



A NEW HISTORY OF

BETSY A. MCLANE

DOCUMENTARY FILM

SECOND EDITION

A New History of Documentary Film

A New History of Documentary Film

Second Edition

by

Betsy A. McLane



Continuum International Publishing Group
80 Maiden Lane, New York, NY 10038
The Tower Building, 11 York Road, London SE1 7NX

www.continuumbooks.com

© Betsy A. McLane, 2012

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the written permission of the publishers.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

ISBN: 978-1-4411-5450-7

Typeset by Fakenham Prepress Solutions, Fakenham, Norfolk NR21 8NN

*For Jack C. Ellis
Friend and Mentor*



Table of Contents

Preface xiii

- 1** Some Ways to Think About Documentary 1
 - Description 1
 - Definition 4
 - Intellectual Contexts 7
 - Pre-Documentary Origins 9
 - Books on Documentary Theory and General Histories of Documentary 18

- 2** The Work of Robert and Frances Flaherty 21
 - The Flaherty Way 34
 - The Flaherty Legacy 36
 - Chapter Related Films 39
 - Chapter Related Books 39

- 3** The Soviets and Political Indoctrination, 1922–1929 41
 - Reportage/Newsreel 42
 - Compilation 48
 - Epic 51
 - Fiction and Documentary 51
 - The Fiction Films 52
 - Chapter Related Films 55
 - Chapter Related Books 56

- 4 The European Avant-Garde Experimentation, 1922–1929** 57
- Aesthetic Predispositions 57
 - Avant-Garde and Documentary 59
 - Three City Symphonies 63
 - Changes in the Avant-Garde 68
 - Chapter Related Films 70
 - Chapter Related Books 70
- 5 Institutionalization: Great Britain, 1929–1939** 73
- Background and Underpinnings 73
 - The System 75
 - The Films 79
 - Grierson and Flaherty 87
 - Grierson's Contribution 89
 - Chapter Related Films 91
 - Chapter Related Books 91
- 6 Institutionalization USA, 1930–1941** 93
- The March of Time 96
 - Government Documentaries 99
 - Non-Government Documentaries 107
 - Conclusions 110
 - Dénouement 112
 - An Aside to Conclude 113
 - Chapter Related Films 114
 - Chapter Related Books 115
- 7 WWII** 117
- Part A: Great Britain 117
 - Early Days 118
 - Indoctrination 120
 - Social Documentary 124
 - Records of Battle 126

Part B: Canada	130
Founding of National Film Board	131
Theatrical Series	132
Nontheatrical Films	135
Summary	136
Part C: United States	137
Training	138
Indoctrination – Why We Fight	139
Records of Battle	143
Social Documentary	146
Comparisons: Great Britain, Canada, United States	149
Chapter Related Films	153
Chapter Related Books	153
8 Post-war Documentary, 1945–1961	159
Personnel and Leadership	162
Sponsorship	167
USIA Films	167
Canada	171
Subjects	172
Internationalism	173
Approaches and Techniques	176
Observations	176
Chapter Related Films	181
Chapter Related Books	182
9 Documentary for Television, The ‘Golden Years,’ 1951–1971	185
Historical Background	186
Documentary Series	188
Special Characteristics of Television Documentary	196
Chapter Related Films	200
Chapter Related Books	201

- 10 British Free Cinema and New American Cinema, 1953–1960** 203
- Critical Background 204
 - Free Cinema Films 208
 - The United States 211
 - Chapter Related Films 217
 - Chapter Related Books 217
- 11 Cinéma vérité, direct cinema, 1958–1970** 219
- Historical Background 220
 - New Technology and First CV/Direct 222
 - Direct cinema vs. cinéma vérité 231
 - Effects on Documentary Subjects and Styles 233
 - Frederick Wiseman 237
 - Conclusion 239
 - Chapter Related Films 240
 - Chapter Related Books 241
- 12 The 1970s: Power to the People** 243
- Some Established Filmmakers 244
 - New Directions in CV/Direct 250
 - Political Emphases and Vietnam 255
 - Newsreel Collectives 257
 - Feminist Resurgence 259
 - Challenge for Change 262
 - Public Access Television 263
 - Other Emerging Organization 265
 - Chapter Related Films 268
 - Chapter Related Books 269
- 13 Video Arrives** 271
- Cable and Satellite Technology 274
 - Personal Essay Film 277
 - Compilation 279

Strictly Political 283
Social and Ethnic Minorities 285
Representing Gay and Lesbian Culture 292
Chapter Related Films 298
Chapter Related Books 299

14 Reality Bytes 301

Business and Technology: The Bad and The Good 302
American Public Television 306
Archival Documentary 308
The Ken Burns Phenomenon 312
Canada Soldiers On 316
Developments in the UK 317
American Independents 322
Chapter Related Films 327
Chapter Related Books 329

15 Documentary Tradition in the Twenty-First Century 331

Werner Herzog 335
Steve James, Alex Gibney, Davis Guggenheim 337
Erroll Morris, Sinofsky & Berlinger, Stanley Nelson 342
Women Documentarians 346
Experimental Documentary 351
Theatres and Festivals 357
Chapter Related Films 361
Chapter Related Books 362

16 Now and When 363

Aesthetics and Content 365
Finance 368
Documentary Un-reality 370
Peter Watkins 375
Intimate Doings of Reality 377

Academic Approaches 379
Emergent Technologies 381
Social Media 382
Commitment to History 384
Conclusion 386
Chapter Related Films 390
Chapter Related Books 390

Appendix One

Academy Awards for Best Documentary Feature 391

Appendix Two

The National Film Registry 401

Index 407



Preface

Like any account of history, this one is necessarily limited in scope. In this case, in addition to covering only nonfiction films there are two major delimiting factors:

1. This book is concerned with documentary films made in a particular part of the world: the UK, Western Europe and North America. These are the places where documentary film began.

2. After the silent era, the films considered are English language; even with that caveat, works from Australia, New Zealand, Ireland or other English language-speaking countries are not explored.

In recent decades documentary-making has become widespread, and with the use of mobile telephone cameras and the internet, documentaries are now made and seen regularly throughout the world. It is a marvel that documentaries seem to be everywhere. Even within the above limitations, there are far too many documentary films and filmmakers to include in this volume. Like Pare Lorentz's *River*, one drop became a trickle, a brook, a stream, a torrent, and now a flood that cannot be contained in two covers.

It remains important to understand that without the beginnings and the development described in this book there would not be a documentary tradition in the sense that we know it. The prevailing social hierarchies, the technologies, the finances, the conflicts and the distribution of personal and political power created the milieu in which the documentary developed. Sometimes it has been the films themselves that changed this order; documentaries are nothing if not a product of the shifting conditions of their own time. We today can learn much from these documentaries, not only about how reality was once recorded, but also about how to create change.

As do all writers, I write from the perspective of my own times and my own experiences. Although I believe that, like the best chroniclers of any history, I bring a conscientious factuality to my task, I am bound by my own understanding of the world. In terms of documentary film, my experience has been more munificent than anyone could hope. I am privileged to have seen, and to continuing seeing, tens of thousands of documentary films, and to know many people who dedicate their lives to creating, distributing, exhibiting and writing about them. I am especially fortunate to have known individuals who were important links in the chain of documentary history.

The first edition of this book was written with Jack C. Ellis, a scholar and teacher of great distinction. Jack and I agreed on many of the concepts expressed in that book, and disagreed on others. It was collaboration. With this second edition the concepts are mine alone, and although perhaps the poorer for lack of debate with Jack, I trust that they are as truthfully and thoughtfully presented as he would require.

A chronological organization remains in place in this book, although that structure is less rigidly imposed than in the first edition. Among the things that are different are: an expanded explanation of the intertwining of documentary and avant-garde that continues to the present; a look at the faux documentary as a subset of the form; a fine but consistent through-line that ties together the ways in which money, technology and artistry constantly interact with each other to determine what films get made and seen; and, of course, the book is up to date, with expanded information on documentary developments of the last decade. A change that is important to me is the addition and expansion of information on women in the documentary world, especially before 1970. There is little information available about the many documentary jobs taken on by women, and there is a great deal of research to be done. This book provides just a taste of what is yet to be discovered.

Jack Ellis' magnum opus is a magnificently detailed study of John Grierson and the Griersonian films and traditions. Jack spent time with John Grierson and many of the other men that worked with him. There is no one left alive now who has that first-hand knowledge. Grierson of course was great friends with Robert Flaherty and knew Frances Flaherty. The last living link to Flaherty was Ricky Leacock, who died in 2011, and although I met neither

Grierson nor Flaherty, I knew Ricky. So through Jack and through Ricky and through the gracious friendship of other documentarians, I feel deeply a part of this history. As a young film student I was welcomed into the documentary world by makers from older generations: Joris Ivens, Fred Wiseman, D. A. Pennebaker, Al Maysles, Robert Drew, Mel Stuart and George Stoney and others. The first documentary history class I took was taught by a man who had once worked with Leni Riefenstahl. There is a chain of human connection in documentary history, as well as a film record that ties it together.

There is nothing like hearing the first (or second)-hand colourful tales of documentary exploits and adversities from those who lived them. Of course, all the tales are not true, and it is the historian's job to try to uncover which bits are fact and which are fancy. This is this same challenge that makes creating and watching documentary films so valuable and so much fun. In the search for 'truth' in life and in documentary there are always unexpected developments and new discoveries. I hope that this Second Edition of *A New History of Documentary Film* will bring to its readers new information, and some small share of the enormous fun that I have had in writing it.

1

Some Ways to Think About Documentary

Documentary is one of three basic creative modes in film, the other two being narrative fiction and experimental avant-garde. Narrative fiction is well known as the feature-length and short story movies in theatres, on TV or computers, and now mobile phones and tablets. They grow out of literary, story-telling, and artistic and stage traditions. Experimental or avant-garde films are generally shown in nontheatrical film societies, in museums and art galleries, or are available in a few video anthologies; usually they are the work of individual filmmakers and the traditions of the visual arts and later aural experimentations mix with those of film.

Description

Traditionally, the characteristics most documentaries have in common, but that are distinct from other film types (especially from the fiction film), can be thought of in terms of: (1) subjects and ideologies; (2) purposes, viewpoints or approaches; (3) forms; (4) production methods and techniques; and (5) the sort of experiences they offer audiences, including actions that result from the films.

As for **subjects** – what they're about – documentaries for many decades focused on something other than the general human condition involving individual human feelings, relationships and actions; these were the province of

narrative fiction and drama. For example, a British documentary made by Paul Rotha entitled *The Fourth Estate* (1940) is about a newspaper, *The [London] Times*, whereas Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* (1941) is more concerned with a fictional character who is modelled on William Randolph Hearst, the powerful American press lord, than with the publishing of newspapers. The National Film Board of Canada's *City of Gold* (1957) made by Wolf Koenig and Colin Low from still photographs taken in Dawson City, in the Yukon Territory, in 1898 was set within a brief frame of live action in then present-day Dawson. In terms of library catalogue headings, *City of Gold* would be listed under 'Canada. History. Nineteenth century', 'Gold mines and mining. Yukon', 'Klondike gold fields', and the like. On the other hand, if Charlie Chaplin's *The Gold Rush* (1925) were to be similarly catalogued, it would be in the Cs (alphabetically by author) under the general heading Fiction, Comedy, Chaplin. Though its unforgettable recreation of the file of prospectors climbing over Chilkoot Pass is remarkably painstaking, *The Gold Rush* is not really about the Klondike Gold Rush as much as it is about loneliness and longing, pluck and luck, failure and success, friendship and love personified in an actor, in this case a world-renowned movie star. Generally documentaries are about something specific and factual; traditionally they concerned public matters rather than private ones. People, places, processes, politics, problems and events in documentary are actual, and, except for strictly historical work, are contemporary. Much of this categorical approach has been challenged in recent years, but to understand those changes it is necessary to understand the roots of documentary philosophy.

The second aspect – **purpose/viewpoint/approach** – is what the filmmakers are trying to say with their films. Today they record social, cultural and personal, as well as natural, institutional and political phenomena in order to inform us about these people, events, places, institutions and problems. In so doing, documentary filmmakers intend to increase our understanding of, our interest in, our sympathy for their subjects, and perhaps our future actions. They may hope that through this means they will enable lives to be lived more fully and intelligently. At any rate, the purpose or approach of the makers of most documentaries is to record and interpret the actuality in front of the camera and microphone in order to inform and/or persuade us to hold some attitude or take some action in relation to their subjects.

Third, **form** evolves from the formative process, including the filmmakers' original conception, the sights and sounds selected for inclusion, the artistic vision and the structures into which they are fitted. Documentaries, whether scripted in advance or confined to recorded spontaneous action, are derived from and limited to actuality. Hybrids continue to multiply, but documentary is based in reality. Documentary filmmakers limit themselves to extracting and arranging from what already exists rather than making up content. They may recreate what they have observed, but they do not create totally out of imagination as creators of stories can do. Though documentarians may follow a chronological line and include people in their films, they do not employ plot or character development as standard means of organization as do fiction filmmakers. The form of documentary is mainly determined by subject, purpose and approach. Usually there is no conventional three-act dramaturgical progression from exposition and complication to discovery to climax to denouement. Documentary forms tend to be functional, varied, and looser than those of short stories, novels, or plays. Sometimes they are more like non-narrative written forms such as essays, advertisements, editorials, or poems. More and more documentaries in the last decade blur the boundaries between the forms.

Fourth, **production method and technique** refer to the ways images are shot, sounds recorded, and the two edited together. Arguments can be made for exceptions, but a basic requirement of documentary is the use of nonactors ('real people' who 'play themselves') rather than actors (who are cast, costumed and made up to play 'roles'). Another basic requirement is shooting on location (rather than on sound stages or studio back lots). In documentaries sets are very seldom constructed. Other than lighting for interviews, lighting is usually what exists at the location, supplemented only when necessary to achieve adequate exposure. Exceptions to these generalizations occur, of course; but, in general, any manipulation of images or sounds is largely confined to what is required to make the recording of them possible, or to make the result seem closer to the actual than inadequate technique might. Special effects might be used to make clear a point, as in a science film for example, but technological effects are not a primary element of documentaries. Experimental documentaries are quite different, but their categorization is always difficult.

Finally, the **audience response** documentary filmmakers seek to achieve is generally twofold: an aesthetic experience of some sort, and an effect on attitudes, possibly leading to action. Though much beauty can exist in documentary films, it tends to be more functional, sparse and austere than the constructed beauties offered by fictional films. Also, much documentary filmmaking offers more that would be described as professional *skill* rather than as personal *style*; communication rather than expression is what the documentary filmmaker is usually after. Consequently, the audience is responding not so much to the artist (who traditionally keeps under cover) as to the subject matter of the film (and the artist's more or less covert statements about it). Generally the best way to understand and appreciate the intentions of documentarians is to accept the precept of the Roman poet Horace that art should both please and instruct. Another key factor is to understand for whom the film was made; in other words, follow the money.

Definition

Traditionally, the English-language documentary is said to start with American Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North*, shot in Canada and released in the United States in 1922. Flaherty wanted to show his version of the Eskimos – the people whom he had gotten to know in his travels – to audiences who had little or no knowledge of them. In the early twentieth century, few had seen a photograph or moving image of Eskimo life. To accomplish this goal he fashioned a new form of filmmaking. The worldwide success of *Nanook*, along with the influence of his wife Frances, drew Flaherty further away from exploring (which had been his profession) and still photography, and into filmmaking. His second film, *Moana* (1926), prompted John Grierson – then a young Scot on an extended visit to the United States – to devise a new use for the word *documentary*. Grierson introduced the word, as an adjective, in the first sentence of the second paragraph of his review in *The New York Sun* (February 8, 1926): 'Of course, *Moana* being a visual account of events in the daily life of a Polynesian youth and his family, has documentary value.' 'Documentary' film slowly developed as a stand-alone noun, due in no small part to Grierson's own efforts.



Fig 1 Nanook of the North (US, 1922, Robert Flaherty). Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Library

Documentary has as its root word *document*, which comes from the Latin *docere*, to teach. As late as 1800, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, *documentary* meant ‘a lesson; an admonition, a warning’. When Grierson wrote that *Moana* had ‘documentary value’, he would have been thinking of the modern meaning of document – that is, a record which is factual and authentic. For scholars, documents are ‘primary sources’ of information; for lawyers ‘documentary evidence’ is opposed to hearsay or opinion. Perhaps Grierson was also thinking of the French use of *documentaire* to distinguish serious travelogues/ethnography from other sorts of early films that featured mere scenic views. In any case, he would move the term from his initial use of it partially back to the earlier one of teaching and propagating, using the ‘documents’ of modern life as materials to spread the faith of social democracy. Flaherty, for his part, continued to document the subjects of his films as he saw them and, to some extent, as they wanted to present themselves to the world and to posterity.

After meeting Flaherty, Grierson carried the word and his developing aesthetic theory and sense of social purpose back to Great Britain. His personal definition of documentary became 'the creative treatment of actuality'. Beginning with his own first film (the only one he personally directed), *Drifters*, in 1929, British documentary advanced to become an established movement. Most of the characteristics we associate with the term *documentary* and see evident in the films to which it is applied were present in the Griersonian films by the mid-thirties.

Documentary, then, as an artistic form, is a technique and style that originated in motion pictures. There are still photographic precursors and analogues, to be sure: the Civil War photographs of Mathew Brady, the remarkable photographic documentation of turn-of-the-century New York City by Jacob Riis, and the photographs made during the Depression years for the United States Farm Security Administration by Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, Ben Shahn, and others. Documentary radio began in the early thirties in pioneering broadcasts of the British Broadcasting Corporation and in 'The March of Time' weekly series on the Columbia Broadcasting System; documentary television (which usually means documentary film or video made for television) became standardized, and later bastardized. In literature the concept of documentary established itself as the nonfiction novel (Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* and Norman Mailer's *The Prisoner's Song*), and in newspaper reporting in the late 1960s and early 1970s as the 'new journalism' (Tom Wolfe's *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, Hunter Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, or Norman Mailer's *The Armies of the Night*). More recently, television courtroom and survival programmes and other 'reality' entertainments have become popular. In fact, the word *documentary* is by now pervasive, and much abused. But Webster's *New Collegiate Dictionary* offers as the primary meaning of documentary: '*n.* A documentary film.' Even the highly questionable validity of Wikipedia defines the term in its traditional sense.

Intellectual Contexts

Though various forms of nonfiction film preceded and existed alongside the story film, the latter early on became the main line of both film art and film industry. In aesthetic terms, the fictional feature film is an extension of nineteenth-century artistic forms: theatre, the novel, drama, and Pre-Raphaelite still photography. The documentary mode appeared, was invented in a sense, to meet new artistic and communication needs arising in the twentieth century. Documentary is purposive; it is intended to achieve something in addition to entertaining audiences and making money. This purposiveness is reflected in the four traditions identified by Paul Rotha in his seminal book of theory and history, *Documentary Film* (1935), as feeding into documentary: 1. naturalist (romantic), 2. newsreel, 3. propagandist, and 4. realist. These categories were adopted by many writers, and remain a valid starting point today.

According to Rotha, the beginning of the **naturalist (romantic)** tradition, exemplified by the films of Robert Flaherty (1884–1951), roughly paralleled the development of anthropology as a social science. Sir James Frazer, a Scot who lived from 1854 to 1941, was an anthropological literary pioneer. His monumental survey of the evolution of cultures, *The Golden Bough*, was published in 1890 in two volumes; the twelve-volume edition appeared between 1911 and 1915. Flaherty began to film the Eskimos in 1913.

Almost exactly contemporary with Frazer was Franz Boas (1858–1942), a German-born American anthropologist and ethnologist. Boas maintained that the immediate task of anthropology should be to record endangered cultures that might vanish. He stressed the specifics of each culture and taught that only after extensive data had been collected through fieldwork could any conclusions be put forward. Fieldwork has been the foundation of anthropology ever since. Though Flaherty had no training as an anthropologist, he approximated fieldwork more closely than any filmmaker preceding him, living with and observing the Inuit of the Hudson Bay region many years before filming them.

Boas' work was followed by that of Polish-born Bronislaw Malinowski (1884–1942). Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* was published

in 1922 (the year *Nanook of the North* was released). It is about the people of the Trobriand Islands, located off the coast of New Guinea. Margaret Mead (1901–1978) published her *Coming of Age in Samoa* in 1928. Flaherty's *Moana*, dealing with Samoans, was released in 1926. What are accepted as the earliest academic attempts at film anthropology were undertaken by an 1898 expedition to the Torres Straits (a small group of islands near Northern Australia). The expedition was sponsored by Cambridge University and the four minutes of footage shot by the expedition's leader, Alfred Haddon, appear to be the first time that images purposefully intended for anthropological use were recorded in the field.

The **newsreel** tradition came out of the phenomenal expansion of journalism in the early twentieth century. The beginning of mass-circulation newspapers (and later of radio transmission) arrived at about the same time as the movies – 1896. The popular press, with its dramatization of the news, functioned not only as dispenser of information but also as informal educator for millions of avid readers. Newsreels appeared in movie theatres in regular weekly form from 1910 on. They were in some ways an extension into the motion pictures as the rotogravure (photographic) sections of the tabloids were to newspapers. Radio grew from its early pre-WW I military applications to an individual passion, to a mass medium. This trajectory from military technology developed for war then moving to industrial and wide consumer use is one that repeats itself throughout media history. It was present from the development of sound tape recording to the use of virtual reality.

The concept and term **propaganda**, Roth's third tradition, goes back at least to the *Congregatio de propaganda fide* (Congregation for propagating the faith), a committee of Cardinals established by Pope Gregory XV in 1622. Interestingly, the purpose of this part of the Catholic Church remains responsible for establishing the Church in non-Christian countries and administering missions where there is no Catholic hierarchy. A subsequent use of propaganda grew out of the revolutionary theory set forth by German political philosopher and socialist Karl Marx (1818–1883). Film propaganda became a key concern of governments, especially Russian Communist leader Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1870–1924). Following the Russian October Revolution of 1917, the new government – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

– was the first to make sustained, extensive and coordinated use of film propaganda. Modern interest in propaganda is related to the intellectual disciplines of sociology, social psychology and political science, as well as proselytizing. The word has acquired a negative connotation over the years, but it is not necessarily derogatory.

Rotha's final tradition, **realist (continental)**, emerged as part of the European avant-garde of the 1920s, headquartered in Paris. One of its preoccupations was finding artistic means for dealing with the interrelatedness of time and space, thus the 'real'. Although 'real' is a slightly confusing and misused adjective here; Rotha's realist tradition became what today is called avant-garde or experimental. This modern understanding, originating in the physical sciences, was enunciated by Max Planck in his quantum mechanics, by Albert Einstein in his theory of relativity, and by others beginning about the turn of the twentieth century. Another preoccupation of the avant-garde was expressing the understanding of the unconscious human mind offered by Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung and others in the then new psychological science at about the same time. Thus Rotha's use of the word 'realist' referred to the emerging sciences.

Pre-Documentary Origins

Depending on how one defines documentary, it can be said to have begun with the birth of film itself. The filmed recordings of actuality in the experiments of technicians at the Edison laboratory in West Orange, NJ, might qualify. For example, the sneeze of an employee named Fred Ott was filmed in 1893, and two of the Edison workers dancing to phonograph music can be viewed during an attempt to synchronize sight with sound in 1896. Both of these are documents meant to be entertaining experiments. Closer in content and approach to subsequent documentaries are the first films produced by August and Louis Lumière and first projected for paying customers in a Paris café on 28 December 1895. Edison's use of a studio and very large camera is contrasted with Lumière's development of a relatively lightweight camera and outdoor shooting. The Lumière brothers' first films included *The Arrival of a*

Train at the Station, *Feeding the Baby*, and – most famously – *Workers Leaving the Factory*. A member of the audience at this showing is supposed to have exclaimed of the film being projected: ‘It’s life itself!’

In the very early following years of the motion picture, films were similarly brief recordings showing everyday life, circus and vaudeville acts, and skits. Only Georges Méliès used specially conceived narrative and fantasy to any extent before 1900, and even he began by recording snippets of life on the streets of Paris (*Place de L’Opéra*, *Boulevard des Italiens*, both 1896). Gradually, as the novelty of the moving photographic image began to fade, the subjects of actualities recorded by filmmakers were selected for extra-cinematic interest.

Foreign and exotic subjects had a strong appeal. Travelling projectionists and cameramen of the Lumière organization and other companies from England, Russia and the USA roamed widely, showing ‘scenic views’ of the Eiffel Tower and the Champs Elysées to audiences everywhere. In Russia they photographed troika rides and Cossacks, and in Spain Flamenco dancing and bull fights, to be shown to audiences in France and elsewhere. In addition



Fig 2 Workers Leaving the Factory (*France, 1895, Louis Lumière*). *National Archive Stills Library*

to such early travelogue forms – *Moscow Clad in Snow* (1909) is a French example (produced by Pathé Frères); *The Durbar at Delhi* (1911) a British one; *With Scott in the Antarctic* (1913) made by Herbert Ponting; *In the Land of the Head-Hunters* (1914) is a larger, more complex American film, produced by Edward S. Curtis. About the Kwakiutl Indians of the Pacific Northwest, it was the most ambitious experiment of its sort up to that time. Curtis was not only a professional photographer but also a trained and experienced ethnologist. Although working quite separately from Flaherty, he was headed in a somewhat similar direction. The Flahertys and Curtis met once in 1915 in New York City where they viewed each other's films.

The newsreel tradition may be said to have begun in France with Lumière's *Excursion of the French Photographic Society to Neuville*, 1895. Called 'interest films', the subjects quickly became events of greater newsworthiness. Many of them featured heads of state and ceremonial occasions. Examples include the crowning of a czar (*Coronation of Nicholas II*, 1896), the campaign of a presidential candidate (*William McKinley at Home*, 1896), and the final rites for a queen (*The Funeral of Queen Victoria*, 1901). Warfare was another frequent subject. The Spanish–American War (*Dewey Aboard the 'Olympia' at Manilla*, *Tenth US Infantry Disembarking*, both 1898), the Boxer Rebellion (*The Assassination of a British Sentry*, *Attack on a China Mission*, both 1900), and the Russo–Japanese War (*The Battle of the Yalu*, *Attack on a Japanese Convoy*, both 1904) had films made about them – though these were often re-enactments rather than actualities. In 1899 the great cameraman W. K. L. Dickson filmed the Boer War on location in South Africa. Among other examples that have lasted down to the present are *Launching of 'H.M.S. Dreadnought' by King Edward VII* (UK, 1906) and *Suffragette Riots in Trafalgar Square* (UK, 1909). Demand for war films was so keen that Harry Aitkin of Mutual Film paid Pancho Villa the enormous sum of \$25,000 and a promise of net profit 50% for the exclusive right to film Villa in 1914 during the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920). The original contract still exists in a Mexico City museum. *The Life of Pancho Villa* also included many staged scenes with professional actors. The newsreel in weekly form was begun by Charles Pathé of France in 1910 with what became known as Pathé-Journal; newsreels made by Russians began in 1911.

Isolated examples of what might be called government propaganda films, in Rotha's sense of the term, appeared before the outbreak of World War I (1914). In the United States, the Department of the Interior produced and distributed motion pictures as early as 1911 to entice Eastern farmers to move to the newly opened land in the West. The US Civil Service Commission used a film, *Won Through Merit*, in a recruiting campaign in 1912. In the same year the city of Cleveland had a movie made as part of a programme to alleviate slum conditions.

WWI made film critical to victory. Training films were produced to instruct troops in warfare. Propaganda films were intended to instil in military personnel and civilians alike a hatred of the enemy and desire for victory. The multi-reel *Pershing's Crusaders* (USA, 1918), notable among these propaganda films, was meant to boost morale and the sale of war bonds, and such WWI documentaries were wildly popular in the US. Newsreels took on propaganda dimensions and the filmic documentation of warfare became much more comprehensive, skilful and actual than in preceding wars. *The Battle of the Somme* (1916), made by J. B. McDowell and Geoffrey Malins, and *The Western Front* (1919) are two British examples. Animated documentaries made their appearances during WWI. *Battle of the North Sea* (1918) is a completely animated diagrammatic account of the naval battle of Jutland. Silent, the film uses geometric outlines of cruisers, battleships, battle-cruisers, dreadnaughts, even radio waves and a zeppelin as they fight this inconclusive battle.

Perhaps the most important war documentary ever made is *The Battle of the Somme*. Long recognized as 'one of the jewels in the collection' of (England's) Imperial War Museum's Film and Video Archive, this opinion was formally endorsed in 2005 when the film became the first item of British documentary heritage to be accepted for inscription on UNESCO's 'Memory of the World' register. The reasons for this supreme honour are many. It is the first feature film to certifiably capture actual in-the-field combat and carnage during war, and is one of the most-seen documentaries of all time. This was, of course, at a time when commercial cinemas were the only place to see films. Shot by Geoffrey Malins and J. B. McDowell in June and July of 1916, *The Battle of the Somme* captures the grimness of filthy, pestilent, mud and poison



Fig 3 Newsreel in wartime London (UK, 1917). From Strichting Nederlands Filmmuseum

gas-filled trench warfare as the Allies and the Germans fought for five wretched months. The final result was a British advance of only about five miles. 420,000 casualties were suffered by the British (20,000 dead on the first day), 195,000 by the French and 650,000 by the Germans.

The film of this carnage was quickly edited and in August of 1916 released in thirty-four theatres across Britain. *The Battle of the Somme* shocked audiences who previously had seen only the 'Pack up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag' glory of marching troops in newsreels. That the film was funded and endorsed by the British military was also significant. It laid bare the horrors and the human faces of war, a policy decision that governments from then until now have danced around. Scepticism about the authenticity of its battle scenes haunted the film for decades, but recent impeccable scholarship has proved that only about one minute and 12 seconds of a film running one hour and 14 minutes was faked.

Culturally and economically, filmmaking began as the exclusive province of white males from the upper and upper-middle classes, although the first audiences were mainly working-class. This was true in both fiction and documentary. It also began as a product of machine-age developments in Western Europe and North America, part of the breakneck rush to mechanical modernization that changed the world. Access to the new medium also required financial resources. Very few women and virtually no non-whites had access to the money or the technology needed for documentary-making. They existed merely as subjects in front of the camera. Although the same can be said to apply in other arts, the lack of non-white and female presence was more pronounced in film than in painting, literature, sculpture, or even still photography of the era, because films required large investments of money, and because filming required that its makers leave the confines of home.

During the silent era, a handful of women rose to prominence behind the camera in fiction filmmaking, and some blacks made movies, chiefly in the USA. The contributions of women to documentary filmmaking in its earliest years are themselves undocumented, and the exceptions have been glossed over by history. The best-known woman documentarian of the silent era, Frances Flaherty, would herself have never used the term filmmaker to describe her work, and she chose to spend her life building and promoting the



*Fig 4 'Mac' McDowell with a Moy and Bastie cine camera as he appeared during the Battle of the Somme. The 'head' mechanism which traversed and elevated the camera can be seen on the tripod. While he moved the camera on the tripod with his left hand, the right hand had to maintain a steady two revolutions per second. Information from Kevin Brownlow in the book *Ghosts of the Somme*. British Film Institute*

work and the myth of her husband Robert. The work of other notable women in silent documentary – Yelizaveta Svilova, Helen Van Dongen, Marguerite Harrison and Esther Shub – is described in this book to the extent that information is generally available. Van Dongen and a few others, among them John Grierson's sister Ruby, made films in the 1930s and 1940s, and a few women participated in experimental documentary-making in the 1950s and early 1960s. Hope Ryden was an important contributor to early cinema verité in America, as was Agnès Varda in France, but it was not until the late 1960s and 1970s that documentaries by women began to become more common. It was at this time, too, that people of colour began to have real access to documentary filmmaking, at least in the US.

In the four decades since then, much has thankfully changed. The triangular interaction of money/business, technology/equipment and artistry/aesthetics has shifted many times and continues to shift today. Thousands of people of every type raise money, make, and explore the world with documentaries. And whether one subscribes to, revolts against, partially accepts, or tries to escape from them, John Grierson's now 70-year-old 'first principles of documentary' remain part of the core of its history.

- 1) 'We believe that the cinema's capacity for getting around, for observing and selecting from life itself, can be exploited in a new and vital art form. The studio films largely ignore this possibility of opening up the screen on the real world. They photograph acted stories against artificial backgrounds. Documentary would photograph the living scene and the living story.'
- 2) 'We believe that the original (or native) actor, and the original (or native) scene, are better guides to a screen interpretation of the modern world. They give cinema a greater fund of material. They give it power over a million and one images. They give it power of interpretation over more complex and astonishing happenings in the real world than the studio mind can conjure up or the studio mechanician recreate.'
- 3) 'We believe that the materials and the stories thus taken from the raw can be finer (more real in the philosophic sense) than the acted article.'



Fig 5 John Grierson in the 1930s. Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive

Spontaneous gesture has a special value on the screen. Cinema has a sensational capacity for enhancing the movement which tradition has formed or time worn smooth. Its arbitrary rectangle specially reveals movement; it gives it maximum pattern in space and time. Add to this that documentary can achieve an intimacy of knowledge and

effect impossible to the shim-sham mechanics of the studio, and the lily-fingered interpretations of the metropolitan actor.’

(from Essays in the Winter 1932, Spring 1933 and Spring 1934 issues of ‘Cinema Quarterly’)

Books on Documentary Theory and General Histories of Documentary

Encyclopedia

Aitken, Ian, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Documentary Film*, Vol. 1–3. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Theory

- Barsam, Richard Meran, ed., *Nonfiction Film Theory and Criticism*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1976.
- Coles, Robert, *Doing Documentary Work*. London: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Corner, John, *The Art of Record: A Critical Introduction to Documentary*. Manchester, UK: University of Manchester Press, 1996.
- Grant, Barry Keith and Jeanette Sloniowski, (eds), *Documenting the Documentary: Close Readings of Documentary Film and Video*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998.
- Grierson, John, *Grierson on Documentary*, ed. Forsyth Hardy. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966.
- Holmlund, Chris and Cynthia Fuchs, (eds), *Between the Sheets, In the Streets: Queer, Lesbian, Gay Documentary*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.
- Hughes, Robert, ed., *Film: Book 1: The Audience and the Filmmaker*. New York: Grove Press, 1959.
- Hughes, Robert, ed., *Film: Book 2: Films of Peace and War*. New York: Grove Press, 1959.
- Levin, G. Roy, *Documentary Explorations: 15 Interviews with Film-Makers*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971.
- Macdonald, Kevin and Mark Cousins, *Imagining Reality: The Faber Book of Documentary*. London: Faber and Faber, c. 1996.
- MacDougall, David, edited and with an introduction by Lucien Taylor, *The Corporeal Image: Film, Ethnography and the Senses*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999.
- Nichols, Bill, *Introduction to Documentary, Second Edition*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001.
- Nichols, Bill, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.
- Plantinga, Carl R. *Rhetoric and Representation in Nonfiction Film*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

- Rabinowitz, Paula, *They Must Be Represented: The Politics of Documentary*. New York: Verso, 1994.
- Renov, Michael, ed., *Theorizing Documentary*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Renov, Michael and Jane Gaines, (eds), *Collecting Visible Evidence*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.
- Rosenthal, Alan, *The Documentary Conscience: A Casebook in Film Making*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.
- Rosenthal, Alan, *New Challenges to Documentary*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.
- Rosenthal, Alan, *The New Documentary in Action: A Casebook in Film Making*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972.
- Rothman, William, *Documentary Film Classics*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Warren, Charles, ed., *Beyond Document: Essays on Nonfiction Film*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1996.
- Winston, Brian, *Claiming the Real: The Griersonian Documentary and Its Legitimations*. London: British Film Institute, 1995.
- Winston, Brian, *Lies, Damn Lies and Documentaries*. London: British Film Institute, 2008.
- Wright, Basil, *The Use of Film*. London: John Lane, 1948.

History

- Aufderheide, Patricia, *Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Baechlin, Peter and Maurice Muller Strauss, *Newsreels Across the World*. Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1952.
- Barnouw, Erik, *Documentary: A History of the Non-fiction Film*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Barsam, Richard Meran, *Nonfiction Film: A Critical History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992.
- Barsam, Richard, guest ed., *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, 7 (Winter 1982). Special issue on documentary.
- Fielding, Raymond, *The American Newsreel, 1911–1967*. Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972.
- Jacobs, Lewis, ed., *The Documentary Tradition*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1979.
- Hertogs, Daan and Nico De Klerk, *Nonfiction from the Teens*. Amsterdam: Stichting Nederlands Filmmuseum, 1991.
- Leyda, Jay, *Films Beget Films*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1964.
- Manvell, Roger, ed., *Experiment in the Film*. London: The Grey Walls Press, 1949.
- Orellana, Margarita *Filming Pancho Villa: How Hollywood Shaped the Mexican Revolution*. London: Verso, 2004.
- Rotha, Paul in collaboration with Sinclair Road and Richard Griffith, *Documentary Film*. New York: Hastings House, 1952.
- Waugh, Thomas, ed., *'Show Us Life': Toward a History and Aesthetic of the Committed Documentary*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1984.

2

The Work of Robert and Frances Flaherty

Between 1910 and 1915, at the time Edward R. Curtis was making *In the Land of the Head-Hunters* in western Canada, another American, Robert J. Flaherty, was exploring and mapping the Hudson Bay region of Canada. He was employed to search for iron ore by Sir William Mackenzie, Canada's railroad entrepreneur. Though Flaherty found some ore, the deposits were not rich enough to tempt anyone to try to mine and transport it. In the course of his travels Flaherty (re)discovered the main island of the Belcher group in Hudson Bay in 1914, and it was subsequently named for him. Flaherty often defined himself an explorer, and was very proud of his induction into the Royal Geographic Society of England for this discovery. But the most important discovery of his expeditions was how to make a new kind of motion picture. With this discovery he brought the life of the far North Country and its inhabitants, the Eskimos, to the attention of the world. And through this revelation, Flaherty forever put his personal stamp on documentary.

Robert Flaherty was born in Iron Mountain, Michigan in 1884, first son of an iron ore explorer whose family emigrated from Ireland. An early ability with the violin was taken as a sign of genius, if only the boy would discover 'discipline'. Despite such criticism, Flaherty continued 'playing' throughout his life; he applied real enthusiasm to his diverse interests, and photography especially grew to be a passion. He was determined to make 'beautiful pictures' even if it did mean lugging a bulky camera and tripod into turn-of-the-century

homes, soda parlours and classrooms. Brilliant, but not cut out for long-term schooling, Robert went with his father on expeditions from an early age. He followed in his father's footsteps, in love with the wilderness, and developed a fascination for the people who lived there, beginning with the Ojibwa Indians.

Flaherty was already an acclaimed still photographer with gallery shows in Toronto, where he and his wife Frances lived at the time of making *Nanook*. He had photographed life and work in the North America wilderness since he was a teenager and was acclaimed for the portraits of American Indians and Eskimos on his expeditions. It was on his third expedition – 15 August 1913 to 3 October 1914 – that Flaherty, encouraged by then-affianced Frances and again funded by Mackenzie, supplemented his still photo kit with motion picture equipment to record what he saw. Supplies included 'a comprehensive motion picture and camera outfit including 1,000 pounds of chemicals, 25,000 feet of film and 2,000 dry plates' (a letter from Flaherty to Mackenzie). To prepare, he took a short course in camera operation offered by Eastman Kodak in Rochester, New York. During the expedition he shot hours of the Eskimos, their activities and their surroundings.

While editing this mass of material in Toronto, he dropped a cigarette onto a pile of film on the floor. Since it was the highly flammable cellulose nitrate stock of the time, it went up in a great flash of flame, nearly taking Flaherty with it. Though the original negative footage was almost totally destroyed, an edited positive work print survived and Flaherty, as usual prodded by Frances, screened it repeatedly throughout the US and Canada in attempts to secure funding for another filming expedition. At one point in 1915, the Flahertys met with Edward Curtis in New York. He showed *In the Land of the Head-Hunters*. They screened their work print of *Nanook*. Apparently this confirmed the Flahertys' sense that more human-interest storyline was needed in a new film.

Another novice might have given up filmmaking altogether following such an entry into the field; Robert and Frances not only persisted, they learned from the experience. In fact, some now speculate that the fire might not have been as much an 'accident' as a 'happy coincidence' that enabled a deeply flawed work to disappear. In this now-lost version, though, it seems Flaherty, ably assisted by the Eskimo crew, had faithfully recorded aspects of Eskimo



Fig 6 *Frances and Robert Flaherty as they appeared in Vancouver in 1908. The Robert and Frances Flaherty Study Center, Claremont School of Theology, Claremont CA 91711*

existence. Still, Flaherty's feelings for the people and their way of life was not expressed in a form that would permit audiences to share them. The film lacked emotion. When Mackenzie refused to finance any more expeditions



Fig 7 Production still taken during shooting of *In the Land of the Head-Hunters*, aka *In the Land of the War Canoes*, Curtis is operating the camera (US, 1914, Edward S. Curtis). Thomas Burke Memorial Washington State Museum

(after attending a screening of the first work print), Robert and Frances spent several years fundraising and, after many setbacks, obtained backing from the French fur company Révillon Frères for a return to the North to make another film. As such *Nanook of The North* is sponsored film. The name Révillon Furs was painted on a sledge, an early example of corporate promotion in a documentary, although audiences could not read it in the final film. (Morgan Spurlock was only fulfilling a documentary practice that was in place eighty-five years before he made *POM Wonderful: The Greatest Movie Ever Sold* [2011].) What resulted from Flaherty's shooting between 1920 and 1922 was the *Nanook of The North* we know.

In this unprecedented feature-length film ordinary people carried out and sometimes re-enacted things they did in everyday life – working, eating, sleeping, travelling, playing with their children – doing for the camera what they seemingly would have done if the camera hadn't been there. There are many scenes of the Eskimo working to survive, with a walrus hunt providing the most dramatic challenge. The shooting for *Nanook* was accomplished with a hand-cranked Akeley camera, weighing about sixty pounds, and by lugging

a bulky fifteen-pound wooden tripod and quantities of 35mm film (which shattered in the sub-zero cold) across ice floes and frozen banks. Flaherty and Nanook almost starved during a trip to film bears. Very important to the film is the deep friendship that existed between Flaherty and some of the Inuit, and this quality is evidenced on the screen.

When the Flahertys took the completed *Nanook* around to distributors, one by one they turned it down. 'Who would want to see a movie about Eskimos,

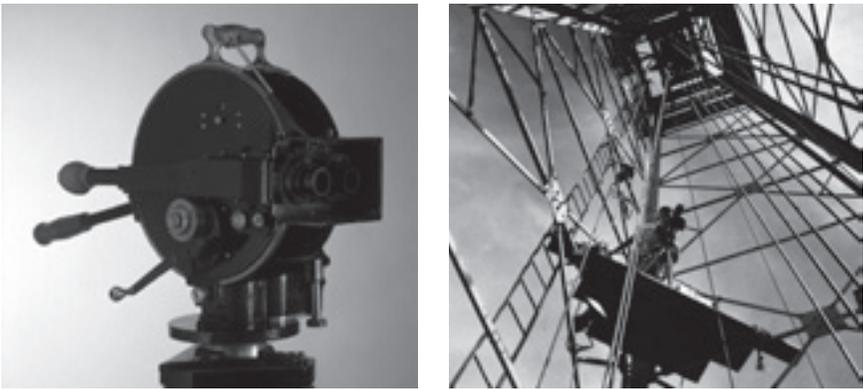


Fig 8A & 8B *The Akeley camera revolutionized documentary filmmaking. Nicknamed 'Pancake' for its odd rounded shape, the camera featured a gyroscopic pan/tilt head so it could tilt straight up while the viewfinder remained in a fixed position. It had two lenses on the front: one a viewfinder, the other the film lens, which allowed for simultaneous focusing and filming. The Akeley also allowed the operator to change film magazines in less than 15 seconds. It was invented by explorer and big game hunter Carl Ethan Akeley 'The Father of Modern Taxidermy,' for use during his expeditions. Although not a manufacturer, he built this camera to suit his own needs, and it remained in production from 1917 until 1940. The shutter mechanism was another innovation. The pancake design allowed room for the shutter to travel all the way around its circumference; as a result, the shutter angle was 230 degrees. On right: Robert Flaherty continued technological innovations throughout his career. In his last major film, Louisiana Story, he worked with Ricky Leacock to create striking images of oil drilling in the bayou. Leacock is seen shooting high on the drilling rig. Robert and Frances Flaherty Study Center, Claremont School of Theology; Claremont, CA, 91711.*

a movie without story, without stars?', they seemed to be asking. It was Pathé Exchange, another firm with French origins, which eventually undertook worldwide distribution. No doubt much to the surprise of Pathé and perhaps to the Flahertys, this new kind of movie received an enthusiastic reception by critics and audiences. It became a substantial box office hit. Pathé's distribution deal, as often proved to be the case for documentaries, returned little to the Flahertys. Nanook himself, who received no compensation, became a recognizable face worldwide; he died of starvation less than two years after the film was released.

Following the success of *Nanook of The North*, Flaherty was approached by Jesse L. Lasky, head of Famous Players-Lasky (which later became Paramount Pictures), the first firm to have turned down distribution of *Nanook*. Lasky, not wanting to repeat a mistake, offered Flaherty what amounted to a blank cheque to make his next film. He was to go anywhere in the world and bring back 'another *Nanook*'. Flaherty had become interested in the peoples of the Southwest Pacific through the eloquent descriptions of Frederick O'Brien, who had written a popular book about the area, *White Shadows in the South Seas*. O'Brien urged Flaherty to go to Samoa to record the lovely culture of its gentle people before it was further eroded by the incursions of foreigners. With his wife Frances, three small daughters, their nursemaid, and his brother David, along with many filmmaking and family accoutrements including a piano, he set sail for the South Seas.

Flaherty was aware of what Hollywood expected from him – another box office success – and wondered what he would find in Samoa that could provide the drama of human survival contained in *Nanook*. Throughout his career he maintained a prickly relationship with the mainstream film industry. He sought money and on some levels craved its approbation; on the other hand, he refused to play by its commercial rules. Samoan existence seemed to provide no drama at all. Nature was munificent beyond belief; if one weren't hit on the head by a falling coconut one might spend life easily fishing and eating. For weeks, a dejected Flaherty sat on the veranda drinking apple beer, gloomily contemplating what form he might give to a film about Samoans. During this time, Frances, who learned photographic technique from Robert, took many beautiful still photographs, in a way creating a storyboard for

a film. The role of stills artist was reprised by Frances on every subsequent Flaherty feature.

Through his informal investigations into the culture Flaherty learned of a ritual that interested him but was no longer practised. Formerly, young Samoan men had been initiated into manhood by undergoing elaborate and intricate tattooing over much of their bodies. Flaherty convinced himself that because there were few physical threats to their existence, the Samoans had invented a test of endurance involving considerable pain. He revived this custom for the purposes of his film and organized the narrative around the initiation of one Samoan youth named Moana. Preceding and paralleling the scenes of tattooing are scenes of the gathering of food – in the jungle, from the sea, and along the shore – the making of clothing and ornaments, the preparing and cooking of a feast, and the dancing of the Siva by Moana and his intended bride. When the tattooing was completed there was a ceremonial drinking of kava (a fermented beverage made from the crushed root of a shrubby pepper) by the chiefs, and a celebratory dance by the men of the village in honour of Moana's courage. In this resurrection of an old cultural practice, Flaherty was (most likely unknowingly) following in the footsteps of the first serious ethnographic film.

In his first two films – *Nanook of The North* and *Moana* – Flaherty's subjects and purposes led him into innovations in film form. In essence he was creating what would become documentary film. He found a means other than the plotted story, or simple topical organization of newsreels and travelogues, or even Curtis' work, to present real people and their everyday lives on the screen. Flaherty was intuitive and pragmatic, building his films out of long immersion in the culture of its subjects, and it is obvious from the films that he deeply respected them. He also was a true film artist and he made profound contributions to film aesthetic technique and to the uses to which films could be put. He experimented with film stocks and various lenses, spending days seeking the image he wanted. And Flaherty's body of work is the basis from which conversation about 'truth' 'reality' and 'illusion' in documentaries began.

The organizing structures of Flaherty's films involve loose narratives set within natural chronology. *Nanook of The North* extends through almost a

year, during which time Flaherty never left the Eskimos. Beginning in late spring and ending in deep winter, *Moana* covers the period of its hero's initiation rites, from preparations to festive conclusion – somewhere between a month and six weeks. The separate sequences within the overall time spans describe the various kinds of work of each of these people: ceremony, children's play and other activities most characteristic and distinctive of their lives and culture. We see Nanook spearing fish, catching and rendering walrus, hunting seals, and building an igloo. Moana and his family are seen snaring a wild boar, collecting giant clams, gathering coconuts, capturing a huge tortoise, making custard, scraping breadfruit, and baking little fish. What Flaherty chose to show are traditional skills and customs that, while different from the 'civilized', modern ways of his era, are rooted in common sense all can appreciate. *Nanook's* kayak appears an extremely serviceable craft for navigating the ice-clogged waters of the far North. Flaherty asked the Eskimo to build what seems to be an efficient and comfortable igloo, even though it was constructed with a cutaway side to create enough light for the camera. In Samoa, clothing made from the bark of the mulberry tree and outriggers of carved wood and spars bound together with vines seem good use of what is readily available and well suited to tropical climate and rolling surf.

What Flaherty offers is beautiful visual description of then-unfamiliar human activities and artefacts, of exotic flora and fauna, and an emotional connection to nature – a perfect purpose for a maker of silent films. His films are all virtually silent. When sound became available, he used it essentially as secondary accompaniment to the images, filling in another sensory dimension of reality with natural sounds, adding emotional colour with music. Dialogue is used sparingly in Flaherty's two major sound films – *Man of Aran* (1934) and *Louisiana Story* (1948). Mainly it serves to characterize the timbre and style of his subjects' speech and to suggest their attitudes, more than to convey information or reveal psychological motivation.

Those who spent long evenings in Flaherty's company, whether in his youth or at the end of his life, remembered him as a teller of tales, a consummate raconteur with a sure sense of drama. In all his films, the dramatic conflict is achieved with man against – or at least in relation to – nature. In *Nanook of the North* it is family against the arctic cold and desolation. In *Moana*,

amidst the warm soft abundance of a tropical paradise, it is man against invented, or at least man-made, pain. In Flaherty's later *Man of Aran* it is man and woman against the infertile rock of a barren island off the west coast of Ireland and the towering waves of the North Atlantic. And in *Louisiana Story*, with the most complex conflict of the four major films, it is still man in ecological relationship with nature – a boy and his raccoon moving amidst the secrets and dangers of a primordial swamp, and an oil drilling crew wresting commercial treasure from deep beneath its surface.

If Flaherty was a story-teller, he was also a teacher. His pedagogy employed mystery and suspense to arouse audiences' curiosity, to make them want to learn about the subjects that fascinated him. One of many instances of this method occurs early in *Moana* when Moana's younger brother, Pe'a climbs a palm tree. First we see him mid-frame, on a section of the trunk. He is allowed to climb up out of frame; then the camera tilts up to re-centre him. Pe'a again climbs out of frame and is again pursued by the camera. On the third climb-tilt the uppermost part of this majestic tree is revealed. By that time we are not only craving to see the top, we are prepared to accept this as the tallest palm in the world. Flaherty's visual exposition is splendid in its simplicity and clarity. Nanook's construction of an igloo is presented so clearly and simply we feel we could go out and build one. Much the same can be said for the making of soil in *Man of Aran*.

The dramatis personae of the Flaherty films are the nuclear family structured along conventional Western cultural lines. He did not acknowledge the polygamy practised in traditional Eskimo culture, nor the looseness of the Samoan family arrangement described by Margaret Mead in her seminal book *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928). A Flaherty film family usually has a strong, mature father; gentle but heroic mother devoted to him, to their children, and to the concerns of the family; and a son who is learning his way into his cultural and natural surroundings. The women in Flaherty's films are supportive of the men in the struggle for existence, assisting them in domestic and ceremonial activities. Maggie, in *Man of Aran*, is the most forceful in her strength of character, independence, resourcefulness and bravery. The young boys of his films perhaps are surrogates for the young Flaherty himself. Water, boats and fishing are important in his films, as they were for the life of

young Robert Flaherty, who grew up in isolated mining camps in the North Minnesota and Canadian wilderness.

The film families were artificially created for the films with considerable care given to the casting. Those selected to become father, mother, son, sister, and the rest are physically representative of the culture and also attractive – not necessarily handsome or beautiful, but ‘best of type’. Nanook (which means ‘The Bear’) was played by Allarkariallak. Nyla’s real name was Alice Nevalilnga. Community life is scarcely acknowledged; the family and the individuals are most important. The sudden appearance of numerous Eskimos, Samoans, or Aran Islanders for the trek to the fur trader’s, the performance of a tribal dance, or the hunt for basking sharks is surprisingly within the prevailing intimacy and isolation of the central family. Ages and stages of life are present, but there are no human deaths or births in Flaherty films.



Fig 9 *Maggie in Man of Aran (UK, Robert Flaherty). International Film Seminars*

What he seeks out among his peoples are their consistent patterns of physical behaviour – activities related to obtaining food, clothing and shelter – rather than the aberrations of human psyches and antisocial actions which are the basis for Western fiction dating back to the Greeks. Flaherty may ultimately have been most concerned with the human spirit, but what he chose to show are its basic physical manifestations. He pays no attention to how his societies govern themselves, nor is there anything in his films about the spiritual life of the people. Religious beliefs and practices are absent – remarkable considering the importance of religion in the cultures he chose. We see neither anger nor grief. While affection is quite evident – of his subjects for each other and (implicitly) of the filmmaker for his subjects – there is no sex. (It has been verified that Flaherty did have an Eskimo female companion and fathered a son whom he neither saw nor acknowledged to the public on his sub-arctic expeditions.) Personal feelings – the emotions of individuals – are not central to Flaherty's concerns. Rather, more generalized notions of what a man, a woman and a child do are operative. What it means to survive, to exist in the culture and in the environment one is born into, are the archetypes of which his films are made.

Shooting in remote places in the way Flaherty did was fairly unique – at least in feature filmmaking up to that time – although at the same time in Scandinavia and Russia other explorers were using film to document their travels. Shackleton's 'Endurance' expedition (1914–1916) had been filmed. This venture – to be the first men to cross the Antarctic on foot – was extensively documented; even after their ship was crushed in an ice pack some eighty-five miles away from the continent, photography continued, and when, miraculously, all twenty-eight men survived, the cameraman, Frank Hurley, had the makings of a film. This became *South – Ernest Shackleton and the Endurance Expedition* (1919). But no one was developing and printing film on location, nor were they interested in and interpreting people's lives. Flaherty's methods of conception and production were especially original and unusual in two respects. One was what was characterized by Frances, constructor of what became the 'Flaherty Myth', as 'non-preconception'. Rather than approaching a society with an idea of the film they wanted to make, the Flahertys chose to live with and observe the people, to discover their essential

story, like the Eskimo sculptor who cuts into the ivory tusk until he finds the seal figure it contains. The other, corollary characteristic was Flaherty's practice of shooting tremendous amounts of footage on the aspects of the people and their environment that struck him as significant, or beautiful, or interesting. That initial lack of fixed intention and seemingly random shooting were accompanied by long evenings of screening, looking for the essences of the culture in the images, seeking the particular rhythms and graces of the life being shown. As part of the editing process, Flaherty's subjects and members of his family and crew screened the uncut footage with him and discussed it for weeks.

As innovative as his production methods were, his initial use of film language followed accepted practice. Flaherty's camera was always mounted on a tripod. His nonactors were directed to re-enact things he had observed them do and to repeat their actions in multiple takes. The conventional continuity editing evidently rested on some sort of post-production script that formed in Flaherty's head during the repeated screenings. He seems never to have used pre-written scripts, only scribbled notes and Frances' magnificent photographic 'storyboards'. Though occasional differences are evident, the sequences are constructed with long shot-medium shot-closeup, matching action and sightlines, and consistent screen direction.

Shooting in out-of-the-way locations required considerable technological improvisation and ingenuity. Many technological advances in film technique have come about first from documentarians working outside the studio trying to get close to unaltered real life. Though he tended to profess ignorance of technological matters and worked with cameramen and editors, Flaherty seems to have been a natural and perhaps superb technician. He also surrounded himself with masters in the technical. From assistant cameraman Sam Sainbury on his northern expedition through editor Helen von Dongan and cameraman Ricky Leacock on *Louisiana Story*, skilled craftspeople always contributed to the film. And Frances' imprint is always there behind the scenes guiding and protecting his methods.

For his first filming in the North in 1913 Flaherty used a 1912 Bell and Howell studio camera, adapting it to his needs. Later he would use the Akeley, a sophisticated gyroscopic camera employed by newsreel cameramen, and

then the Newman Sinclair, which became a standard camera for documentarians. On *Nanook of The North* he began his practice of developing and printing film in the field, necessary if he was to see what he was shooting while still on location. For this arduous task the Eskimo cut holes in the ice to obtain water for processing, carried it in barrels to the hut, and strained out deer hair and debris that fell into it from their clothing. The 'printer' was a rectangle of clear glass left on a window painted black. It corresponded to the 35mm film frame in size and dimension. Through it the low Arctic sun shone. That such a system of developing worked at all is amazing; that the quality of images in *Nanook* show little sign of the crudity of the 'laboratory' involved is even more astounding. The camera froze, the film cracked, the locations truly were dangerous, and Flaherty had no communication with the outside world during the long winters he spent with the Eskimo. Although *Nanook* is fully Flaherty's film, it is little noted that he had an Anglo assistant, Sam Sainsbury, who worked with him on the film, sometimes functioning as cinematographer, and helping with development as well as working to keep the equipment running in the freezing weather.

Flaherty was among the first to use Eastman Kodak's new panchromatic film on *Moana*. Though black and white (before practicable colour was available), panchromatic film is sensitive to all colours of the spectrum, unlike the orthochromatic film then in standard use. Orthochromatic film did not respond to red and was prone to harsh contrasts; *Moana*, shot with panchromatic stock, offers a Samoa of deeply rich and varied shades of gray. It was also on *Moana* that Flaherty first began to make extensive use of long (telephoto) lenses. Almost all of *Moana* was shot with lenses of six inches focal length and upward (two inches then being standard for most films). The use of such lenses had the obvious advantage of permitting the filming of distant and inaccessible subjects – the outrigger on the surf, for example. Also, Flaherty found that his subjects were less self-conscious and therefore behaved more naturally if the camera was some distance away from them. He also thought certain special photographic qualities resulted from the use of long lenses: 'The figures had a roundness, a stereoscopic quality that gave to the picture a startling reality and beauty,' he wrote, 'alive and real, the shadows softer and the breadfruit trees seemed like living things rather than a flat background.'

Man of Aran was Flaherty's first use of recorded sound. On the Irish island of Inishmore this would have been impossible with the cumbersome optical sound equipment then in use for fiction films (magnetic recording was not yet available). To solve this problem, Flaherty post-recorded in a London studio a soundtrack made up of music and noises and fragments of speech, laying it over the images in a complex and poetic blend. *Louisiana Story* was the first feature partly shot with the 35mm Arriflex camera, which had through-the-lens viewing capability (SLR) developed from the 16mm combat model used by the Germans in World War II. The Arri became one of the documentarians' favourite cameras. Some sound was also recorded on location, using a direct-to-disc method, with rather poor results.

The Flaherty Way

One aspect of Flaherty's overall significance is his special use of the film medium, which grew out of his creative impulse and began one main line of documentary. Stated simply, Flaherty used film to show people he loved and admired to the rest of the world. He was not an anthropologist; he idealized and interpreted as an artist does – a visual poet, in his case. The view he offers is his view, admittedly coloured by his own early life and the mores of the early twentieth century, but Flaherty's vision transcended the era in which he lived. At the 1904 Saint Louis World's Fair pygmies were exhibited in made-up 'villages' as curiosities, not considered fully human. Flaherty never condescended to or marginalized his subjects. In some respects his films are as much about him – his pleasures, his prejudices, his convictions – as about the people he was filming. Often he set them back in time to recapture and preserve cultures that were disappearing; and he always presented people at their finest, simplest and noblest, gaining their cooperation to achieve this presentation. *Man of Aran* especially – in which the hunting of basking sharks was recreated from past practices and the urgent contemporary economic problems of Aran were ignored – has been criticized for its 'distortions', but Flaherty did not invent or glamourize. His films were not created from make-believe or fakery; all that he shows did happen or had happened in the lives

of the people and/or their fathers. (*Louisiana Story* is the exception; though based on actuality, it is a story, as its title announces.)

True, Flaherty usually stuck to peoples in far corners of the earth and dealt with the essentials of their traditional existence. But this is not exoticism à la 'Hollywood' (as in *Tabu*, 1931, on which Flaherty worked with F. W. Murnau in Tahiti but which became Murnau's sexualized film fantasy). In Flaherty's films there are neither 'colourful natives' nor 'native colour'. Instead, he was attempting to show how other cultures are like our own; how understandable, rather than how different and strange. This he shares with the developing field of visual anthropology, but unlike the distancing that characterized anthropology, *Nanook* ends with a closeup of Nanook's grinning face, and audiences may think: 'There's a man I've enjoyed getting to know. If I were in his situation, I hope I would be able to do things as well as he does.'

Simply to categorize Flaherty as a 'romantic', as Paul Rotha and others have done, misses the point. One can see what Rotha is thinking, in that the people and settings Flaherty selected and the way he chose to present them are linked with the noble savage of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the idealized landscapes of early nineteenth-century painters. But Flaherty's films have little to do with

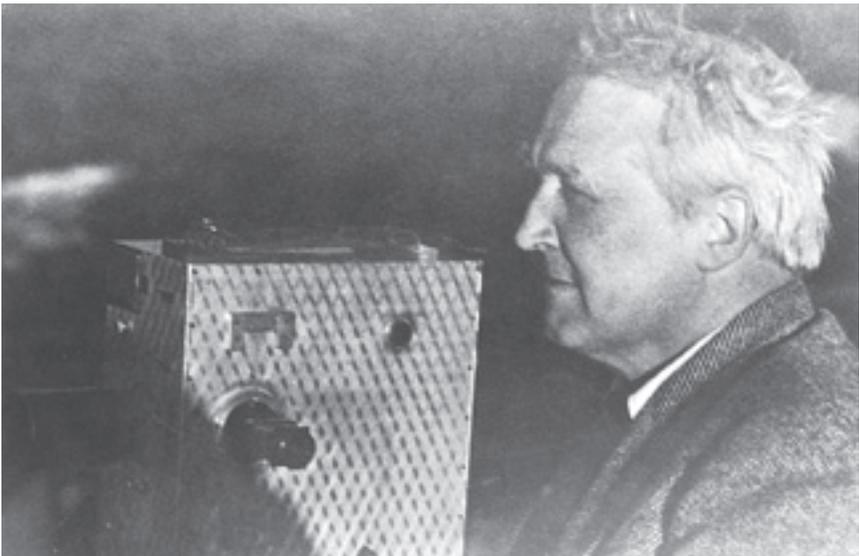


Fig 10 Robert Flaherty with a Newman Sinclair camera, England, 1930s.
Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive

the romanticism of the 'romantic movement', resting as this does on individual imagination and heightened emotions. On the contrary, his work might be said to be 'classical', as the term is generally used in the romantic/classical dichotomy; it is spare and uninvolved with individuals' psychologies. Flaherty worked with what he understood and said what he had to say. Like many artists of substance this was essentially one thing reiterated throughout a career. The great French director Jean Renoir once remarked that a filmmaker spends his whole life making one film over and over again. What Flaherty said throughout his work was that humankind has an innate dignity, and that the world's meaning and beauty dwell in its patterns of existence.

The Flaherty Legacy

Though no school or movement ever formed around him, others who worked along similar lines have continuously followed Flaherty's example. *Nanook of the North* is a recognizable name even in the twenty-first century, and the idea of observing and recording people in their own milieu with a sympathetic eye continues to be a vital strand in documentary-making. Many also cite *Nanook of the North* as being among the first ethnographic films, and as anthropologists continue debate about the role of filmmaking (and ethnography) in their discipline, no one doubts that Flaherty holds a seminal place in it. The main strength of Flaherty's vision for ethnographic filmmaking lies in his refusal to pass judgment on his subjects. If his perspective sometimes seems quaint, it reflects more about the artistic milieu of the turn of the nineteenth century and perhaps the Pre-Raphaelites. Although this movement pre-dated Flaherty's work, it was the atmosphere in which his parents and Frances' parents lived. Since almost all of Flaherty's youth was spent in the wilderness, he was isolated from artistic trends in the early twentieth century and developed an aesthetic that reflected an earlier time. The films are about Flaherty's own unique poetic way of looking at life. For this his work is cherished, not only by visual anthropologists; but also by other kinds of filmmakers working today. For some detractors, Flaherty's lack of social comment was considered his downfall, perhaps even the antithesis of what they called documentary, but

the films speak for themselves; the major work continues to resonate with audiences today.

During the same period as Flaherty's early work, one film by Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack and their female partner, Marguerite Harrison (she secured the funding) deserves similar high praise. This film, the sweeping epic *Grass: A Nation's Battle for Life* (1925), records the migration of 50,000 Bakhtiari tribesmen in central Persia (today Iran) who cross a wide flooding river and climb a 12,000-foot mountain to reach pasture for their herds. Unlike Flaherty's work, the film does not focus on specific individuals, but rather captures the beauty and the dangers of a tribal culture from an almost objective point of view. The trio were the first white people to go with the Bakhtiari as they moved, carrying many pounds of gear on horseback. *Grass* is visually spectacular work that belongs in the pantheon of great documentaries. *Chang: A Drama of the Wilderness* (1927), which followed *Grass*, is Cooper's and Schoedsack's (without Harrison) concocted account of a family in the jungles of Siam (Thailand) struggling for survival against hostile animals – tigers, leopards, elephants. *Grass*, like Flaherty's films, remains compelling; *Chang* is a sentimentalized melodrama that exploits rather than respects native culture and environment. The two men subsequently had great success in Hollywood with *King Kong* (1933) and other fiction films. Harrison made no further films.

In the same ethical and artistic vein as *Chang*, in the 1930s the husband-and-wife team of Martin and Osa Johnson made several popular travel/expedition pictures with meretricious 'educational' trappings and condescending asides about the natives: *Wonders of the Congo* (1931), *Baboonia* (1935), and *Borneo* (1937) are among them. Frank Buck, in much the same vein, filmed his expeditions to capture wild animals in Africa: *Bring 'em Back Alive* (1932), *Wild Cargo* (1934), *Fang and Claw* (1935). Set in the wild and using superfluous plots, these films are a stereotype of fiction film potboilers, and the antithesis of the Flaherty's work. The French also made films in the explorer mode, the most notable being *La Croisière Noire* (*Black Journey*), a seventy-minute movie made in 1926 by Léon Poirier, which documents the Citroën Kégresse (a car race sponsored by Citroën) expedition in Africa.

Another offshoot from Flaherty's nonfiction form was the application of some elements by John Grierson and the British documentarians to purposes



Fig 11 *Marguerite Harrison in Grass: A Nation's Battle for Life (1925)* She, with co-filmmakers Merian C. Cooper and Ernest Schoedsack, became the first Westerners to make the migration with the Bakhtiari tribe. The film follows Haidar Khan as he led 50,000 people across the Karun River and through a pass in the highest part of the Zagros Mountains in what is now Iran

and subjects quite different from those of Flaherty. The British were concerned with people in an industrialized, interdependent and predominantly urban society. Their interests were social and economic, and political by implication. Grierson often publicly attacked Flaherty viciously. But, in a moving 'Appreciation' published in *The New York Times* at the time of Flaherty's death in 1951, Grierson said of his old friend and ideological adversary that perhaps Flaherty had been right after all in pursuing the timeless rather than the timely. In eulogy, Grierson wrote of Flaherty's seminal importance in the history of film, concluding with a quote from e. e. cummings in loving tribute to Flaherty:

Buffalo Bill's

defunct

who used to

ride a watersmooth-silver

stallion

and break onetwothreefourfive pigeonsjustlikethat

Jesus

he was a handsome man
and what I want to know is
how do you like your blueeyed boy
Mister Death

Chapter Related Films

1919

South – Ernest Shackleton and the Endurance Expedition (UK, Frank Hurley)

1922

Nanook of the North (US, Robert Flaherty)

1925

Grass (US, Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack)

1926

La Croisière Noire (The Black Cruise; France, Léon Poirier)

Moana (US, Flaherty)

1927

Chang (US, Cooper and Schoedsack)

Voyage au Congo (Voyage to the Congo; France, Marc Allegret and André Gide)

Chapter Related Books

Barsam, Richard, *The Vision of Robert Flaherty: The Artist as Myth and Filmmaker*.

Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.

Brownlow, Kevin, *The War, The West, and The Wilderness*. New York: Knopf, 1979.

Calder-Marshall, Arthur, *The Innocent Eye: The Life of Robert J. Flaherty*. London: W. H. Allen, 1963.

Carpenter, Edmund, ed., *Comock: The True Story of Eskimo Hunter as told to and by Robert Flaherty*. Boston: David R. Godine, 2003

Christopher, Robert J., *Robert and Frances Flaherty: A Documentary Life 1883–1922*.

Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005.

Flaherty, Frances Hubbard, *The Odyssey of a Film-Maker: Robert Flaherty's Story*. Urbana, IL: Beta Phi Mu, 1960.

Griffith, Richard, *The World of Robert Flaherty*. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1953.

Holm, Bill and George Irving Quimby, *Edward S. Curtis in the Land of the War Canoes: A Pioneer Photographer in the Pacific Northwest*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1980.

Imperato, Pascal James and Eleanor M., *They Married Adventure: The Wandering Lives of Martin and Osa Johnson*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992.

- McGrath, Melanie, *The Long Exile: A Tale of Inuit Betrayal and Survival in the High Arctic*. London: Fourth Estate, 2006.
- Murphy, William T., *Robert Flaherty: A Guide to References and Resources*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1978.
- Rotha, Paul, *Robert J. Flaherty: A Biography*, ed. Jay Ruby. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983.

3

The Soviets and Political Indoctrination, 1922–1929

Paralleling the nonfiction films of Flaherty and others in the West in the 1920s were those of Russian Soviet filmmakers. After the Revolution in 1917 one of the first acts of the new Communist government was to set up a film subsection within the new Department of Education. An indication of the department's importance was the fact that it was headed by Nadezhda Krupskaya, wife of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, principal architect of the Revolution. In 1919 the existing film industry was nationalized and the State Institute of Cinematography (VGIK) established in Moscow to train filmmakers. VGIK remains an important film school in the twenty-first century.

In Russian the word *propaganda* lacked the pejorative connotations it acquired in English. Soviets working in the arts and media understood that ideological bias operated in the selection and presentation of content in all information and entertainment, and that it was naive or hypocritical to pretend otherwise. In fact the filmmakers' goal was to create good Soviet propaganda, a goal they – at least at first – supported.

Lenin said – with remarkable foresight, given the uses of film up to that time and the negligible czarist film production: 'Of all the arts, the cinema is the most important for us.' He instructed Soviet filmmakers to revamp newsreels and other nonfiction short films. Western filmmaking companies were soon evicted. Key to Lenin's edict was the urgent need to communicate the experience and spirit of the Revolution to the still largely uninformed,

often illiterate, poor and apathetic public. The country was exhausted and its human resources depleted by the harsh years of WWI and Revolutionary war. Three types of Soviet nonfiction films were prominent in the 1920s: newsreel-indoctrinational series, compilations of archival footage tracing recent history, and epic-scale celebrations of contemporary Soviet achievement.

Reportage/Newsreel

Among the most active and influential of the pioneer Soviet filmmakers was a young man who called himself Dziga Vertov. Dziga Vertov translates as 'spinning top', which characterized well his unstoppable energy; actually his name was Denis Arkadieivitch Kaufman. He had two brothers who became filmmakers as well: Boris, a famous cameraman who later worked in the West with such directors as Jean Vigo, Elia Kazan and Sidney Lumet; and Mikhail, a cinematographer with Vertov and a documentary-maker in his own right. While Vertov's talent and originality are unquestionable, he seemed a whirling dervish to some, an eccentric fanatic to others. Before becoming a filmmaker Vertov had been an experimental poet and writer of fantasy and satire. In 1918 he joined the staff of *Kino Nedalia* (Film Weekly), which produced the first newsreel in Soviet Russia.

What attracted Vertov to cinema was what he saw as a close relationship between the filming process and human thought. Sergei Eisenstein would also develop much the same idea in his theories of montage. Also, Vertov saw human perception as having limitations compared with the more perfectible 'machine eye' of the motion picture camera. Flaherty, too, thought of the motion picture camera as a seeing machine, like the telescope or microscope, offering 'a sort of extra sight', albeit with a very different purpose from Vertov's. For both, the combination of technological developments and artistic desires played off each other to advance cinema in very different directions.

In his delight in the scientific and mechanical bases of cinema, Vertov was consistent with the great emphasis being placed on the machine in Soviet life and art. The government knew the urgent need to bring the Soviet Union up to a level of industrial production comparable with that of the Western



Fig 12 *Dziga Vertov in the 1920s. The Vertov Collection at the Austrian Film Museum*

nations, and to use modern technology to harness its vast natural resources since much of the country lived in the same ways that they had for generations. The constructivist artistic movement that became prominent in Europe in the early 1920s was also marked by an effort to give formal expression to

the dynamic energy and quickly evolving movement of mechanical processes. This resonated with the artists in the new Soviet Union. It was adopted by some filmmakers, and thought to have a special relationship with the mechanics of film.

In 1920 the Russian Revolution was still being fought. The continuing conflict between the counter-revolutionaries (the Whites), who had supported the Czar or the Socialist Duma, and the Communists (the Reds) threatened the existence of the nation. Vertov at that time worked on 'agit trains' and made *agitka*. Agit is short for agitation; sometimes the term 'agit-prop' was used, for agitation and propaganda. *Agitka* were little political propaganda pieces that were 'agitated' in form as well as in their goal of agitating the population. agit trains were developed variously equipped with small printing presses, actors who gave live performances, filmmaking and processing equipment, and other means of entertainment and communication. These traveled to the far-flung battlefronts, mostly along the Trans-Siberian Railway, trying to instill the troops and peasants along the way with revolutionary zeal. There is no real way to measure the effectiveness of the agit trains.

In 1922 (the year *Nanook of the North* was released) Vertov began to produce the 'Kino Pravda' series of short films. *Kino Pravda* means, literally, 'film truth'; *Pravda* was also the name of the Soviet daily newspaper, central organ of the Communist Party. The series was released irregularly for twenty-three issues until 1925. It was, in that respect, a precursor to the 'The March of Time' series in the United States (1935–1951). In 'Kino Pravda' the newsreel and propaganda traditions merged with avant-garde art design and theatre techniques. Each issue, running about twenty minutes and frequently comprising three or more reports on separate subjects, was intended to inform and indoctrinate Soviet audiences about the necessity for and the values and progress of the Revolution.

The best-known example of 'Kino Pravda' contains six separate reports. The first is on the renovation and operation of the Moscow trolley system, with rails being laid, electric lines installed, meters measuring power, and trolley cars running. Second is the building of Khodinka Airport, with army tanks pulling graders to level the landing field. The third deals at some length with the trial of the Social Revolutionaries (i.e. the Whites who had been defeated

by the Reds). Fourth is the organizing of peasants to form communes. Fifth is a sanitarium for crippled children at the town of Gelenzhik. Last is a report on starving children at the Melekes rail junction. The subject matter of all six reports is of a practical, immediate and concrete nature: social, economic and political problems being solved and outlines of things remaining to be done. ‘Save the starving children!’, a title in the last report exhorts.

Initially Vertov’s production method did not involve recreation. Vertov confined himself, for the most part, to capturing what he could of undirected action as it was occurring: ‘Life as it is’ and ‘Life caught unawares’ were his slogans. ‘All people must continue to act and function in front of the camera just as they do in everyday life,’ he wrote. This strategy of shooting became a principle that has remained at the core of some subsequent modes of documentary filmmaking. Vertov insisted that the camera ‘strive to shoot events “unnoticed” and approach people in such a way that the cameraman’s work does not impede the work of others.’ Conversely, the cameraman was not



Fig 13 *‘Kino Pravda’* newsreel series (USSR, 1922–25, Dziga Vertov). *Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive*

to hide when people reacted to the camera even if they expressed displeasure at being photographed. Vertov did, however, plan the films beforehand. His equipment did not easily permit candid photography. He wrote complicated and detailed notes about where the camera should be placed, and about the artistic effects he sought to achieve. It is not an accident that the camera would be placed atop a building or in front of a train; a definite artist's view was expressed. Visual effects were also sometimes added in post-production, and the appearance of the camera and cameraman in his work marks a certain self-reflexivity.

In later editions of 'Kino Pravda' there are more exceptions to the unstaged ethos. In a sequence about the trial of the Whites, for example, the selling of newspapers on the streets and the reading of newspapers in a moving trolley obviously have been enacted for the camera. But even if Vertov generally confined himself to recording what was happening in front of the camera without intervention, he felt free to manipulate this filmed actuality in post-production. He edited extensively in order to make clear and emphatic the meanings he wished to communicate to his audience, often with rapid cuts. The brevity of the shots in 'Kino Pravda' may have been made more acute by the shortage of available film in the Soviet Union, which would have required the use of odds and ends of raw stock. On the other hand, the rapid cutting is consistent with the new editing theory and technique Vertov and Eisenstein were developing, and with the experimentation of constructivism.

Vertov's film practice was accompanied by his steadily developing written film theory. In a 1925 article, 'The Basis of "Film Eye" [*Kino Glaz*]', he explained his concept. Deciphering 'life as it is' begins with the direct recording of facts found in real life. 'Film Eye' had to act not through the medium of theatre or literature, since they were 'surrogates of life', but on its own terms. This bias stimulated Vertov's followers, called *kinoks*, to become antagonistic to drama and fiction, as well as – at least nominally – to 'pay little attention to so-called Art'. This authentic film material ('life facts') was then reorganized into cinematic structures ('film things') to give a new unity with a particular ideological meaning. According to the Marxist view, the world could not be known through naive observation because its operation is hidden. The empirical world is the starting place (the source of raw material)

for the ‘scientific’ (that is, Marxist dialectical) analysis of the world. Vertov repeatedly pointed out that the ‘deciphering’ of life through cinema ‘must be done according to the Communist view of the world’. Consequently, the ‘Film Eye’ method combined an aesthetic concept of unstaged, although manipulated, film with an ideological attitude towards art in general. The true Communist artist, Vertov claimed, must face reality ‘as it exists’, neither hiding from facts nor masking problems. Despite declarations of anti-aestheticism, the films remain compelling partly because they are highly contrived art.

The wife of Dziga Vertov, and a key member of the ‘Cinema Eye’ group, was Yelizaveta Svilova, who began work at age 14 as an assistant editor for Pathé in Moscow and in 1918 became an editor of features at Goskino. When they met in 1919, Vertov’s early work inspired Yelizaveta; she alone of the editors he approached seemed able to understand his artistic vision. She joined the Cinema Eye studio and became the chief editor of all Vertov’s subsequent films, including the *Kino Pravda* series, *Kino Eye* (1924), *Man With a Movie Camera* (1929), and *Three Songs of Lenin* (1934), later directing her own documentaries. Vertov and Svilova married in 1924. Her skill as an editor shielded her from Stalin’s attacks, and she kept working throughout the 1930s, when Vertov was not permitted to make films. During World War II she was able to get him work on documentaries, and made notable films herself, including *Berlin* (1945), a compilation celebrating the Allied victory and one on the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps. Much like Frances Flaherty, Svilova devoted the later years of her life to protecting and enhancing her husband’s reputation. She managed to smuggle a large part of his personal archive out of Moscow to Vienna, where they are now accessible.

Vertov’s artistic impulse eventually proved stronger than his social one. He would probably have denied that the two impulses could be separated, and argued that his formal innovations were superior means of persuasion in support of the Revolution. Though maintaining their basis in recorded actuality, his films moved ever more toward aesthetic, psychological, even philosophical preoccupations. In his feature-length *Kino-Eye* (1924), opening titles announce it as ‘The First Exploration of “Life Caught Unawares”’ and ‘The First Non-Artificial Cinema Object, Made Without a Scenario, Actors or a Studio’. What he created, though, is a succession of vignettes and

anecdotes suggesting investigative journalism cut together to achieve a structural symmetry.

The following is one of Vertov's poetic manifestos about film:

Start 1917
 Not like Pathé.
 Not like Gaumont
 Not how they see,
 Not as they want.
 Be Newton
 To see
 An apple.
 Give people eyes
 To see a dog
 With
 Pavlov's
 eye.
 Is cinema CINEMA?
 We blow up cinema,
 For
 CINEMA
 to be seen.

Dziga Vertov: *The Laboratory of Hearing*, 1917

(translation by Julian Graffy in *DZIGA VERTOV: The Vertov Collection at the Austrian Film Museum*, ed. Thomas Tode and Barbara Wurm)

Compilation

A major new type of documentary was introduced in Soviet Russia by Esfir (Esther) Shub. A consummate editor, she influenced Vertov and Eisenstein; she also learned from their work, insisting that she was 'in the final instance, Vertov's pupil'. Beginning in film in 1922, Shub was soon inspired by Eisenstein's full-blown use of montage in *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) to begin making

compilation films. In her first three features she reconstructed recent Russian history by editing together shots taken from earlier newsreels, home movies, and other sorts of visual material. *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (1927), the best known, covered the period 1912 to 1917; *The Great Road* (1927), 1917 to 1927; and *The Russia of Nicholas II and Leo Tolstoy* (1928), 1896 to 1912.

The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty is presented in four parts: pre-World War I; preparations for war; the war; and the Communist Revolution. Throughout, narrative intertitles in the past tense are used to identify images and give them emotional colouring, frequently ironic. It begins with ‘Czarist Russia in the years of the black reaction.’ There are short sequences on ‘The Kremlin of the Czars,’ ‘Moscow of the Priests,’ ‘Police,’ and the legislative body: ‘In St Petersburg the State Duma, obedient to the Czar, was in session.’ We then see the prosperous-looking Russia of the clergy and landed aristocracy. There is one shot of village huts, with peasant women at a well, and a scene of ‘Yoked peasant labour on the lands of the gentry’; but there is more footage of court nobility, senators and officials, and of army units and the fleet. In a sequence of pointed contrast between beautifully dressed aristocrats ‘on an outing at sea’



Fig 14 *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty*, a compilation film (USSR, 1927, Esfir Shub). Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive

dancing the mazurka aboard a ship, with images of labourers doing various sorts of manual work, a title makes a small joke about the sweating involved in each activity. *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* creates amazement and pleasure in its vivid sense of time and place, even of the personalities, caught by the camera. It is a visceral document, full of life and Shub's lively response to that life.

Even though she is clearly justifying the Revolution through showing the background out of which it came, the humanity of the people photographed comes through, regardless of which side they were on politically. A scene of an aristocratic celebration in Moscow of the 300th anniversary of the Romanov reign is fascinating for its interplay of relationships among family members and friends caught and preserved for decades, in some instances without any apparent awareness on their part that they were being recorded. Nothing like Shub's films had existed before them, and her work remains among the finest examples of the compilation technique.

Shub's contributions were influential in the United States. In the early 1930s leftist filmmakers made what they called 'synthetic documentaries' out of newsreels edited for propaganda purposes. Additionally, her techniques had a major influence on later experimental documentaries. Rapid montage filmmaking was also picked up and used later in 'The March of Time' (1935 to 1951) series, in the 'Why We Fight' (1942 to 1945) indoctrination series made during World War II, and in countless compilation documentaries made over the past hundred years. A seminal book by Jay Leyda devoted to this kind of filmmaking has the apt and engaging title *Films Beget Films* (1964). This work is discussed in Chapter 13.

Montages of very rapidly cut images and sounds later became a common technique in fiction films to represent, among other things, the passage of time. Serbian Slavko Vorkapich, a 'montagist', created both experimental films and documentaries. The most famous of the former is *The Life and Death of 9413: a Hollywood Extra* (1928), made with Robert Florey. Vorkapich was hired to use his montage technique in many Hollywood fiction features: *David Copperfield* (1935, George Cukor) and *The Broadway Melody of 1938* (1937, Roy DeRuth) are only two examples. 'Vorky', as he was nicknamed, became Dean of the film school at USC (1949–1951) and taught extensively in the US and Europe spreading the art of montage.

Epic

The final Soviet documentary pioneer to be considered here is Victor Turin. One film of his demands special attention: *Turksib* (1929), a large-scale feature about the building of the Turkestan-Siberian Railway. Prior to making it Turin had been sent by his well-to-do family to America, where he moved from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to the Vitagraph Company in New York City, before returning to the Soviet Union. After the great success of *Turksib*, he was rewarded by being given a studio production post, organizing other people's films.

The introductory titles of *Turksib* set forth an economic-geographical problem. Cotton can be raised in Turkestan and 'cotton for all Russia' could be grown there if the wheat needed for the Turkestanis' subsistence could be shipped from Siberia (where cotton could not grow), thus permitting Turkestan land to shift from wheat to cotton production. However, Turkestan does not have enough water to grow cotton, so water must be brought in.

Shots of parched land are followed by a famous irrigation sequence as the snow melts in the mountains and water flows down into the valley. Trickles become streams, which become torrents. This sequence was echoed in King Vidor's fictional *Our Daily Bread* (1934), and in Pare Lorentz's documentary *The River* (1937). *Turksib* combines documentary ingredients already in use by others. It includes the distant and exotic, the Flaherty heroic struggle of man against nature. But whereas Flaherty recorded and celebrated indigenous cultural practices, Turin urged 'WAR ON THE PRIMITIVE!', as the large intertitle shouts. For Flaherty, technology represented a threat to what is most human; for Turin and the Soviets it was an extension of human power – 'forward the machines'.

Fiction and Documentary

It is sometimes impossible to separate documentary from fiction; hybrids have existed since the inception of cinema and continue to fascinate documentarians in the twenty-first century. Individual films, as well as certain national styles and movements, fall into an area containing both documentary and fiction.

The first recognized group of such films that fused fiction-documentary work are the Soviet silent features.

The basic factor setting all Soviet cinema apart from that of the rest of the world was its total support from the State. From idea, script, shooting, editing, distribution, exhibition, all financing and control was centralized. Filmmakers had to answer not to bankers, critics and the profit motive as they did in the West, but to government administrators and their presumed needs of the populace. This difference, if theoretically basic, may not have been as great in practice as it appears. Capitalist as well as Communist films all embodied ideologies. Both attempted to attract large audiences. The control of content and form in both instances was exerted by a 'front office', whether those behind the desks were called bosses or commissars. The success of Soviet films, however, was measured in terms of how well they conveyed the message – the extent to which they succeeded in affecting audience attitudes and behaviour in conformance with the Communist Party. In this respect they were profoundly different from films of the West, where market forces allowed for greater freedom.

The Fiction Films

The three greatest Soviet silent fiction film masters were Sergei Eisenstein, V. I. Pudovkin, and Alexander Dovzhenko. Eisenstein's work is the most influential of the three. It is also closest to documentary, and is therefore an invaluable example.

Eisenstein started his artistic career in the theatre, coming under the influence of renowned experimental director Vsevolod Meyerhold. He bounced out of theatre into film after he produced a play in 1924 entitled *Gas Masks*, performed by workers and staged in a real Moscow gas factory. Instead of replacing 'art' with 'life', as he had intended, Eisenstein found that the industrial setting and the performances of nonactors showed up the artificiality of conventions that would have seemed perfectly at home in the theatre. He thus turned to film as the medium in which art could be made out of materials much closer to life.



Fig 15 Battleship Potemkin, a fiction film based on historical fact of the 1905 abortive Russian revolution (USSR, 1925, Sergei Eisenstein). Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive

The documentary-like characteristics of Eisenstein's film are, first, that their subjects are all related to actual life lived or presently being lived. They are about people in relation to social institutions, a theme echoed many decades later in works by Frederick Wiseman and Roger Graef. Their concerns are large, economic and political. *Strike* (1925) deals with a labour protest and its smashing in Czarist Russia. *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) is based on the mutiny of the crew of an armoured cruiser in the abortive 1905 revolution. This was a mass uprising that sprang up in many parts of Russia, protesting against overwork, poverty, abuse and other government ills. It led to the founding of the Duma and a constitutional rather than absolute monarchy. *October/Ten Days That Shook the World* (1928) is a recreation of the Bolshevik seizure of power in St Petersburg, the storming of the Czar's Winter Palace, and the takeover from the government. *The General Line/Old and New* (1929) is about an idealized agricultural collective in the new state; it is like an expansion of

a 'Kino Pravda' report with the same emphasis on machines, in this case a tractor and a cream separator.

The purpose of these Eisenstein films, like Vertov's, is to inform and emotionally involve the Soviet public regarding: (1) the conditions and events leading to and justifying the Revolution; (2) the heroic struggle of the revolutionary forces during it; and (3) the positive and constructive efforts of the new state following it. Their aim is to persuade the people to support the efforts of their government, to make them think as Communists – for brotherhood, collective effort, and material progress, and against everything that stands in the way of those goals. Getting people to support the Bolsheviks was critical; real life in Russia was very grim and poor, often to the point of starvation, and the early USSR was not a stable nation.

Eisenstein shot on location and used nonactors. Though he started with actuality, he submitted it to extreme formalistic control and shaping. His work seems to represent a fusion of the contributions of two American pioneers: David Wark Griffith and Robert Flaherty. He acknowledged his indebtedness to Griffith; it is not known whether he saw Flaherty's films. But Eisenstein began with something close to natural material and morphed it with highly developed Griffith directing and editing technique.

According to his theory of *typage*, Eisenstein would select a person to play a priest, or a ship captain, or a foundry worker, whose appearance suggested most strongly that he might perform such a function. Eisenstein's definition of 'typage' is not the same as 'typesetting'. His purpose of typage was meant to present one aspect of a character, not a full psychological representation of that character. What Eisenstein needed was different from Flaherty's getting Nanook to play himself driving a dog sled. Performances in Eisenstein's films had to be created according to script requirements. Flaherty could capture his sort of action in sustained wide-angle takes. Eisenstein cut his nonactors' performances into bits and pieces, often using closeups. Montage, as Eisenstein conceived it, matches the Marxist dialectical process – shots cut together equalling thesis, antithesis, synthesis – rendering it ideal for polemical purposes. The aesthetic experience and social effects offered by Eisenstein's films finally move them outside the realm of documentary.

All of the Soviet silent films embrace the documentary impulse. If the art of Vertov, Shub, and Turin, of Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Dovzhenko

might include entertainment, it was intended ultimately to make a better-functioning country. The artists at that time were committed to building a perfect classless and centralized Communist Russia. Such loyalties shifted for some filmmakers as time passed. Eisenstein especially ran foul of Joseph Stalin's dictatorship. Sometimes his films were popular and in favour with the regime; at other times, after 1930, he was accused of being too formalistic, independent and elitist. Vertov, too, was later indicted as being too 'cosmopolitan' – a code-word for being too interested in art for art's sake and for being a Jew.

The relationship between government and documentary established in the USSR would be picked up later by Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, and in the English-speaking democracies of Great Britain, the United States and Canada, as will be seen.

Chapter Related Films

1922–1925

'Kino Pravda' series (Dziga Vertov)

1924

Kino-Eye (Vertov)

1925

The Battleship Potemkin (Sergei Eisenstein)

1926

A Sixth of the World (Vertov)

Strike, Soviet (Vertov)

1927

The Fall of the Romanov Empire (Esfir Shub)

The Great Road (Shub)

1928

The Life and Death of 9413: a Hollywood Extra (Robert Florey, Slavko Vorkapich)

October/Ten Days That Shook the World (Eisenstein)

The Russia of Nicholas II and Leo Tolstoy (Shub)

1929

The General Line/Old and New (Eisenstein)

The Man with a Movie Camera (Vertov)

Turksib (Victor Turin)

Chapter Related Books

- Feldman, Seth R., *Dziga Vertov: A Guide to References and Resources*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1979.
- Feldman, Seth R., *Evolution of Style in the Early Work of Dziga Vertov*. New York: Arno Press, 1977.
- Hicks, Jeremy, *Dziga Vertov: Defining Documentary Film*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2007.
- Kenez, Peter, *Cinema and Soviet Society, 1917–1953*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Lawton, Anna, ed., *The Red Screen: Politics, Society, Art in Soviet Cinema*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Leyda, Jay, *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film*. New York: Macmillan, 1983.
- Leyda, Jay, *Films Beget Films*, 1976.
- Roberts, Graeme, *Forward Soviet!: History and Non-fiction Film in the USSR*. London: I. B. Tauris, 1999.
- Shlapentokh, Dmitri, and Vladimir Shlapentokh, *Soviet Cinematography, 1918–1991: Ideological Conflict and Social Reality*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1993.
- Taylor, Richard and Ian Christie, (eds), *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents, 1896–1939*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988.
- Taylor, Richard and Ian Christie, (eds), *Inside the Film Factory: New Approaches to Russian and Soviet Cinema*. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Vertov Collection at the Austrian Film Museum. Wien, Austria: FilmmuseumSynema Publication, 2007.
- Youngblood, Denise J., *Soviet Cinema in the Silent Era, 1918–1935*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991.
- Zorkaya, Neya, *The Illustrated History of Soviet Cinema*. New York: Hippocrene Books, 1991.

4

The European Avant-Garde Experimentation, 1922–1929

It is a curious historical coincidence that at almost exactly the time Flaherty in America (*Nanook of the North*) and Vertov in Russia ('Kino-Pravda') began laying the groundwork for documentary, the avant-garde film was starting in Western Europe and to a lesser degree in the US. Thus, by the early 1920s documentary and experimental emerged alongside fiction to establish the three main aesthetic impulses of film art, its principal modes documentary, fiction and avant-garde. These Soviet and Western European films, along with Flaherty's, also became sources for the experimental documentary film as it would develop. And the avant-garde as well as documentary started as rebellion against the fiction film, which had quickly become the predominant artistic and commercial form.

Aesthetic Predispositions

What caused this rebellion was the feeling on the part of devotees of both new artistic tendencies that the conventions of the fiction film were limited and limiting. (This idea has surfaced many times in documentary, for example, with proponents of Free Cinema, cv/direct, and on-line filmmaking.)

Someone once remarked that the artistic experience offered by the Hollywood movie was equivalent to a performance by someone playing a grand piano with one finger, and throughout the course of film history new generations have continued to 'discover' this. The documentarians and avant-gardists of the 1920s shared a desire to explore more fully the capacities of film as a medium – to do what only film could do, or what only film could do best. They wanted to create films different from literary stories told through the theatrical means of actors and sets. They also agreed that the fiction film was telling lies about life. They did not agree on much else, however. For the documentarians, conventional fiction films were not realistic enough; for the avant-gardists, they were too realistic. For the most part the former wanted external (objective) facts, presented fully and accurately; the latter wanted formal (aesthetic) patterns and inner (subjective) truths, presented poetically.

The creative predilection of the documentarians extended out of the detailed verisimilitude the photographic image offered; the illusion of motion in the cinematographic image permitted the recording of yet more visible reality – more than was attainable through any other means of communication or form or art. With the motion picture, material and physical life could be captured as it was being lived, even more fully than still photography.

The avant-gardists, on the other hand, extended more out of emerging trends in design, architecture, poetry and painting. They valued the movement of the moving picture for allowing their visual imagery to become more complex and consistent with twentieth-century artistic and scientific conceptions of time as a fourth dimension. In addition, movement in time enabled the avant-gardists to follow the workings of the mind into dreams, hallucinations, fantasies, which jumble an incongruous succession of images in a stream of consciousness. Through film they could both present abstract patterns in motion and represent dream-like perceptions.

In the traditional arts the interrelationship of space and time was already being explored. In painting, Marcel Duchamp's 'Nude Descending a Staircase' (1912) offered an abstracted, stroboscopic view of a person and her activity. The practice of cubism, Pablo Picasso's 'The Violin' (1913), for instance, rests on the notion of an observer moving about to view a subject from various distances and angles; the separate views are then overlaid to try to suggest

looking at the subject from different positions all at once. In literature, Marcel Proust, in his multi-volume *Remembrance of Things Past* (1919–1925), assumed that the past is always present, and that places experienced earlier join with places experienced later. James Joyce, in *Ulysses* (1922), intermingled what is happening to his characters in various parts of Dublin on 16 June 1904, cutting back and forth among them as a filmmaker would, trying to convey a sense of simultaneity and interaction of events and persons. The work of Vertov in 'Kino-Pravda' was rich in experimental design and the notion of placing self within film. The Dada and Surrealist movements with their emphasis on found objects, automatic writing, the importance of dreams, also found film to be a special medium. These last two movements in particular found their way into mainstream cinema.

Avant-Garde and Documentary

The first of the avant-garde films were along lines of abstraction and nonobjectivity. In 1921 two painter friends living in Berlin each began work on short films that might, aside from Vertov, be thought of as the beginning of avant-garde cinema. Influenced by such artistic movements as futurism and cubism, Viking Eggeling, a Swede, and Hans Richter, a German, had been attempting to bring a sense of motion approximating animation into their paintings. Their preoccupations led them from picture scrolls to the moving picture, and Richter's *Rhythmus 21* (1921) and Eggeling's *Diagonal Symphony* (1925) were the first results. 'Rhythm in painting' now painting on film is what they said they were after. Richter's film comprises an interacting set of square and rectangular shapes in white, gray and black; as they change sizes, they seem to be moving towards or away from the viewer. Eggeling's film consists of white abstractions shaped like lyres in shifting relationships with each other against a black screen. These two films might make one think of Piet Mondrian paintings in motion.

Some of Mondrian's nonrepresentational, geometric canvases resemble aerial photographs of a city taken from extremely high altitudes so that all we see is the grid of streets, a block of colour that may be a park, and so on. In 1921 two Americans, Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand – the first a painter, the

second a photographer – made a film that offered a somewhat similar view of New York City: *Manhatta* (based on the Walt Whitman poem ‘*Mannahatta*’; the film version altered the spelling). In their *Manhatta*, shot mostly looking down from skyscrapers, the city becomes abstract. The streets and buildings appear as patterns of light and shadow. The people, flattened and seen at great distance, exist only as part of the design. Though shown little in the United States, *Manhatta* appeared in Paris in a Dadaist programme that included music by Erik Satie and poems by Guillaume Apollinaire. It was said to have received a shocked but enthusiastic ovation on that occasion. These films were an embryonic beginning of the ‘city symphony’, films that strongly link avant-garde with documentary, some experimental in intent. Very short actualities had been a staple of the earliest films, two notable examples being experimental or ‘trick’ films *Star Theater New York* (1901) and *Market Street San Francisco* (1906).

Another seminal film that could be added to the works of Richter, Eggeling, and Sheeler and Strand is one by the French painter Fernand Léger. With technical assistance from an American named Dudley Murphy, Léger made *Ballet Mécanique* (1924), exploring the rhythmic relationships of images in motion. In it, the capacity of film for mechanical repetition and its power to animate the inanimate (kitchen utensils, mannequin legs, Christmas ornaments, bottles, printed words, and geometric shapes) are strikingly exploited. Marcel Duchamp’s *Anemic Cinema* (1926) is somewhat similar in its intentions. It was this type of filmmaking that led later into Len Lye’s work in the UK and for the National Film Board of Canada, and to many experiments in graphics in motion.

The second line of avant-garde creation was inspired by psychoanalysis and Surrealism, with its preoccupations rooted in dream and the unconscious. In painting, Salvador Dalí, who subsequently worked occasionally and briefly in film, painted in the surrealist manner. This generally involved more or less realistic representations of objects and persons placed in strange juxtapositions with each other. In literature, Proust, though no surrealist, also relates to this psychoanalytic tendency, with the past affecting the present; as does Joyce, in *Ulysses*, especially in the use of stream of consciousness. In film, Luis Buñuel’s and Salvador Dalí’s *Un Chien Andalou* (1929), Buñuel’s *L’Âge d’or* (1930), and Jean Cocteau’s *The Blood of a Poet* (1930) are celebrated

examples of these dreamscapes. Freud's ideas about the unconscious were gaining public acceptance around this time, and the founders of the Surrealist movement were also deeply influenced by their traumatic experiences in WWI. This 'war to end all wars' was the first large-scale example of the horrors of highly mechanized warfare. It left these artists profoundly disturbed by its slaughter and violence.

Even in Rotha's realist (continental) precursors of documentary there is evidence of these two avant-garde styles. Abstraction appears in Joris Ivens' first significant film, *The Bridge* (1928). It is related to modernist movements such as cubism, futurism and constructivism. Like much of the later Vertov, whose work influenced Ivens, *The Bridge* converts machinery into art. Camera composition and movement, and edited relationships of shots are designed to bring out the functional and also aesthetic essence of an enormous railway bridge in Rotterdam. Few people appear in the film – a workman climbing a ladder and a bridge tender answering a phone and starting machinery that raises and lowers the bridge – and it ends with animated squares à la Richter's *Rhythmus 21*.

Surrealism is evident in Jean Vigo's *Jean Taris, champion de natation* (1931). This study of the aquatic style of a celebrated French swimmer is notable for its beautiful underwater cinematography in slow motion and a dive back out of the pool onto the diving board at the end. Jean Lods' *Le Mile* (1934), about a runner, employs 'ether music', slow motion, and superimpositions. Buñuel's *Land Without Bread* (1932) forces us to look at the devastating actuality, the poverty of the Las Hurdes region of Spain, in a way that might be described as having the intense irrational reality of a dream – that is, of being *surreal*. The mixture of 'real' and 'surreal' images makes this one of the more complex and fascinating avant-garde documentaries. It is also sometimes considered a beginning in 'reflexive' documentary – that is, narrative documentary in which the audience is made aware of the presence of the camera.

But it was a third line of avant-garde filmmaking, developing near the end of the twenties, that fed most directly into documentary. Its aesthetic *ism* was impressionism, and its origins went back to the French impressionists at the turn of the century. The style of impressionism also placed emphasis on the space/time relationship; impressionist painting was like looking at life from a



Fig 16 A collage of images from Berlin: Symphony of a Great City (Germany, 1927, Walther Ruttmann). Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive

fast-moving railway carriage, it had been said. (Of course, film provided this actual opportunity; see, for example, Jean Mitry's *Pacific 231* [1949], about a powerful locomotive rushing through the French countryside.)

The impressionist films resemble the paintings in their quick views and concentration on surfaces and light. What they offer mainly are collected

glimpses of city life during a passage of time. Joyce's *Ulysses* might again be thought of as a literary precedent. Eisenstein wrote of that novel: 'What Joyce does with literature is quite close to what we're doing with the new cinematography, and even closer to what we're going to do.' He further said that if *Ulysses* were ever made into a film, the only men capable of directing it would be Walther Ruttmann or Sergei Eisenstein.

Ruttmann directed one of the early city symphonies, *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (1927). It was preceded slightly by *Rien que les heures/Only the Hours* (1926), about Paris, directed by Brazilian Alberto Cavalcanti. *Rain* (1929), Joris Ivens' film about Amsterdam, followed. What follows is an examination of these three seminal works: *Rien que les heures*, *Berlin*, and *Rain*. It must be acknowledged, however, that the line they started includes, among others, Jean Vigo's *À propos de Nice* (1930), a scathingly satirical study of the famous resort in the manner of Honoré Daumier paintings, Ralph Steiner's and Willard Van Dyke's *Manhatta*, Jay Leyda's *A Bronx Morning* (1931), Robert Flaherty's *The Twenty-four-Dollar Island* (1927), *The City* (US, 1939, to be dealt with in Chapter 6), Arne Sucksdorff's *Symphony of a City* (1947), about Stockholm, and John Eldridge's *Waverley Steps* (1948), about Edinburgh. Much later iterations of this mode came in Hilary Harris' *Organism* (1975) and Pat O'Neill's *Water and Power* (1989).

Three City Symphonies

Alberto Cavalcanti was a Brazilian emigré who became part of the Parisian avant-garde in the early 1920s. He began his film career as an innovative set designer for Marcel L'Herbier on such features as *L'Inhumaine* (1923), in collaboration with Fernand Léger, and *The Late Matthew Pascal* (1925), in collaboration with Lazare Meerson.

Rien que les heures is a curious and fascinating mixture of the aesthetic and the social. It deals with Paris from predawn to well into the following night – roughly twenty-four hours. Opening titles promise that we will not be looking at the elegant life but rather at that of the lower classes. Thus the social viewpoint is established. But a philosophical thesis concerning time and space is also introduced and reprised. At the conclusion of the film we

are asked, after we have seen what the filmmaker has shown us of Paris, to consider simultaneously Paris in relation to Peking (Beijing). The titles assert that, though we can fix a point in space, arrest a moment in time, both space and time escape our possession – that life is ongoing and interrelated, and that, without their monuments, cities cannot be told apart.

The film is mainly devoted to contrasting scenes and changing activities of Paris during the passing hours. In early morning we see all-night revellers still out on deserted streets as well as the first workers on their way to work; later, workers are shown at labour; then lunchtime. In the afternoon some people are swimming; work ceases, rest and recreation occupy the evening. Among the views of unstaged actuality are brief, staged fragments. Three slight narratives are developed. The protagonists of all three are female – an old derelict (drunken or ill), a prostitute, a newspaper vendor – all of them pathetic figures. The overall mood of the film is a bit downbeat; there is a sweet sadness, a sentimental roughness about it.

Still, Cavalcanti's attitude may be one of detachment, perhaps cynicism: '*c'est la vie*', he seems to be saying. Though some attention to class distinctions and social matters is evident, the considerable number and variety of highly stylized special effects – wipes, rapid match dissolves, multiple exposures, fast motion, revolving images, split screens, freeze frames – seem to confirm that Cavalcanti's greatest interest was in artistic experimentation.

Like Cavalcanti, Walther Ruttmann came out of architecture and painting into avant-garde filmmaking in the early 1920s – specifically, in his case, to abstract, geometric forms in motion like those of his mentor, Viking Eggeling. A fascination with design is even more evident in *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* than in *Rien que les heures*; and, incidentally, the former was released so soon after the latter that there can be little question of one influencing the other. Unlike *Rien*, *Berlin* emerged from mainstream commercial cinema. Produced for Fox-Europa Film, its scenario was written by Ruttmann and Karl Freund, based on an idea by Carl Mayer. (Mayer had written scripts for *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* [1919], *The Last Laugh* [1924], *Tartuffe* [1925], and other notable German silent features.) The cinematography was supervised by Freund (who was director of photography on some of the great fiction films of the period including *The Golem* [1920], *The Last Laugh* [1924], *Variety* [1925],

and *Metropolis* [1927]). Original music was composed by Edmund Meisel (who had created a famous score for the German exhibition of *Potemkin*). The editing was done by Ruttmann. Though the camerawork of *Berlin* is dazzling, it is above all an editor's film, and Ruttmann is credited as its director. We see Berlin, true enough, but it is Ruttmann's Berlin that we see.

The overall organizational basis is temporal; occasionally clocks show the time: 5:00, 8:00, 12:00. The major sequences comprise very early morning (the city coming to life), morning (work and general activity), lunchtime (eating and repose), afternoon (work ceases, recreation takes place), and evening (entertainment and various sorts of diversions). Intertitles indicate 'acts' up through four (though a fifth would seem to be intended), but they are much less clearly structured than the five acts of *Potemkin* or *Turksib*.

The criteria for selection and arrangement of material within these acts rest heavily on visual similarities and contrasts. Ruttmann is fascinated with the way things are shaped, the way they move. At any given time the organizing principle may be kinetic (things going up, things coming down; things opening, things closing) or shapes that look alike (people in a crowd walking, a herd of cattle moving, a troop of soldiers marching).

There are also topical groupings: workers going to work; children going to school; women cleaning and scrubbing; the various means of transportation; people eating lunch; animals feeding at the zoo. The pattern for each scene or subsection within the major sequences/acts is frequently that of an activity starting, increasing in tempo, then coming to a halt. The people are treated much as the objects; both are subjects for visual examination.

Some of the action is staged: a group of merry-makers in the early morning returning from a party; an argument between two men which attracts a group of watchers; a woman jumping from a bridge to drown, apparently. But mostly life is caught unawares. Much influenced by Vertov, Ruttmann did not follow Vertov's dictum about advancing a social point of view, though at the time he was identified with the political left.

In *Berlin* the rich and powerful are seen in contrast to members of the working classes, although no social comment is inferred. Much less attention is paid to individual persons in *Berlin* than in 'Kino-Pravda'. Machines are as important for Ruttmann as they are for the Soviets, but in *Berlin* they are

not shown to have social utility as they are in *Turksib*. Instead, they exist as fascinating, intricate, moving objects. The film's opening proceeds from abstractions of water to what look like polarized images of fast-moving locomotive wheels and railroad tracks, beginning a protracted, elaborately cut evocation of a train's early morning approach to a Berlin terminus, which climaxes in a huge closeup of one of the engine's now stationary piston wheels after its arrival. Later, the image of a typewriter keyboard is set spinning and metamorphoses into a whirling animated design. *Berlin* strikes some viewers as brilliant and cold, an exercise in cinematic virtuosity.

The exclusively aesthetic concentration of Ruttmann represented a severe limitation, not only from the Soviet point of view but from that of subsequent British documentarians. Yet, *Berlin* may have more value as a *document* than do those *documentary* films made with more explicit social biases and programmes. Though composed according to artistic insights and intuitions and the requirements of form, what it offers essentially is a visual description. From this film we can learn a great deal about the appearance of life in Berlin in 1927.

Joris Ivens, like Louis Lumière, came out of the photographic business. His grandfather was a pioneer Dutch photographer; his father owned a chain of camera shops. After serving an apprenticeship at the Zeiss camera factories in Germany, Ivens returned to Holland in 1926 to become manager of his father's Amsterdam branch. His *Rain* (1929) and *The Bridge* (1928) are shorts (both run 10 to 15 minutes) and unlike *Rien* or *Berlin*, which are short features (45 and 70 minutes, respectively). Perhaps *Rain* is a city sonata. It presents Amsterdam just before, during, and immediately after a shower. Ivens' play with light and shadow and the compositional relationships of shots becomes much more important than in *The Bridge*. *Rain* is impressionist rather than cubist; lyrical rather than analytical. Its shapes and textures tend to be round and soft rather than straight and hard. It seems a very tactile film.

The film begins with shots of canals and harbour, roofs, sky, an airplane, streetcar and traffic, sheets hanging on clothes lines, and awnings. The first person we see extends his hand, palm up, to feel raindrops, then turns up his coat collar. An umbrella is opened; a window is closed. Throughout, Ivens seems to be asking us to examine images in everyday life – rain on



Fig 17 A youthful Joris Ivens with editing equipment used at the time. Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive

windshields, puddles in streets, umbrellas, reflections – to see the ‘artistic’ in the actual. Fernand Léger once observed that before the invention of the moving picture no one knew the possibilities latent in a foot, a hand, or a hat. Ivens makes something as commonplace as an umbrella or a bare window a thing of uncommon loveliness and significance.

The career of one of documentary’s most brilliant early editors was launched in Ivens’ shadow. Helen Van Dongen was also born in Holland. In her teens, she held a job with the firm owned by the father of Joris Ivens. She became deeply involved in Ivens’ work, and with him. Her first screen credit came in 1931 with Ivens’ *Phillips Radio*, although she worked uncredited on some of his earlier projects. She also studied in Russia with Eisenstein, Vertov and Pudvkin, and presumably with Esther Shub and Svilova, as did Ivens.

After moving to the US with Ivens, who soon abandoned her for another woman, she directed a Technicolor experimental film with stop-motion puppets for the 1939 New York World’s Fair. Later during World War II she worked on films for both the Army Signal Corps and the Office of War Information. Other notable contributions were the editing of Ivens’ *The 400*



Fig 18 *Rain* (Holland, 1929, Joris Ivens). Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive

Million (1938), about the Japanese invasion of China, and their last project together, *Power And The Land* (1941). Two remarkable collaborations editing with Robert Flaherty resulted in *The Land* and *Louisiana Story*. When the latter moved to the scoring stage Van Dongen supervised the music with its composer Virgil Thompson and Flaherty. *Louisiana Story* won the only Pulitzer Prize ever given for music. These films are discussed in later chapters.

Changes in the Avant-Garde

The energy of the first wave of film avant-garde diminished soon, in part because of the expense, complexity and cumbersomeness that sound added to the motion picture in the late 1920s. It was no longer easy for individuals or intimate groups of friends to shoot on weekends, registering images as they found or created them, cutting them together in the evenings using only a pair of rewinds and a splicer, and screening the completed film at a local ciné-club. Now the big studios, with sound stages and synchronous sound recording

apparatus, exercised complete domination, and not only over production, but over distribution and exhibition as well.

Perhaps at least as contributive to this decline of the avant-garde were changing intellectual and artistic interests and attitudes. If the twenties were 'roaring' and frivolous, they also nurtured aesthetic innovation. The notion of art for the sake of art, with emphasis on formal experimentation, prevailed in influential circles. The intellectual preoccupations during the worldwide depression of the thirties, in contrast, were markedly social and political. This decade included not only depression, but also the rise of fascism, and other misfortunes that culminated in a second world war. In the thirties, art for the sake of society became a rallying cry, and the documentary film replaced the avant-garde film at the centre of intellectual and artistic life in a number of countries.

Before making *Rain*, Joris Ivens had been involved in the politics of the international student movement and had participated in workers' demonstrations, which strengthened his leftward leanings. In his subsequent films Ivens moved away from formal experimentation towards social problems posed in a realistic style. In 1929 and 1932 he visited the Soviet Union. From that point on his films would be made in support of projects on the political left. His work will be encountered again in subsequent chapters.

Ruttman, too, moved from the avant-garde to the political, but in a different direction. In the late 1930s he lent his talents to the Nazi propaganda ministry. He served as adviser to Leni Riefenstahl on the editing of her massive *Olympia* (1938), which celebrated the Olympic games held in Berlin in 1936, the subtext of which supported certain aspects of Nazi mythology. In 1940 Ruttman made *Deutsche Panzer* (German Tanks) and recorded on film the German occupation of France. The following year he was killed while covering the Russian front for a newsreel. Both brought to this later work the same artistic sensibilities as they did to their private projects.

Of the three city-symphonists, Alberto Cavalcanti is the most neatly symbolic figure of transition. He moved from the French avant-garde of the 1920s to the British documentary of the 1930s. Cavalcanti's documentary work is dealt with in the next chapter.

In its time, the emerging British documentary was considered avant-garde too, and included experimentation with new forms and techniques

as well as with new subjects and purposes. If it is thought of as an artistic movement (as it can be), British documentary is remarkable within the history of twentieth-century art movements for lasting some twenty years, its influence spreading internationally and extending down to this day. The formal experimentation was encouraged partly to attract artistically talented young persons to documentary filmmaking, and partly to find ways in which social arguments could be made most appealing and persuasive. British documentary continued the avant-garde experimentation with shapes in movement, and the emphasis of the Soviets and their fascination with machines continued in Britain. Such experimentation was most evident in the works of Humphrey Jennings (the surrealist influence) and Len Lye (the abstract). The documentary avant-garde also grew in the United States during the 1920s and 30s but eventually the two forms took largely separate paths there.

Chapter Related Films

1921

Manhatta (US, Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand)

1926

Melody of the World (Germany, Walther Ruttmann)

Rien que les heures (France, Alberto Cavalcanti)

1927

Berlin: Symphony of a Great City (Germany, Ruttmann)

The Bridge (Netherlands, Joris Ivens)

1928

La Tour (The Eiffel Tower, France, René Clair)

1929

The Man with a Movie Camera (USSR, Dziga Vertov)

Rain (Netherlands, Ivens)

1931

A Bronx Morning (US, Jay Leyda)

Chapter Related Books

Aitkin, Ian, *Alberto Cavalcanti: Realism, Surrealism and National Cinemas*. Trowbridge, Wilts: Flicks Books, 2000.

- Bakker, Kees, ed., *Joris Ivens and the Documentary Context*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000.
- Böker, Carlos, *Joris Ivens, Film-Maker: Facing Reality*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1981.
- Delmar, Rosalind, *Joris Ivens: 50 years of filmmaking*. London: British Film Institute, 1970.
- Ivens, Joris, *Joris Ivens: The Camera and I*. New York: International Publishers, 1969.
- Manvell, Roger, ed., *Experiment in the Film*. London: Grey Walls Press, 1949.
- Rees, A. L., *A History of Experimental Film and Video*. London: British Film Institute, 1999.

5

Institutionalization: Great Britain, 1929–1939

While documentary filmmaking was beginning in the 1920s – in America with films about tribal societies (*Nanook of the North* and *Grass*); in the Soviet Union with indoctrinational newsreels ('Kino-Pravda') and compilation films and epics (*The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* and *Turksib*); and in Western Europe with the city symphonies (*Rien que les heures* and *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City*) – the conceptual origins of British documentary were also being formulated, but not exactly in Britain, and not in film. John Grierson later remarked that 'The idea of documentary in its present form came originally not from the film people at all, but from the Political Science school in Chicago University round about the early twenties.'

Background and Underpinnings

Grierson, founder and leader of the British documentary movement, was a Scot. Born in 1898 and raised near Stirling, he was strongly influenced from an early age by the Scottish labour movement emanating from the working-class district along the Clyde river in Glasgow. Most of World War I he spent in the Navy. When he was mustered out in 1919 he entered Glasgow University with other returning veterans.

Upon graduation in 1923 Grierson taught briefly in Newcastle-on-Tyne. While there he obtained a Rockefeller fellowship to pursue graduate research

into public opinion and the mass media in the United States. He set sail for America in 1924. He had chosen the University of Chicago as his base because of its distinguished social science faculty. He also knew and admired the work of Chicago writers such as Sherwood Anderson, Ben Hecht and Carl Sandburg. He was fascinated by the newness and originality of American culture, and by the ways in which Europeans were being changed into Americans.

This assimilation of the foreign-born into American culture, and the role the popular press played in their education, occupied much of Grierson's attention. He spent more time on Halsted Street, with its polyglot population of Germans, Italians, Greeks, Russians and Poles, than on the Midway campus of the university, he liked to say. As Grierson came to understand the matter, the tabloid newspapers – the Hearst press, and its imitators – provided more of these immigrants' education into citizenship than did the schools, churches, or government.

A book that strongly influenced his thinking at the time was Walter Lippmann's *Public Opinion*, published in 1922. In it Lippmann described how the earlier ideals of Jeffersonian democracy had been rendered inoperative. Originally the Virginia gentleman sitting on his veranda reading the two-week-old newspaper brought by packet from Philadelphia could make up his mind about the issues facing the nation and vote for a candidate running for public office who would represent his views. Since that time, government had become big, distant and complex. The citizen, feeling he could not keep abreast of the information necessary to participate in the decision-making process, had dissociated himself from government. Lippmann thought education was the only solution to the problem, but that it was too late for it to take effect in time to keep the democratic system viable. Grierson postulated that what was needed was to involve citizens in their government with the kind of engaging excitement generated by the popular press, which simplified and dramatized public affairs. As he travelled around the country, Grierson eventually met Lippmann. It was Lippmann, Grierson frequently acknowledged, who suggested to him that, rather than the press, he look into the movies. Perhaps they were the form best suited to turn citizens' attention to the decisions that needed to be made in common, and to provide them with a basic education in the factors to be considered.

Clearly the entertainment film was not readily available for these purposes; two filmmakers and films not part of the Hollywood industry suggested to Grierson a way to harness the motion picture to the job of educating citizens. One filmmaker was Sergei Eisenstein. Though Grierson would not meet Eisenstein until a few years later, he did gain intimate knowledge of and respect for *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) by helping prepare it for American release. The other filmmaker, Robert Flaherty, Grierson met sometime in 1925. It was to Flaherty's second film, *Moana* (1926), that he first applied the term *documentary*.

When Grierson returned to England in 1927 he approached another man who would become enormously important in the development of the documentary film: Stephen Tallents, Secretary of the Empire Marketing Board (EMB). The EMB had been established in 1926 to promote the marketing of products of the British Empire and to encourage research and development among the member states. The broader purpose implicit from the outset was to substitute for the decaying military and political ties of empire the economic ones of a commonwealth of nations. Tallents saw quickly that the motion picture might be a valuable tool in this unique new governmental public relations endeavour, and that Grierson was exceptionally well qualified to initiate its use.

The System

Empire Marketing Board

Following Grierson's research into film activities of other governments and screening films for EMB, he and Tallents succeeded in talking the Department of Treasury into funding production of a film by the Empire Marketing Board. *Drifters* (1929) was the result, written, produced, directed and edited by Grierson. A short feature in length, it dealt with herring fishing in the North Sea. Rather than follow its substantial success with another and then another film of his own, Grierson chose to establish a collective filmmaking enterprise, a sort of workshop and schoolhouse, out of which the British documentary movement would emerge.



Fig 19 *Drifters*, Grierson's first film (UK, 1929, John Grierson). *Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive*

In 1930 the Empire Marketing Board Film Unit was established, with Grierson as its head. During the four years of its existence it made over one hundred films. Grierson's catchphrase for what the EMB films were designed to do was 'To bring the Empire alive'. He pursued this purpose by showing one and then another part of the Empire (one region of Britain, one of its colonies, one of its industries) to the rest. He hoped that films of this sort would help citizens of the Empire to more fully understand and appreciate each other, to perceive their interdependencies and value them, and to create a more coherent civic whole.

In the production of the EMB films Grierson involved dozens of young people, mostly upper middle-class and well-educated (many at Cambridge University), who were used to being listened to, as Grierson once put it. They learned not only filmmaking but also the sort of social commitment that motivated Grierson. What he wanted films to do was to make the state and the society function better. He thought that collective effort, cooperation and

understanding could lead to a better world – not only better food and better housing, better teeth and better schools, but a better spirit – a sense of being part of a valuable society with space still left for individual satisfactions and eccentricities.

Those who came through this informal but rigorous schooling at the Empire Marketing Board included, roughly in the order of their hiring, Basil Wright, Paul Rotha, Arthur Elton, Edgar Anstey and Stuart Legg. Harry Watt came later, as did Humphrey Jennings. Alberto Cavalcanti joined the group as a sort of co-producer and co-teacher with Grierson. They were paid so little it was laughable (or perhaps weepable) at the time, but they were all caught up in the excitement of art put to social use. Each had special talents and interests: Wright's were poetic, Elton's technological and scientific, Legg's political, and so on. After absorbing what Grierson had to offer and developing deep and lasting loyalties to his causes and to himself, they could – and did – move out into the world filming for other sponsors, forming other units, training other filmmakers, while still working in common cause.

As well as creating filmmakers, Grierson was also concerned with creating audiences for his kind of film. Though documentaries were sometimes shown in theatres, theatrical showings were limited. The film industry resisted government filmmaking; distributors and exhibitors said the public didn't want documentaries. In answer, Grierson developed a method of nontheatrical distribution and exhibition. In order to build audience support, film critics on the major papers were recruited in behalf of the movement and Grierson and his colleagues wrote and lectured tirelessly. They were instrumental in founding and guiding three successive journals – *Cinema Quarterly*, *World Film News*, and *Documentary News Letter* – which served as house organs for the documentary.

If Grierson did not do it all himself, it was mainly his leadership and his manifold activities that brought British documentary into being and caused it to grow in its influence. The movement developed a powerful, coherent energy, with Grierson able to direct, to a remarkable extent, the uses to which that energy was put.

General Post Office

In 1933, at the depth of the Depression, the Empire Marketing Board was terminated on grounds of necessary government economy. Tallents moved to the General Post Office as its first public relations officer, on condition that he could bring the EMB Film Unit and the Empire Film Library with him.

A vast enterprise, the GPO handled not only the mail but the telephone, wireless broadcasting, a savings bank, and a whole host of government services. Here the subjects of the films were reduced from the exoticism and drama inherent in the far-flung reaches of empire available at the Empire Marketing Board to such subjects as the picayune detail of mail delivery (*Six-Thirty Collection* [1934]; *Night Mail* [1936]). ‘One remembers looking at a sorting office for the first time,’ wrote Grierson, ‘and thinking that when you had seen one letter you had seen the lot.’

Designed to increase respect for the work of the GPO, by the population at large and by the GPO workers themselves, one approach the GPO Film Unit took to fulfil its obligations to its new sponsor was to stress the fact that post office services provided the means of modern communication. And some drama was found, though occasionally by stretching beyond what might properly be seen as post office concerns (*The Song of Ceylon* [1934]; *Coal Face* [1935]). Out of the more than one hundred films made by the General Post Office Film Unit came some lovely and lasting ones. Major British documentaries of the thirties will be discussed shortly.

Private Sponsorship

Growing restive within the constraints of government budgets and departmental requirements, Grierson began to reach out to private industry as an additional source of funding. He must have been remarkably persuasive in talking industrial leaders into taking his own broad view. Not only did he find sponsors, he convinced them to eschew advertising in favour of backing films in the public interest – that is to say, films whose subjects Grierson thought needed attention. The oil industry was especially receptive. Out of a report he made for Shell International on the potential uses of film came the

Shell Film Unit, highly regarded for its films on scientific and technological subjects. Edgar Anstey was first head of the Shell Unit. He was succeeded by Arthur Elton, who maintained a career-long connection with films sponsored by the oil industry, and developed great skill as a maker of expository films on technical subjects. Grierson also succeeded in getting the gas industry to back an annual film programme. The resulting group of films were intended to increase general awareness of problems of pressing concern, to provoke discussion of them, and to suggest attitudes that might contribute to their solutions (*Housing Problems* [1935]; *Enough to Eat?* [1936]).

With documentary growing apace, private units were being formed by alumni of the EMB and GPO units to make films for the emerging non-government sponsors. In 1937 Grierson resigned from the GPO to set up a central coordinating and advisory agency to put sponsors in touch with producers (and the other way around), oversee production, plan promotion and distribution, and the like. Film Centre was the organization he, with Arthur Elton and Stuart Legg, established for that purpose in 1938.

The British system of documentary financing, production and distribution became a model for subsequent developments in other countries. Many foreign visitors came to London to look into this new use of film – especially from the commonwealth nations and the colonies – and in 1937 Paul Rotha went on a six-month missionary expedition to the United States to show British documentaries and spread the documentary gospel. At the New York World's Fair of 1939 British documentaries were shown to sizeable audiences with evident success. One consequence of this exposure was the beginning of an association of documentary-makers in the US.

The Films

Some sixty filmmakers working within what is here called the British documentary system made over three hundred films between 1929 and 1939. Three main lines of subject/purpose/style emerged roughly in the order in which they are dealt with below. First, following *Drifters* (1929), were the documentaries which undertook to interpret one part of the Empire – or one

region of Britain, one of its industries, or one of the government services – to the population at large. Often poetic and experimental, this group included such films as *Industrial Britain* (1933), *Granton Trawler* (1934), *The Song of Ceylon* (1934), and *Coal Face* (1935).

Drifters, Grierson's first film, was the only one of the hundreds of films with which he was associated in one way or another that he completely controlled creatively. It has a simple narrative structure. The herring fishermen board their trawlers in the harbour, sail to the North Sea banks, lay the nets, haul in the fish in the midst of a storm, and race homeward to auction the catch at the quayside. Rather than evidence of creative genius, it more nearly represents the work of a brilliant synthesist who had absorbed what was at hand to make the kind of film he wanted to see made. In it are reflections of Flaherty's *Nanook of the North*, with brave men eking out their existence in the face of the elements. Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* is even more heavily called upon. In *Drifters*, the loving long takes of a Flaherty are cut up and banged together in Eisensteinian montage to provide a modern dynamism, and the individual accomplishments of Nanook are replaced by the collective efforts of a crew, as in *Potemkin*. It is unlike both sources in certain respects, however. Instead of the exotics of Flaherty or the heroics of the Soviets, the drama of *Drifters* is in the everyday workaday. By ending the film with the fish being sold at market, Grierson sets the fishermen's work firmly within the context of economic actualities of contemporary Britain. It was an unusual, perhaps unique, instance in British cinema up to that point in which work had been given this sort of importance, and members of the working class presented with dignity rather than as comic relief.

Industrial Britain establishes its thesis at the outset: though traditional ways of work have changed over the centuries, the success of British industry rests on the skill of its craftsmen. 'The human fact remains, even in this machine age, the final fact,' the commentator intones. To produce it, at the urging of Frances, Robert Grierson invited Flaherty to England. Though given a lot of film, Flaherty shot it all on the lovely images of traditional craftsmen (glass blowers) and ancient crafts (pottery). The individual faces and gestures that appear ('Look at those hands,' exclaims the commentator) are like *Moana* in fragments. Then an intertitle in large letters, STEEL, advances towards

us, accompanied by portentous music. This unexpectedly announces what becomes in effect a separate film, making the point of bigness, collectivity, and internationalization – clearly Grierson's contribution. If *Industrial Britain* represents the contrast between these two filmmakers' approaches, the commentator's stilted delivery and the clichéd stock music (including bits of Beethoven) are at odds with both. It was made before the film unit had its own sound recording facilities. Nonetheless *Industrial Britain*, along with *Drifters*, was one of the most successful and generally liked film to come out of the Empire Marketing Board.

The Song of Ceylon, Basil Wright the principal creator, is one of the accepted masterpieces of documentary. Sponsored by the Ceylon Tea Propaganda Board (Ceylon today is Sri Lanka), it is first of all remarkable in being so fully and freely a work of art while doing so little to sell the sponsor's product, perhaps even subverting their main goals. It may be even more remarkable, within the body of early British documentary, as a highly personal work which, furthermore, emphasizes matters of the spirit. It is a moving hymn to a native people, their work, their ways, and their values in conflict with imposed requirements of modern commerce. Though it contains exquisite images of a golden time and place, not unlike those of Flaherty's Samoa in *Moana*, Wright's discovered Eden has a discordant note accompanying it. *Song of Ceylon* remains a major film, a complex and sophisticated artwork in both form and content.

The commentary is drawn from a 1680 book on Ceylon by the traveller Robert Knox. It provides an appreciative description of traditional life, which we see and also hear in reverberating gongs, native music and rhythmic chanting to the dancing. In the third sequence, entitled 'The Voices of Commerce', the discord erupts. Images of the indigenous and traditional are here accompanied by deep whistles of seagoing freighters, Morse code beeping on the wireless, English voices dictating business letters and listing stock market quotations. This medley of sound, plus a musical score suggesting an Eastern modality composed and conducted by Walter Leigh, was supervised by Cavalcanti. In addition to Wright's principal role, Leigh, Cavalcanti and Grierson, to one extent or another, were all involved in the creation of the whole, which can astonish and delight audiences as much today as it did when first shown.



Fig 20 *The Song of Ceylon*, Wright's account of the culture in the country now called Sri Lanka, is a work of art that perhaps subverts the sponsor's intended purposes (U.K., 1934, Basil Wright). Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive

Coal Face, mainly Cavalcanti's creation, continued the formal experimentation with sound in relation to sight, though this time as an exalted tribute to the lives of British miners. Added to Grierson and Cavalcanti on its crew were the poet W. H. Auden and the composer Benjamin Britten, who worked together and separately on subsequent documentaries. *Coal Face* is an evocative combination of factual information laid over haunting images drawn from the coal-mining regions, of harsh modern music with piano and percussion prominent, of choral speech which at one point ascends into a kind of keening, and of snatches of miners' talk and whistling. The drabness and hardship that mark the men's lives are evident, along with their resilience, courage, and dignity – all heightened by the poetry of Auden recited and sung by a women's chorus. Though the commentary ends with the statement 'Coal mining is the basic industry of Britain', the last images we see are of an individual miner walking against a background of mining village and pithead at evening.



Fig 21 *Coal Face* (UK, 1935, Alberto Cavalcanti). At a time when coal mining was the basic industry of Britain, Brazilian-born Cavalcanti offers a sense of the lives dependent on the mines in an experimentation of sight and sound

The second line of British documentary, which began in the mid-thirties, consisted of calling public attention to pressing problems faced by the nation; of insistence that these problems needed to be solved; and of suggestions about their causes and possible solutions. Such matters sometimes involved differing political positions and in any case did not relate directly to the concerns of the Post Office. These were the films for which Grierson stepped outside the GPO to enlist sponsorship from large private industries. The subjects included slums (*Housing Problems* [1935]), malnutrition among the poor (*Enough to Eat?* [1936]), air pollution (*The Smoke Menace* [1937]), and the shortcomings of public education (*Children at School* [1937]). They consisted of reportage and argument. Making much use of stock shots and newsreel footage, they were given coherence and rhetorical effectiveness through editing and voiceover commentary.

Unlike the earlier British documentaries, these films are journalistic rather than poetic – they seem quite inartistic, in fact – yet they incorporate formal

and technical experiments. Most notable among these is the direct interview – with slum dwellers in *Housing Problems*, for example – presaging the much later cinéma vérité method. Sponsored by the British Commercial Gas Association, *Housing Problems* was made by Arthur Elton, Edgar Anstey, John Taylor and Ruby Grierson (John's youngest sister). It begins by presenting the problems and what they look like – 'a typical interior of a decayed house' – with a housing expert commenting (voiceover) on how badly the housing functions. Then the film commentator (also voiceover) says 'And now for the people who have to live in the slums.' The man we see observes that where he lives they 'haven't room to swing a cat around' and describes how uncomfortable and unhealthy his apartment is; two of his children have died. A Mrs. Hill tells us 'the vermin in the walls is wicked [shots of cockroaches crawling on walls are cut in] and I tell ye we're fed up!' The use of commentary by the subjects without a narrator or interviewer and looking directly was a new concept.

The commentator says: 'The more enlightened public authorities have been applying themselves to clearing away slums with energy.' We see models of new types of housing, one of them of a development at Leeds. 'And now let's have a word with Mrs Reddington' who is living in one of the new housing developments. She tells us how pleased her family is with their new quarters; they especially like the new bathroom. Set forth in this bald way *Housing Problems* may not seem the innovation it in fact was. Its combination of voiceover housing authority and film commentator with onscreen interviews, of stock footage with models and fresh-shot material, established the basic format and technique of much later television documentary. The spoken word is used to provide information and analysis and to allow people to reveal themselves more fully and colourfully than was altogether possible in silent film. The intentions of *Housing Problems*, and certainly its effect, are quite different from those of *Nanook*.

Released shortly after *Housing Problems*, it was *Night Mail* (1936) that started the third trend: the narrative. Cavalcanti and Harry Watt were the leaders in this new tendency. Watt would go on in a direct line of increasing narrative elements. In *The Saving of Bill Blewitt* (1937) he shaped documentary ingredients of location shooting, nonactors and sponsor's



Fig 22 *Housing Problems* (UK, 1935, Arthur Elton and Edgar Anstey). *Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive*

message into plot, character and theme. With *North Sea* (1938) he reached a peacetime height in realistic use of story. This line led directly to the wartime British semidocumentary feature, a fusion of fact and fiction. Essentially a contribution of the 1940s, it is dealt with in Chapter Seven. Judging from the evidence of Watt's subsequent films, it is his directorial style that is dominant in *Night Mail*, though he shares director's credit with Basil Wright.

Night Mail is the most celebrated of Watt's pre-war films and one of the most famous in all documentary. Following the passage of a postal train from London to Glasgow, it is a prime example of 'drama on the doorstep', to use the Grierson phrase – everyday and close to home, yet engaging and lasting. It may be the ultimate blend of Grierson's ethic (social purposes) and aesthetic (formal properties). In any case, it is a paradigm of propaganda so intertwined with art that the viewer experiences pleasure while absorbing the message (painlessly, effortlessly, and probably even unconsciously). What this film is



Fig 23 Night Mail 1936 by Basil Wright and Harry Watt. The film documents the run of the night postal train from London to Glasgow. It may be the finest example of Grierson's ethic (social purpose) and aesthetic (formal properties). British Film Institute

saying is simply that: (1) mail delivery is a large and complicated undertaking requiring the attention of the national government on behalf of all of us; (2) this government service is a splendid thing involving speed, efficiency, and intricate processes faultlessly learned and carefully regulated; and (3) the government employees who perform these multifarious and interesting tasks for us are a pretty good bunch – patient and caring, but not without an occasional irritability or a little joke.

Within this slight odyssey of a working journey, expository and poetic sequences alternate. The poetic interpolations include the rhythmic montage of mailbags being discharged and picked up by the speeding train, and the climb up into Scotland, 'Past cotton grass and moorland boulder, shovelling white steam over her shoulder.' These latter words are from bits of verse written by Auden. (Grierson himself speaks two sections after the train enters

Scotland, including the final one; Stuart Legg speaks the rest.) As in *Coal Face*, the words are combined with music by Britten; sound supervision is again by Cavalcanti. Interlaced with the very young Auden's poetry is a factual, statistical commentary, as if from the General Post Office itself, and the dialogue of the postal workers' conversations with each other while doing their jobs. This melange of sound, almost as diverse in its components and complex in its assemblage as that of *The Song of Ceylon*, accompanies the visuals in a manner that makes *Night Mail* a lively and seemingly effortless description and explanation of the workings of the postal train on its nightly run.

Grierson and Flaherty

In eighteenth-century England the essayist Joseph Addison, in his *Lives of the Poets*, complimented Alexander Pope by observing of his poetry: 'New things are made familiar, and familiar things are made new.' In the films of Robert Flaherty it seems clear that he was attempting to make the unfamiliar familiar; to discover and reveal, as he put it, what was distant and past. In the films produced under John Grierson, on the other hand, the attempt was to find new meanings and excitements in the familiar through applying the creative treatment of actuality, as Grierson said, to the close-to-home workaday modern world. Flaherty and Grierson represent two poles in the documentary tradition between which any documentary filmmaker still has to find a place. Incidentally, both men – the Irish-American, whom Grierson once described as 'a sort of handsome blond gorilla', and the small wiry Scot – had considerable personal magnetism and charm. How extraordinary, yet somehow appropriate, that these two should have become friends and antagonists, loving each other while hating each other's ideas. Their archetypal arguments were carried on in long evenings of talk and drink on what Grierson once described as 'a dialectical pub crawl across half the world'.

Flaherty, the artist, was a practical man in many ways. Determined and persuasive, he could talk big business and big government into financing his artistic statements. His concern was with showing the world as he saw it, which is one way of understanding the artist's job; it is sometimes argued

to be the only thing the artist should be expected to do. The artwork may lead to social change but it is not created to effect that end. So it was with Flaherty. Grierson, for his part, said: 'I look on cinema as a pulpit, and use it as a propagandist.' He was, however, an extremely discerning and sophisticated propagandist who realized the utility of beauty in selling ideas – and recognized it when he saw it, incidentally. He early wrote about painting and his reviews of fiction films are exceptionally perceptive, well-informed and articulate, including especially those of popular Hollywood features. His own filmmaking, however, was primarily concerned with social engineering – with making the institutions of society function better on behalf of all of us – and he used every means available, including art, to achieve that end. Artistic creativity in British documentary of the 1930s appeared mainly when it could contribute emotional depth to intellectual argument.

Grierson's goals were always social, economic and political. He saw British documentary from the beginning as an anti-aesthetic movement. Art for him was 'the by-product of a job of work done'; not beauty as good in itself, or aesthetic experience as enriching and broadening. Nor was he much interested in documentaries that offered information or insights along with beauties, which, while they may have contributed to sympathetic understanding, did not attempt to lead the viewers to action.

Perhaps an understanding of the fundamental aesthetical divergence between the Flaherty and Grierson positions can be amplified by a short quotation from Frances Flaherty, acting as her husband's medium, summing up the relationship between Flaherty and himself as he saw it. Here is Mrs Flaherty:

A Flaherty film is not a documentary, because a documentary film is preconceived. The great documentary movement fathered by John Grierson is all preconceived for educational and social purposes. Hollywood preconceives for the box office. None of these is simply and purely, freely and spontaneously, the thing itself, for its own sake. In other words he had no axe to grind.

It is interesting, of course, that the films of the man frequently called the father of documentary are dissociated from that mode altogether by Mrs Flaherty.

Like Flaherty, who had been a geologist and explorer, Grierson came to film from another field: social science. Whereas Flaherty wanted to use film to discover and reveal little-known people and places, Grierson wanted to use it to enlighten and shape the modern, complex, industrialized society in which he lived. Flaherty was a highly personal filmmaker who worked alone initially and always attempted to control every phase of the production of his few films. Grierson, who directed only one film himself, established documentary units within which dozens of others were created. In *Industrial Britain* (1933), the credits for which read ‘Production Grierson-Flaherty’, Flaherty came into brief contact with the early stage of British documentary. Then he went his individual way to make *Man of Aran* (1934) – a project Grierson helped set up, incidentally – leaving Grierson to the production and supervision of a host of other documentaries.

Grierson’s Contribution

It is for his multifaceted, innovative leadership that Grierson is to be most valued. As a theoretician he articulated a basis for the documentary film, its form and function, its aesthetic and its ethic. As an informal teacher he trained and, through his writing and speaking, influenced many documentary filmmakers, not just in Britain but throughout the world. As a producer he was eventually responsible to one extent or another for thousands of films, and played a decisive creative role in some of the most important of them. And for most of his professional life he was an adroit political figure and dedicated civil servant. Even when not on government payroll, his central concern was always with communicating to the people of a nation and of the world the information and attitudes he thought would help them lead more useful and productive, more satisfying and rewarding lives.

More than any other person, Grierson was responsible for the documentary film as it developed in the English-speaking countries. The use of institutional sponsorship, public and private, to pay for his kind of filmmaking, rather than dependence on returns from the box office, was one key innovation. A second, which complemented the first, was nontheatrical distribution and exhibition

– going outside the movie theatres to reach audiences in schools and factories, union halls and church basements, and eventually on television.

The three hundred or so British documentaries made during the ten years between *Drifters* and Grierson's departure for Canada in 1939 and the system that spawned them became models for other countries. If many of those films were dull and transient in their significance (only the exceptions have been dealt with here), such an opinion would not have disturbed Grierson. His strategy involved a steady output of short films presenting a consistent social view. Each film dealt with a small piece of the larger argument. It may seem ironic that conservative institutions were talked into paying for what was overall and essentially the presentation of a socialist point of view, but the desperateness of the economic situation during the Depression had to be acknowledged even by the Tories in power. Perhaps the subject matter of the films about work and workers that Grierson talked them into sponsoring was, or was made to seem, obligatory.

The attitudes of those films were always positive; problems could be solved by combined goodwill and social action. Though never acknowledged publicly, it seems to be true that the films were seen mostly by middle and upper classes rather than by the working classes whom they were mostly about. Opinion leaders were thus reached who may have been persuaded, or at least encouraged, by the films to take a Griersonian view of the world.

One of the requisites for the success of the Grierson enterprise was the notion of consensus. The documentary films did not advance partisan political positions; they stayed within what the two major political parties, Conservative and Labour, might agree upon. Nor did the documentary filmmakers attach themselves publicly to a political party. At the same time, the subjects and viewpoints evident in the steady flow may have contributed to some extent to the sweeping Labour victory in 1945, at the end of the war.

In any case, Grierson once hinted that he thought documentaries of the thirties had helped prepare the British people for the collective strength soon to be required of them in wartime. Perhaps without the documentary movement there might have been responses other than the heroic national effort that began once the bombs started to fall. Before dealing with World War II in Britain, however, let's have a look at the parallel, if ultimately

contrasting, documentary development in the United States during the 1930s.

Chapter Related Films

1929

Drifters (John Grierson)

1933

Aero-Engine (Arthur Elton)

Contact (Paul Rotha)

Industrial Britain (Grierson and Robert Flaherty)

1934

Granton Trawler (Grierson and Edgar Anstey)

Shipyards (Rotha)

The Song of Ceylon (Basil Wright)

Weather Forecast (Evelyn Spice)

1935

BBC – The Voice of Britain (Stuart Legg)

Coal Face (Alberto Cavalcanti)

Housing Problems (Anstey and Elton)

Workers and Jobs (Elton)

1936

Enough to Eat? (Anstey)

Night Mail (Harry Watt and Wright)

1937

The Saving of Bill Blewitt (Watt)

We Live in Two Worlds (Cavalcanti)

1938

North Sea (Watt)

1939

Men in Danger (Pat Jackson)

Chapter Related Books

Aitkin, Ian, *Alberto Cavalcanti: Realism, Surrealism and National Cinemas*. Trowbridge, Wilts.: Flicks Books, 2000.

Aitken, Ian, ed. *The Documentary Film Movement: An Anthology*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998.

Aitken, Ian, *Film and Reform: John Grierson and the Documentary Film Movement*. London: Routledge, 1990.

- Anstey, Edgar, 'Development of Film Technique in Britain,' *Experiment in the Film*, ed. Roger Manvell. London: Grey Walls Press, 1949, pp. 234–65.
- Arts Enquiry, The, *The Factual Film*. London: Oxford University Press, 1947.
- Beveridge, James, *John Grierson: Film Master*. New York: Macmillan, 1978.
- Commission on Educational and Cultural Films, *The Film in National Life*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1932.
- Ellis, Jack C., *John Grierson: A Guide to References and Resources*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1986.
- Ellis, Jack C., *John Grierson: Life, Contributions, Influence*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000.
- Grierson, John, *Grierson on Documentary*, ed. Forsyth Hardy. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966.
- Hardy, Forsyth, 'The British Documentary Film,' *Twenty Years of British Film 1925–1945*, eds Michael Balcon and others. London: Falcon Press, 1947.
- Hardy, Forsyth, *John Grierson: A Documentary Biography*. London: Faber and Faber, 1979.

6

Institutionalization: USA *1930–1941*

In 1930 the (US) Workers' Film and Photo League (WFPL) was established in New York City. Its goal was to train filmmakers and photographers to produce material that would present the 'true picture' of life in the United States; that is, from their Marxist point of view – a picture not revealed by the news services, the newsreels, or the capitalist press. Among its listed advisors or associates were notables such as Margaret Bourke-White and Ralph Steiner, photographers; Elia Kazan, Burgess Meredith and James Cagney, actors; Slavko Vorkapich, film theorist and montage expert. The Film and Photo League (it dropped Workers' from its title, as did the League in London) produced such topical films as *Winter* (1931), *Hunger* (1932), and *Bonus March* (1932).

An increasing schism in this leftist group developed between those who wanted to stick to straight agit-prop newsreels and polemical films and those who thought the cause of revolution (or of social progress – political aims varied from person to person) could best be served by films with greater aesthetic value and emotional appeal. This latter group became more aligned with an avant-garde approach.

In 1934 three key members – Leo Hurwitz, Ralph Steiner and Irving Lerner – left the Film and Photo League to form Nykino (evidently a Russianized abbreviation for New York cinema; a leftist film organization named Kino also existed in London). Its *Pie in the Sky* (1934), by Elia Kazan, Molly Day Thatcher, Ralph Steiner and Irving Lerner, became its first publicized release.



Fig 24 From left to right, Jacques Lemare, Henri Cartier-Bresson and Herbert Kline during the Spanish Civil War. For the New York Film and Photo League they filmed Return to Life, Spain Will Live and With the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in Spain (1938). This once 'lost' film chronicles the activities of American volunteer troops before and after their deployment to the front

It is a whimsical spoof of the promises of religion for life in the hereafter in place of food for present hunger on earth. Nykino would subsequently become Frontier Films, whose work will be dealt with later.

In some ways the work of 1930s leftist documentarians presaged later developments in the 1960s, especially in the Newsreel Collectives. In the 1930s The Workers' Film and Photo League, unlike most of the later New Left groups, had direct ties to the USSR through the Communist Party in America. (Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, previously secret

files were opened offering tantalizing glimpses into the organization and work of the WFPL.) From the 1920s through the start of World War II, the Communist Party USA sent copies of important documents to be filed for safekeeping in the Comintern's archives. Several of these files contain primary source material on the WFPL, though not all of the materials are legible. 2209 contains a four-page, unsigned document attempting to convince the CPUSA to systematically support the work of the WFPL. Dated December 16 [1932?], it summarizes the programme of the WFPL in its own words:

Concretely: The next six months must witness the development of the WORKERS FILM AND PHOTO LEAGUE OF AMERICA into an organization capable of producing at least a thousand feet of workers' News weekly. By spring we must be ready to project films at open-air meetings on a wide scale; the issuance of a monthly organ for struggle against the bourgeois film and for the popularization and development of the workers' film movement; the forming of classes to train workers in the shooting of films with hand cameras. This is our immediate program and we are pledged to carry it forward to the conquest of the film! (Delo 2209, p. 18)

It is important to remember that the Communist Party is and always was a legal political party in the US.

The Film and Photo League was also briefly active on the West Coast. Departing from New York, Lester Balog, an editor and Ed Royce, an organizer for Workers' International Relief (WIR), after a crowded evening screening at the New York League headquarters, loaded into a car a projector, a print of Vsevolod Pudovkin's *Mother*, and some New York Film and Photo League newsreels. Inspired by the Soviet agit trains, the two set off north, hitting Rochester and Buffalo then driving onto Detroit, Chicago and westward. Driving from one town to the next, they had showings in fifty-one locales across the country at workers' halls, ethnic clubs, community theatres and private homes. Along the way, Balog shot footage of strikes, demonstrations, the World's Fair in Chicago, and a trial of labour organizers in Utah. The trip served as a benefit tour for the WIR, raising money to support striking workers, as well as to keep the tour moving. The second half of their film tour was in California, where they travelled down the coast and back up the

valley during the fall of 1933 at the time of the largest agricultural strikes in California. They set up shop in San Francisco at the Workers' Cultural Centre at 121 Haight Street, which functioned much like Workers' Centres in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and other towns. Usually housing the Communist Party Headquarters as well as Workers' Schools, John Reed Clubs, bookstores, libraries, soup kitchens, Labour Sports Unions, workers' theatre groups, and Film and Photo Leagues, Workers' Centres were prominent in left cultural life of the period.

During their travels, they and colleagues encountered violent opposition from law enforcement officials, were put in jail and ultimately were shut down. In a 1933 crackdown, newsboys were arrested for selling the 'Western Worker', bookstores selling radical publications were shut down and their owners thrown in jail, street theatre players were beaten up. In July 1934, while Balog languished in jail, San Diego police arrested Louis Siminow of the Los Angeles Film and Photo League for showing a film. With San Francisco in disarray, and the local Film and Photo League darkroom and meeting space destroyed, the people who created the short-lived Film and Photo League movement on the West Coast disbanded. (This information is excerpted from: Leshne, Carla, 'The Film & Photo League of San Francisco', *Film History: An International Journal*, Volume 18, Number 4, 2006, pp. 361-73).

The March of Time

Unlike the Film and Photo League, another development, on the political right (or centre at least), stood apart from the mainstream of American documentary, but would be highly influential throughout the world – and to British and Canadian documentary especially. Entitled 'The March of Time', this monthly film series offered a new and distinctive kind of screen journalism, a cross between the newsreel and the documentary. Sponsored by Time-Life-Fortune, Inc., headed by Henry Luce, it was preceded by a weekly radio series of the same title. Louis de Rochemont was the principal creator of the film series. Luce himself said about it: "The March of Time" is fakery in allegiance to the truth.'

‘The March of Time’ had the most sustained popular success of any documentary-like material prior to television. It was announced on movie marqueees, sometimes appearing above the feature title. At its peak, in the late 1930s and the years of World War II, it was seen in the US by over twenty million people a month in 5,000 theatres. It was distributed internationally as well.

Though originating from a conservative organization, the MOT became identified for a somewhat more liberal stance than *Time* magazine. This was particularly true on foreign affairs; on domestic issues the films tended to be more conservative or erratic. Still, while fiction features in the thirties largely ignored or dealt only covertly with the Depression, MOT acknowledged the bread lines and unemployment, as well as the political demagoguery it gave rise to (for example, *Huey Long* [1935]; *Unemployment* [1937]). While the European newsreels tended to avoid controversial political and military



Fig 25 One of 5,236 theaters that presented ‘The March of Time’ to 12 million people every month during its heyday. From Raymond Fielding’s book *The March of Time*

developments, MOT reported the machinations of Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini and Tojo (as in *Nazi Conquest – No. 1* [1938]; *The Mediterranean – Background for War* [1939]).

Along with its energy, the success of 'The March of Time' was fuelled by the controversy it aroused and by its press agency. One of the most politically controversial films in the history of American cinema was MOT's *Inside Nazi Germany* (1938). In its sixteen minutes it examined in some detail the regimentation of the German people, the control and consolidation of national allegiances, and the preparations being made for future military and economic expansion. This was at a time when the majority of the American public was still strongly isolationist and the government maintained a careful impartiality.

The makeup for each issue of 'The March of Time' was worked out in its early years and varied little, regardless of subject. The fixed format may have been necessitated by the pressures of monthly production with modest resources. One of the most important ingredients was the voice and delivery style of its commentator, Westbrook Van Voorhis. His 'Voice of Time' was deep and commanding, ominous and reassuring at the same time. Spoken words carried the weight of the communication; the footage (largely stock), music (obvious and clichéd), and sound effects (sparse and highly selective) were cut to them. Often the images were given their meaning by the words as part of 'the dramatization of the news' that MOT practised. An extreme closeup of part of a face and a mouth at a telephone becomes 'An angry refusal' in *War In China* (1937). Editing was the key. The pace is fast, with a hard rhythmic impact; a great deal of information is presented dramatically to capture the attention of the popcorn-munching audience.

Structurally, every issue has four parts, with titles announcing each part. The first establishes the magnitude and urgency of the problem at hand. The second offers a historical survey of its origins and causes. Part three presents the immediate complications, confirming its newsworthiness. The concluding part looks to the future, stressing that the problem is a matter for continuing and serious concern.

No doubt, its unchanging style and approach had something to do with its eventual demise in 1951 (along with the competition of television and

the rising costs of production). ‘The March of Time’ remains, however, a noteworthy phenomenon in the history of popular American culture. Its influence has extended to the documentary and public affairs programmes on television today.

Government Documentaries

The Film and Photo League and ‘The March of Time’ were precedents of sorts, but documentary in the institutional or Griersonian sense – engaging and educating citizens in the affairs of the nation – began in June 1935, in Washington, DC. At that time Rexford Guy Tugwell, head of the newly established Resettlement Administration, made a decision to use motion pictures to interpret its programme and objectives. Tugwell was one of the ‘brain trust’ assembled by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to implement his New Deal. Roosevelt gathered around him the best minds he could find to help solve the problems presented by the Depression. Some have compared this style of Executive Branch composition with the methods of President John Kennedy and that of President Barack Obama. The Resettlement Administration was intended to aid those farmers who were being forced off their land by low crop prices compounded by the ‘Dust Bowl’ drought in the West and Southwest.

Into Tugwell’s office came a movie critic named Pare Lorentz, whose wife was vaguely related to the president. Lorentz was a combination of New York liberal (where he was established) and West Virginia populist (where he had been born and raised). He convinced Tugwell that what was needed was a new kind of dramatic/informational/persuasive movie. Lorentz disliked the term ‘documentary’ and felt that much of Grierson’s work in England was too school-teacherish. ‘Films of Merit’ was Lorentz’s label for what he would produce. Out of that conversation came *The Plow That Broke the Plains* (1936), an indictment of the lack of planning that had caused the Dust Bowl. *Plow* shows the historical origins of the problem and its then current magnitude and urgency.

Lorentz, who had no prior film production experience, wrote and directed *Plow*. As cinematographers he hired Paul Strand, Ralph Steiner and Leo



Fig 26 *The Plow That Broke the Plains* (US, 1936, Pare Lorentz). *Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive*

Hurwitz. Strand and Steiner had backgrounds in still photography; all three had been active in the Film and Photo League. When they began shooting out in the field, with Lorentz remaining in Washington, they were frustrated by the lack of clarity in their instructions. To compensate for this, and to give themselves guidelines for shooting, they drafted a script. The film as they conceived it was to be about the devastation of the land caused by exploitative capitalism. This was not an economic-political stance Lorentz was prepared to take (nor one the government would have welcomed) and dissension and cross-purposes resulted. Lorentz hired an editor, Leo Zochling, to assist him, and with his help Lorentz learned to edit. He assembled the footage according to his own rough outline and began writing the commentary. Well-known composer Virgil Thomson was hired to compose the score. Working together, in hours upon hours of shaping and reshaping, they combined images and music with spoken words and sound effects. It was Thomson's idea that his music should have an operatic balance with the rest of the filmic elements. In fact, his score exists even today virtually as he wrote it for the film as a suite in standard orchestral repertoire.



Fig 27 Pare Lorentz in the 1930s

Unlike Grierson, who always determined in advance how his films would reach their audience, Lorentz failed to set up distribution for the completed film. He might have been forewarned of the Hollywood film industry's resentment of government film production by the resistance he had encountered in trying to obtain footage from fiction features. (It was finally only with the covert help of veteran director King Vidor that he obtained what he needed.) Accordingly, *The Plow That Broke the Plains* was not shown as widely as it might have been. What distribution it received was because of glowing reviews. The Rialto Theatre in New York City publicized its showing by proclaiming it "The picture they dared us to show!"

Lorentz was discouraged by the inadequate distribution, exhausted from the hard work and frustration of production, and in debt for money he (and his wife) had invested in the film. In that dismal mood, he went to Tugwell's office to say goodbye. As part of his farewell he suggested another film he

thought should be made – one about flooding in the Mississippi valley. Lorentz's enthusiasm for this project convinced Tugwell to allow him to produce another government film, *The River* (1937), backed by the Farm Security Administration.

While the Resettlement Administration, which had sponsored *Plow*, had intended to relocate people forced off their land, the Farm Security Administration was attempting to keep them on their farms. *The River* became a compelling plea for national flood control and soil conservation. The film also counteracted the public relations campaign being conducted by private utilities to keep government out of providing electric power. While it became generally agreed that the Tennessee Valley Authority was a remarkable and salutary instance of a government undertaking, it remains an experiment that has never been repeated. Perhaps if it had, the US would not have faced the extreme flooding and destruction at the mouth of the Mississippi that resulted



Fig 28 A devastation scene in *The River*. Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive

from Hurricane Katrina. *The River* screened with Spike Lee's and Sam Pollard's 2006 documentary *When the Levees Broke* provides remarkable comparison.

Lorentz wrote and directed *The River*. The cinematographers were Stacy Woodard, Floyd Crosby and Willard Van Dyke. Woodard had been producing a series of nature films entitled 'The Struggle to Live'. Crosby had worked on the Murnau-Flaherty *Tabu* (1931), would have a long association with Lorentz, and went on to fiction features (including *High Noon* [1952]). Van Dyke, who had studied still photography with Edward Weston, would become a fine documentary-maker in his own right. Though there was no political contention this time, there seems to have been the same uncertainty as to exactly what kind of footage was wanted. The score was again by Thomson, based almost entirely on hymns ('Yes, Jesus Loves Me'), folk songs ('Go Tell Aunt Rhody') and popular tunes ('Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight').

As in *Night Mail*, Lorentz's lyric commentary for this film became classic. Its blank verse litany of names of rivers and towns has often been imitated and sometimes parodied, but it is beautiful in itself. For example:

We built a hundred cities and a thousand towns:
 St Paul and Minneapolis,
 Davenport and Keokuk,
 Moline and Quincy, Cincinnati and St Louis, Omaha and Kansas City ...

Or, again:

Down the Judith, the Grand, the Osage and the Platte;
 The Rock, the Salt, the Black and the Minnesota;
 Down the Monongahela, the Allegheny, Kanawha and Muskingum;
 The Miami, the Wabash, the Licking and the Green;
 The White, the Wolf, the Cache, and the Black;
 Down the Kaw and Kaskaskia, the Red and Yazoo.
 Down the Cumberland, Kentucky and the Tennessee ...

Lorentz this time took pains to set up proper distribution and the film was shown in more than 5,000 theatres. It has remained in active nontheatrical distribution ever since – not just as a historical curiosity but as a significant statement about an ongoing ecological problem, and as an epic poem. The

only negative criticism is that following its moving evocation of the history of this big country, its people, and its natural resources, it adds a commercial. The last six minutes on the TVA are much weaker; even the photographic quality drops, with some stock shots being used. Unlike the best of the British documentaries, in which the propaganda becomes an indissoluble part of the whole, here the sponsor's message seems tacked on. Lavishly praised at the time of its release, *The River* has come to be considered a masterpiece of the screen.

On the basis of its success Lorentz was able to persuade the Roosevelt administration (with the backing of the President himself, who is reported to have loved the film) to set up the United States Film Service in 1938. It was intended to make films propagandizing the policies and activities of all departments of government. The first of the US Film Service productions was *The Fight for Life* (1940), produced for the US Public Health Service. Written and directed by Lorentz, it is about the work of the Chicago Maternity Centre in providing prenatal care for mothers, and delivering babies in the homes of poor families. It was photographed by Floyd Crosby. The music, composed by Louis Gruenberg (who shortly before had written the score for John Ford's *Stagecoach*), was innovative, including the use of blues. Its cast mixed nonactors with actors.

Feature-length, half-dramatic and half-documentary, *The Fight for Life* is what would sometimes be called a semidocumentary. In attempting to heighten the drama and engage the emotions, Lorentz inadvertently made childbirth a frightening experience. When the film was completed and rushed to the White House for viewing on New Year's Eve 1939, Franklin Roosevelt showed little enthusiasm for it. Eleanor Roosevelt is said to have remarked in her gentle way: 'Surely there's something good to be said about having a baby.' It was not very widely shown. In Chicago it was banned by the police censorship board, though it had been made there.

On the other hand, *Power and the Land* (1940), the next production, was distributed by RKO to nearly 5,000 theatres. It was so well received that it continued to be reissued nontheatrically into the late 1940s, with its maps being updated to show the continuing increase in the number of farms receiving electric power. It was produced for the Rural Electrification

Administration and the Department of Agriculture. Joris Ivens, the famous Dutch documentarian living in the US, directed, and Helen Van Dongen, his then wife and editor, edited. Cinematography was again by Floyd Crosby and Arthur Ornitz; the commentary was written by renowned poet Stephen Vincent Benet; musical score was by Douglas Moore.

Power and the Land pursues its objective of persuading farmers to organize rural cooperatives to obtain government power by showing a typical family, the Parkinsons, on their farm in southwestern Ohio. We see them at work, before they have electricity and then afterwards. The contrast in the greater ease and comfort electric power provides these decent and hardworking people is a simple and effective argument. At the same time, Ivens offers an affectionate picture of this family and their farm. With deft and poetic strokes he and Van Dongen document for other cultures and future generations a kind of life and economy that was fading into history.

The next production, *The Land* (1941), was conceived and directed by an even more famous documentary pioneer, Robert Flaherty, returning to America after a decade in Britain. It too was edited by Helen Van Dongen. Cinematography was by Irving Lerner, Douglas Baker, Floyd Crosby and Charles Herbert; the music by English composer Richard Arnell; the commentary written and read by Flaherty. Produced for the Agricultural Adjustment Agency of the Department of Agriculture, this became what the French would call a *film maudit* – a cursed film. Its initial purpose was along the lines of *The Plow That Broke the Plains* and *The River* – to encourage the careful and controlled use of agricultural resources. During its production, United States foreign policy shifted from strict neutrality at the beginning of the Second World War to support of the British. A lend-lease programme had been initiated and the US's promise to become 'the breadbasket of democracy' required that agricultural production be increased by every means available. *The Land* works against itself, and its message is confused. The visuals may in fact represent Flaherty's true uneasiness concerning what he had discovered about the land and the people on his first film about his own country.

In any case, before *The Land* was completed, Congress, now alienated from the New Deal by Republican victories at the polls in 1940, decided that government film production was needless and, indeed, un-American. The

US Film Service was not exactly abolished, since it had never really been approved. Now, not only were no funds for the Film Service appropriated by Congress, legislation was passed that forbade tucking film production costs into other budgets. *The Land* was never shown in theatres.

In summarizing Lorentz's highly significant contributions, a number of things can be said. He established American precedent for the government use of documentaries, which would be continued during World War II and afterwards. From Lorentz's efforts five large and important films resulted, the first three of which he directed: *The Plow That Broke the Plains*, *The River*, and *The Fight for Life*. In *Plow* and *The River* Lorentz developed an original personal style of documentary that also became a national style. In his two mosaic patterns of sight (carefully composed images shot silently) and sound (symphonic music, spoken words, selected noises). No one element works alone, but together they offer a form and content resembling epic poems. They seem close to the attitudes of American populism and are rooted in frontier tradition. The sweeping views of a big country and the blank verse



Fig 29 *Power and the Land* was distributed to nearly 5,000 theaters by Hollywood studio RKO (US, 1940, Joris Ivens). Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive

commentaries with their chanted names and allusions to historic events make one think of Walt Whitman. The use of music is quite special, with composer Virgil Thomson participating more fully than usual in the filmmaking process.

The closing of the US Film Service proved a great waste and inefficiency. Shortly after its demise, the United States entered World War II and government filmmaking on a vast scale had to be restarted from scratch, but in contributing two lasting masterpieces to the history of documentary, Lorentz joins a very select company: the artists of documentary.

Non-Government Documentaries

Paralleling the work of Lorentz and the United States Film Service and the ‘March of Time’ were the documentaries of private and commercial sponsorship. When, in 1937, Nykino (discussed at the beginning of this chapter) metamorphosed into Frontier Films, it represented those committed to art on behalf of social action. Among the persons associated with Frontier Films, either actively or as advisors, were notables such as John Howard Lawson, Elia Kazan, Leo Hurwitz, Herbert Kline, Ralph Steiner, Joris Ivens, Malcolm Cowley, John Dos Pasos, Lillian Hellman, Archibald MacLeish, Lewis Milestone, Clifford Odets, Willard Van Dyke and Paul Strand. The mainstays were Strand, Hurwitz and Steiner. Frontier Films intended to be an alternative to ‘The March of Time’.

The non-government documentaries of the 1930s offer a catalogue of the most significant problems and issues of the time – with a bias to the left in their selection and treatment. International threats were a main subject. A number of films were made about the Spanish Civil War (1936–8), in which General Francisco Franco’s legions, backed by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, were pitted against the Republican Loyalists aided formally by Russia and informally by volunteers from many nations. All of the American films supported the Loyalist cause. From Frontier Films came *Heart of Spain* (1937, Herbert Kline and Geza Karpáthi) and *Return to Life* (1938, still photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson and Herbert Kline). From Contemporary Film Historians, Inc., formed by a group of writers that included John Dos Pasos,

Ernest Hemingway, Archibald MacLeish and Lillian Hellman, came *The Spanish Earth* (1937). The most ambitious and widely seen of the Spanish Civil War films, *The Spanish Earth* was a short feature in length (54 minutes). Directed by Joris Ivens, cinematography was by John Ferno and editing by Helen Van Dongen; narration was written and read by Ernest Hemingway; music arranged by Marc Blitzstein and Virgil Thomson, from Spanish folk melodies. The 1984 film *The Good Fight; The Abraham Lincoln Brigade in the Spanish Civil War* by Noel Bruckner, Mary Dore and Sam Sills offers a more modern, if somewhat simplistic view of Americans who fought in that war.

As for films dealing with China's defence against Japanese aggression, which began with the invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and continued until 1945, Frontier Films made *China Strikes Back* (1937). Harry Dunham directed; Jay Leyda and Sidney Meyers were among others involved in its production. This film offered sustained coverage of the Chinese 8th Route Army, the Communist force, with Mao Tse-tung among its leaders, its guerilla tactics, educational programme, relations with the peasants, and efforts toward the unity of Free China against the invading Japanese.

Films were made about the Munich crisis of 1938, when Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain of Great Britain agreed with Adolph Hitler that Germany could annexe the Sudetanland section of Czechoslovakia, without interference from Britain. *Crisis* (1938), produced and directed by Herbert Kline, was co-directed by the Alexander Hammid. The same pair created *Lights Out in Europe* (1938).

As for non-government documentaries on domestic subjects, most of those had 'progressive tendencies' and dealt with issues of particular interest to the political left. The 1930s were years of considerable labour unrest and progress, of union building and busting, and a number of films were made in support of unionism. For example, three were produced by Frontier Films. *People of the Cumberland* (1938) is about an isolated community of English and Scottish ancestry working in the coal mines of Appalachia and their emergence from poverty and backwardness to social consciousness and action. The feature-length *Native Land* was Frontier Films' magnum opus (and swan song). Production of it began in 1939 but it was not released until 1942. Based almost entirely on the investigation and conclusions of the US Senate Robert

Lafollette Committee on Civil Rights and other labour documents, it dealt with workers' rights and unionism, and was part-actuality footage and part-dramatization. Direction and script were by Leo Hurwitz and Paul Strand; cinematography was by Strand; music by Marc Blitzstein. Paul Robeson narrated.

Municipal planning was another subject. *A Place to Live* (1941) is a cogent little film about slum clearance in Philadelphia. *The City* (1939) is a trenchant large one. A hit at the New York World's Fair of 1939, it was produced for the American Institute of Planners by American Documentary Films, set up by Ralph Steiner and Willard Van Dyke, who co-directed and co-photographed the film. (When Van Dyke and Steiner left Frontier Films on ideological grounds this sponsored project left with them. That incident caused a serious and lasting breach among various filmmakers who had been involved with Frontier Films.) The scenario was by Henwar Rodakiewicz from an original outline by Pare Lorentz; the commentary was written by cultural historian Lewis Mumford and spoken by actor Morris Carnovsky, with music by Aaron Copland.

The City promotes the concept of the planned greenbelt communities detached from urban centres. It has a five-part historical organization: (1) In the Beginning – New England (a rural community dating from the eighteenth century); (2) The Industrial City – City of Smoke (Pittsburgh); (3) The Metropolis – Men into Steel (Manhattan); (4) The Highway – The Endless City (Sunday traffic congestion in New Jersey and the environs of New York City); (5) The Green City (shot in Radburn, NJ, and Greenbelt, MD). John Grierson, who was himself working on a film about city planning at the time (*The Londoners*), much admired the keenness of observation, the rhythm and the energy of *The City*. It is also part of the 'City Symphony' tradition.

Aesthetically and technically, Willard Van Dyke's *Valley Town* (1941) is remarkable for several reasons: the extraordinary force and effectiveness of its images for one; and its daring use of soliloquy, even sung soliloquy, in an effort to heighten the feeling of its contents for another. It makes one think of the words and music of Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill in *The Threepenny Opera* and their other music dramas with social meanings. Another, somewhat related film, *One Tenth of a Nation* (1940), is about the need for better



Fig 30 *The City* was a hit at the 1939 New York World's Fair (US, 1939, Ralph Steiner and Willard Van Dyke). Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive

schooling for the Southern Negro. It was the most widely seen of several films dealing with the problems of black Americans. Henwar Rodakiewicz and Joseph Krungold co-produced and co-directed.

Conclusions

In concluding this section, a number of generalizations can be made about the nongovernmental American documentaries of the 1930s. First, the filmmakers often took bold positions on social matters, but they had continuing difficulty finding backing for their statements. The pattern was one of a big, fine film for which funding was somehow obtained, followed by inadequate distribution and exhibition, leading to the sponsor's disenchantment and the filmmaker's having to scramble to try to find sponsorship for the next film.

Second, because of the uncertainty of sponsorship, there was no steady flow of smaller films reaching interested audiences and little reinforcement of the

ideas presented. Too frequently as still happens today, only those persons who already agreed with the filmmakers' positions saw the films or even learned of their existence.

Third – and related to the second point – rarely is the propaganda mixed with the artistic form in a smooth blend. The sponsor's message may obtrude. On the other hand, sometimes the pleasures of form seem to be working against the content and evident intention of the film. The liveliness and humour of the New York City sequence in *The City* is much more engaging than the blandness of its greenbelt sequence.

Though he never contributed to organizing American documentary filmmakers, Robert Flaherty may have been their unacknowledged bellwether. Certainly, all the filmmakers had seen his work. Documentary other than Flaherty didn't really take hold in the United States until seven years after documentary in Great Britain. American documentary did not grow out of British documentary, though it may not have begun when and how it did if there had not been the British precedent. Personal connections between the two national groups of documentary-makers were not made until the late thirties.

The major differences between American and British documentaries of the thirties seem to have grown mostly out of contrasting political positions. The American films are rooted in populism, the British in socialism. The populists, begun in the People's Party around the turn of the nineteenth century, felt that government should control tendencies toward monopoly, but that its function should end there. Populism began among American farmers in the country; socialism among factory workers in European cities. Agrarian subject matter and influence are very strong in the American films (this despite the fact that by the mid-thirties the majority of Americans were living in cities); urban and industrial subjects predominate in British documentary. In the American films, the importance of the people and the sacredness of the individual receive considerable emphasis. In the British films, collective effort through government, with government leadership, is stressed.

These American romantic and emotional tendencies led to the poetic rather than the expository. In general, American documentaries of the thirties may have been more 'aestheticky', to use a Grierson dismissive term, than the

British. ‘The March of Time’ is, of course, an exception to this generalization. Grierson seemed to value it (he imitated it, in fact, in films he produced in Britain and later in Canada) more than he did *The River* and *The City*. Another difference is that American documentaries tended to gravitate towards the historical and to use before-and-after arguments. *The City* moves from eighteenth-century rural New England to twentieth-century urban Pittsburgh and New York; *Power and the Land* from the farm before electricity to the farm after it. Frequent reference is made to folk history and customs. Also, the New Deal, accused in some quarters of being a kind of creeping socialism, tended to attach itself to established American values and virtues, suggesting that the cooperation with government it embodied was as American as apple pie.

Finally, there are the sorts of aesthetic experiences and effects on social attitudes being offered. On the aesthetic side, the United States films *The Plow That Broke the Plains*, *The River*, *Power and the Land*, *The City*, and *And So They Live* are lovely and lasting. On the side of social and educational effectiveness, however, what Grierson called *propaganda*, perhaps none of these matched *Night Mail* or *Housing Problems*. On the other hand, Jennings and Cavalcanti in Britain saw themselves as artists.

Dénouement

At the end of the 1930s, some efforts were made to organize American documentary along British lines. Mary Losey (sister of feature-film director Joseph Losey) was a key figure in these. She was a researcher for ‘The March of Time’, and on a trip to London in 1938 which she undertook to study documentary, she met Grierson and was stimulated by his achievements. On her return she ‘set to work after the Grierson pattern to organize the jangling sects of American documentary into a purposeful group’, as Richard Griffith put it. An Association of Documentary Film Producers was established in New York City in 1939. The ADFP membership included, ‘with the conspicuous exception of Pare Lorentz’, Losey noted, ‘all the producers of documentary today’ – some sixty full members, roughly the same number of documentary-makers as in Britain. Even Flaherty became part of this group

on his return from Britain in 1939. Alas, those efforts were too little and too late. Following the United States entry into World War II in late 1941, the organization disbanded in 1942.

With the war, the groups on the far left that had culminated in Frontier Films lost their principal reason and means for being. The political situation was now that of a common cause, with the United States fighting fascism alongside Communist Russia. During the war, there was a virtual cessation of private documentary production, and documentary filmmakers instead made government films of one sort or another. In 1943, Frontier Films ceased to exist.

An Aside to Conclude

Though this history is mostly of the English-language documentary, we would be remiss here if we did not recognize some non-Anglophone developments – in this case, in Germany. Early in 1933, with curious simultaneity, Franklin Delano Roosevelt became president of the United States while Adolf Hitler, leader of the National Socialist Party, came to power in Germany. In Britain the Labour Party had been succeeded in 1931 by the National Government (made up of a coalition of the Conservative, Labour and Liberal parties), with Neville Chamberlain becoming Prime Minister in 1937. Paralleling John Grierson in Britain and Pare Lorentz in the United States was the equally formidable former actress, Leni Riefenstahl in Germany. In 1936 Grierson (and Watt and Wright) made *Night Mail*, Lorentz *The Plow That Broke the Plains*, and Riefenstahl *Triumph of the Will*. All three films were sponsored by their governments to try to rally support for current activities, programmes and policies. Politically the films could be characterized, implicitly at least, as socialist, populist, and fascist.

Triumph of the Will was made to commemorate the sixth Nazi rally in Nuremberg in 1934. Produced by order of the Führer, it was intended to show the German people the power of a resurgent Germany united under a Nazi party. The event was staged partly to accommodate the needs of filmmaking as a ceremony – a religious ritual – elaborate, powerful and penetrating, with mass emotion overcoming

individual reason. Its key image is the moulding of tens of thousands of human beings into artistic patterns – stationary and solid masses in the huge stadium, or moving with deliberation and vigour in endless parades. What *Triumph of the Will* offers is the losing of self in the mass: in total dedication to an ideal of a strong and united nation, to supermen and super-state – a transcendence. Even today it retains terrifying power. Riefenstahl's other masterpiece, *Olympia* (1938), similarly edited from an enormous amount of footage covering a huge public event, the Olympic Games of 1936 held in Berlin, also – though more subtly – articulates Nazi ideology in cinematic terms. Taken in this light they can be seen as contributing to the *Zeitgeist* which accompanied the Holocaust and World War II.

Chapter Related Films

1935

'The March of Time' series began (Louis de Rochemont)

The Wave (Paul Strand and Fred Zinnemann)

1936

The Plow That Broke the Plains (Pare Lorentz)

1937

China Strikes Back (Harry Dunham)

The River (Lorentz)

The Spanish Earth (Joris Ivens)

1938

Inside Nazi German (de Rochemont)

The Four Hundred Million (Ivens)

People of the Cumberland (Elia Kazan)

1939

The City (Ralph Steiner and Willard Van Dyke)

Lights Out in Europe (Kline)

1940

Power and the Land (Ivens)

The Ramparts We Watch (de Rochemont)

Valley Town (Van Dyke)

1941

The Fight for Life (Lorentz)

The Land (Robert Flaherty)

A Place to Live (Irving Lerner)

1942

Native Land (Leo Hurwitz and Paul Strand)

Chapter Related Books

- Alexander, William, *Film on the Left: American Documentary Film from 1931 to 1942*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981.
- Böker, Carlos, *Joris Ivens, Film-Maker: Facing Reality*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1981.
- Bakker, Kees, ed., *Joris Ivens and the Documentary Context*. Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 1999
- Campbell, Russell, *Cinema Strikes Back: Radical Filmmaking in the United States, 1930–1942*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1982.
- Delmar, Rosalind, *Joris Ivens: 50 Years of Filmmaking*. London: British Film Institute, 1979.
- Eyneart, James L., Willard Van Dyke: *Changing The World Through Photography and Film*. Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 2008.
- Fielding, Raymond, *The March of Time, 1935–1951*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- Ivens, Joris, *The Camera and I*. New York: International Publishers, 1969.
- Lorentz, Pare, *FDR's Moviemaker: Memories of Scripts*. Reno, Nevada: Nevada University Press, 1992
- MacCann, Richard Dyer, *The People's Films: A Political History of US Government Motion Pictures*. New York: Hastings House, 1973.
- Rother, Rainer, *Leni Riefenstahl*. London: Continuum, 2002.
- Snyder, Robert L. *Pare Lorentz and the Documentary Film*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968.
- Stufkens, Andre, *Cinema Without Borders: The Films of Joris Ivens*. Amsterdam: European Foundation Joris Ivens, 2002.
- Zuker, Joel Stewart, *Ralph Steiner, Filmmaker and Still Photographer*. New York: Arno Press, 1978.

7

WWII

Part A: Great Britain

On 1 September 1939, German Panzer divisions rolled across the Polish border and Stuka dive-bombers took to the skies. On 3 September, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain announced over BBC radio that a state of war existed between Great Britain and Germany. (His announcement was followed by the accidental setting off of air-raid sirens.)

Documentary, though relatively small in terms of money and audience, had established film as a means of social and scientific communication, with hundreds of short films of fact and opinion. It had prestige among the educated classes and fit in with thirties' ideas about art in relation to society. A movement with trained and skilled workers, it offered a distinct style as well as purpose, and innovations in form and technique that are arguably Britain's most important contribution to the development of the motion picture. Further, with the outbreak of war, when the needs of the country were paramount, British documentary's identification with government from its beginnings became especially significant. The film unit at the Empire Marketing Board and then at the General Post Office had been training ground and trend-setter, and had offered means of national expression in an exact sense. With the war, the GPO Film Unit became the Crown Film Unit, serving all departments of government. Wartime documentaries would be made by veteran documentarians plus new recruits.

Following the declaration of war it was some time before Britain was engaged in actual combat. There was a period of 'phoney war', as it was called

– the ‘sitting war’ or ‘Sitzkrieg’, as someone dubbed it in reference to the Germans’ *Blitzkrieg* (lightning war). Poland was defeated before either France or Britain, bound to it by mutual defence treaties, could come to its aid. Six months passed between the fall of Poland and the beginning, in Denmark and Norway, of the German drive in Western Europe.

Early Days

The first film job, immediately evident, was to record the events of war. For that purpose the five English newsreel companies pooled their resources for what would soon become a mammoth task. This provided for the free exchange of material to limit redundancy in the use of personnel and permit a maximum amount of war activity to be covered. Exceptional work was done by newsreel and armed forces combat cameramen throughout the war. The casualty rate among them was high. In battle situations where troops could dig foxholes, those who had to move about above ground – platoon leaders, medics, and still photographers as well as cinematographers – were most vulnerable.

In September of 1939 the Ministry of Information was established to take overall charge of the creation and dissemination of news and propaganda. The film advisers to the Chamberlain government were distrustful of the documentary people because of their leftward tendencies. Instead of the documentarians, filmmakers from the entertainment film industry were called upon. The documentary group vented their frustration by grouching to each other and writing letters to *The Times*. Without any real authorization, let alone relevance to Post Office activity, the GPO Film Unit, on its own, made *The First Days* (1939) shortly after war broke out. Harry Watt, Humphrey Jennings and Pat Jackson collaborated on it.

When Winston Churchill became Prime Minister he named Brendan Bracken Minister of Information. Bracken in turn appointed Jack Beddington head of the Films Division. Beddington, public relations officer for the Shell Oil group, had been instrumental in the establishment of the Shell Film Unit. He understood the aims of the documentary movement and had a feeling for the film medium. His first act at the Films Division was to request a paper



Fig 31 Britain's Ministry of Information, established in 1939, was responsible for the production of the Grierson units' wartime films and for exhibiting them to audiences throughout the country using vans such as this one. *British Film Institute*

from Film Centre explaining how to use films in time of war. Former Grierson associates Edgar Anstey, Arthur Elton and Basil Wright wrote it.

After the summer of 1940, when France had fallen, the greater part of Western Europe was overrun by Germany. Britain was now a besieged island constantly under the threat of air attack. The documentarians reacted to these changed circumstances and became the interpreters of the British mood at war. A series of short factual films followed – half newsreel, half pictorial comment, and highly charged with the spirit of the time. *The Front Line* (1940), directed by Harry Watt, recorded life in the Channel port of Dover under air and artillery bombardment by long-range German guns. *London Can Take It* (1940) pictured life in the capital during the great night raids of the Battle of Britain. Directed by Watt and Humphrey Jennings, its commentary was written and read by American correspondent Quentin Reynolds. Cool images of actuality combined with hot journalistic prose are the basis of its style. Reynolds could say things about the English under fire that they couldn't modestly say about themselves.

The documentary old guard now fully entered the wartime filmmaking effort. *Squadron 992* (1940), produced by Alberto Cavalcanti and directed by Harry Watt, was made by the GPO Film Unit for the Air Force. About the training of a balloon barrage unit which then moves up into Scotland, it ends with a simulated German air raid on the bridge over the Firth of Forth. There is less attention to how things are done than is usual in documentaries, and more to mood and imagery, with lovely shots of the bridge, countryside and sea. The humour is noteworthy as well – including mild kidding of the Scots. (Watt was Scottish.)

As the war got fully underway, hundreds of training and orientation, scientific and medical films were produced for military and civilian audiences. There were films which enabled aerial gunners to test the accuracy of their aim, or which taught pilots the use of their controls. Short films encouraged civilians to conserve fuel and water (*The Burning Question* [1945], on fuel economy), to collect salvage (*Salvage with a Smile* [1940], paper for cartridges, household waste for pig food), and the like. Each month the MOI presented a fifteen-minute film on the progress of the struggle: the conquest and rehabilitation of Naples (*Naples Is a Battlefield* [1944]) or the devastation created in Walcheren by Allied bombing of the dykes (*Broken Dykes* [1945]), for instance. The scientific and medical films included one dealing with the National Blood Transfusion Service (*Blood Transfusion* [1942]), a film for doctors on diagnosis and treatment of a skin disease caused by parasites (*Scabies* [1943]), and another on a new antibiotic drug (*Penicillin* [1944]).

In addition to these more directly utilitarian films, three major types of British wartime documentaries emerged between 1941 and 1945. They were: (1) the semidocumentary indoctrinational features; (2) a continuation of the peacetime social documentary with new subjects and forms; and (3) the records of battle.

Indoctrination

Evidently the Ministry of Information decided that the best sort of support and inspiration for the population at large could come from showing British



Fig 32 *Squadron 99* (UK, 1940, Harry Watt). *Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive*

men and women going about their wartime tasks with resolution, efficiency and quiet courage. In taking this approach, a main line of British indoctrination films moved toward Flaherty, and also toward fiction features, in depicting the drama of survival inherent in war. It was Watt in *Target for*

Tonight (1941) who created the prototype for the feature-length semidocumentary indoctrination films.

Target for Tonight concerns a Royal Air Force bombing mission into Germany to destroy an oil refinery and storage and distributing centre at Freihausen. After covering the preparation for the raid, it follows a Wellington bomber and its crew. The bomber is hit by flak over the target, one of its crew is wounded, and it limps back to base on one engine. The action is a composite representation of how such an engagement would actually be carried out. It has the real setting of airfield and airplanes and is acted by real airmen. Through our direct involvement with the crew members, it comes alive in a way usually associated with story films. The deft characterizations, dialogue that seems to fit the men and the situation, and bits of wry humour are all engaging. Watt was the first to depict the human undercurrents of war at a depth documentary had not previously attempted.

Fires Were Started (1943), directed by Humphrey Jennings, is about the work of the Auxiliary Fire Service during the devastating German fire raids on London. By using the narrative device of a new recruit, Jennings saw through his eyes the functioning of this fire-fighting service and the diverse and likable personalities brought together in it. When the raid begins in the evening we are able to follow the tactics of the fire-fighters without aid of commentary through their actions and conversations, the phone calls from headquarters, the maps with pins stuck into them, the lists of equipment chalked on a blackboard. Among other things, *Fires Were Started* is a model of exposition without didacticism. But its true greatness lies in the way it informs, persuades and moves us, all at the same time. In this film Jennings succeeds in differentiating and developing characters of his real/nonactor firemen. *Fires Were Started*, together with two of his shorts – *Listen to Britain* (1942), an impressionistic audiovisual poem about the country in wartime, and *A Diary for Timothy* (1945), a fusion of the impressionist/symphonic approach with (in this case multiple) narrative – comprise Jennings' masterpieces.

Jennings co-directed and co-edited *Listen to Britain* with Stewart Macallister – his usual collaborator and editor of *Fires Were Started*. The film is a masterpiece of visuals and sound; it uses natural sounds and music to create the sound of Britain. The introduction, voiced directly to camera by

Leonard Brockington, touched many of Jennings' key themes in a way that invites the viewer to share. Indeed the invitation comes from outside of any narrative, directed straight at the audience. It creates an audio landscape of Britain during the war, with images both accompanying and conflicting with the multitude of sounds. Jennings' work as a Surrealist painter is evident here as he paints with both light and sound. His qualities as a filmmaker involve especially his formal experimentation, the intricate patterns of interwoven sights and sounds. The individual images Jennings selected are rich in symbolic expressiveness, evoking peace as well as war, past as well as present, in combination and contrast. English tradition and English spirit saturate his films. Jennings celebrates cultural heritage with a warmth that encourages us to share his feelings.

Western Approaches (1944, titled *The Raider* in the US) was directed by Pat Jackson, who had assisted Harry Watt earlier (as had Humphrey Jennings before him). It is an account of the convoys of merchant vessels that left Halifax, Nova Scotia to transport supplies to Britain, and of the submarine warfare in the North Atlantic that they faced. It narrows down to the story of twenty-four men, survivors of a torpedoed freighter, who spend fourteen days adrift. Their lifeboat is used as bait by a lurking U-boat to attract an Allied ship. This is the largest in scale, the most ambitious, and the most technically difficult of the British wartime semidocumentaries. Along with the documentary essentials of nonactors, location shooting and description of process (how convoys and submarine attack and defence function), there is a high degree of skillfully handled artifice. The use of tightly scripted dialogue, synch-sound recording on location, and shooting with the cumbersome Technicolor camera on the high seas are all impressive. With its carefully plotted suspense and familiar characterizations, documentary here moves very close to fiction.

Two indoctrinational intentions of the British wartime semidocumentaries are apt to strike a viewer. One is their emphasis on togetherness. Over and over again the people are shown – civilians as well as military – working together to get the job done. Though microcosms of English society are frequently offered – with various identifiable regional and class accents, and a Scot or perhaps Canadian thrown in – no tensions between regions or among classes are shown. In fact, such differences, very real in Britain, are minimized.

Everyone is doing his or her work; all are working equally hard to win the war. The other distinctive characteristic is the lack of violence shown and the lack of hatred expressed in either dialogue or narration. Rather than digging coal or working for an advertising agency or attending university, the job now is to destroy the (unseen) enemy to keep them from destroying us. If bombs fall from the night skies, it's as if they were an act of God, a natural disaster like an earthquake. The thing to do is to put out the fires, clear away the rubble, attend the wounded, and bury the dead. While one might think these two attitudes were part of general wartime propaganda strategies, they appear to be very British – maybe even more specifically English. Nothing quite like them is present in the wartime films of Canada or the United States.

Social Documentary

Notwithstanding the national peril, the social documentary survived. In fact, some interesting innovations of subject and form were added to it. In the wartime social documentary a common goal was put forward: not simply that the war should be won, but that it should be won to some purpose; that life should hold better opportunities for everyone after it. This attitude even appears in Jennings' *A Diary for Timothy*. When the Welsh miner is injured in an accident, the commentary, written by E. M. Forster and read by Michael Redgrave, states: 'It's pretty shocking that this sort of thing should happen every day though we've been cutting coal for five hundred years.' As he is recuperating, the miner reminds his wife of the gains in health services made by Labour since the end of the First World War. 'Surely, if we can do that during that period,' he says, 'nothing can stop us after this war.' If post-war opportunity was a frequent theme in British wartime documentaries, it was probably at least partly a response to working-class feelings that their great sacrifices and losses of World War I had not resulted in sufficient benefits for them.

World of Plenty (1943), Paul Rotha's compilation film, begins with the breakdown in international food distribution before the war – surpluses in some countries, starvation in others. The system of fair distribution by

rationing enforced nationally in Britain during the war is then presented. It is suggested as a worldwide model for the future. Rotha, firmly schooled in Marxist ideals, always insisted (as did Grierson less stridently) that documentaries had to deal with the economic underpinnings of any subject tackled. At the same time, economic abstractions are much harder to present in the language of motion pictures than are specific actualities. In attempting to solve this problem Rotha introduced a number of experimental elements. Diagrams, interviews and trick optical effects were added to stock footage. The remarkable animated representations created by the Isotype Institute add clarity and drama to statistics of food production and distribution. Especially original is the argumentative dialogue between an offscreen voice speaking for the audience to onscreen actors, and among onscreen actors, in roles of persons in various parts of the world, speaking to each other.

As a final example of the wartime social documentary there is *When We Build Again* (1945), about housing and city planning. Sponsored by Cadbury Brothers, Ltd., makers of chocolates, it was produced by Donald Taylor and



Fig 33 *World of Plenty* (UK, 1943, Paul Rotha). *Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive*

directed by Ralph Bond. Dylan Thomas wrote and read the poetic portions of the commentary. The film begins with a slight narrative of three returning servicemen. The music sounds like and is used in the manner of dramatic films. Inner city slums, suburbs and new towns (like the greenbelt town of *The City*) are surveyed. Interviews, statistics, visual demonstrations of existing housing and models for the future are employed. 'No private interest to stand in our way,' intones the commentator, who calls people 'the greatest capital – the future belongs to them.' This film could be thought of as *Housing Problems* ten years later.

Records of Battle

Desert Victory (1943) – with production by the Army Film and Photographic Unit and the Royal Air Force Film Production Unit, direction by Roy Boulting, and music by William Alwyn – is about the British Eighth Army's campaign in North Africa against the German forces under the command of Field Marshall Erwin Rommel. In this kind of filmmaking, with filmmakers working with miles of footage shot by combat cameramen, two creative problems are uppermost. The first is to give clarity to the mass of confusing, technical detail. The second is to give it dramatic form. These problems are the same as those faced by Esther Shub in *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (1927), discussed in Chapter 3, and by all compilation filmmakers. In *Desert Victory*, the first problem was solved by the use of animated maps to establish the overall patterns and movement of the campaign, and by a carefully planned narration. As for the second, all of the nonartistic material with the irregularity of history inherent in it was organized into a coherent story told chronologically with beginning, middle and end. In addition, the sponsor's requirements – to show each branch of the armed forces, the civilian workers, the presence of US aid, and the like – were fitted into the whole without warping it out of shape.

Desert Victory starts at the lowest point of the campaign. The British, who had retreated across the Sahara pursued by the seemingly invincible Afrika Korps, are halted just sixty miles from Alexandria, deep inside Egypt. Then

there is the fierce battle of El Alamein, with the British emerging victorious. From there the film follows the triumphant 1300-mile pursuit of the German army to the final victory at Tripoli. To organize these events so they would appear both clear and dramatic, the filmmakers contrived an alternation of cause and effect. To personalize the mass action, and gain empathy, a number of closeups of individual soldiers (some of them obviously recreated, particularly in the night attack sequences) are inserted. Generals Alexander, Montgomery and Wavell, and Prime Minister Churchill are introduced as well. In comparison with the indoctrinational semidocumentaries, which tended to make the violence of war part of a job of work to be done, *Desert Victory* is singularly bloodthirsty. Perhaps these filmmakers were not inclined to conceal their elation over this first major British victory following the battering Britain had received in the desert fighting and from the air blitz. It was hugely successful at home and abroad, receiving an Oscar as the year's most distinctive achievement in documentary features.



Fig 34 *Desert Victory* (UK, 1943, Roy Boulting). *Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive*

The True Glory (1945) was produced jointly by the British Ministry of Information and the US Office of War Information. It was co-directed by Englishman Carol Reed and American Garson Kanin, both fiction-film directors of considerable distinction. William Alwyn composed the score. It covers the final phase of the war in Europe, from the preparations for the D-Day landings in Normandy through the fall of Berlin, to the establishing of contact between the Western Allies and Soviet troops at the Elbe River. Made from 5.5 million feet of combat footage shot by 500 American, British and other Allied cameramen, it is a vast panorama, yet intensely human, even intimate at moments.

Emotional involvement is gained largely through the experimental use of commentary. The words are complementary to the images, sometimes in humorous or ironic counterpoint to them. Alternating with blank verse choruses are multiple voices representing soldiers involved with the particular



Fig 35 *The True Glory* was a triumphant record and hymn to Allied victory in Europe. (UK and US co-production, 1945, Carol Reed and Garson Kanin).
Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive

action being shown. The generals' version, spoken by Dwight D. Eisenhower, supreme commander of the Allied forces in Europe, is irreverently interrupted by simulated voices of enlisted men who were there: New York cab driver, cockney Londoner, member of the French Maquis, and others. One marvellous moment occurs when a black American MP directing military traffic at a crossroads explains that the situation is tough, that the invasion forces are bottled up in the Caen Peninsula. 'Then we heard that the Third Army was taking off,' he says. 'They'd pulled a rabbit out of a hat – and what a rabbit! A rabbit with pearl-handled revolvers.' As he utters these last words a tank bearing an erect General George S. Patton roars by.

The True Glory was the final triumphant record and hymn to Allied victory in Europe. The occasion permitted a kind of boasting and self-congratulation without it appearing to be so. Pride is expressed in the massiveness and efficiency of the military machine, and in its democratic character. The participation of many nations is indirectly reiterated without explicit statement being required. The Allied attitude toward war is presented as being purposeful and matter-of-fact, its violence accepted as part of the job, as in the British semidocumentaries. Unlike the semidocumentaries, however, dislike and distrust of the German enemy are strongly stated. The horrors of what the advancing forces discovered at the Belsen concentration camp are included. An American GI, talking about guarding German prisoners of war, says: 'I just keep 'em covered ... It wasn't my job to figure 'em out ... But, brother, I never gave 'em more than the Geneva convention, and that was all.' Finally, though, it is the positive corollary of the GI's attitude that receives the strongest emphasis. What *The True Glory* is saying mostly is that this was a just and necessary war and that on the Allied side we can all feel proud of winning it.

The joint production ventures near the end of the war of the 'victory series' discussed in Chapter 8, culminating with *The True Glory*, were the final and most complete examples of this collaboration. The centripetal force exerted by war not only brought together documentaries and documentarians of three countries, it also pulled together documentary and fiction filmmakers within each country. Filmmakers of all sorts were working in common cause and sometimes on the same projects. Documentarians

gained an unprecedented amount of theatrical screen time. The degree and kind of wartime pulling together in each country were different, of course. Differences among the films of the three nations will be examined in the final section of this chapter. The sections up to that deal with the four major types of wartime films – training, indoctrination, records of battle, social documentary – made in the US.

Part B: Canada

At the outbreak of World War II, Canada was something of a sleeping giant. In certain ways it was also a geographical and cultural anomaly which no orderly minded nation planner would have perpetrated. Larger in area than the United States, with a sparse population stretched across a 200-mile wide strip along its southern border, physically it represented a virtual extension of the United States up into the uninhabitable Arctic. Its prodigious breadth of forest and prairie, blocked at the western end by a fierce mountain range, took considerable conquering before the Atlantic was finally linked to the Pacific.

Considering the open nature of this border, it is easy to understand how both Canada and the US have always laid claim to Flaherty, since he lived and worked in both. In addition to the formidable size of its wilderness, Canadians had always faced a struggle for national identity. At first it was the matter of establishing independence from Great Britain. More recently, the gravitational pull of its powerful neighbour to the south was smothering Canada's distinctiveness. Economically and culturally, as well as geographically, Canada has to fight against becoming something of an extension of the United States.

When war broke out in 1939 the film situation in Canada was considerably different from that in either Britain or the United States. In Canada there was no production of fiction feature films, and theatrical distribution and exhibition were even more dominated by the Americans than in Britain. In fact, there was a negligible amount of Canadian film production of any sort. Britain had a firmly established documentary movement. If the United States' documentary efforts lacked the coherence and overall effectiveness of the British, it had distinguished documentary filmmakers and films it could

point to with pride. War and documentary arrived together in Canada at the end of the thirties. A pioneer Government Motion Picture Bureau in Ottawa extended back to 1914, but it provided largely 'scenic and travel pictures' lacking the social relevance of the documentary. By the 1930s it had fallen badly out of touch with current realities, and the filmmaking techniques and styles it employed were quite old-fashioned. No image of productive, modern Canada appeared on the screens anywhere; no adequate acknowledgment was made of its role as a rising world leader with vast natural resources, agricultural and industrial potential. No sure sense of national identity was being given to the Canadian people through film.

Founding of National Film Board

By the mid-thirties, representatives of the Canadian government in London had become interested in the success of British documentary – its dynamic presentation of government services, British people and British problems. At about the same time, John Grierson was asked by the Film Committee of the Imperial Relations Trust, set up by the British government in 1937, to survey government film developments in Canada and other dominions. In 1938 he was invited to Canada, where he investigated, reported on, and made recommendations to the Canadian government regarding its use of film.

In his report Grierson, of course, recommended the creation of a new federal agency. It would produce films that would contribute to a greater sense of relationship among the Canadian people and present an accurate picture of Canada to the rest of the world. The acceptance of his recommendations followed; legislation establishing a National Film Board was passed by the Canadian Parliament in May 1939 and the search for the new Canadian-born Film Commissioner began, but no Canadian with adequate qualifications could be found. Grierson was chosen and accepted the offer in October 1939.

It is important to note that the Film Board was conceived in Canada's peacetime and for peacetime purposes. The legislation creating it decreed its principal mandate to be that of helping 'Canadians in all parts of Canada to understand the ways of living and the problems of Canadians to other parts of

the world's.' This was the same goal as that pursued at the Empire Marketing Board ten years earlier by Grierson and Stephen Tallents in showing one part of the Empire to the rest. The Film Board's position as an autonomous government agency with its own budget and representation in Parliament came out of Grierson's frustrations with the limitations of sponsorship. The Board was also to concern itself with 'distribution of Canadian films in other countries.' The first six years of the National Film Board would, however, be focused to considerable extent on Canada's war effort – especially those films made for theatrical release.

Grierson began immediately to build the large and effective organization the National Film Board would become. In this he had the full support of Prime Minister Mackenzie King. Veteran ex-colleagues from Britain were brought over to assist, including Stuart Legg, already in Ottawa making two films for the Canadian government. Available documentary talent from other countries was hired as well: Irving Jacoby (screenwriter and producer) and Roger Barlow (cinematographer) among those from the United States; Joris Ivens and John Ferno from Holland; Boris Kaufman and Alexander Alexeieff (animator of the pinboard technique) from France. And hiring the young Canadians began, not unlike the hiring of young Britons in the earlier EMB and GPO days, except now in much larger numbers.

The production of hundreds and hundreds of films commenced. The first year closed in October 1940 with some forty pictures either in distribution, in production, or in script preparation; by fiscal year 1943-4 the annual rate of release had increased to 200. Two monthly series modelled on 'The March of Time' were distributed in the theatres and subsequently released to nontheatrical audiences. It was a newsreel war not a documentary war, Grierson said, requiring the crude immediacy of reportage rather than the considered refinement of art.

Theatrical Series

The first series was 'Canada Carries On', intended primarily to depict Canada's part in the war to its own people and to others. The initial CCO release was



Fig 36 *Stuart Legg, the producer of ‘The World in Action’ monthly theatrical documentary series for the National Film Board of Canada, edits (1945, Canada, Stuart Legg). Canadian Government Photo Centre*

Atlantic Patrol (April 1940). It was about the work of the Canadian navy in protecting the huge convoys that sailed from Halifax to Britain from German submarine attack. *Churchill’s Island* (June 1941), about Britain at war, won an Academy Award, one of the first given for best documentary.

The Canadian series demonstrated an uncanny knack for latching onto what was about to happen. *Warclouds in the Pacific* (November 1941), appearing ten days before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, contained some borrowed 'March of Time' footage. de Rochemont tried to hold up its release to prevent it from scooping the MOT. *Zero Hour – The Story of the Invasion* (June 1944) was another scoop: the first account of the Allied invasion of Normandy to reach the screen. NFB personnel had assembled footage on D-Day preparations in Britain. Then they prepared more than a dozen different endings covering possible landing sites from Norway to the Mediterranean. When the invasion occurred, the appropriate ending was added and the film was released in the United States and Canada within three days.

If 'Canada Carries On' paid 'The March of Time' the compliment of imitation, the second, even more ambitious series began to compete with MOT in the world market, including the United States. Entitled 'The World in Action,' it appeared two years after CCO had begun. With some exceptions, Stuart Legg wrote and directed every issue; United Artists distributed. Technically this Canadian series advanced in some respects from its American counterpart. Words and images were cut together in complex and artistic ways. The music, by Louis Applebaum, was subtler and more sophisticated. The commentator, Lorne Greene, had a deeper, richer voice than Westbrook Van Voorhis. (Greene would go on to play the father in the popular US television series *Bonanza*.)

Food – Weapon of Conquest (March 1942), the second release, is one example. *Time* magazine called it 'a blueprint of how to make an involved, dull, major aspect of World War II understandable and acceptable to moviegoers.' *Inside Fighting Russia* (April 1942) comprised mostly footage obtained from the USSR. Since the Soviets tended to be secretive, this represented quite a coup. *The War for Men's Minds* (June 1943) concerned psychological warfare. (Grierson took secret delight in being called 'the Goebbels of Canada,' in reference to Nazi propaganda minister Josef Goebbels, though he thought Hitler the true genius of propaganda.) The most ambitious and intellectual of the WIA films, *The War for Men's Minds*, was also the first of the Canadian films to look ahead to peace.

The two series were distinctive in their departure from usual wartime propaganda emphases. There was very little hatred or violence in these films. 'World in Action' emphasis shifted from matters of immediate wartime preoccupations to those that would concern the post-war world. The international view and steady look ahead to peace were quite exceptional during wartime. Examples of internationalism would be *Labour Front* (October 1943) and, especially, *Global Air Routes* (April 1944). Grierson felt satisfaction in turning the globe upside down, as he put it, in the NFB films – putting Canada at the centre rather than the periphery of the world.

Nontheatrical Films

The great majority of those hundreds of films produced by the Film Board were for nontheatrical distribution rather than for the theatres, and were less likely to be war-related than the theatrical series. In fact, they dealt with a wide variety of subjects aimed at various audiences. These included intimate regional studies (for instance, on the life of a Quebec priest, or on Gran Manan Island), and the building of the Alaska Highway. There were also cultural shorts such as *Flight of the Dragon*, about the collection of Chinese art in the Royal Ontario Museum. Gudrun Bjerring, a woman, made a fifteen-minute film called *Before They Are Six*, intended particularly for mothers who ran a home and a factory workbench in a wartime plant.

Canada's comprehensive system of 16mm nontheatrical distribution and exhibition was unequalled and remained so for decades. It reported an annual audience larger than the national population. The films, in fact, grew out of the needs of the audiences to a remarkable degree; 'audience response' was the key term, uniquely important in the growth of the NFB. A network of nontheatrical showings was created by the Board (preceding television, of course), with rural circuits, national trade union circuits and industrial circuits being established. Showings were held by the women's club or library, for example, or by the YMCA or at a grange meeting. Sixteen-millimetre prints were borrowed from regional libraries. Volunteer projection services provided trained projectionists and taught others to operate projectors. Film councils

formed, consisting of representatives from each of the local organizations using films. They would meet, once a month perhaps, to discuss and plan ways of improving the use of films'. So, a kind of decentralized leadership emerged and a feedback process started. It was not just the government telling the Film Board what it wanted films to be about. This strategy became the model for the development of the US system of nontheatrical, educational distribution.

Summary

The salient observation to be made about the National Film Board is that the kind of organization Grierson was able to construct in Canada was an unrivalled information system, the largest and best-coordinated government film operation in the world. By 1945, the end of the war, it was producing 300 films a year. Most of the Film Board releases reached an audience of roughly four million. It had a government paid staff of about 700 in production and distribution. All of this was achieved by a nation with a population of only twelve million.

The '5 1/2 films a week', as Grierson characterized the Film Board output when it had reached full speed, were often skilfully made, usually timely in subject matter (rather than timeless), quickly produced, and designed to reach as wide an audience as the subject and purpose permitted. In artistic terms, they had a roughness along with their urgency. Those films were valued by their audiences as well as by their producers for what they were – an almost television-like flow (before television) of information and coverage of important topics.

During the war a rift occurred between Grierson and his former British colleagues over the kind of documentaries that needed to be made. Grierson thought the British documentaries too soft and aestheticky. 'Sure London can take it,' he would say, in reference to the influential British documentary of that title, 'but can she dish it out?', paraphrasing dialogue from one of his favourite gangster movies, *Little Caesar*. Grierson saw early British wartime propaganda as reflecting a country preparing to go down with quiet heroism into defeat. There is an anecdote about Grierson preventing the young Canadians from

screening a print of *Listen to Britain* so that they would not be distracted by its loveliness from the more vigorous style he wanted them to develop. Some of the British, for their part, found the Canadian films' illustrated lectures lacking in artistic sophistication, which infuriated Grierson.

Perhaps, finally, the sheer establishment of the National Film Board – which went on to other kinds of achievement, including aesthetic excellence, while the documentary movements in Britain and America faltered during the 1950s – is the great legacy of the wartime documentary efforts in Canada. It stands as the largest and most impressive monument to Grierson's concepts and activities relating to the use of film by governments in communication with their citizens. It became a model for national film boards established in New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, India and elsewhere. Grierson himself called the Film Board 'a tidy operation, the tidiest [he] was involved with'.

Part C: United States

In the US, the first two years of the 1940s were essentially an extension of the 1930s, but the extreme hardships of the Depression were gradually alleviated as the country backed into war. At President Roosevelt's request, Prime Minister Winston Churchill agreed not to send British wartime propaganda to the United States until the US officially entered the war. Roosevelt was concerned that such a clear indication of his administration's pro-British and pro-war stance would disturb the illusion of neutrality and provide American isolationists with evidence to use against him. Since no such agreement had been made with Canada, John Grierson, head of its National Film Board, saw to it that some British documentaries filtered into United States along with those of Canada. Britain's and Canada's early wartime documentaries may have contributed to moving America from sympathy to action on behalf of Britain. However, not until the Japanese attack on the US naval base at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, followed by Germany's declaration of war, did the United States join the widening world conflict. Entry into the war had as profound an effect on documentary film in the US as it had had on America's allies, Britain and Canada.

The war brought English-language documentary together in ways and to a degree not true of any other period in its history. The people of Britain, Canada and the United States viewed each other's films about the war. Film materials were exchanged – stock-shot library footage, combat footage, captured enemy footage. Films about each other were produced to orient troops and civilians as to our differences as well as to our common ways and to the ways in which we each depended on the other for survival. The joint production ventures near the end of the war, culminating with the Oscar-winning co-production by Carol Reed and Garson Kanin, *The True Glory* (1945), were the final and most complete examples of this collaboration.

The centripetal force exerted by war not only brought together documentaries and documentarians of the three countries, it pulled together documentary and fiction filmmakers within each country. Filmmakers of all sorts were working in common cause and sometimes on the same projects, and documentaries gained an unprecedented amount of theatrical screen time. Newsreels played an even more important role than they had before. Only through newsreels was the public able to see live pictures of troops at rest and on the battlefield within weeks, sometimes days of the footage being shot.

Training

As with British wartime documentary, hundreds of 'nuts and bolts' films were made, on every conceivable subject. A random sample of those in the US might include the following: *Articles of War*, *Military Courtesy*, *Keep It Clean* (how and why to take care of a gun), *Resisting Enemy Interrogation*, and *Sex Hygiene*. In *Identification of the Japanese Zero* (1942) a young Ronald Reagan plays a flyer who mistakes a friend's P40 for a Japanese Zero and tries to shoot it down. In the end he gets a chance to down a real Zero. These training films were tested to be extremely effective pedagogically (see Hovland, Lumsdaine and Sheffield, *Experiments on Mass Communication*.)

Indoctrination – Why We Fight

Rather than using the ‘un-American’ terms *indoctrination* or *propaganda*, the US Armed Forces engaged in what it called *orientation*. Central to the massive effort directed toward converting more than nine million Americans from civilians into military personnel was the seven-part ‘Why We Fight’ series. The production of this series and of other important information and education films was entrusted to Lt. Col. Frank Capra. One of the most popular Hollywood directors of the 1930s (*It Happened One Night*, *Mr Smith Goes to Washington*), Capra had no prior documentary experience. (The same could be said of virtually all the Hollywood filmmakers involved with wartime documentaries.) He was assisted by Major Anatole Litvak and Captains Anthony Veiller and William Hornbeck – Hollywood veterans all; director, writer, and editor, respectively. Sgt. Richard Griffith (subsequently head of the film department of the Museum of Modern Art) did research. In addition to ‘Why We Fight’, the Capra group made other large-scale films designed to orient American troops to the foreigners – allies and enemies – with whom they were about to come into contact. Examples are *Know Your Ally – Britain* (1943), *Here Is Germany* (1945), and *Know Your Enemy – Japan* (1946).

‘Why We Fight’ was based on the assumption that servicemen would be more committed and able fighters if they knew about the events leading up to, and the reasons for, US participation in the war. The spirit of isolationism – still strong in America right up to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor – had to be counteracted. In this attempt, ‘Why We Fight’ presented a gigantic historical treatise from a particular point of view – that is to say, from the perspective of Roosevelt’s New Deal Democratic administration, which became the predominant viewpoint during the war.

‘Why We Fight’ is most impressive in the scale of its conception and the virtuosity of its execution. Almost entirely compiled from existing footage, including newsreels, Allied and captured enemy records of battle, bits from fiction features, and Nazi propaganda films, through editing and commentary it presents a vast and coherent panorama.

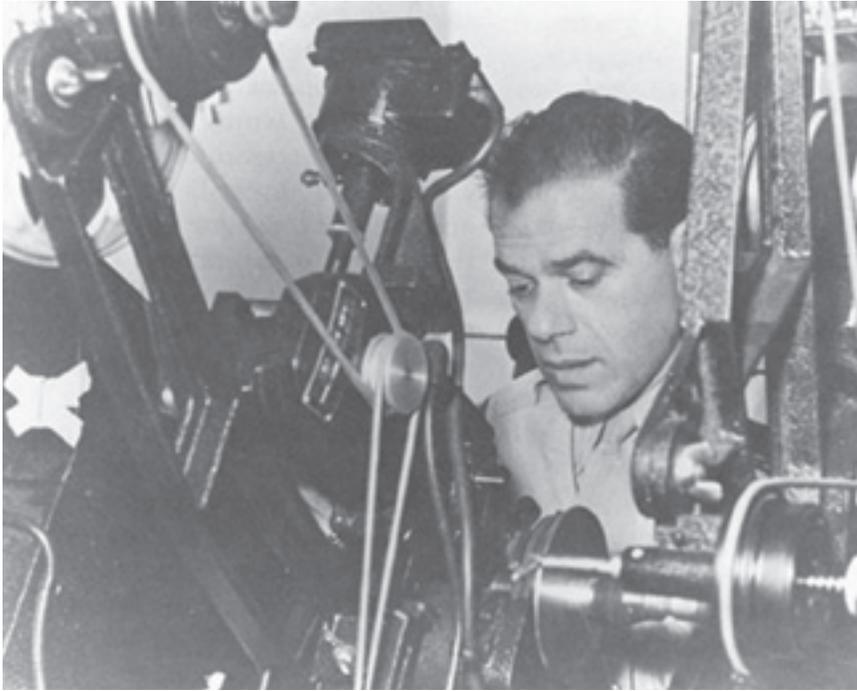


Fig 37 Frank Capra, circa 1943, editing at the U.S. Army Signal Corps facility in Astoria, New York

The first three films – *Prelude to War* (1942), *The Nazis Strike* (1943) and *Divide and Conquer* (1943) – cover the period 1918 to 1941. They document the increase in Japanese aggression in Asia, the growing menace of Hitler in Europe and, above all, the changing American foreign policy and public opinion between the end of World War I and US entry into World War II. *The Battle of Britain* (1943), *The Battle of Russia* (1943) and *The Battle of China* (1944) cover the efforts of the Allies who were in the war before the US and continued to fight alongside US troops. *War Comes to America* (1945) offered a recapitulation and even more detailed examination of changes in American attitudes over the preceding two decades, and of the conflicting impulses and ideologies that shaped them. Picking up and consolidating the themes of the first three films, it was made last but intended to be shown first.

The films, short features in length, were shown to servicemen; viewing of all seven was compulsory before embarkation for overseas duty. Though

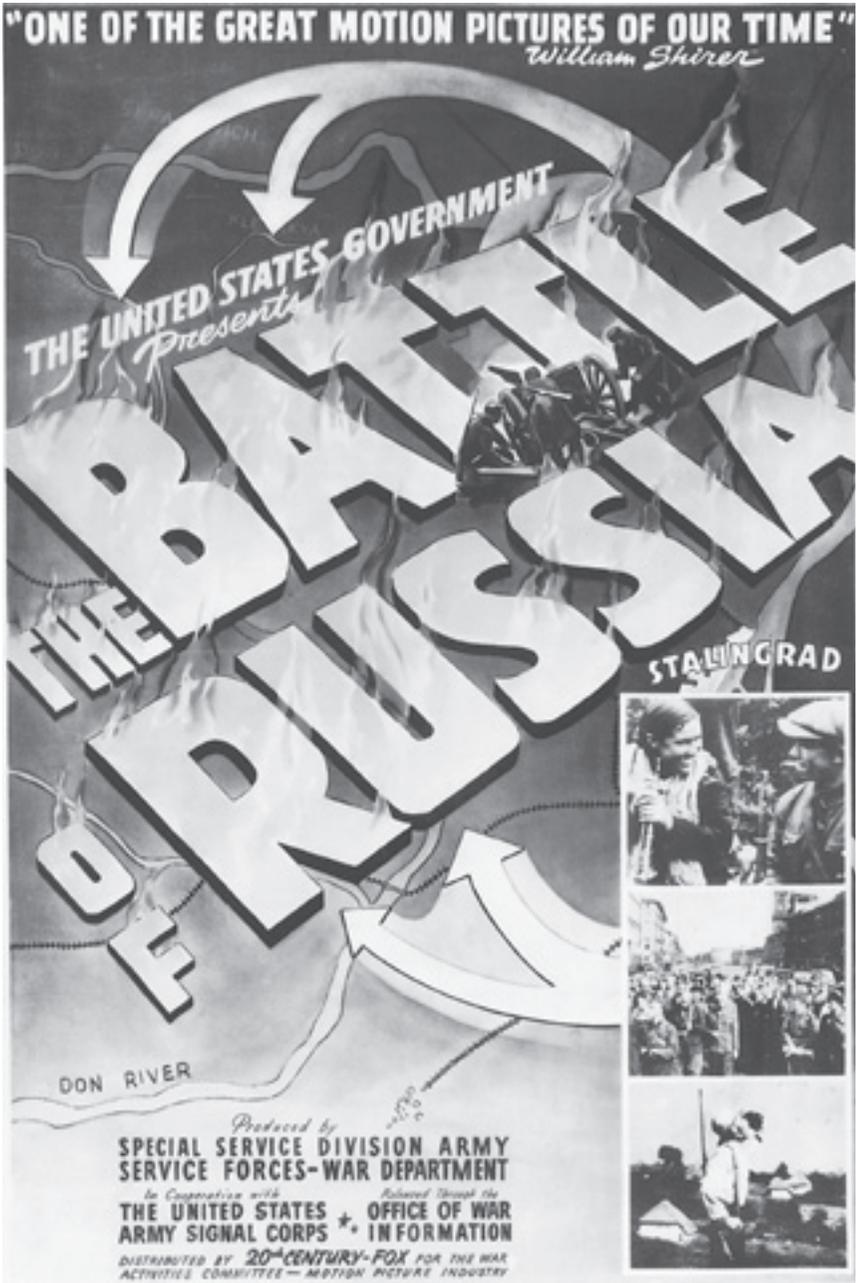


Fig 38 Theatrical poster for The Battle of Russia of the 'Why We Fight' series (US, 1943, Anatole Litvak). Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences

designed solely for showing to military personnel. When their excellence and dramatic power were recognized by the War Department some of them were made available for civilian audiences through theatrical exhibition.

The chief artistic problem the makers of these films faced was one of giving structure to vast amounts of unstructured history. Dramatic form was given to each of the films, with exposition, mounting action, climax and denouement. They can be broken down into acts. *Divide and Conquer*, for example, has five acts, like classical tragedy. Act I contains exposition: Poland has been overrun by Germany; conquest of Britain is now its goal; German strategy is outlined; the theme of Hitler's lying treachery is sounded. The content of Act II is the successful German campaign against Denmark and Norway. Act III deals with the position of France, the Maginot Line, and French weakness. Act IV comprises the German conquest of Holland and Belgium. Act V is the fall of France. The various participant countries are given character; they become characters, like *dramatis personae*.

A considerable variety of visual and audio resources is used in these compiled documentaries – very nearly the full range conceivable. Visuals in *The Nazis Strike*, for instance, include, in addition to combat and newsreel footage, excerpts from the Nazi *Triumph of the Will*, bits of staged action (the victims of firing squads), still photos, drawings and maps, animated diagrams (the animation by Walt Disney Studio), newspaper headlines, and printed titles (Hitler's pronouncements). The soundtrack includes two narrators (Anthony Veiller for the factual, Walter Huston for the emotional), quoted dialogue (Churchill, and an impersonation of Hitler), music (by Dmitri Tiomkin), and sound effects. Dramatic conflict is obtained by painstaking manipulation of combat footage. Editing conventions of matched action and screen direction are maintained. German attackers always move from right to left. A synthetic assemblage of diverse shots is edited into a cause-effect order: German bombers in formation, bombs dropping from planes, explosions in villages, rubble. The result is almost as if all of this footage had been shot for these films under Capra's or Litvak's direction. Maps and animated diagrams give scope to the live-action sequences, clarify and relate random material to formalized patterns consistent with the actual movement. The animation takes on symbolic and rhetorical meaning; in *Divide and Conquer*, swastika

termites infest the base of a castle, and python-like arrows lock around the British Isles.

Although 'Why We Fight' is greatly admired on technical and aesthetic grounds, there is some convincing evidence that it was not as effective indoctrination as hoped for and even thought to be (see Hovland, Lumsdaine and Sheffield, *Experiments on Mass Communication*). The problem, the social scientists inferred from their testing, was with the historical approach. It seemed to have the desired effects only on those with the equivalent of some college education; it appeared to be too intellectual and over the heads of a majority of soldiers tested. As film, though, 'Why We Fight' offers incontrovertible evidence of very great filmmaking skill and a remarkably full and varied use of film technique. It stands as a peak of achievement in the history of documentary, and influenced subsequent historical compilation films, especially the many which later appeared on television. Quite likely, it helped to win the war.

Records of Battle

As with the 'Why We Fight' series, others of the most prestigious wartime documentaries were made for the Armed Forces by Hollywood veterans. Among them were John Ford, John Huston and William Wyler.

John Ford's fiction features gave him a status at least as great as Capra's; his fictional films also emphasized American themes, though in his case usually historical (*Stagecoach*, *Young Mr Lincoln*, *Drums Along the Mohawk*). He enlisted in the Navy rather than the Army. Much of *The Battle of Midway* (1942) he filmed himself with a 16mm handheld camera, and he was seriously wounded during the filming. It won an Academy Award. It is early and unusual in using colour, which would come into documentary for the first time during the war. (Eastman Kodak had introduced the first practicable 16mm colour film for ordinary home movie use, Kodachrome, in 1935.) Ford's *December 7th* (1943) is a largely recreated account of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor using miniatures, rear screen projection, process photography, and actors. (It was shot by Gregg Toland, cinematographer of *The Grapes of*

Wrath and *Citizen Kane*.) Though the emotionalism of these two films may strike audiences today as excessive, they accurately reflect the feelings of many people at the time they were made.

John Huston (whose pre-war success included *The Maltese Falcon*) made some of the finest and most personal of the wartime documentaries. His subsequent filmmaking seems to have gained considerably from that experience. Many think *The Battle of San Pietro* (1945) is the finest American wartime documentary; it is among the most outstanding films made about men in battle. It is an engrossing account of a full week of savage fighting between American and German forces in Italy for the control of the Liri Valley. The taking of a small military objective becomes an indictment of modern warfare in general, with its incredible cost both in military and civilian casualties. This theme is underscored as we see bodies of soldiers being buried beneath dog tag markers. After the battle, the people of San Pietro return to their devastated village and must somehow find the strength to rebuild their shattered lives. The weary Americans will move on to 'more rivers, and more mountains, and more towns ... more "San Pietros", greater or lesser – a thousand more.' The commentary was written and read by Huston. *Let There Be Light* (1946), Huston's final wartime documentary, is discussed later.

William Wyler (director of *Wuthering Heights* and *The Little Foxes*) served in the Army Air Force. His *Memphis Belle* (1944) is, in a way, an answer to the British *Target for Tonight*. It is interesting that Hollywood director Wyler used candid colour footage of a real raid (one of his cameramen was killed while filming) with voiceover narration. The 'Memphis Belle' was a Boeing B17 'flying fortress' on its last bombing mission over Germany before its veteran crew was sent home. The world we see and hear is that of the airmen – refracted images of sky and enemy fighters seen through plexiglass, the drone of engines, and excited voices over the intercom. The film seems to come very close to the reality of their experience. The title of Wyler's *Thunderbolt* (1945, in colour) is what the P47 fighter-bomber was called. The film deals with the activities of the 57th Fighter Group in Italy destroying vital supply routes deep behind German lines.

In addition to combat documentaries identified with particular Hollywood directors were those made collaboratively by film crews of the various armed



Fig 39 *American troops on the attack in The Battle of San Pietro. Huston's original version, using the voices of dead men (recorded before battle) as narration over photographs of their bodies, was cut by the military authorities (US, 1944, John Huston). Museum of Modern Art Film Still Archive*

services. A notable group of these reported on warfare in the Pacific. *The Battle for the Marianas* (1944) concerns a joint Army, Navy, Marine and Coast Guard assault on Saipan, Tinian and Guam, the major islands of the Mariana group. In *Attack! The Battle for New Britain* (1944) explanations of the strategy are accompanied by comments about life in the jungle. *To the Shores of Iwo Jima* (1945) is one of the fullest and most skilfully made accounts of a combined operation. *Fury in the Pacific* (1945) is unusual in the number and intensity of the shots of Japanese and Americans being killed in battle, which is probably why it was not released until after the war. Nine cameramen fell while filming.

The Fighting Lady (1944) is about the final phase of the war in the Pacific (fought almost exclusively between American and Japanese forces). It is feature-length and in Technicolor. The title refers to an aircraft carrier, in this



Fig 40 *The Fighting Lady*, made by de Rochemont after leaving 'The March of Time' (US, 1944, de Rochemont). Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive

case the *Yorktown*. The action concerns defence against attacks of kamikaze pilots diving to their deaths, trying to take American warships with them. Directed by famed still photographer Edward Steichen, it was narrated by movie star Robert Taylor, both then in the Navy. It was produced by de Rochemont, who had left 'The March of Time' to become a producer at Twentieth Century-Fox, which distributed *The Fighting Lady* and was also then distributing 'The March of Time'.

Social Documentary

In 1940, before America's entry into the war, Roosevelt appointed Nelson Rockefeller as Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (CIAA). This new agency was occasioned largely by US nervousness about the growing German presence in Latin America, through increased immigration and growth in

trade. The conception of the CIAA was not unlike that of the earlier British Empire Marketing Board: government public relations working to increase economic and political interdependency and mutual support.

One film about Latin America made for the CIAA was *The Bridge* (1944), directed by Willard Van Dyke and Ben Maddow. It is about the economics of South America and the importance of air transport in connecting its countries with each other and with North America. A cluster of films for the CIAA were produced by the Walt Disney Studio. They are clever and imaginative, using animation for teaching and communication. *The Grain That Built a Hemisphere* (1943) is a historical survey of the importance of maize/corn in the nutrition and economies of the American continents. *Water – Friend or Enemy* (1944) offers basic education in the importance of uncontaminated water and methods for obtaining it. The Disney films were distributed widely in both Spanish- and English-language versions. The Disney Studio also made instructional films for the Armed Forces. *Cold Front* and *Fog*, both 1943, are two examples.

The most notorious of these films – although not a documentary – was Orson Welles' ill-fated *It's All True* (1941). Rockefeller, who was on the board of directors of RKO (the studio for which Welles was making *The Magnificent Ambersons*) requested that Welles make the film, but when Rockefeller left the board and the studio felt Welles was spending too much money, the project was cancelled. Welles had left *Ambersons* in the middle of editing and felt that it was butchered by the studio in his absence. *It's All True* was left unfinished.

In 1942, following United States entry into the war, the Office of War Information (OWI) was set up. This agency was equivalent to the British Ministry of Information and the Canadian Wartime Information Board. News commentator Elmer Davis was named head of the OWI. Its function was to coordinate all government information released to the media and to develop its own means of informing the public. The Motion Picture Bureau of the OWI was headed by Robert Riskin, scriptwriter for some of Frank Capra's most successful features. It established liaison with the Hollywood studios, primarily to ensure that entertainment films did not contain material harmful to morale or to US relationships with its allies. The Motion Picture Bureau also produced its own films.

The purpose of the Domestic Branch of the Motion Picture Bureau was to make films for American civilian viewing, somewhat along the lines of the British Crown Film Unit or the Canadian National Film Board. The Overseas Branch was to make films for showing to allies, neutral countries, and countries which had been under Axis occupation. It is characteristic of Americans' suspiciousness about government information directed at them that the Domestic Branch never succeeded in getting a production programme underway. The Overseas Branch, on the other hand, had a distinguished wartime record, its films made largely by documentary veterans. Though not as big, prestigious or expensive as the Armed Forces documentaries made by Hollywood directors, the OWI films, taken together, offer a broad and sensitive picture of diverse aspects of life in the United States. Among them were *Autobiography of a Jeep* (1943, Joseph Krungold), a jaunty tribute to that product of American wartime technology. Following a showing in liberated France, the audience is said to have burst into shouts of 'Vive le jip! Vive le jip!'. *The Town* (1944, Josef von Sternberg) is about the contribution of many cultures to the United States as evidenced in the eclectic architecture, mixed population, and many religions of Madison, Indiana. *Pacific Northwest* (1944, Willard Van Dyke) describes and interprets the Northwestern states.

One quite singular film was *The Negro Soldier* (1944). The US Army used it as a means to convince African-Americans to enlist and to point out the contributions that blacks had made to the American military. It ultimately influenced army members and civilians of all races. The structure of the film is that of a black minister who preaches to his all-black congregation. He recounts the contributions of blacks in American military history, from Crispus Attucks and the Boston Massacre to the men who served in World War I, along the way touching on the War of 1812, the Civil War and the Spanish-American War. The film is a typical blend of archival footage and re-creations and even includes a re-creation of the destruction by the Nazis of a World War I monument in France to African-American soldiers. The second half is made up of graphic images of hangings, bombings and bodies; following the story of a young man through basic training; and wrapping up depicting African-Americans serving in all aspects of military life.

Let There Be Light (1946, John Huston), though produced by the Army Pictorial Service, was intended mainly for civilian audiences. It serves as a

painful and moving reflection on the mental and emotional casualties of war. What had been called 'shell shock' in World War I became 'battle fatigue' in World War II; today it is known as 'post-traumatic stress syndrome'. Whatever called, the symptoms are equally debilitating. *Let There Be Light* examines the then current types of rehabilitation of the psychosomatically disabled at Mason General Hospital in Brentwood, Long Island. The psychotherapy is observed with close attention to particular cases. A GI who lost his memory during a shell burst at Okinawa is hypnotized and begins to recall his terror and fear of battle. Another soldier, who stutters, is given sodium amytol. He begins to speak and then to shout, half-sobbing: 'I can TALK! Oh God, listen! God, I can talk.'

It may seem overly dramatic and staged today, but at the time its impact seemed threatening. *Let There Be Light* was not released until almost forty years after it was completed. The Army said they were concerned about invasion of privacy of the men shown. Huston said they were concerned about showing the public the terrible and lasting psychological damage of war.

Comparisons: Great Britain, Canada, United States

A key aspect of wartime documentary in the three countries was that the films were all government sponsored, and related in one way or another to what was seen as needed in the national interest. Private sponsorship of nonfiction films virtually ceased during the war. Beyond that similarity, however, there were significant differences between the three countries, beginning with the context of documentary in each at the outbreak of war.

In Britain, before the war, documentary was a thoroughly established enterprise. It was not large in terms of amounts of money, numbers of filmmakers and films made, or total audience size, admittedly, but it had earned respect among opinion-leaders and gained a central relationship to matters of public concern. The British entertainment film industry, on the other hand, rested more firmly on the distribution and exhibition of American films than on the production of British ones. As a result, it was the documentarians who

obtained the choice assignments and made the finest of the British wartime documentaries.

In Canada, little filmmaking of any sort had existed before the war. When the National Film Board was established, it became the main, almost the sole producer of Canadian wartime films. Its staff – consisting of a few documentary veterans from abroad and hundreds of Canadian tyros – made mainly documentary and related types of informational and instructional films.

In the United States, pre-war documentary had been individualistic and lacking power compared with monolithic Hollywood. It also tended toward left-wing politics. As a result, it was the Hollywood filmmakers who got the big Armed Forces projects and made some of the most valuable and lasting of the wartime documentaries. The American documentary veterans, for the most part, worked on smaller-scale projects for the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs and the Office of War Information. These were closer to a continuation of the peacetime documentary, albeit with different themes, than were other American wartime documentaries.

The following is a comparison of wartime nonfiction films produced in the United States, Canada and Britain. Since the training films were generally alike, the comparison is confined to the indoctrination films, records of battle, and social documentary.

As one might expect, the greatest differences among documentaries of the three nations are evident in their **indoctrination films**. In Britain the most important of these took the form of poetic, sometimes experimental shorts and semidocumentary features. One noteworthy characteristic of all these British films is the lack of attention given to the violence and destructiveness of war, even less to vilification and hatred of the enemy. Instead, two themes are repeated, subtly and insistently. One is that Britain will survive – or, as put in the final words of ‘The British Grenadier’ (aka ‘Rule Britannia’), which accompanies the conclusion of *Listen to Britain*, ‘England never, never will be slave’. The other is that the British are all in this together; everyone is doing his or her job. The reason for the first of these two emphases is clear enough. Britain was facing German military might massed across a narrow Channel, and destruction rained down nightly from the skies. Survival was a matter

of real and immediate general and personal concern. The second relates to class divisions persisting in England. Many of the working class had come to feel that their sacrifices in WWI had benefited the already privileged more than themselves. This time everyone is shown working with everyone else for everyone's post-war world.

Canadian indoctrination films took the form of the two 'March-of-Time'-like monthly theatrical shorts, 'Canada Carries On' and 'The World in Action.' These offer information about and interpretation of aspects of the world at war, showing their meaning for Canadians and Canada's relationship to them. There are two emphases here as well: one is that Canadians are doing their part; the other is that Canada is an important part of the world. The divisive issue of differences between French-speaking Canada (which did not fully support the war effort) and English-speaking Canada (which did) was avoided. Canadians are Canadians are Canadians in these films, whatever their ethnic backgrounds.

In the United States the main form of indoctrination films was the large historical compilation (short feature in length). The 'Why We Fight' series was the centrepiece. The emphases in them are, first, that our enemies (Germany, Japan, Italy) are unethical, sometimes even inhuman. Audiences today are shocked by the racism, chauvinism and incitement to hatred evident, but it was the accepted norm for that time. Second, that it is in America's interest to join the allies in helping destroy these enemies; if we don't, eventually they will invade and conquer us. This was a very real fear for many Americans.

British **records of battle** were mainly the large-scale feature-length 'victory series,' which chronicled successfully completed campaigns. The series began with *Desert Victory* (North Africa) and concluded with *The True Glory* (Europe).

Canadians made few 'shot and shell' films, as Grierson called the accounts of combat. Strategy rather than tactics was the principal concern – the goals and progress of the war, the general problems which had to be resolved. Canadian films about warfare were mostly informational and analytical rather than descriptive and emotional; little battle was shown.

The Americans made a large number of battle films and became especially accomplished at this kind of documentary. They are, of course, full of violence and the attitudes expressed are jingoistic and frequently racist. The US was

more distant from the war than were the British; more people were involved in it than were the Canadians (where a draft was never adopted). So there was felt to be a need for Americans to report back to Americans what war was really like.

Finally, there were continuations of the **social documentary**. British wartime documentaries frequently contain quite explicit references to what will be needed in the peace ahead, sometimes from what would seem a socialist point of view. The work of Paul Rotha in England is noteworthy here, especially *World of Plenty*, about international food distribution, and *Land of Promise*, about post-war housing.

The Canadian films are exceptional in their selection of subjects, having to do with peacetime needs and aspirations as well as with the wartime situation. Grierson said that everything that was built at the NFB in wartime was built for peacetime as well.

The American wartime documentaries continued peacetime subjects and themes only for special reasons. Those films produced for the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs were directed at improving US relations with Latin American countries, and those for the Office of War Information were designed to present a favourable picture of American ways of life to neutral peoples and those who had been freed from occupation by the Axis powers. Admittedly what was shown was idealized, but the CIAA and OWI films reflect how a lot of Americans like to think about themselves. These films were made not only to counteract enemy propaganda, but also the overblown pictures of American life offered by Hollywood movies, with their gangsters and millionaires, materialism and glamour.

By the end of the war, documentary in Britain, Canada and the United States had reached a pinnacle. More money was being invested in documentary production, more personnel were making more documentary films than ever before. Vastly larger audiences were seeing documentaries and related types of realist and educational films in theatres and in greatly increased nontheatrical showings.

Chapter Related Films: Britain

1940

London Can Take It (Harry Watt and Humphrey Jennings)

They Also Serve (Ruby Grierson)

1941

Merchant Seamen (J. B. Holmes)

Target for Tonight (Watt)

1942

Coastal Command (Holmes)

The Harvest Shall Come (Max Anderson)

Listen to Britain (Jennings)

1943

Desert Victory (Roy Boulting)

Fires Were Started (Jennings)

The Silent Village (Jennings)

World of Plenty (Paul Rotha)

1944

Children of the City (Budge Cooper)

Tunisian Victory (Boulting and Frank Capra)

Western Approaches (Pat Jackson)

1945

Burma Victory (Boulting)

A Diary for Timothy (Jennings)

The True Glory (Carol Reed and Garson Kanin)

Chapter Related Books: Britain

Aldgate, Anthony and Jeffrey Richards, *Britain Can Take It: The British Cinema in the Second World War*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986.

Aitken, Ian, ed., *The Documentary Film Movement: An Anthology*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998.

Arts Enquiry, The, *The Factual Film*. London: Oxford University Press, 1947.

Chapman, James, *The British at War: Cinema, State and Propaganda, 1939–1945*. London: I. B. Tauris, 1998.

Coultass, Clive, *Images of Battle: British Film and the Second World War*. London: Associated University Presses, 1988.

Hardy, Forsyth, 'The British Documentary Film', *Twenty Years of British Film 1925–1945*, eds Michael Balcon and others. London: Falcon, 1947, pp. 45–80.

Hodgkinson, Anthony W. and Rodney E. Sheratsky, *Humphrey Jennings: More than a Maker of Films*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1982.

- Jennings, Mary-Lou, ed., *Humphrey Jennings: Film-Maker/Painter/Poet*. London: British Film Institute, 1982.
- Lovell, Alan and Jim Hillier, *Studies in Documentary*. New York: Viking, 1972.
- Manvell, Roger, *Films and the Second World War*. New York: Dell, 1974.
- Powell, Dilys, *Films Since 1939*. London: Longmans, Green, 1947.
- Rotha, Paul with Eric Knight, *World of Plenty: The Book of the Film*. London: Nicholson and Watson, 1945.
- Sussex, Elizabeth, *The Rise and Fall of British Documentary: The Story of the Film Movement Founded by John Grierson*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975.
- Swann, Paul, *The British Documentary Film Movement, 1926–1946*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Taylor, Philip M., ed., *Britain and the Cinema in the Second World War*. New York: St Martin's Press, 1988.
- Thorpe, Frances and Nicholas Pronay, *British Official Films in the Second World War: A Descriptive Catalogue*. Oxford: Clio, 1980.
- Vaughan, Dai, *Portrait of an Invisible Man: The Working Life of Stewart McAllister, Film Editor*. London: British Film Institute, 1983.
- Watt, Harry, *Don't Look at the Camera*. London: Paul Elek, 1974.
- Winston, Brian, *Fires Were Started*. London: British Film Institute, 2000.

Chapter Related Films: Canada

1939

The Case of Charlie Gordon (Stuart Legg)

1940

Atlantic Patrol ('Canada Carries On' series, Legg)

Hot Ice (Irving Jacoby)

Letter from Camp Bordon (CCO, Raymond Spottiswoode)

1941

Canadian Landscape (F. R. Crawley)

Churchill's Island (CCO, Legg)

Peoples of Canada (CCO, Gordon Sparling)

Strategy of Metals (CCO, Stanley Hawes)

Warclouds in the Pacific (CCO, Legg)

1942

Action Stations! (Joris Ivens)

Food – Weapon of Conquest ('The World in Action' series, Legg)

Geopolitik – Hitler's Plan for Empire (WIA, Legg)

13th Platoon (Julian Roffman)

West Wind (Crawley)

1943

High Over the Borders (Jacoby)

The War for Men's Minds (WIA, Legg)

1944

Look to the North (James Beveridge)

When Asia Speaks (WIA, Legg)

Zero Hour – The Story of the Invasion (CCO, Legg)

1945

Food – Secret of the Peace (WIA, Legg)

Listen to the Prairies (Gudrun Bjerring [Parker])

Maps in Action (Evelyn Lambart)

Music in the Wind (Jean Palardy)

Now – The Peace (WIA, Legg)

Chapter Related Books: Canada

Backhouse, Charles, *Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau 1917–1941*. Ottawa: Canadian Film Institute, 1974.

Beattie, Eleanor, *A Handbook of Canadian Film*. Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1973.

Beveridge, James, *John Grierson: Film Master*. New York: Macmillan, 1978.

Ellis, Jack C., *John Grierson: A Guide to References and Resources*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1986.

Ellis, Jack C., *John Grierson: Life, Contributions, Influence*. Carbondale: University of Southern Illinois Press, 2000.

Evans, Gary, *John Grierson and the National Film Board: The Politics of Wartime Propaganda*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984.

Feldman, Seth and Joyce Nelson, (eds), *Canadian Film Reader*. Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1977.

Grierson Project, McGill University, The John, *John Grierson and the NFB*. Toronto: ECW Press, 1984

Hardy, Forsyth, *John Grierson: A Documentary Biography*. London: Faber and Faber, 1979.

James, C. Rodney, *Film as a National Art: NFB of Canada and the Film Board Idea*. New York: Arno Press, 1977.

Jones, D. B., *Movies and Memoranda: An Interpretive History of the National Film Board of Canada*. Ottawa: Canadian Film Institute and Deneau Publishers, 1981.

Manvell, Roger, *Film and the Second World War*. New York: Dell, 1974.

McKay, Marjorie, *History of the National Film Board of Canada*. Montreal: National Film Board, 1964.

Nelson, Joyce, *The Colonized Eye: Rethinking the Grierson Legend*. Toronto: Between the Lines, 1988.

Chapter Related Films: United States

1943

- The Autobiography of a Jeep* (Irving Lerner)
The Battle of Britain ('Why We Fight' series, Anthony Veiller)
The Battle of Midway (John Ford)
Divide and Conquer ('Why We Fight' series, Frank Capra and Anatole Litvak)
High Plain (Jules Bucher)
The Nazis Strike ('Why We Fight' series, Capra and Litvak)
Prelude to War ('Why We Fight' series, Capra)
Report from the Aleutians (John Huston)
World at War (Samuel Spewack)

1944

- Attack! The Battle for New Britain* (War Department)
The Battle of China ('Why We Fight' series, Capra)
The Battle of Russia ('Why We Fight' series, Litvak)
The Bridge (Willard Van Dyke and Ben Maddow)
The Fighting Lady (Edward Steichen)
Hymn of the Nations (Alexander Hammid)
Memphis Belle (William Wyler)
The Negro Soldier (Capra and Stuart Heisler)
A Salute to France (Jean Renoir and Garson Kanin)
Steel Town (Van Dyke)
The Town (Josef von Sternberg)
Valley of the Tennessee (Hammid)
With the Marines at Tarawa (Marine Corps)

1945

- El Agente Agronomo* (The County Agent, Julien Bryan)
The Battle of San Pietro (Huston)
A Better Tomorrow (Hammid)
Capital Story (Henwar Rodakiewicz)
The Cummington Story (Helen Grayson and Larry Madison)
Fury in the Pacific (Army, Navy, and Marine Corps)
The Library of Congress (Hammid)
Thunderbolt (Wyler)
To the Shores of Iwo Jima (Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard)
Tuesday in November (John Houseman)
War Comes to America ('Why We Fight' series, Litvak)
The Window Cleaner (Bucher)

1946

- Let There Be Light* (Huston)

Chapter Related Books: United States

- Bohn, Thomas William, *An Historical and Descriptive Analysis of the 'Why We Fight' Series*. New York: Arno, 1977.
- Capra, Frank, 'Part III, The Great Struggle', *The Name Above the Title*. New York: Macmillan, 1971, pp. 325–67.
- Culbert, David, ed., *Film and Propaganda in America: A Documentary History*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1990.
- Hovland, Carl I., Arthur A. Lumsdaine and Fred D. Sheffield, *Experiments on Mass Communication*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1949. Vol. 3 of *Studies in Social Psychology in World War II*.
- Look, ed., *Movie Lot to Beachhead*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran, 1945.
- MacCann, Richard Dyer, *The People's Films: A Political History of US Government Motion Pictures*. New York: Hastings House, 1973.
- Manvell, Roger, *Films and the Second World War*. New York: Dell, 1976.
- Shale, Richard, *Donald Duck Joins Up: The Disney Studio During World War II*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1982.
- Short, K. R. M., ed., *Film and Radio Propaganda in World War II*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1983.

8

Post-War Documentary, 1945–1961

The challenges of WWII brought documentary and fiction filmmakers closer together. Post-war, documentary in some ways drew closer to the fiction film than it had previously. One extreme example is *Benjy* (1951), a short produced for the Orthopaedic Foundation of Los Angeles, with the cooperation of Paramount Pictures, directed by Fred Zinnemann and narrated by Henry Fonda. Though it used acted performances, studio lighting and an opulent score to tell an authentic story of a crippled boy, it received the Academy Award for Best Documentary Short. A British 38-minute short, produced for the Central Office of Information (successor to the Ministry of Information, and still operating), *David* (1951) by Paul Dickson, used a full range of fictional techniques. The film lyrically describes the philosophy of the caretaker of a school in Wales, D. R. (David Rees) Griffiths, who is also a respected poet and brother of a powerful South Wales Miners Federation president. *David* brought Griffiths' importance as a poet and a role model to national attention. In the film he plays himself, thinly veiled, as 'Dafydd Rhys' and the film reflect much of his own story. Stylistically romanticized, the film defines the Welsh yin and yang of poetry and coal mining in a believable way.

In the United States, three of the biggest documentaries of the immediate post-war years were clearly nonfiction and narrative in structure. Using narrative obviously does not disqualify a film from being a documentary; it

is one of many documentary tools. Robert Flaherty's *Louisiana Story* (1948) is about a Cajun family of father, mother, and a young son who paddles his pirogue through the bayous with his pet raccoon. An oil drilling rig enters this primeval wilderness to tap the riches beneath its surface. Shell Oil is the film's sponsor. The Flahertys had spent most of the previous two years touring oil rigs throughout the Southern US. In this search to find the perfect location, the Flaherty method continued, with Frances shooting hundreds of stills. Once again their enterprise was funded by a commercial company. In the film, two worlds come together, natural and technological, and a tentative affection develops between the boy and the drillers. As the title plainly says, this is a story. This disarms concerns about ethnographic accuracy, and reflects the then generally accepted assumption that drilling for oil was good for all. The cinematography, by the young Richard Leacock and Flaherty, is some of the most gorgeous ever created in documentary

The Quiet One (1949) was made initially as a nontheatrical promotional film for the Wiltwyck School in upper New York state. It was scripted and edited by Helen Levitt, Janice Loeb and Sidney Meyers. Levitt, a renowned still photographer, was one of the film's cinematographers. The narration was written by James Agee and is read by actor Gary Merrill. This school offered a home and rehabilitation to emotionally disturbed adolescent boys, most of them African-American, from the streets of Harlem. The film is about one such case, that of 'Donald', his painful past, the nature of his treatment, and the hopes for his recovery. *The Quiet One* was blown up from 16mm to 35mm and played with some success among art theatres in large cities. It was also widely shown nontheatrically. Oddly, as well as an 1948 Oscar nomination for Best Documentary, the film was nominated for Best Story and Screenplay in 1949, along with Federico Fellini for *Paisan*. These contradictory factoids are worth noting because they demonstrate not only the blurred line between documentary and fiction, but also the Academy's ongoing fluxuations in its documentary category.

All My Babies (1952) was an instructional film sponsored by the Georgia State Department of Health to demonstrate to midwives correct sanitary procedures to use in their deliveries. It was scripted and directed by George



Fig 41 *Images from All My Babies, George Stoney*

Stoney, himself a white southerner, who became sympathetically involved with the rural black people the film is about. Though it is a medical film and contains all the technical information required – some 118 points – it developed a length, a scope, and an emotional intensity that lift it out of the realm of the purely educational. Its protagonist, Miss Mary (Mary Francis Hill Coley), is not only a consummate midwife, she is a magnificent person commanding affection and respect. The ‘Aunt Jemima’ stereotype she might represent is exploded before our eyes. At first the official sponsors did not quite know what to make of the film; they were impressed (and surprised) when it was selected for showing at the Edinburgh International Film Festival. Because Miss Mary’s skill in delivering babies was carefully recorded, the film was long afterwards shown in medical schools. The warm and wonderful feelings it contains – for birth, for people, for life – surely did the student doctors no harm. In 2007 Stoney returned to Georgia to record a ‘reunion’ in which over 150 people who had been delivered by Mrs Coley participated.

Efforts to hang onto the occasion provided by World War II to have documentary films playing in the theatres waned in the early fifties. The war years had marked a high point of documentary achievement. More filmmakers had made more nonfiction films for larger audiences than ever before. Given this vastly increased activity, with films being used in all sorts of new ways, it was assumed by some that the trend would continue in the post-war years. Instead, the documentary took different paths.

Personnel and Leadership

In the US during the war, not only had fiction film directors (among them John Huston, Anatole Litvak, William Wyler, Garson Kanin) been responsible for most of the major wartime documentaries, they had also been in positions of administrative leadership (Frank Capra and John Ford). When the war ended, these men returned to Hollywood. Some of them tended to make fiction features more closely related to social problems and/or more realistic in style, perhaps as a result of their wartime experience. Ford's *They Were Expendable* (1945), Wyler's *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946), Huston's *The Treasure of Sierra Madre* (1948) and Litvak's *The Snakepit* (1949) could be cited. But neither they nor their films were any longer directly connected to documentary.

In Canada the situation was different. The NFB, which had almost a monopoly on Canadian production, was not making fiction features, but had other difficulties. Canadian documentary was profoundly affected by Grierson's resignation from the Board and departure from Canada at the end of the war. The number of NFB personnel was drastically reduced from the wartime high. As a result of this curtailment, some Canadian filmmakers went into other fields; others moved to other countries. Some observers charged that the Board was unjustifiably costly and extravagant, that it competed with private enterprise, that it harboured subversives, and that there was not need for it in peacetime.

One development in the immediate post-war years was that more people wanted to make documentaries. Most post-war documentary-makers were

of a new generation. Many were young men who had received their training in filmmaking as a result of military service. The wartime recruits had been thoroughly trained technically, but ideologically emphasis was on a universal desire to defeat the enemy. Many lacked a common core of values and aspirations for peacetime filmmaking of the sort that had existed in Britain, Canada and the US in the 1930s and 1940s. Since the peacetime demand for films was much less great than it had been in wartime, competition for opportunities to make films led filmmakers to offer their services cheaply and with perhaps lowered professional standards.

Another, more complicated difficulty surfaced in the post-war years. Partly because of lessons learned during the war, a gap between the artist-filmmaker and the audio-visual educator widened. Elaborate and sophisticated social-scientific testing of the effects of films on learning had been done on an unprecedentedly large scale during the war. The results of this testing – for instance, that reported by Hovland, Lumsdaine and Sheffield in *Experiments on Mass Communication* – seemed to define and limit what films could be expected to do in relation to audiences. They seemed successful in teaching troops to assemble a pontoon bridge or clean and maintain the breech of a coastal gun – the so-called nuts and bolts films. Films used to teach desired attitudes, however – the so-called orientation films – seemed much less certain in their effect. For all its brilliance, *The Battle of Britain*, or the ‘Why We Fight’ series, did not appear to do much to move American servicemen towards a greater sympathy and appreciation for their British ally. In the post-war years, while the 16mm nontheatrical field expanded, with educational and industrial applications drawn from the inspiration and models provided by wartime use of documentary, such ‘attitude-oriented’ films languished. Some filmmakers moved further away from traditional documentary toward the experimental avant-garde.

The power of documentary and its unique ability to create social change is found in its fusion of social purpose with artistic form. It is worth remembering that the young tyros of British documentary had been well educated in the liberal arts before Grierson drilled them in his social philosophy. After the war in the United States and Britain, the social scientists and the technicians were predominant. Makers of classroom films usually worked from a formula:

tell the audience what you are going to tell them; tell them; tell them what you have just told them. It left little room for imagination, wit, or beauty. Makers of industrial films offered gorgeous compositions and perfect exposures, and left it to the sponsor to determine what would be said. Often neither the educational nor the industrial filmmaker was motivated to make emotionally or intellectually stimulating films. Documentary began to get a 'bad name' as something boring that had to be endured.

A successful theatrical documentary of this period was *The Sea Around Us* (1953). When Irwin Allen decided to make a film version of Rachel Carson's best-selling book of the same name, it must have seemed a natural money-maker, and a great way to jump-start the career of a Hollywood film producer. The book had, at that time, been on the best-seller list for more than seventy weeks, and Allen was building a filmmaking career in Hollywood, having only a couple of associate producer credits to his name. The film of *The Sea Around Us* went on to a healthy theatrical life as a second-billed title for its studio, RKO, and later became a staple of the 16mm educational market. According to studio press releases, Allen's original plan to shoot the film from scratch was untenable to RKO executives, who estimated the cost of such a production to be over \$4 million. In response, he hit upon the seemingly simple idea to compile a film based on existing scientific research footage. By contacting over 2000 museums, scientific institutes, universities, individuals and the like, Allen was able to come up with over 300 hours of footage, which he and editors then cut to sixty-one minutes. He paid Carson \$25,000 and paid no one for the filmed material, convincing the original makers that the prestige of being credited on the film version of *The Sea Around Us* was compensation enough.

Neither the book nor the film contains a storyline. Rather, episodes that describe the origin of the earth, the lives of various undersea creatures, the jobs done by fisherman and others who work with marine life, along with scientific explorations are presented in episodic style. The film links these episodes, which were originally shot mostly in 16mm and in a range of colour film processes, through special effects sequences designed by Linwood Dunn, then the resident wizard of optical effects at RKO. It features the booming voices of two 'Voice of God' (literally) narrators who explain what is going on onscreen.

The Sea Around Us was made some time before the films of Jacques Cousteau were seen widely, and its Technicolor wonders of the deep were revelatory to most of the public. It is also in many ways dated in its approach to the subject. The narration, written by Allen, continually refers to the 'limitless bounty' of the sea, as it celebrates the activities of salmon fishermen and the dragging nets of crab fisherman. In an astonishing sequence, the bloody harpooning of a whale from a small boat is captured closeup; a breathless drama unfolds as the whale is then attacked by other, killer whales, and the crew must respond so that 'all can share' in the catch. Much of this would be humorous, if we did not now understand the ecological peril that our whales and our oceans face today. Most egregiously, *The Sea Around Us* insists, like the later *March of the Penguins* (2005), on anthropomorphizing the marine life. By setting the sequences up in cute stories, the narration belittles the dignity carried in the images. All of this human-centric celebration of life is then creepily undone in an ending that brings back the Voice of God in a doomsday warning about the melting of the polar icecaps.

One long-lasting and important result of the influx of World War II veterans was the establishment and strengthening of college and university film programmes. Men who had been trained in filmmaking took advantage of the GI Bill and enrolled in schools across the US. It did not take long for their skills to be recognized by university administrations, and they were soon making educational films for science departments, etc. and shooting football games, thus creating classroom media and play-by-play study films. Soon they were training other interested students as assistants. Gradually formal film classes evolved. At places like USC where film schools previously existed, the new teachers modified curricula. At others, new departments were added. A new generation of young people began to be exposed to filmmaking and film-watching within university settings. Film societies began to become part of campus life, bringing the first taste of foreign and experimental films to these audiences. Some of these film students became the core of the generation who created important documentaries in the 1960s and 70s. As we shall see in chapters 13 and 14, it was they who carried on the social activist documentary tradition. Notable educators in the field who followed the path from armed service to college teacher included Bob Wagner at Ohio State, Jack C. Ellis at

Northwestern University and Herb Farmer and Dan Wigand at the University of Southern California.

The post-war period saw the end of British documentary as a Griersonian movement, although the type of structure he had developed continued. Crown Film Unit – successor to the Empire Marketing Board (1930–1933) and the General Post Office Film Unit (1933–1940) – was terminated in 1952. The grounds were that it cost too much, and that if films were needed by the government they could be made by private firms. No tradition of film training at university level developed in immediate post-war Britain as it did in the US.

However, in Britain another generation became active participants in documentary-making under the tutelage of Grierson veterans such as Arthur Elton and Edgar Anstey. Like their counterparts in the US, they made thousands of sponsored films, some good, some bad. For the most part, many of those filmmakers who worked in this field in both nations remain anonymous.

In Britain the Shell Film Unit was the most highly regarded documentary unit based within a private corporation. It was also especially long-lived, surviving many changes in distribution and technology – from 35mm film to 16mm to video. The combination of quality and subtlety evident in Shell's best films exemplifies a form of sponsored filmmaking, apparently more enlightened – or perhaps more insidious? – than direct advertising. From the start, it was designed to have a cumulative, but subtle, impact on the general public. Often released in theatres as well as screened nontheatrically, the films frequently avoided direct reference to the company or its products and services, focusing instead on processes and places. This methodology continues today; for example in 2011 General Electric, through its subsidiary CBS, announced the production of a series of short documentaries on the subject of 'innovation' to be made by such well-known filmmakers as Steve James, Barbara Kopple, Alex Gibney, Morgan Spurlock and Jessica Yu. Innovation is a buzz word for promoting GE.

In the US, what collective documentary leadership had existed on the political left or within the New Deal administration of Franklin Roosevelt ended as war broke out. After the war Pare Lorentz, head of the short-lived

US Film Service, lapsed into semi-retirement. Others were making industrially sponsored films. Willard Van Dyke, for example, in *American Frontier* (1953), produced for the American Petroleum Institute, retained some of the themes and style of his earlier work, but a prevailing blandness replaced the originality and conviction of *The City* and *Valley Town*.

Sponsorship

The established institutional sources that have always supported documentary are government, industry, foundations and associations. During WWII, governments were virtually the sole source of funding. The wartime Ministry of Information of the British government metamorphosed into the peacetime Central Office of Information, but the Labour government failed to back documentary-making. This profoundly dampened the spirits of the documentary people, most of whom were on the political left and Labour supporters. Second, the post-war years in Britain were ones of rigorous austerity; funds were lacking for many forms of government activity and film production could scarcely be regarded as essential.

In the US, the Office of War Information was eliminated altogether and sustained government support for filmmaking existed only in the Department of Agriculture (with a long and honourable record of using films to communicate with farmers through the county agents scattered around the country), the Armed Forces (which, of course, had available an enormous stockpile of films), and the International Motion Picture Division of the Department of State (IMPD).

USIA Films

In 1953 IMPS was absorbed into the new United States Information Agency (USIA), created to consolidate overseas information activities of the federal government into one programme. The first head of USIA was legendary broadcaster Edward R. Murrow, personally selected by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. IMPS operated in 135 offices in over fifty countries, through which 300 to 500 film titles eventually became available. It was said that

these reached approximately 500 million people annually. The USIA was charged with disseminating ideas about American freedoms and the value of democracy to audiences abroad. In addition to its film service it operated 'The Voice of America' radio network. The USIA was officially disbanded in 1999, although Voice of America continues to operate. By law, USIA-produced films could not be screened publicly in the US. This restriction, intended to prevent the federal government from distributing propaganda to its own citizens, meant that Americans could not view the films at all. The law remained in effect until 1990, at which time the films became available twelve years after their production. This nondisclosure of the films led many to believe that they were strident propaganda about 'the American Way' and offered only the view of the federal government. This was true of many, but by no means all of the films, and they remain a little-studied, widely misunderstood sliver of documentary history.



Fig 42 Walter de Hoog made the compilation film. *The Wall*, 1962 about the human toll of the Berlin wall as part of the Marshall Plan

Among the best USIA films is *The Wall* (1962) by Walter de Hoog. Clearly an anti-Communist propaganda film, *The Wall* is an emotional, factual account of the building of the Berlin wall and its effect on citizens on both sides. It is composed entirely of news footage, all shot from the Allied side, masterfully edited together by de Hoog. He was affiliated with Fox Movietone news and had easy access to the material. *The Wall* contains some of the most memorable images of Germany in this era: men, women, children, scrambling through barbed-wire fences that were the first stages of the wall; people jumping from second-storey windows in the East, caught by sympathizers on the West; families torn apart and waving to each other in code from one side to the other; and terrifying images of those shot and killed by German guards during escape attempts, are accompanied by a first-person narration spoken as if from the collective ‘we’ of West Berlin citizens. The overall effect of this short (ten-minute) compilation film is powerful. It crafted an inspirational message to West Berliners who were then living under the Communist blockade, demonstrated to the world the lengths people were willing to go to escape Communism, and remains one of the US government’s most artful and informative documentaries. It was said to be such a favourite of Attorney General Robert Kennedy that he secretly showed it to visiting Soviet artists.

Launched by US Secretary of State George C. Marshall, the ‘Marshall Plan’ began in April 1948 when the US Congress created the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA), which transferred over \$13 billion of material and technical assistance to Europe – the equivalent today of around \$90 billion US dollars. Europe desperately needed to be rebuilt after the disasters of WWII. In addition to supplies and technical assistance, the Marshall Plan housed an information programme whose mandate was to present a convincing picture of democratic values and vision of a future in which Europeans could aspire to prosperity, American-style. The plan included cooperative filmmaking between American makers and those living in war-ravaged Europe. The men who ran the Marshall Plan Motion Picture Section strongly believed in the potential of film to effect social change, and they also believed in representing stories from the points of view of the filmmakers living in Europe. German-born Lothar Wolff, who was picked to set up the film division, had been the long-time chief film editor at “The March of Time.” Stuart Schulberg

was recruited from American occupational government in Berlin, where, as head of the Documentary Film Unit of the Information Services Division, he had produced the feature-length official record of the Nuremberg Nazi war trials. He became the second person to head the Marshall Plan unit. During the course of its seven-year existence it produced at least twenty-five films in several countries that dealt with a range of social and personal issues affecting Europe's concerns. The best known of these films is *Nuremberg* (1948).

The famed Nuremberg war crimes trials accused a small group of Nazis of atrocities committed against humanity during WWII. In 1946 twelve were sentenced to death, three to life imprisonment and four to between ten and twenty years in prison. Three defendants were acquitted, one committed suicide and one was too frail to stand trial. An official documentary about the trials was made by the US government. Pare Lorentz, who was then chief of Film/Theatre/Music for the US War Department's Civil Affairs Division, commissioned a treatment from Stuart Schulberg, who was awarded a contract by the US Department of War to write and produce *Nuremberg*. The result, completed in 1948, was a compilation documentary of trial footage and brutal images of Nazi horrors, including the first publicly shown scenes of people being gassed in the death camps. Some of this footage came from Yelizaveta Svilova's *Nazi Atrocities* (1945); Svilova also shot her own film about the Nuremberg trials, *Peoples' Trial* (1946). But while *Nuremberg* became mandatory viewing for the occupied German population, the film was not screened in theatres in the US. The public, outside of Germany, knew little or nothing of its existence.

The purpose of *Nuremberg* was to convince the German population that the blame for post-war decimation, poverty and national despair lay not with the Allies but with the deranged regime that had led their nation, and by extension themselves. The filmmakers also had larger goals. The Nuremberg trials presented a startling example of post-war global cooperation, with US Supreme Court Justice Robert H. Jackson serving as lead prosecutor alongside a team of British, French and Soviet colleagues. And as a giant media spectacle of judgment, the trials became the controversial model for the war crimes trials that continue today. The film was restored by Sandra Schulberg (Stuart's daughter) and Josh Waletzky and was released in a seventy-eight-minute version in 2010 as *Nuremberg: A Lesson for Today*.

Canada

Though the size of the National Film Board of Canada was cut, it survived and adjusted to the post-war needs of government and citizens. Government financial support for it would gradually increase. By the mid-fifties it had moved into new eminence with shorts that won awards for documentary, live action, and animation at major international festivals.

In Canada, production of sponsored films outside the Film Board increased, led by Crawley Films, which had begun with contracts from the Board during the war. Long-lived and often-ignored Canadian independent production company, Crawley Films deserves to be singled out. Frank Radford ‘Budge’ Crawley was thoroughly Canadian. He began making amateur films in the 1930s, and progressed into short nonfiction industrial work. For a time he worked at NFB. When WWII came, his filmmaking skills were urgently needed to make training films, so, turning a room in their home into a studio, he and his wife Judith built a business making sponsored films. By 1958, Crawley Films had built a studio and made a thirteen-part CBC documentary television series, ‘The Saint Lawrence North’. Crawley later produced fiction features and the notable feature documentaries *Janis* (1974, about Janis Joplin) and *The Man Who Skied Down Everest* (1976), an adventure classic that won the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature. This theatrically released film followed Japanese poet and world-champion skier, Yuichiro Miura as he and his team made the challenging climb up Mount Everest, carrying a 35mm Panavision camera. During the ascent an icfall claimed the lives of six members of the team. The remainder continued on to within 350 meters of the summit, where Miura tested his dream, with the camera recording the feat in Cinemascope. Using oxygen and a parachute to slow his speed, Miura skied 7,000 feet over sheer ice and rocks. Caught by gusting winds, he hit a boulder and fell 1,320 feet, smashing to his death, a finale that has been called by some the most exciting six minutes of film ever shot.

As noted, in the US and UK industry became a big sponsor of films. In all three countries, however, businesses and industries were now justifying every bit of money spent on films in terms of increased sales and obvious

goodwill. There existed little industrial sponsorship of films in the general public interest in Canada, such as those sponsored by the oil and gas industries in Britain in the thirties. Flaherty's *Louisiana Story* is the most notable exception.

In Britain and in Canada, foundations and associations were less active sponsors of films than they were in the United States. And in the US the large foundations and national associations were soon limited in what they would spend their money on by growing pressure from the political right. This post-war right-wing reaction came to be known as 'McCarthyism'. Senator Joseph McCarthy (Republican, Wisconsin) headed congressional committees and used whatever other power he could muster to ferret out suspected Communists and Communist sympathizers wherever he saw them hiding. His work paralleled that of the House of Representatives Un-American Activities Committee, which was busy investigating Communist influence in the film and broadcasting industries. In its paranoia, McCarthy's investigations even attacked purported subversive influence in the Department of State and the Army. At the time of his death he was about to start on the large foundations, most notably the Ford Foundation, which were accused of sheltering 'reds' and radicals. As a result of this political climate, the foundations restricted their grants to existing and widely accepted institutions and activities. They did not sponsor films which might prove 'controversial' or might be made by filmmakers with a 'past' (involvement with organizations and causes on the left).

Subjects

It seems to be true that documentaries thrive on crisis and disaster, criticism and attack. Following the war the great documentary causes of the thirties (unemployment and rural poverty, conservation of land and water, housing and urban planning) and early forties (the fight against fascism) were no longer relevant.

Internationalism

The first years of peace saw a brief surge of international good intentions. The Axis powers (Germany, Italy, Japan) had been defeated by the Allies (British Empire, United States, Soviet Union, China). The United Nations was established to sustain and extend this victory, to try to make one world out of this war-torn globe. In this spirit, films were needed to interpret the meaning of the United Nations and its subsidiary organizations, and to show aspects of their services to the world at large. Also needed were films confronting particular post-war problems and the concerns of war-ravaged and underdeveloped nations.

The United Nations undertook some modest film production and distribution, making and circulating films for and about the UN and its related agencies. One of its films, *The Pale Horseman* (1946), written and produced by Irving Jacoby, was a grim and forceful survey of world devastation, famine, and the threat of pestilence. It took the stance that it was in US self-interest to combat this menace. In Britain there was a similar United Nations emphasis. As successor to his *World of Plenty* (1943), Paul Rotha made *The World Is Rich* (1947) for the Central Office of Information. Like the earlier film, it argues for more adequate international distribution of food by contrasting rich and poor nations.

Following the war, Britain used documentary to attempt to explain to its citizens (and the rest of the world) its changing conception of colonial stewardship. *Cyprus Is an Island* (1946, Ralph Keene) is a film with such a purpose. It is about deforestation and goatherds rather than the conflict between Greek and Turkish inhabitants that would erupt when Cyprus achieved independence in 1960. *Daybreak in Udi* (1949, Terry Bishop) concerns the progress of community education in Nigeria. It won an Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature.

In the world as a whole, the spirit of internationalism dwindled by 1948 with the outbreak of the cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union. The cold war subsequently changed political attitudes and military strategies throughout the world. Documentaries reflected this new paranoia.

Grierson's discovery that more seats existed outside the theatres than within them was a valuable one. Still, major documentary achievements had

previously reached large audiences in theatres – *Nanook of the North*, *Night Mail*, *The River*, for example. Now the nontheatrical 16mm field was the main means for documentary distribution/exhibition. Nontheatrical films, the business begun in the 1920s by Kodak, were mainly used on behalf of industry or education. Subjects dealt with for the first time, or with a new frequency, were the arts, mental health, public health, and race relations. Films about the arts and those that used the arts to deal with other subjects became widely popular. Experimental documentary hybrids also relied on this arts audience. Sometimes experimental films were shown as shorts in the ‘art theatres’ specializing in European or otherwise non-mainstream feature films, and new film societies developed during these years, often being the only places to see foreign language movies.

Some documentarians had been trained in or were especially sympathetic to the arts. Willard Van Dyke, veteran American documentarian who had been a student of Edward Weston’s, made a film about him entitled *The Photographer* (1948). Even Robert Flaherty shot material in 1947 for a study of *Guernica* and became involved in the promotion and distribution of *The Titan – Story of Michelangelo* (1950). The latter is a feature-length biography of Michelangelo using only contemporary architecture, interior settings and artworks as its visual material. Erica Anderson specialized in films about art. Her *Grandma Moses* (1950) received an Oscar nomination for Best Documentary Short, and she won an Academy Award for *Albert Schweitzer* (1957). Both films were made in collaboration with Jerome Hill. In Britain a similar interest in films about the arts was in evidence with documentaries such as Jack Howell’s *Dylan Thomas* (1962) shot in Wales and London. With a first-person narration spoken by Richard Burton, this is a complex portrait in which Burton sometimes seems to become Thomas and vice versa. It won the Best Documentary Short Oscar in 1963.

More akin in subject and style to earlier documentary forms were documentaries about mental health. A profound difference between them and earlier documentaries on similar subjects was that the mental health documentaries now dealt with people in relation to themselves – their individual, interior lives – rather than with their relationships to society and to social problems. *The Quiet One* (US, 1948, Sidney Meyers), discussed at the outset of this

chapter, is an example. If this film had been made in the 1930s, it might well have centred on the social, economic and political causes for the unhappy lives we see. Here, the Harlem ghetto and broken families serve as background for the disturbances in Donald's psyche.

Documentaries on matters of general public health became much more plentiful and effective than before. One film with which George Stoney was involved, *Feeling All Right* (1947), dealt with the detection and treatment of syphilis in a semidocumentary narrative form in Mississippi. Among the many noteworthy Stoney films about health problems is *Still Going Places* (1956, made for health professionals), about the care and treatment of the aged. The Museum of Modern Art recognized the importance of such films in a significant 1954 exhibition entitled 'The American Scene 1945-1953'. In addition to films by Stoney, it included sponsored works by Sidney Meyers, Irving Jacoby, Willard Van Dyke and others. In Great Britain, *The Undefeated* (1950, Paul Dickson) was about the therapy administered to permanently disabled World War II veterans.

Films about race relations were much in evidence in the US. This subject was dealt with using a number of styles and techniques in addition to documentary. In a rather bizarre theatrical short, *The House I Live In* (1945, produced by RKO Radio Pictures), Frank Sinatra sings the song of the title and speaks directly to the camera against anti-Semitism and racism. The song went on to become a classic Sinatra hit. A cluster of animated race-relations films began with the very popular *Brotherhood of Man* (1946), sponsored by the UAW-CIO. It was an early effort of United Productions of America (UPA), the talented group that broke away from the Disney Studio and went on to create Mr Magoo and Gerald McBoing Boing.

Norman McLaren, a filmmaker who worked with Grierson in England during the late 1930s, is best known as an animator extraordinaire. His work transcends boundaries and time, and some of his films are clearly animated political and experimental documents. McLaren's most famous film, *Neighbours* (1952) was made after McLaren joined NFBC in 1941, at the invitation of Grierson. *Neighbours* can be classified subject-wise with documentaries concerned with world harmony. A direct consequence of his experiences teaching in post-war China in 1949, it is a parable about two men

who fight over a flower. The film uses pixillation of two live men to make a very strong anti-war, anti-racism statement that still resonates worldwide.

Approaches and Techniques

As for their formal aspects, the post-war films were freer and more varied in their techniques than were the earlier documentaries. More nonactuality was employed – fictional and dramatic elements – and structurally they tended to be organized as narrative or drama. There was an increased use of actors and performance and more location sound. Sound recording was made easier by the introduction of magnetic tape, developed in WWII by the Germans. It made recording outside the studio much more practicable than it had been with the optical system, but it still demanded large recording equipment and was not truly synched to the visuals. The narrative structures and use of dialogue coincided and complimented the tendency of these post-war documentaries to centre more on individuals than had the films of the thirties. In the post-war years even large-scale problems were dealt with in terms of how they affected individuals. The not-so-subtle influence of Sigmund Freud's increasingly adopted theories was also reflected in such films.

Observations

In the years between the end of World War II and the beginning of a world blanketed (or perhaps smothered) by television, mainstream documentaries were mostly industrially sponsored or classroom films. The oil, coal and steel industries provided funding for films using the arresting visuals of brilliantly burning furnaces and sparks flying in forges. This may have been because they had more money, or because of more need for improved public relations. In either case, they sponsored some noteworthy films during these years.

Among US-made classroom films, increased ambition and improving artistry were in evidence occasionally. Two examples, about city planning, were *The Baltimore Plan* (1953) and *The Living City* (1953). Both were sponsored

by the Twentieth Century Fund, directed by John Barnes, and released by Encyclopedia Britannica Films. The latter was nominated for an Academy Award and was the first film shot by Haskell Wexler, who went on to become one of Hollywood's and documentary's renowned cinematographers. But such 'prestige pictures didn't pay the rent', as they said at Encyclopedia Britannica Films at the time, unlike those fitting more neatly into Kindergarten through Grade 12 curricula, so they remained exceptions.

National Film Board of Canada's Unit B, 1948–64

The National Film Board, too, was having to tailor its films to clearly identifiable informational and educational needs and nontheatrical distribution. But within that setting, in the late 1940s and early 1950s there developed an extraordinary array of creative talent identified as Unit B, which produced some brilliant and original work.

In 1948 the NFB was reorganized into four production units – A, B, C, D – reporting to an overall director of production. In 1951 Tom Daly, one of the earliest recruits to the Film Board, who had gained his experience working as Stuart Legg's assistant and researcher on 'The World in Action' series, was appointed executive producer of Unit B, charged with making sponsored, scientific, cultural and animated films. Eight Unit B films received Academy Award nominations, and some of its films remain documentary classics. Unit B ended in 1963 but its body of work remains as an extraordinary legacy and challenge for emulation.

Norman McLaren's *Neighbours* began Unit B's move into the spotlight, eventually reaching audiences worldwide, as did another animated film, *The Romance of Transportation in Canada* (1953). Curiously, this was a modest little (eleven-minute) documentary intended for classroom use. *The Romance of Transportation* broke out of the standard requirements of the educational film, however, sketching the history of Canadian transportation from snow shoes to jet planes with an appealing lightness and deftness, including spoofs of Hollywood cartoon clichés. Widely popular, it was nominated for an Oscar and won several international awards.

The Romance of Transportation in Canada brought together for the first time some of Unit B's key personnel – Colin Low (direction and animation),

Wolf Koenig and Robert Verrall (animation), Eldon Rathborn (music) and Tom Daly (production) – who would form the creative core of Unit B. In terms of live-action documentary, breakthrough films came the next year, including *Corral*, part of a ‘Faces of Canada’ series of short films. Directed by Colin Low, it was filmed on the Southwestern Alberta ranch where he had grown up. (Camera was by Koenig; music by Rathburn; editing and production by Daly.) The subject is a ranch hand working with a half-broken horse in a corral. There is a pairing of man and horse – a *pas de deux*, cutting back and forth between movements of man’s feet and horse’s front hoofs; hand-held moving camera in medium closeups predominates in the roping sequence. Finally the man mounts and rides off in long shot, horse and rider running out into the surrounding countryside with foothills in the background. Lyrical and wordless, the soundtrack consists solely of a guitar accompanying the images.

Among Unit B’s most celebrated productions was *City of Gold* (1957). *City of Gold* concerns the Klondike Gold Rush of 1898, recorded in contemporary still photographs and brief live-action sequences that frame the main story of Dawson City in the mid-1950s. On the Yukon River, not far from the Arctic Circle, this was the jumping-off point for the journey north and the climb over Chilikoot Pass to the gold fields so gloriously staged in Charlie Chaplin’s *The Gold Rush*. It was also the hometown of Pierre Berton, a well-known journalist, who wrote and read the narration, which is drawn from his remembered childhood in the 1920s.

The music used throughout is of an earlier time and place; it becomes part of the document. The intimate perspective of the narrator warms and gives life to the images. The immobile subjects seem so completely ‘real’ that we forget we are watching photos – we expect the people to move at any moment. To achieve this sense of liveness, a rostrum camera on an animation stand travels steadily and carefully over the photos as if it were actually at the scene. Direction is by Wolf Koenig and Colin Low. Transitions from the present-day live-action into the aged photos and out again are quite remarkable, especially in that they are almost imperceptible. For example, in the conclusion of the film viewers are brought back to present-day Dawson City by gradual degrees. First we are on photographs; then we are on a still-life scene in which we detect

a tiny particle of matter dangling in a cobweb; then we have a still landscape with off-camera voices of children at play; and finally we are in the midst of a baseball diamond with all the usual shouting accompanying the game. This is the first time in the film that location sound is introduced. It appropriately breaks the spell of reminiscence, and returns us to the mid-twentieth century. In the 1980s this style of filmmaking came to be exemplified in the films of Ken Burns (discussed in Chapter 14), who was admittedly influenced by *City of Gold*. The ‘Ken Burns Effect’ of i-movie fame owes as much to *City of Gold* as it does to Burns’ work.

The directorial pair Roman Kroiter and Colin Low did the strikingly different and equally original and inventive *Universe* (1960), again framed by live-action sequences. The film moves along an extraordinary probe

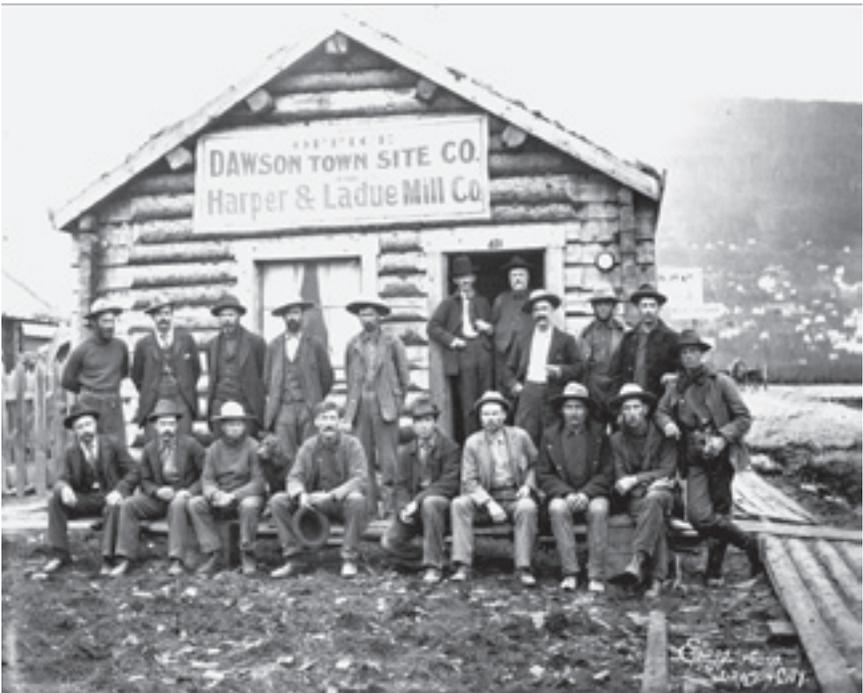


Fig 43 A rare example of mythmaking in Canadian documentary, *City of Gold* created a paradox of living people and dead objects in a way that inspired the future work of Ken Burns (Canada, 1957, Colin Low and Wolf Koenig). National Film Board of Canada

into the solar system, in which the filmic material consists largely of three-dimensional models of the moon and most of the planets. A second probe takes us beyond the solar system into our galaxy. A third and final probe asks the audience to imagine being able to 'move with the freedom of a god ... so that a million years pass in a second'. We would come to 'an endless sea of night' dotted with islands of stars – galaxies – so immense 'that they have been observed slipping through one another like phantoms'. The animation consists of astonishing 3D constructions that create incredible and scary movements. (During the production of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Stanley Kubrick bought several copies for his technicians to study.) The music is very dramatic and 'atmospheric', recalling Gustav Holst's *The Planets*. This film was one of the seeds which eventually germinated into large-format IMAX documentaries.

Paralleling these high-profile separate works was the 'Candid Eye' series of thirteen films of between twenty-four and twenty-eight minutes made for Canadian Broadcasting Corporation television, an early exploration of the possibilities of the *cinéma vérité* technique. The series began with *The Days Before Christmas* (1958), co-directed by Terence Macartney-Filgate, the first of many films in his distinguished career. *The Days Before Christmas* is both a city symphony of Montreal and a celebration of the holiday. Disparate images are cut together in a style not unlike Humphrey Jennings' in *Listen to Britain* or the experimental styles of city symphonies of the 1920s. Some of the sound is synchronous with the images, some not, but it is recorded on location and cleverly overlaid over non-synch footage. Montreal is presented as big, cosmopolitan, wintry: a melting pot, with cold, dirty winters; but also a sweet place where people live.

Another film of exceptional quality out of Unit B is markedly cynical. *Very Nice, Very Nice* (1961) is a seven-minute idiosyncratic work of one filmmaker, Arthur Lipsett, a member of the characteristically avant-garde Animation Unit. He made it solely from snippets of film and audio tape, out-takes culled from racks and bins in cutting rooms around the NFB. This cacophany of sights and sounds is perhaps intended to mimic and satirize the informational overload of modern (1960s) media life. Lipsett, who ultimately committed suicide, presents a bleak view of rampant commercialism and also seems preoccupied with bits of evidence suggesting that we may be mindlessly moving toward



Fig 44 *Very Nice, Very Nice* was a film montage, without commentary – a first film by its maker that was nominated for an Oscar (Canada, 1961, Arthur Lipsett). National Film Board of Canada

nuclear annihilation. *Very Nice, Very Nice* is also a key link for other avant-garde documentary filmmakers working in similar ways with ‘found’ material.

Chapter Related Films

1946

Cyprus Is an Island (UK, Ralph Keene)

The Pale Horseman (US, Irving Jacoby)

1947

First Steps (US, Leo Seltzer)

Journey into Medicine (US, Willard Van Dyke and Jacoby)

The World Is Rich (UK, Paul Rotha)

1948

Louisiana Story (US, Robert Flaherty)

Nuremberg (US German release only, Stuart Schulberg, Pare Lorentz)

The Photographer (US, Van Dyke)

1949*The Quiet One* (US, Sidney Meyers)*Waverley Steps* (UK, John Eldridge)**1950***The Titan – Story of Michelangelo* (Switzerland, Curt Oertel)**1951***Benjy* (US, Fred Zinnemann)*David* (UK, Paul Dickson)**1952***All My Babies* (US, George Stoney)*Neighbours* (Canada, Norman McLaren)**1953***American Frontier* (US, Van Dyke)*The Baltimore Plan* (US, John Barnes)*The Living City* (US, Barnes)*The Sea Around Us* (US, Irwin Allen)**1954***Corral* (Canada, Colin Low)**1957***City of Gold* (Canada, Wolf Koenig and Low)**1958***The Days Before Christmas* (Canada, Macartney-Filgate, Stanley Jackson, Koenig)**1960***Universe* (Canada, Kroitor and Low)**1961***Very Nice, Very Nice* (Canada, Arthur Lipsett)**1962***The Wall* (US, Walter de Hoag)

Chapter Related Books

Beattie, Eleanor, *A Handbook of Canadian Film*. Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1973.

Bischof, Gunter, ed., *Images of The Marshall Plan in Europe: Films, Photographs, Exhibits, Posters*. Wiesbaden, Germany: Verlag, 2009.

Evans, Gary, *In the National Interest: A Chronicle of the National Film Board of Canada from 1949 to 1989*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991.

Feldman, Seth and Joyce Nelson, (eds), *Canadian Film Reader*. Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1977.

Film Council of America, *Sixty Years of 16mm Film, 1923–1983*. Evanston, IL: Film Council of America, 1954.

Jones, D. B., *Movies and Memoranda: An Interpretive History of the National Film Board of Canada*. Ottawa: Canadian Film Institute and Deneau Publishers, 1981.

Russell, Patrick and James Piers Taylor: *Shadows of Progress: Documentary Film in Post-War Britain*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010.

Starr, Cecile, ed., *Ideas on Film: A Handbook for the 16mm. User*. New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1951.

Waldron, Gloria, *The Information Film: A Report of the Public Library Inquiry*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1949.

9

Documentary for Television, the 'Golden Years', 1951–71

A Technical Note

English-language documentary films began and have remained a regular part of theatrical exhibition. The earliest actualities, as well as films such as *The Battle of the Somme* and *Nanook of the North*, were all made with the big screen in mind. At the time of *Nanook* and before, almost the only way to see a documentary, or any film, was in a theatre. Since film stock for these theatrical showings had a base of cellulose nitrate, which was highly flammable, it had to be projected from booths specially constructed in theatres in conformance with fire ordinances. Exceptions, like the projection vans used by the Soviets, were few. Audiences associated film with theatres; there was no other option.

In 1923, partly at the urging of educators, Eastman Kodak Company made available a 16mm film stock with a cellulose acetate base. Because it was nonflammable (it was called 'safety stock'), and had a narrower width, the use of lighter projection equipment was possible. Portable 16mm projectors could be set up in schoolrooms, church basements, union halls – almost anywhere. This also opened up another market for sales of Kodak film and its projectors. Still, theatrical exhibition of documentaries remained dominant.

With 16mm films available for rental and purchase, the nontheatrical field encouraged by the Griersonian approach became a force in the late 1930s. World War II caused an explosion in the use of films as means of informing and educating. Following the war the nontheatrical field, with industrially sponsored and classroom films predominating, expanded enormously. But the expansion of the nontheatrical field did not at first work to the advantage of documentary. The earlier classic documentaries did not fit comfortably into the rather narrow requirements of industrial sales or formal education. Nor did documentaries have the access to theatres they had had before and during wartime.

As theatrical documentary was slipping into the background, losing financial support and audiences, as well as its earlier subject matters and purposes, a new channel for distribution and exhibition was opening up. Thanks to television, more documentaries and related types of public information programmes were shown to larger audiences than at any previous time in history. The technical quality of early television did not require the visual clarity of 35mm, and 16mm production became the norm for television documentaries.

Historical Background

Telecasting began on an experimental and very limited basis in Germany, Great Britain and the United States before World War II, but military requirements of wartime stopped further development. After the war, regularly scheduled consumer television broadcasting began in Great Britain, the United States and Canada. By 1946 the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) had a schedule in place. A Documentary Department was established in 1953, with veteran Paul Rotha heading it until 1955. The BBC's first major documentary series was *Special Inquiry*, which ran from 1952 to 1957. Norman Swallow was its producer. But as a quasi-governmental organization supported by a tax on television sets, the BBC did not attract anything like the audience that would develop when commercial broadcasting was permitted to operate in the UK in late 1955. The Independent Television Authority

(ITA, initially; later called Independent Television, ITV) had a regular lineup of documentary programmes produced by a number of outside commercial companies. For example, from Granada Television, one of the original of four ITV franchises, came the long-running (1963–1998) *World in Action*, a public affairs and documentary series, the title for which was borrowed from the wartime National Film Board of Canada. Thames Television was another ITV franchise that existed from 1968–1992. Thames produced the outstanding twenty-six-part documentary series about World War II, entitled *The World at War* (1969). Scottish Television produced John Grierson's weekly television programme devoted to documentary and experimental shorts, *This Wonderful World*, later changing its title to *John Grierson Presents* (1957–1968).

The situation in Canada was anomalous. Though the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), also a government-sponsored system, did not begin telecasting until 1952, most of Canada's population lived close enough to its southern border to receive US television earlier. Canada's bilingual culture was acknowledged by the CBC, with a French-language as well as an English-language network. The NFB continued to work more or less separately from CBC-TV, with little exchange between the two organizations.

Because American programming came to be the model for much of the world, most of this chapter focuses on the United States. 1946 was the year television was removed from the wartime freeze. In 1948 big-time TV was born. A network out of New York linked the major cities; the most popular shows were Milton Berle's *Texaco Star Theatre* and Ed Sullivan's *Toast of the Town*. By 1950, one hundred stations telecast to four million sets. In 1951 coaxial cable and microwave relay connected the country coast to coast. (Not altogether coincidentally, that was also the year 'The March of Time' ended.)

In the 1951–1952 season Edward R. Murrow's and Fred W. Friendly's *See It Now* (developed from their radio series *Hear It Now*) appeared on CBS. The 1952–1953 season also featured *I Love Lucy* and *Victory at Sea* (supervised by historian Henry Salomon, Jr, and edited by Isaac Kleinerman). *I Love Lucy*, a situation comedy about a married couple (starring a married couple) and the twenty-six half-hour films about US naval warfare in World War II (compiled from over six million feet of combat footage) are among the most successful and seminal television programmes ever shown. They are still televised today.

While dramatic and other entertainment programmes came from outside companies, production of documentaries and news was carried on primarily in-house by the networks and local stations themselves. Both the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) and the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) established units for that purpose, with personnel initially drawn from the ranks of radio and nontheatrical documentarians. American Broadcasting Company (ABC) documentary production was later and weaker, with a news emphasis. The main function of these units was the creation of special programmes, frequently non-sponsored, presented as prestige or public service features. At this time, commercial broadcasting took seriously its mandate to devote time to public service as mandated by Federal law.

In 1953 what is now the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) began as National Educational Television (NET). This noncommercial network, supported by funds from the federal government, initiated and distributed substantial quantities of documentaries and public affairs materials. Its budgets were smaller than those of the commercial networks, but it made up for this by purchasing independently produced documentaries and importing many significant programmes and series from abroad, principally from Britain. The number of documentaries shown on commercial and public television networks from the fifties into the early seventies was very large and the shows were considered highly prestigious. ABC, NBC and CBS produced 447 individual investigative reports (not necessarily full documentaries) in 1962 alone.

Documentary Series

See It Now was the first regularly scheduled US documentary series. This is not surprising, since Murrow was the most-trusted, strongest voice of truth in radio reports during WWII. The fact that millions had listened as he broadcast live from a rooftop during the London Blitz created an aura of security for audiences that translated from radio to television. A sort of news magazine of feature stories in *The March of Time* tradition, *See It Now* had a much quieter and more intimate tone than newsreels, suitable for the living

room, with Murrow as the on-screen host and commentator. At first *See It Now*, like 'The March of Time' and the present-day *60 Minutes*, presented several different stories in each half-hour programme. In 1953 that format changed to include only one story a week. Among the *See It Now* programmes best remembered are 'Christmas In Korea' (1953), made during the Korean War, the several programmes dealing with McCarthyism, including one in 1954 in which Senator McCarthy was given a follow-up programme for reply (consistent with an American broadcasting dictum called 'the fairness doctrine'), and a visit with nuclear physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer (1955). Like 'The March of Time', *See It Now* maintained consistent structural and stylistic characteristics in its format.

One programme, 'Argument in Indianapolis' (1953) presents opposing factions in that city when the American Civil Liberties Union, attempting to form a local chapter, is opposed by the American Legion post. One of the extraordinary things about this programme is its balance in handling a then controversial subject, no doubt necessary for it to be telecast. Depending on your sympathies, the Legion members become fascist monsters or upholders of true Americanism; the ACLU group, pleasant, sensitive intellectuals or dangerous radicals and subversives. The faces, speech and manner of the protagonists are caught more or less candidly, and this remarkable study offered diverse ideologies and personalities existing in uneasy relationship to each other.

In 1955 Alcoa (Aluminum Company of America) withdrew its sponsorship of *See It Now*. The show then changed from regularly scheduled weekly half-hours to hour-long programmes that appeared at intervals – 'specials' in effect. Media critic Gilbert Seldes quipped that it had become *See It Now and Then*. In 1958 *See It Now* was terminated, to be followed by *CBS Reports*.

CBS Reports developed its own excellence. Murrow's last programme for the series, 'Harvest of Shame' (1960) became one of the most celebrated. Examining the exploitation and hardships suffered by migrant agricultural workers, it was aired on Thanksgiving Day, shocking viewers with its examination of the poor. Subsequent notable *CBS Reports* made after Murrow left included 'Hunger in America' (1968, Martin Carr and Peter Davis), which is credited with facilitating the introduction of the federal food stamps

programme. It was also criticized for containing a sequence of a baby, possibly incorrectly described as dying of malnutrition. ‘The Selling of the Pentagon’ (1971, Peter Davis) is a critical and controversial examination of the military’s extensive public relations activities.

NBC responded to *See It Now* with the quite different *Project XX* series, begun in 1954. It grew out of the success of *Victory at Sea*, and its production unit included many of the same personnel. From the start, *Project XX* (pronounced Project Twenty) offered occasional hour-long specials. Like *Victory at Sea*, its programmes were compilation films devoted to recreating aspects of the history of the twentieth century using existing footage – newsreel, documentary and feature – and occasional re-enactments. Among those that attracted most attention were ‘Nightmare in Red’ (1955), which chronicled the rise of Soviet Communism, ‘The Twisted Cross’ (1956), which did the same for German Nazism, and ‘The Real West’ (1961). The latter, produced and directed by Donald Hyatt, used paintings and photographs,



Fig 45 ‘Harvest of Shame’ showed to critical outcry on Thanksgiving Day as part of the CBS Reports series (US, 1960, David Lowe). J. Fred MacDonald

music and words of the era to capture the spirit of a particular time and place. It was one of the forerunners of the subsequent Ken Burns-type historical series. The commentary, spoken by Gary Cooper, took on a colloquial period flavour as well.

The NBC series comparable to *CBS Reports* was *White Paper*, begun in 1960, with Irving Gitlin as executive producer. For the most part it stuck even closer to current or recent headlines. 'The U-2 Affair' (1960) dealt with the Gary Powers incident that exposed US aerial spying on the Soviet Union. Other programmes also announced the currency of their topics in their titles: 'Angola: Journey to a War' (1961), 'The Death of Stalin' (1963), 'Cuba: Bay of Pigs' (1964).

The Twentieth Century, another weekly series, which began on CBS in 1957, was sponsored by the Prudential Insurance Company and produced by Burton Benjamin and Isaac Kleinerman. Its programmes were mostly half-hour. Many of these were historical compilations, such as 'Trial at Nuremberg' (1958) and 'Paris in the Twenties' (1960). The format of 'From Kaiser to Fuehrer' (1959) is typical. Host Walter Cronkite introduces the programme then retreats off-screen to voiceover commentary, the 'Voice of God' narration. Clips from German films of the thirties and forties are its main visual content; extensive use is made of Ruttman's *Berlin: Symphony of a great city* and *Variety* (1923) directed by Ewald Dupont, a fictional feature. The cutting pace is rapid and the editing skilful; a full orchestral score contributes to continuity and dramatic effect.

Other *Twentieth Century* programmes were on contemporary subjects and used freshly shot material and interviews: 'The Burma Surgeon Today' (1961), 'So That Men Are Free' (1962). Former Film and Photo League member Willard Van Dyke directed a number of *Twentieth Century* episodes. In 1966 *The Twentieth Century* became *The Twenty-First Century*. The new title was intended to suggest a shift in emphasis to scientific development and the future. Its final season was 1970–1971.

ABC distinguished itself with *Closeup!*, the first series using true cinéma vérité – more precisely, the American version of it called direct cinema. (This book uses the term *cv/direct*.) This radical technique made possible by new technology is the subject of Chapter Eleven. The idea for the series came

from Robert Drew, who produced *Primary* and *On the Pole* (both 1960) for Time-Life Broadcast. These first synch-sound portable camera films were of the Wisconsin presidential Democratic primary contest between Hubert Humphrey and John F. Kennedy, and of the Indianapolis automobile race, following driver Eddie Sachs. They were initially shown on only four local stations owned by Time, Inc. ABC was sufficiently impressed to hire Drew to make four more one-hour documentaries for the *Closeup!* series: *Yanki No!* (1960), *X-Pilot* (1960), *The Children Were Watching* (1960) and *Adventures on the New Frontier* (1961). The first had to do with anti-Americanism in Latin America and was shot on location, including in Cuba. The subject of the second is the final test flight of a new airplane and the personality of the test pilot. The third was shot in New Orleans during one week of a school integration crisis, presenting the attitudes of white segregationists and their effects on a black family whose daughter is to be one of the first to attend a previously all-white school. *Adventures on the New Frontier* offers 'a day in the life' of John F. Kennedy in the White House.

Drew did not continue on *Closeup!* but the executive producer of that series, John Secondari did, and he made valuable programmes using direct cinema technique with his own personnel. Nicholas Webster was one of these. He made 'Walk in My Shoes' (1961). It presents the anger, resentment, and feelings of frustration of black Americans largely from their point of view. Webster's 'Meet Comrade Student' (1962) examines Soviet education after the launching of Sputnik, which had caused Americans to feel left behind in scientific knowledge and training.

Also ground-breaking was William Greaves, an African-American documentarian. After beginning as a stage actor, he spent a short time at the NFB in the early 1960s, working with the innovators of cv/direct there. He returned to the US and became the executive producer (after a controversy in which the white executive producer was removed) and co-host of the pioneering National Educational Television series *Black Journal* (1968–1976), with a mandate to produce 'by, for, and about Black people'. Greaves' best-known documentary television work is *Ralph Bunche: An American Odyssey* (2001), *From These Roots* (1974), an in-depth study of the Harlem Renaissance, and *Ida B. Wells: A Passion for Justice* (1989).



Fig 46 *William Greaves, co-host of the National Educational Television groundbreaking series Black Journal (1968–1976). International Film Seminars*

During this same period but following a far different track, producer David L. Wolper was pioneering a different type of television documentary. Like Drew, but unlike most of the others then producing television documentaries, Wolper did not work for any of the three networks, yet he wanted to sell his shows to them. In 1957, when a representative from Artkino, the official US



Fig 47 Producer David Wolper and director Mel Stuart on the set of *Wattstax* (US, 1973). Mel Stuart

film distributor for the USSR, told him that he had actual footage of the Soviet space missions to sell, Wolper conceived the idea of creating a documentary on the rockets and the then-hot space race, and selling it to the networks as a completed project. Financing it himself, he enlisted the help of friends Jack Haley, Jr, and Mel Stuart to locate footage, shoot interviews, and create *The Race for Space* (1958).

Wolper was not a documentarian but a man who had decided to be in the entertainment business. His experience in film had mainly been selling old Hollywood movies to individual television stations. This background paid off handily with *The Race for Space*, since in these years the networks generally refused to broadcast any documentary that was not made by their own in-house production teams. Worries about the Fairness Doctrine and sponsor accountability made network executives loath to buy from outsiders. Wolper was able to convince individual stations, both independents and network affiliates, to buy and air *The Race for Space*. It ran on various stations for one

week in April 1960, and proved to be a huge critical and financial success. It was even nominated for an Academy Award, the first made-for-television documentary to be so recognized. The Wolper empire and, more influentially, the huge American television syndication business was born.

Over the next forty years Wolper and his teams were responsible for fifty-eight television documentary specials and twenty documentary series consisting of 347 episodes – a prodigious output. With *Hollywood and the Stars* he was the first to create television celebrity biographies. (He is perhaps best known, though, for his fictional mini-series – fourteen of them at 108 hours, including *Roots* and *The Thorn Birds*.) He also produced twenty theatrical motion pictures, including successful documentaries. The Wolper company provided hands-on training for at least two generations of documentarians, and he won Oscars, Peabodys, and Lifetime Achievement Awards galore.

Documentary history has tended to pass over the importance of David Wolper's work for a number of reasons. He always asserted that he was in the business to make money, and at this he was more successful than any other documentary producer in history. He did not claim that his films could change the world, yet many of them deal compassionately with serious social and political issues. For example, it was Wolper who brought Jacques Cousteau to television. Wolper was located in Hollywood, rather than in New York City, the traditional centre of documentary production. He said that he didn't know his films were not supposed to be entertaining in addition to being informative. He was being a passionate and very adept salesman – a trait he shares with some of the most effective documentarians from Robert Flaherty and John Grierson to Ken Burns and Michael Moore. All of these men could sell their ideas to funders, their films to distributors, and themselves to the public. Wolper did, however, sometimes play fast and loose with history; it was rumoured that a stack of Nazi uniforms was kept on hand, ready to be used when actuality film was lacking.

By contrast, Frederick Wiseman, one of the most skilled and talented makers of direct cinema, produced and continues to produce for public television. *High School* (1968), *Law and Order* (1969), *Hospital* (1970) and *Basic Training* (1971) were supported in varying proportions by the Public Broadcasting Service, WNET Channel 13 in New York City. After *Basic*

Training Wiseman contracted with WNET to do one documentary each year to play on the PBS network. His subjects have been various American institutions, the titles generally making clear which one. Wiseman's films are discussed in Chapter 11.

Among the television documentary news magazines the biggest success was CBS's *60 Minutes* (produced by Don Hewitt) which began in 1968. It brought documentary-like content and production methods into commercial television just as 'The March of Time' earlier had introduced its own kind of nonfiction forms and subjects into movie theatres. Like 'The March of Time,' *60 Minutes* developed a format that fit the medium within which it was received. Its origins are directly traceable to *See It Now* and *CBS Reports*. In *60 Minutes* the American journalistic term 'news story' is taken quite literally. The several stories of each programme – some light, some serious – use a combination of aggressive investigative reporting, personable on-the-air reporters (early-on Mike Wallace, Morley Safer, Harry Reasoner, Diane Sawyer) and tight narrative structures. It was successful not only in comparison with other television news, public affairs and documentary series, but reached the Top Ten among all television shows in ratings. Its success was also awarded the compliment of imitation, and the magazine format made up of short segments gradually began to multiply. *60 Minutes* still is produced and shown today.

Special Characteristics of Television Documentary

Many elements common to documentaries made for television can be traced to the new technological characteristics of this electronic means of distribution/exhibition, and to the new relationship with the audience sitting – as individuals or members of small groups – at home. Just as cumbersome equipment and theatrical exhibition dictated the form of documentaries from 1895 to 1945, the technology and financial base of television determined what subjects were covered and what form the documentaries took.

In regard to the content of documentaries made for television, three major types predominated throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and they correspond to emphases of the documentary series and specials discussed above. First is the

documentary based on a current newsworthy subject, something that is of immediate, widespread interest. This is a mode in which TV is very effective. From its beginnings it could examine topics quickly, if not with today's immediacy. Second are the historical and often nostalgic subjects of the compilation series and programmes – *Project XX* and much of *The Twentieth Century*. Lastly there is what could be called 'human interest' – the curiosity people have about others, their personalities and their problems. This sort of content became most manifest in the use of cv/d, but later morphed frighteningly into the ubiquitous reality series.

The range of subjects of television documentaries was wider as well as different from that of earlier documentaries. A kind of 'entertainment documentary' emerged – the nostalgia and human interest categories – in which the issues no longer were of national concern or social significance. Lyman Bryson observed, in his essay 'Popular Art' (in *The Communication of Ideas*, 1948), that the function of the mass media, the experience they offer, is more like that of gossip than that of traditional art forms. Certainly television offers materials as diverse as those of a neighbour talking to us over the back fence – in our electronic global village, a concept another media scholar, Marshall McLuhan, suggested (in *Understanding Media*, 1964). Scandalous secrets are revealed, amusing anecdotes told, conundrums posed, local events recounted, and the like. This gossipy quality also reached its apex – or nadir – in the reality programming of the twenty-first century.

Television documentary tended to maintain a small-scale intimacy. In *The Twentieth Century*, for example, a programme on 'Gandhi' (1959) is as much about the man as about the magnitude of his accomplishments; it seems quite unlike *The River* or films of the 'Why We Fight' series. Television documentaries often centred not only on individuals but on values (ethical, spiritual, psychological) rather than on material concerns (work, housing, poverty), as did earlier documentaries. Perhaps this difference was due as much to changed post-war preoccupations as to the influence of television; but whatever the cause, the difference is evident.

Frequently in television documentary, the commentator was the star and appeared on camera. Except for pioneer Nancy Dickerson, all were male. In earlier documentaries, the narrator was usually anonymous and unobtrusive;

his voice was heard over the images, and he never appeared on screen. The few exceptions that occurred seemed awkward. With TV the commentator often appeared on screen. The images and sounds of television documentary were constantly there in the TV set, just as electricity was in the wires and water in the pipes, ready to be turned on at any time. The celebrity commentators of that era – Ed Murrow, Walter Cronkite, Charles Kuralt, Chet Huntley, Dan Rather, et al. – fed into and emphasized the quality of liveness. The audience tuned in to see what Ed Murrow was offering on a Friday night. He talked directly to us from the control room, his reporters were available to come in over the ‘monitors’ as he called on them. Actually, given the technology available at the time, they were filmed beforehand, the film was flown to New York City, processed in the lab, and edited before being aired. Still, *See It Now* was shot more as if events were live and undirected than they were in earlier documentaries. Today’s celebrity reports and commentators continue this tradition. *360 with Anderson Cooper* is certainly nothing new. He tries to make everything look live, even when segments have been filmed beforehand.

From the 1950s until the mid-1980s the rule was that the commentator’s own point of view was generally withheld, or balanced – or maybe just ambivalent, and therefore ambiguous. Exceptions to this rule sometimes created a furore. *Harvest of Shame* drew outraged protests from the agriculture industry. *The Selling of the Pentagon* provoked a congressional committee to investigate the fairness of the film and threatened to subpoena the president of CBS, Frank Stanton, to force him to turn over out-takes, sound recordings and production notes from the programme. This same issue surfaced again in 2010 with out-takes from Joe Berlinger’s *Crude* subpoenaed by the oil company criticized in the film. *Sixteen in Webster Groves* (CBS Special, 1966, Arthur Barron) is an exceptional case. The citizens of Webster Groves strongly objected to its portrayal of their town. In a sequel, *Webster Groves Revisited*, parents and other residents of this posh suburb of St Louis were permitted to offer a counter-view to the one presented by the teenagers in the first programme.

In documentaries made for television there was an increased use of synch sound, especially talk, and interviews were used much more extensively. The spoken word carried at least as much content as the visual track, and the

visuals, to say nothing of the music, were much less rich and interesting than in non-television documentaries. At its worst this became radio with pictures. As a result of this different balance between words and images, the *auteurs* of television were usually the producers, writers and commentators rather than the directors, editors and camerapersons, as was more often the case in films made for theatrical exhibition. A redundancy developed in the documentary made for television that permitted the viewer-listener to go to the refrigerator and still follow what was going on, or vacuum the living room carpet while keeping an eye on 'the tube' without missing much. And of course the commercial break dictated form. This was the financial underpinning of television. Making money by selling ads was, and largely remains, the force that determines what documentaries appear on television.

As already noted, television documentaries tended to appear in the context of a series. Before television this was true only in exceptional instances such as 'The March of Time' or 'Why We Fight.' Television documentaries also had and continue to fit into quite precise air times, down to the second, allowing pauses for and building structures to accommodate the commercial breaks. The running times of earlier documentaries varied and were determined, to considerable extent, by the form and content of each film: *The Spanish Earth* runs 55 minutes; *And So They Live*, 24; *London Can Take It*, 9; *Fires Were Started*, 72; and *Nanook* has been recut so many times by distributors and exhibitors that it is hard to name its exact length. The fixed times of television resulted in strains – insufficient time available to deal adequately with a subject, or padding to fill out the timeslot even though less time would have produced a better film. Unfortunately this latter factor has also affected the quality of many twenty-first century documentaries whose makers must meet restrictive time and commercial breaks or who feel that they need to exceed eighty minutes in length to be theatrically viable.

In the series context and in the daily flow of television programming, it may be difficult for documentaries to offer the best aesthetic experience, though they do reach many people more quickly. Television became virtually *the* mass medium, certainly as far as documentary was concerned. It was the best qualified of any form of art and communication then devised to quickly call large numbers of people's attention to various subjects. It established its ability to do that – and sometimes did it superbly.

Chapter Related Films

1952–53

Victory at Sea series (Henry Salomon and Isaac Kleinerman)

1953

Argument in Indianapolis (*See It Now* series, Edward R. Murrow and Fred W. Friendly)

Christmas in Korea (same as above)

1954

Dresden Story (*On the Spot* series, Julian Biggs)

Edward R. Murrow Talks on Senator McCarthy (same as above)

Segregation in Schools (same as above)

1955

Nightmare in Red (*Project XX* series, Salomon and Kleinerman)

1956

The Twisted Cross (*Project XX*, Salomon and Kleinerman)

Skid Row (Allan King)

1958

From Kaiser to Fuehrer (*The Twentieth Century* series, Burton Benjamin and Kleinerman)

The Population Explosion (*CBS Reports* series, Av Westin)

1960

Primary (*Closeup!* series, Robert Drew, Richard Leacock, Al Maysles, Terence Macartney-Filgate)

Harvest of Shame (*CBS Reports*, Murrow, Friendly, and David Lowe)

Paris in the Twenties (*The Twentieth Century*, Benjamin and Kleinerman)

The U-2 Affair (*White Paper* series, Wasserman)

1961

Angola: Journey to a War (*White Paper*, Wasserman)

The Real West (*Project XX*, Donald B. Hyatt)

Walk in My Shoes (*Closeup!*, Nicholas Webster)

1962

The Battle of Newburgh (*White Paper*, Wasserman)

Meet Comrade Student (*Closeup!*, Webster)

So That Men Are Free (*The Twentieth Century*, Willard Van Dyke)

1963

Crisis Behind a Presidential Commitment (For ABC-TV, Robert Drew, Richard Leacock, Hope Ryden, Gregory Shuker)

The Death of Stalin (*White Paper*, Len Giovannitti)

The Plots Against Hitler (*The Twentieth Century*, Benjamin and Kleinerman)

That War in Korea (*Project XX*, Hyatt)

The Vatican (*Closeup!*, John Secondari)

1964

Cuba: Bay of Pigs (*White Paper*, Fred Freed)

Cuba: The Missile Crisis (same as above)

1966

Sixteen in Webster Groves (CBS-TV Special, Arthur Barron)

1968

Hunger in America (CBS Reports, Martin Carr)

1971

The Selling of the Pentagon (CBS-TV Special, Davis)

Chapter Related Books

Bluem, A. William, *Documentary in American Television*. New York: Hastings House, 1965.

Curtin, Michael, *Redeeming the Wasteland: Television Documentary and Cold War Politics*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995.

Friendly, Fred W., *Due to Circumstances Beyond Our Control . . .*. New York: Random House, 1967.

Hammond, Charles Montgomery, Jr, *The Image Decade: Television Documentary 1965–1975*. New York: Hastings House, 1981.

Kendrick, Alexander, *Prime Time: The Life of Edward R. Murrow*. Boston: Little Brown, 1969.

Madsen, Axel, *60 Minutes: The Power & the Politics of America's Most Popular TV News Show*. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1984.

Murrow, Edward R. and Fred W. Friendly, *See It Now*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955.

Raphael, C., *Investigative Reporting: Muck Rakers, Regulators, and the Struggle Over Television Documentary*. Illinois. University of Illinois Press, 2005.

Sperber, A. M., *Murrow: His Life and Times*. New York: Freundlich Books, 1986.

Swallow, Norman, *Factual Television*. New York: Hastings House, 1966.

Wolper, David L., *Producer*. New York: Scribner, 2003.

10

British Free Cinema and New American Cinema 1953–60

As noted in Chapter Eight, in the late forties and early fifties traditional documentary in Britain had run down somewhat, as it had in the US and, to a lesser extent, in Canada following the wartime boom. Grierson and his old boys were locked into former subjects and purposes which no longer seemed as relevant to the needs of the society as they once had – not as urgent anyway, and certainly not as exciting. In part they were suffering from their success. Many still consider the Grierson films to be the high point of British cinema and Humphrey Jennings is lauded as its Poet Laureate. British documentary films of the thirties could be seen as having pointed to the need for a more collectivized, socialized state. Now that state had arrived.

But beginning in the mid-fifties a kind of cultural revolution commenced that affected art in Europe and the US generally. In Britain, this new school first became manifest in film. With the advent of commercial television and a vitality in the political left that extended into all the arts, new popular values ('vulgar' they were thought to be an elitist quarters) came to the fore. Almost all of the Grierson people came from privileged backgrounds, and after WWII class continued to play a significant role in British documentaries. Although new emerging artistic trends remained partly the creative province of the middle and upper classes, working class people's lives were now viewed differently.

Expressing these new values was a group of novelists, playwrights and political essayists who were dubbed 'The Angry Young Men'. Some of these individuals had working- and lower-middle-class backgrounds. Prominent among these were Kingsley Amis and John Osborne, whose play *Look Back in Anger* became emblematic for the group. What they were angry about was the conformity, the ugliness, the lack of individuality present in what was being called a welfare state – the very sort of state that the Labour government and the earlier documentary films seemed to be seeking. Further, the Angry Young Men protested that even within this semi-socialist state the class system persisted, with the upper classes controlling government, business, education and the media, and that these upper-class people through these institutions were responsible for the flattening of the working class, for keeping the common people not only helpless but listless. A very important part of this agitation among young intellectuals and artists occurred in the documentary film. It took the form of a small but highly influential group of films and filmmakers who called their work Free Cinema. This was the first substantial reaction against the Griersonian main line since its beginning back in 1929.

Critical Background

The roots of Free Cinema lay in a critical position espoused by a group of young people at Oxford University in the late forties. What they started as *Film Society Magazine* in 1947 quickly became *Sequence*. Persons associated with *Sequence* would become extremely important in the British film scene. Later, *Sequence* became *Sight and Sound*, a still-venerable critical voice of film. Penelope Huston was its first editor, and Gavin Lambert her assistant editor. He later became a successful author of short stories, novels, biographies and Hollywood screenplays. Tony Richardson, Karel Reisz (the only male member of the original group not from Oxford; he was at Cambridge, from which a high proportion of the Grierson alumni had come), and Lindsay Anderson were three other principals. All three would later become fiction filmmakers of considerable distinction.

The editorial emphases of *Sequence* were clear-cut and contentious; it was strongly against some things, strongly for others. The British entertainment

film industry was denigrated for being dominated by Hollywood and failing to produce films having a national character. British documentary was scorned for its didacticism, dullness, and collective (as opposed to personal) creation. Certain new European films and filmmakers were lauded, such as the Italian Neorealists and the French New Wave. A poetic cinema in Britain was called for that would also provide a national expression – a poetry of reality, and of the common man – not to be confused with the poetry of ships, machinery and trains prevalent in the Grierson documentaries. Whereas Grierson was inspired by Eisenstein and Flaherty, Free Cinema was inspired by contemporary European fiction films.

Lindsay Anderson was the leader of this group. Like Grierson before him, he began as a writer about film, was the articulate spokesman and the first to begin making films. While pursuing such artistic goals, he held jobs making educational films such as *Foot and Mouth* (1955), a short film about the danger of hoof and mouth disease in cattle. Also like Grierson, Anderson searched for precedents for the sorts of films he wanted to be made. He wrote seminal re-evaluations of the work of Jean Vigo, John Ford and Humphrey Jennings, finding in their films evidence of the poetic and of the expression of their respective cultures. The Free Cinema group were vigorous polemicists, as the Griersonians had been.

Free Cinema Films

Anderson, in addition to his work on *Sequence*, had been making sponsored films since 1948. It was this work that funded his first Free Cinema films. These first significant Free Cinema documentaries were originally seen by very few. *Thursday's Children* (1955), co-directed with Guy Brenton, celebrated the pupils and the loving, skilful teaching being done at the Royal School for Deaf and Dumb Children. It won an Oscar for best documentary short. *O Dreamland* (1953) castigated the dull and synthetic pleasures being offered to the bemused working class at a seaside amusement park; Anderson himself once described it as 'a horrid little film'. The cameramen on these two films would become principal technicians of the Free Cinema films: Walter

Lassally (who subsequently became one of the world's great cinematographers) and John Fletcher (who would concentrate on sound and editing). It was their invaluable technical and artistic work that was a key part of the films' aesthetics.

Karel Reisz and Tony Richardson made *Momma Don't Allow* (1956), about a lively London jazz club patronized by working-class teenagers. Lorenza Mazetti, the only woman in the Free Cinema group, made *Together* (1958), a semidocumentary, which deals with the emotionally impoverished lives led by two deaf-mute dock workers in London's East End. This dark and ultimately tragic portrait remains wrenching today. *Together* along with *Momma Don't Allow* and *O Dreamland* were the first films screened under the Free Cinema banner. The programme for this opening night at the British Film Institute (BFI) theatre included the following programme note:

These films were not made together; nor with the idea of showing them together. But when they came together, we felt they had an attitude in common. Implicit in this attitude is a belief in freedom, in the importance of people and in the significance of the everyday.

As film-makers we believe that

No film can be too personal.

The image speaks. Sound amplified and comments.

Size is irrelevant. Perfection is not an aim.

An attitude means a style. A style means an attitude.

Lorenza Mazetti

Lindsay Anderson

Karel Reisz

Tony Richardson

Of the subsequent Free Cinema films – there were only a dozen or so altogether – *Nice Time* (1957) was made by Swiss filmmakers Alain Tanner and Claude Goretta, who would return home to become well-known fiction filmmakers. *Nice Time* is about the people in Piccadilly Circus in London's West End on a Saturday night. Lonely and disconsolate by and large, they



Fig 48 *Momma Don't Allow* (UK, 1955, Karel Reisz and Tony Richardson).
Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive

are shown seeking pleasure and diversion among the movie theatres, the refreshment stands, the prostitutes, and the milling crowds of others like themselves.

Every Day Except Christmas (1957), by Lindsay Anderson, is about the Covent Garden produce market (which no longer exists). It is an elegiac observation of the workers and their culture – the look, the feel, the activities of the place – from early evening, as the trucks come in from the country with vegetables, fruits and flowers, until closing the following morning. *We Are the Lambeth Boys* (1959) is about ‘teddy boys’ – kids from a poor and tough part of London. At its social centre is an outing to a cricket match at a posh suburban school. It is a sympathetic and respectful view of these young people who the popular press were presenting as gangs of dangerous delinquents.

What did these filmmakers mean by Free Cinema? Essentially, independent: free from serving the sponsor’s purposes, as in traditional British documentary; free from pandering to the demands of the box office, as in entertainment features. Gavin Lambert, in an article in *Sight and Sound* (Spring 1956), wrote about the three films shown at the first Free Cinema programme. Likening their spirit to that of D. H. Lawrence’s writings, he noted that they ‘sprang from non-conformism, from impatience with convention, sadness about urban life’. Like Lawrence’s work, too, they represented ‘a desire to regain contact with a more vital, individual force’. Lambert continued:

In the broadest sense, they are films of protest; they are not conceived in sweeping terms ... but the camera-eye they turn on society ... is disenchanted, and occasionally ferocious and bitter ... If compassion is explicit in Lorenza Mazetti’s film [*Together*], implicit in Lindsay Anderson’s [*O Dreamland*], it is the most rigorous, difficult and austere kind of compassion: not for the moment or the particular situation, but a kind of permanent temperamental heartache for the world and the people apparently lost in it.

A collusion apparent here between critic and creator is reminiscent of the Grierson documentary people who wrote about their own films in *Documentary News Letter*, which they had themselves established. Anderson, in his seminal essay ‘Stand Up! Stand Up!’, also published in *Sight and Sound* (Autumn 1956), demanded that film criticism also be socially committed. Commitment, individuality and poetry were key terms in the rhetoric of Free Cinema. The Free Cinema films observed workers and the working class, as



Fig 49 *We Are the Lambeth Boys* (UK, 1959, Karel Reisz). *Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive*

had the documentaries of the thirties, but rather than their work, Free Cinema was concerned with their personal lives. The films addressed the values of the people, their modest lives, their limited aspirations. They brought to light matters of social psychology and of the spirit.

The Free Cinema films are non-didactic, aesthetic rather than informative; they appeal to emotion more than to reason. The sluggish, unimaginative and flaccid are censured (*O Dreamland*, *Nice Time*); the lively, vigorous and idiosyncratic are extolled (*Momma Don't Allow*, *Every Day Except Christmas*, *We Are the Lambeth Boys*). They have in common a vaguely anarchic, nihilistic, iconoclastic air, yet were affectionate in tone. What they seem to be calling for is a reordering of society, one that respected the working class. They are implicitly revolutionary rather than actively evolutionary, as Grierson's work was.

The formal aspects of the Free Cinema films, especially their structural organizations, are reminiscent of Humphrey Jennings, who was much

admired by Anderson. The Free Cinema films are distinctly not Griersonian. Though they employ a loose chronology, they follow feeling more than logic. Commentary is eschewed for the most part. (There is some in *Every Day* and *Lambeth*, but none in the other four examples cited.) Instead, the filmmakers' points are made through their choice and arrangement of sights and sounds. Juxtaposition of symbolic contrasts and counterpoint of the visible and audible abound. Considerable irony and wry humour result.

The production techniques and technology used grow out of the subjects and purposes of Free Cinema and vice versa. The filmmakers confined themselves to what could be seen and heard on location. Portable synchronous sound did not yet exist, so dialogue is sparse. The sights and sounds used are those that could be captured without studio equipment. Though bits of invented performance are inserted into *Momma Don't Allow*, as in some earlier as well as later documentaries, quite a lot of Free Cinema is candid – the subjects are unaware they are being filmed – hence the preponderance of places where people gather publicly: amusement park, dance hall, Piccadilly Circus, social centre. Early on the camera was hand-held, the black-and-white images grainy and underexposed. Ambient location sound, often of inferior quality, constituted the soundtrack. In essence, most of the people, excepting Anderson, were teaching themselves filmmaking. Between 1954 and 1959 there were increasing technological refinements, from non-synch sound to simulated synch, a so-called wild track that was recorded on location and later edited to match the available footage. The camerawork goes from candid to increasing awareness on the part of the subjects that a camera is present, to steadier and more carefully composed images. Editing is critical for both sound and image, and it is important to remember that most of the films were shot with a spring-wound Bolex 16mm camera with slow black-and-white film. Although portable and lightweight, the film reels limited the length of shots and needed strong lighting to capture images.

O Dreamland cost a few hundred pounds and was paid for by Anderson himself. The other three of the first four films received grants from the British Film Institute Experimental Film Production Fund. The last two listed were sponsored under an agreement with the Ford Motor Company.

As for the arguments between the Free Cinema newcomers and the old-line documentarians, the former were just as much propagandists as the latter,

despite their attacks on earlier documentaries for attempting to manipulate viewer opinion. The ends were different – New Left vs. Old Left – as well as the techniques and styles used to advance those ends. Grierson predicted that Free Cinema would metamorphose into something else, and it very soon and very importantly filtered into the fiction feature film.

The documentary influence has also consistently contributed to some of the most interesting and distinctive cycles of British fiction production: wartime semidocumentaries, post-war Ealing comedies, social-realist features. It might be argued that the quiet genius of British cinema has always pointed most surely in the direction of realism and what John Grierson called the 'documentary idea'. For a while in the late 1950s and 60s the young people of Free Cinema came together with the young men and women of theatre and literature who had been tackling similar themes. The veracity of documentary detail was warmed and strengthened by the addition of story and character.

Free Cinema's end and metamorphosis into the social-realist fiction features, or what was sometimes called the British New Wave, was paralleled by similar, lesser-known developments in the US. These documentaries and experimental films eventually moved documentary closer to the dividing line between art and life. Called *cinéma vérité* in France and Canada and direct cinema in America, this development is the subject of Chapter Eleven.

The United States

Among the precursors in the US in the late 1940s was the renowned still photographer Helen Levitt, whose forte was documenting life on the New York City streets. She made two important documentary films with Janice Loeb and James Agee: *In the Street* (1948) and the previously described *The Quiet One* (1948). Levitt was active in filmmaking for nearly twenty-five years; her final film credit is as an editor for John Cohen's documentary *The End of an Old Song* (1972). Levitt's other film credits include the cinematography on *The Savage Eye* (1960), which was produced by Ben Maddow, Meyers, and Joseph Strick.

While in England it was Free Cinema that led the way to the literary and theatrical changes of the late fifties and early sixties, in the US film did not

precede changes in other arts. The group of people making new kinds of film were influenced by their contemporaries, poets and painters living in New York City, a movement now known famously as the 'New York School', which included poets John Ashbery, Kenneth Koch, Barbara Guest, Frank O'Hara and James Schuyler. Abstract Expressionist painters Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko and Robert Motherwell were emerging at the same time. Not part of the 'New York School' rubric, but writing at the same time were others born in the 1920s, a generation various enough to include voices as dissimilar as Allen Ginsberg and James Merrill, Adrienne Rich and Robert Creeley. This was also the era that Dizzy Gillespie and be-bop shook the jazz world. Simultaneously what became known as 'The New American Cinema' was emerging. A number of noteworthy documentaries emerged during this period.

Among the most important of the independent documentaries from the post-war American independent scene was Lionel Rogosin's 1957 film *On the Bowery*. Rogosin's style and aims were similar to that of the Free Cinema makers. Shot on the street, the film is compassionate to its subjects, the denizens of New York City's skid row, and it sought to make a conscious break from previous documentary tradition. He called his work made 'from the inside' of ordinary people in their everyday surroundings, carrying out their lives as they would without the presence of a camera. Nominated for an Oscar for Best Documentary Feature, the film chronicles three days in the life of a drifter new to the dismal skid-row scene, Ray Salyer. Although he is still good-looking and well-spoken, Ray's life is lost to alcohol. Urged on by Bowery old-timer Gorman Hendricks, Salyer goes on two benders, quits twice, hops on a truck for a day job, but finally states: 'Me, I only care for one thing.' That thing is liquor, and Rogosin makes no apologies, no efforts at rehabilitation, nor gestures of charity. *On The Bowery* has been acclaimed as both a filmmaking inspiration and a look at a now-lost part of New York City. After seeing the film, Lindsay Anderson programmed it as part of the BFI Free Cinema series, and Martin Scorsese has called it 'a milestone in American cinema'.

Rogosin translated the style in a second film, *Come Back Africa* (1960), which was shot, in the Flaherty tradition, after a year of living among



Fig 50 *On the Bowery*, 1957. Lionel Rogosin's account of life on the streets of lower Manhattan.

the people in South Africa. This film, more scripted and acted, is less a documentary than *On the Bowery*. Next, after three years of scouring the world for archival war footage, Rogosin made *Good Times, Wonderful Times* (1966). Inspired by Joan Littlewood's stage production of *Oh! What a Lovely War*, the film is a compilation of twentieth-century war footage, including scenes of the nuclear devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These archival pieces are contrasted with material shot at a posh London cocktail party where people are shown as representative of society's apathy and hedonism. Made at the start of the American War in Vietnam, *Good Times, Wonderful Times* was a success on college campuses and was one of first to help inspire the anti-war protest movement. Rogosin was one of the twenty-five filmmakers who joined together in 1960 as a 'free and open organization' called the New American Cinema Group, which soon became the heart of and the label attached to independent American experimental film.

New American Cinema sprang from some of the same feelings about society and its relationship to art that young artists were sharing in England,



Fig 51 The New York Times wrote in 1964 of Jonas Mekas' film, *'The Brig is a raw slice of new American cinema filmed in an off-Broadway stage with such brutish authenticity that it won a Venice festival grand prize as best documentary'*

France, Brazil, Italy and elsewhere. As one of its founders and the key voice of the movement over the decades, Jonas Mekas, states:

The year was 1960. New York was buzzing with dreams of a new cinema – a cinema that would reflect the sensibilities of 1960. Inspired by the New York School of Cinema – a term used at the Venice Film Festival to introduce the works of Morris Engel, Sidney Meyers, and Lionel Rogosin – the French Nouvelle Vague burst upon the screens of the world. In the United States, the avant-garde cinema of Kenneth Anger, Gregory Markopoulos, Stan Brakhage, Maya Deren, and Ron Rice was making its own waves. So was John Casavettes' *Shadows* (1959); Robert Frank and Alfred Leslie's *Pull My Daisy* (1959); Shirley Clarke's *The Connection* (1961); *Guns of the Tree* (1961) the film I made with Adolfas Mekas; and Bert Stern's *Jazz on a Summer Day* (1959) and Ed Bland's *Cry of Jazz* (1959).

Mekas has continued through today as a leading spokesman through the distribution company Filmmakers Cooperative and the screening venue Anthology Film Archive. These films are experimental in many respects, but documentary tendencies also play a significant role in them. Although many New American Cinema makers are best known as fiction and experimental filmmakers, much of the impetus for their work sprang from new documentary impulses being explored at the time.

A former dancer, choreographer and head of the National Dance Association, Shirley Clarke made a series of short films about dance, including *In Paris Parks* (1954) and *Bullfight* (1955). Moving on to other subjects, *Brussels Loops* (1957), a short work made for the 1959 Brussels World Fair, was co-directed by Clarke, D. A. Pennebaker, Wheaton Galentine and Ricky Leacock. The piece is a long series of film loops edited together beautifully, but without any obvious explanation. *Skyscraper* (1959) traced the construction of a building, used colour and black-and-white shots, and was made in collaboration with documentary stalwarts Willard Van Dyke and Irving Jacoby. It earned an Oscar nomination for Best Live Action Short Subject. *The Connection* is a film with New Wave sensibilities and a strong connection with beat culture. The film was banned because of obscenity and its frank depiction of drug culture. Based on a play, it is a fiction work that tells the story of junkies waiting for their dealer in a documentary style that captures the dark side of the era's counterculture. Clarke also made many other films, experimental, fiction, documentary and every combination of these forms. Her Oscar-winning documentary short *Robert Frost: A Lover's Quarrel With the World* (1963) was commissioned by President John Kennedy.

Pull My Daisy (1959) is a peculiar, interesting and not entirely successful twenty-six-minute film experiment that is very loosely based on a poem jointly written by Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac and Neal Cassady. Each wrote one line then passed it on to another, and the film feels much as the poem does. Directed by photographer Robert Frank with artist Alfred Leslie, it is populated by an odd assortment of people who were then associated with the beat movement. Ginsberg, Gregory Corso and Peter Orlovsky play themselves, while painter Larry Rivers plays Neal Cassady (Milo), Cassady (Milo)'s wife Carolyn is played by a woman credited as 'Beltiane', who in

reality was actress Delphine Seyrig. Painter Alice Neel and dancer Sally Gross also appear. Jack Kerouac later provided a voiceover narration that is meant to replicate one of his spontaneous writings. *Pull My Daisy* makes no pretence of being a documentary, but its existence is a fascinating document in itself and the film marks a key moment when the various filmmakers of that era moved in three different directions: the fiction feature, the purely experimental work and the documentary.

Jazz Dance (1954) is a wonderfully vital twenty-minute documentary film by Roger Tilton (who subsequently became a successful maker of large-screen Omnimax films) and Ricky Leacock. It documents a night at a New York dance hall in 1954. To the music of musicians Jimmy McPartland, Willie 'The Lion' Smith, Jimmie Archey, George Watling and Pee Wee Russell, Leacock's whirl of camera work and the film's editing takes the audience over, under and into the joy that fills the crowd. Although several cameramen had previously turned down the shoot, claiming that large cameras and studio lighting would be needed, Leacock was, as always, confident that he could do the job. As he said,

So I agreed to try making this film the way we had filmed combat ... Roger and his editor Richard Brummer laid these fragmentary shots in sync with the four pieces of music selected for the film; slow, medium, fast and faster! It worked! On a big screen in a theatre, WOW! You were there, right in the midst of it and it looked like it was in sync... it was in sync! We couldn't film dialogue or sustained musical passages this way. But it gave us a taste, a goal.

The similarity of it to Karel Reisz and Tony Richardson's *Momma Don't Allow* (1957), shot by Walter Lassally, is unmistakable. Some have claimed that *Momma Don't Allow* was instrumental in changing the course of British cinema, and *Jazz Dance* is a jewel that continues to excite today's audiences. It is one of the most critical links to what would become cv/direct.

Chapter Related Films

1953

O Dreamland (UK, Lindsay Anderson)

1954

Jazz Dance (US, Roger Tilton and Ricky Leacock)

1955

Momma Don't Allow (UK, Karel Reisz and Tony Richardson)

1956

Together (UK, Lorenza Mazetti)

1957

Every Day Except Christmas (UK, Anderson)

Nice Time (UK, Alain Tanner and Claude Goretta)

On The Bowery (US, Lionel Rogosin)

1959

Pull My Daisy (US, Robert Frank and Alfred Leslie)

Skyscraper (US, Shirley Clarke, Willard van Dyke, Irving Jacoby)

We Are the Lambeth Boys (UK, Reisz)

Chapter Related Books

Dupin, Christophe, *Free Cinema*. London: British Film Institute, 2006 (note accompanying Free Cinema DVD set).

Durgnat, Raymond, *A Mirror for England: British Movies from Austerity to Affluence*. Faber and Faber, 1970.

Engelbach, Barbara, *Jonas Mekas*. Berlin: Walter Konig, 2009.

Gaston, Georg, *Karel Reisz*. Boston: Twayne, 1981.

Graham, Allison, *Lindsay Anderson*. Boston: Twayne, 1981.

Hedling, Erik, *Lindsay Anderson: Maverick Filmmaker*. London: Cassell, 1998.

Lovell, Alan and Jim Hillier, *Studies in Documentary*. New York: Viking, 1972.

Orbanz, Eva, *Journey to a Legend and Back: The British Realistic Film*. Berlin: Verlag Volker Spiess, 1977.

Sargeant, Jack, *Naked Lense: Beat Cinema*. Berkeley, CA: Soft Skull Press, 2009.

Silet, Charles L. P., *Lindsay Anderson: A Guide to References and Resources*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1978.

Sussex, Elizabeth, *Lindsay Anderson*. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1970.

Welsh, James M. and John C. Tibetts, (eds), *The Cinema of Tony Richardson: Essays and Interviews*. New York: State University of New York, 1999.

11

Cinéma vérité, direct cinema 1958–70

In the late 1950s several major technological breakthroughs dramatically changed documentary as well as fictional and experimental filmmaking. These changes occasioned what can be thought of either as something new or merely as new ways of doing old things; technological advancement is always a bit of both. What these innovations permitted was the portable mobile synchronous recording of both sight and sound outside the confines of sound stages and studio lots. Many people, places and activities that were previously not filmable could now be captured almost anywhere with synch sound and 16mm film. These new technical possibilities were also driven by the types of film people wanted to make. Building on the work of Free Cinema and the New American Cinema, the desire for a different kind of creative work pushed technical advancement while the new technologies themselves offered opportunities for changes in both content and form. And, as always, money played a role.

As with the beginning of film itself in the 1890s, a general movement to create different kinds of documentary occurred simultaneously in many places. One of these breakthroughs was what Americans called direct cinema. Another was that of Frenchman Jean Rouch and his colleagues, echoing 'Kino Pravda', who coined the term *cinéma vérité* (film truth) to apply to their work. The Free Cinema group in England and some independent filmmakers in the US were also were heading toward similar goals. Brazilians too were

experimenting with this style, influenced by the Swede Arne Sucksdorf, who held an influential documentary seminar in Sao Paulo in 1962. That country's Cinema Novo movement became another strong variation on the theme. This book does not deal much with non-English cinemas; the point is that the interest in a new kind of documentary with different subjects and made with new equipment surfaced in several places at about the same time.

Historical Background

Documentarians always seek technological modifications that permit them to film more easily under difficult conditions, and to better convey actuality to their audiences. The initial division between the creative impulses that led to documentary and those that led to fiction was caused at least partly by equipment. The first films made by the Edison Company in the 1890s were shot with the Kinetograph. This electrically powered camera was so large and heavy it was confined to a studio built to house it. Edison technicians recorded vaudeville and circus acts and bits of stage plays, performed in the Black Maria, as that studio was called, thus inaugurating the American theatrical/fictional mode of filmmaking. In France, Louis and Auguste Lumière designed a relatively lightweight, hand-cranked camera, the Cinématographe, which permitted them to record life on the streets, thus establishing the documentary mode. Making this distinction even early in film history has its contradictions. Edison was recording actual live performances, not, at first, making up new stories; and the Lumières used multiple takes and direction to get the effect they wanted, even in their very first film *Workers Learning the Factory* (1895). Still, the link between type of equipment and the distinct development of the two tendencies is a valid way to distinguish them.

By the 1920s, when documentary proper began to evolve, the cameras used were more portable than previously, but still cumbersome, requiring tripods to capture steady images. The comparatively insensitive film stock then in use – all of it black-and-white – needed lots of light. No sound was available until after 1927, except that provided in the movie theatres by live pianos, organs, or orchestras that played as films were being exhibited. Sound for location

documentaries remained impossible even as studio fiction films with sound became the norm in the 1930s. Flaherty's descriptive sort of documentary, which showed the surroundings, physical appearances and outdoor activities of unfamiliar peoples, used existing visual technology to perfection. His work did not really require sound. Others – Grierson, Lorentz, the Film and Photo League, the WWII propagandists – all needed post-production sound to make their points.

In the 1930s, optical sound production equipment was so bulky that synchronous recording on location remained difficult to impossible. It was like Edison's big camera all over again, and most fiction filmmakers retreated into the studio. The standard documentary sound-film method became that of shooting silent pictures, subsequently adding to the edited footage spoken words, plus music, plus sound effects. To have documentary 'talkies,' a voiceover commentary was almost obligatory, though sometimes artificial elements, commentary and music tracks did permit the addition of information and interpretation to visuals, and also explained complex contemporary issues.

Black-and-white images accompanied by post-synch sound thus remained the most common format for documentary-makers throughout the thirties, forties and fifties. The classic documentaries of this period – *The Song of Ceylon*, *The Plow That Broke the Plains*, *Night Mail*, the 'Why We Fight' series, and even the most experimental works – were all made within those limitations, even as filmmakers kept trying to come closer to capturing natural sound with natural scenes. This goal and the development of equipment to reach it were not confined to those with documentary interests (though they would win the race). Notable efforts occurred in avant-garde and fiction filmmaking as well.

The Italian Neorealists, especially Roberto Rossellini, made remarkable strides in adding audible reality to their images. Their sound was still post-synchronized, however; the dialogue was dubbed. Jean Renoir (who was a good friend of Robert Flaherty's in their later years) was another fiction filmmaker who disliked the confinement of the studio and the rigidity of the large and heavy stationary cameras standard in American studio shooting. In an amusing interview, Renoir likened the 35mm studio camera to a great metal idol to which humans are offered up sacrificially. Everything was done

for the convenience of the camera and sound recordist. Actors had to move to chalk marks on the floor to be in focus, to turn their faces a certain way to catch the light. Renoir (and Flaherty) wanted, instead, the machine to be subservient to people – to follow them around, to attend to them.

Obviously, the lighter equipment of 16mm offered documentarians advantages over 35mm. Eastman Kodak had manufactured silent 16mm film since the 1920s. If desired, films shot on 16mm could be ‘blown up’ to 35mm for theatrical exhibition. Lionel Rogosin made *On the Bowery* (1956) and *Come Back, Africa* (1958) in this way, with some remarkable synch-sound actuality set within semidocumentary narratives. In 1960 John Cassavetes, in the fictional *Shadows*, allowed actors to improvise while their actions and words were recorded on 16mm equipment. Manufacturers also had a vested financial interest in perfecting 16mm. It was introduced by Kodak in 1923 as a home movie format, intended for the amusement of the wealthy. Streamlining the equipment and lowering costs meant that Kodak could sell the small Cine-Kodak camera, and charge for processing more film to middle-class consumers. Sixteen-millimetre projectors were made and sold by Bell & Howell by (1923). In addition to amateur use, these technical achievements inaugurated the modern professional nontheatrical field. Eastman Teaching Films was incorporated in 1928. Soon teaching films were a regular part of school curricula in the US, with hundred of films being produced regularly. This began to formalize the nontheatrical market, which became so important to documentary after World War II.

New Technology and First CV/Direct

With impetus from engineers, technicians and filmmakers, the key equipment that made direct cinema/cinéma vérité (cv/direct, as this book refers to it) possible began to be made. By substituting plastic for some of the metal moving parts, 16mm shoulder-mounted cameras became more lightweight and less noisy, no longer requiring blimps (i.e. casing containing acoustic insulation). The French Éclair NPR camera (Noiseless Portable Reflex), developed by André Coutant in 1961, and the German Arriflex SR (Silent Reflex) became

standards. Cameras with reflex viewing (actually looking through the lens while shooting), plus zoom lenses, permitted cinematographers to alter the field of view – from closeup to long shot, for example – without having to stop to change lenses or to rack focus. The French Angenieux 12 to 120/mm zoom lens was commonly used, forever blessing and cursing the field with intense zooming in and out. Increasingly ‘fast’ film stock (that is, with emulsion very sensitive to light, thus needing little light) permitted shooting without adding illumination to that naturally available. Later, in the 1970s, Eastman Kodak 16mm colour negative was in widespread use, replacing the reversal processes (Kodachrome and Ektachrome) because of its superior qualities in low light. Added to faster film stock was a laboratory ‘intensification process’ which could push the sensitivity of a film to over 1000 ASA (American Standards Association; the higher the number the faster the film; standard colour negative had an ASA of 100) after it was shot.

For sound, 1/4’ magnetic tape recorders were developed that synchronized with cameras first with a cable and eventually through use of an inaudible sixty-cycle pulse. The Nazis in the 1930s were the first to invent magnetic



Fig 52 *The French Éclair camera was part of the technical revolution that brought about cinéma vérité/direct, and changed documentary forever*

sound tape recording. In the WWII 'spoils of war' treaty between the Allies and the Axis, this technology became – like all German intellectual property (excepting atomic and other military knowledge) – free to the world. The Nagra, developed by Swiss engineer Stefan Kudelski in 1958, became the most common type in use. Around 1960 vacuum tubes, which were large and consumed a lot of energy, were replaced by transistors, and the weight of sound recorders was reduced from about 200 pounds to 20 pounds. When crystal synchronization was added later (first used in Drew Associates' *Primary* [1960]), there was no longer the need for even a cable between camera and recorder. This new technology permitted action to take place in front of the camera and microphone without the presence of extremely intrusive and cumbersome equipment. The camera could now move, creating a fresh way to see the world. A new generation of filmmakers was about to make the documentary its own.

In 1958 at the National Film Board, two young French Canadians, Michel Brault and Giles Groulx, using film left over from another project, shot more or less secretly *Les Raquetteurs* (*The Snowshoers*). The event with which the film is concerned – snowshoe races in Sherbrooke, Quebec – seems mainly to be the occasion for a parade and a party for the townspeople. The film records these activities but concentrates on the people and their relations with each other. The filmmakers seem to have entered into the sociability and evidently were fully accepted by the townsfolk.

Les Raquetteurs raised some hackles in official Canada, and concern was expressed about the non-official way in which it was produced. More serious was the question about the motivation of the filmmakers. Though they appear to be in affectionate, if amused, sympathy with their subjects, some French Canadians were made uneasy by the unprettified view of robust conviviality presented. Such a portrayal, it was alleged, helped to perpetuate the false stereotype of the crude and dull-witted 'Canucks'. This sort of controversy about cultural representation by outsiders is an ethical issue that continues today.

In 1960, in the US, *Primary*, a breakthrough in film, was produced by Robert Drew. Most of the shooting was done by Albert Maysles, Terence Macartney-Filgate and Richard Leacock. Many of the crew also worked on



Fig 53 *The Snowshoers (Les Raquetteurs)* by Michel Brault and Giles Groulx for The National Film Board of Canada. National Film Board of Canada (1958)

the editing: 18,000 feet (seven and one-half hours) of film was cut down to 2,000 (fifty minutes). During filming, two-man crews – one person recording sound, the other using the camera – operated autonomously, following and capturing their subject as they went through the day. This approach meant that there was no single ‘director’ present throughout filming. It was up to the two-man team to decide when to turn the camera on and off. Of course, no one saw any of the footage until weeks later when it had been developed. Drew then divided the editors into groups, each of which worked on separate sections while he supervised the whole.

Primary deals with the 1960 Wisconsin Democratic primary election contest between Senators Hubert Humphrey and John F. Kennedy. Not only does it follow each candidate through his public appearances and activities, intercutting between the two men, it also enters into the more private times when they are in hotel rooms or an automobile. Of the many remarkable moments the film contains, perhaps the most often mentioned is a seemingly



Fig 54 *John F. Kennedy on the campaign trail caught in a famous shot by cameraman Al Maysles in Primary (US, 1960, Drew Associates). Drew Associates*

uninterrupted shot, with synchronous sound, which follows Kennedy from outside a building into it, down a long corridor, up some stairs, out onto a stage, ending with a view of the wildly applauding audience. Maysles shot it holding the camera high above his head, never looking through the lens. The novelty at the time was breathtaking and the shot remains among the most famous in documentary. Another startling difference from documentaries of the thirties, forties and fifties was the absence of interviews; no people talked directly to the camera – unprecedented for that sort of subject. There was, however, a voiceover narrator. As one would expect, the new equipment often malfunctioned, and the crew spent many of their nights fixing it so it could be used the following day.

One could say that French *cinéma vérité* began in 1959 at a Robert Flaherty Seminar – an annual event started by Frances Flaherty and Robert's brother, David, which has met every year since. On that occasion French ethnographer Jean Rouch saw *Les Raquetteurs* and met Michel Brault, who would become

principal cameraman for *Chronicle of a Summer* (1961), directed by Rouch in collaboration with sociologist Edgar Morin. *Chronicle* was first shown in the US at another Flaherty Seminar, in 1963, along with Drew Associates' *The Chair* and Albert and David Maysles' *Showman* (both 1962).

Chronicle of a Summer broke from tradition in ways different from *Les Raquetteurs* or *Primary*. Its subject matter consists of a choreographed sampling of individual opinions, attitudes and values of Parisians in the summer of 1960. What the film offers is a chance to understand something of the interviewees and of their culture, their positions within it, and their feelings about it. The filmmakers' purpose and approach seem to be that of interior discovery and revelation. The Parisians are modern, urban and articulate. Their concerns, as well as those of the filmmakers, are about their feelings rather than about the work they do or how they do it.

The overall structure of *Chronicle* is a loose narrative, as the title implies, resembling an anthology of essays and short stories. Through it we get to



Fig 55 Jean Rouch (left) and Edgar Morin in the conclusion of *Chronicle of a Summer* (France, 1961). Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive

know the Parisians directly from interviews: Marceline, who survived a Nazi concentration camp; Angelo, a factory worker; Marilou, a troubled Italian working in Paris; or Landry, a black African student. This is in contrast to *Primary* in which Humphrey or Kennedy are not interviewed. We are told by Rouch and Morin that part one of the film is intended to deal with the 'interior' lives of the subjects; part two is about the 'exterior', the more general world around them as they see it. Links among the sequences are made through groupings of persons and topics of conversation and the approach is persistently self-reflexive: the people on camera and the audience are continually reminded that a film is being made. The penultimate scene is of the subjects discussing themselves as they have appeared in the film they, and the audience, have just seen. Here the new synch-sound technology is used primarily for discussion and interview. There is a soliloquy in a famous sequence by Marceline strolling in the Place de la Concorde and Les Halles market, as she recalls painful episodes from her past. Angelo, the worker, gives a kind of improvised performance for the camera, pointedly ignoring its presence.

Throughout the film the cinematography of Michel Brault, Raoul Coutard and A. Vignier, though different from Flaherty's, is akin to his in skill and certainty. Their adeptness in moving smoothly and seemingly effortlessly with their subjects is clear, as was the case with the Drew cinematographers. Radically different from Flaherty or the Drew films, however, the two directors of *Chronicle* are frequently on screen, engaged in conversation with their subjects. This is a film being made by Rouch and Morin, they seem to be saying, and here we are so you can see how we are going about it.

The American use of the new equipment was pioneered by technicians and filmmakers, many of whom were at some point in their careers employed at Drew Associates. Its tenets were articulated most forcefully by Robert Drew and Leacock. The Drew approach falls generally within the reportage tradition, stemming from Drew's 'picture story' background in photo-journalism at *Life* magazine. A different element was added by Leacock's engineering training and experience as a WWII combat cameraman. D. A. Pennebaker also brought an engineering background, Al Maysles training in sociology, and Macartney-Filgate the Canadian perspective.

Cv/direct technique seemed to offer the possibility of an objective observer. While acknowledging that subjectivity occurs in selecting persons and situations and aspects of these, once those choices are made the filmmakers, in theory, do not direct or participate in, or even influence (it was contended) the scene in any way. It was felt that the presence of the camera was soon taken for granted by the subjects – ignored mostly, sometimes forgotten altogether. In this approach, the relationship between filmmakers and subjects had to be relaxed and trusting in order for the filmmaking to fit into ongoing action without affecting it. Leacock was particularly adept in winning confidence from the people he was shooting; an engaging person, he could be casual and very charming with his camera and the people in front of it. Maysles, with the gently inquisitive sociological approach of his training, was also able to get close to people with his camera, albeit in a different, softer way.

By design and in the course of the work, Drew discovered that their method functioned best if something important was happening to their subjects – if they were involved in an activity demanding their full attention and evoking a certain behaviour. This was the case in *Primary*. Humphrey and Kennedy were much more concerned with winning an election than with how they would appear in a film. They were attempting to win over people in order to obtain their votes, and public appearance was a normal part of their lives that the presence of a camera and microphone would scarcely alter. One visual convention in this film has become a fall-back shot for hundreds of later documentarians, in no small part because it provides movement in what would otherwise be static scenes. This is the in-the-car-sequences with Humphrey. Filmed by Leacock, Humphrey is seen from behind, the camera being in the back seat. He falls asleep. He occasionally turns to face the camera, but mostly he stares out the car window. As rain spatters against the windshield and the car wipers gently thump, Humphrey muses on life, not the political, but the wide empty landscape. Only some filmmakers today know that when they choose to film this type of shot, they are using a classic technique. Leacock himself did not realize the impact this sequence would have. He once said:

I got into the car with Senator Humphrey and filmed with the tiny camera and recorder that no professional would be seen dead with. He probably

thought I was someone's uncle making home movies and he ignored me, perfect. He fell asleep, even better, then woke up and talked nonsense about how the snow brings nitrogen to the soil. We even filmed him in the men's room with the Governor as they planned their TV show.

Mooney vs. Fowle (1961, aka *Football*) climaxes with a high school football game in Miami, Florida between two rival teams. It concentrates on the players, coaches, immediate families, all completely preoccupied with this contest. *The Chair* (1962) centres on the efforts of a Chicago attorney, Donald Page Moore, to obtain a stay of execution for his client, Paul Crump, five days before it is scheduled to take place. *Jane* (1962), largely made by Hope Ryden and D. A. Pennebaker, concerns nineteen-year-old Jane Fonda in the production of a play, from the rehearsal period through the negative reviews following its Broadway opening and the decision to close it.



Fig 56 Paul Crump faces execution in a shot by Ricky Leacock in *The Chair* (US, 1962, Drew Associates). Drew Associates

As these examples suggest, those at Drew Associates also discovered that their films were more interesting if the situation chosen had its own drama (with beginning, middle and end), which would come to a climax within a limited time. Stephen Mamber, analyzing the films of Drew Associates in his book *Cinéma Vérité in America*, identified this as the ‘crisis structure’, a term that has stuck. When such a situation did not exist the films sometimes lacked point and force, Mamber felt. He gives as examples the Maysles’ film made outside Drew Associates, *Showman* (1962), about movie mogul Joseph Levine, and Drew’s *Nehru* (1962), about the then Prime Minister of India. Though these are interesting and significant figures, the days shown are cluttered and formless – nothing very dramatic happens, there is little understanding of either man, or of why he behaves as he does.

In 1963, Pennebaker and Leacock left Drew to form their own production firm. The partnership did not last long. Al Maysles also soon left Drew and began a new company, Maysles Films, with his brother David. After seeing a short film Pennebaker had done on jazz vocalist Dave Lambert, Bob Dylan’s manager, Albert Grossman approached Pennebaker about filming Dylan while he was touring in England. The resulting film, *Don’t Look Back*, became a touchstone in both film and music history. The opening sequence alone (set to Dylan’s ‘Subterranean Homesick Blues’ with Dylan standing in an alley, dropping cardboard flashcards) became an iconic precursor to music videos. Pennebaker went on to make many more cv/direct films, many of which dealt with music and performance. Leacock continued with his own idiosyncratic career. The Maysles brothers also continued to produce many documentaries, some of which, like the series they made with the artist Christo and his wife Jeanne-Claude, are classics.

Direct cinema vs. cinéma vérité

Nowadays the term *cinéma vérité* is frequently used generically for non-directed filmmaking, but originally it was applied exclusively to the Rouch/French approach, to distinguish it from the Drew, Leacock, Maysles, Pennebaker, Wiseman (and others) American direct cinema. The differences between the two approaches are clear and significant, and worth discussing, but over the decades these differences have become so muddled that they seem

almost irrelevant. Some films do follow one style faithfully, but a mixture of the two, often with other approaches added, is common today. Still, whether the distinction remains, is collapsed, or simply goes by another name, understanding the differences in the two points of view is vital to understanding documentary history, practical ethics, theory, and production approaches.

Cinéma vérité as applied by Jean Rouch to *Chronicle of a Summer* refers back to the Russian language equivalent, 'Kino Pravda,' used by Soviet filmmaker Dziga Vertov forty years earlier. Rouch subsequently said that what he was attempting was to combine Vertov's theory and Flaherty's method. It is important to remember that Rouch was first and foremost an ethnographer. Anthropology, before and after he started making films, was his first interest.

Rouch denied that a filmmaker can achieve objectivity or that the camera can be unobtrusive. Since it is finally the filmmaker rather than the subject who is making the film, Rouch felt that filmmakers must have a strong attitude toward the subjects, must plan what to draw from them. In Rouch's films, and those of others following this approach, the subjects are not necessarily occupied with something more important to them than the camera and microphone. Virtually everything we see and hear in *Chronicle* is occasioned by the making of the film. In many instances the filmmaker is also the film. Examples include Chris Marker's *Le Joli Mai* (*The Lovely May*, 1963), Michel Brault's and Pierre Perrault's *Pour la Suite du Monde* (*Moontrap*, 1963), or the Maysles' *Grey Gardens* (1975), and most of Nick Broomfield's work. In these the camera acts as a stimulus. This approach is the root of even the serio-comic presences of Michael Moore and Morgan Spurlock. It causes people in the film and in the audience to think about themselves as they may not be used to doing, and to express their feelings in ways they ordinarily would not.

In 1963 in Lyons, France, a memorable meeting devoted to cinéma vérité and direct cinema was sponsored by Radio Télévision Française (the French national broadcasting system). Many of those present had contributed to the technology that made cv/direct possible, including André Coutant (Éclair camera) and Stefan Kudelski (Nagra tape recorder). While Coutant was displaying his camera he withdrew a fountain pen from his pocket and said: 'The camera is still not as simple to use as this, but we're working on it, ergo 'Camera Style'. Other attendees included Jean Rouch, Mario Ruspoli and

Edgar Morin from France; Robert Drew, Richard Leacock, Albert and David Maysles from the United States; Michel Brault from Canada.

The greatest excitement was said to be generated by a lively on-going debate between Rouch and Leacock, men noted for enjoying a good argument. Both of them were hoping to find ‘the reality of life’, ‘the truth in people’ hidden under the superficial conventions of daily living. Rouch sought to pierce the observable surface to reach this underlying truth by means of discussion, interview, and a performance sort of improvisation vérité. Drew, Leacock, Pennebaker and the Maysles brothers sought reality by photographing people without intruding. Their subjects would reveal what they really felt and were like when unselfconsciously relaxed or deeply involved in some activity. Direct cinema sought to expose reality through capturing unguarded moments of self-revelation in the normal flow of life. Cinéma vérité wanted to explain the *raison d'être* of life, whereas direct cinema wanted to let life reveal itself.

Effects on Documentary Subjects and Styles

It seems quite appropriate that Ricky Leacock would be one of the pioneers of *cv/direct*. Working on Flaherty’s *Louisiana Story* (1948), on which he and Flaherty both were cinematographers, made a profound impression on him early in his career and served as a foreshadowing of what was to come. Some of the most visually stunning moments of that film are at the beginning when the camera moves through the swamp, introducing the audience to the moving water, sky, trees in a perfectly composed and poetic study in black and white. Viewed in a correctly balanced film print, on a big screen, it takes away one’s breath.

Flaherty’s efforts to capture synchronous dialogue occurs when the father tells a story about a man who had his jaw bitten off by an alligator. The machine used to record sound was large and clumsy. Its use on location is one of the first such experiments in documentary, another instance of Flaherty’s pioneering technical quests. The result is far from perfect, but demonstrates again Flaherty’s interest in new technologies. The main synch-sound scene required time and complete concentration. According to the recollections of

some of those involved, this occurred as camera and recorder were turned on merely for testing, but Flaherty let them run to preserve the telling of the story. Flaherty was so taken with the results that he included it in the film, though its non-directed verisimilitude is quite different in style from the other sound material. This was lucky happenstance – truly the thing itself, for its own sake, which is what Frances Flaherty later said her husband was after. She called it ‘non-preconception.’ From working with Flaherty, Leacock became even more committed to trying to arrive at portable synchronous sound equipment that would permit the recording of actuality in this way – without script, without direction, with scarcely any editing.

Cv/direct permitted relatively long continuous takes. A camera loaded with four hundred feet of 16mm film can be kept running for ten minutes. This may seem a short time compared with today’s endless electronic takes. Short, though, is more difficult, and often better, than long. The act of cutting the thousands of feet of film that initially pass through the cameras into the final versions means that a highly selective point of view is operating. Overload of hours of video meandering can make this process even more difficult. However, synch sound in film prevents the breaking up and manipulation of shots as freely as is possible with footage shot silently. It is difficult to cut into a continuous soundtrack without the cut being noticeable; sound locks images into place.

The value of the long-take can be seen in the NFB film about Paul Anka, *Lonely Boy*. There is a scene in which Anka is singing before a huge audience at Freedomland amusement park in New Jersey. The camera panning a crowd of teenage girls screaming in adulation catches one face that seems to be dissolving in emotion. Just after the camera passes her it stops, pans back, zooms in, and refocuses on a closeup. One can almost hear the cameraman saying to himself as this image registers on his consciousness, ‘Wow, look at that!’, all the while maintaining synch sound. The implications of this technique became ever more evident as technology pushed on through video and digital documentary-making. Within synch-sound scenes the filmmaker is bound closely to the real time and real space of the events.

An even greater innovation in cv/direct was the way in which action is determined and who determines it. In *Nanook of the North*, Flaherty observed



Fig 57 Paul Anka, the teen idol in *Lonely Boy* (Canada, 1962, Roman Kroiter and Wolf Koenig). National Film Board of Canada

what Nanook did. Subsequently – days, weeks, months later – he had him redo it for the camera. Flaherty might ask Nanook to do it a slightly different way, to do it again for another take, or for a shot from a different camera distance and angle. These shots would then be cut together to create an illusion of continuous action. In short, though Flaherty did not use written scripts, he ‘scripted’ in his mind and through still photographs and ‘directed’ Nanook according to that ‘script’. Oppositely, in *The Chair*, the characters are essentially doing the ‘directing’, as their actions could not have been scripted or even anticipated. In the early direct cinema no one was asked to do something again or repeat an action.

Cv/direct has brought losses as well as gains to documentary. If it is not necessarily the cinema of truth, it originally did seem to keep filmmakers from lying too much – the ‘Fly on the Wall’ theory. But lying in this context may merely mean being as selective or as subjective as filmmakers may need to be. Cv/direct is less efficient or effective for some subjects and purposes than



Fig 58 'Little Edie' in Grey Gardens, 1975. Directed by Ellen Hovde, Albert Maysles, David Maysles and Muffie Meyer

other techniques. It is not as good for history or poetry, which often require forms that are carefully controlled and fully shaped.

On the other hand, *cv/direct* pulls towards individuals, towards continuous recording of their words and actions, towards narrative – towards telling the sort of stories that are true, the kind of stories Flaherty told. *Cv/direct* is closer to narrative fiction films than to the descriptive, expository, argumentative, experimental, or poetic and experimental forms of documentary.

The technological bias of zoom lens and directional microphone that pulls *cv/direct* close to the individual also makes it an attractive technique for television and digital formats. It is no accident that *cv/direct* arrived after television and that its first substantial US successes, Robert Drew's in the *Closeup!* series, were designed for what was then called 'the tube'. This move toward apparent intimacy in documentary changed what audiences wanted to see. There has been a steady pressure to use the conventions of *cv/direct* to emotionally involve audiences, and what was once seen as a way to access unvarnished truth is now a style used to sell ideas and things, from ideology

to soap. Techniques of *cv/direct* have been bastardized to the extent that they are accepted as a norm, even a faked convention in today's reality television and newscasts. It is interesting that at about the same time *cv/direct* was developing, in directly opposite techniques, and in response to the competition of television, wide screens and stereophonic sound offered Hollywood's equivalent of life more fully displayed, of less editing, more *mise en scène* and resultant spectacle and ambiguity.

Frederick Wiseman

Frederick Wiseman has made at least thirty-eight independent documentary features, most set in institutions within the United States. In the process he has become something of an institution himself. The new technologies that provided ways to enter situations without the distracting intrusion of lighting rigs, large sound recorders and bigger crews have served Wiseman's goals well. He often uses long telephoto lenses, creating a visual flattening of distance between the viewer and the subject. Long static takes are common, left uncut not only for their striking *mise en scène*, but to show people as part of groups. Both these visual choices occasionally place even the subjects in the position of watchers. The workings of the hospital, school or court being documented unfold without introduction or explanation, creating a feeling of slow discovery.

Wiseman's films are cited by some as the clearest examples of classic direct cinema, documentaries in which the filmmakers are never seen or heard, in which the camera is forgotten by subjects, which use no narration, musical score, or explanation outside the frame and ambient sound; films that thus offer the most 'truthful' of cinematic experiences. His films do give this impression despite the fact that he has worked almost exclusively with 16mm equipment, certainly a format no longer thought of as being invisible. He and his cameraman dedicatedly avoid interference with the action or its outcomes, choosing only to observe. He has said that his films' stories are never preconceived, presenting themselves only during editing, a process of viewing hours of footage, and emerging with a reputed shooting ratio of 30 to 1. The words,

sounds and action onscreen do come across as real, totally unrehearsed, especially as a viewer spends the hours in front of the screen that is required by much of Wiseman's later work. *High School* (1968) is seventy-five minutes, *Near Death* (1989) is around six hours. Some critics maintain that Wiseman studies only the unfortunate, non-functional aspects of America and its social institutions. The infamous revelations of the treatment of the mentally ill in *Titicut Follies* (1967), the bleak struggle against life's end in *Near Death*, even the phoney glitz of *Model* (1981) or *The Store* (1967) may seem to undercut the values of fairness, caring, opportunity, equality and democracy that are meant to characterize the US. An audience – especially an international audience – may react to Wiseman's films as scathing critiques of American values. Different from other direct cinema films, Wiseman's institutional settings carry equal weight with 'closeup' of 'crisis structure' or the view of one or two people. His subjects are not so much revealed as individuals, as they are observed within an organization.

In each film, despite – or perhaps because of – the distance with which the subjects are observed, a respectful acknowledgement of the spirit of humanity emerges. Groups of people must work together within the institutions; individuals try very hard to help other individuals, and faith that circumstances can be made better prevails even when the systems and their arbitrary regulations make reaching such goals seem impossible. Wiseman's Americans carry on, believing that, faulty and heartless as they may be, institutions can be used to create caring and hope and to evince a democratic spirit. Perhaps even the institutions themselves, through a group of individuals, can be bettered, although Wiseman never offers such a 'feel-good' ending. It is up to the audience to take in the whole of a film's architecture, not to be caught up in the distractions of its parts. Enduring the dehumanization to which they are subjected, the occupants of the grim Bridgewater State Hospital for the criminally insane in *Titicut Follies* are not ashamed of their lives. Despite their bleak situation, they claim the variety show as their own, each participating within their own capability, despite what their warders or the viewer may think.

Another example of Wiseman's work, dissimilar in other ways from the bulk of his films, is *Model*, about the business of fashion modelling headquartered in New York City. Throughout, it alternates between fashion modelling

(concentrating on a single agency) and life on the streets of Manhattan. The model business is based on glitz and illusion; real life is nitty-gritty and diverse. One intriguing sequence shows passers-by watching a commercial being shot on a residential street. Elderly women, construction workers, derelicts, young businessmen and dogs regard somewhat indifferently the sexy model, the high-tech equipment, and the Hollywood mannerisms of the crew. Another extended sequence concerns the production of a hosiery commercial which involves interminable takes (up to fifty-five on one shot). The sequence concludes with the thirty-second result of all this professional skill, perfectionism and gruelling work.

The myriad of detail offered by the film (it runs 125 minutes) can be read in at least two ways, probably many more. One is that *Model* is essentially a not-uncritical celebration of a bizarre, fascinating, glamorous and crazy institution in the Big Apple of American society. The other is as an exposé of exploitative, manipulative, frivolous and greedy people working at a profession that is the epitome of consumerism gone berserk. But the final sequence seems to confirm the first view. It is of the fashion-buyers' show, which is like, and is shot and edited like, a musical. Beautiful young women in high-style gowns pirouette down a runway to show tunes ('Strike Up the Band' among them). Unusual camera angles and dynamic cutting complete the choreographic effect. It ends with dancing and applause. The fact that the intent of the film can be argued – exposé or celebration – may suggest that the many snippets we are offered form a mosaic of, or a metaphor for, aspects of our culture, which, of course, is open to as many interpretations as there are cultural observers.

Conclusion

With the arrival of cv/direct the sharp distinctions between documentary and fiction became ever more blurred. Offering a close relationship to life as it is being lived, the classic cv/direct documentaries are preponderantly, almost automatically, narrative in form. They show something happening, followed by something else that happens, followed by yet another thing, and so on. *Eddie* (1961, Drew, Leacock, Albert Maysles, D. A. Pennebaker) is about a race

car driver before, during and after a race (which he did not win). So is fiction feature *Red Line 7000* (1966, Howard Hawks), but they are very different kinds of film. *David* (1961, Drew, Gregory Shuker, D. A. Pennebaker, William Ray) is about a jazz musician who has sequestered himself in Synanon, a sanatorium on the beach in Venice, California, in an effort to rid himself of his addiction to drugs. *The Man With the Golden Arm* (1956, Otto Preminger) starring Frank Sinatra deals with the same subject of drug addiction.

Cv/direct did change documentary. Cv/direct did not revolutionize documentary. Even as its technology, ethical questions, subject matter and style were developing, audiences, critics and filmmakers alike were, quite rightfully, questioning the purposes and values of its approach. Such challenges to documentary are timeless. Robert Drew was criticized for showing candid footage of the Kennedys. They were not respectful enough. Robert Flaherty was, and seemingly always will be, criticized for exploitation of the Inuit. It is interesting to speculate what course the field of visual anthropology might have taken without him. John Huston was criticized for showing too much death in *Battle of San Pietro* and too much trauma in *Let There Be Light*. Arguments about filming even military coffins divide people. Michael Moore is criticized for harassment of his subjects in every film he directs, and Nick Broomfield for exploiting subjects for self-aggrandizement. Individuals today go to court to adjudicate violations of privacy carried out with mobile phone cameras. All of this is very important: documentary debate must remain alive. The development of its modes of financing and distribution, subject matter, form, artistic breadth and ability to move people to action are the very core of debates about what is a documentary, and more importantly, what does documentary do for individuals, for societies, for the world.

Chapter Related Films

1958

Les Raquetteurs (The Snowshoers), Canada, Michel Brault and Gilles Groulx)

1960

On the Pole (US, Robert Drew, Richard Leacock, D. A. Pennebaker, William Ray, Abbot Mills, Albert Maysles)

Primary (US, Drew, Leacock, Pennebaker, Terence Macartney-Filgate, Maysles)

1961

Football/Mooney vs. Fowle (US, James Lipscomb, Drew, Pennebaker, Bill Ray)

1962

The Chair (US, Drew, Greg Shuker, Leacock, Pennebaker)

Lonely Boy (Canada, Roman Kroitor and Wolf Koenig)

1963

Happy Mother's Day (US, Leacock and Joyce Chopra)

Pour la suite du monde/Moontrap (Canada, Brault and Pierre Perrault)

A Stravinsky Portrait (US, Leacock, Pennebaker)

1966

Don't Look Back (US, Pennebaker)

Meet Marlon Brando (US, Albert and David Maysles)

A Time for Burning (US, Barbara Connell, Bill Jersey)

1967

The Anderson Platoon (France, Pierre Schoendorffer)

Warrendale (Canada, Allan King)

1968

Birth and Death (US, Arthur Barron and Gene Marner)

The Endless Summer (US, Bruce Brown)

Monterey Pop (US, D. A. Pennebaker)

1969

Salesman (US, Albert and David Maysles, Charlotte Zwerin)

1970

A Married Couple (Canada, Allan King)

Chapter Related Books

Issari, M. Ali and Doris A. Paul, *What Is Cinéma Vérité?* Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1979.

Leacock, Richard with Valerie Lalonde, *Memoir: The Feeling of Being There*. Semeion Editions, France 2011.

Levin, G. Roy, *Documentary Explorations*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971.

Mamber, Stephen, *Cinéma Vérité in America: Studies in Uncontrolled Documentary*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1974.

Marcorelles, Louis, *Living Cinema*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1973.

McElhaney, Joe *Albert Maysle*. Urban, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009.

Seigel, Joshua and Marie-Christine de Navacelle, (eds), *Frederick Wiseman*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2010.

O'Connell, P. J., *Robert Drew and the Development of Cinéma Vérité in America*.

Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992.

Rosenthal, Alan, *The New Documentary in Action: A Casebook in Film Making*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972.

12

The 1970s: Power to the People

The documentary impulse has always been inseparable from its social, political, artistic and intellectual environment. In the 1920s Flaherty's films reflected the beginnings of anthropology and popular interest in little-known cultures. Vertov and the Soviet filmmakers attempted to meet the needs of a new state, the first Communist society. The European avant-garde was experimenting with artistic means for expressing concepts coming to the fore in physical and psychological sciences, as well as reacting to the horrors of WWI. Documentaries in the 1930s were connected with economic and political upheavals, including the spread of socialism and unions. Totalitarian regimes employed them to gain the allegiance of their people. In Britain and the United States they were used to try to strengthen democratic societies in the face of worldwide economic depression and imperialist aggression. The 1940s were the years of World War II and its aftermath. During the first half of that decade documentaries were produced in unprecedented numbers by the Allied countries in their fight against the Axis powers. In the second half of the decade, the United States, and to some extent Britain and Canada, employed documentary in the Cold War against Communism. In the 1950s, in the US at least, many documentaries, but not all, were marked by conservatism and complacency; and, as it would subsequently appear, hidden uncertainties. New types of subjects and forms compatible with nontheatrical distribution and television were explored. The 1960s saw the beginnings of direct cinema

and *cinéma vérité*, social and political unrest, and with them new debates about defining documentary.

For documentary, the transition from the 1960s into the 1970s was a vibrant era, a time of fruition and fullness. Independent 16mm funding, production, distribution and exhibition were on the upswing. The nontheatrical 16mm market place – schools, libraries, colleges and universities, film societies, even prisons, and later airlines – was substantial. In the US it provided a financial base that allowed considerable creative development for independent makers working outside traditional film and television establishments. In Canada most such production was controlled by the NFB. In the UK most documentary-making was meant for television, and was not as free-flowing.

The early 70s was also a time to pass the nonfiction baton. A new generation of documentary filmmakers, those who had not lived through the experiences of global depression and WWII, began to come into their own. The 16mm market base, the emergence of degreed film programmes, the artistic and social upheavals and protests of the 1960s, along with various personal explorations combined to make documentary filmmaking a leading means of creative expression for more people than ever before.

Some Established Filmmakers

Established and influential documentary-makers in North America remained active as the 1960s turned into the 1970s. Among these were Donald Brittain and Michael Rubbo working in Canada, Emile de Antonio and Frederick Wiseman in the US and Roger Graef in England. Drew Associates also remained formidable, as did other *cv/direct* pioneers, Maysles Films and D.A. Pennebaker.

Donald Brittain worked as a journalist until he joined the NFB in 1954 as a writer. He scripted most of his own films; frequently he collaborated on their direction. Brittain's 'writing' was really his matching of words and images; the creative process for him existed centrally in editing. In this respect he might make one think of Stuart Legg's work on 'The World in Action' series from

the early days of the NFB. Brittain's approach was oblique and understated, yet involved his subjects in a way that makes them stick firmly in viewers' memories.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr Leonard Cohen (1966, with Don Owen) is an affectionate, non-adulatory portrait of the then-young Canadian poet/musician, who is allowed to participate fully in the presentation. Lest we take him or Brittain too seriously, Cohen himself offers an injunction for us at the end of the film, written on a steamy glass while he is bathing: 'caveat emptor: let the buyer beware.' Brittain died in 1989, a much-honoured figure who had made over a hundred films in his fifty-year career at the NFBC.

Emile de Antonio came to film after careers as a philosophy professor, longshoreman and art promoter. His documentaries, all feature-length, received some theatrical distribution. Consistently he advanced a sharply left-wing political view, using compilation – 'radical scavenging', he called it – in part to avoid copyright restrictions. 'De', as he was known, avoided *cv*/direct as well as standard voiceover narration. Like Esther Shub's, his documentary technique consisted in large part of obtaining footage from other sources, sometimes surreptitiously, and excerpting and editing it to make damning critiques of aspects of American politics and culture. He labelled his work 'the theatre of fact'.

De Antonio's first success was *Point of Order* (1963), which enjoyed an extensive theatrical run. It was made from 16mm kinescopes of the televised 1954 US Senate Army-McCarthy hearings. The title comes from an oft-repeated interruption of the proceedings by Senator Joseph McCarthy – 'Point of order, Mr Chairman' – and the film allows the Senator to damn himself and his methods without voiceover commentary. One hundred and eighty-eight hours of telefilm was recut and often chronologically reordered into a ninety-seven-minute film that was a scathing portrait of McCarthy.

In the Year of the Pig (1968) is a compilation about the history of the American War in Vietnam. It employs a mix of news footage, political propaganda, anti-war speeches, and other sorts of evidence and argument including the famous photograph of a young US soldier with 'Make War, Not Love' scrawled on his helmet. It is highly critical of United States involvement in the war.

De Antonio had important relationships with younger radical filmmakers. Perhaps the most potent example of this is *Underground* (1975, with Mary Lampson). In this remarkable document we see, from rear view or through gauze, most of the core group of the then-fugitive Weather Underground – Cathy Wilkerson, Kathy Boudin, Bernadine Dohrn, Jeff Jones and Billy Ayers. These young people had been responsible for five-and-a-half years of bombings at various locations: the Pentagon, the State Department, the US Capitol, and twenty-two other targets. Because of the need to keep their identities hidden, the majority of the film's visuals are shots of cinematographer Haskell Wexler reflected in a mirror. As they sit beneath a home-made quilt emblazoned with the motto 'The Future Will Be What We the People Struggle to Make It', they elucidate their philosophy for the camera, leaving us an indelible record from the most strident of the 'New Left' of the 1960s and 1970s. This film should not be confused with the 2002 film *Weather Underground*, an exploration of the same subject from a different, less personal point of view.

De Antonio died at the end of 1989. His final project was a self-reflexive biographical eulogy, *Mr. Hoover and I*, about the extensive FBI surveillance of De Antonio and his colleagues. Released after his death, it is fraught with the formalism of jump cuts and John Cage music. Like all of his work, it retains the mark of a dedicated 'Old Leftist' radical combined with the artistry of modernist sensibilities.

Michael Rubbo, an Australian painter and photographer with an education in anthropology, joined the NFB in 1965 after studying film at Stanford University. His best-known work is *Sad Song of Yellow Skin* (1970). *Sad Song* was shot in Vietnam in 1969. Rather than military action, then at its peak, Rubbo catches life on the streets of Saigon: the shoeshine kids; three idealistic young American journalists trying to help them; the opium lady, who died in the tomb she lived in while the film was being shot; and a little monk in saffron-coloured robes who takes a symbolic walk each day from 'Saigon' to 'Hanoi' and back. In talking about his work on this and other films, Rubbo said: 'These days I even make a virtue of being unprepared.' He then advanced a position that sounds rather like Frances Flaherty talking about her husband's 'nonpreconception', finding his story by living with his subjects. Rubbo explained:



Fig 59 Emile de Antonio. Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive

You go out with vague ideas about what you want and then just let things happen, trusting in your good instincts. I know it sounds dangerous, but life will inevitably serve up much better stories than you could ever think up beforehand. The trick is to get involved, to get in.

Frederick Wiseman, a leader of *cv/direct* who was formerly a lawyer, began filmmaking as producer of *The Cool World* (1964), a fictional feature directed by Shirley Clarke. Shot in Harlem and using many nonprofessional actors, it has semidocumentary characteristics. His first documentary was *Titicut Follies* (1967), co-directed with John Marshall (subsequently an important figure in visual anthropology, whose credit was later removed from the film after editing disputes). It is an examination of the Bridgewater State Hospital for the criminally insane in Massachusetts. The title refers to an annual variety show performed by inmates and employees. The film offers an unflinching look at the dreary day-to-day situation within the institution. Without doing more than showing the treatment the inmates receive and the attitudes and behaviour of all involved, the hopelessness of the sometimes-cruel care

meted out becomes evident. The film became the subject of litigation, and the Supreme Court of Massachusetts banned its showing within the state; subsequently the film became a cause célèbre in the documentary world. In artistic approach and filmmaking philosophy it is very much like Allan King's *Warrendale* (1967).

Warrendale, like *Titicut Follies*, was never shown by its funder, CBC. The filmmaker spent twelve weeks in a Toronto treatment facility for disturbed children as they undergo a controversial treatment in which the children are encouraged to release their anger through near-hysteria as they are tightly held by staff members. The wrenching footage and the children's foul language, which King refused to edit out, caused CBC to cancel the broadcast. It went on to win a major prize at Cannes. Jean Renoir, a member of the jury, found *Warrendale* one of the most remarkable documentaries he had ever seen.

After *Titicut Follies* (and the justifiably famous *High School*, 1968) Wiseman continued to build an unbroken career making films that examine institutions. In *Law and Order* (1968), he did not present a picture of police brutality or corruption. Some violence, insensitivity, and perhaps racial prejudice are evident in the film, but only as part of a whole that is equivocal. In fact, the evidence offered in *Law and Order* could have served to counter the prejudices against the police that many held at the time. Wiseman is extraordinary in many ways, not the least being that all of his films are funded by and broadcast on public television, yet he retains full control and holds sole copyright. He continues to work today much as he always has, making one film per year and self-distributing through his own company Zipporah Films.

In England, American-born television documentarian Roger Graef, after beginning directing live theatre, has been producing and directing programmes for various British channels since the 1960s. Like Wiseman he is a proponent of filming without interference, has received most of his funding from broadcast television, and is interested in the everyday workings of institutions. The name of Graef's production company, Films of Record, sums up his own goals for documentary as unadulterated looks at reality. His earliest major series was *The Space Between Words* (1972) for BBC, which explores the processes of communication within various organizations. Graef's films in



Fig 60 *Law and Order* (US, 1969, Frederick Wiseman). Photo by Oliver Kool, 1969. Zipporah Films

the 1970s, mostly for Granada Television, are in the Wiseman vein, examinations of powerful institutions such as British Steel, Occidental Petroleum, the British Communist Party, and the European Commission.

One of his acclaimed series is *Police* (1981), about the Thames Valley Police force, shown on BBC between January and March of 1982. It foreshadowed Graef's continuing interest in the workings of law enforcement and the institutions of criminality. One episode, 'An Allegation of Rape', contains interrogation of a rape victim – shot over her shoulder, never revealing her identity – by three male police officers. Their apparently insensitive treatment of the victim led to public outcry, and ultimately to a change in the laws regarding police procedure in rape cases. In England, *Police* was second only to the American night-time soap opera *Dallas* in audience ratings during the three months it aired. Graef's brand of cv/direct involved an agreement with the subjects to film only what had been previously agreed upon, as well as no use of lights, staging, or interviews, along with straightforward camera

angles. He subsequently made over thirty films involving criminal justice. His later work includes *Requiem For Detroit* (2010), for which he was executive producer. Julien Temple directed and narrated.

New Directions in CV/Direct

Criminal justice documentaries are a cv/direct staple. One landmark on that path is *Police Tapes* (1976), made by Alan and Susan Raymond. Like *Law and Order* and *Police*, it focuses on one police station, this time in the South Bronx. Perhaps best known for their intimate involvement (camera, sound, directing) in the groundbreaking US PBS series *An American Family* (1973), the Raymonds have made numerous significant films in the last forty years including the Oscar-winning *I Am a Promise*, *The Children of Stanton Elementary School* (1993). For *Police Tapes* they rode in patrol cars, Alan shooting video and Susan taking sound. Recording what they saw and heard, they also talked with the police about their work. What resulted is a matter-of-fact view of criminal activity in the city, and of public servants trying to do an impossible job. *Police Tapes* was also the direct inspiration for of the hit ABC television series *Hill Street Blues* (1981–1987). The first episode of *Hill Street Blues* is an almost scene-for-scene reproduction of the Raymonds' film, particularly in its use of naturally overlapping dialogue. *Blues* producer Steven Bochco was quoted as saying: 'We really stole the style of *Hill Street Blues* from something called *The Police Tapes* ... It was one of the most arresting things I'd ever seen in my life. We said, "this is the feeling we want. We want to create something that gives the illusion of random event"'

Cv/direct methods continued to evolve in ever more complicated inter-twinings of reality and fiction. The generation of filmmakers who matured in the 1970s became interested in blurring the conventional distinctions between documentary, experimental and fictional films. In some cases this took the form of the 'staged vérité documentary'. Controversy about directing documentary participants to engage in activities outside their normal routines has raged from the work of Robert Flaherty onward. There is also the ongoing ethical question of how far a filmmaker should go in exposing the personal

lives of her/his subjects. What was different from these straightforward documentary questions for a certain segment of 1970s filmmakers was their deliberate intention to confuse the audience about the veracity of the work.

An early and influential example is *David Holzman's Diary* (1968). It concerns a young man who begins filming his apartment, his girlfriend, the people in his neighbourhood, and every aspect of his life with his portable synch-sound camera rig. Initially the film appears to be a *vérité* documentary about himself. David Holzman is inspired by his conviction that the motion picture camera is capable of recording and representing 'truth'. But his obsession with trying to capture everything as it really exists, rather than leading him closer to reality, removes him from it. As the film progresses, the *Éclair* camera and Nagra tape recorder replace Holzman as protagonist. Further, when the credits appear at the end we discover that we have been subjected to a hoax. L. M. 'Kit' Carson plays Holzman (and also wrote much of the dialogue); James McBride directed; cinematography is by Michael Wadleigh. In short, this is a fictional film about documentary filmmaking – about reality and illusion.

...*No Lies* (1973, Mitchell Block), shot in *vérité* style, is a staged film about rape directly inspired by *David Holzman*. Appearing to be a documentary in the Rouch tradition, it plays upon many different audience assumptions until we discover at the end that what we wish had not happened in fact has not happened. Another filmmaker who worked in a similar vein is Michelle Citron. Her best-known film, *Daughter Rite* (1978), experiments with traditional modes in the process of exploring issues of central concern to women. It concentrates on the relationship between two daughters and their mother, and between each other. Citron's films are acted, but the roles and the dialogue are drawn from extensive research and interviews, as is the case with ...*No Lies*. *Daughter Rite* and ...*No Lies* look like *cv*/direct, complete with rack focus, rapid panning back and forth between people in conversation, not having the camera where the action is, natural light, and so forth. While the films are visually and aurally coded to be seen as documentaries, all are done with actors. ...*No Lies* has created controversy throughout its long career. Used as a training film to sensitize law enforcement personnel to the issues around rape, audiences do not care if it is staged or 'real'. Feminist audiences have sometimes been outraged at what they see as duplicitous and manipulative.



Fig 61 David Holzman's *Diary*, a classic of staged cinéma vérité (US, 1968, Jim McBride). Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive



Fig 62 ... *No Lies*, with Shelby Leverington, plays upon documentary expectations (US, 1973, Mitchell W. Block). Direct Cinema Ltd.

A documentarian who began in the 1970s and has successfully mined self-reflexive cinema since then is Nick Broomfield, though his route to self-interjection on camera is not accomplished through actors. A London-born graduate of Britain's National Film School, Broomfield started making films in England in 1971. It was when he teamed up with co-director Joan Churchill on a succession of documentaries that his work solidified. Their best-known early work together, *Soldier Girls* (1980), is a feature-length documentary in the cv/direct style that follows three female US Army recruits through the rigours of basic training. It focuses intimately on the women soldiers, a subject never tackled before. Like Wiseman's films it employs no narration, no subtitles, and no interviews. Unlike his *Basic Training* (1971), however, Churchill's and Broomfield's film centres on the personal more than on the institution of the army. It is a fully realized work following an emotional storyline from an observational point of view. Towards the end of the film the subjects acknowledge the presence of the filmmakers in an onscreen hug, a unique gesture in what is otherwise a classic direct cinema approach. This scene of filmmaker/subject interaction created a bit of stir in some circles.

Broomfield continued to create controversy with what some critics characterize as intrusive and unethical approaches to documentary. For example, he has been known to arrive to do an interview and begin shooting as an unprepared subject opens the door, creating a situation of adversity rather than trust between subject and filmmaker. His work, however, is consistently challenging and richly layered, always underpinned by a commitment to story.

Churchill, who is one of documentary's best cinematographers, has had a lifelong passion for observational filmmaking, which she described as 'a subjective camera style that throws the viewer into an intimate, first-hand experience with participants doing what they would have been doing if the camera wasn't there'. Part of a documentary-making family, Churchill is steeped in cv/direct camera tradition. She worked with the Maysles on *Gimme Shelter*, with Pennebaker and Leacock on *Monterey Pop*, and was a co-cinematographer on *An American Family*. She and Broomfield hooked up, both professionally and personally, while she was teaching at the National Film School. Her collaborations as a groundbreaking cameraperson and director have continued with many and various filmmakers for over thirty years.



Fig 63 Privates Joanna Johnson, Jackie Hall, and Carla Tuten in *Soldier Girls* (US, 1980, Joan Churchill and Nick Broomfield)

Broomfield's later films began to include more and more interaction between subject and filmmaker, challenging the objectivity of the filmmaker. Critical controversy raised by his insertion of self into the films reached boiling point when he is seen onscreen handing money for an interview to his leading subject in *Heidi Fleiss: Hollywood Madame* (1995). In part his work seeks to confront on deeper and deeper levels the dilemma of how the presence of a film crew can alter subjects' behaviour in cv/direct films. On the other hand, Broomfield became the 'star' of his own later documentaries, with his presence as agent provocateur creating serious tensions with the films' ostensible subjects.

A key shift in documentary-making in the 1970s was the increasing number of women filmmakers. Documentaries made primarily by women – notwithstanding the work of Frances Flaherty, Esther Shub and Yelizaveta Svilova in the 1920s, Leni Riefenstahl in the 1930s, Helen Van Dongen, Ruby Grierson in the 1940s – were few until the 1970s. In that decade women found

an unprecedented and distinct voice in North American documentary on personal, political and professional levels. The documentary world changed, and women in the twenty-first century are equal players in the that world, a situation that is deplorably still not the case in fiction filmmaking.

Early films that came to be known as part of feminist documentary include *Nana, Mom, and Me*, made by Amalie Rothschild in 1974. It confronts some of the same issues of relationships between mothers and daughters as Citron's *Daughter Rite*. Rothschild's work is not acted by performers, however, but rather captures unscripted interaction among three real generations of women – Rothschild, her mother, and her mother's mother. Canadians Claudia Weill's and Joyce Chopra's *Joyce at 34* (1972) explores the conflicts Chopra faces as she juggles career, husband, and the prospect of a new baby. Both women later pursued careers in which they directed successful mainstream Hollywood fiction feature films. *Antonia: A Portrait of the Woman* (1974), by filmmaker Jill Godmilow and singer/songwriter Judy Collins, profiles the fascinating career of symphony conductor Antonia Brico, and her fight to be able to use her great talent in what remains today an almost entirely male profession. The film, in which we hear the voice of Godmilow and see Collins interviewing Brico, explores the career and artistic ambitions not only of the subject, but also of the filmmakers.

Political Emphases and Vietnam

Vietnam

The monumental event affecting the United States' society from the mid-sixties to mid-seventies, and the rallying point for much of the social unrest, was the American War in Vietnam. Documentary filmmakers were very much a part of articulating opinion about the war, particularly for those who opposed it. The repercussions of the war, both direct and indirect, became central topics for some of the best nonfiction work of the 1970s, but the subject was explored even earlier.

Letters from Vietnam (1965) is not an anti-war film by intent, but it becomes a questioning of US involvement, even at that early date. Made by



Fig 64 Nana, Mom, and Me (US, 1974, Amalie R. Rothschild). Amalie R. Rothschild

Drew Associates, with Gregory Shuker as correspondent and Abbot Mills as cameraman, it was shown on ABC television. The film follows a young helicopter pilot as he flies sixty missions over enemy territory; this was the first instance of synchronous sound film being shot in a helicopter. We learn his story through the device of the audiotape letters he sends to his girl back home, and come to feel his discomfort as he visits a Vietnamese orphanage and meets some of the child victims of the war.

Interviews With My Lai Veterans (1970) won an Academy Award for Best Documentary Short for filmmaker Joseph Strick. It is a deep indictment of a highly publicized and controversial US decimation of a whole Vietnamese village, the 'My Lai Massacre'. With interviews of five veterans of this encounter, shot by Haskell Wexler, the chaos of warfare is revealed not by showing what happened, but by letting the men involved relate emotions they felt during and after this tragedy of war. Peter Davis' *Hearts and Minds* (1974), released the year that the war ended, presents a detailed, compiled history of Vietnam going back to the French conflict following WWII using archival material of various types in the same contrapuntal way that Shub used, ending with a critical appraisal of the grievous hurt done to all sides by these wars.



Fig 65 *A famous shot of napalm victims in Hearts and Minds, released theatrically by Warner Brothers (US, 1974, Peter Davis). Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive*

The War at Home (1979, Glenn Silber and Barry Brown) is also largely a compilation work about the increasingly violent student protests against the war as manifested in bombings at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

Newsreel Collectives

Like the Film and Photo League, which began in 1930, Newsreel Collective was started in New York in 1967 with similar aims of tackling social problems. It then spread to other cities: Boston, Chicago, San Francisco and Los Angeles. The groups quickly made many films, mostly short agit-prop pieces running from six to twenty-six minutes. To sympathetic audiences, often on college campuses, these seemed to be telling it like it was; to others they seemed merely crude and strident. For example: *Columbia Revolt* (1968) documented an occupation by students of the administration building at Columbia University with great support for the



Fig 66 A young man burns his draft card in *The War at Home* (US, 1979, Glenn Silber and Barry Alexander Brown). *Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences*

student radicals. Filming from inside the buildings with the protesting students, the filmmakers were part of the takeover. As Roz Payne, now the keeper of the Newsreel archive, said: 'Our cameras were used as weapons as well as recording events ... [we] had a WWII cast iron Bell and Howell camera that could take the shock of breaking plate glass window.' The original goal of this small New York group was to make two films per month and get twelve prints of each film out to sympathetic groups around the US. There was never agreement on what constituted a 'correct' political line and the group splintered into many factions. In 1971 in the founding New York chapter, after a series of Marxist 'self-criticism sessions', Newsreel was renamed Third World Newsreel. It decided to focus its efforts on empowering people of colour, and added media training and audience development to its agenda. Produced during this transition by San Francisco Newsreel was Judy Smith's *The Woman's Film* (1971). Providing a sign of this new direction, it was one of the early feminist documentaries to deal with working-class women and their problems. Third World Newsreel continues to function in New York carrying on the progressive vision of the founders. California Newsreel, founded in 1968, is the other remaining pillar. It continues to make and distribute works on

'African-American life and history, race relations and diversity training, African cinema, media and society, labour studies, campus life, and much more.'

Feminist Resurgence

In the 1970s marginalized groups began to claim a rightful place in documentary. One institutional example of rising feminist power was the establishment in 1974 of Studio D at the NFB as a separate woman-oriented production entity. Under the leadership of Kathleen Shannon, Studio D proclaimed a strong mandate of serving women, the aged, youth, and non-whites, with a clearly articulated agenda of 'integrated feminism'. A link between Challenge for Change and Studio D is evident in the decision of both to put filmmaking into the hands of the previously disenfranchised. Shannon insisted that Studio D resources promote only women's perspectives, since she believed that other filmmaking entities already met the interests of white men. One of the studio's earliest successes was Beverly Schaffer's Academy Award-winning short *I'll Find a Way* (1977). This moving story of a young girl's struggle with the neurological disorder spina bifida was one of a ten-part series, 'The Children of Canada', all directed by Shaffer.

Not a Love Story: A Film About Pornography (1981) by Bonnie Sherr Klein both instigates and documents professional stripper Linda Lee Tracey's conversion to an anti-porn stance. Early in the film, Tracey performs her 'Red Riding Hood' act, which she claims is not to be taken seriously. Accompanied by conversations between Tracey and Klein, the film travels through the world of pornography in all its forms: porn shops, sex booths, live sex shows, hard-core magazines, photographs of women in bondage, etc. Sex industry workers speak about their jobs, social scientists discuss the connection between violent pornography and violence against women. The owner of a chain of pornographic magazines attributes the proliferation of hardcore pornography to the rise of the women's movement, and US and Canadian feminists analyze the phenomenon of pornography. As the camera travels through the red light district that then dominated New York's Times Square, Klein relates voiceover statistics on pornography:

- Pornography is an eight-billion-dollar business, now larger than the music and film industries combined.
- There are four times more pornography outlets than McDonald's restaurants in the US.

Throughout the film Tracey carefully considers the arguments against pornography, measures them against her own experience, and finally emerges as a convert to the anti-pornography crusade. *Not a Love Story* was extremely controversial among many different groups, those who attacked it for its raw content and compassionate depiction of life in the porn business, and also by feminists of the era, some of whom felt, as B. Ruby Rich wrote, '*Not a Love Story* is very much a National Film Board of Canada product: concerned, engaged, up to the minute on social questions, but slick, manipulative, avoiding all the hard questions to capture the ready success of answering the easy ones.' It is quite probably the most important film produced by Studio D and it remains a compelling document.

With films such as Lynne Fernie's and Aerlyn Weissman's *Forbidden Love: the Unashamed Stories of Lesbian Love* (1975) and Bonnie Sherr Klein's *Not a Love Story*, Studio D proved that documentaries by and about women could be funny, dramatic, emotionally wrenching as well as educational. Studio D went on to create important work in the 1980s and 1990s until being disbanded in 1996.

Perry Miller Adato is a documentary filmmaker whose work explores art and the creative process. Her biographies provide insight into a particular artist's life and work in a linear, lyrical way. Adato's first film was *Dylan Thomas: the World I Breathe* (1968), which creatively uses still photos in much the same manner as *City of Gold* and the later work of Ken Burns. She is known for applying this technique to works of art and for interviews with those who knew her film subjects that get to the heart of what made a particular person tick. Her films are jammed with visual information and use quick cuts. Each film 'has to arise from the style and the personality of the artist,' said Adato, 'I'm not interested in education, per se, but there needn't be a conflict between something that is entertaining and educational. You can take any subject in the world and make it fascinating, if it's done poetically, artistically and with relevance to people's lives today.'

As a young woman in 1950s New York City, Adato became passionate about documentary film, reportedly inspired by seeing 'Why We Fight' on TV. As she told *Ms. Magazine* in 1976: 'When the United Nations was looking for someone to compile an international catalog of social welfare films, I got the job easily. There wasn't much competition.' She subsequently became a top footage researcher at CBS and travelled through Europe, discovering documentaries at festivals, art houses and archives. Excited by the quantity and quality of what she saw, she determined to set up a centre for European documentaries and films on art in New York. Perhaps encouraged by Robert Flaherty in 1951, she founded the Film Advisory Centre in Manhattan. The centre introduced the films of Jacques Cousteau as well as many distinguished European documentaries on art to America. Adato is perhaps best known for *Gertrude Stein: When This You See, Remember Me* (1970), an evocation of not only the writer and her art collection, but also of the artistic and cultural milieu of Paris between the two World Wars.

Adato's biography of American Impressionist painter Mary Cassatt led to Adato becoming the executive producer of a groundbreaking seven-part PBS television series, 'The Originals – Women in Art', that included her film *Frankenthaler: To a New Climate* (1977). She was the first woman to be honoured with a Directors Guild of America Award for documentary directing for *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Life in Art* (2003), and she went on to win this award a total of four times. For *Georgia O'Keeffe* Adato interviewed the reclusive ninety-year-old O'Keeffe at her home in Santa Fe about her life, her art, her marriage and artistic collaboration with photographer Alfred Stieglitz. Stieglitz, in 2001, was himself the subject of *Alfred Stieglitz: The Eloquent Eye*.

Not a social issue filmmaker in the sense of many women documentarians in the 1970s and 80s, Perry Miller Adato is remarkable for establishing a career filled with artistic merit and wide distribution of her work, almost miraculously achieved by making films in her own style on subjects she loved. She was also responsible for reclaiming important parts of women's history with multifaceted portraits of women artists who, until her films, had been culturally marginalized.

Another influential institution reflecting the growing force of women

documentarians was the start of the New York-based feminist film distribution company Women Make Movies in 1972, formed 'to address the under-representation and misrepresentation of women in the media industry'. While in Canada government subsidy enabled the NFB to allocate resources to female and other underserved documentary producers, in the US it was chiefly the marketplace of 16mm nontheatrical film that fuelled a burgeoning women's documentary movement. Both the Canadian and American entities embodied 'liberation' values of the 1960s and 1970s; and Women Make Movies continues to be important in the field, led for over twenty years by Debra Zimmerman.

New Day Films, another institution that continues to operate, is a distribution cooperative which grew from meetings at the Flaherty Film Seminars in the early 1970s. Co-founders included filmmakers Amalie Rothschild, Lianne Brandon, Julia Reichert and Jim Klein. Feminist in origin, later a more general haven for social activism, New Day is a distribution company collectively run entirely by and for filmmakers. In this it was a unique outgrowth of the empowerment movements of the era. Over fifty independents continue to use New Day to market their work.

Challenge for Change

In 1967 the National Film Board of Canada began a project called 'Challenge for Change' using documentary in a quite new way. In 1968 George Stoney, was hired as its head. The concept behind 'Challenge for Change' was the then-radical idea to provide citizens with access to the media to express their concerns and needs, and to create a dialogue with agencies of government involved in social programmes. This, of course, was close to the Griersonian idea of using documentary for social improvement. Grierson, after all, had been the first Film Commissioner of Canada. But, unlike Grierson, and any other prior programme, 'Challenge for Change' proposed that rather than communicating *to* the people, or even *for* the people, it would attempt to make films *with* the people. Eventually this led to enabling the *people* to make their own films. Grierson characterized this programme as 'decentralizing the power of propaganda'.

Out of the second 'Challenge for Change' project came a film entitled *You Are on Indian Land* (1969), an experiment putting equipment into the hands of the Indian non-filmmakers. The subject was the closing of a bridge across the St Lawrence River at Cornwall Island, Ontario. A treaty in 1794 had given the Mohawk Indians the right to duty-free passage across the river for any goods purchased, and they regularly used the bridge until the government decided to close it. The Indian filmmakers of 'Challenge for Change' took part in a protest demonstration against the closing. Screenings were held for the Mohawks, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Cornwall police, the city administration, and representatives from Indian Affairs. This was the first time these groups had sat down together. Eventually the decision to close the bridge was rescinded. In subsequent 'Challenge for Change' work, following the introduction of portable 1/2' videotape recorders around 1970, documentary subjects were taught to use the equipment and made their own tapes.

Public Access Television

In 1970 George Stoney returned to the US to head the undergraduate film programme at New York University. One of his first actions there, with colleague Red Burns, was to set up an Alternative Media Centre to promote and support the use of public access cable television. New York City public access channels began operation in 1971. In 1972 federal legislation reserved public access television channels in all new cable installations in the hundred top markets in the country. It seemed to Stoney and other advocates that public access channels fit within the US tradition of freedom of speech for all the people and nicely accommodated portable video technology. He became the inspirational voice for community access in the US.

If Stoney can be called the 'grandfather' of community access, its 'godmother' is Dee Dee Halleck, long-time advocate of the populist voice in public media. Filmmaker and media activist, she was founder of Paper Tiger Television in 1981 and co-founder of Deep Dish Satellite Network. Among Paper Tiger's best-known programmes was *Herbert Schiller Reads the New York Times*, in which the UC San Diego professor delivers a funny and sometimes frightening

interpretation of 'all the news that's fit to print'. Echoes of this approach ring through today's *Daily Show* with Jon Stewart. Halleck was involved in alternative media since her work in the 1960s with children making their own films, to a 1990s analysis of the media activist phenomenon exploding across the internet. Deep Dish continues today providing access to under-reported news and information and maintaining an active presence on Facebook.

Independent documentary video production specifically for community access, often directly inspired by Stoney's teaching, blossomed in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Frequently the work was conceived as an alternative to television shows of the time which, it was felt, had failed to illuminate critical social issues. Many of the alternative media operations were cooperatives bearing colourful names such as Videofreex, Video Free America, Raindance and Videopolis. Nearly all of these groups saw their mission as one of revolutionary scope – to inform and educate the public towards action and social change. In this sense they were the video successors to anti-Vietnam war 16mm filmmaking collectives like Newsreel and California Newsreel, described above, and the heir of the documentary legacies of Frontier Films of the 1930s.

Another activist documentarian, Jon Alpert and his wife, Keiko Tsuno started one of the country's first community media centres – Downtown Community Television Centre in New York City in 1971. Alpert bought a used mail truck for five dollars, installed TV sets and began showing his videotapes on street corners in Chinatown. At first nobody watched, but soon their tapes about local issues began to attract small crowds. From the beginning they had a commitment to sharing knowledge that had a direct relationship to the lives of people in underserved communities.

DCTV was the only place in New York City that offered production training and comparable services free. When funding from the New York Department of Cultural Affairs stopped for two years, the workshops went on. Even with the change in arts funding under the Reagan government in the 1980s, DCTV continued to offer free basic video training. Its goal to empower the community through media use has remained one of DCTV's top priorities. Alpert continues to be one of the most active documentarians working in the twenty-first century, both on grass-roots projects and larger, more commercial

films for HBO. DCTV also continues, having been in operation for forty years, and having taught over 50,000 people the ins and outs of video production.

Other Emerging Organizations

One of the corollaries of 16mm and later video independent documentary-making was the emergence of regional media organizations across the US, which often made films on local, as well as national or international issues. In the early 1970s a climate of government support in the US, fostered to a certain extent by the remains of Lyndon Johnson's 'Great Society' programmes, was one of the conditions that made such efforts possible. These were never a formal arrangement like Canada's NFB regional units but rather very American social entrepreneurial efforts. Two examples, in different settings, point to the vitality of this grassroots media movement.

Appalshop, a media centre with strong local roots, was established in 1969 in Whitesburg, Kentucky, with support from the National Endowment for the Arts. An example of its early documentaries is the fourteen-minute black-and-white film by Ben Zickafoose and Dan Moan, *UMWA 1970: A House Divided*. It documents the time when W. A. (Tony) Boyle, president of the United Mine Workers of America, was under indictment for misuse of union funds, and suspected of the murder of Jock Yablonski (outspoken advocate for reform of the union) and his family. By intercutting a speech given by Boyle at a miners' rally in Virginia with scenes at a mine and interviews with miners, the film contrasts Boyle's statements with those of the reform movement then growing among the union rank and file. The film's point of view is clearly with the workers, and ties into another 1970s' populist documentary trend, elaborating on labour issues in America, past and present.

Two Appalshop films that were particularly successful are *Coal Mining Women* (1982) and *Strangers and Kin* (1984), the latter by Herb E. Smith. *Strangers and Kin* examines the stereotyping of 'hillbillies' through films, television shows, literature, and interviews with contemporary Appalachians. Elizabeth Barrett's *Coal Mining Women* is in the tradition of reclaiming women's history, with interviews revealing personal stories of the women

who worked in this generally male world. Appalshop remains a viable production entity for regional media makers, with ongoing funding from the NEA. It continues to produce films and has trained hundreds of people from Appalachia to use many types of art and mass media to express and share their own life experiences.

In a second example, in Chicago in 1970 and 1971, Gordon Quinn and Jerry Blumenthal (as Blumenthal put it) 'began to gather into their hyperactive, flood-prone basement studio a small band of like-minded progressive-thinking sorts: filmmakers, organizers, teachers and students.' This became the Kartemquin Collective. Kartemquin's reputation and numerous international awards stem from works such as *Home for Life* (1967), its first film. It is a moving feature-length cv/direct record of two elderly persons entering the Drexel Home for the Aged and adjusting to the changes in their lives. Other noteworthy early productions include *The Chicago Maternity Centre Story* (1976), about the closing of this midwife service. Ironically, Pare Lorentz's *The Fight for Life* shows why midwives need to be created. *Chicago Maternity Centre* points out the mistake that local government is making by closing down midwife services. *The Last Pullman Car* (1983) is the story of the closing of Pullman Standard's South Chicago plant, the last factory in America to manufacture subway and railroad passenger cars. Working from an agenda of social justice and personal empowerment, Kartemquin has continued to successfully make documentaries, up to and beyond their most noted 1994 phenomenon *Hoop Dreams*, produced by Steve James, Frederick Marx and Gordon Quinn.

In 2004 Kartemquin made the ambitious series *The New Americans*, executive-produced by Steve James and Gordon Quinn. This truly cooperative series for PBS's Independent Lens used multiple filmmakers to document twenty-first century immigrants in the US. The stories and especially the music of people from Nigeria, Palestine, Dominican Republic, Mexico and India reveal the ways in which the cultural makeup of the US is rapidly changing through immigration. Kartemquin brought forty-plus years of experience in social issue filmmaking to bear with the same thoughtfulness and thoroughness that characterizes all of their work. The driving force of Kartemquin, Gordon Quinn, continued his documentary mission

through 2009, when he stepped aside from his administrative leadership role. Kartemquin remains a force in regional filmmaking, continuing to function today.

By end of the 1970s, a fairly broad base of local grassroots film- and video-making groups existed across the US, such as Film Arts Foundation (FAF) in San Francisco, Pittsburgh Filmmakers, IMAGE in Atlanta, and the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers (AIVF) in New York. The National Alliance of Media Arts Centres (NAMAC) was founded in 1980 by these and other activists who felt that by joining together they could create a national media organization that could support its institutional members and advocate for the field as a whole. This was a peak in government support for regional filmmaking in the US, but it was short-lived. By the late 1980s, national political support for independent regional media all but disappeared. NAMAC renamed itself The National Alliance of Media Art and Culture, partly in response to funding shifts, and continues to operate with a fluid agenda. AIVF disbanded in 2006, FAF was absorbed by the San Francisco Film Society in 2009. There remains a dedicated if under-funded history of populist activism through regionally based media-making but much has changed with defunding and the dramatic rise of internet filmmaking.

It almost seems that for the documentary world, the 1970s slipped into the 1980s unnoticed. Many interesting and important documentaries were being made as the decades changed, many still shot and shown on 16mm film. The aesthetic and ethical considerations of social issue documentary-making had been well-honed by filmmakers who came of age with *cv/direct*. This was the first generation to have grown up in a television-saturated world. The social issues that forged identities for these largely college-educated filmmakers from the mid-sixties onward – gay rights, black power, feminism, the American Vietnam War, spiritual enlightenment, rock'n'roll, environmentalism, drug use, and youth culture – were still the backdrop for many lives in North America and the UK. Documentary-makers learned ways to treat these and other themes in sophisticated films that demanded technical expertise. It required funding, cooperative work, planning, audience development, and a mastery of many crafts and skills to produce good documentaries. In North America especially, documentary-makers had achieved this goal, opening the way for previously unheard voices.

The 16mm documentary community, and its public, had established demanding aesthetic standards for image and sound quality, various editing techniques, music, usefulness of films for education and for entertainment value, originality and daring. Working with a medium that required intensive technical knowledge of cameras, lighting, sound recording, linear flatbed editing, optical effects, mixing and laboratory work, meant that documentary filmmaking was by no means a solo or a casual undertaking. Although video pioneers, like cable television community access users, Jon Alpert's DCTV, and Alan and Susan Raymond, were pushing accepted aesthetics with video, documentary was still basically the machine-based medium that Flaherty had used.

All of this changed dramatically in the 1980s. Video and then digital technologies seemed to sneak up on the documentary, hailed by its prophets and decried by classicists. Not as technically precise or aesthetically impressive, it began to open up documentary-making to different groups and individuals. Many things were gained in the shift away from the film medium, but other things that in many ways had become the true art of documentary were lost.

Chapter Related Films

1967

Warrendale (Canada, Allan King)

1968

Colombia Revolt (US, Newsreel Collective)

David Holzman's Diary (US, Jim McBride and L. M. Kit Carson)

1969

High School (US, Frederick Wiseman)

In the Year of the Pig (US, Emile de Antonio)

Law and Order (US, Wiseman)

1970

Gertrude Stein: When This You See, Remember Me (US, Perry Miller Adato)

Sad Song of Yellow Skin (Canada, Michael Rubbo)

1971

Angela: Portrait of a Revolutionary (US, Yolanda du Luart)

Interviews with My Lai Veterans (US, Joseph Strick)

The Murder of Fred Hampton (US, Michael Gray and Howard Alk)

1973

Attica (US, Cinda Firestone)
I. F. Stone's Weekly (US, Jerry Bruck, Jr)
...No Lies (US, Mitchell Block)

1974

Antonia: A Portrait of the Woman (US, Judy Collins and Jill Godmilow)
Hearts and Minds (US, Peter Davis)
Waiting for Fidel (Canada, Rubbo)

1976

The Chicago Maternity Centre Story (US, Kartemquin Films)
Harlan County, USA. (US, Barbara Kopple)
Police Tapes (US, Alan and Susan Raymond)
Underground (Emile de Antonio, Mary Lampson, Haskell Wexler)
Union Maids (US, James Klein, Miles Mogulescu, Julia Reichert)

1977

Men of Bronze (US, Bill Miles)
With Babies and Banners (US, Lorraine Gray, Lyn Goldfarb, Anne Bohlen)
Word Is Out (US, Mariposa Film Group)

1978

Daughter Rite (US, Michelle Citron)

1979

The Wobblies (US, Stewart Bird and Deborah Shaffer)

1981

Police (UK, Roger Greaf)

1982

Not a Love Story (Canada, Bonnie Sherr Klein)
The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter (US, Connie Field)
Soldier Girls (US, Nick Broomfield and Joan Churchill)

Chapter Related Books

- Anderson, Carolyn and Thomas W. Benson, *Documentary Dilemmas: Frederick Wiseman's Titticut Follies*. Carbondale: University of Southern Illinois Press, 1992.
- Atkins, Thomas R., ed., *Frederick Wiseman*. New York: Monarch Press, 1976.
- Beattie, Eleanor, *A Handbook of Canadian Film*. Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1973.
- Benson, Thomas W. and Carolyn Anderson, *Reality Fictions: The Films of Frederick Wiseman*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989.
- Boyle, Deidre, *Subject to Change: Guerilla Television Revisited*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Ellsworth, Liz, *Frederick Wiseman: A Guide to References and Resources*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1979.
- Evans, Gary, *In the National Interest: A Chronicle of the National Film Board of Canada from 1949 to 1989*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991.

- Feldman, Seth and Joyce Nelson, (eds), *Canadian Film Reader*. Toronto: Peter Morris Associates, 1977.
- Fuller, Linda K. *The Power of Global Community Media*. London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Grant, Barry Keith, *Voyages of Discovery: The Cinema of Frederick Wiseman*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1992.
- Halleck, Dee Dee, *Hand-Held Visions: The Impossible Possibilities of Community Media*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2002.
- Jones, D. B., *Movies and Memoranda: An Interpretive History of the National Film Board of Canada*. Ottawa: Canadian Film Institute, 1981.
- Keller, Douglas and Dan Streible, (eds), *Emile de Antonio*, 'Visible Evidence' series, vol. 8. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.
- Kolomeychuk, Terry, ed., *Donald Brittain: Never the Ordinary Way*. Winnepeg, Manitoba: The National Film Board of Canada, 1991.
- Nichols, Bill, *'Newsreel': Documentary Filmmaking on the American Left*. New York: Arno Press, 1980.
- Rosenthal, Alan, *The Documentary Conscience: A Casebook in Film Making*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.
- Rosenthal, Alan, *New Challenges to Documentary*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.
- Siegal, Joshua and Marie-Christine de Navacell, eds, *Frederick Wiseman*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2010.
- Steven, Peter, *Brink of Reality: New Canadian Documentary Film and Video*. Toronto: Between the Lines, 1993.
- Venstone, Gail, *D is for Darling: The Women Behind the Films of Studio D*. Toronto: Sumach Press, 2007.
- Wood, Jason, *Nick Broomfield: Documenting Icons*. London: Faber & Faber, 2005.

13

Video Arrives

As the 1970s progressed into the 1980s, a major transition – sometimes threatening to mutate into a battle – took place as technology moved from film to video. Lighter, and easier to learn than 16mm, video did not have to be processed, generally required less light, handled more easily in difficult locations, was felt to be less intrusive in cv/direct situations, and could capture an image in a continuous shot for much longer than a load of film. Perhaps most important for the ever money-strapped documentarian was the fact that tape was much, much cheaper than film stock and laboratory processing. The US military, which, along with the National Football League, had for years been by far the largest consumer of 16mm stock, converted to video. The very serious drawbacks of video – lesser image quality and lack of long-term archival stability – did not seem to outweigh its cost-saving benefits, speed and ease of use.

Even though the first videotape recorder was demonstrated as early as 1956, it was not until the 1968 US presidential campaign that a portable video minicam was used in broadcast television. The 1/2' open reel portapak became available to consumers around the same time, but not until 1973 did a time-base corrector make 1/2' tape pictures acceptable for commercial broadcast. Video technology refinements continued throughout the 1970s and 1980s. In 1986 Sony introduced digital video recorders, dramatically improving ease of use and image quality. By the end of the twentieth century video had almost completely replaced film for most types of documentary-making.



Fig 67 Sony introduced the world's first *The Portable Battery Operated Video Rover* in 1967, the first video portapack. It was black and white, reel to reel, record only. Recording time was 20 minutes on a 4-1/2 inch reel of 1/2 inch videotape. A small hand crank was stored in the unit's lid for rewinding the tape. Playback of tapes (after they were hand rewind) was on separate decks

Development of digital editing systems, chiefly the Avid Media Composer, further revolutionized the field by replacing videotapes, which, like film, had to be moved back and forth, with randomly accessible images on digital hard disks. Fast, relatively simple, and cost-effective, Avid became the standard for digital nonlinear editing. At the end of the twentieth century over eighty per cent of US television commercials and prime-time programmes were edited on this system. These technological advances had numerous effects on documentary production practices as well as aesthetics. Shooting ratios expanded exponentially, since the cost of videotape was a fraction of the cost of film. Editors often faced hundreds of hours of videotape material, rather than the dozens of 16mm hours. This was particularly noticeable in *cv*/direct-style documentaries. Since it cost virtually nothing to let the camera run, why turn it off? In some cases this led to the capture of wonderful, previously unavailable moments; in others it led to overlong navel-gazing of the most boring sort.

The changes in distribution and exhibition brought by video were also dramatic, as technology, economics and artistry once again converged to rearrange documentary form and content. The nontheatrical educational field, which was built on a 16mm film marketplace, lost its economic underpinnings to the low-cost availability of videotape. The sale and rental of 16mm films had created an economic base that from the 1950s until early 1980s generated enough money to support a group of distribution companies, which in turn returned royalties to filmmakers that helped them to continue producing documentaries. The profitability of this business was shattered when a film-user (teacher, librarian, film society programmer), who in 1976 had to pay \$100 to rent or \$800 to buy a 16mm print, could by 1986 purchase a similar videotape for \$29.00. Pre-recorded home video was also a blow to art house and cinematheque exhibition, traditional venues for documentaries. So, although the means of production was more affordable and accessible, the economic returns generated by the distribution of video made profits, or even recouping costs, much more difficult.

A major factor in the transition from film to video was a significant change downward in quality of image and sound recording. Especially in early video work, the poor quality of these, compared with film, caused many serious

debates about aesthetic values. From the vantage of the twenty-first century, when crystal-clear digital imagery is available virtually everywhere, it is difficult to understand the heated passion that surrounded the film vs. video debates. Advocates of film capture of images and sound were ardent in their beliefs that video degraded the form to an unacceptably low level. Video proponents were just as adamant about the ease of use, cost savings and portability of video formats. One of the big problems with video was its multiplicity of formats. New video, and later digital, technologies came (and continue to arrive) on the market in such rapid succession that makers, distributors and audiences all were often spinning in confusion.

The aesthetic effects of video, television and projected film images are all different, in terms of lighting, depth of field, aspect ratio, and even emotional tone, and discussion of these is important. What is just as important, especially for the documentarian, is a consideration of the archival stability of the medium. Earliest videos have in far too many cases simply disappeared, taped over for other purposes, or just disintegrated. Even when a video exists, the format with which it was recorded and/or shown may no longer exist. Salvaging original 2' television videotapes is a rarefied art form, and VHS is being phased out, heading the way of beta, 1' 1/2' and all the other previous formats. DVDs are being pushed out by downloads but neither is archivally stable. In fact, the only medium that has proven to last over a hundred years is film negative, stored in good conditions. For documentary, this is critical. Compilation films are made only when there is historical material to access, and any filmmaker who is producing a document which they hope will last beyond their lifetime needs to be constantly aware of preservation issues. Without conscious preservation efforts, no documentarian can claim that they are making a contribution to social history. Further discussion of this issue is in Chapter 16.

Cable and Satellite Technology

Another of the big changes to affect documentary-making in this period was the growth of multiple cable, later satellite, television channels that began in

the 1970s and exploded in the 1980s. Cable, which originally was intended only to bring a television signal to areas that could not be reached by over-the-air broadcasts, soon presented the possibility of a hugely expanded number of special interest channels. Despite the growth of public-service cable access (described in Chapter 15), the profit-driven nature of US broadcasting assured that most channels, with the exception of public television, were devoted first and foremost to making money. By the end of the eighties there were speciality cable channels for children, every type of sport imaginable, animals, science, home care, history, movies and more. Documentaries and other varieties of nonfiction programming became more widely seen on television than ever before. Ultimately, the economics of this mode of distribution had an enormous impact on production. Like the advent of broadcast television (described in Chapter 12), cable television was both a boon and a bane for documentary. There were countless numbers of hours to fill on these new channels, but very little money to pay for product to fill them.

One of the more hospitable cable outlets for documentaries was, and remains, HBO. In 1972 HBO went on the air, originally transmitted via terrestrial microwave towers. In 1976 it became the first TV network to broadcast signals via satellite when it showed the 'Thrilla from Manila' boxing match between Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier. Shortly after that, other networks also began satellite transmission. HBO, with its subsidiary Cinemax, has both produced and acquired a wide range of documentaries, including an extensive number of works from both emerging and established independents. Under the long-time leadership of executive Sheila Nevins, HBO has supported work by Al Maysles, Alan and Susan Raymond (*Children of War*), Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman (*Paragraph 17*), and Jon Alpert, as well as Jessica Yu (*The Living Museum*), Rory Kennedy (*American Hollow*), Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky (*Brother's Keeper*, *Paradise Lost: The Child Murders at Robin Hood Hills*), Mitchell Block and Sarah Nesson (*Poster Girl*). Due in part to relatively lush production and marketing budgets, HBO helped to create a high television profile for serious documentaries in the 1980s and 1990s. At the same time, it became a cable home for some of the most innovative filmmakers in the US. HBO creates its share of cable 'potboiler' documentaries such as *Real Sex* but, unlike most other cable entities, it offsets these

with pieces in which filmmakers retain a great deal of artistic control over their work.

In another vein, Ted Turner launched CNN in 1980, calling it 'America's News Channel'. At that time it reached only about 1.7 million households. By 1985 CNN reached more than 33 million households, nearly forty per cent of all US television homes. In that year Turner combined the US domestic signals of CNN and *Headline News* to put them on a global satellite system, creating CNN International. In doing so he created a commercial web, outside of old major network control, feeding news images to and from all parts of the world. CNN and TBS (Turner Broadcasting System) have been responsible for numerous documentaries, among the most notable being the continuation of the Cousteau legacy of undersea exploration begun by David Wolper.

The birth and growth of The Discovery Channel provides an interesting example of the shifting relationship between documentaries and television in the 1980s. It is representative of the mass of nonfiction programming that in the twenty-first century occupies most of the time on such networks as A&E, The History Channel, The Learning Channel, The Military Channel, House and Garden, American Movie Classics, and dozens of others. John S. Hendricks, founder, chairman and CEO of Discovery Communications, created the US Discovery Channel in 1982 as a cable network designed to provide documentary programming with a goal of 'enabling people to explore their world and satisfy their natural curiosity'. By definition, Discovery was all documentary all the time. In 2003 Discovery Channel reached over 86 million subscribers in the United States and was the most widely distributed television brand in the world, reaching over 425 million homes in over 155 countries. At least nineteen offices outside the US are part of its extensive infrastructure, enabling Discovery Networks International to create inroads in fast-growing markets from China to India to Mexico.

Although Discovery began as most cable channels did, by acquiring low-cost programming produced by others, it soon turned to in-house production to fill its ever-expanding schedule. One very early Discovery acquisition, for example, was *Justiceville* (1987), a half-hour video by Gary Glaser about homeless activists in Los Angeles. After Discovery's first months of operation, nothing remotely like this subject matter or its rough-hewn

treatment (the soundtrack was by rapper Ice T) would make it into the channel's formula. Instead, Discovery's most successful audience-pleaser by far has been the relentless *Shark Week*. It is now a mega-business, having gone through many corporate restructurings, buying and selling of businesses, and the channel is one of many that are part of Discovery Communications Holding Corp.

The methods of production adopted by Discovery became the antithesis of the vision of an independent filmmaker with control over the form and content of his/her work. Rather than presenting a fully formed documentary piece in its entirety, Discovery became most interested in 'branding' itself as a cable 'destination', and 'repurposing' material contributed by filmmakers to create specifically targeted programmes for each of its international markets. In other words, a show about elephants might have one point of view and artistic perspective for audiences in North America, and the same material could be re-edited with a different soundtrack, aesthetic values and point of view for an audience in the Middle East. The documentary culture created by these practices is discussed further in Chapter 17.

Personal Essay Film

Some of the same technological factors that led to the production models at Discovery also contributed to the growth of very individualized films created for opposite reasons. Inexpensive video and the ease of use of digital media led many individuals who would otherwise never pick up a camera to create their own documentaries, as Pat Aufderheide, Director of the Centre of Social Media at American University, so clearly points out:

First-person films – diaries, memoirs, home movies, therapeutic records, travelogues – have been part of the audio-visual landscape for decades. But it was not until the mid-1980s that the personal essay film became accessible beyond the reaches of film schools and art houses, and began to take a place in the programming diet of television. It was a period of rapid expansion of accessible video technology, and just-as-rapid cutting-back of public resources for

independent and experimental use of the medium. Personal essay documentaries were part of a trend in documentary work overall towards a more intimate approach, even in explicitly public affairs subject matter, with the goal of intervening in a shared understanding of meaning. In this documentary genre, the narrator takes clear ownership of the narration, at the same time that the narrator is a character. They are frankly, inevitably personal.

Ross McElwee is the filmmaker perhaps most acclaimed for (or accused of) initiating a flood of self-reflexivity that became known in the 1980s as personal diary or essay documentary. Like Michelle Citron, Mitchell Block, Jim McBride and Nick Broomfield, McElwee is another of the first film school-educated generation of documentarians. He began in 1975 as a graduate student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, when Ricky Leacock was leading the documentary film programme there. Ten years later McElwee made *Sherman's March: A Meditation on the Possibility of Romantic Love in the South During an Era of Nuclear Weapons Proliferation* (1986). In it McElwee retraces Union General William Tecumseh Sherman's destructive Civil War path, interweaving his journey with vignettes of seven Southern women. The film is not at all about General Sherman. Highly influential among other emerging documentarians of the time, and critically applauded, *Sherman's March* was followed by McElwee's continued self-reflection in *Something To Do With the Wall* (1991) and *Six O' Clock News* (1998). His films tend to be like *Bright Leaves* (2003), subtly comic, certainly self-deprecating, and appreciative of life around him. The vagueness and intensely personal subject matter in McElwee's films make them difficult to categorize. They are documentaries and yet they are profoundly subjective. McElwee completely exposes his family and friends to the audience in genuinely closed-lipped society of the South. McElwee the filmmaker/storyteller creates works which are both uniquely his and completely accessible.

Alan Berliner, another 1970s film school graduate, merged experimental art with documentary fact in a very personal manner. *Intimate Stranger* (1991) explores the extraordinary life of Berliner's maternal grandfather, a Palestinian Jew raised in Egypt, whose obsession with all things Japanese created confusion and conflict in his post-World War II Brooklyn home. Berliner has said:



Fig 68 Ross McElwee in a North Carolina tobacco field with Aaton camera shooting *Bright Leaves* (US, 2004, Ross McElwee). Photo by Adrian McElwee

The truth is I never actually ‘decided’ to become a filmmaker; somehow via a more arduous and circuitous route derived of inner necessity, I grew into one. Much of my adult life has been spent grappling with the conflicts and contradictions of family. With both the presences and absences of memory. When I came upon my family home movies ... the images I had forgotten about suddenly became triggers for a flood of memories. Using them in my films became a kind of photo-therapy, perhaps, even a way towards healing some of the wounds of my childhood.

Compilation

For a time in the 1970s and 1980s, before many of the rights-holders realized the economic value of their footage, putting together ‘clip shows’ was relatively inexpensive. Part of the David Wolper empire, discussed in Chapter 12, was built upon popular themes such as *Hollywood and the Stars*, the 1963

clip-filled documentary 31 part mini series on NBC. Other filmmakers used the technique to explore more serious subjects.

America Lost and Found (1980) is a compilation by Tom Johnson and Lance Bird which conveys the impact of the economic and social collapse of the Great Depression in the United States. The filmmakers spent three-and-a-half years on research and production, assembling period film, photographs and sounds. Evocative commentary, written by John Crowley, reinforces the images of how the US reacted to the loss of its dreams of prosperity, and how those dreams were slowly rebuilt. This is a deeply psychological presentation of the effects of the Depression, offering persuasive yet emotional contrasts among the images, the hype, and the realities of the era. *The World of Tomorrow* (1985), also by Johnson and Bird and narrated by Jason Robards, is perhaps the most poignant historical film of the 1980s. Its use of home movies, many in colour, as well as promotional films from the 1939 New York World's Fair, captures a precious and precarious moment when the world stood poised between optimism about the fading of the Depression and foreboding occasioned by a looming World War.

Atomic Café (1982), by Jane Loader, Kevin Rafferty and Pierce Rafferty, is a serio-comic compilation elaborating on the ways that Americans' awestruck celebration of atomic weapons changed to pervasive fear of Soviet nuclear attack. When Rafferty found a catalogue of US government films in a San Francisco bookstore in 1976, he envisioned a film that would utilize such titles to create a satirical documentary on the subject of American propaganda. After six years of work, *Atomic Café* emerged as a successful theatrical feature, partly because the filmmakers abandoned narration and relied on the power of the footage and its often-ludicrous original soundtrack. The film's footage, much of it produced by the government, follows the development of the bomb through the atomic attacks on Japan to its central role in the cold war. Shown along with the infamous 'duck and cover' Civil Defence films are lesser-known clips, many of which are unintentionally filled with twisted black humour.

Other documentaries responding to the threat of nuclear warfare during these years were: *The Day After Trinity* (1980, Jon Else); *Eight Minutes to Midnight* (1981, Mary Benjamin, Suzanne Simpson, Baird Bryant); *If You Love This Planet: Dr. Helen Caldicott on Nuclear War* (1982, NFBC Studio D);

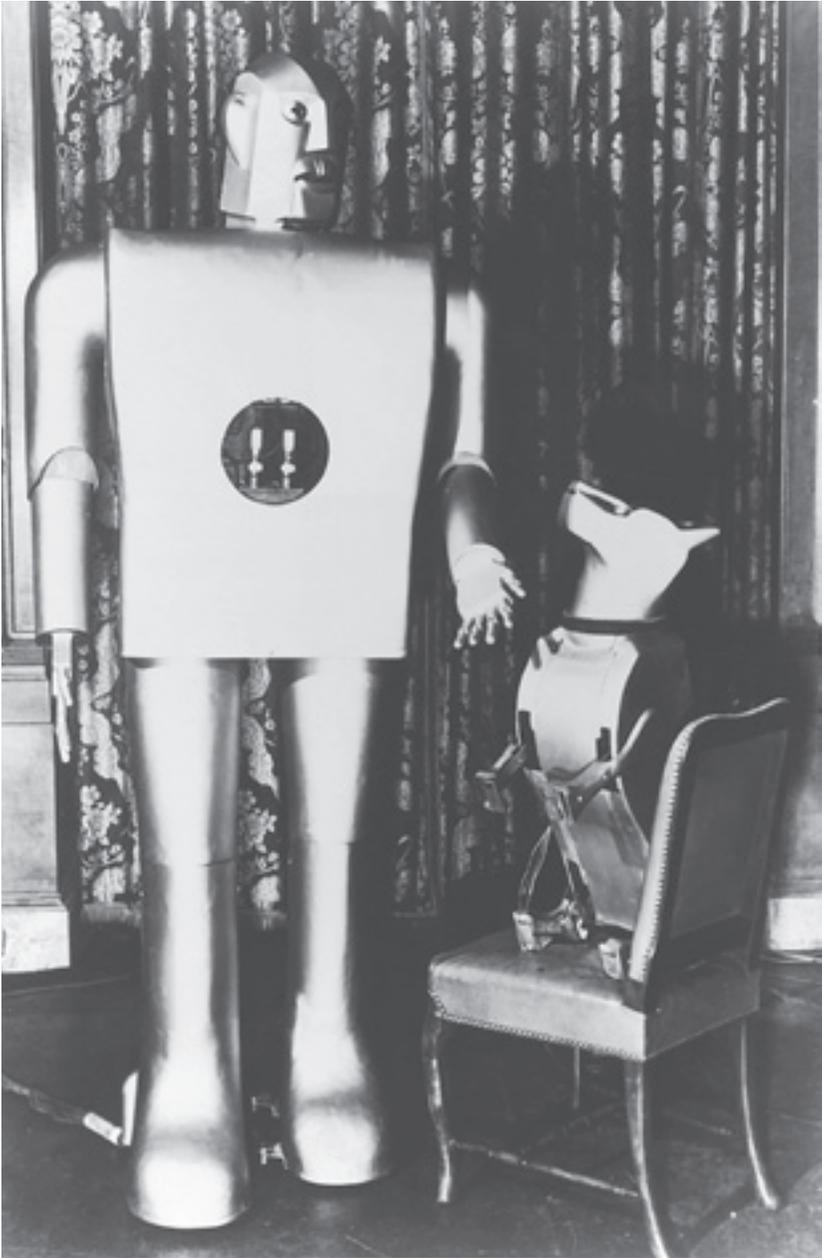


Fig 69 'Electro' the Moto Man and his mechanical dog 'Sparko' were among the attractions at the 1939 New York World's Fair, documented in *The World of Tomorrow* (US, 1980, Lance Bird and Tom Johnson). Direct Cinema Ltd. 2005

Half Life: A Parable for the Nuclear Age (1985, Dennis O'Rourke); *Radio Bikini* (1987, Robert Stone); and *Dark Circle* (1991, Judy Irving and Chris Beaver). Each of these films makes a strong anti-nuclear case, although in very different ways. Perhaps the most interesting in political terms is *If You Love This Planet*, produced by Women's Studio D at the National Film Board of Canada and directed by Terre Nash. In many ways it is simply a filmed speech by eloquent anti-nuclear activist Dr Helen Caldicott. But her message and the delivery of the film are very powerful, and United States nuclear policies are harshly criticized. Before winning an Academy Award as Best Documentary short, the twenty-minute film was labelled as 'political propaganda' by the Reagan-era US Department of Justice under the aegis of a 1930s-era law. Copies of the film print shown in the US were required to carry this warning label, creating a situation in which a documentary from the NFBC was discussed as enemy propaganda.

The career of one of the most successful producers of historical/compilation films, Charles Guggenheim, spanned half a century. He made over one hundred documentaries, was nominated for twelve Academy Awards, and won four of them. In 1954 he established his first production company in St Louis, where he produced a seminal film about the construction of the St Louis Arch, *Monument to the Dream* (1967). It won the Venice Film Festival's XI Gold Mercury Award, marking the first time in the festival's history that the award was given to an American. It was while in St Louis that Guggenheim won his first Academy Award, for the film *Nine from Little Rock* (1964), which tells the story of the Arkansas school integration crisis. Later he moved to Washington, DC, to work with George Stevens, Jr, who headed the film programme of the United States Information Agency (USIA) under Edward R. Murrow.

Guggenheim's second Academy Award came from *Robert Kennedy Remembered*, a film biography, which was made in a remarkable six weeks after the senator's assassination, in time for the 1968 Democratic Party Convention. The third Academy Award went to *The Johnstown Flood*, which included many re-enactment scenes of this 1889 disaster (commemorating its hundredth anniversary). His final Oscar was received in 1995 for *A Time for Justice*, a film about the Civil Rights Movement.

Despite acclaim, Guggenheim pursued his work with an almost private single-mindedness, developing an unadorned style that seemed to be a reflection of his own personality. In his later films, such as the Academy Award-nominated *D-Day Remembered* (1994), Guggenheim began to explore history from a singular point of view. The struggle and humanity of a few individuals thrown into harrowing circumstances beyond their control was the kind of story that interested him most. This was a theme that would lead him towards his most personal film of all – and his last.

Berga: Soldiers of Another War, made with his daughter Grace Guggenheim and his last film before his death in 2002, was the first film in fifty years of directing and producing in which Guggenheim included himself in the telling of the story. Many of the American soldiers caught in World War II's Battle of the Bulge were from his 106th Infantry Division. He could have shared their fate if he had not been injured in basic training. In his narration he remembers quietly: 'They went overseas, and I didn't. And some of them didn't come back. And I've been thinking about it for fifty years, wondering why it didn't happen to me. And that's why I had to tell this story.'

Strictly Political

The long tradition of using documentary to instigate political action continued in the 1980s and 1990s. Although his documentaries are not generally political, Charles Guggenheim was one of the first to create television promotion for American political campaigns, using documentary style in groundbreaking ways. Starting with the presidential campaigns of Adlai Stevenson, Robert Kennedy and George McGovern, he went on to shape the campaigns of many of the most prominent senatorial and gubernatorial Democratic candidates in the 1960s and 1970s. Unlike the 'slash and burn' techniques used in many of today's media campaigns, Guggenheim sought to reveal the character of his candidates in an affirmative way, and to let the issues speak for themselves. In a speech before Congress, he explained why, in the early 1980s, he had quit the business of political advertising: 'If you play the piano in a house of ill repute, it doesn't make a difference how well you play the piano.'

The new ease of use and low cost of video production of the 1980s made it easier for activists of many stripes to cover situations in remote places. The Central American insurgencies of that era, and US involvement in them, occasioned a number of impassioned exposés. As often happens in documentary, the desire to impress the audience with the importance and/or urgency of the subject sometimes overrides the attention given to craft and artistry. Rarely does someone with the vision of Dziga Vertov use documentary to break aesthetic as well as political ground, but the following documentarians have at least well understood the use of film as political hammer.

Pamela Yates' work in war-torn Central America includes the Academy Award-winner *Witness to War: Dr Charlie Clements* (1985, made with David Goodman), as well as *When the Mountains Tremble* (1984) and *Nicaragua: Report From the Front* (1983). Her trilogy *Living Broke in Boom Times* (1990, 1997, 1999, made with Peter Kinoy) describes poverty in America in the 1990s. With Peter Kinoy, she completed *Presumed Guilty* in 2002, a study of the US criminal justice system seen through the eyes of Public Defenders. In 2011 *Granito* was released using the footage from *When the Mountains Tremble* to continue the story of genocide carried out against the Mayan people by the Guatemalan government.

Barbara Trent started the Empowerment Project, which uses agit-prop techniques to inform and motivate audiences to speak out. *The Panama Deception* (1992, with David Kasper) won the Academy Award with its blunt indictment of US policies in that country. Her other pieces include *Coverup: Behind the Iran Contra Affair* (1988) and *Destination Nicaragua* (1986). Trent's work continues into the twenty-first century with anti-globalism documentaries.

Long-time filmmaker and activist Robert Richter has worked in documentary since his days with the Edward R. Murrow team. His career has been dedicated to creating documentary exposés such as *Father Roy: Inside the School of Assassins* (1997), narrated by Susan Sarandon. This film exploring the inner working of the US Army's School of the Americas recounts the actions of Father Roy Bourgeois, a Vietnam War hero and leader in the campaign to close the school. Non-US operatives were trained at this school for work in

Latin America, and Richter documents human rights abuses committed by its graduates. Other productions include the short *School of Assassins* (1994), also narrated by Sarandon, which was nominated for an Academy Award, as was his *Gods of Metal* (1982), a short film about non-violent protests against nuclear proliferation.

Barbara Kopple is best known for her documentaries, two of which are Oscar-winners: *Harlan County, USA* (1976) remains the most famous, although she has made many more documentaries and also some narrative works. An early job was as part of the Winter Soldier Collective, a group of filmmakers who recorded the testimony of returning Vietnam War veterans in 1972. She then spent nearly four years with coal miners in Harlan County, Kentucky, recording the effects of a bitter thirteen-month strike and creating *Harlan County, USA*. This is a sympathetic record of coal miners and their families fighting big business. Also Oscar-winning is *American Dream* (1990), which again deals with a strike from the point of view of the workers, this time at a Hormel meat plant. Kopple's other documentaries include *Wild Man Blues* (1998–9), *Shut Up and Sing* (2006), *Woodstock: Now and Then* (2009).

Kopple's work clearly flows from a traditional political or sometimes simply humanistic perspective. She often uses editing selectivity to shape audience perspective, her positions becoming clear by allowing arguments to be stated by characters in the films and then be answered within the films. In some ways her work is as much about the process of creating public response as about investigating a situation. One of Kopple's latest films is *Gun Fight* (2011), narration-free film that combines interviews and visits to gun fairs and National Rifle Association conventions, along with news and archival footage. It takes no outright position but is clearly cautionary.

Racial and Ethnic Minorities

Exploring African-American history was Henry Hampton (1940–98), who established Blackside, Inc. in 1968, the largest African-American-owned film company of its time. As he chronicled political developments of the twentieth



Fig 70 Barbara Kopple's *Harlan County, USA*, 1976. Cabin Creek Films

century, Hampton became one of the world's most respected documentarians. As executive producer, with Judith Vecchione as series senior producer, Hampton headed production of the massive PBS series *Eyes on the Prize*. The episodes, made over twelve years, followed the pattern of other historical compilations to make its points, using archival footage, interviews with participants, stills, and a strong period musical score. It remains a touchstone in television documentary history in its telling of the story of race relations in the United States.

Eyes on the Prize I: America's Civil Rights Years 1954–1965 (1987), narrated by Julian Bond, documents events that helped focus the nation's attention on the oppression of African-American citizens, such as the lynching of fourteen-year-old Emmett Till in 1955, and the Montgomery Bus Boycott. It also covers the key court case *Brown v. the Board of Education* and other milestones. *Eyes on the Prize II: America at the Racial Crossroads 1965–1985* uses the same formula of mixing present-day interviews and historical footage

to examine those years of social unrest. Despite the critical and popular success of the first part, Hampton had difficulty raising the six million dollars needed to fund the sequel. The subjects of *Eyes II* – the rise of the Black Panther Party, the Nation of Islam, the Vietnam War, busing, and Affirmative Action – were considered too controversial by many potential funders. In a television interview, Hampton once said that he thought the civil rights movement was often overshadowed by the memory of Martin Luther King, Jr, and that *Eyes on the Prize* was an attempt to tell the stories of lesser-known civil rights activists. He wanted the series to be a testament to the power of ordinary people to effect great changes.

Blackside completed sixty major films and media projects, most exploring the worlds of the poor and disenfranchised. Among the dozens of filmmakers who worked with Hampton in making these films were Orlando Bagwell, Lillian Benson, Callie Crossley, Jim DeVinney, Jon Else, Louis Massiah, Sam Pollard, Judy Richardson, Terry Rockefeller, Paul Stekkler and Tracy Strain. Blackside titles include: *Malcolm X: Make It Plain* (1994), *America's War on Poverty* (1995), and *I'll Make Me a World* (1999).

Marlon Riggs' films explore various aspects of African-American life and culture, and earned him wide recognition before his early death in 1994. In addition to the intrinsic value of his work and his teaching, Riggs is remembered for the controversy surrounding the public television broadcasts of his highly charged *Tongues United*, which is discussed at the end of this chapter. *Ethnic Notions: Black People in White Minds* (1987) is a historical compilation examination of mass media stereotypes of African-Americans, much like Appalshop's review of hillbilly stereotypes in *Strangers and Kin*. Riggs' *Colour Adjustment* (1989) continued the themes of *Ethnic Notions* as it traces forty years of race relations through the lens of TV shows like *Amos and Andy*, *The Nat King Cole Show*, *I Spy*, *Julia*, *Good Times*, *Roots* and *The Cosby Show*. Riggs looks at these familiar favourites in a revealing examination of the interplay between America's racial consciousness and network primetime programming.

Other African-American documentarians of note include St Clair Bourne, who chronicled African life internationally by finding common links among people of African descent. Over twenty-five years he made more than forty

films, including the feature-length *Half Past Autumn: The Life and Works of Gordon Parks* (2000) for HBO. With actor Wesley Snipes as executive producer, Bourne directed *John Henrik Clarke: A Great and Mighty Walk* (1996), a feature-length documentary about the respected historian and Pan-African activist. He also made *Paul Robeson: Here I Stand!* (1999). For at least forty years filmmaker Bill Miles has created documentaries such as *Men of Bronze* (1997), the story of the 369th Infantry regiment of African-American soldiers that fought under the French flag in World War I, *The Untold West: The Black West* (1994), and *Black Stars in Orbit* (1990), a film about the black astronauts.

In the UK, Black Audio Film Collective (1982-1998) was one of the film and video workshops set up in Britain in the aftermath of inner-city protests against institutionalized racism. Best-known and most controversial of the collective's work, *Handsworth Songs* (1986), directed by John Akomfrah, uses self-reflexivity and fragmentation to examine the history of contemporary black British experience. Shot in the aftermath of riots against discrimination and unemployment in Handsworth, Birmingham, the film uses images of the violence intercut with interviews with local residents. These are interwoven with archival footage of immigration into Britain, and mainstream media coverage of the riots, along with interior audio monologues. It is part of an emerging history of black people in England in its post-colonial eras. Other documentaries by Akomfrah include *Seven Songs for Malcolm X* (1993) and *Martin Luther King – Days of Hope* (1997). *Black and White in Colour* (1992), a two-part documentary produced by the British Film Institute and directed by Isaac Julien, details the role of black and Asian people in British television. It includes material on Akomfrah, who now also works with multi-media installations.

In documentary, one of the most successfully organized US racial minorities has been the various coalitions of Asian-Pacific filmmakers. The year 2010 marked the fortieth anniversary of Los Angeles-based Visual Communications, the thirty-fourth anniversary of Asian Cine Vision (both of these organizations sponsor large film festivals), and the thirtieth anniversary of the National Asian-American Telecommunications Association (NAATA). These organizations support Asian-American filmmakers and seek to address

the need to raise social and cultural awareness of Asian-American experience and history. All three groups played a consistently important role in defining an Asian-Pacific documentary presence.

One of the well-known Asian-American documentarians is Arthur Dong, who is also claimed by the gay film community. His professional career began with *Sewing Woman* (1983), about the life of his grandmother, an immigrant seamstress. Dong's productions also include *Forbidden City USA*. (1989), a musical tribute to Asian-American nightclub performers in the 1940s, and *Licensed to Kill* (1997), a brutal look into the minds of murderers who killed gay men. *Coming Out Under Fire* (1994) chronicles the lives of nine gay and lesbian soldiers during World War II, when the US military established its first explicit anti-gay policies. *Hollywood Chinese* (2007) is an entertaining look at how Chinese are represented in American films. Dong is an interesting example of a filmmaker who has retained a great deal of independence by self-distributing all of his own work. This distribution income, coupled with grants funding, gives him an autonomy that is very different from that of producers for cable outlets.

Like many Asian-American documentarians, most of the work of Christine Choy deals with social issues directly pertaining to personal experience. Choy with Rene Tajima made a number of films, including their best-known, the Academy Award-nominated *Who Killed Vincent Chin?* (1988). This is about the murder of a twenty-seven-year-old Chinese-American, whose bachelor party turned into an ugly confrontation in a suburban Detroit bar, and later into Chin's fatal beating outside a fast-food restaurant. The incident, on 19 June 1982, was an almost perfect metaphor for the growing anti-Asian sentiment in America: it was ignorant (the attackers presumed Chin was Japanese); it was economically motivated (the two autoworkers blamed the Japanese – and, mistakenly, Chin – for the loss of US auto industry jobs); and the crime was horribly violent (a baseball bat was used as the murder weapon). The film presents this information in a dispassionate nightly-news manner which serves to make the facts even more shocking.

Other Asian-American documentarians who have left a mark include multi-Academy Award-nominated Freida Lee Mock, *Maya Lin: a Strong Clear Vision* (1995); Rea Tajiri, *History and Memory of Takiko and Takashige*

(1991); Jessica Yu, *Breathing Lessons: The Life and Work of Mark O'Brien* (1996); Dai Sil Kim-Gibson, *Silence Broken: Korean Comfort Women* (1999), about Korean victims of WWII Japanese aggression enslaved as prostitutes for Japanese soldiers; Loni Ding, *The Color of Honor* (1987), on the experiences of Japanese-American soldiers in WWII; and Stephen Okazaki, *Black Tar Heroin: The Dark End of the Street* (1999) and the Academy Award-winning *Days of Waiting* (1990). Spencer Nakasako has worked in the Southeast Asian community in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco for several years, training at-risk refugee teenagers in video production. He produced and co-directed *a.k.a. Don Bonus* (1994), a portrait of a Cambodian family devastated by the pressures of life in their adopted country.

Canadian Abenaki Indian Alanis Obomsawin has had a long career as singer, writer and storyteller, promoting the history and culture of her people. In 1967, after being seen in a television profile, *Alanis* (1965), she was invited by the National Film Board to act as a consultant, and has since divided her time between filmmaking and performing. In 1971 she directed her first film, *Christmas at Moose Factory*, a study of life in a small Northern settlement based on children's drawings. Between 1977 and 1994 she made ten films illustrating different aspects of Aboriginal life. Committed to the cause of justice for her people, she documented two major confrontations: *Incident at Restigouche* (1984) and *Kanehsatake 270 Years of Resistance*, her best-known work

In the United States – unlike Canada, where Indians use the term Aboriginal – the preferred term for American Indians is Native. The Native American Public Broadcasting Consortium was begun in 1974 by a group of six producers, with twenty-six public television stations. Its mission is to support and promote Native American culture through various media productions. Although it has been involved in numerous documentary works, its greatest successes have been with radio, and more recently internet development. In 1977 Frank Blythe opened a national office at the Nebraska Educational Television network headquarters in Lincoln, and was named Executive Director, a position he held for over twenty-five years.

In the Latino filmmaking community, noteworthy documentarians include Lourdes Portillo, whose *The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo* (1985) was the result



Fig 71 Alanis Obomsawin. *International Documentary Association*

of a three-year collaboration with writer/director Susana Muñoz and was nominated for an Academy Award. Her next film, *La Ofrenda: The Day of the Dead* (1989), is a charming look at cultural blending. *La Ofrenda* is set up to challenge the notion that, as Portillo puts it, 'documentary is always associated with injustice'. In it she celebrates the traditions of a colourful Mexican and Chicano holiday, the November 1st celebration of *el día de los muertos*. The film relies on a poetic structure that Portillo has used in other work. *Senorita Extraviada, Missing Young Woman* (2001) tells the haunting story of the more than two hundred kidnapped, raped and murdered young women near the maquilladores of Juárez, Mexico. Like others of the PBS Minority Consortium Groups, there is an organization of Latino Public Broadcasting, although much of its efforts have been focused on fiction works.

Representing Gay and Lesbian Culture

As an outgrowth of the social changes and the video technology of the 1970s, various previously disenfranchised groups began to make more documentaries speaking directly to their concerns. Homosexuals were one large group who found in documentary a powerful way to express a distinctive culture. Many of the advances in gay, later labelled queer, cinema were made in the documentary.

Word is Out: Some Stories of Our Lives (1977), an early landmark, was produced collectively by the San Francisco-based Mariposa Film Group: Peter Adair, Nancy Adair, Andrew Brown, Veronica Selver, Lucy Phenix and Rob Epstein. Following videotaped interviews with two hundred gay and lesbian people from across the United States, they focused on a selected group of these individuals. After more than a year of editing, they cut fifty hours of material to a final 135-minute version. *Word Is Out* is divided into three major sections: 'The Early Years', 'Growing Up', and 'From Now On' – although the interviews weave in and out among these with little formal structure. What emerges is a somewhat random, but often moving, collage portrait of the personal stories of gays and lesbians in mid-1970s America.



Fig 72 *Las Madres: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo* (US, 1985, Lourdes Portillo and Susana Muñoz). Direct Cinema Ltd.

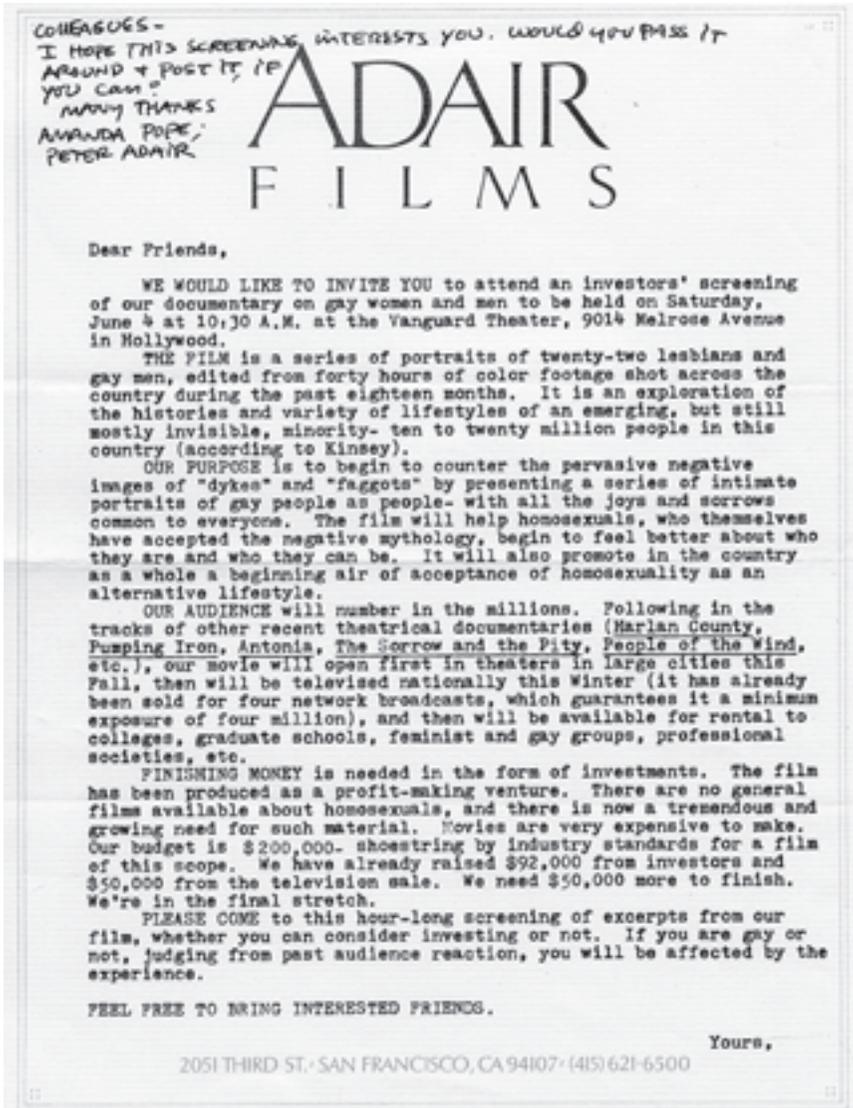


Fig 73 A fundraising letter for the film *Word Is Out*. (US, 1977, Mariposa Film Group). Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences

Before Stonewall (1984, Robert Rosenberg, John Scagliotti and Greta Schiller, narrated by Rita Mae Brown) chronicles the evolution of gay culture in the US from the early 1920s to the violence in 1969. In that year patrons of the Stonewall Inn in New York's Greenwich Village decided to fight back against ongoing harassment, transforming a police raid into three nights of



Fig 74 *The Mariposa Group of filmmakers who made Word Is Out, left to right: Lucy Phenix, Nancy Adair, Peter Adair, Rob Epstein, Andrew Brown, and Veronica Selver*

rioting that signalled the public nature of the new gay liberation movement. Using archival footage and photography from five decades, the film explores the gay underground of the twenties and thirties, the rise of gays in the military and workforce during WWII, and their persecution in the US State Department as ‘subversives’ and ‘sexual perverts’ by Senator McCarthy in the 1950s. *After Stonewall* (1999, directed by Scagliotti and narrated by Melissa Etheridge) explores gay and lesbian history from the 1970s through the 1990s. Like its predecessor, it covers a lot of ground in a short time, but since it deals with only three decades it is more concise.

Other important films of the era dealing in different ways with gay life include Academy Award-winning *The Times of Harvey Milk* (1984) by Rob Epstein and Richard Schmeiken. In 1978, Harvey Milk was elected to the San Francisco city council, becoming the first openly gay person elected to public office in California. One year later he and Mayor George Moscone were shot and killed by another council member, former police officer and fireman

Dan White. *The Times of Harvey Milk* recreates the story of Milk's grass-roots political organizing and election, through the murders and their repercussions. From the eloquent candlelight memorial joined by tens of thousands of San Franciscans on the evening of the assassinations, to the angry mobs who stormed City Hall, breaking windows and torching police cars in the aftermath of White's lenient sentencing, the film is a revealing analysis of democracy in America. As photographer Andrew Epstein said:

Richard and Robert's vision was, of course, the bigger picture, the whole story in political terms. They reclaimed a queer political history that could have easily been forgotten. They recorded and bore witness. It was our assassination, our Kennedy, our King, our Malcolm X, our bullet.

Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt (1989) by Bill Couturié, Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman, made for HBO, is one of the most hauntingly beautiful, and accessible to the public of many films concerning the AIDS crisis. Narrated by Dustin Hoffman, with a score sung by Bobby McFerrin, the film tells the story of the growth of the AIDS epidemic from its mysterious beginnings to the peak of the epidemic in the US.

Of the gay-identified filmmakers, experimental adventurer Barbara Hammer is probably the most prolific. Since the 1970s she has made over eighty films and videos, and is considered a pioneer of lesbian-feminist experimental cinema. Her work can be directly related to the experimental art documentaries of the 1920s. One early piece, *Dyketactics* (1974), was the first film about lesbian lovemaking to be made by a lesbian. Her trilogy of documentary essays on lesbian and gay history – *Nitrate Kisses* (1992), *Tender Fictions* (1995) and *History Lessons* (2000) – has been widely acclaimed. Hammer uses an evocative visual and aural style in which, although imagery may not always be instantly readable in a literal sense, its emotional and often sexual power is clearly recognizable. Her films are also laced with a sophisticated humour and sometimes-graphic eroticism.

Hammer's uncompromising work is far from mainstream, unlike that of African-American filmmaker Marlon Riggs, who pushed the boundaries of conventional network television. Before his death from AIDS in 1994, Riggs became one of the more controversial figures in recent documentary history.



Fig 75 The Times of Harvey Milk (US, 1984, Rob Epstein and Richard Schmiechen)

In his second film, *Tongues Untied* (1988), Riggs profiled urban African-American gay men with frank portraits of gay subcultures, complete with explicit language and sexual imagery. The film was partly financed by a \$5,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). When it was about to be broadcast nationally on PBS, descriptions of the film's subject matter touched off a heated debate about government funding of art that some labelled obscene. While artists argued for free speech, government policymakers, especially the politically conservative, engaged in a public discussion about the use of taxpayer money for the funding of such work. Adding to the controversy was the fact that the public television *POV* (Point of View) series which presented the film also receives general production funding from the Endowment. Leaders of conservative organizations, many of whom had not seen it, labelled *Tongues Untied* obscene. When a few public stations decided not to air the programme, this self-censorship added to the debate. Although most PBS stations did broadcast the film, controversy surrounding *Tongues Untied* played a key role in the future NEA decision to stop funding individual artists, including individual filmmakers.

Chapter Related Films

1980

The Day After Trinity (US, Jon Else)

From Mao to Mozart: Isaac Stern in China (US, Murray Lerner)

Garlic Is as Good as Ten Mothers (US, Les Blank)

1981

Not a Love Story (Canada, Bonnie Sherr Klein)

Eight Minutes to Midnight (US, Mary Benjamin, Suzanne Simpson, Baird Bryant)

1982

Atomic Café (US, Jane Loader, Kevin Rafferty, Pierce Rafferty)

The Brooklyn Bridge (US, Ken Burns)

Burden of Dreams (US, Les Blank)

If You Love This Planet (Canada, Terre Nash)

1983

The Profession of Arms (Canada, Gwynne Dyer, Michael Bryans, Tina Viljoen)

1984

The Times of Harvey Milk (US, Rob Epstein and Richard Schmiechen)

1985

Las Madres: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo (US, Susana Muñoz and Lourdes Portillo)
28 Up (UK, Michael Apted)

1986

Handsworth Songs (UK, John Akomfrah)
Sherman's March (US, Ross McElwee)
The World of Tomorrow (US, Lance Bird and Tom Johnson)

1987

Eyes on the Prize (US, Henry Hampton)
To a Safer Place (Canada, Beverly Shaffer)

1988

Lighting Over Braddock: A Rustbowl Fantasy (US, Tony Buba)
The Thin Blue Line (US, Errol Morris)
Tongues Untied (US, Marlon Riggs)
Who Killed Vincent Chin? (US, Rene Tajima and Christine Choy)

1989

Common Threads; Stories from the Quilt (US, Bill Couturié, Rob Epstein, Jeffrey Friedman)
Roger & Me (US, Michael Moore)

1992

Black and White in Colour (UK, Isaac Julien)
Brother's Keeper (UK, Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky)
Nitrate Kisses (US, Barbara Hammer)

1992

Berga: Soldiers of Another War (US, Charles Guggenheim)

Chapter Related Books

- Boyle, Deirdre. *Video Classics: A Guide to Video Art and Documentary Tapes*. Oryx Press, 1986.
- Crittendon, Roger with Cherry Potter, *Confronting Reality: Some Perspectives on Documentary*. Beaconsfield, Bucks: CILECT Review Clarendon Printers, 1985.
- Goldsmith, David A., *The Documentary-makers: Interviews with 15 of the Best in the Business*. Switzerland: RotoVision, 2003.
- Homlund, Chris and Cynthia Fuchs, (eds), *Between the Sheets, In the Streets: Queer, Lesbian, and Gay Documentary*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.
- Rabiger, Michael, *Directing the Documentary*. Oxford: Focal Press, 1992.
- Rosenthal, Alan, *The New Challenges for Documentary*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.
- Steven, Peter, *Brink of Reality: New Canadian Documentary Film and Video*. Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 1993.
- Stubbs, Liz, *Documentary Filmmakers Speak*. New York: Allworth Press, 2000.

Waldman, Diane and Janet Walker, (eds), *Feminism and Documentary*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

Zimmerman, Patricia R., *States of Emergency: Documentaries, Wars, Democracies*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

Reality Bytes

The centennial of cinema, including the 100-year mark for the documentary, was 1995. The date of the first public projection of film, which took place on 28 December 1895 in Paris, is recognized by hundreds of film organizations around the world as the moment when cinema officially began. As described in Chapter 1, that now-famous Lumière Brothers exhibition at the Grand Café consisted of an approximately twenty-five-minute programme of very short – less than one minute each – films. In that first public screening, the dialectic between the ‘real’ and the ‘staged’, which is continuously included in discussion of documentary, was already in play. On that occasion, both ‘actualities’ and fiction-based vignettes were shown together without distinction. It is probably safe to say that no one from the Lumière organization stood up and announced: ‘Here we have a selection of real, unscripted events, and other scenes which are acted for the camera.’ In fact, those films in the programme long deemed ‘actualities’, such as *Workers Leaving the Factory*, on close examination appear to have been as rehearsed as the ‘enactment’ of the comic *The Hoser Hosed* (*L’Arroseur arrosé*). The Lumière workers were surely told to exit the factory gates as the camera was rolling, and not to look at the camera. Different ‘takes’ of this scene, possibly shot days apart, remain extant over a hundred years later. Still, the workers were nonactors, even if specially dressed for the occasion, and they engaged in an everyday activity as the Lumière camera recorded them. The people in *The Hoser Hosed* were play-acting a comedy.

Over the next hundred years, as suggested in this book, documentary and fiction filmmakers travelled mostly separate routes. However often the

subjects and techniques of the two intersected, documentarians identified themselves as such, often by the social intent of their films. As with all rules, there were exceptions. Still, fiction filmmakers have generally created fictions, usually and primarily meant to entertain. The closing years of the twentieth century, the 'Century of Cinema', and the first years of the yet-to-be-named twenty-first century have brought cinema to a place where it is more and more difficult to separate documentary and fiction. Technology, economics and artistic experimentation continue to push and pull the documentary in new directions, and filmmakers themselves more openly challenge the label of 'documentarian'.

Business and Technology: The Bad and The Good

One of the major trends of the 1980s, the proliferation of cable and satellite channels, became even more pervasive in the 1990s. The consequences – ever more hours of television documentary programming, production cost per hour decreasing dramatically, decreased personal control by the individual filmmaker – all continued. What resulted was a marked decline in the overall quality of most televised documentary, even as the number of television hours devoted to nonfiction increased exponentially. This is not to say that there were not notable, even outstanding and groundbreaking works – there were – but the vast majority of television time devoted to nonfiction was taken up by product whose artistic quality was limited and whose veracity was sometimes questionable. This was increasingly true even before the millennial onslaught of reality TV. Hours were filled with recycled stock footage on every imaginable subject, accompanied by voiceover bland commentary, and the dullest kind of talking-head interviews. Point-of-view, investigative and artful filmmaking often went by the wayside as cable channels scurried to fill endless hours.

With advances in technology, anyone with a digital camera and a home computer could put together a documentary, and fortunately many more people did tell their own stories. At the same time, the professionalism of documentary craft and artistry, to say nothing of concern for ethical

considerations, has suffered. The cost of professional small-format video is a fraction of that of older technologies. In the twenty-first century one or two people shoot major television documentary projects which once required substantial funding and numerous crew members. When shooting in 16mm, or even Betacam, it was common for makers to travel with several cases of equipment, film and supplies. The same technically sophisticated work can usually now be done in small-format, out of one small suitcase. This crush of quick, and above all cheap, work also considerably lowered the bar as to what television audiences accept as documentary. And this downward trend continues. The speed of this kind of filmmaking is low-cost and the fact that a person with almost no technical experience can perform it has opened the field of documentary-making to the entire world. Cell phone filmmaking, to be discussed in the next chapter, carries this approach further.

The need for low-cost programming affected not only documentaries shot mainly in the field. For some cable channels the exigencies of creating mass hours of programming about historical events led to disturbing developments. The slideshow approach, with narration and talking heads, was one consequence. Cost-conscious and inexperienced researchers sometimes substituted any available footage for actual shots of the events under discussion. For example, a stock image of a sinking ship has more than once been passed off as a specific sinking ship, whether or not the ship in the image had actually ever sailed in the same ocean that the documentary claimed. In all too many cases an astonishing disregard for factual rigour overcame historical compilation films. This problem became so widespread that the Association of Moving Image Archivists' newsletter published a column by archivist Jerome Keuhl listing misused footage. His watchful beast, known as the office cat, kept track of such misadventures and anachronisms, and reported to the community when an earnest film researcher asked for footage of Lincoln's 'Gettysburg Address' or the sinking of the *Titanic*, events never covered by a camera.

On the commercial front, when the merchandising of documentary tie-in 'branding' began in earnest, it became abundantly clear that some executives were far more interested in promoting the channels as profitable corporate commodities than in producing meaningful documentaries. A leader in the field was Discovery Communications, with its Discovery Stores. Using the

Discovery name and logos, along with those of its offshoot channels – Animal Planet, Discovery Health, Travel Channel, Discovery Kids, Wings, etc. – stores began to sell everything from plastic sharks to logo shirts to audio CDs, all loosely connected to documentary programming that played on the channels. Starting in 1997, Discovery.com's online store reached out to armchair adventurers with an e-commerce website to mirror the Discovery Stores found in retail malls. Eventually other channels joined in the trend at some level. *National Geographic* magazine redesigned its logo and opened www.shopnationalgeographic.com, and public television viewers were now invited continuously to shop the PBS Online Store. Ken Burns' *The Civil War* was one of the first PBS documentaries to deploy astute marketing tie-ins to books and recorded music. All of the bricks-and-mortar Discovery Channel Stores were closed in 2007, but the on-line site remains active.

There is nothing inherently evil in selling documentary-linked consumer products, nor in categorizing films by channel so that viewers can find the kinds of titles they like. And the cable and satellite channels were only adapting the long-time marketing techniques of Hollywood movie studios in selling theme-related goods. Practices that Hopalong Cassidy first began and Disney mouse ears continued were perfected by George Lucas and *Star Wars* in the 1970s. What is insidious for the documentary tradition is that the merchandise in these cases often became more important to the presenting channel than anything the documentarian might have to say on a subject. Yes, legend has it that chocolate-covered ice cream bars were first marketed as 'Eskimo Pies' or 'Nanooks' in the wake of the success of *Nanook of the North*. 'Eskimo Pie' was trademarked in 1922, the same year as *Nanook's* release; prior to that the frozen treat was called 'I-Scream-Bar'. However, it seems evident that selling ice cream had no bearing on future Flaherty productions, nor on the desire of audiences to watch his films.

Fiscal and artistic consequences have also resulted from the television industry's contractual practices with individual filmmakers. The majority of cable documentaries became works done for hire, in which the filmmakers retain little control and hold no rights to their films. This is not always the case for those producers who raise money independently and then license their work, but it is true for the majority of hours seen by cable viewers. Whereas

independent producers in the 1950s to 1980s nontheatrical market could hope to recoup costs, make a small profit, possibly take some creative risks, and see their work shown in a form resembling the film they intended, these options, at least in the cable marketplace, are almost non-existent in the twenty-first century. Exceptions are HBO/Cinemax Documentaries, and more recently Sundance, IFC, HBO, the Documentary Channel and a few others. HBO is neither product nor advertising, but rather subscriber- and awards-driven. In a long-term economic sense, most independent producers are left with little clout. At one time a television mogul such as David Wolper chose the subjects and the forms, albeit highly commercial, in which he wanted to document them. He amassed capital by retaining the rights to rebroadcast, educational sales, and later home video. For example, to run the *Biography* series and create the Biography Channel, A&E turned to Wolper. The early *cv*/direct films were also more reflective of the filmmaker even when they went on television. Today's presenting channels demand control of these and any other ancillary rights, leaving most producers with no equity in their work.

On US television there are some alternatives, but not at the major networks. Fighting a defensive battle against the erosion of viewership by cable channels in the 1990s, the networks abandoned documentaries almost entirely. Except for the longstanding success of shows such as *60 Minutes* and its spin-offs, the end of the twentieth century brought the demise of what at mid-century had seemed the salvation of serious documentary-making. No one in network broadcast television was willing to take artistic or content risk, nor to uphold the investigative reporting traditions of Edward R. Murrow of CBS, or NBC's *Project XX* and *White Paper*. Even Jon Alpert and DCTV's twenty-year relationship with NBC ended with the First Gulf War in Iraq. 'We were the only independent documentary reporters in Baghdad during the war. But our footage documenting the death and destruction in civilian neighbourhoods was a shocking message, so instead of broadcasting it, NBC killed the messenger,' he says. DCTV formed a new relationship with HBO, producing edgy one-hour investigative programmes such as *Lock-Up: The Prisoners of Riker's Island* (1994), *One Year in a Life of Crime* (1989), *Rape: Cries from the Heartland* (1992) and *High on Crack Street: Lost Lives in Lowell* (1995), the last two directed by Maryann De Leo. Community activist-based DCTV teamed

up in 2003 with Discovery and its *New York Times*-linked DiscoveryTimes channel to produce programming such as *Off to War*, about the deployment of the Arkansas National Guard to the Second Iraq War. For the most part, socially critical documentaries were not the province of cable or network television.

Independent producers did create notable work. A five-part series, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* (1996), made by the highly respected English documentarian Brian Lapping for the BBC and The Discovery Channel and narrated by CNN's Christiane Amanpour, untangled the political and military events which led to the dismemberment of the country that was Yugoslavia. It integrates video footage of council meetings and other events with interviews of the heads of all six states involved in the resulting war. The series explains how Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic systematically and brutally controlled an entire region. Amanpour continues to make documentary specials, which sometimes retain investigative power. Her presence as a respected journalist commenting on location and on-screen adds gravitas to a long-used format.

American Public Television

There remains public television BBC, CBC and PBS. Since its beginnings, US public television has struggled, usually desperately, for enough funds to stay in business. The original 1967 Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) charter from Congress provided no guarantees of long-term financial support. This has left all three arms of public television – CPB, the PBS network, and the local stations – extremely vulnerable to the changing winds of politics in Washington, and to the vagaries of local tastes. (See the discussion of *Tongues Untied* in Chapter 13.) Pledge drives and corporate underwriting provide most of the money for station operation, while much of the production costs are also dependent on corporate or foundation funding.

In 1988, after years of lobbying by media activists (chief among them Larry Daressa and Larry Sapadin of California Newsreel, theoretical physicist/media advocate Larry Hall, Dee Dee Halleck, and producer Mark Weiss),

Congress appropriated funds for an independent PBS production service. Part of that money went to create the Independent Television and Video Service (ITVS). Although it took several years to begin operating effectively, ITVS in the 1990s and into the 2000s has been responsible for some of the more daring programming available on American television. Officially, ITVS's mission is to create and present independently produced programmes that engage in creative risks, advance issues and represent points of view not usually seen on public or commercial television. ITVS is committed to programming that addresses the needs of underserved and under-represented audiences, and expands civic participation by bringing new voices into public discourse. It divides less than ten million dollars each year among a wide range of producers for all types of work, the majority of which are documentaries. As of 2004, ITVS had partially funded 325 documentaries; 304 documentaries with ITVS funding had aired on some part of the US public television system. Projects produced by minority and underserved makers have been emphasized. It has worked with the minority consortia of PBS (the Native American, Latino, African-American, Pacific Islander and Asian-American organizations described in Chapter 13) and has funded in whole or in part such noted gay-themed documentaries as Arthur Dong's *Coming Out Under Fire* (1995), Meema Spadola's *Our House: A Very Real Documentary About Kids of Gay and Lesbian Families* (1999), and Debra Chasnoff's *It's Elementary: Talking About Gay Issues in School* (1996).

ITVS-funded works that make it to national broadcast generally do so under the umbrella of one of two programming strands: *POV* (an acronym for point-of-view) or *Independent Lens*. These are limited showcases with twelve to fourteen premieres for *POV* and twenty-nine for *Independent Lens* each year. This means that on US national public television there are less than fifty one- to two-hour time slots open in any year to stand-alone documentaries made by independent filmmakers. All the other documentaries offered for national broadcast are commissioned to order by strands such as *Frontline*, *American Experience*, *American Masters* and *NOVA*, which is the longest-running documentary series on PBS. A big advantage of a PBS broadcast over commercial channels is that producers generally have much more creative control, and the rights to their films revert to them after a period of time. For

documentarians seeking to effect social change, a national public television broadcast also delivers a much larger audience than any cable or satellite channel can. This remains true today.

Investigative reporting has remained alive on public television largely on another commissioned strand through the efforts of WGBH in Boston and producer David Fanning's *Frontline*. A native of South Africa, Fanning came to WGBH from the BBC to start the documentary series *World* in 1977. Fanning conceived, and has executive-produced, *Frontline* since it premiered in January 1983. For two decades it has remained America's only regularly scheduled public affairs documentary series on television, and has won every major US award for broadcast journalism. *Frontline* has tackled dozens of national and international issues.

Archival Documentary

Before many of the rights-holders realized the economic value of their footage, putting together 'clip shows' was relatively inexpensive, so the historical compilation film became a natural source of material for early television. Henry Salomon's twenty-seven-part series *Victory at Sea*, originally broadcast on NBC from 1952 to 1953, remains one of the most widely seen television shows ever. Its footage of the WWII naval war in the Pacific, combined with a recurring musical theme by Richard Rodgers, was made entirely of clips from US government combat photographers. CBS's *The Twentieth Century*, discussed in Chapter 9, was, in its first years, almost entirely a compilation series. Jay Leyda's important study of historical compilation film, *Films Beget Films: A Study of the Compilation Film*, was, interestingly, published in 1960, near the beginning of television's widespread use of the form. It was Leyda who first used the word 'compilation' in describing film. This kind of documentary is also sometimes called a Found Footage Film, especially when discussing experimental film. Of course, historical compilations go as far back as the Soviet work of Esther Shub in the 1920s, and have continued to the present. Part of the David Wolper empire was built upon popular themes such as *Hollywood and the Stars*, the

1963 clip-filled documentary miniseries on NBC. Other filmmakers used the technique to explore more serious subjects. This formula has remained a television staple for over forty years, perhaps reaching an inevitable overload with war on The History Channel and The Military Channel. Hitler and his friends never leave the screen, in large part because all Axis power films became the free property of the people of the world by law of the World War II Peace Treaty.

In Britain, in 1964, the BBC produced an archival footage-based mega-series. The twenty-six episodes of *The Great War*, narrated by Sir Michael Redgrave, marked the fiftieth anniversary of the outbreak of World War I, and helped launch a new channel in Britain: BBC2. Made at a time when many viewers could still recall this 'Great War', it evoked deep emotions about the First World War from Britons who were still recovering from the Second. It was the first well-researched mega-part war documentary, emerging from the combined resources of BBC, CBS, ABC (Australia) and the Imperial War Museum. *The Great War* remains a high point of historical documentary-making. It was updated, modified for a US audience (a process that meant cutting the forty-minute episodes to thirty minutes), and rerun on both BBC and PBS with great success.

There were other British archival film series; *The World at War* (1975), spearheaded by producer Sir Jeremy Isaacs and narrated by Sir Laurence Olivier, was another landmark in historical television. Using archival film, photographic and other still images, and interviews with eyewitnesses, it broke up historical events into smaller, accessible story lines. These are occasionally supplemented by the use of location shooting to establish atmosphere and to fill a gap where archive footage did not exist. *The World at War* won immense critical acclaim and was highly profitable for Thames Television, where Isaacs was the Director of Programming. It was purchased by broadcasters and shown throughout the world for over twenty years, demonstrating as did *The Great War* that a historical epic documentary series could be of high quality, attract a large popular audience, and make a great deal of money – very much like the 1950s' *Victory at Sea*. The popularity of both these British series continues in DVD sales and downloads.

Jeremy Isaacs has made mayor contributions to television documentary.

Born in Glasgow in 1932, Isaacs was educated at Oxford. He joined Granada Television as a producer in 1958, and worked for the BBC on the noted *Panorama* series. In addition to *The World at War* he produced some of the other most significant British television documentaries. For example, as the founding Chief Executive of Channel 4, Isaacs was also responsible for *Ireland: A Television History* (1981), and *The Cold War* (1998) made in conjunction with Turner Broadcasting. In 1993-4 he helped usher in the 'docu-soaps' phenomenon with a series of behind-the-scenes doings at the Royal Opera House, of which he was the Chief Executive, and thus a key subject of his film.

As an example of the importance of preserving film, in 1970 previously classified US government footage of devastation from the atomic bomb attack on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was revealed. This came to light due in large part to the work of noted media scholar Erik Barnouw and his colleagues at Columbia University. (The footage was originally shot by Japanese cameramen in 1945 for the Japanese government.) Suppressed for decades by the Pentagon, the document of destruction was almost unbelievable to audiences who had not seen this closeup horror. The film made from this declassified material, *Hiroshima-Nagasaki, August 1945* (1970), showed the intimate and shocking results of the atomic blast for the first time to the public. Images of charred human bodies and children with their skin peeling off have today become iconic, perhaps so familiar they cause no remark. In 1970 they made the world face the devastating results of the A-Bomb. This discovery was part of a long visual examination of nuclear war and nuclear power that has remained a continuing thread in documentary, albeit with some periods seeing more films than others. The young adults who began making documentaries in the 1970s were the first generation for whom nuclear annihilation was a serious possibility, if not an assumption, and nuclear holocaust – often incorporating archival film – became a strong theme in independent documentary in the 1980s.

Other filmmakers, also working independently of major television, turned to archival compilation to make social and political points. In the US, accounts of the labour movement and resurrecting women's history were a big part of this historical rediscovery, as newly politicized young filmmakers

approached history with revisionist eyes. They looked back at the archival record of previous social change, and challenged how it had been traditionally presented. Some were inspired by the revisions of history Emile de Antonio popularized. The following are some examples.

From 1905 to World War I members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), nicknamed the Wobblies, travelled across the US organizing workers into 'One Big Union'. The film *The Wobblies* (1978, Deborah Schaefer and Stuart Bird) integrates newsreel footage with music of the period and interviews with IWW members. Cultural, political and legal events of the time are carefully documented, creating an exceptional record of one of the most exciting periods in American labour history. Another union, the United Auto Workers, which was at one point one of the most powerful in the nation, rose from a series of auto plant strikes in Flint, Michigan in the 1930s. The women who participated in or supported participants in those strikes tell their story in Academy Award-nominated *With Babies and Banners* (1979, Lorraine Gray, Lyn Goldfarb, Anne Bohlen). Again, archival footage from the period of the strike serves to illustrate the women's stories. *Union Maids* (1977, Julia Reichert and Jim Klein), Academy Award-nominated, is about trade unionism, but it is even more about three extraordinary women. Their stories are intercut with each other and with period newsreel footage as they recall their lives as workers and union organizers in Chicago in the late twenties and thirties.

The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter (1980, Connie Field) arguably became the most popular of these films of labour and women's history, perhaps because it dealt with a past that was then still alive in the memories of many in its audience. It re-examines the experiences of female war workers in America during the 1940s, especially their struggle for dignity and equality.

Historical documentaries tend to remain fresh. Their use of first-hand accounts from people who are no longer alive make them especially valuable as 'documents' and the facts they present can be 'rediscovered' by succeeding generations.

The Ken Burns Phenomenon

The biggest financial and audience success for PBS in the past thirty years has been the films made by Ken Burns and company under the Florentine Films umbrella. The multiple broadcasts of *The Civil War*, beginning in 1990, had deep and long-lasting effects on style, funding and audience development for PBS documentaries. The series changed the way the public thought about documentary, and it changed the way television executives thought about historical documentaries.

Burns had been making significant documentaries for over fifteen years before *The Civil War*. His first major film, *The Brooklyn Bridge* (1982), remains a graceful, reflective tribute to hard work by immigrants and engineering genius in America, and to many of the traditions of the historical documentary. Its evocative images of this iconic American symbol and meticulous detailing



Fig 76 *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter* (US, 1980, Connie Field). OWI photo by Palmer, Direct Cinema Ltd.

of the building of the bridge demonstrate the emotional power historical documentaries can have.

Burns' output follows in the footsteps of other notable historical documentary-makers discussed previously – Charles Guggenheim, Jeremy Isaacs, Lance Bird, Tom Johnson – particularly in their shared insistence on accuracy and respect for the integrity and beauty of the image. The film that most anticipates the Burns formula is the National Film Board of Canada's *City of Gold*, made by Colin Low and Wolf Koenig (see discussion in Chapter 9).

Like all of Burns' major work, *The Brooklyn Bridge* relies on stills brought to life with a swooping rostrum camera, stunning live-action 16mm cinematography, talking-head interviews with sympathetic experts, and a memorable soundtrack and score. Burns and a succession of very key co-producers and collaborators were to take this formula and refine it in films such as *The Statue of Liberty* (1985), *The Congress* (1989) and others – a total of seven titles, all shown on PBS before *The Civil War*.

Burns' combination of talent, sincerity and personality has put him among the small group of documentarians whose names are known to their contemporary publics. Like Robert Flaherty and John Grierson before him, Burns developed a bold public persona, which made him and his work fundable from different sources. Over the course of making his films he formed highly productive working relationships with his sponsoring PBS station, WETA, Washington, DC. He is one of the filmmakers most consistently funded by the US Federal National Endowment for the Humanities, which provides money for almost every Florentine Films production, and whose dictates about input from humanities scholars help shape the form of his work. Burns was also able to cultivate major corporate sponsorship. *The Statue of Liberty* (1984), for example, had funding from Liberty Mutual Insurance, and a later deal with General Motors guaranteed that it would put money into a series of productions following the success of *The Civil War*. Like Grierson or Flaherty, Burns has a strong mission, but his ultimate goal is not social change or even elegiac poetry. Rather, he considers himself a historian, documenting the social and cultural changes of American life through portrayal of its individuals and institutions.



Fig 77 In *The Civil War* Ken Burns used photographs like this one attributed to Mathew Brady, and told an epic story by weaving into it many personal experiences (U.S., 1980, Ken Burns)

The Civil War remains Burns' masterwork. His later, longer films – *Baseball* (1996), *Jazz* (2001), *The War* (2007), for instance – suffer somewhat from the lack of control that had been exerted by strong co-producers like his brother Ric Burns on *The Civil War*, his then wife Amy Steckler Burns on *Shakers: Hands to Work, Hearts to God* (1974), or Richard Kilberg on *Huey Long* (1985). Collaboration is an important part of Burns' filmmaking technique, and he uses a crack technical team, including editor Paul Barnes and sound mixer Lee Dichter. Lynne Novick has also become a notable contributor as producer. Part of the intrinsic beauty of Burns' work comes from an insistence on using film rather than digital capture, shot by Burns and highly gifted cinematographer Buddy Squires. Both were nominated as producers for an Oscar for *Statue of Liberty*. The visual and aural elegance of Burns' films set a high standard for the craft of historical documentary but, perhaps most importantly, they continuously succeed in engaging a mass audience in emotional nonfiction experiences. Upcoming films (at time of writing) include the five-and-a-half

hour *Prohibition* (2011) and *The Dust Bowl* (2012). It is safe to say that Burns has enough projects in the works to carry him through the rest of his life.

Direct offshoots of Burns' approach from former collaborators include a number of important documentaries: Ric Burns' epic *New York* (1999) and *The Donner Party* (1992); Larry Hott's and Diane Gary's *Niagara Falls* (1985), *Sentimental Women Need Not Apply: A History of the American Nurse* (1988), *Tuberculosis in America: The People's Plague* (1995); Stephen Ives' *The West* (1996, executive-produced by Ken Burns). All of these films were made for PBS broadcast, and each bears the distinctive mark of its makers; still, they follow in the broad form of historical documentary made popular by Burns. Others have adopted the style with more or less success; the form becomes a documentary cliché.



Fig 78 *Theodore Roosevelt parades through Los Angeles in an example of the long tradition of historical compilation mixed with contemporary shooting in The Indomitable Teddy Roosevelt, made by Harrison Engle in 1986. Signal Hill Productions*

Canada Soldiers On

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the National Film Board slowly shifted from a self-contained, government-sponsored production/distribution institution to a hybrid. In 1984 the Minister of Communications' National Film and Video Policy redefined the NFB's mandate. Substantial changes in production and distribution activities followed, with savings from distribution reinvested in production. The plan also suggested a reduction in permanent personnel and the increased use of freelance filmmakers. In 1982 the NFB, in collaboration with the Canadian Film Development Corporation, set up the Film Canada Programme to support private producers; by the end of the 1980s freelancers accounted for seventy per cent of production. This led in the early 1990s to works such as David Adkin's *Out: Stories of Lesbian and Gay Youth* (1994) and Aerlyn Weissman's and Lynne Fernie's *Forbidden Love: The Unashamed Stories of Lesbian Lives* (1992).

More restructurings – which reflected budget reductions, technological changes, and a 1996 Mandate Review Committee's report – again changed the form of the NFB. It slashed its infrastructure and, based on the report, a new long-range plan was put in place which re-emphasized co-productions with independent Canadian producers and international co-productions. It also reaffirmed the NFB's commitment to ethnic diversity, particularly to supporting work by Aboriginal peoples. Early in the twenty-first century, the Canadian Department of Communications dedicated \$25 million for the NFB to undertake co-productions with independent producers. Additionally, it mandated that thirty-five per cent of funding go to new, emerging filmmakers.

Other opportunities for documentaries were principally on television. The History Channel in Canada is a completely separate entity from The History Channel in the US. The state-run Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) has long produced and shown documentaries. In 2000 the NFB joined with the CBC and several private partners to create The Documentary Channel, Canada, sold on the sly observation that 'Canadians have a special fondness for the documentary form'. TVOntario, a private television network, has aired many acclaimed social issue documentaries. It is difficult to categorize the

shows on these channels since they are generally made by freelancers whose films use many different styles to cover many types of subject.

The documentary spirit of individual Canadian filmmakers has remained vital. Vancouver documentarian Nettie Wild has created a number of ardent political films. From armies in the Philippines and oppression in Mexico to confrontations over heroin use in Vancouver, Wild's films tend to focus on the flashpoints of social conflicts. Her work includes *A Rustling of Leaves* (1988), *Blockade* (1993), *A Place Called Chiapas* (1998) – perhaps the most telling document about the desperate situation of indigenous people in Chiapas, Mexico – and *FIX: The Story of an Addicted City* (2002). These are films in the investigative tradition that value social change over form.

In some ways Canadian documentary presents a middle ground between that of the US and the UK. Canada has a much stronger system of public funding support for its documentarians than does the US. The NFB, even with its many changes, along with the government-supported CBC, provides a base from which filmmakers can build a budget. In the US, public funding is almost non-existent. But like the US, Canadian documentary has embraced diversity in style, content, and in welcoming new kinds of filmmakers, particularly women. In the UK, where public funding is strongest, production has remained largely in the hands of the traditional white male media stakeholders. During the 1980s and 90s it is also fair to say that UK and Canadian filmmakers turned their attention to international topics far more than did their US counterparts. NFB in particular was noted for large budgets that encouraged overseas travel. Perhaps also, audiences in Canada and the UK were more open to international issues than the largely parochial, no-foreign-languages American audiences.

Developments in the UK

Unlike the often chaotic diversity of documentarians in the United States, many of the filmmakers working in the UK came from a common background, university education at the 'right' schools leading directly into apprenticeship programmes in television. This has been the case from Grierson through Free

Cinema and on, although somewhat less so today. This has led to a very high quality of craftsmanship and a rather consistent point of view.

The BBC government-supported broadcasting tradition in Britain does allow many socially critical documentaries to appear regularly on television. There are series such as producer Nick Fraser's BBC *Storyville*, which funds some works and acquires others, including some of the best North American independent documentaries. Fraser, a filmmaker in his own right, is one of the most astute and articulate of television's commissioning editors active in the twenty-first century. He works with a range of filmmakers, from venerable British documentarians to emerging talent.

Leslie Woodhead joined Granada Television as a graduate trainee in 1961, after Cambridge University, and in the mid-1960s worked on the series *World in Action*. During the early 1970s he pioneered the development of docudramas on British television, specializing in investigative reconstructions of major East European stories. His extensive filmography includes a documentary about the Iranian Hostage Crisis of 1979, the first on this subject shot inside Iran; a film about the Srebrenica Massacre, *A Cry from the Grave*; and the dramatized reconstruction *The Holocaust on Trial*, about the trial of Holocaust denier David Irving. Other recent films include a documentary about a Russian nuclear missile base, a film about Slobodan Milosevic, and the autobiographical *My Life as a Spy* for *Storyville*.

Clive Gordon is a prolific investigative television documentarian. His work ranges from the tragedy of *Children of Chernobyl* (1991) and the horrors of war in *The Unforgiving* (1993) or *The Betrayed* (1995), to the violence and misogyny of the Milwaukee, USA vice trade in *Pimp Snooky* (2000). In *The Mission* (2000), his third film about civil wars, Gordon focused on the conflict in Central Africa and exploitation of children.

John Pilger, Australian-born investigative journalist/documentarian who works in England, developed a reputation as a television polemicist. For example, his Carlton Television documentary *Palestine Is Still the Issue* (2003) analyzes the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, condemning Israel's injustices towards the Palestinians and arguing that Israelis were at the root of the Middle East conflict. The public outcry about this view was considerable. Pilger, a prolific writer and presenter, was previously in the spotlight for his anti-globalization

work, *The New Ruler of the World* (2001), which links economic globalization with mass abuses of human rights. His style is direct confrontation of those with whom he does not agree. The works are didactic and uncompromising in their criticisms, even of his own role as journalist. Archival footage is used in counterpoint to head-on interviews in a style of investigative documentary that makes no attempt to be even-handed.

Among the few women who have penetrated the male domain of the British documentary is Molly Dineen. Born in Canada, she is a graduate of the UK's National Film and Television School and has made a series of documentaries that, in a self-reflexive mode, make evident the filmmaker in the making. The first of these, her student production, was *Home From the Hill* (1985), about retired soldier and safari operator Colonel Hook, returning from Kenya to England. She went on to make *My African Farm* (1988), a portrait of Sylvia Richardson and her servants on a farm in Kenya, and *The Ark* (1993), a series of four one-hour programmes about the London Zoo, filmed during a six-month period of internal crisis. More recent films include the sponsored promotional *Tony Blair*, a ten-minute portrait of Prime Minister Blair, screened across all four television channels just prior to the election campaign of 1997. (Dineen publicly disavowed support of Blair during the Second Iraq War.) *Geri* (1999) presents a portrait of the predicament of modern celebrity by following Geri Halliwell (Ginger Spice) in the three months after her departure from the popular singing group The Spice Girls.

Dineen is a recurring presence in her films, although not on camera. It is her voice, heard asking questions off-screen, which integrates the filmmaker in the works. In the earlier films, her questioning depicts the subject in ways that focus sympathetically on him/her, while later films contain more of the filmmaker. As some of the best cv/d makers do, Dineen sometimes spends months observing her subjects before filming, developing close relationships with them. This is perhaps most evident in *Heart of the Angel* (1989). It records forty-eight hours in the London Underground Angel station focusing on the female 'fluffers,' women who clean dirt and detritus from the tracks. *The Lies of the Land* (2007) is her most overtly polemical film, attacking the UK ban on fox-hunting by examining how the law devastates the finances of small farmers. In 2003 the Grierson Memorial Trust presented its first



Fig 79 *The cleaning crew in Heart of the Angel by Molly Dineen, 1989. British Film Institute*

Trustees Award, which recognizes an outstanding contribution to the art of documentary, to Dineen, whose films also include *The Pick*, *The Shovel and the Open Road* (1991).

Nick Broomfield, one of documentary's most visible innovators, continued to press onward in the 1990s with the development of his own screen persona, to the extent of starring as himself in five Volkswagen television commercials. In this, and in other film projects, he and Joan Churchill occasionally collaborated professionally. Although his works sometimes veer over the top, a more insightful balance seemed to take hold with 2003's *Aileen: Life and Death of a Serial Killer*, made collaboratively with Churchill. This follow-up to *Aileen Wuornos: The Selling of a Serial Killer* (1992) pulls back a bit from the filmmaker as subject to convey the banal horror of a woman facing execution. Broomfield is still there on-screen, but seems less sure of the moral righteousness of his presence than in his other films, especially in the face of a clearly unstable woman about to be executed. This film, in particular, offers new ways to think about the relationship between the maker and the subject. Still, at the close of the film, Broomfield holds a press conference in the parking lot of the state penitentiary as Wuornos is executed.

From *Night Mail* onwards, the poetic documentary in Britain has had a long history. In the 1990s director Brian Hill collaborated with poet Simon Armitage in a number of unusual poetic works. *Drinking For England* (1998) is a documentary on alcoholism, and *Saturday Night* (1996) a commentary about nightlife in Leeds. These can be called 'film poems', which evolved from Armitage's writing. Some critics have called their later collaborations 'documentary musicals'. In *Feltham Sings* (2002), producer Roger Graef got Hill and Armitage access to Feltham Prison in the hope that their film might make the public look more closely at young criminals. Hill has said: 'Feltham is grim; youth crime is serious; some of these kids have very tragic lives. But I don't think doing it as a musical belittles the problem. And some of the lads at Feltham have more talent than a lot of people who've got recording contracts ... I don't think any subjects are off limits.' The lyrics are by Armitage, who fashioned them from months of interviews with the inmates, although some prisoners insisted on writing their own songs. Most of the film was shot inside cells; all of it behind the prison's bars.

A steady champion of documentary, Michael Apted studied law at Cambridge before joining the BBC. He began his film career in 1963 with a Manchester-based training programme for Granada Television. He is a prime example of the English system for turning out filmmakers highly skilled in craft, who can move freely from one genre to another. (His fiction work ranges from *Nell* [1994] to the James Bond film *The World Is Not Enough* [1998] and *The Chronicles of Narnia* [2010].) One of his first assignments was to research a film entitled *Seven Up* for producer Tim Hewet, whose idea it was to take a survey of English society from the eyes of a group of seven-year-old children. Following the Jesuit saying, 'Give me the child until he is seven, and I will show you the man' as a theme, Apted spent three weeks selecting fourteen children from a range of class backgrounds. He has since returned every seven years to visit the same individuals, making his own films, and in the process has created one of the most remarkable documentary phenomena.

The films, known as the 'Up Series' – *Seven Up*, *Fourteen Up*, *Twenty-One Up*, *Twenty-Eight Up*, *Thirty-Five Up*, *Forty-Two Up* and *Forty-Nine Up* – have documented the personal and social changes in this small sample of English people for over forty years. The next instalment is expected in the spring of

2012. The only comparable documentary exercise is John Marshall's ethnography of the !Kung people, an African tribe whom he has revisited regularly for fifty years, recording the vast changes in their lifestyle. The characters of the 'Up Series' have not been subjected to the immense physical upheavals of the !Kung, but their stories weave both engrossing personal drama and a broad sociological tapestry. The 'Up Series' is one of recent documentary's most debated projects. Apted has also made other significant documentaries, among them *Incident at Ogallala* (1992), *Inspirations (Me and Isaac Newton)* (1999), *Married in America One* (2002) and *Two* (2007), and *Bring on The Night* (1985).

Apted is a special case among serious documentarians. In some significant ways the 'Up Series' changed the way that time is perceived in documentary. It is also one of the best examples of debate about filmmaker/subject relationship. In addition, its episodes provide one of the very few instances in which audiences eagerly anticipate new episodes. Faithful viewers identify with the lives of the characters, creating a unique bond. It would be foolish to understate the importance of 'Up' in the evolution of documentary, especially on television, since the series presents a sublime example of matching distribution with both form and content.

American Independents

Given the continuing lack of public and corporate funding for documentaries, American independents have resorted to a wide variety of means to make and exhibit their projects. The innovations that have emerged are as diverse as the many populations of the US. To write comprehensively about this explosion in documentary requires much more space than this book offers. The following represent major 1980s and 90s trends by focusing on selected bodies of work.

San Francisco Bay Area-based Les Blank is a man of few words and many films. It has been said by fans that in conversation with Les you get less. With over thirty largely self-made films to his credit, he has continuously explored American subcultures, finding revelation and celebration in life's ordinary details. Blank captures on film the sensual human spirit,

often seen through the cultures of music and food. Born in 1935 in Florida, Blank attended film school at the University of Southern California. His first personal films were on Texas blues singer Lightnin' Hopkins (*The Blues Accordin' to Lightnin' Hopkins* [1970]) and the hippie subculture (*God Respects Us When We Work, But Loves Us When We Dance* [1968]). To finance these and other projects, he made industrial and promotional films, generally working as cameraman.

Blank's work continued with series of intimate glimpses into the lives of passionate people who are from often-overlooked segments of American society – an output that grew to include rural Louisiana French musicians and cooks in *Yum, Yum, Yum!* (1990), *J'ai Eté au Bal – I Went to the Dance* (1989), *Hot Pepper* (1973), and *Marc and Ann* (1991); Mexican-Americans in *Chulas Fronteras, Del Mero Corazon* (1979); New Orleans music and Mardi Gras in *Always For Pleasure* (1978); chef Alice Waters and other San Francisco Bay Area garlic fanatics in *Garlic Is As Good As Ten Mothers* (1980); filmmaker Werner Herzog in *Burden of Dreams* (1982) and *Werner Herzog Eats His Shoe* (1980); Appalachian fiddlers in *Sprout Wings and Fly* (1983); Polish-American polka dancers in *In Heaven There Is No Beer?* (1984); Serbian-American music and religion in *Ziveli!: Medicine for the Heart* (1987); Hawaiian music and family traditions in *Puamana* (1991); Afro-Cuban drumming and religious tradition in *Sworn to the Drum* (1995); East Texas bluesman Mance Lipscomb in *A Well Spent Life* (1972) and *Cigarette Blues* (1985) with Sonny Rhodes; and the charmingly personal *Gap Toothed Women* (1987).

Blank is perhaps the most independent American documentarian. His films have been financed by the sale of previous films through his distribution company, Flower Films; by lecture and screening fees; and by selling T-shirts and tapes from the trunk of his car. Every one of his works bears his own definitive stamp. The subjects are allowed to speak for themselves; the camera is respectful, not intrusive; the editing is not jarring or flamboyant; and the music flows naturally from the situation at hand. Blank is not an invisible filmmaker – the subjects often speak directly to the camera – but he is one who, like Apted, becomes a part of people's lives. His documents are important as ethnographic evidence, but they are just as important for the singular artistic worldview they create. If Ken Burns captures the realities of American

history with the accuracy of detailed research and minute exactness, Les Blank captures it simply by witnessing.

Among the many independent American documentarians to begin creating work in the late 1990s and the earliest part of the twenty-first century, Judith Helfand is one who has combined the personal self-reflexive mode with a Griersonian dedication to education and social change. She co-produced and co-directed, with George Stoney, along with Susane Rostock, *The Uprising of '34* (1995), a documentary which draws on the hidden history of the General Textile Strike of 1934 to explore labour, power and economics in the South at the time. Her work is among the most clear in carrying on the tradition of America's 1930s' Film and Photo League tradition.

Helfand was working for other producers when, at twenty-five, she was diagnosed with DES-related cervical cancer. In 1963 Helfand's mother, pregnant with Judith, had been prescribed the ineffective, carcinogenic synthetic hormone diethylstilbestrol (DES), meant to prevent miscarriage and ensure a healthy baby. After a radical hysterectomy Helfand went to her family's home to heal, and picked up her camera. The resulting video-diary is an exploration of how science, marketing and corporate power can affect our deepest relationships. Shot over five years, *A Healthy Baby Girl* (1997) tells a story of survival, mother/daughter love, family renewal, and community activism. Continuing to combine the personal and the political, Helfand's *Blue Vinyl* (2002) addresses the complex issue of toxins in vinyl production by bringing viewers into her parents' home, recently re-sided with blue vinyl. Although her work employs a fierce investigative reporting style, it has been criticized for its lack of scientific accuracy. This problem becomes more and more acute as passionate filmmakers examine the increasingly complex scientific discoveries and revised hypotheses of our world. Helfand's latest film, *Everything's Cool* (2007), continues the homey, somewhat slapdash approach she brings to every topic, including a largely one-sided perspective.

Another example of the personal diary film that became a powerful public document is Deborah Hoffmann's *Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter* (1995). Nominated for an Academy Award, the film uses both humour and insight to explain how Hoffmann comes to terms with her mother's deterioration from Alzheimer's disease. A more traditional documentary made by Hoffmann,

along with Frances Reid, *Long Night's Journey Into Day* (2000), follows the stories of four individuals whose cases come before South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission following the abolition of Apartheid. This film, too, was nominated for an Academy Award.

Reid and Hoffmann are both documentary veterans from the Bay Area, as is Jon Else, another independent who believes firmly in using media for social change. Else, who was series producer and cinematographer for Henry Hampton's *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years*, teaches documentary filmmaking at the University of California at Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism. He directed the first three parts of a visually stunning, meticulously crafted four-part PBS series *Cadillac Desert: Water and the Transformation of Nature* (1997), which examines the history and struggle for water in the American West. His Academy Award-nominated *The Day After Trinity* (1980) looks at the life of J. Robert Oppenheimer and the Manhattan Project at Los Alamos, while *Sing Faster: The Stagehands' Ring Cycle* (1998) views Wagner's operas from the point of view of stage hands. Else also has a career as an accomplished cinematographer, working on everything from commercials and music videos to feature-length documentaries such as John Korty's *Who Are the DeBolts? And Where Did They Get Those Nineteen Kids?* (1977) and Lauren Lazin's *Tupac Shakur: Resurrection* (2003). Frustrated with the amount of time and effort it requires an independent filmmaker to raise money through grant-writing (310 funding proposals for *Cadillac Desert*), Else launched a programme to make documentaries using very low-cost technology, providing access to a wide range of young would-be documentary-makers.

Formerly the co-curator of the Margaret Mead Film Festival, Jonathan Stack began his filmmaking career in 1991, forming Gabriel Films, 'an independent documentary film company that specializes in social issue storytelling'. His first production was *One Generation More* (1991) with the BBC, about the resurgence of Jewish culture in Estonia, and he has directed and produced more than two dozen films since then. He was nominated for an Academy Award for his documentary, produced with Liz Garbus, *The Farm: Angola USA* (1998), and was nominated a second time for *The Wildest Show in the South: The Angola Prison Rodeo* (1999), produced with Simon Soffer. Both

of these films deal with Texas' Angola Prison, the largest maximum-security penitentiary in the US which houses around 5,000 men, three-quarters of whom are black and eighty-five per cent of whom die within its walls. Stack is a filmmaker who works very much in the Griersonian tradition of explaining social problems which general audiences might not fully understand, with an aim of bettering social conditions. He has revisited the workings of America's prisons in many works, taking audiences inside these complex, dangerous and controversial institutions.

It is also important to remember that many of the stalwarts of American independent documentary filmmaking remained vitally active in the 1990s and into the twenty-first century. Co-direct pioneers such as Robert Drew, Albert Maysles (David Maysles died in 1987), D. A. Pennebaker and Frederick Wiseman all continued to make important contributions. For Pennebaker, the 1990s was a prolific time, greatly enhanced by his personal and professional partnership with filmmaker Chris Hegedus. Their film (with R. J. Cutler) *The War Room* (1993) was one of the most fascinating studies of a political campaign ever undertaken. It presents a classic vérité chronology of the 1992 presidential campaign waged by candidate Bill Clinton, and among other things made a media star of campaign manager James Carville. *Down From the Mountain* (2000), which Hegedus and Pennebaker made with Chris Doob, and photographed by Joan Churchill, is a concert documentary and historical document of American bluegrass music. In 2001, Hegedus, working without Pennebaker but with Jehane Noujaim, made *Startup.com*, which traces the rise and fall of a new media company during the 'dot.com' business craze of the 1990s. This film, sometimes amusing, sometimes bleak, is a revealing look at not only the vagaries of business, but also the emotions of driven young men. It is unique in the level of intimacy it offers, piercing the outer shells of its characters to reveal a roller-coaster of emotions. The male characters reveal themselves in ways they might not have done to a male film crew.

Al Maysles teamed with Susan Fromke and Bob Eisenhardt to make *Concert of Wills: Making the Getty Centre* (1997). Filmed over twelve years, it documents the conception, construction and completion of the Los Angeles 'Parthenon', the Getty Centre. Fromke and Maysles also made, with Deborah Dickson, the Academy Award-nominated *Lalee's Kin: The Legacy of Cotton*



Fig 80 George Stephanopoulos and James Carville in *The War Room* (US, 1993, Chris Hegedus and D. A. Pennebaker). Pennebaker-Hegedus Films

(2001). Robert Drew, often with his wife Anne, has never stopped making documentaries, with well over a hundred to his credit. Frederick Wiseman remained true to his format throughout a career that includes over thirty-five films. *High School II* (1994), *Ballet* (1995), *Public Housing* (1997), *Belfast, Maine* (1999) and *Domestic Violence* (2001) are only some of the more recent titles. Continuing to examine American institutions in his own distinctive style, and continuing to have his films broadcast on PBS, Wiseman has himself become something of an institution. And in 2011 Ricky Leacock died, still at work on an innovative multi-media autobiographical project.

Chapter Related Films

1989

The Heart of the Angel (UK, Molly Dineen)

1990

Berkeley in the Sixties (US, Mark Kitchell)

The Civil War (US, Ken Burns)

1991

American Dream (US, Barbara Kopple)

Brother's Keeper (US, Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky)

1992

Forbidden Love: The Unashamed Stories of Lesbian Love (Canada, Lynne Fernie and Aerlyn Weissman)

Nitrate Kisses (US, Barbara Hammer)

The Panama Deception (US, Barbara Trent)

1993

The War Room (US, D. A. Pennebaker, Chris Hegedus, R. J. Cutler)

1994

Hoop Dreams (US, Peter Gilbert, Steve James, Frederick Marx, Gordon Quinn)

Lock-Up: The Prisoners of Riker's Island (US, Jon Alpert)

1995

Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter (US, Deborah Hoffmann)

1996

When We Were Kings (US, Leon Gast)

Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation (UK, Brian Lapping)

1997

Cadillac Desert (US, Jon Else)

Concert of the Wills: Making the Getty Centre (US, Susan Frommke, Bob Eisenhardt, Albert Maysles)

Four Little Girls (US, Spike Lee and Sam Pollard)

A Healthy Baby Girl (US, Judith Helfand)

Licensed to Kill (US, Arthur Dong)

Waco: The Rules of Engagement (US, Dan Gifford and William Gazecki)

1998

42 Up (UK, Michael Apted)

The Farm (US, Jonathan Stack and Liz Garbus)

Human Remains (US, Jay Rosenblatt)

A Place Called Chiapas (Canada, Nettie Wild)

1999

Belfast, Maine (US, Frederick Wiseman)

Geri (UK, Molly Dineen)

2001

Domestic Violence (US, Wiseman)

Startup.com (US, Hegedus and Jehane Noujaim)

2002

Dogtown and Z Boys (US, Stacy Peralta)

Feltham Sings (UK, Roger Graef, Brian Hill, Simon Armitage)

The Fog of War (US, Morris)

2003

Aileen: Life and Death of a Serial Killer (US, Nick Broomfield and Joan Churchill)

Chapter Related Books

- Bullert, B. J., *Public Television: Politics and the Battle Over Documentary Film*. Rutgers, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997.
- Bruzzi, Stella, *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- Corner, John, *The Art of Record: A Critical Introduction to Documentary*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1996.
- Edgerton, Garry R., *Ken Burns' America*. New York: St Martin's Press, 2001.
- Goldsmith, David A., *The Documentary-makers: Interviews with 15 of the Best in the Business*. Switzerland: Rotovision, 2003.
- Harris, Mark and Claudia Medina, *Wild at Heart: The Films of Nettie Wild*. Vancouver: Anvil Press, 2009.
- Hogarth, David, *Documentary Television in Canada: From National Public Service to Global Marketplace*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002.
- Kilborn, Richard and John Izod, *An Introduction to Television Documentary: Confronting Reality*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1997.
- Singer, Bennett, ed., *42 Up: A Book Based on Michael Apted's Award-Winning Documentary Series*. New York: The Free Press, 1992.

Documentary Tradition in the Twenty-First Century

There are many fine examples of new films being made that fall sometimes more, sometimes less, into established documentary traditions. To follow are only a few examples, from the US mainly, but the quality and complexity of such work is evident in Canada and Britain, as well as in the rest of the world. It is interesting to note that at a time when the press continues to bemoan what it perceives as waning US world stature, the country's important social issue filmmakers are producing some of the most provocative, influential and well-made body of documentaries in the world. (A similar argument can be made for American's role as the foundation for music [hip-hop], art [graffiti and street art], internet innovation [social networking] and other cultural phenomena.)

In the politically motivated 1930s Film and Photo League vein is the 2011 documentary *No Contract, No Cookies: The Stella D'Oro Strike*. Made by longtime media and social justice advocate Jon Alpert with Matthew O'Neil. *No Contract, No Cookies* follows the struggle of 138 mostly immigrant women workers who go on strike to save their jobs at a famous bakery in the Bronx, New York after a private equity firm buys the company and demands wage and benefit cuts of up to thirty per cent. The film uses Alpert's interviews and *cv*/direct technique to follow the eleven-month strike from its hopeful beginnings to its dismal epilogue. At the time, the *Wall Street Journal* reported on the case: "The accountability that frequently arises when a portfolio company acquired

by PE firm, combined with the type of management attention that company receives, can create pressure that raises the bar for everybody”, said the labour and employment law partner at Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP. What does that language mean? More pointedly, *No Contract: No Cookies* begins eight months into a strike in which the workers, who originally came from twenty-two countries, tell their own stories of how their work lives of ten, twenty or thirty years in a family-run company are smashed by corporate greed. Says one worker, a Greek immigrant: ‘When I see those cookies in the supermarket (now) I want to cry.’ The struggles between labour and management never cease, and documentarians like Jon Alpert, and gatekeepers like Sheila Nevins at HBO, which backed the film, will hopefully never stop examining the problem.

Sheila Nevins and her team at HBO continue, through today, to provide a very important channel for independently made documentaries like *No Contract: No Cookies* to be made and seen. At any given time information about at least 225 major documentary films can be accessed on the HBO website: www.hbo.com/documentaries. Titles range from Nigel Noble and Daniel Jung’s *The Killing of Sister Dorothy* (2008), about the 2005 murder of an American Catholic nun in the Amazon jungle and the subsequent trial of the suspects, to James Marsh’s 2011 festival hit *Project Nim*, the story of a chimpanzee who in the 1970s became the focus of a series of unusual scientific experiments. Marsh also directed the Oscar-winning *Man on Wire* (2008).

HBO, never a network to shy away from the attraction of films affiliated with famous names, is responsible for getting the documentaries of Spike Lee, best known for his feature fiction work, on television. *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts* (2006) is partly a compilation film of news footage and interviews with which Lee, cameraman Cliff Charles and Lee’s longtime editor (and filmmaker himself) Sam Pollard created a semi-poetic eulogy and testament to the struggle of New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Lee returned to the interviewees of *When the Levees Broke* in August 2010 when HBO aired his new documentary, *If God is Willing and Da Creek Don’t Rise*, which chronicles how New Orleans and the Gulf Coast area have fared in the five years following Hurricane Katrina. *Trouble the Water* uses a different innovative technique to plumb the same subject matter in ways that speak



Fig 81 HBO's Sheila Nevins left, with Susan Harris, a descendant of one of the 1911 fire's survivors at the premiere of Triangle: Remembering the Fire, 2011 by Mark Levin and Daphne Pinkerson. Several other documentaries have been made about this tragedy, one of the earlier The Triangle Factory Fire Scandal was made by Mel Stuart in 1979. Michael Loccisano, Getty Images

directly to audiences around the world. And watching these films side by side with Pare Lorentz's *The River* makes clear how little progress has been made in seventy years of US stewardship of its rivers.

Perhaps more meditative is Lee's *Four Little Girls* (1998), again made for HBO. His eleventh feature and first full-length documentary, it focuses on the 1963 bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, an attack that left four young African-American girls dead. In the tradition of other historical documentaries, this film examines an event that proved to be a watershed in a time of radical change in American's racial landscape. The bombing unveiled a racist anti-black movement whose embrace of hate and violence was anathema to most Americans. Lee told CNN that one reason he made the film was that 'There's a legacy and I think it's a tragedy that we, as parents and as older generations, do not pass down to younger children.' As

with many testament documentaries, Lee was motivated to make *Four Little Girls* in part because 'I think a dramatization would have cheapened it. Also, a lot of these people are very old, so when they go, their story goes.'

This same drive to tell the stories of passing generations has become a leitmotif in documentary filmmaking. As the people who lived through the World Depression of the 1930s, WWII, and especially the Nazi Holocaust die, the importance of a preserved documentary legacy heightens. The number of films recounting both individual and larger sociological accounts of the Holocaust has become uncountable and deserves a book-length study on its own. The depth of material on this and other historical events only heightens the need for awareness of the film preservation issues discussed more fully in Chapter 16.

In more recent war coverage, examples by Michael Tucker and Petra Epperlein are tandem films *Gunner Palace* (2004) and *How To Fold a Flag* (2010). These two films reflect documentary's continuous need to explore the reality, repercussions and meanings of war in their examination of the wartime and, in *How To Fold a Flag*, the post-war lives of a group of soldiers serving in the fierce battles of the second Iraq War. As a pair, these are remarkable in the long-term and personal revelations they provide, and are far different from the films from WWII, Korea and Vietnam that deal with veterans. A sobering perspective of a female US army vet is revealed in Sarah Nesson and Mitchell Block's 2010 Academy Award-nominated *Poster Girl*. This story of Robynn Murray's transformation from all-American high school cheerleader and ROTC advocate to scarred PTSD sufferer is an unflinching look at women and war today.

An important recent war film that justifiably received a great deal of attention is *Restrepo* (2010). Made by American journalist Sebastian Junger and British/American photojournalist Tim Hetherington, and produced for National Geographic Films, it chronicles a single US platoon on deployment in Afghanistan that arrives just as US Army General Stanley A. McChrystal is relieved of command following his comments critical of President Barack Obama's administration. It uses a non-narrative cv/direct approach to move from the frightening chaos of daily firefights to the backbreaking boredom of digging bunkers. It sits deep within the horror of war. Despite the high-tech

equipment and the precision of high-flying bombers that define modern warfare, the film is a chilling reminder that much fighting is still done close enough to see the enemy's breath in the cold mountain air. The film shows that nothing about face-to-face war has changed much since WWI's *The Battle of the Somme*. The platoon depicted defending observation posts in *Restrepo* make this war personal. And the film's message of sacrifice was tragically realized when soon after it was released, Tim Hetherington was killed while covering combat in Libya.

Since documenting the up-close meaning of war has become so technologically accessible, expect more and more of these personal war and post-war stories to be turned into documentaries. This is especially true of studies of returning veterans' stories, and represents a change from earlier eras when such accounts were relatively rare. *Dear America: Letters Home From Vietnam* (1988) by Bill Couturié, *Winter Soldier* (1972) by the Winter Film Collective, *Letters from Vietnam* (1965) discussed in Chapter 12, WWII's *Let There Be Light* (see Chapter 7), and WWI medical study films reflect how attitudes about shell shock, battle fatigue and PTSD have shifted over decades.

Werner Herzog

Werner Herzog is a force, a genre, a mode, a style, a voice, a type all his own. An analysis of his film career would be psychoanalysis of the man himself, it is a career so long and unique. He has described his filmmaking as a quest for 'ecstatic truth'. The line between Herzog's stated contempt for cv/direct, 'the accountant's truth – the surface of facts that is not what cinema can really achieve' and his again self-stated desire 'to put the audience back into a position where they can trust their eyes and ears again' is self-servingly obscure. His films are more often opera-like than they are documentaries or fiction features; they are highly effective and can be, when they do not descend into 'soap', brilliant. Herzog generally narrates his documentaries, asks questions of himself and his participants, and sometimes appears on camera. Even though he appropriates self-reflexive styles, he always keeps a distance, and thus keeps the audience at a distance

from his subjects and from himself. All are 'actors' playing on a stage that Herzog creates.

The recent fame and controversy of *Grizzly Man* (2005), which has far outstripped that of *Little Dieter Needs to Fly* (1997), is justified, but despite the outrage of bear eats man, it comes nowhere near the ethical unbalance of the latter. Dieter Dengler always wanted to pilot an airplane. From his WWII childhood in Germany, where he enviously watched the Allied bombers pummel his city, to becoming a US Air Force pilot fighting in Vietnam. His life is in itself fascinating. But for Herzog it gets better. Shot down, Dengler was taken prisoner by the Pathet Loa, then turned over to soldiers of the Army of North Vietnam. After a period of torture and starvation, chained to the bottom of a bamboo cage, Dengler escaped. Years later he allows Herzog to enter his life and probe the depths of his motivations. The bulk of the film consists of footage in which Herzog takes Dengler back to Laos and Thailand to recreate his wartime ordeal. Herzog hired locals to play the part of his captors and had Dengler retrace his steps while describing his experiences; Herzog films as Dengler crawls through the jungle again, reciting his own horrors. Dengler re-enacts his escape again rescued by air, and Herzog concludes the film with Dieter sitting happily home and safe, smiling at their mutual adventure. *Little Dieter Needs to Fly* goes further and deeper and creates visceral excitement more compelling than a traditional story might. Herzog even had the bravado (or the financial need) to remake *Little Dieter* into an unremarkable fiction feature film titled *Rescue Dawn* starring Christian Bale in 2007.

In the very different *The White Diamond* (2004) Herzog makes an almost typical science/nature documentary. Of course, it is still a Herzog film, and one of his most beautiful. He sets aside cruelty, although he still riffs on his recurring madman theme (there are no madwomen in Herzog's universe). The main character, British aeronautical engineer Graham Dorrington, is still driven and over-reaching as he and his team struggle to build a teardrop-shaped balloon and send it gliding over the jungle canopies in Guyana. Dorrington remains haunted by memories of his friend who fell to death in a similar expedition 12 years earlier. But Dorrington's goals are benign; the film gives viewers a luscious dream that they might well share, and Herzog's cinematography is breathtaking. The balloon is a softly shining beacon, and

one feels that the jungle canopy is touchable, just barely out of reach. Of course, being a Herzog film, there are indigenous tribespeople assisting. The main one of these, Marc Anthony Yap, when interviewed head-on says: ‘It’s beautiful up there flying around. I should’ve had my rooster here with me for the world to see. His name is Red. He has five wives, five hens. So, I get five eggs every morning. Yeah, my rooster’s good.’ It would be good if the rooster had glided in the balloon, and it would then be good to be that rooster.

That softer Herzog emerges in his most financially successful film to date. *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (2011) was a runaway IMAX hit at the international box office, and at age seventy, Herzog well deserves that. The film offers a detailed look into the Chauvet-Pont-d’Arcave cave in southern France, which on its walls holds the earliest known artistic visions of humankind. In the film Herzog shows and tells the film audience how he fails to capture the full beauty of the cave because of severe (legitimate) restrictions on access. Included are ‘mediated’ interviews with the standard-type science experts and archaeologists before Herzog shows us the ‘naked’ cave, supposedly mediated only by him and his cameras. Herzog muses on the depth of time. At every turn he announces his cinematic failure, an aural device that becomes integral to the film. This use of monologue is another Herzogian convention, but one that works especially well here. *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* is beautiful; it takes audiences to a place they will never see, and with its mix of science and romance it gives the public, who might not otherwise watch a Herzog documentary, a wonderful – if not the best – example of his work. Whatever one thinks of his films, whatever forces drive him, Herzog continues to throw down welcome challenges for documentary.

Steve James, Alex Gibney, Davis Guggenheim

Years after *Hoop Dreams*, Steve James made *Stevie* (2003), a highly personal film about ‘Little Stevie’ whom James mentored in a Big Brother programme in rural Illinois. The documentary goes back to that eleven-year-old tie to find that Stevie is a troubled man, emotionally crippled and awaiting trial for molesting his eight-year-old cousin. *Stevie* becomes more about the Steve

behind the camera than the Stevie before it in a fascinating self-reflexive manner. The film becomes a journey of self-discovery that manages to indict both America's healthcare system and the twenty-first century's 'me-first' society. *No Crossover: The Trial of Allen Iverson* (2010), which was part of ESPN's *30 for 30* television series, uses the same thematically and stylistically personal documentary, in which the director is much seen on camera. *No Crossover* re-examines the 1993 trial of Allen Iverson, then a teenage basketball star who was accused of harassing a white girl and starting a brawl. This case divided the Newport News and Hampton, Va. communities along racial lines. James, who is white and grew up there, returned to make the film, discovering that tensions, even within his own family, still run high when the black athlete's name is mentioned.

James was also executive producer, story director and co-editor of the PBS series *The New Americans* in 2005. *Reel Paradise* (2008) became his fourth film to premiere at the Sundance Film Festival. He co-produced and co-directed with *Hoop Dreams* collaborator Peter Gilbert *At the Death House Door* (2008), which traces the remarkable career journey of Protestant Minister Carroll Pickett, who served fifteen years as the death house chaplain in an infamous prison unit in Huntsville, Texas. During that time Pickett presided over ninety-five executions, including the very first lethal injection done anywhere in the world. In what became a ritual act of catharsis after each execution, Pickett recorded an audiotape account of the fateful day. These he stored and never again listened to them until the filmmakers prompt him to open the box. The scenes in which the camera observes Pickett hearing these tapes is a remarkable and painful moment of intimacy. The film also tells the story of Carlos De Luna, a convict whose execution affected Pickett more than any other. Pickett firmly believed the man was innocent, yet administered last rites and watched him die. *At the Death House Door* is a prime example of cases in which documentaries set out to tell one story (in this instance, that of one wrongfully executed man) and then discover and have the skill to follow a different storyline. The film's end reveals that Pickett, who had begun his job in the prison with approval of the death penalty, has become an anti-death penalty advocate. James' sixth feature documentary *The Interrupters*, made with writer Alex Kotlowitz, was released to wide acclaim in 2011. In it,

James returns to some of the same Chicago neighbourhoods featured in *Hoop Dreams* in an investigation of the unending violence that plagues American cities.

There are two remarkable things that stand out in James' career. The first is the way his work manages to combine deeply self-reflexive film essays with controversial social issues in a way in which neither takes precedence over the other. Even in those films in which he is not a direct participant, his presence can be felt behind the camera, yet it never overpowers the people and the arguments that the films explore. The second and almost more meaningful thing is James' longtime loyalty to the ideals of the Kartemquin 'collective' and to their model of distribution. Some filmmakers use documentary and its supporters as a platform for career advancement, and many have not stuck with the first funders, supporters and distributors that got them started. (Kartemquin's history and philosophy are discussed in detail in Chapter Twelve.) James is a filmmaker who has had offers to shift to bigger, more famous associates (he has also directed fiction features), but he continues to work with and support the grass-roots activism of Kartemquin. This loyalty is a testament to the people of that organization and to Steve James' strength of character.

Alex Gibney and Davis Guggenheim each seem to have established their own small production factories since 2000. In their cases this is a good thing. Each has produced a number of high-quality films, and more are arriving regularly. Both have achieved considerable success in the festival, review and theatrical areas, and they are part of the newer 'name-brand' documentarians.

After working for two decades in the documentary business as an editor and then a director, Gibney's personal break-out film was *Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room* (2005). He followed this with *Taxi to the Dark Side* (2007), *Gonzo: The Life and Work of Dr Hunter S. Thompson* (2008), *Casino Jack and the United States of Money* (2010), *Client Nine: The Rise and Fall of Eliot Spitzer* (2010) and *Magic Trip* (2011), with more in production. He was also executive producer for *No End in Sight* (2007), an Oscar-winning film directed by Charles Ferguson. In addition to winning an Emmy, the Peabody, a duPont Columbia Award, and a Grammy, Gibney won an Oscar for *Taxi to*

the Dark Side. Three things that all his features share is very careful attention to research and detail, a respect for the films' subjects, and impeccable craftsmanship. Whether he is working in a compilation style like *Magic Trip* or using interviews in balance with stock footage, the work is all compelling. Gibney is especially good at making very complex political and cultural issues understandable. In 2010, *Utne Reader* magazine listed Gibney as one of the '25 Visionaries Who Are Changing Your World'. If enough people watch his documentaries, that may become true.

Taxi to the Dark Side was part of a *Why Democracy?* series meant to present independent documentary filmmakers' personal perception of democracy. It was shown by forty-two different broadcasters worldwide in 2007, accompanied by a global interactive conversation that took place in real and interactive space. In this context, a personal side of Gibney's life is revealed at the close of the film. It is a historically investigative approach to



Fig 82 Ken Kesey and driver Neal Cassady in Alex Gibney and Alison Ellwood's 2011 *Magic Trip*, a freewheeling account of the Merry Prankster's fabled road trip across America in the 1960s in a bus named 'Further'. The Film Foundation helped fund the repair of damaged original footage at the University of California, Los Angeles film archive, a process which took over a over a year

the decades-old battle about torture that led to the murder of an Afghan taxi driver, who was beaten to death by American soldiers while being held in extrajudicial detention at the Bagram Air Base. Unlike most of Gibney's work, it has many difficult-to-watch scenes of human degradation. *Taxi to the Dark Side* also presents a many-sided view of what was one of the US government and military's most appallingly controversial policies. Its sympathetic interviews with some of the ordinary soldiers who were incarcerated for this crime are especially surprising.

Davis Guggenheim is best known as the executive producer and director of *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) and *Waiting for Superman* (2010). Although Guggenheim's credits include more television fiction work than documentaries, his documentary films merit attention, in part because two have generated loud public controversies. With *It Might Get Loud* (2009) Guggenheim is the only filmmaker to release three different films ranked within the top 100 highest-grossing documentaries of all time. All of these are entertaining and contemporary. Perhaps what they tell us about successful documentaries for large audiences in the twenty-first century is that these often feature famous people – Al Gore in *An Inconvenient Truth*, Jack White, Jimmy Page and The Edge in *It Might Get Loud*, and the entire U2 band in *From the Sky Down*, the 2011 opening night gala film of the Toronto Film Festival – or perhaps not. *Waiting for Superman*, about the sinking quality in US schools, is as far as one can get from celebrity.

The team of former Vice President Al Gore and director/producer Davis Guggenheim made waves in political and social arenas for *An Inconvenient Truth*. *Waiting for Superman*, an inquiry into the possibility of education reform through charter schools, also stirred debate. As Vice President Gore said about *An Inconvenient Truth*, 'Who would have ever thought that a slide-show about global warming would become a hit film?' While some quibble about the scientific and social evidence backing up the messages in *An Inconvenient Truth* and *Waiting for Superman*, there is no doubt that they present powerful examinations about urgent problems. And they demonstrate solutions to those problems, becoming truly social efforts in the Griersonian tradition.

Errol Morris, Sinofsky & Berlinger, Stanley Nelson

Errol Morris makes films that belong in theatres. He began filmmaking in the 1970s, and his total body of work becomes more important with each new documentary. The films have been distributed to wide critical acclaim, and he has a loyal following for his completely personal vision, one perhaps shaped by a distortion of sight in his one eye. This work includes *Gates of Heaven* (1978), *Vernon, Florida* (1981), *The Thin Blue Line* (1988), *A Brief History of Time* (1992), *Fast, Cheap and Out of Control* (1997), *Stairway to Heaven* (1998), *Dr Death: The Rise and all Fall of Fred E. Leuchter, Jr.* (1999), *The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara* (2002), and *Tabloid* (2011). Morris is drawn to often-eccentric people who talk candidly about their lives while doing what they normally do. In an interview he explained that he is asked endlessly whether his films are documentaries:

The answer is 'yes' and 'no'. There are elements of fiction and nonfiction in all filmmaking. I use real people. They're not reading a prepared script. They're attempting to talk about themselves. That's real. But I do other things that are closer to fictional, like I storyboard for instance.

As a graduate philosophy student, Morris spent much of his time at San Francisco's Pacific Film Archives watching movies. After making *Gates of Heaven* and *Vernon, Florida*, he spent two years working as a private detective. This job may have given him a sharp forensic capacity to evaluate evidence and put fragments of a narrative together. Morris' talent for investigating the implied truth and for appreciating how people reveal themselves to the camera is at the heart of his art. His first two films became cult favourites. Critic Roger Ebert said about *Gates of Heaven*:

I believe it is one of the greatest films ever made. Ostensibly a documentary about two pet cemeteries in Northern California and the people who owned them, it is in fact one of the most profound, and funniest, films ever made about such subjects as life and death, success and failure, dreams and disappointments, and the role that pets play in our loneliness.

It was the theatrical release of *The Thin Blue Line* that brought Morris wide popular recognition. The film follows the case of Randall Dale Adams, a man who, it seemed, was falsely accused of the highway murder of a Texas police officer. Morris uses repeated dramatizations of the murder, multiple points of view, visual effects, talking-head interviews, and telephone conversations, in concert with Philip Glass' almost eerie score, to create the overriding impression that justice was not served. The film makes a strong case that prejudice and possibly tainted testimony persuaded the jury to find Adams, a drifter from the Midwest, guilty. The 'thin blue line' of police officers separating the public from chaos – as the judge, quoting the DA in the case, describes them – is shown as ineffective. The police, courts and prisons are seen as putting people at the risk of injustice as often as they protect them. After serving time for a death sentence commuted to life imprisonment, Adams was freed, in no small part due to the film. He died in 2011.

Most recently Morris completed *Tabloid* (2011), the story of a woman whose high jinks became a tabloid newspaper sensation in the late 1970s. This film prompted Morris to rethink some documentary precepts. Where once a single documentary (or book, or piece of journalism) could provide focus and a filter for a story, there are now many thousands of public views about every incident. Speaking of how tabloid journalism dominates the news, Morris commented on society's over-saturation of information from television, the internet, print, and every other source:

Now, there are so many sources of information that you lose track. You really do. I don't know how else to describe it. Maybe other people can deal with this glut of information differently, but I forget now where I heard things. There's a hall of mirrors where people are reporting on other people reporting on other people reporting. The connection of all this sea of information, this glut of reality, is sometimes lost. Where did all this stuff originate?

Morris acknowledges the importance of his films as documentary innovations. About the *Thin Blue Line* he says:

I did use movies in a different way, I think, than they had been used before ... I investigated a murder with a camera – an oddity in and of itself, it

was not telling a story about a murder investigation, it was the investigation – and evidence was accumulated with that camera ... One of the lessons about the Adams case is that, if it had happened now instead of 1988, when the movie came out, Randall Adams would in all likelihood have been executed [because there would be too much information and dis-information circulating about the case].

Interesting documentaries have also been made by the team of Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky. Previously best known for the intriguingly odd portrait film *Brother's Keeper* (1992), they transformed a tragic and lurid story into the 1996 HBO documentary *Paradise Lost 2: The Child Murders at Robin Hood Hills*. It explores the deaths of three boys, all second-graders who were found mutilated and murdered in a West Memphis, Arkansas ravine. The killings were dubbed the 'Robin Hood Hills murders', after the neighbourhood where the killings took place. Three youths who wore black T-shirts and listened to heavy metal music were arrested, tried and convicted in what the prosecution called 'ritualistic, satanic cult' killings. That trial was filmed by Sinofsky and Berlinger (who began work in advertising and later worked with Maysles Films.) Not only did it expose why poor people without adequate legal representation often end up on death row, it seriously cast doubt on the trio's guilt. *Paradise Lost 2: Revelations* was made in 2000. In it the filmmakers revisit the legal case, then mired in appeals for the imprisoned youths. The two films created a wave of popular support for the accused, Damien Echols, Jason Baldwin and Jesse Misskelley. In 2011, while they were editing the final cut on *Paradise Lost 3: Purgatory*, news came that the accused, known as the 'West Memphis Three', would be freed. Berlinger and Sinofsky flew to Arkansas and shot a new ending for the third film they, as filmmakers, now firmly a part of the story. There are echoes of *The Thin Blue Line* and Nick Broomfield's Aileen Wuornos films in the *Paradise Lost* trilogy, all of which demonstrate that documentaries can play an important, potentially life-or-death part in contemporary social discourse.

Stanley Nelson is known for historical documentaries that illuminate critical but sometimes overlooked parts of history, often that of African-Americans and other minorities. Before becoming an independent filmmaker,

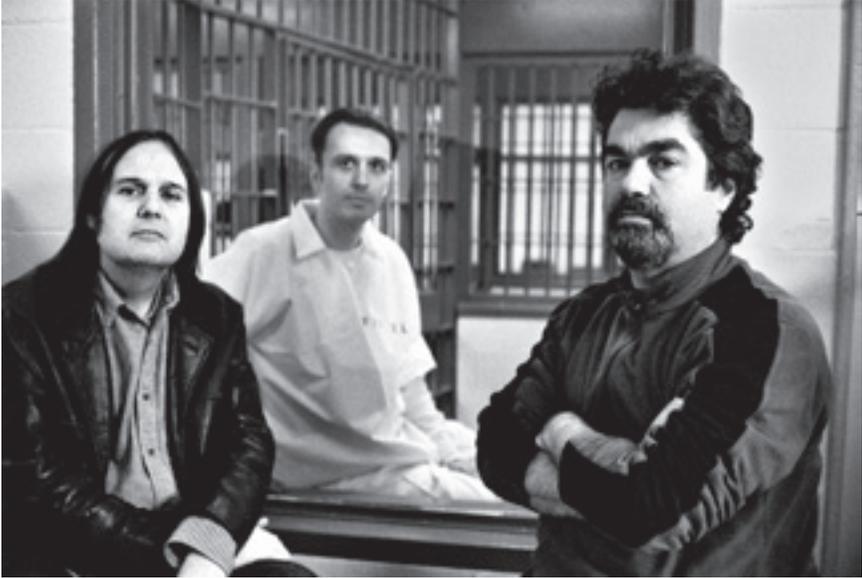


Fig 83 Filmmakers Bruce Sinofsky and Joe Berlinger flank one of the accused 'West Memphis Three' in the HBO trilogy *Paradise Lost: The Child Murders at Robin Hood Hills* 1996, *Paradise Lost 2: Revelations* 2000, *Paradise Lost 3: Purgatory* 2011. The films and the cause célèbre created by them had an impact on the ultimate release of Jason Baldwin, Jesse Misskelley and Damien Echols in 2011.

he was a producer for Bill Moyers at PBS. Nelson's feature documentary work includes *Wounded Knee* (2009), *Jonestown: The Life and Death of Peoples Temple* (2006), *Marcus Garvey: Look For Me in the Whirlwind* (2000) and *The Murder of Emmett Till*. (2003). This last film had the remarkable impact of reopening the inquiry into the murder of fourteen-year-old Emmett Till. His brutal killing was the result of Till's 'crime' of whistling at a white girl in Mississippi while he was visiting from Chicago in 1955. The young Till did not understand that he had broken the unwritten laws of the segregated South. Although his killers were arrested and charged with murder, they were both acquitted by an all-white, all-male jury. Shortly after, the defendants sold their story to a journalist, including a detailed account of how they murdered Till. The murder and the trial, along with the killers' subsequent boasts about the murder, horrified the world.

Nelson's films are usually made for PBS's 'American Experience' series, and the productivity of his relationship with PBS is topped only by Ken Burns' long-term support from the network. His work includes *Black Press: Soldiers Without Swords* (1998) and *A Place of Our Own* (2004), a semi-autobiographical look at the African-American middle class. *Sweet Honey in the Rock: Raise Your Voice* (2005) documents the African-American female a cappella ensemble as it traces the group's deep musical roots to the sacred music of the black church – spirituals, hymns, gospel – as well as jazz and blues. Nelson produced and directed *Wounded Knee* (2010), one of the five films that formed part of the 'We Shall Remain' series for PBS's 'American Experience'. Nelson's efforts in community outreach are realized through Firelight Media, a non-profit company dedicated to telling the stories of people, places and issues that are under-represented in popular culture. Firelight Media also provides training and support for emerging filmmakers who might otherwise be unable to make films.

His *Freedom Riders* (2010) recounts the powerful and inspirational story of six months in 1961 that changed America forever. Over four hundred black and white Americans, many young college students, risked their lives and endured savage beatings and imprisonment for travelling together on buses and trains as they journeyed through the Deep South. Deliberately violating the American South's Jim Crow laws, the Freedom Riders met with bitter racism and mob violence along the way, testing their belief in non-violent activism. The film's impact was enhanced by a web series, and a re-enactment of the freedom rides for the historic event's fiftieth anniversary. Nelson's work sits firmly in the tradition of historical interview and compilation films. His choice of subject matter, skill and thoughtfulness make him one of the twenty-first century's most notable documentarians working in this form.

Women Documentarians

There are no women documentarians in the above section. There are about the same number of women as men making English language documentaries, at least in the US, in the twenty-first century, but only a few have sustained

bodies of work with films appearing regularly over time. Fewer still have public profiles. As a cinematographer, Joan Churchill's career stands out for its longevity as well as for its artistic triumphs. She has been shooting acclaimed documentaries for over forty years and continues to grow creatively, yet only a few times has she been the producer or director of the films. Jessica Yu steadily makes very solid documentaries beginning with the Oscar-winning documentary short *Breathing Lessons: The Life and Work of Mark O'Brien* (1996). Her first hard-hitting social issue documentary is *Last Call at the Oasis* (2011), about the world's drinking water crisis, and she often directs television dramas. Her one-time employer Frieda Lee Mock also has an extensive filmography that includes five Oscar-nominated films. Women with high-profile names (as do men with high-profile names) have a bit more access to documentary-making and a shot at substantial careers. Alexandra Pelosi's (the daughter of US House Representative Nancy Pelosi) *Journeys with George* (2003) presented a homey and approachable portrait of George W. Bush on the campaign trail, and she has now made several films.

Chris Hegedus is a strong filmmaker in her own right, and in partnership with D. A. Pennebaker for thirty years, she commands great respect within the documentary community, but their films are less often referred to as Hegedus' than they are as Pennebaker's. Interestingly, she was drawn to documentary by seeing Drew Associates' *Jane*, described in Chapter 11. Hegedus' films with other filmmakers include *Startup.com* (2011) with Jehane Noujaim, a film about two young men who fail to get their internet start-up company off the ground. Possibly its candid intimacy of failure shared among young men is achieved only because it was made by two women. Reminiscent of Helen Van Dongen/Joris Ivens is Anne Drew, who has produced alongside Bob Drew for decades, and the work of Victoria Leacock or Valerie Lalonde, both of whom made films with Ricky Leacock in his later years. Lynne Novick has produced regularly with Ken Burns since 1989, but few know her name. Oppositely, Oscar-winners Susan Raymond and Alan Raymond are always referred to as just that: Alan and Susan Raymond, as is another husband-and-wife team Larry Hott and Diane Garey. Karen Goodman and Kirk Simon (also Oscar-winners) and Tia Lesson and Carl Deal are other successful male/female producing/directing teams.

A woman filmmaker with a substantial number of credits as producer and director is Rory Kennedy who, often with producer/director Liz Garbus, has made over twenty-five documentaries since 1992. *A Boy's Life* (2004) is a portrait of the troubling forces that shaped the character of a seven-year-old boy from an impoverished region of Mississippi. The documentary follows two years in the life of Robert and his younger brother, Benji, as their grandmother, Anna, struggles to raise them. Their mother, who got pregnant as a teenager as the result of a rape, feels that she cannot care for her sons. The film recalls the feel of *Lalee's Kin: the Legacy of Cotton* and *Portrait of Jason* in its sympathetic approach to a child's ongoing problem. Kennedy also directed and produced *Pandemic: Facing AIDS* (2003), going to Uganda, Russia, Thailand, Brazil and India to show the wide differences between how these nations view the disease, the services they offer, the quality of life and chance for survival within each. Her other credits include *American Hollow* (1999), *The Changing Face of Beauty* (2000), *Thank You, Mr President: Helen Thomas at the Whitehouse* (2008) and *The Nazi Officer's Wife* (2003). *American Hollow*, made with Nick Doob, reveals a deep sympathy with the heart of Appalachian culture in the Eastern US. It tells the story of Tree Bowling, sixty-eight years old and mother of thirteen, who discusses life in the hollow through interviews and footage of her and her large family. Iree and her family are stuck in century-old traditions that have turned them into a family suffering from poverty and unemployment due to lack of opportunities and the crutch of government welfare. Many of her grandchildren dream of leaving once and for all, aware they are giving up a time-honoured heritage. *American Hollow* is another of Kennedy's many HBO productions.

Barbara Kopple has the most long-lived record of steady documentary-making success and public recognition, a feat in itself. Some of her company, Cabin Creek Films' credits include: a portrait of Woody Allen as a jazz musician, *Wild Man Blues* (1998); *Shut Up and Sing* (2006); *Bearing Witness* (2005), the story of combat photographer Molly Bingham, who was held prisoner at Abu Ghraib at the start of the Iraq War; *Woodstock Now and Then* (2009); a film for ESPN's prestigious sports documentary series 'Thirty for Thirty', *The House of Steinbrenner* (2010); and for HBO *Gunfight* (2011). None



Fig 84 *Number Our Days* (1977) is an elegiac study of the aging members of the last remaining synagogue on the boardwalk in Venice, California by director Lynne Littman and producer Barbara Myerhoff. It won an Academy Award for Best Documentary Short

of these has the raw power of her debut film *Harlan County, USA*, but her work is a testament to dedication, indomitable passion and persistence that Kopple brings to her films.

Shut Up and Sing is one of Kopple's best. In 2003, with anti-Iraq War feeling running high, the top-selling Texas-based band the Dixie Chicks (Natalie Maines, Emily Robison and Marcie Maguire) played a gig in London, during which Maines told the crowd that she was embarrassed that US President George W. Bush was from Texas. The comment was reported by a British paper and picked up by the US media, who lost no time in branding the Dixie Chicks as traitors, banning their songs from radio and turning them into figures reviled by right-wing political conservatives. Despite death threats and mounting pressure from their record company and corporate sponsors, the women refused to apologize. Instead they took a stand for free speech, eventually turning their experiences into a new, politically charged album. Directors Barbara Kopple and Cecilia Peck were granted classic *cv/direct* access to tell this story – the cameras are backstage with the women as the

story breaks and there are many intimate moments. The film uses as a structural basis a cutting between the growing media furore in 2003 and the Dixie Chicks' older, wiser reunion in 2005.

Even as women and people of colour create more styles of documentary films on a wide array of subjects, most of their work generally gets less high-profile attention than that awarded to films made by men. This reflects the standard thinking of mainstream Hollywood media in which women directors and producers, along with people of colour, remain a minority. For most of the twenty-first century, of the roughly 13,400 members of Directors Guild of America, only about 1,000 (7%) are listed as female directors. Total female membership in the DGA, which includes people on the directing team such as assistant directors and unit production managers, is about 3,000 (22%). In 2003 Caucasian males directed more than 80% of US television episodes; of the 860 total episodes studied in 2002-3, Caucasian males directed 705 (82%); women directed 92 (11%); African-Americans 43 (5%); Latinos 14 (2%); and Asian-Americans directed 8 episodes (1%).

Admittedly, the documentary world is a far different place than episodic television. By nature, and continuing decades of tradition, many people who make documentaries embrace a social consciousness that welcomes minorities and women. In documentary pretty much anyone who can raise the money can get their film made, but completing any documentary accomplishes only two-thirds of the process – that is, funding and production. Distribution and exhibition are often daunting tasks, as Robert Flaherty learned but never took to heart, and which John Grierson mastered. In the international television market many documentary decision-makers are women. Not only at HBO/Cinemax, but in the US at POV and ITVS, PBS's long-running strands 'American Masters', 'American Experience' and The Discovery Channel, A&E, Bravo, Sundance, Lifetime and IFC, women often hold key decision-making positions. A big part of the reason for this is that after the 'golden years' of network television documentary in the 1950s and early 60s, nonfiction-making became a less visible, less profitable and less prestigious arena. Women were allowed into the 'ghetto' of documentary television since it was perceived as secondary to fiction and entertainment TV. When cable programming began, more women got jobs, accepting the low

budgets and low salaries offered by the cable start-ups. Now some of them are in key executive positions and nurture younger women.

Experimental Documentary

A filmmaker whose work might be placed among documentary experiments is Chuck Workman, best known for the short *Precious Images* (1989). Commissioned to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Directors Guild of America, this glorious pastiche takes audiences on a whirlwind-of-editing trip through the history of American feature film. It is the soundtrack as much as the visuals, taken from movie soundtracks, that makes *Precious Images* stand apart. It won an Academy Award for Best Live Action Short Subject, but it is more rightly a documentary. This influential film played in thousands of theatres around the world, has been used as part of museum installations and continues to thrill audiences whenever it is seen. Workman has made dozens of these montage experiments, or 'clip shows' as the Hollywood industry calls them. His style, rooted in compilation film, is much imitated by others to create mass emotion-based entertainment. Other documentary work includes *Superstar: The Life and Times of Andy Warhol* (1990) and a summary of the early avant-garde in the US, *Jonas Mekas, and the (Mostly American) Avant Garde* (2009). He has a list of television credits for both documentaries and compilations; it is the latter at which he excels.

Jay Rosenblatt continues to break new ground not only with the compilation films previously mentioned, but also with a series of short live-action films that have documented his relationship with his young daughter and her filmmaking. These self-reflexive personal essay/experimental films originated when two-year-old Ella said she wanted to be a filmmaker. Turning four, her dad gave her a video camera for her birthday. *Beginning Filmmaking* (2008), another HBO film, takes the audience through one year of trying to teach a pre-schooler how to make a film. Ella rises to the challenge of filmmaking on her own terms. The joys and frustrations of being a parent and of being a child are chronicled, with one result being the message that everyone does have to be careful what they wish for. More experimental in nature are Rosenblatt's

provocative compilation films *King of Jews* (2000), the most personal *Phantom Limb* (2005), and *Human Remains* (1998). The last addresses the horror of evil in a completely innovation way. Irony and occasional humour are threaded throughout a rapid montage compilation that brings to light the banality of evil by creating unusual portraits of five of the twentieth century's most reviled dictators. The film disturbingly unmasks the personal lives of Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, Joseph Stalin, Francisco Franco and Mao Tse Tung. Historically accurate, but mundane, details of their everyday lives – their favourite foods, films, habits and sexual preferences – are the only subject of the documentary. There is no mention of their public personae or of their place in history, but Rosenblatt's intentional omission of the unspeakable acts for which these men were responsible becomes clear in a repeated closeup image of a shovel digging earth.

Su Friedrich has made more than a dozen films and is generally typed as an experimental filmmaker. She has been mixing forms for over thirty years with work such as *The Odds of Recovery* (2002), *The Head of a Pin* (2004), *Seeing Red* (2005) and *From The Ground Up* (2008). Her words about documentary vs. experimental films are worth noting:

Of course, I run into problems naming what I do when I do something that relates to documentary, so I (sometimes) use the term begrudgingly. I don't know whether anyone could ever coin a term that would be large enough to embrace the huge range of work made under this current name, but I still have to say I dislike and disavow it.

Tarnation (2003), a first feature documentary by Jonathan Caouette, is very much an experiment. It is a critical darling and financial wonder created from Caouett's family home movies and found footage on Apple's i-movie system for a reported \$187.00 or \$218.32, depending on which publicity one reads. It exemplifies the mesh of self-reflexive documentary and experimental film in the early twenty-first century. Caouette was thirty-one when he morphed the surreal and shaky pieces of his regularly filmed life into a riveting self-reflexive documentary. Using self-filmed diary footage that stretches back to his 1970s childhood, along with re-enactments, collages of commercial films and other material, *Tarnation* presents the story of a schizophrenic mother, Renee, who

was once a child-model and her son who is shuttled through abusive foster homes and who grows up gay in the middle of nowhere, USA. Through the intervention of established fiction filmmakers Gus Van Sant and John Cameron Mitchell, the film had its technical edges polished and became a sensation at Sundance, Toronto, the New York Film Festival and Cannes. *Tarnation* is perhaps the most narcissistic documentary ever made, at least in terms of the amount of screen time and reflection taken up by Caouette's image. (*David Holtzman's Diary* could top it, but see Chapter 12 for an explanation of that film's exempt status.) Roger Ebert, always the documentary champion, proclaimed it: 'A TRIUMPH! A film of remarkable power. One of the best documentaries of recent years.' The film is also charming in its matter-of-fact explanation of various family horrors through simple on-screen text. Spanning a twenty-year filmmaking period, *Tarnation* is an emotional, craftily edited pastiche that is made more powerful through its pop and rock score. (Did the \$218.00 include the cost of music clearances?) A sequel to *Tarnation*, *Walk Away, Renee* is said to be forthcoming, but in 2011 Caouette claimed that he wanted to make no more documentaries.



Fig 85A



Fig 85A and B In *Gimme Shelter* the 1970 film by Albert Maysles, David Maysles and Charlotte Zwerin, Keith Richards and Mick Jagger are being filmed. In the second picture a flatbed editing machine monitor reflects Jagger's face back at him as he watches. During the editing, Jagger is confronted with the image of the murder of a spectator by the Hell's Angels that took place while the Rolling Stones were onstage during a free concert at Altamont, California

An aside about theatrical success and cv/direct ethics via rock documentaries

From 1961, when the National Film Board of Canada produced *Lonely Boy*, to Berlinger's and Sinofsky's 2004 psychological exposé of heavy metal stars Metallica in *Some Kind of Monster*, rock'n'roll and pop music have fascinated documentary-makers, and musicians have loved to be filmed. Notable music documentaries are not fiction films that use rock'n'roll, or straight-ahead filmed concerts, nor are they simply records of performances. These are fully realized creative efforts. Filmmakers such as D. A. Pennebaker (*Don't Look Back*, Bob Dylan, 1967), Martin Scorsese (*The Last Waltz*, The Band, 1979), Taylor

Hackford (*Hail, Hail, Rock and Roll*, Chuck Berry, 1987), Penelope Spheeris (*The Decline of Western Civilization*, the punk movement, 1981), Jonathan Demme (*Stop Making Sense*, Talking Heads, 1985), Michael Apter (*Bring on the Night*, Sting, 1985), Wim Wenders (*Buena Vista Social Club*, 1999) and Jason Priestly (*Barenaked in America*, Barenaked Ladies, 2000) are only some of the well-known names who have made notable music films. There are dozens of such films, up to and including Davis Guggenheim's latest *From the Sky Down* (2011).

For many years the most financially successful theatrically released documentary – rock, music, or otherwise – was Warner Brothers' *Woodstock* (1970) by Michael Wadleigh. The film devotes almost as much screen time to the audience encamped on Yasgur's farmland in upstate New York as it does to its now-legendary musical performances. *Woodstock* thus is an informal sociological study of hippie culture. Its many split-screen images, its (for the time) thundering soundtrack, and the lure of its carefree approach to 'Peace, Love, and Music', as well as sex and drugs, made it a landmark and an inspiration for millions of young people. The iconography of *Woodstock* remains powerful. New versions of the concert have been staged and new documentaries made about those events, notably Barbara Kopple's *My Generation*, which began as a documentary of Woodstock '94. As she finished editing her Woodstock '94 footage, Woodstock '99 occurred: 'I took a deep breath and went and did '99 with a really small crew – one 16mm camera and two DV cameras,' she has said. The result was a cross-generational look at all the factions that participated in the various Woodstocks. Wadleigh's original, which continues to generate income in revamped re-release and home video and DVD sales, remains as a seminal event in the history of American culture.

Wattstax (1973) is a bold documentary directed by Wolper alumnus Mel Stuart, produced by Wolper for Warner Brothers. This film of a concert staged in the summer of 1972 that drew over 100,000 people to the Los Angeles Coliseum featured performances by Stax Records soul stars such as Isaac Hayes, Albert King and the Staples Singers, as well as an appearance by Jesse Jackson. Intercut with the musical numbers are two contrapuntal threads: one of a group of black men discussing life questions in a local bar, another of raw standup comic newcomer Richard Pryor. *Wattstax* is an unusually frank

and hip look at the mores and the problems of urban black Americans in the mid-1970s. Stuart achieved this insider's perspective by using a crew made up of as many black filmmakers as he could find (an almost unheard-of situation for a studio-backed film) and the result is a real-deal celebration of giant afros and swinging dashikis.

The flip side to *Woodstock's* sunny view of the world (even during a downpour) is Albert and David Maysles', Charlotte Zwerin's and Muffie Meyers' *Gimme Shelter* (1970). Ostensibly the study of a free concert by the Rolling Stones at Altamont Speedway in Northern California, *Gimme Shelter* invokes the darkest moments of rock'n'roll as an enormous crowd surges out of control in response to Mick Jagger's 'Sympathy for the Devil' persona. At Altamont two people died in a hit-and-run auto accident, another drowned, and captured on film is the knife murder of an 18-year-old black spectator by the Hell's Angels, who were hired to provide concert security. Later in the film we see the filmmakers screening, rewinding and focusing in on this bit of footage as Jagger watches it on a flatbed editing machine. We, the film viewers, watch as the performer watches his performance and the filmmaker watches his own work, while an unknown someone is killed in front of us all. The murder becomes part not only of the filmed record, but also of a work of art. In this, it presages many controversies about capturing brutality and death on film and so-called reality television.

Michael Sragow, writing in 1990 for the magazine of the International Cinematographers Guild ICG, made the point that 'Pauline Kael and Vincent Canby led the [critical] charge against *Gimme Shelter* as an opportunistic snuff film, essentially saying that the filmmakers were complicit in the murder by having photographed it and subsequently profited from its theatrical release.' Their main criticism was that the concert was staged specifically to be filmed – and irresponsibly so. While conceding that the filmmakers had caught Jagger's 'feral intensity' with acute 'editing of the images to the music', Sragow quotes Kael writing that 'the filmed death at Altamont' was part of a 'cinéma vérité spectacular'. She condemned the movie with rhetorical questions: 'If events are created to be photographed, is the movie that records them a documentary, or does it function in a twilight zone? Is it the cinema of fact when the facts are manufactured for the cinema?'

Theatres and Festivals

There are many more documentaries seen in theatres in the twenty-first century than ever before. This book has noted that there are more of all types of moving image media available, but it is true that the percentage of documentary features playing in cinemas, measured against the number of fiction films in cinemas, has increased. Documentary shorts, however, remain in distribution/exhibition limbo. The following section details how a huge increase in film festivals, cultural institutions and theatrical documentaries are related.

The increased screening of documentaries in commercial theatres owes not a little to the rise in the number and quality of film festivals that showcase the form. There is a natural symbiosis between the popularity of documentaries and the popularity of documentary films in festivals. One feeds the other. From around 1995 with the success of *Hoop Dreams*, a pattern for launching 'big' documentaries became established, and a growing popular and critical interest in documentaries swept many titles from film festivals into multiplexes. The late 1990s and early 2000s saw an exponential growth in the sheer number of festivals worldwide, and in the United States in particular. It is possible to be at a film festival in some part of the globe every day of the year. It is probably possible to be at a film festival in the United States every day of the year. These festivals in themselves create a niche market for documentaries, since every festival programmer is competing with others to have the premiere showing of any given film. And many festivals are now dedicated only to documentaries.

To use festivals and other public platforms to gain a theatrical release, the plan is this: (1) get the film accepted into a festival that provides high visibility for documentaries; (2) have a successful festival screening, audience 'buzz' and great reviews; (3) be acquired by a theatrical distributor, hopefully one that will pay an acquisition fee up-front, offer a reasonable percentage, and not require the filmmaker to put up money (for blowups, prints, promotion, etc.); (4) hope that the distributor prepares a good advertising and PR campaign; (5) personally become involved in the theatrical distribution strategy, i.e.

get the film opened in the right theatres in the right places, get more good reviews; and (6) receive royalty cheques from the distributor. Then move on to television sales, the educational market, and DVD/download sales. This all assumes that the filmmaker has a spectacularly good film that audiences want to see. The chance that events will play out as described above is almost nil. Most documentaries never make it past the first hurdle, and of the handful that do, most return very little money to the filmmaker.

There are variations on the theme: self-distribution, a gruelling business proposition that takes up to two years of grass-roots work (after the film is completed); or acquisition by a distributor who learns about the film prior to a festival screening, moving into theatres following success in the nontheatrical market.

Documentaries have been part of film festivals as long as there have been film festivals. There have also long been festivals devoted to documentary. Nyon, Switzerland was one of the first modern festivals to focus on the documentary. Originating in the trend for ciné-clubs, the Nyon Festival started in 1969, and by the end of the 1970s was well established. Other important festivals for documentary in the twentieth century were Rotterdam, Holland, and in the US the Margaret Mead Film Festival, held at New York's Metropolitan Museum. Although the focus of the last is the anthropological film, it was a serious showcase for many varieties of documentary long before other film festivals celebrated the form, and it remains an important venue.

In the past two decades in the United States, no festival has been more responsible for the explosion of interest and commercial exposure for documentaries than Sundance. Robert Redford, its founder, has always supported, talked about and embraced documentaries. Sundance eventually provided the same legitimization and commercialization to documentaries that it earlier bestowed on independent fiction films. In 2004, Stacy Peralta's *Riding Giants*, an exploration of surfing culture, was the first documentary ever to be the Sundance opening night film. Peralta had a previous hit at Sundance and in theatres with *Dogtown and Z Boys* (2002), his homage to the skateboarding culture of his youth in Santa Monica, California. The 2004 opening night event was another signal that the documentary had arrived in terms of Hollywood's independent film scene. And in 2011, the Toronto

Film Festival opening night was for the first time a documentary, Davis Guggenheim's U2 film *From the Sky Down*.

Sundance is only one of the proliferation of film festivals around the world that are known for their documentaries, or exclusively screen documentaries, but it provides an example of the type, form and content of the documentary in relation to film festivals today. Approximately 862 documentaries were submitted to Sundance in 2010, sixteen were selected for the main competition, and a handful more played out of competition. That means that each year hundreds of feature-length documentaries are floating around seeking a festival home. There are other important festivals for documentaries of course: Toronto, Cannes, SXSW, New York, Tribeca and Silver Docs, Berlin and Full Frame.

An example of a documentary greatly helped by Sundance was *Capturing the Friedmans* by Andrew Jarecki, which was awarded the grand jury prize for documentaries in 2004. Later it was shown on HBO and released in theatres with limited success. Because it deals with the sensitive issue of child molestation in an ambiguous, reflexive, non-traditional way, the film was not a likely candidate for theatrical release. Its somewhat controversial approach, in which the filmmaker does not take a clear stand on the guilt or innocence of the convicted child molesters, led to critical debate in the press. 'Winning the prize [Sundance] got the film invited to other festivals. And it hiked up the profile a notch, which is very important for difficult films with difficult subjects that are hard enough to sell,' said Jarecki. The list of significant North American documentaries that have premiered at Sundance is impressive. It includes, among others, Ross McElwee's *Sherman's March* (1987), Al Reinert's *For All Mankind* (1989), Mark Kitchell's *Berkeley in the Sixties* (1990), Barbara Kopple's *American Dream* (1991), Joe Berliner and Bruce Sinofsky's *Brother's Keeper* (1992), Terry Zwigoff's *Crumb* (1995), Leon Gast's *When We Were Kings* (1996), Kirby Dick's *Sick* (1997), Liz Garbus and Jonathan Stack's *The Farm* (1998), Morgan Spurlock's *Super Size Me* (2004), James Marsh's *Man on Wire* (2008), Davis Guggenheim's *Waiting for Superman* (2010), Jeffrey Friedman's and Rob Epstein's *Paragraph 175* (2000), Chris Smith's *Home Movie* (2001), Doug Pray's *Scratch* (2002), Steve James' *Stevie* (2003) and others which, like many of the other documentaries that premiered there, have been little seen since their opening.

The most significant documentary festival in Europe in the twenty-first century is the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam, most ably run by Ally Derks. It is a huge, comprehensive world festival that attracts public and professionals alike to almost two weeks of screenings in several theatres. It also includes an important film market and the original 'Forum' pitching sessions. In Asia, Yamagata, held every other year in Japan, is perhaps the most prestigious. The leading documentary film festival in South America is called 'It's All True', headed by Amir Labaki. It is held in Brazil in Rio do Janeiro and Sao Paulo. Hot Docs is the leader in Canada and in England, it is Sheffied Doc Fest. There are literally hundreds of film festivals around the world that feature documentaries almost exclusively. The most charming name – and one that brings documentary history full circle – Flahertyiana in Perm, Russia.



Fig 86 *Robert Flaherty wearing his Borsalino hat, near the end of his life.*
International Film Seminars

Chapter Related Films

1978

Gates of Heaven (US, Errol Morris)

1988

The Thin Blue Line (US, Morris)

Precious Images (US, Chuck Workman)

1996

Paradise Lost: The Child Murders at Robin Hood Hills (US, Joe Berlinger and Bruce Sinofsky)

1997

Little Dieter Needs To Fly (US and Germany, Werner Herzog)

1998

Four Little Girls (US, Spike Lee)

Human Remains (US, Jay Rosenblatt)

1999

American Hollow (US, Rory Kennedy and Nick Doob)

2000

The Eyes of Tammy Faye (US, Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato)

Paradise Lost 2: Revelations (US, Berlinger and Sinofsky)

2002

The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara (US, Morris)

2003

Capturing the Friedmans (US, Andrew Jarecki)

Journeys with George (US, Alexandra Piloni)

Shut Up and Sing (US, Barbara Kopple)

2004

Gunner Palace (US, Michael Tucker and Petra Epperlein)

The White Diamond (US, UK, Herzog)

Tarnation (US, Jonathan Caouette)

Super Size Me (US, Morgan Spurlock)

2005

Murderball (US, Henry Alex Rubin and Dana Adam Shapiro)

Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room (US, Alex Gibney)

The Power of Nightmares: The Politics of Fear (UK, Adam Curtis)

Grizzly Man (Herzog)

2006

An Inconvenient Truth (US, Davis Guggenheim)

When the Levees Broke (US, Lee)

Shut Up and Sing (US, Kopple)

2007

No End in Sight (US, Charles Ferguson)

Taxi to the Dark Side (US, Alex Gibney)

2008

Beginning Filmmaking (US, Rosenblatt)

Man on Wire (France, US, James Marsh)

2009

It Might Get Loud (US, Guggenheim)

2010

Waiting for Superman (US, Guggenheim)

How to Fold a Flag (US, Tucker and Epperlein)

Restrepo (UK, US, Sebastian Junger and Tim Hetherington)

Inside Job (US, Ferguson)

Crude (US, Berlinger)

If God is Willing and Da Creek Don't Rise (US, Lee)

Poster Girl (US, Sarah Nesson and Mitchell Block)

Freedom Riders (US, Stanley Nelson)

2011

Cave of Forgotten Dreams (Herzog)

No Contract, No Cookies: The Stella D'Oro Strike (US, Jon Alpert)

Sarah Palin: You Betcha (US, Nick Broomfield and Joan Churchill)

Chapter Related Books

Bloom, Livia, ed., *Errol Morris: Interviews*. Mississippi: University of Mississippi Press, 2010.

Cronin, Paul and Werner Herzog, *Herzog on Herzog*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2003.

Levy, Emmanuel, *Strange Than Fiction: Michael Moore, Barbara Kopple, Errol Morris and the New Documentary Filmmakers* (not yet released)

McCreadle, Marsha, *Documentary Superstars*. New York: Allworth Press, 2011.

Rothman, William, *Three Documentary Filmmakers: Errol Morris, Ross McElwee, Jean Rouch*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2009.

Now and When

During its long journey from a single screening to a world now blanketed – perhaps smothered – by moving image information and opinion, documentary has given voice to both charlatans and truth-tellers; it has gathered acolytes and debunkers, shaken up populations, and kept them in line. It has changed the lives of individuals and the course of society. All the while, it has recorded the actual sounds and images of the world. The history of documentary is far from simple or straightforward, even though this book presents a historically organized chronicle of major works and trends that shaped the field. The complexity of that field has become ever more pronounced in the twenty-first century. There are so many types of work laying claim to the term ‘documentary’, so many practitioners of the form, and so many ancillary ‘documentary’ activities, that the more one examines it, the more confused the label might seem. In this, documentary is much like other aspects of our post-post-modern world: extremely rich in data and nuance that sometimes falls into the bathos of self-importance.

Documentary films are different from other media because the force driving the most dedicated documentarians has always been, and remains, a deep desire to shed light on the very issues, people, places and processes that make the world so complex. Grierson or Flaherty might not recognize the technology or the politics at work, but they would certainly identify with filmmakers’ motivations in the twenty-first century. They knew that as individuals who belong to an increasingly global society, we can best affect what we best understand, and we bear an increasing responsibility for the

ways our personal actions affect the entire world. In terms of promoting social change, documentary film remains one of the most effective ways to enhance understanding on a mass level. Nothing else can so fully reveal one part of the world to another. Documentary also provides its own singular aesthetic and emotional pleasures. For these reasons, and others, it is worth the effort to make sense of the documentary now, to linger on the history that shaped it, and to speculate on its possible future.

Even though this book deals mainly with Great Britain, the United States and Canada, documentary has long been a more global form than suggested by these geographical/political entities. Globalization has made what was always an international movement the province of every part of the earth. Worldwide access to documentary is due in no small part to advances in technology and economic changes – the same factors that drove every phase of cinema's growth.

Rapid changes have also affected funding, distribution and exhibition. High-definition cameras and screens, hundreds of cable and satellite channels, internet exhibition, and video-on-demand are all realities. At the same time that Hollywood spends more and more millions for special effects spectacle in simplistic fiction features, documentaries of all kinds are made at much lower cost. Some, on the level of 2004's theatrical success *Super Size Me*, are produced for \$100,000 or less, and screen at festivals, in cinemas, and in homes. Many others, made with much smaller budgets, reach smaller audiences, but all are giving voice to makers who have never before been heard.

As access to equipment for production, distribution and exhibition becomes more universal, the documentary world expands and reconfigures in surprising ways. Just as many developing countries skipped the second stage of the telecommunications chain – jumping from no telephones at all to mobile phones, without ever stopping at landline phones – some filmmakers leapt from no access to media-making to complete access to a world stage. In 2004, Arab Muslim terrorists filmed the beheading of foreign hostages and put the images on the internet for all to see, creating a few moments of 'actualities' indeed. It is absurd to think of these terrorists having the access or ability to do the same with 35mm or 16mm cameras, or without the internet as a distribution mechanism. Because of the presence of mobile phone cameras,

the 2009 death of Neda Agda-Soltan during the Iranian election process instantly became a worldwide story and human rights cause. It was called by *Time* magazine 'The most widely witnessed death in human history'. The downside of these reports is that they are in no way documentaries. They are not journalism. They are actuality documents much like early silent film actualities, some of which later become parts of fully realized documentaries.

Another interesting sidelight to the world's big technological leaps is the fact that in the USSR the domination of the top-down Soviet system of centralized filmmaking from the teens through the 1980s dictated that documentaries intended for theatrical release were made with 35mm equipment. Professional documentary, education, production, distribution and exhibition were supported by the Communist systems, and beautiful, meaningful, and occasionally subversive films were made and seen. After the dissolution of the USSR the technical leap was from 35mm to portable video with little stopover at 16mm. Television used some 16mm, but the vast output of Soviet regional documentaries in gorgeous 35mm will never be repeated.

It always takes some time, and much trial and error, to find the best uses for new equipment and new means of expression. Most internet documentaries have progressed little further than snippets – thankfully most are more productive than terrorist acts. And the internet is vital now to documentary. Working documentarians and many individual films have their own websites supporting, and in some cases surpassing, the usefulness of the primary film. A recent trend is online fund-raising through social media sites. Historically, no new technology immediately begets great artistry, but better online documentaries are coming, hopefully building on long-tested documentary practices, as new ideas are explored.

Aesthetics and Content

The aesthetic questions that always arise with the introduction of new technologies also continue to shift. It is often claimed that much is lost – visually, aurally and artistically – with the cheaper, easier-to-use equipment. This is true. *Super Size Me* feels more like a home movie than a finished work

meant to be screened in theatres, although it was successful there, grossing over \$7 million. Perhaps the cute and catchy home movie aesthetic was the intention of the filmmaker, Morgan Spurlock. Probably the story – of the consequences of its maker eating nothing but fast food from McDonald's for a month – would not have been made without the cheap technology. Would it have been better not to tackle this issue at all than to have it exist in a rough form? Is it better to drink wine from a poor vintage than to drink no wine at all? The answer perhaps is that every vintner must take care to do the best job possible with the grapes at hand, and every consumer must make their own valuation. In the case of *Super Size Me*, audiences embraced the film, both for its comedy and its social comment. McDonald's does now post its exorbitant calorie counts on its menus, but the number of its customers and its corporate profits continue to grow. The danger for the documentary lies not in using the newest, most accessible technologies, but in being careless with their use. Just because something seems simple does not mean that it does not deserve to be used with care and respect. It is possible, for example, to light beautifully for mini-DV, just as it is possible to shoot without any regard for the lighting. Unfortunately most people choose the latter, easier route.

Audiences have been conditioned for several generations to accept certain aesthetic qualities as part of documentary. They are unlikely to reject a nonfiction film combined with the techniques of fiction film simply because it has less than perfect image quality, sound or editing techniques, or because it promotes a first-person point of view. However, aesthetically ugly images increasingly dominate as audiences come to accept low quality. Documentaries have long been victim of being judged solely for their content rather than for their skilful use of film techniques. It is almost axiomatic that the perfectly produced documentary on a less-than-emotionally compelling subject will be bested in competition for prizes and audience acceptance by the less well-made film that moves an audience to tears. The best documentaries, just as the best fiction films, manage to combine high-level skill with story and emotion. Although Grierson sometimes decried the artifice of technique, documentarians such as Humphrey Jennings and Alberto Cavalcanti, even when they worked for him, tried very hard to combine the best available technique with a passion for their subject. Experimental

film also continues to push boundaries within documentary. Jay Rosenblatt, especially with his remarkable compilation shorts *Darkness & Day* (2009) and *Human Remains* (1998), has moved the classic compilation technique past historical comparison, past pastiche, and into a realm of art that pulls at the darkest of human thought.

Content-wise there have been shifts towards worldwide democratization of documentary. In some cases this has meant a move to better understanding of the complexities of our linked globe. *FRONTLINE/World* (1998–2010), for example, was a US public TV series that profiled countries and cultures seldom seen on American television. Springing from the original WGBH *FRONTLINE*, each episode of *FRONTLINE/World* featured two or three short stories told by an ethnically diverse group of video-journalists. With portable digital cameras, these correspondents roamed the world, observing and filming, sometimes surreptitiously. This idea has been reiterated recently by the Current TV channel. ITVS International, with its mandate for diversity, launched the ‘Global Perspectives’ project in 2005. This is a two-way exchange that brings documentaries from other nations to US audiences and delivers independent US documentaries to audiences abroad through public and cable television, online and outreach partners. More than eighty fiction films and documentaries have been partially funded through this programme.

In other cases, globalization of documentary has meant little to increasing understanding among cultures. The subjects most easily transported to all parts of the world are often those which are least offensive to mass audiences. Nature documentaries, because they rely on no human language, have an international currency that transcends any border. This can translate into advantages for some ‘message’ films, as was the case with the anti-dolphin killing *The Cove* (2009), but can be rather meaningless in a case such as *March of the Penguins* (2005), in which animals become anthropomorphized Disney-like characters. Stories of adventure, ancient civilizations, natural wonders, unexplained phenomena are also easier to sell cross-culturally, and fascination with every detail of WWII seems to permeate society, sixty-five years after conflict ended. It is the politically and personally challenging analyses of recent historical and current events that are hard to explain across cultures. Documentaries on these subjects create the most controversy, if they get seen.

Finance

International co-production became a buzzword in the documentary field of the 1990s. In most cases the term meant international co-financing rather than actual production. In its simplest form, television entities from various countries invest money with a production company (usually based in one country) to buy the rights to telecast a film that has yet to be made or is in some stage of production – in effect, presales. The finished documentary takes shape depending upon the amounts of monies involved and the varying power of the investors and the production company. In Europe this system was a fairly natural outgrowth of the meshing of separate countries into the European Union. The NFB has, as it tends to do, institutionalized the globalization trend with a mandate decreeing that a specific percentage of all its productions be made with international co-financing monies. Canada is now well known for its co-production efforts.

For US producers, operating independently, the challenge is greater. While European co-productions are facilitated by European Union economic incentives, documentarians in the US are both aided and penalized by international co-production. Some enterprising producers are savvy enough to find financing from any place on earth, but the trade laws and cultural quotas of other nations do not facilitate the funding of US productions. Many nations mandate that the majority of their media funding go to ‘native’ producers. Conversely, US television entities, even public television, have no restrictions about paying for programming from foreign sources. These policies make sense in the Hollywood-dominated fiction world. The hegemony of such US media giants is obvious, and fought by those who wish to retain separate cultural identities. However, the same exclusionary formulas are also often applied to independent US documentarians who do not have the same clout nor the same objectives as major corporate producers.

The market for completed documentaries on television internationally is fairly large. Networks and stations around the world buy thousands of nonfiction shows. According to the trade publication *The Hollywood Reporter* in October 2003, prices to license documentaries (of all types)

for broadcast ranged from \$2,000 to \$5,000 in the Middle East, \$1,000 to \$7,500 in Eastern Europe, \$5,000 to \$15,000 in Japan, and a high of \$25,000 to \$50,000 in the UK. The films are sold by a variety of individual producers, sales representatives, television networks and large production entities at markets like Docs For Sale at IDFA (International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam) and Sunny Side of the Doc in Marseilles. The traditional international television market MIP, which takes place each year in Cannes, added a special separate two-day MIPDOC session in the mid-1990s specifically for the buying and selling of documentaries. Many of these are nature films and other types of nonfiction that might well not be categorized as documentary (cooking shows or travelogues, for example), but important social issue documentaries, too, ultimately make money when sold to international television. International television sales are often the largest source of revenue for any documentary from any English language-speaking country.

Today's international documentary scene also includes a large number of public pitching events and conferences designed to help filmmakers co-produce their work with partners from different countries. These emerged in the late 1980s from events such as the Amsterdam Forum, running within IDFA, and from the three International Documentary Congresses organized in the late 1990s by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and the International Documentary Association in Los Angeles. There are documentary training initiatives funded by the European Union's MEDIA (e.g. Eurodoc), Discovery Campus Master schools, the Banff Television Festival in Canada, etc. The original pitching forum was so popular in Amsterdam that it successfully expanded to a sister forum at the Hot Docs Festival in Toronto, Canada. There are also specialized for-profit multi-day conferences for history documentary producers, science documentary producers, wildlife documentary producers, and the like.

There is a flip side to the argument that an increasingly global culture and international funding results in a healthier production landscape for documentaries. Leslie Woodhead, in a critique for the website Docos.com in 2001, said:

In his remarkable series of diaries recording the subtle corruptions of daily life in Nazi Germany, Victor Klemperer notes how curious it is that

at the moment when modern technology annuls frontiers and distances (flying, wireless, television, economic interdependence) the most extreme nationalism is raging. They (these words) were written more than 60 years ago, in 1938. At the beginning of the 21st century, it is hard to avoid the evidence that those same forces of new technology and international business, far from extending our understanding and our tolerances, are shutting down our horizons. More and more, it seems, the Global Village is patrolled and ring-fenced by the Global Market. The evidence for that mounting insularity is clear and disturbing in the tough new environment for television documentary. Commissioners and schedulers regret that international stories don't get the big audiences; ratings-hungry networks gorge on the overnight returns for material, which exploits the most intimate doings of the people closest to home. In a time when even the most public-spirited broadcasters seem frozen in the headlights of ratings and profits, the space for documentary to explore difficult issues in faraway places shrinks every year.

Documentary Un-reality

As has been pointed out, examples of faux documentary are found throughout its history. The purposes and techniques involved in making such films vary, but there have been many attempts to fool audiences, to comment on documentary technique and the authenticity of moving images, to surprise audiences and to let them in on a joke. And while they have generated serious debate and comic comment over the decades, these films are today a widely accepted cinema subset, regardless of whether they are called fake documentary, staged documentary, pseudo-documentary or faux documentary, or in the sometimes cruel spirit of the twenty-first century, mockumentary, even shockumentary.

One name that does not apply to this sort of film in this book and in our era is docudrama, particularly when discussing work in Canada and the US. Docudramas are fiction films that are based on events that occurred or were imagined to have occurred in the past; and they are fully scripted, cast, acted,

and often do not use documentary styles. When they do employ documentary styles, the makers are not trying to create something that will be perceived as anything other than a partly or wholly fictionalized account of events that happened or to people who live/d. In other words, the makers do not intend the audience to believe that the dialogue or costuming, for example, are authentic. Docudramas often do contain factual information and references, and they sometimes include employing nonactors as participants or shooting at authentic locations. It is sometimes difficult to draw a line between docudrama and faux documentary, and debate over definitions continues, but in this context faux documentaries are categorized as belonging to the documentary tradition and docudramas are not. Docudramas have stronger links to fiction films and should be considered in a category of their own. In the UK, the documentary drama is a somewhat different animal, partly because of a history rooted in using television as a dramatically staged educational medium that contrasts with the often-melodramatic needs of North American commercial networks.

At the end of the nineteenth century, faking events for short actualities was common. In January 1898, the battleship *USS Maine* was near Cuba to 'safeguard American interests,' even as Secretary of the Navy, John D. Long insisted that it was only making a friendly call. A mysterious explosion destroyed the *Maine* while it sat in Havana harbour, killing many aboard. Although the cause of the explosion was unknown, America became bitten by war fever, and blamed the Spanish in Cuba for the attack (this despite the fact that many Spanish ships sent out lifeboats to rescue survivors of the explosion). The young film industry immediately began to exploit the drama inherent in this event and thus furthered public outrage in order to sell more films to theatre owners. The Biograph Co. reacted to the sinking by taking their existing film *Battleships 'Iowa' and 'Massachusetts'* (December 1897) and simply retitling it *Battleships 'Maine' and 'Iowa'* (February 1898). This retitled version was described in the Biograph sales catalogue: 'This scene embodies probably the only moving picture extant of the ill-fated battleship *Maine* blown up in Havana harbour. It was taken, together with the *Iowa*, in the Brooklyn Navy Yard but a few days before the *Maine's* departure for the South. Most of the men shown in the picture were killed by the explosion under the

Maine.’ In other words, Biograph renamed the ship in their existing actuality footage to fit the immediate need for a ‘documentary’ about the sinking of the *Maine*. Biograph lied; audiences watched, but we do not know if they questioned.

War against Spain was declared by the US Congress in April 1898, and the Vitagraph Company, eager to be a part of growing war film frenzy, produced *Tearing Down the Spanish Flag*, clearly a staged event. The film was simply a closeup of the hand of Vitagraph executive J. Stuart Blackton pulling down a Spanish flag and hoisting the US flag in its place. ‘It was taken in a 10 x 12 studio room, the background a building next door,’ Blackton explained in a lecture at the University of Southern California in 1929. ‘We had a flagpole and two 18-inch flags. [Albert E.] Smith, another Vitagraph executive operated the machine and I, with this very hand, grabbed the Spanish flag and tore it down from the pole and pulled the Stars and Stripes to the top of the flagpole. That was our very first dramatic picture and it is surprising how much dramatic effect it created ... the people went wild.’ *Battleships ‘Maine’ and ‘Iowa’* was a faux documentary; *Tearing Down the Spanish Flag* was a drama.

Early in the conflict Biograph cameramen, including Billy Bitzer, were sent to Cuba to film the scenes of the war. Actual footage of marching troops, the *Maine* wreckage, and other non-combat scenes were shot. Bitzer, beginning what in the future became a modus operandi for some war zone cameramen, apparently spent much of his time on William Randolph Hearst’s press yacht being entertained by Hearst and his entourage of young ladies. Blackton and Smith also went to Cuba, where they followed Teddy Roosevelt and his Rough Riders on the ‘charge’ up San Juan Hill. At one point the filmmakers realized that the sound overhead was sniper bullets, not the buzzing of tropical bugs as they thought, and they soon returned to the US. According to the Library of Congress website, ‘The risk was far too great for cameramen to film actual battles in the Spanish-American War but the studios capitalized on the public’s interest by filming re-enactments of the conflicts.’ National Guard troops recreated several scenes in New Jersey, including an attack on a Spanish scouting party in *Cuban Ambush* and Spanish soldiers executing Cuban rebels in *Shooting Captured Insurgents* (both 1898).

The difficulties of capturing combat footage have made re-enactment of battle in documentaries a subject of debate in every ensuing decade, from

WWI (see the discussion of *Battle of the Somme* in Chapter 1) through WWII (*The Battle of San Pietro* in Chapter 7) to present-day questions about terrorist website posts. Most of what is presented as documentary combat footage is just that, brought to audiences in spite of the obstacles of unwieldy equipment and great personal danger, first by cameramen and, since the 1980s covert US wars in Central America, camerawomen, both those officially working for a government and those filming without authority.

Fake documentaries are not limited to the subject of war; they exist on a myriad of topics. According to Raymond Fielding, in his book *The March of Time, 1935–1951*:

For every genuine news film photographed under difficult and sometimes dangerous conditions, an equal amount of energy was spent by the same producers to fake outstanding news events of the day . . . realistically staged re-creations of famous events, based upon reliable information and duplicating insofar as possible the location, participants, and circumstances of the original. These films were generally designed to deceive audiences.

In films other than combat, though, faux documentaries often are not meant to directly deceive, rather they contain a strong element of self-consciousness that seeks to subvert documentary conventions. While using the stylistic techniques of documentary, they often seek to question the ‘truth’ of all documentary films. Sometimes these films are parodies, ‘a work that broadly mimics a characteristic style and holds it up to ridicule’. One of the best of these parodies is the famous 1957 April Fool’s Day BBC *Panorama* television series segment by cameraman Charles De Jaeger and producer David Wheeler about the bumper Alpine spaghetti harvest. As the camera shows the harvesting by local girls, presenter Richard Dimbleby notes, in his sonorous BBC announcer’s voice, that ‘After picking, the spaghetti is laid out to dry in the warm, Alpine sun’. Recently treehugger.com, a website of the slow food movement, posted tongue-in-cheek: ‘One of the earliest and most important documentaries on local food and cultural practices was this classic, one of the first studies of the importance of climate (there was a really mild winter that year), culture and food, rolled into two minutes of cinematic history.’ BBC has followed up on reactions to the spaghetti trees segment for decades and

reports from viewers who thoroughly believed the film can be found on its website. Any artistic form can be parodied. Mel Brooks mastered the western in *Blazing Saddles* and the monster movie in *Young Frankenstein*. Similarly Woody Allen parodies science fiction in *Sleeper* and the documentary in *Zelig*. Parodies like these are meant to make audiences laugh, and on that level the finest documentary parody is *This Is Spinal Tap* (1984).

As its premise, young filmmaker and Spinal Tap fan Marty D. Berg sets out to capture, in his words, 'the sights, the sounds, and the smells' of a workhorse British rock band named Spinal Tap. With a small crew by his side, Marty films the group during their first US tour in six years. The result of Marty's vision is a documentary that is humorous, shocking, and completely made-up. *This Is Spinal Tap* is actually Rob Reiner's directorial debut. After having been granted unprecedented access to the band's tour, Marty captures the day-to-day grind of what it means to be fading rock stars on tour. In addition to concert and behind-the-scenes footage, Marty interviews the three principals of Spinal Tap: lead singer David St Hubbins (Michael McKean), guitarist Nigel Tufnel (Christopher Guest) and bassist Derek Smalls (Harry Shearer), all three of whom are the film's co-writers. *Spinal Tap* even includes 'archival images' of earlier incarnations of the band from better days in the 1960s and 70s. *This Is Spinal Tap* is constructed to resemble a genuine low-budget rock music documentary, except that the tone, instead of being earnest, is gently mocking. Spinal Tap became a cult band with a power to live on in the 'real' world, spawning a fan base, websites and merchandize. Christopher Guest went on to appropriate its mock-documentary form successfully in *Best in Show* (2000), *Waiting for Guffman* (1996) and *A Mighty Wind* (2003), documentary parodies of dog shows, community theatre and folk music, respectively.

Other fiction feature films and many television programmes that have appropriated documentary's aural and visual conventions for various entertainment objectives include: *The Rutles* (1978), which parodies the Beatles, *Hard Core Logo* (1996), *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan* (2006), and *Incident at Loch Ness* (2004), in which Werner Herzog archly attempts to parody his own filmmaking style. These and many others are similar in their use of documentary form to create films that audiences are expected to

understand are faked and are expected to enjoy with a grain of salt. Other faux documentaries operate on more serious levels and intend other results.

Peter Watkins

The films of Peter Watkins are among the most challenging ever made in documentary, or any other cinematic form. At least since *The Forgotten Faces*, his 1961 short, through today, his films challenge convention and they do it in a very deliberate reasoned way that represents his own highly structured and iterated media theories. All of his films have either been documentary or drama presented with documentary techniques, sometimes portraying historical occurrences and sometimes possible near-future events, as if contemporary reporters and filmmakers were there to interview the participants. Watkins pioneered this technique in his first full-length television film *Culloden* (1964), which portrayed the Jacobite uprising of 1745 (the attempt by Charles Edward Stuart to regain the British throne) in the then-contemporary style of a news broadcast about the Vietnam War. With the success of *Culloden*, the BBC commissioned him to make what became his best-known film, *The War Game*, which was released theatrically and won the 1966 Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature. In this film Watkins places the viewer in the subjective position of the confused soldiers, who have no real idea of how the battle is going. Using medium closeups of soldiers' faces and few establishing long shots, he refuses to provide a clear overview of the action. This form, which is also the basis of *The Forgotten Faces*, allowed Watkins to place the action in a context that could not be signposted by familiar landmarks of place or time. The incongruous presence of news cameras on an eighteenth-century battlefield became irrelevant as viewers were drawn into the conflict. Watkins continues to use this aesthetic throughout his work, filming events from the past, the present, and the possible future as if they were contemporary news events. *The War Game* (1965) is Watkins' most emotionally powerful use of these techniques. Viewers see vague, often hazy or grainy long shots that could be from any number of locations, medium closeups of individuals, little traditional cross-cutting and preference for random events over psychological character development.

The War Game was banned by the BBC, which refused to broadcast it until 1985. Due to this and other instances of what he characterizes as black-balling by the television and critical establishments, Watkins has lived and worked in self-imposed exile from England since the mid-1960s. Great public debate surrounded the cancellation of the film's broadcast. Although the BBC is, by charter, free from government influence, it receives this charter and its funding from central government. *The War Game* was screened for government representatives prior to the broadcast date, and pressures were brought to bear to prevent its being shown. Other private screenings were held from which came varied opinions, specifically that the film was too powerfully shocking for audiences to handle and that it played into the hands of England's anti-nuclear activists who were very prominently in the news at the time. Over the years, the BBC did make the film available to film societies, limited theatrical release, educational and festival screenings.

Official distress over *The War Game* came not only from the realistic treatment of horrific events. The British government maintained and maintains a pro-nuclear weapons defensive strategy. *The War Game* is adamantly anti-nuke. The film also portrays the response of the official agencies and individuals as laughably inadequate, and the information given to the public as lies. In this it is similar to the 2005 BBC fictional production *Dirty War* that dramatizes the inadequacies of response to the explosion of a terrorist bomb in London.

The charges of censorship and suppression may have moved members of the Academy to award an Oscar to *The War Game* as much as did its shocking content and challenging form. Obviously, the nominating committee knew that the events portrayed never actually occurred. In recognizing Watkins' work as a documentary, they took a chance at broadening the definition of the term. There was probably also a sentiment that this is one of those films that everyone should have the chance to see and that the award would facilitate that. Although it is not a Soviet Union vs. NATO war, the twenty-first century world faces a continued, possibly less manageable, threat from nuclear war. The lack of government preparedness for catastrophic events is more apparent than ever in the mid-1960s, when many people harboured complacency about the ability of our bureaucracies to handle any problem. The disaster of

the official response to Hurricane Katrina has shown that this faith, like that of the survivability of nuclear war, is false. Amazon.com used the appalling term 'shockumentary' in its headline description of the *The War Game*. It is not that. Nor can it be classified with most of the other recent films in which documentary conventions are used to trick, ridicule or dramatize life. Almost none of these contain the sophisticated comment on media itself that characterize Watkins' work. His films comprise a body of original cinematic works that are hard to categorize.

Watkins has struggled to have his films seen, as well as to continue making films. He spent many years developing a critical manifesto against what he calls 'Monoform', the dominant media language of film, television and the web in which audiences are pummelled by endless sounds, images and rapid, seamless editing. He continues to evolve a stylistic critique that questions the 'reality' of media images; even to the point of having performers in his later films question the director about the purpose of the work.

The staged documentary, using conscious reflexivity and self-reflexivity, has been explored and reworked dozens of times since Watkins made *The War Game*, among them Watkins' own *Punishment Park* (1971) and his overly theoretical and rather tedious *La Commune* (2000). Other notable films that can be grouped with them include *Daughter Rite, ...No Lies* (discussed in Chapter 12), Orson Welles' *F for Fake* (1973), Peter Greenaway's *The Falls* (1987), William Greaves' *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm* (1968) and its sequel *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take 2 1/2* (1998), Barry Spinello's *Rushes* (1979), Mitchell Block's *Speeding?: A Film About Driver Safety* (1978), and Eleanor Antin's *From the Archives of Modern Art: A Documentary Fiction* (2005).

Intimate Doings of Reality

It has been posited that part of the wide audience enthusiasm for documentaries in theatres beginning in the 1980s lies in the fact that commercial television so embraced 'reality' shows like MTV's *Real World*, *Survivor*, *Big Brother*, and on downward to *Extreme Makeover*, that a ready-made audience accepted

the conventions of Michael Moore and other first-person documentarians as ordinary entertainment. There is a devolving and skewed road leading from the founders of *cv/direct* to the frenzy of TV reality shows, with many stops of self-reflexivity on the way. An example of such a trajectory begins with Frederick Wiseman's *Law and Order* (see Chapter 15), plus Jon Alpert's 1969-70 series of *cv/d* films on the Pittsburgh Police Department, and continues with Alan and Susan Raymond's *Police Tapes*, which foreshadows Malcolm Barbour's and John Langley's *Cops*. Wiseman looks at the institution of the police with his distanced *vérité* approach. *Police Tapes* is a serious, yet character-driven, personal and sobering *vérité* view of the very real threats to policemen. *Cops*, on the other hand, earned an online review in which it was observed that 'Cops is always more fun when you are a tad inebriated yourself; this collection (*Cops: Caught in the Act*, 1989) can be enjoyed simply for the fact that some people can be very, very stupid, and, as a bonus, these people are not you.' *Cops* has played successfully on the Fox network for over twenty-five years, and has generated numerous spin-offs and copycats around the world. *Cops* is often cited as the progenitor of reality shows, but it sprang from a documentary impulse. One of its creators and its long-time executive producer, John Langley, came to the documentary world with a master's degree in English. He always had an interest in crime documentary. Langley and partner Malcolm Barbour happened to pitch the *Cops* concept to Fox at a time when the network was new and very hungry for inexpensive programming. *Cops* continues.

It sometimes seems that every boundary of documentary ethics has been breached by reality TV. Following the success of its US broadcast of the BBC's *Victorian House* (a show in which middle-class people from the twenty-first century attempt to dress and live as Victorians), PBS got into the reality show business with a series that began with *Frontier House* in 2003. This eventually produced the spin-off *Colonial House* (2004), in which rich and famous television talk show host Oprah Winfrey arrived via rowboat at the colony, fully dressed in Colonial garb. Few would claim that this is documentary, and today we are regaled, or nauseated, by the antics of the Kardashians and the *Real Housewives* – an overblown version of the American dream. The 2011 suicide of a cast member of *Real Housewives of Beverly Hills* shows the heartless 'reality' to which so-called unscripted television has sunk.

Cheap and easy-to-produce reality shows have joined the globalization and spawned a particularly hollow and exploitative kind of 'celebrity'. The cross-cultural reality series *Worlds Apart* generated in 2004 for the US National Geographic is an example. Popping urban American families into remote locales around the world for ten-day periods, it aired in the UK, Brazil, the Middle Eastern channel Al-Hurra, Goodlife Channel in Israel, Australia's ABC, and National Geographic Channel Canada. Promoting the show, Gary Lico, then President and CEO of CABLE ready, said: 'The drama caused by the intermingling of cultures in *Worlds Apart* has proven to have wide appeal around the globe. Viewers in North and South America, the UK, the Middle East and Australia will be able to see these entertaining examples of how people overcome their differences to eventually arrive at enlightenment.' This series combines reality television, globalization, new technology and perhaps, despite itself, a now-warped traditional documentary impulse to explore people. *Alien Wife Swap* anyone?

Academic Approaches

Intellectual debate and discussion of ethical and theoretical issues surrounding the documentary has continued since Grierson first used the 'D' word in 1926. Grierson and Flaherty, Drew and Leacock, George Stoney and all his students spent hours in debate and discussion over issues of documentary form and purpose. Michael Moore and Werner Herzog are self-contained documentary contradictions. As a rule, documentarians love to gather to discuss their work and the work of others. After all, these are people who have strong opinions about the subjects of their films and very strong opinions about the ways they should be made. As is evident in this text, the British documentary movement founded by Grierson compared with the observational approach of the Flahertys has received the most attention in critical and historical writings, followed later by debates about the nature of cv/direct, self-reflexivity, and onward. Discussion of practice, impact and ethics by serious documentarians continues today with vigour, forever moving into new realms, and occasionally marginalia.

For much of its early history, film was written about chiefly in the form of popular criticism in general interest publications. The notable exceptions, Vertov and Eisenstein, Grierson and Rotha, Jay Leyda and later Lindsay Anderson, set forth their opinions in writing as well as practice, and a body of literature began to slowly accumulate. While film theory in general grew slowly as a field of serious study in 1970s and throughout the 1980s, it was not until later that documentary studies emerged as a sub-category in the newly academicized field of film theory. Feminist and Marxist approaches were among the first to turn their attention to the subject, in part because documentary was a field in which many women and minorities gained access to filmmaking as early as the 1970s. Today there is lively scholarly debate about documentary theory in academic journals and specialized conferences.

Teachers and writers who helped to shape the emerging field include Jay Ruby, Cal Pryluck, Henry Breitrose, Ernie Rose, Raymond Fielding and, especially, Brian Winston in England, who succeeds both as a filmmaker and a scholar. Winston's keen, witty and adversarial writings are perhaps the most challenging and entertaining in the field. Much credit for the strength of documentary theoretical thought in the twenty-first century goes to Bill Nichols and Michael Renov, two scholars whose wide-ranging writings and work have influenced many others. Nichols has an 'organic' approach to the development of various kinds of documentaries that sees new works growing out of existing examples in the categories he calls Expository, Observational, Interactive, Reflexive, and Performative modes, suggesting a chronology of linear development. His work is continuously cited by others. Renov argues that documentary is the cinematic idiom most actively promoting the illusion of immediacy insofar as it forswears 'realism' in favour of a direct, ontological claim to the 'real'. This approach has also influenced the way that many recent film theorists attack the problems of documentary. Both also have substantial influence because of their respected academic positions and influence on students.

Women have added significantly to the development of documentary theory. Among them are Jane Gaines, Patricia Zimmerman (especially with her work at the Flaherty Seminar) and Pat Aufderheide, whose controversial positions on copyright and fair use seek to settle the irreconcilable debates

about using work made by others. English scholar Stella Bruzzi has produced an argument in contemporary documentary theory that involves a polemic against some of the traditional ways of discussing the form. She advocates an analysis of newer films, which are 'familiar and relevant', rather than the canon of older classics.

However useful they may be for students seeking a deep understanding of the films, the academic writings of film theorists are not very much a part of the world of documentary-making and watching. It is without a doubt fascinating and instructive to think about, read about, and discuss film theory. Its impact on the vast majority of documentaries made and seen is relatively minor, because it is a specialized field with its own language, its own arguments, and its own self-limited audience. There are working documentary-makers, such as Jay Rosenblatt, Jill Godmilow, Barbara Hammer, Dennis O'Rourke in Australia, Chris Marker in France, Peter Watkins and Peter Forgács in Hungary, who employ preconceived formal theoretical constructs in their work. Most makers, however, are driven principally by issues that put documentary theory, when it is considered, in service to a larger idea.

Emergent Technologies

The media response to the 2001 terrorist attack on New York City's World Trade Center, because it was unexpected and took place in a world media hub, became the most-documented event in human history. Some of the twentieth-century trends of documentary development reached a natural apotheosis in coverage of the attack and aftermath. Not only was the technology portable, lightweight, intimate and immediate, the event was observed by hundreds of individually owned professional- and amateur-operated still and motion cameras. Access to many versions of the visual record of this attack could not be effectively limited by anyone; there were just too many people with too many cameras for authorities to control. Many recorded their own reactions to the events in an unselfconscious outpouring of self-reflexivity.

It was the financial and production resources of HBO that focused this mass of imagery to produce a new version of the compilation film with *In*

Memoriam: New York 9/11/01. When the World Trade Center was attacked within view of HBO's mid-town Manhattan headquarters, Sheila Nevins and her team created a response that aided the development of new ways to analyze documentary. This film is especially relevant because the 9/11 attack was recorded on film and video from hundreds of perspectives, all of which were made within the same timeframe of a few hours. Never before had any event been photographed from so many angles by so many different kinds of people with different kinds of camera. Still and moving images were edited together with a soundtrack by the HBO team, to create a record of the shattering events of that day. The 'Rashomon Effect' was realized in a way that fiction-makers could never equal.

Social Media

Anyone today can call themselves a filmmaker; smart phones with cameras and internet connections make that obvious. As noted, this material is mostly snippets of reportage, sometimes of questionable veracity, almost never analyzed journalistically, let alone for its documentary content. The power of social media is about access, the enabling of ordinary individuals to tell and disseminate their own stories. It is happening worldwide, and it is happening now. This change in the way factual information is shared will change the nature of documentary, just as surely as the coming of sound, the technical developments of *cv/direct*, the advent of television and the use of videotape changed the form. An excellent explanation of this process at work is the Academy Award-nominated documentary *Burma VJ: Reporting from a Closed Country* (2009), directed by Anders; Anders but sometimes credited as being made by 'The Cooperative', the anonymous activists who risked their lives to get the images.

Composed partly of mobile phone images taken during the 2007 uprisings against the government in Burma, it is framed with reconstructed footage that provides the film with a storyline centred on one individual whose ruminations weave together the disparate on-the-ground reports. This 'character' provides emotional connection and logic for the audience. To get the original anti-government videos out of Burma, they were uploaded to a Swedish server

and sent out to the world. Despite the nitpicking of some few who continue to argue that staging is not documentary, this film explains the power of mobile phones and social media within the framework of traditional staged documentary form.

An example of emergent technology use from the UK is the *One Day on Earth* project, in which amateur and professional videographers shot footage during one twenty-four-hour period in October 2010. This idea is nothing new; 'one day in the life of...' projects have existed in multiple forms for decades. What is different in this experiment is that it evolved into an online community that plans to document social issues around the globe. One of its projects was called *Libya: True Story*, a multi-platform-based way to record activists' struggle to free the country from the Gaddafi regime. Brandon Littman, the executive producer of *One Day on Earth*, states that: 'Though what we are making is a traditional documentary in that it will follow a linear storyline, the project will also involve content that sits online within a social community so that the documentary can be organic and interactive, too.' On Facebook its page is called 'A Crowd-Sourced Documentary'. It is covered on other sites such as Babelmed, which defines itself as 'The leading independent website on Mediterranean issues'. It is free, totally independent and put together by a multicultural network of journalists from the whole Mediterranean; it exists in multiple languages, and the videos seem to be uncensored. This site, like *One Day on Earth*, promotes varied political propaganda. Through the immediacy of many internet links, people now see these kinds of diverse opinions and styles from thousand of places, created by thousands of people and groups, all with unique philosophies and agendas, when audiences have the time and energy to engage with it.

To date, the piecemeal style of such projects remains similar and largely informed; still, all it takes is one person to share with another. *18 Days in Egypt* aspires to do just that. Phase two of this project is about assembling the gathered content in a variety of ways across different platforms. Based on on-the-ground reports, a documentary will be compiled to mark the first anniversary of the Egyptian uprising. This is a reiteration, like HBO's *911*, of compilation film techniques whose finished product stems from Esther Shub's work. The form, the actual content and the meaning of the finished product always reflect the editors' choices and points of view.

A similar idea carried out on a large corporate scale is *Life in a Day* (2011), jointly distributed by National Geographic Entertainment, YouTube and Cine Digital Cinema Corp. Called the first 'user-generated feature-length documentary', it was edited together from footage shot by anyone who cared to participate during a twenty-four-hour period on 24 July 2010. Well-known directors/producers Kevin McDonald and Ridley Scott collaborated to edit over 4,500 hours from 81,000 YouTube submissions. The rules for submission were 'Tell us your story, tell us what you fear and show us what you have in your pocket'. The film premiered at the 2011 Sundance Film Festival, where it was well received.

Immediacy, worldwide reach, diverse opinions, on-the-ground reporting and extreme economy are the pluses of such evolutions of documentary form. It is part of the natural historical progression of the media interplay between money (not much capital necessary, small amounts of funds accessible to millions), technology (the digitization of the world) and content (the human desire to capture a timely situation). On these levels this is different from the traditional evolution of documentary.

Commitment to History

To these advantages of emergent technology, there are distinct minuses, some of them heartbreakingly detrimental. One major downfall is the loss of craft. Lighting, composition, sound quality and every other technical aspect of filmmaking are imperilled. Devaluation of the work becomes easier, and the artistry of documentarians is diminished. The ability to make a living making worthwhile films is jeopardized when television audiences accept the crudity of anyone's free 'street reportage' and when video piracy is rampant. Documentary ethics, including a commitment to veracity and obligation to one's subject, are often thrown away, especially by individuals who have little sense of documentary history. These problems have been debated for decades by serious documentarians. They must remain part of any discourse if the form is to retain respect. Today ethics and artistry seem to be very secondary to the pull of here-and-now.

One of the most critical of the minuses is that the digital information cannot be well preserved. This book is not meant to be an explanation of the state of digital storage, the existing means of film preservation and restoration, the morass of videotape loss, a recounting of the possibilities of future preservation techniques, the benefits of media migration, nor especially the cost of preservation. All of these discussions exist elsewhere. It is a fact that negative film stock is still the only medium known that can save our moving image media. We are able to look at the images from the very first moving picture. Without those experiments of the Lumière brothers and the other enduring millions upon millions of feet of documentary film so hard won, so painstakingly made since 1895, our world would be very different. Imagine a world without any moving images of Theodore Roosevelt or FDR, Winston Churchill, Joseph Stalin, the opening of the Nazi concentration camps, Marion Anderson at the Lincoln Memorial, John and Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Leonard Bernstein conducting, or the Rolling Stones in concert. Our artistic and social heritage would be bereft. The lives and the souls of those to come would be much poorer.

Much of our early film history, especially nonfiction footage, even that shot on film, has vanished because people did not recognize or care enough to save it. And worse happened. From the invention of videotape through the digital age, until today, we have lost an incomprehensible amount – the majority, in fact – of our moving image history, especially our documentary, part of the ‘orphaned’ works. Work created and distributed digitally is most at risk. How many websites have come and gone? How are mobile phone images being preserved once they are shared? What will happen to the visual record of the Arab Spring, or to the stories created and stored in drives, discs or clouds, about our grandmothers and our children? Documentaries not preserved result in a world in which coming generations will not be able to see today through our eyes. That is happening hourly. Every person who makes, aspires to make, or who finds value in watching documentaries must personally engage with the enormity of this problem. To assume that someone else is taking care of it is a mistake. To leave the record of today at risk, despite any cost, is to commit a criminal act against the future. If you are not saving your film for others to see in five, fifty or a hundred years, why are you making it?

And what might be considered irrelevant and uninteresting now – people walking out of a factory, for example – may become vitally important in a hundred years. Who are we to make that judgement?

Even before pictures moved, the US Civil War photographs of Mathew Brady shook contemporary audiences with their vision of death, and they continue to haunt viewers today. A recent example of the importance of preservation is the 2009 documentary by James Chressanthis, *No Subtitles Necessary: László and Vilmos*. This follows the lives of renowned cinematographers László Kovacs and Vilmos Zsigmond, telling the story of their escape from the 1956 Soviet invasion of Hungary to the present day. As film students in Hungary, the two friends shot footage of the Russian invasion of Budapest – the tanks, the riots, the murders – and then smuggled it out of the country. Barely escaping with their lives, they fled, eventually arriving in Hollywood. Both rose to prominence in the late 60s as cinematographers on *Easy Rider*, *Five Easy Pieces*, *McCabe and Mrs Miller*, *Deliverance*, *Paper Moon*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and many others. Their film of the Hungarian uprising exists. In 1956 there was no way for audiences to see it immediately, and their story did not affect the situation. Yet they filmed at great risk, and the footage changed the way history interprets the brutal power of 1950s USSR. We have the images today, still on film, for our documentary record.

Conclusion

Our history of documentary is a story of determined individuals who overcame every kind of obstacle to put their messages on the screen. That message may be one of artistic experimentation, the world's beauty, political consciousness, personal triumph over adversity, self-revelation or historical record. Documentarians can choose among dozens of available technologies and techniques to get their messages seen and heard. However, what was once a manageable number of documentary films to see and evaluate every year is now a cacophony of sounds and images, often relentless. There are animated documentaries, computer-generated documentaries, IMAX documentaries, internet documentaries, scripted documentaries, video diaries, cv/direct



Fig 87 This 1956 image of freedom fighters celebrating during the Hungarian Revolt against Soviet rule is attributed to Vilmos Zsigmond, ASC. It is a frame from 35mm footage of the Russian invasion of Budapest in the 2009 documentary No Subtitles Necessary: László and Vilmos directed by James Chressanthis ASC. This film follows the lives of László Kovacs and Vilmos Zsigmond who barely escaped from Hungary with their lives and the footage. They fled to America, eventually becoming renowned cinematographers of films such as Easy Rider, Five Easy Pieces, McCabe and Mrs. Miller, Deliverance, Paper Moon and Close Encounters of the Third Kind. Their 'student-shoot' footage of the revolution has immeasurable value as an archival record in its own right. Because of the later artistic contributions of the men who shot it, it is doubly valuable. No Subtitles Necessary is a special example of the importance of saving documentaries and the reliability of film as the best preservation medium. Had the images of the revolt been shot on video, it is almost certain that they would no longer exist. BBC / CBS 'Revolt in Hungary', Walter Cronkite

documentaries, fake documentaries, investigative news documentaries, and all of their hybrids. And these forms multiply exponentially around the world every day.

In the twenty-first century documentary is livelier and more complex than ever. This book devotes one full chapter to WWII, basically ten years in a 110-plus-year history. The number and types of films from the 1940s is small enough to be discussed in detail. And fortunately almost all of them

remain to be screened and studied. Today, thousands of English-language documentaries premiere on television, in theatres, or at festivals every year, and thousands more are made in other languages and posted online. Analyzing this number is impossible in any one book. And not only do more people make documentaries, more people than ever before watch and talk about documentaries. Perhaps this is inevitable simply because there are many more people, but it is also due to worldwide access to production, distribution and exhibition mechanisms – and, more importantly, to the strength and flexibility of the ‘documentary impulse’.

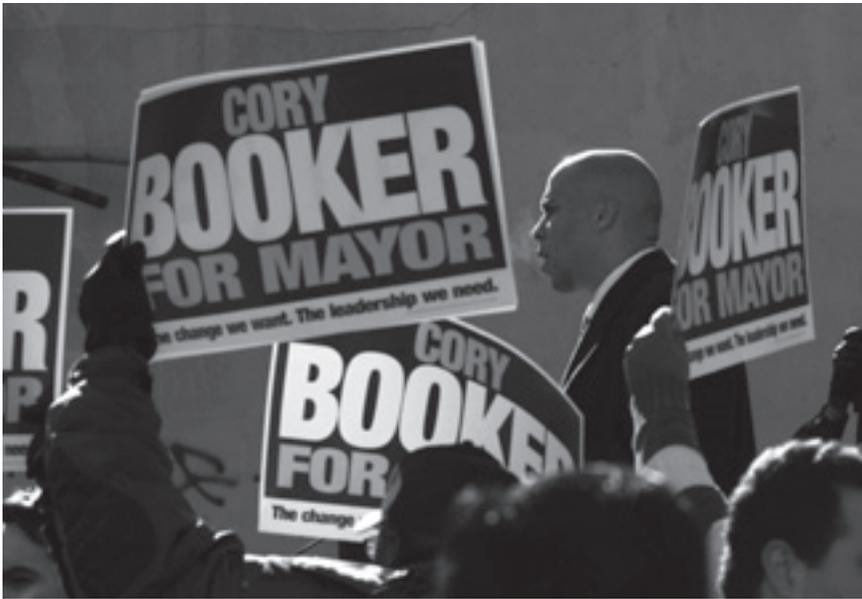


Fig 88 *Streetfight* (2005) by Marshall Curry is emblematic of one way that 21st Century documentary filmmakers are adapting traditional forms and subjects. This film, which traces the mayoral campaign of Corey Booker in Newark, New Jersey shows black people judging other blacks for not being “black” enough. Curry was nominated for an Academy Award for *Streetfight* (2005), his first documentary, and was also nominated for his third, *If a Tree Falls: The Story of the Earth Liberation Front* (2011), (made with Sam Cullman and Matt Hamachek) Curry’s ability to create narrative and reveal personality makes him the direct heir of the American *cv/direct* techniques.

Although there is always discussion about and debunking of documentary, many, many people want to make documentaries. It has been suggested, more than once, that the term is obsolete and the form too defiled to have meaning. The ongoing and sometimes heated debates about documentary indicate that the term is too meaningful and too powerful to abandon. People are always interested in seeing their own, and other, realities reflected back to them. The proof is in the history of the form. From the astonishing importance of the Lumières' *The Arrival of a Train at the Station*, Flaherty's *Nanook of the North*, Capra's 'Why We Fight', Grierson's enormous influence, Murrow's *Harvest of Shame*, Drew's *Primary*, Pennebaker's *Don't Look Back*, IMAX's *To Fly*, Burns' *The Civil War*, Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*, Guggenheim's *An Inconvenient Truth* and Herzog's *Cave of Dreams*, among many others, we know that people love documentaries. Filmmakers will continue to produce, audiences will watch, the world will debate, and our culture will remain richer, not only for the magnificent legacy of this form that tries to explain some truths, but also for its present and its future. Our world today without the debate of documentary is hard to imagine, and a future without its questioning energy is a place where few of us would want to live.



Fig 89 A secret service officer and Michael Moore confront one another in *Fahrenheit 9/11* (US, 2004, Michael Moore). Dog Eat Dog Films

Chapter Related Films

1898

Battleships Maine and Iowa (US, Biograph Company)

Tearing Down the Spanish Flag (US, Vitagraph Company)

1964

Culloden (UK, Peter Watkins)

1965

The War Game (UK, Peter Watkins)

1984

This Is Spinal Tap (US, Rob Reiner)

2009

Burma VJ: Reporting from a Closed Country (Andres; Andres)

No Subtitles Necessary: László and Vilmos (US, James Chressanthis)

2011

Life in a Day (Kevin McDonald and Ridley Scott)

Chapter Related Books

Bruzzi, Stella, *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction*. London: Routledge, 2000.

Hogarth, David, *Documentary Television in Canada: From National Public Service to Global Marketplace*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002.

Juhasz, Alexandra and Jesse Lerner, *F is for Phony: Fake Documentary and Truth's Undoing*. University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

Kilborn, Richard and John Izod, *An Introduction to Television Documentary: Confronting Reality*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1997.

McCreadle, Marsha, *Documentary Superstars: How Today's Filmmakers Are Reinventing the Form*. New York: Allworth Press, 2009.

Sights of the Turn of the Century: New Tendencies in Documentary Cinema, lectures CILECT, 1996.

Renov, Michael, *The Subject of Documentary*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

Rhodes, Gary D., *Docufictions: essays on the intersection of documentary and fictional filmmaking*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2006.

Roscoe, Jane, *Faking it: Mock-documentary and Subversion of Factuality*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001.

Waldman, Diane and Janet Walker, (eds), *Feminism and Documentary*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

Zimmerman, Patricia R., *States of Emergency: Documentaries, Wars and Democracies*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.



Appendix One

Academy Awards for Best Documentary Feature

THE WINNER IN BOLD

1942

The Battle of Midway
Kokoda Front Line!
Moscow Strikes Back
Prelude to War
no winner

1943

Desert Victory
Baptism of Fire
The Battle of Russia
Report from the Aleutians
War Department Report

1944

The Fighting Lady
Resisting Enemy Interrogation

1945

The True Glory
The Last Bomb

1946 – none given

1947

Design for Death
Journey Into Medicine
The World Is Rich

1948

The Secret Land

The Quiet One

1949

Daybreak in Udi

Kenji Comes Home

1950

The Titan: Story of Michelangelo

With These Hands

1951

Kon-Tiki

IO Was a Communist for the FBI

The Sea Around for the FBI

Kokoda Front Line!

Moscow Strikes Back

Prelude to War

1952

The Sea Around Us

The Hoaxters

Navajo

1953

The Living Desert

The Conquest of Everest

A Queen is Crowned

1954

The Vanishing Prairie

The Stratford Adventure

1955

Helen Keller in Her Story (aka **The Unconquered)**

Crèvecoeur

1956

The Silent World

Where Mountains Float

The Naked Eye

1957

Albert Schweitzer

On the Bowery

Torero

1958

White Wilderness

Antarctic Crossing
The Hidden World
Psychiatric Nursing

1959

Serengeti Shall Not Die

The Race for Space

1960

The Horse with the Flying Tail

Rebel in Paradise

1961

Sky Above and Mud Beneath

La grande olimpiade

1962

Black Fox: The Rise and Fall of Adolf Hitler

Alvorada

1963

Robert Frost: A Lover's Quarrel with the World

Le Maillon et la chaîne
The Yanks Are Coming

1964

World Without Sun

14-18
Alleman
The Finest Hours
Four Days in November

1965

The Eleanor Roosevelt Story

The Battle of the Bulge...The Brave Rifles
The Forth Road Bridge
Let My People Go: The Story of Israel
Mourir á Madrid

1966

The War Game

The Face of a Genius
Helicopter Canada
The Really Big Family
Le Volcan interdit

1967

The Anderson Platoon

Festival

Harvest

A King's Story

A Time for Burning

1968

Journey into Self

Note: At the 41st Awards ceremony on 14 April 1969, *Young Americans* was announced as the winner of the Documentary Feature Oscar. On 7 May 1969, it was revealed that the film had played in October 1967, which rendered it ineligible for a 1968 Award. The first runner-up, *Journey Into Self*, was awarded the statuette on 8 May 1969.

A Few Notes on Our Food Problem

Legendary Champions

Other Voices

1969

Arthur Rubinstein – The Love of Life

Before the Mountain Was Moved

In the Year of the Pig

Olimpiada en México

The Wolf Men

1970

Woodstock

Chariots of the Gods

Jack Johnson

King: A Filmed Record...Montgomery to Memphis

Say Goodbye

1971

The Hellstrom Chronicle

Alaska Wilderness Lake

Le chagrin et la pitié

On Any Sunday

Ra

1972

Marjoe

Bij de beesten af

Malcolm X

Manson

The Silent Revolution

1973

The Great American Cowboy

Always a New Beginning
Journey to the Outer Limits
Schlacht um Berlin
Walls of Fire

1974

Hearts and Minds

Antonia: A Portrait of the Woman
The Challenge...A Tribute to Modern Art
The 81st Blow
The Wild and the Brave

1975

The Man Who Skied Down Everest

The California Reich
Fighting for Our Lives
The Incredible Machine
The Other Half of the Sky: A China Memoir

1976

Harlan County, USA

Hollywood on Trial
Off the Edge
People of the Wind
Volcano: An Inquiry Into the Life and Death of Malcolm Lowry

1977

Who Are the DeBolts? And Where Did They Get Nineteen Kids?

The Children of Theatre Street
High Grass Circus
Homage to Changall: The Colours of Love
Union Maids

1978

Scared Straight!

Mysterious Castles of Clay
Raoni
Le vent des amoureux
With Babies and Banners: Story of the Women's Emergency Brigade

1979

Best Boy

Generation on the Wind
Going the Distance
The Killing Ground
The War at Home

1980

From Mao to Mozart: Isaac Stern in China

Agee

The Day After Trinity

Front Line

The Yellow Star – The Persecution of the Jews in Europe 1933-45

1981

Genocide

Against Wind and Tide: A Cuban Odyssey

Brooklyn Bridge

Eight Minutes to Midnight: A Portrait of Dr. Helen Caldicott

El Salvador: Another Vietnam

1982

Just Another Missing Kid

A Portrait of Giselle

After the Axe

Ben's Mill

In Our Water

1983

He Makes Me Feel Like Dancin'

Children of Darkness

First Contact

The Professional of Arms

Seeing Red

1984

The Times of Harvey Milk

High Schools

In the Name of the People

Marlene

Streetwise

1985

Broken Rainbow

The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo

Soldiers in Hiding

The Statue of Liberty

Unfinished Business

1986(tie): **Artie Shaw: Time Is All You've Got** and **Down and Out in America**

Chile: Hasta Cuando?

Isaac in America: A Journey with Isaac Bashevis Singer

Witness to Apartheid

1987

The Ten-Year Lunch

Eyes on the Prize

Hellfire: A Journey from Hiroshima

Radio Bikini

A Stitch for Time

1988

Hôtel Terminus: The Life and Times of Klaus Barbie

The Cry of Reason: Byers Naude – An Afrikaner Speaks out

Let's Get Lost

Promises to Keep

Who Killed Vincent Chin?

1989

Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt

Adam Clayton Powell

Crack USA: County Under Siege

For All Mankind

Super Chief: The Life and Legacy of Earl Warren

1990

American Dream

Berkeley in the Sixties

Building Bombs

Forever Activists: Stories from the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade

Waldo Salt: A Screenwriter's Journey

1991

In the Shadow of the Stars

Death on the Job

Doing Time: Life Inside the Big House

The Restless Conscience: Resistance to Hitler Within German 1933–1945

Wild by Law

1992

The Panama Deception

Changing Our Minds: The Story of Dr. Evelyn Hooker

Fires of Kuwait

Liberators: Fighting on Two Fronts in World War II

Music for the Movies: Bernard Herrmann

1993

I Am a Promise: The Children of Stanton Elementary School

The Broadcast Tapes of Dr. Peter

Children of Fate

For Better or For Worse

The War Room

1994

Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision

Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter
D-Day Remembered
Freedom on My Mind
A Great Day in Harlem

1995

Anne Frank Remembered

The Battle Over Citizen Kane
Hank Aaron: Chasing the Dream
Small Wonders
Troublesome Creek: A Midwestern

1996

When We Were Kings

The Line King: The Al Hirschfeld Story
Mandela
Suzanne Farrell: Elusive Muse
Tell the Truth and Run: George Seldes and the American Press

1997

The Long Way Home

Ayn Rand: A Sense of Life
Colours Straight Up
4 Little Girls
Waco: The Rules of Engagement

1998

The Last Days

The Dancemaker
The Farm: Angola, USA.
Lenny Bruce: Swear to Tell the Truth
Regret to Inform

1999

One Day in September

Buena Vista Social Club
Genghis Blues
On the Ropes
Speaking in Strings

2000

Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport

Legacy – Tod Lending
Long Night's Journey into Day
Scottsboro: An American Tragedy
Sound and Fury

2001

Murder on a Sunday Morning

Children Underground
LaLee's Kin: The Legacy of Cotton
Promises
War Photographer

2002

Bowling for Columbine
Daughter from Danang
Prisoner of Paradise
Spellbound
Winged Migration

2003

The Fog of War

Balseros
Capturing the Friedmans
My Architect
The Weather Underground

2004

Born into Brothels

The Story of the Weeping Camel
Super Size Me
Tupac: Resurrection
Twist of Faith

2005

March of the Penguins

Darwin's Nightmare
Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room
Murderball
Street Fight

2006

An Inconvenient Truth

Deliver Us from Evil
Iraq in Fragments
Jesus Camp
My Country, My Country

2007

Taxi to the Dark Side

No End in Sight
Operation Homecoming: Writing the Wartime Experience
Sicko
War/Dance

2008

Man on Wire

The Betrayal

Encounters at the End of the World

The Garden

Trouble the Water

2009

The Cove

Burma VJ

Food, Inc.

The Most Dangerous Man in America: Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers

Which Way Home

2010

Inside Job

Exit Through the Gift Shop

Gasland

Restrepo

Waste Land



Appendix Two

The National Film Registry

Under the terms of the United States National Film Preservation Act, each year the Librarian of Congress, Dr James Billington, names twenty-five ‘culturally, historically or aesthetically significant motion pictures to the Registry. The list is designed to reflect the full breadth and diversity of America’s film heritage, thus increasing public awareness of the richness of American cinema and the need for its preservation. The films are not selected as the ‘best’ American films of all time, but rather as works of enduring significance to American culture.

‘Taken together, the 550 films in the National Film Registry represent a stunning range of American filmmaking – including Hollywood features, documentaries, avant-garde and amateur productions, films of regional interest, ethnic, animated, and short film subjects – all deserving recognition, preservation and access by future generations. Despite the heroic efforts of archives, the motion picture industry and others, America’s film heritage, by any measure, is an endangered species . . . The Library of Congress – with the support of the US Congress – must ensure the preservation of America’s film patrimony,’ says Billington. ‘The National Film Registry is a reminder . . . that the preservation of our cinematic creativity must be a priority because about half of the films produced before 1950 and as much as ninety per cent of those made before 1920 have been lost to future generations.’

It is safe to say that the figures for lost documentaries are higher. The following is a list of the documentaries included in the list in order of year of release.

Documentaries Selected for the National Film Registry:

1893Thomas, Edison: *Blacksmithing Scene***1901***President MacKinley Inauguration footage***1904**Bitzer, G. W.: *Westinghouse Works***1906***A Trip Down Market Street**San Francisco Earthquake, April 18, 1906***1910***Jeffries-Johnson World's Championship Boxing Contest***1913***Preservation of the Sign Language***1914**Curtis, Edward S.: *In the Land of the Head-Hunters /aka In the Land of the War Canoes***1920**American Red Cross: *Heros All***1921**Scheeler, Charles; Strand, Paul: *Manhatta***1922**Flaherty, Robert: *Nanook of the North***1925**Schoedsack, Ernest B.; Cooper, Merian C.; Harrison, Marquerite: *Grass: A Nation's Battle for Life***1928**Fox Movietone Newsreel: *Jenkins Orphanage Band***1930**Ames, Alfred: *From Stump to Ship***1931**Leyda, Jay: *A Bronx Morning*Marvin Breckinridge Paterson, Mary: *The Forgotten Frontier***1934**Lorentz, Pare: *The Plow That Broke The Plains***1935***Republic Steel Strike Newsreel footage*

1936

Chevrolet Motor Company: *Master Hands*

1936–1939

Mead, Margaret: *Trance and Dance in Bali*

1937

Lorentz, Pare: *The River*

Hindenberg Disaster Newsreel Footage

1938

de Rochemont, Louis: *March of Time: Inside Nazi Germany*

1939

Marian Anderson: *The Lincoln Memorial Concert*

Steiner, Ralph; Van Dyke, Willard: *The City*

Cologne: *From the Diary of Ray and Esther* (home movie)

1940

Bryan, Julien: *Siege*

Tacoma Narrows Bridge Collapse footage

1941

Water, Lee H.: *Kannapolis, N.C.*

1943

Wyler, William: *Memphis Belle*

1943–1945

Capra, Frank; Litvak, Anatole; Veiller, Anthony: *Why We Fight* (series)

Topaz (home movie footage taken at Japanese American Internment Camp)

1943–1946

George Stevens' World War II

1944

Mili, Gjon: *Jammin' the Blues*

Heisler, Stewart: *The Negro Soldier*

1945

Huston, John: *Battle of San Pietro*

1946

Huston, John: *Let There Be Light*

1948

Levitt, Helen; Loeb, Janice; Agee, James: *In the Street*

Flaherty, Robert: *Louisiana Story*

1951

Rizzo, Anthony: *Duck and Cover, US Federal Civil Defense Administration*

1953

Stoney, George: *All My Babies*

Federal Civil Defense Administration: *House in the Middle*

1956

Rogosin, Lionel, *On the Boweny*

Disneyland Dream

1957

Marshall, John: *The Hunters*

Algar, James: *The Living Desert*, Walt Disney Studios

1959

Avakian, Aram; Stern, Bert: *Jazz on a Summer's Day*

1960–1975

Core, Dwight Sr., Ingmire, George: *Think of Me First as a Person*

1960

Drew, Robert; Leacock, Richard; Maysles, Al; Macartney-Filgate, Terence: *Primary*

1963

Zapruder footage

Drew, Robert; Shuker, Greg; Leacock, Richard; Lipscomb, James; Ryden, Hope: *Crisis*

1964

Warhol, Andy: *Empire*

Blue, James: *The March*

Gardner, Robert: *Dead Birds*

de Antonio, Emile: *Point of Order*

1966

Jersey, Bill: *A Time for Burning*

Brown, Bruce: *The Endless Summer*

Anderson Mike; Benally, Susie; Clah Al: *Through Navajo Eyes (series)*

1967

Pennebaker D. A.: *Don't Look Back*

1968

Sanders, Dennis: *Czechoslovakia*

Bass, Saul and Elaine: *Why Man Creates*

Wiseman, Frederick: *High School*

1969

Wadleigh, Michael: *Woodstock*

Maysles, Albert and David: *Salesman*

1970

Wiseman, Frederick: *Hospital*

Lumet, Sidney: *King, A Filmed Record*

1971–1972

Klein, Jim; Reichert Julia: *Growing Up Female*

Mekas, Jonas: *Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania*

1974

Block, Mitchell: *...No Liesi*

Godmilow, Jill and Collins, Judy: *Antonia, Portrait of a Woman*

1975

Appalshop: *Buffalo Creek Flood*

1976

Hovde, Ellen; Maysles, Albert; Maysles, David; Meyer, Muffie: *Grey Gardens*

Blank, Les: *Chulas Fronteras*

Kopple, Barbara: *Harlan County, USA*

MacGillvray, Greg: *To Fly*

1980

Blank, Les: *Garlic is as Good as Ten Mothers*

Field, Connie: *Life and Times of Rose the Riveter*

1986

Workman, Chuck: *Precious Images*

McElwee, Ross: *Sherman's March*

Morris, Errol: *The Thin Blue Line*

Strand, Chick: *Fruitcake Factory*

1989

O'Neill, Pat: *Water and Power*

1994

James, Steve; Marx, Frederick; Gilbert, Peter: *Hoop Dreams*



Index

An 'f.' after a page number indicates a figure.

- 9/11 coverage 381–2
18 Days in Egypt 383
60 Minutes 196
- ABC 188
Academy Awards 391–400
Adato, Perry Miller 260–1
 Georgia O'Keeffe 261
 Gertrude Stein 261
Afghanistan, war in
 Restrepo (Junger and Hetherington) 334–5
 Taxi to the Dark Side (Gibney) 340–1
Agda-Soltan, Neda 364–5
Agee, James 211
agit-prop 44, 93, 257, 284
agriculture
 constraints in 189, 190f.
 disparities 100, 105
AIDS 296, 348
Aileen: Life and Death of a Serial Killer
 (Broomfield and Churchill) 320
Akeley camera 24, 25f., 32
Akomfrah, John 288
 Handsworth Songs 288, 299
All My Babies (Stoney) 160–1, 182, 404
Alpert, Jon 264–5, 268, 275, 305, 328,
 331–2, 362, 378 *see also* *No*
 Contract, No Cookies: The Stella
 D'Oro Strike
Amanpour, Christine 306
America Lost and Found (Bird and
 Johnson) 280, 309
American Civil War 312, 314f.
American Documentary Films 109
American Hollow (Kennedy and Doob)
 348
Anderson, Lindsay 204, 205, 206, 210,
 212, 380
 Every Day Except Christmas 208, 217
 O Dreamland 205–6, 208, 210, 217
 Thursday's Children 205–6
Anemic Cinema (Duchamp) 60
'Angry Young Men' 204
animation 12, 147, 175–6, 177
Anka, Paul 234, 235f.
Anstey, Edgar 166
 Housing Problems 84, 85f.
Antonia: A Portrait of the Woman (Collins
 and Godmilow) 255, 269, 395, 405
Appalshop 265–6
Apted, Michael 321, 322
 'Up Series' 321–2
archival documentaries 308–12 *see also*
 individual names
Argonauts of the Western Pacific
 (Malinowski) 7–8
Armitage, Simon 321
Arriflex camera 34
Asian Cine Vision 288–9
Association of Documentary Film
 Producers (ADFP) 112–13

- At the Death House Door* (James and Gilbert) 338
- Atlantic Patrol* (CCO) 132–3
- Atomic Café* (Loader *et al.*) 280
- Auden, W. H. 82, 86–7
- Aufderheide, Pat 277–8
- avant-garde 1, 9, 57, 58, 68, 71, 243, 366–7
 artistry, political and social issues 69
 city symphonies 60, 62f., 63–8
 documentaries and 352
 impressionism in 61–3
 montage 50
 time and sequence 58
 unconscious mind 9, 58, 60–1
- Avant-guard 1, 9, 57, 68–71, 243, 366–7, 352
- Avid editing 273
- Bakhtiari migration 37, 38f.
- Ballet Mécanique* (Léger) 60
- Balog, Lester, WFPL tour 95–6
 political constraints on 96
- Baltimore Plan, The* (Barnes) 176–7
- Barnes, John 176–7
- Barrett, Elizabeth 265–6
- Battle of Midway, The* (Ford) 143
- Battle of Russia, The* (Litvak) 141f.
- Battle of San Pietro, The* (Huston) 145f.
- Battle of the North Sea* 12
- Battle of the Somme, The* (McDowell and Malins) 12, 14
- Battleship Potemkin* (Eisenstein) 53
- Battleships 'Maine' and 'Iowa'* 371–2
- BBC 186, 309, 310, 318
 independence and 376
Panorama hoax 373–4
- beat movement 215–16, 340f.
- Beddington, Jack 118–19
- Before Stonewall* (Scagliotti) 294–5
- Beginning Filmmaking* (Rosenblatt) 351
- Benjy* (Zinnemann) 159
- Berga* (Guggenheim) 283
- Berlin* (Ruttman) 62f., 63, 64–6
- Berliner, Alan 278–9
- Berlinger, Joe 344, 345
- Biograph Co. 371–2
- Bird, Lance 280, 281, 309
- Bird, Stuart 311
- Bishop, Terry 173
- Bitzer, Billy 372
- Black Audio Film Collective 288
- Blackside, Inc. 285, 287
- Blackton, J. Stuart 372
- Blair, Tony 319
- Blank, Les 322–3
- Block, Mitchell W. 251, 252, 334
- Blue Vinyl* (Helfand) 324
- Blumenthal, Jerry 266
- Boas, Franz 7
- Bochco, Steven 250
- Bohlen, Anne 311
- Bond, Ralph 125–6
- Boulting, Roy 126–7, 127f.
- Bourne, St Clair 287–8
- Boy's Life, A* (Kennedy) 348
- branding 277, 303–4
- Brault, Michel 224, 225f., 228
- Brenton, Guy 205–6
- Brico, Antonia 255
- Bridge, The* (Ivens) 61
- Bridge, The* (Van Dyke and Maddow) 147
- Brig, The* (Mekas) 214f.
- Britain 6, 37–8, 69–70, 73, 79, 90, 91–2, 153–4
 backgrounds 317–18
 forms 83–5
 government 86, 90, 117, 118–19, 120–1, 128–9, 159, 166, 167
 subjects 79–80, 203
 transatlantic issues 111–12, 129–31, 136–8, 149–52, 171–2, 317
- Brittain, Donald 244–5
- Brooklyn Bridge, The* (Burns) 312–13
- Broomfield, Nick 253, 254, 320
- Brotherhood of Man* 175
- Brown, Barry Alexander 257, 258f.
- Brussels Loops* (Clarke *et al.*) 215
- Bruzzi, Stella 381
- Buck, Frank 37
- Buñuel, Luis 60–1

- Burma VJ* (Ostergaard) 382
- Burns, Ken 312, 313–15
 The Brooklyn Bridge 312–13
 cinematography 314
 The Civil War 312, 314f.
 photography 179
- Burton, Richard 174
- cable TV 263, 274–6, 305–6, 332, 350–1, 381–2
 accurate footage and 303
 branding 277, 303–4
 constraints from 304–5
 disparities 275, 276–7
 quality and 302, 303
- Cadbury Brothers, Ltd. 125–6
- Cadillac Desert* (Else) 325
- California Newsreel 258–9
- cameras 15f., 25f., 32–3, 34, 222–4, 223f., 232
 constraints from 210
 disparities 220, 221–2
 lenses 33, 223
 realism in 45–6
 reflexive documentaries 61
 as seeing machines 42
 see also cinematography; photography
- Canada 130, 131, 154–5
 transatlantic issues 111–12, 129–31, 136–8, 149–52, 171–2, 317
- ‘Canada Carries On’ (CCO) 132–5, 151
- Canby, Vincent 356
- ‘Candid Eye’ 180
- Caouette, Jonathan 352–3
- Capra, Frank 139, 140f.
- Capturing the Friedmans* (Jarecki) 359
- Carson, Rachel 164
- Cartier-Bresson, Henri 94f.
- Cassady, Neal 215, 340f.
- Cassavetes, John 222
- Cavalcanti, Alberto 63–4, 69, 81–3
- Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (Herzog) 337
- CBC 187
- CBS 188
- CBS Reports* 189–90
- Chair, The* (Drew) 230, 230f.
- Challenge for Change 262–3
- Chang* (Cooper and Schoedsack) 37
- Chaplin, Charlie 2
- Chicago Maternity Centre Story, The* (Kartemquin) 266
- China Strikes Back* (Dunham) 108
- Chopra, Joyce 255
- Choy, Christine 289
- Chressanthis, James 386, 387f.
- Chronicle of a Summer* (Rouch) 226–8
- Churchill, Joan 253–4, 320, 347
- Churchill’s Island* (CCO) 133
- CIAA (Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs) 146–7
- Cine-Kodak camera 222
- Cinema Eye 47
- Cinema Novo 219–20
- cinema vérité see cv/direct
- Cinématographe camera 220
- cinematography 11, 31, 32, 66, 99–100, 103, 205–6, 216, 224–6, 228, 233, 253, 314
 candidness in 210
 disparities 372
 distraction in 229–30
 length of takes 234
 realism in 45–6, 210, 219
 sets and 3, 16
 see also cameras; photography
- Citizen Kane* (Welles) 2
- Citron, Michelle 251
- City, The* (Steiner and Van Dyke) 109, 110f.
- City of Gold* (Koenig and Low) 2, 178–9
- city symphonies 60, 62f., 63–8
- Civil War, The* (Burns) 312, 314f.
- Clarke, Shirley 215
- classroom films 176–7, 222
- Clinton, Bill 326
- Closeup!* 191–2
- CNN 276
- Coal Face* (Cavalcanti) 82, 83f.
- Coal Mining Women* (Barrett) 265–6
- Cohen, Leonard 245

- collectivity 53–4, 75–6
 Collins, Judy 255
Colour Adjustment (Riggs) 287
Columbia Revolt (Newsreel Collective) 257–8
Come Back Africa (Rogosin) 212–13
Common Threads (Couturié *et al.*) 296
 Communism 8, 46–7, 93, 169
 compilations 48–50, 279–80, 281f., 282–3
 as archival documentaries 308–12
 see also individual names; montage
Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter (Hoffmann) 324
Concert of Wills (Fromke *et al.*) 326
Connection, The (Clarke) 215
 Contemporary Film Historians, Inc. 107–8
Cool World, The (Wiseman) 247
 Cooper, Merian C. 37, 38
Cops (Langley) 378
Corral (Low) 178
 Coutant, André 232
 Coutard, Raoul 228
 Couturié, Bill 296
 Crawley, Frank Radford 171
 Crawley Films 171
Crisis (Kline and Hammid) 108
 Cronkite, Walter 191
 Crosby, Floyd 103
Culloden (Watkins) 375
 cummings, e. e. 38–9
 Curry, Marshall 388f.
 Curtis, Edward S. 11, 22, 24
 Cutler, R. J. 326, 327f.
 cv/direct 180, 191–2, 211, 219–20, 228, 236, 239–41
 cameras 222–4, 223f.
 cinéma vérité vs direct cinema 231–3
 cinematography 234
 determiners of action 234–5
 disparities 240
 limitations 235–6
 objectivity in 229
 realism in 235, 250–1
 sound 223–4, 234
 subjects 229–30
 TV and 191–2, 236–7
 see also individual names
Cyprus Is an Island (Keene) 173
 Dalí, Salvador 60–1
 Daly, Tom 177
Daughter Rite (Citron) 251
David (Drew) 240
David Holzman's Diary (McBride) 251, 252f.
David Welshman (Dickson) 159
 Davis, Peter 256, 257f.
 Day Thatcher, Molly, *Pie in the Sky* 93–4
Daybreak in Udi (Bishop) 173
Days Before Christmas, The (Macartney-Filgate) 180
 DCTV 264–5, 305–6
 de Antonio, Emile 245, 246, 247f.
 de Hoog, Walter 168f., 169
 de Rochemont, Louis 146
December 7th (Ford) 143–4
Desert Victory (Boulting) 126–7, 127f.
Diagonal Symphony (Eggeling) 59
Diary for Timothy, A (Jennings) 124
 Dickson, Paul 159
 Dickson, W. K. L. 11
 Dineen, Molly 319–20
 direct cinema *see* cv/direct
 Directors Guild of America (DGA) 350
 Discovery Channel 276–7
 Discovery Communications, branding from 303–4
 Disney Studio 147
Divide and Conquer ('Why We Fight') 142–3
 Dixie Chicks 349–50
 docudramas 370–1
 documentaries 1, 3, 7, 57, 58, 117, 152, 176, 211, 240, 243–4, 301–2, 363–4, 386–9
 academic debate 379–81
 artistry 366
 audiences 4, 173–4

- avant-garde and 352
 definitions 4–6
 distribution 357–8
 first recordings as 9–12
 methods and techniques 3, 176, 268
 narrative 159–60
 purpose and approach 2, 7
 social issues 163–4, 267
 sound 176
 study courses 165–6
 training documentaries 163
see also individual terms
 documentary dramas 371
Documentary Film (Rotha) 7–9
 Dong, Arthur 289
Don't Look Back (Pennebaker) 231
 Doob, Nick, *American Hollow* 348
 dot.com bubble 326, 347
 Drew, Robert 191–2, 231, 240
 Drew Associates 228, 230, 231
 David 240
 Jane 230
 Letters From Vietnam 255–6
 Mooney vs. Fowle 230
 Primary 224–6, 226f., 229–30
 The Chair 230, 230f.
Drifters (Grierson) 6, 75, 76f., 80
 drugs culture 215
 Duchamp, Marcel, *Anemic Cinema* 60
 Dunham, Harry, *China Strikes Back* 108
 Dylan, Bob 231
Dylan Thomas (Howell) 174

 Eastman Kodak 185, 222, 223
 Ebert, Roger 342, 353
 Éclair camera 223f.
 Edison Company 220
 Edison laboratory recordings 9, 224–5,
 273
 editing 46, 47, 67f.
 realism in 46
 see also compilations; montage
 Eggeling, Viking 59
 Egypt 383
 Eisenhardt, Bob, *Concert of Wills* 326
 Eisenstein, Sergei 48, 52–5, 63, 75
 Battleship Potemkin 53, 53f.
 disparities 55, 80
 Gas Masks 52
 October/Ten Days That Shook the
 World 53
 purpose and approach 53, 54
 The General Line/Old and New 53–4
 election campaign 326
 electric power 105
 Ellwood, Alison, *Magic Trip* 340f.
 Else, Jon 325
 Elton, Arthur 166
 Housing Problems 84, 85f.
 private sponsorship 79
 Empire Marketing Board (EMB) 75–7
 Empowerment Project 284
 Encyclopedia Britannica Films 176–7
 Endurance expedition (Shackleton) 31
 Engle, Harrison, *The Indomitable Teddy*
 Roosevelt 315f.
 Epperlein, Petra 334
 Epstein, Andrew 296
 Epstein, Rob
 Common Threads 296
 The Times of Harvey Milk 295–6, 297f.
 Eskimo life 4, 22–3, 24, 28, 36
 fieldwork in 7
 ethnicity 16, 74, 109–10, 148, 151, 160–1,
 174–5, 285–6, 287–90, 292, 293f.,
 337, 346, 350, 355–6, 388f.
 a capella group 346
 disparities 14, 224, 287, 292, 338
 gay and lesbian cultures and 289, 298
 immigration and 266
 integration and 192
 oppression on 286–7, 288
 subjectivity in 356
 violence on 333–4, 345, 346
 work and 331, 332
 Everest, Mount 171
Every Day Except Christmas (Anderson)
 208
 executions 320, 338
Eyes on the Prize (Hampton) 286–7

- 'Faces of Canada' 178
Fahrenheit 9/11 (Moore) 389f.
Fall of the Romanov Dynasty, The (Shub) 49f., 50
 consistent patterns 31
 disparities 348, 352–3
 family life 29, 30, 105, 251, 255, 324, 351
 fieldwork in 31–2
 people's lives 50
 omissions 31
 ironic intertitles 49–50
 Famous Players-Lasky 26
 Fanning, David, *Frontline* 308
Farm, The (Stack and Garbus) 325–6
 Farm Security Administration 102–4
 fast food culture 366
Father Roy (Richter) 284–5
 faux documentaries 251, 252f., 370, 371–2, 373–5 *see also individual terms*
 FBI surveillance 246
Feltham Sings (Graef *et al.*) 321
 fiction films 1, 3, 7, 16, 57, 143, 162, 302
 government productions 101
 limitations 57–8
 montage 50
 parodies 374
 subjects 1–2, 118
see also individual names
 Field, Connie, *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter* 311, 312f.
 Fielding, Raymond 373
 fieldwork 7, 8, 31–2, 246–7
Fight for Life, The (Lorentz) 104
Fighting Lady, The (Steichen) 145–6, 146f.
 film 33, 185, 186, 222, 223
 constraints from 210
 developing 33
 preservation 385
 video and *see video*
 Film Advisory Centre 261
 Film and Photo League (WFPL) 93–6
 Film Centre 79
 film festivals 357, 358–60
 film studies 165–6
 Filmmakers Cooperative 215
Films Beget Films (Leyda) 50, 308
 Films of Merit 99–101
 fire 333f.
 Firelight Media 346
Fires Were Started (Jennings) 122
 fishermen's lives 80
 Flaherty, Frances 14, 16, 21, 23f.
 photography 26–7
 relationship 88–9
 on Robert Flaherty–Grierson
 subject, family life 31–2
see also Moana; Nanook of the North
 Flaherty, Robert J. 4, 11, 21, 23f., 27, 28, 35f., 36, 54, 111, 174, 221, 240, 360f., 363–4, 379
 artistry and social issues 87–8
 assistance 32
 cameras 32–3, 42
 cinematography 31, 32
 death 38–9
 disparities 80
 family life 29, 30–2
 on film industry 26, 42
 Grierson relationship 37–8, 75, 87, 88–9
Industrial Britain 80–1
The Land 105–6
 legacy 36–8
 life 21–2
Man of Aran 28, 29, 30f., 34
 methods and techniques 32
 nature 28–9
 pedagogy 29
 people's lives 34–5, 51
 photography 22
 romanticism and 35–6
 sound 28
 subjects 5, 7, 29–30
 visual exposition 29
see also Louisiana Story; Moana; Nanook of the North
 Fletcher, John 205–6
 flood control 102–3, 332–3

- Food* (WIA) 134
 food distribution 124–5, 134, 173, 189–90
 Ford, John 143
 The Battle of Midway 143
 December 7th 143–4
 found footage 180–1, 352
Four Little Girls (Lee) 333–4
 Fox 378
 France
 cv/direct 226–8
 Radio Télévision Française 232–3
 Frank, Robert, *Pull My Daisy* 215–16
 Fraser, Nick 318
 Frazer, James, *The Golden Bough* 7
 Free Cinema 204, 208, 209–10, 211
 cameras and film 210
 class in 204, 208–9
 historical and future styles 210–11
 manifesto 206
 methods and techniques 210
 national values and poetry 204–5
 see also individual names
Freedom Riders (Nelson) 346
 Freund, Karl 64–5
 Friedman, Jeffrey, *Common Threads* 296
 Friedrich, Su 352
 Fromke, Susan, *Concert of Wills* 326
 Frontier Films 107–9, 113
Frontline (Fanning) 308
FRONTLINE/World 367
Fury in the Pacific 145

 Gabriel Films 325
 Galentine, Wheaton, *Brussels Loops* 215
 Garbus, Liz, *The Farm* 325–6
 gas industry 79
Gas Masks (Eisenstein) 52
Gates of Heaven (Morris) 342
 gay and lesbian cultures 289, 292, 294–5,
 294f., 295f., 296, 297f., 298, 307
 GE (General Electric) 166
General Line, The/Old and New
 (Eisenstein) 53–4
 General Post Office (GPO) 78, 120
Georgia O'Keeffe (Adato) 261

 Germany 113
 propaganda 69, 113–14
 WWII 170
Gertrude Stein (Adato) 261
 Getty Centre 326
 Gibney, Alex 339–40
 Magic Trip 340f.
 Taxi to the Dark Side 339, 340–1
 Gilbert, Peter, *At the Death House Door*
 338
Gimme Shelter (Maysles *et al.*) 353f., 354f.,
 356
 Ginsberg, Allen 215
 'Global Perspectives' 367
 globalization 364, 367, 368–9, 379
 disparities 367
 immediacy and skill 364–5
 international co-production 368,
 369–70
 Godmilow, Jill, *Antonia* 255
 gold mining 2, 178
Gold Rush, The (Chaplin) 2
Golden Bough, The (Frazer) 7
 Goldfarb, Lyn, *With Babies and Banners*
 311
Good Times, Wonderful Times (Rogosin)
 213
 Gordon, Clive 318
 Gore, Al 341
 Goretta, Claude, *Nice Time* 206–7
 Government Motion Picture Bureau 131
 GPO see General Post Office
 Graef, Roger 248–50, 321
 Feltham Sings 321
 Police 249
 Granada Television 187
Grass (Cooper and Schoedsack) 37
 Bakhtiari migration 37, 38f.
 Gray, Lorraine, *With Babies and Banners*
 311
 Great Britain see Britain
Great War, The (BBC) 309, 310
 Greaves, William 192, 193f.
Grey Gardens (Hovde *et al.*) 236f.
 grids 59–60

- Grierson, John 4, 5, 6, 17f., 74, 78, 131,
132, 137, 187, 262, 363–4, 379
artistry and 111–12, 136–7
audiences 77, 90
Chicago University 73
cinematography 16
collectivity 75–7
constraints on 203
Drifters 6, 75, 76f., 80
Eisenstein influence 75
on ethnicity 74
first principles 16–18
Flaherty relationship 37–8, 75, 87,
88–9
Industrial Britain 80–1
legacy 77, 89–91, 166
life 73–4
multifaceted roles 89
political and social issues and 88, 89
on politics 74
private sponsorship 78–9, 90
- Griffith, David Wark 54
- Grizzly Man* (Herzog) 336
- Groulx, Giles, *Les Raquetteurs* 224, 225f.
- Guest, Christopher 374
- Guggenheim, Charles 282–3
Berga 283
Monument to the Dream 282
Robert Kennedy Remembered 282
- Guggenheim, Davis 339, 341
An Inconvenient Truth 341
It Might Get Loud 341
Waiting for Superman 341
- Gun Fight* (Kopple) 285
- Gunner Palace* (Tucker and Epperlein) 334
- Guyana, ballooning 336–7
- Halleck, Dee Dee 263, 264
Herbert Schiller Reads the New York Times 263–4
- Hammer, Barbara 296
- Hammid, Alexander, *Crisis* 108
- Hampton, Henry 285–6, 287
Eyes on the Prize 286–7
- Handsworth Songs* (Akomfrah) 288
- Harlan County, USA* (Kopple) 285, 286f.
- Harrison, Marguerite, *Grass* 37, 38f.
HBO 275–6, 305, 332, 381–2
- Healthy Baby Girl, A* (Helfand) 324
- Heart of the Angel* (Dineen) 319, 320f.
- Hearts and Minds* (Davis) 256, 257f.
- Hegedus, Chris 326, 347
Startup.com 326, 347
The War Room 326, 327f.
- Helfand, Judith 324
A Healthy Baby Girl 324
Blue Vinyl 324
The Uprising of '34 324
- Hemingway, Ernest 107–8
- Herbert Schiller Reads the New York Times*
(Halleck) 263–4
- Herzog, Werner 334–7
Cave of Forgotten Dreams 337
disparities 335
Grizzly Man 336
Little Dieter Needs to Fly 336
subjectivity 335–6
The White Diamond 336–7
- Hetherington, Tim 335
Restrepo 334–5
- Hill, Brian 321
- Hill Street Blues* (Bochco) 250
- 'hillbillies' 265
- hippie culture 355
- Hiroshima-Nagasaki, August 1945* 310
- Hoffmann, Deborah
Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter 324
Long Night's Journey into Day 324–5
- Holocaust 334
- Home for Life* (Kartemquin) 266
- home movies 222, 352, 365–6
- House I Live In, The* 175
- housing 84, 85f., 125–6
- Housing Problems* (Elton and Anstey) 85f.
- Hovde, Ellen, *Grey Gardens* 236f.
- How to Fold a Flag* (Tucker and Epperlein) 334
- Howell, Jack, *Dylan Thomas* 174
- Hudson Bay 21
- Human Remains* (Rosenblatt) 352

- Humphrey, Hubert 225, 229–30
- Hungarian uprising 386, 387f.
- Hurley, Frank, *South* 31
- Hurricane Katrina 332–3
- Hurwitz, Leo
Native Land 108–9
The Plow That Broke the Plains 99–100
- Huston, John 144, 240
Let There Be Light 148–9
The Battle of San Pietro 144, 145f.
- hybrids 3, 51–2, 159–60, 302 *see also*
individual terms
- I Love Lucy* 187
- Identification of the Japanese Zero* 138
- If You Love This Planet* (Nash) 282
- I'll Find a Way* (Schaffer) 259
- In Memoriam* 381–2
- In the Land of the Head-Hunters* (Curtis)
 11, 22, 24f.
- In the Year of the Pig* (de Antonio) 245
- Inconvenient Truth, An* (Guggenheim)
 341
- Indomitable Teddy Roosevelt, The* (Engle)
 315f.
- Industrial Britain* (Grierson and Flaherty)
 80–1
- Industrial Workers of the World (IWW)
 311
- information overload 343
- Inside Fighting Russia* (WIA) 134
- Inside Nazi Germany* (MOT) 98
- International Documentary Film Festival
 Amsterdam 360
- internet 364–5, 382–3
- Interrupters, The* (James and Kotlowitz)
 338–9
- interviews 83–4, 256
- Interviews with My Lai Veterans* 256
- Intimate Stranger* (Berliner) 278
- Inuit life 4, 22–3, 24, 28, 36
- Iran election killing 364–5
- Iraq wars 334
 free speech on 349–50
- irrigation, cotton industry and 51
- Isaacs, Jeremy 310
The World at War 187, 309–10
- Israel 318
- It Might Get Loud* (Guggenheim) 341
- Italy 221
- It's All True* (Welles) 147
- ITV 187
- ITVS 306–7
- Ivens, Joris 61, 63, 66–9, 104–8
 artistry, political and social issues 69
 editing 67f.
 photography 66
Power and the Land 104–5, 106f.
Rain 63, 66–7, 68f.
The Bridge 61
The Spanish Earth 107–8
 Van Dongen influence 67–8
- Iverson, Allen 338
- IWW (Industrial Workers of the World)
 311
- Jackson, Pat *Western Approaches* 123
- Jacobite uprising 375
- Jacoby, Irving 132, 173, 175, 215
Skyscraper 215
The Pale Horseman 173
- Jagger, Mick 353f., 354f., 356
- James, Steve 338
At the Death House Door 338
 loyalty 339
No Crossover 338
 social issues and subjectivity 339
Stevie 337–8
The Interrupters 338–9
- Jane (Drew) 230
- Jarecki, Andrew, *Capturing the Friedmans*
 359
- Jazz Dance* (Tilton and Leacock) 216
- Jean Taris, champion de notation* (Vigo) 61
- Jennings, Humphrey 122
A Diary for Timothy 124
Fires Were Started 122
Listen to Britain 122–3
London Can Take It 119
- Johnson, Martin 37

- Johnson, Osa 37
 Johnson, Tom
 America Lost and Found 280, 309
 The World of Tomorrow 280, 281f.
 Jonas Mekas 214–15
 journalism 343
 see also newspapers
 Joyce, James, *Ulysses* 59, 63
 Junger, Sebastian, *Restrepo* 334–5
 Jutland, battle 12
- Kael, Pauline 356
 Kanin, Garson, *The True Glory* 128–9,
 128f.
 Kartemquin Collective 266–7, 339
 Katrina, Hurricane 332–3
 Kazan, Elia, *Pie in the Sky* 93–4
 Keene, Ralph, *Cyprus Is an Island* 173
 Kennedy, John F. 192, 225–6, 226f., 229
 Kennedy, Robert F. 282
 Kennedy, Rory 348
 Kerouac, Jack 215, 216
 Kesey, Ken 340f.
 Keuhl, Jerome 303
 Kinetograph camera 220
 King, Allan, *Warrendale* 248
Kino-Eye 47–8
 Kino Pravda (Vertov) 44, 45, 45f., 46
 cameras 45–6
 cinematography 45–6
 editing 46
 purpose and approach 44–5
 Kinoy, Peter 284
 Klein, Bonnie Sherr, *Not a Love Story*
 259–60
 Klein, Jim, *Union Maids* 311
 Kline, Herbert 94f.
 Crisis 108
 Klondike Gold Rush 2, 178
 Koenig, Wolf 2, 313
 City of Gold 2, 178–9, 179f.
 Lonely Boy 234, 235f.
 Kopple, Barbara 285, 348–9
 Gun Fight 285
 Harlan County, USA 285, 286f.
- My Generation* 355
 political issues 285
 Shut Up and Sing 349–50
 Kotlowitz, Alex, *The Interrupters* 338–9
 Kovacs, László 386, 387f.
 Kroiter, Roman 179
 Lonely Boy 234, 235f.
 Universe 179–80
 Krumgold, Joseph, *One Tenth of a Nation*
 109–10
 Kung! people 322
- La Croisière Noire* (Poirier) 37
La Ofrenda (Portillo) 292
Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr Leonard Cohen
 (Brittain and Owen) 245
 Lambert, Gavin 204, 208
Land, The (Flaherty) 105–6
Land Without Bread (Buñuel) 61
 Langley, John, *Cops* 378
 Lapping, Brian, *Yugoslavia* 306
Las Madres (Muñoz and Portillo) 290,
 292, 293f.
 Lasky, Jesse L. 26
 Lassally, Walter 205–6
Law and Order (Wiseman) 249f.
 Lawrence, D. H. 208
 Leacock, Ricky 229–30, 231, 233
 Brussels Loops 215
 engagement from 229
 Jazz Dance 216
 on realism 233
 Lee, Spike
 Four Little Girls 333–4
 When the Levees Broke 332
 Léger, Fernand, *Ballet Mécanique* 60
 Legg, Stuart 133f.
 CCO 132–4
 WIA 134
 Leigh, Walter, *The Song of Ceylon* 81
 Lemare, Jacques 94f.
 Lenin, Vladimir Ilyich 8, 41
 lenses
 telephoto 33
 zoom 223

- Lerner, Irving, *Pie in the Sky* 93–4
Les Raquetteurs (Brault and Groulx) 224, 225f.
 Leslie, Alfred, *Pull My Daisy* 215–16
Let There Be Light (Huston) 148–9
Letters from Vietnam (Drew) 255–6
 Levin, Mark, *Triangle* 333f.
 Levitt, Helen 211
 The Quiet One 160
 Leyda, Jay, *Films Beget Films* 50, 308
 Lico, Gary 379
Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter, The (Field) 311, 312f.
Life in a Day (McDonald and Scott) 384
Life of Pancho Villa, The 11
 Lippmann, Walter 74
 Lipsett, Arthur, *Very Nice, Very Nice* 180–1, 181f.
Listen to Britain (Jennings and Macallister) 122–3
 literature documentaries 6
Little Dieter Needs to Fly (Herzog) 336
 Littman, Lynne, *Number Our Days* 349f.
 Litvak, Anatole, *The Battle of Russia* 141f.
Living City, The (Barnes) 176–7
 Loader, Jane, *Atomic Café* 280
 Loeb, Janice 211
London Can Take It (Watt and Jennings) 119
 London Underground cleaning crew 319, 320f.
Lonely Boy (Kroiter and Koenig) 234, 235f.
Long Night's Journey into Day (Hoffmann and Reid) 324–5
 Lorentz, Pare 99, 101f., 104, 107
 form 106–7
 legacy 106–7
 Nuremberg 170
 The Fight for Life 104
 The Plow That Broke the Plains 99–101, 100f.
 The River 101–4, 102f.
 Losey, Mary 112
Louisiana Story (Flaherty) 25, 28, 29, 32, 34, 35, 68, 160, 172
 camera 34
 cinematography 233
 narrative 160
 nature and oil 29, 160
 sound 28, 68, 233–4
 Low, Colin
 City of Gold 2, 178–9, 179f.
 Corral 178
 The Romance of Transportation in Canada 177–8
 Universe 179–80
 Luce, Henry 96
 Lumière brothers 9–10, 301
 cameras 220
 Workers Leaving the Factory 10, 10f., 301
 Macallister, Stewart, *Listen to Britain* 122–3
 Macartney-Filgate, Terence, *The Days Before Christmas* 180
 machinery 42–4, 61, 65–6
 disparities 51
 Maddow, Ben, *The Bridge* 147
Magic Trip (Gibney and Ellwood) 340f.
 mail delivery 86
 Malinowski, Bronislaw, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* 7–8
 Malins, Geoffrey, *The Battle of the Somme* 12, 14, 15f.
 Mamber, Stephen 231
Man of Aran (Flaherty) 30f.
 Aran life 34
 sound 28, 34
 subjects 29
Man Who Skied Down Everest, The (Crawley) 171
Manhatta (Sheeler and Strand) 59–60
 ‘March of Time, The’ *see* MOT
 Margaret Mead Film Festival 358
 Mariposa Film Group 292, 294f., 295f.
 Marsh, James 332
 Marshall, John 247, 322
 Marshall Plan 169–70

- Marxism *see* Communism
- Maysles, Al 226, 226f., 231
Concert of Wills 326
 engagement from 229
Gimme Shelter 353f., 354f., 356
Grey Gardens 236f.
Showman 231
- Maysles, David 231
Gimme Shelter 353f., 354f., 356
Grey Gardens 236f.
Showman 231
- Mazetti, Lorenza 206
Together 206, 208
- McBride, James, *David Holzman's Diary*
 251, 252f.
- McCarthyism 172, 189, 245
- McDonald, Kevin, *Life in a Day* 384
- McDonald's 366
- McDowell, J. B., *The Battle of the Somme*
 12, 14, 15f.
- McElwee, Ross 278, 279f.
Sherman's March 278
- McLaren, Norman 175
Neighbours 175–6
- McLuhan, Marshall 197
- Mekas, Jonas, *The Brig* 214f.
- Méliès, Georges 10
- Memphis Belle* (Wyler) 144
- mental health 160, 174–5
- Mexican communities 292
- Mexican Revolution, *The Life of Pancho Villa* 11
- Meyer, Muffie, *Grey Gardens* 236f.
- Meyers, Sidney, *The Quiet One* 160, 174–5
- Miles, Bill 288
- Milk, Harvey 295–6, 297f.
- Miura, Yuichiro 171
- Moan, Dan, *UMWA 1970* 265
- Moana* (Flaherty) 26–8
 definition in 4
 equipment 33
 pedagogy 29
- mobile phone cameras 364–5, 382–3
- Model* (Wiseman) 238–9
- modelling, New York life and 238–9
- Mohawk Indians 263
- Momma Don't Allow* (Reisz and Richardson) 206, 207f., 216
 independence in 208
 protest in 208
- Mondrian, Piet 59
- montage 50, 54, 180–1, 351, 352 *see also*
 compilations
- Montreal 180
- Monument to the Dream* (Guggenheim)
 282
- Mooney vs Fowle* (Drew) 230
- Moore, Michael, *Fahrenheit 9/11* 389f.
- Morin, Edgar, *Chronicle of a Summer*
 226–8, 227f.
- Morris, Errol 342
Gates of Heaven 342
Tabloid 343
The Thin Blue Line 343–4
- MOT ('The March of Time') 96–7, 97f.,
 98–9, 196
 CCO, WIA and 134
- Motion Picture Bureau 147–8
- Moy and Bastie camera 15f.
- Mr. Hoover and I* (de Antonio) 246
- Munich crisis 108
- Muñoz, Susana, *Las Madres* 290, 292,
 293f.
- Murder of Emmett Till, The* (Nelson) 345
- Murrow, Ed 188–9, 198
- Museum of Modern Art 175
- music 68, 100, 341, 349–50
 a capella group 346
 musicals 321
 rock and pop documentaries 231, 234,
 235f., 353f., 354–6, 354f., 374
 symphony conductors 255
- musicals 321
- Mutual Film 11
- My Generation* (Kopple) 355
- My Lai Massacre 256
- NAATA (National Asian-American
 Telecommunications Association)
 288–9

- Nagra sound recorder 224
- Nakasako, Spencer 290
- Nana, Mom, and Me* (Rothschild) 256f.
family life 255
- Nanook of the North* (Flaherty) 4, 5f.
audiences 4, 23, 25–6
branding 304
distribution 25–6
equipment 22, 24–5
Eskimo life 4, 7, 22–3, 24, 28, 36
friendship from 25
funding 23–4
lost footage 22–3
methods and techniques
assistance 33
constraints on 33
determiners of action 234–5
film developing 33
promotion from 24
screenings 22
time and sequence 27–8
- narrative fiction *see* fiction films
- Nash, Terre, *If You Love This Planet* 282
- natal care 160–1
disparities 104, 266
- National Alliance of Media Art and Culture (NAMAC) 267
- National Alliance of Media Arts Centres (NAMAC) 267
- National Asian-American Telecommunications Association (NAATA) 288–9
- National Educational Television (NET) 188
- National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) 298
- National Film Board (Canada) *see* NFB
- National Film Registry 400–4
- Native American Public Broadcasting Consortium 290
- Native Land* (Hurwitz and Strand) 108–9
- nature, humans and 28–9, 165, 178
oil and 29, 160
- Nazis Strike, The* ('Why We Fight') 142
- Nazism 98
- propaganda 69, 113–14
trials 170
- NBC 188, 305
- NEA (National Endowment for the Arts) 298
- Negro Soldier, The* 148
- Nehru* (Drew) 231
- Neighbours* (McLaren) 175–6
- Nelson, Stanley 344–5, 346
ethnicity 346
Freedom Riders 346
Sweet Honey in the Rock 346
The Murder of Emmett Till 345
- neorealism 221
- Nesson, Sarah, *Poster Girl* 334
- NET (National Educational Television) 188
- Nevins, Sheila 332, 333f.
- New American Cinema 211–12, 213–4
see also individual names
- New Americans, The* (Kartemquin) 266
- New Day Films 262
- New Deal 112
- New York life, modelling and 238–9
- New York School 212
- New York World's Fair, 1939 280, 281f.
- newspapers 2, 8 *see also* journalism
- newsreel 8, 11, 134
propaganda and 44–6, 45f.
see also war
- Newsreel Collective 257–9
Columbia Revolt 257–8
- NFB (National Film Board) (Canada) 131, 132, 135–6, 137, 171, 262, 317
audiences 135, 136
Challenge for Change 262–3
constraints on 162, 316
freelancers and 316
international co-production 368
Studio D 259–60, 282
togetherness in 131–2
Unit B 175–6, 177–81, 179f., 181f.
- Nice Time* (Tanner and Goretta) 206–7
- Nichols, Bill 380
- Nigeria 173

- Night Mail* (Watt and Wright) 85–7, 86f.
No Contract, No Cookies (Alpert) 331–2
No Crossover (James) 338
...No Lies (Block) 251, 252f.
No Subtitles Necessary (Chressanthis) 386, 387f.
Not a Love Story (Klein) 259–60
 Noujaim, Jehane, *Startup.com* 326, 347
 nuclear war 376–7
 nuclear weapons 280, 282, 310–11
Number Our Days (Littman) 349f.
Nuremberg (Schulberg) 170
 Nykino 93–4
 Nyon Festival 358

O Dreamland (Anderson) 205
 cinematography 205–6
 independence in 208
 protest in 208
 Obomsawin, Alanis 290, 291f.
 O'Brien, Frederick 26
October/Ten Days That Shook the World (Eisenstein) 53
 oil industry 78–9, 160, 166, 176
 O'Keeffe, Georgia 261
Olympia (Riefenstahl) 69, 114
On the Bowery (Rogosin) 212, 213f.
One Day on Earth 383
One Tenth of a Nation (Rodakiewicz and Krumgold) 109–10
 'Originals – Women in Art, The' (Adato) 261
 Oscars 391–400
 Ostergaard, Anders, *Burma VJ* 382
 Owen, Don, *Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr Leonard Cohen* 245

Pale Horseman, The (Jacoby) 173
Palestine Is Still the Issue (Pilger) 318
Pandemic (Kennedy) 348
Panorama hoax 373–4
 Paper Tiger 263–4
Paradise Lost trilogy (Berlinger and Sinofsky) 344, 345f.
 Paris 63–4, 227–8

 Pathé 11, 26
 PBS 188, 195–6, 312, 346
 Pearl Harbor 143–4
 pedagogy 29
 Pelosi, Alexandra 347
 Pennebaker, D. A. 231, 326, 347
 Brussels Loops 215
 Don't Look Back 231
 The War Room 326, 327f.
 Peralta, Stacy 358
Pershing's Crusaders 12
 personal essay films 277–9, 324
 pets 342
 photography 6, 22, 26–7, 66
 live-action and 178–9
 realism and 58
 see also cameras; cinematography
 Piccadilly Circus 206–7
Pie in the Sky (Kazan et al.) 93–4
 Pilger, John 318–19
 Palestine Is Still the Issue 318
 Pinkerson, Daphne, *Triangle* 333f.
Plow That Broke the Plains, The (Lorentz) 99, 100f.
 agriculture 100
 cinematography 99–100
 distribution constraints 101
 methods and techniques 100
 sound 100
 poetry 38–9, 82, 86–7, 103, 159, 204–5, 321
 beat poetry 215
 manifesto as 48
Point of Order (de Antonio) 245
 Poirier, Leon, *La Croisière Noire* 37
Police (Graef) 249
 police forces 248, 249, 249f., 250, 378
Police Tapes (Raymond and Raymond) 250, 378
 legacy 250
 politicians 225–6
POM Wonderful (Spurlock) 24
 pornography 259–60
 Portillo, Lourdes 292
 La Ofrenda 292

- Las Madres* 290, 292, 293f.
Poster Girl (Nesson and Block) 334
 post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) 61,
 148–9, 334
 recreating 336
Power and the Land (Ivens) 104–5,
 106f.
Precious Images (Workman) 351
 preservation 274, 310, 334, 385–6, 387f.
Primary (Drew) 224–6, 226f., 229–30
 prison 320, 321, 325–6, 343, 344
 death house chaplain 338
 private sponsorship 79, 107, 109, 313
 advertisements 199
 aluminium industry 189
 artistry and 81
 audiences and 110–11
 chocolatiers 125–6
 coal industry 176
 constraints on 171–2
 disparities 90, 110, 111, 210
 gas industry 79
 GE 166
 health provider 159
 insurance company 191
 oil industry 78–9, 160, 166, 176
 politics and 172
 steel industry 176
Project XX 190–1
 projector viewings 185–6
 propaganda 8–9, 12, 41, 69, 119, 120–3,
 132–5, 139–40, 142–3, 151, 169
 agit-prop 44
 class 151
 disparities 150, 168, 282
 ethnicity 148
 hatred and violence in 124, 150, 151
 limitations 143
 Nazi 69, 113–14
 newsreel and 44–6, 45f.
 Soviet Union 8–9, 41
 togetherness in 123–4, 150–1
 United States Information Agency
 (USIA) 168–9
see also individual names
- Proust, Marcel, *Remembrance of Things
 Past* 59
 Prudential Insurance Company 191
 PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) 61,
 148–9, 334
 recreating 336
 public access TV 263–5
 cable TV 263
Public Opinion (Lippmann) 74
 public TV 186, 187, 188, 195–6, 306–8,
 309, 310, 312, 318, 346, 373–4, 378
 constraints on 306
 independence and 376
Pull My Daisy (Frank and Leslie) 215–16
- Quiet One, The* (Meyers) 160, 174–5
 Quinn, Gordon 266–7
 Race for Space, The 193–5
- radio 6, 8
 Radio Télévision Française 232–3
 Rafferty, Kevin, *Atomic Café* 280
 Rafferty, Pierce, *Atomic Café* 280
Rain (Ivens) 63, 68f.
 cinematography 66
 everyday life 66–7
 rape 249
 hoax in 251
 Raymond, Alan 250
 Police Tapes 250, 378
 Raymond, Susan 250
 Police Tapes 250, 378
 Reagan, Ronald 138
 reality TV 6, 197, 310, 337–9
 Reed, Carol, *The True Glory* 128–9, 128f.
 reflexive documentaries 61
 Reichert, Julia, *Union Maids* 311
 Reid, Frances, *Long Night's Journey into
 Day* 324–5
 Reiner, Rob, *This Is Spinal Tap* 374
 Reisz, Karel 204, 206
 Momma Don't Allow 206, 207f., 208,
 216
 We Are the Lambeth Boys 208, 209f.
Remembrance of Things Past (Proust) 59

- Renoir, Jean 36, 221–2
- Renov, Michael 380
- Resettlement Administration 99–101
- Restrepo* (Junger and Hetherington) 334–5
- revolutions
- Mexican 11
 - Russian 41–2, 44–5, 53, 53f.
- Rhythmus 21* (Richter) 59
- Richards, Keith 353f.
- Richardson, Tony 204, 206
- Momma Don't Allow* 206, 207f., 208, 216
- Richter, Hans 59
- Richter, Robert
- Father Roy* 284–5
 - political issues 284, 285
- Riefenstahl, Leni
- Olympia* 69, 114
 - Triumph of the Will* 113–14
- Rien que les heures* (Cavalcanti) 63–4
- Riggs, Marlon 287, 296
- Colour Adjustment* 287
 - Tongues Untied* 298
- River, The* (Lorentz) 101–2, 102f., 103
- cinematography 103
 - disparities 103–4
 - distribution 103
 - flood control 102–3
 - poetry 103
- Robert Flaherty Seminars 226–7
- Robert Kennedy Remembered* (Guggenheim) 282
- rock and pop documentaries 231, 234, 235f., 353f., 354–5, 354f.
- ethnicity 355–6
 - faux documentary 374
 - violence in 356
- Rockefeller, Nelson 146–7
- Rodakiewicz, Henwar, *One Tenth of a Nation* 109–10
- Rogosin, Lionel 213, 222
- Come Back Africa* 212–13
 - Good Times, Wonderful Times* 213
 - On the Bowery* 212, 213f.
- Romance of Transportation in Canada, The* (Low) 177–8
- animation 177
 - transport 177
- romanticism 35–6
- Roosevelt, Franklin Delano 99, 104, 137
- Roosevelt, Teddy 315f.
- Rosenblatt, Jay 367
- Beginning Filmmaking* 351
 - Human Remains* 352
- Rostock, Susane, *The Uprising of '34* 324
- Rotha, Paul
- Documentary Film* 7–9
 - Flaherty and 35
 - subjects 2
 - The World Is Rich* 173
 - World of Plenty* 124–5, 125f.
- Rothschild, Amalie R., *Nana, Mom, and Me* 255, 256f.
- Rouch, Jean
- on awareness in filming 232
 - Chronicle of a Summer* 226–8, 227f.
 - on realism 233
 - on subjectivity 232
 - Vertov influence 232
- Royce, Ed, WFPL tour 95–6
- political constraints on 96
- Rubbo, Michael 246
- on fieldwork 246–7
 - Sad Song of Yellow Skin* 246
- Rural Electrification Administration 104–5
- Russian revolutions 41–2, 44–5
- Battleship Potemkin* 53, 53f.
 - October/Ten Days That Shook the World* 53
- Ruttman, Walther 64
- artistry, political and social issues 69
 - Berlin* 62f., 63, 64–6
 - Olympia* 69
- Ryden, Hope 16
- Sad Song of Yellow Skin* (Rubbo) 246
- St Louis Arch 282
- Sainsbury, Sam 33

- Salomon, Henry, *Victory at Sea* 187, 190, 308
- Samoan life 26, 27, 28
tattooing 27
- San Francisco Newsreel, *The Woman's Film* 258
- satellite TV 274–5, 276, 302, 304, 378
- Scagliotti, John, *Before Stonewall* 294–5
- Schaefer, Deborah, *The Wobblies* 311
- Schaffer, Beverly, *I'll Find a Way* 259
- Schmeiken, Richard, *The Times of Harvey Milk* 295–6, 297f.
- Schoedsack, Ernest B.
Chang 37
Grass 37, 38f.
- Schulberg, Stuart 169–70
Nuremberg 170
- Science 324, 337, 341
- Scott, Ridley, *Life in a Day* 384
- Scottish Television 187
- Sea Around Us, The* (Allen) 164–5
- See It Now* 188–9
onscreen commentary 198
- Selling of the Pentagon, The* 198
- Sequence* 204
national values and poetry 204–5
- sets 3, 16
- Shackleton, Ernest 31
- Shannon, Kathleen 259
- Sheeler, Charles, *Manhatta* 59–60
- Shell Oil 78–9, 160, 166
- Sherman's March* (McElwee) 278
- Showman* (Maysles brothers) 231
- Shub, Esfir 48–9
Eisenstein influence 48
legacy 50
The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty 49–50, 49f.
Vertov influence 48
- Shut Up and Sing* (Kopple) 349–50
- Sight and Sound* 204
on independence 208
- Silber, Glenn, *The War at Home* 257, 258f.
- Sinatra, Frank 175
- Sino–Japanese War, *China Strikes Back* 108
- Sinofsky, Bruce 344
Paradise Lost trilogy 344, 345f.
- Sixteen in Webster Groves* 198
- skiing 171
- Skyscraper* (Clarke et al.) 215
- Smith, Albert E. 372
- Smith, Herb E., *Strangers and Kin* 265
- Smith, Judy, *The Woman's Film* 258
- social issues 326
The Farm 325–6
The Wildest Show in the South 325–6
- social media 364–5, 382–4
preservation 385
- socio-economic issues 14, 44–5 *see also individual terms*
- Soffer, Simon, *The Wildest Show in the South* 325–6
- Soldier Girls* (Churchill and Broomfield) 253, 254f.
- Somme, battle 12, 14
- Song of Ceylon, The* (Wright) 81, 82f.
- South* (Hurley) 31
- South Africa 324–5
- Soviet Union 41, 42, 52, 54–5, 265
Cinema Eye 47
compilations 48–50
hybrids 51–2
machinery 42–4
propaganda 8–9, 41
revolutions 41–2, 44–5, 53, 53f.
US political links 94–5
VGIK (State Institute of Cinematography) 41
West and 52
see also individual names
- space race 194
- 'spaghetti harvest' hoax 373–4
- Spanish-American War 371, 372
Battleships 'Maine' and 'Iowa' 371–2
Tearing Down the Spanish Flag 372
- Spanish Civil War 107
- Spanish Earth, The* (Ivens) 107–8
- special effects 3

- Spurlock, Morgan
POM Wonderful 24
Supersize Me 365–6
- Squadron 992* (Watt) 120, 121f.
- Squires, Buddy 314
- Sragow, Michael 356
- Stack, Jonathan 325
- Startup.com* (Hegedus and Noujaim) 326, 347
- State Institute of Cinematography (VGIK) 41
- state occasions 11
- steel industry 176
- Steichen, Edward, *The Fighting Lady* 145–6, 146f.
- Steiner, Ralph
Pie in the Sky 93–4
The City 109, 110f.
The Plow That Broke the Plains 99–100
- Stevie (James) 337
 subjectivity in 337–8
- Stoney, George 175, 263
All My Babies 160–1, 161f.
The Uprising of '34 324
- Strand, Paul
Manhatta 60, 63
Native Land 108–9
The Plow That Broke the Plains 99–100
- Strangers and Kin* (Smith) 265
- Streetfight* (Curry) 388f.
- Strick, Joseph, *Interviews with My Lai Veterans* 256
- Stuart, Mel 194f.
Wattstax 355–6
- Studio D (NFB) 259–60, 282
- Sundance Festival 358, 359
- Supersize Me* (Spurlock) 365–6
- Surrealism 59, 60–1
 realism and 61
- Svilova, Yelizaveta 47, 170
- Sweet Honey in the Rock* (Nelson) 346
- swimming 61
- symphony conductors 255
- syndication 194–5
- Tabloid* (Morris) 343
- Tajima, Rene, *Who Killed Vincent Chin?* 289
- Tallents, Stephen 75
- Tanner, Alain, *Nice Time* 206–7
- Target for Tonight* (Watt) 121–2
- Tarnation* (Caouette) 352–3
- tattooing 27
- Taxi to the Dark Side* (Gibney) 339–41
- Taylor, John, *Housing Problems* 84
- Tearing Down the Spanish Flag* 372
- technological advances 219, 381–2
 artistry and 365–6, 384
 disparities 364, 384–5
 immediacy and skill 364–5
 quality and 302–3
 sound 219, 220–1
see also individual terms
- teddy boys 208
- telephoto lenses 33
- television *see* TV
- Tennessee Valley Authority 102
- Thames Television 187, 309–10
- theatre 46, 52
- theatre viewings 185, 385–8
 constraints on 186
- Thin Blue Line, The* (Morris) 343
 disparities 343
 prison 343
 violence in 343–4
- Third World Newsreel 258
- This Is Spinal Tap* (Reiner) 374
- This Wonderful World* 187
- Thomas, Dylan 174
- Thursday's Children* (Anderson and Brenton) 205–6
- Till, Emmett 345
- Tilton, Roger, *Jazz Dance* 216
- Times of Harvey Milk, The* (Epstein and Schmeiken) 295–6, 297f.
- Titicut Follies* (Wiseman) 238, 247–8
- Together* (Mazetti) 206, 208
- Tongues Untied* (Riggs) 298
- Tony Blair* (Dineen) 319
- Torres Straits life 8

- toxins 324
- Trent, Barbara 284
- Triangle* (Levin and Pinkerson) 333f.
- Triumph of the Will* (Riefenstahl) 113–14
- Trobriander life 7–8
- True Glory, The* (Reed and Kanin) 128–9, 128f.
- Tsuno, Keiko 264
- Tucker, Michael 334
- Tugwell, Rexford Guy 99, 101–2
- Turin, Victor 51
- Turksib* (Turin) 51
- Turner, Ted 276
- TV 186–8, 196–9, 306, 316–17, 350
auteur shift 199
 cable TV 263, 274–7, 302, 303–6, 332, 350–1, 381–2
 constraints from 305–6
 cv/direct and 191–2, 236–7
 film listing 200–1
 globalization on 367, 368–9, 370
 public access TV 263–5
 public TV 186, 187, 188, 195–6, 306–8, 309, 310, 312, 318, 346, 373–4, 376, 378
 quality and 303
 reality TV 6, 197, 310, 377–9
 satellite TV 274–5, 276, 302, 304, 378
 syndication 194–5
see also individual names
- Twentieth Century, The* 191, 197
- Twenty-First Century, The* 191
- Ulysses* (Joyce) 59, 63
- UMWA 1970 (Zickafoose and Moan) 265
- unconscious mind 9, 58, 60–1
- Underground* (de Antonio) 246
- Union Maids* (Klein and Reichert) 311
- unionism 108–9, 311
 constraints on 265
 disparities 189
- Unit B (NFB) 175–6, 177–81, 179f., 181f.
- United Auto Workers 311
- United Nations 173
- United Productions of America (UPA) 175
- United States Information Agency (USIA)
 167–8
 propaganda and 168–9
Universe (Kroiter and Low) 179–80
 universities 73, 165–6, 204
 student takeover 257–8
- UPA (United Productions of America)
 175
- Uprising of '34, The* (Helfand *et al.*) 324
- 'Up Series' (Apted) 321–2
- US Film Service 104
- US Public Health Service 104
- USA 39–40, 114, 115, 156, 157, 322, 326–7, 331
 constraints on 166–7
 declassified film 310
 Department of Agriculture 104–5
 government 99, 167, 265, 306–7
 constraints from 267, 306
 disparities 105–6
 Office of War Information 128–9, 147–8
 Soviet political links 94–5
 transatlantic issues 111–12, 129–31, 137–8, 149–52, 171–2, 317
see also individual terms
- USIA *see* United States Information Agency
- Valley Town* (Van Dyke) 109
- Van Dongen, Helen 16, 67
 Ivens influence 67–8
Power and the Land 105
see also Louisiana Story
- Van Dyke, Willard 167
Skyscraper 215
The Bridge 147
The City 109, 110f.
The River 103
Valley Town 109
- Van Voorhis, Westbrook 98
- Varda, Agnès 16
- Vertov, Dziga 42–3, 43f., 44–7, 45f., 48, 55, 232
Kino-Eye 47–8

- Kino Pravda 44–6, 45f.
 Vertov brothers 42
Very Nice, Very Nice (Lipsett) 180, 181, 181f.
 modern life 180–1
 montage 180–1
 VGIK (State Institute of Cinematography) 41
Victory at Sea (Salomon) 187, 190, 308
 video 264–5, 268, 273, 274, 279–80, 282–3, 299–300
 artistry and 284
 character and 283
 distribution 273
 ethnicity 285–90, 292
 origins 271, 272f.
 personal essay films 277–9, 324
 preservation 274
 quality and 303
 sound and image quality 273–4
 simplification from 303
 social issues 264–5
 see also individual names
 video-diaries 277–9, 324
 Vietnam War 213, 245, 255, 336
 Hearts and Minds 256, 257f.
 Interviews with My Lai Veterans 256
 Letters From Vietnam 255–6
 The War at Home 257, 258f.
 Vietnamese life 246
 Vignier, A. 228
 Vigo, Jean, *Jean Taris, champion de notation* 61
 Villa, Pancho 11
 Visual Communications 288–9
 ‘Voice of America, The’ 168
 Vorkapich, Slavko 50

 Wadleigh, Michael, *Woodstock* 355
Waiting for Superman (Guggenheim) 341
Wall, The (de Hoog) 168f., 169
 war 8, 11, 334, 372–3
 Afghanistan 334–5, 340–1
 American Civil War 312, 314f.
 Iraq 334, 349–50
 nuclear war 376–7
 personal war and horror 334–5
 Sino–Japanese War 108
 Spanish–American War 371–2
 Spanish Civil War 107–8
 Vietnam 213, 245, 255–7, 257f., 258f., 336
 WWI 61, 12, 13f., 14, 15f., 309, 310
 WWII *see* WWII
War at Home, The (Silber and Brown) 257, 258f.
 war crimes 170
War for Men’s Minds, The (WIA) 134
War Game, The (Watkins) 375, 376
War Room, The (Pennebaker *et al.*) 326, 327f.
Warclouds in the Pacific (CCO) 134
 Warrendale (King) 248
 water 325
 flood control 102–3, 332–3
 irrigation 51
 Watkins, Peter 375, 376, 377
 Culloden 375
 The War Game 375–6, 377
 Watt, Harry 84–5
 London Can Take It 119
 Night Mail 85–7, 86f.
 Squadron 992 120, 121f.
 Target for Tonight 121–2
 Wattstax (Stuart) 355–6
We Are the Lambeth Boys (Reisz) 209f.
 teddy boys 208
 Weather Underground 246
 Webster, Nicholas 192
 Weill, Claudia 255
 Welles, Orson
 Citizen Kane 2
 It’s All True 147
Western Approaches (Jackson) 123
 WFPL (Film and Photo League) 93, 94–6
 WGBH 308
When the Levees Broke (Lee) 332
When We Build Again (Bond) 125–6
White Diamond, The (Herzog) 336–7

- White Paper* 191
Who Killed Vincent Chin? (Tajima and Choy) 289
Why Democracy? 340
 'Why We Fight' 139, 140, 141f., 142–3, 151
 WIA ('The World in Action') (Canada) 134, 135, 151
 CCO, MOT and 134
 Wild, Nettie 317
Wildest Show in the South, The (Stack and Soffer) 325–6
 Winston, Brian 380
 WIR (Workers' International Relief), tour 95–6
 Wiseman, Frederick 195–6, 237, 238, 248, 326–7
 Law and Order 248, 249f.
 Model 238–9
 The Cool World 247
 Titicut Follies 238, 247–8
With Babies and Banners (Gray *et al.*) 311
Wobblies, The (Schaefer and Bird) 311
 Wolper, David L. 193–4, 194f., 195, 305
Woman's Film, The (Smith) 258
 Women 14, 16,
 in academic debate 380–1
 artists 261
 class 258
 cleaning crew 319, 320f.
 coal miners 265–6
 ethnicity 346, 350
 execution of 320
 filmmakers 14, 16, 346–51
 immigration and work 331, 332
 lesbian culture 292, 296
 life and unionism 311
 pornography 259–60
 rape 249, 251
 soldiers 253
 subject, family life 251, 255, 324
 symphony conductors 255
 war 311, 312f., 334, 349–50
 see also individual names
 Women Make Movies 262
 Woodard, Stacy, *The River* 103
 Woodhead, Leslie 318, 369–70
Woodstock (Wadleigh) 355
 Woodstocks 355
Word Is Out (Mariposa Film Group) 292, 294f., 295f.
 Workers' Centres 96
 Workers' International Relief (WIR), tour 95–6
Workers Leaving the Factory (Lumière) 10, 10f., 301
 Workman, Chuck 351
World at War, The (Isaacs) 187, 309–10
World in Action (Britain) 187
 'World in Action, The' *see* WIA
World Is Rich, The (Rotha) 173
World of Plenty (Rotha) 124–5, 125f.
World of Tomorrow, The (Bird and Johnson) 280, 281f.
 world wars *see* WWI; WWII
Worlds Apart 379
 Wright, Basil
 Night Mail 85–7, 86f.
 The Song of Ceylon 81, 82f.
 Wuoronos, Aileen 320
 WWI 12, 13f., 61
 Battle of the North Sea 12
 propaganda 12
 The Battle of the Somme 12, 14, 15f.
 The Great War 309, 310
 WWII 113, 117, 118–19, 119f., 120, 132, 133f., 134, 136–8, 140f., 144–5, 149–50, 151–2, 153–4, 155, 156, 157, 162–3, 165, 187, 387–8
 disparities 163, 213
 Holocaust 334
 overload in coverage 309
 phoney war 117–18
 post-war themes 124–5, 152, 170, 173
 propaganda 119, 120–1, 132, 135, 139–40, 142–3, 148, 150–1
 social documentary in 124–6, 135–6, 146–9, 152
 training documentaries 120, 138

- trauma 148–9
see also individual names
- Wyler, William, *Memphis Belle* 144
- Yates, Pamela 284
- You Are on Indian Land* (Challenge for Change) 263
- Yu, Jessica 347
- Yugoslavia* (Lapping) 306
- Zero Hour* (CCO, Legg) 134
- Zickafoose, Ben, *UMWA 1970* 265
- Zinnemann, Fred, *Benjy* 159
- zoom lenses 223
- Zsigmond, Vilmos 386, 387f.
- Zwerin, Charlotte, *Gimme Shelter* 353f., 354f., 356