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Image Pragmatics and Film as a Lived Practice in the Documentary Work of Hani Susumu and Tsuchimoto Noriaki

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Abstract: This paper focuses on two discrete bodies of work, Hani Susumu’s films of the late 1950s and Tsuchimoto Noriaki’s Minamata documentaries of the early 1970s, to trace the emergence of the *cinéma vérité* mode of participant-observer, small-crew documentary in Japan and to suggest how it shapes the work of later social documentarists. It argues that Hani Susumu’s emphasis on duration and receptivity in the practice of filmmaking, along with his pragmatic understanding of the power of the cinematic image, establish a fundamentally different theoretical basis and set of questions for social documentary than the emphasis on mobility and access, and the attendant question of truth that tend to afflict the discourse of *cinéma vérité* in the U.S. and France. Tsuchimoto Noriaki critically adopts and develops Hani’s theoretical and methodological framework in his emphasis on long-running involvement with the subjects of his films and his practical conviction that the image is not single-authored, self-sufficient, or meaningful in and of itself, but emerges from collaboration and must be embedded in a responsive social practice in order to meaningfully reach an audience. Hani and Tsuchimoto both believe that it is possible for filmmakers and the film itself to be fundamentally processual and intersubjective: grounded in actual collaboration, but also underwritten by a belief that intersubjective processes are more basic to human being than “the individual,” let alone “the author.” This paper explores the implications for representation and ethics of this basic difference in *vérité* theory and practice in Japan.

Keywords: documentary film; film theory; documentary film theory; postwar Japan; post-1945 Japan; Hani Susumu; Tsuchimoto Noriaki; *cinéma vérité*; direct cinema; observational documentary

1. Introduction

It is generally agreed that a new mode of participant-observer, small-crew documentary appeared around 1960 and was greeted as revolutionary in its time.¹ Its appearance has been well-studied in relation to France and the U.S., enshrined in terms, like *cinéma vérité* and direct cinema and linked to foundational texts such as *Chronicle of a summer* (*Chronique d’un été*, 1961) and *Primary* (1960). Its emergence in Japan is less well-known. This is a shame because, as Bruce Elder points out in his evaluation of the Canadian Candid Eye movement, the theory and practice of these supposedly similar forms of documentary are actually quite different (Elder [1977] 2016). Japan’s case affirms Elder’s observation and, in offering an alternative articulation of the rhetorics, practices, and aesthetics of documentary realism, it can bring greater clarity to the assumptions at work in each case. One major

¹ Participant-observer is a term proposed by Charles Musser. I also follow Musser in using *cinéma vérité* as a general term that encompasses a variety of new approaches (Musser 1996).

difference to note at the outset is that *cinéma vérité* in Japan is not strongly linked to technological change: Synchronized sound—which many have been taken to be indispensable to *vérité*—is absent or erratic, not only in early examples, but for many small-crew social documentaries through the early 1970s. Exploring these differences may provide ways to understand certain key features of social documentary in Japan, particularly as practiced by Ogawa Shinsuke and Tsuchimoto Noriaki in the 1960s and 1970s. A full account of that history is beyond the scope of this paper. What I do instead is sketch out one set of episodically-recurring problematics that might be relevant to the broader field, by focusing on two discrete and thematically different bodies of work: Hani Susumu's films of the late 1950s and Tsuchimoto Noriaki's Minamata documentaries of the early 1970s.

The new approach to documentary appeared in Japan in 1954, six years earlier than in France and the U.S. (see [Nornes 2002](#), p. 43). Hani Susumu (b. 1928) pioneered it in *Children of the classroom* (*Kyōshitsu no kodomotachi*, 1954), a short film that examines the behavior of children in a functioning second-grade class. The film was greeted as opening a new horizon in the look and feel of documentary. Although it does not seem remarkable today, its impact at the time was clear: Tsuchimoto Noriaki, for one, talked about it as life-changing: The spark that kindled his desire to try his own hand at filmmaking ([Tsuchimoto and Ishizaka 2008](#), p. 41). As a film theorist, Hani himself also played an important role in cementing his early films' reputation, by interpreting them in accordance with a well-developed theory of the moving image. While there are limitations to letting Hani—a prolific filmmaker, author, and public figure—dominate the narrative, the first half of this essay examines two of his early films alongside his theoretical and methodological writings. The account can and should be complicated, but the goal here is to show how Hani's emphasis on duration and receptivity in the practice of filmmaking, along with his pragmatic understanding of the power of the cinematic image, establish a fundamentally different theoretical basis and set of questions for social documentary than the emphasis on mobility and access, and the attendant question of truth that tend to afflict the discourse of *cinéma vérité* in the U.S. and France.

The second half of the paper will argue that Tsuchimoto Noriaki (1928–2008) critically adopts and develops Hani's theoretical and methodological framework. Like Hani, Tsuchimoto emphasizes the importance of sharing the life-world of the subjects he is filming, although Tsuchimoto extends this to the scale of a lived practice.² His films about the effects of environmental mercury poisoning—which number at least 17 in all, shot between 1965 and 2004—are the products of a lifelong engagement with the victims. The films' meaning is inseparable from the extreme duration of the filmmaking. Also like Hani, Tsuchimoto is centrally concerned with processual complexity and implicitly argues that film has a special capacity to register the material, ecological interdependence of people and their environment. Finally, although Tsuchimoto does not share Hani's faith in the power of the uncut shot, he approaches the image with similar pragmatism. Just as Hani's theory emphasizes the effectivity of the image, the importance of communicating the feeling of the subjects' life-worlds, and the contingent nature of both filmmaking and viewing, Tsuchimoto demonstrates a practical conviction that the image is not single-authored, self-sufficient, or meaningful in and of itself, but emerges from collaboration and must be embedded in a responsive social practice to meaningfully reach an audience.

² Film as a lived practice is a reference to the phrase "*eiga wa ikimono no shigoto de aru*," which Tsuchimoto used to title his first book of essays ([Tsuchimoto \[1974\] 2004](#)). I have previously translated the phrase as "film is a work of living things" ([Jesty 2011](#)), while Adam Bingham translates it as "filmmaking as a way of life" ([Bingham 2009](#)). Tsuchimoto explains the phrase's multiple meanings this way. It references: How each new project is already in motion by the time he conceives of it as a film project, that he feels like a craftsman who loses himself in the process of his work (as opposed to the more individuated concept of artist or author), how his films emerge from the richness, dynamism, and contradictions of the lives of the people who become the subjects of the film, how those subjects are living bare lives outside the mainstream social system, the collective and collaborative nature of film production, the need to represent the damage pollutions wreaks upon the ecosystem and all living things, and finally, his disinterest in taking this or that side in debates about film form and his greater concern for how film can become part of the broader project of human life, like revolution ([Tsuchimoto \[1974\] 2004](#), pp. 377–80). I adopt the idea of art as a lived practice from the book *A Lived Practice* ([Jacob and Zeller 2015](#)).

2. An Image of Eternal Youth: Redemption by Rejuvenation

Hani Susumu is from an elite background. His grandmother was Japan's first female journalist and a leading social reformer, his father a world-class Marxist historian and critic, and his mother a prominent advocate for women's and children's rights (Hani Motoko, Gorō, and Setsuko, respectively). As a boy, Hani attended the private school founded by his grandmother and headed by his mother, which bore the emphatic name Freedom Academy (Jiyū Gakuen) and taught self-reliance and personal responsibility. At a time when his peers were receiving an imperial education or, in the desperate final years of the war, being mobilized to work in military supply factories, Hani had access to books, and schooled himself in much of the Western literary and philosophical canon (Hani 1984, 2007). When he graduated just after the war ended, his experience and intellectual horizon were quite different from most others around him. He remained a maverick through the 1950s and 1960s: an innovative filmmaker and a prominent intellectual but never closely identified with a particular cohort, school of thought, or artistic movement.

He was, however, recognized as one of the leading young filmmakers at Iwanami Film, a company that produced non-fiction films primarily for educational and public relations (PR) markets. Iwanami was well-regarded as a hothouse for innovative filmmaking in the 1950s, aided in part by a theatrical distribution agreement with Nikkatsu (from 1955), which brought in audiences beyond its sponsors. Abé Mark Nornes observes that it provided a training ground for some of "the best directors and cinematographers in Japan: Ogawa Shinsuke, Tsuchimoto Noriaki, Kuroki Kazuo, Higashi Yoichi, Tamura Masaki, Iwasa Hisaya, Suzuki Tatsuo, and a couple dozen more" (Nornes 2007, p. 17), and Takuya Tsunoda argues that Iwanami Film "institutionally fostered [the development of] cinematic modernism" in postwar Japan (Tsunoda 2015, p. iii). Hani joined Iwanami in 1950, soon after it was founded, and *Children of the classroom* (*Kyōshitsu no kodomotachi*, 1954) launched him into prominence.³

Up until *Children of the classroom* children's documentaries—and documentaries generally—used scripts, actors, and highly-staged filming and editing techniques that differed little from fiction films. But the children in *Children of the classroom* had no script and they were not acting for the camera.⁴ It was filmed in an actual, functioning classroom, but rather than hiding their presence, Hani and his crew introduced themselves to the class and set up their camera in full view. Then they waited, and, within a few days, the children began to ignore it. They wrapped a quilt around the camera to muffle its noise and hung additional lighting over the whole room so that they could start and stop filming without distracting the class. When class was in session the crew was forbidden to move around or switch lenses. They shot most of the classroom scenes using a telephoto lens (150 mm)—a key decision that enabled close-up shots of individual facial expressions and behavior in small groups. While the camera does not move, the children themselves fill the frame with motion, creating the impression of having been thrown into the middle of a churning classroom.

Children of the classroom had been commissioned by Japan's Ministry of Education to be a teacher training film about problem children. The framing narrative (which is scripted) begins with a trainee teacher on her first day. She has much she wants to teach, but does not understand how to connect with actual children. As we hear her voice on the soundtrack, a series of shots shows a boy exploring his mouth with his finger, another karate-chopping a book in the back row, and another absorbed in balancing a piece of wire on the end of his pencil. The remainder of the film is narrated by the character of the host teacher. One could interpret the visual narration as presenting the classroom as it appears to this more experienced teacher's eyes. What she and we see are individual children, each living different lives. As the film progresses, the image track becomes gradually less chaotic and the film

³ *Children of the classroom* won the top prize in the general education category at the Educational Film Festival (Kyōiku Eigasai), and was 3rd place in *Kinema Junpo's* top 10 list of short films that year. It was also the first Iwanami film to be distributed to Nikkatsu theaters (Kusakabe 1980, pp. 50–51).

⁴ This account of the film's production comes from Hani (1958, pp. 6–46) and Kusakabe (1980, pp. 55–57). See Centeno (2018b) for more information regarding Hani's ideas about the role of scripting in documentary.

ends with the class's choral performance at the school festival. The chorus functions as a metaphor for each individual finding their respective role in a productive whole and it was widely criticized as hackneyed, even by the film's supporters (Hani 1958, p. 46). The film as a whole, therefore, was not seen as revolutionary. It is the unstaged shots that were new and fresh.

The surprising complexity and fluidity of children's behavior would be difficult to track without the intervention of the camera, and the telephoto lens in particular. It establishes a perspective sympathetic to each child's embodied struggle with their environment. As Nornes argues, the film "used observation to approach the subjectivity of the individuals involved" (Nornes 2002, p. 43). The boy balancing the strand of wire on his pencil goes through incredible expressive changes in the space of a single take. He balances it once then suddenly looks up, eyes wide and forehead creased (it is the middle of Japanese class). Seeing the coast clear, he returns to balancing and then begins flying the assemblage like a helicopter before he suddenly drops it and snaps his eyes forward to check on the teacher again. Hani writes:

[As I was shooting the film], I understood that the overflowing fresh curiosity and vitality fairly bursting out from inside the children, even if it was expressed in mischief, was something that people in the teaching profession shouldn't ignore. Guidance that could grasp the bodily and physiological condition of children, would be able to raise that energy into an actual power to seek things out. The telescopic lens turned out to be very effective in creating an index to show that. If we had shot the scenes in the usual scale, [the activity] would have simply looked like mischief. In close up though, something *from inside of them* came through in their expressions. [Original emphasis.] (Hani 1958, pp. 24–25).

Though the boy sailing his wire through the air might have been a troublemaker from the stand-point of Japanese class, the problem was not that he lacked concentration or curiosity.

Children of the classroom features many such redemptive moments. One sequence focuses on children vying to be called upon. One boy with his head on his desk raises his hand excitedly but when someone else is called upon he slumps back down. A student named Aoki raises his hand, but struggles to answer. In the end, Aoki is overwhelmed by a chorus of other students, but the film continues to focus on his face as he processes the experience. Later in the film, we meet another student who is diligent and conscientious, but, the teacher/narrator feels, is holding herself back in reserve. The problem comes out on the playground when the camera, stationed some distance away, observes Tanigawa as she hovers near a group of other girls playing. She looks on and seems eager to join them but wavers, physiologically, about how to make the move. She hovers just on the edge, but cannot quite bring herself to jump in. The sequence ends with a long shot of her standing in the middle of the playground by herself.

These passages concentrate on a single child for long enough that they go through major changes of bodily and emotional attitude. Because they are not aware of the camera, their bodies and faces are extremely expressive, alive in the precariousness of an experience that does not know its future. The effect is amplified by the way the framing brackets off each child's surroundings: In many cases, the viewer is only aware of events in the environment as they appear suddenly within the child. By portraying the struggles of individual children so intently, the shots complicate a summary or synoptic view of classroom behavior. One boy is not paying attention, one raises his hand, but is not called upon, one who is called upon cannot answer the question, and a girl on the playground fails to join in a game. All of these children are portrayed in a vivid fullness that, partly because they are children, elicits a powerful sympathy while ultimately facing the viewer with the extended experience of children as they move within their own dynamic worlds, not satisfying pedagogical desires and, indeed, not satisfying their own desires, but passionately absorbed in trying.

Many of Hani's films are concerned with growth, individuation, and socialization. After *Children of the classroom*, he directed *Children who draw* (*E o kaku kodomotachi*, 1956), which documents a class of first grade students together with their artwork, to show how they use art and fantasy to apprehend

and explore the world. *Twin class* (*Sōseiji gakkyū*, 1956) examines sets of twins attending a special school for twins set up by Tokyo University, investigating resemblances while also arguing for the formative role of environment in their development. *Bad boys* (*Furyō shōnen*, 1960/1961) is usually categorized as a fiction film, but it also used non-professional actors, location shooting, and, as will be discussed, problematizes not only the characters' growth but also the actors'.⁵ Outside of his filmmaking, Hani was a lifelong student of psychology and advocate of child-centered experiential learning.⁶ He wrote over a dozen books on child-rearing and the family. One example, *The hands off approach* (*Hōnin shugi*), captures his convictions with section headings such as, "Children have the right *not* to be educated," "Treat your children like roommates," "Let them explore sex," "Don't teach them about right and wrong," "Parents all die one day," and "Life is a gamble" (Hani 1972a).

The significance of childhood, however, goes beyond children per se. As Bianca Briciu argues, Hani's attention to the perspective of women and children entails a "[critique] of Japanese society through his alliance with the powerless" and the most "vulnerable to oppression" (Briciu 2013, p. 60). I would add that Hani positively valued the qualities of life that tend to be most visible in children. His theory of filmmaking and the moving image is motivated by the project of liberating people's chaotic, creative energies, in other words, of making them young again. Although some of the advice in *The hands-off approach* is clearly meant to provoke the reader, the phrase "life is a gamble" captures something at the core of Hani's thinking. The individual organism always finds itself in the midst of a world that is ongoing. It cannot refuse the world. It must act and react with no guarantee of the outcome. Adults empower themselves by claiming to know what the world has in store, but, for Hani, that self-assurance is fundamentally wrong. "Living, insofar as one is reciprocally engaged [*aikakawatte iru*], does not admit of any truth that can be pinned down and stopped. Because [that truth] only ever presents itself in the already living moment" (Hani 1972b, p. 123). For Hani, play and experiment are truer to life as an unpredictable intersubjective process than anything a teacher or parent might appeal to in the name of safety and stability.

The term Hani uses to denote the activity by which "humans subjectively engage with the moment" is performance (*engi*): a usage that goes beyond the word's usual meaning in Japanese or English (Hani 1972b, p. 123). Performance is often a struggle, and Hani's films concentrate on moments of hesitation, of performative "stuttering" as he calls them (Hani 1972b, p. 79). These are moments when the individual is attempting to engage with their environment in an unfamiliar way—a way that remains faithful to the reality that they are not fully in control—by deploying hypothetical forms (*kari no sugata*) (Hani 1972b, pp. 105–6). Automatic, habitual activity cannot be considered performance and, for Hani, is not true to life as a contingent process of reciprocal engagement. He recognized that modern, adult society is built upon principles of stability and universality that devalue performance as inauthentic and untrue (*uso*) and insist each individual maintain a basic character (*hontai*). But he argued in opposition that "hypothetical form should not be taken lightly because in life there can never be anything more than hypothetical personae." (Hani 1972b, pp. 105–6).

For Hani, film (i.e., the recorded moving image) is special because it can capture performance in real time and make it observable in a way not possible in other media or by recollection. This capacity of film comes through most powerfully in the uncut shot. The uncut shot is where reality's dynamics push into the film with their greatest force and directness and for this reason the shot has a resistant power (*teikōryoku*) (Hani 1960, p. 67). The dialectic engine of film works not between shot and shot, but through "the force exerted by the fragments upon the process of montage itself" (Hani 1960, p. 68). Giving maximum play to the tension between the motion of the world and the internal motion of the filmmaker (and audience), could make the film "a firm joint (*kansetsu*) between human being and reality," a "dynamic balance within the historical situation" (Hani 1960, p. 48).

⁵ The first review of *Bad boys* appears in 1960, but it was released to cinemas in early 1961.

⁶ For Hani's relationship to progressive education movements in the late 1950s, see Jesty (2018).

This position sets his theory and practice in opposition to filmmakers who advocated montage: something he shared with *cinéma vérité* advocates elsewhere.⁷ But Hani's idea of where the power of the uncut shot comes from, and what it implies for filmmaking and viewing, differs from those of *cinéma vérité* pioneers in France and the U.S. (Edgar Morin and Jean Rouch and the Robert Drew Associates filmmakers, respectively).⁸ When Hani claimed that film could establish a joint between viewer and reality, he was not appealing to the indexical/material nature of the film image or the spatio-temporal integrity of the uncut shot serving as evidence of a scene having been recorded as it really happened (as was common in the U.S.). Nor was he claiming that the mobile camera and synchronized sound made new immersive, intimate qualities possible (as Morin did). Hani contended the shot appears as a moment of rupture, in both the film and the life space of the viewer. It is fragmentary and its impact is episodic. It does not function as a kind of visual evidence in the rational/legal sense of the word (as often claimed in discourse in the U.S.), nor as something that bears witness to unstaged confessions (as for Morin). The shot, rather, is important to Hani for its affective impact, what he calls its capacity for sensual expression (*kankakutekina hyōgen*) (Hani 1960, p. 96). The most precious connection with reality the shot establishes is the *feeling* of being profoundly interconnected with others and the *sense* of a world much wider and more dynamic than one's habituated sphere of (self-)control.

Although Hani's theorization of the shot's power is scattered, an important passage is his discussion of Nakai Masakazu's well-known theory of how the audience's emotion creates continuity at the points of rupture between shots. To paraphrase Nakai, the shot catches the historical moment just as it leans into the future, thus provoking a directionality in the desire of the audience (in Hani 1960, pp. 88–90). Hani then connects this concept of directionality to the work of the psychologist, Kurt Lewin, who developed a field theory of human behavior, which employs topological analysis to understand the attractions and repulsions at work across the territory of the individual. For Lewin, individual behavior is best understood by mapping out the transindividual psychic and social forces that an individual is subject to, the sum of which comprise the individual's "environment," or "life space" (Lewin 1936). No action, thought, or psychological state exists in a vacuum: An individual's psychological state forms part of the environment that envelopes others, just as that individual is subject to the forces created by everyone around them. Much like affect theory, field theory understands human behavior to be preconscious and transindividual in its basic orientations. It can illuminate how individuals or groups get "stuck" in patterns of repeated failure (individuals are not conscious of all the forces affecting them) and how changes in environment can change individual behavior and group dynamics. The passages imply that Hani believed film could preserve the power of the directional forces in and among the subjects being filmed: The unresolved nature of the shot referenced in Nakai's theory left the viewer open to the field dynamics unfolding in a moving image.⁹ Thus, the intensity of the children's engagement with their environment in *Children of the classroom*—especially presented at such a large scale—pulls the audience into their world alongside them to experience the tensions of their life space, the intersubjective ebb and flow of their situation.

Even though the moving image has the power to displace the viewer, Hani believed that familiarity and convention usually blocked that potential. By bracketing off the moving image with categories like, "it's just a movie," or "just something on TV," the adult horizon of experience insulated itself from any involvement the image might otherwise provoke (Hani 1972b, pp. 6–11). It was therefore important to defamiliarize moving imagery in ways that would weaken viewers' perceptual frameworks and create slippage between their life space and that of the image. This idea also imagines a rejuvenation

⁷ For further information on Hani's position within contemporary debates in Japan on filmmaking and documentary see Centeno (2018a, 2018b), Jesty (2018), and Tsunoda (2015).

⁸ For a brief introduction to *cinéma vérité* and direct cinema, see Musser (1996).

⁹ In the same passage, Hani also cites the work of developmental psychologist, Hatano Kanji, as showing that viewing is not passive, but requires the viewer to actively process the tensions in what is being depicted.

(even infantilization) of the viewer's relationship with the moving image. Such rejuvenation could be hard to achieve. Pure duration risks triviality, while the reality effect of fiction films and expository documentary produce powerful conventions in expectation. Hani wrote a great deal about the technical work necessary to capture such powerful shots. His 1960 collection of essays, *Camera and microphone*, argues that the titular camera and mic be understood as the principle creative tools of the filmmaker, not passive receptors. Like paint and brush would be for a painter, they represent the sometimes arbitrary material disciplines where potentiality condenses into actuality. The shot, therefore, is not an unmediated registering of reality, but a space where the given recording technologies and the skill of the filmmaker make aspects of reality visible in an image that might not have been visible with other cameras or with the naked eye.

Ultimately, however, the shot's power is a question of its effect: something not entirely under the filmmaker's control. Writing about the television documentary, for instance, Hani praised the work of the amateur producers from radio backgrounds who, notwithstanding their lack of experience with film, had been pressed into service making documentary programming in the early days of television in the late 1950s. As Hani puts it, they did not know even the "ABCs" of filmmaking (Hani 1960, pp. 196–97). Nevertheless—or perhaps because of that—their work had "a fresh effect." They filmed "impressive," "unconsciously successful" imagery and often failed to bring closure to the narratives they opened (Hani 1960, p. 197). Their work had "the power to startle viewers" (Hani 1960, p. 198), something lost in the hands of professionals with film backgrounds who were—at the time Hani wrote the essay—being brought in to replace them. "Whether we like it or not," Hani wrote, "reality exists and is always moving." Television had the potential to be a "window" into that reality—right from everyone's living room—but its professionalization threatened to turn it into another "mirror" that simply "reproduces the world we choose to believe in" (Hani 1960, pp. 202–3). The shot must almost necessarily be beyond the control of any single individual (including the filmmaker) in order for it to be effective and to remain true to reality, which, as Hani characterizes it, is not a particular thing to be discovered or exposed but change in and of itself: things in the state of being "unresolved" and "in process" (Hani 1960, p. 201).

The fluidity of intersubjectivity is prominent in the thematics of Hani's films as well. Towards the end of *Children of the classroom* the children do some group work. The film takes this an opportunity to briefly but prominently introduce the sociogram—an analytical tool developed by the influential group psychologist, Jacob L. Moreno—by means of an animated diagram. At this point in the film, the viewer can recognize about 10 characters whose behavior has been described and/or shown. During the sequence, the narration describes how group dynamics significantly alter their behavior. Children who were shy or lethargic actively contribute, a sunny outspoken girl and a more serious child form an effective leadership combination, while a bright but domineering boy proves unable to work with others. The sequence breezily reframes many of the "problems" that had emerged to that point in the film: A changed environment can bring out a whole new person. The refreshing potential of a changed environment is the key to reform in *Bad boys* as well. The reform of the main character—his rediscovery of his ability to grow and change—is achieved not by deep psychological excavation but by transfer to a different work unit, whose environment affords him the space to form his own relationships. Notably, the final stage of his growth comes by listening to his friend's story, not telling his own. Both thematically and in the theorization of the documentary image, Hani's work centers on reintroducing intersubjective instability as a practice of liberation.

The psychological assumptions in these works are thus different from what we see in *cinéma vérité* in France and the U.S. Although *Chronicle of a summer* also creates new situations as a way to provoke psychosocial discoveries among its protagonist-participants, Morin and Rouch's theorization of the process assumes a model of depth psychology. Through comfortable conversation—which Morin likens to confession, psychotherapy, and psychodrama at various points—the film sets the stage for something to be expressed which is usually hidden (Morin [1962] 2016). Though the conversations may be unscripted, they are used as a pretext, a tool, to reveal what is assumed to be an

already-existing (but as-yet unexpressed) truth. The film itself, meanwhile, operates almost entirely through dialogues, monologues, and conversations: Speech is the primary vehicle of whatever truths are to be found. Hani's depiction of psychosocial change, by contrast, is not language dependent, but relies on minute observation of facial expressions, bodily movement, group interactions, and—we must not omit—attentive voice-over explanation.¹⁰ Behaviors and their causes are horizontally complex and closer to the surface, while change is less cathartic and more fleeting. It happens not by revelation of something inner or deeper, but by opening out the viewer's sensitivity to the ever-present transformations at play in overlapping intersubjective fields of action and reaction. The ultimate goal, however, is openness to ongoing intersubjective processes itself.

This being the case, the filmmaker does not have to infiltrate private spaces to lay in wait for the film's subject to expose their true character (as in Drew Associates' rhetoric). Neither is the filmmaker like a diver: an explorer of unfamiliar depths, both enabled and encumbered by bulky equipment (Morin [1962] 2016, p. 462). In both French and U.S. varieties of *cinéma vérité*, access to what is usually hidden is the touchstone of new documentary meaning, and mobility is fundamental to the feel of the image and claims about its authenticity. In Hani's filmmaking and theory, however, mobility is not required. To the contrary, reality is already moving. The task of the filmmaker is to become aware of it: a practice that requires time and receptivity. Hani reflected on shooting *Children of the classroom* that, "When we became aware of the psychological waves that were constantly rippling through the classroom, all the different behaviors necessarily began to register in our own feelings. Or rather, whatever it was within us that responded dynamically to this calling began to move of its own accord, becoming happy, disappointed, anxious, distracted. . . . When we became participants in the class, suddenly things that we hadn't been able to see became visible" (Hani 1958, pp. 33–34). Documentary filmmaking is thus a process of immersing oneself in the world(s) of the subjects of the film, surrendering one's senses to them in order to understand what and when to film. Rather than by penetration or exploration, the filmmaker accesses the world they hope to film by opening themselves to its dynamics. As opposed to Morin's metaphor of the diver, Hani likens filmmaking to predicting the weather: operating by means of heightened receptivity to the winds and tides of psychosocial fields (Hani 1958, pp. 33–34).

Language also works differently. Before we write off the different emphasis on language as a result of Hani's lack of access to synchronized sound equipment, we should note that the "inauthenticity" of overdubbed language corresponds well with Hani's theory of performance (*engi*). Given that Hani believes the idea of a basic character (*hontai*) is false and that "there can never be anything more than hypothetical personae," it follows that he would also see language as situationally complex, but unconnected to a presumed psychological depth.¹¹ Writing about *Bad boys*, a film which, like *Chronicle of a summer*, features non-professional actors performing a version of themselves, Hani argued that it was the slippage between two life-spaces and life-times introduced by the process of overdubbing that marked how the actors in the film had changed and grown in the process of making it. As he describes it, the mismatch between the image track and sound track marks a difference between the actor acting and the actor speaking, thus demonstrating in a single sound-image how the "same" person is not actually the same across space and time. The faith that Morin and Rouch put in the power

¹⁰ Jeanne Hall has written an excellent critical analysis of *Primary* (1960), showing how the discourse surrounding direct cinema/*cinéma vérité* in the U.S. diverges significantly from what one can see in the actual films (Hall 1991). She shows that the films are far more conventional in their form than either advocates or critics allow. A similar analysis could be undertaken with Hani's films, which only episodically deviate from standard practices of documentary filmmaking. Rather than overturning all prior filmmaking practices, Hani adds significant new ones, while taking on many of the others. But I ultimately disagree with Hall's logic. Discursive interpretation of films—which is first and foremost a selection of salient elements in them—is unavoidable, and is equally part of Hall's own critical analysis and her historical and institutional circumstances. Her implied claim that she has accessed the real films by viewing them in a more objective manner seems to replicate the rhetoric of realism she finds problematic in others.

¹¹ Hani critiques the naïve understanding of language as an expression of the subject's internality in his discussion of stuttering (Hani 1972b, pp. 78–82).

of synchronized sound to reveal individuals' hidden experience of daily life shuts down that opening by insisting that there is some persisting reality to be found. For Hani, reality is non-identity, change, and difference itself.

To expand on this, *Bad boys* is a fictional narrative that follows the character of Asai Hiroshi, who is arrested for robbing a jewelry store, but who is able to transform himself through friendship and supportive collaboration in the juvenile detention center he is sent to. Hani provides a supplementary account of the non-fictional process of making the film in his writing about it.¹² The young men playing the roles of the juvenile delinquents were non-professional actors who themselves were recently juvenile delinquents. Although Hani wrote a script for the film, the young actors did not like reading it. He accommodated this by letting them improvise scenes as they thought best. To draw them into the process, he and his assistant, Tsuchimoto Noriaki, would act out a scene and then let the young men show them how to do it properly. Although the story was fictional, the young men were acting roles that resembled their former selves. Hani claimed that the film's production offered an object lesson in the way performance could empower people vis-à-vis their own behavior. The process of re-enacting their delinquent behavior—as an enactment—opened a social space for their behavior by loosening it from “reality.” Hani recalled the breakthrough that occurred when the actor playing Asai was assured that he could do the jewel robbery sequence (which was shot on location at a real store) with no fear of arrest. The boys could fight off bullies with no fear of getting hurt and muscle their way into movie theaters with no fear of reprisal. In a way, it was a bad boy's dream. But rather than encourage further bad behavior, the loosening of the bonds of basic character allowed the performance to come to the fore and be played through as what it always actually had been: hypothetical.

Film was important to Hani's claim of redemption because it made it possible to reanimate a unique, indeterminate moment. He relates how, when the boys were faced with the image of their own actions when they were doing the overdubbing for the soundtrack, they began to comment on their behavior rather than voice it. In one of the mugging scenes, the boys were critical of their behavior, which they were now able to see from outside the momentum of their former position within it. Film alone can provide this feedback, this doubling of perspective that demonstrates so clearly that the individual is not the same through time. Experiencing the “same” moment beyond identity reopens the reality of each moment as something without closure, without final resolution, so that behavior can become performance once again. With *Bad boys*, the rejuvenating power of the film was literal, at least according to Hani's account of its significance to the actors. The film made their performances available yet again: capturing actions that were of that moment and no other, while at the same time demonstrating in the very distance between image (of them acting) and viewer (when they watched themselves acting) that that was not the only possible playing out. Filmmaking and the moving image can catalyze change in the world, but the mechanism works through a demonstration of non-identity and non-necessity, not the discovery of a deeper or more complete picture.

Hani Susumu's approach constitutes a major deviation from the U.S. and French discourses of realism around *cinéma vérité*. The theory is interesting in that it is highly reflexive about the contingent and partial nature of mediation: Hani was deeply hostile to claims of neutrality and objectivity, once arguing that they “present nothing more of people . . . than their subjugation” (Hani 1960, p. 91). In order to capture reality, the filmmaker has to understand it, which means they have to be in it, in an actual time and place. Taking a position—adopting a prejudice (*henken*), as Hani advocates—is necessary for the film to work as a sensual expression of the inextricably and irreducibly embedded struggles of the film's subjects. One could argue that the theory is still realist, based on the claim that reality is so intensely productive, creative, and fascinating that there is no way to capture or cover it in the form of a conclusive image, regardless of the technology employed.

¹² This account of the film's production comes from Hani (1972b, pp. 102–17). For more detailed accounts of this film's production and reception, see Centeno (2018a) and Tsunoda (2015).

But Hani's position is better described as pragmatic. His image theory is concerned with how moving images mediate processes. He attempts to theorize what images do, in a way that parallels pragmatic linguists' concern with how words do things (in contrast to what they mean semantically). Hani's consideration of that question is necessarily contextual. The moving image did something very specific for the actors in *Bad boys* viewing it during overdubbing. But more typically, Hani imagines the context of viewing (particularly in the case of television) in more general terms: as daily life in its state of being colonized by ideologies of stability, predictability, and productivity. That sets the stage for disruption as the image reintroduces reality as an unforeclosed process. Hani's theory of filmmaking likewise insists that the actions captured on film be treated as integrally interconnected with the context of their happening. He pushed back against defenders of Eisensteinian montage, who assumed each shot to be almost meaningless until the filmmaker combined them with other shots (Hani 1960, pp. 51–70). Treating a shot in this manner reduced its unique contextual density to a general, stereotypical sign (Hani 1960, p. 54). Hani treated the shot as an utterance: something integral to and effective in an actual context, in the time-space of both its recording and its viewing.

Hani's theory of the documentary image is less concerned with how the image is (or is not) truthful or faithful to a particular picture of reality than with how the image's movement succeeds (or fails) in reanimating the life space of the viewer by transporting the affective dynamics of the subjects and their situation into it. We might even say that the implied vector is diametrically opposite the one imagined by Morin and Rouch. Rather than the filmmaker prodding the subjects of the film into unfamiliar situations in order to film *them* rediscovering the non-necessity of the current disposition of everyday life, Hani's ideal filmmaker pushes the viewer out of the false equilibrium of comfortable uninvolvement by casting them into the precariousness of others' struggles, as they play out in the present tense of viewing the recorded image.

3. Film as a Lived Practice

Tsuchimoto Noriaki acknowledges *Children of the classroom* as the inspiration that attracted him to documentary. He did not initially have any ambition to become a filmmaker. He entered Iwanami Film because his background as a radical activist blocked him from finding steady employment elsewhere. In his student days in the late 1940s, he had risen to the level of vice-president of Zengakuren, the radical national student organization, and he was arrested and jailed for Communist Party activism in the early 1950s (Tsuchimoto and Ishizaka 2008, pp. 20–39). The Iwanami producer, Yoshino Keiji, was an old friend, and found a way to hire him as a contract worker in 1956. Although Tsuchimoto and Hani have written about each other's work admiringly on many occasions, it would be wrong to imply that Hani had a linear influence on Tsuchimoto. Tsuchimoto was part of a large cohort of up-and-coming filmmakers, who incessantly discussed their ideas and experiences, eventually forming an informal but intense study club called the Blue Group (Ao no Kai) that convened at a bar after work a few nights a week to discuss work, ideas, and films they had seen (Tsuchimoto and Ishizaka 2008, pp. 61–74). Trying to trace Tsuchimoto's development amid that ferment would be a daunting task, and Tsuchimoto's style changes a great deal over time. Discussing their commonalities, therefore, is not to claim a strict historical lineage. The commonalities are remarkable enough, however, that I believe they warrant consideration. Especially because they also resonate with the work of other prominent filmmakers, such as Ogawa Shinsuke and Sato Makoto.¹³

The commonalities are most apparent in Tsuchimoto's first feature-length film about mercury pollution, *Minamata: the victims and their world* (*Minamata: kanjasan to sono sekai*, 1971), which remains his best-known film. First-time viewers are often surprised that there is relatively little information about the history or science of mercury poisoning or the Minamata victims' movement. The film's

¹³ Abé Mark Nornes also speculates on the connections among these filmmakers (Nornes 2013, pp. 190–97). For more information on Ogawa, see Nornes (2007).

framing is much closer, intently focused on bringing the viewer into the embodied and environmentally enveloped experience of the victims' situation. The camerawork of Ōtsu Kōshirō (also an Iwanami graduate) is both creative and attentive to the textures and rhythms of the people's lives, finding ways to admire their sensitivity and knowledge while also showing the ways the damage caused by mercury has infiltrated every connection and relationship in them.¹⁴

Tsuchimoto and his crew clearly located themselves at a particular place and time, in alliance with a particular community. That position is not only the enabling condition of *Victims and their world* in a logistical sense, but is inextricable from its voice and rhetoric. The position was not something given or planned. The crew developed it over many months working with the people they filmed and it changed over time. The crew shared the filmmaking process, and both sound and image register the presence of the filmmakers in the events. The film is therefore a document of the filmmakers' participation in the life-world they are recording, and vice versa. One of Tsuchimoto's juniors remembers this practice as "symbiotic" (Suzuki 1993, p. 14), and the ecological metaphor is apt. The filmmakers did not melt into the world of the subjects to become one with them (Tsuchimoto never claimed to be one of the local people): The filmmakers remained a different kind of entity within the situation. But while the people filmed and the film crew were irreducibly different entities, their meeting and interaction produced a meaning of an order different from any one of them.

Tsuchimoto was also highly focused on the viewers of these films. If the film was something that emerged from an actual, unpredictable process of filmmakers sharing in and learning about the life world of the subjects of the film, then the distribution had to be equally attuned to the fact that viewers were not an abstract entity, but specific people who came to screenings with particular needs. Whereas Hani's invocation of the viewer of the moving image is usually abstract, Tsuchimoto ceded priority to viewers' needs in a more practical sense, by planning subsequent films based on audience feedback. Tsuchimoto's overriding emphasis on the effects of his films in fact led away from Hani's investment in the uncut shot. Tsuchimoto was willing to sacrifice such formal restrictions in order to maximize the practical impact of his work.

Tsuchimoto first met people in the Minamata victims' movement in 1970, when he was arrested for participating in a protest at the Tokyo headquarters of Chisso, the company responsible for the mercury pollution in Minamata. Following from that connection, he and his crew arranged to go to Minamata that summer to begin filming what would become *Victims and their world* (Tsuchimoto [1974] 2004, pp. 69–70). There was no script for the film at the time they arrived. Its content and narrative grew out of the experiences of the filmmakers over their five months shooting. The most important enabler of this practice was a position among the patients. The crew lived at the family home of Hamamoto Fumiyo, located in one of the fishing hamlets hardest hit by the disaster. Both of Fumiyo's parents had died of acute mercury poisoning in the 1950s, leaving her with the house. She and her brother, Tsuginori, both suffered the effects of mercury, and their homestead had become a meeting place for the victims' group that was pursuing a court case against Chisso for compensation.

Tsuchimoto and the crew slept and bathed there, shared meals with Fumiyo, and after a day of shooting, they viewed the rushes there, together with anyone from the neighborhood who cared to drop in. From that starting point, the crew met other families, and went to film people who invited them. Eventually they filmed 46 victims or their relatives, and 22 children who had been poisoned in utero. The film's structure reflects the method: The people and events appear in the film in the same order that they were shot. The one-share movement—which creates a narrative arc that culminates in an unforgettable climax when Fumiyo confronts the president of Chisso with the tragedy of losing both her parents—is something that emerged by chance during the filming (Tsuchimoto [1974] 2004, pp. 36–40, 61–76; Tsuchimoto and Ishizaka 2008, pp. 137–59). Although the film is undeniably a social

¹⁴ For an account of the Minamata mercury disaster, its history, and significance, see George (2001). For a more detailed account of Tsuchimoto's engagement with Minamata, see Jesty (2011).

movement film, Fumiyo's expression of grief also indicates a problem that lies beyond restitution: She screams into the president's face that no amount of money is enough, that all she wants is her parents back. Significantly, the film does not end with the confrontation, but takes us back to Minamata for a short closing segment, where we see the fishing boats going out again, continuing their round of work. The political movement is important, but the victims must always return to their world, and the film is, at its core, an attempt to portray that world.

Most live in difficult circumstances, suffering from mercury-related disability, or having lost relatives in the disaster. We meet them person by person, family by family, in a series of portraits where the people speak about their experiences and the camera portrays them in their everyday surroundings, sitting at home, fixing nets, and working out at sea. Apart from a few doctors, and the occasional interjection of Tsuchimoto himself, the voices on the soundtrack are those of the patients describing their struggles. An older man remembers how, when his daughter died in the late 1950s, he had to carry her body home from the hospital on his back because no taxis would take him. A young woman relates how she was forced to divorce her beloved husband when his family found out she had the disease. A fisherwoman reminisces about how much her father knew about the sea and the weather, saying she's lost without his knowledge.

But the lives of the "victims" are not defined by their tragedy. The filming invites us to appreciate the complexity of their continuing way of life and the sensitive interconnection with the environment that it rests upon. One sequence introduces a family preparing bait. The camera does not focus much on the people, but on the bait itself: Hands drop in the ingredients, and a giant ladle stirs the cauldron. When the mixture has cooled, a chorus of busy hands molds it into shape to be used. A man's voice explains that the fish love it: It's delicious, nutritious, fit for human consumption. Anyone can catch a fish that's already there, he confides, the real skill is in getting the fish to come to you. The scene portrays an intimate and highly attuned form of knowledge. The family lives by understanding how to entice the fish they mean to catch.

In another scene, the camera follows a man wading in chest-deep water, catching octopus. The sequence is poetic, set to gentle music. On the soundtrack, the man explains how he lures them out, snags them on a stick, and then quickly kills them by biting a particular "vital spot" between their eyes. As his voice explains the technique, the camera observes in close-up as he demonstrates, bringing a squirming octopus up to his face and biting, essentially kissing it in order to kill it. In this and similar scenes, we understand the specific, visceral link between the fisher families and their environment. They must learn the ways of their world in order to be able to live as part of it. Their knowledge is finely tuned, embodied as a "sense" or "feel" for how to operate.

The film gives great attention to small things, to everyday ideas and habits. Ōtsu's camerawork is instrumental in this: His extreme close-ups and remarkable use of deep space illuminate the complexity of everyday competence. Habit and familiarity tend to dissolve everyday interdependence into invisibility, but the filming brings the substance and grammar of those connections into the foreground, closely studying the coordinated actions that comprise select moments in the lives of the victims and their world. The knowledge and competence thus portrayed rest on terribly sensitive interrelationships, and in that they are also vulnerable.

The film celebrates the ingenuity of the victims and fishermen in their relationship with the world, but it never lets the audience forget that that relationship has been forever altered by mercury. In one fleeting example, a man who had once been incapacitated demonstrates how he is finally able to hold a glass of water again after years of rehabilitation. The camera frames his face and hand in turn, and then there is an unusual shot, which keeps the shaking cup of water in the foreground while looking up the man's arm to his face. On the one hand, we have a great achievement. The old man is able to establish the sensory feedback loop necessary to steady the muscular impulses that mercury had

destroyed.¹⁵ But at the same time, this relationship is called into question. The hand and head are separated from each other, their distance emphasized. Holding a cup of water is one of the most trivial forms of understanding. It might as well be invisible. But the film emphasizes how, after the poisoning, even this most banal relationship is no longer stable or given. The film never tires of documenting the small marvels of daily life, but at the same time calls them all into question.

The visual “testimony” of *Victims and their world* is composed of this kind of minute observation of people and their surroundings, and it often forms a counterpoint to the tragic verbal testimony on the soundtrack. One woman tells the story of her young daughter’s death, and how the autopsy revealed extensive brain damage that was the result of mercury poisoning. As she does so, the camera concentrates on her hands as she uses an ashtray on the floor in front of her to illustrate which portion of her daughter’s brain was destroyed. In another scene, the grandmother of a teenage boy with cognitive and physical deficits from being poisoned in utero, relates how the boy sleeps most of the day, does not eat much, and needs help going to the bathroom. Unconcerned by this, the boy reaches out his hand and begins to play with the camera while it is filming.

The visual details accrue to create a sense of the victims and their world that works at a liminal register, similar to preconscious level of fascination that the behavior of the children in *Children in the classroom* elicits. The details in the victims’ surroundings seem undermotivated, random, not entirely in tune with their speech. But in their density they are recognizable as the idiosyncratic, irreplaceable substance of people’s lives. The sense of fragility in *Victims and the world* is not the fragility of evanescent moments that Hani believed the shot could capture, but the fragility inherent in the unique intimacy of small things that have been invested with familiarity over a long-shared life by the people who live among them. Through the slow, uneven observation of the victims, their homes, their work, and all of the minutia that make up their world, the viewer can glimpse something of the scale of the damage, and its absolute irreversibility. Mercury has not shattered the world but infiltrated and reshaped it—all of it, at a scale both much larger and much smaller than we can readily imagine, “shallower” in the sense that it takes shape in extremely recognizable objects and scenes (an ashtray, stickball, a family dinner, etc.), but vertiginously broad in its extension, through all of these most familiar objects and daily activities that hold amongst them the feeling of home.

The achievement of *Victims and their world* was also a shortcoming. As Tsuchimoto screened the film around Europe on the occasion of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in 1972, one critique he kept hearing was that it contained little information about the medical or environmental science of mercury (Tsuchimoto [1974] 2004, pp. 139–80). To answer that need, Tsuchimoto and his producer, Takagi Ryūtarō, decided to make three one-hour documentaries about the science of mercury (Tsuchimoto [1976] 2004, pp. 18–29). By the end of the project in 1975, they had produced four films totaling 420 min.

Although these films lack much of the formal uniqueness and explosive political confrontation of *Victims and their world*, they might be considered a more remarkable achievement. Tsuchimoto and his crew needed to move out of their comfort zone—they were no longer immersing themselves in the world of a specifically located group of people and none of them had expertise in medicine or science. Stylistically also, the films adopt many of the conventions of the expository documentary, such as voice-over narration, diagrams and visual aids, and interviews with experts. The films are remarkable, finally, because they make a unique statement about science. For many of the intellectuals who supported the Minamata patients in the 1970s, science was inextricably bound up with the extractive and destructive habits of industrial modernity. These films, however, take a more nuanced view, in which the problem is not science itself, but the way that science so often intersects with state

¹⁵ Some important context to this scene is that an early television documentary about the Minamata poisoning (*In the shadow of a mysterious disease (Kibyō no kage ni)*, 1959) features a scene with this same man, when he was suffering the throes of acute poisoning, which manifest in symptoms such as uncontrollable jerking and shaking, difficulty walking, and slurred speech. One shot shows how he is unable to hold a glass of water. This scene in *Victims and their world* answers that earlier image.

power as a tool to disenfranchise local knowledge. They document how local researchers had been, and still were, on the forefront of knowledge about the disaster.

Dr. Harada Masazumi, who narrates the final film in the medical trilogy, *Clinical field studies (Igaku toshite no Minamatabyō—sanbusaku dai sanbu: rinshō ekigaku hen, 1975)*, is one such scientist, whose approach to his work resembles that of the films themselves (Tsuchimoto [1976] 2004, p. 55). Harada is well-known for having spent his career treating and studying the victims of Minamata. He discovered and established congenital Minamata disease almost single-handedly and has written many books about it. While the camera follows him in his research around the Shiranui Sea, he introduces his theory of the disease and how it must be studied. His first insight is that Minamata disease is not yet fully understood. A new and distressing case has appeared that none of the current accounts of mercury poisoning can adequately explain; for Harada, it is evidence that the theories should be thrown into question, not the victim. He argues also that Minamata disease affects the whole body (not just the sensory neurons), and that its diagnosis must consider epidemiological factors, such as the residence and dietary habits of the patient. He visits families whose members received different diagnoses from the certification board in charge of compensation benefits because of small differences in the expression of symptoms. Harada's location on the ground among the patients made it impossible to endorse the black-and-white approach of official diagnosis. Across the fabric of behaviors and environments, the disease itself appears differently, and that complex variation can only be understood through extended, ongoing research. It is ultimately Harada's view of science that underlies the trilogy's view, as an unending practice of inquiry that gives priority to the emergent variety of the world rather than the desire to tidy it up.

Shiranui Sea (Shiranui Kai, 1975) is in some sense the crowning achievement of Tsuchimoto's first five years of engagement with mercury poisoning. It is a long and powerful meditation on the depth and breadth of the tragedy, and brings together the issues raised in the films made since *Victims and their world*: the complex integration of natural patterns and human habit in the formation of community and ecosystem, the vulnerability of these systems in the face of pollution, appreciation for the spirit of people coping with adversity, the difficulty of many patients in finding proper recognition, and the conviction that the extent of the disease was not yet known.

The film extends Tsuchimoto's area of research beyond Minamata, to the entire Shiranui Sea, a body of water about 40 miles long and 10 miles wide, bounded on one side by the mainland and on the other by a string of closely grouped islands. It exposes the fact that although fishing had stopped in Minamata Bay, it continued basically unchanged on the wider sea. Remarkably, this film is the first to give sustained attention to the great natural beauty of this ever-calm inland sea. Shot almost exclusively on brilliant sunny days, it introduces the viewer to a variety of traditional fishing methods, the ingenuity of which is almost as stunning as their setting. The viewer is treated to shots of the fishermen preparing a feast of fish they have caught and, thanks to Tsuchimoto's unerring empathy, it comes across as less shortsighted than it might otherwise. For people whose lives and communities have taken shape around fishing, and who have enjoyed a daily bounty of fresh fish since childhood, it is simply impossible to give it up. It is the fabric that ties them to the world. Yet symptoms of mercury poisoning continue to spread around the sea and further inland. As happened with so many before them, the people affected usually go undiagnosed, because of a combination of ignorance about the disease, the incompetence of local doctors, and the social pressures to keep quiet in order to protect the local fishing industry.

In addition to portraying the geographic spread of the poisoning, *Shiranui Sea* shows how its effects continue to develop over time. It revisits many patients familiar from previous films. The children born with congenital Minamata disease are growing up. They are now entering their teenage years, and with that their lives grow more complicated. One scene records a long conversation between a young woman with congenital Minamata disease and Dr. Harada. The camera is set at a respectful distance behind them, where they sit on a rock facing the sea. The young woman begins by asking Dr. Harada if she can have a brain operation that will make her better. She realizes that she is different from people

around her, and breaks into tears as she tries to explain how when she looks at things, like the sea or a flower, nothing comes to mind. She knows something should. She sees other children making progress each day at school, but she seems to stay in the same place. It is heart-rending testimony, that she cannot see a place for herself in the world. The effects of the mercury poisoning continue to be very real in the lives of these young adults and, as they grow up, the way it affects them continues to change. The film gives us access to many of the patients speaking in their own time, but it also gestures to the lifetimes ahead.

Tsuchimoto revisited Minamata many more times, but always remained a visitor, someone whose work lay in connecting these experiences to others. Mercury pollution was an ongoing problem and Tsuchimoto knew that the people who most needed to see his films were often those with least access to them. In December 1973, the photographers, W. Eugene and Aileen M. Smith, received a letter sent to them in Minamata from two private citizens in Canada who were fighting a battle against mercury in the English-Wabigoon River in northern Ontario (Smith and Smith 1975, p. 141). The mercury was being dumped upriver by a paper mill, while downstream there was the same mixture of economic self-interest and disregard for marginalized populations—the Cree Nation were bearing the brunt of the pollution. In the face of government inaction, members of the Cree Nation formed an interlocal alliance with people of Minamata. In spring 1975, a group of Minamata researchers visited them and in July of that year, five members of the Cree Nation travelled to Minamata. Tsuchimoto accompanied the Cree during their visit, making a short documentary about it for Japanese television.

The collaboration laid the groundwork for his own trips to Canada. With the help of local activists, Tsuchimoto and a group of assistants made two tours of First Nation reservations across Canada, the first from September to December, 1975, the second from May to July, 1976. Over the course of the two trips, they exhibited a combination of Minamata films in over 110 screenings involving over 12,000 people.¹⁶ There were sometimes communication problems: Not everyone could read the English subtitles and there were often empty seats by the end of a show. But the screenings were flexible. As director of all the films, Tsuchimoto had the leeway to re-edit them in the process of projection, to concentrate on the segments that seemed most effective for the audience. They regularly stopped the films for translators to speak and to take questions. After Tsuchimoto returned to Japan, he re-edited footage from his previous films based on his experiences with the audiences in Canada. The result is a much shorter introduction to Minamata disease, *Message from Minamata to the world* (1976, produced in cooperation with Radio Quebec), that includes some of the most harrowing footage of mercury's effects. It could hardly be more different from *Victims and their world*.

Tsuchimoto also brought his films to audiences around Japan, especially those who lived in the shadow of mercury, but lacked the knowledge to protect themselves or seek redress. To the people living on the small islands that were only reachable by boat across the Shiranui Sea, the news about Minamata seemed to come from a different world. It was a big city problem, not something that they had to worry about. The isolation of the communities favored local power holders just as it had in Minamata. Local fishing cooperatives could not afford to lose their market in a pollution panic, which meant people applying for official certification as a Minamata disease sufferer risked ostracism.

Much as they had done in Canada, Tsuchimoto and a group of supporters brought the Minamata films on a tour of these islands, with the goal of screening them in every village on their coasts. They eventually succeeded, holding screenings and information sessions at 76 locations over the late summer and fall of 1977. Sleeping in local community halls and men's clubs, often holding screenings outdoors, they brought the films to approximately 8500 people. Tsuchimoto collected many anecdotes in his record of the trip that suggest the screenings helped people understand that loss of sensation, tremors, and birth defects might have causes other than what their doctors told them, and gave courage to those who had considered applying for recognition or had tried and failed (Tsuchimoto [1979] 2000).

¹⁶ These numbers refer only to the first, longer trip. Numbers for the second trip are unknown (Tsuchimoto [1979] 2000, p. 87).

4. Conclusions

Tsuchimoto continued to be involved with Minamata for the rest of his life.¹⁷ But we have already come a long way from Hani's *Children of the classroom*. As argued, Hani and Tsuchimoto share certain ideas and commitments. They both believe that it is possible for filmmakers and the film itself to be fundamentally intersubjective. This is grounded in actual collaboration in most of their filmmaking, usually by sharing rushes and keeping up ongoing discussions with people appearing in the film. But it is also underwritten by a belief that intersubjective processes are more basic to human being than "the individual," let alone "the author." It is interesting that in the discourse of Euroamerican social documentary, the relationship between filmmaker and filmed subject is a territory that produces deep anxiety. It is possibly the most intensely theorized aspect of documentary ethics. And indeed, this scrutiny is probably justified insofar as *cinéma vérité*, as we have seen, operates according to a model wherein the director arrogates the empowered role of an investigator (an observer or "diver") seeking a truth conceived to exist apart from themselves, within the personal, private lives of their subjects. The filmmakers' positioning raises questions about the viewers' positioning as well: Does the viewer identify with the filmed subjects or do the films (re)affirm the viewer's superiority over them by encouraging identification with the filmmaker or camera?

Japanese small-crew social documentary of the 1960s and 1970s has not been as centrally concerned with these questions. Rather than being a mark of the filmmakers' ethical naiveté, however, I would argue that the reason may lie in a fundamentally different understanding of social reality—as intersubjective and fluid, and a different investment in the image—as something effective rather than revealing. From the outset, there is no explicit or implicit claim that a particular film reveals an objectively valid deeper truth. Hani urges that documentary aspire to being a sensuous expression of a specifically located (and therefore not universal) intersubjective context that evolves incessantly through time, with the aim that viewers come to the end of the film with an altered sense of their own life space, one more complexly interconnected with the subjects on the screen and their struggles, not as a way to gain objective knowledge or in the mode of identification, but as an expanded and therefore more exposed and precarious sense of interrelation. These ideas are closely imbricated with filmmaking and film exhibiting practices, especially for the filmmakers who emerged a few years after Hani. If Hani was responsive to people appearing in his films over spans of a few months, Tsuchimoto, Ogawa, and Sato extended that engagement into lived practices, producing series of films over decades that shift and adjust according to the dynamics of the worlds being filmed, and exhibition practices similarly sensitive to the life-worlds of their viewers (on Ogawa, see [Nornes 2007](#)). For the most part, Hani's viewer remains an abstract, bourgeois audience while for Tsuchimoto and his cohort, viewers were specific individuals in need of particular forms of knowledge presented in particular ways. For both, the intended effect of film viewing was to upset the status quo by connecting the viewer to different (not necessarily deeper or more universally valid) perspectives and positions.

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¹⁷ In the late 1970s, he co-directed *My town, my youth* (*Waga machi, waga seishun*, 1978), which followed a group of young people with congenital Minamata disease as they organized a public concert featuring the popular female vocalist Ishikawa Sayuri. In 1981 he made *The Minamata mural* (*Minamata no zu monogatari*, 1981), about the artists Maruki Iri and Toshi, well-known from their murals depicting the atomic bombings, as they completed a mural about the tragedy of Minamata. In the 1980s, Tsuchimoto's interests expanded: He directed two films about nuclear power and its dangers, *Tsuchimoto Noriaki's nuclear scrapbook* (*Genpatsu kirinuki cho*, 1982), and *Umitori—Robbing the sea at Shimokita Peninsula* (*Umitori—Shimokita Hantō, Hamasekine*, 1984), and an ambitious work on Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation, *Afghan spring* (*Yomigaere karēzu*, 1989). In his final works, however, he returned to the subject of Minamata with *Memories of Kawamoto Teruo—Minamata: The person who dug the well* (*Kaisō—Kawamoto Teruo, Minamata ido o hotta otoko*, 1999) and *Minamata Diary—Visiting resurrected souls* (*Minamata nikki—yomigaeru tamashii o tazunete*, 2004).

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