

classical structure of observation. "Each one," writes Waugh, "endeavours to move beyond observation, and all of its inherent liabilities: humanist ambiguity, false objectivity, liberal empiricism, and the complicity of spectacle. They undertake rather to accede to the level of intervention..."

The anthology is arranged into three sections. Part I documents the achievements of the "pioneers": Vertov, the granddaddy of "committed documentary," Esther Shub, Joris Ivens, and the CP supported newsreel collectives of the 1930s. Part II examines contemporary political documentarists of the West and Part III provides an intriguing investigation of the departures of the Third World documentary, largely Latin American.

One of the strengths of this anthology lies in its insistence that specific documentary practices and movements can only be understood in light of the historical, social and institutional conditions of production and reception which determine the meaning and effectiveness of texts - something which psychoanalytic film criticism with its nearly exclusive focus on textual analysis and its too frequent theorization of the subject as abstract textual effect has a great deal to learn from. Waugh's own piece on Joris Iven's *The Spanish Earth*, with its detailed historical research and depth of insight into the relationship between Iven's film and documentary tradition, is particularly exemplary in this regard. Here, Waugh traces how the formal innovations in *The Spanish Earth*, its use of mise en scene, its experimentation with characterization and narrative vocabulary, evolved in response to the historical contingencies of war and revolution, popular front initiatives and the exigencies of production.

Nevertheless, one limitation of the collection has to do with the failure of many essays to move beyond contextual analysis to a theoretical consideration of specific textual operations and their effects - a failure that the historical section seems particularly prone to. While making a substantial contribution to the development of historical research into neglected areas and filmmakers, the writing in this section tends largely to be

descriptive and anecdotal, and falls somewhat short of the successful integration of new methodologies with documentary inquiry.

What makes it a compelling read, though, are the details recalled concerning the ingeniousness of political documentarists in situations where costs, availability of resources and state censorship made production an almost impossible undertaking. Bert Hogenkamp in his article on "Workers' Newsreels during the Twenties and Thirties," for example, recounts how workers' film societies in pre-Nazi Germany and Holland procured commercial newsreels which had passed the censor, re-edited these to "highlight class contradictions," and, after screening and discussions, edited them back to their original format to return to the distributor.

Russell Campbell's piece on "Radical Documentary in the United States, 1930-42" provides a fascinating insight into the integral role that radical documentarists played in communist party mobilizations during the thirties: documenting police violence at demonstrations; producing shorts for use in the organization of strikes, union drives, and unemployed marches; and organizing the extensive exhibition of Russian films during this period.

It is within the section on contemporaries that the debate concerning the theory and practice of political documentary heats up as prescriptive models fight it out as favoured prototypes of revolutionary cinema. For Julia Lesage and Barbara Halpern Martineau, the didactic "talking heads" approach of early feminist documentaries emerges as the favoured political strategy. Ann Kaplan concurs, arguing that the realist strategies of Barbara Kopple's *Harlan County* have to be evaluated, not in terms of any modern aesthetic, but in terms of their ability to "focus political issues" and to act "as a source of inspiration."

While the general tendency of the articles selected in this section is to defend populist and verite approaches (such as Chuck Kleinham's pragmatic political advice to documentarists), a certain 'modernist'

difference is marshalled in the pieces by Steven Neale, Julianna Burton, and Clare Johnston and Paul Willeman. For Johnston and Willeman, two of the more prominent arbiters of canonical film theory, agit prop cinema remains problematically immersed in a rationalist and pre-psychoanalytic conception of ideology and the subject/text relation which assumes that "individuals and groups participate in some mythical unity of consciousness." "The effect of such a form of realism," they argue, "is to convey the impression of a homogeneous world - a false sense of continuity and coherence reinforced by identification: the impression that truth can indeed be manifest out there in the visible world." Forwarding the Brechtian inspired film *The Nightcleaners* as "the most accomplished example of political cinema," Willeman and Johnston argue for a self-reflexive and non-instrumental approach to political cinema where particular textual strategies and the film's process of production and engagement of spectators are themselves constituted as the means of political intervention.

While Willeman and Johnston's intervention is of critical importance to any consideration of contemporary documentary, there is a disturbing tendency in their argument to fetishize certain cinematic techniques (such as the inclusion of black leader or stepprinting) as inherently revolutionary and to reify the spectator as a disembodied instance. Surely, however, the effect of any technique is utterly dependent on context, on the specific referential concerns articulated by the film itself, on particular social audiences who would read these specific techniques as material indication and not simply as "noise."

The debate is irresolvable. But, perhaps, the oppositional terms might be productively reconsidered, not simply as form versus content, or even by Godard's opposition between political films and making films politically, but in relation to differing theorizations of spectatorship, political transformation, and ideology. These issues are irresolvable within a metacommentary on documentary because - and this is the anthology's most forceful

point - political effectiveness is dependent on specific historical contexts, sites of reception, and the particular sexed, classed, raced, and committed audiences that cinema addresses.

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**Cultures in Contention**  
Douglas Kahn and Diane Neumaier, eds. Seattle: The Real Comet Press, 1985.

To a degree largely unrecognized in both mainstream art media and left journals, the contestative dimension of 1960s activist politics has been continued in the cultural sphere, leading to a revival of the political avant-garde art tradition often pronounced dead. Still, even for radical artists the development of theory and techniques appropriate to challenge manufactured consciousness has, according to Douglas Kahn and Diane Neumaier, all too often been carried out in the kind of isolation that encourages - and requires - reinventing the wheel. Their anthology, *Cultures in Contention*, expanded from the 1981 Art Politik conference in Seattle, is intended to overcome this isolation by stimulating critical and theoretical discussion among artists, activists and intellectuals and by providing some practical guides for countering "the vacuities and repressions of contemporary capitalist society."

The 24 largely original contributions range widely over the arts (from music to theatre), the media (from the radical hoax journalism of Gunter Walraff to free radio in Japan), and forms of community struggle (from mobilizations in the South Bronx against the film *Fort Apache, The Bronx*, to anti-urban renewal projects in the London Docklands). What they all have in common is a view of culture as situated in a space between the narrow definitions of high art and the global definitions of anthropology. They also share a willingness to take cultural interventions seriously because "cultural self-representation is inseparable

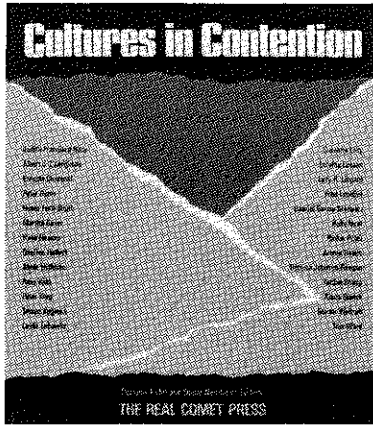


from political representation."

Developing the interventionist requires a consciousness that the mere content, of course, form are involved. Realist artistic continues to be well as the conventional production and artist to audience to the last, in approaches taken. Factors vary widely.

Thus, in a pop Bunn and Lor describe their ever school radicalers for the Do committee wh the issues, strategies of struggle Hans Haecke, hand, presents man flying sq the cities where are held in or issues and sym local sense. (I placed posters scored operas, a of Steve Biko, a summarizing African activist aluminum win different jourr by muralist Ju sponsorship of works, ultimately hundreds of w combining the raiser and ad bridging betw Angeles street Hall. In the e from burn-out nizing that he talents and re placed her au position of lea tion that broke gender and C norms.

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Developing the practice of interventionist art also requires a consideration of more than the mere ideological content, of course. Questions of form are involved - the place of realist artistic representation continues to be troublesome - as well as the context of artistic production and the relation of artist to audience. With respect to the last, in particular, the approaches taken by contributors vary widely.

Thus, in a populist vein, Peter Bunn and Loraine Leeson describe their evolution from art school radicals to image-makers for the Docklands steering committee which decides on the issues, strategies and priorities of struggle. Visual artist Hans Haeccke, on the other hand, presents himself as a one man flying squad, researching the cities where exhibitions are held in order to identify issues and symbols that make local sense. (In Montreal, he placed posters for Alcan-sponsored operas, a morgue portrait of Steve Biko, and verbal text summarizing Alcan's South African activities in homely aluminum window frames.) A different journey is described by muralist Judy Bacca, whose sponsorship of monumental works, ultimately employing hundreds of workers, meant combining the roles of fundraiser and administrator, bridging between the Los Angeles street scene and City Hall. In the end, saving herself from burn-out required recognizing that her own design talents and responsibility placed her authentically in a position of leadership, a position that broke both feminine gender and Chicano culture norms.

In situations of struggle, other

contributors note, collective participation in the creation of culture breaks down distinctions between artist and audience, creating and unleashing community power. In Uruguay, women sing in prisons to create communities of resistance. In California, Sweet Honey in the Rock, a black women's *a capella* group, sings to cross boundaries between black and lesbian separatist cultural networks. In Kenya, villagers create national identities in theatrical performance. In Jamaica, Sistern, a women's theatre troupe, empowers women to name their own reality.

While a strategy of naming does not in itself constitute an aesthetic, the popular participation it entails tends to discourage formal experiment as a supreme value. Independently of that, the (much maligned) social realist tradition has continued to be influential - for example, as Martha Gever notes, in the making of early feminist videos. On the other hand, feminism in particular has eschewed any single approach, as is documented in Arlene Raven's description of the work of Los Angeles lesbian artists which drew on everything from archaic ritual magic to the latest techniques in photo collage and neon sculpture. In perhaps the best discussion of the Situationalist International available in English, Tom Ward makes a strong case for surrealist disruption of acquiescent (un)consciousness to see, and name, the failures of capitalist abundance.

Finally, there is the problem of distribution: how, in a market society, actually to get radical art out to its intended audience. Community television and free radio provide space on the air waves. Photographer Fred Londier suggests ways of working with unions. Klaus Staack sells posters of his photomontages to German political groups. Lucy Lippard breaks the convention of the detached art critic to help artists and activists communicate. But the strategies that delight are those that turn the media against themselves. Suzanne Lacy and Leila Leibowitz offer guidelines to get feminist political performances covered on that confiner of reality, the news. And Peter King's manual of how the Australian Billboard Utilizing Graffitiists Against

Unhealthy Promotions BUGA UP billboards makes my finger itch for a can of spray paint.

Overall, the anthology has the virtues of bringing together several national experiences, good lay out, many black and white illustrations and an accessible language that such discussions sometimes lack. If some reprinted articles seem to add little to what is already easily available, and if there needs to be a critical introduction that draws connections between the viewpoints expressed, it is nevertheless a useful collection that should fulfill its editors' aims of making practices of political art and debates about them widely known.

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**The Politics of Pedagogy: A Review of Peter McLaren's *Schooling as a Ritual Performance*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986.**

Peter McLaren established his reputation as an important figure in radical education theory with *Cries from the Corridor*, a work in which the brutal and degrading underside of the Canadian inner-city schooling system was revealed in graphic and often disturbing detail. McLaren's ongoing concern with the development of an emancipatory pedagogy is now the focus of a second book, and though this is a more densely written and theory-laden text than his first work, it shows clearly that McLaren remains a perceptive ethnographer of the educational setting. *Schooling as a Ritual Performance* is based on the author's fieldwork at a Toronto Catholic junior high school purported to be the toughest in the city. It is also a school where the majority of the students are the sons and daughters of largely working-class, immigrant Portugese and Italian parents. McLaren's purpose in this book is to offer a

critique of the ideological presuppositions of contemporary education, a purpose which leads him to investigate the processes by which political indoctrination is intertwined throughout the curriculum of mainstream pedagogy. This is an ambition he sustains with considerable success throughout the text.

The most innovative feature of McLaren's approach is the framework of his analysis, the field of ritual studies, or ritology, an emerging perspective which still bears the traces of its interdisciplinary heritage. Because ritology is only now crystallizing around a core of central themes, its systematic application promises as many pitfalls as it does advantages. To the extent that *Schooling as a Ritual Performance* generates a number of important insights through its ritual studies perspective, the book is occasionally hampered by the ill-defined nature of its methodological framework. The very notion of ritual, for example, is notoriously polysemic, and McLaren is forced to pursue his discussion at a fairly high level of abstraction. Consequently, at times the book's theory tends to overwhelm rather than illuminate matters, for the territory McLaren has staked out for analysis becomes rather densely populated with theories, theorists, and definitions. Of course, it should be pointed out that an absence of clear and definite boundaries is hardly surprising in a work that finds its chief lines of influence coming from an array of scholars and disciplinary approaches: anthropology, semiology, education, religious studies, and dramaturgy are but a few of the established fields ritology claims as kin. Thus while *Schooling as a Ritual Performance* is a model of eclecticism, McLaren is impressive in his capacity to move with relative sureness between disparate and often competing schools of thought.

McLaren's investigation of the ritual dimensions of education is structured around an analysis of the intersection of four socially and symbolically constructed "states": the street-corner state; the student state; the sanctity state; and the home state. Each state is comprised of particular rituals, and these ritual complexes are themselves embedded in the social