

5 Coda

Arai Haruhiko (1947) is a distinguished scriptwriter of his generation who has recently forged an acclaimed directing career with films such as *Kakō no futari* (*It Feels So Good*, 2019, named the best film of the year in the *Kinema junpō*'s critics poll) and *Hanakutashi* (*A Spoiling Rain*, 2023). The latter features an aspiring scriptwriter as a main character, an unusual choice that mirrors his colleague Shindō's debut feature, *Aisai monogatari*, from seven decades earlier. Arai was born around the time when young Satō was making his rounds in postwar Tokyo's used bookstores, looking for old scenarios; most of the events discussed in this book date back to when Arai was only a young boy. However, he is the last writer mentioned by Shindō in *Nihon shinarioshi* (1989), appearing just before the final image, discussed in Chapter Two, of Japan's railway network blanketed with handwritten scenario sheets. In addition to his scriptwriting and directing, Arai is also an outspoken essayist and critic, known particularly for his staunch advocacy of the scenario as an independent work of its author (*chosakubutsu*). He often expresses his dissatisfaction with changes made by directors and producers to his scripts, a sentiment that resonates with various topics covered in this book.

In the beginning of the current century, Arai found himself embroiled in several controversies related to scenario publishing and scriptwriting credits. One such case, which ended up being discussed

by the Supreme Court, began when Itoyama Akiko (1966), the Akutagawa Prize-winning author of *Yawarakai seikatsu* (*It's Only Talk*, 2005, Hiroki Ryūichi, 1954), the source text, would not allow the publication of Arai's script based on it. The scenario had already been selected for the annual anthology, *Nenkan daihyō shinarioshū*, published by the Japan Writers Guild. Arai's response was to appeal to the Tokyo District Court, citing a breach of contract for the film adaptation of the book. The contract had stipulated that "no refusal of permission contrary to customary practice shall be made". This case provided an unusual opportunity for then-president of the guild, Katō Masato (1954), to elucidate the role and importance of the scenario in filmmaking to legal professionals.¹ After the appeal was dismissed by the Tokyo District Court on the grounds that neither Arai nor the guild had the right to request permission, Arai reappealed again to both the Intellectual Property High Court and the Supreme Court. The latter finalised the judgment in Itoyama's favour on 16 February 2012. Throughout the entire lawsuit, Arai and the guild continued to criticise Itoyama in the monthly *Shinario* journal. This case brought renewed attention to the legal loopholes that have left Japanese scriptwriters without ownership or protection for their work, echoing a similar issue highlighted by the film *Eiga kantoku tte nan-da!*, discussed in Chapter Four.

Around the same period, Arai found himself entangled in another unfortunate controversy. This time, it was over the omitted scriptwriting credits from the film *Amarufi: Megami no hōshū* (*Amalfi: Rewards of the Goddess*, 2009, Nishitani Hiroshi, 1962). This unprecedented incident sparked outrage among the scriptwriting community, leading the Japan Writers Guild to lodge a protest with Fuji TV, the production company, accusing them of disregarding scriptwriters. The correspondence was summarised and published in the November 2009 issue of *Shinario*. Apparently, Maho Yūichi (1961), the author of the novel on which the film was based, co-wrote the script with the director but declined to take credit. At a production report meeting, he revealed that he did not personally scout locations in Italy, and his role was primarily to ensure the story's consistency based on the materials that the rest of the crew had gathered. According to Fuji TV producer Usui Hiroshi, Maho explained that "I don't want my novelist friends to think this is my script", and thus declined the credit.²

¹ The text of the appeal can be found at <http://song-deborah.com/copycase5/X/090627Katostatement.pdf>.

² In a somewhat ironic turn of events, Arai himself recently faced controversy for not crediting his collaborator. In 2022, Gotō Sayaka, a disciple of Arai, had spent two years writing the script for *Tenjō no hana* (*Flowers in Heaven*, 2022, directed by Katashima Ikki). However, just before filming commenced, Arai, credited as co-scriptwriter, made significant alterations to the script without consultation. The lead actor was also

Based on these legal cases, it appears that scriptwriting credits have recently become a site of intense contestation. In addition to the shortcomings of the copyright law, Arai has highlighted more general attitudes towards scenarios among contemporary film critics and audiences. He points out a lack of understanding of the script's basic function among viewers who, naively believe that the actors improvise their lines on screen (Arai 2012, 221). As for film critics, Arai notes that they often solely credit the director for aspects of the film that clearly fall within the script's domain, and thus, the scriptwriter's responsibility (228). This sentiment echoes Richard Corliss's motivation for his study of Hollywood screenwriters:

[I]f auteur criticism had lived up to its early claim to be truly concerned with visual style, there would be no need for any systematic slighting of the screenwriter [...] But visual style is not the auteurist's major interest. Auteur criticism is essentially theme criticism; and the themes – as expressed through plot, characterization, and dialogue – belong primarily to the writer. (Corliss 1974, xxi-xxii)

Arai also mentions an international symposium held at Ozu's centenary in 2003 where the name of Noda, who co-wrote all of the director's films between 1949 and 1962, was not mentioned once in the panel discussions (Arai 2012, 227). Ultimately, Arai criticises the auteurist trend in film criticism, pointing out that film critics tend to credit directors for the script, while in fact they could be better described as those who bring 'it' on screen. However, it is precisely this 'it' that is created by the scriptwriters (230-2).

It may appear that the public's perception of scriptwriting has significantly evolved since the Golden Age of Japanese cinema. For instance, in the late 1980s, when many older films were introduced to home theatres via the VHS format, the names of the scriptwriters appeared alongside the director's on the cover of the cassette. This practice seems to have faded with the DVD releases since the 1990s. Nevertheless, in the retrospective appreciation of Japanese cinema, the contributions of scriptwriters remain highly visible. Over the past decade or so, during my involvement with this project, numerous programmes in all major Japanese art house cinemas have been dedicated specifically to the work of scriptwriters, alongside others with a thematic focus or those arranged according to actors, directors or studios.

replaced without permission, and the scriptwriting fee did not meet the "5% of the production cost" recommended by the Japan Writers Guild. As a result of these actions, Gotō demanded an explanation, an apology, and payment of the scriptwriting fee according to official rules, leading to a lawsuit.



Figure 55
The pamphlet
of the retrospective
“The World of Mizuki Yōko
and Female Scriptwriters”
(Jinbōchō Theatre,
May–June 2019)

The list of programmes includes “Mizuki Yōko to josei kyakuhonka no sekai” (The World of Mizuki Yōko and Female Scriptwriters), featuring films written by Tanaka, Mizuki, Wada, Kusuda, Ōno Yasuko (1928–2011), Hiraiwa Yumie (1932–2023), Miyauchi Fukiko (1933–2010), Nasu Machiko (1952), and Okudera Satoko (1966). This programme ran from May to June 2019 at Jinbōchō Theatre, located just a few blocks away from bookstores selling scenarios. There have been extensive retrospectives on Arai (September 2017) and Hashimoto (November 2018) at Cine Nouveau in Osaka. The latest retrospective on Shindō as scriptwriter took place from February to March 2020 at Cinema Vera in Tokyo.³ As I write these very words at my home in Kyoto in April 2024, a retrospective is underway at Jinbōchō Theatre, focusing on the work of the scriptwriter Yamada Ta’ichi (1934–2023) and his mentor, Kinoshita.

3 Arai received his personal retrospective even earlier, in 2008, in Kawasaki City Museum, once an important film archive. Unfortunately, it was damaged in a typhoon in 2019 and has remained closed since then.

However, even today, production companies generally retain ownership of film's images, which sometime complicates the study of Japanese cinema. From the authors' viewpoint, the concept of individual ownership has been subsumed by corporate objectives. Janet Staiger (1985) suggested in her study of historical Hollywood practices that alienation is an inevitable byproduct of the detailed division of labour that characterises studio filmmaking. Within this highly specialised Fordian enterprise, participants are typically kept in the dark about the overall plan and purpose. The Japanese Copyright Law, while bestowing a similar sense of dispossession upon both the director and the writer, at least invests the former with some notion of agency. Conversely, its article 16 states that

the authorship of a cinematographic work shall be attributed to those who, by taking charge of producing, directing, filming, art direction, etc., have contributed to the creation of that work as a whole, *excluding authors of novels, scenarios, music or other works adapted or reproduced in that work.* (Copyright Law of Japan, emphases added)⁴

As we have already seen, under the same legislation, authorship and ownership of a film are, in fact, incompatible. However, when scriptwriting is denied basic recognition as part of the creative process of filmmaking and is instead treated as raw material to be adapted and appropriated, what avenues of empowerment can a scriptwriter explore? Is there any 'ship' upon which a scriptwriter can hope to embark? In this book, I have effectively argued that one such vessel is scenario readership, along with its various extensions within the broader idea of cinematic audience, which does not entirely align with the notion of film viewership.

While any definite claims of authorship will, and perhaps should, likely remain nebulous, there is an undeniable visibility to the work of Japanese scriptwriters. Simultaneously, the reader is also invested with images that spring from the pages of a scenario, rather than being imposed from the screen. I would further argue for script

⁴ <http://www.cric.or.jp/english/clj/cl2.html>. The idea of aligning source novels and scripts adapted from these is fundamentally flawed, as the script serves as the site of adaptation from one medium to another, transitioning the text from the verbal to the cinematic realm. This passage seems to suggest that lawmakers have limited understanding of how films are made, particularly the role and function of the script. On the other hand, the Paris Act (1971) of the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, that guides international copyright law and was ratified by Japan in 1975, states in article 14bis (Special Provisions Concerning Cinematographic Works): "(3) Unless the national legislation provides to the contrary, the provisions of paragraph (2) (b) above shall not be applicable to authors of scenarios, dialogues and musical works created for the making of the cinematographic work, nor to the principal director thereof" (<https://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text/283693>).

readership as a site of empowerment where the audience can grasp the images from the pages, gaining a real sense of ownership of films. This is certainly a substitute, but it is something that, at least until the advent of home media, remained largely outside the realm of repeated engagement, scrutiny, and even scholarship. Ultimately, the tangible presence of the scenario allows us to observe opportunities for empowerment on various levels: the text becomes independent of the film, the reader peruses and owns the scenario, and the writers find their agency by taking possession of their workspaces and practices.