

Raced Bodies and the Public Sphere in Ichikawa Kon's *Tokyo Olympiad*

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For the last several years my work has focused on “the body” and it was in that connection that I first became interested in Ichikawa Kon’s film of the 1964 Olympic Games, titled *Tōkyō orinpikku* (*Tokyo Olympiad*, 1965). More recently Ichikawa’s documentary seemed to me to present a potentially useful text for exploration of Habermas’s model of communication in the public sphere as it relates to Japan in the 1960s. I originally envisioned this study as proceeding along the lines of Wimal Dissanayake’s essay on filmmaker Oshima Nagisa and the public sphere.¹ But that style of analysis proved problematic in this case. Part of my discussion here will be an exploration of these problems: the difficulty of integrating the Habermasian public sphere with discussion of the *reception* of a particular set of body-focused artistic texts, which circulate through time and among multiple audiences, across multiple linguistic and national boundaries.

Introduction

Ichikawa Kon was born in 1915. He is therefore a member of the generation the Japanese call the *senchū-ha* (those who lived through the war as adults).² In 1968 critic Etō Jun remarked about the members of this generation: “in order to gloss over the humiliation of ‘national defeat’ *men* have built up elaborate bluffing self-deceptions” (Etō 114).³ In this context Etō is explicitly contrasting the male writers and artists of this generation with their female counterparts, whom Etō sees as “[trying] to throw themselves bodily into the fissures between reality and the fabrications created by these ruined men” (114). Although Etō is to some extent including himself in this indictment, his birthdate of 1933 also lessens the intensity of his responsibility for the war and thus lessens the emotional complexity of his engagement with its aftermath.

Etō was outspoken in mainstream circles in his lifelong attempt to come to terms with the meaning of Japan’s pre-1945 totalitarianism, defeat, the Allied Occupation, and the effects of all of these events on Japan’s subsequent public and political discourse. Ichikawa and many others of the *senchū-ha* generation have engaged these same issues, but have done so implicitly in their art—films and fiction—rather than through direct cultural critique. Whether they deserve to be characterized as constructing “elaborate, bluffing self-deceptions” or not, is one of the questions of this essay.

Jürgen Habermas was born in Düsseldorf, Germany in 1929, fourteen years after Ichikawa and four years before Etō. His first knowledge of Nazi wartime atrocities came in 1945 when he saw newsreels of the Nuremberg Trials and Allied documentaries of the concentration camps (Horster and van Reijen, 77-78). The experience of recognizing only

retroactively the horrors of the totalitarian Third Reich led to his developing a philosophical ideal of communicative action and the public sphere—an attempt to make sure it “never happened again” through the development of a positive rationality (rather than the negative kind adduced by his teacher Adorno in his later years, which Habermas saw as conducive to a return to totalitarianism).⁴ This philosophy was first articulated in *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (*The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. 1991), published in 1962, two years before the Tokyo Olympic Games, and three years before the release of Ichikawa’s film.

Like Etō, Habermas’s birthdate exempts him from immediate responsibility: he was a child and adolescent throughout the war. And, like Etō, his intervention thereafter has taken the form of direct cultural critique and an active engagement with history. Rather than the potentially very interesting juxtaposition of Etō and Habermas, however, in this paper I will juxtapose the very *dissimilar* interventions of Habermas and Ichikawa Kon, their very different reactions in the first half of the 1960s to the end of Japanese and German totalitarianism in 1945. Given that Habermas’s realization of the criminality of the National Socialist government came explicitly through the medium of documentary film, it seems especially pertinent to consider the role of the documentary in his later model of the public sphere.

I will be triangulating this discussion backward in time through one figure: director Leni Riefenstahl, born in 1902. Unlike Ichikawa or Habermas she *was* indisputably involved with pre-1945 totalitarianism.⁵ As the director, hand-picked by Hitler, of the infamous documentary of the Nazi Party Congress in Nuremberg, *Triumph of the Will* (1935), her connection to Habermas’s past is clear. And as the director of the more ideologically ambiguous *Olympia*, a documentary of the 1936 Berlin Olympics, she also has a close connection with Ichikawa’s film.

When considering the relationship between specific films and the public sphere, two approaches are possible.⁶ The first, that taken by Dissanayake in his study of Oshima, approaches film primarily as text: Dissanayake analyzes the messages “encoded” by Oshima in several of his films and the challenges those messages represent to the state and the status quo of Japanese society. Dissanayake’s argument is straightforward: “Oshima Nagisa has clearly sought to fashion his cinema as a site of interrogatory and oppositional discourse connected to the idea of the public sphere” (139). Dissanayake’s study is text- and author-focused; there is no attempt to interrogate modes of reception or consumption.

The second approach focuses on the film’s reception by individual consumers. For Habermas the “subject” in the sphere of identity formation and communicative action, what he calls “the lifeworld,” is never considered as a singular individual. His model of communication and identity formation is relentlessly abstract and intersubjective. Nevertheless, when he posits a model of communication that results in changes in the structure of this lifeworld, and then the subsequent changes brought back to the broader social system—this is his positive vision of the transformative potential of the public sphere—he (or we) must somehow account for the transformation resulting from *individual* consumption of, for example, a *particular* film. That individual consumption may be multiplied many times—must be, in fact, if we are to hope for any significant effect upon the broader social system—but its immediate effect

occurs one viewer at a time, even within a crowded theater. When considering film from the point of view of the viewer, questions of memory and prior experience—the biographically and culturally determined situation of the viewer at the moment of viewing—become inescapable.⁷ Whereas the “public” of Oshima’s early films was restricted to Japan, and the content of those films addressed explicitly Japanese social and political issues, *Tokyo Olympiad* was conceived from the beginning as a product for an international audience. Therefore, rather than focusing on the film’s reception in Japan, I will address here its multiple readings by multiple individual viewers in an “international public sphere,” through and against Leni Riefenstahl’s *Olympia*.

It will be necessary to distinguish here between two levels of “spectacle” or “text”: the 1936 and 1964 Olympic Games themselves, attended and viewed by eager audiences; and the films made of the Games, in which the original audiences become part of the spectacle presented to a new and potentially much larger audience. The two types of spectacle work differently as “messages” or actions in the public sphere, and will be explored as separate, though linked, phenomena.

The modern Olympic Games began in 1896, when Pierre de Coubertin developed and promoted the National and International Olympic Committee system that has structured the Games ever since. He promoted the revival of the ancient Greek games through a rhetoric of ideals of sportsmanship and goodwill among nations. Unlike the ancient Games, Coubertin insisted on the importance of competition for its own sake (not for material gain); he and his supporters believed that “sport could be an agent of human moral development. They . . . insisted that ‘politics’ could only be an intrusion on the athletic process” (Kanin 11). As Coubertin put it when proposing his idea (unsuccessfully) to the French government in 1892: “Let us export our oarsmen, our runners, our fencers, into other lands. That is the true free trade of the future; and the day it is introduced into Europe the cause of peace will have received a new and strong ally” (Kanin 20). From their inception the modern Olympic Games were framed as a privileged site for equal competition among the nations of the world, a privileged site for the promotion of peace. At the same time, even from the beginning of the Olympic movement it did not escape the notice of the participating states that the development of strong, agile, trained, maximally disciplined bodies was also effective preparation for war. Although the Olympics were conceived as a prophylactic against international war, that effect was to be achieved through the mobilizing of trained bodies to act as stand-ins for “nation” in physical, aggressive (pseudo-war) competition.

Heretofore sport has rarely been explicitly considered in examinations of the working of the public sphere. For Habermas it is only the public institutions based on *language*, such as newspapers or literary forms, that constitute useful sites of public interaction. Because it is not linguistic, because it is a phenomenon of the body, organized sport is therefore not figured as consequential as either a message or a site in Habermas’s ideal model of the modern public sphere.

I would argue, however, that international sports meetings may be conceived as a type of theater, a theater of the body, which, like narrative theater, may constitute communicative action in the lifeworld. Joan B. Landes has inflected Habermas’s ideas to include the embodied performance or enactment of narrative—traditional theater—as an important form of

political communication in the public sphere (Landes 100-101). To that idea I would add the argument that representation need not be language-based to be communicative; public spectacle of any sort can be fruitfully generative of (multiple) narrative(s).

We are all familiar with the instant narratives produced by sports announcers of each event in the Olympic Games, in addition to the smaller set of enduring master narratives that such huge events tend to generate.⁸ In this sense organized sport can be construed as analogous to improvisational theater: although the general frame of each event is established ahead of time (through rules), its enactment is spontaneous, unpredictable, a once-only event. The viewers, familiar with the rules, construct the narrative of each event as it unfolds before them, even in the absence of official announcers.

Another aspect of sport that is relevant to any discussion of the public sphere is its history of relative inclusiveness. In Habermas's model the agents within the developing public sphere in 18th and 19th century Europe included only propertied, educated men of the bourgeois or upper class, with a few women participating in the salons (which were, at best, a secondary public institution for Habermas). By definition in this context such men were white. Feminists have broadened the list of important communicative sites in the developing public sphere of the 18th and 19th centuries to include some to which women had access and within which women had agency; nonetheless, these remain bourgeois or upper-class white women. If we are to imagine a model of public discourse constituted by broader participation across class, race, and gender boundaries it may be useful to incorporate the idea of organized sport. The spectacle of Jesse Owens's stunning victories in the so-called "Nazi Olympics" stimulated lively public discussion—both at the time, and ever since—on race and power relations. It is significant, therefore, that Owens and his African American teammates had an international visibility and agency through sport at a time when their access to and agency within most other public institutions in North America was still severely limited.⁹

The Olympics as Film

The Eleventh meeting of the modern Olympic Games was held in Berlin in 1936. (Berlin had originally been scheduled to host the 1916 Games, which were canceled because of World War I.) Berlin had been selected as the site of the 1936 Games while Germany was still under the Weimar Republic; by the time the Games were held, however, the country was under the control of Hitler's Third Reich. Hitler himself chose director Leni Riefenstahl to create the film documentary of the Berlin Games.

Riefenstahl began her career as an actress and dancer. In 1932 she directed her first movie, *Das Blaue Lichte* (*The Blue Light*), in which she also starred. The romantic mysticism of the film and its gorgeous photography held strong appeal for Hitler. In 1934 he chose Riefenstahl to direct the documentary of the fifth National Socialist Party rally in Nuremberg; the result was *Triumph of the Will*, which, despite its topic, won a Gold Medallion at the Paris World Exhibition in 1937 (Hinton 59). It was her unprecedented success at producing a visually beautiful, emotionally effective film from this *huge* event, that led Hitler to designate Riefenstahl as the most qualified director for documenting the Berlin Olympics, meant to be a showcase of the Third Reich's status as a world power. Although Goebbels allegedly opposed this, and used his propaganda film studio to produce quickly released newsreels of the Games

in an effort to steal Riefenstahl's market, Hitler repeatedly came to Riefenstahl's support. She was given completely free rein, tempered only by the insistence of the International Olympics Committee that her camera crews not interfere in any way with the athletes.

The result is a two-part, three hour film that has won both tremendous acclaim and, from some quarters, tremendous condemnation.¹⁰ I will return in a moment to the arguments on both sides, but believe that all the critics would agree that Riefenstahl's film actively and effectively mobilizes the dominant symbolism of the modern Olympic Games, as expressed in Coubertin's words. The film was released in four language versions, with slight differences among them. It won the Grand Prize at the Venice Film Festival of 1938, as well as prizes from the Greek and Swedish governments; Riefenstahl was awarded a gold medal by the International Olympics Committee for her making of the film. Nonetheless, it was boycotted in the U.S. and banned in Great Britain until many years after the end of the war.

Ichikawa Kon is a director best known before 1965 for his film adaptations of literary works, ranging from Sōseki's *Kokoro* (1955) to Yokoyama Taizō's comic strip *Mr. Pu* (1953). The Japan Olympics Committee solicited Ichikawa to direct a documentary of the Tokyo Games after having held discussions with directors Kurosawa Akira and Hani Susumu. Although Ichikawa had never before directed a documentary, and claimed to have no interest in sports, he agreed. In a 1965 interview in *Cahiers du cinéma* he explained his reasons:

Sport is something very simple and has nothing interesting in itself. It is no more than the struggle and movement of bodies. What is important is the human wisdom that invented these Games in the hope that they would contribute to world peace: that is the most useful function of the human brain. Showing these struggles and these sufferings, I wanted in my turn to contribute to this ideal of peace (61).

As in the case of Hitler's Berlin Olympics, the hosting of the Tokyo Games was taken as an opportunity by the Japanese government to disseminate a carefully orchestrated vision of the nation to an international audience. (This opportunity is one of the most important reasons countries and cities vie for the chance to host the Games.) In this instance it was perhaps felt to be particularly crucial to demonstrate Japan's renewed claims to respectable nationhood, only twelve years after regaining autonomy at the end of the Occupation, and twelve years after being allowed to re-enter the Olympics as competitors. (Again similar to Berlin, Tokyo's original chance to host the Games, scheduled for 1940, had been pre-empted by a world war. The 1944 Olympics were also cancelled. Then, in 1948, under the Allied Occupation government, Japan was not allowed to compete.) In an era when Japan was struggling to position itself relative to the postwar superpowers, when the Anpo security treaty riots were still raging, when Japan's economic progress had outstripped that of any other Asian country, the necessity for renegotiating its place in a complex international hierarchy of nations was self-evident.

The modern Olympic Games provide a site for an *international* spectacle of competition. In any Olympic event, even if the various contestants share not one word of language, they all know how to perform their sport in such a way that the process and outcome are intelligible to themselves and those watching. It is the strict rule-bound nature of sport that makes it accessible to an international audience. But what happens when the spectacle of the

Olympics is converted to documentary film form? Is it still accessible across national, ethnic, or linguistic boundaries?

Certainly the *bodies* captured on film exist in a discourse of universal intelligibility. We may not all be able to jump over an eight-foot bar, or run a marathon, but every human can imagine being able to do so; we all have bodies that, if whole and healthy, replicate those behaviors on a much simpler scale. In that sense the filmed versions of the Olympic Games, too, participate in what I am calling international theater, international “public discourse.” But, as the multiple versions of *Olympia* and *Tokyo Olympiad* show, such films are often carefully and consciously tailored to appeal to specific publics, to accommodate the language and what Negt and Kluge call the “horizons of experience” of specific national audiences. (I will discuss the details of the differences among the versions below.)

Despite the universal intelligibility of most body behaviors, the specific semiotic inflections of body discourse in each culture—based on such elements as skin color, size, eye shape, and body shape—produce messages about race, gender, ethnicity, class, and so on; and those messages work within more abstract semiotic systems in each culture to produce culture-specific messages about relative status and power.

As documentaries these films are to some extent constrained in the body behaviors they show: if Jesse Owens won the 100-meter race it is not possible for Riefenstahl to show someone else winning it. She did not “script” his victories, nor did Ichikawa plan the victories or dramatic losses of the 1964 athletes. But the carefully planned and executed camera work, the editing, and the scripting of voiceovers added after the films were shot—all of these provide opportunities for documentary filmmakers to organize and produce another layer of messages to be disseminated with the films in their home countries and around the world.

One of the first images of Ichikawa’s film is that of a wrecking ball, destroying the old Tokyo to make way for the beautiful new stadium complex. As is well known, it was for the 1964 Games that Japan completed the bullet train, and the national highway system. Although Ichikawa, like Riefenstahl before him, was given free rein over his film, he was far from blind to the careful assembly and orchestration of symbols surrounding the Tokyo Games, and his film serves to mobilize and concentrate selected elements of that symbolism, increasing its power exponentially through two factors: 1) the director’s careful exploitation of the technical potential of the medium, providing views of the action inaccessible to any normal human through slow motion, telephoto lenses, aerial photography and imaginative camera placement, as well as the use of background music and voiceover, etc.;¹¹ and 2) through the film’s distribution around the country and the world, freeing the one-time-only *event* of the Tokyo Olympics from the bounds of time and space. Even before filming began Ichikawa was conscious of his responsibility to distill the essence of the Games, and also conscious of the international, and in the context of this paper more significantly, the *interracial* nature of the spectacle. In a 1964 *Newsweek* interview he makes clear his awareness of the layers of meaning beyond the “universal” semiotics of the body:

The Olympic Games themselves are a realization of a human dream . . . and so we want to show the games as about much more than striving bodies. The ebony of the Negro athlete, the marble skin of the white, the polished ivory of the Asiatic—if we see only this we have not seen enough. What our camera must also catch is the

largeness of this conception, the end of which is the performing human body; it must suggest the imagination, the labor, the faith which makes these meaningful meetings possible (106).

The result is a two-hour and fifty minute film, which, like Riefenstahl's, was praised far more for its visual beauty and humanity than for its sports reportage. Although the government hated it,¹² *Tokyo Olympiad* became the highest grossing film in Japan to that date. As of July 1965, fifteen million Japanese viewers had reportedly seen it; this comprises one fifth of the total population at that time (*Cahiers* 61). It won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes film festival, and was released in a number of quite different versions around the world.¹³

The multiple similarities between the 1936 *Olympia* and the 1964 *Tokyo Olympiad* make it impossible for anyone who has seen both to refrain from reading them together. Of the twenty-six reviews and essays on *Tokyo Olympiad* that I have read, in French, Japanese, and English, well over half explicitly compare it to Riefenstahl's film. In the 1964 *Newsweek* article about his preparations for the film before the Olympics were even held, Ichikawa makes clear his own admiration for Riefenstahl's film and his awareness that the two will inevitably be compared. The article is entitled, "Outdoing 'Olympia?'"—which suggests that for the *Newsweek* writers and readers as well, the comparison was virtually automatic (106).

Tokyo Olympiad and Olympia

I will turn now to a reading of *Tokyo Olympiad* and its apparent thrust as a communicative act in the "international public sphere" within which it has circulated. Like the majority of critics, my reading explicitly juxtaposes Ichikawa's film and Riefenstahl's. For purposes of brevity, I will focus on selected moments from the films: particularly the opening sequence, where the symbolic framework is established; and the marathon. There are many similarities between these sequences in the two films, and it is in them that we see most clearly the ways that Ichikawa is playing off of his predecessor.

The opening sequence of Riefenstahl's black-and-white *Olympia* (Part I) begins in "ancient" Greece. A grey mist slowly clears to reveal half-ruined buildings, then ancient statues of athletes, one of which transforms into a living man. Nearly naked male bodies enact the ancient Olympic sports of javelin and discus throwing; artfully photographed naked female bodies do a slow and elegant dance with Olympic rings. Finally the torch is lit from the ancient fire, and a naked, Greek-god-like man runs with it—toward Berlin, as it turns out. The viewer suddenly finds him/herself flying through the air over southern and eastern Europe as if on an airplane, tracking the path of the torch, which presumably is traveling on land below us. We descend through the clouds to land in Berlin, and watch as the torch, carried now by a more fully dressed and modern looking young man, is brought to the filled stadium, where the flame is lit. Twenty minutes have passed, and we have yet to see a competitor, much less a competition.

The film now shows the opening ceremony, with the parade of athletes from various nations saluting Hitler. The camera cleverly picks out the "characteristic" aspects of each country's contingent.¹⁴ In one interesting moment, the French competitors, wearing berets to mark their nationality, give the Olympic salute as they pass before the platform where Hitler

sits: the arm held straight out at shoulder height. Some in the crowd, mistaking it for the Nazi salute, give the annoyed French team a standing ovation. Next, Hitler officially opens the Games. Finally, after more than half an hour of film time, the competitions themselves begin. Throughout the first half of the film, Riefenstahl repeats a visual linking of the Olympic flame with the sun; in one particularly striking shot the two seem to be melting together.

The opening sequence of Ichikawa's film consists of a more complex set of narrative elements, but bears a distinct resemblance to Riefenstahl's construction. The film opens with a very long shot of a blazing sun: white against a blood-red sky, motionless for nearly thirty seconds. This static image is suddenly interrupted by a wrecking ball, destroying old Tokyo, we understand from the visuals, to create the beautiful new stadium complex. In the meantime a voiceover is telling us about the previous modern Olympics; where each was held in what year; whether war necessitated cancellation; whether or not Japan was allowed to compete. Then the screen is again filled with the sun, red on black this time, rising slowly. (45 seconds)

Like Riefenstahl, Ichikawa journeyed personally to Greece to film the lighting of the torch, and next his cameras follow it, travelogue style, across Asia. The voiceover tells us that this is the first time the Olympics have been held in an Asian country, and speculates on the reactions of the crowds in various cities as they watch the torch go by: Beirut, Tehran, Hong Kong, and finally Okinawa. The voiceover declares that "we know" that the Olympics are dedicated to the idea that "all men are created equal."¹⁵ This torch is traveling at ground level, and so are we. When it boards a plane in Okinawa to fly to Honshū, we join it, landing in Hiroshima. From its passage through a crowded Peace Park in Hiroshima we follow the torch around the base of Mt. Fuji, past crowds of rustic-looking Japanese spectators, finally arriving in Tokyo. These shots are intercut, however, with shots of the competitors arriving, as the voiceover explains that never before have so many foreigners from so many countries been in Japan at one time. We see the parade of nations, each country again framed to enhance the exhibition of its own "characteristic" traits, filing past the Emperor in the stands, who then announces the opening of the Games, reading carefully from a card. As the torch finally arrives at the stadium we watch it being carried step by step to the very top, over 100 steps in all, where the handsome Japanese athlete unexpectedly grins just before he touches the torch to the basin and ignites the flame. As in Riefenstahl's film, the viewer has sat through half an hour of prelude before the competitions begin.

Both directors have used these opening sequences to construct the ideological frame within which the actual competitions will be read by the viewer. Both connect their respective modern nations with the origin of the Olympic flame, and both explicitly connect that flame with the sun, invoking an even more ancient and transcendent symbol of power and continuity. In both cases the *extreme* slow pace of the opening visuals forces the viewer into a mode of patient receptiveness; the atmosphere is immediately that of a solemn ritual, outside the bounds of "normal" time.

Despite their structural similarities, an analysis of the opening segments of the films can also be used to reinforce the most commonly cited *differences* in ideological connotation between the films. Although Riefenstahl's *Olympia* includes many scenes of interracial and international amity and goodwill, it is most often read by critics as an example of what Susan

Sontag called "fascist aesthetics," through its aggrandizement of the human to a superhuman level, and the focus on mass movements and harmony, supported by the "wagnerian" music of Herbert Windt (Sontag, Vaughn, Barsam, Prédal). In contrast Ichikawa is seen as stressing the human, the humble, the quotidian, and thereby producing a utopic, progressive, humanistic vision of *true* interracial and international amity. As one reviewer puts it:

Ichikawa's goal situates itself opposite that of [Riefenstahl], because the quest of the director tends to the unmasking of the man behind the number, the nationality, or the performance; it is not a matter of demystifying the champion but rather of humanizing him, and without removing from him his halo, giving him his true dimension as human. (Prédal 34)

I need not belabor the elements of the opening sequences that support these opposed readings: Riefenstahl moves the torch through time, linking ancient Greece with contemporary Germany; it is a mystical and mythical linking. Since we, the viewers, are traveling through the clouds while the torch travels on the ground, we do not see the implied gradual chronological movement that takes us from the naked Greek torch-bearers to the clothed German athlete, himself an impeccably Aryan-looking echo of the perfection of classical Greek beauty. Instead the emphasis here is on the *transcendence* of time, which underscores the Games as privileged, romantic, even mystical site. The solemn music and absence of voiceover on our journey adds to the sense of timelessness.

Ichikawa's torch, on the other hand, moves across space rather than time, and along its way we are told explicitly by the voiceover about how it came to be in Asia. A sense of history is therefore added to the opening visuals, including Japan's ignominious exclusion from the Games during the Allied Occupation. All along the way Ichikawa's camera lingers on individual people in their various moods. A rustic Japanese woman grimaces as the crowd steps on her foot as they struggle to see the torch go by. An American woman athlete turns during the parade of nations and tells the woman behind her to shut up. The emphasis is on the particular, the individual. In contrast to Riefenstahl's preference for the beautiful, Ichikawa shows from early on a penchant for the humorous. Although Ichikawa's patient tracking of the final torchbearer up more than one hundred steps begins to suggest a portentous symbolism, the quick grin of the man before he ignites the flame immediately lightens the atmosphere. In a similar manner Ichikawa sets up a contrapuntal relationship between the motionless, ancient, enduring sun and the aggressively new, remade, bustling Tokyo.

As the films progress past the opening ceremonies, many viewers have argued that these contrasts are extended: Riefenstahl focuses more on the competitions, they argue, while Ichikawa hardly seems to notice or care who won or lost; Riefenstahl emphasizes the beauty and grace of the athletes' bodies, while Ichikawa shows us both beauty and humor, and even, at times, the ugliness of a body strained beyond normal limits. Particularly as read *against* Riefenstahl's film, *Tokyo Olympiad* is often seen by commentators as a film of progressive humanism, an effective intervention in the service of a true and sophisticated international peace.

The Atlanta Olympics

But let us look forward in time and read *Tokyo Olympiad* through the televised opening ceremonies of the most recent Summer Games, held in Atlanta in 1996. Like Ichikawa, the director of the 1996 sequence followed the torch on the ground, so to speak, through Atlanta. This was intercut with clips from Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech as the torch was shown moving through a predominately African American neighborhood. (King's widow, Coretta Scott King, was one of the torchbearers.) The final torchbearer was Mohammed Ali, who stood motionless except to receive the torch and dip it to the Olympic cauldron. One man a martyred warrior for civil rights, the other a convert to Black Islam and outspoken Vietnam war resister: these are two strong-minded African American men, who, despite harsh criticism and threats at the time, had stood up for what they believed in. Clearly their prominence in the internationally televised opening ceremonies was meant to demonstrate America's pride in such important icons. By recruiting these men in the service of the symbolism of the Olympics, the director would seem to be retroactively validating their resistance.

But Martin Luther King is dead, and Mohammed Ali is so incapacitated that he can no longer speak, nor move with full control. The torch could be seen shaking in his hands. Their battles (if not their wars) are safely in the past. The director of the opening ceremonies has juxtaposed these powerful images—linking the bodies and faces and words of two well-known African American men with the Olympic torch—to suggest that race relations in the United States are not a problem; we are past all that. But it is extremely significant that neither of these men is currently physically powerful: in fact they represent in strong visual terms the *price* African American men have paid (and, threateningly, may still have to pay) for their resistance.

To put it simply: much is elided here, and even ostensibly positive images may present a more threatening reading to some viewers. The recognition of what is elided may be accessible to those who share an "horizon of experience": American viewers watched the Atlanta Olympics while living in the midst of the racial polarity that characterized public discourse about the O. J. Simpson trial, for example. It is more difficult to imagine what an international audience might have made of these same images, whether their double-edged message was apparent.

This project is not the place to explore this issue at length. It is interesting, however, to note the effects of time, too, in the production of certain kinds of "elision"—the result of generational changes in an "horizon of experience." In Riefenstahl's film, for example, the emotional tenor of the scene of the French team giving the Olympic salute is incomprehensible to most viewers; this far from the time of the Third Reich the subtle differences between the Nazi salute and the Olympic salute are muted in memory. Evidently many viewers of the film continue to misinterpret the French team's salute. Similarly, many people in 1965 may have been aware that the handsome young final torchbearer was born in Hiroshima on the day the atomic bomb was dropped, and was chosen to light the flame for precisely that reason. Despite Ichikawa's attention to Hiroshima in the opening sequence, and despite the helpful information provided by the voiceover regarding other matters, this fact is not made apparent in the film. The 1965 Japanese viewer is expected to *know* the young man's background, and

thereby understand the scene's significance. It is less clear that a 1965 *international* viewing audience understood the scene's significance, and even less clear that audiences of subsequent generations have understood it.¹⁶ In Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*, the "Nazi blood flag" scene is similarly unintelligible to an uninitiated audience, despite the fact that it is one of the most deeply significant moments in the film. The problems involved in trying to discuss film as a medium for Habermas's communicative action in the public sphere include this extreme problem of *un-shared* horizons of experience among various publics and across time, and the communication anomalies that result.

As mentioned above, every society has its own implicit system (or rather network of interconnecting systems) for "reading" relations of race, ethnicity, or gender. While the presentation to an international audience of a particular body performing a particular act within a particular context—Mohammed Ali lighting the Olympic flame—may seem transparent in meaning, that spectacle will in fact be read according to a whole network of interconnecting "horizons of experience," defined by each viewer's own knowledge(s) and identity/ies.

Even within one nationally-defined public the "horizon of *experience*" of different spectator groups may differ. This is made abundantly clear in the work of Elizabeth Alexander, writing about the collective memory of trauma shared by African Americans, who have for generations witnessed organized spectacles of the black body in pain. "This history moves from public rapes, beatings, and lynchings to the gladiatorial arenas of basketball and boxing.... White men have been the primary stagers and consumers of the[se] historical spectacles..., but in one way or another, black people have been looking, too, forging a traumatized collective historical memory" (92-93). She relates this memory to the contemporary public images of the Rodney King beating, suggesting that African American spectators bring to their viewing a memory that includes images of Emmett Till and Martin Luther King, among many others. Significantly, she argues that this "memory" has been "constructed as much by storytelling in multiple media as by personal, actual experience" (99).

It is impossible, therefore, to speak of an horizon of experience that is universally shared, even within one national setting. Nonetheless, I think that it can be argued that most viewers would recognize a director's *intention* of presenting a utopian, harmonizing spectacle, for example, as opposed to one consciously emphasizing conflict.

In his study of Oshima, Dissanayake demonstrates the ways the director confronts messy social issues of contemporary Japan in complex, confrontative terms. Ichikawa, on the other hand, clearly opts for a utopian, idealistic, *universalist* vision, according to the critical consensus. A utopic vision seems only fitting, perhaps, in a film about the Olympics, but let us now look at the overall aesthetic inscribed in Ichikawa's film, and at the ways in which problematic or still-contested issues are elided in it.

Documentary Films as Maps

It is particularly in noting the similarities between *Tokyo Olympiad* and *Olympia* that we become aware of the dangers of elision. Both films function as maps: they give a seemingly complex and complete picture of a particular geopolitical event, but give no hint that some of the marked boundaries may still be under question.¹⁷ It could be argued, in fact, that all

modern Olympic Games function in a similar way. Modern maps are often taken to be origin- and ideology-neutral, scientifically accurate and objective. The choices of the International Olympic Committee, like those of the mapmaker, are invisible to those witnessing the final product, which seems authoritative and conclusive. This is most obvious when we think of national boundaries: just as the disputed autonomy and sovereignty of a nation can be affirmed by its named inclusion on a map, it can also be affirmed by its inclusion as an official competitor in the Olympics, as in the case of Taiwan;¹⁸ or on the contrary its exclusion can underscore a would-be nation's lack of recognition—until very recently there were no competitors marching under a Palestinian national flag.¹⁹ Documentary films, too, present a synchronous slice of the world, potentially erasing the still-contested elements of that world. Nonetheless, documentary film often adds an emotive “spin” to its acts of mapping. In Ichikawa's film one of the most moving sequences of the opening parade is the set of tiny delegations from the newly formed and newly “recognized” African nations of Chad and Cameroon. Similarly, Japan's exclusion from participation in 1948 during the Allied Occupation is explicitly raised in the film's opening sequence.

But both *Tokyo Olympiad* and *Olympia* also inscribe elisions more subtle than these, particularly with regard to the international hierarchy of race. And in this context it is once again all too easy to see *Tokyo Olympiad* as progressive when read against its German predecessor. During Riefenstahl's presentation of the 10,000 meter men's race in Berlin, the British announcer makes approving but condescending comments about the Japanese competitor, calling him “brave little Murakoso”; and in the grueling seven-hour pole-vault competition, he remarks paternalistically “Oh well, he must be tired” when one of the Japanese finalists fails on his last vault.²⁰ (He makes no such remark when the Caucasian American finalist fails immediately thereafter.) The African American athlete Jesse Owens is described, again admiringly, but in animal similes by the narration. At one point he is called “the American black panther.” This, combined with generous camera attention to the various national claques in the stands, emphasizes a view of the world as sharply fragmented and those fragments organized into a relationship of implicit and unquestioned hierarchy, often, although not exclusively, determined by race.

In the long marathon sequence that ends the first half of *Olympia*, the winning runner is “a Japanese” named Son Kitei. Although he runs in a Japanese uniform, past crowds waving Japanese flags, and finally receives his first-place award with “Kimigayo” playing in the background, Son was of course a Korean (Son Kee Chung), competing reluctantly under the colors of the Japanese imperial government. Nothing is hinted in the film of Son's actively expressed resistance to being identified as Japanese.²¹ On the contrary, he is surrounded by numerous shots of the Japanese flag, and the camera features the Japanese spectator claque vigorously cheering his progress.²² With the “horizon of experience” shared by almost any historically informed viewer this far from the events of World War II, the irony of these unremarked assumptions and elisions is all too clear, and in contrast *Tokyo Olympiad* may at first appear completely “enlightened.”²³

But there are elisions in *Tokyo Olympiad*, too. Although the voiceover celebrates the rare appearance of a joint East and West German team, the precariousness of their entente is not explored. This was the last time until the recent reunification that the two nations competed

under one flag (Sragow C-6). On another controversial front, the Korean press was outraged for the duration of the Tokyo Olympics by a statement made by the same Son who won the marathon in Berlin, saying that he hoped a *Japanese* runner would win it. Nothing is mentioned of this in the film, although it is commented on, characteristically, by director Oshima in an interview (Oshima 62). On the contrary, in *Tokyo Olympiad* the opposite point is underscored when another athlete from the 1936 Games, Jesse Owens, is shown in the Tokyo stands, cheering on the latest generation of African American sprinters: in other words, unproblematic national and racial continuity and solidarity, rather than conflict and division, is emphasized. Although once again an African American athlete, sprinter Bob Hayes, is given a lot of precious camera time both before and after his victories, the ugly contentiousness of U.S. race relations in the 1960s is of course nowhere evident. That Bob Hayes would later be imprisoned on a trumped-up drug charge is unimaginable from the perspective of Ichikawa's movie. (It is perhaps unreasonable to expect a documentary to represent the *future* with perfect accuracy, but we must remember that in the *present* of 1964 civil rights workers, both black and white, were being harassed and murdered in the American south.) Although Ichikawa's presentation of the multiple victories of black athletes from various nations supports the impression of the Olympics as a site of utopian democracy and equality, a 1964 German book about the Games may unintentionally present a more accurate picture of contemporary anglo-european race relations in its nervous recording of black pre-eminence in the 100 meter sprint: "Only two white men, two Europeans, qualify for the finals. . . . The others are all dark-skinned" (Lechenperg 191). Already the "horizon of experience" of many North Americans living in the late 1990s has changed to a point where the irony of Ichikawa's elisions has become increasingly clear, if not quite as disturbingly so as in Riefenstahl's film.

But whether a critic or viewer of these two Olympic films is arguing a reading that discovers a fascist aesthetic, or on the contrary a progressive humanism, the evidence adduced is always the same: *the way the human body is framed in the films*. Both *Olympia* and *Tokyo Olympiad* joyously celebrate the body. Critics often cite the brilliant camerawork in both movies that makes the pole-vaulting scenes and the gymnastics (among others) so visually beautiful. Ichikawa's film does not reconstruct events as Riefenstahl's does, but both are the result of hundreds of hours of careful scripting and editing.²⁴ In both films beauty and harmony is therefore *consciously* emphasized over contention. Considering what this means in *Olympia* according to many critics—the mobilization of a fascist aesthetic—is it not it equally suspicious, equally worthy of critical attention in *Tokyo Olympiad*? Susan Sontag has declared that the art of totalitarian regimes is "based on a utopian morality" (Sontag 26). Let us next examine the analysis of *Olympia* that leads Sontag and others to their conclusions.

The Fascist Aesthetic

Sontag takes exception to the many reviews of Riefenstahl's *Olympia* that find it to be a beautiful film and one with a socially progressive message, despite its inescapable Nazi context. She argues (and with her Dai Vaughan and others) that when you consider *Olympia* through Riefenstahl's earlier documentary of the Nazi rally, *Triumph of the Will*, its hidden fascism becomes apparent. At one point she relates them in the following heavily weighted

terms:

Triumph of the Will uses overpopulated wide shots of massed figures alternating with close-ups that isolate a single passion, a single perfect submission; clean-cut people in uniforms group and regroup, as if seeking the right choreography to express their ecstatic fealty. In *Olympiad* [sic] . . . one straining scantily clad figure after another seeks the ecstasy of victory, cheered on by ranks of compatriots in the stands, all under the still gaze of the benign Super-Spectator, Hitler, whose presence in the stadium consecrates this effort (26).

Ecstasy, superhuman control and discipline are the elements she sees as linking the films. Because both are magnificently filmed and edited artistic renderings of huge-scale events, requiring tremendous skill at planning, tremendous organization and discipline on the part of Riefenstahl, it is understandable that Sontag would consider the two films together. It was, after all, Riefenstahl's success in filming the national party rally that impelled Hitler to recommend her to direct the filming of the Olympics.

In terms of their *framing of the body*, however, I would argue that a juxtaposition of the two reveals that *Triumph of the Will* and *Olympia* are nearly diametrically opposed. *Triumph of the Will* glorifies the exclusively male and exclusively Aryan body in regimented, uniform, disciplined, mass *immobility*; *Olympia* glorifies both male and female bodies, of all races, in splendid motion, concentrating often on the individual body. *Triumph of the Will* does not figure the body as attractive, or sexual; on the contrary it is the disciplined, repressed, aggressively asexual body that is featured. Looking at the endless rows of young men (52,000 in one shot) standing motionless for hours listening to distant figures as they rant and rave, the viewer is irresistibly led to imagine how badly some of them must want to sit down, ease their aching feet, go to the bathroom, eat something. In *Olympia*, on the other hand, the body is disciplined and possibly sexually repressed, at least for the duration of the Games, but hardly unattractive, or motionless. We see the competitors before and after their competitions, sprawled on the ground looking relaxed, nervous, happy, tired. Many shots in *Olympia* seem intentionally erotic.

Triumph of the Will frames Hitler and cohort in carefully controlled visual terms—shot from below, silhouetted against the sky—the “deifying” camera angle with which Riefenstahl's propaganda is often identified (Vaughan, Doherty, Bersam). In *Olympia* Hitler is shown in various postures: whereas he looks powerful and controlled as he officially opens the Games, he is later shown at different times looking nervous, annoyed, foolish, or pleased. Goebbels is revealed in one shot as a clown. And while critics have made much of Hitler's arrival from the air in *Triumph of the Will*, suggesting the arrival of a god-figure, in *Olympia* it is the viewer who arrives from the air, to find Hitler already, prosaically, on the ground waiting for *our* arrival, which is simultaneous with the heavily symbolic torch.

And while Sontag disputes as self-serving myth Riefenstahl's claim that Goebbels tried to make her remove *Olympia*'s footage of the victorious Jesse Owens, the fact remains that the footage is there; the camera gives Owens a great deal of warm attention, both as he performs his “superhuman” feats, and as he smiles with pleasure after his events. It is at least partly due to this film that one of the earliest “master narratives” of the Berlin Olympics—that Owen's

victories and personal charm exploded the Nazi myth of Aryan supremacy—has so brilliantly endured.

Other athletes of color get substantial appreciative screen time as well. Toward the end of the long marathon sequence, virtually all of the camera's attention is on the two "Japanese" runners (both actually Korean), and an Indian man who is running bare-chested. In one extraordinary mini-sequence, the film viewer is shown the point of view of Son Kee Chung himself: the scenery moving past, "his own" hands and arms pumping, and even "his own" legs and feet pounding rhythmically along, viewed from above as if by Son himself.²⁵ And contrary to the received wisdom that Ichikawa includes humor and Riefenstahl does not, *Olympia* includes at least one very funny sequence in the cross-country horse race. It is perhaps significant that all the competitors are military officers of their various nations, garbed in military riding clothes. That Riefenstahl should linger so long on the scene of these stiffly disciplined riders falling one after another into a pond, might suggest that her feelings toward militarism, including Germany's, were less than fully respectful. Her frequent short shots of the spectators, too, spliced into scenes of a specific competition's progress, are full of humor, and serve to interrupt and reduce the solemnity of the athletes' utter seriousness while performing.

Despite this kind of evidence to the contrary, *if* we accept Sontag's characterization of Hitler as presiding like a personified superego over the 1936 Games, this would then surely hold true for the filmed presence of the Shōwa Emperor as well, one would think. Surely he is filmed in the stands to serve the same purpose: that is, to mobilize the gaze into one central point of power, in relation to which all of the other activities within the film occur.

And yet, even supposing that we accept this somewhat simplistic characterization of Riefenstahl's deification of Hitler (which overlooks Riefenstahl's rather playful and nuanced filming of Hitler in the stands, and the conspicuous amount of film time devoted to events that he would surely not have been willing to consecrate), it is even harder to read Ichikawa's film as unproblematically and consistently inscribing a fascist aesthetic. Rather, the Emperor and imperial family are figured in Ichikawa's film as icons of middle-class domesticity. This could, of course, very plausibly be read as an example of the elision discussed above: an attempt to paper over the still-smoldering questions about the Emperor's wartime responsibility. And, as will be clear below, I certainly do not suggest that the framing of the Emperor in Ichikawa's film is devoid of ideological meaning. Nonetheless this framing can hardly be taken as an example of explicit fascistic deification.

Ethnography vs. Historiography

It must be noted, however, that in her argument Sontag is also reading *Olympia* forward, through Riefenstahl's 1970s photographs of an isolated African people called the Nuba. Although she does not call it this, Sontag is criticizing the *ethnographic* impulse that drives Riefenstahl's attention to the *raced* body. Lévi-Strauss has distinguished between peoples classified as "*historifiable*" and those considered "*ethnographiable*": that is, those modern peoples who, "like us," have histories, as opposed to those exotic others, usually racially "different," who are described ethnographically. This distinction relates to the synchronic "mapping" mentioned earlier: in *Olympia* as in her later photography, rather than providing

a diachronic, historicized picture of the Olympic Games, Riefenstahl constructs a *static* mapping of the interaction of variously exotic bodies, with focus on their ceremonies and rituals, their distinctive beauty. As in the earliest documentary film ethnographies, such as Robert Flaherty's famous *Nanook of the North*, Riefenstahl stages re-enactments of key scenes (as opposed to capturing the actual moment of competition), in order to "prioritise larger, more mythic and universal topics" (Wells 175).²⁶ Riefenstahl's camerawork and editing brilliantly produce the characteristically *doubled* ethnographic effects of marking national and ethnic peculiarities (such as in the opening parade, for example, or the frequent shots of the nationally-marked spectator claques) and simultaneously underscoring the basic similarity of all humans.

Ichikawa's ethnographic impulse is generally expressed with greater subtlety; but in some ways it is even more blatant than Riefenstahl's, to the extent that Cid Corman is moved to explicitly link *Tokyo Olympiad* with *Nanook* (Corman 39). In his filming of the opening parade of athletes Ichikawa's camera is even more observant than Riefenstahl's in documenting the various nations' "endearing" differences—both the scripted and the unintentional ones

Ichikawa spends much time focusing on unconscious body rituals—the physical tics of the athletes. The most striking of such scenes is a solid *two minutes* (an age in filmic time) focused on the unconscious warm-up ritual of one huge Soviet male shot-putter. The fact that his head is cut out of the frame through most of this scene focuses attention on the body as both the source and the target of these rituals. The slow-motion filming of the sprinters waiting for the beginning of the 100-meter dash, a sequence noted repeatedly in reviews, also records the beauty, the humor and the utterly unconscious emotion of the body.²⁷ It could also be argued that, in refusing to focus much attention on the outcomes of the various events, Ichikawa is refusing the "history" of the Games in favor of a document of the athletes as humans acting within a particular social context, bound by extremely formal rules: ethnography.

The same argument could be made about *Olympia*. The structure of the two films provides a gradually increasing emphasis on universal form over the specific content of each event. Both films divide neatly into two halves: the outdoor track and field competitions held in the main stadium; and then the indoor or off-site sports, such as gymnastics, swimming, yachting. The first half of both films features a greater number of complete competitions, and the award ceremonies following them; the second half of both films becomes more impressionistic, often showing gorgeously edited clips of multiple performances, with no indication of winners or losers.

It is important to note, however, that Ichikawa's "ethnographic" film is fixed within an historical frame. The voiceover and titles that open the film describe in stark terms the background to Japan's hosting of the Olympic Games, including its ignominious exclusion in 1948. This sequence is reminiscent of nothing so much as the opening titles of *Triumph of the Will*, which are used to set the ideological stage for Hitler's appearance at the 1934 National Socialist Party rally.²⁸ The propagandistic purpose of the titles in *Triumph of the Will* seems clear; it is interesting to speculate, then about the purpose served by the historicizing voiceover in the opening to Ichikawa's film.

If we consider Ichikawa's film as a form of ethnography, the fact that so many of the bodies in the foregrounded sections of his film are simultaneously racially and nationally

marked, becomes quite significant. Fatimah Rony and others have discussed the ways in which ethnographic cinema “has been a primary means through which race and gender are visualized as *natural* categories; cinema has been the site of intersection between anthropology, popular culture, and the *constructions of nation and empire*” (Rony 9; emphasis added). By definition, in ethnographic cinema the positions of the filmmaker and the imagined audience are equivalent, and are sharply differentiated from the position of the subjects of the film, the objects of the ethnographic gaze. This becomes important when we consider the different functions of the Olympics-as-real-time-spectacle versus the Olympics-as-film within the public sphere.

As mentioned above, the Olympic Games are intelligible to an international audience viewing the events in real time because of a general knowledge of the rules of each sport and a shared understanding of the capabilities of the human body. When the Tokyo Olympics were broadcast by satellite to a television audience around the world, it is likely that nearly all viewers had the same understanding of at least the simplest narrative of the relationship among the bodies in each competition: who won and how/why. But the “meaning” of the *relationships among* the various bodies is produced in a very different way when the real-time event is turned into a film. That film is made within a specific cultural matrix and, through extensive scripting and editing, will organize the presentation of events to fit the codes of a specific cultural matrix. Let us examine then how Ichikawa, a Japanese man of the *senchū-ha* generation, constructs the “character” of the racially and nationally marked athletes whom he so conspicuously foregrounds.

The heroes of his film, the athletes featured in the scenes most often remarked on by reviewers, are uniformly lonely, patient and enduring, not from the superpowers (which is part of the reason for their loneliness), but gallant and gritty. Just as the English announcer in Riefenstahl's film praised “brave little Murakoso,” Ichikawa frames the runner from Ceylon, completing the last lap of the 10,000 meters by himself, in such a way as to prompt reviewers to describe him as “heroic in defeat” (Corman), and “kicking his way gallantly into the stadium to a burst of cheers” (Tallmer).²⁹ Ichikawa films the lonely athlete from Chad, featured in a long narrative section in the exact center of the movie, in such a way as to invite the adjectives “dedicated” and “lonely” (Thomas); “skinny,” “bewildered” and “lonely” (Brown), and so on. Cid Corman describes how Ichikawa has “projected ably and gently the young man's pride, isolation, and aspirations, frustrated utterly despite intense effort” (40). Michael Sragow, too, no doubt refers in part to this section of the film when he notes “Ichikawa's acknowledgment of the effort that goes into losing causes.” Sragow may also be referring to Ichikawa's brief narrative of an anonymous pentathlon competitor, shown only in silhouette against a blood-red setting sun as he runs alone, away from the camera. The voiceover says: “Five events in five days. One athlete participating silently in the Olympics, a mute, lonely memory. We cannot know what this athlete, who finished 37th in the competition, gained from his hard experience.” It is significant that the voiceover tells us that “this competitor *alone*” swam the breaststroke rather than the crawl during the swimming section of the event, because of a shoulder injury.

Immediately following this poignant moment of anonymous, unrewarded effort we see the “glowing climax” (*Variety*) of the film: the 19-minute segment on the marathon,

dominated by Bikila Abebe from Ethiopia. The remarkable shots of Abebe in this section evoke a multitude of significant phrases: “tireless” (*Sports Illustrated*); “manful,” “intently set features,” “lonely” (Gillett); “unproductive courage,” “devoted willfulness” (Coleman); “inward-looking,” “coolly measuring his tread” (Knight); and “lonely-looking” (Brown, and Sragow). Abebe, too, competed while “injured”—he had had surgery to remove his appendix less than a month before.

The difference between these depictions and Riefenstahl’s “brave little Murakoso” is that the 1936 British announcer and his presumed audience live in a society that positions itself clearly “above” Japan. On the contrary, in Ichikawa’s film, 1964 Japan is implicitly *linked* to all of these gallant, patient, determined, “marked” figures, impressive even in defeat, at the same time that Japan has moved beyond the Third World nations of Asia and Africa in terms of modernization and economic power. This linking occurs at every level of filmic discourse. Shortly after completing the film Ichikawa remarked to an interviewer that his team of cameramen had managed to complete the arduous filming because Japanese people are “very faithful, docile, and assiduous” (*Cahiers* 61). Similarly in the parade of nations near the beginning of the film the Japanese voiceover stresses how hard the young Japanese athletes have worked to get there, how hard the entire nation has worked to overcome obstacles in preparing for these Games. Although the Japanese delegation, marching in last, is quite large, this voiceover encourages the viewer to link their gallant efforts to the earlier scenes of the delegations from the tiny new African nations, present at the Olympics to compete “equally” with athletes from older and more powerful countries.

In Ichikawa’s film the Japanese body, too, is often figured as wounded (significant after the opening sequence’s emphatic attention to Hiroshima) or tiny in contrast with hulking western athletes. One of the few Japanese competitors to get much screen time in the first half of the film is Yoda Ikuko, running in the women’s hurdles. Her thigh is heavily bandaged, as the viewer cannot help but notice since Ichikawa’s camera travels lingeringly over the legs and buttocks of the women poised to begin their race. When Yoda loses, the Japanese sports announcer exclaims, “unfortunately Yoda couldn’t make it; she ran well, but she couldn’t make it.” (The English subtitles are “silent” at this point.) Immediately thereafter we see tiny and elegant kimonoed Japanese women handing medals to huge foreign athletes. This is filmed from below, causing the Japanese women to look smaller, and the athletes more hulking, than would a different framing. In a similar scene, male Japanese groundskeepers in dapper uniforms are visually contrasted with the gigantic, grunting hammer throwers from the Soviet Union and North America.

The long opening shot of the sun gives us the Japanese flag reversed, white on red, but is this just another way of figuring Japan as outcast from its former glory, still powerful but with a reversed ideological valence? This important shot is echoed in significant moments throughout the film, serving as a marker for events/narratives of a very particular sort.

1) It is not until the track and field events are completed and the competitions move indoors—at least half-way into the film—that we see the first Japanese victory, in men’s gymnastics. As “Kimigayo” plays, the Japanese flag rises behind the head of the victorious athlete. This scene melts quickly into a shot of the real sun—a white disc again against a red-orange sky, with red clouds trailing across it. Immediately following is the touching story of

the unsuccessful young runner from Chad.

2) The story of the unsuccessful pentathlon runner, mentioned above, is also framed against a sunset scene. Immediately following this is the dramatic final of the women's volleyball match, when through discipline and teamwork Japan defeated the Soviet Union.

3) The final use of the sun as significant visual punctuation comes at the very end of the film; the image is identical to the opening shot, a white disc against a red background, sustained this time for 15 seconds. Then as the closing credits roll by, we see five stills: of Abebe in the marathon; the Japanese women's volleyball team; Japanese weightlifter Miyake, who won a gold medal, although his victory is not shown in the film (perhaps because his obvious physical strength would undermine the visual rhetoric of Japan as wounded and small, but gallant): an unidentified white woman gymnast in mid-vault; and the runners—mostly black athletes, as noted by the German commentator quoted above—frozen at the start of the 100 meter race, which opened the filmed competitions.

The heavily symbolic sun is thus used to foreground events that feature victorious Japanese competitors, gallant non-Japanese losers, and admirable men of color.

Scenes of the imperial family, too, are used as visual punctuation throughout the film, drawing particular attention to certain events. At the opening ceremonies we see the Shōwa Emperor together with his wife and children; thereafter, the focus is on the younger generation in the imperial family: then Crown Prince Akihito (the current Heisei Emperor), his wife Michiko, and their children. In the middle of the film's rendition of the women's volleyball competition there is a striking shot of Michiko watching with calm intensity. The marathon—featuring Abebe and Japan's foremost long-distance runner, Tsuburaya Kōkichi—is begun under the cheerful domestic gaze of the Crown Prince, Michiko, and at least one of their young sons.

Two symbols connected most potently and persistently in Japanese cultural discourse with divine right and the eternal, unchanging nature of the Japanese state—the sun and the imperial line—are thus explicitly linked here with the marginal, *as measured in an international context*. Taken together these aspects of Ichikawa's visual organization of the world could be interpreted as a return to that same old complicated prewar rhetorical move: we Japanese both are and are not Asian, are and are not victims of colonial (now superpower) oppression, are and are not lonely but gallant outcasts. Have we returned, in this film, to that slippery prewar rhetoric of simultaneous victimhood and pride?

Possibly. But there is another striking difference here from Riefenstahl's film. Whereas *Olympia's* English-language voiceover announcer encouraged the viewers to situate themselves outside of and above the Asian and African American athletes, Ichikawa's film *links* his gallant, patient heroes with the film *viewer*, too. I quoted Cid Corman above, commenting on the frustrated aspirations of the runner from Chad. However, Corman continues: "*But*—when Bikila wins the marathon, one feels that the young man from Chad has had, in that event, his triumph—*as we have had, too*" (40) [my italics]. (Gillett, Sugiyama, Poole, Knight, and Sragow make a similar points.) If Ichikawa succeeds in making film reviewers and essayists from four countries over a span of twenty years feel themselves to be identified with these lonely but patient and determined men of color, his intervention has perhaps been effective. (For whatever reason, Riefenstahl's occasional linking of the viewer with a patient and

determined man of color, such as her brilliant filming of Son Kee Chung's physical point of view, has been less effective, at least as judged by the consensus of criticism of her work.)

Conclusion

In the original model of the Habermasian public sphere, reason and language-based argument are valued to the exclusion of any other agonistic encounter. Therefore the *affective* or *unconscious* aspects of the lived body are missing from Habermas's discussion. In fact, any human behavior based more on the body, and on the spectacle of the body, than on language is excluded from his definition of public discourse. (This is an odd omission considering that it was documentary films about the Nazi treatment of human bodies that first communicated to Habermas a vital message about the need for a viable political philosophy.) By that definition, international sports competitions can never be anything but meaningless simulacra of "real" public discourse within a "real" public sphere. As I have argued, however, international sports meetings and the body behaviors that constitute them can be viewed as sort of theater, generative of public narrative(s). And the films that document those events are generative of even more narratives, in a multitude of publics, spread out over time and space. In such a plurality of communicative acts, occurring in such a diverse plurality of "publics," is it possible to discuss the impact of *Tokyo Olympiad* in "the" public sphere?

If we limit ourselves temporarily to a consideration of "the" public sphere of Japan in the 1960s (itself diverse and multiple), can it be argued that Ichikawa's film, which evokes such powerfully positive responses in many viewers, is an example of Etō's aforementioned "elaborate, bluffing self-deception"? Or is it, rather, an example of the other strategy that Etō identifies among *senchū-ha* artists, the women who "throw themselves *bodily* into the fissures" between reality and the fabrications about Japan's totalitarian history? Certainly Ichikawa is using stunning visual portrayals of the *body*, framed in particular narrative and non-narrative terms, in a medium that in itself is somewhere between reality and fabrication: the documentary film. But what does it mean to use the body in this way in the context of Habermas's "communicative action"?

The body is always problematic in terms of public discourse, nearly always wielding a double-edged meaning. This is because it is the *one thing* that *unites* all humans, and yet the one thing in the modern (colonial, racialized, radically gendered) world most often used to reify *difference* between humans through the powerful cognitive medium of vision. It is the thing in the modern world that *must* be subdued to support industrial capitalism, and yet the one thing that can never be fully subdued unless destroyed: the repressed body will always return. The radical discipline of the Olympic body would in these terms seem to serve a totalitarian or even fascist vision, even when it is celebrated: "It is not, after all, the fact that one man can throw further, shoot straighter, or swim faster than another that is important, but that men can *so control and coordinate their bodies*—that year after year new records are created" (Knight; italics added). This Nietzschean superhuman overcoming of the body's limitations is at the core of Sontag's "fascist aesthetic." This may be what Habermas fears in his concern that "modern society has fostered an unbalanced expansion of the technical interest in control: The drive to dominate nature becomes a drive to dominate other human beings" (Habermas 52).

Nevertheless, that which is repressed in the body will always find a way to reassert itself: the filmed body provides constant evidence of the fact *that the subject is never singular, never identical with itself*. As Ichikawa said in a 1965 interview: "I have tried to express the solitude of the athlete who, in order to win, *struggles against himself*. I wished people to rediscover with astonishment that wonder which is a human being" ("Triumph in Cannes" 17; italics added). Recalling the unconscious movements of the shot putter, or the runners in the men's 100 meters as they prepare for and then begin their race, it becomes impossible to reduce our vision of the body to the stunningly disciplined immobility of *Triumph of the Will*. (Although I concentrate here on *Tokyo Olympiad*, I could make many of the same points about Riefenstahl's *Olympia*, which includes many scenes highlighting the multiplicity of the seemingly singular subject.)

There is little room in Habermas's model for this layered, complex, self-contradictory subject as an actor in the public sphere. Communicative action in the lifeworld is supposed to be transparent (at least as an ideal), and the speaker-hearer couple is figured as ideal as well: pre-existing language, and disembodied, rather than constituted by language and the body. As a *message* in the public sphere, a communicative action in itself, *Tokyo Olympiad* produces both a utopic, ethnographic, synchronic (and therefore potentially essentialist and even fascist) vision of discipline and harmony, and yet also gives play to the humor and complexity of the life of the body. As John Coleman points out in a review of *Tokyo Olympiad*: "[T]he essence of play...is that it registers a firm, hedonistic protest against the workaday world. Sport cocks a snook at utility, reasonableness, functionalism. It is often inseparable from art" (533). Such a complex message has no clear ideological valence; the interpretation of the message depends too much on the experiences, the history, the knowledge, and the memory of the actual viewer. The "horizon of experience" of the fifteen million Japanese viewers who saw this film in 1965 (if we may posit a singular such horizon even here) differs from that of a contemporary audience; and this multiplication of "experiences" across national boundaries as well as temporal ones leads to a wide variety of individual responses in the lifeworld.

I can therefore bring this paper to no ringing conclusion. As Jochen Schulte-Sasse has pointed out about art and the public sphere: "The . . . art of modern society, on the one hand, protests against the alienation and reification in society and insists on the realization of certain ideals in the future." Such ideals might include peace and amity in an international discourse of racial equality. "On the other hand, because it is detached and autonomous and is juxtaposed to society, the same art threatens to degenerate into a mere compensation for what society lacks and thus serves finally to affirm social conditions it sees no need to protest against." Such compensation might include the recruitment of Martin Luther King and Mohammed Ali in the service of quieting American discomfort with the current state of race relations. "Thus, art can both protest and protect the status quo" (xxxv). Both Riefenstahl and Ichikawa produce in their films "elaborate, bluffing self-deceptions" about certain uncomfortable aspects of the status quo, thereby protecting and even advancing it. But at the same time both filmmakers use images of the body in an attempt to bridge the gaps between reality and fabrication, using the never-fully-disciplined body to protest the reductive, overly coherent images of totalitarianism.

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NOTES

¹ Dissanayake 1996.

² See Uriu 1977, pp. 300-328.

³ Unless otherwise noted all translations from French and Japanese are mine. Etō made this comment in the context of his published assessment of Oba Minako's story "Sanbiki no kani" [The Three Crabs] when it won the Gunzō New Writer's Award in 1968. All three winners of the awards in this year were women, and Etō's comments are meant to indicate a gender-linked pattern in the responses of late-60s artists to the events of the war.

⁴ White 1995, p. 5: "For Habermas, [Adorno's] growing pessimism and the totalization of his critique of Western modernity constituted something of a failure of nerve. In this regard, there is a subtle and disturbing affinity between Adorno and Heidegger. From the depths of such a total critique, what sort of politics is likely to capture the imagination?"

⁵ Although Ichikawa fought in the Pacific islands in World War II, only one source I have read mentions this (briefly): the English-language publicity packet for *Tokyo Olympiad*. None of the critics who discuss *Tokyo Olympiad* pursue the question of Ichikawa's complicity or resistance to the war and pre-war Japanese totalitarianism. This is in striking contrast, as we shall see, to critical interest in the political affinities of Leni Riefenstahl.

⁶ Please note that I am talking here about relating the public sphere and a specific body of film texts. For recent studies that have worked more generally to relate the idea of the public sphere to the special characteristics of film as a form of communication, see Kluge 1981-82, Negt and Kluge 1993, and Hansen 1995.

⁷ Critics such as Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge (in Negt and Kluge 1993) have inflected Habermas's idea of the public sphere to accommodate "individuated acts of reception, even in the context of mass events" (Hansen 1995, p. 141), as occurs through photographic and electronic media, without

consigning these acts to terms of disintegration or unraveling. I am indebted to their work in what follows.

⁸ Television viewers of recent Olympics have complained about the announcers' excess of attention to melodramatic narrative at the expense of "straight" sports reportage of each event, but even in the film of the 1936 Games the brief narrative produced from each event by the announcers includes enriching detail about athletes' recent injuries or their past performance, heightening the dramatic effect. In addition to these discrete multiple narratives, a far more limited number of "master narratives" are also produced from such massive spectacles. For example, the 1936 Games have long been known as the "Nazi Olympics," short-hand for a narrative that says that the hosting Germans "won" the Games, despite the prominent successes of non-Aryan athletes from other nations, such as Jesse Owens. The Tokyo Olympics are similarly noted for their impeccable planning and impressive execution, despite Japan's relative poverty as compared with the U.S. or some European host nations. One repeatedly finds the "dominant character" of each Olympic meeting described using the same basic shorthand narratives.

⁹ Participation in mainstream organized sports, though possible, was still not easy for African Americans in the 1930s. In the Los Angeles Olympics of 1932, despite the Depression, a relatively large number of African American athletes were able to compete because of the low cost of domestic transportation. Their performances inspired other black athletes to involve themselves in organized sport, particularly those young men and women enrolled in colleges and universities (such as Jesse Owens at Ohio State). For more, see Mandell 1971, pp. 209-232, Kanin 1981, p. 93, Hatfield 1978, pp. 193-94.

¹⁰ See, for example, Sontag 1975 or Vaughn 1977. It is interesting to note that the criticisms of the film leveled by French critics (e.g. Prédal 1965 and Demeure 1996) frequently refer to the visual rhetoric of "the superman" implied by the French title of the first half of the film: *Les Dieux du Stade*. The original German title, however, is *Fest der Volker*, literally "the festival of peoples/nations." One wonders who originally affixed the French title, which seems to have inspired and encouraged a particular reading of the first half of the film by some French critics.

¹¹ Coleman: "The spectator's sense of the scene is a bit god-like [because of the amazing camera angles], as if one could summon the altitude and angle of perception at will" (p. 534).

¹² For details see Corman 1965, pp. 38-40, and Yamada. The government's major objection to the film was that it did not strongly enough support the narrative they were trying to promote about the new Japan as Olympic host. Minister of State Kōno Ichirō complained that the new stadium, the new highway system, and the new athletic buildings got short shrift in Ichikawa's film, the various sporting events were not shown "as sports," and Japanese victories were not adequately foregrounded. The government had wanted a straightforwardly national(ist) narrative and Ichikawa had given them something quite different.

¹³ The original version of the film was 170 minutes long. For submission to the film festival competition at Cannes, Ichikawa made a shorter version—130 minutes—which incorporated a small amount of new footage featuring French athletes. Ichikawa had no further control over the editing or distribution after making these two original cuts. The version released in the U.S. in the mid-1960s was much shorter at 93 minutes, and was provided with a new voiceover; critics who had seen both versions unanimously panned the U.S. cut. (See, e.g., Corman 1965, Thomas 1966, Knight 1965, Tallmer 1988.) It was not until the 1980s that the original subtitled version was available in the U.S. Other versions tailored for specific national audiences were also released. All critical writings cited in this essay, however, were based on viewings of the original cut (or, in one case, the one shown at Cannes). In contrast, Riefenstahl supervised all four language versions that were made of her film; the visuals remained the virtually same in all versions.

¹⁴ In the parade of nations each country's team mobilizes its own set of "national characteristics" through

elements such as choice of costume and marching behavior (elegantly choreographed vs. stubbornly unchoreographed, for example). In addition each national team indicates international alliances and rivalries through, for example, the specific form of its salute to Hitler (or to the Emperor in the 1964 games). The U.S. teams have since 1908 persisted in a refusal to perform the customary "dipping" of the flag in respectful obeisance to the hosting nation's leaders, thus showcasing the "typical" American independence of spirit.

¹⁵ The English subtitle does not include the phrase "we know," but it is conspicuous in the Japanese.

¹⁶ My thanks to Yoshi Igarashi for pointing it out to me.

¹⁷ A British-made 1942 map of Asia is an excellent example of this phenomenon. The Japanese, Australian, British, Dutch, French, and American colonial holdings in Asia are simply displayed as such, with no hint of the violent contention taking place over those territories at that very moment: the map shows "The Dutch East Indies," and "British Malaya," for example. The cities in Korea and Taiwan are identified by their Japanese names, with no suggestion that those who live in those cities might violently dispute those names.

¹⁸ For extensive discussion of the Taiwan case, for example, see Hill 1992, pp. 40-53; or Lucas 1980, pp. 198-99.

¹⁹ In 1996 the first Palestinian competitors participated in the Atlanta Games.

²⁰ Murakoso was a competitor in the 10,000 meters, who was beaten into fourth place by three Norwegians, acting as a team to win. The second example is quite ironic, because in fact it had become too dark to film the pole vaulting finals, so Riefenstahl had the finalists *re-enact* their winning and losing vaults the next day. The second place Japanese competitor could not, therefore, have been "tired" when his unsuccessful final jump was actually filmed. See Hinton 1991, pp. 72-73.

²¹ Son was highly uncomfortable with his participation as "a Japanese." In Berlin he reportedly signed his name in Korean script, and actively told reporters and other questioners that he was from Korea. Mandell 1971, pp. 215-220.

²² When this group was shown earlier, cheering on the generally quite successful Japanese athletes, they did so using the competitor's name: "Ni-shi-da, Ni-shi-da," for example. In this shot they are shown cheering, but they do not use Son's name. It is unclear, therefore, that this shot actually represents their reaction to his success in the marathon, or whether the editing of the film merely encourages that interpretation. In either case, Riefenstahl is here emphasizing the solidarity of the colonizer and colonized, rather than showcasing resistance.

²³ Dai Vaughan makes this argument at length, analyzing the camerawork that contributes to Riefenstahl's "unforgivable elisions" versus what Vaughan sees as Ichikawa's more humanist approach.

²⁴ Riefenstahl was forced to restage the pole vaulting finals and the 1500 meter race in the decathlon because of lighting and logistical problems (Hinton 1991, pp. 72-3). With many more cameras to work with, and more technically sophisticated equipment, Ichikawa had less trouble filming even nighttime events.

²⁵ Because Dai Vaughan's argument is predicated on the assumption that Riefenstahl's camera-techniques are only used to deify or aggrandize German competitors, and that no non-Aryan athlete is portrayed as a hero, Vaughan is forced to concede complete bafflement regarding this mini-sequence. "For me...the sequence loses coherence at th[e] point [where the audience "sees" the world from Son's point of view], disintegrating into its constituents" (Vaughan 1977, p. 214). Like Sontag's, Vaughan's interpretation of the film is *predicated on* an a priori assumption of Riefenstahl's complete complicity with Nazi philosophy. Here, rather than seeing an exception or challenge to that assumption, Vaughan sees the sequence itself as incomprehensible.

²⁶ Wells is describing Flaherty here.

²⁷ It should be noted that Riefenstahl, too, gives much more time and attention to this kind of body

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ritual than is usually mentioned in reviews of her film. She devotes considerable camera time to athletes' warm-ups before an event, and the unconscious body rituals that accompany them.

²⁸ The titles read: "September 4, 1934. 20 years after the outbreak of World War I, 16 years after German woe and sorrow began, 19 months after the beginning of Germany's rebirth, Adolph Hitler flew to Nuremberg to review the columns of his faithful followers" (Hinton 1991, p. 31).

²⁹ Tallmer is clearly referring to this incident, but is wrong in implying that the runner has left the stadium at any point. The entire 10,000 meter run is performed on the track.