

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

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

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

process of editing—in choices of what to show and what to omit—might there be that also deserve a place in the finished film?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The common interview is even more structured than conversation or

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

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

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

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

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

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

Often the quality of the sound recording suggests that the filmmaker

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

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

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

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

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

The Reflexive Mode of Representation

If the historical world is a meeting place for the processes of social exchange and representation in the interactive mode, the representation of the historical world becomes, itself, the topic of cinematic meditation in the reflexive mode. Rather than hearing the filmmaker engage solely in an interactive (participatory, conversational, or interrogative) fashion with other social actors, we now see or hear the filmmaker also engage in metacommentary, speaking to us less about the historical world itself, as in the expository and poetic or interactive and diaristic modes, than about the process of representation itself. Whereas the great preponderance of doc-

umentary production concerns itself with talking about the historical world, the reflexive mode addresses the question of *how* we talk about the historical world. As with poetic exposition, the focus of the text slides from the realm of historical reference to the properties of form, reflexivity to its problem. It internalizes many of the issues and concerns that are the subject of this study, not as a secondary or subsequent mode of retrospective analysis, but as an immediate undeferrable issue in social representation itself. Reflexive texts are self-conscious not only about form and style, as poetic ones are, but also about strategy, structure, conventions, expectations, and effects.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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