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# New Perceptions: Kinugasa Teinosuke's Films and Japanese Modernism

by William O. Gardner

*Abstract: This essay offers a reading of Kinugasa Teinosuke's independent silent films as responses to the traumatic experience of twentieth-century modernity. Of particular interest are the global and local intertexts in A Page of Madness and Crossways, their connections to the literary criticism of the shinkankakuha, or New Perception school, and the centrality of sensory perception in Kinugasa's work.*

Kinugasa Teinosuke's silent films *A Page of Madness* (*Kurutta ippetji*, 1926) and *Crossways* (*Jūjirō*, 1928) are among the most valuable surviving records of the modernist movement in Japanese film, theater, art, and literature produced during the interwar period. *A Page of Madness* is set in an insane asylum and employs rapid, rhythmic montage sequences, multiple exposures, lens distortions, and a battery of other visual techniques to convey the abnormal sensory experiences and visions of the inmates. *Crossways* is a historical drama without any swordplay that features expressionistic sets, masterful shot compositions, rich deployment of light and shade, and visually stunning, carefully placed sequences of subjective montage.

Kinugasa developed the screenplay for *A Page of Madness*, the more formally radical of the two films, in collaboration with the young writer Kawabata Yasunari, who achieved international fame in 1968, when he became the first Japanese recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature. Kawabata's collaboration on the screenplay was just one aspect of Kinugasa's involvement with the modernist literary clique *shinkankakuha* (New Perception school), which counted Kawabata as a founding member.<sup>1</sup>

Since the titles and opening publicity for *A Page of Madness* presented it as a product of the Shinkankaku eiga renmei, or Shinkankakuha Film Alliance, much of the critical discussion that greeted the film's initial release naturally focused on the connection between Kinugasa and this literary group. Subsequent commentators on Kinugasa's independent silent films, however, have tended to neglect the thematic and theoretical ties between the director and the *shinkankakuha* writers, thus relegating these works to the status of cultural anomalies.<sup>2</sup> Close examination of *A Page of Madness* and *Crossways* reveals multiple points of resonance between the filmmaker's thematic and stylistic concerns and the theoretical issues explored by the *shinkankakuha*, beginning with the issue of sense perception itself.

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The label *shinkankakuha* refers to a group of young writers who in 1924 broke away from the high-circulation literary magazine *Bungei shunjū* (*Literary Seasons*) to found another magazine, *Bungei jidai* (*The Literary Age*). The group expressed impatience with what it saw as “realist” styles of prose fiction and sought to apply a measure of the formal experimentation pioneered in Japanese poetry and visual art to the more conservative genre of prose fiction. The members’ theoretical writings disavowed “objective description” in favor of a radical subjectivism that would be expressed, paradoxically, through more intensive engagement with the material world.<sup>3</sup>

In the group’s most prominent theoretical statement, its leader, Yokomitsu Riichi, wrote, “The phenomenon of perception for the *shinkankakuha* is, to put it briefly, the direct, intuitive sensation of a subjectivity that peels away the naturalized exterior aspects and leaps into the thing itself.”<sup>4</sup> Yokomitsu’s fictional and critical writings reveal a fascination with direct, subjective sensory experiences and a countervailing anxiety about the effects of such experiences on both individual psychology and social institutions.

The *shinkankakuha* writers can be situated globally among the twentieth-century theorists who offered, in Ben Singer’s words, “a neurological conception of modernity” and “insisted that modernity must . . . be understood in terms of a fundamentally different register of subjective experience, characterized by the physical and perceptual shocks of the modern urban environment.”<sup>5</sup> The members of the *shinkankakuha* were by no means the only Japanese intellectuals to offer such a “neurological conception.” Japan’s encounter with the West in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has often been troped as a series of shocks, as the physical environment, the structure and pace of everyday life, and the conceptual frameworks of society were rapidly and radically transformed. In the words of the leading late-Meiji period novelist, Natsume Sōseki, the strain of attempting to adjust to the accelerating pace of change into the twentieth century inevitably led the Japanese people to an “incurable nervous breakdown.”<sup>6</sup>

The works of the *shinkankakuha* school and of the independent cinema of Kinugasa appeared at a time when the pace of change and the shocks of modernity were especially pronounced. The capital city of Tokyo had been leveled by the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 and its subsequent deadly fires. A radically transformed city had appeared, pell-mell, from the ashes. New technologies, such as the subway, ocean liner, zeppelin, airplane, and radio, were transforming the experience of space and time, adding to the already pervasive technologies of the locomotive, printing press, and cinema. As these changes were taking place, a new conception of modern life emerged in Japan, focusing on mobility, leisure, and consumption, even as the economy stalled and Marxist and anarchist critiques gained traction among the intelligentsia.<sup>7</sup> As one artistic response to the tumultuous change occurring during the decade, Kinugasa’s independent films articulate a warning about the dangers of hyperstimulation and consumer spectacle while simultaneously exploiting an aesthetic of modernist speed and visual sensuousness. These films provide a provocative link between the everyday experience of modernity in a rapidly transforming nation and the themes and techniques of modernism in Japan.

**Japanese Film in Transition.** The 1920s were a particularly contentious period for film in Japan. Hollywood and its stars were enthusiastically embraced by a broad and avid filmgoing public. Domestically produced, action-packed period films reached high levels of technical facility and popularity as well. The 1920s were also when the *benshi*—narrators who provided commentary and intertitle dialogue at silent film screenings—became popular. The best of the *benshi* became stars in their own right, sometimes receiving higher billing than the films they narrated.

Despite the seeming vitality of Japanese cinematic culture, however, domestic critics expressed dissatisfaction with numerous aspects of domestic film production, presentation, and reception. Critics and filmmakers affiliated with the pure film movement pressured the film industry to bring the domestic product up to what they perceived to be international standards and encouraged the ideal of self-sufficient film narrative that did not rely on the narrative skills of the *benshi*.<sup>8</sup> Many of the most important directors in Japanese film history emerged during the decade, including Itō Daisuke, Inagaki Hiroshi, Gosho Heinosuke, Ozu Yasujiro, Mizoguchi Kenji, and Kinugasa Teinosuke.

Kinugasa's career reflects many of the changes under way in Japanese cinema in the 1920s. He began as an *oyama*, or male actor specializing in female roles, moving from theater to film in 1917. At this time, both stage and screen were dominated by the all-male performance culture of the *kabuki* theater, carried into the modern period by both *kabuki* and *shinpa*, a melding of Japanese and European dramatic forms. Kinugasa played the female lead in the landmark film drama *Ikeru shikabane* (*The Living Corpse*, Tanaka Eizō, 1918), but as *oyama* film actors—among the first targets of the reformist pure film movement—began to be replaced by female performers, Kinugasa deftly repositioned himself as a director rather than an actor.

Debuting as a director in 1920, Kinugasa worked first for Nikkatsu and then for Makino studios, breaking with the latter to form his own independent production group, the Shinkankakuha eiga renmei, in 1926. After producing *A Page of Madness* with the Shinkankakuha eiga renmei, he led his own production unit, the Kinugasa eiga renmei, with logistical and distribution support from the Shōchiku film studio.

Kinugasa worked prodigiously throughout this period, directing eighteen films for the Kinugasa eiga renmei between 1926 and 1928 alone. After returning to Japan from a tour in Europe, Kinugasa renewed his studio affiliation with Shōchiku and continued to specialize in period films throughout a long career that stretched into the 1960s.<sup>9</sup>

While his roots as an actor and a director were in *shinpa*-style melodramas, Kinugasa's commercial production work in the mid-1920s centered on the period film, a genre in which he was one of the few filmmakers to rival Itō Daisuke. The genre conventions of Kinugasa's commercial work are reflected in the three avant-garde films he directed during this period: *A Page of Madness* retains distinctive traces of the *shinpa* melodrama, while *The Sun* (*Nichirin*, 1925) and *Crossways* represent new approaches to the period film. Although two of these films were

period dramas, Kinugasa engaged thematically with aspects of modern urban life—especially those related to sensory stimulation—that cinema both reflected and created. As I shall explore below, the theme of sensory stimulation ties Kinugasa's work to the theory, criticism, and literature of the *shinkankakuha* and more broadly to interwar Japanese modernism in its various literary and artistic incarnations.

**Kinugasa, Japanese Modernism, and the *Shinkankakuha*.** The scenario for Kinugasa's *A Page of Madness* developed from consultations between the director and several members of the *shinkankakuha*, but it was Kawabata who eventually became Kinugasa's primary collaborator. Reflecting a film culture that placed a strong value on the screenplay as an independent or semi-independent literary genre, Kawabata published a version of the screenplay in the July 1926 issue of *Eiga jidai* (*The Film Age*), a journal with strong ties to the *shinkankakuha*.<sup>10</sup> Several members of the *shinkankakuha* were involved in the promotion of the film, and although they failed to materialize, further collaborations with Kinugasa were planned. This collaborative context was highlighted in the credits and publicity for *A Page of Madness*, which was presented as "the first work of the Shinkankakuha Film Alliance."<sup>11</sup> While the historical details of this collaboration are intriguing, they will not be my focus here. Rather, I will investigate Kinugasa's and the *shinkankakuha*'s shared attention to sense perception and suggest that the sensorium of cinema was a key aspect of the modernity to which Japanese modernism, both cinematic and literary, responded.

*A Page of Madness* is one of the first examples of independent narrative filmmaking in Japan and has garnered considerable international attention since its rediscovery in the early 1970s. It is the most radical of the trio of formally experimental films Kinugasa made in the 1920s. The first, *The Sun*, was based on a novel by the leading member of the *shinkankakuha*, Yokomitsu Riichi, and initiated Kinugasa's involvement with this group. Set at the semimythical dawn of Japanese history, this ambitious film, now lost, established Kinugasa's progressive oeuvre as distinct from his previous work as an *oyama* and studio director.

The second of Kinugasa's three independent films, *A Page of Madness*, cemented his reputation as an innovative filmmaker. Several critics praised the work as the first Japanese film worthy of an international audience.<sup>12</sup> The third film, *Crossways*, attracted less commentary in Japan but achieved historical status when Kinugasa screened it in Europe in 1928, making it the first Japanese work to be presented to Western audiences as an "art film."<sup>12</sup>

The remarkable avant-garde aesthetic of *A Page of Madness* can be explicated in at least three contexts: (1) as part of the broad surge of Japanese avant-garde and modernist art and literature produced in the 1920s; (2) as representative of the pure film movement in Japanese cinema and film criticism; and (3) in its specific relation to the *shinkankakuha*. While Kinugasa's collaboration with the *shinkankakuha* writers is clearly the most obvious context in which to discuss the film, both it and the *shinkankakuha* group must first be placed against the larger background of avant-garde artistic and literary activity in interwar Japan.

During the interwar period, Japanese intellectuals became increasingly confident that their cultural expressions were unfolding parallel to the latest trends in Europe and America. Such a conviction presupposed the rapid transmission of foreign works to Japan, as well as the existence of a receptive and competent audience for them, and such was indeed the case.

We can identify three primary channels mediating the introduction of European modernist and avant-garde art and literature to Japan: (1) the transnational flow of people; (2) the exhibition of visual works; and (3) the circulation of written information, via translations, reports, and critical texts. Examples of the first channel of mediation include exiled Russian futurist David Burliuk's visit to Japan in 1920 and avant-garde leader Murayama Tomoyoshi's stay in Berlin from 1921 to 1923. Such exchanges were typically combined with the other two channels of mediation. Burliuk presented an exhibition of futurist work in Tokyo, for example, while Murayama parlayed his encounters with expressionist, Dadaist, futurist, and constructivist artists in Europe into numerous textual reports, translations, and critical works. With the exception of film, direct exhibition of European visual works was rare in Japan during this period; in the absence of original works, Japanese art journals played a vital role in the transmission of European artistic ideas.

As one might expect, translation was crucial to the introduction of European modernism to Japan. As an indication of the intense interest in European avant-garde movements, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's *Futurist Manifesto* (1909) was translated five times by 1924, initially by Mori Ōgai in 1909. Dadaism was introduced somewhat later through a series of articles in the newspaper *Yorozu chōhō* (*Universal Morning Report*) in 1920 and proved to have strong appeal for several Japanese writers. The francophile poet Horiguchi Daigaku produced two especially influential translations in the mid-1920s: one of Paul Morand's novel *Ouvert la Nuit* (*Open All Night*, 1922, translated in 1924), which had a major impact on the prose writers of the *shinkankakuha*; and the poetry collection *Gekka no Ichigun* (*A Moonlit Gathering*, 1925), which featured translations of many contemporary French poets including Guillaume Apollinaire, Jean Cocteau, André Breton, and Max Jacob.<sup>13</sup>

As the example of the *shinkankakuha* suggests, Japanese writers were not content solely to monitor developments in Europe but quickly produced their own literary experiments. In the field of poetry, Takahashi Shinkichi's *Dadaisuto Shinkichi no shi* (*Dadaist Shinkichi's Poems*, 1923), and Hagiwara Kyōjirō's *Shikei senkoku* (*Death Sentence*, 1925) made a strong impression on Japanese intellectuals in the years just before the release of Kinugasa's *A Page of Madness*. The first stanza of Hagiwara's "Ren'ai no ichionshin" ("A Love Telegram") from the collection *Shikei senkoku* captures a number of recurrent themes expressed by writers and artists affiliated with Japanese Dadaism and anarchism:

One second

A film of massacre is projected on the wave of hats

• • • It's cut off by the shout of the crowd-----

Cries!

Countless alphabet faces

————— “What’ll I do? I don’t have the money to get home!”

A packed elevator

An underground room encased in lead pipes • • • “Dried Fish and Whisky”

Turning like a globe—————the exposed man’s eyeball

“Kill me with the napkin!”

“Marvelous! • • • Come on!”

“Even insensitive men have loves and beliefs.”

“You’re not so dull after all.”

“I hear one love letter costs over 150 million yen.”

Footstep • Ay! Bee!<sup>14</sup>

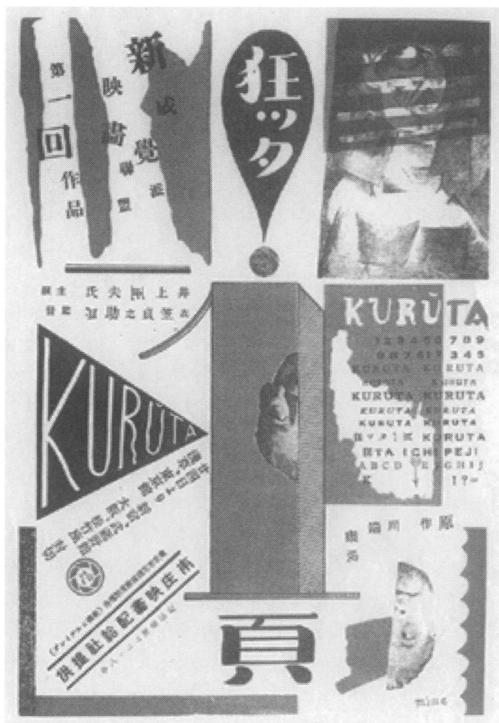
This brief stanza encapsulates many of the thematic preoccupations of Japanese modernism, beginning with the fixation on diverse aspects of modern technology, including the cinematic apparatus, the elevator, and the technologies of printing that make possible the poem’s “typographic” expressionism. An atmosphere of social and political repression is evoked in such phrases as “a film of massacre” and “an underground room encased in lead pipes”; the practice of state censorship (and the associated self-censorship of publishing houses) is invoked by the expressive appropriation of *fuseji*, characters (typically x’s or black dots) used to blot out or stand in for objectionable words and phrases. Other lines allude to what the state might want to repress: (political) violence, grotesquerie, and illicit sexual practices. Over the following decade, as the subversive themes explored here migrated to such mass media as cinema and popular magazines, the themes were codified in the ubiquitous slang phrases *ero-guro* and *ero-guro-nansensu* (abbreviations for erotic-grotesque and erotic-grotesque-nonsense).

Hagiwara’s poetry collection was also significant because it was a multimedia collaborative effort by the poet and the members of the Mavo artists collective, founded in 1923, who were closely involved with the design of the collection and contributed linoleum prints and reproductions of their works. Led by Murayama Tomoyoshi, the members of Mavo worked in a wide variety of media, exhibiting prodigious numbers of collages and assemblages, engaging in eclectic architectural and theatrical projects, and publishing their own anarchic journal of art, literature, and criticism.<sup>16</sup> The collage aesthetic developed by the group is an important intertext for the montages in Kinugasa’s films. An advertisement for *A Page of Madness* in the major film journal *Kinema junpō* (*The Movie Times*) illustrates the futurist-Dadaist typography such poets as Takahashi and Hagiwara adopted.

The Mavo group’s work was merely the most radical expression of a profound interest in advanced European art movements and a strong desire to reform—and in some cases revolutionize—Japanese representational practices. A sustained interest in German expressionist drama and other progressive theater movements was mediated through the innovative productions of the Tsükiji shōgekijō (Tsükiji Little Theater), founded in 1924 by Hijikata Yoshi and Osanai Kaoru. Tomonari Yōzō’s set design for *Crossways* shows the influence of German expressionist theatrical design.

Screenings of German expressionist and French impressionist films arguably gave the Japanese intelligentsia their most direct access to contemporary European visual and narrative experimentation. Three works with particularly strong

Figure 1. The original *Kinema junpō* advertisement for Kinugasa Teinosuke's *A Page of Madness* alluded to the European futurist-Dadaist collage style. *Kinema junpō*, October 26, 1926.



impact in Japan were Robert Weine's *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari* (*Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, 1919), screened in Japan in 1921; F. W. Murnau's *Der letzte Mann* (*The Last Laugh*, 1924), screened in 1925; and Abel Gance's *La Roue* (*The Wheel*, 1923), screened in 1926—all of which have been cited as probable influences on Kinugasa's work.

But although cinema may have given Japanese audiences a relatively direct glimpse at European artistic trends, it is important to recall that the exhibition of these films was mediated not only by the commentary of *benshi* but by an extensive critical apparatus, including translations of European film theory and criticism that sometimes preceded the importation of the films themselves. For example, the enthusiastic critical reception for Alexander Volkov's *Kean* (1924), the first of the French impressionist films to be screened in Japan (1924–25), helped establish an influential new critical idiom that valorized the use of flashbacks and montage and emphasized the qualities of speed, both rhythmically and musically.<sup>17</sup>

Several commentators, including Joseph L. Anderson and Donald Richie, have observed the influence of impressionist film theory and practice on Kinugasa's films, especially *A Page of Madness* and *Crossways*.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, Yamamoto Kikuo notes that several other directors of period films in the mid-1920s, including Itō Daisuke and Inagaki Hiroshi, as well as directors of contemporary dramas, such as Gosho Heinosuke and Ushihara Kiyohiko, were influenced by the same French



impressionist films and film criticism that informed Kinugasa's independent works. This influence, which was often noted by contemporary critics, is especially evident in the adaptation of rhythmic montage and the extensive use of flashbacks. While Kinugasa's independent films, particularly *A Page of Madness*, pushed the use of these techniques to idiosyncratic extremes, these works appear considerably less anomalous when considered in the larger context of film practice in the mid-1920s.<sup>19</sup>

As Aaron Gerow has argued, in addition to their intertextual relationship to European avant-garde theater and film, Kinugasa's works, particularly the intertitle-free *A Page of Madness*, occupy important positions in the ongoing pure film movement in Japan.<sup>20</sup> Broadly speaking, this movement campaigned for a self-sufficiency of filmic narrative, thereby negating the need for the *benshi*—or, to put it another way, preventing the film from being a pretext for the *benshi*'s vocal performance. Critics affiliated with this movement were also highly conscious of the international position of Japanese cinema and sought to encourage the production of films that would be of comparable technical quality and narrative self-sufficiency as the products coming out of Europe and America.

An article on *A Page of Madness* by *shinkankakuha* writer Kataoka Teppei, published just before the film's release, illustrates the pervasiveness of the arguments favoring pure film. Kataoka's article stands firmly within the pure film critical tradition in its rejection of filmmaking "for the sake of telling stories"—that is, in the service of the *benshi*'s narrative. Kataoka's remarks are especially striking in that they combined critique and the language of constructivism, reminiscent of Soviet montage theory, with the vocabulary of "sensory perception," which was the hallmark of *shinkankakuha* literary theory. Indeed, Kataoka's argument represents an important bridge between film criticism and the literary theory of the *shinkankakuha*:

Today, the age of film for the sake of telling stories is gradually passing away. Ultimately, the film must be a progression of mutual understanding formed only between the moving picture and the senses (*kankaku*) that watch it. A film progresses; then it ends.

The viewer must unify the impressions bestowed by this progression and understand it naturally. From one incident on the globe, [the filmmaker must] select many various cross-sections and present these selected sections to the senses (*kankaku*) of the viewer. This, and only this, is the true responsibility of film.<sup>21</sup>

In Kataoka's formulation, then, meaning is produced through a "mutual" and "natural" understanding of the progression of images selected by the filmmaker and the "senses" of the viewer. This forecloses the need for rational or intellectual intervention on either a *benshi*'s or the viewer's part, in favor of a seemingly prerational circuit between the film and the viewer's sensory apparatus (reminding us of Yokomitsu's call for the "direct, intuitive sensation of . . . subjectivity" in *shinkankakuha* literature).<sup>22</sup> This prerational conception of film reception is significant in light of the anxiety around sense perception expressed in other *shinkankakuha* critical writings and in Kinugasa's films themselves.

The name *shinkankakuha*, though bestowed on the young cofounders of the *Bungei jidai* (*Literary Age*) by an outside journalist, was seized upon by the members

themselves, who quickly elaborated the idea of a new (*shin*) approach to sense perception (*kankaku*) as central to their literary identity.<sup>23</sup> The members' focus on sense perception was consonant with their interest in current Euro-American scientific and philosophical theories, most notably those of Henri Bergson. Moreover, this focus was consistent with their keen interest in the experiential phenomena of contemporary Japanese urban life, including the experience of cinema spectatorship.

A few parallels are readily apparent between the theoretical agenda of the *shinkankakuha* and Kinugasa's film practice. First, both rebel against contemporary conventions of realism (although realism in literature and in cinema refers to two very different codes). Second, the *shinkankakuha*'s emphasis on subjectivism finds its parallel in the many subjective shots and sequences in *A Page of Madness* and *Crossways*, a practice that encourages the viewer to experience the action via the perceptive apparatus of the film's characters. As James Peterson has argued, the number, variety, and frequent ambiguity of subjective shots in *A Page of Madness* problematize the notion that an objective narrative can be reconstructed from a film's subjective interludes.<sup>24</sup>

Much of the intensity of Kinugasa's films derives from their bold use of montage sequences, such as the one that introduces *A Page of Madness* and the one that occurs at the climax of *Crossways*. As Vlada Petric has described them, these sequences employ complex, accelerating metrical principles and graphic diversity to create a "kinesthetically energetic" effect, in some cases accelerating the montage to the vertiginous pace of a single frame per shot.<sup>25</sup>

In his study of critical responses to *A Page of Madness*, Gerow notes that several contemporary critics familiar with French impressionist films and critical vocabulary praised Kinugasa's film for its "rhythm" and "musicality."<sup>26</sup> Regardless of their application to Kinugasa's film, the words *speed*, *tempo*, and *rhythm* were repeated as mantras in the critical writings of members of the *shinkankakuha* and by others associated with Japanese modernism. Indeed, the elevation of these terms to paramount aesthetic values marks a major point of convergence between the vocabulary of film criticism—under the influence of French impressionism—and that of modernist literary theory. Kawabata Yasunari's remarks from January 1925 on his fellow *shinkankakuha* writers are a case in point:

Their imagination flies courageously from one thing to another. The mental images coming in and out of the author's mind drop their shapes into the written characters in a somewhat disorderly and reckless sequence, with a richness that seems to have forgotten arrangement and selection. Couldn't we say this form approaches what psychologists term "free association"? The expressions of Yokomitsu [Riichi] and Kon [Tōkō] in particular succeed in capturing the "speed" with which the myriad shapes of things rush in and out of their heads. One can even sense there a musical rhythm.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to his invocation of "speed" and "musical rhythm," Kawabata's remarks on "free association" are suggestive and doubly striking when we consider that his essay was written just a few months after André Breton's statements on automatism in the first *Manifeste du Surréalisme* (*Surrealist Manifesto*) of 1924.

Interestingly, in a roundtable discussion in the *shinkankakuha*-affiliated film journal *Eiga jidai* (*The Film Age*), Kinugasa emphasizes the unstructured and associational method employed in shooting *A Page of Madness*. In the context of an extended discussion on the relationship of his work to the *shinkankakuha* school, the director states that he did not have access to Kawabata's script during shooting because of logistical problems. Thus, he claims, "when I filmed one scene, I was picturing in my head only the very next scene." "In other words," he continues, "this film was constructed out of my impressions that arose from the moment. So I can't answer the question of whether it is, in the final analysis, a *shinkankakuha* work." By deemphasizing the influence of Kawabata's script, Kinugasa seems to be distancing himself from the *shinkankakuha* as a manifestly *literary* school. Yet, in emphasizing the importance of momentary "impressions" and loose associational construction in his work, Kinugasa ironically ties himself to key *shinkankakuha* concerns as Kawabata outlined them.<sup>28</sup>

**Sense Perception in *A Page of Madness*.** Beyond the general parallels between *shinkankakuha* theory and Kinugasa's cinematic concerns, the manner in which *A Page of Madness* and *Crossways* addresses the key *shinkankakuha* issue of sense perception merits closer attention. The former film concerns a middle-aged man (Inoue Masuo) who has taken a job as a custodian in a mental hospital to be with his wife (Nakagawa Yoshie), who was institutionalized many years before after she attempted to drown her baby in a well. A subplot focuses on the man's anxiety that his wife's mental condition will doom the marriage prospects of their teenaged daughter (Iijima Ayako). The primacy of this melodramatic narrative is undermined, however, by the film's lack of intertitles and frequent excursions into fantasy and visual excess, including in the opening montage, which features a female dancer (revealed to be one of the inmates) (Minami Eiko); a feverish depiction of a riot in the asylum; a sequence in which the custodian daydreams of winning a raffle at a neighborhood festival; and the brilliant penultimate sequence, in which the custodian presents masks to the inmates, thereby offering them a chimerical escape from madness—an escape, that is, from an extreme form of the interiority and alienation characteristic of modern subjectivity.<sup>29</sup>

The considerable pathos of the film derives not only from the custodian's deep concern for his deranged wife and vulnerable daughter but also from the strained mental condition of the custodian, whose frequent daydreams and near-hallucinatory visions bespeak the danger of the infectious spread of the inmates' "madness." Thus, the film's narrative structure induces anxiety that the "madness," as indexed by the film's disorienting *mise-en-scène* and battery of visual distortions, will pass from the janitor to the viewers of the film. Except for identifying with the viewpoint of the janitor as the protagonist, viewers are offered no framing mechanism or more stable perspective from which to make sense of the film or to establish a firm boundary between "sanity" and "insanity."

In exploring the realms of psychic trauma, Kinugasa draws attention to the senses of sight and sound throughout the film. Although *A Page of Madness* is, in one respect, silent, sound is evoked repeatedly, from the opening montage con-

sisting of images of pouring rain, to the shots of a dancer cross-cut with more images of rain, to the hand-drawn images representing lightning, to the close-ups of brass instruments and a drum. Such visual evocations of sound also prevail in the sequence in which the custodian tries to escape the asylum with his wife. We see a dense succession of images of feet stepping on a wooden floor; prisoners laughing scornfully at the escaping couple; and a dog barking in the night. These sound-evoking images effectively convey the oversensitive sense perceptions of the anxious custodian, who fears that the noises will alert the asylum's doctors to the couple's attempt to escape.

Since the pure film movement was ongoing at the time *A Page of Madness* was made, the film's strongly aural quality could be seen as Kinugasa's attempt to preempt or "drown out" the explanatory presence of the *benshi*, just as not using intertitles spurns another customary verbal supplement to the cinematic image. Indeed, the film's relationship to the *benshi* institution was a focus of debate among contemporary critics. According to an account by Iwasaki Akira, the successful reception of *A Page of Madness* at Tokyo's Musashinokan Theater was in part due to the skill and sensitivity of renowned *benshi* Tokugawa Musei: "Leaving ample room for the viewers' freedom in the story and its interpretation, he heightened the atmosphere of Kinugasa's picture and added his own accents, managing to leave the audience satisfied when they finished watching it, like a true master."<sup>30</sup>

Ironically, while the elimination of intertitles could be seen as an attempt to limit the role of the *benshi*, some pure film-oriented critics took Kinugasa to task for giving the *benshi* freer reign.<sup>31</sup> Regardless of Kinugasa's ultimate success in circumventing the *benshi*'s role, the strikingly aural effects evoked by the film's visual images demonstrate the degree to which Kinugasa's work shares Kataoka's view that filmmaking should present information directly "to the senses of the viewer," rather than exist "for the sake of telling stories."

The sense of sight is vividly evoked by the film's constant attention to the gaze and the film's dizzying optical effects, including lens distortions, multiple exposures, incongruous lighting, angular and inverted compositions, and jarring camera movements, in addition to the rhythmical montage discussed earlier.<sup>32</sup> The film's riot sequence, however, thematizes the sense of sight most directly. The sequence begins as the custodian's wife passes by the dancer's cell; a shot of the wife staring with demented amusement at the dancing woman through the cell bars is cross-cut with a lens-distorted image of the dancer, presenting, we assume, the wife's deranged perception of the dancer's movements. Several women inmates then rush up to the cell bars to watch the dancer. (Even though there are now several spectators, the cross-cut shots of the dancer are still shown through the distorting lens associated with the wife's subjective gaze.) As the spectators' excitement builds, a group of male inmates rushes in, and the crowd's agitation quickly approaches that of sexual frenzy. The spectators' mounting agitation is presented effectively through accelerating montage and distorting camera effects. When the hospital's staff attempts to pull the inmates away from the cell door, a full-fledged riot breaks out, as inmates battle staffers in a melee reminiscent in its stylistic overtones of Hollywood slapstick.

Kinugasa's nod to slapstick caps the already meta-discursive nature of this sequence. It takes no great leap to see in the quickly distracted inmates a parallel to modern subjects exposed to such consumer spectacles as dance reviews, sexualized advertising, and the cinema itself. The bars of the cell separate the inmates from their visual object as film spectators are separated from the objects of their visual desires by the cinematic apparatus. Separated from the source of their stimulation by the cell bars and bereft of their rational faculties by their mental status, the inmates are thrown into a condition of extreme nervous agitation—indeed, they seem to be reduced to moving, desiring, and potentially violent “sense receptors.” Ultimately, the janitor is also swept into the “madness,” as he loses himself in a tussle with one of the inmates, while, in a role reversal, his now-subdued wife watches passively.

The anxiety expressed in this scene was addressed in the above-cited theoretical treatise by Yokomitsu Riichi, who clearly saw a danger in the *shinkankauha*'s valorization of sense perception. “If it were possible for a human to fundamentally enact purely sensory activity (*kankaku katsudō*),” he wrote, “that person would be no more than an animal. It is humans who perform rational activity; it must not be permitted to fundamentally replace rational activity with sensory activity.”<sup>33</sup> The riotous scopophilia of the inmates, together with the heightened sensitivity to sound attributed to the janitor earlier in the film, underscores Kinugasa's attention to the extreme conditions affecting the sensory apparatus of modern subjects. The scene expresses a social fear of the spread of the “madness” of abnormal perception and nervous agitation to “rational” modern subjects such as the janitor and the hospital staff.

**Crossways, Blindness, and the “Floating World.”** The perils of “sensory activity” and the unreliability of sensory faculties are also central themes of Kinugasa's *Crossways* (also known as *Crossroads* or *Shadows of the Yoshiwara*). Although its storyline is unrelated to that of *A Page of Madness* and the temporal setting is historical rather than contemporary, in terms of its themes and visual motifs, *Crossways* could be regarded as a virtual sequel to the earlier film. For instance, a circular, often spinning object appears in a sporadic and often enigmatic fashion in *A Page of Madness*, as a coin in the road, the striped ball behind the dancer in the opening montage, a button that transforms into a bauble in the deranged wife's hand, a spinning automobile tire, and a lottery wheel. The motif reappears in *Crossways* in shots of paper lanterns, balls, archery targets, and a spinning-wheel.<sup>34</sup> As visual “targets,” these circular items highlight the role of vision, both within the films and between the film images and viewers; their spinning motion underscores both films' thematic interest in states of disorientation and mesmerism. The motif also suggests a number of metaphorical or intertextual readings; the circular objects might be wheels of fortune, allusions to the karmic cycle, or intertextual references to Gance's *La Roue*. In any case, these recurrent circular figures are significant in establishing visual and thematic integrity not only within but also between Kinugasa's two films.

Even more than *A Page of Madness*, *Crossways* pivots on the theme of perception, or rather misperception. The story, set in the Edo period (1603–1867),

concerns an impoverished brother (Bandō Jūnosuke) and sister (Chihaya Akiko) whose bonds of mutual care and affection are tested by the brother's foolhardy infatuation with the courtesan O-ume (Ogawa Yukiko). In a crucial early scene, O-ume rejects the brother in favor of a wealthier patron (Ozawa Meichirō). When the brother challenges O-ume's new lover, the rival throws ashes into his eyes. The blinded brother, taunted by O-ume and a crowd of onlookers, lunges at his opponent and mistakenly believes he has killed him. Later, a man posing as a constable (Ipppei Sohma) tries to take advantage of the sister by threatening to turn in the brother as a murderer. The brother regains his sight at a critical moment when the sister stabs the false constable to defend herself against his sexual advances. The brother and sister then become fugitives, but he turns back for a final confrontation with O-ume, promising to meet his sister at the crossroads of the title. The sight of O-ume and her new lover triggers the brother to have a series of hallucinations. At the close of this scene, he loses his sight once again and passes out, leaving his sister stranded at the crossroads in the final image of the film.

The film's themes of misperception, misrecognition, and deception should be readily apparent from this synopsis. Despite its historical setting, however, several clues link the film's general themes to the more specific issues of modern subjectivity also explored in *A Page of Madness*. Just as Kinugasa finds a metaphor for the cinematic apparatus in the woman dancing behind bars in the asylum, he discovers an apt historical parallel for modern consumer society and its cinematic "dream factory" in the "floating world" (*ukiyo*) of courtesans and their patrons in Edo Japan.<sup>34</sup> In the Yoshiwara quarter and its contiguous cultural territory, Kinugasa glimpsed an "entertainment" world made possible by an advanced money economy, driven by the purchasing power of the ascendant merchant class, and promoted by a minor industry of popular art (*ukiyo-e*), literature (*gesaku*), and theater (*kabuki*). The critical dimension of Kinugasa's film lies in the gap between the desire stimulated by the illusions of the floating world and the bitter economic situation of the film's protagonists. This theme links *Crossways* with contemporary works of so-called proletarian literature, left-leaning modernist literature, and "tendency" films, which frequently thematize the gap between the fashionable "modern" consumption that prevailed in the rapidly expanding mass media of the 1920s and the realities of everyday life for the majority of Japanese subjects during the stagnant economic conditions of that decade.

To pursue this historical parallel a bit further, it is worth noting that despite O-ume's designation in the English-language intertitles as "A Woman of the Yoshiwara," she is not a courtesan of the elegant and luxurious Yoshiwara teahouses but an employee of an archery range, a game arcade that served as a front for unlicensed prostitution (hence the prominent visual motif of the archery target). Many of these ranges were not on the main streets of the Yoshiwara licensed quarter but were clustered around the Asakusa Kannon temple, which lay just outside the district.

After the Meiji Restoration, the somewhat disreputable fairground precincts of Asakusa developed into the foremost popular entertainment district of Tokyo, housing the first permanent movie theater in Japan and continuing throughout the

prewar period to boast a lively neighborhood containing movie theaters, review theaters, a theme park, and other attractions. Kaleidoscopic images of Asakusa's crowds and attractions were central to the iconography of modern life in Tokyo and were the subject of such literary works as Kawabata's extraordinary modernist novel *Asakusa kurenaidan* (*Scarlet Gang of Asakusa*, 1929–30).<sup>36</sup> With this setting, then, Kinugasa establishes a geographical link between the floating world of Edo and the world of popular entertainment in modern Tokyo, while shifting the social ground of the film from the haut-bourgeois realm of the *tsū* or grand connoisseur in the Yoshiwara proper to the more prosaic milieu shared by the film's brother-sister protagonists and their working-class counterparts in modern Asakusa.<sup>37</sup>

Two scenes in *Crossways* are especially evocative of the connection between this floating world and the culture of contemporary cinema. Early in the film, O-ume appears on a balcony before a crowd of her admirers in a scene reminiscent of an appearance by a Hollywood star. As O-ume, actress Ogawa Yukiko demonstrates little attempt in her coarse and uninhibited gestures and body language to evoke a character in a historical setting. She bears far greater resemblance to a "modern girl" than to conventional depictions of Edo courtesans.

Later, Kinugasa frames a complex shot of the sister passing outside the archery range as she takes a look at O-ume. The scene is shot from the inside of the range through the exterior wall, which is composed of wooden lattices and square patches of paper. As the sister passes outside, she is visible through the wooden lattices, while the revelers inside are projected as shadows onto the patches of paper. This shot clearly alludes to the unseen figures whose shadows are projected onto *shōji* (sliding paper doors) as depicted in *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints. It also evokes the cinema's projective apparatus while making a visual distinction between the cinematic floating world of illusion inside the archery range and the "real" space occupied by the sister.

Within this tawdry floating world, the brother's blindness serves as a correlative for the impairment of his rational faculties and his moral blindness, for he is unable to distinguish between reality and virtue, represented by the sister, and illusion and depravity, represented by O-ume. (This binarism of virgin and vamp is also, of course, a familiar trope of 1920s Hollywood cinema.) The brother's confusion comes to a head in the climactic sequence. In this suggestive montage, a series of images alternates rapidly between shots of O-ume, the sister, a spinning wheel (associated with the sister and the realm of production), decorative balls and lanterns (associated with O-ume and the floating world of consumption), and falling ashes (associated with the onset of the brother's blindness), cross-cut with shots of the brother himself. Not only does the brother collapse under the force of his own delusion at the end of this sequence but in doing so he also condemns his sister, the sole vessel of virtue in the film, to a life of solitary wandering.

The ultimate ideological message the viewer takes from *Crossways* depends on whether the viewer (or the *benshi*) allocates blame on the system that has enmeshed the brother in a net of unreasonable desire or on his moral failure to distinguish between the false and the true. In either case, the film presents a paradox in its condemnation of perceptual delusion through a popular medium that is

itself fundamentally reliant on illusion and sensual stimulation. This paradox, far from being an anomaly, is recognizable as a local manifestation of a widespread ambivalence toward cinematic modernity on the part of filmmakers in varying cultural and ideological contexts.

Film historian Miriam Hansen has argued that “American movies of the classical period [the 1920s through the 1950s] offered something like the first global vernacular”—a language she calls “vernacular modernism.” “The juncture of classical cinema and modernity reminds us,” she writes, “that the cinema was not only part and symptom of modernity’s experience and perception of crisis and upheaval; it was also, most importantly, the single most inclusive cultural horizon in which the traumatic effects of modernity were reflected, rejected or disavowed, transmuted or negotiated.”<sup>38</sup> While Kinugasa’s films speak a quite different “vernacular” than the Hollywood cinema of that era, they mark a powerful instance of how the “traumatic effects of modernity” could be both “reflected” and “disavowed” in film at the same moment.<sup>39</sup> To borrow Yokomitsu Riichi’s evocative phrase, both *Page of Madness* and *Crossways* can be said to capture, as well as to critique, an avowedly modern range of “sensory activity.”

While the naming of the *shinkankakuha* may have been fortuitous, the members’ concern with issues of sense perception clearly was not; a similar concern is evident in the work of their filmmaking collaborator, Kinugasa. These artists’ attention to the issue of sense perception may be partly attributable to their exposure to the works of European modernism and the avant-garde, as well as to contemporary scientific and philosophical theories. As Kinugasa’s films remind us, however, Japanese modernism was at least as much a response to the experience of modernity (including its most basic somatic level) as it was an engagement with foreign literary, artistic, or intellectual trends. Kinugasa’s films share with the *shinkankakuha* literary works an impulse to address and rework the qualities of speed, tempo, and rhythm, as well as the phenomena of hyperstimulation, scopophilia, and exhibitionism that mark the technological and commercial regimes of modernity—not the least of which is the cinema itself.

## Notes

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1. *Shinkankakuha* has been translated variously as neo-sensualism, neo-impressionism, and neo-perceptionism. Dennis Keene’s description of the group in *Yokomitsu Riichi: Modernist* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980) is highly biased but remains the most detailed account available in English. For translations of works by Yokomitsu and Kawabata written during the period in question, see Yokomitsu Riichi, *Love and Other Stories by Yokomitsu Riichi*, trans. Dennis Keene (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1974); *Shanghai: A Novel by Yokomitsu Riichi*, trans. Dennis Washburn (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2001); and Kawabata Yasunari, *Palm-of-the-Hand Stories*, trans. Lane Dunlop and J. Martin Holman (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1988). James Peterson outlines some of the themes shared



by Kinugasa's films and *shinkankakuha* prose works in his article "A War of Utter Rebellion: Kinugasa's *Page of Madness* and the Japanese Avant-Garde of the 1920s," *Cinema Journal* 29, no. 1 (fall 1989): 39–40. Yokomitsu's and Kawabata's prose styles and critical perspectives differed considerably, and some critics (including Keene) have argued that the members of the *shinkankakuha* shared no fully coherent or cohesive theoretical agenda or stylistic traits. The premise of this article is that the *shinkankakuha* members did articulate a recognizable, if not a dogmatically unified, set of critical concerns and that the work of their filmmaking collaborator, Kinugasa, helps to elucidate them. All Japanese personal names used in this article follow the Japanese order of surname first and given name second. All translations are the author's.

2. In his influential critical study of Japanese film, Noël Burch enthusiastically discusses Kinugasa's avant-garde deconstruction of classical film codes. However, Burch's frame of reference is exclusively European avant-garde films and not the artistic and literary avant-garde in Japan, leading him to conclude that Kinugasa's work was "utterly thankless," "alien," and "meaningless" in its Japanese context (123, 139). James Peterson provides a valuable corrective in relating Kinugasa's work to contemporary Japanese avant-garde movements but is limited by his lack of access to Japanese-language source materials. This essay aims to extend Peterson's work by relating Kinugasa's films to specific aspects of *shinkankakuha* theory. Burch, *To the Distant Observer: Form and Meaning in the Japanese Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979) 123–39, and Peterson, "A War of Utter Rebellion." For readers of German, an extensive, detailed analysis of Kinugasa's *A Page of Madness* and its cinematic context with reference to numerous Japanese-language sources is presented in Mariann Lewinsky, *Eine Verrückte Seite: Stummfilm und Filmische Avantgarde In Japan (A Crazy Page: Silent Film and the Cinematic Avant-garde in Japan)* (Zürich: Chronos, 1997).
3. For key theoretical statements on antirealism and subjectivism, see Yokomitsu Riichi, "Kankaku katsudō" ("Sensory Activity," later retitled "Shinkankakuron," or "A Theory of New Perception"), *Bungei jidai*, February 1925, collected in *Teihon: Yokomitsu Riichi Zenshū (Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Yokomitsu Riichi)*, vol. 13 (Tokyo: Kawade shobō shinsha), 75–82. Kataoka Teppei, "Shinkankakuha wa kaku shuchō su" ("What the New Perception School Emphasizes"), *Bungei jidai*, July 1925, collected in *Nihon bungaku kenkyū shiryō soshō: Yokomitsu Riichi to shinkankakuha (Library of Resources for Japanese Literary Studies: Yokomitsu Riichi and the New Perception School)* (Tokyo: Yūseidō, 1980) 239–44.
4. Yokomitsu, *Teihon*, 76.
5. Ben Singer offers this characterization in the broad context of responses to mechanization, the heightened pace of urban life, and experiences of hyperstimulation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. More specifically, he refers to the theories of Georg Simmel, Siegfried Kraucauer, and Walter Benjamin. While the *shinkankakuha* writers were probably unaware of Kraucauer and Benjamin, they shared with these contemporaries an intense interest in cinema and in the experiences of urban life, as well as in the influence of Bergson. Singer, "Modernity, Hyperstimulation, and the Rise of Popular Sensationalism," in Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz, eds., *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 72.
6. Natsume Sōseki, "The Civilization of Modern-Day Japan," trans. Jay Rubin, in *Kokoro: A Novel and Selected Essays* (Lanham, Md.: Madison Books, 1992), 281. Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916) is arguably the most important writer to emerge in the Meiji period (1868–1912). A generation before the *shinkankakuha* modernists, we can observe

a conception of modernity with strong “neurological” overtones in a lecture Sōseki gave in 1911. Sōseki proposed a definition of civilization as the “advancement, entanglement, and ongoing change” of two parallel responses to external stimuli: the conservation of “vital energies” as a negative response to the stimulus of duty and the consumption of these energies as a positive response to the stimulus of pleasurable pastimes. Labor-saving devices such as rickshaws, bicycles, and locomotives belong to the former category, while energy-consuming devices such as amusement park rides belong to the latter; together, these form the “warp and woof” of modern civilization. The problem for Japan, Sōseki argues, is that “because of external pressure, Japan has had to leap all at once from a barely attained complexity level of twenty to a level of thirty in the two great areas of energy conservation and energy consumption.” Sōseki, “The Civilization of Modern-Day Japan,” 262–78.

7. Recent English-language historical and cultural studies of the interwar period in Japan include Harry D. Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Sharon A. Minichiello, ed., *Japan's Competing Modernities: Issues in Culture and Democracy, 1900–1930* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998); and Elise K. Tipton and John Clark, eds., *Being Modern in Japan: Culture and Society from the 1910s to the 1930s* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000). See also Miriam Silverberg, “Constructing the Japanese Ethnography of Modernity,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 51, no. 1 (February 1992): 30–54, and “The Modern Girl as Militant,” in Gail Bernstein, ed., *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 239–66.
8. On the pure film movement, see Aaron Gerow, “The Word before the Image: Criticism, the Screenplay, and the Regulation of Meaning in Prewar Japanese Film Culture,” in Dennis Washburn and Carole Cavanaugh, eds., *Word and Image in Japanese Cinema* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 3–35; Aaron Gerow, “Writing a Pure Cinema: Articulations of Early Japanese Film,” Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1996; and Joanne Bernardi, *Writing in Light: The Silent Scenario and the Japanese Pure Film Movement* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001).
9. His *Jigokumon* (*The Gate of Hell*, 1953) won the 1954 Cannes Grand Prix and the 1955 Academy Award for best foreign-language film. For an English-language overview of Kinugasa's career, see Robert Cohen, “A Japanese Romantic: Teinosuke Kinugasa,” *Sight and Sound* 45, no. 3 (summer 1976): 164–69.
10. For particulars on the encounters between the literary world (*bundan*) and the film world in the journal *Eiga jidai*, see Joseph Murphy, “Economies of Culture: The Taishō *bundan* Dallies with the Movies,” *Japan Forum* 11, no. 1 (1999): 5–22. For more on these encounters and their subsequent erasure from canonical accounts of Japanese culture, see Aaron Gerow, “Celluloid Masks: The Cinematic Image and the Image of Japan,” *Iris* 16 (spring 1993): 23–26.
11. In a three-part newspaper article on the Shinkankaku Film Alliance, Kawabata listed the four members of the alliance as himself, Yokomitsu, Kataoka Teppei, and Kishida Kunishi. “Shinkankakuha eiga renmei ni tuite” (“Concerning the New Perception School Film Alliance”), *Kawabata Yasunari zenshū* (*Complete Works of Kawabata Yasunari*), vol. 32 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1982), 512. The article was originally published in *Yomiuri shinbun* on April 27, 28, and 30, 1926.
12. In their reviews for the film journal *Eiga ōrai* (*Film Traffic*), for example, Moriyama Tomizaburō wrote, “I think that *A Page of Madness* is the first [Japanese film] that can be exported,” while Tateishi Naritaka wrote, “I am overjoyed to have had contact with

- a good Japanese film for the first time.” Moriyama, “‘Kurutta Ippeiji’ gūkan” (“Random Thoughts on ‘A Page of Madness’”), *Eiga ōrai* no. 21 (September 1926) 62; Tateishi, “Watashi wa hajimete ‘nihon eiga’ no ii mono wo mita” (“I’ve Seen a Good ‘Japanese Film’ for the First Time”) *Eiga ōrai* no. 23 (November 1926): 43.
13. *Crossways* remained the representative Japanese film in the European consciousness until Kurosawa Akira’s success with *Rashōmon* in 1951.
  14. For detailed information on the transmission of European modernist and avant-garde literature to Japan, see Chiba Sen’ichi, *Gendai bungaku no hikakubungakuteki kenkyū* (*Comparative Studies in Modern Literature*) (Tokyo: Yagi shoten, 1978), 39–260.
  15. Hagiwara Kyōjirō, “Ren’ai no ichi onshin” (“A Love Telegram”), in *Shikei senkoku* (*Death Sentence*), reprinted ed. (Tokyo: Nihon kindai bungakukan, 1972), 112–13.
  16. On Takahashi Shinkichi, see Makoto Ueda, *Modern Japanese Poets and the Nature of Literature* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1983), 335–80. On Hagiwara Kyōjirō and Mavo, see William O. Gardner, “Avant-Garde Literature and the New City: Tokyo, 1923–1931,” Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1999, and Jennifer Weisenfeld, *Mavo: Japanese Artists and the Avant-Garde, 1905–1931* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).
  17. Yamamoto Kikuo, *Nihon eiga ni okeru gaikoku eiga no eikyō: hikaku eigashi kenkyū* (*The Influence of Foreign Films on Japanese Film: Studies in Comparative Film History*) (Tokyo: Waseda daigaku shuppanbu, 1983), 144–66. In addition to Volkov’s *Kean* and Gance’s *La Roue*, four of Marcel L’Herbier’s films, *L’Homme du Large* (*Man of the Sea*), *El Dorado*, *L’Inhumaine* (*The New Enchantment*), and *Feu Mathias Pascal* (*The Late Mathias Pascal*), were screened in 1925–26, fanning the enthusiasm for impressionism. Film critic Iijima Tadashi played an especially active role in introducing French film criticism to Japan, translating several critical and film historical works of Léon Moussinac and Jean Mitry and both screenplays and criticism by Louis Delluc. Jean Epstein’s criticism was introduced by Yoshida Shinkichi in 1926. See Yamamoto, *Nihon eiga ni okeru gaikoku eiga no eikyō*, 141–57.
  18. Joseph L. Anderson and Donald Richie, *The Japanese Film: Art and Industry*, expanded ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 54–56.
  19. Yamamoto, *Nihon eiga ni okeru gaikoku eiga no eikyō*, 167–75.
  20. Gerow, “Eiga no ta no kanōsei,” 66–80.
  21. Kataoka Teppei, “‘Kurutta ippeiji’ ni tsuite” (“Concerning *A Page of Madness*”), *Engeki-eiga* 1, no. 7 (July 1926): 33.
  22. In his newspaper article on the Shinkankakuha eiga renmei, Kawabata also emphasized the unmediated nature of the cinema’s appeal to the sense organs. Explaining the rationale for the name of the alliance, Kawabata wrote, “Indeed, unlike literature, film (*eiga*) is a type of sensory art (*kankaku geijutsu*) that appeals directly to the senses (*kankaku*);” emphasis added. Kawabata Yasunari, “Shinkankakuha eiga renmei ni tuite,” in *Kawabata Yasunari zenshū*, vol. 32 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1982), 512.
  23. The name *shinkankakuha* was bestowed on the group by Chiba Kameo in the article “Shinkankakuha no tanjō” (“The Birth of the New Perception School”), *Seiki*, November 1924. Chiba’s article is anthologized in *Gendai bungaku hyōron taikai* (*Compendium of Modern Literary Criticism*), vol. 6 (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō, 1973), 38–43.
  24. For an analysis of the film’s use of subjective techniques, see Peterson, “A War of Utter Rebellion,” 40–51.
  25. Vlada Petric, “*A Page of Madness*: A Neglected Masterpiece of Silent Cinema,” *Film Criticism* 8, no. 1 (fall 1983): 97.
  26. Gerow, “Eiga no ta no kanōsei,” 70.

27. Kawabata Yasunari, "Shinshin sakka no shin keikō kaisetsu" ("An Explanation of the New Tendencies of Up-and-Coming Writers") *Kawabata Yasunari zenshū*, vol. 30, 181–82; originally published in *Bungei jidai* 2, no. 1 (January 1925): 2–10.
28. Teinosuke Kinugasa et al., "Kurutta Ippeiji gōhyōkai sokukiroku" ("Group Evaluation of *A Page of Madness*: A Direct Record"), *Eiga jidai* 1, no. 2 (August 1926): 61.
29. In his landmark study, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, critic Karatani Kōjin builds a provocative narrative about the development of Japanese literature from the 1880s onward around the various effects that were employed to establish a sense of "interiority" in the modern literary subject. If the madness depicted in Kinugasa's film is an extreme and disturbing example of such a modern effect of interiority, then the power of this striking scene derives from an ecstatic pre-/postmodern subjectivity provided by the masks, which release their bearers into a communal, presentational, and carnivalesque "exteriority." See Karatani Kōjin, *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, trans. edited by Brett de Bary (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993). For a literary interpolation of this scene, see Kawabata Yasunari, "The Man Who Did Not Smile," *Palm-of-the-Hand Stories* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1988), 128–32.
30. Quoted in Kinugasa Teinosuke, *Waga eiga no seishun (My Youth in Film)* (Tokyo: Chuo koronsha, 1977), 79.
31. Kinugasa et al., "Kurutta Ippeiji gōhyōkai sokukiroku," 60–61; see also Gerow, "Eiga no ta no kanōsei," 70–73.
32. For more discussion of these techniques, see Petric, "A Page of Madness," 94–106.
33. Riichi, *Teihon*, vol. 13, 78.
34. Petric discusses the use of the circular motif in "A Page of Madness," 99–101, 105.
35. *Ukiyo* is a complex concept with extensive literary and religious overtones that has undergone significant changes during the history of its use. It should be noted that at the peak of discussion of the concept, in the eighteenth century, successful passage through the floating world was not contingent on money alone but required formidable cultural and social skills. Nevertheless, desire for the courtesans and *kabuki* actors in the floating world and mimetic desire for its *tsū* (connoisseurs) was promoted to a broad public by such cultural products as woodblock prints, popular literature, and *kabuki* plays. For more on the floating world, see Donald Jenkins, "Introduction," in Jenkins, ed., *The Floating World Revisited* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), 3–23, and Elizabeth de Sabato Swinton, "Reflections on the Floating World," in Swinton, ed., *The Women of the Pleasure Quarter* (New York: Henry Hills Press, 1995), 13–45.
36. On Asakusa's significance in the performance of "modern life" in interwar Japan, see Yoshimi Shun'ya, *Toshi no dramaturugi: Tōkyō, sakariba no shakaishi (Dramaturgy of the City: A Social History of Tokyo's Commercial and Entertainment Centers)* (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1987), 193–218.
37. As one of my anonymous *Cinema Journal* readers pointed out, the trope of using a historical setting as an indirect means of commenting on a contemporary Japanese situation was not Kinugasa's innovation but can be traced to the *kabuki* theater practice of coding the contemporary to a historical or legendary "world" (*sekai*), a practice that developed in part as a method of circumventing the Tokugawa government's ban on works depicting contemporary political events.
38. Miriam Bratu Hansen, "The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism," *Modernism/Modernity* 6, no. 2 (1999): 68, 69.
39. It could be argued that Kinugasa's films, and the literary works of the *shinkankakuha*, belong more to the lineage of "high modernism" that Hansen intentionally removes from the center stage of her discussion of "vernacular modernism." Instead, she focuses

on the “low” or “mass-culture” works of the Hollywood studios. In this light, it is the comedies of Ozu Yasujiro or the period films of Itō Daisuke and others that, together with the reception of Hollywood cinema, would be more appropriate objects to a study of “vernacular modernism” in Japan. For an exploration of Ozu’s work in its historical context, see the chapter “Materials” in David Bordwell, *Ozu: The Poetics of Cinema* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 31–50. Nevertheless, it is important to cite in this context Gerow’s observation that Kinugasa’s *A Page of Madness*, and especially Kawabata’s published screenplay, retain many aspects of popular *shinpa*-style melodrama, and contemporary reception placed the film in several interpretive frameworks, the “avant-garde” being only one of them. Expanding our consideration beyond Kinugasa’s works, we can say that one of the hallmarks of Japanese prewar modernism is its disregard for—or willful contamination of—the categories of “high” and “low” (categories that have at any rate been intensively reevaluated in recent studies of Euro-American modernism). In Japan, the active collaboration in this period between those in the ostensibly “high” literary world and those in the still disreputable film world was, in fact, one of the manifestations of this intermingling. Gerow, “Eiga no ta no kanōsei,” 66–80. On the intermingling of high and low in Japanese modernism, see also Murphy, “Economies of Culture,” 5–22.