

Private Reality: Hara Kazuo's Films

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While documentary has a decidedly peripheral position in most national cinemas across the globe, the form has enjoyed relative prestige in the Japanese film world. Initially, this was a peculiar side benefit of global warfare in the 1930s and 1940s. However, even in the postwar era, documentary's profile was never lost on the film community. Directors like Imamura Shohei, Teshigawara Hiroshi, Hani Susumu, Yoshida Yoshishige, and Oshima Nagisa moved easily between fiction and nonfiction. Written histories, in both Japanese and English, never fail to include consideration of the most important documentarists: Kamei Fumio, Tsuchimoto Noriaki, Ogawa Shinsuke, and Hara Kazuo. With the deaths of Ogawa and Kamei, as well as the relative inactivity of Hani and Tsuchimoto, the younger Hara Kazuo has taken the lead in pushing the Japanese documentary into new, unmapped territories.

Hara's filmography reveals a considerable variety of subject matter—a portrait of a victim of cerebral palsy, a deeply personal account of his relationships with women, a radical investigation into wartime atrocities, and the biographies of a novelist and a filmmaker. However, it is easy to tease out certain consistencies, particular and peculiar passions. While Hara is

always undergoing transformation, the concerns of his films and the style in which these issues are worked out are inevitably affiliated with the filmmaker's sense of his own subjectivity as both social actor and artist. Hara's approach to postwar Japanese history eschews any easy realism, as it is a representation of the world linked to the measure of his own sight. The measuring stick of the filmmaker's own look searches out private spaces, piercing them with his presence with a singular obsession. This tendency reveals as much about Hara as a Japanese documentary filmmaker as it does about documentary realism itself. While there have been a number of excellent interviews with Hara and surveys of his life and work, Hara's relationship to his own tradition of documentary has gone unexplored.¹ This essay will discuss the films of Hara Kazuo against the backdrop of Japanese nonfiction film in order to consider larger questions about the realism of the documentary moving image.

Born months before the end of World War II in 1945, Hara came of filmmaking age during a turbulent time for Japanese documentary. He graduated from high school in Yamaguchi Prefecture and worked for *Asahi* newspaper as a photographer. Through this contact, he was able to move to the capital in 1966 to study at a photography school (Tokyo Sogo Shashin Senmon Gakko) while working for *Asahi* at night. However, he quit school after only half a year. According to Hara, the only exercise that taught him anything was a portrait assignment: approach a stranger and take his or her portrait from no more than a meter away, not from behind but full frontal and not carefully but in a "sudden assault."² It was absolutely terrifying and positively educational. In a sense, it became the work ethic of Hara's subsequent work in filmmaking.

Hara continued to pursue a career in still photography while working at a school for children with disabilities. He finally staged an individual exhibition on disabled children at the Ginza's Canon Salon in 1969. At the same time, he became increasingly interested in making movies, choosing television as his entry point. Television documentaries of the time were experiencing a radical shift in style. At the very moment when the radical films about Japan's massive social protests became iconic for drawing a contrast between the styles of television news reportage and independent documentaries—between styles that *take sides* with either the powerful or the powerless—there were certain spaces in television available for experimentation that blurred some of the very same boundaries.³ Takeda Miyuki, the woman he married in 1968, was also interested in filmmaking and ap-

peared in Tawara Soichiro's documentary *I Sing the Present: Fuji Keiko, June Scene* (*Watashi wa genzai o utau: Fuji Keiko, roku gatsu no fûkei*, 1970) for Tokyo Channel 12. The next year they appeared as a couple with their newborn in Tawara's *Bride of Japan* ("Nihon no Hanayume"), another documentary for Tokyo Channel 12. This was also the year they started filming *Sayonara CP* with Kobayashi Sachiko.

Sayonara CP drew on Hara's experiences working with people suffering from disabilities. The film featured Yokota Hiroshi, a man whose body was devastated by cerebral palsy, leaving much of his body limp. Hara's approach was far from conventional, as his collaboration with Yokota cut straight to issues of the representation of handicapped bodies. With the exception of Tsuchimoto's newly released *Minamata: The Victims and Their World* (*Minamata: Kanja-san to sono sekai*, 1971), documentaries approaching the topic of mental or physical handicaps were toothless exercises that simply allowed spectators to empathize with the subject's plight, policing the borders between the healthy and the ill. The consequences for such a delimitation was ghettoization of the ill from social acceptance and the creation of a culture of shame that excluded the handicapped from full participation as subjects in the social world.

Hara sensed the enormous role cinematic representations had in this process, and so his portrait of Yokota attacked the sensibilities established by conventional images of disability. In the film's most striking and controversial scene, Yokota strikes out into the public realm without a wheelchair . . . and without clothing. He literally drags his naked body down the street. The film has a remarkable level of self-reflexivity, which exposes Hara to, indeed, invites criticism of, the filmmakers' unorthodox strategy of empowerment through representation. For example, in an extraordinary scene, Yokota's wife, who suffers from the same disease, threatens divorce if the filmmaking does not stop. She argues forcefully that such aggressive tactics are only playing to the camera as a monstrosity. This will surely result in nothing other than a perpetuation, if not intensification, of the discrimination they suffer.

Sayonara CP came out in 1972. While it did not achieve the notoriety of Hara's later films, it did make a mark on the history of representations of illness in Japan. This was a tradition that began in the postwar era with Kamei Fumio's use of the atomic bombings as a counterpoint to the aesthetic of healthiness during the war, a tradition continued in the work of Tsuchimoto Noriaki (the mercury poisoning of Minamata disease), Yana-

gisawa Hisao (disabled children), Haneda Sumiko (Alzheimer's victims), Sato Makoto (Niigata Minamata disease), and other important documentarists. To this very day, Hara and Kobayashi regularly show the film in hospitals, clinics, and medical schools. In addition to raising ethical issues underpinning public representations of the disabled, the film puts into play certain dynamics that characterize all of Hara's work: an exploration of and penetration into the line drawn between the public and the private. This is a vector codified into the very title of his next film, *Extreme Private Eros: Love Song, 1974* (*Kyokushiteki erosu: Renka 1974, 1974*).

Here Hara brought his own life before the camera, using his material existence to represent the larger social world and its politics. Considering how the period of this production coincided with massive changes in his personal situation, it was a brazen move. Hara's disintegrating marriage ended in divorce from Takeda Miyuki in 1973; the same year, he and producer Kobayashi Sachiko gave birth to a baby girl and shortly thereafter entered marriage. Using the camera to retain some vestige of his relationship with Takeda, Hara follows her on an extraordinary journey (with Kobayashi along recording the sound). Takeda leaves a relationship with a woman to travel to Okinawa, where she gives birth to a mixed race child by herself, camera running, on the kitchen floor. Surrounded by a prostitution system set up on the peripheries of the U.S. military bases, she starts a day care center for the working women and gets involved in political action around the brothels. She joins a commune for feminists and ends up working as a stripper at a nightclub for American soldiers.⁴ At one level, Hara's film consolidates a long running strand in Japanese documentary: films on the U.S. military bases, which were pioneered by Kamei Fumio with *Children of the Bases* (*Kichi no kodomotachi*, 1953) and *Sunagawa: A Record of Flowing Blood* (*Ryûchi no kiroku: Sunagawa*, 1956) and Higashi Yoichi's *Okinawa* (1968). However, Hara's film was radically different in the way this larger social landscape was intimately tied to his private life. As he explains, "In the sixties and seventies, there was a feeling that if the individual did not cause change, nothing would change. At the time, I wanted to make a movie, and I was wondering how I could make a statement for change. There was much talk of family-imperialism (*kazoku teikokushugi*). One of the strong sentiments of the time was that family-imperialism should be destroyed. I thought that if I could put my own family under the camera, all our emotions, our privacy, I wondered if I might break taboos about the family."⁵

The approach of the film hinges on an exposure of the private and its conversion into public space and event. In its most intimate moments, with Hara making love with camera in hand, it inspires awkward embarrassment. Takeda's single-minded determination to be independent and socially engaged often turns on Hara with a vengeance. For example, at a beach, Takeda and Kobayashi (holding the microphone and wearing earphones) discuss Hara as he films their conversation. Takeda lashes out at Hara, warning the new bride that he is just using her and she is doomed to be thrown away. At one point, Takeda's political activism around the prostitutes gets Hara beaten up. For over a decade, film theory by people like Oshima Nagisa and Matsumoto Toshio had been calling for a documentary foregrounding the artist's subjectivity, but nowhere had this been so thoroughly realized than in Hara's physical and emotional immersion in *Extreme Private Eros: Love Song*, 1974. It may not render an objective accounting of the situation in Okinawa or of Japan in 1974, but it does offer a palpable, embodied knowledge about the life around military bases, the often whimsical sides of political activism, and the deep impact of feminism on adult relationships. This world, Japan in 1974, is measured through the network of human intersubjectivities surrounding Hara Kazuo.

While the film is often seen in terms of documentary voyeurism, it may actually reveal something more fundamental about nonfiction moving imagery itself. William Rothman has recently argued that a dialectic between the public and the private is key to understanding the power of direct cinema style.⁶ Drawing on a previous argument from *The "I" of Cinema*, he links the classical Hollywood style to the direct cinema of Drew Associates, unlikely partners indeed.⁷ Both, Rothman asserts, share the same philosophical concerns in that they rely on a play of public impression and private response to represent human reality. In the earlier work, he suggests that a stylistic feature such as shot/reverse shot is based on granting access to an internal, subjective, private view of the world—access through the facial "mask" presented in reverse shots. Direct cinema depends on a similar foundation: "The *cinéma vérité* cameras revealed its human subjects continually putting on masks, taking them off, putting them on again, and so on, as they reacted to the spectacle of the world, prepared their next ventures into the public realm, performed on the world's stage, and withdrew again into privacy to which the camera grants us access."⁸

Thus, the documentary offers up a public world as a "succession of private moments," especially through cinematic devices like the close-up. Viewed

by mass audiences in the privacy of their own homes, these private moments again are transformed into public events. *Extreme Private Eros* and *Sayonara CP* share this dynamic to a large degree. However, they also point to a politics of the private in ways that develop the circumstances and implications far beyond Rothman's parallel.

The grounds for such a discourse, which complicate any easy division between the private and the social, were set in Japanese documentary theory itself. Thus, a contextualization of Hara's work—particularly its use of collective for individual modes—is crucial to understanding Hara's singular innovation as a contribution to the transformation of documentary realism in Japan.

In the 1950s, television was fast establishing itself as the dominant form of distribution for nonfiction work, creating an explosion in production that hadn't been seen since the war, when the government forced theaters to show documentary shorts. With a new distribution outlet hungry for material, production companies sprouted up to feed the demand. Because politics is never far from issues of style in documentary, it should not be surprising that this relatively luxurious climate would breed some experimentation and questioning of given forms of realism. As in many other parts of the world, the Left had long made its mark on documentary film. With growing generational rifts between new and old in Japan, tensions grew over the most appropriate ways of representing the referential world. The stakes of cinematic realism felt exceedingly high with the impending U.S. security treaty renewal in 1960, which locked Japan into a bilateral relationship under America's nuclear umbrella.

The epicenter for what would be a shake-up of the Japanese documentary world was the Iwanami Publishing Company. One of Japan's oldest book publishers, it decided to cash in on the new markets for nonfiction film by creating a filmmaking unit. The most prominent of the staff members was the young Hani Susumu. Hani's commitment to innovations in film style is evident in his first two documentaries for Iwanami, which sent shock waves through the Japanese film world. They were called *Children of the Classroom* (*Kyoshitsu no kodomotachi*, 1954) and *Children Who Draw Pictures* (*E o kaku kodomotachi*, 1956), and were observational documentaries shot in elementary school classrooms. With their radical spontaneity, these films mark an important stylistic and theoretical break in the history of Japanese documentary, and we can draw a direct line between them and the practices of Hara Kazuo some twenty years later. Indeed, English-language criticism

of Hara's work is quick to compare him to his Euro-American colleagues, from Rouch to Morris. However, these are ultimately arbitrary linkages. Hara has far more in common with someone like Hani than any foreign filmmaker. This is not to essentialize some ephemeral Japanese style of realism but to point to an approach to documentary that has a history that is analogous to developments in other parts of the world while being supported by a rhetoric that was very nearly hermetically sealed from theories from abroad.

Hani is a case in point. His was primarily an observational style. He brought cameras into the classrooms of young students and closely watched their interactions. While they were initially concerned that the equipment and adult camera operators would distract the children—well, children are easily distracted—they quickly forgot about the filmmakers and went about the business of playing, drawing, and learning. Other filmmakers at Iwanami attempted similar approaches to representing the social world, most notably Haneda Sumiko in *Village Politics* (*Mura no seiji*, 1958). In this film, Haneda detailed the activities of a group of women in village Japan as they attempted to balance work and participation in local politics. Following Hani's lead, she took care not to interfere with the women, choosing instead to capture the events transpiring before the camera in an observational mode. The women interact in daily life and discuss local politics in meetings, apparently oblivious to the presence of the filmmakers. The result of this approach was a highly observational cinema, one, I might add, that significantly predates the innovations of Drew Associates and its direct cinema by half a decade.

The spontaneity captured by Hani's films bowled people over in the mid-1950s. Japanese audiences were accustomed to a documentary realism that involved the treatment of human subjects as actors (the cinematic kind). This had roots in both Soviet theories of typage and in long-standing filmmaking practices with a lineage reaching back to the China War. In the 1930s, an enormous amount of energy went into theorizing documentary film. It began with the writings of the Proletarian Film League of Japan in the late 1920s and early 1930s, and when this movement was suppressed by the government, critics from a wide variety of political positions developed the theories until the end of World War II.⁹ Some of Japan's greatest philosophers and film theorists wrote on documentary, including Tosaka Jun, Nakai Masakazu, Hasegawa Nyozeikan, and Imamura Taihei. The writings of authors like Vertov, Eisenstein, Moholy-Nagi, and Rotha were

translated and debated. During the China War, the government introduced forced screenings, providing an unquenchable market for nonfiction, and this energy pushed documentary from fairly straightforward newsreels and compilation films to something far more creative. At this early stage in the history of documentary, this meant a brand of realism closely aligned with fiction filmmaking. Filmmakers would take people in their natural settings and direct them through scenes using rudimentary scenarios; these scenes were embedded in larger, nonnarrative structures of compiled documentary footage. Ironically, while the war feature film drew closer to documentary, the nonfiction form gradually integrated more and more narrative techniques. This tendency was further energized by a translation of Paul Rotha's *Documentary Film* in 1938, which brought news of a documentary movement whose engine was the "creative treatment of actuality." For many, this was none other than the inclusion of scripted narrative with nonactors.

The inertia behind this style of documentary realism propelled it across the apparent breach of 1945, when Japan seemed to undergo an overnight political and social conversion. While the politics of documentary shifted from Japan's wartime brand of nationalism to a postwar democratization—if not radicalization—the largely fictive form of documentary realism remained standard and stable. A postwar film on the democratic activities of a village looked little different than a documentary on a similar village preparing for the American wartime invasion. Hani's films began to upset this equilibrium, and people began questioning the claims the standard approach made for an adequate representation of the phenomenal world. The relative freedom of Iwanami's approach to management at all stages of production allowed its employees to experiment within the bounds of the public relations (PR) film. The brightest of the bunch formed Blue Group (*Aou no kai*), including Kuroki Kazuo, Higashi Yoichi, Suzuki Tatsuo, Tamura Masaki, Tsuchimoto Noriaki, and Ogawa Shinsuke. They discussed filmmaking and theory. They would show rough cuts for feedback and perform experiments. At the same time, they began pushing the limits of the PR film, converting typical shorts on, say, steel factories into massive cinemscope spectacles. Not surprisingly, working for large corporations soon proved constricting. Their creative and political energies could not be contained, and they fled from Iwanami en masse in 1960 and went independent. They were subsequently joined by Hani himself, who made feature films with a strong documentary touch, such as *Bad Boys* (*Furyo sho-*

nen, 1959), *He and She* (*Kanojo to kare*, 1963), and *Nanami: Inferno of First Love* (*Hatsu koi: Jigokuhen*, 1968).

Hara Kazuo was becoming fascinated with the cinema at precisely this point, as the former Iwanami PR filmmakers began producing completely personal works in the mid-1960s. After leaving Iwanami, they had quickly aligned themselves with the New Left, a political break conjoined to a stylistic rupture. They completely eschewed the reenactments with nonactors, a continuous practice since the 1930s, and explicitly took sides with political movements of one sort or another. Higashi went to Okinawa while Tsuchimoto and Ogawa made films at the universities, behind the lines with the student movement. Then Tsuchimoto moved to Kyushu to record the devastating impact of Minamata disease, while Ogawa and his film collective (Ogawa Pro) joined the farmers in Sanrizuka, who were being evicted from their land for the construction of the new international airport at Narita.¹⁰ With the appearance of these films, the work of older filmmakers appeared marked and inauthentic, and documentary realism experienced a sea change.

This was one of those moments when theory and practice evolved together, when the filmmakers were theorizing their own work. Artists like Matsumoto Toshio and Oshima Nagisa attacked the older styles as nothing more than a continuation of wartime conventions. They held that filmmakers adhering to the standard form of realism exhibited a Stalinist authoritarianism that restricted artistic and political expression for the sake of a faux objectivism. This style of documentary realism, they reasoned, was predicated upon a total suppression of the artist's subjectivity. Ironically, Hani's observational mode also involved a similar kind of suppression, even if it made the artifice of the mainstream style obvious. So, rather than continuing in Hani's direction—and there is no indication that they were aware of American direct cinema or the Rouch-style *vérité*—they moved documentary toward the avant-garde through an impressive combination of critical discourse and filmmaking practice. Matsumoto, for example, made experimental documentaries like *Security Treaty* (*AMPO Joyaku*, 1960), which shocked the documentary world with a surrealist approach to compilation and an agitprop narration. Other filmmakers followed his lead, both in filmmaking and in criticism and theory. These new experimental documentaries were the films that Hara was watching in the 1960s.

Hara was a fan of every genre of feature film, but it wasn't until he moved to Tokyo that he paid serious attention to documentary. It was probably impossible to miss this form of filmmaking at the time, considering the ex-

citement over the radical student movement films of Tsuchimoto Noriaki, Ogawa Shinsuke, and many others. Like most young people interested in politics, Hara found himself drawn to the films from Ogawa Productions' Sanrizuka series. They were shown in public halls instead of regular theaters. The lines were long, and the energy at screenings was incredibly impressive. The theaters were often decorated for the film; spectators would wear helmets, sing songs, chant, give speeches, and hold after-film discussions. Years later, Hara recalls,

I was deeply attracted to Ogawa Pro, the collective itself. . . . Actually, I never joined, but did think about it. Still, jumping into the middle of that kind of thing, I just couldn't imagine myself in that kind of collective. . . . Those people were, after all, from the sixties, one generation earlier. Since we were from the seventies . . . there's the question of who exactly is that self that's participating in the struggle. One-self . . . who are you? We'd face that individual, our self, and ask that question. . . . Who are you, this individual that wants to express something? That's how we thought. For example, even if I entered Ogawa Pro, in the end it is my self that's wrapped up inside there. While I kept thinking that creating things within a collective was incredibly attractive, in the end those Ogawa Pro people were already doing it, so as for me, I might as well try and do it from this place called the individual.¹¹

This comment edges us toward the issue that defines Hara's work, the problem that both sets him apart from his contemporaries and places him within the larger stream of Japanese documentary. Theorists, journalists, and filmmakers posed the nonfiction film as the trace of a meeting between human beings, between filmmaker and a collaborating subject. Not surprisingly, the terminology in Japanese is significantly different. Writers and filmmakers always speak of a *shutai* (subject/filmmaker) and a *taisho* (object/filmed). By way of contrast, Euro-American theory speaks of the sign and its bracketed referent. It is the difference between discussing human beings or a material reality. Thus, while the Japanese discourse arguably suffers from a philosophical poverty, it simultaneously focuses on the qualities of representations of human beings in a language available to artists without specialized training in psychoanalysis or other critical systems. In other words, Japanese documentarists take issues of representation extremely seriously and come to their work armed with a body of thought grounded in a politicized sociality.¹²

Therefore, for Hara the very notion of private must be undergirded by a regulation coming from without, which is to say the dynamic between private and public is enforced through mores and social controls that penetrate and construct private space. This renders the binary opposition between the two terms relatively meaningless. Hara feels compelled to uncover this secret relationship of the private and public by using the camera to provoke policing, making the political implications visible and palpable. In this sense, that policing is an activity from the lived world and at the same time a process deeply inscribed in the film: "Within this private area, I think there's something like a contradiction that we hold. . . . To speak of this privacy, we talk about individual people's values and sensitivities. When you look at the sensitivities and feelings of those kinds of individuals, I end up thinking that within their own self-contradictions the establishment or something systemic (*seidoteki*) is thoroughly incorporated. Therefore, regarding that systemic thing, when we strike out with the camera, the target we face is, after all, that world of individual feelings. To this end, what is necessary is stepping into the private sphere."¹³

Extreme Private Eros pointed to a transformation in Japanese documentary from the collective modes of filmmaking best represented by Ogawa Pro and Tsuchimoto to the highly individualized and artisanal practice being pioneered by Hara. This change, turning around a vague point in the mid-1970s, is deeply connected to cultural shifts Japan shared with other localities in the world, a move from forms of committed, collective, social activism and public passions to more private concerns. While a similar vector in the West led to theories and art practices that recognized the political dimensions of the private, forms of so-called private film in Japan ended up largely apolitical. Hara's work stands out for its intellectual vigor and constant provocation of privacy politics. After the unqualified success of *Extreme Private Eros*, he went thirteen years before releasing his next major film. In the meantime, Hara and Kobayashi made *History Starts Here: "Women, Now . . ."* (*Rekishii wa koko ni hajimaru 'Onnatachi wa ima . . .'*), a television documentary for the TBS network in 1975. He survived largely by working as an assistant director for major filmmakers like Imamura Shohei (on *Vengeance Is Mine* [*Fukushu suru wa ware ni are*, 1979] and *Ei ja nai ka* [1980]), Urayama Kiriro (on *The Children of the Sun* [*Taiyo no ko (tedanofwa)*, 1980]), and Kumai Kei (on *Sea and Poison* [*Umi to dokuyaku*, 1986]). All the while, he worked on his next film, *The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On* (*Yuki yukite shingun*), which was released to an explosive reception in 1987. In addition to a long run at the prestigious Eurospace Theater in Tokyo,

Hara received the New Director Award from the Japan Film Directors' Association, as well as prizes at the Berlin and Cinéma du Reel festivals. It was one of the first Japanese documentaries to find a distributor in the United States since Hani's *Children Who Draw*.¹⁴

The film is about veteran Okuzaki Kenzo's search for the truth behind the deaths of two comrades in arms in 1945. Okuzaki is well known in Japan for his loud protests about wartime atrocities and the need for politicians and the emperor to take responsibility for the war. This activism included outrageous stunts like shooting a steel *pachinko* ball at Emperor Hirohito and passing out pornographic leaflets depicting the imperial family. Imamura Shohei introduced Okuzaki to Hara in 1981 after deciding not to make a film about the activist himself. Hara took on the project, following Okuzaki in his single-minded quest.

Okuzaki is, by anyone's measure, relatively insane. In the pursuit of history, he is a "dogged empiricist," to borrow a phrase from Jeffrey and Kenneth Ruoff. Hauling Hara all over Japan, Okuzaki is committed to nailing down the facts about the suspicious deaths once and for all. However, in his pursuit of "truth" Okuzaki resorts to constant "lies." The basic structure of the film revolves around Okuzaki's visits — with Hara in tow — to his old army buddies. One by one, Okuzaki interrogates them about the events of 1945. Gradually, a picture takes shape: Okuzaki was not present because he had been captured in the final months of the war in New Guinea, the two comrades were shot by a firing squad composed of his own unit, and the charges were desertion. The problem is that the desertion charges and subsequent executions occurred after the war was over.

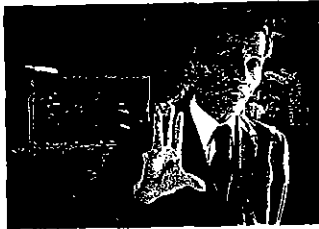
Okuzaki resorts to unconventional interview tactics for the film. He abruptly shows up at the homes of the remaining members of his unit (twelve elderly men from the thirty survivors of a contingent of troops numbering one thousand).¹⁵ His unannounced arrival catches them off guard, and they hesitate in brushing him off. The presence of the brother and sister of each dead soldier probably contributed to their politeness, although Hara's film crew might have had something to do with it as well. In each meeting, Okuzaki and the relatives plead and cajole the men into telling their stories. Each offers a small piece of the puzzle before telling them to let the dead lie in peace. Finally, in the face of such insistent stonewalling, Okuzaki suddenly jumps from his seat and begins beating one of the old men. Hara continued to film.

Needless to say, this raises a spectrum of issues regarding the ethics of documentary representation. From this point on, every encounter is

marked by the inclination to use violence on Okuzaki's part and Hara's willingness to provoke and record this violence. Okuzaki now greets the obfuscations with threats that haunt each encounter: "I've shot pachinko balls at the emperor, so don't think I won't beat you up." Okuzaki even attacks one man recuperating from an operation. As a spectator of this violence, we are pushed off balance by the gravity of the final revelations. The two soldiers were indeed executed by their own men after the war. This was a standard practice: the weakest, lowest-ranked, and most problematic members of the unit were singled out for execution and cannibalization. The two men had been eaten.

These revelations are profound, and the force of their disclosure *feels* unfathomable, immeasurably heavy. This epistemological weightiness comes largely from Hara's penetration of the private spaces where this knowledge resided, in that most private realm of human memory. However, this personal form of media also has a deeply social level. The memories protected by such privacy were networked by a national suppression of discourses engaging wartime violence and responsibility. As one of Okuzaki's interlocutors recalls, cannibalism in New Guinea in 1945 was a way of life for the emperor's army. The postwar, mnemonic defenses circled around this knowledge. Its shunting into quiet, private spaces was a complex process connected to other struggles over wartime memory and responsibility, issues such as violence against civilians, the abysmal treatment of prisoners of war, and the military's organized efforts at forced prostitution.

The exposure of this private space relies distinctly on a multivalent performance. Okuzaki's outrageous, flamboyant style is clearly a spectacle designed for his interlocutors and for Hara. He answers threats to call the police by putting in the call himself. When the relatives of the slain soldiers tire of Okuzaki's manner and strategies, he simply has his wife act as the sister and an anarchist friend play the brother. Even the violence itself is performative; they kick and wail and thrash about on the ground. But Okuzaki is more interested in provoking that revelation of memory than in injuring his rhetorical opponent. This use of performance points us to the rhetoric of documentary as well.



1. Okuzaki demands the truth in *The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On*, Kazuo Hara, 1987. (Still courtesy of the University of Michigan, Department of Asian Languages and Cultures.)

Susan Scheibler has argued that most documentary is a form of constative event. The constative is a use of language that guarantees authority and authenticity. There is a sticky, snug fit between sign and referent. For Scheibler, the constative is the foundation of traditional documentary realism, which draws on the indexical qualities of the photo-mechanical image to assert a confidence in the adequacy and completeness of its representation of the world. If the traditional documentary is predicated on a constative enunciation, the newer, essayistic forms of documentary are performative. The films of documentarists like Trinh T. Minh-ha, Errol Morris, Jill Godmilow, and Marlon Riggs are characterized by breaks, ruptures, and reflexivity. While the reality effect of most documentary relies on the human desire for the constative, Scheibler argues that the documentaries of these artists capitalize on performative enunciative acts. They circulate around the constative and performative in the form of a "struggle [that] plays itself out in the discursive arena by performatively confronting the constative with its own assumptions of authority, authenticity, veracity, verifiability."¹⁶

Austin himself called the performative "perfectly straightforward utterances with ordinary verbs in the first person singular present indicative active . . . if a person makes an utterance of this sort we should say that he is doing something rather than merely saying something."¹⁷ Thus, the performative treats facticity as less important; it is an enunciation outside of verification, one that sidesteps binaries like true and false and eschews a straightforward, conventional documentary realism. Bill Nichols appended his modes of documentary with the "performative" to account for them.¹⁸ Michael Renov has more convincingly called them "essayistic" works.¹⁹ However, both Renov and Nichols use their terms to isolate a variety of very recent documentaries and describe their formal and epistemological innovations, Renov to valorize them and Nichols to top off a historical time line. Hara's practice points to the ways in which performance and privacy appear to be fundamental to documentary itself, suggesting that the recent phenomenon of the essayistic documentary is predicated on something more basic.

Hara's action documentary points us toward the performative in the everyday, a performative enunciation that makes documentary itself possible. His films rarely exhibit the experimental qualities of the filmmakers listed above. Rather, in the tradition of his colleagues in the Japanese documentary, his cinema is always the record of a meeting between the film-

maker and the filmed, between subject and object. His films begin with the presence of the filmmaker penetrating private space, exposing it to the glaringly public view of the cinema. The dramas that unfold depend upon a slippery sense that the events unfolding are performative acts rather than observed reality mindlessly captured by the camera. The difference between the violence of, for example, the Rodney King videotape and Hara's films is that the latter are always self-conscious performances for the camera, for the world. The violence is real enough, and it hurts, whether it be Takeda Miyuki berating Hara or Okuzaki Kenzo kicking an army buddy, but it is a violence that requires the documentary cinema.

What Hara's films suggest is that most documentary is constituted by performative enunciations masquerading as constative ones and that the most private-appearing spaces are thoroughly raked by public systems and gazes. The extremes he is willing to go to foreground this triad of film/filmmaker/filmed teases us with the possibility that the documentary as a form relies heavily on the conversion of all human action and language as performative enunciations for the camera. It is only that Hara's cinema teases this performance to the surface by playing with the lines between the private and public space. Without this, documentary would be nothing but surveillance. The lives Hara's subjects offer up are not simply false or fictive, but they are not exactly innocently "true" either—even with Okuzaki's obsessive quest to uncover lies. There is a winking conspiracy between these charismatic social actors, director Hara, and their audiences. His next film, a portrait of the famous novelist Inoue Mitsuharu, sheds light on this problematic.

In the midst of shooting *A Full Life*, I came across Hara in the United States, where he was enjoying an extended visit under the auspices of the Asian Cultural Council and the Cultural Ministry. Based in New York, he was enthusiastically researching the history of documentary at places like the Museum of Modern Art and New York University. Undoubtedly, he was driven in part by a problem that had arisen in his Inoue project: the novelist was dying. A film that was to portray the life and life energy of a charismatic author was suddenly diverted to representing his death. And upon that death how does one go about representing the life no longer present? Hara turned to issues of performance, and that brought fundamental questions about documentary form to the fore.

The first image of the film is a grotesque and amusing dance by Inoue in geisha drag. It then alternates between interviews, scenes of Inoue teaching

seminars, and fictional sequences. The latter are dreamy reenactments of the novelist's early years; they emerge full blown from his nostalgic reminiscences, which are laced with the sharp, ironic humor of bragging. Inoue was clearly another charismatic, magnetic personality for Hara. Having been invited in, Hara delights in edging closer and closer to this man's life, loves, and impending death. The filmmaker goes as far as documenting, in close-up, Inoue's open heart surgery.

Finally, upon the novelist's death, Hara's continuing investigation begins to turn up one surprise after another. Inoue's date of birth was inconsistent. He didn't drop out of school. The novelist's story about losing his virginity with a young Korean prostitute was fabricated. All of the key circumstances of Inoue's early life, stories repeated constantly over the years, information featured in the histories of modern Japanese literature, were fiction. The novelist had written his own biography. His entire life was a performance!

Hara exploits this discovery to interrogate the shifting boundaries between fiction and documentary from a new perspective. As an artist, he initially deploys fictional re-creation of history as a constative reiteration of the life described in interviews. There is nothing particularly innovative about this. However, upon the discovery of Inoue's fanciful recollections—the *writing* of his life—Hara brings back his fictional sequences, turning them against the interviews to point to a performance at the heart of the interviews' utterances. He peels away the constative stickiness between oral interview and history. To extend Hara's observations and consider the implications of this for documentary as a form, we might turn to the work of Margaret Morse.

In *Virtualities*, Morse makes a convincing case for understanding the powerful cultural position of television in the late twentieth century. She is interested in the way we have come to grant human qualities like subjectivity to machines, from computers to television. Human beings have a deep need for intersubjective engagement, a desire that television engages as a machine featuring a simulation of human subjectivity. This is effectively accomplished in television through full frontal, direct address by charismatic anchors using words like *we* and *you*. Drawing on Derrida, she argues that the gap between enunciation and meaning is what makes television possible: "The argument to be made here is *not* that once there was something sincere and unmediated called face-to-face conversation of which exchanges mediated by television and the computer are inherently

inauthentic or debased simulations. If anything, machine subjects are made possible by the fundamental gap that has always existed between language and the world and between *utterances*—be they subjective or impersonal—and the act of enunciation—whether it is produced by a human subject or has been delegated to machines.”²⁰

Morse points to a human need for and pleasure in being recognized as a partner in discourse—even if a machine stands in between subjects. This explains one of the reasons why documentary has persisted for a century, even if relegated to a marginalized position, and why it came to settle into modes so reliant on the interview and direct address. Most critical attention in documentary theory has gone to the innovative and politically progressive work of performative documentary (such as *Nitrate Kisses* and *Tongues Untied*), for all the reasons charted by Scheibler. Because of this focus, documentary theory and criticism have not dealt adequately with (post-direct-cinema) television, even though the vast majority of documentary is now distributed through this medium. While the relationship between documentary realism and television has yet to be mapped, we can see that the emergence of interview-heavy documentary coincides with the rise of television as a cultural form. The pleasures of documentary may not be reduceable to the virtual engagement with charismatic on-screen subjectivities, but it certainly is a fundamental starting point.

Hara intrigues because there is no question that the interview—with spectacularly charismatic figures—is his starting point, yet he diverts us to another dimension in intersubjective engagement mediated by cameras and screens. Indeed, from a historical perspective the formal break represented by Ogawa and Tsuchimoto was precisely the search for a style that foregrounded the intersubjective nature of nonfiction filmmaking by immersing the documentary process in social communities under siege. Hara extended their innovations by turning the camera to the self with his “action documentary.” Interestingly enough, his 1998 documentary on his mentor, Urayama Kiriro, is the culmination of his increasing reliance on the interview.²¹ However, it is significant that Hara chooses his objects so carefully. He clearly takes delight in approaching a highly glamorous and even dangerous object. His own humanity and his desire for discursive exchange with these seductive other subjects are mediated by machines at a different level; his machine is the camera. This is what is so distinctive about Hara’s cinema. Recall the opening sequence of *Extreme Private Eros*, where he states this dynamic specifically: “I have this relationship; I was losing her,

and couldn’t let her go. It seemed the only way to keep our relationship going was to make a film.” It is also what he has most strongly in common with his fellow documentarists in Japan, who have—at least in the post-war era—defined documentary practice in terms of a relationship between *shutai* = subject = filmmaker and *taisho* = object = filmed. The film is a vestige of this relationship, captured on celluloid and offered up for a virtual engagement with spectators.

Hara has often said that “documentary is the recording of ‘*ki*.’”²² This is an extremely loaded term. The Chinese character itself refers to “spirit, mind, soul, heart; intention; bent, interest; mood, feeling; temper, disposition, nature; care, attention; air, atmosphere; flavor; odor; energy, essence, air, indication, symptoms; taste; touch, dash, shade, trace; spark, flash; suspicion.” It is commonly combined with verbs (in a kind of linguistic montage) for various inflections: “doing *ki*” means “be nervous about”; “having *ki*” indicates “having the intention”; you notice something when you “attach *ki*”; “*ki* stands” when you get excited; you “become *ki*” when you worry; and so on. What does it mean to “record *ki*”? I think it has to do with describing a trace of that intersubjective moment of filming, committing it to celluloid or tape in order to offer it up again for another intersubjective moment in the performance at the theater.

Hara brings us to this point by discovering the performance at the heart of documentary, a discovery he makes by aggressively penetrating the private spaces in this most public of media. That is why Hara is the most exciting of all Japanese documentarists.²³ The actors in Hara’s last films appear keenly aware that to some inestimable degree, the deployment of fictions approaches a knowledge that is embodied and social and escapes the logic of true/false, real/unreal. Needless to say, this is not the conventional wisdom of the documentary, for Hara carries us back in an arc that touches the pre-Iwanami documentary without bringing us full circle.

Notes

- 1 On Hara’s work, see Kenneth J. Ruoff and Jeffrey K. Ruoff, “Japan’s Outlaw Filmmaker: An Interview with Hara Kazuo,” *Iris: A Journal on Image and Sound* 16 (spring 1993): 103–114; Akira Iriye, “The Emperor’s Naked Army Marches On,” *American Historical Review* 94:4 (October 1989): 1036–7; Makiko Ogihara, “The Emperor’s Naked Army Marches On,” *Japan Times*, August 4, 1987, 11; Jeffrey Ruoff and Kenneth Ruoff, *The Emperor’s Naked Army Marches On* (London: Flicks Books, 1998); and Laura Marks, “Naked Truths: Hara Kazuo’s Iconoclastic Obsessions,” *Independent* 15:10 (1992): 25–27. In Japanese, see

- Sayonara CP (Tokyo: Shisso Productions, 1972); *Yuki yukite shingun Seisaku Noto* (Tokyo: Shisso Productions, 1987); *Zenshin shosetsuka* (Tokyo: Kinema Junposha, 1994); *Gumon Yuki yukite shingun*, edited by Matsuda Masao and Takahashi Taketomo (Tokyo: Togo-sha, 1988); Hara Kazuo, *Fumikoeru Kamera: Waga Hoho, Akushon Dokyumentarii*, (Tokyo: Firumu Aatosha, 1995); and Hara Kazuo, *Eiga ni Tsukarete* (Tokyo: Gendai Shokan, 1998).
- 2 Hara, *Fumikoeru Kamera*, 47–49.
 - 3 Clearly, these television documentaries require more comment. However, this is difficult because they have largely been ignored by Japanese film historians and there are no archives holding them for research purposes. Hara himself began this research in late 1998 through the organization of a kind of “short course” on the subject in Osaka. For the last few years, Hara’s production office has been buzzing with the energy of young people as they organize what they call Cinema Juku, literally “Cinema cram courses.” These are short events in which Hara appears with famous Japanese actors, directors, and cinematographers to discuss various issues. In toto, they constitute an impressive body of research into Japanese film and some of its neglected areas, including television documentary. It culminated in a 16mm documentary produced collaboratively with his students entitled *My Mishima (Watakushi no Mishima, 1999)*. This signals Hara’s turn from the individual to a collective mode reminiscent of the filmmakers he broke with in the early 1970s. Indeed, talk of Ogawa Productions frequently enters his public rhetoric (he was one of the filmmakers interviewed in Barbara Hammer’s documentary on the collective, entitled *Devotion* [2000]). Hara’s current project, however, is a feature film.
 - 4 Takeda’s life is clearly a personalization of politics from a feminist point of view. The women’s liberation movement in Japan is often ignored by commentators on Japan, while the sexism of Japanese patriarchy has very nearly become an object of obsession. Takeda points to a far more complicated situation. Her excesses seem to have become stereotyped by more conservative women today, who often associate feminism with obnoxiousness even if their lives embody many of the core values of feminism. Hara himself presents a paradoxical example. In many respects, he is one of the most progressive filmmakers with respect to feminist politics. His work with Kobayashi is clearly a deep collaboration, and I have been impressed, for example, seeing him allow a female staff member to work at the office with her newborn. However, the progressivism of a film like *Extreme Private Eros* is called into doubt by his recent work.
 - 5 Ruoff and Ruoff, *The Emperor’s Naked Army Marches On*, 6–7.
 - 6 He actually uses the word *cinéma vérité*, but his argument to collapse American and French practices is neither convincing or historiographically useful.
 - 7 William Rothman, *The “I” of the Camera: Essays in Film Criticism, History, and Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
 - 8 William Rothman, *Documentary Film Classics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 119.
 - 9 For a history of prewar and wartime Japanese documentary (forthcoming) *Japanese Documentary Film: From the Meiji Era Through Hiroshima* (forthcoming) Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2003. see Peter High’s *Imperial Screen* and my own *Forest of Pressure* (both forthcoming).
 - 10 Sanrizuka is the name of the village now under the cement of Narita International Airport. When the government announced the eviction of farmers from their ancestral

land, the farmers staged massive protests with the help of the student movement and various activist organizations. The protests involved tens of thousands of people, and were violent enough to cause deaths. The Ogawa Pro collective based itself in the village of Sanrizuka and documented the struggle for nearly a decade. The protests continue today, with farmers refusing to sell strategic lands. Any visitor to Japan should look out the windows of Terminal 2, where they’ll see a small patch of mulberry bushes in the middle of the tarmac, bushes tended by a reticent farmer.

- 11 Hara, *Fumikoeru Kamera*, 64–67.
- 12 This is an exceedingly complicated discourse, with roots in larger debates within Marxism during the occupation period (which in turn is based on prewar social theories within the Left). I discuss the genealogy of these debates over *shutaisei* at length in “The Postwar Documentary Trace: groping in the Dark,” in *Open to the Public: Studies in Japan’s Recent Past*, ed. Leslie Pincus, a special issue of *Positions* 10:1 (Spring 2002): 39–78.
- 13 Hara, *Fumikoeru Kamera*, 8.
- 14 The film is distributed by Kino International of New York. For countries outside of the United States, contact the Japan Foundation.
- 15 Ruoff and Ruoff, *The Emperor’s Naked Army Marches On*, 11.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 140. Associating constative forms of documentary realism with nonfiction’s plenitude, Scheibler turns to the suture theory of Jean-Pierre Oudart and Daniel Dayan. This seems to me to be a retreat to an earlier brand of film theory, replicating the problematic valorization of Brechtian distanciation as progressive politics and in effect reconstructing the binary difference that Derrida critiques.
- 17 Quoted in Susan Scheibler, “Constantly Performing the Documentary: The Seductive Promise of *Lighning over Water*,” in *Theorizing Documentary*, edited by Michael Renov (New York: Routledge, 1993), 139.
- 18 Bill Nichols, *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 92–106. The original modes were presented in Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).
- 19 For example, see Michael Renov, “The Subject in History: The New Autobiography in Film and Video,” *Afterimage* (summer 1989): 4–7.
- 20 Margaret Morse, *Virtualities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 14.
- 21 The documentary was produced for television and is nothing but interviews with the dead director’s friends, actors, and relatives. In fact, Hara published a 492-page collection of the full conversations, billing it as an “interview documentary” on the cover: Hara Kazuo, *Eiga ni Tsukarete: Urayama Kiriro* (Obsessed by movies: Urayama Kiriro) (Tokyo: Gendai Shokan, 1998).
- 22 Hara Kazuo, “Extreme Private Eros—Love Song 1974,” in *Japanese Documentary: The 70s*, edited by Yasui Yoshio (Tokyo: Yamagata International Documentary Film Festival, 1995), 30.
- 23 This is why Hara is more interesting than Tsuchimoto and more like Ogawa. The latter turned to performance and fiction in his last film, *Magino Village: A Tale (Magino monogatari: Sennen kizamino hidokei, 1987)*, and after his death it was discovered that his biography, like Inoue’s, was largely a personal fiction.