

Ozu in the 1980s and New Wave Cinema in Okinawa

—Pastiche and the Post-Reversion Youth Identity in *Hare biyori* (1988)—

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In Japan in the 1980s, Hasumi Shigehiko's work as a scholarly critic had considerable impact on the young generation of filmmakers of both mainland Japan and Okinawa. In mainland Japan, Hasumi's reevaluation of the films of Ozu Yasujirō provided a driving force for the creativity of young filmmakers such as Kurosawa Kiyoshi and Suo Masayuki, who were under the tutelage of Hasumi at Rikkyō University. Indeed, the work of these filmmakers later constituted what is often dubbed the Japanese "New New Wave," for their serving as a possible successor to the Japanese New Wave of the 1960s. Furthermore, Hasumi's influence is recognizable also in the work of contemporaries of Japan's "New New Wave," such as the Okinawan filmmakers who propelled what can be deemed the "Okinawan New Wave" in the 1980s and 90s. This article focuses on connections between Ozu and those Okinawan New Wave filmmakers, in particular, their stylistic indebtedness to Ozu.

In the mid-1980s, the youthful members of the film club at the University of the Ryukyus published their film reviews and undertook independent filmmaking preparatory to their directorial debut in the 1990s. A close analysis of one of their collaborative works, 8-mm feature *Hare biyori: Bokura no kuso kinen-bi* [*A Good Sunny Day: Our Shitty Anniversary*] (Tōma Hayashi, 1988), reveals that these Okinawan filmmakers, who regarded themselves as a "new wave," were recognizably influenced by Hasumi's perception and interpretation of Ozu, as were mainland Japanese filmmakers around the same time. As a homage to the Japanese auteur, the films of the young Okinawans incorporate Ozu's stylistic tropes, in particular those which had been identified by Hasumi. These critics-turned-filmmakers, however, distanced themselves from the mainland Japanese by rejecting the imposition of either national or local identities, refusing to be associated with either mainland Japan or traditional Okinawan culture. Contrary to the then-current conservative local administration's effort for homogenization with mainland Japan, these Okinawan filmmakers celebrated the cultural hybridity of their contemporary Okinawa, and in doing so characterized young Okinawans as being distinct from mainland Japanese as well as from the older generation of Okinawans. As will be demonstrated in this article, *Hare biyori* exemplifies the noteworthy efforts of those filmmakers of the Okinawan New Wave.

Keywords: new wave, pastiche, cinephile, the Ozuesque, Okinawa, reversion.

Introduction

New wave cinema is a global phenomenon. Beginning with the French New Wave in the late 1950s, there occurred a number of film movements labelled "new wave" or "new cinema" in such countries and areas as the UK, Japan, Czechoslovakia, Brazil, West Germany, the US, India, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, Iran, Mexico, and Romania. In Japan, one of the major studios, Shōchiku, used early in the 1960s the French term *nouvelle vague* as a marketing strategy to promote youth-oriented films directed by new studio filmmakers under

the name of *Shōchiku nūberu bāgu*, known in English as the Japanese New Wave.¹ Another wave occurred in Japan at the beginning of the 1980s, when a new generation of filmmakers debuted without having been employed at a film studio and trained as assistant directors—the dominant career path for filmmakers until the end of the 1960s. Notable among those filmmakers, sometimes dubbed Japan’s “New New Wave,”² were Kurosawa Kiyoshi, Manda Kunitoshi and Suo Masayuki, all of whom graduated from Rikkyō University, where they took a film course taught by Hasumi Shigehiko, an influential film scholar and critic who, hailing from French literary criticism, introduced such contemporary French thinkers as Gilles Deleuze and Roland Barthes to Japanese readers and whose books were widely read among educated youths at that time, despite his notoriously difficult style of writing. Through his film criticism and education, Hasumi contributed to the growth of cinephilia within Japanese urban youth culture.

I seek to trace Hasumi’s possible influence on a group of burgeoning filmmakers in post-reversion Okinawa, who would later make their commercial debut with the omnibus film *Pineapple Tours (Painappuru tsuāzu, Makiya Tsutomu, Nakae Yūji and Tōma Hayashi, 1992)*. Before embarking on their filmmaking career in the 1990s, those young filmmakers had been actively engaged in amateur filmmaking and criticism at the film club of the University of the Ryukyus, where they expressed their shared cinephilia and aspiration to become professional filmmakers. Notably, this cadre of young filmmakers frequently presented their filmmaking as a new wave in Okinawa, modelling themselves after the French New Wave. They often underscored a parallel between the French counterpart and themselves; for example, one such parallel can be found in the programme distributed for Tōma Hayashi’s first feature-length production, *Hare biyori: Bokura no kuso kinen-bi (A Good Sunny Day: Our Shitty Anniversary, 1988)*:

The French *Nouvelle Vague* emerged from a film journal called *Cahiers du cinéma*. François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Louis Malle [*sic*] and others contributed their film reviews to this journal before they became film directors. As avid film buffs, they frequented film theatres almost every day, but watching and writing about films were not enough to satisfy their love for cinema. They swapped the pen for the camera and started making their own films. That was around 1958; they were soon to be known as the French *Nouvelle Vague*. And today, a similar phenomenon is taking place in Okinawa.³

In this passage, it is implied that these would-be filmmakers may be equated to the French New Wave. The fact that the knowledge of the French filmmakers is not particularly accurate (Louis Malle, for instance, started his career by working under such filmmakers as Jacques-Yves Cousteau and Robert Bresson, and was not involved in *Cahiers du cinéma*) may suggest that historical accuracy was at that time not a major concern for them. What is to be emphasized here is the romantic view of what propelled the French New Wave filmmakers into the industry—a shared “love for cinema,” which the young Okinawan filmmakers similarly entertained. In this optimistic imagination, cinephilic passion could magically catapult the writer and fellow students into a professional film career, just as it had done for the French New Wave filmmakers.

In the second half of the 1980s, the alumni and student members of the university film club published their film reviews in various platforms and organized film screenings, while continuing to make 8-mm films. In 1985, Nakae Yūji and a few other alumni members of the club founded Cinema Apple, an organization of film critics which was comprised mostly of the former and current members of the film club but which was also open to non-students. In the following year, Cinema Apple published the hand-written film magazine *Eimei*, which issued only two editions.⁴ The film club members’ reviews also began to appear in local literary and cultural

¹ Isolde Standish, “Night and Fog in Japan: Fifty Years On,” *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema* 1, no. 2 (2009): 143-144.

² Chuck Stephens, “Japan’s New New Wave,” *LA Weekly*, August 2, 2001.

³ “Intorodakushon” イントロダクション [Introduction], in the programme of *Hare biyori: Bokura no kuso kinen-bi はれ日和ぼらのクソ記念日 [A Good Sunny Day: Our Shitty Anniversary]* ([Okinawa]: Tokkan Kozō and the Film Club of the University of the Ryukyus, [1988]), 1. Hereafter, the translation from Japanese sources is mine, unless otherwise indicated.

⁴ Shin’ya Namie, “Henshū goki” 編集後記 [Editorial], *Eimei* 1 (1986): 164.

journals, including *Myaku* (Pulse) and *Karuchua* (Culture).⁵ After a film screening event in 1988, multiple local film clubs merged into a group called “Tokkan Kozō,” named after the titular character in Ozu Yasujirō’s silent short *A Straightforward Boy / Tokkan Kozō* (1929). As the leading members of Tokkan Kozō, Nakae, Tōma Hayashi, and Makiya Tsutomu collectively edited a film column in *Lequio*, the weekly supplement to the local newspaper, *Ryukyū Shinpō*. Tokkan Kozō’s newspaper column lasted for nineteen years from 1988 to 2007, and, with the assistance of Tōma, continues online to this day.⁶ Moreover, with the financial support of *Ryukyū Shinpō*, Tokkan Kozō organized weekly public screenings of films of the members’ selection from 1988 until 1991, with a focus on classical and contemporary films which had not been released theatrically in Okinawa, including the films of Ozu, Mizoguchi Kenji, Roberto Rossellini, and Jim Jarmusch. The film club’s most notable collaborative effort during the 1980s, however, was the production of two-feature length films, Nakae’s *Panari nite* (*On an Offshore Island*, 1986) and Tōma’s *Hare biyori*. In an interview, Nakae proudly recalls these years, noting that the film club was at the time dubbed the *nouvelle vague* (*nūberu bāgu*) of the University of the Ryukyus.⁷

By focusing on *Hare biyori*, this article aims to illuminate these filmmakers’ critical doctrines and their manifestation in the form of an aesthetic programme, two of the conditions proposed by Michel Marie as criteria for a new wave cinema.⁸ Just as the French New Wave filmmakers’ interest in the *mise-en-scène* had been informed by André Bazin’s theory on the ontology of cinema,⁹ the influence of the contemporaneous theoretical discourse underlies the early films of the Okinawan New Wave, particularly that of the Japanese film scholar and critic Hasumi Shigehiko. Elsewhere, I have argued that Hasumi’s theorization of the surface enabled the Okinawan New Wave to develop a critical eye for recognizing the stereotypical representations of Okinawa, particularly those stereotypes which predominantly emphasized the natural beauty and exoticism of the subtropical islands.¹⁰ Following Okinawa’s 1972 reversion to Japan, the islands had been reconfigured in the course of the transformation of Japan’s forty-seventh prefecture into a major tourist destination for the rest of Japan. As will be discussed in the subsequent sections, the influence of Hasumi’s critical approach on the Okinawan New Wave’s filmmaking can be found predominantly in the allusion to the works of Ozu and other filmmakers in *Hare biyori*.

1. Hasumi Shigehiko and His Impact

In the history of Japanese film theory, the critical work of Hasumi Shigehiko is seen as an alternative to ideological criticism of the 1960s.¹¹ According to Aaron Gerow, it was Hasumi and other critics having emerged around the 1970s who dismissed the previous generation of critics as being partisan and advocated employing the idea of “film as film” rather than focusing on film’s ideology and political stance.¹² In contrast to the earlier ideological criticism, which focused predominantly on the ideology manifest in the narrative, those new critics, inspired by the French critics of *Cahiers du cinéma* in the 1950s, paid more attention to the film form of the works of studio directors and their authorship.¹³ In his 1983 book, *Kantoku Ozu Yasujirō* (Director Ozu Yasujirō), Hasumi analysed the films of the Japanese auteur Ozu Yasujirō and discussed Ozu not as an individual, but as a semiotic system consisting of a number of recurrent visual and thematic motifs. At first glance, Hasumi’s

⁵ “Tokushū: Eiga” 特集・映画 [Feature: Cinema], *Myaku* 31 (1987): 43-95; Panari Picture Production, ed. “Eiga jōhō shinematogurafu” 映画情報シネマトグラフ [Film information: Cinematograph], *Karuchua* 1, no. 5 (1988): 106-109.

⁶ “Shinema rabo Tokkan Kozō towa” シネマラボ突貫小僧とは [About Cinema Lab Tokkan Kozō], *Kinema tanteidan on web* キネマ探偵団 on WEB [Cinema detectives on the web], accessed May 10, 2016, <http://tokkan-kozo.com/about.html>.

⁷ Nakae Yūji and Uchimura Hirokazu, “Okinawa no jishu eiga kai wa *Hare biyori*!?” 沖縄の自主映画界は“はれ日和”!? [Has A Good Sunny Day come to Okinawa’s independent filmmaking!?!], by *Lequio* editorial office, *Lequio*, December 9, 1988, 2.

⁸ Michel Marie, *The French New Wave: An Artistic School*, trans. Richard Neupert (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 28.

⁹ Christian M. Keathley, *Cinephilia and History, or the Wind in the Trees* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006) 87-88.

¹⁰ Kosuke Fujiki, “Landscape and the Crisis of Representation in Nakae Yūji’s *Panari nite* (1986),” *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema* 13, no. 1 (2021): 22-37.

¹¹ Aaron Gerow, “Critical Reception: Historical Conceptions of Japanese Film Criticism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Cinema*, ed. Daisuke Miyao (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 73.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

method is akin to Peter Wollen's semiotic reading of the thematic recurrence in an auteur's films taken as a structure. In the semiotic sense, structure is a set of principles governing repetitions and variations, which "seep[s] to the surface [...] through the repetition process."¹⁴ The auteur is not a person but is an abstraction constructed after analysis of his or her oeuvre and the identification of the structures, without reference to specific biographical information. Such structural analysis of the auteur theory redeemed Hollywood studio filmmakers such as Alfred Hitchcock and Howard Hawks, whose works had not necessarily been taken seriously for their artistic values.

A crucial difference between Hasumi's criticism and structuralism, however, is that Hasumi is critical of the idea of an invisible structure behind the visible surface; for him, structural analysis would be another gesture that draws attention away from the film text to suggest an invisible system of meaning behind it. Instead, Hasumi stops short of pointing out details in the films and refuses to elicit any structural pattern or dynamic from such details, frequently leaving his readers to wonder about their implications of observed details.¹⁵ As Ryan Cook characterizes, Hasumi's critical approach "involves strategies for slipping through systems, for breaking up the identity that anchors representation, and for then re-entering narrative with thought newly animated by an encounter with absurdity."¹⁶ Cinema is construed as absurd because it is only a surface without any substance, and the task of a film critic is to follow the surface to the extent of being able to find a slippage in the system, or a schism in representation. Hasumi's critical approach has met a variety of criticisms, from one which accuses him of turning a blind eye to the sociopolitical contexts and ideological implications of films,¹⁷ to the other which regards him as reverting to earlier impressionistic film criticism.¹⁸ Nonetheless, Hasumi's book on Ozu has also been considered to have changed the way one sees Ozu's films and has proven to be highly influential among the Japanese filmmakers emerging at that time.¹⁹ His influence, I argue, is worthy of being extended to the Okinawan New Wave filmmakers.

The utility of Hasumi's approach in the context of post-reversion Okinawa can be found in his detachment of film from abstract meaning, thus challenging the role of film as representation of the external reality. Even in his discussion on Ozu's "Sunny Skies," the only portion of his Ozu book currently available in English translation, Hasumi stresses the artificiality of Ozu's "filmic reality," noting that Japan's typically rainy and damp climate is carefully excluded from Ozu's films.²⁰ *Hare biyori* thematizes this artificiality of cinematic representation. For example, the *mise-en-scène* in which the film's young protagonists find themselves is shown as being excessively artificial and laden with Ozu clichés, or what Hasumi would call the "Ozuesque" (*Ozu-teki naru mono*).²¹ Although stereotypical images of Okinawa are mobilized, they are presented ironically with a strong focus on the artificiality of such images. In the following sections, I will demonstrate the film's indebtedness to Hasumi's analysis of Ozu's oeuvre in *Kantoku Ozu Yasujirō*. While neither nostalgically sustaining the utopian dream of restoring an authentic Okinawa nor forthrightly rejecting the stereotypical images of Okinawa for being inauthentic, Tōma's film plays with cinephilic pastiches, in order to offer tacit commentary on the discrepancy between reality and representation. In doing so, the film provides a critique of the Japanese stereotypes of Okinawa which eclipse the islands' sociopolitical conditions.

¹⁴ Peter Wollen, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), 575.

¹⁵ Adrian Martin, "Incursions," in *The Language and Style of Film Criticism*, ed. Alex Clayton and Andrew Klevan (London: Routledge, 2011).

¹⁶ Ryan Cook, "An Impaired Eye: Hasumi Shigehiko on Cinema and Stupidity," *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 22 (2010): 138.

¹⁷ Yomota Inuhiko, "Tokyō monogatari no yohaku ni" 東京物語の余白に [In the margin of *Tokyo Story*], *Eureka* 45, no. 15 (2013): 42-44.

¹⁸ Gerow, "Critical Reception," 74.

¹⁹ Martin, "Incursions," 61, 63.

²⁰ Hasumi Shigehiko, "Sunny Skies," trans. Kathy Shigeta, in *Ozu's Tokyo Story*, ed. David Desser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 127-128.

²¹ In "Sunny Skies," *Ozu-teki naru mono* is translated as "things characteristic of Ozu," 129. I prefer the word "the Ozuesque," because the suffix *-esque* connotes resemblance, but not being identical. The choice of the term is intended to reflect Hasumi's skepticism toward *Ozu-teki narumono*, which he opposes against the *surface* of Ozu's films. The term should not be confused with "Ozu-like" (translation of *Ozu san rashii*, which connotes a more personal overtone) in Kiju Yoshida, *Ozu's Anti-Cinema*, trans. Daisuke Miyao and Kyoko Hirano (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2003).

2. The Pastiche of Ozu in the Okinawan Landscape

Hare biyori is a comedic road movie revolving around three university students, two males and one female. On one sunny day, Yōko decides to kill herself and jumps in front of the car of Yūsuke and Hiromi, who are total strangers to her, only to be taken to a hospital by the two boys. The three subsequently drive around southern Okinawa to find an ideal place for her to die peacefully. The full original title of the film is a combination of cinematic allusions: Ozu Yasujirō's *Late Autumn / Aki biyori* (1960), and the 40th "Tora-san" film *Tora's Salad-Day Memorial / Otokowa tsuraiyo: Torajirō sarada kinen-bi* (Yamada Yōji, 1988), which was released in the same year as *Hare biyori*. Laden with allusions, the film is unmistakably the work of cinephiles; in the end credits, Tōma dedicated it in English to the "Men of much abilities [who] gave me influence," namely Ozu, John Landis, Alan Parker, Ōmori Kazuki, and the Beatles. Tōma's rather awkward English acknowledgment implies previous exposure to the popular cultures of mainland Japan and the West. Tōma belongs to the post-reversion generation of Okinawan youth, for whom both mainland Japanese and Western cultures constitute an indelible part of their cultural identity. Unlike earlier generations, this youth generation, most of whom are incapable of speaking the Okinawan language properly, are no longer able to recognize the traditional Okinawan culture as being their own culture.

Hasumi's *Kantoku Ozu Yasujirō* provides a useful framework to understand the critical practice of Tōma's film, which heavily alludes to the works of Ozu Yasujirō, among others. In his polemical book, Hasumi distinguishes the actual details of Ozu's films from the Ozuesque, certain traits which are widely received as the iconic characteristics of Ozu.²² The Ozuesque is for Hasumi a habitual construct which is projected upon Ozu's films and prevents one from seeing the films without one's culturally acquired cognitive framework. Hasumi, however, does not regard the details of Ozu's films as meaning clouded by, or hidden behind, the Ozuesque; the details are the surface, visible and concrete, yet are something which the viewer often fails to see. Ozu's films are irreducible to the Ozuesque, because they resist being confined to a set of "rules of the game," such as the low camera position, still life shots used for transition between scenes, the recurrence of the family drama, quiet and predictable storylines, and transcendental *zen* moments.²³ In the context of *Hare biyori*, I suggest that the gap between Ozu's films and the Ozuesque can be compared to that between the filmed space and the stereotypes associated with it. The viewing of cinematic representations of Okinawa is often guided by a preoccupation with apparent Okinawanness, no matter whether it is the exotic stereotypes of the islands, or essentialist expectations placed on them. Frequently excluded from such representations are the very lives of the post-reversion Okinawan youth who grew up in the hybridized cultural background and who are therefore often considered by the older generations to be insufficiently Okinawan. The youth would become invisible in the eyes of those who seek to find in a film established representation of the imagined, timeless essence of Okinawanness. As with Hasumi, who explores Ozu's visual and thematic motifs by situating himself in the gap between Ozu's films and the Ozuesque,²⁴ I argue that in trying to reclaim a place for young Okinawans, *Hare biyori* playfully engages with both the lived space and the excessive and alienating representations of such a space.

As implied in the title, the story takes place on one sunny day, which itself can be seen as a reference to Ozu's frequent use of sunny days as the settings of his films.²⁵ Throughout *Hare biyori*, the blue skies are foregrounded by low angle shots as well as empty shots in which the sky takes up the majority of the frame. The filmmakers, however, were well aware that such a clear weather, an exotic cliché in the Japanese discourse on touristic promotion of Okinawa, is not necessarily typical of Okinawa's subtropical summer. Remarking on the difficulty owing to the "changeable weather unique to Okinawa," Tōma notes that the sky in his film was not naturally achieved.²⁶ For Hasumi, too, Ozu's iconic sunny skies are far from representing the actual Japanese

²² Hasumi Shigehiko, *Kantoku Ozu Yasujirō* 監督小津安二郎 [Director Ozu Yasujirō], expanded and definitive ed. (1983; Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 2003), 3-7.

²³ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁵ Hasumi, "Sunny Skies," 119.

²⁶ [Tōma Hayashi,] "Hayashi kantoku no eiga seisaku nisshi 2" 早志監督の映画製作日誌② [Director Hayashi's production note 2], *Lequio*, September 16, 1988, 13.

climate.²⁷ Instead, excessive employment of sunny skies in Ozu's films are a marker of the artificial "world of Ozu," an authorial stamp on the diegesis which is clearly distinct from the reality.²⁸ In *Hare biyori*, the clear skies are presented to such an excessive degree that they seem to accentuate the artificiality of the postcard images of Okinawa. Given the allusion to Ozu, this excess in the depiction of the skies may even suggest the uncanny or sinister implications detected by Hasumi, as that Japanese auteur frequently associated the sunny weather with death in such films as *Tokyo Story* (1953) and *The End of Summer* (1961).²⁹ Death is also manifested in *Hare biyori*: the film is a road movie that follows the three protagonists' one-day trip to find a suitable place for the heroine Yōko to commit suicide.

The range of references to Ozu's visual style and motifs in *Hare biyori* provides an attempt to reproduce the Ozuesque. Admittedly, lacking in obvious critique of Ozu's work, it is a pastiche of Ozu rather than a parody. A critique is found in the very act of imitating others, or speaking in a borrowed language. In this sense, Suo Masayuki's blue film (known as "pink film" in Japanese), *Abnormal Family* (1984), can provide a point of comparison. Although allusions to Ozu in *Abnormal Family* primarily seem to express cinephilia, they also suggest the decline of the Japanese studio films, of which Ozu was representative. As a student of Hasumi at Rikkyō University, Suo Masayuki was influenced by Hasumi's reading of Ozu's films; *Abnormal Family* has been regarded as responding to Hasumi by offering another formalist reading of Ozu's films.³⁰ Suo is not trying to mock either Ozu or Hasumi, but the very act of imitation constitutes a commentary on the industrial change in Japanese cinema. In *Hare biyori*, the *mise-en-scène* is presented as being excessive of allusions and other types of borrowing, thereby emphasizing the artificiality of the filmed space highlighted by Hasumi in his analysis of Ozu. Parallel to the stylistic dynamics of Ozu's films, which are frequently ignored and simplified to the Ozuesque, the actual living places of young Okinawan protagonists are marginalized in this bewildering space. Throughout the film, a conflict between the artificial imitations and the alienated subject manifests itself as awkward, excessive, and even absurd. As will be made clear in the following discussion, this conflict derives from the Okinawan youth's inability to fit either to the role of the homogenized Japanese or to that of the Okinawan native.

Hare biyori begins with an immediate emphasis on the local identity of Okinawans after Okinawa's integration into Japan. The film introduces its three main characters—Shimada Yūsuke, Iwasaki Hiromi, and Yamada Yōko—in portrait-like medium shots with a series of intertitles of the characters' names. Although all three characters are played by natives of Okinawa, these protagonists are shown to be totally lacking in identifiable Okinawan specificities. Their surnames, for instance, are common Japanese names, which suggest no connection to the characters' Okinawan origin. Moreover, their monologues, as presented in the voiceover, are in standard Japanese with no hint of any recognizable Okinawan accent, a condition which gives a certain awkwardness to the film. Given the fact that the everyday speech of young Okinawans in the 1980s was *Uchinā-Yamatusguchi*, this opening may even give a false impression that the film might have been set in mainland Japan. Yet, standard Japanese here seems to create a sense of artificiality, as it is a language which had been imposed upon Okinawans. This artificiality is further highlighted by the use of clichés from Japanese pop songs of the 1970s, associated with such lyrics as "Neither drink nor tears can wash away my sadness" and "Why don't we go see the sea?" The characters' frequent use of these trite phrases taken from Japanese pop songs of the 1970s not only renders the scene comedic, but further suggests the characters' inability to articulate their interiority without recourse to the clichéd language borrowed from Japan. The film ingeniously depicts a situation in which the youthful individuals, representing Japan's isolated minority, appear deprived of the means for articulating their own subjectivity and are thereby compelled to adopt a dominant identity. Japan seems to have taken over the characters' minds much like an obsession, as when Yūsuke's voiceover states, "Nationwide, it's brilliantly sunny [*Nihon-bare*, literally 'Japanese sunny']" in a mimicry of the weather forecast, while

²⁷ Hasumi, *Kantoku Ozu Yasujirō*, 209-210.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 209.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 216-217.

³⁰ Kirsten Cather, "Perverting Ozu: Suō [*sic*] Masayuki's *Abnormal Family*," *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema* 2, no. 2 (2010): 141.

frustrated Hiromi dreams of “dup[ing] the shitty members of the shitty National Diet into enacting National Shit Day.” Thus, arguably, the film is about the frustration and sense of alienation that the Okinawan youth experience as they live in the Japanese time.



Fig. 1 The characters looking in the same direction in *Hare biyori*

Allusion to Ozu is used to comment on the identity of young Okinawans. This is particularly evident in the scene where Yōko wanders into a graveyard, followed by Yūsuke and his friend Hiromi. Yūsuke, Yōko and Hiromi look into the distance while sitting on a turtleback tomb—a typical Okinawan tomb originally introduced from southern China. This scene is the very first moment in which all three protagonists are shown to be gazing in the same direction (figure 1). This parallel direction of the gaze takes on a particular meaning if the film is to be understood as an allusion to Ozu Yasujirō, or, more likely, to Hasumi’s reading of Ozu’s work. Hasumi notes that Ozu foreshadows a significant change in the narrative by having the characters face the same direction.³¹ In *Early Summer* (1951), Noriko stands on a platform with a man, looking in the same direction. Even though the scene itself is by no means romantic, Hasumi argues that the scene prepares the spectator for Noriko’s later announcement of her decision to marry the man.³² Likewise, in *Tokyo Story*, Shūkichi and Tomi sit on the breakwater in Yokohama and look in the same direction toward the sea. This prefigures the moment when Tomi’s fatal illness is suggested for the first time. In the graveyard scene of *Hare biyori*, the influence of Ozu through Hasumi’s analysis is evident: faithfully emulating Ozu, the staging of the characters to gaze in a parallel direction signals a drastic change within the characters. It is the moment when the three characters, who had been constantly in conflict up to this point, begin to find, for the first time, an emotional bonding with one another. Furthermore, from this scene onwards, Yōko stops attempting to commit suicide, and finds comfort in the company of the two boys. More significantly, the scene suggests that the protagonists are reconnected with Okinawa’s past, as symbolized by the ancestral tomb. Rarely found in mainland Japan, the turtleback tomb connotes Okinawa’s specificity as well as indicating a spiritual background for Okinawans. In other words, this staging of the gaze reinforces the three characters’ symbolic encounter with their own cultural heritage.

3. The Okinawan Youth as Strangers in the Paradise

In *Hare biyori*, another crucial point of intertextual reference is Jim Jarmusch’s 1984 film, *Stranger Than Paradise*. Tōma’s film borrows from Jarmusch’s film the protagonists’ apparent lack of aims and the haphazard nature of the road trip. In one scene on Senaga Island, Tōma even visually reenacts a scene from Jarmusch’s film (figures 2 and 3). *Stranger Than Paradise* is probably one of the direct sources of inspiration for *Hare biyori*, as the filmmakers had been involved in the screening of *Stranger Than Paradise* prior to the production of *Hare biyori*.³³ Because *Stranger Than Paradise* had not been theatrically distributed in Okinawa, they organized a

³¹ Hasumi, *Kantoku Ozu Yasujirō*, 141.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ The screening was held on 21 May 1988 as the second in the series of screenings named “Cinema Aid,” and was accompanied by the publication of the film programme, *Stranger Than Paradise: A New American Film* ([Naha, Okinawa]: Okinawa Cinema Circle Association,

screening event entitled “Cinema Aid” at a local film theatre in May 1988, collaborating with other local groups of cinephiles. In order to express their love for Jarmusch’s film, Tōma and one of his cohorts, Uchimura Hirokazu (who appears in a supporting role in *Hare biyori*), even posed for a photo published in *Lequio*.³⁴ In the photo, they reenact the film’s male protagonists, with Okinawa’s subtropical scenery and other friends dressed in traditional Ryukyuan costumes being placed in the background, as if to claim they were the Okinawan version of the characters in *Stranger Than Paradise* (figure 4).



Fig. 2-3 *Stranger Than Paradise* (left) and *Hare biyori* (right)

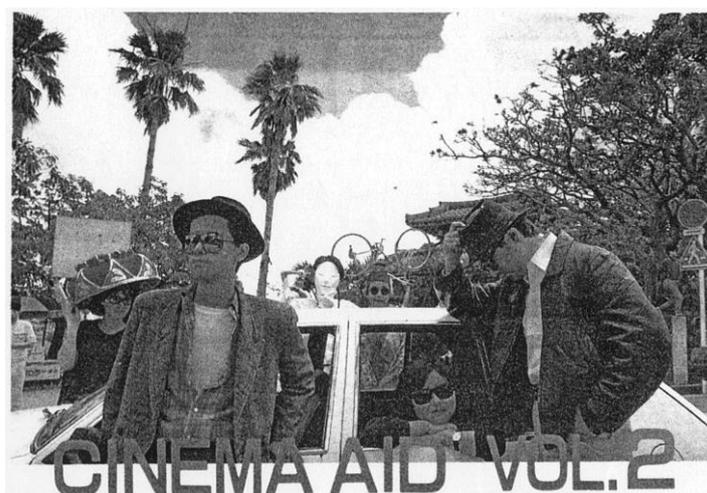


Fig. 4 *Lequio*, May 20, 1988

For the purpose of interpreting *Hare biyori*, *Stranger Than Paradise* provides a useful point of reference in two respects. First, the film is notable for its unconventional portrayal of the titular “paradise,” namely Florida in the film. Like Okinawa in Japanese cinema, Florida has been frequently portrayed as a tourist resort or as a tropical utopia in such American films as *Midnight Cowboy* (John Schlesinger, 1969) and *Some Like It Hot* (Billy Wilder, 1959). Nevertheless, in *Stranger Than Paradise*, the title of the third segment, “Paradise,” soon proves to be ironic. Although the three main characters, Willie, Eddie, and Eva, come to Florida from the snow-covered Cleveland with full of expectations to enjoy their time as holidaymakers, their trip turns out to be a disaster as Willie and Eddie immediately lose almost all their money in a dog race. In addition, the film denies pleasurable representation of the paradise, as the camera stays with Eva in the motel room while the two men go out. The scenes of Eva roaming about the room and taking a walk within the premises of the motel create a sense of being stranded, suggesting that the proverbial image of Florida is nothing but an illusion and their trip is a

1988).

³⁴ “*Rekio ban zen’ya sai: Shinema eido-tte nan-da!!*” レキオ版前夜祭シネマエイドって何だ!! [The pre-festival event on *Lequio*: What is Cinema Aid!?!], *Lequio*, May 20, 1988, 10.

disappointment.

Second, the road trip in *Stranger Than Paradise* compels the film's protagonist, Willie, to confront his ethnic background. A Hungarian-American living in New York, Willie had not revealed his ethnic background even to his best friend Eddie. He seems to repress his Hungarian identity even within himself, for, in a phone conversation at the beginning of the film, he testily asks his Hungarian aunt to speak in English, even though we later learn that he is fluent in the language enough to interpret his aunt's words for Eddie. Willie's initial annoyance at having his Hungarian cousin Eva stay with him at his apartment evinces his emotional hang-up toward his Hungarian relatives. However, the Hungarian ethnic background gradually encroaches on Willie and begins to dominate his life, marked by such events as Eva's intrusion into his apartment in the first segment "The New World," Willie and Eddie's visit to Eva and Aunt Lotte in Cleveland in the second segment "One Year Later," and eventually by Willie's accidental flight from Florida to Budapest at the end of the third segment "Paradise." Therefore, the trip in *Stranger Than Paradise* can be read as a journey of uncanny self-discovery for a protagonist who had chosen to become a *stranger* to his own cultural origin.

As with *Stranger Than Paradise*, *Hare biyori* avoids glamorous presentation of tourist attractions. Hiromi first takes Yōko and Yūsuke to a beach in Higashi-hama on the east coast of Okinawa's main island, a relatively less developed area than the west coast teeming with resort hotels. As if to counter the commercialized stereotype of Okinawa's beaches, the beach presented in the scene is spoiled by numerous litter which had drifted ashore. The scene of Hiromi and Yōko on the beach begins with a low camera position reminiscent of Ozu's iconic camera position: for example, the shot of Noriko and her sister-in-law walking up the shore in *Early Summer*. This extreme long shot of Hiromi and Yōko presents the litter on the foreground. It is followed by a high-angle shot in which Yōko lies amid the litter, as though she herself were one of the objects which had been cast away. Then it cuts to another low position shot evoking Ozu's style, with Hiromi hunching in the background like the hallmark of Ozu characters. This time, the face of Yōko lying down among the litter is shown in the foreground, suggesting that the outcast Yōko has become part of the littered landscape shown in the shot before the previous one. Through the *mise-en-scène*, the young Okinawans in the film are shown as alienated from the alluring façade of the islands as a tourist resort, an image which was widely circulated in Japan since the 1970s.

In contrast to such touristic images, places they visit on their day trip are sites familiar to the local audience as well as the filmmakers themselves, such as the campus of the University of the Ryukyus, the university hospital, a women's clinic in the neighbourhood, a local fast-food restaurant, among others. Landmarks such as beaches on Higashi-hama, Naminoue Bridge, and Senaga Island are also public spaces familiar to local residents. The film's evocation of those known, familiar places may have had a social significance for its contemporary Okinawan audience. The Okinawan audience did pay attention to the familiar space on screen, as can be seen in the Okinawan broadcaster and film critic Adaniya Mariko's comments that the film induced in the audience a sense of everydayness which was created by the familiar Okinawan scenery.³⁵ This "everydayness" results from the fact that the landscape presented in the film was closely related to the everyday life of young Okinawans. The filmed space could even foster a sense of belonging in the local spectators, for the film's clearly recognizable locations constitute a territorial landscape, which is, in Martin Lefebvre's words, "space seen from the 'inside,' a subjective and lived space."³⁶ Unlike the exotic, postcard image of the islands for mainland Japanese tourists, the territorial landscape is underpinned by the lived experiences of local spectators. The film thus offers an alternative to the highly commercialized image of Okinawa in Japanese cinema such as *Tora's Tropical Fever*. In doing so, the film provides spaces for the Okinawan youth, affirming their everyday, ordinary life.

³⁵ Adaniya Mariko, "Minareta Okinawa-no fūkei ni tadayō fushigi-na jikan" 見慣れた沖縄の風景に漂う不思議な時間 [Magical time looming over Okinawa's familiar landscape], in the programme of *Hare biyori: Bokura no kuso kinen-bi* はれ日和ぼくらのクソ記念日 [A Good Sunny Day: Our Shitty Anniversary] ([Okinawa]: Tokkan Kozō and the Film Club of the University of the Ryukyus, [1988]), 8.

³⁶ Martin Lefebvre, "Between Setting and Landscape in the Cinema," in *Landscape and Film*, ed. Martin Lefebvre (New York: Routledge, 2006), 53.

Afterword

Although *Hare biyori* was shot on 8-mm and directed by the then only twenty-two-year-old Tōma, the film was released in Okinawa in a double bill with John Sayles's *The Brother from Another Planet* (1984) in December 1988,³⁷ thanks to the local network developed by the filmmakers, a network which they had previously used to organize film screening events. The film was distributed in Tokyo a few years later, though only for a limited period of time. Upon its release in Okinawa, the film was warmly received by the local critics and spectators but with some reservations. *Ryukyu Shinpō*, for instance, praised the film as the “the birth of a New Cinema generation in Okinawa,” albeit the concerns expressed with regard to technology and acting.³⁸ Similarly, in a newspaper article titled “Okinawan Movie,” the theatre director and playwright Kinjō Kiyoe expressed her enthusiasm that *Hare biyori* might mark the emergence of “the forerunner of Japanese cinema from Okinawa,” even though she immediately added that she was disappointed with the quality of the film.³⁹ In her review in the programme of *Hare biyori*, Adaniya Mariko wished the film had had more substance, admitting that “since they [the filmmakers] made such a fine effort, we, as the viewers, tend to ask for more and more.”⁴⁰ These local responses unanimously celebrate the fact that the young turks from the film club of the University (because the filmmakers used their weekly film column in *Lequio* to promote *Hare biyori*, it was much more widely recognized among the Okinawan public than their previous feature film, *Panari nite*), but the commentators also found that the film itself fails to meet their admittedly high expectations of Okinawa's upcoming generation. Their expectations would be met four years later, when Nakae, Tōma, and Makiya were to make their commercial debut with *Pineapple Tours*.

Filmography

- Abnormal Family / Hentai kazoku: Aniki no yomesan* 変態家族兄貴の嫁さん. Directed by Suo Masayuki. Shin Tōhō, 1984.
- The Brother from Another Planet*. Directed by John Sayles. Cinecom Pictures, 1984.
- Early Summer / Bakushū* 麦秋. Directed by Ozu Yasujiro. Shōchiku, 1951.
- The End of Summer / Kohayagawa-ke no aki* 小早川家の秋. Directed by Ozu Yasujiro. Tōhō, 1961.
- Hare biyori: Bokura no kuso kinen-bi* はれ日和ぼくらのクソ記念日 [A Good Sunny Day: Our Shitty Anniversary]. Directed by Tōma Hayashi. Panari Pictures, 1988. The English title is my translation.
- Late Autumn / Aki biyori* 秋日和. Directed by Ozu Yasujiro. Shōchiku, 1960.
- Midnight Cowboy*. Directed by John Schlesinger. United Artists, 1969.
- Panari nite* パナリにて [On an Offshore Island]. Directed by Nakae Yūji. The Film Club of the University of the Ryukyus and Cinema Apple, 1986. The English title is my translation.
- Pineapple Tours / Painappuru tsuāzu* パイナップル・ツアーズ. Directed by Makiya Tsutomu, Nakae Yūji, and Tōma Hayashi. Sukoburu kōbō, 1992.
- Some Like It Hot*. Directed by Billy Wilder. United Artists, 1959.
- A Straightforward Boy / Tokkan kozō* 突貫小僧. Directed by Ozu Yasujiro. Shōchiku, 1929.
- Stranger Than Paradise*. Directed by Jim Jarmusch. The Samuel Goldwyn Company, 1984.
- Tokyo Story / Tokyo monogatari* 東京物語. Directed by Ozu Yasujiro. Shōchiku, 1953.
- Tora's Salad-Day Memorial / Otoko wa tsuraiyo: Torajirō sarada kinen-bi* 男はつらいよ寅次郎サラダ記念日. Directed by Yamada Yōji. Shōchiku, 1988.
- Tora's Tropical Fever / Otoko wa tsuraiyo: Torajirō haibisukasu no hana* 男はつらいよ寅次郎ハイビスカスの花. Directed by Yamada Yōji. Shōchiku, 1980.

³⁷ Makiya Tsutomu and Ōshiro Satoshi, “*Hare biyori* taidan: Makiya Tsutomu vs Ōshiro Satoshi” はれ日和対談真喜屋力 vs 大城智 [A conversation on *A Good Sunny Day: Makiya Tsutomu vs Ōshiro Satoshi*], *Lequio*, November 11, 1988, 13.

³⁸ Hone, “Hanashi no tamago” 話の卵 [The topic of the talk], *Ryukyu shinpō*, December 1, 1988.

³⁹ Kinjō Kiyoe, “Okinawan mūbi” オキナワン・ムービー [Okinawan movie], *Okinawa Times*, December 29, 1988, 15.

⁴⁰ Adaniya, “Minareta Okinawa-no fūkei,” 8.

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