

IV

TELLING STORIES WITH EVIDENCE AND ARGUMENTS

Challenging the Status of Documentary

A tendency in recent writing on documentary is to stress its link to narrative. Documentaries are fictions with plots, characters, situations, and events like any other. They offer introductory lacks, challenges, or dilemmas; they build heightened tensions and dramatically rising conflicts, and they terminate with resolution and closure. They do all this with reference to a "reality" that is a construct, the product of signifying systems, like the documentary film itself. Like the constructed realities of fiction, this reality, too, must be scrutinized and debated as part of the domain of signification and ideology. The notion of any privileged access to a reality that exists "out there," beyond us, is an ideological effect. The sooner we realize all this, the better.

Some documentary filmmakers have also stressed this view. In *Far from Poland* the central question of the film is what is really happening, over there, in Poland, in a realm of which we have fragmentary and highly mediated knowledge, a realm we creatively reconstruct for our own diverse purposes. Jill Godmilow introduces herself as the filmmaker who meditates on and debates this question, inconclusively. She inverts the expository mode of documentary that relies on interviews with witnesses and archival footage by doubting the truth value of this form of evidence about the historically real. She fabricates her own version of what historical figures, social actors, might say and do. She has a companion, Mark Magill, who challenges her own reflexive inclinations: is she indulging in word and image play? Is Poland not a reality, where people live and die; can we reduce it to textual figures without reducing our sense of history itself? Godmilow withholds a concluding answer. Perhaps we have lost the possibility of such engagement. Perhaps speaking directly about the reality of speech, and its limitations, is the strongest way in which the assumptions we hold about our access to a reality that comes to us largely through media representations can be challenged. And to challenge these representations

is to challenge historical representation and its ally, documentary film itself.

This insistence on a narrative, constructed basis to documentary undercuts claims for the moral superiority of documentary to fiction. Dziga Vertov, John Grierson, Paul Rotha, Pare Lorentz all extolled the documentary as a morally superior form of filmmaking, as a responsible contributor to the discourses of sobriety. This perspective certainly facilitated the creation of national film producing agencies like the GPO and Empire Marketing Board in Great Britain, the United States Film Service, or, later, the U.S. Information Service, and The National Film Board of Canada. Documentary has set itself apart, historically, from the fiction film. Fiction was what deceived and distracted. Fiction ignored the world as it was in favor of fantasy and illusion. It was of little consequence, especially if it came from Hollywood.

Dziga Vertov took this view: "A psychological, detective, satirical, or any other picture [*sic*]. Cut out all scenes and just leave titles. We will get a literary skeleton of the picture. To this literary skeleton we can add new footage—realistic, symbolic, expressionist—any kind. Things are not changed. Neither is the interrelationship: literary skeleton plus cinematic illustration. Such are all our and foreign pictures, without exception."¹ Paul Rotha in his *The Film Till Now* had a similar opinion: "Hollywood did little to further the humanitarian uses of the cinema. . . . No, Hollywood must face the accusation of having deliberately kept people from thinking, from asking questions, from knowing how and what other people in other places were doing."² Documentary, even if it still relied upon images, stood apart from the illusory realm of fiction by addressing itself to the historical world and the real issues that confronted it. But this belief in redemption through an avowed social purpose has come under siege. To call the work of a documentarist a fiction like any other shocks and paralyzes the liberal mind. It places documentary's liberalism under attack and leaves precious little by way of an alternative for the socially conscious filmmaker, critic, or viewer.

This critique of documentary as a fiction like any other needs to be questioned without resorting to the assumed superiority of an analytical, essayist, and fact-based discourse. The rationalism and logocentrism that characterize the documentary tradition and its nonfiction kin in the realm of journalism, television news reporting, editorializing, and the yet broader web of legal-rational discourse that supports our political-economic system can be understood as a distinctive mode of social inquiry and conduct without any ontologically superior basis, Plato notwithstanding. It can even be argued that this is a masculinist tradition, reinforcing those values and skills of abstract analysis and symbolic manipulation that men claim as their special province. But the opposite assumption, that documentary is as much a fiction as any other, that the world we inhabit is a social construct as much as any fiction is an imaginative one, that what we find "out there"

is nothing more than what our codes and systems of signs posit, this, too, needs to be questioned.

Documentary shares many characteristics with fiction film but it is still unlike fiction in important ways. The issues of the filmmaker's control over what she or he films and of the ethics of filming social actors whose lives, though represented in the film, extend well beyond it; the issues of the text's structure, and the question of the viewer's activity and expectations—these three angles from which definitions of documentary begin (filmmaker, text, viewer) also suggest important ways in which documentary is a fiction unlike any other.

The World in Documentary

Consider how we enter into a fictional world, based on the spatio-temporal dimensions of the characters' environment. This world is a unique, imaginary domain. It bears resemblance to fictional worlds in (other texts, often aligning itself in groupings such as genre or movement. It also bears resemblance to our own world, especially if it is made in a realist style. It will be populated with recognizable people, objects, and places and with recognizable feeling states or emotional tonalities, but the resemblance is fundamentally metaphorical. We may comprehend this world through cognitive procedures that are distinct to fiction,³ but we interpret this world through evaluative procedures that also depend on assumptions and values applicable to the world in which we live. To it we address questions of ideology and social value, gender and sexual representation, history and political affiliation, national and cultural identity, and so on, as well as more formal matters, and we do so metaphorically. It is a likeness rather than a replica to which we attend.

Documentary is somewhat different. Documentary offers access to a shared, historical construct. Instead of *a* world, we are offered access to *the* world. The world is where, at the extreme, issues of life and death are always at hand. History kills. Though our entry to the world is through webs of signification like language, cultural practices, social rituals, political and economic systems, our relation to this world can also be direct and immediate. Here, "strychnine poisoning" is not just a signifier lying inertly on a page in all its polysyllabic density, but a life-threatening experience. Here, "Fire," "Shoot to kill," "Jump," or "Scalpel" are not simply linguistic imperatives but preludes to action that carry life and death consequences for our physical selves. *Material practices occur that are not entirely or totally discursive, even if their meanings and social value are.*

Like people themselves, representations and texts have the potential to kill, but they lack the physical capacity to do the job directly. The Bible, Koran, and *Communist Manifesto* are three works that have left a trail of blood, among other things. But to have this effect, they must enter into the

world by means of form, rhetoric, and ideology. As sources of ideas, images, values, and concepts, of systems of belief and categories of perception texts may, like past experience, shape or inflect behavior, often through a cumulative process. But matter and energy are not at their immediate disposal. The text itself cannot act upon us. It can give no orders nor take any measures. The words "Workers of the world, unite!" remain inert, mere words on a page, unless they enter into the mental disposition of a reader in such a way as to provoke or contribute to subsequent action. Texts are a realm of information, where differences circulate and signifiers slide. And as fictions or narrative, texts direct us toward worlds, inviting us to inhabit imaginatively realms often uncannily similar to our own, sometimes radically distinct, but always other than the one world we physically inhabit.

The world is where not only information circulates but also matter and energy. These physical forces can be unleashed for or against us by discourse, linguistics, or even more directly, by nature. Whatever else we may say about the constructed, mediated, semiotic nature of the world in which we live, we must also say that it exceeds all representations. This is a brute reality; objects collide, actions occur, forces take their toll. The world, as the domain of the historically real, is neither text nor narrative. But it is to systems of signs, to language and discourse, that we must turn in order to assign meaning and value to these objects, actions, and events. Occur they will; their interpretation, though, invokes the full power of our cultural system. Documentary directs us toward the world of brute reality even as it also seeks to interpret it, and the expectation that it will do so is one powerful difference from fiction.

Documentaries direct us toward *the* world but they also remain texts. Hence they share all of the attendant implications of fiction's constructed, formal, ideologically inflected status. Documentary differs, though, in asking us to consider it as a representation of the historical world rather than a likeness or imitation of it. The image of the death of an individual purports to record the actual, physical death of that person rather than a mimetic representation of death. This experiential difference is itself the subject of a videotape, *Eternal Frame*, by the Ant Farm Collective, which reconstructs historical reality by simulating the Zapruder footage of the John F. Kennedy assassination and yet achieving a decidedly different effect. (The status of the footage itself as artifact and our tendency to engage with it as a talisman come to the fore, displacing the apparent transparency of the recording with the event it records. This is comparable to the effect of the reworked historical footage in *A Movie and Report*.) Although we must often take the text at its word ("What you are about to see really happened . . ."), the effect of doing so produces a sharp difference which is dramatically demonstrated by the question of death.

Death may, in fact, be the underlying theme of the great majority of documentaries, as Andre Bazin hinted about the cinema generally in his essay, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image."¹ Documentaries often

confront the experience of death itself directly. Even if they do not, the fragile mortality of its social actors remains always in evidence. The institutions, practices, apparatuses, beliefs and values, situations and events that impinge on this mortality provide the recurring focus for the great majority of documentaries whether they adopt a fatalistic, amelioristic, or revolutionary argument about the ways in which our bodies and mortality are placed at risk. This lends urgency to a category of filmmaking that lacks the appeal to fantasy and imagination possessed by fiction.

Documentary Representation

Documentaries, then, do not differ from fictions in their constructedness as texts, but in the representations they make. At the heart of documentary is less a *story* and its imaginary world than an *argument* about the historical world. (In *Ideology and the Image* I used "diegesis" and "rhetorical fiction" to make this distinction between the imaginary world of a fiction and the propositional world of a documentary. I prefer "argument" as a more familiar word, but I do not mean to suggest that all documentaries are argumentative, only that their representations or propositions, tacit or explicit, aim at the historical world directly.) Documentary represents the world, and it may be useful to recall some of the multiple meanings of the word "represent" since they are all simultaneously applicable here. The most prevalent usage in film criticism has been that of likeness, model, or depiction. (The idea of a model that was, simultaneously, its object, that shared in its ontological being by dint of the photographic process, was the form of representation that so fascinated Andre Bazin.)

Representation also means, according to the OED, politically representing a group or class by standing for or in place of them with the right or authority to act on their account. The House of Representatives of the United States Congress bears its name due to its responsibility to represent the population in fair and equal proportion among the states. An entire discourse surrounds the representative function of elected politicians generally, including an ethics, but other, more informal forms of political representation also occur.

In addition, representation means "The action of placing a fact, etc., before another or others by means of discourse; a statement or account, esp. one intended to convey a particular view or impression of a matter in order to influence opinion or action" (OED). Here representation is made or presented; representation amounts to making a case in a convincing fashion. Representation is allied with rhetoric, persuasion, and argument rather than with likeness or reproduction.

In sum, documentary gives us photographic and aural representations or likenesses of the world. Documentary stands for or represents the views of individuals, groups, or agencies from a solitary filmmaker like Flaherty to

CBS News or a state government. Documentary also makes a representation, or a case, an argument, about the world explicitly or implicitly. In offering our own representation of documentary here, in giving an adequate account of its properties and traditions, forms and effects, we will need to attend to all three of these meanings.

The Documentary Window

Documentary shares the properties of a text with other fictions—matter and energy are not at its immediate disposal—but it addresses the world in which we live rather than worlds in which we may imagine living. This may be partly a matter of conventions and expectations, but it makes a fundamental difference. Conditional tense documentaries such as Peter Watkins's *Culloden* or *The War Game* and historically discrepant reenactments such as the staged accounts of a policeman's murder in *The Thin Blue Line* test one boundary of documentary and narrative by directing us toward an imaginary extrapolation from the present world, based on factual evidence, but necessarily presenting *a* world rather than *the* world to us; they therefore share a fundamental trait of fiction but employ many of the conventions of documentary.

The difference between direction toward *the* world and *a* world can be illustrated by imagining ourselves in relation to a room. In fiction, we look in upon a well-lit room, overhearing and overseeing what occurs inside, apparently unbeknownst to the occupants. The opening of *Psycho*, with its slow panning shot of the Phoenix skyline that gradually zooms toward and then through a single window into the hotel room where Marion Crane and Sam Loomis discuss their lives, crystallizes this impression of looking in.

In documentary, we look out from a dimly lit room, hearing and seeing what occurs in the world around us. The opening of *The Battle of China* in the *Why We Fight* series evokes the war in China through edited wartime footage of Japanese bomber planes dropping their explosives on the city of Shanghai. Walter Huston's first words, coming to us in a motion picture theater or at home before a television monitor, are, "This is the battle of China." Representations are being made: cinematic likenesses arrive before us; a political argument unfolds; the concerns of citizens across the land are spoken for. Our attention is immediately directed outward toward the historical world, past or through the text, and into the realm where action and response are always possible.

We enter a fictional world through the agency of narration, that process whereby a narrative unfolds in time, allowing us to construct the story it proposes. We enter the world in documentary through the agency of representation or exposition, that process whereby a documentary addresses some aspect of the world, allowing us to reconstruct the argument

it proposes. In fiction, the sense of an authoring activity or of an overt narrational process that draws our attention away from the imaginary world we have entered is normally slight and intermittent, only rarely forceful. In documentary, the sense of the filmmaker's argumentative activity or of an overt expository process that directs our attention toward the historical world is often continual and highly noticeable. Without it, we would have the impression of gazing onto the world itself rather than seeing the world by means of a text, a window, and an argument. This is indeed the case with some modes of documentary, most notably observational documentary or American cinema vérité. (This is another mode that skirts up against fiction, as it stresses the sensation of overhearing and overlooking a world that happens to be drawn from some portion of the historical world, without making an overt argument about it. The argument is tacit, oblique, or indirect; it arises by implication.)

In most documentaries, we are asked to realize that the world we see is one conjured for a purpose and that this purpose is made manifest to us through the agency of an external authority, our representative, the expository agent. (It is important that we grasp the argument although not necessarily the conjuring.) The world as we see it through a documentary window is heightened, telescoped, dramatized, reconstructed, fetishized, miniaturized, or otherwise modified. Like realist fiction, documentary presents us with an image of the world as if for the first time; we see things anew, in a fresh light, with associations we had not consciously realized or attended to. An observational documentary can hide behind this effect, giving us the impression that this modified world was there all along, waiting for us to discover it. An expository documentary may also try to mask or diminish its own shaping and modifying activity so that it seems self-evident that the world is indeed cast in the image that the film proposes. This apparent naturalness of a given image of the world may be a rhetorical ploy, but it is also a vital aspect of how we come to hold views of the world that may guide subsequent action.

Their respective orientations, toward *a* world and toward *the* world, sharply distinguish fiction and documentary, but the effect of providing, as if for the first time, a memorable form for experiences and concepts that the text purports only to reveal or reflect is a common bond between them.⁵ That bond frequently goes by the name of realism, one of the issues immediately raised by this conception of the documentary as a fiction (un)like any other. We are offered a world but a world different from any other by dint of its basis in history itself. We can construct a world of our own design or represent the one whose design surrounds us. In representing it we introduce the subjectivities and vicissitudes, the issues of style and form that govern discussion of any text. It is, mysteriously or magically perhaps, the world out there that we represent in documentary, and shape so as to be seen as if for the first time from a particular angle, in the grip of a particular way of seeing and a distinctive argument about its workings.

The mystery or magic stems from the re-presentation, the documentary's apparent ability to mechanically reproduce the world as it is, in all its historical uniqueness, again and again in the service of representations or arguments, often recycling images of never-to-be-repeated events in the service of sharply divergent points of view.⁶

The world, in documentary, is destined to bear propositions. "This is so, isn't it?" is the gist of the most common and fundamental proposition we find. It is the basic proposition made by realism. This question, as much or more than Louis Althusser's "Hey, you there!" is the basis for the social construction of reality and for the work of ideology.⁷ In documentary what "is so" is a representation of the world, and the question, "isn't it?" has to do with the credibility of the representation. This representation can be either a re-presentation of overt propositions made *in* the historical world—the record of public speeches such as we find in *Triumph of the Will*; the representation of a case or argument *about* the world such as the claim that "This is the battle of China," mentioned above; or of perspectival propositions about the world made obliquely or indirectly by the way in which actions and events are represented. (Examples of a tacit perspective include the films of Fred Wiseman, the impressionistic memory of the Vietnam War given by *Dear America*, and the ironic tonalities of Buñuel's *Land without Bread*. Although there is a referentiality about these representations that anchors them to the historical world, they are by no means free of constructedness. They are, however, propositions somewhat distinct from those introduced by the text itself where the representation of the world serves as evidence for an argument that did not entirely predate the text.)

Consider, for example, two airplane disasters: the destruction of Korean Airline flight 007 on September 1, 1983 by the Soviet Union and of Iranian Airline flight 655 on July 3, 1988 by the United States. Although the incidents bore many similarities in how they came about, the American press represented the Soviet attack as a crime against humanity, as a blatant example of a "real" Soviet mentality of territorial obsession and wanton disregard for life. The American attack, however, was represented as an unfortunate mistake, an error or miscalculation that would never have been allowed to occur by design. And although spy theories involving American reconnaissance flights, decoy missions, and tests of Soviet radar defenses were largely dismissed as possible justifications for the Soviet attack, there were repeated hints that the Iranians had brought the American attack upon themselves by government policy that allowed civilian flights in an area the United States had chosen to defend. In both cases the evidence available was quite similar, but the uses made of the evidence were sharply different. News accounts included representations made in the world by figures like President Reagan, arguments made by the text such as accounts of the "most plausible explanation" offered by reporters and

news anchorpeople, and tacit perspectives arising from such cues as tone of voice, choices of symbolic or iconic representation, and reference to stereotypic notions of national character. Each account claimed "This is so, isn't it?" and yet the accounts used similar facts in radically different ways.

The world as we encounter it in most documentary is both familiar and distinctive. Although twentieth-century culture has given us a world rich in ambiguity, indeterminacy, subjectivity, and doubt, a post-Freudian, post-Einsteinian world radically different from the Cartesian, Newtonian world that prevailed from the Renaissance to World War I or so, this is not the world that documentary usually represents. We find a more traditional vista before us, akin to the nineteenth-century fictional conventions that govern most popular cinema. Documentary represents the world of individual responsibility and social action, common sense and everyday reason; it confronts the historically momentous and the patently quotidian—all couched in the style and rhetoric of classical realism. (Realism, as we shall see, has certain distinctive attributes in documentary but shares profound kinship with narrative realism in its effect.) This is indeed *the* world we see but it is also *a* world, or more exactly, *a view of the world*. It is not just any world but neither is it the only view possible of this one historical world. There is an obviousness and naturalness about the world as represented that we are frequently invited to take for granted. Documentary remains distinct in its representation of the historical world, the world of power, dominance, and control, the arena of struggle, resistance, and contestation. Documentary asks us to agree that the world itself fits within the frame of its representations, and asks us to plan our agenda for action accordingly.

Khrushchev's Shoe

Unlike fiction, documentary evidence refers us constantly to the world around us. Fiction films, too, may anchor their stories in a historical reality, whether past or contemporary, and many of their elements may be authentic. (In Hollywood cinema, great care is traditionally given to the authenticity of supporting elements like clothing, furniture, weapons, locale, architecture, and so on, while great liberties may be taken with (1) dialogue and language—historical figures of any nationality speak English; (2) motivation—the need of narrative for unity and closure governs motivation; (3) character—established stars always play the central ones, and (4) sequence—the events are rearranged into linear narrative form.) Although fiction films employ elements of realism in the service of their story, the overall relation of film to the world is metaphorical. Fiction presents the likeness of actual events, motives, appearances, causality, and meaning. Fiction may well constitute an explanation or interpretation of great power,

but the avenue back to the world is always by means of this detour through narrative form. There is a centrifugal pull on elements of authenticity away from their historical referent and toward their relevance to plot and story.

Documentary, on the other hand, takes up and uses an *indexical* relation to the historical world. It grounds itself in evidence that cannot be witnessed as it happens, on a first-hand basis, more than once. I am thinking here of those evidentiary claims that depend upon the photographic or aural authenticity of film as document. To see not what Hitler, Kennedy, Holocaust survivors, or Vietnam War victims looked *like* but how they themselves actually looked, we turn to documentary. As Jerry Kuehl points out, "at the heart of documentaries lie truth claims, and these claims are based on arguments and evidence. Did Khrushchev ever lose his temper in public? Film of him banging his shoe on the desk at the U.N. may not convince everyone; film of Telly Savalas wearing the Order of Lenin and banging a desk on the set at Universal City will convince no one."⁸

Documentary evidence in this sense is distinct, less because it is of an entirely different order from similar historical evidence in the fiction film (the authentic firearms, waistcoats, and wall hangings in a period film, for example), but because the evidence no longer serves the needs of narrative as such. (This is a matter of degree, but a degree that is very often registered.) Documentary evidence is not a touch of the historically real used to embellish *a* world. It is not an element deployed and motivated according to the requirements of narrative coherence. Instead, documentary evidence refers us to the world and supports arguments made about that world directly. (It is still a representation but not a fictional one.)

In sum, evidence of and from the historical world may appear in either fiction or documentary film and may have the same existential bond to the world in both. In one it supports a narrative; in the other it supports an argument. The effect of a heightened realism may be very similar in the two instances—to gain our assent that "This is so"—but the process for making this case differs in fiction and documentary, in degree if not kind. Even though the evidence has a historical basis, the argument or representation made with it does not. Representations are what the text constructs: "truth claims" not simply of what exists in the world but, in a strong sense, of what meaning, explanation, or interpretation should be assigned to what exists in the world. It is here that elements of narrative, rhetoric, style, and representation commingle.

The conventions and constraints, codes and expectations may function somewhat differently, but both fiction and documentary set out to make something from the historical evidence they incorporate. Matters of institutional discourse, textual structure, and viewer expectation constitute the heart of the difference. At issue is not only whether we see Telly Savalas playing Nikita Khrushchev banging a shoe or Khrushchev himself (though this is hardly insignificant) but also what kind of argument or story this action supports. Even if thoroughly authentic, so that the "truth claim,"

"This happened, in history" is fully validated, the action only becomes meaningful as more than an isolated incident when it is placed within a narrative or expository frame. (The shoe banging might be "noise," an incidental detail bolstering a sense of verisimilitude or realism but bearing no further significance of its own. Attaching any greater meaning to it requires a conceptual frame or explanatory scheme. This moves us away from factual accuracy to an entirely different level of engagement.)

Factual documentation serves as evidence, but evidence of *what* becomes a fundamental question. Documentary answers this question with conventions that call for evidence drawn from the historical world indexically, as it was seen and heard to occur rather than with metaphorical likenesses. (If we do not recognize the authenticity of the evidence, we may misinterpret the film as fiction. Khrushchev banging his own shoe may seem like a bad TV movie to someone who does not know what Khrushchev looked like.) For the most part, though, the preoccupation of documentary is to answer the question, "Evidence of what?"

Once we embark upon the presentation of an argument, we step beyond evidence and the factual to the construction of meaning. This is where footage such as the historical evidence contained in shots of Khrushchev banging his shoe or in the amateur Zapruder footage of Kennedy's assassination become more than isolated facts. They become pieces of evidence demonstrating the physical look of a historical event in a way no fictional likeness can ever duplicate however close its approximation. Once an argument begins to take shape, that fact begins to fit into a system of signification, a web of meanings—in the case of Kennedy's assassination, of conspiracy, of grievous national loss, of the tragic consequences of demented, individual acts; in the case of Khrushchev's shoe, of volatile and untrustworthy character, crude, bullying ways, of America's need for diplomatic wariness and military preparedness. There is never a pure one-to-one correspondence between fact and argument. For every fact, for every piece of incontrovertible evidence, more than one argument can be fashioned. In this, documentary is like fiction, but it relies on different forms, procedures, conventions, and strategies to achieve its end.⁹

Kuehl stacks the deck somewhat by choosing an example of evidence that cannot be represented authentically in a fiction because there can only be one Khrushchev and no actor can authenticate something that he himself is imitating, whereas a fictional representation of a 1955 Chevrolet can be just as authentic as a documentary representation of one. The difference lies in the uses made of the evidence: the subordination of the car to a narrative story in one case and to an argument in the other. Similarly, the function of the Bushman in *The Gods Must Be Crazy* is the classic one for the racially or culturally Other: as donor to the protagonist, assisting in the white hero's efforts to rescue the white woman abducted by a gang of marauding looters, a function whose construction is clearly documented in *Nlai: Story of a !Kung Woman*, which observes the multiple takes required to

film the Bushman's triumphal return to his own family in a "natural" tone. Narrative maintains a metaphorical relation to the real whereas arguments represent truth claims about it. This may give the evidence an added force in documentary (as we shall see in discussing the film *Roses in December* later), but it does nothing to give its truth claims status as anything other than claims. Documentaries do not present *the* truth but *a* truth (or, better, a view or way of seeing), even if the evidence they recruit bears the authenticating trace of the historical world itself.

Documentary Logic: Perspective, Commentary, Argument

To speak of *a view* of the world is to return to the notion of argument generally. If narrative invites our engagement with the construction of a story, set in an imaginary world, documentary invites our engagement with the construction of an argument, directed toward the historical world. The authenticity of sounds and images recorded in the historical world (or reconstructed according to specific criteria) constitutes evidence about the world. The evidence is the material basis for the argument and has a similar relation to it as the plot (or *syuzhet*) does to the story (or *fabula*) that we construct in fiction. The evidence and commentary on it is what we physically see and hear in a documentary.

We will consider argument to be the general category for the representation of a case about the world and subdivide this category into two major parts. Perspective is the way in which a documentary text offers a particular point of view through its depiction of the world. It leads us to infer a tacit argument. Perspective in documentary would be akin to style in fiction; the argument is implied, sustained by rhetorical strategies of organization. Commentary is how a documentary offers a particular statement about the world or about the perspective it has tacitly presented. Commentary is always at a more "meta" level than perspective. It is a more overt and direct form of argumentation.

Commentary can include not only direct address (voice-over narrators or on-screen authorities, for example) but also other tactics or devices (elements of style, and rhetoric) that draw attention away from a perspective on the world and toward a more distanced, conceptual accounting of it. (This might include the particular way interviews and commentary are contextualized in the film.) These tactics or devices are not specific figures but rather any figure that departs from the stylistic expectations previously established by the text. In Frederick Wiseman's *Titicut Follies*, for example, the usual pattern of cutting from one fragmentary scene of hospital life to another, not directly related one is disrupted by a sequence of a patient being force-fed through a tube cross-cut with later shots of his preparation for burial. In the context of the established expectations, the cross-cutting becomes a commentary on the institution rather than a perspective on it.

The cross-cutting operates outside the normal editing pattern already established by the text and becomes thereby a commentary signaled not by voice-over narration but by this deviation itself.

All documentaries, not only reflexive ones, take up a specific relationship to their own commentary or perspective. Some of these possible relationships can be summarized in terms of formal properties such as the degree of knowledge possessed by the text, subjectivity, self-consciousness, and communicativeness.¹⁰

Degree of knowledge: What we learn may be restricted to what a single character or commentator knows or it may exceed any one source. In classic voice-over, expository documentaries like *Housing Problems* or *The Plow That Broke the Plains*, our knowledge is directly correlated to what the anonymous but all-knowing narrator tells us. In more recent variations like Emile de Antonio's *In the Year of the Pig*, Connie Field's *Rosie the Riveter*, the Black Audio Film Collective's *Handsworth Songs* or Trinh Minh-ha's *Naked Spaces*, what we learn exceeds the knowledge of any one source. These works lack a single, controlling voice; we deduce the argument from the weave of many voices. Other films align knowledge with a single character or agent. What we learn in the films of Michael Rubbo, for example *Sad Song of Yellow Skin* or *Waiting for Fidel*, is restricted to what Rubbo himself knows or learns since he places himself in the foreground as an inquiring presence. His questions, puzzlements, observations, and reflections provide the informative tissue of the film. Bonnie Klein's *Not a Love Story*, which also presents the filmmaker as an inquiring presence (this time about the nature and effects of pornography), includes a number of substantive interviews with various individuals either in the pornography industry or critical of it. Although Bonnie Klein conducts the interviews, our knowledge is not filtered through the filmmaker's sensibility as thoroughly. The interviewees provide independent evidence that contributes to an argument that seems to derive from the expository agency of the text itself rather than from the persona of the filmmaker. In both cases, though, the filmmakers assume a role akin to that of the fiction film detective or the real life investigative reporter and restrict our knowledge, in varying degrees, to their own.

A character can also provide the basic restriction on what we learn and when we learn it, but this is a fairly unusual format. It requires the filmmaker to subordinate his or her knowledge or investigative skills to those of a single character or social actor. One example of this possibility is *The Emperor's Naked Army Marches On* by Hara Kazuo. The film follows Kenzo Okuzaki as he investigates the fate of several Japanese soldiers executed by their own army in the days after the end of World War II. Our degree of knowledge is virtually identical to Okuzaki's, with the result that we experience both suspense and alarm as we learn what Okuzaki learns in concert with him and also witness the confrontational tactics he employs to gain this knowledge. (The key revelation is that the officers, with their cautious

gone and starvation setting in, shot army privates in order to cannibalize their remains.)

Degree of subjectivity: The extent to which we experience the inner thoughts and feelings of characters or share their perspective. The prevalence of a criterion of objectivity in documentary has left the exploration of subjectivity underdeveloped. Although there are several recent counter-examples of note, most documentaries neglect the traditional forms of fictive subjectivity (flashbacks, visualized memories, slow motion, anticipations, fantasy, visual representations of altered states of mind such as drunkenness or reverie, dreams, and so forth). The primary exception is when these forms of subjectivity are adopted by the expository agency itself as a form of anonymous or omniscient but personalized, collective consciousness. Vivid examples include Alain Resnais's *Night and Fog* and Bill Couturié's *Dear America*, in which the film's own voice-over adopts the attributes of human memory and reminiscence, speaking, in the first case, as a generalized voice of conscience, and, in the second, as a recounting of individual experience. The recounting of individual experience takes even more elaborate form in *The Civil War*, where over a dozen voices speak for participants, quoting from letters, diaries, and memoirs. A similar, less intense form of collective memory governs the voice-over commentary of *Victory at Sea* as well. The commentary is less a didactic statement of how World War II was fought than a poetic evocation of what that fighting felt like: when and where it occurred, what anxieties and heroism it induced, what sounds and furies accompanied it.

Subjectivity also enters into the documentary mainstream via the preference for people, or social actors, who can present themselves before a camera with minimal self-consciousness and, more importantly, who can inflect actions or recountings with a subjective depth of feeling. Like trained actors, social actors who convey a sense of psychological depth by means of their looks, gestures, tone, inflection, pacing, movement, and so on become favored subjects. The impulse is toward social actors who can "be themselves" before a camera in an emotionally revealing manner. This is not quite as neutral and objective a preference as it might at first appear since not everyone who acts before a camera in a manner very similar to how he or she acts without it presents an appealing figure for documentary films. Priority goes to those individuals who can convey a strong sense of personal expressivity that does not seem to be produced by or conjured for the camera—even if, in fact, it is. Television personalities are a prime example, from talk show hosts, advertising announcers, and quiz masters to news reporters and anchorpeople. But so are the guests on talk shows, the "men-and-women-in-the-street" found in TV commercials, and the contestants on quiz shows.

In documentary films, the central characters are frequently individuals who convey some sense of an interior dimensionality, of a complex persona, without suggesting that the persona is a role wholly distinct from the

persona they would normally present. Nanook, the central character in Flaherty's classic documentary, supplies a prime example. *Frank: A Vietnam Veteran* depends entirely on the confessional storytelling power of its only subject, Frank, a vet whose muted normalcy belies the extreme behavior he describes, just as *Portrait of Jason* relies entirely on the dramatic self-revelations of Jason, a black male prostitute with various improbable aspirations. (It need not be their "true" or "private" persona that social actors display; normal may mean the presentation of self in public space such as we find in *Primary*, for example, on the 1960 Wisconsin primary race between John F. Kennedy and Hubert Humphrey. Both men perform continuously, but the persona represented in the film seems very much the same as the persona they presented in public appearances generally.)

This tendency to seek out social actors with expressive capacity becomes one of the main avenues by which subjectivity enters documentaries. Even though the film may adopt an objective shooting style and abstain from cinematic attempts at interiority like point-of-view shots or flashbacks, expressive individuals heighten the possibility for empathetic identification and involvement on the part of the viewer. Social actors who lack this kind of expressive capacity seldom become the focus of the documentary film no matter how similar their performance is during shooting to what it is before and after. David MacDougall has spoken and written quite insightfully on his tendency to gravitate toward individuals who suggest complexity and density to their character through their everyday behavior. Lorang, the central character of the Turkana Conversations trilogy (*Lorang's Way*, *A Wife among Wives*, *Wedding Camels*), certainly exhibits this capacity with his urban experience but preference for traditional tribal ways, his skills at bargaining, and a predilection for philosophical musing that brings these films closer to Eric Rohmer's early work (*Claire's Knee*, *My Night at Maude's*, etc.) than to other ethnographic films. By contrast, MacDougall's later experience among Aboriginal people who were extremely reticent and disinclined to discuss their culture led him to experiment with strategies of "interior commentary" that might compensate for the absence of expressive performance.¹¹

The paradoxical nature of this tendency is the desire for performance that is not performance, for a form of self-presentation that approximates a person's normal self-presentation. One of the conventional hallmarks of great acting is the ability to represent a wide range of characters; one of the conventional expectations about social actors is that their character remains stable, with continuity and coherence. In documentary we have the desire for performance stripped of the training, rehearsing, and directing that normally accompany it. This desire spans almost the entire gamut of documentary forms and modes. (The exceptions are mostly films that focus on process, objects, or concepts rather than people, films like *The Bridge*, *Rain*, *Drifters*, *Industrial Britain*, *Song of Ceylon*, *Naked Spaces*, *Kudzu*, *Consuming Hunger*, *Time Is*, or *Powers of Ten*, and even here "performance" may

return as prototypical faces and body types, icons that evoke preexisting assumptions and attributions present in the audience. The long rhapsodic passages of the German people in Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* provide a pantheon of *volk* images even though none is given any dimensionality.)

The paradoxical sense of a performance, an expressive capacity, where the concepts of acting and performance are simultaneously disclaimed and desired, can be captured by the term "virtual performance." *Virtual*: "That is so in essence, or effect, although not formally or actually; admitting of being called by the name so far as the effect or result is concerned" (OED). Virtual performance has the power and effect of actual performance without being one. It has this characteristic by dint of its representation of the logic, or deep structure, of performance without its historical, institutional, or professional manifestations, all of which can be considered surface structure. (Computer science defines "virtual" in a similar way: unlike a library or archive, a computer's virtual memory stores bits of information without regard to their physical location. Each item is tracked by means of an algorithm that correlates physical space with logical relationships, allowing information to be readily retrieved regardless of spatial placement.)

Virtual performance presents the logic of actual performance without signs of conscious awareness that this presentation is an act. (Such awareness is what the terms "self-conscious" and "camera conscious" refer to.) Virtual performance, or the everyday presentation of self, derives from a culturally specific system of meanings surrounding facial expressions, changes of vocal tone or pitch, shifts in body posture, gestures, and so on—those very elements that actors train themselves to control at will. When Sergeant Abding in *Soldier Girls*, the tough drill instructor who puts the female recruits through grueling paces, breaks down and confesses that his Vietnam experience has left him shattered inside, we witness a virtual performance of considerable power. It has all the effects on a viewer that an actual performance would also have (as well as another: the sense of historical authenticity and privileged access). It is also typical of virtual performance in documentary in that the camera is not used to enter into an interior state of mind (via point-of-view shots, memory images, or expressive montage). The camera continues to observe; the sense of subjectivity arises from the expressive dimension of what it observes.

Degree of self-consciousness: The extent to which an expository agency acknowledges itself such that the viewer senses, "An argument is being presented to me." Self-consciousness is quite variable in fiction film—ranging from the relatively un-self-conscious style of much Hollywood film (most frequently broken by beginnings, summary montages, some comedy, and many endings) to the highly self-conscious style of early Soviet cinema, many experimental narratives, and contemporary advertising. Self-consciousness is least common in observational films, the documentary mode

most akin to fiction. There is an inevitable perspective on the events and this can be taken as an implicit argument, but self-conscious, overt argument or commentary remain minimal. Expository, interactive, and reflexive films, however, depend for their effect upon our recognition that an argument is being made. The viewer's awareness of an argument, case, or representation defines these modes and establishes audience expectations in terms of demonstration or exemplification.

Degree of communicativeness: The extent to which the exposition reveals what it knows. Delays and retardations, enigmas and suspense are intrinsic aspects of both fiction and exposition. They serve to attract ("Guess what happened today?") or retain attention ("This could be the way the last two minutes of peace in Britain would look" [*The War Game*]). Enigmas arise at a local level, when we watch Nanook set about the business of seal fishing for several minutes before the purpose of his labors becomes clear, or when an elaborate sequence of cross-cutting suspends the moment of confrontation between the sons who have stayed out too long and the father who awaits their help back at the family pizza parlor in the Middletown series film, *Family Business*. They also contribute to the overall structure of documentary. Exposition generally invokes a desire to know and the promise to fulfill that desire, in time: the time it takes the argument to unfold. *The Day after Trinity* promises to provide an understanding of Oppenheimer's role in the development of the atomic bomb as *Harlan County, U.S.A.* promises to explore the heated conflicts between workers and owners in the coal mines of Kentucky.

Texts know more than they tell at any one moment. They can be straightforward or elusive in relaying that information. The desire to know addressed by many documentaries is not a timeless, ahistorical one, however. The degree of communicativeness may fluctuate as the argument unfolds, but the promise remains that all will be told and the sum total of what is reported shall be the truth. (TV news shows frequently lead into commercial breaks with a teasing reference to the dramatic quality of a news item yet to come, but when the newscast concludes, effort is made to assure us that we have received all the news there is, for now, with no emotional loose ends yet to be resolved.)

Unlike the detective film, with its paradigmatic structure of false starts and misleading clues, where the "truth" has a structural definition, namely, it is what comes last (as it is in "*Sarrasine*," the novella analyzed by Roland Barthes in *S/Z*), the documentary breaks out of a structurally determined truth to claim a correspondence between its representation of events and the truth of an external reality. Structural determination remains, however, in the assumption that the satisfaction of the desire to know calls for a linear coherence, a documentary logic that invokes a teleological world of "meaning and truth, appeal and fulfillment."¹² Delays and retardations offer hesitations, feints, suspense, and uncertainty along the long and relentless march of exposition toward the full disclosure of a knowledge it

had held and possessed from the beginning. Permanent uncertainty and unresolved suspense, on the other hand, seem anathema to a tradition devoted to telling what it knows. Texts that follow this route (films of a reflexive bent like *Of Great Events and Ordinary People*, *Unfinished Diary*, or *Reassemblage*, for example) call this entire tradition of certain knowledge and full disclosure into question.

Another important difference between fiction and documentary stems from the specific degree of control that the documentary filmmaker may have over the events filmed. A lack of communicativeness that we would attribute, in fiction, to an intent to delay or retard the transfer of information may not, in documentary, be an attempt to withhold information at all. The information may simply be unavailable. Conversely, there may be information available that the filmmaker chooses to suppress or ignore, and it may be suppressed in ways designed to distract us from the omission. *First Contact* does not tell us that the white gold-mining brothers who made first contact with the New Guinea Highland natives some fifty years ago have been and still are married to native women; *Nanook of the North* does not disclose the differences between its depiction of Eskimo life and the much more modern patterns of existence that Flaherty found but did not film; *With Babies and Banners* does not reveal the Communist Party affiliations of some of its witnesses to the conditions of women workers in the 1930s.

Alternatively, a tangible trace of unavailable information may remain in the film as evidence of the limitations confronted by the filmmaker. The sense of an uncontrolled historical process may not only authenticate "reality," but also authenticate the documentary *representation* of that reality. It may authenticate the documentary process itself. In Sturla Gunnarson's *Final Offer*, about negotiations between the Canadian branch of the United Auto Workers and Canadian car manufacturers, his crew gains access to several of the negotiating sessions but at one crucial session, the crew, and Gunnarson, are barred, unexpectedly, at the hotel room door. This scene is left in the finished film. It contributes both surprise and suspense and can be read as an editing choice that is fully communicative in the face of a situation where important information was withheld *from* the filmmaker rather than *by* the filmmaker. Although this is an expository strategy, it is less an unalloyed testimony to rhetorical mastery than the narrational strategies of a Hitchcock are to story-telling mastery. The scene presents evidence of vulnerability as well as mastery, or, mastery in this context means displaying the way in which the filmmaker remains vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the historical world.

These categories of degrees of knowledge, subjectivity, self-consciousness, and communicativeness suggest some of the important stances a documentary can take in relation to its own argument, to the process by which it lets its knowledge be known. The distinctive ways in which these

categories operate in fiction and in documentary films suggest how documentary is a fiction (un)like any other. Knowledge more often derives from an omniscient narrator than from a single character; subjectivity is more limited than in fiction and performance has a distinctive, "virtual" quality; self-consciousness is a more common component of exposition than of narrative; and restricted communicativeness may be a stratagem for suspense and viewer engagement but it may also be testimony to the filmmaker's limited control over a world not entirely of his or her own construction. At the core of these differences remains the concept of expository argument. Its characteristics need further examination.

Argument in Documentary

Argument about the world, or representation in the sense of placing evidence before others in order to convey a particular viewpoint, forms the organizational backbone of documentary. This backbone constitutes a "logic" or "economy" of the text. This, in turn, guarantees coherence. Both narrative and documentary are organized in relation to the coherence of a chain of events, which depends on the motivated relationship between occurrences (taking "motivation" in the formal sense of justification or causality). The term "narrative logic" frequently invokes this organizational principle in contemporary criticism, but since narrative is less concerned with traditional principles of logic, analysis, rhetoric, and argument than with motivation, plausibility, function, and consistency, it may be more appropriate to speak of "narrative coherence" and "documentary logic." In documentary as in fiction, we use material evidence to form a conceptual coherence, an argument or story, according to a logic or economy proposed by the text.

The argument is what we make of the documentary's representations of the evidence it presents. These representations can take a great variety of forms. Many of these provide the chapter headings for Erik Barnouw's *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film* ("Explorer," "Reporter," "Painter," "Prosecutor," "Catalyst," and "Guerilla," for example). Typical forms of nonfiction argument that we readily recognize would include the essay, diary, notebook, editorial, report, evocation, eulogy, exhortation, and description. These forms are not specific to a given medium any more than are the forms of fiction (romance, comedy, epic, and so on). Medium-specific argumentative strategies form another, complementary categorical level. These are the modes of documentary representation previously discussed (expository, observational, interactive, and reflexive). Such modes have a history and paradigmatic logic. They confer a patina of authority on the individual text by dint of its membership within a larger category of representational strategies. Various combinations of forms and modes are

possible (expository reports or evocations, observational diaries or descriptions, reflexive eulogies or essays, and so on) with some combinations being more favored at given times and places than others.

Argument treats the historical world as the ground for the figure of its documentary representation. Argument gives us a sense of an authorial or expository presence. This creates the context for a particular view of the world and a particular array of evidence about it. As we have seen, argument takes two forms: it comes both in the form of a perspective on the world and commentary about the world. The distinction is between a continuous, implicit form of argumentation such as we find in observational films like those of Frederick Wiseman or the Middletown series and an intermittent, explicit form of argumentation that we customarily associate with voice-over commentary or the direct testimony of social actors. Perspective is the view of the world implied by the selection and arrangement of evidence. Films built heavily around interviews, such as *In the Year of the Pig*, *The Sorrow and the Pity*, and *Shoah*, also may present their argument primarily as a perspective, although both filmmaker and interviewees may interject commentary into their descriptions and accounts. (In all three examples above, it is very clear from his argumentative perspective where the filmmaker stands on the central issues, even without further commentary.) Commentary is the view of the world stated by the filmmaker or social actors recruited to the film. (Such "statements" need not be verbal; they can also be visual or more generally aural as we shall see when we discuss intellectual montage in documentary.)

Commentary serves to provoke a sense of distance for the purposes of orientation, evaluation, judgment, reflection, reconsideration, persuasion, or qualification between the text as a whole and the evidence it presents. Commentary allows for a recognizable moral/political overlay to be applied to the world, often using the same techniques or stylistic devices that contribute to establishing the text's representation of the world in the first place (editing, speech, camera angle, composition, and so on). This doubling is what gives the text its voice or social point of view.

The distinction between commentary and perspective can also be made by the contrast between a viewer position that is relatively active in terms of determining the moral or political theme of the text and one in which the viewer is placed in a more passive position. The first, most pronounced in observational films, could be described as "see-for-yourself" in its effect, the second as "see-it-my-way." A "see-for-yourself" perspective is closer to the experience of most fiction. In relation to viewer expectations for documentary it may seem manipulative because it is oblique. Wiseman's *High School* is sometimes regarded this way, while a highly pointed, satirical text such as *Sixteen in Webster Groves* appears more frank. Emile de Antonio's films (*In the Year of the Pig*, *Point of Order*, *Millhouse*, *Underground* and others) are particularly successful examples of argument by perspective (see-for-yourself) in contrast with many other interview-based films that leave us with

little choice but to accept the perspective, and commentary, of their interviewees (see-it-this-way). Still other films remind us that the alternatives are not quite so stark: multiple commentaries may conflict with one another without resolution; different voices may compete for attention; a heteroglossia may prevail that says, in effect, "there's-always-more-than-one-way-to-see-it" and may also say that each "way" carries ideological/moral/aesthetic implications with it. (*Naked Spaces*, with its three non-hierarchized commentaries representing indigenous African sayings, the thought of African intellectuals, and Western commentary about Africa conveys this possibility effectively.)

One immediate consequence of this way of representing documentary logic is that a perspective, and therefore a representation or argument, differentiates a text from "mere film" or raw footage. Once the viewer can infer a perspective, then even observations, descriptions, and "objective" reports or records can no longer be considered mechanical replicas or value-free reproductions of the historical world. Such representations do not offer a neutral fingerprint or decal of the world although they may aspire to a certain culturally determined standard for objective reportage. Put differently, objectivity is itself a perspective. Nonjudgmental, impartial, disinterested, and factually correct, objectivity nonetheless offers an argument about the world; its strategy of apparent self-effacement testifies to the significance of the world and the solemn responsibility of those who report on it to do so impartially and accurately, with a detachment legitimized as institutional discourse.

Objectivity also emphasizes the denotative dimension to situations or events in preference to subjective and connotative elements (these often figure in as "color commentary," introductory "hooks," or accentuations of particularly dramatic occurrences). But the emphasis on denotation remains a perspective. As Roland Barthes effectively argues at the beginning of *S/Z*, denotation works to legitimate scientific, critical, and philosophic discourse. And although this can be seen as a linguistic effect, it is a felt effect, one that registers as "true." (In a similar fashion apparent motion in film registers as felt or perceived motion; "to reproduce its appearance is to duplicate its reality."¹³) Denotation, then, bolsters the persuasive power of an argument. Barthes, though, dissects this support into a form of complicity: connotation and denotation refer to each other in the manner of a game:

Ideologically, finally, this game has the advantage of affording the classic text a certain *innocence*: of the two systems, denotative and connotative, one turns back on itself and indicates its own existence: the system of denotation; denotation is not the first meaning, but pretends to be so; under this illusion, it is ultimately no more than the *last* of the connotations (the one which seems both to establish and to close the reading), the superior myth by which the text pretends to return to the nature of language, to language as nature.¹⁴

Though illusions, denotation and objectivity have considerable power. They cannot be disregarded, but their status as distinct perspectives, implicit arguments about the world, remains of fundamental concern.

Objectivity, in accord with realism, represents the world the way the world, in the guise of "common sense," chooses to present itself. Barthes calls this natural and commonsensical (that is, ideological and institutionally enforced) form of representation "zero-degree style." It adopts a posture of innocent neutrality in the face of the wiles of individuals, institutions, and social systems while also providing one of the foundation stones for professions like journalism and certain forms of ethnography, anthropology, sociology, and documentary filmmaking. And in each case, objectivity is not only a perspective, it also allows for more specific individual or institutional perspectives to represent themselves. (We may, for instance, feel we have an impartial view of both of the presidential candidates, John F. Kennedy and Hubert Humphrey, in the Drew Associates' *Primary*.)

Frederick Wiseman's documentaries are never quite as neutral as they seem, for example. They embody a distinctive view of institutions like hospitals, schools, and the military that sides with strategies of resistance over instrumental, bureaucratic logic.¹⁵ But they do so through a particular selection and arrangement of sound and image, without benefit of overt commentary. In other words, rhetoric is operative, but less blatantly. It is embedded in a style that, like fiction, appears to address us only indirectly.

Likewise, television news represents the world in accordance with the criteria of objectivity, but from a perspective—at least in United States network broadcasting—that empowers the institutional apparatus for the production of news more than the viewer, and often more than those who, in fact, make the news.¹⁶ The reality of the news takes precedence over the news of reality. And the objectivity offered clearly is constrained by decisions of what is and is not news, what should and should not be reported, what may and may not be commented upon. Like soap operas, television news presents an ongoing saga of complication, reversal, and suspense composed, in this case, of events drawn from a national political and socioeconomic drama as represented in the commonsensical terms of the dominant institutions that define this drama. Like a secondary plot, more cursory attention goes to the world of sports, culture, weather, and curious, offbeat, or exceptional occurrences in everyday life. (The offbeat or unusual highlights the difference between normalcy and deviance for a society whose collective agenda is set by, as much as reported in, the news.)

The primary point is to identify a level of authorial presence, or voice,¹⁷ that is felt and experienced by the viewer as different from the mere replication or reproduction of the world. What we experience is less the world reproduced than represented. Perspective can embody both objective and subjective moments; it can defer to those individuals recruited from the world to speak in the film but not for the film; it can be a voice

wholly embedded within stylistic choices of selection and arrangement. By contrast, commentary is a form of argument in which the voice of the film is seen or heard directly. Elsewhere I have referred to this form as "direct address." Direct address, though, tends to be most closely associated with exposition, whereas commentary in the sense meant here can occur in expository, interactive, and reflexive documentaries. (It is rare in the observational mode, although individual observational films may well contain examples, as we saw with *Titicut Follies*.)

Commentary gives didactic orientation toward the argument. Commentary guides our grasp of the moral, political view of the world offered by the documentary text. Unlike perspective, it diverts our attention from the world represented to the discourse of the text, to the representations of a documentary logic. In *The Battle of San Pietro*, for example, the commentary, in the form of John Huston's voice-over, provides an argument about the cost of battle that is at odds with the opening statement by General Mark Clark praising the fruits of victory. Huston's ironic remarks ("Last year was a bad year for grapes and olives") form the scaffolding for our construction of the argument so that we regard the images as supporting material, illustrative of an argument carried by tone more than assertions (shell-pocked fields accompany his remark about crops, for example). (*The Battle of San Pietro* also has a perspective embedded in the editing and music that places a much higher premium on the loss of Allied lives than Axis ones: we see living GIs in facial close-up, but we see their dead bodies from angles that hide or obscure their faces; with German and Italian soldiers we do not see their faces while they are alive, but we do see close-ups of them when they are dead.)¹⁸

Similarly, the commentary by anchorpeople and reporters in television news guides our comprehension of the events that may also be visually illustrated. The argument will usually identify the important characters or forces involved and briefly indicate what kind of narrative-like event they contribute to. Famine in Ethiopia, for example, is represented as the result of natural drought and inept organizations that create starvation and death of grand proportions. Longer-term factors such as the transformation of agricultural practices by external economic pressures and imported technologies will be ignored or downplayed in favor of a more dramatic tale of sudden and catastrophic disaster. The images, vivid and dramatic in their own right, support this argument.

This steering or agenda-setting process by those who provide commentary is even more evident in television talk shows. In both late-night talk shows, where the emphasis is on inconsequential, entertaining conversation, and in daytime talk shows, where the emphasis is often on timely, volatile issues like wife battering or drug abuse, the host guides us along an argument that, at the level of content and commentary, often appears minimal, made up on the spot, and seldom more than platitudinous but, at the level of form and perspective, is highly preconceived (i.e., this show

and this host will give you a lively, informative, entertaining, but also sensitive and socially responsible window onto the world; trust us). These shows rely upon the interview for their basic structure but seldom marshal their guests into an arrangement that builds to support a particular point of view (unlike, say, Emile de Antonio's classic expository documentary, *In the Year of the Pig*). The underlying argument, the formal perspective, is more attitudinal: this host (and the ongoing show, its sponsors, and the network that carries it) cares about important issues; he or she will explore them conscientiously; he or she will ferret out evasions and show tact in the face of emotional distress; he or she will allow your own surrogate representatives—members of a studio audience—to participate in the dialogue; and we will leave you yet more aware of the full extent and possible consequences of the issues even if we offer no clear solutions. You may congratulate yourself for watching us; we will make you a more informed and empathetic person.

Commentary appears directed toward us. On-screen narrators and hosts look into the camera lens, at us. Interviewers and interviewees present three-quarter poses, carefully aligned so as not to look directly into the lens. They look at each other, lest the process of interviewing seem irrelevant. This orchestration of the gaze also subordinates those interviewed to those who speak on behalf of the program or network—the host—by restricting access to the camera lens. Guests and hosts have different rights of access to the camera. Guests normally look about fifteen to thirty degrees to the side of the camera, presumably at the host. Frontality of face, eyes, and trunk is the favored bodily position for commentators. (Hosts invariably look directly at the camera when they announce a station break; the control of time and space is delegated to them, not guests or audience.) This commonly lends a heightened awareness not of the constructedness of an imaginary world or even the constructedness of a particular representation of the historical world, but of the authoring, expository agency itself: this is the world according to Barbara Walters, Robin Leach, Oprah Winfrey, Arsenio Hall, or Ted Koppel, and the institutions for which they stand.

This emphasis on the agent of expository argumentation itself is vividly demonstrated in television advertising. If awareness can be said to be heightened by these texts, it is primarily in terms of the sense of being addressed. The world represented in the commercial, whether anchored to the historically real or fully fabricated, takes on an aura of plausibility by providing a suitable milieu for its own denotative ground: the product. But its stability and extension as a world is precarious. "Documentary logic," in this case rhetorical claims about the product, supports a believable world—but only to the extent that this world substantiates claims made on the behalf of a commodity, claims that often stretch our definition of common sense. We feel ourselves less in the presence of *a* world or *the* world than of an argument, frequently one based on wish-fulfillment or hyperbole. (In lifestyle ads that make few if any overt claims, the argument may be carried

by a perspective that associates a particular form of sensibility and experience with the use of a product.) What David Bordwell has claimed for the innovative Soviet cinema of the 1920s can also be said of television advertising (even though the political intent makes an abrupt about-face): "This cinema goes beyond those narrational asides which we found in the art cinema; these films do not offer a reality [a mix of objective and subjective representations] inflected by occasional interpolated 'commentary'; these films are signed and addressed through and through, the diegetic world built from the ground up according to rhetorical demands."¹⁹

The construction of a world to the measure of rhetoric in early Soviet cinema was nowhere more true than in the use of intellectual montage, the combination of images, or sound and images, explicitly in order to comment on some aspect of the story. Sometimes the image chosen to make a comment would have no basis in the world of the fiction (a peacock would be imported to comment on the character of Kerensky in *October*, for example). Sometimes the image would be drawn from the world of the story itself, constituting a refrain of sorts (repeated expressions of shock on the faces of citizens as the troops attack them on the Odessa steps in *Potemkin*, or the cross-cutting between the abattoir and the slaughter of the workers in *Strike*). These alternatives are sometimes called extradiegetic and diegetic inserts or juxtapositions. In documentary, the intrusion of an image that does not belong to the world represented is a near impossibility to the extent that documentary images claim a bond to the historical world. Archival footage might be said to intrude on the present with the evidence of history, although this is less an intrusion than an amplification. The most intrusive images would be fictional ones, not even reconstructions so much as scenes from preexisting fictional films, but even here the join can be made reasonably seamless and the effect of contrasting planes of representation minimized. The documentary *The Making of a Legend*, about the making of *Gone with the Wind*, uses fiction films rather than newsreel footage to authenticate, quite effortlessly, the historical period it describes. More likely, images that support the "logic of implication" associated with commentary arrive from disparate parts of the same world in accord with principles of evidentiary editing. Smoke stacks from different factories or towns may be inserted to evoke "industry" or, today, "pollution."

Even more to the point, intellectual montage may actually *constitute* the visual representation of the world. Elements of the world required as evidence for the text's argument can be herded together from separate points of origin; their combination may not prompt the sense of a diegetic and extradiegetic distinction since they are all of the world and all in support or constitutive of the argument. In other words, since there is no fictional world to be intruded upon, intellectual montage in documentary emphasizes the overt or constructed quality of an argument, based on representations from the historical world, rather than the constructed quality of an imaginary world. It is less reflexive or deconstructive in its

potential than pointedly argumentative. It urges us to follow the logic of the text, perhaps casting aside or questioning previous assumptions and knowledge about the world.

Intellectual montage is more than the combination of disparate snatches of the world according to the rules of evidence. Intellectual montage achieves an unbalancing or disequilibrium in relation to norms, assumptions, or expectations that prevail for the viewer. It is a form of formal and, often, political reflexivity. Insight replaces recognition, new possibilities suggest themselves, alternatives come to light. In this sense intellectual montage achieves its effect by means of strange juxtapositions. This was the quality of mechanically reproduced art that excited Walter Benjamin who saw this as a way of empowering workers. Strange juxtapositions, reassemblies of the world as it is, suggest how the principle of the assembly line can be revolutionized to subvert a logic of order and control into one of transgression and change:

If close-ups of the things around us, by focusing on hidden details of familiar objects, by exploring commonplace milieus under the ingenious guidance of the camera, the film, on the one hand, extends our comprehension of the necessities which rule our lives; on the other hand, it manages to assure us of an immense and unexpected field of action. Our taverns and our metropolitan streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories appeared to have us locked up hopelessly. Then came the film and burst this prison-world asunder by the dynamite of the tenth of a second, so that now, in the midst of its far-flung ruins and debris, we calmly and adventurously go travelling.²⁰

The history of intellectual montage—and the larger goal of political reflexivity to which it contributes—is a story of suppression, distortion, dilution, and repression. In Hollywood, Slavko Vorkapich perfected the montage summary that became the standard means by which transformation or prolonged process was represented. A series of images would be rapidly cut together (often joined by overlapping dissolves or other optical effects) to evoke the various stages or periods of a process without analyzing the labor that would go into the process. Things changed, seemingly without effort or cost, until the story resumed at its more leisurely pace and the fate of specific characters could be once again differentiated and individualized from the general historical flow.

In United States documentary in the 1930s, where the influence of Soviet film theory and practice was massive, intellectual montage never achieved the status of a fundamental principle or commitment. A pragmatic insistence on reportage, on bringing back evidence of working-class solidarity and struggle, took precedence. Leadership and change resided outside the film process, in the political vanguard provided by the Communist Party. Films depicted conflict (strikes, hunger marches, etc.) but were not themselves representations of conflict. The Film and Photo League, Nykino, and

the most sophisticated filmmaking group, Frontier Films (*People of the Cumberland*, *Heart of Spain*, *China Strikes Back*, *Native Land*), acknowledged the importance of the Soviet example without adopting its methods wholesale.²¹

Where pragmatism and deference to a political party did not prevail, humanism did. The emphasis throughout the 1930s, and in *Native Land*, the film that culminated and terminated the left cultural activism of the period, was on identification and empathy, the human cost of war and fascist inclinations, through characters shaped and crafted with an attention to psychological realism not radically different from that of Hollywood. Departure from individuated characters and their plight for conceptual juxtapositions or strange combinations of competing logics never took hold. The formalist concept of *ostranenie*, the “making strange” of things familiar through the manner of representation and juxtaposition; the Brechtian concept of *Verfremdungseffekt*, using alienation devices that break the empathetic bond to promote a broader level of insight; and surrealism, with its insistence on the forced juxtaposition of incommensurate realities, all seemed too distracting for principles that were direct, immediate, and obvious.

Instead, documentary or historical realism filled the bill. It let audiences see for themselves. It assumed an unproblematic transfer of motivation from activists to viewers, and it encouraged a strong identificatory bond between viewer and exemplary character. Strange juxtapositions such as those employed by Luis Buñuel in *Land without Bread*, by Dziga Vertov in *The Man with a Movie Camera*, by Eisenstein in *Potemkin* or *October*, by Franju in *Blood of the Beasts*, and by other surrealists and early French ethnographers hovered beyond the pale, unable to move beyond their status as “art” or “novelty” to that of model and foundation. To this day, the documentary of social change—especially in its classic, expository mode—remains character-centered to a remarkable degree in the United States, and the teachings of Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Dovzhenko, and Dziga Vertov together with the foremost exemplars of those strategies for a political cinema, Bertolt Brecht and Jean-Luc Godard, remain comparatively underutilized.²²

generalizing frames around it that direct commentary would provide. Arguments for a fetishization of the visible such as Annette Kuhn offers in her extremely useful article, "The Camera I: Observations on Documentary" or Noel Burch makes in "Hogarth, England Home and Beauty: Two Recent British Films and the Documentary Ideology," assault the "hegemony of the visible" or the "bourgeois fascination with the replica as a means of symbolically extending property" within the terms of the 1970s project to displace readerly, classical texts with writerly, radical ones. Both essays appear in *Screen* 19, no. 2 (1978). This project claimed that to observe but not confront, to represent but not explain, allowed the dominant ideology of documentary to march hand in hand with dominant bourgeois ideology. The only politically correct strategy was one that challenged convention and code in the text itself and by that means made the viewer aware of the text not only in terms of what it represented about the world but also what it represented as a text. This encourages a politics of form that tends toward the reductive in its generalizations about bourgeois ideology, the fetishization of the visible, and the work of the cinematic apparatus as a means of social control. It is no coincidence that Noel Burch has subsequently had a greater influence on formalist critics like David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson than political ones like Robert Stam or Tania Modleski.

10. Brian Winston, "The Tradition of the Victim," Alan Rosenthal, ed., *New Challenges for Documentary*, 274. The tension between subject as victim and filmmaker as artist can be profitably explored in regard to *The Thin Blue Line*, where Errol Morris's desire to make a good movie had the happy effect of helping to free a wrongfully accused Randall Adams. Adams gets to tell his story but he is less empowered than showcased. The film is less an acknowledgment of Adams's dignity or honesty than of his ability to play a key role in the orchestration of a taut drama of injustice and victimization, including the victimization Brian Winston attributes to filmmakers who present their subjects as either social victims or the stock characters required by their own dramatic treatment of reality.

11. If this strategy of disenfranchisement and mythologization does not represent control in relation to the "uncontrolled" practice of documentary filmmaking, what does? In a world of images and discourses, of languages that we speak but that also constitute us, the question of "control" returns as an issue for the viewer and social actor as much or more than for the filmmaker and his or her art. Central to any progressive political stance, this particular aspect of the question of control receives no consideration in the works by Gomery and Allen or Bordwell and Thompson discussed in chapter 1.

12. Nick Browne, "The Spectator-in-the-Text: The Rhetoric of Stagecoach," *Movies and Methods*, vol. 2.

13. *Ibid.*, 468-69.

14. This concern is the reason Ed Pincus gives for holding his extraordinary documentary, *Panola*, about an unemployed alcoholic black father in Natchez, Mississippi, out of general circulation: it might simply reinforce preexisting stereotypes about Southern blacks if no further context is provided.

15. I discuss the idea of the "masked interview" in *Ideology and the Image*, 279-83. It is also explored further in chapter 2 in relation to the interactive mode of documentary representation.

16. Nick Browne, "The Spectator," 472.

17. The prime counterpoint to this position, and one that is implicitly criticized by the entirety of Nick Browne's essay, is Jean-Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," *Movies and Methods*, vol. 2.

18. Bill Nichols, *Ideology and the Image*, chapter 7.

19. Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974): 188.

20. Fredric Jameson puts it well when he writes that "ethical thought projects as

permanent features of 'human experience,' and thus as a kind of 'wisdom' about personal life and interpersonal relations, what are in reality the historical and institutional specifics of a determinate type of group solidarity or class cohesion. . . . What is really meant by 'the good' is simply my own position as an unassailable power center, in terms of which the position of the other, or of the weak, is repudiated and marginalized in practices which are then ultimately themselves formalized in the concept of evil." See *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981): 59, 117.

This function of ethical discourse in relation to the responsibility of the documentary filmmaker emerged in the rejection of *The Thin Blue Line* by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for an Oscar nomination. The film's ironic, reflexive mode seemed to fall outside the bounds of "responsible" reporting. The possibility that the film might be attempting to challenge prevailing conventions, and the ethics that underpin them, or that it might merit nomination for the quality of its accomplishment regardless of its adherence to certain canons of objectivity, fairness, and accuracy were not, apparently, entertained. See "How Oscar Shoo-In Got Dumped by Academy," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 22, 1989, E3.

4. Telling Stories with Evidence and Arguments

1. Dziga Vertov, "From a Stenograph," in P. Adams Sitney, ed., *Film Culture Reader* (New York: Praeger, 1970): 354-55.

2. Paul Rotha, *The Film Till Now* (1930; reprint, London: Spring Books, 1967), 34.

3. For an elaborate and thorough discussion of how viewers may process narrative information cognitively, see David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985). For a critique of Bordwell's approach see Barry King, "The Classical Hollywood Cinema," and "The Story Continues . . .," *Screen* 27, no. 6 (1986): 74-88 and 28, no. 3 (1987): 56-82. A debate between King and Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson occurs in *Screen* 29, no. 1 (1988). Also see my "Form Wars: The Political Unconscious of Formalist Theory," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 88, no. 2 (Spring 1989): 487-515.

4. André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," in Hugh Gray, ed., *What Is Cinema?*, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967). A typical comment by Bazin on the cinema as an "embalming" medium is, "The photographic image is the object itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space that governs it. . . . Hence the charm of family albums. Those grey or sepia shadows, phantomlike and almost undecipherable, are no longer traditional family portraits but rather the disturbing presence of lives halted at a set moment in their duration, freed from their destiny; not, however, by the prestige of art but by the power of an impassive mechanical process: for photography does not create eternity, as art does, it embalms time, rescuing it simply from its proper corruption" (14).

5. I am indebted for this formulation to Giles Gunn, "The Semiotics of Culture and the Interpretation of Literature: Clifford Geertz and the Moral Imagination," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 12, no. 1 (1979): 120. He writes that we must balance the mimetic and creative dimensions of art. "For if art forms refract and express certain meanings, they also help shape and sustain them. Art not only imitates life but equally influences it, and it does so by providing, often for the first time, a significant form for those very aspects of subjective human experience it purports only to reflect." This comment is itself an acknowledged paraphrase of Fredric Jameson who first formulates the idea that a text appears to refer us to a

context that is itself the invention of the text, even if this context enjoys all the illusionistic vividness provided by realism. See "The Symbolic Inference; or, Kenneth Burke and Ideological Analysis," *Critical Inquiry* 4 (1978): 507–23.

6. Prime examples include *Operation Abolition* (1960), made for the House Un-American Activities Committee to document their investigation of subversives in the San Francisco Bay Area, and *Operation Correction* (1961), made in response to the film's rhetorical manipulations; Emile de Antonio's *Point of Order* (1963) and the original live television broadcast of the United States Senate's investigation of Eugene McCarthy's dealings with the Army; *Triumph of the Will* and the Why We Fight series, which both use the same images of marching Nazi soldiers to opposite effect. Pat Aufderheide discusses several recent examples involving El Salvador in "Left, Right and Center: El Salvador on Film," in Julianne Burton, ed., *The Social Documentary in Latin America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990): 151–71.

7. See Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy* (London: NLB, 1971), where he writes that "the category of the subject is only constitutive of all ideology insofar as all ideology has the function (which defines it) of 'constituting' concrete individuals as subjects" (171) and "the individual is interpellated as a (free) subject in order that he shall submit freely to the commandments of the Subject, i.e., in order that he shall (freely) accept his subjection, i.e., in order that he shall make the gestures and actions of his subjection 'all by himself' (182)." This may be so, but my point is that our constitution as subjects is for naught until we are directed toward the world around us by means of propositions, protocols, procedures, and practices. Without its "This is so," ideology's "Hey there!" operates in a vacuum.

8. Jerry Kuehl, "Truth Claims," in Alan Rosenthal, ed., *New Challenges for Documentary*, 109. Kuehl's somewhat flip tone glosses over a sharp distinction between argument and evidence. A documentary may present convincing evidence that Khrushchev pounded his shoe; the image may even enter into popular memory and become an evocative icon with strong symbolic value, but this evidence is of a completely different order from the argument that accompanies it. Arguments are representations whether they occur in documentary or fiction. That documentary argument is linked to evidence from the historical world may give it considerable power to convince, but this linkage does not itself certify the argument's validity.

9. An eloquent example of how facts can be fit to more than one argumentative frame—to say nothing of a multiplicity of fictional possibilities—occurs in an essay by Gregory Bateson:

I began to doubt the validity of my own categories, and performed an experiment. I chose three bits of culture: (a) a *wau* (mother's brother) giving food to a *laua* (sister's son); a pragmatic bit, (b) a man scolding his wife; an ethological bit, and (c) a man marrying his father's sister's daughter; a structural bit. Then I drew a lattice of nine squares on a large piece of paper, three rows of squares with three squares in each row. I labelled the horizontal rows with my bits of culture and the vertical columns with my categories. Then I forced myself to see each bit as conceivably belonging to each category. I found that it could be done.

... In fact, "eth" is and the rest were finally reduced to abstractions ...; they were labels for points of view voluntarily adopted by the investigator.

Gregory Bateson, "Experiments in Thinking About Observed Ethnological Material," *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (New York: Ballantine, 1972): 85–86.

10. These categories are proposed and described in Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 57–61. They are also useful within a broader perspective and in relation to documentary as well as fiction.

11. David MacDougall, "Experiments in Interior Commentary," typescript.

12. Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, 76.

13. Christian Metz, "On the Impression of Reality in the Cinema," in *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974): 9.

14. Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, 9.

15. See chapter 7, "Frederick Wiseman's Documentaries: Theory and Structure," in my *Ideology and the Image* for a detailed discussion of this aspect of Wiseman's work.

16. One example occurred on "Nightline," an ABC current events talk show hosted by Ted Koppel. On July 15, 1988 the guest was Jesse Jackson. After pursuing one line of questioning, Ted Koppel told Jesse Jackson that his next question, after the station break, would be about his role at the Democratic National Convention now that the presidential candidate, Michael Dukakis, had selected someone else as vice-presidential candidate. The Reverend Jackson began to reply when Ted Koppel cut him off, saying, in effect, "Not now, after the break." The segment ended with a close-up shot of the effectively gagged, and stymied, Reverend Jackson. The purpose of posing a question only to delay the answer was clearly to create suspense rather than sustain a dialogue. That it would be tolerated was quiet testimony to the power of the institutional apparatus. The sense of objectivity becomes a pose of innocence behind which stands hierarchy, control, and, in this case, arrogance.

17. In a previous essay, "The Voice of Documentary," *Film Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (Spring 1983), I used the term "voice" to refer to what I here call "argument." Argument (carried by commentary and perspective) allows for a wider range of strategies than voice and retains the basic idea that argumentation is a property of the documentary text regardless of its own claims of objectivity, neutrality, or deference. What I there referred to as a loss of voice in films that ceded authority to the commentary of witnesses recruited to them is what I would consider here as a deferential perspective, one that chooses to present evidence of the world as witnesses describe it rather than add a contrapuntal argument or voice of its own.

18. A more extended discussion of *The Battle of San Pietro* occurs in my *Ideology and the Image*.

19. Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 239.

20. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969): 236.

21. William Alexander, in *Film on the Left: American Documentary Film from 1931 to 1942* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), writes that the American political filmmakers paid little heed to the political throttling of experimentation that took place in the Soviet Union in the mid-thirties. Instead, Ralph Steiner, Paul Strand, Leo Hurwitz, and others found a valuable lesson in the move to socialist realism: "What engaged them was the fact that, in order to reach a wider audience, Soviet film had moved beyond formalism and a merely external naturalism to an exploration of individual psychology, a representation of rounded character. *Chapayev* was hailed on all sides as a peak example of this, and it reinforced the Nykino incentive to move in such a direction" (90).

22. Some recent work revives an interest in alternative ways to represent situations and subjective experience. I explore several examples, such as Marlon Riggs's *Tongues Untied*, Brenda Longfellow's *Our Marilyn*, Marilu Mallet's *Unfinished Diary* in chapter 8, and in "Getting to Know You: Knowledge, Power, and the Body," in Michael Renov, ed., *Documentary Film* (New York: Routledge, forthcoming).

5. Sticking to Reality

1. See my *Ideology and the Image* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981): 93–103 for a discussion of pragmatics and paradox in narrative.
2. Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni, "Cinema/Ideology/Criticism" in *Movies and Methods*, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976): 27. They also go on to identify a sixth category, documentary, divided according to whether the filmmaker actively engages with his/her material or thinks that by eliminating some of the trappings of narrative, reality can be allowed to speak for itself. This latter choice, which they identify with an observational style, is the target of derision since it fails to distinguish between appearances and reality (or deep structure) and does not produce knowledge but relays existing (ideologically permeated) knowledge (*méconnaissance*).
3. The concept of the double hermeneutic derives from work by Fredric Jameson on the representation of ideology and utopia in texts, especially in *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981) and "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture," *Social Text* 1 (1979): 130–48.
4. Examples are Murrow's reports on the bombing of London (9/22/40), the bombing of Germany (12/3/43), and the discovery of Buchenwald concentration camp (4/15/45). All are found on *An Ear to the Sound of Our History*, CBS Records, 1974.
5. See Nick Browne, "The Spectator-in-the-Text: The Rhetoric of *Stagecoach*," in Bill Nichols, ed., *Movies and Methods*, vol. 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) where he argues that rhetoric represents the moral viewpoint of the author in fiction. His use of rhetoric is close to my use of style in this context in terms of an implicit system of representation, but shares with my use of rhetoric the notion of perspective as argument. Browne shows that we share the optical point of view of the upright Lucy in a scene in *Stagecoach* but identify more strongly with the "fallen woman," Dallas. A similar analysis of *Thy Kingdom Come* might show how we come to position ourselves with Kevin and against Anthony Thomas even though we share Thomas's point of view during the interview scene. Similar forms of empathetic alignment that go against the grain of the text at one level occur often in documentary. Whether they reveal the author's true sympathies or underlying fissures and contradictions has to be resolved case by case.
6. I discuss Wiseman's gaze as tactless in *Ideology and the Image* but place it more within the tradition of a radical empiricism that eschews etiquette and taboos to examine what others would prefer to overlook or ignore. In this discussion I stress the ethical ambivalence of this position toward those whom he films. Greater sensitivity toward subjects need not necessarily be an argument for more timid empiricism.
7. Eileen McGarry, "Documentary, Realism, and Women's Cinema," *Women and Film* 2, no. 7: 56.
8. Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 53.
9. Charles Altman, "Dickens, Griffith, and Film Theory Today," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 88, no. 2 (Spring 1989): 345, 346–7.
10. Dana Polan, "Film Theory Re-assessed," *Continuum* 1, no. 2 (1988): 15–30.
11. Richard Dyer, "Entertainment and Utopia," in *Movies and Methods*, vol. 2, 220–232.
12. Altman, "Dickens, Griffith, and Film Theory Today."
13. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981): 35.
14. Hayden White, *Metahistory*, 2.

15. Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973): 7.
16. Geertz, "Thick Description," 27.
17. Geertz, "Thick Description," 29.
18. Quoted by Peter Wollen, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972): 123–24.
19. Christian Metz, *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974): 9. Digital sampling destroys the concept of the original. Altered images have identical ontological status as what was altered. The evidentiary value of the photograph (in legal cases, for example) is utterly destroyed, but, ironically, the *impression* of authenticity remains.
20. André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," *What Is Cinema?*, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967): 14.
21. A classic existential paradox requires the individual caught within it to act, but acting requires him or her to act in a self-contradictory fashion, one that sets up a perpetual oscillation, an on/off, yes/no form of schizophrenic response until the context or frame that created the double bind in the first place is broken. An example is the "barber's paradox," where a soldier is given the order to shave all the men who do not shave themselves. The dilemma arises when the soldier must decide whether to shave himself. If he does shave himself he has disobeyed the order (he must only shave men who do not shave themselves), but if he does not shave himself he also disobeys the order (he must shave men who do not shave themselves).
22. The indexical image says, in a similar fashion, "Regard this image as you would regard that which it represents." How, then, do we regard the image? If we decide that the image is what it represents, we disregard its status as image and act as though what it represents were before us (although it is not). If we decide that the image is not what it represents, we disregard its claim and act as though the image were only an image (although it also represents something else). This oscillation is akin to the "suspension of disbelief" requested by fiction generally where we retain an awareness that it is only a fiction but make believe that it is more than a fiction.
23. André Bazin, "Cinema and Exploration," *What Is Cinema?*, vol. 1, 159.
24. Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (New York: Ballantine, 1972): 86.
25. Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 322.
26. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, 221. Benjamin saw aura as a quality of original objects and things that was lost when they were replicated mechanically. Photography stripped things of their aura. My point here is that subjectivity in documentary adds to the ability of a representation to convey something of the specificity and uniqueness of a historical moment. It remains, of course, a representation, devoid, perhaps, of aura in Benjamin's precise use of the term.
27. A full description of the historical overlay to *Patriamada* can be found in Julianne Burton, "Sing, the Beloved Country: An Interview with Tisuka Tamasaki on *Patriamada*," *Film Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (Fall 1987): 2–9.

6. The Fact of Realism and the Fiction of Objectivity

1. I am indebted to David Bordwell's *Narration in the Fiction Film* for initially suggesting that art cinema overcomes a possible tension between an objective view of an imaginary world (a view not that of any one character) and the personal, even idiosyncratic view of an overt author by stressing ambiguity. Although this insight does not do justice to the forms of ambiguity found in such films—ranging from a

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