Radical Attractions: The Uprising of '34

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Fig. 1. Strikers at Atlanta Mill, Atlanta, Georgia. September 6, 1934. Photo courtesy

Radical Attractions: *The Uprising of '34*

by Jane M. Gaines

"The struggle of humanity against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting."

—Milan Kundera

Those familiar with *The Uprising of '34* will recognize the epigram from the conclusion of the film, the film's epilogue here my prologue. In their monumental effort to retrieve from memory the Textile Workers of America strike of 1934, a recollection of epic proportions, George Stoney and Judith Helfand have given us a narrative that pushes against the force of forgetting. Using all of the capacity of the motion picture to reiterate, repeat, and replay, they have also returned us to that privileged affiliation between the moving image and peoples' struggles. They have returned us to thinking about what it was that radicals thought motion pictures could do. Radicals, beginning in the post-revolutionary twenties not only envisioned the moving image machine as able to energize and politicize. They thought that it could move mountains. But in recent years, this vision of radical cinema has become a memory. With *Uprising*, however, Stoney and Helfand have made us wonder why in recent years we may have thought that the tradition of radical workers' cinema was long gone. Although films in this tradition have appeared with less and less frequency in the U.S. since the rebirth of the tradition in the seventies, nostalgia for the thirties or the sixties (the always-more-political times) persists. *Uprising*, however, does nothing to encourage nostalgia.

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The film is a use of the past to update radicalism, demonstrating that there is still massive work to be done to uncover the radical past that many Americans did not know they had. While others may have mourned the fact that in the West there would seem to be no radical present and therefore no momentous movements to follow on film, Helfand and Stoney have found in our radical past the striking images needed to politicize the present. In *The Uprising of '34*, this lost past comes back in the struggle retrieved and imaged, the voices of protest conjured up again, producing a wonderful and powerful organizing tool.

This is the occasion to praise *The Uprising of '34* as well as to remark on the mass phenomenon of its airing on PBS stations across the country. We also need to marvel at its success, a success that has come despite the hostility on the Right that Patricia Zimmermann has described as the "war on documentary."[1] Despite early setbacks, most notably the refusal of PBS stations in North and South Carolina to air the film when it was first broadcast, we need to credit the distribution engine that continues to circulate VHS copies of the film. Significantly, the tape has been distributed to schools and libraries and screened in conjunction with union meetings and within other organizing efforts, particularly in the Southeast where textile workers still remain hard to organize. This is also the occasion for something more difficult—a reconsideration of theories of documentary aesthetics, an extremely important academic exercise that goes to the heart of how documentary film history is taught in colleges and universities in Europe and the U.S. For if *The Uprising of '34* has done one thing, it has challenged the seventies dictum that radical form and radical politics have to fit hand-in-glove. I am referring to the formula by which films were once measured, assessing their politics by their antagonism to (and refusal of) the illusionistic devices of Hollywood pleasure cinema. What is needed is another approach, one that looks at politicized bodies as well as devices. What is needed is an approach that works backward from the particular films that have politically moved us to the question of the devices they use to produce their effects. What do I mean by *moved*? By *moved* I mean the mix of affect and action that the double meaning of the word implies. I mean everything from it "troubled" or "disturbed" or "shocked," to it made you "get up and do something." I realize that this is a wide range of possibilities. *The Uprising of '34* may have moved us to tears or to decisive action, and the question of whether it did the

one or the other, or did both at the same time, is a question fraught with issues of measurement, causality, and disciplinary boundary. My reconceptualization takes a different tack. I want to see the historical bodies-in-action on the screen as having a mimetic relation to the bodies of the viewers. In this theorization, viewing bodies re-produce the political movement imaged on the screen in the world of their present. Here the radical film has the power to make things happen because of this special screen/world relation that I call political mimesis.

The Uprising of '34 offers, I think, another case of political mimesis.[2] First, a word of caution. In formulating this concept, I have been mindful of the pitfalls of reflection theory and effects studies, both behaviorist in bent. The idea that art simply mirrors life, as well as the idea that there is a clear cause-and-effect relation between what people see and what they do, has been aligned with a conservative tendency to blame the media for anti-social behaviors ostensibly triggered by over-invested viewing. Recent critical work on the media has steered clear of these tired approaches that play to conservative fears and concerns. However, we still do not want to completely abandon the notion of powerful world-transforming images. While we are critical of the conservative version of how "the media" makes (some) people (the masses) do bad things, we want to reserve the right to explore the possibility that images might rouse people in politically progressive ways. For purposes of discussion, then, I want to restrict this question to viewers on the Left. What is meant here by political mimesis is something quite localized and of utility primarily for organizers and social activists. It presumes an already politicized viewership, a receptive working class audience, and a supportive community. Most importantly, it keeps alive the vision of a cinema that rouses us to targeted action, imagining a swelling unisonality of bodies and voices.

The Uprising of '34 and the Legacies of Documentary

We could easily locate this film within the tradition of the U.S. labor history film, carrying on the fight, continuing the cause of films such as *The Inheritance* (1964), *Finally Got the News* (1970), *Harlan County, USA* (1976), *Union Maids* (1976), *With Babies and Banners* (1978), *The Wobblies* (1979), and *The Life and*

Times of Rosie the Riveter (1980). This was a tradition of 16mm filmmaking that seemed to end with New Day's *Seeing Red* (1984), one of the last labor history films that schools and universities purchased on 16mm.[3] In *Uprising*, the generous use of historical footage, the emphasis on the historical actor through the interview with survivors and labor leaders, and the use of documentary to rewrite the record hearkens back to an earlier effort and a proud filmmaking legacy.[4] Those who are nostalgic for the mid-seventies, when filmmakers were energized by the woman's movement as it intersected with the labor movement, may experience some political *déja vu* on first seeing Helfand and Stoney's work. Yet something is different this time. Could it be the fact of the film's production for Independent Television Service (ITVS) with major funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting? One could argue, after all, that the expectation of "balance," in anticipation of PBS airing, produced a familiar public television format that muted the narrative of one of the most traumatic chapters in American labor history.[5] But the expression of outrage in *The Uprising of '34* is not exactly muffled; the voices of the mill workers and their descendants cut through the usual PBS smoke and caution. We will need to deal at some point with the fact that *The Uprising of '34* is outspokenly and unrelentingly pro-labor and that millions of viewers would have seen it when it was aired on PBS stations in 1995. This film seeks neither balance nor objectivity (knowing the impossibility) as the voices that describe the mill owners' role in the 1934 murders win out over the voices of justification for ownership. So its semi-PBS structure does not define this work as significantly different. What is different is that *The Uprising of '34* is phenomenally powerful as a piece of work and that it was seen. Not only was it widely seen, but it is a first—a radical film produced for broadcast to a mass audience in the U.S. While it does not exactly call for revolution, *Uprising* is about a revolutionary action, and one of the workers speaking in the introductory section even describes the General Textile Strike of 1934 as "the closest thing that this country has had to a revolution."

While it is important to examine the range of exhibition strategies that Helfand and Stoney used in what should be called the *Uprising* campaign, what is significant for documentary history is the situation in which, particularly given the grassroots efforts in the Southeast, the VHS tape became the organizing tool that far surpassed the old 16mm film.[6] What I want to argue is that in the

case of *The Uprising of '34*, the filmmakers produced the reception context as well as the work itself. Perhaps the most dramatic example of this was the "Labor to Neighbor" effort, timed to the June 27, 1995 national broadcast as part of the POV series, and designed to counter the isolation of home viewing with group viewings.[7] In this instance, the reception was produced as part of the struggle that begins in the film's Depression Era and continues into the present. Thus, a continuity between the screen and the world, a flow of historical events, signifies the legacies of class warfare. *Uprising* produced its own uprising.

I attribute much of the power of *The Uprising of '34* to its avowedly realist construction of a crucial chapter missing from the history of the American textile industry. It is an economic explanation or narration of the events that forced Southern farmers to leave their land in 1926 and to go to work in the textile mills, a documentation of the intolerable conditions of life in the mill towns as well as at the filthy factories where children worked until after sundown. After the Great Depression, which only exacerbated their difficult life, millworkers noted that Roosevelt's National Recovery Act provided for union organizing and extended legal protection to workers who voted to join. In *Uprising*'s narrative, Roosevelt gives the workers hope, but conditions, particularly in the South, do not improve, and a strike begins to appear imminent. When the United Textile Workers (UTW) finally called a general strike in the South in 1934, workers were hopeful that the government would stand behind Section 7A of the new act that gave them the right to organize. However, in town after town, management, going against the law, targeted the UTW's "Flying Squadrons," organizers sent into the communities to help in the struggle, and turned against their own workers. The high dramatic point is the management order to fire on workers approaching the Chiquola Mill in Honea Path, South Carolina, an order that resulted in seven dead and fifteen wounded. In the aftermath of the strike, things only get worse, particularly for those who led the uprising. Although President Roosevelt's administration promised that there would be no retribution in the settlement that ended the strike after three weeks, *Uprising* shows the leaders blacklisted and workers evicted from their homes because of their participation in the strike.

In ways, *The Uprising of '34* tells a familiar story of corporate callousness and

government betrayal of workers. There is as well the plight of labor, of people harnessed to an unequal system of producing valuable goods, of people with no recourse to fair treatment. The affinity between documentary and labor struggle is a given. What we want to fathom is how the moving image documentary does its narrative work, how in this case, the historical testifies so irrefutably to the wrongs. Yes, this is a powerful narrative, but its power derives not only from the compelling ordering of events. I would argue that the narrative of *Uprising* is also "hammered home" by the basic kernel of incontrovertibility, that bullet of decisive evidence—the historical fact.[8] This is to define the rhetorical advantage of documentary but also to identify the source of its necessary pathos, what I have often called the pathos of fact. One way of probing the question of the long-standing alliance between documentary and radical history is to consider the way that facts are electrically charged in this mode. Maybe Russian documentary filmmaker Dziga Vertov defined the stakes as well as the possibilities of documentary for labor when he argued for the "Factory of Facts," which in his manifesto called for "Fists made of facts… Lightning flashes of facts… Mountains of facts…Hurricanes of facts…" which all goes to the "genuine cinematification of the worker-peasant."[9] To engage in a political struggle by means of the production of a historical documentary, to supply the missing chapter, is to make "fists of facts."

Politically Sympathetic Magic

Tom Terrill, one of the historians who participated in an informal group dedicated to public education about the South-Wide Textile Strike of 1934, ends an article on the film: "Whatever you do, don't just watch *The Uprising of '34*."[10] It is the continuation of the fight that matters. So how does the film produce not just itself but the viewer as a fist? I want to return here to the possibilities of political mimesis, taking a detour into the sources of the concept in order to suggest its subtleties. Originally, I drew this concept from Michael Taussig's anthropological sense of mimesis as "sympathetic magic" which seems to have all of the advantages of respect for the body with its own particular way of knowing, but none of the disadvantages of the Western concept of imitation as slavish copying.[11] Relevant for documentary film theory here is an awe of the

power of images to transform the world. In Taussig, ancient powers are revisited; the miraculous mimetic capacity, once the exclusive domain of the body, is now extended to mimetic machines. These are the modern moving image machines that record, store, and display. (Here the machine takes over from the more mimetic primitive body, now remembering what the body has forgotten.) Although in the anthropological version people do not sit in front of screens, they do attribute special powers to resembling images, which are thought to have their effect in and on the world. Clearly mimetic power extends to more than icons or effigies. As an active relation, it is about bodily and body-like reproductions.

I take this in a particular direction. In my notion of political mimesis, I find a reciprocal mimetic function. That is, on the side of the machine as well as on the side of the world with its viewer, I find a film/body analogy, but most importantly, something else. I want to take from the anthropological this awe-inspiring power of the image of the world over the world of which it (the image) is a copy. And here is the most important part for documentary theory. The image copy derives its power from the very world of which it is a copy. Those familiar with the documentary concept of indexicality will recognize my attempt to get around questions of the automatic or guaranteed connection between the image and the real world object or event.[12] What I am arguing is that the historical world is the source of the power of the image.

The events of September 6, 1934 underwrite the power of this momentous film about the history of textile industry organizing in the American South. The fact of the irrefutable temporal connection between the striking workers and those who remembered spreads this power further. There is the effective incontrovertibility—the "having really happened" effect, which comes to us from the historical footage of the funerals of the seven workers, for instance, but it is not only the visual image, it is the sound image that is used so successfully in *The Uprising of '34*.

Unmistakably, the incontrovertibility factor is in the handwritten letter, the archival evidence *par excellence*, in which the protests written by textile workers to President Roosevelt (read voice-over by contemporary figures), nail the villains in the historical struggle. Voice testimony is married to image testimony.

Sue Hill, introduced at the beginning of the film as the daughter of one of the workers who were killed in Honea Path, later recollects on screen how her mother begged her father not to go to the mill that day. The machine remembers with the aid of the body; the body remembers with the help of the machine.

Let me summarize now the aspects of a theory of political mimesis that I am deriving from Taussig's update of an anthropological phenomenon: 1) the machine remembers what the body has forgotten, 2) the machine has the power to bring things into being, and 3) this power is derived from the world that the image resembles so closely. Now consider points two and three in relation to this film. The irony here is that the image of the struggle now has more power over the world than the power of the hold that the mill owners once had over their workers. *The Uprising of '34* represents a victory over the injustice of capital as well as over systematic forgetting. But there is yet a final point I take from Taussig: 4) bodies mirror bodies, or bodies in struggle on screen have a mimetic relation to bodies in struggle off screen. Why resurrect the mirroring aspect of primitive mimesis? Mimesis may have had a dubious reputation in its incarnation as imitation, but more recently, in Homi Bhaba's understanding of the doubleness of colonial mimicry, for instance, the concept has shown itself to have significant flexibility.[13] Understanding the world/screen/audience relationship in documentary as a mimetic one helps us to imagine bodies and events as derived from and held up against each other, helps us think a continuum of movements, helps us finally to expect reciprocal movement from the viewer who is impressed with the likeness between world and screen. Some of my readers may recognize this use of mimesis as another circumvention, this time of the problematic concept of realism which has become nothing more than a sloppy catch-all for often contradictory concepts—from the "true" to the spectacularly amazing.[14] While others would credit the "realism" of George Stoney and Judith Helfand's phenomenal work of historical retrieval for the grassroots responses to it on behalf of labor, I would go further. The mimeticism of *The Uprising of '34*—its remarkable likeness—produces a contemporary situation in which the struggle begun in the film continues into the present. The most dramatic example of this is the Honea Path, South Carolina, monument to the workers who were killed there in 1934. As resident Kathy Lamb describes the difficulties of pulling the community together around her plan, it involved

an effort to transcend local fear as well as anti-union sentiments, to heal wounds and end a sad silence.[15] In such a remarkable situation, it is difficult to tell where the film's history lesson leaves off and the contemporary struggle to organize the American South begins. The Honea Path monument is a profound example of the mimetic relation.

In my first discussion of the possibilities of political mimesis I was intrigued with the possibilities of spontaneous activism, citing at least one instance in which viewers reacted to the screening of a group of films by marching out of a university theater in a protest that led to an attack on an ROTC building.[16] While I am now perhaps more interested in longer-term political mimesis as a commitment that goes beyond the moment of reception, I still want to assert that it is the sense experience of the moving image that registers on the body. And by no means do I mean here that there is a body to the exclusion of a consciousness. Increasingly, in film theory, there is a tendency to see the body and things bodily as at the intersection between consciousness and the world.[17] Thus, I mean that there is a comprehensiveness implied in the bodily reception of this politically mimetic film—a film that makes the body do things.[18] *Uprising* makes the body do things in the world depicted on screen, intervening in that world to rectify (as much as possible) the historical situation. To want to do things is to take the film at its word: this really happened. Beyond the notion of any realist "truth value" I want to find a more comprehensive explanation of how the visualization of the story of a political upheaval that tore the South apart in 1934 has its effect on the body of the viewer. How does the film reach us and why? We are close now to the question that still drives documentary theory, the question of how it is that the successful event depicted as "having really happened" in the presence of the camera (at some historical point) gives documentary a rhetorical advantage that fiction can never claim.[19] Yet the "having really happened" is nothing without the question of what it is that the sense of "really happened" does to the body of the viewer who, as I am arguing, must be living in the world that is the same as the world in which something happened. The viewer is struck by the film's assertion that in his or her own world seven textile workers were shot by company-paid operatives in Honea Path, South Carolina, on September 6, 1934, during a strike at the Chiquola Mill, the largest in town. He or she may be stirred by testimony and photographic image

evidence. What do we mean by stirred and is that enough? How do we talk about what it is that *The Uprising of '34* does to produce in its audience a sense of political exhilaration? I turn finally to Russian Sergei Eisenstein because his is the most precise as well as the most passionate theorization of this question.

Sergei Eisenstein: Emotional Infectiousness

Let us take the "what it does to the body" question, an old and difficult question for film theory. The bodily responsiveness question is never more dramatically addressed than in Eisenstein's essay on the excitation factor in cinema, "The Montage of Film Attractions." This is also an essay in which Eisenstein advocates "agitation through spectacle," reminding us that it was the Soviets who originally imagined a political cinema of agitation and alignment, of world-transforming cause and consequence.[20] While we are reminding ourselves not to forget labor history, let us also recall that the very idea that cinema has special aesthetic powers that could be harnessed to the cause of labor originates in the post-revolutionary period of Soviet aesthetic invention. In "The Montage of Attractions" we find as well Eisenstein's theorization of the mimetic for he, like Taussig, was impressed with primitive mimesis, particularly as its magic demonstrated the powers of the image copy over the very world that it echoed.[21] In the "Attractions" essay Eisenstein refers to the "refinement of imitative skill" as well as the "motor imitation of the action by those perceiving."[22] Here, also, is everything we might wish for in social change media produced today: the exercise of "emotional influence" over the masses, "pressures on its psyche," and "blows to the consciousness and emotions of the audience."[23] Although a generation of critics have quite rightly distanced themselves from what might be called Eisenstein's reception theory perhaps because of its indebtedness to Pavlovian reflexology (preferring instead his aesthetic theory with its formal counter principles), developments from within film theory have perhaps brought us around again to a fresh consideration of Eisenstein's "agitated" audience. To mention these developments that have returned us to this aspect of Eisenstein is to again privilege the body.

Currently informing our reading of Eisenstein is, of course, an interest in melo-drama and its companion questions of affect, but, ironically, Eisenstein,

via his "montage of attractions" is now read back through the Soviet theorist himself. Or, I am now reading Eisenstein on political agitation through Eisenstein on the popular aesthetics of the visceral, which is what the "montage of attractions" now means in the broadest sense within film studies where the term (although not the original Eisenstein essay) has come to have wide usage. In an interesting twist, Tom Gunning's original essay, which introduced the "montage of attractions" into contemporary film theory and film history, borrowed the concept not only to deepen our understanding of early cinema but to connect that cinema to the European and American avant-garde.[24] Significantly, Gunning reminded us in that essay that he was borrowing a concept from an "oppositional" practice (the Soviet avant-garde) and applying it to the broadly popular practice of early cinema which had in common with Eisenstein's ideal cinema the stimulating shocks to the spectator that could constitute an assault on the illusionism that produced the impression of the real. What has been retained from this essay, however, has not been the connection of early cinema with the avant-garde as much as Gunning's assertion that Eisenstein associated "attractions" with his long-remembered experience of the fairground.[25] My next move should be obvious. What I am proposing is another return to Eisenstein's "The Montage of Film Attractions," this time in order to take advantage of the concept that is now re-inflected through its contemporary usage. The idea of cinematic "attractions" is thus ready and available, translating our interest in the viscerality of film-going back into the question of radical film viewing and the consequent radicalization of the spectator.

In other words, I am understanding the politicizing potential of *The Uprising of '34* through a popularized Eisensteinian idea of "attractions." To reclaim "The Montage of Film Attractions" for radical cinema is further to understand the way in which the story of a 1934 strike could catch on and capture the hearts and minds of contemporary working-class communities. There is a logic to this. After all, this is the essay in which Eisenstein says that "The first thing to remember is that there is, or rather should be, no cinema other than agit-cinema," laying the foundation that would inspire decades of artists to attempt to prove the powerful social change quotient of the moving image.[26] But I would caution that Eisenstein's foundation and formula for social change was never limited to the creation of those "attractions" that would stimulate the audience.

As we know, attractions alone do not teach the political lesson. (Highly subsidized "attractions" continue in the present to divert the contemporary Hollywood blockbuster audience, after all.) In Eisenstein, it is the "montage of attractions *and its method of comparison*" that constitutes the political formula.[27] Attractions in and of themselves are not (political) enough, although Eisenstein does give credence to the "purely physical infectiousness" that can be achieved by means of, for instance, the chase.[28] The montage of attractions is always in the contrast of materials as well as in the cutting rhythms that produce Eisen-stein's famous dynamism. Let us not leave this only at the level of materials and textures, however, for my reading of Eisenstein's largest sense of contrast is always as contrast drama—the clash of forces, of structures, and, most importantly, the clash of classes.[29] Another way of putting this would even be to say that the "montage of attractions" uses the rhythmic viscerality of cinema combined with the contrast structure of melodrama in the service of political analysis and action. Yes, melodrama. Bill Nichols has already opened the door to the consideration of Eisenstein's *Strike* (1924) in some of these terms—referring to Eisenstein the "show-man" whose use of "excess," that code-word for melodramatic form, has the ability to transform things. Isn't it *Strike* that ends with the single word title following the soldiers' slaughter of the striking workers? In the present day, *Uprising* also admonishes us (although not quite as breathlessly) to "Remember!"[30]

The Drama of Contrasts

One of the great strengths of *The Uprising of '34* is its pure montage opening sequence. And it is here that I think that the montage of attractions (the excitation factor) as well as its method of comparisons is most pronounced. Seventy years after *Strike*, when cinema's new attractions still attracted for their own sakes, we may wonder what all of the fuss was about. Perhaps we take rhythmic cutting for granted as a style. But our familiarity of the technique does not mean that we do not still respond to the beats of the cutting pattern viscerally.[31] And there is something more to respond to here. What is striking about *Uprising* is that *tour de force* cutting in the introduction is used in the service of a strong class message! A slow zoom into a close up of cotton wisps hanging like deadly

cobwebs on the cogs of the mechanical loom is accompanied by a voice-over: "My mother told us that my grandmother told her that she would rather see her take my brother and me to the graveyard than to see us brung up on the cotton mill village." Voice-overs build the workers' case: "Keep a man hungry and he'll work. That's the truth." "The union was a dirty word…always will be." Over black and white shots of empty cotton mill interiors a single dissonant violin is introduced. From within the montage of voices, a ticking suggests the imminence of conflict, the mill conditions as a time bomb. Humming underneath situates the scene in the South and sets the tone of suffering and triumph. When the humming stops, a black woman in a chair looks at the camera and states: "I would like to know what happened and what is the history of it."

As the narrative arrives at the point where farmers, now textile workers, are forced into company-owned towns ("The whole city belonged to Mr. Cannon"), we are introduced to the class contrast. Sue Hill, who explains that when her father died he owed his whole pay check, is contrasted with Robert Ragan, son of a mill owner in Gastonia, North Carolina who says that workers were charged "low rent or maybe no rent," and had their coal and later electricity free. The mill owner's son is countered by Larry Blakeny, son of a Cannon Mill worker from Kannapolis, North Carolina, who says it was just "living in the man's house that you worked for," and that he could always "put you out." As if in answer, Joseph Lineberger, a North Carolina mill owner (holding a black poodle) maintains that drinking was a problem and that after they had given offenders enough time, "We'd move 'em out." Later, he insists that "We were all happy" and that there was "One big family." *Uprising* may be a documentary in its deference to the historical real but in its starkness of contrasts it draws on melo- drama and its revolutionary origins.[32] It is no wonder that audiences continually asked George Stoney and Judith Helfand, "Which side are you on?" *Uprising* is a narrative of sides about a volatile historical situation in which there were sides and a presentation of issues on which we still cannot avoid taking sides.

Uprising strikes us with its contrasts. The film also recruits its viewers by means of analysis as in one of its most compelling exchanges, that between filmmaker Stoney and Bruce Graham, an African American from the Eagle

Yarn Mill, Gastonia, North Carolina, with whom he is discussing the position of the black worker in the thirties mill hierarchy, a position so low that the black did not even hold a job that could be unionized. In this conversation, the filmmaker asks why blacks never got these jobs.

> George: Were there any black spinners or weavers or loom fixers?
> Bruce: I don't know.
> George: Did you ever wonder why?
> Bruce: I don't know why. Do you know?
> George: I have a pretty good idea. They wanted to save the good jobs for white men. I'm afraid that's what it was.
> Bruce: All right. That's what I think. I'm just letting you say it first.

The filmmaker puts the words in his own mouth here, as Stoney, never afraid to get his respondents to produce an analysis of the situation, encourages that analysis in a dialogue that allows the maker and his subject to both say it, an interesting indifference to the old documentary prohibition against filmmaker "intervention." *Uprising*'s actors speak out, as Etta Mae Zimmerman, who looks back and says, "I'd do it all again!" And I do mean "actors," if only to call attention to a final connection to Eisenstein who "refined" the "imitative skill" of his actors with the goal of creating the "maximum emotional effect" on the audience. These "model actors," as he called them, were ideally to work to encourage the "imitative capacities" of the audience.[33] In other words, a high expectation of mimesis built into the production process, perhaps at the level of the rehearsal and certainly as part of actor training, is a part of the tradition of revolutionary filmmaking. The model actor performs a labor on the audience.[34]

The real historical workers and union people who tell *Uprising*'s story are "model actors" in every sense. Yes, they have an existence as themselves, but, in addition, they are encouraged by the filmmakers to perform their past. This performance is never more moving than when the historical actors burst into song. Nanny Leah Washington sings "Hard times in this old mill, hard times I know." Eula McGill sings "Hey, boss man, you're not so big, you're just tall, that's all!" as well as the refrain, "Tra la la boom-de-ay, they chiseled all my pay, I wish that I'd been wise, next time I'll organize." Others encourage mimesis with their stories. In the tiniest of voices Laura Hull Brand trembles, "Well, when you get hungry enough and your baby starts crying, you fight back…"

One of the Rainwater sisters, Mattie Rainwater Whatley, telling an anecdote about the way toilet paper was rationed in the mills, recalls the humorous sign she put up "Use This Cob and Save Your Job," an irritation to the managers who threatened to fire them for this offense. It would seem to me that these workers are still organizing as they perform. What, after all, is the purpose and point of putting yourself on the line in a radical documentary about a dangerous sixty-year-old secret if it is not to advance a cause to which you are still committed? What is the reason if you are not committed to a cause that requires a mimesis on a very large scale? A mass movement must catch on and grow like a brush fire. I am reminded that Eisenstein speaks of the goal of "emotional infectiousness."[35] *Uprising*'s model actors, with their infectious capacity, effectively produce a world in which the struggle continues, a struggle that audiences cannot help but emulate. The struggle is passed from body to body, now with the help of the remembering machine that is so instrumental in the battle "against forgetting."

Fig. 2. 10,000 strikers parading through the street of Gastonia, North Carolina, in a gigantic Labor Day Parade, September 5, 1934. Photo courtesy

In conclusion, it would be important to acknowledge that the phenomenon of the grassroots success of *The Uprising of '34* comes at a time when the old body-to-body means of organizing may have faded in public memory. Or, it may have been eclipsed by the question of the radical potentialities of new technologies. Then again, it is interesting to see Hans Enzensberger's "Constituents of a Theory of the Media" with its original interest in video and radio reconsidered in the light of newer media. To find the seventies manifesto on the use of new media to mobilize and emancipate reprinted in a collection on digital culture suggests that there may be some desire to carry over, if not capture, earlier radicalism for a present in danger of losing the connection.[36] This may mean that we need a much more inclusive sense of the image machinery that has the capacity to deliver the "radical attractions" that I am insisting upon. I take my cue from Patricia Zimmermann who writes about the excitement that is still cinema studies, now expanded to encompass the moving image in digital as well as film or video form. Her imagination of an expanded cinema studies envisions a new political exhilaration: "It means possession by ideas. It means explosions into some passionate public space that moves you outside of yourself. Cinema can do that."[37]

Notes

1. Patricia R. Zimmerman, *States of Emergency: Documentaries, Wars, Democracies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), chapter one.
2 . See my "Political Mimesis," ed. Jane M. Gaines and Michael Renov, *Collecting Visible Evidence*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).
3 . For more on the phenomenon of 16mm film distribution during this time, see Patricia Peyton, ed., *Reel Change: A Guide to Social Issue Films*, (San Francisco: The Film Fund, 1979).
4 . It is important to remember the U.S. radical filmmaking groups from the thirties—the Film and Photo League and Nykino Films. For histories, see Russell Campbell, *Cinema Strikes Back: Radical Filmmaking in the United States 1930–1942* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982) and William Alexander, *Film on the Left: American Documentary Film from 1931 to 1942* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).
5 . Brian Winston, in *Claiming the Real: The Documentary Film Revisited* (London: The British Film Institute, 1995), 42–43, finds the precursor of journalistic "balance" in television documentary in the "problem moment" film, best exemplified by John Grierson's *Housing Problems* (1935), also important as it introduced the documentary subject as "social victim." The "problem moment structure" is one that assumes that the "problem" in the history of the nation is one that will eventually pass, crediting, in the British case Winston discusses, a particular industry, but just as predictably, government itself, or even "progress." The structure succeeds by opening up a social dilemma (attractive to radicals) while simultaneously denying the causes as well as the

effects (attractive to conservative funders). One might consider the ways in which *The Uprising of '34* does as well as does not fit Winston's model. Certainly the way in which the film locates the causes of the bloodshed in the unlawful strike-breaking activities of the Southern mill owners explains the trouble it had with some PBS stations, most notably South Carolina public television as well as in Charlotte, North Carolina, where the local public television stations first refused to telecast the film in 1995. *Uprising* was finally aired in South Carolina three years later after pressure was exerted on SC ETV.

6 . See David Whiteman, "Reassessing the Impact of Documentary Film: Filmmakers, Activist Community Organizations, and Public Policy" (paper presented at the Visible Evidence Conference, UCLA Department of Film and Television, August 19–22, 1999). The author, in a comprehensive overview of the way the film entered into public discourse, refers to distribution by Carolina Alliance for Fair Employment (CAFE), Service Employees International Union (SEIU), United Textile Employees (UNITE), as well as museums (Charlotte, Kannapolis), centers such as the Peace Center in Raleigh, North Carolina, and religious conventions (Quakers Palmetto gathering). This is only to list a few of the documented screenings and organizations involved in the months and years immediately following the film's first airing on POV.

7 . Whiteman discusses the "Labor to Neighbor" program which included the live call-in on Manhattan cable and events in Maine, Massachusetts, Montana, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania, many of these efforts mounted with the help of the National Organizers Association.

8 . Mary Poovey asks: "What are facts? Are they incontrovertible data that simply demonstrate what is true? Or are they bits of evidence marshaled to persuade others of the theory one sets out with? Do facts somehow exist in the world like pebbles, waiting to be picked up?" *A History of the Modern Fact* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 1. Zimmerman has also argued the subversiveness of fact-based work: "Because the nation is always in part fiction, all nonfictions are threatening.… Documentaries repudiate the fictions of the nation with the real, the document, the historical, the particular, and it is these negations and refusals that provoke the offensives to close down all public cultures." Zimmerman, 15.

9 . Annette Michelson, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, trans. Kevin O'Brien, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 59–60.

10 . Tom Terrill, "Watching *The Uprising of '34*," in *Three Years Later: "The Uprising of '34"* (New York: Hard Times Productions, 1998), 4.

11 . Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

12 . Bill Nichols offers perhaps the most sophisticated discussion of indexicality, going beyond the origins of the concept in the work of semiotician Charles Sanders Peirce, whose understanding of the close bond between the representation and that to which it refers has been the preferred approach to the theoretical problem of the photographic sign and its referent. For our purposes, Nichols is most useful as he explains that "Indexicality plays a key role in authenticating the documentary image's claims to the historically real, but the authentication itself must come from somewhere else and it is often subject to doubt." Here is one place where Nichols seems to anticipate the more recent developments in which the amazing capacity of the digital image to replicate by means of mathematical models calls the expectation of authenticity into question. *Representing Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 153.

13 . See Homi K. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).
14 . See my "The Real Returns" in Gaines and Renov for an overview of the importance of the concept of "realism" in film theory, from the seventies "critique of realism" to the reconsideration of early theorists of the real such as André Bazin and Siegfried Kracauer to the contemporary more complex approach to "realist" strategies in documentary.
15 . Kathy Lamb, "*The Uprising of '34* and the Impact on a Southern Town," in *"The Uprising of '34" on SCETV*.
16 . Gaines, "Political Mimesis," 89. The attack following the screening of a group of films by the radical filmmaking collective, Newsreel, took place during the anti-Vietnam War period in 1969 at the State University of New York in Buffalo and was recorded by the student newspaper, *The Rat*.
17 . This is best exemplified in Vivian Sobchack's use of phenomenologist Maurice Merleau- Ponty. See Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: The Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 64–68.
18 . The inspiration for the conceptualization of the question of films that "make the body do things" has been Linda Williams's understanding of body genres. "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, Excess," *Film Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (summer 1991). See Gaines, "Political Mimesis," 90, on the idea of what the radical film might "produce" on the body of spectators, following this line of thinking.
19 . Nichols, on this question, gives us the following formulation: "The most fundamental difference between expectations prompted by narrative fiction and by documentary lies in the status of the text in relation to the historical world. This has two levels. Cues within the text and assumptions based on past experience prompt us to infer that the images we see (and many of the sounds we hear) had their origin in the historical world. Technically, this means that the projected sequence of images, what occurred in front of the camera (the profilmic event), and the historical referent are taken to be congruent with one another." Nichols, 25. The question of the *faux* documentary might arise here in other situations, in which case it is the depiction of an event as "having really happened" that matters, with emphasis on the "depiction."
20 . Sergei Eisenstein, "The Montage of Film Attractions," *S.M. Eisenstein, Selected Works, Vol. I: Writings, 1922–1934*, ed. Richard Taylor (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 45.
21 . Sergei Eisenstein, "Imitation as Mastery," *Eisenstein Rediscovered*, ed. Ian Christie and Richard Taylor (London: Routledge, 1993). See also Mikhail Yampolsky, "The Essential Bone Structure: Mimesis in Eisenstein," *Eisenstein Rediscovered*.
22 . Eisenstein, "The Montage of Film Attractions," 49, 40.
23 . Ibid, 39.
24 . Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," *Wide Angle* 8, no. 3–4 (fall 1986).
25 . Ibid., 66. On the same page, Gunning also refers to the more didactic, political side of Eisenstein in his reference to the "experimentally regulated and mathematically calculated," the quite different ends to which Eisenstein would want to put his "montage of attractions."
26 . Eisenstein, "The Montage of Film Attractions," 44–45.
27 . Ibid. (emphasis mine).
28 . Ibid, 42.

29 . I have argued that Eisenstein's *Strike* can be read as having the structure of melodrama. See "The Melos in Marxist Theory," ed. David James and Rick Berg, *The Hidden Dimension: Film and the Question of Class* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).
30 . Bill Nichols, *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 111, 114. See also, "*Strike* and the Question of Class," James and Berg.
31 . I am referring rather obliquely to a moment in the seventies when theories of radical film, particularly feminist film, favored a political modernism that eschewed these kinds of effects. Ironically, political modernism also found its origins in Eisenstein. For more on this period see Alexandra Juhasz, "They Said We Were Trying to Show Reality—All I Want to Show is My Video: The Politics of the Realist Feminist," in Gaines and Renov.
32 . See Daniel Gerould, "Revolution and Melodrama," *Melodrama: Stage|Picture|Screen*, ed. Jacky Bratton, Jim Cook, and Christine Gledhill, (London: British Film Institute, 1994).
33 . Eisenstein, "The Montage of Film Attractions," 49–50.
34 . Eisenstein goes even further as he theorizes the performance of the actor as "*real*, *primarily*, *physical*" work, a labor enacted in their material—the audience. Ibid., 56.
35 . Ibid.
36 . Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Constituents of a Theory of the Media," *Electronic Culture*, ed. Timothy Druckery (New York: Aperture, 1996).
37 . Patricia R. Zimmermann, "Holding on to the Real," *Afterimage* (September–October 2000), 4.