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Drive My Car: An Extended Palimpsest of Home

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Abstract

Ryusuke Hamaguchi's *Drive My Car* (2021) approaches Japan's social reality and historical memory through the experience of home. This article reads its adaptations of Murakami and Chekhov as an extended palimpsest in which memories, spaces, and objects preserve traces of earlier lives. Home takes shape across three overlapping dimensions, encompassing the national history that haunts Hiroshima, families in crisis, and the absence or disruption of maternal care. The red Saab, Oto's recording, and the multilingual stage connect these dimensions through encounters that allow the characters to acknowledge loss and begin to care for one another. Shared listening and performance offer ways to reconstruct home from ruins and live with the ghosts of the past. The film's movement away from rancor makes such renewal imaginable, although its emphasis on private recovery risks softening the historical conflicts and social inequalities that continue to shape home.

Keywords

Drive My Car, adaptation, palimpsest, home, Japanese cinema

Learning to live with ghosts.
After Jacques Derrida[1]

An excess of history harms the living person.
After Friedrich Nietzsche[2]

Through a close reading of *Drive My Car* (2021), this article examines how the film refracts Japan's social reality and history through the lens of home. Directed by Ryusuke Hamaguchi, *Drive My Car* gained wide international recognition, winning Best International Feature Film at the 2022 Academy Awards after receiving the screenplay prize at Cannes.[3] Hamaguchi's films now attract a growing body of scholarship, including studies of adaptation, gender, cinematic space, and multilingual performance. These discussions provide a context for examining his understanding of home.[4] As a prominent figure in contemporary Japanese cinema, Hamaguchi brings a new cinematic approach to an old question: how can people live together after their home has collapsed?

The term "palimpsest" captures the essential hybridity and layered texture of this film. The term originally referred to a manuscript on which earlier writing had been removed or overwritten but remained partly visible. Metaphorically, it denotes an accumulation of meanings in a work of art; in this case, a mixture of memories, spaces, and physical objects. The red car, the theatrical stage, and the city of Hiroshima all contribute to building the palimpsest of *Drive My Car*. The examination of this film is like an archaeological excavation of "home" within this palimpsest. Moreover, *Drive My Car* is an adaptation with multiple sources, and this complexity deepens its underlying context of social anxiety. Primarily adapted from Haruki Murakami's eponymous short story, the film also draws on "Scheherazade" and "Kino," collected in *Men Without Women*. It gives Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* an extended place within the story, while Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* appears as another theatrical reference.[5] The title invokes the Beatles' song, a connection that is hard to ignore since the Beatles are a frequent cultural reference in Murakami's writing. The song links an invitation to drive with the possibility of love, adding a sexual undertone to the film's concern with desire.[6]

Drive My Car brings different cultures and languages together within the film and its theatrical stage. These sources become layers of a spatial palimpsest, their earlier meanings remaining partly legible within the film. Drawing on Linda Hutcheon's account of adaptation as palimpsestic, we might call such a work an extended palimpsest: a creative and interpretive transposition of recognizable works into another set of conventions.[7] The palimpsest extends beyond literary adaptation to the spaces, recordings, and performances through which earlier relationships remain active in the present. The film brings European plays into a contemporary Japanese setting, where their

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words become entangled with the characters' lives. As Derrida suggests, the past never completely disappears; it endures like a ghost. One of the film's core motifs is learning to live with ghosts. Its layered construction also gives us a comparative perspective from which to examine home. Both *Uncle Vanya* and this film emphasize the crises that families face when society is in transition. Another recent adaptation of Murakami offers a useful comparison. In both Lee Chang-dong's *Burning* (2018) and *Drive My Car*, the directors expand the role of home. *Burning* turns Murakami's "Barn Burning" into a South Korean story filled with class antagonism: the contrast between wealthy and impoverished households is accompanied by the presence of the North Korean border. Björn Boman's discussion of *han* offers one way of understanding the resentment and accumulated hurt in the film.[8] In contrast to the rancor surrounding the collapse of home in *Burning*, *Drive My Car* offers another emotional response to traumatic experience. It swerves away from a structure of rancor, also recognizable in strands of Japanese cinema, and invokes the possibility of finding a way out of a contentious reality and historical pain.

Home has three overlapping dimensions in *Drive My Car*. The first concerns national history and the spaces through which it remains present. The second concerns families in crisis, while the third focuses on the absence or disruption of maternal care and the possibility of reconstructing home from ruins. These dimensions intersect, and the characters' stories echo the discussion of home in *Uncle Vanya*. The play appears both as a major part of the film and as an earlier text whose traces remain visible, giving us an internal comparative perspective.

1. Haunted by Disaster

The nation can be read as a larger home in *Drive My Car*, linking the characters' domestic losses to histories of upheaval and disaster. Within the Confucian tradition in East Asia, one broad meaning of home connects family and country, or jia guo, through concentric circles expanding outward. The analogy has limits, since a family and a nation are not identical. *Drive My Car* carries the shadow of trauma engraved in national memory: a national house full of a haunting feeling that is hard to escape. Similarly, in *Uncle Vanya*, problems of the social order are represented by a home in crisis. Margaret and Michael Rustin's discussion of Chekhov places the pain of intimate relationships within this connection between family life and the wider world.[9] Through the adaptation of *Uncle Vanya* and the film's historical setting, I try to distinguish the traces of upheaval and disaster that underlie the struggle to maintain a home. A national allegory here is a possible relation between these dimensions of experience; it does not require every character to stand for a country.

Japan's defeat in 1945 cast a long shadow over twentieth-century cinematic portrayals of families in crisis. Memories of war and the disruption of the social order repeatedly appear in Japanese films. Akira Kurosawa and Yasujiro Ozu, as masters of world cinema, represent this troubled world in very different ways. Kurosawa often dramatizes the breakdown of an established order, while Ozu brings historical change into the apparently ordinary life of a household. In *Tokyo Story* (1953), for example, the difficulty of accommodating visiting parents reveals the distance between generations and the pressures of work. The quietness of Ozu's domestic world does not make it untouched by history.[10] After them, questions of defeat, responsibility, and rebellion continued into the Japanese New Wave, from the late 1950s into the 1970s, and remained influential in later cinema.[11] This troubled inheritance has almost become a ghostly presence in the history of Japanese cinema. Even when it is not directly represented, we can recognize its traces through objects and locations charged with historical associations.

Postwar Japanese cinema repeatedly asks questions of identity: what does it mean to be Japanese, and what can be inherited from the past? These questions are linked with the

collapse of home, in both its personal and national meanings. It is a feeling of always being haunted, confronted with a vague, often invisible threat in a familiar place or set of ideas. Ann Laura Stoler's account of the intimate and sometimes unseen effects of empire offers a vocabulary for this persistence, although her historical setting differs from Japan's.[12] Shuji Terayama's *Throw Away Your Books, Rally in the Streets* (1971) evokes the emptiness left after the radical frenzy of the 1960s. Young people, faced with the compromised inheritance of their fathers, want to shout and smash but seem powerless to change anything. The image of a lizard trapped in a Coca-Cola bottle gives this frustration a bitter form: Japan's future grows inside an American container. The film's questions about history and the father return, in different forms, in the troubled young people of *Akira* (1988) and the entanglement of childhood and collective history in Naoki Urasawa's manga *20th Century Boys* (1999–2006).[13] In these works, history becomes a burden that the younger generation wants to reject. Yet the characters cannot simply push away the moral failures and unfinished questions inherited from their fathers. Such a portrait of a lost young generation reappears in *Drive My Car* as the young actor Koji Takatsuki, who admires Kafuku and, in trying to break out of his own dilemma, seems to seek a spiritual father.

In contrast with the confrontational energy of parts of Japanese New Wave cinema, *Drive My Car* brings different narrative and theatrical forms together while recalling Ozu's way of placing history within an everyday landscape. Today's directors also stand at a greater distance from the memory of defeat than their predecessors. In *Drive My Car*, doubt and resentment about history and relations with other countries rarely become explicit declarations. Instead, war trauma and complex histories form a distant landscape. However, questions from the past do not disappear; they haunt the spatial palimpsest of the film. Most of its central action takes place in Hiroshima, a city rebuilt from the ashes. Behind the familiar image of destruction were people with homes and ordinary lives. Hiroshima remains a space marked by enormous historical violence. Yet a spectator who does not attend to this history can still follow the plot. The shadow of history is a distant background to the stage, not a conspicuous performer. The choice of filming location arose from a practical change: pandemic restrictions disrupted plans to shoot in Busan, and the production moved to Hiroshima. In the location interview, Tomoko Nishizaki connects Yoshio Taniguchi's glass passage with Kenzo Tange's "peace axis," while noting that the plant and Peace Memorial Park are not aligned in a straight line. She recalls that this account impressed Hamaguchi and later entered the screenplay as dialogue.[14] The city's history thus entered the film through the built environment as well as its broader associations with destruction and recovery.

The film returns to these problems through rehearsal, gathering performers from different countries under Kafuku's direction to perform *Uncle Vanya*. It offers a softer way of representing tensions between countries whose histories are entangled. Through theater, people whose predecessors experienced colonial domination and war are brought into a shared space. The rehearsals give *Drive My Car* its mixture of cultures. At the beginning, Kafuku uses an unusual method, requiring the performers to read their lines with little expression, in several languages, including Japanese, Mandarin, and Korean Sign Language. They sit together reading Chekhov's play about a home in crisis. Kafuku calls Chekhov "terrifying": speaking his lines brings out parts of the self that the actor would rather avoid.[15] This encounter may also bring ghosts of historical pain into view. The actors must learn when another person has finished, where to look, and how long to wait. This takes time. Kafuku's method may bring them closer, but his refusal to explain his instructions to the Taiwanese actress Janice Chang also exposes the unequal authority within this temporary household.[16]

The multilingual performance makes communication depend on attention to different languages and bodies. Lee Yoon-a, the Korean actress playing Sonya, does not speak and delivers her lines in Korean Sign Language. Her performance requires the other actors to attend to her gestures, movements, and pauses. Signing is itself a language, so it would be misleading to make her simply an image of a nation unable to speak. If we reconsider the rehearsal beyond its East Asian setting, another layer of the palimpsest appears: a revision of the Tower of Babel. In this revision, people are not finally separated by the confusion of languages but brought together through their differences. Their connection depends on interpretation, repeated readings, and attention to one another. The film's positive possibility lies in this effort to communicate across a difference that remains.[17]

Natural disaster also shadows *Drive My Car*, destroying the home of Kafuku's driver, Misaki Watari. Disaster is also an essential part of the film's social background. On March 11, 2011, the earthquake, tsunami, and Fukushima nuclear disaster threw Japan into a series of crises, destroying homes and displacing communities.[18] These events influenced many filmmakers, including Hamaguchi. In *Asako I & II* (2018), the earthquake appears directly and interrupts the characters' everyday lives and relationships. After the disaster, Hamaguchi himself went to the affected region and, with Ko Sakai, made the Tohoku documentary trilogy, beginning with *The Sound of the Waves* (2011).[19] His experience there helps us understand his attitude toward traumatic memory. In an interview, he recalls the intimate conversations that developed during long car journeys while making the documentaries. Sharing a changing landscape allowed people to speak about things they would otherwise have found difficult to say.[20] Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano examines how the trilogy's interview methods shape the relationship between the filmmakers and the people telling their stories.[21] Tragedy does not disappear, but an encounter becomes possible within its aftermath. The characters finally begin to adopt such an attitude toward trauma in *Drive My Car*.

These post-disaster scenes of ruins find a highly symbolic counterpart in the waste plant in Hiroshima, giving a strong metaphor of ashes. The city rebuilds from the ashes, the country lives on with its pains, and Misaki and Kafuku try to reconstruct themselves from ruins. At the plant, discarded clothes and other household waste, gathered into a huge pile, can look like the remains of lives. Here, death or haunted ghosts reappear in the form of waste, as if civilization must pass through burning in order to be reborn. Yet the plant is also a place where the city continues its daily life. Yoshio Taniguchi's Naka Incineration Plant contains a public glass passage, the Ecorium, through which visitors can see its machinery.[22] The film moves from this ordered passage to the refuse pit and its moving crane (Figure 1). The refuse pit gives the image of renewal an unresolved remainder. On the left, the crane suspends a dense mass of refuse whose former household uses can no longer be recovered. On the right, the cool light and straight lines of the viewing corridor frame the two figures. The warm, irregular mass of waste appears larger than either observer. Set against the orderly public passage, this accumulated material makes the persistence of the past visible within the city's routine disposal of waste. The continuing work of handling what homes discard gives the metaphor of renewal its material weight. Misaki once drove garbage trucks in Hiroshima, so this place also touches her working life. The scene asks how pain might become a source of new life without making destruction itself a gift.



Figure 1. Ryusuke Hamaguchi, *Drive My Car*. The refuse crane and the glazed viewing corridor at Hiroshima's Naka Incineration Plant. Digital film still. Japan, 2021. Internet source: IMDb, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt14039582/characters/nm4392528/ (image). Accessed September 9, 2026. Film ©2021 *Drive My Car* Film Partners.

2. Home at Risk

The title *Drive My Car* raises questions of possession and direction: who drives "my" car, with whom, and where? The car belongs to Yusuke Kafuku, and the story largely follows his perspective and life, much like the Vanya he performs onstage. Both men face a midlife crisis, and their home is at risk. But the car also carries the lives of Oto and Misaki, who is the same age as Kafuku's dead daughter would have been. The ending shifts attention toward Misaki's possible future. Four people leave important traces in the car: Kafuku, Oto, Misaki, and the young actor Koji Takatsuki. In a pivotal scene, Takatsuki tells the ending of Oto's fictional story, a continuation her husband has never heard. Oto's relationship with Takatsuki, the young actor's admiration for Kafuku, Kafuku's glaucoma, and his attachment to Misaki invite a comparison with Oedipus. Sexual rivalry, paternal authority, and impaired sight bring the stories into relation, without establishing the classical text as a direct source for the film.[23] The car becomes a mobile form of home, carrying these unresolved relationships into new encounters.

This situation of home also reflects the social reality of Japan. Since the 1990s, economic slowdown and demographic shifts have placed pressure on established family structures and definitions. Home, often imagined as a private sanctuary, has always been shaped by the outside world.[24] The Saab 900 in this film is such a sanctuary for Kafuku. But each time another person enters the car, it is like an intrusion into his inner world. Lydia Maria Makrides's discussion of automotive space helps us see how motion and enclosure work together in these encounters.[25] The festival's requirement that Kafuku accept a driver makes the intrusion unavoidable. He can listen to Oto's tape from the back seat because Misaki is watching the road. The red bodywork marks the Saab as a distinct enclosure within the passing landscape (Figure 2). The car occupies the center of the frame while the roadside blurs behind it, giving the moving vehicle a temporary visual stability. Its windows frame a world that moves around its occupants while the cabin holds their voices together. The car gives home a visible boundary without fixing it to one place. Through this process, the characters leave their traces on this "home": Oto leaves her voice and memory; Takatsuki leaves the ending of Oto's story; Misaki's silence contrasts with these voices, and her presence becomes a saving force for Kafuku, a role that can be compared with Antigone's care for Oedipus. Yet she also has her own story to tell. When her memories lead them to Hokkaido, the destination belongs to her history, and Kafuku must follow as a listener.



Figure 2. Ryusuke Hamaguchi, *Drive My Car*. The red Saab 900 against the passing roadside. Digital film still. Japan, 2021. Internet source: Hagerty Media, https://www.hagerty.com/media/entertainment/drive-my-car-the-saab-900-turbo-as-sanctuary/ (image). Accessed September 9, 2026. Film ©2021 *Drive My Car* Film Partners.

If the car is a home for Kafuku, then Oto, his wife, seems to have been locked in the tape,

another form of home for her voice. Perhaps we could instead call it the grave of home. Oto reads every part of *Uncle Vanya* except Vanya's, leaving gaps for Kafuku to answer as he drives. After her death, the pauses remain where she left them. He can rewind the tape, but her voice cannot answer anything new. The recording preserves both an intimacy and its limit. In *Uncle Vanya*, Sonya and Vanya's work supports the retired professor Serebryakov, while Marina's care holds the household together.[26] Oto likewise prepares something her husband needs for his work, although the relationship between Kafuku and Oto appears more equal. He also helps her create her scripts. As Yasuo Tsuda observes, Hamaguchi brings the storytelling after sex from Murakami's "Scheherazade" into the married couple's relationship.[27] They enjoy making stories together. Their marital problems do not seem to arise directly from the economic and demographic pressures often discussed in accounts of contemporary Japan.

The most immediate crises are Oto's infidelity and unexpected death. Oto's wish to talk to her husband leaves open the possibility that she wants the appearance of an undisturbed marriage to end. But Kafuku pretends that nothing has happened, which he claims to have done for fear of losing her. Before his wife dies, he has already lost her in a sense. This points to Kafuku's status as an actor: he continues the performance in his life when his wife may no longer want to play the same role. Her desire cannot be reduced to a single explanation, but her affairs may also suggest desperation within married life. This echoes another famous female character, Madame Bovary, whose adultery grows out of dissatisfaction with the life of a wife. Kafuku's retreat can be read as an attempt to protect the appearance of their marriage while leaving Oto's experience unexamined. His refusal to speak postpones a conversation whose outcome he fears and can no longer know after her death. In Hamaguchi's *Happy Hour* (2015), a woman similarly describes her marriage as a slow destruction of herself.[28] Yet Oto's story also escapes the Bovary comparison. Takatsuki knows a continuation that Kafuku does not, and the film never grants the husband a complete account of her inner life. The conversation he avoided cannot now be recovered from the tape.

Misaki's story concerns a family already destroyed by crisis. Her personal experience brings together child abuse, poverty, and the vulnerability of a household with only one parent. Alongside Oto's absence, it raises the question of what happens when maternal care is lost or fails. Near the end of the film, Kafuku rides in the car driven by Misaki to a small village in Hokkaido, where she lived until she was seventeen. A long shot captures the two of them standing before a house reduced to rubble (Figure 3). The snow-covered ground occupies more of the frame than the two figures. The wreckage lies above them in the frame, separated from their bodies by an expanse of snow. A small bouquet passes between their outstretched hands, bringing a gesture of mourning into a landscape that cannot be restored by confession. The subsequent embrace changes their relation to each other while the damaged site remains. Misaki tells Kafuku that her mother died beneath it in a landslide. In her account, her mother drank heavily and often abused her. When Misaki was fourteen, her mother began to turn into an eight-year-old persona named Sachi after the violence. Sachi was Misaki's only friend.[29] There is an overlap in the way both Oto and Misaki's mother remain inaccessible to those closest to them, despite their very different social and cultural circumstances. Both die suddenly, leaving an unfinished relationship. But their maternal histories are different: Oto has lost a daughter, whereas Misaki's mother has abused a living child. Their stories disturb the comforting image of the mother as the center of a secure home without equating bereavement with abusive parenting. In *Uncle Vanya*, Marina is assigned much of the actual mothering of the household. In the film, that figure receives little attention, another kind of absence against which the characters must find care elsewhere.[30] Misaki and Takatsuki, as members of a younger generation, also struggle to find an appropriate

position in society. Like the people in Chekhov's household, they face inner obstacles as well as external crises. At the ruins, Misaki's guilt over not rescuing her mother meets Kafuku's belief that he might have saved Oto by coming home earlier. Their grief brings them together, though a child's survival under abuse does not carry the same responsibility as an adult spouse's avoidance. The embrace offers company in this pain, without rebuilding the house or deciding what the dead would have said.



Figure 3. Ryusuke Hamaguchi, *Drive My Car*. Misaki and Kafuku exchange flowers before the snow-covered remains of Misaki's home in Hokkaido. Digital film still. Japan, 2021. Internet source: X (Twitter), image file, https://pbs.twimg.com/media/FiXQ3dgWIAEmBGN.jpg. Accessed September 9, 2026. Film ©2021 *Drive My Car* Film Partners.

The household of the Korean actress Lee Yoon-a, her husband Kon Yoon-su, and their dogs offers another form of home within the film's international mixture. Amid homes that have collapsed or are close to collapse, its members respond to loss through hospitality and mutual care. Kafuku and Misaki have dinner with them. The couple has also experienced family pain. Lee speaks of losing a pregnancy and being unable to continue dancing as before, just as Kafuku has been unable to return to Vanya. They communicate across spoken and signed languages. Kon interprets as they eat, and Lee chooses what she wishes to tell her guests.[31] The household offers another small palimpsest of the Tower of Babel, as its members and guests communicate across different languages. Their willingness to discuss loss contrasts with the appearance of an undisturbed marriage that Kafuku maintains. His silence is a retreat from an available conversation. This failure in communication contributes to the dissolution of his home and finds an echo in *Uncle Vanya*. The dinner also gives Misaki a place beside the man she drives. For a while, she is a guest whose company is wanted after the driving is finished.

3. Conclusion: An Image of a New Home

The film's final scene brings these overlapping dimensions of home together in an image of Misaki's possible future. Misaki appears in a supermarket in South Korea, and the masks worn by the customers place the scene in the COVID-19 era. After leaving the supermarket, she drives away in a red Saab with a dog in the back seat. The scene suggests a new beginning through Misaki's position at the wheel. The scar on her face is no longer visible. This image is also the film's final palimpsest of home. As Yuji Kato observes, Kafuku has disappeared from the ending, leaving the film to Misaki and the dog.[32] Xiyi Zhang's account of what remains beyond the male-centered narrative similarly helps us see how the car carries traces into a life that no longer appears only for Kafuku's sake.[33] Yet we do not know whether he has given her the Saab, how she supports herself, or where she is going. The groceries and the animal suggest the ordinary contents of another home, while its circumstances remain outside the frame.

The film's emphasis on personal recovery risks making reconciliation seem sufficient to resolve social conflict, and it may weaken the social criticism of Chekhov's play. The professor's proposal to sell the estate threatens the home sustained by Sonya and Vanya's work, and his departure does not settle who benefits from that work.[34] The film, by contrast, foregrounds the private movement toward reconciliation. Even the suggestion of Misaki's independence takes a familiar consumer form: a car, shopping, and companionship. Joseph Jonghyun Jeon's account of the film's ambivalent transnational mobility complicates the idea that crossing into Korea is simply a fresh start.[35] The history and unequal conditions of movement remain, however light the final drive may look.

The film's international circulation also gives this consolation a curatorial setting. MoMA's presentation of *Drive My Car* in *The Contenders* in November 2021 foregrounded literary adaptation, multilingual performance, and grief.[36] The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, also screened the film in February 2022.[37] These presentations recognize the film's formal and emotional achievements. Their emphasis on adaptation and performance offers a context for the layered encounters examined here, while leaving open the historical and social limits of the film's consolation.

The stage nevertheless offers the possibility of an almost utopian reconstruction of home. It gathers the actors around Chekhov's lines and makes Kafuku confront experiences he has avoided. Studies of the changing Japanese family describe shifts in its boundaries and in the relationships through which care is provided.[38] The stage suggests such a network beyond the nuclear or extended family. The actors work together to inhabit Chekhov's troubled household. For Kafuku, the play has both oppressive and saving power. He is unable to face himself, yet in the play's final scene he receives a form of consolation, in a moment that feels sacred both in the film and in Chekhov. More often than not, the lines speak what cannot be said in reality. The resonance between the play and the characters brings Kafuku's story and *Uncle Vanya* into close relation, allowing the older text to reappear within the film. When Kafuku encounters his wife's infidelity and struggles with his pain, those lines seem to speak for him what he wants to say but cannot. At the end, however, Sonya's words reach him through Lee's signing, with a living person's movements and pauses. He knows the words from Oto's tape; he must now receive them from someone else. The frontal framing places Lee behind the seated Kafuku, with her signing hands moving beside his face and across his upper body (Figure 4). Her raised right hand directs his gaze outward while her left arm reaches across him toward the open book. The arrangement connects the written play to the bodies that perform it. Against the dark background, their faces and hands carry the scene's visual emphasis. Chekhov's text becomes a relation between two bodies, giving the palimpsest a visible form that Oto's recording alone cannot supply. Performance works as a mask through which the characters can approach pain, though it can also be harmful to have the inner self exposed. Its saving power comes from making room for another person within what has already been written. The film does not restore the lost home. It leaves us with the possibility of constructing one while learning to live with its ghosts.



Figure 4. Ryusuke Hamaguchi, *Drive My Car*. Lee Yoon-a as Sonya signs behind Kafuku as Vanya in the final stage performance. Digital film still. Japan, 2021. Internet source: Cinemamonogatari, https://www.cinemamonogatari.com/2022/05/25/drive-my-car-2021-a-comparative-reading/ (image). Accessed September 9, 2026. Film ©2021 *Drive My Car* Film Partners.

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[10] Yasujiro Ozu, dir., *Tokyo Story* (Shochiku, 1953); Woojeong Joo, *The Cinema of Ozu Yasujiro: Histories of the Everyday* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 141–85.

[11] Inuhiko Yomota, *What Is Japanese Cinema? A History*, trans. Philip Kaffen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), chaps. 6–9.

[12] Ann Laura Stoler, "Intimidations of Empire: Predicaments of the Tactile and Unseen," in *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, ed. Ann Laura Stoler (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 1–22, at 1.

[13] Shuji Terayama, dir., *Throw Away Your Books, Rally in the Streets* (Art Theatre Guild, 1971); Katsuhiro Otomo, dir., *Akira* (Akira Committee, 1988); 浦沢直樹, *20 世紀少年*, 22 vols. (Tokyo: 小学館, 2000–2007), originally serialized in *ビッグコミックスピリッツ*, 1999–2006.

[14] 西武ロケーションサービス, "米アカデミー受賞作「ドライブ・マイ・カー」撮影地選定秘話," accessed September 9, 2026, https://www.seibuholdings.co.jp/location-service/special/drivemycar/.

[15] Hamaguchi, *Drive My Car*, dialogue between Kafuku and Takatsuki about performing Chekhov.

[16] Ryusuke Hamaguchi, interview, in Janus Films, *Drive My Car: Press Notes*, PDF p. 8; 山内健司, "映画『ドライブ・マイ・カー』演劇リハーサルのシーン〜「イタリエンヌ」の今日性〜," *芸術文化観光学研究* 1 (2022): 207–10, especially 209–10, https://doi.org/10.60292/artsandtourism.1.0_207. Yamauchi distinguishes the possibilities of repeated reading from the pressure of unexplained directorial demands.

[17] Genesis 11:1–9. The Babel comparison is an interpretation of the multilingual rehearsal and performance sequences in *Drive My Car*.

[18] Jeff Kingston, ed., *Natural Disaster and Nuclear Crisis in Japan: Response and Recovery after Japan's 3/11* (London: Routledge, 2012).

[19] Ryusuke Hamaguchi, dir., *Asako I & II* (C&I Entertainment, 2018); Ko Sakai and Ryusuke Hamaguchi, dirs., *The Sound of the Waves* (2011). See 山形国際ドキュメンタリー映画祭, "なみのおと," *311 ドキュメンタリーフィルム・アーカイブ*, accessed September 9, 2026, https://www.yidff311docs.jp/?post_type=yidff0311&p=538.

[20] Hamaguchi, interview, in Janus Films, *Drive My Car: Press Notes*, PDF pp. 6–7.

[21] Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano, "The Power of Interviews," in *Japanese Filmmakers in the Wake of Fukushima: Perspectives on Nuclear Disasters* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2023), 117–44, chapter abstract, https://doi.org/10.1017/9789048556885.005.

[22] Hiroshima Prefecture, "Naka Incineration Plant," *Hiroshima Tatemonogatari*, accessed September 5, 2026, https://www.pref.hiroshima.lg.jp/soshiki_file/tatemonogatari/en/page017.html. For the Ecorium, see also Hiroshima City, "Hiroshima 2045: City of Peace and Creativity: Completed Projects," accessed September 9, 2026, https://www.city.hiroshima.lg.jp/business/toshikeikaku/1021740/1017838.html. The plant was completed in 2004. The film does not establish that Misaki worked at this plant.

[23] Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* and *Oedipus at Colonus*, in *The Three Theban Plays*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Viking, 1982).

[24] Marcus Rebick and Ayumi Takenaka, eds., *The Changing Japanese Family* (London: Routledge, 2006), 3–5.

[25] Lydia Maria Makrides, "The Poetics of Auto-Mobility in Ryūsuke Hamaguchi's *Drive My Car*," *Movie: A Journal of Film Criticism* 12 (2025): 67–77, at 67, https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/scapvc/film/movie/contents/moviejfc12-issue_12_whole_issue.pdf.

[26] Anton Chekhov, *Uncle Vanya: Scenes from Country Life in Four Acts*, trans. Marian Fell, acts 1 and 3–4, Project Gutenberg, eBook no. 1756, accessed September 5, 2026, https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1756. This English edition is cited independently of the film's multilingual translations.

[27] 津田, "村上春樹と濱口竜介の『ドライブ・マイ・カー』," 68.

[28] Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, trans. Lydia Davis (New York: Viking, 2010), parts 2–3; Ryusuke Hamaguchi, dir., *Happy Hour* (2015), Jun's account of her marriage and divorce proceedings.

[29] Hamaguchi, *Drive My Car*, Misaki's account of her mother and Sachi at the ruins in Hokkaido.

[30] Chekhov, *Uncle Vanya*, acts 1 and 4.

[31] Hamaguchi, *Drive My Car*, dinner at the home of Lee Yoon-a and Kon Yoon-su. The Korean characters' names follow the cast list in Janus Films, *Drive My Car: Press Notes*, PDF p. 14.

[32] 加藤, "『ドライブ・マイ・カー』を読む," 8–9.

[33] 張, "「翻訳」しきれない残余," 170–71.

[34] Chekhov, *Uncle Vanya*, acts 3–4.

[35] Joseph Jonghyun Jeon, "Migrant Crash," *ELH* 92, no. 3 (2025): 707–38, at 707–11, https://doi.org/10.1353/elh.2025.a969154.

[36] Museum of Modern Art, "*Drive My Car*. 2021. Directed by Ryûsuke Hamaguchi," screening, November 14, 2021, accessed September 9, 2026, https://www.moma.org/calendar/events/7343; Museum of Modern Art, "*The Contenders* 2021," November 4, 2021–January 22, 2022, accessed September 9, 2026, https://www.moma.org/calendar/film/5372.

[37] Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, *Film Focus: February 2022*, 1, accessed September 9, 2026, https://static.mfah.com/documents/mfah-films-february-2022.9692716832100551661.pdf.

[38] Rebick and Takenaka, *Changing Japanese Family*, 3–5.