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notes for Oshima Retrospective by Tadao Sato

"Cruel Stories of Youth (Seishun Zankoku Monogatari)"

This was the first picture to make the name of Nagisa Oshima popular among Japanese film-viewers.

It deals with the misconducts of young people which imply their insurrection against the morals of their parents' generation. Of course, such a theme is nowadays quite usual in every country throughout the world, and even in Japan during the period from 1956 through '57 a young novelist Shintaro Ishihara's rebellious novels were adapted one after another for the screen and caused the social problem of the day.

Those films, however, described the students behaving themselves freely like young delinquents as if they were the heroes of the new era.

In those days, one of the great issues in the world of literature as well as of the cinema was the question as to how we should think about the rebellious conduct of the youngsters as portrayed by Shintaro Ishihara. Some found there the yearning for adventures of the youngmen who were tired of peace, ^{and} feared lest there be a critical feeling of their expectation for fascism. Others regretted that progressive ideologies had already lost their attraction for younger generation.

Nagisa Oshima's "Cruel Stories of Youth" was made as a voice after such films were in vogue. Two young lovers, ignoring the morals taught by adults, insist that they are entirely free. However, inside of the real society they cannot really be free, and the freedom they insist upon hurts as well as ruins themselves.

Nagisa Oshima makes the two the big sister of the girl who is one of the lovers and her loving doctor around 30 years of age ^{act} as spokesmen for the feeling of their own generation. They themselves had been rebellious young men in their student days when they were the same age as the hero and heroine. However, they had been making their political resistance in a

stoic manner, and they were frustrated and now they have turned out to be quite gloomy and exhausted in their living. They say, "Now that our political resistance has been frustrated, our following sisters are expressing in a more different way the same sort of indignation of their own as we have once experienced."

This motif of comparison between the movement of political resistance and that of young delinquents as well as criminals or dropouts becomes more and more significant in the subsequent ^{works} of Nagisa Oshima ~~works~~, and finally turns out to be intermingled with each other.