3 Reader as Director: Intermediality, Functions, Imagination

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In 1936, the year when sound cinema was finally and firmly established in Japan, Kitagawa Fuyuhiko outlined what he saw as the main task ahead for post-talkie scriptwriting.

> There has long been a demand for good scenarios. The need to elevate the scriptwriter's position has also been mentioned. However, I believe that the current format of the scenario will prevent this from happening for an indefinite period. This is primarily because the scenario today remains a secondary thing, regardless of how we look at it. Its form is distorted and altered by the director, but this is still reluctantly accepted. Even if it gets printed and published, the scenario can only be read by a devoted few. Above all, reading something close to a continuity script cannot be interesting for anyone who is not a specialist.

At this juncture, to elevate the scriptwriter's position, the scenario-novel [*shinario soku shōsetsu*][1] becomes absolutely indispensable. In other words, we must request for a scenario that would be engaging reading matter [*yomimono*] even independently from the film; a scenario that would be an independent work of art [*geijutsu sakuhin*] that inspires the director. (Kitagawa 1936, 17)

Kitagawa connects the issue of the writer's social and industrial status to the script format, proposing an artistically enhanced, autonomous scenario as a solution. Simultaneously, he hints at the dilemma that this textual form necessarily involves: the dual requirement to stand on its own while never being completely detached from the context of film production. In addition to providing reading pleasure similar to that gained from literature, the scenario must also contribute to the medium of cinema by aiding its development in new directions.

Kitagawa was not alone in suggesting that scenarios can or should be considered and read as literature. In this chapter, I will apply a synchronic approach to examine how several leading film critics of

[1] Kitagawa admits to borrowing the term 'scenario-novel' from the Soviet film director and theoretician Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948).

the day participated in the collective effort to define and contemplate the concept of 'scenario literature' (*shinario bungaku*) around the years 1936-38. Specifically, I am interested in how contemporary film criticism was grappling with the rapidly expanding corpus of scenarios available through journals and anthologies discussed in the previous chapter, while suggesting ways in which the act of reading could benefit future Japanese cinema. I will argue that the discourse on 'scenario literature' proved to be highly influential beyond its immediate surroundings, proposing as it did how the possession of particular imaginative skills brings out the agency of professional and casual readers alike.

3.1 The Autonomy of the Scenario

3.1.1 Film Scripts as Literature

Appeals to consider scripts as independent literary texts have been surprisingly common across most film traditions. Price summarises this as a "history of perpetual novelty" where time and again the issue of literature is addressed in relation to publishing film scripts (Price 2010, 26). Recent studies of screenwriting in Hollywood have unanimously considered the anthology *Twenty Best Film Plays* (1943, edited by John Gassner and Dudley Nichols) as the first of its kind in attempting to "distill literature" out of existing screenplays (Maras 2009, 51).

In Japan, a collection comparable to *Twenty Best Film Plays* had already materialised a few years earlier with the publication of the six-volume *Shinario bungaku zenshū* (Complete Works of Scenario Literature, 1936-37). An advertisement for the anthology in the November 1936 issue of the journal *Eiga hyōron* (ex)claimed that "[a] new literary genre that brings together old forms of literature such as fiction, drama, and poetry is here! It will light the beacon of reform in our increasingly autumnal film world!! Make scenario into literature!!!" As I examined in the previous chapter, several similar collections later followed in the postwar years, but *Shinario bungaku zenshū* differs markedly from its successors by virtue of a sizeable critical apparatus that occupies the entire first volume of the collection.[2]

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2 Although designated as the first volume, it was actually third to be published (following volumes 2 and 5). The remaining volumes contain the following: 2) recent Japanese scenarios (all but one produced) (*Nihon shinario kessakushū* Collection of Japanese Scenario Masterpieces), 3) translations and transcripts of foreign scenarios (*ōbei shinario kessakushū* Collection of European and American Scenario Masterpieces), 4) original work by professional scriptwriters (*Eigajin orijinaru shinario shū* Collection of Original

Figure 24 An advertisement for *Shinario bungaku zenshū* in *Eiga hyōron* (November 1936)

This volume, titled *Shinario taikei* (Outline of the Scenario), comprised essays on different aspects of the scenario, such as its dialogue and structure, as well as production context and prospects for research. Ostensibly, this gesture to contextualise was necessary to present and establish scenarios as autonomous texts, a step that subsequent script anthologies no longer needed to repeat. The essays were followed by summaries of the work of individual writers, both foreign and Japanese (70 and 16 names respectively). The volume concludes with a list of vocabulary of technical terms (*yōgo*) used in film scripts. This arrangement became the template for future critical collections on scriptwriting such as *Gendai eiga kōza: Shinariohen* (Lectures on Contemporary Film: Scenario, 1954) and the *Kinema junpō* special issue *Shinario tokuhon* (1959).

3.1.1 The Scenario Literature Movement

As I observed in the previous chapter, scenarios had appeared semi-regularly in several film journals since the mid-1920s. However, it was only a decade later that a broader critical (re)consideration of the textual form began. The term 'scenario literature' became central to discussions about the artistic possibilities of the newly emerging talkie script. Writing in May 1937, Sawamura Tsutomu (1915-77) noted that "[s]cenario literature has lately become something of a vogue word [*ryūkōgo*] in the world of film and film criticism" (Sawamura 1937, 32). Other critics expressed doubts about employing this designation in an uncritical manner.

> We have become terribly particular about the word 'scenario literature'. Who on earth came up with it? 'Scenario literature' is surely a nice word. But isn't asking the scenario to become literature simply nonsense? Isn't it rather like asking the whale to live in the ocean? (Sugimoto 1937, 89)

While it seems nearly impossible to trace the exact origin of the term, *Shinario bungaku zenshū*, which was published between October 1936 and December 1937, should be credited with providing the impetus for the intense debate on whether scenarios should be considered as a new genre of literature.

Although the term 'scenario literature' was yet to be coined, quite a few essays in the journal *Eiga hyōron* addressed similar issues as early as May 1936. However, it was the year 1937 that the discursive

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Scenarios by Film People), 5) scenarios by members of the literary establishment (*Bundanjin orijinaru shinario shū* Collection of Original Scenarios by Literary People), and 6) scripts of experimental films (*Zen'ei shinarioshū* Collection of Avant-Garde Scenarios).
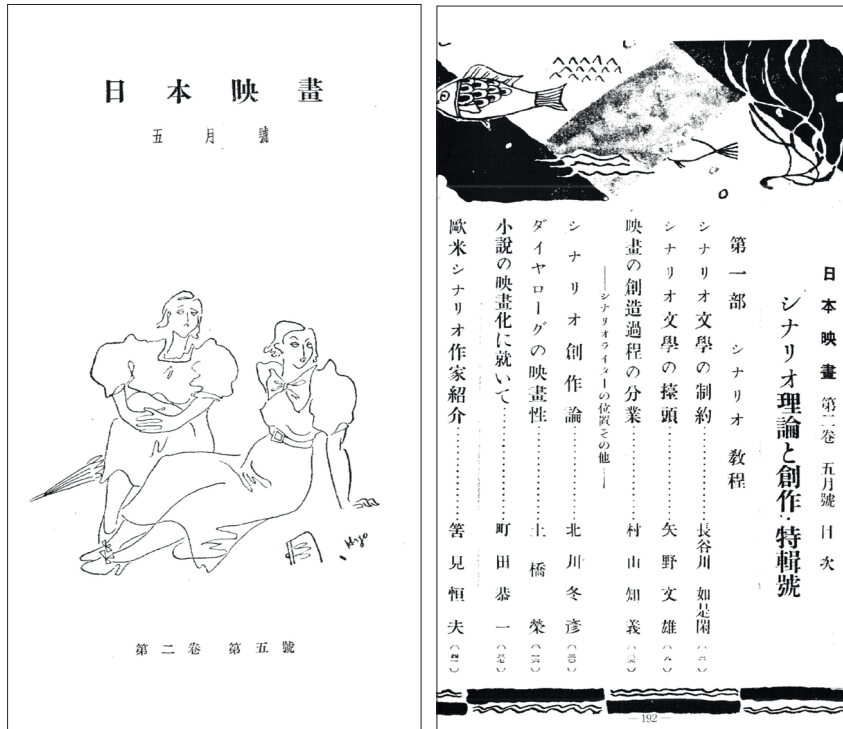
Figure 25 The cover and the table of contents of the special issue *Shinario riron to sōsaku* (The Theory and Creation of Scenarios) of *Nippon eiga* (May 1937)

endeavour commonly referred to as the Scenario Literature Movement began. Several leading film journals dedicated special issues to the topic, providing a platform for a similar circle of critics to test their opinions and arguments against each other. These issues include *Eiga hyōron* (January 1937), *Nippon eiga* (May and October 1937) and *Eiga sōzō* (Film Creation, December 1937). In addition, Kitagawa discussed 'scenario literature' in his regular column in *Kinema junpō* from May through June. He was also the driving force behind the establishment of the journal *Shinario kenkyū*, which provided an additional forum for debates on various facets of the phenomenon in its inaugural volume.[3]

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[3] Although the debate was largely confined to the pages of these periodicals, parts of it have been reprinted in influential books such as Hasegawa Nyozenkan's *Nihon eigaron* (On Japanese Film, 1943), Iijima's *Eiga to bungaku* (Film and Literature, 1948), Imamura Taihei's *Eiga geijutsu no seikaku* (The Character of Film Art, 1939), Kitagawa's

The Scenario Literature Movement was closely related to various topical issues in film criticism addressed by the same group of critics. These issues include film realism, sound, and documentary, as well as film genres such as *bungei eiga* (literary film), *bunka eiga* (culture film), and *nyūsu eiga* (news film).[4] In this capacity, the debate formed part of a broader discussion on different functions of sound film, indicating how the capabilities and opportunities of cinema as an audio-visual medium were perceived at the time. A deep concern for contemporary Japanese cinema permeates most of these accounts, often depicting it as significantly inferior to its foreign counterparts.[5]

3.1.2 Analogies in Drama and Music

The first task that most critics of the Scenario Literature Movement found themselves facing was to find a way to discuss scenarios as an independent textual form within the realm of literature and cultural production. This problem was commonly solved by aligning the new 'genre' with already existing ones, with the goal of legitimising scenarios as reading matter (*yomimono*). A comparison to drama was by far the most convenient example for these purposes. The common argument suggested that as drama plays in their printed form were widely considered literature and consumed separately from theatre-going, scenarios should be granted a similar status by association (Kikumori 1937, 22; Ueno 1937b, 13; Yano 1937, 9).[6] Tsuji Hisakazu (1914-81) even suggested that the history of Western theatre could serve as a point of reference for further prospects of the scenario.

> The first aspect that must first be improved to increase the value of the scenario is its form. I believe that the formal development of drama is a good example for this purpose. Doesn't the progress of the script – initially little more than an outline for a vulgar play – to our present days, when, in tandem with the development of theatre at the content level, it has taken the form of a drama play, also hint at the future of the scenario? (Tsuji 1936, 71)

Shinario bungakuron (On Scenario Literature, 1938) and Sawamura's *Gendai eigaron* (On Contemporary Film, 1941).

4 See Yamamoto 2020 for an analysis of the debate on film realism and documentary.

5 See Iijima 1937, 6; Ueno 1937b, 12.

6 The same mechanism can be observed in the case of the first American script anthology, *Twenty Best Film Plays*. The use of the term 'film play' rather than 'film script' or 'screenplay' immediately hints at its proximity to drama plays, an established literary genre.

This evolutionary view of art – maintaining that it was the embracing of particular limitations and improving them that eventually led to the emergence of crystallised forms – surfaces intermittently in the Scenario Literature Movement. Along these lines, various critics posit that the master-scene script provided precisely such a complete form for the scenario (Ihara 1937, 53-4; Kikumori 1937, 23; Sawamura 1936, 48; Ueno 1937b, 16).

The above comparisons were opportune means to argue for scenarios as both legible and reputable literary texts. However, references to drama also proved problematic due to theatre's association with early silent cinema, which relied heavily on stage repertoire and acting techniques. The prominent social critic Hasegawa Nyozekan (1875-1969) identified cinema as predominantly visual medium and consequently expressed his doubts about literary readings of scenarios. In his view, a stage play is always driven by dialogue, whereas in film, images interrupt the speech and thereby break the flow of the word-based narrative (Hasegawa 1937, 4-6). In effect, Hasegawa was sketching a distinction between what he considered major and minor elements in scenarios: the dialogue takes on merely an auxiliary role while the images on screen are essential for the unfolding of the narrative. In this decidedly narrow view of cinema, Hasegawa made a case against treating it as a verbal medium and, in effect, against the scenario as a literary genre akin to stage plays.

Another common analogy for the scenario came from the world of music. Future documentary filmmaker Ueno Kōzō (1908-81) pointed out that, parallel to scenario readership, the faculty of musical literacy makes it possible to read sheet music without listening to the actual performance. He even suggested that similar claims about 'music literature' (*ongaku bungaku*) are likely to emerge in the future (Ueno 1937b, 17-18). Another critic, Kita Saiga, was somewhat more hesitant about the accuracy of this analogy, illustrating his claim with a rather naive story from his youth.

> There was a music lover among my friends. During our school days, whenever he ran out of money, he had a habit of climbing into his dormitory bed and reading foreign music scores. He said it gave him great pleasure. German Lieder were the handiest: with minimal effort, he could enjoy piano music. Had this man money, he could have attended a concert or bought a record. Unfortunately, the pleasures of the musical score elude me. (Kita 1937, 77)

Along similar lines, the scriptwriter Kisaragi Bin (1903-65) expressed his strong doubts about considering scenarios as literature. He posited that while a professional writer might indeed derive enjoyment from reading them, to the general public they would seem as unintelligible as musical scores (Kisaragi 1937, 82). These dismissing

statements notwithstanding, the analogy of musical literacy can indeed be instructive for examining the readership of scenarios. This is closely tied to what is commonly called 'cinematic literacy', a topic I will return to later in this chapter.

3.1.2   Autonomy and Intermediality

Comparisons to other textual forms, whether verbal or not, also helped to underline the scenario's relative independence from the film production context. As we observed, for Kitagawa and others, it was paramount to find a format that could both captivate the reader and inspire the director. This was a precondition for the scenario to obtain an autonomous textual status. In this sense, the scenario's very existence was linked to its formal properties, and consequently, it became crucial to find an ideal form or rather a range of options for scenario literature. The American practice exemplified by *Twenty Best Film Plays* provides an interesting parallel: rather than trying to find a suitable form for the scenario, literariness was teased and 'distilled' out of a handful of existing scenarios. Price has noted the "editorial recasting of screenplays into a hybrid form combining narrative fiction and stage-play format" (Price 2013, 171). This is in sharp contrast with the Japanese practice of publishing largely unedited versions of whatever happened to be available, most often shooting scripts (*daihon*).

Most participants of the Scenario Literature Movement appear to have agreed that formats resembling the continuity script were unsuitable if literariness was sought for the scenario (Kurata 1937, 76; Yano 1937, 9; Yoshida 1937, 86). At the same time, there was a common understanding about the need to first identify various forms to eventually arrive at something that would accommodate the objectives of 'scenario literature'. Furukawa Yoshinori proposed that the continuity script was at best useful for familiarising oneself with the working styles of individual film directors rather than the narrative itself; conversely, the scenario should ideally be used for learning the writing skills and applying these on one's own film scripts (Furukawa 1937, 85). Tsuji went as far as calling for the abolishing of the continuity script: "The improvement of the scenario's position necessitates excellent scriptwriters, and in order for such writers to emerge, the current form of scenario must first be gotten rid of" (Tsuji 1936, 73). At the same time, warnings were sounded against the temptation to rely on existing literary forms. Kikumori Hideo (1909-2001), later a prolific translator and scholar of German literature, noted that to maintain its integrity as an independent genre, a scenario should under no condition attempt to take the form of a novel or a poem. In his view, the genre of *cine-poem*, gaining some popularity at the time, was not part of scenario literature at all but merely a poem that
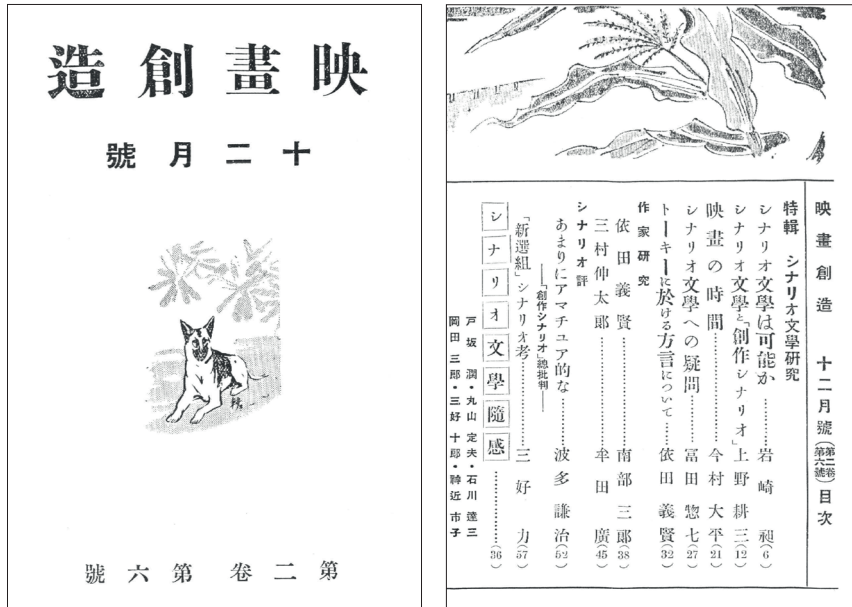
Figure 26 The cover and the table of contents of the special issue *Shinario bungaku kenkyū* (Research of Scenario Literature) of *Eiga sōzō* (December 1937)

happened to use literary techniques roughly reminiscent of corresponding cinematic devices (Kikumori 1937, 25).

The debate took place at a time when the master-scene scenario was already on its way to becoming the standard format in film production. Some critics, such as Tomita Sōshichi, insisted that the scenario remains meaningful only in its connection to film (Tomita 1937, 27), but most seemed to agree that the scenario had a strong claim for an autonomous status. For instance, Watanabe Toshihiko argued that while the scenario's dependence on film can be traced back to the production context and the continuity script, a different approach and format would dramatically change this situation (Watanabe 1936, 64). What emerges from these accounts is a consensus that the proposed autonomous position of the scenario as a literary text is contingent on its success in distancing itself from film production.

However, Yamakawa Yukio noted that by extracting itself from cinema, the scenario, as a new textual genre with its claim to autonomy, has paradoxically ended up subordinating itself to literature (Yamakawa 1938, 52). On a more conciliatory and constructive note, other critics pointed out that the scenario had come to occupy an intermediate position between film and literature. The following passage by Ueno illustrates this claim by employing a corporeal metaphor.

> Scenario literature is something of a child-in-between [*ai no ko*]. It is a mixed blood child [*konketsuji*] with flesh and bones from literature and skin from cinema. It is a film written with words. (Ueno 1937b, 16)

The novelist Ishikawa Tatsuzō (1905-85), the winner of the inaugural Akutagawa Price in 1935, saw this intermediality (*chūkansei*) mostly in negative terms and argued that due to its partial attachment to cinema, the scenario could not claim to be literature at all (Ishikawa 1937, 36). This opinion voiced by a leading novelist of the day ironically aligns with the one of the scriptwriter Kisaragi who found value in scenarios only for scriptwriting professionals.[7] Perhaps due to their respective professional allegiances, both Ishikawa and Kisaragi were compelled to underestimate both the efforts of film critics and the reading skills of the general audience. Conversely, the critics who participated in the Scenario Literature Movement agreed about the precondition that autonomy from cinema posed for the scenario as a new literary genre that could be perused independently from the film production context.

3.2 The Critics' Role and Scenario's Functions

3.2.1 The Positionality of the Critics

The arguments employed within the Scenario Literature Movement are at times very revealing of the critics themselves and how they reflected on their own positionality in the endeavour. In the inaugural issue of the journal *Shinario kenkyū*, Sawamura pointed out how during the silent era, literary people began producing texts in new genres influenced by their experiences of cinema.

> However, when films became talkies, such efforts by writers ceased for some time. After the initial confusion had dissipated, new cinematic techniques were generally apprehended and people made talkies their own. It was then that the advocacy of scenario literature on the part of film critics occurred. The voices raised from the critics' side resulted in cinema beginning to demand scenario literature. This is because film critics are the people who are first to understand and convey the voiceless demands of cinema. In contrast to the earlier *lese scenario* and *cine-poem*

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7   Ishikawa Tatsuzō won the inaugural Akutagawa Prize in 1935 for *Sōbō* (Many People), This, like many of his subsequent works, was adapted for the screen (1937, written by Kurata Fumindo and directed by Kumagai Hisatora, 1904-86). Kisaragi authored one of the most acclaimed Japanese silent scripts, *Kaijin* (*Ashes*, 1929, directed by Murata Minoru).

which emerged on the part of writers, the recent advocacy of sce-
nario literature is none other than a great desire coming from the
cinema itself. (Sawamura 1937, 32-3)

With a polemical pathos that is in danger of appearing self-righteous,
Sawamura expresses an opinion not uncommon among the partici-
pants of the Scenario Literature Movement: in comparison to both
the member of the literary establishment and film industry, the film
critic is in a privileged position for evaluating the literary possibili-
ties of the scenario. Moreover, many critics appear to have seen them-
selves as responsible for making the scriptwriters aware for the first
time about their elevated status and opportunities as (literary) au-
thors. The critic effectively becomes the catalyst for the writers' self-
awareness as expressed in the following passage.

This thing called 'scenario literature' should be conceived as the
authorial awareness of the scenario author [*shinario sakka no sak-
kateki jikaku*]. It should give birth to those who are truly awakened
to the function of film art. (Kitagawa 1938, 53)

It was the studio system in general, and its increasing focus on film
adaptations of contemporary literature by the mid-1930s, that was
blamed for keeping the writers unaware of their professional (class)
consciousness. It was even suggested that those writers with perma-
nent contracts with studios possessed insufficient creative faculties
to even come up with original scripts. At the same time, some sym-
pathy was afforded to the seemingly unenviable position of studio
scriptwriters:

[Th]e fact remains that current scenario writers know about little
more than the techniques of adaptation [*kyakushoku*]. For them,
possessing their own ideas or expression is not easily permitted.
(Tsuji 1936, 70)

The critics displayed a generally low opinion of contemporary script-
writers, but the efforts by the literary establishment to contribute to
the field were commonly treated with similar disdain. The anthology
Shinario bungaku zenshū had two contrasting volumes, one dedicated
to scenarios by *eigajin* (film people), and the other by *bundanjin* (lit-
erary people).[8] Kitagawa expressed his disappointment about the lat-
ter volume soon after it appeared: "Regrettably, most of these works

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8   In *Bundanjin orijinaru shinarioshū*, several established writers provided their sce-
narios, complete with short introductions on their views on the genre. An attempt of
the Scenario Literature Movement to transfer prestige from the literary circles (*bun-
dan*) to the scenario is nowhere more apparent. Interestingly, this pattern was never
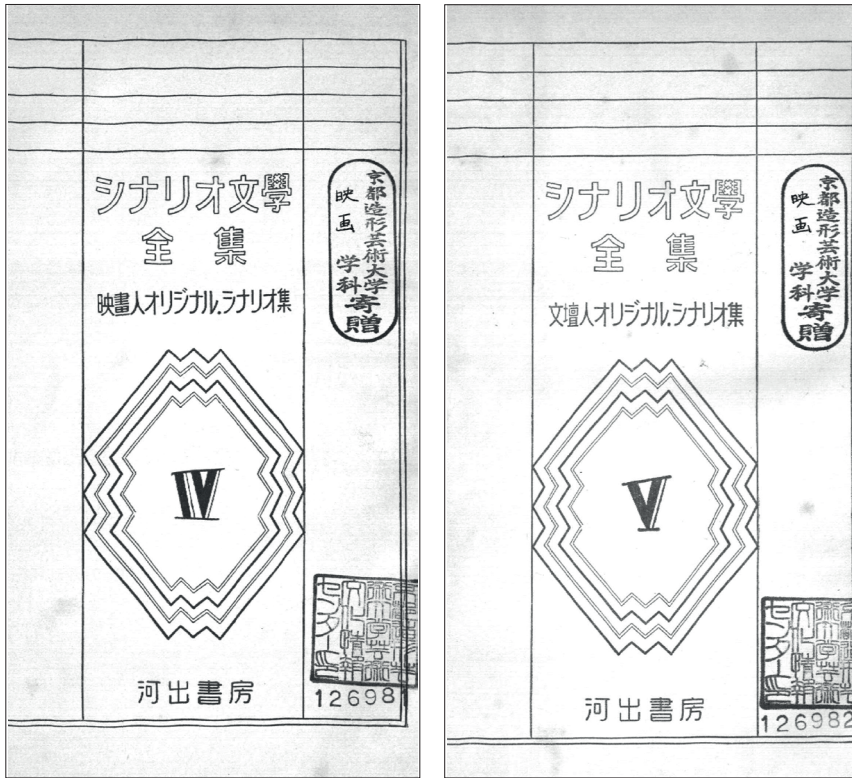
Figure 27 The covers of the fourth (*eigajin*) and fifth (*bundanjin*) volumes of *Shinario bungaku zenshū* (1936-37)

keep the so-called cinematisation [*eigaka*] too much in mind, and due to this, the scenarios end up being of low artistic value" (Kitagawa 1938, 57). Kitagawa clearly expected more imaginative works from the 'real' writers, whom he presumed were not bound by the limitations seen in the film industry, once more suggesting that it was the role of the critics to decide on what would qualify film scripts as scenario literature.

repeated: perhaps the distinction between literature and film professionals made sense only in the context of 'scenario literature'.

3.2.2 The Professional Divide

Another line of demarcation, this time between the film critics and scriptwriting practitioners, was represented by two journals, *Shinario* and *Shinario kenkyū*. Both began appearing in the summer of 1937, during the peak of the Scenario Literature Movement.[9] The former was published by the Kansai section of Eiga Sakka Kyōkai (Association of Film Authors), a predecessor to the postwar Nihon Shinario Sakka Kyōkai (Japan Writers Guild). The Kyoto-based scriptwriter, Yoda Yoshikata, served as its editor.[10] The inaugural issue of *Shinario* contained congratulatory messages from all major studios, attesting to its close industrial ties. This is further evidenced by the presence of Yoda, who was emerging as a major studio scriptwriter at the time, having recently written the acclaimed *Gion no kyōdai* (*The Sisters of Gion*) and *Naniwa erejī* (*Osaka Elegy*) both directed by Mizoguchi Kenji in 1936.

In stark contrast, *Shinario kenkyū* was edited by a coterie known as Shinario Kenkyū Jūninkai (The Club of Ten of Scenario Research), which was primarily composed of film critics. Often abbreviated as Jūninkai (The Club of Ten), this group relied on the combined critical and creative faculties of its members and was a significant entity in the Japanese scenario world until the 1950s. The establishment of the group roughly coincided with the beginning of the Scenario Literature Movement.[11] The original ten members included Horiba Masao, Ihara Hikoroku, Iida, Kaiwa Hikaru, Katanada Yakurō, Kitagawa, Sawamura, Shigeno Tatsuhiko, Sugimoto Shun'ichi and Tsuji (Sugimoto 1937, 89).[12] According to Sugimoto, the main aims of the Jūninkai were the following:

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[9] The ambiguity of the word *kenkyū* (research), which distinguishes these two journals, should be noted. A postwar series published by the Nihon Shinario Sakka Kyōkai, similarly titled *Shinario kenkyū*, contained only scenarios with extremely brief commentaries, suggesting their status as *material* for research, with the presumed research itself excluded. Terms such as *kenkyū* and *ron* (theory) are used quite liberally to denote varying degrees of critical engagement with texts, not necessarily rigorous scholarly inquiry.

[10] *Shinario* should not to be confused with its postwar reincarnation of the same name, which continues appearing to the present day. The postwar version of *Shinario* was published by Nihon Shinario Sakka Kyōkai; so were *Nenkan daihyō shinarioshū* and *Nihon shinario taikei*, the definitive scenario anthology discussed in the previous chapter.

[11] There is some uncertainty regarding the exact inception of the group. Sugimoto cites 15 July 1936 as the date of the founding meeting (Sugimoto 1937, 89), whereas Kitagawa refers to September 1936 (Kitagawa 1938, 15).

[12] The lineup of the group was listed in each issue of *Shinario kenkyū*, with Ōguro Toyoshi (1908-92), Takiguchi Shūzō (1903-79), and Asano Akira (1901-90) eventually replacing Katanada, Miwa, and Tsuji. Ihara passed away in August 1937 and Tsuji was reinstated. Supporting members of the group included the country's foremost moder-
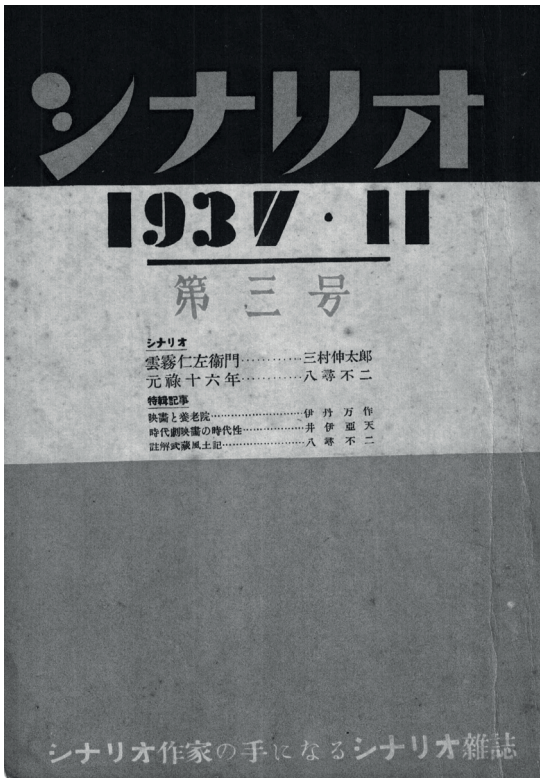
To open up new artistic territories not ruined by contemporary commercialism, to keep in mind the establishment of new textual forms, to examine monthly submissions of scenarios brought in by each group member, and to analyse work by writers from outside the group. (Sugimoto 1937, 89)

Due to the emphases above, *Shinario kenkyū* markedly differed in its content from *Shinario*. It dedicated equal space in the journal to both criticism and scenario texts, while *Shinario* clearly focused on the latter. The professional tensions between the two periodicals were brought to light in the editorial of the first issue of *Shinario*, which

nist poet, Hagiwara Sakutarō (1886-1942). Interestingly, the activities of the Jūninkai continued beyond the wartime period. The group is credited for editing books such as *Shinario nyūmon* (Introduction to Scenario, 1952), and its members contributed to discussions on scriptwriting in various fori such as *Kinema junpō* and its special editions, notably *Shinario tokuhon*. A notable postwar addition to the membership was Kobayashi Masaru, the main editor of the anthology *Nihon eiga shinario koten zenshū*.

expressed disappointment that *Shinario kenkyū* had managed to enter the scenario publishing market first (May vs June 1937). Harsh words were directed at the behaviour of a particular unnamed member of the Jūninkai (Anon 1937, 80).

Shinario kenkyū appears to have borrowed its general template from literary coterie magazines such as *Shi to shiron* (Poetry and Poetics, 1928-31). This approach might have lent it some institutional credibility. The participation of several critics associated with the literary scene, such as Kitagawa and Takiguchi Shūzō (1903-79), reveals its close connection to a series of literary movements of the late-1920s, such as the Short Poem Movement (*Tanshi undō*) and the Prose Poem Movement (*Sanbunshi undō*). Indeed, Kitagawa, an advocate of both movements, was already an established poet when he began a parallel career as a film critic in the early 1930s. Takiguchi is widely considered the foremost surrealist artist in Japan.[13]

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13   This literary connection is further emphasised by the two-volume facsimile edition of *Shinario kenkyū* that appeared in 2012 as part of the series dedicated to making available modernist poetry journals, *Toshi modanizumu shishi* (The Poetry Journals of Urban Modernism). Given that, apart from an odd *cine-poem*, *Shinario kenkyū* contains

Besides professional divisions, there is an underlying geopolitical dimension to the Scenario Literature Movement, as represented by the two periodicals. *Shinario* was established by scriptwriters working in the Kansai region, while *Shinario kenkyū* was founded by film critics residing in Tokyo. However, both journals were published by companies based in Kyoto, with Daiichi Geibunsha (*Shinario kenkyū*) also responsible for several books by members of the Jūninkai, such as Kitagawa and Shigeno, as well as writings by the director Itami Mansaku. This bias towards the Kansai region is notable due to the increasing concentration of publishing houses and capital in Tokyo following the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake (Mack 2010, 4). Such regional aspects have implications for the entire scenario literature project, which is seen as an alternative to what was perceived as an increasing commercialisation of cinema, a topic discussed later in this chapter. In fact, Muta Hiroshi has pointed out that, in his impression, people from Kyoto were generally stronger proponents of scenario literature (Muta 1937, 50). Often referred to as the Hollywood of Japan in the 1920s, Kyoto, which fostered such early scriptwriting circles as the Narutakigumi[14] remained a formidable presence for innovations in scriptwriting into the late 1930s.

3.2.3 Introducing New Talents

In December 1937, when the debate on scenario literature was already beginning to subside, Iwasaki Akira (1903-81) highlighted what he saw as the three greatest achievements of the endeavour.

> The Scenario Literature Movement has provided significant stimulation to the artistic improvement of cinema. First, it has rightfully acknowledged the importance of the script in film production.

neither poems nor discussion on poetry in any conventional sense, it seems unusual that it should have been reproduced in that particular series. Many central concerns and frequent contributors of *Shinario kenkyū* heavily overlap with those of other contemporary journals such as *Eiga to ongaku* (Film and Music), *Eiga sōzō* and *Nippon eiga*, all published in facsimile editions of film journals. While the effort to make *Shinario kenkyū* available should be warmly welcomed, its peculiar position is attested by the commentaries by its editors who appear to be out of their depth when discussing film criticism, preferring links to the literary scene instead (Hayakawa 2012, Mizutani 2012). As it appears in a series with the goal of making available several literary coterie magazines, *Shinario kenkyū* is situated in the literary realm rather than that of film criticism. This might explain why that the journal itself and Scenario Literature Movement have generally been excluded from discussions of cinema and relegated to footnotes of literary history as a modernist curiosity. Ironically, then, *Shinario kenkyū*, the main forum for publishing and discussing 'scenario literature', sits uneasily between the two fields to this very day, failing to find its proper place in either canon.

14 See Chapter Four for more details about the Narutakigumi.

> Second, it has created opportunities for the emergence of original scenarios from outside the film industry, not contracted by the studios. Third, it has introduced artistic talent from outside the film world to create scenarios. (Iwasaki 1937, 10)

Yamakawa seconded this evaluation by noting the benefits of publishing scripts that, for one reason or another, failed to be produced, and invited young writers to try their hand at writing for cinema (Yamakawa 1938, 52). Both statements highlight how the emergence of a new forum for scenario publishing resulted in engaging outsiders to contribute to scriptwriting beyond regular assignments facilitated by the studios.

One of the positive outcomes of the Scenario Literature Movement was undoubtedly the participation of individuals from various professional backgrounds and affiliations in the broader cultural field. While this might have occasionally revealed a divide between the literary establishment and the film world, it also underscored the flexibility and potential for merging different roles. By significantly expanding the opportunities for scenarios to be noticed, and sometimes even produced, the Scenario Literature Movement essentially democratised the contemporary film industry. The chance to publish their work without being commissioned by the studios led to new individuals joining the ranks of scriptwriters from outside the industry and its restrictive system of in-house training. As I will discuss in the next chapter, the script departments often acted as a site of exclusion, and those without proper training under the assigned master could not easily join the trade of scriptwriting. This practice highlights the negative aspect of the issue of professionalism in writing for film, which is addressed by several critics in the debate.

> Today, when there is a shortage of good scriptwriters, I would like to see the freshness that comes from amateur-ish scenario writers, even though this might not happen immediately. Amateur [*shirōto*] writers do not necessarily have to submit to the many requirements of the studio or obey the subordination of the scenario to film. It would suffice for them to write scenarios keeping in mind the optimal conditions for cinematisation [*eigaka*]. This is one aspect of the scenario's independence. Such scenarios would probably not be made into films *immediately* [emphasis original]. [...] However, the attitude of professional [*kurōto*] writers, who are always just making do, is unproductive as well. (Watanabe 1936, 63)

Along similar lines, Furukawa suggested that future scriptwriters are most likely to emerge from among those who peruse and research scenarios published in journals, rather than from the professional writing staff employed at the studios (Furukawa 1937, 86).

Iida has pointed out that the general atmosphere of democratisation of writing for film, generated by the Scenario Literature Movement, was integral in helping to launch the careers of several significant postwar scriptwriters (Iida 1952, 212). The publication of original work by emerging talent facilitated the rise of new writers from outside the studio system. Many of these attempts never made it to the screen, but the opportunities to have their writing published in fori such as *Eiga hyōron*, *Nippon eiga*, *Shinario*, and *Shinario kenkyū*, and to receive feedback from their peers, proved to be crucial for future writers. These few decisive years in the late 1930s laid the foundation to the modus operandi of the typical postwar scriptwriter.

One of these young writers was Shindō, who had his first scenario, *Tsuchi o ushinatta hyakushō* (The Farmers Who Lost Their Land), published in *Eiga hyōron* in May 1938. Although he was already employed at the Shinkō Studio's art department at the time, it was not easy to cross professional boundaries within the industry. It was in the same year that, after accidentally acquiring a copy of *Nippon eiga* featuring scenarios, Hashimoto started to try his hand at scriptwriting. Yet another important filmmaker from the same generation who started his career by publishing unproduced scripts was none other than Kurosawa.

3.2.4 Advocating for Original Scenarios

Within the Scenario Literature Movement, the quality of the film script, and indeed that of the film made from it, often hinged upon the scarcity of original scenarios (*orijinaru shinario* or *sōsaku shinario*). This perceived deficiency was in turn related to the independence of the scenario from the film production context. The solution was seen in providing opportunities for publishing original work that would be free from industrial demands and addressing the problems arising from the often-formulaic methods of literary adaptation. During the early days of the debate, the scriptwriter Kyōto Nobuo (1914-2004) noted that

> [i]t has often been said that the film authors [*eiga sakka*] of our country have until now lacked the talent to write original scenarios and due to this cinema, too, has deteriorated. I am strongly against this view. It is rather that the authors of original scenarios have been kept all too long in such an unfavourable environment. Beginning with Itami Mansaku, there are more scenario authors [*shinario sakka*] than can be counted on one's fingers. It is only that they have not had the chance to publish their work. (Kyōto 1936, 121)

Kyōto associates the elevation in the scriptwriters' status with the creation and publication of original scenarios, which saw a considerable increase during the Scenario Literature Movement. Upon examining the texts that appeared in journals at the height of the debate, one is struck by the overwhelming proportion of original works, many of which were never filmed.[15] The flagbearer of this trend was clearly *Shinario kenkyū*: nearly all scenarios published there were subtitled as *sōsaku shinario*.[16] Original scenarios were also frequently published in *Nippon eiga* and *Eiga hyōron*, and to a lesser extent in other film journals, significantly contributing to the growing corpus of scenarios discussed in the previous chapter.

The impetus behind this advocacy of original scenarios was closely tied to the critics' disappointment with certain trends in contemporary Japanese cinema. This was an era characterised by the flourishing of *bungei eiga*, literary adaptations of so-called pure literature (*junbungaku*). Only a few years earlier, literary and film critics had placed great hopes in the emerging genre. However, these literary adaptations, often made with clear commercial considerations, were subsequently seen as the antithesis of scenario literature. Watanabe astutely pointed out that art (*bungei*) does not automatically follow from adapting highbrow material (*junbungei*) for the screen (Watanabe 1936, 65). Arguably, it was the failure of the *bungei eiga* to live up to its initial promise of bringing cinema closer to literature that prompted the critics to search for literary value in scenarios in the first place.

In several essays published prior to the Scenario Literature Movement, Kitagawa had already levelled harsh criticism at the attempts to adapt literature to film.[17] Nor was he particularly impressed by the recent shift from popular literature (*taishū bungaku*) to 'pure literature' as the source of film adaptations. In his view, the rationale behind adaptations was the lack of original scenarios, and the prevalence of adaptations was related to the generally poor skills of contemporary Japanese scriptwriters. Kitagawa singled out Shimazu's *Okoto to Sasuke* (*Okoto and Sasuke*, 1935), an adaptation of Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's novel *Shunkinshō* (*A Portrait of Shunkin*, 1933) as an example of the failure to meaningfully transmit literature to the screen.

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15   These original scenarios commonly concluded with the notice: "Screening and performing without permission prohibited" (*Kin mudan jōei jōen*). This suggests that even non-professional writers were sufficiently aware of the issue of copyright.

16   While placing its main focus on original scenarios, *Shinario kenkyū* also featured a section called *Shinario kurashikku* (Scenario Classics), where scripts of acclaimed earlier films were published (See Table 1 on the prewar scenario canon).

17   These include "Eiga to taishū bungaku" (Film and Popular Literature) from May 1933 (Kitagawa 1938, 190-2), "Bungei sakuhin eigaka shiken" (Personal View on Film Adaptations of Literary Works) from January 1935 (125-8) and "Bungei sakuhin no eigaka" (Film Adaptation of Literary Work) from March 1936 (133-6).

3.2.5 Scenario as Archive

In his opening essay to the first volume of *Shinario bungaku zenshū*, Iijima claimed that "[f]or us, unable to be satisfied with Japanese cinema, it has become impossible not to try cinematic creation through the printed word [*katsuji*]" (Iijima 1937, 6). This controversial and oft-quoted statement was followed by one that disproportionately invests only the dialogue passages of the scenario with literary qualities; the descriptive parts of the scenario (*togaki*), unable to account for all the visual aspects of the film, are considered suspect (10). Iijima's stance on the accuracy of dialogue as a faithful transcript of film is highly problematic: equating words printed on the page with those uttered on the screen fails to consider the aspects of voice and performance. It is also curious that this view should be expressed in the inaugural essay of the anthology, the main goal of which was to make scenario texts available, appearing as if Iijima was trying to undermine the whole effort at its inception.[18] Almost instantly, several critics reacted to Iijima's words. Ihara made a strong pitch about the directions (*togaki*) in the scenario being as important as its dialogue, a fallacy that he suggested resulted from Iijima's taking the analogy between drama play and the scenario too far (Ihara 1937, 52). Kitagawa, in turn, posited that instead of separating different facets of the scenario, it should be perceived as a single entity (Kitagawa 1938, 16).

Aaron Gerow has discussed the same essay by Iijima and his stance on film dialogue as a negative example of a certain trend in Japanese film criticism. Gerow argues that Iijima

> [tried] distinguishing between the cinematic aspects (camera, editing, etc.) from the literary aspects (mainly focusing on dialogue) in the scenario […] [arguing that t]he coming of sound […] opened up an avenue for the cinematic pursuit of literature in the form of dialogue. (Gerow 2000, 28)

Gerow finds in Iijima's stance a refusal to fully embrace the visual nature of cinema and uses it to illustrate his general claim about how the image has been repeatedly subordinated to the word in Japanese film theory. In his interpretation, literature "promised to finally give cinema that self-contained textuality, that unchanging and univocal meaning", effectively rendering "the script largely equivalent to the moving picture" (Gerow 2000, 29).

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18   Iijima (1976) later admitted that his ideal at the time was a detailed continuity script that would include camera angles and changes made to the script during the production of the film. Remarkably, this is very close to what the compilers of the first anthology of American screenplays, *Twenty Best Film Plays*, tried to accomplish by significantly editing the shooting script in order to make it match the final screen work.

Figure 30
Iijima Tadashi (1902-96)

While I generally agree with Gerow's conclusion about Iijima assigning a privileged position to literature, I also think that Iijima's concern has strong practical implications as an early call for film preservation. One of the passages that Gerow quotes to present what seems to be Iijima's strong anti-visual stance reads as follows:

> [T]he words on screen disappear after an instant and do not possess the quality of permanence. In this regard, one cannot but recognize the superiority of literature composed in written words. (Gerow 2000, 28)

I argue that the emphasis here should not be on the superiority of literature but rather on the perceived ephemeral quality of cinema. In a revised version of this essay, published two years later in 1939, Iijima made significant changes to the passage in question, and explicitly addressed the archival capacity of printed words.

> The words on screen disappear after an instant and do not possess the quality of permanence. In this regard, the fact that the written

words of the dialogue in the scenario provide permanence must be regarded as particularly crucial. (Iijima 1948, 119)

Iijima's words can instead be interpreted as an attempt to address the material status of contemporary cinema in his time. The tangible form of the scenario might have appeared as a more stable surrogate for the ever-disappearing images on screen. By emphasising the "permanence provided by written words", Iijima deems it important that cinema can emulate literature in order to secure its own durability and consequently, its status as an autonomous art. In what amounts to an evolutionary view of art, Iijima suggests that it was not until stories were put down in writing (*moji*) that they first became literature (*bungaku*) (Iijima 1937, 9-11; 1948, 126). It is through this analogy from the genesis of written literature that Iijima invests printed scenarios, rather than the more vulnerable film prints, with archival power. In Iijima's view, a scenario possesses the capacity to elevate cinema to a new artistic and social status with the more accessible means of preservation it implies.[19]

Film preservation was an extremely new concern in Iijima's day, not yet properly conceptualised, let alone acted upon. The first institutions with the explicit aim of preserving films for future generations were founded in the United States (The New York Museum of Modern Art) and France (La Cinémathèque Française), in 1935 and 1936, respectively. Japan was among the last countries with a sizeable corpus of films to systematically address the issue of film preservation. Sam Ho has noted that

> The heritage of film in Asia is particularly fragile. For a long while, the garbage bins of Asian cinema were a homeless bunch, not so much because of snobbish rejection of a new and popular medium but simply due to indifference. While the West waited three decades before establishing archives, it took a lot longer for Asia to get going. The first film archives in the continent are the ones in Iran, China and India, launched respectively in 1949, 1958 and 1964. Japan, perhaps the best among Asian nations in protecting its cultural heritage, did not start preserving films systematically until the 1970s, under the banner of the National Film Centre. (Ho 2001, 2-3)

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19   The relevance of Iijima's suggestion about the scenario as an archive becomes increasingly urgent when we consider similar accounts by other critics of the Scenario Literature Movement. Several contemporaries pointed out what appeared to them the inherently ephemeral quality of cinema. For instance, Sawamura noted that "it could even be said that the literary independence [of the scenario] has already become something of a pressing necessity in order to acquire artfulness [*geijutsusei*] for film that disappears in the course of time" (Sawamura 1936, 48).

The debate on 'scenario literature' started with what might have seemed like purely literary concerns, but subsequently broadened to address several urgent issues relating to cinema at the advent of talkies. In terms of meeting its main goals, the Scenario Literature Movement can be described as unsuccessful: the scenario never became an established literary genre, and its publication was largely confined to film journals and specialist anthologies. However, the conceptual framework that first emerged from this debate in the late 1930s proved to be very influential in the postwar era, leading to an extended publishing and reading culture, as well as the emergence of several notable scriptwriters with no studio training. The expanding corpus of published scenarios also invited considerations of their archival capacity and significance to the wider readership.

3.3   The Skills of Cinematic Imagination

3.3.1   Cinematic Competence

Kitagawa considered Iijima misguided for focusing solely on the scenario's dialogue and advocated for a more holistic reading practice that treated all parts of the text in an equitable manner. He also expressed a preference for reading the scenario before watching the film made from it (Kitagawa 1938, 13). This is verified by the fact that a large part of his film reviews began with a self-assessment of the extent to which his expectations, based on the prior reading of the script, were met. Kitagawa's approach suggests an unusual level of reader participation in actively creating images from the printed word at the outset, rather than using the scenario simply to complement or recreate the audio-visual experience of watching a film. Other critics involved in the Scenario Literature Movement pointed to similar function of reading that presupposes familiarity with the cinematic narrative mode.

> Scenarios are not only written but also read with filming in mind. To the extent that the scenario includes artistic suggestions, completeness is expected from its expression. However, scenario writers have until now relied on directors and other member of the staff to read it cinematically, and as a result, they have continued writing in a rather muddled manner. Just as in the case of appreciating literature, the visual translation occurs without the reader being fully aware of it. Today, as the number of those with cinematic education has increased, there is no reason to leave unused the circumstances where the scenario is gathering strength as reading matter [*yomimono*]. Indeed, readers are presently acquiring

skills to read scenarios cinematically. Even if the general reader will not understand all the details, it is quite enough if they understand the appeal [*omoshirosa*] of it. (Watanabe 1936, 64)

By shifting the focus to the act of reading, Watanabe highlights what is specifically expected from the reader of the scenario. In her study of Hollywood screenplays, Claudia Sternberg (1997) has described this particular skill-set as "cinematic competence". However, Watanabe was writing during the early sound cinema era when a broader population was still learning to 'read' the new medium. For this reason, he connects the alternative that the scenario offered to film viewing with the necessity of an emerging critical mass of skilful readers, something that the Scenario Literature Movement hoped to facilitate. Similarly, Kitagawa emphasises the importance of cinematic literacy. He mentions it as a prerequisite for the success of the entire scenario literature project.

> The extent to which a film script [*kyakuhon*] can be considered a scenario [*shinario*] depends on whether it involves the evocation of screen images. It cannot be claimed that screen images never featured in literature. However, this was merely a sprout and not like the scenario where everything evoked is in fact a screen image. … Even if scenarios become outstanding by the addition of more and more screen images, it would be like casting pearls before swine if the reader lacks skills to imagine them. (Kitagawa 1938, 9-10)

Kitagawa highlights the belief that an understanding of cinematic language and techniques is essential for readers to fully engage with and derive value from scenario literature. On the other hand, Ueno Kōzō argued that the task of the reader should not end with being able to functionally peruse scenarios.

> It will not suffice for scenario readers to use their experience of watching films merely to read the scenarios without going beyond this experience. What they are experiencing serves as the basis and starting point: with the development of scenario literature, the reader's creativity will also develop. The reader creates [*sōzō*]. […] They create while imagining [*sōzō*]. The general direction is indicated by the scenario, but for vividly painting its particular shape in the mind, imagining powers [*imeeji suru chikara*] are expected from the reader. Therefore, the reader directs. […] The real directors are bound by restrictions such as studio intentions, money, actors and so on. But the reader is not restrained by anything. They can spend money without regrets, move the shooting location to Egypt, cast [Valéry] Inkijinoff, [Pierre] Blanchar and

Todoroki Yukiko together;[20] in short, carry out all things imaginable inside their heads. (Ueno 1937b, 14-16)

Ueno ingeniously employs the homonymy of the Japanese verbs 'to create' and 'to imagine' (both pronounced *sōzō*) to advocate for the agency of a reader-turned-director, envisioned as someone who possesses the imaginative faculties capable of devising a film that surpasses what any director could ever hope to produce. This concept underscores the power of imagination and creativity in the hands of a skilled reader, transforming them into an active participant in the cinematic process, rather than a passive consumer of screen images. At the same time, this line of thought also lends a political dimension to the act of reading scenarios.

3.3.2 The Anti-Commercialisation of Cinema

The extended publishing and reading of scenarios had already detached them from certain impositions of the film industry. Writing in the immediate postwar years, one of the original proponents of scenario literature, Iijima, pointed out the unique position that the scenario had since come to occupy in Japanese film culture.

> It is only natural that scriptwriters would want to get their work published, at least in the form of printed matter [*insatsubutsu*], given the reality that there are few chances of getting unhampered scenarios filmed. It could be said that this literary publishing form – printed matter – is also capitalising on the trend of the Japanese considering scenarios as literature. At any rate, the desire to publish [*happyōyoku*] and the spirit of study [*kenkyūshin*] should be cherished. I believe that the way scenarios are being successively published has significance as kind of a protest against Japanese commercial cinema. (Iijima 1948, 135)

This statement strongly suggests that during the decade following the Scenario Literature Movement, the published scenario had become something of an alternative to actual films. Iijima's strong anti-commodification stance also contains surprising echoes from an earlier statement by Ueno, which suggests that the mass reading of scenarios might have the capacity to force film production to eventually reassess its consumerist course.

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20 Notable contemporary Russian-born (1895-1973), French (1892-1963), and Japanese (1917-67) actors.

> It should not be assumed that scenarios will remain unfilmed and
> that there is absolutely no chance of change. Even if the current
> production system prevails, the heightened demand for art by the
> masses will inevitably urge film capitalists to produce higher art
> films. This will certainly have its limits, but if various journals,
> newspapers, and books feature outstanding scenario literature
> and attract tens and hundreds of thousands of readers, the pro-
> ducers who are adept at making money will not let this opportu-
> nity pass unnoticed. (Ueno 1937a, 79)

In this ultimately simplistic sociological take on the dynamics of art
and industry, Ueno views scenario literature as a vehicle for driving
change in film production. Along similar lines, Yoshida Shigeru not-
ed that the scenario might compel a reassessment of its own market
value, thereby breaking the circle of capital.

> The social nature of the emerging scenario literature will yield
> various results. [...] The possibility of the birth of the scenarios,
> not filmed under the restrictions of capitalist society, will present
> the prospect of art greater than current cinema to the wider mass-
> es. (Yoshida 1937, 91)

The above assertions, as superficial as they may seem, seek to as-
sign a distinctly political meaning to scenario literature. They pro-
pose a kind of utopia where cinema's commercial considerations are
countered and alleviated by unsolicited scenarios, unsullied by the
imperatives of the film industry.

3.3.3 Between Accuracy and Evocativeness

In a series of short essays, "Katakana zuihitsu" (Jottings in *katakana*,
1943), Itami posits that the main task scriptwriters should never for-
get in their work is "[h]ow to make readers feel as if they were watch-
ing the film" (Itami 2010, 311). On the one hand, this can be seen as
a call for the writers to employ specific techniques to prompt cer-
tain visual images to appear in the reader's eye. On the other hand,
it hints at what Barbara Korte and Ralf Schneider refer to as "an in-
termedial competence [...] essential in grasping the screenplay's spe-
cial artistic demands and artistic merits" (Maras 2009, 75). Maras al-
so discusses the concept of the screenplay as blueprint, which "can
serve as a counterbalance to the idea that the script is an autono-
mous entity as well as the idea that the screenplay is a new form of
literature" (121). Although the term 'blueprint' strongly relates to
the screenplay's function as a management tool, Maras argues that
it does not reduce the script to a technical document. Paradoxically,

it "[w]orks as a blueprint not because it is technically precise, but because it is poetic. Poetic writing draws on a different idea of precision that can be described as 'crystalline'" (124). For our purposes, Maras appears to suggest that an ideal scenario seems to possess an inherent incompleteness or open-endedness.

Approaching the film script as reading material from another perspective, Price points out "the function played by textual materials as mnemonic devices prior to the advent of home video in the late 1970s" and that "such texts function more or less explicitly as substitutes for the viewing experience" (Price 2010, 106-7). Here, Price is primarily referring to series such as *Classic Film Scripts* (1968-86) and *Modern Film Scripts* (1969-75), which, unlike the majority of Japanese scenario collections, also include a substantial number of film stills. This made such publications necessarily semi-visual and engaged to a lesser extent with the readers' intermedial faculties. The notion of the mnemonic tool serves to subordinate the published scenario to the already viewed film, while in actuality, these positions could be experientially reversed. The common practice in Japan of publishing scenarios before the opening of a film makes a strong case against this function, while also keeping that possibility intact. In that sense, much like for the shooting crew, the scenario preceded the film for the reader as well.

What emerges from the above are two markedly different ways of looking at published scripts: 1) as a mnemonic 'tool' for reprising an already existing film-viewing experience (Price 2010), and 2) as a 'text' both embedded in and detached from its function as a blueprint, more suggestive than detailed in its descriptive passages (Maras 2009). At the same time, even if a scenario were to function as a mnemonic tool, it evokes images not through an exact description but rather through suggestive textual passages. The Italian writer-director Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922-75) has noted that the screenplay asks the reader "to see the kineme in the grapheme, above all, and thus to think in images, reconstructing in his own head the film to which the screenplay alludes as a potential work" (Maras 2009, 70-1). It is precisely this process of transmitting the textual to the visual in the mind's eye that requires a particular set of skills from the reader.

Kitagawa highlighted the futility of presenting a scenario to a reader lacking the competence to evoke screen images. Conversely, a sufficiently skilled reader would not require precise information on shooting or editing techniques to trigger their cinematic imagination. Satō, who, as we saw in the introduction, used to employ scenarios to experience films that no longer existed, notes how the reader, holding what is essentially a shooting script in their hand, is in position akin to that of a film director, imagining a yet non-existent film out of the text (Satō 1975, 292). In this capacity, the reader's function is that of actively constructing meanings in scenario that is a '(script)writerly'

rather than 'readerly' text. To further paraphrase along these Barthesian lines, a scenario could even be considered a directorly, or for that matter, actorly or cinematographerly, text.

3.3.4 Expanding Readerships

The readership of scenarios has typically been limited to specific members of the film industry. In Hollywood, there is a profession known as script reader, which refers to those who evaluate incoming scripts to pass the ones with potential onto the production team. However, the wide range of publications and the discursive efforts in Japan to conceptualise reading practices clearly extend far beyond such narrow industrial boundaries. As elsewhere in this book, my interest lies not in the most obvious kind of readership – producer, director, cinematographer, actors, and so on – and the production context, but rather in something more readily available and open to the general public.

Okada, in his editorial for the *Kinema junpō* special issue *Shinario tokuhon*, describes a phenomenon brought about by extensive publishing of scenarios.

> There is probably no other country besides Japan where scenarios would be so widespread as reading matter [*yomimono*] and introductions to cinema. At the same time, more people are trying to write scenarios. Students who have serious ambitions of becoming scriptwriters. Salarymen writing in their spare time. Film fans for whom simply enjoying films is not enough. The enthusiasm for writing scenarios is spreading even among young women. (Okada 1959, 158)

According to this observation about readership during the zenith of the Japanese studio system, one of the natural consequences of reading of scenarios is the desire to start writing them (much like fan fiction spreads literary production to hitherto uncharted territories). The slightly patronising tone in the final remark notwithstanding, it is notable that Okada raises the matter of gender precisely at a time when several prominent female scriptwriters such as Mizuki, Tanaka and Wada Natto (1920-83) were leaving a definitive mark on Japanese cinema. This trend of empowerment in readership, generated by the wide availability of published scenarios, also suggests that, at least in theory, those who have acquired the cinematic skills as 'writerly readers' also have the opportunity to put these in practice as actual scriptwriters.

A few years prior, Kitagawa had made a distinction between different types of readers based on both their individual preferences and social background.

There are people who enjoy reading scenarios more than watching films. This is because they can evoke cinematic images freely from the scenario. For instance, they can bring in their favourite actor to play a character [...] On the other hand, in the case of film, joy can be felt and satisfaction drawn from things already presented. This applies to the general masses [*taishū*], and as such people form the majority, films continue to be made. Without the skills to paint cinematic images by reading scenarios, these people are satisfied with the fixed scenes painted by the director. Such people demand distinct images and find the picturing of cinematic images through scenarios vague and insufficient. (Kitagawa 1952, 6-7)

Kitagawa evokes certain tropes that were already activated during the Scenario Literature Movement about the reader's imagining faculties as well the relevance of mass reading of scenarios. Kitagawa also makes a distinction between two kinds of trends among the cinema audience. If we consider that this statement was made at the time of the rapid process of democratisation (*minshūka*) of postwar Japan,

it is far from being ideologically innocent.[21] Whereas the main part of the population simply yearns for images readily presented to them on the film screen, others will rather make an effort to develop the skills and freedom of imagining with the aid of the scenario. Somewhat surprisingly, Kitagawa points out that most scenario readers are people living in the rural areas where film screenings are rare. In this case the function of the scenario is for the reader to merely "grasp a rough impression of the film" (Kitagawa 1952, 7). However, Kitagawa adds that the 'real' readers of scenarios would rather prefer to "paint their own creative images through reading scenarios" (7). Next, I will proceed to examine various examples of such serious scenario readers among fans and professional, renowned and anonymous alike.

3.4 Scenario Reader(ship)s

3.4.1 Amateur Readers

While it is now nearly impossible to recreate the kind of readership both Okada and Kitagawa are referring to, fragments that point in certain directions can sometimes be excavated. For instance, notes of an anonymous reader in the copy of *Kinema junpō* (1 January 1959), currently held at the main library of Kyoto University of Art and Design, suggest a simultaneous reading/viewing practice where the discrepancies are marked down in the text of the scenario (Yasumi 1959). The scenario/film in question is based on the Naoki Prize-winning novel *Hana noren* (Flower Shop Curtain, 1958) by Yamasaki Toyoko (1924-2013). Set in the popular entertainment world of Osaka, it was adapted by the veteran scriptwriter Yasumi Toshio (1903-91) and directed by Toyoda Shirō.[22]

Although this is a conjecture, it seems plausible that the reader has made notes with a pencil while watching the film. First, several cross-cut scenes that detail alternating announcements on the signboard in front of a *rakugo* theatre (marked 18, 21, 23 and 25) have been rearranged with drawn boxes and arrows to be included within larger scenes. Second, an emotional and climactic scene (number 34) where the protagonist Taka tries on a white garment that reminds

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21 *Shinario nyūmon*, including Kitagawa's essay, appeared on 20 May 1952, a month after the Treaty of San Francisco that ended the Allied Occupation in Japan came into effect.

22 The same team, including the film's stars Awashima Chikage (1924-2012) and Morishige Hisaya (1913-2009), had been behind earlier successes in the *bungei eiga* genre, most notably *Meoto zenzai* (*Marital Relations*, 1955), also set in prewar Osaka.

Figure 32
Written-in pages of Yasumi Toshio's *Hana noren*
from a copy of *Kinema junpō* (1 January 1959)
found at the library of Kyoto University of Art
and Design

of her dead mother has been accentuated by inserting more arrows and a shaded box around the words "white garment". Third, by adding numeration (1 to scene 1 and 4 to scene 36), the reader seems to have been delineating the structure of the scenario based on either acts or film reels. Finally, the date marked at the beginning of the scenario also suggests that this was a reader with access to a pre-screening of the film which opened in theatres only four days later, on 27 January 1959. In line with common practice, the scenario had appeared four weeks before the film's premiere. This unearthed example from the most prolific year of scenario publishing attests to the kind of engagement these texts invited from their readers.

There are also contemporary scenario readers, such as the Nagano-based blogger presenting himself as OKAMURA Hirofumi (`http://acting.jp`, 2010-), who has made a considerable effort to introduce the work of certain scriptwriters as well as summarise the key points of various scriptwriting manuals through social media.[23] In his profile, Okamura provides a list of his favourite scenarios and scriptwriters under the banner "this scriptwriter is wo*nnn*derful" (*kono kyakuhonka ga sunbarashii*). He is a big fan of Oguni Hideo (1904-96), a member of Kurosawa's writing team, but also Marune Santarō (1914-94), an obscure *jidaigeki* director and a kind of heir to both Itami and Yamanaka. Another name that appears on the list is Mizuki, whose work will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. Rather surprisingly, Mizuki gets an approving nod from Okamura for comedies such as *Hadaka no taishō* (*The Naked General*, 1958, directed by Horikawa Hiromichi, 1916-2012) and *Amai ase* (*Sweet Sweat*, 1964, directed by Toyoda Shirō) rather than the more serious, socially conscious work she is better known for.

Among his favourites, Okamura also singles out Kurosawa's single-authored early and late works, and completely ignores what is considered the core of his *oeuvre*. Included are the unproduced scenarios such as *Darumaji no doitsujin* (The German of Darumaji Temple, 1941) and *Yuki* (Snow, 1942) but also *Yume* (*Dreams*, 1990) and *Hachigatsu no rapusodī* (*Rhapsody in August*, 1991), the latter of which received generally poor reviews and has commonly been considered a minor work. Okamura's all-time top three scenarios include Yoda's *Chikamatsu monogatari* (*The Crucified Lovers*, 1954, directed by Mizoguchi Kenji), Tamura Tsutomu's (1933-97) *Shōnen* (*Boy*, 1969, directed

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23 Okamura's post from 27 April 2012 provides summaries of 22 manuals, including classics in the genre such as Noda's *Shinario kōzōron* (1952) and Shindō's *Shinario no kōsei* (1959) but also earlier books such as Takeda's *Eiga kyakuhonron* (1928), Yasuda's *Eiga kyakuhon kōseiron* (1935), Kurata's *Shinarioron* (1940) as well as translations of Sergei Eisenstein, Lev Kuleshov, and Frances Marion (`https://acting.jp/hajime-arai-1965/`). There is also a selected bibliography of scenario-related publications (`https://acting.jp/story/index.html`).

by Ōshima Nagisa, 1932-2013), and Ozu's and Noda's *Bakushū* (*Early Summer*, 1951, directed by Ozu) (`http://acting.jp/profile`). These are similarly somewhat atypical choices when weighed against the whole output of their respective writers. However subjective, and precisely for that reason, such preferences elucidate how a reader's reception of cinema can vary considerably depending on whether it is based on finished films or scenarios.

3.4.2   A Professional Reader: Itami Mansaku

There are notable cases of an even more elaborate engagement with published scenarios as an alternative for film criticism.[24] One such example is Itami Mansaku, who wrote a regular column, called "Shinario jihyō" (Scenario Reviews), for the journal *Nippon eiga*, published in eleven instalments between April 1941 and March 1942. The important place these texts hold in Itami's oeuvre is attested by their being reprinted in all subsequent collections of Itami's writings on cinema.[25] As mentioned in the introduction, Itami is well known as one of the 'radical directors' of the 1930s who sought to reform the period drama,

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[24]   An earlier, expanded version of this section appeared as Kitsnik 2018.

[25]   First reprinted in *Seiga zakki* (Miscellaneous Notes from the Sickbed, 1943), this later became part of the three-volume *Itami Mansaku zenshū* (The Collected Works of Itami Mansaku, 1961) and *Itami Mansaku esseishū* (Collection of Essays by Itami Mansaku, 1971, *bunko* edition 2010).

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Figure 34
Itami's column in *Nippon eiga* (September 1941)

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although his posthumous reputation has somewhat paled in comparison with his contemporary Yamanaka.[26] What Itami was doing in his column was not entirely unprecedented. In the 1930s, scenario reviews were published in several film journals, some of which were later reprinted in book format. For instance, Kitagawa included a chapter's

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[26]　Noël Burch notes that although Itami revolutionised *jidaigeki* on the content level, this was not translated into cinematic terms as in Yamanaka's work (Burch 1979, 192). Kitagawa even devised the terms verse film (*inbun eiga*) and prose film (*sanbun eiga*) to juxtapose the styles of Yamanaka and Itami (Kitagawa 1936, 23-6). The terms *sanbun* or *sanbun seishin* (prose mentality) frequently appear in discussions on Itami, although it is often difficult to understand what exactly is meant, except for the alleged lack of sentimental lyricism in his work, which was sacrificed for plot twists and witty dialogue.

worth of scenario reviews in his *Gendai eigaron* (On Contemporary Film, 1941). Many of the scenarios examined by Itami were simultaneously reviewed in competing journals such as *Eiga hyōron* and *Jidai eiga* (Period Film), albeit in less detail. However, what makes the case of Itami unique is his methodical approach to discussing these texts.

In this series of reviews, Itami discusses 30 scenarios, but only 17 of these were made into films (see Table 2). Judging from Itami's often harsh criticism, one might be tempted to conclude that perhaps not all of them were destined to be produced. On the other hand, the relatively poor production ratio can be attributed to the circumstances following the outbreak of the Pacific War in December 1941. Only a month later, to streamline the film industry and focus it on the war effort, all existing film studios, save for Shōchiku and Tōhō, were merged into the new Dai Nippon Eiga Seisaku Kabushiki Kaisha (Great Japanese Film Production Co Ltd, abbreviated as Daiei). This left a vast number of studio employees out of work and many already commissioned projects unfinished. However, film scripts continued to be published in film journals such as *Nippon eiga* and *Eiga hyōron*, effectively saving them from obscurity.

The reviews were commonly published before the actual release of the film, reflecting the work-in-progress nature of the scenarios and Itami's approach to them.[27] Itami acts rather like a script doctor, pointing out shortcomings with his keen professional eye and offering solutions to overcome them. Itami's method was to single out illogicalities, inconsistencies, or exaggerations in the script. At the same time, it appears as if each single review is also invested in exploring a wider problem, often demonstrating Itami's penchant for satire and social criticism. Such discussion points included the choice of material, the structure of the script, the motivation of the characters, the use of sound and dialogue, the style and functions of description, cinematic treatment of time, mixing fact and fiction, and adapting literature to film. In effect, using script doctoring as a pretext, Itami was tackling several general issues of filmmaking.

In his inaugural review of the series, that of Yoda's *Geidō ichidai otoko* (*The Life of an Actor*, 1941, directed by Mizoguchi Kenji), Itami presents his first rule of scriptwriting:

> I strongly believe that the basis of the scenario is simple objective description... A scenario must not arbitrarily express anything that film essentially cannot. (Itami 2010, 174)

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27 For instance, one of the scenarios, *Jokyōshi no kiroku* (The Record of a Lady Teacher) by Kishi, was made into a film with a different title, *Wakai sensei* (*Young Teacher*, 1942, directed by Satō Takeshi, 1903-78). Another scenario, Asagami Toshio's *Kabacheppo* (Princess Trout), was re-reviewed by Itami eight months later upon the publication of its updated final version (*ketteikō*).

Itami adds that, at the time when publishing scenarios had become increasingly common, it was more important than ever to pay attention to distinguishing this mode of writing from those that relied more on verbal embellishments. This was

> [b]ecause even if the cinematic expression gets substituted with a literary one, it is only evil people like us who will notice it, while most people just casually skim it through and admire it for what it is. (Itami 2010, 174)

Itami is distinctly stating his own challenging task and responsibility as a critic.

In several reviews, Itami returns to this question of distinguishing between cinematic and literary modes of expression. For instance, in a review of Mimura Shintarō's (1897-1970) *Umesato-sensei gyōjōki* (*The Life Story of Dr Umesato*, 1942, directed by Takizawa Eisuke, 1902-65), Itami notes that

> [t]he difficulty, and at the same time the boundless appeal of the scenario, lies in the [writer's] attempt to mould a 'film' that has a thoroughly concrete form, while using 'literature' that is essentially of conceptual character. (Itami 2010, 255)

This concern naturally leads Itami to examine the issue of adapting literature to the screen: he readily admits that alterations to the source text are inevitable and strongly advocates the writer's right or even obligation to make appropriate changes (182), especially if one must work with poor source material (253). At the same time, Itami warns about extensive omissions, which should only be undertaken to make the story more comprehensible for the viewer (256).

When examining adapted scenarios, Itami seems particularly adamant about inconsistencies with genre conventions. In the review of *Shidō monogatari* (*A Story of Leadership*, 1941, directed by Kumagai Hisatora, 1904-86), Itami first congratulates the scriptwriter, Sawamura, on his choice of material, only to then dismiss the attempt to merge the modes of *bungei eiga* (literary film) and melodrama within a single work. The use of too many augmentations by way of subplots, as well as the omission of the dramatic final scene, prompts Itami to conclude that an adapter should have the correct attitude towards the original material (Itami 2010, 178-9).[28] Along similar lines, in his review of Kishi's *Jokyōshi no kiroku* (*The Record of a Lady Teacher*, 1942, directed by Satō Takeshi as *Wakai sensei*

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28   In this review and a few others, Itami displays a particular dislike for the work of Sawamura, with whom he was clearly at odds ideologically. See High (2003, 223-46) for more on *Shidō monogatari* and other 'spiritist' films written by Sawamura.

Table 2 The list of scenarios reviewed by Itami Mansaku in *Nippon eiga* with publishing, reviewing and premiere dates

Title	Writer	Journal	Publishing date
Geidō ichidai otoko (*The Life of an Actor*)	Yoda Yoshikata	Nippon eiga	1941.01.01
Mikaeri no tō (*The Inspection Tower*)	Shimizu Hiroshi	Eiga hyōron	1941.01.01
Medetaki wa Kōrin byōbu (*Kōrin's Screen Is Auspicious*)	Inoue Kaoru	Nippon eiga	1941.02.01
Shidō monogatari (*A Story of Leadership*)	Sawamura Tsutomu	Eiga hyōron	1941.02.01
Akeyuku tsuchi (*Earth at Dawn*)	Yahiro Fuji	Jidai eiga	?
Jokyōshi no kiroku (*The Record of Lady Teacher*)	Kishi Matsuo	Eiga hyōron	1941.04.01
Waga ai no ki (*The Story of Our Love*)	Yagi Yasutarō	Eiga hyōron	1941.04.01
Gunji taii (*Captain Gunji*)	Yagi Ryūichirō	Nippon eiga	1941.05.01
Yomigaeru tsuchi (*Earth Returning*)	Itō Sadasuke	Nippon eiga	1941.04.01
Kabacheppo (*Princess Trout*)	Asagami Toshio	Nippon eiga	1941.07.01
Watanabe Kazan	Yahiro Fuji	Jidai eiga	?
Hachijūhachi-nenme no taiyō (*The Sun of the 88th Year*)	Sawamura Tsutomu	Nippon eiga	1941.08.01
Rudoran no gashū (*Ledran's Drawings*)	Inoue Kaoru	Nippon eiga	1941.08.01
Ishibumi (*Monument*)	Yanai Takao	Eiga hyōron	1941.05.01
Nobushi (*Masterless Soldier*)	Mimura Shintarō	Nippon eiga	1941.09.01
Genroku chūshingura: zenpen (*The Loyal 47 Ronin of the Genroku: Part 1*)	Hara Ken'ichirō / Yoda Yoshikata	Jidai eiga	?
Jirō monogatari (*The Tale of Jirō*)	Tateoka Kennosuke	Eiga hyōron	1941.09.01
Chichi ariki (*There Was a Father*)	Ozu Yasujirō / Ikeda Tadao / Yanai Takao	Eiga hyōron	1941.10.01
Shiroi hekiga (*The White Mural*)	Yoshida Fumio	Nippon eiga	1941.11.01
Ōmura Masujirō	Yahiro Fuji	Nippon eiga	1941.12.01
Nankai no hanataba (*Bouquet of the South Seas*)	Yagi Ryūichirō	Nippon eiga	1941.12.01
Seikatsu no kawa (*The River of Life*)	Uekusa Keinosuke	Nippon eiga	1941.12.01
Genroku chūshingura: kōhen (*The Loyal 47 Ronin of the Genroku: Part 2*)	Hara Ken'ichirō / Yoda Yoshikata	Eiga hyōron	1941.11.01
Ōhara Yūgaku	Ozaki Masafusa	Daito eiga senden panfuretto	?
Umesato-sensei gyōjōki (*The Life Story of Dr. Umesato*)	Mimura Shintarō	Nippon eiga	1942.01.01
Darumaji no doitsujin (*The German of Darumaji Temple*)	Kurosawa Akira	Eiga hyōron	1941.12.01
Hahakogusa (*Mother-and-Child Grass*)	Koito Nobu	Nippon eiga	1942.02.01
Shizuka nari (*All Is Quiet*)	Kurosawa Akira	Nippon eiga	1942.02.01
Kabacheppo (*Princess Trout*)	Asagami Toshio	Nippon eiga	1942.03.01
Yama o mamoru hitobito (*People Guarding the Mountain*)	Nobuchi Akira	Nippon kyakuhon	?

Itami's review date	Film premiere date	Director	Studio	Extant print
1941.04.09	1941.02.09	Mizoguchi Kenji	Tokusaku Production (Shōchiku)	○
1941.04.09	1941.01.30	Shimizu Hiroshi	Shōchiku (Ōfuna)	○
1941.04.09				
1941.04.09	1941.10.04	Kumagai Hisatora	Tōhō Eiga (Tokyo)	○
1941.04.09	1941.03.09	Terakado Seikichi	Shinkō Kinema (Kyōto)	✕
1941.05.09	1942.03.20	Satō Takeshi	Tōhō Eiga (Tokyo) (film title: *Wakai sensei* [*Young Teacher*])	○
1941.05.09	1941.11.07	Toyoda Shirō	Tōkyō Hassei Eiga (Tōhō)	○
1941.05.09				
1941.07.04				
1941.07.04				
1941.07.04				
1941.07.30	1941.11.15	Takizawa Eisuke	Tōhō Eiga (Tokyo)	○
1941.07.30				
1941.08.31	1941.07.29	Hara Kenkichi	Shōchiku (Shimogamo)	✕
1941.08.31				
1941.09.04	1941.12.01	Mizoguchi Kenji	Kyōa Eiga / Shōchiku (Kyōto)	○
1941.09.04	1941.12.11	Shima Kōji	Nikkatsu (Tamagawa)	○
1941.11.01	1942.04.01	Ozu Yasujirō	Shōchiku (Ōfuna)	○
1941.11.01	1942.02.04	Chiba Yasuki	Shinkō Kinema (Kyōto)	○
1941.11.30	1942.01.14	Mori Kazuo	Shōchiku (Kamata)	○
1941.11.30	1942.05.21	Abe Yutaka	Tōhō Eiga (Tokyo)	○
1941.11.30				
1941.11.30	1942.02.11	Mizoguchi Kenji	Shōchiku (Kyōto)	○
1941.11.30				
1941.12.04	1942.06.25	Takizawa Eisuke	Tōhō Eiga (Tokyo)	○
1942.01.25				
1942.01.25	1942.06.04	Tasaka Tomotaka	Shōchiku (Uzumasa)	✕
1942.03.07				
1942.03.07				
1942.03.07				

[*Young Teacher*]), based on a non-fiction book by Hirano Fumiko (1908-2001), Itami is puzzled by the scriptwriter's decision to enhance the plot with several fictional scenes. For Itami, this seems incongruous because the source text is based on real-life events (Itami 2010, 184).

3.4.3 Early Analyses of Ozu and Kurosawa

Another recurring motif in Itami's reviews is the issue of the motivation of the characters and how any discrepancies in that can undermine the entire logic of the narrative. A good example of this is the review of *Chichi ariki* (*There Was a Father*, 1942, written by Ikeda, Ozu and Yanai, directed by Ozu). Itami notes that while the film is built upon the simple premise of a father and a son destined to live apart from one another, their failure to make more effort to change the situation is insufficiently explained, which in effect leads to an ambiguity in the characters' real intentions (Itami 2010, 235). Itami also expresses his concerns about the idiosyncratic use of cinematic time: when switching from one scene to another, the amount of time that has been left out between the scenes is always greater than expected by the reader. For instance, when it appears that two or three months have passed since the previous scene, one soon learns from the dialogue that it is actually four or five years. Itami states that while watching these films the viewer must adjust to this "cinematic time", but when the time adjustment is small the viewer finds this pleasurable rather than annoying because it evokes a "sensation akin to velocity". In contrast, he points out that if the time displacement is only disclosed at the end of a long scene, it could be too difficult for the viewer to adjust (236).

Itami might well have been the first to identify and describe the typically Ozu-esque use of screen time and its cognitive effect on the viewer. By so doing, Itami astutely singled out several features, such as the apparent illogicality of the plot and elliptical style that leaves out major incidents, that later film critics have characterised as the strengths of Ozu's work. Itami's contemporary observations are surprisingly close to the subsequent detailed analyses of how Ozu's decentring of the narrative and playful use of time and space in fact draw attention to the conventions of cinema itself.[29] Somewhat prophetically, at the end of his review, Itami writes that judging from his impression of reading the script, *Chichi ariki* could turn out to be a singularly Japanese film, one no foreign filmmaker could hope to imitate (237-8). In effect, Itami is prefiguring the repeated claims of

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[29] See Bordwell, Thompson (1993, 396-401) and Desser (2005, 457-72).

the alleged Japaneseness of the director's work elaborated by scholars such as Noël Burch, Donald Richie and Paul Schrader.[30]

Itami praises the 'Japaneseness' of *Chichi ariki*, a film that very much subscribed to the dominant ideology of the time by underlining the sense of social duty on the part of both the father and the son. However, he appears to be taking a more critical stance towards propagandistic *kokusaku eiga* (national policy films) that were supposed to boost public morale during the war. When discussing Yahiro Fuji's (1904-86) *Ōmura Masujirō* (1941, directed by Mori Kazuo, 1911-89), a biopic of the man considered the 'Father of the Modern Japanese Army', Itami points out that just as a good subject does not by default make for a good film, good historical material does not automatically produce a good national film (Itami 2010, 242). By insisting that films must above all work in cinematic terms, Itami seems to be going against the grain of the official policies of the day by hinting at the severe problems facing such stale productions. Not without irony, in this review, published a week before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Itami appears to be providing instructions on how to make effective propaganda films.

As cinema was becoming an increasingly important part of Japan's war effort between 1941 and 1945, the Jōhyōkyoku (Cabinet Board of Information) organised annual script competitions. Several fledgling scriptwriters participated, and winners included such then-unknown figures as Kurosawa and Shindō.[31] Towards the end of the series, Itami reviewed two scenarios by Kurosawa, *Darumaji no doitsujin* and *Shizuka nari* (All Is Quiet, 1942). Both scripts remain unproduced, and Itami's reviews are highly relevant, not least for the fact that these are probably the first critical writings on the work of the future director; Kurosawa's debut feature, *Sugata Sanshirō*, was released only in 1943. *Darumaji no doitsujin*, also mentioned by the blogger Okamura as one of his favourites, received much praise from Itami, especially for its imaginative use of *ji no bun* (descriptive passages). Itami posits that although he had in the past proposed that descriptions in a scenario were equal in importance to the dialogue, it was only this script that finally provided him with concrete examples to support this argument (Itami 2010, 259). *Shizuka nari*, which placed second in the First Cabinet Board of Information Script Contest in 1942, fares somewhat less well under Itami, especially in comparison to the other script, being criticised by him for its overlong dialogue and several smaller issues (268). Itami's future son-in-law, the novelist Ōe Kenzaburō (1935-2023), points out that for contemporary audiences familiar with Kurosawa's later directorial work, it

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30 For a critical appraisal of these approaches, see Yoshimoto (2000, 9-23).

31 For more on the competition, see Salomon (2011, 203-4).

is interesting to see that some of his future strengths are designated by Itami as shortcomings (Ōe 2010, 386).

It is highly probable that Itami never saw the films based on the scenarios he perused and reviewed. Incapacitated by illness, writing and script doctoring proved to be the only means to sustain his relationship with cinema. Ironically, this puts us today in a somewhat analogous situation: deprived of these films (many of which are now lost or were never produced in the first place) but endowed with their scripts as well as Itami's reviews. This attests to the viability of the scenarios and their propitious application to scholarship on Japanese cinema. The continued publication of scenarios also prompted, especially in the immediate postwar years, an interest in the individuals behind these works, scriptwriters such as Itami himself. Some of the writers attained a devoted following and were elevated to the status of 'scenario authors', resulting in extended literature on the content of their work as well as their peculiar working methods that I will proceed to discuss in the following chapter.

In this chapter, I conducted a comprehensive review of the Scenario Literature Movement, a collective discursive effort that acknowledged and advocated for the diverse roles of the published scenario. Beyond its relative autonomy from the context of film production, I examined the scenario's role in introducing new writers, disseminating

original works, and its potential as film archive. I also explored the specific requirements for both the scenario text and its readers, favouring evocativeness over precision for the former, and imaginative skills as cinematic competence for the latter. An examination of various readerships unveiled the scenario's dual role as contemporary film criticism and subsequent critical appraisal that can occasionally alter the perception of film history.