INTRODUCTION TO
DOCUMENTARY

Second Edition

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INDIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS
Bloomington & Indianapolis

This book is a publication of

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

www.iupress.indiana.edu

Telephone orders 800-842-6796
Fax orders 812-855-7931

(∞) The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of the American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1992.

Manufactured in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Nichols, Bill, [date]
Introduction to documentary / Bill Nichols. — 2nd ed.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
Includes filmography.
ISBN 978-0-253-35556-0 (cloth : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-0-253-22260-2 (pbk. : alk. paper) 1. Documentary films—History and criticism. I. Title.
PN1995.9.D6N539 2010
070.1'8—dc22

2010017294

8 9 10 11 12 13 15 14

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MODELS AND MODES IN DOCUMENTARY FILM: THE NEED TO CLASSIFY

In chapter 1 we defined documentary as a form of cinema that speaks to us about actual situations and events. It involves real people (social actors) who present themselves to us in stories that convey a plausible proposal about or perspective on the lives, situations, and events portrayed. The distinct point of view of the filmmaker shapes this story into a proposal or perspective on the historical world directly, adhering to known facts, rather than creating a fictional allegory.

Helpful though this definition is for documentaries in general, it scarcely begins to distinguish different types of documentary. Many documentaries violate any specific definition and mockumentaries deliberately blur the border zone between fiction and documentary in any case. There are no laws and few genuine rules when it comes to creative expression. What actually counts as a documentary remains fluid, open to debate across institutions, filmmakers, audiences, and the films themselves. Institutions, from television channels to foundations that support specific types of documentary film; filmmakers, from the extraverted Michael Moore to the self-effacing D. A. Pennebaker; films, from the searing *Night and Fog* (1955) to the hilarious *Super Size Me* (2004); and audience expectations that range from "show me the truth" to "entertain me" all co-exist. Favored styles come and go. Institutional opportunities and constraints, technological innovations,

creative inspiration, and evolving audience expectations constantly change the landscape of what counts as a documentary and what constitutes its horizon of possibility.

Rather than regret the failure of documentary films to comply with any one, single definition, and rather than lament the ability of any one definition to identify all the possible types of documentary, we can accept this fluidity as cause for celebration. It makes for a dynamic, evolving form. Fluid, fuzzy boundaries are testimony to growth and vitality. The amazing vigor and popularity of documentary films over the last 25 years is firm evidence that fluid boundaries and a creative spirit yield an exciting, adaptable art form.

This said, distinctions can still be made. New documentaries continue to bear strong resemblances to previous documentaries. In fact, it is possible to note a number of tendencies, or modes, such as the poetic and expository modes, at work in documentary. The modes were sketched out in chapter 1 and receive fuller consideration here and in the next chapter. These modes identify the different ways in which the voice of documentary manifests itself in cinematic terms. They differentiate documentaries in terms of formal, cinematic qualities. These qualities have existed as potential resources for decades, but in different proportions and with different emphases. Most films incorporate more than one mode, even though some modes are more prominent at one time or place than another. These modes serve as a skeletal framework that individual filmmakers flesh out according to their own creative disposition. But before we break down documentary representation into a number of modes, it is useful to take a brief, more distant view of documentary film as one component of cinema in general.

How we categorize and divide up a domain of experience is seldom a purely objective act in which we follow the natural fault lines given to us by a preexisting world. Science, which deals with the natural world, can classify in this way, but when what we want to classify is the product of our own human activity, natural fault lines quickly disappear. In relation to documentary film these categories belong to a continuing dialogue among institutions, filmmakers, films, and audiences rather than to the natural world. They evolve, change, consolidate, and scatter in unpredictable ways. The needs they meet at one moment may no longer be met in another. Filmmakers are usually among the first to

notice this as they seek new ways to tell stories and convey their point of view. Categories and concepts often play catch-up, trying to give coherence to the extraordinary array of works created by human activity.

DOCUMENTARY FILM AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER KINDS OF FILM

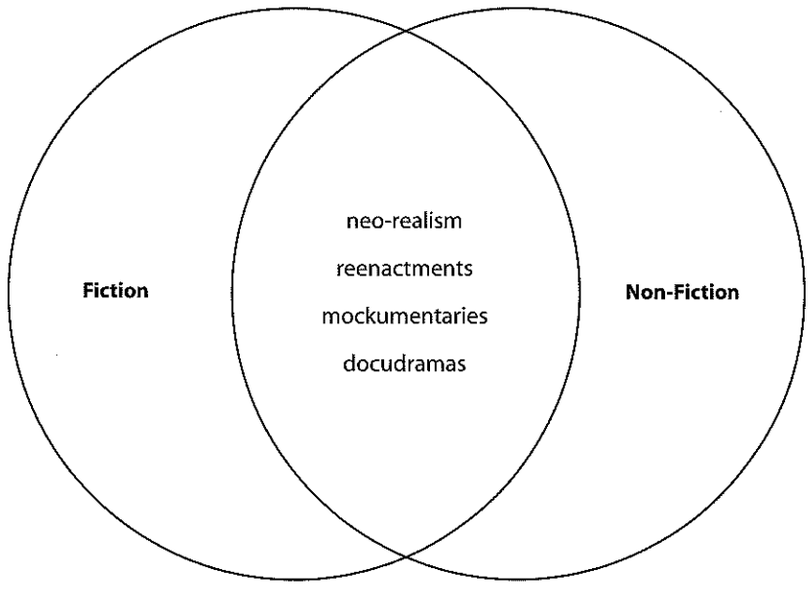
From an adequate distance, we might see film clustered into fiction and nonfiction films that can be represented by two overlapping circles or spheres (Table 6.1).

Exclusively in the left-hand circle is fiction per se. Here we find the majority of fiction films that are readily identifiable as works that conjure up an imaginary world populated by actors who play assigned roles (characters). These characters appear to go about their business as if the camera that beholds them were in no way part of their world. What they say and, even more, what they do may be incredible, fantastic, seemingly impossible, and hence amazing, but it all unfolds as if such occurrences were a plausible part of the world the characters inhabit.

Exclusively in the right-hand circle is nonfiction, which includes documentary film, informational or "how to" films, scientific films, surveillance footage, and more. Here we find the majority of documentary films that are identifiable by (1) their representations in sound and image of a preexisting, historical world, (2) their reliance on social actors who present themselves rather than take on assigned roles, and (3) the intricate relationship that may arise between the interaction of the filmmaker and the film's social actors who clearly co-exist in the same historical world. It is from this interaction that the film's story, proposal, or perspective frequently arises.

In both circles, nestled in the zone of overlap, are forms that borrow from both traditions and get classified as one or the other according to the goals and purposes of the analyst. Most critics consider neo-realism fiction because the performers, even if not trained actors, play assigned roles; the films possess a clear narrative shape, and the restrained, understated style gives little sense of a documentary voice. These qualities, however, are also present in observational documentaries, as we shall see, but these films are routinely counted as documentaries because the stories they tell seem to be primarily of the social actor's own making.

TABLE 6.1. The Relation of Fiction to Nonfiction

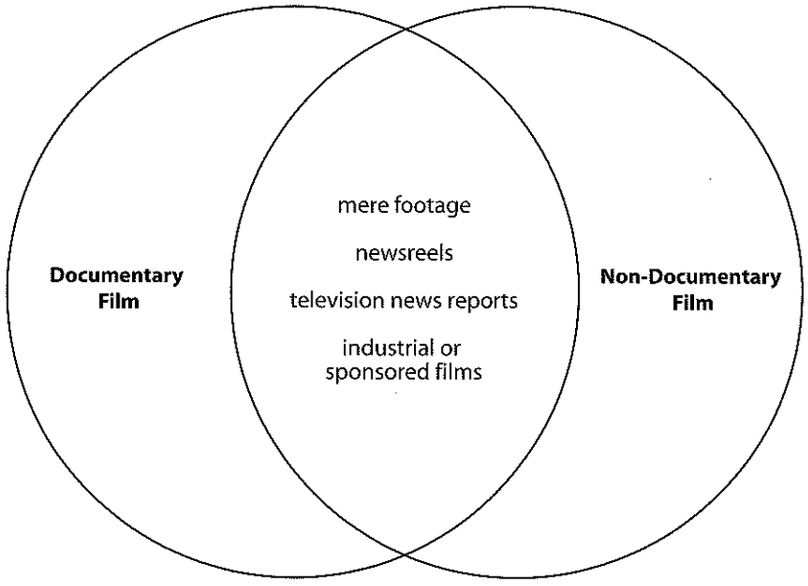


In contrast to neo-realism, reenactments, mockumentaries, and docudramas, although they adopt many fictional techniques and are generally considered fundamentally fictions, get roped into discussions of documentary. This is because reenactments typically occur as one part of a documentary or informational film and take much of their meaning and value from that larger context. Mockumentaries clearly engage in a teasing dialogue with documentary conventions and audiences' expectations, and docudramas draw much of their plot structure and character depiction from actual events.

Once we shift our attention to the nonfiction side of the diagram in Table 6.1, we find that it, too, breaks down into two overlapping categories: documentary and nondocumentary films, which Table 6.2 illustrates.

In the zone of overlap are those forms that can be treated in either documentary or not documentary, depending on the critic's goals and

TABLE 6.2. The Relation of Documentary to Nondocumentary Films



purpose. Mere footage is raw footage, often a single shot or take such as surveillance footage or Abraham Zapruder's famous Super 8 footage of President John F. Kennedy's assassination. By itself mere footage lacks any pronounced voice or perspective but it can easily be drawn into either a documentary or nondocumentary work. Oliver Stone's *JFK* (1991), a narrative fiction, strives to present Zapruder's footage as scientific evidence of a conspiracy (and multiple assassins). Going in the opposite direction, Jean Painlevé made scientific recordings of aquatic life, mere footage, into captivating documentary poems such as *The Sea Horse* (1934). His films are often considered scientific documents, but numerous museums also include them in their collections of documentaries.

Industrial or sponsored films usually address a very limited clientele or openly promote a specific business or product. Advertisements, which may have some documentary elements, are highly promotional. Their partisanship urges the purchase of a product, a more limited goal than most documentaries, although they share many of the same rhetorical techniques. Sponsored films such as Robert Flaherty's *Louisiana Story* (1948), sponsored by Shell Oil, carry less pointed messages (the film is about a young Cajun boy; that his traditional world and the world of oil extraction can co-exist was sufficient message for Shell). Here sponsorship is akin to that of governments when they underwrite documentaries: the film promotes a perspective or way of seeing the world more than a specific act of consumption.

Documentaries are not documents. They may use documents and facts, but they always interpret them. They usually do so in an expressive, engaging way. This lends documentaries the strong sense of voice that nondocumentaries lack. This voice distinguishes documentary films. We sense a voice addressing us from a particular perspective about some aspect of the historical world. This perspective is more personal and sometimes more impassioned than that of standard news reports. Television news adheres to journalistic standards that have a strongly informational bias although they are far from free of qualities of voice. Bias, framing the context within which to present information, assumptions about who counts as an expert or authority, and choices of words and tone can all push news reporting toward the documentary camp while journalistic standards of objectivity and accuracy pull in the direction of the informational film.

Nondocumentary films such as scientific films, surveillance footage, and informational or "how to" films exhibit a minimal sense of voice: they function more like documents than documentaries, conveying information in a straightforward, often didactic manner. They speak about aspects of the world with a high degree of transparency or indexicality. This is what lends evidentiary value to what they show: the footage retains a highly indexical relation to preexisting situations and events such as footage of animal behavior or a spaceship launch. Clarity and simplicity are often at a premium in scientific films, whereas expressivity, style, and sometimes ambiguity are prized qualities in documentary films.

MODELS FOR AND MODES OF DOCUMENTARY FILM

If we accept these general categorizations as a useful starting point, remembering that they could be redrawn, for other purposes, in other ways, we can then ask, Once a documentary tradition came into being,

what categories help us characterize different types of documentary films?

This book proposes two major ways of dividing up documentaries:

- Preexisting nonfiction models. Documentaries adopt models such as the diary, biography, or essay. Documentary film belongs to a long, multi-faceted tradition of nonfiction discourse that continues to evolve (essays, reports, manifestos, blogs, etc.). Erik Barnouw used some of these models to categorize documentaries in his international history, *Documentary: A History of the Non-fiction Film.* (Barnouw treats "documentary" and "nonfiction" as synonyms.)
- Distinct, cinematic modes. Documentaries adopt modes such as the expository or observational mode. Documentaries select and arrange sounds and images in distinct ways, using specifically cinematic techniques and conventions. These forms did not preexist the cinema. Many have since carried over to television, digital production, and the internet. Like the cinematic techniques developed in the early cinema, which helped define the contours of the narrative feature film, the modes help define the shape and feel of the documentary film. They identify the qualities that distinguish an expository documentary from an observational one, for example, regardless of whether the film uses the diary, report, or biography as its model.

The emphasis here will be on the modes of documentary, but one additional point needs clarification: we can classify any one documentary in either of two ways:

- What model it adopts from other media
- What mode it contributes to as cinema.

The classifications are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they are complementary: together, they give us a better sense of the structure of any one documentary film.

Table 6.3 provides a list of some of the primary nonfiction models from which documentary draws and of the six cinematic modes that characterize the bulk of documentaries. (The film examples listed under the heading "Nonfiction Models" also appear in the right-hand column, "Documentary Modes," according to the documentary mode to which they belong most strongly and vice versa.)

TABLE 6.3. Some Major Models and Modes for Documentary Film

NONFICTION MODELS	DOCUMENTARY MODES
Investigation/Report (assemble evidence, make a case or offer a perspective)	**Expository** (speak directly to viewer with voice over)
Bus 174	*Afrique, je te plumerai*
Control Room	*Chile, Obstinate Memory*
Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room	*The Civil War*
Gunner Palace	*The Corporation*
Harvest of Shame	*Dead Birds*
Real Sex (HBO series)	*Grass*
	Grizzly Man
	Harvest of Shame
	An Inconvenient Truth
	Les Maîtres Fous
	The March of the Penguins
	Nanook of the North
	Night and Fog
	Night Mail
	The Plow That Broke the Plains
	The Power of Nightmares
	The River
	Roger and Me
	Seven Days in September
	Sicko
	Stranger with a Camera
	Super Size Me
	Unfinished Diary
	Victory at Sea

TABLE 6.3. (*continued*)

NONFICTION MODELS	DOCUMENTARY MODES
	Why We Fight series
	Wild Safari 3D: A South African Adventure (an IMAX film)
Advocacy/Promotion of a Cause (stress convincing, compelling evidence and examples; urge adoption of a specific point of view)	**Poetic** (stress visual and acoustic rhythms, patterns, and the overall form of the film)
The Corporation	*The Bridge*
An Inconvenient Truth	*Koyaanisqatsi*
Night Mail	*The Maelstrom*
The Plow That Broke the Plains	*Rain*
The Power of Nightmares	
Sicko	
History (recount what really happened, offer an interpretation or perspective on it)	**Observational** (look on as social actors go about their lives as if the camera were not present)
The Civil War	*Control Room*
An Injury to One	*Gunner Palace*
Night and Fog	*High School*
Seven Days in September	*Jesus Camp*
Victory at Sea	*The Last Waltz*
	Metallica: Some Kind of Monster
	N!ai: Story of a !Kung Woman
	Primary
	Salesman
	Up the Yangtze
	Wedding Camels

NONFICTION MODELS	DOCUMENTARY MODES
Testimonial (assemble oral history or witnesses who recount their personal experience)	**Participatory** (filmmaker interacts with his or her social actors, participates in shaping what happens before the camera: interviews are a prime example)
The Fog of War	*Bus 174*
Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo	*Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room*
The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter	*The Fog of War*
Shoah	*Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo*
The Women's Film	*The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter*
Word Is Out	*Nobody's Business*
	Real Sex (HBO series)
	Sherman's March
	Shoah
	Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill
	The Women's Film
	Word Is Out
Exploration/Travel Writing (conveys the distinctiveness and often the allure of distant places, may stress exotic or unusual qualities)	**Reflexive** (calls attention to the conventions of documentary filmmaking and sometimes of methodologies such as fieldwork or the interview)
Grass	*Man with a Movie Camera* (not in the models column; see text below for discussion)
The March of the Penguins	*Reassemblage*
Nanook of the North	*Stranger with a Camera*
Up the Yangtze	
Wild Safari 3D: A South African Adventure (an IMAX film)	

TABLE 6.3. (*continued*)

NONFICTION MODELS	DOCUMENTARY MODES
Sociology (the study of subcultures: normally involves fieldwork, participant-observation with subjects, and both description and interpretation)	**Performative** (emphasizes the expressive quality of the filmmaker's engagement with the film's subject; addresses the audience in a vivid way)
High School	*Chile, Obstinate Memory*
Jesus Camp	*Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter*
Primary	*Finding Christa*
Salesman	*The Gleaners and I*
Stranger with a Camera	*An Injury to One*
	Tarnation
	Tongues Untied
	Waltz with Bashir
Visual Anthropology/Ethnography (the study of other cultures; similar to sociological fieldwork with language acquisition usually added; reliance on informants to provide access to the culture studied)	
Dead Birds	
Les Maîtres Fous	
N!ai: Story of a !Kung Woman	
Reassemblage	
Wedding Camels	
First-Person Essay (a personal account of some aspect of the author/filmmaker's experience or point of view; autobiography is similar but stresses individual development)	
Chile, Obstinate Memory	
Nobody's Business	
Roger and Me	
Super Size Me	

NONFICTION MODELS	DOCUMENTARY MODES
The Bridge	
Koyaanisqatsi	
The Maelstrom	
Rain	
Diary/Journal (daily impressions that may begin and end somewhat arbitrarily)	
Afrique, je te plumerai	
The Gleaners and I	
Sherman's March	
Unfinished Diary	
Individual or Group Profile/Biography (recounts the story of a person or group's maturation and distinctiveness)	
7 Up (and successors: *7 Plus Seven* to *49 Up*)	
Grizzly Man	
The Last Waltz	
Metallica: Some Kind of Monster	
The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill	
Autobiography (a personal account of someone's experience, maturation, or outlook on life)	
Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter	
Finding Christa	
Tarnation	
Tongues Untied	
Waltz with Bashir	

A few points about this table call for elaboration.

- First, the categorizations reflect individual judgment rather than precise measurement. Many films can be classified in relation to multiple models and modes. To emphasize this, *Stranger with a Camera* (1999) appears under the expository and the reflexive modes and *Chile, Obstinate Memory* (1997) appears under the expository and the performative modes. Similarly, *Night Mail* (1936) has a strongly poetic quality to its voice-over commentary (written by W. H. Auden) and might be discussed as a film beholden to poetry and the poetic mode rather than advocacy and the expository mode. *Nanook of the North* (1922) corresponds to anthropology as well as exploration since it has served as a touchstone for many discussions and debates within visual anthropology and ethnographic film. Its emphasis on the character Nanook also argues for biography as a model. These are valid choices. They stress specific qualities, just as placing *Nanook* within the observational mode stresses Flaherty's remarkable patience and willingness to let events unfold in their own time, even if it took Flaherty's active hand to set up events like the seal hunt or igloo building. Different viewers respond more or less strongly to different aspects of the same film and classify it accordingly.
- The expository mode contains the most examples by far. This is partly a result of the specific films chosen as examples, but it also suggests the prevalence of this mode. Expository documentaries arose at the start of the documentary tradition and remain prominent today, even if some of the films listed here could be associated with other modes as well. This mode gives priority to the spoken word to convey the film's perspective from a single, unifying source. This, in turn, facilitates comprehension.
- Films like *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room* (2005) and *Sicko* (2007) demonstrate how one mode can combine with other modes especially in the use of interviews. We can stress the guiding role of the direct address commentary in *Sicko*

(expository mode) or the interviews and what they reveal in *Enron* (participatory mode). In each film interviews are quite central. In *Enron* they provide some of the most crucial information and demonstrate how public interviews and comments by company officers hid rather than revealed the truth, which interviews with others make clear. In *Sicko*, the interviews generate considerable insight, and humor, thanks to Michael Moore's use of mock naïveté and guerilla tactics to catch interviewees off guard in ways other techniques never would. Stressing Michael Moore's own role as commentator argues for a primarily expository emphasis as his voice guides us through the complexities of health care and how to provide it. Such commentary has become a trademark signature in his films. Both expository and participatory modes are clearly present in each film. Which prevails depends, in large part, on what aspects of the film we want to explore further. Neither is right or wrong in any fundamental sense.

This practice of mixing modes holds true for many films. It does not mean that the categories are inadequate so much as that filmmakers frequently adopt a fluid, pragmatic approach to their material, blending different models and modes to achieve a distinct result. This is quite different from an "anything goes" approach in which the filmmaker invents structures and patterns on the spot, without recourse to precedent. As is true of other arts, those filmmakers who are familiar with previous work and aware of the basic characteristics of different models and modes typically exhibit a fluidity and grace in their ability to use a wide range of conventions and techniques to create a style, and voice, uniquely their own.

- The reflexive mode is clearly under-represented. This, however, is not too surprising if we consider that many reflexive documentaries call attention to the formal conventions of the documentary film itself. In other words, they question the principles that underlie the other five modes rather than the various models drawn from other media like the printed word. There is no reason why they might not also be reflexive in relation to the nonfiction models, though,

drawing attention to the conventions of the diary, biography, or visual anthropology, for example.

Stranger with a Camera, however, does prompt a reflexive awareness of anthropological and sociological assumptions involving fieldwork. The film dwells at length on two individuals: Canadian filmmaker Hugh O'Connor, who went to film Appalachian residents in the late 1960s, and Hobart Ison, the local resident who shot and killed Mr. O'Connor. The filmmaker, Elizabeth Barret, reflexively questions how massive cross-cultural misunderstandings and stereotypes led to this tragic end. In doing so she peels away many of the assumptions viewers might have about impoverished citizens and entitled filmmakers to prompt deeper consideration of the underlying issues of social representation.

Similarly, *Reassemblage* (1982) looks at aspects of West African culture but does so primarily to question the traditional assumptions of anthropological methodology. Other reflexive films such as *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929; not listed in the models column) draw attention to the filmmaking process itself and how filmmakers construct a distinct perspective on the historical world cinematically. Its maker, Dziga Vertov, was adamant about not adopting preexisting models. He sought to forge new ones unique to the cinema. His film, therefore, does not fall under any of the models listed in the left-hand column even though there are traces of sociology, poetry, and the first-person essay in it.

- The expository and poetic modes often harvest, glean, or compile images from the world with relative indifference to the specific individuals or situations captured in order to shape proposals or perspectives on a general topic. The sense of any extended engagement between the filmmaker and the subject is frequently modest, at best. *The River* (1937), for example, contains numerous shots of specific people and places as it tells the story of how the Tennessee Valley Authority tamed the Mississippi and brought electrical power to a vast region. Some of these people and places may be named, in passing, but their personal history and individual relation to the film's goals remain scantly addressed. The classic poetic film *Rain* (1929), adopts a similar attitude: we see scores of people caught in a summer shower in Amsterdam but none of them emerge as characters with names and personalities. The poetic power of the film lies elsewhere.

Images culled from other films yield a compilation film that joins these fragments together in a distinct way. The actual interaction between the filmmaker and the social actors is usually of nominal concern since the images contribute to the big picture proposed by the film. Images are harvested and assembled into a whole greater than the individual parts. This is true of the great majority of the shots in the *Why We Fight* series (1942–1945) because the films advocate U.S. involvement in World War II rather than tell the story of specific individuals. The filmmaker's relation to those who appear before the camera generally holds less importance than the overall proposal or perspective shaped from the resulting images.

- The observational, participatory, and performative modes work differently. The relationship between the filmmaker and the person filmed becomes more direct, personal, and complex. The viewer senses that the image is not just an indexical representation of some part of the historical world but also an indexical record of the actual encounter between filmmaker and subject. The sense of extended engagement between filmmaker and subject is often acute. The individuality of specific social actors, people, matters greatly. The filmmaker enters into the social actor's world through interviews, conversation, provocation, or other forms of encounter and has the power to alter that world. Something is at risk in the encounters. We realize that the filmmaker exists on the same plane of human existence as his or her social actors rather than on the more detached plane of commentator or poet. Discussions of ethical conduct in documentary often revolve around the nature of these interactions. (Ethical discussions also involve questions of distortion, misrepresentation, and deception that span all the modes.)

DOCUMENTARY MODES AND THE FILMMAKER'S VOICE

Like every speaking voice, every cinematic voice has a style or "grain" all its own that acts like a signature or fingerprint. It attests to the individuality of the filmmaker or director or, sometimes, to the determining power of a sponsor or controlling organization. Television news has a voice of its own just as Fred Wiseman or Chris Marker, Esther Shub or Barbara Kopple do.

Individual voices lend themselves to an auteur theory of cinema, while shared voices lend themselves to a genre theory of cinema. We routinely group fiction films into subcategories known as genres such as melodrama and horror, westerns and science fiction. Genre study considers the qualities that characterize these various groupings of films. In many instances, documentary can be treated as a genre similar to the western or gangster film, with conventions and expectations that routinely inform it. Chapter 1 addressed documentary at this level to a considerable degree. But to fine-tune our discussion, we need to differentiate among different types of documentary films. It is to this end that the notion of models and modes comes into play. The models are not specific to the cinema, whereas the modes are. These modes, in fact, deserve extended discussion because they form the conceptual backbone of most documentary film production.

These six modes establish a loose framework of affiliation within which individuals may work. They set up conventions that a given film may adopt, and they provide specific expectations viewers anticipate having fulfilled. Each mode possesses examples that we can identify as prototypes or models: these prototypes seem to give exemplary expression to the most distinctive qualities of that mode. A prototype cannot be duplicated verbatim, but it can be emulated as other filmmakers, in other voices, set out to represent aspects of the historical world by using a prototype that they inflect with their own distinct perspectives.

The order of presentation for these six modes appears to correspond roughly to the chronology of their introduction. This is not literally true since performative and reflexive tendencies were evident from the outset. The greatest temporal divide is before and after 1960, roughly. This is when portable synchronous sound recording became a reality and the observational and participatory modes gained prominence. They differ quite vividly from the expository and poetic modes because the filmmaker's actual physical presence in a given historical moment takes on new and profound importance.

The different documentary modes may seem to provide a history of documentary film, but they do so imperfectly. Not only were most of them present from the outset, a film identified with a given mode need not be so entirely. A reflexive documentary can contain sizable portions of observational or participatory footage; an expository documentary can include poetic or performative segments. The characteristics of a given mode give structure to a film, but they do not dictate or determine every aspect of its organization. Considerable latitude remains possible. The modes do not constitute a genealogy of documentary film so much as a pool of resources available to all.

A performative documentary can exhibit many qualities common to poetic documentaries, for example. The modes do not represent an evolutionary chain in which later modes demonstrate aesthetic superiority over earlier ones and vanquish them, although a temptation to make such claims often arises. Once well established through a set of conventions and prototypical films, a given mode remains available to all. Each mode expands the sense of the possible in documentary representation. Expository documentary, for example, goes back to the 1920s but remains highly influential today. Most television news and reality TV shows depend heavily on its quite dated conventions, as do almost all science and nature documentaries, biographies such as the A&E *Biography* series, and the majority of large-scale historical documentaries such as *The Civil War* (1990), *Eyes on the Prize* (1987, 1990), *The People's Century* (1998), or *The War* (2007).

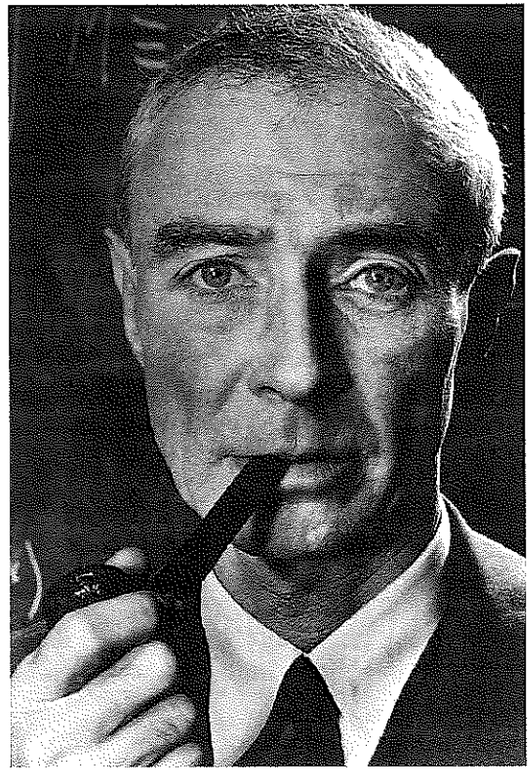
To some extent, each mode of documentary representation arises in part through a growing sense of dissatisfaction among filmmakers with other modes. New technological possibilities often play a significant role. The observational and participatory modes of representation became highly attractive once lightweight 16mm cameras and portable but high-quality sync tape recorders came onto the scene in the 1960s. Similarly, the advent of digital cameras and recording devices, computer-based editing programs, and the internet have spawned a wave of documentary work that promises to alter many basic assumptions about the form. From cell phone video recorded in the heat of a

highly volatile moment to spoofs of popular culture icons and almost nonstop video diaries, these new technologies are expanding the sense of the possible in dramatic ways.

As an example, an official White House "photostream" exists on Flickr.com, a website devoted to the display of images. The photos are captioned and often tell stories about the president's activities. In 1963, Robert Drew organized an observational study of the White House during the peak of the struggle to desegregate schools in the South: *Crisis: Behind a Presidential Commitment* (1963). It provided a behind-the-scenes view of the confrontation between President Kennedy and Governor George Wallace of Alabama. Critics praised its access to the corridors of power and its insider-like ability to get behind the scenes. Now these activities become a daily update on Flickr by the White House itself, the story content and image of the president a carefully crafted result of those who once rarely allowed outsiders to view the inner workings of the White House in any detail at all. It is a small indication of how new technology and creative minds constantly alter the documentary landscape.

The desire to come up with different ways of representing the world contributes to the formation of each mode, as does a changing set of circumstances. New modes arise partly in response to perceived deficiencies in previous ones, but the perception of deficiency comes about partly from a sense of what it takes to represent the historical world from a particular perspective at a given moment in time. The seeming neutrality and "make of it what you will" quality of observational cinema arose at the end of the quiet fifties and during the heyday of descriptive, observation-based forms of sociology. It flourished as the embodiment of a presumed "end of ideology" and as a fascination with the everyday world. It had less obvious affinity with the social plight or political anger of those who occupy the margins of society.

Similarly, the emotional intensity and subjective expressiveness of performative documentary took fullest shape in the 1980s and 1990s. Its deepest roots are among those groups whose sense of commonality had grown during this period as a result of identity politics. This form of political, often militant organizing on a basis other than class affirmed the relative autonomy and social distinctiveness of marginalized groups. These films rejected techniques such as the voice-of-God commentary not because these techniques lacked humility but because they belonged to an entire epistemology, or way of seeing and knowing the world, no longer deemed acceptable. Tired of hearing others speak about them, members of these groups set out to speak for themselves.



The Day after Trinity (Jon Else, 1980). Post-1960s reconsiderations of cold war rhetoric invited a revision of the postwar record. Filmmakers such as Connie Field in *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter* and Jon Else in *The Day after Trinity* recirculate historical footage in a new context and give it new meaning. In this case, Else reexamines Robert J. Oppenheimer's hesitancies and doubts about the development of the atomic bomb as a lost, or suppressed, voice of reason during a period of near hysteria. Oppenheimer himself was accused of treason. *Photo courtesy of Jon Else.*

We do well to take with a grain of salt any claims that a new mode advances the art of cinema and captures aspects of the world never before possible. What changes is the *mode* of representation, not the quality or ultimate status of the representation. A new mode is not so much better as it is different, even though the idea of "improvement" is frequently touted, especially among champions and practitioners of a new mode or new technology. Every change brings a different set of emphases and implications. But every new mode or new way of making and distributing work will eventually prove vulnerable, in turn, to criticism for limitations that some type of alternative promises to overcome.

New modes signal less a better way to represent the historical world than a new way to organize a film, a new perspective on our relation to reality, and a new set of issues and desires to preoccupy an audience.

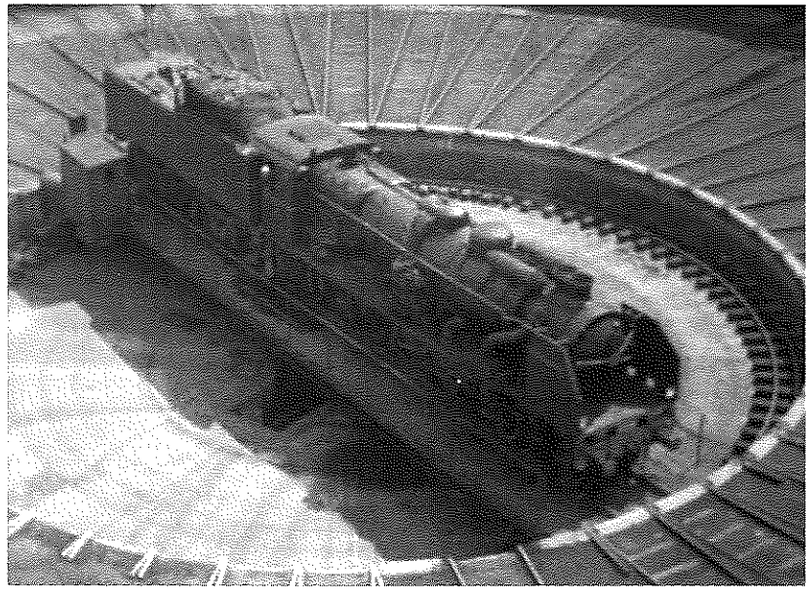
We can now say a bit more about each of the modes in turn.

THE POETIC MODE

As we saw in chapter 5, poetic documentary shares a common terrain with the modernist avant-garde. The poetic mode sacrifices the conventions of continuity editing and the sense of a specific location in time and place that follows from such editing. The filmmaker's engagement is with film form as much as or more than with social actors. This mode explores associations and patterns that involve temporal rhythms and spatial juxtapositions. Social actors seldom take on the full-blooded form of characters with psychological complexity and a specific view of the world. People more typically function on a par with other objects as raw material that filmmakers select and arrange into associations and patterns of their choosing. We get to know none of the social actors in Joris Ivens's *Rain*, for example, but we do come to appreciate the lyric impression Ivens creates of a summer shower passing over Amsterdam.

The poetic mode is particularly adept at opening up the possibility of alternative forms of knowledge to the straightforward transfer of information, the prosecution of a particular argument or point of view, or the presentation of reasoned propositions about problems in need of solution. This mode stresses mood, tone, and affect much more than displays of factual knowledge or acts of rhetorical persuasion. The rhetorical element remains underdeveloped but the expressive quality is vivid. We learn in this case by affect or feeling, by gaining a sense of what it feels like to see and experience the world in a particular, poetic way.

Laszlo Moholy-Nagy's *Play of Light: Black, White, Grey* (1930), for example, presents various views of one of his own kinetic sculptures to emphasize the gradations of light passing across the film frame rather than to document the material shape of the sculpture itself. The effect of this play of light on the viewer takes on more importance than the object it refers to in the historical world. Similarly, Jean Mitry's *Pacific*



Pacific 231 (Jean Mitry, 1949). The locomotive begins its journey in a roundhouse and is soon hurtling down the rails. Mitry's film is one of the cinema's great tributes to the railroad, a vehicle, like film, that swiftly transports us to distant places. *Courtesy of Photofest.*

231 (1949) is in part a homage to Abel Gance's *La Roue* (1923) and in part a poetic evocation of the power and speed of a steam locomotive as it gradually builds up speed and hurtles toward its (unspecified) destination. The editing stresses rhythm and form more than it details the actual workings of a locomotive. The film's poetic power is all the more apparent when we compare it to the Lumière brothers' *Arrival of a Train* (1895). *Pacific 231* builds a vivid sense of the dynamic rhythms of an extended journey that is completely lacking from the long take of a gradual but dramatic arrival in the earlier film.

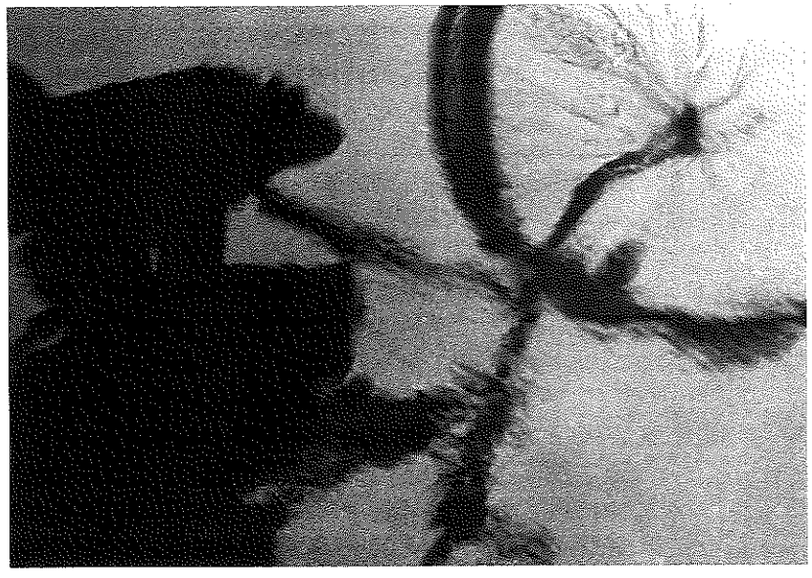
The documentary dimension to the poetic mode of representation stems largely from the degree to which modernist films relied on the historical world for their source material. Some avant-garde films such as Oskar Fischinger's *Composition in Blue* (1935) use abstract patterns of form or color or animated figures and have minimal relation to a documentary tradition of representing *the* historical world rather than *a*

world of the artist's imagining. Poetic documentaries, though, draw on the historical world for their raw material but transform this material in distinctive ways. Francis Thompson's *N.Y., N.Y.* (1957), for example, uses shots of New York City that provide evidence of how New York looked in the mid-1950s but gives greater priority to how specific shots can be selected and arranged to produce a poetic impression of the city as a mass of volume, color, and movement. Thompson's film continues the tradition of the city symphony film and affirms the poetic potential of documentary to see the historical world anew.

This sense of the affective tone of lived reality takes considerable prominence in animated documentaries, many of which have strong poetic qualities even if they also address a specific event or type of experience. Sylvie Bringas and Orly Yadim's moving account of Tana Ross's experience of the Holocaust as a little girl, *Silence* (1998), is told largely through animation. The haunting, ghostly quality of the animation stresses the unspoken and unspeakable history that her family carried forward but did not acknowledge. It takes on a half-life of its own, felt and experienced obliquely rather than directly, just as the animation evokes the world of the death camps and the surreal illusions of Theresienstadt, which the Nazis used as a "show camp" to create the impression that prisoners were well treated, with memorable power.

In a similar spirit, Jonathan Hodgson's *Feeling My Way* (1997) uses animation to evoke the highly subjective world imagined by the film's narrator as he travels to work. Nothing is quite real but everything bears an uncanny resemblance to reality. The narrator, "John," applies categories and labels to what he sees, but these seem to do little to reduce the affective power of a world that teems with mystery and, sometimes, threat. When he finally arrives at work it is to pass through a door labeled "Parallel Universe." The question becomes: is the parallel universe what we would understand as reality or is it yet a wilder variation on the subjective world we have just experienced? These films and many others like them use animation to achieve poetic goals mixed with autobiographical, diaristic, and performative models and modes.

The poetic mode began in tandem with modernism as a way of representing reality in terms of a series of fragments, subjective impressions, incoherent acts, and loose associations. These qualities were often attributed to the changes wrought by industrialization generally



Rain (Joris Ivens, 1929). Images such as this convey a feeling or impression of what a rain shower is like rather than convey information or an argument. This is a distinct and distinctly poetic perspective on the historical world. Pursuing such a perspective was a common goal of many who would later identify themselves more specifically as documentary or experimental filmmakers. *Photo courtesy of the European Foundation Joris Ivens.*

and the effects of World War I in particular. The modernist world no longer seemed to make sense in traditional narrative, realist terms. Breaking up time and space into multiple perspectives, denying coherence to personalities vulnerable to eruptions from the unconscious, and refusing to provide solutions to insurmountable problems had the sense of honesty about it even as it created works of art that were puzzling or ambiguous in their effect. Although some films explored more classical conceptions of the poetic as a source of order, wholeness, and unity, this stress on fragmentation and ambiguity remains a prominent feature of many poetic documentaries.

Un Chien Andalou (Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dali, 1929) and *L'Age d'or* (Luis Buñuel, 1930), for example, give the impression of a documentary reality but then populate that reality with characters caught up in uncontrollable urges, abrupt shifts of time and place, and

more puzzles than answers. Filmmakers like Kenneth Anger continued aspects of this poetic mode in *Scorpio Rising* (1964), a representation of ritual acts performed by members of a motorcycle gang, as did Chris Marker in *Sans Soleil* (1982), a complex meditation on filmmaking, memory, and postcolonialism. (At the time of their release, works like Anger's seemed firmly rooted in an experimental film tradition, but in retrospect we can see how they combine experimental and documentary elements. How we place them depends heavily on the assumptions we adopt about categories and genres, models and modes.)

By contrast, works like Basil Wright's *Song of Ceylon* (1934), on the untouched beauty of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) despite the inroads of commerce and colonialism, Bert Haanstra's *Glass* (1958), a tribute to the skill of traditional glass blowers and the beauty of their work, or Les Blank's *Always for Pleasure* (1978), a celebration of Mardi Gras festivities in New Orleans, return to a more classic sense of unity and beauty and discover traces of them in the historical world. The poetic mode has many facets, but they all emphasize the ways in which the filmmaker's voice gives fragments of the historical world a formal, aesthetic integrity peculiar to the film itself.

Péter Forgács's remarkable reworking of amateur movies into historical documents stresses poetic, associative qualities over transferring information or winning us over to a particular point of view. *Free Fall* (1997), for example, chronicles the fate of European Jews in the 1930s and 1940s through the home movies of a successful Jewish businessman, Gyorgy Peto, and *Danube Exodus* (1998) follows the journeys of a Danube cruise ship as it takes Jews from Hungary to the Black Sea on their flight to Palestine and then takes Germans from Bessarabia (the northern part of Romania at the time) as they are driven out by the Russians and evacuated to Germany, only to be relocated in Poland. The historical footage, freeze frames, slow motion, tinted images, selective moments of color, occasional titles to identify time and place, voices that recite diary entries, and haunting music build a tone and mood far more than they explain the war or describe its course of action. The poetic quality Forgács adds to the original home movies imbues these films with an affective dimension that stems from the blind spots and pleasures of everyday experience rather than from the drama and intensity of world-shaking events.

THE EXPOSITORY MODE

This mode assembles fragments of the historical world into a more rhetorical frame than an aesthetic or poetic one. It is the mode that first combined the four basic elements of documentary film described in chapter 5 (indexical images of reality; poetic, affective associations; story-telling qualities; and rhetorical persuasiveness). The expository mode addresses the viewer directly, with titles or voices that propose a perspective or advance an argument. Some expository films adopt a voice-of-God commentary (the speaker is heard but never seen) such as we find in the *Why We Fight* series, *Victory at Sea* (1952–1953), *The City* (1939), *Blood of the Beasts* (1949), and *Dead Birds* (1963). Others utilize a voice-of-authority commentary (the speaker is heard and also seen) such as we find in *America's Most Wanted*, *The Selling of the Pentagon* (1971), *16 in Webster Groves* (1966), John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* (1974), Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004), and Zana Briski and Ross Kaufman's *Born into Brothels: Calcutta's Red Light Kids* (2004).

The voice-of-God tradition fostered the cultivation of the professionally trained, richly toned male voice of commentary that proved a hallmark of the expository mode even though some of the most impressive films chose less-polished voices precisely for the credibility gained by avoiding too much polish.

Joris Ivens's great film urging support for the Republican defenders of Spanish democracy, *The Spanish Earth* (1937), for example, exists in at least three versions. None has a professional commentator. All three have identical image tracks, but the French version uses an ad-libbed commentary by the famous French film director Jean Renoir, while the English versions rely on Orson Welles and Ernest Hemingway. Ivens chose Welles first, but his delivery proved a bit too elegant; it bestowed a humanistic compassion on the events, where Ivens hoped for a tougher sense of visceral engagement. Hemingway, who had written the commentary, proved the more effective voice. He brought a matter-of-fact but clearly committed tone to a film that wanted to galvanize support more than compassion. (Some prints still credit the voice over to Welles even when the actual voice is Hemingway's.)

Expository documentaries rely heavily on an informing logic carried by the spoken word. In a reversal of the traditional emphasis

Yosemite: The Fate of Heaven (Jon Else, 1988). The tension between public access and conservation is the focus of this film. Robert Redford's commentary falls into the category of voice-of-God address inasmuch as we never see Mr. Redford. To the extent that Mr. Redford's long-time advocacy for environmental issues makes him a more informed speaker than an anonymous commentator would be and that we already have an image of what Mr. Redford looks like with us from his many film roles, he also fulfills the function of a voice of authority. *Photo courtesy of Jon Else.*

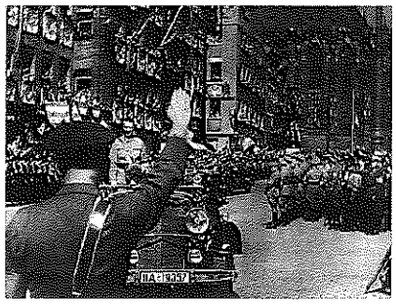
in film, images serve a supporting role. They illustrate, illuminate, evoke, or act in counterpoint to what is said. The commentary is typically presented as distinct from the images of the historical world that accompany it. It serves to organize these images and make sense of them similar to a written caption for a still image. The commentary is therefore presumed to come from some place that remains unspecified but associated with objectivity or omniscience. It shows signs of intelligence and represents the organizing logic of the film. The commentary, in fact, represents the film's perspective. We take our cue from the commentary and understand the images as evidence or illustration for what is said. Television news descriptions of famine in

Ethiopia as "biblical," for example, appear proven by wide-angle shots of great masses of starving people clustered together on an open plain.

Editing in the expository mode generally serves less to establish a rhythm or formal pattern, as it does in the poetic mode, than to maintain the continuity of the spoken argument or perspective. We call this evidentiary editing. Such editing may sacrifice spatial and temporal continuity to rope in images from far-flung places if they help advance the argument or support a proposal. The expository filmmaker often has greater freedom in the selection and arrangement of images than the fiction filmmaker. In *The Plow That Broke the Plains* (1936), shots of arid prairie landscapes came from all over the Midwest, for example, to support the claim of widespread erosion. Cutting shots from Kansas and Texas together enhanced rather than detracted from the claim that the Great Plains stood in severe danger of permanent damage.

The expository mode emphasizes the impression of objectivity and a well-supported perspective. The voice-over commentary seems literally "above" the fray; it has the capacity to judge actions in the historical world without being caught up in them. The professional commentator's official tone, like the authoritative manner of news anchors and reporters, strives to build a sense of credibility from qualities such as detachment, neutrality, disinterestedness, or omniscience. These qualities can be adapted to an ironic point of view such as Charles Kuralt's commentary for *16 in Webster Groves* or subverted even more thoroughly in a film such as *Land without Bread* (1932), with its implicit attack on the very notion of objectivity. More recently, filmmakers such as Michael Moore, Su Friedrich, Jill Godmilow, Travis Wilkerson, Alan Berliner, Trinh Minh Ha, and Patricio Guzmán speak in their own voice on the sound track. This change stresses the personal perspective of the maker and foregoes the claim to ultimate wisdom or impartial truth that is common to voice-of-God commentary. It is part of a larger change that has emphasized personal perspectives over institutional authority in documentary generally and in other forms of discourse as well.

The expository mode also affords an economy of analysis since points can be made succinctly and pointedly in words. Expository documentary is an ideal mode for conveying information or mobilizing support within a framework that preexists the film. In this case, a



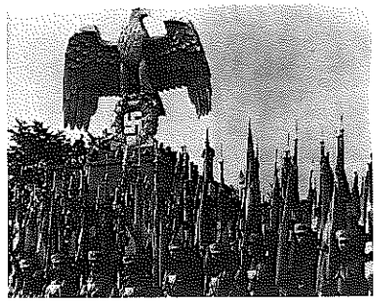
Triumph of the Will (Leni Riefenstahl, 1935). The physical gap and hierarchical distinction between leader and followers again comes across clearly in this scene of Hitler's parade through the streets of Nuremberg.

The Spanish Earth (Joris Ivens, 1937). Ivens's support for the Republican cause against the Nazi-backed rebellion of General Franco followed from his political commitment to democratic and socialist ideals. His de-emphasis on hierarchy in this shot of an officer and a soldier contrasts sharply with Riefenstahl's shooting style.

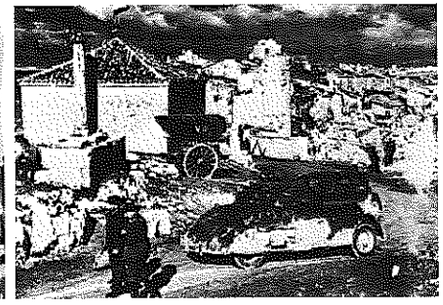
film will add to our stockpile of knowledge but not challenge or subvert the categories that organize and legitimate such knowledge in the first place. Common sense makes a perfect basis for this type of representation about the world because common sense, like rhetoric, is less subject to logic than to belief.

Frank Capra could organize much of his argument for why young American men should willingly join the battle during World War II in the *Why We Fight* series, for example, by appealing to a mix of native patriotism, the ideals of American democracy, the atrocities of the Axis war machine, and the malignant evil of Hitler, Mussolini, and Hirohito. In the black-and-white alternatives of a "free world" versus a "slave world," who would not defend a free world? Common sense made the answer simple—to the predominantly white audience thoroughly imbued with a "melting pot" belief in American values.

Some 50 years later, Capra's appeal seems remarkably naïve and overblown in its treatment of patriotic virtue and democratic ideals. For example, no minorities, no problems of social justice, poverty, or hunger intrude into the film. White Americans represent all Americans and all Americans oppose a fascist enemy. When Ken Burns



Triumph of the Will (Leni Riefenstahl, 1935). The soldier's salute, left, parallels this low-angle view of the German eagle and Nazi swastika. Like Hitler, the eagle serves as a symbol of German power. It presides over the stream of marching troops that pass below it, galvanizing their movement into a tribute to national unity.



The Spanish Earth (Joris Ivens, 1937). In contrast to the pageantry of Riefenstahl's endless parades and speeches, Ivens captures the modest quality of everyday rural life in 1930s Spain, right. This image of the town, Fuenteduena, situated near the shifting battlefront, suggests how ordinary lives are jeopardized, not galvanized, by the fascist rebellion.

retold the story of World War II in *The War*, a 7-part TV series, he learned firsthand that he could not invoke a Capraesque vision of melting pot unity so easily. An episode focusing on Sacramento, California, during the war made scant reference to the efforts of Mexican Americans and protests quickly arose. Burns, a fundamentally conservative historian and filmmaker, albeit a very talented one, beat a hasty retreat and added references to Mexican Americans but retained his overall melting pot perspective. Despite the afterthought quality, Burns's acknowledgement of a marginalized minority community that experienced discrimination and injustice makes clear that the expository mode need not serve to promote only the dominant point of view. World War II looked very different when seen from the perspective of Hispanics in Sacramento, of women confronting sexism in wartime factory work, or Japanese Americans enduring forced confinement to relocation camps. The proposals and perspectives of specific expository films may become dated far more than quickly than the mode itself. It persists and is quite probably the most prevalent mode in use today.

7 How Can We Describe the Observational, Participatory, Reflexive, and Performative Modes of Documentary Film?

THE OBSERVATIONAL MODE

Poetic and expository modes of documentary often sacrificed direct engagement with specific individuals to construct formal patterns or compelling perspectives. The filmmaker gathered the necessary raw materials and then fashioned a meditation, perspective, or proposal from them. What if the filmmaker were simply to observe what happens in front of the camera without overt intervention? Would this not be a new, compelling form of documentation?

Developments in Canada, Europe, and the United States in the years after World War II culminated around 1960 in various 16mm cameras such as the Arriflex and Auricon and tape recorders such as the Nagra that could be easily handled by one person. Speech could now be synchronized with images without the use of bulky equipment or cables that tethered recorders and camera together. The camera and tape recorder could move freely about a scene and record what happened as it happened.

Many filmmakers now chose to abandon all of the forms of control over the staging, arrangement, or composition of a scene made possible by the poetic and expository modes. Instead, they chose to observe lived experience spontaneously. Honoring this spirit of observation in postproduction editing as well as during shooting resulted in films with no voice-over commentary, no supplementary music or sound effects, no inter-titles, no historical reenactments, no behavior repeated for the

Victory at Sea (Henry Salomon and Isaac Kleinerman, 1952–1953). Like *Night and Fog*, *Victory at Sea* returns to the recent past to tell the story of World War II. Made as a television series for CBS, it adopts a commemorative stance. It recalls battles and strategies, setbacks and victories from the perspective of the survivor or veteran. It celebrates naval power and its contribution, giving scant attention to the ground war or the civilian consequences that are at the heart of *Night and Fog*. Both films, however, rely on compilation of footage shot contemporaneously with the events to which the films now return. Compilation films invariably alter the meaning of the footage they incorporate. Here, both films use footage for purposes that are possible only to those who reflect on the meaning of the past rather than report the occurrences of the moment.

camera, and not even any interviews. What we saw was what there was, or so it seemed in *Primary* (1960); *High School* (1968); *Les Racquetteurs* (Michel Brault and Gilles Groulx, 1958), about a group of Montrealers enjoying various games in the snow; portions of *Chronicle of a Summer* (1960), which profiles the lives of several individuals in the Paris of 1960; *The Chair* (1962), about the last days of a man condemned to death; *Gimme Shelter* (1970), about the Rolling Stones' infamous concert at Altamont, California, where a man's death at the hands of the Hell's Angels is partially caught on-camera; *Dont Look Back* (1967), about

Bob Dylan's tour of England in 1965; *Monterey Pop* (1968), about a music festival featuring Otis Redding, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, the Jefferson Airplane, and others; or *Jane* (1962), profiling Jane Fonda as she prepares for a role in a Broadway play.

The resulting footage often recalled the work of the Italian neorealists. We look in on life as it is lived. Social actors engage with one another, ignoring the filmmakers. Often the characters are caught up in pressing demands or a crisis of their own. This requires their attention and draws it away from the presence of filmmakers. The scenes tend, like fiction, to reveal aspects of character and individuality. We make inferences and come to conclusions on the basis of behavior we observe or overhear. The filmmaker's retirement to the position of observer calls on the viewer to take a more active role in determining the significance of what is said and done.

The observational mode poses a series of ethical considerations that involve the act of observing others go about their affairs. Is such an act in and of itself voyeuristic? Does it place the viewer in a necessarily less comfortable position than in a fiction film? In fiction, scenes are specifically contrived for us to oversee and overhear, whereas documentary scenes represent the lived experience of actual people that we happen to witness. This position, "at the keyhole," can feel uncomfortable if a pleasure in looking seems to take priority over the chance to acknowledge and interact with the one seen. This discomfort can be even more acute when the person is not an actor who has willingly agreed to be observed playing a part in a fiction.

For some, the Mayles brothers' portrait of Edith and Edie Bouvier Beale in *Grey Gardens* prompted just this sort of acute discomfort. The two women, scions of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis's family, live in a huge but dilapidated mansion in the fashionable Hamptons outside New York City. They are at ease with the camera and spontaneous in their interactions but seem to have no idea that others will judge their eccentric, reclusive, highly co-dependent lifestyle bizarre if not unhealthy. How can the filmmakers simply observe and pass along what they see if what we now see becomes fodder for diagnoses of illness or judgments of dysfunction? Did they have no ethical obligation to confront these concerns more directly? Of course, these questions now enter into the arena of ethical debate regarding the documentary

filmmaker's responsibilities, but the act of entering this arena is not as praiseworthy as acknowledging the issue and attempting to resolve it in the moment rather than observe it and possibly exploit it.

The impression that the filmmaker is not intruding on the behavior of others also raises the question of unacknowledged or indirect intrusion. Do people conduct themselves in ways that will color our perception of them, for better or worse, in order to satisfy a filmmaker who does not say what it is he wants? Does the filmmaker seek out others to represent because they possess qualities that may fascinate viewers for the wrong reasons? This question often comes up with ethnographic films that observe, in other cultures, behavior that may, without adequate contextualization, seem exotic or bizarre, more part of a "cinema of attractions" than science. Has the filmmaker sought the informed consent of participants and made it possible for such informed consent to be understood and given? To what extent can a filmmaker explain the possible consequences of allowing behavior to be observed and represented to others?

Fred Wiseman, for example, requests consent verbally when he shoots but assumes that when he shoots in tax-supported, public institutions he has a right to record what happens; he never grants participants any control over the final result. Even so, many participants in *High School* found the film fair and representative although most critics have considered it a harsh indictment of school regimentation and discipline. A radically different approach occurs in *Two Laws* (1981), about Aboriginal land rights, where the filmmakers did not film anything without both the consent and collaboration of the participants. Everything from content to camera lenses was open to discussion and mutual agreement.

Since the observational filmmaker adopts a peculiar mode of presence "on the scene" in which he or she appears to be invisible and nonparticipatory, the question also arises of when the filmmaker has a responsibility to intervene? What if something happens that may jeopardize or injure one of the social actors? Should a cameraman film the immolation of a Vietnamese monk who, knowing that there are cameras present to record the event, sets himself on fire to protest the Vietnam War, or should the cameraman refuse or try to dissuade the monk? Should a filmmaker accept a knife as a gift from a participant

in the course of filming a murder trial and then turn that gift over to the police when blood is found on it (as Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky do in their film *Paradise Lost* [1996])? This last example moves us toward an unexpected or inadvertent form of participation rather than observation as it also raises broad issues about the filmmaker's relationship with his or her subjects.

Observational films exhibit particular strength in giving a sense of the duration of actual events. They break with the dramatic pace of mainstream fiction films and the sometimes hurried, montage assembly of images that support expository or poetic documentaries. When Fred Wiseman, for example, observes the making of a 30-second television commercial for some 25 minutes of screen time in *Model* (1980), he conveys the sense of having observed everything worth noting about the shooting. His 25 minutes of screen time, however, condenses what was hours and hours of actual shooting time for the commercial.

Similarly, when David MacDougall films extended discussions between his principal character, Lorang, and one of his peers about the bride price for Lorang's daughter in *Wedding Camels* (1980), he shifts our attention from what the final agreement is or what new narrative issue arises because of it to the feel and texture of the discussion itself: the body language and eye contact, the intonation and tone of the voices, the pauses and "empty" time that give the encounter the sense of concrete, lived reality.

MacDougall himself describes the fascination of lived experience as something that is most vividly experienced as a difference between rushes (the unedited footage as it was originally shot) and an edited sequence. The rushes seem to have a density and vitality that the edited film lacks. A loss occurs even as structure and perspective take shape:

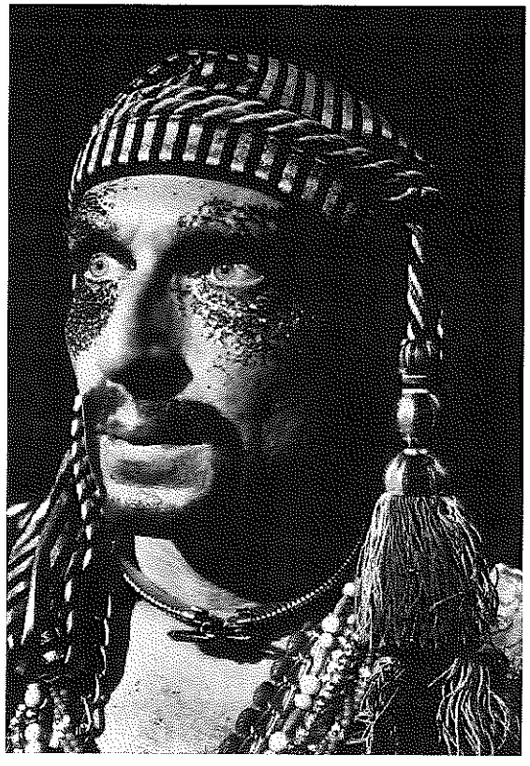
> The sense of loss seems related to positive values perceived in the rushes and intended by the filmmaker at the time of filming but unrepresented in the completed film. It is as though the very reason for making films is somehow contradicted in the act of making them. The process of editing a film from the rushes involves both reducing the overall amount of screen time and cutting most shots to shorter lengths. Both these processes progressively highlight particular meanings. Sometimes filmmakers appear to recognize this when they try to preserve some of the qualities of the rushes in their films, or reintroduce those qualities through other means. ("When Less Is Less," *Transcultural Cinema*, p. 215)

The presence of the camera "on the scene" testifies to its presence in the historical world. This affirms a sense of commitment or engagement with the immediate, intimate, and personal as it occurs. This also affirms a sense of fidelity to what occurs that can pass on events to us as if they simply happened when they have, in fact, been constructed to have that very appearance. One modest example is the "masked interview." In this case the filmmaker works in a more participatory way with his subjects to establish the general subject of a scene and then films it in an observational manner. David MacDougall has done this quite effectively in several films. An example is the scene in *Kenya Boran* (1974) where, without paying heed to the camera but in accord with the general guidelines established before shooting began, two Kenyan tribesmen discuss their views of the government's introduction of birth control measures. Almost all contemporary filmmakers who rely on interviews meet and talk to their subjects first, often prerehearsing what will be said on-camera to ensure, at the very least, that it is terse and coherent. Of practical advantage, it also provides an opportunity to shade a perspective or emphasize a tone in accord with the filmmaker's needs rather than the subject's experience.

A more complex example is the event staged to become part of the historical record. Press conferences, for example, may be filmed in a purely observational style, but such events would not exist at all if it were not for the presence of the camera. This is the reverse of the basic premise behind observational films, that what we see is what would have occurred were the camera not there to observe it.

This reversal took on monumental proportions in one of the first "observational" documentaries, Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (1935). After an introductory set of titles that set the stage for the German National Socialist (Nazi) Party's 1934 Nuremberg rally, Riefenstahl observes events with no further commentary. Events—predominantly parades, reviews of troops, mass assemblies, images of Hitler, and speeches—occur as if the camera simply recorded what would have happened anyway. At 2 hours running time, the film can give the impression of having recorded historical events all too faithfully and unthinkingly.

And yet, very little would have happened as it did were it not for the express intent of the Nazi Party to make a film of this rally. Riefenstahl



Roy Cohn/Jack Smith (Jill Godmilow, 1994). Godmilow's film, like many documentaries of music concerts, observes a public performance; in this case she records two one-man plays by Ron Vawter. Given that such events are understood to be performances in the first place, they allow the filmmaker to avoid some of the accusations that the presence of the camera altered what would have happened had the camera not been there. *Photo courtesy of Jill Godmilow.*

had enormous resources placed at her disposal, and events were carefully planned to facilitate their filming, including the repeat filming of portions of some speeches at another time and place when the original footage proved unusable. (The repeated portions are reenacted so that they blend in with the original speeches, hiding the collaboration that went into their making.)

Triumph of the Will demonstrates the power of the image to represent the historical world at the same moment as it participates in the construction of the historical world itself. Such participation, especially in the context of Nazi Germany, carries an aura of duplicity. This was the last thing observational filmmakers like Robert Drew, D.A. Pennebaker, Richard Leacock, and Fred Wiseman wanted in their own work. The integrity of their observational stance successfully avoided it, for the most part, and yet the underlying act of being present at an event but filming it as if absent, as if the filmmaker were simply a "fly

Roy Cohn/Jack Smith (Jill Godmilow, 1994). Godmilow makes use of editing to create a distinct perspective on Ron Vawter's performance as gay underground filmmaker Jack Smith and right-wing, anti-Communist (and closeted gay) lawyer Roy Cohn. By intercutting the two separate performances she draws increased attention to the contrasting ways in which the two men dealt with their sexuality during the 1950s. *Photo courtesy of Jill Godmilow.*

on the wall," invites debate as to how much of what we see would be the same if the camera were not there or how much would differ if the filmmaker's presence were more readily acknowledged. That such debate is by its very nature undecidable continues to fuel a certain sense of mystery, or disquiet, about observational cinema.

THE PARTICIPATORY MODE

Also appearing around 1960 with the advent of new technologies that allowed for sync sound recording on location is the participatory mode. Here the filmmaker does interact with his or her subjects rather than unobtrusively observe them. Questions grow into interviews or conversations; involvement grows into a pattern of collaboration or confrontation. What happens in front of the camera becomes an index of the nature of the interaction between filmmaker and subject. This mode

inflects the "I speak about them to you" formulation into something that is often closer to "I speak with them for us (me and you)" as the filmmaker's interactions give us a distinctive window onto a particular portion of our world.

The participatory mode has come to embrace the spectator as participant as well. Interactive websites and installations allow the viewer to chart a path through the spectrum of possibilities made possible by the filmmaker. A vivid example of this shift is the difference between Péter Forgács's film, *Danube Exodus* (1998), about the passage of Jews during World War II from central Europe to the Black Sea aboard a cruise ship and the return passage of Germans from Bessarabia to Germany. Forgács builds his film from the home movie footage of the ship's captain and the result is an extremely powerful, poetic, but also provocative study of the displacement and exodus of two populations. Later, Forgács, in collaboration with the Labyrinth Project, which has created a number of interactive "database documentaries" on DVD, turned the footage into an installation. A computer controls the projection of footage from the film onto a large screen, but now audience members can interact with the computer to make choices about how the footage is displayed, opting to follow different strands or themes in the original footage. In addition, other computers house outtakes, interviews, and other primary source documents that can be accessed in patterns of the viewer's choosing. Individual lives can be examined in greater detail and more learned than the original film made possible.

Such innovations suggest that the participatory mode is particularly ripe for exploitation in digitally based, computer-driven forms that grant far more control to the viewer than the standard fixed and unalterable structure of the film-based documentary. Because the filmmaker or database artist retains ultimate control over what gets into the database and how it can be accessed, the overall experience will possess aesthetic and rhetorical qualities that exceed those of a general archival depository, but the participatory emphasis shifts from the interaction between filmmaker and subject to the one between viewer and assembled material. Such database documentaries occupy very fertile ground between the very open structure of the ordinary archive and the much more linear structure of the average documentary.

The participatory mode has antecedents in other media and disciplines. Radio has long featured direct interactions between talk show hosts and guests, a form that migrated readily to television before taking root in cinema as well. In addition, the social sciences have long promoted the study of social groups by means of direct interaction and investigation. Anthropology, for example, remains heavily defined by the practice of field work, where an anthropologist lives among a people for an extended period of time, learns the language and customs, and then writes up what he or she has learned. Such research usually calls for some form of participant-observation. The researcher goes into the field, participates in the lives of others, gains a corporeal or visceral feel for what life in a given context is like, and then reflects on this experience, using the methods of anthropology or sociology to do so. "Being there" calls for participation; "being here" allows for observation. That is to say, the field worker does not allow him- or herself to "go native," under normal circumstances, but retains a degree of detachment that differentiates him or her from those about whom he or she writes. Anthropology has, in fact, consistently depended on this complex act of engagement and separation between two cultures to define itself.

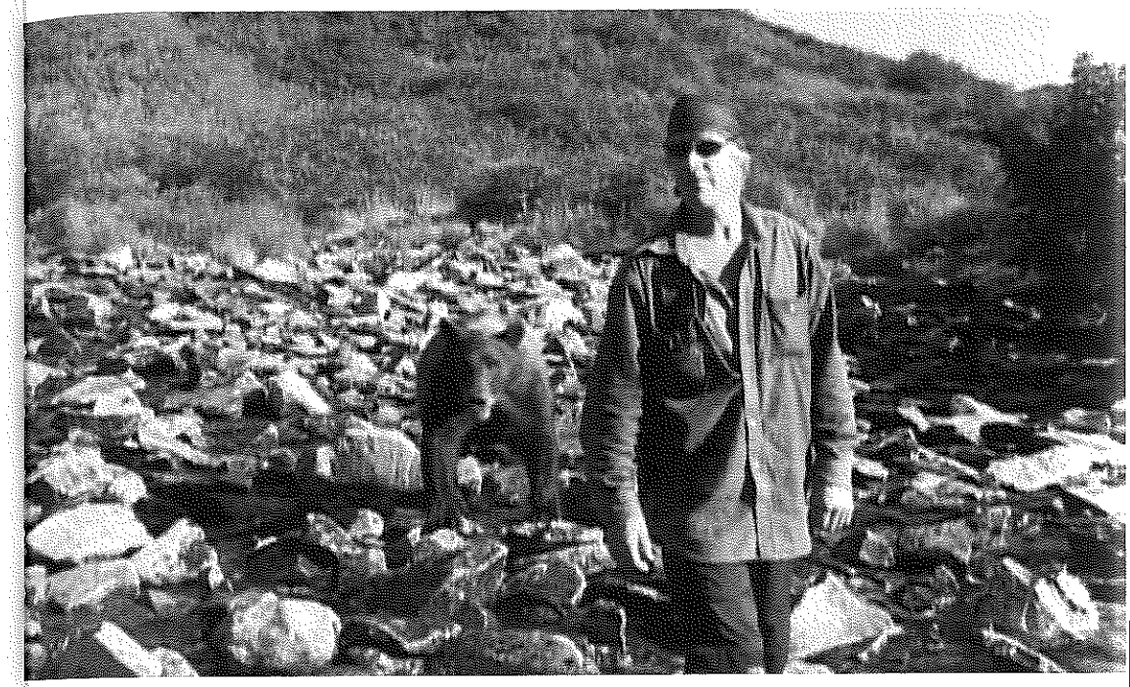
Documentary filmmakers also go into the field; they, too, live among others and speak about or represent what they experience. The practice of participant-observation, however, has not become a paradigm. The methods of social science research have remained subordinate to the more prevalent rhetorical practice of moving and persuading an audience. Observational documentary de-emphasizes persuasion to give us a sense of what it is like to *be* in a given situation but without a sense of what it is like for the filmmaker to be there, too. Participatory documentary gives us a sense of what it is like for the filmmaker to be in a given situation and how that situation alters as a result. We experience the representation of an encounter that can be quite acute in films such as *Nobody's Business* (1996), about the filmmaker's blunt but evasive father, or *Tarnation* (2003), about the filmmaker's efforts to understand why his mother became mentally ill and his own childhood a nightmare, that draw on the diary, confession, or essayistic traditions for their model. In fact, biography, autobiography, history,

essays, confessions, and diaries are among the most popular models for participatory documentaries. Like the performative mode, discussed below, the filmmaker's presence, and perspective, often contributes significantly to the film's overall impact.

When we view participatory documentaries we expect to witness the historical world as represented by someone who actively engages with others, rather than unobtrusively observing, poetically reconfiguring, or argumentatively assembling what others say and do. The filmmaker steps out from behind the cloak of voice-over commentary, steps away from poetic meditation, steps down from a fly-on-the-wall perch, and becomes a social actor (almost) like any other. (Almost like any other because the filmmaker retains the camera, and with it, a certain degree of potential power and control over events.)

Participatory documentaries like *Chronicle of a Summer*; *Portrait of Jason* (1967); or *Word Is Out* (1977) involve the ethics and politics of encounter. This is the encounter between one who wields a movie camera and one who does not. How do filmmaker and social actor respond to each other? Does a sense of respect, despite disagreement, emerge, or is there a feeling of deception, manipulation, distortion at work? How do they negotiate control and share responsibility? How much can the filmmaker insist on testimony when it is painful to provide it? What responsibility does the filmmaker have for the emotional aftermath of putting others on-camera? What goals join filmmaker and subject and what needs divide them?

Many find the ambush interview practiced on CBS's *60 Minutes* and refined into a major ploy by Michael Moore in all of his films an example of where an ethical borderline exists. To catch someone who is unprepared and perhaps ill equipped to engage in an interview can signal disrespect as well as irreverence. In many cases, the targets of Moore's ambushes seem to deserve what they get: Dick Clark, who owns the restaurant where a welfare mother barely earns enough to cover the costs of her daily commute and day care for her children, hastily beats a retreat rather than try to explain himself to Moore in *Bowling for Columbine* (2002), but Charlton Heston cannot flee his own home after he lets Mr. Moore inside. A rising sense of discomfort comes over many viewers as they realize Mr. Heston's faltering responses are at least partly due to a case of Alzheimer's disease, making



Grizzly Man (Werner Herzog, 2005). Werner Herzog uses footage of grizzly bears shot by Timothy Treadwell to reflect on man's relation to nature and Treadwell's relation to sanity. Treadwell records his own thoughts in footage he shoots of himself without assistance as he camps out in the wilderness. Herzog then adds his own voice-over commentary to Treadwell's footage as well as introducing interviews with others. Treadwell's extraordinary footage, shown here, frequently places him in the same frame as wild bears, miles from civilization. The indexical power of deep focus long takes lends an overwhelming authenticity to his footage. It's beyond dispute: he and the bear co-exist in the same frame just as they co-existed in the remote Alaskan wilderness. *Courtesy of Lions Gate Films/Photofest.*

Moore seem insensitive and disrespectful rather than tough minded. Moore does a similar thing in *Roger and Me* (1989) when he snares Miss Michigan to quiz her about economic conditions in Flint. Clearly unfamiliar with the specifics and not someone who pretends to any authoritative knowledge of plant closings and the global economy, Moore makes her look foolish, but for some the insensitivity to her individuality as a person makes the filmmaker appear callous in his pursuit of irreverence.

The sense of bodily presence, rather than absence, that arises from sync sound exchanges between filmmaker and subject locates the filmmaker "on the scene." We expect that what we learn will hinge on the nature and quality of the encounter between filmmaker and subject. We may see as well as hear the filmmaker act and respond on the spot, in the same historical arena as the film's subjects. The possibilities of serving as mentor, critic, interrogator, collaborator, or provocateur arise.

Participatory documentary can stress the actual, lived encounter between filmmaker and subject in the spirit of Dziga Vertov's *The Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin's *Chronicle of a Summer,* Jon Alpert's *Hard Metals Disease* (1987), Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* (1985), or Ross McElwee's *Sherman's March* (1985). The filmmaker's presence takes on heightened importance, from the physical act of "getting the shot" that figures so prominently in *The Man with a Movie Camera* to the political act of joining forces with one's subjects, as Jon Silver does at the start of *Watsonville on Strike* (1989) when he asks the farmworkers if he can film in the union hall in defiance of the union boss. In other cases, the filmmaker's presence takes on a highly personal and sometimes poignant quality, as in *Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter* (1994), as Deborah Hoffmann, the filmmaker, struggles to cope with her mother's descent into dementia, or *Finding Christa* (1991), as filmmaker Camille Billops wrestles with her decision to locate the daughter she gave up for adoption some 20 years earlier.

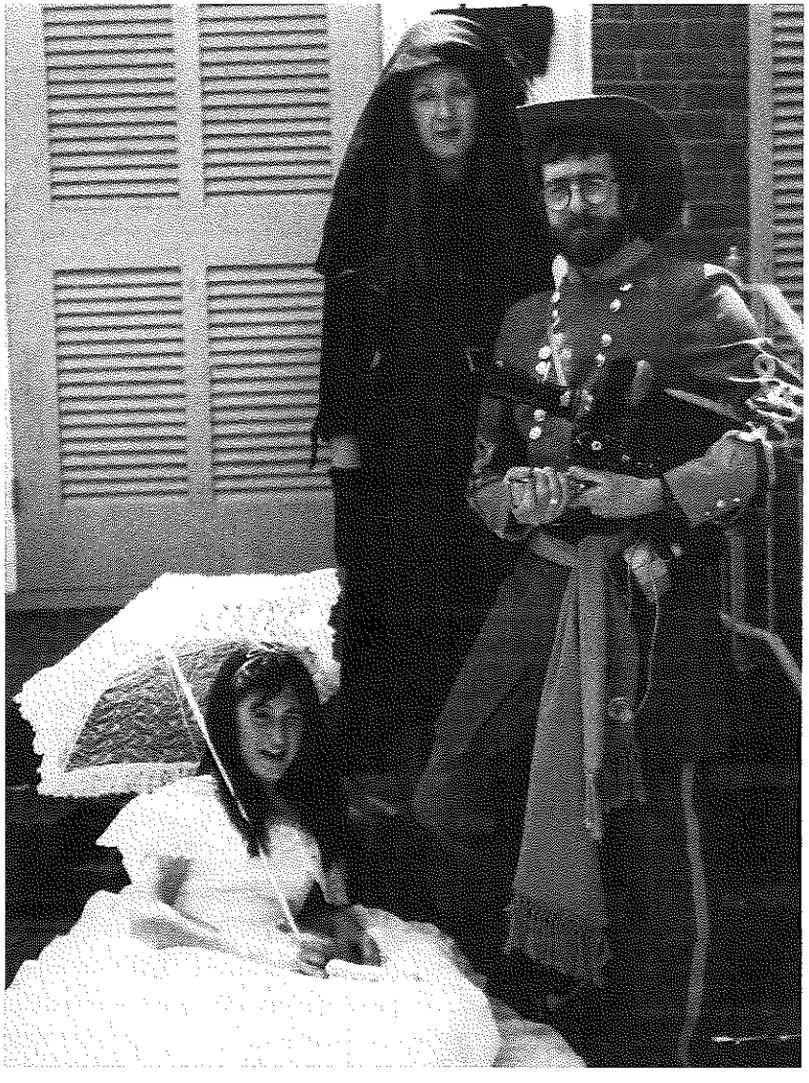
This style of filmmaking is what Rouch and Morin termed "cinéma vérité," translating into French Dziga Vertov's title for his newsreels of Soviet society, *kinopravda.* As "film truth," the idea emphasizes that this is the truth of an encounter rather than absolute or untampered truth. We see how the filmmaker and subject negotiate a relationship, how they act toward one another, what forms of power and control come into play, and what levels of revelation or rapport stem from this specific form of encounter. Cinéma vérité reveals the reality of what happens when people interact in the presence of a camera.

If there is a truth here it is the truth of a form of interaction that would not exist were it not for the camera. In this sense it is the opposite of the observational premise that what we see is what we would have seen had we been there. In participatory documentary, what we see is what we can see only when a camera, or filmmaker, is there

Takeover (David and Judith MacDougall, 1981). The MacDougalls have evolved a collaborative style of filmmaking with the subjects of their ethnographic films. In a series of films made on Aboriginal issues, of which *Takeover* is a prime example, they have often served as witnesses to the testimonial statements of traditions and beliefs that Aboriginal people offer in their disputes with the government over land rights and other matters. The interaction is highly participatory, although the result can seem, at first, unobtrusive or observational since much of the collaboration occurs prior to the act of filming. *Photo courtesy of David MacDougall.*

instead of ourselves. Jean-Luc Godard once claimed that cinema is truth twenty-four times a second: participatory documentary makes good on Godard's claim.

Chronicle of a Summer, for example, involves scenes that result from the collaborative interactions of filmmakers and their subjects, an eclectic group of individuals living in Paris in the summer of 1960. In one instance Marcelline Loridan, a young woman who later married the Dutch filmmaker Joris Ivens, speaks about her experience as a Jewish deportee who is sent to a German concentration camp from France during World War II. The camera follows her as she walks through the Place de la Concorde and then through the former Parisian market,



Sherman's March (Ross McElwee, 1985). In this still, director Ross McElwee adopts the pose of a Confederate officer, but for the bulk of the film he simply records his journey through the American south, looking, ostensibly, for love. The film is a classic example of an essay film in which the filmmaker's personal perspective shapes not only what we see but how we see it. The most memorable scenes involve interactions between McElwee and various women as they discuss his search for love. *Courtesy of First Run Features/www.firstrunfeatures.com.*

Les Halles. She offers a quite moving monologue on her experiences, but only because Rouch and Morin planned the scene with her and gave her a tape recorder to carry. If they had waited for the event to occur on its own so they could observe it, it never would have occurred. They pursued this notion of collaboration still further by screening parts of the film to the participants and filming the ensuing discussion. Rouch and Morin also appear on-camera, discussing their aim to study "this strange tribe living in Paris" and assessing, at the end of the film, what they have learned.

Filmmakers who seek to represent their own direct encounter with their surrounding world and those who seek to represent broad social issues and historical perspectives through interviews and compilation footage constitute two large components of the participatory mode. They differentiate, loosely speaking, into essayists and historians. As viewers we have the sense that we are witness to a form of dialogue between the filmmaker and his or her subject—be it an issue like a labor strike or a person like the filmmaker's mother—that stresses situated engagement, negotiated interaction, and emotion-laden encounter. These qualities give the participatory mode of documentary filmmaking considerable appeal as it roams a wide variety of subjects from the most personal to the most historical. Often, in fact, this mode demonstrates how the personal and political intertwine to yield representations of the historical world from specific perspectives that are both contingent and committed.

In *Not a Love Story* (1981), for example, Bonnie Klein, the filmmaker, and Linda Lee Tracy, an ex-stripper, discuss their reactions to various forms of pornography as they interview participants in the sex industry. In one scene, Linda Lee poses for a nude photograph and then discusses how the experience made her feel. The two women embark on an exploratory journey in a spirit similar to Rouch and Morin's and partly confessional/redemptive in an entirely different sense. The act of making the film plays a cathartic, redemptive role in their lives; it is less the world of their subjects that changes than their own.

In some cases, such as Marcel Ophuls's *The Sorrow and the Pity* (1970), on French collaboration with Germany during World War II, the filmmaker serves as a researcher or investigative reporter. In such cases, the filmmaker's voice emerges from direct, personal involvement in the events that unfold. The investigative reporter commonly makes

his or her own personal involvement in the story central to its unfolding. Another example is the work of Canadian filmmaker Michael Rubbo, such as his *Sad Song of Yellow Skin* (1970), where he explores the ramifications of the Vietnam War among the civilian population of Vietnam. Another is the work of Nick Broomfield, who adopts a brasher, more confrontational—if not arrogant—style in films like *Kurt and Courtney* (1998). Exasperation with Courtney Love's evasiveness about her possible complicity in Kurt Cobain's death compels Broomfield to film his own apparently spontaneous denunciation of her at a ceremonial dinner sponsored by the American Civil Liberties Union.

In other cases, we move away from the investigative stance to take up a more responsive and reflective relationship to unfolding events that involve the filmmaker. This latter choice moves us toward the diary and personal testimonial. The first-person voice becomes prominent in the overall structure of the film. It is the filmmaker's participatory engagement with unfolding events that holds our attention. It is Emiko Omori's effort to retrace the suppressed history of her own family's experience in the Japanese American relocation camps of World War II, for example, that gives form to *Rabbit in the Moon* (1999). Marilu Mallet offers an even more explicitly diary-like structure to her portrait of life as a Chilean exile living in Montreal married to Canadian filmmaker Michael Rubbo in *Unfinished Diary* (1983), as does Kazuo Hara to his chronicle of the complex, emotionally volatile relationship he revives with his former wife as he and his current partner follow her over a period of time in *Extremely Personal Eros: Love Song 1974* (1974). The film includes a mind-boggling scene in which Hara films his former wife giving birth on the floor of her apartment. These films make the filmmaker as vivid a persona as any other in his or her films. As testimonial and confession, they often exude a self-revelatory power.

As noted above, not all participatory documentaries stress the ongoing, open-ended experience of the filmmaker or the interaction between filmmaker and subjects. The filmmaker may wish to introduce a broader perspective, often one that is historical in nature. How? The most common answer involves the interview and the archive. The result often takes the form of a compilation film and recounts history from above (about major figures and events), or from below (about the

Crumb (Terry Zwigoff, 1994). Terry Zwigoff adopts a highly participatory relationship to the cartoon strip artist R. Crumb. Many of the conversations and interactions clearly would not have occurred as they do had Zwigoff not been there with his camera. Crumb takes a more reflective attitude toward himself and a more probing attitude toward his brothers as he collaborates with Zwigoff's desire to examine the complexities and contradictions of his life.

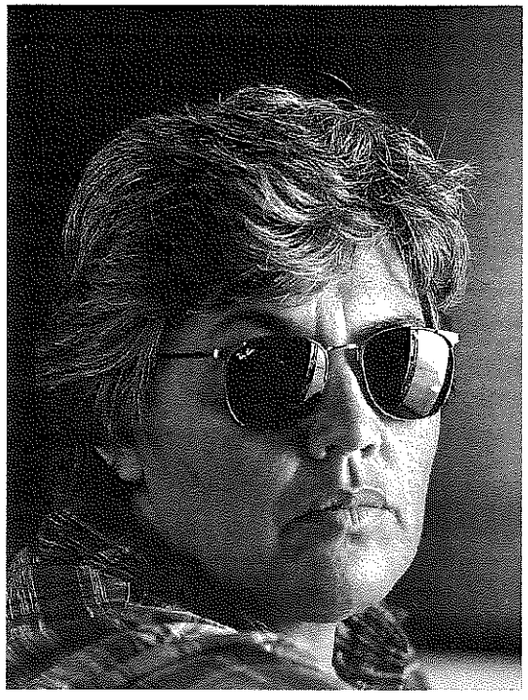
experience of ordinary people in relation to a historical event). The vast archive of previously shot footage that now exists provides historical footage to accompany the voices of those who were there or who know about what happened.

The interview stands as one of the most common forms of encounter between filmmaker and subject in participatory documentary. Interviews are a distinct form of social encounter. They differ from ordinary conversation and the more coercive process of interrogation by dint of the institutional framework in which they occur and the specific protocols or guidelines that structure them. Interviews occur in anthropological or sociological field work; they go by the name of the "case history" in medicine and social welfare; in psychoanalysis, they take the form of the therapeutic session; in law the interview becomes the pretrial deposition and, during trials, testimony; on television, it forms the backbone of talk shows; in journalism, it takes the form of both the interview and the press conference; and in education, it ap-

Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo (Susana Muñoz and Lourdes Portillo, 1985). These two women filmmakers (Susana Muñoz and Lourdes Portillo) adopt a highly participatory relationship with the mothers who risked their lives to stage public demonstrations during Argentina's "dirty war." The sons and daughters of these women were among the "disappeared" whom the government abducted, and often killed, without any notice or legal proceedings. Muñoz and Portillo could not shape the public events, but they could draw out the personal stories of the mothers whose courage led them to defy a brutally repressive regime. *Photo courtesy of Lourdes Portillo.*

pears as Socratic dialogue. Michel Foucault argues that these forms all involve regulated forms of exchange, with an uneven distribution of power between client and institutional practitioner, and that they have a root in the religious tradition of the confessional.

Filmmakers make use of the interview to bring different accounts together in a single story. The filmmaker's voice emerges as it weaves together in a distinctive way, contributing voices and the material brought in to support what they say. This compilation of interviews and supporting material has given us numerous film histories, from *In the Year of the Pig* (1969), on the war in Vietnam, to *Eyes on the Prize* (1987, 1990), on the history of the civil rights movement, and from



The Devil Never Sleeps (*El Diablo Nunca Duerme*) (Lourdes Portillo, 1994). Director Lourdes Portillo as a hard-boiled private eye. The film recounts her journey to Mexico to investigate the suspicious death of her uncle. Reflexive and ironic at times, Portillo nonetheless leaves the question of whether her uncle met with foul play, possibly at the hands of a relative, open. *Photos courtesy of Lourdes Portillo.*

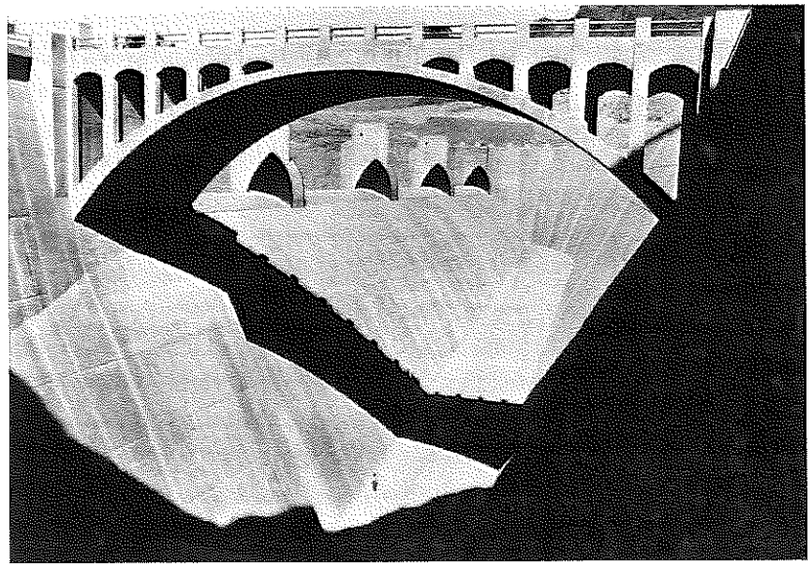
Shoah, on the aftermath of the Holocaust for those who experienced it, to *Jazz* (2000), on the history of jazz in America.

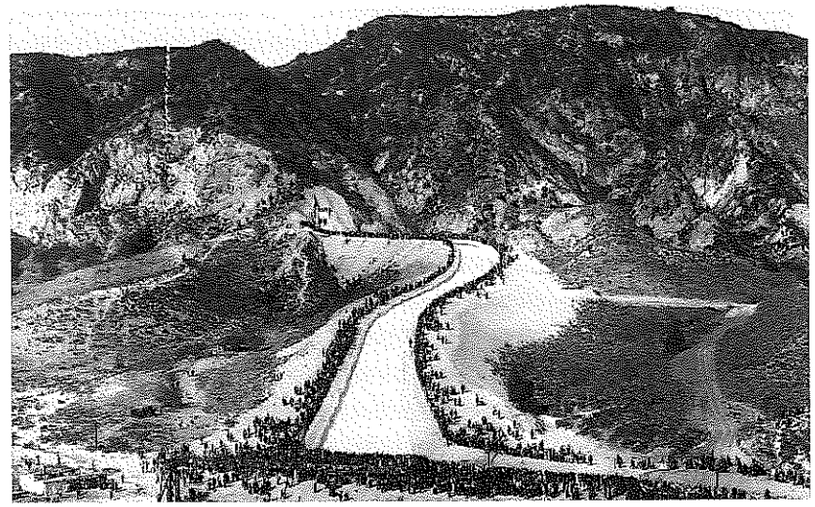
Compilation films such as Esther Shub's *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (1927), which relies entirely on archival footage found by Shub and reedited to tell a social history, date back to the beginnings of documentary film. Shub draws out insights and themes by how she edits shots together, just as later directors like Emile de Antonio draw out a broad historical perspective by how they edit interviews together. Some, such as Barbara Kopple's *Harlan County, U.S.A.* (1977), on a coal miner's strike in Kentucky, or Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004), dwell on events in the present moment as the film is made and in which the filmmmaker participates. Others, such as Errol Morris's *The Thin Blue Line* (1988), Leon Gast's *When We Were Kings* (1996), on the 1974 fight between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman, or Ray Müller's *The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl* (1993),

The Devil Never Sleeps (*El Diablo Nunca Duerme*) (Lourdes Portillo, 1994). The filmmaker, in the course of an interview, in search of clues, and, ideally, the confession that will solve the mystery. Although she never obtains a confession, the sense that she *might* do so lends an air of narrative, film noir–like suspense to the film. *Photos courtesy of Lourdes Portillo.*

on Riefenstahl's controversial career, center on the past and how those with knowledge of it now recount it.

The experience of gays and lesbians in the days before Stonewall could be recounted as a general social history, with a voice-over commentary and images that illustrate the spoken points. (In 1969, gay patrons of the Stonewall bar in New York city battled police who tried to raid the bar; it sparked the rise of the gay rights movement.) It could also be recounted in the words of those who lived through those times by means of interviews. The Mariposa collective's *Word Is Out* (1977) opts for the second choice. The filmmakers, like Connie Field for *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter* (1980), screened scores of possible subjects before settling on the dozen or so who appear in the film. Unlike Field or Emile de Antonio, the Mariposa collective opts to keep supporting material to a bare minimum; they compile the history primarily from the "talking heads" of those who can put this chapter





Cadillac Desert (Jon Else, 1997). *Cadillac Desert* is another excellent example of a film that couples archival footage and the tradition of the compilation film with contemporary interviews that add a fresh perspective to historical events without resorting to a voice-over commentary. *Cadillac Desert* retraces the history of water use in California and its devastating impact on the inland valleys of the state. *Photos courtesy of Jon Else.*

of American social history into their own words. The articulateness and emotional directness of those who speak gives films of testimony such as this a highly compelling quality. The form is similar to but different from the oral history, an extended recounting of past events by participants. Oral histories serve as primary source material and generally lack the careful selection and arrangement of the interview material into a greater whole or a broader perspective.

THE REFLEXIVE MODE

If the historical world provides the meeting place for the processes of negotiation between filmmaker and subject in the participatory mode, the processes of negotiation between filmmaker and viewer become the focus of attention for the reflexive mode. Rather than following the filmmaker in his or her engagement with other social actors, we now attend to the filmmaker's engagement with us, speaking not only about the historical world but about the problems and issues of representing it as well. This intensified level of reflection on what representing the world involves distinguishes the reflexive mode from the other modes.

Trinh Minh-ha's declaration that she will "speak nearby" rather than "speak about" or "speak with" the native people of West Africa, in *Reassemblage* (1982), symbolizes the shift that reflexivity produces: we now attend to *how* we represent the historical world as well as to *what* gets represented. Instead of *seeing through* documentaries to the world beyond them, reflexive documentaries ask us to *see documentary* for what it is: a construct or representation. Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin carry this to an extreme in *Letter to Jane* (1972), a 45-minute "letter" in which they scrutinize in great detail a journalistic photograph of Jane Fonda during her visit to North Vietnam. No aspect of this apparently factual photo goes unexamined.

Just as the observational mode of documentary depends on the filmmaker's apparent absence from or nonintervention in the events recorded, the documentary in general depends on the viewer's neglect of his or her actual situation, in front of a movie screen, interpreting a film, in favor of imaginary access to the events shown on the screen as if it is only these events that require interpretation, not the film. The motto that a documentary film is only as good as its content is compelling is what the reflexive mode of documentary calls into question.

One of the issues brought to the fore in reflexive documentaries is the one taken up in chapter 2: What to do with people? Some films, like *Reassemblage; Daughter Rite* (1978); *Bontoc Eulogy* (1995); or *Far from Poland* (1984), address this question directly by calling the usual means of representation into question: *Reassemblage* breaks with the realist conventions of ethnography to question the power of the camera's gaze to represent, and misrepresent, others; *Daughter Rite* subverts reliance on social actors by using two actresses to play sisters who reflect on their relationship to their mother, using insights gathered from interviews with a wide range of women but withholding the voices of the interviewees themselves; *Bontoc Eulogy* recounts the family history of the filmmaker's own grandfather, who was taken from the Philippines to appear as part of an exhibit of Filipino life at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904 through staged reenactments and imagined memories that call conventional rules of evidence into question; *Far from Poland*'s director, Jill Godmilow, addresses us directly to ponder the problems of representing the Solidarity movement in Poland when she has only partial access to the actual events. These films set out to heighten our awareness of the problems of representing others as much as they set out to convince us of the authenticity or truthfulness of representation itself.

Reflexive documentaries also tackle issues posed by realism as a style. Realism seems to provide unproblematic access to the world; it takes form as physical, psychological, and emotional realism (see chapter 5) through techniques of evidentiary or continuity editing, character development, and narrative structure. Reflexive documentaries challenge these techniques and conventions. *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (1989), for example, relies on interviews with women in Vietnam who describe the oppressive conditions they have faced since the end of the war, but then halfway through the film we discover (if various stylistic hints haven't tipped us off) that the interviews were staged in more ways than one: the women who play Vietnamese women in Vietnam are actually immigrants to the United States reciting, on a stage set, accounts transcribed and edited by Trinh Minh-ha from interviews conducted in Vietnam by someone else with other women!

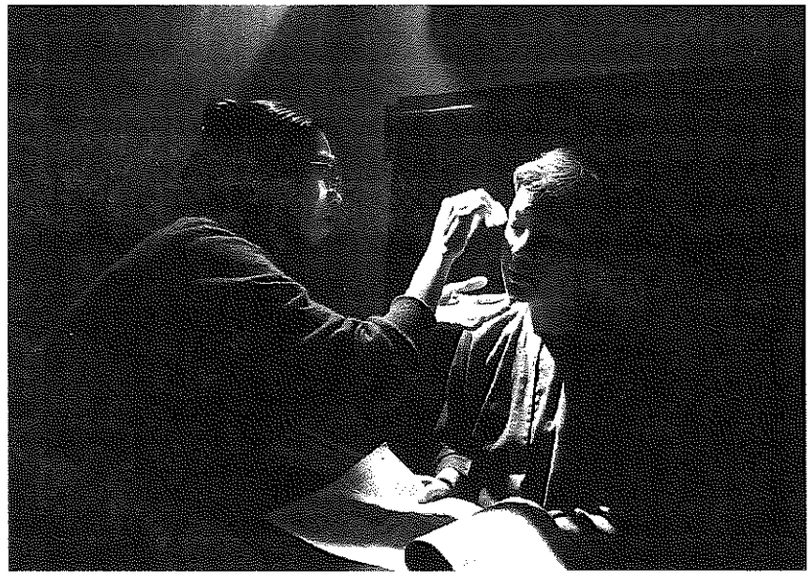
Similarly, in *The Man with a Movie Camera*, Dziga Vertov demonstrates how the impression of reality comes to be constructed by beginning a scene with the cameraman, Mikhail Kaufman, filming

Surname Viet Given Name Nam (Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1989). These three successive shots, each an extreme close-up that omits portions of the interviewee's face, correspond to the preproduction storyboard designed by the filmmaker. Their violation of the normal conventions for filming interviews both calls our attention to the formality and conventionality of interviews and signals that this is not a (normal) interview. *Photos courtesy of Trinh T. Minh-ha.*

people riding in a horse-drawn carriage from a car that runs alongside the carriage. Vertov then cuts to his editing room, where the editor, Elizaveta Svilova, Vertov's wife, assembles strips of film that represent this event into the sequence we have, presumably, just seen. The overall result deconstructs the impression of unimpeded access to reality and invites us to reflect on the process by which this impression is itself constructed through editing.

Other films, such as *David Holzman's Diary* (1968); *No Lies* (1973); *Daughter Rite*; and *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), represent themselves, ultimately, as disguised fictions. They rely on trained actors to deliver the performances we initially believe to be the self-presentation of people engaged in everyday life. Our realization of this deception, sometimes through hints and clues during the film, or at the end, when the credits reveal the fabricated nature of the performances we have witnessed, prompts us to question the authenticity of documentary in general: What "truth" do documentaries reveal about the self; how is it different from a staged or scripted performance; what conventions prompt us to believe in the authenticity of documentary performance; and how can this belief be productively subverted?

The reflexive mode is the most self-conscious and self-questioning mode of representation. Realist access to the world; the ability to provide persuasive evidence; the possibility of indisputable proof; the



Surname Viet Given Name Nam (Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1989). Makeup and costume are a more frequent consideration for documentary filmmakers than we might assume. Here filmmaker Trinh T. Minh-ha prepares actress Tran Thi Bich Yen for a scene where she will play an interviewee describing her life in Vietnam. The interview appears to be set in Vietnam but was actually shot in California. Like *Far from Poland*, this film explores the question of how to represent situations not directly available to the filmmaker. *Photos courtesy of Trinh T. Minh-ha.*

solemn, indexical bond between an indexical image and what it represents—all these notions come under suspicion. That such notions can compel fetishistic belief prompts the reflexive documentary to examine the nature of such belief rather than attest to the validity of what is believed.

At its best, reflexive documentary prods the viewer to a heightened form of consciousness about his ore her relation to a documentary and what it represents. Vertov does this in *The Man with a Movie Camera* to demonstrate how we construct our knowledge of the world; Buñuel does this in *Land without Bread* (1932) to satirize the presumptions that accompany such knowledge; Trinh does this in *Reassemblage* to question the assumptions that underlie a given body of knowledge or mode of inquiry (ethnography); and Chris Marker, in *Sans Soleil* (1982),

questions the assumptions that underlie the act of making films of the lives of others in a world divided by racial and political boundaries.

Achieving a heightened form of consciousness involves a shift in levels of awareness. Reflexive documentary sets out to readjust the assumptions and expectations of its audience, more than to add new knowledge to existing categories. "Let's reflect on *how* what you see and hear gets you to believe in a particular view of the world," these films seem to say.

In pursuit of this invitation to reflection and a heightened form of consciousness, documentaries can be reflexive from both formal and political perspectives.

From a formal perspective, reflexivity draws our attention to our assumptions and expectations about documentary form itself. Trinh does this vividly in *Sur Name Viet Given Name Nam* as she undercuts our assumptions about the interview as a privileged form of access to what people wish to recount. It is only as the film unfolds that we realize that apparent interviews of women who suffered from Communist rule in Vietnam are in fact entirely staged and that the women deliver stories told not by themselves but by others. It is a way, perhaps, to highlight the prescripted, if not stereotyped, nature of tales of hardship, suffering, and victimization. At the very least the revelation that the interviews are not what they appear to be prompts the viewer to rethink his or her assumptions about the truth value and credibility of what is said. In a similar spirit the numerous "confessions" of sex addiction made by the filmmaker Caveh Zahedi in *I Am a Sex Addict* (2005) involve so many obviously exaggerated or stylized reenactments that their ultimate validity comes into question. Although less insistently reflexive than Trinh's film, Zahedi encourages the viewer to bring a heightened skepticism to the credibility of his own confessions.

From a political perspective, reflexivity points toward our assumptions and expectations about the historical world more than about film form. The rise of feminist documentaries in the 1970s provides a vivid example of works that call social conventions into question. Films such as *The Woman's Film* (1971), *Joyce at 34* (1972), and *Growing Up Female* (1971) followed most of the conventions of participatory documentary, but they also sought to produce a heightened consciousness about discrimination against women in the contemporary world. They counter

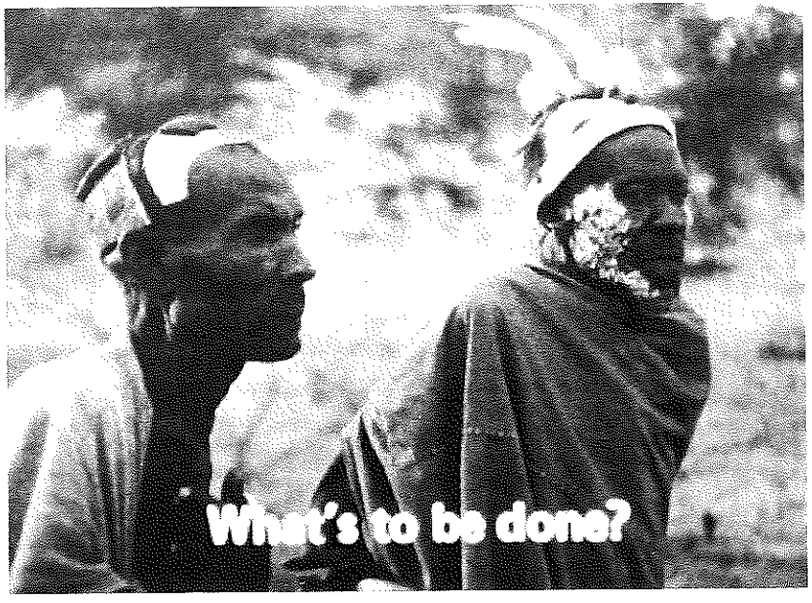
the prevailing (stereotypical) images of women with radically different representations and displace the hopes and desires fueled by advertising and melodramas with the experiences and demands of women who have rejected these notions in favor of radically different ones. Such films challenge entrenched notions of the feminine and also serve to give name to what had lain invisible: the oppression, devalorization, and hierarchy that can now be called sexism. Individual experiences join up to support a new way of seeing, a distinct perspective on the social order.

Both perspectives rely on techniques that jar us, that achieve something akin to what Bertolt Brecht described as "alienation effects," or what the Russian formalists termed *ostranenie*, or "making strange." This is similar to the surrealist effort to see the everyday world in unexpected ways. As a formal strategy, making the familiar strange reminds us how documentary works as a film genre whose claims about the world we can receive too unthinkingly. As a political strategy, it reminds us how society works in accord with conventions and codes we may too readily take for granted.

Brecht's term, "alienation" (a conscious mode of detachment or distantiation), separates us from prevailing assumptions. Formal reflexivity makes us aware of formal assumptions; political reflexivity provokes awareness of the assumptions that support a given social structure. They both tend, therefore, to induce an "aha!" effect, where we grasp a principle or structure at work that helps account for how we understand and represent the world. We take a deeper look. Our heightened consciousness opens up a gap between knowledge and desire, between what is and what might be. Politically reflexive documentaries point to *us* as viewers and social actors, not to films, as the agents who can bridge this gap between what exists and the new forms we can make from it.

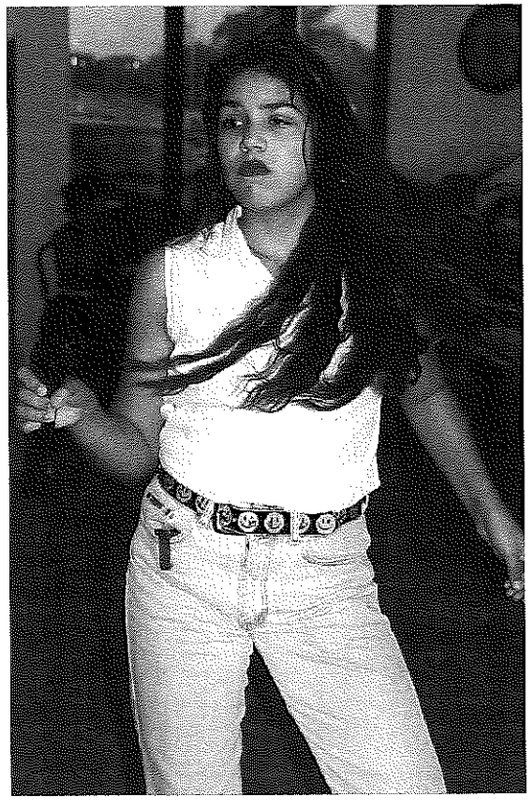
THE PERFORMATIVE MODE

Like the poetic mode of documentary representation, the performative mode raises questions about what knowledge actually amounts to. What counts as understanding or comprehension? What besides factual information goes into our understanding of the world? Is knowl-



Wedding Camels (David and Judith MacDougall, 1980). In this trilogy of films on the Turkana of northern Kenya, David and Judith MacDougall adopt several reflexive strategies to make us aware of the filmmakers' active involvement in shaping the scenes we see. Sometimes it is a question put by the filmmakers that prompts discussion, sometimes it is written titles that remind us of the complex process of representing members of another culture in a form members of an English-speaking culture can understand. Such reflexive acts were rare at the time in ethnographic film. Many such films want to give the impression *Nanook of the North* gave: we witness customs and behavior as they "naturally" occur, not as a result of interaction between filmmaker and subject. *Photo courtesy of David MacDougall.*

edge best described as abstract and disembodied, based on generalizations and the typical, in the tradition of Western philosophy? From this perspective, knowledge can be transferred or exchanged freely and those who perform the transfer or exchange are but conduits for knowledge that remains unaltered by their personal involvement with it. But is knowledge better described as concrete and embodied, based on personal experience, in the tradition of poetry, literature, and rhetoric? From this perspective, knowledge can be demonstrated or evoked but



Corpus: A Home Movie for Selena (Lourdes Portillo, 1999). Director Lourdes Portillo investigates the repercussions that followed from the murder of the popular Tex-Mex singer Selena. Was she a positive role model for young women who learn to channel their energies into becoming popular singers, or was she herself a young woman encouraged to recycle stereotypical images of female sexuality? Portillo does not answer such questions so much as pose them in an engaging way. She does so partly by shooting in video to create a family portrait of Selena and her legacy. *Photo courtesy of Lourdes Portillo.*

those who perform the demonstration or evocation imbue what they do with a distinctiveness that cannot be easily replicated. Performative documentary endorses the latter perspective. It sets out to demonstrate how embodied knowledge provides entry into an understanding of the more general processes at work in society.

Meaning is clearly a subjective, affect-laden phenomenon. A car or gun, hospital or love affair will bear different meanings for different people. Experience and memory, emotional involvement, the precise context, questions of value and belief, commitment and principle all enter into our understanding of those aspects of the world most often addressed by documentary: the institutional framework (governments and churches, families and marriages) and specific social practices

(love and war, competition and cooperation) that make up a society (as discussed in chapter 4). Performative documentary underscores the complexity of our knowledge of the world by emphasizing its subjective and affective dimensions.

Works like Marlon Riggs's *Tongues Untied* (1989), Ngozi Onwurah's *The Body Beautiful* (1991), Marlon Fuentes's *Bontoc Eulogy*, Agnès Varda's *The Gleaners and I* (2000), Jonathan Caouette's *Tarnation*, and Ari Folman's *Waltz with Bashir* (2008) stress the emotional complexity of experience from the perspective of the filmmaker him- or herself. An autobiographical note enters into these films that bears similarity to an essayistic or diaristic model for participatory filmmaking. Performative films give added emphasis to the subjective qualities of experience and memory. Marlon Riggs, for example, makes use of recited poems and enacted scenes that address the intense personal stakes involved in black, gay identity; Onwurah's film builds up to a staged sexual encounter between her own mother and a handsome young man; Fuentes enacts a fantasy about his grandfather's escape from captivity as an object of display at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair; Varda speculates on time and mortality as she interviews a host of urban and rural gleaners; Caouette invokes powerful, disturbing memories of his chaotic, trauma-laden youth as he tries to understand why his mother became mentally unstable; and Folman recounts a horrific wartime incident by means of animation. Actual occurrences become amplified by imagined ones. The free combination of the actual and the imagined is a common feature of the performative documentary.

What these films and others such as Isaac Julien's *Looking for Langston* (1988), about the life of Langston Hughes, or Julien's *Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask* (1996), about the life of Frantz Fanon; Robert Gardner's *Forest of Bliss* (1985), about funeral practices in Benares, India; Chris Choy and Renee Tajima-Peña's *Who Killed Vincent Chin?* (1988), about the murder of a Chinese American by two out-of-work auto workers who reportedly mistook him for Japanese; and Rea Tajiri's *History and Memory* (1991), about her efforts to learn the story of her family's internment in detention camps during World War II share is a deflection of documentary emphasis away from a realist representation of the historical world and toward poetic liberties, more

unconventional narrative structures, and more subjective forms of representation. The referential quality of documentary that attests to its function as a window onto the world yields to an expressive quality that affirms the highly situated, embodied, and vividly personal perspective of specific subjects, including the filmmaker on that world.

This use of the word "performative" differs from the well-known use given it by the philosopher J. L. Austin in his book *How to Do Things with Words*. For Austin, speech normally refers to things external to it and does not alter this reality. Performative speech was an exception. In this case saying something becomes a form of doing: commands and pronouncements by those with the authority to utter them and promises meant to be kept are examples. The officer who says, "Fire!" to a firing squad, the minister who says, "I pronounce you man and wife," and the person who says, "I will pay you back" do something by means of speech. The nature of reality changes.

Performative documentaries do not do something in this sense. Performance here draws more heavily on the tradition of acting as a way to bring heightened emotional involvement to a situation or role. Performative documentaries bring the emotional intensities of embodied experience and knowledge to the fore rather than attempt to do something tangible. It they set out to do something, it is to help us sense what a certain situation or experience feels like. They want us to feel on a visceral level more than understand on a conceptual level. Performative documentaries intensify the rhetorical desire to be compelling and tie it less to a persuasive goal than an affective one—to have us feel or experience the world in a particular way as vividly as possible.

Ever since at least *Turksib* (1929), *Salt for Svanetia* (1930), and, in a satiric vein, *Land without Bread*, documentary has exhibited many performative qualities, but they seldom have served to organize entire films. They were present but not dominant. Some participatory documentaries of the 1980s, such as *Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo* (1985) and *Roses in December* (1982), include performative moments that draw us into subjective, "as if" renderings of traumatic past events (the "disappearance" of the son of one of the mothers who protested government repression in Argentina and the rape of Jean Donovan and three other women by El Salvadoran military men, respectively), but

the organizing dominant to the films revolves around a linear history that includes these events. Performative documentaries primarily address us emotionally and expressively rather than factually.

Tongues Untied, for example, begins with a voice-over call that ricochets from left and right, in stereo, "Brother to brother," "Brother to brother . . . ," and ends with a declaration, "Black men loving black men is the revolutionary act." The course of the film over a series of declarations, reenactments, poetic recitations, and staged performances that all attest to the complexities of racial and sexual relations within gay subculture urges us to adopt the position of "brother" for ourselves, at least for the duration of the film. We are invited to experience what it feels like to occupy the subjective, social position of a black, gay male, such as Marlon Riggs himself.

Just as a feminist aesthetic may strive to move audience members, regardless of their actual gender and sexual orientation, into the subjective position of a feminist character's perspective on the world, performative documentary seeks to move its audience into subjective alignment or affinity with its specific perspective on the world. Like earlier works such as *Listen to Britain* (1941), on resistance to German bombing by the British people during World War II, or *Three Songs of Lenin* (1934), on the mourning of Lenin's death by the Soviet people, recent performative documentaries try to give representation to a social subjectivity that joins the particular to the general, the individual to the collective, and the personal to the political.

Here, too, animation has proven a powerful tool. *His Mother's Voice* (1997), discussed in chapter 4, helps us grasp what it feels like to learn your son has been shot by using two different animated treatments of what might go through the mother's mind as she recounts this horrifying experience. Folman's *Waltz with Bashir* draws us strongly into the experience of war as a disorienting, surreal nightmare in which individual autonomy and responsibility dissolve into chaos and confusion. Chris Landreth's *Ryan* (2004) gives powerful visual form and emotional expressiveness to how a prominent animation artist at the National Film Board of Canada, Ryan Larkin, might see the world from his wildly schizophrenic perspective. The film is both an homage to Ryan's artistry and a lament for a life shattered by mental illness.

Paris Is Burning (Jennie Livingston, 1990). *Paris Is Burning* enters into a distinct, black, gay subculture in which young men cluster into "houses," which compete against each other in various categories of mimicry and drag at "balls." Organized partly to explain this subculture to nonparticipants, *Paris Is Burning* also immerses us performatively in the quality and texture of this world to a degree that *16 in Webster Groves* or *Dead Birds* does not.

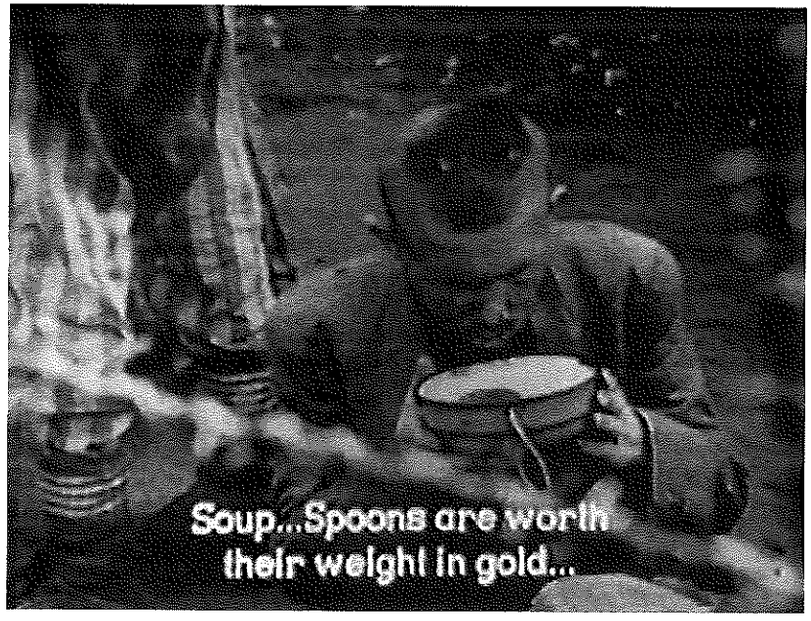
The emotional intensities and social subjectivity stressed in performative documentary is often that of the underrepresented or misrepresented, of women and ethnic minorities, gays and lesbians. Performative documentary can act as a corrective to those films in which "We speak about them to us." They proclaim, instead, "We speak about ourselves to you," or "I speak about myself to you." Performative documentary shares a rebalancing and corrective tendency with autoethnography (ethnographically informed work made by members of the communities who are the traditional subjects of Western ethnography, such as the numerous tapes made by the Kayapo people of the Amazon River basin and by the Aboriginal people of Australia). It does

not, however, counter error with fact, misinformation with information. Instead, performative documentaries adopt a distinct mode of representation in which gaining knowledge and understanding require an entirely different form of engagement.

Like early poetic and expository documentaries—before the observational mode placed priority on the direct filming of social encounter—performative documentary freely mixes expressive techniques that give texture and density to fiction (point-of-view shots, musical scores, renderings of subjective states of mind, flashbacks, and freeze frames, etc.) with oratorical techniques for addressing social issues that neither science nor reason can resolve.

Performative documentary approaches the poetic domain of experimental or avant-garde cinema but gives, finally, less emphasis to the self-contained formal rhythms and tones of the film or video. Its expressive dimension refers us back to the historical world for its ultimate meaning. We continue to recognize the historical world by means of familiar people and places (Langston Hughes, Detroit cityscapes, the San Francisco Bay Bridge, and so on) and the testimony of others (participants in *Tongues Untied* who describe the experiences of black, gay men; the personal voice-over confidences of Ngozi Onwurah about her relationship to her mother in *The Body Beautiful*; and Jonathan Caouette's harrowing home movie footage of his mother and himself as they struggled to maintain their dignity and sanity in a hostile universe).

The world as represented by performative documentaries becomes, however, suffused by evocative tones and expressive shadings that constantly remind us that the world is more than the sum of the visible evidence we derive from it. An early, partial example of the performative mode, Alain Resnais's *Night and Fog* (1955), about the Holocaust, makes this point vividly. The film's voice-over commentary and images of illustration nominate *Night and Fog* for the expository mode, but the haunting, personal quality of the commentary moves it toward the performative. The film is less about history than memory, less about history from above—what happened when and why—and more about history from below—what one person might experience and what it might feel like to undergo that experience. Through the elliptic, evocative tone of the commentary by Jean Cayrol, a survivor of Auschwitz, *Night and Fog* sets out to represent the unrepresentable:



Night and Fog (*Nuit et brouillard*) (Alain Resnais, 1955). Much of the footage presented in *Night and Fog* was shot by concentration camp officers, then discovered after the war by the Allies. Alain Resnais compiles this footage into a searing testimony to the horrors of inhumanity. His film offers far more than visual evidence of Nazi atrocities. It urges us to remember, and never forget, what happened long ago in these camps. It links the past to the present and gives to memory the burden of sustaining a moral conscience.

the sheer inconceivability of acts that defy all reason and all narrative order. Visible evidence abounds—of belongings and bodies, of victims and survivors—but the voice of *Night and Fog* extends beyond what evidence confirms: it calls for an emotional responsiveness from us that acknowledges how understanding this event within any preestablished frame of reference is an utter impossibility (even as we may arrive at a judgment of the heinous monstrosity of such genocide).

In a similar spirit, Hungarian filmmaker Péter Forgács has described his goal as not to polemicize, not to explain, not to argue or judge, so much as to evoke a sense of what past experiences were like for those who lived them. His extraordinary documentaries are made from home movies reorganized into performative representations of

Free Fall (Péter Forgács, 1996). Péter Forgács relies entirely on found footage, in this case, home movies from the 1930s and 1940s. Such footage reveals life as it was seen and experienced at a given time. Forgács reworks the footage, cropping images, slowing down motion, adding titles and music, to combine a sense of historical perspective with a form of emotional engagement. The result is quite poetic, radically different in tone from the classic World War II documentaries in an expository mode such as the *Why We Fight* series. *Photos courtesy of Péter Forgács.*

the social turmoil caused by World War II: *Free Fall* (1997), recounts the life of a successful Jewish businessman in the 1930s, Gyorgy Peto, who is eventually caught up in Germany's decision, late in the war, to apply their "final solution" to Hungarian Jews.

By focusing on specific events, seen from the viewpoint of a participant rather than a historian, Forgács suggests something about the overall tone of the war: he suggests how, for some participants, the war hovered on the horizon, seemingly at a remove from everyday pleasures and distractions. We, with benefit of hindsight, know better. Forgács maintains a strong level of suspense by means of this disparity in knowledge. Gyorgy Peto's life is destined to fall apart. We know and he doesn't. This alone is a potent way of invoking the power of history performatively: we experience what it feels like to have historical knowledge and yet also realize we cannot alter what has already come to pass.

Forgács leaves evaluation and judgment to us but postpones this kind of reflection while we experience a more directly subjective encounter with these historical events. He invokes affect over effect, emotion over reason, not to reject analysis and judgment but to place them on a different basis. Like Resnais, Vertov, and Kalatozov before him, and like so many of his contemporaries, Forgács sidesteps ready-made positions and prefabricated categories. He invites us, as all great documentarians do, to see the world afresh and to rethink our relation to it. Performative documentary restores a sense of magnitude to the local, specific, and embodied. It animates the personal so that it may become our port of entry to the political.

We can summarize this general sketch of the six modes of documentary representation in the Table 7.1. As already discussed, the modes are not a genealogy and the table is not a family tree. It only suggests how each mode possesses distinct qualities, qualities that are sometimes a matter of emphasis more than hard and fast distinctions. The qualities of each mode, along with the models that filmmakers also adopt, provide a rich toolbox of resources from which to fashion distinctive new documentaries.

TABLE 7.1. Some Specific Qualities of Documentary Modes

Quality	Expository	Poetic	Observational	Participatory	Reflexive	Performative
An Alternative To	Fiction/avant-garde	Fiction/exposition	Classic oration and poetic expression	Passive observation and classic oration	Realist representation that ignores the formal process of representing the world or social assumptions about the nature of the world	Empirical, factual, or abstract forms of knowledge
Limited By	Didacticism	Formal abstractions that lose touch with historical reality	What occurs in front of the camera (hard to represent historical events)	May cede control and point of view to others, lose independence of judgment	Increased sense of formal abstraction, detachment, loss of direct engagement with social issues	Personal pov or vision may become private or dissociated from more broadly social perceptions
Treats Knowledge As	Disembodied or abstract ideas, concepts, or perspectives	Affective, a new way to see and comprehend the world; see the familiar in fresh way	Tacit sense of what we learn by watching, listening, observing, and making inferences about the conduct of others	What we learn from personal interactions; what people say and do when confronted or engaged by others; what can be conveyed by interviews and other forms of encounter	Contextual. Always framed by institutional constraints and personal assumptions that can be exposed and changed; asks what we learn when we ask how we learn	Embodied. Affective and situated. What we learn from direct, experiential encounter rather than second-hand from experts or books
Sound	Expressive and cognitive, fully under the control of the filmmaker; no indexical link to the image it supports; often in a voice-over form	Expressive, used for pattern and rhythm but with filmmaker holding a high degree of control as in the expository mode	Tied to the image by the indexical link of synchronous recording. Filmmaker gives up full control of sound to record what is said and heard in a given situation; refrains from voice over	Stress the speech between filmmaker and subject, especially in interviews. Heavy reliance on sync sound but may also utilize voice over; filmmaker retains only partial creative control of sound	May meta-communicate about how communication takes place. Talk about talking about something as well as sync or nonsync sound	Often relies on fimmaker's own voice to organize the film; stress introspective, testimonial, essayistic forms of speech and dialogue. Mixes sync and nonsync; uses music and sound expressively
Time and Space	Discontinuous. Uses images from many different times and places to illustrate a perspective or argument	Discontinuous. Uses images that build mood or pattern without full regard for their original proximity	Continuous. Strong sense of continuity that links the words and actions of subjects from shot to shot	Continuous. May interconnect a present tense time and space with a past tense (historical time and space)	Contextualized. Draw attention to how time and space may be manipulated by systems of continuity or discontinuity	Varies according to the expressive goals. May stylize time and space to emphasize its affective dimension
Ethical Concerns	Historical accuracy and verifiability; fair representation of others, avoid making people into helpless victims; develop the viewer's trust	Use of actual people, places, and things without regard for their individual identity; may distort or exaggerate for aesthetic effect	Passive observation of dangerous, harmful, or illegal activity can lead to serious difficulties for subjects. Questions of responsibility toward subjects can become acute	Manipulate or goad others into confessions or actions they may regret; a strong responsibility to respect the rights and dignity of subjects. Questions of manipulation and distortion arise	Use or abuse subjects to pose questions that are those of the filmmaker and not the subjects	Degree of honesty and self-scrutiny vs. self-deception; misrepresentation or distortion of larger issues, lapses into wholly idiosyncratic
A Voice Characterized By	Classic oration in pursuit of the truth and seeking to inform and move an audience	An expressive desire to give new forms and fresh perspectives to the world represented	Patience, modesty, self-effacing. Willingness to let audience decide for itself about what it sees and hears	Engagement, strong investment in the encounter with others or in presenting a historical perspective	Self-questioning, a voice of doubt, even radical doubt about the certainty or fixity of knowledge	Strongly personal, engaged orator pursuing the truth of what it feels like to experience the world in a particular way