



us, to the point of appearing like 'a desire inherent in our psychical structure'. More precisely, some see in it a manifestation of the Oedipal and of the 'configuration based on the narcissistic redoubling between man and woman that has ruled, since the end of the 18th century and throughout the 19th century (which we have just left behind us), the relation of desire between the two sexes'.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, it is advisable to be prudent when confronted with the temptation to universalize and even more to naturalize this desire, but one thing is certain: in our Western societies and in the field of the audio-visual, the space of fictional communication is the dominant space of communication. It is so dominant that, in the social imaginary, we often have the tendency to simply assimilate cinema and fiction film. Furthermore, the productions that do not conform with the constraints of this space find it very difficult to function correctly.

This is precisely the case with the documentary film. This manifests itself both on the film-making level and on the reading level: not only does making a documentary always appear less prestigious than making a fiction film – there are only a few documentary film-makers who have been able to gain recognition as an 'auteur', and when this happens it is very often retrospectively, because they have succeeded in the fiction film. Moreover, the documentary in a general sense is considered to be a temporary locus while waiting to be able to make fiction films. But also, for the spectators themselves, the documentary appears like something that we hardly have the desire to look at spontaneously, since it is often regarded as something that is fundamentally boring: 'The docukoo really annoys the kids, and how ...'. This terse formula by Raymond Queneau may be generalized without risk to the ensemble of spectators.<sup>3</sup>

But before continuing along this line of inquiry about the documentary, it is necessary to briefly describe the dominant regime of communication – the fictionalizing regime. Though it is not a question here of developing a theory of fiction,<sup>4</sup> it seems indispensable to us to comprehend the functioning of the documentary in our social space and to briefly explain the different operations that constitute the process of fictionalization.

There are a total of five operations:

Construction of a diegesis: production of a world (we must note that this operation presupposes the anterior operation of 'figurativization': the construction of figurative images);

Narrativization: production of a story, of a narrative;

'Mise en phase': alignment of the filmic relations to the diegetic relations in such a way that the spectator is made to 'resonate' to the rhythm of the events told;

Construction of an absent Enunciator: the presence of the Enunciator is both indicated and effaced in such a way that the spectator, although knowing very well that

an Enunciator does exist may, however, believe that the world and events that are shown to him exist in themselves (we recognise here the mechanism of belief described by Octave Mannoni: 'I know very well ... but all the same');<sup>5</sup>

5 Fictivization: the (absent) Enunciator functions as a fictive origin. He accomplishes the act of enunciation 'without undertaking the commitments that are normally required by that act' (the obligation to guarantee the truth of what is articulated, to provide proof if requested, to commit himself personally to this truth: the sincerity rule ...).<sup>6</sup>

How does all of this concern the documentary? It is necessary to realise that the documentary is compatible with the majority of the operations that intervene in the process of fictionalization. Most documentaries construct a world (a diegesis) and comply with the rules of narrative structuration, even if it is to tell the story about how a barrel is made or the different stages of metamorphosis of the dragon-fly. More rare are without doubt the documentaries that bring into operation the 'mise en phase'. However, a certain number of these do exist, like those by Walt Disney and F. Rossif that are devoted to animals: everything is done 'to set the spectator on the right track', to involve him affectively in the dramas that take place in nature. The process that constructs an absent Enunciator is itself very frequent in the documentary. All the productions that function in accordance with the ideology of transparency (direct cinema, 'candid eye'-cinema, cinéma-vérité...) strive to give us a view of the things of the world as if there were no intermediaries, as if the world were there in front of us instead of on the screen.

Indeed, only the operation of fictivization is radically incompatible with the documentary. To make or read a film in a documentary perspective is always to construct an Enunciator who functions as a real origin. It is this operation, and nothing else, that founds the process of *documentarization*.<sup>7</sup> The operations involved in the construction of a diegesis, in narrativization, in 'mise en phase', and in the construction of an absent Enunciator can intervene concurrently with the implementation of this process, but they are not part of it, as opposed to what takes place in fictionalization where they are an integral part of the process. We can even say that a documentary will have a higher degree of 'documentarity' the more it blocks a greater number of these operations.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, a documentary will have more chance to be accepted by the public if it mobilizes more operations belonging to the process of fictionalization, i.e. the more it resembles the fiction film. Television-makers know this very well: 'The reportages that are most appreciated and about which the critics make the most complements, are those that tell a story. The more they conform to narrative, the greater their success'.<sup>9</sup> If, in addition, they function in accordance with the 'mise en phase' it is even better. The only documentaries to have real success with the public (leaving aside the

cinephiles) are precisely those that put into practice the first three or four operations of fictionalization (which is the key to the success of the series devoted to animals mentioned above).

However, this strategy to win-over the public to the documentary has a disadvantage: the more the documentary employs operations deriving from fictionalization, the more there is the risk that if the affirmation of documentarization (the construction of a real Enunciator) is not extremely strong, it may very well turn out that fictionalization will triumph over it. Nothing is more difficult to get included in a film than this documentarizing communication pact. Its acceptance has the effect of dislodging the Addressee of the film from his comfort as a spectator by placing him in the position of a *real* Addressee, i.e. an Addressee having to take seriously, in reality, what he is offered to watch. Faced with the perspective of such a positioning, the Addressee of the documentary film mobilizes all of his defences, and the simplest solution usually open to him (since it is the most readily available solution within our social space) is not to take into account the documentarizing injunction and to take up again as quickly as possible the position of a fictionalizing spectator.

We could, it seems to us, account for the very curious positioning that results from this alternating as a process of belief of double relief:

- first time: I know very well that what I am offered to watch emanates from a real enunciator, but I react as if it were a fictitious Enunciator (a refusal of the documentarizing injunction);
- second time: I want to believe that it concerns the production of a fictitious Enunciator; consequently, I can from now on allow myself without any problem to believe in the reality of what I am offered to watch (re-engagement to a fictionalizing positioning).

Be that as it may, the dilemma that all documentarizing production is embroiled in can now be formulated very precisely:

- either it attracts only a small audience, because it clashes too directly with the fundamental desires of spectators,
- or it reverts to the dominant space of fictional communication.

Now we would like to attempt to show quickly what happens in a certain number of Institutions that are attempting, despite all these difficulties, to promote documentary productions or, more simply, to make them function. Our hypothesis is that their degree of success in this attempt essentially depends on the way in which they negotiate the setting up of the documentarizing pact.

However, before coming to this investigation, it is necessary to return briefly to the conditions governing the setting up of the fictionalizing pact. What really charac-

terises the fictionalizing pact, what explains why it functions so well is, on the one hand, that its Sender (the person responsible for the *mandate*<sup>10</sup>) seems to merge with the spectator Subject himself – the spectator Subject has the feeling of being himself his own Sender, even though the real Sender is in fact the social space. On the other hand, the manifestation of this mandate is so strongly interiorized that it takes place unconsciously. As soon as we are in the field of the cinema, the Desire for fiction is present, without which the Subject needs to decree it. This is a sort of 'natural' pulsation (quite evidently cultural) that animates the Subject without passing through the intermediary of a certain 'wanting' (even less of a 'having to do'). It is advisable to keep this in mind if we want to understand the problems that exist for the Institutions which promote documentaries.

Within the framework of this article, whose aim is to explain a method rather than carry out a systematic analysis of the documentarizing communication space, we shall be content to briefly examine the case of three Institutions that appear interesting because of the very different ways in which they offer to the addressee the documentarizing pact: School, the BPI at the Georges Pompidou Centre, and Television.

*School.* School is one of the great users of documentary productions while being itself an important producer of them. However, it seems that things are not working out as well as we would wish, because these productions rarely attain their pedagogical objectives. Indeed, there are many reasons for this, some of which (linked to the structure of the films themselves) have already been given prominence by Genevière Jacquinot.<sup>11</sup> We would only like to insist here on the difficulties arising from the institutional modalities setting up the communication pact. Within the framework of School, the documentarizing pact appears, in fact, as something imposed from the outside by an authority (the Teacher, himself representing the School Institution) endowed with the power to sanction and operate in the manner of 'Having to do'. Such an injunction can only conflict violently with the fictionalizing desire that animates the student-Subject from within. The conflict will be even stronger as long as the student-Subject considers the offer to watch a film to be equal to the instruction to fictionalize. In this perspective, we can say that the Teacher gives two contradictory instructions: to fictionalize and to documentarize. Faced with these two instructions issued by the same Sender the student-Subject can neither choose nor escape. We recognise here the characteristic schema of the 'double-bind'.<sup>12</sup> The ways to answer this type of paradoxical injunction are relatively limited: the first consists of strictly adhering to the injunction despite its illogicality – namely, in the case that concerns us here, to watch the film (this is what is common to the two injunctions) without fictionalizing or documentarizing, i.e. without

taking any interest in it whatsoever. The second consists in 'withdrawing' from the game, in breaking off the communication (for example by taking refuge in day-dreaming or by talking to one's neighbours). And finally, the third consists in contesting more or less aggressively the source of the paradoxical injunction (uproar, dissension with the teacher, etc.). It is of course clear that none of these responses can have a positive effect on pedagogical communication.

*The B.P.I.* Apart from its role as library, the B.P.I. (Public Library of Information at the Georges Pompidou centre) produces a certain number of documentaries and makes freely available to its users documentaries on video. In addition, the B.P.I. organises a festival that specializes in this type of film: the Festival of the 'Cinéma du réel'. Within this institutional framework, and in opposition to what takes place in school, the documentarizing pact is not in any way forced upon the Addressees: it establishes itself prior to the arrival of the users at the B.P.I. by an internal negotiation between the user and himself) or, to be more exact, between the fictionalizing *Desire* that the user has in him and his decision to see a documentary film: his *Wanting* to see a documentary film. This means that when the user enters the B.P.I., he has already decided to put himself in the position of a documentarizing spectator. Even if that does not regulate everything (namely, it can happen that the Desire for fiction returns during the showing of the film and causes annoyance towards the documentary film) it is, however, certain that the documentarizing communication has a much greater chance of functioning correctly within this context than within the context of the School.

*Television.* Television offers through a variety of programmes transmissions that correspond to different communication pacts: the spectacular pact of the variety shows, the ludic pact of the television games, the fictionalizing pact of the films and serials, the advertisement pact, the documentarizing pact of the 'magazine' programmes and news-broadcasts, etc.<sup>13</sup> All these pacts have in common the fact that they are offered as a choice to the television viewer without any apparent external constraints. The acceptance of the contract seems to depend only on his *Wanting* and prior to the transmission itself (by the television guides that publicize the programmes or by the announcements that appear on television during the day). Here we find ourselves in a situation quite similar to what we described in relation to the B.P.I.: the television viewer *positions himself* in the role of a documentarizing tele-viewer before seeing the transmission. Moreover, it appears that these transmissions are very well received by television viewers, so much so that Television still remains one of the few transmitters of this type of production.<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, we can wonder if this analysis of the functioning of television in terms of communication pacts is quite correct. In fact there are good reasons to

support the argument that television functions less in the way of a *contract* and more in the way of a *contact*. Let us note first of all that very frequently the television viewer switches on the television without prior contract and allows himself to be guided by the flux of images and sounds without any other positioning than to enjoy this flux. More generally, we can say that television establishes with its viewer a relationship that is based more on the, almost physical, power of a whole set of variations of rhythm and intensity, rather than on the production regulated by meaning and affects. The present evolution of television is moving clearly in the direction of a strengthening of this tendency already inherent in the medium itself: fragmentation of the transmissions by commercials, shortening of the length of transmissions, internal cutting up of the transmissions themselves in short sequences having their own rhythm and 'treatment'.<sup>15</sup> All concur in such a way as to make television a medium that we watch just for itself independent of the content of the transmissions (the famous formula of Marshall McLuhan: 'The medium is the message' applies perfectly here), a medium of fascination (we are not far from hypnotism), rather than one of communication. Under these conditions, we can say that all the transmissions are watched with the same *indifference* and the opposition between fictionalization and documentarization (to remain within the two types of contract which we are concerned with in this article) is thus suspended, emptied of its signification and its pragmatic relevance to make room for a positioning which consists of allowing ourselves to be carried along by the *energetics of the flux*.

This energetic positioning does not only exist in relation to television: an ever increasing number of films function according to this principle (the *Mad Max*, *Rambo* and *Rocky* series, etc.).<sup>16</sup> All video clips also pertain to this positioning (and we know the success of the music stations that diffuse these products). Finally, it is evident that the popularity of discos and huge spectacular concerts goes in the same direction. It is therefore not absurd to formulate the hypothesis of a modification in the demand of the social space itself. Perhaps we are witnessing the end of the domination of the fictionalizing *Desire*, and simultaneously the disappearance of the distinction between fictions and documentaries. If this mutation proves to be true, the whole functioning of the field of the audio-visual would find itself in confusion, and furthermore, in all probability, that of the unity of social space. Because when the conscious awareness of the distinction between the real Enunciator and the fictitious Enunciator disappears, it is the social body itself that is in danger. The 'uncivil'<sup>17</sup> man who functions only by way of emotional contact replaces the 'public' man who functions by way of contract. The demand of the documentary and of fiction would therefore announce the 'end of the social'<sup>18</sup>, but luckily the 'cassandras' are not always right.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Jean-Louis Baudry, 'The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in the Cinema', in Philip Rosen (ed.), *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, p. 307.
- <sup>2</sup> Raymond Bellour, *L'analyse du film*, Paris: Albatros, 1979, p. 22.
- <sup>3</sup> We could quote quite a few documentary film-makers who attest to this difficulty of the functioning of the documentary. Jean Rouch recognises that the Cinémathèque Française itself has made very little effort in this direction: 'What is certain is that the documentary has not often been programmed, neither by the Cinémathèque, nor elsewhere, because it has always been considered as a complement to a programme. And as a programme complement, the documentary has never been the subject of criticism, or only very rarely. The first film that I made, *Au pays des mages noirs*, produced in 1946, was shown as a complement to Rossellini's *Stromboli*, and was not mentioned anywhere at the time', interview with Jean Rouch in *Documentaires (Bulletin de liaisons et d'information des documentaristes associés)*, 4, December 1987, p. 1.
- <sup>4</sup> For a theoretical discussion of this point, cf. my forthcoming book *Cinéma et effet fiction*.
- <sup>5</sup> Octave Mannoni, *Clefs pour l'imaginaire ou l'Autre scène*, Paris: Le Seuil, 1969.
- <sup>6</sup> On this point, cf. John Searle's 'The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse', in *Expression and Meaning. Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
- <sup>7</sup> For a detailed analysis of this process, see my article 'Film documentaire. lecture documentarisante', in J. Lyant and Roger Odin (eds.), *Cinéma et réalités*, Saint-Etienne: Ceirec, 1984, pp. 263-280.
- <sup>8</sup> For another approach to the degree of documentarity in terms of levels of documentarizing enunciation mobilized by film, cf my article cited in footnote 7.
- <sup>9</sup> Here we quote Thierry Mesny, documentary film-maker and theoretician of the documentary. Cf. Mesny, *Analyse du documentaire cinématographique et télévisuel dans sa construction interne et ses aspects structuraux*, Doctoral thesis (3rd cycle), 1987, under the direction of Christian Metz, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales.
- <sup>10</sup> It is a known fact that each contract can be designated two functions: F(mandate) and F(acceptance). Cf. the entry 'Contract' in A. J. Greimas and J. Courtés, *Semiotics and Language: An Analytical Dictionary*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982, pp. 59-60.
- <sup>11</sup> Genevière Jacquinet, *Image et Pédagogie*, Paris: PUF, 1977.
- <sup>12</sup> On this notion, cf Paul Watzlawick, Janet Beavin, and Don D. Jackson, *The Pragmatics of Human Communication*, New York: Norton, 1967.
- <sup>13</sup> Such an approach is being developed by Francesco Casetti.
- <sup>14</sup> To cite an example, TFI announced 230 hours of documentary programmes in 1986.
- <sup>15</sup> The documentary film-makers complain about this reduction of time allowed to them and especially about the disappearance of the 52 minute slots. Cf. Christophe de Ponfilly, *Cahiers du Cinéma* 402, December 1987, p. IV.
- <sup>16</sup> On this point, see my article 'Du spectateur fictionnalisant au nouveau spectateur: approche sémio-pragmatique', *Iris*, 8, 1988, pp. 121-139.
- <sup>17</sup> Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York, Norton, W.W. and Company, 1977)
- <sup>18</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities*, trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton, and John Johnston, New York: Semiotext(e), 1983.