

## FURY AND THE LANDSCAPE FILM

### THREE MEN WHO LEFT THEIR WILL ON CONCRETE

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On June 1, 2020, as protests against police brutality swept the United States following the murder of George Floyd, Los Angeles resident Zenda Mitchell Abbott walked out of her house and burst into tears. The previous day had borne witness to what the news reported as riots and looting, and one might expect Abbott to bemoan the broken windows and graffiti that littered her neighborhood. The truth, however, was more complicated. As she told the local news: “I was crying because . . . the visual representation of what I saw was what I feel internally every day I walk out of the house. That’s the visual representation of what I feel when you have to put on a suit of armor in order to go out into the world.”<sup>1</sup>

Abbott saw her subjective experience of pain and oppression literalized by the disruption of her quotidian landscape. A mundane, rapidly gentrifying city street might seem neutral in the eyes of many observers, but to Abbott, a Black woman who bore the weight of systemic racism, the normally clean, graffiti-free streets were more oppressive than the occasional broken window and walls tagged with anti-police graffiti.

<sup>1</sup> Christina Pascucci and Kristina Bravo, “Resident Says Damage in Fairfax District Represents ‘What I Feel Internally Every Day I Walk Out of the House,’” KTLA 5 Morning News, posted online June 1, 2020, <https://ktla.com/news/local-news/what-i-feel-externally-every-day-i-walk-out-of-the-house-resident-reacts-to-damage-in-fairfax-district>.

Her normally nondescript landscape instead diagrammed the power relations between Abbott and the police state, thus showing Abbott that her environs do not, in fact, belong to her. By contrast, after the landscape transformations following the protests for Black Lives Matter, her streets expressed “the visual representation” of her feelings—the fury and desperation that resulted from a broken socioeconomic system buttressed by white supremacy.

Abbott’s contemporary experience reflects a perpetual fight against an oppressive urban landscape more focused on maintaining displays of capital than supporting the lives of its citizens. The understanding that our surrounding spaces are implicit diagrams of power, and the corresponding desire to disrupt the power dynamics endemic to the ever-homogenizing urban landscape, however, is not limited to Abbott’s experience or to the United States. It is connected to global revolutionary movements from Paris to Chicago to Tokyo, from the 1960s to the present day. Indeed, to better understand the “visual representation” of injustice described by Abbott, one might turn to Japanese Marxist thinkers like Matsuda Masao, theorist of *fukei-ron* or the “theory of landscape,” who posited that our lived landscape is an expression of dominant political power. As the theorists of landscape theory argue, even seemingly banal landscapes, bereft of visible conflict, are weighted with violence and oppression.<sup>2</sup>

In the 1960s, Japanese artists and filmmakers likewise directed their fury against the sterile urban landscapes<sup>3</sup> that surrounded them. As Franz Prichard has noted, newly networked forms of transportation, communication, and exchange gave rise to an increasingly homogenized material and sensory environment.<sup>4</sup> Through protests, experimental theater, graffiti, and other means of capturing and transforming urban space, young people rebelled against their landscape, which bore witness to the oppression of the poor, foreign, and transient. Furuhata claims that many of the works associated with landscape theory attempt

2 Yuriko Furuhata, *Cinema of Actuality: Japanese Avant-Garde Filmmaking in the Season of Image Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 147.

3 In this article, I take the term “landscape” as a given, following the use of the term in the films and writings of the 1960s. While it is not my intention to delve into this term further, it may serve as a fruitful point of departure for future scholars and texts, which could perhaps investigate the differences between the Japanese term *fukei* and its English translation.

4 Franz Prichard, *Residual Futures: The Urban Ecologies of Literary and Visual Media of 1960s and 1970s Japan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 12–13.

a counter-cartography: first they bring to attention a landscape frequently ignored by other works of militant cinema, and then the artists attempt to undo our habitual ways of seeing these landscapes.<sup>5</sup> This is accomplished by an unveiling of power relations, frequently through avant-garde and experimental forms. Landscape theory sought to transform the cityscape into a zone that rendered visible a violence normally hidden from view.

Alongside Matsuda, other critics contributed to the development of landscape theory, including the radical Marxist filmmaker Adachi Masao, filmmaker Hara Masataka, photographer Nakahira Takuma, and other critics associated with the journals *Provoke* (1968–69) and *Eiga Hihyo II* (*Film Criticism II*, 1970–73).<sup>6</sup> This discourse emerged in the wake of the late 1960s wave of radical student movements and marked what Prichard notes to be an *archipelagic* scale of urban transformations.<sup>7</sup> Across the Japanese archipelago, cities began to look increasingly uniform, covered by newly constructed highways, high-density apartment dwellings, and cement-covered streets. As Matsuda notes, “Whether in the center or the countryside, the city or the periphery, in Tokyo or the *furusato* (hometown), there was only a homogenized landscape.”<sup>8</sup>

Scholars such as Prichard and Furuhashi have largely approached landscape theory through the experimental film *A.K.A. Serial Killer* (1969), helmed by Adachi and collaboratively realized by a group of filmmakers including Wakamatsu Koji and Matsuda, which traces the geographic path of a serial killer—nineteen-year-old Nagayama Norio, charged with four counts of murder in 1969—by focusing on seemingly average landscapes in Japan. This analysis of landscape theory highlights the sense that urban environments spread through Japan in an undifferentiated mass. Adachi’s film, frequently labeled a “landscape film” or *fukei eiga*, is methodical in its analysis, with its still shots of empty landscapes and minimal voiceover, reminiscent of Slow Cinema. Furuhashi argues that the film directly led to the creation of landscape theory itself, making this film instrumental for the discourse of the

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5 Furuhashi, *Cinema of Actuality*, 141.

6 Yuriko Furuhashi, “Returning to Actuality: Fûkeiron and the Landscape Film,” *Screen* 48, no. 3 (Autumn 2007): 347.

7 Prichard, *Residual Futures*, 10.

8 Matsuda Masao, *The Extinction of Landscape* (*Fukei no shimetsu*) (Tokyo: Tabata Shoten, 1971), 11–12. English translation derived from Prichard, *Residual Futures*, 10.

period.<sup>9</sup> However, other films from this fervently experimental era likewise evoke landscape theory by instead privileging fury, chaos, and destruction over Adachi's more methodological model. These more anarchic films are fundamentally anti-establishment and anti-authoritarian, expressing on-screen violence that can be at times playful or disturbing. These are not "landscape films" in the same manner as A.K.A. *Serial Killer*, but instead are landscape films that seek to actively transform our understanding and perception of the apparent emptiness of urban landscapes by instead unleashing violence against them. These films wrest banality asunder to reveal destruction underneath.

In this article, I analyze three Japanese political avant-garde films from the late 1960s and early 1970s that mark frustration and anger through a reworking of the mundane urban environment that surrounds them: Wakamatsu Koji's *Go, Go, Second Time Virgin* (1969), Oshima Nagisa's *The Man Who Left His Will on Film* (1970), and Terayama Shuji's *Throw Away Your Books, Rally in the Streets* (1971). These three films, whose narratives are fundamentally integrated with the discourse of landscape theory, use forms of violence to create gaps and fissures within the coldly modernized Tokyo landscape. While the forms of violence they use might differ, Wakamatsu, Oshima, and Terayama's films all critique and interrupt the cityscape, rendering the violence inherent in its concrete walls and buildings explicit.

This analysis, however, first necessitates an understanding of the monumental changes in Tokyo's urban landscape in the 1960s. During this time, the national population shifted from predominantly rural to predominantly urban. This coincided with Japan's extreme economic growth: from 1950 to 1973, Japan's real gross domestic product (GDP) grew at a staggering rate of nearly 10 percent per year.<sup>10</sup> Everyday citizens appeared to emerge from utmost poverty to the appliance-filled world of the urban middle class, seemingly overnight. This was, and continues to be, frequently described as an economic miracle. Yet the massive advances in economics and quality of life in Japan were inextricably bound to its ties with the United States, given the US-Japan

9 Furuhata, *Cinema of Actuality*, 117.

10 Nick Kapur, *Japan at the Crossroads: Conflict and Compromise after Anpo* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 2.

Security Treaty, or Anpo (from *Anzen Hoshou Jouyaku*), which allowed the United States to maintain military bases on Japanese soil. Economic growth was thus closely tied with the nationalism associated with Japan's imperial past. Similarly, the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo and the 1970 World Exposition in Osaka, both of which were firsts in East Asia, carried forward prewar plans for construction and mobilized citizens for the monumental expression of a supposedly reborn postwar Japan. Migrants began to flow into Tokyo and other cities in the late 1950s and 1960s, providing essential labor for Japan's economic miracle. Meanwhile, the economic regime sanctioned and promoted by the state, built and financed by corporate capital, demanded a large pool of "domesticated" white-collar labor.<sup>11</sup> These developments, symbolized by the ubiquitous *salaryman* workers, quickly became symbolic of Japan as an economic powerhouse. Workers who fell outside this "domesticated" model—including working-class blue-collar workers, women workers, and Japan's many recent migrants—did not factor largely into the construction and design of Tokyo's environs.

It is not surprising that the investigation of landscape came into being in the late 1960s and early 1970s, during what is known as Japan's "season of politics." Critics and artists began to draw attention to the vast changes erupting in Japanese urban landscapes. For example, the photographs by Nakahira Takuma marked how networked forms of transportation, communication, and exchange led to an increasingly homogenized material and sensory environment. Nakahira's photography and writings sought what Prichard describes as "new vocabularies of thought from the gap between powerlessness and possibility."<sup>12</sup> In the realm of theater, the performance collective Zero Jigen (Zero Dimension) led playful disruptions of Nagoya and Tokyo landscapes.<sup>13</sup> Their filmed performance (or "ritual," as they called their events) *Walking Man*, directed by Zero Jigen member Iwata Shinichi in 1969, is a 15-minute-long tracking shot following a tall man slowly walking through common urban landscapes: the rubble of a construction zone, department storefronts, and, briefly but meaningfully, a field occupied

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11 Jordan Sand, *Rediscovering Tokyo's Vernacular* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2013), 3–10.

12 Prichard, *Residual Futures*, 12–13.

13 Zero Jigen are perhaps best known within the field of Japanese film as the theater troupe in handmade elephantine gas masks featured in Matsumoto Toshio's 1969 avant-garde, semi-documentary film *Funeral Parade of Roses*.



by young people protesting Anpo.<sup>14</sup> Alongside the walking man, a group of suited, bowler-hatted, and bespectacled men fall to the ground in unison, their legs suspended comically in the air. Zero Jigen's work, more than Nakahira's, juxtaposes urban modernity with childhood playfulness<sup>15</sup>—a trait shared by Terayama Shuji as well, as we shall see.

While certain works appear to use a lighter touch, all are marked by unchecked revolt against their landscape. Across media and genres, Japanese artists showed a fervent resistance to the control of everyday life wreaked by extreme capitalist accumulation and economic growth. The fundamental sameness of the Japanese urban landscape was representative of the banal homogenization of daily life itself; it should not come as a surprise that much of the political activity of this time period focused on the negation and reconstruction of everyday life.<sup>16</sup> This inquiry into everydayness, or *nichijosei*, developed as a critique of the

14 Although the topic is beyond the scope of this article, the ubiquitous protests of this highly political era likewise use violence in highly artful forms to reveal the machinations of power. In public forums, students were armed with two-by-fours, which they called Gebabo or "*gewalt* staves," as well as with colorful helmets that marked their specific political sects. The militant protesters openly embraced violent tactics, which they called *gewalt*, as a legitimate means of opposing state power. These students consciously echoed the protests happening in other parts of the world, including France in May 1968, and indeed, Japanese activists even called the occupied territory in Tokyo the Kanda Quartier Latin. See Furuhashi, *Cinema of Actuality*, 116.

15 Kuroda Raiji, "Sound in Two Dimensions: Graphic Scenario of Performances by Zero Jigen in the 1960s," Post: Notes on Modern and Contemporary Art around the Globe (blog), June 18, 2015.

16 Ando Takemasa, "The Absence of the New Left: The (Un)Changing Cultures of Activism in Japan" (Lecture), "ANPO Revisited" Workshop in the ICC Workshop Series on Youth Activism in Post-War Japan, Sophia University, Tokyo, November 14, 2015.

complacent homogeneity of urban life in the mid-1960s, in the wake of the period of high economic growth. As Watanabe Hiroshi notes, everyday life “was swallowing up dreams for a revolution.”<sup>17</sup>

The experimental and heavily political films from this period attempt to disrupt this homogeneity. Wakamatsu Koji’s 1969 pink film *Go, Go, Second Time Virgin* (*Yuke yuke ni do me no shoujo*), a collaborative work co-written by Adachi Masao and others, takes place entirely in a single, nondescript apartment complex and attempts to wrest it asunder. As a pink film<sup>18</sup>—Japan’s unique sexploitation genre, invented in the early 1960s and cresting to enormous popularity by the late 1960s—sex, and especially sexual violence, becomes the vessel through which Wakamatsu symbolizes and literalizes young people’s rage against their lived environments. Furuhashi notes Wakamatsu’s concern for journalistic actuality, which allowed him to create films that straddle fictional film and journalistic analysis—all reflected through the strange, fragmented prism of experimental soft-core pornography.

*Go, Go, Second Time Virgin* reacts to a contemporaneous scandal: the murder of actress Sharon Tate and three others by the Manson Family. Upon further investigation, however, the film does not comment upon Tate’s gruesome murder as much as it critiques a certain hedonism endemic to contemporary youth culture. In the film, Poppo, a working-class girl, is gang-raped by a group of rowdy Tokyo youths, while the impotent Tsukio watches—able neither to save her from her unceasing rapes nor to consummate their relationship. Later in the film we learn via flashback that he was sexually abused by his parents, and that he killed them and another couple as they were engaging in an orgy—hardly an ode to free love in the 1960s. Nevertheless, with their long hair, fashionable clothes, and mod John Lennon-esque glasses, the youths of the film are recognizable as *futenzoku*, or Japanese hippies, who, as Yomota Inuhiko describes, “came from all over Japan, homeless

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17 Watanabe Hiroshi, *Abe Kobo* (Tokyo: Shinbisha, 1976), 71.

18 Alexander Zahlten defines the genre as a low-budget alternative to the major studio system, which reintroduced independent production and distribution strategies to Japan. Each pink film was shot within a mere three to five days, had a small budget of about 3 million yen (about \$30,000), was around 60 minutes in length, was shot on location on 35mm film and without synchronized sound, and was exclusively shown in specialized pink-film theaters. Directors were granted a great deal of autonomy: as long as about five to seven sex scenes appeared per film, the director was free to experiment with form and narrative structure. Alexander Zahlten, “The Role of Genre in Film from Japan: Transformations 1960s–2000s” (PhD diss., Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, 2007), 74, 77–78.

and hungry, [to] sleep on the grass and sing songs.”<sup>19</sup> Yet the youths in the film are not peace-loving layabouts but a thrill-seeking roving gang who repeatedly humiliate and terrorize Poppo.

Neither the youths nor Tsukio and Poppo appear able to escape either their apartment complex or the repeated traumas they suffer. The film feels immensely claustrophobic: apart from the opening scene, in which Poppo is chased by the youths and raped on a beach, shot through an eerie blue filter, the entirety of the film is set within the apartment complex. Most scenes occur on the building’s roof, with characters staring out at endless other apartments but unable to physically access them. Seemingly unable to escape, the characters in the film instead crawl and run around the building, as if desperate to craft it into a livable, liberated space meant for meaningful human existence. In one mesmerizing scene, Wakamatsu films from the perspective of Tsukio and Poppo running down a stairwell for several minutes; the viewer sees nothing but blurry and jagged stairs as the camera rushes forth, while manic scat jazz plays in the background. This vertigo-inducing scene is unexplained diegetically, but I argue that it depicts the frustration of its protagonists. In Tsukio’s case, the frustration is sexual, given his impotency. As is common in pink films, his sexual impotency symbolizes political impotency—a lack of power and control over life and country, an inability to change or improve his situation.

After Poppo is repeatedly attacked on the roof by the gang of *futen-zoku*, the couple retreat to a basement while Poppo showers; the couple half-heartedly attempt to have sex atop a pile of books, but Tsukio remains impotent. Unable to escape violence and trauma, the characters eke out an existence by lying atop the roof, wistfully gazing at the sun, and drinking. Half-empty bottles of alcohol frequently litter shots from the film, as the characters attempt to escape their reality. As in many pink films, the end explodes into violence: Tsukio kills the youths who raped Poppo, and the couple jump from the rooftop to their deaths. In the end, no liberation can be found within the claustrophobic building, so the only escape is suicide.

*Second Time Virgin* is a fascinating jumble of seemingly incongruous styles. Like many other pink films, this film is shot in a mix of

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19 Yomota Inuhiko, “2 ou 3 choses que je sais d’ATG,” in *Art Theatre Guild* (Vienna: Vienna International Film Festival, 2003), 30.



Wakamatsu Koji, *Co, Second Time Virgin*, 1969. Film still.



Wakamatsu Koji, *Co, Second Time Virgin*, 1969. Film still.

black-and-white and color due to severe budget constraints. Highly grotesque scenes of sexual and physical violence are accompanied by a wistful and nostalgic soundtrack, which uses Western jazz and simple plaintive melodies (for instance, a gentle flute solo is played immediately after Tsukio murders the youths at the end of the film). The cinematography varies from extreme close-up to long shot to long handheld point-of-view shots, as in the stairwell scene. The result is a highly varied mix of styles and techniques that combines a news-oriented sense of “actuality” with a hugely experimental and anti-authoritarian artfulness. Both the film’s form and content are biting in their criticism, both of a media-centric, hedonistic culture and of an unbroken, invariant landscape in which true liberation is impossible.

Wakamatsu's films constantly courted scandal. If controversy emerged, Wakamatsu then used it to lay bare the "true nature" of a political situation. Scandals served to separate the wheat from the chaff, so to speak, by clarifying the stance of each member of a community. He argued that shocks to the establishment caused ripples within calm waters, out of which the "true nature" had the potential to emerge. Wakamatsu described this strategy using the common phrase *Niku wo kirasete, hone wo kiru* (literally: allow your flesh to be cut, then cut the bone)—allow yourself to be hurt (your own flesh cut) in order to defeat your enemy (cutting deeper than the flesh, to the bone).<sup>20</sup> In 1962, avant-garde documentary filmmaker and theorist Matsumoto Toshio wrote an article in *Kiroku Eiga* titled with the same common parlance: "*Niku wo kirasete, hone wo kiru.*" From within such a phrase arose a discussion of several important buzzwords of the period, including alienation (*sogai*), the subject (*shutai*),<sup>21</sup> and the negation of everydayness (*Nichijosei no hitei*).<sup>22</sup> Wakamatsu's film *Go, Go, Second Time Virgin* is a pivotal example of a "negation of everydayness" in its biting critique of late 1960s urban life. As the film argues, apartment buildings are not zones of peaceful domesticity, housing the white-collar workers for whom Tokyo and other urban centers were rebuilt and reconstructed. Instead, they reveal sexual and political violence, child abuse, sexual trauma, and death—a world in which the lower-class members of society, symbolized by Poppo, are entirely ignored while repeatedly violated, and whose assailants are ever present.

Interestingly, where *Go, Go, Second Time Virgin* ends with the protagonists' suicide, Oshima's *The Man Who Left His Will on Film* begins with one—unleashing a chain of events that causes both characters and audience to constantly question their grasp of "reality." Oshima's film, more explicitly than Wakamatsu's, battles against the new urban Tokyo cityscape; for Oshima, the problem is beyond mere apartment buildings and constructions, extending to the entirety of the urban landscape—so much so that the characters battle deliberately with the Tokyo environs

20 Wakamatsu Koji, *The Collected Writings of Wakamatsu Koji (Wakamatsu Koji Zenhatsugen)* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobo Shinsha, 2010), 11.

21 A description of the debates surrounding subjectivity and subjecthood in Japan is published elsewhere; see Julia Alekseyeva, "Butterflies, Beetles, and Postwar Japan: Semi-Documentary in the 1960s," *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema* IX, no. 1 (May 2017, Special Issue: Human Rights): 14–29.

22 Matsumoto Toshio, "*Niku wo kirasete, hone wo kiru*" ("Allow Your Flesh to Be Cut, Then Cut the Bone"), *Kiroku Eiga (Documentary Film)* 5 (October 1962): 14.

in a “War on Landscape,” attacking seemingly banal city spaces, first with staves and helmets, then with rifles.

Its critique of capitalist modernization, economic growth, and the capitalist sameness of urban landscape shares much with Wakamatsu, and Oshima’s film is similarly critical of urban Japanese youth in the late 1960s. However, here the youth are not *futen* but a young revolutionary sect, reminiscent of the Red Army faction. Finding a global parallel in Jean-Luc Godard’s *La Chinoise* (1967), the film similarly treats a group of hip, urban, (mostly) bourgeois youth, quoting revolutionary treatises and arguing about Trotskyism, with both a critical eye and a profoundly sympathetic lens. The film’s Japanese title is *Tokyo senso sengo hiwa*, or *The Secret Story after the Tokyo War*, referring to the failed revolutionary “War of Tokyo” (as the Red Army called it) during the radical student movements that intensified during 1968 and 1969, including the occupation of Tokyo University and antiwar demonstrations in Shinjuku. As Furuhata notes, the film is a requiem dedicated to the post-Tokyo War period.<sup>23</sup>

The film engages explicitly with landscape theory through its inclusion of a film within a film: a series of shots of banal urban landscapes recorded by a young man, known only as *aitsu* or “that guy,” who then goes on to commit suicide in the same manner as Poppo—jumping off the roof of an apartment complex. Oshima’s protagonist, Motoki, a camera-obsessed young man, pores through the footage and finds nothing, only the drab urban landscapes—an “awfully slow (*nonbiri*: leisurely or laid back) testament,” according to the youths, “just junk and more junk.” He and Yasuko, allegedly *aitsu*’s lover, then decide to find the areas featured in this “testament,” drawing on a large map of Tokyo in a manner that recalls the psychogeographic maps of the Situationist movement.<sup>24</sup>

However, when Motoki and Yasuko try to re-create the shots taken by *aitsu*, violence ensues—especially, violence rendered onto Yasuko’s

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23 Furuhata, “Returning to Actuality,” 346–47.

24 While the subject is beyond the scope of this article, the theory of the Situationists, alongside Guy Debord’s *Society of the Spectacle*, have much in common with the theorists of landscape theory, and indeed, one can argue that the Japanese movement was quite influenced by the French one. This is especially evident in how influential the protests in Paris during *Mai ’68* were to the critics, filmmakers, and theorists of *Eiga Hihyo II*—the main journal buttressing landscape theory critics such as Matsuda and Adachi. *Eiga Hihyo II* frequently published interviews with and features on Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin, whose concurrent Dziga Vertov Group productions viewed cinema as a weapon in class struggle.



body. First she is restrained by a policeman when she stands in front of a nondescript mailbox; then she is shoved and slapped by a generic-looking salaryman when she uses a phone booth whose line has been cut. Finally, after she crosses a street without heeding the intersection, she is shoved into a car and repeatedly raped, as Motoki, also captured, lies below the passenger seat, able only to watch. What appear to be neutral landscapes are revealed to be profoundly violent. Yasuko merely needs to act slightly out of the ordinary—to jaywalk, stand in an inopportune area, or pretend to place a phone call—in order to be assaulted.<sup>25</sup> Just as for Abbott, the “junk,” “awfully slow” landscapes are deeply oppressive—in fact, as Motoki and Yasuko discover, these landscapes aren’t banal or neutral “junk” at all. In the end, their war against landscape ends with defeat, and Motoki jumps from the same ledge from which *aitsu* had jumped in the film’s opening sequence—thus completing the film’s Escherian narrative, in which a single diegetic “truth” or “reality” becomes ever more impossible to verify.

Critics of the time likewise wrote of the gap between *genso* (幻想, “illusion”) and reality in *The Man Who Left His Will on Film*. Film and

25 While the topic is outside the scope of this article, it certainly bears noting that in the bulk of Japanese cinematic work of this period, especially within the avant-garde community and the films produced by the Art Theatre Guild (ATG), women’s bodies are overwhelmingly at the receiving end of sexual violence. One can rightfully argue that the use of the female body to represent cycles of oppression and systemic horror is extremely problematic. Wakamatsu’s and Oshima’s films—and, indeed, the vast majority of avant-garde films from this era, including those of the filmmakers central to landscape theory, such as Adachi—frequently employ rape as a metaphor.

theater critic Saito Masaharu noted that the film achieves the impossible: a film that presents not fiction or fantasy, but an “invisible space” that is no less real than what we consider to be reality. As he writes:

Film has long held the delusion that only space that is visible is real. Images have the power to make illusions materialize, and we have frequently seen films that do this. However, those fantastical scenes were not meant to change reality—they were merely a means for explaining the world, not trying to step into the invisible world. In *The Man Who Left His Will on Film*, I saw what could be called a “fantasy” method of trying to seize the invisible world, in order to get closer to reality and acquire a new “reality.”<sup>26</sup>

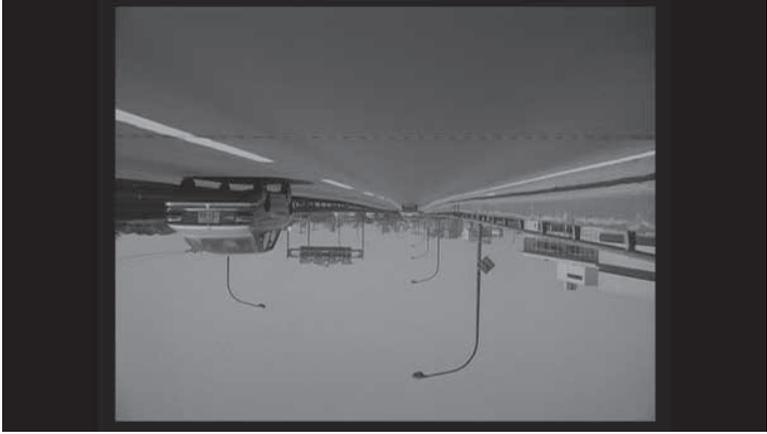
As Saito explains, Oshima’s film is fundamentally opposed to films that “make illusions materialize” by incorporating “fantastical scenes.” This style of fictionality inherently assumes that “only [the] visible is real.” By contrast, *The Man Who Left His Will on Film* attempts to “step into the invisible world.” Oshima’s film shows the viewer the power relations inherent in the landscapes of urban spaces like Tokyo. The violence of mundane highways or nondescript thatched roofs might not be immediately apparent, but Oshima depicts power relations by rewriting and refilming encounters with the landscape. His film, fundamentally representative of landscape theory’s claim that power relations are endemic to contemporary, seemingly empty landscapes, incorporates “illusionistic” elements, as Saito notes, “in order to get closer to reality and acquire a new ‘reality.’”

Saito likens Oshima’s film, with its complex and interwoven threads of reality and fantasy, to the endless layers of an onion, making a “verification of form” fundamentally meaningless. Instead, he posits that the fantastical aspects of the film are nonetheless still truthful—albeit a truth that is invisible to the “naked eye,” as well as to eyes overly habituated to preconceived notions and readymade forms.<sup>27</sup> Sometimes a very simple restructuring of form or the use of “illusionistic” aspects creates an entirely new perception of everyday existence. For example, in the aforementioned sequence in which Yasuko is thrown into a car and raped, the camera juxtaposes her violent assault with an extended

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26 Saito Masaharu, “Chasing Invisible Space” (*Fukashi kuukan no tsuiseki*), *Film Criticism* (*Eiga Hyoron*) 27, no. 8 (1970): 32.

27 *Ibid.*, 33–34.



shot from a low angle, from the perspective of a car driving along a highway. Oshima had already shown the viewer a similar sequence a few minutes earlier, but in this iteration the shot is flipped 180 degrees, so that the car appears to be careening upside down. Wistful, ambient music plays—a stark contrast to the horrific scenes occurring in the car’s interior. The landscape is turned literally on its head, its inner darkness and violence exposed—a violence normally hidden from everyday life and from eyes used to “readymade forms,” as Saito calls them. Instead, Oshima’s film retrains the viewer’s habituated eye to see landscape as oppressive. The avant-garde experimentation of the film attempts to retrain perception, to view the “invisible spaces” of reality through the lens of “illusion.”

Terayama Shuji’s *Throw Away Your Books, Rally in the Streets*, like *The Man Who Left His Will on Film*, similarly breaks down the boundaries between “illusion” and “reality” to find spaces otherwise not accessible to the naked eye. Terayama was notorious for not following the dogma of any one particular theorist, and above all else, his work is playful and anti-authoritarian. Where Wakamatsu and Oshima frequently employ sexual violence as a metaphor for political and national violence, and where they place (in rather problematic fashion) the violated, generally female, body upon a seemingly neutral landscape to reveal the inherent violence within, Terayama’s protagonists enact violence upon the landscapes themselves. His films lay bare the disruptions upon the landscape enacted by Tokyo youth engaged in both art and politics.

Terayama’s conception of fictionality, as opposed to Oshima’s, is

inherently tied to his tendency toward play, or *Spiel*.<sup>28</sup> As he notes: “My thinking goes like this: ‘Play’ [*Spiel*] organizes chance through imagination or intense concentration. Because ‘play’ [*Spiel*] is fictional, it is easy to set it outside of everyday reality. Why can’t it include everyday reality? ‘Play’ tends to fall into the realm of the private dreamworld, but our drama rejects private dreamworlds. We ardently try to construct dramas that portray universal truths.”<sup>29</sup> Play, for Terayama, includes “everyday reality,” in which “private dreamworlds” are necessarily rejected in favor of the portrayal of “universal truths.” Fiction, usually correlated with dreams, becomes a space where everyday reality is constructed and deconstructed—where “universal truths” are played out.<sup>30</sup> “Play” in its many iterations suffused Terayama’s entire artistic output—and even Terayama himself, who was constantly in a state of reinvention and transformation. As a public, aestheticized figure, Terayama personified a permanent revolution of selfhood and personality. As Carol Sorgenfrei aptly notes, Terayama’s goal in all his artistic experiments was to transform “the dross of mere existence into golden art, leaden reality into glittering fiction.”<sup>31</sup>

Terayama’s politics yearned to liberate humanity from this burden of everyday life, as well as from ties to home and country (*furusato*). Everyday life became play, in both senses of the term: playful, as well as a theatrical production. For Terayama, the function of play seems to have been inherently political: to reverse history. Terayama, however, differentiates his practice from political science, whose purpose was to distinguish fantasy from reality.<sup>32</sup> His work questions the validity of dis-

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28 Terayama, similar to certain other critics from the “season of politics,” including Matsumoto Toshio, often used German terms in place of either Japanese or English-language *romaji* terminology. This is likewise true for the radicalized students of the era, who described violence as *Gewalt*, giving the term a more active, motivated, and distinctly philosophical flavor.

29 Terayama Shuji, *A Projectionist in Shot: Collected Writings on Cinema of Terayama Shuji (Eiga gishi wo ite)* (Tokyo: Shinshohan, 1973), 268–69.

30 Although Terayama is describing his *Tenjo Sajiki* (“People of the Ceiling,” the Japanese for *les enfants du paradis* and roughly translating as “peanut gallery”) theater troupe, this same sense of playful nonfictionality exists in his films. Indeed, many of his theatrical and radio scripts were reworked into films; for example, *Emperor Tomato Ketchup* was originally a provocative radio play entitled *Otona-gari (Adult-Hunting, 1960)*. Allison Holland, Review of “Japanese Counterculture: The Antiestablishment Art of Terayama Shuji,” *Japanese Studies* 32, no. 3 (2012): 483.

31 Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei, *Unspeakable Acts: The Avant-Garde Theatre of Terayama Shuji and Postwar Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005), 1.

32 Terayama, *Projectionist in Shot*, 264–66.

tinctions: false versus real, imaginary versus lived experience. Terayama advocated for an intense questioning of such difference and a breaking down of their boundaries to reveal hidden truths. Terayama engages in an investigation into the very difference between the real and the imagined, the fictional and the nonfictional, in a manner that is purposefully shocking to the viewer. Everything in Terayama's fictional worlds, however absurd, pointedly reveals itself to be not dissimilar from the absurdities of our own lived reality. Theater in Terayama's world similarly dissolves these boundaries between a "created" artistic work and the contemporary landscape; for Terayama, bystanders and average citizens become actors, with the whole world a stage.

The boundary between fiction and nonfiction is especially investigated in the chaotic and carnivalesque *Throw Away Your Books, Rally in the Streets*—one of the last works of Japan's heavily experimental "season of politics." Alongside a largely fictional narrative, it includes documentary footage of *futen* smoking outside of the Shinjuku train station or participating in sexually themed performance art in which a woman punches a bag in the shape of an enormous penis, long-haired hippies drawing on the pavement and falling over the art, and interviews with a sarcastically nonplussed sex worker. Importantly, the film includes footage—both fictional and nonfictional—of Tokyo youth physically transforming the city space, whether by hurling their bodies at it (in a manner similar to the action in Oshima's and Wakamatsu's films), radically transforming it through experimental theater, or writing on its many surfaces: concrete walls, asphalt, brick, and even fields of grass. The film's physical attack upon the landscape resolutely documents the zeitgeist of the era, participating in its chaos as well as recording its happenings. As such, Terayama enacts what Yukio Lippit, writing on the youth-centric Shinjuku neighborhood of the era, describes as "a specific mode of interrelational subjectivity" in which "the resulting subject was not so much a *flâneur*-observer of the streets, but a participant in a dynamic process of becoming through encounters with the fragments of an abstracted, post-industrial landscape."<sup>33</sup> Terayama's camera, itself a participant in this "dynamic process," breaks entirely with the Brechtian distancing techniques characteristic of Oshima and Wakamatsu and instead revels in its "encounters" and the "fragments" of a modern city in the midst of revolution.

33 Yukio Lippit, "Japan during the Provoke Era," in *Provoke: Between Protest and Performance* (Gottingen, Germany: Steidl, 2016), 22.

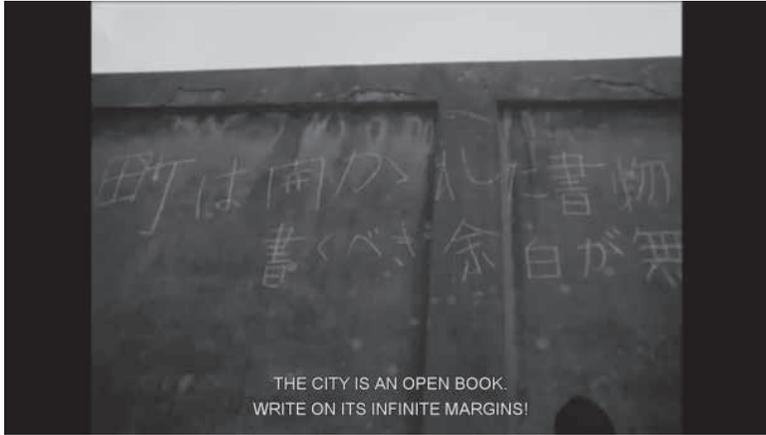


Terayama Shuji. *Throw Away Your Books, Rally in the Streets*, 1971. Film still.

In the film—as much an absurdist, experimental fantasy as a political treatise—the teenager Kitagawa Eimei lives at home with an unemployed war criminal father, a thief grandmother, and a younger sister, Setsuko, who has a sexual attachment to her pet rabbit. The protagonist attempts to join a team of soccer players but fails: the team’s charismatic leader Omi brings Eimei to a prostitute (thus fulfilling a hazing ritual), but Eimei runs away. His grandmother asks a Korean neighbor to kill Setsuko’s rabbit, and in Setsuko’s mourning, she wanders into the soccer team’s changing room, where she is brutally gang-raped. Eventually, Setsuko falls in love with Omi and moves in with him and his girlfriend, the grandmother runs away after her son attempts to place her into a Western-style nursing home, and the father is unemployed after the ramen cart Eimei purchased for him is stolen.

Although Terayama’s film does include one pivotal image of rape<sup>34</sup>—it bisects the narrative at its center and forms the crux of the film’s dramatic arc—the scene contrasts significantly with the tone of the rest of the film, which tends toward oneiric imagery, often shot using magenta or green filters. In addition to the film’s hybrid of realism and fantasy, however, *Throw Away Your Books* is remarkable in its

34 The rape sequence in *Throw Away Your Books*, however, is the first and last moment in any Terayama production when a woman is sexually violated. Given the prevalence of this problematic trope in Japanese political avant-garde film—and within works by Jean-Luc Godard in France, as well—Terayama’s turn away from such elements is notable. In fact, Terayama’s work, in contradistinction to that of other Japanese filmmakers, is far more likely to involve the humiliation of young men, especially by older, more experienced women.



mixture of text and image: it is what Terayama himself termed a “reading film,” due to the graffiti that floods almost every shot. Quotes from radical communist thinkers such as Gheorghe Gheorgiu-Dej, Vladimir Mayakovsky, André Malraux, and Erich Fromm cover brick, cement, grass, and wall—every possible surface. Although the title enjoins the audience to “throw away your books,” the phrase is meant far more symbolically than literally: to break with solitary study and join in solidarity with others in the “street.” As Terayama notes, “One might say that I, who have thrown out the study of printed material and gone out into the city, extended the definition of books.”<sup>35</sup> The film is instead a call to arms to bring books out into the streets themselves; in a tone mirroring, and certainly influenced by, Guy Debord and the Situationists in Paris, the graffiti in *Throw Away Your Books* radically alters a homogeneous landscape bowed in submission to capitalism. As one piece of graffiti in the film enjoins: “The city is an open book. Write on its infinite margins!”

Indeed, the use of graffiti in the film echoes film footage of the *Mai '68* protests in Paris, which was concurrently in heavy rotation in Japan due to the influx of French films from the likes of Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin, and others. Although Terayama’s film appears at first glance to be a personal, fictional story, the real world intervenes, scribbled across the walls of so many shots. While this film is not usually considered nonfiction, it does include several pivotal scenes of docu-

35 Terayama, *Projectionist in Shot*, 218.

mentary footage, as noted previously, including a series of personal ads for homosexuals, made into video; a comedic interview with a prostitute (“Which is your favorite book?” “The Bible.” “How about Marx’s *Das Kapital*?” “Haven’t heard of it.”); and footage of Japanese *futen* inhaling paint thinner or smoking marijuana. The real world persistently interrupts, and provokes, the fictional, even as Eimei dreams of flying machines shot with a magenta filter.

However, the purpose of such juxtapositions was far more political than it might first seem. As Ridgely notes, this is not a process of drawing elements of reality into fiction, but of seeking a clearer view of reality from the standpoint of fiction. For Terayama, one must exit the real in order to view it cleanly, from a viable vantage point.<sup>36</sup> The fictional, then, both provokes and interrupts the real, in order to generate new perceptions and new meanings. This is central to Terayama’s theory of dramaturgy, that performance and play reveal a truth generally undisclosed to us. In particular, the fiction of landscape films such as *Throw Away Your Books* shows viewers the violence inherent in the modernization process. The blend of fiction and nonfiction serves, then, to get a “clean look” at the world and life itself. Terayama offers a radical deinstitutionalization of forms, demystifying the film’s diegetic worlds. Terayama’s filmmaking takes radical reflexivity and the juxtaposition of the real with the oneiric to their furthestmost limits. In fact, filmmakers such as Terayama, Oshima, and Wakamatsu argue that our allegedly objective, visible reality is more “illusionistic” than the fiction seen on screen. As Saito writes on *The Man Who Left His Will on Film*, “today, even reality is a ‘fiction.’”<sup>37</sup> The films of the era seek to retrain our eyes to perceive these real-world “fictions,” attempting to revolutionize the way we perceive of our own flawed realities.

In *Throw Away Your Books, Rally in the Streets*, Eimei states near the film’s conclusion that “this film will be over soon.” Indeed, in 1971 the Japanese political avant-garde was already nearing its end; more than a decade of extremely prolific filmmaking would soon be over—or at least, would metamorphose into something else. In 1973, Matsuda Masao, the key theoretician of landscape theory, declared that the *kakumei no media*—revolutionary media, the media of revolution—

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36 Steven C. Ridgely, *Japanese Counterculture: The Antiestablishment Art of Terayama Shuji* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 108.

37 Saito, “Chasing Invisible Space,” 33.

had given way to *media no kakumei*, the revolution of media. For Matsuda, the time for Marxist-Leninism was gone, replaced by a less didactic approach: one inspired by the anarchist Peter Kropotkin, for example.<sup>38</sup> Matsuda, formerly an avid proponent of the radically leftist filmmaking epitomized by filmmakers such as Wakamatsu and Adachi, effectively declared their approach to be a failure.

Yet one can argue that Terayama's, Oshima's, and Wakamatsu's films all understood that any true "war against landscape" is likely to fail: they all exhibit Matsuda's skepticism about the success of the media within Japan's "season of politics." In *Go, Go, Second Time Virgin*, for instance, the youth see no escape from the oppression of landscape or from the burden of daily life, save by suicide. In Terayama's film, the attempt to transform both self and landscape does not resolve happily: Eimei's family continues trudging out their meager, working-class existence, with even less hope than they had previously. In Oshima's film, Motoki and Yasuko lose their war with landscape, and the film ends with a cyclical suicide. The films thus show three filmmakers who direct their fury against the world but are fundamentally unable to transfer a shift in perception to a shift in lived reality.

Instead of a political revolution, the post-1973 world saw a massive shift in documentary media practices. Even in France, the Dziga Vertov Group, so inspirational for the militant *Eiga Hihyo* journal, had disbanded by 1972. As Mark Nornes notes, "The passion and social commitment of the 1960s cinema seemed to give way to a new kind of documentary centered on the self."<sup>39</sup> Nornes posits that there are many ways to answer the "what happened" question, ranging from the problem of rampant misogyny within leftist movements to the continuing presence of overly authoritarian and old-fashioned leftist leadership, as well as the increasing violence and polarization of radical movements. In addition, media events such as the Asama Sanso Incident of 1972 caused the public to shy further and further away from politics altogether, not to mention from the left itself.<sup>40</sup>

The most likely and direct cause of the demise of landscape films is tied to the increasing violence and factionalization of leftist movements

38 Matsuda Masao, "An Axis for a Media Revolution" (*Media kakumei no tame no akushisu*), in *Impossible Media (Fukanosei no media)* (Tokyo: Tabata Shoten, 1973).

39 Abé Mark Nornes, *Forest of Pressure: Ogawa Shinsuke and Postwar Japanese Documentary* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 128–29.

40 In this highly mediated real-life spectacle, the militant leftist group United Red Army

in the early 1970s. Desperate radical groups seemed to take Luis Buñuel's famous injunction to heart, that "the simplest Surrealist action of all would be to go down into the street and shoot at random into a crowd." What Georges Sadoul wrote of the 1920s in Western Europe applies to Japan in the early 1970s: "Beneath this anarchistic state of mind, there could be felt, spasmodic, violent, ambivalent, the revolt of young intellectuals against the world which had brought them forth, and from which they had not yet disengaged themselves."<sup>41</sup> The young, anarchistic intellectuals between aesthetic and political movements revolted against their own oppressive landscape in this fashion: spasmodic, violent, and, with defeat, increasingly ambivalent. As the filmmakers had suspected, the revolt resulted in a sense of failure. With revolutionary movements having lost their goal, and in the wake of countless imprisoned activists, apathy (*shirake*) spread among the youth.<sup>42</sup>

Nonetheless, the films engaged with landscape theory of the late 1960s remain applicable to contemporary political struggles, especially in their unique ability to use fictionality or "illusion" (*genso*) to unveil the violence unleashed by the forces of staggeringly swift economic development. Such films demonstrated fury against the stern, homogeneous concrete and steel of Japan's "economic miracle," and so crafted a liberated space where such concerns could playfully and meaningfully interact. Far more than mere formal experiments, such films reveal repressed aspects of Japanese existence, as well as the violence frequently rendered invisible by the machinations of capital.

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lynched many of its own members while training in the woods of Nagano. Soon after the lynchings, on February 19, 1972, five remaining members took a lodge keeper's wife hostage and barricaded themselves inside the lodge. A shootout with the police ensued, and the televised event, which began on February 19 and ended on February 28, received unprecedented television broadcast ratings. The New Left, which had peaked in 1968, had become increasingly radicalized and turned violent. The incident became an enormous scandal. An astonishing 98.2 percent of viewers in the Tokyo metropolitan area watched live coverage of the event. See Furuhashi, *Cinema of Actuality*, 185–86.

41 Georges Sadoul, *French Film* (New York: Arno Press, 1972), 39. Original language text: Georges Sadoul, *Histoire d'un art: Le cinéma: Des origines à nos jours* (Paris: Flammarion, 1949).

42 Kimata Kimihiko, "Thoughts on the Extremely Private Pink Film of the 1970s," in *The Pink Book: The Japanese Eroduction and Its Contents*, ed. Mark Nornes (Kinema Club, 2nd ed., 2014), 52–53, PDF.