

## **1/10: Discussion 1**

- Reading Points: Tom Gunning
  - “Making Sense of Film”
    - Unique qualities and use as historical evidence
      - Objectivity and editing
        - Can create stories of events that didn’t happen in reality
      - Film unlikely to capture key historical moments
    - How to approach film as part of social/cultural history
      - Record of daily life
      - Who made the film and for what purpose
        - Was it a government, religious association, etc.
          - Think about the intended audience and purpose
      - Who is the audience and what perspective does the film reflect?
  - “Film Criticism”
    - Domination of historical and theoretical methods
    - Should not dismiss evaluative film criticism
    - Where do our evaluative categories come from? How do they shape what we write about?
    - Strength of film criticism = focus on the individual feature
- Reading Points: Davidson and Wittgenstein
  - Davidson:
    - An “agent” exercises ability to act intentionally, but some actions invoke unintended actions
    - We judge action as disclosing something about agent identity
    - Action is a realization of freedom against the reality of the external environment
  - Wittgenstein:
    - Relationship between inner life and external behavior is more complicated than “action reveals intentional movement,” or “external behavior exemplifies internal character”
  - Action is not just intentional movement, but something more complex

## 1/14: Animation and Cinema

- Agent, symptom, and reflexive critique
  - Not film as a reflection of society
    - Not homogenous culture
  - Film as an agent - what does it do?
    - Promote new forms of life
      - Heterosociality, autonomous subject, commodity culture
    - Shifting understanding of identity, belonging - exploration not limited by reality
      - Cultural nationalism
      - Also dislocation, deterritorialization
  - Film as a symptom
    - Film as part of burgeoning capitalist mass culture
    - History of cinema → history of modernization
  - Film as reflexive critique
    - Experience of cinema models “modernization without modernity”
    - Not tradition vs. modernity but inescapable condition of life
- Animation and Cinema - Colin Williamson
  - Cinema **is** Animation
    - Creation of sequential motion; the illusion of motion
    - Animation of pictures
  - Animation bestows animate-ness on an inanimate entity, “modern magic”
    - Power of vivification
  - Animation provides “a forum for achieving something like an intuitive or sensory understanding of the ‘effectiveness’ of moving images and their uncanny metamorphoses” (Williamson on Eisenstein)
- Revealing life vs. giving life

## **1/17: Discussion 2**

- Things to consider:
  - Cinematography
  - Editing
  - Mise-en-scene
  - Sound
    - Diegetic (sounds the characters can hear/with a source onscreen)
    - Non-Diegetic
  - Performance
- Tips:
  - Syllabus policy (-25% every hour)
  - Address the prompt
  - Cite quotes
  - You do not need to cover everything
  - No singular truth - only persuasive arguments
  - Be Careful:
    - Do not essentialize
    - Make generalizations unsupported by film evidence
- Reading Points:
  - “Our capacity to recognize agency in action (behavior that looks like intent) backfires in our experience of an artform like film”
    - Relationship between animate and inanimate objects
  - Animation and Cinema
    - Convergence of performance magic and early animation practices
      - Flip book (illusion) vs. blow book (shock)
      - “What barely animation archives is the bestowal of animate-ness on an inanimate entity, not the revelation of animate-ness where it is otherwise imperceptible”
  - Stern:
    - Uncanny as a sensation
      - Seemingly novel, but always a return
      - Frightening
      - Involuntary
      - Likely to experience in familiar situations
      - Doubling, dividing, interchanging of self
    - The cinematic body as one that is simultaneously moved and is moved
- Discussion: Paprika
  - Agency:
    - Split between Paprika and Chiba
      - Emphasized by feelings towards Tokita
      - Physical split
    - In the rescue scene:
      - Chiba is inside Paprika, unconscious state = lack of agency

- Time: cycles of dreams
  - Movie sequence in Kanagawa's dream
- Space: dreamspace → external or internal?
  - Same space contrasts (reversal of roles)
  - Multitude of selves, actions across multiple levels of consciousness

**1/21: Narrative and Attractions**

- Story (presumed and inferred events) combine with plot (added non-diegetic material), both presented by explicitly presented events
- Narrative defined by space, time, cause and effect, and situation
- Personhood and the constitution of self

### **1/23: "Cinema of Attractions"**

- Tom Gunning
  - 1906/1908
  - The hegemony of narrative films in the history of cinema
  - The spectator
  - Exhibitionism
  - Modes of exhibition
  - Energy moves outward
  - Temporality
  - Anarchy
- "Against Interpretation" - Susan Sontag
  - Form v. Content
  - Surface v. Depth
  - Feeling/Sensory v. Meaning/Intellect
  - Comfortable v. Nervous
- Aesthetics
  - (Fine) arts, imaginary, fictive, illusory
  - The notion of "beautiful"
  - Culture
    - Creative genius, moral sensibility, refinement of "taste"
  - Corporeal, "materiality" (the luminousness of the thing in itself)
  - Discourse of the body
  - Sensory experience of perception
    - Touch, smell, hearing, etc.

### **1/24: Discussion 3**

- Reading Points: Gunning
  - Early Cinema (pre-1906): “cinema of attractions”
  - 1907-1913: narrativization of cinema (feature films)
    - Eventual incorporation of attraction into narrative
  - “Cinema of attractions”
    - Display/exhibition
    - Shock/surprise at the expense of a story
    - Different relationship between the film and the viewer
      - Narrative = suspense
      - Attractions = surprise
- Reading Points: Sontag
  - Reduction of art to its content
  - Act of interpretation as translation
    - Alters the meaning of the original
    - Conceals itself by professing to disclose “true meaning”
  - Film as a medium that can resist interpretation
    - Hard for us to grasp at things to translate
  - Development of a vocabulary for forms that is descriptive (how or that something is) rather than prescriptive (what it means)
- Reading Points: Bordwell
  - 3 cinematic systems
    - Narrative logic
    - Temporal representation
    - Spatial representation
  - Hollywood cinema by model
    - Dominated by narrative logic
    - Character-centered causality
    - Pre-packaged characters and actors
    - Dual lines of action
      - Heterosexual romance
      - Goal (crime, politics, sports, business, etc.)
- Dead or Alive
  - Genre and the Yakuza film
    - What genre is this?
    - How does that structure our expectations?
    - Does the film fulfill, deny, exceed those expectations?
  - Role of excess
  - Issues of gender, race, class
  - Spectator relationship to film
    - Group v. individual viewing
    - Attraction v. repulsion
    - Sequel?

## **1/31: Discussion 4**

- Shot Analysis Assignment
  - Provide Content
    - Place of shot in film narrative/overall structure
    - Whether shot is typical/atypical to those before/after it in film
  - Thesis
    - Why the element is significant
    - May describe how said element is enhanced by others, but maintain emphasis on a single feature
  - Big Picture
    - Broader function/significance of this shot in relation to the sequence
    - Broader function/significance of this shot in relation to the film
    - How this shot relates to the theme of the course
      - Action, cinema of attractions, narrative, etc.
- Elements
  - Lighting
  - Framing
  - Shot length
  - Camera movement
  - Camera Angle
  - Focus
  - POV
  - Performance style
  - Setting
  - Music
- Lastra Reading
  - Development of sound design to immerse the reader
    - Creation of a new reality
  - Creates a full sensory experience
  - Wagner
  - Noise in daily life - desensitization to noise
    - Requires continual increase of shock value



## **2/4: Realism and Cinematic Violence of Jidaigeki**

- Jidaigeki:
  - Early age: small production, with smaller budget without capitalization of film
- Japanese Film Industry in the late 1910s:
  - The impact of WWI on the global film market
    - A blow to European companies across the globe
    - A blow to the dominance of French and Italian films in Japan
    - The rise of American cinema
      - Comedies, Universal's "Bluebird" films
    - Hollywood films began to take a prominent place in reformist literature after around 1916
- Reformist Discourses in the late 1910s and 20s:
  - Inept photography
  - The lifeless and slow-moving drama
  - Actors who are all sloppy and dull-witted
  - The use of onnagata ("female impersonator")
  - Cinema seen as an inherently silent medium that communicated through gesture  
→ replace benshi (narrators) with intertitles -- poetic and artistically designed ones
  - Good screenplays
- Japanese Cinema before the 1920s:
  - Kyugeki/Kyuha - old drama, kabuki style period drama
  - Shinpa - new school, or modern drama
  - The mixed-media rensageki - chain drama, a mixture of cinema and theater
- Japanese Cinema after the 1920s:
  - Jidaigeki - literally meaning period drama, films set in pre-Meiji Restoration
  - Shinpa - set in post-Meiji Restoration
  - Gendaigeki - the ever-changing present from the mid-1920s onwards

## **2/14: Discussion 5**

- Linda Williams: “Film Bodies”
  - Form, function, and system of seemingly gratuitous excess
    - Pornography, horror, melodrama
  - Types of bodily excess
    - Bodily spectacle
    - Ecstasy
    - Bodily convulsion, inarticulate noises
    - Female bodies
  - Excess is not “gratuitous”
    - Fluctuation of subject positions
- Jean Ma: “Circuitous Action”
  - Revenge as a theme predates the cinema
    - Varieties of filmic vengeance
    - Cultural expressions of vengeance v. legal and moral philosophy
  - Vengeance as a crossway
    - New Wave film movements (1950s, 1960s)
    - Violent action as aesthetic regeneration
    - Unique time of revenge (non-linear), reliance on backstory
  - Explosion of Hong Kong martial arts films in 1970s
    - New style wuxia pian
  - Grammar of revenge
    - “Eye for an eye”
    - Mimicry that points to the high price of revenge
    - Revenge gives rise to multiplication and deferral
  - Satisfaction of revenge → not moral superiority, but ingenuity
  - Post 1970s revenge films
    - Jidaigeki, wuxia pian, westerns → vehicles for historical fantasy and myths of national identity
    - Cross-pollination of genres → loss of conviction → left only with skeletal structure of vengeance
  - *Kill Bill* as an intertextual phenomenon
- Lady Snowblood
  - Yuki Kashima (Lady Snowblood)
  - Ryu Ashino (Gishiro Tsukamoto’s son)
  - Sayo Kashima (Lady Snowblood’s mother)
  - Kobue Kitahama (Takemura Banzo’s daughter)
  - Grammar of vengeance
    - What logic does vengeance follow in Lady Snowblood?
      - Total annihilation (Yuki) - personal connection, life spent for revenge (mother’s), karmic balance
      - Eye for an eye (Kobue)
      - Rejection of family (Ryu)

- Are there multiple logics? Do certain characters represent, or enact, certain logics?
- Temporality of vengeance
  - What temporalities are at work in Lady Snowblood?
  - Consider the plot, logic of vengeance, audience time
- Action of vengeance and the body
  - How does the body perform action in Lady Snowblood
  - Whose body? Whose intent?
- Body and vengeance
  - Yuki lands killing blow
  - Ryu sacrifices self
  - Ryu connected to both Yuki and his father

## **2/21: Discussion 6**

- The Emperor's Naked Army
  - What is a documentary?
    - Focus on a real-life event
    - Commentary (narrator, director, experts, etc.)
    - Archival clips
    - Vulnerable to bias
    - Fact-driven/appearance of objectivity
    - Tells a story
    - Lack of actors
  - What is the difference between a documentary film and surveillance video footage?
    - Documentaries are narrative based
    - Consciousness of recording
    - Documentaries provide context
    - Documentaries → education, surveillance → evidence
  - Two views on documentaries:
    - Editor:
      - Creating a story
    - Director:
      - Show the good and bad
      - Coherence?

## **2/28: Discussion 7**

- Mackinnon: "Women, Self-Possession, and Sport"
  - Liberal Feminism
    - Most writing on women adopts this approach
    - Gender differentiation - real biological natural differences between the sexes
    - Society has created distorted, inaccurate, irrational, and arbitrary distinctions based on those differences
    - Aspires to a genderless point of view to eliminate wrong/irrational distinctions
    - Initiatives toward sex equality are limited to or constrained by real underlying differences
  - Radical Feminism
    - Sexism is a problem of gender hierarchy
      - Objectification is not the result of stereotypes but of subordination of women
    - Femininity has been defined as easily violated and physically weak
- Stoljar: Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy
  - Autonomy generally understood as self-government or self-direction
    - Kant and Rawls: Rational beings unaffected by embeddedness in a culture, social class, etc.
  - Potential Problems:
    - Current understanding of autonomy as promoting masculinist ideas of personhood
    - Individuals do not operate in a vacuum unaffected by social relationships
    - Kant and Rawls assume an abstracted individual stripped of distorting influences
  - Feminist attempts to rehabilitate autonomy → idea of relation autonomy
  - Attempts to articulate conditions of autonomous choice to better understand gender oppression and related concepts (objectification)
  - Denies that autonomy requires self-sufficiency
    - Relationships of care and interdependence are valuable and morally significant
  - Denies the atomistic personhood of Kant and Rawls
    - People are socially and historically embedded and are shaped by factors such as race and class
- Allison: Precarious Japan
  - Precarity: refers to conditions of work that are precarious
    - Employment that is uncertain, unpredictable and risky from the point of view of the worker
    - Loss of social contract around work (income, job, identity, lifestyle)
  - Not everyone is affected in the same way
  - 1970s-1980s

- Super stable society, high economic growth, job security
- Collapsing of market/workplace/family/home
- Mid-1990s
  - Turn to flexible employment, transformation of work/workplace
  - Replaceable work/workers
  - Social impermanence: relationships that instantaneously connect/disconnect/never start up
- Post 3/11
  - Discrimination against Fukushima evacuees
  - Spreading skepticism against government and social institutions
  - Ikisuraasa (“pain of life”)

