

Documentary Journey to the Land of the Head Shrinkers

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1. How is one to describe the present situation of documentary cinema in France or in Europe without indicating, at the outset, the nature of its treatment or mistreatment, both here and abroad? Both cause and manner remain to be seen. First, it must once again be made clear that there is no such thing as "documentary cinema" on the one hand and television documentaries on the other. Vague and variable as it may seem, the category called "documentary" is central to cinema's history and experience, from the Lumière brothers and Vertov through Bunuel, Rossellini, Antonioni, Resnais, or Kiarostami, by way of Flaherty, Franju, and Wiseman, to name only a few. The cinema began as documentary and the documentary as cinema.

If *Contempt* is a documentary of Brigitte Bardot's body (*Godard dixit*) then every film that makes bodies move (including on the moon or on Baghdad's magic carpets) is based on cinema's documentary power. From the zaniest fictions—those, say, of the Marx Brothers—to the headiest fantasies (*The Wizard of Oz* and, one might propose, Lubitsch's *Hasen Can Wait* or Demy's *Une chambre en ville*), nothing is produced in any way other than through the real relation between a given time (that of the recording) and a place (the scene), a body (the actor), and a machine (responsible for recording). Such is the documentary condition whose combination of these four elements is obviously to be found in most television productions, including serials and films made for television: they all display, willy-nilly, cinematography's imprint, the documentary certificate of origin.¹

The filmed encounter of body and machine—both zero degree and primal scene—has been recorded and will be mechanically reproduced to be viewed at a distance, both spatially and temporally, by at least one spectator. This reproducibility of the encounter is the warrant of its reality. Recording provides indefatigable testimony, everlasting proof; it both assures and reassures with respect to the reality of this encounter; it attests to its existence, confers on it the dimension of a real

that cannot be breached or modified. Not only has this encounter been produced, but it will reproduce itself as often as necessary to convince a spectator—and to gain his participation. The gratified viewer is offered the scene in repetition. Should he see it only once, should he see only one film, he will know that it's always there, awaiting him. For each of us as spectators, the machine's certainty is established: the recording cannot lie or weaken, because it is both synchronous with the event—therefore faithful to it, in the sense of sharing space and time—and infinitely repeatable, thus different. Life goes on, and the machine remains. This supposed immutability of the machine exceeds all subjectivity, all experience; it is truly extrahuman. The world, the body, in so far as they are not subjectively visible or tangible, are given once and for all. That is why cinematography of the scene and the shot is, first and foremost, documentary.

2. All filmed fiction is, as I have said, therefore subject to this condition, and I see little but the animation film, the cartoons—or their current successors, synthetic images—as capable of bypassing this documentary law that governs the cinema. Those synthetic images, scientifically calculated and produced by the fusion of a computer program and a computer screen, take us somewhere else, beyond cinema; they are products of the human eye rather than the hand. The cinema, like all arts at their maturity, feels attracted, dazzled by its limits, its impasses, by what lies outside its boundaries, by that which threatens or betrays it. Synthetic imagery is that Other of the cinema precisely insofar as it allows for a realist representation of the human body that does not require real presence—of the body's weight, of life's vibration, of the instant's chance occurrence. There will be no encounter—within a given fragment of space-time—of a body and a machine, and this nonencounter means the disappearance of the scene as level of experimentation and of authentication of bodily presence, those of bodies and the material presence of machines. It means the disappearance of their common functioning, of their interplay, of the recorded trace of their play, capricious or erratic, perhaps, but nonetheless quite real.

On the contrary, I, as spectator, see clearly that the scene presented within a synthetic image is always produced as already on a screen, the image of an image. I do see that it's the representation of an unfulfilled exchange, that it's delivered as openly simulated. That the sign precedes the object, canceling it. Either I play or I don't. There's no possibility of compromise; we are no longer within the ambiguity of classical representation in which the possibility of belief in something and its double or its contrary is provided for me as spectator: the truth of the true or its falsity... the falsity of the false or its truth.

It is this perverse position of the documentary's spectator that the new images prohibit;² I can no longer believe or hope to believe that the scene has a

1. For discussion of this issue, see Jean-Louis Comolli, "L'Oeil était dans la boîte," *Tragédie* 12 (Fall 1994).

OCTOBER 90, Fall 1999, pp. 36-49. Translation © 1999 October Magazine, Ltd. and Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

2. See the group of essays on "The Place of the Spectator," *Images* 31 (Fall 1998).

referent, the referential reality for which the film is testimony or denial, the testimony overturned. Yes, there has surely been an encounter, since it has been filmed, and the recorded film is, in addition, the warrant of it. To believe in what I see, to confirm, to be implicated and affected by it: all the ordinary conditions of the filmic spectator allow me to assume the reality of a referent that would be relatively independent of the cinematic gesture.³ It would, through a kind of reversal of perspective, not be the film that directs the encounter between body and machine, but the opposite: as if this first and absolute encounter had required filming. The spectator's faith would therefore be doubled: belief and disbelief in the filmed world, with preference, perhaps, for the film, but simultaneously, when confronted with the filmed world, to believe that it is the world that authenticates the film and not the film, the world. Here is a dialectic that I assume as vital for cinema. And I wonder whether the awaited triumph of digital imagery—and particularly of the synthesized body—will not impede this complex movement of belief and doubt that grounds and sustains the relation of spectator to film.

3. Theorists of theater (Henri Gouhier among them) defend it against cinema in the name of this "real presence," the co-presence of actor and of spectator in scene and in space.⁴ It happens that not only cinema's scene—the shooting—involves co-presence of bodies and gazes (actors, spectators) with recording machines, but what we call cinematic *mise-en-scène* ultimately comes down to working on this first presence as already a future absence. Onscreen, actually, all that has been present for filming will only be represented, presented as absence of a past present.⁵ This means that the work of the cinematic scene is actually the prefiguration of the moment of absence, intensifying through it this moment of presence, so as to intensify, finally, the presence of bodies through the promise of their coming absence. The image of the actor's body, absent but represented, finds a response, and possibly a hidden correspondence, in the real body of the spectator—a presence, certainly, but as if absent from itself in projection toward a screen.

In cinema, presence and absence fold back upon one another, in any case. To avoid presence is to conceal absence, which is not without some danger. To spare oneself, thanks to digitized images, the passage through this in-betweenness that can be produced only by shooting as the sharing of a given duration, of a common here-and-now and a vital current, means destroying—whether consciously

or not—one of the basic conditions of representation: that there be a moment when scenic performance is really produced, that sacrifice have been achieved or achievable (even if only in play), that its threat have been tangible, that actor and spectator alike be forced to pay a certain price of reality—of sweat, let us say, if embodiment.⁶ Such is the beauty, if you like, of that which defines the cinema; it is embodied in the presence of and for a machine, for the absence it represents.

4. Is television's forced sheltering of documentaries that are haunted or inhabited by cinema's ghost truly a misfortune? Television certainly does limit both quantity and effect; yet it appears unable to entirely dispel them, perhaps out of habit, or perhaps because in a department store there's "some of everything." Thus the documentary is now this nomad, homeless but omnipresent, this smuggler, fraudulently sneaking in some cinematic substance unwanted in those areas where the alliance of spectacle and commodity govern exchange.

The prevailing economic and ideological powers guarantee their own enforcement and reproduction in mass television, consigning the documentary to a place on the margins of programming, thereby abandoning it to those evening hours that really distance it from the nonspecialized public.⁷ These time slots lend themselves to the hidden, unacknowledged strategy of ridding television of the documentary, of effacing this unproductive "product" unsuited to "the transmission" (as the language of marketing has it) of messages and the blessings of advertising. This negative fate obviously does offer an element of luck. Far from complaining, we aspire to this modest reward, to this relegation, to the lesser share. If only the programmers will continue to neglect us! How I do distrust the will to power that occasionally impels them to reform the documentary so as to adapt it to the market, to normalize it, to guide it according to the same codes of efficiency, the same level of ideological speculation as televised serials.⁸ They don't usually press their

6. See Marie José Mondzain, *L'Image naturelle* (Editions Nouveau Commerce, 1995).

7. With the notable exception of the Arte Channel and its documentary unit (Thierry Garrel). Apart from this, the so-called "cultural" channel is preparing to launch into "the soap doc," those documentary series as strictly calculated as fiction, but with the advantage of a somewhat easier assimilation of some shards of the real. This element of the real will, by the way, not be allowed to go astray; the perfectly repressive editing exercises complete control, down to the rebellious bodies of the nonactors that have willingly become the actors of themselves. At least the evidence will allow us to decide on the validity of documentary cinema's practice of choosing those to whom the proposal of sharing in a film is made—and we shall not misunderstand our desire for them.

8. It is all controlled, or tends toward being controlled, by the powers that be, who are no longer the directors or producers, but those who rule over the dens of broadcasting. This means surveillance of script and dialogue, casting and decor, and finally, editing. The control over "the final cut" is becoming again what it was in Hollywood in the good days: the master's *droit de passage* over the film. But why? Why such distrust of all creativity? The answer is: fear. It means keeping power and not exposing oneself, or rather exposing oneself only to lack of success and never to scandal. To do nothing large so as not to attract attention.

3. On this issue of denial as essential to the relation of spectator to film, see "La Ville filmée," in *Regards sur la ville* (Paris: Editions BpL, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1995).

4. See Henri Gouhier, "Théâtre et cinéma," in *Essence du théâtre* (Paris, 1958).

5. The cinematographic trace is what subsists and holds even after the disappearance of the live beings who have created it, but at the same time it marks that disappearance, rendering it, through its very survival, irreversible (Bazin).

point: the stakes don't seem high enough for them, the "target" is too tiny, and so much the better! There's surely some link between the reasons for the documentary's continued existence and its stifling by the directors of televised spectacle. Not yet reducible to the commercial (such is its luck), the documentary seems all the more attractive as a protective charm against the boredom of routine, warding off the emptiness of fictions that are worn out before they're even viewed, and the redundancy of established narrative forms.

5. If, however, a need for the documentary exists, it lies, I believe, in a necessary confrontation—not with the narrow logic of television programmers but with something much stronger: the realities that shape us here and now.⁹ This is the leitmotif of the text to follow: the documentary film draws its power from its very difficulty, wholly derived from the fact that the real doesn't give film the time to forget it, that the world presses on, that it is through contact with the world that cinema is made. This intense charge of the real gives documentary a particular place, even as technological developments and computerization tend toward a virtualization of the world. The present moment can be characterized as one of domination by the rise of the scenario,¹⁰ as one of computation and the general regulation of the imaginary in the interest of a new total power, the only one still accorded us by the sphere of commodities—that of the images that feed our dreams. It then follows that faced with the ultimately reassuring triumph of the virtual, of the digitization of possibility, the scenarization of conflicts, and the programming of phantasms, cinema responds in one film after another with the proof, if one were needed, that in this world—our own—there do subsist acts, projects, works, constructions that can no more be reduced to the computation of human machines than to the desires of mechanized men.¹¹ Today it is through a few fiction films with a strong documentary element—and thus, paradoxically, through the cinema—that the real returns, dinned into our ears.¹² The cinema is bringing back the real as that which, filmed, is not wholly filmable, as excess or lack, overflow or limit . . . all the hollows or outlines open to our sensing, experimenting, to thinking. It is paradoxical, indeed, that at the close of this century it falls to cinema to represent the world's strangeness, its opacity, its radical otherness—all that the fictions surrounding us carefully hide from view. It is paradoxical

9. In the interest of clarity, I shall call "realities" the social constructions—economic, political, familial, etc.—that surround us, school, factory, prison, office, everything set in place as holds upon us and involved in the narrative, the program; the scenario or script, if you like.

10. For a discussion of this question, see Gérard Leblanc, *Scénario du réel* (Paris: Editions L'Harmattan, 1997).

11. Examples are provided by the films of Philibert, van der Keuken, Dindo, Segre, Tadic, Kanewski and LeRoux.

12. *Close-up or Life Goes On*, directed by Abbas Kiarostami, and *La Promesse* by the Brothers Dardenne.

that the mission of representation now stumbles over its limit: the impossible nature of this mission, our favorite secret.

There's nothing reassuring about the documentary cinema. It does insist on reminding us how perplexing the world is. And what if that were the real for us, here and now—the real that cinema can still test, touch, and possibly authenticate? What if it were this game of chance or of balance between grace and perplexity? A game in the sense of risk, a risk affecting the program itself to the point of changing or destroying it?¹³

This is quite the contrary of what game programs now do, since they remain safe, untouched, articulating indifferently any game, unfolding or impeding them with no effect on their own lines of command. The program exists in one world, the player in another: You play the game, but I, as master of the game, remain safe. This is the relation that is celebrated in the name of the "virtual": the master appropriates the real of property and leaves the use of the virtual to the subject. This is quite the contrary of the documentary's way of working on the game's side, against the program, and thus against mastery; documentary is entirely for sacrifice of the program, if necessary, for the beauty of the game.

6. I am well aware of a present-day attraction, the fascination of the virtual. I would say that this fascinated gaze produced by "virtual reality" is focused not only on the leveling of life, on the theme of perfect death, but on that of a repeated death that no longer seems definitive. These recommencing "lives" that reappear, beginning again in passage between registers, as through some idiotic initiation rite, these simulated "lives" that we lose and regain ad infinitum in untransformed repetition, this luminous, sleepless dream . . . Yes, we're for speed, for the most highly euphoric of its claims: our destination is lightness, immateriality, incorporeality, and even immortality. So be it. But it's easy to see that the result of all these calculations will always be invaded and undone by clouds of reality, storms of the unthought. Is this cause for complaint? The nonvirtual real sticks to the world through a thousand inextricable bonds, and should they encumber or wound us, they still hold us, let us hope, in a state of watchfulness—as night watchmen in the broad and dazzling daylight of technology's triumph.

7. The documentary remains the observer and the active agent of these interlacings. Since its making requires confrontation with a world, it will offer testimony and the trace of this encounter, as an abutment on the stubborn part of this world, one resistant to our tales, our computing. That part will always resist, with something of its toughness; it will resist our efforts of seduction. If there be an ontology of cinema (Bazin), it belongs to the documentary, insofar as despite

13. On the difference between game and play, see D. W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Penguin, 1980).

all, and occasionally in spite of itself, it testifies to that which is not ourselves. I believe that in the first Lumière films it was already the force of things that captured cinematic representation; this force was equal to that of the form of representation that claimed to capture those things; it was this force of things as they assert themselves. For people were wonderstruck by the trembling of leaves on the trees—a good example, since the wind bloweth where it listeth—which produced an effect, an effect of the real.

The cinema—and it is the documentary that must assume this destiny—would thus have as its aesthetic goal our conversion into spectators of the sort of representations that are more than imperfect and less than deceptive, representations that can't quite tame the world. The world would be glimpsed in those representations that fall in their effects and miss their object. The real as error, approximation, groping, transition, all that writing processes (including those of scripts, game programs, or imagery) make or reveal, and that once made, are denied or contradicted by program or scenario. From a computer program, the customer expects the opposite of that which leads to the writing of the program—successive versions, trials and errors, bugs, and so on. Once on the market, the program has effaced everything linked to its inventor's labor and to the difficult delivery of the world. It glides on, preserved henceforth from its origins and from its present accomplishment.

8. Held to the real, as if through a breaching, the documentary cinema is quickly referred by our social formations to the zone of the probable, that is, to what they imagine as possible for them. As flagship of spectatorial competitive bidding, the cinema refers us instead, through the documentary, to the "global spectacle," to those above-mentioned imperfect representations of the documentary, those that sustain our common existence.¹⁴ The documentary's servitude would thus lie in its having to continually expose itself to the pressure of these collective representations that we call "realities." Formed over time as narratives or mise-en-scène, they preexist the cinematic relation. Political, judiciary, economic institutions—groups, associations, unions, commercial firms—none of these systems awaited the arrival of cinema for formulation and for forming themselves. These social and mental constructions develop their own narratives of the world without waiting for or depending upon what the cinema itself might narrate. For the documentary cinema, it is a question of constructing a filmable state of the world with—and sometimes against—all existing narrative states of the world. The cinema must impose, superimpose, or oppose a cinematic mise-en-scène on or by other institutional, collective, or familial ones that can compete, resist, or offer complicity. This constraint of reality is inherent in documentary

14. It is, of course, Debord who provides the point of departure for reflection on spectacle, but also for consideration of what still stands in the way of its generalization.

cinema, whereas fiction can, in a way, choose to use this constraint or dispense with it so that it disappears. The documentary is pushed to the limit and is required to innovate, if only in response to the compact pressure of the referents. Unlike the documentary, the fiction film can imaginatively submit to its script, offer the historical proof that they can narrate and represent themselves, even before the cinema's intervention. The documentary therefore attacks (heroically?) an ensemble of narratives of the world that are not necessarily adapted to cinematic process. That is why it has to invent forms that give it a hold on what has not yet been grasped cinematically. Put it this way: it has an obligation to create. Surely, no work of the mind can truly settle for the world's reduction to a prepared schema; there can be none that don't wish to see this schema upset by the invasion of forms through which we experience the world. It therefore seems to me that the documentary enjoys the terrible privilege of continually countering this newness of the world of forms and of fragile, precarious setups, and that its sole end lies in being forced to the uncertain exploration of the hitherto unknown. Fiction is aimed, more or less, at guaranteeing my possession or mastery of the world; this the documentary acknowledges as beyond its means, precisely insofar as in this nonmastery, which is the condition of invention, the real power of this world bursts forth, unbreached.

9. What can we derive from this situation of paradox? On the one hand, the confirmation that the documentary, like a laboratory of rare formulas and a site of invention, has been able to resist just because, exactly in film history as in television practice, it remained a minority category, never or very rarely the object of economic stakes on the scale of the cinema of fiction (with the sole recent exception of the unusually lucrative career of *Microcosmos*). It was thus not subject to the recall to ideological norms or conventions that currently prevail in those window displays of fashion that most fictions promote: compassion, competition, and marketing. Let's see this decentring, defaulting, this abandon as a real chance. Isn't it, as Gilles Deleuze would have it, on the margins of dominant trends and of centralized power that new approaches, forms of dissident thought, new, as yet unknown ways of working are produced? Faced with the pressure of commercials, including those focused on repetition of the media's news (a given broadcast relaunched by a newspaper that adds fresh fuel to a given debate, etc.), faced with the contemporary vortex that devours both talent and funding, the documentary cinema's modesty, its basic fragility, demonstrate through its daily experience that whatever resists the will to power of the filmmaker/author fortunately remains the stronger. How can one not find in chance all sorts of necessity? This rejection of necessary chance is what differentiates a fair share of filmic fictions from the documentary that accepts it: the documentary is the acceptance of the very necessity of chance.

Came against program, risk against simulacrum: this sums up the degree to which the practice of documentary cinema is now affected and even threatened

by the logic and practices of the program of information (or genetics), of determination—fore-sight and repetition—that believes and declares itself to be intangible and incorruptible.

10. The problems now facing documentary cinema in France and Europe are not primarily those that can be treated by the documentary, or those occasionally dealt with by the fiction feature: those of servitude, corruption, ambition, compromise, among others. Rather, they are the problems that directly determine the *very possibility* of making documentary films within our social formations. What is it that may, in short order, forbid documentary practice? It is increasingly apparent that we are witnessing, within the system of circulation of commodities, the gradual infiltration of consciousness by commercial rights (those of the law) as the norm of interpersonal relations, succeeding a more or less acknowledged rule of social relations.

I want to discuss this increasingly insistent claim of a "right to the image" (or of the image). We know that this "right" is not only recognized by the courts, but is increasingly invoked against the action of both photographer and documentary filmmaker. And what is the "right" in question? No doubt, that of control of production and diffusion of one's own image—as if we were, to begin with, the owners of "our" images, holders of property rights on this or these images of ourselves, and that we can consequently claim to be their author, creator, and perhaps their impresario, trainer, producer.

This is a senseless claim, and a dangerous one. Our image has nothing to do with us, even though we may feel possessive about it. Our image is not and never will be ourselves. To suppose, as the market economy does, that we are identical to it, identified by it, is reductive, beside the point. I believe, and want to believe, that within each of us there exists a real, irreducible complexity. However, I also believe that in each image of each of us there is another complexity that also cannot be reduced to that which we believe to be the image of ourselves. The images of ourselves made by photographers, both ordinary and highly celebrated, by the cameras of amateur or of filmmaker, these images exceed and dispossess us of ourselves. And so much the better! They identify us only insofar as they change us—alteration that reveals an alterity of the self, that represents a chance of entrance within the circulation of signs, the construction of meaning. Hardly a negligible consideration. But may it be this task (which I call a chance) that awakens fear? That the subject becomes a fragment of a text (of a scene) that can be read (seen) by others? We shall return to this point. An image is always that of the other. There is no image without difference. Whether it be that of the mirror or that of my parents, of those about me or those whom I see and who see me, any image of my body is skimmed off at a third level of which I am both instigator and receiver. And I receive in turn the image that has been "taken" by another. At stake here against a right is something like the freedom of images (like the free image).

11. Let's first consider the situation of documentary practice as experimented and developed over the last few decades—say, since World War II, since the (blessed?) era of propaganda or of the war effort: the English school, Joris Ivens, the *Why We Fight* series, the films of the clear civic conscience that was, moreover, that of the citizen of the world. At that time no one yet really worried about "his" image, apart from institutions (John Huston's *Let There Be Light*, censored by the American army). Neither individuals nor groups thought of the image as a variety of auto-immune disease. For all the great documentary experiments that followed—those of Jean Rouch, Pierre Perrault, Johan van der Keuken, Frederick Wiseman, to name only the most preminent—and right up until our own time, in the work of Bob Connolly (*Black Harvest*), Raymond Depardon (*San Clemente*) or Nicolas Philibert (*La mainière des choses*), it's fairly clear that the link between documentary filmmakers and those who agree to be in their films is essentially undefined and undefinable.¹⁵ A "two of us" is created, an ensemble that's not stated as such. If we come to use the term "contract," it is understood as a "moral contract" that should and does remain implicit, tacit, unspoken. For in this the whole documentary relation involved, all that's essential to this relation as an experience of truly felt and assumed alterity that is emotional and responsible. You can, if you like, call it "confidence," but I prefer to locate it under the aegis of desire. Desire of one for the other, desire of the other in each.

When I see *Moi, un Noir*, *La Pyramide humaine*, or *Chronique d'un été* (Rouch), when I see *Pour la suite du monde* (Perrault)—films of the end of the 1950s, of the early '60s—I'm struck by what could be defined as a community of desire; those who are filmed, whether from Africa, Paris, or Québec, clearly share the film with the one who shoots it. Sharing means that they're wholly present, without reserve, that they are giving what they have and also what they don't have: what they know they have and what they don't have as much as that which they don't know they have and have not.

12. To give what one has not, that is love, says one of the characters in *Réve d'un jour*. To give one's self to the image that I'm making with the other means really giving something I don't have, something that's neither my property nor my possession, not even an attribute. Can I want to sell what doesn't belong to me but to the in-betweenness of a relation, to the fertile encounter? The logic that says "My image is mine" begins by forgetting, ignoring, or repressing the fact that there is no image without separation from the self and constitution of another point of view, an otherness of the gaze, of a scene, of a third level which is that

15. An exception that necessarily confirms the rule is Raymond Depardon's film with Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, who, dissatisfied with the film, then blocked it. More recently, Jean-Noël's ghost of a film on Max Rouch was re-edited and partly reshoot by its producer (ex nihilo) in order to satisfy the same Max Rouch, undoubtedly more at ease in music than in cinema.

scene and is responsible, since there's a film, for the image's existence.¹⁶ It assumes, as well, that what "belongs" could be sold, and that one might therefore sell "his" image as one sells one's body (no, it's not the same). And getting a better deal for one's own body probably means a "cleaner" virtual one. Such is the market's progress, for to the commerce of the body one adds that of the spirit, and then their totalization in the image. Refusing this transaction doesn't win you a medal for virtue. It's the realization that concerns me, the mutual exposure, what I call the encounter. Morality has nothing to do with it; these are questions of a work's mise-en-scène of practice, not merely of conduct. It happens that I no more buy images than I do bodies, and don't see myself bargaining over a quickie in a film.

Thus it is that the "right to the image" implies (or is implied by) another right, a well-known one, none other than that of property, also known as the right to part with property in exchange for money. And here is what is modestly but rather clumsily disguised by the noble term of "right." On the one hand, there is no question of "property" here, as I believe I've demonstrated, but rather a usurpation of an elusive ownership, the trace of a lost moment, a nostalgia for what has been. On the other hand, to advance a legal claim to this "right" means endowing it, sooner or later, with a market value, thereby agreeing to part with it, in denial of its noncommercial value and in renunciation of referral to the possibility of noncommercial in our dealings with the world and its social formations.¹⁷ To claim this "right" in order to immediately alienate it in property rights, to pit right against conscience and responsibility; who, I wonder, is the inner enemy that has driven me to want this error?

13. Here, perhaps, is what I have learned from the documentary and what the fiction film had hidden from me: what is at stake is freedom of bodies and of consciousness, often already present in those who are not professional actors because they play only themselves, while the actor consequently must win or win back, together with or against his character. The nonprofessional actor who places a bet and takes the risk of playing his or her own role in one of my films (like the architect Pierre Riboulet or the socialist activist Yvette) is obviously conscious of acting, aware that what is happening is not typical of the nonfilmed life, but of the filmed life. It involves a break, the ordinary becoming extraordinary, so clearly

16. The thinking of Pierre Legendre on representation, fundamental in this regard, is developed in his two most recent books, *Imago Dei* (Paris: Editions Fayard) and *Le 901ème constitution* (Paris: Editions Fayard). They should stimulate further consideration of these issues.

17. I note, parenthetically, how much simpler it would be if payment were sufficient for the availability of the other party. Now, the seduction of the documentary relation lies more in words and images than in money. If that relation should become a commercial one, why wouldn't documentary filmmakers go so far as to be paid for filming those of their "clients" who could afford it, and so much the worse for the others? We'd be in a fine mess. The buyer would commission his portrait, without even being sure he'd like it.

does there transpire through the scene of everyday relations another scene in which dream, chance, the unconscious can take on shape and meaning. Let's not take actors in a film for idiots. They know perfectly well that what's hatched between them and the film in progress is in no way a copy. In the film's work, he or she makes a double of the self which, in the best tradition of the fantastic tale, is not strictly the way they imagine themselves to be or to have been. And so much the better—both for them and for the film.

I tell myself that what comes into being during the sharing of a shooting period is just that which escapes both those filmed and the others, their filmers. A Third Party is formed, which establishes the film's necessity for both sides; something in-between that's a third element between self and self. Author or director, actor or directed body, and spectator or subject are all separated from themselves and restored, exceeded, made new to themselves, renewed in the representation and divesting them of self, transports and transforms them within the work, in this other zone of togetherness that is the work. Each in turn becomes actor, becomes director, becomes spectator of the trio, and of each within the trio. And thus what is developed is, happily, inextricable, unattributable, nonreferable—I might also say unidentifiable. Who made *Moi un Noir*? Who made *Pour la suite du monde*, and, more recently, *La moindre des choses*? To say "Rouch, Perrault and Philibert," is the response to the most trivial sort of quiz. The agencies for authors' rights and the courts need attribution; they need to decree a paternity that is precise, identified, normalized. We who make documentary films well know that they involve nothing of the kind, and that it is always the intersection of desires that engenders the work. The relation that defines documentary cinema is itself relative: a pre-filmic identity of each party disappears, an alterity is gained, a new, cinematographic identity, unrecognizable to the prior one. Once filmed, I belong to the film by which I become image. The filmed body is a transformation, an alteration of the nonfilmed body. We belong to the films that we make, whether as actor or director; it's not they who belong to us. And this inversion bears examination. It is the law of work that its components be transformed into parts of it; the signature is first and always an effect of the work; ownership is determined by the place the work extends to everyone within it, by the role the work accords to those who make it.

14. Does vampirization by the judiciary mean that we're headed for the end of all possible documentary relation? What still remains of the encounter as the shared exercise of a desire for cinema in which filmed and filmer, each and other, rights come to replace the proper use that each makes and should make of his powers as filmed or filmer? For those who are filmed, let us remember, are free to explicitly break, in innocence or perversity, the nonexplicit contract; they are free to abandon at any second the making of the film. This is certainly not the case for the hired actor, since he is bound by a commercial contract in good and due legal

form. In filming, I don't abandon my direction; it's not a constraint but a commitment. I maintain my gaze and I stick to the word or the body of those I film. And I expect the same exclusive passion from them. This proper use of the filmic relation defines the responsibility of each party, with no need of formal expression. In the great examples of our admired predecessors this same law obtains; whether or not one knows of one's own desire or that of the filmed other, one assumes them as certain and strong.

One may doubt everything, but with conviction. I may as well admit the following: I believe that whatever may be the social transformations and the advance of the spectacularization/scenarization of the world (unimaginable at the time of *Moi un Noir*, though implied by it), documentary practice—at least that which implies other speaking beings—is possible only by virtue of this loss of control and mastery that makes you who are filmed abandon yourself to the film and makes me, who films, abandon you *and* the film being made with you, about you. I wish to stress the force with which a declaration of this sort excludes the sentimentality that might be attributed to it. This is not a matter of fine sentiments. There is no other choice. I began by speaking of necessity and constraint. The documentary cinema claims to deal with the full dimension of each individual, with community. Rights can change nothing here. That those of us in passing, extras in spite of ourselves, persons crossing a camera's visual field, can protest against the capture, unknown to us, of our images—so be it. Reason actually commands one to do so, and this proceeds more from the legitimate protest against rape than from an accusation of "theft." But for those who have, of their own free will, entered the film, is desire not involved? Why would they want to guard what they will be producing? Images now produce fear: they seem dangerous.

15. The question is urgent in this year of the millennium, which is also that of the end of cinema's first century. A kind of prohibition everywhere begins to weigh on true inscription—that condition of all cinematography. It comes, as I have noted, from the direction of the synthetic image, especially that of the human body, that is, the image whose production no longer requires the chance meeting, always partly uncontrollable, of the camera-machine and human bodies: from the direction of programmatic and programmed fictions, of images that are themselves programmed, which is to say insusceptible to mistreatment from the real conditions of production. The goal is, on the whole, the fabrication of a cinema that avoids the real and its accidents. Finally, however separate and distant it may appear from the fabrication of synthetic images, the prohibition in question derives from the "juridization" of documentary practice: the "right to the image." The real image of the real body recorded in real time now becomes the center of a triple dispute: of legitimacy, opportunity, and finally, of property.

This is a political issue. I want to emphasize the following simultaneity: in the era of fiction's triumph, of the globalized political script, we witness the rise to power of synthetic figuration that dispenses with real bodies, and, at the same

time, we see the advance of claims made by persons filmed to the property rights or control of film in which they have participated. This convergence is enlightening. On the one hand, the body loses some of its reality and the real presence becomes a burden relative to virtual existence. However, the real body hides behind the individual's right and, more broadly, behind property rights. What is held to disappear reappears as weak, endangered, in search of protection. The body being lost claims a supplement of legal right. Are we to understand the introduction of this decoy as the effect of a higher stratagem, or as a joke? In one stroke, the ruling powers, known and unknown (and who take care to control the images made of them), alienate the bodies of their subjects in commercials and propaganda (the T-shirts of the World Cup),¹⁸ restrain freedom and civic responsibility (through the depreciation of the State, degradation of the Republic), and extend to citizens the favor of pressing a right to . . . their images. It is, ironically, at the very moment when the ownership of the means of production and distribution of images and of sounds almost completely escapes the spectators that we, creators or not, find ourselves invited to become proprietors of our image.

18. The commercialization of bodies: bearers of signs, colors, T-shirts: *the body as surface* for ads, commercial screen.