REPRESENTING REALITY

Issues and Concepts in Documentary

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INDIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS
Bloomington and Indianapolis

This book is a publication of

Indiana University Press
601 North Morton Street
Bloomington, IN 47404-3797 USA

http://www.indiana.edu/~iupress

Telephone orders 800-842-6796
Fax orders 812-855-7931
Orders by e-mail iuporder@indiana.edu

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

Manufactured in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Nichols, Bill.
Representing reality : issues and concepts in documentary / Bill Nichols.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-253-34060-8 (alk. paper). — ISBN 0-253-20681-2 (pbk. : alk. paper).
1. Documentary films—History and criticism. I. Title.
PN1995.9.D6N54 1991
070.1'8—dc20 91-2637

6 7 8 9 10 05 04 03 02 01 00

Dedicated to the memory of
Emile de Antonio (1920–1989)
and Joris Ivens (1898–1989)

II

DOCUMENTARY MODES OF REPRESENTATION

Modes

Situations and events, actions and issues may be represented in a variety of ways. Strategies arise, conventions take shape, constraints come into play; these factors work to establish commonality among different texts, to place them within the same discursive formation at a given historical moment. Modes of representation are basic ways of organizing texts in relation to certain recurrent features or conventions. In documentary film, four modes of representation stand out as the dominant organizational patterns around which most texts are structured: expository, observational, interactive, and reflexive.*

These categories are partly the work of the analyst or critic and partly the product of documentary filmmaking itself. The terms themselves are essentially my own, but the practices they refer to are filmmaking practices that filmmakers themselves recognize as distinctive approaches to the representation of reality. The four modes belong to a dialectic in which new forms arise from the limitations and constraints of previous forms and in which the credibility of the impression of documentary reality changes historically. New modes convey a fresh, new perspective on reality. Gradually, the conventional nature of this mode of representation becomes increasingly apparent: an awareness of norms and conventions to which a given text adheres begins to frost the window onto reality. The time for a new mode is then at hand.

A very cursory history of documentary representation might run like this: expository documentary (Grierson and Flaherty, among others) arose from a dissatisfaction with the distracting, entertainment qualities of the fiction film. Voice-of-God commentary and poetic perspectives sought to

* The four modes treated here began as a distinction between direct and indirect address in my *Ideology and the Image*. Julianne Burton revised and refined this distinction into an extremely useful and much more nuanced four-part typology in "Toward a History of Social Documentary in Latin America" in her anthology, *The Social Documentary in Latin America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990): 3–6. This chapter is a further elaboration of Burton's typology.

disclose information about the historical world itself and to see that world afresh, even if these views came to seem romantic or didactic. Observational documentary (Leacock-Pennebaker, Fredrick Wiseman) arose from the availability of more mobile, synchronous recording equipment and a dissatisfaction with the moralizing quality of expository documentary. An observational mode of representation allowed the filmmaker to record unobtrusively what people did when they were not explicitly addressing the camera.

But the observational mode limited the filmmaker to the present moment and required a disciplined detachment from the events themselves. Interactive documentary (Rouch, de Antonio, and Connie Field) arose from the availability of the same more mobile equipment and a desire to make the filmmaker's perspective more evident. Interactive documentarists wanted to engage with individuals more directly while not reverting to classic exposition. Interview styles and interventionist tactics arose, allowing the filmmaker to participate more actively in present events. The filmmaker could also recount past events by means of witnesses and experts whom the viewer could also see. Archival footage of past events became appended to these commentaries to avoid the hazards of reenactment and the monolithic claims of voice-of-God commentary.

Reflexive documentary (Dziga Vertov, Jill Godmilow, and Raul Ruiz) arose from a desire to make the conventions of representation themselves more apparent and to challenge the impression of reality which the other three modes normally conveyed unproblematically. It is the most self-aware mode; it uses many of the same devices as other documentaries but sets them on edge so that the viewer's attention is drawn to the device as well as the effect.

Though this short summary gives the impression of a linear chronology and of an implicit evolution toward greater complexity and self-awareness, these modes have been potentially available from early in the cinema's history. Each mode has had a period of predominance in given regions or countries, but the modes also tend to be combined and altered within individual films. Older approaches do not go away; they remain part of a continuing exploration of form in relation to social purpose. What works at a given moment and what counts as a realistic representation of the historical world is not a simple matter of progress toward a final form of truth but of struggles for power and authority within the historical arena itself.

From an institutional point of view, those who operate largely in terms of one mode of representation may well define themselves as a discrete collectivity, with distinct preoccupations and criteria guiding their film practice. In this regard, a mode of representation involves issues of authority and the credibility of speech. Rather than standing as the idiosyncratic utterance of the individual filmmaker, the text demonstrates compliance with the norms and conventions governing a particular mode and, in turn,

enjoys the prestige of tradition and the authority of a socially established and institutionally legitimated voice. At issue for the individual filmmaker are strategies of generalization, ways of representing the highly specific and local as matters of broader import, as issues with larger ramifications, as behavior of some lasting significance through recourse to a representational frame or mode. Attaching a particular text to a traditional mode of representation and to the discursive authority of that tradition may well strengthen its claims, lending to these claims the weight of previously established legitimacy. (Conversely, if a mode of representation comes under attack, an individual text may suffer as a result of its attachment.)

Narrative—with its ability to introduce a moral, political, or ideological perspective to what might otherwise be mere chronology—and realism—with its ability to anchor representations to both quotidian verisimilitude and subjective identification—might also be considered modes but they are of yet greater generality and frequently appear, in different forms, in each of the four modes discussed here. Elements of narrative, as a particular form of discourse, and aspects of realism, as a particular representational style, inform documentary logic and the economy of the text routinely. More precisely, each mode deploys the resources of narrative and realism differently, making from common ingredients different types of text with distinctive ethical issues, textual structures, and viewer expectations. It is to these that we shall now turn.

The Expository Mode

The expository text addresses the viewer directly, with titles or voices that advance an argument about the historical world. Films like *Night Mail*, *The City*, *The Battle of San Pietro*, and *Victory at Sea* that utilize a "voice-of-God" commentary are the most familiar examples. Network news with its anchorperson and string of reporters in the field is another. This is the mode closest to the classic expository essay or report and it has continued to be the primary means of relaying information and persuasively making a case since at least the 1920s.

If there is one overriding ethical/political/ideological question to documentary filmmaking it may be, What to do with people? How can people and issues be represented appropriately? Each mode addresses this question somewhat differently and poses distinct ethical questions for the practitioner. The expository mode, for example, raises ethical issues of voice: of how the text speaks objectively or persuasively (or as an instrument of propaganda). What does speaking for or on behalf of someone or something entail in terms of a dual responsibility to the subject of the film and to the audience whose agreement is sought?

Expository texts take shape around commentary directed toward the viewer; images serve as illustration or counterpoint. Nonsynchronous

sound prevails (expository representation prevailed before location sound recording in sync became reasonably manageable around 1960). The rhetoric of the commentator's argument serves as the textual dominant, moving the text forward in service of its persuasive needs. (The "logic" of the text is a subordinated logic; as in law, persuasive effect tends to override the adherence to the strictest standards of reasoning.) Editing in the expository mode generally serves to establish and maintain rhetorical continuity more than spatial or temporal continuity. Such evidentiary editing adopts many of the same techniques as classic continuity editing but to a different end. Similarly, cuts that produce unexpected juxtapositions generally serve to establish fresh insights or new metaphors that the filmmaker wishes to propose. They may, as an aggregate, introduce a level of counterpoint, irony, satire, or surrealism to the text as the strange juxtapositions in *Land without Bread* or *Blood of the Beasts* do.

The expository mode emphasizes the impression of objectivity and of well-substantiated judgment. This mode supports the impulse toward generalization handsomely since the voice-over commentary can readily extrapolate from the particular instances offered on the image track. Similarly it affords an economy of analysis, allowing points to be made succinctly and emphatically, partly by eliminating reference to the process by which knowledge is produced, organized, and regulated so that it, too, is subject to the historical and ideological processes of which the film speaks. Knowledge in expository documentary is often epistemic knowledge in Foucault's sense of those forms of transpersonal certainty that are in compliance with the categories and concepts accepted as given or true in a specific time and place, or with a dominant ideology of common sense such as the one our own discourses of sobriety support. What each text contributes to this stockpile of knowledge is new content, a new field of attention to which familiar concepts and categories can be applied. This is the great value of the expository mode since a topical issue can be addressed within a frame of reference that need not be questioned or established but simply taken for granted. The title of the National Film Board documentary centering on a speech by Dr. Helen Caldicott about nuclear holocaust, *If You Love This Planet*, illustrates the point. If you do love the planet, then the value of the film is the new content it offers in terms of information about the nuclear threat to survival.

Both strange juxtapositions and poetic modes of exposition qualify or contest the commonplaces on which exposition depends, and make what has grown familiar strange. The films of Buñuel and Franju mentioned above challenge our tendency to describe other cultures within the morally secure framework of our own (*Land without Bread*) and undercut our blasé assumption that meat on our table symbolizes our own hunting and gathering ancestry and the nobility of him who procures our food rather than the mass production techniques of the modern abattoir (*Blood of the Beasts*). Classics of poetic exposition like *Song of Ceylon* and *Listen to Britain*, like the

works of Flaherty, give emphasis to the rhythmic and expressive elegance of their own form in order to celebrate the beauty of the quotidian and those values that unobtrusively sustain day-to-day endeavor (enterprise and valor, reserve and determination, compassion and civility, respect and responsibility). Flaherty, Jennings, and Wright, among others, sought to promote a social or collective subjectivity based on these often taken-for-granted cornerstones of middle-class life and a humanistic-romantic sensibility. Their efforts, though poetic, fall within the mode of expository representation. The emphasis, however, shifts from a direct argument or statement, to which illustrations attach, to an indirect evocation of a way of being in the world that derives from the formal structure of the film as a whole.

More recent films such as *Naked Spaces: Living Is Round* and *Sky* tend less to celebrate than *identify* a set of alternative values, drawn from other cultures and ways of life. They do so in an equally poetic, oblique style. *Sky* offers glimpses of an annual ritual honoring the dead among the Xingu in the Brazilian Amazon but provides minimal explanation. Built almost entirely around the type of suspense utilized by Flaherty in the famous sequence of Nanook hunting a seal where we only grasp the significance of actions retrospectively, but without the "pay-off" we get in *Nanook*, without any concluding summation or holistic frame, *Sky* leaves us with a sense of textures, colors, and rhythms, actions, gestures, and rituals that elude any one strategy for comprehension without ever suggesting that the events are incomprehensible or merely raw material for poetic expression. The linear, chronological flow of image and argument in Flaherty's work and in most expository films—driven by the diachronic march of cause/effect, premise/conclusion, problem/solution—turns into the "vertical," more musical pattern of association where scenes follow one another for their poetic resonance rather than for their fidelity to temporal and logical progression.

Naked Spaces shows us West African villages and some of their architectural details (but few of their people). It does not tell us about the history, function, economics, or cultural significance of these particular forms. Instead a trio of female voices composes the voice-over sound track, accompanied by indigenous music from the various regions. Each voice offers a different form of anecdotal commentary on questions of fact and value, meaning and interpretation. The film signals an acute awareness that we can no longer assume that our epistemic theories of knowledge provide unproblematic access to another culture. Poetic exposition no longer functions bardically, to draw us together into a social collectivity of shared values, but instead exposes, poetically, the social construction of that form of collectivity which allows for hierarchy and representation to go hand in hand. Trinh Minh-ha refuses to speak for or evoke the poetic essence of another culture, and instead renders the rhetorical strategy of empathy and transcendental unity strange and does so within the terms of a poetic

exposition rather than with metacommentary such as a reflexive documentary might adopt.

Exposition can accommodate elements of interviews but these tend to be subordinated to an argument offered by the film itself, often via an unseen "voice of God" or an on-camera voice of authority who speaks on behalf of the text. Any sense of give and take between interviewer and subject is minimal. (Matters of duration, content, the limits or boundaries of what can and cannot be said are heavily determined by the expository text even though there may well be elaborate strings of question and answer, or even repartee between interviewer and subject. These matters circulate as tacit knowledge among practitioners and form part of the institutional matrix for expository documentaries, a matrix which the other three modes contest when it comes to the status of those recruited to appear in the film.) The voices of others are woven into a textual logic that subsumes and orchestrates them. They retain little responsibility for making the argument, but are used to support it or provide evidence or substantiation for what the commentary addresses. The voice of authority resides with the text itself rather than with those recruited to it.[1] From *Housing Problems* (1935) to the latest edition of the evening news, witnesses give their testimony within a frame they cannot control and may not understand. The tone and perspective are not theirs to determine. Their task is to contribute evidence to someone else's argument, and when well done (*Harvest of Shame, All My Babies, The Times of Harvey Milk, Sixteen in Webster Groves*) our attention is not on how the filmmaker *uses* witnesses to make a point but on the effectiveness of the argument itself.

The viewer of documentaries in the expository mode generally holds expectations that a commonsensical world will unfold in terms of the establishment of a logical, cause/effect linkage between sequences and events. Recurrent images or phrases function as classic refrains, underscoring thematic points or their emotional undercurrents, such as the frequent montages of artillery fire and explosions in combat documentaries that stress the progression of a battle, its physical means of implementation, and its human cost. Similarly, the refrain of images of rich farm land turned to dust in *The Plow That Broke the Plains* gives affective emphasis to the thematic argument for reclamation through federal programs of conservation. Causation tends to be direct and linear, readily identifiable, and subject to modification by planned intervention.

The authoring presence of the filmmaker is represented by the commentary and sometimes the (usually unseen) voice of authority will be that of the filmmaker him- or herself as it is in *The Battle of San Pietro*. In other cases such as the evening news, a delegate, the anchorperson, will represent a broader, institutional source of authority. (We do not assume that the structure or content of the evening news arises from the anchorperson but that he or she represents a discursive field and gives it anthropomorphic embodiment. In either case the viewer attends less to the physical presence

of the commentator as a social actor engaged with the world than with the movement of the argument or statement about the world which the commentator advances. In other words, the authoring or institutional agency is represented by the logos—the word and its logic—more than by the historical body of an actual agent.)

Finally, the viewer will typically expect the expository text to take shape around the solution to a problem or puzzle: presenting the news of the day, exploring the working of the atom or the universe, addressing the consequences of nuclear waste or acid rain, tracing the history of an event or the biography of a person. This organization plays a role similar to the role of the classic unity of time in narrative where imaginary events occur within a fixed period of time and often move toward a conclusion under some form of temporal urgency or deadline. Rather than the suspense of solving a mystery or rescuing a captive, the expository documentary frequently builds a sense of dramatic involvement around the need for a solution. The felt need itself can be as much a product of expository organization as of narrative suspense, even if it does refer to a problem located in the historical world. The viewer expects entry into the text by these teleological devices and substitutes the dynamics of problem-solving for the dynamics of anticipation, retardation, feints, and enigmas that constitute the stuff of suspense.

The Observational Mode

Observational documentaries are what Erik Barnouw refers to as direct cinema and what others like Stephen Mamber describe as cinema verité. (Barnouw reserves cinema verité for the interventionist or interactive filmmaking of Jean Rouch and others.) For some practitioners and critics the terms direct cinema and cinema verité are interchangeable; for others they refer to distinct modes, but some may assign direct cinema to the more observational stance and others cinema verité. For these reasons I have chosen to sidestep both terms in favor of the more descriptive appellations, *observational* and *interactive* modes of documentary representation. The observational mode stresses the nonintervention of the filmmaker. Such films cede "control" over the events that occur in front of the camera more than any other mode. Rather than constructing a temporal framework, or rhythm, from the process of editing as in *Night Mail* or *Listen to Britain*, observational films rely on editing to enhance the impression of lived or real time. In its purest form, voice-over commentary, music external to the observed scene, intertitles, reenactments, and even interviews are completely eschewed. Barnouw summarizes the mode helpfully when he distinguishes direct cinema (observational filmmaking) from Rouch's style of cinema verité.

> The direct cinema documentarist took his camera to a situation of tension and waited hopefully for a crisis; the Rouch version of cinema verité tried to precipitate one. The direct cinema artist aspired to invisibility; the Rouch cinema verité artist was often an avowed participant. The direct cinema artist played the role of uninvolved bystander; the cinema verité artist espoused that of provocateur.[2]

Observational filmmaking gives a particular inflection to ethical considerations. Since the mode hinges on the ability of the filmmaker to be unobtrusive, the issue of intrusion surfaces over and over within the institutional discourse. Has the filmmaker intruded upon people's lives in ways that will irrevocably alter them, perhaps for the worse, in order to make a film?[3] Has his or her need to make a film and build a career out of the observation of others led to representations about the nature of the project and its probable effects on participants in disingenuous forms? Has he or she not only sought the informed consent of the participants but made it possible for informed consent to be understood and given? Does the evidence of the film convey a sense of respect for the lives of others or have they simply been used as signifiers in someone else's discourse?[4] When something happens that may jeopardize or injure one of the social actors whose life is observed, does the filmmaker have a responsibility to intervene; or conversely, does he or she have the responsibility, or even the right, to continue filming? To what extent and in what ways shall the voice of people be represented? If they are observed by someone else, to what extent do their own observations on the process and results of observation deserve a place in the final film?

This last question begins to shade toward the issues of interactive filmmaking. For the moment the specific properties of observational works as texts deserve consideration. Such works are characterized by indirect address, speech overheard rather than heard since the social actors engage with one another rather than speak to the camera. Synchronous sound and relatively long takes are common. These techniques anchor speech to images of observation that locate dialogue, and sound, in a specific moment and historical place. Each scene, like that of classic narrative fiction, displays a three-dimensional fullness and unity in which the observer's location is readily determined. Each shot supports the same overall system of orientation rather than proposing unrelated or incommensurate spaces. And the space gives every indication of having been carved from the historical world rather than fabricated as a fictional mise-en-scène.

Rather than a paradigmatic organization centered around the solution to a puzzle or problem, observational films tend to take paradigmatic form around the exhaustive depiction of the everyday. *A Trial for Rape*, for example, compresses days of argumentation during two separate legal hearings into one hour of screen time, but the viewer has a vivid sense of comprehensive documentation (largely due to shots that are held longer

and individual statements that continue longer than they would in a realist fiction or a typical news report). When Fred Wiseman observes the making of a thirty-second television commercial for some twenty five minutes in his film *Model*, he conveys the sense of having observed everything worth noting about the shooting. (He omits the pre- and post-production elements of the activity, which is not unusual in observational cinema: since these films tend to cover specific moments exhaustively, they avoid the type of summarization of a process that would require a montage of typical moments. Also, in this film, Wiseman's focus is on the interaction of the advertising system with its social agents, the models, rather than on the entire system: its economic structure, the decision-making process, marketing strategies, and so on.)

The sense of exhaustive (and telling) observation frequently comes not only from the ability of the filmmaker to record particularly revealing moments but also from the ability to include moments representative of lived time itself rather than what we might call "story time" (time propelled by the cause/effect logic of classical narrative where an economy of carefully justified and well-motivated actions prevails). "Dead" or "empty" time unfolds where nothing of narrative significance occurs but where the rhythms of everyday life settle in and establish themselves. In this mode of representation, each cut or edit serves mainly to sustain the spatial and temporal continuity of observation rather than the logical continuity of an argument or case. Even when the text shifts to a different scene or locale, the sense of an underlying spatial and temporal continuity prevails, one which is consonant with the moment of filming, making observational cinema a particularly vivid form of "present-tense" representation.

The presence of the camera "on the scene" testifies to its presence in the historical world; its fixity suggests a commitment or engagement with the immediate, intimate, and personal that is comparable to what an actual observer/participant might experience (without unrestricted recourse to the dynamization of time and space that cinema allows). The sounds and images used are recorded at the moment of observational filming, in contrast to the voice-over and images of illustration in the expository mode, which do not propose or require so intimate a tie to the moment of filming. This makes the expository film, and the interactive one, available for historical investigations whereas the observational film most readily addresses contemporary experience.

The absence of commentary and the reluctance to use images to illustrate generalizations encourages an emphasis on the activity of individuals within specific social formations such as the family, the local community, or a single institution or aspect of one (such as the play between an institution and those it recruits or serves that we find in so many of Fred Wiseman's films). Such observations frequently take shape around the representation of typicality—the types of exchanges and activities that are likely to occur (*High School*), process—the unfolding of a set of relationships over time (*An American Family*), or crisis—the conduct of individuals under pressure (*Primary*).

"Strange juxtapositions" often function as examples of a hybrid style in which the filmmaker chooses to turn to techniques associated with one of the other modes, as when Fred Wiseman cross-cuts in *Titicut Follies* between the forced feeding of a patient and the later preparation of the same patient for burial. These juxtapositions work to make an editorial point in the spirit of expository cinema rather than allow events to unfold according to their own rhythm. The conventions of observation make abrupt shifts of time or location less likely as ways to jar the viewer into fresh insight. More likely are abrupt, surprising, or unexpected shifts in the perspective of or self-presentation by a social actor, as when Sgt. Abing in *Soldier Girls* drops his tough drill instructor demeanor to confess how deeply wounded and emotionally crippled he has become as a result of his combat experience. Such moments serve as epiphanies and seem "real," that is, to have originated in the historical world rather than in the defamiliarizing strategies of an argument. The leaps or juxtapositions that jar and unsettle stem from the ways in which people and events take twists and turns that, as is often said, appear stranger than fiction. Matters of placement within the film, rhythm, camera position, sound quality, and intimations of the felt presence of the filmmaker may contribute to the force of the juxtaposition as much as its basis in actual behavior of people, but, to the extent that the film subscribes to an observational realism, these factors will tend to be unobtrusive and rarely commented upon.

Recurring images or situations tend to strengthen a "reality effect," anchoring the film to the historical facticity of time and place and certifying to the continuing centrality of specific locations. These refrains add affective texture to an argument; they stress the historical specificity of the observed world and the micro-changes that occur from day to day. The repeated presence of the home in *A Married Couple* and of the pizza parlor in *Family Business*, for example, locate the site of dramatic engagement. These locales take on more and more significance in terms of the emotional geography of space (the way in which specific zones of a bedroom, a kitchen, the cash register, or pizza oven become associated with specific characters and their own sense of place and identity, a sense of self often tested or put at risk through their interactions with others). Though observational films are rooted in the present, they also take time, and such recurrences heighten the impression of narrative development, of transformation over time, as opposed to the alternative impression of an atemporal slice of selected scenes from a single moment in time.

The observational mode of representation has enjoyed considerable use as an ethnographic tool, allowing filmmakers to observe the activities of others without resorting to the techniques of exposition that turn the sounds and images of others into accomplices in someone else's argument. Observational filmmaking and the social science approaches of ethno-

methodology and symbolic interactionism have a number of principles in common.[5] All three stress an empathetic, nonjudgmental, participatory mode of observation that attenuates the authoritative posture of traditional exposition. Observational cinema affords the viewer an opportunity to look in on and overhear something of the lived experience of others, to gain some sense of the distinct rhythms of everyday life, to see the colors, shapes, and spatial relationships among people and their possessions, to hear the intonation, inflection, and accents that give a spoken language its "grain" and that distinguish one native speaker from another. If there is something to be gained from an affective form of learning, observational cinema provides a vital forum for such experience. Though still problematic in other ways, there are qualities here that no other mode of representation duplicates.

For the viewer, observational documentaries set up a frame of reference closely akin to that of fiction film. (The differences are pursued in detail in the following chapters.) We look in on and overhear social actors. This term stands for "individuals" or "people." Those whom we observe are seldom trained or coaxed in their behavior. I use "social actor" to stress the degree to which individuals represent themselves to others; this can be construed as a performance. The term is also meant to remind us that social actors, people, retain the capacity to act within the historical arena where they perform. The sense of aesthetic remove between an imaginary world in which actors perform and the historical world in which people live no longer obtains. The performance of social actors, though, is similar to the performance of fictional characters in many respects. Individuals present a more or less complex psychology, and we direct our attention toward their development or destiny. We identify and follow the codes of actions and enigmas that advance the narrative. We attend to those semic or behaviorally descriptive moments that fold back over characters and give further density to their behavior. We give considerable attention to the referential codes imported or "documented" by the text as the operational codes of the culture that the social actors adhere to or contest in discernible ways. We may note the play of a symbolic code that governs the economy of the text in metaphysical or psychoanalytic terms (such as the desire for the fullness of knowledge and the transcendental authority of the observing gaze or the desire for unity between observer and observed, viewer and text, without reminders of lack, deficiency, or fissure between the text and the real, representation and referent).

Through its kinship with fiction (first posited by observational filmmakers themselves in relation to Italian neorealism), these films invite the viewer to take an even more complex relation to the film's referential dimension. If fictional aesthetics involves us in relation to "nonpractical ends," a fairly conventional if not unproblematic definition, observational documentary also extends this possibility of nonpractical, aesthetic involvement.[6] Instead of the suspension of disbelief that could be put as "I know

very well [that this is a fiction] but all the same . . . [I will treat it as if it were not]," the observational documentary encourages belief; "Life *is* like this, isn't it?" Though spared any requirement of practical application, the reprieve is even less clear than it is in fiction. The viewer experiences the text as a template of life as it is lived; the attitude taken toward it proposes itself as (or derives from) the attitude appropriate for the viewer were he or she "on the spot," as it were, placed in a position where the interaction from which the camera restrains itself were expected. We imagine the screen pulled away and direct encounter possible. One element of the viewer's engagement, then, is less an imaginative identification with character or situation and more a practical testing of subjective responses as an eligible participant in as well as observer of the historical world represented.

This testing depends on the work of realism and its ability to render the impression of reality, a sense of the historical world as we, in fact, experience it, usually on a quotidian basis. This, in turn, hinges on the presence of the filmmaker or authoring agency as an absence, an absent presence whose effect is noted (it provides the sounds and images before us) but whose physical presence remains not only unseen but also, for the most part, unacknowledged. When a psychiatrist filmed working with a patient in Fred Wiseman's *Hospital* looks at the camera in dismay, after an exasperating phone call to a social worker, and says, "She hung up on me," the film cuts to another scene rather than continue the shot and force the filmmaker to take responsibility for a reply. When a tribesperson in *Joe Leahy's Neighbors* speaks of the filmmaker to his companion and asks his friend if they should sing a song, the friend replies, "No, it's not that kind of film." This produces a moment of amusement for the viewer but by cutting immediately to another shot, the filmmakers also dodge the implied responsibility to explain what kind of film it is. This would require a form of presence they prefer to avoid, allowing the film to explain itself (to the viewer at least; how it was explained to the subjects remains purely speculation).

Observational cinema, therefore, conveys the sense of unmediated and unfettered access to the world. The physical body of a particular filmmaker does not seem to put a limit on what we can see. The person behind the camera, and microphone, will not draw the attention of the social actors or engage with them in any direct or extended fashion. Instead we expect to have the ability to take the position of an ideal observer, moving among people and places to find revealing views. The fact that the mise-en-scène of the film is not fabricated on a set but in the arena of historical reality imposes more constraints on the ideal observer than we find in fiction—and, by dint of the evidence of physical or technical difficulty, we may be reminded of the filmmaker's presence in the face of the real—but the expectation of transparent access remains. As in classical narrative fiction, our tendency to establish a repertoire of imaginary relationships with

characters and situations prospers on condition of the filmmaker's presence as absence. Their unacknowledged, nonresponsive presence clears the way for the dynamics of empathetic identification, poetic immersion, or voyeuristic pleasure.

The Interactive Mode

What if the filmmaker does intervene and interact? What if the veil of illusory absence is shorn away? This is the possibility promoted by Dziga Vertov in the 1920s as *kino-pravda*. Filmmakers in several countries renewed this possibility in tentative, technically limited ways during the early to mid 1950s. In the late fifties this mode became technologically viable through the work of filmmakers at the National Film Board of Canada (particularly with the Candid Eye series, 1958–59, and Gilles Groulx and Michel Brault's *Les Racquetteurs* in 1958). The mode regained prominence and became the center of controversy with Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin's *Chronicle of a Summer* (1960), which they named a work of cinema verité, and with the success of *Primary* (1960) by Drew Associates in the United States.[7]

Beginning in the late 1950s the availability of very portable synchronous sound recording equipment made interaction more feasible than it had been theretofore. Speech need no longer be reserved for postproduction in a studio, far removed from the lives of those whose images grace the film. The filmmaker need not be only a cinematic, recording eye. He or she might more fully approximate the human sensorium: looking, listening, and speaking as it perceives events and allows for response. The filmmaker's voice could be heard as readily as any other, not subsequently, in an organizing voice-over commentary, but on the spot, in face-to-face encounter with others. The possibilities of serving as mentor, participant, prosecutor, or provocateur in relation to the social actors recruited to the film are far greater than the observational mode would suggest.

Interactive documentary stresses images of testimony or verbal exchange and images of demonstration (images that demonstrate the validity, or possibly, the doubtfulness, of what witnesses state). Textual authority shifts toward the social actors recruited: their comments and responses provide a central part of the film's argument. Various forms of monologue and dialogue (real or apparent) predominate. The mode introduces a sense of partialness, of *situated* presence and *local* knowledge that derives from the actual encounter of filmmaker and other. Issues of comprehension and interpretation as a function of physical encounter arise: how do filmmaker and social actor respond to each other; do they react to overtones or implications in each other's speech; do they see how power and desire flow between them? (This last question forms the core of Ross McElwee's *Sherman's March* as the filmmaker journeys through the South, recording his interactions with a variety of women to whom he is drawn.)

Editing operates to maintain a logical continuity between individual viewpoints, usually without benefit of an overarching commentary, the logic of which shifts to the relationship between the more fragmentary statements of subjects in interviews or the conversational exchange between filmmaker and social actors. (To the extent that the film may be *about* the interaction itself, as in *Sherman's March* or *Hotel Terminus*, the logic of the text leads less to an argument about the world than to a statement about the interactions themselves and what they disclose about filmmaker and social actors alike.) Spatial relations may well be noncontiguous or even incommensurate (such as the spatial leaps from the site of one interview to another and from the mise-en-scène of interviews to that of archival footage in *In the Year of the Pig* or other interactive, historical documentaries).

Unexpected juxtapositions may involve graphic intertitles (like the dictionary definition of a screw inserted after a rape victim speaks of being "screwed" in JoAnn Elam's work, *Rape*). Unusual framing, especially during an interview when we roam away from the "talking head" to explore some other aspect of the scene or person, such as the pan to a bee on the lapel of a pompous speaker in Chris Marker's *Le Joli Mai* or the emphasis given to the "empty space" between filmmaker and subject in Trinh Minh-ha's *Surname Viet Given Name Nam*, put the solemnity and authority of the interview itself into question. Incongruous or contradictory statements about the same issue, such as the reassembled remarks of Richard Nixon in Emile de Antonio's *Millhouse* or the two different interpretations presented in *First Contact* when historic photographs and film of the first encounters between whites and New Guinea Highlanders are described by the participants from each culture, also achieve the effect of a strange juxtaposition. They prompt the viewer to reassess an initial set of statements in light of a second, discrepant set. Such juxtapositions contest the flow of thought appropriate to the first frame of reference to induce surprise, insight, or possibly, laughter.[8] They become, apart from the process of interaction itself, a key tool in the filmmaker's discursive repertoire.

These possibilities pose distinct ethical issues for practitioners. How far can participation go? How are limits beyond which a filmmaker cannot go negotiated? What tactics does "prosecution" outside of a formal legal system allow? The word "prosecution" refers to the process of social or historical inquiry in which the filmmaker engages in dialogue with witnesses to carry forward an argument. Actually, the relation to witnesses may be closer to that of public defender than prosecutor: it is not commonly an adversarial relationship but one in which information is sought for an argument. The ethical issue in such a relationship pivots on the manner in which the filmmaker represents his or her witnesses, particularly when differing motives, priorities, or needs are at work. In a Public Broadcasting System interview with Bill Moyers, Errol Morris, director of *The Thin Blue Line*, differentiated his primary goal as a filmmaker from his subject's overriding desire to prove his innocence. For Morris, making a "good

movie" came first. The film has also served his subject well, as it happens, but in other cases the results are not always so happy. (*The Things I Cannot Change*, an early Challenge for Change documentary from the National Film Board of Canada, for example, is a good movie but it had a negative impact on the lives of the poverty-line family on which it focuses.) The methods of ABC's "Nightline" exemplify how the interests of constructing a good program can work to the detriment of the program's subjects by depriving them of control over how they are represented. The show features newsworthy individuals with whom host Ted Koppel interacts, but they are placed in a separate studio (even when they are in the same building in Washington, D.C.); they are not provided with a monitor on which to see Koppel or themselves in dialogue, and they must rely on an ear plug to hear their interlocutor's questions and comments.[9]

These tactics are not discernible to the viewer and may seem quite mild compared to the tendentious, inflammatory harangues of Morton Downey. "The Morton Downey Show" encourages representations of excess. The appearance of fairness seems thoroughly abandoned in the midst of inflammatory harangues where the progressive or conservative quality of the views expressed matters less than emotional intensity and imperviousness to reasoned dialogue. This show goes so far beyond the bounds of normal dialogue that it may well presage the death of public service discourse, however loosely construed, or mark its return as participatory spectacle. (The show failed to garner adequate ratings after becoming available nationally; it is no longer on the air.)

Mr. Downey's proximity to the ethics of the Roman circus poses another, related questions: How far can provocation go? When a Geraldo Rivera eggs white supremacists into physical violence, what responsibility does he bear for the consequences (an issue somewhat blunted when his own nose, rather than that of one of his guests, is broken)? When Claude Lanzman urges, if not insists, in *Shoah*, that his witnesses speak of the trauma they suffered as concentration camp victims can we assume that the result is as therapeutic as Mr. Lanzman seems to believe it will be? When the actor-scientist in Stanley Milgram's film, *Obedience* (the film demonstrates Milgram's classic experiments on obedience to authority), urges unwitting subjects to administer what would be lethal shocks to faulty learners, what responsibility remains with the filmmaker for the emotional aftermath of the experience, and not just in the immediate moment but in the succeeding years? In the latter cases, the filmmakers represent themselves with a particular honesty that allows us to see the process of negotiation that leads to the result they seek. We can make our own assessment of their conduct, the procedures governing their inquiry, and the balance between information gained and its personal price, but is this a sufficient form of exoneration? What are the ethical or political standards that organize patterns of social exchange such as these? What further negotiations, particularly in the process of editing—in choices of what to show and what to omit—might there be that also deserve a place in the finished film?

Interaction often revolves around the form known as the interview. This form raises ethical questions of its own: interviews are a form of hierarchical discourse deriving from the unequal distribution of power, as in the confessional and the interrogation. How is the inherently hierarchical structure of the form handled? Does the filmed oral history (or audiovisual history) pose ethical issues distinct from those of oral histories intended for archival use as primary source material? What rights or prerogatives does the interviewee retain? Legal safeguards to privacy and protection from slander or libel provide guidelines in some cases, but not in all. The ethical principle of informed consent provides another, but many documentary filmmakers choose to disregard it, arguing that the process of social or historical inquiry benefits from the same principles of free speech and a free press that allow considerable license to journalists in their pursuit of the news.[10]

Beyond the interview and oral history as such lie other nagging questions of the filmmaker's responsibility for historical accuracy, objectivity, and even the visual complexity of source material.[11] *Who Killed Vincent Chin?* for example, about the case of a young Chinese-American beaten to death by a laid-off, white auto worker and his stepson in Detroit partly because they mistook him for Japanese, gives considerable time to the explanations by the auto worker and his son themselves, as well as to their friends. The restraint—all the more evident when put in the context of Renee Tajima and Christine Choy's status as women of color and Choy's long record of political filmmaking—does not function as an obedient bow to the canons of good journalism but as a powerful rhetorical strategy. The diversity of perspectives—combining the account by the auto workers with that of friends and family of the murdered Mr. Chin and extensive footage taken from television news reports made at the time of the incident—and the juxtapositions created by the complex interweaving of source material in the editing require the viewer to arrive at his or her own answer to the question posed by the film's title.

The interactive text takes many forms but all draw their social actors into direct encounter with the filmmaker. When heard, the voice of the filmmaker addresses the social actors on screen rather than the spectator. Some works, like Rouch's seminal *Chronicle of a Summer*, or later films like Jon Alpert's *Hard Metal's Disease*, Octavio Cortázar's *For the First Time*, and *Talking about Punto Cubano*, Jean-Pierre Gorin's *Poto and Cabengo*, Michael Rubbo's *Sad Song of Yellow Skin*, or Bonnie Klein's *Not a Love Story* (as well as Ross McElwee's *Sherman's March*) are rooted in the moment of interaction itself. The present-tense quality is strong and sense of contingency vivid. Events yet to unfold may take alternative courses based on the process of interaction that we witness. In a later, ethnographic work, *Tourou et Bitti*,

for example, Rouch confides to the viewer in voice-off as he strides toward a small village square that his intention is to use the camera he carries (and which records the traveling long shot we see) to provoke a trance that has been attempted unsuccessfully on several recent occasions. The remainder of the film records the event more or less observationally, but Rouch's opening remark makes clear the interactive powers of the camera as the trance ceremony proceeds to a successful conclusion.

Other films, like Emile de Antonio's pioneering *In the Year of the Pig*, or subsequent films like *With Babies and Banners*, *The Wobblies*, *Seeing Red*, *Rosie the Riveter*, *Shoah*, *Solovki Power*, or *Hotel Terminus*, turn to the past or, more precisely, to the relationship between the past and the present. Some, like *Shoah*, stress the influence of the past on the present by making the interview process itself the central aspect of the film. Others, like *Are We Winning the Cold War, Mommy?* and *Rosie the Riveter*, stress the continuous process whereby the past is reconstructed in the present by moving beyond the interviews to a visual interpretation of the past from archival footage. *In the Year of the Pig*, for example, builds around a series of interviews with various observers of or participants in the American involvement in the war in Vietnam. The film helped establish the genre of historical reconstruction based on oral history or witness testimony and archival footage rather than on a voice-over commentary. De Antonio's presence is relatively oblique but constantly implied both by editorial commentary (such as the statues of Civil War soldiers with which the film opens, suggesting the internal, basically Vietnamese rather than external, "free world vs. enslaved world" nature of the conflict) and by the interview format itself. We only hear de Antonio once (in an interview with Senator Thurston Morton where he takes particular pains to stress the fact of the interview as such) and never see him on camera, but the clear historical account of the war's origins, which is obviously at odds with the United States government account, indirectly points toward de Antonio's organizing presence. The *argument* is his but it arises out of the selection and arrangement of the evidence provided by witnesses rather than from a voice-over commentary. (There is no voice-over commentary at all.)

With Babies and Banners, *Union Maids*, and *Seeing Red*, on the other hand, give the impression that the argument is the witnesses' and that the filmmaker merely acts to present and illustrate it. (There is still no voice-over commentary and the structuring presence of the filmmaker is also less in evidence.) The difference is quite significant, but the important point here is the shift of emphasis from an author-centered voice of authority to a witness-centered voice of testimony.[12] When interviews contribute to an expository mode of representation, they generally serve as evidence for the filmmaker's, or text's, argument. When interviews contribute to an interactive mode of representation, they generally serve as evidence for an argument presented as the product of the interaction of filmmaker and subject.

Other filmmakers interact overtly and are both seen and heard routinely.

This is the case with Jean Rouch himself, with Barbara Kopple in *Harlan County, U.S.A.*, Jon Alpert in *Hard Metal's Disease*, Bonnie Klein in *Not a Love Story*, Marilu Mallet in *Unfinished Diary*, Claude Lanzman in *Shoah*, Tony Bubba in *Lightning over Braddock*, and Marcel Ophuls in *Hotel Terminus*. The filmmaker's felt presence as a center of attention for the social actors as well as the viewer leads to an emphasis on the act of gathering information or building knowledge, the process of social and historical interpretation, and the effect of the encounter between people and filmmakers when that experience may directly alter the lives of all involved. The encounter may be formalized via interviews as it is in *Shoah* or more unstructured and spontaneous as it is in *Lightning over Braddock* but the sense of the precariousness of the present moment, as the direction of the film hangs in the balance with every exchange, distinguishes the interactive or participatory mode of representation quite sharply from the observational one.

The degree of latitude within which social actors can engage in the process of self-presentation varies considerably, from the maximal autonomy allowed by observational cinema to the highly restrictive limitations of formal interviews like those utilized by Ted Koppel on "Nightline" or CBS's "Meet the Press." When interaction occurs outside of one of the formal interview structures, as will be discussed below, the filmmaker and social actors engage one another as peers, taking up positions on the common ground of social encounter, presenting themselves as social actors who must negotiate the terms and conditions of their own interaction. (These positions, of course, are not necessarily those of full equals; the act of filming alone usually sees to that.) Parts of *Hard Metal's Disease* when Alpert becomes a full participant in events, for example, when he steps in to translate statements by American disease victims into Spanish for the Mexican workers whom the Americans have come to warn, erase the sense of the constraints of an interview structure. Alpert is not an observer but a full participant, if not instigator, in the events he films.

Likewise, the exchanges between the filmmaking team of Joel Demott and Jeff Kreines and their subjects, a group of Pittsburgh filmmakers whose attempt to make a low-budget horror film they document in *Demon Lover Diary*, are those of individuals engaged in a common project.[13] The film underscores the extent to which a participatory approach, where the interactions are themselves part of the final record and their effect significant to the outcome of events, becomes a type of metaobservational film as well. The filmmakers extend their observations to include the process of exchange between themselves and their subjects in a systematic and substantive manner. (The idea of "metaobservation" is particularly apt here because Jeff Kreines operates one camera, recording the making of the low budget film, while a different individual operates a second camera, recording Jeff and Joel's interactions with the feature filmmakers. At times, Joel DeMott records diaristic entries about the unfolding events, voice-over. We are left with the impression that the film they would have produced was

observational but that to this they added a second, more "meta" set of observations and diaristic commentaries.)

A participatory dynamic is one that extends beyond the use of interview material in an expository text. Commentary made by or on behalf of the filmmaker clearly subordinates the interviews to the film's own argument. Man-in-the-street interviews tucked into *Prelude to War* or sandwiched among narrator Roger Mudd's points about military waste in *The Selling of the Pentagon* convey a minimal sense of participatory engagement. A participatory dynamic also goes further than the occasional gesture or passing acknowledgment that a film is being made. (One example occurs in *Joe Leahy's Neighbors*, discussed below, chap. 7.) An interactive text extends beyond passing acknowledgments to the point where the dynamics of social exchange between filmmaker and subject become fundamental to the film. Jon Silver's *Watsonville on Strike* establishes a vividly interactive mode in its opening scene inside the Teamster union hall in Watsonville. The room is crowded with striking cannery workers, most of whom are Chicano. A Teamster official, Fred Heim, looks toward the camera and insists that Silver leave the room. Rather than debate the point with Heim, Silver asks the workers, in Spanish, if he can stay. The camera pans away from Heim to show dozens of striking workers shout out, "Si!" The scene becomes a lively confrontation between these workers and their purported union leader. Silver continues this pattern of interactive engagement throughout the film, principally by means of interviews that make his own allegiances clear and situate him less as an observer than a metaparticipant, someone actively engaged with other participants but also engaged in constructing an argument and perspective on their struggle.

The interview is an overdetermined structure. It arises in relation to more than oral history and it serves far more than one function. Most basically, the interview testifies to a power relation in which institutional hierarchy and regulation pertain to speech itself. As such, the interview figures into most of the fundamental discourses of sobriety, as I have termed them, and into most of the dominant institutions in our culture. Michel Foucault speaks extensively of the patient-client interview in social management, particularly sexual therapy, originating in the religious practice of the confession.[14] The regulatory function of such exchanges, which appear to emancipate sexuality from a burden of silence only to place it within the disciplinary procedures of an institutional regime, draws most of Foucault's emphasis, but the interview extends well beyond its religious-psychotherapeutic use. In medicine, it goes by the name of "case history," where patient-generated narratives of symptoms and their possible source become rewritten in the discourse of medical science. In anthropology, the interview is the testimony of native informants who describe the workings of their culture to the one who will rewrite their accounts into the discourse of anthropological investigation. On television it has spawned the genre known as the talk show. In journalism, it is the press conference and

interview as such, and in police work, the interrogation. (The difference is one of degree.) In law, we find depositions, hearings, testimony, and cross-examination. In education, the Socratic dialogue as well as the lecture with question/answer period represent different versions of this basic structure.

In each case, hierarchy is maintained and served while information passes from one social agent to another. In contrast to what Teresa de Lauretis has called, after Foucault, the "technologies of gender," which work, discursively, to implant a gendered, sexual subjectivity in every individual, we might use the term "technologies of knowledge" for those activities that work to implant a gendered, social subjectivity that never disrupts the linkage of knowledge (any more than sexuality) from power.[15] The interview in its various guises has a central role to play among these technologies. In cinema, this linkage of technique to power takes material form as space and time, particularly space. Like the ethical issues concerning the space between filmmaker and subject and how it is negotiated, a parallel set of political issues of hierarchy and control, power and knowledge surround the interview.

No one-to-one correlation exists between form and content with regard to the interview any more than to low-angle shots or high-key lighting. But each choice of spatio-temporal configuration between filmmaker and interviewee carries implications and a potential political charge, an ideological valence, as it were, that deserves attention. At one extreme would be "conversation," a free exchange between filmmaker and subject that seems to follow no predetermined course and to address no clearly specified agenda. (The word is in quotes since the very process of filming such a conversation makes it something other than the natural and obvious thing it appears.) Talk shows, with their hosts who serve as surrogates for the filmmaking or television apparatus and whose speech appears spontaneous and wide-ranging, come to mind, as do the informal exchanges between Ross McElwee and the women he meets or visits in his *Sherman's March*. In these cases, the filmmaker or surrogate is clearly visible or, if off screen (usually wielding the camera), still the primary center of attention for the characters on screen. Conversation is at the boundary of institutional control, as Lyotard suggests when he contrasts it with discourse inside an institutional frame. Conversations draw our attention to the byplay and maneuvering, along a gradient of power, between the filmmaker and subject. Like the oral history, case history, deposition, or court testimony, conversation within a film is also destined to be scrutinized by interested onlookers, giving these quasi-public maneuvers an added measure of complexity.

A variation on "mere" conversation, even less obviously organized by the filmmaker, is the "masked interview."[16] In this case the filmmaker is both off screen and unheard. Equally significant, the interviewee no longer addresses the filmmaker off screen but engages in conversation with an-

other social actor. An example is the discussion between Guyo Ali and Iya Duba in *Kenya Boran* when the two men discuss birth control practices promoted by the Kenyan government. Guyo Ali introduces the topic without giving any sense that this is the result of a request by the filmmakers, who did no more than request its introduction. (David MacDougall has described his occasional use of this technique in *Kenya Boran* in private discussion.)

The impression rendered is very hard to differentiate from ordinary conversation of the sort found in observational films. The key difference, however, is that we observe an implanted conversation. What topic the social actors address and the general drift of what they say has been prearranged. Sometimes the discussion will give the impression of being more strictly focused than ordinary conversation, but there are no clear-cut guidelines for determining this, especially in a cross-cultural or ethnographic context. Rather than making the interview structure evident, the masked interview slides toward the oblique stylistics of the fiction film, and the work of a *metteur en scène*. The sense of a fissure or discrepancy between the performance we observe and the codes we expect to govern it opens up. Dialogue has an "imperfect" quality, but without further, contextual information, the viewer is left uncertain whether to construe this discrepancy as cultural difference (including speech protocol associated with rituals), camera consciousness, or self-consciousness that stems from the act of presenting an interview in the guise of conversation.

A more structured interaction between filmmaker and social actor where both are present and visible may give the impression of "dialogue," again in quotes because of the hierarchy of control that guides and directs the exchange, privileging the interviewer as the initiator and arbiter of legitimacy and framing the interviewee as primary source material, potential repository of new information or knowledge. This form of exchange might also be termed "pseudo-dialogue" since the interview format prohibits full reciprocity or equity between the participants. The interviewer's skill is often revealed by his or her ability to appear at the service of the interviewee whose speech he or she actually controls, somewhat in the manner of a ventriloquist. Michel Brault and Gilles Groulx's *Les Racquetteurs*, Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin's *Chronicle of a Summer*, Michael Rubbo's films such as *Sad Song of Yellow Skin*, *Waiting for Fidel*, and *Wet Earth, Warm People*, the types of discussions conducted by Barbara Walters or Bill Moyers on American television, among others, adopt this tack, heightening a sense of equity between discussants and giving the sense of an agenda that does not require a formalized, preestablished sequence of exchanges. The resulting impression of a pseudo-dialogue disguises the degree to which such exchanges are, in fact, as highly formalized here as they are in other institutional contexts.

The common interview is even more structured than conversation or

dialogue. A specific agenda comes into play and the information extracted from the exchange may be placed within a larger frame of reference to which it contributes a distinct piece of factual information or affective overtone. Unlike the opening café scene in Godard's *Vivre sa vie*—when the camera moves back and forth behind the two main characters seated at a café bar trying to frame them and see their faces but apparently lacking the authority to make them turn to face this intrusive instrument—and unlike the reflexive tactics of *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* that allow subjects to move outside the frame, subverting the formality of the interview itself, the common interview normally requires subjects to provide a frontal view of themselves and generally discipline their bodies to oblige the camera's requirements regarding depth of field and angle of view. The individual identity, autobiographical background, or idiosyncratic qualities of those interviewed become secondary to an external referent: some aspect of the historical world to which they can contribute special knowledge. (Personal traits are not irrelevant; they add "grain," or texture, to knowledge and can be crucial to the rhetorical credibility of what is said. This is particularly evident in films like *Word Is Out*, *Before Stonewall*, or Valeria Sarmiento's *A Man When He Is a Man*, since qualities of personality are themselves aspects of the subject at hand.)

In the Year of the Pig is built entirely around common interviews, as is a great deal of *Who Killed Vincent Chin?* Each film's argument arises indirectly, from the selection and arrangement of witnesses, rather than directly from the voice-over commentary of a narrator. Although such films continue to make a case about the historical world, just as an expository documentary might, they do so in a distinctive manner. Both the specific ways and means individuals have of telling their part of a story and the filmmaker's tactics for combining each account into a larger picture draw our attention. We shuttle between these two points of authority, authorship, and rhetorical suasion. The film is joined with what it presents. *Not a Love Story*, for example, builds much of its case against the pornography industry around interviews between the filmmaker, Bonnie Klein, or her companion, ex-stripper Linda Lee Tracy, and various participants in the pornography trade. Each interview finds a place within a textual system that stresses the spiritual journey of the two interviewers into this dark corner of the human soul and their subsequent redemption. Each interview provides both factual information and an opportunity for the interviewers to mark another station on their personal passage. What narrative development there is surrounds the acquisition of knowledge about pornography and, somewhat atypically in relation to most interactive films, the moral growth of the interviewers as social actors.

In *Not a Love Story*, no doubt due to the unusual emphasis placed on the interviewers' experiences, the exchanges place the filmmaker and the subject within the frame, in shared social space. This form of spatial

arrangement is more typical of television interviews, where the personality of the host-anchorperson-interviewer can itself acquire iconic status and therefore economic exchange value through repetition in program after program. In a great many instances, particularly in those films that make history their subject rather than the effect of the interview experience itself, the interview takes place across the frameline. The filmmaker/interviewer remains off screen, and, quite often, even the interviewer's voice disappears from the text. The interview structure remains self-evident because the social actors address the camera, or a location on a proximate axis (their eyeline presumably aimed at the interviewer), rather than other social actors and because not only their words but their bodies seem held in the grip of the mise-en-scène. *Seeing Red*, *In the Year of the Pig*, *Word Is Out*, *The Day after Trinity*, *Ethnic Notions*, *The Color of Honor*, *Family Gathering*, and *Rosie the Riveter* are but a few examples of films using a technique where the interview approximates the style and structure of oral history.

The visible presence of the social actor as evidentiary witness and the visible absence of the filmmaker (the filmmaker's presence as absence) gives this form of the interview the appearance of a "pseudomonologue." Like the musings directed to the audience in a soliloquy, the pseudomonologue appears to deliver the thoughts, impressions, feelings, and memories of the individual witness directly to the viewer. The filmmaker achieves a suturing effect, placing the viewer in direct relation to the interviewee, by absenting him- or herself.[17] Instead of watching and overhearing an exchange between the filmmaker and his/her subject, which then requires specific measures such as the shot/reverse shot editing pattern to place the viewer in a position of subjective engagement rather than detachment, the pseudomonologue violates the dictum, "Don't look at the camera" in order to achieve a more immediate sense of being addressed by the subject. The pseudomonologue makes the viewer *the* subject of cinematic address, erasing the very mediations of filmmaker/subject/viewer that the interactive mode accentuates.

The degree of filmmaker absence in the pseudomonologue can vary considerably. Frequently the filmmaker is neither seen nor heard, allowing witnesses "to speak for themselves." Sometimes the voice of the filmmaker is heard while the body remains unseen. This occurs in the one scene in *In the Year of the Pig* with Senator Morton, in portions of *Harlan County, U.S.A.*, and throughout *Sad Song of Yellow Skin* and other films by Michael Rubbo. The sense of an aural presence echoes the strategy of voice-over commentary in expository films but the voice is now turned toward the subjects within the frame, the interviewees, rather than the viewer, or, as in *Sherman's March* and *Demon Lover Diary*, the filmmaker's voice addresses us in a personal, diaristic tone, adding another individual point of view to what we see and hear.

Often the quality of the sound recording suggests that the filmmaker

occupies contiguous space, just off screen, but it is also possible for the filmmaker to record the questions to which interviewees respond after the fact, in an entirely separate space. In this case, spatial discontinuity establishes an existential discontinuity as well: the filmmaker, or the mechanism of inquiry, operates at a remove from the historical world of the social actor and the contingency of direct encounter. The interviewee moves "under glass," framed, held within the space of an image from which the interviewer is not only absent but over which the filmmaker retains mastery. The interviewer's voice occupies space of a higher logical type: it defines and contains the messages that emanate from the historical world. It takes on the mantle of a fuller, more complete authority. But just as the image inevitably points to an absence (of the referent to which it refers, of the authoring agent behind the camera and the enunciating apparatus in toto), so, too, the disembodied voice of inquiry points to another, paradoxical absence (the absence of the interviewer from the arena of the historical present, the placement of the voice in a transcendental, ahistorical field that can only be a fiction of the text).

This discontinuity can be brought to a focus more overtly when the filmmaker displaces the spoken voice with the written word. Intertitles may provide the other half of the "dialogue" rather than a voice-off. Ron Mann's *Comic Book Confidential*, a history of the American comic book, mimics comic books themselves by tying interviews together with brief intertitles that suggest the narrative line of the film (for example, "Meanwhile the superheroes battle each other," or "And then the fifties arrived," and so on). David and Judith MacDougall's *Wedding Camels* contains a scene in which they interview the bride by means of a set of questions represented by intertitles (in English; the replies are in Turkana, with subtitles, another graphic mediation). One question is, "We asked Akai [the bride] whether a Turkana woman chooses her husband or if her parents choose for her." Although this tactic places the filmmaker "on screen," in the two-dimensional space of the graphic intertitles, a sense of absence remains. This space is discontinuous from the three-dimensional space of the interview; it stands in for or represents the filmmaker without embodying him or her. An advantage is that the difference between the graphic and indexical (realist) signifiers, between the written word and the image of the speaking body, can work to acknowledge the hierarchical difference between interviewer and interviewee. The turn toward the written word serves as a trace of an encounter that did occur and acknowledges the authority of the filmmaker to frame and control his or her subjects without requiring the disembodiment of the voice and the paradoxical transference of its grain, its historical specificity, into the realm of an apparently timeless logos. Graphic intertitles can achieve the effect of an unexpected or strange juxtaposition, adding to our awareness of the hierarchical structure of interaction. As such they have the potential to move us toward the reflexive

mode of documentary representation without being sufficient to do so in and of themselves.

Viewer expectations are quite different for interactive films than for expository or observational ones. Expository and observational films unlike interactive or reflexive ones, tend to mask the work of production, the effects of the cinematic apparatus itself, and the tangible process of enunciation, the saying of something as distinct from that which is said. When the interactive film takes the form of oral histories strung together to reconstruct a historical period or event, the reconstruction is clearly the result of assembling these discrete pieces of testimony. The process is more rooted in individual perspectives or personal recollections than a disembodied voice-of-God commentary and evidentiary editing would be. The sense of being addressed by others who are themselves historically situated or implanted and who speak directly to us, or to our surrogate, the filmmaker/interviewer, shifts these texts closer to *discours* than *histoire*. (The awareness of s/he-who-speaks, so vivid in everyday conversation, does not evaporate into the evasive lure of a narrative that seems to issue from nowhere, that can simply announce, through an anonymous agency, "Once upon a time. . . .")

The viewer of the interactive text expects to be witness to the historical world as represented by one who inhabits it and who makes that process of habitation a distinct dimension of the text. The text, whatever else, addresses the ethics or politics of encounter. This is the encounter between one who wields a movie camera and one who does not. The sense of bodily presence, rather than absence, locates and holds the filmmaker to the scene, even when masked by certain strategies for interviewing or representing encounter. Viewers expect conditional information and situated or local knowledge. The extension of particular encounters into more generalized ones remains entirely possible, but the possibility remains, at least in part, one that viewers must establish through their own engagement with the text itself.

The Reflexive Mode of Representation

If the historical world is a meeting place for the processes of social exchange and representation in the interactive mode, the representation of the historical world becomes, itself, the topic of cinematic meditation in the reflexive mode. Rather than hearing the filmmaker engage solely in an interactive (participatory, conversational, or interrogative) fashion with other social actors, we now see or hear the filmmaker also engage in metacommentary, speaking to us less about the historical world itself, as in the expository and poetic or interactive and diaristic modes, than about the process of representation itself. Whereas the great preponderance of documentary production concerns itself with talking about the historical world, the reflexive mode addresses the question of *how* we talk about the historical world. As with poetic exposition, the focus of the text slides from the realm of historical reference to the properties of the text itself. Poetic exposition draws attention to the pleasures of form, reflexivity to its problems. It internalizes many of the issues and concerns that are the subject of this study, not as a secondary or subsequent mode of retrospective analysis, but as an immediate undeferrable issue in social representation itself. Reflexive texts are self-conscious not only about form and style, as poetic ones are, but also about strategy, structure, conventions, expectations, and effects.

Reflexive documentaries like *The Man with a Movie Camera, The Thin Blue Line, Daughter Rite, Reassemblage, Lorang's Way, Of Great Events and Ordinary People, Poto and Cabengo, Far from Poland,* and *Unfinished Diary* pose the ethical dilemma of how to represent people in two distinct ways. First, it is posed as an issue the text may itself address specifically (as we find in *Far from Poland* and *Daughter Rite*). Second, the text poses it as an issue for the viewer by emphasizing the degree to which people, or social actors, appear before us as signifiers, as functions of the text itself. Their representativeness in terms of the institutions and collectivities that operate beyond the frame of the film, in history, becomes more problematic as we recognize the extent to which we see a constructed image rather than a slice of reality. Interactive films may draw attention to the process of filmmaking when this process poses a problem for the participants; the reflexive mode draws attention to this process when it poses problems for the viewer. How can a representation be adequate to that which it represents? How can the struggles of the trade union Solidarity be represented in a film, especially when the filmmaker cannot travel to Poland (the subject of *Far from Poland*)? How can the emotional bonds of mother-daughter be represented when they are not readily available for documentation, having occurred in the past, out of sight of any camera (an issue in *Daughter Rite*)? How can the viewer be drawn into an awareness of this problematic so that no myth of the knowability of the world, of the power of the logos, no repression of the unseen and unrepresentable occludes the magnitude of "what every filmmaker knows": that every representation, however fully imbued with documentary significance, remains a fabrication?

People represented within a text that poses such a problem will, inevitably, not be available for assimilation by the conventions of realism. Realism provides unproblematic access to the world through traditional physical representation and the untroubled transference of psychological states from character to viewer (by means of acting style, narrative structure, and cinematic techniques such as point-of-view shots). Reflexive documentaries will employ such techniques only to interrupt and expose them. *The Thin Blue Line,* for example, relies heavily on the conventions of the interview with its affinities for the confessional, but also draws attention to the

tensions that arise when statements contradict one another. Director Errol Morris so emphasizes these contradictions that the appeal to testimony as an index of "what really happened" becomes thoroughly enmeshed in the testimony's function within a liturgy of mutually contradictory statements of self-vindication.[18] This overarching pattern, however, by definition cannot be perceived or shared by any of the characters. And in the case of the protagonist, Randall Adams, who serves a life sentence for the murder of a police officer he swears he did not commit, the very notion of such a pattern threatens to entrap his own assertions of innocence within a babble of inconclusive, competing ones. Morris dramatizes the quest for evidence, and underlines the uncertainty of what evidence there is. He reminds us of how every documentary constructs the evidentiary reference points it requires by returning us, again and again, to the scene of the crime by means of a reenactment that highlights suggestive, evocative, but also completely inconclusive aspects of the event (such as a milkshake tumbling through the air in slow motion or a car taillight held in close-up while the physical identity of the killer remains resolutely indeterminate). Though realist in many respects, the film blocks the "natural," largely unquestioned assumption of a direct correspondence between realism and the truthfulness of claims about the world.

As a result, the belief systems of social actors become repositioned within the text's own metacommentary about competing belief systems and the proclivity of the judicial system to grant an authority to the narratives of "fact" generated by police and prosecutors that it denies to those cast as the accused. This is the work of the text, not the point of view of any of the witnesses we see and hear. The hazard of the many interactive texts that subordinate their own textual voice to that of their witnesses no longer threatens; if anything, we have the converse hazard of a textual voice overwhelming the discrete voices of social actors with a message of its own about the problematics of representation.

The reduction of the social actor to a slot within the textual system presents us with the issues of performance and, in several cases, the reflexive text opts for a performance as such rather than to compel others to disguise self-presentation in the form of a virtual performance. *Far from Poland, Daughter Rite, The Thin Blue Line,* and both *David Holzman's Diary* and *No Lies* (films that are reflexive interrogations of the ethics of the observational mode of representation) all rely on performances by actors to represent what documentary might have been able to convey if it conscripted social actors to represent roles and subjectivities that are not their own. Such films give reflexive emphasis to the question of "using" people while avoiding some of the ethical difficulties of using social actors for this purpose.

The same reasoning prompts many reflexive texts to present the filmmaker him- or herself—on screen, in frame—less as a participant-observer than as an authoring agent, opening this very function to examination.

Elements of this approach occur in Vertov's pioneering *The Man with a Movie Camera* and in Rouch and Morin's *Chronicle of a Summer.* They are carried to a far greater extreme in Godard's *Numero Deux* while both *Of Great Events and Ordinary People* and *Far from Poland* extend the concept. In all of these cases the filmmakers' acknowledgment of their own difference from those they represent—their function as the representative of the film and the constraints this function imposes on their ability to interact with others—positions them within the text as the occupant of a historical, discursive space paradoxically incommensurate with that of their subjects. (That which defines and frames a space cannot also occupy that space at the same time, or as Bertrand Russell put it, a class cannot be a member of itself.) *Numero Deux* begins and ends with Godard himself in an editing room, playing through the sounds and images of his actors who represent the family he has chosen to investigate. He is historically situated in this space (the space of production, textual space) and yet he is at a palpable remove from the space of the representation occupied by his "family" (the space of story, scenographic space). The possibility of direct interaction between subject and filmmaker that figures so powerfully in *Chronicle of a Summer, Hard Metal's Disease,* or the work of Michael Rubbo no longer seems tenable. Reflexive mediations have pulled the two series of images apart, into distinct, hierarchical registers of representation. And to make his point, Godard turns to professional actors rather than ordinary people, a turn that may not resolve all the ethical issues that such a text both addresses and provokes.[19]

In fact, one of the oddities of the reflexive documentary is that it rarely reflects on ethical issues as a primary concern, other than with the sigh of a detached relativism readier to criticize the choices of others than to examine its own. The preference for professional performances and the appearance of the filmmaker seldom serve to point to ethical issues directly. Actors help avoid difficulties that might arise with non-actors since their profession revolves around willingly adopting a persona and being available as a signifier in someone else's discourse. Using actors spares the filmmaker from using people to make a point about the nature of representation rather than about the nature of their own lives, but the use of actors does not solve the problem of how to combine the two issues. The desire to address the politics or aesthetics of representation requires increased attention to and organization of what occurs in front of the camera, and to the juxtaposition of individual shots or scenes. Actors help facilitate this process. Their use does not mean that the film will necessarily take up questions involving the filmmaker's ethical responsibilities either to the film's subjects or viewers. To do so would be to challenge not only the conventions but also the prerogatives on which the documentary form depends. Explorations of the difficulties or consequences of representation are more common than examinations of the *right* of representation.

A vivid exception is *No Lies,* which is explicitly about the ethics of the

filmmaker/subject interaction and, by extension, the text/viewer relationship. By using actors to represent a situation in which a male "cinema verité" filmmaker relentlessly interviews a female friend about her recent rape while allowing the viewer to believe that the film *is* the documentary footage of this encounter, *No Lies* not only questions the latent voyeurism in observational or interactive filmmaking, the power of the camera to extract confessional performances, and the indifference to personal, emotional consequences that such filmmaking may encourage, it also places the viewer in the position of being manipulated, and betrayed, very much like the female friend. We only learn after the fact, from the credits, that the two characters are actors. Some feel cheated by the revelation. They have tendered belief in the reality of a representation they should have treated as a fiction, but this violation of trust is precisely the point. *No Lies* reflexively heightens our apprehension of the dynamic of trust that documentaries invite, and of the betrayals—of subjects, and of viewers—made possible by this very trust.

The reflexive mode of representation gives emphasis to the encounter between filmmaker and viewer rather than filmmaker and subject. This mode arrives last on the scene since it is itself the least naive and the most doubtful about the possibilities of communication and expression that the other modes take for granted. Realist access to the world, the ability to provide persuasive evidence, the possibility of indisputable argument, the unbreakable bond between an indexical image and that which it represents—all these notions prove suspect. As Hayden White puts it when speaking of irony as a historiographic trope:

> The trope of Irony, then, provides a linguistic paradigm of a mode of thought which is radically self-critical with respect not only to a given characterization of the world of experience but also to the very effort to capture adequately the truth of things in language. It is, in short, a model of the linguistic protocol in which skepticism in thought and relativism in ethics are conventionally expressed.[20]

In its most paradigmatic form the reflexive documentary prompts the viewer to a heightened consciousness of his or her relation to the text and of the text's problematic relationship to that which it represents. Editing often works to increase this sense of awareness, a consciousness of cinematic form rather than of the historical world on the other side of the realist window—as long takes also do when they extend beyond the duration necessary for "reading time": the time needed to take in their socially significant meaning. When an image lingers it eventually calls attention to itself, to its composition, to the *hold* it exerts over its content, to the frame surrounding it.

Unexpected juxtapositions work in the manner described by the Russian

formalists who termed their effect *ostranenie*, the making strange of the familiar and the making familiar of the strange. Frames of reference collide, usually the representational and the referential, such that an initial untroubled sense of access to the world becomes troubled or problematized. Unexpected juxtapositions or stylistic departures from the norms of a text or the conventions of a genre make realism and referentiality themselves strange. They fold the viewer's consciousness back onto itself so that it comes into contact with the work of the cinematic apparatus rather than being allowed to move unimpeded toward engagement with a representation of the historical world.

The reflexive mode emphasizes epistemological doubt. It stresses the deformative intervention of the cinematic apparatus in the process of representation. Knowledge is not only localized but itself subject to question. Knowledge is hyper-situated, placed not only in relation to the filmmaker's physical presence, but also in relation to fundamental issues about the nature of the world, the structure and function of language, the authenticity of documentary sound and image, the difficulties of verification, and the status of empirical evidence in Western culture.

Jean-Pierre Gorin's *Poto and Cabengo*, for example, reflexively addresses the issue of language and signification directly. The film combines interactions between Gorin and a set of twins reputed to have evolved a private language with a reflexive critique of the very process of scientific investigation and journalistic reporting that Gorin's own film also pursues. Like Raul Ruiz in *Of Great Events and Ordinary People*, where Ruiz, a Chilean exile living in Paris and speaking a second language, questions his own function and presence, Gorin, a Frenchman living in San Diego and speaking English with a pronounced accent, questions his own relation to a pair of twins whose idiosyncratic use of language singles them out. Gorin combines a diaristic voice-over describing his relation to the twins and scenes of himself interacting with them with ironically toned reports on the results of scientific investigations (they speak a variation of English, not a unique language) and the journalistic reports (the parents hope to get an offer from Hollywood, they are ambivalent about whether to accept or discourage their children's "abnormality").

What counts as normal? What anchors signifiers to English language and speech? What influence does a German-speaking grandmother and a "word salad" of everyday conversation in the home (mixing German, English, and idiolect in one discursive bowl) have on the twins? What influence does the attention they receive exert? What language should we expect from twins who eat *gemesht* salad, use *käse* knives, and call each other Poto and Cabengo?

Gorin makes his own *gemesht* (mixed) representation of the issues, combining observational footage, interactive engagement, subtitles and intertitles that reproduce and mock the vocabulary of the linguists and

reporters, the voices of his subjects over a black screen, blow-ups of newspaper clippings and Katzenjammer cartoons, and an exhaustive breakdown of sixteen different ways to say "potato," including "Poto."

Gorin's interest is less in getting an "answer" to the question of the status of the twins' language, or in observing how the media affect the lives of this family (as we find in Richard Leacock's *Happy Mother's Day*, about the Dion quintuplets), than in meditating on the nature of language and representation as social phenomena in general. What are the necessary and sufficient terms for linguistic competence? What validates the ordering of signifiers; what keeps them from sliding across one another in an endless succession? And, to complete the reflexive turn, how can this film call its own use of language, as well as the physical presence of the authoring agent (Gorin), into question at the same time that it attempts to question the social responsibility of people (parents, filmmakers) with linguistic mastery to those around them? (Gorin's apparent answer to the ethics of representation and his responsibility to this particular family involves outlasting the scientists and press. Once the story has exhausted itself for them, Gorin remains to "follow up" and chronicle the state of the family after their dreams of movie contracts fall through and the husband's job collapses. As *An American Family*, with its twelve-hour length culled from three hundred hours of footage, suggests, duration has an indeterminacy of its own that may not resolve ethical questions so much as postpone or extend them.)

Viewer expectations for reflexive documentaries differ from expectations for the other modes: in place of the representation of a topic or issue, with or without attention to the interactive role of the filmmaker, the viewer comes to expect the unexpected, functioning not with a surreal intent to shock and surprise so much as to return the film systematically to questions of its own status and that of documentary in general. Refrains, should they occur, no longer underline thematic concerns or authenticate the camera's and filmmaker's presence in the historical world, but refer to the construction of the text itself. (The ongoing argument between Jill Godmilow and Mark Magill, her companion, about the efficacy of her strategies in *Far from Poland* is one example; the repeated shots that frame the documentary image on a video monitor and surround it with darkness in *Numero Deux* is another.) The terms and conditions of viewing that are normally taken for granted may be subject to scrutiny, particularly as they pertain to the film being viewed at that moment. The phenomenology of filmic experience, the metaphysics of realism and the photographic image, epistemology, empiricism, the construction of the individual subject, the technologies of knowledge, rhetoric, and the visible—all of that which supports and sustains the documentary tradition is as much the focus for the viewer's consciousness as the world beyond. A thickened, denser sense of the textuality of the viewing experience is in operation. The sense of vicarious transport into the historical world doubles back on the trail of representation itself.

More than the sense of the filmmaker's presence in the historical world found in the interactive mode, the viewer experiences a sense of the text's presence in his or her interpretive field. The situation to be experienced and examined is no longer located elsewhere, marked and referred to by the documentary text; it is the viewing situation itself. A longer-standing tradition in fiction, where satire, parody, and irony all enjoy a prominent position, this reflexive move is relatively new to the documentary. This questioning of its own status, conventions, effects, and values may well represent the maturation of the genre. Further formal advance necessarily involves a return to the earlier, presumably more naive forms, but with a heightened awareness of their limitations.

The reflexive documentary arises in part from a history of formal change in which the constraints and limits of a mode of representation provide the context for its own overthrow. A new mode may also arise from a more directly political history when the efficacy of a previously accepted mode diminishes or when the stance it sanctions toward the historical world is no longer adequate. The institutional framework surrounding documentary, however, served for several decades to shelter this cinematic genre from twentieth-century tendencies toward radical doubt, uncertainty, skepticism, irony, and existential relativism that gave impetus to modernism and the even more disaffected scavenging of postmodernism.

When a reflexive mode of documentary representation did gain some degree of prominence in the 1970s and '80s (with a few notable precursors like *The Man with a Movie Camera*), it clearly derived both from formal innovation and political urgency. The poststructuralist critique of language systems as the agency that constitutes the individual subject (rather than empowering it); the argument that representation as a semiotic operation confirmed a bourgeois epistemology (and voyeuristic pathology); the assumption that radical transformation requires work on the signifier, on the construction of the subject itself rather than on the subjectivities and predispositions of an already constituted subject all converge to insist that the representation of reality has to be countered by an interrogation of the reality of representation. Only this can lead to any significant political transformation.

The problem is that the transparency and empowering capacity of language, the knowability of the visible world and the power to view it from a disinterested position of objectivity (not pathology), the assumption that transformation comes from persuasive intervention in the values and beliefs of individual subjects (not debates about the ideology of the subject as such) are the cornerstones of the documentary tradition. Having been sheltered from skepticism and radical doubt for most of its history, the institutional discourse available to documentary filmmakers had few tools at its disposal to address the issue of the reflexive or ironic, and, even less, to see it as a potentially more powerful political tool than the straightforward, persuasive presentation of an argument.

One of the first considerations of reflexivity in documentary film was Julia Lesage's "The Political Aesthetics of the Feminist Documentary Film."[21] Lesage does not treat the feminist documentaries she discusses as formally innovative. *Growing up Female, The Woman's Film, Three Lives, Joyce at Thirty-four, Woman to Woman, Self-Health, Chris and Bernie, Like a Rose, We're Alive,* and *I Am Somebody* are generally simple in narrative structure, traditional in their reliance on realist conventions, and show "little self-consciousness about the flexibility of the cinematic medium."[22] Their reflexivity emerges as a parallelism. Just as the women's movement of the 1970s stressed consciousness-raising as the cornerstone for transforming the personal into the political, for recontextualizing what had seemed purely individual or "merely" domestic experience into the shared experience of a political collectivity and feminist movement, these films also "show women in the private sphere getting together to define/redefine their experiences and to elaborate a strategy for making inroads in the public sphere."[23] As Lesage puts it:

> Film after film shows a woman telling her story to the camera. It is usually a woman struggling to deal with the public world. . . . Yet the stories that the filmed women tell are not just "slices of experience." These stories serve a function aesthetically in reorganizing women viewer's expectations derived from patriarchal narratives and in initiating a critique of those narratives. . . . The sound track of the Feminist documentary film often consists almost entirely of women's self-conscious, heightened, intellectual discussion of role and sexual politics. The film gives voice to that which had in the media been spoken for women by patriarchy. Received notions about women give way to an outpouring of real desires, contradictions, decisions, and social analyses.[24]

Reflexivity, then, need not be purely formal; it can also be pointedly political.

Unexpected juxtapositions here occur between the internal conventions, iconography, and, especially, speech of these films and the dominant (masculinist or patriarchal) ideology operating in society at large. Rather than drawing attention to the means of representation, to the process of constructing meaning, these feminist works challenge entrenched notions of sexuality and gender, empowering women who can now give a commonly shared political name (oppression, exploitation, manipulation, self-deprecation, devalorization . . .) to experience that had previously seemed personal or inconsequential. (An exception is JoAnn Elam's *Rape,* a film that does call attention to the cinematic apparatus and the process of constructing meaning at the same time that it, too, addresses the acutely personal and highly political experience of rape through the same structuring principle of consciousness-raising as the other films.)

Such films, which could be classified as predominantly expository, interactive, or observational, remind us of the "impure," hybrid nature of most

films. (The four modes of representation are partly based on discursive formations, institutional practices, and conventions, and partly serve as a heuristic model, drawing out more cleanly defined alternatives than we find in practice.) Even more, the parallelism that Lesage notes—and chooses not to identify as reflexive because it does not call attention to the process of signification or of viewing as such—reminds us that reflexivity is not quite the purely formal operation we have so far made it. The affinities it has with a sensibility of exhaustion, and a relativist perspective, need to be counterbalanced with its affinity for a process of political engagement based on *ostranenie,* or, in somewhat more familiar, Brechtian terms, on the experience of an alienation effect that pleases, instructs, and alters social consciousness in precisely the manner Lesage describes.

The tools that documentary discourse lacked, feminism provided. It instigated a radical reconceptualization of subjectivity and politics that achieved through the programmatics of consciousness-raising an effect comparable to that of reflexivity. The viewer, especially the female viewer, encountered an experience that reexamined and recontextualized the ground of experience itself. Evidence from the lives of women, no longer contained within the masculinist mythologies of Woman, called for a radical, retroactive reconsideration of categories and concepts every bit as fundamental as any reflexivity could require. If the reflexive mode of representation serves to make familiar experience strange, to draw attention to the terms and conditions of viewing, including the subjective position made available to the viewer, the feminist documentaries described by Lesage, despite an apparent lack of awareness of the "flexibilities of the cinematic medium," achieve precisely this result. And they do so in relation to matters where the difference can truly be said to make a difference.

The bipolarity of reflexive strategies—calling attention to form itself or to the "other side" of ideology where we can locate a utopian dimension of alternative modes of material practice, consciousness, and action—is not unique to this mode. The other three can also align themselves for or against aspects of dominant ideology, for or against concerted change of a progressive or regressive kind. Expository films like *Blood of the Beasts* or *Land without Bread,* observational films like *High School, Hospital,* or *Seventeen,* interactive films like *In the Year of the Pig, Rosie the Riveter,* or *Hard Metal's Disease* can also challenge convention and propose alternative, heightened modes of consciousness for the viewer. In this sense they, too, might be seen as politically reflexive. The distinction is perhaps sharpest with the reflexive mode, however, since this is where the fundamental issue of whether new form, and a heightened awareness of form, is a necessary precondition for radical change takes clearest shape.

Peter Wollen describes the issue as that of two materialisms. One, regarding the materiality of the cinematic signifier, becomes the central concern of the avant-garde. The other, regarding the materiality of social practices,

including that of viewing and the cinematic apparatus but extending well beyond it to the discursive formations and institutional practices that characterize a given society, becomes the central concern of a political, Brechtian cinema.[25] From an ontology concerned with the ability of the indexical image to capture something of the essence of things to an ontology addressing the essence of cinema itself, and from a materialism concerned with the ensemble of social relations to a materialism of the signifier, shorn of its semantic burden and making no reference beyond itself, between these two poles debates about political efficacy oscillate. Wollen contrasts Brakhage, the romantic visionary trying to change how we *see* in fundamental ways, with Brecht, the socialist artist trying to change how we *live* beyond the theater:

> For Brecht, of course, the point of the *Verfremdung*-effect was not simply to break the spectator's involvement and empathy in order to draw attention to the artifice of art, an art-centered model, but in order to demonstrate the workings of society, a reality obscured by habitual norms of perception, by habitual modes of identification with "human problems." . . . Film-making can be a project of meaning with horizons beyond itself, in the general arena of ideology. At the same time it can avoid the pitfalls of illusionism, of simply being a substitute for a world, parasitic on ideology, which it reproduces as reality. The imaginary must be de-realized; the material must be semiotized. We begin to see how the problem of materialism is inseparable from the problem of signification, that it begins with the problem of the material in and of signification, the way in which this material plays the dual role of substrate and signifier.[26]

Dana Polan makes a similar point in his comparison of a Daffy Duck cartoon, *Duck Amuck*, to Brechtian theater.[27] *Duck Amuck* is extraordinarily reflexive, but in a limited way: the dangers and hazards suffered by Daffy prove to be the work of his animator, but we ultimately discover this to be none other than Bugs Bunny. As Polan argues, if this reflexive loop moves beyond a heightened awareness of animation technique and the kind of self-consciousness common to comedic forms, it remains noticeably disengaged from the material conditions confronting a spectator as social actor: "The film opens up a formal space and not a political one in viewer consciousness. *Duck Amuck* closes in on itself, fiction leads to and springs from fiction, the text becomes a loop which effaces social analysis. This is the project of all non-political art, realist or self-reflexive."[28]

What *Duck Amuck* lacks is precisely what Brecht provided: a political position, not only *in* the work, but *for* the spectator. Polan states:

> For Brecht the attitudinal position of the viewing subject springs from an attitudinal position in the work—the political artwork embodies a difference between the way things are and the way they can be. . . . To avoid the new world of possibility appearing as nothing but noise, the artwork must also make use of the old world as a standard. Meaning, and its realization in action, comes from the differences between the two world views. Political art defamiliarizes the world. But it does so by playing off our connections to that world.[29]

Reflexivity and consciousness-raising go hand in hand because it is through an awareness of form and structure and its determining effects that new forms and structures can be brought into being, not only in theory, or aesthetically, but in practice, socially. What is need not be. The unquestioned givenness of ideological constraints can be juxtaposed with alternative positions and subjectivities, affinities and relations of production, precisely as the feminist documentary has done. As a political concept, reflexivity grounds itself in the materiality of representation but turns, or returns, the viewer beyond the text, to those material practices that inform the body politic.

Like poetry, reflexive strategies remove the encrustations of habit. Political reflexivity removes the ideological encrustations that support a given social order, particularly those practices, experienced in everyday life, that revolve around signification and the discursive. Too tight a reflexive loop squeezes this crucial social element out. Instead of what can be represented through realism (lived experience) forming the focus of reflexivity, the question of realism itself, or of representation (formal structure), becomes the focus. Like the schema developed in Hayden White's *Metahistory*, such an approach is essentially formalist, proposing categories that bear a relation principally to texts rather than to the relation between texts and their readers or viewers. To seek change on any level other than that of the signifier, the materialism of form, and the construction of the bourgeois subject requires something of a dialectical or divided consciousness. We must attend to formal reflexivity since the content of the form, in Hayden White's phrase, is indeed decisive, but we must also attend to political reflexivity since the form of the content is equally critical. If credulity and skepticism mark the normal oscillation of the viewer in relation to the claims of a text, fiction or documentary, the commensurate form of critical engagement requires suspicion and revelation, attention to the workings of ideology, whatever mode of representation is at work, and attention to a utopian dimension signifying what might or ought to be.[30]

In *Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera*, E. Ann Kaplan addresses directly the issue of realism in relation to a feminist cinema, thereby continuing the line of thought begun by Julia Lesage. She argues that the uses of realism carry as much importance as the question of realism as such. She asserts that a discussion of feminist documentary cannot even begin without considering the relation of text to ideology, that is, the politics of the text as formal construct. This, in turn, establishes the importance of assessing the effect of realist conventions on the viewer rather than of trusting to realism as an inherently appropriate style. *Joyce at Thirty-four*

and *Janie's Janie* are taken as examples of films that adopt a realist, largely interview-based form and succumb to similar limitations regarding the use of narratives of optimism (the characters are on the way to better things as a result of the film's structuring principles); an innocent trust that the portraits of Joyce and Janie capture their "true" selves rather than particular constructions of the women; a reluctance to draw attention to themselves as films, allowing some customary viewing habits to go unquestioned; and the assumption that there is, at the heart of human behavior, a unified, coherent self that forms the origin of both personal and social change.[31]

This critique could apply to virtually any realist documentary, formally reflexive or not. It leaves out of consideration other issues that Kaplan argues are equally vital. By examining the two films more closely, Kaplan argues that *Janie's Janie* breaks out of the bourgeois individualism that encloses *Joyce at Thirty-four.* Janie addresses her own sense of herself as Other in relation to her father and husband, not as a purely personal issue, but as a function of the symbolic order of things under patriarchy. And, like *The Woman's Film, Growing up Female, Rosie the Riveter, A Song of Air,* and other feminist works, *Janie's Janie* also disturbs the iconographic norms of sexual representation in cinema by offering a portrait of a working-class woman who cannot be contained within strategies of condescension, charity, or victimology.[32] The familiar forms of female representation are rendered strange, not in a strictly formalist manner but one that is reflexive all the same.

At one point Kaplan, in contrast to Polan's suggestion that alternative visions need to play themselves off against dominant ones, calls for the abandonment of "prevailing realist codes . . . to challenge audiences' expectations and assumptions about life."[33] But as her argument develops, she moves to a more dialectical position in which any blanket assumption about the ideology of such generalities as realism or the cinematic apparatus requires qualification. She suggests, as her comparison of the two documentaries demonstrates, that "the same realist signifying practices can indeed be used for different ends. . . . Taken simply as a cinematic style, which can be used in different genre (i.e., documentary or fictional), realism does not insist on any special relation to the social formation."[34]

What provides the litmus test for political reflexivity is the specific form of the representation, the extent to which it does not reinforce existing categories of consciousness, structures of feeling, ways of seeing; the degree to which it rejects a narrative sense of closure and completeness. All representations distance reality and place it within a frame that, in Metz's word, "unrealizes" the real (it *is* in a frame, in a different time and space from that which is represented).[35] Some, however, seek to substitute themselves for that reality, to give the full-blown *impression* of reality. Others seek to maintain their distance, not simply to remind us of their status as text, discourse, narrative, or art, but also of the need to move beyond the text if we, too, are to engage with the world that a text can only represent.

Reflexive Strategies

Different authors mean different things by reflexivity. A primary concern here is to differentiate the formal and political dimensions of reflexivity. These are not alternatives but different ways of inflecting, and viewing, a given set of operations. In the terms described here the same device (reference to the off-screen space of the image or acknowledgment of the filmmaker's presence and power, for example) will begin as a formal operation that upsets norms, alters conventions, and draws the viewer's attention. In certain circumstances it will also be politically reflexive, drawing our attention to the relations of power and hierarchy between the text and the world. This difference and some of the best-known types of formal operation can be summarized as follows:

(1) Political Reflexivity. This form of reflexiveness operates primarily on the viewer's consciousness, "raising" it in the vernacular of progressive politics, decentering it in an Althusserian politics in order to achieve a rigorous awareness of commonality. Both the Portuguese *conscientização* and the Spanish *conscientización* stress a reference to social or collective awareness rather than the personal pilgrimage and its attendant topography of an improved or superior self that the English term "consciousness-raising" sometimes implies. It is this broader form of socially situated awareness that is meant here. Each type of formal reflexivity may have a political effect. It depends on how it works on a given viewer or audience. The effect can occur with works whose importance is primarily located at the level of content, as *The Woman's Film* and *Janie's Janie* indicate, with their affinities to the politics of agitprop, but it can also occur in relation to form, as the *Ways of Seeing* series demonstrates with its radical juxtapositions and recontextualizations of the Western tradition of oil painting.

(2) Formal Reflexivity. The techniques of reflexivity can be broken down into further categories. In discussing them we attempt to identify the formal device brought into play more than the political effect it might achieve. At the same time, it is important to note that no one political effect is assured by a given device or strategy, nor is a political effect dependent on any single type of formal procedure.

Both Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* and Tomas Gutierrez Alea's *Memories of Underdevelopment* use formal devices to generate a reflexive awareness of the cinema's similarity to voyeurism (both central characters take pleasure from viewing others through binoculars; both construct narratives from what they see that involve themes of impotence and desire; both characters are isolated from their social milieu by profession or class background). *Rear Window*'s reflexivity remains essentially formal, its political dimension a repressed subtext (of male ambivalence toward women, of the latent pathology of voyeurism and fetishism) that may well pass most viewers by. *Memories of Underdevelopment*'s reflexivity operates more overtly

to locate the character's remoteness in a social context. The text prompts a heightened awareness of the patriarchal and class basis for ambivalence toward women and recourse to pleasure at a distance. Nothing, though, is guaranteed. The effects of reflexivity ultimately depend on the viewer.

(a) Stylistic Reflexivity. Here we might group those strategies that break received conventions. Such texts introduce gaps, reversals, and unexpected turns that draw attention to the work of style as such and place the obsessions of illusionism within brackets. Expressionist styles are frequently of this sort. The multivoiced commentary in Trinh Minh-ha's *Naked Spaces* upsets our assumptions about the normative guidance usually offered by commentary. Departures from internal norms set up by a text also belong here. (The recurrence of surreal moments in *Blood of the Beasts*—such as tossing the heads of lambs into the corner of a room, or the long shot down a row of still-twitching carcasses—work this way, building up a contrapuntal movement to the business-as-usual tone of the commentator.)

Two extreme forms might be, first, those documentary styles that draw attention to their own patterns so consistently that they evolve into a poetic or essayist mode of representation, loosening the linkage to a historical referent in favor of more internally generated foci such as color, tonality, composition, depth of focus, rhythm, or the personalized sensibilities and perceptions of the author. (Documentaries like *The Nuer, Rain, Naked Spaces, Listen to Britain, Industrial Britain, Glass, Louisiana Story, N.Y., N.Y., Letter from Siberia, Sundays in Peking, Poto and Cabengo,* and *A Divided World* indicate something of the spectrum of work in a poetic or essayist vein.)

The other extreme would be those works that provide a metacommentary on method and procedure while remaining within a realist, as opposed to a poetic, sensibility. Raul Ruiz's *Of Great Events and Ordinary People* is of this sort, with its reference to shots that "might be" suitable to a documentary, to the heterogeneous objects swept together in classic exposition, and its attempt to situate Ruiz himself as an exile and outsider to the events he is immersed in reporting. *The Ax Fight* is another example, acknowledging the presence of the camera and the ethnographic witnesses to the violent confrontation it records, wheeling in anthropological theories and explanations to account for it, and concluding with a narrative-like reconstruction of the events they initially recorded in more haphazard, inchoate fashion. More obliquely, films like *No Lies, David Holzman's Diary,* and *Chronicle of a Summer* produce, through their structure, a critical metacommentary on the circumstances of their making, prompting us to ponder the ethics and politics of representing the lives of others in texts not of their own making.[36]

In a manner similar to interactive reflexivity (below), stylistic reflexivity depends upon the viewer's prior knowledge of documentary convention. One convention that has come in for considerable reflection is objectivity. The introduction of the subjective elements of, for example, stylistic expressivity and character development can pose basic questions about the

nature of certainty, the variability of factual interpretation, and the attitudinal relation of the filmmaker to his or her material. Errol Morris's *The Thin Blue Line* is a prime example with its highly subjectivized re-creations of events and its iconically suggestive images of typewriters and guns. Like Peter Watkins and Raul Ruiz, Morris opts to present what might have been (conditional mood) rather than what was. Morris's own tone may also seem quite distant from the normally scrupulous sincerity of the investigative reporter who wants to be believed; Morris (as author, not person) might be read as someone more interested in ironic or reflexive effect than in seeing that justice is done.

The use of stylistic devices to achieve a reflexive effect runs the risk of manipulating social actors for textual effect rather than provoking a reflexive consideration of how texts are constructed. When the filmmaker moves to center stage—as in Michael Moore's *Roger and Me,* or, to a lesser extent Bonnie Klein's *Not a Love Story*—the risk is that other characters will fall into the narrative slots reserved for donors, helpers, and villains. Social actors (people) will be subordinated to the narrative trajectory of the filmmaker as protagonist. As the filmmaker moves further from a diaristic or participatory mode of self-representation as one among many, and closer to hero or protagonist of the drama—its center and propelling force—the greater the risk becomes. Bonnie Klein, for example, retains the role of investigative reporter though the film is laced with a spiritual narrative of redemption through personal trial and tribulation; whereas Michael Moore overtly, if also ironically, embraces the role of hero and champion.

Roger and Me, praised by many for its attack on General Motors's indifference to the individual suffering it causes, reduces most of the individuals it portrays to victims or dupes. In order to tell his story of coming to the rescue by confronting the elusive CEO of General Motors, Roger Smith, Michael Moore renders others as helpless, indifferent, or ignorant in contrast to his heroic and determined if also somewhat nebbish-like persona. His portrait of a deputy sheriff charged with evicting tenants for nonpayment is more vivid and engaging than his portrait of the people evicted. (Like Moore, the sheriff also acts, but in the wrong way.) Moore's use of irony and satire makes it difficult to be certain if he meant to be as critical of the unemployed as he is of General Motors, but as a character, "Michael Moore" seems as distant from the now redundant auto workers (of whom we actually meet very few) as he is from the inaccessible Roger Smith.

In *Roses in December,* Ana Carringan retains the role of mostly invisible reporter. Her stylistic reflexivity focuses more strongly around the representation of others than of filmmaker/reporter. *Roses in December* employs a great many narrative strategies, ranging from imaginative reenactments to rich, warm lighting in certain interviews (they are obviously lit to achieve this effect and not the result of filming with available light), but avoids the risk of manipulation by minimizing the narrative function of the filmmaker

as character. The text stresses biographical investigation, albeit in a more fully subjective register, regarding its historical subject, Jean Donovan. The investigator recedes before the impressions that the process discovers. Individuals are not required to fulfill narrative functions in relation to a filmmaker as central protagonist.

When social actors are required to adopt such narrative functions as donor or helper, the outcome has greatest reflexive effect when subjective dimensions prevail. That is to say, individuals reveal significant qualities about themselves while ostensibly serving as helpers to the filmmaker's central role (usually involving a quest for knowledge or the righting of a wrong). In neither Marcel Ophul's *Hotel Terminus* nor in Claude Lanzman's *Shoah* does the complexity of individual lives become diminished by being restricted to narrative roles. Characters, in giving witness, give witness to their own complexity and multidimensional subjectivity. The more limited goals of Michael Moore, or Ross McElwee in *Sherman's March* (to save the community, to find a mate—classic goals for male fiction heroes) abate this sense of complexity. The structural resolution of these classic quest narratives demands a degree of subordination, and reduction, in the representation of others relative to the hero that the classic documentary quest for knowledge does not necessarily require. *Daughter Rite*, like *No Lies*, resorts entirely to fictional enactment, but structures the interactions between the two daughters who reflect on their relationship with their mother according to the conventions of documentary. This offers another way of avoiding the risks of misrepresentation, or abuse, that poetic and narrative strategies run. *Daughter Rite* also regains what it loses in historical authenticity in the reflexive attention it draws to the documentary conventions of authentication themselves.

(b) Deconstructive Reflexivity. The object here is to alter or contest dominant codes or conventions in documentary representation, thereby drawing attention to their conventionality, The stress is less on effects of style than of structure, and although stylistic strategies may come into play, the main effect is one of a heightened awareness of what had previously seemed natural or had been taken for granted. *Land without Bread* was one of the first such films, but in 1932 the power of the conventional travelogue was strong enough to prompt some reviewers and, presumably, audiences to dismiss the musical score and the oddly disjunctive commentary as the work of a tasteless distributor rather than the author, Buñuel.[37] More recent works such as Chris Marker's *Sans Soleil*, Raul Ruiz's *Of Great Events and Ordinary People*, and Trinh T. Minh-ha's *Reassemblage* successfully deconstruct many of the conventions of objectivity in documentary, bringing about a reflexive highlighting of the conditional nature of any image and the impossibility of arriving at certain truth.[38] In written anthropology, some have given preferred status to heteroglossic or dialogical forms of writing in which no one authorial point of view prevails, where native,

informant, and ethnographer occupy equal status within the text, their commentaries arranged without the usual hierarchy of ascending explanatory power.[39] The emergence of works of this sort in documentary is not yet evident, although films like *First Contact, Surname Viet Given Name Nam, Wedding Camels*, and *Far from Poland* all find ways of deconstructing or displacing some of the usual hierarchies of knowledge and power in cross-cultural representation.

(c) Interactivity. This entire mode of documentary representation possesses the potential to have a consciousness-raising effect, drawing attention to the oddity of filming events where the filmmaker is nowhere to be seen and encouraging us to recognize the situated nature of documentary representation. Interactivity can work reflexively to make us aware of the contingencies of the moment, the shaping force of the representational project itself, and the modifications of action and behavior that it can produce. *Hard Metal's Disease* and *Chronicle of a Summer* both achieve this effect as does *No Lies* in a somewhat different register (since the events were constructed specifically to make this very point).[40] In *Poto and Cabengo*, Jean-Pierre Gorin's diaristic asides to the viewer, in English but with a noticeable French accent, and his interaction with the twins from San Diego (Poto and Cabengo) who appear to have invented a language of their own, with Germanic overtones, generate a heightened awareness of how speech constructs subjectivity as well as expressing it.

(d) Irony. Ironic representations inevitably have the appearance of insincerity since what is overtly said is not what is actually meant. The ironist says one thing but means the opposite. A heightened awareness of tradition usually informs the ironic; it is burdened with an excess of knowledge and a deficiency of invention, especially in its postmodern phase. As a tone or attitude, irony comes after romance, tragedy, and comedy; it sets them all on edge; it undermines their solidity and sobriety.[41]

Irony raises in an acute form the question of the author's own attitudinal relation to his or her subject matter. It is still a relatively rare phenomenon in documentary, one of the few of our culture's discursive formations or institutional practices to have sidestepped much of the impetus of modernism, reflexivity, and irony generally. It does crop up, however, in *The Thin Blue Line, Of Great Events, Roger and Me, Le Joli Mai, Les maîtres fous, Les Racquetteurs*, and *Lonely Boy*, among others, but seldom as a sustained, radically reflexive operation. Often, as in *Lonely Boy* or *The Thin Blue Line*, this ironic potential seems more specifically aligned to a fairly localized tendency toward detachment or skepticism when the filmmaker wants to signal distance from specific characters but not necessarily from the representational procedures of documentary themselves.

Raul Ruiz's *Of Great Events and Ordinary People* represents as thoroughgoing an ironic point of view as any in its radical interrogation of documentary form. Ruiz, though, does not settle on a detached relativism. Instead

his irony derives from his own status as Chilean exile working in Paris where the Third World functions as a structuring absence in relation to the immediate issue of French national elections.[42]

Ruiz suggests that ironic categories of perception require detachment from a local scene or restricted frame of reference. To become politically reflexive this irony must reattach itself to a larger perspective. In relation to a broader scene or larger frame irony rebounds as a reflexive self-awareness of the prices and penalties of distance (such as we also find in Solas's fiction film, *Lucia*).[43] As Ruiz's voice-over commentary puts it near the end of the film, as we watch very grainy, high-contrast, generic images of Third World people:

> The documentary of the future must show the poverty in countries still knowing joy and freedom. We must show the sadness of those countries with the wealth and freedom to be happy or sad. It must show attacks on freedom in countries emerging from poverty even at the price of innocence and joy. In this way the future documentary will endlessly repeat these three truths:
> So long as poverty exists, we shall still be rich.
> So long as sadness exists, we shall still be happy.
> So long as prisons exist, we shall still be free.[44]

(e) Parody and Satire. Parody can provoke a heightened awareness of a previously taken-for-granted style, genre, or movement; satire is one device for sharpening consciousness of a problematic social attitude, value, or situation. These forms are somewhat underdeveloped in documentary, where the prevalence of the discourses of sobriety and a Calvinist sense of mission have attenuated their status, particularly in English-speaking countries. They do have a certain standing, however, as a subgenre of social criticism. *Sixteen in Webster Groves* and *Millhouse* are satires of upper middle-class teenagers and of Richard M. (Milhous) Nixon, for example, while *Cane Toads* and *Quebec, USA* are parodies of nature and tourist films respectively. *Poto and Cabengo* includes moments of sharp satire directed against the behavioral scientists who study and attempt to explain the twins' language skills in a social vacuum, strictly in relation to recorded utterances and their etymological analysis. Films like *The Most* and *The Selling of the Pentagon* use their subjects (Hugh Hefner and the military-industrial complex, respectively) as sources of satire by incorporating activities seemingly second nature to the subjects but not the audience. Such satire tends to be limited to specific moments rather than a global viewpoint. The fear of being considered "unfair" to one's subject is a strong constraint. (Films like *Thy Kingdom Come* and George Csicery's *Where the Heart Roams*, on religious fundamentalism and women's romance literature, respectively, include such satirical moments but strain to avoid all-out satire lest it alienate rather than inform.)

Although irony can be an effective weapon for both parody and satire, it is rare to have an ironic parody or satire as such since this would call into question the very form of parody or satire rather than accept these forms as suitable and appropriate ways of criticizing the ways of others. (The ironist is self-critical in a way that the parodist or satirist is likely not.) Fredric Jameson speaks of pastiche as the postmodern form of parody, wherein a normative judgment about previous styles is avoided in favor of an affect-less borrowing, a nostalgia that neither reveres nor loathes that which it retrieves.[45] The use of clips from period fiction films to provide a historical referent for the issues taken up in *The Thin Blue Line* or *The Making of a Legend* (on the making of *Gone with the Wind*) are more in the spirit of pastiche than parody or satire (the clips are of B-gangster films and late 1930s dramas respectively): these clips introduce fictional styles associated with a bygone era to evoke that period as though the fictional style were now itself a historical fact but one which we continue to enjoy in a nostalgic frame of mind. This affords the benefits of both historical documentation and narrative pleasure without necessarily calling either into question. Political reflexivity propels parody and satire beyond pastiche with its reassuring nostalgia or comfortable iconoclasm. It brings these forms into an arena where, subject to audience reception, they do more than mock or unsettle accepted convention. Heightened awareness carries beyond the immediate experience of the text into social praxis rendered more conceivable by dint of its documentary representation.

science as precisely this sort of institutionally governed procedure was inadvertent. On rereading, the reference—ignored by French theorists like Foucault or Lyotard whom I have chosen to cite—seems quite important. Kuhn's work, in fact, prefigures central aspects of Foucault's. What Kuhn ignores, and what remains underdeveloped here, are questions of ideology: an innocence or "normalcy" presides over Kuhn's account that Foucault, despite his own extraordinary blindspots (such as matters of gender and the place of women in the history of sexuality), refuses to tolerate. Foucault, like Lévi-Strauss, is in search of the most basic elements of Western culture; Kuhn settles for an account of the institutional basis of Western science. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) trace the relation of Kuhn's work to Foucault's in some detail.

16. This discussion of procedures used to comprehend a text is strongly informed by David Bordwell's discussion of schemata in *Narration in the Fiction Film* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985): 31–39. I have chosen not to adopt the vocabulary of cognitive psychology because of its premise that such activity is a value-free mental base for more complex, socially conditioned forms of subjectivity and consciousness.

17. The four types of motivation discussed here are proposed, with somewhat different nomenclature, in Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*: 36.

18. In *The Thin Blue Line*, decontextualized shots of objects like a gun, milkshake, silhouette in a window, and letters being typed onto a sheet of paper, too abstract in their representation to be justified realistically, take on a formal motivation. They become a series of iconographic images that link up primarily to each other in order to suggest how the film, though a documentary, cannot assure us of the historical authenticity of its evidence. This reflexive move locates the text in a borderline territory between narrative fiction and documentary argument, a zone that is very familiar to those who work within a postmodernist aesthetic. We read it primarily as a documentary, but with a steady awareness of how what occurs before the camera displays an appearance tied less to the historical world than to choices made by the filmmaker.

19. André Bazin was a French critic who celebrated the ability of film to capture "the object itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it." (Quoted from "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," *What is Cinema?* [2 vols. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967]: I:14.) Editing and expressionist techniques obscured the thing itself and imposed new constraints of time and space that were the filmmaker's doing. Bazin's ideal, a realist style that engages us in a manner similar to how the world itself does, stands opposed to didactic commentary, reenactment, and montage effects.

2. Documentary Modes of Representation

1. The interactive mode frequently cedes considerable authority to those interviewed. These individuals may even provide the essence of the film's argument, as they do in *With Babies and Banners, Solovki Power, Union Maids, Through the Wire*, and *Who Killed Vincent Chin?* or give rise to the predominant tone or attitude of the film. *Where the Heart Roams, Wise Guys!*, and *Coming Out*, about women's romance literature, a television quiz show, and a debutante ball, respectively, all cede to the participants in these activities the opportunity to set the tone of the representation rather than use them to illustrate a dominant perspective constructed by the film.

2. Erik Barnouw, *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974): 254–55.

3. A paradigmatic instance of this form of debate centered around the film *An American Family*, a twelve-hour series on one family aired on public television in 1973. A rigorously observational work, the series prompted a great deal of journalistic attention in terms of how much Craig Gilbert, the person responsible for it, had shaped, prompted, or otherwise manipulated events in front of the camera. Some of these charges came from the film's subjects, the Loud family themselves, particularly the mother, Pat Loud. Most of them implied far more manipulation than Craig Gilbert saw at work in his or any documentary. See his "Reflections on *An American Family*, II" in Alan Rosenthal, ed., *New Challenges for Documentary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988) for a useful summary of the ethical issues as seen by the filmmaker.

4. Semiotic approaches to cinema took it for granted that the images of people were signifiers with attachments, and hence meanings, that depended on their relation to other elements in the signifying chain. Useful as this approach may be to the refutation of notions of transparency between image and reality it does not quell the disturbances semiosis sets up in the bodies of those who have their image "taken." Legal principles of privacy, libel, and slander attest to some of the dimensions of conflict. The uncertainty of the effect on a situation of filming it forms part of the speculative involvement of the viewer. One dimension of this involvement hinges on this question of use. The discursive frame (morally, ethically, politically) within which we debate the issue has its own historical context. If a semiotics of signifiers and their attachments once had a historically valuable role to play in the theory of the fiction film, its applicability to documentary film was always less certain. The relation to what seems to elude the field of a *langue*-centered semiotics—the referent, the person who engages in *parole*, who speaks as well as is spoken—remains a central concern in documentary from multiple points of view.

5. See Paul Rock, *The Making of Symbolic Interactionism* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1979) for an excellent introduction to many of the methodological principles that were adopted, knowingly or inadvertently, by observational filmmakers. Rock notes that symbolic interactionism is the segment of sociology "which has devoted itself to the detailed ethnography of small social worlds" (92). Compare Rock's comment on participant-observation with the desire of Richard Leacock, for example, to observe what people do when they are not interviewed or otherwise addressed directly by the camera: "The business of ethnography is presented as comparatively hostile to rehearsal. Much of it is described as if it entailed the artless projection of the sociologist's self into the natural setting. Such artlessness is both the prerequisite and the unavoidable companion of effective communion. . . . Interactive fieldwork is designed to capture and foster prepredicative experience. It is axiomatic of the methodology that such experience can never be adequately described by words: it occupies realms which are *sui generis*. Full comprehension can stem only from engaging in the experience itself" (197–98).

6. Face-to-face encounter also has its nonpractical ends as phatic communication suggests. (Phatic communication involves interstitial fillers that let someone else know that we are attending to them, such as "um," "ah," or "well.") All utterances and texts, not only art, then, have a nonpractical dimension, while art, or fiction, as part of an ideological system, clearly has a practical outcome in its effects on subjectivity and sometimes on specific opinions, beliefs, attitudes, or forms of behavior.

7. The traditional accounts of documentary in the postwar years refer to the development of lightweight, portable cameras and magnetic tape sound recorders that allowed for synchronous sound recording on location as the central step in the transformation of documentary film from an expository mode (including its poetic variants) to direct cinema and cinema verité, what I have chosen to call observa-

tional and interactive modes of representation. These developments seem to have occurred more or less simultaneously and independent of one another in Canada, at the NFB, and in the United States, mainly through the efforts of Drew-Leacock, and in France with Jean Rouch. What often goes underemphasized, or neglected, are two things:

First, the NFB of Canada pioneered most of the technological innovation, introducing synchronous location sound recording in works like *Les Racquetteurs (1958)*, *The Days before Christmas* (1959), *Blood and Fire* (1958), and *Back-Breaking Leaf* (1959) independent of and prior to developments in the United States that centered around Richard Leacock, Donald Pennebaker, and Robert Drew (Drew Associates). *Les Racquetteurs*, made by Groulx and Brault in Quebec, is often credited as the first cinema verité film in Canada. Origins and "firsts" are complex and often unrewarding matters to pursue, since what comes first chronologically may fall within the domain of a different institutional discourse and set of expectations, thereby limiting its impact elsewhere. The practice also tends to localize and restrict causation to a linear phenomenon propelled by a series of discrete events: "First this, then that," etc. Nonetheless, it should be noted that there was a great deal of foment in Canada around the possibilities of interactive filmmaking. It involved more people than in the United States (where the observational alternative gained the most attention) or France (where Jean Rouch worked largely on his own, although many of the same techniques were incorporated in the fictional frame of the French *nouvelle vague*). The Canadian developments, though, have gone relatively underreported and have failed to receive as much credit as an influence as they might. It is difficult to say if the lack of critical and historical attention has become a vicious circle, guaranteeing a lack of influence by neglect, or if the actual influence on interactive filmmakers was much greater than critical accounts allow. (Jean Rouch has always acknowledged the importance of meeting Michel Brault and seeing *Les Racquetteurs* for his own work—Brault and Raoul Coutard did the camerawork on *Chronicle of a Summer*—but whether a more elaborate French-Canadian connection can be identified remains unexamined.)

See Peter Morris's *The Film Companion* (Toronto: Irwin, 1984) for dictionary-like entries regarding these works and Bruce Elder, "On the Candid-Eye Movement," in Seth Feldman and Joyce Nelson, eds., *Canadian Film Reader* (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1977) for a more extended discussion. See Stephen Mamber's *Cinema Verité in America: Studies in Uncontrolled Documentary* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1974) for an account of the evolution of Leacock, Pennebaker, and Drew's filmmaking in the mid to late fifties before the first major breakthrough, *Primary*. Mamber only refers to the NFB developments to note that one of the Candid Eye filmmakers, Terence Macartney-Filgate (who shot a good deal of *Primary*, as Brault did *Chronicle*), felt that the Candid Eye series had already covered similar ground (p. 36).

Second, technological innovation is often offered as a casual explanation of why filmmaking styles changed. Though this does seem to be one instance in which transformations in film equipment resulted in a significant difference in how films could be made, there was absolutely no singular causal linkage between technology and a new mode of documentary representation. The development at about the same time of *both* observational styles that favored the invisibility of the filmmaker *and* interactive styles where the filmmaker's presence was not only acknowledged but often a decisive factor in the events presented demonstrates the lack of any one-to-one correspondence between technology and form or between technology and meaning. This radical variation among French, Canadian, and American filmmaking, not to mention British, Continental, and Third World practices,

emanating from one set of technological innovations, seldom receives the attention it deserves.

8. See Arthur Koestler's *The Act of Creation* (1964; Pan Books, 1975) for an excellent discussion of the effect of suddenly juxtaposing two distinct frames of thought in the production of comedy, art, and science. Koestler carries the basic surrealist idea of juxtaposing two incommensurate realities within a single plane of reference far beyond its initial application and, in doing so, suggests one important way in which systems, codes, habits, subjectivities, discursive formations, and other regulatory structures remain vulnerable to change and subversion. Koestler's notion of collision between two frames of reference resulting in a transforming synthesis also bears close kinship with the concept of logical typing as an aspect of interpersonal communication in the work of Gregory Bateson. Here "errors" of logical typing allow incommensurate frames of reference to collapse into one another at the expense of the subject, especially in schizophrenia, but also, less pathologically perhaps, in relation to the effects of realism (where the signifier is mistaken for the referent, the image for the reality, or the actor for the character). See *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1972).

9. Marshall Blonsky, "Ted Koppel's Edge," *New York Times Magazine*, August 14, 1988.

10. See Rosenthal, ed. *New Challenges for Documentary*, especially part 3, "Documentary Ethics."

11. Both Marc Ferro's *Cinema and History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988) and Kathleen Hulser's "Clio Rides the Airwaves: History on Television," *The Independent* 12, no. 2 (March 1989): 18–24 give examples of archival footage that provides overlooked or neglected historical evidence, often because it is used as a generalized illustration, of the Bolshevik revolution or the modern city, for example, rather than examined closely for such details as changing class participation during the days leading up to the revolution (signaled, for example, by clothing) or the social dynamics of neighborhoods as revealed through spatial relationships and specific types of residential and commercial building.

12. See my "The Voice of Documentary," *Film Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (Spring 1983) for an extended discussion of this difference as a matter of textual "voice" or authority (the place from which a sense of either authoritative knowledge or epistemological doubt derives). Of particular interest is the relative distribution of this authority between the filmmaker and social actors.

13. A similar sense of a participatory bond is very evident in Demott and Kreines's *Seventeen*, done for the Middletown series but banned by PBS, ostensibly because of the amount of foul language but more likely because of the interracial love affair between a black male and a white female teenager. Unlike the largely observational style of *Family Business* or *Community of Praise*, *Seventeen* displays a strong degree of spontaneous interaction between filmmakers and subjects. This, too, may have seemed somewhat outside the canon of objectivity for television journalism that observational films can more readily conform to, at least in their disavowal or suppression of the subjectivities of the filmmaker at the time of filming.

14. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1 (New York: Random House, 1980): 58–73.

15. Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), especially chapter 1, "The Technology of Gender."

16. The concept of the "masked interview" is discussed at greater length in my *Ideology and the Image*, pp. 281–83 in particular.

17. "Suture" has a technical linguistic-psychoanalytic meaning that derives from

Jacques Lacan and arrived in film theory via Jacques-Alain Miller's essay, "Suture," Jean-Pierre Oudart's "Cinema and Suture," Stephen Heath's "Notes on Suture" (all in *Screen* 18, no. 4 [1977/78]), Daniel Dayan's "The Tutor-Code of Classical Cinema," in Bill Nichols, ed., *Movies and Methods*, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), Kaja Silverman's *The Subject of Semiotics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), and other essays. It involves the process whereby films establish themselves as discourse, as more than brute sound and image, and the viewer takes up a position as the subject addressed by the film. In Oudart's formulation this involves apprehending the work of an absent agent for whom the film provides a stand-in in the form of the Absent One, the Other, off screen, in the space behind the camera, who is the originating agent of the shot, frame, and point of view. (This anthropomorphic abstraction corresponds to what I have elsewhere described as "voice.") The Absent-One authorizes a reading of the image as discourse, as a thematically and affectively signifying form of address. The image no longer seems a brute object but the residue of an expressive intention; it remains haunted by this absence.

This eerie sense of a haunting absence can be read as a necessary condition of symbolic discourse, where we are always represented by what we are not (I am not "I," the signifier that stands in for me) or it can be regarded as an ideological operation that constitutes the subject of bourgeois ideology by means of a kind of ventriloquism. This can be used, in Dayan's view, to regard almost all cinema as bourgeois since it relies on continuity editing, especially shot/reverse shot cuts to mask the actual apparatus of production behind the apparent authorship of characters who share with us that which they themselves see through a relay of shots. (The voice-over commentator plays a similar role in documentary, complementing the process of evidentiary editing.) In a feminist version of this reading, the process of suture attempts to disavow absence, or lack, in a characteristically masculinist way where a preoccupation with the fear of absence, loss, deficiency, and lack is projected onto the image of women. (The general tendency to align the disembodied voice-over with the male and with authority might be taken as one sign of how questions of gender enter into questions of subject-address in documentary.)

18. A similar awareness of vested interest operates in the interviews in *Who Killed Vincent Chin?* but the film conveys the sense that these differences can be relayed from the historical world itself without further distortion, whereas Morris also draws attention to the mediations of interviews and reenactments in the viewer's process of understanding what occurred in the historical world.

19. The fiction "documents" the child's first encounters with his parents' sexuality in graphic form. Whether enacted or observed, and whether acknowledged or not, such representations continue to raise the question of the use of people in signifying systems not of their own making. Godard's indifference to the ethics of representation regarding the use of a child actor may also highlight the relativism that a reflexive position readily accommodates: Godard's self-consciousness as a male filmmaker addressing issues of sexual representation proposes a crucial agenda that later works, by women, address in quite distinct ways. There is the sense in *Numero Deux* that Godard's reflexive critique of the representation of sexual difference is, though profeminist, radically other from what a feminist filmmaker might propose. His perspective remains quite singularly male: controlling, cerebral, problematizing as a representational issue what is, for others, also a problem of lived experience. What is remarkable is that he produced this work in 1975, well ahead of most of the feminist works that take up similar issues, such as *Riddles of the Sphinx*, *Born in Flames*, and *Thriller*, and well ahead of the widespread adoption of video as a medium worthy of extensive consideration. (The film exists as a 35mm

print but much of the "family" life was shot on video and then transferred to film, often miniaturized within the frame as though still confined to the limits of a television screen.)

20. Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973): 37–38. White's comments on satire as a fictional form parallel his comments on irony, both of which figure into his elaborate taxonomy of the possible modes of historiographic narrative. His description has provided considerable stimulus for my discussion of documentary modes of representation generally, although his specific categories do not seem as useful for documentary as they do for nineteenth-century historiography.

21. Julia Lesage, "The Political Aesthetics of the Feminist Documentary Film," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 3, no. 4 (Fall 1978): 507–23.

22. Lesage, "Political Aesthetics," 508.

23. Lesage, "Political Aesthetics," 509.

24. Lesage, "Political Aesthetics," 515, 519.

25. Peter Wollen, "'Ontology' and 'Materialism' in Film," *Screen* 17, no. 1 (Spring 1976): 7–23. Reprinted in Peter Wollen, *Readings and Writings* (London: Verso, 1982).

26. Wollen, *Readings and Writings*, 201, 206.

27. Dana Polan, "A Brechtian Cinema? Towards a Politics of Self-Reflexive Film," in Bill Nichols, ed., *Movies and Methods*, vol. 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

28. Polan, "Brechtian Cinema," 668.

29. Polan, "Brechtian Cinema," 669–70. See also, Louis Althusser, "The 'Piccolo Teatro': Bertolazzi and Brecht," in *For Marx* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970) for a similar and compelling statement of the way in which a politically reflexive stageplay (*El Nost Milan*) pits the conventions of melodramatic form against the "real time" of its working-class characters.

30. The fullest discussion of this bipolar critical stance occurs in Fredric Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), especially chapter 6, "Conclusion: The Dialects of Utopia and Ideology."

31. E. Ann Kaplan, *Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera* (New York: Methuen, 1983): 127–28.

32. Kaplan, *Women and Film*, 130.

33. Kaplan, *Women and Film*, 131.

34. Kaplan, *Women and Film*, 134.

35. See Christian Metz, *Film Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974): 21–22.

36. Jay Ruby, in "The Image Mirrored: Reflexivity and the Documentary Film," *Journal of the University Film Association* 29, no. 1 (Fall 1977); reprinted in Rosenthal, ed., *New Challenges for Documentary*, identifies another form of reflexivity: metaphysical disclosure. As he puts it, "being reflexive means that the producer deliberately and intentionally reveals to his audience the underlying epistemological assumptions that caused him [*sic*] to formulate a set of questions in a particular way, to seek answers to those questions in a particular way, and finally to present his findings in a particular way" (65, Rosenthal).

The basis for this definition in the discourses of sobriety (normative science in particular) is clear, but its efficacy is less so. Few of us, including reflexive filmmakers, are fully aware of the underlying (unconscious, ideological) assumptions we have. What we can be aware of, and strive to achieve intentionally, is our effect on an audience, but announcing this intention may undercut the effect or merely repeat it in a less memorable, more didactic fashion. (As Isadora Duncan is reputed

to have said, "If I could say it in words, I wouldn't have to dance it.") Any announcement or metastatement about intentions is also subject to the Cretan's paradox, the very form of uncertainty that Ruby's reflexivity seeks to dispel. (The Cretan explained that all Cretans are liars. Was he telling the truth?) There are certainly times when the reflexivity Ruby calls for will be helpful, but I regard this act of disclosure as a form of attempted honesty rather than reflexivity. My primary reservation has to do with the experiential impact of such disclosures compared to formal/political modes of reflexivity as I attempt to demonstrate in chapter 8, "Representing the Body: Questions of Meaning and Magnitude."

37. See Basil Wright, "*Land without Bread* and *Spanish Earth*," in Lewis Jacobs, ed., *The Documentary Tradition* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979): 146–47.

38. A useful overview of the contemporary debate on truth and its claims with helpful attention to Michel Foucault, Fredric Jameson, Jürgen Habermas, Richard Rorty, Ian Hacking, and others , is Paul Rabinow's "Representations Are Social Facts: Modernity and Post-Modernity in Anthropology," in James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986): 234–61.

39. See Clifford and Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture* in general, but also James Clifford, "On Ethnographic Allegory," particularly and also Clifford's "On Ethnographic Authority," *Representations* 1, no. 2 (1983): 118–46.

40. Interactivity is seldom a reflexive operation in network newscasting, where it serves to authenticate the newsgathering process and legitimate the presence of the reporter in the field. Moments of social crisis, though, such as the air attacks on Iraq and Kuwait that began on Jan. 16, 1991 or the pro-democracy demonstrations and military repression in China in May-June, 1989 with their attendant prohibition of live news coverage by foreign agencies, can reflexively heighten our awareness of how much such newscasts depend on interactivity for their effect. A limited repertoire of images is recirculated on different programs, images are subjected to freeze-framing or enlargement, or to transformations between color and black-and-white. These "unnatural" devices (on network news) foreground the absence of the usual interactivity. The news apparatus collapses on itself, in a latent hysteria, when the naturalizing effect of interactivity can no longer be achieved.

41. The arrangement of these four modes into a cycle is first proposed by Northrup Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (New York: Atheneum, 1968): 158–239. It is also taken up by Hayden White in his *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Both authors tend toward a formalist use of the concept, granting a high degree of autonomy to this succession of forms but seeing the rhythm of succession itself as tied to a changing historical order.

42. The concept of "structuring absences" comes from Louis Althusser. It addresses how the unsaid functions when it is not a case of the irrelevant but the repressed or the structural. In these cases the unsaid is visible only as a trace or pressure, a constraint or effect, rather than as a positive (and positivist) entity. Althusser develops the concept in an essay on the painter Leonardo Cremonini. He writes, "The structure which controls the *concrete* existence of men, i.e., which *informs the lived ideology* of the relations between men and objects and between objects and men, this structure, *as a structure*, can never be depicted by its presence, *in person*, positively, in relief, but only by traces and effects, negatively, by indices of absence, *in intaglio (en creux)*" (237). Louis Althusser, "Cremonini, Painter of the Abstract," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (London: New Left Books, 1971).

43. A great deal of the work of Unit B at the National Film Board of Canada in the 1960s, in fact, embodies a detached view of its working-class subjects. It should, however, be more strictly labeled as satire or even class bias than irony in the sense of a discursive stance that questions the efficacy of discourse itself.

44. This commentary is a transcription of the English subtitles in the print available from the British Film Institute.

45. See Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," Hal Foster, ed., *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Port Townsend: Bay Press, 1983).

3. Axiographics

1. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in Bill Nichols, ed., *Movies and Methods*, vol. 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985): 308.

2. Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure," 314.

3. The signal importance of space and the filmmaker's relation to it is far from lost in most documentary criticism. Whereas a definition in relation to a relative lack of control would suggest that the shooting of documentaries would be the least creative or important aspect of them, the bulk of commentary and discussion dwells precisely on this aspect with relatively little attention to pre- and postproduction. Discussion of *An American Family* (in *New Challenges for Documentary*), as just one example, bears this out. The lack of "control" is a false issue when the presence of the camera marks space with ethical dimensions.

4. For a discussion of the prefiguration of moral perspective in historical writing, see Hayden White, *Metahistory* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), especially 1–43.

5. Vivian Sobchack, "Inscribing Ethical Space: Ten Propositions on Death, Representation, and Documentary," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 9, no. 4 (1984): 283–300. I am extremely indebted to this essay for the following discussion of ethical space in relation to the camera's gaze. Though I have modified her categories, I retain the basic notion that space in documentary bears an ethical dimension distinct from that of fiction.

6. Sobchack, "Ethical Space," 287.

7. The following account of a professional photographer's response to the fact and threat of death during the suppression of riots in Soweto captures the full ambivalence described here:

> Suddenly a small boy dropped to the ground next to me. I realized then that the police were not firing warning shots. They were shooting into the crowd. More children fell. . . . I began taking pictures of the little boy who was dying next to me. Blood poured from his mouth and some children knelt next to him and tried to stop the flow of blood. Then some children shouted they were going to kill me. . . . I begged them to leave me alone. I said I was a reporter and was there to record what happened. A young girl hit me on the head with a rock. I was dazed, but still on my feet. Then they saw reason and some led me away. All the time helicopters circled overhead and there was the sound of shooting. It was like a dream. A dream I will never forget.

Quoted from an account by Alf Khumalo, a black reporter on the *Johannesburg Sunday Times*, in Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973): 191–92.

8. See Julia Kristeva, *The Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982) for an extended discussion of the abject.

9. A privileged position for the visible is particularly evident in observational documentary, although here, too, I would argue that there is little fetishization of the visible without the audible. Films like *Primary*, *High School*, and *Salesman*, or *Sherman's March*, an interactive, reflexive offshoot of this mode of representation, are close to incomprehensible without their synchronous sound tracks. The fetish is of the quotidian, the experience of the everyday without the conceptual and