

Drive My Car: A Symposium on Hamaguchi's Cross-Media Vehicle

18/06/2022 @Symposium Space, Raiosha, Hiyoshi Campus, Keio University (and via Zoom)

Keynote Speakers

D. A. Miller (The University of California, Berkeley)

Drive My Car Drives Me Crazy

D.A. Miller was for many years the John F. Hotchkis Professor at the University of California, Berkeley, where he taught literature and film. His numerous publications on film include the BFI Classics volume on *8½* (new edition, 2022), *Second Time Around: From Art House to DVD* (2021), and *Hidden Hitchcock* (2016). A collection of his essays on gay-themed movies is forthcoming in Italian under the title *Bellissimo: Il film a tema gay*. He is a member of the American Academy.

Ayako Saito (Meiji Gakuin University, Japan)

Who Drives His Narrative: Women, Psychoanalysis, and Cartography in *Drive My Car*

Ayako Saito is a professor in the Department of Art Studies, Faculty of Letters, at Meiji Gakuin University in Tokyo, Japan, specializing in film studies. Her publications include: "Hitchcock's Trilogy: A Logic of Mise-en-Scène" (*Endless Night: Parallel Histories, Cinema and Psychoanalysis*, University of California Press, 1999), "Politics of Crying and Reclaiming Women's Public Sphere" (*Senses of Cinema*, 2003), "Reading as Woman: The Collaboration of Ayako Wakao and Masumura Yasuzo" (*Reclaiming the Archive: Feminism and Film Theory*, Wayne State University Press, 2010), "Occupation and Memory: The Representation of Woman's Body in Postwar Japanese Cinema" (*The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Cinema*, Oxford University Press, 2014), "The Power of Narrating and the Politics of Listening in Sakai Ko and Hamaguchi Ryusuke's Tohoku Documentary Trilogy" (*Social Factory*, the Shanghai Biennale Catalogue, 2014), and "Kinuyo and Sumie: When Women Write and Direct" (*Tanaka Kinuyo: Nation, Stardom and Female Subjectivity*, Edinburgh University Press, 2018). She has also edited *Film and Body/Sexuality* (Shinwasha, 2006), co-

edited *Invisibility: Representation of Invisible Race—Dismantling the Race Myth Vol.1* (University of Tokyo Press, 2016), and co-authored books, including *Wakao Ayako Film Actress* (Misuzu Shobo, 2003), *Male Bonding: East Asian Cinema and Homosociality* (Heibonsha, 2004), and *Fighting Women: Female Action in Japanese Cinema* (Sakuhinsha, 2009).

Speakers

Ru Shou Robert Chen (National Chengchi University, Taiwan)

A Return to Bazin: *Uncle Vanya* in *Drive My Car*

In “Theater and Cinema”, Andre Bazin began this seminal article by proclaiming that “Cinema is a valid medium for a wide variety of dramatic works.” He aims to settle the dispute between what he calls “filmed theater”, a pure recording of stage play, and “cinematographic theater”, theater work wisely employed by film director as a part of mise-en-scene in a film.

Bazin’s discussion of theater and cinema can be applied as case studies to the films of Ryusuke Hamaguchi, who loves to incorporate theater work as a part of narrative structure. In *Asako I & II* (2018), for example, a performance of *The Wild Duck* by Ibsen was stopped because of the earthquake. And in *Drive My Car* (2021), more than one third of the story centers around table read and rehearsing of Chekhov’s *Uncle Vanya*.

As Hamaguchi expressed in an interview, he found a strong connection between the world of Kafuku, the main character in *Drive My Car*, and that of Uncle Vanya, while adopting the short story of the same title by Haruki Murakami into his script. In this paper, I would like to elaborate on the significance of the play-within-film, *Uncle Vanya*, and how the text reflects every wounded soul directly or indirectly related with the production of the theater performance in the film. And most importantly, by returning to Bazin, this paper hopes to shed light on the reason how the themes of regret and redemption in *Drive My Car* find echoes in *Uncle Vanya* and win its appealing power over Asian as well as global audiences.

Ru-shou Robert Chen is a Professor at the Department of Radio-TV, National Chengchi University, Taiwan. His publications include *Looking at Screen Darkly: One Hundred Years Reflections on Taiwan Cinema* (in Chinese, 2013), and the Chinese translation of *Lumiere*

Galaxy (2021) by Francesco Casetti. His research interests are Taiwan cinema, film theory, and Walter Benjamin.

Kosuke Fujiki(Okayama University of Science, Japan)

Hear the Other Sing: The Construction and Acceptance of Otherness in *Drive My Car*

Although the worldwide pandemic of COVID-19 has largely shut down access across national borders since around the spring of 2020, Japanese cinema witnessed in 2021 a handful of productions filmed in South Korea. Both *The Cursed Sanctuary X* (*Seichi X*, Irie Yū, 2021) and *The Asian Angel* (*Ajia no tenshi*, Ishii Yūya, 2021) were shot and are set entirely in South Korea, with Japanese visitors and expatriates as their protagonists. Whereas the former was filmed in September 2019, prior to the pandemic, the filming of the latter from February to March 2020 coincided with the spread of COVID-19 in the country, which posed a challenge to the filmmakers as some locations became unavailable during the shoot. Japan's contender for the Oscars 2022, *Drive My Car* (*Doraibu mai kā*, Hamaguchi Ryūsuke, 2021), was affected more heavily by the pandemic. Busan was initially chosen as the main filming location; however, the filming in March 2020 was suspended until November, with the location having been changed to Hiroshima. The remnant of Hamaguchi's original plan can be traced in the film's South Korean cast members and the brief epilogue shot in South Korea.

Approaching the question of understanding the Other in different ways, these three films can be situated within the context of Japan's strained relationship with its East Asian neighbours throughout the 2010s. Even though the Korean elements may be minimal among these films, *Drive My Car* responds to its socio-political background through its construction of Otherness with the use of voice and the multiplicity of languages, as well as through its dramatised confrontation with and eventual acceptance of the Self and the Other. The characters' intense remorse for their past, a theme which is nearly absent in Murakami's stories from which the film derives, not only underscores the characters' introspection but also opens up possibilities for an allegorical reading of Hamaguchi's film. By examining the film's narrative, cinematography and audio-visual motifs, this paper seeks to demonstrate how the theme of the Other is developed in *Drive My Car*, and then elucidate its significance within the current situation in East Asia.

Kosuke Fujiki is Lecturer in English Linguistics at Okayama University of Science. He earned his PhD in Film Studies at King's College London, where he completed his thesis on the post-reversion Okinawan cinema. His research interests include contemporary East Asian cinemas, film adaptation, and the representation of memory and history in cinema.

Hironori Itoh (Kansai University, Japan)

All the World's a Stage, Rotating with Sound: Motives of Rotation and Sound in *Drive*

My Car

Japanese director Sho Miyake presents several interesting thoughts on *Drive My Car* (Ryusuke Hamaguchi, 2021): in a trilogy discussion with Hamaguchi, Miyake claims, "I really felt at home on the rotating earth, that is, the feeling that the world is in motion every moment". The phrase of "the rotating earth" may seem relatively abrupt; however, it is suggestive and constitutes the essence of the film because *rotation* is an important motif in *Drive My Car*.

In the original novel entitled "Drive My Car" by Haruki Murakami, the expression related to *rotation* appears toward the end of the novel: "He could only make out a slight gradation in the engine's hum." If the original text is translated into English, "the engine's hum" denotes "the sound of an engine revving". In Japanese, however, the word *kaiten*(回転) is used to *both* describe rotation and revving. In the novel, the name of the wife of protagonist Kafuku remains unknown. However, in the eponymous film, she is given the name Oto, which means "sound" in Japanese. The words rotation or revving and sound precisely play the same important role in the film.

Moreover, car tires, cassette tapes, and vinyl records appear as props related to rotation and sound. In this presentation, I shall demonstrate the manner in which these visual and acoustic elements cinematically depict Kafuku's circumstances and the changes in his state of mind.

Kafuku drives a Saab 900, a vintage car that is no longer manufactured. Cassette tapes and vinyl records are media from an older era. They can be considered analogies to *films* of the

film era. Through *Drive My Car*, a film of the digital age, Hamaguchi declares not only the rebirth of Kafuku but also the renewal of the film medium itself.

Hironori Itoh is a film researcher and critic. He earned his MA in the Graduate School of Human and Environmental Studies of Kyoto University. He specializes in the film and cinematic style of Yasujiro Ozu and is also interested in contemporary Japanese film and animation. He is the author of the book *Film as Liberal Arts for Work and Life* (PHP Institute, 2021).

Hwang Kyunmin (Meiji Gakuin Institute of Language and Culture, Japan)

Beyond Borderlines: On Hamaguchi Ryusuke's *Drive My Car*

The red Saab 900, the car Kafuku, the main character, drives, is another protagonist of *Drive My Car* (2021). Hamaguchi's intention to switch the yellow convertible in Murakami's original story to a vivid red one was successful, showing the scenery of Japan through a running car and making a sharp contrast with the green landscape. His prominent use of the car as an essential visual element is reminiscent of Abbas Kiarostami's films in that its presence is more keenly felt than that of any other character during the three-hour running time.

In the interview with *Filmmaker Magazine*, Hamaguchi explained that he referred to Kiarostami's works when he shot a lot of car scenes. "There's this Iranian artist called Kiarostami, and his films have very striking scenes where there's a driver and the surroundings are changing a lot. And at the same time, the relationships between the characters are changing as well. I began to think that this image was somehow a condensation of life".

Drive My Car has resonances to the characteristics of Kiarostami's films in that they capture the outside scenery through the movement of cars. These images are embraced by the development of narrative and the theme of the film. At the same time, however, Hamaguchi differs from Kiarostami by elaborating the movement and closed space of a car that crosses (symbolically) physical and psychological boundaries. In this paper I aim to examine the ways in which Hamaguchi visualizes and resolves the trauma of characters by focusing on the representation of the Red Saab and the act of moving beyond borderlines. Furthermore, I

would like to see how the film gains sympathy from contemporary Asian audiences suffering trauma in the Covid-19 era.

Hwang Kyunmin earned a Ph.D in the Department of Art Studies at Meiji Gakuin University and her dissertation examined the representations of Women in the Films of Imamura Shohei. Her main areas of interest are history, gender and genre in Japanese and Korean cinema. She participated in “Transition and Actual Condition of the Studio System in Postwar Japanese Films: An Empirical study of Nikkatsu Romanporno”(2019) as Project Researcher, and her publications include “The Spatial Embodiment of Gaze and Aspects of Women’s Oppression in *The Pornographers*” (2017, Cineforum), “The Cinematic Landscape of Korea Changed by Iwai Shunji’s *Love Letter*” (2020, Kawadeshobo) and “Evolving Heroines: Transition of Women’s Representation in Korean Drama” (2021, etc.books).

Motonori Sato (Keio University, Japan)

To the Ends of Adaptation: The Beginnings of Translation in Hamaguchi’s *Asako I & II* and *Drive My Car*

It may sound counterintuitive to regard Hamaguchi’s two recent films, *Asako I & II* (2018) and *Drive My Car* (2021), as “translations”. Indeed, given that the former is based on Tomoka Shibasaki’s novel *Netemo Sametemo* (2010) and that the latter is based on Haruki Murakami’s short story “Drive My Car” (2014), it would make more sense to call them “adaptations” rather than “translations”. However, despite the rise of adaptations studies, the conceptions of adaptation as discussed in the academy—in which most of the arguments centre on faithfulness and freedom—do not seem to provide an insight into the unique experiments that Hamaguchi began to undertake with *Happy Hour* (2015). What Hamaguchi calls the “Italian reading method” is an eminent example. His inspiration is a French documentary film *La Direction d'acteur par Jean Renoir* (1968), in which Renoir asks an actor to read her lines without putting any emotion into them. In *Drive My Car* Hamaguchi demonstrates this Italian method in multiple ways, asking his characters/actors to read their lines *literally*, regardless of whether they are Murakami’s, Chekhov’s, or Hamaguchi’s words. I will argue that his Italian reading method, that is, his stubborn commitment to the original *words*, offers a new way of

thinking about “translation”, one akin to what Walter Benjamin theorised in his essay “The Task of the Translator”: “A real translation is transparent; it does not cover the original, does not block its light, but allows the pure language, as though reinforced by its own medium, to shine upon the original all the more fully”. The key to real translation is, according to Benjamin, “a literal rendering of the syntax which proves words rather than sentences to be the primary element of the translator.”

Motonori Sato is Professor of English at Keio University, Japan. His publications on literature and cinema include *The British New Wave* (in Japanese, Minerva, 2012) and *Graham Greene, a Cinematic Life* (in Japanese, Keio University Press, 2018, Winner of the Association for the Studies of Culture and Representation Award).

Ryohei Tomizuka (Kanagawa University, Japan)

Looking and Touching: Bodies in *Drive My Car*

A naked woman, shot backlit in bed before dawn, is talking to a man. She seems to be telling the story of a girl who comes to mind while they are having sexual intercourse. In *Drive My Car* (2021), which opens with this truly striking scene, Ryusuke Hamaguchi introduces two new elements into his film that relate to the body.

First, the love scenes, which he has rarely featured in his other works, stand out in the early part of the film, which depicts the lives of Kafuku and Oto in Tokyo. In these scenes, a man and a woman are naked, embracing each other face-to-face and engaging in physical contact. However, each of their gazes shifts to the space behind the other, and they do not actually look at each other directly. This is quite bizarre, considering the fact that the Japanese word “maguwai” (目合ひ, which literally means “eye contact”) metaphorically refers to sexual intercourse. Such scenes appear repeatedly in the part of the film set in Tokyo. In these scenes, we are made aware of the disconnection between the two, rather than the intimacy of their relationship.

For instance, take the scene of Oto’s affair, which Kafuku witnesses by chance. In this sequence, her face, which is embraced by the man, is staring straight ahead instead of back at

him, and she comes into Kafuku's view through the mirror. Just as Kafuku's gaze is unreciprocated here, in the story that Oto sometimes tells Kafuku after sex, the female student can only secretly break into the house of the boy she has feelings for. In another love scene, in which Kafuku and Oto have returned home after their daughter's memorial service, their expressionless faces, like the Noh mask, are captured from opposite angles as they sit on the sofa and embrace each other, as if to show their distance. The next morning, Oto collapses, leaving behind a riddle of pensive words.

The second half of the film focuses on the rehearsals of the multilingual play by the cast from seven different countries and the scenes in which Kafuku and his personal driver Misaki drive back and forth between the theater and the place where he is staying. In the beginning, they can only glance furtively at each other through the rearview mirror, a pattern of action that resembles Kafuku's relationship with Oto. What triggers a change in their relationship is an outdoor rehearsal scene that Misaki observes for the first time. In this sequence, Sonya, played by Lee Yoo-na (Park Yu-rimu), who communicates in Korean sign language, and Yelena, played by Janice Chang (Sonia Yuan), who uses Chinese, touch each other. The emotional interaction between the two is brought out by the power of sign language, which Hamaguchi, who has always focused on the voices of actors, adopts for the first time in this film.

This presentation will trace how the two motifs of sign language, which again plays an important role in the climax of the story, and the love scene in the early part of the film reenact and alter the themes of looking and touching that Hamaguchi has been pursuing, while also referring to his previous works in the process. In so doing, I will reconsider the unique significance of *Drive My Car*, which can also be interpreted as a re-staging, the "second time around" of his earlier film *Intimacies* (2013) with a variety of innovations.

Ryohei Tomizuka is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Kanagawa University, Japan. His publications on literature and cinema include "From Grief to 'Practical Power': Moods and Affects in 'Experience'" (*The Journal of the American Literature Society of Japan*, vol. 20, 2022), "Parlor and Study: Emerson's Domestic Economy in Representations of Space" (in Japanese, *The American Review*, vol. 54, 2020, Winner of the Makoto Saito Award), and "The Method of *Asako I & II*" (in Japanese, *Eureka*, no. 50, vol. 12, 2018). His research interests include American literature, film studies, and literary theory.

Mary Shuk-han Wong (Lingnan University, Hong Kong)

Sadness in *Drive My Car*

It had already passed midnight when the film ended. Audience in this preview show remained silent while leaving the cinema. Under the dark sky of Hong Kong, I had to catch my last bus home but I chose not to run. There were some heavy things inside my mind. Yusuke Kafuku, Misaki Watari and Oto Kafuku all strick me by their glooming faces. Even the playful Koji Takatsuki, his glooming face in the car, shot by long take, creates a strong emotion on me. What do these faces tell? Sadness, without doubt.

Drive My Car is a film about sadness. It started with Yusuke Kafuku's sudden discovery of Oto's affair and together with her sudden death, give Yusuke a mix feeling of hate and self-blame. Yet this is just the beginning. From his personal sadness, we gradually deeply visit other people's sadness including Misaki's, Koji's and Lee Yoon-a's. *Drive My Car* is not a film only about individual sadness but aims to connect sadness in the contemporary world. It starts with a domestic sadness in a middle-class Japanese family. Yet with Yusuku's road trip, his sadness is connected with other classes, gender and people of other nationalities. The film with its non-dramatic narrative brings out a strong humanistic message that in today's world, ironically, people are united with sadness. Textually, sadness or strike to start a new life are also common grounds to connect Haruki Murakami's short story and Anton Chekhov's play. What sadness is the saddest? Is Kafuku's sadness looks junior than Misaki's sadness? There are different layers of sadness in the film, yet it does not aim to rank sadness. For *Drive My Car*, sadness is not cured by happiness. One's sadness is being "cured" by others' sadness through self-reflection. With the tragic childhood of Misaki, her solemn expression and monotone action throughout the film could be seen as a criticism towards the middle-class male artist who looks egoistic. Not to say the dumb Lee Yoon-a who could be regarded as the spiritual lead of the film. Yet it is only through this process that Kafuku could be "cured".

Sadness in *Drive My Car* is represented in a very control narrative style. I hardly remembered a single scene of crying when I left the cinema. *Drive My Car* has constructed a world of sadness that allow global audience to identify with. The film seems want to remind us that make sure we understand what sadness is before shedding tears.

Dr. Mary Shuk-Han Wong is a writer and comparative literature scholar. She was born and raised in Hong Kong. She is now Associate Professor in Chinese department of Lingnan University in Hong Kong. Published widely on Hong Kong literature, film and culture. Her major scholarly works are *Feminine Writing: Cinema, Literature and Everyday Live* (2014) and *Hong Kong Cinema: Writer, literature and cinema* (2013). Major edited works are 'Hong Kong Literature and Culture of 1950s series' (2013) and *Hong Kong: 1960s* (2020). Major creative works include literary essays *How to Live the Sad Days* (2022), *Against the Grain* (2017), *From Kafka* (2015) and short story collection *Surviving Central* (2013). She is the co-producer and literary advisor of the documentaries *1918: Liu Yichang* (2015) and *Boundary: Leung Ping Kwan* (2015).