CHAPTER ONE

Cultural Iconoclasm and Contexts of Innovation

The film career of Oshima Nagisa spans the years 1959 to the present. Coinciding with Japan's reemergence after its World War II defeat and the Occupation as a major global economic power, Oshima's films represent a running commentary, direct and indirect, on the intellectual and political life of postwar Japan. This volume analyzes the films' engagement in that history, seeking a multiplicity of meanings they evoke in context.

As important as the social and political stances represented in these films are, they are of equal interest for their formal innovations. Form and structure are integral to the meanings of these films, in very subtle and complex ways. Oshima uses patterns of editing and narrative development that simultaneously interlace mutually impossible story lines and interpretations of events. These techniques invoke the functioning of the unconscious and desire. Innovative use of zoom lenses, camera movements, and conflicting camera angles mold a vision of subjectivity quite different from that seen in other films. This unique application of filmic technique aims at presenting the internal conflicts of the individual psyche. Psychoanalytic theory helps us understand these perceptual and enunciative elements.

This form of representation is particularly striking in a Japanese artist, as much of Japanese literature and art has traditionally limited the exploration of the psyche and interior thought. Modernism in Japan, however, introduces subjectivity, in part as an absorption of Western influences, a history explored in more detail later in this chapter.

Oshima's films therefore demand a dual context: the specificity of Japan and the international arena. We must consider not only how Oshima blends Japanese and non-Japanese elements but also how the Japan of the postwar period is already an international culture. Then there is another sense in which Oshima's films demand being seen in an international context: while

his earliest films were distributed at first primarily in Japan and other Asian countries, eventually these films and most of his later ones received international distribution. His most recent films were not only made for an international audience, they were financed by non-Japanese sources. Oshima's career corresponds to the period in which Japanese film has received recognition from the rest of the world, which had previously been relatively unaware of the rich history of cinema in Japan.

Oshima's films call many theories into play. Narratives are fractured, events are presented ambiguously, modes of representation conflict with each other. In fact, paradoxical logic that allows for a multiplicity of truths is key to understanding the constant variation, the different approaches, the changes in the films. Some films even make "bibliographical" references to such key Western theoreticians as Bertolt Brecht, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Wilhelm Reich. Japanese writers and philosophers also resonate through these films, in ways that have been perhaps less apparent to European and American audiences. Like his "Shinjuku Thief" in his film *Shinjuku dorobo nikki* (Diary of a Shinjuku Thief, 1969) Oshima has performed acts of borrowing that we now associate with postmodernism, the piling together of fragments of thoughts and sources to reshape ideas and create stories. His aim is often to shape history, for more than most filmmakers, Oshima saw film as an activist intervention in a global culture.

A NOTE ON THE AUTEUR

Any study of the works of an individual director faces questions of the debts it owes to auteurism, the methodology of film history and analysis that developed in the fifties and sixties which privileges the director as the "author" of his or her films. The function of the director as creative consciousness, shaping a film's artistic purpose and merit, was central to auteurism's concerns. Auteurism construed itself as a remedy to the studio system and the industrialization and standardization of film production. It was also a response to film histories that concentrated on the role of producers, actors, national industries or studios, and even the audience, rather than on the films' directors. Auteurism quickly became an assumption in the writing of film history. It has subsequently been challenged on a number of grounds, mainly for its excessive supplanting of alternative approaches, for its biographical fixations on "great, individual artists," and for its factual errors (faulty assumptions of directorial responsibility for elements in a film that other talents initiated).

Oshima emerged as a filmmaker when auteurism was among the newest and most dynamic concepts in film criticism internationally. His career is marked by claims for his prominence as a filmic auteur, as a director who had vision, wrote many of his own scripts, and worked with teams made up of

many of the same actors and "creative" personnel—camera persons, set designers, and so on—from film to film. Oshima certainly thought of himself in auteurist terms and marketed his works that way, especially when he also established his own production company. So if for no other reason than historical context, auteurism drifts, more or less consciously, through any study of Oshima.

There are many forms of auteurism. Some forms of auteurist film criticism borrow heavily from biographical methodologies in literary criticism, art and music history, the history of science, and other disciplines. In film studies the biographical is amplified by journalistic coverage. Film journals such as the French *Cahiers du Cinéma,* the Japanese *Kinema Jumpo,* the British *Sight and Sound,* and the American *Wide Angle* covered Oshima by offering interviews in which he was asked, or volunteered, to present his films autobiographically.

Yet we should question the romantic tendencies of the practice of auteurism in film studies and recognize its debt to traditions of literary criticism, as Ed Buscombe points out in his 1973 essay, "Ideas of Authorship." This essay comes on the heels of much debate in France over the larger issues of authorship, historically, and its relationship to modernity and contemporary theory that we will turn to momentarily; for now let us consider that one danger some saw in auteurism was its tendency in many cases to remove films from discussion of ideology. When a filmmaker declared a goal other than social commentary, be it aesthetics, entertainment, or the search for universal truths, such stated intentions could be used to restrict investigation of other issues. Even those auteurist studies that avoided focus on a filmmaker's statements could end up extrapolating a restricted sense of purpose from the films themselves, using such arguments to foreclose social inquiry.

In Oshima's case, however, auteurism clearly does not preclude sociological and historical correlations, since Oshima himself foregrounds this aspect of his work. Thus the biographical framework in Oshima's work produces interpretations open to social history, but it introduces some other problems that we will examine. Even an auteurism open to social history may tend to assure a set of authorized meanings, limiting exploration of the modernity and complexity of the works.

The most unquestioned approach to biography as a framework for an auteurist approach to Oshima's films is offered by Louis Danvers and Charles Tatum, Jr. (1986). The first chapter establishes Oshima's biography, and his presence as personality and artist is foregrounded throughout. There is much that is valid in the biographical approach to authorship, but methodological questions arise. First, we must ask whether the biography presented is accurate. Second, we must ask on what interpretive assumptions biographical explanation rests.

Before sorting through the many issues that these questions pose, let us

note that besides the auteurist and biographical tendencies of the foreign press and film scholarship, the focus on the director accrues specific meaning in the Japanese context. The arts in Japan have traditionally been the province of artisan families; since the Tokugawa period, birth into a family of crafts people or artists gave one access to an apprenticeship that constituted the precondition of artistic production (though adoptions could augment such lineages). Within this control of access to specific lineages, the notion of the "great artist" plays a central hierarchical role. In fact, at present the throne bestows the title "great national living treasure" to artists of special talent and renown. Certainly there were moments in the history of the arts in Japan where new directions emerged both from outside influences (such as the forcible importation of Korean ceramists by Toyotomi Hideyoshi following his invasions of Korea in 1592 and 1597) (Mikami 1981: 36–47) and through the long history of aesthetic dissent and splinter groups within Japan, many of which helped to reformulate a tradition. Arts that we now associate with traditional Japan, Kabuki and Ukiyoe, originated as subversive manifestations of popular culture associated with the "water trade," the sexual entertainment districts of Edo (Tokyo) and Kyoto. Yet the strength of hierarchical tradition and aesthetic doctrine in Japan is such that even these arts evolved into codified traditions, many, such as Kabuki, developing strict familial lineages limiting entrance to the sons of performers and those adopted into the familial system.

The modern culture industries have opened up this tradition of inherited right to cultural expression in the newly emerging technological arts. Even some of the closed traditional arts, such as Nō and Kabuki theater or pottery, are now less completely circumscribed to "outsiders." Yet many of the assumptions of inherited status persist in Japanese notions of artistic genius; though modern theater, films, modern dance, oil painting, sculpture, and so on, may have been an artistic outlet for a new group of artists, the traditions of acclaim surrounding the great artist were readily transferred to these new and Western-influenced disciplines. This includes the artistic position of film director. At Japanese studios, directors historically wielded great authority as artists. Apprenticeship as assistant director was the customary way to learn this art and accede to the status of film director (Anderson and Richie 1982: 346–351, 495).

Similarly, Japanese film criticism is often director centered. Sato Tadao in *Oshima Nagisa no Sekai* (1973) reflects the tendency toward auteurist approaches in Japanese film criticism. Yet in Sato's work on Oshima, we find a contradiction that is itself quite illuminating, as Sato is also one of the most sociological of Japanese film critic-scholars. He makes a great effort to place Oshima in a larger cultural and political frame, similar to his more general tracing of the cultural meanings in his historical essays in *Currents in Japanese Cinema* (1982).

Oshima even becomes useful as an emblem of a whole period to David Desser in his book, *Eros plus Massacre,* which he supports by citing other critics' similar moves (1988: 13–36, 46–59). In the structure of this book, Oshima not only plays the role of key participant in a period of filmic production, but his ideas and themes are used to coordinate the disparate tendencies of the period and derivations of his film titles name several chapters. Two of Oshima's early films, *Cruel Story of Youth* and *Night and Fog in Japan,* are presented as "paradigmatic" of the New Wave movement in Japan (Desser 1988: 25, 48, 236). Perception of paradigmatic status and even of this leadership role may be partially due to foreign reception; none of the other figures that Desser is identifying with the New Wave were known outside Japan until years later. Oshima, as well as the other directors, as Desser (1988: 46) points out, sees the movement as less unified than this. We will reconsider interpretations of the historical changes in the Japanese film industry later. For now, let us note that, arguably, both the role and the legend of Oshima in the history of contemporary Japanese film and culture are large. A direct, critical look at the issues raised by what we know of his biography and how that informs his explorations of subjectivity is most relevant to the films and their history of reception.

BIOGRAPHY AND SUBJECTIVITY

So here is the trouble with which we are faced. We have a series of films made by a filmmaker, Oshima Nagisa, whose biography is hard to ignore when looking at his films, even if one's methods of film analysis make one wary of such a biographical, auteurist approach. First, Oshima, as a part of a modernist practice in Japan and in film, creates his films drawing not only on his immediate personal experience but also on his self in the more extended sense of his feelings, his psyche, his unconscious. Second, he covers his films with his "self." By this I mean that he writes about his films extensively. The writings are themselves often brilliant; Oshima is not only articulate on his strategies but also a powerful theorist and critic of his own work as well as the works of others. With his writings, I would include the form of "writing" that we call the "interview," which I have already placed as overdetermined by an auteurist historical moment. Of course, interviews are mediated not only by the other's questions and reporting of answers but also by expectations of what the other might want to hear, or to which she or he might be provoked to respond. In all his pronouncements Oshima was a particularly gifted publicist; he brings to interviews great intelligence, strong political opinions, and complex interpretations of his own films, which he is able to express in accessible terms. He seems to reach a most intriguing balance of saying what his audience might respond to well while still introducing elements meant to shock or provoke.

Yet Oshima's very success in expressing his ideas about his films seems to cause a certain journalistic dependence on his ideas, a tendency to substitute for analysis of the films themselves mere juxtaposition and collation of his quotes. His films are read biographically or as the accomplishment of the author's intentions more often than they are read as in any way venturing beyond the self and intentions (and the projected self and stated, conscious intentions, at that) that Oshima's writings express. Oshima warns about the dangers of insularity and literal "self" reflection in his essays "The Laws of Self-Negation" and "Beyond Endless Self-Negation" (the title of the latter is mistranslated: it should be "From an Endless Self-Negation"), indicating that self-negation is a positive term in Oshima's lexicon, one that indicates not self-effacement but the willingness to engage subjectively in a dialectical relationship with one's preconceptions (Oshima 1992: 47–48, 52–53).

Oshima advances a kind of auteurism—"films must first and foremost, express the filmmaker's *active involvement as an individual*" (my emphasis)—but it is one tempered by restraints on ego investment (1988: 47). The Japanese word that has been translated as "active involvement" is *shutaiteki,* which means the direct exteriorization of inner subjectivity, a nuance that is combined with suspicion of any reified notion of singular and sacrosanct intentionality. On the contrary, Oshima simultaneously advocates a willingness to change one's approach in response to a reality that is "always changing" (1992: 53). Methodologically, for him, this means that creating a film "must be a reality-based negation of the images expressed in the script" (1992: 52). This is a demand for improvisation, but improvisation in response to important preplanning. Spontaneity and fluidity that negate the preestablished conception allow for the discovery of "new images." We will return to what Oshima might mean by "reality" here, for it is a term he uses frequently in a specifically political, as well as an aesthetic, sense. What I wish to highlight is that involvement "as an individual" is not for Oshima a simple championing of the artist's selfhood.

Further, there is the sense in which subjectivity is a radical concept in the Japanese context, in opposition to a Buddhist and Confucian focus on collectivity and on the effacement of individual needs and desires. This may even be the reason why the translator chose the mistranslation "beyond," assuming that "self-negation" would have to be a concept Oshima, as a critic of Japanese traditions, would hold in contempt; it is clear from the context of both essays, however, that self-negation for him is not negation of subjectivity but rather a dialectics of the inner, anterior self with the social and artistic circumstance.

Similarly we need to look at the specifics of the question of biography. The major biographical elements in Oshima's case, as presented in his writings, his interviews, and the critical works that draw on these sources, investigate just these boundaries of self and history. I will examine four elements often

taken as mythic keys to Oshima in a manner that looks at biography self-consciously. Interest in social context and psychoanalysis makes this material highly relevant, but our readings of it cannot be a merely direct causal transference of biographical statements as explanations of works of art. These key instances still need to be examined in a larger context and read for the conflicting and ambivalent narratives they represent.

Consider Oshima's family background. He is said to be from an "aristocratic" background as well as a "descendant of a Samurai family" (Danvers and Tatum 1986: 19). His father is also identified as a government official who kept a large library. Each of these carries various meanings, especially in contemporary Japanese society; the samurai were a privileged class of warriors who emerged in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and whose codification in the Tokugawa period gave them privileged status in the shogunate; the terms, "aristocrat" and "samurai," while not entirely consistent with one another, taken together connote a tradition of education, privilege, and self-esteem, which, since the Meiji restoration, would find its most likely equivalent in government service, the higher echelons of the military (with right-wing associations, particularly in memory of the thirties and World War II), or in established intellectual activity such as that of a university professor. So in this view Oshima becomes the rebellious son whose rebellion is nonetheless informed by his inherited sense of power and will to action. Another version of this background is offered in a quote from Imamura Shohei with which Audie Bock (1978: 309) introduces her chapter on Oshima: "I'm a country farmer; Nagisa Oshima is a samurai." Some might take Imamura to mean he is the simpler and more passive of the two and Oshima is the more aggressive fighter. One of the connotations of Imamura's opposition, however, is that between peasant as "outcast" *(hani),* inherently critical of Japanese official culture, and samurai, which in this context emphasizes a historical role as both privileged and loyal servant of the Tokugawa shogunate, or at the very least to the daimyo, the local retainer. If Oshima is still marked as a "samurai" long after the demise of this official class, what are we to make of the successful government servant who was Oshima's father but apparently widely enough read to be familiar with Marx?

Whatever we might postulate is conditioned by absence, as the father died when Oshima was only six years old. Oshima marks this as the most significant factor in his childhood, in his essay "My Father's Non-existence: A Determining Factor in My Existence" (Oshima 1992: 201–202). He even counsels other parents that such absence is preferable to more attentive and controlling parenting, advising them to create parental time away from the child as "true discipline and education." This statement is perhaps to be understood in the context of his rebellion against conformity, for what he praises in his own formation is his acceptance and even desire to be out of the ordinary. Yet what Oshima seems to forget is both how many Japanese

boys lost their fathers (and mothers) during the Pacific War and how absent many living Japanese fathers are, with their long hours at work and their evenings at bars with colleagues. Given their numbers, the children of these absent fathers are among the conforming children. We might also recognize how symptomatic the essay's rejection of nurturing as "overprotective" is, as it is divorced from any larger perspective. Oshima holds his protective mother in contempt, blaming women in general for conformity. "I resented my mother's existence; it made my life merely average, relatively speaking, as opposed to extraordinary" (1992: 201). Lacking an analysis of female dependency and limitations within Japanese society, or other, institutional pressures toward conformity, the essay singles out overprotective, dominant mothers. It is all too reminiscent of U.S. attitudes toward motherhood in the late forties and fifties, following the lead of Philip Wylie's *A Generation of Vipers* (1942), in which mothers, themselves oppressed by a patriarchal limitation on their lives, were accused of stifling the lives of their sons. Yet even if we read such an essay critically, we should remember that such revelations of self and psyche are not common in Japanese culture. The attempt to look at personal psychology, to examine the workings of one's family, is to be read as an act of nonconformity and an attempt in itself to escape tradition and reinvent Japanese identity.

Oshima also speaks of resentment and longing for his dead father. He tells of his attempt to hide his father's books during the war, only to watch them disintegrate. It is through such metaphors that this story of Oshima's family background gains special significance in the context of the Pacific War, the next key instance often cited in renderings of Oshima's biography. The Pacific War was a time of extreme political repression in Japan, during which the mere possession of leftist literature was a crime. To watch the destruction of the legacy of the period in which leftist social thought flowered among the Japanese intelligentsia is for Oshima to learn of his nation's intellectual and moral somnambulance.

As he tells us in an autobiographical essay, "My Adolescence Began with Defeat," Oshima had a Pacific War childhood (Oshima 1992: 195–200). Born in 1932, the year before the invasion of Manchuria, Oshima's early life and schooling were colored by his nation's militarism and imperialist expansion. He was thirteen years old at the time of surrender, and therefore his adolescence was a coming to terms with the nation's fallibility and the deceit practiced by the powerful and the respected. The realization *après-coup* of the Japanese propaganda machine having been a false foundation of childhood truth is what coming of age meant for much of his generation. His image in the essay is of playing Go all day on the day the defeat was announced, but not remembering whether he won or lost the game (1992: 195).

Thus the father's Marxist texts are a trace of a schism in twentieth-cen-

tury Japanese culture between tradition and the impulse for social change stimulated by revolutionary ideas from the West. Yet the father continued to serve the nation through the invasion of Manchuria and the growth of militarism, to die from natural causes rather than from resistance, abandoning the son to simply shared faith in Japan's actions and demoralization at Japan's defeat. As Oshima has said in an interview with this author in 1984, his generation came of age through a realization of their being duped to follow an ill-conceived and immoral militarism and patriotism. These biographical elements place Oshima on a broad cultural and historical map in which those who previously enjoyed privilege and believed in the Japanese nation are caught culturally between nostalgic longing and rejection of the past. They help to explain the emotional charge that interlaces nation and father under patriarchal systems.

Oshima's involvement, beginning in high school and then later when he was a student at the Law Faculty of Kyoto University, in left-wing student movements and drama groups is another aspect of his life that is a touchstone for interpretation of his films. In his account published in *Sekkai no eiga sakka 6* (Film Directors of the World) as well as his essays, he tells of his leadership role as vice president of the student association and then president of the Kyoto Prefecture student alliance. A key demonstration took place in 1951, when protests surrounding a visit by the emperor resulted in banning the student organization. Then in 1953 the students held a demonstration over the right of the group to meet, known as "the KU incident," which led to violent confrontations with the police. These years were an extraordinary period in which Japanese students were still reacting to Japan's wartime militarism, its defeat, and the U.S. occupation, as well as events such as the revolution in China, the war in Korea, the Soviet Union's increasing postwar power, and the war against the French in Vietnam. Oshima's account gives us his concern with what he calls the "logic of organized struggle," given his growing critique of Communist party cell operation within the student movement, Stalinist tactics, and the dynamics of factional infighting.

Oshima's biography does find reflection in his *Nihon no yuro to kiri* (Night and Fog in Japan), a film I will discuss in chapter 2; it is a surprisingly direct representation of the sort of intellectual theoretical debate that characterizes the Japanese student left, colored by the vicissitudes of personal desires and jealousies. What is interesting to note here is Oshima's processes of fictionalization, even when he draws on the personal. First, this film concerns students organizing in opposition to the 1960 security pact treaty. While Oshima's involvement in political groups of this sort was in the fifties, his films represent a younger generation of sixties protests. Rather than work from the directly autobiographical, he applies his analysis to what is immediate and topical at the time of the film's making, which is already removed from his experience, filtered analytically from his perspective at a distance. Polit-

ical groups, protests, and student interaction figure in many of the films, but the representations of the participants, the characters, are not only fictional, they are allegorical abstractions imbued with heightened dramatic power within a theoretical frame. Even when the filmmaker's life intersects so closely with his subject matter, his subjectivity as an artist is rarely as direct as the correlation of life incidents with filmic statements would imply. Yet in a filmmaker whose own life is so clearly a source and reference point, we need to bring this material to bear on the works, knowing that they are insufficient explanations of the films but rather elements in what can be conceived as a poststructuralist view of the artwork. They are elements that filter through the individual artist, along with elements gathered through him or her from a much broader cultural frame. The student demonstrations of the fifties and sixties are one instance in which Oshima shows us the artistic psyche in history, gathering, focalizing, theorizing, and reacting to circumstances that are much larger than the personal.

THE AUTHORIAL SUBJECT IN THE FILM INDUSTRY

Oshima's biographical material also gives us an entrance into Japanese film industry history at a critical juncture. We have seen earlier how Oshima is often taken as the defining presence in Japan's New Wave. However important his role and however valid it may be to speak of a distinct cinematic movement in the early sixties in Japan paralleling that of France, the convention of simply centering this "New Wave" on Oshima inevitably distorts aspects of film history and our understanding of its place in a larger social history. I wish now to take a view that considers these phenomena as less directly or even causally connected a priori. My purpose is to show how the authorial subject, Oshima, both fits into and shapes film history in the pivotal years that mark his entrance as director.

His biographical writings touching on his six-year filmmaking apprenticeship and subsequent promotion to director at Shochiku Ofuna are numerous—and somewhat contradictory. Reading Oshima's film criticism from this period indicates that it might be understood as the story of a newly graduated student radical moving into the heart of the corporate establishment, bringing to this move highly critical creative aspirations, yearnings to put his aesthetic theories into practice. However, retrospectively remarking that "there is no youth without adventure," he then reminisces on this period with ironic antiheroic detachment: "I entered a film company for the simple reason that it was difficult to find a job at that time, and due in part to my activity in the student movement, I couldn't find anything else" (Oshima 1992: 205). This contradictory presentation of self in history, and the irony of its presentation, is characteristic of Oshima and his view of subjectivity as expressed in his films and his writing. He is deeply aware of uncon-

scious motivations both underlying and raging against consciousness, of splits within the subject, of multiple determinations of history.

Placing Oshima's biography within Japanese film industry history demands that we see this story as just that complex. As background, it is important to recognize Shochiku as one of Japan's oldest surviving studios, the twenties' cinematic offshoot of a company whose roots were as a theater monopoly, owning both Kabuki and Shimpa companies (Anderson and Richie 1982: 40). According to Joseph Anderson and Donald Richie, Shochiku at first sought its inspiration in Hollywood, seeking to replace "old-style Japanese movies" with "only the latest ideas" (1982: 41). Evidence of this is its production of such features as *Rojo no reikon* (Souls of the Road, Minoru Murata and Osanai Kaoru, 1921) (Burch 1979: 100–107). This beginning seems like a prefiguration of events at the studio surrounding the promotion of Oshima to director in 1959, which also sought the "latest ideas" to renew cinematic style in order to secure its economic future. While the studio perhaps was launched on a program of innovation, by 1924 Shochiku had secured a place within the Big Four monopoly that formed the Japan Motion Pictures Association (Anderson and Richie 1982: 60). At this point it displayed many of the conservative traits one might expect from an industry giant, and these policies continued throughout the thirties and forties. Shochiku introduced a sound-on-film system that was instrumental in the Japanese industry's transition to sound (Anderson and Richie 1982: 77; Bordwell and Thompson 1994: 228). The studio head, Kido Shiro, became involved in the expansion of the Japanese industry into newly occupied countries during the Pacific War, and the studio later made wartime national policy films (Anderson and Richie 1982: 142). During the Occupation it specialized in melodramas and women's films (Anderson and Richie 1982: 142). Throughout its history Shochiku could at times support artistic innovations in contexts of audience acceptance and financial gain. It was the studio at which Ozu Yasujiro made all his films, and during wartime it produced such films as *Genroku chushingura* (Forty-seven Ronin, 1941–1942) by Mizoguchi Kenji.

The fifties were a period of artistic and financial flourishing for Japanese cinema, marked by a string of internationally acclaimed films by Kurosawa and the later films of Naruse, Mizoguchi, and Ozu, as well as the general financial health of commercial narrative filmmaking through lucrative "program" pictures, the Japanese term for predictable genre features. If the Japanese industry in the late fifties was at its height, if Shochiku had huge commercial successes with such films as Kinoshita's *Nijushi no hitomi* (Twenty-four Eyes, 1955), a sentimental melodrama of a rural schoolteacher's relationship to her pupils, Shochiku was feeling the competition both from other Japanese studios and from an ever-increasing U.S. and European penetration of the Japanese film exhibition market. The growth of Japanese television was substantial in the late fifties. Film studios in Japan, as worldwide,

needed to position themselves to compete with and infiltrate television production. One weapon would be the widescreen image ratios of Shochiko Grandscope and Tohoscope used in many fifties and sixties films. Shochiku undoubtedly felt pressure to transform its style to rival Nikkatsu, which was scoring huge market successes with its new "sun tribe" genre (films of juvenile rebellion or delinquency) made by a group of young directors.

In 1958, Oshima, then an assistant director at Shochiku, wrote "Is It a Breakthrough? The Modernists of Japanese Film" for the widely read Japanese journal *Eiga Hihyo* (Film Review). It opens:

> In July 1956, Nakahiro Ko breezed onto the scene with *Crazed Fruit,* boasting "*Season of the Sun* glorified the sun tribe and *Punishment Room* criticized it; I sneer at the sun tribe." In the rip of a woman's skirt and the buzz of a motorboat, sensitive people heard the heralding of a new generation of Japanese film. Then in May of the following year, with *The Betrothed,* a wholesome, rational depiction of adolescence, Shirasaka Yoshio proved that scripts of exceptional style can transcend the weaknesses of the director and determine the style of the entire film. At the same time, even more people became aware that this new element could not be ignored when talking about Japanese film. In September of that year, when Yasuzo used a freely moving camera to depict a pair of young motorcycle-riding lovers in *Kisses,* this new generation had assumed a place in Japanese Cinema as an intense, unstoppable force that could no longer be ignored. (Oshima 1992: 26; my translation correction)

All of the films mentioned in this passage, those in the internal citation of Nakahiro and those added by Oshima, were produced by Shochiku's rival studios, either by Nikkatsu or, in the case of Ichikawa's *Punishment Room* and Masumura's *Kisses,* Daiei. Note that Oshima's phrase "In the rip of a woman's skirt and the buzz of a motorboat" prefigures his citation of Ko in his use of these elements in a crucial scene in his 1960 *Cruel Story of Youth.* Note also his emphasis on script writing as a source of cinematic exuberance. The article goes on to place these modernists within an assessment of Japanese film history, continuing to praise works by Nakahiro and Masumura in detail. It advocates a more politically informed use of the *taiyo-zoku* (usually translated as "sun tribe" and indicating hedonist youth culture) genre and filmmaking in general, avoiding the potential for sheer exploitation by the industry of the youth audience. Among the several goals of this essay Oshima sought implicitly to confront his employer, Shochiku, with neglecting to support similar cinematic innovation.

A subsequent article does this more directly. "A Review of 'Sleeping Lion': Shochiku Ofuna" was Oshima's answer in *Eiga Hiyoron* (Film Criticism) to a June 1959 article, "Sleeping Lion: Shochiku Ofuna," in *Eiga Hihyo* (Film Review) by Noguchi Yuichiro and Sato Tadao. Oshima complains that the article is too gentle in its criticism and its appeal to management to be a little

smarter; he would have had them call the studio a "dead lion" and demand a turning over of production to "a new class of directors whose inner consciousness is not yet completely dominated by the old Ofuna framework." He goes on to say, "Not only the directing department, but every department involved in making films must give the postwar generation, which is capable of establishing the content and method of new works, the opportunity for self-expression" (Oshima 1992: 41). Yet Oshima notes in this piece that management at Shochiku has been discussing the Noguchi and Sato article.

His arm twisted in print, Shochiku's studio head, Kido, responded by designating Ofuna Studios as a unit devoted to tapping a new consumer market, competing in the youth film cycle that had made the career of Masumura. Besides this internal competition in the Japanese market, Kido was likely to have been aware that production was shifting internationally from studio sound stages to independents using equipment that could make increasing use of lighter, more mobile camera and sound equipment. The Italian neorealist movement was clearly affecting Japanese film, as was the first entrance into feature production in 1957–1958 of Jean-Pierre Melville, Louis Malle, and Claude Chabrol, the filmmakers who, along with others still making shorts at this time, would later be seen as precursors of a movement and called the *nouvelle vague* (the French New Wave).

It makes sense that these foreign filmmakers would, in addition to domestic rivals, spur Shochiku heads to pay attention to the young assistant directors in their own ranks who were not only proving themselves in their apprentice production jobs but also, in Oshima's case, writing for film journals and praising works at rival studios. However, it seems that the often-assumed direct influence of Jean-Luc Godard on Oshima at this stage may be exaggerated (stated, for example, in Anderson's 1982 addendum to his and Richie's *Japanese Film* [1982: 465]). If one considers only the years before Godard's first feature, *A Bout de souffle* (Breathless), was released in Japan in 1960, there seem to be certain problems with holding that Oshima's or Shochiku's motivation was to imitate Godard, though it was clear that Oshima admired Godard on viewing his first film and said so in print (Oshima 1992: 46). At this point, however, *Seishun sankoku monogatari* (Cruel Story of Youth), Oshima's second film, was already in production. It is probable that Oshima knew earlier of Godard's film criticism in *Cahiers* and his late fifties shorts; though Oshima's ability to speak French is minimal, *Cahiers* was followed in film circles in Tokyo, and surely the long talks at bars characteristic of the film world at this time provided some exposure. Further, one is struck by the similarities between the two directors' careers in the late fifties, as both were known as critics before becoming directors. However, close attention to the dates does not support Godard as a motivating figure for Oshima's filmmaking, or for his studio head's financing; it is probably better history to posit that both directors were being affected by similar forces in quite sepa-

rate circumstances than to see Oshima as from the start modeled after Godard. Once their film careers were both under way in the early sixties, Shochiku marketed Oshima as the "Japanese Godard," a phrase that continues even today in reviews and advertisements for revivals of Oshima's films. Certainly throughout the sixties and particularly at the point Oshima comes to Cannes and Paris, the filmmakers are engaged in a kind of filmic dialogue, perhaps between themselves, but certainly in the minds of critics and audiences.

The forces shaping Oshima's entry into the film industry are those of a generalized move toward independent production in the postwar period, with the studios scrambling to co-opt the independents, either by making at least some of their features look like independents, by buying independent companies, or by hiring the independent directors. Cinema as an industry must renew itself as it confronts a crisis; at Shochiku Ofuna, Oshima and an extraordinary collection of other talented assistant directors were able to seize this opportunity, to market their will to innovation and artistic expression, in some cases joining this with political expression that pushed at the limits of what that industry would allow. We might also remember in looking back at this history Oshima's admonition to critics more interested in codifying film history than in responding actively to the politics of industry production and their relation to national politics; in calling for protests to the shelving of his fourth feature, *Nihon no yoru to kiri* (Night and Fog in Japan, 1960), he vented his anger over the publicity myth of Shochiku Ofuna as home to a cinematic movement of quasi-independents, telling critics, "Stop using the term 'New Wave' once and for all! Evaluate each film on its merits!" (Oshima 1992: 57).

Some practitioners of auteurist criticism see Oshima as a director remarkable for his lack of stylistic consistency, his lack of a coherent style from film to film; Peter Lehman (1987: 28) suggests that if one were to show *Burial of the Sun* and *Night and Fog in Japan* without the credits, "it is almost inconceivable that the viewer would guess that the same filmmaker made both films, much less in direct succession in the same year." He also argues that "Oshima does not have a style which he develops, and his work does not break down into the conventional early, middle and late periods" (p. 28). If these points seem telling in a conventional auteurist framework, they are debatable depending on the parameters one might adopt for establishing recurring concerns and stylistic gestures; Lehman focuses on shot duration and montage, which admittedly are the formal parameters that vary the most from film to film in Oshima's works. I would rather read such pronouncements as symptomatic of a methodology imposing its own assumptions even as it points toward recognizing something of what I am calling Oshima's iconoclasm. Other methodologies for looking at a corpus of films will avoid the tangle of such assumptions and more clearly present Oshima's

contribution to filmmaking. As Lehman goes on to suggest, "Although it is entirely beyond the scope of this paper, the significant question to me seems to be: What is the relationship between Oshima's paradoxical abandonment of an individual style and his nearly compulsive pursuit of deeply personal issues? Oshima's radical pluralism rejects the individual and personal at one level and reinscribes it at another" (p. 31). What I hope to do here is answer just such questions about repetition and variation, style and "concerns," the "personal" and the political, using methodologies open to seeing the subject Oshima in history.

AUTHOR-FUNCTIONS, STYLE, AND A CORPUS OF FILMS

The issues raised by Oshima and auteurism are even larger and more theoretical than this critical recognition of his biography and its relationship to industry history indicates. For if Oshima is the product of a certain period of auteurism's flowering, he is also contemporaneous with, and arguably a part of, a deconstructive investigation of auteurism. As we shall see later, Oshima's film *Tokyo senso sengo hiwa* (The Battle of Tokyo, or the Story of the Young Man Who Left His Will on Film, 1970) addresses the issues of authorship and collective expression in highly theoretical and engaged ways. It is arguably a deconstructive work of fiction, pointing to the theoretical issues that make auteurist approaches problematic. While Oshima's works self-consciously raise issues of authorship, these theoretical issues were being debated in the years 1968–1972 in France as structuralists extended earlier Russian formalists' critique of biographical fallacies through emphasis on textual construction.

Thus we have Roland Barthes's monumental essay "The Death of the Author," first published in 1968. In this short, concise, and often elliptical essay, Barthes presents the author as a "modern" concept emerging from the Middle Ages and beginning to flower in the Renaissance. Despite the work of formalists, Barthes tells us, "The Author still reigns in histories of literature, biographies of writers, interviews, magazines, as in the very consciousness of men of letters anxious to unite their person and their work through diaries and memoirs" (1977: 143). The "allegory of the fiction" is largely interpreted by the reading public as the "author confiding in us" (1977: 143).

Modern writing, for Barthes, with its attention to language, calls that notion of the author into question; Mallarmé serves Barthes (1977: 143–144) as an author who begins pointing to the forces in language that supersede a myth of authorial and poetic voice. Barthes is arguing not only for a self-consciousness concerning allegorical readings of literature as authorial confidences but also for a special recognition that modern literature cannot be understood in these terms, as its purpose lies elsewhere.

Michel Foucault indirectly responds to Barthes and goes a few steps

further, or perhaps in another direction, when he proposes the "author-function" in his essay "What Is an Author?" published the next year. As Barthes introduced a sort of "Foucaultian genealogy," in tracing the development of the author to Renaissance impulses, it seems Foucault wants to put that historical tracing of the author as function precisely in his genealogical framework of discourses. He wants to exceed the literary realm, referencing authors of nonfiction, particularly those who write theory. The author-function then becomes a way of addressing texts as discourses in circulation, stimulating Foucault to summarize what would be the positive changes in methodology to replace recourse to authorial construction as four suggested questions:

> What are the modes of existence of this discourse?
> Where does it come from; how is it circulated; who controls it?
> What placements are determined for possible subjects?
> Who can fulfill these diverse functions of the subject? (Foucault 1977: 138)

These questions turn out to be very useful for examining the works of Oshima, in particular, as works that clearly have preexisting discourses circulating through them and place spectators in multiple and troubled positions.

However, the misinterpretations of Barthes's and Foucault's essays, their caricature as refusals to consider authorship at all, rather than as proposals of methodologies that would avoid the limits of an author-constricted allegory, have had a life of their own. Foucault's provocative ending to his essay contributes to such misinterpretations when he suggests that behind the questions he proposes lies a murmured indifference to "who's speaking" (1977: 138). This is a provocation, whose emphasis on the metaphor of a murmur and an ironic use of "indifference" now seems doomed to have not been heard in its subtlety. Rather than being taken as an acknowledgment that current intellectual thought was ready to speak of cultural forces, instead of attaching fictions only to individuals, it was doomed to be heard as flamboyant antihumanism, even as inhuman. Let me emphasize here that despite their differences, Barthes and Foucault were part of a new intellectual history that would trace the force and signification of concepts and paradigms rather than offer chronicles of the lives of thinkers. Their essays were a part of a movement toward a literary history that would be about narrative representation and language, an art history that would be about visual representation and its reception, film histories that would be less about directors and more about the representation in and circulation of a corpus of films. Thus in *Language and Cinema,* Christian Metz revisits auteurism by giving it a most concise structural definition as authorial corpus; the films are worthy of study together to investigate the ways they may be linked by a notion of enunciation or forms of representation.

Film theorists responded to these propositions by incorporating the no-