

Imamura Shohei's adaptation of Nosaka Akiyuki's *The Pornographers*: Ethical Representations of Translating the Unwritten¹

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Translation, adaptation and ethics in 20th century Japan

In Japan, translation is a cultural practice that is often scrutinized by the authorities to find content that is considered inappropriate for mass consumption by the Japanese public, mostly due to explicit depiction of sexuality. Article 175 of the penal code allows for the prosecution of anyone who distributes obscene material in Japan. Translators, although they are not the original producers of the material, are still responsible for the content of their translations. They have to judge if the content is obscene or not. But, the legal definition of obscene is vague enough to allow for very subjective interpretation by the authorities. For this reason, there are many examples of obscenity trials implicating translators of foreign work, the most famous examples being the translation of D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover's* by Itō Sei and the translation of Sade's *Juliette's* by Shibusawa Tatsuhiko². During those trials, the translator had to justify from an ethical point of view his decision to translate a text that might offend society's morals. During Shibusawa's trial, the prosecutor asked the translator to explain why, even though he had published an abridged translation of *Juliette*, he had chosen to translate obscene passages of Sade's work. According to the prosecutor, leaving out the obscene passages would have been the ethical thing to do, especially since they do not contain a direct expression of Sade's philosophy. Shibusawa countered his argument by saying that, from a translator's point of view, rendering the essence of a novel, even in an abridged translation, was the ethical thing to do. In order to do so, he had to translate passages that might be considered obscene by some readers. For Shibusawa, sexual descriptions were an integral part of Sade's philosophy. These obscenity trials undoubtedly contributed to raise awareness of translators' roles in society. In Japan, translators have often more responsibility for the content they translate than their foreign counterparts. They have to justify and explain, not only in a legal context, but in the media, the essence of their work. For this reason, they have a higher public profile than, for example, European translators, who tend to hide their involvement. European translators are less involved, but they also have less social importance. Japanese translators are often essayists, scholars or TV personalities that have more clout than

¹ The second part of this paper is a translation and an adaptation of some of the conclusions written in my Master's thesis on the novel *The Pornographers* by Nosaka Akiyuki. I have expended the scope of the enquiry in order to reflect some of the research I have been conducting on issues of translation, representation, ethics and media. This paper builds a bridge between my previous research and my next research project on translation and media.

² On obscenity trials in Japan see Kristen Cather, *The Art of Censorship in Postwar Japan*, Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 2012, and my article on Shinbusawa Tatsuhiko's trial (in French), « Shibusawa Tatsuhiko et le rôle du traducteur dans la société japonaise d'après-guerre », *Honyaku no Bunka/Bunka no Honyaku*, n.6, 2011, p.31-41.

their European counterparts, but they also face more risks. The importance given to the translators is also a way to control their social influence.

For all these reasons, the figure of the translator had a defining impact on Japanese culture and media, especially in the Meiji, Taishō, and post-war periods. Japan is a country that is well-known for the number and diversity of books and movies that are translated. The defining influence of translation on the culture is unquestionable. This influence is not only limited to the fact that foreign content is more accessible through translations than in most countries, it is also related to the idea that the act of translation, including its mode of practice, its ideology as well as its structure, permeates Japanese society.³ Some conceptions of translation as well as considerations on representations are often intertwined.

For this reason, when considering ethics and translation together in a Japanese context, there is a need to expand to cultural practices that are not usually considered translations. For me, movie adaptations of novels are of interest. To read movie adaptations as a form of translation is not a new concept, but it seems even more appropriate in a Japanese context when we look at ethical issues in the media, especially since problems of representation and media have been considered by famous translators like Shibusawa Tatsuhiko, and adaptations are a form of interpretation that modify a text in order to accommodate different media the same way translation adapts a text to a language or culture. From a methodological point of view, I will borrow mostly from Lawrence Venuti's work on translation and adaptation. He argues:

The interpretative force of translation also issues from the fact that the source text is not only decontextualized, but *recontextualized*. These two processes occur simultaneously, as soon as a text is chosen and the translator begins to render it. Translating rewrites a source text in terms that are intelligible and interesting to receptors, situating it in different patterns of language use, in different literary traditions, in different cultural values, in different social institutions, and often in different historical moments. The recontextualizing process entails the creation of another network of intertextual relations established by and within the translation [...] A film adaptation likewise recontextualizes its prior materials, but once again the process is much more extensive and complex because of a shift to a different, multidimensional medium with different traditions, practices and conditions of production⁴.

³ For example, a common complaint among English teachers in Japan is that foreign language instruction is often based on grammar and translation to the detriment of communication skills. This pedagogical choice is part of the phenomenon that I describe. Furthermore, this obsession for translation to learn English is not new. A good example of this is the ideological debate between Jōji and Naomi's native English teacher in the novel *A Fool's Love* (1925). Jōji wants Naomi to learn grammar and translation skill while the native teacher tells him that Naomi does not need to translate or learn grammar rules, but to speak English.

⁴ Lawrence Venuti, "Adaptation, Translation, Critique" in *Film and Literature: An Introduction and Reader*, London, Routledge, 2012, p.93.

This idea of recontextualization is key to understanding the debates around translation, adaptation and ethics in Japan. It is indirectly what is at stake in trials of obscenity as well as when screenplay writers or movie directors try to adapt a novel to the screen, especially when the novel deals with issues of obscenity and portrayals of sexuality.

For this reason, I have chosen to explore the screen adaptation of a novel that deals with problems of the representation of sexuality, *The Pornographers* (in Japanese *Erogoto-shi-tachi*) by Nosaka Akiyuki. Actually, it is not a novel like Sade's *Juliette* with explicit representation of sexual acts, but a novel about producers and distributors of pornographic material. As far as erotic episodes are concerned, they remain mostly unwritten. The narratives usually focus on the description of the reaction of spectators or consumers of erotic material. It avoids any descriptions that could be considered obscene. Even though this choice is essentially justified by aesthetic concerns (Nosaka wanted to describe the impact of this kind of life on the people who practice it), it had the merit of not attracting the attention of Japanese authorities⁵. The book does not describe sexual encounters, but it shows how people, who consider themselves to be artists, can be lost in the post-war consumerist world dominated by industrial reproduction of words and images. The whole novel is a reflection on art, representation and performance. As I explained, it does not perform the sexual aspect of the title, but the novel itself is a reflection on the status of the artist and the capacity of a work of art to reproduce reality. The characters within the novel try to recreate "real" sexual encounters on screen or through other media, but they can only achieve to create a parallel reality that disconnects them from their daily lives. The novel tries to avoid performing the characters' fantasies by leaving their representation unwritten. Instead, it achieves the performance of their ideal of reality through an adaptation, or translation, of the Osaka dialect spoken by the characters. This is a crucial aspect of the novel. The characters often complain in the narrative that erotic movies made in Tokyo sound "phony" because of the difficulty standard Japanese has in reproducing the feelings of ordinary people. They argue that the best way of recreating the reality of ordinary people is through the Osaka dialect. The novel performs this aspect in so far that the narration tries to reproduce the Osaka dialect. Of course, it is still a representation, or translation, of a spoken language adapted and modified for the novel's needs. In the end, it is a novel about the capacity of literature to translate a reality without performing the aspects it tries to parody.

The movie springs from similar aesthetic conceptions. Even though there are a lot of changes at the level of narrative, it keeps the same idea of translation and reflection on the limits of a certain medium, in this case film. It does not show erotic films within the film, but the reaction of people watching these kinds of film. The viewpoint in the movie is inverted in order to represent the idea of leaving sexual scenes unwritten in the book. I will prove that the adaptation is not a literal translation of the book, but that it translates its idea regarding art and media, an idea which is the key to understanding the novel.

⁵ I do not believe Nosaka censored himself. Later in his career, he was put on trial for the publication of Nagai Kafu's *Yojyohan husuma no shitabari*, in a *Omoshiroihanbun*, a magazine he edited.

My analysis will focus on how the movie makes narrative changes in order to better translate the essence of the novel as well as think about the ethics of translation, adaptation and representation within a narrative that deals with those same issues. Before delving into the analysis, I will explain the context of production of this adaptation and summarize the difference between the novel and the movie at the level of narrative. This will give me the basis to analyze the adaptation using the idea of the “gaze” in movies to think through issues of representation and spectatorship.

The making-of

This adaptation of Nosaka’s novel started pre-production just after the publication of the book in 1966. This shows how much a first novel by a fairly young writer, because of its representation of a certain conception of Japanese society and everyday life in a poor neighborhood with the protagonists haunted by memories of the war, was able to pique the interest of the film industry, and especially of an already famous director like Imamura Shohei. Imamura had already made seven films as a director for one of the biggest Japanese studios, Nikkatsu, and was perceived by many to be an important representative of Japanese New Wave cinema⁶. In 1965, he started his own production company in order to be free to direct films without having to worry about studio censorship. Like Satō Tadao explains in his book *Imamura Shohei no Sekai*⁷, although it was not his intention at first, the adaptation from *The Pornographers* ended up being Imamura’s first movie as an independent director.

Even though Imamura showed an interest from the start in Nosaka’s work, he agreed with his partners that he would only write the screenplay. After a few months of research and interviews with people who actually worked as “pornographers” he finally completed a first draft. According to Satō, because he could film a few scenes related to eroticism, or the representation of sexuality, and because some of the themes in the novel were related to his own aesthetic, he convinced himself that he was the ideal director for the job. But, from the start, he wanted to do something original, a movie that was not a mere adaptation, or visual reproduction, of Nosaka’s novel. In order to emphasize the change in perspective, Imamura modified the title from pre-production to *An Introduction to Anthropology based on The*

⁶ Although it has the same label, the Japanese New Wave is very different from the French New Wave. It is label that refers to filmmakers that were already within the Japanese studio system. Even within the system they often tried push the boundaries at the aesthetic and narrative level. Some directors associated with the New Wave still oppose this label.

⁷ Information related to the making of the movie is based on Satō Tadao, *Imamura Shohei no Sekai*, Tokyo, Gakuyōshobo, 1997(1980), p.90-92. Satō Tadao works mostly on the social context and on the life of directors to extrapolate an analysis of movies. He tends to borrow from author theory, which tends to neglect aspects that do not relate directly to the director’s vision. Although, recognizing the importance of a director is valuable, it should not be made at the detriment of other influences. In this case Satō downplays the complex relationship that the movie and the novel have created.

Pornographers⁸. The title allows the movie to distance itself from the original and reminds the viewer of Imamura's conception of filmmaking as an anthropological study of Japanese society. Most of his films deal with a particular culture or subculture that is often both embedded in and hidden by Japanese society. For this reason, even though it is based on a novel, the movie reflects to Imamura's own vision.

At the level of story as well as the level of representation, there are numerous differences between the movie and the novel. Although, the differences are easy to identify, the reasons behind those changes are still debated. For many critics, like Satō, Imamura chose to modify the film in order to create something that continued his aesthetic vision. For those critics, every film by Imamura is a part of a greater body of work that needs to have consistency, as well as a teleological purpose. According to this conception of filmmaking, every movie should be part of a process. You can relate one movie to the whole body of work and watching all the movies will help understand better every single one of them. There are a number of problems stemming from this conception of filmmaking. First, it does not consider the involvement of other staff members and actors, nor does it take into account the fact that most directors are influenced by the social context of other works of art, in this case a novel. In short, this type of analysis that sees the complete work of a director as a totality, is unable to see moviemaking as collaborative process involving negotiation. In this case, it cannot see the adaptation as a translation of a novel to the screen that has to deal mainly with issues of representation, especially in the case of sexual representations. Therefore, I will analyze the movie as a literary adaptation, or translation, in order to understand how film as a media changes the narration process as well as the representation of the story. I will emphasize how the book as well as the movie avoids representing directly certain aspects of the life of the pornographers in order to avoid performing, or becoming the object of their anthropological inquiry. Even though in the book as well as the movie, there is no explicit judgment of the characters' behavior, there is still an ethic related to the representation of the pornographers' universe. Even though at the level of narration, both are, to borrow a quote from Milan Kundera, "realms where moral judgment is suspended", there is nonetheless a conscious effort to avoid directly representing sexuality in favor of depicting the impact of those unseen (not shown) representations on their producers and consumers. Both the movie and the book play on this idea using the limits and conventions of their respective media. In both cases, they try to represent the absence of what I would call a gaze, and translate this absence through literature of film. This is why they

⁸ This is a literal translation of the Japanese title. In English, the distributors opted for the same title as the English translation of the novel *The Pornographers*. This simpler title could be considered a mistranslation that leads to a mistaken first impression of the novel. Nosaka himself wrote an essay on the impact to title might have on an English-speaking audience. He argues that the English title is much more subversive than the original Japanese, that could be literally translated as *The Masters of Eros*. In order to illustrate his point, he mentions an episode where he was questioned by a British customs officer, because he carried a translation of his own book with him. In a way, the mere fact of carrying the book transformed him into a pornographer. Although the misunderstanding was dissipated without any further problem, the title could have led to strong legal implications. See Nosaka Akiyuki, *Essay Collection 3: Pornographer*, Tokyo, Chikuma Bunko, 2004, p.12-14.

will be considered as two texts dealing with the impact of media on representation, performance and translation.

A comparative analysis of the scenario and the novel

Before delving into close readings of these two texts, I will summarize the story in the movie while comparing it with that in the novel. The book and movie both tell the story of a group of producers and distributors of illegal sexual material in Osaka after the war. These “pornographers” and most of their clients, although they have achieved a better financial situation compared with the Occupation period, still live, for the most part, precarious lives. They are often obsessed by war or childhood memories (they are often the same), and they try to escape from the alienation brought by an ever more competitive capitalist society. Single men are lonely, married men dream of freedom. Subuyan, the main character in the novel and the film is, to borrow an expression from Nosaka himself, a “modern day Don Quixote” fighting with sexuality, the unbeatable enemy of men’s infinite desire to escape their reality. And like Don Quixote, he also believes the made-up stories he uses to entice his clients. After a while, he has to perform, to become the person everyone wants him to be, forgetting who he used to be. Although there are some female characters with true agency in the book and the movie, mostly Haru and her daughter Keiko, the world described by Nosaka is essentially homosocial. The idea of women as commodities is obviously a part of the story, but men also become commodities for other men in some episodes. In brief, everyone is to a certain degree in a relationship of exploitation or manipulation. In the case of Subuyan, he willingly puts himself in situations where he has to use his body to create a false reality that will please his clients⁹. This means that Nosaka did not write a misogynistic novel about men’s desire. There are some passages that can be considered misogynistic but the novel as a whole is structured around a more complex portrayal of gender relations, and is quite critical of the impact of men’s desire on themselves and the people surrounding them. Even though the movie makes some narrative changes, it echoes the book’s perspective on gender relations, ridiculing even more Subuyan’s life choices.

Although the book also has Subuyan as its main character, it delves deeper into the lives of other “pornographers” such as Banteki, Hack or Cocky. The movie focuses on Subuyan’s work life and family situation. Being a movie about making pornographic movies, it has a strong self-reflexive aspect that leads the narrative to ignore most of the pornographers’ work outside of movie-making. There are a few scenes showing Subuyan talking with businessmen about his exploits or showing him recording the sound of sexual encounters, but it does not compare with the extensive descriptions in the book. The movie is mostly interested in movie-making, and the depiction of Subuyan’s dysfunctional family. Within the context of the film, this is used to demonstrate how cinema, when it is created in order to produce a consumerist product, tends

⁹ See my article on Nosaka and performance, “Ishikawa Jun and Performativity”, *Ishikawa Jun to Sengo Nihon*, Kyoto, Minerva Shobo, 2010, p.147-159.

to reassure the viewers by representing a conventional and ideal vision of the world. Imamura wants to criticize this ideology by questioning the idea of the gaze based on psychoanalytic principles. In order to achieve this goal, he parodies an idealization of the role of the father within a family structure and the representation of sexuality in movies. The novel is structured around a description of the pornographers' daily lives, but the movie is structured around family relations, and the difficulty to establish connections, sexual or otherwise, within that context, for example, Subuyan always thinking about his young step-daughter or Haru being controlled by her son because she believes he might become a university student someday. The children use the power they have to control their stepfather and their mother to get favors or money. Keiko uses her charm to control Subuyan after her mother's death. The son uses the money he got from his mother under false pretenses to have fun and seduce women. The children are not emotionally affected by their parents' desires. Keiko, although she sometimes gives the impression that she is curious about sex, likes to use her power over men to increase her influence and material comfort. The son ignores her mother's despair after his father's death, and does not understand why he has to become his replacement. The parents are slaves to their desires. Thus in Imamura's film, it is less a gender issue than a generational issue. The adults want to use the children to return to a (fictional) period in their lives in which their sexual or emotional desires were fulfilled. They are stuck in a state of nostalgia that hides how the children, obsessed by future gains, only want to use their elders. In the end, Haru dies in a mental institution, and Subuyan becomes impotent, and tries to return to a fictional past by building, alone on his boathouse, a doll looking like Haru (in the book, the doll is based on Keiko's features).

This last project by Subuyan, to recreate Haru in a doll, may seem paradoxical. During the movie, he does not seem to feel anything for her. The only scene of intimacy shows them in a long, but impassionate embrace, both of them avoiding looking at each other¹⁰. They are both lost in their thoughts. After her death he tries to recreate moments of pleasure that never really existed by making a sex-doll. In the end, the recreation of a past that never existed is more powerful than an actual event. In Imamura and Nosaka's world, a real encounter with another person is an impossible ideal that cannot be achieved, except maybe through an ironic artistic reproduction of the ideal image of an encounter. From a well-known psychoanalytic perspective, the sexual relation between Haru and Subuyan, as well as the others depicted in the film, can only fail because it cannot provide the subject with the thing he or she is missing. Subuyan cannot be satisfied, because he does not really need anything. Both Subuyan and Haru are looking for an ideal that is not real. When we look closely at Subuyan's trajectory during the movie, we can see how he conceives his relationship with Haru. From Subuyan's point of view, when she is alive, Haru represents a presence, a subjectivity that seeks satisfaction of its own desires. But after her death, Subuyan is free to project his desires on a white canvas. At the end of the movie, which reminds the viewer of Ihara Saikaku's *The Life of*

¹⁰ This portrayal of the gaze is very important. I will argue in the rest of the paper that it is the key to understand Imamura's adaption.

*an Amorous Man*¹¹ (1682), Subuyan is so obsessed with his doll that he does not realize that he is drifting from the shore. He leaves society heading for an imaginary utopian world or, to borrow an expression from Nosaka, a *pornotopia*. He is now powerless, but it does not matter anymore because he is stuck in his imaginary world.

The desire to achieve a perfect sexual relationship or the desire to achieve complete bliss is common to most of the characters in the movie: Subuyan, Subuyan's customers, and Haru. This impossible quest defines the movie. This is close to the themes explored in the novel, but as I have said before the movie focuses on the film medium in its criticism of the characters' endeavors. The novel involves a greater number of media and the characters see in each type of media the possibility of finding happiness through the recreation of a fantasy or, in other words through a recontextualization, a translation of their desires. The movie is more concerned with the limits and the ideology associated with filmmaking. Imamura opposes a certain way of conceiving and making movies. In this, he is close to denouncing the ideology of cinema expressed by Todd McGowan: "If the fundamental ideological function of cinema consists in providing a fantasmatic image of the successful sexual relationship, cinema's ability to reveal that failure of the sexual relationship marks its most important task in challenging the structure of ideology"¹². McGowan's idea of a successful sexual relationship can be used to open cinema's desire to idealize a number of aspects of life and to create perfect human relationship. Imamura's criticism not only involves cinema's recreation of sexuality, but the portrayal of the Japanese family and their relationship. We must not forget that Imamura, before becoming a director, worked as an assistant for Ozu Yasujiro, famous for his depictions of ideal Japanese families¹³. Imamura proposed a different model of the Japanese family, one in which the members were not afraid to explore their problems and flaws openly. In Imamura's movies, family problems do not get resolved at the end like in Ozu's films.

In order to achieve this portrayal of the family, Imamura inverts the viewpoint, or the gaze, within his movie. This is probably the most important aspect he adapts from the novel, more than the narrative. Imamura, like Nosaka, decides to leave aspects of the plot unwritten or unseen. He completes Nosaka's portrayal of the pornographers by being able to recreate a recontextualization of the act of seeing, or to borrow from a film theory term, of the gaze. The last part of this paper will show how Imamura translates this aspect of the gaze from the book to his film.

The omnipresence of the gaze in Imamura's *The Pornographers*

The gaze in Imamura's film is present at the extradiegetic as well as the intradiegetic level.

¹¹ Even though the ending of the movie and the book are different, Saikaku is recognized as one Nosaka's influence.

¹² Todd McGowan, *The Real Gaze : Film Theory after Lacan*, p.203.

¹³ Here, ideal does not mean perfect in the sense that the families depicted in Ozu did not have any problem. It means that the family unit always overcame their problem or kept them subdued, in order to preserve cohesion.

First, at the extradiegetic level, the movie borrows from the aesthetic of documentary film or *cinéma vérité*. The spectators are made to believe that the characters are observed by a camera. The characters are often filmed from afar, giving the impression of a documentary on rare animals (after all, the first part of the movie's title is *An Introduction to Anthropology*). For example, when Subuyan talks with some clients in a building, the camera films them from another building, without any shots from the inside. It gives the impression that a cameraman would have disturbed their secret meeting. We cannot see the characters' faces, but we can hear them speak clearly, as if a microphone were hidden somewhere. Obviously, there is no hidden microphone, but rather an artificial distance that is essentially visual between the spectators and the characters. There are similar scenes throughout the movie: the pornographers' conversation at the Turkish bath, or the intimate scenes between Subuyan and Haru. There are places where the camera cannot go. This also refers to the voyeuristic nature of cinema. This voyeuristic aspect is present in any genre, but it is even more obvious in documentary films. This is what Imamura recreates.

But this is not enough to justify Imamura's aesthetic choice of making a fake documentary film. The voyeuristic aspect does not only refer to documentary films or to pornographic films (which are documentaries, even when they have a fictional dimension), but also is a way of questioning the aesthetic of the film medium in general. From the first scene the film presents itself like a movie about movies or a film within a film. It shows two pornographers, Subuyan and Banteki, preparing the filming of a pornographic movie. The actors put their make-up on and the pornographers are setting up their equipment. Then we see a close-shot of Subuyan's face holding a camera. The four lenses on the camera gives the impression that his gaze has been demultiplied. Like in the novel, the spectator does not see what is filmed. It stays unseen¹⁴. This is close to Nosaka's rule of the unwritten. In Imamura's film, the gaze is an empty structure that needs to be filled by the spectator. It does not contain one stable reality like the traditional conception of cinema usually puts forward. The gaze does not represent anything except the act of looking at and being conscious of looking at something. This is why Imamura does not show sexual encounters. Instead he shows people looking at something. The characters mimic the actions of the spectator, and the spectator has to watch the characters look at something they cannot see. The gaze is the object of the gaze. From a structural point of view, the gaze represented by Imamura is nihilistic¹⁵.

After the close-shot of Subuyan's face, we see the pornographers in a dark room watching the result of their work. Again, Imamura, like Nosaka, is more interested in depicting the characters' reaction to the pornographic material than the pornographic scene itself. The impact is even stronger than that in the novel since it is a movie within a movie that we are not

¹⁴ For a discussion on eroticism and realism in literature and film from a Japanese perspective see Shibusawa Tatsuhiko, "Eiga ni okeru erotikku shinbokizumu nitsuite" *Kōfuku ha eien ni onna dake no mono da*, Tokyo, Kawade Bunko, 2006, p.133-140.

¹⁵ In other films by Imamura, like *Eijanaika* (1981), the representation of sexuality is more explicit, but in this case the historical aspect as well as the subversive aspect of the plot justifies it. *The Pornographers'* universe is subversive only because it avoids to represent sexuality.

allowed to see, although the medium would have allowed it. Then the camera turns to the screen that the pornographers were watching. But, we do not see the film they were watching. Instead there is a fish with big eyes swimming in a fish tank (an obvious personification of the gaze). This fish that seems to see everything belongs to Haru and is, according to her, her husband's reincarnation. Then, the camera goes into the screen: the film that the pornographers were watching becomes the film we will watch, a movie within a movie.

This crucial scene inverts the gaze on itself, and invites the viewer to think about the cinematic medium through pornography. This film within a film underscores the inevitability of the cinematic illusion, even after using techniques associated with the documentary film. A film is always a fiction, a structured gaze. Imamura shows how a critique of the ideology of cinema can happen within a film. Again, Imamura is close to McGowan's ideas: "This [kind of] cinema reaches its fullest development through films that use the separation between worlds of desire and fantasy in order to permit spectators to experience this [sexual] failure as a positive event"¹⁶. Imamura follows this structure. He puts the spectator in the world of the pornographers that is depicted as an imaginary world even with documentary style filming. All the pornographers' endeavors are all failures. But these failures help us understand our own relationship with reality, the cinematic medium and the gaze.

In the end, these failures are connected to the family structure. Imamura depicts a dysfunctional family, dominated by desires and power relationship. The fish, representing the dead husband's gaze, shows how powerless he is to stop his family from being unhappy and unfulfilled. He can only observe, but he cannot change anything. This ideal father (at least in Haru's memory) is replaced by a stepfather who only tries to fulfill his desires without protecting the family members. Unlike Ozu's father figures, Subuyan does not know any limit and will put his needs before the those of his family.

As I have shown, Imamura's film, even though it recontextualizes Nosaka's novel based on media related imperatives and his own aesthetic vision, is able to translate the essence of Nosaka's conception of the limits of representation in postwar Japan. This is especially interesting for me, because the narrative of the novel and the movie reflects as well concerns of language, translation, and representation. For this reason, Nosaka and Imamura's *Pornographers* allow us to reconsider our own preconceptions on art and media, without tackling directly the issue of the representation of sexuality.

¹⁶ Todd McGowan, *The Real Gaze : Film Theory after Lacan*, p.203.

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