

Beyond the Screen Terayama. Spectatorship. Intermediality

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Abstract Intermedial practices are a common trademark of the Japanese art world in the sixties and seventies. This article focuses on a case study of such practices, namely the relationship between artwork and audience in Terayama Shūji's cinema. Moving from the author's theatrical theories on spectatorship (*kankyakuron*), the paper applies those theories to Terayama's experimental movies, analysing how they are adapted to the cinematic medium. This study conceives a three-phased system, where the spectator is progressively brought towards the screen and his role changes from passive viewer to active agent. The study adopts an approach based on performance studies and avant-garde film theory to reveal how Terayama moulds the movie-going practice into a performative and collective event, using the movie theatre as a theatrical stage.

Keywords Japanese Cinema. Terayama Shūji. Spectatorship. Intermediality. Performance.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Oral Provocation of the Audience. – 3 Cinema as Performance. – 4 Active Cinema. – 5 Conclusions.



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579

1 Introduction

Terayama Shūji is a renowned figure in Japan for his versatile approach to media, since his artistic activity ranges from poetry to theatre, cinema, photography, literature, and several other fields. His intermedial approach clearly documents the cultural context in Japan in the sixties and seventies. In the theatrical and cinematographic work of Terayama, the relationships arising with spectators play an essential role in understanding both the playwright's experiments and his intermedial approach to the art.

In 1976 Terayama published his first collection of theatrical essays – *Meiro to shikai. Waga engeki* (The Labyrinth and the Dead Sea. My Theatre, 1976)¹ – and the first section is devoted to *kankyakuron*, or 'theory of the spectator', in which he explains the function that theatre should play, mainly according to how it is watched. However, for Terayama, it is an error to reason in terms of 'who watches' and 'who is watched', because: "[i]n any situation, we can only create half the work. The other half is made by the public" (Terayama 2009, 343-4). Spectators must not 'watch and learn' from the play; they must interact with it and live the theatre as an experience for creating so-called "encounters" (*deai*) that unleash dramaturgy (341).²

Terayama believed that, after Artaud's *Le théâtre et son double* (1938), the spectator seat could no longer be considered as a "safe area" (*anzen chitai*, Terayama 2009, 341). He put this concept into practice from the first international tour of his company Tenjō sajiki in 1969, during which the public was constantly challenged. The contact with that public – both verbally and physically – transmitted anxiety, fear and claustrophobia, causing real shocks. From that moment onwards, Terayama wrote works involving direct contact with the audience, sometimes by means of special divisions of the stage that limited spectators' view, requiring them to make substantial imaginative efforts. An even more radical strategy was to use the stalls as scenic space, as the stage is robbed of its authority. The whole theatre building becomes part of the play, challenging the properties of transparency and passivity usually associated with spectators. These forms of provocation – which Terayama later applied to the cinema – aimed at eliminating the 'artificial frontiers' between the theatre and reality:

1 In this work, the following version of the text is used: Terayama Shūji (2009). "Meiro to shikai. Waga engeki". *Terayama Shūji chosakushū*, 5: 331-97.

2 The concept of *deai* was very popular in Japanese art after the Second World War, partly thanks to the work of the philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō in the thirties. cf. Sas 2011, 97-126.

When my actors do something outrageous - as part of the play - or if they get beaten up by the spectators, those frontiers are eliminated. I'm pleased by this. (Terayama in Khaznadar, Déak 1973, 50)

The ultimate development in Terayama's approaching strategies were his *shigaigeki* (street plays), where the author instilled the germ of the theatre into daily life, mixing reality and fiction in almost violent forms. Street plays exceeded the dynamics of traditional theatrical representation to become real-life *jiken* ('incident', but also 'event', cf. Senda 2002, 58),³ sometimes causing true cases of disturbance of the public order. The most infamous of these experiments is *Nokku* (Knock, 1975), performed on April 19-20, 1975, in the streets of Tokyo. All the participants received a map, showing the places and timetables of various events, allowing everyone to create their own theatrical journey. The spectators thus became the co-creators of the 'play' and, at the same time, actors and explorers. Provoked to search for 'theatre' within the urban space, the public was asked to look at daily life with new eyes. Terayama's intention was to reveal true-life intrinsic theatricality and make the participants question themselves about the theatrical and the fictional elements inside reality.⁴ *Nokku* thus defies the definition of 'theatre' in a narrow sense and makes it necessary to speak rather of an *event* capable of involving actors, spectators and unsuspecting passers-by in the creative process.

Saraba eiga yo (Farewell to movies!, 1968)⁵ represents the perfect link between the concept of *performance* in this type of experiment and that which Terayama was later to develop in cinema. This one-act drama examines - on a theatrical stage - the relationship between spectators and the cinematographic screen. It also explains the author's vision according to which the stage/screen must become one single thing with the public. Of particular interest is the introduction of the concept of *dairinin* ('substitutes', Terayama also uses the English term 'stand-in'. Terayama 1968, 120), i.e. those figures that in everyday life perform an act in place of someone else. Producing clothes, preparing food and building a house are examples of how everything in human life is entrusted to the *dairinin*, to the point of realising that we too, in order to participate in social consent, *interpret* the substitute of someone else.

³ The word *jiken* is frequently used in Japanese to refer to some violent or criminal event, such as the infamous *Asama sansō jiken*, *Komatsugawa jiken*, *Yodogō jiken*, etc.

⁴ Senda, one of the original participants at the street play, recalls that he had confused a watchmaker's shop for one of these performances (2002, 57).

⁵ There are two plays sharing the same title, the one analysed here is the first, called *Fan hen* (Fan Version), followed shortly afterwards by *Star hen* (Star version), which shows the mirror-image version and clarifies some points that were obscure in the preceding version.

As the stage has a large white screen on the backdrop that is used to “allow [the public] to perceive the absence of images” (116) and by means of many cinematographic references, the two actors begin to think of their lives as a film, in which each has a part to play. From this perspective, the white screen on the stage may be viewed as the ‘screen of life’, manifested as the stage on which the two people move as in a kind of daydream, until cinema and theatre become one. Not knowing one’s own role in this ‘movie’ is clearly linked to the theme of the loss of identity (“I am not me, I’m somebody’s stand-in”, 122) – both social and, in this case, sexual. Terayama deconstructs the identity of these personages, creating a world no longer containing protagonists, where everyone is the replacement of someone else. The public, asked to interpret a role and to create a ‘personal film’ from the play, can recompose their own identities through imagination. The involvement of the spectators is clarified in the finale, when a rugby ball is kicked into the stalls. It is as if there had been a reversal of roles, in which the actors on the stage watch what is happening beyond the ‘screen’, breaking the fourth wall (cf. 126). Terayama uses here, for the first time, a means – provokingly, a theatrical stage – to make the audience actively participate in a ‘film’, reflecting in a meta-theatrical way his idea of the ‘other half’ of the work created by its spectators.

2 Oral Provocation of the Audience

In an interview to Senda shortly before his premature death, Terayama said he had always been more interested in theatre than cinema, because cinema aims at reproducing reality, whereas theatre aims at its negation. The fact that theatrical experience is, perforce, limited in its representation of reality when compared with that of a film, constitutes a further point in its favour, since it becomes a creative challenge for the author. Furthermore, it requires the spectators to fill in these ‘blanks’ with their own imaginations, further enhanced by the feature of “uniqueness” (*ikkaisei*) of the theatre (cf. Senda 1983, 28). When it comes to cinema spectatorship, it should therefore come as no surprise that Terayama tried to re-elaborate those elements which make theatre ‘more interesting’, particularly in his short movies. In this article, I subdivide into three phases the process of attracting spectators to the screen, which starts from simple oral provocation to reach active participation by the public in creating the work itself.

The first phase appears in its most explicit form in the initial monologue of *Sho o suteyo machi e deyō* (Throw away your books, rally in the streets, 1971. From now onwards *Sho o suteyo*), in which the protagonist Eimei speaks directly to the public in a five-minute sequence

filmed without editing cut, in black and white on a neutral background. The scene is preceded by a completely black screen, lasting one minute, which Shimizu describes as “blackout cinema” (*teiden eiga*, Shimizu 2012, 270). The suggestion here is the same as that in *Saraba eiga yo*, i.e., from the darkness of the stalls one’s ‘private movie’ can begin, and it is not by chance that Eimei’s first words are:

What are you doing? If you just sit there waiting in the dark, nothing can begin! The screen is blank. The people who have come here [on this side of the screen] are tired of waiting, just like you. They ask each other: ‘Will it be something interesting?’ (Terayama 1987, 240)

Eimei immediately breaks the fourth wall and asks directly the spectators to avoid passive ideas about cinema, commonly perceived as mere ‘goods for consumption’. The black screen preceding his words serves the precise purpose of supplying that space necessary for the spectators’ fantasies to spur them to action and to imagine the infinite possibilities which might follow.

Eimei’s monologue, with its attack to film fictionality and incitement to action, recalls the last monologue of *Jashūmon* (Heretics, 1971). In this play, similarly, the actors take off their characters’ masks and talk as themselves directly to the audience. Terayama thus tries to unify art and reality, but in this phase the separation between creator and spectator is still clear-cut. Through the monologue, the spectators are fully aware of the spatiotemporal distance between the moment when the film is made and the moment when it is watched. Terayama still works at a purely verbal (and theatrical) level, attached to the world ‘inside the screen’ which continues to preserve its ‘sacredness’ and to exercise its ‘dictatorship’ over the public. However, it is interesting to notice that Eimei tries to interrupt the spectators’ passivity by inciting them to a ‘scandalous’ act linked to sexuality, as in Terayama’s tradition:

If you are thinking of something depraved in the obscurity of the cinema, don’t just sit there! Try stretching out your hand to the woman sitting next to you. Press her hand. Try caressing her knees. If you start with her skirt, if things go well, you will get as far as her panties. If things go badly, nobody knows your name. Nobody knows my name. (Terayama 1987, 240)

In his works, especially in theatre, Terayama questioned himself several times about the fine divide between reality and fiction in rela-

tion to the concept of 'crime'.⁶ Many 'incidents' caused by his performances, directly or indirectly, aimed at unveiling the 'theatrical' approach to crime in everyday life as a media event. Thus, masking a supposed *jiken* as part of art fictionality makes spectators dubious about the values on which society is based. However, in the case of *Sho o suteyo*, the division between screen and spectator obstructs this view, as incitement to 'crime' is indirect. Although the monologue (and, even more, the short movie *Rōra*, Laura, 1974) reveals criticism of the concept that watching experimental and underground movies constitutes a 'deviant' or even political act in itself, the separation between creation and presentation, although rejected by Terayama, is still clearly in evidence, making of *Sho o suteyo* the kind of film the monologue criticizes. Spectators are asked to act according to their reality without being able to act *on* the film, from either side of the screen. Even if unusual, the expedient used here by Terayama – verbal provocation by removal of the fourth wall – is a recurrent practice in cinema history, including earlier examples from Japan.⁷

However, Terayama also tried to reduce the distance from spectators with other actions. When the monologue reaches the words: "No-one knows your name. No-one knows my name", Eimei compares the spectator's anonymity with his own – to the extent that, after this sentence, he begins to describe some episodes from his own life, such as part-time jobs, simple meals and popular ways of passing the time. Those were common features of art-house films' typical audience. The protagonist, then, approaches his public on the same level – that of an anonymous individual in the auditorium's indeterminate mass. With this initial monologue, Terayama fit perfectly into the cultural and political context of the times; his incitement to action – although without explicit political intentions – attempted to bring the fictional world of cinema into contemporary reality, to be one with the spectator. This was how he mirrored a period in which students' political demonstrations, events and performances involved their participants (cf. Ushida 2007, 181). Terayama found a way of allowing spectators to perceive the 'participatory' atmosphere of the times, in a film that represented an example of the closeness between art and reality typical of the early seventies. He achieved this feature identifying their common ground precisely in the cultural life of Shinjuku, where the movie is set and originally screened.

6 See the chapter: "Hanzai ni okeru 'kankyaku' no kenkyū" [Research on the 'spectator' in the Crime] (Terayama 2009, 442-53).

7 See, for example, *Subarashiki nichiyōbi* (One Wonderful Sunday, 1947) by Kurosawa Akira, filmed more than twenty years earlier. At the end of the film, the heroine, in tears, turns deliberately to the audience, breaking the fourth wall and begging them to encourage her desperate lover with applause. That is, she asks them to undertake an *action* that would give them the illusion of being able to influence what happens *on* the screen.

Eimei's sentence "No-one knows my name" also allows us to analyse another point of contact with spectators. It is in fact repeated several times in the monologue, which ends by emphasising this aspect:

on the walls of rest homes, on the blackboards of university classrooms where I have not been, on the walls of public baths, throughout the city I scrawl my alibi. Come on! Remember, I will only say it once: my name is... my name is... my name is... (Terayama 1987, 241-2)

The alibi is clearly Eimei's name, in which his entire life was inscribed, as demonstrated by presenting his family members by quoting the *koseki*, that is, the Japanese family register containing the names of all those who belong to it. Therefore, the name itself often contains - in Terayama's works - 'cursed' links of blood, from which it is impossible to escape and through which one is identified, or 'ticketed', as represented in his theatre play *Inugami* (Terayama 1969). One's name becomes the alibi for hiding one's own failures, but also the causes of the injustices and discriminations to which individuals may be subjected. The *koseki* - and thereby the name - also implies the social construction of the family institution, according to a similarly imposed model. This means that the fictional family unit created on the screen is not very different from the 'real' one. Terayama himself, speaking of the 'realism' of the family portrayed on the screen, says:

Rather than similarity, I would speak of reality. Because reality as such does not exist, right? Only similarity exists, isn't it? (Terayama 1987, 354)

Terayama reveals this mechanism through the film medium, convinced that reality is already itself 'theatralized' and fictitious, constructed according to predetermined conventions. They are exposed by the monologues that open and close *Sho o suteyo*: on one hand, the author declares that the movie is fiction and, on the other, that fictitiousness is also the 'fiction' of reality. The spectators understand that what they are watching is a film but, at the same time, it is also something existing in their own worlds, outside the cinema's doors. Thus, "[Terayama] both affirm and negate the continuity between the screen space and the space of the auditorium" (Furuhata 2013, 189).

Lastly, the fact that the last sentence of the monologue ("my name is...") remains suspended not only emphasises Eimei's anonymity, but it also reveals one of the central themes of the film and a recurrent one in early seventies Japan - marked by the youth movement's failure and the retreat of the *avantgarde* - i.e. the loss of identity. When

Eimei introduces the final monologue using his real name,⁸ he affirms his own identity and consolidates the link with the extradiegetic world, although not all the doubts are dissolved:

The film finishes here, now it's my turn to speak. If you think about it, films only live in the darkness of a cinema theatre, because if you turn the lights on the movie vanishes. In the film, I dream about a man-powered aeroplane. When I finished filming and went back to my four and a half *tatami* room to sleep, I ended up dreaming about the same plane. I gradually became unable to distinguish the 'inside' from the 'outside' of the film. (Terayama 1987, 312)

Terayama has made these two realities (or 'fictions', as he would have probably said) indistinguishable from each other, so that the end of Eimei's internal conflict could not take place with a final epiphany, but rather with the addition of further doubts, or other layers of reality. Among these, the dimension of the distance from his spectators is one of the most relevant, and we may say that in this first phase, exemplified by *Sho o suteyo*, a 'nearness' has been achieved, but on a purely theoretical level.⁹

3 Cinema as Performance

The second phase is characterised by a more active approach towards the film, intended as the material element forming the movie itself, through experiments both on and outside the screen. In this phase, Terayama discards 'orthodox' cinematic techniques, to focus on all the 'illusions' that can be created with images projected on a screen, or with the projector itself.

The final scene of *Den'en ni shisu* (Pastoral Hide and Seek, 1974), which "encapsulates the spirit of the sixties avant-garde filmmaking" (Furuhata 2013, 190), clarifies the transformation of the act of filming into a performance inserted in the daily lives of its spectators. In the last part, the walls of the house/set collapse, taking the specta-

⁸ The actor Sasaki Eimei plays in the movie a fictionalised version of himself, called Kitamura Eimei, sharing with the real-life actor several biographical traits. In the opening monologue, it is not clear if Eimei is speaking for himself or for his character. The script does not clarify this ambiguity, since it is simply referred as "Me" (*watashi*).

⁹ It should be noted, however, that Ridgely seems to reach opposite conclusions (2010, 131): "Rather than the audience suspending their disbelief and allowing the fictional characters on-screen to become real, Eimei emphasized the way that process operates on the production side of a film as well - that is, of actors beginning to lose track of themselves as they transform into the characters they perform".

tor from a fictional Aomori to real-life Shinjuku, where movie characters, Tenjō sajiki's actors and ordinary people appear.

The *performance* of this last scene thus involves its spectators, comparing the co-presence of reality and fiction and the existence of various temporalities. The theatricality of the sequence is also emphasised by the fact that, once the walls of the set have fallen, what remains is a sort of raised theatre stage, higher than ground level, on which two people are eating, ignoring the surrounding environment. Inside the reality of Shinjuku – but outside the ‘stage’ – all the fictional characters of the film congregate, walking backwards and forwards, behind and around the platform, gazing with curiosity, waving or pointing to the camera, and then moving away into the city streets. At the same time, ordinary people are incorporated in the creative process, when they cross the stage they become spectators without knowing it. There are people who stop to watch, making gestures towards the camera; others do not even raise their heads, as if this invasion of daily life were denied, rather like what happened during the street play *Nokku*.

Although the concept of cinema as *performance* is used in *Den'en ni shisu* in a similar way to other films of the same years (cf. De Angelis 2018, 91-5), Terayama takes this aspect to extreme consequences in his short movies. It was in this phase that he composed those works that act directly inside the reality of the public, transforming the film into a proper performance, because:

Terayama's screen experiments positioned their focus onto the essential qualities of the medium, only to render it malleable by displacing its properties within a different medial context, a collision of performance and cinema that dissolves the boundaries between them. (Ross 2015, 262)

Many of his shorts, mainly those filmed between 1974 and 1977, were experiments containing several dimensions inside the projection space. In this regard, they are closer to the ‘expanded cinema’ of contemporary filmmakers such as Iimura Takehiko and Jōnouchi Motoharu, than narrative cinema. In these works, Terayama explored the performative possibilities of projection, constantly examining the properties of the depth of field, often by overlapping several ‘layers of reality’, interacting with the images on the screen and inserting the projector within the creative process. For Terayama, the place in which a film is made (the set) and the place where it is ‘consumed’ (the viewers’ seats) are not to be considered as two separate, non-communicating spaces: on the contrary, they must both become creative places. From this viewpoint, the projectionist is particularly relevant, since he can modify the experience of the projection by shifting the focus, accelerating or slowing the film, changing the volume, etc.

Chōfukuki (also known by its international title *16 ± 1*, 1974) was the first short feature made by Terayama's production company, Jinriki hikōkisha, and was to inaugurate experiments with and on the screen which Terayama defined as "obstructed cinema" (*saegirareta eiga*, Terayama 1983, 213). In these works:

Terayama incorporated attributes of performance he transcribed through his experiences in theatre. For his short features, Terayama often investigated the surface of the screen by assimilating projection into his shooting process. Moreover, the act of projection in front of an audience was considered an opportunity for him. (Ross 2015, 259)

Chōfukuki, like many of his shorts, shows the lack of a linear narrative structure, and thus facilitates the definition of these works as "traduzione in immagini più diretta delle sue poesie" (Novielli 1994, 165). Furthermore, in the case of *Chōfukuki*, this must be understood literally, as it originated from one of the author's *haiku*, further enriching the intermedial discourse about it.¹⁰ Terayama presents "the psychoanalysis of a memory" (Asai 1981, 5) of a boy who kills a butterfly and hides it inside a bandage over one of his eyes, so that he can then go and spy on his mother. What he sees are a series of perverse little tableaux, usually associated with the combination 'sex and food', in which Terayama's classic 'freaks' appear, such as prostitutes, body-builders, and ventriloquists.

The author understands *Chōfukuki* as "an attempt to 'obstruct' by putting something in the space between the projector and the screen" (Asai 1981, 5). And quite quickly we see a series of human figures in front of the movie images, so that the spectator can only see silhouettes, which literally obstruct the view of the 'original' images and voices that overlap and substitute the audio of the boy's story. The public's attention shifts between the 'stage' and the screen, two worlds linked by the presence of the butterfly, which obstructs the boy's sight and, at the same time, is present as a large shadow in its more 'external' dimension. A parallel is thus created between the boy's visual field and that of the spectator, to favour their identification and to produce at the same time cognitive distancing from the 'primary' images. The fictionality of the latter is shown by the use of kaleidoscopic filters - the same used in the scenes devoted to the circus in *Den'en ni shisu* - extreme camera angles and, above all, by the presence of the butterfly-shaped shadow. This is a deliberate effect that Terayama wanted to create and that is very similar

¹⁰ "Hidden in the eyepatch | the dead butterfly, | [he] crosses mountains and seas" (Terayama 2008, 72).

to the dynamics between projector and screen, and between eye pupil and bandage. These last two elements form “the smallest film in the world” (Asai 1981, 5), in which the presence of the butterfly creates light and shadows from the images themselves.

In the instructions for projecting the short film – as, for example, its screening at Cannes – Terayama added a third dimension to the work, asking the projector operator to wave something (he ironically proposes a butterfly net) in front of the light from the projector, in order to create another shadow, another ‘layer of reality’ (cf. Nakajima 1993, 128). The possibility of creating new effects with every projection gave rise to a series of different experiences, thus making the screening an *event* that defies medium reproducibility and the fixedness of images. The existence of these three dimensions (the images on the screen, the human silhouettes, and the public), presented so as to create confusion, gave rise to an effect similar to a concentric structure, also typical of the experimental theatre of the times (cf. Goodman 2003, 287-9). The anti-naturalistic style of the images on the screen accentuates the fictionality of the work, while the silhouettes in front of it increasingly acquire ‘materiality’. In this way, the distinction between the diegetic and the extra-diegetic collapses, becoming undefinable, and everything is sent back into the performative space of the cinema theatre, in which the spectators too are called upon to take part. They are taken *inside* the second dimension of the short, if we consider the people moving before the ‘primary’ images as fellow ‘spectators’. The space in front of the ‘screen within the screen’ thus becomes the place where the action takes place, now functioning as a stage. Terayama here adapts to the cinema medium the dynamic already examined in *Saraba eiga yo*, in which both stage and screen become a single entity. In *Chōfukuki*, the performance takes place not only inside the movie, as in *Den'en ni shisu*, but also outside it, in the place and in the time of the audience. Terayama was now very close to creating his cinematographic ‘encounter’ with the spectators.

4 Active Cinema

In the third phase, Terayama succeeded in making spectators interact with what had, until then, been considered as “sacred inviolable space” (*kinjirareta seiiki*, Asai 1981, 6), the screen. In a development that also included the projection space in the creative process, he was able to elevate the audience to the role of active co-author. The film thus is no longer an “object which is reproduced” (*fukuseika sareta bukken*), but it becomes “an event which cannot be repeated” (*hanpuku funōna jiken*, Hirose 2005, 176).

Although a connoisseur of both American and European experimental cinema, Terayama did not limit himself to imitating pre-ex-

isting models, but found expressive modalities to be applied to his theories on theatre, actors and spectatorship, with the aim of dismantling the methods of traditional projection. As we have seen, the projection space and the screen were, for Terayama, sources of infinite possibilities:

The distance existing between the projector and the screen is a creative space [...] there too, one can add various creative gestures. If that space is used, the public can become part of the film. (Terayama 1983, 213)

The projection space thus becomes performative, while the screen is violated, modified, multiplied, until its confines disappear.

The most important example of the so-called “participated movies” (*kankyaku sanko no eiga*, Terayama 1983, 214) is *Shinpan* (The Trial, 1975, also known as *Der Prozess*)¹¹ which brings actors and public to act together *on the screen*. *Shinpan* was defined as “the nail film” (*kugi no eiga*, Asai 1981, 9) – and could have been nothing else, as nails are present in every scene. They appear in a series of narratively unconnected scenes in which the actors perform repetitive movements with small variations. Shimizu compares this pattern with the production process of anime and manga, where every drawing differs from the next one in an almost indiscernible way (cf. Shimizu 2012, 275). The above actions are always related to the theme of nails, which change shape, function and size scene by scene. However, they are never represented as simple objects, but gradually become metonyms for language, weapons, sexual organs and, in the end, human passions (cf. Terayama 1983, 213). As Hirose duly noted (2005, 180), every time a nail is hammered into something, its tip seems to be directed towards the relative object of desire. The only recurring image throughout *Shinpan* is that of a naked man staggering along carrying a gigantic nail on his back, which strongly recalls the cross of the Passion of Christ. The nails progressively invade and fill the images, obstructing them, until the penultimate diegetic scene, when a man in uniform – i.e. representing Authority – begins to pull them out violently from a big white wall. After the last appearance of the man with the cross/nail, the screen becomes completely blank, while the score by J.A. Seazer continues in the background.

During the following nine minutes, the spectators are asked to knock nails into the screen – an action enabled by the fact that the

11 This is a clear-cut reference to Kafka’s novel of the same name, although the link has never been described in details. However, *Shinpan* is also the title of one of Terayama’s *shokan engeki* (epistolary theatre), in which a person receives a letter listing several actions he must perform the following day. The two works are thus similar in that they urge the ‘spectator’ to act himself.

screen itself is made of a white-painted plywood, in front of which a basket of nails and hammers has been left (see the projection notes in Nakajima 1993, 130). After this short period of time, “the screen becomes a wall of nails and [the short film] ends” (Asai 1981, 9), while the ending credits start rolling. The public is then asked to act on the screen *while it is being projected*. Consequently, the ‘active’ part (doing) and the ‘passive’ part (watching) of *Shinpan* are made similar by the same action, understood in both cases as ‘interfering’ with the images, and thus linking the dimension of the screen with that outside. However, if the diegetic personages are characterised by their ever-repetitive movements, the overall work becomes “a unique and unrepeatable ‘event’” (Hirose 2005, 175), because the spectators change with every performance, and the quantities of nails and the patterns in which they are fixed also change, so that the projection “hides the possibility of expanding in a subtly different manner” (Shimizu 2013, 214).

One of the main differences in distinguishing a theatrical experience from a cinematographic one is the distance from the spectators. In the former, contact is more direct and the exchange is almost alive; while cinema inexorably interposes a barrier called ‘screen’ separating these two worlds. Terayama worked on his experiments with feature-length and short films, in an attempt to reduce this barrier by making creator and spectator meet, while those categories become increasingly less well-defined. The author ‘betrays’ or, rather, subverts the spectator’s expectations, and makes interaction with the screen possible. *Shinpan* thus appears as the most direct cinematographic adaptation of the concept of *hanengeki* (“Half/Anti-theatre”; Senda in Terayama 1991, 38).¹² According to it, an artwork must be carried out half by the author and half by the public, stimulating the latter’s imagination and making them take part in the creative process, as it happens in Terayama’s plays. In *Shinpan*, spectators do not only fulfil this function, but their presence becomes necessary in order to “preserve the film” (Terayama 1983, 214), which is disappearing because of the repressive action of Authority, which acts to eliminate the nails from the wall and make the screen totally blank.¹³ If nails represent the expression of human passions in the diegetic world, then the action of the spectators must equally be considered

12 Senda uses both the *kanji* of ‘half’ and that of ‘anti’ (they have the same reading in this case) and may thus be interpreted either as ‘half theatre’, presuming that the other half is created by the spectator, and as ‘anti-theatre’, in the sense of refusal of the theatre building and traditional play writing.

13 However Kishida, one of Terayama’s closest collaborator in the later stage of his career, provides a very different interpretation to Authority’s action, seeing it as an analogy of immortality, in which the extracted nails are those of a coffin, to allow the resurrection of the dead (cf. Asai 1981, 9).

as the manifestation of their desire for the screen and, therefore, for cinema (cf. Hirose 2005, 181). In this way, the parallel between the public's action and that of the characters gives rise to a new spectatorship and a new relationship between screen and spectator, so that every nail tangibly represents the imprint left by the viewer's gaze.

This new relationship distinguishes Terayama's experiments from the 'expanded cinema' of the period, because the resulting screening experience is individual for each spectator. In Japan, for instance, works like those of Iimura and Jōnouchi mainly focused on manipulation of film material or on the body of the filmmaker-performer acting as a screen. Although these authors challenged the logics of the filmic apparatus in order to take the medium out of its conventional confines, they did not succeed (or were not interested) in creating a direct 'encounter' with the audience. At the same time, experimental cinema in the rest of the world around the late sixties - particularly in Europe and in the United States - appears to aim mainly at exploring the very process of projection, its relationships with the images and their political value, once 'imposed' on a public regarded as a passive entity. However, these expanded cinema experiments "only demonstrate the structural possibilities of film rather than actually provide new situations themselves" (Müller 1994, 226 fn. 14).

Instead, in *Shinpan*, a new possibility is proposed: each spectator can actively contribute towards making the film. Terayama's short movies combine technical experimentation with artistic expression, transforming themselves from static objects of passive contemplation to *events*, in which the spectators' gaze is incorporated in the creative process. In this way, Terayama's artwork allows human desire to *inter-act* with the images, finding its own expressive modality in the end. This reconfiguration of spectatorship, although shocking at the time, is even more so nowadays. Following the advent of digital consumption - in the cinema theatre and at home - the materiality that distinguished the cinema until the end of the last century has been lost, in favour of the immaterial and the virtual. Thus *Shinpan's* urgency is still greater today, within the idea of recovering one's relationship with the cinematographic apparatus, understood in its more physical and fundamental sense.

In *Shinpan*, the action of hitting nails challenges the boundaries of the original medium and makes them tangible, involving the public in an *individual* creative process. Terayama himself stressed that "the main personage of this work is the spectator's imagination" (Terayama in Hirose 2005, 182). The nailing action thus represents the manifestation of the audience desire for the screen, facilitating the passage from the spectators' seats to the space of the stage/screen. The above mentioned dynamic clarifies the intermedial system of Terayama who, with a common, often repeated action, achieved the 'encounter' with his spectators, investing them with personal power,

able to subvert pre-established roles and to reach an original form of co-authorship. If this could be more easily achieved within theatre, thanks to the co-presence of actors and spectators in the same dimension, his cinematographic experiments would:

contribute to the disintegration of demarcated borderlines between different media and provide further complications for attempts at marking classifications for intermedial phenomena. (Ross 2015, 259)

Shinpan is indeed a movie that cannot be shown in the absence of certain conditions, as watching it on a television or on a laptop would result in an incomplete experience. The possibilities of its existence need radical rethinking about both the projection space – which becomes performative – and the function of the screen, destitute of its authority as a sacred and impenetrable apparatus.

5 Conclusions

Spectatorship has always been a major field of interest to Terayama since his early theatrical works, in which he progressively created plays stimulating the imagination of the audience in order to achieve an ‘encounter’ and distancing the spectator from his ‘safe area’. In the production notes of *Aru kazoku no chi no kigen* (The Origin of the Blood of a Certain Family, 1973) Terayama states:

The spectators at this play should be thought of as participants at a party. They should move about freely during the performance and should search for the play by themselves (Terayama, Ōshima 1973, 51)

The international subtitle of this work – *A Way to Plan Dreams* – clarifies Terayama’s views about spectators to an even greater extent. They are ‘visitors’ of the theatrical performance and the author’s role is to allow them to create their own theatrical journey, deliberately to dream. Terayama’s *shigaigeki* frees this idea from the boundaries of the theatre building and takes it down to the city streets, where he achieves the theatricalization of reality and spectators lose their intrinsic properties.

Although Terayama is certainly the *angura* author who, more than any other, challenged medium boundaries, it is true that his approach is grounded on the more general context of Japan’s artistic *avant-garde* during the sixties. Even in cinema, the ultimate reproducible medium, figures such as Matsumoto Toshio and the experimental group VAN mixed filming with art, performances and various modes of projection. Thus, they may be considered as forerunners

leading to Terayama's experimentations. These experiences also testify to the 'intermedial atmosphere' that characterised Japanese cinema between the Sixties and the Seventies. Therefore, when Terayama adapted his *kankyakuron* to cinema, the following concept was already clear:

The seemingly material constraints of the filmic medium are not actually capable of restricting expression in the ways they first appear. In fact, the opposite may in fact be true: by establishing an assumption like the screen's impenetrability, the materiality of cinema creates fictional potential using those expectations. (Ridgely 2010, 120)

In the first phase of his approach to the screen, Terayama tries to bring movies into the audience's dimension through proper cinematographic strategies, like breaking the fourth wall. However, the structure of the monologues of *Sho o suteyo* is still properly theatrical, and Terayama's attempt merely results in a verbal confrontation. In the second phase, the cinema theatre is used as a performative space and the spectator - although not physically involved - becomes part of the creative process, which does not end with the shooting, but continues during the projection. Therefore, this phase is marked by experiments on and off the screen, and creative use of projector effects and the space between screen and spectator. In the last phase, audience's participation is active as was the case for his 'theatrical' *shigaigeki*, thus fulfilling within the cinema medium Terayama's theory of works created half by the author and half by the public. Spectators are no longer exclusively 'viewers', but their role overlaps with the creator's and screen boundaries become fluid to include theatre's 'uniqueness' in the cinema space. The movie is transformed from an object of passive contemplation into a non-repeatable event, which requests audience performativity.

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