



Still from *Atomic Café*, by the Archives Project (1982):
Official Civil Defense Photo. *Courtesy of the Museum
of Modern Art.*

and in their absence, the film points to their annihilation within atomic culture as it displaces reality with a simulated version.

In lieu of a documentary voice-over, the makers of *Atomic Café* have used many of the soundtracks of the original footage, authoritative voices of science that compare the risks of atomic annihilation to slipping on a bar of soap. The last vignette of the film assigns this voice to a father protecting two small children, which is indeed the film's dominant paradigm. Real people are like the children who submit to the system of MAD (mutual assured destruction).³⁶ Thus we have the "ordinary citizens" who are caught up in the propaganda machine: the Girl Scouts who solemnly demonstrate the contents of a survival kit (canned mashed potatoes, canned peaches, napkins). Men who expound Dr. Strangelove scenarios likewise devise narrative strategies for coping with the incomprehensible catastrophe of nuclear war.



Still from *Atomic Café*, by the Archives Project (1982): Official Civil Defense Photo. Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art.

Andreas Huyssen neatly sums up the affinities of the *Atomic Café* footage with the Fluxus avant-garde movement of the 1950s: "The insidious dialectic of mere accident and total rational control is perhaps nowhere as evident as in the ultimate Fluxus event of the 1950s, one performed millions of times over, but never by a Fluxus artist: schoolchildren line up, arms covering their heads, in nuclear war drills. Nuclear war was, after all, the trauma of the 1950s generation."³⁷ Huyssen implies that the image taken from *Atomic Café* is of real children, performing a real drill. And yet the film footage is necessarily a propaganda document, and thus a performance of a drill. *Atomic Café* could only be a found-footage film because it is about the representation of rational control, which falls apart precisely on its fabricated status, its void of referentiality. The children in this image are performing their fear of nuclear holocaust, but it is only a paranoid symptom of the apparatus of power that has created the image, to circulate as a perpetuation of the paranoia, to augment its power, and so on.

Atomic Café may not be an avant-garde film, and yet the events that it documents are absurd, surreal, and ironic. As a found-footage film, it poses the question of the real outside this fabricated fantasy world of the controlled catastrophe. Only in the opening sequence of the bodies

of Japanese corpses, the Hiroshima and Nagasaki footage repressed for so long by the U.S. government, do history and the real briefly coincide. Even here, though, an American investigator is seen drawing an outline of a vaporized body in chalk on the pavement. The Japanese victims become ghosts within the film's compilation of fake scenarios and constructed alibis. If we can think of the fictions of *Atomic Café* as fragments of a fabricated ethnography, the bodies of the men, women, and children become doubled as actors. Beside their fictional roles, they are also the others who remain outside the narrative facade of U.S. army information. A single color shot of a Japanese man looking up at a blue sky (possibly from a Godzilla film) is a fictional insert that opens a space for other stories, other fictions about nuclear holocaust.

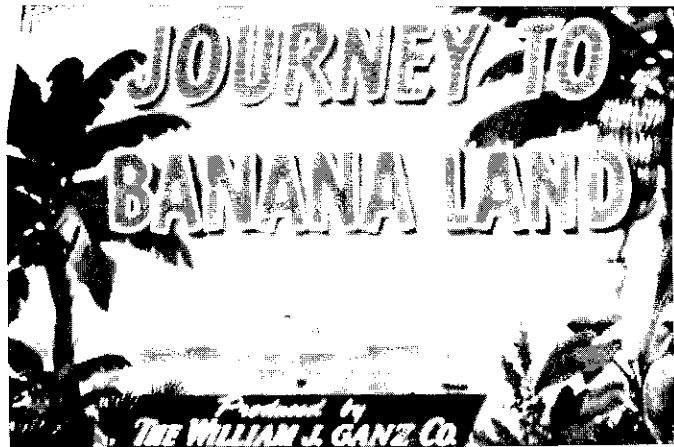
The atomic age is represented in both *A Movie* and *Atomic Café* as a new era of representation. The mobilization of images to cover the threat of mutual assured destruction in the 1950s culminates in the spectacle of the mushroom cloud itself. Found-footage filmmaking picks up the pieces of the media facade and reconfigures the fragments as visible evidence of the fiction of history produced in that era. One of the effects of this dream analysis is to find the repressed bodies within the image bank, to salvage them as traces of other histories and other temporalities. In both films, to be sure, the ethnographic body is infantilized: poor people of color in *A Movie*, children in *Atomic Café*. In the systems of representation that the filmmakers deconstruct, the Other becomes a fiction, a discourse of images of victims necessary to the logic of authority and control.

In *A Movie* and *Atomic Café*, the ethnographic Other also becomes a floating signifier. Detached from referentiality, the fundamental link to the past is broken, and as a fiction, the ethnographic enters a different temporal schema, one based on metonymic combination rather than metaphor, symbolism, and narrativity. If metaphor implies a depth of meaning, metonymy takes place on the surface, constructing a language of appearances and signifiers.³⁸ Whether the sources of images are "documentary" or "fictional" texts, found images are always documents of the profilmic, historical bodies. Decontextualization is the means by which the archive offers up history as a nonnarrative series of bodies and events. As film aspires to the condition of photography in found-footage practices, the indexical trace of the photographic image is produced as a supplement in excess of the fictions of time, history, and representation. The traces of another historical narrative challeng-

ing the ideology of capitalist progress are grounded in bodies in time, and ethnography is produced within the allegorical nature of found footage, in its dialectics of history.

The circulation of ghosts in found-footage filmmaking is even more explicit in Alain Resnais's *Night and Fog* (1955), a film that combines film and photo imagery of the Holocaust with contemporary shots of overgrown, decaying concentration camps. Huyssen notes that as the documentary footage from the Nazi period began to circulate in Europe in the 1950s, it had "a paralyzing effect on the visual imagination of a whole generation."³⁹ As a classic example of experimental documentary, *Night and Fog* represents the archive as an unfixed, problematic document of history. The past cannot easily be retrieved but challenges the present as its linear descendant. Alan Sekula has described the conventional use of the archive as a means by which "the spectator comes to identify with the technical apparatus, with the authoritative institution of photography."⁴⁰ What is most shocking is that the atrocities in *Night and Fog* were filmed at all. Offered the sight of historical trauma, such as emaciated naked bodies, or the ruins of Hiroshima, the viewer becomes deeply implicated in a cruelty of which the camera is an agent. The image thus becomes dialectical, bringing past and present together in what Benjamin calls a "monad of history." *Night and Fog* evokes a surrealist aesthetic of absurd juxtaposition with the accumulated piles of glasses and hair gathered from Holocaust victims. And yet the shock is much greater than an aesthetic of defamiliarization because it contains the trace of the real, an index of the historical trauma. The ghostly referents of *Night and Fog* speak to a problem of memory and the need for a new theory of historical time, one that can redeem the past. To this extent, the film contributes to a form of experimental ethnography based in the archive as a locus of nonlinear historical memory. As Sekula argues: "The archive has to be read from below, from a position of solidarity with those displaced, deformed, silenced, or made invisible by the machineries of profit and progress."⁴¹

If the terror of *Night and Fog* lies in the implication of an original viewer of the atrocities documented, thirty-five years later, this horror has been tempered by a cynical postmodernism and an annihilation of the subject of vision and responsibility. Television images are the products of a dispersed, corporate subject. In Craig Baldwin's *Tribulation* 99, the ethnographic referent is recast as a threat to representation and history. However, in his depiction of a perpetual catastrophe of im-



Still from *Tribulation 99*, by Craig Baldwin (1991).

pending apocalypse, the horror of a lack of horror keeps the repressed referent of history from asserting itself. Drawing on the image bank of American information films and newsreels, Hollywood science fiction, thriller, and adventure movies, and TV programs, Baldwin constructs a scenario of conspiracy and paranoia. Layering the imagery with written intertitles and a whispered voice-over, *Tribulation 99* is a palimpsest of floating signifiers that subsume history in an impossible network of metonymic relations.

The premise of *Tribulation 99* is that U.S. security, with its vast arsenal of mass media, military, and government institutions, is mobilized against the threat of alien invaders from outer space. Moving through Guatemala to Cuba, Chile, Granada, Nicaragua, and Panama, the history of U.S. intervention in Central and South America is depicted as a science fiction thriller. Interspersed with the footage of flying saucers, monsters, mad scientists, Latin American actors, diagrams, maps, and American politicians are scenes of Latin American laborers, religious processions, and newsreel footage of street violence in Chile and Nicaragua. The verbal and written texts describe a complex conspiracy of anticommunist personnel organized through the CIA, the United Fruit Company, and the Warren Commission, which is battling a supernatural conspiracy of the Bermuda Triangle, Haitian voodoo, and a Mayan-alien alliance. In the apocalyptic finale, the Panama Canal is flooded by secret dumping of American atomic waste, "the Atlantic and Pacific



error keeps the repressed
ing on the image bank of
wood science fiction,
s. Baldwin constructs a
the imagery with writ-
ation 99 is a palimpsest
impossible network of

tion, with its vast arse-
sations, is mobilized
pace. Moving through
and Panama, the his-
merica is depicted as a
age of flying saucers,
diagrams, maps, and
laborers, religious
in Chile and Nica-
plex conspiracy of
the United Fruit
banning a supernatu-
rals, and a Mayan-
Canal is flooded
Atlantic and Pacific

merge . . . the world comes to an end, for which we are grateful." The Chosen Ones flee to Mars via stealth mother ships and damn those left behind.

The accelerated pace of Baldwin's montage and the elliptical character of his narration constitute a barrage of information that thoroughly mixes truth and fiction, fact and fantasy. *Tribulation 99* is the epitome of what Bill Nichols has described as "the paranoid style" of documentary representation that circulates around and emanates from the JFK assassination and American conspiracy culture of the 1950s and 1960s. The collage form is emblematic of the partial knowledge and decenteredness of a lack of mastery over reality.⁴² Baldwin pushes this paranoid style to a point of excess so that history becomes a product of the fertile imagination of anticommunist propaganda. U.S. intervention in Latin America appears to be motivated by the media imagery of monstrous invasion that generates a counterconspiracy thoroughly duped by its own fictions.

In *Tribulation 99*, the crisis of representation is most clearly also a crisis of historical time and colonial power. The "end of history" is apparent not only in the spectacle of failed technology but equally in the neocolonial exploitation of Third World peoples whose challenge to the military-industrial complex lies in their escape from representation. Allegorized as invaders from another planet, as monsters and supernatural phenomena, "the alien" has no referent but exists as pure representation. From the ideological construction of the alien in American culture, Baldwin produces signifiers that are not grounded in any history but transcend referentiality altogether. Fiction and myth are constructed as arbitrary linkages of images in which the oppressed and the colonized are produced as threats to both American security and realist representation.

In the conjunction of science fiction and anthropological history, the dialectical images of *Tribulation 99* constitute a revision of the notion of the repressed. While the paranoid style evokes the repressed, here, in the form of dialectical images, the repressed becomes detached from memory. Baldwin's collage is drawn from an image bank so vast that it suggests the wholesale obliteration of linear memory. Images are recalled instead by arbitrary links to storage in this postmodern variant of the found-footage film.

Mobilizing these images as cultural documents, *Tribulation 99* functions as a kind of random-access memory of American Cold War cul-



Still from *Tribulation 99*, by Craig Baldwin (1991).

ture. The discontinuity of catastrophe is once again symptomatic of apocalypse culture and its crisis of representation. Among the images of disaster are an earthquake in Nicaragua (possibly filmed in miniature) and the same swaying suspension bridge seen in *A Movie*,⁴³ plus a slew of plane crashes and explosions. As a postmodern variant of *A Movie*, Baldwin's film inscribes a discourse of political activism in which the ethnographic is not a mute signifier of historiographic memory but a sign of historical trauma. In the void created by the onslaught of images, the possibility of historical resistance to the military-industrial complex is eclipsed. This is the real crisis of the film, its traumatic undercurrent. Baldwin can address neocolonialism only as a problem of representation, not of history; the film has no access to the "truth" of U.S. intervention in Central and South America, as the media "cover-up" has become a totalizing form of coverage.

Whereas most of the imagery of Latin American people is heavily coded as tourist or industrial footage, some of the newsreel footage of street demonstrations jumps out of the film as another order of representation. Civilians dodging sniper bullets and being assaulted by police in Chile and Nicaragua document a historical struggle that cannot be subsumed by any narrative temporality. These scenes are shot in a realist style that is otherwise absent from the film, and while they do not *necessarily* have a greater claim on the real than any other shots, they tend to point to another level of representation, one in which the



again symptomatic of
Among the images of
(filmed in miniature)
A Movie,⁴³ plus a slew
variant of *A Movie*,
activism in which the
graphic memory but
by the onslaught of
the military-industrial
film, its traumatic
only as a problem
cess to the "truth" of
as the media "cover-

people is heavily
newsreel footage of
other order of rep-
being assaulted by
struggle that can-
these scenes are shot
and while they
any other shots,
one in which the

referent finally breaks through the fiction of the signifier. Only in its most traumatic form does the ethnographic correspond with the historical real.⁴⁴

In Baldwin's allegory of invasion, the aliens infest the interior of the earth and threaten those above, a structure that quickly becomes fused with the American-Mexican border: "Earth's creatures flee in terror," announces a graphic title while the narrator says, "Their activities drive huge armies of soldier ants and killer bees past the Rio Grande . . . our southern border ditches as permeable as paper towels." In the few newsreel images in the film, this threat from below is also a threat of referentiality, a challenge posed to the "surface" of representation that is the fabric of Baldwin's collage, the network of images through which U.S. policy in Central and South America justifies and perpetuates itself.

Tribulation 99 is an extremely ambivalent film, symptomatic of its own paranoid strategies that ultimately curtail the possibility of historical agency in the inaccessibility of a "real" outside the onslaught of images. And yet it points to the discursive potential of found footage to produce the ethnographic as a radical form of memory. The retrieval of the singular, the accidental, and the contingent by means of Benjamin's *mémoire involontaire* runs counter to the effect of abstraction by which the social actor loses his or her identity and becomes a representative of his or her culture. The inscription of a historical specificity outside of linear time challenges the aura of essentialism that plagues colonial paradigms of anthropological knowledge. Found-footage filmmaking is a means of accessing history in the form of an unordered archive populated by historical subjects that pressure representation "from below," from their status as referents. Retrieved into new textual forms, they are salvaged as image, as allegories of a historical real that is not itself retrievable but stands in dialectical relation to a temporary and impermanent present.

The apocalyptic narrativity of *Tribulation 99* is generated through the accumulated conflicting narratives of which each image is a mere fragment. Although the fabrication of memory is emblematic of the simulated history of postmodern culture, Baldwin's film does not foment a historical amnesia. It is not a film about forgetting. Both the verbal narration and the visual montage recall a tremendous amount of information. The problem is of assembling a coherent history, but by deliberately rendering the history incoherent, Baldwin invokes the inadequacy of narrative representation to historical struggle. That struggle



becomes, instead, a contest in and of representation, even if in this particular film it is one that is ultimately lost to a narrative closure of Christian redemption and satanic damnation.

How would the "time of the other" differ from the hierarchization of time that informs colonialist anthropology? In his rhetoric of "invasion" in the quoted epigraph to this chapter, Fabian offers a clue to how the found-footage film might function as a counternarrative to the denial of coevalness. By means of juxtaposition, fragmentation, and interruption, the archival film brings past, present, and future into a new nonlinear temporality. Found footage literalizes the salvage paradigm, making each rescued image into an allegorical form of representation, a ruin, in Benjamin's words, of another time. It is important that the answer to "the denial of coevalness" is not simply a lapse into a perpetual present that might obliterate the traces of cultural memory. This is the danger with which *Tribulation 99* flirts, and to which it ultimately succumbs.

If one of the major thrusts of the contemporary critique of anthropology is its implicit theory of history, dialectical images and archival film practices offer a means of interrupting and disrupting the salvage paradigm. The filmic image always contains a dual temporality: the time of filming is a coeval time, but the time of viewing an edited film will necessarily be later, rendering the image as past tense. It is in this sense that the cinema has contributed to the denial of coevalness by which anthropology has constructed its object, the Other.⁴⁵ While narrative and documentary codes tend to cover up this difference, found-footage filmmaking feeds on it.

Handsworth Songs: The Trauma of History

As a found-footage film, *Handsworth Songs* mobilizes the archive quite differently than the films discussed in the previous section. In its commitment to historical struggle and its exploration of identity politics, this film seeks to re-present the imagery of the past in the interest of a transformed future. Lacking the cynicism of *Atomic Café* and *Tribulation 99*, and without the total melancholia of *A Movie* or *Night and Fog*, this is an attempt to construct a text of cultural memory. In its fragmentary and multilayered form, it responds to the difficult, complex, and violent construction of diasporic Black subjectivities in Thatcher's En-

sensation, even if in this
t to a narrative closure of

from the hierarchization
? In his rhetoric of "in-
er, Fabian offers a clue to
as a counternarrative to
tion, fragmentation, and
esent, and future into a
eralizes the salvage para-
torical form of represen-
time. It is important that
mply a lapse into a per-
of cultural memory. This
d to which it ultimately

rary critique of anthro-
cal images and archival
disrupting the salvage
temporality: the time
ing an edited film will
tense. It is in this sense
of coevalness by which
then.⁴⁶ While narrative
ference, found-footage

izes the archive quite
is section. In its com-
t of identity politics,
st in the interest of a
ic *Café* and *Tribula-*
e or *Night and Fog*,
ory. In its fragmen-
cult, complex, and
es in Thatcher's En-

gland.⁴⁶ Its ethnographic aspect is thus deeply grounded in questions of representing race, nationhood, and community. The historical referents of the found footage are described as "ghosts" who haunt the present, as the film's most evocative slogan implies: "There are no stories in the riots, only the ghosts of other stories."

The riots in question are those of Handsworth and Broadwater Farm, suburbs of Birmingham, in 1985, with echoes of those that took place in Brixton in 1981. The apocalypticism of this film belongs to a specific historical moment of a specific social formation. Black Audio Film Collective, who produced *Handsworth Songs* in 1985, is a workshop that was formed in 1983. The group came together to produce films for and about the Black community in Britain, and its members—John Akomfrah, Reece Augiste, Eddie George, Lina Gopaul, Avril Johnson, and Trevor Mathison—are all graduates of sociology and communication theory programs. Well versed in the cultural studies theory of Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, and Homi Bhabha, these filmmakers sought to challenge the conventions of representing Blacks in the British media.⁴⁷ Particularly concerned about the prevailing image of dangerous and violent Black youth that emerged from the riots of the 1980s, they felt the need not to "correct" the representation of Blacks but to excavate the imagery of Blacks in Britain and interrupt its historical trajectory.

Among the fragmented imagery of *Handsworth Songs* is original footage shot by the collective, and also TV newsreel footage of the riots. Juxtaposed with film clips of Caribbean immigrants arriving in England in the 1950s, the events of the early 1980s also become history. A historical narrative of failed promise and thwarted ambition is obliquely implied, but not as a simple, linear story. Moving back and forth between historical periods, most of which are undated and uncredited but speak through their various production values and media aesthetics, the collage is deliberately poetic and romantic. The technique of "poeticizing every image"—through selection, juxtaposition, and music—was a means of countering the truth-values of the authoritative discourses of British TV newsreels from which much of the footage is borrowed. At the same time, despite the title that promises a kind of elegiac aesthetic, the film's romanticism is deeply fissured and fractured. The film's director, John Akomfrah, says of this strategy: "The triumphalist vision of race and community operates on the assumption that there is essentially a core of affect that is structured around oratory, around song—giving

it an irreducible unity—which wasn't present in the film. It played with it, at some stages discards it, it takes it on board, then it says it's probably not possible, . . . but the film doesn't fix its sentiments around it."⁴⁸

Along with several other films by Black Audio and Sankofa (another Black filmmaking collective formed in the 1980s), *Handsworth Songs* generated a debate about the role of avant-garde techniques in Black filmmaking. The fragmentary decentered aesthetic was felt by many to be inappropriate to the filmmakers' responsibility to produce "positive images" of the community.⁴⁹ Black Audio's articulate defense of their choice of aesthetics excludes any claim to a heritage within the avant-garde. Instead, they point to television culture, with its fast-paced editing, nonnarrative structures, and radical juxtapositions, as an important source of experiments with cinematic realism.⁵⁰ Moreover, the question of identity within the diasporic Black community is one of radical dislocation. The multiplicity of cultural histories from which diasporic identity is constructed, or positioned, is strongly evoked by the collage form of *Handsworth Songs*.

The archival imagery includes both newsreel footage and more informal shots that have a home-movie aesthetic. Immigrants arriving on boats and planes, social dancing, schoolchildren, families and wedding photos, all depict "community" as a network of images that are lost to the past. In several instances, still photos are posted in a studio setting, and the camera moves past and around them, graphically depicting the distance and difference between then and now. The museological frame renders these photos as monuments to a past beyond reach. In this respect, *Handsworth Songs* exemplifies Andreas Huyssen's argument that the museum has been transformed in postmodernity as "a space for creative forgetting." If the museum once stood in opposition to an avant-garde that demanded a complete break with a fossilized past, the museum is now fully part of the society of the spectacle, offering "an alternative to channel flicking that is grounded in the materiality of the exhibited objects and in their temporal aura."⁵¹ "In relation to the increasing capacity of data banks, which can be seen as the contemporary version of the American ideology of 'more is better,' the museum would be rediscovered as a space for creative forgetting. The idea of the comprehensive data bank and the information superhighway is just as incompatible with memory as the television image is with material reality" (34).

Unlike most found-footage filmmaking, *Handsworth Songs* evokes

the "museal gaze" to enhance the "auratic effect" of archival photography. Remembering the Caribbean immigrants and factory workers who came to Britain in the 1950s and 1960s is depicted as a difficult but strategic task in the construction of the diasporic subject looking back from the distance of the present. The film footage of factory workers and children is dominated by close-ups of faces, individuating those who populated the past, permanently caught within an ethnographic gaze. In the context of the violence of the 1980s, that gaze is decentered and inscribed as a discourse of race. One black-and-white sequence in which a woman finally turns and swings her handbag at a camera that has been following her underlines the contest over the gaze implied in so much of the archival footage. Another sequence of a fully assimilated black man who has accepted his subservient role in British society as a uniformed guard is offered as a site of subjectivity and identification that is highly ambiguous. His faith in the icons of British industrialism and national culture is depicted in the film fragment as highly fictional and staged — which is not to say that it is not a true story.

Intercut with this rich archival material are interviews with Margaret Thatcher and other politicians, as well as footage that is best described as marginal to the mainstream news media. Disrespectful of the conventions of the TV interview, angry members of the Black community challenge politicians on the street or speak their minds directly to the camera. Interviews with formally seated members of the Black and Asian communities imply a social formation quite separate from that of official British politics. Instead of a televised public forum, we get only the elaborate preparations for a TV show that will clearly make any real dialogue impossible. The explanations for the riots are multiple, conflicting, and incomplete. The riots themselves are represented mainly by a massive police presence, burning cars, and a shot of a boy with dreadlocks being chased and tackled by policemen. This particular shot of street violence is precisely the kind of image that has contested political meanings and significance; repeated in slow motion, in the collage context, it becomes a signifier available to different mobilizations with no original, essential meaning.⁵² As a documentary of the Handsworth riots, the film forces the question of representation into the foreground. For example, Cynthia Jarrett's daughter describes how her mother died after being accosted by police, but neither the speaker nor the incident is shown. Instead, as she speaks, we see the outside of a dull gray apartment building with a crew of disappointed photographers gazing at it.



by Black Audio Film

One of the themes that links the heterogeneous fragments of *Handsworth Songs* is the role of industry in the construction of the British subject, and its importance for the problematic alignment of race and class in late-twentieth-century Britain. The Anglican hymn "Jerusalem," which was written in the nineteenth century with lyrics by William Blake, is about the utopian memory of a preindustrial England. It is heard twice in *Handsworth Songs*, the first time in a sampled reggae version by Mark Stewart and the Mafia, over news headlines describing Handsworth as "the bleeding heart of England." (In this and other points in the film, Black Audio suggest an allegiance with the sampling techniques of Afro-Caribbean popular music.) When "Jerusalem" is played again toward the end of the film, the hymn is played in a more churchlike spirit over shots of an industrial wasteland, workers' row housing, and various arched railroad tunnels. Black Audio's appropriation of this particular song is a means of posing the question of the redemption of the black working class in Britain, and they map another memory onto its redemptive strains—the pastoral scene of the Caribbean homeland. The film is completed by a series of images of fire, street demonstrations, a repetition of the boy being captured by police, and, finally, old footage of Black and Asian immigrants arriving full of hope. In the final shot, a woman walks away from the camera into a street walled by red bricks.

Despite the lyricism of *Handsworth Songs*, the film still has something of the apocalyptic sense of other found-footage films. However, in this case, it is linked to a redemptive aesthetic. There is a salvage paradigm at work here, which is best described as a redemption of history within a culture of simulation and amnesia. As a history of fiction, images, and disjunctive stories, it is an allegorical form of history in which the real remains outside, in the form of ghosts. The use of archival and newsreel footage constitutes a mediascape from which Black British subjectivity might be constructed. Outside the essentialism of nationhood, cultural identity depends on retelling, not reproducing, the past. The distinction is critical. As Stuart Hall explains, "Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant trans-formation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power."⁵³ In the retelling of the past, it is important that it does not slip into a simulacral, fabricated image sphere cut off from the historical real. (This is the lesson of *Tribulation 99*.) Thus

the invocation of the museal gaze, along with romantic lyricism, works within the fissures of the image bank to render the phantasmagoria allegorical.

Handsworth Songs suggests how found-footage filmmaking can function as a form of experimental ethnography that challenges the modernist temporality of "progress" in which ethnography and cinematic representation are conventionally bound. We have seen how the collage style of filmmaking tends toward an apocalyptic "end of history." With the amnesiac erasure of historical referentiality, an aesthetic of simulation entails a collapse of historical time as a theory of priority, teleology, and hierarchy. When there is nothing to remember, there is nothing to overcome; when there is no depth to representation, there is nothing lost and nothing to redeem. This postmodern condition, however, reconstructs the real outside representation, as an other order of temporality and history. In cutting the present off from the past, amnesiac culture is also allegorical, producing the possibility of dialectical images in which past and present might correspond in new, nonlinear ways. Once the postmodern image bank is recognized as a cultural data bank, its materials might be reformed, through appropriation, for new forms of memory. *Handsworth Songs* demonstrates the potential role of nonlinear memory for the positioning of postcolonial subjectivities and diasporic culture.

Between Photography and Television

Taken together, the films discussed in this chapter delineate an ethnographic discourse that is founded on traumatic histories of exploitation, colonization, and appropriation. From the excesses of the society of the spectacle, the fabric of "coverage" is ripped apart to produce a historiography of radical memory in which the indexicality of the image resists the symbolization of progressive, "natural" historicism. This is what I have described as the inscription of the time of the Other. Whereas the breakdown of the defense mechanism of "coverage" constitutes a melancholia of loss in the 1950s, in the 1980s "the power of remembrance" is challenged by the other time of randomly accessed memory traces. It is significant in this respect that films such as *Tribulation 99*, Baldwin's *RocketKitKongoKit* (1986), *Handsworth Songs*, and many other films and videos of the last fifteen years address issues of colonial culture by means of archival imagery. The crisis of representation may have become asso-

ciated with the "end of history," but it may also be an important means of challenging the teleological historiography of progress with a discourse of singularities, contingencies, and dispersed histories.

After all, the shocks of modernity must include the multiculturalism of the global crowd. If colonialism is a closed, linear system in which the discourses of power, cultural imperialism, and racial hierarchies have cohered as a defense mechanism against the threat of the Other, Benjamin's theory of memory, time, and allegorical representation might be the point at which the time of the Other interrupts the system. As the visual evidence of progress, ethnography operated as a salvage paradigm within a system of remembrance. But within the context of failed progress and unreliable representation, the ethnographic takes on a new role as a historical counterpoint to the linear historiography of colonial time.

The Other haunts found-footage filmmaking in the form of ghosts, lingering just "below" or outside the images of people drawn from long-forgotten narratives. In the radical decontextualization of montage, the ethnographic subject is cast out of narrative and takes up a position outside the teleological thrust of historical "progress." The apocalyptic tenor of found-footage films points back to the singular status of the body in the archive,⁵⁴ and a fragmented social history that resists the linear unfolding of filmic time. Once the retrieval and recycling of images has transformed the imaginary space of memory into a randomly accessed data bank, images may be properly dialectical, inscribed with forgetting as a radical form of the Other.

It is tempting to think of archival practices as a kind of archaeology, and yet what is immediately evident in these films is that found footage is a discourse of surfaces. Origins and sources are effaced, producing an image sphere with a highly ambivalent relation to history. *Atomic Café* and *Tribulation 99* both embrace the kitsch aesthetic of a lack of depth,⁵⁵ but it is precisely that surface quality that renders found footage particularly ethnographic. The limits of visual evidence render the profilmic as a cultural space outside representation. All images become documentary images once their original contexts are stripped away; in being repositioned within another serial organization of images, they document an Other time and place.

Film seems to aspire to the condition of photography in these texts, and yet the breakdown of cinematic temporality also invokes the multiplicity and redundancy of television. The cinema in found-footage

filmmaking falls between the memorial function of photography and the amnesia of tv culture. Filmmakers such as Thornton, Conner, Baldwin, and the Black Audio Film Collective have found ways of mobilizing this ambivalence for their different experimental ethnographic practices. Once cinematic space and time are broken down into the terms of the Other mediums of photography and television, those practices can then be appropriated as techniques of memory construction. Wrenched from the individual, memory becomes a kind of forgetting that is insistently social and historical, and it becomes a form of allegorical representation.

The techniques that produce the radical ambiguity of found-footage filmmaking are those of juxtaposition and irony. Through allegory, archival cinema enacts a dialectic of "original" and "copy" in which the body belongs to the parallel universe of the original footage, cut off from — indeed annihilated from — the appropriated image and its machine of modernity. As a form of recovery, found footage renders culture not as a lost property but as an image sphere in which the real is found in a new form. Once the salvage paradigm is allegorized and rendered uncanny, the Other is relocated in a history that is not vanishing but exceeds and transcends representation, resisting its processes of reification.