

The Limits of Fiction: Politics and Absent Scenes in Susumu Hani's Bad Boys (Furyōshōnen, 1960). A Film Re-reading through its Script.

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Introduction

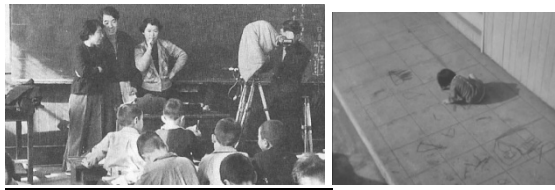
Susumu Hani is known as one of the leading figures in the renewal of cinematic language in Japan in the 1960s. During this decade, he made his most recognised works; fiction films that benefited from international distribution and obtained great prestige. In Japan, they were often ranked among the ten best films of the year by the film journal *Kinema Junpō*: *She and He* (Kanojo to kare) reached seventh position in 1963; *The Song of Bwana Toshi* (Buwana toshi no uta) was eighth in 1965; *Bride of the Andes* (Andesu no hanayome) was sixth in 1966; and *Nanami: The Inferno of First Love* (Hatsukoi: Jigoku-hen), which is his best known work, was sixth in 1968.¹ This essay focuses on his first feature film, *Bad Boys* (Furyō Shonen, 1960), which marked the beginning of a new cinema in Japan and the starting point of Hani's fiction films. While there have been attempts to rediscover the value of this work (Satō 1997: 3-12; Amit, 2004), this text proposes a new approach to *Bad Boys*, bringing into account its script, published by *Kinema Junpō* in April 1960, as well as Hani's theoretical contributions.

Bad Boys is a work at the limits of reality and fiction, in which Hani implemented the method of filmmaking that he had developed during his earlier decade as a documentary film maker for Iwanami Eiga studios. This is a period that remains understudied, although in recent years, there has been a rediscovery of his two most successful documentaries *Children in the Classroom* (Kyōshitsu no kodomotachi, 1954) and *Children Who Draw* (E o kaku no kodomotachi, 1956).² The former won the Best Documentary at the Educational Film Festival (*Kyōiku Eigasai*) of 1955 and the Blue Ribbon Prize of "Best Film of Educational Culture" and the Jury Prize at the Berlin Film Festival. After this success, the documentary was screened at Nikkatsu commercial cinemas alongside fiction films, which was a rare distinction (cfr. Takefumi 2002, 61). It later received the prize for best documentary film at the Educational Film Festival of 1956, "Best Short Film" at Cannes and Best Short Educative

¹ Film reviews of the time can be seen in Sigechika Satō(1963: 40-43) and Ogawa (1971: 105-108).

² Recent analyses of these short documentary films can be found in Haneda (2010: 178-188), Arta Tabaka (2010); For an account on Hani's documentary work in Iwanami Eiga, see Takefumi (2012: 59-83).

film at Venice Film Festival. However, Hani made twenty nine short documentaries in total, including two other works on the inner world of children, *Gurūpu no shidō* (Group Direction, 1956) and *Sōseiji gakyū* (Study of Twins, 1956) which is widely neglected by scholars aside from a couple of exceptions (Hatano 1956; Richie 1963); on the inner world of animals *Dōbutsuen nikki* (Zoo Diary, 1957); three films on traditional Japan, *Yuki matsuri* (Snow Festival, 1953), *Hōryūji* (Hōryū Temple, 1958) and *Nihon no buyō* (Dances of Japan, 1960); and several episodes of television documentaries for the series *Nenrin no himitsu* (Secrets of the Year, 1959-1960) and *Nihon Hakken* (Discovering Japan, 1961-1962).³



Shooting *Children in the Classroom* (Hani, 1954), left. Opening scene of *Children Who Draw* (Hani 1956), right.

Approaching Susumu Hani's earliest work is essential for an understanding of the cinematic innovations and theoretical discussions that took place in the 1950s in Japan. Hani was a key figure in the development of post-war Japan in two ways: on the one hand, as has been noted (Satō 1970, 373-374; Normes 2003, 2006, 59-68), Hani founded a trend in documentary film based on observation and a close gaze upon the pro-filmic world, which was followed by Noriaki Tsuchimoto, Shinsuke Ogawa, and the female directors Sumiko Haneda and Toshie Tokieda; all filmmakers who started their careers in Iwanami Eiga. On the other hand, he was a few years older than the other young film makers of the New Wave and can be deemed not only a prominent author of the movement (Bock 1984; Rayns 1984, Desser 1988, Nagib 1993, Jacoby 2008, Tsutsui 2012), but even its precursor (see Satō 1970, 6-9; 1973, 174-187; 1997, 3-12; 1997, 97), as he developed filmmaking based on technical and aesthetic asceticism that anticipated the films Nagisa Oshima, Shohei Imamura and Yoshishige Yoshida.

Theoretical Pragmatism and "Life Document" (Seikatsu Kiroku)

³ For an account of these lesser known films, see Centeno (2015, 2016a, 2017).

Hani's theoretical contribution to documentary film and cinematic modernity had significant repercussions in Japan (cfr. Matsumoto, Noda, Iijima, Satō,⁴), but is virtually unknown in the West; in part, because his writings have never been translated from Japanese and in part because of the difficulty of accessing this corpus because it has never been gathered in one volume and his works are instead dispersed among a hundred different publications. Hani's essays on film theory were written between 1955 and 1967 but he also published on the television medium (1959-1960), and the nature of the image art and means of communication (1969-1972). Through his books *Engi shinai shuyakutachi* (Protagonists who do not act, 1958) and *Kamera to maiku* (Camera and mic, 1960), a prophetic book in which he conveyed his views on the possibilities of a new cinema, Hani proposed a new documentary film with an innovative style, which is characterized by his consistent "method" (*hōhō*) of filmmaking, rather than an aesthetic will. It is a method based on naturalist techniques and his search for a kind of subjective realism, achieved by observation, becoming familiar with protagonists, improvisation, absence of dramatizations, and an exploration of the psychological dimensions of characters before the camera.

Hani raised the possibility of a new avant-garde, which unlike Toshio Matsumoto's experimental documentary films inspired by the avant-gardes of the twenties, interrogates the world by means of a pragmatic method, shifting from the abstract to the concrete, from the rational to the empirical, from surrealism to realism. While Hani admired experimental works, he aimed to look for new mechanisms to explore reality rather than distort them. Hani took his philosophical pragmatism from the American psychologist, William James (cfr. Hani 1975, 345-349; 1981) and from the "life document" (*seikatsu kiroku*) practices appearing in Japan in the 1950s and consisting in amateur writings in which authors expressed their own experiences in everyday life. The origin of the *seikatsu kiroku* was *Yamabiko gakkō* (Mountain Echo School, 1951) a book compiled by the Zen monk Seikyō Muchaku, in which children expressed their own points of views regarding their school and their family. The book was adapted for the big screen in Tadashi Imamura's *Yamabiko Gakkō* (1952). In this decade, there were a number of books written with this method such as *Ikiru* (1955) by Utako Yamada which concerned the memories of a patient admitted in hospital; and *Murahachibu no ki. Shōjo to jijitsu* (1953) a compilation by Satsuki Ishikawa on the memories of high

⁴ Among those who referred to Hani's ideas were Matsumoto and Noda (1964) and Iijima (1960). However, it was Tadao Satō who was the main disseminator of his theoretical proposals in Satō (1977, 1997, 2010).

school students on injustices relating to local elections. They caused a great impact after being published in the diary *Asahi Shinbun*, and even a film version was made, *Murahachibu* (1953) directed by Yoshitama Imaizumi with a screenplay written by Kaneto Shindō. Another example was *Ari no machi no kodomotachi* (1953) by Satoko Kitahara, about a woman who, after being converted to Catholicism by Basque nuns, decides to spread Christianity among the children of a Tokyo slum. This book is Kitahara's compilation of a child's writings and was adapted to the big screen in Heinosuke Gosho's *Ari no machi no Maria* (1959).

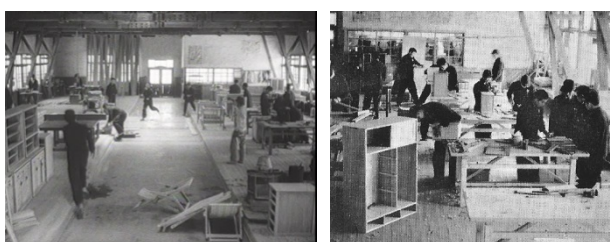
The antecedents of this practice were the "life compositions", *seikatsu tsuzurikata* 「生活綴方」 launched by Miekichi Suzuki in the journal *Aakai Tori* in 1918, which included texts by schoolchildren. These "life compositions" were part of an innovative educational method which preceded World War II, where children talked freely about topics that concerned them. Revisiting this practice in the postwar period meant not only the beginning of a new literary genre but also the recovery of a democratic educational model.

Hani grew up in a family of renowned educators and was familiar with modern educational trends.⁵ He knew the *seikatsu kiroku* practices (cfr. Hani 1964, 13-14) and implemented this style in two of his texts. The first was "Watashi no rekishi. Watashi ni totte seishun to ha nann datta ka" ("My history. What Was Youth for Me?") in which he talks about his memories of childhood under militarism, his experience during the air raids and his attempts to commit suicide, among other things. The second was *Chichi ga musuko ni kataru. Rekishi kōdan* (*Father Talks to his Son. History Speech*), a book written with his father, the well-known Marxist historian Gorō Hani, in which they combined an account on the History of Japan with stories of their private lives. It should be noted that, the *seikatsu kiroku* was simultaneously an educational practice and a literary genre, featuring in both schools and publications and it was a practice developed by the "popular history movement" (*kokuminteki rekishi undō*), a trend of Marxist historians active in the first half of the fifties which considered these writings valuable historical documents worthy of study.

⁵ His grandparents Yoshikazu and Motoko Hani had founded the famous Jiyū Gakuen School, which promoted an alternative education based on strengthening children's self-management and self-determination through knowledge of practical insights from everyday life.

Bad Boys as a “Life Document”

Bad Boys is loosely based on the book *Tobenai tsubasa* (*Wings that cannot Fly*, 1958), another example of *seikatsu kiroku* in which the psychologist of Aiko Jinushi gathered the memories and autobiographical stories of inmates from the Kurihama reformatory. Hani used former inmates and filmed *Bad Boys* on location, in the reformatory itself, and also in the districts of Tokyo and Yokosuka, around the American military base. The story revolves around Hiroshi Asai (Yukio Yamada), an eighteen-year-old boy. After he is arrested for robbing a jeweller, it is revealed that his father had died in the Pacific War and that he had become a drifter after his mother abandoned him at an unknown age.



Carpentry workshop, scene 56, *Bad Boys* (left). Photograph of the real workshop at the reformatory, *Tobenai tsubasa* (right)

As Hani (1983, 148-219) explains, he was offered by Nikkatsu Studios to make a feature film on wayward youth, featuring the popular stars of the time, Yūjirō Ishihara, Akira Kobayashi or Hiroyuki Nagato. However Hani turned down the offer in order to make a film with real delinquent youths between fifteen and nineteen years of age in Iwanami Eiga, using his previous documentary style. Again the *seikatsu kiroku* method was implemented during the shooting. *Bad Boys* was made with a high degree of improvisation. Hani proposed situations or what he calls “environments” (*ba*) (Hani 1983, 167), inspired by *Tobenai tsubasa* and these were modified according to the protagonists’ own memories and how they imagined them. Hani encouraged boys to express themselves freely and do whatever they wanted in each situation. Thus, while the final story was not a documentary, it was also not completely fictional, as it was based on multiple personal experiences. Hani questioned whether it was actually his first fiction film: “what is the difference from documentary cinema? Of course, when one watches the film, that difference can be understood, however, this difference exists only in one’s imagination regarding the way it was made” (ibid.)

For instance, the robbery surpassed the limits of acting several times. When Hani told the scene’s two protagonists they could rob a store and act as if the situation was real,

excitement lit up their faces. The scene at the jeweler's in Ginza district was made according to what they thought a robbery should be. They adopted the psychological tension preceding each theft and asked Hani in a low voice, using their slang: "Is the ceremony ready?" (*Shikiten wa kitte arudeshōne?*).⁶ The veracity of these robbery scenes is greatly ambiguous. The protagonists wondered whether the shop assistants would actually agree to being robbed, and when the jewels were stolen, an employee went worriedly outside the store (cfr. Hani 1983, 183). The situation transcended the fictitious basis of fact that a film reenactment is supposed to build. As the store's closing time came closer, everybody became impatient and Hani had to make up the excuse that the boys were filming another scene somewhere else (Hani 1983,181-187). Suddenly, the filmmaker heard someone whispering to him from an alleyway, then found the nervous boys hidden in the darkness. Before Hani could ask them for an explanation, Yukio Yamada (Asai) reproached him "what the hell are you doing in the jeweler's after having robbed it in front of everybody?" After being scolded, the boys affirmed that they had understood that this was a film but asserted that the robbery had to be done properly from the beginning to the end.



Asai and Bono robbery in a jeweler's. *Bad Boys* (Hani, 1960)

In another scene, the character Debari and his gang rob a *salary man*, an old friend of Hani's who he had phoned and asked to be at a certain time at a certain venue to participate in a film (Hani 1983, 204). The actors playing the role of Debari and the four accomplices waited for the remaining characters to be hidden in a dark street and the crew hid cameras and microphones in the surrounding areas. The boys were veteran thieves who had robbed dozens of times and as a consequence, when their victim arrived they acted as if it was a real robbery. They took his wallet, withdrew its money, took him by his hair and tried to extort from him as much as they could. Hani asserts that the salary man's face was shaken, soaked by cold sweat and tears, with snot dripping from his nose. Hani acknowledged that he thought of stopping the shooting in that moment but finally decided not to do so in order to prevent

⁶ The expression "is the ceremony ready?" was the protagonists' expression to ask if they were ready for the robbery (see Hani 1983: 183)

them from having to repeat the scene again (Hani 1983, 208). While Hani's friend affirmed after filming that he knew it was a film all along, this method of film-making put into question the categorization of fiction and non-fiction films. The facts represented were not a real robbery but the characters in the scenes acted as if it was, drawing a blurred line between the performance and the action.



Robbery of a *salary man* by Debary and his gang. This scene was not added to the script, *Bad Boys*

As a result, as Sato noted, Hani reached a higher level of realism than could have been achieved by any director (Satō 1997, 6).⁷ *Bad boys* was a pioneer film which broke free from previous narrative logic, stereotypical characters and cinematic codes, bringing about a coexistence of fiction and nonfiction cinema (Noda et al. 1961, 125- 137). The first review was written in December 1960, by critic Kōichi Iijima (1960, 24-28), who assessed the film in light of Hani's own theoretical contributions regarding the borders of documentary film.

Indeed, the degree of realism achieved in *Bad Boys* had a major impact and its release triggered debates among theorists, critics and filmmakers on the possibilities of a new cinema (cfr. Iijima 1960; VV.AA. 196; Hani 1961b; Noda, Matsumoto, Teshigahara and Hani 1961; Richie 1963; Matsumoto and Noda 1964). The film was named best film of the year by the film magazine *Kinema Junpō* and also received the prize for the best film at Mannheim Film Festival in Germany and had a warm reception in France, where Hani met the French Nouvelle Vague authors, Truffau, Godard and Renoir, who were surprised by his work (cfr. Hani 1961, 68-72).

Re-conceptualizing the Script: a "Text in Process"

Hani also theorized the notion of a script in 1961, through "Watashi no shinarioron" (My Script theory") and other essays. He claimed that documentary film had the enormous

⁷ Barret also cites Satō in Barret (1982: 209).

ability to extract stories directly from reality, something that was being implemented already in the television medium as well as in postwar cinematic movements such as Italian Neorealism. Hani made references to Taihei Imamura, who had differentiated between two kinds of screenplays, the “script” (*sukuriputo*) made for fiction and the “scenario” (*shinario*) made for a documentary. However, in both cases, the film was predetermined by the written text. Unlike Imamura, Hani claimed that the script should be no more than a guide for the production of the film and he rejected the idea that a text is needed to construct a story”. (Hani 1956). Believing that the script should be re-conceptualized, Hani reacted against the a priori election of topics by stating the paradox: “a topic is not necessary to show facts, it is necessary that there be facts to show a topic” 「事実をうつすためテーマがいるのではなくて、テーマをあらわすために事実がいるのである」 (Hani 1972, 44). Hani claimed that the script should be understood as an ongoing process, and could be rewritten before, during and even after the filming (Hani 1961, 59). His rejection of film as conditioned by pre-established ideas dismantled the industrial conception of cinema as a visual creation starting with the text; a topic of debate at the time (VV.AA.1961, 38-42). The entire filming lasted a little over a month and during the eleven days it took to shoot the scenes in the reformatory, Hani lived with the protagonists (Hani 1961b, 72). During this time, the important issue for Hani was knowing the person rather than making sure the actors knew the character they were going to embody. In fact, Hani acknowledged that getting to know the reality of the reformatory and the young people led him to change the story: “During the difficult sequences, I talked to them the night before and I rewrote the script one more time” 「あとはむずかしいところは前の晩に話し合って、ほぼせりふをもう一度書き直すわけです」 (Hani 1961b, 68-77). To a great extent, *Bad Boys* was a collective work in which Hani included suggestions and even texts written by the boys themselves.

Political Avant-garde: Immediacy and New Realism

This new understanding of the script and the film-making process is connected to the search for a new realism as well as the synthesis of film and journalism of the early 1960s. The exploration of new artistic forms to portray reality within the culture circles of the fifties, led by Kiyoteru Hanada, Kōbō Abe and Tarō Okamoto, led to the notion ‘synthesis of arts’ (*sōgō geijutsu*), used as a tool to launch attacks against all kinds of conventions and to overcome genre boundaries by promoting an active exchange between different means of expression. This tendency expanded into the cinematic field, when documentary makers Susumu Hani

and Toshio Matsumoto joined the *Genzaki no kai* and the group was reorganised into the *Kiroku Geijutsu no Kai* (Documentary Arts Society) in May 1957 (Key 2011, 13). The members of *Kiroku Geijutsu no Kai* shared an interest in bringing visual arts closer to topical issues. As Oshima pointed out, the proto-journalistic style of these films was a result of the growing necessity of immediacy at the time (Oshima, 1963, 80-81). By the time *Bad Boys* was released, more than five hundred films were produced annually; 574 films in 1960 and 95% of them belonged to the big studios, who produced two films per week on average (Yomotaka 2000, 160). This rhythm demanded by the distribution and exhibition system, together with the boom of mass media in the late fifties (such as weekly journals and television) prompted a reconceptualization of film temporality. After one or two weeks in cinemas, films were considered obsolete. Thereby, cinema seemed to adapt the urgency of other media such as news and current affairs.

These demands of further realism coincided with a moment of great political tension as a result of the renewal of the US-Japan Security Treaty (ANPO), signed in 1952. It needed to be ratified in 1960 and this prompted massive protests and unrest over the decade. The new generation of filmmakers was heavily conditioned by this political instability. Films journalistically documented current affairs, such as the student demonstration appearing in Yoshida's *Good for Nothing* (*Roku de nashi*, 1960) and Oshima's *Cruel story of Youth* (*Seishun zankoku monogatari*, 1960) – the latter of which included newsreel images of the April Revolution in South Korea, and also a sequence in which the protagonists witness a student demonstration in Tokyo. Twelve days after the release of *Cruel Story of Youth*, the great demonstration of 15th June took place, and Oshima based his following film, *Night and Fog in Japan* (*Nihon no yoru to kiri*, 1960), on this event.



Newsreel on the April Revolution in South Korea. *Cruel Story of Youth* (*Seishun zankoku monogatari*, Nagisa Ōshima, 1960)

Although Kinoshita Keisuke had already inserted news clippings into his *A Japanese Tragedy* (*Nihon no higeki*, 1953), and Toshio Matsumoto made an experimental documentary on this struggle in *Security Treaty* (*Anpo Jōyaku*, 1959), Oshima and Yoshida's scenes of

student protests expanded cinematic boundaries by bringing films closer to journalistic current affairs and creating multidimensional transmedia experiences by erasing the limits between cinema and television, fiction and non-fiction. These strategies were a turning point in the cinematic modernity of the early sixties and conformed to the “actuality cinema” defined by Yuriko Furuhata (2013) as a political avant-garde that continued until the early seventies. They went back to the primitive function of cinema as a “visual press” (Furuhata 2013, 2) but their repertoire of photos, news and journal clippings, television news and documentaries appeared separated from the rest of their stories. The political upheaval in South Korea is not tackled in *Cruel Stories of Youth* beyond the few seconds of said newsreel and the protagonist couple, Kiyoshi (Yusuke Kawazu) and Miyuki (Makoto Shinjo), showing, from a distance, one of the demonstrations organized at the time by the left-wing student league *Zenngakuren*, without eventually being involved. Footage of another of those protests is inserted in *Good for Nothing*, only to illustrate a memory of main character Jun (Masahiko Tsugawa) about a discussion about philosophy at college. The narrative about the criminal ambitions of a band of troublemakers and Jun’s relationship with Makino (Kakuko Chino) evolves, however, without featuring any character explicitly participating in the student movement.



Demonstrations against ANPO in *Good for Nothing* (Yoshishige Yoshida, 1960).

These transmedia elements were presented with barely any narrative function but provided films with a powerful, although ephemeral, formal appeal, by unequivocally bounding those fictional stories to the synchronic events of its time. Regardless of their plot lines, such avant-garde youth cinema created a remarkable bond between film and audience, in the moment in which it was released, drawing somewhat the *sensation de l’actualité*, described by Gabriel Tarde (1989, 33) as the feeling of collective belonging to a time reference created by the media. Said films witnessed history and became somewhat attached to the moment in which they were made. However, unlike Tarde’s assumption that this shared experience would be objectively verifiable, Oshima and Yoshida presented current

affairs as subjective portrayals of postwar Japan prevailed over any other form of historical discourse. They incorporated a self-reflexive attitude towards the journalistic material, which became an arena for experimentation throughout formal interdependence between current affairs and media. Thus, avant-garde authors interrogated media constructions and called into question journalistic practices by proposing unorthodox approaches to history.

Subsequent discussions on the relationship between film and history have provided interesting contributions to assessing cinema as a source of any kind of historical insight. Several decades after the release of these films, scholars set out the uselessness of using cinema for understanding the pro-filmic reality and instead they called attention to its ability to become an ideological expression of the time (Sorlin 1985, 42; Ferro 1980, 67). More recently, observations made from the archaeology of images have highlighted the idea that rather than capturing facts, images only represent a version of them, evidencing the impossibility of liberating films from synchronic necessities and interests of any kind (Sánchez-Biosca 2006). In light of these contributions, any hermeneutic analysis of films should acknowledge that images are detached from their referent, the one that they are supposed to represent. In other words, the relationship between the world and its cinematographic representation depends on issues of historical codification (Prince 1993, 16-28) although this codification is governed by a variety of ideological and political criteria that condition the diverse production of meanings.

This subjective nature of images was not concealed by the cinematic avant-garde filmmakers of the sixties, who saw art as a means of prompting social transformation; they considered it necessary that art meets the demands of contemporary life and reaffirmed their commitment to connecting popular arts (*tashū geijutsu*) to the political realities of the time (Key 2011: 77). Authors such as Hanada claimed that while the neologism *avangyarudo*, of American inspiration, had spread during the post-war period, authors should return to the Japanese term *zen'ei*, including the ideological implication that the proletarian avant-garde had had before the war (Hanada 1964: 133).⁸ Thus, for the avant-garde documentary movement, revolutionary art and the artistic revolution became intertwined objectives. However, unlike the avant-gardes of the 1920s that were more interested in exploring the unconscious, this kind of postwar “political avant-garde” was more concerned about linking

⁸ Namigata also pointed out that unlike the European aesthetic avant-garde of the twenties, the notion of avant-garde in Japan historically had an inherent political leaning (Namigata 2005).

their works to their present. Yet, ironically, this happened in a moment in which current issues were being transferred from the film industry to the television industry. The new medium replaced old cinema as the main source of news distribution, and these images of student protests shaped the postwar avant-garde because they were counter-currents; they appealed to the young generation of filmmakers when films had broken their commitments to topical issues.⁹ As a consequence, unlike the general understanding of avant-garde, this strategy was not innovative because it attributed a new role to cinema but because, on the contrary, it represented a swansong for the cinema's role as a courier of current affairs.

Apparent Absence: Student Protests in Bad Boys

Hani was not only aware of the political leanings of the avant-garde documentary movement of the fifties but, as we have seen at the beginning of this text, he even made significant contributions to it in both theoretical and practical terms. Having that in mind, the lack of sequences featuring student protests in *Bad Boys*, which is another youth film released through the same year 1960, conveying similar aesthetic and narrative concerns to those of Oshima and Yoshida, is somewhat striking. In addition, the fact that, compared to said filmmakers, Hani goes one step further by adapting non-fiction formats –by working with real youth delinquents, shooting entirely on location with mostly hand-held camera— makes this apparent oversight even more remarkable. However, the *Bad Boys* script published in June 1960 by the journal *Kinema Junpō* reveals the existence of several scenes of student demonstrations that are absent in the film. In fact, they appear up to three times throughout the written text: in scene 2, again in scene 25 and finally, in scene 76.

⁹ From the early thirties, newsreel production was dominated by the main national diaries *Asahi*, *Yomiuri* and *Mainichi*, and *Shōchiku* joined them afterwards. During war-time and the Occupation period, newsreels were controlled by Nippon News (from the 1939 Film Law) but in the fifties, these companies tried to monopolise news programmes transferring them from cinema to television (Furuhata 2013: 4-5). For an account on newsreels produced during the Pacific War see High (2003) and Kitajima (1977) and about the censorship during the Occupation periods see (Hirano 1992)



Bad Boys' script in *Kinema Junpō. Meisaku shinarioshū*, 4-1960, pp.135-142

Scene 2 depicts an introductory outdoors shot in which a fast moving car suddenly stops for a while as a demonstration takes up an avenue. No more information is provided in the script but it is quite clear how this would have been part of the opening sequence used by Hani to frame the story in the political context of that year. Half-way through the script, scene 25 portrays Shibata and Bono, Asai's friends, getting up to mischief in town and at some point mocking a group of students coming from a demonstration and holding placards. As with Oshima's protagonists in *Cruel Story of Youth*, the event presents a distinction between an aimless youth and a politically committed youth. Scene 76 is part of the denouement of the film. It features another kind of demonstration, in this case that of the nationalists who come across Asai in Shimbashi station. The script describes a shot where vagabond is featured sleeping behind the father of Bono –the main character's friend— who sits on a bank with an anxious face and is in a poor condition. The portrayal of that tramp and Bono's father worrying about his debts, and the subsequent *tuyoku* (right-wing) demonstration, which functions as a visual reference to the resurgence of militarism in the postwar period, represents Hani's attempt to show his social and political concerns.¹⁰ In addition, these scenes seem coherent with the new wave of cinematic developments anticipated by Oshima and Yoshida the same year. As in their films, Hani's script presents the political context of the time but his characters remain apart from said events. Neither political agenda is the main topic nor do the protagonists end up actively engaged in student protests. Thus, in Hani's case, history and story remain separate narrative entities once more. Just as in Oshima and

¹⁰ Hani embodied the intellectual and artistic movement of the Japanese New Left (*shinsayoku*) from late fifties and before that he had participated in the political campaigns of his father, the Marxist historian Goro Hani, who had been arrested during the Pacific War and became member of the House of Councillors from 1950 (Centeno 2015: 775).

Yoshida's work, these references to the social turmoil of the time become a seductive tool giving freshness and immediacy to the film and tying it up to the moment in which it was made.

However, despite the fact that said scenes fitted well within the avant-garde film tendencies of the time, they were never added into the film. They become a kind of "absent image". The decision to get rid of these sequences is not really surprising given Hani's film-making method, based on improvisation, in which the script was merely used as guidance for planning but was disregarded during the actual shooting process (Hani 1956, 213; 1961b, 59). As a consequence, his scripts were continuously rewritten, sometimes collectively together with the actors and participants, and in fact, the one published in *Kinema Junpō* was its fifth version. Yet, we also might consider the possibility that the historical context could have conditioned the content of the film. *Bad Boys* was released some months after Oshima and Yoshida's films, and in the meantime two tragic events took place in Japan: first, the death of the student leader Michiko Kamba during the riots of 15th June 1960; and second the assassination of Inejirō Asanuma, leader of the Socialist Party at the hands of a radical nationalist in November.

The editing of *Cruel Story of Youth* and *Good for Nothing* were completed before these events —as they were released in June and July respectively. However, while the script of *Bad Boys* was published in June 1960, the film was released at the end of the year, and therefore, after those events took place.¹¹ The study of these absent images raises interesting questions about the mysteries of this pioneering film made outside the rigid production of the large studios and about the intimate, and in turn ambiguous, relationship between the postwar film avant-garde and its political context. Certainly, this dialectical tension between the two might hide the reasons why a filmmaker ultimately decides to drive the film in one direction or another. However, these absences revealed by the script open up, to film historians and archeologists of images, interesting avenues to interrogate a film as an always unfinished process rather than as a closed project. This approach to the film as a palimpsest reveals Hani's shared concern at the time with the necessities of adding to the cinematic medium a renewed sense of realism, immediacy and political context. Being able to trace back this attitude is key to understanding the motivations that led that generation of filmmakers to

¹¹ *Bad Boys* editions consulted for this research are a VHS published by New York Film Annex in 1998, and a DVD published by Nihon Toshokan Kyōkai in 2008, as well as a copy kindly lent by the Iwanami Eizō production company.

search for new styles to explore the format's limits, providing film with a new media status between fiction and non-fiction.

Conclusion

Bad Boys crystallized a new kind of film, expanding the boundaries between reality and fiction by using the philosophical pragmatism inscribed in the “life document” (*seikatsu kiroku*) practices, and by implementing a method of filmmaking that had been developing in his previous documentary films for a decade. Through this style *Bad Boys* shared with Oshima and Yoshida’s films, released the same year, there was a an attempt to create a new avant-garde by means of searching for alliances with other media and exploring the demands of actuality beyond the limits of cinema. This synthesis of media implied adding to films a sense of immediacy by bringing them closer to current affairs, as the scenes of student protests used by Oshima and Yoshida reveal. However, the absence of these scenes in *Bad Boys* blurs Hani’s stance regarding the renewal of the cinematic language implemented in 1960. This text tries to show how images as such are a limited document for interrogating a film. The visual analysis of *Bad Boys* is not explanatory enough to asses Hani’s concerns regarding the new cinematic developments of the time. On the one hand, his theoretical contributions are helpful tools for reframing his method of film-making. On the other, it is in his script, rather than in his film, that the researcher can find out how Hani participated in the post-war political avant-garde by incorporating a journalistic dimension and addressing topical issues.

There has been a long discussion about the validity of cinema as a witness of history. Through the debates regarding the relations between film and history, the powerful nature of images has been demonstrated; while conditioned by historical context, they surpass it, reaching an emotional level. This phenomenon has interesting implications regarding the possibility of studying films as a subjective expression of the time rather than a document of facts. The relationship between the film and its surrounding world is built upon a historical codification that is governed by a variety of ideological criteria. The intention of this work is to highlight the fact that this mechanism of codification can be applied to not only what is shown but also to what is hidden. I propose that the study of the script reveals the existence of an absence that was also evidence of the zeitgeist. There was something during the process of the film production beyond the image that witnessed the spirit of the time. This opens new avenues to explore not only what is visible; but also something “invisible”, that in fact is also

linked to its present. The script is a palimpsest that can help archeologists of images to trace back concealed narratives behind explicit messages. Alongside what is told, the script reveals something that is not told, and could be a valuable element in exploring the fears, concerns and anxieties of the moment which a filmmaker, rather than showing, ultimately made the decision not to show.

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