of foreground and background I am given to understand that as an individual viewer I have been chosen for privileged information which the rest of the scene is not party to. I am being brought much closer, intimately closer, to the diarist and his or particular subjective experience' (Dovey, 2000: 72–3).

While *Sherman's March*, a work which inaugurated many of the techniques adopted by Gibson, includes a number of scenes in which McElwee, sitting alone late at night, talks directly to the camera, such scenes are statically arranged and bespeak a certain amount of preplanning. In these ways McElwee's to-camera dialogues resemble the 'talking heads' mode of expository documentary (albeit that McElwee is, in each case, speaking in a low whisper). Gibson's to-camera pieces, in contrast, spontaneously capture various moments (as when he films himself on a hospital trolley awaiting his vasectomy reversal operation), replete with ambient sounds and background action. The effect intensifies viewer identification with the diarist, and opens the diary up to otherwise unrecorded and unrecordable thoughts, contextual details and effects. Drawing on such techniques, Dovey (2000: 76) points to a number of significant qualities of *Video Fool for Love* which, he argues, mark it as a paradigm of the first-person-based camcorder documentary form: its focus on individual relations in domestic settings; a form of self-reflexivity focused on the work's authenticity (a process exemplified in Gibson's self-conscious comment to Gianna in his film, 'I'm trying to turn us into a media event'); and the shocking effects achieved through a voyeuristic and unrestrained self-exposure.

In these ways, the paradigmatic features of the camcorder diary displayed in Gibson's work, and the visual language in which they are expressed, suggest an emergent 'grammar' of the expanding diaristic mode (Dovey, 2000: 71). The grammar of the video diary, coupled with the range of forms and practices displayed in the work of McElwee and Tajiri, constitute a set of formal features and productive practices which begin to situate first-person records of identity as a central form within the established field of documentary film, video and television. From this position, autobiographical documentary examines a range of subjective issues within the field of what are, otherwise, the objective concerns which conventionally occupy documentary representations. As such, autobiographical documentary reflects the rise of 'the personal' to a place of prominence in contemporary social life, a situation which, in turn, points to the continued expansion of autobiographical forms.

CHAPTER 7

Finding and Keeping: Compilation Documentary

The compilation filmmaker is a collector and an editor who creates an object – a film or television programme – from a variety of so-called found footage. Footage that can serve as the basis of the compilation film includes, among other sources, newsreels, television programmes, government produced films, instructional films, home movies and fiction films. From among these diverse sources the compilation filmmaker constructs a work that in its 'pure' form is composed entirely of archival footage, devoid of interviews and voice-over narration. The pure form of compilation film has been encoded in definitions such as: 'the compilation film is a documentary made solely from already existing footage. The filmmaker may never use the camera, functioning primarily as an editor, presenting and analysing new footage (made by others for other purposes) through juxtaposition and ordering of material in the editing process' (Sobchack and Sobchack, 1987: 355). This definition, with its emphasis on a film constructed solely from existing sources, reflects the approach to compilation film taken by film historian Jay Leyda (1964) in one of the few book-length studies of the form in which he characterized the process of compilation as one in which 'films beget films'. Though many definitions foreground 'pure' works which contain only archival footage as the pre-eminent form of compilation, found or archival footage has been recycled in other compilation works. Notably, the interweaving of archival footage with interview footage and a voice-over narration is a common feature of contemporary compilation forms on television.

Speaking of the abundance of images in the mass-mediated world of the late twentieth century, one observer has commented 'that the job of future documenters may be more in the nature of editing than of creating' (Court, 1995: 58). The observation points to compilation film, and its practices of editing pre-existing footage. In another way, the comment assumes that the multitude of images circulating in the 'image domain' is readily accessible and available to the compilation filmmaker. This is not always the case; compilation films are produced within a context that involves issues of availability of, and access to, source footage. This context informs compilation filmmaking in various direct ways, not the least by determining which topics will be covered and how they are treated. In the absence of relevant footage to illustrate a subject important topics may go unaddressed or, alternatively, a lack of necessary footage has led to an increasing reliance on generic shots – footage which symbolically connotes a referent (this process is discussed below).

The availability of footage and access to footage impact on the compilation filmmaking process in further ways. For example, the makers of the compilation film *The Atomic Café*, a witty recoding of US government footage dealing with Cold War fears of nuclear attack, faced the problem of an abundance of footage on the topic. To produce *The Atomic Café* the filmmakers screened an estimated 10 000 films and had an editing ratio for the footage they purchased of 200 to one (one foot of film was used for every 200 feet of footage purchased). The compilation filmmaker Emile de Antonio faced problems of access to footage in the production of his compilation history of the Vietnam War, *In the Year of the Pig*. Much of the footage de Antonio required for his film was held in French military archives and de Antonio (quoted in Crowdus and Georgakas, 1988: 166–7) admits to one of the more extreme measures he took to 'obtain' relevant footage from the strictly controlled military source:

> I ... got access to the French army's film library, the greatest collection of Vietnam footage that exists – it goes back to 1902 ... There's this beautiful shot in *Pig* of something you can't get in [the US]. It's Ho Chi Minh with Admiral d'Argenlieu, the French commissioner of Vietnam, aboard the battlecruiser *Richelieu*. It's ... a really symbolic scene, because [in the midst of Vietnam's anticolonial war with the French] ... Ho leaves the ship, with the French saluting, [and] takes a cigarette out of his mouth and, in that casual way of his, flips it over the side. I had to have that shot, so I said to [a French sergeant assigned to supervise de Antonio in the archive], 'Listen, I'm going to steal this. Would you mind going out, because I don't want you to be implicated in all this.' So I just cut that shot out of the roll of 35 mm negative and stuck it in the pocket of my raincoat. I realized that since they knew who I was now, there was a good chance that the guys with the guns at the gate would stop me, and I could have gotten five years for that in France, but I thought it was worth it. Making films is risk taking.

The presence of increasing restrictions imposed by the provisions of global copyright laws placed on access to images have led to other, more sustained versions of image pilfering. So-called culture jamming compilation filmmakers confront the problem of access to and control of images through practices of image piracy purposefully designed to draw attention to the increasing commercialization of the image domain. Availability and accessibility, then, involve a range of practices in the production process of compilation films beyond that of editing. These practices include, as the examples here suggest, the thorough reviewing of archival sources (such as those maintained by government and scientific bodies, television stations and film studios and commercial 'stock footage' collections), the cost of purchase from stock footage collections, other methods of obtaining relevant footage and the risk of prosecution under national and international copyright laws associated with the re-use of appropriated footage. To paraphrase de Antonio, making compilation films is an intricate, frequently expensive and risky business which belies the suggestion of serendipity implied by the term 'found footage'. Within the context of issues of availability of, and access to, recyclable footage, this chapter examines formal features of selected compilation films as they are rallied in the construction of historical interpretations and argumentation. The chapter focuses on the works mentioned above: Emile de *Antonio's In the Year of the Pig* (1969), a mixture of archival footage and interviews, and the 'pure' compilation film *The Atomic Café* (1982), and works produced through the practices of image piracy. The compilation works addressed here do not deploy source footage merely to complement an historical thesis, rather they apply source footage within the construction of new histories. The differing approaches to the use of archival source footage are set out in the following section.

Uses of archival footage

Early historical television documentaries often relied on the denotative function of source footage to reinforce the exposition established in a voice-over or to complement comments made by witnesses or experts. Examples of the practice include the National Broadcasting Company's (NBC) television series *Victory at Sea* (1952–53), a 26-part history of naval combat during the Second World War, which deployed war footage in support of points made in the voice-over. Columbia Broadcasting System's (CBS) *The Twentieth Century* (1957–64) and NBC's *Project XX* or Project 20 (1954–74) series of special presentations adopted the approach in their respective examinations of aspects of the history of the twentieth century. In addition to the accuracy of a representation – its verifiable relationship to the narrated events – a variety of criteria govern the selection of footage to be included as illustration, including the matching of lighting, and alignment of movement in the frame (narrative drive is reinforced by action moving in the same direction in each frame; troops moving left to ride in one frame, for example, and right to left in the next disrupts such movement). The clarity of the image may be another factor in selection. Damaged, scratched or water-marked film evokes a degree of historical authenticity in the suggestion that the film survived the vicissitudes of the era it represents. The markers of authenticity are enhanced by the use of black and white footage as opposed to colour footage (Sandusky, 1992: 12–13).

Working with these criteria, footage is edited into a pattern of voices and images in a film or programme to construct a thesis or in support of a pre-existing thesis about the socio-historical world. In those cases where appropriate footage cannot be found, the thesis may be altered or, as noted in the introduction to this chapter, aspects of an argument are left unaddressed. In this way, Jerry Kuehl, producer of Thames Television's *World at War* (1974) series acknowledged historical omissions in the programme's coverage of the rise of the Third Reich:

> relations between Church and State were very important to the leaders of the Third Reich, and, it goes without saying, to ordinary Germans too. But very little film was ever made which even showed National Socialist leaders and churchmen together, let alone doing anything significant. So considerations of Church and State were virtually omitted from our films on Nazi Germany ....(quoted in McArthur, 1980: 14)

As Kuehl's comment reveals, the producers worked with a historical thesis ('relations between Church and State were very important to the leaders of the Third Reich') and sought footage to support the thesis. In this case, a conventional historical argument is constructed and confirmed as the outline of a programme or series which is supported and reinforced by available footage.

Archival footage is not always deployed in this way. Source footage has also been used to foreground historical contradictions through which new or unprecedented historical arguments emerge. Within the so-called expressive or critical use of archival footage (Arthur, 1999–2000: 64; Bruzzi, 2000: 22), unmatched images are counterposed to create new meanings. The method relies on the denotative function of the images, the meanings of which are, however, critically reworked within their oppositional reframing. This method, the basis of the compilation films studied in this chapter, was pioneered in the 1920s by the Soviet filmmakers Dziga Vertov and Esther (Esfir) Shub in works intended to be both instructive and agitational.

Shub's film *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (1927), a work produced to mark the tenth anniversary of the overthrow of the Russian imperial family, demonstrates the method within its innovative deployment of source footage, among which includes the home movies of Nicholas II. From what was largely pro-Czarist footage, Shub constructed a pro-Bolshevik narrative critical of the decadent excesses of the Czars. The operative principle of Shub's editorial technique was juxtaposition. Working with the found footage Shub juxtaposed images to 'achieve effects of irony, absurdity, pathos and grandeur', as film historian Jay Leyda notes (in Bruzzi, 2000: 22). The juxtapositions operate in association with intertitles to produce what Eisenstein referred to as a 'montage of collision' – the editing of dissimilar images to produce new, unanticipated meanings (as discussed in Chapter 2). In one sequence in *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty*, for example, Shub cleverly juxtaposes footage of members of the Russian court dancing on board a pleasure cruise ship with images of peasants working in fields to produce ironic effects. The contrast of images is reinforced in the intertitles which introduce the dance by stating: 'Their Honours Were Pleased to Dance with Their Highnesses.' The footage of the shipboard dance is interrupted by the intertitle 'Until They Perspired'. At the end of the dance the women wipe sweat from their faces and Shub cuts to footage of peasants digging a ditch,

one of whom scratches himself in a visual echo of the dancers' gestures (Winston, 1995: 167).

Brian Winston has pointed out (1995: 167) that Shub was also able to transform a whole event through the application of an intertitle: across a religious ceremonial parade Shub included the words 'The Priests' Moscow', thereby reframing the ceremony as evidence of collusion between the Church and the Czarist regime. Shub admitted the historical specificity of the source footage, not necessarily seeking to match lighting textures or movement in the frame. In the case of *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty*, differences in technical standards between the home movie footage and the other footage included in the work draw attention to the home footage and the fact that few people in Russia at the time, other than the excessively rich, could afford to operate moving image technology. *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* pays close attention to the content of the images, not expressly to unearth previously hidden historical details, but to locate images that could be used to analyse and critique conditions from a revolutionary (in both meanings of the term: innovative and Bolshevik) point of view. Using unstructured 'bits of reality' (Leyda, 1983: 224) the juxtapositional technique produces a new, structured work which attains documentary status in its critique and analysis of historical conditions. Shub wrote in her autobiography that:

> The intention was not to provide the facts but to evaluate them from the vantage point of the revolutionary class. This is what made my films revolutionary and agitational – although they were composed of counter-revolutionary material ... Each of my compilation films was also a form of agitation for the new concept of documentary cinema, a statement about unstaged film as the most important cinematic form of the present day. (quoted in Winston, 1995: 167)

The concept of documentary as an 'unstaged film' clearly set Shub apart from her contemporary Flaherty and his dedication to extended reconstruction. Shub's revolutionary cinema was also at variance with Flaherty's romantic individualism and its legacy to Western documentary filmmaking. Winston (1995: 168) interprets Shub's legacy not only in terms of her contribution to the development of compilation film, but also through reference to her position as a role model for politically engaged filmmakers. Both legacies coalesce in the figure of the politically motivated compilation filmmaker Emile de Antonio.[1]

In the Year of the Pig: 'radical scavenging' and radical history

Emile de Antonio (1918–89) produced a number of films concerned with events within US history. His compilation films include among others *Point of Order* (1964), which utilizes television footage to examine the McCarthy hearings of the late 1950s, *America is Hard to See* (1971), de Antonio's most conventional compilation work, which examines Senator Eugene McCarthy's unsuccessful bid for the 1968 Democratic presidential nomination, *Millhouse: A White Comedy* (1971), a scathing satirical analysis of the political career of Richard Nixon, and *In the Year of the Pig*, an interpretation of the Vietnam War from French colonial rule through US invasion of the country, to the Tet offensive of 1968. In the latter work, de Antonio was not concerned with representing the war; his intention in the film was to examine the causes and effects of US involvement in the war.

A number of television documentaries had dealt with the war in ways which failed to achieve the type of analysis de Antonio sought to undertake. The television special *Christmas in Vietnam* (CBS, 1965) and the films *The Anderson Platoon* (1966–67) and *A Face of War* (1968) focused on the actions of individual US soldiers in the war, an approach that has been endlessly replicated in the stream of US fiction films dealing with the Vietnam War. Within this representational focus, the US soldier (GI) is positioned as the principal, if not exclusive, agent of political interpretation and historical understanding. '[The US soldier's] experience of the war, always weightier and more authoritative than ours and circumscribing any experience we can have', notes film scholar David James, 'is proposed [in these representations] as the moment of authenticity and knowledge ... upon which the war can be evaluated and validated' (1989: 198). The focus limits analysis of the war to the level of personal knowledge, thus restricting broad analysis of topics such as the reasons why the United States was involved in Vietnam and the political effects of the war on the Vietnamese. The documentary *Why Vietnam?* (1965), produced by the US State Department (the title an echo of the Pentagon's Second World War *Why We Fight* series) presented US involvement in Vietnam from a standpoint of official US policy toward the war. Upholding the debatable claim that the United States was drawn into the war after its warships were attacked in the Gulf of Tonkin, the film

repeats the arguments made by President Johnson that the United States was involved in the war to assist 'a free people defend their sovereignty' against Ho Chi Minh's 'reign of terror' (James, 1989: 202). The absence of analysis of the issues and events asserted in the film denied an informed historical understanding of the war. De Antonio, however, held television news most accountable for its absence of interpretive critique of the conflict:

> There is nothing as bad that's happened concerning the war as the networks' coverage of it, because it seems as if they're covering the war whereas in fact they're not. The networks have made the American people comfortable with the war – because it appears between commercials. There's never the question asked, 'Why are we doing this? What is this war about?' It's never suggested by anything that occurs on television that we should even be interested in that type of question. Television is a way of avoiding coming to terms with the fact that we're in this war. (quoted in Waugh, 1985: 251)

In the Year of the Pig functions to readdress television's lack of analytical coverage of the war and, unlike *Why Vietnam?*, and its unified and univocal history structured around the notion of US 'liberation' of Vietnam, de Antonio's film constructs a provocative history of the US invasion of Vietnam from multiple and competing discourses (James, 1989: 206). The film's visual images were assembled from extensive searches of various sources in a process of what de Antonio referred to as 'radical scavenging' (quoted in Weiner, 1971). Images were obtained from archives in East Germany, Hanoi, the offices of the Vietnamese National Liberation Front in Prague, the archives of United States and British television companies, notably the ABC and the BBC, and other sources, including the French army, the offices of United Press International, and newsreel footage shot by the film company Paramount. De Antonio weaves interviews he conducted with a number of contemporary figures with archival footage in which politicians and others comment on the war. The assembled collage of voices includes observations by, among others, Ho Chi Minh, Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, Daniel Berrigan, Generals Paul Le May and William Westmoreland, US scholars Paul Mus and David Halberstam and French scholars Jean Lacouture, author of a biography of Ho Chi Minh, and Phillippe Devilliers, the editor of an academic journal devoted to the study of southeast Asia. The film adds to the auditory register of spoken comments through

various musical and sonic overlays. In this way, for example, a US Department of Defense film, 'Communist Guerrilla Becomes U.S Ally' is accompanied by an excerpt from a Mahler symphony. The soundtrack also features several tunes played on traditional Vietnamese folk instruments, which are used in one scene, ironically, to perform a version of 'The Marseillaise' over images of French military defeat at Dien Bien Phu.

The complexity of the interrelationship of the film's visual and auditory discourses is exemplified in the film's opening sequence. Seemingly chaotic images and non-synchronous sounds become, within de Antonio's approach, powerful pieces of evidence of the methods employed by the United States in the conduct of the war. Within the opening segment de Antonio links Vietnam to other American wars and in the process criticizes attempts to justify and legitimate the war in Vietnam through such comparisons. References to the Civil War, located in the opening image of the soldier from that conflict and in a subsequent image of a Civil War memorial, are interspersed with words from the Revolutionary War: 'When I heard of the revolution, my heart was enlisted.' Such allusions to 'honourable' wars are accompanied by references, contained in a series of images, to the inordinate violence involved in pursuing the war in Vietnam: a still image of a GI's helmet inscribed 'make war not love', images of scared Vietnamese fleeing a destroyed village, footage of a monk who has set himself alight to protest the war, and a still image of a soldier loading a helicopter gunship with shells, his body almost completely obscured by the ammunition. Accompanying the visual images is the sound of helicopters – a sound popularly associated with the Vietnam War and one that is used in the film as an aural motif – that suggests the auditory overload of the war itself and the 'noise' of verbal commentary associated with the war, examples of which are incorporated in the film in the form of comments by US Vice President Hubert Humphrey and President Lyndon Johnson. Coming as they do after images of the violence suffered in the conflict by the Vietnamese, statements about the United States as peacemaker (Humphrey) and the ethnocentric focus on an America which punishes itself with self-criticism (Johnson) are particularly offensive.

After the introductory montage the film turns to an analysis of French occupation of Vietnam. Pre-Second World War footage shows French colonialists abusing rickshaw drivers, a scene which de Antonio described as 'the equivalent of a couple of chapters of

dense writing about the meaning of colonialism' (in Lewis, 2000: 99). The history of the Vietnamese struggle continues in the following scenes in which de Antonio outlines the rise of Vietnamese nationalism under Ho Chi Minh, and the French re-occupation of Vietnam after Japanese control during the Second World War. The end of French rule is signified in footage from a Soviet re-enactment of the Vietnamese victory at Dien Bien Phu.

The following sequences examine US support for South Vietnamese president Ngo Dinh Diem amid evidence of the corruption of the Diem regime. American policy-makers discuss full scale US military involvement in the Vietnamese war amid an analysis of events in the Gulf of Tonkin. The next section examines the US military conflict in Vietnam, focusing on the war in the countryside and the (racist) impressions of US soldiers and generals of their adversary. De Antonio contrasts these estimations of the enemy with images of the US ally, South Vietnamese premier Nguyen Cao Ky, and his authoritarian rule. The final sequence contains a number of comments on the war by US observers, among them the journalist Harrison Salisbury of the *New York Times*, who describes the effects of US bombing on North Vietnam. The last words in the film are by the scholar Paul Mus, whose comments are directed at the American audience for the film: 'You are not the first people who destroyed villages in Vietnam, unfortunately. And so, they are used to that, and it's a great tradition that the village is not lost even when it disappears from the surface of the ground.' The observation intimates that Vietnamese fortitude and perseverance will outweigh America's military power, a suggestion extended in an image in the closing montage sequence of wounded American soldiers in Vietnam awaiting evacuation. The final sequence includes the same image of a Civil War statue of the young man who died at Gettysburg featured in the beginning of the film, here used in negative. Through a reversal of the image de Antonio sought to subtly evoke the notion that Vietnam was the reversal of the Civil War, 'that our cause in Vietnam was not the one that boy had died for in 1863' (in Crowdus and Georgakas, 1988: 168).

De Antonio readily acknowledged that his work is opinionated: 'I happen to have strong feelings ... and my prejudice is under everything I do' (in Rosenthal, 1980: 211). His open abandonment of the presumption of objectivity was mirrored in his condemnation of the seemingly neutral and objective stance of direct

cinema, a style which he called a 'joke' and a 'lie' for its refusal to make manifest its inherent 'prejudices' (in Rosenthal, 1980: 211). He argued that his approach, in contrast, was one of 'democratic didacticism', a method which presents aspects of an argument while constructing a conclusion which is ineluctable (in Waugh, 1985: 244). By acknowledging his didacticism de Antonio sought to diffuse the negative connotations of the term while reworking the position in ways which, he argued, do not condescend to his audience. De Antonio (in Waugh, 1985: 244–5) expanded on his method by stating that:

> I have been a teacher. My work is didactic ... I only want to think that [*In the Year of the Pig*] is more complicated, has more levels of meaning than there are in a slogan or in a purely didactic message. I don't believe that such a message has any more sense than to shout in the street 'Down with war!' ... The goal of a truly didactic work is to go beyond that and to suggest the 'why'. I like to describe my own feelings as democratic with a small *d*, which means that if you don't want to teach things to people but to reveal things to them, you will permit them then to arrive at the same conclusion as yourself. That's a democratic didacticism, without having to say 'firstly, secondly, thirdly'. And that's why I insist on the word 'reveal'.

De Antonio's 'democratic didacticism' is, in this way, democratic in the sense that the viewer is asked to interpret information without reference to explanations imposed in a voice-over. De Antonio argued against what he interpreted as the manipulative and 'fascist' technique of voice-over:

> I've always thought that it's wrong to explain things to audiences. The material is there, and interpretations can be made. I mean, I could have stopped the film and inserted outside explanations, but I'm really not terribly interested in that. I disagree with that approach from every point of view aesthetically and even politically. I think it's a mistake to show everything. (in Waugh, 1985: 244)

The film scholar Thomas Waugh has called the verbal the 'dominant logic of the de Antonio film'. The depth of content provided through the interviews in de Antonio's film contrasts with the often facile and brief interviews of television journalism and avoids the reign of personal reminiscence that stands in for historical analysis in many interview-based reports (Waugh, 1985: 249). Whereas, commonly, archival images are sequentially ordered by a

voice-over narration, in de Antonio's film comments by an interviewee establish a contrapuntal and critical relationship with the images, judging and recoding them (Waugh, 1985: 249). De Antonio acknowledged that spoken comments form the basis of the film around and against which he organized archival images: 'Words are very important in [*In the Year of the Pig*] and all of my work, that's how I do the editing: I start with the transcription of the soundtrack and put all those pages up on the walls of the big editing rooms where I work and begin to assemble the pages before the film: that's how the structure begins' (in Waugh, 1985: 249). This methodology differs from a strict adherence to a pre-planned script and a ready-made thesis to which the documents must conform.

Attention to the word does not, however, result in an uncritical acceptance of the opinions of interviewees. Comments by individuals are juxtaposed in ways which call into question the perceptions and claims of different commentators. It is a strategy which reveals that no one witness holds the definitive interpretation of events. Within this strategy the film 'cross-examines' interviewees within a process in which the verbal statements made by one commentator are juxtaposed with the observations of another interviewee. The process is exemplified in interviews relating to the Gulf of Tonkin incident. Statements by the United States Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, that the US warship Maddox returned fire only when attacked by North Vietnamese patrol boats are contested by testimony given by a sailor from the Maddox who denies that the North Vietnamese attacks took place. The process of 'questioning' is extended in those places within the film in which images are used as evidence to undercut the veracity of verbal statements. In one scene, for example, the claim by US Vice President Hubert Humphrey that Communist prisoners are not being ill-treated is juxtaposed with images of a captive Vietnamese man being kicked and beaten.

Elsewhere the film enters a complex process of exposing the evidential inadequacies of both film footage and verbal comments. The process is exemplified in the film's attitude to Ho Chi Minh, who in many ways occupies the ideological and emotive centre of the film. While the visual and the verbal domains coalesce in a hagiographic representation of Ho, at the same time such modes of representation are revealed as incapable of fully realizing the North Vietnamese leader. Throughout the film Ho remains silent.

In a sequence near the beginning of the film Ho's words emanate, in a form of ventriloquism, from Paul Mus. It is part of de Antonio's approach that Ho remains an enigma, a historical figure who cannot be contained by characterizations achievable via archival film and contemporary interviews.

Through various means, then, the film's interrogative process results in the destabilization of the evidentiary status of both verbal comments and visual images. History, as a stable interpretation of past events, is not located in either the verbal or visual realms of de Antonio's film, but in the dialectical relationship of the verbal and visual operating in the film as a whole. De Antonio's method – one which forms the practical basis of a fully realized compilation film practice – exceeds both the juxtaposition of archival images and the counterpointing of testimony and images. Within de Antonio's film the illustrative and evidentiary capacities of multiple images and sounds are questioned and reworked to produce a history which contests the official record of US involvement in the war encoded in many of the sources that de Antonio criticizes, recontextualizes and recodes.

Re-presenting history: *The Atomic Café*

De Antonio's criticisms of direct cinema as a 'lie' and a 'joke' that hides its own prejudices behind a veneer of objectivity were extended in other filmmaking and critical quarters. According to certain criticisms, observational filmmaking failed to engage history adequately.[2] Following de Antonio's lead, many filmmakers in the 1970s and 1980s relied on archival footage and direct address by interviewing subjects as a method of retrieving historical experiences denied within observational representation. In works such as *Union Maids* (1976), *With Babies and Banners* (1978), *The Wobblies* (1979), *The Good Fight* (1984) and *Seeing Red: Portraits of American Communists* (1984), archival footage is used in association with verbal testimony to retrieve suppressed or submerged histories of labour struggle and Left experiences.[3] The deployment of archival footage in this way runs contrary to its popular usage in support of mainstream or dominant interpretations of the past. In the case of histories such as *Union Maids* and *With Babies and Banners*, with their focus on women's labour struggle, the method employed resulted in a major shift in historical representation. 'Writing women into "history"', as Judith Newton has observed, meant

that 'traditional definitions of "history" would have to change' (1988: 100). Traditional constructions of history as a teleological narrative involving the exploits of 'Great Men' was reconceptualized in these films in a 'history from below' focused on the struggles of women and people of colour. The method involved a critical interrogation of official records encoding a dominant history and a turn to oral testimony and recreations of women's experiences routinely excluded from mainstream historical narratives.

Such an approach is rigorously applied in Connie Field's *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter* (1980), a history of women workers in heavy industry during the Second World War. The work contrasts the 'official' or mainstream record of the past located in archival footage with evidence provided in the oral testimony of five women who worked in various heavy industries in the early to mid-1940s. The title of the film refers to a wartime illustration by the artist Norman Rockwell for the cover of the popular *Saturday Evening Post* for 29 May 1943 which depicts a woman holding a rivet gun while eating a sandwich from a lunch box inscribed with the name 'Rosie'. The illustration and a popular song of the period about 'Rosie' became representative of women in the US workforce during the latter years of the Second World War. Interviews in Field's film with five women construct biographies of their lives prior to the war and the prejudicial attitudes they encountered in their wartime occupations. The film's various sources, among them newspaper headlines, popular songs and, principally, the oral testimony of the five women, contain what Foucault (1996: 122–32) called in a different context the 'popular memory' of an era which is frequently denied within a focus on 'official' sources of historical knowledge such as census statistics, bureaucratic reports and, in this case, government produced 'informational' films.

Field's film abandons voice-over narration and relies on extensive interviews with the selected subjects together with archival footage culled from government films to complicate history and to question the notion that events can be contained in a univocal narrative. The two discourses – archival footage and oral testimony – speak of the events within a process in which the two sources are contrasted and counterpointed. The women's experiences of sexist and racist discrimination are recounted in interviews which form the film's central discursive focus against which the archival footage is situated as propagandistic and mendacious. *Rosie the Riveter* problematizes the notion of evidence through the inclusion of testimony which contests the denotative status of the footage. Within the contrast of image and voice, archival footage is profitably included as evidence not of the experience of working women during the Second World War but as a reflection and register of an 'official' history and its ideological record of the times.

The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter does not, interestingly, uniformly contrast archival footage and oral testimony. While the government propaganda footage is consistently undercut by the women's testimony, newsreel footage is presented in a positive and productive way to provide a visual accompaniment to the women's reminiscences. John Corner, in his discussion of the different ways in which the official images are deployed in the film, points out the inadvertent comic force of much of the propaganda footage and the inconsistency of the arguments that it attempts to maintain (1996: 137). The film's use of newsreel footage raises a different set of issues. The newsreel footage is not relied on as illustration; it does not directly signify the specific conditions described in the testimony. Rather, the newsreel footage is used descriptively, evoking general features of wartime conditions to accompany the women's comments. In this way, the archival footage functions to provide a set of images that suggest certain social conditions.

A version of the practice of incorporating images which function descriptively occurs in those cases in which there is no footage available to illustrate an event. In such situations so-called generic shots are used to re-create historical conditions. Generic shots are those which approximate or symbolically represent experiences. Film historian Paul Arthur (1999–2000: 65) illustrates the use of generic shots through reference to *Union Maids* (1976), a history of women in the labour movement constructed from archival footage and oral testimony. In the example quoted by Arthur, a witness to a Depression-era strike describes the arrival of armed police called to dispel a labour protest, and mentions that one of the policemen carried a sawed-off shotgun. To satisfy the demands of visual illustration of the speaker's testimony a generic shot is used of a policeman at a protest. However, Arthur points to a problem with the use of this particular image. Reading the image very carefully he notes that the policeman is carrying a tear gas gun and canisters, not a shotgun as stated by the witness.

According to Arthur, the contradiction amounts to a fabrication that blocks or revises the use of found footage as evidence (Arthur,

1999–2000: 66). The argument is extended in other cases involving generic shots. In *War Stories* (1995), for example, a documentary dealing with the role of New Zealand women in the Second World War, the director, Gaylene Preston, illustrates one woman's reminiscences through use of black and white footage of a jeep on a beach. Preston shot the footage, as she readily acknowledges, in colour for another film and recycled it in *War Stories* (Beattie, 1996: 8). Based on the example from *Union Maids*, Arthur (1999–2000: 66) argues, in a conclusion that implicates the practices of *War Stories*, that the 'guarantees of authenticity ostensibly secured by archival footage are largely a myth'. Arthur's conclusion, not inconsiderably, points to a crisis of representation in which, effectively, archival footage is stripped of any evidentiary function. Arthur here usefully highlights the ways in which meanings can be constructed through the use of footage that is of a discursively different order to the associative footage, though overstates his case that such practices subvert an entire tradition of documentary compilation. While raising questions related to particular uses of footage the practices do not in themselves destroy the documentary compact and traditions which reinforce the provenance of archival footage. (A more resolute and sustained assault on the referentiality of the image and questions of provenance occurs in mock compilation documentaries such as Peter Jackson's *Forgotten Silver*, referred to in Chapter 1.)

Arthur further illustrates the use of generic shots through reference to the opening of *The Atomic Café*, a film by Jayne Loader, Kevin Raffety and Pierce Raffety, a film which constructs a history of Cold War years by satirically recoding US government propaganda films from the 1950s intended to allay communal anxieties of nuclear attack. The sequence Arthur refers to deals with the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, and includes snippets of an interview with the captain of the bomber which dropped the bomb on the city, mixed with footage of street scenes in Japan, and shots of a bomber in flight. Tension is constructed through the combination of scenes which narrativize the impending destruction of the city. The sequence includes several low-angle shots of a Japanese man framed against a clear sky, innocently gazing upward, as the sounds of a plane are heard on the soundtrack. In its context within *The Atomic Café* the image represents an inhabitant of Hiroshima being alerted to the approach of bombers. However the image is derived from a source (most probably a fiction film) not

of the same status as the other footage in the sequence. Clearly the footage could not have been recorded in Hiroshima at the time of the attack and have survived the blast and is included in *The Atomic Café* to create a meaning and elaborate a point of view – that of those under the bomb – typically denied in official US accounts of the bombing. Arthur concludes that the shots suggest the wide range of non-denotative functions of found footage which carry the capacity to critique and revise the conventional reliance on compilation footage as illustration and transparent evidence.

The Atomic Café is a 'pure' compilation film which draws on an incredibly rich archive of US government information films from the 1950s and eschews interviews or additional narration, though some of the source footage does carry its own commentary. The film, which took five years to produce, is heavily indebted to the compilation films of Emile de Antonio, whose comments the filmmakers echo in their assessment of voice-over narration. Jayne Loader commented that 'so-called Voice of God narration, ubiquitous in documentaries destined for PBS [the US Public Broadcasting Service], is insulting to the audience. If you believe in the intelligence of your audience, you don't need to tell them what to think and how to process the material they're seeing.' However, as Loader added, 'making a documentary without a narrator is not an easy process. It's much easier to get your point-of-view across with a voice-over than to find precisely the right images and sounds and put them together in such a way that they communicate what you want to say' (Loader: 4).

On its release a number of critics claimed that the film's only response to the official position promoted in the archival film is 'profound skepticism' (Boyle, 1982; Seitz, 1982). Though imbued with the blackest of humour derivable from the absurd remarks contained in the footage, the film transcends condescension and incredulity in its willingness to address the frightening and 'unthinkable' proposition at the centre of the propaganda: 'what is it like to experience nuclear attack?' Thinking the unthinkable has been pursued in the dramatized documentaries *The War Game* and *The Day After* (1983) in chilling scenarios of mass death and destruction. In contrast, *The Atomic Café* exposes attempts by the US government to persuade citizens that by following simple procedures they will safely survive a nuclear war. The absurdity of the proposition is compounded by the fact that in the immediate post the Second World War era, one which witnessed the annihilation

by nuclear weapons of the majority of the populations of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the government would expect its citizens to believe its nuclear propaganda. Just as the US government sought to convince its audience of its position on nuclear weapons, so too the filmmakers of *The Atomic Café* seek through skilful editing of official footage to establish a preferred reading which subverts the government's position, thereby criticizing Cold War thinking for its naiveté while simultaneously mounting a powerful critique of contemporary (Reagan era) policies of nuclear proliferation (Bruzzi, 2000: 38).

The perspective provided by temporal distance from the events described underscores the irrationality of the notion of surviving nuclear holocaust and reinforces the black humour derivable from such a grim and absurd idea. In a scene toward the end of the film, the filmmakers insert footage extracted from an 'informational' film in which members of a family gather in the wake of a nuclear attack in their minimally damaged living room as the calm and assured father suggests that his children clean up the broken window glass. The viewer can, of course, find it humorous that the effects of nuclear attack can be easily brushed away and, further, the post-1950s withering of the patriarchal family underscores the film's joking reliance on the assertive presence of the patriarch as head of the 'nuclear' family. The humour and insight here derives from an historical perspective which overdetermines the images of the family, investing them with meanings derivable only from the distance of the early 1980s. In this way the film profitably constructs a dialectic of past and present which reflects on current conditions as it reframes past events. The historical revisionist approach is, then, pursued as a politically committed contribution to informing the present.

However, the particular application of the montage method to enact this process exposes certain limitations of the film's revisionist project. An example from near the end of the film points to the problem. Archival television news footage features a reporter describing the impending execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg following their convictions for providing US nuclear secrets to the Soviet Union. The sequence ends with images filmed from a moving car of a new suburb, its freshly built homes lined up street after street. The contrast of 1950s suburbia and the execution of the Rosenbergs suggests political quietism and passivity in the presence of nuclear destruction (symbolized by the Rosenberg's cause)

and McCarthyist witch hunts which branded the Rosenbergs communists. The meaning of the montage – acquiescence in the face of various forms of political threat – is established through reliance on the denotative features of the original footage. The method here does not interrogate the archival footage, rather, it merely deploys it uncritically as illustration of what the film accepts as authentic historical conditions. Further, the method fails to pose certain questions, in particular whether the 'history' so illustrated is a complete or 'authentic' picture of the period.[4] Did all of America demand the deaths of the Rosenbergs? (A brief clip included in *The Atomic Café* of a news report dealing with the impending execution features a pro-Rosenberg demonstration, which is immediately replaced by more extensive clips of people demanding their execution.) Was the entire population of the United States in the 1950s locked into a relentless drive to build and populate suburbias? Were the 1950s totally devoid of political action? An exclusive reliance on propaganda footage designed to reinforce consensus and to deny the presence of dissent leaves little space for representations of political protest and opposition to the nuclear threat.

Cultural plagiarism and the production of counterhistories

In a description of the production and reception of *The Atomic Café*, Jayne Loader suggests quite reasonably that the film's popularity raised the profile of, and increased demand for, archival footage thereby contributing to the growth of the stock footage industry (1996a: [6]). The comment did not anticipate, however, the rising costs of obtaining stock footage. The compilation filmmaker will frequently spend the majority of a film's budget purchasing so-called stock footage from commercial vendors, and in an era of global copyright few alternatives exist for access to archival footage beyond payment for the rights to use selected film. However, filmmakers working in the tradition of avant-garde compilation work have readily ignored copyright restrictions and reworked images gathered from a variety of sources, including footage copied directly from television, into parodic and politicized comments on consumer society.

Exemplifying the alternative uses of plagiarized footage, the avant-garde filmmaker Bruce Conner used television footage of

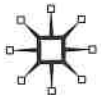
the shooting of President John Kennedy, together with other recycled images, to comment in his film *Report* (1967) on issues surrounding the assassination. The film replays the television coverage, stops it, restarts it and projects images upside down and in reverse. The objective of Conner's reworking of the source footage is to draw attention to the mass media coverage of the event and his treatment parodies television's obsessive documentation of every aspect of the Kennedy assassination as a news 'story'. Conner's intention is not to reveal the motives behind Kennedy's killing (an exercise that, typically, slides into varieties of conspiracy theory, as evidenced by Oliver Stone's attempt to do so in *JFK*, 1991), but to subject the footage from television coverage of the event to an analysis which reveals meanings and ideological dispositions implicit in the footage. Conner's method reads the footage 'against the grain', not as evidence of a presidential assassination, but as an indicator of the morbid popularization of a tragic event and the ideological positions of television networks which promote tragedy for ratings.[5] For artists such as Conner, compilation filmmaking is not, as Paul Arthur notes, 'the combining of "pure", unaffiliated fragments in order to construct new meanings with alternative historical perspectives, but rather the interrogation ... of collusive strands of embedded ideology in extant materials' (2000: 62).

In Conner's *Report* and his film *A Movie* (1958) – a collagist reflection on mass-mediated depictions of human disasters based on footage culled from television, old Hollywood films, ethnographic films and information films – Conner makes little attempt to deploy footage in the manner of television documentaries, in which the source of the archival footage is erased or minimized within a seamless and smooth visualization of the rhetorical drive established in voice-over. By drawing attention to the sources from which the footage was extracted, the politicized avant-garde compilation filmmakers comment on the ways in which original contexts inflect footage with meanings (e.g. the commercial thrust of Hollywood and television, the construction of Otherness in certain ethnographic films) which are revealed and analysed within the recontextualization of the images in new compilation works.[6]

The commercial conditions under which footage is produced and archived and the extension of copyright of images and sounds have led beyond the appropriative methods of avant-garde compilation filmmakers to even more flagrant practices of cultural plagiarism aimed at openly violating the laws pertaining to sound

and image reproduction. The practices of media piracy and so-called culture jamming extract and 'sample' images and sound from various sources. Here the act of 'finding' footage, a seemingly passive act, becomes appropriation, an active intervention in the field of media representations and copyright. Examples of such activist interventions include *The Nation Erupts* (1992), a videotape of the Los Angeles riots and rebellion of 1992 which uses appropriated images from commercial television news and historical footage interspersed with amateur camcorder footage to provide an interpretation of events in Los Angeles which opposes and revises that presented in mainstream media coverage. For his video *Spin* (1994), Brian Springer extracted and edited images from over 600 hours of downloaded satellite feeds (unedited videotape footage transmitted to television stations by satellite) for an analysis of the ways in which political debate and discourse is packaged and presented in the United States. Craig Baldwin's film *Sonic Outlaws* (1995) enacts the slogan 'Copyright Infringement is Your Best Entertainment Value' as it documents the activities of audio and video activists through pirated footage and sound extracts. 'Scratch' or improvisational videomakers re-edit appropriated images derived from transnational corporations and those of prominent political figures into politically astute parodic tapes which subvert the original meanings encoded in the images.

The radical recoding of source footage pioneered by Shub is extended and maintained in works which self-consciously recode appropriated images and sounds to create hybrid documentary/avant-garde counterhistories. In another way, the practices of sound and image piracy continually evoke issues of availability of and access to source footage. In a direct and challenging approach, the work of media pirates problematizes the notion of 'found' footage and points to what is, in the era of extensive copyright provisions, its archaic connotation of an image domain which freely offers up recyclable images. Compilation film in the future will no doubt continue to confront issues of availability and accessibility in the production of new histories of experience.



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Non-Fiction Film and Television

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