

'Two Moments in *Crazed Fruit*'

by George Crosthwait

Kō Nakahira's *Kurutta kajitsu* (*Crazed Fruit*) stands as a Japanese counterpoint to Nicholas Ray's *Rebel Without A Cause*, insofar as it captured the disillusionment, anxiety, and ennui of teenagers coming of age in the aftermath of WWII. The Japanese Economic miracle combined with US postwar occupation engendered a kind of listless new leisure class amongst the new-fangled 'teenagers' in the 1950s. But whilst James Dean was tearing himself apart in histrionics. The jaded *taiyozoku* (sun tribe) youths in *Crazed Fruit* are more analytical about their dissatisfaction. At times they set out their manifesto: "Look what the older generation tried to sell us"; "Let's find our own way by wasting time"; "we live in boring times"; "we'll make boredom our credo". For me these sentiments are encapsulated in the film's opening and closing segments.

The film opens with a shot of a steely open sea, the horizon line barely visible against the grey sky. A speedboat towards the camera. A cut shows the wake of the boat, churning up dark water as the titles appear and Toru Takemitsu's lilting jazz score begins. Now we see the boat's driver, Haruji (Masahiko Tsugawa), initially silhouetted, but as the close-up tightens, his face comes into the light. Haruji is staring ahead, his eyes darting around, yet unblinking. He looks absolutely terrified. This moment points to the stakes of *Crazed Fruit*: modernity, leisure, pleasure, relaxed yet modern music, all form the setting for a kind of desperate ingrained horror.

We return to this scene at the film's climax. Turns out that Haruji is using the boat as a murder weapon. Now his eyes are focused on his prey, and Takemitsu's score is notably absent. He repeatedly circles his victims—a bird's eye view shot that shows the spirals created in his wake. This circular pattern is constantly retraced, but constantly self-erases after a few seconds. He lines up his attack, looks dead-ahead, and moves full-throttle into the future.

Here is the true nihilism of Nakahira's film—not the laconic slogans tossed around by the teenager. The commodities of modernity only disguise its abject heart; take these away (remove the cool music) and what remains is a dark future that can only be reached through destruction.