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Strategies of representation in South African anti-apartheid documentary film and video from 1976 to 1995

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I will return now to the discussion about the apparent victimisation of Eddie Jakobs and his family, and how the documentary does not ultimately enable the viewer to place this in a broader political context. Unlike *The Peacemakers* where there was a finely tuned overlapping of the personal with the political, admittedly provided by the choice of the event itself, here the complexity of the political is lost and the viewer is left with only a few shreds of contextual evidence. This is not enough to lift the documentary from the level of the personal and this therefore is where it stays. To remake the point in a more theoretical way: the historical axis is never sufficiently exposed for it to be a player in the understructure of the documentary. Hence, when the narrative closes, history closes. The viewer might however be left with some questions as to what might have happened to the 'characters' of the 'story' but there are no gaps opened by the documentary itself that enable the viewer to consider options towards some form of transformation of the situation that has been presented. In effect, it is a kind of 'slice-of-life' documentary, where the individual subjects are represented as being at the mercy of forces that are far larger than they can or do comprehend. They are in a word, victims. By extension the viewer too is a 'victim' of what he or she is watching without more contextual detail. There is one 'character' though who as a 'speaking subject' partially redeems the documentary from being entirely depleted of historical context. This is the farmer's son. Some examples of how this happens follow.

In one of the kitchen scenes, where the son speaks to the camera in mid-shot, he makes the point that he is angry because since 1986 the bank has made 1.1 million rands on a loan of four hundred and twenty thousand rands. Furthermore, he continues, about half the loan is still owing. Here, fairly early in the documentary following the brief voice-over narration that introduced the issue at the very beginning, we have some commentary on the broader contextual issues from the point of view of a 'victim'. This commentary is reinforced later when at the auction the son

turns to the camera and, as if in a whispering collusion with the cameraperson, points out a particular man on the stand as being from the Rand Bank. 'He looks for me like a vulture (sic)' he comments, as he turns away again. On another occasion he is seen in discussion with a farmer making the comment that politics plays the biggest role in the structuring of agriculture. If it were not for these comments the documentary would be entirely depleted of the broader socio-political context that frames it.

Before leaving this documentary and moving on to *The Night Shift*, it is important to extend the point I raised earlier in this analysis of *The Tooth of the Times*, about the fact that although the documentary is centrally the farmer's 'story' it is also a representation of the victimisation of the labourer by the same circumstances. Linked with this is the choices of the filmmakers to thread details from the labourer as 'speaking subject' into the farmer's 'story'. This 'speaking' on his part, within the strategies of representation that are now familiar to us, provides evidence of his virtual enslavement.

One of these occasions is immediately prior to the farmer visiting him. Here, Fanie Letsime comments: 'I was earning ninety rand per month and that's when I started getting ill and then I didn't get any money. All he gives me is a sack of mielies and milk'. At this point the farmer arrives. His arrival and what he says is viewed mostly from Fanie Letsime's perspective, undermining his subjectivity. In relation to his tragedy - the loss of his home and in effect his land since he has lived there all his life, his ancestors are buried there, and he has worked the land himself - the words and tears of the farmer are no longer moving, rather they seem somewhat trite. There are two further moments in the documentary which have the effect of representing the victimisation of the labourer. One of these is when he points to the gravestones of his ancestors in a field and then unexpectedly turns his commentary into a prayer to them: 'Fathers, mothers, grandmothers, members of the Letsime family...remember me too!

Give me good fortune...You can see I am suffering. My baas is lost, and I am left alone'. The poignancy of this moment is extreme, for the gravestones are barely visible, on the other side of a fence, in very tall grass, untended. And the inextricable tie between the farmer's circumstances and Fanie Letsime's circumstances is palpable. What happens to the farmer, happens to Mr. Letsime, but not the other way around.

The other of these moments is when Fanie Letsime is represented in an interior shot within his dwelling, walking towards the camera on his crutches and saying: 'Who will build a house for me? ...They are tearing down the house. There's no other way. No-one will take pity on me. Who'll help me? No-one'. The camera has tilted down as he walks to show his bare feet. This underlines the vulnerability of which he speaks. By comparison, we hear from the farmer's son that his father will be renting the house from the Land Bank, so although he is about to be liquidated he is still able to stay in his home. His wife's comment that 'now there is no plaas' is therefore not true in this context. Ideologically, the documentary proposes a comparison between the farmer and the labourer - visually, their dwellings are compared, and their words about their futures are compared. The narrative is framed by the farmer as 'character' but the details of the 'story' are not his alone. Ultimately the more extreme case of victimisation is that of the labourer.

In this discussion of *The Tooth of the Times* a number of points have been highlighted. The relationship between the 'speaking subject' and 'non-speaking subject' has been identified, specifically in the context of its incorporation into the series' formula of strategies of representation. This episode has in addition revealed that the filmmakers inserted ideologically-based image choices which counteracted the inordinate identification with one subject, in this case the farmer. This is not to suggest that images are ideology-free but rather to reflect on how ideological

consciousness powerfully shapes and re-shapes the visualisation of subjectivities in documentary. The filmmaker reveals, allows to surface, her consciousness of her ideological position.

This analysis has also shown how, when the documentary is tied exclusively to the subjects chosen and their immediate locale or context, they themselves may not provide sufficient information on the broader political context. Without this, as we have seen in *The Tooth of the Times*, the subjects become victims of unidentified forces that exist amorphously beyond the frame. In this case the historical axis is limited and the viewer's ability to perceive any prospects of transformation, let alone have agency within them, is subsequently also truncated. The question here becomes: does the documentary have value?

One way of answering this is to say first of all that the effect of limiting the historical axis in *The Tooth of the Times*, is that the resultant strength of the narrative axis heightens the sense of the subjects being 'characters'. It is in this way that the issue of stereotyping comes into play. In *The Tooth of the Times* the stereotype of the white farmer is at best opened up - he is given shape and form; at worst, the stereotype is reinforced. But even so, the opportunity to delve in a personalised way into the life and experiences of a white farmer, and tied into this of a black farm labourer, is valuable for viewers. South African historical realities presented in this new way, from an extremely subjectivised perspective, were significant interventions into the ways in which identities had been perceived up to that point in television. If it made possible the loosening up of strict categorisations of people from firm stereotypical moulds then it had value in and of itself. That the representations in this particular part of the series limited the historical axis is in part a wasted opportunity. At the same time however the fact that the exposure of the farmer's personalised sense of his

own misfortune allows for the representation of the greater tragedy in relation to the labourer, is significant.

I will now move onto another part of the series to explicate further how the formulaic elements of the *Ordinary People* series were applied, and to what effect. Here we will see how the strategies of representation in the *Ordinary People* series open up ethical questions with regard to the representation of victims of rape and abuse, and how these questions reflect back on the choice of strategies themselves.

The Night Shift

In contrast to *The Tooth of the Times* it is valuable to assess critically a part of the 1994 series called *The Night Shift* for a number of reasons. First, the question of stereotyping is again important for in this part the three 'ordinary people' are, a policeman, a bar owner/ex-gangster and an ambulance driver. It is with regard to the two former 'characters' that stereotypes come into play, and, with regard especially to the policeman, that they are potentially reinforced. Second, this notion of stereotyping can be linked to the context within which this night shift occurs - Soweto. The stereotype of Soweto as 'crime capital of the world' is upheld. This is explicit in the documentary's introduction. At the same time however, the combination of experience of these three people, especially the ambulance driver and the policeman, provides a window onto Soweto that is unmatched in documentary film and video. The statement 'crime capital of the world' is turned over and its insides scoured out. Third, an examination of how this documentary's 'voice' is developed extends the discussion thus far on questions of 'voice'. Fourth, the incidents to which the ambulance service or police are called include the rape of an elderly woman, and a case of child abuse, which raise ethical questions about documentary.

I will now critically assess the documentary in relation to these points. The first point on stereotyping needs to be examined in conjunction with the idea of representation of the personal-political. The policeman's position in the documentary usefully exemplifies this. Towards the end of the night, driving his car, in a shot from just behind his shoulder, looking at him in profile, he comments: 'I don't think any policeman really sleeps well at night. We relive our past experiences...you dream about chasing cars, people shooting at you...the pressures just gets too much (sic)...we've had a couple of suicides here...where policemen just shot themselves, very tragic, two guys this year committed suicide'. There's a sense that this policeman is not able, or willing, to talk about himself. The closest he comes to doing so is in this commentary but where he begins to make a personal point, he quickly moves from 'we' to the more impersonal 'you'. The same thing occurs in his language when he speaks about his fear of ambushes - in the more objective comment he uses 'I': 'I'm always on the alert for ambushes...', but as soon as his commentary could go deeper into his own personal views he switches to the impersonal 'you': '...when you get ambushed, the guy that ambushes you, he's got the upper hand'. Unlike the policeman Clive in *The Peacemakers* we do not see him in his personal domestic space, nor is there any matching of the shot that introduces the ambulanceman, where we see him kissing a woman goodbye as he leaves home. Rather the shot that introduces him is at the Protea police station where a group of police gather in a circle around a room to pray before going on duty. In itself it is a rather impersonal context. The police are led by commands through the steps of standing to attention, removing their caps, holding them to their chests, and bowing their heads. The prayer is then recited in Afrikaans: 'Lord let us come together as a unit tonight. Protect us in our work under difficult circumstances. Guard our loved ones back home' (as translated in the sub-titles). Once the prayer is said they are then led by commands through the task of preparing their guns. This 'context' reflects the nature of the hierarchical structure of the police force, and portrays it as authoritarian and indeed deeply

de-personalised.

Despite his inability to personalise himself, however, this policeman is given an extraordinarily human face in the documentary, leading the viewer to wonder how much of this is because the camera is watching him. For example, there is a scene where he approaches a car, gun in hand as he drives towards it. It is here that he makes the comment about fearing ambushes. From his point of view, established by an over-shoulder shot, through the windscreen we see the driver of the vehicle emerge with his hands up. The policeman then approaches him and comments: 'But you seem to be a little bit under the influence of liquor'. After establishing where the man lives he says: 'you must drive very very carefully home huh, very carefully, OK', and allows the man to leave. In the context of experiences of police brutality, especially in places like Soweto, this scene is virtually unbelievable. Another reading inherent in the scene however is that this is genuinely the policeman's response whether the camera is present or not. There is after all a limit to how much a person can play act especially under pressure. In this case, the stereotypical view of police as inhumane and unjust, is refuted. In either case, the inclusion of this scene in the documentary is cause for discussion or thought on the part of viewers, and thus makes it a significant segment of the documentary and the subjectivities it seeks to portray. There is however a further concern with this scene, which is that in effect it was dangerous to allow this man to drive home under the influence of alcohol. In a similar scene in another episode called *Sebokeng by Night*, a white man is discovered lost in Sebokeng driving under the influence of alcohol. On this occasion the man is driven out of the township to a police station by a policeman. On the basis of this comparison, the question arises: Had the man in *The Night Shift* been white would he have been allowed to drive home alone? On the other hand, there is also a sense that in relation to the life and death incidents that are dealt with through the night, someone driving in a slightly intoxicated state is not to be and cannot be given a great deal of attention.

So in relation to the stereotypical view of policemen there is a quite complex set of viewer responses set up in *The Night Shift* with regard to this scene - anxiety and intrigue to see how the policeman will deal with this man, relief that he does not treat him brutally, then disbelief that he does not do so, followed by a concern that the man is in fact left to drive off alone.

Let us look next at how Godfrey Moloi, the ex-bootlegger and gangster, now running a night-club in Soweto, is represented in relation to this issue of stereotypes and on the line of the personal-political. Given that the theme of this documentary is Soweto as the crime capital of the world it is this subject, Moloi, (and the ambulance driver, in different ways which I will come to shortly) who most directly addresses the theme. This is significant coming from him because he has been a gangster himself. But what happens here is that the interface of his past with the comments he makes about crime brings into the open the racialised basis of South African society. Reflecting on his exploits in the past and the attitudes then to crime he comments: 'You should prove you're a man, you've got a plak, you've got a nerve. Go to the whites there they've got guns...go to town and pickpocket in town. Open the bag of the missus and take, take out the money...those were the great guys, the things we honoured'. So here the ability to pickpocket whites is applauded[5]. On the other hand however he makes the further point that '...if you gonna start pickpocketing next door, I mean, it was a shame at that time. But now there's no more shame'. Later on he makes the further point that 'the South African house is out of order, it's out of control'. Thus, from the subjective perspective of one who himself has been a criminal we hear concern for the way things are not only in Soweto but also in the country as a whole. The problem with this subjectivity however is that it too has an

[5] In the South African feature film *Mapantsula* (1988) the scenes where the chief protagonist Panic takes the wallet of a white man at knife-point and where he and a friend attempt to snatch the handbag of a white woman are visual reflections of this perspective.

air of unbelievability to it. This is because Godfrey Moloi was a township gangster, and one is not so convinced that he in fact made the distinction that he now claims to have honoured. In another Free Film Makers documentary *Freedom Square and the Back of the Moon* made in 1987, which uses interviews with former gangsters, this distinction is made differently. Indeed the point is made in this documentary by an ex-gangster, Don Mattera, on gangster violence, that 'it was now becoming introverted violence in which we were hurting and killing our own people'[6]. So Godfrey Moloi's comments here in *The Night Shift* do not hold.

There is little sense of this subject's point-of-view in the visual elements of *The Night Shift*, except for one or two shots where the camera follows him in the street on the way to his saloon, or drives with him in his car. Hence his words as a 'speaking subject' become very important. Without these his perspective would hardly be represented. In effect his words stand in as his point-of-view because there is little else in the form of his representation. Even the mise-en-scene of his speaking is limited, apart from the street shots. In one scene where he speaks he sits at the bar drinking a glass of beer alone. In the other he sits in what looks like an office at the saloon, with the sound of the saloon's music playing over the image. Both times he is in mid-shot, so in fact the viewer sees little of the mise-en-scene. His point-of-view is however at least underlined by the fact that he speaks virtually direct to camera, thereby engaging the viewer in his words as his. Given the limited strategies of representation that accompany his presence in the documentary this is important. But what most limits his representation is that nothing happens to him or around him all night. He simply goes to the saloon, has a beer, and sits in his office briefly. As a 'character' he is unidimensional and uninteresting, a fact that is redeemed, but only

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[6] In *Freedom Square and the Back of the Moon* the point Don Mattera makes is in relation to the ANC's concerns at the time to stop Sophiatown residents fighting with each other and to incorporate gangsters into the fight for political freedom.

slightly, by his comments on pickpocketing highlighted earlier. Without these comments and their particular relationship to political issues, the predictability of his representation as an ex-bootlegger and gangster almost entirely in the context of the nightclub he now runs, would weaken the documentary.

By contrast the representation of the ambulanceman is strongly textured. We 'meet' him first in his home, then follow him on the way to work, getting an insight into his friendliness as he arrives there, at the same time hearing in a voice-over how he would have liked to be a lawyer, and how ultimately he likes his work because he always wanted to work with people. The scenes we follow with him through the night provide close insight into how he responds on a human level to the crises with which he is confronted. This 'ordinary' person is in fact extraordinarily committed to his job, and to the people with whom he comes into contact. Because of the intimacy of his representation in comparison with that of the policeman or the night-club owner, a certain air of authenticity accompanies his actions. To some degree this is because he is in a helping role anyway, whereas the policeman would like to be seen as helping, but has a legacy of police brutality to overturn. He is also a target for the anger of the community, which makes him afraid, always in possession of a gun, never free to communicate humanly without protection. The ambulanceman is by contrast not fighting any stereotypes, at least image-wise. This arguably makes it possible for the film to develop his 'ordinary' persona. But it also means, as I will show, that his political commentary is extremely significant.

It is through the subjective perspective of the ambulanceman that we experience Soweto by night. His is literally a hands-on experience. Through his eyes we see the effects of the violence on the streets, mostly violence that remains unaccounted for. In each individual case there seems to be confusion, uncertainty, lack of knowledge and information. The darkness of the night-time images seems to symbolise the blanket of

darkness on the reasons for the violence we see. One after another these violent incidents exacerbate the sense that there is no way out. But, and this is where the ambulanceman's subjectivity is crucial, the questions posed by the ambulanceman direct us towards possible causes and solutions. And because of the ways in which we have been exposed to his work, his comments have a respectability, that the same comments from say, the policeman, would not have.

An important example of the ambulanceman's views on the violence is when he comments: 'if the government doesn't do anything about it crime rate will still be on its legs...in fact I think the solution to...the curbing of crime rate is the introduction of employment...What makes crime rate to escalate is unemployment...But should everyone...get a job I think crime rate will drop. And that is the duty, definitely it is the duty of the government, to create jobs' (sic). This comment is especially meaningful because it follows a high-speed dash in the ambulance with a man who has been shot for reasons that cannot be established and is driven into Baragwanath Hospital (now called Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital) in a critical condition. The last we see of him is when he is wheeled from the ambulance on a stretcher into a section of the hospital called 'Resuscitation Unit'. It seems he is either dead or dying.

There are important visual aspects of this drive into the hospital and of the process of the stretcher being pushed into and through the hospital, that relate to the notion of 'blurred boundaries' between documentary and fiction. In other words, and in the instances that follow, the documentary filmmakers appropriate strategies of representation that are conventionally fictional ones, to entrench the perspectives and meanings they seek to make within the realm of historical reality. First, the drive into hospital is represented primarily through the eyes of the ambulanceman by over-shoulder, profile shots as the ambulance speeds towards the hospital with a police escort in front of it. There is a cut-away in this sequence to an image in close-up of a

screen recording a graph of the patient's condition with the sound of sirens over it. Here, the documentary draws on the generic conventions of fictionalised television hospital dramas to heighten the sense that this is a life-and-death situation. Second, when the stretcher is wheeled through the hospital, the filmmakers take the opportunity both to keep the shot wide so that the corridors filled with people waiting are seen, and to cut-away to images of people waiting for treatment. Reminiscent of Wiseman's documentary film *Hospital* (1969), a critique of the hospital as institution, the camera pans in mid-shot across people bleeding from various wounds, and lying on trolleys roughly covered over in a blanket, bandaged, some of them curled up asleep. These inter-textual images, in some senses extraneous to the core of the incidents we are following, visually (and aurally) plumb their depths. In doing so, they provide a broader tapestry for the political critique presented by the ambulanceman.

In another moment driving between calls the ambulanceman comments on how they try to respond to the calls as quickly as possible, but because there is a shortage of staff it is very difficult to get to people sometimes. By now, we have seen how one of the calls to which he responds, is for a man who has died. The implication in his comment is that had they been a little earlier, had there been more staff, he may not have died. This relates to a comment made earlier that at this point in the documentary is all the more significant: '...Jo'burg has got more ambulances than Soweto...they are more staffed than us and...Jo'burg is smaller than Soweto. But I don't know why it's like that'. The cut away from his comment after 'I don't know why' is another advance on the documentary's processes that engage the viewer into a relationship of critical judgement with it, for here, in part because of the conversational manner in which the comment is made - it is as if the viewer is seated alongside him in the ambulance - she or he is drawn to continue the conversation, to respond to him.

The ambulanceman's critique that embraces the broader political context is an aspect of *The Night Shift* that is given added substance by the filmmaker's use of commentary from people at the sites of the incidents to which the ambulanceman is called. At the scene of the shooting, a woman who voluntarily holds up the drip for the ambulanceman, on being asked by an off-camera interviewer "What do you think of this sort of thing?" comments: 'This is very unacceptable and it's terrible'. At the home of the woman who has been raped, a woman comments to the camera: 'We're scared to go out at night because we'll be attacked. When we call the police, they take their time getting here'. The son of the woman who has been raped comments: 'The situation in Soweto is bad. People are not safe. People are dying. This is not the first time this happens'. Stylistically, when these commentaries are presented it is as if we are watching television news. This elevates these events to issues that have news value and are therefore of national concern. But there is an important difference between the way these commentaries are presented and national news. Although we hear an interviewer we never see him and we also never return to an anchor person in a studio as we do in television news[7]. The chain of what could be seen as a kind of visual deference from one level to another, which has the effect of closing off each news item as a unique 'story' in a conventional news format, is broken here. The effect of this is that each of these incidents 'bleeds over' into the others. The 'story' is much bigger than just one of these incidents.

It is in fact the ambulanceman who makes the final comment on each incident. We have already seen the significance of his comments after getting the shooting victim to hospital, on the government's responsibility to provide employment and the effect he believes this would have on the crime rate. We have also seen how his comments on the differences between the number of ambulances in Johannesburg and Soweto

[7] For details of these conventions with regard to how they provide 'proof' to the viewer see Nichols (1981:174-178).

engage the viewer. After attending to the woman who has been raped and driving her to hospital he comments: 'I don't know what comes into the youth's mind. We're talking about freedom. We said we want freedom but - I don't know what freedom we're talking about if we still do barbaric things like (pause) that one'. There are two important points to make here. First, with regard to the news conventions used, although the ambulanceman is given the power to make the final comment on each incident, as an anchor person would be, his comments do not close off the 'story' because he is an active agent or 'character' in the bigger 'story' of *The Night Shift*. So the events/incidents build through the narrative, unlike conventional news programmes. Second, the ambulanceman's comments act against the potential for closure in the narrative, because they refer to the broader historical reality. They also infer processes that might begin to provide solutions. But they do not only place responsibility with authority or the government, as in the comment about unemployment and the crime rate. They also place responsibility with ordinary people. This is exemplified by this comment on the relationship between the desire for freedom and violence.

The ways in which *The Night Shift* draws in and reflects upon historical context is analysed above in parallel with the discussion of each subject and his position in the narrative. Broadly speaking the filmmaker weaves the thematic context of the documentary, crime in Soweto, into the subjective content of each individual 'character's' experience. The documentary's 'voice' takes shape simultaneously, until at the end of the documentary the axes of narrative and history rise to the surface through the documentary's textures, in the voice-over narration which notes, in a bland tone, the number of babies born on that night at Baragwanath Hospital - forty-seven in all. This knowledge and the way in which it is given, rubs against the images of Soweto on that night, leading the viewer to question the world into which these babies are being born. The world of the night shift we have seen is desperate, violent,

depraved - not a world that responds to the needs of infants nor by extension to common human needs.

The way in which the voice-over narration is used in this documentary opens up an important discussion on voice-over narration across the series. Overall there is a range of voice-overs used. Most often it is used minimally, the 'speaking' of the subjects being more significant. But each documentary has a voice-over narrator. In *The Night Shift* the voice-over narrator is Grethe Fox, an actress, who is white, and speaks English with an Afrikaans inflection. In the opening narration to the documentary, because of her identity position(s), and because we are looking at images of Soweto as she speaks, the sense evoked is an observational one, which carries through to the introduction of each subject. Her voice and the identity position(s) it symbolises, because it is not based from within Soweto, and in relation to the interiority of the rest of the documentary, is seemingly juxtaposed against the subject matter of the documentary. By the end of the documentary when she makes the point that forty-seven babies were born that night at Baragwanath Hospital, that particular voice making that comment heightens its effects most powerfully. This is precisely because her voice and the subjectivities it symbolises are in effect exterior to Soweto. The use of her voice engages the critical perceptions therefore of all those exterior to Soweto who do not know it. Those who do know it or who are black would presumably be engaged by the nature of the content. The use of voice-over narrations in *Ordinary People*, examined on the basis of identities, might also be seen as strategic, drawing in and engaging viewers who might otherwise hold themselves outside of the documentary. Certainly different voice-overs create different meanings but in practice, in the making of the *Ordinary People* series, it was most often a case of using the most available person for a voice-over without a great deal of thought[8].

[8] Gavshon, H. Personal discussion. Johannesburg, 6 June 1997.

In relation to *The Night Shift* there is one more point to be raised and this concerns the ethics surrounding the representation of the woman who was raped and the child abuse call. Earlier on I alluded to ways in which the use of commentary from observers or relatives at the scene of an incident elevated the incident to the level of news and therefore to being of national concern. In the same sense the reporting of these incidents has a special significance because rape and child abuse are so prevalent, but are seldom represented on television from the perspective of the victim. What is interesting here however, in *The Night Shift*, is that the rape victim and the child abuse victim have limited subjectivity in the documentary. From an ethical point of view this is problematic because we observe them, and yet we never see their points of view, in the visual sense that we see subjective viewpoints in this series. If we take each of these incidents in turn it will be possible to clarify exactly how the problematic ethical concerns are dealt with.

The call to the woman who has been raped is represented observationally. It is within the documentary's focus on the subjectivity of the ambulanceman that this scene is exploited, for we see him at work, caring for the woman who is raped and battered. We also hear his comments as the ambulance drives away, spoken over images of a tracking shot from his perspective, of houses in darkness on the street, concerning the relationship between the desire for freedom and these kinds of "barbaric acts". This comment is important for here he is opening up the perspectives on violence that the documentary represents. Not only is the crime rate the responsibility of the government but it is also the responsibility of the community, in this case, the youth. The fact that he makes the link between freedom and violence is especially significant, given the bringing to birth of the new democracy that is in process at that time.

This scene is also an opportunity to represent a range of perspectives from people at the scene. Here, we hear the son talking about what happened. This is the closest that the documentary comes to represent the perspective of the woman who has been raped. He also comments further on the violence, which earlier in this chapter I referred to in the discussion of the use of a news style in engaging with people at the scene. A woman also talks to the camera in this way. What disturbs however is that the viewer is in an observational 'looking at' mode in relation to the woman herself, which is extremely uncomfortable. This is mirrored by the shots that show others, including a number of men, looking at the woman. She is seated in a home, presumably her home since her son is there, so it is a domestic space and therefore private. But the shots reveal the entire lack of privacy. There is an additional disturbing factor. This is a kind of howling that can be heard, though its source is never seen. It could be crying it could even be laughing. It is never clear. In terms of the traumatic event that has occurred one has to assume that it is crying. In ethical terms presumably all the subjects represented gave their consent to be represented in the documentary and so therefore had some sense of its potential. The idea that this should be shown carries some weight, if it was agreed to by those affected. For in the showing, albeit observationally, the effects on ordinary human beings of the violence in Soweto can be witnessed. Had the interior perspective of the woman who was raped been achieved more strongly however, this would have balanced in a more equitable way the partially alienating effect of the voice-over narration. The use of multiple subjectivities, it would seem, at least at the level of ethics, now begins to create all kinds of problems. With this in mind let us look at the child abuse case.

The child abuse case is another call to which the policeman responds. Here the scene is very confused, and this is due to the way in which it is edited. It appears fragmented, incoherent. The shots do not follow the order in which the event occurred. On the other hand there is every probability that there was no order. Indeed,

the fragmented nature of the event is to some degree a result of the various perspectives that the camera tries to portray. The other cases do not have this incoherence however, they have a seamlessness which gives a comprehensive mini-narrative framework to each of them. Here it seems there is not enough narrative flow in the filming of the event to present this type of structuring, as if in the very filming it was not clear where to place the camera. Like in the rape case the space is privatised and domestic, but there are a lot of people apparently observing what has happened. The father who has apparently attempted to abuse his daughter is drunk, and seemingly inept. The camera takes his point of view at one point looking onto the scene where the policeman is standing in the living room trying to ascertain what has happened. The mother comes into the room at another point, also apparently drunk, crying and collapsing onto her daughter and a woman sitting alongside her. But in terms of subjectivities the father's perspective is most underlined by the over-shoulder camera, and it therefore draws the audience's sympathy towards him. Yet it is an intensely uncomfortable position for the spectator since he is the abuser. There is one shot however which represents the daughter's subjectivity most powerfully, primarily because it is an extreme close-up of her face in profile. Here she is positioned on the right of the frame, while in the background on the left of the frame we see the policeman sitting in mid-shot saying that the Child Protection Unit will be there in about an hour.

At another point the daughter speaks to the policeman about what happened. This shot represents his subjectivity. He is in a medium close-up with his head down, eyes closed, fingers pressed to his forehead, listening attentively as she speaks, and asking the child questions. It seems that he does not understand what she says: that in fact this is a case of sexual abuse, which is implied in the language the child uses to describe what happened. The sound of women's voices shouting out "Praat Pinkie, praat!" ("Talk Pinkie, talk!") is over much of the representation of this event. As if

the women are urging the child to reveal the element of sexual abuse. Finally, the policeman leads the father Charlie out through the kitchen to go and find the priest next door, the camera following behind them as they leave. How the priest plays a role is never explained. And the documentary moves on.

In these two cases the camera exposes, in a sense exteriorises from the interiority of the domestic space and the neighbourhood space, the depth of crime and violence that occurs in Soweto. And because the camera is participative within than space, observationally like one of the neighbours watching the scene, but also taking subjective positions, and hearing from some of those present as commentary to the camera and by extension to the viewer, what is usually merely statistics is given human dimensions never before seen on national television. From the perspective of the producers, the decision to make this documentary has to be on the basis that the privacies of those people affected by crime and violence will be exposed. Yet in the case of rape, sexual abuse and child abuse, the strategies used consciously to represent multiple subjectivities collapse upon themselves, at least in terms of ethical representation or on the vexed question of whose point-of-view is chiefly portrayed. The cinema verite style is pushed to its limits, binding the viewer and the participants in the event into the domestic, privatised space, never allowing the camera beyond its diegetic framework. Within this enclosed framework, the matter of whose point-of-view is represented is not clearly enough defined. And at the same time, the exposure of the faces behind the statistics, even though it is in a somewhat observational mode which reinforces conventional responses to such events, or is in sympathy with those who have perpetrated the abuse as in the child abuse case, is still a powerful (if uncomfortable) unmasking of the realities of crime and violence in Soweto.

To summarise the discussion on *The Night Shift*: I have focused on the ways in which the three main subjects are represented. In the framework of the strategies of the

Ordinary People series as a whole, the choice of subjects and more importantly the choices made about how they are represented within their own context and within the broader political context, is significant in terms of the extent to which the subjects are believable, they have an authenticity. This is not to propose that documentary filmmakers are bound for some nebulous, moral reason to represent an 'authentic' core that exists in a 'story'. We have already seen how futile an exercise this would be. And *Ordinary People*, in any case, reveals its attempts to refute the notion of a central, singular 'truth' or 'authenticity', by representing a number of subjective perspectives on the same event, issue or place. But it is because the series represents multiple subjectivities and does so on the basis of the concept of the 'speaking subject' (and the subjective camera), that this sense of believability (or non-believability) occurs. In the event that the stereotypical notion of the subject mitigates strongly against the representation of the subject in the documentary, the reading evoked may well ideologically tip the balance of the documentary and lose it viewers. Where in *The Peacemakers* we saw a very careful matching of each subject in terms of their representations on the personal level in the context of the event, and at the political level, in *The Night Shift* this is not the case, especially with the policeman and the ex-gangster. The representations of each of the 'characters' in *The Night Shift* is therefore not equalised. The effect is that the ambulanceman embodies the documentary's 'voice', and also its visual and aural space, more than the other two subjects. Interestingly, because the ambulanceman is not circumscribed with negative social values, it is his representation that enables the documentary to incorporate the personal with the immediate context of Soweto and beyond that with broader socio-political concerns.

This documentary uses a variety of filmic styles that take the viewer beneath the surface of the statement that "Soweto is the crime capital of the world". One of these is the incorporation of a style that is used in television news, usually to authenticate

the comments of the anchor person in the studio about an event. Here, in *The Night Shift*, the style and its manipulation has the effect of raising the status of events that are usually absented from news, to the level of national news. Another stylistic feature is the use of conventions of television drama that has the effect of heightening tension, especially when a life is in the balance, and therefore engaging the spectator. The 'voice' of this documentary, how it represents its argument, hinges on these textualising strategies. These are the strategies in the documentary, along with the more typical strategies of subjectivising the views of the three 'ordinary' people being followed through the night, that prevent it from sliding into an observational *cinéma vérité*-style string of violent cases, with little depth and perspective. Finally, the discussion on this documentary, focused on ethical issues, especially in relation to the representation of a woman who had been raped and a child abused by her father. Noting that the consent of these people would have been sought, the combination of discomfort for the viewer with the interiority of the neighbourhood and domestic space exposed, acts as a further strategy for the revelations behind the statistics on crime in Soweto.

Now that I have critically examined three documentaries from the *Ordinary People* series it would be valuable to pause here and to summarise how they achieve their 'voice'. This is a valuable exercise at this juncture because this chapter will close with an examination of *A Day with the President*. This had a somewhat different format to all the other documentaries in the series and therefore needs to be assessed independently of the rest of the series, while some similarities will also be noted.

'Voice' and the *Ordinary People* Series

There is a sense in which the strategy to represent different individual subjectivities in relation to one event or place over the same time period is a simple one. It emerges after considerable and detailed analysis that in fact the workings of this strategy are

much more complex than it would first seem. In each of the analyses the first two principles identified at the beginning of this chapter, namely the choice of three or four subjects and the accompanying subjective camera style in representing each subject, have been reiterated. Tied to these, and a crucial influence in perceptions of the subject in each case, is the notion of the subject as 'speaking'. A further concept on which the series is based, and which gives it its title, is that of the subject as 'ordinary'. One of the common effects of the combination of these strategies is that there is no singular truth represented. Rather, in using multiple perspectives, the series proposes that truth shifts, truth is unfixed, and furthermore, it is unfixable. While the combination of these strategies of representation are central to each documentary in the series, how they are applied and the effects that are gained differ for each one.

The third principle, the personal-political line as I have called it (after Deleuze and Parnel), within each subject's representation, is one of the critical features of how the combination of strategies works in *Ordinary People*. While I have called this a 'personal-political' line, it in effect incorporates the immediate context of the documentary itself. When the immediate context is obviously politically-based, as in *The Peacemakers* - especially with regard to Gertrude as the Inkatha supporter - this line works as a strong sub-structure to the breadth of meanings that the film evokes. When the context is not so clearly politically-based then this line stops short at the boundaries, often geographic boundaries, of the immediate context of the documentary. In *The Night Shift*, the representation of Godfrey Moloi, is a good example of how this line is closed on the geographic boundary, and therefore limits the usefulness of the representation of that person's subjectivity in the documentary's production of meanings. In his representation, the fact that he is a 'speaking subject' makes an important difference to the fragile footing on which he is incorporated into the documentary as one of the chief 'characters'. The personal-political line operates most strongly when the visual and aural - filmic - elements of the documentary are

able to represent the political as well as the personal. Otherwise, the documentary has to rely on the subject's 'speaking' to extend this 'line'. A good example of how this happens is in the ambulanceman's 'speaking' which has the effect of both extending beyond the geographic boundaries into the realm of political issues that frame this geographic context, and opening up questions of magnitude. Through the combination of strategies applied to the representation of the ambulanceman, and because of his awareness of the broader political context that shapes the forces at play within the immediate context in which he works, the viewer is sutured into a subjective relationship with him. She or he is bound then, through this relationship, to consider the historical realities that are represented, in a critical way - to reflect upon the questions of magnitude evoked by the ambulanceman's representation.

The fact that the documentaries visually contextualise the subjects within the events or places that they 'act' within makes the use of the 'speaking subject' even more important for moving beyond the boundaries of the immediate context. While the producer of the series has called this feature a "materialist camera"[9], it is not necessarily so, for it binds the subject in filmic terms into a personal-immediate context line, (to use this concept of 'line' with some flexibility), which has no visual or aural possibility of being transgressed. Thus the potential for material or historical realities to be represented is limited. It is only in the 'speaking' that this transgression occurs, unless, as we have seen, the event or place that fills the 'space' of the narrative makes the immediate context political, and therefore filmically possible to be represented. Throughout the series the camera seldom moves beyond the visual boundary the particular constellation of time and space allows. When it does, it is carefully incorporated into the textual representation of the subjects themselves, as in the closing sequence of *The Peacemakers*, where the camera tracks with a moving

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[9] Gavshon, H. Interview with Chas Unwin. Johannesburg, 1994.

vehicle between the closing statements of each subject. The fact that the shift from the tracking shot to the shot of the subject is a dissolve, and a slow one at that, makes for a strong interconnection between the subject and that context. It illustrates, in the very choice of filmic representation, the seamlessness of this personal-immediate context line. This line is not always established using a dissolve, but it produces the effect of a seamlessness between the individual subject and her or his immediate locale. There is no sense therefore of any directorially imposed illustrative material from other events at other times that is used to explain, support or refute the representations of subjects. This makes these documentaries exceptionally different to the VNS documentaries, and indeed to conventional television documentaries that rely, sometimes heavily, on illustrative sounds and images beyond the experiences of documentary subjects themselves.

One of the conventions of documentary filmmaking that is used in the *Ordinary People* series is voice-over narration. An overview of the series reveals how as a whole the series reflects a broad spectrum of voices through the choice of narrators. This is an important intervention in documentary filmmaking in general and in South African documentary specifically, for in the main, it is male voice-overs, and often white male voice-overs that are used. The effect of the multiplicity of narrators' voices is to extend possibilities for viewer identification with the series, and also with individual documentaries as we have seen in *The Night Shift*. There are times however, as that example shows, that the voice of the narrator may take the viewer too far beyond the framework of the documentary and its immediate context, as defined visually by the documentary itself, and so undermines the 'voice' of the documentary. The narrator usually however plays a minimal role in the documentary so the combination of strategies that bind the viewer into it will usually limit the possible negative impact of the narrator's voice. The other effect of the voice-over narration in this series is to provide a further form of extension beyond the boundaries

of the immediate context of the documentary, but this is not a strategy that the series relies upon. Most of the voice-over narration is limited to explanatory comments. The strategy here is apparently not to use voice-over narration as opposed to a strategy to use it. This underlines then the documentary's centredness on the subjective experiences of those subjects chosen.

Two further aspects need some comment before proceeding with an analysis of *A Day with the President*: first, the incorporation of reflexive elements; and second, the title sequence which precedes every documentary in the series.

1. Reflexivity

There are moments in some of the documentaries in the series when features of the film-making production process are revealed. These include:

a) The camera filming itself, as for example in *The Peacemakers*, when David leaves his apartment at the start of the day. The camera follows him into the lift and we see it reflected in the mirror at the back of the lift.

b) The microphone or sound boom being visible in the frame, especially present in *A Day with the President.*

c) The questions or comments of an off-screen interviewer or member of the production crew edited into the sound track of the documentary, used in *The Peacemakers*, and *The Night Shift.*

d) The cameraperson or member of the production team being included in the images represented, used in *The Peacemakers* and *A Day with the President.*

In film, self-reflexivity seeks consciously to make the production processes visible in order to underline the fact that what is represented is not 'the truth' but is a representation of reality from a particular perspective. It is a construction, or rather re-construction, of reality. It does not reflect or mirror reality. As a strategy it was

important from the 1960s (notably in the films of Jean-Luc Godard) in fiction filmmaking, while Nichols proposes that in documentary film it gained prominence in the 1970s and 1980s (1991:63). It represented a form in which political and avant-garde filmmakers were able to make ideological challenges not only on the basis of the content of their films but on the basis of form. They were able to challenge the very institutionalisation of the conventions that had been developed in film, which supported the seamless representation of a closed reality, and therefore a fixed truth, derived primarily from within the classical realism of Hollywood film. These filmmakers believed that in challenging these conventions they were also challenging the epistemological base which gave rise to them and sustained them. This is well explicated in a quote from Dusinberre (1976) on formalist film used by Gidal in his book *Materialist Film* where he states that: "The formalist project is to challenge the coherent system of formal practices which subtend the dominant practice and thereby challenge the organization of meaning, and ultimately, the entire system of signification established by the dominant practice...by separating the formal postulates from their conventional context and revealing the way in which they operate, the way in which they determine representation" (Gidal, 1989:97). In South Africa, the film *I am Clifford Abrahams, This is Grahamstown* made in 1984 has been called "radical cinema" by Keyan Tomaselli (1989:212), one of the filmmakers. In the context of his comment that "reflexive techniques...identify the ideological position of the producers with the working class struggle" he notes that: "The presence of the crew is stamped into the image and the sound...The reflexive techniques used by the crew make visible their own assumptions and methodology presenting not a camera determined 'truth', but Cliffie's interpretation of it" (Tomaselli, 1989:212-213). Films made in South Africa that most exemplify reflexivity are those made by the SACHED (South African Council for Higher Education) Audio-Visual Unit in Cape Town in the late 1980s, in particular one film

called *The Apple* (1988), which set out explicitly to interrogate and expose the formal production of meaning in film.

In *Ordinary People* the reflexivity displayed is not so strongly foregrounded as to be a primary feature of the meanings it produces. Rather it is important to note that it uses elements of the reflexive mode of filmmaking, which work alongside the strategies of representation that aim to discount the presence of a single, absolute truth. They also confirm the sense that the documentary is made in-the-moment. We shall see how this functions in *A Day with the President.*

2. The title sequence

This is present at the start of every documentary in the series. It is a sixty-second, black and white collage of images with a single soundtrack of music. The fact that it is in black and white, tells the viewer that it is documentary, that it is about reality. It is important to note that some of the key features of the series are present in the title sequence, setting the scene for what is to come. The key theme of this sequence is the relationship between the individual, ordinary person, and her or his context, as well as the political context. This is represented by a moving camera, sometimes from a vehicle, other times hand-held in a situation, thereby becoming a participative camera. With the exception of one or two shots the moving camera provides a continuity between the often very different shots, binding them together in a non-stop flow of movement. The moving camera engages the viewer, puts her or him into the picture, as it were. With the camera the viewer looks, observes, participates in, even selects the collage of images, which is in effect a collage of images of people and their contexts, a collage of images of ordinary South Africans and our contexts. Some of the images are in slow motion, others in fast motion; some are blurred, others in hyper-real clarity; some are in extreme close-up, others in wide- or long-shot. A range of cinematic devices are employed. Over this collage the music has a number of

qualities that also engage the viewer - the vocal sound is not in words and with the accompanying instrumental music, it is reflective and haunting, at times a kind of cry, while at other times rhythmic and dynamic.

The content of the images reveals a range of people and places. The idea that the series is about different identities and different contexts in South Africa is established here and then reiterated throughout the series in the choices of subjects and their environments for each documentary. A description of some of the images in the title sequence collage will confirm this point: the first image is a low angle mid-shot of a black child twirling a toy aeroplane above his head and running along a road filmed in slow motion; the next shot is a pan from a moving vehicle of a rural area, dust road in the foreground with a horse and cart moving along in the background; there is a shot of a cityscape with parts of a motorway visible in the foreground; this is followed by a long shot of a black gardener with lawnmower on the grass verge of a suburban middle-class house; later the camera films two black men in mid-shot from behind as they jump onto a moving train; there is a short series of images of cars both in close-up and at a distance on motorways with a cityscape in the background in fast motion; there is an extreme close-up of a black woman crossing a street in a (nurse's?) uniform; an extreme close-up of a taxi sign on top of a car follows, which the camera tracks with through a busy urban street; an elderly white woman in mid-shot smiles down at a baby on her lap while the camera pans across from her to show a man and another woman seated up close to her also smiling; later a young white man on a street corner is fighting with two young black men; we see an extreme close-up of black women moving past the camera singing as if in a protest or demonstration; then a medium close-up low angle shot of a black man who looks like a mine worker; and a group of black and white girls at a poolside in mid-shot looking into the camera.

In the 1993 series the final shots in the title sequence make visual reference to the notion of reflexivity discussed above. The way it does so is in a sequence that shows three people standing at a garden gate talking angrily to a cameraperson on the other side of it. The shot is taken from behind the cameraperson. It is as if they are telling him they do not want to be filmed. As he turns away the shot cuts to the image of the same three people, two black men and one black woman, on a television screen that fills the frame. From this shot the camera pans right to an image of the woman (who is on the screen) now watching the image, in effect watching herself. The camera holds still as she turns her head and looks into it, and therefore directly at the viewer. The title fades up on the bottom right hand side of this image.

Here we have a complex layering of film within film: viewer watching cameraperson watching subject; viewer watching subject; subject watching subject; subject watching viewer watching subject. A number of effects results. First, the idea that this is a representation is underlined by incorporating the image of the cameraperson. Second, the idea that the subject is not exploited is underlined by representing the image of the woman watching herself on screen. The sense of the subject's participation in the construction of images of herself, and their approval by her, is heightened by the fact that in the image she and the other two subjects appear angry, [illegible]ar to be telling the cameraperson not to film them. His subsequent turning away [illegible]nfirms this view. So the fact that she now sits before this very image, and then looks at the camera from this position, confirms her conscious recognition of the process. Third, the viewer is challenged to engage with the image by the look of the woman at the end into the camera. She is by extension looking at the viewer who is looking at her. The screen in-between is momentarily made invisible as the viewer faces the subject who faces the viewer. The screen in-between is simultaneously a mirror, the viewer looks at the screen which reflects a person looking back at her or him, an image of what he or she may look like - ordinary people not only looking at

each other but also looking at themselves. All of these effects establish the series' reflexivity, a conscious sense of its representational qualities as a text. And significantly, the conventional triangle of filmmaker, text, viewer is broken open to include the subject.

In the 1994 series this reflexive ending to the title sequence was changed to images that mostly referred to t tions. There was no reference to reflexive elements. But the effect of this 'new ing was that it invigorated the title sequence with the contemporary reality in South Africa at the time. This was a wise move on the part of the producer because the title sequence was used not only in the presentation of each documentary but to advertise it on television. Viewers were very familiar with it. Thus to keep the first two-thirds of the title sequence and change the ending, both invoked the familiar and noted the immediate relevance of the new series that would be forthcoming. It was also a marker that the series was now less concerned with its processes of representation, and specifically with making this concern conscious in the image. Rather, having established its reputation, it would be continuing to represent 'ordinary people', as it had previously done.

A Day with the President

The last of the *Ordinary People* documentaries that I will examine is *A Day with the President*. While many of the key elements of the series as a whole are repeated in this documentary, it stands alone. The reasons for this are: first, it is fifty-five minutes long, in comparison with the half-hour television slots of all the others; second, it was made as a commemoration of the first anniversary of Nelson Mandela's first year as President of South Africa; and third, it is about a person who, at some levels, is ordinary along with all other people, but who is arguably a most extraordinary person by virtue of his life experience, his incarceration, his position in the ANC, his popularity, and his Presidency. Accordingly then I will treat this documentary

somewhat uniquely, presenting those elements of the *Ordinary People* 'formula' that are repeated, but primarily examining how it succeeds (or not) in defining Nelson Mandela as 'ordinary'.

The documentary establishes its narrative structure in the title which suggests movement through 'a day', and this is confirmed in the first image which is subtitled '4.00 a.m. Qunu, Transkei'. It follows President Mandela from Qunu, where he has been on holiday, flying with him back to Pretoria. He spends the morning in his office, then has lunch, after which he presides over the swearing in of the Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture. He then flies to Stellenbosch where he addresses a dinner, then flies back to Johannesburg. The documentary ends with him arriving at his home in Houghton, Johannesburg at 11 p.m.

Although, as the title suggests, the documentary is about the President, it does incorporate a close view of two or three subjects apart from Nelson Mandela himself. These are his housekeeper, his private secretary, and more marginally, the administrative secretary of the President's office. These subjects are not so much representative of entirely stereotypical positions in society, as for example a policeman would be, but the differences between the subjects are important. In many senses, the housekeeper is the most important of these subjects because she 'saves' the documentary from lapsing into being a rather slow-moving account of the President's day, or of how *Ordinary People* tried to show the President as 'ordinary' and failed. The housekeeper's down-to-earth attitude and disregard for the camera and what it signifies - almost irreverence for the camera - gives the documentary its most 'ordinary' slant. A good example of this is when just before the President is to arrive for lunch, she looks in the mirror and puts on some lipstick commenting 'I look a bit

bleek[10] so I've got to just put a face on'. Because of her role as housekeeper she is most close to the President's ordinariness and can interpret it for the documentary. So, for example, she is able to comment on the fact that he always makes his own bed - 'force of habit' she says, alluding to his imprisonment. She knows what food he likes, and does not like. And when this type of knowledge interconnects visually or aurally in the representation of the President himself the documentary comes closest to representing him as 'ordinary'. Thus when the housekeeper offers him a drink at lunchtime, when he asks whether it is fresh she tells him 'it's not 100% only 95%'. He declines it and has water instead. Following her comments while shopping for fruit and vegetables that he only likes fresh food, this kind of layering gives the documentary texture. The administrative secretary displays some stereotypical elements, as a white Afrikaans-speaking male and contrary to the housekeeper he talks about his job as if it is an ordinary job, working for any ordinary person. Indeed, he attempts to ensure that this is the meaning the documentary will ascribe to him. This de-mythologises the President in the context of the documentary. The President's personal assistant provides a slant on his working life by referring to his diary, explaining what he is to be doing, getting in contact with people on his behalf. Her representation is mostly observational, apart from those moments when she addresses the cameraperson, and therefore the viewer, directly, and one occasion when the camera is behind her when she gives the President some letters to sign across his desk. But her subjectivity is never developed in the documentary.

The subjective camera is one of the elements of this documentary that seems to be less featured than in the other documentaries from the series. The camera seems to be at pains, for example, to represent the president's point-of-view. It achieves this twice: once when the President is on the telephone at his desk, and the camera is

[10] An Afrikaans-derived colloquialism for 'bleak'.

behind him, and a second time at the swearing in of the Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture. Here, the camera goes behind him so that he frames the shot. In front of him is a large group of journalists and camerapersons, all behind their cameras filming him - a notable reflexive moment in the documentary. But more significantly, the shot so strongly breaks the conventions of images of 'great people' - that is, to film them from the other side, the side that all the journalists are on - that this shot has the effect of providing the viewer with a sense of what it might be like to be this person, who happens to be President. His ordinariness is certainly advanced in this shot.

The voice-over narration in this documentary is in the voice of what might be conventionally described (but is not necessarily so) as a white, male, English-speaker in a 'cultivated' English accent. This voice-over is typical of earlier times in documentary history, especially in BBC documentaries, of the didactic, 'voice-of God' type - the expository documentary, for Nichols. This voice, framing the documentary, was chosen perhaps to give it an international legitimacy, possibly with a view to marketing the film internationally, and perhaps even to facilitate the identification of business people with it, since it is a conventional choice. The voice-over is not, similar to the other documentaries, a major feature of the work - it is informative in brief spurts, so although the choice of voice is surprising it is not disruptive.

Overall the documentary is not reflexive but there are elements within it that have their roots in the reflexive style of documentary filmmaking. In *A Day with the President* these elements are primarily the representation of the production crew in the image and furthermore, the relationship between the producers and the President as well as the other subjects. There are reminders, in other words, all the way through, that this is not only a presentation of the President's day but it is also a mediated representation of his day. This strategy gives the documentary a sense of importance,

and a sense of legitimacy, which is appropriate in terms of the opportunity provided to the filmmakers to film the President's day. At the beginning of the day, for example, the camera watches the door from which Mandela will emerge. The strategy of not 'hiding' the crew, and so not giving an illusion of innocent observation, is underlined when an aide emerges through the door and says to the crew: 'I'll tell you when he's coming'. On-camera, two members introduce themselves and shake hands with the President when he steps out. But where the reflexive elements of the documentary weaken its vision is when the sound boom drops into the frame from time to time or when the shot itself is not adequately accomplished and inappropriate to the subject of the shot. This happens most obviously when the President is talking in a medium close-up about how he likes to be alone. This is probably the moment in the documentary in which he is most personal in his conversations to the crew. At the point where he comments: 'I sometimes crave you know, for just moving alone', the camera zooms in to an extreme close-up, thereby disrupting the moment for the viewer. As the President gives his important 'sound-bite' the cameraperson is more concerned with zooming in to a close-up, which once attained is out of focus. These elements, the framing of shots that includes the sound boom and the mis-choice to zoom in at a rare moment of extremely personalised commentary on the part of the President, are careless intrusions that undermine the film's professionalism, and the value of this unique opportunity. The *cinéma vérité*-style is pushed over its limits, and loses its worth as a style that represents a participative subjectivity on the part of the film crew.

To conclude these reflections on *A Day with the President*: the documentary takes the viewer into the workings of one day with Nelson Mandela, beginning early in the morning and ending late at night. There are moments when the documentary achieves a representation of him as 'ordinary', especially through the subjective perspectives of his housekeeper, and through the use of subjective strategies like point-of-view shots.

Overall however the documentary is more about waiting for Mandela to be ordinary, especially in the observations of his work and meetings in his office, rather than achieving a sense of his ordinariness. Indeed, through the subjectivity of his housekeeper, much as she confirms his ordinariness she also confirms his extraordinariness - this is evident when she comments in her personable way to the camera about how he has changed her, and how her children have commented on how much she has changed - changes which she puts down to his example on being 'in harmony with himself'. In effect then, the documentary, perhaps predictably, achieves the representation of President Nelson Mandela as both 'ordinary' and extraordinary. In the final analysis, however, the formulaic principles that have worked for all the other parts of the series, to greater or lesser extents, now in fact fail the producers. As a means of documenting a day in the life of the president of a country, such strategies of representation, used to valuable effect to represent the subjectivity of the ordinary South African person, re-familiarising and de-familiarising their perspectives on life in South Africa for audiences, are simply not appropriate for representing the president, at least not without more actively engaging him in discussion and debate in a more challenging investigation.

In this chapter I have critically examined four documentaries from the *Ordinary People* series which was broadcast on SABC between 1993 and 1995. The four documentaries are: *The Peacemakers*, *Tooth of the Times*, *The Night Shift*, and *A Day with the President*. Core strategies of representation were identified: the representation of three or four subjects, 'ordinary' people, in each documentary; the subjective camera style; a personal-political line; and narrative. I have also discussed how the documentaries in this series formulate their 'voice' or 'argument', and propose questions of magnitude, based on these strategies. The notion of a personal-political line, present within the representation of each subject to greater or lesser degrees, which sometimes becomes closed off by the subject's immediate context,

was discussed as one of the ways in which this series either opens its questions of magnitude or limits them, either creates the potential for viewers to perceive history as incomplete and therefore confirms their agency within it or closes history at the moment of narrative closure. The elements of voice-over narration and reflexivity in this series were also examined. This is a series that represents a major intervention in the making of anti-apartheid documentary film and video for one primary reason: it achieved a shift away from the subject as representative. That it did so in a highly-conscious and public way makes it an established intervention into the predominance of the subject as representative from the 1980s into the 1990s, which the VNS documentaries exemplify. Had the *Ordinary People* documentaries been few in number, this 'intervention' would not be as great. Since there are over thirty parts in all, including the high-profile *A Day with the President* - the most watched documentary in South African history according to the sleeve - South African documentary film and video henceforth will have to take account of this series. There is one more significant condition of this series that made such a powerful intervention possible - historically it was created at a time when the SABC was in the process of transformation, and was therefore in a sense 'ready' for a documentary series of this nature. In the next chapter we will examine how this 'readiness' came about at the level of policy, and how two history series coming from different 'traditions' in anti-apartheid cinema were represented on the new SABC.

Chapter Six

Representations of History for National Television in the 1990s: *Ulibambe Lingashoni - Hold up the Sun* and *Soweto: A History*

The euphoria of the first democratic elections in 1994 gave way to a new intensity to rebuild and reconstruct the nation. This sense of transformation, even revolution, was all-pervasive, and within it the priorities for addressing the basic human needs of the majority of South Africans were paramount, especially with regard to health, education, employment and housing. Apartheid had left a legacy of destruction and devastation on all these levels and government programmes to address these were being put in place. The legacy of apartheid had also to be measured in psychological terms, both individually and as a nation, which the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established to address. Within this melange of both celebration of the democratic future and the knowledge of the 'woundedness' of the apartheid era, the broadcasting sector in South Africa, along with all sectors of the society, underwent major transformations. In this chapter I shall outline some of these transformations, and analyse two history series made by anti-apartheid filmmakers that were presented on national television at that time, to evaluate whether and how they might propose possibilities for new strategies of representation in television, that would take into account, and account for, the multiple identities and subjectivities that are experienced or felt in South Africa.

The first focus of this chapter is a brief consideration of the ways in which television, specifically the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) as the national television broadcaster, began to be transformed or to transform itself within the processes of negotiation towards democracy in the early 1990s, and

even further by the work of the Independent Broadcasting Authority established within these processes of negotiation.

The second focus notes the documentary programmes which were broadcast nationally in the early 1990s, since campaigns for access to the national broadcaster made it increasingly possible for progressive political movements and filmmakers to have their work represented on the television screen, and more recently to have their work commissioned by the SABC. But more important for my purposes, is closely and critically to analyse two of these documentaries on the basis of their strategies of representation especially in relation to questions of identity. In the last two chapters I critically examined a VNS documentary *Hlanganani: A Short History of COSATU* broadcast in 1991, and the *Ordinary People* series broadcast between 1993 and 1995. In the present chapter I will add to these critical analyses, by examining two history series which were made by collective groups of what I would identify as anti-apartheid filmmakers from the 1980s. The first series is called *Ulibambe Lingashoni - Hold Up the Sun* (1994), a five part series representing the history of the African National Congress (ANC). The second series is called *Soweto: A History* (1994).

The South African Broadcasting Corporation

In relation to western countries it is interesting to note that television is a recently acquired pleasure (or in terms of apartheid history, propaganda tool). It was only established in 1976. This followed many years of heated debates in parliament about its usefulness to the state and the appointment in 1969 of a Commission of Inquiry into the desirability of introducing a television service. By the 1990s there was a more diverse broadcasting environment in South Africa than the SABC alone - a single, state-owned and controlled national broadcaster, for example the subscriber channel, M-Net, had been introduced, and the Bophutatswana Broadcasting Corporation within the Bophutatswana 'homeland'. As I mentioned earlier the SABC itself underwent major and significant transformations in the

early 1990s. These were sparked off by the demonstrations of a coalition of anti-apartheid film and media organisations and unions which marched on the SABC in 1990 - "the first ever public protest against the SABC" (Currie and Markov.z, 1993:98) - to proclaim that 'the people shall broadcast' and to claim publicly the right of access to the national broadcaster. In August 1991 the 'Jabulani! Freedom of the Airwaves' conference was held in the Netherlands, bringing together representatives of major stakeholders in the transformative processes of the media in South Africa. In his presentation to that conference Willie Currie, secretary-general of the Film and Allied Workers Organisation, reflected the concerns of a broad range of media organisations when he said that "the strategies of the State and big business aim at restructuring broadcasting before a new government comes to power or a new constitution comes into force...[and]...the aim is to change the economic environment to limit local access" (Currie, 1991:9). His analysis was based on the fact that the government had appointed a Task Group which was set to propose that the structure of broadcasting should be determined by market forces. He argued, in his presentation, for the view that people in South Africa should be seen not just as 'consumers' but also as 'citizens' - that there should be a balance between market forces and economic considerations with political concerns (Currie, 1991:10-11). A few months later a further conference called 'Free, Fair and Open: South African Media in the Transition to Democracy' was convened by the Campaign for Open Media and the Centre for Development Studies of the University of the Western Cape. This conference drew together the "broadest possible range of media and political opinion in South Africa to identify changes necessary to ensure that the media contributes to the fullest possible extent during the transition to a climate for a free political participation and free and fair elections"[1]. In a carefully strategised and orchestrated move the resolutions of this conference were presented to Working Group 1 of the

[1] Submission to the Convention for a Democratic South Africa, Working Group 1, ("Free, Fair and Open: South African Media in the Transition to Democracy" Conference, Convened by: The Campaign for Open Media and The Centre for Development Studies of the University of the Western Cape, 30 January 1992), Item 1.2.

Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA), engaged in multi-party negotiations to prepare the way for the first democratic elections, precisely to make the elections free and fair. Since SABC television was state-owned and controlled, its potential use primarily for the election campaign of the National Party was a serious threat to the validity of the elections. Through the representations of organisations like the Campaign for Open Media, this had the effect of placing on the political agenda of the multi-party negotiations of the early 1990s the significance of the media in representing the aspirations of the citizens of the nation. The Campaign for Independent Broadcasting formed by a broader coalition which included the umbrella trade union body, COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions) and progressive political groupings like the South African Communist Party, the African National Congress, and the South African Council of Churches, finally pressured the state into establishing a new SABC Board. It was nominated and elected (on largely democratic lines although the then State President FW de Klerk was inevitably heavy-handed in the process), and by May 1993 the Board was in place, just one year before the elections, and structures were created for the appointment of new top management and staff. In addition, through these various political campaigns to wrest the national broadcaster from the control of the state, intensive debates, discussions and consultations brought about agreement by broad-based film, media, political and labour bodies on legislative proposals which would re-define broadcasting for the new democracy. This led to the writing and promulgation of a new Act of Parliament which defined the terms for the establishment of an Independent Broadcasting Authority to regulate broadcasting, and served effectively to diminish state power and control over broadcasting. The first important point, then, in establishing a context for analysis concerns the general political transformations that shaped the broadcasting environment for a democratic future.

The second important point is to note some of the specifics of the new legislation and their implications. The Act defines broadcasting as functioning to entertain,

inform and educate within three forms of broadcasting: public, private and community broadcasting. It emphasises both the public interest or public needs and the necessity of opening the airwaves through the provision of a diverse range of services, which should cater for all languages and cultural groups[2]. In South Africa there are eleven official languages. Their recognition by Act of Parliament further entrenches the responsibilities of broadcasters both in terms of advancing linguistic democracy and in terms of safeguarding the rights of those whose languages have been disregarded in the past. The Act also makes two further significant provisions pertaining especially to the legacy of apartheid: the first of these is that broadcasting should be regulated to encourage ownership and control by persons from historically disadvantaged groups, and the second is to ensure that broadcasting services are not controlled by foreigners. These sweeping provisions have paved the way for major transformations that have taken place within the broadcasting environment in general and in television (especially the national broadcaster) in particular.

The third important point is the outcome of the Inquiry held by the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA). In terms of its parliamentary mandate the IBA conducted an Inquiry into three specific areas of broadcasting: public service broadcasting, local content regulation and cross-media control, in the context of "the identified national goals of democracy, development and nation-building" (*Triple Inquiry Report*, 1995:25). My focus here is on the local content aspect of the Inquiry, since it has specific implications for the ability of locally-made productions to gain access to the national broadcaster[3]. The IBA's recommendations established that the national broadcaster should within three years of its report (by the end of 1998) be required substantially to increase its

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[2] See the Independent Broadcasting Authority Act, No.153 of 1993.

[3] This in turn refers back to the concerns about local content expressed at the 'Jabulani! Freedom of the Airwaves' conference in 1991. See for example Willie Currie's comment that "market forces have the capacity to destroy completely the viability of indigenous South African film and broadcasting industries" (1991:10).

local content quota to 50% overall within the broadcast period of 5.00 a.m. to 11.00 p.m. - important that this local content cannot be relegated to very late night and early morning slots[4]. Specifically local drama productions should increase from 9.2% to 20%, local documentary productions from 3.5% to 50%, as well as local children's programming (*Triple Inquiry Report*, 1995:91-92). The scene was set for major advances in representations of South African issues on the national broadcaster and therefore for representations of South African identities and subjectivities.

The fourth important point is to identify the issues that arise from a critical evaluation of these recent transformations. Here there are a number of issues that need to be problematised arising from the final recommendations of the IBA and the subsequent wide changes to the SABC's programming: for example, in relation to local content on questions of quality vs. quantity, and on the inadequate financial bases upon which these proposals have been made. There is also a lack of clarity in the various categories[5], and in the wording of certain recommendations which 'encourage' rather than 'require' certain changes to be effected. These changes include the commissioning of programmes from black independent producers, and the move to prevent the establishment of commercial television stations until 1998: a move which limits competition, offering initial protection to the national broadcaster on the one hand, but on the other possibly limiting the production of higher quality programmes.

It would be a project in itself to elaborate further on these critical points, but it is important to note here, however briefly, that there are indeed a number of serious concerns affecting the transformation of the broadcasting environment on the basis of democratic principles which are perhaps more obliquely than directly

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[4] This time period was established by the Authority for measuring quotas and was given the title 'The South African Television Performance Period', (*Triple Inquiry Report*, 1995:92).
[5] For example, in the *Triple Inquiry Report* the category of 'documentary' is actually called 'documentary and informal knowledge building', (1995:92).

apparent, and perhaps only apparent to those who have a professional interest in analysing the transformative process in television. Further critical analysis would need to examine allegations pertaining to the high salary packages of IBA councillors and so-called 'extravagances'; complaints by independent producers about funding and scheduling issues for local content programmes; allegations, on the one hand, of the IBA's protectionist attitude towards the SABC as far as commercialisation is concerned, and on the other hand, allegations of tensions between the IBA and the SABC.

In addition, stretching a little beyond the time frame of this study, in the reshuffle of cabinet posts in the first half of 1996, President Nelson Mandela removed Pallo Jordan as Minister of Posts, Telecommunications and Broadcasting and appointed in his place Jay Naidoo, former Minister without Portfolio, and Head of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (now disbanded). Shortly afterwards, in his first major policy speech Jay Naidoo reported that the IBA would from now on focus on regulating broadcasting rather than drawing up broadcasting policy. The question to be asked of this was whether this would be a way in which the state - the new democratic state - would reclaim jurisdiction over the broadcasting environment and influence its direction. On the one hand, this could be welcomed within the broader restructuring imperatives of the new state, and especially in terms of the commitment to address in Jay Naidoo's words "the traditional imbalances in the deployment of the telecommunications services...by the establishment of a reliable network that will reach both rural and urban communities [for the] provision of universal services" (*The Star*, 8 May 1996). There is a vast rural/urban divide, with only about fifty percent of the population mostly concentrated in urban areas with access to television. The advancement of a broadly based telecommunications policy framework is to be welcomed. On the other hand, the legacy of the apartheid state's control of the SABC, which

included decisions on programme content, raises serious questions about processes for maintaining an independent broadcasting sector[6].

The key factor within this discussion of broadcasting questions is the fact that the ground had been laid for much greater representation of local content on television in South Africa by 1995. This created an expectation that many more local productions would be produced and commissioned for television. In such a context, critical analyses of locally-made productions in relation to their strategies of representation have become crucial - particularly with regard to questions of identity and subjectivity[7].

Re-presenting Apartheid History

I propose now to discuss two locally-produced history series: the first a history of the ANC, and the second a history of Soweto. My choice of these two series is informed both by the broader sense of the nation in transformation, and by the significance for a new democracy of the representation of history and the past. Given the apartheid state's heavy reliance on propaganda, censorship, information bannings and silencings, representations of history are even more significant. It is pertinent here to be reminded of the issues around questions of truth and reality in

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[6] In 1997, moves towards uniting the IBA and SATRA (the South African Telecommunications Regulatory Authority) under the Department of Posts, Broadcasting and Telecommunications further extend questions of the independence of broadcasting from the state.

[7] Writing in 1997, an 'addendum' to these comments is necessary. While the policy foundations have been laid for increased local content, there are less and less prospects of local content increasing, primarily in view of the financial strictures which increasingly face the SABC. In relation to recent debates about the SABC's finances it is noteworthy that the Task Group on government communications appointed by Deputy President Thabo Mbeki reported in 1996 that the decision not to pass on the proceeds from the sales of six radio stations to the SABC directly had "created a disjuncture between financing and policy in respect of the public broadcasting service, which cannot bode well for public broadcasting in the future" ('Communications 2000: A vision for government communications in South Africa', Report of the Task Group on Government Communications to Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, October 1996:30). Furthermore, there is a sense in the independent sector that the SABC is 'bankrupt' and that further commissions cannot be expected - in this regard note the comment in the 'Friday' section of the *Mail and Guardian* that "documentaries are under threat at the SABC...[and] airtime has...been cut for fine investigations into South African life..." ('Friday', *The Mail and Guardian*, 5-11 September 1997:18).

documentary film, which I elaborated earlier in this thesis, especially since histories of the kind I am describing are both set up and set themselves up as a more truthful account of the past than has previously been available on television[8]. And there is a certain *felt* sense in which they are[9].

I will briefly describe each series beginning with the ANC history, then make some comparative comments on the two series, and extend these comments with more focus on the Soweto history series since it is not as formulaic as the ANC history and raises some complex issues about questions of representation. The full title of the ANC history series is *Ulibambe Lingashoni. Hold Up the Sun - The ANC and popular power in the making*. A statement from the producers (on the video cover) describes the series as "a record of the resistance against apartheid by the masses of South Africans. It reveals...the rich tapestry of South African history". This identifies it as a history of both the ANC and of South Africa, and also of the making of popular power. Simply on the level of the title there is an already defined sense of the series as the new official history of the country, of apartheid and of its resistance. This can be contrasted with the Soweto history, called *Soweto: A History*, a title which suggests that this is one of many possible histories, rather than closing the text off as the definitive truth.

The ANC history is a five-episode series, each episode running for fifty-two

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[8] For further discussion of this issue see my papers: 'Trends in South African documentary film and video: questions of identity and subjectivity', in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 21(4), December 1995:657-667; and '*Fruits of Defiance*: Narrating Popular Consciousness', in *Current Writing*, 9(1), April 1997:54-67.

[9] Here it is important to note that after the first part of the series was screened on TV1 in January 1994, three months before the elections, the Democratic Party announced its intention "to lodge a complaint about TV1's timing with the Independent Electoral Commission" as did the National Party (*Weekly Mail and Guardian*, 14-20 January 1994:33). The Democratic Party spokeman's comments reported in the same article - "for all these years the SABC has been the lackey of the National Party. I just hope that we are not about to exchange a National Party lackey for an African National Congress one" - show how strongly this history series was perceived as a history of the ANC rather than the more broadly based history it seems to want to embrace.

minutes, beginning with an episode entitled 'The Roots of Struggle 1912-1948'. This is a significant period to represent as 'roots' of popular power, since it was in 1948 that the National Party came into power and established the apartheid state. The remaining four parts cover the next forty years in episodes which coincide with historical developments under the apartheid regime: these are 'Enter the Masses: 1949-1958', 'Submit or Fight: 1958-1969', 'The New Generation: 1968-1983' and 'Not the Kings and Generals: 1983-1990'.

The Soweto history is in three episodes with two parts in each. The first episode starts in Johannesburg 1900 with 'Building Matchbox City', covering the early history up until the 1950s, followed by 'Divide and Rule' which examines the entrenching of white Johannesburg and black Soweto after the National Party came to power in the 1950s. The next episode covers 'Making the Best of the Worst', focusing on the 1960s and 1970s and 'This is Our Day' which mostly represents the historic June 16 1976 events when Soweto scholars demonstrated en masse against Afrikaans being the medium of instruction and sparked off a new wave of revolutionary action. The third episode in its first part, 'By War: The Era of the Comrades' marks the period of the late 1970s to the mid 1980s, and, in its second, 'Endbeginnings', traces the period from the mid 1980s to the eve of the election in 1994.

Both histories, then, cover approximately the same period of time: from 1900 to 1994; from the basis in colonialism to the particular form it developed within South African society - apartheid. Both histories are made by anti-apartheid filmmakers whom one knows to have a progressive view of South African history, and who would therefore be concerned to represent resistance to apartheid. Indeed, resistance is a theme of both series. Both histories were produced at approximately the same time: in the early 1990s after the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners, during multi-party negotiations and just prior to the first democratic election. And finally, both series have similar stylistic features:

footage from interviews mixed with archival photographs and film images or sequences, using explanatory/informational voice-over narration.

But there are significant differences in both form and content in relation to questions of the representation of identity and subjectivity. The strongest point of comparison between the two series on this level is the inclusion in *Soweto: A History* of conflicts both historically and in the present between migrant workers living in so-called single-sex hostels and those people living in family houses in Soweto. In more recent times this conflict has escalated into war between Inkatha (whose membership is largely drawn from rural KwaZulu-Natal and Zulu migrant workers from this region) and ANC groups. In the ANC history this war and the conflicts which gave rise to it, as well as the role of the State in fuelling the war, is hardly mentioned. This is a complex war (as all wars presumably are) but in the making of a comprehensive history series for television which presents itself as 'popular power in the making', the exclusion of such a significant and critical part of South African history must be examined.

The makers of the ANC history were largely working in the VNS collective in the 1980s and early 1990s. As we saw in Chapter Four, the collective functioned to represent anti-apartheid 'struggle' on video for workers, youth and community organisations through the anti-apartheid network within the United Democratic Front, a broad-based anti-apartheid alliance established in 1983, and the Mass Democratic Movement. In the words of Mokonenyana Molete, a founding member of the collective: "...there was increasing mass political activity; people's organizations were springing up all over the place and we as filmmakers had to look at how we could use our skills to contribute to the growing political movement inside our country" (1991:62). Much of this work focused on and promoted the concept of 'unity'. If conflicts within the resistance movement were represented it was always within the context of the power of the masses presented as those within the ANC-aligned movement. The issue here is not that these video

documentaries were not representing the aspirations of the majority of South Africans, at least in a broad sense. What is important is that the realities of South African history and experience, are still largely unexplained at least for the television-watching public. Identity, in other words, and the subjective experience of everyday life, is for many people not as singular, unitary and conflict-free as the ANC history series proposes.

Soweto: A History on the other hand, creates a strong sense of the conflicts - first between migrant workers brought into Soweto to live in hostels and the broader community, and later in the aftermath of the 1976 protest by scholars. The escalation into war between Inkatha and the ANC is also represented - and it is important to note that these depictions are very complex in themselves. In comparison, then, the exclusion of this area of history in the ANC series is disturbing.

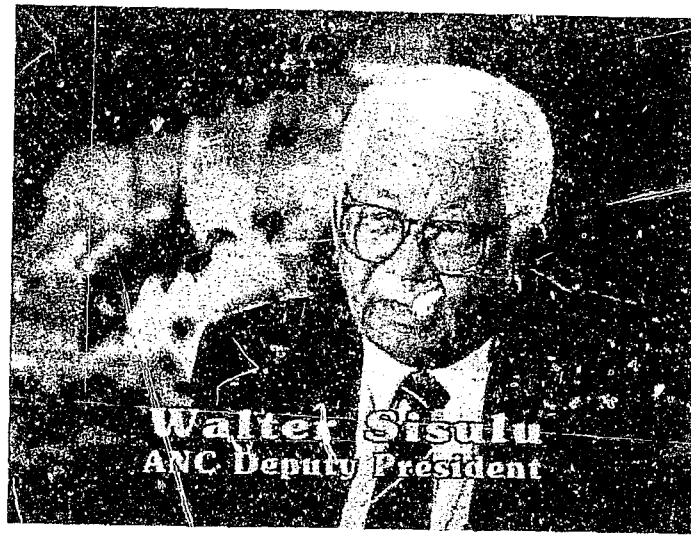
Perhaps the theme in *Soweto: A History* which can be set against the unitary theme of the ANC history is that of 'community'. Almost from the start of the series, the idea of 'community spirit' is represented. The counter-theme of the divisions created by apartheid and its legislation, and the on-going desperate attempts of the apartheid state to entrench divisions is therefore all the more powerful. But so, also, is the power of the 1976 protests against the Afrikaans medium being used for black education. Here the point is made that the scholars came together as one mass body, despite the fact that schools were divided on ethnic lines.

As well as these thematic contrasts, there are also differences of style: for example, with regard to the status and style of the interviews. While on the face of it both series have used similar stylistic strategies, on closer examination the interview style of the ANC history associates the representation of this history with male leaders of the ANC, dressed in business suits and ties, whose mode of

address is mostly to speak in objective overtones about the events being represented (see Figs.7&8, p.299). Add to this the fact that the voice-over narration is the voice of John Kani a well-known black actor and theatre personality. So the representation of this apparently 'rich tapestry of South African history' is very much male-dominated, observational and middle-class.

It is interesting to note however where and how this overall format changes, which has the effect of both highlighting it, yet also revealing its limitations. This is when women, either leaders of the ANC or allied organisations, or participants in various resistances, are interviewed, occupying the frame and using the opportunity to voice their perspectives in a different way to the suited men of the ANC. For example, Ama Naidoo, referred to as a 'passive resistance volunteer' describes the month she spent in prison in terms of the pain it caused her as a mother leaving her eighteen month old son. She says: 'when I came back...he didn't want to come to me. I felt very hurt but on the other hand I was very proud because I'm not sorry I went to jail, because...it's for a good thing we went, isn't it?' The rhetorical question is followed by a shy laugh, it is not answered, and here the viewer is drawn in to answer in the affirmative. The viewer is interpellated into the ideological statement of the film through the rhetorical moment. But this is seemingly unwitting on the part of the filmmakers. Rather, in relation to the overall didactic representation of history, this moment, and others like it, stand out as ones that engage the viewer in more human terms than any of the words or presentations of those presented as leaders, leaders in the know. Especially since Ms Naidoo seems uncertain of the value of her effort.

Soweto: A History on the other hand embraces a strong witness-participant orientation in its interviews. Every interviewee is identified by a subtitle, and there is no differentiation between leaders of the ANC and ordinary people. Everybody is apparently ordinary - showing how image-making can be democratic. All interviewees are equal in this documentary series. Stronger than witness-





Figs.7&8. Shots of Sisulu and Mandela representing the ANC point-of-view: 'voices' of authority in suits and ties *(Ulibambe Lingashoni - Hold Up the Sun).*

participants, the interviewees are perhaps more appropriately defined as 'speaking subjects' - people who were there - so they are speaking about/voicing, sometimes even enacting, events and experiences with gestures. This highlights their subjective perspectives. The choice of interviewees itself covers a wide range of people, which includes some political leaders, but seems on the surface to be an almost random choice of people. The presence of women on the screen is in strong contrast to the male-dominated ANC series. Indeed the very first interviewee is a woman. Added to this the voice-over narration is that of a black woman, a well-known singer, Sibongile Khumalo, which further entrenches and confirms the perspectives on Soweto's history from a female 'voice'. Identity in this series, however, is not defined nor represented predominantly on the basis of gender, but is rather a mix of identities based on race, gender, age, ethnicity, place, employment, position, and political activism. It is textured and complex in its presentation.

What is lacking in the meanings which these two series produce is a more nuanced sense of history than either of them explicate. History is not so much composed of the master narratives that have become entrenched with hindsight. It is also composed of smaller but intensely significant events. Here it is significant that there are concerns re-emerging in South African historiography about histories now being written on the basis of reconstructed or reproduced master narratives[10].

In this connection, it is valuable to consider how, for example, in the Soweto series the first episode devotes a great deal of space to James Mpanza who in the 1940s played a major role in expanding Soweto by developing squatter areas

[10] See for example Gary Minkley's review of Les Switzer's, *Power and Resistance in an African Society: the Ciskei Xhosa and the Making of South Africa* (1995:20-21), where he critiques the book as an example of "the subaltern historical stuffing which inscribes region into national history" (1995:21). Similarly in the documentary history series, (though to differing extents and in different ways), the local is absented in favour of the national. History is constructed as seamless and linear.

where the state had ceased to provide housing[11]. On the other hand, more recent moves to wrest control of housing by residents themselves are not represented. These include large groups of women who organised themselves in tandem with civic organisations in Soweto, to occupy vacant land in Soweto[12]. Similarly, the significance for gay and lesbian rights in Soweto of the 'coming out' of political activist, and former treason trialist (under the apartheid state), Simon Nkoli, along with others in Soweto, is something that the series chooses not to mention.

Questions of sexuality, however, are not completely ignored. Firstly, the allusion to the mixing of all races in ghettos in the early 1900s, and how this "offended the segregationist ideals of those in power", as stated in the voice-over narration, is significant here. Secondly, the representations of ideas about migrant workers and how they were perceived within Soweto is also significant. To provide some detail here: one of the interviewees indicates that the urban/rural divide was evident in the ways the urban Soweto dwellers talked about migrant workers, denoting their rural-ness. This point is developed by another interviewee who states that 'most of the parents around here didn't like the idea of us boys going into the hostel. There was that rumour the men in the hostel are sexually abusing boys here from the township for money'. He goes on to describe how they used to call these men 'isiqhaza', a word associated with connotations derived from the very large earrings they wore in their ears and derogatorily associated with homosexuality by urban township dwellers. So there is a complex mix here of urban and rural identities, and perceptions of these, with sexual and ethnic identities. In the sequence where this is represented, black and white photographs are used as illustrations of migrant workers dressed in hybrid ways that combine their rural

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[11] For detailed history on James Mpanza see Alfred Stadler, 'Birds in the Cornfield: squatter movements in Johannesburg, 1944-1947', (1979:93-123), and Alfred Stadler, 'The Politics of Subsistence: Community Struggles in War-time Johannesburg', Inaugural Lecture, (Wits University Press, 1981).

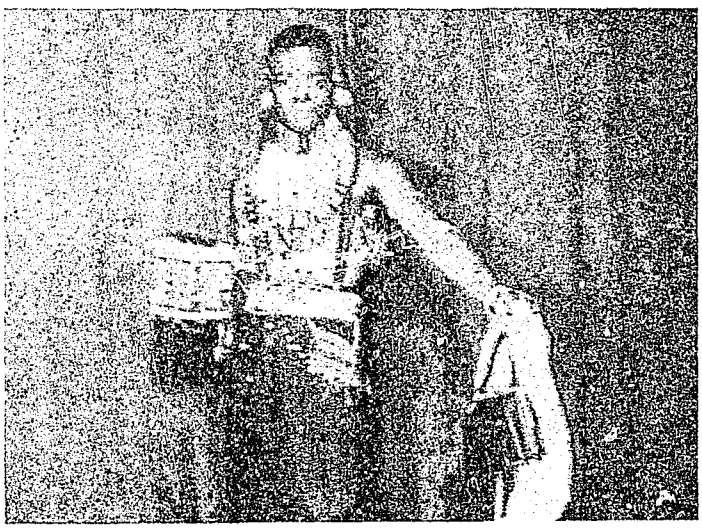
[12] One of these 'actions', where a group of women stripped off their clothes to prevent the demolition of their homes, is documented in a video I directed called *Uku Hamba 'Ze - To Walk Naked* (1995).

and ethnic icons with urban and sexualised styles: in one photograph a man is depicted holding a small handbag, usually associated with women (see Figs.9&10, p.303). What is interesting from the perspective of questions of subjectivity is that the comments are made not by migrant workers themselves but by the so-called urban dwellers. This might suggest that the subjectivities of migrant workers are not adequately considered. Yet the illustrative photographs which are shot direct to camera have the effect of representing the 'voice' of the migrant workers - *isiqhaza* - themselves. The filmmaker chooses to accentuate the relationship between the migrant worker being photographed, his direct to camera gaze at the audience beyond the frame, and the icons which define his multiple identities, by firstly representing the handbag in a close-up and then zooming out to a mid-shot of the man who is holding it. Here the filmmaker is 'speaking' in the choice of shots and creating meaning in the movement from the close-up to the mid-shot. Yet the subject of the photograph postures himself with what appears to be a certain pride and coupled with his direct to camera gaze it serves to represent his point of view despite the fact that he does not speak words as an interviewee. The representation of this aspect of Soweto's history is, then, textured and complex[13].

A similar pattern emerges around representations of sexual harassment and, in particular, of rape, but the resolution of these lacks the sophistication described above and therefore seems roughly concluded. Here again, some detail is helpful: the sequence begins with the voice-over narration contextualising the formation of township gangs in relation to education and the fact that so many youths were out of school in the late 1950s. The so-called '*tsotsi* gangs' (*tsotsi* meaning 'township criminal') that formed drew their membership from this group. Here there is strong representation in the form of a woman, Susan Shabangu (now a Minister in

[13] The complexities of this representation of subjectivity could be further developed with reference to Butler (1990), *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. For a useful example of the aplication of Butler's work to film (in another context) see Hayward (forthcoming) on Balasko's film *Gazon Maudit* (1994).





Figs.9&10. Hybridity in black and white: a two-shot sequence - first, a close-up identifying 'sexuality'; second, the camera pulls back to reveal the direct gaze of the migrant worker/*isiqhaza (Soweto: A History).*

the new government), talking forcefully about how these *tsotsi* gangs harassed women going to school. Then an interviewee who was obviously once, and possibly still is, a gangster describes how women who were abducted 'if you were nice...didn't accuse you of force'. Susan Shabangu then speaks again about her fear: '...if I refuse them they are just going to stab me...', and then the gangster speaks again: 'Rape' he says 'well it was bad. Five guys would sleep with one girl...but at least they didn't kill her. They just wanted sex. They'd never slit the girl's throat'. Over the last sentences we hear an ominous beating sound which we realise in the next shot is actually the sound of a train seen travelling at high speed from right to left of frame silhouetted against a setting sun. There is a sound mix here which creates a menacing effect. As the image of the train cuts to a black-and-white shot of two gangsters in medium close-up, the one looking at the other with a sinister grin, the sound of a train stopping is mixed with a high-pitched screeching sound. This sound mix ends abruptly with a dissolve into a second black-and-white shot, signalling an end to the sequence on sexual harassment and rape.

What is unresolved here - and therefore remains disturbing - is that apart from the words of Susan Shabangu there is very little to counteract the words of the gangster. The choice of shots and sound seems to be jerky and unclear, which produces a confused and confusing sequence. Rather than contextualising the sequence in relation to experiences of women in Soweto, what the filmmaker opts for is a contextualisation in socio-political terms. This is evident in what follows. The next sequence deals with violence and the community's fears of violence. The narrator makes the point that the authorities seemed unconcerned about crime and that there were only three police stations for a city of over a million people. This is followed by a sequence about the community's attempt at policing itself, with Susan Shabangu commenting that it had failed.

[illegible]

[illegible] Ingoapele Madingoane, a well known black [illegible] performs invoke [illegible] ending' - but of greater concern is the repeated motor invoking the male to 'Behold! My son behold!' and the representation of [illegible] excess that will liberate. The excesses of men as gangsters and rapists have been transformed into the excesses of men as liberators. Women as victims and [illegible] and women as co-liberators are effectively excluded.

Conclusion

Transformations in the broadcasting sector in the first half of the 1990s and the simultaneous move to gain access to the national public broadcaster by anti-apartheid filmmakers, led to the broadcasting of two history series that are valuable to analyse in the context of the framings of this thesis. The question to ask here is whether and how these history series might be seen as opening up questions of magnitude, or whether they are miniaturising the complex ways in which the worlds they represent are, or have been, experienced. A simple answer in the context of representations of identities is that both series are diminished accounts of the histories they seek to represent, in different degrees and in different ways. In the remainder of this chapter I shall discuss how this [illegible]

about, especially in relation to the strategies these two series portray and the differences between them.

The first point to be made is that both series are interactive, to use Nichols' typography of modes of documentary filmmaking, in the sense that the filmmaker relies predominantly on interviews. Having said this, it is interesting to note however, how the series are differently interactive, each from the other. Thus while it is useful to have a term that categorises a film as one type or another, the category itself needs to be elaborated with regards to each film, in more precise terms. In the ANC history series, *Ulibambe Lingashoni - Hold up the Sun*, history is predominantly male, black, middle-class and defined by the leaders. In this sense, it is an official ANC history, less concerned to represent the perspectives of ordinary people than of the leaders of the movement (as it was then before the general election in 1994). There are exceptions to this general view, and it is useful too to note how, for example, when women are interviewed they inhabit the frame differently, such as the way in which Ama Naidoo discusses her role in resisting apartheid and the effect this had on her relationship with her young son. By comparison, keeping to the general perspective on the series for the moment, as we have seen, history in *Soweto: A History* is purportedly the history of ordinary people. Here the important point to make is that although the interviewees are presented as 'ordinary people' many of them are in fact officials at various levels of government, so while they may have been 'ordinary people' at the time of the histories they represent, they are no longer so at the time of the making of the documentary series. But, even so, the filmmakers choose to allow the viewer to perceive them as equal to each other, since the sub-titles identify them only by name and not by position or status. This sense that the filmmakers create of equality between the interviewees, whatever their status in society, thus functions to 'perform' democracy within the text itself. On the other hand, however, it can be seen as an illusion of democracy since in effect they are not equal to each other, so while their accounts may be perceived by un-knowing

viewers as those of ordinary people, they are not in fact so. The effect of this strategy, is that viewers will believe that they are listening to, and watching, people giving accounts of life in Soweto as representatives of the ordinary person's perspective, when in fact this is not always the case.

There is a second point to be made that is important, and that concerns the ways in which the interviews are spatially located in each series. In *Ulibambe Lingashoni - Hold up the Sun* the interviewees are interviewed mostly as officials. By comparison, in *Soweto: A History*, the interviewees are interviewed in spaces that seem to be more arbitrarily chosen than in the ANC history series. These interviewing spaces, in *Soweto: A History*, are by and large domesticated, private or personal spaces, often in the home of the interviewee. Thus there is a strong sense created in the documentary that the viewer is receiving an inside, interior perspective on the history of Soweto, as opposed to an official one, be that 'official', either in the sense of the official version of apartheid history as represented by the apartheid state, or as represented by the counter-hegemonic structures developing prior to the first democratic elections in 1994. The fact that the camera has been allowed into the interviewees' personal space underlies, and underlines, the documentary series' ability to pose as a truthful, authentic, honest, ordinary person's representation of Soweto's history. This is in keeping with the positioning of the History Workshop at the University of the Witwatersrand, producer of the series, whose approach and focus has been on 'history from below'. This contrasts with the ANC history which sets up the interviewees in more official spaces and thus represents the official version of history in a double layering of officaldom: one layer represented by the choice of the majority of interviewees, the second layer by the spaces in which they are interviewed. What is interesting here, however, is that there is a clear line of demarcation between those interviewees that represent the official perspective on the ANC and those that are incorporated into the documentary to describe an event, to develop a point being made by another individual, or to represent a more 'ordinary' view. Thus, in

the strategies that the documentary series visibly employs, there is a greater sense of difference between the official interviews and other interviews. In *Soweto: A History*, on the other hand, the structuring of interviews is more singular, in keeping with the 'voice' of this documentary series as purporting to represent the perspective of ordinary people. Here, the agency of the subject as 'speaking subject' is (pre)determined by the filmmaker's strategy to present all subjects as socially equal. Yet, despite this equalising, democratising strategy, that in fact closes down the viewer's access to knowledge about the interviewee, except in the terms that are prescribed by the filmmaker and that therefore at this level is not at all democratising, this history series opens up its meanings in a way that the ANC history does not. How does this happen? In essence, the chief controlling device or strategy that the filmmakers of *Soweto: A History* use is this one where subjects are apparently equalised. The details of the representation of Soweto's history, apart from the need to separate them from official versions of history as I have already discussed, do not seem of direct concern to the filmmakers, at least in comparison to the details of the history of the ANC in the other series. This is clearly because the ANC history series is in fact, in its very intent, an official version of the history of the ANC, thus its content, even at the level of the words that the interviewees speak on camera, is of great significance. Hence the importance of the ideological framing provided by the officials of the ANC.

Beyond the strategies used to represent interviewees, the other strategy that both series use is to incorporate photographic illustration as evidence of history, and further, as evidence of the truthful nature of the history being represented. As I discussed in Chapter One, documentary film claims access to reality and truth, at least in its more conventional definitions. Documentary photography has the same claim. In effect then, its use, as evidence, provides a double claim on truth in documentary film, because documentary film is often allied with truthful perspectives on reality, and this already-present notion is repeated, or further layered by the use of documentary photography. Both the ANC history series and

the Soweto history series incorporate black and white photographs as illustrative images. This reliance on photographic illustration as evidence, coupled with the use of interviews, renders both histories into rather conventionalised documentary accounts of their respective subjects (that is, what they are about). There is no sense in either series of 'blurred boundaries' between fiction and documentary. Where it might have been enhancing to represent re-enactments of historical events, in unconventionalised ways, as has been the case in the representation of other histories from left-wing perspectives, which I described in Chapter Three, or from subjective perspectives, such as some anthropological films have achieved, like the film *Two Laws* mentioned in Chapter One, both series opt for the conventional documentary approach. Indeed, the innovations of anti-apartheid film itself, in which the makers of both series have participated, are not strategies that are incorporated into these documentaries. The conscious narrative structuring of documentaries in the *Ordinary People* series, or in single documentaries like *Fruits of Defiance*, are not strategies that these history series employ. Thus it would seem that the transition to national television broadcasting, in the making of these two history series, in effect reduces the range of strategies of representation that the filmmakers draw upon.

To link this discussion back to the last two chapters that focus on two trends in anti-apartheid documentary filmmaking, the *Ordinary People* series stands out quite uniquely in terms of its strategies of representation, combining the three under-structural axes of history, narrative and myth. In terms of questions of identity and the representation of the multiplicity of identity the breadth that *Ordinary People* achieves is not matched in either history series. *Soweto: A History* does at times, in its own right, work strongly at the level of representations of identity as multiple or hybrid, as the earlier discussion shows. This sense is created in part by the democratising strategy used in presenting interviewees, and the spaces within which they are interviewed, but, more importantly, the range of different people interviewed opens up the text towards

perceptions of identity in Soweto as multiple, and hybrid. In addition the range of issues considered in the series, such as questions of sexual orientation in the relationship between migrant workers in hostels and township dwellers, facilitates an opening up of issues of identity, that the ANC history series does not achieve. Indeed in this example and others like it, history and identity, and through the interviewees, memory, are inextricably linked.

This chapter focuses initially on the transforming television broadcasting sector in the first half of the 1990s, sketching and highlighting some key developments in that time, and noting some of those that were to follow in the first years of the second half of the decade. This sector in itself is in flux. By the end of 1995 policy changes were beginning to take effect, and particularly at the level of increasing 'local content', anti-apartheid filmmakers were poised to move beyond their former positioning against the state, making resistance, political film and video, to develop their work with greater access to, and possibly even commissions from, the national public broadcaster. As the decade moves towards 2000 however, hopes of significantly increasing 'local content' are dwindling, especially with regard to documentary film and video.

The second half of this chapter analyses two history series made in the first half of the 1990s, re-visualising former official versions of history on the ANC, and on Soweto. The discussion on these two versions of history, and the comparison I make between them, raises questions about strategies of representation for documenting history. To different extents both series diminish their accounts of history, miniaturise them, while at times they also accomplish an opening up of questions of identity in important ways. It is these uneven moments, in both series, that might be developed in future similar programmes to redress the official versions of history that dominated under apartheid. The challenge for South African filmmakers is to create new versions of history that are not official ones, nor diminishing ones, but that facilitate viewers' engagement with the texts

themselves, with their contents, and with their own sense of agency in the making of history, and in the making of democracy in contemporary history. Documentary strategies of representation that recognise multiplicities of identity need to be developed further in 'local content' film and video to make such new visions possible.

Conclusion

I

From 1976 to 1995, the time period set for this thesis, anti-apartheid documentary film and video in South Africa made a sweeping transformation from the alienated position of being made by foreign film crews for predominantly foreign television audiences; through a period of being made by local filmmakers within national anti-apartheid structures or allied to them without access to national television screens and therefore, at least at the level of local distribution, as a form of Third Cinema - a militant, 'underground', political cinema; to being made for national television audiences in the period leading up to the first democratic elections in 1994 and beyond.

The primary focus of this thesis is the making of anti-apartheid documentary film and video by South African filmmakers in South Africa (that is not including those in exile) first in the 1980s and then in the 1990s. This 'movement' to make anti-apartheid documentaries represents a unique 'moment' (if we allow a 'moment' to span almost two decades) in South African film history, for such a development had not and could not have developed earlier for reasons that will become clear in this conclusion. It is a 'moment' pre-empting and even in some senses creating, at least in part, the conditions for some of the transformations that were to come in the post-apartheid period. Here the contexts to which the texts relate are important: cultural, economic, political and social contexts, and I have made allusions to, and in places focused on, these in this study. This is not to suggest that there is a linear and chronological relationship between this filmmaking 'movement' and what follows it historically, nor to ascribe a greater historical significance to it than is warranted.

Rather I am proposing that various contextual threads weave through the development of this 'movement' both affecting it and being affected by it. I am thinking here of such complex interweavings as the formation of the Federation of South African Trade Unions and later the Congress of South African Trade Unions, to which Video News Services (VNS) was allied; the roles played by members of VNS in establishing the Film and Allied Workers Organisation (FAWO) along with members of other anti-apartheid film groups like Free Film Makers; the commitment of these film organisations and of FAWO as a whole to providing training and education opportunities for young, aspirant filmmakers, and especially black filmmakers; the political transformations for which FAWO lobbied in coalition with other organisations, in the context of the multi-party talks that led to the first democratic election, that led directly to the establishment of the Independent Broadcasting Authority and a more democratic process for electing a new SABC Board than would otherwise have been the case; and, the establishment of a film school under the auspices of FAWO, with a focus on selecting applicants affirmatively with respect to race, class, gender and region thus actively engaging in creating, in a small but not insignificant way, a more diverse film and television sector. By and large, these contextual issues have not been the direct focus of the present study. Rather I have chosen to focus, with necessary reference to aspects of this contextual web, on the textual strategies of representation that structure the documentaries of this anti-apartheid film and video 'movement' that I have selected for study.

The framework that I have created for the study of textual strategies of representation in anti-apartheid documentary film and video brings together a rather unique combination of theories unusual for film studies. Drawing from documentary film theory, and theories of Third Cinema and of identity, this framework favours theoretical developments in film and culture that are concerned broadly with film and

ideology, with the blurring of boundaries between fiction and documentary, and with identity as complex, unfixed, and as definitively multiple.

Documentary film theory is the subject of Chapter One where I discuss realism and documentary, elucidate selected aspects of documentary film theory and practice and closely examine the writings of Bill Nichols. One of the most significant international film theorists especially for documentary film, Bill Nichols, deals with documentary filmmaking as a political act. For this reason it is particularly important for the study of anti-apartheid documentary film and video. Interestingly, he does not consider South African film at all, a reflection perhaps of the paucity of distribution opportunities for South African, and especially documentary film, in the international arena. His studies stretch across documentary film history, mostly located within the USA, usefully identifying modes of filmmaking that are valuable for categorising different documentaries. In essence, Nichols' pervasive concern, in all his writings, with praxis, that special potential that lies between thought and action, is the most consistently seductive aspect of his work for the study of political (documentary) filmmaking. Within this overarching concern, his focus is on how documentary film matters, how it defies the (almost inherent) tendency of film to miniaturise lived realities and opens up questions of magnitude that facilitate transformative perspectives and actions, that produce praxis. Nichols' definition of the overlapping axes of history, myth and narrative as an under-structure of all documentaries, provides a valuable analytical grid for interpreting how a text is made, and what the strategies are that function in how it makes meaning. The subject of his most recent book is the 'blurred boundaries' between documentary and fiction, which is a recurrent strand of this study.

The concept of Third Cinema, the subject of Chapter Two, is a rather marginalised one in mainstream film theory and film studies, like the filmmaking practices that it

describes and upon which it deliberates. As a conscious basis for the making of revolutionary cinema in predominantly 'Third World' countries, and also in the diaspora and in various groupings and collectives in 'First World' countries, Third Cinema is an extremely important sphere within which to consider such consciously political filmmaking as anti-apartheid documentary film and video in South Africa. In this chapter I sketch the lineage of the theory of Third Cinema, and based on this extend towards those theories that elaborate questions of identity, especially those that propose that identity is made in difference, that it is a multiple construct, a hybrid construct. Here the work of Homi Bhabha in particular is useful, his notion especially of the in-between and its significance for cultural criticism, which I elaborate and invoke with reference to a range of theories in a similar mould, especially those of Appiah, Gilroy, Hall, Mouffe, Mudimbe and Trinh T. Minh-ha.

Thus Chapters One and Two provide the primarily theoretical foundations for this study of anti-apartheid documentary film and video. In Chapter Three I shift the framing register beyond theory to the filmmaking practices in working class cinema of the 1920s and 1930s. The point to be made here is that this cinema, though marginalised like Third Cinema, played a most significant role in the development of world cinema, focused as it was on the distribution of Soviet films, on the making of films that emulated the strategies of the best Soviet 'classics', such as Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), and on promoting the point of view of the working class. In the sense that anti-apartheid filmmaking in South Africa has been predominantly concerned with representations of the working class, at least, but not exclusively, in the work of VNS, the history of working class cinema is a necessary basis for its study. The especially valuable aspect of this focus is the conscious primacy of strategies of representation for political purposes, which facilitates comparisons with South African anti-apartheid documentaries, especially those consciously seeking to represent working class perspectives.

The primary focus then of this study is the textual strategies of representation in anti-apartheid documentary film and video from 1976 to 1995, reflected upon and analysed in relation to: perspectives of documentary film tnat consider its potential for praxis; notions of Third Cinema and the multiplicities of identity; and strategies of representation in working class cinema of the 1920s and 1930s.

With regard to the selection of documentaries for analysis, this study is concerned with two groupings of documentaries. The first is those made by VNS. This organisation was established in the 1980s to make anti-apartheid documentaries primarily for local audiences, but also for international audiences. In Chapter Four, which focuses on the VNS documentaries in particular, I have analysed three videos that exemplify this organisation's output: *Compelling Freedom* (1987), *Fruits of Defiance* (1990) and *Hlanganani: A Short History of COSATU* (1991). The other of the two groupings of documentaries that this study focuses on, in Chapter Five, is represented by four documentaries made by Mail and Guardian Television in its *Ordinary People* series: *The Peacemakers* (1993), *The Tooth of the Times* (1993), *The Night Shift* (1994) and *A Day with the President* (1995). The central themes of these two chapters are the concept of 'voice', the ideological shaping of the text by the filmmaker(s); and the related but different concept of the 'speaking subject', which refers to how the subject(s) of the film are 'allowed' to speak, not merely in the verbal sense, but in the sense of subjective agency within the text itself.

The films made by VNS by and large concern themselves with categorised perceptions of South African reality, in documentaries that are ideologically bound up with representations of particular categorisations of identity, while the films in the *Ordinary People* series, may be seen as paving the way, at times unevenly, for new types of filmmaking, new textual strategies that open up questions of identity in the South African context. At the same time, it needs to be said that the VNS films point

in places to ways in which South African film might usefully 'blur' boundaries between documentary and fiction, and might develop combinations of diverse strategies for representing points of view in documentary film. This can be seen in juxtaposition to the *Ordinary People* series which represents subjective points of view primarily through following each subject with a camera. The point is that subjectivity and point-of-view need not necessarily be bound to a subjective camera mode. Seen in relation to each other then, the strategies of representation in the VNS films and in the *Ordinary People* series, together open up valuable spaces for considering strategies that (potentially) represent multiple subjectivities.

In the pre-election period, VNS (having changed its name to Afravision) was commissioned by the African National Congress to make a five part series on its history. In Chapter Six I focus on this documentary series called *Ulibambe Lingashoni - Hold up the Sun* (1994), where I discuss it in the light of transformations that were beginning to take place in the television broadcasting sector in the early to mid 1990s. In this chapter I compare the ANC history series with another history series called *Soweto: A History* (1994) made by an anti-apartheid film collective, Free Film Makers. The significance of this chapter is that the drive for more 'local content' on the national public television broadcaster coupled with the need to re-present South African history from democratic vantage points in the 1990s, suggests that strategies for doing so need to be found, and that those documentaries already made in this vein need to be analysed to assess how they achieve or produce new meanings of the past.

Thus far in this conclusion I have summarised the focus and scope of this study. In the second section below I elaborate some of the significant issues arising from it.

II

In the second half of the 1990s, towards 2000 and beyond, with film and television in South Africa expanding, through new government policies and programmes, and through increased opportunities for state sponsorship of filmmaking, strategies of representation that reflect and represent the full(er) realities of South African life need to be found, need to be given space for experimentation and development, and national screening opportunities need to be created. Coming out of the apartheid era where identity was categorically defined: blacks/whites, rich/poor, bosses /workers...and into an era where the multiplicities of identity can be given some breathing space, without loss to left-wing political purposes, as might have been the case in the 1980s especially, what is now needed, and possible, is film that is not so singularly concerned with one or other category of identity. This statement opens up a complex terrain. The primary focus of my considerations of identity and its representation has been on issues of multiplicity, as a way of redressing the singular identities that apartheid ascribed to all South Africans. Similarly, as my theoretical framework asserts, locating or explaining identity on the basis of binary oppositions cannot be perceived as valid. This is a point Mudimbe makes exceptionally well with regard to binary oppositionalities that are proposed to 'invent' Africa, like tradition versus modernity, underdevelopment versus development. This is where Homi Bhabha's notion of the in-between or *entre* is significant. The Third Space of which he speaks, derived from a conceptualisation of identity as both conscious and unconscious, defines the almost intangible, almost uninhabitable space of the in-between, which at the same time is tangible and habitable *just enough* - or to put it slightly differently is felt, sensed, imagined *just enough* - to be in some form identified. This notion of hybridity is seductive because it proposes a sense, a space, of neither One nor Other, an in-between of Self and Other, which in the South African context usefully blurs the strongly defined categories of identity which dominated in the colonial and apartheid eras. I have argued however in Chapter Two that this

conceptualisation of identity has limitations, primarily in its (still) binarist, dualist base, although the conept of the in-between is not in and of itself binarist. This theoretical framing of identity by writers like Homi Bhabha could usefully be expanded in the South African context. Here what is needed is a concept of identity that allows for even greater multiplicities, that broadly defines the experience of the multi-layered spaces of in-betweennesses that we inhabit in South Africa. Strategies to represent identity in this complexity are needed, not forgetting that filmic representation itself can express and propose definitions of identity. This extends Trinh T. Minh-ha's idea: "to continue to use words like 'in-betweenness' and 'hybridity' as tools of change, and we should keep on redefining them until their spaces become so saturated..." (Trinh, 1996:11). Not only do the words need to be used within the South Africa context, but I am proposing that beyond this they need to be the subject of representations in film, as a means of extending notions of identity.

In promoting this perspective on identity, and also proposing that strategies need to be discovered to represent identity as multiple, hybrid, in-between, I am conscious of the need to develop new strategies of representation that might affirmatively telescope into one or another positioning of identity, without the former exclusivity that apartheid achieved. And this is the important point here: that filmmakers in South Africa are uniquely placed to (re)conceive film and video, towards re-presenting identities in inventive and innovative ways that can achieve the opening up of questions of magnitude that Nichols proposes. Nichols' concern to discover how documentary film can expose 'the full dimensionalities of the world in which we live' is clearly one that we need to share in South Africa. Documentary film has a particularly important role to play in the making of democracy. The widespread unemployment and poverty in South Africa, for example, needs to be represented on national screens. The challenge is to discover ways, strategies, to do this that will not be diminishing or miniaturising, that will facilitate praxis. There needs to be a

diversity of approaches to facilitate this necessary process of discovery. It ought to include opportunities for those already-established (a. 'i-apartheid) filmmakers that are breaking new ground, alongside programmes to reinforce the work already being done to establish something like the Fourth Cinema that I proposed in Chapter Three. *Ghetto Diaries* (1996), produced by Mail and Guardian Television, where ordinary people, such as a migrant worker, make a documentary about themselves, could be seen as an example of this type of approach. Further, more extensive programmes to encourage film and video production by 'indigenous' groups, need to be created.

In proposing, therefore, a perspective of South African identities as multiple, hybrid, and unfixed, I do not wish to prescribe against the value of representations of singular perspectives on identity. There is no doubt that to focus specifically and singularly on race, or class, or gender, or any other specific positioning or subjectivity, could be most valuable. Here I am in agreement with the formulations of Stuart Hall (1989b) on identity, where, writing in relation to Caribbean cinema, he proposes that identity is both constructed as a singular collectivity and constructed in difference. Neither of these operates independently of the other, it is entirely a 'both-and' scenario. Thus identity in one definition can be seen as "reflect(ing) the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as 'one people', with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning" (Hall, 1989b:69). And in another 'related but different' definition identity can be recognised on the basis of "critical points of deep and significant difference which constitute 'what we really are': or rather - since history has intervened - 'what we have become'" (Hall, 1989b:70). In a more recent paper, Hall (1996) usefully expands his earlier view, to suggest that there is what he calls a 'third way' (1996:129), not unlike Bhabha's Third Space, - way of 'grappling' with the politics of identity, that is not only concerned with identity as fixed, or as fluid, but that shifts discussion towards identification: "the process by which groups, movements, institutions, try to locate us for the

purpose of regulating us; try to construct us within symbolic boundaries in order to locate us, to give us resources, or take resources away from us" (1996:130). In other words, the processes by which we are located and locate ourselves into what Nichols calls the 'discourses of sobriety' are as important to consider, and to represent, as identity itself. I am proposing here then, that questions of identity in the South African context need to be articulated, represented, within a consciousness of processes of identification. In other words, representation, and I am writing here primarily of documentary film and video, can be powerful, active, effective, at the level of praxis, when it is concerned consciously with how it matters to those whom it represents. This ties into a further discussion on the appropriation of representation by those who, as Nichols puts it, were formerly the objects of visual representation, those Third and Fourth World people who have 'seized' cinema for their own representation. The nuanced perspectives that a subjective view makes possible is in many cases undeniable. Here Nichols' postulation of a new mode of documentary called 'performative documentary' is valuable, especially his perspective on the embodiment of subjective experience on the part of the subject, the subject who is, in turn, the filmmaker. Thus the filmmaker becomes an 'embodied intelligence' in selecting and structuring the texts strategies of representation. This raises further issues, most importantly on the question of the location of the subject/filmmaker. Trinh T. Minh-ha, a subject/filmmaker herself, discussed in Chapter One, reminds us that in the context of this vexed question, as in any other context, the notion of the in-between is significant. For in her poetic rendition of the subjectivity of the filmmaker, the filmmaker is not reducible to insider or outsider, she is insider outsider, self other, with no slash between, inhabiting, embodying, the unfixed fluidity of that in-betweenness. This kind of embodied in-betweenness in turn suggests that the 'blurred boundaries' between fiction and documentary that, as we have seen, have long strands of history in various forms of filmmaking throughout its first century of existence, are necessary and crucial, in the documenting of new perspectives on identity. Fiction

film celebrates the notion of point-of-view in ways that documentary has never sufficiently explored. The film histories that I have studied here especially the strategies of working class cinema, show how 'blurring boundaries' between documentary and fiction can affect the production of new meanings. To suggest this blurring therefore is not to suggest a new act. It is however to suggest a radical one, literally one that delves deep into the roots of filmmaking, despite, perhaps even because of, other technological forms of representation, to create strategies of representation that might be more truly representative of the multiplicities of identities that we embody, not for their own sake, but to make the world a better place.



Fig.11. Opening up multiplicities of identity: the 'ordinary' person/woman 'speaks' history *(Soweto: A History)*.

Filmography

In this Filmography I list each film as it appears by title in the main text. Where possible I have included director (d.), producer/production company (p.), country and date of production. The filmography, listed as it is with no categorisation, can be seen as both 'blurring boundaries' and making links on different levels: between documentary and fiction; across countries and languages; and across time[1].

Advance, Democracy (d.Bond; p.Workers Film Association; GB; 1938)
America Today (p.FPL; USA; 1934)
The Apple (p.SACHED; SA; 1988)
Arm Drenthe (d.de Visser & Lakerveld; p.VVVC; Holland; 1929)
The Battleship Potemkin (d.Eisenstein; p.Goskino [1st Factory]; USSR; 1925)
Before Hindsight (d.Lewis & Taylor-Mead; p.Metropolis Pictures; GB; 1977)
Blow Bugles Blow (p.Socialist Film Council; GB; 1934)
Blütmai 1929 (d.Jutzi; p.Weltfilm; Germany; 1929)
Bonus March (p.FPL; USA; 1932)
Boulogne Socialiste (p.SFIO; France; 1936)
Brüder (d.Hochbaum; p.Werner Hochbaum Filmproduktion GmbH; Germany; 1929)
De Brug (d.Ivens; Holland; 1928)
Chronique d'un été (d.Rouch & Morin; France; 1960)
Chroniques Sud-Africaines (d.Van In; p.JBA Production, Institut National de L'Audiovisuel, La Sept, Varan, ZDF; France; 1988)
Come Back Africa (d.Rogosin; USA; 1959)
Compelling Freedom (p.VNS; SA; 1987)

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[1] In addition to the theoretical works cited in the text I have found Taylor and Christie's (1988) book, *The Film Factory*, especially helpful for information on Soviet films.

Construction (p.FPL; GB; 1935)

Contemporary Problem: How the Worker Lives (d.Dudow; p.Weltfilm; Germany; 1930)

Contre le courant (p.PSOP; France; 1938)

Le Crime de Monsieur Lange (d.Renoir; France; 1935)

A Day with the President [special episode in the *Ordinary People* series] (d.Hofmeyr; SA; 1995)

Defence of Madrid (d.McLaren; p.Progressive Film Institute; GB; 1936)

Drifters (d.Grierson; p.Empire Marketing Board; GB; 1929)

Earth (p.Prokino; Japan; 1930)

Enthusiasm (d.Vertov; p.Ukrainfilm; USSR; 1930)

Le Film des grèves (p.Ciné-Liberté; France; 1936)

The Ford Massacre (p.FPL; USA; 1932)

The Forge (d.Berger; p.Volksfilmbuhne; Germany; 1924)

Free People (d.Berger; p.Volksfilmbuhne; Germany; 1925)

Free Thaelmann (d.Montagu; p.Progressive Film Institute; GB; 1935)

Freedom Charter (p.Terra Vision; SA?; 1986)

Freedom Square and the Back of the Moon (d.Kentridge & Gibson; p.Free Film Makers; SA; 1987)

Fruits of Defiance (d.Schmitz & Tilley; p.VNS; SA; 1990)

Full Speed Ahead (p.Film und Lichtbilddienst; Germany; 1928)

Gazon Maudit (d.Balasko; France; 1994)

Grand Rassemblement du 14 juillet (p.ACI; France; 1935)

La Grande Espérance (p.PCF; France; 1938)

Grèves d'occupation (p.Ciné-Liberté; France; 1936)

Handsworth Songs (d.Akomfrah; p.Black Audio Film Collective; GB; 1986)

Histoire d'un soldat inconnu (d.Storck; Belguim; 1937)

Hlanganani: A Short History of COSATU (d.Tilley & Schmitz; p.VNS and COSATU; SA; 1991)

Hospital (d.Wiseman; USA; 1969)

Hunger/Hunger 1932 (p.FPL; USA; 1933)

Hunger in Soviet Russia (p.Sevzapkino; USSR; 1921)

Hunger in Waldenburg (d.Jutzi; p.VFV with Weltfilm & Theater am Schiffbauerdamm; Germany; 1929)

I am Clifford Abrahams, This is Grahamstown (d.Abrahams, Hayman, Pinnock &Tomaselli; p.Department of Journalism, Rhodes University; SA; 1984)

Industrial Britain (d.Grierson; p.Empire Marketing Board; GB; 1931)

Infinite Sorrow (d.Panteleyev; p.Sevzapkino & First Petrograd Collective of Screen Artists; USSR; 1921)

In the Beginning was the Word (p.Film und Lichtbilddienst; Germany; 1928)

Isithwalandwe: The Freedom Charter (p.International Defence and Aid Fund; GB; 1980)

Jo'burg Stories (d.Tilley & Schmitz; SA; 1997)

Journey to the Sun (p.South African Tourist Bureau; SA; 1975)

Kuhle Wampe (d.Dudow; p.Prometheus & Prasens; Germany; 1932)

Last Grave at Dimbaza (d.Mahomo; p.Morena Films; GB; 1974)

The Line (d.Tilley; p.Nathan; SA; 1993)

The Living Corpse (d.Otsep; p.Prometheus; Germany; 1929)

The Man of Aran (d.Flaherty; USA; 1934)

The Man of Aran: How the Myth was Made (d.Stoney; USA; 1978)

The Man with the Movie Camera (d.Vertov; p.VUFKU; USSR; 1929)

Mapantsula (d.Schmitz; p.Montocchio; SA; 1988)

March Against Starvation (p.FPL; GB; 1936)

La Marseillaise (d.Renoir; France; 1937)

May Day in Berlin (p.Weltfilm; Germany; 1930)

Mayfair (p.Ad Hoc Video Group & Carnegie Commission; d.Bensusan, Tilley, Weinberg & Schwegmann; SA, 1984)

Moana (d.Flaherty; USA; 1926)

Moi un noir (d.Rouch; France; 1957)

Mother, The (d.Pudovkin; p.Mezhrabpom; USSR; 1926)

Mr English at Home (d.Sellers; p.Colonial Film Unit; GB; 1939)

Le Mur des fédérés (p.SFIO; France; 1935)

National Hunger March/Hunger March1931/Hunger 1931 (p.FPL; USA; 1931)

Nanook of the North (d.Flaherty; USA; 1922)

Newsreel No.2 (p.FPL; GB; 1934)

The Night Shift [an episode in the *Ordinary People* series] (d.Bestall; SA; 1994)

On the Bowery (d.Rogosin; USA; 1956)

One + One = Three (p.Prometheus; Germany; 1927)

Ordinary People [three series] (p.Gavshon, Mail & Guardian Television; SA; 1993-1995)

Peace and Plenty (d.Montagu; p.Communist Party of Great Britain; GB; 1939)

The Peacemakers [an episode in the *Ordinary People* series] (d.Bestall; SA; 1993)

The Plow that Broke the Plains (d.Lorentz; p.US Resettlement Administration; USA; 1936)

Prokino-News No.1 (p.Prokino; Japan; 1930)

Rain (d.Ivens; Holland; 1929)

Red Right and Bloo (p.FPL; GB; 1937)

Red Sport in Pictures (p.Weltfilm; Germany; 1930)

Le Retour à la vie (d.Dulac; France; 1936)

Revolt of the Fishermen (p.FPL; GB; 1935)

The River (d.Lorentz; USA; 1937)

The Road to Hell (d.Messel; p.Socialist Film Council; GB; 1933)

Roses in December (d.Carringan & Stone; El Salvador/USA; 1982)

Roter Frontkaempferbund (Germany; 1928)

The Search for Sandra Laing [an episode in the *South African Experience* series] (d.Thomas; GB; 1977)

Sebokeng by Night [an episode in the *Ordinary People* series] (d.Bestall; SA; 1993)

The South African Experience [a three part series] (p.ATV Network Production; GB; 1977)

Soweto: A History [series] (d.Gibson; p.Galombik, Free Film Makers & The History Workshop; SA; 1994)

Starvation Along the Banks of the Volga (p.Sevzapkino; USSR; 1921)

The Strike (d.Eisenstein; p.Proletkult & Goskino [1st Factory]; USSR; 1924)

Surname Viet Given Name Nam (d.Trinh; p.Idera Films; USA; 1989)

Le Temps des Cerises (p.PCF; d.Le Chanois; France; 1937)

The Tooth of the Times [an episode in the *Ordinary People* series] (d.Bestall; SA; 1993)

Twelfth May Day in Tokyo (p.Prokino; Japan; 1931)

Twelfth Party Congress of the KPD in Berlin (p.Weltfilm; Germany; 1929)

Two Laws (d.Cavadini & Strachan with the Borroloola Aboriginal community; Australia; 1981)

Two Worlds (d.Hochbaum; Germany; 193?)

Uku Hamba 'Ze - To Walk Naked (d.Maingard; p.collective; SA; 1995)

Ulibambe Lingashoni - Hold Up the Sun [series] (d.Dworkin; p.Afravision; SA; 1993)

Unemployment Special (p.FPL; USA; 1931)

La Vie d'un homme (d.Le Chanois; p.PCF; France; 1937)

La Vie est à nous (d.Renoir & collective; p.Ciné-Liberté; France; 1936)

Wanne Dan (d.Fish; p.Community Video Education Trust; SA: 1987)

Waste and Want (d.Brody; p.Harry Alan Potamkin Film School; USA; 1934)

What the Newsreel Does Not Show (p.Socialist Film Council; GB; 1933)

The White Tribe of Africa [series] (d.Dimbleby; p.BBC; GB; 1980)

Workers' Films of the 30s (d.Wegg-Prosser; p.Wegg-Prosser; GB; 1981)

Workers Newsreel No.1 (p.FPL; GB; 1934)

Zeitbericht-Zeitgesicht (p.VFV; Germany; 1928)

14 juillet 1935 (d.Pivert; p.SFIO; France; 1935)

16 février 1936 (p.SFIO; France; 1936)

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