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Intro to Film

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Framing, Negative Space, and Ma in Tsukigakirei

I believe the quietest moments are the most emotional. The anime *Tsukigakirei* was directed by Seiji Kishi. He uses stillness, glances, and negative space to tell a story of young love. I chose the scene from episode 1 at (00:08:35) to (00:12:53) where Kotarou and Akane notice each other at a cafe while dining with their families. They do not talk but the wide shot and distance between them say a lot. The still camera and soft lighting create a pause which is called Ma. This essay will explain how the scene uses quiet framing and space to create Ma, showing the character's emotional connection.

Framing: It was used to show emotional distance in the scene. When Kotarou and Akane spot each other, the camera holds on wide, static shots. At first, they were not framed together but even when they are briefly seen together, their body language keeps them emotionally apart. According to the textbook, "how those people, objects, and settings are arranged within the border of the image can bring balance or imbalance, reveal or hide information, indicate power or weakness, all without a word of dialog" (Ladd, 3.3.1). The distance in the frame reflects the tension they cannot express aloud. The frame holds them apart without needing edits or movement. Nervousness and awareness come through in the quiet moment.

Negative Space: It was used to deepen the emotional tension. Akane looks down at her phone, Kotarou pivots in his seat, and they try not to look at each other. The negative space between them feels heavy. The textbook explained, "If the subject appears far away, as in an

extreme long shot, that communicates a sense of disconnection or emotional distance from the subject" (Ladd, 3.3.1). The tilted heads, lowered eyes, and twitching add to the awkwardness. They are physically creating a visual wall between them. The silence and lack of contact speak volumes. Even their school uniforms, neat and identical, reflect the emotional formality and distance between them, influencing how appearance supports the scene's tension.

Ma: It was used in the scene to slow the rhythm and build emotion. Ma is more than just silence; it is a meaningful pause that lets the audience feel what the characters feel. It avoids flashy visuals or music. The long pause, subtle glances, and quiet stillness give the moment space to grow. The camera stays completely still for most of the scene, letting the moment grow naturally without cuts or motion, influencing the rhythm of stillness. The silence becomes it's kind of dialogue. Through visual rhythm alone, I sense the connection forming.

Conclusion: The scene sets the tone for Kotarou and Akane's relationship and shows how Tsukigakirei tells its story through space and silence. The use of Ma asks the audience to feel the uncertainty and attachment of early connection. Framing, stillness, and rhythm express deep emotion without saying a word.

Textbook Contribution: This scene would be a strong addition to the course textbook because it shows how Tsukigakirei can use visual storytelling, especially framing and silence, to express emotion. As the textbook states, "Framing the shot is really about directing our attention, showing us where to look in the shot or scene, and ultimately, how to feel about it" (Ladd, 3.3.1). The cafe scene does just that. It uses character placement and space to guide the viewer's focus and build an emotional tone.

Work Cited

Tsukigakirei Directed by Seiji Kishi, episode 1, Feel, 2017 Crunchyroll

Ladd, Robert “Tokyo in Film” *Humanities LibreTexts*, 15 Jan. 2025,

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