Introduction

Narrating High-Speed Growth through Film

Suntanned girls are playing on the beach
I am transporting cars to the factory for repair
But I am caught in traffic
The TV says this country worries it's too rich
But my life hasn't changed at all

—"An August Song" ("Hachigatsu no uta"),
1986, sung by Hamada Shōgo[1]

❈

I GREW UP IN JAPAN IN THE 1980s, that is, on the eve of and during what we now remember as the "bubble economy," characterized by the sharp escalation of asset prices—probably the most prosperous time in the history of modern Japan. The marvelous high-speed train that we took every summer to go to my grandmother's house; the "Port Liner," the world's first driverless transit system, which connected downtown Kobe and the manmade Port Island; the gigantic Hankyū Osaka-Umeda Station's ten platforms and labyrinthine underground city; the department stores' mesmerizing variety of clothes, prepared foods, and appliances; and the electronics stores filled with gorgeous audio systems all made me somewhat aware of my country's material wealth and mature consumer culture. It was (and still is) common, in

describing the experience of postwar Japan, to contrast this affluent time with the state of complete devastation in the immediate post–World War II years and to bridge these two periods with the extraordinary historical event of high-speed growth. The material comfort we enjoyed in the 1980s was supposed to be the result of the effort Japanese people had made during this historical event.

Later in life, I started watching seriously (and fondly, of course) Japanese films released during this supposedly glorious time of high-speed growth for personal pleasure and, later, for my work as a historian. But the images of postwar Japan that these films presented, or, more correctly, the impressions of postwar Japan that I received from these films, did not always align with and sometimes even betrayed the widespread bright, optimistic images of high-speed growth. Naruse Mikio's films of the 1950s and 1960s—for instance, *Flowing* (*Nagareru*, 1956), *When a Woman Ascends the Stairs* (*Onna ga kaidan o agaru toki*, 1960), and *Yearning* (*Midareru*, 1964)—seemed to communicate not the rapid reconstruction of the national economy but the persisting legacies of the war, the precarious nature of working women's everyday lives, and their emotional despair and resignation. Imamura Shōhei's films of the 1960s—*Pigs and Battleships* (*Buta to gunkan*, 1961) and *The Insect Woman* (*Nippon konchūki*, 1963)—conjured the chain of poverty, the violence of capital, and the cunning required for daily survival rather than the affluence of a society amid the Ikeda cabinet's "income doubling plan" and anticipation of the 1964 Tokyo Summer Olympics. In Yamada Yōji's films of the 1970s, including *Where Spring Comes Late* (*Kazoku*, 1970) and *Home from the Sea* (*Kokyō*, 1972), I found not so much the prosperity of urban centers in Tokyo and Osaka as the disquiet generated by the fundamental structural change in the economy of rural Japan amid massive industrialization throughout the archipelago.

Watching these and other films again and again, I became fascinated by the inconsistency between what we are commonly told or encouraged to believe about high-speed growth and how the people who lived and worked then might have actually experienced this historical event. It looked to me as though diverse sentiments, negotiations, and responses back then had somehow converged into a few, far simpler narratives that disguised that diversity. This led me to the broader questions of the relation between history and narratives. What language can we employ to narrate past events? By choosing

one narrative, what other narratives do we sacrifice? What are the politics behind such choices? And is it possible to change, through narratives, our perceptions of the past? This book is an attempt to examine these questions through the use of popular films as historical sources and to explore the possibilities of counternarratives that help us better understand the heterogeneity of experiences during the era of high-speed growth. As the rest of this book demonstrates, cinematic texts are part of a contemporary intellectual and cultural discourse contesting a variety of concerns and interests and therefore reveal much about the society that produced them.

Historical Narratives of Postwar Japan

The linguistic turn in the humanities and the social sciences persuasively established that there is no single true history waiting to be recuperated by historians. The writing of history is a subjective and ideological act that reflects the historian's belief, values, and worldview—as well as, we hope, their conscience and commitment to accuracy. We can write history from a variety of perspectives, incorporating various analytical categories, depending on the positionality that each of us assumes. History writing is a process of signification in which "the world has to be made to mean" through the employment of "language and symbolization" (S. Hall 1982, 63). It is the practice by which we identify certain events in the past as worth remembering, documenting, and disseminating; give specific meanings to those events; articulate causal relations among them; put them in a chronology; and then turn them into a coherent narrative. Not all historical narratives, however, exist equally. Certain historical narratives occupy hegemonic positions and present themselves as the natural way of understanding the past, whereas other narratives may be relegated to positions supplementary to more dominant narratives or even eradicated as unimportant, irrelevant, or erroneous.

In the modern world, the nation-state has served as one of the most powerful frameworks for historical narratives. As nationalism swept across much of the world in the nineteenth century, the ruling elites in newly emerging or reorganized states—whether in Asia, Europe, or the Americas—expected their shared history (or their conviction in such a history, more precisely) to make up for the absence

of temporal continuity, cultural consistency, emotional solidarity, and collective memory in their anonymous and intangible national communities and also, to borrow Anthony Giddens's expression, to provide "an anchorage for anticipated developments in the future" (1987, 212). Since the nineteenth century, political leaders, intellectuals, educational institutions, the mass media, and so on have created a set of narratives designed to give legitimacy and credibility to their nation-states, to enlighten the masses, and to make them loyal and conscious citizens. Although the prominence of multinational corporations and global media in the world today might convince us that national borders are gradually losing their significance, historical narratives are still commonly used to warrant the collective experience of the nation-state and induce a sense of belonging among its people.

In the case of modern Japan, until defeat in World War II and the fall of empire in 1945, the emperor and the national polity, or *kokutai*, that he was thought to embody worked as the most influential set of ideologies upon which the history of the nation-state was written. For this narrative, the emperor, who had been deprived of political authority during the Tokugawa era and was not registered in regular people's minds, had to be revitalized as the sovereign of the newly born Meiji state and symbol of the cultural and spiritual unity of national subjects (Fujitani 1996). The historical view that placed the emperor at its center, while competing with other historical views such as historical materialism during the Taishō democracy era, came to earn the predominant position in both academic and popular discourse in the 1930s as Japan's imperial expansion to Manchuria and China accelerated and as military intrusion into parliamentary politics, academia, school education, and people's everyday lives intensified. The famous 1935 "emperor organ theory" incident—right-wing nationalists' fierce attack on Minobe Tatsukichi's well-accepted theory that the emperor was only an organ of government and their insistence on the emperor's divinity—and the subsequent state campaign to glorify *kokutai* must be remembered as an effort to impose this historical view over alternatives through threats, violence, and the rejection of dialogue.[2]

It may be difficult to find a historical view as powerful as this emperor-centered view when we shift our attention to postwar Japan, where a new constitution stipulated the principle of popular sovereignty (in the preamble); guaranteed freedom of thought, religion, conscience, and speech (in articles 19, 20, and 21) as well as

academic freedom in education (in article 23); and thereby endorsed pluralist democracy. Though it is true that the emperor remained an influential cultural symbol (Ruoff 2001), the state generally refrained from overtly coercive methods to impose a single historical view. This does not imply, however, an absence of hegemonic historical views. As economic reconstruction steadily advanced and as Cold War uncertainties quickly spread, "modernization" came to serve as a key organizing concept for a coherent narrative of the history of modern Japan. Modernization theory, first developed in the United States as an alternative to Marxism, was introduced to Japan by such scholars as Edwin Reischauer, John Hall, and Marius Jansen in the 1960s. Amid the tense ideological conflict incited by the anti–Security Treaty protest and the anti–Vietnam War movement in Japan, these and other scholars of Japanese studies enthusiastically promoted modernization theory as that which would help to reinterpret and rewrite the history of modern Japan as the nation's continued progression toward greater economic rationality, material affluence, and political liberalism without radical and violent revolution.[3] This was an appealing theory in that it used growth, which could be demonstrated with concrete and objective data (such as GNP, GDP, and household income), as an analytical category and naturalized it as a permanent and indispensable condition for the existence of human societies. It played on Japanese people's self-esteem by allowing them to recognize the relevance of modern Japan's experience within the context of world history as a successful case of social transformation in the non-West.[4] As Harry Harootunian (1993) argues, this American-born narrative, or "America's Japan," had become "Japan's Japan" by the 1970s.

To this day, modernization theory remains influential in academia and beyond as a way of organizing past events and making connections among them (even if it has become increasingly difficult, in academia at least, to maintain blanket support for the concept of modernization based on economic development as we are now cognizant of its harmful consequences). Within the perception of history guided and dictated by it, high-speed growth is presented as a central event. The stories of the astounding growth of Japan's GDP, the success of the 1960s "income doubling plan," Japanese companies' innovations and technologies, and the prominence of Toyota, Honda, Sony, and Nintendo overseas are all familiar to those living in Japan and those who have studied Japanese history even cursorily. All have

contributed to representing the history of postwar Japan as a narrative of great triumph and accomplishment, or, to use an expression familiar in both English and Japanese, a narrative of the "economic miracle," or *keizai no kiseki*. This kind of economic miracle narrative highlights the extraordinary and unprecedented nature of the growth that Japan managed to achieve in just a few decades from the end of World War II.

On the one hand, high-speed growth is of course an irrefutable historical fact. Triggered by the revival of the ammunitions industry during the Korean War, the Japanese economy began to demonstrate conspicuous signs of recovery and experienced its first postwar economic boom. From the mid-1950s to 1973, it grew at an average annual rate of 10 percent. By the mid-1960s, Japan turned from a debtor to a creditor nation. In 1965, Japan ran a trade surplus with the United States for the first time in postwar history, which would lead to intense trade friction between the two countries in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1968, it became the second-largest economy in the capitalist world, behind only the United States. Japan was an original member of the current G7 when it launched as the G6 in 1975. By this time, the economic power of the country defeated in World War II had far exceeded the expectations of its former occupier.[5]

The quality of Japanese people's daily lives dramatically improved during this period, too: cars, televisions, washing machines, vacuum cleaners, air conditioners, dinners at fancy restaurants, vacations abroad, and designer clothes, none of which had been easily attainable for a regular working person at the beginning of the high-speed growth, lost their novelty by the end of the 1970s. Accordingly, a large majority of Japanese people came to identify themselves as middle class in that decade. In a national survey conducted by the *Asahi* newspapers in 1985, 36 percent of the 2,310 respondents said that they were "satisfied" with their current lives, and 41 percent were "more or less satisfied." This survey also showed that while not entirely satisfied with incomes and savings, a large majority of the respondents believed their needs for housing, "delicious food," and "good clothes" to be well fulfilled ("Sengo yonjūnen no Nihon" 1985, 11).

On the other hand, high-speed growth is not simply a historical fact but also a prescriptive and disciplinary cultural discourse, or what Herbert Marcuse ([1965] 1968) called "affirmative culture," removed from social reality and aimed at helping people achieve fulfillment

and satisfaction in the spiritual realm. Here, I am referring to the fact that the ruling elite in postwar Japan have often discussed high-speed growth in such a way as to foster national pride, identity, and dignity. The narrative of the economic history of postwar Japan that the Economic Planning Agency compiled for its fiftieth anniversary provides an excellent example. It begins, "The era of high-speed growth of the Japanese economy from the immediate aftermath of World War II to the first half of the 1970s was a period of dramatic development [*gekiteki na tenkai*] rarely observed, not only in the history of Japanese economy but even in the history of the world economy. It must be the case that [Japan's] experience will be analyzed repeatedly and handed down [*katari tsugarete iku*] both inside and outside [Japan]" (Keizai Kikakuchō 1997, 5). This narrative describes the overall history of postwar Japan as a splendid drama in which the Japanese, who found themselves in "ruin and despair" ("haikyo to zetsubō") just after defeat in war, miraculously rebuilt their homeland and transformed it into "one of the world's top economic powers" ("sekai yūsū no keizai taikoku"; 5).

The narrative of postwar history promoted by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) is a good example, too. It starts with the following statement:

> When we look back, the thirtieth year of Shōwa [1955] was the time when Japan, which had become scorched earth [*shōdo*] through war, was getting on track for a miraculous recovery [*kisekiteki na saikō*] and reconstruction of our homeland [*sokoku*], thanks to the effort of forerunners who would continue to our party. Our predecessors desired development and prosperity as well as peace and stability, bravely shaped the form of our country, achieved high-speed economic growth, and established [Japan's] place within the international community. (Jiyū Minshutō 2006, preface).

While these narratives may embrace high-speed growth more explicitly than most, it is not uncommon for narratives of high-speed growth to employ this historical event to remind the Japanese of the material and psychological devastation that they or their forefathers overcame (I use this gendered term because most of those who play critical roles in these narratives are men) as well as the collaboration, indus-

triousness, and patience they demonstrated for the common goal of making economic growth happen, resorting to such a language as "ashes" (*yakeato*), "hardship" (*kunan*), "turbulence" (*gekidō*), and "miracle" (*kiseki*). In other words, this type of narrative not only describes what happened but also appeals to Japanese people's sense of solidarity at the national level about their supposedly shared past.

In popular culture of the past two decades or so, there have been occasional "Shōwa retro booms"—elevated interest in those years that roughly coincide with high-speed growth and its aftermath, from the mid-1950s to the 1980s. The 2005 film *Always: Sunset on Third Street* (*Always san-chōme no yūhi*), which, using numerous computer-graphics images of 1958 Tokyo, portrays heartwarming interactions between a family that owns a small garage and a girl who moves from Aomori to work for them, was one harbinger of such a boom (Katagiri 2007; Morinaga 2007; Ichikawa 2010). Its enormous popularity resulted in the production of two sequels, in 2007 and 2012, both of which dealt with the same Tokyo family and rural girl but were set in 1959 and 1964 respectively. Although the representations of the "good old days" in these and other cultural productions may seem simply to reflect benign nostalgic longing for things already lost—whether foods, fashions, houses and homes, lifestyles, neighborhoods, streets, personal relations, or affects—they certainly help constitute a prescriptive narrative of high-speed growth in that they serve to foster the audience's sense of collective belonging as Japanese by highlighting those days when the Japanese people might have been still struggling materially but were supposedly working together with hope and optimism for better lives.[6] As the Japanese economy has stagnated and as neoliberal policy has justified growing economic polarization in the last few decades, this type of historical narrative appears to have acquired greater appeal as a convenient tool for shifting the locus of solidarity from the socioeconomic to the cultural sphere. It is not a mere coincidence that Abe Shinzō of the LDP, who, during his tenure as prime minister from 2012 to 2020, demonstrated little intention to assert the state's constitutional responsibility for the welfare of the people while eagerly dismantling the notion of the social, highly praised *Always: Sunset on Third Street* (Abe 2006).

The goal of *Cinema of Discontent* is to construct diverse counternarratives that cannot be co-opted by or absorbed into the conventional narrative that represents high-speed growth as a grandiose national

project. This book sheds light on the heterogeneity of experiences generated by high-speed growth and examines what it meant to undergo this historical event, without reducing it to either a self-congratulatory story of success or a redemptive story of patience. For this, we must first acknowledge a simple fact: high-speed growth was a massive and rapid capitalist expansion. During this period, the Japanese state fully committed itself to the reconstruction and growth of its economy in Cold War Asia under American tutelage (e.g., the singing of the Security Treaty in 1951 and participation in the Mutual Security Act program in 1954). Corporate managers mobilized men and women from cities, suburbs, and villages and galvanized them to compete in the market while the LDP, central and local governments, bureaucrats, academics, and others facilitated this process through various economic, social, and educational policies (e.g., "mass employment," or *shūdan shūshoku*, from the 1950s to 1970s; the New Life campaign in the 1950s; and the discourse of "industrial society" in the 1960s). These men and women were encouraged (or required) to act not only as workers willing to serve employers diligently but also as consumers eager to spend money on personal and familial needs and pleasures (e.g., the TVs, washing machines, and refrigerators promoted as "three sacred treasures" in the 1950s) and as patriotic and disciplined citizens committed to contributing to the national good (e.g., the state-led "income doubling plan" in the 1960s). High-speed growth was frankly an intense form of accumulation through the intense enhancement of the production of surplus value, carefully arranged by the joint forces of the state and the business world.[7] As such, it was fundamentally a contradictory process accompanied by numerous tensions and anxieties related to, for example, the uneven distribution of wealth within society, the economic and cultural gap between the city and the countryside, the alienation and powerlessness of individual workers, growing and irreversible corporate control over everyday life, militarized peace and prosperity, the overgrowth of metropolises, and precarious and contingent work.

If we place these problems within the conventional narrative of high-speed growth, they look like obstacles that people in Japan had to overcome or simply come to terms with as the society became affluent and as the nation acquired the status of a global economic power. In other words, by adopting the conventional narrative of high-speed growth as the basic framework for remembering postwar

history, we might end up interpreting these problems at most as secondary issues that bring complexity, nuance, and a bit of drama to this narrative, thereby concealing the contradictions and violence structurally embedded in the economic and political system of postwar Japan. But, of course, the people who were living through high-speed growth, especially in its early phase in the 1950s, did not possess such a grand narrative with which to construe (or glamorize) the tensions and anxieties they were facing. It is possible that the immense social changes that were occurring back then were more confusing and disquieting than promising and exciting. People were likely more concerned about how these changes were affecting their immediate lives and livelihoods and how to protect themselves from these changes than how the changes would be remembered. If we are to understand the experiences of high-speed growth earnestly, we must acknowledge these points and consider how to construct a set of narratives that permits us to represent the tensions and anxiety of this historical event without trivializing them.

Methodology: Historicization of Cinematic Texts

To achieve this purpose, *Cinema of Discontent* analyzes cultural texts, particularly feature-length fictional films produced in the two decades between the 1950s and 1970s. In making this decision to focus on cultural history, I agree with such historians of modern Japan as Yoshikuni Igarashi and Miriam Silverberg in their insistence upon treating culture as a historically constituted, inherently political, and above all potentially subversive category. In *Bodies of Memory*, Igarashi (2000) analyzes the "absent presence" of Japan's war memory that appeared in various cinematic and literary representations and intellectual discourses between 1945 and 1970. In *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense*, Silverberg (2006) deals with cultural production in the interwar years and points out the new modern sensibilities that the masses had come to share, which did not always conform to emperor-centered statist ideology. *Cinema of Discontent* participates in the discussion advanced by these historians regarding the entangled links between culture and politics, or more precisely the politically engaged reading of cultural texts. This book seeks to demonstrate how the study of culture, which tends to be addressed within an abstract, ahistorical, and essentialized national

context, can contribute to challenging and destabilizing the knowledge of postwar history that is widely accepted at the national level.

While there are many ways of studying cinematic texts, the approach I employ for this book is the close reading of these texts based on careful historicization. That is, I examine what narratives of high-speed growth I can extract from cinematic texts by considering their historical significance in conjunction with contemporary political, socioeconomic, and cultural conditions as well as intertextual relations with intellectual discourses and other cultural artifacts, such as literary works and popular songs. The work of film scholars Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano (2008) and Misono Ryōko (2012) on Shōchiku *gendaigeki* ("contemporary drama") in the interwar years provides critical insight into this effort. Resorting to the analytical concepts of "modernity" (Wada-Marciano) and "the nation-state" (Misono), they have unraveled and articulated the meanings and roles of seemingly apolitical *gendaigeki* texts within the context of such events as industrialization, Westernization, urban development, colonialism, and imperialism. Inspired by and building upon their historically oriented approaches, *Cinema of Discontent* brings historical specificity to the readings of postwar films and places them in a dialogue with the events, concerns, ideas, ideologies, and trends that prevailed in contemporary Japanese society.[8]

This is to say, I use cinematic texts as primary sources for the study of postwar history. But a cautious reader may point out that the cinematic texts I am dealing with are all fictional and that it is inappropriate for a historian to rely on these sources to tell the stories of what really happened and how it happened. My response is that I am not using these as sources that document historical figures, events, and statistics with accuracy as one of the primary criteria. To me, the value of these sources lies in the possibilities they open up for scrutiny of the people and society that produced them. A film text, as a cultural artifact produced collectively by a multitude of people, interweaves multivalent observations and commentaries on the transformations that a society experiences (though these observations and commentaries may not always be intentional), exhibiting in itself a specificity rooted in the social relations of the time when it is made. As such, film constitutes a part of the broader contemporary cultural and intellectual discourse, in the same way that, for instance, literature and literary criticism, history and historiography, philosophy,

journalism, sociology, anthropology, art, and music do. My purpose in using films as sources is to identify these historically mediated, conditioned, but also limited observations and commentaries. I will attempt to descry, borrowing French historian Marc Ferro's expression, "what is latent behind what is apparent" and "the nonvisible by means of the visible" ([1977] 1988, 30) and thereby diversify the ways of remembering and narrating the events of the past—in this book's case, high-speed growth.

Let me offer a widely familiar example to clarify this point. Ozu Yasujirō's 1953 film *Tokyo Story* (*Tōkyō monogatari*), a film about the journey of an old married couple from Onomichi in Hiroshima Prefecture to see their children living and working in Tokyo, is probably one of the Japanese films best known and most acclaimed outside Japan, as well as being representative of Japanese cinema's postwar "golden age." The director's unique stylistic camerawork, including "tatami shots" (taken by a low-positioned camera) and "pillow shots" (brief shots of static objects that do not seem particularly relevant to the main plot), has commonly led critics to discuss this film (and Ozu's oeuvre broadly) within the framework of auteurism and national aesthetics, as if it represented some sort of cultural and spiritual value system shared by people in Japan.[9] If I were to use *Tokyo Story* as a historical source, however, my approach would be quite different (though I do not discuss this film extensively in this book). First, we would need to identify key themes and motifs addressed in the film—for instance, Tokyo as a major destination of labor migration since the prewar era, the reconstruction of the urban middle class in the early postwar years, and economic and cultural unevenness between the capital (Tokyo) and a provincial city (Onomichi). Next, we would gather sources that help us better appreciate these themes and motifs within the historical context of Japan circa 1953, which might include statistics on the recovery of Tokyo's economy and the movement of people from the countryside to Tokyo; contemporary analyses of these issues, such as white papers; the media coverage of these issues; and films, novels, and popular songs on the topic of "going up to the capital," or *jōkyō* (as chapter 2 shows, this topic had been depicted again and again in cultural representations since the prewar era). Throughout this process, we would ask what observations of Japanese society on the eve of high-speed growth we can read into this film, whether at the level of plot or cinematography, and what historical narrative we can construct by combining these observations

with other available discourses of contemporary Japanese society. In sum, to use *Tokyo Story* as a historical source is to articulate in detail the significance of the fact that it was made not in, say, 1949 or 1958 but in 1953 and to incorporate this historical specificity into our appreciation of this film.

Maruyama Masao and the History of Ideas

Maruyama Masao's discussion of methodologies for *shisōshi*, or "the history of ideas" ([1961] 1996), based on a lecture that he had delivered in 1960, has helped me conceptualize this task of constructing historical narratives through the analysis of cinematic texts. Defining himself as a specialist in the field of the history of ideas, Maruyama distinguishes his own field from two other related fields. First is what he calls *shisōron*, or the "theory of ideas." He explains that people in this field generally aim to construct their own philosophies. Although their philosophies may derive from the examination of historical sources, it is not unusual for them to use ideas from the past without considering the contexts from which they emerged. Maruyama does not talk much about this field, but one suspects that he has in mind those, probably outside academia, interested mainly in applying historically specific ideas, whether from China, India, Greece, or France, to contemporary Japanese society for practical purposes. The other field he distinguishes his own from is positivist history. Here, he is clearly referring to those historians who believe that they can tell stories about the past free from subjective judgments through the careful selection and presentation of primary sources. Maruyama positions his own work in between these two fields and argues that a historian of ideas is just like an "instrumentalist" (*ensōka*) in the field of music. Just as the instrumentalist is expected to express their own imagination and creativity through performance but is also constrained by the scores that composers of the past wrote, the historian of ideas seeks to provide their own ideas and interpretations through narratives but must also reference historical sources to corroborate these ideas and interpretations. Maruyama sees the essence of the work of the historian of ideas in its dual nature—proactive and creative engagement with sources from the past and recognition of limits imposed by the same sources—and the dialectic interaction between the two. Like Maruyama, I see myself as a historian of ideas (or, using his

metaphor, an instrumentalist), and as such I employ my own imagi-
nation to construct historical narratives based on my own readings of
cinematic texts, but I also ensure that my readings are not arbitrary
and random but are validated through the incorporation of relevant
and responsible sources.

    To me, one of the greatest allures of this approach is that it per-
mits me to analyze cinematic texts with a degree of nuance, subtlety,
and sensitivity. The films that I analyze in *Cinema of Discontent*, which
include a light romantic comedy (chapter 2), a spy film (chapter 3),
and an action film (chapter 4), do not always address the anxieties and
tensions of high-speed growth explicitly. Some might point out that
there are films produced during the same period that tackled these
issues more directly. For example, Kobayashi Masaki's *Black River*
(*Kuroi kawa*, 1957), set in a town adjacent to a US base, depicts the
resistance of destitute residents in a shabby old tenement to the greedy
landlord's proposal to sell it to a developer who plans to build a cab-
aret for American GIs there. Urayama Kirio's *Foundry Town* (*Kyūpora
no aru machi*, 1962) portrays the everyday life of a schoolgirl, played
by a young Yoshinaga Sayuri, living in a working-class neighborhood
in the industrial city of Kawaguchi in Saitama Prefecture. Ōshima
Nagisa's *Death by Hanging* (*Kōshikei*, 1968), inspired by the rape and
murder of a schoolgirl by a Korean Japanese man, sheds light on
the poverty and racism faced by the *zainichi* Korean community in
postwar society. But I have consciously chosen to examine films that
seem made primarily to entertain a mass audience instead of such
films designed to raise awareness of social problems. This is because
Maruyama's methodology, which values the balancing of one's imagi-
nation and the historicization of texts, urges us to direct our attention
not only to the main plots of cinematic texts but also to characters'
seemingly trivial dialogue, their unspoken backstories, their bodies
and movements, their occupations, the sites of location shooting, the
music, and the items in the mise-en-scène, and thereby make meanings
and ascertain relevance where we might not ordinarily expect to do
so. For example, when the heroine in Masumura Yasuzō's *Blue-Sky
Girl* (*Aozora musume*, 1957), discussed in chapter 2, engages in various
physical activities, such as Ping-Pong and dance, I ask what these
activities could have meant within the contexts of gender relations
and patriarchy in the 1950s. When two men in Kumashiro Tatsumi's
The Light of Africa (*Afurika no hikari*, 1975), discussed in chapter 5,
share an apartment in a small fishing town in Hokkaido, that prompts

me to consider how we can link their cohabitation and homosocial affect to the economic recession brought on by the 1973 oil crisis.

Furthermore, Maruyama's methodological discussion invites me to be conscious of the historicity or historically conditioned and restricted nature of my own desire to study postwar history through engagement with cinematic texts. In the lecture mentioned above, as an example of his scholarship as a historian of ideas, Maruyama talks about the reexamination of the notion of loyalty to a master in feudal relations since the Warring States period in Japan. While this notion has commonly been understood as one's absolute and blind obedience to one's master, Maruyama, through the reading of various historical sources, argues that the recognition that one was tied to a master by fate and therefore could not leave him under any circumstances could actually result in one's strong commitment to correcting the master's wrongdoings, if necessary, and that it was exactly this ethos shared by concerned warriors that worked as a driving force for the Meiji Restoration.[10] When he spoke about this in October 1960, Japanese society was in the immediate aftermath of the massive nationwide protest against the signing of the revised US-Japan Security Treaty, or Anpo. Just like many other intellectuals, students, and workers in contemporary Japan, Maruyama took the LDP's railroading of the revised Anpo in the Diet as an indefensible challenge to democracy and supported the protest, finding in it the possibility for Japanese people to further cultivate democratic consciousness (Maruyama [1960] 1996b, [1960] 1996c). This political condition undoubtedly fueled his wish to understand through the reassessment of historical sources the ethos of social transformation (or revolution) not simply as an import from the modern West but as something rooted in Japan's own history and thereby to validate and empower the popular movement for democracy.

Similarly, my attempt to construct alternative narratives of high-speed growth is a product of the political and social environment that permeates present-day Japan (and beyond). I am referring especially to the rise of neoliberalism as the dominant ideology of social governance. Japan's ruling elite in the past two decades or so actively propagated such ideas as "structural reform" (*kōzō kaikaku*), "deregulation" (*kisei kanwa*), "reform of the ways of working" (*hatarakikata kaikaku*), "a society where all one hundred million people participate actively" (*ichioku sōkatsuyaku shakai*), and "the energy of the private sector" (*minkan katsuryoku*) in order to further accustom current and future workers as well as already retired workers to the principles of

competition. What is worse in Japan's case is that long-term rule by the LDP, while encouraging competition among workers, has also exacerbated grave cronyism, which prioritizes connections and personal friendship over merit and ability in the world of business and politics, invalidating the notion of a just society. The vivid images of Japanese society that the proponents of neoliberal policy foreground—freed from conventions and restrictions and rife with possibilities and opportunities—work to conceal the uncertainty and unpredictability brought about by the current political and socioeconomic system, or in some cases even identify them as stepping-stones for the nation's financial health and economic survival ("reforms accompanied with pain," or *itami o tomonau kaikaku*, in the common formulation). It is this type of glorification of the social reality that has driven me to the study of historical narratives. I hope that this book, by detailing anxieties and tensions during high-speed growth as problems intrinsic to the system of capitalism (rather than contingent and temporary), will contribute to critiquing the forces that seek to impose specific ways of narrating what is happening in Japan today and thereby to foster specific thinking and behavior that conform to such narratives.

"Place" as an Analytical Category

One thing I cannot help noticing when watching films made around the time of high-speed growth is their remarkable sensitivity to various places in Japan. Filmmakers back then conducted location shootings in many places and made actors and actresses learn the dialect of each place, through which they tried to convey to the audience the landscapes, cultures, communities, and ambience characteristic of those places. Kinoshita Keisuke's *Twenty-Four Eyes* (*Nijūshi no hitomi*, 1954), shot on idyllic Shōdo Island in the Seto Inland Sea, portrays the interchange between a schoolteacher, played by Takamine Hideko, and her twelve students, played by local children, over eighteen years from the 1920s to the immediate postwar era (though not all these students survive poverty and the war). In the same director's *Immortal Love* (*Eien no hito*, 1961), the unchanged nature of Mount Aso in southern Japan is effectively contrasted with the distress and sorrow of the heroine, again played by Takamine, who has no choice but to marry the man who raped and impregnated her, while giving up the man she truly loves. In Nakamura Noboru's *Ki River* (*Ki-no-kawa*,

1966), adapted from Ariyoshi Sawako's ([1959] 2006) well-known novel, this splendid river flowing through Wakayama Prefecture provides an important backdrop for the main motif of the tension between a traditional mother (Tsukasa Yōko) and a rebellious daughter (Iwashita Shima) from the Meiji to the Shōwa era. Kuroki Kazuo's *Preparation for the Festival* (*Matsuri no junbi*, 1975), based on the experience of screenwriter Nakajima Takehiro, depicts the life of a young man in a provincial town in Kōchi Prefecture (Etō Jun) and his boredom, sexual curiosity, longing for Tokyo, and dream of becoming a screenwriter. Of course, we can also think about Yamada Yōji's "Tora-san" series with Atsumi Kiyoshi and Nikkatsu's "Rambler" (*Wataridori*) series with Kobayashi Akira. These are just a few examples, but what I want to point out is that those involved in filmmaking back then were extremely conscious of the power that place possessed—that is, the specific images, affects, and moods that a specific place could induce—and regarded it as a crucial attraction that film could offer. When a 1957 *Asahi* newspaper article praised the large-scale location shooting conducted by Kinoshita Keisuke for his *Times of Joy and Sorrow* (*Yorokobi mo kanashimi mo ikutoshituski*, 1957), saying that people would become bored of Japanese cinema if it depicted only Ginza ("Nihonjū o roke suru" 1957), it was clearly referencing the regular audience's growing interest in discovering and learning about different places on screen at the onset of high-speed growth.

With this fact in mind, I have chosen as objects of study for this book films that are set in a variety of places in Japan and have adopted "place" as a useful analytical category. Whereas high-speed growth is often narrated and remembered as a collective and shared experience of the nation, if we shift our attention to different places within the nation-state, including the metropolis, suburb, port city, countryside, resort town, and "periphery," we can effectively complicate the dominant mode of narrating this historical event. In other words, by complementing and relativizing the common analytical category of the nation-state, which certainly has its own merits but easily falls into the problems of overgeneralization and abstraction, place can bring more concreteness to our analysis and make us more cognizant of the difference, conflict, and unevenness that exist within the nation-state. Once we focus on place, we can no longer speak about high-speed growth simply as a national event but are compelled to consider seriously such issues as whether this process is applicable to all places within the nation-state, how the experiences of major cities like Tokyo

and Osaka differed from those of farming and fishing communities in rural Japan, and how we can fathom the relations between places with different socioeconomic backgrounds.
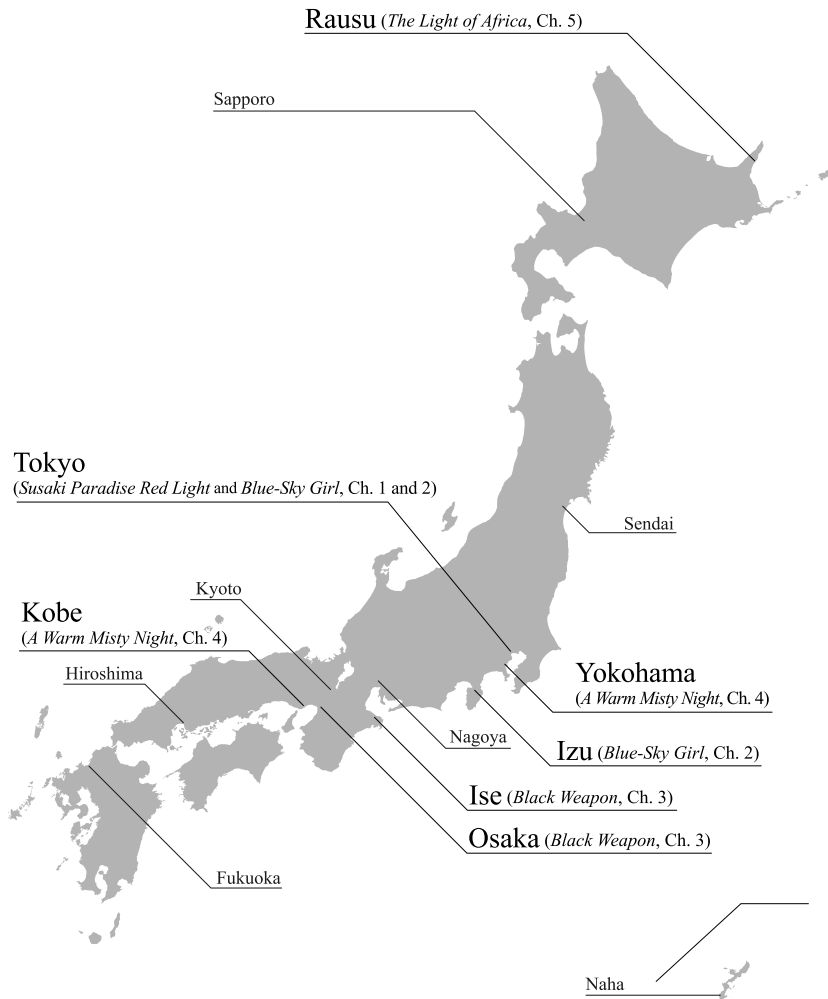
When I say *place* in this book, I do not mean simply a geographical point or physical setting. As geographers and urban historians alike have indicated, a place is a social construct—that is, a space that has been (re)organized through activities, whether physical or intellectual, social or personal, for specific purposes and uses and into which specific meanings have been woven accordingly. These meanings are established and solidified by the entwined interactions between those who develop, control, and manage that place; those who live and work there; and those who visit, imagine, and tell stories about it and, in turn, contribute to shaping people's perceptions, experiences, desires, and memories regarding that place. Furthermore, whereas a place often has a set of prevailing meanings broadly recognized at the global, national, or regional level (or what one might call public images), it is often the case that the same place implies multifaceted, multilayered, and sometimes conflicting and hierarchical meanings and images depending on class, birth and origin, status, occupation, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and many other personal and social factors of those involved with that place (Jones and Evans 2012; Hayden 1997; Tuan 1977; Relph 1976). If we think about, for instance, Kobe, the widely shared public image of this major city in the Kansai region may be that of an exotic and stylish port city, but some people may imagine it primarily as the site of the catastrophic Hanshin-Awaji earthquake of 1995. While art historians may associate Kobe with modernist art and architectural movements in the interwar years, so-called Hanshin-kan modernism, researchers of immigration and diaspora may think about its large Chinese and Korean communities. Or, for a person like myself, raised in a small, insipid suburban town in Hyogo Prefecture, downtown Kobe—Sannomiya and Motomachi—may signify an urban center where excitement and anonymity are guaranteed.

The conceptualization of place as socially constructed and culturally polysemous is important for the argument in *Cinema of Discontent* for the following two reasons. The first is that the representations of places in the cinematic texts examined in this book are grounded upon the historically accumulated knowledge of these places that had been disseminated in Japanese society by then. For example, Kawashima Yūzō's *Susaki Paradise Red Light* (*Susaki Paradaisu aka-shingō*, 1956;

discussed in chapter 1) is set in two neighborhoods in the central part of Tokyo: Susaki and Akihabara. Their representations derive from the images of these two places familiar to contemporary viewers, at least in Tokyo and its metropolitan region: the former as a declining red-light district faced with the upcoming enforcement of the Anti-Prostitution Law and the latter as a neighborhood metamorphosing into a vibrant "electric town." By juxtaposing these two places, the film effectively draws attention to uneven development within the city. In Masumura's *Blue-Sky Girl*, the appreciation of the main plot of the heroine's movement from a small town in Izu to Tokyo requires an understanding of the contrasting images of the countryside as a supplier of workers and the city as a place for the achievement of professional and personal success—images that became popularized in the interwar years and were further reinforced in the postwar era. The representations of Yokohama in Ezaki Mio's *A Warm Misty Night* (*Yogiri yo kon'ya mo arigatō*, 1967; discussed in chapter 4) presuppose the audience's shared knowledge of this place as a cosmopolitan trade port as well as a military town with large American bases. In sum, filmmakers did not pick these places (and the locations of the other films examined in this book) randomly or simply as a matter of convenience but by deliberating upon the cultural meanings ascribed to them; my effort to historicize these films therefore unavoidably requires an appreciation of these meanings.

The second reason to adopt the perspective of place as socially constructed and culturally polysemous is that these films also sought to create new meanings for places. For example, the representations of Osaka in Inoue Akira's *Black Weapon* (*Kuro no kyōki*, 1964; discussed in chapter 3) betray viewers' common expectations because this metropolis does not appear as a vital merchant city with a long history or a city of *ninjō* (human warmth and kindness)—associations conventionally applied to Osaka. Quite the contrary; by showing repeatedly the artificial landscape of the newly launched suburban community in northern Osaka, the film brings to light the anonymity, standardization, and what Edward Relph (1976) calls "placelessness," characteristic of highly industrialized societies such as postwar Japan. When Kumashiro's *The Light of Africa* portrays a small fishing community in eastern Hokkaido, it does not stress the serene and innocent nature of rural Japan, which the National Railway's "Discover Japan" campaign was enthusiastically promoting at that time, but redirects viewers' attention to the exhaustion and frustration of a provincial community

left behind by high-speed growth. By assigning new meanings to these places, these films transmuted, challenged, and destabilized the existing meanings and thereby constructed a constellation of more complex meanings, which urges us to consider what political and socioeconomic factors prompted these new meanings and how we can incorporate them into our narratives of high-speed growth (see map I.1).

Rausu (*The Light of Africa*, Ch. 5)

Sapporo

Tokyo
(*Susaki Paradise Red Light* and *Blue-Sky Girl*, Ch. 1 and 2)

Sendai

Kyoto

Kobe
(*A Warm Misty Night*, Ch. 4)

Hiroshima

Yokohama
(*A Warm Misty Night*, Ch. 4)

Nagoya

Izu (*Blue-Sky Girl*, Ch. 2)

Ise (*Black Weapon*, Ch. 3)

Osaka (*Black Weapon*, Ch. 3)

Fukuoka

Naha

Map I.1. Places discussed in *Cinema of Discontent*.