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## **The Postwar Documentary Trace: Groping in the Dark**

Abé Mark Nornes

The 1998 Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival featured a major retrospective of Japanese documentary films from the 1980s and 1990s. This was the last installment in a biennial series that painstakingly covered the one-hundred-year history of nonfiction filmmaking in Japan. Previous retrospectives confidently displayed a national heritage and its sure but steady growth, but the title of the 1998 edition suggested a less than optimistic attitude: “The Groping in the Dark: Japanese Documentary in the 1980s and Beyond” [“Nihon Dokyumentar no Mosaku: 1980 Nendai Ikō”]. Nowhere was the cautious uncertainty more evident than in the accompanying symposium. On the stage were four filmmakers representing various generations in Japanese film history. In the middle sat Kanai Katsu (who started filming in the 1960s) and Ise Shin’ichi (from the 1980s). On either end were Iizuka Toshio (1960s) and Kawase (Sentō) Naomi (1990s).<sup>1</sup> Iizuka served as assistant director to the late Ogawa Shinsuke from the 1960s until

Ogawa's death in 1992 and has since become a director in his own right. Kawase had recently returned from the Cannes International Film Festival, where her first feature (shot, incidentally, by Ogawa's cameraman Tamura Masaki) surprised everyone by taking a special jury prize. The media—of which a sizable contingent sat at Kawase's feet in Yamagata—was calling the Cannes coup for *Suzaku* [*Moe no suzaku*] an indication that a new generation of filmmakers had attained international recognition and that Japanese cinema had entered a new era. This claim has far more to do with Japan's anxiety about its place in global cultural production than with any sense of film history. However, as I hope to demonstrate, it is right on the mark, at least from a certain perspective.

The seating arrangement at Yamagata was a piece of history writing in and of itself. It did not take long before the generational structure bared itself onstage. Any "groping" that evening would be between those on either end of the platform. Iizuka and Kawase would have it out over the question posed by moderator Yamane Sadao, one of Japan's finest critics. Taking a cue from Fukuda Katsuhiko (an ex-Ogawa Productions member who stayed in Sanrizuka after the collective left), Yamane suggested that in the mid-1970s something happened that transformed Japanese documentary, leaving it in its present, seemingly precarious state. As in any serious discussion of documentary in Japan, the words *shutai* (subject) and *taishō* (object) constantly came up. They are rarely, if ever, defined, yet they are repeated like the mantra of postwar documentary; functionally they generally demarcate historical articulations of difference to construct a periodization for postwar documentary. The artists onstage quickly staked out the territory. Iizuka laid out the generally accepted view that the filmmakers of the 1960s and early 1970s had a political commitment and took their engagement with the world seriously. They assumed a subject (*shutai*) that was thoroughly social, one that required visible expression on film and at the same time acknowledged its delicate relationship to the object (*taishō*) of the filming. Younger filmmakers, argued Iizuka (in an obvious critical swipe at Kawase), are too wrapped up in their own little world. They focus on either themselves or their family without reference to society, without engaging any political position or social stance. Kawase responded defensively, though perhaps not convincingly, that her own documentaries about her aunt and the search for

her lost father had the kind of social resonance Iizuka claimed for his own work. In the end the two offered only implicit criticism of each other. For all the groping, which included contributions from the floor by Tsuchimoto Noriaki (the Minamata Series) and Fukuda, almost everyone felt they had been left in the dark, especially on the question, “What happened to the exhilaration and passionate engagement of the Japanese documentary world of the 1960s?”

This essay provisionally accepts Fukuda and Yamane’s periodization. Following the filmmaking of the 1960s and early 1970s, which was spectacular in both quality and quantity, something *did* happen, and the Japanese documentary went into a steady decline. At the very least, all historians accept that the sheer number of stirring, creative documentaries in that earlier period was unprecedented, that the present situation pales in comparison, and that the popular support that made these documentaries possible in the first place has evaporated. And how ironic that of all the art forms to experience decay in the 1980s bubble economy—in the age of *jōhōshihonshugi* (information capitalism)—documentary would lose its confidence and end up groping in the critical darkness for a toehold in Yamagata at the close of the 1990s. Few films today are as compelling or as daring as the prodigious work straddling the year 1970. Today’s films and videos in Japan represent a turn to the self, a movement that appears strikingly similar to developments in Euro-American film and video making. However, the latter is rigorously political and theoretically informed, while its Japanese counterpart documents the self from a vaguely apolitical place. That is to say, the intertwining histories of documentary and its conceptualization largely took their own course in Japan. They developed with relative autonomy vis-à-vis Euro-American nonfiction film. Japanese writers and directors were aware of *vérité*, direct cinema, third cinema, and developments in the Western avant-garde but remained resistant to slavish imitation. As will soon become clear, this independence has been a correlate of the vigor of ongoing debates in the field, the innovation of the filmmakers, and the perception that the local social and political stakes were high. Tracking the transformations in debates over *shutaisei* (subjectivity), this essay will grope for the “something” that did happen, the thing that seems to divide the filmmaking group shooting other

groups and the camera-toting individual documenting the self, the public and the private, the *shutai* and its *taishō*—the 1960s and the present day.

### The Fifties: Problematizing Realism

As a form of filmmaking, documentary has been attractive to persons at both ends of the political spectrum since the 1920s. This, one can argue, is due to several qualities specific to the medium. First, by the early years of the Shōwa era the infrastructure for the movies had developed sufficiently enough to allow quick distribution of images to masses of people scattered across vast distances. This gave cinema an easy national, even international (colonial) reach. A further reason lies in the indexical quality of cinematic representation. The on-screen image is an index in the Peircian sense, like a fingerprint or a thermometer. It possesses a striking spatial and temporal immediacy to its indexed object, a quality that documentary filmmaking uses to set itself far apart from the fictive film. Exploiting this seemingly privileged link to reality, filmmakers with a sense of social commitment developed an arsenal of rhetorical devices to move those newly formed masses of moviegoers. These special qualities were initially evident to filmmakers involved in primary education and the proletarian culture movement in the late 1920s and early 1930s. However, these two tendencies—pedagogy and sociopolitical enlightenment—converged as Japan went to war; at the same time differences between left and right became increasingly ambiguous. However, with the end of the conflict, independence for filmmakers meant new possibilities for deploying cinema as an oppositional force in society. Leftist activists, particularly those aligned with the Japan Communist Party, gravitated toward the documentary form, which became a powerful force within the organizations devoted to documentary and the educational film. Like their predecessors in the prewar and wartime eras, these leftist filmmakers were strongly attracted to the possibility of a medium based on an indexical representation of the public arena; through this newly democratized apparatus they intended to construct an alternative space of the nation, one capable of *moving* people in every sense.

The resulting films from the late 1940s and the 1950s generally look pedestrian today, but that was partly the point. This new attitude—although it can

easily be seen as a continuation of wartime practice—demanded a straightforward realism. Nevertheless, this documentation of a democratic reality also required the suppression of individual expression in favor of people and class. The speciousness of the dominant style was revealed in the *White Mountains* [*Shiroi sanmyaku*] (1957) debacle, when it was discovered that a nature film on the mountains showed species unknown to the region and even used a stuffed bear as a stand-in for some scenes. This prompted some of the first questioning of postwar realism.<sup>2</sup> The rigidity of the style was revealed even more decisively by the new films produced by Hani Susumu (son of historian Hani Goro). As a key member of Iwanami's film division, which, as we will see, made an enormous contribution to 1960s cinema, Hani made a striking first film in 1954 titled *Children of the Classroom* [*Kyōshitsu no kodomotachi*]. Audiences were stunned by the spontaneity captured in the film. Close to direct cinema, which it predates, this was actually much smarter filmmaking than its Anglo-European counterpart.<sup>3</sup> While American filmmakers such as Richard Leacock and the Maysles brothers initially clothed their work with a rhetoric of objectivity, Hani used observation to approach the subjectivities of the individuals he filmed. For example, *Children Who Draw* [*E o kaku kodomotachi*] (1955) simply shows children interacting in an art class. As we begin to recognize different personalities, Hani cuts to the paintings they are in the process of creating. This jump from apparently objective, observed phenomena to representations of the children's inner worlds is accompanied by an astounding shift from black and white to brilliant color. Far from the stodgy realism of his contemporaries, Hani's films won international awards and were distributed across Japan through Tōhō Studio.<sup>4</sup> These were the first rumblings of change.

The critical push, however, came from a rebellious, certainly audacious young filmmaker named Matsumoto Toshio, whose contributions to the critical discourse were as influential as his filmmaking. He started publishing missives and manifestos, contributing to a critical turbulence that would shake the foundations of the film world in the next decade. Matsumoto and others critiqued the approaches of old and renovated documentary practice by turning the term *shutai* against the grain. We must approach the translation of *shutai* with considerable caution. Its meaning varies depending on the context of the utterance or inscription. Every field treats it differently,

making any easy correspondence to the English word *subject*, a tricky word itself, impossible. The term *shutai* appeared in film theory of the prewar period in essays by philosophers such as Nakai Masakazu and in debates over the scientific or artistic merits of nonfiction film. However, it was during the Occupation that it entered film discourse in an engaged way and apparently then toed the Japan Communist Party (JCP) line. Film critics borrowed the terms of the debate over war responsibility raging within the left and transposed them to the film world.<sup>5</sup> However, in the December 1957 issue of *Kaihō*, the newsletter of the Kyōiku Eiga Sakka Kyōkai (Association of Education Filmmakers), the primary organization of nonfiction filmmakers that was decidedly leftist, Matsumoto published “On the Subject of the Filmmaker” [“Sakka no Shutai to Iu Koto”]. It was the first essay in a decade-long series of political and aesthetic critiques by Matsumoto. It also stood as a declaration of generational difference. Matsumoto began this initial dispatch with the following words:

During the war, [documentary filmmakers] uncritically produced films collaborating with the war, changing course because of absolutely external power and transitively switching directions without any serious internal criticism. In that period of political promotion they quickly and hysterically, in the manner of a fast-spreading disease among children, engaged in a biased practice that subordinated art to politics. Lacking principles, they subsequently adapted to the PR film industry in a period of retreat. Here, consistent from start to finish, there are only slavish craftsmen lacking subjectivity. One might say that, from the beginning, there were no artists here.<sup>6</sup>

The furor that followed the publication of “On the Subject of the Filmmaker” contributed to the shake-up of the organization. The members changed their name from Kyōiku Eiga Sakka Kyōkai to Kiroku Eiga Sakka Kyōkai (Association of Documentary Filmmakers), indicating a broadening of practice, and established *Kiroku Eiga* [Documentary film] as their monthly journal. This would become their “movement magazine,” the site where the conceptualization of the future of documentary would be worked out. Matsumoto’s criticism was the lightning rod for a backlash led by the organization’s leader, Yoshimi Tai. In a series of articles published in the

first three issues of *Kiroku Eiga* he defended the work of filmmakers whose careers straddled 1945.

On the one hand, we use film production as a weapon of citizens' movements—in other words, we widely disseminated the idea of making film belonging to the people, and the results from this experience have been epochal. It is also extremely meaningful that we have uncovered this route for making works featuring independent planning and independent expression. Moreover, for artists in particular, the experience gained from this period has been precious. The majority of artists, through the pursuit of both realism and a creative method, were certainly able to accumulate practice.<sup>7</sup>

However, it was precisely this continuing commitment to realism that bothered Matsumoto, partly because of its continuity with wartime approaches to documentary but also because of the suppression of the artists' subjectivity that it implied. A cinematic style that presents itself as a privileged referential representation of the lived world ultimately rests on a set of conventions. These conventional constructions hide the work demanded by realist styles, and this amounts to a suppression of the subjective procedures at the heart of filmmaking. For Matsumoto this was both irresponsible and dangerous because it inevitably involves a veiling of politics as well. The realist agenda of nonfiction filmmaking "for the people" hid an authoritarianism Matsumoto associated with a Stalinism at the heart of the JCP. He vigorously attacked these older leftist filmmakers in a series of articles, the most famous of which was an essay on Alain Resnais's *Guernica*. This was a short documentary on the Picasso painting, and in this—both the film and the painting—Matsumoto found traces of what he believed to be missing in Japanese films:

Internal consciousness is the decisive disengagement of the subject and the external world of today, the idolatry of the relationship between the two. It is the consciousness established upon recognition of the collapse of the classical human image. Naturalists should bear in mind that capitalist alienation exists, more than anywhere, in the process of materializing one's internal self and dismantling the subject. When they rely easily on



the outer world without an awareness of their own internal world, then they cannot but grasp matter itself through attributes and atmosphere. They end up drying up their imaginative power and developing a pattern of helpless emotion. The documentarists who capture the *taishō* with an unemotional eye cannot gain a total grasp of reality without using an inner document as a medium. Sharply confronted with avant-garde art, to which at first glance they have no connection, they fail to aim for a higher realism as an opportunity to negate the self. This is because of the artists' own lack of subject-consciousness.<sup>8</sup>

Attacking the highly lauded realism of 1950s "Golden Age" cinema by advancing a theoretical critique grounded in subject relations, this declaration is a kind of statement of principles for the emerging battle between Old and New Left filmmakers. When Matsumoto's writings were collected in *Eizō no Hakken*, they quickly became a bible for the new cohort of artists. Matsumoto supported his written critiques with some fascinating filmmaking. In works such as *Poem of Stones [Ishi no uta]* (1959) and *Security Treaty [Anpo jōyaku]* (1960) he blurred any easy distinction between documentary and the avant-garde, bringing the realism of nonfiction film together with moments of shocking surrealism. For example, *Security Treaty* is a collage film combining found footage, documentary imagery, photographs, and drawings related to the 1960 security treaty between Japan and the United States. Rather than simply presenting the images in a matter-of-fact fashion (as you would see in a television documentary, for example), Matsumoto mutilated still photographs of Japan's leaders and literally spit on the projected, moving image of a U.S. soldier and a prostitute. This was aggressively experimental filmmaking that politicized film style itself. It caused an uproar.

By early 1959 the power on the editorial board of *Kiroku Eiga* had shifted to Matsumoto and his supporters, most notably Noda Shinkichi. They began publishing work by strong writers outside the organization, creating alliances with intellectuals in other fields who opposed the Stalinist mainstream of the left. These contributors included Satō Tadao, Hanada Kiyoteru, Uriu Tadao, and others. This was a turning point for documentary in Japan. The field was experiencing a growth as explosive as that of the late 1930s. In 1959 documentary short production was about to surpass 900

films a year, marking a growth of nearly 500 percent over the course of the decade.<sup>9</sup> Made-for-television education productions constituted another 900 films a year, up from none at the beginning of the 1950s.<sup>10</sup> Within this healthy industry Matsumoto's pressure to innovate, through both critical attacks and artistic examples, met massive institutional weight and its inertia from those working within established organizations. The ultimate solution for reformers was independence—whatever that might come to mean in 1960.

### The So-Called Sixties

This decade, so extraordinary in so many societies across the globe, represents ten years marked by public passion, the spectacle of governments struggling to contain their people's energies, and the shifts in consciousness that lead to new approaches to artistic expression. In Japan historians have the convenient bookends of the U.S. security treaty renewals, but for our purposes we must place "the sixties" in scare quotes. The (early) 1970s are also "the sixties"—after all, that was when *something happened*. The second Anpo was not an ending.

Documentary film is one of the most fascinating artistic fields because of the claims it makes to represent our world. Its easy alliance with centers of power and its national, even global reach make it a crucial ground for contestation in times of pressure. Within this complex of forces bearing down on the cinema was precisely where Matsumoto and company positioned themselves in the late 1950s. By their reasoning, the realism espoused by the older generation of filmmakers was a sham. It was deeply implicated in the propaganda of the government and the public relations of industry; it was a specious realism aligned with oppressive forms of power. The editorial board of *Kiroku Eiga* announced a new direction for their efforts in 1960, a reconfiguration premised on three intertwining agendas: (1) the logical interrogation (*ronrika*) of the relation of the setting and the filmmaker's subjectivity, (2) the logical interrogation of representation and the filmmaker's subjectivity, and finally (3) the logical interrogation of the deep correspondence between subject/setting and subject/representation. Upon these three pillars they would attempt to revolutionize nonfiction film. At

the seventh general assembly in December 1960 they changed their name to Kiroku Eiga Sakka Kyōkai, sloughing off the word *education* and emphasizing their identity as documentarists. In 1961 their journal cover was printed in color, and they began thinking about selling *Kiroku Eiga* on newsstands, thanks to thoughtful writing by authors such as film critic Satō Tadao and philosopher Hanada Kiyoteru, as well as contributions from high-profile filmmakers such as Teshigawara Hiroshi, Ōshima Nagisa, Atsugi Taka, Kuroki Kazuo, and Yoshida Yoshishige.

The critical buttressing of their filmmaking remained the debate over subjectivity. This term initially entered film discourse during the Occupation. Marxism in general engaged in a lengthy and complicated debate over its meaning in the context of war responsibility. Matsumoto, Noda, and others attempted to turn the vocabulary in a new direction, apparently ignoring previous debates in their assertion of new definitions. This is one of the most striking aspects of this discourse: its fragmentary quality and lack of development. Writers freely changed the character of subjectivity, switching contexts with little regard to previous incarnations, within or outside Japan, in film or in other discourses. From another perspective this equivocation could be seen as multivocal and exceeding the strict bounds of a hermetically sealed debate; however, I will argue that this disconnected plurality of discursive loci lent itself to a particular kind of careless appropriation with concrete effects in the film world.

Directors Masumura Yasuzō and Ōshima Nagisa, for example, were discussing *shutaisei* in articles about feature film. However, this seems strikingly disconnected from what was going on in documentary circles. One of the few links between mainstream fiction filmmaking and nonfiction discourses is Ōshima's "What Is a Shot?" ["Shotto to wa nanika?"] in the November 1960 issue of *Kiroku Eiga*. Ōshima argues for a recognition of authorial subjectivity built into the temporal limits of the shot.<sup>11</sup> Most other writers emphasized montage when thinking about authorial intervention in filmmaking (in fact, *Kiroku Eiga* had published a special issue on editing just months earlier). Matsumoto worked in similar territory, but his activities signaled the direction the documentary discourse would take in the 1960s. In what is probably the most intriguing of his articles, he drew on psychoanalysis and Freud's essay on the uncanny (*unheimlich*). "Record of the

Hidden World” [“Kakusareta sekai no kiroku”] was published in the June 1960 issue of *Kiroku Eiga*. Here Matsumoto attempted to turn the debate surrounding documentary toward the very existence of the *mono* (thing) recorded by the filmmaker:

The existence of the *taishō* is, finally, nothing other than a *heimlich* (intimate) thing. There, the estranged facts of reality are suppressed by the stereotypes of everyday consciousness and become *heimlich* (concealed) things. Rather, precisely because of that, the existence of the *taishō*—what could be thought of as everyday consciousness or as the law of causality—is powerfully negated by the non-everyday, hidden reality that our consciousness still cannot grasp. It is overturned by the world reproduced [*utsusu* in *hiragana*, thus it could mean *remove* or *film* and/or *project*] as something nonexistent in our everyday consciousness. When this happens, our consciousness, touched for the first time by that kind of reality we have never experienced directly, dismantles its balance with the outside world. We take it as strange, or as an *unheimlich* (unearthly) thing.<sup>12</sup>

It was with the untapped energy of the hidden world that we must resist the very structures that hide, that oppress through veiling apparatuses like cinematic realism. Thus while feature filmmakers like Ōshima and Matsumura were concerned with the subjective expression of the artist in fiction forms, as a documentarist Matsumoto naturally wanted to account for the existential force of the real people he was dealing with. While Matsumoto never developed these ideas further in print and no one else picked up where he left off, his 1960 essay held the promise of inserting psychoanalysis into the debate. It is both surprising and unfortunate that this was another route abandoned.

While the specifics of Matsumoto’s essay went undeveloped, we can see how it expressed the transformation that the nonfiction film was undertaking. It signaled a new emphasis on the *taishō* in the debate on *shutaisei*. This part of the equation was largely missing from previous theorization. Its significance lies in the conceptualization of the documentary image as a *document of a relationship* between the filmmaker and the object; this latter term is usually referred to as the “subject of the film” in English-language film criticism. This would have wide-ranging effects on documentary practice in

the following decades. At the same time, Matsumoto's impulse to draw on psychoanalysis would also prove important, if only because the move went nowhere. It meant a discourse on subjectivity that did not take into account the most important and richest body of thought exploring the contours of the human mind. The implications of this omission were multiple and varied. The fact that various writers and artists did not share a common language and conceptual framework meant the *shutaiseiron* would inevitably splinter into many directions at once. From the distance afforded by time we can look back and see a seemingly endless variety of positions, with people deploying words like *shutai* and *taishō* to significantly different ends. Without the substantial buttressing from an external body of theory, there was no need or pressure to engage in pointed arguments to advance a common line of thought. This dearth of structure enabled a popular conception of *shutaiseiron* to circulate in the documentary world—a malleable version that ironically may have been more productive than a “high theory” comprehensible primarily to specialists. Most importantly, we might speculate that the fact that psychoanalysis was so swiftly raised and dropped from the equation would contribute to the *something* that happened in the 1970s. But we would be getting ahead of ourselves.

As with so many endeavors grouped around the pivot of the 1960 Anpo, *Kiroku Eiga* began losing energy in the first few years of the decade. The organization was dismantled in March 1964 but quickly reformed in June as Eizō Geijutsu (Image Arts), a group of some eighty members that suffered some of the same structural problems as the previous organization. An atomization of individual interests interfered with any attempt at sustained debate. The focus widened with the introduction of the Euro-American avant-garde by individuals such as Imura Takahiko, who wrote about what was happening on the New York film scene.<sup>13</sup> In one sense the dissipation of the group had to do with the success of the members. Their issues became normalized, so they no longer felt a need for organization.

Indeed, the production side was getting interesting, thanks in large part to the legacy of Iwanami Productions. In the 1950s the film department quickly became a hotbed of creative filmmaking in the wake of Hani's innovations. Building room to maneuver within the structure of what was essentially a public relations firm, Iwanami allowed its filmmakers the (relative) freedom

to stretch the limits of the public relations (PR) film. Within this atmosphere a group coalesced in 1961 to explore these conventional boundaries of the sponsored documentary. Its membership reads like a roster of the best directors and cinematographers in Japan: Ogawa Shinsuke, Tsuchimoto Noriaki, Kuroki Kazuo, Higashi Yōichi, Tamura Masaki, Suzuki Tatsuo, and others. Calling themselves the Blue Group (Ao no Kai), they regularly performed experiments, read and discussed criticism and theory, and previewed cuts of their film projects for feedback. They would gather at a bar, drink, eat, and hold intense discussions through the night. Their efforts brought the PR film to unusually spectacular levels, deploying interesting montage, narration, and even 35mm cinemascope color photography. Nevertheless their subject matter was restricted to steel factories and construction sites—a limit on their ambitions that would soon intersect with other pressures.

Working within an industrial context forced the filmmakers to aestheticize the human-made, industrial spaces created by the high-growth economy. But riding the coattails of the spectacular rise of economic power proved problematic for this group of filmmakers because of their sympathies with those social elements bringing capital and government under critique. While Iwanami filmmakers made industrial-strength commercials for some of the most corrupt, polluting corporations in Japan, social movements of every sort were taking to the streets. Chafing under the weight of these contradictions, the members of the Blue Group abandoned Iwanami for a politicized, independent documentary.

Kuroki left in 1961; Tsuchimoto, Higashi, and Ogawa went independent in 1964. They helped pioneer a new independent cinema aligned with the New Left, joining others such as Noda, Matsumoto, and Ōshima Nagisa. Compared with where they had learned their craft, the former Blue Group members located their independent practice in the most contrary space imaginable: the student movement. Higashi made films in U.S.-occupied Okinawa. Ogawa shot *Sea of Youth* [*Seishun no umi*] (1966), a documentary about the dilemma of correspondence students and their contentious relationship with the school administration—at the same school where he had made a PR film for Iwanami some years before. He followed this with *Forest of Pressure* [*Assatsu no mori*] (1967), which described the noisy protests at Takaseki University from behind the barricades. That same year Ogawa directed a

documentary about the massive protests that attempted to interrupt Prime Minister Sato's departure for the United States: *Report from Haneda* [*Gennin hōkoku: Haneda tōsō no kiroku*] (1967). Ogawa also produced Tsuchimoto's radical film *Prehistory of the Partisan Party* [*Paruchizan zenshi*] (1969), which detailed the inner workings of the ultraradical student group that had taken over a building at Kyoto University. All of these films rejected the rhetoric of objective reportage used by the television news documentary to veil its alliance with the government and big business. Ogawa and Tsuchimoto's films documented the thrill of independence, of crossing barricade lines and taking sides. This bold move attracted the burgeoning student movement, making the filmmakers cultural heroes on the left. At this stage the radical students formed both their subject matter and their audiences, which made their next move appear quite ambitious. In 1965 Tsuchimoto went to Kyushu and started a series of films on mercury poisoning in the villages ringing Minamata Bay; Ogawa moved his operation to a village outside Tokyo where the government was attempting to evict farmers for a new international airport. The films made in these new sites—Tsuchimoto's Minamata Series and Ogawa's Sanrizuka Series—remain monuments of postwar Japanese cinema.

Their filmmaking was swept up in larger political movements, electrifying audiences and inspiring considerable debate on the role of cinema in society. The films were produced through a combination of rental fees, donations, and loans from labor unions and individuals. Once completed, they were shown across Japan in both urban and rural areas, in labor union meetings, citizen movements, independent theaters, universities, and even a surprising number of high schools. The filmmakers themselves would often travel across the countryside, film under arm, and arrange screenings anywhere they could. For obvious reasons the films were never shown in regular movie theaters or on broadcast television.

Of the two, the Sanrizuka Series is the more innovative and theoretically interesting, despite the fact that Tsuchimoto was and remains the intellectual leader of Japanese documentary. However, Ogawa's films, as well as the way he produced and exhibited them, are more relevant to our concerns. His constant innovation points to new modes of nonfiction filmmaking, and this involved nothing less than carving out local, public spaces that resonated

with the struggles and latent contradictions of other localities, or of the nation itself. For example, villagers in *any* part of Japan easily could identify with films about the farmers' face-off with the central government. Later Ogawa would attempt to create a nationwide network of offices that would exhibit independent documentaries while producing and sharing their own films on local problems. While these are later developments, key features of Ogawa's creative manipulation of the nonfiction image are evident early.

The beginning of *Report from Haneda* is instructive. In the course of violent street riots, one student was killed by a blow to the head. As officials shirked responsibility, Ogawa used the documentary to investigate *precisely what went on*. This meant more than a reiteration of the "facts" or the careful reconstruction of events, a strategy typical of the television documentary. Rather, the filmmakers mix painstaking detail with evocative imagery of past events, shifting between the mundane, the beautiful, and the dreadful. Near the beginning we are thrown into the midst of the riots between students and police by cameraman Ōtsu Kōshirō (who would move on to become the primary cinematographer for Tsuchimoto's films). Refusing to maintain the safe distance of a typical news cameraman, Ōtsu simply plunges into a melee on the street. Ogawa suddenly freezes the image, pauses, then moves the film a few frames, pauses, moves again, returns to full motion, then freezes again. Their experimentation turns the street fight into a ballet of violence and dynamic movement. Bodies—only half of which are in riot gear—flow in every direction, limbs askew, faces frightened, batons swinging, and the scene ends on an extreme close-up of a human skull, complete with brain, sitting on a table. From this shocking segue a doctor explains, in excruciating detail, the physiology of a blow from a police baton. Head in hand, he describes exactly how that young student perished. This shifting attention to surface, process, and detail may well embody the qualities Matsumoto called for in evoking the *unheimlich* lurking beneath the sure surfaces of documentary realism (indeed, their publicity flyers for the film feature a close-up of the dead student's face, eyes ever so slightly open). The analytical attention to procedure and development parodies the superficial analysis of television news, while the experimentation with documentary style asserts the subjectivity of the filmmakers in the tissue of the image and sound. This was the attitude that Ogawa brought to his Sanrizuka films, although



with a difference from his New Left colleagues that only gradually became apparent.

After the release of *Report from Haneda*, Ogawa's group took the name Ogawa Productions and could finally be described as a collective. The crew had started to live together part time and work together, and they slowly began extending their collaboration to the people being filmed as well. In 1968 they moved to the construction site of the airport, taking over a house in Sanrizuka and turning it into their home base. In all they produced seven films over nine years, a total of twelve and a half hours of film that views the power of the state through farmers' eyes. The filmmakers lived with the farmers and made films while fighting for their cause. They were not alone. Perceived as one more abusive government project, this time with connections to the war in Vietnam, the airport plan attracted the attention of the student movement and other political groups committed to environmental and social causes. The construction site became a war zone with the addition of these groups, and this figured into how Ogawa Pro approached their subject matter. The camera crews modified their equipment to withstand abuse, and they themselves wore helmets and protective gear. Judging from the hand-to-hand combat shown in the films, they needed such precautions. At one point cameraman Ōtsu Kōshirō and Matsumoto Takeaki were even arrested, an incident caught on film in *Summer in Sanrizuka* [*Nihon kaihō sensei: Sanrizuka no natsu*] (1968).

Ogawa Pro's first films reflected the willingness of the filmmakers to sacrifice body and freedom. The fights over fallow fields were massive and violent. The police outnumbered the farmers and put up an intimidating front in their riot gear and helicopters. The collective shot the first film from April to July 1968 as survey teams investigated the lands protected by riot police. In this initial stage the farmers watched the soil of their livelihood mapped out as a prelude to being obliterated. For the first time they found themselves confronting raw state power—a police force fully armed—while the farmers themselves had little more than rocks and sticks. By this time the students had arrived in Sanrizuka with various factions of the student movement who perceived the battleground of rice paddies and fallow fields as a new, pure, political landscape on which to confront the state. *Summer in Sanrizuka* is rough in both photography and editing

and focuses on the confrontations between airport employees, their police escorts, and protesters. Ogawa called it an “action film” along the lines of a John Ford western, with the epic proportions of a violent confrontation between representatives of national power and local residents fighting for their ancestral lands—but with the documentary difference.

In July and October 1970 Ogawa Pro released two more films from Sanrizuka. *Winter in Sanrizuka* [*Nihon kaihō sensen: Sanrizuka*] and *The Three-Day War in Narita* [*Sanrizuka: Daisanji kyōsei sokuryō soshi tōsō*] have significant similarities to and differences from the collective’s earlier films. Both films have the spectacle of peasants battling the repressive apparatuses of the state, as seen in the first film of the series. However, these scenes of violence begin to alternate with sequences in which the farmers reflect upon their situation. *Winter in Sanrizuka* opens with the image of farmers stubbornly sitting in front of a massive bulldozer. Shot over a six-month period after the airport authorities began breaking ground, it shows the growing fear of the farmers as their fields come under attack. During the skirmishes many farmers are arrested. At the same time the filmmakers also stop to listen to and record the farmers’ own thoughts about what they were experiencing. Put simply, the relationship between filmmaker and *taishō* was undergoing a subtle but deep transformation. *The Three-Day War in Narita* uses a similar structure, the difference being that it was a creditless, agitprop cinetract shot over the course of three days. As the forced survey pushed into its final phase, the farmers and students undertook a massive attempt to obstruct its progress. This film records those days of combat between twenty-five hundred protesters and sixty-five hundred riot police. School had even been let out so that children could participate. Nevertheless, as cameraman Tamura Masaki often recalls, Ogawa began sending the crews out with instructions to shoot butterflies in long, thirty-second takes in the midst of a massive social struggle. Such unusual instructions indicate the new path Ogawa Pro was embarking on.

Their next effort, *Sanrizuka: Peasants of the Second Fortress* [*Sanrizuka: Dai ni toride no hitobito*] (1971), marks a turning point hinted at in the previous year’s films—one significant for both Ogawa Pro and Japanese documentary film. The determination displayed by both sides was escalating the struggle into civil-war-like proportions. The farmers and their entire families built

fortresses that they defended with bamboo spears.<sup>14</sup> Students pitched Molotov cocktails from behind the walls. Out in the fields various groups—from the student-led Zengakuren to housewives' associations—lined up and battled police. The violence the filmmakers captured was shocking. Of course by now the fights were regularly captured by television news crews, but these filmmakers kept their distance and remained behind the police lines in every sense. Ogawa's crews, now led by former Blue Group cinematographer Tamura Masaki, traversed the barricades freely and literally dove into the clashes. The spectacle had grown to epic scale, a standoff between a reported twenty thousand protesters facing thirty thousand police. Some of the scenes are heart wrenching; women confront a long wall of riot police, grab their shields, and scream, "Can't you see you're killing us? What would your mothers think?!?" When police storm the fortresses, they beat people and rip away mothers and children who have chained themselves to their trees.

Amid this cinematic spectacle, familiar from previous films but now considerably larger and more violent, something very different is going on. In *Peasants of the Second Fortress* there are occasional moments when the action of the film grinds to a halt and people simply talk. While the students were once Ogawa's focus, they now haunt the background of the film. They appear only occasionally to clash with mobs of riot police. In their stead the farmers take center stage, and in the most awkward style. Their speech is halting, filled with pauses and repetition. Where the typical filmmaker would search out the most articulate conversations and speakers (usually male leaders) and give them voice, Ogawa photographed unexceptional discussions and strategy sessions in long takes. The breaks, silences, sidetracks, and repetitions were left untouched by editing. As the farmers' comprehension of their own situation deepened, so did Ogawa Pro's understanding of the farmers themselves. This is particularly evident in one scene shot under the earth. One of the strategies of the farmers was to burrow underground—under *their ground*—and build catacombs of basements under their fortresses. Groups would rotate duty, living in the tunnels to make eviction and construction impossible. When the Ogawa Pro cameras tour the tunnels, their guide stops at a small hole designed for ventilation. After briefly describing how it works, the farmer holds a candle up to the hole: "See, when I put the

flame near the hole, the fresh air nearly blows it out.” He repeats this action for several minutes. The point is clear the first time, after which the typical documentarist would cut to the next scene; but this ventilation hole is important to the farmers. It allows them to survive under the earth, and Ogawa refuses to interrupt the demonstration. This is paradigmatic of a new attitude toward documentary forming within Ogawa Pro. It becomes the predominant stance in the rest of their work.

Moreover, this approach became generalized throughout the discourse on documentary, in part because Ogawa Pro was closely watched by everyone interested in the relationship between film and politics. For example, in 1969 a group of filmmakers including Oshima, Wakamatsu, Matsumoto, and Adachi Masao helped bring back *Eiga Hihyō*, once an important forum for film theory in the era surrounding the previous Anpo. The writers of the new *Eiga Hihyō* attempted to theorize the contours of a “movement cinema” (*undō no eiga*). To this end they resurrected the *shutaiseiron*, although with apparently little regard for the actual genealogy of the term. (Indeed, they also had little sense of their own history, since the theorists of the Proletarian film movement [Prokino] laid the groundwork for a movement cinema in the early 1930s but are not mentioned.) For example, in a typical debate from 1970 the writers discuss the complex relationship between the “conscious subject,” “image,” and “conditions.” The image came to be perceived as a record stamped by the assertive hand of the filmmaker—that conscious, active subject—in the midst of the volatile conditions of the world. This world hid enemies and was structured by powerful institutions handed down from the past. As the new *Eiga Hihyō* group saw it, the quality of that relationship had implications for a politicized aesthetics. In the next few years the writing on Ogawa Pro and Tsuchimoto developed such ideas, focusing on the nature of *shutai/taishō* relations. It must be said that while we can certainly find continuity with earlier discourses on nonfiction filmmaking, the new discussions about *shutaisei* have none of the rigor or intertwining engagement typical of other moments in film theory. They reintroduce a protean *shutaiseiron*, the very vagueness of which may have made it more aesthetically productive in actual practice. For example, we sense only distant echoes of Matsumoto’s *Eizō no Hakken* when Ōshima Nagisa writes that Ogawa’s method “returns to the original intention of documentary, realizing

the principle of documentary. What are the principles and original intention of documentary? First it is a love toward the object documented, a strong admiration and attachment, and it is carrying this first principle over a long period of time. Nearly all the films considered masterpieces fulfill these two conditions.”<sup>15</sup>

By the early 1970s it was hard not to describe the films of Ogawa and Tsuchimoto, indeed of most independent documentary filmmakers as well, in these rather vague terms. In 1973 these tendencies arrived at their natural conclusion with Ogawa’s *Heta Village* [*Heta Buraku*]. Now the protests had faded into the film’s background, and the world of the villagers became the exclusive focus. In incredibly long takes the peasants discuss their everyday life and the ancient history of the village. In terms of style *Heta Village* is the inverse of the rough, action-packed *Summer in Narita*. The airport struggle remains, but our access to it is mediated entirely by its traces on village life and the villagers’ consciousness. Now the axis of the film is situated completely, deeply within the world of the villagers. The elders are disturbed when their communal graveyard falls into the hands of the airport authorities; the young people share their fear of arrest after three policemen are killed. All of this is shown in a series of calm, lengthy sequence shots. This approach starts from the position of the filmed “object” and ends there, too. It is described variously as “letting the *taishō* enter the *shutai*,” “going with the *taishō*,” “betting on” or “depending on the *taishō*,” or becoming “wrapped up in the *taishō*.” Suzuki Shirōyasu, who will soon figure prominently in this developing story, described this approach in the following manner:

I think that “symbiosis” (*kyōseiikan*), as a goal or aim for the documentary, first came into parlance with Tsuchimoto. . . . The filmmaker tries to take in and accept all the troubles, the conflicts, really the whole existence of the object being filmed. That’s fundamentally different from the Western style of filmmaking. In the West, the object is never anything more than an element of the work, a particular work that is being made by a given filmmaker for him- or herself. I think you can also see the effects of the Japanese attempts at a “symbiotic relationship” in the way the objects of the film are treated, or in the way the director refers to them. For example, Tsuchimoto doesn’t call those suffering from Minamata disease simply

*kanja* (victim), but he adds the polite suffix *-san*: *Kanja-san* (victim-*san*). Ogawa refers to the farmers in his films with the honorific expression “*nōmin no katagata*.” They elevate the object of the film to their own level, or are treating the relationship with their objects and the objects themselves with a degree of respect.<sup>16</sup>

By way of contrast, Western theory since the poststructuralist intervention has theorized the documentary in terms of subject and representation, putting the referent (*taishō*) in brackets and only reticently discussing it. This is to say, Western documentary film theory focuses on the relationship of signified and signifier raked by the subjectivities of producer and spectators. Because these two groups approach the referent only through this signification system, the theory closes off extensive discussion of the profilmic world. The referent is used primarily to set the documentary apart from fiction film, as well as to lend documentary theory a remarkable ethical resonance. The referent reminds us that, as Bill Nichols puts it, “history hurts.” Less academically inclined discussions of documentary practice in the West are just as revealing in their own way. As noted above, we generally refer to the *taishō* as *subject*, strongly implying a desire to see the filmed human beings as acting and not acted upon, as free subjects rather than the objects they are in the context of cinematic representation. This is an artifact of earlier discourses of objectivity, forms of documentary realism that discount the subjective, creative force of the filmmaker.

Japanese theoretical and popular discourses do not suffer from this linguistic confusion between subject and object. In post-1960 film theory and filmmaking it is precisely the relationship between the subject and the referent that produces the sign. Where the American filmmaker creates a sign from a referent in the world, the Japanese filmmaker’s intimate interaction with the referent leaves a signifying trace we call a documentary film. It is a subtle but decisive difference in emphasis that one can find in virtually every discussion of nonfiction film in Japan, a difference one would have difficulty articulating with the critical tools of contemporary documentary theory outside Japan.<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, it is significant that this orientation to production also informs Japanese filmmakers’ often remarkable approaches to distribution

and exhibition. Tsuchimoto and Ogawa worked to elevate local struggles onto the national public stage. At the same time they attempted to negotiate a borderline between public and private spheres, territory generally mapped out by the state and by capital on their own terms. In the high-growth economy after the Occupation, public space increasingly became privatized and nationalized. In the film industry a handful of heavily capitalized studios controlled “mainstream” spaces for cinema production and exhibition. Thus mainstream theaters—those deceptive places that pose as public spaces—would not touch the work of dissident filmmakers. As one kind of media the movie theater could provide an arena for shaking the hegemony of the *keiretsu* system, as the short-lived New Wave attempted to do at Shochiku Studios. Significantly, these feature filmmakers went independent; many also made documentaries. Cultural critic Ikui Eikō points out that it is more appropriate to think of the cinema underground of the 1960s and early 1970s as functioning well above ground. This is a measure of their success in carving out a space for public discourse unmediated by state and capital—a place like a park, where strangers could meet and shake up one another’s worlds. In the case of these filmmakers this public exchange occurred within a dynamic between the local, regional, and national levels.

Since we usually consider this filmmaking in the context of a national cinema, our sense of the meanings of these films is easily homogenized into the space of the nation-state. However, in some cases the most politically effective interaction was local. We can look to Tsuchimoto as a compelling example. While his films may have excited the national environmental movement and anyone suspicious of the collusion between government and business, back on the coast surrounding Minamata, Tsuchimoto’s films informed the families of fishermen of the mercury lacing their fish. In the face of government inaction and the chemical industry’s denials, Tsuchimoto was saving the lives of people who did not know their food supply was dangerously polluted. This is not an exaggeration; the filmmakers were taking their films from village to village, informing the residents of the perils of eating their own catch.

Ogawa Pro was far more aggressive at constituting an alternative sphere for public discourse. Beginning with their independence from Iwanami they were forced to distribute their films alone. Their own records, which

include distribution schedules and reports filled out at the screenings, reveal that in the late 1960s and early 1970s their films were shown virtually every day of the week somewhere in Japan. When a film was new, the members themselves would organize screenings by traveling across the countryside with their prints and posters. Ogawa would give them only enough money to go to a region, where they would move from one village or town to another, showing the films wherever they could. When people found out they were from Ogawa Pro, they were always offered somewhere to stay for free in village halls or dorm rooms.

Most of the screenings, however, were organized at the local level. Rental prints went to unions, universities, and citizens' movements of every kind. A surprising number of the screenings were organized by high school students and teachers. At each screening the organizers would do their best to collect donations to send back to Ogawa Pro with the rental receipts and profits from selling posters and programs. These showings were often accompanied by speeches, songs, and cat calls when police came on-screen. The members also began to transform the spaces where they showed their films, staging photo and art exhibitions in the lobbies. They displayed a famous photographer's images of Sanrizuka or student art projects about the airport struggles, the equipment the film was shot with, or even a portrait of every villager (mixed in with the film collective). They decked the entranceways with bamboo and agitprop banners, and there were always discussions after the films. Eventually they codified their network into branch offices in Tohoku, Hokkaido, Kansai, and Kyushu. While acting as distribution hubs for the Sanrizuka films, the branches were to engage local issues through production of their own documentaries. The public envisioned by Ogawa Pro was a collection of localities connected by cinema, not a homogenized national space based on a collective defense, an imperial symbol system, or a corporate network of production and consumption.

But something happened. . . .

### **"Something Happened"**

In the early 1970s documentary was peaking. The National Film Center held major retrospectives of pre- and postwar documentary in 1973 and



1974. The leaders of documentary filmmaking were producing the finest films of their careers. Ogawa Pro released *Heta Village* in 1973. Tsuchimoto made two master works in the same year; *Shiranui Sea* [*Shiranuikai*] (1975) was probably his best film. His interview techniques with the victims of Minamata disease were by this time refined into a powerful tool. He patiently listened to them talk about their joys and anxieties, often with the sea—that source of life and harbinger of death—as sparkling backdrop. He revisited familiar personalities from previous films in the series and traveled to far-off islands where new victims are still being discovered. *Shiranui Sea* was Tsuchimoto's last attempt at a comprehensive survey of the Minamata situation. That same year Tsuchimoto produced his astounding medical film, *Minamata Disease: A Trilogy*. Harking back to his Iwanami days, he borrowed the conventions of the science film, politicizing it over a sprawling but meticulous three hours of cinema. The film is structured in three parts: Progress of Research, Pathology and Symptoms, and Clinical Field Studies. Tsuchimoto painstakingly laid out the science of the disease, addressing medical practitioners and research scientists more than the general public. It was an extraordinary attempt to inventory the physiology of the disease and its human toll at a time when Kyushu scientists were still trying to figure it out, and while Tokyo scientists, Chisso Corporation, and the government insisted that the claims about chemical poisoning were exaggerated.

As Tsuchimoto and Ogawa were approaching the pinnacles of their careers, quite a few other filmmakers were also producing fine films: Yamatani Tetsuo's *Living: Twenty-five Years after the Mass Suicide on Tokashiki Island, Okinawa* [*Ikiru: Okinawa Tokashikijima shūdan jiketsu kara nijūgonen*] (1971) and *Miyako* (1974); Hara Masato's *First Emperor* [*Hatsukuni Shirasumera no Mikoto*] (1973); the NDU collective's *Onikko: A Record of the Struggle of Youth Laborers* [*Onikko: Tatakau seinenrōdōsha no kiroku*] (1970) and *Motoshinkakurannu* (1971); Jōnouchi Motoharu's *Going Down into Shinjuku Station* [*Chika ni oriru Shinjuku Suteshon*] (1974); Yamamura Nobuki's *Tokyo Chrome Desert* [*Tokyo kuromu sabaku*] (1978); and Haneda Sumiko's *My View of the Cherry Tree with Grey Blossoms* [*Usuzumi no sakura*] (1978).

It is, however, in retrospect that we see these filmmakers peaking because we know what followed. After the efflorescence of the early 1970s, the conditions of the documentary slumped, or at least the conditions the filmmakers

aspired to were slipping into the impossible. In the next few years most of these filmmakers migrated to television and PR film or simply took up unrelated careers. Others settled into academia. Higashi and Kuroki basically became feature film directors, apparently giving up on documentary, even though they continue to appear in public forums on the subject. The filmmakers who attempted to remain independent struggled and quickly lost their artistic and political edge, while their audiences disappeared. While Tsuchimoto moved to smaller, less ambitious projects, he always engaged politically controversial subjects, such as Hiroshima, Afghanistan, and a few other Minamata-related topics; but none of these films are as compelling or innovative as his previous work. Ogawa Pro began transforming during the production of *Heta Village*. In 1972 the Tohoku branch dissolved; then in rapid order the Hokkaido and Kansai branches followed suit. The Kyushu branch survived until 1975, but by then Ogawa Pro had left Sanrizuka. The distribution of *Heta Village* had been the most creative to that point, with projection teams, tickets made of branded wood, decorated theaters, lobby exhibitions, and the like. Nevertheless, the collective found it difficult to attract audiences. The times were clearly changing. The airport was nearing completion, and the student movement was in disarray. In northern Japan, however, a local culture movement came out in droves for the film and then issued an invitation. If the collective moved to Yamagata, they could borrow a house and some land to make rice—and films. The members accepted, but they produced only two major films in the next fifteen years. Granted they were spectacularly good films, but by the time of Ogawa's death in 1992 the Ogawa Pro collective had dwindled to a handful of people (the only longtime members were producer Fuseya Hiroo; Ogawa's wife, Shiraishi Yōko; and Iizuka Toshio).

Amid the apparent dissolution of the support structures of the documentary world, two figures arrived on the scene to signal what would become a new direction, a path Japanese documentary has followed to the present day. Hara Kazuo and Suzuki Shirōyasu are the pioneers of what has come to be called private film (*puraibeto firumu*) in Japan, a new production mode based on the solitary work of a singular filmmaking subject. In this thoroughly artisanal mode, the lone filmmaker oversees the initial conceptualization, the photography, the editing, and even the distribution of his or her work.

It is significant that the term *private film*—used as it is to signify a historical difference—implicitly posits the work of Ogawa and Tsuchimoto as public film. And once again the *shutai/taishō* dyad maps this transformation.

Hara burst onto the documentary scene in 1974 with *Extreme Private Eros: Love Song 1974* [*Kyokushiteki erosu: Renka 1974*] (1974). The film lays the filmmaker's personal relationships out for the world to see. Having left his rather abusive wife (Takeda Miyuki) and taken up with a new woman (Kobayashi Sachiko, his present wife and producer), Hara decides to make a film to, as he explains in the opening voice-over, come to terms with his ex. With Kobayashi recording the sound, they follow his former wife around the country. Hara bares all: he includes the verbal abuse he takes from Takeda (some of it well deserved), he runs his camera while making love with her, and he films her giving birth on the kitchen floor. This indulgence in the personal, this extremely public exposure of the private, proved earth shaking in the context of a documentary world whose values were formed by films like *Heta Village* and the Minamata Series.

Hara's emergence was followed by the arrival of Suzuki, an NHK television cameraman and prominent poet. Considering this combination of vocations it should not be surprising that the contradictions between producing corporate and personal representations proved stifling. Inspired by Jonas Mekas, Suzuki began producing diary films.<sup>18</sup> His *Impressions of a Sunset* [*Nichibotsu no inshō*] (1974) and the 320-minute *Harvesting Shadows of Grass* [*Kusa no kage o karu*] (1977) recorded the mundane events of daily life, the details of the physical spaces he moved through, and his fetishistic fascination with the camera.

Thus the early to mid-1970s seem to constitute a break, with new filmmakers rejecting the dominant conception of documentary practice in which films were produced within organizations of people, whether collectives, companies, political parties, or the military. However, to perceive this shift only as a break would conceal important continuities that can help us answer the question, "What happened?" Hara and Suzuki are the most important figures in this narrative for more than their timing. Both are simultaneously fascinated and repulsed by the collective approach to filmmaking represented by Ogawa and Tsuchimoto, yet they still locate themselves in that territory through their films, writings, lectures, and interviews. Indeed, they

can hardly avoid this since they both have a strong historical consciousness, a sense of where they have come from or an identification with a long-running documentary heritage within the context of their own national cinema. Hara had a close but ambivalent relationship with Ogawa Pro. Before making *Extreme Private Eros* he flirted with the idea of joining the collective in Sanrizuka. He often tells a story about his decision to join the collective: he went to the Tokyo office intending to start work, but after he arrived, he stood in the entranceway watching the buzz of activity inside and then quietly left. Although that front door turned out to be a barrier, Hara constantly uses the older filmmakers as a filter through which to understand his own work. Suzuki, for his part, has always haunted the fringes of the collectives. In his 1980 film *15 Days [Jūninichikan]* he spends fifteen evenings in a largely empty room talking to the camera about whatever comes to mind; he constantly wonders about the legitimacy of locking himself away like this and waits for transformation, for change, for *something to happen*. Out of the blue, a bale of rice arrives from Ogawa Pro, a gift of the collective's recent harvest in Yamagata. More than anything, he has written extensively and quite provocatively on both eras of documentary in essays that have been collected in two books.

Moreover, both Hara and Suzuki have continued to place their work within the discourse of *shutaisei*. We have already seen signs of this in a quote from Suzuki, but it is easy to find Hara speaking the same language. For example, in an interview with Laura Marks at the Flaherty Seminar, Hara described his approach in familiar terms that are difficult to gauge without contextualization in the Japanese postwar discourse on nonfiction filmmaking: "As a filmmaker I try to understand what I want to do, not so much by *confronting* my object, but by trying to become 'empty inside myself' and letting my object enter me. The object becomes my opponent and I become the receiver of the opponent's action and development."<sup>19</sup>

Readers unfamiliar with the previous discourses on subjectivity in documentary will key in on words like *confronting* and *opponent* (or possibly make comparisons to a Zen-like "emptying of the self"). However, Hara is actually staking out territory in relation to and within the theoretical heritage that has been handed down to him. This complex relationship to the past is also what sets Hara and Suzuki apart from the general turn to the individual that they helped create. If we use the *shutai/taishō* pair to sketch the shape

of this shift, we could say that if the previous generation of documentarists strove to “go with” or “sympathize with” the *taishō*, the new generation of documentarists folded the *taishō* into the *shutai*. This is to say, the *shutai became the taishō*. The subject matter now centers on the self or the family and often with very personal concerns and obsessions. More often than not the private film lacks any significant engagement with others outside the family and reveals a reticence to set out into the public world like the previous generation. Many of these young filmmakers, particularly those emerging in the 1990s, were students of Hara and Suzuki. Thus while the two are often seen as epitomizing the private film, it is far better to see them as transitional figures with feet in both camps.

Interestingly enough, this parallels developments in documentary in much of the world, where it combines a theory and practice that interrogate the problem of subjectivity and representation through a kind of private film and video. However, it would be a mistake to conflate the Japanese and Euro-American approaches, just as the connections between, say, Ogawa Pro and the American Newsreel collectives are tenuous at best.<sup>20</sup> The dangers of conflation are strikingly clear by comparison of the work itself. The current Euro-American documentary in particular is smart, sophisticated, and theoretically informed. It plays on the border between traditional notions of the avant-garde and documentary in ways that Matsumoto called for forty years ago in an entirely different context. Significantly, the conception of subjectivity in these films and tapes is inseparable from larger social and political problems, so that any close examination of the self raises issues as diverse as gender, colonialism, race, nationalism, and modernity. The Japanese counterpart of the 1990s is simplistic in comparison.

At their best these Japanese documentarists who mine the self for subject matter can create moving portraits of emotional life. Kawase Naomi's *Embracing* [*Nitsutsumarete*] (1992) is an 8-mm record of her traumatic search for a father who abandoned her; it is a beautifully crafted film that ends on a deeply moving note when she finally decides to phone her father. But most of these films and videos disappoint. On the opposite end of the spectrum of quality are the so-called self-nudes, which are produced exclusively by young women who turn the camera on their own bodies. Examples include Kamioka Fumie's *Sunday Evening* [*Nichiyōbi no yūgata*] (1992); Wada

Junko's *Claustromania* [*Heisho shikoshō*] (1993) and *Peach Baby Oil* [*Momoiro no bebi oiru*] (1995); and Utagawa Keiko's *Water in My Ears* [*Mimi no naka no mizu*] (1993). This has been done in Western video art, but the Japanese variety has little of the self-conscious inquiry into problems of representation as does, for example, early video art such as *Birthday Suit: Complete with Scars and Defects* (1975).

Obitani Yuri's *Hair Opera* [*Mōhatsu kageki*] (1992) is typical and among the most interesting films from this 1990s group. It follows the raucous relationship between the filmmaker and an artist whose current exhibit is a massive collection of pubic hair from all the men (and boys) she has slept with. The film is very much about social disconnection, perhaps unwittingly so, and personal obsession. The artist collects men; the filmmaker in turn attempts to collect the artist on celluloid, framing her in his own private world and fantasies. It is a very funny piece, but Obitani seems to be unaware of, or unable to deal with, any issues of gender; at least, the questions the film raises are not his own, an unfortunate tendency of the private film. The fact that Obitani's films—like a surprising number of these works—are fake documentaries is a significant index of his ambivalence about representing the public world and its inhabitants. Reality is where it hurts, and the filmmaker is as vulnerable as his or her object. It is far safer to stay home and shoot documentaries cut to the measure of the filmmaker's private desires. The difference between Ogawa joining the Sanrizuka farmers and filming one's own family is vast.

Indeed, there is something ironic about the moniker private film, considering that even such a film is, by design, meant for public viewing. Probably anything named private implies a specularization of itself, as in Hara's *Extreme Private Eros*. However, quite unlike Hara, what we have here is a retreat from the world, leaving the moving image a singular conduit connecting the private self with a vague, inscrutable public. In the 1990s the vector originally taken by Hara's and Suzuki's rejection of collective film practice intersected with the culture of the *otaku*. The stereotypical image of this 1990s icon is the dysfunctional cyborg youth, safely ensconced in the wired bedroom where all social communication becomes mediated through electronic gear such as fax machines, computers, and phone networks. This turn inward is topologically equivalent to the artists of the private film who

too often cut themselves off from social connection and interaction, that referential stuff of the documentary form. The *shutaiseiron* Matsumoto initiated cannot hope to account for the subjectivity of an *otaku*, a measure of the historical specificity of this theory and perhaps its philosophical poverty.

Onstage at the Yamagata Film Festival, Ogawa Pro's Iizuka Toshio directed this very critique at Kawase Naomi, the de facto representative of the private film. She insisted vigorously that her films *did* have the *shakaisei* (sociality) Iizuka felt was missing. I have suggested this is probably the case; however, Iizuka does have a point. Private films are often creative works, but they nearly always disappoint in terms of conceptualization. The artists seem unable to articulate what they are doing or to comprehend the political and social implications of their work in representing the world. They present a politics of public exposure strikingly naive about the relationship between subjectivity and representation; theirs is a politics devoid of politics. Like Hara, they are standing at the front door of the public world with countless people and issues to engage; unlike Hara, who chooses to move through that public space as an individual, the private filmmakers only retreat to the family rooms and bedrooms.

So what *did* happen to documentary representations of the world in the mid-1970s?

## What Happened

Since the 1970s there has been no shortage of brilliant films available for inspiration. The best work from around the world is regularly shown at forums such as Image Forum, Scan Gallery, and various museums, festivals, and minitheaters across Japan. The generation that seemed to fall apart in the early 1970s managed the occasional film.<sup>21</sup> In fact, the latter work of Ogawa Pro and Hara is particularly impressive. So why the sense of devolution? Why the need to “grope” at Yamagata near the end of the 1990s? Perhaps it is nothing more than a premature millennialism. In any case, panel members could not produce an adequate answer to Yamane's query, “What happened?”

So I would like to hazard a guess . . . or two. First, of course, the New Left energy and its student movement dissolved. Just as clear for the case of

Ogawa Pro is the completion of Narita Airport.<sup>22</sup> Since these citizen and student movements constituted both the audience and the source for production monies for the movement filmmakers, reliable new venues and fund-raising sources have yet to emerge in the wake of the 1970s. We could also chalk up the current situation to the hyperconsumerism of late capitalism, which does after all encourage self-absorption and retreat from the social imperatives of the 1950s to 1970s. However, do we not also find some form of that capitalism and consumerism in, for example, the United States? Perhaps it is an even more intense variety than Japan's in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and other centers of the U.S. personal documentary. Clearly the most succinct response to Yamane is, "It's overdetermined." However, I would like to suggest a less obvious explanation for what happened.

As we have seen, there has historically been a productive relationship between film criticism, theory, and practice, a relation traceable back to the 1910s. However, this relationship also seemed to unravel at the same time that documentary declined. Comparison to the U.S. situation is instructive. At the same time the independent film world in Japan experienced its shift, film theory and criticism in the West took a turn that would ultimately provide the theoretical ground for the Western work about subjectivity and identity politics. This is the innovation brought by feminist theory. In the post-1968 scene, as semiotic and Marxist applications of nonfilmic theoretical discourse began to play out, feminism provided the field for the poststructuralist synthesis of thinkers as diverse as Marx, Freud, Jacques Lacan, Ferdinand Saussure, Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault. These developments coincided with our problematic moment in Japan. In 1972, the year Ogawa Pro's branch offices started closing, *Women and Film* began publishing and major women's film festivals were held in New York and Edinburgh. Laura Mulvey presented "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" in 1973, the year *Heta Village* was released, publishing it the year of *Shiranui Sea* (1975). Audiences were watching *Impressions of a Sunset* when the first issue of *Camera Obscura* came out in 1976. This feminist synthesis of poststructuralist theory has been remarkably productive for film theory and constitutes a complex, long-running debate continuing into the present. More recent inquiries into identity politics, in both print and moving image, owe much to feminism if only because it enabled a shift from discussions



about positive images/negative images to questions about the apparatus of representation itself.

In Japan, however, while Japanese feminism proved a potent agent for social reform and protest on many fronts, the discussions occurring in the film world did not respond to the feminist challenge. Although Japanese filmmakers and theorists paid close attention to Jean-Luc Godard's Dziga Vertov Group and the Third Cinema theories from Latin America of the same era, Mulvey's article was not translated until 1997, and then by a scholar trained at a U.S. film school. Japanese film semiotics was generally emptied of politics and never served as the petri dish for the cross-fertilization of diverse theories or for keeping theory socially and politically engaged. Considering this, it should come as no surprise that a self-consciously feminist film and videomaker such as Idemitsu Mako always faced severe criticism in her struggle for legitimacy. Or that the women in the Ogawa Pro collective were restricted to "supporting roles" like shopping and doing housework. Or that Kawase is virtually the only aspiring young female director to work in 35mm. Many of the most powerful women in the Japanese film world are in programming and distribution of primarily independent work (Nakano Rie of Pandora, Kamiyama Katsue of Image Forum, Kitano Etsuko of the National Film Center, and Ono Seiko and Fujioka Asako of the Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival).

The point of this comparison has not been to imperiously suggest that feminism was a necessary or natural—and thus missing—stage in the development of Japanese film (although the film world's imperviousness to it has had material implications for women interested in careers in film). Rather, this comparison reveals a deep, dogged authoritarianism, patriarchal in inclination, that carried over from the Old to the New Left. Reflecting on his generation's deep antagonism for the older independent filmmakers, Ogawa's cameraman Tamura Masaki suggests, "You don't attack someone so harshly unless you are very close. Why else would you care? How else would you establish your difference?" In retrospect it would appear that the critics of the Old Left, though honestly attempting to renovate the relationship between art and politics, never substantially rethought social politics. Indeed, if we look at the way Ogawa Productions actually functioned, it was obviously an autarchy. For all the rhetoric about collective production, there



**Figure 1** Kawada Yumiko, a female Ogawa Pro member, in the kitchen. Courtesy Committee for Symbiosis between the Local Community and Narita Airport

was a crystal-clear hierarchy with Ogawa Shinsuke in the unquestioned seat of power. Those who could not keep up with the debate were swiftly purged. This structure may also be seen as an analog of the nation-state itself. The authoritarianism that all these factors point to may have left Japanese critical theory and documentary filmmaking of the early 1970s an inflexible discourse incapable of meeting the challenges of a social world undergoing massive change.

Furthermore, this authoritarianism used its own historical prestige to disallow other conceptualizations and theorizations of power and politics. The legacy of the movement politics generation hamstrings both itself and the artists following in its wake. For example, one of the most interesting documentaries at the end of the twentieth century was Matsue Tetsuaki's private film *Annyong-Kimchi*, which premiered at the 1999 Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival. It is, not surprisingly, about his own family. However, what sets this apart from other private productions is the fact that



**Figure 2** Men outside in armor: (left to right) cameraman Tamura Masaki, Shimizu Yoshio, director Ogawa Shinsuke, and Fukuda Katsuhiko. Courtesy Committee for Symbiosis between the Local Community and Narita Airport

Matsue films from the point of view of a third-generation Korean living in Japan, and he therefore has a relationship to Korea very different from that of either his parents or his grandfather. The energy driving this charming film's production is Matsue's feeling of guilt for not being a good grandson to his first-generation grandfather. Along the way he maps out the identities of the different generations vis-à-vis "home": one aunt living in the United States has left both Korea and Japan behind, another aunt seems split between Korea and Japan, his grandmother thoroughly identifies with Korea, and he and his sister basically consider themselves Japanese.<sup>23</sup> But what of his grandfather? He remains a cipher that pushes the film along because he seemed to suppress his Korean heritage all the way to the grave (which has the Matsue name on it). In the course of filmmaking, Matsue nervously decides to reveal his racial difference to his best friends, who do not know

his real roots, and shoot the scene with a hidden camera. They respond, “Yeah, so what?” Of course Matsue’s film is profoundly political, ranging deftly across subjects such as generation gaps, North versus South Korea, World War II, forced labor, racial discrimination, imperialism, national and racial identity, immigration, and exile. However, over long conversations Matsue firmly asserted that his film was *non-pori* (no-policy) because he was a third-generation Korean living in Japan. In other words, he refused to perceive his own work as political in any sense. When I mentioned this conversation to Hara Kazuo, who was at Yamagata for an event centered on mentoring young filmmakers, he shook his head and compared it to an allergic reaction. Matsue’s conflation of policy and politics, his fervent desire to avoid looking political, and his inability to acknowledge the politicalness of his own doing reveal the depth to which the earlier generation has impoverished younger filmmakers. They set the terms, which have not been transformed along with the social world. By irrevocably linking political documentary to movement cinema, they have problematized movement through public space and contact with the other—the very foundation of documentary itself.<sup>24</sup>

### Historiographic Caveat

Up to this point I have focused on the generational differences represented onstage at Yamagata by Iizuka and Kawase Naomi. However, it is crucial not to neglect the fact that there were two other filmmakers on that stage, Ise Shin’ichi and Kanai Katsu. Ise makes very fine, very conventional documentaries;<sup>25</sup> Kanai is known for his wildly experimental films that also have a documentary touch.<sup>26</sup> As the other two filmmakers argued over Yamane’s provocation about the generational split on group versus individual, Ise and Kanai looked on, slightly puzzled, wondering what it had to do with them. They said as much. Their existence cannot be accounted for in this topology of self and other. They point to two large areas of practice, the conventional documentary, often made for television, and the avant-garde, that are largely excluded from the Japanese historiography of postwar non-fiction film in Japan. In other words, what we have here in these discourses

surrounding *shutaisei* is a historical narration that suppresses vast areas of practice while offering a powerful explanation for others with more prestige.

This essay has presented the strong version of postwar Japanese documentary history, but this rhetorical strength is precisely what makes it useful for present-day observers. If such tropes of discourse thin out our sense of history, they are also unavoidable because they attained such cogent powers of explanation *and affect*. Produced here by the pressures of postwar politics, they provide a measure for the filmmaking identity. The artists that emerged in the late 1950s and 1960s transformed their art in reaction to the authoritarianism of both the war and the high-growth economy. They searched for a form of representation that did not involve an imperial or technocratic signification that overpowered and dominated the referential world. In theory, and especially in practice, they accomplished what appears to be a radical democratization of the relationship between *shutai* and *taishō*. Often inserting an equals sign between the words *film* and *movement*, they started with the assumption that such a public art form—so easily reproduced and presented to masses of strangers—was so rooted in the world that it could not but affect the world. Clearly, it possessed the power to complicate a public sphere.

That there are lessons to be learned that are concealed in this story is Hara Kazuo's sense as well. Recently he signaled a turn from the private film by forming a nascent collective of his own. His office bustles with the energy of young people who have gathered around him. Together they conduct miniseminars Hara calls Cinema Juku (which could be translated as "cinema cram schools"). These are short courses held in various parts of Japan to investigate historical and aesthetic questions like the ones raised in this essay. Visitors include famous directors, cinematographers, and actors, and they recently released their first documentary film project, *My Mishima* [*Watashi no Mishima*] (1999).<sup>27</sup> As part of this ongoing investigation of Japanese cinema, Cinema Juku has undertaken a long-term study of and possible book project about Ogawa Pro. Hara senses that the future for artists of the documentary lies in the interstices between the individual and the collective, between fiction and documentary, between the extremely private and the extremely public.

## Notes

This essay would not have been possible without the help of many people, but I do want to single out a few for their kindness. Leslie Pincus helped me revise and rethink this essay through extensive editorial comments and many pleasurable discussions. Yasui Yoshio, the coordinator of the Yamagata programs on Japanese documentary and curator of Planet Film Library (Osaka), went out of his way to dub a tape of the proceedings for me. Kogawa Tetsuo kept me thinking hard through months and months of engaging e-mail, and Katō Mikirō provided helpful comments in the essay's revision. Finally, I received generous grants from the University of Michigan's Center for Japanese Studies and the Fulbright Scholar Program to conduct research with former Ogawa Productions members in Japan. Many of the films of Ogawa and Tsuchimoto are available for rental through the Japan Foundation. Tapes of Tsuchimoto's work may be purchased online through VideoAct! ([www.st.rim.or.jp/~yt\\_w-TV/VIDEOACT.html](http://www.st.rim.or.jp/~yt_w-TV/VIDEOACT.html)). Ogawa's films are owned by the Film School of Tokyo (Katakura Building, 1 Floor, 3-1-2 Kyōbashi, Chūō-ku, Tokyo; Phone: 81-3-5205-3565) and are being prepared for video release. The source for Matsue's film is Japan Academy of Visual Arts, 1-16-30 Manpukuji, Aso-ku, Kawasaki, Kanagawa Prefecture 215-0004.

- 1 Kawase established her reputation under this name. However, shortly after winning a major award at Cannes for her first feature film, she married her producer and actually held a press conference to announce the marriage and her new name, Sentō. The politics of naming are a complicated and touchy issue in Japan. Kawase's insistence on taking her husband's name even though the world knew her by a different one indicates a certain kind of conservatism whose significance to this essay will be apparent by its end. After divorcing Sentō in 2000, she reverted to her maiden name.
- 2 Key essays in this debate by Iida Shinbi, Ara Masahito, Ogura Shinbi, Kamei Fumio, Iwasa Ujitoshi, Hani Susumu, and Morimoto Tetsurō appear under the collected title "Kiroku eiga no 'uso' to 'shinjitsu'" ["Truth" and "lies" in documentary film], *Kinema Junpō*, 15 April 1957, 40–47. They are reprinted in *Besuto obu Kinema Junpō, 1950–1966* [Best of *Kinema Junpō*, 1950–1966] (Tokyo: Kinema Junpōsha, 1994), 580–587.
- 3 Direct cinema and cinema vérité are often confused. Vérité is the approach developed in France by Jean Rouch in which the camera is used not only to capture spontaneously unfolding events but also to instigate happenings that would not otherwise take place were a camera not present. Filmmakers developing the U.S. version, direct cinema, would follow people around for extended periods, attempting to avoid intervention in the world before them (the fly-on-the-wall approach). Initially they cloaked themselves in a rhetoric of objectivity, a position from which they quickly retreated when criticized. Hani's work predates both styles.
- 4 Hani's films were international hits on the documentary and educational film circuits, so they were purchased by quite a few U.S. libraries. The University of Michigan has a print of the

latter film, and a search of research libraries that rent films would probably turn up a print or two.

- 5 J. Victor Koschmann provides a useful sketch of this larger debate in *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). Joanne Izbicki writes about the situation within film circles in “Scorched Cityscapes and Silver Screens: Negotiating Defeat and Democracy through Cinema in Occupied Japan” (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1997).
- 6 Quoted in Matsumoto Toshio, “*Kiroku Eiga* no obogaki” [*Documentary Film* memo], *Eiga Hihyō*, March 1971, 95. By “transitively switching directions” Matsumoto is referring to *tenkō*. This is often translated as *ideological apostasy* and refers to the great numbers of left-leaning intellectuals, artists, and activists in the 1930s who—for a wide variety of reasons—caved in to political pressure and renounced their political positions. Some filmmakers who underwent *tenkō* gave up filmmaking, but most became the producers of wartime propaganda films. They also formed the generation of postwar documentarists Matsumoto’s generation attacked.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 96.
- 8 Matsumoto Toshio, “Zen’ei kiroku eigaron” [On avant-garde film], in *Eizō no Hakken* [Discovering the image] (Tokyo: Sanichi Shobō, 1963), 54.
- 9 Data from Eikyō, quoted in Tanaka Jun’ichirō, *Nihon kyōiku eiga no hattatsu-shi* [History of the development of Japanese education film] (Tokyo: Kagyūsha, 1977), 227.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 248.
- 11 Ōshima Nagisa, “Shotto to wa nanika?” *Kiroku Eiga* 3, no. 11 (November 1960): 6–8. Also see Ōshima Nagisa, “Sakka no suijaku: Watakushi no kiroku eigaron” [The weakness of the auteur: My theory of documentary film], *Kiroku Eiga* 3, no. 5 (May 1960): 26–28.
- 12 Matsumoto Toshio, “Kakusareta sekai no kiroku,” in *Eizō no Hakken*, 86.
- 13 Imura continues to split his time between Japan and New York, and he is the only Japanese avant-garde filmmaker being distributed in the United States. Both Canyon Cinema (San Francisco: 415-626-2255) and Filmmakers’ Co-op (New York: 212-889-3820) rent his films.
- 14 Ironically, the last intended use of such spears was the all-out defense of the homeland, for the emperor, in the face of U.S. invasion. Since the construction of a new international airport was partly associated with the transportation needs in waging the war in Vietnam, there are also certain continuities to be found at the tips of those spears, as the villagers themselves recognize in films such as *Summer in Sanrizuka*.
- 15 Ōshima Nagisa, “Ogawa Shinsuke: Tōsō to datsuraku” [Ogawa Shinsuke: Struggle and loss], *Eiga Hihyō*, December 1970, 17.
- 16 Abé Mark Nornes, “Documentarists of Japan: An Interview with Suzuki Shirōyasu,” *Documentary Box II*, April 1993, 14–15.
- 17 This is not to suggest that subjectivity in Euro-American film is complex while in Japan it is simple. The conceptualization of subjectivity in Japanese film theory is what is problematic. One reason for the difference has to do with the filmmaking itself, which was conceptualizing

documentary practice and the relationship between filmmaker and filmed along different lines. Another has to do with the lack of serious, critical engagement between all the scholars, critics, and filmmakers deploying the ideas. Thus there was consensus on the meaning of terms such as *shutai*, *taishō*, *shutaisei*, and the like.

- 18 Lithuanian immigrant Jonas Mekas pioneered the diary film in the New York avant-garde with stunning films such as *Memories of a Journey to Lithuania* (1971) and *Lost, Lost, Lost* (1975). He has a wide following in Japan.
- 19 Laura Marks, “Naked Truths: Hara Kazuo’s Iconoclastic Obsessions,” *Independent* 15, no. 10 (1992): 26.
- 20 There was contact between the two; however, it amounted to a single, unannounced visit by a magazine reporter who carried prints of the Black Panthers and Columbia revolt films. They swapped for prints of the Sanrizuka films, and Tsuchimoto oversaw the dubbing into Japanese, borrowing talent from avant-garde theater troupes. Ogawa Pro distributes the films, and their library still holds the prints.
- 21 It is unfortunate, however, that virtually no filmmakers of this generation seem willing to work without multimillion-dollar budgets, even though producing amazing films on a shoestring was standard practice at the beginning of their careers. Ōshima in particular appears to have fallen to the level of self-nude narcissism with his astoundingly self-serving history of Japanese cinema for the BBC centenary project.
- 22 The protests at Narita/Sanrizuka do continue. A town on the far side of the airport is perishing because stubborn farmers with land at the border refuse to allow a subway to run through their property. The train line, complete with stations, is ready on both sides, but the owners of the fields directly adjacent to the airport refuse to budge. Also, a trip through Narita is incomplete without a visit to Terminal 2. From the windows one can see a neat field of mulberry bushes in the middle of the tarmac, land that some farmer still refuses to sell. You may see someone tending the bushes as 747s roll past on their way to every corner of the globe.
- 23 Matsue is currently filming a sequel centered on his sister. The surveys he passed out for his first film showed that many respondents found her charming, wanted to meet her, or even compared her to Sakura from the *Otooko ha tsurai* series—I guess that makes Matsue Tora-san. In any case, it remains to be seen if Matsue can sustain this level of complexity when he leaves home and turns his camera on the world.
- 24 One factor in my coming to this conclusion was Aaron Gerow’s presentation “The Image of the Self: Women Personal Filmmakers in the Early Nineties” (Japanese Women Filmmakers Conference, 5 October 2000, University of Colorado, Boulder). Gerow’s reading of the 1990s personal film by women filmmakers—the self-nudes in particular—finds a hint of critique within the form. While granting they may lack complexity, he suggests their explorations of personal identity, sexuality, and the body do engage the central problematics of their generation’s relationship between self and other. His readings have convinced me there is an impulse to break out of the private spaces and recognize how the public penetrates the private



(something I believe I missed on my own viewings because my taste has been constructed by both the Japanese movement cinema and the Euro-American documentary). At the same time, he also shows how that impulse is consistently checked, precisely the dynamic I am examining in this article.

- 25 Ise's father was a well-known documentary film editor, and he began making his own documentaries in his twenties. They include *Run toward Light: Record of a Blind Baseball Player* [*Hikari ni mukatte hashire: Mōjin yakyū no kiroku*] (1983); *And Five Died in a War* [*Soshite gonin wa senshi shūta*] (1984); *Trust, Hope, Love: Portrait of Kobori Shirō in His Nineties* [*Shin, nozomi, ai: Kobori Shirō kyūjūssai no shōzō*] (1992); *If You Want to Dance, Dance!* [*Odoraba odore*] (1993); *Skillful* [*Takumi*] (1994); and *Nao-chan* [*Nao-chan*] (1995) and *Loupe* [*Rupe*] (1996) on documentary cinematographer Segawa Jun'ichi.
- 26 Kanai Katsu graduated from the art department of Nihon University in 1960 and entered the cinematography section of Daiei Studios. He went freelance in 1964 as a cinematographer and turned to documentary in 1968 with made-for-television productions. At the same time, he started making independent films that smudge the line between documentary and avant-garde. They include *Deserted Island* [*Mujin rettō*] (1969); *Kingdom* [*Ōko*] (1973); and *Time Blows On* [*Toki ga fukubu*] (1991).
- 27 Hara premiered this film at the 1999 Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival. The event featured the work of Cinema Juku and Full Shot, a youthful documentary collective from Taiwan. It was a fascinating scene. The Taiwanese filmmakers criticized the Japanese for being too nostalgic for a nonproblematic past and avoiding any political aspects of their subject (people leaving rural Japan for life in the big city). Hara continually expressed his frustration with his own students over the issues discussed in this essay. Both sides struggled to understand each other, and the missing ingredient seemed to be a historical consciousness that could help explain their different conceptions of self and other, individual and the world, private and public.