). The two sources also diverge on the English name for Southeast Asian Motion Pictures Producers Association (Yau's term), with Baskett giving no less than four different variations on the name in the space of a 14-page article. Given the latter's inconsistency, and in acknowledgement of the fact that Japan is not strictly a part of Southeast Asia, I will use Yau's translation in all cases.

[40] The sixth major, Nikkatsu, was at that moment not producing films. It had lost all its production facilities after extricating itself from Daiei, into which it had been forcibly subsumed during the war years.

Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Hong Kong, and Taiwan) to meet with fellow film moguls, a trip that resulted in the formation of the Southeast Asian Motion Picture Producers Association (SEAMPPA).[41]

Nagata's successes in this regard are all the more remarkable for the fact that, as Baskett points out, the Japanese government had yet to restore diplomatic relations with Indonesia, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.[42] The ace up

[41] Sangjoon Lee describes the positions and stakes of the individual members of the SEAMPPA as follows: 'In the 1950s, Asian countries were at very different junctures in the configuration of their film industry. The Philippines, after Japan, had the most advanced system and technologies. The Philippines had four vertically integrated studios [...] LVN, Premier, Sampaguita, and Lehran-Movietec had been producing more of less one hundred films per year since the early 1950s. Due to these ever-increasing annual outputs, Philippine film studios were seeking to export their films. Indonesia was the most rickety in terms of political volatility. Its two film moguls, Djamaludin Malik and Usmar Ismael, were under cumbersome pressures from both the country's communist party and the government for various reasons. Malaysia, Singapore, and Hong Kong were in the hands of the Shaw family and Loke Wan-tho's MP&GI, and these two companies were keen to acquire up-to-date technologies to fill their enormous theater chains in Southeast Asia. South Korea and Taiwan were in the very early stages in terms of the maturity of the industry. In sum, although these countries had different purposes for attending [the SEAFF] in the early years, they had shared two goals: to coproduce films and to acquire modern technologies.' (Lee 2014: 234-5)

[42] Not to mention that Nagata had been on the Allied Occupation's list of war criminals and had been temporarily banished from the film industry. However, as Lee, Yau, and Baskett all point out, the shifting power balance of the Cold War had a large influence on the formation of the SEAMPPA and the SEAFF, entry to which was limited to the countries of non-Communist "free Asia." Therefore, while the SEAFF fits de Valck's model for the first phase of film festivals' development within a context of

Nagata's sleeve, however, was the international praise for *Rashomon*, which 'became a model for emerging Asian nations that sought to modernize their own domestic film industries.' (Baskett 2014: 5) If Nagata hadn't understood the film's plot, he certainly grasped the full extent of its potential.[43]

Nagata's soft-power approach resulted in the first edition of the Southeast Asian Film Festival, opening in Tokyo on May 8, 1954. A week earlier, the Daiei-produced *Gate of Hell* had won the Grand Prix in Cannes, further solidifying Japan's (and Nagata's) 'dominion' in the entire venture. Daiei's *Golden Demon* (*Konjiki yasha*, dir: Shima Kōji) duly won the festival's award for best motion picture. Sangjoon Lee notes that it was Nagata's achievements rather than those of the now-forgotten film director Shima that were celebrated in local and regional media. (Lee 2014: 227)

Hong Kong Connections

One of the Southeast Asian Film Festival's aims was to foster co-productions between member countries (or to be more precise, between member companies). The first of these was *Princess Yang Kwei Fei* (*Yōkihi*, dir: Mizoguchi Kenji, 1955), a partnership between Daiei and Hong Kong studio Shaw Brothers. Kinnia Yau Shuk-Ting details that Shaw Brothers brought in 30 percent of the budget

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geopolitics, it did not function as an extension of government diplomacy but rather as a vanguard to it.

[43] Baskett relates that Nagata, while on his tour of Southeast Asian countries, 'was particularly elated by the reactions by "typical" Thai film workers in Bangkok, who, he claimed, shared a cultural proximity, enabling them to "intuitively understand" the spirit of *Rashomon*.' (Baskett 2014: 8)

plus ‘five actresses, one hairdresser, one costume designer, one historical consultant, one martial arts choreographer and one set designer, and would supply the costumes, props and accessories’ for the film that was to be shot in Tokyo by an otherwise entirely Japanese crew and cast. (Yau 2010: 68)

As Yau points out, this model of co-production, in which the Japanese party dominated and the Hong Kong party took a secondary role, would last until the mid-1960s. In spite of the unequal stakes, both Baskett and Yau conclude that this type of relationship was nevertheless symbiotic, since the underlying party gained access to a model of film production and distribution – Japan’s ‘technical superiority and rational studio system’ (Lee 2014: 228) – that it sought to emulate and appropriate. Yau argues that the partnership with Daiei raised Shaw Brothers’ international profile and facilitated the studio’s ambition to produce ‘large-budget color epics’ (Yau 2010: 68). Lee (2014: 228) claims that Shaw Brothers ‘probably benefited the most’ from the Southeast Asian Film Festival and the business deals that were struck there. Daiei in return sought to increase its shares in Southeast Asian markets, and to achieve this, it needed access to the Shaw Brothers’ extensive network of film theatres throughout the region.

The impenetrability of the American market was not the only reason Nagata turned toward Southeast Asia in general and Hong Kong in particular as export markets. Communist China had closed its markets in 1952, and while Japanese films enjoyed a degree of popularity in Taiwan, it exercised an import quota on Japanese films. Hong Kong was, as Yau points out, a more stable option

and could serve as Japan's 'stepping stone' into Southeast Asia thanks to the Shaw Brothers' theatre chains in the region.

For the Shaws, distributing Japanese films worked out more cost-effective than producing or co-producing new films, as the cost of acquiring rights and dubbing into Mandarin and Cantonese were roughly one-third of the production cost of a new work. Japanese films also guaranteed higher box-office returns, since 'the quality of Japanese productions was generally better' (Yau 2010: 67). Dubbing in turn eased the films' penetration of the market, which mostly consisted of the Chinese-speaking inhabitants of the region, a population at that time of over 15 million. Dubbed versions of Japanese films were effectively seen as Chinese movies and therefore did not need to compete with Western or local productions.

According to Baskett, Nagata felt that Southeast Asian markets 'did not require films of the artistic standard of *Rashomon*.' (Baskett 2014: 7-8) The emphasis was therefore placed on exporting genre films, a decision that would shape the canon of Japanese cinema in the region. Yau (2010: 66) refers to an annual poll of favorite foreign films among young Hong Kong film critics during the second half of the 1960s: the list of Japanese films selected runs nearly a full page and consists almost exclusively of *chanbara* period action films.

Since Shaw Brothers also produced films, its ownership of these Japanese films, made according to 'the technological and artistic standards to which all other Asian nations would need to aspire' (Baskett 2014: 12), gave it a unique opportunity to school its in-house directors. Yau relates how studio head Run Run Shaw screened various

Japanese *chanbara* for such directors as King Hu and Zhang Che (a.k.a. Chang Cheh) to study, while director Xu Zenghong was sent to Japan to learn the genre's 'production techniques'. 'This trio became well known for pioneering the genre and two of Shaw Brothers' earliest new-style *wuxia pian*, *Come Drink With Me* (*Da zui xia*, dir: King Hu, 1966) and *One-Armed Swordsman* (*Du bei dao*, dir: Zhang Che, 1967), displayed heavy stylistic influences from Japanese *chanbara*.' (Yau 2010: 41)

Xu Zenhong would later co-direct, with Yasuda Kimiyoshi, *Zatoichi Meets the One-Armed Swordsman* (*Shin Zatōichi yabure! Tōjinken*, 1971), the meeting of two national martial arts heroes, famously edited into two versions: in the Japanese version, Zatoichi won the final duel, while the One-Armed Swordsman triumphed in the version released in Hong Kong. By this time, Hong Kong martial arts action films had found their way into not only the Japanese market but also the American one. The resulting "kung-fu craze" of the early 1970s began with the American release of a number of Shaw Brothers productions and peaked during the short career of Bruce Lee, between *The Big Boss* (*Tang shan da xiong*, dir: Lo Wei, 1971) and *Enter The Dragon* (dir: Robert Clouse, 1973). It also offered a brief window for Japanese action features into the previously closed-off U.S. market, thanks on the one hand to intentional mimicry – such as the *Streetfighter* (*Satsujinken*, dir: Ozawa Shigehiro, 1974) series starring Chiba Shinichi (a.k.a. Sonny Chiba) – a strategy that Yau calls 'an unprecedented moment in that Japanese action cinema was for the first time inspired by Hong Kong' (Yau 2005: 46). On the other

hand, American distributors picked up and released Japanese *chanbara* films, re-commodifying the samurai known to American audiences since *Rashomon* into a novelty figure within the current craze: ‘Raise a Kung Fu fist against Ogami... and he’ll chop it off!’ ran the tagline for the American release of *Lightning Swords of Death* (*Kozure ōkami: shi ni kaze ni mukau ubaguruma*, dir: Misumi Kenji, 1972), originally the third entry in the six-part *Lone Wolf and Cub* (*Kozure ōkami*) series. [Figure 1]

Figure 1: American theatrical release poster for *Lightning Swords of Death*

"Discovering" Asian Film Cultures

By this time, the early 1970s, the Japanese film industry had gone from being the standard bearer for the region to withdrawing altogether from both the Asian Film Festival and the Southeast Asian Motion Picture Producers' Association. Baskett points out that Japan, 'despite triumphalist rhetoric of its technological superiority in the region', failed to establish the hegemony it so desired. (Baskett 2014: 16) This was due not only to the inevitable leaps in development made by its partner industries, but also to domestic factors.

With the AFF charter limiting entries from each member state to five titles, the Japanese majors had locked out independent production companies from participating in the event. Such gatekeeping mechanisms would have adverse effects: independent film producers turned to foreign festivals for wider exposure, where they 'successfully promoted their films abroad [...] and in the process changed the perception of what a Japanese film represented.' (Baskett 2014: 16).[44] The case of director Wakamatsu Kōji's *Secrets Behind the Wall* (*Kabe no naka no himegoto*, 1965) forms a noteworthy example. A *pinku eiga* (independent erotic film) produced by Wakamatsu's own company, its selection for the Berlin film festival that year elicited strong protest from Eiren, the Motion Picture Producers Association of Japan (an interest group formed by the same five majors that had a seat in the SEAMPPA), which stated that *Secrets Behind the Wall* was 'an independent

[44] As we will see, a similar strategy with similar results would recur during the 1990s and help a number of filmmakers working in V-Cinema to reach a global audience.

pornographic film and should not be screened as an official Japanese entry' (Standish 2011: 97). The argument was familiar: previous protests from national film selection bodies had sounded very similar, except that those had always been aimed at films from other countries. The controversy surrounding Wakamatsu's film exemplifies the tensions within the first-phase film festival format that would come to a head in 1969, but also underscored the changes that were happening within the Japanese film industry itself, where competition from television was causing a gradual decline in audience attendance figures and thereby a loss of domestic authority for the major studios. By 1972, the year Japan withdrew from the SEAMPPA and the Asian Film Festival, two of the five majors had gone bankrupt and another two had ceased producing films.

The Asian Film Festival may have been the first Asian film festival in the region and may have united all the area's major players, but it would be decades until the Western world would bother to take notice of Asian film cultures, beyond the occasional Asian film. Nornes (2014: 246-7) points this out by quoting Dudley Andrew's argument that

> 'value could properly be assessed only at Western festivals, and only by Western, specifically Parisian, critics. European festivals thus served as a stock market where producers and critics bought and sold ideas of cinema, sometimes investing in futures and trading on the margin, with the quotation registered at *Cahiers du Cinéma*.'
> (Andrew 2009: 74)

This striking description of how European film festivals assigned cultural capital held sway throughout the first and second phases, until 'the global dissemination of festivals [meant] a justified break with hegemony of European festivals' (de Valck 2007: 69). As previously noted, it was Asian festivals and Asian cinemas in particular that marked the start of the third phase. According to Nornes, Asian film festivals offered Western programmers access to a number of vibrant film cultures through a more 'heterogeneous selection' than the informers who were the crucial gatekeepers during the first and second phases. In this switchover, the Hawai'i International Film Festival played a crucial role, since it was 'an American outpost halfway to Asia, where the local language was English and no intermediaries were necessary' (Nornes 2014: 249). Before long its pivotal role was overtaken, for not entirely dissimilar reasons, by Hong Kong. Just as it had for Nagata Masaichi three decades earlier, the crown colony served as the gateway to the Far East, in particular the part that spoke a form of Chinese: the revelation here was of the PRC's Fifth Generation, through the screening of Chen Kaige's *Yellow Earth* (*Huang tudi*) at the 1985 edition of the festival. It was also at the Hong Kong International Film Festival that Western programmers subsequently "discovered" New Taiwanese Cinema and the popular genre films of Hong Kong. "Asian cinema" had arrived – but the West still held the privileged position of putting it on the map.

III – Through Japanese Eyes

As the previous section demonstrates, the selection and prize-winning success of *Rashomon* at Venice had been, in the words of the film's director, 'like pouring water into the sleeping ears of the Japanese film industry.' Kurosawa also lambasted Japanese film critics' tendency ('insistence', he felt) to dismiss the film's foreign recognition as a simple reflection of 'Westerners' curiosity and taste for Oriental exoticism'. (Kurosawa 1982: 187) Without *Rashomon* winning this award, Japanese cinema would, as Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto argues, have taken much longer to establish itself as a recognizable national cinema. In his monograph on Kurosawa, Yoshimoto posits that *Rashomon* and its international success inhabit a central position in the way Japanese cinema is imagined as a national cinema, abroad but also in Japan: 'The worldwide acceptance of Kurosawa gave [the Japanese] an opportunity to rearticulate consciously what constituted the national and cultural specificity of Japanese cinema', for instance by branding Kurosawa 'the most Westernized Japanese director.' (Yoshimoto 2000: 1)

Such an opportunity to define the boundaries of a national cinema would logically form an important step in the formation of a canon of that national cinema, an attempt to set certain guidelines and boundaries for inclusion. If Kurosawa was too 'Westernized' to Japanese film critics' taste, then the next inevitable question would be: who would qualify as more "specifically" Japanese? One cannot help but recall the invention of Ozu Yasujirō as 'the most Japanese of all film directors' – a notion eagerly adopted by

Western observers, who found that it suited their own agendas. As Yoshimoto notes, without distinguishing between domestic or foreign perception, '[t]o the extent that his films reveal the existence of a geocultural fantasy in a seemingly neutral critical language of film criticism, "Kurosawa" can be understood as a symptom of Japanese cinema as it is perceived as a national cinema.' (Yoshimoto 2000: 2)

Where Western, specifically American, scholars during the 1950s began to embrace Japanese cinema in their search for the universal in the culturally specific, Japanese film critics in the same period, consciously or otherwise, sought to distinguish works that they saw as embodying the distinctiveness of Japan as a nation-state. As Sarah M. Corse has pointed out, the universalistic and the specific have long formed two guiding principles of canon formation in literature, the latter gaining prominence with the rise of nationalism and nation-building projects in the late eighteenth century (Corse 2009: 212). That a similar tendency should occur in Japanese cinema at the start of the 1950s is, in the light of Corse's observations, not entirely surprising. The Allied Occupation of the country following the Pacific War officially came to an end in 1952, leaving a newly democratized Japan to find its own footing. The film industry was in a comparable situation of profound reconstruction and maturation. All restrictions placed on Japanese filmmakers by Allied censors had been abolished by 1948, and the first half of the 1950s saw the gestation of the six-studio system, as the three wartime blocks Toho, Shochiku, and Daiei were joined by the newly founded Shintoho and Toei (in 1948 and 1950), and the

reemergence of Nikkatsu, whose production arm had been absorbed by Daiei during the war years, but which resumed in-house production with the acquisition of studio facilities in Tokyo in 1953. In addition, cinema attendance figures were at a record high and rising, providing a stable basis for the industry's development during this period.

In film criticism, Aaron Gerow notes, the 1950s formed a turning point in a tendency inherited from pre-war years to praise foreign films over domestic ones. Previously many film critics felt that Japanese films should be judged by Western standards and rejected the notion of a separate set of (Japanese) values for Japanese films. The post-war period brought the idea into question that Japanese critics could assume 'the eye, if not the sensibility, of the supposedly culturally advanced foreigner' (Gerow 2014: 65). In 1952, critic Kitagawa Fuyuhiko proclaimed Japanese film criticism, because of its relation to 'Japan's position in the world,' to be one of the world's best for its ability to assume a 'fair,' politically nonaligned position: devoid of theory, which is aligned with the West, as well as of leftist ideology (Gerow mentions that Kitagawa 'was a persistent critic of film writers associated with the Japanese Communist Party' (77)). This stance of nonalignment, a "third criticism" if you will, finds itself reverberated in Japanese critics' dismissals of *Rashomon*'s foreign successes and in the label applied to Kurosawa as a 'Western' film director. But it is a remarkable stance to adopt, given that 'Japan's position in the world' during the burgeoning Cold War era was firmly on the side of the capitalist West – a stance that did not spare the world of cinema, as the founding

principles of the Asian Film Festival demonstrate.

Significantly, the decade would also witness the publication of the first encompassing historiography of Japanese cinema, in the shape of Tanaka Junichirō's *Nihon eiga hattatsushi* ('Developmental History of Japanese Film'), whose first three volumes were published in 1957 (two more volumes would follow in 1968 and 1976) and covered developments from the introduction of the kinetoscope to Japan in 1896 right up to the post-war situation. As its title indicates, Tanaka's book series told a history of technological and industrial development rather than proposing a canon of films and filmmakers on aesthetic grounds. Nevertheless, with the first attempts at canonization made around the time of its publication being so clearly in service of the re-emerging nation-state, what these attempts needed most of all before any consensus could be reached was an official historiography of the national cinema. As the first to encompass the entire span of cinema history into their pages, Tanaka's tomes provided the necessary narrative framework to support the project of canonization.

Joint Struggles and Radical Changes

Aaron Gerow sees Japanese film critics' ambivalent position vis-à-vis theory as emblematic of the otherwise 'long and vibrant history' of Japanese film criticism. He identifies several periods and waves within this history, but he sees them all, in the end, as marked by an inability to 'theorize [their] own historicity or [their] own politics' (Gerow 2014: 74) and by an 'absence of critical self-examination by

students and scholars who use film criticism.' (62)

His conclusions echo almost verbatim those of Yoshimoto on the topic of film studies, which he calls 'a discipline that does not exist in Japan' (Yoshimoto 2000b: 698). Locating the birth of film studies in the United States within a context of political protest, self-examination within academia, and a surge in student enrolment, he argues that conditions in Japan were very similar ('political protest and contestation against the faculty and university administrators, the out-of-date curriculum and ineffective teaching, and the complicity of the academy, industry, and government in their support for the U.S. bombing of Vietnam' (698)), yet Japanese academics were unable to seize this momentum to 'invent film as an object worthy of scholarly attention' because there was no 'desire for questioning disciplinary boundaries and presuppositions on a fundamental level' (710-711), thus allowing no entry point for the study of film through the back door of existing disciplines, as was the case with departments of English literature teaching film courses at universities in the United States.

This is all the more striking in that cinema and political activism often overlapped in Japan during the 1960s,[45] and that issues of auteurism played a significant role in this miscegenation. One significant reminder that the *politique des auteurs* was indeed political in essence is the case of Suzuki Seijun's dismissal from Nikkatsu in April of 1968. The

[45] See Standish, *Politics, Porn and Protest: Japanese Avant-Garde Cinema in the 1960s and 1970s*. London: Continuum, 2011, and Desser, *Eros Plus Massacre: An Introduction to the Japanese New Wave Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.

consequences of this incident mirrored events happening simultaneously in France in the wake of Henri Langlois's discharge from the Cinémathèque française. Nikkatsu's decision thwarted plans for a Suzuki retrospective organized by the Cineclub Study Group, a student film society headed by the Kawakitas' daughter Kazuko (who around the same time was instrumental in landing Ōshima Nagisa's *Death By Hanging* / *Kōshikei* a slot in the 1968 Cannes Film Festival – where it never screened, due to the festival's premature closure[46]). The company's refusal to loan prints of Suzuki's films for the retrospective led to the students choosing Suzuki's side in the conflict; they resorted to picketing Nikkatsu's offices and forming a "Suzuki Seijun Joint Struggle Committee" that soon attracted '[a] wide spectrum of film people from large studios to independent production houses, film critics and student film groups' (Hirasawa 2005). One notable consequence of this movement was a greater unity between filmmakers and film critics with leftist agendas, inciting closer collaborations and intellectual exchanges between such people as Wakamatsu Kōji, Adachi Masao, and Ōshima Nagisa. Suzuki eventually sued Nikkatsu and the two parties reached a settlement in 1971, a date that is not wholly without significance of its own: it was the year Nikkatsu switched its entire production roster to softcore pornographic films under the

[46] The film was nevertheless screened at parallel events around the country and drew strongly favorable reception from French critics – particularly those aligned with *Cahiers du cinéma*, which 'immediately adopted Ōshima into their pantheon of celebrated auteurs' – as well from British film scholars in the pages of *Screen*. (Nagib 2011b: 199)

“Roman Porno” banner and existing contracts with in-house cast and crew were dissolved.

The policy change at Nikkatsu was indicative of greater ills in the film industry and the studio system. Declining cinema attendance throughout the 1960s had made Shochiku, Toho, and Daiei virtually halt production all together (Shintoho had already gone bankrupt in 1962). At the same time, the rise in consumer film technology, in particular the commercial availability of 8- and 16-millimeter cameras, influenced a burgeoning amateur filmmaking scene that would come to prominence in the latter half of the decade, in part thanks to newly formed film festivals like the Off-Theater Film Festival in Tokyo, which began in 1976.

Japanese film critic Abe Kashō refers to this period as ‘a radical change in Japanese film culture’ (Abe 2000: 10, quoted in Gerow 2002: 2), one that did not spare film criticism. Indeed, the change is ‘identifiable at the point at which major film critics, most of whom had been active since the 1950s, began declaring Japanese cinema uninteresting, if not bad’ (Gerow 2002: 2). Gerow argues that a group of younger, emerging critics led by Hasumi Shigehiko in a sense returned to the apolitical stance of the early 1950s, rebelling against the political focus of the previous decade’s criticism by arguing that ‘films should be looked at as films, even if that meant bracketing off political and social issues. Cinematic form was more important to a movie than story or film content because that was what made it cinema’ (Gerow 2002: 2).

Writing in 1987, film scholar Iwamoto Kenji foreshadowed in more muted terms Abe’s ‘radical change’ by positing that the cinema of Japan had ‘completed a historical

cycle' and that this had caused an increase in the number of publications about the history of Japanese cinema because at this juncture 'it demands proper treatment' (Iwamoto 1987: 142). The year 1976 saw the publication of the final volume of Tanaka Junichirō's *Developmental History of Japanese Film*, as well as the paperback reissues of all its five installments. 'Proper treatment' of Japanese film history would logically include the challenge of constructing a canon, which Tanaka was still hesitant to do, but which a number of writers after the period of 'radical change' seemed more eager to meet. One example is *Kōza Nihon eiga* ('Lessons in Japanese Film', 1985-1988, 8 volumes), which is all the more notable for having been written by a committee of critics, scholars, and filmmakers, and for receiving wide distribution by a major publishing company, Iwanami. It marks, in this sense, the mainstreaming of a canon of Japanese film, in a form and on a scale that few alternatives could match.[47] The editorial board for the series consisted of film directors Imamura Shōhei, Shindō Kaneto, and Yamada Yōji, the film critic Satō Tadao, and the philosopher and literary scholar Tsurumi Shunsuke.[48] In his foreword to the first volume, Satō writes that the books were compiled to fill a perceived gap in the historiography of Japanese cinema and posits that at the time of writing, the mid-1980s, Japanese cinema is in

[47] Tanaka's books also came out with a large publisher, Chuōkōron, and the paperback editions would therefore have received a similarly wide diffusion as *Kōza Nihon eiga*.

[48] The presence of Tsurumi among this group is indicative of the dearth of dedicated film scholarship in Japan up to this moment. Few alternatives to fill this position come to mind besides Hasumi Shigehiko.

a crisis and that reflecting on the achievements of the past may somehow reveal clues that could help Japanese cinema of the present move forward. Canonizing the past is therefore meant to function as a catalyst for future development.

The blurring of the boundary between filmmaker and film critic was by this point anything but a recent trend, in Japan or elsewhere. The writings on film of Ōshima Nagisa (who also contributed to *Kōza Nihon eiga*) and Yoshida Yoshishige not only contributed to the canonization of fellow filmmakers, principally Ozu Yasujirō and Masumura Yasuzō, but arguably also to their own. Ōshima in particular greatly increased his visibility through other activities besides directing feature films, such as publishing and broadcasting.[49]

With film studies barely extant, canon formation of Japanese cinema within Japan was, into the 1980s, therefore mostly the realm of film critics and the film industry.[50] Film festivals in any form were a rarity in Japan until

[49] Including guest appearances on TV entertainment programs such as the cooking show *Ryōri no tetsujin / The Iron Chef*, which would suggest that publicity and visibility are also contributing factors in canon formation. See also Alfred Hitchcock's expert manipulation of his own public profile, in Jan Olsson, *Hitchcock à la Carte*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.

[50] Although as the example of Tsurumi Shunsuke shows, scholars from various fields have contributed significantly to the construction of a domestic canon of Japanese cinema. Later examples of scholars who have published books on Japanese film history structured as canons of significant films and filmmakers include Katō Mikirō, Iwamoto Kenji, and Yomota Inuhiko.

at least the latter half of the 1970s, with the launch of the Off-Theater Film Festival in 1976 – later redubbed the Pia Film Festival (PFF), after its main organizer, the Pia Corporation. Founded in 1972, Pia Corporation's activities included publishing a weekly magazine listing film screenings and cultural events around the country.[51] However, this festival's mission was (and still is today) to discover unknown filmmaking talent: amateur filmmakers from all over the country could enter their works – short films as well as features, made on 8mm, 16mm, or video – out of which a committee made a selection that would compete for the annual Grand Prize, as decided by a jury of seasoned film professionals. In 1984 the PFF installed a scholarship program, by which the Grand Prize winner received funding for a follow-up feature film project. In this manner, the Pia Film Festival has helped launch the careers of a number of filmmakers that would go on to varying degrees of domestic and international notoriety, including Sono Sion, Hashiguchi Ryōsuke, and Lee Sang-il. The PFF did not nurture filmmaker careers beyond this point: once their scholarship film was made, they were left to forge their own professional trajectories. Its function and influence in terms of canon formation is therefore fundamentally different when

[51] As well as the now discontinued annual *Shinema Kurabu* (Cinema Club) film reference guides, which appeared in two separate editions: one for Japanese films (or *hōga*) and another for foreign films (or *yōga*). Both listed basic information (director, writer, main cast, running time, plot synopsis, etc.) for all films released theatrically in Japan.

compared to the film festivals that fit the molds of De Valck's stages two and three.[52]

Despite or perhaps because of the dwindling fortunes of the major film studios, the late 1970s also saw a renewed attempt by the established film industry to retain a prominent role in shaping the canon: the 1978 founding of the Japan Academy Prize (Nippon akademī-shō) was modeled on the annual Academy Award ceremony in Hollywood, whose leading function in canon formation has been noted by Jonathan Rosenbaum. Though initiated by the majors Toei, Shochiku, Toho, and Daiei, the genesis of the Japan Academy Prize demonstrates the changing nature of the term "film industry" in Japan during this period, with the advertising firm Dentsu and broadcaster NTV (Nippon Terebi) playing crucial roles in making the venture financially viable at a time

[52] The Pia Film Festival functions more as a replacement for the in-house apprenticeship system that largely disappeared with the fall of the major studios at the start of the 1970s – an argument supported by the fact that the Pia Corporation's founding, and the launch of its listings magazine, happened in 1972. In this regard, rather than to other film festivals, the PFF is more usefully compared to pink films (*pinku eiga*, see Sharp 2008) and V-Cinema – both of which allowed novices an entry into (semi-) professional filmmaking. The fact that a number of later festivals in Japan, notably the Yubari International Fantastic Film Festival (1990–today) replicated the PFF's scholarship program suggests that film festivals in Japan often fulfill a fundamentally different function from the models analyzed by de Valck – a function that deserves closer study. See also Abé Mark Nornes' definition of a 'festival short circuit' in reference to the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival (Nornes 2014: 245-262). For an example of the workings of the PFF's scholarship system, see Mes 2005: 69.

when the combined powers of the majors were insufficient.[53]

The Japanese Academy may have consciously modeled itself on its American forerunner as an attempt to retain a claim on authority, but this has not automatically given it an advantage in the canonization stakes. Japan possesses a formidable counterpoint in no less than three influential and long-running annual film prizes that are decided exclusively by film critics: the Kinema Junpo Awards (Kinema junpō-shō, since 1924), the Mainichi Film Concours (Mainichi eiga konkūru, organized by the daily newspaper of the same name since 1935), and the Blue Ribbon Awards (Burūribon-shō, organized by a consortium of Japan's daily tabloid papers since 1950). The focus of all three pageants is overwhelmingly domestic, with each bestowing prizes on Japanese laureates in various categories – Best Film, Best Actress, Best Screenplay, etc. – plus one for a Foreign Film (and in the case of the Kinema Junpo Awards, another for Foreign Director). Regardless of the state of Japanese film criticism as decried by Gerow and others, these remain active, visible, and successful initiatives to shape the canon as it is perceived by the general public. Rosenbaum's call for a more active role from (American) critics and academics in countering the film industry's influence on canon formation could have benefitted from a reference to the situation in Japan.

[53] In the intervening years, television networks and large advertising firms have also gained an increasing stake in the production of feature films in Japan.

Conclusion

The wide diffusion of Japanese films in the world, particularly in Western Europe and North America, during the second half the twentieth century was largely the work of three sets of gatekeepers: film festivals and distributors, film critics, and academic film scholars. While the line of influence initially worked as a trickle-down effect from former down to the latter, the hierarchy between these three parties eventually became shuffled as the priorities, stakes, and preoccupations of each group changed. Yet, throughout the course of all these mutations, Japanese cinema long remained at the very center of each group's activities and interests. In the process, a formidable discourse developed which, further bolstered by the wide impact of auteur theory, firmly cemented Japanese cinema's leading position within global cinema and canonized a select set of films and filmmakers.

The Western success of Japanese cinema had repercussions for its standing in Asia as well. The breakthrough achievements of *Rashomon* at the dawn of the 1950s led to a remarkable reconciliation between the film industry representatives of Japan and those of surrounding countries – many of which had not yet reestablished official diplomatic ties with Japan after World War II. As others hoped to duplicate Japan's technical knowhow and international success, Japanese films found increasing inroads into Asian markets, where they in some cases would have profound effects on local filmmaking practices. But the balance of power between Asian nations (and national cinemas) also shifted. The dominant hold of Japan's major studios on international

diffusion ironically strengthened the positions of those stuck on the outside: as independent Japanese filmmakers sought and found exposure in Europe, Asian nations developed their own infrastructures and film festivals, which would eventually also work to break the hegemony of the European festival network as gatekeeper and increase the visibility of Asian cinema worldwide – a development that would also benefit Japanese films and filmmakers.

With the absence of film studies as an academic discipline and of authoritative film festivals, the formation of a domestic canon of Japanese cinema has largely been the stage of a gentle tug of war between film industry and film critics, although the border between these two "camps" has always been porous. Significantly, it was not until the status and fortunes of the Japanese film industry dwindled that attempts were made at historiography of the national cinema, a project that was undertaken as a joint effort between critics, filmmakers, and academics. The same dwindling fortunes also contributed to the formation of a new infrastructure for the emergence of filmmaking talent, including the establishment of film festivals that broke with tendencies among festivals abroad, shaping themselves instead to a uniquely domestic need for discovering and launching new talent and new forms.

All these forms of discourse on Japanese cinema contributed to shaping various coexisting canons of films and filmmakers. These canons were quite firmly in place by the time cinema underwent what has often been called a revolutionary change, with the arrival of home video in the late 1970s. Home video could be regarded as bolstering the established canon – by providing a means

of rereleasing, on videocassette and videodisc, authoritative texts and bringing them directly into people's homes – but it can also be seen as challenging it – by offering new avenues for the production and distribution of films outside the reach and scope of the traditional gatekeepers. However, these established gatekeepers also made concerted efforts to marginalize video: they initially perceived it as a threat and their hostility toward video shaped the discourse on this new medium, its uses, and the films released on it.