

1 Introduction

Satō Tadao (1930-2022), who by the sheer range and scope of his contributions deserves the distinction as Japan's foremost film scholar, recalls how during his school days in the immediate postwar years, he sometimes escaped his provincial hometown and went up to the capital on something akin to a shopping spree to appease his unquenchable thirst for cinema.

To read film scripts, I went through a lot of trouble in my youth. At the time, I was a student at a railroad engineering college in Niigata, but on a couple of Saturday evenings every year, I took my savings and got on a night train to Tokyo. Those were the postwar days of inconvenient transportation, so on most occasions, I slept the nine hours it took, crouching on newspapers spread along the aisle. I would spend the entire Sunday roaming around used bookstores in the Kanda area, looking for journals and books that might contain old scenario masterpieces [*shinario meisaku*]. Old journals and the like were cheap, so I could buy a lot. Owing to this, I could not afford any other hobbies but did not mind in the least. After stuffing the amassed journals in my rucksack, I returned to Niigata on another night train and on Monday morning went straight from the station to my classes. (Satō 1975, 290)



Figure 1 Yaguchi Shoten, located in Tokyo's Jinbōchō used bookstore district, was founded in 1918 and specialises in film and theatre-related publications. Note the word 'scenario' on the signboard. The photo taken by the author in April 2024

Aside from the particulars of his itinerary, Satō appears to be describing a practice that was common among the members of his post-war generation with profound interest in cinema. At the time, the Japanese film industry was on a quick track to recovery after years of ideological pressure and material shortages. However, insufficient film preservation practices, together with firebomb campaigns at the end of the war that reduced the country's major cities into a wasteland, had all but ensured that the majority of actual film reels, made from highly inflammable nitrate stock, were forever lost. Satō (1975, 289) admits that reading the scenarios of celebrated prewar films no longer available for watching, usually resulted in convincing him of their historical significance, which he had hitherto possessed no means to validate. The above personal recollection attests to the crucial role that published film scripts played for the largely self-educated cinephiles as a way to experience and reconnect with a body of cinematic tradition that had disappeared in its visual guise but could – with the aid of some imagination – still be retrieved in a textual form from the pages of film journals, script anthologies, and volumes dedicated to the work of individual scriptwriters.

Film scripts (or scenarios, *shinario* in Japanese) first began to appear in various periodicals dedicated to cinema during the silent era in the mid-1920s. Among their many conceivable functions, scenarios served as a point of reference and education for aspiring scriptwriters, a profession still relatively novel within the emerging film industry at the time. Although the early 1930s saw a proliferation of script-writing manuals, often translated from various European languages, the method of ‘observe and learn’ was regarded as the more effective one for learning the tricks of the trade. Coinciding with the advent of sound cinema in the mid-1930s, this utilitarian approach was augmented by calls to treat scenarios as autonomous literary texts, which prompted further publication efforts. The casual reading of film scripts arguably reached its peak after the war when such texts appeared regularly in all major Japanese film journals, as well as reprinted in numerous special issues and book series. This fascination with scenarios, peaking around the year 1959, was accompanied by critical studies on scenario authors (*shinario sakka*) that effectively (re)evaluated film history from an alternative viewpoint. The viability of mass-publishing scenarios appears to have run parallel to the fortunes of the Japanese studio system of filmmaking, which underwent a stark decline from which it never fully recovered by the mid-1960s.

Some years prior to the milieu that Satō was describing, and with the country still at war, a salaryman named Hashimoto Shinobu (1918-2018) was creatively making use of his spare time during the daily commute to work and back on a different train bound for Himeji in western Japan. He dedicated these two slots of fifty minutes to his favourite pastime, writing film scripts on a specially devised clipboard; during the evening rush hour, he had to perform the task while standing. Back at home, Hashimoto would transcribe his day’s work on special manuscript paper (*genkō yōshi*) (Hashimoto 2015, 26). Hashimoto had developed an interest in scriptwriting while recuperating at a rehabilitation facility in rural Okayama, where he stayed upon receiving a tuberculosis diagnosis after being enlisted to military service. He had failed to bring anything to read and seemed visibly bored to his fellow patients. In his memoir, *Fukugan no eizō* (2006, translated into English as *Compound Cinematics*), Hashimoto recollects the following momentous incident.

At some point I noticed someone moving on the corridor-side bed next to mine. When I looked over, a smallish fellow sitting up in his bed with a book in hand offered it to me saying, “If you like, you might read this”. I responded to this unexpected kindness with a bob of my head and an “oh, thanks”, and accepted a somewhat thick magazine with the words “Japanese Cinema” printed on the cover. I opened it, but finding no articles to my taste, flipped through the pages until I came upon a screenplay in the back. I

read the first three or four pages, tilting my head in puzzlement, but continued on and asked the man when I was done, “This is a scenario... a film scenario?”

“It is”, he answered.

“I’m surprised it’s so simple... Really simple, isn’t it?”

There was a curious expression on the small man’s face.

“I feel like even I could write something of this level.”

The small man, sitting cross-legged on his bed, gave me a wry smile. “No, no, they’re not that easy to write.”

“No, compared to this, even I could do better. Who’s the great-Japanese writer of these?”

The smallish man from 63rd Regiment, Matsue army hospital - Isuke Narita - looked a little flustered, and with a bewildered grimace that contorted his face he replied, “A person called Mansaku Itami”.

“Mansaku Itami?” I parroted, somewhat argumentatively.

“Then I’ll write a scenario and send it to this Mansaku Itami.” (Hashimoto 2015, 14-15)

However, writing a script based on his experiences at the sanatorium proved to be more difficult than Hashimoto had initially imagined. Eventually, it took him three years to complete it, and even in 1942, when he was finally able to fulfil the promise to his late friend at the hospital and send a final draft to Itami Mansaku (1900-46), he remained realistic about his chances of being noticed. Against all expectations, a reply soon arrived, in which the venerable scriptwriter went to lengths to “pinpoint weaknesses in [Hashimoto’s] work and even offered specific guidance for what and how to revise” (Hashimoto 2015, 18). The correspondence between Hashimoto and Itami continued through the remaining war years until the latter’s death in 1946. Hashimoto, whose recovery from illness had more than a little to do with his newly found enthusiasm, became one of the leading Japanese scriptwriters of his or any generation. When he passed away after a long and celebrated career at the age of 100 in 2018, he had outlived nearly all his contemporaries from what is commonly known as the Golden Age of Japanese cinema.

Hashimoto’s writing attracted widespread attention with his very first produced script for the film *Rashōmon* (1950, co-written and directed by Kurosawa Akira, 1910-1998),¹ which, unexpectedly to everyone involved, garnered considerable international acclaim upon winning the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival in 1951. This proved to be a turning point for both its director and the global

1 Hashimoto’s first draft, an adaptation of Akutagawa Ryūnosuke’s (1892-1927) short story *Yabu no naka* (*In a Grove*, 1922), was thoroughly rewritten by the more experienced Kurosawa.



Figure 2
Hashimoto Shinobu, pictured during his time at the Okayama Disabled Veterans' Rehabilitation Facility. Image sourced from *Fukugan no eizō* (2006)

exposure of Japanese cinema that it helped initiate. Hashimoto's early career coincided with an era in Japanese film history when the names and distinctive styles of major scriptwriters were well known and held in high esteem among critics and audiences alike. Film histories commonly point out several notable proponents from the pre-war period, but according to most relevant accounts, it was the immediate postwar condition that granted the profession and its role in filmmaking a new visibility. This elevation in ranks was underlined by the use of the semi-literary term scenario author to mark those considered to be the best in the field. This designation relied on the production of original scripts that often revealed willingness to engage with serious social issues, not always favoured by the commercial imperatives of the studio system, as well as an aptitude for adapting literature for the screen during the second boom of *bungei eiga* (literary film) in the 1950s.²

² See McDonald (2000, 46-82) on literary adaptations in 1951-59. Unfortunately, McDonald does not discuss the contributions of scriptwriters/adapters, which is an example of the director-centred scholarship once prevalent in studies of Japanese cinema.

The agency of scriptwriters has been brought into discussion on various occasions across the history of Japanese cinema. Particularly well-documented are the contributions of silent era writers such as Susukita Rokuhei (1899-1960) and Yamagami Itarō (1903-45). Working predominantly in the *jidaigeki* (period film) genre during the late 1920s, their reputation equals that of the directors and star actors with whom they collaborated. Frequently noted from the postwar era is the extent of creative influence of writers Yoda Yoshikata (1909-91) and Noda Kōgo (1893-1968) upon the mature cinematic styles of the directors Mizoguchi Kenji (1898-1956) and Ozu Yasujirō (1903-63), respectively.³ The late-career surge of Naruse Mikio (1905-69) would be unimaginable without the contributions of two female scriptwriters, Mizuki Yōko (1910-2003) and Tanaka Sumie (1908-2000).⁴ These few examples alone suggest that placing attention on scriptwriting has the capacity to complicate the notion of authorship in cinema, often located in the director. This change of focus also provides visibility to the creative work of several women in the field of cultural production that in Japan has traditionally been an extremely male-centred endeavour.

Back at the rehabilitation centre, Hashimoto's new friend had been correct about Itami being one of the country's best scriptwriters. But he was more than that. Despite his relatively young age, Itami had already gone through an illustrious career as one of the major film director of the 1930s, who was particularly noted for his revisionist approach towards period drama. At the time when the correspondence with Hashimoto began, Itami was similarly lying in a sickbed with tuberculosis that had forced him into semi-retirement. As a way to compensate for this absence from the field, he was writing a regular column in the leading wartime film journal mentioned by Hashimoto, *Nippon eiga* (Japanese Cinema), between 1941 and 1942. In these publications, Itami reviewed the latest scenarios by Japanese writers, and much like in his reply to his younger colleague, identified the scripts' shortcomings and suggested revisions. By so doing, he was also the first to draw attention to the early writings of such yet-unknown filmmakers as Kurosawa.

Only a few years earlier, while still in his prime, Itami had been an advocate of a discursive effort that sought to (re)consider scenarios as autonomous and intermedial texts, bridging the fields of literature and cinema.

³ The watershed moments in the careers of Mizoguchi and Ozu are commonly identified as the beginning of their collaborations with Yoda on *Naniwa ereji* (*Osaka Elegy*) and *Gion no kyōdai* (*The Sisters of Gion*, both 1936), and with Noda on *Banshun* (*Late Spring*, 1949), respectively.

⁴ Either Mizuki or Tanaka received scriptwriting credits for twelve of the sixteen films that Naruse directed between *Repast* (*Meshi*, 1951) and *Anzukko* (1958).



Figure 3

A photograph of Itami Mansaku, taken during his final illness by a childhood friend and fellow scriptwriter, Itō Daisuke. Sourced from *Itami Jūzō Kinenkan Gaidobukku* (2007)

I am one of those who believes that in the form of the scenario lies a unique appeal [*omoshiromi*] that cannot be found in any other type of literature. [...] While being primitive in form, its implied meanings [*ganchiku*] and suggestive power [*shisaryoku*] surpass any literary craftsmanship. (Itami 1937, 21-2)

The particular and distinctive format of the Japanese scenario first developed through early encounters with Hollywood practices and was subsequently informed by the changes imposed on filmmaking with the advent of sound cinema. Itami was not alone in drawing flattering comparisons between film scripts and literature proper: a collective attempt by major film critics of the day to provide scenarios with their due place and visibility, the Scenario Literature Movement (*Shinario bungaku undō*), succeeded in proposing new functions for scenarios as well as ways in which scriptwriting could act as a catalyst for the future development of Japanese cinema.

The above brief vignettes about Satō, Japan's most important film critic, Hashimoto, the universally lauded postwar scriptwriter, and Itami, an influential prewar director, are linked not only by crowded trains and debilitating disease. These are the stories of three individuals whose lives and passion for cinema were deeply shaped by their engagement with scenarios. These are not isolated examples: similar accounts keep surfacing in recollections by other filmmakers and critics, attesting to the prominent place

scenarios and scriptwriting still hold in Japanese film culture. Anyone with a more pronounced interest must surely have noticed this simply while browsing the back issues of periodicals such as *Kinema junpō* (The Movie Times) or *Eiga hyōron* (Film Criticism), where full scripts of recent films often comprise the final quarter of any given volume. It is all the more surprising, then, that so far no serious attempt has been made to examine this phenomenon relating to cinema in a comprehensive manner.

This monograph aims to provide a cultural history of scriptwriting and scenarios in Japan. It is the presence of scenarios and the heightened interest and visibility they have been given that stands at the centre of my research. I will be conducting what is mostly a contextual survey, keeping the textual analysis of particular scenarios outside the limits of this study. My sources include (but are not limited to) film histories, (auto)biographical accounts, memoirs, interviews, critical debates, and various paratexts of published scenarios.⁵ Above all, my study addresses the multiple ways in which scriptwriting and scenarios have been relevant for both film historiography and audience reception as a semi-autonomous discourse within the larger field of Japanese cinema. Admittedly, I have had to navigate what are mostly fragmentary accounts, hoping that by focusing on early sound cinema and the Golden Age of the 1950s, I can present and examine several key moments when the entire discursive field stood out in real prominence.

The scholarship on Japanese cinema has undergone significant proliferation and diversification during the decades since the publication of early landmarks such as Tanaka Jun'ichirō's (1902-89) *Nihon eiga hattatsushi* (History of the Development of Japanese Film, 1957) and Joseph L. Anderson and Donald Richie's *The Japanese Film: Art and Industry* (1959). However, scriptwriting has remained at the margins of an otherwise wide array of studies focused on a variety of aspects of Japanese film culture. Arguably, this underrepresentation in scholarship mirrors the problematic position that scriptwriters and the script hold in the process of film production. Even now, directors are generally considered single-handedly responsible for a film's form and content, and by default are uncritically granted overwhelming visibility and focal position in scholarship. Perhaps symptomatically for the studies that have followed, the overall motto of *The Japanese Film: Art and Industry* reads: "[D]edicated to that little band of men who have tried to make the Japanese [sic] film industry what every film industry

5 I will mostly refrain from examining scriptwriting manuals, a topic which is forbid-
dingly broad and deserves a separate study.

should be: a directors' cinema" (Anderson, Richie 1982, 5).⁶ It should be noted, however, that in the final essay to the updated version (1982) of the same book, Richie sought some balance to the earlier statement by repeatedly discussing the contributions of Hashimoto, in particular, and in the space of two decades separating the two editions seems to have moved closer to the consensus among Japanese critics about the script being a crucial factor in film production and reception.

Although possible approaches to studying scriptwriting are yet uncharted in English-language scholarship on Japanese cinema, I will be drawing upon some helpful pioneering efforts that have looked at corresponding phenomena in Hollywood. These include Steven Maras's *Screenwriting: History, Theory and Practice* (2009) and Steven Price's *The Screenplay: Authorship, Theory and Criticism* (2010) and *A History of the Screenplay* (2013). The range of approaches in current screenwriting studies becomes apparent from the titles of these books, with the former examining discourses that surround the concept of *screenwriting* while the latter focuses on the format of the *screenplay* and the implications it entails. A few earlier studies have adopted a different angle and attempted polemically to bring to the fore the contributions of several individual Hollywood screenwriters. These include Richard Corliss's *Talking Pictures: Screenwriters in the American Cinema* (1974) and David Kipen's *The Schreiber Theory: A Radical Rewrite of American Film History* (2006). Both of these studies are clearly motivated by a revisionist drive towards the auteur theory and try to replace the director with the screenwriter as the source of authorial voice in filmmaking. At the same time, what still remains an understudied aspect in screenwriting studies is the function of the reader and the role of readership as a point of reception.

David Bordwell has noted that "[i]n most film histories, masterworks and innovations rise monumentally out of a hazy terrain whose contours remain unknown. In other arts, however, the ordinary work is granted considerable importance" (Bordwell, Staiger, Thompson 1985, 10). Indeed, histories of cinema generally move from one peak to another without paying much attention to the standard practices of, in Thomas Schatz's (1996) term, "the genius of the system" that, in fact, supports the few elevated to distinction. By way of an analogy, scriptwriting in its entirety, even if universally regarded as the

6 In the main part of the book, which resonates with the auteurist tendency of the day, scriptwriters and the function of the script are only rarely referred to. The exceptions are Kurosawa's scripts for other filmmakers and Shindō Kaneto (1912-2012) as the main writer for the perennial favourite, Yoshimura Kōzaburō (1911-2000). The single paragraph in the content section where scriptwriting is mentioned relates to the general poor quality of scripts, implying that only a genius director is able to save the day.

backbone or blueprint of filmmaking, seems to fall into this kind of obscurity in the shadow of the more familiar narrative ‘props’ such as genres, directors, and actors, all deemed more suitable for telling the (hi)story of cinema. In effect, histories of scriptwriting rarely seem to get written. Nor is the topic displayed to any notable extent in most general film histories, which tend to mention scriptwriting only when it is considered an inextricable part of a particular developmental phase. Perhaps it has seemed disproportionate to focus too narrowly on this single aspect of the filmmaking process, but one is still left to wonder why, among the vast amount of literature on all conceivable aspects of cinema, a comprehensive history of scriptwriting is yet to materialise.

There are several explanations for this neglect of scriptwriting. First, a common perception seems to be that the process of scriptwriting, while admittedly crucial to the early stages of production, loses its relevance once the words on paper have become images on film. Furthermore, unlike a film that has an undeniable completeness to it – a definitive version that emerges from the editing room and onto the screen for audiences to watch – film scripts necessarily have many versions, depending on the stage of production in which they are employed. This is a question one must always keep in mind when encountering texts of this variety. Is it a story outline, any one of the writer’s (writers’) drafts, or the final version that is handed to the director? Or is it the shooting script, already complete with suggested alterations? A continuity script with all cinematographical details added? Or is it a transcript of the film, accommodating all changes made during editing? Steven Maras has pinpointed this indeterminacy as the perennial ‘object problem’: as long as there is no definitive version of the script, it can never become a stable object of study (Maras 2009, 11). This ‘problem’ is often tied to availability issues, the much-repeated (but not always fully substantiated) fact that film scripts have commonly been hard to come by, hidden away by the studios who own the copyright, and very rarely published (Price 2010, 94-5). Subsequently, Ian W. Macdonald has proposed a solution to the ‘object problem’. He suggests replacing the term ‘screenplay’ with ‘screen idea’, based on the following rationale:

The Barthesian view gives us permission to accept the shifting, changing nature of the screenplay, instead of insisting that we find and fix an object for study. I suggest the imaginary of the Screen Idea allows us to accommodate both traditionalist and Barthesian perspectives of the screenplay. It allows us to view such documents as expressions of discourse, as plural and shared, as the Text rather than the Work, as part of the larger work of production. It also allows us to focus on the tangible document without needing to name it as definitive, as completed. (Macdonald 2013, 19)

While a mix of deep-rooted ideological and practical assumptions may have kept scriptwriting out of focus for most film scholars, it is the particular position occupied by the scriptwriting manual that has certainly contributed to holding back historical studies. Often written in a highly accessible style, a typical manual represents a ‘theoretical’ inquiry into the structure and functions of the film script and its applications. This approach is almost always accompanied by pragmatic concerns about how to produce marketable products. This goal is well underscored by the double emphasis in the title of Frances Marion’s influential work, *How to Write and Sell Film Stories* (1937). Arguably, the position of the manual has strengthened over the last few decades with the emergence of screenwriting gurus such as Syd Field and Robert McKee. Since the late 1970s, their work has focused on advocating a dominant type of Hollywood narrative with its reliance on the Aristotelian three-act structure, development of character arcs, embarking on a mythical journey, etc (Price 2013, 204-7).⁷

It is important to note that scriptwriting handbooks often strategically omit any historical or developmental aspects in order to present scriptwriting as a supposedly timeless craft. The removal of the temporal factor is hardly surprising, as one of the central concerns of these how-to books is to establish clear, universal rules to be adhered to in order to create a well-functioning and marketable piece of writing. It goes without saying that any hint at the possibility that a different set of rules might exist, or might have existed, would greatly disrupt such an understanding. As a result, the prominence of manuals all but erases the possibility of historical engagement with scriptwriting due to the single-minded agenda of providing a universal, and necessarily ahistorical, template for screenwriting. In Japan, too, there is no scarcity of such how-to books with a universalist approach, as well as a wealth of translations of foreign writing manuals.⁸ However, there are a few rare examples that have sought

⁷ Notable works that sustain this understanding of scriptwriting include Syd Field’s *Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting* (1979), Robert McKee’s *Story: Substance, Style, and the Principles of Screenwriting* (1998), and Christian Vogler’s *The Writer’s Journey: Mythic Structure for Storytellers and Screenwriters* (1998).

⁸ Notable examples include Takeda Akira’s *Eiga kyakuhonron* (On Film Script, 1928), Mori Iwao’s *Tōki sairento eiga kyakuhon nijūkō* (Twenty Lectures on Talkie and Film Scripts, 1930), Sasaki Norio’s *Hassei eiga kantoku to kyakuhon ron* (On Sound Film Director and Script, 1931), Yasuda Kiyoo’s *Eiga kyakuhon kōseiron* (On the Structure of Film Script, 1935) and *Tōki shinario kōseiron* (On the Structure of Talkie Scenario, 1937), Kurata Fumindo’s *Shinarioron* (On Scriptwriting, 1940), Noda Kōgo’s *Shinario kōzōron* (On the Structure of Scenario, 1952), Kobayashi Masaru’s *Shinario daiikka* (First Steps in Scriptwriting, 1956), Shindō Kaneto’s *Shinario no kōsei* (The Structure of Scenario, 1959), Yasumi Toshio’s *Shinario kyōshitsu* (Scriptwriting Class, 1964), and Arai Hajime’s *Shinario no kiso gijutsu* (The Basic Techniques of Scriptwriting, 1985). Yasumi’s manual stands out by drawing extensively from Soviet theorists, while the

to bridge the gap between serving as a handbook and providing a historical perspective on scriptwriting practices. For instance, Okada Susumu's *Shinario sekkei* (Scenario Design, 1963), besides thoroughly theorising about the script structure, provides a model for distinguishing between different historical styles of Japanese scriptwriting. While how-to books remain outside the scope of this study, it is worth noting that they seem to function as something of an adversary that continues to both inform and undermine historiographical texts.

Conversely, there are studies that go beyond the universalist approach and engage with scriptwriting from a historical perspective. In what remains a definitive study of Hollywood practice, Janet Staiger's contributions to *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* (1985) use scriptwriting as one of the organising devices in her account of the early Hollywood production mode. Somewhat ironically, these sections come at the end of each chapter of the book, underscoring scriptwriting's uneasy position at the margins of film studies. Nevertheless, Staiger convincingly shows how the development of scriptwriting is closely intertwined with film history, as the shifts in industrial modes also necessitated respective changes in script format. The genesis of screenwriting studies in the late 2000s is clearly indebted to Staiger's work: both Maras and Price draw heavily from it, and Price goes as far as positing that "all subsequent studies of screenplay history need to take account of Staiger's work as a starting point" (Price 2013, 6). A remaining question is to what extent Staiger's typology can be applied to studying Japanese practices, an issue that I have addressed in a survey of historiographies on Japanese scriptwriting (Kitsnik 2023).

The present study contributes to filling an important gap in the scholarship on Japanese cinema. At the same time, it hopes to complement the relatively recent and still developing discipline of screenwriting studies. In fact, Price notes that "[o]ne can anticipate that significant studies of writing in other film industries, such as those of India and Japan, will emerge in the near future" (Price 2013, 20). This book is an attempt to rise to this challenge. On a more general level, it aims to contribute to the discursive turn in recent film studies, which seeks to uncover and consider alternative resources for film analysis and sites of film reception. Already two decades

others remain less explicit about their particular influences. What is often regarded as first screenwriting manual in Japan, Kaeriyama Norimasa's *Katsudō shashingeki no sōsaku to satsueihō* (The Production and Photography of Moving Picture Drama, 1917), heavily drew from various American sources (Bernardi 2001, 77). Translations into Japanese include Vsevolod Pudovkin's *Eiga kantoku to eiga kyakuhonron* (On the Film Director and Film Script, 1930), Frances Marion's *Shinario kōwa* (How to Write and Sell Film Stories, 1938), Sergei Eisenstein's *Eiga shinarioron* (On Film Scenarios, 1957), John Howard Lawson's *Gekisaku to shinario sakuō* (Theory and Technique of Playwriting and Screenwriting, 1958), and many others.

ago, Abé Mark Nornes astutely pointed out what he perceived to be a common neglect of textual sources in the study of Japanese film.

Most histories of the Japanese cinema concentrate on textual analysis and auteur study to the exclusion on all else. This is generally true of most writing on Asian cinema, where little attention has been paid to other discourses surrounding cinema, particularly those involving written texts. (Nornes 2003, xviii)

The kind of discourses to which Nornes refers have been meticulously examined in a few remarkable works on the early history of Japanese cinema. These include Joanne Bernardi's *Writing in Light: The Silent Scenario and the Japanese Pure Film Movement* (2001) and Aaron Gerow's *Visions of Japanese Modernity: Articulations of Cinema, Nation, and Spectatorship* (2010), both of which continue to inform and inspire my own research. At the same time, it is all too apparent that both studies have opted to use alternative sources partly due to the unavailability of visual material from their chosen periods in film history, in what could be described as a quasi-archaeological approach.

Bernardi's *Writing in Light* remains, by some distance, the single most important contribution to English language scholarship on Japanese scriptwriting. This monograph could be regarded as a much welcome curiosity, because even in Japan, a separate study with this particular focus and scope is yet to emerge.⁹ In this seminal book, Bernardi uncovers and collates a discourse from various early film journals from the 1910s. She argues that the emergence of the scenario was part of a larger set of innovations first proposed by the critics involved in the so-called Pure Film Movement (*Jun'eigageki undō*). The proposals included radical alterations to certain practices common at the day that were believed to be holding back the development of Japanese cinema, such as abolishing *benshi* (silent film narrator) and replacing *oyama* (female impersonators) with actresses.

My research differs from Bernardi's study by tackling a considerably wider range of issues related to scriptwriting and scenarios. For Bernardi, scriptwriting appears to hold interest only to the extent that it contributes to the nascent Pure Film Movement. For this reason, the study is necessarily limited to a relatively short period, relying on a teleological model that seeks to identify a particular

⁹ In Japan, a handful of books are dedicated to the life and work of individual writers, the main task of which is to reprint key scenarios and provide biographical detail. For instance, Takenaka Rō's *Yamagami Itarō no sekai* (The World of Yamagami Itarō, 1976), Murai Atsushi's *Kyakuhonka Hashimoto Shinobu no sekai* (The World of the Scriptwriter Hashimoto Shinobu, 2005), and Kasahara Kazuo, Arai Haruhiko and Suga Hidemi's *Shōwa no geki: Eiga kyakuhonka Kasahara Kazuo* (The Drama of Shōwa: Film Writer Kasahara Kazuo, 2002).

watershed moment in the history of Japanese cinema. Predominantly concerned with the question of origins, Bernardi's study is also representative of what Price calls 'quixotic attempts' of looking for 'firsts' in screenwriting (Price 2013, 22). Admittedly, Bernardi's study provides valuable insight into the often erratic formats of early Japanese scriptwriting, but is less concerned, if at all, with the film script in its mature form that only emerged in the late 1930s.¹⁰

While extensively employing a variety of textual rather than audio-visual sources of Japanese film, the present study also aims to address the material aspect of cinema, which in this case is embodied by the published scenario. By focusing on this seemingly paratextual source, we can consider the capacity of a verbal text to undermine or even replace the audio-visual product that is film. A published scenario presents a full-length account of a film (sometimes unproduced), which crucially distances it from teasers, trailers, synopses, and posters: a variety of paratexts that represent only a condensed version of the central text. I will argue that while it was initially considered a phase in film production, the scenario in its published form became an important part of the audience's film-viewing experience. Ultimately, scenarios published for the general reader suggest an alternative sociality and materiality to film reception, which until quite recently was considered communal and ephemeral, replacing it with something that is both private and tangible.

Before proceeding, a few comments are in order regarding the terminology I will use throughout this study. The reader might have already noticed that I prefer 'scriptwriting' to the more common 'screenwriting', as well as 'scenario' and 'script' to 'screenplay'. Admittedly, these choices are not without their ideological implications, as one of the aims of this study is to draw attention to the verbal and material character of scriptwriting and scenarios. As terminology is at the very core of any discourse, employing the vocabulary of screenwriting studies based on Hollywood examples uncritically, and not considering viable alternatives, could potentially lead to the misrepresentation of various crucial aspects of Japanese scriptwriting.

Both Maras and Price have put considerable effort into historicising the term 'screenplay', which, although currently the most

10 Towards the end of her study, Bernardi even seems to fall back on the 'great man theory' by extensively focusing on the novelist Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's brief stint in film production. Ironically, Tanizaki contributed very little to the future format of the scenario. Certainly, an interest in Tanizaki is understandable due to a wealth of studies that examine his involvement in the new medium, and because his recognised status as a literary author might seem like a way to legitimise research of an otherwise marginal genre. Unfortunately, it is precisely this gesture that effectively undermines its own goal by introducing minor texts by a major author who also happened to write scripts, becoming a case of literary studies trivia rather than a study of scriptwriting.

common expression in English denoting the film script, is highly problematic. This is because it points to a certain format that emerged from the specific industrial needs and practices of Hollywood. Unlike ‘screenplay’, which gestures to the film ‘screen’ on the one hand and to the drama ‘play’ on the other, the main Japanese term for scriptwriting and scenario, *shinario*, seems to block direct appeal to both of these spheres. The use of ‘*shinario*’ instead brings the textual aspect of the script to the surface, while refuting the ambiguity of ‘screenwriting’.¹¹ To avoid similar misconceptions, I will use the term ‘scriptwriter’ rather than ‘screenwriter’.

Fortunately for us, the noun ‘*shinario*’ is also remarkably inclusive, appearing in the titles of scriptwriting manuals and collections of published scenarios alike.¹² By extension, the scriptwriter is called *shinario raitā* (scenario writer), or *shinario sakka* (scenario author). Although ‘scenario’ was widely used in English during the silent era concurrently with terms such as ‘photo play’, it is largely obsolete now. This allows us to use it exclusively for Japanese (published) scripts and not as a synonym for other varieties with different functions within the filmmaking process.

In this study, I will examine the phenomenon of Japanese scriptwriting, drawing from various sources that bring both the process and the work of scriptwriters into focus. Arguably, these efforts were greatly supported by the extensive practice of publishing and reading scenarios, which in turn elicited comparisons to literature and facilitated the emergence of a new type of reader.

In Chapter Two, I will focus on the textual format of the Japanese scenario, pointing out early foreign influences and tracing the development towards master-scene script as its standard. The chapter also offers an outline of the field of scenario publishing and demonstrates how the serialisation of film scripts in various periodicals, and their subsequent anthologising, functioned as a site for canon formation. I will also explore the implications arising from the medium specificity suggested by the standardised use of the manuscript paper (*genkō yōshi*).

11 This ambiguity has prompted some scholars to ponder whether it could also metaphorically include the actual act of filmmaking as ‘writing on screen’.

12 Other available terms refer to the specific sites of their usage. The most common of these, *kyakuhon* (play, script) was borrowed from theatre terminology and initially used as a synonym for *shinario* but has since mid-1930s been used mostly for title credits; in the realm of scriptwriting, it has a somewhat bureaucratic tinge. However, it is from here that a common nickname for the script, *hon*, and for scriptwriters, *hon'ya*, is derived. Another term, *kyakushoku*, can be translated as adaptation or adapted script. Finally, terms such as *daihon* (shooting script) and *konte* (continuity script) relate to pre- and post-production phases.

Chapter Three focuses on the *Shinario bungaku undō* (Scenario Literature Movement), which sought to consider scenarios as a new literary genre. I will delineate several topics that emerged in the course of the debate, including the scenario's autonomous status in the cultural field, its role in inviting new talent from outside the industry, and its archival capacity for film preservation. I will examine the particular faculties of various types of readerships, including their function as film criticism by Itami Mansaku.

Chapter Four is dedicated to the social and material conditions of scriptwriting. I will demonstrate how the perceived critical status and situational learning in a homosocial milieu has proffered a particular image of the writer and their work. I will discuss the writing space as exemplified by the regular inn (*jōyado*), while problematising this by introducing gender issues and contributions of female writers. A discussion on script scouting practises and Mizuki Yōko's work will address the extent of a scriptwriter's agency.

In the Coda, I will revisit some of the issues that relate to the authorship and ownership of scenarios.

Japanese names are rendered in Japanese name order, surname followed by given name. All translations, unless noted otherwise, are my own.