"*Junbungaku* Goes to the Movies: Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and *katsudō shashin*"

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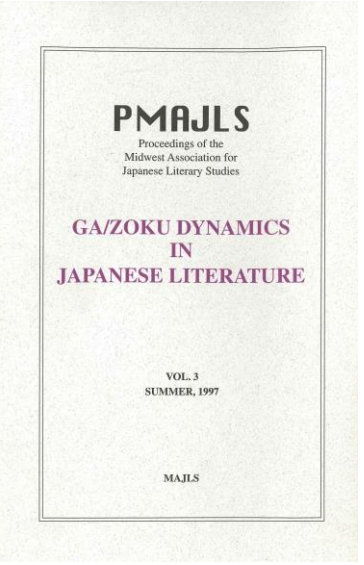

PMAJLS 3:
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Junbungaku Goes to the Movies: Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and *katsudō shashin*

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The *ga/zoku* dynamic is complicated in the early twentieth century by the appearance of film, a popular art that enabled modern fiction to claim comparatively greater prestige. By 1933 the economist Ōkuma Nobuyuki noted the wide appeal of director Kenji Mizoguchi in comparison with Izumi Kyōka,[1] a writer whose stories were the sources of important Mizoguchi films, and who decades earlier had served as the *shitamachi* alternative to the higher aspirations of *junbungaku* (pure literature). The preoccupation of Japanese film with literary adaptation is symptomatic of its alterity; film nonetheless holds a similar if more subtle fascination for narrative fiction, especially in the 1910s and 20s. Cinema infiltrated the urban and psychological landscapes of the late Meiji and Taishō years with effects on literature no less persuasive than the imported textual affiliations writing more readily upheld.

Telling stories with pictures was not new to Japan, but the power of perspectival realism in photographs that moved was. Imported film changed urban culture, but did the realism of both native and foreign film change subjective vision? Perspectival realism became and remains "a transcultural standard of pictorial representation" because of the rapid spread of cinema around the globe at the turn of the century.[2] The ideological implications of

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[1]Ōkuma Nobuyuki, Bungaku no tame no keizai (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1933), 111.

[2]W. J. T. Mitchell, Iconology, Image, Text, Ideology (Chicago,

this standard are profound, because vision informed by perspective is "a vision in the first person that is coherent, that evinces mastery, and that would imply as its condition the position of a subject that could eventually reclaim it for its own, as its property, its own representation."[3] Meiji writers had adjusted their vision according to the optics of the European novel, but film even more efficiently repositioned the subject according to the fixed perspective of western modes of realist representation. A realist perspective, a subjective point of view, a vantage from which one sees without distortion---these in turn became the chief concerns of Japanese writing, concerns fostered by modernism but made urgent and accessible by cinema, the most modern of arts.

While his contemporaries, notably Tanizaki Jun'ichirō and Osanai Kaoru, wrote and produced motion pictures, the relationship of Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892-1927) to film demonstrates the power of cinema to redirect even reluctant vision according to the "eyewitness" view of modern realism. Reluctant in that he refers to only a handful of the films he saw during the dozen years of his career, and most of these he regarded as unmemorable. The experience of reading made a deeper impress on the mind, he believed, since the speed of events in a motion picture exceeded the rate at which memory could record them.[4] But he anticipated films more compelling, if "the people that appeared in them were to talk,"[5] and, astonishingly for so casual a viewer, more solid "if shot from

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University of Chicago Press, 1986), 73.

[3]Hubert Damisch, The Origin of Perspective, John Goodman, trans. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1995), 32.

[4]Akutagawa Ryūnosuke zenshū, 12 vols. (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1978), 8:66, hereafter abbreviated as ARZ.

[5]Ibid.

several angles."[6] He was charmed less by the illusory power of the moving picture than by the correlation it promises between itself and reality, a rapport that inspired two short narratives, "Katakoi" and "Kage." These stories establish his interest in the psychology of the spectator, and in the processes of cohesion and disruption in spectator identification with the film subject. More than with cinema itself, both works are concerned with the relation of film to the viewer and to core issues of spectator experience: perspectival realism, the pleasurable dangers of the gaze, and the intrusion of the other.

Before turning to the two stories Akutagawa wrote about cinema, we can historicize them by turning to his own description of his first experience with film. In his memoir *Tsuioku* Akutagawa describes his initial encounter with the *katsudō shashin*:

> I was probably five or six when I saw a moving picture for the first time. I went with my father, if I remember rightly, to see this marvelous novelty at the Nishūrō in Ōkawabata. The motion pictures were not projected on a large screen as they are nowadays. The size of the image was a rather small four by six feet or so. Also, they had no real story, nor were they as complex as films are these days. I remember, among the pictures that evening, one of a man fishing. He hooked a big one and then fell head over heels back into the water. He wore some kind of straw hat, and behind the long fishing pole he held in his hand were reeds and willows waving in the wind. Oddly enough, though my memory may be wrong, I fancy the man looked something like Admiral Nelson.[7]

Reckoned by his age in this passage, the year was 1897. In February of that year Lumière's Cinématographe arrived in Japan

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[6]ARZ, 5:99

[7]ARZ, 8: 135.

with a program of one-minute films similar to the fishing movie he describes. The Nishūrō was a hall on the west side of the Ryōgoku Bridge in Chūō Ward; not a theater, the building accommodated scientific displays, public meetings, and art exhibitions. The moving picture was initially presented as a commercial spectacle, an educational experience, a demonstration of the unprecedented capacity of technology to reproduce the real. It is all the more meaningful to note then in this context that despite his assertion that *shashin no hanashi mo mata ima no yō ni fukuzatsu dewa nai* (the story of the film was not as complicates as they are nowadays) he dwells on its narrativity. It is evident in his description that the film he remembered was a work of narrative fiction, internally "edited" by a story-telling structure that ensured the coherence and temporal movement of its content. Though the film consists of a single one-minute shot, the camera achieves narrativity through the editing choices it makes in where to begin, when to end, and what to record. The film sets up the action, shows the man catching a big fish, then reverses viewer expectations by ending with the pratfall payoff. Though simple, the demands of western-style narrative are fully in place: a coherent subject, conflict and its resolution, a beginning, middle, and end.

The point is not that this film tells a story, but that it tells it in a realist mode and thereby hides its essential fictionality from the viewer. Akutagawa is impressed by the accumulation of details that surround and unify the subject: the straw hat, the fishing pole, the hooked fish, the reeds and willows in the background. The technological wonder of the moving picture, its illusory character, is passed over in favor of its realism, affirmed in remembered details. The "transcultural standard of pictorial representation" at work in Akutagawa's description is evident in the fact that what was remarkable to him as a child was

remarkable cotemporaneously to the first film spectators of Europe: natural incidentals spontaneously captured---background images that confirmed the reality of the scene. As Dai Vaughn notes, "people were startled not so much by the phenomenon of the moving photograph . . . as by its ability to portray spontaneities of which the theater was not capable. . . . That the inanimate should participate in self projection was astonishing."[8] Film commandeered the natural and material world to project the subject within narrative as real, and no longer as a fictionalized construction. The response of the first film audiences confirms the cross-cultural power of mimetic aesthetics, a radically different form of performance and representation for the Japanese viewer. Audiences were enthralled by realism's power over representation, by the "doubling back of the world into its own imagery."[9] The framed randomness and captured spontaneity of background movements affirmed the authority of resemblance, an authority achieved by the optics of fixed-point perspective, in the representation of the subject.

The authority of resemblance goes even further in its demand for subject identification. Akutagawa's recollection that the filmed man looks like Admiral Nelson demonstrates the mind's struggle to reconcile what it knows to be false with what it perceives to be actual. Realism insists so strongly on identification that memory has not only supplied an identity, it has chosen the most representative figure of western imperial power. The mention of Nelson seems to concede that with film a foreign kind of vision, one that presents itself as natural and universal, has colonized the mind. According to W. J. T. Mitchell, realism does not take power over the observer's eye,

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[8]"Let There Be Lumière," in Thomas Elsaesser, ed. Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative (British Film Institute, 1990), 65.

[9]Ibid., 65.

but rather stands for it by offering a transparent window onto "reality," an embodiment of a socially authorized and credible "eyewitness" perspective.[10] Akutagawa is not astonished by the moving picture's power to deceive, but by its realistic transparency. He understands the film to be at once familiar and exotic, ordinary and marvelous, but not illusory as well as real, only real. Realism has special authority because it purports to represent directly and without mediation. Secured by the science of fixed-point perspective, realist vision expresses the mystique of the colonizing eye, for it says of itself, "this is not just the way things look, this is the way things are, this is the truth." That mystique would define the terms of Akutagawa's vacillation between collaboration with western modes of literary and pictorial representation and resistance to their dominance.

His description of seeing *katsudō shashin* seems so inconsequential in the context of his memoirs and larger oeuvre, and yet the passage crystallizes not only a defining moment in his psychological and aesthetic development, but a threshold experience for Japanese culture. The western "scientific" vision that students at the Technical Art School or nascent writers of naturalist fiction struggled to domesticate in a Japanese context was immediately internalized by masses of ordinary people. "Suddenly it was everywhere; it swept away all else," wrote Kubota Mantarō of *katsudō shashin*,[11] and its sweep was not just geographical: cinema was an index of the interpenetration of cultural forces between the Sino-Japanese war of 1895 and the nineteen-thirties. The presence and availability of motion pictures transformed Tokyo into a city where the modes of

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[10]W. J. T. Mitchell, Picture Theory (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 325.

[11]Quoted in Edward Seidensticker, *High City, Low City* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 121.

presentation exchanged by the popular and prestige arts were redistributed as the new currency of modernism, a cultural movement that counted on realism for its intellectual authority as well as for its popular appeal.

Appropriately, the setting for Akutagawa's first story on cinema is Asakusa, the area of Tokyo transformed by a proliferation of movie theaters; and its central character is a young woman whose contemporaries transformed themselves into "modern girls" modeled on film stars. But change does not characterize Otoku, the subject of "Katakoi," for the realism of the cinema imprisons her when she falls in love not with a man but with his moving image on the screen. She is a self-styled geisha down on her luck as the story opens and recalls for an old friend "the strange tale of her amours." She confesses her girlhood passion for a foreign movie star, a man she had of course never met but saw only in films. She longs for him and wants to see him everyday, but has only enough spending money to go to the movies once a week. The theater is so full on one occasion she can get only a corner seat and so is forced to see him from a bad angle. "'The face I had yearned for was up there on the screen, but it was so strange, all I could see was how flat and how collapsed it looked. I was heartbroken, just heartbroken!'"[12] The absurd comedy of this moment does not diminish its ideological implications. The apparatus of realism traps the subject by requiring a fixed vision and singular view of the world.

Otoku lives with this disillusionment for ten years, for no matter how many films she sees, he never reappears, until one day by chance there he is on the screen. Now a geisha, she describes seeing him as though she has encountered an old lover: "'He had on that same coat and a walking stick, and looked just

[12]ARZ, 2: 35.

as he did when I was a girl. . . . he paused for a moment near the trees, turned toward me, tipped his hat, and smiled. He was greeting me! If I had known his name, I would have called out to him.'" Here "Katakoi" is a stunning anticipation of Woody Allen's *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, and, like the 1985 film, plays on "the frisson that occurs when life and art or, more broadly, reality and art, purport to be continuous."[13] That continuity is strengthened by the fact that the model for the screen actor whom Otoku loves was an actual person, the wildly popular French comedian Max Linder (1883-1925) who often played amorous rogues. "The elegant figure of Max, always impeccably dressed with hat, morning coat and stick,"[14] as he was known, is just as she describes him. Social reality is also at work here. Otoku's naiveté is that of the spectator, particularly the female spectator, as she has been constructed by classic films, in the words of Mary Ann Doane, to "collapse the opposition between the image and the real."[15] "Katakoi" imagines the limit case of that collapse as an enduring emotional impasse. The story juxtaposes misplaced love against the promise of realism and its failure, a relation spatialized in the movie theater where modern desire is created and thwarted by the same mechanism.

That mechanism is allegorized in levels of narration---the narrator hears the story from his friend who hears it from Otoku who tells her tale as the retelling of a narrated film. These levels box the story into multiple frames that readjust the ratio between vision and visualization, between the immediate and the mediated. The force of the narrative mechanism is strongest

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[13]Brigette Peucker, Incorporating Images: Film and the Rival Arts (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 105

[14]Roger Manvell, ed., The International Encyclopedia of Film (New York: Crown, 1972), 201.

[15]Mary Ann Doane, The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 1.

when Otoku describes the man's arrest at the end of the film:

> 'It seemed to be nighttime, all the scenes had a bluish cast. In that blueness . . . I looked at his face on the verge of weeping in that blueness. If you had seen it, I know it would have made you sad. The tears in his eyes, his mouth a little open . . . Then the *benshi* signaled the end, and the film stopped. There was nothing left but the white screen. . . . It had all vanished. Vanished into nothingness.'[16]

If there is any villain in this tale, it is the narrator in the theater, the *benshi*, who is not an interpreter but an intruder in her fantasy, a narrative reminder of the gap between reality and its representation. In nearly every paragraph of "Katakoi" is a reference to some mistaken belief, reversed expectation, frustrated ambition, or failed hope. The mediating authority of the *benshi* , the last defense of Japanese narrative against the forces of western representation, strives to keep open the gap between the real and the illusory.

Before turning to "Kage," a story that captures the dilemma of realism as it is experienced in cinema, it will be helpful to look first at "Nyotai " (The Female Body), a narrative that recapitulates the transition from pre-Meiji ways of looking to the distanced vision of both perspectival representation and scientific realism.[17] The story fixates aesthetic vision on a woman's body transformed into a beautiful object by the male gaze. A man is unable to sleep one night. He lies next to his nude wife and notices a louse on the bed. As he contemplates the differences in their mobility and perception, he suddenly sees her from the

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[16]ARZ. 2: 36-38.

[17]While Japanese fiction moved away from Zolaesque naturalism, the entire thrust of the modern narrative was determined by its aspiration toward the claim of naturalism for objectivity and detachment.

vantage of the insect. Husband turns voyeur and insect becomes eye. The louse never touches the object of its gaze, indeed never moves from a fixed position of intensified observation, but instead relishes the scopic pleasure linear perspective allows.

From Akutagawa's letters we know he was enthralled by western forms of pictorial representation, particularly quattrocento painting, which formalizes the perspectival realism that was to culminate in the late-nineteenth-century invention of the motion picture. The story "Nyotai" brings to mind the conventional optic of western painting as a gendered relation between the male observer, or artist, and the female object, or image. Vision from a fixed point dwarfs the husband but compensates that diminution with possession of the artist's privileged perception. The familiar wife, defamiliarized and aestheticized by the activated eye, is magnified but wholly consumable by the glance.

The relation of eye to body (subject to object) is reconfigured according to the optical equation for scientific and artistic objectivity, a formula that turns the mortal body into eternal landscape: "Shadows played in the hollows, misty blue like those cast by the moon on snow over the gently sloping hillsides, their whiteness as smooth and soft as clotted cream. Unlike any mountains he had ever seen, those places struck by the light were tinged with the luster of liquid amber, and the line of their crest traced into the distance the curve of a beautiful bow."[18] Through the special vision of the insect the husband becomes artist: "He forgot love, hatred, and desire . . . he stood stock still in total absorption. It was not until he became an insect that he could see, in reality, the beauty of his wife's body." The husband's vision, involved only aesthetically, is the

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[18]ARZ, 2: 30. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

idealized artist's vision (*geijutsu no shi*) made objective or "real" (*nyojitsu*) by the distance of fixed-point perspective.

In *gesaku*, or other forms of traditional narrative, the image is not framed or fixed (asleep) at a single location, or trapped in the immobilized eye as in the Akutagawa story, but must circulate in search of fulfillment in the realms of human interaction.[19] In traditional fiction, when the image initiates desire it anticipates completion through romantic union. The image cannot satisfy itself or stand apart, transcendent like an auratic painting or landscape, but must seek fulfillment through intersubjectivity. "Nyotai," on the other hand endorses the myth that vision alone can possess the aestheticized other, and not temporarily, but in a timeless relationship. Subject and object are suspended in an eternal visual relation that displaces eros with artistic appreciation, an appreciation heightened by the realism perspective offers. The prestige art of western painting initiates the aesthetics of realism, which film in turn disseminates to popular narrative. The "Nyotai" narrative endorses the fixation of perspective as a prerequisite for transcendental vision.

But perspective requires distance and it is distance that generates desire for the aestheticized object impossible to possess. Distance is at the heart of "Kage," a narrative that aspires to the techniques of film without revealing its intentions until the last scene.[20] The story of Chin Sai, a Chinese man

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[19]The locus classicus for pictorial fulfillment in human action is in the "*Eawase*" chapter of Genji monogatari. The sketches Genji has painted in exile enter the text not in the Suma chapter, but only when they circulate at court as a sign of Tamakazura's aesthetic backing and as the seal of Genji's political success. As early as the Heian era, the image is something touched and admired as it passes from hand to hand. Its power is political and immediate and does not have the aura of distance so crucial in the west.

[20]For an insightful discussion of the cinematic metaphor in this

obsessed with the fidelity of his Japanese wife, unfolds conventionally until the ending reveals that the narrative is a film called *Kage* watched by two characters with uncanny connections to the motion picture they have just seen. But the "trick" ending is more than a gimmick or a stylish way to close a predictable tale, for it is only after it is finished that the reader realizes the narrative has meticulously followed the visual aesthetics of film rather than those of fiction. The ending invites us to look more closely at those elements that distinguish story-telling in words from story-telling in images, particularly unannounced temporal and spatial shifts---transitions that try to imitate the film flashback. The temporal considerations of the story---that it is unfolding in real time even as it manipulates time through parallels and flashbacks---again suggest the temptation film offers to close the gap between the represented and the real. This closure is allegorized in the final scene when the man who has watched the film wonders if he did not in fact dream it, and the woman despite the suggestion that he was dreaming assures the man that she has seen the film on another occasion. The slippage between the experienced and the imagined implied in the ending recalculates the distance between spectator and image, between reality and representation, and between desire and its object.

In "Kage," as in "Nyotai," the relationship of viewer to object is conventionally gendered---the woman is passive object for the active male gaze. Chin Sai becomes voyeur when he sneaks into his own house to observe his wife, who, as it turns out, is not with another man as Chin has been led to believe but alone. Jealousy prevails when Chin's vision overtakes reality to form a false reality. He continues to "see" her with another man

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story see Aaron A. Gerow, "The Self Seen as Other: Akutagawa and Film," Literature Film Quarterly July 1995, v23 n3, 197-204.

and so cannot prevent himself from killing her. Here he becomes the "spectator" who in trying to close the gap between the real and the imagined actually forces himself into the "screen" of his illusion. Although the "possessor of the gaze" is different, in both "Kage" and "Katakoi" the passive-female/active male relationship is the same. In contrast to Otoku who remains passive as she imagines the male actor greeting her, Chin intrudes into the area of the passive image of his wife. The viewer/object relationship is further complicated when Chin is doubled: he not only perpetrates the murder but remains the spectator who witnesses his own commission of the crime.

The absurdity of a spectator self that perceives itself committing a crime is naturalized by its location within a film---Chin watching Chin murder his wife is not really happening but is taking place on the screen. But beyond the need for the story to naturalize this impossibility, "Kage" situates the split self within the cinematic realm because the possibility of the transcendent subject whose perception alone constitutes "reality" occurs within Japanese experience for the first time in cinema.

The disruption of the self and the concept of otherness the double implies arise from the psychological experience of film, specifically from the identification of the subject with his own ability to make coherent what happens on the screen ("it is I who make the film").[21] As Baudry argued and Metz elaborated, the film spectator identifies with himself "as a pure act of perception"---an act of perceiving that is the necessary condition for the existence of the other on screen.[22] In other words, the spectator identifies with the act of *seeing* itself, or more specifically with the camera. As Aaron Gerow has pointed out,

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[21]Christian Metz, The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema (Bloomigton, Indiana University Press, 1982), 48.

[22]Ibid., 49.

"'Kage' is about viewing and the power and nature of the gaze, connecting paranoia, scopophilia, and visual investigation to the subjectivity of the film viewer."[23] In the case of Chin Sai, the power of spectator identification is announced in the fact that "seeing" alone moves outside the self to a transcendent level, the level on which the self has the power to observe its own actions. In the cinema, the camera achieves this identification through monocular perspective which necessarily positions the spectator at the center of the visual field.[24] This construct of spectator and perspective is the basis for the ideological argument that "the impression of reality created by the cinema literally reproduces the empiricist's conception of knowledge in its ideal form: the absolutely transparent, presuppositionless vision of reality of a transcendental subject."[25] Monocular perspective and the impression of reality it produces allow for the ideological construction of the transcendent subject according to the empiricist view that "I make the world."

The notion of transcendental subjectivity takes hold in *junbungaku* only after the infiltration of cinema in Japan---a coincidence, perhaps, but no less powerful a coincidence than the internationalizing influences of the Russo-Japanese War, or other modernizing historical and cultural shifts that occurred as prose fiction became something recognizably different from its traditional forms. Japanese literary criticism has alternately embraced and rejected Eurocentric views of modern fiction, but rarely has it focused on influences from popular and material

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[23]Gerow, 198.

[24]Jean-Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematic Apparatus," in Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 289.

[25]Richard Allen argues against this position but articulates it helpfully in Projecting Illusion: Spectatorship and the Impression of Reality (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 17.

culture, influences that changed not only writing but the processes of reading and response. While fiction began its realist project in theory in the 1880s with Tsubouchi Shōyō and in practice with Futabatei Shimei, it was a project that until the late 1890s could appeal to only a small constituency of readers sympathetic to its goals. The problem for modern fiction was not the production of new writing but the large-scale production of a new kind of reading, a kind of reading that could involve itself in the transcendent subjectivity modern fiction proposed. The appearance of film in the late 1890s and its steady proliferation in the early 1900s created a reader who had already experienced (through the power of the impression of reality produced by monocular perspective) identification with his own perceptions. If there is a single shared element to be found in all works of Naturalist-inspired fiction of the late Meiji, Taishō, and early Shōwa periods it is the identification of the subject with his own perceptions, an identification that Naturalist writing equates with truth. The *watakushi shōsetsu* and novels influenced by its aesthetics did not inaugurate transcendental subjectivity but only reconfirmed its ideological agenda as an intellectual expression of what the urban reader had already experienced and had had authenticated for him by the scientific apparatus of film. The naturalization of that spectator experience is corroborated by Akutagawa's naive description of his first encounter with *katsudō shashin* in 1897.

Realism (and its implications for Japanese literature) would hardly concern us here had it not continued to concern writers like Akutagawa. The term was so misted with notions about sincerity and the self that by 1927, when he wrote his seminal essay "Literary, too Literary" (*Bungeiteki na, amari ni bungeiteki na*), the most personal, impressionistic works could be sanctioned under its name. His own attitudes about the purposes

of literature had by then shifted sharply toward Naturalist or personal writing, so that he was able to declare Shiga Naoya a better realist than Tolstoy,[26] and these distinctions clearly mattered to him. Worse writers than Shiga had proved that enervated explorations of the self were "real" because one's own perceptions were all that could be counted on as true. Here was realism's stunning triumph: that the writer's observing eye could be thought to detach itself from the writer; and whether turned toward the world or toward the self, the privileged eye became a scientific instrument, a camera that reliably recorded only the truth because of its perfect identification with its own perceptions.

Appropriately enough for the writer who recorded one of the first film-viewing experiences in Japan, the last images of Akutagawa were on film. In June 1927 the same month that he completed his poetic self-portrait, *Aru ahō no isshō* (The Life of a Fool), he was the subject of a two-minute motion picture designed to promote sales of his new *zenshū*. That simultaneity alone invites a comparison between the two works, one visual and one textual, both able to claim the writer's last "image." The film inadvertently documents some of the realist processes that Akutagawa problemetized in "Kage" and "Katakoi," and so can serve as a concluding metaphor---if not a satisfying conclusion---both for the author's lifelong concern with perception as well as for the concerns of this essay with realism, perception, and subjectivity.

Akutagawa may have "turned his back on realism"[27] as one of his biographer's wrote of his last work of fiction *Aru ahō no isshō* but not on its disturbing authority as an aesthetic standard.

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[26]ARZ, 9:12.

[27]Shindō Junkō, Denki Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, (Tokyo: Rokko, 1978), 611.

Propelled by the demands of the dominant literary aesthetic, he looked to his life for material to bring the self into phase with the contemporary demand for the identification of the subject with what the subject perceived. Shimazaki Tōson wrote that *Aru ahō no isshō*, "confines itself to recording images alone and eliminates all the rest"[28] (*shinshō nomi o shirusu ni todometa yō na mono de, sono hoka o habuita*), a comment that confirms the success of Akutagawa's struggle for "a story without a story" (*hanashi rashii hanashi no nai shōsetsu*). Akutagawa's phrase is similar to his description of the "storyless" film he saw as a child (see our quote in p. 3) and the images of *Aru ahō* have the poetic and unmediated quality of film montage, with no temporal connection or sequential logic. The story is a series of snapshots drawn together into a coherent whole only by the transcendence of the subject implied in each image.

The film of Akutagawa presents a parallel if not exactly corresponding example. In three scenes and six shots interspersed with titles we see him in close up smoking a cigarette, playing with his sons in the garden of his home, climbing a tree to the roof where he poses spectrally in silhouette against the backlight of the sky, and playing cards with the artist Oana Ryūichi. The realism of the film is ensured by the substitution of its vision for that of the viewer. The spectator becomes unaware of the mediating presence of the camera by the use of the novelist Hirotsu Kazuo as its substitute. "When I visited Mr. Akutagawa's home in Tabata . . ." (*Tabatadai ni Akutagawa Ryūnosuke shi o tazuneta ga . . .*), reads the opening title, followed by a shot of a residential gate. A man in a coat and panama hat (Hirotsu Kazuo) enters the frame from the position of the camera, walks to the gate, seems to check the nameplate, and then enters. In the next shot we see him again from the back,

[28]Quoted in Shindō, 615.

emerging from the position of the camera, walking through a garden and entering the door of the house. The next title reads: "Recovering from a bout with an old illness, Mr. Akutagawa was playing in the garden with his sons" (*Shukua keikai ni omomukeru shi wa, niwa ni aijito tomo ni kigisareteita*). We see Hirotsu's back as he emerges from the camera (not once but twice) and into the screen. He then enters the Akutagawa home, where he disappears from our view for the rest of the film. He disappears because his vision (actually the view of the camera) transparently replaces our own. His literal and then fictive presence naturalizes the eyewitness perspective that realism demands. Read together, the film and *Aru ahō no isshō* demonstrate the conditions for representation that realism prescribes---that is, the identification of the subject with his own perceptions. In the film that identification is literal, in *Aru ahō no isshō* it is aestheticized.

Marking the edges of the life of Akutagawa are the *katsudō shashin* he saw as a child and the commercial picture about him just before his death. The spectator has literally become the subject of the camera's vision. These cinematic brackets to Akutagawa's life define his modernity: he has always been understood, even by his contemporaries, as the representation of a self that veils its own authenticity. Inevitably perhaps, the moving image---a phenomenon of modernism---attached itself to Akutagawa, who intuited its inevitable hold on modern psychology in two minor works of fiction. Both "Katakoi" and "Kage" demonstrate not only the infiltration of the cinematic metaphor into *junbungaku* but the construction of the transcendent subjectivity *junbungaku* forced Akutagawa to create.